Welcome to the NSSE Webinar

Assessing the First-Year Experience

Student success in the first year of college is no accident. This Webinar will highlight approaches to maximizing the use of NSSE results to inform first-year experience programs, retention initiatives, and to consider what results suggest about activities for the sophomore year.

We will begin at 3pm EST. Before we begin please review the following:

• Download and print the presentation PDF from the NSSE website.
• Please turn up your computer speakers or plug in your headphones to listen to the presentation.
• Please close all other applications as they may interfere with the audio feed for this webinar.
• If you cannot hear anything, click on “Meeting” in left of dark grey tool bar at the top of the screen and select “Audio Setup Wizard”. Complete the first part of the Wizard, which ends with a speaker test, in order to ensure you are properly connected for webinar audio. If you cannot hear anything after this, please consult your technology support person.
• The Chat window will be available throughout the presentation so that you can interact with participants. You will be able to use the chat window to submit questions to the presenter during the Q & A session.

Inquiring Minds....

• What data do you use to inform your understanding of the first year experience? Who wants to know??
• In what curricular and co-curricular areas, specific courses, or transition points do first year students have the most difficulty? What measures do you use to monitor these issues?
• What are your current strengths in the first year experience?
• How can NSSE data inform activities for the sophomore year?

What do we know? What assessments inform the First Year Experience?

• Cooperative Institutional Research Program – 40 years of data on entering students; YFCY
• College Student Experience Questionnaire Research Program (CSXQ & CSEQ)
• Institutional data on entering students; gateway course success rates; persistence data; early alert statistics
• National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE)
• Foundations of Excellence project

Principles of Good Practice for the First College Year: Recommendations

• Institutional commitment by leaders, faculty, staff, and governing boards
• Focus on student learning both inside & outside the classroom
• Encourage student affairs-academic affairs partnership
• Offer challenge and support
• Communicate high expectations
• Foster an inclusive and supportive campus climate
• Conduct systematic assessment
• Create atmosphere of dignity & respect for FY students
• Teach students strategies and skills to succeed
• Get faculty involved
• Encourage students to assume responsibility for their success


Audiences for FY Assessment Data

• Admissions and Enrollment Management
• First Year Experience (Orientation, Residence Life, FIGs faculty and staff)
• Faculty teaching FY courses; Faculty Development offices
• FY Advisors
• General Education committee
• Retention Task Force
• Academic Deans, Department heads
• Accreditation team
Make NSSE, BCSSE Data Relevant

• **RELEVANCY.** Share data that are most compelling for your audience.
  - What **campus initiatives** (retention, learning community creation, writing center) might benefit from NSSE data? Feed them results!
  - Use **comparison group data** to motivate reflection and action on results — requires careful selection of peer groups
  - Look at your results relative to past performance and absolute standards — can you commit to getting better?
  - What other institutional data can you link to NSSE results?
  - Which results warrant further exploration?

Using NSSE, BCSSE & FSSE to Assess the First Year

• Use standard NSSE, BCSSE and FSSE reports, means and frequencies
• Create topical, short reports (ex: FY writing; FY in Learning Communities); collapse response options
  - Frequently = “often” + “very often”
  - Substantial = “quite a bit” + “very much”
• Simple comparisons, crosstabs, regressions to predict outcomes variables including persistence (add FY retention data to file), and FY satisfaction (Q 13)

Using NSSE, FSSE, BCSSE: What Kinds of Questions?

• “Thermometer” Questions
  How many first-year (FY) students...?
• “How Do We Compare” Questions
  Do we score above or below institutions like us?
• “Comparing Groups” Questions
  Do FY men and FY women do certain things differently?
• “Relationship” Questions
  Are those FY who x more likely to y?
• “Multiple Data Source” Questions
  What do faculty (FSSE) and FY students (NSSE) say about...?
What do first-year students do?

1. What percent of full-time first-year students study, on average, more than 15 hours per week? (Q9a)
   (a) 18%
   (b) 28%
   (c) 34%
   (d) 41%
   (e) 50%
   c. 34% NSSE FY;

Worrisome Gap?
Time spent studying

- First-year students average about 13-14 hrs. per week studying
- 60% of entering students expected to spend more than 15 hrs per week preparing for class
- Entering first-year students EXCEPT to study more than they actually do in college
- Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) data indicate that faculty expect students to spend more than twice that amount preparing (estimated 24-30 hrs. a week for FT)

BCSSE: Pre-College Experiences, Expectations Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement

- BCSSE (pronounced “bessie”)
  - Designed as a companion to NSSE
  - Pilots in 2004-2006; 127 BCSSE schools in 2007!
- Purpose:
  - Measure entering first-year students’ pre-college academic and co-curricular experiences.
  - Expectations and attitudes for participating in educationally purposeful activities during the first college year.

BCSSE Content

- High school academic and co-curricular engagement.
- High school academic preparation (e.g., AP courses).
- 5 scales
  - High School Academic Engagement
  - Expected First-Year Academic Engagement
  - Academic Persistence
  - Academic Preparation
  - Importance of Campus Environment
BCSSE-Faculty Interaction

- What percent of students in high school report that they frequently (often + very often) interact with faculty outside of class?
  a). 15%  b). 26%  c). 35%  d). 42%

*Okay, so what is the relationship between student reports of the extent to which they interact with faculty outside of class in high school and their expectation for doing this in college?*

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**Are We Better or Worse?**

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**Comparing Against Other Institutions**

- Unlike NSSE...
  
  *FSSE and BCSSE do not provide institution-versus-peer-group comparisons*

- But....

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**Grand Frequencies**

- Find FSSE and BCSSE results that can be used as reference points at [www.fsse.iub.edu](http://www.fsse.iub.edu) and [www.bcsse.iub.edu](http://www.bcsse.iub.edu)
Comparing Groups

National Survey of Student Engagement
25

Gender Differences in Engagement by First-year Students (source: NSSE 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Students More Engaged</th>
<th>Male Students More Engaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community service or volunteer work</td>
<td>Tuttend or taught other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours per week preparing for class</td>
<td>Hours per week relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours per week providing care for dependents living with you including parents, children, spouse, etc.</td>
<td>Hours per week participating in co-curricular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations</td>
<td>Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor</td>
<td>Discussed ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language coursework</td>
<td>Number of problem sets (problem-based homework assignments) that take less than an hour to complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in</td>
<td>Research project with faculty member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended an art exhibit, gallery, play, dance, or other theater performance</td>
<td>Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Answering Questions with BCSSE Data

- What do we know about entering students expectations about studying?
- BCSSE asks of entering college students:
  “During the coming school year, about how many hours do you think you will spend in a typical 7-day week preparing for your class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)?”
- Does this differ by gender?

BCSSE - Time Spent Studying per Week at “Institution A”, by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entering Students</th>
<th>Institution A</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>21+ hrs</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>11-20 hrs</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1-10 hrs</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0-5 hrs</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0-5 hrs</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Piloting a Learning Community: Comparing FY in LCs vs. Not in LCs

Comparing FY LC students to No-LC students:
1. Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions.
2. Worked with other students on projects DURING CLASS.
3. Worked with classmates OUTSIDE of class to prepare class assignments.
4. Worked on a paper that required integrating ideas or information from various sources.
5. Discussed ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class.
6. Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions.
7. Coursework emphasized: SYNTHESIZING and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.

Are Those Who ... Also ...?
3/4/2008

NSSE and Humboldt State University

- 2002 NSSE surveyed 169 freshmen
  - 139 returned and 30 withdrawn
- Analysis on individual item level
- Withdrawn students had substantially lower engagement on 12 NSSE items (more than 15-20% difference) – Ex: working with classmates on assignments, participating in community-based project, hours participating in co-curriculars
- A large number of the items reflect attitudes that could be identified in conversations between students and advisors

Predicting Retention at Elon University

- Students’ relationship with peers predictive of retention.
- Elon considering programs/services to foster these relationships, checking published findings & best practice.

Don’t We Have Data from … on That Too?

NSSE - FSSE Data

- “Institution B” Active &Collaborative Learning benchmark scores LOW for FY students; FY report limited gains in working with others; quality of relationship with peers lower than norm
- What percentage of faculty members teaching FY students spend more than half the time lecturing in their course?
  - 23% 36% 45% 58%

Improvement Initiative: Co-curricular Involvement in the First Year

- Interpreting NSSE results for Institution A:
  - “About half of our FY students spend no time on co-curricular activities. This seems really low. What did our students do in high school?”
- Institution reviews CIRP data. Their entering students are lower than the norm. Admissions confirms most new students worked part-time jobs in high school, likely limiting co-curricular involvement.
Using NSSE to Look Forward: The Sophomore Year

“The sophomore year challenges students with many choices and is an exciting time as students solidify their academic plans, decisions about choice of concentration (major), off-campus study, and potential career paths.”

- “Sophomore slump”
- Time of development confusion; search for meaning and direction
- Greater need for programming related to major, career, enriching activities, advising, co-curricular life


Using NSSE to Look Forward: Planning for the Sophomore Year

NSSE FY data to consider for Soph Programming:

- 30% FY NEVER* discussed career plans with a faculty member or advisor
- 65% “don’t plan to” + “aren’t sure” about study abroad
- 88% happy (excellent + good) with advisors (Q12)
- Concern: 45% FY report 0 hours in co-curricular involvement; and the 20% report more than 21 hours per week

NSSE and Accreditation

Using NSSE in Accreditation

- NSSE results are direct indicator of what students put into their education, and provides an indirect measure of student gains
  - EX: Institution claims strong emphasis on active & collaborative learning in FY
  - DATA: 88% FY “frequently” ask questions in class; 78% “frequently” work with peers in class, 80% outside on group projects; FY report substantial gains in working effectively with others
- NSSE results indicate areas for improvement and are “actionable” – thus, appropriate for inclusion in quality improvement plans

Perspectives on NSSE and Accreditation

“NSSE is used more widely today than ever as an effective way to assess what both institutions and students themselves do to foster student success.”

— Belle S. Wheelan, President, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Institutional Example: Wesleyan College, Macon, GA

SACS QEP “Living Liberal Education: A More Intentional First-Year Experience”
BCSSE and NSSE: Institutional Examples of Assessment in the FY of College

Using NSSE Data-- Example 1: Participation in Internships

- **NSSE Results:**
  - Internships: 78% FY “Plan to do” only 45%
    - Seniors report “done”
    - FY & SRs report low gains in “acquiring work related knowledge”
    - Students wanted to participate in internships, but too few did

- **Campus Action:**
  - Used NSSE data to advocate hiring staff dedicated to overseeing this area of growth.
  - Increased campus advertising and focus on the internship program in FY and Sophomore year

Institutional Example: Using BCSSE to Become a Student-Centered Institution

- **Southern Connecticut State University** reviewed BCSSE & NSSE results in strategic planning process to create new FY initiatives, including a pilot FYE program, increased emphasis on recruitment & retention, and improvements to advising.

- **BCSSE results** distributed to **advisers** to help them better understand first-year students’ expectations. FYE instructors shared BCSSE results with students in their FY seminars to actively involve students in the assessment process. Future administrations of BCSSE & NSSE will be used to evaluate these initiatives.

Institutional Example: Focus on desired pedagogy

- **NSSE data** indicated First-year students less involved in service learning than JMU desired.

- **Workshops conducted** to encourage faculty to adapt courses to include service learning

- **Studied change in participation of students and instructional practice**

Truman State University Focus on Advising

Data: NSSE results low for quality advising; internal survey indicated professional advisors rated more highly than faculty advisors; faculty desired to improve advising

- Implemented professional advisors in residence halls to improve access to advisors

- Developed faculty – professional staff advising workshops, newsletter

- VP of Academic Affairs to carry out comprehensive assessment of advising

Used NSSE results to identify areas for increased focus including:

- Need to develop & distribute a campus-wide philosophy
- Create more exposure to diversity in FY & Gen Ed courses
- More professional development for faculty & administrators who work with first-year students
- Creation of common components in the FY curriculum
- Better & more effective communication with FY students
- Promotion of service learning, mentoring, & undergraduate research to foster student-faculty interaction outside classroom

First Year Task Force established priorities including:

- “One Voice” syllabi for first-year courses
- Create reward system for faculty teaching first-year courses
- Develop First-Year Council of faculty & administrators with responsibility for first-year classes or programs
- Assessment of FYE programs and initiatives – in particular, the Student Success Seminar
Examining the FY Experience More In-Depth: Using Quantitative and Qualitative Assessments

- NSSE results can point to areas in need of more in-depth study
  - Focus Groups
  - Interviews with students and faculty
  - Self-studies

Example: Using Focus Groups

- NSSE and CIRP pointed to problems with first-year students' academic engagement, but WTAMU desired more holistic picture of students' experience
- Conducted “Student Engagement Audit Focus Groups” – 2 focus groups per college to discover what faculty and students found educationally engaging and identify classroom experiences that were engaging and disengaging

Example: Focus Groups and Self-Study

- Committee on First-Year Experience (CoFYE) conducted series of focus groups with students & faculty to gain greater insight into their NSSE results
- Student responses suggested areas for improvement in curriculum & faculty development in FY experience
- CoFYE released self-study report, recommendations for other institutions planning a self-study of the first-year experience, thoughts on what Committee had learned about liberal arts education, and an analysis of trends among their first-year students.

Discussion and Comments

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EXTRA Information about BCSSE

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https://websurvey.indiana.edu/bcsse/registration/2008/welcome.cfm
BCSSE Content

• High school academic and co-curricular engagement.
• High school academic preparation (e.g., AP courses).
• 5 scales
  • High School Academic Engagement
  • Expected First-Year Academic Engagement
  • Academic Persistence
  • Academic Preparation
  • Importance of Campus Environment

Answering Questions with BCSSE Data

• To what extent do entering students think they are prepared for college level work?

Academic Preparation
Self-reports of academic preparedness may signal a student’s likelihood of success. This scale measures the degree of confidence students have in their academic abilities. Items include how prepared students are to:
  • Write clearly and effectively
  • Speak clearly and effectively
  • Think critically and analytically
  • Analyze math or quantitative problems
  • Use computing and information technology
  • Work effectively with others
  • Learn effectively on your own

BCSSE and Academic Preparation

% of entering students at “Institution A” that report lacking preparation...

- Analyze math or quantitative problems 49%
- Write clearly and effectively 26%
- Use computing and information technology 24%
- Speak clearly and effectively 21%
- Think critically and analytically 18%
- Learn effectively on your own 15%
- Work effectively with others 8%

What does this suggest for FY practice??

Questions to Answer with BCSSE

• Where are the gaps between our students HS experiences and college expectations and our hopes for their engagement in college?
• To what extent do high school experiences and engagement relate to expectations for the first-year of college?
• To what extent do student expectations for academic engagement and attitudes vary by gender, first-generation status, and high school achievement level?
• When combined with NSSE, BCSSE data can help identify expectation – college experience gap

Thank you For Participating in the Webinar

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