The need to create powerful learning experiences so more students can succeed in college has never been greater.

One approach: Focus on Student Engagement in Effective Educational Practice

Student engagement in a variety of intentionally designed educationally-purposeful activities is necessary to achieve desirable learning outcomes. However, such engagement does not happen by accident. Educational practices must be aligned to guide students toward the intended outcomes, academic and student affairs educators must work collaboratively to optimize the learning environment, and data must be used to inform policy and practice.

\[
\text{Student engagement} = \text{the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities} \quad \text{– practices shown to be related to desired educational outcomes.}
\]

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). NSSE is an annual survey that nearly 1500 participating institutions have administered to assess quality in the undergraduate experience. Based on Chickering & Gamson’s (1987) principles for good practice in undergraduate education, results document the extent to which students, faculty, and institutions engage in empirically proven educational activities.

- Results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time, the quality of their relations with faculty and students, how they feel the institution has contributed to their development, and other educationally meaningful activities and perceptions.
- Items represent empirically confirmed ‘good practices’ and behaviors associated with desired outcomes.

According to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), student engagement is:

- What students do -- time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities
- What institutions do -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things
- Educationally effective institutions channel student energy toward the right activities

\textit{Engaged learning is a gateway to the desired outcomes of college.}

Considerations for NSSE and Advancement: Use NSSE Data to...

- identify areas of engagement that distinguish the campus (perhaps in comparison to other CIC peers, or to public, regional institutions) and provide evidence of educational value.
- combine with other data about the student experience and learning outcomes (CIRP, Noel-Levitz advising, retention data, ACT CAAP, CLA, portfolios, focus groups, employer surveys) to present a comprehensive portrait of the student experience to interested stakeholders.
- make the case for greater investments in distinctive campus experiences, or in resources or activities that advance institutional mission.
- demonstrate the need for resources to enrich important practices in which students are under-engaged, or to support underrepresented students in high-impact practices.
- provide evidence that the investment of resources made a difference for student engagement.
Making the Case for Independent Higher Education

America’s independent colleges and universities are quite effective in enabling students to participate in and succeed in higher education. CIC’s purpose in offering this website is to compile the mounting evidence, organize it in a way that communicates the breadth of this message, and present it in a format that is both easy to understand and easily downloaded for other uses.

Example from Making the Case:

**Student and Faculty Interaction**

**FACT 1 – Student-Faculty Interaction**

Students enrolled in independent colleges and universities are more likely to interact with faculty members than their peers at other institutions. First-year students (38 percent) at non-doctoral private colleges are more likely to collaborate with and participate in activities with faculty members than first-year students at public and doctoral private universities (35 percent and 35 percent, respectively).

![Level of Student-Faculty Interaction](image)

**Note:** The Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark is based on six key questions from the NSSE survey that include: discussed grades or assignments with an instructor; talked about career plans with a faculty member; received prompt written or oral feedback on academic performance from a faculty member; and worked with a faculty member on a research project.

**Source:** National Survey of Student Engagement (2009) report prepared for the Council of Independent Colleges.

**Resources:**


