NOW WHAT?
A Facilitator’s Guide for Using NSSE Data

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WHAT IS NSSE?

- A survey that provides an annual snapshot of student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development.
  - Results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college.
  - NSSE items represent empirically confirmed ‘good practices’; they reflect behaviors associated with desired outcomes of college.

CORE SURVEY: NSSE

- Research based on effective educational practices
- Designed and tested for high validity and reliability
- Relatively stable over time
- High credibility of self-reported data
- Over 275,000 students at 600 institutions annually

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER WITH NSSE RESULTS

- How many hours per week do first-year students spend studying? Do women study more than men?
- What % of seniors work with faculty members on activities other than coursework (activities, committees)? Does this differ by major?
- What % of FY and SR spend 0 hours in co-curricular involvements? Is this more than at peer institutions?
- Do FY students work more frequently with classmates on assignments outside of class than their counterparts at peer institutions?
Questions to answer with NSSE results

- Do NSSE results match our mission?
- Are we meeting our expectations for having a supportive campus environment?
- Since implementing a new multicultural education initiative and expanding diversity programming, has our score on the diversity scale changed?
- Are FY who withdraw from the institution different in terms of engagement than students who are retained?

Sample NSSE results: Frequencies & Mean comparisons

- Frequency Comparisons: About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>NSSEville State</th>
<th>Selected Peers</th>
<th>Carnegie Peers</th>
<th>NSSE 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 Hours = 61% FY vs. 56% seniors compared to 45% and 46% at Select Peer Institutions

Sample NSSE results: Benchmarks

Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)

Benchmark Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Year</th>
<th>NSSEville State</th>
<th>Selected Peers</th>
<th>Carnegie Peers</th>
<th>NSSE 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using NSSE Data

- Problem Identification - results point to things institutions can do something about – almost immediately
- Mobilize Action
- Context Setting – paint a picture of the institution
- Evidence of outcomes & processes
- Refocus conversation about collegiate quality
- Helps inform decision-making
- Provides lexicon for talking about collegiate quality in an understandable, meaningful way

Acting on NSSE Data
Where do I start?

1. Start with your campus concerns, then go to the data
   a. What burning questions do you have about your students?
   b. What are the hot topics on your campus?
   c. How can these data feed you with information on those topics?
2. How are you stacking up in terms of NSSE benchmarks, and educational practices of interest to your campus?

Getting to Know NSSE Data

- Respondent Characteristics
- Comparative data [National, Carnegie, Selected Peers]
- Means Comparison
- Frequency Distribution
- Benchmark Data
- Data File

Know your data

What do these data indicate? What surprised you?

With whom might you share these results?

What might you want to communicate?

What implications do you see for assessment and retention?

How do I deal with skeptics?

Skeptics tend to ask about the following:
- Why are we administering this survey?
- Validity and reliability
- What is the research foundation?
- Others?

“These results aren’t true!”

“This survey is not appropriate for OUR students”

Assessment Strategies

- “The institutional attitude should encourage organizational constituents to ask – about all policies, programs, and procedures – ‘What is our source of evidence for that assertion?’” (Wolfe & Harris, 1994, p. 276).
- “Examine, share, and act on assessment findings” (Palomba & Banta, 1999, p. 14)

Focus Assessment on What Matters in College: Student Engagement

Because individual effort and involvement are the critical determinants of college impact, institutions should focus on the ways they can shape their academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage student engagement.


Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 602
How do I deal with skeptics?

Skeptics tend to ask about the following:
- Why are we administering this survey?
- **Validity and reliability**
- What is the research foundation?
- Others?

Validity of Self-Reported Data

- Self-reported data is valid if five conditions are met:
  1. Information is known to respondents
  2. Questions are phrased clearly & unambiguously
  3. Questions refer to recent activities
  4. Respondents think the questions merit a serious & thoughtful response
  5. Answering the questions does not threaten or embarrass students, violate their privacy, or encourage them to respond in socially-desirable ways
- NSSE was intentionally designed to satisfy these five conditions

Does the instrument yield valid information?

- Survey items...
  - Are clearly worded
  - Are well-defined
  - Have high content and construct validity
  - Relationships exist between items that are consistent with objective measures and other research
  - Responses are normally distributed
  - Patterns of responses are consistent both within and across major fields and institutions

Data Quality

- Random sampling from similar population types
- Response rate
  - 39% in 2006
- Sampling error
  - An estimate of the margin likely to contain your “true” score, for example:
    - If 60% of your students reply “very often” and the sampling error is ±5%, it is likely that the true value is between 55% and 65%
  - More respondents --> smaller sampling error

How do I deal with skeptics?

Skeptics tend to ask about the following:
- Why are we administering this survey?
- Validity and reliability
- **What is the research foundation?**
- Others?

Research Foundation

- Student Engagement: based on the work of George Kuh and C. Robert Pace
- Current exemplars:
  - *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter (Project DEEP)*
  - *Assessing Conditions to Enhance Educational Effectiveness: The Inventory for Student Engagement and Success*
Communicating your Results

- It’s your call on how to do this!
- Sample PowerPoint presentation in binder
- Focus groups
  - Faculty
  - Students
- Facilitator’s guide can help you get organized

Sharing NSSE Results...Stimulating Conversation on Campus

“NSSE is a great way to stimulate reflection and debate about what we do more and less well, and why. For us it’s proving an exciting and enlivening tool for self-reflection and self-improvement.”

-- Michael McPherson, President of The Spencer Foundation (former President of Macalester College)

Communicating Results - INTERNAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Sharing of NSSE 2005 Results</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Chairs</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advisors</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governing Board</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (web site, fact book, etc.)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Communicating Results - EXTERNAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Sharing of NSSE 2005 Results</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation Agencies</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No External Disclosure</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Site</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Agencies</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospective Students</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using your Data

- Benchmarking
- Normative approach
- Criterion approach
- Accreditation Preparation (see the Toolkit in your binder or on our Web site)
- Link to institutional data
- Link to other survey data

NSSE and Retention

Links between NSSE & Retention Goals:

- NSSE is a stimulus for reflection on what the institution does well, & areas for improvement
- Ultimate goal of retention initiative is improved educational experiences (not just retention)
- Identifies what distinguishes institution, where student experience matches espoused mission, & where it falls short
- NSSE results can be connected to institutional data to build retention models
Retention

- What factors affect student retentions?
  - Financial Aid
  - GPA
  - Tinto’s Retention Model
  - Other personal and environmental factors

NSSE and Tinto’s Model of Student Persistence

- Students’ engagement in effective educational practices as an indication of level of academic & social integration (1 a-v; 6a-f; 9a-g etc.)
- Institutional emphasis items suggest institutions’ level of commitment to student success (10 a-g)
- Student intentions to engage in educational activities before graduating (7 a-h)

NSSE and Retention at Elon

- Predicting Retention:
  - What is one of the most effective procedures to forecast retention?
  - Simply ask they plan to return!!
  - 93% of the variance is explained

NSSE and Retention at Elon: Correlated Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students’ relationship with other students</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Commitments: Faculty/Student Interactions</td>
<td>0.250</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals &amp; Intentions: Goal and Institutional Commitment</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Experience: Academic Experience</td>
<td>0.250</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Normative Commitments: Personal Normative Commitment</td>
<td>0.250</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer-Group Interactions: Extracurricular Activities</td>
<td>0.250</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Integration: Academic Experience</td>
<td>0.250</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Integration: Personal Normative Commitment</td>
<td>0.250</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Integration: Social Integration</td>
<td>0.250</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NSSE and Retention at Elon: Logical Questions

- Since a students’ relationship with other students affects retention...
- What programs/services can either be created or enhanced to foster these relationships?
- Has your institution looked at the effect of these programs/services?
- Check published findings
Humboldt State University

- 2002 NSSE surveyed 169 freshmen
  - 139 returned and 30 withdrawn
- Analysis on individual item level
- Withdrawn students had substantially lower engagement
- A large number of the items reflect attitudes that could be identified in conversations between students and advisors

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Georgia Institute of Technology

- 2005 NSSE surveyed 1244 freshmen
  - 1178 returned and 66 withdrawn
- Analysis on NSSE Benchmark using regression model and controlled for GPA and a control factor
- Supportive Campus Environment (SCE) is the only benchmark that significantly contribute to the regression model

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Adelphi University

- Using NSSE results to test Tinto’s retention model
- Create 2 new scales “social integration scale” and “academic integration scale” from NSSE items (alpha = .79 & .72)
- Using NSSE 2000-2003, 585 freshmen surveyed, 508 returned and 77 withdrawn
- Control variables: gender, high school GPA, SAT
- Social and Academic Integration have effects on freshmen retention

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The Facilitator’s Guide in Action

- Simply reporting results may not lead to action
- The Facilitator’s Guide is an instructor’s manual and can help you get organized
- Provides suggestions for leading a workshop or session on understanding, interpreting and taking action on NSSE data
The Facilitator's Guide in Action

- Topic 1: Respondent Characteristics
- Topic 2: Mean Comparisons
- Topic 3: Pattern Analysis
- Topic 4: Frequency Distributions
- Topic 5: Benchmark Comparisons

Copies available: www.nsse.iub.edu/institute

Making Sense of Data: Two Approaches

- Most valued activities
  What is most valued at your institution, in departments, what does the data show?

- Eliminate “Nevers”
  Work on reducing or eliminating reports by students of never doing specific engagement activities.

Making Sense of Data: Benchmarking

Two Approaches:
- Normative - compares your students’ responses to those of students at other colleges and universities.
- Criterion - compares your school’s performance against a predetermined value or level appropriate for your students, given your institutional mission, size, curricular offerings, funding, etc.

Discussion and Questions

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