Assisting Students through the College Choice Process:

Asking the Right Questions

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Today’s Agenda

- Student Engagement
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
- NSSE Benchmarks
- Pocket Guide to Choosing a College
- Discussion on Integrating Student Engagement into College Choice
- Questions are welcome!
Student Engagement

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
Effective Educational Practices

• Student-faculty contact
• Active learning
• Prompt feedback
• Time on task
• High expectations
• Cooperation among students
• Respect for diverse talents and ways of learning

What is NSSE?

- An annual snapshot of student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development
  - Results show how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college
  - *NSSE* survey results measure behaviors associated with desired outcomes of college
  - The time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities is the single best predictor of their learning and personal development
  - Data belongs to the institution
History of NSSE

• 1998 Pew Charitable Trust
  – Better ways to look at schools than US News?
    • Non-Student Measures of Success (i.e. endowment, admit rates, external opinions)
  – Can we look at undergraduate quality?
    • Asking students about their experiences

• Survey is conceptually based on the CSEQ, (still a survey in the NSSE family)
Conceptual Background

- The time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities is the single best predictor of their learning and personal development (Kuh, 2002).

- These things can be measured and then changed by institutions.

- Create a yearly, national snapshot of students in the U.S.

- Schools can foster change if they know what they need to do.
What does NSSE capture?

Student Learning and Development

- Student Reactions to College
- Student Behavior in College
- Institution Actions and Requirements

Student Learning and Development
What does NSSE report?

**Level of Academic Challenge**

- **Active and Collaborative Learning**
- **Student-Faculty Interaction**
- **Enriching Educational Experiences**
- **Supportive Campus Environment**

**Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice**
Since 2000, NSSE has been used by more than 1,300 colleges and universities in all 50 states.
Who’s Participating?

Institutional Type (Carnegie Classifications)

Public – 42%
Private – 58%
Lessons from NSSE

• The single best predictor of student satisfaction with college is the degree to which they perceive the college environment to be supportive of their academic and social needs.

• Effective educational practices measured by NSSE are independent of institutional selectivity.

• Grades, persistence, student satisfaction, and engagement go hand in hand.
Connecting NSSE to Your Work
Counselors play an important role in helping students with career and education planning.

- Academic Development
- Career Development
- Citizenship Development
#3. Give students and parents an understanding of the variety of postsecondary education opportunities and how to prepare for each.

- Arrange field trips for middle school students to visit a variety of postsecondary campuses.
- Encourage high school students to visit postsecondary campuses as part of their postsecondary exploration process.

*from the introduction to the Indiana Student Standards for Guidance (Indiana Department of Education, September 29, 2003)*
How You Can Use NSSE

School counselors and youth-serving professionals can help parents and students become more aware of the importance of asking the right questions about the colleges they visit in person or explore on the Web.
Selecting the right college is one of the most important decisions a student will make. To get a sense of how students will learn, grow and develop at a given institution, they need to look beyond admission test scores and popular media rankings.
Getting Answers Using NSSE

• The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects responses directly from students at hundreds of college and universities across the nation.

• What they say about the quality of their learning experience provides valuable information to high school students and parents trying to make good choices about college.
What NSSE resources can assist in the college choice process?

- A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College
- NSSE-USA Today Initiative
Exploring College Campuses

• **Web**
  – Does the institution participate in NSSE and, if so, does it publish results on its institutional Web site?
  – [NSSE-USA Today Initiative](http://www.nsse.iub.edu)
  – Information may also be requested from the Office of Admissions. For a list of schools that participate in NSSE, see our Web site (www.nsse.iub.edu)

• **Campus Tour**
  – “A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College: Are You Asking the Right Questions”
Sharing the NSSE Pocket Guide with Parents and Students

• Pocket Guide helps prospective students (and parents!) ask the “right” questions

• NSSE results allow students to assess institutional fit

• School counselors can request up to 1000 free pocket guides per year. Colleges and non-profit education organizations can request up to 300 copies free per year.*

*copies are available for a small fee to for-profit education professionals and organizations
“Choosing a College: Are You Asking the Right Questions?”

**Academic Challenge - Demanding intellectual and creative academic work**
- To what degree is studying and spending time on academic work emphasized?
- Do faculty hold students to high standards?
- How much time do students spend on homework each week?
- What type of thinking do assignments require?
- How much writing is expected?
- How much reading is expected?
- Do exams require students to do their best work?

**Active Learning - Intense involvement in learning**
- How often do students discuss ideas in class?
- How often are topics from class discussed outside of the classroom?
- Do students work together on projects – inside and outside of class?
- How often do students make class presentations?
- How many students participate in community-based projects in regular courses?
- How many students apply their classroom learning to real life through internships or off-campus field experiences?
- Do students have opportunities to tutor or teach other students?
- Is a senior year capstone experience required?
Ask the Right Questions About NSSEville State University

Sample answers you might receive if you were to ask questions from the NSSESE pocket guide about NSSEville State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Challenge: demanding intellectual and creative work</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pocket Guide and Survey Questions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do faculty hold students to high standards?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Survey Question 1r</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>What type of thinking do assignments require?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Survey Question 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>What type of thinking do assignments require?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How much writing is expected?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Survey Question 3d</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of papers or reports 20 or more pages, between 5 and 19 pages, fewer than 5 pages.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do exams require students to do their best work?</td>
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<td><strong>Survey Question 5</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Extent to which your examinations during the current school year have challenged you to do your best work</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NSSEville Student Responses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65% of NSSEville Seniors</td>
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<tr>
<td>60% of Seniors National Sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>report that they frequently work harder than they thought they could to meet expectations.</td>
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<td>Seniors report substantial emphasis on the following kinds of thinking:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memorizing facts: NSSEville 54% / National 57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyzing ideas: NSSEville 84% / National 84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizing ideas: NSSEville 71% / National 75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making judgments: NSSEville 70% / National 72%</td>
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<tr>
<td>80% of First Year NSSEville Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>78% of First Year Students National Sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>report writing more than 1 but less than 20 medium length papers during the current school year</td>
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<tr>
<td>84% of First Year NSSEville Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>82% of First Year Students National Sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>80% of NSSEville Seniors</td>
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<tr>
<td>82% of Seniors National Sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>report that their exams provide a strong push to do their best work</td>
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Assessing the Fit with NSSEville State

How does NSSEville State measure up in terms of demanding a high degree of intellectual and creative effort from its students?

– Academic challenge scores suggest NSSEville is an academically rigorous university
– First-year students write at moderate level
– First-year students and seniors receive prompt feedback on their performance
– Not particularly strong in terms of seniors working with faculty on research
Small Group Exercise:
What’s the Best College for Your Student?

Three case studies:

1) Todd – Texas high school student - a high achiever who plans to major in Biology and eventually attend medical school. Wants to find a college that supports him socially and spiritually.

2) Kevin – an average student at a TN high school. Kevin is not especially motivated but plans to go to college because his parents want him to get a bachelor’s degree. He is on the football team but will probably not get an athletic scholarship. He would like to find a college with programs of study that incorporate his love of sports.

3) Rene – student from large urban VA high school. Wants to study Romance Languages. Is looking for a school that offers study abroad, encourages a diverse student population, and is close to home.
Contact Information

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