Assessing Student Engagement with an Updated NSSE: New Possibilities

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Audience Survey
• Are you in NSSE 2013?
• Do you have NSSE results from past years?
• Who has worked with their NSSE results?
• What questions do you have about using NSSE in your assessment & improvement work?

Agenda
• Current Context
• Engagement Findings
• Data for assessment & persistence
• Updated NSSE
• Discussion and Questions

College Attainment Report: The Challenge is Urgent
• ALL colleges and universities must marshal the resources to make completion a priority
• Change campus culture to boost student success
  – Create student-centered culture
  – Improve the academic experience
• Institutions must take steps to increase the chances that students will be successful, and ensure that students are active, engaged participants

The Challenge for Student Affairs:
To create energy in our campus systems to create and sustain processes of regular and systematic assessment of student outcomes for continuous improvement.

- Susan Komives, 2006, Reflections on Outcomes and Assessment: Applying the CAS Process

Four Principles For Assessment & Accountability in Student Affairs
1. Make SA role in promotion of student learning plain – be explicit about learning outcomes you seek to foster
2. Assess extent to which students are experiencing practices associated with and making gains on specific learning outcomes
3. Motivation for assessment should come from desire to fully understand strengths & shortcomings of student experience, and then to make changes where necessary
4. It’s right to commit to evidence-based practice, to be accountable, and to improve
What We Know About Student Success:

• Student engagement in intentionally designed educationally purposeful activities is necessary to achieve desirable learning outcomes.
• Institutions need information about students' experiences to deploy resources appropriately and encourage success behaviors.

What is NSSE?

NSSE annually gathers valid, reliable information on the extent to which First Year & Senior students are exposed to proven educational practices that correspond to desirable learning outcomes.
  – Results provide estimates of how students spend their time and what they gain
  – NSSE items represent empirically confirmed ‘good practices’; behaviors associated with student learning and development

What is Student Engagement?

Student engagement is the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities – practices shown to be related to desired educational outcomes.

Integrating NSSE and Outcomes Assessment to Inform Student Affairs Practice

• Student engagement is a rich concept to base evidence-driven practice (possible with/without NSSE results)
• Student engagement concept, research, plus campus data provide a stronger basis for documenting and improving learning processes and outcomes

What Have We Learned From NSSE 2000-2012?

• The more students are engaged, the more likely they are to persist and succeed
• Some practices are unusually effective – “High-Impact” HIPs - doing research with faculty, service-learning, positively related to deep approaches to learning
• Upward institution-level trends in engagement over time

Refreshing Engagement: NSSE at 13

Summarize 13 years of lessons...
• Wabash National Study findings: positive connections between students’ experiences, learning outcomes (critical thinking, problem solving, intercultural effectiveness, etc.) and development
• Engagement had stronger effects on first-year grades and persistence for underprepared and historically underserved students — the very populations most in need of improved outcomes
### Key Questions Answered: Do Students Invest Enough Time in their Studies?

- **Average FY spends 15 hrs per week**
  - Women spent 1 hr. more than men
  - First-generation devoted 1 hr. less per week
  - Major differences – Engineering 5 hrs. more

- **Faculty no longer hold to 2 hrs. for every 1 in class**
  - FSSE results show time faculty expect is only slightly higher than what students report

### Conditions of Educationally Effective Institutions

1. “Living” Mission & “Lived” Educational Philosophy
2. Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning
3. Environments Adapted for Educational Enrichment
4. Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success
5. Improvement-Oriented Ethos
6. Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality

### Figure 1. Trends in First-Year Active & Collaborative Learning at Four Institutions

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- **Private Baccalaureate**
- **Public Master's**
- **Public Research**
- **Public Research**

### Most Importantly, NSSE is a Tool for Campus Assessment & Improvement Efforts

- **Student engagement data provide a strong basis for documenting and improving learning processes and outcomes on campus!**
- **NSSE results help campuses focus on what matters for educational quality**

### Institutional Improvement Over Time!

Positive trends outnumber negative ones, by margin of 7:1

### Annual Results 2011: Fostering Engagement Campuswide

- **Featured Assessment stories within campus programs & units**
  - Service-Learning
  - Residence Life
  - Career Services
  - Greek Life
  - Transfer Students
Residence Life Example
FY students who live on-campus differed from their peers
• Living on-campus = more serious conversations with students different in terms of religion, politics, and personal values
• 76% of students living on campus said institution substantially emphasized attending campus events & activities, vs. 59% of off-campus
• On-campus residents believed their institution provided more support to thrive socially

Example of Mission Effectiveness: Are students & faculty experiencing our service-learning mission?
• NSSE results show that nearly 50% of FY and 75% of Seniors do service-learning or community service – significantly more than comparable peer institutions
• Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) results show 65% faculty teaching FY think “service-learning” is “important” and 42% do this in their courses.
• Data provide evidence of service-learning mission!

Percent Midwest U (MWU) Seniors “Done”
High Impact Practices: Service-Learning, Undergraduate Research, Internship

NSSE Use in Persistence
• Concern about retention rates & education quality
• Task force retreat to review data
• Low NSSE results in Supportive Campus Environment suggested area for improvement
  – Developed unified academic support center for tutoring & supplemental instruction
  – Immediate response to students at academic risk
• Tracking NSSE results post-implementation
Why Update Now? Purpose

- We know more about what matters to student success, institutional improvement efforts, and properties of the NSSE survey itself
- NSSE must stay relevant to current issues
- Starting in 2005, we kept the survey largely unchanged with the aim of rolling out major updates at longer-term intervals

Why Update Now? Goals

- Maintain core purpose of assessing student engagement in effective educational practices to inform improvement
- Stay current with trends in higher education
- Improve clarity, consistency, and applicability of survey
- Improve properties of existing measures
- Incorporate new measures relevant to effective teaching and learning

How did the NSSE items change?

- About a quarter of NSSE items are new, about the same proportion remained unchanged.
- Of the half that changed, an equal number were modified in major or minor ways.
- Deleted items maintained the overall length.

New Content in 2013

- Learning Strategies
  - *How often have you...*
    - Identified key information from reading assignments
    - Reviewed your notes after class
    - Summarized what you learned in class or from course materials

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<td>How often... Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in</td>
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<td>How often... Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor</td>
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<td>How often... Talked about career plans with faculty member or advisor</td>
<td>How often... Connected your learning to societal problems or issues</td>
<td>New</td>
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<tr>
<td>How often... Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)</td>
<td>How often... Explained course material to one or more students</td>
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How can you track item changes?

- Item by Item Comparisons of NSSE 2012 and NSSE 2013:
  - nsse.iub.edu/pdf/NSSE 2012-2013 Item Comparisons.pdf

The Former NSSE Benchmarks are being Retired!

- Level of Academic Challenge
  - Time, effort, and coursework emphasis on intellectually challenging
- Active and Collaborative Learning
  - Interacting with faculty, peers in and out of the classroom
- Enriching Educational Experiences
  - Completing activities that augment curriculum
- Supportive Campus Environment
  - Perceptions of support for academic and nonacademic success

Engagement Indicators and High-Impact Practices

Reporting 10 measures plus individual high-impact practices provides more specificity and more actionability

NSSE 2013 Engagement Indicators

- Higher-Order Learning
- Reflective & Integrative Learning
- Learning Strategies
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Collaborative Learning
- Discussions with Diverse Others
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Teaching Practices
- Quality of Interactions
- Supportive Environment

High-Impact Practices

- Learning Community, Capstone, Study Abroad, Service-Learning, Research w/Fac., Internship

Getting Acquainted with Updated NSSE

1. Review Engagement Indicators (EIs)
2. Which measure most relates to your unit?
3. Which EIs suggest an opportunity for partnership on campus?

What Use Do you see for the “Discussions with Diverse Others” Measure?

Discussions with Diverse Others

During the current school year, how often have you had discussions with people from the following groups:

- People from a race or ethnicity other than your own
- People from an economic background other than your own
- People with religious beliefs other than your own
- People with political views other than your own
What Use Do You See for the Discussions with Diverse Others Items?

- Assess institutional commitment to diverse learning experiences
- Assess multicultural affairs, diversity component in curriculum,
- Where do diverse discussion levels vary? by student characteristics? Majors? Housing status...

Relationship Between Quality of Interactions Measure and Persistence

Quality of Interactions
- Indicate the quality of your interactions with the following people at your institution:
  - Students
  - Academic Advisors
  - Faculty
  - Student services staff (career services, student activities, housing, etc.)
  - Other administrative staff and offices (Registrar, financial aid, etc.)

For further analysis...Explore relationship between Quality of interaction and students’ rating of their “entire educational experience” & “start over” items

Additional New Content

- Topical modules:
  - Academic advising
  - Civic engagement
  - Transferable skills
  - Writing
  - Technology
  - Experiences with diversity

- Additional modules will be developed over time — send us your great ideas!

Opportunities for Partnership

Who might be interested?
- Teaching practices?
  - Learning strategies?

- Expanded content on diverse interactions, leadership, likely to be of interest to student affairs, accreditation committees, academic departments
- How might you generate interest in new results? Or, solicit interest of relevant staff and units?

What will remain the same?

- Meaningful, actionable data about educational quality
- Updated resources (Accreditation Toolkits, Facilitators Guide)
- Updated FSSE & BCSSE
- Customizable comparison groups
- What do you most want to see retained?
- What NSSE data, report, or feature is most important to you and your campus?

How might you prepare???

- Re-familiarize yourself with the NSSE data you already have
  - What was most valued (items, benchmark scores, multi-year data etc.) and how will this be affected?

How might you prepare???

• Find new partners! NSSE has many new measures and features - results cross divisions, units, are campuswide
  • Meet with IR
  • Form partnerships with faculty/academic units, to explore common areas of interest
  • Link data to processes - accreditation, annual reports...

What other questions do you have?

Ideas, feedback, and questions:

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