An Introduction to the National Survey of Student Engagement

AIR Forum
Atlanta, GA
June 2, 2009

Agenda
- What questions do you have about NSSE?
- NSSE in the current context: Assessment, Accountability and Transparency
- NSSE overview
- Three core surveys
- Timeline and Administration
- Deliverables
- Questions

NSSE in the Current Context: Assessment, Accountability & Transparency
- Greater transparency - NSSE included in Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA); Initiative with USA Today; Pocket Guide Report can be shared with prospective students
- Assessment to inform improvements in teaching and learning - NSSE results immediately actionable; combine NSSE with institutional data, FSSE, and other measures of student learning to render complete picture of quality of student learning
- Accountability - NSSE items map to Regional and Specialized accreditation standards; use in quality improvement plans

What is NSSE?
- NSSE annually gathers valid, reliable information on the extent to which students engage in and are exposed to proven educational practices that correspond to desirable learning outcomes.
  - Results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college.
  - NSSE items represent empirically confirmed ‘good practices’, reflect behaviors associated with student learning and development.

What is NSSE?
- Student Engagement
  - The time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities is the single best predictor of their learning and personal development.

NSSE Overview
- The “NSSElings”
  - The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (2003)
  - The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (2004)
- Additional Surveys
  - The Law Student Survey of Student Engagement
  - The College Student Experiences Questionnaire
  - The College Student Expectations Questionnaire
  - The High School Survey of Student Engagement*
  - The Community College Survey of Student Engagement*

*Not administered by the Center for Postsecondary Research
Using NSSE Results

- Diagnostic purpose - to help institutions look holistically at undergraduate experience
- Help pinpoint aspects not in line with mission, or what institution expects
- Identify weaknesses and strengths in educational program
- Help institutions know what to focus on to improve student learning and success

Core Surveys: 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 772 institutions annually

Core Surveys: FSSE

- Faculty perceptions of how often their students engage in different activities
- Importance faculty place on various areas of learning and development
- Nature and frequency of interactions faculty have with students
- How faculty members organize class time

NSSE 2010

- Invitation in your AIR Forum Packet
- Registration open now
- Register by Sept. 17, 2009
- New in 2010 - Census (FY & SR) for all web-based administrations

NSSE Survey Item Organization

- Q.1 - Academic activities
- Q.2 - Learning mental activities
- Q.3 - Reading & writing
- Q.4 - Homework
- Q.5 - Academic challenge
- Q.6 - Co-curricular activities
- Q.7 - Enriching educational experiences
- Q.8 - Campus relationship
- Q.9 - Time usage
- Q.10 - Institutional emphasis
- Q.11 - Gains
- Q.12-14 - Satisfaction

FSSE Instrument: Survey Options

- Course-based (default)
  - Responds to questions based on one particular undergraduate course section during taught during the current academic year
- Typical-student
  - Responds to questions based on the typical first-year student or senior taught during the current academic year
Core Surveys: Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement - BCSSE

- Designed for entering first-year students as a companion to NSSE
- Measures:
  - pre-college academic and co-curricular experiences
  - expectations for educationally purposeful activities during college

BCSSE Instrument

- Launch in 2007 after three pilots
  - 2005-2006 pilots with 80 institutions, 39,986 students
  - 2007 launch – 127 institutions, 67,040 students
- Study effect of students’ background on NSSE scores
- Use to examine gap between expectations and engagement
- Registration now open

NSSE Timelines (15 mos.)

- May – June 2009
  - NSSE/FSSE registration opens
- September
  - NSSE/FSSE registration deadline
  - NSSE materials due two weeks after registration confirmation
- October
  - NSSE pop. files, oversample, and consortium decisions due
- December
  - FSSE materials and pop. files due
- Mid-January early February 2010
  - NSSE administrations open
  - BCSSE registration begins
- Mid-March early April
  - FSSE administration opens
- June
  - NSSE & FSSE administrations close
  - BCSSE administration begins at many campuses
- August
  - Institutional Reports sent, including raw data and printed reports for NSSE, FSSE, and the prior summer’s BCSSE
  - BCSSE administration continues
- September
  - BCSSE data and reports sent to participating institutions

NSSE Administration

- Administration Mode
  - Paper: We need accurate mailing addresses, letterhead, signatures
  - Web+: 4x the paper sample, we need e-mail and mailing addresses
  - Web: 5x the paper sample, we need e-mail addresses**
- ** New in 2010 – Census for Web-based administrations

NSSE Administration

- Sample Size
  - Numbers are based on mode and school size
  - Oversampling can increase sample size or ensure adequate representation of populations of interest

NSSE Administration

- Things that we need from you: contact persons
  - Campus Project Manager (required)
    - Primary contact; responsible for preparing all survey materials and coordinating promotional efforts
  - Campus Administrative Contact (required)
    - Secondary NSSE contact; responsibilities vary
  - Auxiliary Contact (optional)
    - Alternate contact
  - IT Contact (strongly recommended)
    - Provides technical support; especially important to assist in achieving highest response rates possible in web administration modes
NSSE Administration

- Things for you to consider
  - Broad buy-in from others at your institution
  - Partner with colleagues across campus to spread word of mouth
  - Web-mode institutions:
    - Good partnership with IT department
  - Consortium

NSSE Deliverables

- User Resources
  - Using NSSE Data
  - Accreditation Toolkit
  - Data Facilitator’s Guide

- Institutional Report (August)
- Comparison Reports
  - Respondent characteristics (Demographic Information)
  - Means and Frequencies (item averages and response percentages)
  - Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice
  - Multi-year BM report
- Additional Reports (If Applicable)
  - FSSE Report
  - BCSSE Combined Report
  - Data file (student-identified)

NSSE Reports: Respondent Characteristics Table

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NSSE Reports: Frequency Distribution

- Frequency Distributions - for a focused look at your students (% that experienced activity)
- Unweighted counts
- Weighted percentages (gender, enrollment status, institution size)
- Engagement items, background items, system/consortium items

Administration: Increasing Student Participation

- Customized invites
  - Variety of templates with customized options
- Mode - Paper, Web, Web+
- Announcements & Follow-ups (up to 5 contacts)
- Promotion - Tips to boost response rates
  - http://nsse.iub.edu/html/tips.cfm

Using NSSE, FSSE, BCSSE: What Kinds of Questions Can Be Explored?

- “Thermometer” Questions
  - How many (or what %) students/faculty...
- “How Do We Compare” Questions
  - Do we score above or below institutions like us?
- “Comparing Groups” Questions
  - Do X and Y do certain things differently on our campus?
- “Relationship” Questions
  - Are those who x more likely to y?
- “Multiple Data Source” Questions
  - What do faculty and students say about...?
**NSSE Reports: Mean Comparison Reports**

- Comparison and effect size information
- How similar are our students to those at our comparison groups on “Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments?” What is the magnitude of the difference?

**Benchmark Report**

- **Level of Academic Challenge**
- **Active & Collaborative Learning**
- **Student Faculty Interaction**
- **Supportive Campus Environment**
- **Enriching Educational Experiences**

**Multiyear Benchmark Report**

- NEW in 2008
- First-year and senior benchmark scores charted for all years of participation
- NSSE changes (weight, item changes, etc.) accounted for
- Detailed statistics (standard errors, confidence intervals, etc.)
- See our new Multi-Year Data Analysis Guide

**Beyond Reports**

- Doing your own within-institution analyses using NSSE resources
  - SPSS data
  - Codebooks
  - Syntax library
- Additional tools and services from NSSE
  - Special analyses
  - Voluntary System of Accountability
  - Accreditation Toolkits (regional and specialized)
  - Multi-year Data Guide
  - How to conduct Interviews & Focus groups

**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
NSSE: Only one step in assessment process

**Step #1: Survey Data**
- Survey students
- Review results
- Develop preliminary list of strengths and opportunities for improvement

**Step #2: Feedback**
- Share results with faculty, administrators & students
- Identify themes & priorities
- Design action plan

**Step #3: Action Plan**
- Finalize plan
- Share plan with appropriate groups
- Link to strategic plan
- Implement action

**Step #4: Follow-up**
- Use results as benchmarks to monitor progress
- Faculty & student focus groups

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NSSE in your assessment plan

- How often should I administer NSSE?
  - Every Year: Gives you a snapshot of each class
  - Every Three Years: Gives you a picture of a cohort at the beginning and the end of their college experiences
  - Every Five Years: Works well with most accreditation cycles (Accreditation and Interim Reports)
- Other factors to consider
  - Establishing a baseline
  - Costs (using all core surveys)
  - Additional Surveys/Sources of Data
  - Time to take absorb results, make changes

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Institutional Example

- Incorporated NSSE results from students majoring in education into self-study prepared for NCATE teacher education certification
- Student affairs staff in health services and counseling use NSSE data to guide outreach programming
- Include NSSE results in proposals for external funding, such as Title III grants for expanding institutional capacity to serve low-income students

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Institutional Example

Disseminating NSSE Data at Doane:
- Executive summary of scores prepared for president and vice-presidents
- Report aligning NSSE benchmarks and survey items with long-range strategic plan sent to Board of Trustees, presented to full-faculty, and posted on campus Web site
- Student learning report examining student reading experiences based on NSSE scores that contribute to student performance data. To be presented to faculty, included in general assessment report, and posted on Web site.

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Institutional Example: Improving teaching & learning

- 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

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Recent Enhancements

- No changes to survey content (2004-2010)
- Census (FY & SR) for Web-based administrations
- 3 customized comparison groups
- Electronic report delivery & archive
- Executive Snapshot report
- Multi-Year Benchmark Report
- Pocket Guide report
- Weighting changes
- New Carnegie classifications
- Benchmarks delivered in August
Discussion and Questions

Jillian Kinzie
Associate Director, NSSE Institute

Bob Gonyea
Associate Director, NSSE

Web site: www.nsse.iub.edu
E-mail: nsse@indiana.edu

Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research
1900 East 10th Street
Eigmann Hall, Suite 419
Bloomington, IN 47406-7512
Ph: 812-856-5824    Fax: 812-856-5150