Using NSSE Data to Align Higher Education and Fraternity/Sorority Community Priorities

Becky Druetzler
Butler University

Dan Bureau
Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research
Voluntary System of Accountability

- Developed through a partnership between the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), the VSA is designed to help institutions meet the following objectives:

  - Demonstrate accountability and stewardship to the public
  - Measure educational outcomes to identify effective educational practice
  - Assemble information that is accessible, understandable, and comparable
Principles for Good Practice in Student Affairs
(Blimling & Whitt, 1999)

› Engage students in active learning
› Help students build coherent values and ethical standards
› Set high expectations for learning
› **Use systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance**
› Use resources effectively to help achieve goals
› Forge partnerships that advance learning
› Build supportive and inclusive communities
Assessment in Fraternal Movement

- Upcraft and Schuh
- CAS Standards
- CSCF Greek Experience Survey
- AFA EBI Survey
  - Alignment with Learning Reconsidered and CAS Standards
- AFA Research
- National Initiatives
Assessment Challenges in Student Affairs

- Documenting contributions to student learning
- Creating enriching opportunities aligned with educational mission and desired outcomes
- Partnering with campus and community constituents
- Attention to assessment in preparation programs appears to be increasing but to what extent are students envisioning themselves as a part of the assessment picture?
- Ensuring the persons conducting assessment have the awareness, skills and knowledge to conduct high quality assessment
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What is NSSE and What Does it Measure?

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What Really 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.

Two Components of 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
**What is NSSE?**

- A survey that provides an annual snapshot of student engagement 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

Designed and tested for high validity and reliability

High credibility of self-reported data

Over 750 institutions this past year; in 2007 with about 650 schools there were 325,000 respondents
Benchmarks

The benchmarks are based on 42 key questions from the NSSE survey that capture many vital aspects of the student experience. These student behaviors and institutional features are some of the more powerful contributors to learning and personal development.

- Level of Academic Challenge
- Active and Collaborative Learning
- Student Faculty Interaction
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Supportive Campus Environment
NSSE Results

- Are **diagnostic**; 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 programs
- Help institutions know what to **focus on to improve** student learning and success
Student Affairs Questions that NSSE Can Answer

Do NSSE results match our mission?

Start with your campus concerns, then go to the data

- What burning questions do you have about your students?
- What are the hot topics on your campus?
- How can these data feed you with information on those topics?

How are you stacking up in terms of NSSE benchmarks, and educational practices of interest to your campus?
Two Basic Approaches

✓ Determine most valued activities

What is most valued at your institution, in departments, what does the data show? Does the results for F/S align well?

✓ Address challenges

Work on reducing or eliminating reports by students of *never* doing specific engagement activities
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How NSSE Can Support Fraternity and Sorority Affairs Assessment – Butler

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Butler University Greek Community

- Fall – 26% undergraduate population
  Spring – 35% undergraduate population
- 98% retention, FR to SO
- Greek GPAs consistently exceed non-affiliated
  (All-Sorority 3.420, All-Fraternity 3.205  Spr. ‘08)
- 25,000+ service hours contributed,
  $90,000+ philanthropy dollars raised
- 68% of non-Greek student organizations have a
  fraternity/sorority member holding an executive office
- Greek 6-yr. graduation rate 89.6 % vs. 70% for all undergraduate students
Butler Greek Assessment with NSSE: Where To Start?

Questions:

Is the overall collegiate experience of our fraternity and sorority members significantly different from that of unaffiliated students?

*Is there a value-added component provided through Greek involvement?*

Regarding NSSE, how do members of the Greek community stack up in terms of educational practices of interest to the university?
Partnering with Institutional Research

- Initial meeting
  - Parties involved
  - What can we do?
  - Database to be included
    ★ Special considerations for the campus and/or Greek community
  - Time period to be analyzed
  - Performing the analysis
  - Processing results
Database Preparation

- Student ID number
- Seniors only
- General fraternity/sorority members of current active status
  - How do we know this?
- Exclude Pharmacy and PA degree candidates
  - Exclude respondents who did not specify major
Which survey items would be of most interest to a campus fraternity/sorority community?

Items of statistical significance, Greeks score higher

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<tr>
<td>Community service or volunteer work</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>96%</td>
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<td>Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2.97</td>
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<td>Hours spent participating in co-curricular activities (organizations,</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>3.24</td>
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<td>publications, student government, social fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate sports, etc.)</td>
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<td>Quality: Your relationships with other students</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>6.22</td>
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- Items of statistical significance, Greeks score lower

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<td>Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.36</td>
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<td>Hours spent commuting to class (driving, walking, etc.)</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.96</td>
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<td>Hours spent providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.14</td>
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Partnering with Institutional Research

Discussion of the Analysis

- Importance of multiple years of data
- What does this tell us about the Greek community?
- Items of significance vs. items of interest
  - What’s missing?

- Comparison groups (institutional)
- Next steps
CHALLENGES!
(or, what we wish we’d thought of first)

- Researcher expertise
- Data analysis performed by staff not at initial meeting
- No agreement on project timeline
  - Clear understanding of what’s realistic
- Staff relocation
- Errors on both sides
Using NSSE Data in Fraternity and Sorority Affairs

Partnering with Institutional Research and Faculty in Using NSSE Data

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Partnering with Institutional Research and Faculty

- Have a research agenda - Review NSSE instrument to help shape questions
  - What will you do with the data?
  - How will you answer the still burning questions
- Contact the NSSE Campus Project Manager
- Ask about the group variable option
- Determine how the data can be used
- Provide database to include in population file
- Arrange meeting with campus project manager to run reports and review data
- Use the data to shape practice
Taking this home

- Review the NSSE instrument
- Consider what we’ve shared today
- What questions emerge for you?
  - Campus Context
  - Issues in your F/S Community