Acting Intentionally: Using NSSE to Guide Student Affairs Action

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Tell Us About How You Interact with NSSE Data

Which of the following statements best describes your use and familiarity with NSSE data on your campus?

a) I am chiefly responsible for NSSE administration and data analysis on my campus
b) I have reviewed the NSSE data results for my school
c) I have seen the NSSE data for my campus one time
d) I have never seen the NSSE data for my campus
Learning Outcomes

As a result of participation in this workshop, participants will:

- Identify NSSE as a tool to support student affairs assessment efforts;
- Create strategies to use the NSSE instrument to answer potential questions regarding student engagement and learning outcomes;
- Develop a plan to work with stakeholders to use NSSE data.
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.

Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) How College Affects Students, p. 602
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.
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
Getting to Know NSSE Data

- Respondent Characteristics
- Comparative data [National, Carnegie, Selected Peers]
  - Means Comparison
  - Frequency Distribution
  - Benchmark Data
- Pocket Guide Report
- Data File
Helpful Tools

› NSSE Facilitator’s Guide
› What Student Affairs Can Do
› Working with Campus Partners
› Innovative Use of NSSE Data in Student Affairs
Using NSSE to Assess Engagement in Student Affairs

Evidence about quality of student experience

- Indicators at item level
  - Institutional emphasis on attending campus events (10 f)
- Hours spent on co-curricular activities (9d)
- Scales - Diversity Experiences (1 e, u, v);
- Compare differences by gender, race-ethnicity, students in learning communities, place of residence, work on/off campus, fraternity/sorority membership by hours of co-curricular involvement etc.
Student Affairs Questions that NSSE Can Answer

- Do NSSE results match our division’s 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 FYs who withdraw from the institution different in terms of engagement than students who are retained?
student Affairs Assessment with NSSE: Where To 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?
NSSE Findings & Student Affairs

- Functional Areas
  - Admissions and Retention Initiatives
  - First Year Programs/Orientation
  - Fraternity and Sorority Life
  - Multicultural programs
  - Residential Life
  - Student Activities
Career Services/Advising  
Case Study - Items of Interest

About how often have you ...
- 10. ‘Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor’ [Very Often, Often, Sometimes, Never]

Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution...
- 7a. Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment’ [Done, plan to do, Do not plan to do, Have not decided]

To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in...
- 11b. ‘Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills’ [Very much, Quite a bit, Some, Very much]

12. Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution? [Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor]
FY taskforce, a joint-committee of academic & student affairs staff, established to review first-year students’ success

- Results from NSSE, YFCY, CIRP surveys used to gauge students’ progress.
- Taskforce examines FY experience, reviews program evaluations, and outcomes-based assessments.
  - Northern Arizona University
Student Success

• Interviews completed with academic department chairs and student affairs units to uncover what activities they are engaged in to bolster student success.

• Interviews were organized around five benchmark items from the NSSE survey. This was done to learn what types of specific activities departments and units do that might affect NSSE responses and to gauge awareness of NSSE items by campus faculty and staff.
  • University of Wisconsin Stevens Point

• Coupled NSSE results with CIRP and internal surveys data to better understand incoming students
  • Bellarmine University
Examined seniors over four years of NSSE administration to examine fraternity and sorority members vs. non-members

• Butler University
Pluralism and Inclusion

- Used NSSE results regarding racial and ethnic diversity to inform strategic initiatives
  - University of Wisconsin Platteville.

- Career Services used NSSE data to recruit more advisors of color and developed a mentoring program for students

- Used NSSE data to inform curriculum development for workshops relative to diversity
  - University of North Carolina Wilmington
Residence Life

- Linked NSSE and EBI data to discover value of peer interaction; finding informed Residence Life staff training to emphasize approaches to fostering student interaction
  - Washington State University

- Residence Life used results of NSSE oversample to assess program success with learning communities
  - Northern Arizona University
Supporting Student Affairs Staffing

- Used NSSE data to support hiring staff to oversee co-curricular transcript initiative, and increased assessment within the Division
  - *Bellarmine University*

- Disseminates results to Student Affairs in short, accessible formats
  - *Northern Arizona University*
Strategic Planning

- Formed NSSE related strategic benchmarks for Student Affairs
  - *Washington State University*

- Focused on improving performance on NSSE benchmark - Supportive Campus Environment as one goal of strategic plan
  - *Bellarmine University*
Partnering with Institutional Research and Faculty

- Have a research agenda - Review NSSE instrument to help shape 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
Focus Groups & Interviews Can Help:

- Determine or verify how students on your campus interpret items
- Provide a deeper understanding of differences in the responses of particular groups of students (i.e., commuter students, students in first-year experience)
- Enhance understanding of results to increase the likelihood that changes based on survey results would prove effective
For More Information...

- Email: dabureau@indiana.edu, shawmd@indiana.edu

- NSSE website: www.nsse.iub.edu

Copies of papers and presentations as well as annual reports and other information are available through the websites