



National Survey of Student Engagement

The College Student Report

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Most College Students Satisfied But Transfer Students Less Engaged

Findings from a national survey released today show that the vast majority of undergraduate students are satisfied with their college experience. About 87 percent rate their overall experience as “good” or “excellent” and 80 percent would probably go to the same institution if they had it to do over. Transfer students, though, are generally less engaged across the board in learning activities, a troubling finding inasmuch as two-fifths of all seniors started college somewhere other than the school from which they will graduate.

Student engagement represents the combination of the effort students devote to educationally sound activities and what colleges do to prompt students to take advantage of these activities. Many studies show that engagement is a strong predictor of how well a student learns. The more engaged students are in college, the more likely they are to develop the habits of the mind that are key to success after college including participating in civic affairs.

The 2002 report from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is based on information from 135,000 first-year and senior students at 613 different four-year colleges and universities. The NSSE study, titled *From Promise to Progress: How Colleges and Universities Are Using Student Engagement Results to Improve Collegiate Quality*, gives schools an idea of how well students are learning and what they are putting into and getting out of their undergraduate experience.

Carol Geary Schneider, president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, said that “NSSE findings can help campuses explore the connections between their expectations for student achievement and what students actually experience.”

The survey results provide comparative standards for determining how effectively colleges are contributing to learning. Five benchmarks are measured: 1) level of academic challenge, 2) active and collaborative learning, 3) student-faculty interaction, 4) enriching educational experiences, and 5) supportive campus environment.

According to the NSSE director, Indiana University Bloomington professor George D. Kuh, “prospective students and their parents can better determine a school’s quality and fit by asking the kinds of questions NSSE asks: How many students work with faculty members on research and other activities? How much reading and writing is required? How often do students interact with other

students who are from different backgrounds and cultures? How good is the academic advising?”

Some of the key findings from the 2002 report are:

- Experiences with diversity heighten student engagement and overall satisfaction with college.
- International students are more engaged overall than American students.
- Women majoring in science, engineering and math study more and interact more with faculty members than students in other majors.
- Participating in a learning community enhances the overall quality of the educational experience.
- Sixty two percent of first-year students and forty seven percent of seniors never worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework.
- Forty one percent of first-year students and twenty six percent of seniors never discussed ideas from their reading or classes with faculty members outside of class.
- About two fifths of all students spend ten or fewer hours per week preparing for class, far less time than what faculty members say is needed.

Schools of all types are using student engagement results to improve the quality of the undergraduate experience. Peter Smith, the president of California State University-Monterey Bay, calls NSSE “an invaluable resource. It sheds light on our strengths while pointing to areas where improvement is needed.”

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The NSSE 2002 Report, “*From Promise to Progress: How Colleges and Universities Are Using Student Engagement Results to Improve Collegiate Quality*,” may be obtained for \$20 from the National Survey of Student Engagement, Ashton Aley Hall, Suite 102, Indiana University, Bloomington IN 47405-7510. The NSSE Website: www.iub.edu/~nsse.