Accreditation Toolkits

One of the most common institutional uses of NSSE data is for accreditation. NSSE results can be used in all components of the accreditation process: self-studies, quality improvement initiatives, discussions during visits by the team of peer evaluators, and in response to a decision by an accrediting body requesting improvement or additional evidence of educational effectiveness. The NSSE Accreditation Toolkits include guidelines that suggest ways to map specific items from the NSSE instrument to regional accreditation standards, timelines to help institutions decide when and how often to collect student engagement data, and examples of how other institutions in each region have used NSSE in their accreditation efforts.

Toolkit Updates

We have completed a major update to regional and specialized toolkits to correspond with the updated NSSE survey. In addition, the HLC New Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components went into effect for all institutions in 2013. Both the Standard and Open Pathway options as well as the AQIP process require institutions to meet this set of Core Component standards. Updated NSSE 2013 survey items have been aligned with the new Core Components in the HLC–NCA toolkit. The updated survey content—including new measures of quantitative reasoning, effective teaching practices, and learning strategies—provides additional opportunities to document and consider evidence for quality assurance and improvement.

Regional Accreditation Toolkits

The following regional toolkits are available:

- Higher Learning Commission–North Central Association (HLC–NCA)
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

Specialized Accreditation Toolkits

Specialized Accreditation Toolkits provide suggestions on how institutions can incorporate NSSE results into processes that support specialized and professional accreditation. Guidelines map survey items to specific accreditation standards.

Sample: 2013 NSSE Survey Items Mapped to SACSCOC Accreditation Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?</th>
<th>SACS Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Asked questions or contributed to course discussions in other ways</td>
<td>3.3.1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in</td>
<td>3.3.1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Come to class without completing readings or assignments</td>
<td>3.3.1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Attended an art exhibit, play, or other arts performance (dance, music, etc.)</td>
<td>2.10, 3.3.1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>Asked another student to help you understand course material</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>Explained course material to one or more students</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students</td>
<td>3.3.1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>Worked with other students on course projects or assignments</td>
<td>3.3.1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Gave a course presentation</td>
<td>3.3.1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments</td>
<td>3.3.1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Specialized toolkits available:

- ABET: Applied Sciences, Computer Science, Engineering, Engineering Technology, Information Systems
- Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB): Business, Accounting
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE): Teacher Education
- Teacher Accreditation Education Council (TEAC): Teacher Education

Institutional Examples

Because NSSE focuses on the quality of student learning and effective educational practices, colleges and universities have found productive ways to incorporate survey results in their institutional self-studies. In the following section, we describe how selected institutions use NSSE in accreditation.

Regional Accreditation

Higher Learning Commission–North Central Association (HLC–NCA)

University of Denver

In support of Standard 3.A.3 of its 2010 self-study for HLC–NCA, The University of Denver (DU) assesses student learning at multiple levels using multiple methods that include NSSE, BCSSE, and other student satisfaction surveys. Multi-year analysis of benchmark scores were reviewed by the chancellor, provost, and other senior administrators. Institutional research staff also conducted focus groups with students to explore their responses. In particular, they were interested in how the distributed nature of administrative services at DU may be reflected in lower scores on the Supportive Campus Environment (SCE) benchmark than DU’s peers and comparison groups. This led to creation of the Center for Academic and Career Development, a “one-stop” service model.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)

New Jersey Institute of Technology

As described in its self-study, A Science and Technology Research University for the 21st Century, the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) is “an assessment-based university in terms of educational effectiveness.” The development of its Strategic Plan 2012–2015, coincided with the institution’s 10-year bid for reaffirmation of accreditation from MSCHE and provided an opportunity to bring assessment efforts under a unified framework. NJIT used first-year student results from 2008 and 2010 NSSE administrations related to classroom presentations, collaborating on projects, tutoring other students, diversity experiences, and development of ethical values as indirect measures to support MSCHE Standard 14, Assessment of Student Learning. Also under Standard 14, NJIT highlighted results from participation in NSSE’s Consortium for the Study of Writing in College as evidence of strong competence in a variety of writing measures.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)

Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw State University’s QEP for SACSCOC contains ten goals with related action plans and strategies for assessing progress. For example, analyses of NSSE scores from 2004, 2005, and 2006, indicated the KSU students did not report desired levels of exposure to diversity, participation in study abroad, and taking a foreign language to support KSU’s global learning goals. Goals 1–9 of the plan concentrate on strengthening leadership, financial, and infrastructure commitments “to the promotion and interaction of visibility and awareness of the importance of global learning,” and to enhancing student success programs. The action plan for Goal 10, “Campus-wide Engagement in Global Learning Will Increase Greatly,” focuses on assessing the summative impact of Goals 1–9 and includes biennial participation in NSSE through 2012. Survey responses of KSU seniors will be used for trend analysis and to show gains in targeted areas.

Specialized Accreditation

ABET

The Catholic University of America

In 2005, the School of Engineering (SOE) at The Catholic University of America (CUA) adopted a unified assessment process (UAP) for all engineering departments. Reports of program outcomes that align with ABET guidelines are issued annually. Since 2007, select NSSE data have been used in assessment of engineering programs as well as CUA’s general education goals. SOE seniors at CUA are compared with the general CUA senior population as well as with Carnegie peers to measure how well the SOE is meeting 11 program learning objectives. Specifically, CUA studied results for SOE seniors on NSSE items related to oral and written communication, critical thinking and reasoned analysis, understanding of scientific and quantitative reasoning, ability to find and critical evaluate information using resources and technology, and experiences with diversity. Data from the various assessments have resulted in curricular changes focused on continuous improvement.