

## NSSE 2014 Overview

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information from first-year and senior students about the characteristics and quality of their undergraduate experience. Since the inception of the survey, more than 1,500 bachelor's-granting colleges and universities in the United States and Canada have used it to measure the extent to which students engage in effective educational practices that are empirically linked with learning, personal development, and other desired outcomes such as persistence, satisfaction, and graduation.

NSSE data are used by faculty, administrators, researchers, and others for institutional improvement, public reporting, and related purposes. Launched in 2000 with the support of a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, NSSE has been fully sustained through institutional participation since 2002. After two years of pilot testing and extensive analysis, 2013 marked the first year of NSSE's updated survey instrument and new customization options. This document provides an overview of NSSE 2014, the second administration of the updated NSSE.

### Survey Data and Methodology

More than 1.8 million first-year and senior students from 713 institutions (640 in the US and 73 in Canada) were invited to participate in NSSE 2014. Of this population, 473,633 students responded to the survey. Nearly half (46%) of these were first-year students and 54% were seniors.

NSSE's sampling methodology calls for either a census of all first-year and senior students or a random selection of an equal number of students from each group, with the sample size based on the total undergraduate student enrollment. In NSSE 2014, census administration was available only via the email recruitment method, in which students receive a survey invitation and up to four reminders by email. All but five participating institutions opted for this method. Sampled students at the five remaining institutions received up to three messages by post and up to two reminders by email, if email addresses were provided.

Unless noted otherwise, the results presented below are from 692 institutions—622 in the US and 70 in Canada—that participated in NSSE 2014. Due to nonstandard population files or survey administrations, 21 institutions are not represented among the results in this *Overview*. Only data for census-administered surveys and randomly sampled students are included in the summary tables.

### U.S. Participating Institutions

NSSE 2014 U.S. respondents profiled here include 355,865 first-year (43%) and senior (57%) respondents from 622 institutions. NSSE 2014 participating institutions and students reflect the diversity of bachelor's-granting colleges and universities in the US with respect to institution type, size, sector, region, and locale (Table 1, next page).



Wofford College

At the institution level, Carnegie-classified Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs), public institutions, and institutions with 5,000 to 9,999 undergraduates are somewhat overrepresented in these results, while Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields, private institutions, and institutions with fewer than 1,000 undergraduates are underrepresented

With regard to students, those attending Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences and institutions enrolling 1,000 to 9,999 undergraduates are somewhat overrepresented, while those at doctorate-granting universities and institutions with 20,000 or more undergraduates are underrepresented.

Although small and private institutions account for the majority of institutions in NSSE and in the US, a majority of NSSE respondents, like the entire population of U.S. students, attend large and public institutions. NSSE comparison reports are weighted (as appropriate) to ensure that each institution is proportionally represented.

Note: A searchable list of participating institutions by year is on the NSSE Web site at [nsse.iub.edu/html/participants.cfm](http://nsse.iub.edu/html/participants.cfm)

**Table 1****Profile of NSSE 2014 U.S. Institutions and Respondents and Bachelor's-Granting U.S. Institutions and Their Students<sup>a</sup>**

Institution Characteristics	Institutions		Students	
	NSSE	U.S. <sup>b</sup>	NSSE	U.S. <sup>b</sup>
<b>Carnegie Basic Classification<sup>c</sup></b>				
Research Universities (very high research activity)	4%	6%	15%	22%
Research Universities (high research activity)	7%	6%	13%	15%
Doctoral/Research Universities	5%	5%	7%	9%
Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)	29%	25%	33%	31%
Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)	13%	11%	10%	8%
Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)	7%	8%	4%	4%
Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences	17%	16%	10%	5%
Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields	18%	23%	8%	7%
<b>Control</b>				
Public	43%	34%	63%	65%
Private	57%	66%	37%	35%
<b>Undergraduate Enrollment</b>				
Fewer than 1,000	11%	18%	3%	2%
1,000–2,499	32%	33%	16%	10%
2,500–4,999	21%	19%	15%	12%
5,000–9,999	19%	14%	22%	18%
10,000–19,999	11%	10%	23%	25%
20,000 or more	6%	6%	22%	33%
<b>Region</b>				
New England	8%	8%	7%	6%
Mid East	20%	18%	18%	16%
Great Lakes	14%	15%	14%	15%
Plains	10%	10%	7%	9%
Southeast	29%	25%	28%	23%
Southwest	8%	7%	9%	12%
Rocky Mountains	4%	4%	6%	5%
Far West	9%	11%	11%	12%
Outlying Areas	1%	2%	1%	2%
<b>Locale</b>				
City	44%	47%	51%	61%
Suburban	24%	26%	26%	21%
Town	27%	21%	22%	15%
Rural	4%	6%	2%	3%

- a. All percentages are unweighted and based on U.S. postsecondary institutions that award baccalaureate degrees and belong to one of the eight Carnegie classifications in the table. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
- b. U.S. percentages are based on the 2012 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics file for institutions in one of the eight Carnegie classifications in the table.
- c. For information on the Carnegie Foundation's Basic Classification, see [classifications.carnegiefoundation.org](http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org)

## Institutional Response Rates

Table 2 shows that the average response rate for U.S. NSSE 2014 institutions was 32% (29% for first-year students and 34% for seniors). The highest institutional response rate among U.S. institutions was 88%, and more than half of institutions achieved a response rate of 30% or higher.

The average response rate for Canadian NSSE 2014 institutions was 36% (34% for first-year students and 38% for seniors), with the highest institutional rate being 90%. Two thirds (67%) of Canadian institutions achieved a response rate of 30% or higher.

For information about your institution's response rate, refer to your NSSE 2014 Administration Summary.

**Table 2****NSSE 2014 U.S. Participation and Response Rates by Undergraduate Enrollment and Use of Incentives**

Institution Characteristics	Number of Institutions	Average Institutional Response Rate
<b>Undergraduate Enrollment<sup>a</sup></b>		
2,500 or fewer	271	39%
2,501 to 4,999	136	30%
5,000 to 9,999	111	24%
10,000 or more	102	22%
<b>Incentives Offered<sup>b</sup></b>		
Offered incentives	316	35%
No incentives	306	29%
<b>All Institutions</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>32%</b>

- a. Two institutions had no enrollment information in the IPEDS data.
- b. Some institutions used recruitment incentives, such as small gifts or raffles, to encourage students to complete the survey.

## Survey Customization

NSSE now enables institutions to append up to two additional question sets in the form of NSSE-created topical modules or consortium questions (for institutions sharing a common interest and participating as a NSSE consortium). Another option—appending a question about sexual orientation to the demographic section of the core survey—was elected by nearly one third (31%) of participating institutions.

About three in four (76%) institutions appended at least one topical module (with or without consortium questions), and about one third (34%) appended additional questions as part of a consortium (with or without a module). More than half (55%) added two sets of questions in any combination of modules and consortium questions (Table 3).

**Table 3****Module and Consortium Participation in NSSE 2014, U.S. and Canadian Institutions**

Customization Options Selected	Number of Institutions	Percentage of Institutions
None	119	17%
One module only	148	21%
Two modules	205	29%
Consortium items only	52	7%
Consortium items plus one module	189	27%

Note: Includes 21 institutions with nonstandard population files or administrations.

Eight topical modules were available in NSSE 2014, and participation in a given module ranged from 55 to 247 institutions. By far the most widely adopted module was Academic Advising, selected by 35% of participating institutions. Use of the other seven modules was fairly even, ranging from 12% of institutions selecting Development of Transferable Skills to 8% for Civic Engagement.

## U.S. Respondent Profile

Table 4 displays key demographic and enrollment characteristics of NSSE 2014 U.S. respondents and all U.S. bachelor's-seeking students. Among NSSE respondents, female, White, and full-time students were overrepresented in varying proportions compared to all U.S. students. NSSE comparison reports use weights as appropriate to correct for disproportionate survey response related to institution-reported sex and enrollment status at each institution.

As Table 5 illustrates, 22% of U.S. respondents were older than traditional age (at least 24 years old), and less than half (43%) were first-generation college students. About one in three NSSE respondents (29%) began postsecondary education at an institution other than the one they were attending when they completed the NSSE survey. Two thirds of respondents (67%) expected to complete a master's, doctoral, or professional degree. Two in five NSSE respondents lived on campus, and one in twenty reported taking all classes online.

**Table 4****Characteristics of NSSE 2014 U.S. Respondents and Undergraduate Population at All U.S. Bachelor's-Granting Institutions<sup>a</sup>**

Student Characteristics	NSSE 2014 Respondents <sup>b</sup>	U.S. Bachelor's-Granting Population <sup>c</sup>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	36%	45%
Female	64%	55%
<b>Race/Ethnicity<sup>d</sup></b>		
African American/Black	10%	13%
American Indian/Alaska native	1%	1%
Asian	5%	6%
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%
Caucasian/White	66%	61%
Hispanic/Latino	11%	13%
Multiracial/multiethnic	3%	3%
Foreign/nonresident alien	3%	4%
<b>Enrollment Status</b>		
Full-time	90%	81%
Not full-time	10%	19%

a. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

b. NSSE 2014 population consists of first-year and senior undergraduates. Data were provided by participating institutions.

c. U.S. percentages are unweighted and based on data from the fall 2012 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics and Enrollment data. Includes all class years.

d. Institution-reported data. Excludes students whose race/ethnicity was unknown or not provided.

**Table 5****Additional Characteristics of NSSE 2014 U.S. Respondents**

Respondent Characteristics	Percentage of Respondents
At least 24 years old	22%
First-generation student <sup>a</sup>	43%
Transfer student	29%
Expects to complete a master's degree or higher	67%
Living on campus <sup>b</sup>	40%
Taking all classes online	5%

Note: Data are unweighted.

a. Neither parent (or guardian) holds a bachelor's degree.

b. Dormitory or other campus housing, fraternity, or sorority.

## Canadian Respondent Profile

Canadian respondents profiled here include 114,511 students from 70 institutions in ten provinces, including 27 institutions in Ontario, 12 in Quebec, 9 in British Columbia, 7 in Alberta, 5 in Nova Scotia, 3 each in New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, 2 in Manitoba, and 1 each in Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. Canadian respondents included 61,920 first-year and 52,591 fourth-year students. Female students and full-time students, respectively, accounted for about 65% and 88% of Canadian respondents. About 18% of Canadian respondents were at least 24 years old. Ethnocultural categories for Canadian institutions participating in NSSE were adapted from those used by Statistics Canada, Canada's national statistical agency. The majority of students providing ethnocultural information identified as White (67%), while 12% identified as Chinese, 7% South Asian, 4% Black, 3% each Arab and North American Indian, and about 2% each Latin American, Filipino, and Southeast Asian. Less than 2% of respondents identified with each of the remaining categories.

## Meet the NSSE Team

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