

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 1,600 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 fees since 2002. The NSSE questionnaire was substantially updated in 2013, including new customization options. This document provides an overview of NSSE 2016, including administration details, response rates, participating institutions, and respondent characteristics.

Survey Data and Methodology

Over 1.3 million first-year and senior students from 557 institutions (530 in the US and 27 in Canada) were invited to participate in NSSE 2016. Of this population, 311,086 students responded to the survey. Less than half (45%) of these were first-year students and 55% 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 total undergraduate enrollment. Census administration is available only via the email recruitment method, in which students receive a survey invitation and up to four reminders by email. In 2016, all but two participating institutions opted for this method. Sampled students at the two remaining institutions received up to three messages by postal mail and up to two reminders by email.

Unless noted otherwise, the results presented below are from 537 institutions—512 in the US and 25 in Canada—that participated in NSSE 2016. Due to nonstandard population files or survey administrations, 20 institutions are not represented. In these summary tables, as in each *Institutional Report 2016*, only data for census-administered surveys and randomly sampled students are included.

U.S. Participating Institutions

NSSE 2016 U.S. respondents profiled here include 292,031 first-year (45%) and senior (55%) respondents from 512 institutions. NSSE 2016 participating institutions and students reflect the diversity of bachelor's-granting colleges and universities in the US with respect to institution type, public or private control, size, region, and locale (Table 1).



Cameron University

Institutional Response Rates

The average response rate for U.S. NSSE 2016 institutions was 29%. The highest institutional response rate among U.S. institutions was 77%, and three out of five institutions achieved a response rate of 25% or higher. Higher average response rates were observed for smaller institutions, and for institutions that offered incentives (Table 2).

Institutions had the option to use their learning management system or student portal to recruit students. In 2016, 36 U.S. institutions chose this option, and the average percentage of students who accessed the survey this way was 27%.

Note: A searchable list of participating institutions by year is on the NSSE website at nsse.indiana.edu/html/participants.cfm

Table 1**Profile of NSSE 2016 U.S. Institutions and Respondents and Bachelor's-Granting U.S. Institutions and Their Students**

Institution Characteristics	Institutions (%)		Students (%)	
	NSSE	U.S. ^a	NSSE	U.S. ^a
Carnegie Basic Classification^b				
Doc/Highest: Doctoral Universities (Highest Research Activity)	5	7	18	24
Doc/Higher: Doctoral Universities (Higher Research Activity)	9	6	16	16
Doc/Moderate: Doctoral Universities (Moderate Research Activity)	8	6	15	7
Master's L: Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)	28	25	27	31
Master's M: Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)	13	11	8	7
Master's S: Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)	7	7	4	3
Bac/A&S: Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences Focus	15	17	7	5
Bac/Diverse: Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields	15	22	6	7
Control				
Public	42	34	61	66
Private	58	66	39	34
Undergraduate Enrollment				
Fewer than 1,000	12	20	3	2
1,000–2,499	34	33	15	10
2,500–4,999	19	18	13	12
5,000–9,999	17	14	20	19
10,000–19,999	12	9	25	24
20,000 or more	6	6	24	34
Region				
New England	8	8	8	6
Mid East	16	18	13	16
Great Lakes	13	15	14	14
Plains	11	10	10	8
Southeast	30	25	26	24
Southwest	10	8	14	12
Rocky Mountains	4	3	7	5
Far West	8	11	8	13
Outlying Areas	1	2	<1	2
Locale				
City	48	47	59	62
Suburban	21	26	21	22
Town	26	21	18	14
Rural	5	6	1	2

Notes: 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.

- U.S. percentages are based on the 2014 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics data.
- For information on the Carnegie Foundation's 2015 Basic Classification, see carnegieclassifications.iu.edu.

Table 2**NSSE 2016 U.S. Participation and Response Rates by Undergraduate Enrollment and Use of Incentives**

Institution Characteristics	Number of Institutions	Average Institutional Response Rate (%)
Undergraduate Enrollment^a		
2,500 or fewer	242	36
2,501 to 4,999	96	27
5,000 to 9,999	85	23
10,000 or more	89	21
Incentives Offered^b		
Offered incentives	296	32
No incentives	216	26
All Institutions	512	29

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

Survey Customization

Participating institutions may append up to two additional question sets in the form of NSSE Topical Modules or consortium questions (for institutions sharing a common interest and participating as a NSSE consortium) (Table 3). Of the nine modules available in 2016, the most widely adopted module was Academic Advising, followed by First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions (Table 4). Another customization option—including a question about sexual orientation in the demographic section of the core survey—was elected by 32% of participating institutions.

Table 3**Summary of NSSE 2016 Participation in Additional Questions Sets**

Selection of Additional Question Sets	Number of Institutions	Percentage of Institutions
None	89	16
One module only	125	22
Two modules	238	43
Consortium items only	13	2
Consortium items plus one module	92	17

Notes: Includes both U.S. and Canadian institutions, and 20 institutions with nonstandard population files or administrations. Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 4**NSSE 2016 Participation in Topical Modules**

Topical Module	Number of Institutions	Percentage of Institutions
Academic Advising	188	34
First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions	148	27
Global Learning	67	12
Experiences with Information Literacy	60	11
Experiences with Writing	54	10
Civic Engagement	50	9
Development of Transferable Skills	47	8
Learning with Technology	41	7
Experiences with Diverse Perspectives	38	7

Notes: Includes both U.S. and Canadian institutions, and 20 institutions with nonstandard population files or administrations. Percentages sum to more than 100 because many institutions selected two modules.

U.S. Respondent Profile

Table 5 displays selected demographic and enrollment characteristics of NSSE 2016 U.S. respondents alongside all U.S. bachelor's degree-seeking students for comparison. Among NSSE respondents, female, White, and full-time students were overrepresented in varying proportions. NSSE reports use weights as appropriate to correct for disproportionate survey response related to institution-reported sex and enrollment status at each institution. Table 6 provides additional details about U.S. respondents.

Canadian Respondent Profile

Canadian respondents profiled here include 13,831 students (56% first-year, 44% fourth-year) from 25 institutions in 7 provinces, including 8 institutions in Ontario; 6 each in Alberta and British Columbia; 2 in New Brunswick; and 1 each in Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Quebec. Female students and full-time students accounted for about 69% and 86% of Canadian respondents, respectively. The average response rate for Canadian NSSE 2016 institutions was 39%, with the highest institutional response rate being 74%. Twenty-one of the Canadian institutions achieved a response rate of 25% or higher.

About 26% of Canadian respondents were at least 24 years old. The majority of students providing ethnocultural information identified as White (78%), while 6% identified as Chinese; 5% South Asian; 4% Black; and at least 2% each Métis and North American Indian. Less than 2% of respondents identified with other categories.

Table 5**Characteristics of NSSE 2016 U.S. Respondents and Undergraduate Population at All U.S. Bachelor's Degree-Granting Institutions**

Student Characteristics	NSSE 2016 Respondents ^a (%)	U.S. Bachelor's-Granting Population ^b (%)
Sex		
Male	35	45
Female	65	55
Race/Ethnicity^c		
African American/Black	10	12
American Indian/Alaska native	1	1
Asian	5	6
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Isl.	<1	<1
Caucasian/White	65	58
Hispanic/Latino	12	14
Multiracial/multiethnic	3	4
Foreign/nonresident alien	4	4
Enrollment Status		
Full-time	89	83
Not full-time	11	17

Note: Percentages are unweighted and may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

- The NSSE 2016 sampling frame consists of first-year and senior undergraduates. Data were provided by participating institutions.
- U.S. percentages are based on data from the 2014 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics and Enrollment data. Includes all class years.
- Institution-reported, using categories provided in IPEDS. Excludes students whose race/ethnicity was unknown or not provided.

Table 6**Additional Characteristics of NSSE 2016 U.S. Respondents**

Student Characteristics	%
At least 24 years old	24
First-generation college student ^a	44
Transfer student	30
Expects to complete a master's degree or higher	64
Living on campus ^b	39
Taking all classes online	9

Note: Percentages are unweighted.

- No parent (or guardian) holds a bachelor's degree.
- Dormitory or other campus housing, fraternity, or sorority.

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