

Institutions participating in NSSE have provided hundreds of examples demonstrating wide-ranging uses of NSSE data. Diagnostic, actionable information on student engagement catalyzes vital, sometimes challenging conversations on campus about the quality of undergraduate education. This brief focuses on one theme among these examples.

Since the introduction of NSSE's Topical Modules in 2013, more than 1,000 institutions have administered at least one module with the core survey. The nine modules currently offered give institutions more detailed information on Academic Advising, Civic Engagement, Development of Transferable Skills, Experiences with Information Literacy, Experiences with Writing, First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions, Global Learning, Learning with Technology, and Inclusiveness and Engagement with Cultural Diversity. This brief highlights institutions that have used module results to gain insight into progress toward specific institutional goals and to justify curricular changes. Visit our website to learn more about NSSE's Topical Modules.

nsse.indiana.edu/html/modules.cfm

INFORMATION LITERACY

Information literacy has become a growing priority and a new core competency for the **University of San Diego** (USD)—recognized as a student learning outcome spanning all disciplines and critical to the success of all USD graduates. In 2015, USD appended the Experiences with Information Literacy Topical Module to their NSSE administration. Findings represented a baseline for how students perceived and responded to the institution's prioritizing of information literacy. For example, one module finding was that many first-year students did not perceive that key information literacy outcomes or skills were embedded in their courses. USD considered this problematic, as students should be developing their skills in the use of information in their courses.

As follow-up interventions, USD librarians developed a set of curricular offerings to help faculty and their students acquire information literacy skills; USD core curriculum faculty incorporated the teaching of information literacy skills into the historical inquiry requirement; and, specifically to address the development of these skills in the first year, USD hired a writing director to work closely with librarians to ensure information literacy becomes a core piece of the first-year experience. USD is also working with faculty to explicitly deepen students' awareness of the



University of San Diego

importance of gaining information literacy skills. For example, a faculty member in engineering identifies and describes information literacy skills to students as a part of the course and carves out time to articulate to students what they are to focus on to gain these skills by completing course assignments (e.g., research papers). When these connections are made explicit, students appear to be more engaged in the learning process. It is important to USD that faculty members as well as staff across the institution are involved—making increasing students' information literacy skills truly an institutional effort.

WHAT IS YOUR NSSE DATA USE STORY?

Our growing collection of stories about how NSSE institutions use their results is a shared resource for colleges and universities, and assists in our continuing efforts to improve the quality of the undergraduate experience. Please contact your NSSE Project Services team to share examples highlighting your institution's uses of NSSE data, usage strategies, and special activities.

nsse.indiana.edu/html/staff.cfm

EXPERIENCES WITH WRITING

The focus on writing in **Harvey Mudd College's** 2010 core curriculum revision, based in part on the observation that students reached capstone without advanced writing skills, led to the requirement for first-year students to take *Introduction to Academic Writing (Writ 1)*, a half-semester course taught by faculty from all disciplines. NSSE and FSSE results—in particular, responses to the Experiences with Writing Topical Module—have been important in assessing the course's impact and in identifying approaches for improvement.

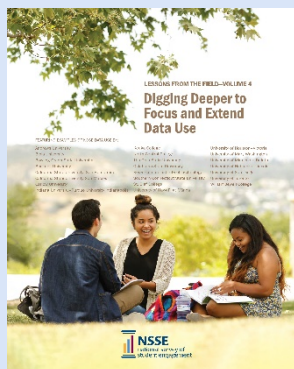
Prior to teaching *Writ 1*, faculty attend an intensive one-week workshop on current composition theory and pedagogy and on lessons learned the previous semester. At the 2015 *Writ 1* workshop, looking at patterns in NSSE and FSSE results for where to expand effective practices, faculty discussed strategies to encourage reflection and to clarify and foster the application of *Writ 1* skills across disciplines.

As *Writ 1* approached its fifth year, both NSSE and FSSE results suggested Harvey Mudd's students and faculty compared favorably to those of its Carnegie peer group. Additionally, since the implementation of *Writ 1*, survey responses from first-year students and seniors have indicated that most writing assignments asked students to use evidence and reasoning to argue a position, to explain the meaning of numerical and statistical data, and to write in the style and format of a specific field—all outcomes stressed in *Writ 1*.

Going forward, by disaggregating NSSE results, the college seeks to better understand how students access resources and how faculty meet the needs of a diverse student body. These results will help bring the benefits of *Writ 1* to all students—by defining expectations, addressing learning preferences, and uncovering underlying assumptions.

Lessons from the Field

See our *Lessons from the Field* series for many more instructive and inspiring narratives from colleges and universities describing the innovative ways they put NSSE results into action.



nsse.indiana.edu/links/lessons_home



University of Colorado Denver

ACADEMIC ADVISING

The most pressing goals at **University of Colorado Denver** (CU Denver) and the NSSE data that best address them are identified by a team of the assistant vice chancellor for institutional research and effectiveness, the associate deans of education and arts and sciences, the director of CU Online, the registrar, the associate vice chancellor for undergraduate experiences, and other members of the academic and student affairs staff. In 2013, because of momentum to improve advising at CU Denver but little data to inform these changes, the team elected to administer the Academic Advising Topical Module, after which an advising task force ensured each unit received its own module report with comparisons to other campus units as well as to selected peer groups; the assistant vice chancellor for institutional research and effectiveness also shared complete module results with all academic advisors and the student government. CU Denver has since set a goal to be more purposeful in creating consistency in advising between academic units and among faculty and staff advisors.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Universidad de Monterrey (UEM) prides itself on graduating students who go on to positively impact their communities, yet 2015 results from the Civic Engagement Topical Module indicated students felt UDEM could better prepare them for informed, active citizenship. In response, a committee of faculty and student affairs staff identified more than 15 experiences including courses, community service activities, internships, and organization membership that can promote students' civic engagement. Campus actors responsible for these experiences then set benchmarks and goals for improvement and collaborated in revising initiatives to deliberately promote civic engagement. For example, manuals for leadership development programs now include strategies for stimulating dialogue with students on themes related to community and citizenship. Both faculty and staff at UDEM are enthusiastic for the potential positive change in these areas and will assess the impact of these changes in future administrations of Civic Engagement.