How AASCU Colleges and Universities Are Using Their NSSE Data

Members of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities include 430 public colleges and universities in the United States, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Institutions range in size from 1,000 to 44,000 students and are located in urban, suburban, small town/city, and rural areas.

Academic and Student Life Programs
University of Nebraska at Kearney
All academic and student life programs at the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK) have access to NSSE data. Key programs that use NSSE data for assessment, program improvement, and recruitment include: Writing Intensive Program, Cultural Diversity Program, Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, academic departments, Admissions Office, Learning Strategies Office, Multicultural Affairs Office, Careers Services, Student Union, and Student Housing and Greek Life.

Undergraduate research is an important part of many academic programs at UNK and is supported by the Office of Sponsored Research. NSSE data help to gauge student perception of the opportunities and benefits of participation in undergraduate research. The Office of Sponsored Research has incorporated UNK’s NSSE results into its recruiting efforts, and program review and improvement initiatives.

Accountability and Assessment
Clayton State University
Clayton State University, part of the University System of Georgia, included its NSSE scores related to advising in the reporting requirements for the system’s Customer Service Plan. The University System of Georgia enrolls its member schools in NSSE and makes collective data available to the participating schools to allow comparisons of areas of strength and those that need improvement.

University of Nebraska at Kearney
UNK has developed a campus culture of assessment, where the expectation is that all academic and non-academic programs will be assessed regularly. The Assessment Office oversees this process, provides assessment tools, and organizes UNK’s participation in NSSE. The Office conducts research using NSSE data to help guide programs in their assessment efforts.

Western Kentucky University
The Commonwealth of Kentucky bases a portion of its funding for public institutions on how well they improve on select key indicators. Western Kentucky University (WKU) chose improvement in NSSE as its indicator, in part due to the confidence WKU has in the reliability of NSSE results.

Accreditation
Clayton State University
Since it is preparing a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that is focused on retention, Clayton State has used its NSSE data to measure progress in initiatives related to faculty development, faculty mentoring, peer mentoring, supplemental instruction, and tutoring. Clayton State will continue to analyze NSSE data to make changes to the QEP in preparation for an upcoming SACS site visit. Student engagement data has been discussed as a possible QEP project for Clayton State’s next reporting period.

Kennesaw State University
KSU selected as its QEP for SACS reaccreditation, “Global Learning for Engaged Citizenship.” As part of this plan, KSU will initiate a global engagement certification for undergraduate and graduate students. Those receiving the certification will present evidence of: 1) knowledge in global perspectives through coursework and study abroad; 2) effective intercultural engagement skills that involve productive teamwork with diverse groups and intensive interaction with people of other cultures; and 3) global citizenship attitudes reflected in cross-cultural services contributions and cultural sensitivity.
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
NSSE data is critical to the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) process for accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) uses NSSE data to support three categories in the AQIP Systems Portfolio: Helping Students Learn, Understanding Stakeholders, and Measuring Effectiveness. Data are also used to describe the institution and its resources.

Texas A&M International University
Annual data from specific NSSE items indicated that many TAMUI students were not developing writing skills at a level expected of college graduates. TAMUI focused on enhancement of undergraduate writing for the institution’s QEP prepared for reaffirmation with SACS. The “First-Year Writing Program was revamped and more writing was emphasized in the disciplines. Baseline NSSE scores will be compared with scores from future NSSE administrations to demonstrate changes and improvements in the culture of undergraduate writing.

University of North Carolina-Wilmington
UNCW academic units utilize NSSE is assessing their programs as part of the reaccreditation process, including business programs for AACSB and education programs for NCATE. NSSE results are also a catalyst for productive discussions related to teaching, learning, and the quality of students’ educational experience.

Western Kentucky University
NSSE is one of the primary tools used in assessing WKU’s QEP, “Engaging Students for Success in a Global Society,” prepared in support of its reaffirmation process by SACS. As a participant in the 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, and 2007 NSSE administrations, WKU has significant baseline data from which to assess its student engagement efforts.

Admissions
Fort Lewis College
The admissions staff at Fort Lewis College focuses its recruiting efforts on highlighting areas where the college’s students have scored well on NSSE data. They also use NSSE responses from seniors to provide evidence to potential students of positive education experiences at Fort Lewis.

Advising
University of Nebraska at Kearney
UNK’s Office of Academic Advising (OAA) makes extensive use of NSSE data to improve the central advisement process. While all students have faculty advisors, the OAA provides advising services to students and faculty who need more immediate intervention. All academic departments and academic/student life offices at UNK undergo periodic review in which NSSE data are incorporated as assessment and program improvement indicators.

Dissemination of Results to Campus Stakeholders
Clayton State University
An annual participant in NSSE since 2003, Clayton State University presents its NSSE results at leadership retreats and Dean’s Councils. In 2007, the data were included in the 2007 Fact Book that was distributed to all faculty members.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
NSSE data is shared with internal and external audiences through the SIUE FACT Book, an annual publication. Data from NSSE are also used to measure the engagement of underrepresented populations and are included in the Minority Women Disabilities Report submitted to the State of Illinois. Individual schools and colleges, as well as ad hoc committees, also used NSSE data for self-studies, accreditation processes, and assessment of student engagement.
University of Massachusetts Boston
As an urban research university with a commuter student population and large number of “non-traditional” students, the University of Massachusetts Boston has examined NSSE items related to the outside stressors of work and family responsibilities. Findings have been presented to senior administrators, the Faculty Council, and to ad hoc committees focusing on retention and campus community issues. UMBC also participated in a NSSE urban consortium and used responses to items on language use to uncover additional layers of complexity related to the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of its student population.

University of North Carolina-Wilmington
UNCW distributes reports and presentations to campus leadership that identify how students are doing and how they compare to their peers. The effort identifies areas of institutional strength as well as areas that need improvement. Data trends are also presented based on UNCW’s use of NSSE data for four consecutive years.

University of South Carolina Aiken
The University of South Carolina Aiken shares reports on NSSE data with various campus constituencies, including senior administration, the Strategic Planning Committee, the Enrollment Planning Team, the Academic Council, the First Year Experience Committee, and others. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness provides disaggregated responses by selected student demographics and distributes this information internally. The IE Office also places NSSE and reports on the university’s Web site.

First-Year Experience
Morehead State University
We have used NSSE to identify the characteristics of our first-year students and to determine if the institution is designing programs and services that address student needs. NSSE results are also used as part of the resources that support the president’s diversity initiative.

Southern Connecticut State University
NSSE and BCSSE results have informed the strategic planning process at Southern Connecticut, particularly for the design of the university’s new First-Year Experience pilot. Results from both surveys helped to define the kinds of experience Southern Connecticut wanted its students to have and were disseminated to faculty who designed the FYE seminar pilot. Analyses of NSSE data were also integrated into the “FYE Academy,” a two-day development program for faculty who will be teaching the new first-year seminars. Southern Connecticut will use data from the 2007 NSSE and 2008 BCSSE administrations to evaluate the FYE program pilot by comparing responses from students who participated in the pilot with other first-year students. BCSSE results on items related to advising will provide faculty teaching in first-year programs with an early intervention measure as well as an overview of students’ experiences on entering college.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
SIUE identified from its NSSE results over several years the need to engage students more quickly in their first-year of study. The Freshman Engagement Study Committee created a pilot program for a New Freshman Seminar class which included four options: an honors seminar; a university experience course; a culture, ideas, values course; and a Learning Communities in Academic Development course. SIUE’s 2007 NSSE data are being used to measure response differences between students who participated in the new program and those who have not. SIUE will continue to use the results from future administrations of NSSE to track progress of the program which became a requirement for all entering students in fall 2007.

General Education
Kennesaw State University
Based on AASCU’s Call for a New Vision of Greater Expectations, which underscores the philosophy of greater integration and realignment of general education, the major, and electives into a coherence education experience, KSU developed 14 college-level competencies. These competencies closely
match NSSE’s student learning outcomes survey items. The competencies include: critical thinking, information technology skills, writing skills, oral/presentation skills, analytic/quantitative skills, interpersonal/teamwork skills, independent learning skills, problem solving skills, self-awareness, cultural/global awareness, professional ethics/practices, community engagement, demonstrating a broad general education, and demonstrating job or work-related knowledge and skills.

**Morehead State University**

Morehead State is involved in an initiative to rethink and reformulate its general education experience. The institution is using NSSE results as key indicators for several general education goals and anticipates that changes in the General Education program will be made as result of an analysis of NSSE and FSSE data.

**Information Literacy and Technology**

**University of Massachusetts Boston**

Based on a desire to improve earlier NSSE results on items related to student use of computer technology and information resources, UMass Boston increased its investment in technology-enhanced classrooms and in faculty access and training in instructional technology. More recent NSSE results have documented the effectiveness of the investment and show an increased use of technology by students in their academic pursuits.

**Learning Communities**

**North Carolina Central University**

During the summer of 2006, 50 incoming first-year students were chosen to participate in the Summer Bridge Program, part of a new Learning Communities Program at North Carolina Central University. Students lived in the same residence hall with two peer tutors and two graduate assistants. Students enrolled in math and reading course and were required to spend additional tutorial hours each week. All but one of member of the group returned to be part of the hundred and fifty students that enrolled in the Learning Communities program in fall 2006. Students who resided, took classes and studied together in small groups outperformed all others in the Learning Communities Program. In the summer of 2007, 100 students entered the Summer Bridge Program and all returned as first-year students in the fall. The faculty members directing the Learning Communities Program are working to provide the opportunity to participate in this program to all 1000 first-year students at North Carolina Central.

**Liberal Arts Curriculum**

**Grand Valley State University**

Leaders of the “Claiming a Liberal Education” (CLE) initiative, a campus change project to align faculty and student expectations of the goals of a liberal arts education, used NSSE results as one assessment tool to characterize teaching and learning at Grand Valley State. Although Grand Valley students scored well on many areas of the survey, campus leaders identified a need for improvement on several items closely related to the liberal arts ethos such as working effectively with peers, solving complex real-world problems, and developing a personal code of values and ethics. Now in its fourth year, the CLE initiative, fueled by NSSE results, has produced cultural change on the Grand Valley campus. For example: 1) University marketing and recruitment now has a more significant liberal arts component, 2) About one-third of first-year students enroll in “Introduction to Liberal Education,” 3) Students in advertising and marketing class are tracking the progress of the CLE and use NSSE as a basis for their own surveys of faculty and students, 4) Half of the competitive grants from the university’s teaching and learning center go to CLE projects, and 5) Individual faculty members have referred to NSSE results in their curriculum planning. One faculty member requires, “students to make presentations because the NSSE seniors said they needed more help in speaking clearly and effectively.”

**Retention**

**Fort Lewis College**

The dean of enrollment uses NSSE data, as part of Fort Lewis’ retention model, to review persistence of first-year students to a second year. These findings inform planning of the Freshmen Workshop, a series of faculty workshops focused on the first-year experience.
North Carolina Central University

The Retention Management Team and the Division of Academic Affairs at North Carolina Central have used NSSE data to shape policies and strategies designed to assure student success through graduation. The nine sub-committees of the Retention Management Team developed numerous strategies to move NCCU closer to its retention goals. Several task groups appointed by the provost discussed the retention plan in seven Town Meetings targeted to departments, schools, and colleges of the university. Two of the main changes to the plan that resulted from the Town Meetings were: 1) the addition of a goal focused specifically on student engagement, and 2) the development of strategies to recruit Hispanic and Latino students to increase diversity on the NCCU campus.

Southern Connecticut State University

Southern Connecticut has participated in NSSE and BCSSE since 2004. The Office of Assessment and Planning has followed cohorts of students who have completed BCSSE and NSSE to learn more about their college experiences and persistence toward a degree. By tracking students who have left Southern through the National Student Clearinghouse, assessment and planning has found that non-returning students did not have as high quality relationships with faculty, peers, and administrative personnel. At Southern, student scores on items related to the NSSE benchmark, "Supportive Campus Environment," comprised one of the most important predictors of persistence to the junior year.

Strategic Planning

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

SIUE strategic plan includes the goals of: 1) Engaged Students and Capable Graduates, 2) Innovative High Quality Programs, 3) Harmonious Campus Climate, 4) Active Community Engagement, and 5) Sound Physical and Financial Assets. NSSE data are one of multiple measures used to evaluate progress on these long term goals as well as inform the development of short term goals.

University of Nebraska at Kearney

Over the past two years UNK has used NSSE data to inform development of its strategic plan and evolving action plans. Specific processes that incorporate NSSE data include: establishing baseline data for student engagement, setting benchmarks for student engagement activities, developing action plans, and establishing priorities.

University of Wisconsin-Stout

UW-Stout reviews its NSSE results along with other data in preparation for its summer retreat. At the retreat, the strategic planning group develops university priorities to address opportunities for improvement. Several priorities were developed based on NSSE results including the following two examples:

1. “Ensure a culture of affirmation that enhances an engaging and supportive environment inside and outside the classroom.” A student-centered summer institute is held annually. The institute’s activities are designed to develop faculty skills in integrating engagement and active learning activities into their courses.

2. “Define and develop successful learning communities, beginning with freshmen, using a comprehensive targeted approach, and use as a model to develop an all-university plan.” Five freshmen learning communities are offered: 2 in art, 1 in career exploration, 1 for education majors, and a bridge program for multicultural students. Retention rates for these students are higher than those for first-year students who do not participate in learning communities.

Western Kentucky University

Several NSSE items were selected as performance indicators in WKU’s 2005/06 – 2007/08 strategic plan, “Challenging the Spirit.” As WKU reviews its strategic plan for 2009/10, NSSE will continue to be used as an assessment tool for furthering student learning opportunities.

Student Affairs

Grand Valley State University
Student Affairs staff interest in NSSE results has strengthened the relationship between the academic and student services areas of Grand Valley. In addition to discussions at division meetings, Student Affairs prepared a publication on NSSE results for faculty. They have also taken the lead in establishing learning communities at Grand Valley: one for first-year women in science and engineering in 2006, and one for pre-law students in 2007.

Student Affairs has helped faculty to become more aware of the place of engagement in learning and has provided programming for the introductory course on liberal education where staff team teach the course with a faculty member.

**Teaching and Pedagogy**  
**University of North Carolina-Wilmington**  
The UNCW Center for Teaching Excellence has directed its efforts toward developing teaching-centered programs based on NSSE findings. The provost has also implemented a comprehensive new faculty orientation with a concentration on experiential learning concepts and student engagement.

**University of Wisconsin-Stout**  
To gain an even deeper understanding of its NSSE results, UW-Stout conducted phenomenological interviews with highly engaged students to understand what “being engaged” meant locally. To generalize findings from the interviews, results were turned into a survey that was administered campus-wide. The results demonstrate alignment with NSSE survey questions in many areas. Results from this study have been presented at conferences, and used by the Teaching and Learning Center at UW-Stout for faculty development. The following steps were also taken:

- A letter was mailed to all faculty that highlighted results and suggested pedagogical strategies.
- Teacher story sessions have been established.
- An annual student-centered institute was developed and implemented.
- Several course projects have been designed including interactive lectures, problem-based learning, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning projects, and group/project work.