In August 2007, The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) invited The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) Chief Academic Officers to report on how their institutions are using their NSSE results. CIC institutions reported a range of activities, including institutional task forces to assess student engagement, revisions in first-year students’ programs, accreditation self-studies organized around student engagement themes, and faculty development initiatives. NSSE data are helping to document the effectiveness of small and mid-sized private colleges and universities. This type of documentation can provide one answer to increased calls for greater information and accountability.

The following examples describe the efforts made by CIC member liberal arts colleges to incorporate their NSSE results into effective strategies and action plans that promote effective educational practice and high levels of student engagement.

**Accreditation**

**California Lutheran University**
California Lutheran University (CLU) participated in the 2001 and 2005 NSSE administrations as well as the BCSSE pilot in 2005. CLU has worked with its NSSE results since 2001 to prepare for an upcoming WASC self-study, to measure student learning outcomes, to provide data for a major grant application, and for strategic planning.

**Drake University**
NSSE data from multiple years, particularly the 2006 administration, have been used by Drake in support of Criterion 2 and 3 for their reaccreditation study for HLC.

**Wells College**
Wells is using NSSE data to provide evidence in support of its self-study for MSCHE’s 14 Standards of Excellence.

**Assessment and Accountability**

**Drake University**
In response to the ever increasing emphasis on accountability, Drake University had included NSSE data and other internal and external information on a new public “Drake Student Outcomes” Web page.

**University of Akron**
The governor of Ohio recently reorganized state-assisted universities into the University System of Ohio. The University of Akron is currently using its 2007 NSSE students’ responses on what undergraduates feel the institution does well and what areas need improvement to help inform its evolving role in the state system. For example, UA students are enrolling increasing numbers in foreign language courses and more are pursuing study abroad. NSSE results have helped UA focus on ways to broaden the cultural horizons of students.

**Dissemination to Campus Stakeholders**

**Austin Peay State University**
Enrollment management and academic support staff presented NSSE findings to deans, chairs, and directors of programs. A report was also included in departmental packets distributed in the fall. For NCATE reaccreditation, the responses of Education majors were summarized and shared with the School of Education.

**Concordia College**
Concordia College participated in the 2004 and 2007 NSSE administrations and has been active in sharing its results with a wide range of campus audiences through focus groups for faculty and students, faculty workshops, and multiple presentations to administrative and academic committees. In addition, the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research published NSSE results in its monthly newsletter.

**Doane College**
The coordinator of assessment at Doane College prepared three reports to disseminate NSSE results to various campus constituencies. The first was an executive summary of students’ scores on the 2006 NSSE administration prepared for the institution’s president and vice-presidents. The report also covered basic explanations of the format of the NSSE results, the benchmarks, individual items, and selected comparison groups.

Six months later, a second report aligned selected NSSE benchmarks and individual survey items with Doane’s long-range strategic plan. The report was sent to the Board of Trustees, presented to the full faculty who were also given print copies, and posted on the college’s Web site.

A third report on student learning is in the final stages of preparation. Several measures of student performance as well as the impact that Doane experiences have had upon student learning will be assessed. This year the report will examine experiences in reading based on NSSE scores that have contributed to student performance data. The final report will be presented to the faculty, included in the general assessment report, and posted on the Doane Web site.
 Messiah College
To help raise awareness of NSSE and share results on how its students perform on the survey in comparison to their peers, Messiah College has prepared a PowerPoint presentation that will be shown to groups such as the College Council, President’s Cabinet, meetings of various schools within the college, the Board of Trustees, the Community of Educators, and others. Results on individual or groups of survey items will be shared with those administrative or academic groups to which they specifically relate.

Mount St. Mary’s University
A campus committee reviewed Mount St. Mary’s 2006 NSSE results and issued a report that was presented to the faculty as a whole at a faculty meeting. The vice president for academic affairs then met with the committee to plan the next steps. As part of these initiatives, discussions were held at a dinner for seniors to explore their responses to specific items on the NSSE survey. In addition, five-year out alumni were asked for input on issues raised by NSSE survey results.

Ohio Northern University
The Office of Institutional Research at Ohio Northern carried out a series of analyses on their NSSE data and shared their findings with many groups on campus.

Results from a comprehensive analysis of the NSSE scores of first-year and senior Ohio Northern students compared with their peers at other institutions were presented to the university’s Planning Council and to the deans and members of the academic staff.

Three targeted analyses looked at groupings of or individual survey item responses. The first analysis compared senior students’ responses to education and personal growth items with their peers at similar institutions and to the NSSE cohort to assess performance related to the university nine general learning objectives. Results were shared with deans, student affairs staff, and the general education steering committee. In addition, these same scores for students in selected majors were reported as part of the annual Program Review process in the College of Arts and Sciences.

A second, more focused analysis compared the responses of minority and non-minority students to survey items related to diversity and cultures outcomes. These results were recently presented at an Opening Session meeting with vice presidents and deans.

Finally, a third analysis compared Ohio Northern students’ responses on mental activities, study abroad, undergraduate research, and the capstone project with peer institutions and the entire NSSE cohort. Findings were included in Academic Affairs Strategic Indicators, a bi-monthly report to the university’s Board of Trustees.

Peace College
Peace College has participated annually in the NSSE survey since 2002 and uses its results to provide academic feedback and as a marketing and recruitment resource. The dean of academic affairs shares NSSE results each year with faculty and in 2005 sent the data to the Curricular Issues Committee for their review and suggestions on changes in the curriculum to improve academic rigor. After the committee’s recommended revisions were made to the liberal education requirements, Peace was able to use its NSSE 2007 results to measure improvement in this area.

In addition to sharing NSSE results with board members, posting the results on the college Web site, and conveying results verbally to prospective students and their parents, Peace has created a postcard summarizing its 2007 data that will be used for recruitment as well as to share information about the effectiveness of its programs with friends of the college and potential donors.

Rollins College
In addition to integrating NSSE scores with other assessment tools to analyze patterns that informed strategies for improvement and growth, a team of faculty and administrators presented NSSE data to first-year program staff, the Academic Affairs committee, the Student Life committee, and to the faculty at their annual retreat.

Saint Leo University
Saint Leo first administered the NSSE survey in 2005, and has shared their NSSE results with key stakeholders. Summaries of the findings from the survey were presented to Trustees and upper level administrators. In addition, results on areas in need of improvement were communicated to appropriate campus groups and committees. For example, first-year students’ scores on the academic challenge benchmark were not as high as the university wished. Analysis of responses to NSSE survey items related to this benchmark will be used by faculty and administration to inform improvements to the first-year experience.

Wells College
Presentations on the previous year’s NSSE results are made to senior administrative staff and the faculty as whole where areas of success and those that need improvement are reviewed. Throughout the year, NSSE findings are incorporated into senior staff meeting discussions to guide decision making. A variety of campus discussions also have addressed students’ college experiences at Wells and how faculty/staff perceptions align or differ.
**Faculty Teaching and Professional Development**

**Texas Lutheran University**
Following each year of its participation in the 2000, 2003, and 2006 NSSE survey, Texas Lutheran has scheduled faculty workshops to discuss its students’ responses to the survey. Discussions of the results after the first two administrations helped to increase faculty awareness of institutional strengths as well as areas of needed improvement. The 2006 faculty workshop will focus on setting higher expectations.

**University of Akron**
UA’s Institute for Teaching and Learning is focusing on student engagement and is using NSSE data to guide their programming for the 2007-2008 academic year. Topics to be addressed include how faculty can meet the needs of the increasing number of Honors College students, respond to students who are in need of counseling, become better teachers, and become more effective advisors.

**California Lutheran University**
As part of CLU’s program review process, the Office of Assessment & Educational Effectiveness provides NSSE data specific to each program on the areas of challenge, engagement, and diversity. Faculty review and include a summary of the data in their program reports. As an example of action taken from program-level use of NSSE data, one department at CLU proposed a curriculum change to increase rigor in the program.

The Office of Assessment & Educational Effectiveness also shared BCSSE and NSSE data at a faculty retreat. There was concern about the discrepancy that the data revealed between what student expected compared to what they experienced by the end of their first year, particularly in the area of service learning. Since “service to the community” is one of CLU’s student-learning outcomes as well as a cornerstone of its mission, the BCSSE/NSSE comparison revealed valuable information about the need for more focus in this area.

**First-Year Experience**

**Concordia College**
Faculty and administrative staff are using NSSE data to evaluate the effectiveness of Concordia College’s first-year experience which include a new course and an enhanced orientation program. Faculty and student affairs staff are comparing students’ experiences before and after the implementation of the first-year program. NSSE data is also examined to better understand retention and attrition of first-year students. Faculty have made several suggestions to address areas in need of improvement: explore and implement active learning strategies in large classes, integrate research into capstone courses and/or study abroad, develop honors tracks for all majors, and expand the opportunity for students to work in small groups with faculty.

**University of Akron**
Members of the First-Year Experience Task Force continue to draw on NSSE data to inform initiatives that were developed when UA participated in the Foundations of Excellence self-study in 2005-06. These initiatives include professional development for faculty, a centralized information resource on campus events, implementation of a computer literacy requirement, adding diversity modules to the first-year curriculum, establishing learning outcomes, and several plans to increase the interaction of students with each other and faculty.

**Worcester Polytechnic Institute**
NSSE results revealed that first-year students at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) experienced lower levels of engagement than seniors at WPI and in comparison to first-year students at peer institutions. WPI’s new president appointed a commission to recommend changes to enhance the first-year experience. The commission defined five objectives: to encourage critical thinking, information literacy, and evidence-based writing; to engage first-year students with current events and social issues; to promote life-long learning; to cultivate a more stimulating intellectual environment at WPI; and to contribute to civic engagement and community partnerships.

In 2006, a faculty-appointed committee began developing a new first-year curriculum. In early 2007, an associated dean was appointed to oversee the newly created Office of the First-Year and the implementation of a pilot test of the new curriculum. NSSE indicators will play a significant role in the assessment its effectiveness.

**General Education Programs**

**Drake University**
To help in a major assessment of its core curriculum, Drake is using NSSE data as an important component, combined with other data sources, to evaluate outcomes in specific curricular areas such as service learning, multicultural understanding, and critical thinking skills.

**Grant and Funding Proposal Support**

**California Lutheran University**
California Lutheran used NSSE results to report on a major grant initiative on diversity that was awarded in 2003. NSSE data provided both baseline data and indicators of progress over time, as well as helped set goals for future initiatives.
Retention
Northland College
The provost at Northland formed an Enrollment Task Force to examine retention issues using NSSE data from 2000, 2003, and 2006; internal and external surveys; findings from a campus retention audit; financial studies; and profiles of Northland student persistence data. A pair of task force members analyzed each of the assessment tools then presented their conclusions to the general group. Upon reaching consensus on its conclusions and recommendations, the task force has presented its findings to the board of trustees and plans to present them at an upcoming faculty in-service and to the president’s staff.

University of Akron
The Student Success & Retention Committee continues to assess NSSE data as it develops programs and services. The committee plans a study to link three years of NSSE results to its retention data, creating a “response-to-retention” profile; carry out a comparison of the first-year and senior responses of the same cohort of students to assess changes in engagement activities; and launch other studies using student demographics.

Strategic Planning
California Lutheran University
CLU is developing a list of Key Performance Indicators for use in its 2012 strategic plan. NSSE data will likely provide evidence for tracking student learning outcomes. The KPI’s will be used by faculty administrators, and the Board of Regents to mark progress.

Texas Lutheran University
Improving student engagement as measured by NSSE results is now part of the Strategic Plan at TLU and is woven through its QEP, “Engaging Students in a Culture of Scholarship,” prepared for reaffirmation of accreditation through SACS.

Wells College
A current campus initiative to develop a 10-year academic plan is using NSSE data to consider the current and future learning experiences that are required at Wells.

Student-Faculty Interaction
Bethel University
Students’ responses to the NSSE survey have allowed Bethel’s assessment staff to initiate changes to improve student-faculty interaction, adjust the curriculum to increase academic rigor, and place additional emphasis on the importance of writing in first-year and general education courses.

Houghton College
After reviewing NSSE scores on student-faculty engagement, faculty and administrative staff at Houghton have started to focus on collaborative pedagogy with students. In addition, a new Science Research Institute was launched in the summer of 2007. The Institute funds joint student-faculty research as well as the costs for travel to other research facilities.

University of Akron
In addition to presentations to numerous departments and offices, the Office of Institutional Research at the University of Akron has prepared summaries for several specific groups on campus. The Student Success & Retention Committee reviews NSSE data to explore ways to further engage students. For the past two years, the Committee has sponsored an annual Student Appreciation Day attended by faculty, administration, and all students. Food and beverages are served and informational booths from various colleges are set up to help students better connect with faculty members.

Student Affairs and Support Services
William Woods University
The Office of Student Life revised the new student orientation schedule to include a stronger academic component which set the tone that student learning was an institutional priority.

Student Engagement Initiatives
William Woods University
The offices of Academic Affairs and Student Life have used NSSE data to collaborate on efforts related to student success. Both office use NSSE to inform their work. In a recent staff retreat on program improvements, the Office of Student Life used NSSE results as one of several resources.