Introduction and Rationale for Using NSSE in NCATE Accreditation

One of the most common institutional uses of NSSE data is for accreditation. In fact, NSSE schools report that accrediting agencies are the primary external group with which they share NSSE results. There are two major reasons for this.

First, when assessing educational effectiveness accreditation agencies give less weight to indicators that represent institutional resources such as library holdings and student characteristics. More emphasis is placed on evidence of student learning. Regional associations and various specialized accrediting organizations urge colleges and universities to more thoroughly measure student learning. Specifically, demonstrating that processes are in place to assess and enhance learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness on an ongoing basis are among the recommendations. Student engagement results from NSSE are a direct indicator of what students put into their education and an indirect indicator of what they get out of it. NSSE data can show how engaged various types of students are in effective educational practices during the first and last years of college.

Second, regional and professional accreditation standards encourage institutions to focus on self-evaluation and formative reviews that guide improvement efforts. Rather than fashion self-studies as a stand-alone document for one-time use, they have begun to feature more elements of strategic planning and program evaluations that can be used to identify areas where institutions wish to improve. NSSE data are especially valuable for this purpose. The results are actionable; that is, they point to aspects of student and institutional performance that institutions can use to improve the curriculum, pedagogy, instructional emphases, and campus climate. In addition, because NSSE results allow a school to compare itself to others, the data often point to areas where improvement may be desired. NSSE results help answer key questions related to institutional policies and programs associated with high levels of student engagement and learning.

An effective accreditation plan is context specific. No one approach or template can do justice to the wide variety of institutional missions, curricula, and campus environments the plan is designed to address. However, two common early steps to developing an accreditation plan are to identify the assessment practices already in place and the data that are available and then to augment this evidence with the self-study process.

Specific applications of student engagement information for accreditation vary. They may range from minimal use such as including the results in a self-study appendix to systematic incorporation of NSSE results over time to demonstrate the impact of improvement initiatives.

This toolkit provides suggestions for incorporating NSSE into accreditation processes and products with an emphasis on mapping student engagement results to specialized accreditation standards.

NSSE and the NCATE Accreditation Process

“When combined with other assessments, NSSE provides an important starting point for discussion by faculty, program directors, community partners, and others about means of improving diversity in teacher education, a central purpose of the NCATE accreditation process.”

-Dr. Sean McKitrick, Assistant Provost for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
SUNY - Binghamton University

NSSE results can be used in many components of the NCATE accreditation process. These include but are not limited to (a) the initial self-evaluation report that responds to evaluation criteria established by the accrediting body; (b) the visit by the team of peer evaluators who gather additional evidence; and (c) ongoing review and maintenance that may include annual reports, annual summaries, and periodic reviews of strategic progress.

Standard 2: Assessment System and Unit Evaluation: NSSE results may also be used as one measure in the unit’s assessment system indicated in Standard 2: Assessment System and Unit Evaluation that collects and analyzes data on applicant qualifications, candidate performance, as well as on the effectiveness, fairness, and accuracy of the unit’s assessment procedures and operations.

For specific education schools or departments that hope to use NSSE results in specialized program accreditation processes, it is valuable to understand the institution’s strategy for administering and utilizing NSSE results. The following section provides suggestions on how education schools may work with central administration to ensure appropriate timelines, enough education students are sampled, and encourage participation in specialized consortia. Even for departments that may not have a direct impact on the decisions regarding NSSE participation, understanding general institutional policies will help in assessment of the usefulness of NSSE data in the specialized accreditation process.

**Timeline for NSSE Administration**

Institutions establish different timelines to meet their self-study objectives. Some administer NSSE on an annual or biennial basis. The appropriate NSSE participation cycle depends on how you intend to use the data. Many institutions have found it valuable to have several years of NSSE results to establish a reliable baseline of data, then assess their students every few years to allow time for institutional changes to take effect. This planned administration cycle maximizes the use of student engagement data for most accreditation purposes.

A substantial number of schools have gathered multi-year student engagement data and are carefully monitoring student learning processes to track trends over time and to make certain that institutional performance remains at the desired level.

Since the NCATE accreditation cycle may not coincide with regional accreditation or other priorities that drive an institution’s NSSE participation, review committees will need to plan their analyses and use of NSSE data around existing institutional participation timelines. Ideally, committees would have input into institutional decisions about the frequency of NSSE participation to establish baselines as well as to determining what criteria to use to identify education students in their population file.

**Forming a Consortium**

Education schools that wish to use NSSE data to support NCATE accreditation may want to explore participation in a consortium, a group of six or more colleges or universities participating in NSSE that share comparative, aggregated data among their institutions. Consortia may also ask up to 20 additional questions that address unique characteristics of the member schools (all consortium institutions will get the same set of questions). More information on forming a consortium and details on associated fees, is available on the NSSE Web site, www.nsse.iub.edu/html/consortia.cfm.

**NSSE Administration**

NSSE is administered using standardized procedures at all institutions. In 2010, NSSE began providing a census to institutions participating in the Web-only administration (smaller random samples are available upon request). Students are randomly sampled in paper and Web+ administration modes. To increase the likelihood that a representative sample of education students responds to NSSE - a key issue for those planning to use NSSE in accreditation - institutions are advised to request a Web-only administration to take full advantage of the census administration.

Schools of education will also need to determine what criteria to use to identify education students in their population file. A “group” variable which identifies these students can be included in the population file submitted by your institution to NSSE. Group variables could also add characteristics desired for further analysis (for example, school-reported education specialties). Group variables are returned in the institution’s data file with the Institutional Report delivered in August.

The NSSE survey also asks students to self-report their majors, and is another way to identify education students.

**Custom Analysis**

Custom analyses allow for more detailed comparisons between your students and those attending other institutions. A useful custom analysis for an institution seeking accreditation might be to compare the responses of your senior education majors to students in similar programs at selected institutions. There are additional fees associated with custom analyses. Find more information on the NSSE Web site. nsse.iub.edu/html/custom_analysis.cfm

**Partner Surveys**

Finally, NSSE offers two partner surveys, the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) and the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE). FSSE measures faculty members’ expectations of student engagement, provides information on how faculty spend their time related to professorial activities, and highlights the kinds of learning experiences the faculty emphasize. BCSSE measures entering first-year students’ high school academic and co-curricular involvements as well as their expectations and attitudes regarding their participation in educationally purposeful activities for the upcoming year. These surveys may be helpful in supporting NCATE standards related to faculty and students’ expectations and outcomes.
### Mapping NSSE to NCATE Criteria

This toolkit is not intended to be a “formula” for mapping NSSE results to accreditation standards, but is designed to encourage institutions to think more broadly about how these data can be used as evidence to support specific standards. Also, NSSE findings and benchmark scores may be used to support and document institutional improvement efforts, but will be most meaningful when coupled with other measures of student learning outcomes from your campus.

#### 2006-2011 NSSE Survey Items Mapped to NCATE Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic and Intellectual Experiences</th>
<th>NCATE Standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>a. Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Made a class presentation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d. Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources</td>
<td>1b, 3c, 4a-4d</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e. Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments</td>
<td>1b, 3c, 4a-4d</td>
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<td></td>
<td>f. Come to class without completing readings or assignments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>g. Worked with other students on projects during class</td>
<td>3b, 3c</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h. Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments</td>
<td>3b, 3c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions</td>
<td>1b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>j. Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>k. Participated in a community-based project (e.g. service learning) as part of a regular course</td>
<td>1b, 3b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>l. Used an electronic medium (Listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment</td>
<td>1b, 3b, 5b, 6d</td>
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<td></td>
<td>m. Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor</td>
<td>1b, 5b, 6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n. Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor</td>
<td>5b, 6a</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o. Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor</td>
<td>1c, 3b, 5b, 6a</td>
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<td></td>
<td>p. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class</td>
<td>3b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q. Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance</td>
<td>5b, 6a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>r. Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>s. Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>t. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.)</td>
<td>3c</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### 2006-2011 NSSE Survey Items Mapped to NCATE Standards (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NCATE Standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Mental Activities</strong></td>
<td><strong>3c, 4a-4d</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Reading and Writing</strong></td>
<td><strong>3. Reading and Writing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. Problem Sets</strong></td>
<td><strong>4. Problem Sets</strong></td>
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<td><strong>5. Exams</strong></td>
<td><strong>5. Exams</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6. Additional Collegiate Experiences</strong></td>
<td><strong>6. Additional Collegiate Experiences</strong></td>
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#### Mental Activities
- **u.** Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own
- **v.** Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values

#### Reading and Writing
- **a.** Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings
- **b.** Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment
- **c.** Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more
- **d.** Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages
- **e.** Number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages

#### Problem Sets
- **a.** Number of problem sets that take you more than an hour to complete
- **b.** Number of problem sets that take you less than an hour to complete

#### Exams
- Mark the box that best represents the extent to which your examinations during the current school year have challenged you to do your best work.

#### Additional Collegiate Experiences
- **a.** Attended an art exhibit, play, dance, music, theater, or other performance
- **b.** Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities
- **c.** Participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.)
### Enriching Educational Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>NCATE Standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>a. Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment</td>
<td>1b, 3b, 3c, 5b, 6b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Community service or volunteer work</td>
<td>1b, 6e</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>c. Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together</td>
<td>6b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements</td>
<td>5b, 6e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Foreign language coursework</td>
<td>4a-4d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. Study abroad</td>
<td>4a-4d</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>g. Independent study or self-designed major</td>
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<td></td>
<td>h. Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)</td>
<td>1b, 3b, 3c, 6b</td>
</tr>
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### Quality of Relationships

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>NCATE Standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>a. Relationships with other students</td>
<td>1c, 1g, 3b, 3c, 4a-4d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Relationships with faculty members</td>
<td>3b, 3c, 4a-4d, 5b, 6a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Relationships with administrative personnel and offices</td>
<td>3b, 6e</td>
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### Time Usage

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>a. Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Working for pay on campus</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Working for pay off campus</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e. Relaxing &amp; socializing (watching TV, partying, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>f. Providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g. Commuting to class (driving, walking, etc.)</td>
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</table>
### 2006-2011 NSSE Survey Items Mapped to NCATE Standards (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NCATE Standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>10</strong> Institutional Environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Spacing significant amounts of time studying and on academic work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically</td>
<td>3a-3c, 6a, 6b, 6d, 6e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds</td>
<td>3c, 4a-4d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Providing the support you need to thrive socially</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Using computers in academic work</td>
<td>1b, 1d, 3c, 6d, 6e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11</strong> Educational and Personal Growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Acquiring a broad general education</td>
<td>1a, 1b, 1c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills</td>
<td>1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1g, 3b, 3c, 4a-4d, 6a, 6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Writing clearly and effectively</td>
<td>1b, 1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Speaking clearly and effectively</td>
<td>1b, 1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Thinking critically and analytically</td>
<td>1a, 1b, 1e, 3b, 3c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Analyzing quantitative problems</td>
<td>1e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Using computing and information technology</td>
<td>1b, 1e, 3b, 6d, 6e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Working effectively with others</td>
<td>1c, 1g, 3b, 3c, 4a-4d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Voting in local, state, or national elections</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>j. Learning effectively on your own</td>
<td>1b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Understanding yourself</td>
<td>1g, 3b, 3c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds</td>
<td>1g, 3c, 4a-4d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Solving complex real-world problems</td>
<td>1b, 1c, 1e, 3b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. Developing a personal code of values and ethics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o. Contributing to the welfare of your community</td>
<td>1b, 1c, 6e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. Developing a deepened sense of spirituality</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
12 Academic Advising

Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution?

5b, 6a

13 Satisfaction

How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?

14 Satisfaction

If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?

Institutional Examples

Interest in using NSSE for specialized accreditation is growing across all sectors and types of institutions. Because NSSE focuses on student behaviors and effective educational practices, colleges and universities have found productive ways to incorporate survey results into their institutional self-studies and annual progress reports. In this section, we describe how selected institutions are using NSSE in NCATE accreditation.

Brigham Young University (BYU)
The David O. McKay School of Education at Brigham Young University used NSSE results in assessments related to diversity in support of continuing accreditation of its Educator Preparation Program (EPP). As described in their 2005 Institutional Report prepared for NCATE, the EPP Diversity Committee was formed in 2003 to develop a plan to increase awareness of diversity and the skills needed by faculty and students to address the learning needs of all students. After identifying areas in need of improvement, the Diversity Committee planned and carried out a series of initiatives which included: (a) creation of a Web site to feature diversity resources for faculty and staff; (b) coordination of multicultural curricula and syllabi across courses; (c) faculty retreats and meetings; and (d) several other projects related to improving the focus on diversity on the BYU campus. NSSE results were used as one of several measures in efforts to assess candidates’ proficiencies relative to diversity.

Indiana State University (ISU)
The College of Education at Indiana State University (ISU) asked the Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Research (OSPIRE) and the Office of Assessment and Accreditation to analyze the scores of teacher candidates on NSSE items related to diversity and technology. The study found that senior teaching candidates indicated higher levels of acceptance of diversity and use of technology than first-year students. However, senior teaching candidates reported fewer contacts with students from diverse backgrounds which led ISU to step up recruit-

Recent Trends in Accreditation

The following trends in accreditation support the use of student engagement results in assessment and institutional improvement initiatives in specialized programs:

- Campuses and accrediting bodies are moving toward self-studies that systematically review existing processes over time (like strategic planning, program evaluation or student services and enrollment management) as contrasted with one-point-in-time reports that have limited utility.

- Regional and specialized accrediting bodies have shifted away from setting and holding institutions to rigid quantitative standards that feature inputs and resources toward empirically-based indicators of institutional effectiveness and student learning.

- Regional and program accreditors are emphasizing the importance of cultivating “cultures of evidence” that nurture and sustain...
continuous improvement. Progressive campus leaders increasingly are harnessing the regional and specialized program re-accreditation process as a “chariot for change.” Rather than viewing the process as a burden or hurdle to be overcome, presidents, provosts, and deans are using the self-study and team visit as an opportunity to stimulate productive dialogue and to guide constructive change.

Accreditation Tips

Tip #1:
Student engagement results provided by NSSE are direct indicators of what students put into their education and indirect indicators of what they get out of it.

Tip #2:
NSSE items can be used to analyze the resources and appraise the effectiveness of the institution in fulfilling the mission and goals of individual specialized programs. Two such measures included in the educational gains items are the extent to which students' experiences at the institution have: (a) contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in specific program areas, and (b) helped them develop a personal code of values and ethics. Assessment of these experiences may help to demonstrate achievement of program mission and goals.

Tip #3:
NSSE data are actionable; that is, they point to aspects of student and institutional performance that institutions can address related to the curriculum, pedagogy, instructional emphases, and campus climate. In addition, because NSSE results allow a school to compare itself to others, the data often point to areas where improvement may be desired.

Tip #4:
The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) measures faculty expectations of student engagement in educational practices that are empirically linked with high levels of learning and development. Taken together, the combination of NSSE and FSSE results can be used to identify areas of strength as well as aspects of the undergraduate experience that may warrant attention and stimulate discussions related to improving teaching, learning, and the quality of students’ educational experience.

Tip #5:
NSSE results can help assess the degree to which the institution encourages contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds and the extent to which students report that their experiences at the institution have contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Results also can be used to demonstrate institutional effectiveness in responding to the increasing diversity in society through educational and co-curricular programs. These experiences may be particularly related to programs that focus on global or international culture and practices.

Additional Information:
Copies of this document, accreditation toolkits mapped to regional accreditation standards, and research reports related to NSSE data and accreditation are available on the NSSE Institute Web Site.

nsse.iub.edu/links/accred_toolkits

Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation Institutions. NCATE, February 2008

NSSE Toolkit update November 2011

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