Promoting Student Engagement:  
Involving Students with NSSE  
Planning and Results

William Woods University

Session Outcomes

- Identify key constituents to review NSSE results and strategize improvement efforts.
- Link NSSE to marketing research course student learning outcomes.
- Use student conversations to gain insight into effective educational practices.

Key Constituents

- President’s Cabinet
- Academic Council
- Community Life staff
- Retention Committee
- Faculty
- Board of Trustees

Key Constituents

- Students
  - Leaders
  - Marketing Research class
  - Focus groups
  - General population
- Strategic Planning Team
- Common Studies Learning Community

Review NSSE Results

- Overview of NSSE
- NSSE 2004 Means Comparison Report
- WWU report of critical thinking results
- Recommendations of campus leaders

Strategize Improvement Effort

- Decisions after key constituents reviewed 2004 NSSE results
  - Academic Challenge to be the area of emphasis for improvement efforts
  - Focus groups to elicit additional student perceptions about level of academic challenge at WWU
Link NSSE to Marketing Research Course Objectives
- Marketing Research course objectives
  - Design and lead an in-depth interview and/or focus group
  - Distinguish between bias and unbiased characteristics in the marketing research
  - Analyze data gathered from questionnaires and surveys using various testing devices
  - Prepare a written and oral marketing research report

Use Student Conversations
- Marketing Research internship project
  - 7 student interns
  - Marketing Research teacher
  - Director of Academic Assessment
  - 21 focus group participants

Planning Steps
- Research the topic
- Develop the questions
- Plan and script the session
- Invite the participants
- Conduct the sessions
- Compile the verbal and nonverbal observations
- Analyze the results and write the report
- Share the findings

Research the Topic
- Student interns reviewed:
  - NSSE 2004 Means Comparison Report
  - Report of NSSE Survey Results Related to Critical Thinking

Develop and Prioritize the Questions
- High School to College: (5)
  - How would you compare courses you took in high school to those you have taken or are currently taking in college?

  - Common Studies/Classes: (3)
    - In what ways did your Common Studies courses contribute to your education?

Develop and Prioritize the Questions
- Challenging: (2)
  - Describe the type of activities that keep a course challenging to you.
    - How challenging do you feel WWU has been during the years you have attended?
    - Do you feel that certain majors are more challenging than other majors?
    - Describe a course that you have taken at WWU that you feel provided a high level learning environment.
      - What assignments contributed?
      - What did the professor do?
      - What were the tests or other graded activities like?
Develop and Prioritize the Questions

**Homework/ Tests: (6)**
- What kind of studying do you do for most of your tests? (memorizing, analyzing, interpreting, etc.)

Develop and Prioritize the Questions

**Teacher Relationships: (4)**
- Do you feel your teachers consider you as an individual or a number?
- Do you feel comfortable approaching your teachers?
- What qualities make you feel comfortable approaching them?

Develop and Prioritize the Questions

**Real World Preparation: (1)**
- How do you feel classes at WWU have prepared you for the real world?
- What else could have been done?

Plan and Script the Sessions

**Intern Assignments**
- Moderator’s instructions
- Participants’ instructions
- Observers’ instructions and recorders’ packet
- Room arrangements

Invite the Participants

**Session 1**
- President’s Twenty
  - Student leaders, freshmen through seniors
**Session 2**
- Juniors & Seniors
  - Invited by interns

Conduct the Sessions

**Moderator**
**Student observers/recorders**
- Comments
- Body language
**Videographer**
Compile the Verbal and Nonverbal Observations

- Categories for organizing responses
  - Environment
  - Academic Challenge
  - Common Studies Content
  - Delivery of Information (Common Studies and Majors)
  - Real World Preparation
  - Student/Teacher Relations
  - Attendance Policies

Sample Table

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Analyze and Write the Report

Sample Observations & Conclusions

- Group 1 (President’s Twenty) is used to more discussion with each other than Group 2 (random selection of students).
- Overall, students were much more pleased with delivery within their majors than in Common Studies (70% of responses in the “Good” or “Outstanding” range).

Sample Quotations/Suggestions

- “We can read the book and tell you what we read, so you don’t need to tell us the same information. Tell us something different.”
- “WWU does a great job with building and retaining student-teacher relationships.”
- “You retain the information so much better when doing it rather than memorizing.”

Sample Overall Conclusions

- When asked to describe the types of activities that challenge them, students cite examples of application of knowledge.
- There is exceptionally strong evidence that students feel they are treated as individuals, not numbers, at William Woods University.
- 100% of the verbal and non-verbal responses indicate that students do not agree with the current attendance policy.

“Ahah” moment

- Equestrian students put in a lot of time at the barns, but do not consider it to be either homework or “academically challenging” because it does not entail writing a paper, reading a text, or calculating problem sets.
Share the Findings

- 2005-06 Focus on Academic Challenge
  - President and Academic Dean
  - President’s Cabinet
  - Faculty
  - Common Studies Learning Community

Added Benefits from The Marketing Class

Test the Method of Administration

- Problems with the online survey
  - 12 seniors took the survey in the computer lab
  - 12 juniors observed the seniors taking the survey
  - 5 seniors (41%) had problems accessing e-mail account
  - Group provided input concerning interpreting the questions, length of survey, and relevance of questions

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