NSSE Institute

INTRODUCTION

Scenario: The NSSE institutional contact opens the Institutional Report binder and starts reviewing the NSSE Overview. She quickly moves to the Respondent Characteristics table and then on to the Benchmark Comparisons for a general sense of engagement patterns, then digs into the Frequency Distributions and Mean Comparisons reports for item level results. Even though a picture of her institution’s results begins to emerge, she feels a bit overwhelmed by the many possibilities for using these data. The president wants a concise interpretation of the results on his desk by the end of the month, and she knows the Board of Trustees will be meeting soon thereafter to make decisions on the campus budget. She considers the work ahead and, in a mild panic, wonders aloud “What do I do first?”

If you can relate to this dilemma, consider turning to the NSSE Institute for some assistance. The NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice was created to respond to requests for assistance in using student engagement data to improve student learning and institutional effectiveness. Since its inception in 2003, NSSE Institute associates have completed a major national study of high performing colleges and universities, made dozens of presentations at national and regional meetings, and worked with several campuses to enhance student success. We invite you to consider how the NSSE Institute can be helpful to you.

Here are a few examples of how Institute associates have been involved with other schools, state systems and organizations:

• Designed several half-day workshops and daylong retreats with key administrators of several universities in the US and Canada to examine their NSSE and FSSE data and identify institutional policies and practices that promote and inhibit student persistence and academic success.

• Reviewed student engagement data in small groups with faculty, administrators, and staff at different types of colleges and universities to identify areas where the institution could profitably focus to improve student engagement.

• Presented a workshop at a system-sponsored conference for faculty members interested in using NSSE data in their scholarship in teaching projects.

• Facilitated a “back-to-school” faculty workshop for a regional public university aspiring to enhance student success by focusing on educational quality as measured by NSSE and to adapt lessons from the high-performing institutions featured in Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter (Kuh, Kinzie, Shuh, Whitt & Associates, 2005).

• Conducted a workshop on effective educational practice, assessment, and using FSSE data to institutional teams assembled for two state system conferences on student engagement.

• Advised a philanthropic organization on designing a symposium to examine the role of assessment and accountability for private colleges and universities.

• Helped design an invitational conference to examine the changing role of student affairs professionals in promoting student engagement.

• Met with the General Education Task Force at an urban doctoral extensive university to tease out areas where the institution’s student engagement results suggested attention was needed.

These examples illustrate the range of services we offer and the diverse institutions and organizations we serve. The rest of this section provides additional information about the NSSE Institute.

Note: An Institute brochure is attached to the inside face of the divider for this section. Feel free to remove and send it to a colleague or share it with an appropriate committee or task force on your campus. If you want additional copies of the brochure, please contact the NSSE Institute at www.nsse.iub.edu/institute/.
OUTREACH SERVICES

Regional NSSE Users Workshops

User Workshops are designed to allow institutional researchers, faculty, administrators, and staff an opportunity to gain ideas for using NSSE data from their colleagues at peer institutions and NSSE staff members. More specifically, workshop topics address how to use NSSE data for assessment, accreditation, self-studies, general education reviews, reviews of academic and student life programs, and faculty development initiatives. These ideas are presented over a two-day period in a collaborative environment. Through a combination of plenary sessions, concurrent interest sessions, group activities, and hands-on sessions, participants learn more about linking NSSE data to other institutional data, using the new Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) to understand faculty expectations for student engagement, and better understand educationally effective practice.

Past workshop topics have included:

- Promoting Student Engagement: Involving Students with NSSE Planning and Results
- Having a Successful NSSE Administration
- Moving From Data to Goals
- Lessons for Effective Educational Practice
- Using NSSE and BCSSE Data to Answer Assessment Questions
- Developing an Action Plan: Using Quality Tools to Analyze NSSE Data
- Using NSSE Data in Accreditation and Quality Improvement Plans
- Using NSSE and FSSE Results in Combination: An Overview of Existing Tools and Reports

The Spring Drive-in Regional NSSE Users Workshop co-hosted by Wichita State University, Friends University, and Newman University, was held on April 19-20, 2007, on the Wichita State campus. The event drew 78 institutional representatives from 32 colleges and universities and included faculty, staff, and administrators with commitments and responsibilities for enhancing the quality of the undergraduate learning experience. The sessions focused on topics such as using NSSE data for new and experienced users, multiple year analysis of NSSE data, student response rate and nonresponse error, the characteristics and level of engagement of students at urban universities, and ways to compare NSSE and FSSE data. Workshop participants also had the opportunity to sign up for individual consultations with NSSE staff to ask detailed questions about or gather new ideas on ways to analyze their NSSE data.

The fall workshop will be held at the University of Nevada, Reno, on Tuesday and Wednesday, October 16-17, 2007. Details on registration, accommodations, travel, and session schedules are available on the NSSE Institute Web site, www.nsse.iub.edu/institute/.

If you have questions about NSSE User Workshops or are interested in hosting an event at your institution, please direct inquiries and questions to Jillian Kinzie at 812-856-1430 (toll free 866-435-6773) or jikinzie@indiana.edu.

ACCREDITATION

Updated Accreditation Toolkits:

One of the most common institutional uses of NSSE data is for accreditation. NSSE data can be used in all components of the accreditation process: self-studies, visits by the team of peer evaluators, and in response to a decision by an accrediting body requesting improvement or additional evidence of student learning. The NSSE Accreditation Toolkits are guidelines that suggest ways to map specific items from the NSSE instrument to regional accreditation board standards. The toolkits are not intended to provide a formula for mapping items to accreditation criteria but, rather, to stimulate institutions to consider ways to integrate NSSE data with other measures of student learning outcomes into accreditation processes.

For the 2007 Institutional Report we have updated the toolkits to reflect changes in the standards for several regional accrediting organizations. We have also provided a new set of more recent examples of how institutions have used their NSSE data for accreditation.

Specialized Accreditation Toolkits:

Work has begun on guidelines that map NSSE survey items to specialized, professional accreditation standards related to specific programs of study. Toolkits for the Business Accreditation (BA) and Accounting Accreditation (AA) standards of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) will be available in the fall of 2007. Over the next year, the NSSE Institute plans to complete toolkits to assist institutions who are applying for initial accreditation or are participating in a regular reporting process to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation for education programs and to the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) for programs in applied science, computing, engineering, and technology.
LESSONS FROM THE CONNECTING THE DOTS PROJECT

The recently released report, *Connecting the Dots: Multifaceted Analyses of the Relationships between Student Engagement Results from the NSSE, and the Institutional Practices and Conditions that Foster Student Success*, is available for download from the NSSE Web site, www.nsse.iub.edu/pdf/Connecting_the_Dots_Report.pdf. The Connecting the Dots (CTD) project builds upon and extends the work of two Lumina Foundation for Education supported initiatives: the Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) project and the Building Engagement and Attainment of Minority Students (BEAMS) project.

The CTD project involved two strands of work. The first, examined the relationship between NSSE and selected indicators of student success. Cognitive interviews and focus groups carried out at eight institutions supplied data for the second strand of our project in which we conducted a series of psychometric analyses to determine how the NSSE survey performs when completed by minority students at predominantly White institutions as well as Minority-Serving Institutions. A combination of statistical analyses and qualitative methods were used to examine the validity, reliability, and other psychometric properties of the NSSE survey for different types of students and institutions.

The major findings from the CTD project indicate that engagement in educationally purposeful activities is positively related to first-year grades and persistence to the second year, engagement has a compensatory effect for historically underserved students, and finally, that the NSSE survey performs well for students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. This information provides institutions increased confidence in their NSSE results and justification for continuing their work on enhancing student engagement. We hope you find the report useful in your assessment and student success initiatives.

USER TOOL DEVELOPMENT

The NSSE Institute staff has continued to develop resources for institutional researchers and administrative staff to facilitate use of their NSSE data. In addition to the updated accreditation toolkits, we have:

1. Updated *Working with NSSE Data: A Facilitator’s Guide*. The guide is designed to help institutional leaders facilitate workshops, presentations, and discussions about interpreting and using NSSE data for campus stakeholders.

2. Created *A Guide to Contextualizing Your NSSE Data: Cognitive Interviews and Focus Groups*.

Typically used in survey design and development, techniques such as cognitive research testing and focus groups can be adapted for use by institutions to provide a more contextualized understanding of survey responses. The NSSE Institute developed a step-by-step guide to conducting cognitive interviews and focus groups that will help institutions develop a deeper understanding of their NSSE data.

Sharing contextualized information about what students have in mind when they respond to survey questions can help enliven discussions about NSSE results by providing concrete examples of student behaviors and institutional practices. In addition, information gleaned from interviews and focus groups can:

- Help determine or verify how students are interpreting survey items.
- Provide specific examples of what results mean in a local context.
- Help develop a deeper understanding of differences in the experiences of different groups of students (i.e. underrepresented students in specific majors; commuter students; non-traditional age students).
- Provide additional evidence on topics of interest to the institution.
- Help enhance understanding of results to increase the likelihood that reform efforts based on survey results will prove effective.
- The guide describes cognitive interview and focus group methodologies, the three stages of a cognitive interview, and provides suggestions for the coding of responses. Detailed instructions are provided for planning, conducting, and gathering data from interview and focus groups. For example, *Section V, Step-by-Step Preparation for Conducting Interview and Focus Groups*, will walk you through:
  - Following Human Subjects protocols
  - Preparing the interview team
  - Recruiting students
  - Interview set-up
  - Interview materials
  - Focus group materials
  - Data collection strategies
- You may download the full guide (26 pages), including protocols and recruitment messages from the NSSE Web site: www.nsse.iub.edu/pdf/cognitive_interviews_facilitation_guide.pdf.
RESOURCES TO ENHANCE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Publications

Three publications produced in conjunction with the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) Project are helpful resource materials for institutions concerned about enhancing student learning:


   Order directly from the NSSE Institute Web site for a 15% discount (www.nsse.iub.edu/institute/?view=deep/book_flyer).


   Order directly from the NSSE Institute Web site for a 15% discount (www.nsse.iub.edu/institute/?view=deep/book_flyer_2).


   Order from the NSSE Institute Web site (www.nsse.iub.edu/institute).

DEEP Practice Briefs

Presidents, senior academic affairs and student affairs administrators, faculty members, and governing boards (among others) too often have little time to read volumes of materials, even when they offer practical advice. For this reason, we have prepared more than a dozen DEEP practice briefs: four-page documents that summarize key findings from the strong-performing colleges in Project DEEP for specific campus audiences.

Later in this section of the Institutional Report, we have included one brief broadly intended for campus leaders, *Promoting Student Success: What Campus Leaders Can Do*. Improvement-oriented institutions may want to tie together this brief with their NSSE data to help motivate faculty, staff, and administrators around student engagement results. Additional briefs that complement this document are posted to the NSSE Institute Web site at www.nsse.iub.edu/institute/.

Student Success Report


NSSE PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT

NSSE Use Study

NSSE will expand efforts to gather additional information from college and university educators on how they are utilizing their institution’s NSSE, FSSE and BCSSE results. This information will be instructive for improving services and support to institutions who participate in the surveys.

We will continue to use our annual NSSE Report Card (Web-based survey) to solicit information from NSSE users. This year we will expand our data collection efforts to include specific questions on the utility of reports and also how educators are using the data to inform policy and program decisions at their institutions. If you are interested in sharing your story of NSSE use please send an e-mail to Jillian Kinzie at jikinzie@indiana.edu.

Benchmark Change Project

We know that NSSE results are used to inform or help launch campus improvement initiatives. However, we do not know to what extent such changes resulted in increases to an institution’s NSSE scores. To learn more about campus improvement initiatives and what it takes to move the needle, we are planning in the coming year to study campuses where NSSE benchmark scores have significantly improved. We will empirically identify institutions based on their NSSE scores and learn more about what accounts for the change via interviews with institutional contacts and mini-case studies. We will also study institutions that have recently launched improvement initiatives to examine their campus change process and ultimately if the results of their efforts are reflected in NSSE scores. If you have questions about this project please contact Jillian Kinzie at jikinzie@indiana.edu.
RESEARCH INITIATIVES

Wabash College Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts Projects

NSSE continues its collaborations with CILA through a licensing agreement that permits NSSE to be used in the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education, a longitudinal project to assess liberal arts outcomes. The project aims to explore not only whether and how much students develop because of their collegiate experiences, but also why and how this development takes place. One of the benefits of NSSE’s involvement in this project is the potential for exploring the relationship between engagement and a variety of outcomes measures, such as critical thinking as measured by the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) Critical Thinking Test and the moral reasoning and character as measured by the Defining Issues Test (DIT-2).

Parsing the First Year of College

Based at Penn State University, the Parsing project is using NSSE as one measure in its longitudinal study of the influences on student learning and persistence in the first year of college. Similar to the Wabash national study, students in the Parsing project will also complete the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) Critical Thinking Test. Data from this study will be available to NSSE for exploring the relationship between engagement and a variety of outcomes measures.

Teagle Foundation Grant to Evaluate Assessment Efforts

NSSE Institute staff are conducting an evaluation of Teagle Foundation assessment initiatives grants. These projects are designed to promote rigorous, systematic assessment of the quality of undergraduate education in the liberal arts, to encourage the use of existing assessment models and tools in liberal arts colleges, to develop additional approaches that are sensitive to educational processes valued in the liberal arts tradition, and to cultivate a culture of evidence on participating campuses.

Teagle Improved Assessment Methods Grant: Deep Learning

The Teagle Foundation, under its Improved Assessment Methods grant competition, is supporting an initiative aimed at establishing the relationships between deep approaches to learning, critical thinking skills and dispositions, and reflective judgment. The NSSE survey, which contains a deep learning activities scale, is being administered along with the California Critical Thinking Skills Test, the California Critical Thinking Dispositions Inventory, and the Reasoning about Current Issues test at Indiana University Bloomington and two other campuses. The project will help validate a component of the NSSE instrument by connecting deep learning processes to highly valued educational outcomes.

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