

National Survey of Student Engagement

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NSSE 2008 Overview

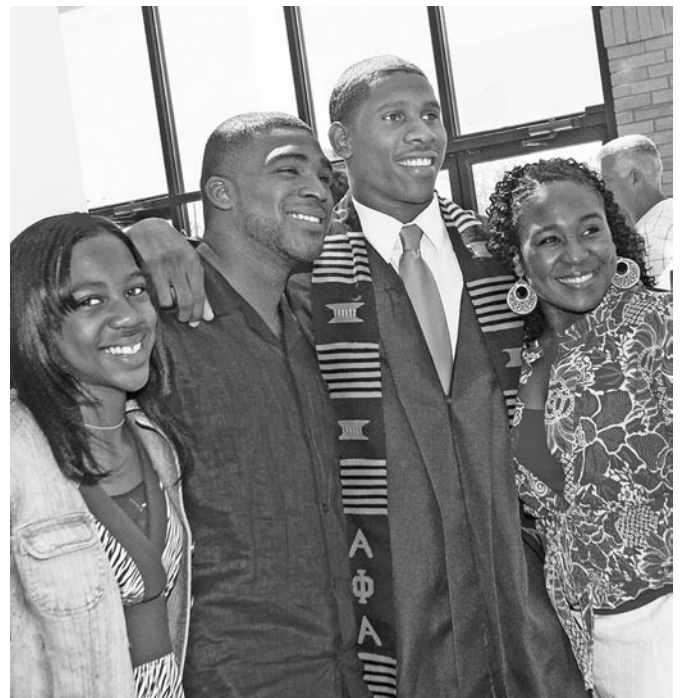
The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information annually from samples of first-year and senior students about the nature and quality of their undergraduate experience. Since its inception, more than 1,300 baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities in the US and Canada have used the instrument to measure the extent to which students engage in effective educational practices that are empirically linked with learning, personal development, and other desired outcomes such as student satisfaction, persistence, and graduation. NSSE data are used by faculty, administrators, researchers, and others for institutional improvement, accountability, and related purposes. Launched by a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, since 2002 the NSSE project has been supported by institution participation fees.

About 1.4 million first-year and senior students from 769 institutions in the US and Canada were invited to participate in the 2008 NSSE administration. Of this survey population, 478,079 students responded, including 78,288 students from Canadian institutions. A list of all participating institutions is available on the NSSE Web site at www.nsse.iub.edu/nsse_2008/2008-colleges.cfm.

The trend of more institutions electing Web-based administrations continued in 2008 as 466 institutions (61%) opted for the Web-only administration mode, in which students received all contacts by e-mail and completed the survey online. The Web+ survey option was used by 235 institutions (31%). This mode includes multiple e-mail contacts and one paper questionnaire sent to a portion of non-respondents. The remaining 68 institutions (9%) chose the paper questionnaire mode. Notably, half of all respondents at paper administration institutions elected to complete the survey online rather than submit the paper instrument they were provided. Overall, about 96% of all NSSE 2008 respondents completed the survey online.

U.S. Institutions and Respondents

Table 1 shows how NSSE 2008 institutional characteristics compare with the profile of all baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities in the United States. Comparative data for these tables are from the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The Far West and Southwest regions are slightly underrepresented in NSSE 2008, while the Mid East region is slightly overrepresented. Although NSSE 2008 institutions are generally representative of the distribution of institutional types in the 2005 Basic Carnegie Classification, Baccalaureate Colleges-Arts & Sciences and Master's Colleges and Universities with larger programs are somewhat overrepresented, and Baccalaureate Colleges-Diverse Fields and Research Universities with very high research activity are slightly underrepresented. In all, the NSSE 2008 participating institutions reflect the diversity of U.S. higher education with respect to institutional type, sector, region, and location.



Newman University

Table 1
Profile of U.S. NSSE 2008 Institutions Against All U.S. Baccalaureate-Granting Institutions and Their Students^a

	Institution-Level		Student-Level	
	NSSE	US ^b	NSSE	US ^b
Carnegie Classification – Basic 2005^c				
RU/VH	4%	6%	12%	21%
RU/H	7%	7%	14%	17%
DRU	5%	5%	6%	8%
Master's L	27%	22%	30%	28%
Master's M	13%	12%	11%	8%
Master's S	7%	8%	5%	4%
Bac/A&S	22%	18%	14%	7%
Bac/Diverse	16%	23%	8%	7%
Control				
Public	42%	35%	60%	67%
Private	58%	65%	40%	33%
Undergraduate Enrollment				
Fewer than 1,000	13%	19%	2%	2%
1,000 – 2,499	35%	34%	11%	11%
2,500 – 4,999	21%	18%	14%	13%
5,000 – 9,999	16%	14%	21%	20%
10,000 – 19,999	10%	10%	26%	28%
20,000 or more	5%	5%	27%	26%
Region				
New England	10%	9%	8%	6%
Mid East	23%	18%	20%	17%
Great Lakes	15%	15%	16%	16%
Plains	11%	11%	10%	8%
Southeast	25%	24%	25%	23%
Southwest	6%	8%	6%	12%
Rocky Mountains	3%	3%	5%	4%
Far West	8%	10%	9%	12%
Outlying Areas	0%	2%	0%	2%
U.S. Service Schools	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%
Location				
City	47%	46%	52%	60%
Suburban	22%	24%	22%	19%
Town	24%	21%	22%	15%
Rural	7%	9%	5%	6%

RU/VH Research Universities (very high research activity)
 RU/H Research Universities (high research activity)
 DRU Doctoral/Research Universities
 Master's L Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)
 Master's M Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)
 Master's S Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)
 Bac/A&S Baccalaureate Colleges-Art & Sciences
 Bac/Diverse Baccalaureate Colleges-Diverse Fields

a. Percentages are unweighted and based on U.S. postsecondary institutions that award baccalaureate degrees and belong to one of the eight Carnegie classes in the table. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
 b. U.S. percentages are based on data from the 2007 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics file.
 c. For information on the 2005 Basic Carnegie Classifications, see: www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications

Table 1 also shows the distribution of NSSE 2008 respondents and the national distribution of students by these same characteristics. At both the institution- and student-level we see that NSSE 2008 participants largely reflect the U.S. percentages. At the same time we see that while small and private institutions account for an appreciable share of institutions, larger and public institutions enroll more students, both in NSSE and nationally. NSSE comparison reports use special weights to prevent distortions due to the presence of institutions of varying size in comparison groups.

Table 2 shows selected characteristics of NSSE 2008 U.S. respondents. The first column represents the students who responded to the survey in 2008. The second column represents the undergraduate population at NSSE 2008 participating institutions. The third column shows the profile of all students attending all baccalaureate-granting institutions in the US as indicated by IPEDS data.

NSSE 2008 U.S. Cohort Profile

The standard NSSE sampling scheme calls for an equal number of randomly sampled first-year and senior students at a given institution, with the sample size based on the total number of undergraduate students enrolled. Institutions participating in Web-only and Web+ administrations automatically receive a random oversample of students due to the efficiency of Web-based data collection. In addition, many institutions request random oversamples to increase the number of respondents, thereby reducing sampling error and enhancing their ability to examine results by subgroups. All randomly selected eligible student respondents from U.S. institutions are referred to collectively as the NSSE 2008 cohort. Only randomly selected, or cohort, respondents are used for institution and comparison groups in institutional reports. The NSSE 2008 cohort consists of 385,842 respondents, made up of 125,440 students sampled under the standard sampling scheme and an additional 260,402 students selected through random oversamples. The data provided in the remainder of this *Overview* are based on the NSSE 2008 cohort unless otherwise noted.

Table 2
Characteristics of NSSE 2008 U.S. Respondents, Undergraduate Population at Participating U.S. NSSE Institutions, and Undergraduate Population at All U.S. Baccalaureate-Granting Institutions^a

	NSSE 2008 Respondents	NSSE 2008 Population ^b	U.S. Baccalaureate Population ^c
Gender			
Male	36%	44%	44%
Female	64%	56%	56%
Race/Ethnicity^d			
African American/Black	9%	12%	12%
Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native	1%	1%	1%
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	6%	7%	7%
Caucasian/White	76%	69%	67%
Hispanic	7%	9%	10%
Other	2%	2%	n/a
Multiracial/Ethnic	<1%	<1%	n/a
International	5%	2%	3%
Enrollment Status			
Full-time	90%	86%	82%
Part-time	10%	14%	18%

a. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

b. NSSE 2008 population data are provided by participating institutions.

c. U.S. percentages are unweighted and based on data from the 2007 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics and Enrollment file.

d. IPEDS and NSSE categories for race and ethnicity differ. Percentages exclude students whose ethnicity was unknown or not provided.

Selected NSSE 2008 Cohort Characteristics^a

Year in School

The NSSE 2008 cohort respondents were almost equally divided between first-year (49%) and senior (51%) students.

Gender

Women made up more than three-fifths (64%) of the respondents compared with 56% of the students enrolled at NSSE 2008 institutions, and 56% of students enrolled nationally (Table 2). The larger proportion of female respondents is consistent with widely reported survey research findings that women are more likely than men to respond to surveys. Weighting adjusts for the gender imbalance in institutional comparison reports.

Age

Students 19 years of age or younger represent the largest group (41%) of respondents. About 39% of all respondents were 20-23 years old, 9% were between the ages of 24 and 29, and 11% were 30 years of age or older. Of first-year student respondents, 13% were 20 years of age or older; while 33% of seniors were 24 years of age or older.

Race and Ethnicity

African American/Black and Hispanic students are slightly underrepresented, while Caucasian/White students are slightly overrepresented (Table 2).

Living Arrangements

Overall, approximately 44% of students lived in campus housing (72% of first-year students, 19% of seniors). The remainder lived within driving distance (38%), within walking distance (17%), or in a fraternity or sorority house (1%).

Fraternity or Sorority

About 11% of men and 10% of women were members of a fraternity or sorority.

Grades

Approximately 44% of all students report earning mostly A grades (40% of first-year students and 47% of seniors). About 4% of students report earning mostly C grades or lower (5% of first-year students and 2% of seniors).

Enrollment Status

About 90% of all respondents were enrolled full time (Table 2). Weighting adjusts for the enrollment imbalance in institutional comparison reports.

Parents' Education

Of all respondents for whom education information was provided for both parents, 43% were first-generation college students with neither parent having completed a baccalaureate degree. About 81% of respondents had at least one parent with some college education, while approximately 57% had at least one parent who had graduated from college with a baccalaureate degree. Approximately one-third (32%) of respondents indicated both parents having a baccalaureate or higher degree.

Transfer Status

About two-fifths (41%) of senior respondents began postsecondary education at a school other than the one they were attending when they completed the NSSE survey. About 51% of these transfer students had previously attended another baccalaureate-granting institution, 69% had attended a community college, 13% had attended a vocational-technical school, and 5% had enrolled in some other form of postsecondary education.

Primary Major Field

Table 3 shows the percent of students pursuing majors in various fields of study, by class and by gender. More men pursue studies in business, engineering, and physical sciences, while more women pursue majors in arts & humanities, education, professional schools and the social sciences.

a. Students for whom institutions did not provide class year are omitted from "Select NSSE 2008 Cohort Characteristics" findings. Percentages reported are unweighted.



Eastern Washington University

Table 3
Percentage of Students by Primary Major, Class, and Gender at NSSE U.S. Institutions^a

Major ^b	First-Years		Seniors	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Arts & Humanities	13%	15%	14%	16%
Biological Sciences	8%	9%	7%	7%
Business	19%	14%	21%	16%
Education	4%	12%	5%	13%
Engineering	14%	2%	12%	2%
Physical Sciences	5%	3%	5%	3%
Professional (<i>other</i>)	5%	14%	5%	12%
Social Sciences	10%	14%	12%	17%
Other	18%	13%	21%	15%
Undecided	4%	4%	<1%	<1%

^a Percentages are unweighted.

^b NSSE codes major information using 85 categories developed by NSSE from the 2000 Classification of Instructional Programs. For information on the classification, see: www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2002165. The condensed major categories above are used for NSSE reporting purposes. Additional details concerning the majors included in each category are available in the *NSSE 2008 Codebook*.

US and Canadian Response Rates

The average institutional response rate for NSSE 2008 (Table 4) was 37%. The average institutional response rate for paper mode schools (institutions where students were invited by postal mail, but had the option of completing either the paper or the Web version of the survey) was 32%, with approximately 70% of these institutions achieving a response rate between 20% and 46%. Fewer than half of the students responding at these institutions completed the paper survey, while 54% elected to complete NSSE online. The average institutional response rate for NSSE 2008 Web-only institutions (institutions where students could only complete the survey online) was

39%, with approximately 70% of these institutions achieving a response rate between 25% and 52%. Institutions participating using the Web+ mode of administration recorded an average institutional response rate of 35%, with 70% achieving response rates between 24% and 49%.

Additional information about response rates, including response rates for your institution calculated at the student level, are provided in the *Respondent Characteristics* report.

Table 4
NSSE 2008 Participation and Response Information by Survey Administration Mode^a

Survey Administration Mode	Number of Institutions ^b	Average Institutional Response Rate	% of Students Responding via Web ^a
Paper	67	32%	54%
Web-only	463	39%	100%
Web +	233	35%	96%
All	763	37%	98%

^a Response rates and percent of students responding via Web are based on randomly sampled participants only.

^b Table does not include results for six NSSE 2008 institutions that participated as part of a special research program.

Canadian Institutions and Respondents

Forty-seven Canadian institutions from nine provinces participated in NSSE 2008. Of these, 20 institutions were from Ontario, 11 were from Quebec, five each were from British Columbia and Nova Scotia, two were from Alberta, and one each was from Manitoba, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, and Saskatchewan.

In addition, four universities participated in the Canadian Research Universities consortium, while 20 were part of the Ontario Universities consortium in 2008. All Canadian institutions participated via the Web-only administration mode.

Response Rates

The average Canadian institutional response rate for NSSE 2008 was 39%, ranging between 17% and 56% for all institutions.

Student Overview

More than 200,000 Canadian students were invited to participate and the total number of respondents was 78,288 (Table 5). Women made up 63% of the respondents. About 88% of respondents were enrolled full-time. Of all respondents, 20% were enrolled in a social science major, 17% in an arts & humanities major, 12% in business, and 11% in biological sciences.

Summary of Ethno-Cultural Categories

The majority of students providing ethno-cultural information identified themselves as White (71%). Additionally 11% identified as Chinese, 6% as South Asian, 3% as Black, and 2% each self-identified as Latin American, Southeast Asian, or Arab. Ethno-cultural categories used by Canadian institutions participating in NSSE were adapted from Statistics Canada, Canada's national statistical agency.



Dalhousie University

Age

Students 20-23 years of age represented the largest group (43%). About 39% of respondents were 19 years old or younger and 12% were between the ages of 24 and 29.

Table 5
Characteristics of Canadian NSSE 2008 Respondents^a

NSSE 2008 Respondents at Canadian Institutions		N=78,288
Gender		
Male		37%
Female		63%
Enrollment Status		
Full-time		88%
Part-time		12%
Major		
Arts & Humanities		17%
Biological Sciences		11%
Business		12%
Education		3%
Engineering		9%
Physical Sciences		5%
Professional (<i>other</i>)		8%
Social Sciences		20%
Other		16%
Undecided		<1%

^a Percentages are unweighted.



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