Overview of User Resources and Activities of the NSSE Institute

The NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice was created to develop user resources and respond to requests for assistance in using student engagement results to improve student learning and institutional effectiveness. Since the NSSE Institute’s inception in 2003, staff and 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 many campuses to enhance student success.

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

- Designed a day-long retreat with administrators and faculty at an urban research university to review their NSSE and FSSE data and identify institutional policies and practices that promote and inhibit student persistence and academic success.
- Reviewed student engagement data with small groups of faculty, administrators, and staff at colleges and universities to identify areas where the institutions could focus to improve student engagement.
- Presented a workshop at a system-level conference for faculty members interested in using NSSE data in their scholarship of teaching projects.
- Worked with teams from dozens of colleges and universities that participated in regional workshops (Texas, Illinois, Florida, Oklahoma, Connecticut, Kansas, and Nevada) on using NSSE and FSSE results for accreditation and institutional improvement initiatives.
- Advised teams at an annual summer institute on learning communities about using NSSE results to develop and assess the effectiveness of learning communities.

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.

We invite you to consider how the NSSE Institute can be helpful to you in your institutional improvement efforts.

Outreach Services

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 results for assessment, accreditation, self-studies, general education reviews, reviews of academic and student life programs, and faculty development initiatives. These ideas are presented in a collaborative environment over a two-day period. Through a combination of plenaries, 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), as well as the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) to understand faculty expectations for student engagement, and to better understand educationally effective practice.

The fall 2007 NSSE users workshop was held at the University of Nevada, Reno, on October 16-17. The event drew over 60 institutional representatives and included faculty, staff, and administrators with commitments and responsibilities for enhancing the quality of the undergraduate learning experience. Highlights of the workshop included a standing room only audience for the luncheon plenary, “NSSE: Retrospective and Prospective,” given by Dr. George Kuh, Chancellor’s Professor of Higher Education and Director of the Indi-
ana University Center for Postsecondary Research. On the second day of the workshop, Dr. Robert Smallwood, Assistant to the Provost for Assessment at the University of Alabama, delivered the breakfast plenary on using the Classroom Survey of Student Engagement (CLASSE) to look at assessment of student engagement at the classroom level. Presentations are posted to the workshop Web site, www.nsse.iub.edu/workshop_presentations.

The 2008 fall users workshop will be held at the State University of New York, Brockport, on Thursday and Friday, October 16-17, 2007. Details on registration, accommodations, travel, and session schedules are available on the NSSE Institute Web site, www.nsse.iub.edu/fall_workshop.

If you have questions about NSSE users 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.

**NSSE Webinars**

NSSE initiated a series of free, live, interactive Webinars scheduled on a number of Tuesdays. The first Webinar, “Assessing the First-Year Experience,” focused on approaches to maximizing the use of NSSE results to inform first-year experience programs, retention initiatives, and activities for the sophomore year. Topics for other Webinars have included “Using NSSE Data for Student Affairs” and “Introduction to BCSSE.” All previous sessions are recorded and are available for viewing on the NSSE Web site, www.nsse.iub.edu/webinars.

Please join us for future Webinars to learn more about how NSSE results can be used in institutional assessment and planning. Upcoming sessions will cover: how to use your Institutional Report; using NSSE, FSSE, and BCSSE data in combination; and multi-year analysis of NSSE data. We suggest a group viewing as a convenient way to participate with your colleagues and to facilitate cross-campus conversations about using NSSE. A schedule, detailed descriptions, and registration information are posted on the NSSE Web site, www.nsse.iub.edu/webinars.

**Accreditation**

**Updated Regional Accreditation Toolkits**

The NSSE Accreditation Toolkits offer guidelines for incorporating NSSE into accreditation self-studies and suggest ways to map specific items from the NSSE instrument to regional accreditation board standards. For 2008 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**

New to the Institutional Report 2008 are links to guidelines that map NSSE survey items to specialized, professional accreditation standards related to specific programs of study. Specialized accreditation toolkits have been prepared that align NSSE survey items with the business and accounting program standards of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB); teacher education program standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE); and applied science, computing, engineering and technology program standards of ABET.

Find links to both the regional and specialized toolkits under the Accreditation Toolkit & Additional Resources tab in the Institutional Report binder.

**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 regional and specialized accreditation toolkits, we have:

1. Updated and expanded *Working with NSSE Data: A Facilitator’s Guide*

Similar to an instructor’s manual, the facilitator’s guide provides suggestions for leading a workshop, presentation, or session on interpreting and using NSSE data for campus stakeholders.

The guide includes:

- Preparation notes for facilitators
- Outlines for addressing topics related to NSSE data
- Exercises and worksheets

We have included step-by-step instructions for facilitating a group session using the data reports provided in the Institutional Report. Each section contains a sequenced program that may include an overview of the data report, suggestions for how the facilitator can prepare for individual topics, definitions of key terms, exercises, FAQs, and questions for further discussion. Worksheets are provided to accompany the exercises.
2. Developed the **Multi-Year Data Analysis Guide**

More than three quarters of NSSE participating schools have administered the survey more than once. This new guide will help users analyze multiple years of NSSE data for trends and stability.

The guide will help to answer questions such as:

- Can an institution’s existing reports be used to evaluate changes from year to year, or should data sets be merged to conduct a separate analysis?
- Since the NSSE survey has changed over time, how can institutions quickly identify comparable survey items and benchmarks?
- What is an appropriate methodology for determining if there has been a meaningful change between years?

The items on the NSSE survey and the construction of reports have been adjusted over time in an effort to provide institutions the most accurate information possible in any given year. These improvements, however, make multi-year analysis of NSSE data more complex. Thus, this guide provides resources, information, and suggestions for suitable approaches to NSSE multi-year analysis, and may strengthen the validity of final conclusions. The guide accompanies the **Multi-Year Benchmark Report**, which provides recalculated and comparable benchmark scores and related statistics for all years of NSSE participation.

Find print copies of both guides in the User Resources section of the binder.

**NSSE Use Study**

We are very interested in learning more about how institutions use what they learn from NSSE, FSSE, and BCSSE. To gather information from college and university educators, NSSE staff are conducting interviews with representatives from selected institutions through the summer of 2008. The resulting feedback will be compiled and analyzed to improve services and support to institutions who participate in the surveys and to expand examples and stories of NSSE use to feature in publications and presentations. Contact Jillian Kinzie, jkinzie@indiana.edu, or your Client Services team to share your story of NSSE use.

**NSSE Change Project**

We know that NSSE results are used to inform or help launch campus improvement initiatives. However, we don’t know to what extent such interventions resulted in changes to an institution’s NSSE scores. To learn more about campus improvement initiatives and what it takes to move the needle, we conducted analyses of multi-year results for all institutions that have participated in at least three NSSE administrations. Using a variety of statistical methods, we derived a set of institutions where NSSE scores on select scales have significantly changed. To learn more about what might have accounted for these changes, we will begin interviews with institutional contacts and conduct mini-case studies in the fall of 2008.

**Research Initiatives**

**Wabash College Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts Projects (CILA)**

NSSE continues its collaborations with CILA and will again arrange a licensing agreement that permits NSSE to be used with the 2009 cohort of the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNSLAE), 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. WNSLAE received funding from the Teagle Foundation and the Davis Foundation to add about 25 more schools to the study beginning in fall 2008. To encourage these schools to participate in a standard NSSE administration, we will again offer to work closely with them and the research team regarding modifications to the survey administration process.

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 moral reasoning and character as measured by the Defining Issues Test (DIT-2). Findings from the first year of the WNSLAE show promising results regarding the relationship between effective educational practice measured on NSSE and key outcomes assessed in the study. NSSE and the WNSLAE research team recently discussed plans for further analysis of NSSE data and key outcomes to support cross-validation activities. We hope to work out a data sharing agreement with the team to explore additional cross-validation studies and other research questions.

**Teagle Foundation Grant to Evaluate Assessment Efforts**

NSSE Institute staff completed the Teagle Foundation Evaluation project in the spring of 2008. The Teagle Foundation funded six “collaboratives” involving 30 colleges for three years of work focused on using assessment
instruments and data to cultivate a culture of evidence on their campuses. These efforts aimed to advance the adoption and use of assessment models and tools in liberal arts colleges and to develop additional approaches that are sensitive to educational processes valued in the liberal arts tradition. The larger goals of this initiative were to stimulate faculty-driven assessment, to produce evidence of deeper, engaged learning by undergraduates, to develop a capacity for ongoing assessment in liberal arts colleges, and, ultimately, to enhance student learning.

We are now seeking ways to share lessons learned from the project to create a model for collaboration and develop approaches to using assessment to improve student learning. These efforts will entail more detailed examinations of the development and implementation of assessment plans at several colleges from within the collaboratives.

**CIC-CLA Consortium Project**

The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) continues to work with a consortium of institutions that have decided to use the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) instrument, an evaluation tool for measuring the cognitive growth of students. The goal of the CIC-CLA project is to learn more about programmatic features that correlate with “institutional effects” associated with larger than expected gains in students’ analytical reasoning, critical thinking, and writing skills. NSSE is one diagnostic tool that schools can use in their efforts. We are working with CIC and CLA to explore the potential for participating institutions to: 1) administer BCSSE, CLA, and NSSE surveys to match first-year data to outcomes for in-depth analysis of the First-Year Experience, including relationships among high school experiences, college expectations, engagement, self-reported gains, and all measures and success indicators; and 2) administer NSSE and CLA to seniors to examine the relationship between experiences and CLA scores. We will join CIC for their August 2008 workshop with consortium institutions to help facilitate the use of NSSE in their projects.

**Building Engagement and Attainment of Minority Students (BEAMS)**

The Building Engagement and Attainment of Minority Students (BEAMS) project was a partnership between the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) and NSSE and more than 100 four-year institutions in the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education. Having administered NSSE at least once, these institutions committed to implementing action plans to improve the quality of the undergraduate experience on their campuses and conducting another NSSE administration to assess success.

The BEAMS project ended in December 2007. In spring 2008, IHEP hosted a series of regional events to disseminate the BEAMS findings and promote the forthcoming release of the monograph, “Increasing Student Success at Minority-Serving Institutions: Findings from the BEAMS Project.” Each event featured a panel of BEAMS campus representatives, and BEAMS project staff from IHEP and NSSE, who discussed the project’s findings and recommendations. Event sites included the University of the District of Columbia (March 13), California State University-Dominguez Hills (March 25), Spelman College (March 28), University of Puerto Rico-Humacao (April 1), and University of the Incarnate Word (April 4). The monograph is available for download on the IHEP Web site, [www.ihep.org/Publications/publications-detail.cfm?id=96](http://www.ihep.org/Publications/publications-detail.cfm?id=96).

In addition, the project resulted in 10 practice briefs that focus on aligning multiple campus initiatives, campus leaders’ support, co-curricular activities, collecting survey data for assessment, engagement among campus constituencies, faculty development, first-year programs, student support services technology, and writing across the curriculum. Find brief titles and links to PDF copies in the Accreditation Toolkit & Additional Resources section of the Institutional Report binder.