



NSSE Position Statement: Public Disclosure of Student Engagement Results

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) provides valid, reliable and usable information about the quality of undergraduate education at national, sector, and institutional levels. To this end, hundreds of colleges and universities are using the NSSE benchmarks of educational effectiveness to take stock of their performance. Prospective students, parents, the media and others have also expressed interest in institution-level results. So far, at least one quarter of NSSE schools have made some or all of their NSSE results available to the public (e.g., website, alumni magazine, press release).

1. **NSSE encourages public disclosure of student engagement results in ways that serve to increase understanding of collegiate quality and that support institutional improvement efforts.** Disclosing institutional results from the NSSE survey provides an opportunity to help educate the public about the value of student engagement as a new metric for defining and examining collegiate quality. NSSE especially supports public reporting of student engagement results in ways that enable thoughtful, responsible institutional comparisons while encouraging and celebrating institutional diversity.
2. **Whether a participating institution makes public their student engagement results is up to the institution.** Consistent with the NSSE participation agreement, NSSE does not make institutional scores available to third parties. Institutions may do so if they wish as stated in the NSSE Participation Agreement. While organizations and individuals are entitled to request NSSE results from participating schools, NSSE is neutral as to whether institutions supply their results. In the near term some colleges and universities will be understandably cautious about releasing their scores with only one or two years of information available, or if the institution has not thoroughly vetted and had an opportunity to take action on the results. Premature disclosure could inadvertently divert the focus away from improvement if the data are used in inappropriate or irresponsible ways.
3. **NSSE does not support the use of publicly disclosing student engagement results for the purpose of rankings.** The NSSE National Advisory Board and NSSE co-sponsors -- The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning -- believe that reducing student engagement to a single indicator obscures complex dimensions of institutional performance. Thus, rankings are inherently flawed as a tool for accountability and improvement, whatever the information on which they are based. Such comparisons become even more problematic in the case of schools that differ in terms of mission and resources and that differ in terms of the percentages of students who are enrolled full- or part-time, who are transfers, or who major in various fields.