Using NSSE Data

Introduction

Interest in using student engagement data is building across all sectors and types of institutions. Indeed, the most frequently asked question of NSSE staff these days is, “How are schools using their results?” Now in our fourth year, we are beginning to better understand how, why, and with whom schools are using NSSE data and results.

The ideas we offer come from a number of sources, including the annual NSSE Report Card we use to collect feedback from participating schools, telephone interviews with NSSE users, conference presentations by NSSE users, NSSE user group meetings, and campus visits.

NSSE’s Core Activities

To set a context for how NSSE data are being used, it’s helpful to have NSSE’s core activities in mind. We conceptualize them in the form of a triangle.

The largest segment of the triangle represents activities that focus on institutional improvement efforts. Colleges and universities use the information from their NSSE institutional report and other sources to determine what they are doing well and to identify areas where improvement is desirable. As we explain later, linking NSSE results to other institutional information about the student experience may generate additional insights.

A second set of activities is targeted toward documenting and reporting effective educational practices and then translating and sharing this information with institutions and groups working to improve undergraduate education. One of NSSE’s new initiatives, the NSSE Institute (featured in the “Additional Information” section of this report) is building on, documenting, and expanding our knowledge about using effective educational practices to promote student learning and improve institutional effectiveness.

The third portion of the triangle represents our commitment to steering the discourse about collegiate quality away from institutional resources and reputation toward effective educational practices. As more colleges and universities use NSSE, its influence and contribution to discussions about institutional effectiveness will expand. Our public advocacy commitment is represented by the NSSE pocket guide, “College. What You Need to Know Before You Go,” a pamphlet designed to help prospective college students ask the right questions when they visit a school (www.iub.edu/~nsse/html/pocket_guide_intro.htm).

These three sets of activities are not mutually exclusive, certainly. Indeed, synergy across these activities is necessary for NSSE to accomplish its mission.
Multiple Uses of NSSE

Because NSSE focuses on student behavior and effective educational practices, colleges and universities have found many different, productive ways to use survey results:

- Assessment and improvement
- Benchmarking
- Accountability
- Institutional research
- Accreditation
- Retention
- General education reform
- Alumni outreach
- Grant writing
- Institutional advancement
- Self-studies
- State system performance reviews

Later we describe how selected institutions are using their results. In most instances, a communication strategy is needed in order to get people to attend to and take interest in the findings.

Communicating Results Internally

Institutions often use several approaches to share their results. It’s usually most effective to use a combination of dissemination activities.

Selected Audiences

Targeting specific audiences that may have expressed an interest in, or that should be aware of, one or more aspects of the results can facilitate focused dialogue about implications of the findings for policy and practice.

- Brigham Young University-Hawaii presented findings to the Faculty Advisory Committee as well as an ad hoc faculty “think tank,” providing an opportunity for them to review and respond to the report.
- Boise State University planned a half day retreat for student affairs personnel where the data were presented and implications were discussed. Findings were also presented to a broader audience through the “Assessment News” newsletter.

Campus Wide

To distribute NSSE results broadly, many schools post summaries of important findings, and invite colleagues to review the full report online or by request through the appropriate office.

- The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse creates individual reports for the deans of each college, who then present them to their faculty in a variety of ways.
- Spring Hill College posted its results on the front page of its web site and then held a “NSSE Summit” with a group of students, using faculty facilitators to explore what students found surprising about the results, what was not surprising, and why. Students were then asked what could be done to enhance specific aspects of the college.

Another way to share results is to post them to internal or public web sites. You can see some examples, such as Drexel University and North Carolina State University, by linking to participating institutions’ home pages from the NSSE website (www.iub.edu/~nsse).
Communicating Results Externally

Accreditors are the most common external audience for NSSE results. About a third of NSSE schools tell us that they are using their results, or expect to refer to them, in self-studies and accreditation reports. Examples can be found on page 8.

Governing boards, state oversight agencies, and university systems also see value in student engagement data. “The NSSE survey has been valuable at the System level for accountability purposes, allowing us to provide national benchmarks along with system data,” said Frank Goldberg, Associate Vice President for Policy Analysis and Research, University of Wisconsin System.

A number of colleges and universities provide information via news releases and special feature articles for student, local, and regional newspapers. Some of these are included on the NSSE web site at www.iub.edu/~nsse/html/news.shtml.

More than two thirds of the schools responding to the NSSE 2002 Report Card had not yet shared results with external audiences. Some of these schools see NSSE as primarily an institutional improvement tool. Others are in the process of triangulating the results with other institutional data before deciding on appropriate action.

Establishing Standards of Comparison

NSSE data serve a diagnostic function by identifying institutional strengths and weaknesses in terms of effective educational practices. Comparisons with peer institutions and the national averages help reveal aspects of institutional and student performance not readily available from other sources.

Benchmarking

There are two basic approaches to benchmarking that NSSE schools are using. One or both may be appropriate, depending on your institution’s situation.

Normative Approach

The normative approach compares your students’ responses to those of students at other colleges and universities. If enough students have participated, this can also be done at the department or major field level—a particularly effective way of stimulating faculty interest in the findings.

• Daemen College initiated use of NSSE to establish a baseline of student engagement among freshmen and seniors so that entering and graduating classes could be compared across years and against peer institutions.

Criterion Approach

A second approach to benchmarking is criterion referenced, whereby you compare your school’s performance against a predetermined value or level that you and your colleagues deem appropriate for your students, given your institutional mission, size, curricular offerings, funding, and so forth.

• University of Wisconsin-Stout has set NSSE benchmarks for themselves within the context of their strategic plan. Several strategic indicators were set for each goal in the plan, and NSSE represents one of the indicators the school is tracking to measure success.

“The NSSE items are clear-cut—and meaningful. NSSE data always seem to point to things we can DO something about.”

-Kathleen Carlson,
Director of Planning and Assessment,
Saint Xavier University
NSSE TIP #1

NSSE on the Web

More than 100 colleges and universities have disclosed some or all of their results on the Web. Publishing NSSE results on the Web in an appropriate way is not only a way to highlight institutional strengths, but can also demonstrate your school’s commitment to quality improvement.

Some NSSE schools display their entire means and frequency reports. Others post selected results highlighting particular strengths or news releases emphasizing institutional participation and the importance of the study.

Criterion Approach (cont.)

- After reviewing NSSE findings at one state university in the South, faculty members in various units established what they considered to be reasonable thresholds for the amount of time students should spend preparing for class. Some groups stipulated that a minimum of two hours studying for every hour of class meeting should be the standard while other units established higher or lower thresholds. NSSE data for students majoring in the different units were then interpreted according to whether these criterion levels were met.

- Southwest Texas State uses a discipline-specific, criterion-referenced approach when looking at levels of engagement across departments. Faculty members asked themselves, “What should be the level of collaborative learning activities in the College of Liberal Arts?” Do we want 50%, 60% or 70% of our seniors to report “often” or “very often” that they work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments?

Lessons Learned About Using NSSE Data

Based on the collective experience of NSSE early adopters, we offer the following suggestions for incorporating NSSE data in institutional change efforts. More details can be found on pages 18-20 of the NSSE 2002 Annual Report.

1. **Make sure faculty and staff understand and endorse the concept of student engagement.** The value of student engagement results to improving teaching and learning need to be convincingly explained to those faculty less familiar with assessment in general and the engagement concept in particular.

2. **Collect enough results so the information is usable at the department or unit level.** Surveying more students than called for by NSSE’s standard sampling strategy can allow schools to drill down to the department or unit level, which may increase faculty interest in using engagement data.

3. **Understand what student engagement data represent and use the results wisely.** It takes time, perspective and experience to understand and make the best use of NSSE results.

4. **Report student engagement results in a responsible way.** NSSE encourages schools to share their results in ways that lead to a better understanding of collegiate quality and promote institutional improvement efforts.

5. **Don’t allow the numbers to speak for themselves.** Every number and comparison reported should be accompanied by an explanation and interpretation of what can and cannot be concluded from the results.

6. **Examine the results from multiple perspectives.** Use peer comparisons to confirm or challenge assumptions about performance quality, but also consider a criterion-referenced view of student engagement in the context of the school’s mission. It’s also wise to compare the engagement levels of specific student groups, such as first-year women students or seniors in various majors.

7. **Link the results to other information about the student experience and complementary initiatives.** The positive impact of student engagement results will be multiplied if the data can be made relevant to groups of faculty and staff working on different reform efforts around the campus.

8. **Don’t go it alone.** Experts argue that the chances of successful innovation improve when campus teams are formed and institutions work together in consortial arrangements on topics of mutual interest.
**Institutional Improvement Examples**

In this section we’ve grouped examples of how colleges and universities are using NSSE data into the following categories: general education, technology, advising, first-year experience, involving students in interpreting NSSE data, enriching educational experiences, faculty and staff development, enrollment management and recruiting, accreditation, planning and accountability, and student-faculty interaction.

**General Education**

- Mount Mary College is using reports generated from NSSE data as part of the planning process for a revision of their core curriculum.
- Aurora University discussed the role of computing in its general education requirements and the need for a more formalized curriculum. NSSE results helped stimulate movement on both issues.
- Eastern University (formerly Eastern College) formed a task force that focused on core competencies such as writing, math, oral communication, and computer skills. To address some of the issues related to writing, the task force recommended definition of certain courses as writing intensive and provision of opportunity for students to rewrite papers after receiving feedback from faculty.
- At Saint Vincent College and Seminary, faculty examined individual items to see which dove-tailed with departmental goals and mission in a way that would allow the items to serve as performance indicators. One example was writing across the curriculum. The college found that students at similar colleges were writing more, prompting departments to look at the number of papers being written and whether students’ writing improved throughout a course.
- Prior to its participation in NSSE, Drake University eliminated its oral communication requirement. NSSE results indicated that students did not give as many presentations as expected or develop speaking skills at the desired level. Drake is now attempting to inject more opportunities for oral communication experiences into the curriculum, with a particular eye on using the first-year seminar program for this purpose.
- Illinois State University used NSSE results as evidence in its assessment of changes made to their general education curriculum.

**Technology**

- Saint Xavier University faculty used NSSE data as part of their application for a Title III grant to increase retention through student engagement and technology.
- St. John’s University in New York has set new targets for integrating technology in the curriculum based on a review of its NSSE results.
- For the past several years, Framingham State College has focused on teaching faculty how to integrate technology in their courses. This has the dual intent of exposing students to technology use while increasing communication between students and faculty. Although not a result of NSSE data, future NSSE participation will be used to assess changes resulting from the initiative.

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“We’ve used our NSSE results fairly extensively in discussions within our Provost’s Council to better understand the behavior of our students so that we can manage our academic and co-curricular programs as well as possible.”

- Alan Caniglia, Franklin & Marshall College

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**NSSE TIP #2**

**Special Peer Comparisons**

To assist in benchmarking efforts, NSSE allows schools to select other participating schools for a special peer comparison report with a minimum of six schools in the aggregated request. Schools can also ask for peer comparisons with institutions from a different Carnegie category.

NSSE also conducts specialized analyses on an as-needed basis to assist schools in answering specific questions (e.g. how do our women engineering students compare with other women engineering students from across the country?). The fees for special analyses are based upon time required to complete the project.
Advising

NSSE data show that student satisfaction with the quality of their advising is a strong predictor of interaction with faculty, overall satisfaction with college, and perceptions that the campus environment is supportive.

- Baruch College used NSSE data to inform changes in its major advisement process.

First-Year Experience

- North Carolina State University uses its NSSE results during new student orientation to emphasize key activities and behaviors that lead to student success.
- Birmingham-Southern College is in the process of incorporating NSSE data in the creation of a new curriculum called First-Year Foundations, which involves three freshmen-only experiences.
- Brigham Young University-Hawaii will initiate a first-year experience program, including learning communities, with a limited number of freshmen this fall based on a review of NSSE results related to first-year students.
- Roanoke College held open forums to focus on NSSE responses related to level of academic challenge for first-year students. NSSE data provided momentum for addressing the academic experience of first-year students.
- One small college reallocated resources to provide release time for faculty involvement in orientation and the first-year program. In addition, the campus retention team used NSSE data as evidence of the need for additional staff.

Involving Students in Interpreting NSSE Data

Some schools are making strong efforts to share their NSSE data with undergraduates and interpret the results in ways that are meaningful for students. Student representatives are included on assessment committees at some institutions. Sharing results with student government is a typical way to inform students.

- One school created posters highlighting their results and displayed them in the student union.
- Norfolk State University and Evergreen State College encouraged students who read their schools’ NSSE reports to write editorials for campus newspapers.
- At Oregon State University, the vice provost for student affairs suggested that first-year students in the Leaders of Positive Innovation Program examine NSSE data and provide feedback to administration. Students were provided with the Oregon State NSSE institutional report and were allowed to plan how they would use the information to lead in a positive direction.

The 24 students divided themselves into work groups with the task of using NSSE data, seeking out other data that existed on campus, and conducting their own surveys and research. Students then made recommendations to the Provost’s Council, such as ways to increase faculty-student interaction beyond the classroom and build involvement in campus clubs.

Several of their recommendations actually validated changes being considered by other departments, such as changing housing contracts to a full year with a penalty for early termination, and increased emphasis on academic theme residence halls.
**Enriching Educational Experiences**

Several schools have responded to their NSSE results by increasing opportunities to study abroad, adding service learning components to courses, creating living-learning communities, and further developing capstone experiences for seniors.

- New College of Florida plans to increase curricular focus on preparing students for study abroad, internships and independent study.
- Juniata College is considering the addition of a requirement that every student complete a capstone experience before graduation.
- The University of Charleston (West Virginia) is reconceptualizing their senior capstone course around desired engagement practices measured by NSSE.
- Rollins College is implementing living-learning communities to improve student interaction and collaboration. Their efforts will include a focus on fostering discussions about diversity as well as increasing interactions between diverse students.

**Faculty and Staff Development**

NSSE results may be appropriate for faculty and staff development workshops and retreats, such as those sponsored by the local chapter of The Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL). Presenting student engagement data is one way to initiate discussions about a variety of teaching and learning issues.

- Asbury College used NSSE data as the centerpiece of a fall and spring faculty forum on best pedagogical practice and curriculum. Several faculty have changed the ways they are teaching their courses as a result of these data discussions.

To encourage faculty members to reflect on and use the data, a growing number of schools are adapting the NSSE survey, with NSSE’s permission, for use with faculty members to help differentiate faculty expectations from student perceptions. Southwest Texas State University pioneered this approach. More recent variations are being used at Alverno College, University of Akron, and other institutions, such as Winthrop University:

- Prior to the start of classes each fall, Winthrop University holds an academic retreat for its faculty leaders and administrators. After receiving its NSSE results, the Office of Assessment and Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs selected NSSE items to give to participants who were then asked to provide two responses. First, they were to indicate how they thought their students WOULD respond. Next, faculty members were asked to give their ideal response - how did they think their students SHOULD respond?

  The actual responses from Winthrop's NSSE report were then shared with the faculty participants, highlighting similarities and differences between students' responses and perceptions of faculty. Later in the fall, a discrepancy analysis was conducted to help focus the campus on self-improvement, especially in areas where student scores were lower than faculty expectations.

In response to strong interest in adapting NSSE for use with faculty, a Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) was piloted last spring. More than 16,000 faculty from 147 colleges and universities responded. See the “Faculty Survey of Student Engagement” tab in the institutional report binder for more information.

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**NSSE Tip #4**

**Linking NSSE Data with Other Sources**

NSSE results can be linked to other data sources on campus to determine whether improvement efforts are having the desired effect.

Some schools want multiple years of data before taking action. Other institutions corroborate NSSE results with existing evidence and are confident in moving ahead to address areas of concern, such as student use of technology, increasing the amount of assigned reading and writing in certain majors, and quality of academic advising.

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“We distributed a summary of our results widely on campus and posted it to our internal Web site. The result was an unprecedented wide-ranging discussion of our educational and intellectual climate led by students, engaged by faculty, and supported by a lengthy discussion at a meeting of our Board of Regents.”

-Lynne Arthur Steen
Professor of Mathematics and Director of Institutional Research, St. Olaf College
Enrollment Management and Recruiting

NSSE data are also being used to provide more accurate and realistic descriptions of campus life to prospective students and parents. Some schools use NSSE data to present empirically-derived portraits of the typical student in viewbooks, recruitment literature, brochures, and gatherings of prospective students to accurately convey expectations for college life.

A new publication, the NSSE pocket guide, provides prospective students with a list of questions organized around NSSE benchmarks to help them focus on issues of student engagement as they investigate various college options. The guide is provided free to high school guidance offices as well as college and university admissions offices. Schools with NSSE data can design publications and train staff to answer the questions students might ask based on this guide.

Indiana University Bloomington, the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, and other schools link first-year student NSSE data with fall sophomore enrollment records to discover the student engagement factors that predict persistence, with an eye toward developing an early warning system to identify students at risk of premature departure.

Accreditation

As mentioned earlier, about a third of NSSE schools plan to use student engagement data in accreditation, both for regional and discipline-specific reviews (teacher education, social work, music, nursing, business, etc.).

- Evergreen State College used NSSE data to meet an accreditation requirement to compare student assessment results with national norms. Evergreen State researchers felt NSSE not only meets the requirement, but is suited to their own needs as well.

- College of St. Scholastica used NSSE data in each of the five criteria for its self-study for North Central accreditation, with the data being particularly useful for demonstrating outcomes.

Planning and Accountability

NSSE results are used along with other surveys and existing institutional data for strategic planning (e.g., Keuka College, Saint Mary’s College of California, Transylvania University).

- The University of Nebraska-Lincoln decided to use NSSE after the offices of academic affairs and student affairs agreed that both would find the results useful. Collecting information about academic and out-of-classroom experiences on the same instrument was seen as a way to guide conversations between academic affairs and student affairs and help them make connections between different parts of the student experience.

Some states are incorporating NSSE data as indicators of institutional effectiveness, such as the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, the University of Wisconsin System, and the University of Texas System.

- Cal Poly plans to participate in NSSE on alternate years for use in the development and improvement of institutional outcomes assessment and the biennial CSU accountability process. For this purpose, Cal Poly joined 12 other CSU campuses in a consortium to address some common system-wide questions. Analysis of the NSSE data from two years was presented as part of an institutional accountability report to CSU and its Board of Trustees.
Student-Faculty Interaction

A frequently expressed concern is about the level of student interaction with faculty members. For instance, some small liberal arts colleges were surprised to find that students did not report as much contact with faculty as institutional leaders expected. NSSE results related to student-faculty interaction are also disquieting for many research intensive universities.

- In response to first-year student reports about the frequency of interaction with faculty members, Marymount Manhattan College plans to have more full-time faculty and fewer adjunct instructors teach first-year courses.
- At Drake University, NSSE results raised the question of how much students were interacting with faculty. In response, they designed a first-year intensive residence life experience similar to an intensive seminar in which faculty would be involved, including programs outside the classroom.
- The University of Montana has made $3,000 grants available to departments to stimulate projects that increase student engagement; the first $2,000 is awarded to implement a project, and the remainder once an assessment of its impact is completed.
- Based on its NSSE results, the University of Richmond is implementing several strategies to enhance student relationships with faculty, particularly in the first year of study, including involving more students in research projects. In addition, the university intends to expand opportunities for students to serve on institutional committees and to increase faculty interaction with students through the advising process.
- Columbia College, a women’s college, is using NSSE results to leverage several innovations. Although NSSE results highlighted many areas where the school achieved at high levels, they also pointed to some areas for improvement. As a result, the college has begun to implement a series of initiatives including:
  1) A four-year general education plan that incorporates signature course work in the freshman year, learning communities in the sophomore year, mentoring and/or service learning in the junior year, and capstone experiences in each major in the senior year.
  2) An Office of Community Service to support and encourage service learning; and
  3) An Office of Leadership and Globalization to support and encourage student study abroad and faculty development of study abroad programs.

Other Reported Uses

- Assessing the impact of learning communities, such as first-year interest groups, intensive first-year seminars, and orientation to college courses.
- Assessing the quality of senior capstone courses and internships.
- Sharing NSSE data with academic advisors so that they can help students better manage their time and use other academic resources.
- Organizing campus symposia around the topic of student engagement.

NSSE Tip #5

Faculty Development Activity

One activity that helps increase faculty and staff interest in using NSSE results is to ask groups to identify the college activities, listed on page 1 of the survey, that would lead to the greatest gains in student learning and development.

Results of this activity can then be tallied and used to narrow in on three or four activities. Faculty and staff members can then brainstorm ways that the institution can increase the frequency of student engagement in these locally identified high priority activities.

“We’re using NSSE to complement our Academic Vision Plan, which emphasizes student engagement in academic and co-curricular programs and integration of various aspects of their four-year experience.”

-Jane Jakoubek
Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs, Hanover College
Coordinated Uses of NSSE Results

In the first four years, nearly 400 colleges and universities participated in 46 self-selected consortia. The consortia represent very different types of institutions — women’s colleges, urban universities, Jesuit institutions, engineering colleges, art and design colleges, and research universities. Institutions participating in consortia or state systems typically shared results with a central office, though some communicated directly with other members of the group. Schools in two consortia exchanged student-level records after removing individual student identification information. One group was composed of four public universities in Ohio, the other of 15 Doctoral Extensive Universities.

- The four campuses in the University of Missouri system use NSSE for studying student success issues. Not only do individual campuses use their own data to evaluate local objectives, but the system also uses the results to track system goals from its strategic plan.

NSSE results can be linked with information from academic transcripts, retention studies, focus groups, and results from other surveys to develop a rich, comprehensive picture of the undergraduate experience.

State & University Consortia from 2000-03

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How Often to Use NSSE?

On average, a school’s NSSE results do not change dramatically from one year to the next. Knowing this, NSSE recommends that an institution use the survey every 3-4 years. That said, some colleges and universities have specific reasons for using NSSE more frequently, even annually. For example, some schools want data every year for longitudinal tracking purposes or to monitor the impact of specific improvement initiatives. Others time their NSSE participation with the accreditation cycle. Still others are using NSSE to obtain information they can use in funding proposals. Ideally, NSSE should be used in combination with other assessment tools to capture the richest, fullest picture of the college student experience.
Public Disclosure of Student Engagement Results

Prospective students, parents, the media, and others have expressed interest in seeing institution-level NSSE 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). Other schools see NSSE primarily as a tool for institutional effectiveness. Some schools are triangulating the results with other institutional data before deciding on appropriate communication strategies.

NSSE’s Position on the Public Disclosure of Student Engagement Data

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 its 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 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 student behavior and institutional performance. For this and other reasons, 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 percentages of students who are enrolled full- or part-time, who are transfers, or who major in various fields.
Overcoming Potential Obstacles to Using NSSE Data Effectively

Converting assessment information into action is a challenge for all colleges and universities. Below we provide ways to address some of the more common obstacles.

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<tr>
<td>Small number of respondents</td>
<td>Check to see how representative the sample is compared to the respective populations. Review sampling error. Try over-sampling to increase number of respondents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions about validity and reliability</td>
<td>NSSE has conducted a number of studies to document the validity of the instrument, including stability analyses, test-retest, focus groups, and non-responder bias checks. The FAQ section of the NSSE psychometrics report (located in the Additional Information section of this report) provides more information about this important set of issues.</td>
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<td>Inappropriate comparison group</td>
<td>Contact NSSE for another peer comparison or special analyses to capture a better fit.</td>
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<td>Limited capacity to analyze and report results</td>
<td>The reports that NSSE sends institutions can be quickly packaged and sent to faculty and staff with little work.</td>
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<td>“Average” results across the board</td>
<td>Try using a different comparison group or consider a criterion-based approach to determine to what degree student performance is inconsistent with institutional expectations.</td>
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<td>Lack of faculty awareness of, or interest in, using student engagement results</td>
<td>Consider administering the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), a modified version of NSSE that looks at student engagement from the faculty perspective. Results may be useful to discuss at a retreat or workshop. Also, make available a summary of the literature on the value of effective educational practices.</td>
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Final Word

Collecting and documenting how NSSE colleges and universities are using their results is an ongoing process. We would very much like to hear about how you are using your NSSE data. Please send us specific examples of internal reports or brochures highlighting NSSE data, usage strategies, and special activities. This way we can be more helpful to other colleges and universities and assist in our continuing efforts to improve the quality of the undergraduate experience for all students.

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