

32 Featured Institutional Uses

Beyond the value of communicating important changes being implemented as a result of student feedback, “You Spoke. We Listened.” was used strategically as a recruitment tool for NSSE 2014 to help prompt students to participate in the upcoming NSSE administration. The office of institutional research and assessment coordinated with the housing and residential education office to effectively promote NSSE 2014 (for example, by sliding handouts under students’ dorm-room doors) and, as a result, the institution observed an uptick in first-year responses.

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With approximately 15,000 undergraduate students, Boston University’s overall response rate for NSSE 2014 was 59%, exceptionally high for an institution of its size (the average response rate among similar size institutions in 2014 was 22%). Boston University (BU) attributes its high response rate to (1) marketing and communication efforts, (2) a convenient and guaranteed incentive, (3) collaborative efforts across campus, and (4) BU students’ desire to provide constructive feedback.

To plan its NSSE administration, BU formed a collaborative, interdepartmental committee with members from student affairs, residence life, student life, the provost’s office, institutional research, marketing and communications, and the faculty. Based on both previous survey experience and recommendations from the committee, BU personnel decided to promote NSSE extensively through multiple mediums, including posters, table tents, mailbox stuffers, signs on shuttle buses, newspaper articles, tweets from the office of the dean of students, and in-class announcements. Marketing efforts began prior to the survey launch and were sustained throughout the administration. Student leaders were also a part of the promotion, as resident assistants kept their respective communities updated with current response rate information. Additionally, all students who completed the NSSE survey were provided a \$5 credit on their campus card. BU faculty and staff invested time,



Boston University

effort, and resources in their NSSE administration, and it clearly paid dividends in a high response rate.

With the support of a new president, BU administrators sought to push the institution into the next tier of student engagement. A team of professionals from marketing and communication, residence life, the dean of students office, individual colleges, and the institutional research office reviewed BU’s retention rates and found them lower than desired. This team, the campus’s Student Engagement and Retention Group, identified NSSE as a way to benchmark student engagement within individual colleges, particularly around advising. As the main sponsor behind BU’s first NSSE administration, the team reviewed the results first and immediately created a plan to share the data widely with the provost’s cabinet and the deans and faculty within Boston’s nine undergraduate colleges.

Administrators and faculty at BU found that data presented in the NSSE reports were intuitive, helpful, visually attractive, and easy to reproduce. The Student Engagement and Retention Group used BU’s NSSE *Snapshot* as a primer for the university. However, with over 33,000 students at the campus, the team identified college- and department-level data as most important to improving outcomes. Thus, for more precise information regarding student advising experiences, BU disaggregates their data by college and major.