"The new questions seem to **engage the campus** much more. We've had more conversations on campus around the data and what it means than we've ever had before. Some of the data will be used to drive a faculty assembly day in January. It's gotten **great conversations** going that can only help us improve."

— Nancy Grear, Director of Institutional Research and Assessment (retired), Nazareth College

Creating NSSE Champions

YORK UNIVERSITY

York University is a public research university with two campuses in Toronto, Canada. With 55,000 students, it is the third-largest university in Canada and one of the biggest in North America. York has participated in seven NSSE administrations, including in 2014. York's Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis (OIPA) led a carefully planned campaign to engage the larger campus community in a successful NSSE administration. In partnership with the Division of Students, an initial steering committee of four was formed to guide the NSSE administration and promotional efforts.

After brainstorming initial ideas, the steering committee sought one representative from every faculty (equivalent to academic department or program in U.S. colleges and universities), from every front-facing administrative department, and from the student union to serve as a "NSSE Champion" in a larger working group and to lead promotional efforts in their own units. Committee members were recruited via a call to action from the provost and through presentations to various groups on campus. The presentations aimed to raise awareness of the value of NSSE and the importance of improving response rates. They also expressed a commitment to share the results more widely than before. The working group met every two weeks to help develop and test ideas, share techniques, and to maintain promotional momentum.

After rethinking York's previous practice of not offering incentives to recruit participants, the working group created two kinds of incentives. At the end of the campaign, five $500 tuition waivers and 20 $25 bookstore coupons or student account top-ups were awarded by lottery. During the campaign, every student who completed the survey was awarded, on their student card, an electronic "virtual coupon" that was redeemable for a coffee at the campus Starbucks franchise or for $5.00 off any purchase at York Lanes—the campus retail center. The coupons were donated by the retailers. York's information technology office developed software to make sure the process from completing the survey to transmission of the coupon was as seamless as possible.

York designed the campaign to be ubiquitous on campus, so that when the initial NSSE invitation email arrived, every student would know what it was for. To promote the survey, the working group used several strategies including the following:

- Hired a student to make a teaser promotional video called "What Is NSSE?" that was shared on the York webpages, played on LCD screens around campus, and posted on social media.

- Designed an extensive set of webpages with detailed information about what NSSE is and why it matters, what the incentives are, how faculty and staff can get involved, and how to promote NSSE ethically.

- Used student-centric social media channels to generate awareness and discussion of NSSE and to encourage participation in the survey.

- Displayed professionally designed and branded promotional messages on computer monitors in labs and on screens in classrooms.

- Created a digital Communications Toolkit with information and material to help promote NSSE in faculties (e.g., departments) and classrooms. The toolkit aimed to support conversations between faculty, staff, and student groups and included downloadable promotional postcards and posters, or an online form for requesting print copies of these. Posters were posted in high-traffic areas and postcards were used as information pieces and conversation starters.

One innovative idea for the York campaign was to create an internal competition in which the academic program with the highest participation rate would receive the "NSSE Champion Cup." During the administration of the survey, the standings were updated every Thursday and displayed on York's NSSE webpage and on every LCD screen across campus at 2:00 p.m. (see Figure 7).
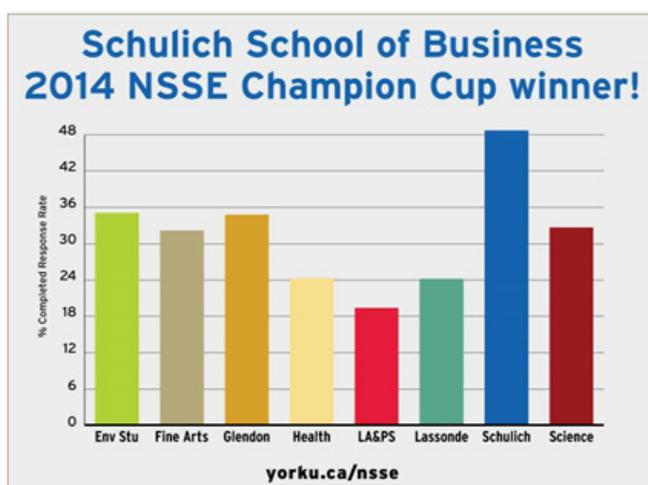

Figure 7. Example of York University faculty standings for the NSSE Champion Cup, shown on campus LCD screens

Results were also disseminated to the community via social media. At the end of the NSSE administration, the cup was awarded to the Schulich School of Business, which won with a final overall response rate of 52%. York's president awarded the trophy to the dean and his team of NSSE champions, who will keep the cup and bragging rights until the next administration of NSSE, in three years.

The working group continued to meet throughout the NSSE administration to share updates and best practices among the champions. One unit's faculty found that the best promotional ambassadors were other students and advisors, so they encouraged students rather than administration to talk up NSSE. Another unit's faculty found beginning-of-class announcements and distributing promotional postcards after class to be effective. Although central oversight of the campaign was critical, it was important for individual units to tailor their own campaigns to fit their culture.

Improving student participation in the NSSE 2014 administration was important to York because the results would be used to help set priorities in campus planning exercises. York replicated all of its institution-level NSSE reports as faculty-level reports with internal benchmarks. York also created item-level trend analyses using NSSE's Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons report. Because the 2014 survey instrument differed from previous versions, items were grouped into "no change," "minor change," and "other," according to NSSE's guidelines. In total, about 70 reports were produced.

After looking at their results, one unit observed that their senior students were under-using their academic advisors relative to benchmarks, so they initiated offering the option of academic advising via Skype or smartphone to give busy students more flexibility. Another unit observed that their students had longer commute times than the rest of the institution. As a

York University President Mamdouh Shoukri with the Schulich School of Business team, Keshia Gray, Dean Deszö Horváth (holding the NSSE Champion Cup), and Marcia Annisette

result, in-person workshops are being replaced with live and recorded webinars and a student was hired to work between classes to encourage other students to complete their financial aid applications. Yet another unit is using their results to encourage departments to include more experiential learning and high-impact practices in their curricula.

When asked what advice they would give to other campuses looking to boost their response rates, York recommended involving as much of the community as possible in the campaign. For large universities in particular, it is important not only to guide the campaign centrally, but also to allow the different academic units and other groups to promote the survey according to their unique cultures. Make sure that students know NSSE is coming well before the invitation letter is sent. Tell everyone how important NSSE is for identifying areas of academic strength and challenge; then associate NSSE results with improvement initiatives once the results are known. Be creative; campaigns that catch the imagination and rally the community can become engagement tools in their own right.

Inspiring Greater Use of Assessment Results

UNIVERSITY OF SAINT MARY

The University of Saint Mary (USM), in Leavenworth, Kansas, participates in various external and internal surveys to gather direct and indirect evidence of educational effectiveness at many levels of the university. About three years ago the campus revamped their assessment efforts, in response to feedback from their accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), which encouraged them to make their campus assessment efforts more data-driven. HLC wanted to see more data-based and informed decision making.

In response to the feedback for expanded assessment efforts, USM faculty and staff examined the measures they had in place and solicited further feedback. The faculty unanimously echoed the desire to create a combination of internal and external assessment measures. As such, they realigned their University Learning Outcomes (ULOs) to three assessments. First, each semester faculty report student achievement of ULOs. Second, first-year students and seniors complete a direct assessment of achievement by participating in the CLA+ (CAE's collegiate level assessment). Third, first-year students and seniors report on their behaviors and time on task through annual participation in NSSE. Combined, the campus is able to look across faculty reports of student learning, students' performance, and students' reports about their behavior and engagement. Additionally, for comparisons, the campus can look at national data, usually in percentile ranks.

Upon receiving their 2014 NSSE results, USM distributed copies of their NSSE *Snapshot* to senior administration, vice presidents, and the campuswide assessment committee. Additionally, a series of presentations focusing on specific NSSE items and