

Are institutions that participate in NSSE different from other baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities?

Purpose

Institutions that participate in NSSE are self-selected, rather than selected randomly from all eligible institutions. Institutions choose when and how often to participate in NSSE administrations. Given this method of self-selection, it is important to compare the institutional characteristics of NSSE schools to those of all baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities in the United States in order to explore the possibility of a self-selection bias. Based on the [NSSE Psychometric Reliability Framework](#), one way to minimize error is examine the characteristics of those institutions that participate in NSSE. If institutions participating in NSSE have similar institutional characteristics, compared with those of all possible institutions, there is a lower chance of self-selection bias influencing NSSE results.

Data

In 2009, the institutional characteristics from all participating NSSE institutions were compared with those of all baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities in the United States. Information was collected from the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Methods

To investigate the presence of self-selection bias, NSSE institutions and all U.S. institutions were compared at both the institution and student level for the following characteristics: Carnegie Classification (Basic 2005), sector, undergraduate enrollment, geographic region, and location. This data is presented in Table 1 at http://nsse.iub.edu/2009_Institutional_Report/pdf/NSSE_2009_Overview.pdf.

Results

In general, participating institutions mirror the national distributions for Carnegie classification, sector, enrollment, region, and location. In terms of 2005 Basic Carnegie Classification, Master's Colleges and Universities with larger programs and Research Universities with high research activity are slightly overrepresented, while Baccalaureate Colleges in Diverse Fields and Arts and Sciences are slightly underrepresented. In terms of region, the Southeast region is slightly overrepresented, while the Far West region is slightly underrepresented. Overall however, NSSE participants largely reflect the U.S. undergraduate population.

References

NSSE Psychometric Reliability Framework. (2009). Bloomington, IN: Center for Postsecondary Research, Indiana University, School of Education. www.nsse.iub.edu

NSSE 2009 Overview (2009). Bloomington, IN: Center for Postsecondary Research, Indiana University, School of Education. http://nsse.iub.edu/2009_Institutional_Report/pdf/NSSE_2009_Overview.pdf