A Brief History of NSSE & Related Projects at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research
1998

- In February 1998, Russ Edgerton of the Pew Charitable Trusts organizes a group of scholars to explore ways of understanding the extent to which institutions emphasize effective teaching practices and students engage in educationally purposeful activities. Meetings are held to introduce concepts behind a survey instrument to assess quality in undergraduate education.

- Representatives from accrediting agencies, state systems, as well as individuals from the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) and the Annapolis Group are consulted about a national survey.

- With the support of the Pew Trusts, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) coordinates the design of the survey. The design team consists of Alexander Astin, Gary Barnes, Arthur Chickering, Peter Ewell, John Gardner, George Kuh, Richard Light, Ted Marchese, and C. Robert Pace.

- Feedback on the instrument is gathered from a series of meetings with potential stakeholders and participants to prepare for pilot launch the following year.

- The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is created to address this need and gain a better understanding of students’ educational experiences in college.

- George Kuh and John Hayek launch NSSE in two waves. The pilot of NSSE is a “tryout” phase in spring 1999 with 12 institutions participating. The second wave is a larger administration in fall 1999 with 56 institutions participating.

- The National Advisory Board (NAB) is established.

- The Indiana University Center for Survey Research (CSR), led by Director John Kennedy, partners with the Center for Postsecondary Research (CPR) for survey administration.

- Robert Gonyea joins the project as a research analyst.

1999

- The first full-scale national administration of NSSE launches on paper and online.

- Five “Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice” are introduced in the inaugural 2000 Institutional Report.

- The NSSE survey hailed as an alternative to rankings that neglect the significance of the student experience.

- USA Group and the Pew Charitable Trusts Fund develop the Community College Student Survey of Engagement (CCSSE). UT Austin pilots first CCSSE administration.

- First NSSE regional users gatherings are offered at the University of Akron, then for a group of Texas colleges and universities.

- Numerous NSSE announcements are reported by national media, such as ABC News, NBC "Today Show," National Public Radio, The Washington Post, Cox News Service, and the Associated Press.

- With support from the Lumina Foundation for Education and the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College, CPR and the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) collaborate on Project DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practice), to explore the practices of educationally effective institutions.

- Under the direction of Jillian Kinzie, the NSSE Institute is established to conduct externally funded research, and work with institutions and other organizations with goals that complement those of NSSE.

- With support from the Lumina Foundation for Education, NSSE partners with AAHE on the Building Engagement and Attainment of Minority Students (BEAMS) Project to improve retention, student engagement, and institutional effectiveness at minority-serving institutions.

2000

- 276*

2001

- 470*

2002

- 618*

*The cumulative number of participating U.S. & Canadian institutions as of the given year.
• The first Institutional Interface is created, allowing NSSE clients to monitor survey administration.

• In response to growing demand for an instrument to measure faculty perceptions and expectations of student engagement, the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) is developed and pilot tested.

• Pilot administration of the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) in the spring of 2003 with 12 law schools participating.

• The pilot of the High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE), a student engagement survey for secondary schools, is administered at several high schools in Indiana and Kentucky.

• As part of an ongoing public awareness campaign to refocus the national conversation about what constitutes quality in the college experience, NSSE publishes its first guide for high school students, College. What You Need to Know Before You Go.

• NSSE receives a 2004 Telly Award for its Informational Video.

• NSSE becomes involved with the American Democracy Project (ADP), a joint project of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and The New York Times, designed to promote civic and moral development of college students.

• Web+ is introduced as a mode of administration for the NSSE survey, which encourages schools to use the Web version of NSSE, with a sample of non-respondents receiving a paper survey.

• To help institutions use NSSE results for accreditation, NSSE accreditation toolkits are introduced in the Institutional Report 2004. These documents map items on the survey to regional accreditation standards and provide specific examples of how institutions use NSSE in accreditation self-studies.

• NSSE launches a survey of entering college students regarding their high school experiences, as well as their attitudes and expectations for the first year of college. Almost 16,000 first-year students at 28 institutions complete the pilot. This instrument becomes the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE).

• The first full administration of the FSSE receives over 20,000 respondents from 133 institutions (100 of which are new institutional participants in 2004) under the direction of Project Manager Tom Nelson Laird.

• Illinois State University hosts the regional users workshop. More than 60 participants from 34 college and universities attend.

• NSSE Institute partners with University of Central Florida for the spring regional users workshop. The University of Central Oklahoma hosts a fall workshop.


• The FSSE Sounding Board, an advisory board of national experts on teaching, learning, and collegiate faculty as well as representatives from participating campuses, is convened.

• The Pocket Guide is renamed: A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College: Are You Asking the Right Questions on a College Campus Visit?

• A second BCSSE pilot is administered.

• Six Canadian institutions participate and adapt the survey to fit the Canadian context. During this pilot year, 39,968 students at 71 institutions, including 6 Canadian complete the Beginning University Survey of Student Engagement (BUSSE).

• Working with NSSE Data: A Facilitator’s Guide is developed to help instructional leaders facilitate workshops, presentations, and discussions about interpreting and using NSSE data for campus stakeholders.
The Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), which manages the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education Program, replaces AAHE as a Partner in the BEAMS Project.

USA TODAY approaches NSSE about a partnership to publish benchmark scores of participating colleges and universities to assist parents and students in the college choice process.

Todd Chamberlain is named Assistant Director of Survey Operations.

The FSSE Typical-Student survey option is developed and piloted to accommodate institutions that want to collect faculty data more closely aligned to data collected by NSSE. The original FSSE questionnaire is renamed the Course-Based survey option.

The inaugural full-scale BCSSE administration is launched.

257 colleges and universities release their benchmark scores on the USA TODAY Web site in late 2007.

The Annual Report 2007, Experiences That Matter: Enhancing Student Learning and Success, explores the relationships between effective educational practice and selected aspects of student success in college.

NSSE issues “Connecting the Dots,” a report analyzing the relationships between student engagement and selected outcomes, and the institutional practices and conditions that foster student success.

NSSE launches a live, interactive Webinar Series with a presentation on “Assessing the First Year Experience.”

George Kuh announces plans to step down as NSSE Director, but continue as Director of CPR. A national search ends with the appointment of Alexander C. McCormick as NSSE’s new director.

More than 1,458,000 students at nearly 1,200 four-year colleges and universities have participated in NSSE thus far.

To promote and facilitate public reporting, NSSE provides institutions with a new report, What Students Are Saying About Their <Your Institution> Experience.

Jim Cole is named Project Manager of BCSSE.

A third BCSSE administration includes 14,471 students enrolled in 31 schools, including 11 Canadian institutions.

The Multi-Year Benchmark Report and the Multi-Year Data Analysis Guide are introduced in the Institutional Report 2008. The multi-year report shows benchmark scores for all years of NSSE participation to help schools identify potential changes over time. The multi-year guide provides institutions with recommendations for analyzing data from multiple NSSE administrations.

The Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) selects NSSE as one of the instruments to be used to document “Student Perceptions and Experiences,” a section of the College Portrait.

Promoting Engagement for All Students: The Imperative to Look Within – 2008 Results calls attention to the importance of within-institution variation in student engagement.

A record number of institutions (772) participate in NSSE, and 391 institutions participate in the USA TODAY initiative.

FSSE introduces Working with FSSE and NSSE Findings: A Facilitator’s Guide, to assist FSSE users in leading workshops, presentations, and discussions about student engagement on their campuses.

Institutional Reports include the new BCSSE-NSSE Combined Report, presenting results from students who completed both the BCSSE and NSSE.
• “Using NSSE in Institutional Research” is published as a special issue in the *New Directions for Institutional Research* series.

• *Using FSSE Data* is included in the *Institutional Report 2009* to further assist institutional users in finding resources and communicating their survey results.

• 129 institutions register to participate in BCSSE 2009, a notable increase from previous years. Since 2007, more than 200,000 first-year students at 258 institutions across the U.S. and Canada have completed BCSSE.

• *Using NSSE to Assess and Improve Undergraduate Education Lessons from the Field 2009*, an in-depth examination of how institutions use their NSSE results, is published.

• NSSE is recognized with an honorable mention in the National Council for Continuous Improvement in Higher Education’s (NCCI) “Leveraging Excellence” award program.

• *The Student Experience in Brief*, a report to facilitate public reporting of NSSE results, replaces “What Students Are Saying”.

• A new Institutional Interface is created, allowing clients online access to all current and past NSSE, FSSE, & BCSSE reports and data.

• To date, about 1,393 U.S. and Canadian institutions have participated in NSSE.

### Institutional Participation in NSSE 1998 – 2009

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NSSE Annual Reports

Each year NSSE has provided both institution-specific reports and a summary of findings. Following is a brief summary of annual reports.

The NSSE 2000 Report: National Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice
The first annual report began with “an invitation for reflection and discussion” from Russell Edgerton, then Director of The Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning, and Lee Shulman, President of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. At that time, the focus of the NSSE 2000 Report was whether students actually use their institution’s resources to provide meaningful learning experiences. A decade later, NSSE and related projects have contributed much to that initial objective.

Improving the College Experience: National Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice – NSSE 2001 Report
With one successful administration complete, the concept of student engagement representing two critical features of collegiate quality is introduced:

- The amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities
- How the institution deploys its resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to get students to participate in activities that decades of research studies show are linked to student learning.

From Promise to Progress: How Colleges and Universities Are Using Student Engagement Results to Improve Collegiate Quality – 2002 Annual Report
Surveys record how people think or feel about certain topics and events. Surveys don’t often aim to change the way people talk and behave. NSSE is different as it is both an ongoing data collection effort and a strategy to improve undergraduate education. With a third year completed, it is important to highlight the fact that survey results point to things that an institution can do something about—almost immediately.

Converting Data into Action: Expanding the Boundaries of Institutional Improvement – 2003 Annual Report
In just four years, NSSE has quickly become an authoritative source about collegiate quality. The size and scope of the annual survey make it possible to evaluate, interpret, and draw informed conclusions about the nature of the undergraduate experience and institutional performance in the United States.

Student Engagement: Pathways to Collegiate Success – 2004 Annual Survey Results
This annual report focuses on multiple ways to engage students. Results show that when faculty members expect students to study more and arrange class work toward this end, students do so. In addition, students at historically Black colleges and universities are far more likely to participate in a community project linked to a course, and report gaining more in personal, social, and ethical development. Another finding shows that students who engage more frequently in “deep” learning activities report greater educational and personal gains from college, participate in more enriching educational experiences, perceive their campus to be more supportive, and are more satisfied overall with college.

Expanding Different Dimensions of Student Engagement – 2005 Annual Survey Results
This annual report marks the fifth consecutive year of increased institutional participation. Since its inception more than 844,000 students at 972 four-year colleges and universities have reported their college activities and experiences to NSSE. The report focuses on the relationships between effective educational practice and selected aspects of student success in college and provides examples of how a variety of institutions are putting their NSSE data to use.
Engaged Learning: Fostering Success for All Students – Annual Report 2006

With an emphasis on all students, results focus first on the engagement of non-traditional students. In addition, findings emphasize that among first-year students, women are more likely to do volunteer work and spend more time in academic preparation, while men are more likely to serve as tutors and to interact with faculty members outside of class. Other promising results are found in our “Connecting the Dots” study, which examines the relationships between student engagement and grades and persistence.

Experiences That Matter: Enhancing Student Learning and Success – Annual Report 2007

The first theme, *Enriching High-Impact Experiences*, examines four of the activities George Kuh briefly described in his Director’s Message: (a) learning communities; (b) research with faculty; (c) study abroad; and (d) culminating senior experiences. The second theme, *Factors That Support Student Success*, looks at interactions students have with their academic advisor and with their family members and close friends. Finally, in *Another Look at Gender*, we briefly explore gender differences in high school experiences and college expectations, and summarize findings from a study comparing men and women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Promoting Engagement for All Students: The Imperative to Look Within – 2008 Results

The first theme—*Looking Within*—examines the large and often unexamined variation in engagement that exists among students, even those attending the same institution. The second theme—*Promoting Success in the First Year*—addresses student plans to persist at their institution, as well as examining the experiences of underprepared students. The third theme—*Writing Matters*—draws on core survey items and a promising new set of questions about the writing process administered experimentally in 2008.

Assessment for Improvement: Tracking Student Engagement Over Time – Annual Results 2009

Our tenth anniversary issue of the Annual Report will be available on November 9th.

For more information or to access NSSE annual reports, please visit our Web site:

[www.nsse.iub.edu/html/annual_reports.cfm](http://www.nsse.iub.edu/html/annual_reports.cfm)
SELECTED NSSE PUBLICATIONS & RESOURCES

We recommend the following publications and presentations as resources for more detailed information on how NSSE, FSSE, and BCSSE results can inform institutional improvement, accountability, and effective educational practice.

Publications


Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Cruce, T., Shoup, R., & Gonyea, R. M. Connecting the dots: Multifaceted analyses of the relationships between student engagement results from the NSSE, and the institutional practices and conditions that foster student success: Final Report prepared for Lumina Foundation for Education. Bloomington: Indiana University, Center for Postsecondary Research.


Conference Papers and Presentations


Publications to Enhance Educational Practice Project DEEP Publications

NSSE carried out Project DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practice) from 2002 through 2007. With support from Lumina Foundation for Education and the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College, this initiative examined the everyday workings of a variety of educationally effective colleges and universities to learn what they do to promote student success. Three publications produced in conjunction with Project DEEP are helpful resource materials for institutions concerned about enhancing student learning:


NSSE also created a series of policy briefs based on in-depth examination of 20 Project DEEP schools that have higher-than-predicted graduation rates and have demonstrated through NSSE results that they have effective policies and practices for working with students of different abilities and aspirations. These briefs provide useful suggestions for promoting student success to a wide range of audiences including university administrators and leaders, faculty, students, and the general public.

Practice briefs can be downloaded from the Web site: www.nsse.iub.edu/institute/index.cfm?view=deep/publications&ptab=DEEP_Practice_Briefs
NSSE Timeline 1998–2009

National Advisory Board (2009)

Doug Bennett (chair)
President
Earlham College

Rebecca S. Chopp
President
Colgate University

Peter Ewell
Vice President
National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)

Muriel A. Howard
President
Buffalo State College

Pat Hutchings
Vice President
The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

John Immerwahr,
Professor of Philosophy
Villanova University

Stanley Ikenberry
Interim President
University of Illinois

Charlie Nelms
Chancellor
North Carolina Central University

Patrick Terenzini,
Distinguished Professor &
Senior Scientist
Center for Study of Higher Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Judith Torney-Purta
Professor of Human Development
University of Maryland

William Tyson
President
Morrison and Tyson Communications

Kay McClenny*
Director
Community College Survey of Engagement

John Kennedy*
Director
Center for Survey Research
Indiana University

*Molly Corbett
President
American Council on Education

*ex officio

* denotes ex officio member.
PAST NSSE NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS
(Titles at time of service on Board)

- Alexander Astin, Allan M. Cartter Professor and Director, Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles
- Derek Bok, University Professor, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University
- Mary Brown Bullock, President, Agnes Scott College
- Nancy Cantor, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
- Russell Edgerton, Director, The Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning (Chair)
- Thomas Ehrlich, Senior Scholar, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Vice chair)
- Alex Gonzalez, President, California State University–San Marcos
- Michael Nettles, Professor of Education and Public Policy, School of Education, University of Michigan
- Deborah Wadsworth, President, Public Agenda
- George Walker, Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School, Indiana University
- Robert Zemsky, Professor and Director, Institute for Research on Higher Education, University of Pennsylvania

PAST TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL

- Trudy Banta, Vice Chancellor for Institutional Improvement and Planning, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis
- Gary Barnes, Vice President, Program Assessment and Public Service, The University of North Carolina
- Emerson Elliott, Director, Program Standards Development Project, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education
- Peter Ewell, Senior Associate, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (Chair)
- John Gardner, Executive Director, Policy Center on the First Year of College, Brevard College
- Sylvia Hurtado, Associate Professor of Higher Education, Center for the Study of Higher Education, University of Michigan
- John Kennedy, Director, Center for Survey Research, Indiana University Bloomington
- Alexander McCormick, Senior Scholar, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
- Deborah Teeter, Director, Institutional Research and Planning, University of Kansas
- Patrick Terenzini, Professor and Senior Research Scientist, Center for the Study of Higher Education, The Pennsylvania State University
NSSE STAFF (2009)

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Jillian Kinzie ....................................................................................Associate Director NSSE Institute & BEAMS
Todd Chamberlain ...........................................................................Assistant Director Survey Operations
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Julie Williams ..................................................................................Research Analyst, CSEQ Project Manager

Tom Nelson Laird ..............................................................................FSSE Project Manager
Amy Garver .....................................................................................FSSE Project Associates
Mahauganee Shaw

Marilyn Gregory .............................................................................Finance Manager
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Tiffani Butler ...................................................................................NSSE Institute Project Associates
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Antwione Haywood ..........................................................................NSSE Client Services Team 3
David Hardy

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