Using NSSE in Department-Level Assessment

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Department/Program-Level Assessment

• Most assessment on campus goes on at the department level
• Results from national surveys like NSSE are typically used at the institution-level
• Evidence of student engagement should be used for multiple levels of assessment

Engaging Departments

Peer Review 12 (1), Winter 2010
Engaging Departments: Assessing Student Learning
Issue explores how departments are developing assessment approaches that deepen student learning. The features draw on sessions and presentations from AAC&U’s 2009 Engaging Departments Institute.

www.aacu.org/peerreview/

Why NSSE at the Department/Program Level Assessment?

• Explore “variation within”
• Measure dept/program level goals and provide feedback for improvement
• Faculty members more likely to take ownership of department level results than institutional results
• Results more likely to be actionable

Levels of Assessment and NSSE

• Institution Level
  • College/Department/Program-Level
    - NSSE “Major Field” reports (2009)
    - Value of NSSE “Scalelets”
    - Focused, “item level” examination
    - FSSE by discipline (collapsed 80+ disciplines into 9 categories to parallel major campus organizational units)
  • Course-Level
    - CLASSE
    - Special item use permissions

Approach #1

Take advantage of existing NSSE reports and relate to department/program goals
NSSE MAJOR Reports

- Reports established in 2009
  - Individual items and benchmark scores
  - 8 Major Field Reports (comparison between)
  - Majors Within Institution comparison

Using Major Field Reports

- Share reports with Colleges/Schools and Departments/Programs
- Encourage review of all Major Field Reports, but encourage attention on items that relate to department learning goals and concerns (i.e., senior writing, advising, collaborative learning)
- Showcase examples of use among departments

Examples of Department/Program use of Major Field Reports

- Indiana State University’s College of Education uses NSSE items related to diversity & technology to assess senior teaching candidates
- Iowa State University’s College of Business uses NSSE items related to technology & global awareness in strategic plan

Tailoring Major Field Reports

- Customized major groupings
- Added graphs to illustrate benchmark scores comparisons

University of Washington-Seattle

Benchmarks by UW Student Major Group

- Report presents results for 5 NSSE benchmarks by self-reported student major. In general, majors were grouped by UW-S college. Within COAS there were 3 groups: Arts/Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences. Medical professions formed a single group.

Detailed Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Year Students</th>
<th>Arts/Arts &amp; Humanities</th>
<th>Arts Social</th>
<th>Arts Natural</th>
<th>Humanities</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Environmen-</th>
<th>Enginer-</th>
<th>Medical</th>
<th>Pre-Medical</th>
<th>Undeclared</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>75.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>140.1</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>112.2</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>740.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active &amp; Collaborative</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>382.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>700.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Class Benchmark scores are reported separately for first-year students and seniors. Institution-reported class levels are used. (Note that first-year reports of major are more likely to be unstable, and interpretations of first-year results should be made with caution).

FSSE Results by Discipline
Faculty perceptions of students using deep approaches to learning and sub-scales by general area of academic appointment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Academic Appointment</th>
<th>Deep Approaches to Learning</th>
<th>Reflective Learning</th>
<th>Integrative Learning</th>
<th>Higher-Order Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Humanities</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using Scalelets
• Survey results most likely to be used when the results are disaggregated
  - specific to a program or unit (e.g., college or department)
  - focused on specific areas or outcomes
• NSSE scalelets provide a mechanism for disaggregating NSSE results to the college or department level without resorting to over-sampling

NSSE Scalelets
- NSSE Scales and Scalelets
  - Smaller, more reliable measures
  - NSSE Scale properties:
    - Active learning
    - Higher order thinking
    - Course-Related Interactions with Faculty
    - Diversity experiences
    - Scales to measure perceived gains in social, practical, and academic competence

Using Scalelets
12 dependable metrics for assessment at College and Department Level

Share Results on Limited Item Set
Assessment brief presents results on “engaging with other learners outside the classroom” (4 items) – create report for each college or department

Probe Deeply: Add NSSE Items to Department/Course Level Surveys

Oklahoma State University
- OSU College of Education included additional NSSE-type questions to examine diversity issues, an area of concern for that college's NCATE accreditation.
- OSU School of Business conducted a local version of NSSE. Then developed a faculty working group to examine college-level results from national and local NSSE surveys.
- OSU Zoology Department integrated NSSE survey questions into existing senior surveys to obtain larger sample sizes and more meaningful results on topics of particular concern.

Approach #3
Structure assessment effort around a concrete problem of practice.

Address Department Concern
Writing in Arts and Science
- Faculty concerned about quality of writing in senior projects
- In general, writing at the University was on par with other institutions, but the College of Arts and Science was struck by the writing results for its seniors which trailed the institution

Address Department Concern cont’d
Writing in Arts and Science
- 2 items low for seniors in A&S
  - Prepared 2+ drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
  - Worked on a paper/project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources
- Resulted in pedagogical intervention: intentional opportunities for drafting and integrated assignments in sophomore and junior courses in the major

Approach #4
Focus on outcomes distinctive to the program.
What are the distinctive experiences for Seniors?
Distinctive Experiences in Business

- School of Business interested in increasing student participation in High Impact Practices: service-learning, internships, study abroad
- Results compared to 2 other majors
- Is the B-School student experience distinct?

School of Business: Participation in Service Learning; Internships; Study Abroad

(% Seniors report: “done”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Engineering</th>
<th>Social Sci</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship, Coop, Clinical</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings from NSSE and AAC&U: Some Educational Activities are Unusually Effective

Growing evidence that “high-impact practices” provide substantial educational benefits to students


High Impact Activities

- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses/Projects

Approach #5

Provide feedback on improved performance.

Cal Poly Pomona

Created 9 “By College” reports - comparing NSSE 2005 & 2008

- NSSE 2005 & 2008 Item Frequency Distribution
- NSSE 2005 & 2008 Summary Frequencies (combine top 2 response options)
- NSSE 2005 & 2008 Benchmark Report
Last Words about Department-Level Assessment

- Involve college, department and program level representatives early in NSSE administration.
- Provide data in small doses. Share results that concern the department or program.
- What opportunities do you see for using your NSSE results in departments? What obstacles do you anticipate?

Questions?

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