Using Results from the Consortium for the Study of Writing in College

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Agenda:
- Introduction & context: What is NSSE
- Value of Writing questions
- Using your Data
- Lessons about Writing

Introduction

The value of this work...
- Explore writing-to-learn practices among your students
- Comparative data from institutions interested in writing practices
- Explore relationship between engagement and writing experiences of your students
- Meaningful way to enlist faculty in assessment
- Consortium provides opportunity for collective research and action on writing issues and an empirical foundation for writing program advocacy

Who is in our Webinar Audience?

What’s your role?
1. NSSE Campus Project Manager
2. Writing Program Administrators
3. Faculty member
4. Other

What is the National Survey of Student Engagement?

- National survey to explore quality in undergraduate education started in 2000 with support from Pew Charitable Trusts
- Currently supported by Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
- 1,400 four-year institutions have participated

Purpose of the National Survey of Student Engagement

- Refocus conversations about undergraduate quality to what matters most
- Enhance institutional improvement efforts
- Foster comparative and consortia activity
- Inform accountability efforts
- Provide systematic national data on “good educational practices”

What is Student Engagement?

Student engagement
A domain of constructs that measures both the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities, and how students perceive different facets of the institutional environment that facilitate and support their learning.

**Sample NSSE Questions**

**NSSE Main Survey Questions:**
- How often have you...
  - Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
  - Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions
- Which have you done or do you plan to do...
  - Work on a research project with faculty
  - Study abroad
- How many hours do you spend in a typical week...
  - Preparing for class (studying, reading...)
- To what extent have your experiences at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in...
  - Thinking critically and analytically

(see pp. 4-7 of handout)

**NSSE Writing Questions**

**NSSE Main Survey Questions:**
- How often have you...
  - Prepared 2+ drafts of paper/assignment before turning it in
  - Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources
  - About how much...
    - Written papers or reports of 20 pages or more
    - Written papers or reports between 5 and pages
    - Written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages
- To what extent have your experiences at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in...
  - Writing clearly and effectively

(see pp. 4-7 of handout)

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**NSSE Consortium**

- A group of 6 or more colleges or universities participating in NSSE the same administration year that ask students additional questions that follow the core survey.
- Institutions receive consortium aggregate means and frequencies as one of the three comparison groups in their **Institutional Report**.
- 2009 Consortium (13): Catholic Colleges & Universities; Women’s Colleges; Teagle Diversity Consortium; American Democracy Project etc.

**Consortium for the Study of Writing in College (CSWC) 75 schools in 2009**

Goals of the Consortium Writing Questions
- Creating a portrait of the writing students are assigned throughout their first and senior years
- Determining how students and instructors engage in selected best practices in making and completing writing assignments
- Determining whether those “best practices” really make a difference
- Providing a basis to explore possible associations between writing, engagement, and learning

**History of the 27 CSWC Questions**

July 2007—50+ WPAs online and in Tempe work with Center for Postsecondary Research to generate 140 writing questions
Fall 2007—Question set streamlined to 27
Spring 2008—Survey administered to 82 randomly selected schools
Fall 2009—Consortium for the Study of Writing in College is created, grows to 75 schools
Spring 2009—Survey administered to the CSWC schools
### CSWC Questions

**Item Groups**
1. Process items
2. Genre and strategy items
3. Teaching best practices

**Response Sets**
1=No assignments
2=Few assignments
3=Some assignments
4=Most assignments
5=All assignments

4. Higher order

(see p. 3 of handout)

### Your NSSE Reports and Data

Available for download by NSSE Campus Project Manager

- Reports
  - Frequencies and Means of core NSSE and CSWC questions
  - Each contains comparisons to CSWC peers
- Raw data (includes student identifiers)
- Consortium reports

### Frequency Distributions Report

### Mean Comparisons Report

### Raw Data (SPSS)

### Consortium Report
Making the Most of Your Data

- Involve various campus audiences from the beginning and to help make meaning of the data; why are the numbers what they are?
- Explore curious results and collect real student experiences and faculty practices through focus groups with students and faculty.
- Every number and comparison reported should be accompanied by an interpretation of what can and cannot be concluded from the results.
- Link results to other information about the student experience and complementary initiatives.
- Combine NSSE with institutional data, such as retention statistics, GPA, student characteristics to further analysis.

What Can You Explore?

1. How did our students respond to the 27 questions?
   - Individual items and scales
   - Demographic comparisons (e.g., by gender, major)
2. How do our students compare to those attending other institutions?
3. Relationship questions “Are students who completed writing intensive courses more likely to do X more?”
4. Merge school records (e.g., participation in special programs, GPA, learning outcome measures)

Collaborating with Other CSWC Institutions

CSWC institutions might choose to share data to answer specific questions.
- Combine NSSE data with other institutional data, such as persistence, GPA, ethnicity, recorded academic activities, scores on writing portfolios, and other general-education assessment.
- For instance, a group of schools with high-visibility writing centers might wish to band together to explore the impact of writing centers of GPA and retention, combining using the data they collect about who has visited the writing center.

2009 CSWC Data

- 17,735 first-year students and 21,903 seniors
- 75 baccalaureate-granting institutions
  - 19 doctoral level
  - 38 master’s level
  - 9 baccalaureate arts & sciences
  - 7 baccalaureate diverse
  - 2 other types
- 53 public and 22 private institutions

2009 CSWC Data

Amount of Writing
- Average: FY = 93 pages, SR = 138 pages
- Median: FY = 69 pages, SR = 108 pages
- Mid 50% range: FY 49-129 pgs, SR = 49-191 pgs

By Class Standing

Percent Responding “Most” or “All” Assignments

- Talked with [others] to develop ideas before drafting assignment
- Received instructor feedback on draft before turning in assignment
- Proofread final draft before turning it in
To ponder...

- What do these results suggest about writing practices in the first year compared to senior student experiences?
- Are your results similar?
By Major

Percent Responding “Most” or “All” Assignments

Talked with instructor to develop ideas before drafting your assignment - Seniors

By Major

Percent Responding “Most” or “All” Assignments

Received feedback from instructor about a draft before turning in assignment - Seniors

By Major

Percent Responding “Most” or “All” Assignments

Analyze or evaluate something you read, researched, or observed - Seniors

By Major

Percent Responding “Most” or “All” Assignments

Include drawings, tables, photos, screen shots, or other visual content into your written assignment - Seniors

By Major

Percent Responding “Most” or “All” Assignments

Explained in advance what he or she wanted you TO LEARN - Seniors

By Major

Percent Responding “Most” or “All” Assignments

Asked you to write with classmates to complete a group project - Seniors
**Exploring Relationships**

- What is the relationship between...
  - writing practices and student engagement among Seniors?
  - writing practices and First Year GPA and retention?
  - writing practices and writing portfolio scores?
  - writing practices and CAAP Writing Essay Test scores?

*What are you doing, or considering?*

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**Scales**

**Writing Practices**
- Assign Meaning-Constructing Writing Tasks
- Explain Writing Expectations Clearly
- Encourage Interactive Writing Activities

*Scale reliabilities range from .75 to .82*

(see p. 8 of handout)

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**Scales**

**Approaches to Deep Learning**
- Higher-Order Learning Activities
- Integrative Learning Activities
- Reflective Learning Activities

*Scale reliabilities range from .71 to .83*

(see p. 9 of handout)

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**Scales**

**Self-Reported Gains**
- Practical Competence
- Personal and Social Development
- General Education

*Scale reliabilities range from .81 to .87*

(see p. 10 of handout)

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**Research Using 2008 Writing Question Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-Year Students</th>
<th>Seniors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40 institutions</td>
<td>82 institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,683 students</td>
<td>12,015 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 66% female</td>
<td>- 66% female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 39% first-generation</td>
<td>- 39% first-generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 5% African American</td>
<td>- 6% African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 4% Asian</td>
<td>- 4% Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 7% Latino/a</td>
<td>- 6% Latino/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 74% White</td>
<td>- 77% White</td>
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**Findings: Basic Correlations**

*Writing scales are positively correlated with deep learning activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Practices</th>
<th>Higher-Order Learning Activities</th>
<th>Integrated Learning Activities</th>
<th>Reflective Learning Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage Interactive FY</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Processes SR</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assign Meaning- Const. Writing Tasks FY</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.23</td>
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<td>Const. Writing Tasks SR</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.20</td>
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<td>Explain Writing FY</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explaining Clearly SR</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.22</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*All correlations significant at p<.001*
Findings: Basic Correlations

Writing scales are positively correlated with self-reported gains of learning and growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Practices</th>
<th>Practical Comp.</th>
<th>Personal &amp; Social</th>
<th>General Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage Interactive FY</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Processes SR</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Intel. Focused FY</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assignments SR</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain Writing FY</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expectations Clearly SR</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All correlations significant at p<.001

Findings: Multivariate Regression – Deep Learning

Results controlling for student characteristics and writing amount

✓ Sig. - trivial
✓✓ Sig. - small
✓✓✓ Sig. - moderate

Multivariate Regression – Deep Lrng

Results adjusting for student characteristics and writing amount

First-Year Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Higher-Order Learning Activities</th>
<th>Integrative Learning Activities</th>
<th>Reflective Learning Activities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage Interactive Writing Activities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assign Meaning-Const. Writing Tasks</td>
<td>✓†</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain Writing Expectations Clearly</td>
<td>✓†</td>
<td>✓†</td>
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Seniors

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Multivariate Regression – Gains

Results adjusting for student characteristics, writing amount, and deep learning

First-Year Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Practical Competence</th>
<th>Personal &amp; Social</th>
<th>General Education</th>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage Interactive Writing Activities</td>
<td>✓†</td>
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</table>
### Multivariate Regression – Gains

**Results adjusting for student characteristics, writing amount, and deep learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Senior Practical Competence</th>
<th>Personal &amp; Social Education</th>
<th>General Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Encourage Interactive Writing Activities</strong></td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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### Results Summary

1. The more frequently students work on meaning-constructing assignments, engage in interactive writing activities, and receive clear expectations:
   - A. The more they engage in deep learning activities.
   - B. They greater the gains in learning and development that they attribute to their college.

2. These results persist after controlling for:
   - A. Student characteristics such as gender, parental education, race, grades, and major.
   - B. The amount of reading and writing that students do.

### Implications

- First, note that our results all pertain to factors over which instructors have complete control:
  - Kind of projects they assign
  - Way they explain their assignments
  - Activities they require students to engage in while working on the assignments

- You can tell faculty that they are more likely to achieve their goals if they do the following:
  - Assign meaning-making projects
  - Explain their expectations clearly
  - Include interactive activities in the writing process

  _These practices are more effective when used in combination_
Looking Forward

• Joining the Consortium for 2010
• More data from Spring 2010
• Further analyses of existing and future data
• Enhance question set
• Cooperation among Consortium schools to share data, conduct focus groups, share ideas, conduct generalizable research
• Other ideas?

Permission to use the CSWC questions

Indiana University grants permission under the following conditions:

1. Items used for institutional assessment and improvement.
2. Researchers notify NSSE by e-mail in advance of their intention to use the questions. (Send to Bob at rgonyea@indiana.edu.)
3. On all survey forms using the questions and on all publications and presentations of data obtained through the questions, the researchers state that the questions were used with permission from the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and the Council of Writing Program Administrators.
4. The researchers provide the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research with copies of all of their reports, presentations, and publications that use data they obtained through the questions.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The NSSE survey instrument, The College Student Report, is copyrighted and the copyright is owned by The Trustees of Indiana University. Any use of survey items contained within The College Student Report is prohibited without prior written permission from Indiana University.

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