Thank you for joining us. The Webinar will begin at 3:00pm.

Some general advice before we begin:

PRINT PDF of the slides:

Hints:
- Please turn up your computer speakers or plug in your headphones to listen to the Webinar.
- For best results, close all other applications – they may interfere with audio feed for Webinar.
- What to do if you don’t hear anything:
  - If you cannot hear anything, click on “Meeting” in left of dark grey tool bar at the top of the screen and select “Audio Setup Wizard.” Complete the first part of the Wizard, which ends with a speaker test, in order to ensure you are properly connected for webinar audio. If you cannot hear anything after this, please consult your technology support person.
  - If this does not work, the Webinar is being recorded. You will be able to view the session on the NSSE Web site several days after the live session.

Using the Chat feature:
- The Chat window will be available throughout the presentation for participants to interact with presenters and each other. Please use chat to pose questions, suggest a resource etc.

Overview of Webinar

- Introduction to comparison groups and NSSE Institutional Report customization
- Review approaches to selecting comparison groups
- Illustrate value of customizing groups
- Suggestions for making selections
- Your ideas and questions

Importance of Customization and Comparison

Customization and comparison useful to data informed decision-making.
- Compare institutional performance against meaningful groups
- Valuable in the accreditation process
- Useful for benchmarking and planning
- Helps bolster justification for budget requests, decisions about programming, teaching and learning initiatives etc.

NSSE Report Customization

- Over the last 3 years, NSSE has increased the degree to which institutions can customize their Institutional Report through selecting their comparison groups.

Participant Feedback

Can you name one of your comparison groups?

Please respond via the Chat
NSSE Report Customization

NSSE collects preferences for your Institutional Report, including comparison groups via the Report Information Form --- See the Institution Interface

Resource: RIF Tutorial

Tutorial describing the mechanics of completing the RIF via the Institution Interface

Resource: Guide to Selecting Comparison Groups

- Document provides some guidelines to keep in mind as you make your selections.

Stats on Comparison Selections

NSSE 2007 Selected Comparison Groups

- 57% of institutions customized at least one comparison group.
- Most institutions selected specific schools from a list of current-year participants. 79% selected institutions by name from list, & 21% used criteria.
- Average comparison group size when selected from a list was 9 institutions. NSSE requires a comparison group to include at least 6 institutions.
- Most popular default comparisons were Basic Carnegie Classification & all current-year NSSE institutions.

NSSE Report Customization

- In NSSE 2008, 3 out of 4 participating institutions customized at least one comparison group.
- Substantial increase between 2007 and 2008 in number of institutions customizing groups.
- However, many institutions are accepting NSSE-defined defaults, are selecting large, unrefined groups, and are not taking advantage of labeling comparison columns.

How might your institution use customization options more effectively??

NSSE’s Institutional Comparisons

In your NSSE Institutional Report you can customize up to 3 comparison groups. Here are some options for creating comparison groups.

- Identify specific institutions from a list of all current-year NSSE participants.
- Select peers based on characteristics from IPEDS, Barron’s Guide, and the Carnegie Classification.
- Begin with institutional criteria and refine your group by adding or removing specific schools.
- Accept default groups provided by NSSE with relevant institutional comparisons.
**Building Comparison Groups**

- Your choices:
  - Accept NSSE defaults
  - Create customized groups for all 3 columns
  - Select a mix of custom groups and defaults

(note: if your institution is in a consortium/system, this is your 1st comparison column)

**Create customized groups for all 3 columns – You need at least 6 institutions!**

**Four Approaches to Building Comparison Groups**

1. **Peer groups** – Identify a group of most similar institutions to evaluate performance.
2. **Aspiration groups** – Compare your institution with exemplar colleges and universities on some key dimension.
3. **Overlap/Competitor groups** – Evaluate an institution’s performance with colleges and universities that overlap or compete for students, faculty, and/or other financial resources.
4. **Pre-existing groups** – Assess an institution with other schools that share common missions and goals (religious affiliation, HBCUs), athletic conferences, university system, classification-based for national or regional reporting.

**NSSE Comparison Group Examples**

1. **Peers Groups**: Most similar based on Carnegie classification, size, educational offerings, etc.
   - **University of Maryland, Baltimore County** – Chose 11 science-technology peers from top 30% of schools that awarded degrees in science or technology.

2. **Aspiration groups** – Exemplar institutions on some key dimension.
   - **Stevenson University** – Conducted a benchmarking study and created a list of 10 peer and 10 aspiration institutions. Their group was any of those 20 institutions which were current NSSE participants.

**Benefits of customization vs. accepting defaults**

- Increases comparability and credibility of comparison results;
- Opportunity to expand investment of stakeholders; Advances institutional awareness of aspirants or like institutions.
1. Involve Stakeholders in Selection
   • Texas State University-San Marcos circulated list of current-year NSSE participants to deans who then selected institutions to include in their customized groups. This helped build interest in successful administration, and when results arrived—deans and faculty were curious about how they performed against their selected comparators.

2. Consider comparison group size – A mix of both small and large groups may be best. Smaller groups offer more specific comparisons. Larger groups are more stable.

3. Comparison group stability – Using similar comparison groups over time is valuable in evaluating change.

4. Keep it simple – Selecting one or two dimensions such as size, region, or educational offering will ease eventual interpretations of results.

5. Involve faculty groups.

Example: Institutions affiliated with “Colleges That Change Lives” want to create a 2009 comparison group of CTCL member schools.

Action: CTCL sent email to members schools encouraging members to create a comparison group consisting of CTCL schools participating in NSSE (sent attached list). Column label: “Colleges That Change Lives.” CTCL intends to discuss common concerns or strengths revealed in comparison results.

Example: In the Fall of 2008, the University of Texas at El Paso selected the University of North Texas and Texas State University to form a comparison group.

Example: Consistent Urban University comparison group:

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<th>University</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Size</th>
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</table>

Approach to Building Comparison Groups

3. Which groups, departments, current campus initiatives might want comparison results?

Example: Institution participating in Foundations of Excellence project wanted to compare their FY students results to students at institutions with established First Year Experience programs. FOE team selected 8 comparison institutions with similar institutional characteristics, strong first year experience programs, and exemplary FY retention results. Results helped team identify strengths and shortcomings in their first year program.
Considerations for Selecting Groups

5. You can always compare to NSSE cohort! Just reference Grand Means and Frequency comparisons -- available on NSSE website

www.nsses.iub.edu/NSSE_2008_Results/results.cfm

- Demographic Views
- Means by Gender
- Frequencies by Major (First-year)
- Means by Major (First-year)
- Means by Major (Senior)
- Frequencies by Major (Senior)
- Codebook
- Benchmark Descriptive Statistics - First-Years
- Statistics - Seniors
- Executive Snapshot (NSSEville State example)

Considerations for Comparison Groups: Benchmarking

Benchmark approaches:
1. Normative - compare your students' responses to those of students at other colleges and universities.
2. Criterion - compare your school's performance against a predetermined value or level appropriate for your students, given your institutional mission, size, curricular offerings, funding, etc.
3. Longitudinal - compare your student's scores over time

Corresponding selection considerations:
1. Normative - important to tailor groups to ensure comparability, meaning, appropriateness
2. Criterion - use comparison group results simply to inform the identification of reasonable criterion values, again groups should be tailored to achieve institutional objectives
3. Longitudinal - least related to comparison groups selection since this comparison is within the institution; however, the ability to do mean comparisons over time is compromised due to different institutional participation schedules

Final Considerations

- Effect of customization on interpreting results – will multiple comparisons be confusing? Who decides what to report to whom?
- Potential to create tailored reports
  - Report comp column results to specific audiences
    Example: Orientation & Admissions staff might be most interested in results for FY students compared to customized "Admissions Overlap" group
- Scan the institutional environment. What comparison data might be needed?
  Example: AACSB accreditation; Foundations of Excellence involvement; Strategic Planning initiatives, Mission review

Discussion

- What comparison groups has your institution found useful?
- What approach did you take to identify relevant comparison groups?
- What else could NSSE do to support your efforts?

NSSE Webinars

Recent Webinars – Recordings Available on NSSE Web Site

Digging Deeper series of Webinars presented in April by NSSE research analysts,
http://www.sse.iub.edu/webinars/archives.cfm
- Core Concepts
- Intermediate Concepts
- Advanced Use: Multi-year Analysis

Future Webinar topics include:
- June 22 - Using high impact activities to maximize student gains
- August 18 - integrating NSSE results across academic/support departments
- October 13 - linking NSSE data with other institutional data.

Complete listing at www.sse.iub.edu/webinars