Introduction

The improvement efforts of colleges and universities are most promising when they are based on evidence of the performance and experience of their students inside and outside the classroom. In addition, institutions’ evidence of their achievements and of how they use data to inform improvement efforts is expected in their responses to heightened demands for accountability and multiple pressures to increase student persistence and completion, support diversity, and ensure high-quality learning for all students.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) provides institutions with data and reports about critical dimensions of educational quality. Whether a campus is interested in assessing the amount of time and effort students put into their studies or the extent to which students utilize learning opportunities on campus, NSSE provides colleges and universities with diagnostic, actionable information that can inform efforts to improve the experience and outcomes of undergraduate education.

NSSE results can inform and structure conversations in efforts to enhance student learning and success across campus offices and projects including enrollment management and retention, marketing and communications, faculty development, learning support, and student housing. As an assessment instrument, NSSE can be used to identify both areas of strength as well as opportunities for growth to help make learning and the campus environment more cohesive with student needs and expectations.

Making NSSE data accessible and useful is key to engaging various campus audiences in identifying and analyzing institutional and program shortcomings and for developing targeted strategies for continuous improvement—critical steps in institutional growth and change. How can institutions determine who is interested in NSSE results? What are the best ways to connect campus groups and committees with this information? What audiences could use this information in responding to campus challenges and opportunities?

Conceptual Framework

Getting good data, communicating what the data mean to invested parties, and using the data accordingly are critical steps in institutional change and achieving improved educational outcomes. The approach known as “double-loop learning” (Argyris & Schön, 1996) informs this work and involves the creation of “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991)—practitioners engaged in dialogue to share experiences, identify problems, and learn with and from each other. It is through this kind of collaboration that community members can take ownership in institutional issues and work together to help institutions grow.

Simply reporting NSSE results will not lead to action.

An early step in making the best use of NSSE data and reports is to revisit your institution’s rationale for participating in NSSE. What motivated your NSSE participation and what does the campus intend for the results? Knowing if your campus plans to use NSSE for accreditation, for routine assessment, or for student retention efforts is important to determining where data are most relevant and to informing audiences eager to use the results.

Using NSSE data effectively also requires accurately interpreting the results and disseminating the interpretations along with the results to people who can do something about student engagement. Simply reporting NSSE results will not lead to action. Many institutions have found that sharing results at retreats, faculty workshops, first-year experience task force meetings, and other group gatherings is a productive way to stimulate interest and action.

Inside the NSSE Data User’s Guide

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This Guide’s Purpose

Although NSSE’s reports are designed for usability, the path to using the data may not readily emerge in reviewing them. Determining how best to encourage the use of NSSE data where it has potential to bring improvement and to ensure that the reports influence campus action can be challenging. To help institutions address this challenge, this guide outlines strategies, gives suggestions, and provides worksheets with exercises to help institutional leaders facilitate discussions with a wide range of campus stakeholders to make meaning from the results, identify priorities for action, and formulate uses of NSSE data for accountability, assessment, and improvement. Following the worksheet templates are an outline of topics for consideration when communicating results and descriptions of exemplary institutional uses of NSSE data.

References


Worksheet Topics at a Glance

Worksheet #1: Guiding Questions
This one-page worksheet offers three reflective prompts essential to initiating and focusing NSSE data use.

Worksheet #2: Predict Your Results
The invitation to predict results can fuel interest in knowing actual results, expose gaps between perception and actuality, and stimulate discussion about what deserves campus attention.

Worksheet #3: High-Impact Practices
This one-page worksheet is designed to facilitate reflection and discussion of student participation in high-impact educational practices.

Worksheet #4: Engagement Indicators
This exercise is designed to facilitate consideration and discussion of the quality of the student experience from the perspective of staff compared to the perspective of students.

Worksheet #5: Item-Level Engagement Indicators
After identifying areas of strength or concern in previous worksheet discussions, participants can use this worksheet to probe why scores are high or low in an area of engagement.

Worksheet #6: NSSE and Campus Strategic Goals
Using this two-page worksheet in a group or individual setting, campus representatives map a selected institutional goal to NSSE items.
By now, you have read through your institutional reports and are ready to start using your data. Knowing where to begin can be overwhelming, especially with the array of reports and data at your disposal. Before you dive into your results, take a moment to identify your main intentions for pursuing student engagement information and the most appropriate audiences for this information at your institution. The following questions are a reflection activity to help frame contexts to consider, understand what results mean, and disseminate the findings.

1. Reflect on your reasons for administering the NSSE survey. What strengths, concerns, or points of interest do you want to know about your students’ educational experiences?

2. Review your institutional NSSE Snapshot. Are there any Engagement Indicator scores, or item level results that you want to know more about? Do these matters require attention before results are shared with other audiences?

3. What is occupying attention at your institution? Is first-year student retention a concern? Is strategic planning on the campus agenda? Are you preparing for reaffirmation of accreditation? Is there a program that you want to improve or develop for a certain student population? What are your institution’s priorities? Jot down these ideas to keep in mind as you move forward with presenting and using your NSSE data.

4. What audiences would be interested in or could benefit from a greater understanding of your NSSE data? Identify key groups from and add to this list of offices and people to consider:
   - Prospective students and parents
   - Accreditation organizations
   - General education assessment committees
   - Alumni
   - State agencies and commissions
   - Faculty senates and committees
   - Boards of trustees
   - Student affairs offices and units
   - Student retention and transfer student committees
   - Internal and external media
What do you know about your students? Because beliefs and assumptions play a role in shaping expectations and actions, it is helpful to account for them when trying to understand the undergraduate experience.

Items from NSSE Question #1 are in the table below. Select several items of interest, or add your own to the table. Then, in the “Predict” column record whether you believe this is a “strength” or an infrequent experience among your students (see the key below). Under “Prefer” indicate the level of your preference for students’ engagement in this experience. Under “Actual” write the result for that item in the Frequency and Statistical Comparisons report.

Examine the gaps between students’ actual responses and faculty and staff predictions and preferences as a catalyst for group discussion about the quality of the student experience.

**Items from Survey Question #1** [modify this table to include a dozen or so items of interest to your institution]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?</th>
<th>Predict*</th>
<th>Prefer*</th>
<th>Actual %**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response options: Very often, Often, Sometimes, Never</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Asked questions or contributed to course discussions in other ways</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Come to class without completing readings or assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Attended an art exhibit, play or other arts performance (dance, music, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Asked another student to help you understand course material</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Explained course material to one or more students</td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students</td>
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<tr>
<td>h. Worked with other students on course projects or assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. Gave a course presentation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Key**

* Use “+” to identify a strength, something students do frequently, “=” to identify something a fair proportion of students do, “−” to identify an infrequent experience.

** Actual percentage distribution is available from the Engagement Indicators and Frequency and Statistical Comparisons reports.**
This exercise is designed to facilitate consideration of and discussion about student participation in the High-Impact Practices (HIPs) reported in NSSE results. Record your prediction of what percentage of students you think participate in these activities. Similarly, you can record what you would prefer this percentage to be. Comparisons of your predictions and preferences to actual NSSE results are then possible. You will need to refer to the High-Impact Practices section of your NSSE Institutional Report to complete the exercise. The “Looking Within” column in the table can be used to note subpopulations of interest after reviewing the final page of the High-Impact Practices report showing participation by student characteristics.

If your institution also participated in the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), record the percentage of faculty who believe participation is “Important” or “Very Important.” This information can be found in the FSSE-NSSE Combined Report in your NSSE Institutional Report. If your institution did not participate in FSSE, record overall values of importance from FSSE summary tables located on the FSSE website. fsse.iub.edu/html/overall_results.cfm

Consider what the gaps between student participation and your predictions, preferences, and faculty values reveal about the quality of the student experience at your institution. How might your institution address these gaps?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-Year Students</td>
<td>Learning Community</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Service-Learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Research with Faculty</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participated in at least one of the above</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Students</td>
<td>Learning Community</td>
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<td>Service-Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research with Faculty</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Internship or Field Experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Study Abroad</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Culminating Senior Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participated in at least one of the above</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participated in two or more of the above</td>
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</table>
This exercise is designed to facilitate consideration of and discussion about the quality of the student experience from the perspective of faculty and staff compared to the perspective of students on the ten Engagement Indicators (EIs)—broad measures of educational effectiveness, grouped within four themes—reported in NSSE results for 47 survey items. For this exercise, use the document in the Institutional Report, “Engagement Indicators & High-Impact Practices,” listing the items that comprise the Engagement Indicators.

For each of the ten NSSE Engagement Indicators, record if you think this is an area of strength (+), an area that your institution does well enough (=), or an area that needs improvement (−). Compare your predictions and preferences to actual Engagement Indicator scores. (Consider scores in relation to your comparison group—are you better than, equal to, or below?) Refer to the Engagement Indicators report in your NSSE Institutional Report to complete the exercise.

Consider what the gaps between student responses and your predictions and preferences reveal about the quality of the student experience at your institution in relation to the particular scale you have chosen. What ideas might you have to address some of these gaps?

### NSSE Engagement Indicator Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Engagement Indicators</th>
<th>Prediction*</th>
<th>Preference*</th>
<th>Actual Score Relative to Comp Group**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Challenge</strong></td>
<td>Higher Order Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflective &amp; Integrative Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning with Peers</strong></td>
<td>Collaborative Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussions with Diverse Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiences with Faculty</strong></td>
<td>Student-Faculty Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effective Teaching Practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campus Environment</strong></td>
<td>Quality of Interactions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive Environment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Key**

*  
* + strength, = done well enough, – needs improvement

**  
** Score is △ higher than comparison group;  no difference; ▼ lower than comparison group.
This worksheet is an additional tool for focusing on important item-level results for NSSE Engagement Indicators. Looking within an area of engagement can help explain why scores are high or low and can also lead to ideas for improvement.

After identifying, in Worksheet #4, areas needing improvement, individual Engagement Indicators items can be considered further with this worksheet. Examining percentages of your students that engage in various activities “Never” (or “Very little”) alongside comparison group percentages can help identify areas of success or concern.

To complete this worksheet, refer to the Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons section of your NSSE Institutional Report and select a respondent group (first-year students or seniors) and a comparison group or groups. If your institution participated in the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), also record information from faculty responses, found in the FSSE-NSSE Combined Report in your NSSE Institutional Report. If your institution did not participate in FSSE, record overall input from FSSE summary tables located on the FSSE website.

fsse.iub.edu/html/overall_results.cfm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Indicator Results Comparisons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement Indicator Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution % Never/Very Little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison Group % Never/Very Little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical Significance (*) of Average Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size (±magnitude) of Average Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Values, Emphasis, or Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of Concern? (Yes/No)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This worksheet is designed to facilitate conversation and discussion across faculty, staff, and administrators as they review NSSE student response data in comparison with existing campus strategic goals. In this guided exercise, campus representatives will familiarize themselves with the NSSE instrument, review their campus goals, and select one to use for the activity.

Select a campus strategic goal for this activity. Keep in mind that not all strategic goals have corresponding indicators among NSSE questions, so it may be helpful to reference the survey while selecting.

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Campus strategic goal selected for this activity:

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1. Review the NSSE instrument and identify 5–6 items that most relate to your campus strategic goal. Among these items, select 3 that you prefer a large proportion of your students to experience—in other words, the NSSE items for which you would like the percentage of “Never” (or “Very little”) participating to be as close to 0% as possible.

1a. Why did you select these items?

1c. Looking at the results for these items, are you surprised? Did you expect different results; if so, what results did you expect? What activities could you do on campus to try to affect the responses?

1d. What existing campus offices, committees, student organizations, and individuals would be interested in the responses to these items?

2. Looking at your NSSE reports, select 3–5 items for which you would like the students at your institution to report more participation than reported by the listed comparison group—in other words, the NSSE items for which you would like the percentage of “Never” (or “Very little”) participating to be lower than your comparison group’s percentage.

2a. For the items selected in question 2a, why did you select these?

2c. For the items selected in question 2a, are any of your results disappointing, surprising, or below your expectations? Expand on this.

3. Reflecting on this worksheet, what have you learned? Who are those on your campus that you will share these results with?
Fully participating in NSSE is more than simply joining in the survey administration and receiving the results. Disseminating NSSE results to relevant audiences and committees across campus is arguably one of the most important steps of NSSE participation. Consider the many opportunities on your campus for sharing NSSE results.

**Data Sharing Opportunities**

NSSE results can be used in many ways, including:

- assessing institutional performance
- monitoring academic standards
- providing evidence for accountability and transparency
- informing improvement efforts
- monitoring students’ exposure to effective educational practices
- supporting student learning and development
- developing cohort experiences for groups of students
- facilitating student retention and engagement
- guiding staff development efforts
- managing resources, programs, and services
- fostering other stakeholder engagement
- improving internal communication
- marketing to prospective students
- communicating with alumni

The most effective uses of NSSE results take into consideration how dissemination is most likely to enhance education policy and practice. This involves identifying the audiences and contexts that surround the reporting activities.

**Laying the Groundwork: Explaining the Importance of Student Engagement**

NSSE results make more sense when audiences have a basic understanding of the concept of student engagement. Research shows that engagement—the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities—is the best single predictor of student learning and personal development. Higher levels of student engagement result from certain institutional practices, the best known set of which are the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education (A. W. Chickering & Z. F. Gamson [1987]. *AAHE Bulletin, 39*(7), 3–7):

1. Encouraging student-faculty contact
2. Developing cooperation among students
3. Using active learning techniques
4. Giving prompt feedback
5. Emphasizing time on task
6. Communicating high expectations
7. Respecting diverse talents and ways of learning

Emphasizing good educational practice helps focus faculty, staff, students, and others on the tasks and activities associated with higher yields in desired student learning outcomes.

**Answering Questions: The NSSE Instrument and Self-Reported Data**

It is important to answer any questions that may arise regarding the validity and reliability of the NSSE survey before introducing the data and results to the workshop group. Staff may more readily accept the findings and consider changes to their practice if such questions are adequately addressed before the workshop begins.

The validity of self-reported data can be affected by the ability of respondents to provide accurate and truthful information in response to questions. Research shows that people generally tend to respond accurately on questions about their past behavior unless the questions are sensitive or make them uncomfortable. The validity of self-reported time estimates has also been examined. To provide survey respondents a frame of reference, NSSE items include specific periods of time to aid memory recall and to reduce the distortion that may occur when respondents remember events over time. Further research suggests that self-reported data are valid under five conditions, all of which NSSE was designed to satisfy:

1. The requested information is known to respondents
2. The questions are phrased clearly and unambiguously
3. The questions refer to recent activities
4. The respondents take the questions seriously
5. The questions do not threaten, embarrass, or violate respondents’ privacy
The “halo effect”—which may account for satisfied students inflating performance, grades, or personal gains and efforts on surveys—appears to be fairly consistent across student populations. Thus, although what students report may differ somewhat from what they actually do, this effect does not appear to advantage or disadvantage one institution or student group compared with another.

Further information about research on self-reported data is in the Psychometric Portfolio, available on the NSSE website. The portfolio provides a framework for presenting studies on the validity, reliability, and other indicators of quality of NSSE’s data, including analysis of data subsets defined by a variety of student and institutional characteristics.

nsse.iub.edu/links/psychometric_portfolio

Getting Started

When new NSSE users receive their results and reports, they may not know where to jump in, or they may first wonder, “What are we doing well?” As you review your NSSE reports from 2001 to 2012, we recommend starting with your Benchmark Comparison report. This will give you comparative information to look inside and across your results. Second, look at the results to individual questions that comprise each benchmark. Specifically, it may be helpful to review the items with the greatest frequency of “Very often” against “Never” responses. If you are reviewing NSSE reports from 2013 or later, we recommend starting with your Snapshot report. Sharing this report with a wide campus audience may be a good first step, but providing campus units or groups with more tailored results or conducting interactive presentations using some of the worksheets in this user’s guide may help stimulate interest in additional results. The tips displayed in the box below may help your data dissemination initiatives.

Closing Thoughts

Educational improvement is the primary goal in using NSSE. If your NSSE results are less than favorable this year, sharing the data with appropriate institutional stakeholders is even more important. If results are not shared, campus administrators may remain in the dark on crucial educational issues. For example, if NSSE results reveal that students are not interacting with academic advisors or faculty members as frequently as administrators had hoped, sharing the NSSE results is an important step in starting the change process.

For campuses that seek to exploit NSSE to its full potential, receiving NSSE’s detailed reports and student data files is not the end of a process. Rather, it signals the beginning of the next phase: using NSSE results. After data collection has concluded, the real work begins—making meaning from the results, identifying priorities for action, formulating concrete plans for improvement, and implementing those plans. At whatever point in this process your campus may be, we encourage you to take full advantage of all that NSSE provides.

Communicating Results to Create Action for Change

Meet with key stakeholders individually or in a small group.

Before meeting with stakeholders, be sure to send NSSE results ahead of time and ask them to bring a copy to the meeting.

Contextualize the data or compare them with previous years’ administration results.

Consider what other institutional data you can link to NSSE data.

Work with stakeholders, relevant committees, and/or departments to create specific goals and action plans using NSSE results.

Make sure that students, individuals who work in this area, and campus representatives who may have an interest in NSSE results are included in communications.

Implement the plan and monitor progress.

Progress can be monitored via focus groups, informal surveys, and interviews.

Form an “action team” (faculty and staff) to spearhead administration and promotion and to help further analyze results.

Host a lunch for a preliminary discussion of team members’ roles and expectations.
### Overcoming Potential Obstacles to Using NSSE Results Effectively

*Converting assessment information into action is a challenge for all colleges and universities.*

*Below, we provide ways to address some of the more common obstacles.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacle</th>
<th>Approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small number of respondents</td>
<td>Check various demographics of your NSSE respondent file to compare the representation of the sample and your campus population. Review the sampling error. In future administrations, consider ways to increase the number of respondents and promote survey participation in new ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions about validity and reliability</td>
<td>NSSE has conducted a number of studies to document the validity, reliability, and other indicators of quality of NSSE’s data, including analyses by various student and institutional characteristics. The Psychometric Portfolio, a framework for presenting these studies, can be found at the NSSE website. <a href="nsse.iub.edu/html/psychometric_portfolio.cfm">nsse.iub.edu/html/psychometric_portfolio.cfm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited capacity to analyze and report results</td>
<td>The reports that NSSE sends institutions can be quickly packaged and sent to faculty and staff with little work. All data files, reports, and supporting documents related to NSSE <em>Institutional Reports</em> are available in electronic format, which allows for easier print or electronic distribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Average” results across the board</td>
<td>Try using a different comparison group or consider a criterion-based approach to determine the degree to which student performance is consistent with institutional expectations. Analyze results by subgroups to reveal internal variation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of faculty awareness of or interest in learning about and using student engagement results</td>
<td>Consider administering the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) as a way to look at student engagement from the faculty perspective. Results may be useful for discussions at a retreat or workshop. Also, make available a summary of the literature on the value of effective educational practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exemplary Uses of NSSE Data

To conclude your results-sharing session or to inspire further campus action, you may want to illustrate the ways other institutions have used NSSE data to improve the quality of undergraduate education. Below are several short examples of institutions that have had success in using NSSE data on campus.

NSSE’s repositories of practical ideas for data use including two volumes of Lessons from the Field, short examples featured in the yearly Annual Results reports, and the more than 500 institution examples in a searchable database on the NSSE website provide additional illustrations of using NSSE data to enhance undergraduate education.

nsse.iub.edu/html/how_institutions_use_NSSE.cfm

Austin Peay State University

Austin Peay State University presented its NSSE findings to the university’s deans, chairs, and directors, connecting student engagement information along with data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program and Your First College Year survey. After analyzing the responses of students majoring in education, the results were incorporated into the self-study prepared for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education review.

In addition, NSSE results have been considered in freshman seminar and orientation workshops and other first-year student initiatives. Student affairs program directors in health services and counseling use NSSE data to guide outreach programming. Austin Peay also has included its NSSE results in proposals prepared for external funding, such as Title III grants for expanding institutional capacity to serve low-income students.

The Catholic University of America

In 2009, The Catholic University of America (CUA), in Washington, DC, launched a comprehensive assessment plan for their newly implemented First-Year Experience (FYE) program. Representing a substantial investment in helping the newest members of the campus community enter into the life of the university and improve student retention, the FYE program at CUA is comprised of numerous components that support student success including a streamlined summer registration process; first-year advising; learning communities; a weekly FYE newsletter; increased tutoring and learning assistance programs; and, at its core, academic and intellectual elements. To inform the creation and improvement of the FYE program, CUA used a range of data including NSSE, the Classroom-Level Survey of Student Engagement (CLASSE), advising surveys, course and instructor evaluations, and institutional retention data.

CUA has administered NSSE annually since 2000 and has examined results longitudinally to assess improvements in first-year student engagement and, in particular, to assess the impact of implementing learning communities and enhanced first-year courses. CUA’s NSSE scores for student-faculty interaction increased significantly over time and in comparison to their Carnegie peers. For example, results demonstrated improvements in teaching and learning in the first year, including discussing ideas from readings with faculty members outside of class and receiving prompt feedback on academic performance.

Similar improvements also occurred for collaborative learning activities such as discussing ideas with peers outside of class and participating in community-based projects. By combining NSSE with other assessment results, including course and instructor evaluations, CUA further revised the curriculum of its introductory writing course, implemented block scheduling of learning communities, and established an FYE reading room. CUA concluded that assessment results supported the incorporation of learning communities, first-year advising, and co-curricular enhancements to the FYE, and also indicated that further attention was needed to the academic core of FYE. CUA plans to invest in expanded faculty development activities and to continue striving to make the educational experience academically rich and personally nurturing to ensure student success.

University of Nebraska at Kearney

The University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK) has administered NSSE six times. Each year, the results are reviewed by various departments and programs for setting priorities, recruitment, assessment, and program
improvement. NSSE results have been employed in discussions about developing a new and different approach to general education at UNK, as faculty examine the relative strengths and weaknesses of the program from the student’s perspective. In addition, the first-year experiences program and the undergraduate research program housed in the Office of Sponsored Programs use student engagement data to assess whether students are benefitting from these two programs in the intended ways.

Finally, NSSE findings have informed the university’s strategic planning process to discern strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats from a student perspective. As a predominantly undergraduate residential institution, UNK considers NSSE data to be indispensable to effective planning, and it intends to continue using it to develop and implement action plans based on the institutional strategic plan.

**Minnesota State Colleges and Universities**

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system convened member campuses for a two-day working conference to build upon efforts to promote promising practices for student success—practices aligned with the chancellor’s priorities to dramatically increase student retention, successful transfer, and completion of degrees. Sessions addressed high-impact practices (learning communities, service-learning, first-year seminars, and undergraduate research) for both state university and two-year college student success. The goal of the conference was to use data, including results from NSSE and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), to inform the design of such practices, with particular emphasis on first-year experience courses, supplemental instruction, and accelerated developmental education.

Each MnSCU campus team—composed of chief academic officers, faculty, student affairs staff, equity officers, deans, and directors of academic support—developed their institution’s plan to scale-up promising practices and to set target measures for increasing student success outcomes. As a result of these conversations, best practices in student success are being fostered across MnSCU campuses including corequisite, accelerated, and modularized models of developmental education; Statways and Quantways efforts (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching curriculum development initiatives to increase student success in mathematics); and expanded supplemental instruction, learning communities, and first-year experience programs. MnSCU also plans to launch a faculty-driven process to determine shared learner outcomes for developmental education and, through partnerships with secondary schools and adult basic education programs, will create a series of targeted interventions to cultivate college readiness and foster success.

**Resources for Additional Examples**

How institutions use NSSE:
nsse.iub.edu/html/howInstitutionsUseNSSE.cfm

Institutional website examples:
nsse.iub.edu/html/inst_web_site_display.cfm