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Introduction

Each year the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information from undergraduates at four-year colleges and universities across the country to assess the extent to which students engage in a variety of good educational practices. The NSSE project is grounded in the proposition that the frequency with which students engage in activities that represent effective educational practice is a good proxy for collegiate quality. NSSE is supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts and is cosponsored by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and The Pew Forum for Undergraduate Learning.

This overview is divided into four sections. First, we compare the characteristics of participating institutions and students with institutional and national profiles as well as some general information on overall response rates. In the second section we present selected findings, including descriptive information about the students who completed the survey and preliminary analyses of patterns of engagement among various groups of students. Finally, we provide suggestions for interpreting the data presented in this report.

Later this fall you will receive national benchmarks of effective educational practice as well as benchmarks for your institution. This information will be based on the aggregated data from 618 different colleges and universities that have participated in NSSE since 2000.

NSSE 2002 Institutions and Respondents

The NSSE 2002 sample¹ was comprised of 206,844 first-year and senior students who were randomly selected from electronic data files provided by 366 participating four-year colleges and universities. A list of these institutions is available in Appendix A of the institutional report. NSSE sampling procedures call for an equal number of first-year and senior students to be sent the survey with the standard sample size determined by the number of undergraduate students enrolled at the institution. Students at the majority of colleges and universities (67% or 245 schools) had the option of responding either via a traditional paper questionnaire or via the World Wide Web. One hundred and twenty-one (33%) schools opted to be Web-only institutions where students received an introduction letter through the mail and all further contact electronically.

Tables 1 and 2 on the next two pages show that NSSE 2002 participating institutions and respondents approximate the characteristics of students enrolled at participating schools as well as the national profile of all four-year colleges and universities. The source of the comparative data is the 1999-2000 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) database, the most recent complete data file available. However, the IPEDS data are two years old so the comparisons may not accurately reflect certain institutional and student characteristics for the 2001-2002 academic year.

**NSSE 2002 schools
closely resemble
the national profile
of four-year
colleges and
universities**



**Table 1
NSSE 2002 Institutions and
all Four-Year Colleges and Universities**

	<u>NSSE 2002</u>	<u>National</u>
Carnegie Classification		
Doc/Res – Ext	14%	10%
Doc/Res – Int	9%	8%
Master’s I & II	44%	43%
Bac – Liberal Arts	20%	16%
Bac – General	13%	23%
Sector		
Public 4-year	45%	37%
Private 4-year	55%	63%
Region		
Far West	11%	10%
Great Lakes	19%	15%
Mideast	20%	19%
New England	8%	9%
Plains	12%	11%
Rocky Mountains	3%	3%
Southeast	19%	26%
Southwest	8%	7%
Location		
Large city (>250,000)	22%	19%
Mid-size city (<250,000)	30%	29%
Urban fringe large city	16%	17%
Urban fringe mid-size city	7%	8%
Large town (>25,000)	4%	4%
Small town (~5,000)	18%	17%
Rural	3%	6%

Source: National data are from 1999-2000 IPEDS Data File

Profile of NSSE 2002 Institutions

NSSE 2002 schools closely resembled the national profile of four-year colleges and universities in terms of region of the country and location, as demonstrated in Table 1. However, NSSE 2002 institutions included more Doctoral/Research Universities and Baccalaureate Colleges- Liberal Arts and fewer Baccalaureate Colleges-General as defined by the 2000 Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

Doctoral/Research Universities and Master’s Colleges and Universities enroll more than three-quarters of all undergraduates. At the same time, ample numbers of smaller, independent colleges also took part in NSSE 2002, insuring that the results reflect the experiences of a broad cross-section of students attending four-year colleges

Profile of NSSE 2002 Respondents

Table 2, on the following page, shows selected characteristics of the 80,597 students who completed *The College Student Report* in 2002. The first column represents students who responded to the NSSE survey in 2002, the second column shows the characteristics of students at the four-year schools that participated in NSSE 2002 as reflected by 1999-2000 IPEDS data, and the third column represents the national profile of students at all four-year colleges and universities from IPEDS data.

Year in School

The respondents were about equally divided between first-year (49%) and senior (51%) students.

Gender

Women made up two-thirds (66%) of the respondents compared with 57% of the students enrolled at NSSE 2002 schools and 58% nationally (Table 2). The larger proportion of women respondents is consistent with the widely reported survey research findings that women are more likely than men to return questionnaires.

Age

Students 19 years of age or younger compose the largest group (44%), reflecting the fact that half the students selected to receive the survey were in their first year of college. About 37% of respondents were 20-23, 9% were between the ages of 24

Table 2
Characteristics of NSSE 2002 Respondents,
Students at NSSE 2002 Institutions, and
Students at all Four-Year Institutions

	<u>NSSE Respondents</u>	<u>All NSSE 2002 Schools</u>	<u>National</u>
<u>Gender</u>			
Men	34%	43%	42%
Women	66%	57%	58%
<u>Race/Ethnicity*</u>			
African American/Black	6%	8%	12%
Amer. Indian/Alaska Native	2%	1%	1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7%	5%	4%
Caucasian/White	80%	74%	71%
Hispanic	7%	6%	6%
Other	.1%	-	-
Multiple	5%	-	-
<u>International</u>			
	5%	3%	3%
<u>Enrollment Status</u>			
Full-time	88%	82%	81%
Part-time	12%	18%	19%

* Notes: Students could check more than one racial or ethnic group so the percentages exceed 100%. The IPEDS and NSSE categories for race and ethnicity differ.

Source for All NSSE 2001 Schools and National: 1999-2000 IPEDS Enrollment Data File



Demographic characteristics of NSSE respondents nearly mirror the national profile

Race and Ethnicity

White, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native students are slightly over-represented and African American students are slightly under-represented (Table 2).

Living Arrangements

Forty-four percent of all students lived in campus housing (68% of first-year students, 21% of seniors). The remainder lived within driving distance (42%), within walking distance (12%), or in a fraternity or sorority house (2%).

Fraternity or Sorority

Thirteen percent of men and 11% of women were members of a social fraternity or sorority.

Grades

Just over 21% of all students reported that they have earned mostly A grades. Only 3% of students reported earning mostly C's or lower.

Parents' Education

Forty-two percent of all respondents were first-generation college students. Approximately one third (32%) had both parents who graduated from college.

Enrollment Status

About 88% of all students were enrolled full-time (Table 2). Approximately 24% of all students attended one or more other institutions in addition to the one at which they were currently enrolled. Of this group of multiple-institution attendees, 50% went to another four-year college, 42% to a community college, 2% to a vocational-technical school, and 6% to some other form of postsecondary education.

Male engineering majors outnumber their female counterparts about six to one

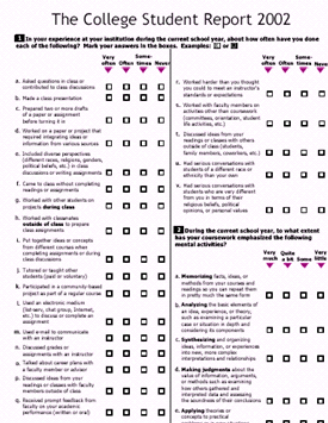
Primary Major Field

Table 3 shows the percentages of students majoring in different fields broken down by class and gender. More men are majoring in business, engineering, computer and information sciences, and physical sciences, while more women are pursuing degrees in education, health-related fields, and the social sciences.

Major	1st Year Students		Seniors	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Biological/life sciences	7%	9%	6%	7%
Business	18%	13%	20%	16%
Communications	3%	5%	3%	5%
Computer and information sciences	9%	2%	10%	3%
Education	4%	13%	5%	13%
Engineering	14%	2%	13%	2%
Health-related fields	3%	9%	3%	8%
Humanities	4%	4%	5%	6%
Mathematics	1%	1%	2%	1%
Multiple primary major	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other	7%	8%	7%	7%
Physical sciences	3%	1%	3%	2%
Social sciences	10%	14%	13%	18%
Undecided	8%	8%	-	-
Visual and performing arts	4%	5%	3%	5%

Response Rates

The average institutional response rate for NSSE 2002 was 41%.² The average institutional response rate for standard schools (institutions where students had the option of completing either the paper or the Web version of *The Report*) was 41%, with a range of 16% to 89% across schools. The average institutional response rate for NSSE 2002 Web-only schools (institutions where students only had the option of completing the survey online) was 39%, with a range of 10% to 73% across schools. About 55% of the NSSE 2002 respondents completed the paper version of *The College Student Report* and approximately 45% completed it using the Web. Additional information about response rates, including the response rate for your institution, can be found in Table 7 at the end of the “Overview” on page 16.



Selected Results

This section is divided into two parts. The first presents a general view of the nature and frequency of undergraduate student engagement in effective educational practices. The second part briefly summarizes the results from a series of regression analyses examining the levels of engagement of different groups of students, controlling for various student characteristics and institutional factors such as selectivity and sector.

College Activities

Page 1 of *The Report* includes questions about the nature of the activities in which students engage. A “substantial amount” of engagement is defined to be at least 50% of all students reporting “often” or “very often” (Table 4).

The least frequent activities are those where the percentage of students who responded “never” exceeded 35%, meaning that roughly one third or more of the students had no experiences in these areas during the 2001-2002 academic year (Table 4).



Table 4
Most Frequently and Least Frequently Reported Activities

	1st Year Students Responding Very Often or Often	Seniors Responding Very Often or Often
<u>Most Frequent Activities</u>		
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	75%	86%
Used email to communicate with an instructor	64%	72%
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	58%	72%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.)	58%	64%
Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral)	54%	65%
Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs) in class discussions or writing assignments	57%	57%
<u>Least Frequent Activities</u>		
Participated in community-based project as part of a regular course	69%	58%
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework	62%	47%
Tutored or taught other students	52%	44%

81% of NSSE 2002 respondents worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources

37% of respondents participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course

About one quarter of seniors worked on a research project with a faculty member

Seven of ten seniors completed an internship or other type of field experience



Almost two thirds of seniors (63%) did community service or volunteer work during college

Course Emphasis and Educational Programs

Another way to gain insight into the student experience is to look at the kinds of intellectual and mental activities that institutions emphasize and the types of educational programs in which students take part that complement and enrich their collegiate experience.

- More than four-fifths (85%) of seniors said their classes emphasized analyzing ideas or situations to a substantial degree (combination of “quite a bit” and “very much” responses).
- About three quarters (78%) of seniors said their classes emphasized applying concepts or theories to new situations.
- Seven of ten seniors completed an internship or other type of field experience.
- Only about one quarter of seniors (25%) worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements.
- About 42% of seniors took foreign language coursework.
- One-fifth (18%) of seniors studied abroad.

Table 5
Percentage of Seniors who Participated in Various Educationally Enriching Activities

	<u>DR- Ext</u>	<u>DR - Int</u>	<u>Master's</u>	<u>B-LA</u>	<u>B-Gen</u>	<u>Total</u>
Practicum, internship, field experience	70%	70%	70%	72%	76%	71%
Community service/volunteer work	62%	57%	59%	74%	68%	63%
Research with faculty member	27%	22%	21%	34%	22%	25%
Learning community	22%	22%	23%	21%	25%	23%
Foreign language	41%	32%	36%	65%	40%	42%
Study abroad	17%	12%	14%	36%	17%	18%
Independent study/self-designed	25%	24%	26%	43%	31%	29%
Culminating senior experience	48%	51%	54%	74%	67%	58%

Community Service and Volunteerism

Almost two thirds of seniors (63%) did community service or volunteer work during college. Students who belong to Greek organizations were more likely than their non-member peers to perform a service activity. In addition, transfer and older students were less likely to engage in community service than their non-transfer or traditional-age peers. We also found that students who live on or near campus are more engaged in volunteer work than their peers who drive to campus.

Time on Task Matters

What students put into their education determines what they get out of it. Of the six time usage items, three are positively correlated with other engagement items and self-reported educational and personal growth. They are time devoted to preparing for class, extracurricular activities, and on-campus work. Of the remaining three items, two of them, working off campus and caring for dependents, may be prompted by circumstances not fully under the control of the student.

- Only about 14% of full-time students spent more than 25 hours a week preparing for class, the approximate number that faculty members say is needed to do well in college. More than two fifths (41%) spent 10 or fewer hours a week (Figure 1).
- Students majoring in engineering and the sciences spent more time than other majors preparing for class. Engineering (37%), physical sciences (33%), and biology (30%) majors spent more than 20 hours per week preparing for class. In comparison, only 14% of communications majors, 12% of agriculture and parks and recreation majors, and 8% of public administration majors spent this much time.
- Two-thirds of all students were working, 54% of first-year students and 88% of seniors.
- More than half of all part-time students (55% first-year students, 62% seniors) work more than 20 hours per week (Figure 2).
- A non-trivial fraction of seniors (about 18%) spent 11 or more hours per week caring for dependents.
- Seventy percent of all students spent 15 or fewer hours a week relaxing and socializing. One out of every ten students spent more than 25 hours.
- Seven percent of first-year students spent more than 25 hours a week relaxing and socializing whereas 62% of all first-year students spent 15 or fewer hours.
- Only about one tenth of all students participated in co-curricular activities more than 10 hours a week.

Student Satisfaction

Most students were generally satisfied with their college experience. Eighty-seven percent of all students rated their college experience “good” or “excellent” (Figure 3). Only 2% said their experience was “poor.” Four fifths (83%) of first-year students and seniors (80%) would “probably” or “definitely” attend the same school if they were starting college again.

Figure 1
Hours Per Week Students Spend Preparing for Class

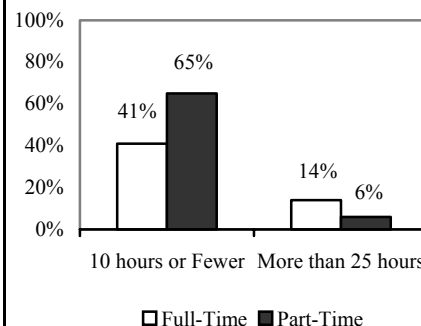


Figure 2
Percentages of Students Working Off Campus More than 20 Hours Per Week

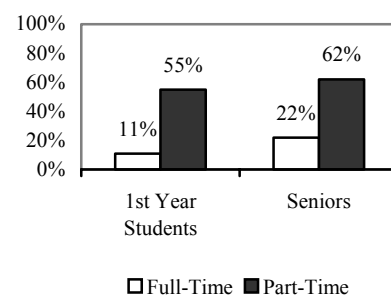
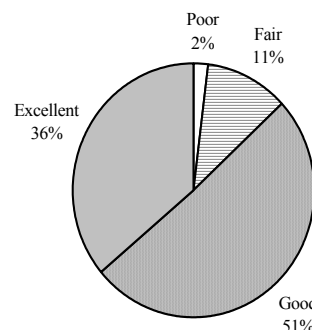


Figure 3
Satisfaction with College Experience



Patterns of student engagement are similar to those reported in both 2000 and 2001



Patterns of Student Engagement

We conducted multivariate regression analyses for different groups of students using seven clusters of items from *The College Student Report* as dependent variables.³ These clusters are:

- (1) college activities (22 items in question #1);
- (2) reading, writing and nature of exams (Question #3, items a, c, d, e, Question #4);
- (3) course emphasis on higher-order mental activities (Question #2, items b through e);
- (4) time-usage (Question #7)
- (5) educational programs (Question #6);
- (6) educational and personal growth (Question #8)
- (7) opinions about your school (Questions #9 through #12).

In general, the results reported below are similar to those reported in both 2000 and 2001.

Year in School

Even though seniors worked more and spent more time caring for dependents, they were also more engaged overall in good educational practices compared with first-year students, net of a host of student and institutional characteristics. First-year students scored higher in one area, opinions about their schools. As expected, seniors reported greater gains compared with first-year students on all educational and personal growth items.

Gender

Women engaged more frequently in good educational practices than men.

Race and Ethnicity

African Americans and Hispanics generally were a little more engaged in college activities, more frequently took advantage of enriching educational programs, reported greater course-emphases on higher-order mental activities, and had higher self-reported gains in educational and personal growth than their peers. Asian students also reported increased educational and personal growth and greater participation in educational programs. Compared with other groups, Hispanic students had the most favorable opinions about their schools (i.e. campus climate and the quality of relations among people on campus).

Age

Younger, traditional-age students (18-24 years) reported participating more frequently in enriching educational programs, spent more time in educationally productive activities, and reported more educational and personal growth. In contrast, older students have equally favorable opinions about their school as their traditional-age counterparts.

Fraternity and Sorority Members

In all areas of good educational practice, members of Greek-letter social organizations were more engaged than nonmembers, taking into account selected student and institutional characteristics. In terms of reading, writing, and the nature of exams, Greek students were more similar to their non-Greek peers than in other areas.

Topics of Interest

From a preliminary analysis of the 2002 results at the national level, we offer the following observations about certain areas of student engagement at four-year colleges and universities. For all analyses, selected student and institutional characteristics are controlled.

Grades and Engagement

As expected, student-reported grade point average (GPA) is positively linked to nearly all engagement items on the survey. In particular, a higher GPA is associated with more time spent preparing for class, asking more questions in class, more frequently tutoring other students, more favorable relationships with faculty, receiving feedback more frequently from faculty, and a more positive evaluation of overall educational experiences in college. These patterns generally hold for both first-year and senior students, though they don't explain the direction of the relationship between grades and engagement (e.g., does engagement result in higher grades, or do higher grades promote more engagement?). What is clear is that engagement and grades go hand-in-hand.

Academic Challenge and Major Field

The nature of course work presented to students in different majors varies. For example, more than three quarters (77%) of the seniors in ethnic studies majors and more than two thirds (68%) in multi/interdisciplinary studies wrote a paper of 20 pages or more. Only one third of mathematics (33%) and visual and performing arts (37%) majors had written a paper of 20 pages or more.

Nearly all of the seniors majoring in the humanities (93%), ethnic studies (89%) and foreign languages (89%) had been assigned five or more books. Less than two thirds of the seniors in engineering (65%), visual and performing arts (65%), computer sciences (65%) and agriculture (60%) were assigned five or more books.

Students in health-related majors (63%) and education majors (61%) were the most likely to indicate that they had frequently (often or very often) worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's expectations. Students in agriculture (44%) and parks and recreation (50%) majors were the least likely to state that they had frequently worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's expectations.

Diversity Matters

Diversity-related experiences are positively related to other areas of effective educational practice. Specifically, (a) talking with others of different races/ethnicities, (b) talking with others who are very different from oneself in terms of their religious beliefs or personal values, (c) incorporating diverse perspectives into class discussions or writing, and (d) attending an institution that encourages contact among students of different backgrounds are all associated with greater self-reported collegiate gains in personal-social and general education realms. In addition, students who experience more diversity reported more involvement in active and collaborative learning activities and also reported that their courses more frequently required critical thinking.

Seniors in the applied sciences (engineering, agriculture, computer science), physical sciences, and math report the fewest experiences with diversity. Conversely, students in ethnic studies, liberal/general studies, humanities, and social sciences report the greatest number of experiences with diversity.

Engagement and grades go hand-in-hand



**International students
are generally more
engaged in various
college experiences
than students who are
citizens of the United
States**



**Older students
appear to be more
satisfied with their
college experience
than their
traditional-age peers**

International Students

International students appear generally more engaged in various college experiences than students who are citizens of the United States. Specifically, international students reported greater gains in personal and social development, practical competence, and general education compared with their American classmates. However, international students were slightly less satisfied with their college experience and less engaged in community or volunteer work compared with American students.

In addition, first-year international students reported higher levels of academic challenge and perceived the campus environment to be more supportive than their American counterparts. However, international first-year students spent significantly less time relaxing and socializing than their American peers.

Older Students

Students age 26 or older spent substantially more time providing care for dependents living with them, working for pay off-campus, and commuting to class than did their younger, traditional-age peers. However, older students spent less time relaxing and socializing than their traditional-aged counterparts.

Older first-year and senior students were considerably less engaged in enriching educational activities compared to traditional-age students. For example, older students are less likely to:

- use technology (e-mail, list-serve, chat group, and Internet) to communicate with an instructor or to discuss or complete an assignment
- interact with faculty members
- report gains in personal social development and practical competence.

Despite these differences both older first-year and senior students appear to be more satisfied with their school than their traditional-age peers. For example, older students are more likely to:

- spend time preparing for class
- report positive relationships with administrative personnel and offices
- engage in active and collaborative learning.

Transfer Students

Forty percent of all seniors who completed the NSSE survey attended college at one or more different institutions before enrolling in the school from which they were about to graduate. What is the quality of the educational experience for those who enter an institution at some “midstream” point in their undergraduate years? What do they look like? Does their college experience differ in systematic ways from their counterparts who started college at the same institution from which they will graduate?

Senior transfer students differ in some marked ways from non-transfers in terms of their background characteristics and in patterns of educational engagement. These students share many characteristics with both older students and commuters. For example, senior transfer students are more likely to:

- be older, enrolled part-time, and drive to campus
- spend time caring for dependents
- be a first-generation student (neither parent graduated from college)
- be a student of color
- work at a job off campus
- attend a Master’s institution.

In general, these characteristics often translate into less frequent and meaningful contact with peers and faculty members, involvement in campus activities and programs, and overall engagement in learning. Transfer students also perceive their campus environment to be less supportive of their needs. Specifically, transfer students are less likely to:

- work with classmates outside of class to complete class assignments
- tutor other students
- use email to communicate with an instructor
- talk about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
- work with faculty members on activities other than coursework
- be in a social fraternity or sorority
- participate in co-curricular activities
- spend time relaxing and socializing
- perceive the campus environment as supportive of their social needs
- believe the campus emphasizes attendance at campus events and activities
- report positive relationships with other students.

However, transfer students are at least as academically focused as non-transfer students. For example, transfer students reported grades on par with non-transfer students and were just as academically challenged. In addition, they are more likely to rewrite a paper two or more times before turning it in and more likely to have done readings and assignments in preparation for class.

Transfer students differ from non-transfers in terms of their backgrounds and patterns of educational engagement

	<u>Transfer</u>	<u>Non- Transfer</u>
24 years of age or older	63%	13%
Full-time enrollment	71%	90%
Greek membership	7%	18%
Commute by car to campus	70%	43%
First-generation college student	54%	38%
Work on campus	18%	41%
Work off campus	68%	50%
Participate in co-curricular activities	35%	66%
Provide care for dependents	52%	22%



Check to see if your respondents differ from the profiles of your first-year and senior students

Guidelines for Interpreting NSSE Results

Before sharing your NSSE results institution-wide, become familiar with the nature of the data and “story line” of your school’s performance. Here are some things to consider.

Check The Representativeness of Your Respondents

An essential early step is comparing your student respondents’ demographic characteristics, summarized in the Frequency Distribution section, with your institutional data files for first-year and senior students. Women and some historically underrepresented groups are somewhat over-represented among NSSE 2002 respondents. Check to see if this is also true in your case and whether your respondents differ in any other ways from the profiles of your first-year and senior students. The determination of student year in school (“first-year” or “senior”) is based on the information from the electronic file that your school provided to us last fall. The Frequency Distribution section contains students’ responses to this question on *The Report*, which in a few cases may differ from the institution’s classification.

Another way to gauge representativeness is through sampling error, an estimate of the margin by which the “true” score for your institution on a given item could differ from the reported score for one or more reasons, such as differences in one or more important characteristics between the sample and the populations. For example, if 60% reply “very often” to a particular item and the sampling error is $\pm 5\%$ there is a 95% chance that the population value is between 55% and 65%. Keep in mind that sampling error is based on the population of interest. If you want to estimate the sampling error for first-year male students, it must be calculated using the numbers of all first-year male students and the first-year male respondents (as contrasted with all undergraduates or all male and female first-year students). Increasing the number of respondents relative to the total population reduces sampling error. For this reason some schools are increasing their sample size using NSSE’s oversampling.

Look for Patterns in Item Differences

In addition to focusing on items with medium to large effect sizes, look for patterns in your students’ responses. For example, are your students consistently above or below the mean of your comparison group in certain areas of engagement? Are the differences explainable, perhaps a function of your school’s mission, the nature of the undergraduate program, or certain students’ characteristics?

Also, don’t rely exclusively on statistical significance tests to identify areas that warrant attention. A consistent pattern of scoring above the mean, even though all items may not reach statistical significance, may indicate your institution is doing the right things in terms of good educational practice. At the same time, some institutions have very high expectations for student engagement and may fall short of their own aspirations even though comparisons with other institutions are favorable.

The Results Are Unweighted

The data in the Means Summary Report comparisons are not weighted. That is, no adjustments were made to correct for potential bias in students' responses to approximate the populations of first-year and senior students at your school and other colleges and universities in your comparison groups. Later this fall, when we prepare the five national benchmarks of student engagement, we'll use appropriate weighting techniques, similar to those employed in previous years, to make the appropriate adjustments. That said, the unweighted and weighted results for most NSSE items tend to be very similar at the institution, comparison group, and national levels. Some possible exceptions may be the reading, writing, and time on task questions (e.g., study hours, caring for dependents) at schools that have substantial proportions of part-time students, as they take fewer classes per term and cannot be expected to read and write as much as full-time students. Keep this in mind when interpreting the results.

Look Carefully At Items With Large Effect Sizes

In the Means Summary Report an asterisk (*) marks those items where your students' responses differ at a statistically significant level from students at schools in your respective comparison group(s) or at all NSSE 2002 institutions. The more asterisks reported for a particular item indicate a smaller probability that the difference noted is due to chance. ability that the differences noted are due to chance ($p < .01$ for consortia comparisons, $p < .001$ for Carnegie and national comparisons). Even so, the actual magnitude of some item score differences may seem trivial, even though they are highly reliable and statistically significant. For this reason, we also report the effect size associated with those item comparisons that are statistically significant. The effect size represents the magnitude of the discrepancy in the student or institutional behavior represented by the item. When the effect size is large, or a pattern of moderate effect sizes exists, it's likely that the quality of the student experience is appreciably different and, therefore, may be of practical as well as statistical significance in the respective area of student engagement.

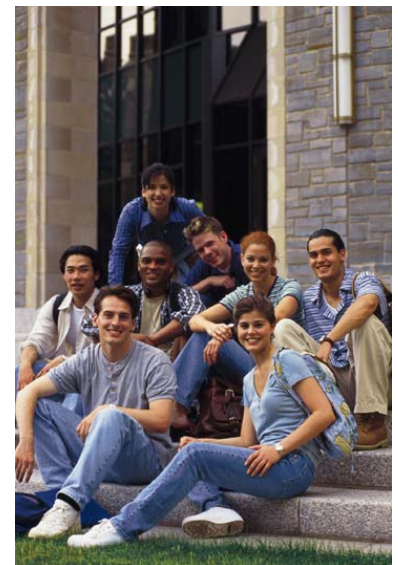
Finding large effect sizes is not that common in most areas of non-experimental educational and social science research including the NSSE project. If your results include some medium or large effects, something may be going on that warrants immediate attention, especially if other empirical or anecdotal information corroborate the NSSE data. Here are some general guidelines for determining the relative importance of a Cohen's d effect size:

- .20 is a small effect
- .50 is a medium effect
- .80 is a large effect

If Your School Is In A Consortium

If your school belongs to a consortium that used additional questions, the responses to these additional questions are included in the Means Summary Report and Frequency Distribution sections. These data are also in the institutional data file. Answers to such questions as "What is your reason for working off campus?" and "Who is your academic advisor?" have categorical response options that are meaningless when displayed in the Means Summary Report format. For this reason the response cells for such questions are empty. When presenting the results to categorical questions to colleagues and others, please use the information in the Frequency Distributions.

Focus on items with medium to large effect sizes and look for patterns in your students' responses



**For more
information about
mode-of-
administration
effects visit our
website at
www.iub.edu/~nsse**



Take Into Account Possible Mode-of-Administration Effects

Our analyses show that a mode-of-administration effect slightly favors schools where a high percentage of students completed *The College Student Report 2000* via the Web. However, the differences that favor the Web mode have very small effect sizes. This phenomenon has also been noted by others using the Web for survey research and is discussed in more detail in the Appendix A. We still don't know for sure whether this pattern of responses is a function of the mode of administration itself (e.g., something about responding via the Web induces students to slightly inflate their responses), a function of certain institutional features (e.g., technology investment), or whether students who complete the survey via the Web are different in some ways including engaging more frequently in good educational practices. Evidence of the last of these is that the Web effect is most prominent on the three technology-related items ("used e-mail to communicate with an instructor," "used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment," and self-reported gain in "using computing and information technology"). We'll continue to monitor this issue and alert you if our analyses lead us to modify our tentative conclusion that the Web mode has little practical impact on student responses to *The College Student Report*.

Review Responses to Experimental Questions (if applicable)

In an effort to test potential survey items for future administration, beginning April 1st, 2002, a small set of experimental questions were added to the NSSE online survey. These questions were attached to the end of the survey and only students responding to the online version after this date received these extra questions. The experimental questions explored themes such as technology and distance education, spirituality development, student academic and social self-esteem, academic motivation, awareness of current news and events, and the impact of September 11 on student learning and experiences. Institutions were categorized into four groups and four sets of different experimental questions were administered to the respective groups.

If your institution participated in this item testing trial, the responses to the experimental questions are included in your institutional data file. Students' answers to the open-ended questions are also provided in an Excel file called "Open-Ended Experimental Items." However, due to their experimental nature and the small sample sizes for most of the participating institutions, these questions are not included in the Frequency Distribution Report and Means Summary Report. Rather, the frequency distributions and grand means by Carnegie types and at the national level are provided in a separate file named "Experimental Item Summary by Carnegie and National" to inform institutional comparisons.

When reviewing your institution's experimental item results, please pay attention to the number of respondents. If the number is small compared with your overall respondent group, interpret your results with extreme caution. The responses to the open-ended questions may contain rich information that might be important to understanding your students and informing institutional improvement efforts.

Consortium, Carnegie, and National Comparisons Do Not Include Oversampled Students

NSSE's minimum sample sizes are determined by undergraduate enrollment (e.g., less than 4,000 students = 450; 4,000 to 15,000 students = 700; greater than 15,000 students = 1,000). It is possible to add students to the minimum sample size by oversampling in one of two ways: (1) all Web-only schools are oversampled using an algorithm based on undergraduate enrollment; and (2) some institutions request oversampling, which requires an additional fee. An increasing number of schools are using the oversampling option to add students to their sample to reduce sampling error and to insure an adequate number of respondents to analyze the information by major field, race and ethnicity, or other variables.

NSSE's policy is to use only respondents from the institution's standard random sample when developing the national benchmarks of effective educational practice and sector and national norms. This protects against the possibility that colleges and universities with oversamples might unduly influence the results. However, if your school requested an oversample, the responses of **all** your students (standard sample and oversample) **are included** in your institution's reports and data file.

Notes

¹The NSSE 2002 number of respondents reported in the "Overview" does not include the additional students who were oversampled. Oversampling was done at Web-only institutions and at schools that requested more of their students be surveyed than dictated by the NSSE sampling strategy, which is a function of institutional size. All in all, more than 118,350 students responded to the NSSE 2002 survey.

²The NSSE 2002 average institutional response rates most likely underestimate the actual adjusted rate. Student postal service and e-mail addresses were based on fall 2001 enrollment information provided by the institutions. An unknown number of students in the sample were no longer eligible to complete the survey because they had dropped out or transferred to another institution. Even though first-class postage was used to guarantee the return of survey packets that could not be delivered, experience suggests that packets were not returned for some students who were no longer in school or residing at their fall 2001 address. In addition, institution provided email addresses were used to send students, at Web-only schools, their invitation to participate in NSSE 2002. We have found that many students have multiple e-mail accounts (e.g., Yahoo, AOL, Hotmail). Some institutions have more difficulty tracking these multiple email accounts and some students may not forward their institution assigned e-mail. Therefore, the actual response rate for Web-only institutions, when corrected for the unknown number of students who were no longer in school or did not receive the invitation to participate, is probably several percentage points higher than 39%. We are in the midst of checking undeliverable e-mails to students in an effort to more accurately estimate the Web-only response rate.

³The regression of each cluster of items on a group characteristic is net of the following student and institutional controls: class, residence, gender, enrollment status, race/ethnicity, age, major, parental education, 2001 Barron's admissions selectivity, sector, and 2000 Carnegie Classification.

The responses of *all* your students are included in your institution's reports and data file

National Survey of Student Engagement
Indiana University Center for
Postsecondary Research and Planning
Ashton Aley Hall 102
1913 East Seventh Street
Bloomington, IN 47405-7510

Phone: 812-856-5824
Fax: 812-856-5150
E-mail: nsse@indiana.edu
Web: www.iub.edu/~nsse

