

## NSSE and The Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)

NSSE has been selected as one of four assessment instruments focused on students' experiences and perceptions for the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA). Developed as a partnership between the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AACU) and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), the VSA is designed to help institutions demonstrate accountability, measure educational practices and outcomes, and assemble information that is accessible, understandable, and comparable.

## NSSE-related Resources to Link to the College Portrait

Of the nearly 300 institutions that have registered to participate in VSA, approximately 95% have NSSE data. In addition to using NSSE results to populate the "Student Experiences and Perceptions" section of the College Portrait, NSSE reports and related resources can be added via several links in the College Portrait to provide supplementary information about how your institution evaluates the experiences of its students.

### NSSE Pocket Guide Report

**What Students Are Saying About Their NSSEville State Experience**

National Survey of Student Engagement

Each year the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) asks students at hundreds of colleges and universities to reflect on the time they devote to various learning activities. The topics explored are linked by previous research on student success in college.

Results from NSSE can provide prospective students with insights into how they might learn and develop at a given college. To help in the college exploration process, NSSE developed *A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College* to provide students and parents key questions to ask during campus visits.

The following responses were provided by 1043 randomly selected NSSEville State students on the 2008 NSSE survey.

**Academic Challenge**

**To what degree is studying and spending time on academic work emphasized?**  
85% of FY students feel that this institution places substantial emphasis on academics.<sup>1</sup>

**Do faculty hold students to high standards?**  
60% of FY students frequently work harder than they thought they could to meet faculty expectations.<sup>2</sup>

**How much time do students spend on homework each week?**  
32% of FY students spend more than 15 hours per week preparing for class. 11% spend 5 hours or less.

**What types of thinking do assignments require?**  
First-year students report substantial emphasis on the following activities:  
Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods: 74%  
Analyzing basic elements of an idea or theory: 81%  
Synthesizing and organizing ideas: 72%  
Making judgments about value of information: 74%  
Applying theories or concepts: 75%

**How much writing is expected?**  
10% of FY students write more than 10 papers between 5 and 15 pages and 15% have written a paper more than 20 pages in length.

**How much reading is expected during the school year?**  
50% of FY students read more than 10 assigned books and packs of course readings. 11% read fewer than 5.

**Do exams require students to do their best work?**  
50% of FY students report that their exams strongly challenge them to do their best work.<sup>3</sup>

**Active Learning**

**How often are topics from class discussed outside of the classroom?**  
54% of FY students frequently discuss readings or ideas from coursework outside of class.<sup>2</sup>

**Do students work together on projects – inside and outside of class?**  
39% of FY students frequently work with other students on projects in class, 40% work with peers on assignments outside of class.<sup>2</sup>

**How often do students make class presentations?**  
25% of FY students report that they make frequent presentations in class.<sup>2</sup>

**How many students participate in community-based projects in regular courses?**  
15% of FY students frequently participate in service-learning or community-based projects during a given year.<sup>2</sup> 55% never took part in such activities.

**How many students apply their classroom learning to real life through internships or off-campus field experiences?**  
By their senior year, 69% of students have participated in some form of practicum, internship, field experience, co-op, or clinical assignment.

**Do students have opportunities to tutor or teach other students?**  
25% of seniors frequently assist their fellow students by tutoring or teaching them.<sup>2</sup>

**Student-Faculty Interaction**

**Are faculty members accessible and supportive?**  
53% of FY students say their faculty are available, helpful and sympathetic.

**How many students work on research projects with faculty?**  
By their senior year, 24% of students have done research with a faculty member.

**Do students receive prompt feedback on academic performance?**  
66% of FY students indicate that they frequently get prompt verbal or written feedback from faculty members.<sup>2</sup>

Note: FY= First-Year Student SR=Senior Student  
IPEDS=868888

### NSSE Benchmark Report - Level of Academic Challenge

National Survey of Student Engagement

NSSE 2008 Benchmark Comparisons  
NSSEville State University

**Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)**

Benchmark Comparisons

NSSEville State compared with:

| Class      | NSSEville State   |                    | Mid East Public   |                    | Carnegie Class    |                    | NSSE 2008         |                    |   |     |
|------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---|-----|
|            | Mean <sup>a</sup> | Stdev <sup>b</sup> | Mean <sup>a</sup> | Stdev <sup>b</sup> | Mean <sup>a</sup> | Stdev <sup>b</sup> | Mean <sup>a</sup> | Stdev <sup>b</sup> |   |     |
| First-Year | 54.3              | 52.6               | **                | .13                | 51.8              | ***                | .19               | 52.9               | * | .11 |
| Senior     | 57.2              | 55.3               | **                | .13                | 56.1              |                    | .08               | 56.5               |   | .05 |

**Level of Academic Challenge (LAC) Items**

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, etc. related to academic program)
- Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings
- Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more; number of written papers or reports of between 5 and 19 pages; and number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages
- Coursework emphasizes: Analysis of the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory
- Coursework emphasizes: Synthesis and organizing of ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships
- Coursework emphasizes: Making of judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods
- Coursework emphasizes: Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Working harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations
- Campus environment emphasizes: Spending significant amount of time studying and on academic work

<sup>a</sup> Weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.  
<sup>b</sup> \* p < .05 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001 (2-tailed).  
<sup>c</sup> Mean difference divided by the pooled standard deviation.

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The NSSE Pocket Guide Report: *What Students Are Saying* is an attractive and easy format that institutions can use to share their NSSE results. The report provides a quick snapshot of the level of student engagement on campus.

The NSSE Benchmark Report is a concise summary of some key findings from your institution's performance on NSSE.

# More NSSE-related Resources for the College Portrait...

## NSSE Executive Snapshot

## USA TODAY Initiative

**National Survey of Student Engagement**  
Executive Snapshot 2008  
NSSEville State University

Dear Colleague:  
This is a summary of some key findings from your institution's performance on the 2008 National Survey of Student Engagement. We hope you can use this information to stimulate discussion on your campus about how to improve the undergraduate experience at NSSEville State University.

Sincerely,  
Alexander C. McCormick  
Director, National Survey of Student Engagement

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**Are All Students at NSSEville State University Equally Engaged?**

Quality in U.S. higher education is often considered an institutional attribute, as if one college offers a uniformly better or worse education than another. Yet, a robust finding from decades of research on college students holds that student experiences and outcomes are more varied among students *within* institutions than *between* institutions.

In this year's annual report NSSE urges institutions to "look within," calling attention to the need to examine variation in the student experience at your institution. Your (hypothetical) average student does not describe all students and groups on your campus.

The adjacent figures illustrate this phenomenon. We plotted your students' NSSE benchmark scores in a "box and whiskers" chart (see key). Here you can see the range and variation of your scores (whiskers), as well as where the mid-range or normal scores fell (box). Note the dispersion of your scores. The greater the range, the more varied the student experience is at your institution.

Improving the experience of your least engaged students may be the most effective way to raise your benchmark scores and improve your overall institutional quality. Even high-performing institutions have much to learn by examining variation in student engagement – by looking within.

**Variation in NSSE Benchmark Scores by Class at NSSEville State University**

**Key**

- 95th Percentile
- 75th Percentile
- 50th Percentile (Median)
- 25th Percentile
- 5th Percentile

The dot signifies the median – the score that divides all student scores into two equal halves (scores are reported on page 4). The box shows the middle 50% of your scores (from the 25th to 75th percentiles) and the whiskers show the range of scores, excluding outliers (from the 5th to the 95th percentiles).

How to make NSSE scores work for you - USATODAY.com - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2007-11-04-nsse-how-to\_N.htm

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### Searching for signs of engagement

Since 2000, the National Survey of Student Engagement has measured student involvement in key practices associated with learning, persistence and graduation. Each participating school receives scores for first-year students and seniors in five "benchmark" categories. To view the scores of schools that have agreed to share their NSSE data with USA TODAY, click on the map — or search by school name or type — and then click on the name of a school.

Search

**Results**

School name

City, State

Survey year

Institution type

NSSE BENCHMARKS

| Category                          | First-year students | Seniors |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Level of academic challenge       |                     |         |
| Active and collaborative learning |                     |         |
| Student-faculty interaction       |                     |         |
| Enriching educational experiences |                     |         |
| Supportive campus environment     |                     |         |

**BY REGION**

**BY INSTITUTION TYPE**

**ALPHABETICALLY**

The Executive Snapshot compares the performance of your institution with your selected comparison groups.

All baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities in the US that administered NSSE in 2006-2008 were invited to authorize the release of their benchmark scores to USA TODAY. More than 300 institutions agreed to participate.

## Learn More about NSSE and VSA!

View at your convenience a recording of the Webinar, "The Transparency-Accountability Puzzle: Where Does NSSE Fit?" presented in November 2008 by NSSE Director, Dr. Alexander C. McCormick. Also, please check the NSSE Web site for the developing 2009 Webinar schedule and to view the archive of all previously recorded Webinars, [www.nsse.iub.edu/webinars](http://www.nsse.iub.edu/webinars).

Detailed information on NSSE and VSA is also available on the NSSE Web site, [www.nsse.iub.edu/html/vsa.cfm](http://www.nsse.iub.edu/html/vsa.cfm).

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