Using Data to Catalyze Change on Campus

Featuring examples of NSSE data use on these campuses:

Anderson University

Bethel University

Boston University

Chaminade University of Honolulu

Denison University

Drake University

Gettysburg College

Holy Family University

Mills College

Nazareth College

The Ohio State University

Pace University

Rhode Island College

SUNY Oswego

Truman State University

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

University of Massachusetts Lowell

The University of North Dakota

University of Northern Iowa

University of Puget Sound

University of Saint Mary

The University of Texas at Tyler

Winthrop University

York University

Youngstown State University

NSSE
national survey of
student engagement

Overview of NSSE

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) annually surveys first-year and senior students at participating baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities to assess the extent to which they engage in and are exposed to proven educational practices that correspond to desirable learning outcomes. Institutions use the results to develop programs and practices that promote student engagement. The survey is administered in the spring term and is short, reliable, and easy for students to complete. It asks undergraduates about:

- Their exposure to and participation in effective educational practices

- Their use of time in and outside class

- The quality of their interactions with faculty staff and other students

- The extent to which they perceive the institution provides a supportive environment

- What they feel they have gained from their educational experience

Institutions participating in NSSE receive a detailed report with customized comparisons to selected institutions, supporting materials and resources, and a student-level data file. To date, more than 1,500 colleges and universities in the US and Canada have participated.

The NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice was created to develop user resources and to respond to requests for assistance in using student engagement results to improve student learning and institutional effectiveness. Since the NSSE Institute's inception in 2003, staff and associates have completed a major national study of high-performing colleges and universities, made dozens of presentations at national and regional meetings, conducted workshops and webinars for NSSE users, created user resources including the *Accreditation Toolkits* and the *NSSE Data User's Guide*, and worked with many campuses to enhance student success.

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Introduction

*"The [NSSE] reports have been **incredibly helpful**! The format is **user-friendly** and the graphs help to **illustrate the points** without being overwhelming."*

—Jodi Fisler, Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs & Director of Student Affairs Planning and Assessment, College of William and Mary

When NSSE-participating institutions receive their Institutional Report, with survey results and supporting documents, it signals only the beginning of their processes to share and interpret data, identify priorities for action, formulate and implement plans for improvement—and then to circle back to assess the impact of those efforts. Since its inception, NSSE has collected hundreds of rich examples of institutions putting student engagement results to use. Many of these have been featured in the "Using NSSE Data" section in past *Annual Results* and were described in depth in Volumes 1 and 2 of *Lessons from the Field,* highlighting varied approaches to converting data to action in ways that promote student success.

Collectively, the institutional examples of data use illustrate (a) the benefit of sharing results widely, (b) the utility of linking NSSE data to other information sources, and (c) the value of using data to address real campus problems and issues. Moreover, these institutional accounts demonstrate how NSSE's diagnostic, actionable information can catalyze vital, sometimes challenging conversations on campus about the quality of education for undergraduates.

Volume 3 of *Lessons from the Field* builds on insights from the earlier volumes illustrating the benefits of using NSSE results. Specifically, the highlighted institutional examples predominately feature the use

of NSSE's updated measures and redesigned reports introduced with the survey's 14th administration in 2013. After more than three years of collaborative analysis, evidence-based item refinement, pilot testing, and student interviews—NSSE was revised to incorporate content enhancements and customization options that sustain the survey's relevance and value to participating institutions.

The institutional examples featured in this volume reflect a range of institution types and include private and public institutions. Each example is unique, but several address common themes, including accreditation, sharing results across campus, and promoting survey participation. Readers might scan the table of contents and review examples from similar institution types, or consider examples by the categories identified in the index below.

The NSSE update opens a new chapter for evidence-based improvement at hundreds of colleges and universities. Maintaining the project's signature focus on diagnostic and actionable information related to student engagement in educationally effective activities and practices, the updated NSSE—and the updated companion surveys, the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) and the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE)—introduced rigorously tested new and refined items, new summary

INDEX OF INSTITUTIONAL EXAMPLES

Responding to Accreditation	Sharing Results Across Campus	Linking to Strategic Objectives	Promoting Participation	Quick Takes
The University of North Dakota	Chaminade University of Honolulu	Bethel University	Anderson University	Holy Family University
University of Northern Iowa	Drake University	Denison University	Boston University	The Ohio State University
The University of Texas at Tyler	Mills College	Gettysburg College	University of Massachusetts Dartmouth	Pace University
Winthrop University	Nazareth College	SUNY Oswego	York University	Rhode Island College
	University of Saint Mary	University of Massachusetts Lowell		Truman State University
	Youngstown State University			University of Puget Sound

measures, and new optional Topical Modules. Since the update was launched, participating institutions have been transitioning to the updated survey's language of Engagement Indicators (EIs) and High-Impact Practices (HIPs); adjusting to the 60-point EI scale; initiating fresh dialogues with faculty and professional staff about new measures such as Quantitative Reasoning, Effective Teaching Practices, and Learning Strategies; and sharing module results with newly interested campus audiences. NSSE's redesigned reports provide information about educational quality that is more concrete and accessible, while new online reporting and analysis tools make it easy for users to tailor and share results.

These updates facilitate the dissemination of easy-to-digest results to busy administrators, faculty, and staff. They also provide fresh ways for more audiences to consider student engagement results and develop action plans for improving undergraduate education.

The 25 institutional accounts featured in this volume illustrate how institutions are using results from the updated NSSE in assessment and improvement activities and in a variety of efforts to address important campus needs and priorities. Indeed, enlisting campus constituencies in the use of assessment results is essential during a time of heightened demands for accountability and pressures to increase student persistence and completion, support diversity, and ensure high-quality learning for all students. Even more, improvement efforts at colleges and universities are more likely to succeed when they emerge from a shared understanding of the evidence and of the priorities for action.

While moving from data to action can be challenging, there can be no shrinking from the task. Making effective use of student engagement data to improve student success has been and continues to be the most consequential challenge of the NSSE project. We appreciate our participating institutions' willingness to share their data-use stories and to work with us in advancing this imperative.

ENGAGEMENT INDICATORS AND HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES

Beginning in 2013, NSSE introduced ten Engagement Indicators, measures that provide valuable information about a distinct aspect of student engagement by summarizing students' responses to a set of related survey questions. The Engagement Indicators represent 47 survey items. In addition, six items are reported separately as High-Impact Practices. These measures provide institutions a concise framework for examining educationally effective practice.

The figure below displays the Engagement Indicators around four engagement themes and lists the items identified as High-Impact Practices. To learn more about the Engagement Indicators visit **nsse.indiana.edu/html/engagement_indicators.cfm**

ENGAGEMENT INDICATORS

THEME: Academic Challenge
> Higher-Order Learning (HO)
> Reflective & Integrative Learning (RI)
> Learning Strategies (LS)
> Quantitative Reasoning (QR)

THEME: Learning with Peers
> Collaborative Learning (CL)
> Discussions with Diverse Others (DD)

THEME: Experiences with Faculty
> Student-Faculty Interactions (SF)
> Effective Teaching Practices (ET)

THEME: Campus Environment
> Quality of Interactions (QI)
> Supportive Environment (SE)

HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES (HIPs)

Learning Community
Service-Learning
Research with Faculty
Internship/Co-op/Field Experience
Study Abroad
Culminating Senior Experience

Featured Institutional Uses

Using Results in Accreditation

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

The University of North Dakota (UND), a national public research university located in Grand Forks, ND, featured NSSE results in their 2013 Higher Learning Commission (HLC) self-study for reaccreditation. NSSE results were discussed in their presentation of evidence for several dimensions specified in HLC Criterion 3, Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support. For example, HLC Criterion 3.B.3 states, "Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments." UND discussed how they address learning goals at the program level and undergraduate core curriculum learning outcomes, and then incorporated results from the following NSSE items in response to the criteria:

- During the current school year, about how often have you examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue?

- During the current school year, about how often have you tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective?

- To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in learning effectively on your own?

- To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in solving complex real-world problems?

The University of North Dakota

Senior student results on several NSSE items were discussed in response to HLC Criterion 3.B.4, which states "The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work." Senior student scores on the educational gains item "understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds" were lower than UND desired, and these results were candidly discussed in the institution's reflection on their effectiveness on this criterion. The full narrative contextualized results in several ways. First, they stepped back and reflected on the students' responses to the diversity-oriented questions and the relative lack of racial and ethnic diversity found within the student population. Second, they recognized that student responses to these NSSE questions were collected before the changes to their general education diversity requirements were fully implemented. The university expects improved results once required courses and curricular adaptations are fully in place.

In response to the HLC Criterion 3.C.5, "Instructors are accessible for student inquiry," UND paired findings from other campus assessment instruments with NSSE results to demonstrate the accessibility of faculty. Overall, their NSSE results demonstrated that the percentage of first-year students interacting

with faculty inside and outside of the classroom had increased over time, while the percentage of seniors reporting interaction with faculty remained consistent since 2005. Again, the university thoughtfully resolved that although their NSSE results related to student-faculty interaction were consistent with peer institutions and other assessment results, their efforts to improve the quality of student-faculty interaction would continue.

NSSE results also informed UND response to HLC Criterion 5.C.3: "The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups." In preparation for their self-study, UND launched an Undergraduate Learning Working Group to reflect on and review local data and national best practices, and created seven recommendations for action. One of the recommendations was to create a first-year experience (FYE) pilot course. This course was launched in 2011–2012, and information obtained from the pilot was used to plan for a long-term FYE program at UND. The pilot course program was assessed using a variety of data including student inputs including ACT scores; GPAs; retention outcomes; results from the College Student Inventory (CSI), the Student Information Questionnaire (SIQ), and the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE); end-of-semester course evaluation results; information from a reflective assignment completed by all students and scored by a faculty team; and more. NSSE results were then used to assess the impact of the FYE pilot course. By comparing NSSE scores for first-year students in the pilot FYE course to NSSE scores of both first-year students who did not experience the pilot and several past years of first-year students, UND concluded that the FYE pilot course made a positive contribution to student engagement in the first year.

In addition to employing NSSE results in the university's successful reaffirmation and their quality improvement project, UND has also prepared brief reports to communicate key messages about student engagement for particular constituencies. For instance, UND presented results of questions related to the Effective Teaching Practices Engagement Indicator to demonstrate a need for clarity of communication between students and faculty, especially regarding feedback on assignments. As much as possible, UND drilled down into their data by creating dashboard reports for programs and comparing program-level data to the overall UND results. UND also mined students' comments on NSSE to provide qualitative feedback to departments. By presenting NSSE data graphically and clearly, UND provided relevant results to academic programs with comparisons to its public peers and Carnegie classification group, uncovering opportunities for improving instruction. UND transformed their NSSE results into digestible, useable formats—exemplifying how an institution can selectively present NSSE results important to specific groups within their institution.

Sharing and Responding To NSSE Data

MILLS COLLEGE

Mills College is a small, selective liberal arts college for women located in Oakland, California. The college has participated in several NSSE administrations, including 2014, and has also participated in the Development of Transferable Skills Topical Module.

Mills creates infographic displays of data results as standard procedure for all of the surveys they participate in. Their NSSE infographic was created after receiving their 2014 results, and highlights NSSE items with Mills student results side by side with their peer. In providing snippets of data, via text or a small table, the infographic communicates NSSE results to help all members of the Mills community better understand "who they are." The infographic also

demonstrates to the students that the administration is doing something with the data and using the results.

Copies of the infographic were printed and displayed all over campus, and digital copies were shared directly with all members of the Mills executive cabinet. Further, the infographic was sent directly to offices and individuals who would find the information particularly relevant to their work. For example, the infographic and Development of Transferable Skills Topical Module results were shared with the admissions and career services offices. Admissions has used the infographic when speaking with potential students. Career services plans to discuss with students transferable skills results, paired with individual experiences and coursework at Mills and how skills such as verbal and written fluency and analytic inquiry relate to the job market. Additionally, the alumnae office has found the infographic to be very useful for their work and communication with Mills alumnae.

NSSE'S TOPICAL MODULES

In 2013, NSSE introduced Topical Modules, which are short sets of items that can be appended to the core survey. Modules make it possible for institutions to delve deeper into aspects of the student experience on focused topics such as academic advising, civic engagement, experiences with diversity, writing, and technology. Module results are particularly useful for topical discussions among campus faculty, staff, and administrators.

For conversations on the role of technology in student learning, for example, the Learning with Technology module provides items about the role of technology in learning with peers and institutional emphasis on academic support. NSSE will develop additional modules for future administrations of the survey.
nsse.indiana.edu/html/modules.cfm

After the infographic was released, a full report on NSSE results was prepared and shared with the cabinet. The report was also posted on the campus intranet for all faculty and staff to access, generating more interest and campus activity around this report than ever before. The NSSE results led to a campus discussion around student social interaction and oral presentations. Specifically, the faculty were interested in the student responses to the questions about giving a course presentation. Responses revealed scores that were lower than Mills faculty would have liked, and that first-year students gave more class presentations than seniors did.

Faculty enthusiastically became involved in follow-up assessments to NSSE results. The campus is now engaging in an assessment to better understand how and where change might occur to increase the occurrences of oral presentations embedded within the general education curriculum. A committee of faculty, staff, and student representatives is collecting evidence to inform recommendations for action, including recordings of about 25 hours of senior seminar culminating presentations. Faculty will use a rubric (informed by the rubrics of MIT and the Association of American Colleges and Universities) to evaluate the oral presentations; their feedback will be shared with the committee to shape recommendations for refining the general education curriculum. The curriculum reform will reach across general education and into the disciplinary areas.

The next steps for the committee will then be to map where oral presentations are happening currently and to host faculty workshops on developing student oral presentation skills. The committee plans to map how oral presentation is first introduced in general education and how its development and practice continue within each degree program.

In addition to responding to the student oral presentation concern, Mills College was interested in responding to concerns about service-learning

and deep-level processing. Mills 2014 NSSE results revealed that there was room to increase the number of opportunities for students to participate in service-learning. During spring 2015, a handful of designs to better integrate service-learning into general education were piloted. The curriculum transformation committee is also looking at NSSE results to shed light on deep-level processing, specifically, responses to "During the current school year, about how much of your coursework emphasized the following: analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts?"

The most significant factor in helping faculty become receptive to NSSE results were the insights gained through examining them, which informed existing campus conversations on general education reform. With the current strategic plan calling for an overhaul of general education, the curriculum transformation taskforce was very interested in what could be learned from NSSE results, especially the questions on oral presentations, quantitative reasoning, and social interaction. Faculty found the Engagement Indicators to be actionable because they provided insight into what the faculty could do better. Mills has always done well on the NSSE construct of Level of Academic Challenge, but the updated survey provided additional insights into how students are being challenged. Additionally, the release of the college's NSSE infographic, followed by the detailed report, may have helped gain attention and build interest in the results. Individuals at Mills are paying more attention to the NSSE reports and are interested in discussing the results. The combination of the campus already prioritizing curriculum transformation, via the strategic plan, and the release of their NSSE 2014 results seemed to be perfectly timed to focus attention on using results.

Widely Sharing Results Through Customized Reports

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

Youngstown State University (YSU), in Youngstown, Ohio, has participated in five NSSE administrations. To introduce NSSE measures and overall results and to prepare campus administrators for more detailed program-level reports, the YSU assessment office edited YSU's NSSE *Snapshot* template of results and shared it via a webpage, with a cover sheet introducing the survey, highlighting results, and enticingly describing upcoming opportunities to learn more about results and "dive into the data." For campus members less familiar with information in the form of data, the introductory sheet also defined common statistical vocabulary.

Upon receiving their NSSE 2013 results, the assessment office created a dissemination timeline outlining how as well as when NSSE results would be shared and communicated across campus. This timeline included such activities as producing and presenting NSSE overview workshops, providing "Lunch and Learn" workshops, and sharing how to access NSSE data. The dissemination timeline was distributed to campus administrators for accountability and support.

Building from resources on NSSE's website and NSSE's standard reports, the first phase of sharing NSSE results was an overview presentation. This presentation provided the history of NSSE, NSSE's Engagement Indicators, the survey instrument, the alignment of NSSE with the YSU mission, the process of selecting comparison groups for NSSE results, and some preliminary results. Some of the charts and graphs from NSSE reports were put directly into the PowerPoint presentation. This overview appealed to individuals who were less familiar with NSSE and statistical data, and a similar overview was presented to department chairs.

At Lunch and Learn sessions, which began at noon, individuals were invited to bring their lunch and dive into Youngstown State's data. There were six different topics at the Lunch and Learns. Four of them were designed in alignment with the four NSSE themes, Academic Challenge, Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, and Campus Environments, and two additional sessions looked within other NSSE question sets on High-Impact Practices, Advising, and Transferable Skills. The goal of these sessions was both to share data and to gather feedback on how to improve practice and promote a high quality learning environment. During the topical Lunch and Learns, the presenter first explained how to look at NSSE results and then distributed copies of NSSE results and gave attendees 5 to 10 minutes to look at the data. Then, they would have a group discussion about what jumped out as interesting, which items merited concern, and which items stood out as exceptional. On items that had results lower than they would have liked or lower than peers, the group would discuss why they thought the responses were lower and what they could do about it.

In an effort to disseminate NSSE data and results to as much of the campus as possible, including to faculty, department chairs, and student affairs professionals, Office of Assessment staff conducted several training sessions on opportunities to access NSSE data via the online Report Builder tool. These sessions were held in a computer resource room on campus and involved an overview and walk-through on how to use the Report Builder, with tutorial resources and time for attendees to generate their own reports with the Report Builder tool. Attendees left the workshop with an annotated guide on how to use the Report Builder, a link to access

NSSE REPORT BUILDER—CREATE YOUR OWN REPORTS!

The NSSE Report Builder displays NSSE results by user-selected student and institutional characteristics. Two versions are available: Public and Institution. **nsse.indiana.edu/html/report_builder.cfm**
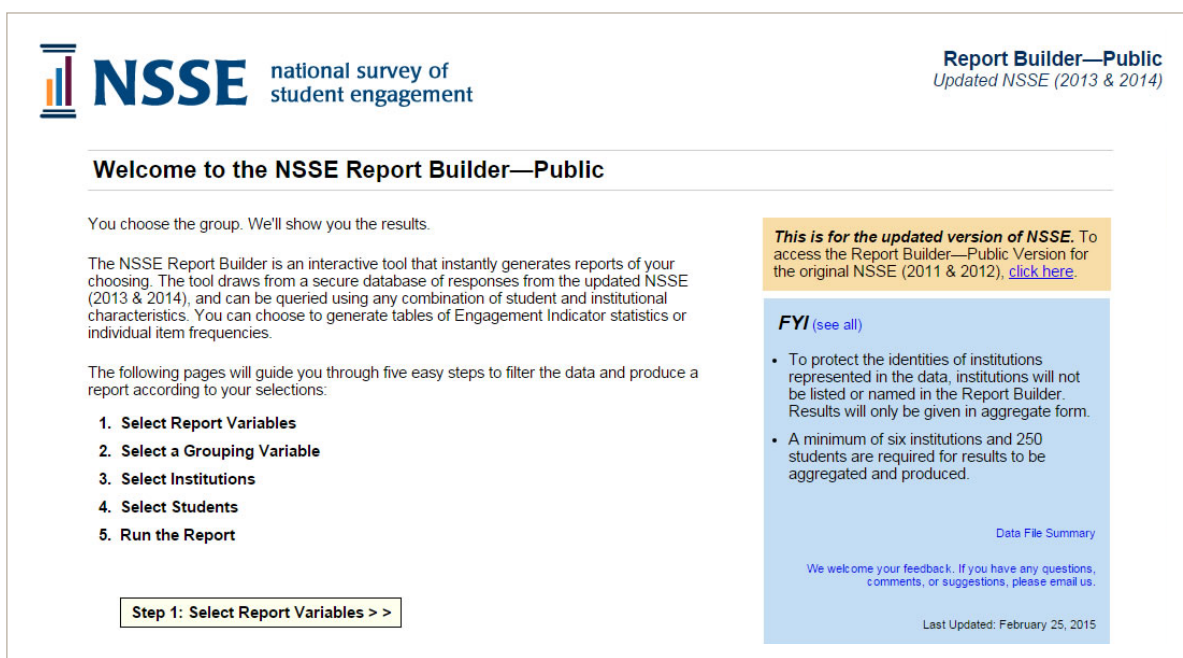

Figure 1. Screenshot of NSSE Report Builder—Public

the tool later, and a sheet with comparison results for the Engagement Indicators. The faculty, staff and administrators who attended these interactive sessions left eager to work with the Report Builder to create their own reports.

Youngstown State University

Altogether, over 15 Lunch and Learns and Report Builder sessions were held. Afterwards, attendees were asked to share how they had used the NSSE data or their own analysis of NSSE results in their work. For example, the Reading and Study Skills Center, an academic as well as a service-oriented division of the Department of Counseling, Special Education, and School Psychology in the College of Education, employed results from four items in the Supportive Environment Engagement Indicator, alongside support service use statistics and retention rates of students who completed the reading and study skills course—to highlight three views of YSUs supportive campus environment. The Center for Student Progress, which is where peer tutoring and peer mentoring happens on campus, reflected on NSSE results related to students' perceived educational gains. As one of the larger student employers on campus, the Center for Student Progress wanted to better understand what their student employees were gaining from their experience. This reflection prompted them to add focused student assessment to the role of mentors and tutors who work at the center.

A common observation in discussions of YSU's NSSE results was that YSU's student demographics differ from the traditional student profile. YSU's results indicated that their first-year students spent a lot of time working off campus, that many of their full-time students worked 30+ hours, and that many students also cared for dependents. All of these points became moments for campus discussion around what student engagement looks like at a commuter campus. Follow-up discussions included reviews of pertinent literature about commuter students, including The Disengaged Commuter Student (Kuh, Gonyea, & Palmer, 2001), and considered student support and activities for commuter students.

Overall, YSU designed their NSSE dissemination plan with the intent to share data and reduce gatekeeping of the data. YSU's account demonstrates that providing some training and guidance alongside sharing NSSE results widely can help facilitate data use and action on results.

Informing Strategic Action with Student Engagement Results

GETTYSBURG COLLEGE

In its most recent reaccreditation review with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, Gettysburg College, a four-year residential arts and sciences college in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, was commended by the visiting team for its exemplary and innovative practices of effective, systematic use of indirect assessments, including NSSE, and for improving student learning. The visiting team commented, "Assessment data were among the motivators for considering improvements and change; multiple constituencies engaged in the discussions and established new goals and benchmarks; resources were allocated, despite unexpected constraints after the 2008 financial crisis; and new data demonstrate some significant achievements in each area."

"Never had such a **positive response** [to NSSE results]."

—Alice B. Knudsen, Director of the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and
Academic Assessment, Mills College

Gettysburg's strong, systematic use of NSSE results and, in particular, its use of data to inform change, is fostered by the regular review and consideration of NSSE and other survey results by a wide range of groups and committees including the President's Council, the Committee on Institutional Effectiveness, the Committee on Learning Assessment, task forces (such as the Academic Advising and Mentoring Task Force and the Task Force on the Intellectual Life of First-Year Students), at faculty meetings, and at divisional meetings and retreats.

The comprehensiveness of sharing NSSE results helped inform the development and refinement of the college's strategic action goal on engagement, which states, "Gettysburg College will promote intellectual development, engagement, and leadership through active and innovative learning experiences." Within this goal the college detailed several subgoals and implementation strategies, including academic rigor/level of academic challenge and high-impact learning opportunities. In these approaches, many initiatives have been expanded or created to address areas of concern identified in NSSE and other assessments.

Two examples of NSSE data use related to the engagement strategic action goal highlight Gettysburg's practice. Results for Student-Faculty Interaction suggested the potential to enhance student participation in faculty-mentored research. In response, the college has prioritized increasing support for student summer research and senior projects, expanding opportunities for student travel to academic and professional conferences and providing a place to showcase student research and creative work. In recent years, the college has expanded student participation in research through increased financial support and new initiatives.

For example, the college launched Celebration—The Annual Colloquium on Undergraduate Research, Creative Activity, and Community Engagement to provide ongoing opportunities for students to present the results of their undergraduate research and creative projects to their faculty, peers, and others. Celebration brings together a wide range of engaged and energized students as they showcase their work from capstone research, independent study, coursework-related research, study abroad, service learning, and arts. The investment in faculty-mentored research has paid off, with more faculty and students reporting their participation in this high-impact practice.

A second effort related to addressing Gettysburg's engagement goal relied on NSSE results for student participation in internships, which were lower than expected. The college used these results as a call to action and has greatly expanded career-preparation programs for students through an initiative called "The Career Connector Challenge" and through closer collaboration between the development and alumni office and center for career development. The Career Connector Challenge was launched in 2010, by Gettysburg's Center for Career Development, to create new career-related opportunities for students, including networking dinners, summer internships, shadowing opportunities, and informational interviews, through an intensive campaign among alumni, parents, and friends. Since this initiative was launched, student-reported participation in career internships, externships, and job-shadowing experiences have increased, and Gettysburg's NSSE 2014 results affirmed that student internship participation as reported by seniors now exceeded their Carnegie Classification peers (earlier results showed that Gettysburg was similar to its peers on this measure).

Informed by NSSE results and other assessments, the college has greatly increased its support for faculty-mentored research, internship, and other high-impact learning experiences through resource allocation and new initiatives. Gettysburg College will continue to monitor its progress through various benchmarking assessments, including their next NSSE administration.

Improving Academic Advising
SUNY OSWEGO

In reviewing their Academic Advising Topical Module results, SUNY Oswego administrators identified an opportunity to improve their advising activities to better meet student needs. To gather more details on where improvement was specifically needed, the university's subcommittee of the campus retention committee, the academic interventions group, invited a sample of students from all class years as well as the entire faculty and staff populations to complete a survey on their advising experiences. Students noted that some advisers lacked the time or knowledge to suggest relevant experiences like internships, study abroad, and career opportunities. Faculty advisors indicated that more training and better access to resources were needed to support students experiencing academic difficulty. Further, the faculty also reported wanting a lighter advising load in order to provide more individualized advising.

The academic interventions group used the NSSE advising module results paired with the campus follow-up survey as leverage for the creation of two new student academic support specialist positions on campus. These two professionals meet with "at-risk" students to help ensure they are staying on track by providing them information about resources like tutoring, counseling, and study skills workshops.

Members of the academic interventions group also developed a set of five "advisement boot camp" sessions—two "basic training" sessions and three

SUNY Oswego

sessions on advanced topics. Members reached out to some of the campus's "super advisors" for suggestions of topics to be covered in each session. The provost's office incentivized attendance at three of the events with a dinner and tickets to a campus performance following the training sessions. To encourage attendance, the academic interventions group used a flier with a catchy logo, emails, campus announcements and digital signage distributed to the faculty, advisement coordinators, and department chairs.

The two basic boot camp sessions, offered at two different times to fit attendees' schedules, introduced attendees to the campus resources available to help them and also provided them with a list of hyperlinks they could bookmark in their browsers to get directly to the issue at hand. The sessions were informal, with some lecture style presentations, but participants reported that the most useful part of the boot camp was the interaction between colleagues who had good tips and excellent questions for each other.

Similar to the basic session, the advanced topics session was offered multiple times to provide scheduling flexibility. This session gave advisors a great deal of information on calculating GPA's, advice to share with students on "undoing a bad semester,"

transfer student issues, graduation problems, campus resources for career services, international education, major exploration, and student support services. Facilitators ended these sessions with case studies that advisors worked on in small groups and on which they then presented their perspectives. The exchange between advisers sharing how they dealt with difficult situations and how they worked through the issues was one of the more valuable aspects of the sessions.

The academic intervention group members undertook an assessment of these sessions that showed advisors were ready to employ more effective practices. SUNY Oswego plans to continue the boot camp series. They will repeat both the NSSE advising module and the internal survey as measurements for growth and ways to continue to improve their advising efforts.

Custom Reports to Shape Expectations for Student Engagement

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI), in Cedar Falls, IA, has participated in NSSE annually since 2006. The campus has shared their NSSE results in a number of ways; here, we highlight three most recent examples.

In 2010, UNI completed a Foundations of Excellence® a self-study, to look within their first-year students' experience, as part of their accreditation review with the Higher Learning Commission. UNI reviewed nine dimensions of the first-year experience, using NSSE results among over 200 other sources of data when evaluating key performance indicators. Within the self-study they identified areas where they could improve and measures that would be used to track progress; these later informed the development of an action plan to improve first-year student learning.

One response to the self-study was to develop and measure first-year learning outcomes. For example, FY Outcome #1 states, "By the end of the first year, students will be able to articulate and examine their personal values." NSSE items used to track progress toward this outcome include "During the current school year, how often have you examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue?" and "During the current school year, how often have you learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept?"

Another response to the self-study was to develop a first-year requirement called First-Year Cornerstone—a two-semester, six-credit course sequence that focuses on intergrated communication, student success, and civility. First-Year Cornerstone credit counts toward general education requirements and is both writing and speaking intensive. It is taught by faculty, with purposeful and systematic assistance from student affairs professionals, academic learning center staff, and library professionals. NSSE results are shared with new instructors in training to teach Cornerstone to help them better understand who the first-year students are. During training, they are asked, "How many of our first-year students live on campus?" and "How many of our students work for pay off campus?" NSSE results for first-year students including residential status, employment status, and enrollment status. Using student responses to these and other NSSE items as part of the training helps to emphasize meaningful, frequent student-faculty interaction as key to an integrated learning environment in the course. Because FY outcomes are mapped to First-Year Cornerstone, UNI is able to use NSSE and Mapworks data to compare students who take the course with those who do not. For students in the course, NSSE results are also used to track these NSSE Engagement Indicators: Discussions with Diverse Others and Student-Faculty Interaction.

"The updated reports are visually appealing, **easy to absorb** for the statistically uninitiated, while at the same time we can grasp sophisticated constructs."

—Ellen Boylan, Senior Director for Institutional Research, Marywood University

A second area for use of NSSE results at UNI is to provide information related to the campus diversity goals. Results for the NSSE Engagement Indicator, Discussions with Diverse Others, are used to map progress on key performance indicators (KPIs) such as "Educate all students to ensure that they are prepared to live and work successfully in a diverse world." To track progress on this KPI, campus data are paired with results for the following NSSE item:
During the current school year, how often have you had discussions with people from the following groups:

- from a race or ethnicity other than your own
- with religious beliefs other than your own
- with political views other than your own

The KPIs are posted on the campus website, on an interactive web page where faculty and staff are able to view KPIs, select progress benchmarks, and review data and progress. The results are also shared at the annual town hall meeting on diversity and inclusion, with results displayed at a booth for others to see.

Finally, UNI is incorporating NSSE results into other initiatives across campus. UNI has used NSSE results as indicators to track progress on their strategic plan. Academic advisors use NSSE item-level results as part of the assessment plan for their office. The campus has used NSSE's Report Builder to dig deeper into the data, looking at results for specific student populations such as first-generation compared to non-first-generation students. Information from NSSE and the writing Topical Module has been shared with the University Writing Committee. NSSE results have also been shared with the president's cabinet and his Executive Management Team. UNI's NSSE data use demonstrates the intentional integration of relevant NSSE results into the work of specific campus audiences and committees to inform initiatives, assess outcomes, and demonstrate educational strengths.

DRAKE UNIVERSITY

Drake University, in Des Moines, Iowa, has reviewed their 2013 results and drawn critical questions about how results align with expectations for student engagement, and has used these findings to prompt discussions about where they want their students to be. In order to better communicate their NSSE data and to translate results into something that would encourage change and action at the college and school level, the university disaggregated the data and created reports for colleges and schools. In addition to recreating many of the NSSE aggregate reports, they also recreated their NSSE *Snapshot,* highlighting the top five items in which each department or college excelled and the five areas in which they were below their peer comparison groups.

For initial analysis, they used the NSSE Report Builder to do some benchmarking and to create a structured report for each college and school. With the Report Builder, first, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment ran analysis by undergraduate major and exported the data to Excel. From there they created a template, so that the reports could be easily replicated across all of Drake's many colleges and schools. They programmed each spreadsheet to automatically highlight cells with the five top and five lowest items for first-year and senior students. These custom reports focused on comparative data in two ways—national benchmarking based on major field and internal benchmarking with Drake students in different colleges. For some of the colleges and schools, they also disaggregated the data to align with the outcomes areas for the college or with disciplinary accreditation standards.

To share the reports, staff from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment set up face-to-face meetings with deans and associate deans to discuss and present the data. Disaggregated results by major were shared side by side with comparative data. The comparative data provided information for administrators to see how the results aligned with areas of need or current priorities and informed discussions about ways to both use and share the data. In response to these reports and meetings, several colleges and schools have taken action. For example, the College of Business and Public Administration has undertaken a review of their curriculum in order to enhance students' development of writing skills. The School of Education and School of Journalism and Mass Communication have started a review of their curriculums to look for opportunities to enhance students' development of quantitative skills. Additionally, these conversations led to support for the faculty senate to review the core curriculum and contributed to a recommendation to examine their developmental sequence for greater focus on integrative learning. Reports were also prepared at the institution level to share with several campus groups, including the faculty senate, dean's council, and academic affairs council. Looking at their Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) and NSSE results together, these groups observed an integrative learning gap for Drake students.

Drake's NSSE *Snapshot* revealed that Drake students' ability to take on diverse perspectives was low in comparison that of their peers. Specifically, while Drake students were comfortable experiencing different cultures, they were less comfortable discussing values with others and trying to understand somebody else's perspective.

These results were shared with the Academic Affairs Leadership Group, which includes representatives from student life and the assessment committee. To address this issue, a group was tasked with looking at

how discussions with diverse others could be addressed systematically in Drake's core curriculum. Additionally, they are looking across other internal surveys and existing data to contextualize this discussion. Overall, in response to this issue, campus conversations have shifted to finding ways to better emphasize critical thinking and integrative learning.

Drake is also using NSSE data to examine effective practices that support student engagement and learning. The graphic display in Figure 2 was created to illustrate the positive gains in engagement at Drake related to participation in High-Impact Practices (HIPs) and mirrors an approach used in an AAC&U publication, *Assessing Underserved Students' Engagement in High-Impact Practices.* The display offers an accessible way to discuss HIPs that influence student-faculty interaction with the goal of determining strategies for increased impact across the university. Using a combination of data triangulation, customized report creation, and sharing results with relevant campus committees, Drake has developed a clear picture of the student experience and where it can be enhanced.
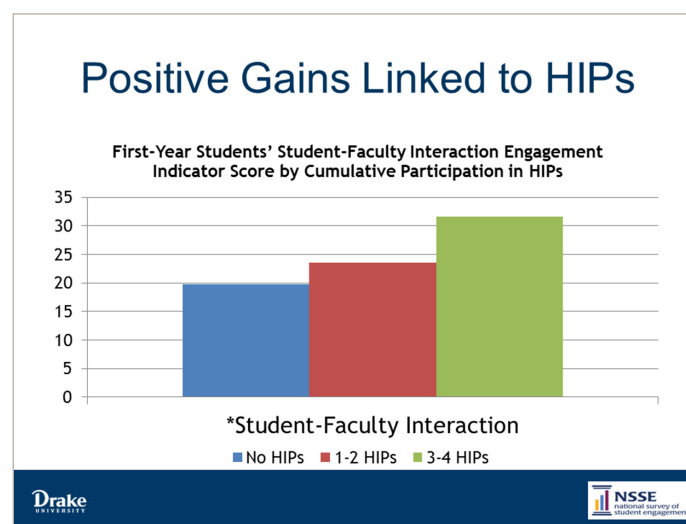

Figure 2. Drake University Display: First-Year Students' Student-Faculty Interaction Gains by Cumulative Participation in High-Impact Practices

"We've tried for years to get this data used and **we seem to have broken through** this year. Perhaps it's just the breaking point, but I think the new survey has questions that **better engage the campus**."

— Nancy Grear, Director of Institutional Research and Assessment (retired), Nazareth College

Introducing the Campus Community to NSSE

NAZARETH COLLEGE

Nazareth College, a religiously independent college with 2,000 undergraduates, located in a suburb of Rochester, New York, has participated in five NSSE administrations, including the updated survey in 2013. Institutional research (IR) staff at Nazareth implemented a comprehensive approach to introducing NSSE to the campus. To increase awareness of the upcoming NSSE administration and to stimulate student participation, they alerted faculty who taught primarily first-year or senior-level courses and encouraged them to mention the survey in their classes. Timing this email alert with the survey invitation schedule added relevance to the in-class reminders.

Following Nazareth's successful administration, and before the college received NSSE results, IR staff distributed copies of the NSSE instrument to faculty and staff, inviting them to consider first what they wanted to learn from the results. In addition, an IR staff member brought copies of the survey instrument to a meeting of all campus directors to get the attention of campus leaders and to spark their anticipation of the arrival of results. The IR staff goal was to create widespread understanding of what NSSE data could tell them.

The NSSE *Snapshot* from the college's *Institutional Report* was shared with two campus groups at Nazareth. The first group to consider the results was the President's Council, composed of individuals representing each academic division as well as staff and administrative offices across campus. The *Snapshot*

Nazareth College

was then shared with a wider campus audience including all directors of programs and units. The goal was to create a campus-wide understanding of how the data could help them learn about the undergraduate experience. Different aspects of reporting on the Engagement Indicators (EIs) were discussed in these meetings, including the box-and-whisker charts, which in addition to demonstrating an admirable mean score also displayed a range of experiences among students. Drawing from the faculty and staff discussions of the *Snapshot,* institutional researchers reviewed their data to look at students who stayed and those who left. Narrowing this examination to students who left with a 3.0 GPA or better, IR staff found that these students scored very low on survey items related to effective teaching and, in particular, the organization of instruction. Faculty examined these findings more fully and considered ways of responding.

To create more actionable and tailored student engagement reports for departments, the IR staff generated customized reports using the campus's production reporting tool, SAP Crystal Report. The

first page of these reports displayed each department's student response rate along with the rate for the whole campus and also with the rate for peers in a comparison group. The department reports similarly broke out the EIs, showing the responses for all items in each EI, again, with side-by-side display of results for the department, the institution, and the comparison group. In total, IR created 20-page reports (including results for certain questions by residency status, athletes, etc.) for about 22 different departments across campus. To follow up after the reports were distributed, IR staff conducted individual meetings with department faculty to clarify findings and to examine specific differences for students in these programs. In particular, the IR staff helped faculty make sense of data from small departments.

Nazareth used results from the core survey and also from the Academic Advising Topical Module to explore the relationship between instructional and advising practice and patterns in student persistence. Students with high GPAs who left the college had lower scores on certain advising items. These results were shared with the academic advisement department and the academic departments. Nazareth adopted a personal approach to introducing the campus to NSSE and created many opportunities for discussion of results. Plans are to continue to have campus conversations to examine results.

Sharing Results and Using Data For Quality Enhancement

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

The University of Texas at Tyler (UT Tyler) has made use of its NSSE data in a number of ways. During the 2014 faculty and staff convocation, the president highlighted NSSE results to show that the student-faculty interaction scores among first-year students

The University of Texas at Tyler

at UT Tyler were significantly higher than those for any other UT System university, Carnegie peers, and all NSSE schools—supporting the university's commitment to maintaining a 16:1 student-to-faculty ratio and its emphasis on student-faculty interaction. The president's fall newsletter, distributed on campus and to the community-at-large, featured information from UT Tyler's *Snapshot r*eport, the NSSE *Institutional Report'*s easily digested summary of key findings. Notably, the results reflected improvement in senior student scores over time. The newsletter reminded faculty and staff that student engagement increases a student's likelihood of success and congratulated those whose efforts contributed to the institution's improved results.

NSSE's ten Engagement Indicators were included in program-level conversations at UT Tyler about assessment for ongoing improvements based on student feedback. The university also launched an initiative to fully document the use of high-impact practices (HIPs) in undergraduate education. Using assessment rubrics drawn from NSSE reports and HIP criteria and curriculum-mapping templates, the institution has been documenting course-related HIPs in each academic program. NSSE results have also been used in the campus's strategic planning to increase levels of student engagement overall.

"I like the new presentations of Engagement Indicators with individual questions listed below each indicator. It's **easier to quickly refer back** to the strengths and weaknesses within each indicator."

—Tingho Huang, Research Analyst, Institutional Research and Information Management, Eastern Michigan University

NSSE data were used to develop UT Tyler's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for regional accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). During this process, NSSE results on diversity experiences captured the attention of faculty members and demonstrated a need for more cross-cultural exposure at UT Tyler. The data provided some evidence for the warrant in the QEP proposal, and the institution made the case that significant work could be done to develop students' understanding of others' opinions and beliefs as well as to focus on global and cultural education. To address these needs, the university developed the Global Awareness Through Education (GATE) program. After this initial use of NSSE data for the QEP rationale, for ongoing assessment of the QEP, GATE has continued to rely on NSSE results including a range of items focusing on discussions with diverse others, understanding someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective, and students' level of interest in study abroad. For the specified NSSE items, GATE staff track responses and set goals for encouraging these educational practices. The results allow GATE staff to gauge the feasibility of the program to significantly impact the UT Tyler student population going forward. Preliminary results show an increase for all students in Discussions with Diverse Others, with senior responses higher than the average of all three peer groups.

NSSE results have provided UT Tyler evidence of educational effectiveness as well as needed indicators to plan, implement, and track improvement efforts.

Assessing Competencies and Improving Educational Quality
WINTHROP UNIVERSITY

Winthrop University, a comprehensive public university in Rock Hill, South Carolina, has participated in 12 NSSE administrations, including the new survey pilot and NSSE 2014. While engaged in many NSSE data use projects on campus, two examples demonstrate Winthrop's thoughtful and extensive approach to making use of student engagement results.

Winthrop has been working to update its undergraduate core curriculum, beginning in 2009 with the design of university-level undergraduate competencies. This effort was informed by several sets of relevant information. Accreditation standards from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC), specifically Comprehensive Standards 3.3.1.1 on institutional effectiveness in educational programs and 3.5.1 on general education competencies and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Essential Learning Outcomes provided initial guidance. Winthrop's NSSE results, in particular the educational gains items (ten items that invite students to report how much their experience at this institution contributed to knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas, writing clearly and effectively, speaking clearly and effectively, thinking critically and analytically, etc.), offered more straightforward expressions of undergraduate learning goals. In 2010, the faculty voted unanimously to adopt four undergraduate university-level competencies (ULC): (1) Winthrop graduates think critically and

Winthrop University

solve problems, (2) Winthrop graduates are personally and socially responsible, (3) Winthrop graduates understand the interconnected nature of the world and the time in which they live, and (4) Winthrop graduates communicate effectively.

To gauge the influence of ULCs on the student experience, Winthrop identified relevant NSSE measures, including Engagement Indicator (EI) items, several High-Impact Practice (HIP) items, and two Topical Modules (Civic Engagement and Experiences with Diverse Perspectives) as metrics. For example, the NSSE 2014 EIs Higher-Order Learning and Reflective Learning are mapped to Winthrop's ULC on thinking critically. Additionally, the EI Discussions with Diverse Others is a metric for the UCL on interconnectedness. NSSE results are featured on Winthrop's website, with a specific page dedicated to showcasing how NSSE items map to the ULCs.

NSSE results also influenced the development of Winthrop's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Proposal for SACSCOC. When initially discussing what topic would be the focus of the project, faculty and staff gathered for a campus-wide conversation. When faculty and staff discussed what to focus on, the idea of global competence came up. Reviewing NSSE data to reflect on how Winthrop students fared against comparison groups over time on diversity measures

and study abroad, faculty and staff found that Winthrop students had expectations for participating in study abroad and levels of participation that were on par with their comparison groups. However, they saw the opportunity for increasing interest and rates of participation. Informed by these results, Winthrop designed its QEP Proposal for a Global Learning Initiative. Two NSSE Topical Modules, Experiences with Diverse Perspectives and Global Perspectives–Cognitive and Social, have provided Winthrop additional information about their students' exposure to and experiences with diversity and global perspectives, and these data are serving as indirect measures to assess Winthrop's QEP, the Global Learning Initiative. Winthrop also used results from selected NSSE 2014 core instrument items (in addition to items from the Global Perspectives module) as an institutional-level metric to assess its QEP.

Winthrop has also used its NSSE Major Field Report and produced customized reports from the NSSE Report Builder–Institutional Version to provide NSSE results to specific disciplines. Faculty were particularly interested in program-, discipline-, and field-level results as metrics for demonstrating senior achievement of Winthrop's ULCs. These are important for cyclical academic program review self-studies and are a data source for SACSCOC Comprehensive Standards (CS) 3.3.1.1 and CS 3.5.1 (college-level general education competencies).

After examining NSSE's institutional website examples webpage (**nsse.indiana.edu/html/inst_web_site_ ex.cfm**), staff members at Winthrop's Office of University Relations adapted Utah State University's NSSE infographic concept to develop Winthrop's NSSE infographic. Winthrop's videographer used the infographic to combine text, video, and pictures to create a customized Storehouse Story (technology to present visual images as an essay) using Winthrop students and featuring NSSE results. Winthrop's university relations and admissions staff worked together to create and send out an email blast using the Winthrop Storehouse Story and NSSE results.

Communicating NSSE Results with Data Visualization

CHAMINADE UNIVERSITY OF HONOLULU

With 47 NSSE items, communication of results to a university-wide audience during an agenda-filled meeting can be a challenge. Chaminade University of Honolulu integrated the use of colors to communicate NSSE results in lieu of text, tables, or multiple charts and to visibly highlight trends and display differences (e.g., effect sizes). For the purposes of illustration, real data from the fictional NSSEville University are used in displays in place of Chaminade results.

The Chaminade faculty core competency assessment committee was interested in reviewing trends within the NSSE Engagement Indicators as part of their assessment cycle. With simple spreadsheet conditional formatting they displayed multiple years of all 47 Engagement Indicators as a single color index or, a single "heat map". The colors purple, green, and yellow were used because they stand-out, however, any color scheme works. For trend analysis they used only two colors: green for where the university is above a comparison group; and yellow for where the trend is below the comparison group. By restricting to just the two distinctive colors, a single image makes it possible for viewers to rapidly answer the question: "From year to year, where is the university consistently higher and consistently lower than the comparison groups?" (See Figure 3 for a sample color index using NSSEville data).
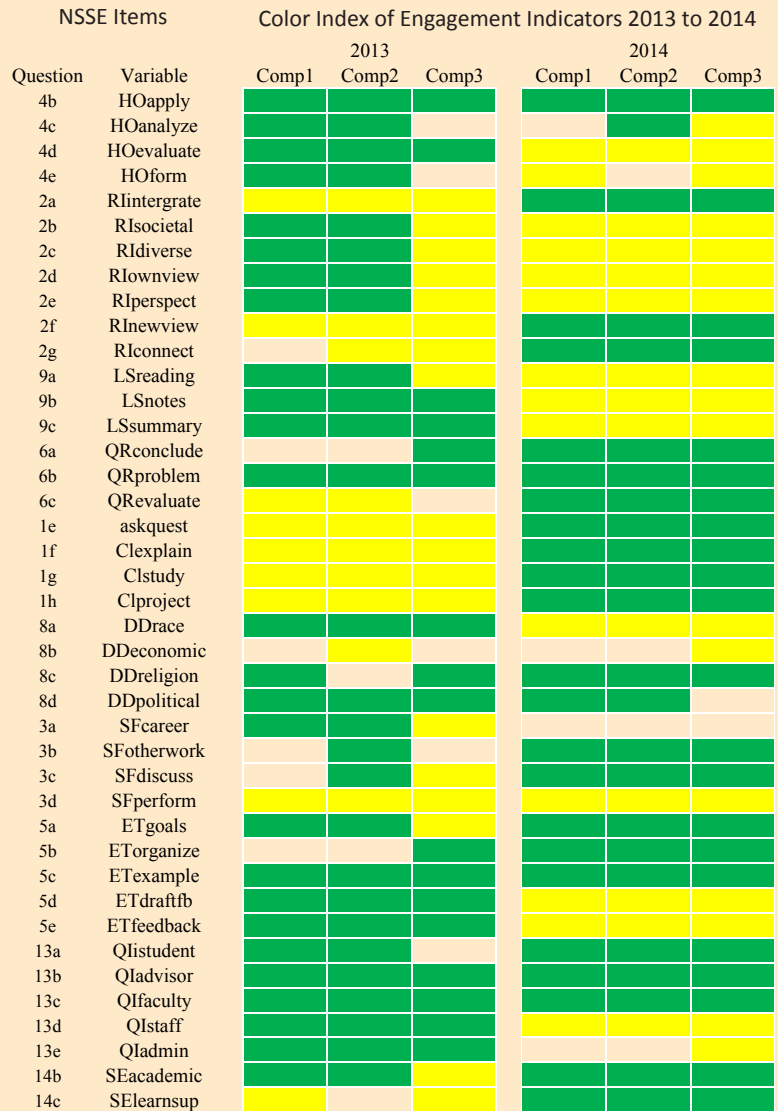
NSSE Items

Color Index of Engagement Indicators 2013 to 2014

Question	Variable	2013			2014		
		Comp1	Comp2	Comp3	Comp1	Comp2	Comp3
4b	HOapply						
4c	HOanalyze						
4d	HOevaluate						
4e	HOform						
2a	RIintergrate						
2b	RIsocietal						
2c	RIdiverse						
2d	RIownview						
2e	RIperspect						
2f	RInewview						
2g	RIconnect						
9a	LSreading						
9b	LSnotes						
9c	LSsummary						
6a	QRconclude						
6b	QRproblem						
6c	QRevaluate						
1e	askquest						
1f	CIexplain						
1g	CIstudy						
1h	CIproject						
8a	DDrace						
8b	DDeconomic						
8c	DDreligion						
8d	DDpolitical						
3a	SFcareer						
3b	SFotherwork						
3c	SFdiscuss						
3d	SFperform						
5a	ETgoals						
5b	ETorganize						
5c	ETexample						
5d	ETdraftfb						
5e	ETfeedback						
13a	QIistudent						
13b	QIadvisor						
13c	QIfaculty						
13d	QIstaff						
13e	QIadmin						
14b	SEacademic						
14c	SElearnsup						

Figure 3. NSSEville State Color Index

NSSE Items — Heat Map of Engagement Indicators 2013 to 2014

Question	variable	2013 Comp1	Comp2	Comp3	2014 Comp1	Comp2	Comp3
4b	HOapply						
4c	HOanalyze						
4d	HOevaluate						
4e	HOform						
2a	RIintergrate						
2b	RIsocietal						
2c	RIdiverse						
2d	RIownview						
2e	RIperspect						
2f	RInewview						
2g	RIconnect						
9a	LSreading						
9b	LSnotes						
9c	LSsummary						
6a	QRconclude						
6b	QRproblem						
6c	QRevaluate						
1e	askquest						
1f	Clexplain						
1g	Clstudy						
1h	Clproject						
8a	DDrace						
8b	DDeconomic						
8c	DDreligion						
8d	DDpolitical						
3a	SFcareer						
3b	SFotherwork						
3c	SFdiscuss						
3d	SFperform						
5a	ETgoals						
5b	ETorganize						
5c	ETexample						
5d	ETdraftfb						
5e	ETfeedback						
13a	QIistudent						

Figure 4. NSSEville State Heat Map

Color Range Index

bright purple = greatest positive difference

bright yellow = greatest negative difference
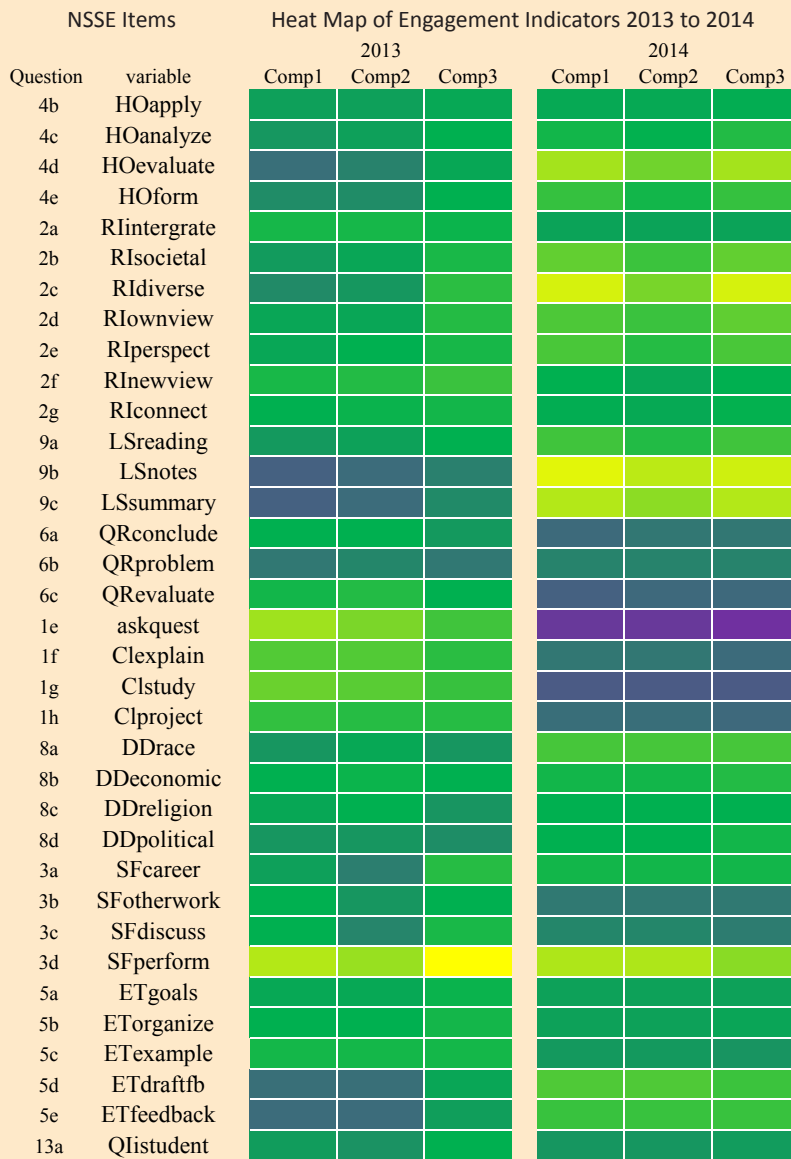
For comparison of differences, they used heat maps—matrix respresentations of data that display individual values and the magnitude of differences in values in colors. Purple denoted largest favorable differences, with smaller differences fading into green, then yellow, to show the largest unfavorable difference. The range of colors enables all viewers to quickly identify where the university has strengths (brightest purple) or weaknesses (brightest yellow) with respect to the NSSE Engagement Indicator items. (See Figure 4 for a sample heat map representing NSSEville data.)

This color display and communication method has been used at Chaminade University of Honolulu to facilitate campuswide discussion and rapid interpretation of the vast amount of information contained in the NSSE reports.

Transparency and Sharing Outcomes

DENISON UNIVERSITY

In October 2014, Denison University, in Granville, Ohio, launched on its website a new page, Student Outcomes: The Denison Difference, devoted to assisting internal and external audiences in understanding the value of a Denison education. The page displays results from Denison's NSSE 2014 administration in an innovative and interactive format. Combining the use of internal survey data, acceptance rates, and alumni narratives with NSSE results, the page is a comprehensive marketing web resource that captures positive student outcomes at Denison.

Denison has identified 13 core undergraduate student outcomes, derived from the institutional mission and general education requirements and developed by a committee of faculty and student affairs staff.

These are Civic Life, Global Perspective, Difference Among Persons, Issues of Power & Justice, Agency, Identity Awareness, Quantitative Reasoning, Oral Communication, Written Communication, Analytical Thinking, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, and Ethical Thinking. On the new webpage, these outcomes are arrayed around a colorful wheel and, when selected, reveal corresponding NSSE data that demonstrate how students at Denison reach that core student learning outcome. For example, analysts combined response proportions from items associated with Quantitative Reasoning to demonstrate students' experiences using quantitative skills. According to their analysis, 63% of seniors at Denison reported that their experience has "contributed 'very much' or 'quite a bit' to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in analyzing numerical and statistical information." Denison also aggregated responses to NSSE items about how students spend their time, including the amount of hours spent participating in
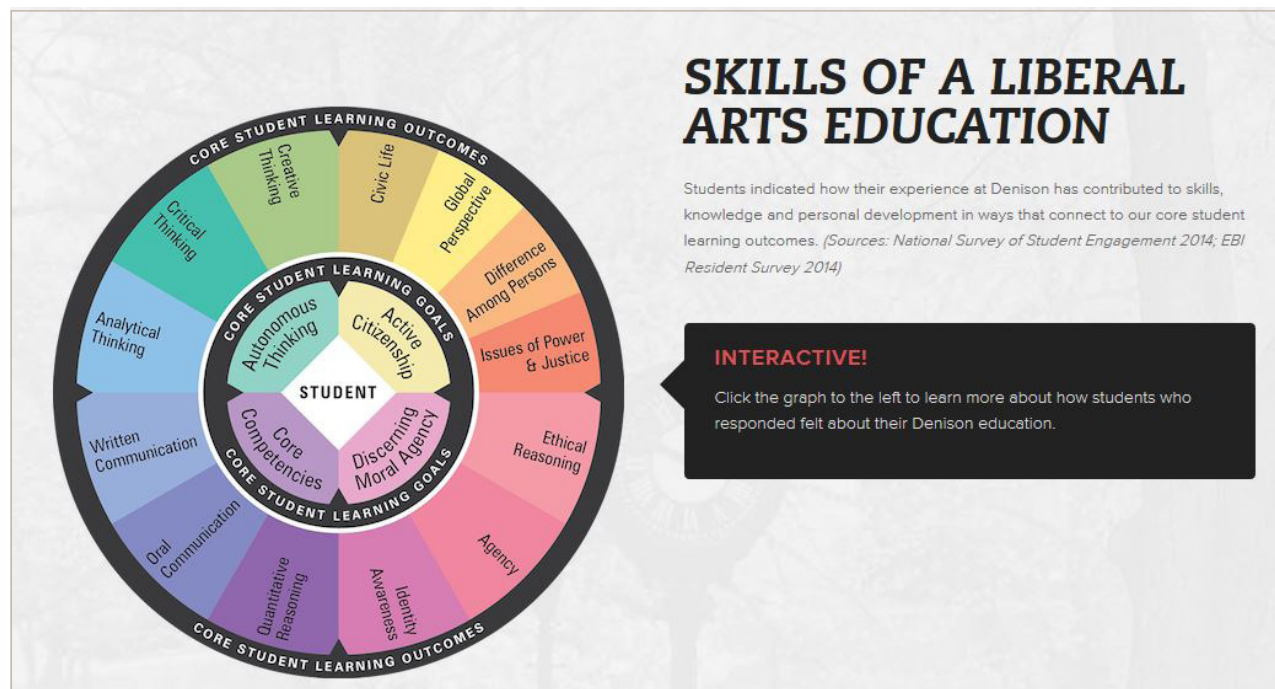

Figure 5. Denison University Skills of a Liberal Arts Education. Available at **http://denison.edu/the-denison-difference**

co-curricular activities and volunteering, to create a profile of civic life among seniors. Additionally, Denison presented NSSE results indicating that 93% of seniors spent at least one hour a week participating in co-curricular activities (student organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity/sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports) and 59% of seniors completed at least one hour per week of community service or volunteer work, with the average senior completing two and a half hours of community service each week, demonstrating Denison students' high levels of co-curricular and community engagement.

NSSE data help Denison's administrators assess the achievement of their core student learning outcomes and align their work to the institutional mission and commitment to liberal arts education. Also, as this example shows, NSSE data help the university communicate their accomplishments to the external community.

Using Results to Improve Educational Practice

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

Bethel University, an evangelical Christian university in St. Paul, Minnesota, has participated in 10 NSSE administrations. NSSE results have been used in various ways at Bethel, including to provide evidence of students' active learning and senior students' satisfaction with their educational experience and to promote innovative instructional practice.

After Bethel's participation in NSSE 2013, the campus prepared two reports. The first report contextualized NSSE by explaining what the results mean, comparing the 2013 results with results from Bethel's 2010 administration and identifying areas of strength. The second report, using first-year and senior NSSE responses, identified four themes for campus improvement and listed specific actions that
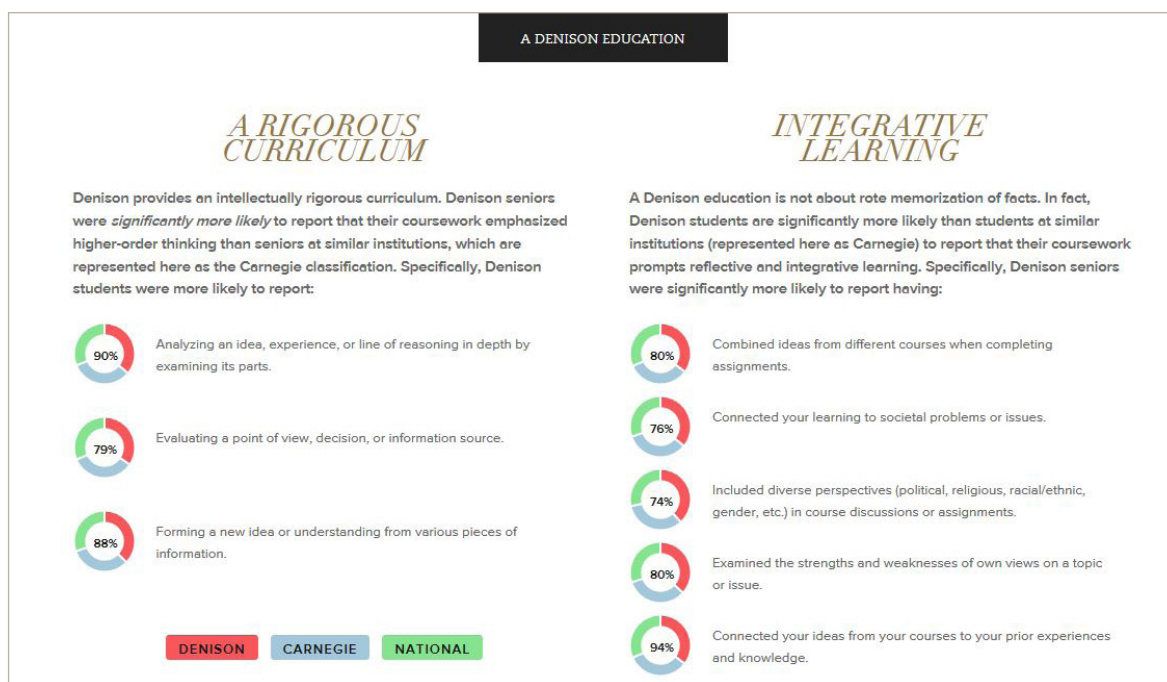

Figure 6. Denison University Student Outcomes. Available at **http://denison.edu/the-denison-difference**

faculty could take to improve their results, specifically targeting the existing campus initiative to improve student writing and integrative thinking. These two reports were shared with campus faculty and administrators at various department, committee, and staff meetings. Examples from both follow.

NSSE 2010 Bethel student responses to "received feedback from an instructor on a draft or a work in progress before submitting the final product" caught faculty attention, and they flagged this item as a target area for improvement. Informal follow up revealed that students expected feedback from faculty as quickly on a five-question quiz as they did on a 20-page research paper. Recognizing this as opportunity to improve, the Program Assessment Committee connected with the Faculty Development Committee to create workshops to address the issue of timely feedback. The committees collaborated to send an email to the all-faculty listserve with steps for how to discuss with students expectations for feedback on different assignments. To go further, the Faculty Development Committee developed a workshop on "how to give helpful feedback to students." For both first-year and senior students, Bethel's 2013 NSSE results on this item improved from their 2010 NSSE results, and in 2013 their students' responses on this item were more similar to those of comparison groups.

Bethel's NSSE 2013 results revealed that both first-year students and seniors were significantly less likely to say they worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's expectations compared to students at colleges and universities across the country. Additionally, seniors were significantly less likely to say that their courses during the current school year challenged them to do their best work compared with seniors nationwide. The NSSE results further revealed that both first-year and senior students were much less likely to say they carefully revised the content or organization of a paper or assignment before turning it in compared to students nationwide. In response to

Bethel University

these results, faculty were encouraged to consider their current expectations for students and how challenge could play a greater role in the classroom experience.

High-Impact Practices (HIPs) were highlighted as an area of great strength in Bethel's NSSE 2013 results, with 89% of Bethel seniors participating in at least two HIPs, including service-learning, research with faculty, internship or field experience, learning communities, and culminating senior experiences. The importance of HIPs reinforced Bethel's commitment to building in a culminating senior experience into almost all majors. Moreover, compared to seniors at other institutions, Bethel was pleased to find that, compared to seniors at other institutions, its seniors write more during a school year, spend more time studying per week, and participate more in co-curricular activities. Bethel's data use example illustrates how NSSE results can inform faculty development agendas and, more important, can influence improvements in teaching and learning. Through their future NSSE results, Bethel plans to continue monitoring their progress in addressing their areas for improvement and sustaining their strengths.

"The new questions seem to **engage the campus** much more. We've had more conversations on campus around the data and what it means than we've ever had before. Some of the data will be used to drive a faculty assembly day in January. It's gotten **great conversations** going that can only help us improve."

— Nancy Grear, Director of Institutional Research and Assessment (retired), Nazareth College

Creating NSSE Champions
YORK UNIVERSITY

York University is a public research university with two campuses in Toronto, Canada. With 55,000 students, it is the third-largest university in Canada and one of the biggest in North America. York has participated in seven NSSE administrations, including in 2014. York's Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis (OIPA) led a carefully planned campaign to engage the larger campus community in a successful NSSE administration. In partnership with the Division of Students, an initial steering committee of four was formed to guide the NSSE administration and promotional efforts.

After brainstorming initial ideas, the steering committee sought one representative from every faculty (equivalent to academic department or program in U.S. colleges and universities), from every front-facing administrative department, and from the student union to serve as a "NSSE Champion" in a larger working group and to lead promotional efforts in their own units. Committee members were recruited via a call to action from the provost and through presentations to various groups on campus. The presentations aimed to raise awareness of the value of NSSE and the importance of improving response rates. They also expressed a commitment to share the results more widely than before. The working group met every two weeks to help develop and test ideas, share techniques, and to maintain promotional momentum.

After rethinking York's previous practice of not offering incentives to recruit participants, the working group created two kinds of incentives. At the end of the campaign, five $500 tuition waivers and 20 $25 bookstore coupons or student account top-ups were awarded by lottery. During the campaign, every student who completed the survey was awarded, on their student card, an electronic "virtual coupon" that was redeemable for a coffee at the campus Starbucks franchise or for $5.00 off any purchase at York Lanes—the campus retail center. The coupons were donated by the retailers. York's information technology office developed software to make sure the process from completing the survey to transmission of the coupon was as seamless as possible.

York designed the campaign to be ubiquitous on campus, so that when the initial NSSE invitation email arrived, every student would know what it was for. To promote the survey, the working group used several strategies including the following:

- Hired a student to make a teaser promotional video called "What Is NSSE?" that was shared on the York webpages, played on LCD screens around campus, and posted on social media.

- Designed an extensive set of webpages with detailed information about what NSSE is and why it matters, what the incentives are, how faculty and staff can get involved, and how to promote NSSE ethically.

- Used student-centric social media channels to generate awareness and discussion of NSSE and to encourage participation in the survey.

- Displayed professionally designed and branded promotional messages on computer monitors in labs and on screens in classrooms.

- Created a digital Communications Toolkit with information and material to help promote NSSE in faculties (e.g., departments) and classrooms. The toolkit aimed to support conversations between faculty, staff, and student groups and included downloadable promotional postcards and posters, or an online form for requesting print copies of these. Posters were posted in high-traffic areas and postcards were used as information pieces and conversation starters.

One innovative idea for the York campaign was to create an internal competition in which the academic program with the highest participation rate would receive the "NSSE Champion Cup." During the administration of the survey, the standings were updated every Thursday and displayed on York's NSSE webpage and on every LCD screen across campus at 2:00 p.m. (see Figure 7).
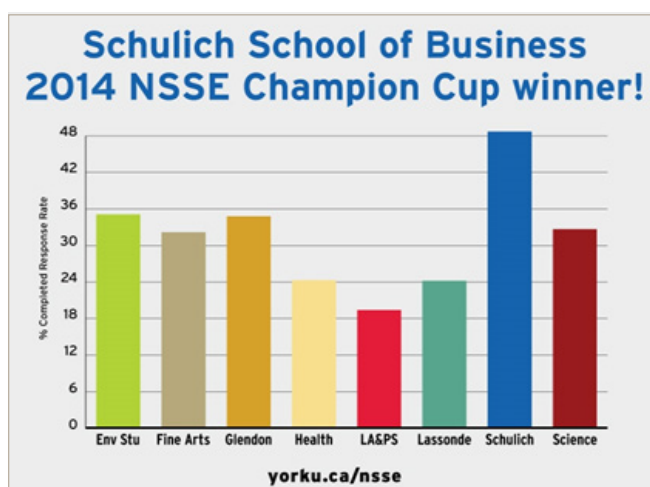

Figure 7. Example of York University faculty standings for the NSSE Champion Cup, shown on campus LCD screens

Results were also disseminated to the community via social media. At the end of the NSSE administration, the cup was awarded to the Schulich School of Business, which won with a final overall response rate of 52%. York's president awarded the trophy to the dean and his team of NSSE champions, who will keep the cup and bragging rights until the next administration of NSSE, in three years.

The working group continued to meet throughout the NSSE administration to share updates and best practices among the champions. One unit's faculty found that the best promotional ambassadors were other students and advisors, so they encouraged students rather than administration to talk up NSSE. Another unit's faculty found beginning-of-class announcements and distributing promotional postcards after class to be effective. Although central oversight of the campaign was critical, it was important for individual units to tailor their own campaigns to fit their culture.

Improving student participation in the NSSE 2014 administration was important to York because the results would be used to help set priorities in campus planning exercises. York replicated all of its institution-level NSSE reports as faculty-level reports with internal benchmarks. York also created item-level trend analyses using NSSE's Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons report. Because the 2014 survey instrument differed from previous versions, items were grouped into "no change," "minor change," and "other," according to NSSE's guidelines. In total, about 70 reports were produced.

After looking at their results, one unit observed that their senior students were under-using their academic advisors relative to benchmarks, so they initiated offering the option of academic advising via Skype or smartphone to give busy students more flexibility. Another unit observed that their students had longer commute times than the rest of the institution. As a

York University President Mamdouh Shoukri with the Schulich School of Business team, Keshia Gray, Dean Deszö Horváth (holding the NSSE Champion Cup), and Marcia Annisette

result, in-person workshops are being replaced with live and recorded webinars and a student was hired to work between classes to encourage other students to complete their financial aid applications. Yet another unit is using their results to encourage departments to include more experiential learning and high-impact practices in their curricula.

When asked what advice they would give to other campuses looking to boost their response rates, York recommended involving as much of the community as possible in the campaign. For large universities in particular, it is important not only to guide the campaign centrally, but also to allow the different academic units and other groups to promote the survey according to their unique cultures. Make sure that students know NSSE is coming well before the invitation letter is sent. Tell everyone how important NSSE is for identifying areas of academic strength and challenge; then associate NSSE results with improvement initiatives once the results are known. Be creative; campaigns that catch the imagination and rally the community can become engagement tools in their own right.

Inspiring Greater Use of Assessment Results

UNIVERSITY OF SAINT MARY

The University of Saint Mary (USM), in Leavenworth, Kansas, participates in various external and internal surveys to gather direct and indirect evidence of educational effectiveness at many levels of the university. About three years ago the campus revamped their assessment efforts, in response to feedback from their accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), which encouraged them to make their campus assessment efforts more data-driven. HLC wanted to see more data-based and informed decision making.

In response to the feedback for expanded assessment efforts, USM faculty and staff examined the measures they had in place and solicited further feedback. The faculty unanimously echoed the desire to create a combination of internal and external assessment measures. As such, they realigned their University Learning Outcomes (ULOs) to three assessments. First, each semester faculty report student achievement of ULOs. Second, first-year students and seniors complete a direct assessment of achievement by participating in the CLA+ (CAE's collegiate level assessment). Third, first-year students and seniors report on their behaviors and time on task through annual participation in NSSE. Combined, the campus is able to look across faculty reports of student learning, students' performance, and students' reports about their behavior and engagement. Additionally, for comparisons, the campus can look at national data, usually in percentile ranks.

Upon receiving their 2014 NSSE results, USM distributed copies of their NSSE *Snapshot* to senior administration, vice presidents, and the campuswide assessment committee. Additionally, a series of presentations focusing on specific NSSE items and

University of Saint Mary

groups of students were presented to different interest groups across campus that included the faculty and student life.

NSSE results and other assessment data are also regularly discussed at USM's semi-annual faculty institute, an all-faculty meeting held at the start of each semester. During one such institute, faculty reflected on the results from the assessment metrics in place. Looking at USM's results from the CLA+, faculty saw that the students did not perform as well as they would have expected or wanted them to. To dig deeper, they looked at their NSSE 2013 results regarding students' reports of time on task, specifically, how much time they spent studying and preparing for class and the number of papers they wrote over the course of the year. The faculty were very concerned by their NSSE results. The students reported low amounts of time on task or studying and preparing for class in comparison to their NSSE comparison groups. Additionally, the students reported having written an average of 30

pages over the course of the year, far below the faculty expectation for first-year students and seniors.

In response to these results, the faculty had conversations about how to increase the time students spend studying and preparing for class and the amount of writing they do. Several efforts were also implemented across the curriculum that focused on strengthening students' critical thinking skills including critiquing and making an argument. For their NSSE 2015 administration, after debating which Topical Module to select—either Learning with Technology or Experiences with Information Literacy—the campus decided to administer Learning with Technology for two reasons. First, the campus was in the process of applying for an external grant relevant to increasing technology in the classroom for students at risk of dropping out, thus, creating the necessity for a baseline measurement of student competency in technology. Second, the questions in the technology module captured more points of interest to current USM initiatives than did the other Topical Modules.

In addition to the NSSE core survey and the technology Topical Module, USM also participates in the Catholic Colleges Consortium, which administers its own customized question set, appended to the core survey. USM has large student involvement in their campus ministry program, and, with the consortium questions, USM is able to see how they compare to other Catholic institutions. To promote campus conversations about outcomes from their first-year experience course and campus ministry program, USM has shared these results with faculty and student life.

Reporting and Tracking Performance

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL

The University of Massachusetts Lowell has administered NSSE numerous times since first participating in 2000, and the university triangulates findings from NSSE with their institutional research and registrar data. UMass Lowell constructed a new comprehensive strategic plan titled "UMass Lowell 2020," organized around five pillars, (1) transformational education, (2) global engagement and inclusive culture, (3) innovative research and entrepreneurship, (4) leverage our legacy and our place, and (5) entrepreneurial stewardship.

To monitor progress toward their goals, UMass Lowell created a Report Card (see Figure 8) to track and evaluate performance, guide all decision-making on campus, and inform the Strategic Planning Commission. Mapped around the five pillars, quantifiable items are listed and tracked. UMass Lowell's 2013 and 2014 NSSE results, specifically

the overall student satisfaction item and High-Impact Practice results, serve as indicators for the transformational education pillar (see Figure 9). The institutional goal for 2020 is to increase overall student satisfaction and to achieve 70% of first years and 80% of seniors engaged in High-Impact Practices.
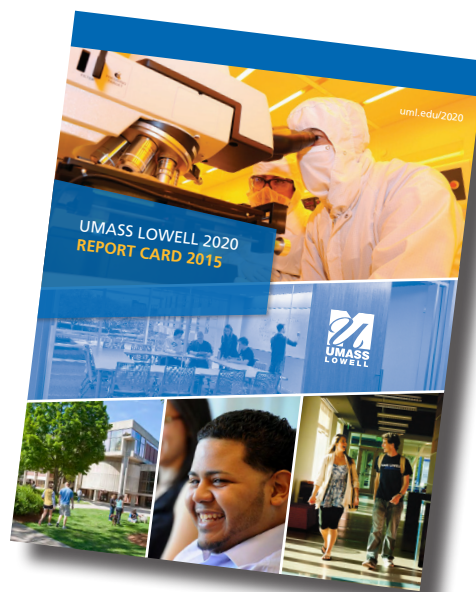

Figure 8. Cover of *UMass Lowell 2020 Report Card 2015.* Full report available at **http://www.uml.edu/2020/documents.aspx**

National Survey of Student Engagement Results: Overall Student Satisfaction						
	2008	2011	2012	2013	2014	**2020 GOAL**
UMass Lowell Freshmen	80%	86%	82%	81%	85%	86%
New England Publics Freshmen	82%	85%	84%	84%	86%	
UMass Lowell Seniors	79%	85%	84%	81%	83%	86%
New England Publics Seniors	86%	83%	84%	84%	86%	

Percent of students evaluating their entire educational experience as "good" or "excellent."

National Survey of Student Engagement Results: High-Impact Practices*			
	2013	2014	**2020 GOAL**
UMass Lowell Freshmen	65%	63%	70%
New England Publics Freshmen	56%	54%	
Carnegie Class Peers	57%	57%	
UMass Lowell Seniors	83%	87%	88%
New England Publics Seniors	86%	88%	
Carnegie Class Peers	85%	86%	

For Freshmen, these high-impact practices include learning community, service learning and research with faculty; for Seniors, these include internship, study abroad and culminating senior experience in addition to those for Freshmen.

Figure 9. University of Massachusetts Lowell Report Card Indicators, *UMass Lowell 2020 Report Card 2015,* p. 5

Creative Survey Promotion
ANDERSON UNIVERSITY

Anderson University (AU), a private university in Anderson, Indiana, has participated in six NSSE administrations, including the 2015 administration. In previous NSSE administrations, the campus offered incentives for NSSE participation, like a drawing for iPods and gift certificates. Their response rate was satisfactory, but not at the level the campus would have liked. So, in response to this, for the 2012 NSSE administration, the campus decided to take a new approach to survey incentives.

As they prepared for their 2012 administration, like many campuses, AU had already experienced budget cuts and so did not have much available spending for NSSE incentives. After some creative thinking, the campus decided to draw on their values as a smaller institution. With just over 2,000 undergraduate students, the campus embraces personal connections and relationships, so they decided to take a personalized approach to their NSSE incentive prizes. The revamped, personalized incentives were a huge success in 2012, with AU achieving a 62% response rate.

In preparation for their 2015 administration, the director of campus assessment decided to take the same approach. She reached out across the entire campus to solicit donations for incentives. The goal was to have every campus department and office participate and donate.

Many offices committed to donate baskets of baked goods, breads, or cookies, which could be offered as incentives to the students. A faculty member who is a black belt in karate donated complementary karate lessons as a prize. A gourmet chef on campus donated a custom-prepared meal at the chef's home for that student and a number of friends. Parking services donated a parking pass for the next term. Another

prize was a personal "cake" day with an administrative department. Prizes were promoted on posters (see Figure 10) and were awarded weekly, at the required chapel on campus, via a drawing of students who have completed the survey. In addition to being less expensive than gift certificates and technology devices, these more personalized prizes emphasize the value of relationships engrained in the AU culture. Anderson's quirky, customized incentives contributed to the institution's high response rate.

Figure 10. Anderson University Promotional Poster

RESPONSE RATE

While not the sole measure of data quality, response rate is an obvious starting place to evaluate the success of a NSSE administration See our Response Rate FAQs for additional information, including other factors to consider. **nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/Resp_Rate_FAQ.pdf**

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DARTMOUTH

In the fall of 2013, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment spearheaded a campus-wide campaign called "You Spoke. We Listened" in partnership with the offices of student affairs and academic affairs. The ongoing publicity campaign advertises feedback that students provide through discussion groups and surveys like NSSE and highlights programmatic and curricular changes that are implemented as a result. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment garnered support for the campaign from the highest levels of the university by discussing the campaign at meetings with assistant and associate deans, the faculty senate, student government leaders, and others on campus. The campaign is delivered through a wide variety of formats (see Figure 11), including large format posters, flyers, campus TV advertisements, advertisements in the student newspaper, and table-tents. Additionally, a page on the campus intranet was developed that is devoted specifically to telling students about NSSE.

Through longitudinal analysis of NSSE data and other campus surveys, university administrators identified supportiveness of the campus environment as an area in need of improvement. Trend analysis of means for the Supportive Campus Environment Benchmark across the NSSE 2005, 2008, and 2011 administrations indicated a consistent pattern of significantly lower mean scores for freshmen and seniors at UMass Dartmouth compared to the university's peers. To further investigate these findings, focus groups were conducted with freshmen and seniors in March 2013 to gather in-depth, qualitative data about overall student satisfaction and, more specifically, student satisfaction with the supportiveness of the campus environment at UMass Dartmouth. Focus group findings that informed university changes were in the areas of academic

Figure 11. University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Promotional Poster

support from advisors and administrative offices, the transition from high school to college, and seniors' comments on academic facilities. The following initiatives were informed by NSSE data analysis and were publicized in the campaign:

- Creation of an Office of Undergraduate Research Office "to promote undergraduate research, support student researchers, and disseminate the products of student research"—a formal space devoted to better support undergraduate students in their research endeavors.

- Development of The Student Transition and Achievement Resource (STAR) Center in the College of Arts and Sciences: "Professional academic advisors, peer mentors, and faculty advisors from most Arts & Sciences majors and minors help students plan their academic careers thoroughly and thoughtfully."

- Development of an engineering freshman experience course.

- Making Achievement Possible (MAP-Works): "In MAP-Works, faculty and staff connect and communicate with students and each other in a first-year community dedicated to Making Achievement Possible in the academic arena."

- Implementation of college student success plans.

Beyond the value of communicating important changes being implemented as a result of student feedback, "You Spoke. We Listened." was used strategically as a recruitment tool for NSSE 2014 to help prompt students to participate in the upcoming NSSE administration. The office of institutional research and assessment coordinated with the housing and residential education office to effectively promote NSSE 2014 (for example, by sliding handouts under students' dorm-room doors) and, as a result, the institution observed an uptick in first-year responses.

Boston University

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

With approximately 15,000 undergraduate students, Boston University's overall response rate for NSSE 2014 was 59%, exceptionally high for an institution of its size (the average response rate among similar size institutions in 2014 was 22%). Boston University (BU) attributes its high response rate to (1) marketing and communication efforts, (2) a convenient and guaranteed incentive, (3) collaborative efforts across campus, and (4) BU students' desire to provide constructive feedback.

To plan its NSSE administration, BU formed a collaborative, interdepartmental committee with members from student affairs, residence life, student life, the provost's office, institutional research, marketing and communications, and the faculty. Based on both previous survey experience and recommendations from the committee, BU personnel decided to promote NSSE extensively through multiple mediums, including posters, table tents, mailbox stuffers, signs on shuttle buses, newspaper articles, tweets from the office of the dean of students, and in-class announcements. Marketing efforts began prior to the survey launch and were sustained throughout the administration. Student leaders were also a part of the promotion, as resident assistants kept their respective communities updated with current response rate information. Additionally, all students who completed the NSSE survey were provided a $5 credit on their campus card. BU faculty and staff invested time,

effort, and resources in their NSSE administration, and it clearly paid dividends in a high response rate.

With the support of a new president, BU administrators sought to push the institution into the next tier of student engagement. A team of professionals from marketing and communication, residence life, the dean of students office, individual colleges, and the institutional research office reviewed BU's retention rates and found them lower than desired. This team, the campus's Student Engagement and Retention Group, identified NSSE as a way to benchmark student engagement within individual colleges, particularly around advising. As the main sponsor behind BU's first NSSE administration, the team reviewed the results first and immediately created a plan to share the data widely with the provost's cabinet and the deans and faculty within Boston's nine undergraduate colleges.

Administrators and faculty at BU found that data presented in the NSSE reports were intuitive, helpful, visually attractive, and easy to reproduce. The Student Engagement and Retention Group used BU's NSSE *Snapshot* as a primer for the university. However, with over 33,000 students at the campus, the team identified college- and department-level data as most important to improving outcomes. Thus, for more precise information regarding student advising experiences, BU disaggregates their data by college and major.

Quick Takes

PACE UNIVERSITY

Pace University, a multi-campus research institution in the New York metropolitan area, administered NSSE every year from 2002 through 2012 and the updated survey in 2013. While initially saddened to bring closure to several multi-year studies, campus leaders realized that NSSE 2013 would open a new chapter of NSSE studies providing different perspectives on institutional questions. To celebrate all they had learned and the action they had taken on their institutional assessment results, Pace published a NSSE Retrospective recounting the many ways NSSE has made a difference for teaching and learning, and, especially, for students at Pace.

To investigate institutional concerns such as retention, for example, Pace matches the most recent NSSE data to each fall semester's roster of first-year students who stayed and those who left. Analysis of these results provides valuable clues to student behavior and suggests actions that faculty and student success professionals might take. A study of sophomore retention at Pace used the NSSE responses of second semester first-year students who would soon be sophomores to provide insight into how to address "sophomore slump" and resulting attrition. Results from the early years of NSSE administration at Pace highlighted the need to pay more attention to student-faculty interaction. To address this need, Pace's Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, along with the University Assessment Committee, developed a series of faculty development workshops using NSSE results. These workshops included breakout sessions in which faculty discussed NSSE results and shared best practices. Results from subsequent NSSE administrations showed upward trends in the student-faculty interaction scores. With NSSE 2013, Pace opens a new chapter in its increasingly sophisticated efforts for improvement. The updated survey's potential for deeper examination of student-faculty interaction through the Engagement Indicators, its expansion of the quality of relationship questions, and new quantitative reasoning items invite fresh insights and fuller understanding of important educational issues.

UNIVERSITY OF PUGET SOUND

An infographic (see Figure 12) summarizing Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) 2013 results at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington, was distributed on postcards to new students and posted on electronic screens around campus to share the results and shape campus norms. This promotional campaign also generated interest in the spring 2014 NSSE administration, resulting in a higher response rate and allowing the university to study combined results from BCSSE and NSSE.

When faculty reviewed results from Puget Sound's past NSSE administrations, they noted, among other findings, lower-than-expected levels in students' responses to questions about experiential learning. Partly due to these findings, a task force was set up to review experiential learning at Puget Sound, with action in 2014–2015 to include more prominent web-based information about experiential learning opportunities.
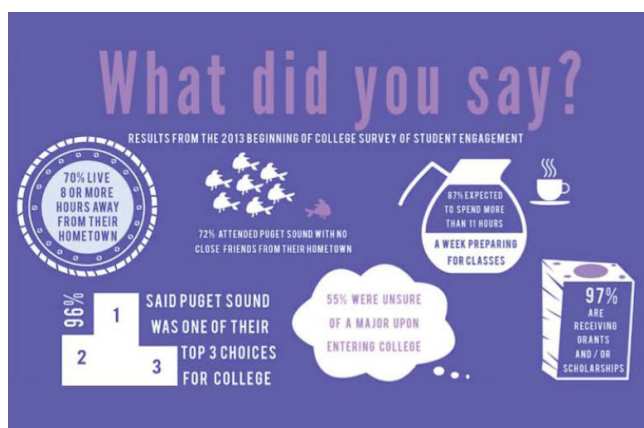

Figure 12. University of Puget Sound Promotional Poster

HOLY FAMILY UNIVERSITY

Staff from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment at Holy Family University (HFU), in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, coordinated two lunch-and-learn sessions on campus to introduce NSSE and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), to share 2013 survey results, and to encourage faculty and staff to use the results in campus assessment and improvement projects. The first session, focusing on NSSE, began with a presentation about what NSSE is, why the campus participates, how the NSSE instrument has changed, and HFU's participation history. Staff shared their gains from NSSE participation, highlighting the reports and resources from their latest administration along with results demonstrating the link between NSSE's themes and HFU's mission. The opening presentation concluded with examples of other institutions' uses of NSSE results (from Lessons from the Field, Volumes 1 and 2). For the interactive portion of the session, the staff split the audience into two groups—one taking the role of first-year students and the other the role of seniors. Each group was tasked with predicting HFU student responses on Engagement Indicator items and how these would compare to comparison-group responses. As actual results were revealed, attendees discussed how they differed from the predicted results, why that might be, and how the campus could work together to improve student engagement. For the final portion of the session, the whole audience, taking the role of seniors, predicted senior responses on the High-Impact Practice items. HFU's second lunch-and-learn session introduced FSSE and detailed why HFU participates, presented results in HFU's NSSE–FSSE Combined Report, discussed differences between faculty and student responses, and generated suggestions from the results for improving instructional strategies. Following up on these sessions, institutional research and assessment staff created for faculty and staff an internal Blackboard webpage displaying both NSSE and FSSE reports.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

The Ohio State University (OSU), a public research university in Columbus, Ohio, has participated in NSSE six times and has launched an initiative to focus on enhancing the campus's use of NSSE data and to create systems to more effectively support assessment, reaccreditation, and institutional improvement across campus. The university is interested in merging their NSSE results with other data sets on campus. In order to do this, they initially organized a group to trend comparative data from NSSE. Next, they plan to combine the NSSE results with other data sets, and then create division- and department-level reports. While waiting for their custom reports, departments have been provided raw NSSE data for their own analysis. When asked what they were most eager to learn from the NSSE results, departments reported being particularly interested in learning about the behaviors of graduating seniors.

In an effort to systematically share NSSE data across campus, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) designed an innovative approach to connect with the rest of campus. First, each person in IR made two lists: (a) informal list of who they currently work with or have partnerships with on campus; and (b) a list of who they would like to partner with on campus. Next, the IR department looked across all of the lists to see who could be NSSE users, who would be great candidates of users, and who or what parts of campus were not connected to NSSE data. To better connect NSSE results with departments that have their own analysis or assessment specialist, the OIRP invited department-level analysts to meet with them about how they can use NSSE within their department and in their work (for example, internal surveys or department-level surveys). OSU has a large number of colleges and divisions on campus, so many—but not all—offices have their own assessment

expert. Utilizing the lists generated internally, the OIRP will make sure the offices that need support or training on NSSE data will receive it. Over time, the OIRP will work with the parts of campus that are less connected to NSSE data to better incorporate them. Through this intentional partnership effort, OSU is working to make NSSE results salient to more campus units.

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

Rhode Island College (RIC), the state's first public institution of higher education, now serving approximately 9,000 students in courses and programs on and off campus, has participated in NSSE five times, including in 2013. When sharing their 2013 NSSE results with the RIC community, the assessment/institutional research team prepared customized presentations that highlighted RIC's results in relation to those of carefully selected comparison institutions. In addition, identical NSSE items were compared directly, over time, between 2013 and previous years' administrations. Presentations were made to RIC's executive team, student affairs personnel, and faculty involved and interested in assessment.

To further encourage reflection on and improvements in student learning and engagement, RIC created a webpage providing a greater number of resources to faculty and staff. Through this public resource with NSSE results, the college sought to foster the use of assessment data across campus. The webpage features a comprehensive report highlighting NSSE data and longitudinal changes in RIC results alongside results from RIC's three comparison groups, as well as a short report focusing on data most relevant to faculty. Updating benchmarking for current campus initiatives related to NSSE 2013 item-level results, this short report can facilitate faculty and staff discussions of how initiatives are impacting student engagement and learning outcomes.

TRUMAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Truman State University, a public liberal arts and sciences university in Kirksville, Missouri, established a committee to evaluate frameworks and rubrics associated with the university's commitment to enhancing the following characteristics in its graduates: (a) understanding and articulating well-reasoned arguments; (b) demonstrating courageous, visionary, and service-oriented leadership; and (c) living emotionally and physically healthy lives. The committee looked to Truman's NSSE results on higher- and lower-order learning skills to learn more about their students' experiences. NSSE results revealed, for example, that first-year students and seniors reported a much greater emphasis on the lower-order task of memorization than Truman faculty reported in the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), suggesting a significant difference between the perceptions of faculty and students. More broadly, NSSE data suggested that in areas related to higher-order learning, Truman students were performing near or slightly above the level of students at comparison institutions. Truman's findings on higher-order learning influenced their Higher Learning Commission Pathways Project to assure quality and demonstrate continuous improvement. Moving forward, the university will craft rubrics for higher-order thinking to help students and faculty recognize connections across courses and among disciplines, creating an integrated understanding of the curriculum while helping faculty be more efficient and intentional in their teaching and letting students know better what is expected of them.

Concluding Thoughts

To make our mission plain, the goal of NSSE is not just to administer a survey
but **to foster evidence-informed improvement**.

Inspiring More Action

Over the past 15 years, millions of students have reported their engagement behaviors in their responses to NSSE, and hundreds of institutions have taken actions based on the results. In this third volume in the *Lessons from the Field* series we have highlighted two dozen examples of how institutions have taken action based on their NSSE results to improve the undergraduate experience.

Our collaborative work with colleges and universities to document accounts of NSSE use have revealed many generalizable insights about which approaches foster use and how results support institutional improvement. Some of the most essential lessons for the effective use of NSSE data include the importance of reporting results in small, digestible bites to targeted audiences; reporting first what is working well at the institution and then focusing on areas for improvement by connecting results to topics that already hold relevance (i.e., accreditation, first-year retention, program review and improvement, advising or general education revision) for particular audiences; and, finally, positioning the opportunity to share NSSE results not as a reporting requirement but as an occasion to bring faculty, staff, and students into a conversation about undergraduate quality and topics of campus concern and, most important, to close the session with considerations for "What do we want to do with and about these results?" And, even better, "What's next?"

Beyond showcasing NSSE's impact in the educational quality and assessment agenda, these accounts suggest that action on data is rarely achieved through mandates or external demands or simply by participating in a survey and sharing results. Instead, it is through thoughtful planning about with whom to share results,

the creation of customized and meaningful reports, and the intentional use of evidence by committed educators to initiate campus conversations and timely action. Many more institutions are clearly moving beyond merely collecting data and are leveraging their results to realize improvement in the student experience.

The "updated NSSE" is now just NSSE. The intensity of updating the survey is behind us, and the updated reports and results are in the hands of NSSE users and campus faculty and staff at thousands of campuses. We hope that in documenting how institutions have responded to, approached, and incorporated the new Engagement Indicators, High-Impact Practice measures, and redesigned reports, and how they have taken advantage of resources including the NSSE Report Builder and Accreditation Toolkits—others will be inspired to take action. Most important, NSSE and other assessment data should provide a reasonable basis for taking action on evidence. To make our mission plain, the goal of NSSE is not just to administer a survey but to foster evidence-informed improvement.

There is far more work to be done to promote greater data use for improvement. We hope NSSE-participating institutions identify more occasions to connect student engagement results to real campus concerns and use targeted reports to inform improvement and assess the impact of change. To advance this objective, it is clear that improvement must be envisioned as a habit—a daily task—and must be the mindful intention of scholars and professionals in higher education.

We'd be delighted to hear how you are moving the educational improvement agenda forward on your campus. If you have specific examples highlighting your use of NSSE, FSSE, or BCSSE, please contact us at **nsse@indiana.edu**.

Resources and References

NSSE Resources Relevant to Examples Featured in this Report

Report Builder
Display NSSE results by user-selected student and institutional characteristics. Campus assessment professionals have many specific questions about the normative patterns of engagement. The NSSE Report Builder is an interactive tool that instantly generates reports of the user's choosing. Two versions are available: a public version (accessible to anyone) and a secure institution version (for participating institutions to run customized reports using their own data). The NSSE Report Builder draws from a database of NSSE respondents and can be queried using a combination of student and institutional characteristics. Variable options include individual items and benchmarks.
nsse.indiana.edu/html/report_builder.cfm

NSSE Item Campuswide Mapping
This resource maps NSSE items to the interests of 26 campus units and departments and suggests approaches to facilitating data sharing and campuswide involvement and action on NSSE results.
nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/NSSE_Item_Campuswide_Mapping.pdf

NSSE Data User's Guide
Although the new NSSE reports and resources for creating customized reports are designed to increase data use, determining how best to engage campus audiences and influence campus action can be challenging. The redesigned NSSE Data User's Guide outlines strategies, suggests topics for consideration when communicating results, and provides worksheets with exercises to facilitate the use of NSSE data for accountability, assessment, and improvement.
nsse.indiana.edu/html/data_users_guide.cfm

From Benchmarks to Engagement Indicators
This document illustrates the transition from the Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice to the Engagement Indicators and High-Impact Practices.
nsse.indiana.edu/html/engagement_indicators.cfm

Accreditation Toolkits
These toolkits provide suggestions for mapping student engagement results to regional and specialized accreditation standards. We also offer sample timelines to help you decide when and how often to collect student engagement data for integration into your accreditation process. Finally, we offer examples of how other institutions in your region have used NSSE results in their accreditation efforts.
nsse.indiana.edu/html/accred_toolkits.cfm

Item-by-Item Comparisons of the Original and Updated NSSE
This document tracks differences between items in the previous and the updated versions of NSSE. Before using this resource, we recommend reviewing your updated NSSE results to identify items that have been historically interesting for your campus, then consulting this document to see if and how much the item has changed, and then considering if the changed item results mean something different for your students. Given the major shift with NSSE 2013 from Benchmarks to Engagement Indicators, we do not recommend using most results from the updated NSSE in longitudinal comparisons. However, some items remain the same, and several of the new Engagement Indicators are similar to the earlier Benchmarks. The student-faculty interaction measures, for example, are similar, so it would be possible to compare scores to those for your comparison institutions but not to the previous Benchmarks scores. Another shift with the update was from a 100-point scale to a 60-point scale. This was an intentional change to correct the occasional mistaken impression that the scores represent percentages. The new 60-point scale both signals the update and makes more obvious the fact that the scores are not percentages.
nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/NSSE_2012-2013_Item_Comparisons.pdf

Live and Recorded Webinars
NSSE's webinar series presents live, interactive sessions on various topics for faculty, administrators, institutional researchers, and other institutional staff who want to better understand and use their NSSE data. Typically, sessions are an hour in length, including a Q&A period. All webinars are recorded and available in our webinar archives for viewing at your convenience.
nsse.indiana.edu/html/webinars.cfm

Publications & Presentations Database
NSSE staff members regularly present at conferences (e.g., AIR, AAC&U, FYE, and ACPA) and publish work of interest to NSSE users. Search this extensive database by keyword and/or year.
nsse.indiana.edu/html/publications_presentations.cfm

NSSE, FSSE, and BCSSE Data Use Examples Search Tool
Over 1,000 examples are available on the NSSE website, illustrating how colleges and universities use their NSSE results to improve undergraduate education.
nsse.indiana.edu/html/using_nsse_db/

References of Publications Relevant to Uses of NSSE Data

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Share Your NSSE Story

NSSE is interested in collecting information on innovative practices surrounding student success and engagement in a variety of areas. Do you have a NSSE data use story to share?

Your story may include methods for communicating results across institutions or using surveys (and other data) to develop more effective educational practices.

Consider including your NSSE stories about promotion of active learning, integration of student support into the classroom, teaching and learning improvement, or quality improvement initiatives for accreditation.

To share your institution's NSSE story, please visit our website: **nsse.indiana.edu/html/institutionStory.cfm**.

National Survey of Student Engagement Staff

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"Colleges and universities derive enormous internal value from participating in NSSE. Of equal importance is the reassurance to their external publics that a commitment to undergraduate education and its improvement is a high priority."

— Muriel A. Howard, President, American Association of State Colleges and Universities