Introduction and Rationale for Using NSSE in AACSB Business Accreditation

One of the most common institutional uses of NSSE data is for accreditation. In fact, NSSE schools report that accrediting agencies are the primary external group with which they share NSSE results.

NSSE results are meaningful indicators of educational quality and can be used in planning as well as for documenting institutional effectiveness, guiding improvements, and assessing their impact. NSSE data show the levels of engagement of various types of students in effective educational practices during their first and last years of college. Thus, NSSE results are a direct indicator of what students put into their education and an indirect indicator of what they get out of it.

NSSE results help answer key questions related to institutional policies and programs associated with high levels of student engagement and learning. Regional and discipline- or program-specific accreditation standards have tended to encourage institutions to focus on self-evaluation and formative reviews that guide improvement efforts. So, rather than fashion self-studies as a stand-alone document for one-time use, these standards have begun to feature more elements of strategic planning and program evaluation that can be used to identify areas in which institutions wish to improve. NSSE results are especially valuable for this purpose because they are actionable. That is, NSSE data point to aspects of student and institutional performance that institutions can do something about related to the curriculum, pedagogy, instructional emphases, and campus climate. In addition, because NSSE benchmarks allow a school to compare itself to others, the results often point to areas where improvement may be desired.

Specific applications of student engagement information for accreditation range from minimal use, such as including the results in a self-study appendix, to systematically incorporating results over several years to demonstrate the impact of improvement initiatives on student behavior and the efficacy of modifications of policies and practices.

NSSE Updated Survey Items

After years of evidence-based collaborative testing, the updated NSSE was first administered in spring 2013. While survey changes range from minor adjustments to entirely new content, the updated instrument maintains NSSE's signature focus on diagnostic and actionable information related to effective educational practice.

How Will Comparisons with Prior-Year Results Be Affected?

Even the best surveys must be periodically revised and updated, affecting multi-year analyses like trend studies or pre/post designs. Although many NSSE survey items are unchanged, others were modified and a few were dropped, limiting longitudinal comparability of individual questions and historical benchmarks. While some new results will not be directly comparable to past results, institutions can still evaluate longitudinal questions with the updated NSSE. For instance, if previous comparison group results indicate above-average performance in a particular area, institutions can still gauge if they outperform the same or a similar comparison group. We are confident that the update will enhance NSSE's value to institutions. Furthermore, NSSE will continue to provide useful resources and work with participating institutions to ensure maximum benefit from survey participation.

NSSE as a Tool for Documenting Student Learning Outcomes

Here are several examples of how student engagement information links to accreditation goals related to documenting student learning processes and outcomes:

- NSSE is a national survey that helps institutions measure their effectiveness in key areas of interest.

- Used systematically over time, NSSE provides data that illustrate (a) that a college or university is using assessment to determine the extent to which it is meeting its educational objectives; (b) whether current institutional goals remain appropriate; and (c) if various areas of teaching and learning need improvement.

- Institutions can benchmark their performance against select peer comparison groups, their Carnegie classification category, and NSSE national norms.

- Information about student engagement and institutional effectiveness provides evidence of efforts to meet accrediting standards and continuously improve.

- NSSE results can yield insights into widely held assumptions about the nature of students and how they use the institution's resources for learning.

- Student engagement results are intuitively accessible and understandable by different groups of stakeholders, on and off campus.

This toolkit provides suggestions for incorporating NSSE into accreditation processes and products, with an emphasis on mapping student engagement results to accreditation standards.

AACSB Business Accreditation and the NSSE Major Field Report

Business programs can take advantage of NSSE's *Major Field Report* to examine business students in comparison to students in other majors within the institution and between business students at comparison institutions. The *Major Field Report* delivers institutional results for engagement indicators, high-impact practices, and frequencies and statistical comparisons in up to ten categories of related majors and presents them alongside comparison groups in the same categories. By customizing major groupings, it is possible to examine patterns of similarity and difference by discipline both among their own students and against their comparison groups.

NSSE participating institutions define how disciplines will be grouped for the *Major Field Report*. You are able to customize the major categories to match the profile of

degrees offered, and you can regroup the 138 student-reported majors (or intended majors) into as many as ten new categories as part of report customization. Institutions who are seeking AACSB accreditation could define one of the custom *Major Field Reports* to exclusively include eligible disciplines as befits AACSB terms.

Using the NSSE Report Builder to Create Custom Results

The NSSE Report Builder is an interactive tool that instantly generates reports of your choosing. The secure institution version allows participating institutions to run customized reports using their own data. By using the public report builder, which draws from a secure database of responses from the updated NSSE and can be queried using any combination of student and institutional characteristics, and the institution version, which allows for the disaggregation of student responses by major, business programs can create reports with more refined comparison group relevant to an AACSB review.

Mapping NSSE to AACSB Accreditation Standards

A successful accreditation plan is authentic to each institution or program. An important step in developing any accreditation plan, however, is identifying the existing evaluation practices and the evidence from them that can be linked to accreditation standards, commitments, and/or criteria. This document offers guidelines for aligning NSSE survey items with business accreditation standards.

A team of NSSE staff members reviewed accreditation standards for each accreditation organization and mapped NSSE survey items to those standards that we thought closely corresponded. Our hope is that this alignment encourages institutions to consider various ways to integrate NSSE data into accreditation processes, beyond simply mentioning NSSE as an element in its systematic assessment activities.

This toolkit, including the tables on the following pages, "Engagement Indicators and High-Impact Practices Mapped to AACSB Business Accreditation Standards" and "NSSE 2016 Survey Items Mapped to AACSB Business and Accounting Accreditation Standards," is not intended as a strict formula for relating NSSE results to accreditation standards but, rather, as a stimulus to think more broadly about how these data can provide evidence to support specific standards. NSSE findings can also be used to support and document institutional improvement efforts but will be most meaningful when coupled with other measures of student learning outcomes for your campus.

Specific AACSB Standards for Accounting Accreditation

NSSE mapped the the survey items to the AACSB International's Eligibility Procedures and Standards for Accounting Accreditation.*

Standard A4

The accounting academic unit maintains and deploys a faculty sufficient to ensure quality outcomes across the range of degree programs it offers and to achieve other components of its mission. Students in all programs, disciplines, and locations have the opportunity to receive instruction from appropriately qualified faculty.

Standard A5

Standard A5: The accounting academic unit uses well-documented, systematic processes for determining and revising degree program learning goals; designing, delivering, and improving degree program curricula to achieve learning goals; and demonstrating that degree program learning goals have been met.

Standard A6

Standard A6: Curriculum content is appropriate to professional expectations and requirements for each accounting degree program and the related learning goals.

It is the recommendation of the AACSB that the review of accounting programs and departments within schools of business be included in the documentation for the business school accreditation review. In cases where the business school documentation does not provide enough detail about the accounting program, the separate accounting standards offer the academic unit opportunity to expand on outcomes not addressed in the business documentation.

NSSE Demographic Items, Consortium Questions, and Topical Modules

In addition to the survey items shown in the following table, the updated NSSE survey contains demographic items, Questions 20–38, that may be of value for examining practices by student subpopulation and for exploring the influence of institutional conditions and student characteristics such as on-campus residence and student status including first-generation, student-athlete, or veteran. Institutions participating in a consortium may also have results relevant to accreditation, including assessment of mission effectiveness.

New customization options on the updated survey include Topical Modules—short sets of questions on topics such as academic advising, writing, and technology use. Responses to these items may help with the assessment of particular practices and provide evidence of quality including, for example, quality of advising, student use of technology, perceptions of institutional support, and relationships between writing and learning. Additional modules will be added over time.

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*2016 NSSE mapped to the 2015 *Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Accounting Accreditation* and the 2015 *Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation.*

Engagement Indicators and High-Impact Practices Mapped to AACSB Business Accreditation Standards

Beginning in 2013, NSSE introduced ten measures of student engagement. Each *Engagement Indicator* provides valuable information about a distinct aspect of student engagement. The ten *Engagement Indicators* include 47 survey items. In addition, six items are reported separately as High Impact Practices. These measures provide institutions a more concise framework for examining educationally effective practice. However, item level results may be as important to examine for purposes of mapping to accreditation standards. The table below maps the *Engagement Indicators* and *High Impact Practices* to accreditation standards.

In addition, NSSE's Topical Modules, which are short sets of items that are append to the core survey, make it possible for institutions to delve deeper into important aspects of the student experience. 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 learning with peers, quality of interaction with others on campus, and institutional emphasis on academic support.

To inspire thinking about likely linkages between the modules and campus needs, we mapped the NSSE 2014 Topical Modules to particular departments, units, and committees. Our mapping employed common department and program categories and designations, which users should revise, as appropriate, to match the context of their own institution's organization and committee structure.

Engagement Indicators	Relevant AACSB Business Accreditation Standards
THEME: Academic Challenge	
Higher-Order Learning (HO)	13–Student Academic and Professional Engagement
Reflective & Integrative Learning (RI)	12–Teaching Effectiveness 13–Student Academic and Professional Engagement
Learning Strategies (LS)	9–Curriculum Content 12–Teaching Effectiveness
Quantitative Reasoning (QR)	9–Curriculum Content 13–Student Academic and Professional Engagement
THEME: Learning with Peers	
Collaborative Learning (CL)	8–Curricula Management and Assurance of Learning 12–Teaching Effectiveness 13–Student Academic and Professional Engagement
Discussions with Diverse Others (DD)	9–Curriculum Content
THEME: Experiences with Faculty	
Student-Faculty Interaction (SF)	10–Student-Faculty Interactions
Effective Teaching Practices (ET)	12–Teaching Effectiveness
THEME: Campus Environment	
Quality of Interactions (QI)	10–Student-Faculty Interactions 13–Student Academic and Professional Engagement
Supportive Environment (SE)	13–Student Academic and Professional Engagement
High-Impact Practices (HIPs)	**Relevant Standard**
Learning Community Service-Learning Research with Faculty Internship/Co-op/Field Experience Study Abroad Culminating Senior Experience	Several of these enriching practices map to these standards: 10–Student-Faculty Interactions 13–Student Academic and Professional Engagement

NSSE 2016 Survey Items Mapped to AACSB Business and Accounting Accreditation Standards*

NSSE 2016 Survey Items	AACSB Standards	Accounting Standards
1. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?		
a. Asked questions or contributed to course discussions in other ways	8, 12, 13	A5
b. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	8, 12, 13	A5
c. Come to class without completing readings or assignments	8, 12, 13	A5
d. Attended an art exhibit, play, dance, music, theater, or other performance	8, 12, 13	A5
e. Asked another student to help you understand course material	8, 12, 13	A5
f. Explained course material to one or more students	8, 12, 13	A5
g. Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students	8, 12, 13	A5
h. Worked with other students on course projects or assignments	8, 12, 13	A5
i. Given a course presentation	8, 12, 13	A5
2. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?		
a. Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments	9, 12	A5, A6
b. Connected your learning to societal problems or issues	9, 12	A5, A6
c. Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments	9, 12	A5, A6
d. Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	9, 12	A5, A6
e. Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective	9, 12	A5, A6
f. Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	9, 12	A5, A6
g. Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge	9, 12	A5, A6
3. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?		
a. Talked about career plans with a faculty member	5, 10	A4, A6
b. Worked with a faculty member on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.)	5, 10	A4, A6
c. Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class	5, 10	A4, A6
d. Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member	5, 10	A4
4. During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following?		
a. Memorizing course material	12	A5
b. Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations	9, 12, 13	A5, A6
c. Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts	12, 13	A5
d. Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source	12, 13	A5
e. Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information	13	A5
5. During the current school year, to what extent have your instructors done the following?		
a. Clearly explained course goals and requirements	12, 13	A5
b. Taught course sessions in an organized way	12, 13	A5
c. Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points	12, 13	A5
d. Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress	12, 13	A5
e. Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments	10, 11, 14	A5
6. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?		
a. Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs, statistics, etc.)	9, 13	A5, A6
b. Used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue (unemployment, climate change, public health, etc.)	9, 13	A5, A6
c. Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information	9	A5, A6
7. During the current school year, about how many papers, reports, or other writing tasks of the following length have you been assigned? (Include those not yet completed.)		
a. Up to 5 pages	13	
b. Between 6 and 10 pages	13	
c. 11 pages or more	13	
8. During the current school year, about how often have you had discussions with people from the following groups?		
a. People of a race or ethnicity other than your own	9	A6
b. People from an economic background other than your own	9	A6
c. People with religious beliefs other than your own	9	A6
d. People with political views other than your own	9	A6

*2016 NSSE mapped to the 2015 *Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Accounting Accreditation* and the 2015 *Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation.*

NSSE 2016 Survey Items Mapped to AACSB Business and Accounting Accreditation Standards (cont.)

NSSE 2016 Survey Items	AACSB Standards	Accounting Standards
9. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?		
a. Identified key information from reading assignments	9, 12	A5, A6
b. Reviewed your notes after class	9, 12	A5, A6
c. Summarized what you learned in class or from course materials	9, 12	A5, A6
10. During the current school year, to what extent have your courses challenged you to do your best work?	8, 9, 13	A5, A6
11. Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate?		
a. Participate in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement	5, 8, 13	A4, A5
b. Hold a formal leadership role in a student organization or group	8, 13	A5
c. Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together	8, 13	A5
d. Participate in a study abroad program	8, 13	A5
e. Work with a faculty member on a research project	8, 13	A5
f. Complete a culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio, etc.)	8, 9	A5, A6
12. About how many of your courses at this institution have included a community-based project (service-learning)?	8, 9	A5, A6
13. Indicate the quality of your interactions with the following people at your institution.		
a. Students	13	
b. Academic advisors	10	
c. Faculty	10	
d. Student services staff (career services, student activities, housing, etc.)	13	
e. Other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.)	13	
14. How much does your institution emphasize the following?		
a. Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	13	
b. Providing support to help students succeed academically	13	A5
c. Using learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.)	13	A5
d. Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.)	13	
e. Providing opportunities to be involved socially	13	
f. Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.)	13	
g. Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	13	
h. Attending campus activities and events (performing arts, athletic events, etc.)	13	
i. Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues	13	
15. About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing the following?		
a. Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)	8, 9	A5, A6
b. Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)		
c. Working for pay on campus	13	
d. Working for pay off campus	13	
e. Doing community service or volunteer work	13	
f. Relaxing and socializing (time with friends, video games, TV or videos, keeping up with friends online, etc.)		
g. Providing care for dependents (children, parents, etc.)		
h. Commuting to campus (driving, walking, etc.)		
16. Of the time you spend preparing for class in a typical 7-day week, about how many hours are on assigned reading?	8, 9	A5
17. How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?		
a. Writing clearly and effectively	8, 9	A5, A6
b. Speaking clearly and effectively	8, 9	A5, A6
c. Thinking critically and analytically	8, 9	A5, A6
d. Analyzing numerical and statistical information	8, 9	A5, A6
e. Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills	8, 9	A5, A6
f. Working effectively with others	8, 9	A5, A6
g. Developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics	8, 9	A5, A6
h. Understanding people of other backgrounds (economic, racial/ethnic, political, religious, nationality, etc.)	8, 9	A5, A6
i. Solving complex real-world problems	8, 9	A5, A6
j. Being an informed and active citizen	8	A5, A6
18. How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?	1, 2, 8	A5
19. If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?	1, 2, 8	A5

Institutional Examples

Interest in using NSSE for specialized accreditation is growing across all sectors and types of institutions. Because NSSE focuses on student behaviors and effective educational practices, colleges and universities have found productive ways to incorporate survey results into their institutional self-studies and annual progress reports for AACSB. In this section, we describe how selected institutions are using NSSE in AACSB accreditation.

California State University, Long Beach (CSULB)

In its progress report to AACSB, the College of Business Administration (CBA) at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) reported on several areas of concern that emerged during the reaffirmation process including the need for an "appropriate, applicable, and effective assessment system" and continued efforts toward retaining and supporting faculty. To address the first of these concerns, CBA's planning and assessment team developed a set of eight learning goals and outcomes for its undergraduate students derived from CSULB's general strategic plan. NSSE results will be used as stand-alone assessment measures for seven of these goals which include: (a) conceptual learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills; (b) awareness of ethical, social responsibility, and citizenship issues; (c) interpersonal skills for working in diverse contexts; (d) effective written and oral communication skills; (e) understanding of business-related functions and practices and the ability to apply this knowledge to real world problems; (f) ability to use quantitative and technological skills to analyze and interpret business data; and (g) understanding of the impact of globalization on business.

Iowa State University

Improved NSSE scores on items related to strengthening undergraduate programs to emphasize technological and global awareness will be used as evidence to support one of the six priorities of The Strategic Plan (2005–2010) for the College of Business at Iowa State University.

Oklahoma State University

The Spears School of Business at Oklahoma State University (OSU) will use internally developed surveys based on NSSE-like questions as well as applicable data from OSU's biennial participation in the NSSE survey to determine how well OSU fosters student learning by studying the engagement (time and effort) devoted to learning activities such as communication, problem-solving, critical thinking from the perspective of students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration program. These measures will be used in support of program outcomes for AACSB standards.

Texas Tech University (TTU)

Texas Tech University (TTU) used NSSE results in its AACSB Fifth-Year Maintenance Report as evidence of assessment of World, Cultures, and Business (WCB) Goal #2 on International Awareness. Since only a small number of TTU students participated in study abroad programs, the WCB Executive Committee created a new course, WCM 490, as way of encouraging more students to participate in an international experience. The course helps students gain a better understanding of international business practices while experiencing diverse business cultures. In addition, the University charged all students a small fee each semester to help cover travel expenses to make it possible for students, particularly those with limited financial resources to study abroad.

Recent Trends in Accreditation

The following trends in accreditation support the use of student engagement results in assessment and institutional improvement initiatives:

- Campuses and accrediting bodies are moving toward self-studies that systematically over time review existing processes (like strategic planning, program evaluation, student services, and enrollment management), as contrasted with one-point-in-time reports that have limited utility.

- Accrediting bodies have shifted away from setting and holding institutions to rigid quantitative standards that feature inputs and resources toward empirically based indicators of institutional effectiveness and student learning.

- Regional and program accreditors are emphasizing the importance of cultivating "cultures of evidence" that nurture and sustain continuous improvement. Progressive campus leaders increasingly are harnessing the regional reaccreditation process as a "chariot for change." Rather than viewing the process as a burden or hurdle to be overcome, presidents, provosts, and deans are using the self-study and team visit as an opportunity to stimulate productive dialogue and to guide constructive change.

Accreditation Tips

Tip #1:

Student engagement results provided by NSSE are one direct indicator of what students put into their education and an indirect indicator of what they get out of it.

Tip #2:

NSSE items can be used to analyze the resources and appraise the effectiveness of the institution in fulfilling its mission. Two such measures included in the educational gains items are the extent to which students' experiences at the institution have: 1) contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in acquiring a broad general education; and 2) helped them develop a personal code of values and ethics. The measurement of these experiences could be used to demonstrate achievement of the institution's mission and goals.

Tip #3:

NSSE data are actionable in that they point to aspects of student and institutional performance institutions can address related to the curriculum, pedagogy, instructional emphases, and campus climate. In addition, because NSSE benchmarks allow a school to compare itself to others, the results often point to areas where improvement may be desired.

Tip #4:

Share NSSE results widely to expand the audience's view of the accreditation data. Spend time thinking about with whom you will share specific results from your data. For example, Oregon State University has disseminated its NSSE results to relevant student affairs departments, like housing and academic advising, who in turn can use the data to better understand how their students interact with available services.

Tip #5:

The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) measures faculty expectations of student engagement in educational practices empirically linked with high levels of learning and development. Combined, NSSE and FSSE results can help identify areas of strength as well as aspects of the undergraduate experience that may warrant attention and stimulate discussions on improving teaching, learning, and the quality of students' educational experience.

Tip #6:

Share NSSE results with appropriate campus community members to help sharpen their reports to the accreditation team. For example, distribute NSSE results on the experience of first-generation and commuter students to academic support services and commuter student offices. Data regarding the degree to which students report the institution helps them cope with nonacademic responsibilities and succeed academically and their satisfaction with advising can be used to demonstrate adequate provision of services to meet students' learning and personal development needs.

Tip #7:

NSSE results can help assess the degree to which the institution encourages contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds and the extent to which students report that their experiences at the institution have contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Results also can demonstrate institutional effectiveness in responding to the increasing diversity in society through educational and co-curricular programs.

Additional Information

This document, accreditation toolkits from previous years, examples of how institutions have used NSSE data for accreditation, and research reports related to NSSE data and accreditation are available on the NSSE Institute website.

nsse.iub.edu/_/?cid=136

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NSSE
national survey of
student engagement