Do Your Students Feel They Belong? Examining Sense of Belonging and Engagement

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Webinar presented December 1, 2020
Preview of Webinar Registrants’ Questions

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Ways to analyze and share NSSE results
General curiosity :)
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What strategies need to be in place to ensure students feel they belong?
Just wanting to know how the findings might inform our initiatives
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How do schools communicate results with stakeholders? How much? What access?
Webinar Follows Up Annual Results Released
November 19, 2020

Engagement Insights: Survey Findings on the Quality of Undergraduate Education

Between November 2020 and February 2021, we will present five data-informed treatments of important topics for higher education.

https://nsse.indiana.edu/research/annual-results/index.html
November 2020 - Annual Results
Building a Sense of Community for All

Building a Sense of Community for All

We examined the relationships between students’ sense of belonging (three new items on the 2020 survey) with engagement, perceived gains, and persistence, and also looked at patterns related to selected student characteristics.

121,955 FY, 149,466 Seniors from 521 institutions
15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Response options: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

a. I feel comfortable being myself at this institution.
b. I feel valued by this institution.
c. I feel like part of the community at this institution.
Poll: Who’s in the Audience?

Which of the following best describes your NSSE data experience?

- Nervous rookie
- Excited apprentice
- Intermediate tradesperson but new to NSSE
- Skilled NSSE magician
- Powerful data wizard
Webinar Agenda

• Highlight and elaborate NSSE Annual Results on “Building a Sense of Community for All”
• Acquaint you with your Belonging results and respond to your questions about data
• Present approaches to using Belonging results
Our Topic Today: Sense of Belonging

The psychological feeling of belonging or connectedness to a social, spatial, cultural, professional, or other type of group or a community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Whether or not students feel respected, valued, accepted, cared for, included, and that they matter, in the classroom, at college, or in their chosen career path (Strayhorn, 2012)
Why Sense of Belonging?

• Sense of belonging influences student persistence

• Interventions can improve students’ sense of belonging
Why Sense of Belonging?

The Pandemic and Racial Turmoil Are Changing Curricula. Here’s How.

By Alexander C. Kafka | OCTOBER 19, 2020

The Chronicle: Colleges are offering new classes on racial history and social justice...creating equity-and-justice centers, and hiring ethnic-minority specialists in neglected topics to deepen students’ understanding. Also, in concert with co-curricular and extracurricular study groups & clubs, offering students in underrepresented minority groups a deeper sense of belonging.
Sense of Belonging and Engagement

• Students’ sense of belonging is positively related to engagement and student development

• Relationship is particularly strong for students’ quality interactions with others on campus, their sense of institutional support, and their perceived gains in learning and development attributable to their college experiences
Most students feel they belong, but differences exist among subgroups
Let’s CHAT

What populations or groups of students are you most interested in looking at within your data, specifically for sense of belonging?
Do First-Year Students of Different Backgrounds Feel They Belong?

• For some types of students, such as those with nonbinary gender identities, these differences are reflected in all three belonging measures (Figure 2). These students consistently express a lower sense of belonging than their cisgender peers.

• To see findings and comparisons for other subgroups of students see our Tableau dashboard.
• Black or African American first-year students sense of belonging scores divided into Low, Middle & High SB groups.
• By examining what relates to groups, we can identify ways to improve experiences.
Implications of Sense of Belonging Results

Knowing what relates to high sense of belonging for under-represented student groups, or populations of interest to the campus, suggest ways institutions can foster belonging

Our results suggest a focus on:

• Reflective activities in courses,
• Positive relationships with faculty, and
• Institutional support for diversity (encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds, and attending events that address important social, economic and political issues)
Does Sense of Belonging Relate to Persistence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>97%</th>
<th>89%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS WHO FELT VALUED BY THEIR INSTITUTION INTENDED TO RETURN THE FOLLOWING YEAR</td>
<td>WHO DID NOT FEEL VALUED INTENDED TO RETURN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Does Sense of Belonging Relate to Persistence?

- Belonging is particularly important for first-year retention
- Students’ major also plays an important role in belonging
  - First-year students with a declared major felt greater belonging than those who were undecided
- Senior sense of belonging is also related to major with students majoring in Health Professions, Education, and Business feeling the greatest belonging

Figure 1. First-Year Students’ Sense of Belonging by Intent to Return to the Institution
Sense of Belonging

Students’ sense of belonging – how valued and included they feel – is a core dimension of inclusion and equity and a factor in overall quality of learning.

What can you learn about your students’ sense of belonging from NSSE 2020, including how this varies by student demographics and by level of belonging?
Let’s Dig into Our Data!

- Have you used your Sense of Belonging data?
- SB item variables
  - sbmyself
  - sbvalued
  - sbcommunity
- SB scale
  - sb
  - Scores range from 0-60, calculated like EIs
Tips for Getting Started

• Start with basic frequencies and crosstabs

• You could run these same descriptives for subpopulations and compare the patterns in response
• Look at variation within subpopulations of interest to your campus (and consider looking at groups you don’t know much about!)

Subpopulations might start to get small, but don’t give up!
• See our tips for analyzing small populations and inclusive data sharing and analysis
• Let go of the need for statistical significance- nonparametric or effect size calculations can be informative, but a qualitative mindset can take you far
• Aggregate small groups based on their experience not a pre-conceived notion of identity (for example, Asian and Pacific Islander students are often grouped, but often differ greatly in experience)
• If groups do need to be removed from analyses, say something about them descriptively, try to not silence voices of small groups!
A Different Kind of Approach

• Start by dividing students into groups (quartiles, high-medium-low, etc.) based on Sense of Belonging
  • In my example, Low SB = 0-33, Moderate SB = 40-47, Highest SB = 53-60

• Look at the proportions of students in these Belonging groups
  • $\chi^2$ tests can help but might not be necessary
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lowest SB</th>
<th>Moderate SB</th>
<th>Highest SB</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensory impairment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobility impairment</td>
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<td>Learning disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Another disability</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>More than one disability</td>
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Using the same cut-offs for low-med-high, do you see positive shifts in proportions over time?
What Questions do you have about your Results?

• What do you plan to examine in your results?
• Who might be interested in results?
Learning from Institution Stories

Affirming the Importance of Belonging
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, DOMINGUEZ HILLS

California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) is using its NSSE 2020 sense of belonging results in a variety of ways, including as part of their integrated assessment of their First Year Experience, in their routine sharing of results, and in an analysis of retention.

Complementary Efforts to Study and Act on Belonging
GEORGIA SOUTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

In Georgia's statewide effort to increase graduation rates, universities are designing interventions to develop productive academic mindsets such as learning from setbacks, having a sense of purpose, and finding a place in the institutional environment.

Sense of Belonging as Validation of the Power of Community
TAYLOR UNIVERSITY

Taylor University, a faith-based liberal arts institution in Upland, Indiana, teaches that community extends beyond the physical campus. They challenge students to live authentically, while also supporting others in their community—promoting belongingness via campus culture.
Pairing SB with Data on Productive Mindsets

• NSSE 2020 sense of belonging results provide GSW a complementary measure to examine alongside belonging data from the institutions’ results on the University System of Georgia’s Mindset Survey.

• Results help identify topics for institutional action, with a focus on how aspects of student life such as contact among students from different backgrounds, being involved socially, and attending campus events, could be redesigned to focus more intentionally on their contribution to productive academic mindsets.
To Assess FYE Program & Retention Analysis

- SB results included as part of integrated assessment of First Year Experience
- Results shared with Associate Vice Presidents and Vice Presidents, General Education curriculum committee, advising council; and in analysis of retention
- FY belonging averages looked good, affirmation that CSUDH is inclusive
- Results informed Faculty Development Center emphasis on faculty’s role in helping students feel valued and part of the community
Validating a Core Component of Mission

• Taylor challenges students to live authentically, while also supporting others in their community. In essence, they promote sense of belonging through their campus culture, and their NSSE 2020 results validate this notion.

• Data show strong belonging scores overall, and specifically in comparison to peer institutions.
Opportunities for Sense of Belonging Results

• Bring Student and Academic Affairs together to discuss results and identify strategies to enhance engagement practices associated with high levels of belonging.

• Explore sense of belonging among students by level of academic performance, work with learning support services & faculty teaching first year courses to devise early indicators of belonging.
How Can We Help You?

What would you like to see in a guide to help facilitate use and disseminate findings?

What other ways can we help you explore students’ (and faculty!) sense of belonging on your campus?
What’s Still Lingering? On Your Mind?

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Have you conducted analysis on impacts of FYSem participation & new student SB?
How do schools communicate results with stakeholders? How much? What access?
How can we create a sense of belonging to help our students thrive?
Thanks so much for joining us!

Find our slides and the recording of this webinar on the NSSE website
nsse.indiana.edu/support-resources/webinars/index.html

Blog: NSSEsightings.indiana.edu
@NSSEsurvey