Changing Expectations? Trends in Student Engagement Expectations and Academic Beliefs

Vendor Session
42nd Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience
Los Angeles, CA Sunday, February 6, 2023

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Who’s Here?
What’s Your Interest in this Session?

First, Some Vendor Session Basics

Widely used tools for assessing the quality of undergraduate education—providing institutions diagnostic, actionable information that fosters and catalyzes evidence-based improvement efforts.

About 1,700 participating colleges & universities
About BCSSE & NSSE

BCSSE collects data about entering students' prior academic and co-curricular experiences, and their expectations for participating in educationally purposeful activities during the coming college year. Administered to first-year, transfer, and older students prior to start of fall or winter classes.

NSSE annually invites first-year and senior students' about their participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. Results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from college.
Do you have NSSE or BCSSE data?
Common questions for all students regarding their expectations and perceptions for the coming year. These common content areas include:

- Academic Preparation
- Academic Perseverance
- Academic Difficulty
- Academic Help-Seeking
- Collaborative Learning
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Hours Studying and Working
- Importance of Campus Support
- Expectation to Graduate from Current Institution
- Sources for paying for college
- First generation status
- Expectation to graduate
- Expected grades
- Friends also attending
- Choice of institution
- Race/ethnicity
- Other background information
Summer/Fall administration:
- Modes: Paper (FY only), Web, or Mixed
- Dates: Early December to mid-February
- Administered prior to the start of the classes or within the first two weeks after the start

Winter administration:
- Modes: Web only
- Dates: Early December to mid-February
- Administered prior to the start of the classes or within the first two weeks after the start
Reports and Data:

- Student-specific advising reports
- Summary results
- Historical summary results (2018 to present)
- Multi-Year Report
- BCSSE-NSSE Combined Report
- Real-time results and data
- Complete data file

All results and data are available 24/7
New for 2023

- Students are asked how concerned they are about feeling homesick, lonely, mental health, and sleeping well.
- Updated race and ethnic identity response categories
- Other edits to match edits in NSSE 2023
- Continuous updates to the dashboard reports
  - New multi-year report

Check out the public demonstration dashboards
nsse.indiana.edu/bcsse/administering-bcsse/demo-dashboard.html
University of South Florida

Use BCSSE data for predictive analytics to identify students at risk of not persisting

New Student Connections and Peer Advisor Leaders offices target priority outreach to these students

In past few years, improved:
- First-year retention **88% to 91%**, and
- Six-year graduation rate **67% to 72%**

Request PowerPoint slides from FYE 2019 session

*Leveraging Survey Data and Predictive Analytics to Support First-Year Students*

presented by Michelle Bombaugh and James Cole, Sunday, Feb 17
How Institutions Use BCSSE Data

Southern CT State University

FY Seminar instructors receive BCSSE Advising Reports

Predictive modelling to identify student success factors

NSSE Academic Advising module to identify issues with the campus’s advising practices

BCSSE-NSSE analysis resulting in a special High-Impact Practice offering First-Generation College Student Living and Learning Communities
NSSE survey collects data representing a breadth of student engagement behaviors, including 10 Engagement Indicators and 6 High Impact Practices.

**Engagement Indicators**
- Higher-Order Learning
- Reflective & Integrative Learning
- Learning Strategies
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Collaborative Learning
- Discussions w/Diverse Others
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Effective Teaching Practices
- Quality of Interactions
- Supportive Environment
- Sense of Belonging (new in 2020)

**High Impact Practices**
- Learning community
- Internship, co-op, etc
- Work w/faculty on research project
- Service Learning
- Study abroad
- Culminating senior experience
- Sense of Belonging (new in 2020)
NSSE Topical Modules

1. Academic Advising
2. Career & Workforce Preparation
3. Civic Engagement
4. Development of Transferable Skills
5. Experiences with Online Learning
6. Experiences with Writing
7. First-Year Experiences & Senior Transitions
8. HIP Quality (New in 2022)
9. Inclusiveness & Engagement with Cultural Diversity
10. Mental Health & Well-Being (new in 2023)
First-Year Experiences

1. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?
   Response options: Very often, Often, Sometimes, Never
   a. Studied when there were other interesting things to do
   b. Found additional information for course assignments when you didn’t understand the material
   c. Participated in course discussions, even when you didn’t feel like it
   d. Asked instructors for help when you struggled with course assignments
   e. Finished something you had started when you encountered challenges
   f. Stayed positive, even when you did poorly on a test or assignment

2. During the current school year, how difficult have the following been for you?
   Response options: Not at all difficult (1) to Very difficult (6)
   a. Learning course material
   b. Managing your time
   c. Getting help with school work
   d. Interacting with faculty

3. During the current school year, about how often have you sought help with coursework from the following sources?
   Response options: Very often, Often, Sometimes, Never
   a. Faculty members
   b. Academic advisors
   c. Learning support services (tutoring, writing center, success coaching, etc.)
   d. Friends or other students
   e. Family members
   f. Other persons or offices

4. During the current school year, did you take a course intended for first-year students as described below?
   Response options: Yes, No, Unsure
   a. A course that introduces students to college and helps develop success skills...
How NSSE Data Can Be Used

NSSE data serve a diagnostic function by identifying institutional strengths and weaknesses with respect to effective educational practices.

- Accountability & transparency
- Accreditation self-studies
- Alumni outreach
- Assessment and improvement
- Benchmarking
- Communications with stakeholders
- Faculty and staff development
- General education reform
- Grant proposals, applications, and progress reports
- Institutional advancement
- Institutional research
- Retention and completion studies
- State system performance reporting
Example: Using NSSE Data to Assess FYE Program & Retention Analysis

- Sense of Belonging results included in 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

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.
Institutions that administer BCSSE to their first-year students entering in the fall, can pair their BCSSE results with a NSSE administration at the end of the first college year, providing an in-depth understanding of first-year student engagement on campus.
Back to you...What’s your interest in Changing Expectations & Trends in Expectations & Beliefs?

What first-year topics are being discussed on your campus?

What pandemic-related changing expectations are you noticing?
In 2021 and 2022, results from the BCSSE show that optimism for college remained high, though some forms of engagement dipped.

BCSSE results from 2021 and 2022 highlight a volatile association between mental and emotional exhaustion and expected academic difficulty.

53% substantial* increase in levels of mental and emotional exhaustion due to COVID

(substantial = “very much” or “quite a bit”)

Pandemic influence on Entering Students
Mental and emotional exhaustion appears to be linked with expectations of academic difficulty.
Combination of mental & emotional exhaustion and expected academic difficulty strongly suggests an imperative to implement widespread and **early check-ins** by faculty, academic advisors, and student life staff to offer the support and—if necessary—intervention to help students’ first college year be successful.
Implications for Mental & Emotional Concerns + Expectations for Difficulty

- Everyone on campus can “check-in” with students, but be systematic
- Expand counseling, peer support
- Offer special RA, peer, faculty, librarian training to help students process expectations and what they experience
- Help re-establish learning habits
- Acknowledge student worries
The first-year students of today are not the first-year students of years prior. These students enter our campuses with unprecedented experiences. It is our responsibility to document and examine in terms of the provision of services and support to facilitate their success and to promote greater awareness of their resilience and challenges as they progress in their educational journey.
NSSE 2022 results show:

• Increase in collaborative learning, discussions with diverse others, student-faculty interaction, perceptions of campus support
• Study abroad & internships, lower than pre-pandemic
• Depressed engagement in campus activities, hours spent in co-curricular activities, perception of institutional emphasis to be social - up from 2021, but lower than in the past
• Students fear lapses in academic prep, expect difficulty, worry about ineffective learning habits from relaxed circumstances
  • Mental exhaustion influencing engagement
  • Seniors regretting missed opportunities, uncertainty about value of degree, issues of mental health
Reflections on Student Engagement & Institutional Practice

What Colleges and Universities Can Do:

• Explicitly Address New Students Preparation Concerns & Expected Difficulty
• Emphasize Relationships
• Check-in & Guide Involvement, HIPs
• Encourage Reflection on Purpose & Value
• Address Holistic Student Success
In recent years, many entering first-year student expectations and academic beliefs are trending down.
Trends in Student Engagement Expectations and Academic Beliefs

- Importance of campus support
- Expected student-faculty interaction
- Expected peer collaboration
- Perceived academic preparation
- Expected academic perseverance

Changes in means from 2018 to 2022 for BCSSE scales

*All of the 2022 mean differences are significantly lower than the 2018 means*
A Closer Look at . . .

**Expected Peer Collaboration**

- Prepare for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students
- Work with other students on course projects or assignments

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Percent change indicating “Very often” or “Often”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Prepare for exams</th>
<th>Work with other students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>-15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>2019</td>
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<td>2020</td>
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<td>2022</td>
<td>-5%</td>
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A Closer Look at . . .

**Expected Student-Faculty Interaction**

- Talk about career plans with a faculty member
- Discuss course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class

Percent change indicating “Very often” or “Often”

- 2018: 0%
- 2019: 0%
- 2020: -5%
- 2021: -8%
- 2022: -9%
How have the expectations and beliefs of your entering FY students changed in recent years?
Do Expectations Relate to Actual?

Why should we care about expectations?

Do students entering expectations connect with actual interaction with peers or faculty?
One BCSSE-NSSE School

Midsize master’s level, public university

Participated in BCSSE 2021 and NSSE 2022
Peer Collaboration

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>NSSE Very Often</th>
<th>NSSE Often</th>
<th>NSSE Never/Sometimes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Expected Study</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Often</td>
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<td>Very Often</td>
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<td>31%</td>
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<td><strong>Expected Projects</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Often</td>
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Student-Faculty Interaction

One BCSSE-NSSE School

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<td>NSSE Never/Sometimes</td>
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Understanding the expectations and mindset of your entering students can help campuses to best facilitate engagement and a successful first year.

Tracking expected and actual engagement allows campuses to see trends and identify problematic areas.
Questions?

Questions? Comments?

Thank you

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