



# National Survey of Student Engagement: Writing Item Workshop

Tempe, AZ  
July 2007

Writing Program  
Administration Conference



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# Working Session Agenda

- ◆ 1:45: Introduction, timeline, objectives.
- ◆ 1:55: What is NSSE?
- ◆ 2:20: What are the major writing issues NSSE should capture (small groups)?
- ◆ 3:00: Break
- ◆ 3:15: What makes a NSSE question good?
- ◆ 3:35: Draft NSSE questions for testing (small groups).
- ◆ 4:10: Next Steps: How to continue collaboration?





# Timeline for Getting Writing Items Included on NSSE

- ◆ July, 2007: WPA Conference participants create 20 to 30 candidates for questions
- ◆ July – late September: Forum of interested people works (electronically?) with NSSE to refine questions
- ◆ Spring, 2008: Questions tested, data analyzed
- ◆ Spring, 2009: Revise and retest? More analysis





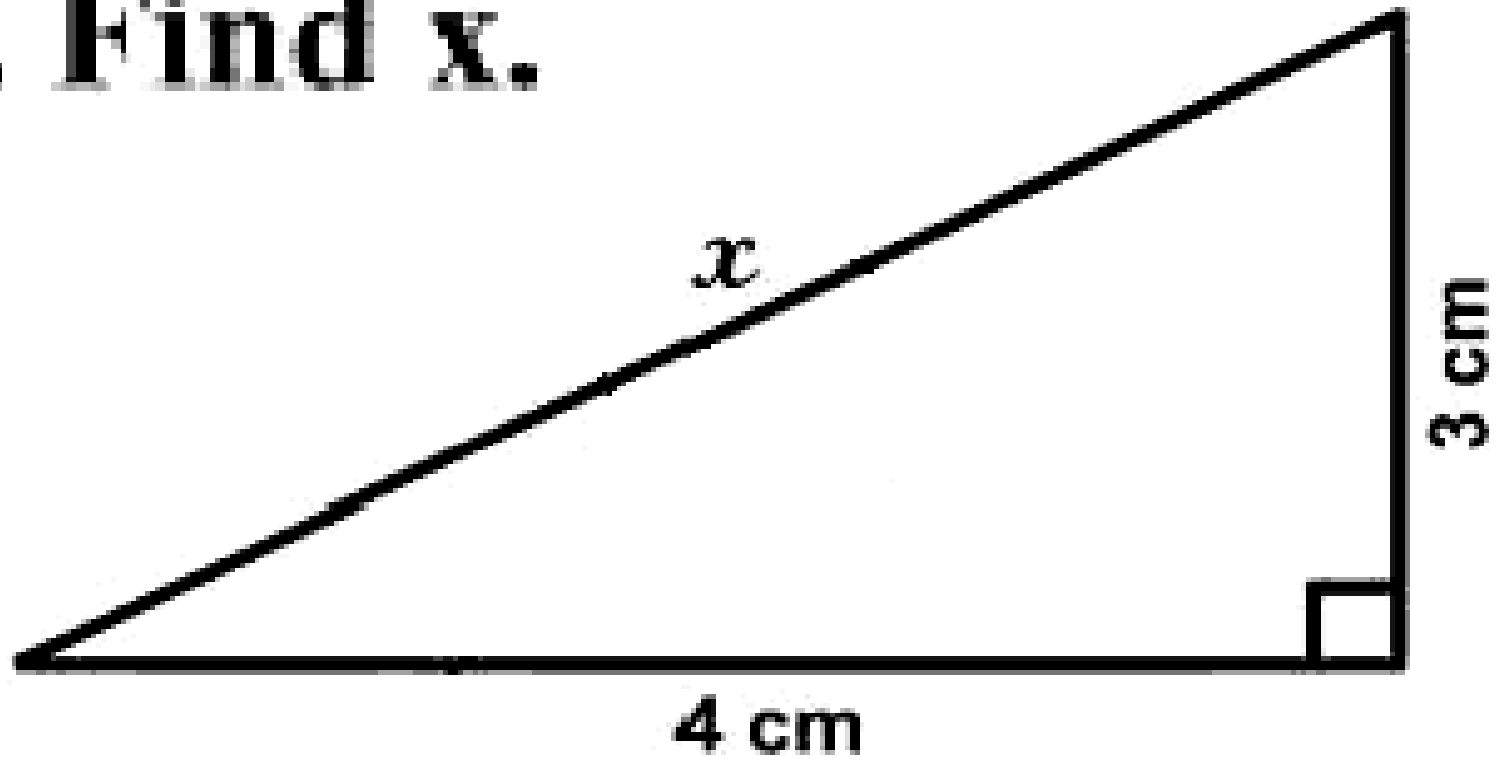
# Objectives

- ◆ For Today
  - ◆ Understand NSSE
  - ◆ Determine most important writing issues to include on NSSE
  - ◆ Draft more than 20 questions for NSSE to consider for testing
  - ◆ Decide on process for continuing this work (who and how)
- ◆ Through September: Consult with NSSE to create between 20 and 30 questions to test



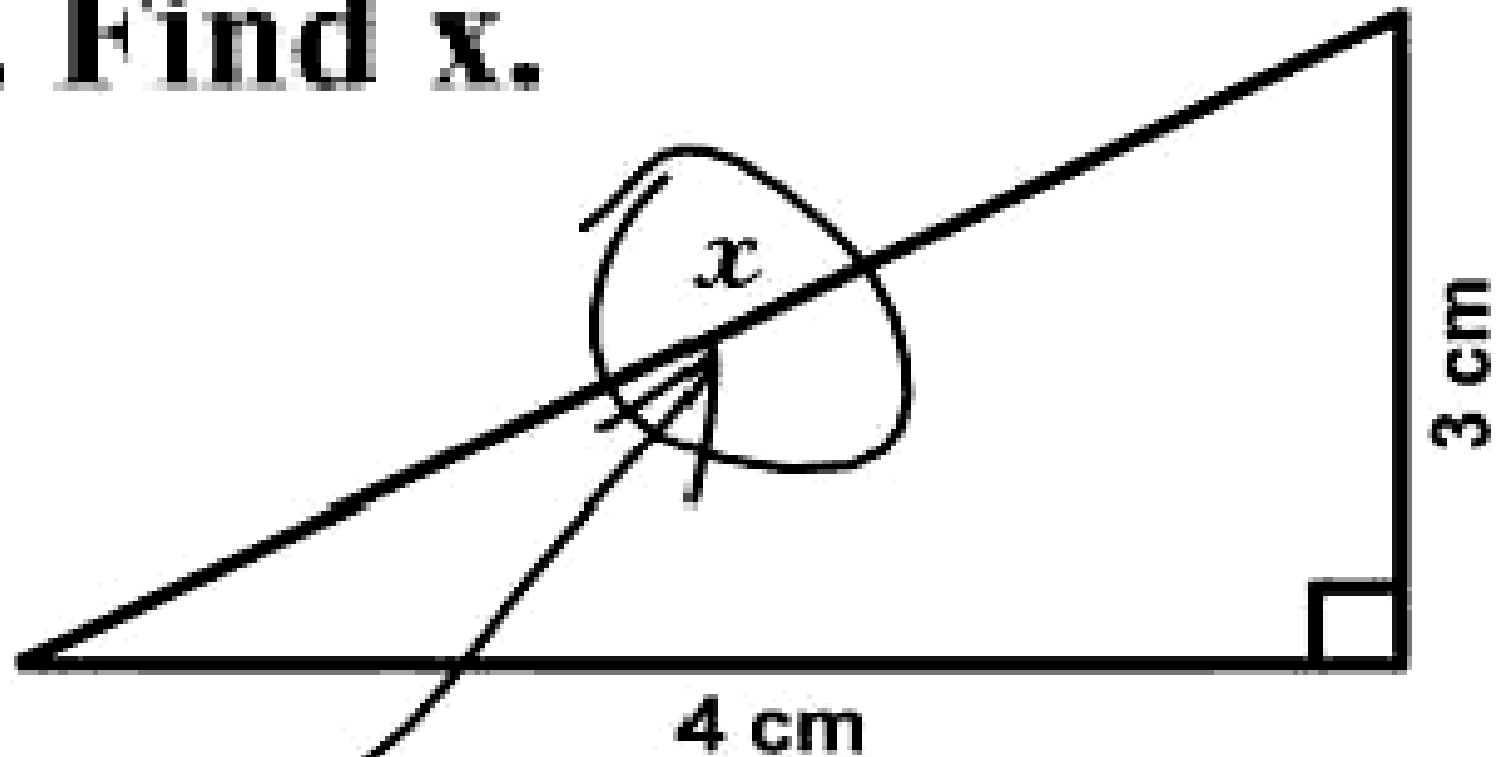
# Quiz

3. Find  $x$ .



# Quiz

3. Find  $x$ .



*Here it is*



***“That’s nice. What else  
have we learned at school?”***

**“We can tell people almost anything about education except how well students are learning.”**

Patrick M. Callan, President

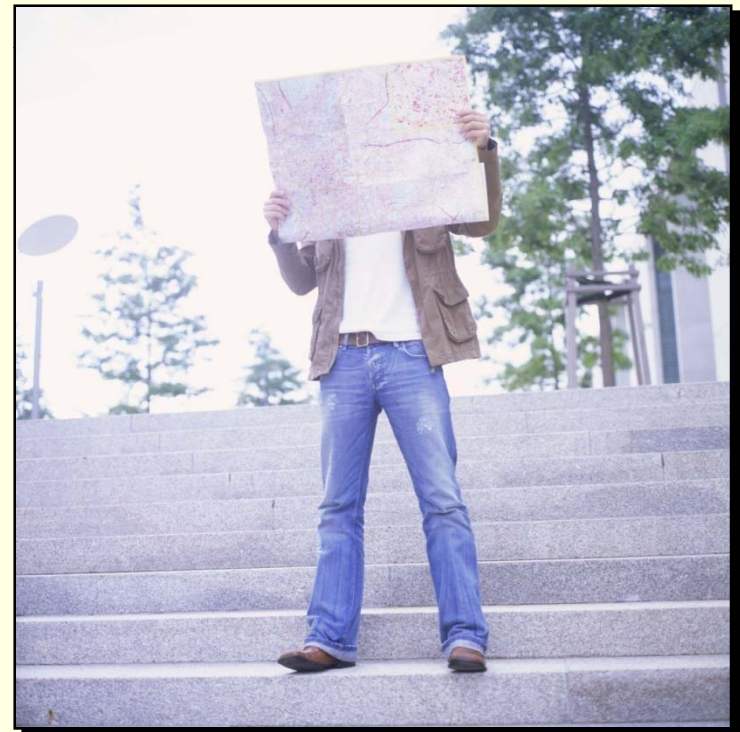
*National Center for Public Policy  
and Higher Education*





# Map

- ◆ What is engagement?
- ◆ Survey content
- ◆ Existing writing items/research





# What is Student Engagement?





# Foundations of Student Engagement

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- ◆ Time on task (Tyler, 1930s)
- ◆ Quality of effort (Pace, 1960-70s)
- ◆ Student involvement (Astin, 1984)
- ◆ Social, academic integration (Tinto, 1993)
- ◆ Good practices (Chickering & Gamson, 1987)
- ◆ Student engagement (Kuh, 2001, 2003)



# Definition

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## Student engagement:

A domain of constructs that measures both the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities, and how students perceive different facets of the institutional environment that facilitate and support their learning.

**Kuh, G. D. (2001). Assessing what really matters to student learning. *Change*.**



# Student Engagement

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- ◆ **What students do** –  
What matters most is what students do, not who they are.
- ◆ **What institutions do** –  
Using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things

Educationally effective institutions channel student energies toward the right activities.





# Student Engagement

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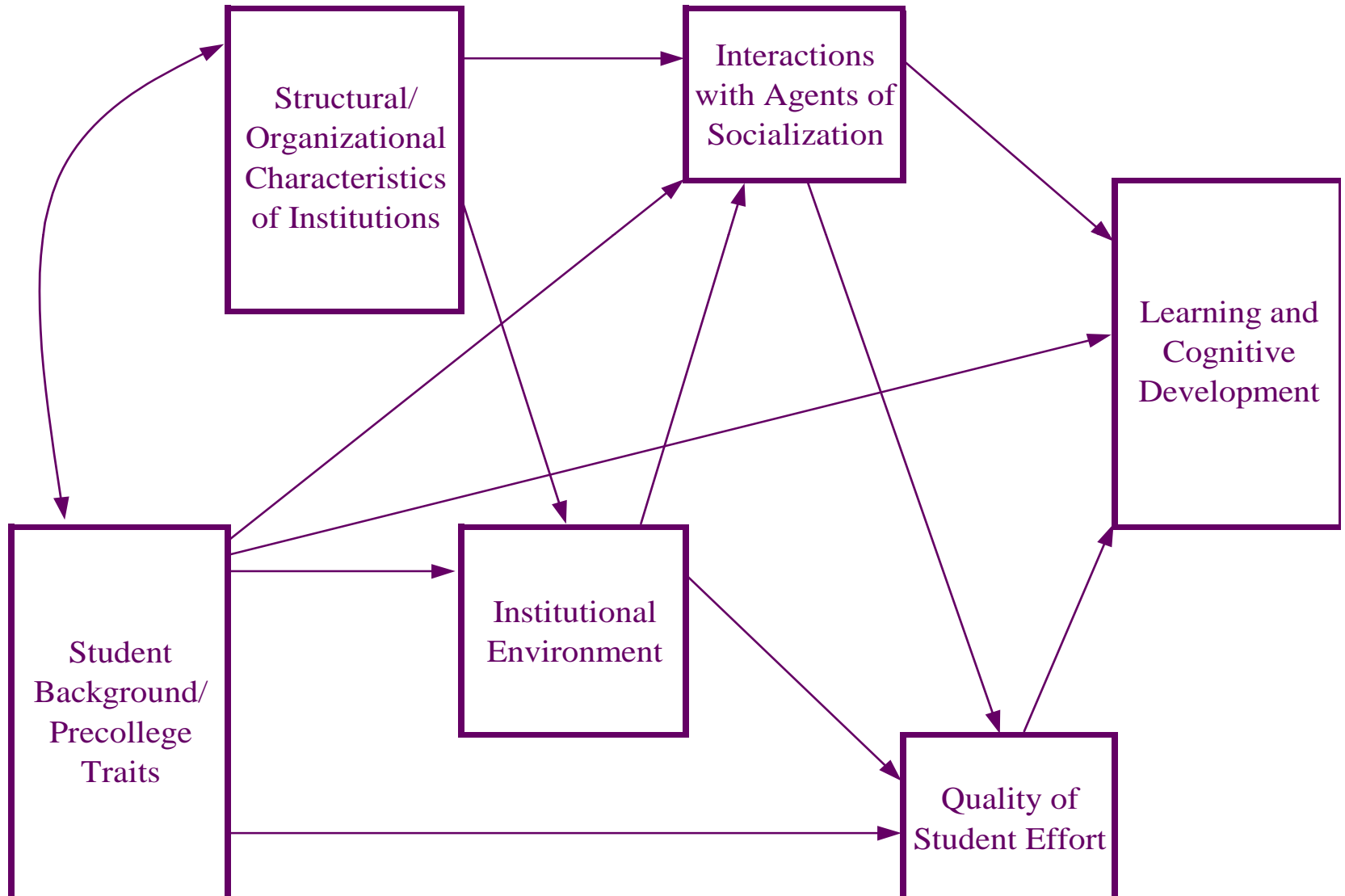
## Process indicators

- ◆ We often assess the products of education (grades, persistence, graduation rates...)
- ◆ We also need to know HOW were such outcomes achieved. What programs, policies, student efforts produced those outcomes?
- ◆ Process indicators are measurable markers along the educational route, associated with desirable outcomes.



# Why Engagement Matters

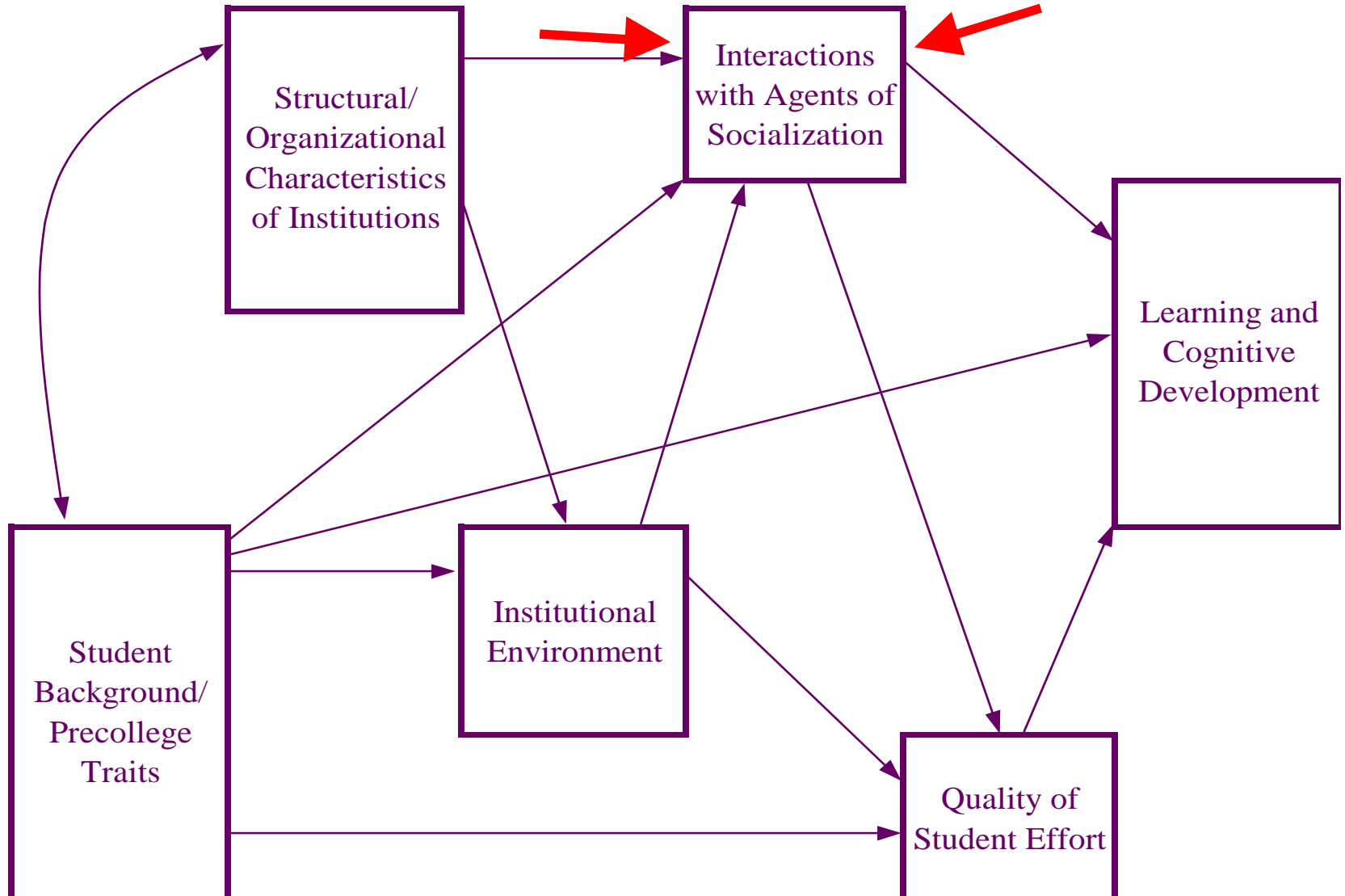
Pascarella, E. (1985).  
General Causal Model for College Impact.





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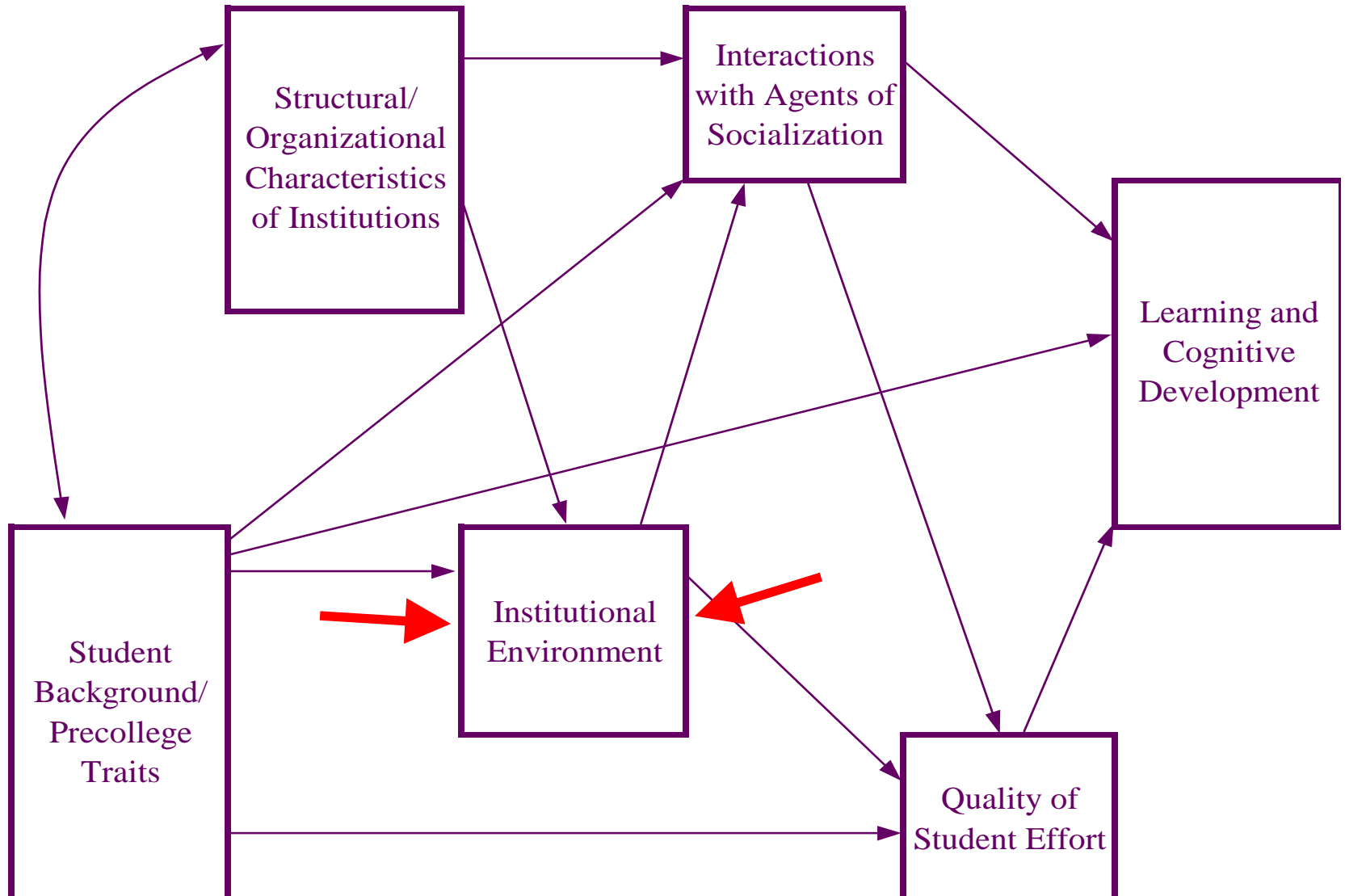






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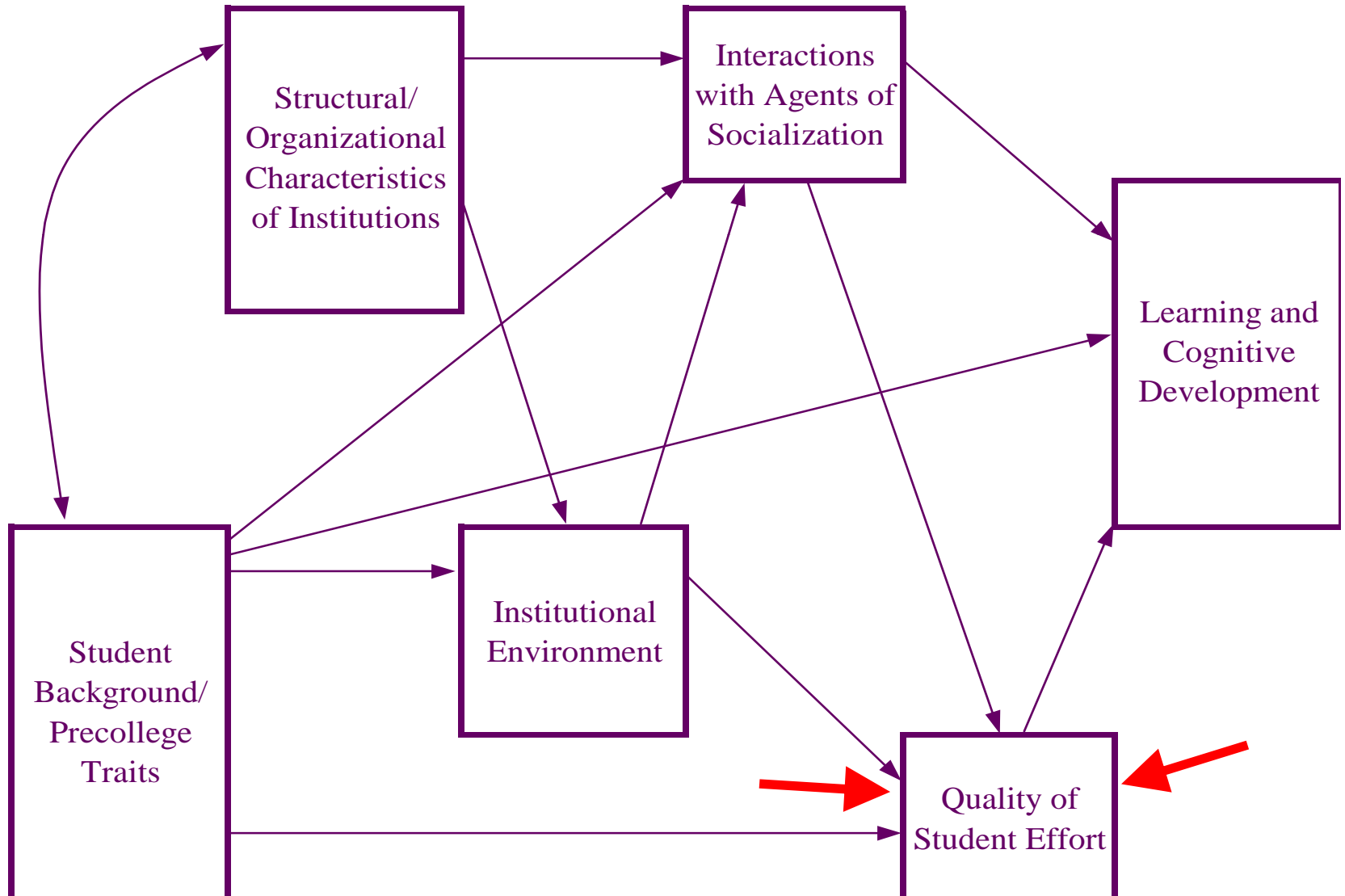
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# Why Engagement Matters

Pascarella, E. (1985).  
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**All learning and  
development requires an  
investment of time and  
effort by the student.**

Pace, C. R. (1984).  
Measuring the quality of college student experiences.



# National Survey of Student Engagement

Assesses the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development

**National Survey of Student Engagement**  
**The College Student Report**

**1** In your experience at your institution during the current school year, how often have you engaged in each of the following? Mark your answers in the boxes. Example:

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Never	
a. Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	r. Worked on projects that required you to stand in front of the class
b. Made a class presentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	s. Worked on projects that required you to work in groups



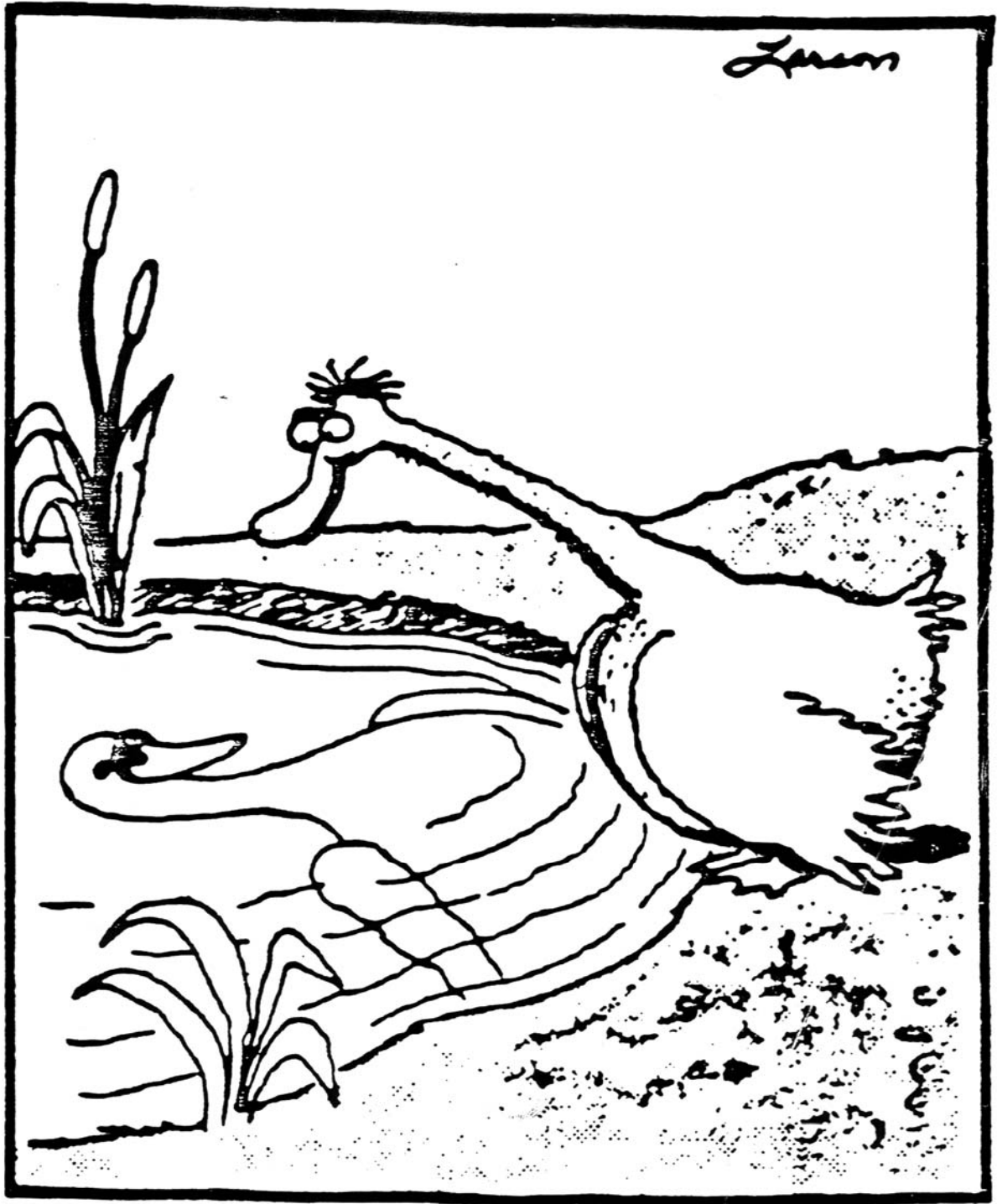
# NSSE Summary

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- ◆ Annual survey of 4-year institutions (610 in '07)
- ◆ First-year students and seniors (n=300,000 in '07)
- ◆ Random sampling methodology
- ◆ Third-party administrator

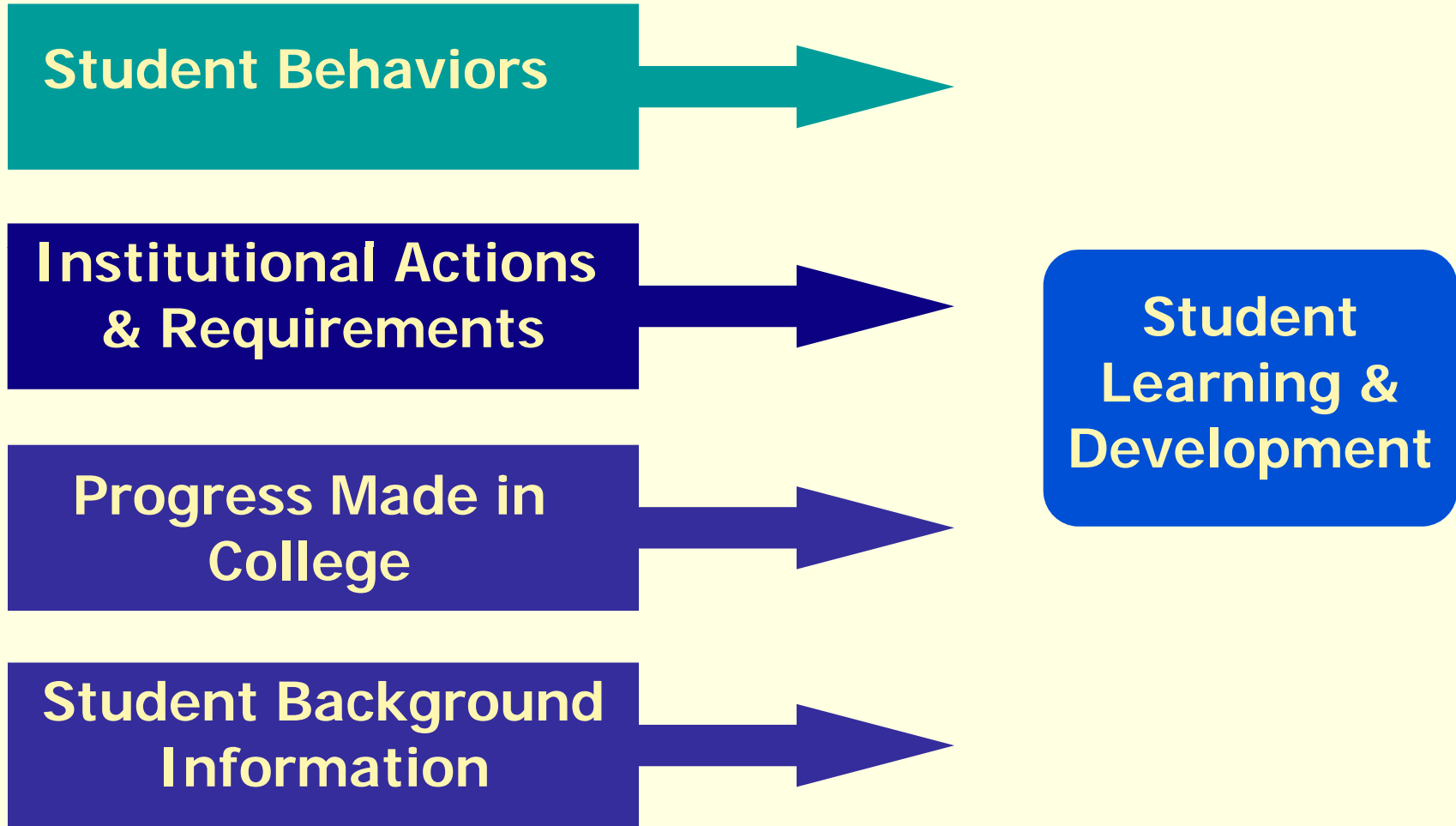


“Institutional  
Assessment”





# NSSE Content





# Current NSSE Writing Items

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*How often have you ...*

- ◆ Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
- ◆ Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources

*About how much ...*

- ◆ Written papers or reports of 20 pages or more
- ◆ Written papers or reports between 5 and pages
- ◆ Written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages

*To what extent have your experiences at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in ...*

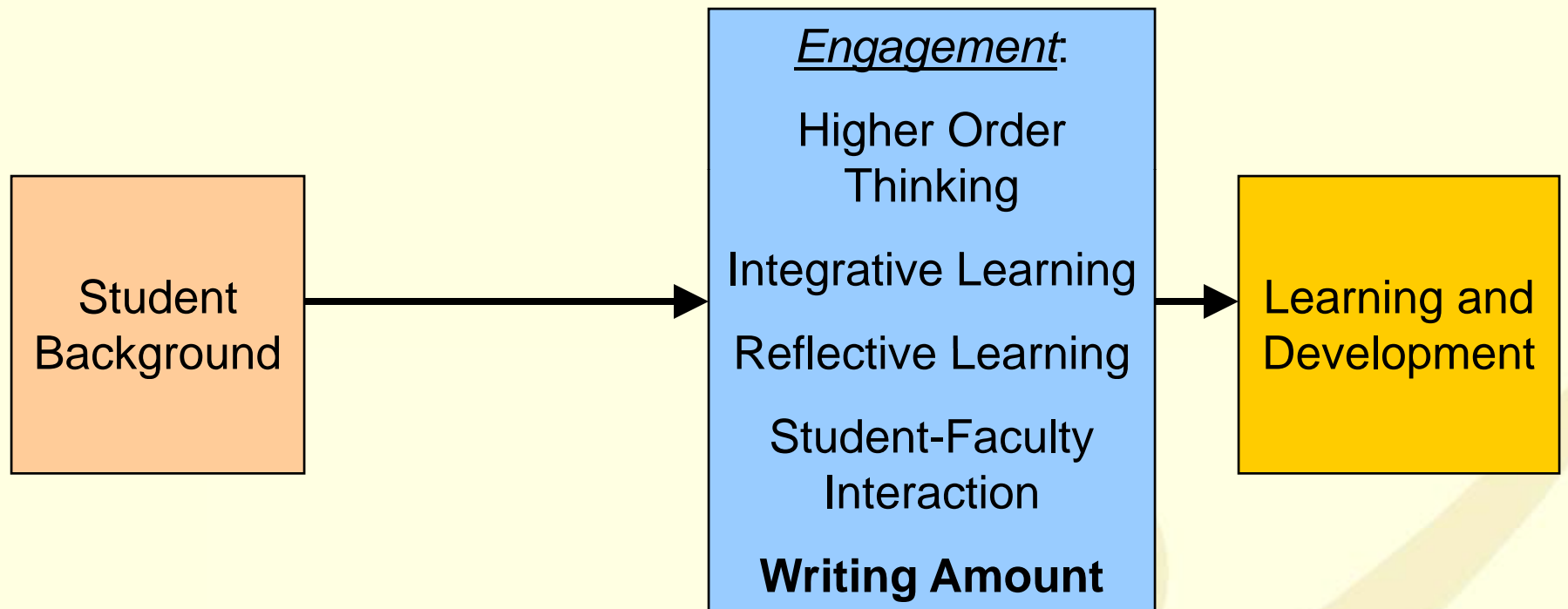
- ◆ Writing clearly and effectively





# Current Research

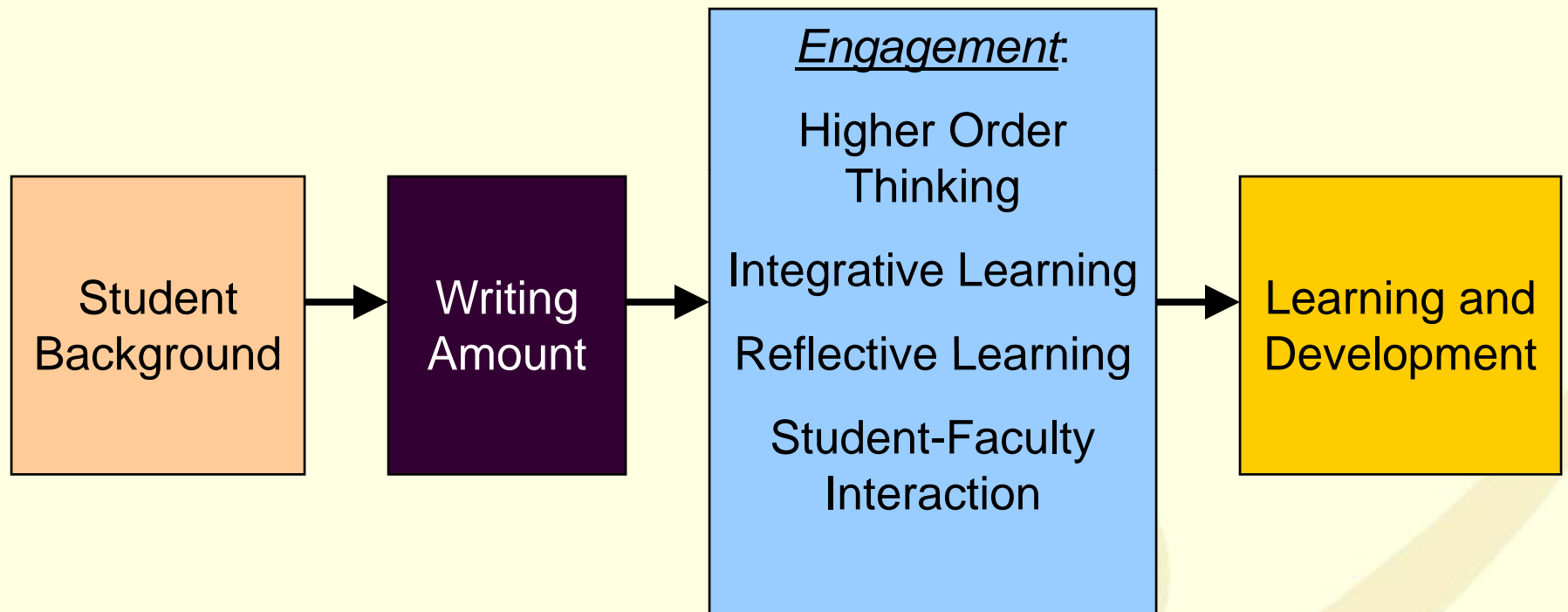
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# Current Research

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# What Should NSSE Capture?

- ◆ Brainstorm the most important issues that NSSE needs to capture. Do not worry, at this point, whether it's *possible* for NSSE to capture these ideas; focus on what you'd *like* NSSE to capture.
  - ◆ 20 minutes of small group work, then 20 minutes for posting issues and discussing in plenary. Continue discussion during break.

Break

What are the characteristics of good survey questions?



# Good Survey Questions

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## Reliable

Consistent upon repeated measurements

## Valid

Measure what they are supposed to measure

## Discriminating

Uncover the variability among respondents



# Good Survey Questions

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## Students are able to respond

- ◆ Recent experience, answer is known,
- ◆ Meaning is clear, unambiguous, and singular
- ◆ Short, easy to read, easy to answer
- ◆ Simple, basic language, commonly understood terms
- ◆ Response options provide all possible options – even “not applicable”



# Good Survey Questions

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Students are willing to respond

- ◆ Not threatening or embarrassing
- ◆ Relevant or interesting to their personal experiences – they care.
- ◆ No desire to provide socially desirable answers





# NSSE Experimental Questions

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- ◆ Purposes:
  - ◆ To test existing items,
  - ◆ To test new items,
  - ◆ Do research
- ◆ Emphasize:
  - ◆ engagement, behavior, experiences
  - ◆ Ratings of the supportiveness of the campus (academic and non-academic)
  - ◆ Self-reported gains

# Draft Questions

- ◆ Using Bob's principles for good questions, draft questions for possible inclusion on NSSE and for research.
  - ◆ 15 minutes to generate questions, 30 minutes for plenary discussion.

# Next Steps?

- ◆ How can we continue this collaboration?
- ◆ Who would like to continue?
- ◆ What are the steps?
- ◆ Future meetings? CCCC, International WAC, ...
- ◆ Sharing the project with educators in other specialties and administration