

## Converting Data into Action: Using NSSE Results in Student Affairs

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Jillian Kinzie, Indiana University, NSSE Institute, [jikinzie@indiana.edu](mailto:jikinzie@indiana.edu)  
Nathan K. Lindsay, Ph.D., Director of Student Life Assessment, UNCW  
[Lindsayn@uncw.edu](mailto:Lindsayn@uncw.edu)  
Carol Casey, Dean of Students, Rhodes College  
[CASEY@rhodes.edu](mailto:CASEY@rhodes.edu)



## Converting Data into Action

- The use of assessment data should emerge out of a desire to know more about and improve the quality and effectiveness of higher education.
- *External demands for accountability and internal commitments to enhancing student learning* amplify the need for comprehensive assessment practices emphasizing student success.



## Assessment Challenges for Student Affairs

- Documenting contributions to student learning
- Creating enriching opportunities aligned with educational mission and assessing desired outcomes
- Partnering across units and with academic affairs to enact comprehensive assessment and data use
- Getting *more* students to engage more frequently in the activities that *matter to their success*

## Inquiring Minds...

- What data do you use to assess quality in undergraduate education? In co-curricular learning experiences?
- In what curricular and co-curricular experiences are students, or particular groups of students, under-engaged? How do you monitor?
- What are your current strengths in undergraduate education? Where might you look to improve?



## Session Objectives

- Briefly introduce NSSE as a tool for assessment in student affairs
- Understand potential applications of results to examine quality in undergraduate education, promote collaboration between student & academic affairs, and institutional research offices
- Highlight effective institutional examples of converting data into action and using NSSE results in student affairs
- Discuss challenges and insights to using data

*National Survey of Student Engagement*  
(pronounced "nessie")

*Community College Survey of Student Engagement*  
(pronounced "cessie")



College student surveys that assess the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development



## NSSE Results

- A window into the undergraduate experience
- Discover strengths and weaknesses in educational program
- Identify areas that need attention to improve student learning and success
- Help pinpoint aspects not in line with mission, or what institution expects
- Link with other institutional data

## Questions to answer with NSSE results...1

- How many hours per week do first-year students spend studying? Do women study more than men?
- What % of seniors work with faculty members on activities other than coursework (activities, committees)? Does this differ by major?
- What % of FY and SR spend 0 hours in co-curricular involvements? Is this more than at peer institutions?
- Do FY students work more frequently with classmates on assignments outside of class than their counterparts at peer institutions?

## Questions to answer with NSSE results...2

- Do NSSE results match our mission?
- Are we meeting our expectations for having a supportive campus environment?
- Since implementing a new multicultural education initiative and expanding diversity programming, has our score on the diversity scale changed?
- Are FY who withdraw from the institution different in terms of engagement than students who are retained?



## Using NSSE to Shape Educational Experiences and Document Outcomes



### Evidence about *quality* of student experience

- Indicators at item level
  - Student participation in tutoring peers (1j)
  - Institutional emphasis on attending campus events (10 f)
- Hours spent on co-curricular activities (9d)
- Scales - Diversity Experiences (1 e, u, v)

Compare differences by gender, race-ethnicity, students in learning communities, place of residence, work on campus, by hours of co-curricular involvement etc.

## NSSE data point of interest to Student Affairs: Co-curricular Involvement

### 1. True or False.

About half of all senior students spend no time on co-curricular activities.

- Do you know proportion of your seniors who report 0 hours in co-curricular activities?
- Are you higher or lower than Carnegie peers? So what?
- If you are above the NSSE 2007 norm group (*not desirable in this case*), what might you do?
- What other information, corroborating data, might you have on about co-curricular activities?
- What might this data point suggest in terms of shaping student engagement?

## Institutional Case Study 1: Examining Co-curricular Involvement in the First Year

- Interpreting NSSE results for Institution:  
*"About half our FY students spend no time on co-curricular activities, compared to only 31% at peer schools. This seems really low. What did our students do in high school?"*
- ✓ Admissions confirms most new students worked part-time jobs in high school, likely limiting co-curricular involvement. CIRP data reveal entering students lower than norm, place high value on practical work experience.

## What do first-year students do?

2. What percent of full-time first-year students have participated in a *service-learning* course?

(a) 18% (b) 28% (c) 34% (d) 46%

- FSSE results show that **55%** faculty teaching FY think “community service” is “important” but, **less than 25%** do “service-learning” in their FY courses.
- **38%** FY students have “done” community service; **40%** FY report “plan to do”
- **Differences by gender, race-ethnicity, major??**
- Use data to **bring faculty & student affairs together**

## Institutional Case Study 2: Participation in Internships

- **NSSE Results:**
  - Internships: **78%** FY “Plan to do” only **45%** Seniors report “done”
  - FY & SRs report low gains in “acquiring work related knowledge”
  - **Students wanted to participate in internships, but too few did**
- **Campus Action:**
  - Used NSSE data to advocate hiring staff dedicated to overseeing this area of growth.
  - Increased campus advertising and focus on the internship program

## Northern Arizona University



- NAU’s IR Office disseminates results to Student Affairs in short, accessible formats
- **FY taskforce, a joint-committee of academic & student affairs staff, established to review first-year students’ success**
  - Results from NSSE, YFCY, CIRP surveys used to gauge students’ progress.
  - Taskforce examines FY experience, reviews program evaluations, and outcomes-based assessments.
- **Residence Life used results of NSSE oversample of students in learning communities to monitor program success**

## Using NSSE in Accreditation

- NSSE results are direct indicator of what students put into their education, and provides an indirect measure of student gains
  - EX: Institution claims strong emphasis on active & collaborative learning in FY
  - DATA: **88%** FY “frequently” ask questions in class; **78%** “frequently” work with peers in class, **80%** outside on group projects; FY report substantial gains in working effectively with others
- NSSE results indicate areas for improvement and are “actionable” – thus, appropriate for inclusion in quality improvement plans

## U. of North Carolina Wilmington’s Use of NSSE Findings

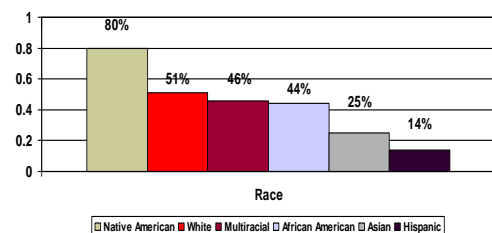


### Example #1: Enhancing Career Services

- NSSE has two items related to career services:
  - In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor?
  - To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills?

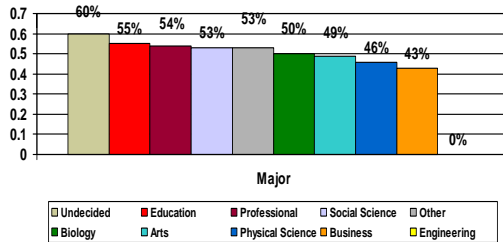
## Demographic Differences: Race

- Under half of most students of color have consulted a faculty member or advisor regarding their career plans.



## Demographic Differences: Major

- Students who report either often or very often consulting with a faculty member or advisor are in the following majors (rank ordered):



## Action Steps for Career Services

- Recruited staff of color to meet the needs of students of color
- Developed the Minority Mentor Program
- Developed staff positions to reach students in physical sciences/engineering, as well as undecided students.

## Example #2: Creating forums for dialogue on diversity

- NSSE has at least six items that are related to diversity
  - To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds?
  - In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own?

## Conversations with students from other races/ethnicities

- The percent of each sub-group that indicated they often or very often had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity:
  - 76.5% of Hispanic students
  - 64% of Black students
  - 59.2% of Asian/Pacific Islander students
  - 46% of Caucasian/White students
  - 42.9% of American Indian/Alaska Native students

## Action steps to promote conversations across differences

- Hosted diversity workshops and conferences
- Focused on student sub-groups that have been marginalized
- Created new staff positions for multicultural organizations and multicultural programming

## Example #3: Improving Campus Activities

- "To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following:
  - Providing the support you need to thrive socially
  - Attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.)"
- Based on NSSE findings and other feedback, the campus initiated a UNCWeekends program

## NSSE Benefits for Student Affairs

- Ability to triangulate other assessment findings
- Forum for dialogue and collaboration with academic affairs
- Longitudinal data set allows comparisons over time



## Rhodes College -- Use of NSSE Findings

Data Used to Indicate Good (and Necessary) Change

- A New Student Program Evaluation (internal)
- Academic Advising Survey (internal)
- Faculty, staff, and student focus groups (internal)
- Student Services Satisfaction Survey (internal)
- Benchmarking higher education and industry
- Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (2006)
- FSSE (2006)

{ 26 } – NSSE (2005 and 2006)



NSSE Data

Rhodes does not provide the desired “supportive campus environment.”

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) 2005 and 2006 Benchmark reports show Rhodes' scores in these areas as below the average for schools featured in Colleges that Change Lives, and a clear mismatch with our very high “level of academic challenge.”

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“Supporting Campus Environment” Variables

- Campus environment provides the support you need to help you succeed academically (ENVSUPRT)
- Campus environment helps you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) (ENVNACAD)
- Campus environment provides the support you need to thrive socially (ENVSOCAL)
- Quality of relationships with other students (ENVSTU)
- Quality of relationships with faculty members (ENVFAC)
- Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices (ENVADM)

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Of Particular Relevance...

In particular, the 2006 Benchmark report indicated that Rhodes' lowest performing areas are

1. “Said institution substantially helps students cope with non-academic matters” (ENVNACAD)
2. “Said institution provides substantial support for students' social needs.” (ENVSOCAL)

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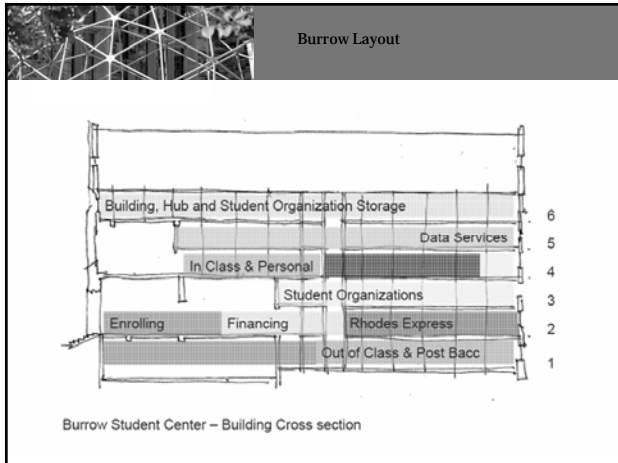
Charge from College President

“Our vision for student services is to create exceptional and memorable connections that delight students and make a critical difference in their Rhodes experience.”

“I asked (the Steering Team) not merely to find out what other, premier liberal arts colleges are doing but to reach farther, dream bigger, and act bolder—not in making minor, incremental changes to our current services and structure, but in making courageous, radical leaps of imagination.”

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**Assessment**

SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) Reaffirmation of Accreditation  
College-Wide Assessment Template

**Mission or Purpose of Program**

**Chart**

1. Area of College Vision to be Met
2. (Learning) Outcome
3. Measurements and Targets
4. Date/Frequency of Analysis

**Assessment Activity Tracking**

1. Outcome
2. Measurements
3. Values
4. Analysis
5. Recommendations
6. Actions Taken
7. Revised Outcome

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**Student Conduct Example**

Mission or Purpose: Students will grapple with issues of honor and integrity, using their own behavior and programs on ethical development as frameworks for personal reflection of values.

Vision	Outcome	Measurements	Frequency of analysis
Inspiration	students learn about goals and values through ethical programming	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. surveys from community day</li> <li>2. hall meetings conducted regarding student behavior violations by grad year</li> <li>3. All students receive handbook.</li> <li>4. All students receive handbook.</li> <li>5. NSSE (developing a personal code of value and ethics (GNETHICS))</li> <li>6. ...</li> </ol>	AN-September AN-August (y/n) EOS (compare) BOS (y/n) Three-year cycle

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**NSSE Use Study:  
Lessons for Student Affairs**

(Ahren, Ryan, Massa-McKinley, in press, *About Campus*)

- **Collaborate and communicate results to create a shared vision**
  - Relationship with IR and faculty pivotal
- **Triangulate data sources to corroborate and deepen initial impressions**
  - Inventory all data sources, combine to review NSSE in tandem with other results; Link NSSE data to student information & outcomes
- **Use NSSE results to learn more about your students**
  - Examine subpopulations, use results to challenge assumptions
- **Use data to set targets and monitor progress**

**Discussion and Comments:  
NSSE and Student Affairs**

National Survey of Student Engagement

- Do you have access to NSSE and other institutional data? If yes, how do you use it in conjunction with other internal/national data to advocate for change, assess organization, program, project? How do you use it as development tool for area, division, collaboration with academic affairs?
- Share an example of NSSE use on your campus?
- What questions do you have about using NSSE for assessment, accreditation, on your campus?
- What action might you take with your NSSE data?

**BCSSE: Pre-College Experiences, Expectations  
Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement**

**Register Now for 2008**

- BCSSE (pronounced "bessie")
  - Designed as a companion to NSSE
  - Pilots in 2004-2006; 127 BCSSE schools in 2007!
- Purpose:
  - Measure entering first-year students' pre-college academic and co-curricular experiences.
  - Expectations and attitudes for participating in educationally purposeful activities during the first college year.