

NSSE and FSSE: A Lever to Engage Institutional Strategies and Priorities in Teaching and Learning

2009 EDC Conference
Eric Kristensen

Agenda

- What are NSSE and FSSE?
- What are the research foundations of these instruments?
- What data are generated by NSSE?
- What challenges does your institution face in its NSSE data? How are they being handled?
- How might educational developers engage with the data and the response?
- FSSE and its comparative reports: what are these tools and how might they be used?
- Wrap up, next steps

What is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)?

- A tool to assess the quality of the post-secondary educational experience across North America.
- Developed and administered by the NSSE Institute at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.
- Beginning in 2006, all Ontario universities participate in NSSE.
- NSSE scope: over 1 million students from 1,100 colleges and universities in 50 states plus Puerto Rico, 35 Canadian universities and over 70 consortia

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Student engagement

“...is the time and energy students devote to educationally sound activities inside and outside the classroom, and the policies and practices that institutions use to induce students to take part in these activities.” (George Kuh, *Change*, March/April 2003.)

What **students** do: how much time and energy they devote to educationally purposeful activities

What **institutions** do: to promote effective educational practices and encourage students to learn within and outside of the classroom.

In short, educationally effective institutions channel student energy toward activities that promote learning, broadly defined.

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Why measure student engagement?

- **Students who are engaged learn better**
 - *Engaged*: devote time and energy to studies *and* to educationally-related activities
 - *Learn better*: students persisted in their studies, acquired a certain level of learning and personal development, and are satisfied with their studies – the university experience has generated 'added-value'
- **Two components of student engagement:**
 - Amount of time and effort on the part of students
 - Institutional support: resources and learning opportunities organized in a way that encourages student participation

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Research Foundations for Engagement

- Time on task (Tyler, 1930s)
- Quality of effort (Pace, 1960s-1970s)
- Student involvement (Astin, 1984)
- Social and academic integration (Tinto, 1987, 1993)
- Good practices in undergraduate education (Chickering & Gamson, 1987)
- Outcomes (Pascarella, 1985)
- Student engagement (Kuh, 1991, 2005)

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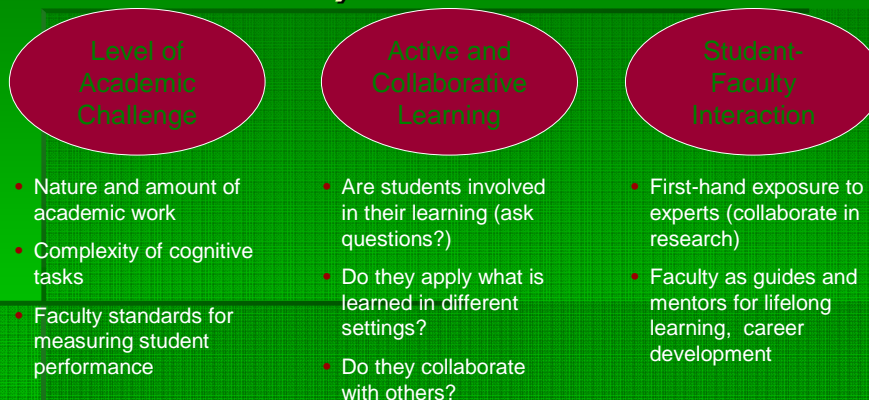
Examples of research supporting NSSE

- *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*, (Chickering & Gamson, 1987) cite the following engagement indicators:
 - Student-faculty contact
 - Active learning
 - Prompt feedback
 - Time on task
 - High expectations
 - Respect for diverse talents and ways of learning
 - Cooperation among students
- Other research (Kuh et al, 2005) identifies “*affirming and inclusive institutional environments where expectations are clearly communicated*” as indicators for student success

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NSSE Clusters of Effective Education Practice (the five benchmarks)



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NSSE Clusters of Effective Education Practice (the five benchmarks)

Enriching Educational Experience

- Opportunities that complement the goals of the academic program, e.g.
 - Diversity
 - Technology
 - Internships
 - Service Learning

Supportive Campus Environment

- Institution committed to a student's success
- Positive working and social relations among different groups on campus

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Other Questions

- General questions regarding satisfaction with experience:
 - Q13: How would you evaluate your entire educational experience?
 - Q14: If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution?
- Questions regarding the development/acquisition of skills, including:
 - Writing and reading skills
 - Thinking critically
 - Learning effectively on their own
 - Working effectively with others

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NSSE Survey - Overview of Questions

1. Academic activities
2. Learning and mental activities
3. Reading and writing
4. Homework
5. Academic challenge
6. Co-curricular activities
7. Enriching educational experiences
8. Campus relationships
9. Time utilization
10. Institutional emphasis
11. Gains, outcomes
- 12.- 14. Satisfaction

NSSE Results

- Diagnostic: help institutions look holistically at the undergraduate experience
- Help pinpoint aspects that are not in line with mission or expectations
- Identify weaknesses and strengths in educational program
- Help institutions focus on specific areas to promote student learning and success
- Can be combined with FSSE results (FSSE measures faculty expectations and activities related to effective educational practices)

Example: uOttawa 2005 Institutional Research Report

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uOttawa Results

	First Year	Senior Year
Level of Academic Challenge	52.5	52.2
Active and Collaborative Learning	36.1	40.6
Enriching Educational Environment	27.4	31.6
Student-Faculty Interaction	22.9	28.1
Supportive Campus Environment	52.7	45.3

- Benchmarks are scored using a 100 point basis.
- To assess the quality of these scores, it is necessary to
 - gauge against comparable universities
 - examine the scale of individual questions.

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uOttawa Results vs Comparators

	First Year		Senior Year	
	Canadian Consortium	US doctoral-extensive	Canadian Consortium	US doctoral-extensive
Level of Academic Challenge	>	>	<	<
Active and Collaborative Learning	=	<	<	<
Enriching Educational Environment	>	=	<	<
Student-Faculty Interaction	=	<	<	<
Supportive Campus Environment	=	<	<	<

Scored higher (>), the same (=) or lower (<) than the Canadian Consortium and US doctoral-extensive institutions

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First Year vs Senior Year

We appear to fare relatively well regarding the engagement of our first year students.

- We are either ahead or on par with other Canadian institutions
- Particularly in terms of the “level of academic challenge” and of the “richness of the educational experience”, our performance is comparable to that of our US peers

There is room for improvement regarding the level of engagement of our seniors.

- The level of engagement of our seniors is on par with that of our first year students.
- However, we lag behind our peers because, at other institutions, the level of engagement increases with student seniority

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What can we do to improve?

2005 uOttawa IR Summary

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Implementation

NSSE results are useful since they help identify areas where improvement is possible and institutionally-controlled

Faculty members can recognize themselves in the teaching and learning practices assessed, and identify areas where innovative approaches could be incorporated into their activities

In following slides, a list of best practices regarding student engagement by NSSE cluster, is summarized (from *“Student Success in College”*, Kuh et al, 2005)

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Academic Challenge

- Informing students of the institution's high expectations from the very beginning.
- Expecting significant time-on-task for writing, reading, and class preparation.
- Supporting students when they are in academic trouble or just wanting extra enhancement of their skills.
- Providing a rigorous summative experience such a senior capstone or a comprehensive examination.
- Encouraging students to share the results of their work through various forms of scholarship celebration activities.

Active and Collaborative Learning

- Designing physical and programmatic structures that encourage group study and other forms of student interaction
- Using undergraduates as "junior professors" to teach, mentor and provide guidance for their peers
- Requiring students to provide feedback to their peers through structured course assignments
- Offering academic credit for service learning opportunities
- Cultivating ties with the community to create learning opportunities for students

Student-Faculty Interaction

- Structuring opportunities for undergraduate research
- Designing first-year seminars and capstone experiences to put students in regular contact with faculty members
- Encouraging students to use electronic technology to communicate easily and frequently with peers and faculty and staff members
- Recruiting and rewarding faculty members who are willing to spend time with students outside the classroom
- Using mentoring and other programs to link students directly with a faculty member with similar interests
- Arranging physical facilities to encourage informal interaction to permit students and faculty members to continue conversations started in class

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Enriching Educational Experiences

- Communicating the value of diversity throughout students' college experiences
- Requiring students to participate in courses or activities that promote cross-cultural understanding, civic engagement and self-reflection
- Providing short-term study abroad opportunities
- Using electronic technologies to increase communication among students, between students and faculty, improve instruction and enhance learning
- Providing ample administrative support and resources to implement and use new technologies
- Encouraging and even requiring students to participate in experiential activities such as internships, practica and field placements so that students gain experience in applying what they are learning to real life situations

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Supportive Campus Environment

- Transition programs that welcome and affirm newcomers
- Redundant early-warning systems that identify and respond to students whose academic performance or other behaviours put them at risk
- Advising networks that respond effectively to the academic and related needs of students
- Mentoring and other initiatives that help students understand and successfully navigate institutional policies and procedures
- Learning support resources that are available and used by students when they need them
- Peers who provide academic and social support in formal and informal ways
- Residential living environments that provide academic and social support
- Faculty and staff members who are perceived by students as accessible and helpful
- Campus administrators who are responsive and supportive

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Wrap up

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- FSSE and its comparative reports: what are these tools and how might they be used?
- Next steps?

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For more info...

nsse.iub.edu

fsse.iub.edu

Eric Kristensen

orion@post.harvard.edu