



## **Brief Description of NSSE**

George Kuh at Indiana University examined high impact practices in student learning and identified the concept of *student engagement* as a measure of student commitment to their educational process. To capture this data and leverage engagement to enhance student educational experiences, Professor Kuh and a team at Indiana University created The National Survey of Student Engagement. The survey, launched in 2000 and updated in 2013, assesses the extent to which or the frequency with which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development. The survey collects information in five categories:

- participation in educationally purposeful activities
- institutional requirements and the challenging nature of coursework
- perceptions of the college environment
- estimates of educational and personal growth since starting college, and
- background and demographic information.

The survey hypothesizes that the greater the “engagement” of students, the better the student’s learning experience. The Engagement indicators are these:

- Academic Challenge
- Active and Collaborative Learning
- Student Faculty Interaction
- Campus Environment

Annually, NSSE data is compiled in *The College Student Report* that cites best practices in undergraduate education: behaviors by students or institutions that are associated with desired student learning or personal growth outcomes. NSSE does not directly assess student learning. The data can identify areas where universities are performing well or aspects where undergraduate education—whether in or outside the classroom--could be improved or enhanced.

## **Administration of NSSE at ENMU**

NSSE was administered online (since 2008) to ENMU freshmen and senior students in 2008, 2011, and 2015. ENMU provided email addresses of students to the test administration team at Indiana University. Invitations were sent to students to participate in the survey. Participation was voluntary and contacts inviting participation were limited based on the protocols set by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Indiana University, which oversees the protection of human subjects. About 12% of contacted students chose to participate each cycle. Because the NSSE changed in 2012, data are first discussed for 2008 and 2011.

Data were shared with faculty in a newsletter and at faculty meetings. Results (2008 and 2011) showed the following patterns:

## NSSE Data 2008, 2011

	<p><b>Academic Challenge</b> ENMU freshmen scored virtually the same as Southwest NSSE peers in this category in 2008 and 2011 cohorts. <b>ENMU seniors</b> were slightly below their Southwest cohorts in 2008 and even with them in 2011.</p> <p>● and ● indicate means for the NSSE southwest peer institutions (<b>freshmen</b> and <b>seniors</b>)</p>
<p><b>Active and Collaborative Learning</b> ENMU freshmen scored above their Southwest Peers in this category in 2008 and 2011.</p> <p>ENMU seniors scored slightly above peers in 2008 but below their peers in 2011.</p> <p>● and ● indicate means for the NSSE southwest peer institutions (<b>freshmen</b> and <b>seniors</b>)</p>	
	<p><b>Student-Faculty Interaction</b> ENMU freshmen and ENMU seniors scored considerably above peers in this category.</p> <p>● and ● indicate means for the NSSE southwest peer institutions (<b>freshmen</b> and <b>seniors</b>)</p>
<p><b>Enriching Educational Experiences</b> ENMU freshmen scored above (2008) and even (2011) with peers in this category, while ENMU seniors scored even with their peers in 2008 and below peers in 2011.</p> <p>● and ● indicate means for the NSSE southwest peer institutions (<b>freshmen</b> and <b>seniors</b>)</p>	

While these data showed trends that other surveys had also documented (e.g., student satisfaction with interaction with faculty, a focus in freshmen classes in collaborative learning, etc.), the expected gains from freshmen to senior year were not appearing.

The Assessment Committee, examining these data, speculated on several possible reasons. The chief of these was that, while freshmen tended to be entirely residential (on-campus) students, many of the seniors who responded to the survey were completing their coursework via distance education. Their interaction with faculty, collaboration with other students, learning modes, and access to campus enriching experiences were governed by their instructional (online) status. It appeared to the committee that NSSE was not equipped to measure engagement except in traditional “on-campus” opportunities.

Concerns about the NSSE data and the apparent lack of fit with the emerging profile of ENMU students were raised at a general faculty meeting on Assessment Day, 2012, where 2008 and 2011 data were presented as well as research (cited below, Addendum 1) on the NSSE instrument.

The NSSE philosophy of student engagement proposed that increased engagement leads to better learning experiences, which leads to increased academic performance, which leads to higher academic performance as measured by GPA, graduation and retention rates. However, in a majority of instances, the research did not directly support that hypothesis. Nor did ENMU’s data.

NSSE data did confirm that ENMU students were relatively well served (their perception) in their educational experiences by faculty, student support services, and campus activities. However, the Committee was mixed as to the value of continuing with administration of NSSE. The recommendation was to continue one more cycle to see if the revised instrument would more accurately direct campus efforts to enhance student learning.

### NSSE Administration 2015

The revised NSSE retained many aspects of the earlier survey but changed them sufficiently to make comparisons between 2008/2011 data and 2015 data difficult. “Engagement indicators” in 2015 showed that ENMU freshmen scored significantly higher than peers in six categories. ENMU seniors outscored peers in three categories and were lower or significantly lower in two categories (“learning with peers”). For the full report, see Appendix 2.

NSSE 2015	Engagement Indicator	First Year relative to SW peers	Seniors relative to SW peers
<i>Academic Challenge</i>	Higher-Order Learning	--	↑
	Reflective & Integrative Learning	↑	↑
	Learning Strategies	--	--
	Quantitative Reasoning	↑	--
<i>Learning With Peers</i>	Collaborative Learning	--	↓
	Discussions with Diverse Others	↑	↓
<i>Experiences With Faculty</i>	Student-Faculty Interaction	↑	--
	Effective Teaching Practices	↑	--
<i>Campus Environment</i>	Quality of Interactions	--	↑
	Supportive Environment	↑	--

## Institutional Actions Taken based on NSSE Data

- As mentioned above, NSSE data was shared with faculty at general faculty meetings and discussed.
  - Positive information (e.g., high satisfaction with faculty-student interactions) and negative information (lower quantities of work produced by students, by their report, relative to southwest peers) were discussed and analyzed.
  - Whether or not to continue use of NSSE (or to replace it with an institutionally-specific instrument) was discussed.
  - The importance of these data relative to faculty instructional priorities (content mastery) and institutional priorities (retention and completion) was also discussed.
- Recognizing the growing number of its online students, ENMU increased its institutional support of Quality Matters™ to enhance the quality of online course materials and pedagogy.
- Recognizing the powerful advantage of peer-to-peer learning, ENMU added Blackboard *Collaborate*, a web conferencing software that allows synchronized online teaching and learning with audio, video, and application sharing. Previously, some ENMU faculty used the web conferencing tool, Wimba (not available after 2014).
- Additional professional development for faculty was provided through the New Faculty Investment program and the assistance of the Distance Education Office team to enhance online teaching and the use of *Collaborate*.
- Student interaction with peers in their majors and faculty mentors (pointed out by NSSE data) informed two initiatives:
  - A VPAA initiative was launched (2015) to encourage academic department meetings with students in their discipline. These meetings would allow students to get to know each other and the faculty. Faculty could present academic advising information as well as job, career, and internship suggestions to students in an informal setting. A small budget was available to support these meetings with a pizza dinner or similar event.
  - Faculty were also encouraged to sponsor discipline-related clubs and organization (e.g., Caduceus Society for pre-med students) to engage students in activities that supported their academic and career interests.
  - Annual fall semester Career Fairs, sponsored by the colleges, also provided students (especially undeclared students) with the opportunity to talk to faculty and other students about majors and careers.

## **Addendum 1**

Research on NSSE Effectiveness (2012)  
Presented to Faculty on Assessment Day 2012

Anstine, J. (2013). Graduation rates at U.S. colleges and universities: A large data set analysis. *Business Education & Accreditation*, 5 (2): 55-64.

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