

## ***Promoting Engaged Learning at KU: Lessons from NSSE***

### ***Jillian Kinzie, NSSE Institute***

**National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).** Administered to first-year and senior students attending four-year institutions. Since its launch in 2000, more than 1 million students have participated, and 1,400 colleges and universities have used NSSE to evaluate the quality of the undergraduate experience. Based on Chickering and Gamson's (1987) principles for good practice in undergraduate education, NSSE provides an annual snapshot of student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide.

- Results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college.
- NSSE items represent empirically confirmed 'good practices' and behaviors associated with desired college outcomes
- The time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities is the single best predictor of their learning and personal development.

**NSSE captures student engagement. Student engagement can be thought of in three ways:**

- What students *do* -- time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities
- What institutions *do* -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things
- Educationally effective institutions channel student energy toward *the right activities*

*"Because individual effort and involvement are the critical determinants of impact, institutions should focus on the ways they can shape their academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage student engagement."* p. 602, Pascarella & Terenzini, *How College Affects Students*, 2005, p. 602

### **What Have We Learned about Engagement and Success from NSSE?**

- Student learning and personal development are enhanced when students engage in educationally purposeful activities.
- The single best predictor of student satisfaction with college is the degree to which they perceive the college environment to be supportive of their academic and social needs.
- Effective educational practices measured by NSSE are independent of institutional selectivity.
- At institutions where faculty members use effective educational practices more frequently in their classes, students are more engaged over all and gain more from college.
- Student engagement positively related to student grades and to persistence for all students.

### **"Variation Within"**

NSSE offers comparative information (select peers, Carnegie types, NSSE cohort) to inform discourse on quality in undergraduate education. Institutions use comparative information for benchmarking, demonstrating effectiveness etc. HOWEVER, from a teaching and learning perspective, we need to move beyond institution-level means to consider engagement among all students. See *NSSE Annual Results 2008* for more information – [www.nsse.iub.edu](http://www.nsse.iub.edu)

**Student engagement varies more within than between institutions**

*Look at student variation within your institution. How do experiences differ by major, student subgroups, who are your least engaged students? What can you do to elevate student engagement and reduce the range in experience?*

### **Engagement, Grades and Retention and the Success of Historically Underserved Students**

Using NSSE and other student-level information, we examined the relationship between student engagement, pre-college experiences, college grades, and persistence for students from different racial and ethnic groups attending different types of institutions. Findings:

- *Student engagement positively related to FY and senior student grades and to persistence between the first and second year of college at the same institution*
- *Engagement has compensatory effect on FY grades and persistence to the second year of college for students historically underrepresented in higher education.*

To increase retention and FY GPA, institutions can profitably focus on increasing student engagement in these educationally purposeful activities...

- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Made a class presentation

- Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment
- Worked with other students on projects during class
- Worked with classmates outside of class on assignments
- Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)
- Participated in a community-based project as part of course
- Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
- Discussed ideas from readings/classes with faculty outside class
- Received prompt feedback on your academic performance
- Worked harder than you thought
- Worked with faculty on activities outside coursework (committees, student life, etc.)
- Discussed ideas from readings/classes with others
- Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity and those who differ from you - religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values

For full report: [www.nsse.iub.edu/pdf/Connecting\\_the\\_Dots\\_Report.pdf](http://www.nsse.iub.edu/pdf/Connecting_the_Dots_Report.pdf)

### **High Impact Practices**

AAC&U identified 10 promising “high-impact” activities in its 2007 report, *College Learning for a New Global Century* including: first-year seminars, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, service learning, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, study abroad & other experiences with diversity, internships, and capstone projects. Analysis of NSSE data related to these practices shows that high-impact practices provide substantial educational benefits to students, however, not all students benefit (Kuh, 2008; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2007).

#### **Percent Participation in High-Impact Activities by Institutional and Student Characteristics**

		<i>FY students</i>		<i>Seniors</i>				
		<b>Learning Community</b>	<b>Service Learning</b>	<b>Research w/ Faculty</b>	<b>Study Abroad</b>	<b>Service Learning</b>	<b>Intern- ship</b>	<b>Senior Capstone</b>
2005								
Basic	Doc RU-VH	20	33	23	18	40	57	29
Carnegie	Doc RU-H	18	37	19	14	44	51	33
Classifications	Doc DRU	18	39	17	13	52	51	33
	Masters-L	16	35	16	10	47	48	30
	Masters-M	16	39	17	11	51	52	30
	Masters-S	14	44	18	14	53	51	36
	Bac-AS	13	43	29	33	53	66	55
	Bac-Diverse	13	41	18	11	55	60	37
	Other	13	29	15	8	38	49	29

For high-impact activities to make more of a difference to student learning and success....

- ✓ Make it possible for students to participate in *at least two high impact activities* during their undergraduate program, one in the first year, and one later related to their major field.
- ✓ Ensure that **all** students have a chance to participate in these experiences – *are students in some majors less likely to participate? To what extent do first-generation students take advantage of these experiences?*
- ✓ Reduce barriers to participation, encourage all students to see potential for their involvement.
- ✓ Ensure that programs are of high quality. *What is your evidence for effectiveness?*
- ✓ Know how your students benefit from the experience.

### **Resources:**

- Chickering, A.W., & Gamson, Z.F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin*, 39, 3–7.
- Kuh, G.D. (2008). *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access To Them, and Why They Matter*, American Association for Colleges & Universities.
- Kuh, G.D., Kinzie, J., Buckley, J.A, Bridges, B.K, & Hayek, J.C. (2007). *Piecing together the student success puzzle: Research, Propositions, and Recommendations*. ASHE Higher Education Report 32, No. 5. San Francisco: Wiley Periodicals.
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., Whitt, E. J. & Associates (2005). *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- National Survey of Student Engagement. (2007). *Experiences That Matter: Enhancing Student Learning and Success*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary, [http://nsse.iub.edu/NSSE\\_2007\\_Annual\\_Report](http://nsse.iub.edu/NSSE_2007_Annual_Report)
- Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.