The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information from first-year and senior students about the characteristics and quality of their undergraduate experience. Since the inception of the survey, more than 1,500 bachelor's-granting colleges and universities in the United States and Canada have used it to measure the extent to which students engage in effective educational practices that are empirically linked with learning, personal development, and other desired outcomes such as persistence, satisfaction, and graduation.

NSSE data are used by faculty, administrators, researchers, and others for institutional improvement, public reporting, and related purposes. Launched in 2000 with the support of a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, NSSE has been fully sustained through institutional participation fees since 2002. After two years of pilot testing and extensive analysis, 2013 marked the first year of NSSE's updated survey instrument and new customization options. This document provides an overview of NSSE 2015, the third administration of the updated NSSE.

Survey Data and Methodology

Nearly 1.4 million first-year and senior students from 585 institutions (564 in the US and 21 in Canada) were invited to participate in NSSE 2015. Of this population, 315,815 students responded to the survey. Less than half (43%) of these were first-year students and 57% were seniors.

NSSE’s sampling methodology calls for either a census of all first-year and senior students or a random selection of an equal number of students from each group, with the sample size based on total undergraduate enrollment. Census administration is available only via the email recruitment method, in which students receive a survey invitation and up to four reminders by email. For NSSE 2015, all but four participating institutions opted for this method. Sampled students at the four remaining institutions received up to three messages by postal mail and up to two reminders by email.

Unless noted otherwise, the results presented below are from 561 institutions—541 in the US and 20 in Canada—that participated in NSSE 2015. Due to nonstandard population files or survey administrations, 24 institutions are not represented. In these summary tables, as in each Institutional Report 2015, only data for census-administered surveys and randomly sampled students are included.

NSSE 2015 Overview

U.S. Participating Institutions

NSSE 2015 U.S. respondents profiled here include 300,543 first-year (43%) and senior (57%) respondents from 541 institutions. NSSE 2015 participating institutions and students reflect the diversity of bachelor's-granting colleges and universities in the US with respect to institution type, public or private control, size, region, and locale (Table 1).

Institutional Response Rates

The average response rate for U.S. NSSE 2015 institutions was 29%. The highest institutional response rate among U.S. institutions was 89%, and three out of five institutions achieved a response rate of 25% or higher. Higher average response rates were observed for smaller institutions, and for institutions that offered incentives (Table 2).

Note: A searchable list of participating institutions by year is on the NSSE website at nsse.indiana.edu/html/participants.cfm
Table 1
Profile of NSSE 2015 U.S. Institutions and Respondents and Bachelor’s-Granting U.S. Institutions and Their Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Characteristics</th>
<th>Institutions (%)</th>
<th>Students (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NSSE U.S. 9</td>
<td>NSSE U.S. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnegie Basic Classification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Universities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(very high research activity)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Universities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(high research activity)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral/Research Universities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Colleges and Universities (larger programs)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Colleges and Universities (medium programs)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate Colleges–Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate Colleges–Diverse Fields</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Enrollment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 1,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000–2,499</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500–4,999</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000–9,999</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000–19,999</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000 or more</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid East</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Lakes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plains</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Mountains</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far West</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlying Areas</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Percentages are unweighted and based on U.S. postsecondary institutions that award baccalaureate degrees and belong to one of the eight Carnegie classifications in the table. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

a. U.S. percentages are based on the 2013 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics data.
b. For information on the Carnegie Foundation’s Basic Classification, see carnegieclassifications.iu.edu.

Table 2
NSSE 2015 U.S. Participation and Response Rates by Undergraduate Enrollment and Use of Incentives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Characteristics</th>
<th>Number of Institutions</th>
<th>Average Institutional Response Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Enrollment a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500 or fewer</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,501 to 4,999</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 to 9,999</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 or more</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives Offered b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offered incentives</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No incentives</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Institutions</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Three institutions had no enrollment information in the IPEDS data.
b. Some institutions used recruitment incentives, such as small gifts or raffles, to encourage students to complete the survey.

Survey Customization

Participating institutions may append up to two additional question sets in the form of Topical Modules (NSSE-created) or consortium questions (for institutions sharing a common interest and participating as a NSSE consortium) (Table 3). Of the nine modules available in 2015, the most widely selected module was Academic Advising, followed by First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions (Table 4). Another customization option— including a question about sexual orientation in the demographic section of the core survey—was elected by 30% of participating institutions.

Table 3
Summary of Participation in Additional Question Sets in NSSE 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection of Additional Question Sets</th>
<th>Number of Institutions</th>
<th>Percentage of Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One module only</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two modules</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consortium items only</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consortium items plus one module</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: These data include both U.S. and Canadian institutions and 24 institutions with nonstandard population files or administrations. Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.
U.S. Respondent Profile

Table 5 displays selected demographic and enrollment characteristics of NSSE 2015 U.S. respondents alongside all U.S. bachelor’s degree-seeking students, for comparison. Among NSSE respondents, female, White, and full-time students were overrepresented in varying proportions. NSSE reports use weights as appropriate to correct for disproportionate survey response related to institution-reported sex and enrollment status at each institution. Table 6 provides additional details about U.S. respondents.

Canadian Respondent Profile

Canadian respondents profiled here include 10,816 students (53% first-year, 47% fourth-year) from 20 institutions in 8 provinces, including 8 institutions in Ontario; 4 in Alberta; 2 each in British Columbia and New Brunswick; and 1 each in Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Saskatchewan. Female students and full-time students accounted for about 64% and 92% of Canadian respondents, respectively. The average response rate for Canadian NSSE 2015 institutions was 44%, with the highest institutional response rate being 86%. Nine out of ten Canadian institutions achieved a response rate of 25% or higher.

About 13% of Canadian respondents were at least 24 years old. The majority of students providing ethnocultural information identified as White (74%), while 9% identified as Chinese; 7% South Asian; 4% Black; and at least 2% each Arab, Latin American, and North American Indian. Less than 2% of respondents identified with other categories.
Meet the NSSE Team

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NSSE national survey of student engagement

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08-07-15
The Updated NSSE Survey

After years of evidence-based and collaborative testing, the updated NSSE survey launched in 2013. While changes range from minor adjustments to entirely new content, the survey maintains NSSE’s signature focus on diagnostic and actionable information related to effective educational practice.

Why Update NSSE?

After more than a decade in the field, we know more about what matters to student success and institutional improvement efforts—and about the properties of the NSSE survey itself. Moreover, as higher education faces increasing demands for assessment and other evidence to improve educational quality, NSSE must stay relevant to current issues and concerns.

New and Updated Content

Sets of new, continuing, and updated items have been rigorously tested and are grouped within ten Engagement Indicators in four broad themes:

- Academic Challenge
  - Higher-Order Learning
  - Reflective & Integrative Learning
  - Learning Strategies
  - Quantitative Reasoning
- Learning with Peers
  - Collaborative Learning
  - Discussions with Diverse Others
- Experiences with Faculty
  - Student-Faculty Interaction
  - Effective Teaching Practices
- Campus Environment
  - Quality of Interactions
  - Supportive Environment

Plus, new summary measures of reading and writing have been created along with a new High-Impact Practices report on participation in enriching activities such as learning communities, service-learning, internships and field experiences, research with a faculty member, study abroad, and culminating senior experiences.

How Has the Survey Changed?

Compared to NSSE 2012, about a quarter of the items in the updated NSSE are new, and nearly the same proportion are unchanged. Of the half of the survey items that are changed, the proportion with major modifications is the same as that with minor changes. Of course, it was necessary to delete some items to make room for new content. An item-by-item comparison showing how the survey was updated—indicating items unchanged, slightly modified, significantly altered, and deleted—is available on our website: nsse.indiana.edu/nsse-update

New Items

The updated survey introduces valuable new content to enrich institutional assessment efforts. Here are some examples of new items:

Quantitative Reasoning

How often have you...
- Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs, statistics, etc.)
- Used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue (unemployment, climate change, public health, etc.)

Reflective & Integrative Learning

How often have you...
- Connected your learning to societal problems or issues
- Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge
Supportive Environment
How much does your institution emphasize...
- Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.)
- Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues

Effective Teaching Practices
To what extent have your instructors...
- Clearly explained course goals and requirements
- Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress

Learning Strategies
How often have you...
- Identified key information from reading assignments
- Reviewed your notes after class
- Summarized what you learned in class or from course materials

Collaborative Learning
How often have you...
- Asked another student to help you understand course material
- Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students

These are examples of only some of the new content. To see the entire updated survey, visit our website. nsse.indiana.edu/links/surveys

Topical Modules: Additional Question Sets
New customization options for participating institutions include appending topical modules—short sets of questions on focused topics such as academic advising, civic engagement, experiences with diversity, writing, and technology. NSSE will develop additional modules for future administrations of the survey. nsse.indiana.edu/html/modules.cfm

How Do the Changes Affect Comparisons with Prior-Year Results?
We recognize that the update affects multi-year analyses such as trend studies or pre/post designs. Although many NSSE survey items remain unchanged, others have been modified and a few have been dropped, limiting longitudinal comparability of individual questions and historical benchmarks.

While some new results are not directly comparable to past results, institutions can still evaluate longitudinal questions. For instance, if previous comparison group results indicate above-average performance in a particular area, institutions can still gauge whether they outperform the same or a similar comparison group.

We are confident that these changes enhance NSSE’s value to institutions. NSSE will continue providing useful resources and working with participating institutions to ensure maximum benefit from survey participation.

When Is the Next Update?
Even the best surveys must be periodically revised and updated. But year-to-year stability is also important, in the interest of tracking results over time. No further updates are planned at this time, and future updates will be announced several years prior to launch.

"At a time when U.S. standards for higher education are being evaluated in a competitive global context, NSSE data provide real insights into the qualities of the campus learning environment."

—Molly Corbett Broad, President, American Council on Education

FSSE and BCSSE
FSSE has been updated to complement NSSE’s changes and has a new format combining both course-based and typical-student questions. FSSE also now offers topical modules for survey customization. fsse.indiana.edu/fsse-update

BCSSE has also been updated with new and modified items to increase alignment with NSSE for a more comprehensive analysis of the first-year experience. bcsse.indiana.edu/bcsse-update

Additional Information, Comments, and Questions
Contact us via email (nsse@indiana.edu) or phone (812-856-5824).
1. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?
   Response options: Very often, Often, Sometimes, Never
   a. Asked questions or contributed to course discussions in other ways
   b. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
   c. Come to class without completing readings or assignments
   d. Attended an art exhibit, play, or other arts performance (dance, music, etc.)
   e. Asked another student to help you understand course material
   f. Explained course material to one or more students
   g. Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students
   h. Worked with other students on course projects or assignments
   i. Given a course presentation

2. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?
   Response options: Very often, Often, Sometimes, Never
   a. Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments
   b. Connected your learning to societal problems or issues
   c. Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments
   d. Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue
   e. Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective
   f. Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept
   g. Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge

3. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?
   Response options: Very often, Often, Sometimes, Never
   a. Talked about career plans with a faculty member
   b. Worked with a faculty member on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.)
   c. Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class
   d. Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member

4. During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following?
   Response options: Very much, Quite a bit, Some, Very little
   a. Memorizing course material
   b. Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations
   c. Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts
   d. Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source
   e. Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information

5. During the current school year, to what extent have your instructors done the following?
   Response options: Very much, Quite a bit, Some, Very little
   a. Clearly explained course goals and requirements
   b. Taught course sessions in an organized way
   c. Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points
   d. Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress
   e. Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments

6. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?
   Response options: Very often, Often, Sometimes, Never
   a. Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs, statistics, etc.)
   b. Used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue (unemployment, climate change, public health, etc.)
   c. Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information
25. Did you begin college at this institution or elsewhere?  
Response options: Started here, Started elsewhere

26. Since graduating from high school, which of the following types of schools have you attended other than the one you are now attending? (Select all that apply.)  
Response options: Vocational or technical school, Community or junior college, 4-year college or university other than this one, None, Other

27. What is the highest level of education you ever expect to complete?  
Response options: Some college but less than a bachelor’s degree, Bachelor’s degree (B.A., B.S., etc.), Master’s degree (M.A., M.S., etc.), Doctoral or professional degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc.)

28. What is the highest level of education completed by either of your parents (or those who raised you)?  
Response options: Did not finish high school, High school diploma or G.E.D., Attended college but did not complete degree, Associate’s degree (A.A., A.S., etc.), Bachelor’s degree (B.A., B.S., etc.), Master’s degree (M.A., M.S., etc.), Doctoral or professional degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc.)

29. What is your gender identity?  
Response options: Man; Woman; Another gender identity, please specify; I prefer not to respond

30. Enter your year of birth (e.g., 1994):

31a. Are you an international student?  
Response options: Yes, No

31b. [If answered “yes”] What is your country of citizenship?

32. What is your racial or ethnic identification? (Select all that apply.)  
Response options: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, Other, I prefer not to respond

33. Are you a member of a social fraternity or sorority?  
Response options: Yes, No

34. Which of the following best describes where you are living while attending college?  
Response options: Dormitory or other campus housing (not fraternity or sorority house), Fraternity or sorority house, Residence (house, apartment, etc.) within walking distance to the institution, Residence (house, apartment, etc.) farther than walking distance to the institution, None of the above

35. Are you a student-athlete on a team sponsored by your institution’s athletics department?  
Response options: Yes, No

36. Are you a current or former member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard?  
Response options: Yes, No

37a. Have you been diagnosed with any disability or impairment?  
Response options: Yes, No, I prefer not to respond

37b. [If answered “yes”] Which of the following has been diagnosed? (Select all that apply.)  
Response options: A sensory impairment (vision or hearing), A mobility impairment, A learning disability (e.g., ADHD, dyslexia), A mental health disorder, A disability or impairment not listed above

38. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? [Question administered per institution request.]  
Response options: Heterosexual; Gay; Lesbian; Bisexual; Another sexual orientation, please specify; Questioning or unsure; I prefer not to respond