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NSSE 2006 Overview

Introduction

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) annually obtains information from random samples of first-year and senior students about the nature of their undergraduate experience. Since its inception, more than 1,100 baccalaureate degree-granting colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada have used the instrument 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 student satisfaction, persistence, and graduation. NSSE data are used by faculty, administrators, researchers, and other leaders in higher education for institutional improvement, accountability, and other purposes. Launched by a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trust, since 2002 the NSSE project has been supported by institutional participation fees.

More than one million first-year and senior students from 557 institutions in the United States and Canada were invited to participate in the 2006 NSSE administration. Of this survey population, 331,601 students responded, including about 60,000 students from Canadian institutions. A list of all participating institutions is available on the *Institutional Report* CD and the NSSE Web site.

The trend of institutions moving toward Web-based administrations continued in 2006 as 253 schools (46%) opted for the Web-only administration mode in which students received all contacts electronically and completed the survey online. The Web+ survey option was used by 185 schools (33%). This mode includes multiple electronic contacts and one paper questionnaire sent to a portion of non-respondents. One hundred and nineteen institutions (21%) chose the paper questionnaire mode. In an effort to learn more about the effects of survey administration mode, an oversample of students at 37 schools using the paper administration option were asked via e-mail to complete the survey online.

The NSSE 2006 Institutions

Table 1 shows how NSSE 2006 institution characteristics compare with the profile of all baccalaureate degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States. Comparative data for these tables are from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The Far West and Southwest regions are slightly underrepresented in NSSE 2006, while the Great Lakes and Mid East regions are slightly overrepresented. While NSSE 2006 schools are generally representative of the distribution of institutional types in the 2005 Basic Carnegie Classification, Baccalaureate Colleges-Arts and Sciences institutions were somewhat overrepresented, and Baccalaureate Colleges-Diverse Fields were slightly underrepresented. Similarly, when compared to the 2000 Basic Carnegie Classification, Baccalaureate-Liberal Arts colleges are somewhat overrepresented, while Baccalaureate-General Colleges are somewhat underrepresented. In all, the NSSE 2006 participating institutions reflect a broad array of institutions. In addition, the profile of NSSE 2006 institutions closely resembles that of all U.S. schools in terms of sector, region, and location.



Table 1
Profile of U.S. NSSE 2006 Institutions against all U.S. Baccalaureate Degree-Granting Colleges and Universities

	NSSE 2006	National
Carnegie Classification – Basic 2005^a		
Doc RU-VH	4%	6%
Doc RU-H	8%	7%
Doc RU	5%	5%
Master's-L	26%	22%
Master's-M	16%	13%
Master's-S	8%	9%
Bac-AS	22%	17%
Bac-Diverse	12%	22%
Carnegie Classification – Basic 2000^a		
Doctoral/Research-Extensive	9%	11%
Doctoral/Research-Intensive	8%	8%
Master's I & II	47%	43%
Baccalaureate-Liberal Arts	21%	16%
Baccalaureate-General	15%	22%
Sector		
Public 4-year	37%	35%
Private 4-year	63%	65%
Region		
Far West	8%	11%
Great Lakes	18%	15%
Mid East	19%	18%
New England	9%	9%
Plains	11%	11%
Rocky Mountains	4%	3%
Southeast	25%	24%
Southwest	6%	8%
Outlying Areas	<1%	2%
Location		
Large city (>250,000)	20%	20%
Mid-size city (<250,000)	31%	28%
Urban fringe large city	17%	18%
Urban fringe mid-size city	7%	8%
Large town (>25,000)	3%	4%
Small town (<5,000)	18%	16%
Rural	4%	6%

Note: Percentages are based on U.S. postsecondary institutions that award baccalaureate degrees. NSSE-participating or other U.S. institutions that do not share these characteristics were not included. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding error.

Source: National percentages are based on data from the 2005 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics File.

^a For information on the 2000 and 2005 Carnegie Classifications, see: www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications.



Table 2 shows selected characteristics of the NSSE 2006 U.S. respondents. The first column represents the students who responded to the survey in 2006. The second column represents the student population at NSSE 2006

participating institutions as indicated by IPEDS data. Finally, the third column shows the profile of all students attending all baccalaureate degree-granting institutions in the United States.

Table 2
Characteristics of NSSE 2006 Respondents, Students at NSSE 2006 Institutions, and Students at U.S. Baccalaureate Degree-Granting Institutions

	NSSE 2006 Respondents	NSSE 2006 Population	National
Gender			
Male	36%	44%	43%
Female	64%	56%	57%
Race/Ethnicity			
African American/Black	7%	10%	11%
Amer. Indian/Alaska Native	1%	1%	1%
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	4%	5%	6%
Caucasian/White	75%	67%	64%
Hispanic	5%	7%	8%
Other	1%	1%	6%
Multiracial/Ethnic	<1%	<1%	-
International	5%	2%	3%
Enrollment Status			
Full-time	91%	88%	83%
Part-time	9%	12%	17%

Note: The IPEDS and NSSE categories for race and ethnicity differ. Percentages are based on U.S. postsecondary institutions that award baccalaureate degrees. NSSE-participating or other national institutions that do not share these characteristics were not included. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding error.

Source: NSSE 2006 Population data are derived from population files provided to NSSE by participating institutions. National data are from the 2004 IPEDS Enrollment Data File.



The NSSE 2006 U.S. Cohort

The standard NSSE sampling scheme calls for an equal number of randomly sampled first-year and senior students to comprise the institution's sample, with the sample size based on the total number of undergraduate students enrolled at the institution. Many schools request random oversamples to increase the number of respondents in order to disaggregate the results in different ways, such as by major, to guide improvement efforts. This year, for the first time, NSSE included all randomly selected students in the institution and comparison groups for reporting purposes. As a result the 2006 cohort is 259,987 respondents, made up of 97,542 students sampled under the standard sampling scheme and an additional 162,445 students randomly sampled through

standard oversampling protocols or at the request of participating institutions. The information in this Overview is based on the entire 2006 Cohort of 259,987 respondents unless otherwise noted

Year in School

The NSSE 2006 cohort respondents were equally divided between first-year (51%) and senior (49%) students.

Gender

Women made up more than three-fifths (64%) of the respondents compared with 56% of the students enrolled at NSSE 2006 schools, and 57% of students enrolled nationally (Table 2). The larger proportion of female respondents is consistent with widely reported survey research findings that conclude that women are more likely than men to return questionnaires. Weighting adjusts for the gender imbalance in your comparison reports.

Age

Students 19 years of age or younger comprise the largest group (43%), reflecting the fact that half the students elected to receive the survey were in their first-year of college. About 38% of respondents were 20-23 years old, 9% were between the ages of 24 and 29, and 10% were 30 years of age or older.

Race and Ethnicity

African American and Hispanic students are slightly underrepresented (Table 2).

Living Arrangements

Overall approximately 44 percent of students lived in campus housing (71% of first-year students, 18% of seniors). The remainder lived within driving distance (40%), within walking distance (15%), or in a fraternity or sorority house (1%).

Fraternity or Sorority

About 12% percent of men and 11% of women were members of a fraternity or sorority.

Grades

Approximately 42% of all students report earning mostly A grades. Only 4% of students report earning mostly C grades or lower.

Parents' Education

Thirty-eight percent of all respondents were first-generation college students, with no parent having completed a Baccalaureate degree. Thirty-one percent had parents who both graduated from college.

Enrollment Status

About 91% of all respondents were enrolled full time (Table 2). Weighting adjusts for imbalances in enrollment status in your comparison reports.

Transfer Status

Approximately one-third of respondents have attended more than one type of higher education since graduating from high school. Of this group, 27% went to another baccalaureate degree-granting college, 37% to a community college, 6% to a vocational-technical school, 6% to another form of postsecondary education, and 25% went to a combination of these.

Primary Major Field

Table 3 shows the percent of students pursuing majors in various fields of study, by class and gender. More men pursue studies in Business, Engineering, and Physical Sciences, while more women pursue majors in Education, Professional Schools and the Social Sciences.



Table 3
Primary Majors by Class and Gender

Major	First-Years		Seniors	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Arts & Humanities	14%	16%	15%	17%
Biological Sciences	7%	9%	6%	7%
Business	18%	12%	20%	15%
Education	4%	12%	5%	14%
Engineering	14%	2%	13%	2%
Physical Sciences	5%	3%	5%	3%
Professional Schools	5%	14%	4%	12%
Social Sciences	11%	15%	13%	17%
Other	16%	12%	20%	14%
Undecided	5%	6%	<1%	<1%



Response Rates

The average institutional response rate for NSSE 2006 (Table 4) was 39%.¹ The average institutional response rate for paper schools (institutions where students were invited by postal mail, but had the option of completing either the paper or the Web version) was 37%, with a range of 10% to 81% across schools. Of these, 49% completed the paper form of the survey, and 51% completed NSSE online. The average institutional response rate for NSSE 2006 Web-only schools (institutions where students could only complete the survey online) was 41%, with a range of 13 % to 82 % across schools. Institutions participating using the Web+ mode of administration recorded an overall response rate of 39% with a

majority of Web+ respondents using the online survey (97%).

About 5% of the NSSE 2006 respondents completed the paper version of NSSE and approximately 95% completed it using the Web. This continues the trend of more students responding via the Web, even at paper administration schools. Additional information about response rates, including the response rate for your institution, is in the Respondent Characteristics tab of this binder. Note that the average institutional response rate of 39% is slightly higher than NSSE 2006 response rate reported in the Respondent Characteristic tab due to different units of analysis (institutions versus students).

Table 4
NSSE 2006 Number of Institutions & Average Institutional Response Rates by Survey Administration Mode

Survey Administration Mode	Number of Institutions	Average Response Rate
All	556	39%
Paper	119	37%
Web-only	252	41%
Web +	185	39%

Note: Insufficient data were available to calculate a comparable response rate for one NSSE 2006 institution; the institution is excluded from this table.





Notes

¹ The NSSE 2006 average institutional response rate most likely underestimates the actual adjusted rate. Student postal service and e-mail addresses were based on Fall 2005 enrollment information provided by the institutions. An unknown number of students in the sample were no longer eligible to complete the survey because they had dropped out or transferred to another institution. Even though first-class postage was used to guarantee the return of survey packets that could not be delivered, an unknown number of packets almost certainly were lost in transit for some students who were no longer in school or had moved from their Fall 2005 address. In addition, at Web-only and Web+ schools, institution-provided e-mail addresses were used to send students their invitation to participate. Many students have multiple e-mail accounts (e.g., Yahoo, AOL, Hotmail). Some institutions have more difficulty tracking these multiple e-mail accounts and some students may not forward their institution assigned e-mail. Therefore, the actual NSSE response rate for Web-only institutions, when corrected for the unknown number of students who were no longer in school or did not receive the invitation to participate, may be several percentage points higher than 41%.

