

Improving NSSE Results Fall 2006

We want to improve NSSE results because

- they indicate student learning and student success;
- they are important accountability measures that are reported and used in several contexts and will probably be used even more widely in the coming years.

NSSE results primarily reflect classroom practices, so

- departments and faculty hold the key to improvement;
 - o Faculty must understand the NSSE instrument and appreciate the meaning and importance of the NSSE results.
 - o Departments must critically evaluate curricula and pedagogy in order to align practices with intended outcomes.
 - rewards and evaluation guidelines should reflect the importance of NSSE.
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Activities for fall semester.

1. Use the August 29 meeting of Provost with deans, chairs, and directors to “set the stage” for a program of improvement. Highlight the importance of NSSE and the plans to improve our performance in this measure of student engagement & learning.
2. Confer with Chair Chris Sadler about possibly having a special meeting, perhaps in mid September, of the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate to focus on improvements to the NSSE results.
3. Highlight the place NSSE plays in our accreditation process to the Accreditation Steering Committee.
4. Discuss the five benchmark categories with new faculty and teaching academic staff during orientation, impressing upon them the connection between engagement and learning.
5. Consider open forums to encourage faculty and staff to be aware of NSSE and how they each individually can make a contribution to improving our scores.
6. Consider meeting with departments to interpret the NSSE data and suggest that active and collaborative learning is a good thing and implies certain teaching strategies.

Comments

1. We may need to “push a little harder” with instructors to change practices related to engagement and learning. Faculty development activities should reflect a commitment to curricular and pedagogical issues entwined with student engagement.
2. Discussion has taken place in many quarters already. Colleges, departments, and instructors need to develop and implement plans to address our sub-average showing on the NSSE.
3. We can avoid the “teaching to a test” negative response by reminding ourselves that NSSE indicates student learning and that teaching for success is appropriate.