Thank you for joining us virtually to watch this pre-recorded webinar overview of the 2018 National Survey of Student Engagement, also known as the NSSE. The Office of Assessment fielded the NSSE in the Spring of 2018 to first year and senior students on Youngstown State University’s campus. This webinar is meant to only be a snapshot of data. Detailed data reports can be requested from the Office of Assessment. Also, any campus stakeholders are welcome to request a presentation for their office or campus group.
The primary intent of NSSE is to measure levels of student engagement. The NSSE survey tool looks at student engagement through the lens of two critical features of collegiate quality – what students do and what institutions do. Self-reported questions examine what students do in terms of time and energy put towards educationally enriching activities. Questions also look at the perception students have of the institution creating opportunities for students to participate in activities linked to learning.
NSSE was first piloted in 1999. The survey is managed by the Center for Postsecondary Research at the Indiana University School of Education. The survey instrument was substantially updated in 2013. In 2018, 511 institutions in the United States and Canada participated in the NSSE.
YSU fields the NSSE as a way to measure student engagement on our campus. The survey is not meant to be a stand-alone measure of student engagement or student learning. Rather, NSSE serves as one of the first steps in facilitating appropriate reflection and assessment of research-backed national engagement indicators for the purpose of continuous improvement. NSSE spurs critical conversations around the campus practices that best engage YSU students.
The content of the survey is broken into 4 elements. The survey tool asks students to report the frequency with which they engage in activities that represent effective educational practice. Students record their reactions to and perceptions of the college environment associated with achievement, satisfaction, and persistence. Students also estimate their educational and personal growth since starting college. And finally, students provide information about their background, including age, gender identity, race and/or ethnicity, living situation, educational status, and major field.
To represent the multiple dimensions of student engagement, 10 Engagement Indicators are calculated from 47 NSSE survey questions. These engagement indicators have been rigorously tested using both quantitative and qualitative methods through a multi-year development process conducted by NSSE. Information on this process, including construct validity and item correlations, can be found at nsse.indiana.edu. The 10 engagement indicators are grouped into four themes developed from the Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practices. Each of the 10 engagement indicators provides valuable, concise, actionable information about a distinct aspect of student engagement. Data for each indicator is expressed on a 60-point scale. Survey items are converted to a 60-point scale with never equaling 0, sometimes equaling 20, often equaling 40, and very often equaling 60, then averaged together to compute student-level scores. Institutional engagement indicator scores are the weighted averages of student-level scores for each class level. Engagement indicator data will be provided later in the webinar.
The first theme is academic challenge and focuses on various aspects and dimensions of students’ experiences in and outside the classroom, such as the presence of challenging intellectual work, personal connections to course material and students levels of engagement in learning activities. This theme includes four engagement indicators - higher-order learning, reflective & integrative learning, learning strategies, and quantitative reasoning.
The second theme is learning with peers and includes two engagement indicators - collaborative learning and discussions with diverse others. Both engagement indicators explore how students interact and learn from each other inside and outside the classroom.
The next theme in experiences with faculty and includes the engagement indicators - student-faculty interactions and effective teaching practices. NSSE notes that student learning is heavily dependent on effective teaching, and interactions with faculty can positively influence the development and persistence of college students.
The final theme is campus environment and explores the ways students are supported across various aspects of their collegiate experience, including their interactions with other students, faculty and staff. This theme includes the engagement indicators quality of interactions and supportive environment.
The survey was administered directly through a credible third-party survey organization to YSU first year and senior students. The YSU Office of Assessment provided email addresses of all YSU students of first-year and senior status as of the Spring of 2018 to the survey administrator. Gift cards were used as incentives and reminder emails were sent to increase response rate. Additionally, in 2018 YSU chose to focus on two extra areas by adding two topical modules, First Year Experiences/Senior Transitions and Inclusiveness and Engagement with Cultural Diversity that were administered as add-ons to the survey instrument.
For a detailed look at the survey, you can download the survey instrument on the YSU Office of Assessment website. Also on the website is a link to NSSE’s Psychometric Portfolio, providing information on the rigor of the survey instrument and methodology.
As a student-centered institution, we acknowledge the importance of using a sound instrument to listen to our students. Surveys like the NSSE (and the Noel Levitz which we will administer in the Spring of 2019) help our office and the university to identify areas of concern and opportunities to improve in providing a well rounded educational experience for students. As we analyze the NSSE data, we are intentional about centering data and action steps around the mission statement of the university. Reading through the 10 components of the YSU mission statement on the screen, you can see some of the specific ways in which the YSU Mission Statement aligns with NSSE.
One of the strengths of using the NSSE is that we are able to benchmark our performance against other universities that also participate in the survey. A great deal of planning went into selecting the best possible comparison institutions. We chose three comparison groups: one group being all institutions that participated in the survey. The second being all Ohio Public Universities that participated in NSSE in either 2017 or 2018. The third comparison group, the True Peer group, is the best match for a true comparison. We also have the ability to break down NSSE data by colleges for comparison. When comparing within or across groups, it is important to note that the NSSE measures process, not achievement.
A distance analysis was conducted for the 2016 NSSE to identify 30 schools most similar to YSU. 19 of those 30 schools participated in the NSSE in either 2017 or 2018. These true peers schools are most similar to Youngstown State University in relation to several variables. Listed are the universities a part of our true peer comparison group. Schools were first filtered by Carnegie classification, then the variables listed were used to establish the true peer group through a distance analysis. Output variables, like graduate or retention rates, were not used to identify peer institutions. Rather these institutions have similar university and student characteristics such as the percentage of students receiving Pell grants and total undergraduate enrollment.
In addition to comparing to the group of true peers, in some instances it may be useful to look at how our survey data compares to other public institutions in Ohio. These 12 institutions participated in the NSSE in 2017 and/or 2018 and are included in the Ohio publics comparison groups.
YSU’s overall response rate was 20%, similar to the response rates of our comparison groups. You’ll note that there is a margin of error of 4.1 and 4.6 percent respectively for first-year and senior students. The margin of error is an estimate of the amount the true score on a given item could differ from the estimate based on a sample. For example, if the margin of error is plus or minus 5% and 40% of your students reply "Very often" to a particular item, then the true population value is most likely between 35% and 45%.
This table compares the gender identify and the race and/or ethnicity of students that responded to the survey versus the overall YSU population. We recognize the complexity and difference in experience for students of various gender-identities and racial and/or ethnic groups and by request are happy to provide any of this data disaggregated more specifically. By looking at the table, you’ll note one place where the difference between respondents and population is noticeable – the percentage of survey respondents who identify their gender as a woman. A full respondent demographic profile can be requested through the Office of Assessment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Year</th>
<th></th>
<th>Senior</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent %</td>
<td>Population %</td>
<td>Respondent %</td>
<td>Population %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender Identity: Woman*</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority (as defined)**</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>77</td>
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* 3 first-year and 1 senior respondent identified as “another gender identity,” and 7 students preferred not to respond. The remaining respondents identified as a man.
** Self-reported and IPEDS data. For the purpose of this table, minority includes students identifying as American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Latinx, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Total does not equal 100% because of students responding “other” or “unknown.”
As a reminder, NSSE has established 10 engagement indicators that group survey items. These 10 items are organized within four themes and represent the multiple dimensions of student engagement.
YSU participates every other year in the NSSE. Because of this, we have the ability to look at trends between the 2016 and 2018 scores. Differences in scores do not indicate statistical significance and it is critical to note these are not matched samples. Rather, we use mean scores to look at trends in data and to identify areas for further investigation. Since 2016 two engagement indicators for first-year YSU students have increased by a change in mean greater than 1 point – quantitative reasoning and student-faculty interaction.
However, 3 engagement indicators for both first-year and senior students have decreased in mean by greater than 1 point. Scores have decreased for all students in collaborative learning. Additionally, for first-year students, there are decreases in the learning strategies and effective teaching practices engagement indicators and for seniors in the higher-order learning and discussions with diverse others engagement indicators. Of particular interest is the concentration of decreases in the Learning with Peers theme. We will dig into some of this data a bit in this presentation, but if you are interested in understanding more about a specific topic, we would encourage you to attend a focused Lunch & Learn in the spring. This schedule will be on the Office of Assessment website.
Beyond looking at YSU’s engagement indicator scores between years, we can compare engagement indicator scores to those of our true peer comparison group. For both first-year and senior students, the student-faculty interaction engagement indicator has a statistically significant higher mean than our group of true peer institutions. We would identify this as strength in relation to peer institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>First-Year</th>
<th>Senior</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Challenge</strong></td>
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<td>Higher-Order Learning</td>
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<td>Reflective &amp; Integrative Learning</td>
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<td>Learning Strategies</td>
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<td>Quantitative Reasoning</td>
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<td><strong>Learning with Peers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussions with Diverse Others</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Experiences with Faculty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Faculty Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective Teaching Practices</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Campus Environment</strong></td>
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<td>Quality of Interactions</td>
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<td>Supportive Environment</td>
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Δ = YSU Student’s average is significantly higher (p < .05) with a small effect size (less than .3)
For both first-year and senior students, the discussion with diverse others engagement indicator has a statistically significantly lower mean than at peer institutions. Additionally, collaborative learning for first-year students is lower than our peer institutions. We would identify these areas as opportunities for growth in relation to peer institutions.
NSSE identifies top and bottom performing survey items for our first-year and senior students based on statistical significance and effect size, providing a snapshot of the greatest differences in YSU respondents compared to our true peer institutions.
Take a moment to read through YSU’s 3 highest performing items for first-year students and 3 highest performing items for senior students in relation to true peers (pause). Two common themes across the highest items for first-year and senior students are interactions with faculty and opportunities for experiential learning. You’ll also notice for first-year students there is an emphasis on attending campus events, something that is central to the curriculum in the required first-year experience course.
Take a moment to read through the lowest performing items on the screen {pause}. The lowest item for first-year students and two of three of the lowest items for senior students have to do with interacting with students of different backgrounds, primarily of a different race and/or ethnicity. Additionally, you’ll notice items related to reading appear for both first-year and senior students on the lowest performing list.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>DATA</th>
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<tr>
<td>LOWEST PERFORMING ITEMS COMPARED TO PEERS</td>
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**FIRST-YEAR**
- (-11) Discussions with people of a race/ethnicity other than your own
- (-8) Asked another student to help you understand course material
- (-7) Identified key information from reading assignments

**SENIOR**
- (-10) Discussions with people of a race/ethnicity other than your own
- (-7) Spent more than 10 hours per week on assigned reading
- (-6) Emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds

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Because of the volume of NSSE data available, it would be impossible to cover all of the data in this webinar. The Office of Assessment has combed through the data to pick a few data points that we find relevant as an overview. As a reminder, for access to full reports, visit the YSU Office of Assessment website.
Over the next several slides we are going to be looking at how YSU students spend their time, participation in high impact practices, time spent reading and writing in comparison to peer institutions, students quality of interactions with others, seniors perceived gains from their time at YSU, and finally data from the two topical modules – inclusiveness and engagement with cultural diversity and first-year experiences/senior transitions.
Before looking at other data we can get a snapshot of a typical week for a YSU student. Take a moment to view the chart and reflect on what this tells us about our students {pause}.
Interesting to note is the change in how YSU students spend their time in 2018 compared to how YSU students reported spending their time in 2013. You’ll notice that students in 2018 work for pay and care for dependents less than students did in 2013. Students commute for basically the same amount of hours, but they prepare for class, relax, participate in campus activities and volunteer more than students did in 2013.
The NSSE survey designates certain activities as High Impact Practices. These are enriching educational experiences that go beyond typical classroom learning and provide high levels of engagement opportunity for students. Six High Impact Practices are designated and include being a part of a formal learning community, participating in service learning, conducting research with a faculty member, participating in an internship or field experience, studying abroad, and a culminating senior experience or capstone.
Research in student engagement recommends that all students participate in at least two high impact practices over the course of their undergraduate experience—one during the first year and one in the context of their major. Students at YSU participate in all 6 high-impact practices. For both first-year and senior students, service-learning is the most common high impact practice in which students participate.
YSU students participation in high impact practices has varied slightly since 2013. In 2018, 69% of first-year students and 85% of senior students have participated in at least one high impact practice, with 63% of senior students participating in at least two high impact practices.
An area where YSU differed from true peers is around the amount of time spent reading per week and amount of writing assigned per year. When looking at writing, you’ll notice barely any difference in assigned pages for the year for first-year students, but that YSU seniors report writing more than 15 pages more than seniors at peer institutions. In regards to amount of time spent reading, you’ll notice that both first-year and senior students spend close to or slightly above an hour and a half less time reading peer week than students at peer institutions.
Digging into this a bit further, you’ll notice the difference in mean scores between students at YSU and peer institutions. Based on effect size, time spent reading in a typical week is the most significant difference in mean on the 2018 NSSE between YSU students and students at peer institutions. We would identify this an area in which to explore more deeply.
Another selection of data is the self-reported quality of interactions respondents feel they have with other students, faculty, and advisors. You’ll note that the majority of students have positive interactions with other students, advisors, faculty, and staff on campus. The highest percentages of negative interactions are with student services staff for first-year students and academic advisors for senior students. Interactions with faculty and other students are the most positive for students.
One interaction to focus in on is the quality of interactions between students and what the NSSE defines as other administrative staff – including the registrar, financial aid, etc. From 2013 to 2018 on a 7-point scale with 1 being poor and 7 being excellent, students have reported steady improvement in the quality of these interactions. Both have risen to 5.1, a .4 and .5 increase respectively on the scale.
A set of questions on the survey tool asks seniors how and to what level the university has prepared them in 10 different areas. If you refer back to the mission of YSU, these 10 items very much align with the university’s mission statement. On this slide, you can see the percentage of YSU students who answered quite a bit or very much to each item. The bottom two items – being an informed active citizen and understanding people of other backgrounds – relate closely to some of the other survey results we’ve seen specifically around our lowest performing items relative to peer institutions. At the top of the list, however, 84% of seniors feel that the university has prepared them (very much or quite a bit) to think critically and analytically.
In fact, if we look at the top three perceived gains, you’ll notice YSU students perceiving the university to prepare them in these areas at higher rates than students at our true peer institutions and at the Ohio publics participating in NSSE. The most noticeable gap is the high level in which YSU students perceive the university to prepare them to acquire job or work-related knowledge and skills.
As noted early in the presentation, institutions are able to choose from a variety of Topical Modules to add to the standard NSSE instrument. These modules are short sets of questions on a designated topic. Rooted in strategic thought from Senior Leaders, YSU added two modules to this year’s NSSE. The first was Inclusiveness & Engagement with Cultural Diversity and the second was First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions. The inclusiveness and engagement with cultural diversity topical module was given to both first-year and senior students and asked students questions about the environments, processes and activities that happen on campus and encourage engagement with cultural diversity. Five schools from our true peer comparison group participated in this module and can be used for comparison.
As just an brief snapshot of the data from this module, this slide presents two items with disaggregated data to compare the experience of YSU students who identify as White and YSU students who identify as a race and/or ethnicity other than White. We recognize the complexity and difference in experience for students of various racial and/or ethnic groups and by request are happy to provide any of this data disaggregated more specifically by racial and/or ethnic group – rather than this broad comparison between White and Minoritized students at YSU. However, for the purpose of an overview, you notice that 19% of White students and 31% of Minoritized students do not feel valued by YSU. Additionally, 21% of White students and 31% of Minoritized students do not feel a part of the community at YSU.
In addition to perceptions of inclusiveness, this topical module explores participation in activities that promoted understanding of non-dominant perspectives. On this slide, are the percentages of first-year and senior students who report never participating in a variety of activities. These percentages are quite high in relation to YSU’s mission to “foster understanding of diversity.” While not the highest percentage on the slide, it is notable that 35% of Seniors report never having reflected on their own cultural identity.
The First-Year Experiences module included a set of items only for first-year students. The first-year items focused on academic perseverance, help-seeking behaviors, and institutional commitment. Six schools from our true peer comparison group participated in this module and can be used for comparison.
Just briefly looking at this module, we’ll see one area where we can glean insight into the experience of first-year students. This chart explores the perceived difficulty of 4 different tasks – learning course material, managing time, getting help with schoolwork and interacting with faculty. You’ll notice that managing time is the most difficult item for first-year students.
Additionally, we can look at the sources first-year students go to when they are seeking help with their academics. Overwhelmingly, students report going to friends or other students for help with school work. Additionally, between 25 and 30% of students are often or very often going to faculty members, learning support services and/or family members for help.
The Senior Transitions module included a set of items only for seniors. Items explored post-graduation plans, links between the academic major and future plans, and confidence with skills developed during college. Six schools from our true peer comparison group participated in this module and can be used for comparison.
69% of graduating senior respondents plan to enter either full- or part-time employment after graduation. Of those respondents, 44% do not currently have a job, while 56% will either continue their current job or start a new job.
Another section of data from this module asks students about the extent their major coursework has emphasized various skills – generating new ideas, taking risks, evaluating multiple approaches, and inventing new methods. Most emphasized in coursework are students having the opportunity to generate new ideas or brainstorming and students having the opportunity to evaluate multiple approaches to a problem. This is likely a part of the reason for the high levels at which senior students feel YSU prepared them to think critically and analytically.
If interested, there is great opportunity to dig further into this data and use the data to help drive student-centered and data backed decision making in your office, program or area. The Office of Assessment website includes a dissemination schedule, as well as avenues for accessing data reports.
To request a presentation for your office, program, or department or to request raw data, please contact the office directly at ysuassessment@ysu.edu. Thank you for participating in this webinar. We look forward to how this data will spur improvement for students at YSU.