The Updated NSSE

Note: This information is from the NSSE website. Further details can be found at nsse.iub.edu.

Launched in 2013, the updated NSSE survey is built upon years of evidence-based testing, institutional feedback and recent advances in educational and survey research. While survey changes range from minimal adjustments to entirely new content, the updated instrument maintains NSSE’s signature focus on diagnostic and actionable information related to effective educational practice.

The survey was updated with four goals in mind:

- Develop new measures related to effective teaching and learning;
- Refine existing measures and scales;
- Improve the clarity and applicability of survey language; and
- Update terminology to reflect current educational contexts.

Consequently, the Institutional Report was thoroughly redesigned to accompany the survey update. With extensive use of color and graphics, the new reports are designed to be shared widely.

Engagement Indicators

Sets of new, continuing, and updated items have been rigorously tested, and are grouped within several Engagement Indicators. These indicators fit within four engagement themes adapted from the Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice, as follows:

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

High-Impact Practices

High-Impact Practices are special undergraduate opportunities such as service-learning, study abroad, research with faculty, and internships that have substantial positive effects on student learning and retention.

How Has the Survey Changed?
Here is an item-by-item comparison showing how the survey was updated from 2012, indicating which items were unchanged, slightly modified, significantly altered, and deleted. New items are included at the end.

Compared to NSSE 2012, about a quarter of NSSE questions are new, and nearly the same proportion unchanged. Of the half that have been changed, an equal number were modified in major or minor ways. Of course, some items were deleted to keep the overall length of the survey about the same.

![Comparison chart](image)

Modules: Additional Question Sets

New customization options include topical modules, or short sets of questions, on focused areas such as academic advising, civic engagement, experiences with diversity, writing, and technology. Additional modules will be developed over time.

How Do the Changes Affect Comparisons with Prior-Year Results?

Even the best surveys must be periodically revised and updated, affecting multi-year analyses such as trend studies or pre-post designs. Although many 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.

Why Update NSSE?
After a decade in the field, we know more about what matters to student success, institutional improvement efforts, and properties of the NSSE survey itself. Moreover, as higher education faces increasing demands for assessment data, NSSE must stay relevant to current issues and concerns.

Long-time NSSE participants may recall that NSSE was updated regularly in the early years. Starting in 2005, however, we kept the survey largely unchanged as a practical matter for institutions to facilitate year-to-year comparisons. Our intention has been to roll out major updates at longer-term intervals, such as what is happening with the 2013 version. This approach balances the need of institutions to have year-to-year comparisons with NSSE’s need to respond periodically to changes in the higher education landscape, informed by a methodical research and development process.

Higher education is constantly changing, and it is important for NSSE to stay relevant to the most salient issues and priorities of institutional assessment and research.