

## What is NSSE?

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), pronounced “Nessie,” collects information annually from samples of first-year and senior students about the nature and quality of their undergraduate experience. Launched by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, more than 1,300 four-year colleges and universities in the United States and Canada have used the NSSE to help them learn and understand more about student involvement and use the information to design better approaches and programs.

The NSSE is grounded in an extensive and ongoing body of research on student learning. This preponderance of research shows that the level of student engagement is highly correlated with overall educational effectiveness.

***In short, the more an institution can engage their students, the more likely it is that the students have a satisfying and successful college experience.***

For that reason, the NSSE asks undergraduates about their in- and out-of-class activities, what they feel they have gained from classes, their assessment of the quality of interactions with faculty and students, and other educational activities.

Institutions use information from the NSSE to review and improve students’ undergraduate experience through strategies to increase student involvement and interaction. Results from the NSSE can also provide insight to prospective students and parents about efforts of an institution to engage their students.

## Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

Five aspects of a student’s experience have been empirically linked and are powerful contributors to learning and personal development. These are called *benchmarks of effective educational practice* and are the focus of the survey. The five benchmarks are:

- Level of Academic Challenge
- Active and Collaborative Learning
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Supportive Campus Environment

*See below for a description of each benchmark.*

## Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.

*Examples of activities and conditions:*

Time spent preparing for class

Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations

Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings

Number of written papers or reports

Coursework emphasizes analyzing, synthesizing, making judgments, or applying theories or concepts

Campus environment emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work

## Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)

Students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education and are asked to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings. Collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares students to deal with the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college.

*Examples of activities:*

Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions

Made a class presentation

Worked with other students on projects during class

Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments

Tutored or taught other students

Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course

Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class

## Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)

Students see first-hand how experts think about and solve practical problems by interacting with faculty members inside and outside the classroom. As a result, their teachers become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, life-long learning.

*Examples of activities:*

Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor

Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor

Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class

Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)

Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance

Worked with a faculty member on a research project

## Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.

### *Examples of conditions:*

Campus environment provides support you need to help you succeed academically

Campus environment helps you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)

Campus environment provides the support you need to thrive socially

Quality of relationships with other students

Quality of relationships with faculty members

Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices

## Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)

Complementary learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom augment the academic program. Experiencing diversity teaches students valuable things about themselves and other cultures. Used appropriately, technology facilitates learning and promotes collaboration between peers and instructors. Internships, community service, and senior capstone courses provide students with opportunities to synthesize, integrate, and apply their knowledge. Such experiences make learning more meaningful and, ultimately, more useful because what students know becomes a part of who they are.

### *Examples of activities and conditions:*

Talking with students with different religious beliefs, political opinions, or values

Talking with students of a different race or ethnicity

An institutional climate that encourages contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds

Using electronic technology to discuss or complete assignments

Participating in:

- Internships or field experiences
- Community service or volunteer work
- Foreign language coursework
- Study abroad
- Independent study or self-assigned major
- Culminating senior experience
- Co-curricular activities
- Learning communities

## What is FSSE?

The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), pronounced “Fessie,” was designed to complement the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and is coordinated by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. FSSE measures faculty members’ expectations of student engagement in educational practices that are empirically linked with high levels of learning and development. The survey also collects information about how faculty members spend their time on professorial activities, such as teaching and scholarship, and the kinds of learning experiences their institutions emphasize.

FSSE results can be used to identify areas of institutional strength as well as aspects of the undergraduate experience that may warrant attention.

*The information is intended to be a catalyst for productive discussions related to teaching, learning, and the quality of students’ educational experiences.*