

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a national survey initiative by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and the Pew Forum for Undergraduate Learning. The NSSE is administered and coordinated by the Indiana University Center for Post-Secondary Research and Planning. The survey was developed to provide a measure of students' engagement in educational practices that have been shown to correlate with desirable learning and development outcomes. Specific information on the conceptual framework and psychometric properties of the NSSE are located here: [http://nsse.iub.edu/pdf/conceptual\\_framework\\_2003.pdf](http://nsse.iub.edu/pdf/conceptual_framework_2003.pdf)

## Oklahoma State Participation and Response Rates

Oklahoma State University (OSU) participated in the NSSE in 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2009. In 2009, in an effort to provide meaningful college-level results, requests to participate in the survey were sent to all first-year and senior students. A total of 1,414 OSU students (476 first-year and 938 seniors) responded to the survey for an overall response rate of 22% (17% for first-year students and 25% for seniors). This represents a decrease from OSU's 2005 response rate of 38% and is lower than the average response rate at 13 selected peer institutions (28% average response rate) and participating doctoral / research institutions (29% average response rate).

## Benchmark Results

NSSE has identified five key benchmarks that are calculated based on results from groups of items. The benchmarks are Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive Campus Environment.

- All of OSU's 2009 first-year benchmarks are significantly higher than OSU's 2005 first-year benchmarks ( $p < 0.01$ ).
- OSU's 2009 first-year benchmarks are significantly higher than 13 selected peer institutions on Student-Faculty Interaction and significantly higher than participating doctoral / research institutions on Student-Faculty Interaction and Supportive Campus Environment.
- OSU's 2009 senior benchmark for Enriching Educational Experiences was significantly higher than OSU's 2005 senior benchmark ( $p < 0.01$ ).
- OSU's 2009 senior benchmarks were significantly lower than 13 selected peer institutions on Level of Academic Challenge and Enriching Educational Experiences.
- OSU's 2009 senior benchmarks were significantly lower than participating doctoral / research institutions on Level of Academic Challenge and Active and Collaborative Learning.

## Positive Findings

OSU's 2009 first-year benchmark results were significantly improved over OSU's 2005 first-year benchmark results and two of the five first-year benchmarks were significantly higher than selected peer institutions and participating doctoral / research institutions. OSU's 2009 first-year and senior results were significantly higher than average results for 13 selected peer institutions and all participating doctoral / research institutions in a number of areas including:

- Relationships with administrative personnel and offices
- Quality of academic advising
- Participation in activities to enhance spirituality
- Percent of first-year (90%) and senior students (84%) who would go to OSU again if they could start over (significantly higher than average score for participating doctoral / research institutions and for participating NSSE 2009 institutions)

## Areas to Consider Improvements

As shown by the benchmark scores, OSU's 2009 senior results were troubling in a number of areas. OSU's senior respondents had significantly lower average results than 13 selected peer institutions and participating doctoral / research institutions in areas such as:

- Experiences with diversity
- Synthesizing, integrating, and organizing ideas
- Institutional contribution to general education outcomes including critical thinking, writing, and problem solving

These results mirror the 2005 results where OSU's senior respondents had significantly lower average scores than selected peers and doctoral-extensive research institutions on the Level of Academic Challenge and Enriching Educational Experiences benchmarks.

### **Recommendations – Course Level**

Systematic improvement across campus will not occur unless faculty members commit to making changes to the level of academic challenge and enriching educational experiences provided to students at OSU within every class. Faculty members should consider how courses could be adapted to increase diversity experiences, include more opportunity for synthesizing and integrating ideas from across courses, and contribute to student achievement of general education outcomes including critical thinking, writing, and problem solving.

Faculty members should also incorporate instructional and student learning strategies that research has shown to lead to improved student learning including Read-Recite-Review (McDaniel, Howard, & Einstein, 2009, *The Read-Recite-Review Study Strategy: Effective and Portable*, *Psychological Science*, 20(4), 516-522), identifying similarities and differences, summarizing and note taking, cooperative learning, providing feedback, and activating prior knowledge (Marzano, Gaddy, & Dean, 2000, *What Works in Classroom Instruction*, [http://www.mcrel.org/PDF/Instruction/5992TG\\_What\\_Works.pdf](http://www.mcrel.org/PDF/Instruction/5992TG_What_Works.pdf)).

### **Recommendations – Institution Level**

Recognizing that OSU's 2009 senior results reflect more than just students' experiences during the senior year, the institution should develop and support additional ways for all students, particularly transfer and commuter students, to be meaningfully connected with classmates, faculty or staff members, and campus groups. This may be achieved through learning communities, student affairs units, student groups and activities, and engagement in research with faculty members.

Colleges and departments should consider implementation of senior capstone courses in all academic majors. Capstone courses provide an additional opportunity for students to develop critical thinking skills and to synthesize and integrate what they have learned from multiple courses and experiences during their post-secondary school career. Capstone courses also provide students with the opportunity to create a project, performance, or research paper that will be valuable for applying to graduate school or starting a career.

Finally, faculty members should be empowered and provided with resources to tackle student engagement and learning challenges identified from the 2009 NSSE results, from OSU's General Education Assessment process ([http://uat.okstate.edu/assessment/assessment\\_at\\_osu/gened/index.html](http://uat.okstate.edu/assessment/assessment_at_osu/gened/index.html)), or from Program Outcomes Assessment results. The Office of University Assessment supports projects to improve student learning and assessment. Oklahoma State University, colleges, and departments should contribute funds and other resources on a regular basis to support projects that target improvement of student learning, development, and engagement.

OSU's 2009 NSSE results reveal many successes to celebrate and many areas to improve. Improvement in student learning, development and engagement can be achieved through commitment from faculty members across campus and from departments, colleges, and the institution.

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