

2016 Executive Summary Report National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Submitted to

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Prepared by

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2016 NSSE Executive Summary Report

In spring 2016, Sam Houston State University administered the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to a sample of First-year and Senior students. Subsequent NSSE administrations are planned for the future on a 3-year cycle. The primary motivation for administering the NSSE was for use as part of SHSU's assessment of the THECB's Six Core Learning Objectives (THECB, 2017); however, the NSSE contains rich, robust information about student learning, student engagement, and student perceptions of campus experiences that have already been put to use by various units within the Divisions of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Enrollment Management. Additionally, NSSE data also serves as a major source of data and evidence for SHSU's QEP process.

This report provides an executive summary of select, key findings from the 2016 NSSE administration. Any questions regarding the findings presented within this report, or requests for additional NSSE data, can be directed to Jeff Roberts, Director of Assessment (jeff.roberts@shsu.edu).

Student Perceptions of Institutional Quality

SHSU students responded in an overwhelmingly positive way to two questions regarding students' perceptions of the general quality of the institution:

- How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?
 - Approximately 86% of First-year students evaluated their "entire educational experience at this institution" as being **good** or **excellent**.
 - Approximately 91% of Senior students evaluated their "entire educational experience at this institution" as being **good** or **excellent**.
- If you could start over again, would you go to the *same institution* you are now attending?
 - Approximately 85% of First-year students indicated if they "could start over again" they would **probably** or **definitely** "go to the same institution [they] are now attending."
 - Approximately 88% of Senior students indicated if they "could start over again" they would **probably** or **definitely** "go to the same institution [they] are now attending."

Student Perceptions Regarding High Impact Practices

Due to positive associations with student learning and retention, certain undergraduate opportunities are designated "high-impact." High-Impact Practices (HIPs) share several traits:

- They demand considerable time and effort.
- They facilitate learning outside of the classroom.
- They require meaningful interactions with faculty and students.
- They encourage collaboration with diverse others.
- They provide frequent and substantive feedback.

Participation in these practices can be life-changing (Kuh, 2008). NSSE founding director George Kuh recommends that institutions should aspire for all students to participate in at least

two HIPs over the course of their undergraduate experience—one during the first year and one in the context of their major (NSSE, 2007).

Areas of Strength

Both First-year and Senior students reported in engaging in service-learning courses at a higher rate than did students at other institutions.

Areas of Improvement

Both First-year and Senior students reported participating in at least one high impact practice at a significantly lower rate than other institutions.

Senior students, in particular, reported lower rates of participation in learning communities, research with a faculty member, internships/field experience, and culminating senior experiences (e.g., capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio). Student participation in capstone experiences was particularly low in comparison to other institutions.

Civic Engagement

As part of the 2016 NSSE administration, SHSU students also completed an additional Civic Engagement Topical Module. Adapted from a pilot survey developed by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, this module asked students to assess their conflict resolution skills and examine how often they engage with local, campus, and state/national/global issues. The module complemented questions on the core survey relating to service-learning, community service or volunteer work, and becoming an informed and active citizen.

Areas of Strength

First-year students reported participating in the following activities at a higher rate than students at other institutions:

- Asked others to address local or campus issues
- Organized others to work on local or campus issues
- Organized others to work on state, national, or global issues

Areas for Improvement

Both First-year and Senior students reported informing themselves “about local or campus issues” at a lower rate than students at other institutions. First-year students also reported that they informed themselves “about state, national, or global issues” at a lower rate; while Seniors reported that they “discuss(ed) local or campus issues with others” and “raised awareness about local or campus issues” at a lower rate than students from other institutions.

Global Learning

As part of the 2016 NSSE administration, SHSU students completed an additional Global Learning Topical Module. This module assessed student experiences and coursework that emphasized global affairs, world cultures, nationalities, religions, and other international topics. The module complemented items on the core survey relating to student experiences with people from different backgrounds, course emphasis on integrative and reflective learning, and participation in study abroad.

Areas for Improvement

Both First-year and Senior students' responses were lower than students at other institutions for the following questions, indicating lower participation/engagement in the following areas:

How much does your institution emphasize the following?

- Providing courses that focus on global and international topics
- Providing activities and experiences (speakers, events) that focus on global and international topics

Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate?

- Complete a *course* that focuses on global trends or issues (human rights, international relations, world health, climate, etc.)
- Complete a *course* that focuses on perspectives, issues, or events from countries or regions outside the United States
- Complete a *course* that focuses on religions or cultural groups other than your own

During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?

- Discussed international or global topics and issues with others
- Talked about international opportunities (study abroad, international internship, Model UN, field study or research abroad, etc.) with a faculty member or advisor

How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?

- Being informed about current international and global issues
- Seeking international or global opportunities out of your comfort zone
- Understanding how your actions affect global communities
- Encouraging your sense of global responsibility

Since enrolling at your current institution, have you lived with a student from a country other than your own (exclude study abroad and other programs outside the US)?

First-year students also reported lower rates of looking “for information about global education programs and opportunities (study abroad, international internships, international field studies or research, volunteering abroad, etc.)” and being prepared “for life and work in an increasingly globalized era.” Senior students also reported attending fewer “events or activities that promoted the understanding of different world cultures, nationalities, and religions.”

Engagement Indicators

Areas of Strength

First-year students reported higher rates of engagement in “Discussions with Diverse Others” than students at other institutions. Particularly, First-year students reported that they had more discussions with individuals from different ethnicities, economic backgrounds, and political views.

Senior students indicated higher levels of engagement as compared to students at other institutions with respect to “Quality of Interactions” and “Supportive Environment.” Furthermore, Seniors also indicated higher levels of engagement for at least one indicator in each of the remaining three themes: (1) ‘Learning Strategies’ in the Academic Challenge theme, (2) ‘Discussions with Diverse Others’ in the Learning with Peers theme, and (3) ‘Effective Teaching Practices’ in the Experiences with Faculty theme.

Areas of Improvement

First-year students reported lower levels of engagement than students at other institutions regarding “Quantitative Reasoning.” Senior students reported lower levels of engagement than students at other institutions with “Collaborative Learning.”

Recommendations

Although SHSU students overwhelmingly indicated they felt their educational experiences were good and they would attend SHSU again if given the chance, there are opportunities for continued institutional improvement based on the NSSE data.

- SHSU should work to promote greater student engagement in High Impact Practices (HIPs). HIPs include First-year Seminars/Experiences, Common Intellectual Experiences, Learning Communities, Writing-intensive Courses, Collaborative Assignments and Projects, Undergraduate Research, Diversity/Global Learning, Service Learning/Community-based Learning, Internships, Capstone Courses and Projects (AAC&U, n.d.). All students can benefit from HIPs, but students can benefit more if they are engaged early in their first year at SHSU. Additionally, Senior students at SHSU reported being engaged in capstone experiences at a far lower rate than students at other institutions; thus, SHSU should consider including more capstone experiences in existing and future senior-level academic programs.
- SHSU should investigate opportunities, both within the curriculum and within co-curricular activities, to better inform students about campus, local, state, national, and global issues. Additionally, the University should take steps to encourage all students to discuss these issues with others, to work to raise awareness of these issues, and to work with others to respond to them.
- Similarly, the institution should investigate additional opportunities within curricular and co-curricular environments to engage students in Global Learning. In addition to existing opportunities to expand study abroad and international internship, the University should

explore other means for bringing global and international topics and experiences to the local campus. For example, colleges and departments should be encouraged to examine where additional Global Learning topics can be infused, as appropriate within the curriculum. Further, existing student programming within both the Divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs can be expanded to include more Global Learning topics and speakers.

- First-year students responded being less engaged with ‘Quantitative Reasoning’ activities than students from other institutions. Examining the survey questions relating to the ‘Quantitative Reasoning’ indicator, SHSU First-year students reported less frequency in (1) reaching conclusions based on analysis of numerical information, (2) using numerical information to examine real world issues, and (3) evaluating what others have concluded from numerical information. This suggests SHSU should examine other data related to quantitative reasoning skills and consider targeted initiatives to address areas in need of improvement.
- Senior students reported being less engaged with ‘Collaborative Learning’ than students at other institutions. Examining the survey questions relating to the ‘Collaborative Learning’ indicator, SHSU Senior students reported less frequency in (1) working with other students on course projects or assignments and (2) preparing for exams by discussing or working through course materials with other students. These findings suggest SHSU should examine other data related to teamwork skills and consider targeted initiatives to address any identified areas for improvement.

References

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- National Survey of Student Engagement (2007). *Experiences that matter: Enhancing student learning and success-Annual Report 2007*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.
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