National Survey of Student Engagement, Spring 2013: Background, Method, and Respondents

CU-Boulder NSSE 2013 Survey Respondents, by Class Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Level</th>
<th>Invited</th>
<th>Responded</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>3,797</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>3,436</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,233</td>
<td>1,915</td>
<td>26%</td>
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Background

In spring 2013 the University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) participated in the national administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which is designed to provide data that colleges and universities can use to improve undergraduate education. CU-Boulder also participated in the NSSE in 2000, 2002, 2006, and 2009. The NSSE, administered by a team at Indiana University, gathers information from freshmen and seniors about college experiences, skills acquired during college, and students’ academic and non-academic activities. NSSE urges prospective students to inquire about these topics on college visits and provides a "pocket guide" for this purpose—available through school counselors, college admissions offices, educational organizations, and on the NSSE Web site.

The 2013 NSSE is the inaugural administration of "NSSE 2.0," the first major revision of the NSSE questionnaire since its initial administration in 2000. Compared to NSSE 2012, 23% of the 2013 questions are new, and 22% are unchanged; 27% of survey items were substantially changed, and 28% of items were modified slightly. To maintain the overall length of the survey, some items were deleted. A recent CHANGE magazine article presents the rationale and goals for the survey update and a description of the new Engagement Measures and their relationship to the former NSSE Benchmarks.

NSSE invited 1.6 million students to take part; 567 four-year colleges and universities participated in NSSE 2013.

Survey Questionnaire

The 2013 NSSE survey questionnaire collects information in five categories: participation in educational activities, institutional requirements and the challenging nature of coursework, perceptions of the university environment, estimates of educational and personal growth since starting college, and demographic information. A marked up version of the 2013 NSSE codebook for the questionnaire is also available, containing notes on comparability of variables used in 2013 and the previous CU-Boulder NSSE administration.

CU-Boulder customized its 2013 NSSE administration to include a topical module of 13 questions on experiences with writing (also available in Appendix A of this document) and
participation in the Association of American Universities Data Exchange NSSE Consortium, which administered 13 optional questions (also available in Appendix B of this document) to students as part of NSSE.

The questionnaire also included one open-ended question that solicited students' comments: "If you have any additional comments or feedback that you’d like to share on the quality of your educational experience, please type them below." Overall 319 students provided comments (117 freshmen and 202 seniors).

Data Collection and Response Rates

Data collection for NSSE 2013 at CU-Boulder began on February 12, 2013, when invitations to submit a NSSE survey were sent to a random sample of 3,797 CU-Boulder new fall 2012 freshmen and 3,437 seniors. The sample comprises half of the eligible freshman and senior populations. The email invitations and reminders also included financial incentive awards offered to 6 randomly-chosen respondents who completed the NSSE survey by the due date. Email messages were sent to students on the following schedule:

- Invitation: February 12, 2013
- Reminder 1: February 20, 2013
- Reminder 2: February 28, 2013
- Reminder 3: March 12, 2013
- Final reminder: April 2, 2013

Our NSSE 2013 data collection closed on May 1, 2013, with 27% responding (n=1,915). Of the 7,233 students invited to fill out a survey, 47 (29 freshmen and 18 seniors) declined to participate and one senior did not have a valid email address. Of the remaining 7,186 students, 1,915 submitted a survey, for an overall adjusted response rate of 26.6%.

- The adjusted response rates were comparable for freshmen (25.6%; 965/3,768) and seniors (27.8%; 950/3,418). The unadjusted response rates, reported by NSSE were 25% and 28%, respectively.
- The 2013 response rate is lower than obtained for CU-Boulder's 2009 participation in NSSE (35%) but somewhat higher than the average 2013 participation rate for institutions with enrollments of 10,000 or more (21%).

The table below shows NSSE response rates over time for CU-Boulder:

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<th>NSSE Response Rates, by Year</th>
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<td>40%</td>
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The spring 2013 administration of NSSE overlapped with the Seniors' Future Plans Survey, which was distributed to all graduating seniors. Response rate for that six-item survey was 47%. We have no reason to think that the overlap affected seniors' response rate in the NSSE. A more likely explanation is a general historical decline in survey participation.

Posted at http://www.colorado.edu/pba/surveys/NSSE/13/
CU-Boulder Office of Planning, Budget & Analysis. Questions to IR@colorado.edu  Nov 5, 2013
enhanced by the proliferation of surveys made possible by internet tools for survey administration (see, e.g., http://cpr.iub.edu/uploads/How_Much_Effort_AERA13.pdf).
Appendix A

NSSE 2013 Experiences with Writing Module
(13 items)

1. *During the current school year, for how many writing assignments have you done the following?*
   a. Talked with a classmate, friend, or family member to develop your ideas before starting your assignment
   b. Received feedback from a classmate, friend, or family member about a draft before turning in your final assignment
   c. Gave feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline he or she had written
   d. Summarized material you read, such as articles, books, or online publications
   e. Analyzed or evaluated something you read, researched, or observed
   f. Described your methods or findings related to data you collected in lab or field work, a survey project, etc.
   g. Argued a position using evidence and reasoning
   h. Explained in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data
   i. Wrote in the style and format of a specific field (engineering, history, psychology, etc.)
   j. Addressed a real or imagined audience such as your classmates, a politician, non-experts, etc.

2. *During the current school year, for how many of your writing assignments has your instructor done the following?*
   a. Provided clear instructions describing what he or she wanted you to do
   b. Explained in advance what he or she wanted you to learn
   c. Explained in advance the criteria he or she would use to grade your assignment

Response options for all items:
1. No writing assignments
2. Few writing assignments
3. Some writing assignments
4. Most writing assignments
5. All writing assignments
Appendix B
NSSE 2013 Association of American Universities Data Exchange AAUDE Consortium

Your school has requested that you answer some additional questions regarding your undergraduate experience. These questions take about 3 minutes to answer. Your continued participation is voluntary.

1. Consider the size of the lower-division classes you’ve taken at this university – have they generally been:
   Response Options: Far larger than you’d like, Somewhat larger, OK in size, Smaller than you’d like, Not applicable/have taken no lower-division courses here

2. Consider the size of the upper-division classes you’ve taken at this university – have they generally been:
   Response Options: Far larger than you’d like, Somewhat larger, OK in size , Smaller than you’d like, Not applicable/have taken no lower-division courses here

3. How would you rate the quality of instruction in lower-division courses?
   Response Options: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Not applicable/have taken no lower-division courses here

4. How would you rate the quality of instruction in upper-division courses?
   Response Options: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Not applicable/have taken no lower-division courses here

5. Would you say that the courses you need to take for your major have been available:
   Response Options: Always or nearly always, Most of the time, Some of the time, Hardly ever, Not applicable (haven’t tried to take any yet)

6. Would you say that the courses you need to take for your general education requirements have been available:
   Response Options: Always or nearly always, Most of the time, Some of the time, Hardly ever, Not applicable (haven’t tried to take any yet)

7. How would you rate the academic quality of this university in general?
   Response Options: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor

8. How would you rate the academic quality of your major program?
   Response Options: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, No major yet

9. How would you rate the quality of academic advising you have received at your university?
   Response Options: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Not applicable

10. At this university, students have to run around from one place to another to get the information or approvals they need.
    Response Options: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, Not applicable

11. I expect to complete a bachelor’s degree:
    Response options: At this university in a total of 4 years or less, At this university in more than 4 years but within 5 years total, At this university in more than 5 years total, At another college or university, I may well not complete a bachelor’s degree

12. To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your acquiring a broad general education?
    Response options: Very much, Quite a bit, Some, Very little

13. Please rate the following as obstacles to your academic progress during the current academic year

Posted at http://www.colorado.edu/pba/surveys/NSSE/13/
CU-Boulder Office of Planning, Budget & Analysis. Questions to IR@colorado.edu

Nov 5, 2013
Response options: Not an obstacle at all, Minor obstacle, Moderate obstacle, Major obstacle
a. Money, work obligations, finances
b. Family obligations
c. Difficulties getting the courses you need
d. Lack of good academic advising
e. Lack of personal motivation
f. Poor academic performance
g. Personal health issues, physical or mental