The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information from first-year and senior students about the characteristics and quality of their undergraduate experience. Since the inception of the survey, more than 1,500 bachelor’s-granting colleges and universities in the United States and Canada have used it to measure the extent to which students engage in effective educational practices that are empirically linked with learning, personal development, and other desired outcomes such as persistence, satisfaction, and graduation.

NSSE data are used by faculty, administrators, researchers, and others for institutional improvement, public reporting, and related purposes. Launched in 2000 with the support of a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, NSSE has been fully sustained through institutional participation since 2002. After two years of pilot testing and extensive analysis, 2013 marked the first year of NSSE’s updated survey instrument and new customization options. This document provides an overview of NSSE 2014, the second administration of the updated NSSE.

Survey Data and Methodology

More than 1.8 million first-year and senior students from 713 institutions (640 in the US and 73 in Canada) were invited to participate in NSSE 2014. Of this population, 473,633 students responded to the survey. Nearly half (46%) of these were first-year students and 54% were seniors.

NSSE’s sampling methodology calls for either a census of all first-year and senior students or a random selection of an equal number of students from each group, with the sample size based on the total undergraduate student enrollment. In NSSE 2014, census administration was available only via the email recruitment method, in which students receive a survey invitation and up to four reminders by email. All but five participating institutions opted for this method. Sampled students at the five remaining institutions received up to three messages by post and up to two reminders by email, if email addresses were provided.

Unless noted otherwise, the results presented below are from 692 institutions—622 in the US and 70 in Canada—that participated in NSSE 2014. Due to nonstandard population files or survey administrations, 21 institutions are not represented among the results in this Overview. Only data for census-administered surveys and randomly sampled students are included in the summary tables.

U.S. Participating Institutions

NSSE 2014 U.S. respondents profiled here include 355,865 first-year (43%) and senior (57%) respondents from 622 institutions. NSSE 2014 participating institutions and students reflect the diversity of bachelor’s-granting colleges and universities in the US with respect to institution type, size, sector, region, and locale (Table 1, next page).

At the institution level, Carnegie-classified Master’s Colleges and Universities (larger programs), public institutions, and institutions with 5,000 to 9,999 undergraduates are somewhat overrepresented in these results, while Baccalaureate Colleges–Diverse Fields, private institutions, and institutions with fewer than 1,000 undergraduates are underrepresented.

With regard to students, those attending Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences and institutions enrolling 1,000 to 9,999 undergraduates are somewhat overrepresented, while those at doctorate-granting universities and institutions with 20,000 or more undergraduates are underrepresented.

Although small and private institutions account for the majority of institutions in NSSE and in the US, a majority of NSSE respondents, like the entire population of U.S. students, attend large and public institutions. NSSE comparison reports are weighted (as appropriate) to ensure that each institution is proportionally represented.

Note: A searchable list of participating institutions by year is on the NSSE Web site at nsse.iub.edu/html/participants.cfm
Institutional Response Rates

Table 2 shows that the average response rate for U.S. NSSE 2014 institutions was 32% (29% for first-year students and 34% for seniors). The highest institutional response rate among U.S. institutions was 88%, and more than half of institutions achieved a response rate of 30% or higher.

The average response rate for Canadian NSSE 2014 institutions was 36% (34% for first-year students and 38% for seniors), with the highest institutional rate being 90%. Two thirds (67%) of Canadian institutions achieved a response rate of 30% or higher.

For information about your institution’s response rate, refer to your NSSE 2014 Administration Summary.

Table 2

<p>| NSSE 2014 U.S. Participation and Response Rates by Undergraduate Enrollment and Use of Incentives |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Characteristics</th>
<th>Number of Institutions</th>
<th>Average Institutional Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Undergraduate Enrollment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 1,000</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000–2,499</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500–4,999</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000–9,999</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 or more</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incentives Offered</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offered incentives</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No incentives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Institutions</strong></td>
<td>462</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Two institutions had no enrollment information in the IPEDS data.
b. Some institutions used recruitment incentives, such as small gifts or raffles, to encourage students to complete the survey.

c. For information on the Carnegie Foundation’s Basic Classification, see classifications.carnegiefoundation.org

Survey Customization

NSSE now enables institutions to append up to two additional question sets in the form of NSSE-created topical modules or consortium questions (for institutions sharing a common interest and participating as a NSSE consortium). Another option—appending a question about sexual orientation to the demographic section of the core survey—was elected by nearly one third (31%) of participating institutions.

About three in four (76%) institutions appended at least one topical module (with or without consortium questions), and about one third (34%) appended additional questions as part of a consortium (with or without a module). More than half (55%) added two sets of questions in any combination of modules and consortium questions (Table 3).
Eight topical modules were available in NSSE 2014, and participation in a given module ranged from 55 to 247 institutions. By far the most widely adopted module was Academic Advising, selected by 35% of participating institutions. Use of the other seven modules was fairly even, ranging from 12% of institutions selecting Development of Transferable Skills to 8% for Civic Engagement.

### U.S. Respondent Profile

Table 4 displays key demographic and enrollment characteristics of NSSE 2014 U.S. respondents and all U.S. bachelor’s-seeking students. Among NSSE respondents, female, White, and full-time students were overrepresented in varying proportions compared to all U.S. students. NSSE comparison reports use weights as appropriate to correct for disproportionate survey response related to institution-reported sex and enrollment status at each institution.

As Table 5 illustrates, 22% of U.S. respondents were older than traditional age (at least 24 years old), and less than half (43%) were first-generation college students. About one in three NSSE respondents (29%) began postsecondary education at an institution other than the one they were attending when they completed the NSSE survey. Two thirds of respondents (67%) expected to complete a master’s, doctoral, or professional degree. Two in five NSSE respondents lived on campus, and one in twenty reported taking all classes online.
Canadian Respondent Profile

Canadian respondents profiled here include 114,511 students from 70 institutions in ten provinces, including 27 institutions in Ontario, 12 in Quebec, 9 in British Columbia, 7 in Alberta, 5 in Nova Scotia, 3 each in New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, 2 in Manitoba, and 1 each in Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. Canadian respondents included 61,920 first-year and 52,591 fourth-year students. Female students and full-time students, respectively, accounted for about 65% and 88% of Canadian respondents. About 18% of Canadian respondents were at least 24 years old. Ethnocultural categories for Canadian institutions participating in NSSE were adapted from those used by Statistics Canada, Canada’s national statistical agency. The majority of students providing ethnocultural information identified as White (67%), while 12% identified as Chinese, 7% South Asian, 4% Black, 3% each Arab and North American Indian, and about 2% each Latin American, Filipino, and Southeast Asian. Less than 2% of respondents identified with each of the remaining categories.

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NSSE national survey of student engagement

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