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NSSE 2009 Psychometric Properties

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was designed to assess the extent to which students participate in empirically derived effective educational practices and what they gain from their college experience. A large, growing body of research on college student development shows that the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities contributes to their learning and personal development (see NSSE Conceptual Framework at www.nsse.iub.edu/html/researchers.cfm for more details). NSSE collects data on student behaviors that are highly correlated with many desirable learning and personal development outcomes of a college education. This document summarizes many of the projects that the NSSE research team conducts in order to measure various psychometric properties of NSSE, beginning with an overview of the content and construction of the survey instrument. It also discusses various measurements of validity and reliability as well as investigations of potential bias. This document concludes with information on where to find additional psychometric information about NSSE.

Validity

The validity of a survey refers to how well the survey measures what it is intended to measure. This section summarizes many of the ways the NSSE research team analyzed the survey instrument's validity: through question creation, question analysis, and correlations with various student outcomes.

What does the instrument cover?

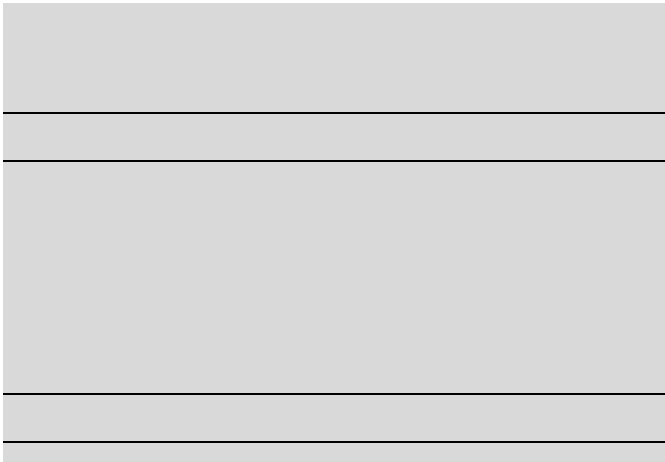
NSSE asks students to report how often they participate in activities that represent good educational practice. The survey also covers students' perceptions of the college environment associated with achievement and satisfaction. In addition, students are asked to estimate their educational and personal growth since starting college. Finally, students provide information about their background, including age, gender, race/ethnicity, living situation, educational status, and major.

Does the instrument yield valid information?

The NSSE research team worked diligently to ensure that survey items were clearly worded, well-defined, and had high content and construct validity. Cognitive interviews and focus groups revealed that very few of the survey items posed difficulty for students to interpret as intended. Although some students had trouble understanding such things as the meaning of a learning community or distinguishing between socializing and relaxing, these problems were consistent across different types of students from different types of institutions. Additionally, items that contribute to the five NSSE benchmarks were not problematic, implying that the benchmarks are also valid measures of the quality of student engagement experiences.

In the *Connecting the Dots* project, researchers used

(Enriching Educational Experiences). Table 2 shows the test-retest analysis results from the 2002 and 2005 NSSE survey administration. These findings suggest little variation in student responses from one testing period to the next.



How stable are institutions' scores between survey administrations?

Assuming no major shifts in an institution's policies, we would expect an institution to have relatively stable or reliable benchmark scores from one year to the next. Over the years we have conducted three analyses to measure the stability of benchmark scores for institutions that participated in consecutive years. The first was in 2003 test-95.2(nc)5.2(hfirst) 7.(an)5eparti

