



Converting Data into Action: Enriching Student Learning at Southern Adventist University

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Overview

- Enriching the Undergraduate Experience
- Data Redux: Southern Adventist University NSSE Results
- FSSE
- Data informed action



What we know about student learning...

- Educators must be concerned with the learning environment – in *and* outside the classroom, socio-cultural aspects and physical settings – in which students interact with peers, the content, educators and others, and the implementation of strategies that help guide the student toward the intended outcomes

Some Assertions about Undergraduate Education :

Assertion 1: Too few students are getting the most out of their college education.

Assertion 2: The total learning environment must be examined to improve undergraduate education.

Assertion 3: We value what we measure.

- How do we get more students to take greater advantage of educational opportunities?
- To what extent are we willing to increase our investment in student success initiatives?
- How do you know that what you're doing enhances student learning and success?

"We value what we measure"

Wise decisions are needed about *what* to measure in the context of campus mission, values, and desired outcomes.



"If you don't measure it, you can't manage it..."

To consider...

- ❖ "Learning that lasts" requires effective educational processes and outcomes
- ❖ Institutions must take a deep, comprehensive look at themselves to assess the quality and effectiveness of the undergraduate program.
- ❖ Assessment and improvement activities like NSSE can help.

The NSSE Challenge

How might we more effectively use data about quality in undergraduate education to:

- ✓ provide evidence of student learning
- ✓ motivate and inspire effective educational practice
- ✓ strengthen the learning environment?



Taking Action To Enrich Student Learning: Using NSSE Results

- Diagnostic: to help institutions look holistically at undergraduate experience
- Help pinpoint aspects not in line with mission, or what institution expects
- Identify weaknesses and strengths in educational program
- Help institutions know what to focus on to improve student learning and success
- Institution, Department, Course-level, Student Life perspectives

Types of Assessment

Normative

Compares your students' responses to those of students at other colleges and universities.

Criterion

Compares against a predetermined value or level appropriate for your students, given your institutional mission, size, curricular offerings, funding, etc.

Longitudinal

Compare your students' scores over time



Characteristic of Educationally Effective Institutions: "Positive Restlessness"

- ✓ Self-correcting orientation
- ✓ Continually question, "are we performing as well as we can?"
- ✓ Confident, responsive, but never quite satisfied...
- ✓ "We know who we are and what we aspire to."

Institutional Example: Improving teaching & learning

WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

- ♦ NSSE and CIRP pointed to problems with first year students' academic engagement, but WTAMU desired more holistic picture of students' experience
- ♦ Conducted "Student Engagement Audit Focus Groups" – 2 focus groups per college to discover what faculty and students found educationally engaging and identify classroom experiences that were engaging and disengaging

Institutional Example: Worcester Polytechnic Institute

- ♦ NSSE results showed FY students were less engaged than seniors
- ♦ New FY interdisciplinary, inquiry-based seminars; better integration of disciplines; engaging introductory courses
- ♦ Associate Dean appointed to Office for the First Year
- ♦ Assessment plan in development with NSSE indicators as key component





Institutional Example: Program Development and Strategic Planning



- ◆ NSSE results framed a “Sophomore Experience”
- ◆ Concern regarding SP- JR persistence; FY results offers context for understanding exp. as students enter SP year
- ◆ Established “SP Experience Working Group” to investigate if FY exp. carried over in SP year. Focused on low NSSE score items, conducted focus groups, created sophomore survey. Led to pilot of “Pace Plan” (mentoring), includes Career Exploration Course, Sophomore Kick-Off Day
- ◆ NSSE also used in strategic indicators, Accred. NCATE, AACSB, Faculty Development/Colloquia, items used by offices (Technology, Multicultural Affairs), studies performed by Enrollment Mngmt.

What Really Matters in College: Student Engagement



Because individual effort and involvement are the critical determinants of impact, institutions should focus on the ways they can shape their academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage student engagement.

Pascarella & Terenzini, *How College Affects Students*, 2005, p. 602

The Student Engagement Trinity

- **What students do -- time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities**
- **What institutions do -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things**
- **Educationally effective institutions channel student energy toward the right activities**

Definition

Student engagement:

A domain of constructs that measures both the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities, and how students perceive different facets of the institutional environment that facilitate and support their learning.

Kuh, G. D. (2001). Assessing what really matters to student learning. Change.

Good Practices in Undergraduate Education

(Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)

- ✓ Student-faculty contact
- ✓ Active learning
- ✓ Prompt feedback
- ✓ Time on task
- ✓ High expectations
- ✓ Respect for diverse learning styles
- ✓ Cooperation among students



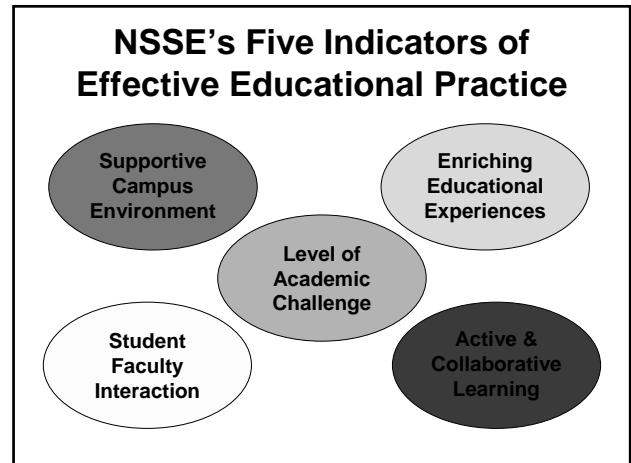
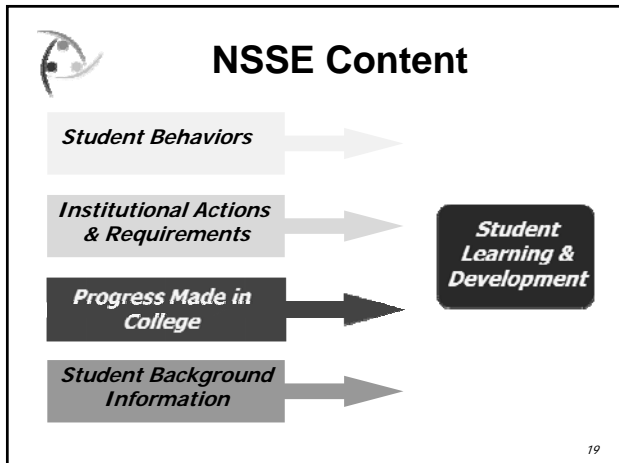
National Survey of Student Engagement (pronounced “nessie”)




Community College Survey of Student Engagement (pronounced “cessie”)



Undergraduate student surveys that assess the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development



NSSE at Southern 

- ❖ NSSE administered spring 2005, 2006, 2007. About 325+ students responded each year. Sampling error 3.8% 2005; 4.3% 2006; 4.3% 2007.
 - ❖ 165 First-years (FY) 2006; 197 FY 2007
 - ❖ 134 Seniors (SR) 2006; 129 SR 2007
- ❖ 42% Response Rate 2005 & 2006; 37% RR 2007 (avg RR Bac Gen = 37%);
- ❖ Southern's 2007 results compared to "Selected Peers" (80 Private Peers in Region i.e., Belmont U, Centre, Virginia Wesleyan) Bac General (86 schools i.e., Messiah, Marietta College) and NSSE national norm group
- ❖ Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) 2007

Thinking About NSSE Results...

1. What NSSE items are of interest to you and to your department?
2. Given Southern's liberal arts and Religious mission, what results do you *want* to see on NSSE?

Thinking About NSSE Results...

3. Given your observation and understanding of Southern students, what results do you *expect* to see?
4. How well do you think you perform on the five NSSE Clusters of Effective Educational Practice? Identify one challenging benchmark for First Years and one for Seniors

Additional Data Questions...

- What would you like to know about first-year students that would help you in advising and teaching?

NSSE at Southern

First Year Students

NSSE Benchmarks	2005	2006	2007	Bac Gen Pri 2005
Level of Academic Challenge	48.3	51.1	51.5	53.1
Active and Collaborative Learning	41.4	43.9	41.7	45.8
Student-Faculty Interaction	32.7	34.5	33.6	36.6
Enriching Educational Experiences	26.2	28.0	26.8	28.3
Supportive Campus Environment	58.2	60.0	60.7	63.8



NSSE at Southern

Seniors

NSSE Benchmarks	2005	2006	2007	Bac Gen Pri (2005)
Level of Academic Challenge	53.7	56.5	58.1	57.1
Active and Collaborative Learning	48.1	51.7	54.7	53.9
Student-Faculty Interaction	38.1	43.0	44.3	46.3
Enriching Educational Experiences	41.0	45.0	45.0	43.8
Supportive Campus Environment	56.0	61.1	63.2	62.3

Academic Challenge

- To what extent is academic effort emphasized at Southern? Are students devoting time and effort to preparing for class?
- Are students reading and writing at high levels?

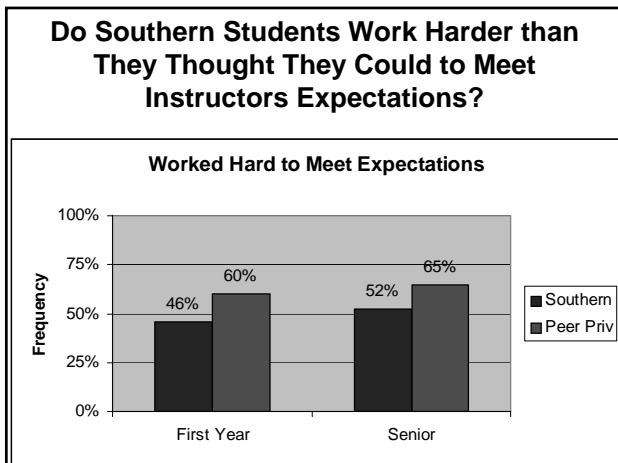



Studying at Southern

About what percent of all students spend more than 15 hours per week preparing for classes at Southern?

20? 30? 40? 50?


	Southern	Bac Priv
First-Year:	? _____	? _____
Senior:	? _____	? _____



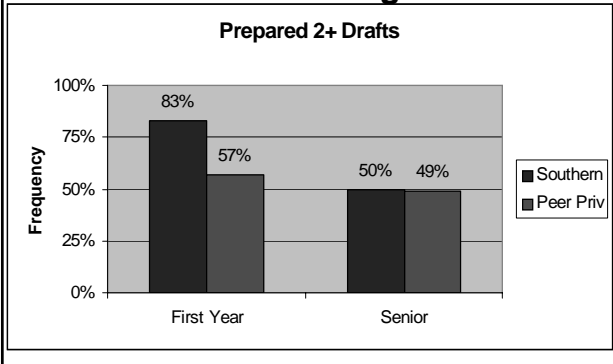
Reading and Writing at Southern:

“How often have you...” and,

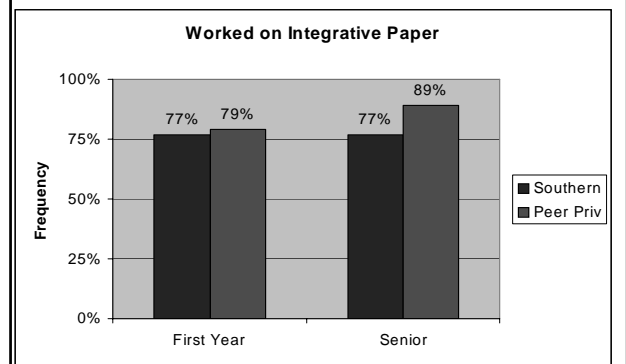
“During the current school year, about how much reading and writing have you done?”



Prepared 2 or more Drafts Before Submitting



Worked on a Paper or Project that Required Integrating Ideas or Info from Various Sources



Amount of Reading and Writing

- In comparison to Peers at Bac Privates, students at Southern are...
 - Reading about the same number of assigned books, packets
 - Writing about the same number of LONG (20+ pages) papers
 - Writing SIGNIFICANTLY LESS medium (5-19 pages) length papers
 - Writing SIGNIFICANTLY MORE short (fewer than 5 pages) papers

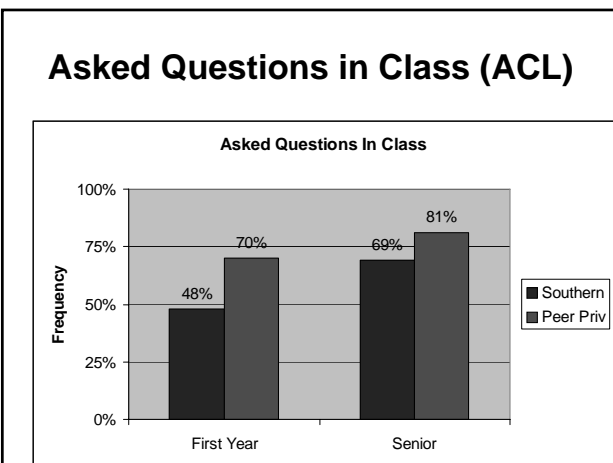
Academic and Intellectual Experiences:

“In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?”



Frequently = “often + very often”

Asked Questions in Class (ACL)



NSSE at Southern

Active and Collaborative Learning

Students indicate how often (1 = “never” to 4 = “very often”) they’ve done the following:

1. Made a class presentation
2. Worked with other students on projects in class
3. Worked with classmates outside of class
4. Participated in a community-based project (e.g. service learning) as part of a course

	First-Years (% often, very often)	Seniors (% often, very often)
1. 40%	1. 59% (-)	
2. 30% (-)	2. 42%	
3. 34% (-)	3. 49%	
4. 19% (+)	4. 36% (+)	

- and + signif different from peers

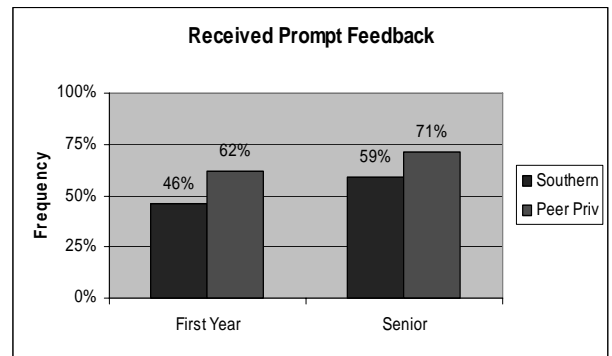


Student Faculty Interaction:

In general students interact with Southern faculty, about the same as peers at other Bac Privates in the Region.

- discuss grades and assignments
- talk about career plans
- discuss ideas outside of class

Received Prompt Written or Oral Feedback on Academic Performance



Enriching Educational Experiences:

In general, Southern students are taking advantage of enriching experiences, about the same as peers at other Bac Privates in the Region.

- MORE Southern students do community service
- Fewer Seniors report a culminating experience
- Seniors spend less time in co-curricular activities



Supportive Campus Environment:

- Students report the campus environment provides support for learning
- First year students report LESS helpful relationships with faculty and administrative personnel than peers at Bac Privates

NSSE at Southern

What percent of Southern Seniors would choose Southern again? "probably yes" + "definitely yes"

(a)74% (b) 81% (c) 89% (d) 94%

d. 94% (Bac Pri = 83%, NSSE =82%)

Educational Gains

- First Year Students
 - Low = Thinking Critically; Analyzing Quantitative Problems; Working Effectively with Others; Solving Complex Real-World Problems
 - High = Contributing to Welfare of Community; Developing Deepened Sense of Spirituality
- Seniors
 - Low = Writing Clearly; Working Effectively with Others; Learning Effectively on Your Own
 - High = Contributing to Welfare of Community; Developing Deepened Sense of Spirituality

Findings for Southern First-Years (FY)



- More than **80%** of FY “often-very often” prepared 2 or more drafts of a paper/assignment before turning it in [57% Bac Private]
- FY students not writing as many long and medium length papers as peers, but are writing a lot more short papers
- Not as engaged as peers in active learning experiences (asking questions in class, making presentations, working with peers in class, discussing ideas with others outside of class), but report more time preparing for class
- FY report good relationship with peers and faculty, but less so with administrative staff
- Spend slightly less time participating in co-curriculars than peers
- Highly engaged in service learning, community service, spirituality activities, and report high gains in contributing to welfare of community
- *How can expectations for active learning be increased for first years?*

Findings for Southern Seniors



- Seniors doing fewer presentations, working slightly less with classmates on projects out of class than peers
- Mostly similar to FY across all items
- Seniors writing more short papers than peers at comparison schools, and writing less medium and long papers.
- Seniors highly involved in service, enhancing spirituality, but less involved in co-curricular activities
- *In what ways can Seniors’ academic experience be enriched?*

Considering Student Engagement at Southern



1. Do these data fit your perceptions? Your mission?
2. What surprised you?
3. Where might you look to improve?

Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (pronounced “fessie”)

FSSE measures faculty expectations and activities related to student engagement in effective educational practices

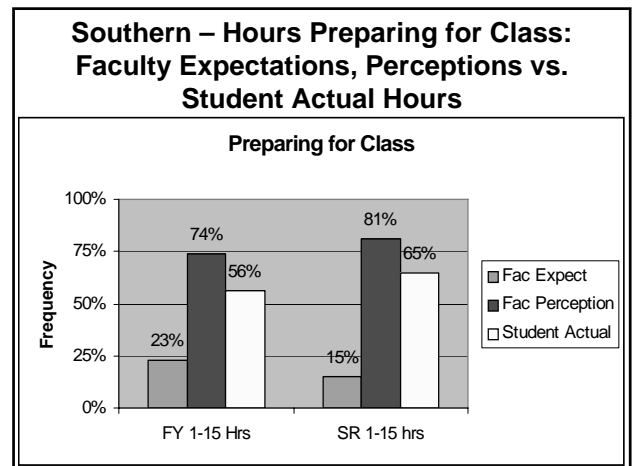
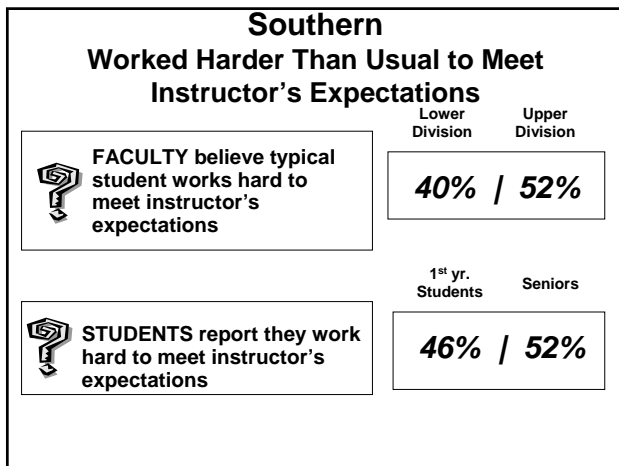
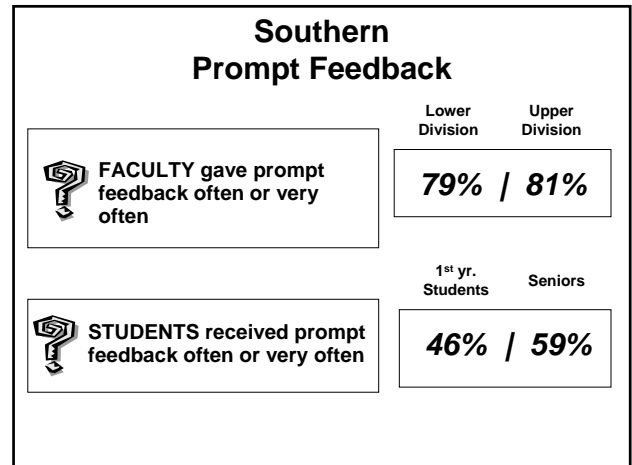
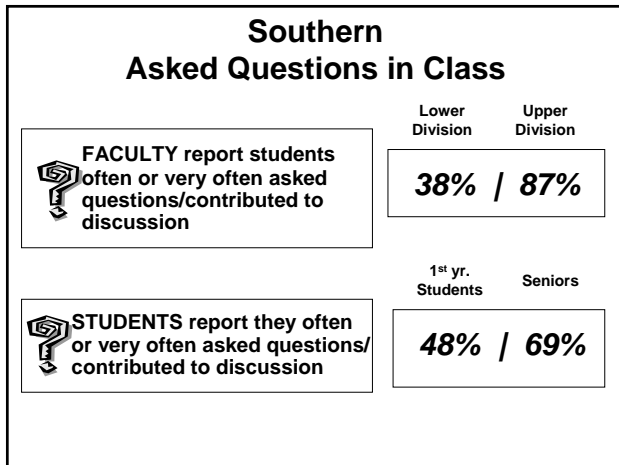


FSSE and NSSE Point to “Disorienting Dilemmas”

Situations in which usual perspectives or ways of responding do not work or don’t fit are more likely to motivate us to learn and change (Mezirow, 1990)

FSSE at Southern

- Typical-student survey option
 - Responds to questions based on the typical first-year student or senior taught during the current academic year
- 71 faculty responded, 57% Response rate (43 teach mostly FY; 23 teach mostly Seniors) in spring 2007



- ### Taking Action at Southern -1
- Institution & Department Focus – First Year of College, Mission Distinction and Academics
1. What do these results suggest for the First Year Experience at Southern?
 2. How can expectations for active learning be increased for first years?
 3. How does more intensive writing (short papers) affect student engagement and learning at Southern? Is this emphasis appropriate?

- ### Taking Action at Southern – cont'd
4. How do service learning and community service activities impact student learning at Southern?
 5. How might you increase time spent on academic work? What messages do students get about how hard they must work at Southern?
 6. What additional information is needed? What questions are raised by these results? Around which data points do you want more evidence?
 7. Identify several short and long term priorities based on NSSE results and what you still need to know.

Taking Action at Southern - 2

Department and Course-Level practice

1. Identify 1 student behavior to be changed. Note how the behavior is to be changed and indicate how you will determine if it has.
2. Identify 1 faculty behavior to be changed... (preferably your own behavior!)
3. Note which of NSSE Benchmarks, or 7 Principles of Good Practice are best exemplified in your department. What is the evidence to support this?
4. Which of these principles deserve greater attention?
5. What might you do differently in your own practice to enhance undergraduate student learning at Southern?



Principles of Good Practice for the First College Year: Recommendations

- Institutional commitment by leaders, faculty, staff, and governing boards
- Focus on student learning both inside & outside the classroom
- Encourage student affairs-academic affairs partnership
- Offer challenge and support
- Communicate high expectations
- Foster an inclusive and supportive campus climate
- Conduct systematic assessment
- Create an atmosphere of dignity and respect for first-year students
- Teach students strategies and skills to succeed
- Get faculty involved
- Encourage students to assume responsibility for their success

Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College By M. Lee Upcraft, John N. Gardner, Betsy O. Barefoot, and Associates, Jossey-Bass, 2005 Pg. 515-517

The First Year of College at High Performing Institutions

- Intentional socialization to academic values of institution
- High expectations balanced by support
- Shared responsibility for educational quality
- Focus on transitions
- Purposeful infusion of diversity
- Focus on improvement-oriented assessment



First Year Recommendations

Lay out the path to student success

- a. Draw a map for student success
- b. Front load resources to smooth the transition
- c. Teach newcomers about the campus culture
- d. Create a sense of specialness
- e. Emphasize student initiative
- f. If something works, consider requiring it
- g. Focus on underengaged students

Discussion and Comments

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