

NSSE 2014: Accolades and Action Items

Patrick Barlow, PhD

Assessment Coordinator

Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, & Planning

May 12, 2015

Summary: UW-La Crosse took part in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in the spring of 2014. This represents the 9th time our first year and senior students have completed the questionnaire. The NSSE was revised in 2013 to include new items and five previous benchmark scores were reconfigured into nine engagement indicators. Institutions were also allowed to pick two additional modules of items to pursue unique questions of interest. UW-L made use of the UW System consortium items and the Experiences with Writing module to fill these two slots.

The body of this report will identify areas of accolades based on how our responses compared positively to our UW System peers, Carnegie Class peers, and the entire groups of colleges that participated in the survey. Areas of concern, based on statistically comparison with these three groups will also be identified. Recommendations for possible actions to address the concerns are included for discussion.

Accolades:

Student responses to the NSSE indicated positive results in relation to the subscales known as Engagement Indicators, standard individual items, questions on the Experiences with Writing module, and UW System Consortium module items.

Engagement Indicator Subscale Results:

First year students held positive comparisons across 7 of the 10 Engagement Indicators against UW System Peers. Senior students demonstrated a more impressive pattern in that 6 of 10 indicators showed UW-L students above all three comparison groups. (See Chart of Engagement Indicators and description of them in NSSE 2014 Select Results Chart Packet).

High Impact Practices (HIPs):

Three HIPs are tracked for first year students and six for senior students. Responses indicated that 62% of first year students participated in at least one, primarily a service learning experience. Seniors reported a higher rate, 96%, of at least one HIP experience. More specifically, service learning was identified (76%) along with internship activities (60%), senior capstone experience (62%), and study abroad (23%) by UW-L seniors at rates higher than our comparison groups. (See Chart of HIP participation in the NSSE 2014 Select Results Chart Packet)

Individual NSSE Items (UW-L results significantly above all 3 comparison groups)

First year students responded in a manner such that many positive comparisons were found to be statistically significant when looking at individual NSSE items. These were identified by looking for items in which student responses placed UW-L above all three comparison groups. Items were organized by the assessment coordinator into groups as follows:

Items about General Academic Activities:

- Attended an art exhibit, play or other arts performance (dance, music, etc.)
- Asked another student to help you understand course material
- Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations
- Amount of papers written up to 5 pages

Campus Relationships with People and Offices:

- Quality of Interactions with Student Services Staff
- Quality of interactions with Other administrative staff
- UWL emphasizes using learning support services
- UWL emphasizes providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling)

Use of Time:

- Hours per week spent preparing for class, recoded as an average of 16.8 hours a week, (UW peers 14.2 hrs, Carnegie 13.5 hrs, NSSE overall 14.3 hrs)
- Time spent in assigned reading per week, 8.4 hours on average, (UW peers 6.7 hrs, Carnegie 6.6 hrs, NSSE 6.8 hrs)

Overall Satisfaction:

- Rating of entire educational experience
- If starting college search over, I would attend UW-L again

UW-L senior students' responses led to a longer list of significant individual item differences. Items were organized by the assessment coordinator into groups as follows:

Collaborative Learning:

- Asked another student to help you understand course material
- Worked with other students on course projects or assignments

Creating Connections among Ideas and Presentations:

- Gave a course presentation
- Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments
- Connected your learning to societal problems or issues
- Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge
- Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations

Student -Faculty Interaction:

- Talked about career plans with a faculty member
- Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class

Faculty Effective Teaching Practices:

- Clearly explained course goals and requirements
- Taught course sessions in an organized way
- Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points
- Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress

Writing Related Tasks:

- Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information
- Amount of papers written up to 5 pages

High Impact Practices:

- Participate in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement
- Participate in a study abroad program
- Work with a faculty member on a research project
- Complete a culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio, etc.)
- Number of course including community based project (service Learning)

Campus Relationships with People and Offices:

- Quality of interactions with students
- Quality of interactions with Faculty
- Quality of interactions with student services staff
- Quality of interactions with other administrative staff and offices

Campus Support :

- UWL emphasis on providing support to help students succeed academically
- UWL emphasis on using learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.)
- UWL emphasis on providing opportunities to be involved socially
- UWL emphasis on providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.) **
- UWL emphasis on helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- UWL emphasis on attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues

UW-L Contribution to Knowledge, Skills, Personal Development:

- Writing clearly and effectively
- Speaking clearly and effectively
- Thinking critically and analytically
- Analyzing numerical and statistical information
- Working effectively with others
- Solving complex real-world problems

- Being an informed and active citizen

Overall Satisfaction

- Rating of entire educational experience
- If starting college search over, I would attend UW-L again

UW System Consortium Items

Each of the nine UW System comprehensive campuses asked an additional set of select items just within this group. Our ratings were higher than the system average on the following questions.

First year students' responses indicated the following items were more positively endorsed at UW-L.

Campus Climate

- My institution fosters an environment where persons of all genders are respected.
- My institution fosters an environment where persons of all sexual orientations are respected.
- I feel safe at this institution, no matter where I am or what time of the day it is.

Obstacles to Academic Success

- Family obligations are not an obstacle to academic progress (lower rating yielding a positive interpretation)

Quality of teaching, library, research opportunities

- Quality of instruction in their courses
- I believe that adequate opportunities for students to conduct their own research exist on my campus.
- The library on my campus provides sufficient resources for me to complete my academic projects.

Senior Students responses showed positive performance related to these items.

Campus Climate

- My institution fosters an environment where racial and ethnic diversity is respected.
- My institution fosters an environment where persons of all genders are respected.
- My institution fosters an environment where persons of all sexual orientations are respected.
- I feel safe at this institution, no matter where I am or what time of the day it is.

Obstacles to Academic Success

- Family obligations as an obstacle to academic progress (lower rating yielding a positive interpretation)

Quality of teaching, library, research opportunities

- Rating of the quality of instruction

- I believe that adequate opportunities for students to conduct their own research exist on my campus.
- The library on my campus provides sufficient resources for me to complete my academic projects.

Writing Experiences

A group of 31 colleges in the overall group of 2014 NSSE participants chose to administer the Experiences with Writing module, a set of 13 items tied to writing and developed by the Writing Program Administrators national organization. Items that indicated a positive UW-L comparison to the group average included:

- First Year Students
 - Received feedback from a classmate, friend, or family member about a draft before turning in your final assignment
 - Gave feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline he or she had written
- Senior Students
 - Talked with a classmate, friend, or family member to develop your ideas before starting your assignment
 - Received feedback from a classmate, friend, or family member about a draft before turning in your final assignment
 - Gave feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline he or she had written
 - Summarized material you read, such as articles, books, or online publications
 - Analyzed or evaluated something you read, researched, or observed
 - Described your methods or findings related to data you collected in lab or field work, a survey project, etc.
 - Explained in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data
 - Wrote in the style and format of a specific field (engineering, history, psychology, etc.)
 - Addressed a real or imagined audience such as your classmates, a politician, non-experts, etc.

Items for Reflection and Possible Action:

Some patterns of student responses indicated areas of concern based on significantly lower average item ratings when compared with our peer groups. These items may indicate areas to consider for future review and action by faculty and staff.

Engagement Indicators

First year scores on the engagement indicators of Learning Strategies, Discussions with Diverse Others, and Student Faculty Interaction placed us below comparison groups. These areas of access to diversity and faculty-student conversations have been noted as concerns in past NSSE administrations. The same pattern continues when reviewing senior students' scores on Learning Strategies and Discussions with

Diverse others. The low scores tied to diversity lean heavily on the specific item related to discussions with students who are of a different race/ethnicity.

Individual Items

Several items did not receive high ratings by our students. The following items emerged due to lower average scores as tested against at least two of our comparison groups. The themes used here were identified by the assessment coordinator.

First Year Students Items of Concern

Exposure to Alternate Points of View

- Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue
- Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective
- Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information

Interaction with Faculty

- Talked about career plans with a faculty member
- Worked with a faculty member on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.)
- Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member

Writing assignments

- Papers written of 11 pages or more
- Estimate of number of assigned pages of writing 41.1 pages, (UW peers 39.5 pages, Carnegie 45.2 pages, NSSE 47 pages)

Diversity Issues

- Discussion with People of a race or ethnicity other than your own
- Discussion with People from an economic background other than your own
- UWL emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.)

Study Habits

- Summarized what you learned in class or from course materials

Learning Communities

- Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together

UWL experience contribution towards skills

- Writing clearly and effectively

- Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills

Senior Students Items of Concern

Writing Assignments

- Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
- Papers written between 6-10 pages
- Papers written 11 pages or more
- Estimated of assigned pages of student writing (73 pages), (UW peers 68.7 pages, Carnegies 79 pages, NSSE 79.1 pages)

Diversity Issues

- Discussion with People of a race or ethnicity other than your own
- Discussion with People from an economic background other than your own
- UWL emphasizes encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.)

Reading and Studying Issues

- Reviewed notes after class
- Estimate of how many study hours are assigned reading

UW System Consortium Items for Review

There were four items that UW-L first year students' average ratings placed them lower than the UW System average on items tied primarily to advising and availability of courses.

- My advising interactions help me make better decisions about my academic goals.
- Satisfaction with availability of general education courses to meet requirements
- Obstacle to academic progress:
 - Difficulties getting courses you need
 - Lack of good academic advising (slight more of problem)

Senior students' response to three items on this scale indicated what may be obstacles to their academic progress.

- Lack of personal motivation
- Poor academic performance
- Personal health issues, physical or mental

Writing Experiences

First year students indicated less exposure to the following kinds of writing tasks or instructions.

- Analyzed or evaluated something you read, researched, or observed
- Described your methods or findings related to data you collected in lab or field work, a survey project, etc.
- Argued a position using evidence and reasoning

- Provided clear instructions describing what he or she wanted you to do
- Explained in advance what he or she wanted you to learn

Senior student only display one item of lower response on this module tied to instructors actions.

- Explained in advance what he or she wanted you to learn

Recommendations:

Based on the responses to the NSSE and the areas that appeared to present challenges for our campus, the following ideas arise as avenues of possible action

1. For all students, engaging them in more academic and co-curricular activities that expose them to multiple perspectives and interactions across difference would help address some of the diversity concerns.
2. Finding paths for first year students to connect with faculty would be advantageous and would build on aspects of our Firm Footing project like Eagle Alert and the advising taskforce.
3. Ongoing review of our approaches to writing instruction and the nature of writing assignments appears warranted. This may be best started by looking at what is taking place in the first year.
4. Course access for lower division students as an obstacle to progress may prove to be a good area for review as we are already aware of some issues for access to science courses and the growing national interest on the need to monitor and report on graduation rates.

The NSSE presents much more information than what is shared in this report and college specific reports are available. A raw data set exists so additional analyses can be conducted. Please contact the Assessment Coordinator for any follow up or questions.