

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information annually from first-year and senior students about the nature and quality of their undergraduate experience. Since its inception, nearly 1,500 baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities in the United States and Canada have used NSSE 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 satisfaction, persistence, and graduation. NSSE data are used by faculty, administrators, researchers, and others for institutional improvement, accountability, and related purposes. Launched in 2000 by a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, NSSE has been fully supported by institutional participation fees since 2002.

Almost two million first-year and senior students from 751 institutions in the United States and Canada were invited to participate in the 2011 NSSE administration. Of this survey population, 537,605 students responded, including 109,532 students from Canadian institutions. A searchable list of participating institutions by year is available on the NSSE Web site.

nsse.iub.edu/html/participants.cfm

Census administrations were offered to institutions opting for the Web-only survey mode, in which students received all contacts by e-mail and completed the survey online. Web-only institutions numbered 647 (86%). The Web+ survey option was used by 79 institutions (11%). This mode includes multiple e-mail contacts and one paper questionnaire sent to a portion of nonrespondents. The remaining 25 institutions (3%) chose the paper questionnaire mode. About three in five (59%) respondents at paper administration institutions, and over 99% of all NSSE respondents, elected to complete the survey online.

U.S. Institutions and Respondents

The first two columns in Table 1 show how NSSE 2011 U.S. institutions compare with the profile of all baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities in the United States. Comparative data for these tables are from the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). NSSE 2011 institutions closely match the U.S. profile in most categories, including Carnegie classification, region, and location. Public institutions are overrepresented in NSSE

NSSE 2011 Overview

2011, while very small institutions—those with fewer than 1,000 undergraduates—are underrepresented. Overall, NSSE 2011 participating institutions reflect the diversity of U.S. higher education with respect to institutional type, size, sector, region, and location.

Table 1 also shows the distribution of NSSE 2011 respondents and the national distribution of students by these same characteristics. NSSE 2011 respondents largely reflect the U.S. undergraduate population, with a few slight exceptions. Student percentages in NSSE 2011 are closely comparable in terms of Carnegie type, sector, and region. The proportion of students enrolled at one group of small institutions—those with between 1,000 and 5,000 undergraduates—is slightly higher for NSSE respondents, and the proportion from institutions with enrollments over 20,000 is slightly smaller. Institutions with very high levels of research activity were also slightly underrepresented.



Agnes Scott College

Table 1

Profile of NSSE 2011 U.S. Institutions and Respondents and All Baccalaureate-Granting U.S. Institutions and Their Students^a

		Institutions		Students	
		NSSE	US ^b	NSSE	US ^b
Carnegie Classification – Basic 2010^c					
	RU/VH	6%	6%	18%	22%
	RU/H	8%	6%	15%	15%
	DRU	6%	5%	6%	9%
	Master's L	27%	25%	32%	30%
	Master's M	12%	11%	9%	8%
	Master's S	6%	8%	3%	4%
	Bac/A&S	17%	16%	9%	5%
	Bac/Diverse	20%	23%	9%	7%
Sector					
	Public	42%	33%	64%	64%
	Private	58%	67%	36%	36%
Undergraduate Enrollment					
	Fewer than 1,000	10%	19%	2%	2%
	1,000 – 2,499	32%	33%	14%	10%
	2,500 – 4,999	23%	19%	15%	12%
	5,000 – 9,999	15%	14%	18%	18%
	10,000 – 19,999	12%	10%	25%	26%
	20,000 or more	8%	6%	26%	32%
Region					
	New England	9%	8%	8%	6%
	Mid East	17%	18%	15%	16%
	Great Lakes	16%	15%	18%	15%
	Plains	11%	10%	11%	9%
	Southeast	26%	24%	25%	23%
	Southwest	7%	7%	8%	12%
	Rocky Mountains	4%	4%	5%	5%
	Far West	9%	11%	11%	11%
	Outlying Areas	1%	2%	<1%	2%
	U.S. Service Schools	1%	<1%	1%	<1%
Location					
	City	45%	46%	54%	60%
	Suburban	22%	23%	18%	18%
	Town	23%	20%	20%	15%
	Rural	10%	10%	8%	6%

a. Percentages are unweighted and based on U.S. postsecondary institutions that award baccalaureate degrees and belong to one of the eight Carnegie classes in the table. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

b. U.S. percentages are based on the data from the 2010 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics File for students at institutions in one of the eight Carnegie classes in the table.

c. For information on the 2010 Carnegie Classifications, see classifications.carnegiefoundation.org.

Carnegie Classifications

RU/VH	Research Universities (very high research activity)	Master's M	Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)
RU/H	Research Universities (high research activity)	Master's S	Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)
DRU	Doctoral/Research Universities	Bac/A&S	Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences
Master's L	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)	Bac/Diverse	Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields

While small and private institutions account for a majority of institutions in NSSE and nationally, a majority of students and NSSE respondents attend large and public institutions. NSSE comparison reports use weights (as appropriate) to ensure proportional representation.

Table 2 shows selected characteristics of NSSE 2011 U.S. respondents and corresponding population estimates for two groups, NSSE 2011 U.S. participating institutions and the U.S. baccalaureate population. Response patterns indicate that females and White students are overrepresented in the NSSE 2011 data, while African American students and part-time students are slightly underrepresented. When it is appropriate to do so, NSSE comparison reports are weighted to correct for disproportional representation by gender and enrollment status.

NSSE 2011 U.S. Cohort Profile

The standard NSSE sampling methodology calls for either a census of first-year and senior students at a given institution (Web-only administrations) or an equal number of randomly sampled students from each group (with the sample size based on the total number of undergraduate students enrolled). Web+ administrations were afforded

larger standard sample sizes than paper mode institutions of comparable enrollment because of the efficiency of Web-based data collection. Some Web+ and paper-mode institutions request random oversamples to increase the number of respondents, thereby reducing sampling error and enhancing their ability to examine results by subgroups. Census-administered and randomly selected respondents from U.S. institutions—referred to collectively as the NSSE 2011 U.S. cohort—are the only respondents included in reports for U.S. participating institutions. The NSSE 2011 U.S. cohort consists of 428,073 first-year and senior respondents, and is used for the remainder of this *NSSE 2011 Overview* unless otherwise noted.

Select NSSE 2011 U.S. Cohort Characteristics

Characteristics of the cohort of U.S. respondents are described below. Percentages reported are unweighted.

Year in School

The NSSE 2011 U.S. respondent cohort includes 191,442 (45%) first-year students and 236,631 (55%) seniors.

Table 2
Characteristics of NSSE 2011 U.S. Respondents, Undergraduate Populations at Participating U.S. Institutions, and Undergraduate Populations at All U.S. Baccalaureate-Granting Institutions^a

	NSSE 2011 Respondents	NSSE 2011 Population ^b	U.S. Baccalaureate Population ^c
Gender			
Male	36%	45%	44%
Female	64%	55%	56%
Race/Ethnicity^d			
African American/Black	10%	13%	13%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1%	1%	1%
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	7%	7%	6%
Caucasian/White	69%	64%	63%
Hispanic	9%	10%	12%
Other	1%	<1%	n/a
Multiracial/Ethnic	2%	2%	2%
International	3%	2%	3%
Enrollment Status			
Full-time	89%	86%	84%
Part-time	11%	14%	16%

a. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

b. NSSE 2011 population data are provided by participating institutions and include only first-year and senior students.

c. U.S. percentages are unweighted and based on data from the 2010 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics and Enrollment data. They include all undergraduate students enrolled in baccalaureate degree programs.

d. IPEDS and NSSE categories for race and ethnicity differ. Percentages exclude students whose ethnicity was unknown or not provided.

Gender

Women made up more than three-fifths (64%) of respondents, consistent with widely reported survey research findings that women are more likely than men to respond to surveys. Institutional reports were weighted to adjust for the overrepresentation of women among NSSE respondents.

Age

Over 80% of first-year students were 19 years of age or younger, while more than three-fifths of seniors were younger than 24. About 10% of first-year respondents and 37% of seniors were 24 or older.

Race and Ethnicity

African American/Black students were somewhat underrepresented, while Caucasian/White students were overrepresented (Table 2).

Living Arrangements

Approximately 64% of first-year students and 14% of seniors lived in campus housing, while an additional 1% of seniors lived in a fraternity or sorority house. Although response options included other residence types differentiated by distance from campus, 6% of first-year students and 9% of seniors indicated that none of the choices applied, likely because they are primarily studying online.

Fraternity or Sorority

About 8% of first-year students and 10% of seniors were members of a fraternity or sorority.

Grades

Approximately 44% of first-year students and 49% of seniors reported earning mostly “A” grades. Only 10% of first-year students and 6% of seniors reported earning mostly “C” grades or lower.

Enrollment Status

About 89% of all respondents were enrolled full time, slightly higher than the NSSE 2011 population (Table 2). Institutional reports are weighted to adjust for the overrepresentation of full-time students among NSSE respondents.

Parents’ Education

Among respondents who provided education information for one or both parents, about 80% had at least one parent with some college education. Approximately 56% had at least one parent who completed at least a bachelor’s

degree, and nearly a third of respondents (30%) indicated both parents having a bachelor’s or higher degree.

Transfer Status

More than two-fifths (44%) of senior respondents began postsecondary education at an institution other than the one they were attending when they completed the NSSE survey. About half (49%) of these students had previously attended another baccalaureate-granting institution, 70% had attended a community college, 14% had attended a vocational-technical school, and 6% had enrolled in some other form of postsecondary education (percentages sum to more than 100% because some students previously attended more than one type of institution).

Primary Major Field

Table 3 shows the percentage of students pursuing majors in various areas of study, by class level and gender. Proportionally more men were pursuing studies in business and engineering, while more women were pursuing majors in education, the social sciences, and other professional fields (e.g., nursing).

U.S. Response Rates

The average U.S. institutional response rate for NSSE 2011 was 33% (Table 4). For paper mode schools (institutions where students were invited by postal mail, but had the option of completing either the paper or the Web version of the survey) the average institutional response rate was 30%. Three-fifths of the students responding at these institutions (59%) elected to complete



Rosemont College

Table 3
Primary Major Categories by Class and Gender at NSSE 2011 U.S. Institutions^a

Major Category ^a	First-Year Students (n=191,442)		Seniors (n=236,631)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Arts & Humanities	12%	13%	12%	14%
Biological Sciences	8%	10%	7%	7%
Business	18%	12%	22%	17%
Education	5%	12%	5%	13%
Engineering	14%	2%	12%	2%
Physical Sciences	5%	3%	4%	2%
Professional (other)	6%	16%	5%	13%
Social Sciences	10%	14%	11%	16%
Other	20%	13%	22%	15%
Undecided	4%	4%	<1%	<1%

a. NSSE codes major categories using 85 majors drawn from the 2000 *Classification of Instructional Programs*. For information on the classification, see www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2002165. The condensed major categories above are used for NSSE reporting purposes. Additional details concerning the majors included in each category are available in the *NSSE 2011 Codebook*; see nsse.iub.edu/html/analysis_resources.cfm.

NSSE online. The average institutional response rate for NSSE 2011 Web-only institutions (institutions where students were invited by e-mail to complete the survey online) was 34%. Institutions using the Web+ mode of administration recorded an average institutional response rate of 31%. The highest institutional response rate in NSSE 2011 was 87%, and 65% of institutions achieved a response rate of at least 30%.

Additional information about response rates, including response rates for your institution, is provided in the *NSSE 2011 Respondent Characteristics* report.

Canadian Institutions and Respondents

Sixty-eight Canadian institutions from 10 provinces participated in NSSE 2011. Of these, 24 institutions were from Ontario, 13 from Quebec, seven each from Alberta and British Columbia, six from Nova Scotia, four from New Brunswick, three from Manitoba, two from Saskatchewan, and one each from Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island. All Canadian institutions participated via the Web-only administration mode. A French language version of the survey was provided as a Canadian administration option.

Table 4
NSSE 2011 U.S. Participation and Response Information by Survey Administration Mode^a

Survey Administration Mode	Number of Institutions ^b	Average Institutional Response Rate	Percentage of Students Responding via Web
Paper	25	30%	59%
Web-only	575	34%	100%
Web+	78	31%	96%
All Institutions	678	33%	~100%

a. Response rates and percent of students responding via Web are based on census and randomly sampled participants only.
b. Excludes five NSSE 2011 institutions that participated as part of a research project with a special survey administration protocol.

Response Rates

The average Canadian institutional response rate for NSSE 2011 was 37%, with the highest rate achieved being 92%. Three-quarters (75%) of Canadian institutions achieved a response rate of at least 30%.

Student Overview

More than 343,000 Canadian students were invited to participate and the total number of respondents was 109,532 (Table 5). Women made up almost two-thirds of respondents, and 94% of first-year and 83% of senior respondents were enrolled full time. Of senior respondents, 21% were enrolled in a social science major, 16% in arts & humanities, 15% in business, and 11% in biological sciences (proportions of first-year students were comparable).

Summary of Ethnocultural Categories

The majority of students providing ethnocultural information identified as White (71%). Additionally, 11% identified as Chinese, 6% as South Asian, and 4% as Black. Less than 2% of respondents identified with each of the remaining categories. Ethnocultural categories for Canadian institutions participating in NSSE were adapted from Statistics Canada, Canada's national statistical agency. statcan.gc.ca

Age

Approximately seven in ten first-year (71%) Canadian respondents were 19 or younger, and a comparable proportion of seniors (72%) were under 24. About 9% of first-year students and 28% of seniors were 24 years of age or older.



SUNY College at Brockport

Table 5
Characteristics of NSSE 2011
Canadian Respondents^a

	First-Year Students	Seniors
	(n=58,534)	(n=50,998)
Gender		
Male	36%	37%
Female	64%	63%
Enrollment Status		
Full-time	94%	83%
Part-time	6%	17%
Major		
Arts & Humanities	16%	16%
Biological Sciences	12%	11%
Business	13%	15%
Education	3%	4%
Engineering	9%	9%
Physical Sciences	6%	4%
Professional (other)	10%	10%
Social Sciences	19%	21%
Other	12%	11%
Undecided	1%	<1%

a. Percentages are unweighted.



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