

INTRODUCING THE NSSE

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What is NSSE?

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a survey of first-year students and seniors administered by colleges across the United States and Canada. In the spring semester of 2015, over 300,000 students at 561 institutions participated in the NSSE, including Fresno State. These institutions represent the full range of 4-year colleges: small and large, public and private, research and teaching oriented. This survey has been conducted annually since 2000.

The primary goal of the NSSE is to measure how students feel about their university experience. Fresno State students who participated in the survey were asked questions about:

- The amount, variety, and challenge of classwork;
- Their interactions with other students, faculty, advisors, and staff;
- The quality of their instruction;
- Their extracurricular activities;
- Their perception of the university's priorities; and
- Their personal and intellectual growth while attending Fresno State.

Why survey student engagement?

Research shows that student engagement predicts important student outcomes. For instance, the amount of time students spend studying or working off campus has been shown to be significantly related to their first-year GPAⁱ. Similarly, freshmen who co-operatively learn, such as by studying together, are more likely to return to college for a second yearⁱⁱ. When Fresno State knows the attitudes and practices of its students, it can better focus its resources to help them succeed in their college careersⁱⁱⁱ.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness at Fresno State analyzes NSSE data, combined with students' responses to surveys in previous years as well as the responses of students at other universities. Fresno State uses these data to better understand the needs of its students, the impact of getting a Fresno State education, and how student experiences at Fresno State compare to students at similar universities.

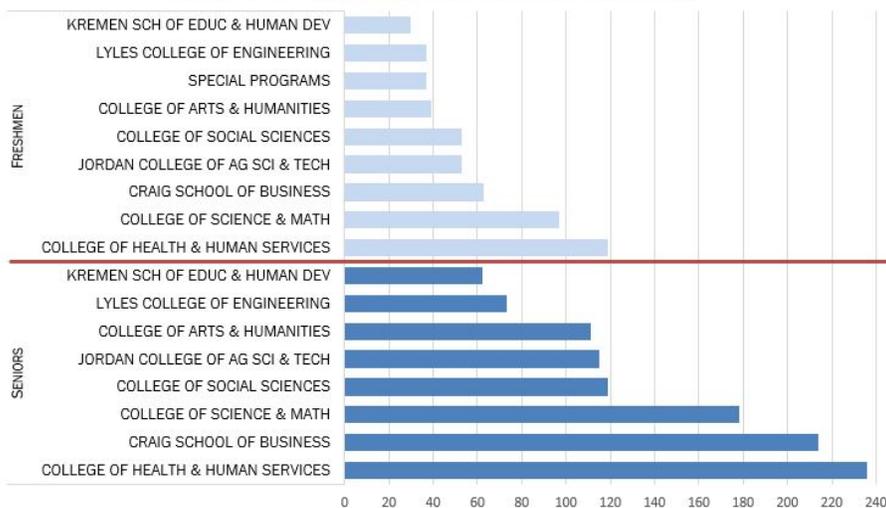
How was NSSE conducted at Fresno State?

Starting in March, 2015, all first-year and senior Fresno State students were asked to participate in the NSSE. Of the 9,291 students contacted, 528 first-year students and 1,107 seniors logged onto NSSE's website and responded to the survey, for a 15% response rate among first-year students and a 19% response rate among seniors. This translates to a margin of error of $\pm 3.9\%$ for freshmen and $\pm 2.6\%$ for seniors. The median survey took 16 minutes to complete.

What was our sample?

The demographics of the sample reflected the diversity of backgrounds and interests of students at Fresno State. Females were more likely than males to respond. Sixty-six percent of respondents were female, even though only 59% of first-year students and 55% of seniors were female. Students were most likely to hail from the San Joaquin Valley. Fifty-nine percent of survey respondents applied from Fresno County, 11% from Tulare County and 5% from Madera County. The sample also reflected Fresno State's diverse student body, with respondents coming from countries such as Saudi Arabia and China. As you can see in the graph on the right, respondents also reflected the diversity of campus, with students from every college responding to the survey. Furthermore, 71% reported being a first-generation college student. Similarly, students have big plans for the future. Fifty-nine percent of respondents expect to earn a masters or doctoral degree after graduating from Fresno State.

Number of Respondents by Student Level and College



How to get more information?

In the coming months, come back to the [Office of Institutional Effectiveness' website](#) for more results from the NSSE, answering questions such as how supportive students find Fresno State and how their interactions with faculty have changed over time. For more information about the NSSE, you can go to [NSSE website](#) or [contact OIE](#). OIE can provide more details about how we analyze the NSSE data as well as conduct individualized analyses.

ⁱ Kuh, G. D., Cruce, T. M., Shoup, R., Kinzie, J., & Gonyea, R. M. (2008). Unmasking the effects of student engagement on first-year college grades and persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79(5), 540-563.

ⁱⁱ DeAngelo, L. (2014). Programs and Practices That Retain Students From the First to Second Year: Results From a National Study. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2013(160), 53-75.

ⁱⁱⁱ Brownell, J. E., & Swaner, L. E. (2009). High-impact practices: Applying the learning outcomes literature to the development of successful campus programs. *Peer Review*, 11(2), 26.