

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Questions and Answers

What is it?

- The NSSE survey was developed in 1999 by the Indiana University Center for Post-Secondary Research and is used annually by more than 500 universities and colleges across North America to gather feedback from students on their university experiences.
- The Indiana University Center oversees the electronic distribution of surveys, does the data collection and analysis, and provides each participating university with a comprehensive set of institutional reports by August each year.
- The NSSE is *not* a 'student satisfaction' survey (how much do you like X; what is your favourite Y). It is designed to gather feedback from students on the ways they are engaged in their studies, on their relationships with faculty, staff and fellow students, on administrative services, on the ways the university supports their success, etc.
- While many universities participate annually in NSSE, each institution receives its own specific institutional report based on feedback from their students.

Did Saint Mary's participate in NSSE before?

- Saint Mary's participated once before, in 2008.

What were the results?

- Nearly 40% of SMU first year and fourth year students participated in the 2008 survey – matching the average Canadian response rate for NSSE.

- Students told us that:
 - They needed greater access to academic advising
 - They wanted improvements to a number of administrative services (and attitudes), and were pretty clear on what they were
 - Saint Mary's was a 'supportive campus environment' but students lacked opportunities and access to a number of 'enriching educational experiences'
 - They worked many hours off campus - in jobs and family responsibilities, and they needed to have that reality reflected in program offerings, availability of services, flexible schedules, etc.

- These results – and many others - were reported widely across campus, and many individuals, groups, and committees have used the NSSE data since 2008 to examine/change/improve their programs and services and how they interact with and support students.

Why do it again?

- Things change over three years and we want to hear and learn from our current student body.
- A new 3 – 5 year Academic Plan is being developed for Saint Mary's, and this is one way to hear from a great many students on their issues/concerns/priorities, and where we should be focusing our attention and resources.

How long will the survey take?

- NSSE is an online survey that will take about 15 minutes to complete.

Who will be invited to participate and when?

- Approximately 2,200 first year and 1,900 fourth year students will be contacted/notified by email
- The email address will be the one students have provided the Registrar's Office.
- The email message will be sent by the Indiana University Centre for Post-Secondary Research but will be signed by Saint Mary's AVP, Dr. David Gauthier.
- The first email invitation will be send to students on January 26, 2011.
- Students will receive several email reminders during February, again, all signed by Dr. Gauthier.

- Once a student has completed the survey, he/she will not receive any further email reminders.
- We know from previous experience that the majority of students who participate will do so on the first invitation – so, please take a few minutes in late January to give us your feedback.

Why should we bother to participate?

- Universities do not participate in NSSE unless they are serious about gathering feedback from students, and, more importantly, doing something positive with the information they receive.
- All students benefit from having their voices heard, their opinions expressed – and from the changes/improvements made because of it.
- Saint Mary's is one of eleven universities in the Atlantic region who will be participating in NSSE 2011. We want Saint Mary's students to participate in numbers equal to, *or higher than*, other universities in the region.
- Substantial numbers of students must participate if the data is to be considered valid and useful.
- All students who complete the survey will be entered in a draw for two \$200 gift certificates to the SMU Bookstore. NSSE will provide us with the two names at the end of the survey cycle.

Please take the opportunity to "Grade your Experience at SMU"

..... When invited to do so, please participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement!

**If you have further questions, contact Margaret-Anne Bennett, Director, Centre for Academic and Instructional Development (CAID):
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