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WEST VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Executive Summary

West Virginia State University- 2014 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) findings
Date: May 18, 2016

Brief Overview

WVSU participated in the 2014 administration of the NSSE, a nationally normed survey that looks at student engagement factors affecting success while attending higher education. The NSSE was sent via email to all first-year and senior year students who were enrolled during the 2013-14 academic year. The WVSU response rate of first-year (FY) and senior students (SY) is considered lower than preferred by survey standards at 18% vs. 22%; therefore, it is suggested that the information provided within this document be used with caution for decision support purposes. This data, however, serves as a valuable tool to begin conversations among the WVSU community about factors affecting student engagement and retention.

In the 2014 NSSE administration, both full-time and female students were *over-represented* while Black/African American students were *under-represented* in the sample. Both aspects of *over-representation* are common to NSSE; therefore, the aggregated reports they provide use a weighted method. When looking at individual survey items as done in this document, weighting is not factored in.

The following sections represent some highlights from the survey which are divided into three areas 1). Respondent characteristics, 2). Selected survey items, and 3). Student comments. Actual item breakdowns are provided in an attachment. More in-depth results are available by contacting the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Effectiveness (IRAE) at 304-766-4189 for inquiry. The selected survey items represent aspects of the university's retention and student success plan <http://www.wvstateu.edu/Academics/RSSC-Example/Retention-at-State>

Section I: Respondent Characteristics

- *Gender & Race:* A little more than 50% of WVSU survey participants were female. The majority of all participants were white (FY=92% vs. SY=69%). About 10% of participants were Black or African American with 6% of first-year and 9% of senior-year reporting multiracial status.
- *Major selection:* The majority of first-year participants represented Biology (12%), Business (16%), Education (26%), and Health Professions (11%). Senior participants were slightly different with most students reporting Arts & Humanities (10%), Social Sciences (11%), Business (20%), and Education (28%) as their majors.
- *Full-time status:* the majority of first-year (94%) and senior (80%) students report attending WVSU during the current academic year with full-time status.
- *Course Load:* Variation is seen between the number of courses taken by respondents during the academic semester by first-year and senior students. Of first-year students, 83% took between 4-6

Institutional Research, Assessment & Effectiveness

325 Ferrell Hall
PO Box 1000 Phone: 304-766-4189
Institute, WV 25112 E-Mail: vicky.morris-dueer@wvstateu.edu

courses while 69% of seniors reported taking between 5-6 classes. Senior students reported more variation, with 10% taking one course and 11% reported taking 7 or more courses.

- *Parental Education Level:* Participants reported that their parents either had a GED (FY= 26%, SY=38%) or had attended college but did not complete a degree (FY=26% vs. SY=15%). First generation status is reported at 72% for first-year students and 69% for senior students (neither parent had a bachelor degree).

Section II: Selected Survey Items

- *Evaluate Experience at WVSU:* Approximately 80% of both first-year and senior students said that if they had it to do over again, they would likely attend WVSU. More than 80% of survey respondents also said that they rate their overall experience here as good or excellent.
- *Quality of Interactions at WVSU:* Students rated the quality of their experiences with various individuals on campus. Table 3 shows that in general, seniors rated their interactions with other students, advisors, and faculty higher than interactions with staff. First-year students rated their interactions with advisors lower than interactions with other students or faculty.

Table 1. Student Ratings - Quality of Interactions with Others on Campus

	First-year	Senior Year
Student	72%	87%
Academic advisors	58%	78%
Faculty	71%	81%
Student services staff (career, student activities, housing, etc.)	63%	65%
Other administrative staff (registrar, financial aid, etc.)	64%	60%

Source: NSSE 2014 results

- *Institutional Emphasis:* Table 4 shows student ratings for areas of institutional emphasis. Generally, 50-60% of the students said that the institution placed quite a bit or very much emphasis on these areas. An exception is noted for ‘helping manage non-academic responsibilities; which was much lower for both first-year and senior respondents.

Table 2. Student Ratings -Areas of Institutional Emphasis

	First-year	Senior Year
Encouraging contact with students from different backgrounds	61%	53%
Providing opportunities to be involved socially	60%	60%
Providing support for your overall well-being	60%	50%
Helping you manage non-academic responsibilities	39%	34%

Source: NSSE 2014 results

- *WVSU Contribution to Knowledge, Skills, and Personal Development:* Table 5 illustrates student ratings of how they perceive that WVSU contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development. Sixty-nine percent of first-year students and seventy-four percent of senior students rated that the institution contributed to their growth quite a bit or very much.

Table 3. Student Ratings - Institutional Contribution to Personal Development

	First-year	Senior Year
Writing clearly and effectively	69%	74%
Speaking clearly and effectively	54%	70%
Analyzing numerical and statistical information	59%	59%
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	57%	63%
Understanding people of other backgrounds	57%	63%

Source: NSSE 2014 results

Section III: Student Comments

NSSE provides student comments made at the end of the survey. This is a short synopsis of those fifty students who chose to offer comments. Several notable themes emerged and were categorized into general themes. More seniors (n=33) offered comments than first-year students (n=17). About 10% of both FY and SY respondents spoke positively about their satisfaction with their WVSU experience. Other themes included appreciation for supportive faculty and staff in courses and programs. Students expressed concerns about the need for better alignment between student service offices, greater flexibility in course offerings, and more support of nontraditional students. While only fifty students offered comments, their voices offer valued insight into their experiences while here.

Concluding Comments

The NSSE results provide the campus with an opportunity to engage in productive discussions about retention and student engagement. Despite the low response rate of this survey administration, we can still find areas that lead to beneficial conversation. As noted in this document, the results presented here are a selected subset of the survey items and were selected because they had impact for the efforts of the Retention and Student Success Council.

A few recommendations can be offered for future survey administrations that will strengthen the findings. In addition to the over-representation of female and full-time students, we would benefit from over-sampling male and Black/African American students. Being an HBCU, having student engagement data that illustrates the experience of our Black students is beneficial for both our mission and Vision 2020. Another benefit would be greater communication with departments so that we have better student participation among the majors.

Overall, students rate many aspects of their time spent at WVSU favorably. While some aspects can be improved upon (i.e. interactions with support service and administrative staff, helping with non-academic responsibilities, analyzing numerical and statistical data), students rated their overall experience well with about 80% stating that if they had it to do over again, they would still attend State.