

The National Survey of Student Engagement Honors Consortium Project

****Open Call for Participation in the Second Year (2020) of the NSSE Honors Consortium****

At this time, we are pleased to announce a call for interested parties at four-year degree institutions to signal their interest to join the Honors Consortium for the spring 2020 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The decision to participate in NSSE usually is made by university leadership at the level of the provost, vice-president for academic affairs, or those in offices of institutional research and reporting. Thus, honors directors and deans who are interested in having their institution participate likely will need to consult with those leaders about the possibility of joining the NSSE Honors Consortium. A description of this project is presented herein, and key decision criteria that you may want to consider during on-campus consultations are included in the [checklist below](#).

THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, often pronounced Nessie) is one of the most widely used surveys of undergraduate student experience in the United States. Each year, the survey targets first-year and senior college students at participating schools, asking dozens of questions about experience with (seniors) or anticipated experience with (first-year students) everything from the quality of interactions with advisors to learning communities to talking with faculty outside of class or working with them on research. According to the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research ([CPR](#)), which administers NSSE, approximately 2 million students at 725 participating institutions were contacted for the 2017 administration of NSSE, and more than half a million students responded ([NSSE 2017 Overview](#)). Moreover, *approximately two-thirds of NCHC member four-year degree institutions have participated in the past four years*, some on an annual basis and others on a biennial or triennial basis.

THE NSSE-NCHC HONORS CONSORTIUM PROJECT

While many of the items in NSSE concern pedagogical approaches and student experiences that are of interest to honors educators, there is no question about honors program/college experience in the main NSSE survey that would allow for comparison of honors students with non-honors students. Fortunately, the CPR offers the opportunity for participating institutions to join into cooperative NSSE consortia for a small fee added to the regular NSSE cost. The NSSE consortium option allows university systems and already-established consortia to join together for purposes that allow colleges and universities to compare their own NSSE summaries to aggregated summaries of the groups to which they belong. More importantly, the NSSE consortium option also allows for a small set of additional questions to be appended to the NSSE survey administration at those schools signing into a consortium.

The NCHC Research Committee has been working with CPR over the past two years to organize an Honors Consortium of interested four-year degree institutions for administration of

NSSE. As part of this effort, a special working group of the Research Committee has designed a set of questions tapping into some of the areas of greatest concern to honors educators. Importantly, that question set includes an item asking students whether they are in an honors program or college, and the question set also includes several dozen additional items on topics such as civic engagement, undergraduate research, curiosity, open-mindedness, intellectual risk-taking, student mental health and well-being, personal values and motivations, the sense of community, and intellectual humility. That Honors Consortium question set can be found on the NCHC website here: [Consortium Sample Question Set](#).

Ten schools from across the country participated in the NSSE-NCHC Honors Consortium in Spring 2019, generating rich student-level data on over 1,000 honors students and thousands more non-honors students. Participating institutions and their honors program staff will benefit in terms of being able to marshal the full complement of NSSE items to compare honors and non-honors students on their campuses. That includes not only the topics embedded in the special Honors Consortium question set, but the addition of the survey item asking about honors participation opens up for the first time the possibility of comparing honors to non-honors students on every other item in the standard NSSE survey, including the following:

High Impact Practices

Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate?

(Done or in progress, Plan to do, Do not plan to do, Have not decided)

- Participate in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement
- Hold a formal leadership role in a student organization or group
- Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together
- 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.)

Knowledge, Skills, and Personal Development

How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?

(Very much, Quite a bit, Some, Very little)

- Writing clearly and effectively
- Speaking clearly and effectively
- Thinking critically and analytically
- Developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics
- Understanding people of other backgrounds (economic, racial/ethnic, political, religious, nationality, etc.)
- Solving complex real-world problems
- Being an informed and active citizen

In-Class Experiences

During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?

(Very often, Often, Sometimes, Never)

- Given a course presentation
- Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignment
- Connected your learning to societal problems or issues
- Included diverse perspectives (political, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments
- Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue
- Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept

During the current school year, to what extent have your courses challenged you to do your best work?

(1 = Not At All to 7 = Very much)

Overall Collegiate Experience

How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?

(Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor)

If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?

(Definitely yes, Probably yes, Probably no, Definitely no)

Educational Aspirations

What is the highest level of education you ever expect to complete?

Beyond those items described above, NSSE also collects data on a variety of demographic items that would facilitate analyses of diversity for honors vis-à-vis non-honors students, and there are numerous other items that may be of additional interest to honors staff. Those interested in exploring the full range of items in the standard NSSE survey form can find a facsimile for the most recent survey at the following link:

http://nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/survey_instruments/2019/NSSE_2019_US.pdf.

COST

The Center for Postsecondary Research charges a fee of \$400 to participate in a consortium. That fee is in addition to the base fee charged to the institution for administration of the standard NSSE survey. Honors program contacts should work to secure financial commitments from campus stakeholders and submit a signed NSSE data sharing agreement by **August 30, 2019**.

CONTACT

Interested parties with questions about the project or those wishing to signal their intention to join the NSSE Honors Consortium may direct correspondence to consortium coordinator **Dr. Andrew Cognard-Black**, chair of the NCHC Honors Consortium Working Group (ajcognardblack@smcm.edu). Consortium members should be current institutional members of the National Collegiate Honors Council.

The final list of consortium participants will need to be submitted to CPR in September of 2019. All agreements with relevant parties on campus will need to be secured by honors program/college representatives by **August 30th** in order to participate in the Consortium. Please note that the CPR registration deadline for consortia is several weeks earlier than the deadline for individual institutions to register for NSSE; the sooner, the better that you communicate your intentions to the consortium coordinator.

Checklist for Honors Directors and Deans Interested in Having their Institutions Join the NSSE Honors Consortium

[\(A printer-friendly PDF version\)](#)

- _____ (1) Does your institution participate either annually or on an occasional basis in the National Survey of Student Engagement, and, if so, does your institution plan to participate in the spring 2020 administration of NSSE? *(You may be able to find the answer to the first part of this question by searching the NSSE participating institution search page at <http://nsse.indiana.edu/html/participants.cfm?>; select the NSSE box, enter your school in the institution name field, and click “Collect Results.”)*
- _____ (2) Is your institution already committed to another NSSE consortium (e.g., as part of a state university system) that might preclude joining the NSSE Honors Consortium?
- _____ (3) Is your institution already committed to using more than one of the optional NSSE “topical modules” that might preclude joining the Honors Consortium? *(CPR sets a limit of one “topical module” for those participating in a consortium.)*
- _____ (4) Is your honors program big enough to join the NSSE Honors Consortium? *(You won’t be restricted from the Honors Consortium based on program size, but you will probably want to consider program size when deliberating about whether your institution will join the NSSE Honors Consortium. Smaller programs may benefit less from the potential. If you have, say, 160 honors students, and if about one-fourth of those are seniors (40), and if those forty student respond at the regular rate of response for NSSE, which is about 25 to 30 percent, then that would be 10–12 honors students’ worth of senior data to compare to the rest of your senior NSSE respondents. If your honors students have big differences from non-honors students on a given set of survey item, those differences could show up as significant with sample sizes that small, but many people would probably raise doubts about data from samples that small. If, however, you have a program that’s closer to 300 (the average program size among NCHC members), and with 75 or 80 seniors, and thus could be fairly confident of about 20+ senior honors students in the final NSSE sample, it gets a little easier to justify a \$400 investment.)*
- _____ (5) Is your honors program/college or your institution administration able and willing to pay the additional \$400 consortium participation fee?
- _____ (6) Are you willing to work with your office of institutional research and reporting (and are they willing to work with you) to provide them with a list of your honors students for inclusion as an “optional group variable” in your institution’s NSSE

“population file” (i.e., the mailing list NSSE uses to contact students)? *(There is no additional cost for doing so, and this variable will provide a useful way to cross-check and corroborate student responses to the survey question asking about honors participation.)*

For those interested in joining the NSSE Honors Consortium, please contact consortium coordinator **Dr. Andrew Cognard-Black**, chair of the Research Committee Honors Consortium Working Group (ajcognardblack@smcm.edu).

NSSE Honors Consortium Working Group

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