



Administration Information for the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement

Introduction

Thank you for registering for the *Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement* (BCSSE, pronounced “Bessie”). The purpose of this document is to make you aware of your institution’s responsibilities regarding the administration of BCSSE on your campus. Regularly reviewing this guide and communicating with NSSE staff members will help ensure a successful survey administration and allow you to maximize the benefits of this unique program.

Key Roles of the Campus Coordinator

The Campus Coordinator has three major responsibilities:

- **Serve as the link between your institution and NSSE staff.**

As the designated BCSSE-NSSE contact between your institution and NSSE staff, you will serve as the Campus Coordinator for your institution. In this role, you will oversee and support all BCSSE project activities on your campus. This includes acting as the link between NSSE staff and the institution, as well as between NSSE staff and your students being surveyed.

- **Coordinate the survey administration process.**

The Campus Coordinator is also responsible for coordinating the administration, collection, and return of surveys. One of the earliest and most important decisions your institution will make is how the survey will be administered – by means of paper or web. You will administer surveys locally, which means that your institution will determine which students on campus receive the invitation to participate in the survey. The key to a successful local administration is identifying the most appropriate method of distribution and collection of the surveys for your institution. On the following pages you will find information to help facilitate your local administration, including suggestions to improve the number of completed surveys on your campus.

- **Ensure proper handling and return shipment of completed paper surveys.**

In order to avoid damages that may cause difficulties when scanning your returned paper surveys:

- **Please instruct staff** to handle surveys with care at all times.
- **Please** follow the packing and shipping instructions carefully when returning completed surveys.
- **Please** do not fold, staple, attach, clip, or in any other way alter the surveys.

Suggestions for BCSSE Administration

Survey Administration

When administering the survey, each student should receive an invitation to participate, which serves as their informed consent, and a survey. For web-based administration, the invitation to participate is provided online with the survey. The invitation to participate will provide the following information: (a) a description of the survey contents and purposes, (b) the students' rights as a participant in the study, and (c) contact information for an office and individual on your campus and for the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University should students have questions about the survey or results.

When administering the survey, please emphasize to students that they should provide their student identification number and complete all questions on the survey, as this will provide your institution with the most valid and accurate information and ensure the integrity of the data.

Administration Mode – Should you use Web or Paper?

Even though your institution may use web-only or web-plus administration for NSSE, web administration for BCSSE may not be the best option for you given the special circumstances of students in transition to your institution. For BCSSE, your institution will be responsible for contacting entering first-year students to solicit their participation, regardless of mode of administration. To determine if web administration is best for your institution, consider the following statements. If even a few of the following statements are *not* true of your institution (or if you do not know the answers for your institution), we highly recommend that you use paper administration.

To administer via web to group audiences:

- Computers in campus facilities have up-to-date browsers, and are well-serviced, fast, and reliable
- Computing facilities are available that require no waiting for your entering first-year students
- Institution's technology staff can obtain required information and quickly address problems when they arise

To administer via web to non-group audiences (i.e., an email contact to participate):

- Most entering first-year students have their own fast computer with an up-to-date browser where they live
- Entering first-year students will have institution-assigned emails OR you will have their accurate email addresses
- Entering first-year students use an email system from which they can click on an embedded link (URL) to BCSSE
- Entering first-year students check their messages regularly at the email addresses that you have for these students

Achieving the Highest Number of Completed Surveys

Based upon our experience, we offer the following three recommendations to ensure that your institution has the highest possible number of completed surveys:

1. Administer the survey to your *entire* entering first-year cohort

Because of such issues as sample attrition between the BCSSE summer administration and the NSSE spring follow-up, we strongly urge you to administer the survey to your entire entering first-year cohort to obtain a sufficient sample size for combined BCSSE-NSSE reporting and analysis.

2. Administer the survey to *group* audiences

We highly recommend that institutions administer surveys as part of their first-year orientation process or welcome week, such as in a lecture hall for a paper administration or prior to online course registration for a web administration. If your institution does not offer a formal orientation or welcome week, or if you are not able to administer the survey during these events, we recommend distributing surveys in the first week of classes in courses selected by their high concentration of first-time first-year students. If you cannot administer the survey as a scheduled part of orientation or in classes, please consider using campus mailboxes; sending periodic mail, e-mail, or telephone reminders for those students who have not returned their surveys; and distributing and

collecting surveys by residence hall staff. These tactics work relatively well at small institutions where a large percentage of students live in campus residences. If you choose to mail surveys to students, carefully consider the wording in your cover letter that asks them to participate. Responding to the survey is an opportunity for students to recall what they have done prior to coming to college and to think about their expectations and interests as they begin college. Also consider ordering additional copies of the survey to be mailed to those students that do not respond to the first round of mailings.

3. Assist students to *correctly* enter their identification number on the survey

No matter how you choose to administer BCSSE, please make sure that your entering students will already know and have access to their student identification numbers when the survey is administered. When the survey is administered to group audiences, we recommend that institutional representatives assist students with correctly entering their student ID. The student identification number is a *critical* element that students will need to enter when completing their survey. This identification number will be used by your institution to identify your BCSSE respondents for NSSE sampling. Please see below for more information on matching your institution's BCSSE-NSSE data.

Keep in mind that student participation in BCSSE is strictly voluntary. Students cannot be blocked from course registration, rejected housing, or any other negative consequence as a result of not completing BCSSE. Any recruiting materials used on your campus for the purpose of facilitating BCSSE participation must not contain any coercive language or indicate that participation in BCSSE is required.

If your institution uses incentives for student participation, the incentives must be described in recruiting materials and clarify details that indicate the odds a study participant will be compensated:

- Approximate number of students in the sample at their institution
- Number of incentives offered
- Approximate value of each incentive item

Institutions are solely responsible for the distribution of incentives. There are no expenses for students to participate in the study.

Reviewing Completed Paper Surveys

As the students' paper surveys are returned, please take time to ensure that they are properly completed (i.e., student ID provided, boxes are properly marked). This will help us to process the surveys in a timely manner, thus getting your institution's data back to you sooner.

Matching your BCSSE-NSSE data

It will be your institution's responsibility to correctly identify your BCSSE participants in the population files submitted for NSSE so that NSSE staff may include these students in your sample for NSSE. To assist you with this process, we will ask students at your institution to provide their student identification number and the first three letters of their last names. This means that BCSSE respondents must be assigned and have ready access to their student identification numbers at the time that they complete the survey. When the survey is administered to group audiences, we recommend that institutional representatives assist students with correctly entering their student ID. Although the survey assumes that your institution's student ID is entirely numeric, students may write in alphanumeric characters (no dashes, please) in the spaces provided.

After we process your BCSSE data in early fall, you will be able to download information on your BCSSE respondents from the institutional user interface. After you have matched these self-reported student identification numbers to your institution's records, we ask that you create an additional field in your NSSE population file that provides the survey identification number for your BCSSE participants. When this population file has been uploaded to our institutional user interface, we will begin the process of using random sampling and targeted oversampling to include these students in your NSSE sample.