

# Grand Valley State University

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## Assessing an Assessment: The New NSSE IL Module

Debbie Morrow



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Friday, 3 November 2017

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# Assessing an Assessment:

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The New NSSE-IL Module

# Abstract

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The University Libraries at Grand Valley State University successfully advocated for inclusion of the 'Experiences with Information Literacy' module in our Winter 2016 administration of NSSE, the National Survey of Student Engagement. Overall, summary responses for our participating students compared positively to the aggregate means for all participating Large Public institutions in the same cohort. However, further analysis of responses broken out by individual colleges within the university revealed an interesting picture of students in GVSU's College of Engineering & Computing, perhaps indicating that their educational experience at GVSU is qualitatively different from that of their peers in other academic and professional disciplines. Or is it? And if so, how? A preliminary exploration of the possible "why's" behind the results suggest that sometimes reliability and validity can be nullified under unexpected conditions.

# Do you know NSSE?

i.e. “National Survey of Student Engagement”



“[Nessie at night, Grand Rapids Art Prize 2009](#)” by [dedav](#),  
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# Do you know NSSE?

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- As a librarian at your institution, are you generally aware of, or perhaps very familiar with, “NSSE”?
- Are you aware of the "Experiences with Information Literacy" add-on module, newly available beginning in 2014?
- Has your institution included the IL module one or more times since 2014?
- Has your library examined or analyzed the data from the IL module, with the goal of revising Library-delivered information literacy instruction?
- Has your analysis of IL module data revealed any anomalies among student responses? – Ours did, when we took a closer look at data from our first administration of the Experiences with Information Literacy responses in 2016. What we saw, and what we are guessing, is the focus of this talk.

# Overview

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- ▶ What is NSSE?
- ▶ NSSE 'Experiences with Information Literacy' module
- ▶ NSSE-IL at Grand Valley State University, 2016
- ▶ Conclusion: What's next?

NSSE is ...

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... a student survey that “... annually collects information at hundreds of four-year colleges and universities about first-year and senior students' participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college.”

**NSSE is NOT a direct assessment of student learning.**

<http://nsse.indiana.edu/html/about.cfm>

# A Brief Chronology of NSSE & Information Literacy

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- Pre-history: College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), with 4 editions between 1984-2002; Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman and follow-up surveys; others.
- 1998-1999: NSSE was created and piloted to address a need for better understanding of students' educational experiences in college. IL was not specifically included.
- 2006: 10 experimental IL items were included, but not retained due to overall length constraints.
- 2011-2013: Project to revise and update NSSE; original focus on 5 Benchmark Indicators → 10 Engagement Indicators & High Impact Practices, + Add-on Modules.
- 2011-2014: Group formed to propose and develop IL module; **Experiences with Information Literacy** module launched in Winter 2014.



# NSSE “Quick Facts”

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- ▶ **Survey Instrument**

- ▶ ~100 prompts to respond to in the core survey

- ▶ **Participating Institutions:** 725 colleges and universities participated in NSSE 2017. Over 1,600 have participated since 2000.

- ▶ **Student Participation:** 517,850 students completed NSSE in 2017. Approximately 6 million students have completed the survey since 2000.

# Anatomy of the NSSE-IL module:

14 response prompts

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

**a) - h)**, 8 items, rated by participants Never, Sometimes, Often, Very often

**2. During the current school year, how much have your instructors emphasized the following?**

**a) - e)**, 5 items, rated by participants Very little, Some, Quite a bit, Very much

**3. How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in using information effectively?**

Single summative question, rated by participants Very little, Some, Quite a bit, Very much

# NSSE at Grand Valley State University

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- ▶ 2005: First time GVSU participated in NSSE, with general plan to repeat every three years
- ▶ 2013: In this iteration, GVSU also participated in 2 of the original set of add-on modules – “Development of Transferrable Skills” and “Learning with Technology”
- ▶ **2016: Most recent iteration at GVSU; included 2 add-on modules – “Civic Engagement” and the new “Experiences with Information Literacy”**

# What did our IL Experiences results look like?—1

College of Engineering & Computing

Depts. of Math and Statistics

## First Year

Responses to 2016 NSSE Information Literacy Module questions by class and college or major grouping

	CCPS	COE	CHP	CLAS (NEC)	KCN	PCEC	SCB	Math/Stat	Psy/Soc/WGS	Com/Mus	Bio/Chem/Env	Clas/Hat/Lib/Phi	Undeclared	All
Number of responses	59	227	118	75	158	17	47	51	242	11	170	1170		
Completed an assignment that used an information source (book, article, Web site, etc.) other than required course readings	3.22	3.39	3.31	3.19	3.10	2.97	3.33	2.92	3.30	3.12	3.18	2.67	3.07	3.17
Worked on a paper or project that had multiple smaller assignments such as an outline, annotated bibliography, rough draft, etc.	2.99	3.11	3.10	2.95	3.01	2.68	3.12	2.77	3.03	2.91	3.01	2.33	2.97	2.99
Received feedback from an instructor that improved your use of information resources (source selection, proper citation, etc.)	2.83	2.98	2.96	2.85	2.94	2.84	2.95	2.69	2.70	2.79	2.89	2.83	2.81	2.87
Completed an assignment that used the library's electronic collection of articles, books, and journals (JSTOR, EBSCO, LexisNexis, ProQuest, etc.)	2.46	2.59	2.66	2.59	2.63	2.00	2.66	2.39	2.58	2.50	2.63	2.60	2.53	2.56
Decided not to use an information source in a course assignment due to its questionable quality	2.41	2.07	2.09	2.06	2.18	2.18	2.33	2.23	2.18	2.15	2.31	2.17	2.21	2.21
Changed the focus of a paper or project based on information you found while researching the topic	2.84	2.33	2.31	2.42	2.27	2.11	2.46	2.23	2.35	2.06	2.46	2.17	2.32	2.37
Looked for a reference that was cited in something you read	2.64	2.57	2.31	2.53	2.47	2.14	2.53	2.54	2.20	2.32	2.46	1.83	2.37	2.42
Identified how a book, article, or creative work has contributed to a field of study	2.45	2.13	2.15	2.23	2.33	1.95	2.32	2.23	2.08	2.15	2.26	2.17	2.14	2.21
Instructors emphasized: Not plagiarizing another author's work	3.60	3.48	3.72	3.56	3.54	3.39	3.53	3.48	3.58	3.65	3.60	3.17	3.51	3.55
Instructors emphasized: Appropriately citing the sources used in a paper or project	3.56	3.39	3.57	3.37	3.50	3.22	3.48	3.15	3.50	3.41	3.48	3.33	3.35	3.44
Instructors emphasized: Using scholarly or peer-reviewed sources in your course assignments	3.46	3.15	3.48	3.24	3.42	2.95	3.36	3.08	3.35	3.33	3.43	3.33	3.22	3.33
Instructors emphasized: Questioning the quality of information sources	3.27	3.00	3.19	3.02	3.00	2.75	3.13	2.77	2.92	3.15	3.13	2.67	2.85	3.03
Instructors emphasized: Using practices (terminology, methods, writing style, etc.) of a specific major or field of study	3.10	2.63	3.08	2.72	2.91	2.78	2.78	2.77	2.67	3.15	2.76	2.50	2.66	2.80
How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in using information effectively?	3.12	3.11	3.15	3.08	2.99	2.97	3.13	3.00	3.03	3.18	3.10	3.33	2.95	3.06

## Seniors

	81	148	71	250	54	83	119	37	43	63	137	31	4	878.00
Number of responses	81	148	71	250	54	83	119	37	43	63	137	31	4	878.00
Completed an assignment that used an information source (book, article, Web site, etc.) other than required course readings	3.59	3.26	3.32	3.36	3.39	2.99	3.26	3.03	3.42	3.09	3.47	3.75	3.75	3.35
Worked on a paper or project that had multiple smaller assignments such as an outline, annotated bibliography, rough draft, etc.	2.95	3.08	3.10	3.09	2.91	2.58	2.94	2.84	3.17	2.78	3.14	3.11	3.25	2.99
Received feedback from an instructor that improved your use of information resources (source selection, proper citation, etc.)	2.88	2.92	2.92	2.96	2.75	2.52	2.76	2.75	3.03	2.75	2.95	3.11	2.00	2.86
Completed an assignment that used the library's electronic collection of articles, books, and journals (JSTOR, EBSCO, LexisNexis, ProQuest, etc.)	3.29	3.12	3.32	3.18	3.18	2.03	2.77	2.47	3.56	2.96	3.23	3.43	3.00	3.06
Decided not to use an information source in a course assignment due to its questionable quality	2.31	2.28	2.10	2.30	2.09	2.34	2.29	2.16	2.11	2.23	2.21	2.71	2.75	2.26
Changed the focus of a paper or project based on information you found while researching the topic	2.60	2.43	2.38	2.46	2.50	2.03	2.42	2.06	2.36	2.19	2.43	2.82	2.50	2.40
Looked for a reference that was cited in something you read	2.83	2.53	2.73	2.61	2.59	2.34	2.57	2.50	2.92	2.62	2.78	3.21	3.00	2.66
Identified how a book, article, or creative work has contributed to a field of study	2.56	2.52	2.42	2.53	2.41	2.00	2.31	2.23	2.67	2.45	2.37	3.07	1.33	2.42
Instructors emphasized: Not plagiarizing another author's work	3.26	3.30	3.65	3.40	3.66	3.15	3.37	3.13	3.58	3.30	3.51	3.50	3.25	3.43
Instructors emphasized: Appropriately citing the sources used in a paper or project	3.52	3.39	3.65	3.42	3.75	2.74	3.34	2.97	3.64	3.36	3.46	3.50	2.75	3.41
Instructors emphasized: Using scholarly or peer-reviewed sources in your course assignments	3.50	3.48	3.77	3.54	3.77	2.88	3.31	2.97	3.78	3.47	3.72	3.71	2.75	3.50
Instructors emphasized: Questioning the quality of information sources	3.07	3.02	3.05	3.07	3.61	2.71	2.90	2.81	2.97	3.06	3.15	3.68	3.00	3.07
Instructors emphasized: Using practices (terminology, methods, writing style, etc.) of a specific major or field of study	3.12	3.04	3.40	3.11	3.57	3.18	2.91	3.00	3.19	3.11	3.28	3.21	2.50	3.19
How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in using information effectively?	3.29	3.27	3.57	3.34	3.52	3.25	3.18	3.44	3.34	3.15	3.35	3.48	2.00	3.33

## What did our IL Experiences results look like?—1

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- ▶ The far right-hand columns are the overall mean scores across all participants.
- ▶ The rest of the interior columns represent disaggregated responses, broken out by individual colleges and some single departments or department groupings, at the request of GV librarians.
- ▶ The uncolored cells represent mean scores that are not statistically significantly different (either above or below) the institutional response for First Year (left) or Senior (right) participants.
- ▶ The colored cells represent mean scores on individual items that ARE statistically significantly different from the overall mean institutional responses – green are higher, red are lower than the institutional mean.
- ▶ The heavily red column on each page is the College of Engineering & Computing; for the Seniors, the somewhat red column two spaces to the right, is Math and Statistics majors.
- ▶ For Seniors, the very green columns are College of Health Professions, College of Nursing, and a grouping of History, Philosophy, and Classics majors.

# What did our IL Experiences results look like?—2

School of Engineering

School of Computing & Information Systems

Depts. of Math and Statistics

## First Year

Responses to 2016 NSSE Information Literacy Module questions by class and college or major grouping

First Year		DCPS	DOE	CHP	CLAS (NEC)	ICN	OSH	Engineering	Comput & Info Sci	SCB	MathStat	Phys/CompWCS	Com/MS	ENAC Int/Mor	Chem/EARTH	Unlabeled	All
Number of responses		39	20	39	227	118	1	55	23	156	17	47	51	242	11	170	1170
Completed an assignment that used an information source (book, article, Web site, etc.) other than required course readings		3.22	3.39	3.31	3.19	3.10		2.93	3.06	3.33	2.92	3.30	3.12	3.18	2.67	3.07	3.17
Worked on a paper or project that had multiple smaller assignments such as an outline, annotated bibliography, rough draft, etc.		2.98	3.11	3.10	2.95	3.01		2.67	2.72	3.12	2.77	3.03	2.91	3.01	2.33	2.97	2.99
Received feedback from an instructor that improved your use of information resources (source selection, proper citation, etc.)		2.83	2.98	2.95	2.85	2.94		2.89	2.72	2.95	2.69	2.70	2.79	2.89	2.83	2.81	2.87
Completed an assignment that used the library's electronic collection of articles, books, and journals (JSTOR, EBSCO, LexisNexis, ProQuest, etc.)		2.46	2.59	2.66	2.59	2.63		2.02	1.94	2.66	2.39	2.58	2.50	2.63	2.50	2.53	2.56
Decided not to use an information source in a course assignment due to its questionable quality		2.41	2.07	2.09	2.08	2.16		2.13	2.28	2.33	2.23	2.16	2.15	2.31	2.17	2.21	2.21
Changed the focus of a paper or project based on information you found while researching the topic		2.64	2.33	2.31	2.42	2.27		2.09	2.17	2.46	2.23	2.35	2.06	2.46	2.17	2.32	2.37
Looked for a reference that was cited in something you read		2.64	2.57	2.31	2.53	2.47		2.13	2.17	2.53	2.54	2.20	2.32	2.46	1.83	2.37	2.42
Identified how a book, article, or creative work has contributed to a field of study		2.45	2.13	2.15	2.23	2.33		2.02	1.78	2.32	2.23	2.08	2.15	2.26	2.17	2.14	2.21
Instructors emphasized: Not plagiarizing another authors work		3.60	3.48	3.72	3.56	3.54		3.29	3.65	3.53	3.46	3.58	3.65	3.60	3.17	3.51	3.55
Instructors emphasized: Appropriately citing the sources used in a paper or project		3.56	3.39	3.57	3.37	3.50		3.11	3.50	3.48	3.15	3.50	3.41	3.48	3.33	3.35	3.44
Instructors emphasized: Using scholarly or peer-reviewed sources in your course assignments		3.46	3.15	3.48	3.24	3.42		2.91	3.06	3.36	3.08	3.35	3.33	3.43	3.33	3.22	3.33
Instructors emphasized: Questioning the quality of information sources		3.27	3.00	3.19	3.02	3.00		2.62	3.06	3.13	2.77	2.92	3.15	3.13	2.67	2.85	3.03
Instructors emphasized: Using practices (terminology, methods, writing style, etc.) of a specific major or field of study		3.10	2.63	3.08	2.72	2.91		2.73	2.89	2.78	2.77	2.67	3.15	2.76	2.50	2.66	2.80
How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in using information effectively?		3.12	3.11	3.15	3.08	2.99		3.02	2.83	3.13	3.00	3.03	3.18	3.10	3.33	2.95	3.06

## Seniors

Seniors		DCPS	DOE	CHP	CLAS (NEC)	ICN	OSH	Engineering	Comput & Info Sci	SCB	MathStat	Phys/CompWCS	Com/MS	ENAC Int/Mor	Chem/EARTH	Unlabeled	All
Number of responses		81	148	71	250	84	6	50	28	119	37	43	63	137	31	4	878.00
Completed an assignment that used an information source (book, article, Web site, etc.) other than required course readings		3.59	3.26	3.32	3.36	3.39		2.00	3.05	2.95	3.26	3.03	3.42	3.09	3.47	3.75	3.35
Worked on a paper or project that had multiple smaller assignments such as an outline, annotated bibliography, rough draft, etc.		2.95	3.08	3.10	3.09	2.91		1.67	2.68	2.48	2.94	2.84	3.17	2.78	3.14	3.11	3.25
Received feedback from an instructor that improved your use of information resources (source selection, proper citation, etc.)		2.88	2.92	2.92	2.98	2.75		2.33	2.59	2.38	2.76	2.75	3.03	2.75	2.95	3.11	2.86
Completed an assignment that used the library's electronic collection of articles, books, and journals (JSTOR, EBSCO, LexisNexis, ProQuest, etc.)		3.29	3.12	3.32	3.18	3.18		1.67	2.09	1.95	2.77	2.47	3.56	2.96	3.23	3.43	3.06
Decided not to use an information source in a course assignment due to its questionable quality		2.31	2.28	2.10	2.30	2.09		2.00	2.30	2.43	2.29	2.16	2.11	2.23	2.21	2.71	2.26
Changed the focus of a paper or project based on information you found while researching the topic		2.60	2.43	2.38	2.46	2.50		2.67	1.89	2.24	2.42	2.06	2.36	2.19	2.43	2.82	2.50
Looked for a reference that was cited in something you read		2.83	2.53	2.73	2.61	2.59		2.33	2.32	2.38	2.57	2.50	2.92	2.62	2.78	3.21	2.66
Identified how a book, article, or creative work has contributed to a field of study		2.96	2.52	2.42	2.53	2.41		1.67	2.05	1.91	2.31	2.23	2.67	2.45	2.37	3.07	2.42
Instructors emphasized: Not plagiarizing another authors work		3.26	3.30	3.65	3.40	3.86		2.67	3.11	3.29	3.37	3.13	3.58	3.30	3.51	3.50	3.25
Instructors emphasized: Appropriately citing the sources used in a paper or project		3.52	3.39	3.65	3.42	3.75		3.00	2.64	2.95	3.34	2.97	3.64	3.36	3.46	3.50	2.75
Instructors emphasized: Using scholarly or peer-reviewed sources in your course assignments		3.50	3.48	3.77	3.54	3.77		3.33	2.75	3.10	3.31	2.97	3.78	3.47	3.72	3.71	2.75
Instructors emphasized: Questioning the quality of information sources		3.07	3.02	3.05	3.07	3.61		3.00	2.59	2.90	2.90	2.61	2.97	3.06	3.15	3.68	3.00
Instructors emphasized: Using practices (terminology, methods, writing style, etc.) of a specific major or field of study		3.12	3.04	3.40	3.11	3.57		2.33	3.25	3.10	2.91	3.00	3.19	3.11	3.28	3.21	2.50
How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in using information effectively?		3.29	3.27	3.57	3.34	3.52		3.33	3.21	3.38	3.18	3.44	3.34	3.15	3.35	3.46	2.00

## What did our IL Experiences results look like?—2

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At my request, the College of Engineering & Computing was disaggregated into its component programs – our Occupational Safety & Health Management degree, the School of Engineering, and the School of Computer Science & Information Systems.

At the First Year level, on the left, the column with the multiple response cells in red is the School of Engineering.

At the Senior level, red columns are the School of Engineering and the School of Computer Science & Information Systems. Occupational Safety & Health, to the left of Engineering has a few low-value cells; and the Math and Statistics majors remain aggregated as on the previous slide.

## What did our IL Experiences results look like?—3

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- ▶ At the institution level, we were similar to other “Large Public” institutions in our cohort
- ▶ Disaggregation by colleges and departments within GVSU showed significant differences between Senior College of Engineering & Computing, and Math, and Statistics majors compared to Seniors in most other colleges or disciplines.
- ▶ And pulling apart the majors (Engineering, Computer Science & Information Systems, and Occupational Safety & Health Management), the Engineering students at both first-year and Senior levels were the clear outliers.
- ▶ **With one exception....**



# Engineering & IL

In response to the final IL module question,

*“(3) How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in using information effectively?”*

Engineering participants at the Senior level told us, “Quite a bit” – on a par with responses from GV Seniors overall!

Cell is NOT red!

	CCYS	COE	CV	GLAS (NEC)	HCN	IOSH	Enginee (rig)	Computer & Info Sci	SCB	Math/Stat	Psy/Soc/WGS	Com/Mns	BioC (in/Mov)	CEHS (RUBPH)	Undeclared	All
How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in using information effectively?	3.12	3.11	3.15	3.08	2.99		3.02	2.83	3.13	3.00	3.03	3.18	3.10	3.33	2.95	3.06
How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in using information effectively?	3.29	3.27	3.57	3.34	3.52	3.33	3.21	3.38	3.18	3.44	3.34	3.15	3.35	3.46	2.00	3.33

Mean > 3.0 (“Quite a bit”)

1<sup>st</sup> Year

4<sup>th</sup> Year

## Engineering & the IL Module

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How can it make sense that students in one program report lower engagement with IL practices and faculty emphasis on the importance of those practices, and yet assert their experience is solid at the same rate as their peers in other disciplines?

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What is the source of the anomaly – the student population? The student sample? ... The survey?

# Questions for consideration

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1. What relationship(s) exist between the EGR First-year and Senior year curricula and the timing of NSSE in February-March?
2. What is the impact of IL Module questions posed in the form of, "During the current school year, about how often ...."?
3. Can exploring these same questions reveal anything explanatory for CIS, Math and/or Statistics majors, too?

# Could it be that “timing is everything”?

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- ▶ NSSE is administered in late winter to population samples of 1<sup>st</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> year students at participating institutions.
- ▶ Our GVSU Engineering students in winter ...
  - ▶ 1<sup>st</sup> Years are Pre-Engineering, typically spending their first Fall & Winter semesters getting up to speed in math, chemistry, physics, and lower level engineering required for secondary admission to the major. Some have comped out of WRT 150 with its heavy IL component.
  - ▶ “Seniors” invited to participate have been defined for sampling purposes as students that have completed at least 100 credits by the Winter semester of NSSE administration. Engineering majors at that point will ideally have spent Fall semester in a required co-op employment term, optionally squeezing in a Gen. Ed. requirement on top of 40+ hr. work weeks. In their Winter semester, they are beginning their Senior Design Project sequence, along with 3 other upper-level engineering courses, and possibly another Gen. Ed. course.
- ▶ When asked, *“During the current school year, about how often have you...?”* – Logically, the responses trend toward a tepid “Sometimes”

# Conclusion—1

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- ▶ Focusing on Engineering students approaching graduation, I would like to offer a slightly revised survey
- ▶ Proposed local modifications:
  - ▶ Revise the sample population by defining “Seniors” as only students enrolled during Winter semester in EGR495 Senior Design
  - ▶ Invite all of the “Senior” population to participate, not just a sample
  - ▶ Revise the question wording – instead of “*During the current school year, about how often have you...?*”, give Seniors the chance to consider their entire Grand Valley experience as they respond to the 13 prompts that comprise the bulk of the IL module.

## Conclusion—2

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- ▶ Looking at our NSSE IL Module data in general, it appears that there is something very different about an identifiable sub-set of our students, i.e Engineering majors.
- ▶ Indirect evidence suggests that it's not the Engineering students or their GVSU experiences with IL that are lacking; but rather that the survey fails to account accurately for their experience.
- ▶ With respect to the NSSE IL Module, the possibility exists that *under certain conditions* the module may be a valid and reliable measure of students' experiences with information literacy, but not a meaningful one.

# Sources consulted -1

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