
From the Selected Works of Jayne Marie Comstock

January 1, 2010

Hot Topic #1 - Access and Student Success

Jamie Comstock, *Butler University*



Available at: https://works.bepress.com/jamie_comstock/22/

Hot Topics and Challenges in Higher Education

A year long agenda for
Academic Affairs Committee
Butler University Board of Trustees

Hot Topics and Challenges

- Accountability: Promoting Access & Student Success
- Civic Engagement: Inspiring Students to Become Agents of Change
- Global Awareness: Educating Across Borders
- Generating & Allocating Resources: Becoming Market-Smart Supports Being Mission-Driven

**Accountability:
Promoting Access and
Student Success
A national conversation**

The Brutal Facts

- Less than 40% of the US adult population has earned a 2-year degree or more (10th in World)
 - College degree attainment rates for young adults are increasing in almost every OECD country faster than in U.S. (U.S = 42.4%, Canada = 55.8%, Korea = 55.5%, Japan = 53.7%, New Zealand = 47.3%, Ireland 43.9%, Norway 42.7%)
 - Only 33% in Indiana at this level (state ranks 39th, MS 49.6%)
 - U.S. Goal = 60% by 2020; Lumina Goal 60% by 2025
- By 2018, 63% of all jobs will require postsecondary education or training
- Unemployment in Indiana is about 10%
- Unemployment for people with a bachelors is 2%

The Brutal Facts

- College grads' wages > high school > drop outs
- The Wage Gap is growing
- Well-paying/low-skill jobs are disappearing
- We now have stratified job market
- Route out of lower strata is higher education
- Access issues have disproportional impact on lower socio-economic and minority populations, which are growing rapidly in U.S.

What happened?

- Country focused on “access” as mere enrollment in higher ed
- Rewarded institutions who enrolled new students
- Failed to focus on “completion”
- Topic has shifted to include “access” and “completion” = student success

Improving Student Success Requires a Focus on Retention

- We serve our students very well
- One of the top 18 comprehensive master's institutions (out of 572)

	<u>Goal</u>
– FY to Sophomore retention 89%	90%
– Graduation rate 73%	75%

What major factor influences retention and graduation?

Student Engagement



What is Student Engagement?

The extent to which students engage in and are exposed to effective educational practices

- Certain activities and practices known to be related to desired learning outcomes

Key Activities & Practices

- **Challenging academic work**
 - High expectations
 - Deep approaches to learning
- **Quality involvement with faculty**
- **Enriching activities and high-impact practices**
 - Active and collaborative learning
 - Powerful educational experiences

Requires Shared Commitment

Engagement reflects institution,
faculty, and student choices

- **Institution sets priorities, incentives, requirements; creates programs to support student success**
- **Faculty set expectations and structure learning opportunities**
- **Students invest time and effort**

Why Does Engagement Matter?

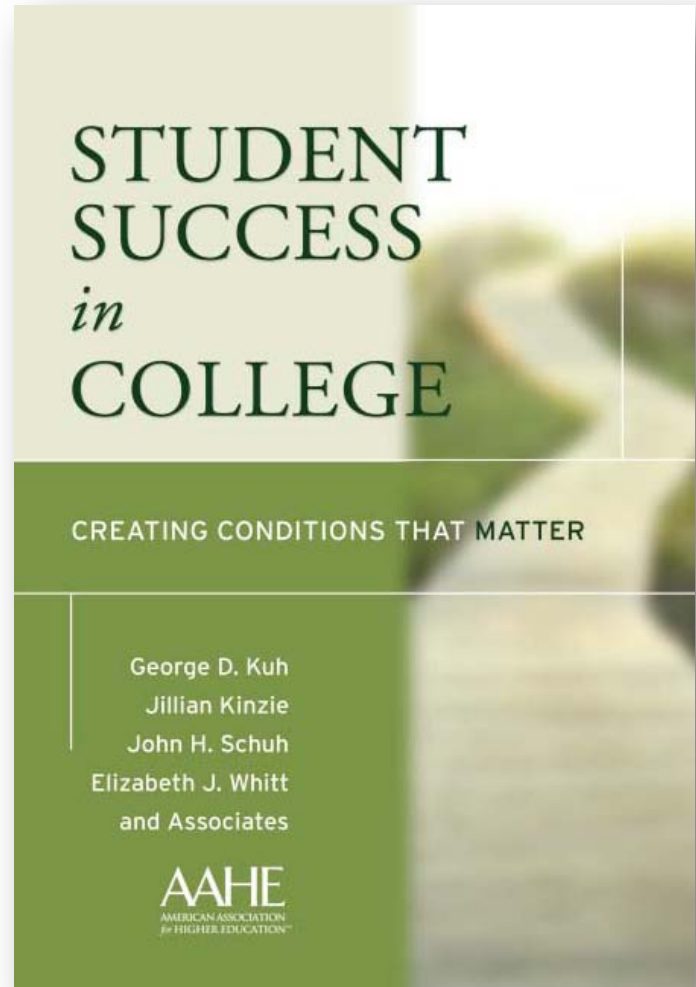
The time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities are the best predictors of their learning and personal development

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Because we can't improve what we don't measure

NSSE to Date

- First national administration in 2000
- Butler part of 1999 pilot
- 1,442 colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada have participated as of 2010
- NSSE data also used in research on undergraduate education



NSSE

Key Aims

- Enrich our impoverished national discourse about **college quality**
 - Shift the focus to teaching & learning
 - Effective educational practices
- Provide **diagnostic information** to inform the improvement of undergraduate education
 - Actionable information based on valid & reliable measures
 - Meaningful comparisons

Making Comparisons

- NSSE standard form contains 102 items
- One important subset of items measures what has become known as “high impact practices”
- High Impact Practices lead to higher levels of retention and deeper levels of learning
- Butler vigilantly monitors progress on these practices

High Impact Practices: A Quick Look at Butler Results and Peer Comparisons

- Two cohorts: FY and Senior
- NACU
- Carnegie Class (Masters Comprehensive)

High-Impact Practices

Experiences that challenge and stretch students

Applying or integrating knowledge

- Related to higher levels of “deep approaches to learning” and higher self-reported gains
- Strong benefits for traditionally underrepresented populations
- Includes student-faculty interaction, experiences with diverse others, active & collaborative learning

High-Impact Practices

HIPs we might expect by NSSE population

- **First-years**
 - Learning communities
 - Service-learning
- **Seniors**
 - Study Abroad
 - Research with faculty
 - Culminating senior experience
 - Service-learning
 - Co-op, internship, field placement

High-Impact Practices (FY)

Butler vs. Peers (%)

	Butler	NACU	Carnegie
Learning community	11	24	15
Service-learning	43	50	42

High-Impact Practices (Sr)

Butler vs. Peers (%)

	Butler	NACU	Carnegie
Study abroad	25	25	13
Research with faculty	29	26	19
Culminating experience	37	45	33
Service-learning	57	53	53
Co-op, internship, etc.	67	62	52

NSSE Five Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practices

1

- Level of Academic Challenge

2

- Active and Collaborative Learning

3

- Student-Faculty Interaction

4

- Supportive Campus Environment

5

- Enriching Educational Experience



Benchmark Comparisons

Level of Academic Challenge

	Butler	NACU	Carnegie	NSSE 2010
First Year	59.7	58.3	53.5	54.1
Senior	59.4	59.8	57.9	57.5

Challenging intellectual and creative work.
Emphasizing academic effort and high expectations.

Benchmark Comparisons

Active & Collaborative Learning

	Butler	NACU	Carnegie	NSSE 2010
First Year	47.8	47.1	44.3	43.7
Senior	51.5	54.6	53.3	51.4

Students are intensely involved in their education and collaborate with others to solve problems and master difficult material in class, out of class and off campus in group work, service-learning, and other activities.

Benchmark Comparisons

Student-Faculty Interaction

	Butler	NACU	Carnegie	NSSE 2010
First Year	39.0	39.2	35.5	35.2
Senior	48.3	47.6	43.8	42.4

Students see first-hand how experts think by discussing assignments, career plans or ideas with faculty or advisors. (A High Impact Practice)



Benchmark Comparisons

Supportive Campus Environment

	Butler	NACU	Carnegie	NSSE 2010
First Year	66.9	66.8	62.5	62.5
Senior	63.0	62.7	60.9	59.6

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that demonstrate commitment to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.

Benchmark Comparisons

Enriching Educational Experiences

	Butler	NACU	Carnegie	NSSE 2010
First Year	31.1	31.0	26.9	27.9
Senior	46.1	46.5	40.4	40.5

Complementary learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom augment the academic program, including experiencing diversity, using technology appropriately, and engaging in internships, community service, capstone experiences, and study abroad. (4 of 5 High Impact Practices)

How do we use the data?

Across Divisions
Across Colleges
Within Colleges

- Provides meaningful context to reflect on and discuss teaching & learning
- Identifies strengths to continue and reward
- Reveals areas needing improvement and points to possible remedies
- Helps assess faculty development needs
- Demonstrates effects of student affairs-academic affairs collaborative efforts
- Shows areas where more integration is needed



**Accountability:
Promoting Access and
Student Success
An Academic Affairs Committee
Conversation**