

Continuing the WPA-NSSE Collaboration: Preliminary Analysis of the Experimental Writing Questions and Next Steps

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Chuck Paine, University of New Mexico, cpaine@unm.edu

Bob Gonyea, Indiana University-Bloomington, rgonyea@indiana.edu

Paul Anderson, Miami University, paul.Anderson@muohio.edu

Abstract

In this workshop, we describe an ongoing collaboration between WPA researchers and National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) researchers in which we developed, administered, and analyzed a survey consisting of 25 experimental writing-specific questions. This project might help us learn more about how teachers teach writing (or teach with writing) and how students are writing in college; it may also help us understand how writing practices connect to other desired outcomes of college, such as engagement, persistence, and educational gains; it may also provide numerical evidence about the importance of writing in college. During the past 19 months, the panelists and many 2007 WPA Conference participants have collaborated with NSSE to develop the experimental question set that was administered this spring at 82 randomly chosen institutions. In today's workshop, we will describe the preliminary analysis and open the floor to discussion about next steps: which research questions and analyses about writing, engagement, and learning should be pursued?

The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not "Eureka!" ...but "That's funny...."
—Isaac Asimov

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Description of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)¹

Project: National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Project Support: The NSSE was launched with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts and is currently self-supported through institutional participation fees. Project research is also supported by grants from Lumina Foundation for Education and the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College.

Objectives: NSSE obtains, on an annual basis, information from hundreds of four-year colleges and universities nationwide about student 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. Survey items on The National Survey of Student Engagement represent empirically confirmed "good practices" in undergraduate education. That is, they reflect behaviors by students and institutions that are associated with desired outcomes of college.

Institutions use their data to identify aspects of the undergraduate experience inside and outside the classroom that can be improved through changes in policies and practices more consistent with good practices in undergraduate education. This information is also used by prospective college students, their parents, college counselors, academic advisers, institutional research officers, and researchers in learning more about how students spend their time at different colleges and universities and what they gain from their experiences.

More than 1200 different colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada have participated in NSSE since it was first administered in 2000. NSSE's widespread use has spawned several other national used instruments including the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement, and the Law School Survey of Student Engagement, all of which are supported through institutional participation fees.

NSSE Colleges and Universities: About 1200 different colleges and universities have participated.

NSSE 2008: 774 colleges and universities

NSSE 2007: 610 colleges and universities

NSSE 2006: 557 colleges and universities

NSSE 2005: 529 colleges and universities

NSSE 2004: 473 colleges and universities

NSSE 2003: 437 colleges and universities

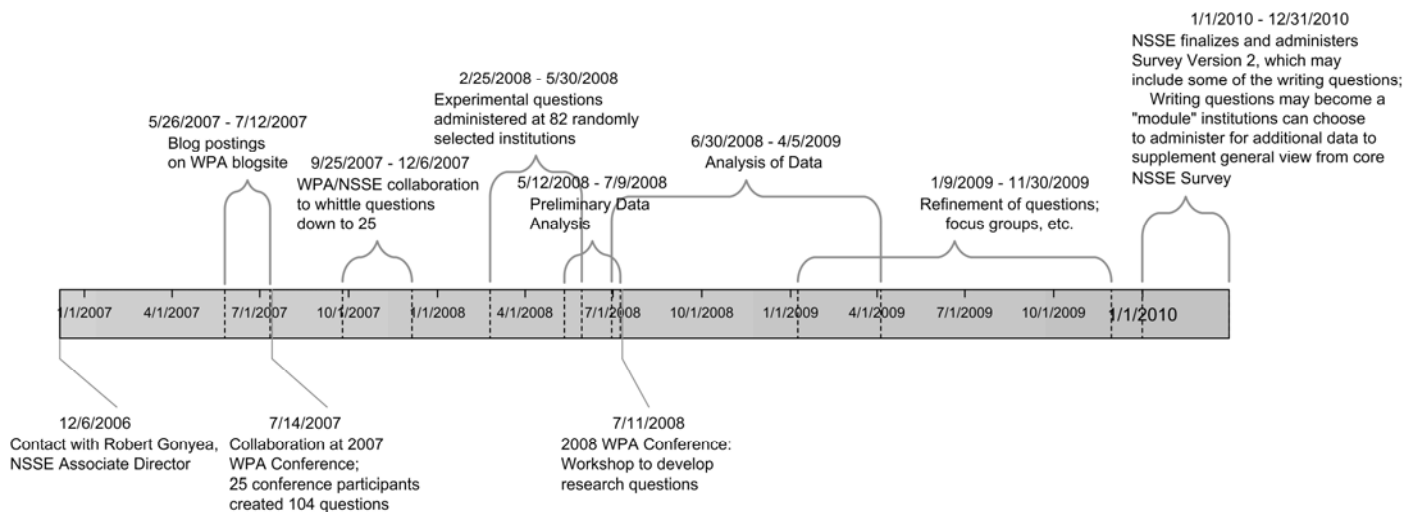
NSSE 2002: 367 colleges and universities

NSSE 2001: 321 colleges and universities

NSSE 2000: 276 colleges and universities

¹ From the NSSE website: http://nsse.iub.edu/html/quick_facts.cfm, 8 July 2008.

NSSE-WPA Collaboration Timeline



Some Terms and Definitions to Frame the Story

Validity. The degree to which the survey measures what it is intended to measure. There are (at least) three types of validity.

Content validity. Your questions seem appropriate to experts; you're measuring what's important to measure.

Face validity. Your questions seem appropriate to non-experts, specifically those taking the survey; survey takers understand the questions as you intended.

Predictive validity. Your questions and survey predict other related attitudes, activities, and gains.

Reliability. The degree to which a measure, instrument, or observer is consistent. There are different types of reliability, but in the present study we report **internal consistency**, the extent to which all items in a scale or test measure the same concept. Internal consistency is usually measured with Cronbach's alpha, which shows how correlated the items in a scale are. An alpha of 0.6 to 0.7 indicates acceptable reliability, and 0.8 or higher indicates good reliability. A high alpha also indicates the questions are all measuring some larger construct.

Scale. A measure that consists of a collection of questions intended to get at some theoretical construct that would be hard to get at with a single question; scales can also increase reliability. Examples: "Student Writing Process," "Instructor Best Practices," "Evidence-based Communications," "Non-alphabetic writing."

Standard Error of the Mean (SEM). SEM quantifies how accurately the true population mean is known. It can be used to calculate a confidence interval—a range of scores most likely to contain the true population. A smaller SEM produces a smaller confidence interval, which means you can be more confident that the mean you have calculated reflects the true mean.

The 2008 Core Survey Instrument



National Survey of Student Engagement 2008

The College Student Report

1 In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? Mark your answers in the boxes. Examples: ☒ or ☐

	Very often	Often	Some-times	Never		Very often	Often	Some-times	Never
	▼	▼	▼	▼		▼	▼	▼	▼
a. Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	r. Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Made a class presentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	s. Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	t. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	u. Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	v. Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Come to class without completing readings or assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
g. Worked with other students on projects during class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
h. Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
i. Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
j. Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
k. Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
l. Used an electronic medium (listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
m. Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
n. Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
o. Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
p. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
q. Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					

2 During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities?

	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
	▼	▼	▼	▼
a. Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from your courses and readings so you can repeat them in pretty much the same form	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3 During the current *school year*, about how much reading and writing have you done?

- a. Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings
- None 1-4 5-10 11-20 More than 20
- b. Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment
- None 1-4 5-10 11-20 More than 20
- c. Number of written papers or reports of **20 pages or more**
- None 1-4 5-10 11-20 More than 20
- d. Number of written papers or reports **between 5 and 19 pages**
- None 1-4 5-10 11-20 More than 20
- e. Number of written papers or reports of **fewer than 5 pages**
- None 1-4 5-10 11-20 More than 20

4 In a *typical week*, how many homework problem sets do you complete?

- None 1-2 3-4 5-6 **More than 6**
- a. Number of problem sets that take you **more** than an hour to complete
-
- b. Number of problem sets that take you **less** than an hour to complete
-

5 Mark the box that best represents the extent to which your examinations during the current school year have challenged you to do your best work.

- Very little Very much
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

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

- Very often Often Some-times Never
- a. Attended an art exhibit, play, dance, music, theater, or other performance
-
- b. Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities
-
- c. Participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.)
-
- d. Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue
-
- e. Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective
-
- f. Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept
-

7 Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution?

- | | Done | Plan to do | Do not plan to do | Have not decided |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Community service or volunteer work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Foreign language coursework | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Study abroad | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Independent study or self-designed major | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

8 Mark the box that best represents the quality of your relationships with people at your institution.

- a. Relationships with **other students**
- Unfriendly, Unsupportive, Sense of alienation Friendly, Supportive, Sense of belonging
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- b. Relationships with **faculty members**
- Unavailable, Unhelpful, Unsympathetic Available, Helpful, Sympathetic
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- c. Relationships with **administrative personnel and offices**
- Unhelpful, Inconsiderate, Rigid Helpful, Considerate, Flexible
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9 About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?

- a. Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)
- 0 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 More than 30
Hours per week
- b. Working for pay **on campus**
- 0 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 More than 30
Hours per week
- c. Working for pay **off campus**
- 0 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 More than 30
Hours per week
- d. Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)
- 0 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 More than 30
Hours per week
- e. Relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, etc.)
- 0 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 More than 30
Hours per week
- f. Providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)
- 0 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 More than 30
Hours per week
- g. Commuting to class (driving, walking, etc.)
- 0 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 More than 30
Hours per week

10 To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following?

- | | Very much | Quite a bit | Some | Very little |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Providing the support you need to thrive socially | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Using computers in academic work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11 To what extent 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 |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Acquiring a broad general education | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Writing clearly and effectively | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Speaking clearly and effectively | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Thinking critically and analytically | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Analyzing quantitative problems | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Using computing and information technology | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Working effectively with others | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. Voting in local, state, or national elections | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j. Learning effectively on your own | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| k. Understanding yourself | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| l. Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| m. Solving complex real-world problems | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| n. Developing a personal code of values and ethics | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| o. Contributing to the welfare of your community | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| p. Developing a deepened sense of spirituality | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12 Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution?

- Excellent
 Good
 Fair
 Poor

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

- Excellent
 Good
 Fair
 Poor

14 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

15 Write in your year of birth:

16 Your sex:
 Male Female

17 Are you an international student or foreign national?
 Yes No

18 What is your racial or ethnic identification? (Mark only one.)
 American Indian or other Native American
 Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander
 Black or African American
 White (non-Hispanic)
 Mexican or Mexican American
 Puerto Rican
 Other Hispanic or Latino
 Multiracial
 Other
 I prefer not to respond

19 What is your current classification in college?
 Freshman/first-year Senior
 Sophomore Unclassified
 Junior

20 Did you begin college at your current institution or elsewhere?
 Started here Started elsewhere

21 Since graduating from high school, which of the following types of schools have you attended other than the one you are attending now? (Mark all that apply.)
 Vocational or technical school
 Community or junior college
 4-year college other than this one
 None
 Other

22 Thinking about this current academic term, how would you characterize your enrollment?
 Full-time Less than full-time

23 Are you a member of a social fraternity or sorority?
 Yes No

24 Are you a student-athlete on a team sponsored by your institution's athletics department?
 Yes No (Go to question 25.)

On what team(s) are you an athlete (e.g., football, swimming)? Please answer below:

25 What have most of your grades been up to now at this institution?
 A B+ C+
 A- B C
 B- C- or lower

26 Which of the following best describes where you are living now while attending college?
 Dormitory or other campus housing (not fraternity/sorority house)
 Residence (house, apartment, etc.) within walking distance of the institution
 Residence (house, apartment, etc.) within driving distance of the institution
 Fraternity or sorority house

27 What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) completed? (Mark one box per column.)

Father	Mother	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Did not finish high school
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Graduated from high school
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attended college but did not complete degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed an associate's degree (A.A., A.S., etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed a bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed a master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed a doctoral degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc.)

28 Please print your major(s) or your expected major(s).

a. Primary major (Print only one.):

b. If applicable, second major (not minor, concentration, etc.):

THANKS FOR SHARING YOUR RESPONSES!

After completing the survey, please put it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope and deposit it in any U.S. Postal Service mailbox. Questions or comments? Contact the National Survey of Student Engagement, Indiana University, 1900 East Tenth Street, Eigenmann Hall Suite 419, Bloomington IN 47406-7512 or nsse@indiana.edu or www.nsse.iub.edu. Copyright © 2007 Indiana University.

The 25 Experimental Writing Questions Administered in Spring 2008

1. During the current school year, for how many of your writing assignments have you done each of the following?

5=All assignments, 4=Most assignments, 3=Some assignments, 2=Few assignments, 1=No assignments.

- 1A** Brainstormed (listed ideas, mapped concepts, prepared an outline, etc.) to develop your ideas before you started drafting your assignment
- 1B** Talked with your instructor to develop your ideas before you started drafting your assignment
- 1C** Talked with a classmate, friend, or family member to develop your ideas before you started drafting your assignment
- 1D** Received feedback from your instructor about a draft before turning in your final assignment
- 1E** Received feedback from a classmate, friend, or family member about a draft before turning in your final assignment
- 1F** Visited a campus-based writing or tutoring center to get help with your writing assignment before turning it in
- 1G** Used an online tutoring service to get help with your writing assignment before turning it in
- 1H** Proofread your final draft for errors before turning it in

2. During the current school year, in how many of your writing assignments did you:

5=All assignments, 4=Most assignments, 3=Some assignments, 2=Few assignments, 1=No assignments.

- 2A** Narrate or describe one of your own experiences
- 2B** Summarize something you read, such as articles, books, or online publications
- 2C** Analyze or evaluate something you read, researched, or observed
- 2D** Describe your methods or findings related to data you collected in lab or field work, a survey project, etc.
- 2E** Argue a position using evidence and reasoning
- 2F** Explain in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data
- 2G** Write in the style and format of a specific field (engineering, history, psychology, etc.)
- 2H** Include drawings, tables, photos, screen shots, or other visual content into your written assignment
- 2I** Create the project with multimedia (web page, poster, slide presentation such as PowerPoint, etc.)

3. During the current school year, for how many of your writing assignments has your **instructor** done each of the following?

5=All assignments, 4=Most assignments, 3=Some assignments, 2=Few assignments, 1=No assignments.

- 3A** Provided clear instructions describing what he or she wanted you to do
- 3B** Explained in advance what he or she wanted you to learn
- 3C** Explained in advance the criteria he or she would use to grade your assignment
- 3D** Provided a sample of a completed assignment written by the instructor or a student
- 3E** Asked you to do short pieces of writing that he or she did not grade
- 3F** Asked you to give feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline the classmate had written
- 3G** Asked you to write with classmates to complete a group project
- 3H** Asked you to address a real or imagined audience such as your classmates, a politician, non-experts, etc.

4. Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution?

Response options:

4=Done, 3=Plan to do, 2=Do not plan to do, 1=Have not decided.

- 4A** Prepare a portfolio that collects written work from more than one class
- 4B** Submit work you wrote or co-wrote to a student or professional publication (magazine, journal, newspaper, collection of student work, etc.)

Institutions that Administered the Experimental Questions

These schools were randomly selected from the 774 institutions that administered the Spring 2008 NSSE.

Institutions Receiving Experimental Writing Questions	First Years	Seniors	Institutions Receiving Experimental Writing Questions	First Years	Seniors
Adelphi University		1	Montana State University-Bozeman	1	1
Albright College	1	1	Northwestern Oklahoma State University	1	1
Bethune Cookman University		1	Oglethorpe University	1	1
Brigham Young University		1	Ohio University	1	1
Bryant University		1	Otterbein College	1	1
Cabrini College	1	1	Pepperdine University		1
Carroll College		1	Polytechnic University	1	1
Clarke College		1	Queens University of Charlotte	1	1
Coker College		1	Roger Williams University	1	1
Colby-Sawyer College	1	1	Rutgers University-Newark	1	1
College of the Atlantic	1	1	Sacred Heart University		1
Colorado State University	1	1	Shawnee State University	1	1
Delaware State University	1	1	Southern Vermont College		1
Dixie State College of Utah	1	1	Southwestern College	1	1
Dominican University		1	The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina	1	1
Drew University		1	The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey		1
East Central University	1	1	The University of Texas at Dallas		1
Eastern New Mexico University		1	The University of Texas at San Antonio	1	1
Elizabethtown College		1	Thiel College		1
Elon University		1	Union College		1
Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering	1	1	University of Mary Hardin-Baylor	1	1
Grinnell College		1	University of Michigan-Flint	1	1
Harris-Stowe State University		1	University of San Diego		1
Hartwick College	1	1	University of Southern Mississippi	1	1
Houghton College	1	1	University of the Incarnate Word	1	1
Husson College	1	1	University of the Sciences in Philadelphia	1	1
Jacksonville University		1	University of Vermont	1	1
Juniata College	1	1	Utah Valley State College		1
Kent State University		1	Virginia Commonwealth University		1
LaGrange College		1	Voorhees College		1
Lamar University	1	1	Washington State University		1
Lasell College		1	Wentworth Institute of Technology		1
Lincoln Memorial University	1	1	Western Illinois University		1
Lincoln University	1	1	Western Michigan University		1
Lindenwood University		1	William Jewell College		1
Lipscomb University	1	1	William Woods University	1	1
Lyndon State College		1	Williams College	1	1
Martin Methodist College		1	Wofford College		1
McDaniel College	1	1	Worcester State College		1
Medaille College		1	Xavier University of Louisiana		1
Mercer University		1			
Misericordia University	1	1			
			TOTAL	40	82

Response Frequencies for Seniors by Major

		Arts and Humanities	Biological Sciences	Business	Education	Engineering	Physical Science	Professional	Social Science
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1A For how many writing assignments have you: Brainstormed to develop your ideas before you started drafting your assignment	No assignments	5	6	5	4	10	11	5	5
	Few or some assignments	43	50	44	44	54	50	41	43
	Most or all assignments	52	44	51	52	37	39	54	52
1B For how many writing assignments have you: Talked with your instructor to develop your ideas before you started drafting your assignment	No assignments	7	10	9	8	17	14	10	7
	Few or some assignments	63	66	63	59	64	67	58	63
	Most or all assignments	30	24	29	33	19	19	32	31
1C For how many writing assignments have you: Talked with a classmate, friend, or family member to develop your ideas before you started drafting you're assignment	No assignments	6	6	5	4	9	11	4	5
	Few or some assignments	54	55	48	44	51	58	44	52
	Most or all assignments	40	39	47	52	41	31	52	42
1D For how many writing assignments have you: Received feedback from your instructor about a draft before turning in your final assignment	No assignments	12	13	13	10	19	18	14	12
	Few or some assignments	58	58	60	54	59	58	55	58
	Most or all assignments	30	29	27	35	21	24	32	30
1E For how many writing assignments have you: Received feedback from a classmate, friend, or family member about a draft before turning in your final assignment	No assignments	14	12	11	9	16	19	10	14
	Few or some assignments	57	58	58	50	55	54	51	55
	Most or all assignments	29	31	31	40	29	27	39	30
1F For how many writing assignments have you: Visited a campus-based writing or tutoring center to get help with your writing assignment before turning it	No assignments	69	62	61	65	69	68	62	61
	Few or some assignments	24	31	30	27	26	27	29	30
	Most or all assignments	6	7	9	8	6	5	9	9
1G For how many writing assignments have you: Used an online tutoring service to get help with your writing assignment before turning it in	No assignments	86	83	77	81	82	85	78	81
	Few or some assignments	9	12	16	12	14	11	15	13
	Most or all assignments	4	5	7	6	5	4	8	6
1H For how many writing assignments have you: Proofread your final draft before turning it in	No assignments	2	2	2	1	4	5	2	2
	Few or some assignments	14	12	13	14	20	17	12	14
	Most or all assignments	84	87	85	85	76	78	86	84

		Arts and Humanities	Biological Sciences	Business	Education	Engineering	Physical Science	Professional	Social Science
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
2A In how many of your writing assignments did you: Narrate or describe one of your own experiences	No assignments	21	29	17	9	40	37	15	17
	Few or some assignments	68	63	67	69	51	56	66	69
	Most or all assignments	11	8	16	23	10	7	19	14
2B In how many of your writing assignments did you: Summarize something you read, such as articles, books, or online publications	No assignments	6	5	4	4	19	13	4	3
	Few or some assignments	61	57	60	57	62	63	53	53
	Most or all assignments	33	37	36	39	19	24	43	44
2C In how many of your writing assignments did you: Analyze or evaluate something you read, researched, or observed	No assignments	1	2	2	2	8	6	2	1
	Few or some assignments	31	35	39	45	48	41	38	26
	Most or all assignments	68	63	59	53	44	53	60	73
2D In how many of your writing assignments did you: Describe your methods or findings related to data you collected in lab or field work, a survey project, etc.	No assignments	30	7	16	12	8	18	13	12
	Few or some assignments	52	40	55	58	40	44	49	55
	Most or all assignments	19	53	30	30	52	38	39	33
2E In how many of your writing assignments did you: Argue a position using evidence and reasoning	No assignments	7	12	8	13	22	17	14	6
	Few or some assignments	40	55	53	62	56	52	55	44
	Most or all assignments	52	34	40	24	22	31	31	50
2F In how many of your writing assignments did you: Explain in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data	No assignments	51	10	13	35	7	14	23	18
	Few or some assignments	43	52	64	57	40	45	62	66
	Most or all assignments	5	37	23	8	54	41	15	16
2G In how many of your writing assignments did you: Write in the style and format of a specific field (engineering, history, psychology, etc.)	No assignments	16	7	18	17	4	10	10	6
	Few or some assignments	37	37	51	42	25	37	31	32
	Most or all assignments	47	56	31	41	71	53	59	63
2H In how many of your writing assignments did you: Include drawings, tables, photos, screen shots, or other visual content into your written assignment	No assignments	30	7	8	15	3	9	18	17
	Few or some assignments	57	50	63	66	28	49	61	64
	Most or all assignments	13	44	28	19	69	41	21	18
2I In how many of your writing assignments did you: Create the project with multimedia (web page, poster, slide presentation such as PowerPoint, etc.)	No assignments	22	12	6	7	12	15	9	14
	Few or some assignments	63	60	50	63	55	66	55	67
	Most or all assignments	16	28	44	30	33	20	36	19

		Arts and Humanities	Biological Sciences	Business	Education	Engineering	Physical Science	Professional	Social Science
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
3A In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Provided clear instructions describing what he or she wanted you TO DO	No assignments	0	2	1	1	4	3	1	1
	Few or some assignments	19	23	22	19	29	26	24	17
	Most or all assignments	80	76	77	80	67	72	76	82
3B In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Explained in advance what he or she wanted you TO LEARN	No assignments	5	4	3	3	9	6	3	3
	Few or some assignments	47	48	41	38	49	52	36	42
	Most or all assignments	48	48	56	59	43	42	61	55
3C In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Explained in advance the criteria he or she would use to grade your assignment	No assignments	2	2	1	1	6	5	1	2
	Few or some assignments	32	32	29	23	39	35	22	29
	Most or all assignments	66	66	70	76	54	60	76	69
3D In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Provided a sample of a completed assignment written by the instructor or a student	No assignments	24	21	16	9	23	26	17	21
	Few or some assignments	58	59	60	61	58	54	55	58
	Most or all assignments	18	20	24	30	19	20	29	22
3E In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Asked you to do short pieces of writing that he or she did not grade	No assignments	33	42	33	29	46	43	37	33
	Few or some assignments	58	50	55	57	46	47	49	55
	Most or all assignments	9	9	12	14	8	10	14	12
3F In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Asked you to give feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline the classmate had written	No assignments	32	38	35	28	44	46	42	35
	Few or some assignments	55	52	50	56	47	46	44	52
	Most or all assignments	13	10	15	16	9	8	15	13
3G In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Asked you to write with classmates to complete a group project	No assignments	28	23	7	14	14	31	13	18
	Few or some assignments	63	66	61	66	61	58	64	67
	Most or all assignments	9	11	32	21	25	11	23	15
3H In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Asked you to address a real or imagined audience such as your classmates, a politician, non-experts, etc.	No assignments	28	32	20	22	27	36	24	26
	Few or some assignments	55	52	56	56	53	48	53	56
	Most or all assignments	17	16	24	22	20	16	22	18
4A Done or plan to do before graduation: Prepare a portfolio that collects written work from more than one class	Done	25	14	17	50	11	13	23	17
	Not done	75	86	83	50	89	87	77	83
4B Done or plan to do before graduation: Submit work you wrote or co-wrote to a student or professional publication (magazine, journal, newspaper, collection of student work, etc.)	Done	20	10	7	11	8	10	7	10
	Not done	80	90	93	89	92	90	93	90

Writing Item “Scales”

We have done some preliminary analysis of four scales. There are many other scales we could and did create, but these four seemed most promising for now. Some important concepts for interpreting the scales are defined below.

Scale. A measure that consists of a collection of questions intended to get at some theoretical construct that would be hard to get at with a single question; scales can also increase reliability. Examples: “Student Writing Process,” “Instructor Best Practices,” “Evidence-based Communications,” “Non-alphabetic writing.”

Reliability. The degree to which a measure, instrument, or observer is consistent. There are different types of reliability, but in the present study we report Internal consistency, the extent to which all items in a scale or test measure the same concept. Internal consistency is usually measured with Cronbach’s alpha, which shows how correlated the items in a scale are. An alpha of 0.6 to 0.7 indicates acceptable reliability, and 0.8 or higher indicates good reliability. A high alpha also indicates the questions are all measuring some larger construct.

Standard Error of the Mean (SEM). SEM quantifies how accurately the true population mean is known. It can be used to calculate a confidence interval—a range of scores most likely to contain the true population. A smaller SEM produces a smaller confidence interval, which means you can be more confident that the mean you have calculated reflects the true mean.

What Students Did: Writing Process

(Reliability Scores²: FY .78, SEN .77)

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1A | For how many writing assignments have you: Brainstormed to develop your ideas before you started drafting your assignment |
| 1B | For how many writing assignments have you: Talked with your instructor to develop your ideas before you started drafting your assignment |
| 1C | For how many writing assignments have you: Talked with a classmate, friend, or family member to develop your ideas before you started drafting you’re assignment |
| 1D | For how many writing assignments have you: Received feedback from your instructor about a draft before turning in your final assignment |
| 1H | For how many writing assignments have you: Proofread your final draft before turning it in |
| CORE 1C | In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you: Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in |

² Cronbach’s alpha.

What Instructors Did: Best Practices

(Reliability Scores: FY .85, SEN .83)

- 1D For how many writing assignments have you: Received feedback from your instructor about a draft before turning in your final assignment
- 3A In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Provided clear instructions describing what he or she wanted you TO DO
- 3B In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Explained in advance what he or she wanted you TO LEARN
- 3C In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Explained in advance the criteria he or she would use to grade your assignment
- 3D In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Provided a sample of a completed assignment written by the instructor or a student
- 3E In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Asked you to do short pieces of writing that he or she did not grade
- 3F In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Asked you to give feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline the classmate had written
- 3G In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Asked you to write with classmates to complete a group project
- 3H In how many of your writing assignments has your instructor: Asked you to address a real or imagined audience such as your classmates, a politician, non-experts, etc.
- CORE 1Q In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you: Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance

Non-Alphabetic Writing

(Reliability Scores: FY .81, SEN .75)

- 2F In how many of your writing assignments did you: Explain in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data
- 2H In how many of your writing assignments did you: Include drawings, tables, photos, screen shots, or other visual content into your written assignment
- 2I In how many of your writing assignments did you: Create the project with multimedia (web page, poster, slide presentation such as PowerPoint, etc.)

Evidence-based Communications

(Reliability Scores: FY .80, SEN .76)

- 2D In how many of your writing assignments did you: Describe your methods or findings related to data you collected in lab or field work, a survey project, etc.
- 2F In how many of your writing assignments did you: Explain in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data
- 2H In how many of your writing assignments did you: Include drawings, tables, photos, screen shots, or other visual content into your written assignment

Scales by Class Rank (First Year or Senior)

		First-Year	Senior
<hr/>			
What Students Did: Writing Process	Mean	3.4	3.3
	SD	0.8	0.8
	SEM	0.01	0.01
	N	6937	16661
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What Instructors Did: Best Practices	Mean	3.1	3.0
	SD	0.7	0.7
	SEM	0.01	0.01
	N	6937	16661
<hr/>			
Non-Alphabetic Writing	Mean	2.3	2.7
	SD	1.0	0.9
	SEM	0.01	0.01
	N	6937	16661
<hr/>			
Evidence-Based Communications	Mean	2.5	2.7
	SD	1.0	0.9
	SEM	0.01	0.01
	N	6937	16661
<hr/>			

Scales by Major for Seniors

		Arts and Humanities	Biological Sciences	Business	Education	Engineering	Physical Science	Professional	Social Science
What Students Did: Writing Process	Mean	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.0	3.0	3.4	3.3
	SD	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7
	SEM	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.01
	N	2380	1318	2911	1496	715	590	1805	2424
What Instructors Did: Best Practices	Mean	2.9	2.9	3.1	3.1	2.8	2.8	3.1	3.0
	SD	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
	SEM	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.01
	N	2380	1318	2911	1496	715	590	1805	2424
Non-Alphabetic Writing	Mean	2.2	3.1	3.0	2.6	3.4	3.0	2.7	2.6
	SD	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9
	SEM	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.02
	N	2380	1318	2911	1496	715	590	1805	2424
Evidence-based Communications	Mean	2.1	3.2	2.9	2.6	3.5	3.1	2.7	2.7
	SD	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9
	SEM	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.02
	N	2380	1318	2911	1496	715	590	1805	2424

Scales by Major for First-Year Students

		Arts and Humanities	Biological Sciences	Business	Education	Engineering	Physical Science	Professional	Social Science
What Students Did: Writing Process	Mean	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.4
	SD	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7
	SEM	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.02	0.03
	N	851	806	824	562	400	224	1086	774
What Instructors Did: Best Practices	Mean	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.1
	SD	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7
	SEM	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.02	0.03
	N	851	806	824	562	400	224	1086	774
Non-Alphabetic Writing	Mean	2.1	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.7	2.4	2.4	2.2
	SD	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9
	SEM	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.03	0.03
	N	851	806	824	562	400	224	1086	774
Evidence-based Communications	Mean	2.2	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.9	2.6	2.5	2.3
	SD	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9
	SEM	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.03	0.03
	N	851	806	824	562	400	224	1086	774

Scales for Humanities Majors for Seniors

		Art, fine and applied	English (language and literature)	History	Journalism	Language and literature (except English)	Music	Philosophy	Speech	Theater or drama	Theology or religion
What Students Did: Writing Process		Mean	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.2	3.3
		SD	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7
		SEM	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.06	0.09	0.19	0.07	0.07
		N	448	577	453	139	157	71	17	118	100
What Instructors Did: Best Practices		Mean	2.9	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.7	3.1	2.9	2.9
		SD	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7
		SEM	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.07	0.18	0.06	0.07
		N	448	577	453	139	157	71	17	118	100
Non-Alphabetic Writing		Mean	2.5	1.9	2.1	2.6	2.3	2.1	2.5	2.2	2.0
		SD	0.9	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.8
		SEM	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.09	0.23	0.08	0.08
		N	448	577	453	139	157	71	17	118	100
Evidence-based Communications		Mean	2.3	1.9	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.5	2.3	2.1
		SD	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.9
		SEM	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.07	0.06	0.10	0.25	0.07	0.09
		N	448	577	453	139	157	71	17	118	100

Scales for Humanities Majors for First-Year Students

		Art, fine and applied	English (language and literature)	History	Journalism	Language and literature (except English)	Music	Philosophy	Speech	Theater or drama	Theology or religion
What Students Did: Writing Process	Mean	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.2
	SD	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.9	0.7
	SEM	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.09	0.09	0.10	0.12	0.14	0.11	0.17
	N	185	181	149	64	70	65	23	9	61	16
What Instructors Did: Best Practices	Mean	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.4	3.0	3.2
	SD	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
	SEM	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.17	0.26	0.10	0.19
	N	185	181	149	64	70	65	23	9	61	16
Non-Alphabetic Writing	Mean	2.2	2.0	2.1	2.4	2.1	1.8	2.3	2.9	2.1	1.8
	SD	0.9	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.2	0.9	0.8
	SEM	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.12	0.09	0.11	0.22	0.40	0.12	0.21
	N	185	181	149	64	70	65	23	9	61	16
Evidence-based Communications	Mean	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.0	2.0	2.4	3.0	2.2	2.1
	SD	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.2	0.9	1.1
	SEM	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.12	0.11	0.11	0.24	0.39	0.12	0.29
	N	185	181	149	64	70	65	23	9	61	16