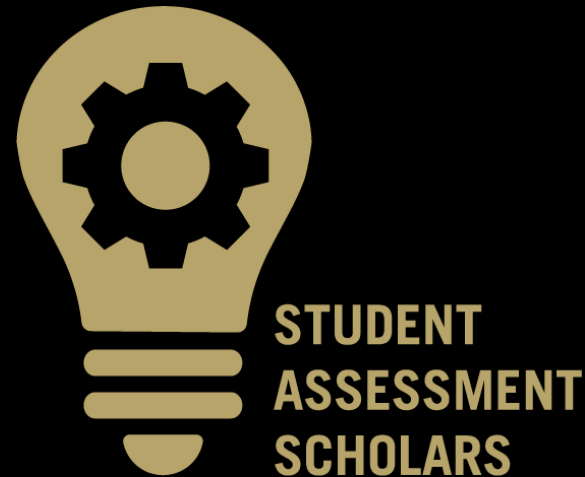# Student Voice in Assessment: Collaborating with Student Assessment Scholars to Gain Feedback and Change How NSSE Data are Shared

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STUDENT ASSESSMENT SCHOLARS

Presentation Learning Outcomes

- Review the Student Assessment Scholars internship
- Recognize the importance of student voice and social responsibility in assessment
- Review the NSSE student engagement project
- Evaluate the results of the NSSE project and other stakeholder projects as well as the Student Assessment Scholars internship

Overview: Student partnership and engagement

In 2019, Lindenwood University launched a one-year internship scheme with Academic Affairs called the Student Assessment Scholars program.

The mission of the Student Assessment Scholars program is to promote student-led assessment by using a real-world approach to carrying out research with other Lindenwood students for the purpose of institutional assessment.

Focus on Real Experience, Real Success through student training and research

- Embracing its commitment to experiential learning, Lindenwood University launched a new internship program for students to work as agents of continuous improvement. Modelled on similar programs at other institutions, Lindenwood's Student Assessment Scholars program provides a one-year real-world experience for students to engage in institutional quality enhancement. Following six weeks of qualitative research training, the Student Assessment Scholars are deployed to gather data and insights through focus groups with other Lindenwood students. Findings from these focus groups are shared with their clients for continuous improvement purposes.

The Impetus

Increasingly, higher education institutions recognize the value in partnering with students to assess and improve student learning (Bishop, 2018). There is abundant literature to describe and evaluate situations where students work as 'consultants' to inform instructional effectiveness by eliciting input from other students (e.g. Cook-Sather, 2011; Healey, 2014; Marie et al., 2018).

Furthermore, in taking on the role of institutional "partner" and "consultant," students go beyond mere memorization of facts and application of learning to serve their campus community. They develop transdisciplinary, civic-minded skills such as identifying potential improvements in their community and working with others to lead (Weiss & Norris, 2019).

Examples of nationally-showcased, institutional programs that have engaged students in the broader activities of institutional assessment and continuous improvement include: The Wabash Provost Scholars at North Carolina State University and the Provost's Assessment Scholars at the University of Scranton (Truncale et al., 2018).

Importance of Student Voice in Assessment

At its core, equitable assessment calls for those who lead and participate in assessment activities to work to ensure that assessment does not feed into cycles that perpetuate inequities but serve to bring more equity into higher education. This requires involving students (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017, 2020).

Students' interactions with peers, faculty, and staff positively influence the breadth and depth of student learning, retention, and graduation rates, and a wide range of other outcomes including critical thinking, identity development, communication skills, and leadership abilities (Felten & Lambert, 2020).

Importance of Student Voice in Assessment

Pastore and Pentassuglia (2015) state, "assessment is a 'silent practice', closed and not shared with students: a silent assessment that loses its empowerment and formative chance both for teachers and for students" (p. 418).

If students viewed assessment tasks as not relevant, disconnected from goals, and unfair - students disengaged from the assessment and did not experience deeper learning or reinforced sense of belonging (Boud, 2017; Martens et al., 2019) .

If assessment is about enhancing student learning as opposed to simply documenting it, then involving students is a vital approach to ensuring learning occurs (Brown, 2017).

Without student involvement, students report finding assessment to be an act of vulnerability involving "Laying oneself bare to be judged by a jury that does not understand you and won't tell you what they want to see"" (Heipp, 2016, p. 136).

Impacts how students view themselves as learners or capable of learning (Falchikov, 2005).

Program Background

On acceptance into the program, participants complete a six-week training program in qualitative and quantitative research methodology, where they explore survey and focus groups methods. The training program covers:

- Turning a client's 'problem' into a research question
- Using literature and secondary research to contextualize a research question
- Designing an effective and ethical study protocol
- Conducting focus groups, administering surveys, and collecting data
- Using thematic and statistical analyses to identify insights
- Reporting research findings

Academic Year	Number of Students Enrolled in Program
2019-2020	3
2020-2021	5
2021-2022	4
2022-2023	4
2023-2024	2

Program Background

- During the first semester, the interns study research methods and design, create their own studies, carry out mock focus groups, practice developing and taking surveys, and reflect on their experiences.
- Students set SMART goals and research questions throughout the first semester, while reflecting on the information they are learning.
- During this process, Academic Affairs recruits internal stakeholders as clients. Prospective clients submit project proposals, which are reviewed and evaluated by the Student Assessment Scholars.

Program Background

- In the second semester, student Assessment Scholars work in teams to address their client's issue or problem. The students later present results to the client.
- Presentations have been in the form of Insight Reports, Websites, and Student Academic Showcase posters.

Student Assessment Scholars Year 1: 2019-2020

- To complete the program, the students were required to:
  - submit their study outline and consent form in preparation of IRB approval
  - write a reflective narrative on their experience.

- Each student was also able to successfully complete their CITI training to prepare data collection and analysis from human subjects.

- The feedback provided on the program through the narratives was helpful in program planning going forward.

ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

**OIE launches the Student Assessment Scholars Internship Program**

The Student Assessment Scholars program promotes student-led assessment by using a real-world approach to carrying out research with other Lindenwood students for the purposes of institutional improvement.

"I understand now that a good research question is essential because everything else in the process stems from it."
-Student Assessment Scholar

Student Assessment Scholars Year 2: 2020-2021: Projects

Preferred Methods of Assessment
Student Perceptions of Humanities
Non Profit Administration Perceptions
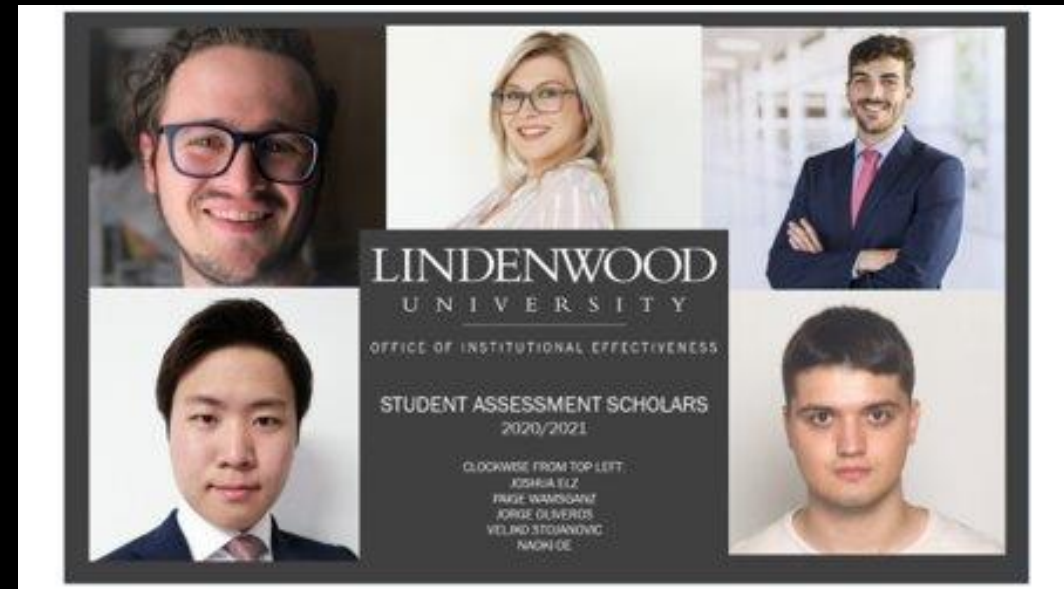
Student Assessment Scholars Year 3: 2021-2022: Stakeholder Proposals

- Library Services

- Enrollment Management-Admissions

Student Assessment Scholars Year 4: 2022-2023

- Involvement and Engagement at Lindenwood University

  - Elevate Leadership Presentation

- General Education Revision Stakeholder Proposal Form

- General Education Revision Presentation

- BIO MAPS Stakeholder Proposal Form

- BIO MAPS Presentation (Work Ongoing)

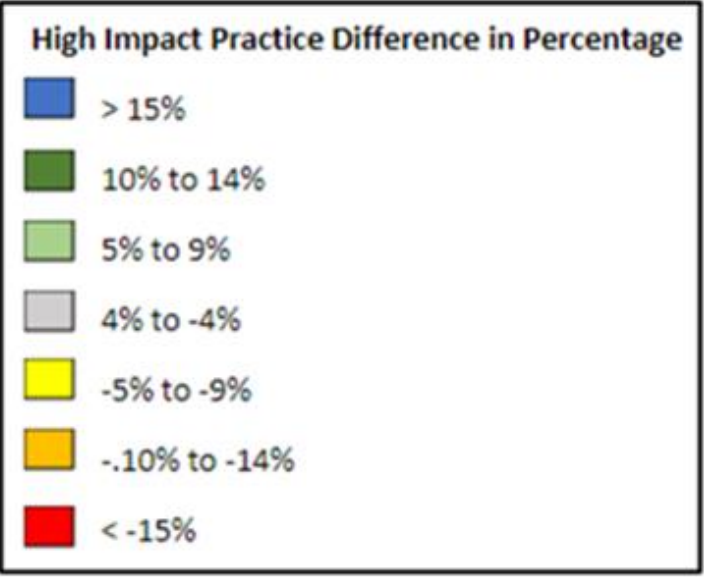- NSSE Student Engagement Project
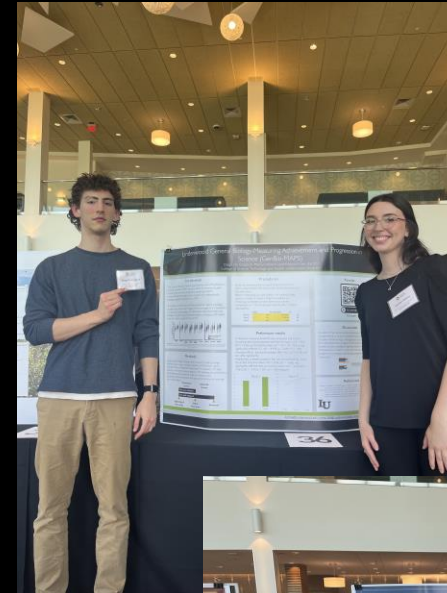
NSSE Student Engagement Project

Last fall, Institutional Research shared the most recent NSSE report with the scholars, including descriptions of the survey content, sample, and results.

Higher-Order Learning: How much coursework emphasized application, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis.	**Discussions with Diverse Others:** How often students had discussions with people with different ethnic, economic, religious, or political backgrounds.
Reflective and Integrative Learning: How often students made connections among information, thought about diverse perspectives.	**Student-Faculty Interaction:** How often students worked on committees or student groups, or discussed career plans, course material, or academic performance with faculty.
Learning Strategies: How often students identified key information, reviewed, and summarized.	**Effective Teaching Practices:** How much instructors emphasize student learning with explanations, organization, examples, and feedback.
Quantitative Reasoning: How often students engaged with numbers and statistics and used this information in critical thinking.	**Quality of Interactions:** Students' quality of interactions faculty, staff, and other students.
Collaborative Learning: How often students ask others for help and explain material, study, and do group work with others.	**Supportive Environment:** Institutional emphasis on helping students to persist and succeed through academic support programs, etc.

NSSE Student Engagement Project

High Impact Practice (HIP) Participation	St. Charles NSSE Results: 2018 vs. 2021, against regional norms			
	NSSE 2018		NSSE 2021	
	LU % answering "done" or "in progress"	Plains Private Gap (2017 & 2018)	LU % answering "done" or "in progress"	Plains Private Gap (2021)
Internship or Field Experience				
Leadership Experience	13%	1%	9%	0%
Learning Community	5%	-8%	7%	0%
Study Abroad				
Research with Faculty	4%	0%	5%	2%
Capstone				
Service Learning	39%	-18%	49%	5%

High Impact Practice Difference in Percentage
- > 15%
- 10% to 14%
- 5% to 9%
- 4% to -4%
- -5% to -9%
- -.10% to -14%
- < -15%

NSSE Student Engagement Project

- The Scholars followed up with questions, providing valuable insight.
  - Are students familiar with the jargon used in the NSSE (e.g., "Higher-Order Learning," "High Impact Practice," etc.)?
  - How was the survey marketed to students (apart from email)?
  - Are students aware of how the results of the NSSE are used? How important their responses are?
  - Are some NSSE indicators more relevant to the university and its mission than others?
- The group decided that reporting the NSSE results on the website, along with survey background and "closing the loop" information, might be a step towards greater transparency (Jankowski & Cain, 2015).

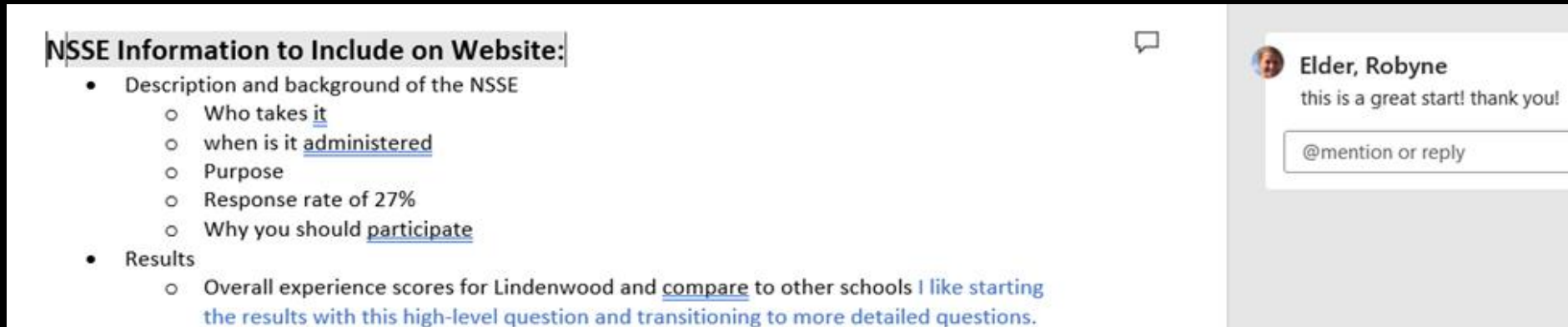## STUDENT ASSESSMENT SCHOLARS STAKEHOLDER APPLICATION

- Institutional Research completed a Stakeholder Request Form after meeting with the scholars.
  - "Based on our previous discussions, I have two primary research questions:
    - 1. Particularly from a student perspective, what NSSE summary-level data should be included on the Assessment website? For students? For faculty/staff/external stakeholders?
    - 2. How can we educate our campus community on the language of the NSSE (e.g., what is a "HIP"?)? The website might be one of several educational tools to consider."

NSSE Student Engagement Project

- Throughout the spring, the Head of Academic Effectiveness (Dr. Elder) and the Senior Research and Evaluation Analyst (Dr. Shilling) continually collaborated with the scholars to provide guidance and examples.
  - Sharing NSSE Results Webpage
  - Kent State NSSE Webpage

NSSE Student Engagement Project

- The scholars' work included:
    - Requesting additional information (e.g., historical NSSE reports, student comments from the survey, etc.)
    - Creating an outline for the webpage in a shared document (i.e., Insight Report)

Results of NSSE Student Engagement Project

- [Lindenwood University NSSE Webpage](#)

Results of Stakeholder Projects & Next Steps

- Flexible modalities for students in response to COVID
- More partnerships between Institutional Research and Academic Affairs
- Broadening research methods training to include discussion of focus group, survey, and institutional data research.
- Student choice in deliverables
- Assessing outcomes of Student Voice and Responsible Citizen

Questions?

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Resources

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