

What Does NSSE Tell Us About High Impact Practices(s) and Engagement?

Boise State asks first-year and senior students to participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) every three years. The most recent administration was in 2015. The survey focuses on asking students about their educational experiences, including their interest and participation in High Impact Practices (HIPs). HIPs are defined as educational practices that have been identified through research as having a positive effect on students' experiences and success.

Working from the 2015 NSSE results, this report describes differences in how much our students participate in HIPs and the probable impact this has on how engaged they feel with Boise State and their education in general. The three HIPs first-year students were asked about are participating in a **Learning Community**, participating in **Service-Learning**, and conducting **Research with Faculty**. Seniors were asked about those HIPs as well as doing an **Internship or Field Experience**, doing **Study Abroad**, and completing a **Culminating Senior Experience**.

How is participation in HIPs related to engagement for Boise State students?

Engagement is assessed in 10 areas by NSSE, called Engagement Indicators (EIs):

- Higher-Order Learning (HOL)
- Reflective & Integrative Learning (RIL)
- Learning Strategies (LS)
- Quantitative Reasoning (QR)
- Collaborative Learning (CL)
- Discussions with Diverse Others (DDO)
- Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)
- Effective Teaching Practices (ETP)
- Quality of Interactions (QI)
- Supportive Environment (SE)

(The items that comprise the Engagement Indicators can be viewed here: http://nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/EIs_and_HIPs_2015.pdf)

Three different modeling approaches were used to explore possible relationships between participating in HIPs and the EIs to determine which model better predicted engagement. The first model only considered whether a student participated in at least one HIP. The second model considered how many HIPs a student participated in, but did not differentiate between the different HIPs. The third model considered the possible impact of the different HIPs on engagement.

There were two major findings regarding these relationships at Boise State. First, **all** of the different HIPs were positively associated with one or more EIs after accounting for the effects of demographic variables like gender, race/ethnicity, and age, as well as GPA. The direction and strength of these relationships did not differ between first-year and senior students, though of course senior students had more opportunities for HIP participation than first-year students.

The second finding was that the third modeling approach was most accurate – the relationships between HIPs and EIs varied based on the HIP. In other words, each type of HIP was distinctly related to different types of student engagement. The table below indicates the EIs with which each HIP was positively associated.

	HOL	RIL	LS	QR	CL	DDO	SFI	ETP	QI	SE
Learning Community	x	x		x	x		x			x
Service-Learning	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Research with Faculty	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x
Internship or Field Experience					x		x			
Study Abroad							x			
Culminating Senior Experience	x	x	x					x		

Judging from these results, Service-Learning and Research with Faculty seemed to have the broadest relationship with student engagement. Service-Learning was related to nine of the 10 EIs (all but Quality of Interactions), and Research with Faculty was related to eight of the 10 (except Collaborative Learning and Effective Teaching Practices).

It is important to note that while this examination does not establish a causal relationship between participation in HIPs by Boise State students and engagement, it is reasonable to assume at least a bi-directional impact. Students who feel more engaged are more likely to seek out opportunities to participate in HIPs which further enhance engagement. The challenge then becomes to figure out how to encourage students who otherwise might not consider participating in a HIP to do so.

How do students differentially participate in HIPs?

Student demographics such as gender, race/ethnicity, first generation status, residency status, transfer status, and more were considered to estimate student differences in HIP participation. There were a number of differences in participation among the student types. Only those related to the two seemingly most impactful HIPs, Service-Learning and Research with Faculty, are considered here.

For Service-Learning, participants were more likely to be traditional-aged¹ if they were first-year students (i.e. no difference in participation between traditional-aged students and non-traditional aged students was observed for seniors). They were more likely to be women if they were senior students. They were more likely to be Pell-Eligible and live off-campus, whether first-year or senior students.

For Research with Faculty, participants were more likely to be men if they were first-year students. They were also more likely to be non-residents and traditional-aged at either first-year or senior level.

¹ Traditional-aged is less than 25 years of age.

What are the takeaways and implications?

- All the HIPs have a positive relationship with at least one EI. Four of the six HIPs have a positive relationship with at least four EIs.
- Service-Learning and Research with Faculty have a positive relationship with nine and eight EIs respectively, implying that these HIPs may be especially useful in improving student engagement.
- Some types of students do not participate in HIPs as much as others, especially non-traditional aged students and Idaho residents. Therefore, the university may need to make extra efforts to offer and involve these groups in HIPs.

This paper is part of a series on using Boise State's NSSE 2015 results to answer specific questions about our students. For additional NSSE results or to ask questions about this paper, please contact Nick Warcholak in Institutional Research at nickwarcholak@boisestate.edu