

MEMORANDUM

To: Scott McNall, Provost
Willie Hopkins, Dean
From: Gail Corbitt
Chair, Department of Accounting and MIS
Date: April 15, 2006
Re: Response to NSSE data

The NSSE item that the College of Business decided to focus is that related to prompt feedback. This response covers the work done by all three departments in the College of Business for the BS in Business Administration. The specific question we addressed was:

“In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?

q. Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral):”

	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Never
Business:	13%	41%	42%	4%
Campus:	15%	47%	34%	4%

As you can see Business is below the campus average and the campus was significantly below peer school results.

Which student practice did we try to change?

To address the student practice Steve Adams and I held 2 focus group sessions in March 2005 using GroupSystems technology so that we could find out what this item meant within our college. We held 2 different electronic brainstorming sessions asking the students how they responded to this question and why they responded the way they did. (The responses were consistent with NSSE results.) Data were distributed to Department Chairs and the Assessment Coordinator for BADM. A concise summary of the comments included the following statements:

- It varies a lot with instructor;
- Tests seem to get back to students more quickly than homework and projects; and
- Prompt and feedback are separate constructs.

In other words feedback is not often given on end of the term projects or presentations although grades are posted promptly. Results of multiple choice tests are given back to students promptly but there is no feedback on why the answers are wrong, thus, even though the feedback is prompt, students gave Chico a low rating on this item. If written comments are given back to students on assignments, tests or projects it usually is not prompt, taking as much as 4 weeks to return work to students with comments.

Given these results, the interventions are mostly faculty directed but we planned to 1) reinstate the peer tutoring we used to do in Accounting (and maybe expand this to include MIS and Supply Chain options) and 2) encourage faculty to set realistic expectations about how and when assignments are returned to students. It was evident in the focus groups that students do not expect to get detailed comments back on work quickly. It is also clear that the quality of feedback is more important to them than timeliness which is part of the change in expectations. Faculty need to help set these expectations with students. What we want to avoid is feedback on written work that takes 3-4 weeks and does not contain any meaningful comments.

The tutoring program was reinstated in Fall 2005. The Department of AMIS hired a writing tutor who also helped the introductory accounting students until Beta Alpha Psi (BAP, the student honor society) got a schedule together to staff the Business Resource Center. After Fall semester we looked at the usage of the tutors and discovered that the writing tutor was spending the majority of his time with marketing (28%) and Masters level (41%) students so for Spring 2006, the College paid for the tutor. Accounting, Finance, Management and BSIS students each had usage between six and nine percent. The AMIS Department continued to work with BAP to provide tutoring to the students in the introductory accounting classes (taken by all COB students). In addition, the AMIS Department also expanded lab hours for help for MINS 301 and SCMS 306 (two other core classes that are difficult for students). This allowed for more student tutors available to help students with homework and assignments, hopefully providing them with prompt feedback to assignments prior to handing them into the instructor. They also explained homework and exam answers when students had questions. Students who used these services reported satisfaction with the services, but usage was generally lower than hoped.

Which faculty practice did we try to change?

This NSSE item is directly involved with the fourth of the seven principles of good teaching: Good practice gives prompt feedback. We distributed the results of the focus group to department chairs and encourage each department to:

- Communicate the results of the focus group sessions to the faculty highlighting the areas of concern for each discipline (some of the comments were directed at specific courses),
- Encourage faculty who use Scrantron tests to go over the results and explain why answers were right or wrong, especially for those items that were missed by 20% or more of the students, and
- Meet with faculty in each discipline to figure out a way to reinstate the mentoring program and brainstorm other ideas to improve performance on this measure.

Data were distributed to faculty along with the memo to Scott McNall in April 2005. The topics of the tutor, multiple choice tests and expectations were addressed at the Fall retreat held on August 18, 2005. In the Fall 2005 the departments also held meetings with the faculty in each discipline to talk about what kind of mentors could be of most

value to the discipline and where we could find students to staff the BRC. This is where the idea to use BAP to mentor accounting students came up since BAP members have to do some service to the college each semester. This is also where it was decided to add lab hours to help students in MINS 301 and SCMS 306.

Clearly follow up on whether or not these interventions made a difference in the rating of prompt feedback is anticipated. We hope that the scores on this years NSSE survey are better than in 2004. We anxiously await results.