

NSSE FAQ

What does NSSE stand for?

NSSE (pronounced “nessie”) is the National Survey of Student Engagement.

What is meant by “student engagement”?

“Student engagement” means students' participation in programs and activities provided by Cal Poly for their learning and personal development. NSSE results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college.

How long will NSSE be open?

February 25, 2025 – May 12, 2025.

Can all students participate in NSSE?

NSSE is for first-year students and senior students.

NSSE's definition of first-year students: Must be (a) enrolled at Cal Poly during the Fall 2024 quarter and (b) expected to be classified as first-year students during the Spring quarter according to institutions' official records. In determining classification as a first-year student, include any Fall quarter credit hours being attempted or earned in this calculation, but if possible exclude any Advanced Placement (AP) credits or other college credits earned prior to completing high school. Transfer students should be included if they fall into the credit range to be a first-year student (less than 46 quarter units) when considering their post-high school credits.

NSSE's definition of senior students: Must be (a) enrolled at Cal Poly during the Fall 2024 quarter and (b) considered a probable graduate by the Spring 2025 or Summer 2025 quarter.

Students who are invited to participate in NSSE will receive a URL to access the survey sent to their Cal Poly e-mail address. Students should check their Junk / Spam / Clutter folder in their e-mail if they are a first-year or senior student and have not received this URL.

If you are teaching any classes that are comprised of mostly first-year students or of mostly senior students, please consider setting aside ~15 minutes of class time to allow students to participate in NSSE.

Are students required to participate in NSSE?

Participation in NSSE is voluntary. Having as many students as possible participate in NSSE helps to make NSSE data more statistically meaningful.

In publicizing NSSE to students:

- Speaking to or contacting students in groups (such as making an announcement in class) is acceptable, if it is clear that the students' grades or relationship with their professor will not be impacted if they do not participate in NSSE. Extra credit may be offered for participating in NSSE; however, there must be other non-NSSE-related opportunities to acquire the same extra credit.
- Faculty in mentorship/advising roles (such as senior project advisors, research advisors, or club advisors) should not directly contact their advisees about participating in NSSE. However, advisors can answer questions about NSSE, if asked.
- Asking a student to participate in NSSE in a one-on-one conversation or communication (e.g., a student visiting during an office hour) should be avoided, as this may potentially be perceived as coercive.

What if students need help completing NSSE?

NSSE attempts to make the survey accessible to all students, including those with visual disabilities. If students encounter any issues while completing NSSE, please contact our survey partners, the Indiana University Center for Survey Research, toll-free for assistance at (800) 258-7691.

Why should students complete the survey?

Cal Poly would like to know what you think of your educational experience, the kinds of activities you do, and how you are benefiting from your studies. Without this information, it may not be easy for Cal Poly to identify areas that can and should be improved. The more we know about the experiences of Cal Poly students, the more likely it is that faculty and staff can take appropriate action to improve the Cal Poly educational experience.

Why does NSSE ask about your personal background?

Cal Poly would like to know whether different groups of students have fundamentally similar or different educational experiences. By providing this information, you will help us answer this important question.

Are responses to NSSE anonymous?

Responses to NSSE are confidential, but not necessarily anonymous. This is because when NSSE data is analyzed, it may be disaggregated to discern if there is a difference in engagement from students of different backgrounds and identities. In some cases, there may be only a few students who have a particular background or identity, which can make complete anonymity difficult. For NSSE data to be meaningful, however, it is critical to include responses from students from as many different backgrounds and identities as possible, no matter how small the number of students belonging to a particular group. This will help the university uncover and address any differences in

engagement from students of different backgrounds and identities. Your contact information or identifiable survey responses will not be shared with anyone other than designated contacts at Cal Poly.

What will Cal Poly do with NSSE results?

NSSE results will give an estimate of how Cal Poly first-year students and senior students spend their time, and what they gain from attending college. This can be compared with Cal Poly's learning objectives and identify Cal Poly's strengths in student engagement. In addition, any gaps in student engagement and achieving learning objectives may be identified and addressed. The results may also reveal if there are differences in participation in engagement activities by students of different backgrounds and identities that need to be addressed.