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# The Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA<sup>SM</sup>)

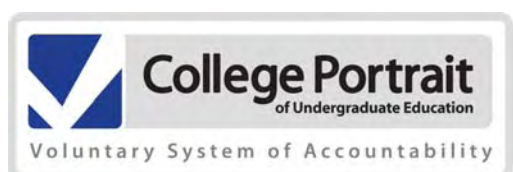
## Overview and Background Materials

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January 5, 2008

(updated)



# The Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA<sup>SM</sup>)

## Background & Development

Through a web reporting template titled *College Portrait*, the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) provides consistent, comparable, and transparent information on the undergraduate student experience to key higher education stakeholders, including prospective students and their families, public policy-makers, legislators, and campus faculty and staff. An important goal of the VSA is to improve public understanding of how public colleges and universities operate, and to affirm the significance of the many diverse missions of U.S. higher education.

The VSA project is the result of a partnership between the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC). During spring of 2006, the associations, in consultation with education officials, policy-makers, and academic leaders, outlined a mechanism through which public higher education could become more accountable for student learning and student development while providing additional information to students and families to aid them in the college selection process. The VSA project was funded by a December 2006 Lumina grant. Over 80 higher education leaders from 70 public colleges and universities contributed to the development of the VSA program and data reporting template.

The data elements included in *College Portrait* were identified and evaluated based on input from student/family focus groups, feedback from the higher education community, and research on higher education. The majority of the data elements selected are from currently available data sources with established definitions and reporting conventions. This approach was designed to enhance comparability, transparency, public confidence, and accuracy as well as to minimize the cost and burden on institutions.

During the VSA development process some university leaders expressed interest in including items on the *College Portrait* template to reflect the specialized missions of their institutions as research universities, land-grant universities, urban universities, open admissions universities, etc. The current *College Portrait* template accommodates differences in institutional missions by providing opportunities to add university-specific text and through the numerous “more” links. However, at this time, the template does not include data elements that are specifically customized by institutional mission.

For each VSA participating institution, the *College Portrait* reporting template will be five pages in length and organized into three primary sections: 1) consumer information, 2) student experiences and perceptions, and 3) student learning outcomes. Institutions may include a supplemental page after the last page of the *College Portrait* if it is clearly labeled as a page added by the institution.

In August 2007, the VSA Presidential Advisory Committee reviewed the work of the task forces and unanimously recommended the VSA program to the AASCU and NASULGC Boards. At the AASCU and NASULGC annual meetings in November 2007, the boards of directors unanimously endorsed the recommendations of the presidential advisory committee and approved the VSA. The boards also established a VSA Oversight Board to oversee the growth and development of the VSA.

Formal registration for the VSA opened in mid-December. The *College Portrait* data entry template and financial aid estimator will be available for VSA participants in early spring of 2008.

## Overview of College Portrait

The *College Portrait* reporting template is five pages in length. The data elements are organized into three sections: 1) consumer information, 2) student experiences and perceptions, and 3) student learning outcomes. Institutions may include a supplemental page after the last page of the *College Portrait* if it is clearly labeled as a page added by the institution. Following is an overview of each of the three standard sections. An example of the template can be found at <http://www.voluntarysystem.org>.

### I. Consumer Information

The data elements in the first three pages of the *College Portrait* template address the question: “*What information would be most helpful to prospective students and their families in deciding which college or university best fits their educational wants and needs?*” Costs of attendance, degree offerings, living arrangements, student characteristics, graduation rates, transfer rates, and post-graduate plans are included.

There are two innovations of particular note – the student success and progress rate and the college cost calculator. The success and progress rate provides a more complete picture of student progress through the higher education system rather than focusing on the graduation rate from only one institution. Such a measure is increasingly valuable as the majority of students now attend more than one institution before they graduate. The college cost calculator is a tool for students and their families to more accurately estimate the net cost of attending a particular institution. Studies have demonstrated that many students, particularly low income students, do not consider attending college because they mistakenly believe the cost of attending is much higher than it actually is.

### II. Student Experiences and Perceptions

The second section of *College Portrait* provides a snapshot of student experiences and activities and their perceptions of a particular college or university by reporting the results from one of four student engagement surveys. Links to other institutional evaluations of campus life are also provided in the top text box.

Institutions will select one of four student surveys to conduct at its campus and report results within six specified constructs that academic research has shown to be correlated with greater student learning and development: group learning, active learning, experiences with diverse groups of people and ideas, student satisfaction, institution commitment to student learning and success, and student interaction with faculty and staff. Under each of the six constructs, student responses to specific questions will be reported to maintain rough comparability across survey instruments.

### III. Student Learning Outcomes

The third section of the *College Portrait* template reports evidence of student learning in two ways. At the top of the page, institutions provide a description of how they evaluate student learning. This description includes links to institution-specific outcomes data such as program assessments and professional licensure exams.

The second method is a VSA pilot project designed to measure student learning gains in critical thinking (including analytic reasoning) and written communication. An institution will select from one of three instruments to measure these broad cognitive skills. The skills are measured at the institution level across all academic disciplines and are intended to be comparable across institution types. It is a pilot project since many public institutions have not previously measured these broad cognitive skills at the institutional level and then analyzed the results to report learning outcomes in this manner.

Results are described on *College Portrait* template in two ways: as the learning gains between the freshman and senior years (or the value-added component); and as the actual average test scores for freshmen and seniors.

Learning gains or value-added scores reflect the difference between the actual and expected scores of graduating and entering students, taking into account the academic ability of the students. Each of the three testing organizations will use the same method to compute and characterize their learning gains or value-added scores for VSA purposes: *Well Above Expected*, *Above Expected*, *At Expected*, *Below Expected*, and *Well Below Expected*.

The reporting of the actual average scores demonstrates whether the average score of the seniors is higher than the average score of the freshmen. Since the range of scores varies across the three instruments, their results do not allow for direct comparisons between instruments.

Since the measurement of student learning at the institutional level is not widespread, many institutions will need a period of time to find the best methods of administration and to determine how to use the test results to improve their educational programs before making the results of the outcomes tests public. For a period of four years, institutions may choose not to publicly report test results. After the four-year period is concluded, institutions will report and update the results at least once every three years.

## **Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA<sup>SM</sup>)**

### **VSA Oversight Board Members**

**Larry Abele**

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Florida State University

**Linda Bennett**

Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs  
University of Southern Indiana

**Daniel Bradley**

President  
Fairmont State University

**William (Brit) Kirwan**

Chancellor  
University System of Maryland

**Jolene Koester**

President  
California State University-Northridge

**Mitchel Livingston**

Vice President  
University of Cincinnati

**Linda Mannering**

Director, Institutional Research  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

**Keith Yehle**

Director of Government Relations  
University of Kansas

*Ex-officio members*

David Shulenburger

Vice President of Academic Affairs  
NASULGC

John Hammang

Director of Special Projects  
AASCU

Christine Keller

VSA Executive Director

## **Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA<sup>SM</sup>) Participation Agreement**

**The institution, as a member of AASCU or NASULGC, hereby agrees to become a participant in the Voluntary System of Accountability and to utilize the *College Portrait* web reporting template. As a VSA participant, the institution agrees that it will abide by the following conditions, reporting requirements, and timelines.**

### **Display of *College Portrait* template**

- 1) The institution will generate the *College Portrait* template using the tools and specifications provided and display the resulting template on the institution website without altering its form or content.
  - a) A supplemental page can be included with the *College Portrait* template if it is clearly labeled as a page added by the institution. The supplemental page must be added after the last page of the *College Portrait*.
- 2) The institution will include the *College Portrait/VSA* icon on the institution home page or no more than one click away from the home page on another appropriate page (e.g., admissions page) and maintain an active link from the icon directly to the *College Portrait*.

### **Reporting of Consumer Information**

- 3) Report data that is available through the Common Data Set (CDS) and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) within three months of becoming a VSA participant.
- 4) Link to supplemental information as required by the VSA program including out-of-state tuition costs, listings of undergraduate, and graduate degree programs, and the Clery Report on campus crime statistics within three months of becoming a VSA participant.
- 5) Add text descriptions of institution mission, the campus community, and campus safety. Select information that will be linked to the “campus community” buttons. Link to supplemental institutional data as desired by using the “MORE” links.

### **Measurement and Reporting of Undergraduate Success and Progress Rates**

- 6) Utilize National Student Clearinghouse StudentTracker tool to report the Student Success and Progress Rates on the template within one year of becoming a VSA participant.
- 7) Link to the detailed success and progress tables generated by the National Student Clearinghouse as part of the VSA program within one year of becoming a VSA participant.
- 8) If the institution has not been submitting enrollment and graduation data to the Clearinghouse, submit back files from Fall 2000 to the present within six months of becoming a VSA participant.

### **College Cost Calculator**

- 9) Include a link on *College Portrait* to the college cost calculator provided as part of VSA or link to another tool to estimate net costs for prospective students based on a student’s individual circumstances.

### **Future Plans of Bachelor’s Degree Recipients**

- 10) Administer a common survey question provided by the VSA to graduating seniors using an appropriate delivery method (e.g., add the question to an existing senior survey, incorporate into application for degree process, etc)
- 11) Report the survey results on the *College Portrait* template no later than two years after becoming a VSA participant and update results at least every three years.
- 12) Provide a link to information on the survey question administration, sample, and response rate.

### **Measurement and Reporting of Student Experiences and Perceptions**

- 13) Link to institution-specific data on the student experience within three months.
- 14) Administer either the CSEQ, CSS, NSSE or UCUES survey to a random sample of seniors as soon as feasible.
- 15) Report the survey results on the *College Portrait* template no later than two years after becoming a VSA participant and update results at least every three years.
- 16) Provide a link to information on the survey administration, sample, and response rate.

### **Measurement and Reporting of Student Learning Outcomes**

- 17) Link to institution-specific learning outcomes data within three months. The choice of what data to report is at the institution's discretion and may include reports on program assessments, employer satisfaction with graduates, licensing exam pass rates, etc.
- 18) As soon as feasible begin trial measurement of student learning gains using either the CAAP critical thinking and writing essay components, MAPP scores for the critical thinking and written communication, or the CLA instrument to random samples of freshmen and seniors following the directions of the test maker in selecting the sample. (Optional: Institutions may chose to measure student learning gains for incoming transfer students and seniors who entered as transfers)
- 19) Report student learning gains on the template no more than four years after becoming a VSA participant and update results at least every three years.
- 20) Provide a link to information on the test administration, sample, and response rate.

### **Conditions of Participation**

- 21) The institution acknowledges that it is receiving value in the form of access to and use of the *College Portrait* report generator, the College Report logo, the VSA cost calculator, software administrative tools and documentation and in return VSA is receiving value in the form of the institution's participation and compliance with this agreement.
- 22) An institution may withdraw from VSA participation at any time if it chooses not to report the data elements outlined in the VSA Reporting Timetable for *College Portrait* Data Elements included as *Attachment 1* in this document. If an institution chooses to end their participation in VSA, the institution will voluntarily remove the *College Portrait* template from their website.
- 23) When a senior official of a participating institution learns that their institution fails to meet the conditions outlined in this document as determined by the VSA Oversight Board and does not bring the institution into compliance within three months the institution will voluntarily remove the *College Portrait* template from their website.
- 24) If an institution is unable to meet the conditions outlined in this document due to unusual or extraordinary circumstances and does not wish to end participation in VSA, the institution

may petition the VSA Oversight Board for an appropriate remedy. The resulting decision of the VSA Oversight Board will be final.

- 25) The institution warrants that that it is responsible for the accuracy of the data that appears on its *College Portrait* template.

### **Additional Conditions of Using the VSA Cost Calculator**

- a) The use of the VSA cost calculator is optional. If a participating institution uses the VSA calculator it agrees to leave intact the warnings that accompany the cost calculator to the effect that the calculator provides estimates, not guarantees, and students must apply for admission to a specific institution and complete all required applications for financial aid eligibility to receive final and certain aid packages and cost of attendance figures. Further, the institution electing to use the VSA calculator acknowledges that estimates generated by the VSA calculator are intended only as a first estimate of potential affordability of the institution to the user and, as such, are to prompt users of the calculator to follow procedures provided by the institution, lenders and the U.S. Department of Education to obtain financial figures on which they can rely.
- b) Participation in VSA is a voluntary activity. The institution understands and agrees that AASCU and NASULGC, their officers, employees, and board members, the VSA Oversight Board officers and members, the template contractors, and the VSA calculator contractor have supplied VSA as a service to participating institutions and bear no responsibility for any errors of fact that appear on a participating institution's template or any data errors supplied or entered by the institution in its template or calculator. Further, estimates generated by the VSA calculator are intended only as a first estimate of potential affordability of the institution to the user and are intended only to prompt the user to follow routes provided by the institution, lenders and the U.S. Department of Education to obtain financial figures on which they can rely.
- c) The institution may not remove or obscure any copyright notices or any other indications of ownership on the VSA calculator, nor may the institution create any derivative works of, or otherwise modify, the VSA calculator.

**All of the above terms and conditions constitute an agreement by and between the institution and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), and the VSA Oversight Board.**

*Note: In early 2008, the VSA Oversight Board will consider whether universities that are not members of AASCU or NASULGC may become VSA participants. In the interim, expressions of interest in participation from nonmembers should be directed to VSA Executive Director Christine Keller. (11/26/2007)*

**ATTACHMENT 1****VSA Reporting Timetable for College Portrait Data Elements**

	<b>Within Three Months</b>	<b>Within Six Months</b>	<b>Within One Year</b>	<b>Within Two Years</b>	<b>Within Four Years</b>
<b>Consumer Info</b>					
CDS/IPEDS data	X				
Supplemental data links	X				
Text and Links	X				
<b>Success/Progress Rate</b>					
Data to Clearinghouse		X			
Report rate			X		
Link to detail tables			X		
<b>Link to College Cost Calculator</b>	X				
<b>Report <i>Future Plans</i> Survey Results</b>				X	
<b>Student Experiences and Perceptions</b>					
Link to institution-specific data		X			
Report results of CSEQ, CSS, NSSE or UCUES				X	
<b>Student Learning Outcomes</b>					
Link to institution-specific data		X			
Report results of CAAP, CLA, or MAPP					X

## Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA<sup>SM</sup>) The College Portrait

### Common Questions and Answers

#### **When can an institution adopt VSA and put *College Portrait* on their website?**

Beginning on December 11, 2007, institutions can officially sign up to become VSA participants on the VSA website at <http://www.voluntarysystem.org/participants/signup.cfm>. The data entry template for the *College Portrait* will be available in February of 2008 and participating institutions may start to display the *College Portrait* on their websites at that time. Initially, some sections of the template will not be fully populated and institutions will continue to add data to the template consistent with the VSA participation and reporting schedule.

#### **What is the difference between VSA<sup>SM</sup> and *College Portrait*?**

The Voluntary System of Accountability<sup>SM</sup>, or VSA, is a program to provide greater accountability by public institutions through accessible, transparent, and comparable information and is jointly sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC). *College Portrait* is the name of the web template designed to communicate the VSA data to the public.

#### **Who is the intended audience for *College Portrait*?**

The primary audience for *College Portrait* is prospective students and their families. There are two secondary audiences: 1) governing board members, legislators, policy-makers, and education agency administrators and 2) institutional faculty and staff.

#### **How will *College Portrait* help prospective students?**

*College Portrait* is a source of basic information about colleges and institutions presented in a common format using established data definitions and data collection conventions. It is not intended to be a marketing tool for institutions nor is it intended to be encyclopedic, but a trustworthy source of standard data. Institutions will continue to market themselves to students, and students will continue to visit campuses and to access college websites to understand the nuances of individual institutions.

#### **How will *College Portrait* serve governing board members, legislators, policy-makers, and education agency administrators?**

*College Portrait* has been designed to meet the needs of prospective students and their parents – an important constituency for board members, legislators, and agency administrators. A system that meets the needs of a key constituency group is in turn valuable to public officials. *College Portrait* responds to calls for accessible, transparent, and comparable data that have been voiced by legislators and other policy makers, particularly the public reporting of student learning outcomes.

#### **How will *College Portrait* serve faculty and staff?**

The data contained in the *College Portrait* will help to build a shared understanding of the institution on a broad scale. Faculty and staff often have detailed knowledge of what is happening in their own program or department but are less familiar with overall view of the

institution. Through the consistent and comparable information displayed on *College Portrait*, faculty and staff will not only have a better understanding of their own institution but how it compares to other colleges and universities.

The sections on student engagement and learning outcomes will allow faculty and staff to gain additional knowledge on student learning and student development at their institution. In particular, the learning outcomes results provide information on students' high level cognitive skills such as critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and written communication; skills highly desired by employers and graduate schools. Used in conjunction with disciplinary assessments of content knowledge, the measurement of higher level skills provides insight into overall student learning gains at an institution. The use of similar instruments and methodologies by the VSA across institutions allow faculty and staff to compare how their institution's students perform as compared to other institutions with similar student populations. Thus, faculty and staff can begin to determine whether curricular or other change is needed to improve the ability of their students to succeed as employees or in graduate studies.

### **Can my institution revise *College Portrait* to better portray our strengths?**

In short, no. For the template to serve its national purpose of providing transparent information in a common format, the template must be identical across all participating institutions.

However, the template provides a number of opportunities for an institution to tell its distinctive story. For example, several text blocks can be used to describe the institution and nine information buttons can be customized to link to topics that the institution believes will be helpful to students. The MORE links by many of the data elements can lead students to any information the institution believes appropriate – from catalog copy to admissions and financial aid applications to film clips. The MORE links also provide an opportunity for institutions to expand on information presented in the template.

A supplemental page can be included with the *College Portrait* template if it is clearly labeled as a page added by the institution. The supplemental page must be added after the last page of the *College Portrait*.

### **Why is there no place on *College Portrait* to describe my institution's graduate and professional programs, research accomplishments, business incubator, patents granted, outreach efforts or other key initiatives?**

The information provided in the *College Portrait* is designed to assist prospective undergraduate students in their college search, so the content is focused on undergraduate education and the environment in which undergraduate education is delivered. However, the template does provide opportunities through the MORE links, the information buttons, the text description, and the supplemental page to highlight other types of information if an institution wishes to do so.

### **If an institution does not elect to become a VSA participant now, will it have the opportunity to join VSA in the future?**

Enrollment for VSA will remain open.

### **When will an institution be permitted to withdraw from VSA?**

An institution may withdraw from VSA participation at any time.

**What is the fee for participation in VSA by an AASCU/NASULGC member institution?**

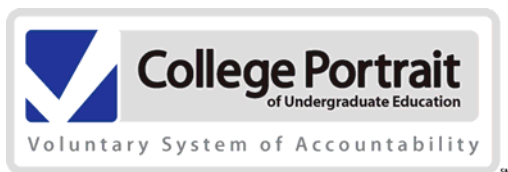
At present, there is no fee for participation in the VSA program. Development costs were covered by a grant from Lumina Foundation and in-kind contributions by member institutions and the two associations. A second grant from the Lumina Foundation will help defray the costs during the first two years of VSA operation. After that period, it is likely that a small fee will be assessed to cover the continuing cost of VSA.

**My institution is not a member of AASCU or NASULGC. May we become a VSA participant?**

Not at this time. One of the first agenda items for the VSA Governing Board will be to discuss this question and to decide the conditions, if any, in which nonmembers may participate.

**How will students find our *College Portrait* web page?**

Each participating institution will place the *College Portrait* icon below on their home page or on a logically alternate web page such as the admissions page. In addition, NASULGC and AASCU will maintain a VSA website ([www.voluntarysystem.org](http://www.voluntarysystem.org)) with a current listing of participating institutions and active links to their *College Portrait* web page.



**Is there a central web site and search engine that can be used to search across the *College Portrait* pages of all VSA participants?**

No. The *College Portrait* web pages will be hosted on individual institution websites not centralized in one location.

**How much will it cost an institution to gather the data that is reported on the template?**

Most of the items on the template are drawn from currently available data sources (e.g., Common Data Set or IPEDS) so there is no additional cost to an institution.

Direct Costs: There are four items included in the VSA that have potential direct costs for the institution: compiling the success and progress rate data, collecting data on the future plans of bachelor's degree recipients, measuring student engagement, and measuring learning outcomes.

- The data for the success and progress rate comes from the National Student Clearinghouse and the cost is dependent upon the type of services that an institution contracts with the Clearinghouse to provide. The annual cost ranges from \$0 to \$3,000 for an institution with an enrollment of 30,000 students (both graduate and undergraduate). Data on student success and progress must be updated annually.
- The cost for the student engagement surveys range from \$4,800 to \$15,500 at an institution with 20,000 undergraduates. Data on student engagement must be updated at least once every three years.

- The cost for the learning outcomes instruments range from \$6,200 to \$10,200. Data on learning outcomes must be updated at least once every three years

Thus, the direct costs over a three-year period for the three activities listed above would average approximately \$4,000 to \$12,000 per year for an institution of 30,000 students. The figures assume ongoing participation in the Clearinghouse and measurement of student engagement and learning outcomes every third year.

- The data for the future plans of bachelor's degree recipient comes from a single question that will be administered to graduating seniors. The direct cost is depends on how an institution administers the question (e.g., add the question to an existing senior survey or include the question as part of the application to degree process. Data on future plans must be updated at least once every three years, so the survey administration costs would not necessarily be incurred every year.

**Indirect Costs:** Indirect costs include the time and effort of institutional personnel to compile the data and administer the testing/survey instruments as well as incentives used to encourage students to participate in the testing. The personnel costs may be an internal reallocation of resources representing an opportunity cost to the institution, but not necessarily an additional cost. The costs of student incentives vary substantially by institution. Some institutions have paid students from \$30 to over \$100 to take learning outcomes tests; others have given priority in course enrollment, passes to concerts and bookstore discounts; yet others have integrated the exams into freshmen survey and senior capstone courses to minimize costs and increase participation.

#### **How were the components of *College Portrait* selected?**

Over 80 higher education leaders from 70 public institutions were involved in the development of the VSA program. Seven task forces made up of presidents, provosts, student affairs officers, institutional research officers, and faculty members and headed by a member institution president worked over an 8-month period to identify and evaluate potential data elements. The task forces were aided by focus groups, feedback from the higher education community, researchers, and the research literature in designing VSA. At the end of the process, a Presidential Advisory Committee composed of current and former presidents reviewed the work of the task forces and made final decisions about the components included in VSA.

#### **How will the *College Portrait* template be revised in the future?**

At their annual meetings in November 2007, NASULGC and AASCU Boards established a VSA Oversight Board to regularly review VSA components and determine whether items should be added, modified, deleted, or revised.

#### **Who will monitor or audit the data that is posted as part of the VSA *College Portrait*?**

Each institution is responsible for the accuracy of the information that is reported as part of the VSA. The VSA program is designed to be as transparent as possible, using established data sources that are routinely published and providing details on collection methods and reporting conventions. This transparency makes it less likely that inaccurate or misleading data will be reported.

#### **How were the components of *College Portrait* selected?**

Over 80 higher education leaders from 70 public institutions were involved in the development of the VSA program. Seven task forces made up of presidents, provosts, student affairs officers,

institutional research officers, and faculty members and headed by a member institution president worked over an 8-month period to identify and evaluate potential data elements. The task forces were aided by focus groups, feedback from the higher education community, researchers, and the research literature in designing VSA. At the end of the process, a Presidential Advisory Committee composed of current and former presidents reviewed the work of the task forces and made final decisions about the components included in VSA.

**Why is the measurement of learning outcomes called a “pilot project?”**

Public institutions have not previously measured student learning outcomes on a large scale as recommended by the VSA. Given the lack of previous experience and limited knowledge, there are some in the academy with significant reservations about the utility of learning outcomes measurement. To give institutions adequate opportunities to become familiar with administration of outcomes testing and to determine how they might benefit from it, the VSA program permits participating institutions to take up to four years to conduct trial tests of learning outcomes measurement before they have to make a decision to publish test results.

If an institution determines at the end of the four years that their trial administrations of learning outcomes tests have not produced useful results, the institution may withdraw from VSA at that time without ever publicly reporting results of the tests. A decision to withdraw from VSA after conducting trial administrations of learning outcome measurements will be judged to reflect a good faith effort at measuring core learning outcomes.

The additional academic research on these measures that will occur during the next four years plus the collective experience of VSA participants with their trial administrations of these measures will add significantly to our knowledge about the tests. At the end of the first four years of VSA, the collective evidence amassed during this pilot effort should assure the public that we have been responsive to the request to thoroughly examine the use of outcome measures. The permanent VSA oversight board will continuously review new findings about learning outcomes testing and shape VSA based on this knowledge.

**Will the results from one of the three learning outcomes tests be the only evidence about learning outcomes in *College Portrait*?**

No. Institutions have the immediate and continuing opportunity to provide other evidence on learning gains such as program assessment reports, employer satisfaction with graduates, graduate school admissions success, licensing test results, etc.

**Which of the three learning outcomes test options should my institution use?**

The choice of the learning outcomes instrument is left up to the institution.

**What are the sampling guidelines for the learning outcomes tests?**

For VSA purposes, we have set basic, minimum standards for the sampling of students - a random sample of freshmen and a random sample of seniors. For sample size, we require that institutions follow the guidelines that have been recommended by the test developers. In general, ACT recommends a minimum sample size of 200 for the CAAP. A sample above 200 is clearly acceptable but you will want to get the test maker to agree that it is really representative of the underlying populations.

**Is the VSA envisioning longitudinal reporting, such that the 1st-year students who are tested this year will be the seniors who are tested in the next?**

At this point we are using only the cross-sectional methodology rather than the longitudinal method. The task forces made this choice because the cross sectional method is quicker, simpler, and less costly to implement and there was no evidence at this time that that the results from one or the other method was more valid or reliable. The test developers are still collecting data on any differences between the two strategies. If it becomes apparent that the longitudinal method is clearly superior to cross sectional method and well worth the additional resources, that decision will be revisited.

**Can a student’s ACT or SAT score be used in place of a “pre-test” to compute the value-added score?**

This option was considered during VSA development process within the technical work group and was discussed with test developers. The conclusion was that to accurately measure value-added, the same instrument needed to be used for both the pre and post test. The reasoning is that although the CAAP, CLA, or MAPP is highly correlated with the ACT or SAT that does not mean that both tests are measuring the same thing - e.g., reasoning or thinking or cognitive processing - in the same manner. In addition, the correlation between ACT/SAT and CAAP/CLA/MAPP, while high, is not perfect. There appear to be systematic variations between the two scores at some universities that might reflect recruiting or scholarship strategies the university uses to build its freshman class. Therefore, in order to get the most accurate measure of the gains in learning between freshmen and seniors we need to use the same instrument. While a financially tempting strategy, neither the test makers nor outside experts on the work group and task force recommended its use.

**Which of the four student engagement measures should my institution use?**

This decision is left up to the institution’s discretion

**How will participation in VSA be used by regional accreditation agencies in the periodic reaccreditation?**

A letter dated September 21, 2006, written on behalf the six regional accrediting agencies and reproduced below, addressed this point, saying in part:

*“The regional accrediting commissions have all changed their accreditation standards to require that institutions engage in assessment of student learning and use the results of that assessment to continuously improve the quality of education offered by those institutions... The regional accreditors believe that the decisions about appropriate common assessment strategies are best made by institutions. The regional accreditors will certainly accept assessment strategies and data developed for purposes of the VSA project as part of an overall evidentiary portfolio when participating institutions undergo accreditation review.*”

# COUNCIL OF REGIONAL ACCREDITING COMMISSIONS

September 21, 2006

Middle States  
Commission on Higher  
Education

The Commission on  
Institutions of Higher  
Education,  
New England Association  
of Schools and Colleges

Higher Learning  
Commission of  
the North Central  
Association of  
Colleges and Schools

Northwest Commission  
on Colleges and  
Universities

Commission on  
Colleges of the Southern  
Association of Colleges  
and Schools

Accrediting Commission  
for Community and  
Junior Colleges,  
Western Association of  
Schools and Colleges:

Accrediting Commission  
for Senior Colleges and  
Universities,  
Western Association of  
Schools and Colleges

David E. Shulenburg  
Vice President for Academic Affairs  
NASULGC, A Public Universities Association  
1307 New York Avenue, Suite 400  
Washington, D.C. 20005-4722

Dear Dr. Shulenburg:

The Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions appreciated the opportunity to discuss with you the NASULGC and AASCU paper, "Toward a Public Universities and Colleges Voluntary System of Accountability for Undergraduate Education (VSA)", at our meeting of September 9, 2006. The regional accreditors recognize that the ideas and plans in the report represent a significant commitment by public higher education institutions to improve the information available to students and other institutional stakeholders. We commend NASULGC and AASCU for initiating this work and hope, with you, that it is successful in demonstrating that there are valid and reliable common measures of student learning that can be used across similar institutions.

Accreditors examine information about student learning as part of the comprehensive evaluation of an institution. The regional accrediting commissions have all changed their accreditation standards to require that institutions engage in assessment of student learning and use the results of that assessment to continuously improve the quality of education offered by those institutions. However, the regional accreditors have not required specific assessment methodologies or instruments. Rather, we have asked each institution to identify meaningful assessment strategies in the context of its institutional mission and programs.

The regional accreditors believe that the decisions about appropriate common assessment strategies are best made by institutions. The regional accreditors will certainly accept assessment strategies and data developed for purposes of the VSA project as part of an overall evidentiary portfolio when participating institutions undergo accreditation reviews.

The Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions will appreciate a continuing dialogue with NASULGC and AASCU as this innovative project develops. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to discuss this project and best wishes to all of you engaged in it.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.  
Chair

## Detailed Description of College Portrait Data Elements

Following is a guide to the data elements contained in the College Portrait reporting template. For each page or section of the template, a description of the data elements including sources, reporting timelines, and estimated direct costs is followed by the corresponding page of the prototype template of "State University." Each of the data elements on the prototype template is labeled with a red letter that matches the element description on the preceding page.

### PAGE ONE DATA ELEMENTS

#### A. Institution Name, Contact Information, Logo, Text Description

- **Data Source(s):** Institution provides information
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs

#### B. Student Characteristics

- **Data Source(s):** Common Data Set (CDS) <http://www.commondataset.org/>
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs, the data are already collected and reported for other purposes

#### C. Undergraduate Success and Progress Rate

- **Data Source(s):** The National Student Clearinghouse <http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/colleges/default.htm>
- **Reporting Timeline:** If not currently doing so, institutions begin to send enrollment and graduation data to Clearinghouse within six months of becoming a VSA participant. Institutions report success and progress rates as part of template within one year of becoming VSA participant.
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** Annual cost is dependent on the level of participation in Clearinghouse services and the total fall enrollment. The amount per student enrolled at each level is: 10 cents, 5 cents, or 0 cents. For example, at an institution with a fall enrollment of 15,000 students, the annual cost could be \$1,500 or \$750 or \$0.

#### D. Retention of First-Time, Full-Time Students

- **Data Source(s):** Common Data Set (CDS) <http://www.commondataset.org/>
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs, the data are already collected and reported for other purposes

# State University



**A**

Washington DC 20005 • 202.478.0000

[www.voluntarysystem.org](http://www.voluntarysystem.org)

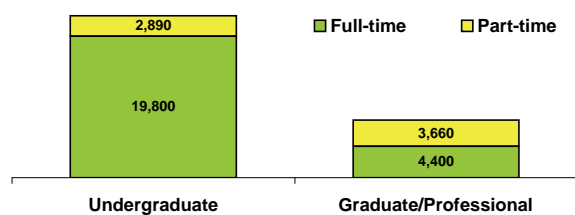
We're glad you're interested in State U! The State University is a major public research and teaching institution that operates through a diverse, multicampus system. State U is bound together by a mission to serve as a "center for learning, research, scholarship and creative endeavor" in the district, the nation and the world. Opened in 1818, State University is a comprehensive educational and research institution with over 30,000 students and more than 2,100 faculty members. At State U, you'll find great academics, including 101 majors, honors programs, and award-winning faculty. You'll find great opportunities for undergraduate research, internships, study abroad, and more. All in a great location--in the heart of the nation's capital.

**B**

## Student Characteristics (Fall 2006) [More](#)

**TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS** **30,750**

### Student Level and Enrollment Status



### UNDERGRADUATE PROFILE

**Total** **22,690**

#### Gender

Women	11,400	50%
Men	11,200	49%

#### Race/Ethnicity

African American / Black	2,225	10%
American Indian / Alaskan Native	425	2%
Asian / Pacific Islander	1,330	6%
Hispanic	1,520	7%
International	1,640	7%
White	15,350	68%
Race/Ethnicity Unknown	200	1%

#### Geographic Distribution (Degree-Seeking)

District of Columbia	39%
Other US States & Territories	53%
Other Countries	8%

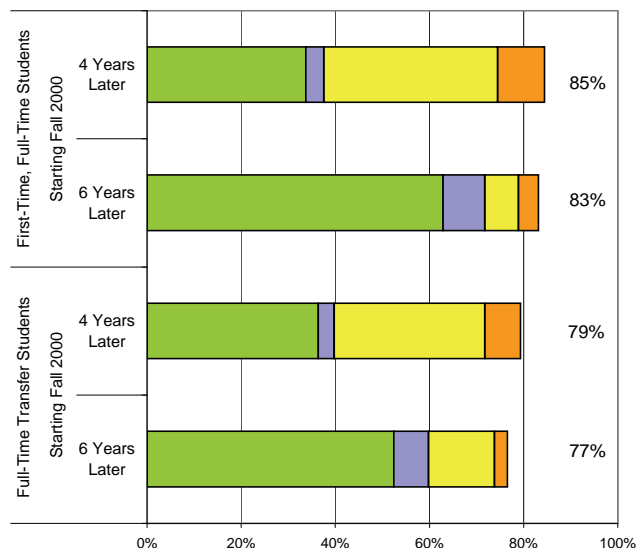
#### Age (Degree-Seeking)

Average Age	22
Percent of Undergraduates Age 25 or Older	10%

**C**

## Undergraduate Success & Progress Rate [More](#)

■ Graduated from State U     ■ Graduated at Another Institution  
■ Stilled Enrolled at State U     ■ Still Enrolled at Another Institution



**A 85% four-year success and progress rate means that 85% of students starting in Fall 2000 either graduated or are still enrolled at a higher education institution four years later.**

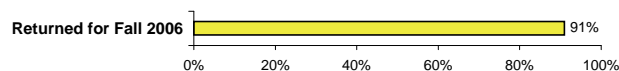
Counts for the Fall 2000 entering class shown in the graph above.

- 4200 First-Time, Full-Time Students
- 2500 Full-Time Transfer Students

[For Detailed Success & Progress Rate Tables](#) [CLICK HERE](#)

**D**

## Retention of Fall 2005 First-Time, Full-time Students



## COLLEGE PORTRAIT

A Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA<sup>SM</sup>)

ONE OF THE STRENGTHS OF U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION IS THE BROAD RANGE OF DIVERSE INSTITUTIONS, EACH WITH ITS OWN DISTINCTIVE MISSION. COLLEGE STUDENTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SELECT THE INSTITUTION THAT IS THE BEST MATCH FOR THEIR INTERESTS, ABILITIES, AND GOALS. WE PRESENT THIS INFORMATION TO HELP STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW COLLEGES ARE ALIKE IN SOME WAYS, DIFFERENT IN OTHERS. THE ITEMS IN THE COLLEGE PORTRAIT WERE SELECTED BASED ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MANY FOCUS GROUPS AS WELL AS EXPERTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION. WHILE THESE ITEMS WILL GIVE YOU VALUABLE INSIGHT INTO COLLEGE LIFE, THEY WILL NOT CAPTURE THE FULL RANGE AND RICHNESS OF THE EXPERIENCE. WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO CHECK OUT COLLEGE WEB SITES AND VISIT CAMPUSES TO GET A MORE COMPLETE PICTURE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO YOU.

## PAGE TWO DATA ELEMENTS

### E. Cost of Attendance and Financial Aid

- **Data Source(s):** Common Data Set (CDS) <http://www.commondataset.org/> and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>.
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs, the data are already collected and reported for other purposes

### F. College Cost Calculator (behind green button)

- **Data Source(s):** Link to calculator developed for VSA participants; institutionally developed calculator or set of cost tables
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs to utilize calculator developed for VSA participants, other costs are dependent upon option selected by institution.

### G. Undergraduate Admissions

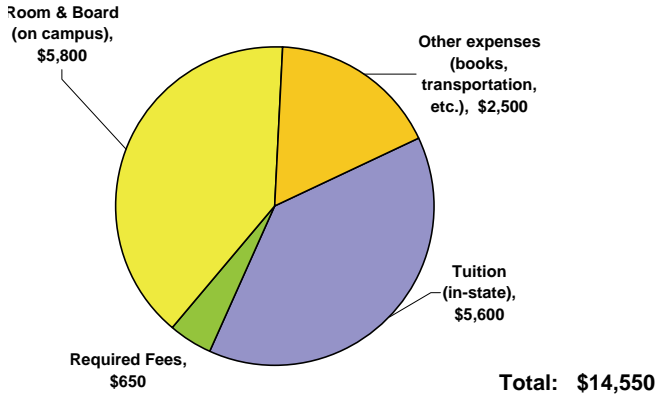
- **Data Source(s):** Common Data Set (CDS) <http://www.commondataset.org/>
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs, the data are already collected and reported for other purposes

### H. Degrees and Areas of Study

- **Data Source(s):** Common Data Set (CDS) <http://www.commondataset.org/>
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs, the data are already collected and reported for other purposes

**E** **Costs of Attendance and Financial Aid** [More](#)

**Typical Undergraduate Costs per Year without Financial Aid (Full-Time, In-State Students)**



[CLICK HERE](#) for typical out-of-state costs and any discipline-specific tuition

The cost to attend State U varies based on the individual circumstances of students and may be reduced through grants and scholarships.

**F** [CLICK HERE](#)  
To get a cost estimate for students like you!

**Financial Aid Awarded to Undergraduates**

**Overall Financial Aid**

- 70% of Fall 2005 full-time undergraduates received financial aid of some type including need-based loans, work study, and non need-based scholarships.

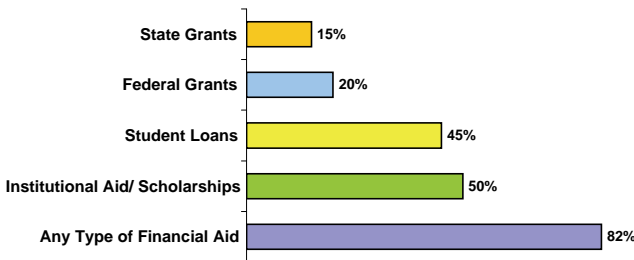
**Annual Need-Based Scholarships & Grants**

- 30% of Fall 2005 full-time undergraduates received need-based grants or scholarships; the average award for the year was \$3,800.

**Annual Need-Based Loans**

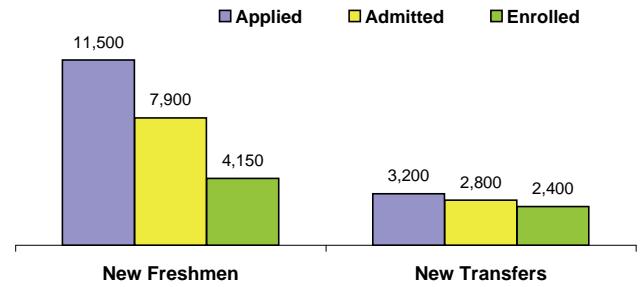
- 40% of Fall 2005 full-time undergraduates received need-based work-study and/or loans (not including parent loans); the average loan for the year was \$4,500.

**Percent of Fall 2005 First-Time Students Receiving Each Type of Financial Aid**



NOTE: Students may receive aid from more than one source.

**G** **Undergraduate Admissions** [More](#)



**Test(s) Required for Admission: ACT or SAT**

Middle 50% of Test Score Range	ACT	SAT
Composite	23-28	
Math	23-28	580-690
English	21-28	
Critical Reading		540-670

50% of admitted students have test scores within the ranges listed, 25% have scores above, and 25% have scores below.

Percent in top 25% of High School Graduating Class	77%
Percent in top 50% of High School Graduating Class	97%
Average High School GPA (4-point scale)	3.54

**H** **Degrees and Areas of Study** [More](#)

**Degrees Awarded at State U in 2005-06**

Bachelor's	3,910
Master's	1,550
Doctoral	330
Professional (e.g., Law, Medicine)	505
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,295</b>

**Areas of Study with the Largest Number of Undergraduate Degrees Awarded in 2005-06**

Business/Management/Marketing	15%
Psychology	13%
Biological and Biomedical Sciences	12%
Engineering	10%
Communication/Journalism	9%
All other degree areas	41%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

[CLICK HERE](#) for a list of undergraduate and graduate programs

## PAGE THREE DATA ELEMENTS

### I. The <AU> Community Text Box Description

- **Data Source(s):** Institution provides information
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs

### J. Institution Choice Buttons

- **Data Source(s):** Institution selects topic for each of the nine buttons and links to the appropriate source
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs

### K. Study at <AU>

- **Data Source(s):** Common Data Set (CDS) <http://www.commondataset.org/>
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs, the data are already collected and reported for other purposes

### L. Carnegie Classifications

- **Data Source(s):** The Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/index.asp>
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs

### M. Student Housing

- **Data Source(s):** Common Data Set (CDS) <http://www.commondataset.org/>
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs, the data are already collected and reported for other purposes

### N. Campus Safety

- **Data Source(s):** Institution provides information in text box and links to Clery Report
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs

### O. Future Plans of Bachelor's Degree Recipients

- **Data Source(s):** Common survey question administered by institution during spring term
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within 2 years of becoming a VSA participant.
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** Dependent on how question is administered, e.g., added to existing surveys

## The Fighting Chicken Community

Student Success is not just our name, but our mission and our goal. With 25 departments and offices, over 1000 employees and an additional 1800 student employees, Student Success is a comprehensive student services organization at State University. We provide a variety of services and programs to assist students in the classroom, and out of the classroom. Because student success starts in the classroom, our offices and departments provide a variety of services and programs that enable students to excel academically. From new student orientation to registering for classes, academic advising and the writing center, programs are designed to assist you in making the most of your academic career. Student Success extends beyond the classroom, and many of our departments focus on providing you with opportunities to be active as a key member of the Fighting Chicken Community. Become involved in our residence halls, Greek organizations, student organizations and activities, and to take advantage of the many, many opportunities available to you here at State U.

J



K

### Study at State U [More](#)

#### Classroom Environment

Students per Faculty	18 to 1
Undergraduate classes with fewer than 30 students	75%
Undergraduate classes with fewer than 50 students	90%

#### Full-Time Instructional Faculty

Total Faculty	1,400
% Women	45%
% from Minority Groups	35%
% with Highest Degree in Field	95%

M

### Student Housing [More](#)

60% of new freshmen live on campus  
25% of all undergraduates live on campus

N

### Campus Safety [More](#)

The Security Monitor Program, a branch of the State University Police Department, offers free walking and biking security escorts to and from campus locations and nearby adjacent neighborhoods for all students, staff, faculty and visitors. All Security Monitors are given training in First Aid, CPR, and Body Substance Isolation are equipped with a First Aid Kit and a portable police radio in the event of an emergency.

L

### Carnegie Classification of Institutional Characteristics

#### Basic Type

Research Universities (high research activity)

#### Size and Setting

Large four-year, primarily residential

#### Enrollment Profile

High undergraduate

#### Undergraduate Profile

Full-time four-year, selective, higher transfer-in

#### Undergraduate Instructional Program

Balanced arts & sciences/professions, high graduate coexistence

#### Graduate Instructional Program

Comprehensive doctoral (no medical/veterinary)

**NOTE:**

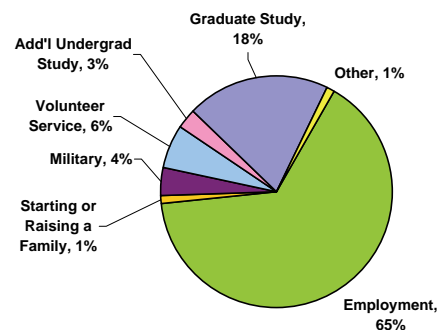
Institutional classifications based on the Carnegie 2005 edition.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information on the Carnegie Classifications.

[CLICK HERE](#) for Campus Crime Statistics Reports

O

### Future Plans of 2005-06 Bachelor's Degree Recipients [More](#)



[CLICK HERE](#)

for information on survey administration, sample, and response rate.

## PAGE FOUR DATA ELEMENTS

### P. Text Box and Links

- **Data Source(s):** Institution links to evaluations/assessments of student experiences on campus
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs

### Q. Survey Results

- **Data Source(s):** One of the following four surveys:
  1. College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) [http://www.indiana.edu/~cseq/cseq\\_generalinfo.htm](http://www.indiana.edu/~cseq/cseq_generalinfo.htm)
  2. College Senior Survey (CSS) from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/cssoverview.php>
  3. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) <http://nsse.iub.edu/index.cfm>
  4. University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/studentsurvey/>
- **Administration Protocol:** Survey administered to a random sample of seniors at least once every three years
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three years of becoming a VSA participant; updated at least every three years
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** Costs to administer surveys vary based on institutional enrollment, number of students surveyed, and services provided by the survey organization. For VSA purposes, the costs would be incurred every three years. Cost estimates are given below for illustrative purposes only. Institutions should contact the survey organizations for exact costs and administration options.

**Scenario 1:** Online survey administration, invitations/reminders sent by survey organization. Institution has an undergraduate enrollment of 10,000, invitations to participate sent to senior class of 2,000 with 800 respondents.

CSEQ: \$6,500  
 CSS: \$2,900  
 NSSE: \$6,300 (includes administration of survey to a first-year student sample)  
 UCUES: Contact the University of California, Office of the President for administration and pricing

**Scenario 2:** Online survey administration, invitations/reminders sent by survey organization. Institution has an undergraduate enrollment of 20,000, invitations to participate sent to senior class of 5,000 with 2,000 respondents.

CSEQ: \$15,500  
 CSS: \$4,800  
 NSSE: \$7,800 (includes administration of survey to a first-year student sample)  
 UCUES: Contact the University of California, Office of the President for administration and pricing

*Note: The College Portrait example for “State University” includes examples using all four survey instruments. An institution will select and report the results of only one instrument.*

## Student Experiences and Perceptions



Students who are actively involved in their own learning and development are more likely to be successful in college. Colleges and universities offer students a wide variety of opportunities both inside and outside the classroom to become engaged with new ideas, people, and experiences. Institutions measure the effectiveness of these opportunities in a variety of ways to better understand what types of activities and programs students find the most helpful.

[CLICK HERE](#) for examples of how State U evaluates the experiences of its students.

In addition, institutions participating in the VSA program measure student involvement on campus using one of four national surveys. Results from the one survey are reported for a common set of questions selected as part of VSA. Following are the selected results from the 2006 College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ). The questions have been grouped together in categories that are known to contribute to student learning and development. The results reported below are based on the responses of seniors who participated in the survey.

[CLICK HERE](#) for information on survey administration, the survey sample, and the response rate.

[CLICK HERE](#) for information on the CSEQ survey.

### Group Learning Experiences

- 1% of seniors participated in discussions with other students and faculty members outside of class
- 2% of seniors worked on class assignments and projects with other students
- 3% of seniors managed or provided leadership for a club or organization

### Active Learning Experiences

- 4% of seniors spent at least 6 hours per week outside of class on academic activities
- 5% of seniors worked with a faculty member on a research project
- 6% of seniors worked on an off-campus committee, organization, or project
- 7% of seniors applied material learned in class to other areas such as jobs or internships

### Institutional Commitment to Student Learning and Success

- 12% of seniors discussed career plans with a faculty member
- 13% of seniors discussed academic programs or course selections with a faculty member
- 14% of seniors used a learning lab or center to improve skills
- 15% of seniors talked with a faculty or staff member about personal concerns
- 16% of seniors reported working harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations



### Student Satisfaction

- 11% of seniors would attend the same university again if they started over

### Experiences with Diverse Groups of People and Ideas

- 8% of seniors had discussions with students from a different country than their own
- 9% of seniors had discussions with students whose philosophy of life and personal values were very different from their own
- 10% of seniors had discussions with students whose race or ethnic background was different than their own

### Student Interaction with Campus Faculty and Staff

- 17% of seniors worked harder after receiving feedback from an instructor
- 18% of seniors discussed grades, make-up work, or assignments with their instructor
- 19% of seniors discussed ideas for term papers or other class projects with a faculty member
- 20% of seniors requested feedback from instructors about academic performance
- 21% of seniors found campus staff to be helpful, considerate, or flexible

## Student Experiences and Perceptions

**P** Students who are actively involved in their own learning and development are more likely to be successful in college. Colleges and universities offer students a wide variety of opportunities both inside and outside the classroom to become engaged with new ideas, people, and experiences. Institutions measure the effectiveness of these opportunities in a variety of ways to better understand what types of activities and programs students find the most helpful.

[CLICK HERE](#) for examples of how State U evaluates the experiences of its students.

In addition, institutions participating in the VSA program measure student involvement on campus using one of four national surveys. Results from the one survey are reported for a common set of questions selected as part of VSA. Following are the selected results from the 2005 College Senior Survey (CSS) from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP). The questions have been grouped together in categories that are known to contribute to student learning and development. The results reported below are based on the responses of seniors who participated in the survey.

[CLICK HERE](#) for information on survey administration, the survey sample, and the response rate.

[CLICK HERE](#) for information on the CSS survey.

### Group Learning Experiences

- 1% of seniors have discussed course content with students outside of class
- 2% of seniors have studied with other students
- 3% of seniors spent at least 6 hours per week in student clubs/groups

### Active Learning Experiences

- 4% of seniors spent at least 6 hours per week studying and doing homework
- 5% of seniors reported challenging a professor's ideas in class
- 6% of seniors reported they had an opportunity to work on a research project
- 7% of seniors reported they had an opportunity to apply classroom learning to "real life" issues
- 8% of seniors performed community service as a part of a class
- 9% of seniors participated in a study abroad program
- 10% of seniors worked on an independent study program
- 11% of seniors participated in an internship program

### Student Interaction with Campus Faculty and Staff

- 24% of seniors were satisfied with the amount of contact with faculty
- 25% of seniors reported they had an opportunity to discuss coursework outside of class
- 26% of seniors were satisfied with their ability to find a faculty of staff mentor

### **Q** Institutional Commitment to Student Learning and Success

- 20% of seniors were satisfied with tutoring or other academic assistance
- 22% of seniors were satisfied with academic advising
- 23% of seniors were satisfied with career counseling and advising

### Experiences with Diverse Groups of People and Ideas

- 12% of seniors indicated they socialized with someone of another racial or ethnic group
- 13% of seniors indicated they often had meaningful and honest discussions about race or ethnic relations outside of class
- 14% of seniors stated that their knowledge of people from different races or cultures is stronger since entering college
- 15% of seniors stated that their ability to get along with people of different races or cultures is stronger since entering college

### Student Satisfaction

- 16% of seniors were satisfied with the overall quality of instruction they received
- 17% of seniors stated they would choose to enroll at this college again
- 18% of seniors were satisfied with the overall sense of community among students
- 19% of seniors were satisfied with their overall college experience

## Student Experiences and Perceptions

P

Students who are actively involved in their own learning and development are more likely to be successful in college. Colleges and universities offer students a wide variety of opportunities both inside and outside the classroom to become engaged with new ideas, people, and experiences. Institutions measure the effectiveness of these opportunities in a variety of ways to better understand what types of activities and programs students find the most helpful.

[CLICK HERE](#) for examples of how State U evaluates the experiences of its students.

In addition, institutions participating in the VSA program measure student involvement on campus using one of four national surveys. Results from the one survey are reported for a common set of questions selected as part of VSA. Following are the selected results from the 2006 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The questions have been grouped together in categories that are known to contribute to student learning and development. The results reported below are based on the responses of seniors who participated in the survey.

[CLICK HERE](#) for information on survey administration, the survey sample, and the response rate.

[CLICK HERE](#) for information on the NSSE survey.

### Group Learning Experiences

- 1% of seniors worked with classmates on a group project
- 2% of seniors tutored or taught other students
- 3% of seniors spent at least 6 hours per week participating in co-curricular activities such as student organizations and intramural sports

### Active Learning Experiences

- 4% of seniors spent at least 6 hours per week preparing for class
- 5% of seniors worked on a research project with a faculty member
- 6% of seniors participated in an internship, practicum, or field experience
- 7% of seniors participated in community service or volunteer work
- 8% of seniors participated in study abroad
- 9% of seniors made at least one class presentation last year

### Institutional Commitment to Student Learning and Success

- 16% of seniors believe this institution provides support for student success
- 17% of seniors rated the quality of academic advising at this institution as good or excellent
- 18% of seniors reported that this institution provided help in coping with work, family and other non-academic responsibilities
- 19% of seniors reported working harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations

Q

### Student Satisfaction

- 13% of seniors would attend this institution if they started over again
- 14% of seniors rated their entire educational experience as good or excellent
- 15% of seniors reported that other students were friendly or supportive

### Student Interaction with Campus Faculty and Staff

- 20% of seniors believed that the campus staff were helpful, considerate, or flexible
- 21% of seniors believed that faculty are available, helpful, or sympathetic
- 22% of seniors reported that faculty members provided prompt feedback on their academic performance
- 23% of seniors discussed readings or ideas with faculty members outside of class

### Experiences with Diverse Groups of People and Ideas

- 10% of seniors reported that they often tried to understand someone else's point of view
- 11% of seniors reported their experience at this institution contributed to their understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds
- 12% of seniors often had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity

## Student Experiences and Perceptions

**P** Students who are actively involved in their own learning and development are more likely to be successful in college. Colleges and universities offer students a wide variety of opportunities both inside and outside the classroom to become engaged with new ideas, people, and experiences. Institutions measure the effectiveness of these opportunities in a variety of ways to better understand what types of activities and programs students find the most helpful.

[CLICK HERE](#) for examples of how State U evaluates the experiences of its students.

In addition, institutions participating in the VSA program measure student involvement on campus using one of four national surveys. Results from the one survey are reported for a common set of questions selected as part of VSA. Following are the selected results from the 2006 University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES). The questions have been grouped together in categories that are known to contribute to student learning and development. The results reported below are based on the responses of seniors who participated in the survey.

[CLICK HERE](#) for information on survey administration, the survey sample, and the response rate.

[CLICK HERE](#) for information on the UCUES survey.

### Group Learning Experiences

- 1% of seniors worked outside of class on class projects or studied with classmates
- 2% of seniors spent at least 6 hours per week participating in student organizations or clubs
- 3% of seniors reported serving as an officer or leader in a campus organization or club
- 4% of seniors helped a classmate better understand course material

### Active Learning Experiences

- 5% of seniors reported making class presentations
- 6% of seniors spent at least 6 hours per week studying and other academic activities outside of class
- 7% of seniors enrolled in at least one service learning course
- 8% of seniors participated in a study abroad program
- 9% of seniors participated in an internship
- 10% of seniors assisted faculty with research

### Institutional Commitment to Student Learning and Success

- 19% of seniors were at least somewhat satisfied with advising by faculty on academic matters
- 20% of seniors were at least somewhat satisfied with advising by college staff on academic matters
- 21% of seniors were at least somewhat satisfied with the availability of courses needed for graduation
- 22% of seniors reported raising their standards for acceptable effort due to the high standards of a faculty member



### Student Satisfaction

- 15% of seniors were at least somewhat satisfied with the value of their education for the price they paid
- 16% of seniors were at least somewhat satisfied with their overall academic experience
- 17% of seniors would choose to attend this institution again
- 18% of seniors reported that their campus had a strong commitment to undergraduate education

### Experiences with Diverse Groups of People and Ideas

- 11% of seniors rated their ability to appreciate, tolerate, or understand racial and ethnic diversity as good or better
- 12% of seniors rated their ability to appreciate cultural and global diversity as good or better
- 13% of seniors gained a deeper understanding of other perspectives through conversations with students of a different nationality
- 14% of seniors gained a deeper understanding of other perspectives through conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity

### Student Interaction with Campus Faculty and Staff

- 22% of seniors sought academic help from an instructor or tutor
- 23% of seniors talked with an instructor outside of class about course material
- 24% of seniors worked with a faculty member on a campus activity other than coursework

## PAGE FIVE DATA ELEMENTS

### R. Text Box and Links

- **Data Source(s):** Institution description of student learning initiatives on campus and links to student outcomes data such as program assessment reports, employer satisfaction surveys, graduate school admission rates, and licensing test results.
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within three months of becoming a VSA participant
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** No direct costs

### S. Results of Pilot Project

- **Data Source(s):** One of the following three instruments:
  1. **Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)** – two modules: critical thinking and writing essay <http://www.act.org/caap/>
  2. **Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)** – complete test including performance tasks, analytic writing tasks [http://www.cae.org/content/pro\\_collegiate.htm](http://www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate.htm)
  3. **Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP)** – two sub scores of the test: critical thinking and written communication <http://www.ets.org/>
- **Administration Protocol:** One test administered in manner consistent with testing organization recommendations at least once every three years
- **Reporting Timeline:** Within four years of becoming a VSA participant; updated at least every three years
- **Estimated Direct Costs:** Costs to administer tests vary based on the number of students surveyed and services provided by the testing organization. For VSA purposes, the costs would be incurred every three years. Cost estimates given below follow the sample size recommendations of the testing organizations to report institutional level scores. The costs are for illustrative purposes only and institutions should contact the testing organizations for exact costs and administration options. The costs do not include any participation incentives distributed by an institution or oversampling to obtain scores for specific subgroups.
  1. **CAAP** (200 students each in fall and in spring): \$10,200
  2. **CLA** (100 students each in fall and in spring): \$6,500
  3. **MAPP** (200 students each in fall and in spring): \$6,200

*Note: The College Portrait example for “State University” includes sample pages for all three testing instruments. An institution will select and report the results of only one instrument.*

## Student Learning Outcomes

All colleges and universities use multiple approaches to measure student learning. Many of these are specific to particular disciplines, many are coordinated with accrediting agencies, and many are based on outcomes after students have graduated. In addition, those institutions participating in the VSA measure increases in critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and written communication using one of three tests.

### Student Learning Assessment at State U

State University is a major research university that emphasizes student learning and effective teaching and sustains a culture that views research and teaching as equally critical to the overall learning environment. State U uses a variety of assessment tools to guide the development and enhancement of the undergraduate learning environment. In particular, the general education assessment process has become part of the campus culture. Not only has it provided important campus-wide data on the extent to which undergraduate students meet university-wide general education goals, it has served as the basis for broad conversations about the depth and breadth of general education knowledge that a State U graduate should possess. Other examples of student success measures used as part of campus improvement initiatives include: assessment in the undergraduate major, academic program review, licensure pass rates, graduation and retention rates, and professional accreditation.

[CLICK HERE](#) for examples of student learning assessment and outcomes at State U

### Pilot Project to Measure Core Learning Outcomes

As a pilot project, VSA participants measure critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and written communication using one of three tests. Following are the 2007 results from the College Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP). The CAAP measures critical thinking and written communication using two test modules -- critical thinking and a writing essay.

[CLICK HERE](#) for a description of the CAAP test.

[CLICK HERE](#) for information on test administration, the test sample, and the response rate.

#### Learning Gains Between Freshman Year and Senior Year

##### Critical Thinking

The increase in learning on the performance task is above what would be expected at an institution with students of similar academic abilities.

##### Writing Essay

The increase in learning on the performance task is what would be expected at an institution with students of similar academic abilities.

#### Average Institutional Scores

	<u>Freshman Score</u>	<u>Senior Score</u>
Critical Thinking	45	71
Writing Essay	3	4

*Critical Thinking Score Range: 40 to 80*

*Writing Essay Score Range: 1 to 6*

## Student Learning Outcomes

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[CLICK HERE](#) for examples of student learning assessment and outcomes at State U

### Pilot Project to Measure Core Learning Outcomes

S

As a pilot project, VSA participants measure critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and written communication using one of three tests. Following are the 2005-06 results from the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). Such general skills are applicable and useful for both career and personal success and are important outcomes of college regardless of a student's major. The CLA measures critical thinking, analytic reasoning and written communication using two different tasks -- a performance task and an analytic writing task.

[CLICK HERE](#) for a description of the CLA test.

[CLICK HERE](#) for information on test administration, the test sample, and the response rate.

#### Learning Gains Between Freshman Year and Senior Year

##### Performance Task

The increase in learning on the performance task is above what would be expected at an institution with students of similar academic abilities.

##### Analytic Writing Task

The increase in learning on the performance task is what would be expected at an institution with students of similar academic abilities.

#### Average Institutional Scores

	<u>Freshman Score</u>	<u>Senior Score</u>
Performance Task	1100	1350
Analytic Writing Task	1150	1250

CLA Score Range: 400 to 1600

VSA participants report results from one of three learning outcomes instruments. Examples using all three are show for illustrative purposes.

## Student Learning Outcomes

All colleges and universities use multiple approaches to measure student learning. Many of these are specific to particular disciplines, many are coordinated with accrediting agencies, and many are based on outcomes after students have graduated. In addition, those institutions participating in the VSA measure increases in critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and written communication using one of three tests.

### Student Learning Assessment at State U

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[CLICK HERE](#) for examples of student learning assessment and outcomes at State U

### Pilot Project to Measure Core Learning Outcomes

**S** As a pilot project, VSA participants measure critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and written communication using one of three tests. Following are the results from the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP). The MAPP measures critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and written communication and reports separate scores on critical thinking and written communication.

[CLICK HERE](#) for a description of the MAPP test.

[CLICK HERE](#) for information on test administration, the test sample, and the response rate.

#### Learning Gains Between Freshman Year and Senior Year

##### Critical Thinking

The increase in learning on the performance task is above what would be expected at an institution with students of similar academic abilities.

##### Written Communication

The increase in learning on the performance task is what would be expected at an institution with students of similar academic abilities.

#### Average Institutional Scores

	<u>Freshman Score</u>	<u>Senior Score</u>
Critical Thinking	108	122
Written Communication	112	118

*MAPP Score Range: 100 to 130*

VSA participants report results from one of three learning outcomes instruments. Examples using all three are show for illustrative purposes.

# Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA<sup>SM</sup>)

## Acknowledgements

### Lumina Foundation for Education

### Higher Education Community

VSA monitors

AASCU Council of Presidents  
AASCU Academic Affairs  
NASULGC Council on Academic Affairs  
NASULGC Council of Presidents  
AAU Data Exchange  
ACE

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### Meeting Hosts

California State University, Office of the President  
University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center  
University of South Carolina

### Organizations

ACT  
College Student Experiences Questionnaire Research Program (CSEQ)  
Council for Aid to Education (CAE)  
ETS  
Higher Education Research Institute, Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP)  
National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

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