Executive Summary

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was administered during spring 2014, and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Research provided a sample for Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) based on students enrolled during the fall 2013 term: the sample consisted of students classified as a first-year student or senior as of spring 2014. The sample also included those students expected to be classified as a senior in summer 2014. Across many college campuses, NSSE continues to be a widely used and highly regarded data source in soliciting reliable feedback from students regarding their educational experiences. The years in which MTSU administers the NSSE survey are mandated by the state's Performance Funding program set by Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). MTSU submitted its survey results for spring 2014 to THEC and the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) as part of the university's 2013-14 Performance Funding Report. Key results from the latest NSSE survey are provided below.

Survey Highlights

Seniors

- There was an increase of three-percentage points in the number of seniors who evaluated their entire experience at MTSU favorably ("good" or "excellent"): 2014 (87%) and 2011 (84%). Along the same line, 83% of seniors responded they would "probably" or "definitely" attend MTSU if they had a "do over" in choosing an institution compared to 80% of seniors in 2011 who responded similarly.
- More seniors reported coming to class prepared this survey cycle: 32% of seniors reported *coming to class with required readings or assignments completed* compared to 20% of seniors who responded the same in 2011.
- The number of seniors *asking questions in class or contributing to class discussions* held constant at 77% for both 2011 and 2014. However, the share of students who reported never *asking questions in class or contributing to class discussions* increased from none in 2011 to one percent in 2014.
- There was a slight increase in the number of seniors responding "quite a bit" or "very much" to the statement*: The institution emphasizes helping students cope with non-academic responsibilities*— 2014 (24%) vs. 2011 (21%). Thirty-nine percent of seniors in 2014 responded the university placed "very little" emphasis in this area compared to 43% of seniors in 2011.
- When asked *how much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in thinking critically and analytically,* the number of seniors responding "quite a bit" or "very much" to the statement decrease to 76% in 2014 from 80% in 2011.

First-year Students

- Similar to seniors, 86% of first-year (FY) students rated their educational experience at MTSU as "excellent" or "good" compared to 82% of FY students in 2011. For 2014, 88% of FY students would choose MTSU again if they could have a "do-over" in selecting an institution: a six-percentage point increase from 2011.
- FY student's class participation rate increased by 10 percentage points with 69% of students responding they "often" or "very often" *asked questions in class or contributed to class discussion* in 2014 compared to 59% of FY students in 2011.
- FY students also reported being slightly more prepared for class since the last survey. Twenty-two percent of FY students reported coming to class having *completed required readings or assignments* compared to 20% who responded the same in 2011. Also, 47% of FY students reported spending 10 hours or less *a week preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework, analyzing data, rehearsing, etc.*) in 2014 compared to 54% of FY students in 2011.
- There was a two-percentage point increase in the number of FY students who spoke ("often" or "very often") with *a faculty member or advisor about his/or her career plans* since the 2011 survey: 2014 (38%) vs. 2011 (36%).
- As seen with seniors, there was a decrease in the number of FY students responding "quite a bit" or "very much" to the statement t*his institution has contributed to his/or her knowledge, skills, and personal development in thinking critically and analytically*: 2014 (70%) versus 2011 (78%).

Survey Methodology

An electronic file of all students classified as first-year and seniors as of spring 2014 was provided to NSSE staff housed at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. Based on the names submitted to NSSE, students were contacted via email on five separate occasions to complete the web based survey. By survey's end, the total number of respondents was 632 (307 FY students, 325 seniors) for an overall response rate of 16%: FY students 13% and seniors 20%. This marks a downward trend in the response rate since 2009: 2014 (16%), 2011 (21%), and 2009 (26%). NSSE noted a comparable decline in survey responses nationally.

Using the College Student Report survey instrument, NSSE contacted over 716 colleges and universities during its 2014 cycle. Around 473,633 students participated in NSSE 2014 from the US and Canada. Since 2000, approximately 4.5 million students have completed the survey.

NSSE Results

With the latest rounds of survey results, NSSE revised and refined its reporting measures. The *Engagement Indicators and High-Impact Practice* reports replaced the traditional *NSSE Benchmarks* (Academic Challenge, Active & Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational

Experience, and Supportive Campus Environment) used to summarize and to compare key dimensions of student engagement. The new format is comprised of 10 Engagement Indicators calculated from 47 core NSSE items: the indicators are grouped into four themes (Academic Challenge, Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, and Campus Environment). A second report, High-Impact Practices (HIP), discusses approaches associated with increased student learning and retention: these approaches require considerable time and effort from both faculty and students.

Summary of Student Engagement Results:

Table 1. First-Year Students

Themes & Engagement Indicators	**MTSU**	**Comparison Group 1**	**Carnegie Class**	**NSSE 2013 & 2014**
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Academic Challenge				
Higher-Order Learning	38.1	39.0	39.4	39.0
Reflective & Integrative Learning	35.9	36.0	35.8	35.6
Learning Strategies	39.7	40.7	40.1	39.5
Quantitative Reasoning	26.7	28.8	28.1	27.4
Learning with Peers				
Collaborative Learning	29.9	32.2*	32.3**	32.1*
Discussion with Diverse Others	43.2	41.0	40.5*	40.9*
Experience with Faculty				
Student-Faculty Interactions	21.1	21.4	21.4	20.3
Effective Teaching Practices	41.2	40.4	39.9	40.1
Campus Environment				
Quality of Interactions	39.1	41.1*	41.0*	41.5**
Supportive Environment	36.3	37.3	37.1	37.3

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001 (2-tailed): green text (significant with effect size LT 0.3 in magnitude)

Table 2. Seniors

Themes & Engagement Indicators	**MTSU**	**Comparison Group 1**	**Carnegie Class**	**NSSE 2013 & 2014**
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Academic Challenge (AC)				
Higher-Order Learning	40.2	41.2	41.8	41.2
Reflective & Integrative Learning	37.4	38.2	39.5**	38.9*
Learning Strategies	40.1	41.2	41.3	40.3
Quantitative Reasoning	29.0	29.9	30.2	29.9
Learning with Peers (LWP)				
Collaborative Learning	29.9	33.4***	33.1***	32.4**
Discussion with Diverse Others	40.8	42.3	42.4	41.8
Experience with Faculty (EWF)				
Student-Faculty Interactions	24.9	25.0	24.9	23.7
Effective Teaching Practices	41.7	40.1*	40.9	40.9
Campus Environment (CE)				
Quality of Interactions	41.9	41.5	41.9	42.5
Supportive Environment	30.9	32.5	33.4**	33.3*

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001 (2-tailed): green text (statistically significant with effect size LT 0.3 in magnitude)

Compared to the national average for NSSE (2013 & 2014), seniors at MTSU had comparable means in most areas. Seniors' means differed significantly from the national average in three areas: seniors' means were significantly lower in Reflective & Integrative Learning (AC), Collaborative Learning (LWP), and Supportive Environment (CE). In contrast, MTSU's mean was significantly higher than its NSSE Peer (Group 1) in the area of Effective Teaching Practices; although not significantly higher, MTSU's mean was also higher than national and the Carnegie Class' mean in this area.

On the whole, MTSU mean was lower than the national average for 77% (n=66) of survey items, and the differences were significant for 44% of those items. In addition, MTSU mean was greater than the national average for 21% (n=18) of survey items: of those survey items, 17% were significantly higher than the national average. Specifically, seniors at MTSU were significantly more likely to report commuting to class, working off-campus (1 hour or more per week), or coming to class without completing assigned readings or assignments.

This summary is meant to provide a brief overall of results from the NSSE data. IEPR plans to utilize this years' data along with earlier surveys to identify and to examine possible gaps impacting student engagement here at MTSU.

Survey Limitations

There are several limitations worth noting in relation to the NSSE survey. The survey results are not holistic and they restrict insight into the academic experiences of first-year students and seniors only. Secondly, survey questions are standard; MTSU was unable to add questions or tweak existing questions to capture feedback specific to this campus. In addition, there were no open-ended questions to allow students to provide additional details on a survey item; the survey items used Likert scales mostly. Lastly, in the latest round of survey, the format of the survey has changed somewhat (survey items added, modified, or deleted) making comparisons over time for certain survey questions more difficult, and for others, comparison is not possible.