



TO: University Affairs Board

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AGENDA ITEM: 4

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Measuring Up on the Undergraduate Student Experience: The National Survey of Student Engagement 2006

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The University Affairs Board is responsible for consideration of policy of a non-academic nature and matters that directly concern the quality of student and campus life. The Board has the mandate for monitoring matters within its area of responsibility including campus and student services.

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

The report of the 2004 National Survey of Student Engagement was presented to the Board on February 22, 2005.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), developed by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, is used at over 400 U.S. universities annually to assess how well students are learning and what they get out of, and put into, their undergraduate experience. NSSE was identified as an appropriate tool to assist the University through a process of institutional change as the University works to meet the objectives outlined in *Stepping Up: 2004-2010 at the University of Toronto*. The survey is based on decades of U.S. research into the outcomes of a quality education and integrates both the curricular (in class) and co-curricular (out of class) experiences in ways envisioned by the academic plan.

The University of Toronto, along with a number of other Canadian institutions, participated in NSSE for the first time in 2004 and is committed to participating every

two years. In 2006, all Ontario universities participated in NSSE, as did 12 other Canadian universities.

Unlike external rankings and other forms of data collection, NSSE was designed as a tool for individual institutions to engage in educational quality improvement. The survey asks students directly about their experiences, their activities, their challenges, their own perceptions of the skills and knowledge they are gaining, and about their interactions with faculty and peers. The 86 items that make up the core survey instrument are based on decades of research into the kinds of practices that have been shown to affect positive outcomes.

As a measure of educational quality, NSSE is only one of the University's primary means of assessing progress toward the undergraduate student experience goals articulated in *Stepping Up*. It is important to note that NSSE is a University-wide instrument. Additional tools are used within academic divisions and provide further data concerning a variety of measures. Bringing together all of these research findings provides a rich information resource from which the University and the academic divisions can assess progress in meeting goals and objectives.

The 2004 NSSE results provided a benchmark from which we are able to measure progress over time; the 2006 results, as expected, do not yet reflect the effects of the many changes and new initiatives that have been implemented over the past two years. In most cases, the data reveal consistency in the student experience and confirm our strengths and weaknesses.

The attached report, entitled *Measuring Up on the Undergraduate Student Experience*, uses not only the NSSE 2004, 2006 and peer institution data, but also incorporates insights from focus groups and student comments, to provide a rich picture of the state of the student experience within first-entry divisions – all in the spirit of provoking discussion and developing consensus on the priorities for the future.

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

The report will be used to assist the University in meeting objectives outlined in *Stepping Up: 2004-2010 at the University of Toronto*, a framework for planning at the divisional level. Budget allocations arising from the plans of academic and administrative divisions will be brought forward for approval at the appropriate time as part of the budget process. Reviews of policies and any revisions that arise out of the academic plan will be conducted in accordance with an appropriate process and will be brought for approval to the appropriate Board or Committee.

RECOMMENDATION:

The report is presented for information.