



The BEAMS Beat

Volume I, Issue 1

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Welcome to the first issue of *The BEAMS Beat*! In this quarterly publication, you will find current news from campus projects, uses of data helpful in making decisions, references to resources, and summaries of what we are learning from campuses' experiences in BEAMS. The purpose of the newsletter is to communicate among the over 100 campuses that are at some stage of their progress toward basing pedagogical, curricular, structural, and budget decisions on well-documented evidence.

As you may know, BEAMS comprises three cohorts, or groups of campuses. Your campus is in the 2003, 2004, or 2005 cohort depending on when you joined. The 2003 cohort administered the National Survey of Student Engagement in 2003, interpreted data to develop a plan at the 2004 AAHE Summer Academy, and is currently implementing the campus plans. The 2004 cohort has just received NSSE data and will interpret it this year as campuses prepare to participate in the 2005 Summer Academy. The 2005 cohort looks forward to administering NSSE in Spring 2005.

If that sounds confusing, it could be! Fortunately, AAHE and NSSE have a detailed organizational plan to support the work of the cohort campuses, no matter where they are in the process. We know that cohorts can learn from one another and that campuses can benefit from linking up across cohorts. Your project leaders take seriously our responsibility to serve your needs, to connect you up with others, and to learn from you.

One way that communication and connection building can occur is through the WebCenter. Any person on a BEAMS campus can be registered for the WebCenter where you can exchange ideas and materials with others on your campus, in your cohort, or across cohorts. You can participate in a chat about an important topic related to your action plan. You can find out about events and resources to help you in your work. If you'd like to join the WebCenter, just contact your local BEAMS Working Group to get signed up.

Another way to communicate is this newsletter. Please send us information that you'd like to have included in the newsletter, questions that you'd like to have answered by others, and requests for topics to be covered in future issues. Because this publication goes to every constituent in BEAMS, you have a wide talent pool to draw on.

Lacey Leegwater and I at AAHE and Brian Bridges, Jillian Kinzie, and George Kuh at NSSE are excited about the work that is already being accomplished through BEAMS. We look forward to working with you, learning from you, and contributing with you to what higher education must know and do to enhance student engagement, learning, and success.

Barbara L. Cambridge

Barbara Cambridge
Director, BEAMS



BEAMS is a partnership between the American Association for Higher Education and the National Survey of Student Engagement and is supported by Lumina Foundation for Education.

Welcoming the 2005 Cohort

We are excited to introduce the third and final cohort of BEAMS institutions. These institutions will administer NSSE in Spring 2005, participate in the 2006 Summer Academy, and begin implementing campus action plans in the 2006-07 academic year. As with our other cohorts, the wide range of diversity represented in this year's cohort will continue to contribute to the learning of and will offer additional collaborative opportunities for all members of the BEAMS project.



- Albany State University
- Barry University
- Bennett College
- California State University, Monterey Bay
- Delaware State University
- Eastern New Mexico University
- Edward Waters College
- Florida A&M University
- Harris-Stowe State College
- Inter American University-Ponce Campus
- Johnson C. Smith University
- Lemoyne-Owen College
- Lincoln University (PA)
- Livingstone College
- New Jersey City University
- Oglala Lakota College (in process)
- Our Lady of the Lake University
- Paul Quinn College (in process)
- Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico
- Salish Kootenai College
- Sojourner-Douglas College
- Southern University and A&M College, Baton Rouge
- Tennessee State University
- Texas College (in process)
- University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
- University of Puerto Rico-Cayey Campus (in process)
- University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez Campus
- University of Puerto Rico Ponce
- Woodbury University
- York College, CUNY

Campuses not yet a part of BEAMS only have a few more chances to join this final cohort of institutions. See the Project Calendar column for details of upcoming opportunities for eligible campuses to register for BEAMS.

For a full list of institutions participating in BEAMS, visit the BEAMS site on the WebCenter at <http://webcenter.aahe.org/chef/portal>. If you do not yet have an account on the WebCenter, contact Lacey Leegwater at leegwater@aahe.org for access.

The AAHE Summer Academy: Learning from the 2003 Cohort

An AAHE Summer Academy experience is part of project participation for every campus. At this July five-day event in a beautiful location, your five-person campus team meets to develop an action plan focusing on one area that you want to improve to better engage students in their learning.

Months before the academy, your campus BEAMS Working Group analyzes the results of your NSSE survey and other data to share across campus, to decide on a focus area, and to select an Academy team. At the academy, the team spends many hours creating an action plan with short-term and long-term goals and specific activities and initiatives. The academy offers consultants,



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Pictures from the 2004 Summer Academy

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workshops, plenary sessions, and cross-campus formal and informal interactions to support the action plan development.

What did 2004 Summer Academy BEAMS teams report about the experience? First, they worked very, very hard—but they reported across the board that the work was generative and worth the effort. Faculty, administrators, and students have so few opportunities to have extended time to brainstorm, to develop ideas, to identify needed persons and resources on campus, to create a timeline, and to distribute responsibilities so that a plan for change can have the best foundation for success. The campus action plans that resulted from the Summer Academy indicate the intense work accomplished.

Second, campus teams reported that working with a consultant who advised in writing and in person during the process of plan development was, as the advertisement says, “priceless.” In addition, teams could call on many other academy staff, from AAHE, NSSE, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, to augment the advice of their own consultants.

Third, campus teams lauded colleagues from other campuses who provided crucial perspectives and information and who will continue to be resources for work over time. Informal conversations, workshop discussions, and reporting sessions enabled individuals and teams to learn from one another.

During the coming year, you will be able to read reports in this newsletter about how the action plans generated at the 2004 academy in Vermont are being implemented. Inevitably, plans will change as campuses try new ideas and strategies in their own context. The Summer Academy provides the environment for the birth of a plan; the ensuing years demonstrate its maturation.

Information about the 2005 Academy, which will be in Snowbird, Utah, July 13-17, will soon be out for 2004 cohort campuses. Watch the WebCenter for details.



BEAMS participants during campus sharing time



Medgar Evers and University of the Virgin Islands team members



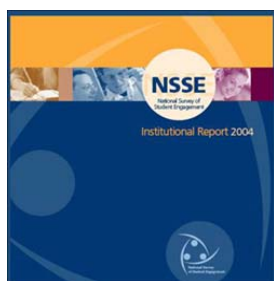
Members of the Active and Collaborative Learning Benchmark Group

2004 NSSE Data Now Available to 2004 Cohort Working Groups

For campuses in the 2004 Cohort, you should now have your institution's NSSE data from the spring 2004 administration. Your 2004 Institutional Report includes an overview of the 2003 administration process and findings. It also provides various lenses for interpreting the data including overall respondent characteristics, mean comparisons, frequency distributions, and a codebook for interpreting results. New this year is an Accreditation Toolkit, tailored to the institution's accreditation region standards, which maps NSSE questions to accreditation standards.

Tips for using NSSE data are also included in the Institutional Report. These will be particularly important as you begin to disseminate your results and plan for what your team work at the 2005 AAHE Summer Academy. We suggest that you begin sharing your results with your campus working group and other members of your institutional community right away. The more time your working group has with the data, the better prepared it will be for identifying a project focus for the Summer Academy.

If your BEAMS working group needs additional assistance in interpreting your campus data, Brian Bridges, NSSE's assistant director and primary BEAMS contact, will be available for conference calls to discuss what your campus can learn from the results. Contact Brian at brbridge@indiana.edu to set up a call.

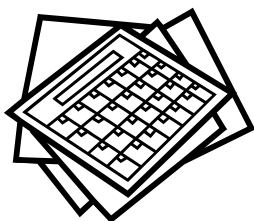




Spotlight on Effective Practice

To learn from campuses' experiences in the project and to help each cohort learn from other cohorts, each issue of *BEAMS Beat* will focus on effective practices coming from your work in BEAMS. For the December issue, the spotlight will be on effective NSSE administration strategies. Campuses in both the 2003 and 2004 cohorts have participated in at least one NSSE administration, and those of you involved in that process can help better prepare the 2005 cohort for its Spring administration.

Therefore, please send your success stories, ideas for overcoming obstacles your institutions may have faced, innovative practices for getting the word out to members of your campus community, and other helpful feedback to Lacey at leegwater@aahe.org no later than November 19. Your contributions will be combined with NSSE staff observations and results from the Urban Institute's survey of the 2003 cohort regarding their experience during the Spring 2003 NSSE administration.



BEAMS Project Calendar

Also included in each issue of *BEAMS Beat* will be a list of upcoming activities, events, and deadlines for project participants. If you know of an approaching event that would be of interest to other project participants, please email the information to Lacey at leegwater@aahe.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

- **HACU Annual Conference** (October 16-19, Miami, FL, Miami InterContinental Hotel): If you plan on attending the HACU Annual Conference in Miami, do be sure to stop by the BEAMS session on Sunday, the 17th, from 3:30-5 pm. Panelists will provide an overview of the project and benefits of participation to campuses. The NSSE deadline has been extended to offer one last chance for campuses attending the session to register for the final BEAMS cohort, so bring your colleagues from campuses not yet a part of BEAMS.
- **HBCU Faculty Development Symposium** (October 21-23, Miami, FL, Doubletree Grand Hotel Biscayne Bay): Also in Miami, BEAMS staff will host a roundtable event at the HBCU Faculty Development Symposium on the BEAMS project. The roundtable will be Saturday, October 23, from 11:45 am-1:45 pm. Again, NSSE is offering a special, extended registration deadline for eligible campuses attending the Symposium. Encourage peers from eligible campuses to attend this session to find out how they can join this exciting work.

Taking advantage of the two Miami meetings, BEAMS will also hold two regional project meetings in the Miami area. We encourage BEAMS participants from the 2004 and 2005 cohorts attending either event and area institutions to join us as we help you prepare for your next stage of BEAMS work.

Other regional meeting opportunities will be offered in different locations in February and March 2005. BEAMS will pay travel expenses for one campus representative to attend one of the offered regional meetings. Sending additional representatives and/or attending more than one regional meeting is welcomed but must be paid for by the institution. To sign up for a regional meeting or to discuss reimbursements, contact Lacey at leegwater@aahe.org.

- **2004 Cohort Regional Meeting** (October 20, 9-11:15 am, Miami, FL, Doubletree Grand Hotel Biscayne Bay): BEAMS project staff will be on hand to answer any questions you may

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have about your NSSE data and help think through with you ways of disseminating your institutional results, increasing campus buy-in for your BEAMS work, crafting a larger campus working group, and planning ahead for the 2005 Summer Academy.

- **2005 Cohort Regional Meeting** (10:45 am-1 pm, October 20, Miami, FL, Doubletree Grand Hotel Biscayne Bay): Work with BEAMS project staff and other campuses in the 2005 cohort to develop a comprehensive plan for administering NSSE in Spring 2005. Some issues that will be discussed are building campus interest in the survey, increasing student response rates, and determining how you might use the data following the survey.

About the Sponsoring Organizations

The sponsoring organizations of BEAMS are committed to your success in this project.

The American Association for Higher Education (AAHE): AAHE serves as the lead organization for BEAMS, coordinating recruitment and work of the cohorts, BEAMS sites on the WebCenter, and public representation of the project.

AAHE is an independent, membership-based, nonprofit organization dedicated to building human capital for higher education. AAHE is the source of choice for information about higher education on issues that matter in a democratic multi-racial society; and AAHE promotes and disseminates examples of effective educational practice to address those issues. AAHE members are a national talent pool willing and ready to share their expertise with colleagues in higher education, policymakers, media professionals, and the public at large. AAHE members receive discounted rates to AAHE convenings including the National Conference on Higher Education and the Assessment Conference, reduced AAHE publication rates, a subscription to *Change* magazine, and other exciting benefits. For more information about or to join AAHE, visit <http://www.aahe.org>.

The Center for Postsecondary Education: Indiana University Bloomington's Center for Postsecondary Education administers the National Survey of Student Engagement and serves as the partner organization for BEAMS, overseeing the NSSE administration process, helping campuses to prepare for and administer the survey and interpret survey results, and working with AAHE to publicly represent the project.

NSSE is an annual survey that focuses on educational practices that prior research indicates contribute to student success. The Center also sponsors the NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice to respond to national concerns about improving the success rates of undergraduate students and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement to assess perceptions faculty have of student engagement at an institution. For more information on the Center for Postsecondary Education and NSSE, visit <http://www.indiana.edu/~nsse/>.

Lumina Foundation for Education: The Lumina Foundation is the funding agency for the BEAMS project. It is a private, independent foundation based in Indianapolis whose program mission is to expand access and success in postsecondary education. Through research, evaluation, and grants for innovative programs, as well as communication, public policy and leadership-development initiatives, it addresses issues that affect access and educational attainment — particularly among underserved student groups, including adult learners. The Lumina Foundation firmly believes education is the best way to help people achieve their potential and improve our nation's future. For more about the Lumina Foundation for Education, visit www.luminafoundation.org.



The BEAMS Beat

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About BEAMS

BEAMS is a 5-year initiative fostering the ways in which Historically Black, Hispanic-serving, and Tribal colleges and universities using National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) can develop data-based decision making and increase student engagement and learning.

BEAMS serves over 100 four-year colleges and universities from the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education. Each institution commits to analyzing the scope and character of their students' engagement in learning and to implementing well-designed action plans for improvement of engagement, learning, persistence, and success. The project offers five primary ways for campuses to move toward these institutional goals.

- *Data on the student experience from the National Survey of Student Engagement*
- *Design of action plans at the AAHE Summer Academy for initiatives to enhance student engagement and learning*
- *Collegial support for implementing action plans*
- *Web-based support throughout Project participation*
- *Opportunities to report nationally on campus initiatives and successes*

Campuses administer NSSE at least twice during the project. Consortia of BEAMS campuses generate action plans based on NSSE data at the 2004, 2005, and 2006 AAHE Summer Academies. They interact and disseminate their learning throughout the project.

BUILDING ENGAGEMENT AND ATTAINMENT OF MINORITY STUDENTS

For more information about BEAMS visit <http://www.aahe.org/BEAMS> or the BEAMS site on the AAHE WebCenter at <http://webcenter.aahe.org/chef/portal>.

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