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Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research

Volume 28

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Chapter 1
You Don't Have to Be the Smartest Person in the Room

George D. Kuh

Writing this autobiographical essay reminded me at times about how I felt when preparing the personal statements for my promotion and tenure dossiers. Those personal statements as well as this essay include some self-aggrandizing. Both also depend on a bit of retrospective sensemaking. The essay, covering a much longer time frame, may not be as accurate as I'd like, as my memory is less and less reliable as the distance grows between events and recollections. These caveats aside, it's an unexpected privilege to be invited to revisit and share many of the major events in my professorial career and especially to recall the people who influenced my thinking and work over a 45-year career in higher education.

I've tried to tell my story in a lucid, engaging manner. At the same time, it has been impossible to reflect on the influences of specific people or projects without taking occasional side trips that introduce other topics that at least in my mind are connected. For those, dear reader, I beg your indulgence.

As my story makes evident, I'm an ordinary person who has had more than his share of extraordinary opportunities. Since completing the Ph.D. at the University of Iowa in 1975, the focus and methodological approaches of my work have evolved, in large part because of circumstances that introduced me to bright, interesting, and productive people. In the early years of my academic career, however, I was occasionally troubled with a less flattering interpretation: that my research and writing lacked coherence in terms of their animating questions and cumulative contributions to the field. I was advised when applying for early promotion to associate professor that my personal statement should explain how my various projects and papers and those planned added up to something somewhat greater than the sum of their parts. My explanation worked, apparently, and I successfully repeated the drill to earn tenure and later promotion to professor. I hope this effort does not disappoint.

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So, how is it that a regular fellow from the south side of Chicago—the first in his family to go to college—found his way into academe and made a good life and living there?

Growing Up

One of the few unequivocal conclusions from the research on college impact and student success is that those to whom one is born is a nontrivial factor when it comes to preparing for, getting into, and finishing college. My parents expressed unconditional love for me at every stage of my life, even when I did things that surely gave them pause (a huge understatement). My juvenile transgressions aside, it was made plain to me and my younger brother that we would do something neither Mom nor Dad did—go to college.

My mother, Anne, graduated from high school second in her class, someone once told me, but never considered college, which was the case with most women in the 1930s. My father, Rudy, left school after 7th grade to work with my grandfather (also named Rudy) in a fledging construction business that soon failed. A card-carrying teamster, he drove a truck the rest of his working days. Our family lived out the promise of the American dream—children of immigrant parents making enough money to compile a nest egg large enough to leave the upstairs flat in the Chicago house owned by my maternal grandparents for a brand new house of their own in a nearby suburb. Moving to Oak Lawn in the middle of my 7th grade year resulted in, among other things, no longer having to share a bedroom with Warren. I am not sure which one of us appreciated this change more.

The move from the city was followed by a surprise 18 months later when it was time to go to high school. Because of existing school district lines, instead of going to lily-white Oak Lawn High School, about one mile away, I attended Blue Island Eisenhower, which was quite large (4,800 students total, 800+ in my 1964 graduating class) and much more racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse. I don't now recall the school's exact profile, but a reasonable guess is that at least one-quarter was African American with another much smaller percentage Latino. Attending this high school was a profoundly formative experience that shaped and anchored my social attitudes and worldview and that continues to define who I am today.

I almost always looked forward to going to school, except on days when a math or Latin test was scheduled. Even through college, more important to me than the academics was connecting with peers, primarily through out-of-class activities, especially sports. If there was a ball involved—big or small, round or oblong—I was there. In high school, I participated in interscholastic athletics every season: 2 years of football, as freshman and senior; 2 years of cross-country (OK, no ball involved), as sophomore and junior; 4 years of basketball; and 4 years of baseball. These after-school activities kept me (mostly) out of trouble, made all the other aspects of schooling worthwhile, and taught me valuable lessons about how to work effectively

with and rely on people who on the surface looked very different from me but fundamentally were very much the same. As it turns out, athletics was as important as any other factor in determining where I went to college.

Undergraduate Days

I've devoted my entire career to thinking, studying, and writing about college life, especially undergraduate education. For this reason, devoting a chunk of this essay to my college years is more than a trivial indulgence. It is a window into who I am, what I've done, and why I remain energized about trying to enhance the impact and quality of the collegiate experience for others.

In May of my high school senior year, I was all set to go to Northern Illinois University. Several high school pals were headed there as well. But fate intervened in the form of one of my favorite high school teachers and coaches, Richard Weiner. A graduate of Luther College, Mr. Weiner arranged to drive me there to visit the campus, in Decorah, Iowa, during which time I would meet the basketball coach. We left Oak Lawn at 4:30 A.M. and returned early the next day, probably about 1:30 A.M., covering the 600+ round-trip miles during that 20-hour period. I had spent time on a handful of college campuses for various reasons during high school, including two other Lutheran colleges, St. Olaf and Wartburg. In fact, the brother of the pastor of my home church was the president of Wartburg College.

The visit to Luther was replete with a series of almost magical moments unlike any I had experienced prior. I immediately fell in love with the campus, and the love affair continues. Whatever was in my mind about the perfect place for a college, this small, idyllic Phi Beta Kappa jewel nestled in the spectacularly rugged corner of northeast Iowa was it. That day, I did not know how much Luther cost ($1,750 annual comprehensive fee guaranteed for 4 years) or even if I was admissible. Nor was I put off by the brief, 10-min meeting with the aging basketball coach, Hamlet Peterson (a *Sports Illustrated* Hall of Fame coach, as I learned later). After a few minutes, he turned to Mr. Weiner and said, "He's not very big, is he?" So much for high-pressure, high-profile recruiting! I completed the application for admission that same afternoon.

My parents were thrilled with my decision for Luther, as it was for them perhaps the last best hope that I would become a minister. That option had crossed my mind occasionally in my youth, but it had no place in choosing Luther. My goal was to become a high school teacher and coach—two of the few college-educated role models with which I had firsthand experience. I learned later, reading a chapter in Nevitt Sanford's classic, *The American College,* that pursuing such an occupation was a sociologically predictable choice for those first in their families to go to college. At least this was true in the 1950s and 1960s.

I played basketball at Luther all 4 years, which included a trip to the NCAA small college regionals in my sophomore year (only two divisions then, big and small). In my senior year, I was the team's most improved player, which gives you

some idea, perhaps, about how well I had played previously! While basketball was important to my identity and sense of belonging to the college, I also connected to the institution and peers in numerous other ways, which almost certainly made a positive difference in my obtaining a degree on time. Indeed, I do not recall a single moment of doubt that I would graduate.

Fully integrated into the college's social systems, as explained in the Tinto (1987) model, in addition to playing basketball, I was an orientation assistant, wrote a column for the student newspaper (being for much of my junior year the Headless Norseman, the supposedly anonymous author of a column that spoofed campus events and occasionally lampooned faculty, staff, and students), and was active in a fraternity (Luther forbade national organizations and formally referred to these groups as "brotherhoods" [for men] and "societies" [for women]). I was later president of my fraternity, which afforded multiple opportunities to meet with the dean of students about various matters and included a few occasions when he bestowed accolades on our accomplishments and contributions to the quality of campus life. As president, I also got to drive the fraternity's 1929 fire truck in Luther's homecoming parade and for other celebratory events.

I was an obedient, almost always serious, but not brilliant student. All of my grades were C or better. I took a full load every semester and never dropped a class. But as with many traditional-age undergraduates then and now, I was not cognitively and intellectually developed enough to take full advantage of the rich intellectual and cultural resources offered by the college, faculty, and many of my peers. I could have been the poster child for Nevitt Sanford's astute observation about it being unfortunate that college seniors were about to leave the institution because it was not until then that most were at the cusp of being able to synthesize, integrate, and reconstruct what they had learned from their studies and other experiences and to use these abilities and knowledge to successfully deal with challenging issues and novel situations.

I graduated on time, in May 1968, with majors in English and history and a secondary school teaching certificate, having completed my student teaching that spring in nearby Cresco, Iowa. Fortunately, Luther College was not done with me yet.

Getting into the Higher Education Business

The job market for high school teachers in the late 1960s was robust. In fact, about 10 min into my first interview with a Wisconsin school district recruiter, I was offered a contract. Flummoxed, I almost accepted on the spot. But I was also about to interview for an admissions position at Luther, which was attractive for multiple reasons, not the least of which was the princely annual salary of $6,200 and unlimited use of a college-owned car! That job prospect soon came through, and overnight I went from being an undergraduate to a full-time member of Luther's admission staff.

My 4 years in admissions work at Luther was significant for several reasons. First, I was introduced to the world of higher education (at least a slice of it) from the

perspective of staff member, which stimulated an unquenchable thirst for learning more about college students and how colleges work. In addition, as much as any other event or experience, the job turned me into a college junkie. During those years and since, when traveling for work or family vacations, it was a given that a route close to a college or university would include a brief self-guided driving tour of the campus.

A second reason the admissions work was important to my career is that I met people working for other colleges and universities representing a variety of missions, histories, and cultures. In retrospect, I see this as having been an informative tutorial about the widely acknowledged strength of American higher education: institutional diversity.

Third, and perhaps most important, I learned how to effectively handle substantial autonomy. That is, the nature of my work as structured by Luther at the time left me to determine pretty much on my own how to use the workday. Luther's staffing pattern then was to assign its admissions personnel to different states and regions. In my first year, I was based in Illinois, my home state. The one-bedroom apartment near Chicago that I shared with my wife, Kristi, and later my infant daughter, Kari, was also my office, from which I scheduled high school visits, made follow-up phone calls, and managed correspondence. The next 2 years, when my territory included Minnesota and the Dakotas (fertile Lutheran ground!), we lived in a two-bedroom apartment in Anoka, a Twin Cities suburb northwest of Minneapolis, just 10 miles from where Kristi was raised and where her parents still taught in the local schools. I handled this independence better than a couple of my colleagues in admissions did. On balance, the work was very good preparation for a research university professorship, which offers almost complete autonomy.

In my final year working for Luther, I was assistant director of admissions, which required moving back to Decorah. I had completed a master's degree the prior summer, and life was good. But it was during this time that recruiting a new class every year began to feel more like a grind than a service to the college. The work was then and is now essential, one of Victor Baldridge's (1981) "jugular-vein" functions of an institution of higher education.

Some behavioral patterns persist from my years in admissions, one of which is checking the mail every day! The Monday through Saturday snail mail brought enrollment deposit checks, which we tabulated daily. Ritualistically, I hovered over the mail with my colleagues on days we were in the office to see if we were on pace with the current year's target.

So, all told, I spent eight formative years at Luther College—the first four as a student and a second four working in admissions. Now, 40 years later, I'm back at Luther again, serving on its board of regents and chairing its Student Learning and Campus Life Committee. When the invitation was extended to join the board, I consulted with some trusted advisors. One of them, John Gardner (the fellow who has almost single-handedly made the first-year experience a legitimate focus of college and university work), had served in a similar capacity at his alma mater. He said I would find the service both rewarding and informative, and he was exactly right. Working with such deeply committed and exceptional people has been a blessing. While, for sure, there are plenty of debates about important and meaningful issues,

never once in any setting have I seen a flash of ego from any regent. On the whole, it is a rare but beautiful thing to see highly accomplished people all committed to finding the best way to do the right thing.

Chance Encounters Lead to Graduate Study

My undergraduate academic record was not one over which graduate school admissions committees would drool. In fact, going on for further study never entered my mind until a chance encounter in the fall of 1967 with my senior paper adviser, Professor John Bale. After a question about my progress, he asked me if I was thinking about the GRE. I didn't know what this was and wondered if he had maybe meant to say "GTO"—a General Motors muscle car of that era! And then he asked where was I going to do my MAT—yet another unfamiliar acronym.

Up until that October afternoon, I had not heard of either the Graduate Record Examination or the Master of Arts in Teaching, which was a relatively new program designed for people who intended to teach in high school or, perhaps, at a community college. Moreover, I did not think of myself as someone who even ought to entertain such matters. For me, the son of a truck driver with a 7th grade education, a baccalaureate degree seemed enough of a reach. Obviously, I was wrong. But it took someone to point that out to me, to tap me on the shoulder and say, "Look at this—you can do it!"

In May 1994, Luther conferred on me an honorary degree. As faculty and staff gathered in the robing room prior to the commencement procession, I recounted to Professor Bale the memorable, life-altering exchange during which he suggested I go to graduate school. I asked expectantly, "Do you recall it?" Of course, he didn't. It struck me a few moments later that he must have had such conversations with scores if not hundreds of students, raising their aspirations. I realized something that commencement day, reflecting on a moment many years earlier. A teacher's words—even those we think to be insignificant, whether after class, in the margins of a paper or in an email—*what* we say and *how we say it* can have a profound impact. Our words can open up previously unconsidered options, putting students on a trajectory of achievement that makes it possible to become more than they dared to dream. But words can also dampen one's prospects. So it's always, *always* better to err toward the former as Professor Bale did with me.

A Walk-On at St. Cloud State

One of the perks of the Luther admissions job was tuition reimbursement for graduate study. The college encouraged all exempt employees (as I recall it) to work toward an advanced degree. Given that today the enrollment management business is a 24/7, demanding, continuous cycle, it's hard to conceive that one could devote the

summer months for two or more consecutive years to graduate study, but back then it was doable.

I applied first to the educational psychology master's program at the University of Minnesota, but I was not found worthy. Undaunted, I stood in a long line on a very warm day in June 1969 to register for classes at St. Cloud State College (now University). I completed the master's degree in school counseling (the program that was closest to my interests) in three summers with a couple of evening courses during spring quarters.

The master's program was important because it showed me (better said, I showed myself) that I could perform academically on a par with the best of my peers. I was interested in the course work (most of it, anyway) and found some of it applicable to my work, which I now know is a key factor in mastery learning. Of the many wonderful memories from that time, two stand out because they were instrumental in my seriously considering doctoral study.

The first was taking a class in the summer of 1970 from a visiting instructor, Dr. John Doerr, at that time a faculty member at the University of Missouri at Kansas City (UMKC). Besides looking familiar, Doerr pronounced my last name correctly when calling the roll the first class meeting. The reason for that was he had been a counselor at my high school, although I had not known him in that capacity. Doerr was a self-described gym rat, and he knew me because of athletics. I did well in his class, and he urged me to go on for a doctorate. Two years later, I spent a couple of days in Kansas City as his guest, interviewing for the doctoral program. Even though I chose Iowa, I stayed in touch with Doerr, who subsequently became executive vice chancellor at UMKC before retiring.

My second noteworthy experience during the master's program at St. Cloud was the three-quarter sequence of courses that culminated in a "problem paper," or so it was called, a project that for all practical purposes was akin to a master's thesis. The goal was to learn how to conduct a research project—which we did by doing one! The first quarter was devoted to identifying the problem to be examined and anchoring it in a literature review. The second quarter's work was fleshing out the methods and collecting the data. And the final quarter was devoted to analyzing the data and writing up the results. I did not have access to computer-assisted programs at that time, so I cranked out percentages using a large hand-operated calculating machine. Submitting the paper for publication, the last step, was presumably to give us experience with the publication process; we were not required to have it published, only to try.

Well, my first publication (not counting my Headless Norseman columns) was based on my master's degree problem paper (Kuh, Redding, & Lesar, 1972). I vividly recall returning to Decorah from an admissions trip late one Friday night in the spring of 1972 and stopping in the office to go through the mail (as always). In the stack was an envelope from the *Journal of the National Association of College Admissions Counselors*. I was so excited that in my haste I cut the letter in thirds with the letter opener! The farthest thing from my mind that evening was that this would be the first of several hundred publications that would bear my name.

Doctoral Study at Iowa

I went to the University of Iowa in the fall of 1972 with the career goal of becoming a therapist (really!) in a college or university counseling center, an aspiration my lifelong friends and family members still chuckle at when it comes up in conversation. I was motivated at the time to do work for individual betterment. The admissions job had such a dimension, of course, but my interests at the time focused on people, not institutions. It wasn't long before the counselor education (major) and higher education (minor) course work began to inform and complicate my understandings of the nature of the relationships between people and institutions, bringing me to realize that trying to separate them in theory and practice was not likely to be in the long-term interest of fostering personal growth or organizational effectiveness.

Iowa did not in those years have a student development track in counselor education, but there were several foundational courses that addressed relevant topics. One such course was "The College Student," taught by Albert Hood; its main text was Nevitt Sanford's (1962) *The American College,* some chapters of which lay the groundwork for later investigations into the developmental process common to traditional-age college students, such as those by William Perry, Lawrence Kohlberg, and others.

My nascent interest in writing and research deepened, in large part, in the opportunities Iowa afforded and those I had a hand in creating. I took a course on personality theories from Diane Carter, who offered (very) pointed, critical feedback on my early papers. She pleaded that I find a peer to review my work so I could revise it before turning it in to her. I did so, gaining a valuable lesson and behavior that continues to have positive return on investment.

William Packwood, a young faculty member with a University of Minnesota Ph.D., was my program advisor. He taught the introduction to student personnel services course, which included a great deal of reading, along with about 20 one-page tightly focused papers (more than one a week), to which he provided a voluminous amount of feedback, both substantive and stylistic. The class that semester threatened to revolt, and no one produced all 20 of these papers; I think I led the pack with 13 or so. We could rewrite the papers to improve both our grade and the quality of the product, an approach I adopted when I started teaching graduate classes. In conversations with Bill, he told me he was drawing on some of these one-page papers to help outline material and build a comprehensive reference list for a handbook about student personnel services he was editing. The nasty one-page issue paper assignment turned out to be another stepping stone to publication for me (and several of my peers), as Bill invited me to author the chapter on admissions (Kuh, 1977a) and to coauthor the orientation chapter with Michael Dannells (Dannells & Kuh, 1977), who retired a few years ago as professor and chair of the Bowling Green State University higher education doctoral program.

In addition to these early entries to the literature, I also published on work I conducted as part of graduate assistantships; one publication was from the College of

Education's Placement Office (Kuh, 1975), and another was from the year I taught courses in interpersonal communications skills and personnel management in the Iowa College of Dentistry (Kuh & Soule, 1975). These seemingly random publications prompted Elaine El-Khawas to offer the following when presenting me with the Association for the Study of Higher Education Research Achievement Award in 2000:

> For those of you just starting out as higher education scholars, I hope that George will not mind if I tell you that, as we all do, George started out modestly. His first grants, during his first years as an academic, were about $5,000 in size… It was not until 10 years later that he obtained his first sizeable grant. So too, his first publications were modest, including work published in the *Journal of Educational Staffing* and in the *American Dental Assistant Association Journal*. The important thing is where he went from there.

Another formative experience was working with Al Hood as his graduate assistant for the *Journal of College Student Personnel,* for which Hood was the editor. This allowed me to see firsthand what happens to a paper from the time it is submitted to when it appears in print, almost always at least a year later. This was a most revealing experience, as I learned that even well-published people with exceptional national reputations sometimes submit less-than-stellar work and have to revise (sometimes multiple times) their paper before it can be accepted.

In those years, the University of Iowa College of Education was one of several schools (the University of Minnesota and the University of Maryland were two others) characterized as favoring "dust-bowl empiricism"—using inductive quantitative approaches to investigate educational phenomena and discover "truth." The practical significance for me at the time was a very challenging series of required statistics courses. The Iowa educational psychology faculty had developed the well-regarded Iowa Test of Basic Skills; nearby, in Iowa City, was the American College Testing (ACT) program. This meant there was considerable expertise to staff these courses and serve on dissertation committees. In fact, two statisticians served on my committee: H.D. Hoover and Bill Snider.

Snider's primary role was to certify my computer skills, which was a popular alternative to demonstrating the required language skill. At the time, packaged statistics programs such as SPSS or SAS were not readily available, which meant we had to be facile enough to write our own computer programs to analyze the data typically coded on punch cards or tapes. The output was printed on large sheets of green paper. By the mid-1980s, punch cards had pretty much disappeared, as did the over-sized green computer print-out paper a few years later.

My dissertation was a longitudinal study of whether the changes in attitudes and values manifested during college persisted in the years following college. The study was prompted by my having read an interview with Theodore Newcomb (Tavris, 1974) in which he pointed out that little was known about what happens to college graduates after they finish their studies. In that era, research into the personality orientations of college students received a fair amount of attention, with much of the work employing nationally normed instruments. One of the more popular tools was the Omnibus Personality Inventory (OPI). Some of the best work in this arena in the 1960s was based at the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of California at Berkeley (Clark, Heist, McConnell, Trow, & Yonge, 1972). I recalled

completing the OPI twice as a Luther student, once as a freshman just before classes started and again in my senior year.

After an exhaustive search of basements and attics on the Luther campus, I was unable to locate these OPI data or any of the other matched years for freshman and seniors that completed the OPI. This led me to contact Paul Heist, one of the OPI authors and a coinvestigator on the Berkeley studies. I then learned, happily, that Heist was a Luther graduate and friend of Clair Kloster, a longtime Luther faculty member and administrator who advocated on my behalf to Heist. After some weeks of uncertainty, Heist confirmed having found the longitudinal data for the Luther class of 1969 (a year after mine) in a locked file cabinet in a warehouse in Oakland, California. In those days, to protect the data from being destroyed or otherwise compromised, data sets were kept in multiple secure locations. Heist told me he had to break the lock on the file cabinet, as no one could find the key! I was in business and spent almost all of 8 months of my waking hours on the dissertation, which included administering the OPI to the Luther College class of 1969 5 years later, in 1974. This research resulted in three of my early publications, two in the *Journal of College Student Personnel* (Kuh, 1976, 1977b) and another in the Luther alumni magazine.

I've occasionally pondered whether there is wisdom in reviving and updating tools such as the OPI. Most of the personality-oriented measures used prior to the appearance of the OPI were based on populations judged to be abnormal by the mores of the times, such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, considered the gold standard for measuring psychopathology in adults. The OPI, however, was normed on college student populations. It was first and foremost a research tool, unlike some of the later personality measures, such as the Myers-Briggs Indicator, which are used for other purposes. Today, with much attention paid to narrow, standardized measures of student learning outcomes such as critical thinking and analytical reasoning, it would be refreshing and instructive to focus some assessment work on other aspects of student development that are equally important to living a fulfilling life and sustaining a democratic society.

The values and attitudes of traditional-age undergraduates are influenced more by their peers than by their teachers and other resources (Astin, 1977, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). This truism is also one of the arguments for doctoral program residency requirements. Thanks to my spouse, who had a half-time teaching job, I had the good fortune—the luxury, some would say—of devoting 34 months to my doctoral study at Iowa along with the 20-hour-a-week commitment to assistantships or other work. The first 24 months were concentrated on course work and the remaining portion on the dissertation. Most other doctoral students in my program also were full time in that they had few if any major competing responsibilities and obligations other than family. Although the Iowa program was not designed to be a cohort experience as we think of the approach today, because most of us were taking the same classes, the impact was similar as we spent a lot of time together both inside and outside of class. As a result, we got to know one another well, trusted one another, and worked closely together on class projects and professional development activities, including conference presentations and occasional publications. The faculty set high performance expectations, and

students reinforced the same with one another. In addition to Mike Dannells, mentioned earlier, Carney Strange, also a longtime faculty member at Bowling Green State University, was in my cohort.

By far, the most significant event of my doctoral study years was the birth of my son, Kristian, in September 1974. The cramped two-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment that was vintage graduate student housing now seemed even smaller. This new, wonderful member of our family was another incentive (not that I needed one) to complete my dissertation.

A Faculty Career…by Default

As my interest in becoming a college counselor waned, I began to explore other alternatives. The most appropriate prospect it seemed, given my prior experience, was to obtain an administrative position in student affairs. I applied for several such jobs in the spring of 1975, in anticipation of defending my dissertation that summer. However, my lofty aspirations were not commensurate with the level of experience and credentials demanded by the positions for which I was applying. In other words, I was simply not qualified for them.

One job I lobbied hard for and believe I could have done well was that of student services officer for the University of Minnesota General College. The General College was established in 1932 as an experiment in general education, and over the years it became a gateway for underprepared metro-area high school students, many of whom were immigrants and people of color. The more I learned about the General College and its mission, the more attractive I found the job. I made it through the early rounds of screening, interviewed in the conference hotel for the annual American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) meeting in Chicago, and later even went to the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus on my own dime to learn more about the General College and to express my keen interest in the position. But it was not to be. The offer went to David W. Williams, who has since held senior leadership positions at several colleges and universities, including Temple University, Fort Valley State University, Metropolitan State College of Denver, Central Michigan University, and the University of Connecticut. Over the years, I've seen David at professional conferences, and we recount how our lives and careers would have been different—not necessarily better—had I been offered the General College job.

Just as the Minnesota door closed, another opened. Bill Packwood, my advisor and dissertation director, announced he was taking a leave of absence to return to his home state of Louisiana to do some education and public policy work out of the governor's office. I was one of two candidates to interview for what was billed as a 1-year appointment to cover Bill's courses. Ironically, the other candidate was a recent graduate of the Indiana University program I joined a year later.

The year teaching at Iowa was most satisfying and a terrific way to find out if the professoriate was a good fit. My assignment was divided between teaching two courses

a term and serving as the assistant director of a federally funded drug counseling program. Because I had taken at Iowa all but one of the courses I taught, the existing syllabi needed only modest revisions—but then I had to figure out how to make the material relevant and interesting, both to the students and myself. I also developed and taught one new course, a doctoral seminar on student development theory, which has since become a staple offering in higher education and student affairs graduate programs. Most of the dozen or so students in that seminar were also peers and friends, including Dary Erwin, who went on to direct the institutional research and assessment office at James Madison University and to help establish the country's first Ph.D. program in assessment there, as well as the aforementioned Mike Dannells and Carney Strange. I often tell people when Carney and I are together that I taught him everything he knows about student development! Of course, that is not so.

As it turned out, Bill Packwood stayed in Louisiana for several more years, never returning to the University of Iowa. He later joined the faculty at Moorhead State University in Minnesota, where he taught for many years. I likely could have stayed at Iowa for at least another year, but assuming Bill was returning, I was active on the job market. Two positions were of keen interest to me: tenure-line faculty appointments at Indiana University and Purdue University. In some ways, the Purdue position was a better fit, as its student personnel program was housed in the counselor education division, which had an intellectual orientation similar to that of my Iowa doctoral program. But there were other aspects of the job that weren't quite right, and it took a fair amount of courage (or maybe foolishness) to politely decline the Purdue offer, which was made before Indiana requested an interview. Fortunately, I was offered the Indiana job, and I was thrilled to join its faculty in the fall of 1976.

There is no graceful way for me to insert into the flow of this narrative the shattering, life-altering event my loved ones and I experienced 3 months after moving to Indiana. My first wife, Kristi, who I met at Luther, died unexpectedly from inexplicable heart failure, otherwise known as cardiac arrhythmia, just 3 days after celebrating her 29th birthday. Adequately capturing the grief and despair that her passing brought on to our family is not possible. I remain profoundly grateful for the outpouring of love, concern, and consolation from my extended family, longtime friends including my colleagues at Iowa, and my new colleagues at Indiana. The St. Thomas Lutheran Church congregation in Bloomington, of which we had been members for only a few weeks, was a remarkable source of a support. The weeks and months following Kristi's loss still are a blur. In some ways, my work and its weekly routines of teaching classes, meeting with students, and so forth were welcome diversions from far more challenging tasks.

Coming to Appreciate the IU Way

Indiana had a strong national reputation for preparing student affairs professionals. As with other nationally prominent programs in those days, such as those at Michigan State and Florida State, the senior Indiana faculty had been successful

executive-level administrators. For example, one of the well-known IU faculty members was Robert Shaffer, the founding president of the American Personnel and Guidance Association, who was for many years the Indiana University dean of students before joining the higher education faculty full time. Elizabeth Greenleaf led the IU student personnel master's program. She was previously a housing administrator at San Jose State before becoming the IU director of residence life. Dr. G, as she was affectionately known, had been the president of two large, influential national organizations, the American College Personnel Association and the National Association of Women Deans and Counselors. The reputations of Shaffer and Greenleaf were well earned and deserved, albeit garnered as much by more national leadership and administrative achievements as scholarship.

But the academic world was changing, not only for higher education and student affairs preparation programs but for other applied fields as well. From the outset, it was made clear that my role at Indiana was to complement the program's strong practitioner orientation by infusing more theory and research into the course work and student experience. Greenleaf, Shaffer, and most of the other senior faculty in the unit understood this and encouraged me at every turn to concentrate on publications and to the extent possible to seek funding to support my scholarship. In the first few years, I successfully obtained several small internal grants and two early career grants funded by the Spencer Foundation.

One of my teaching assignments at Indiana was a course on program evaluation in postsecondary environments. I had never taken such a course, nor had I read much about the subject. This meant I had to become an expert overnight! I taught this course several times but then effectively lobbied to steer higher education students to the school's generic evaluation course being taught by nationally recognized experts such as Egon Guba and Robert Wolf. Teaching the evaluation course brought home to me that there was a dearth of scholarship on evaluation efforts in higher education in general and in student personnel services in particular. This led to my first edited book (Kuh, 1979a), published by the American College Personnel Association. I was fortunate to convince some leading scholars (Robert Brown), scholar-practitioners (Peggy Barr), and practitioners (Dick McKaig) to contribute chapters.

I've taught a total of 17 different courses, 13 at Indiana and 4 at the University of Iowa in addition to practicum seminars and several summer credit-bearing workshops at Indiana, Iowa State, and Portland State. At one point in the early 1990s, I had taught every required course in the IU master's program.

For me, classroom teaching was the most challenging of any professorial activity. My teaching evaluations were always fairly good, and they improved some over time. Even so, in almost every class, there were one or two or three students who I apparently didn't connect with or reach, given their ratings and comments on the end-of-course evaluations. Reading those comments always haunted me. I treated the students' evaluation of my instruction the same way I dealt with anonymous reviews of the manuscripts I submitted for publication: I glanced quickly at them to get the overall picture and then put them out of sight for a few days before mustering the resolve to review them in detail. Despite my classroom shortcomings, of which I was very aware, I received teaching awards from Indiana and national recognition as well.

As others have said, it is also true for me: I have learned as much from my students as I may have taught them—if that is still an appropriate way to think about the nature of the transaction. Throughout my career, I was a stickler for precision in writing, my own and that of my students. One of the more instructive changes I made fairly late in my career was suggested by Megan Palmer, then an advanced doctoral student who was team teaching with me. She offered to draft a rubric that she felt would help students better understand what I expected in terms of clear, persuasive writing. We tweaked her draft rubric several times and tried it out with the class. The rubric was well received by students as it illustrated more concretely what I was looking for in terms of substance, organization, and clarity of expression. Equally important, the rubric made it easier for me to evaluate the students' work, something that people with experience using rubrics know full well.

I very much enjoyed and devoted considerable time and energy to student program and research advising at both the master's and doctoral levels. I chaired or directed 55 dissertations to completion and served as a member on some additional number of dissertation committees. I've also been an outside reader on dissertations done by students at universities in other countries, such as Australia, Canada, and South Africa. Of course, as with my own publications, some of these dissertations were better than others. But in every instance, by my reckoning, the final product was a piece of scholarship the student could be proud of.

The Midwest Meeting of Graduate Students in College Student Personnel

One of the first professional meetings I attended after getting to Indiana was the 1976 fall gathering of faculty members who taught in student affairs preparation programs. Most such programs are known today as higher education and student affairs (HESA) programs, a term we introduced at Indiana in the early 1990s. In the 1970s, though, they were mostly called college student personnel programs, the term used by the field's major journal, the *Journal of College Student Personnel*. During a conversation in my office with several master's students, I mentioned I was preparing a presentation for the meeting and was looking forward to getting to know my colleagues from other preparation programs in the Midwest, most of whom I knew only by reputation. Soon, the discussion turned to whether there were similar opportunities for graduate students to get experience presenting their research and program ideas and meeting people who would be their future professional colleagues. Out of that exchange was born the Midwest Meeting of Graduate Students in College Student Personnel, known to insiders by its unpronounceable acronym, MMOGSISP. Indiana hosted the first meeting in late January 1977, just a little more than 3 months following the idea's concoction. Today, no one in their right mind would for a moment contemplate trying to pull off such an event with so little lead time.

MMOGSISP was held annually for 30 or so years, often attracting more than 100 students from a dozen or more institutions. The site for the meeting rotated among

institutions with master's college student personnel administration programs, with the host school being selected as a result of what were occasionally competitive bids made by oral presentation in the concluding hours of the current annual event. The 25th MMOGSISP meeting was hosted by IU students in Bloomington at the sprawling Indiana Memorial Union. At that year's banquet, I was presented a yellow polo shirt with the MMOGSISP insignia, signifying I was—at one point—the "leader of the pack." That shirt is a bit faded now, but it's still a wonderful reminder of what can happen when people get excited about a worthwhile idea.

Bending IU's Higher Education Program Orientation and Culture

At one time in the 1970s, Indiana University led the nation in the number of former or sitting presidents or campus executive officers with higher education doctoral degrees. My first doctoral student, Gary Ransdell, served with distinction for many years as president of Western Kentucky University. Another former student, Victor Boschini, was president at Illinois State University before becoming chancellor at Texas Christian University. I take great pride in their achievements and hope many other IU graduates will find themselves in similar positions.

Around the same time, starting in the late 1980s, there was an uptick in the number of IU graduates who became faculty members. By my count, about 55 graduates of the IU higher education doctoral program are teaching or had full-time faculty roles at some point in a graduate program somewhere: 42 of these people earned their degrees after 1980. This shift in career paths reflected the significant, intentional shift in the IU program's orientation—from appointing faculty members who were primarily former practitioners to recruiting faculty with strong interests in theory and research. This shift, in turn, affected the type of students considering IU for graduate work. It's also fair to say that many students who later became faculty changed their aspirations while working with faculty and peers during their doctoral studies at IU.

One of the most significant figures in enacting the shift in the mission and orientation of HESA's doctoral program was David Clark, a former dean of the IU School of Education, who returned full time to the faculty in 1977 after working for several years on grant-funded projects. Dave was more than a little intimidating, both intellectually and physically (he stood 6′6″). While he divided his time between the HESA program and the school administration program (which later became the educational leadership program), his presence had a dramatic effect on the kinds of students the HESA program began to attract, the nature of the program's curriculum, and the program's research profile. Dave left IU in about 1985 for a titled professorship at the University of Virginia, but by that time the shift in orientation of the HESA doctoral program was well under way.

In addition to his towering intellect, rigorous classroom expectations, and challenging dissertation advising, Dave did two things that had a concrete, lasting

influence on me and the new direction of the IU program. First, he led us through the process of having the Ph.D. reauthorized for the higher education program. As a result of a highly politicized relationship between the School of Education and the Graduate School, the authority to award a Ph.D. in higher education (as well as several other doctoral programs in the School of Education) was suspended in the late 1960s. With Dave's coaching, our petition to have the Ph.D. in higher education reauthorized went smoothly and we began awarding the degree in about 1980.

The second thing Dave did had a direct, significant impact on me and my career: He orchestrated my appointment in 1983 as department chair. The faculty members in the administrative unit to which the higher education and college student personnel programs were housed were essentially split into two camps; one included the "old guard," made up of professors who were former administrators in schools or colleges; the other group was comprised of faculty who had a stronger orientation to research. Prior to 1983, the department chair had come from the former group. The relations among individuals within and between both groups were generally congenial, but Dave and some others felt the shift to a stronger research orientation should be symbolically cemented with fresh departmental leadership. My appointment as department chair by the dean following a departmental vote was a strategic move that I didn't fully comprehend until some years later (I was the youngest faculty member in the unit at that time). For one thing, it put me in a legitimate position to be considered for an associate deanship, which happened 2 years later, in 1985, when Dean Howard Mehlinger asked me to be his associate dean for academic affairs, a position that included budget oversight.

One of the concrete outcomes of being department chair and associate dean for a total of six consecutive years was that we were able to strengthen the higher education and student affairs faculty in a period when it was most difficult to obtain new faculty lines or replace faculty who left or retired. During this time, we recruited Don Hossler and Frances Stage to join John Bean and me as the "young tenure-track Turks" in the higher education program. There were other strong faculty members in the larger unit; prominent among them was Martha McCarthy, in educational leadership, a renowned, highly prolific professor of education law, to whom I was married for 30 years. I cannot overstate the positive influence she had on my life and career.

Over the years, many productive faculty members joined the HESA program for varying lengths of time. I list them below roughly in the order in which they came to IU along with their most recent institutional affiliation: Nancy Evans (Iowa State), John Bean (IU), Don Hossler (IU), Fran Stage (New York University), Edward St. John (University of Michigan), John Thelin (University of Kentucky), Michael Parsons (Moorhead State University), Mary Howard Hamilton (Indiana State), Deborah Carter (Claremont Graduate School Claremont), Nancy Chism (IUPUI), Vasti Torres (IU), Gary Pike (IUPUI), Tom Nelson Laird (IU), Alex McCormick (IU), Victor Borden (IU), Danielle DeSawal (IU), and Lori Patton (IUPUI). The program also benefitted immensely by the presence of Trudy Banta, who was vice chancellor at IUPUI and whose tenured position was in higher education.

Another significant impact of taking on administrative roles early in my career was that the experience greatly informed and enriched my teaching and also, to a

lesser but nontrivial extent, my scholarship. Yogi Berra was right when he said, "You can observe a lot by just watching." This is one way scholars can learn about and reflect on events and their effects on individual and organizational functioning. But nothing can substitute for being in the moment, attempting to manage toward desired ends the many variables and personalities that make all politics local and lend themselves to multiple, sometimes competing interpretations. It also matters whether one has responsibility for the outcomes of decision and policy making and the individuals whose lives are directly and indirectly affected. Of course, taking on administrative assignments can detract from one's scholarly productivity. I was determined not to let that happen to a major degree, and because of a supportive spouse who was also an academic and understanding, forgiving children, I was able to continue to write and speak while serving my colleagues and the university.

Whether one intends to do so or not, being a department chair and associate dean signals to one's colleagues near and far that one is open to, and perhaps is even seeking, greater administrative responsibility. This situation can also raise suspicion in the eyes of colleagues, as one is thought to be teetering on the edge of going over to the dark side of bureaucratic, power-hungry authority. The immediate implication, aside from denying any such desire, is dealing with invitations and nominations for deanships. Those were always flattering, but I pursued only one: the deanship of the University of Iowa College of Education, where I had earned my Ph.D. I interviewed for the job in 1991. The experience was instructive and fun, especially because many of the faculty I knew from when I was a student were still there. Moreover, I felt that more than a few of them were pulling for me to get the nod. But I did not, which was almost certainly the right call for Iowa and for me. I didn't regret the dance or the decision. Other windows were about to open.

The CSEQ, Bob Pace, and Me

One of those doors opened in 1993 with a call from C. Robert Pace, then at UCLA, inquiring about Indiana's interest in becoming the home of the College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ), which he developed. I became interested in Bob's work and the concepts of quality of effort and involvement in the late 1970s. Writing my ASHE-ERIC monograph (1981), *Indices of Quality in the Undergraduate Experience*, had also made me highly aware of the pioneering work of Alexander Astin and related research about the relationships between what students did with their time, what institutions provided, and desired college outcomes. Because of my ASHE-ERIC monograph, Bob was aware of my interest in the CSEQ and was immediately agreeable when John Schuh, a frequent collaborator, and I asked for permission to use some CSEQ items in a study we did in the early 1980s. My interest in the CSEQ turned out later to be a major turning point in my scholarly program and professorial career. For that reason, a couple of short stories about Bob Pace seem to belong here.

In November 1988, Bob invited me to lunch during the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) annual meeting to persuade me to use the CSEQ in the

College Experiences Study, a project described in my 1991 book, *Involving Colleges,* about which I will say more later. I was positively disposed, provided we could work out the logistics and I could find the money to pay for it, as we did not have funds for this purpose in the Lilly Foundation grant supporting the work. I also had to find money for our lunch, as even though Bob extended the invitation, he had forgotten his wallet! In addition, I had to convince my research team that administering the CSEQ would not detract from or compete with the qualitative nature of the research; my rationale was that the multi-method approach would enrich the study. With those details worked out, I followed some funding leads to use the CSEQ—the most promising being the Marriott Corporation, which at the time was providing contract food services on many campuses. I finally reached the appropriate person by phone during one of our research team meetings at a hotel in Indianapolis. As I explained the project to him, I emphasized that this was a serious research effort focused on meaningful out-of-class experiences, not another vacuous, irrelevant effort to rank colleges, such as the then-popular *Playboy* magazine list of "best party schools," atop which that year again was Chico State. After a long pause, the Marriott executive said sternly, "That's a bad rap"—and went on to explain that his son was a sophomore at Chico State and was having a terrific experience there. I don't recall what, if anything, I said in response, but I was pretty sure I had blown the chance to get the loot we needed. By the end of the call, however, the deal was sealed and the small grant followed.

Even though I had several interactions with Bob over the years, prior to 1992, it never occurred to me to try to bring the CSEQ to Indiana. But he raised the prospect that year, and we had several discussions about how this might come to pass. My idea at the time was that graduate students would benefit from using the database to meet their inquiry course data analysis requirements and that we might produce an occasional research paper.

By 1994, we worked out the details for transferring the CSEQ from UCLA to Indiana. I "borrowed" $15,000 from the School of Education dean's office to pay off the small debt to UCLA that Bob had accumulated there. That amount looks trivial in retrospect, but at the time, it was a bit of a risk because Bob had positioned the CSEQ primarily as an institutional research tool, not a fee-for-service cost-recovery assessment project. And things would be different at Indiana than at UCLA, which provided Bob with office space and graduate student support. By that time, responsibility-centered budgeting had already taken root at Indiana, which meant that CSEQ income would have to cover all of its expenses. Fortunately, the assessment movement was ramping up, stabilizing the number of CSEQ users at about 40 per year, making it possible for me and the half-time graduate research assistant assigned to the project to make a go of it.

Soon it became clear that the CSEQ had the potential to be more than just a data set for graduate students to play with. We began to invest more time and energy in the project, updating the norms, publishing papers using CSEQ data, creating a fourth edition of the instrument, and developing the College Student Expectations Questionnaire—intended, among other things, as a precollege measure of student predilection to devote effort to educationally purposeful activities as well as an advising

tool. Still, even through the late 1990s, I had no idea that this tool would be the foundation for what later would become a major national initiative. More on that later.

One of the things that Bob wanted to do but never accomplished was to use Guttmann scaling to assign weights to reflect the differential value of investing time and effort in various activities. For example, managing the resources of a campus organization requires more effort than simply being a member of the group. It would follow that a student managing resources would not only spend more time on the task but would also benefit more. This was something that intrigued me as well, but I never devoted enough "effort" myself to determine, by devising a weighting scheme, which student behaviors or activities were more and less important to various "outcomes."

Institutional Improvement Work at IU

Another door that opened was the invitation to join the IU Bloomington Dean of Faculties (DoF) office in 1997 as associate dean with a portfolio focused on undergraduate improvement initiatives. The DoF office then was the campus academic affairs office, with the dean being the senior academic affairs administrator. The then-dean of the faculties, Debbie Freund (now president of Claremont Graduate University), said to me, "You are going all over the country, telling people what to do to promote student success. How about doing here what you are telling others to do?" It was an attractive "gotcha." And I was open to the prospect, as the job was only part time and came with no line authority or responsibility—other than figuring out how to motivate key people to cooperate and collaborate on initiatives with promise to enhance the undergraduate experience. As I will elaborate later, we know a fair amount about what works in terms of fostering student success. Getting people to do the right things well is the main challenge.

Most of my influence as associate dean of the faculties came from administering a Lilly Foundation grant to IU for retention initiatives. The stars were aligned for the campus to launch some efforts focused primarily on first-year students that began to have the desired effects, such Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs), a revised summer advising and registration program, a redesigned and shortened fall welcome week with a strong academic component, and study skills centers imbedded in freshman residence halls among other things (Hossler, Kuh, & Olsen, 2001a, 2001b). Some of the main players on campus who had to be directly involved were either former students or colleagues or both. For example, Bruce Jacobs was then responsible for auxiliaries and residence halls; Don Hossler, at the time, was responsible for enrollment management, including orientation. For whatever reasons, the first-to-second-year persistence rate ticked up and, in 2001 IU, was named *Time* magazine's College of the Year for its innovative precollege summer seminar. I had nothing to do with the summer seminar, but I was able to help attract media attention as a result of the contacts I had begun to make from launching the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in 2000. Indeed, it was NSSE that cut short my time in the

DoF office, leading the IUB institutional improvement work to others. Unfortunately, as I write this, I am disappointed to report that some of the more promising efforts, such as FIGs, have been disbanded for various reasons. It is another example of how difficult it can be to institutionalize fragile improvement efforts.

I was again reminded of this recently in working with a large university that has to address, among other things, some “killer courses” that have D/W/F rates of up to 40%. In Vince Tinto’s (2012) book, one of these courses, general psychology, is used to show how, between 2001 and 2003, technology and engaging pedagogies were used in combination to reduce the D/W/F rate from 42 to 18% and the failure rate from 30 to 12% while also reducing instructional costs. Equally compelling in the example was that the performance of historically underrepresented students was as good as and occasionally exceeded that of majority students. It’s not clear how long this positive change persisted, but it has evaporated as the D/W/F rate in this same course, taught by the same faculty member, has again swollen to 40%. I take no special pleasure in discovering this, as I know that some of the promising practice examples featured in some of my own publications have been compromised for various reasons over time and have suffered similar fates.

Intellectual and Scholarly Interests

Most academics write about what we know or would like to know more about. Much of my scholarship prior to 1990 focused on student affairs administration and the out-of-class experiences of students, primarily undergraduates. These were areas with which I had some personal experience and learned more about in graduate school. In addition, they were areas that overlapped with my early teaching assignments, which were primarily in the student personnel administration master’s programs at both Iowa and Indiana. The annual meetings and journals of the two major national student affairs associations, American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), were almost always receptive to my papers, and within a few years, I became involved with both organizations in various capacities.

I also had the good fortune of being named to a couple of national writing teams, the ideas of which held sway in the field for a period of time. The first was a NASPA group tasked with reviewing the *Student Personnel Point of View Student Personnel Point of View* (1937) on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. The impact of the report, *A Perspective on Student Affairs* (1987), was muted as the American Council on Education, the sponsor of the original 1937 document, declined to fully endorse the 1987 statement because of lobbying by former and current ACPA leaders who at the last minute opined that their organization should have had a role in the drafting and approval of the report. It was a harsh, stinging lesson about how petty politics can derail good intentions and exceptional work.

A second effort sponsored by ACPA had a happier ending. Charles Schroeder, a seasoned, highly regarded, visionary student affairs dean and the only twice-elected

ACPA president, convened a group of thought leaders in 1993 to ponder what the student affairs profession should do to become an even more important player on college campuses. The original motivation was to determine how to respond to the national reports of the day calling for more attention to undergraduate education (e.g., National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges [NASULGC], 1997; Wingspread Group on Higher Education [WGHE], 1993). Among those with me on the writing team were Lena and Sandy Astin, Art Chickering, Patricia Cross, Pat King, Susan Komives, and Patrick Terenzini. Our meetings, some of which were at Schroeder's mountain home in Estes Park, were intellectually stimulating and personally rewarding. One irrelevant, irreverent memory from one of these gatherings was my dropping a huge pan of lasagna and Pat Cross scooping it off the kitchen floor and back into the pan within seconds. No one complained! More to the point, the product of our work was *The Student Learning Imperative* (SLI) (American College Personnel Association, 1994). I somehow became the scribe for the group, which sometimes, as in this instance, allows for some of one's own ideas to find their way into the document. This report had "legs" and, for several years, was an organizing framework for national and regional meetings and journal articles. ACPA's new magazine, *About Campus,* was in part an extension of this kind of work, translating theory and research into practical actions campuses can take to promote learning and success.

The SLI's impact was furthered because Jon Dalton, NASPA's incoming president, recognized its potential for uniting and focusing the student affairs profession and made it the organizing theme for the national NASPA meeting at which he presided. This was a much-needed, timely, statesmanlike gesture, which ushered in an era of cooperation between the two associations. It also established the groundwork for subsequent national reports on which the two groups have collaborated, such as *Learning Reconsidered* (American College Personnel Association [ACPA] & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 2004; Keeling, 2006).

By 1990, I was pretty well known in the student affairs rainforest. At the same time, my interests were broadening, stimulated in part by interactions with colleagues through the department chair and associate deanships I held. For example, I took occasional solo forays into other topics, such as needs assessment, and sometimes with coauthors, such as John Bean (on planning) and David Clark (on organizational theory). My interest in and work related to needs assessment came about when Leonard Burrello, a thought leader and professor in special education administration and now a longtime friend, asked me to be the evaluator on one of his federally funded projects. Len and I arrived at IU at the same time, and our offices were located in the same suite. Working with Len and his colleagues introduced me to how federal grants work and how steep and dense such bureaucracies are. Most surprising to me was that one grant-funded task, albeit one with which I was not directly involved, was to tell the federal government how much money it was spending on special education, where, and for what kinds of projects! I thought surely that somebody working full time at these agencies in Washington would have this information at hand. Not so!

Two of my books coauthored with Martha McCarthy (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997; McCarthy, Kuh, Newell, & Iacona, 1988) are based on national studies of the

educational administration professoriate conducted a decade apart. Using the data from the first study, I coauthored an article with Jack Newell (1989), a former ASHE president, on the higher education professoriate.

The department chair and associate dean assignments also prompted me to think more deeply about the factors that influence organizational performance. My collaborations with Dave Clark, mentioned earlier, were instrumental to reading more in these areas. Among the works I found most enlightening were those of Karl Weick. Also during this time, the mid-1980s, Japan's emergence as a world economic power was receiving attention, with much of its success being attributed to its workplace culture. Taken together, these ideas prompted me to offer a doctoral seminar focusing on culture in American colleges and universities. The discussions in this class led to the idea for my ASHE monograph (with Elizabeth Whitt), *The Invisible Tapestry* (1988). The intersections of institutional and student cultures and organizational and student performance have continued to be of keen interest to me, with these underlying ideas shaping my inquiries into strong performing institutions, resulting in two major books, *Involving Colleges* (1991) and *Student Success in College* (2005, 2010), as well as a host of articles based on those two major projects.

Involving Colleges was the major product from what was blandly dubbed the College Experiences Study (CES). The study was prompted by a series of conversations in 1987 with John Schuh, who retired in 2011 as distinguished professor at Iowa State University. In the 1970s and 1980s, John was the consummate practitioner-scholar, holding full-time administrative appointments in student affairs, first as a director of residence life (some of those years at Indiana) and then in higher-level generalist positions. In all of these appointments, John's publication record rivaled that of the most productive contributors to the student affairs literature. We collaborated on several writing projects in the late 1970s and 1980s. As John was about to move from Indiana to Wichita State, we began talking about a study that would look at high-performing student affairs organizations. My view at the time was that there would be more interest in our work if the unit of analysis were the institution, not an administrative unit, and if the study focused on the out-of-class experience. At that point in time, the Lilly Endowment, in Indianapolis, was funding some work in higher education, and Ralph Lundgren, an education program officer there, expressed interest. We secured enough money to assemble a nine-person research team to conduct at least two site visits to each of 14 colleges and universities nominated by experts because the institutions were known to provide unusually rich out-of-class experiences to undergraduate students.

The CES project was my first foray into multi-institution studies. It was also my first major qualitative research project. It is hard to imagine now, but qualitative research in higher education was still considered a suspect methodology in higher education graduate programs well into the 1980s. For example, students proposing qualitative research for dissertations frequently met resistance from faculty members on their research committees. I was not trained in qualitative research at Iowa. Indeed, in the heart of dust-bowl empiricism, qualitative research back then was an oxymoron! But Indiana, because of Egon Guba, was one of the few places to break through early. Although diminutive in stature, Egon was an intellectual giant. He came to

the IU School of Education in the 1960s to be Dave Clark's associate dean. Egon was a statistician but understood better than most that not everything could or should be explained in formulaic ways. He, along with Yvonna Lincoln, a former student who later became his wife, authored some of the early, influential texts about qualitative inquiry. Egon, with his imposing intellect, national reputation, and status at IU, along with several other Indiana faculty members using various qualitative inquiry approaches, legitimated the qualitative genre, so that by the 1980s, it was acceptable to use such methods at IU for dissertation research. Admittedly, I along with some of my colleagues learned as much about qualitative methods from our students who had taken classes from Egon as from other sources.

One of these students was Elizabeth Whitt, with whom I have collaborated on several major projects and publications, beginning with *The Invisible Tapestry,* then *Involving Colleges,* and more recently the research that led to *Student Success in College* (2005, 2010). Liz joined the CES research team as she was completing her dissertation research; she later accepted a faculty appointment at Oklahoma State University. With apologies to the others on the CES team, allow me to mention three others. Carney Strange, by then an associate professor at Bowling Green State University, devoted a sabbatical in Bloomington to the project. The CES was also the first time I worked with J. Herman Blake, who had been a senior administrator at several institutions and was a member of the writing team that produced *Involvement in Learning* (National Institute of Education [NIE], 1984), a report focused on higher education prompted by the National Commission on Excellence in Education's [NCEE], 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*. I subsequently worked with Herman on other projects, including some improvement efforts when he was a vice chancellor at IUPUI. Many of the organizing principles and recommendations articulated in *Involving Colleges* and related publications were distilled from the rich experience and deep, reflective thinking of Jim Lyons, then-dean of students at Stanford University. I came to know him from the *Perspective on Student Affairs* writing team. He is among the wisest and nicest professionals I've had the good fortune to work with during my career. Research team debriefing meetings with him were always a marvelous mix of penetrating perspectives and insights into how institutions of higher education could organize to foster student learning and personal development.

The NSSE Years

As I said earlier, our expectations for moving the CSEQ to Indiana were modest: to continue managing a well-constructed measurement tool and making the database available for graduate student and faculty research. As important as those activities were, the assessment movement rolling across the landscape of American higher education portended that grander things were in store. Having the CSEQ at Indiana and increasing its visibility through publications and presentations made Indiana and my work viable contenders to host the initiative that became the National

Survey of Student Engagement, now known in many parts of the globe as NSSE (pronounced "nessie"). Parts of the NSSE story have been told elsewhere (Kuh, 2001, 2003, 2008), but it seems appropriate to briefly recap it here and add a few details that to my knowledge have not appeared elsewhere.

In the late 1990s, The Pew Charitable Trusts, under the guidance of Russ Edgerton, then-director of the education program, set forth an ambitious reform and improvement agenda. One of the "big ideas" was to create a tool that colleges and universities could use to determine the degree to which students were exposed to good practices in undergraduate learning. Peter Ewell was one of the people Russ relied on for advice, and following a meeting in 1998 at Pew headquarters, at which I was not present, Peter began looking for someone who could deliver such a tool that had both acceptable technical properties and practical utility. I knew who Peter was then but had never interacted with him.

To get the project going, Pew charged Peter and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) to convene a design team to create the new tool (Kuh, 2009). About that time, I began to see Peter in the audience at some of my presentations based on the CSEQ and other research. When the invitation came to join the Pew design team, I accepted immediately. It soon became clear that an outfit had to be charged with seeing if the instrument and survey administration process could work as intended. Because IU had the CSEQ, I was asked to lead the try-out effort, which consisted of two rounds of field testing within an academic year. To say we were running fast and furious for those 10 months is an understatement. While the testing was under way, Peter and Russ issued an RFP to subsequently fully implement and run the project, envisioned to become a self-sustaining cost-recovery effort. Several universities and professional survey research centers were invited to bid. Indiana was selected, I've been told, for several reasons in addition to my sparkling personality.

First and most important, IU was the only bidder to propose a partnership between an established higher education doctoral program at a research university *and* a professional survey organization, the IU Center for Survey Research. It also helped that overhead and personnel costs in Bloomington tend to be lower than in many other parts of the country. Finally, having experience with the CSEQ mattered too, especially as about two-thirds of the items on the original NSSE were taken directly or adapted from the CSEQ.

The IU Center for Survey Research (CSR) was a full partner in this endeavor from the very beginning. John Kennedy, the CSR's mild-mannered, expert director, traveled with me to the initial "getting to know you meeting" with Russ Edgerton in a Red Carpet Club room at Chicago's O'Hare Airport, a confab brokered by Peter Ewell. I was uneasy during the 2-hour "interview" and recall at some point stating unequivocally that I was prepared to spend as many as 8 years establishing the enterprise, if that's what it took. I'm not sure why I picked 8 years rather than five or nine or some other number. But it turned out that that's about how much time I devoted to NSSE.

Our proposal to Pew included the nontrivial task of developing a version of a student engagement instrument for use in 2-year institutions. Of course, this suggestion was

ignored by Russ and Peter, who I learned later already had plans to ask Kay McClenney, an established expert on community colleges, to lead that effort. NSSE was about 2 years ahead of what became the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and we happily shared what we were doing and learning with our colleagues in Texas. To solidify the working relationship, the NSSE director was named an ex officio member of the CSSSE board and vice versa, an arrangement that continues today.

None of us really knew then what the unnamed project that became NSSE could be or do. We've since in private and some public settings said that NSSE has well exceeded what any of us imagined in terms of becoming a self-sustaining enterprise yielding actionable data for improving the student experience. It has also helped to shift the national discourse about what matters in college from what institutions have—resources by way of faculty accomplishments, physical attributes, and student backgrounds—to what students do with these resources.

To be clear, NSSE was not the only effort to stake out this position, nor was it the first. Chickering and Gamson's (1987) Good Practices in Undergraduate Education are well represented in one form or another throughout the questionnaire. NSSE's conceptual framework and many other items on the questionnaire had been available for more than a few years. A long list of prominent scholars and policy makers proffered congenial views—Nevitt Sanford, Douglas Heath, Ken Feldman, Ernie Boyer, Art Chickering, Zee Gamson, Ted Newcomb, Sandy Astin, Bob Pace, Vince Tinto, Ernie Pascarella, Pat Terenzini, Pat Cross, and many, many more. What NSSE had going for it was a confluence of external factors that came together to create the (now overused) "perfect storm" of conditions that helped NSSE prosper in terms of generating interest by people inside and outside the academy and capturing sizeable market share within a few short years (Kuh, 2009). Accreditors were demanding (finally) that institutions show evidence of student attainment *and* were taking action to improve it. It also helped that the media expressed interest in what was happening on college campuses at a renewed level, and major national philanthropic organizations, with Pew in the lead, were investing again in institutional improvement and innovative practices focused on undergraduate education.

With the guidance and encouragement of an esteemed national advisory board and the Pew largesse (about $3.7 million over 4 years to launch and fully implement the initiative), we heeded Sandy Astin's sage advice: To make a difference and change the discourse about undergraduate learning, this new effort (NSSE) had to be more than another annual questionnaire survey leading to a steady stream of papers appearing in places only accessible to academics. Rather, it had to have the characteristics of a campaign—public, open, useful (especially by those paying for it), and relentlessly persistent in pursuing a communications strategy using language laypeople would understand. NSSE set out to be such an enterprise and to establish an industry-leading standard for working with institutions in ways that made data about students important to the decision-making process.

One of the main reasons the field embraced NSSE was that the results from the annual survey were actionable. That is, even though NSSE is a short and in some ways blunt tool, faculty and staff as well as students could look at the data and

identify student and institutional behaviors that were not up to par and take action to address them. What if students who do not write many papers also report not improving their writing ability? Identify who they are by major field and assign more writing! What if students in certain major fields say they do not get prompt feedback from their faculty? Convene the faculty and discuss whether that is acceptable and, if not, what to do about it! If students report that their exams are not particularly challenging, an institution can disaggregate the data to determine whether this is an institution-wide issue or whether it is concentrated in some fields or the experience of certain groups of students such as women or students of color in certain majors.

The NSSE Board

One board-dictated policy that brought NSSE to the attention of senior institutional leaders was that its annual national report and press releases along with the institution's own data report be sent directly to the president at the same time these materials went to the institutional research or assessment office and the institution's media relations office. This triage effort at first caused some consternation among some seasoned IR personnel who were not used to getting calls from the president's office to explain the nature of the student experience, especially if the comparisons with peer institutions were not especially flattering! Within a few years, this concern all but dissipated. Indeed, I think the role and value of the campus IR operation actually was enhanced to a degree by raising awareness on campus about the value of its work and these kinds of data.

Two analogies from early board deliberations shaped and continue to influence NSSE's culture and corporate psyche. The first was Doug Bennett's observation that to be valued and add value, the operation had to think of itself and perform like a public utility—something that people would be willing to pay a reasonable, fair-market price for because it provided a reliable and needed service. While NSSE needed opinion leaders including its board to champion its work, it also had to deliver the goods: trustworthy data that institutions could use to identify areas where the student learning experience was satisfactory or better, as well as areas where improvement was needed.

The second analogy that shaped how NSSE came to think about itself and how it might influence thought and action came from Bob Zemsky, who likened our work to volleying in a tennis match. It would never be the case, he argued, that NSSE (or any other national survey for that matter) could continuously blast big, hard serves of information—such as its annual findings—that would keep the project in the public eye for more than a few days a year. Rather, NSSE's best chance to influence how people thought about collegiate quality would be to respond (volley back) with insights and information to inquiries, for example, from the media and policy makers discussing and debating these ideas. In this way, NSSE would become known as a go-to, reliable, trustworthy, and authoritative source to which the

media and others could turn for information about issues relevant to the quality of undergraduate education. For example, if a news story broke about an issue related to fraternity life or athletics, reporters could contact NSSE to see if it had data that could shed light on the nature of that aspect of college experience. If NSSE had some relevant information, fine. But if not, NSSE might also volley back, by sowing seeds during the conversation about what really matters to collegiate quality (engagement), and in the process develop a relationship with a media representative who could perhaps be helpful with the campaign at a later date.

Bob's advice was right. Over time, telephone inquiries that were not about engagement per se often led later to stories about engagement and collegiate quality. Of course, the media first needed to know that NSSE existed. And this is where the advice of Bill Tyson, of the Morrison and Tyson public relations firm, was indispensable.

Media Relations

From the beginning, Russ Edgerton knew that for NSSE to accomplish its mission, it would need attention from the national media. Bill Tyson helped us do that by contacting the media on our behalf. For example, he arranged meetings for me with reporters from influential dailies, such as *The New York Times,* the *Washington Post*, and *USA Today* as well as the appropriate people at *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and the then-upstart *Inside Higher Ed*. Equally important, he advised us how to tell the NSSE story in a credible, persuasive manner, including among other things how to craft press releases and annual reports as well some related materials in ways that were easily consumed and understood by general audiences. Bill's 2012 book, *Pitch Perfect,* refers briefly to his work with NSSE and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (Tyson 2012).

I can't resist telling one media-related story. Bill's coaching was straightforward, such as for me to write out a list of the four or five key things I wanted the reporter to remember and not to say anything I would later regret. Well, I handled the first of these lessons reasonably well but stumbled a few times on the second. For example, there was a fair amount of early buzz about NSSE among insiders at meetings such as AAHE and AIR, in part because Peter Ewell and I made the rounds to pitch the project during its field testing. This, in turn, generated more than a little apprehension on the part of some IR people that NSSE might challenge the comfortable status quo by making public institution-specific results. This prospect (which did not come to pass), coupled with NSSE's announced intention to send institutional reports directly to presidents, challenged the established assessment and IR norms and prompted chatter on listservs about me and NSSE.

In one posting, for example, someone likened me to the Darth Vader of higher education, about to violate the code and publicly embarrass institutions by posting their NSSE benchmark scores. Another commented, "Kuh used to be one of the good guys" (ostensibly referring to my work with the CSEQ), "but now he has gone over

the dark side…." Near the end of an animated conversation with several staff reporters at the offices of *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* I congenially recounted this listserv thread to those assembled, including the Darth Vader analogy. As soon as we got into the elevator, Bill looked at me and said, "Your Darth Vader line will be featured in the story tomorrow." And sure enough, it was. Ouch! But as Bill often would remind me, there (usually) is no such thing as bad publicity. NSSE and I got some every once in a while, but most of it was helpful to the cause.

My name will always (I hope) be associated with NSSE, and as I often say, there are lots of worse things to be called than "the NSSE guy." But NSSE is much bigger and more important than one person, and while I am willing to accept my share of plaudits for NSSE's accomplishments as well as criticisms for its shortcomings, whatever good the project has done is a function of many unusually talented, committed people who share a common belief in using data to help institutions improve the learning conditions for all students. So many outstanding people have worked and are working at NSSE that it is not fair to name some and not others. But I must mention one.

In the 1999 field test year that, as I said, constituted two trial runs, NSSE was staffed by me and a higher education doctoral student, John Hayek, who started out with a half-time appointment. We contracted with the CSR staff to implement the survey. Within a few months, John became a full-time staff member. His background was somewhat unusual in my experience for a higher education graduate student. Hayek's most recent prior work was with youth soccer in Florida, where he did a variety of things including marketing. This turned out to be very important, as it was second nature for John to be constantly thinking of ways to make NSSE visible, useful, and memorable, while I was concentrating on how to ensure data quality and legitimacy in the academic community. In retrospect, we were a strong, complimentary team for a start-up in higher education. More than anyone, John's entrepreneurial instincts were exactly what NSSE needed to prosper in the early years.

The NSSE Institute

While much energy and attention was devoted to implementing the annual national survey at the highest industry standards of quality, we also knew early on that we also had to invest effort in helping institutions use their results effectively. This was the primary reason we created the NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice in 2002. Since then, with ongoing leadership from Jillian Kinzie, the institute has engaged in a variety of projects and partnerships to help faculty, administrators, and governing board members effectively link information about student experiences and devise practical approaches to improve academic programs and support services. A second, practical reason we created the institute was to keep the budgetary lines clear between income derived from institutional participation fees and income from grants and contracts for research and consulting. For example, for internal bookkeeping purposes, the grant to support the DEEP initiative, which I will

describe later, and the royalties from its products are assigned to the institute, and this income is used to underwrite R&D activities, support staff and graduate student travel, and other activities consistent with the institute's mission.

The Occasional NSSE Migraine

While I have many fond memories of the NSSE days, some were not so pleasant. Perhaps in time I will put together a more complete account of the experience. For now, let me share a couple of challenging experiences with this large national project. One of the more time-consuming annual activities was securing approval by the Indiana University Institutional Review Board (IRB), the entity ensuring the protection of human subjects. On one level, obtaining approval was a relatively straightforward annual exercise; after all, completing the core NSSE survey was voluntary and the nature of the questions did not pose risks to respondents. But as NSSE grew in size and complexity, the IRB process became more complicated. Within a few years, NSSE was translated into Spanish and French (the latter for use with schools in Quebec, Canada), and every annual administration included several sets of consortium-specific questions as well as experimental questions dealing with various topics such as high-impact practices (Kuh, 2008) that were appended to the core survey for selected institutions.

One of the perennial challenges for most colleges and universities has been how to increase response rates. To address this matter, we asked several NSSE graduate research assistants to scour institutional websites and other sources to discover what institutions were doing in this regard. At some point, a long, unvetted list of such examples was posted to the NSSE website. This list of ideas (not all of them were things schools actually did) came to the attention of IU IRB in early 2006. One of the more questionable suggestions was to give those students who completed the NSSE preference for registering for classes the following academic term. This, the IRB determined, created a situation whereby students would feel coerced or compelled to do something against their will. Another suggestion was that institutions contacted potential respondents as many times as possible, which was in direct conflict with the IRB-approved limit of five total contacts.

Because these ideas and other questionable suggestions were on the NSSE site, it appeared that NSSE was endorsing these procedures. This was not our intention; in fact, it was an administrative oversight (mea culpa) that the list was posted without serious internal review. Another of the so-called irregularities the IRB found as it looked more closely at the NSSE website was a link to a poster used at a participating school announcing the survey on which the font size of the incentive to participate (raffle for a spring break plane ticket) was larger than the font used for the invitation script itself. These discoveries prompted the chair of the IRB on February 1, 2006, to instruct NSSE to immediately shut down the survey until these and other perceived irregularities could be thoroughly reviewed and addressed.

The directive to shut down the survey gave us a huge damage control problem, as it came about 3 days after invitations to participate were sent to about 900,000 students in the USA and Canada. Of course, we took responsibility for the lack of oversight as to what was on the NSSE website. A week or so later, after providing documentation that addressed, among other things, that the website had been corrected, we prevailed in a face-to-face meeting with the IRB executive committee and were allowed to reopen the survey. The font size dispute also was settled as something that was beyond NSSE's control.

Several weeks later in that same survey cycle, the IRB discovered that we had neglected to submit for review that year's invitation to participate translated into Spanish. We used the same letter as the previous year, but the one Puerto Rican university administering NSSE in this round made a few minor changes to the letter. My heart sank again when the IRB warned that this oversight could be reason to shut down the survey again. Fortunately, the IRB determined this to be a minor infraction that did not coerce students to complete the survey. However, to protect all parties, we were instructed to remove this school's data from the national norms and could not use its results for research purposes. We were happy to comply!

I was teaching my campus cultures seminar that spring term and have vivid, not-so-pleasant recollections of checking my BlackBerry during breaks from class only to discover another disconcerting missive from the IRB about one thing or another. Needless to say, it was hard to concentrate on class discussions in the second half of that weekly seminar meeting!

A Word About NSSE's Contributions to the Literature

On a happier note, the NSSE database made it possible to examine some aspects of the undergraduate experience about which a fuller understanding was needed. How to increase educational attainment, especially by historically underrepresented groups, was getting more attention from the federal government; business and industry leaders and philanthropic organizations also had signaled their keen interest in this and related areas. NSSE conducted some studies linking student engagement data with persistence and other records of student performance such as transcripts, from which we learned more about the nature of the conditional and compensatory relationships between student engagement and desired college outcomes (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2007). Other researchers were finding similar patterns of findings (Cruce, Wolniak, Seifert, & Pascarella, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

One unexpected finding was the unusually powerful effects of participating in what are now widely referred to as high-impact practices (Kuh, 2008). On a hunch, I asked the crack NSSE analyst team to begin looking at the relationships between engagement (including an experimental deep learning scale), self-reported outcomes, and some of the items that made up the enriching educational experiences benchmark. Of particular interest to me were activities such as learning communities, study-abroad,

and student-faculty research, as the literature about these experiences was on the whole quite promising, and it seemed to me that when implemented well, these experiences would be highly engaging. Sure enough, students who reported doing one of these were much more likely to participate in the effective educational practices measured by NSSE, and they also reported gaining more from their college experiences than their peers without these experiences. These findings prompted the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) to poll other researchers looking at similar questions. This work ultimately led to AAC&U listing ten high-impact practices in its 2007 report for the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007). Others have subsequently found similar patterns of results (Blaich, 2009; Brownell & Swaner, 2010). Additional evidence is coming forth from several California State University campuses (K. O'Donnell, personal communication, May 25, 2012) that participating in these kinds of activities also is related to persistence, with students of color being slightly advantaged in terms of the compensatory bump they receive from taking part in one or more of them.

Leaving NSSE

My departure from NSSE in 2008 was long planned and was triggered primarily by stipulations that applied to me in IU's retirement program. In short, I could not activate the monetary payout IU owed me once retired and also receive income from IU or any state agency if I retired. For this reason, despite my strong attachment and identification with NSSE, I knew when overseeing the project and related efforts had to become someone else's responsibility. The NSSE board along with my colleagues in the IU higher education program conducted a national search that brought Alex McCormick to the helm, a wise decision, indeed.

The Center for Postsecondary Research

One of the more important contributions of the NSSE project to Indiana University and its higher education graduate program was the formal approval by the IU trustees of the establishment in 2003 of the Center for Postsecondary Research (CPR). Some of the better known graduate programs in higher education are affiliated with a research center, and in the 1980s, my good IU colleague, Don Hossler, and I began to talk about the viability of creating such a center. We were unable at that time to persuade IU to commit resources to such an entity.

After the CSEQ was transferred from UCLA to IU, we had an ongoing line of income-producing activity, but the CSEQ revenues could underwrite little more than the project annual operating costs and a graduate student's compensation package. After NSSE was up and running, we needed space, clerical support staff, and other infrastructure. The infrastructure needs intensified as other projects came

on line, such as the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), the Beginning College Student Survey of Engagement (BCSSE), and the Law School Student Survey of Engagement (LSSSE). FSSE and LSSSE warrant brief mention, as neither was on our radar screen when NSSE began.

The idea for FSSE came from Robert Smallwood, who was a faculty member and assessment director at what was then Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University). Bob took an early interest in NSSE; in fact, his institution was one of the schools in the first NSSE field test. He also hosted the first NSSE workshops in San Marcos. In fact, it was at one of these early workshops that the dean of the college of arts and sciences there, referring to NSSE, declared, “Now, we finally have a test worth teaching to!” Her point was that NSSE was a tool focused on the student and institutional behaviors that mattered to learning. The events Bob organized further convinced him that if we could adapt a version of NSSE for faculty members, the engagement constructs and language would be easier to communicate and over time would cultivate more faculty interest and enthusiasm for the work. With a nod of approval from me, Bob helped create that beta version—with assistance from NSSE staff, one of whom was Judy Ouimet, who later left NSSE to help the CCSSE staff during its start-up years.

Surprisingly, the idea for LSSSE came up immediately following a brief presentation about NSSE at the December 2000 meeting of the American Council of Education Secretariat, the group of Washington-based higher education associations. Carl Monk, then-executive director of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS), followed Russ Edgerton and me out of the room and asked if the engagement ideas would apply to law school education. The seed was planted, but the NSSE board discouraged doing anything in the near term, as we needed to focus on establishing NSSE and its brand. There also was early interest expressed to adapt NSSE for other use in other countries. Here, too, the NSSE board was quite direct about avoiding such entanglements, although it approved some small-scale trials as part of other projects and the use of licensing arrangements, which is how the Australian and South African adaptations were originally handled. The NSSE board was, as always, correct; we had a tiger by the tail and more than enough to do.

However, a NSSE graduate research assistant pursuing a J.D./Ph.D. degree, Patrick O’Day, was enamored with the idea of a law school student engagement tool and mentioned it to some IU law school faculty. Within days, the then-dean of the law school, Lauren Robel, was ready to administer a law school student engagement survey; the only problem was we had not yet developed it! Several months later, after consultations with IU law faculty and staff, we administered to IU law students the beta version of what became LSSSE. The IU law school is one of the schools that have administered the instrument every year since. My successor as LSSSE director, Carol Silver, an IU law professor, took over the project in the summer of 2010. By 2012, 178 accredited law schools in the USA (82% of the total) had used LSSSE at least once, and LSSSE, like FSSE, has been self-supporting since its inception. LSSSE participants have included few top-tier law schools, however, a phenomenon also experienced by NSSE, as only a very small number of institutions in the Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE) have participated in the undergraduate student

engagement survey. COFHE member schools have their own student experiences questionnaire that includes many items similar to those on NSSE. Apparently, worry persists that if comparative data were available, the most selective institutions in the country would not always come out on top on engagement indicators, something that Ernie Pascarella and I pointed out in our article in *Change* (2004).

I mention the growth of FSSE and LSSSE to illustrate that CPR had to establish an infrastructure sufficient to support multiple continuing cost-recovery projects as well as other funded work, of which there has been a substantial amount. According to Marilyn Gregory, the CPR business and finance manager, between 1999 and spring 2012, CPR generated just over $52,000,000 in the form of external grants and contracts and institutional participation fees for its various national projects. All this was accomplished without any budgetary investment by Indiana University, other than the $15,000 loan, which we repaid, to move the CSEQ from UCLA to Indiana and expenses for some project space as part of negotiated overhead cost agreements between the university and funding agencies.

My Work on Student Success

Creative swiping is commonplace among industry leaders and even start-ups in the for-profit sector (Peters, 1987). My sense is that over the past decade, faculty and certainly staff have become more willing to do something similar, especially if they see what people at other institutions like their own are doing to make progress. I don't mean to say that people will adopt the same practices willy-nilly, without critical analysis and more than a little tinkering. But at least their willingness to entertain different approaches and models seems to have increased. Within a few years, the NSSE database and the number of participating institutions were robust enough so that outliers—colleges and universities that were more "engaging" than their peers—began to become evident. Our sense was that the field could benefit from learning more about what these high-performing schools were doing to foster student engagement and success. Thus was born the idea for the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) study.

We revisited the case study methodology used in the College Experiences Study (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991), fine-tuned it to match the DEEP research purposes and questions (Kinzie et al., 2006), and together with Barbara Cambridge, who was then at AAHE, pitched the idea to Lumina Foundation for Education in the spring of 2002. The response was favorable. Jillian Kinzie, John Schuh, Liz Whitt, and I then invited 23 additional people to join the research team. Several of these colleagues were affiliated with Wabash College, which is not the first place one might look to staff a project like this. The back story is that I had met Andy Ford, then-president of Wabash College, at a meeting hosted by the Council for the Advancement of Education, which was contemplating launching a new measure of generic skills now known as the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). Andy told me that Wabash had just received $20 million dollars from the Lilly Endowment to create a Center of

Inquiry in the Liberal Arts, which was to be both a facility where people interested in the liberal arts could come together to discuss and study related issues as well as a programmatic effort to examine issues affecting the liberal arts. Constructing a building was something Andy and Wabash had experience with. Creating a research and development operation was far less familiar territory for them.

After a few more discussions during which I described my plans for the DEEP project, Andy suggested that the not-yet-established Wabash Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts (CILA) might be willing to join partners with the DEEP research team, provided that several Wabash College faculty or CILA research fellows could participate in the field work by visiting institutions and participating in research team meetings. This way, Wabash CILA staff would get some firsthand experience with higher education research and the DEEP project would get some additional resources. We drafted a memorandum of understanding between Wabash and IU's CPR to formalize the relationship and outline the work. The link between Wabash and CPR was then and remains win-win.

One of the Wabash faculty members who joined the DEEP research team is Charlie Blaich, who was at the time an assistant professor of psychology. He has since acquired considerable expertise in the assessment arena and is CILA's director of inquiries as well as one of the principal investigators for the Wabash National Study, a multiyear, multiple-institution, longitudinal research project examining the effects of liberal arts education on student outcomes. The seeds for the Wabash National Study were sown during a meeting I helped Andy Ford organize at Wabash in the summer of 2002. The purpose of the meeting was to bring together some of the best higher education scholars to generate a possible agenda for CILA, and I extended invitations on behalf of Wabash. My recollection is that about 20 people participated, including Ernie Pascarella, Marcia Baxter Magolda, and Patricia King, all of whom at one time or another worked on the Wabash National Study.

The DEEP research team was a very productive, congenial, highly skilled, and experienced group. The major book (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005) and other DEEP publications were well received; equally important, the work has had "legs," in that we still get invitations to visit campuses to talk about the implications of our findings for local applications. Part of the staying power of the DEEP work is that we were asked by the publisher, Jossey-Bass, to consider updating the findings, which we did (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2010), and we also reported in several other places (e.g., Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2011). The DEEP work in combination with another Lumina-funded project, Building Engagement and Attainment of Minority Students (BEAMS), managed by AAHE with NSSE staff participation (Bridges, Cambridge, Kuh, & Leegwater, 2005), put student success at the center of my work, which continues today.

Another activity that further deepened my focus on student success was a contract from the National Postsecondary Education Compact (NPEC) to do an extensive review of the literature related to student success. My research group at CPR was one of five funded to do this work, which subsequently comprised the featured presentations at a 2007 invitational symposium on student success, attended by about 700 people, in Washington, DC. The then-secretary of education, Margaret

Spellings, welcomed those assembled, who devoted 2 days to the dialogue. To my mind, these papers (http://nces.ed.gov/npec/papers.asp) are among the richest, most comprehensive sources of what research shows about fostering student success in postsecondary education. For reasons I still do not understand, little was done to publicize or disseminate this work more broadly. My team published an abbreviated version of its report as an ASHE research report (Kuh et al., 2007).

The Post-NSSE Years

I had a pretty good life and career before NSSE and am happy to say that it continues today. In fact, although, as I write this, I have been officially retired from IU for 2 years, I continue to be (intentionally) busy with various activities including a couple of projects that began to unfold in my last few years at Indiana.

SNAAP and Alumni Surveys

Sometime in 2006, I took a call from Ellen Rudolph, at the Surdna Foundation, who asked me some questions about NSSE and then described a project she and some arts education leaders were discussing that would involve surveying graduates of arts intensive training programs about their careers and lives. The project had little interest to me at the time, in large part because I don't know much about arts education and was also quite busy with other activities. Some months later, a consulting firm working for Surdna contacted me. Its task was to identify an organization with the capacity to develop, launch, and sustain a self-supporting alumni survey. We agreed to host the group in Bloomington to answer their questions and provide advice.

Several months later, Ellen Rudolph called again and said—insisted, really—that I and CPR had to do this work. She explained that IU's CPR met or exceeded every criterion they had in mind; our NSSE track record among other things made us the unanimous recommendation of the consultant. I remained skeptical, even dubious. Once again, for advice I turned to my trusted colleague and coconspirator, John Kennedy, at CSR. He and his survey research team would be key to whatever this alumni survey project would become. After hemming and hawing for a few days, I put the question directly to John: "Do you really want to do this?" A moment later he replied in his soft but firm voice, "Well, I think it will be interesting…." And that's how I got involved with the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, or SNAAP. At points in the questionnaire development and field testing phases that presented an especially difficult challenge, and there were many, I would turn to John and ask him if the project was still "interesting." After a while, I would just look at him at such times and he would simply nod and smile, to acknowledge and answer my question.

SNAAP is an annual online survey, data management, and institutional improvement system designed to enhance the impact of arts school education. It was originally

called the "Surdna National Arts Alumni Project," but we knew Surdna could not be in the project title as it would discourage other funders from participating. "Strategic" was the only "S word" that seemed plausible. To my knowledge, the 56,000 graduates from 239 different high schools, colleges, and universities that have participated through the summer of 2012 make up the single largest database on the educational backgrounds and careers of graduates of arts intensive training programs.

The SNAAP project presented a significant learning curve to me, knowing little about arts education. I earned three degrees but never even had an art appreciation class. In another important way, SNAAP has brought me full circle, in that my dissertation research involved alumni. And in the few years prior to SNAAP, I have with increasing frequency pondered the need for a tool that would help determine how well college prepares graduates for their lives and careers afterward.

Almost every college or university administers an alumni survey, but these are typically about satisfaction with the undergraduate experience and postcollege activities and involvements, such as jobs held and community service. There are a handful of multiple-institution and dozens of single-institution studies of alumni about the extent to which the developmental changes in values and interests associated with college attendance persisted, were accentuated, or regressed after graduation. Neither the instruments used by individual institutions nor those currently available from vendors or affinity groups systematically attempt to determine the extent to which the college experience provided what the graduates say they need to know and be able to do to effectively manage postcollege challenges. Such information is especially important, given the contingent economy recent college graduates must contend with, in which holding multiple jobs for fixed periods of time is becoming commonplace and a premium is placed on entrepreneurial skills. While narrow training in a specialized area may be suitable for some, over the long haul, the majority of graduates of postsecondary programs will need cognitive flexibility, inventiveness, design thinking, and nonroutine approaches to address the messy problems in managing rapidly changing and unpredictable global forces—the kinds of outcomes emphasized in the AAC&U LEAP initiative and more recently operationalized in Lumina's Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP).

To state the problem plainly: How well does college-level learning today match what graduates need to know and be able to do to survive and thrive in the twenty-first century? Answers to this general question have important implications and applications:

- First, colleges and universities can use information from recent graduates to modify curricular and cocurricular offerings.
- Second, the data can be used to establish baseline and comparative information for individual institutions to track the quality of preparation of different alumni cohorts over time. Such results would be of interest to governing boards, school leaders, and faculty and staff in determining whether the institution is providing its graduates what it promised and what graduates need.
- Third, the findings from scores of institutions could be used to estimate and compare sector performance in response to calls for accountability and transparency.
- Fourth, accreditors and others responsible for quality assurance could incorporate individual institutional results as part of their oversight and due diligence.

- Fifth, state and federal policy makers and government officials could use the information to justify decisions about resource allocation.
- Sixth, business leaders and policy makers could use the information to determine whether higher education is providing the nature and quality of learning needed for various local, regional, and national sectors to remain economically competitive.
- Seventh, researchers can use the results combined with collegiate achievement measures (e.g., grades, tests, performance appraisals) to determine the validity and utility of these achievement measures.

One promising approach I have pitched to funders, albeit unsuccessfully, is to develop a scenario-based questionnaire administered via the Internet to recent 2- and 4-year degree recipients to determine how well they are prepared to survive and thrive in the twenty-first-century economy. The focus on recent graduates is preferred for two reasons. First, the more recent the college experience, the more accurate respondents will likely be in terms of attributing knowledge, skills, and abilities to what they learned in college or later. Second, faculty and staff will likely find more useful information from recent graduates, as these alumni experienced the existing curriculum as contrasted with graduates who finished a decade or more earlier. The animating feature of the tool could be a series of scenarios that ask respondents how well their postsecondary experience prepared them to effectively perform the task outlined in the scenario, with the response format a rubric-like adaptation of the skill and ability levels demanded by the scenario.

Such a project must address and overcome significant challenges, one of which is obtaining accurate email addresses for graduates from participating schools. In my SNAAP project, we contract with a "people finder" vendor, Harris Connect, which can add on average another 15% or so graduates with accurate email contacts to the institution's database. Another challenge is motivating alumni respondents to put forth the effort needed to give us confidence in the validity of the results. A similar challenge holds for exiting senior tests like the Collegiate Learning Assessment—that of encouraging respondents to try hard to represent their best work.

The kind of tool I envision remains elusive, perhaps impossible to develop and administer so that the results are meaningful and useful. Perhaps someone more creative than I will do so. We can hope.

NILOA

Assessment of student learning outcomes continues to occupy my time and mind these days in large part because of my work with the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA). In November, 2007, just after the release of that year's NSSE annual report (my last), Stan Ikenberry contacted me to talk about a symposium idea which might lead to a monograph about the current state of learning outcomes assessment. During several more conversations, we began to flesh out our respective conceptions of what the field needed at this moment in time. We agreed on

the need for an independent, objective authority that would promote promising assessment practices and help colleges and universities respond to legitimate public interests for transparency and accountability. Before embarking on the "good ship" NILOA, I did not know Stan Ikenberry well, having been with him on only two occasions I could recall. But working with him over the last 4 years has been a career highlight. He is among the wisest and kindest people I have ever met.

In early 2008, Stan and I began talking with foundations for the resources required to create an entity that would track and support the progress of colleges and universities as they respond to calls for greater attention to the assessment of learning outcomes. Lumina Foundation for Education provided a leadership grant, which helped leverage interest and ultimately support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York as well as the Teagle Foundation. These investments ensured 3 years of effort, and we hit the ground running by establishing a national advisory panel made up of higher education association leaders, policy makers, some institutional executive-level personnel, and accreditors. Several months later, we had the skeleton of what would become a "go-to" continuously updated website chock full of resources (www.learningoutcomesassessment.org). Since then, we've conducted national surveys (e.g., Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009) and have produced a series of occasional papers, a monthly newsletter, and more.

A year into this work, just as we were hitting our stride, the University of Illinois—where NILOA is housed and I have a part-time appointment as adjunct professor—prevailed upon Stan to serve as interim president of the university after a series of disappointing revelations about institutional governance irregularities and other problems that had accrued over time. His absence from NILOA for a year was sorely felt by me but was essential for restoring faith in a great university. Fortunately, the team of graduate students at the University of Illinois and other good colleagues at Indiana and elsewhere working on NILOA did more than their share to pick up the slack.

Others will render their own judgments about our contributions, but apparently they have been good enough for us to secure another round of funding from Lumina starting in early 2012 for work related to its Degree Qualifications Profile. Teagle also renewed its commitment for us to among other things think through how to sustain assessment and improvement operations like NILOA and other entities with similar goals. Happily, the University of Illinois has also invested in this work, ensuring that NILOA will be around for a few more years at least. And there is plenty left to do.

One of the more challenging objectives is—if possible—to reconcile the tensions between doing assessment to produce evidence of student learning in response to accountability demands and doing assessment to generate information that faculty, staff, and others can use to modify the curriculum and other learning experiences that will result in enhanced student performance. This is more than an intellectual exercise, as some faculty members view the accountability function of assessment as a threat to their autonomy, fearing that student learning outcomes results will be used to evaluate their performance and will affect their salary or other aspects of their work life. These views can dampen the enthusiasm of those faculty who are involved in assessment in their own courses and programs. Peter Ewell's extensive writing on this topic includes a NILOA Occasional Paper (Ewell, 2009).

In addition, I worry that our efforts to demonstrate accountability are not responding in a meaningful way to what the public wants from us. A recent report sponsored by the Kettering Foundation (Johnson, Rochkind, & DuPont, 2011) concluded that, when it comes to accountability, the public has little interest in seeing dense displays of data; moreover, they know that data can be manipulated to support conflicting conclusions. Rather, what the public wants are assurances that societal institutions including colleges and universities are doing what they are funded to do and that their performance reports are understandable and trustworthy. If reclaiming the public trust is the goal, then what we present as evidence of student attainment and how we report it may have to differ from the approaches we take to communicate to internal decision makers, accreditors, and state oversight bodies.

Another major challenge that must be addressed is to create approaches that enable a campus to roll up and summarize what it knows about student performance from information collected at the program level and represent this work at the institution level. In the current environment, colleges and universities are limited in terms of what they present as evidence of student learning by posting the results from a standardized test, such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP), and the ETS Proficiency Profile (formerly MAPP). A healthy debate is under way about the relative value of these and other standardized measures of institutional performance, especially those that purport to represent general knowledge and skills such as critical thinking and analytical reasoning. The limitations of such measures are well known. For example, many faculty members do not believe standardized tests adequately account for many of the outcomes that they and the institution are attempting to cultivate in their students or are not sensitive to certain outcomes emphasized in different major fields. Equally important, because of sampling limitations (with results from a small number of students representing the entire institution), faculty members understandably have difficulty identifying what they might do personally or as a program to improve student learning. Finally, most of the assessment work that has meaning to both students and faculty—artifacts of authentic student performance such as writing samples and other performance-based demonstrations—is collected at the program level. And it is at the program level that innovations in teaching and learning take root.

What we need is an institutional process that produces representative samples of authentic student work collected at the program level and arrays it as a summary of institutional performance. And all this must be communicated in language understandable to the layperson. We set forth some of these ideas in NILOA's evaluation of the Voluntary System of Accountability's College Profile (Jankowski et al., 2012). Time will tell if the field steps up to the challenge.

A Word About International Work

Thanks to my work on campus cultures, student engagement, and assessment, I've traveled to different parts of the world to speak and consult—Australia, China,

Germany, Lebanon, and South Africa, to name a few. Our neighbor to the north, Canada, warmed early to the student engagement premise, and institutions in every province have used NSSE. As a result, I've spoken at one or more institutions in five provinces, from Nova Scotia to British Columbia. And after some trips that were not business related, such as to Scandinavia (Kuh, 1979b) or as a trailing spouse to Japan (Kuh & Nuss, 1986), I wrote articles on some facet of the higher education system where we visited.

Colleagues who have traveled abroad know firsthand that learning about student experiences and how universities and curricula are organized and delivered makes one more sensitive to the strengths and limitations of campus life in the USA. I am grateful for these opportunities and always feel that I benefit more from spending time at a foreign university than I give in knowledge or expertise while there.

Final Reflections

I continue to be amused by faculty members who say students today are nothing like their predecessors of two or more decades ago in terms of preparation, ability, and motivation. Faculty wistfully believe that students of yesteryear were more intellectually engaged and wanted more from college than simply tickets for a comfortable life. Are such recollections accurate? It does not seem to hold for the 1940s and 1950s (Jacob, 1957). Here's what Norman Cousins wrote about undergraduates in 1960:

> The distance [has seldom been greater] between the interested and the disinterested, between the intellectually curious and the routine, between the concerned and the detached…. [Some] follow national and world affairs with genuine concern; they seem to be able to distinguish between good and poor sources of information; they know how and what to read…. They seem alert, alive, responsible. But the melancholy fact is that they tend to be few in number, very few, and the drop to the others is almost precipitous…. Most … have a mechanistic view of college. The purpose seems to be to get out of school as uneventfully and expeditiously as possible, rather than to get out of it the most that is possible…. Grades are … purely utilitarian…. They lead to … good jobs. (p. 22)

Taken together, these depictions coupled with the historian Fredrick Rudolph's (1990) report that first-year students at Harvard in 1890 studied on average less than 10-hours per week suggest that what college students today do and get from higher education may not be all that different from many previous cohorts. Of course, we can and should do better.

The major difference today is that the profession knows much more about effective educational practices. But the challenge remains the same: to use more of what we know works more of the time throughout the institution. In short, that's pretty much what my career has been about—identifying what makes for promising practices and helping institutions adapt them to the benefit of all students.

Woody Allen is credited for saying "80% of success is just showing up." Herman B Wells, Indiana University's beloved 11th president and chancellor, titled his autobiography, *Being Lucky*. No one would mistake me for either Allen or Wells, but I've been lucky to be in the right place at the right time in the company of many talented people. Because of them—wonderful teachers and administrators and colleagues at Luther College; challenging and supportive mentors and peers during my graduate studies at St. Cloud State University and the University of Iowa; terrific colleagues and career-friendly opportunities at Indiana University and later at the University of Illinois; inspirational administrators, faculty, and staff I've met at various higher education projects, meetings, and campuses; and a supportive family—because of these good people I've been able to do what I love for more than three decades with some measure of success.

My accomplishments are a function of devoting long hours to the work (which only on occasion seemed like "work," especially compared to the not-infrequent 12-hour days my father drove a tractor trailer). In retrospect, I think I was advantaged by a "maze bright" ability, a concept introduced to me by my first boss and longtime friend, George Wallman, who attributed it to Eugene Jennings, professor emeritus at Michigan State University. Jennings (1971) used the term maze bright to describe people who could quickly discern the norms of organizational cultures, which he likened to a maze. I use the term here to imply I was pretty good at that—along with being able to recognize, evaluate, and then take advantage of opportunities. Surely I missed some. Even so, those that I was able to convert into productive, satisfying activities were more than I could have wished for in terms of a professorial career and fulfilling life.

Contrary to what some of my colleagues must think, I consider myself attentive to interpersonal relations and group dynamics, including those in most of the classes I took and those I taught. And I was always sensitive to the fact that I was rarely—if ever (including in the classes I taught)—the smartest person in the room. I have recently finally realized that there are benefits to not being the smartest.

First, smart people tend to talk a lot, and when they do, I can listen. And I learn a lot more when I'm listening than when I'm talking (with apologies to the eminent social psychologist, Karl Weick, who once said, "How can I know what I really think until I hear myself say it?"). Sometimes I am deliberately quiet to allow others to express their views. But much of the time in the company of really smart people, I'm not sure I have anything worthwhile to contribute. That is, until someone says exactly what I was thinking and everyone seems to think it was brilliant. Oh well….

Second, by saying little and nodding on occasion (hopefully, at the right times), I can validate others and signal that their contributions are valued. This also can have the salutary effect of encouraging the less loquacious to talk. Yes, some people—not always the smartest ones in the room—often babble on without any encouragement from anybody. But that's another story.

Third, when I finally do say something, people are surprised and I can sense they are listening. That puts on a lot of pressure to say something meaningful. But the

ratio of meaning-to-minutes talk isn't very high generally, so others have the same problem as me—especially the big talkers!

Finally, because I've learned a lot from listening to smart people, I can go into different settings, draw on things I've heard, and sound smart myself.

It's a fact that a lot of people know more about some things than I do. It's also true that other people know at least something about more things than I do. And I've turned this realization into an advantage over the years. Early on, my modus operandi became surrounding myself with such smart people as I hired staff, assembled research teams, built a research center, and so forth.

There is, of course, a downside to hanging out with highly intelligent, skilled people. It's called intimidation, which can morph into the imposter syndrome—the sensation that everyone else present belongs; they know their stuff and were invited because of what they know or can do. They are a perfect fit for the task at hand. I, however, am a misfit. And I worry that when someone finds out I don't belong, I will be unceremoniously excused…. A nightmare!

The imposter syndrome is not unique to me, of course. Others have talked and written about it. One such circumstance from my professional life is enough to make the point. Recall that NSSE was one of the big ideas that Russ Edgerton had when he was the Pew education officer. Russ also subsequently chaired the NSSE board. I hung on Russ's every word in every conversation. In return, I felt he was always listening closely to every word I said—but in an evaluative manner. It was as if I was under the looking glass every time I spoke. There's more to say about this, of course—lots of examples. But a funny thing happened recently. I was with a person who worked with Russ many years earlier. As we reminisced about Russ and his imposing intellect and interpersonal style, she said something most surprising. She said Russ once told her that he always felt that everyone in the room was smarter than he was—much smarter. Wow! Imagine that!

Russ kindly gave me permission to tell this story on him so I could finally put to rest the worry that not being the smartest person in the room is a problem. And I must say, even though I didn't always understand the potential benefits of being surrounded by people smarter than I, it has been a definite career advantage.

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Chapter 2
Student Engagement: Bridging Research and Practice to Improve the Quality of Undergraduate Education

Alexander C. McCormick, Jillian Kinzie, and Robert M. Gonyea

Introduction

Engagement is in vogue. The term has proliferated widely in higher education, with civic engagement, community engagement, scholarship of engagement, and student engagement peppering the discourse. It has even penetrated the upper reaches of the organizational chart, with vice presidents, vice provosts, associate or assistant vice presidents and provosts, deans, and directors variously responsible for "engagement," "community engagement," "student engagement," and so on. But these various invocations of the term mean different things. Whereas civic and community engagement focus on the various ways that colleges and universities develop students' dispositions toward civic participation and advance the welfare of their surrounding communities (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011; Zlotkowski, 1997), student engagement refers to college students' exposure to and participation in a constellation of effective educational practices at colleges and universities (which may include practices that advance the civic and community engagement mission, such as service learning).[1] This chapter focuses on student engagement as a research-informed intervention to improve the quality of undergraduate education. We trace the emergence of the concept and its intellectual history; review measurement issues, empirical applications, and representative research findings; and provide illustrations of how student engagement connects to contemporary imperatives surrounding assessment and evidence-based improvement. We conclude with a discussion of challenges for student engagement and an assessment of what lies ahead for student engagement research and application.

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Although the term student engagement is new to higher education, having emerged in the late 1990s, the ideas that it encompasses have been around for several decades. Before tracing this background, it's useful to consider the context in which student engagement emerged as a framework for understanding, diagnosing, and improving the quality and effectiveness of undergraduate education. This is a story of the confluence of two streams: one involving increasing interest in so-called process indicators and the other related to mounting frustration with the dominant conception of college and university quality in the United States. This background is closely intertwined with the development of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and its counterpart, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE).

National Education Goals and the Use of "Process Indicators"

In 1989, President George H. W. Bush and the governors of the 50 states articulated a set of National Education Goals. The subsequent work of the National Education Goals Panel culminated in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1994. The legislation set forth eight goals for American education to achieve by the year 2000. Although most of the goals focused on elementary and secondary education, the goal related to adult literacy and lifelong learning specified that "the proportion of college graduates who demonstrate an advanced ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems will increase substantially." The sustained discussion of national goals created the need to monitor progress toward their achievement. As related by Peter Ewell (2010) in his account of NSSE's origins, "The implied promise to develop the metrics needed to track progress on these elusive qualities… stimulated thinking about how to examine them *indirectly* by looking at what institutions did to promote them" (p. 86). Ewell and his colleagues at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) produced a series of articles and reports proposing how "indicators of good practice" or "process indicators" might be productively deployed without the long delay and expense required to develop direct assessments of the outcomes set forth in the national goals (though they also endorsed the development of such assessments) (Ewell & Jones, 1993, 1996; National Center for Higher Education Management Systems [NCHEMS], 1994). Ewell and Jones (1993) also articulated the virtue of process measures for contextualizing what is learned from outcomes assessments, noting that "it makes little policy sense to collect outcomes information in the absence of information on key processes that are presumed to contribute to the result" (p. 125). Indeed, citing Astin's (1991) work on assessment in higher education, they asserted that "information on outcomes alone is virtually uninterpretable in the absence of information about key experiences" (p. 126). They suggested that process indicators related to good practices in undergraduate education have practical relevance, because their linkage to concrete activities offers guidance for interventions to promote improvement. In a report for the National Center for Education Statistics

on the feasibility of "good practice" indicators for undergraduate education, the NCHEMS team undertook a comprehensive review of the knowledge base and available information sources (NCHEMS, 1994). In the discussion of available surveys of current students, the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) surveys and the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) were identified as bearing on a number of dimensions of "instructional good practice."[2]

Kuh, Pace and Vesper (1997) implemented the process indicator approach using CSEQ data from a diverse sample of institutions and students. They created indicators to tap three of Chickering and Gamson's (1987) seven "principles for good practice in undergraduate education" (student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, and active learning) and examined their relationship to students' self-reported learning gains in general education, intellectual skills, and personal and social development. The researchers concluded that CSEQ items could be combined to produce indicators of good practice in undergraduate education and that these indicators showed positive and consistent relationships to self-reported learning outcomes. Although the term "student engagement" did not appear in the article, it offered proof of concept of the process indicator approach and foreshadowed the development of a survey designed explicitly to provide process measures related to good practice in undergraduate education.

Discontent with the National Discourse on College Quality

The other stream contributing to the emergence of student engagement as a framework for assessing educational quality emerged from mounting discontent over the dominant conception of "college quality" in the national mind-set. Beginning in the 1980s, the news magazine *U.S. News & World Report* began publishing annual lists that purported to identify "America's Best Colleges" through a numeric ranking. Although the rankings received extensive criticism from both inside and outside the academy, they proved popular with the general public and, it is widely believed, provided an important source of revenue for the magazine (McDonough, Antonio, Walpole, & Perez, 1998).[3] They also received the implied endorsement of highly ranked colleges and universities that boasted of their standing in their recruitment and promotional materials. (This number was larger than one might expect because the magazine's editors shrewdly split the rankings into subgroups, such that each *Best Colleges* issue provided multiple lists and multiple high performers—in "national" universities and liberal arts colleges, eight regional rankings, separate rankings for public universities, "best value" rankings, and so on.)

While the rankings have been subject to a variety of philosophical and methodological objections (e.g., see Gladwell, 2011; Graham & Thompson, 2001; Machung, 1998; Thacker, 2008; Thompson, 2000), an enduring complaint has been their emphasis on reputation and input measures to the exclusion of any serious treatment of teaching and learning. Indeed, the first issue of the rankings was based solely on a reputation survey sent to college and university presidents, and when the rankings

methodology was later expanded to include other criteria, it was specifically engineered to reproduce the conventional wisdom that the most elite institutions are, in fact, the best (Thompson, 2000). If the rankings were no more than an innocent parlor game, their shortcomings would not have raised much concern. But repeated reports of strategic action by institutional personnel to influence their placement[4] raised serious concerns about the rankings' indirect influence on matters of institutional policy and resource allocation (Ehrenberg, 2002).

To be sure, *U.S. News* was not alone in motivating perverse choices in the pursuit of higher ranking and prestige. Rankings and classifications based on research activity have been another source of status competition that can lead administrators to allocate more resources to schools and departments that bring in high-dollar-value grants and contracts. But *U.S. News* was the self-proclaimed national arbiter of college quality, and its ranking criteria explicitly rewarded a narrow, wealth- and selectivity-based conception of quality that gave short shrift to teaching and learning. All of this occurred at a time when US higher education was confronting a range of serious challenges: the price of four-year college attendance had been steadily rising faster than the rate of inflation, as federal financial aid programs came to rely more heavily on loans than grants; states were shifting proportionally more of the cost of public higher education to students and families; colleges and universities were engaged in an array of costly tactics to enroll the most desirable students, such as differential pricing (tuition discounting) and the so-called war of amenities; and college completion rates were stagnant at less than 60%.

It was in this context that the Pew Charitable Trusts undertook to fund the development and implementation of a survey project focused on process indicators related to educational effectiveness at bachelor's degree-granting colleges and universities and subsequently at community colleges.[5] A fundamental design principle was that the survey would be heavily focused on behavioral and environmental factors shown by prior research to be related to desired college outcomes. About two-thirds of the original survey's questions were drawn or adapted from the CSEQ (Kuh, 2009).

NSSE's founding director, George Kuh, promoted the concept of student engagement as an important factor in student success and thus a more legitimate indicator of educational quality than rankings based on inputs and reputation. He described student engagement as a family of constructs that measure the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities—activities that matter to learning and student success (Kuh, n.d.). From the outset, then, student engagement was closely tied to purposes of institutional diagnosis and improvement, as well as the broader purpose of reframing the public understanding of college quality. But it was also explicitly linked to a long tradition of prior theory and research, as we describe in the next section. Thus the concept of student engagement and the two university-based research and service projects organized around it, NSSE and CCSSE, represent an attempt to bridge the worlds of academic research and professional practice—to bring long-standing conceptual and empirical work on college student learning and development to bear on urgent practical matters of higher education assessment and improvement. We now turn to the intellectual heritage of student engagement.

The Conceptual Lineage of Student Engagement

Student engagement is not a unitary construct. Rather, it is an umbrella term for a family of ideas rooted in research on college students and how their college experiences affect their learning and development. It includes both the extent to which students participate in educationally effective activities as well as their perceptions of facets of the institutional environment that support their learning and development (Kuh, 2001, 2009). Central to the conceptualization of engagement is its focus on activities and experiences that have been empirically linked to desired college outcomes. These influences go back to the 1930s and span the fields of psychology, sociology, cognitive development, and learning theory, as well as a long tradition of college impact research. The concept also incorporates contributions from the field, in the form of practical evaluations of the college environment and the quality of student learning, pressure for institutions to be accountable for and to assess educational quality, concerns about student persistence and attainment, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

The historical roots of student engagement can be traced to studies in the 1930s by educational psychologist Ralph Tyler, who explored the relationship between secondary school curriculum requirements and subsequent college success. At The Ohio State University, Tyler was tasked with assisting faculty in improving their teaching and increasing student retention, and as part of this work, he designed a number of pathbreaking “service studies” including a report on how much time students spent on their academic work and its effects on learning (Merwin, 1969). Joining C. Robert Pace and other noted scholars, Tyler contributed his expertise in educational evaluation and the study of higher education environments to the Social Science Research Council’s Committee on Personality Development in Youth (1957–1963), which furthered the study of college outcomes by turning attention to the total college environment. The committee concluded that outcomes do not result from courses exclusively, but rather from the full panoply of college life (Pace, 1998). This focus on both student and environmental factors related to college success became an important area of study for Pace, who went on to develop a number of questionnaires for students to report on the college environment. Pace’s studies of college environments documented the influence of student and academic subcultures, programs, policies, and facilities, among other factors, and how they vary among colleges and universities.

Tyler’s early work showing the positive effects on learning of time on task was explored more fully by Pace (1980) who showed that the “quality of effort” students invest in taking advantage of the facilities and opportunities a college provides is a central factor accounting for student success. He argued that because education is both process and product, it is important to measure the quality of the processes, and he used the term quality of effort to emphasize the importance of student agency in producing educational outcomes. In recollecting the development of these ideas, he wrote:

> We have typically thought of educational processes in terms of what they contribute to the product; but we know that some processes are qualitatively better than others, just as some products are better than others, so perhaps we should give more thought to measuring the

> quality of the processes. One motivation for my desire to measure student effort was the recurring rhetoric about accountability that always blamed the institution for outcomes… This assumes that the student is buying a product when actually the student, at a later point in time, is the product. So, the other side of accountability is the quality of effort students invest in using the facilities and opportunities the college provides. (Pace, 1998, p. 28)

Pace's instrument, the CSEQ, was created with substantial conceptual backing to operationalize "student effort," defined as a straightforward measure of facility use so that students "would immediately know whether they had engaged in the activity and about how often" (Pace, 1998, p. 29). The quality of effort construct rested on the assertion that the more a student is meaningfully engaged in an academic task, the more he or she will learn. Pace found that students gained more from their college experience when they invested more time and effort in educationally purposeful tasks such as studying, interacting with peers and faculty about substantive matters, and applying what they are learning to concrete situations. Importantly, he distinguished quality of effort from motivation, initiative, or persistence. Although it incorporates these elements, it takes place within a specific educational context, and its strength depends on the context.

Student engagement is also rooted in the work of Alexander Astin (1984) who articulated a developmental theory for college students focused on the concept of involvement, or "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 297), and that what students gain from the college experience is proportional to their involvement. This involvement can be academic, social, or extracurricular. Astin hypothesized that the more involved the student is, the more successful he or she will be in college. He acknowledged that the concept of involvement resembles that of motivation, but distinguished between the two, arguing that motivation is a psychological state while involvement connotes behavior. These key ideas of time on task, quality of effort, and involvement all contribute to the conceptualization of student engagement.

Both Pace (1969, 1980) and Astin (1970, 1984) emphasized the important role of the college environment and what the institution does or fails to do to in relation to student effort and involvement. In contrast to models of college impact that viewed the student as a passive subject, Pace (1964, 1982) conceived of the student as an active participant in his or her own learning and that one of the most important determinants of student success is the active participation of the student by taking advantage of a campus's educational resources and opportunities. Pace (1998) characterized his work as an examination of relationships in their "natural setting," between environments and attainment, effort and outcomes, and patterns of college students' activities and institutional influences. Astin (1984) further articulated the vital role of the institution, in stating that the "effectiveness of any educational practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase involvement" (p. 298).

Another root in the student engagement family tree is Tinto's concept of integration. The term integration refers to the extent to which a student (a) comes to share the attitudes and beliefs of peers and faculty and (b) adheres to the structural rules and requirements of the institution (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto,

1975, 1993). Tinto (1975, 1993) proposed his theory of academic and social integration to explain voluntary student departure from an institution. He defined integration with regard to a student's social and academic connection to the campus. Social integration refers to a student's perceptions of interactions with peers, faculty, and staff at the institution as well as involvement in extracurricular activities. Academic integration refers to a student's academic performance, compliance with explicit standards of the college or university, and identification with academic norms. Tinto's was one of the first theories that viewed voluntary departure as involving not just the student but also the institution. Described as an "interactionist" theory because it considers both the person and the institution, Tinto (1986) shifted responsibility for attrition from resting solely with the individual student and his or her personal situation to include institutional influences. Informed by Tinto's work, student engagement incorporates a student's interactions with peers and faculty and the extent to which the student makes use of academic resources and feels supported at the institution.

Pascarella's (1985) "general causal model for assessing the effects of differential college environments on student learning and cognitive development," or more simply, the general causal model, expanded on Tinto's work by incorporating institutional characteristics and quality of student effort and by linking to more outcomes than retention. Pascarella theorized that students' precollege traits correlate with institutional types and that both of these influence the institutional environment and interactions with agents of socialization, such as faculty members, key administrators, and peers. Pascarella also acknowledged that student background has a direct effect on learning and cognitive development, beyond the intervening variables. By including quality of student effort, Pascarella affirmed Pace's (1984) notion that students' active participation in their learning and development is vital to learning outcomes. Pascarella viewed quality of effort as influenced by student background and precollege traits, by the institutional environment, and by interactions with agents of socialization. Tinto's and Pascarella's emphases on students' interactions with their institution and on institutional values, norms, and behaviors provide the basis for the environmental dimensions of student engagement.

Both Astin's (1985) input-environment-output model, or I-E-O model, and Pascarella's general causal model have been used in student engagement research (see Pike, 1999, 2000; Pike & Killian, 2001; Pike, Kuh, & Gonyea, 2007). Pike and Kuh (2005a) employed elements of Astin's I-E-O model of college effects and Pascarella's causal model as conceptual frames to examine how the college experiences of first- and second-generation college students affect their learning and intellectual development.

In *The Impact of College on Students* (1969), Feldman and Newcomb synthesized some four decades of findings from more than 1,500 studies of the influence of college on students. Subsequent reviews by Bowen (1977), Pace (1979), and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005) synthesized research on college students and collegiate institutions from the mid-1920s to the early twenty-first century. One unequivocal conclusion, wholly consistent with Pace's and Astin's work, is that the impact of college on learning and development is largely determined by individuals' quality of

effort and level of involvement in both the curricular and cocurricular offerings on a campus. Rather than being mere passive recipients of college environmental effects, students share responsibility for the impact of their own college experience.

The literature on effective teaching and learning also contributes to the conceptualization of student engagement. In setting forth a set of principles of good practice in undergraduate education, Chickering and Gamson (1987) provided a concise summary of 50 years of educational research about teaching and learning activities most likely to contribute to learning outcomes. This concise piece—only four pages of text—has had a notable impact on how educational effectiveness is understood and promoted in higher education. In a footnote, the authors acknowledge the assistance of a virtual Who's Who of higher education research and policy, including Alexander Astin, Howard Bowen, Patricia Cross, Kenneth Eble, Russell Edgerton, Jerry Gaff, C. Robert Pace, and Marvin Peterson. Chickering and Gamson distilled the research into seven lessons for good teaching and learning in colleges and universities, including (1) student-faculty contact, (2) cooperation among students, (3) active learning, (4) providing prompt feedback, (5) emphasizing time on task, (6) communicating high expectations, and (7) respecting diverse talents and ways of learning. Chickering and Gamson's commonsense principles were intended to guide faculty members, administrators, and students, with support from state agencies and trustees, in their efforts to improve teaching and learning. They argued that while each practice can stand alone, when all are present their effects multiply, and that combined, they can exert a powerful force in undergraduate education. They also asserted the responsibility of educators and college and university leaders to foster an environment favorable to good practice in higher education. The principles emphasize the responsibility of leaders and educators to ensure that students engage routinely in high levels of effective educational practice. Multivariate longitudinal analyses of these practices at a diverse group of 18 institutions have shown them to be related to cognitive development and several other positive outcomes, net of a host of control variables (Cruce, Wolniak, Seifert, & Pascarella, 2006).

Similarly, as part of their comprehensive reviews of research on college impact, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005) concluded that a range of pedagogical and programmatic interventions such as peer teaching, note-taking, active discussion, integration across courses, and effective teaching practices increase students' engagement in learning and academic work and thereby enhance their learning and development. In *How College Affects Students* (1991), the authors concluded that "the greater the student's involvement or engagement in academic work or in the academic experience of college, the greater his or her level of knowledge acquisition and general cognitive development" (p. 616).

Recent Developments

More recently, participation in "high-impact practices," activities such as learning communities, undergraduate research, and service learning, has proven to be a promising way to promote student engagement and help students achieve the learning

and personal development outcomes essential for the twenty-first century (Association of American Colleges and Universities [AAC&U], 2007; Kuh, 2008). High-impact practices make a claim on students' time and energy, in ways that may require close interaction with faculty or diverse others and that call upon students to apply their learning in novel situations, and they are correlated with deep approaches to learning (NSSE, 2007). Providing students with opportunities to apply and test what they are learning through problem solving with peers inside and outside the classroom, study abroad, internships, and capstone experiences helps students develop habits of the mind and heart that promise to stand them in good stead for a lifetime of continuous learning. For instance, Zhao and Kuh (2004) show that students who participated in a learning community were more engaged across the board in other educationally purposeful activities compared with their counterparts who had not participated in such a program. They interacted more with faculty and diverse peers, they studied more, and they reported a stronger emphasis in courses on higher-order cognitive activities such as synthesizing material and analyzing problems. They also reported gaining more from their college experience.

Over the last decade, educators have contributed to the understanding of student engagement from a pedagogical standpoint. For example, Barkley (2010) developed a classroom-based model for understanding student engagement that emphasizes engagement as both a process and product of the interaction between motivation and active learning. Scholars such as Kathleen Gabriel (2008) have explicated the value of engagement for teaching underprepared students. Other teaching and learning research (e.g., Ahlfeldt, Mehta, & Sellnow, 2005; Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, & Johnson, 2005) explored classroom-based pedagogies of engagement, particularly cooperative- and problem-based learning that enhance student involvement in learning, and urged faculty to consider how students engage in their college experience in both formal and informal ways. These examples of the intersection of the scholarship of teaching and learning with student engagement demonstrate the connection of student engagement to educational practice, as well as a commitment to improvement driven by classroom-based evidence and insights.

From the perspective of involvement, quality of effort, academic and social integration, as well as principles of good practice in undergraduate education, student engagement can be seen as encompassing the choices and commitments of students, of individual faculty members, and of entire institutions (or schools and colleges within larger decentralized institutions). Students' choices include their quality of effort and their involvement in educational experiences and activities (both inside and outside of class). They choose among courses or course sections, and they also make choices within their courses. In choosing courses, they may consider not just the course content, schedule, and what they know about the instructor but also the amount and type of work required. Once enrolled, they make decisions about how to allocate their effort. Students also make choices about whether and how to associate with their fellow students, be it through formal cocurricular activities or informally. The relevant choices and commitments of faculty and institutions, on the other hand, relate primarily to the principles for good practice in undergraduate education. Faculty members choose the learning activities and opportunities in their

courses, they convey their expectations to students, they decide on the nature and timing of feedback provided to students, they facilitate student learning outside of class through formal and informal means, and so on. Institutional leaders and staff establish norms and allocate resources to support student success. For example, library and student affairs professionals create supportive learning environments and provide programs, speakers, and events that enrich the undergraduate experience. Through their policies and practices, institutional leaders communicate shared norms and standards for students, faculty, and staff with regard to student challenge and support.

The intellectual heritage reviewed in this section establishes the conceptual understanding of college impact that undergirds student engagement as an agenda for both promoting student success and enriching the impoverished national discourse on college quality. It also demonstrates the linkage between student engagement and the world of practice, thereby connecting to contemporary reform movements such as the scholarship of teaching and learning. If individual effort is critical to learning and development, then it is essential for colleges and universities to shape experiences and environments so as to promote increased student involvement.

Measuring Student Engagement

From a conceptual standpoint, student engagement represents the blending of related theoretical traditions seeking to explain college students' learning, development, and success with a set of practical prescriptions for good practice in undergraduate education. The *measurement* of student engagement is rooted in both a long tradition of survey research in higher education and more recent calls for process indicators to assess progress toward national goals for undergraduate education. In this section, we discuss the measurement of student engagement by shifting the focus to two widely adopted surveys designed to assess college-level student engagement, the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement.

As the Director of Education for the Pew Charitable Trusts, Russ Edgerton (1997) proposed a grant project to improve higher education, focused on the belief that *what* students learn is affected by *how* they learn. Edgerton argued for "new pedagogies of engagement" to help students acquire the abilities and skills for the twenty-first century. Launched in 2000 with support from the Pew Trusts, NSSE is administered in the spring as either a sample- or census-based survey of first-year and senior students. With support from both the Pew Trusts and the Lumina Foundation, CCSSE was adapted from NSSE in 2001 to address the distinctive features and needs of community colleges and their students while preserving appropriate parallelism (Community College Survey of Student Engagement [CCSSE], 2010a, 2010b). Like NSSE, CCSSE is administered in the spring, but without limitation on a student's year in school, instead collecting information about the number of credit hours earned by each respondent.

Surveys provide a cost-effective way to learn directly from students about their experiences. But survey research confronts a number of challenges. First, respondents must elect to participate. Response rates represent an ongoing concern. As colleges and universities respond to calls to establish a "culture of evidence," students are increasingly asked to participate in a variety of surveys and standardized learning assessments. The advent of inexpensive and easy-to-use online survey tools effectively allows anyone to survey students, adding to the survey burden. Consequently, survey response rates are falling: NSSE's average institutional response rate has fallen by about 10 points since inception.

Having chosen to complete a survey, respondents must make a good-faith effort to respond with honesty and candor. Respondents need to understand the question being asked in a way that aligns with the survey designer's intent, to retrieve and process the information required to formulate an answer, and, in the case of a closed-ended survey like NSSE or CCSSE, to convert the answer to fit within the response frame (Tourangeau, Rips, & Rasinski, 2000). Citing prior research on self-reported data, Kuh et al. (2001) identify five conditions as conducive to the validity of self-reports, noting that the NSSE instrument was designed to meet them. The five conditions are the following:

> (1) the information requested is known to the respondents; (2) the questions are phrased clearly and unambiguously; (3) the questions refer to recent activities; (4) the respondents think the questions merit a serious and thoughtful response; and (5) answering the questions does not threaten, embarrass, or violate the privacy of the respondent or encourage the respondent to respond in socially desirable ways. (p. 9)

Survey Content

Student engagement incorporates both behavioral and perceptual components. The behavioral dimension includes how students use their time in- and outside of class (e.g., asking questions, collaborating with peers in learning activities, integrating ideas across courses, reading and writing, interacting with faculty) as well as how faculty members structure learning opportunities and provide feedback to students. Because beliefs and attitudes are antecedents to behavior (Bean & Eaton, 2000), perceptions of the campus environment are a critical piece in assessing a student's receptivity to learning. The perceptual dimension thus includes students' judgments about their relationships with peers, faculty, and staff; their beliefs that faculty members have high expectations of students; and their understanding of institutional norms surrounding academic activities and support for student success. Both dimensions were incorporated in the design of the NSSE and CCSSE surveys (Fig. 2.1). A key criterion in NSSE's design (and subsequently, that of CCSSE) was that the survey content would be selected based on prior empirical evidence of a relationship to student learning and development—research emerging from the conceptual traditions previously discussed (Ewell, 2010).[6]

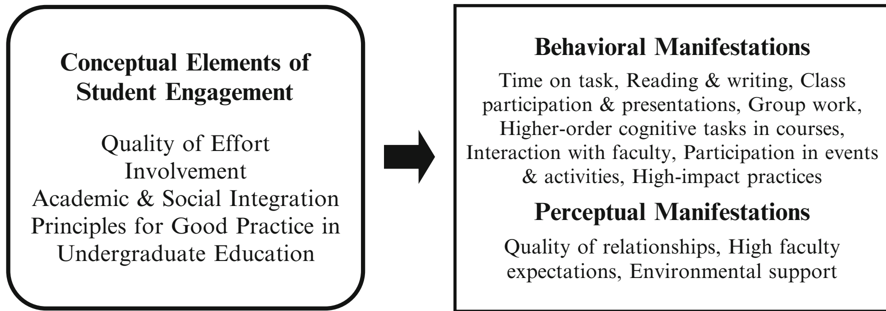

Fig. 2.1 Conceptual elements of student engagement and selected manifestations

Because of their strong emphasis on student *behavior*, surveys of student engagement differ markedly from widely used surveys of college students that examine their values and attitudes or their satisfaction with the college experience. The focus on behavior is both concrete and actionable: when results fall short of what is desired, the behavioral measures suggest avenues of intervention. For illustration purposes, Table 2.1 presents selected NSSE questions assessing active and collaborative learning activities, prompt feedback from faculty, faculty expectations, amount of reading and writing, time devoted to class preparation, quality of campus relationships, and perceived institutional emphases. (The full survey instrument may be viewed at nsse.iub.edu/links/surveys; some questions have been modified for an updated version of the survey launching in 2013).

Another noteworthy feature of NSSE and CCSSE is uniform, centralized administration procedures: sampling, invitation messages, follow-up messages to nonrespondents (NSSE only), data file creation, and tabulation of results are all managed centrally.[7] This uniformity of procedures ensures the comparability of results across institutions, which is related to another design principle for these surveys: results should provide participating institutions a suitable context for interpreting their results. Comparability of results across institutions means that faculty and administrators at participating institutions can interpret their student engagement findings relative to a meaningful comparison group and also make meaningful internal comparisons (e.g., among different schools or colleges within a university).

NSSE and CCSSE Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

The effort to focus the attention of campus leaders and faculty members on student engagement is ultimately about creating campus environments that are rich with opportunities for engagement. Because the institution has a substantial degree of influence over students' learning behaviors, perceptions, and environments (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), student engagement data provide valuable