



Faculty Survey of Student Engagement

A Project of the National Survey of Student Engagement

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Working with FSSE and NSSE Findings: A Facilitator's Guide

The purpose of this guide is to help institutional leaders facilitate workshops, presentations, and discussions about student engagement practices with others on campus. Using data from the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), an instrument designed to complement the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), institutions now have the ability to produce a comprehensive look at student engagement on their campus. Paired with NSSE results from the current or prior academic year, FSSE findings can reveal opportunities for needed improvements as well as areas of highlighted accomplishments. Often shared at faculty workshops and retreats, task forces, and assessment groups, FSSE and NSSE findings, can serve as a vehicle to help shift conversations about undergraduate education toward effective educational practices known to be empirically linked with high levels of learning and development. To better facilitate productive campus discussions, institutional leaders should consider 1) gaining a fundamental understanding of reports given in the customized *Institutional Reports*, and 2) learning of ways results have been successfully shared with various groups on campus. The following information and exercises can help.

How the Guide Can Be Used

This guide is akin to an instructor's manual. It provides suggestions for leading a workshop or session on understanding, interpreting, and taking action on FSSE and NSSE data.

The guide includes:

- Preparation notes for facilitators
- Outlines for addressing topics related to FSSE and NSSE data
- Exercises and worksheets

We have included step-by-step instructions for facilitating a group session using the data reports provided in the *Institutional Report*. Each section contains a sequenced program that may include an overview of the data report, suggestions for how the facilitator can prepare for the individual topic, exercises, definitions of key terms, and questions for further discussion. Worksheets are provided to accompany the exercises.



Introducing Student Engagement

The first step in getting your colleagues to take your institutional FSSE and NSSE findings seriously is to ensure that the concepts of student engagement and effective educational practice are understood. Together, FSSE and NSSE provide quantitative information regarding faculty expectations for student engagement in educational practices that are empirically linked with high levels of learning and development, the time and effort students devote to educationally purposeful activities, and students' perceptions of the quality of other aspects of their undergraduate experience. To learn more about the types of classroom activities and particular faculty and peer interactions that lead to high-quality student outcomes, please download a copy of the conceptual framework for NSSE (http://nsse.iub.edu/pdf/conceptual_framework_2003.pdf) or visit our research and publication Web site at: <http://nsse.iub.edu/links/publications>.

Getting Acquainted with the FSSE and NSSE Surveys and What They Measure

One approach to introducing the idea of student engagement is to invite faculty and staff to identify items in question #1 on FSSE they believe are most important to student learning (do this separately for first-year students and seniors). Participants can spend a few minutes in pairs or small groups discussing their perspectives. Next, ask participants to identify which of the same activities they believe faculty on their campus deem important. This informal exercise will set the stage for discussion about potential gaps between faculty emphasis of and students' participation in effective educational practices.

Working with Institutional Reports

This guide covers working with the three main reports from the *Institutional Report*:

- *FSSE Respondent Characteristics*
- *FSSE Frequency Distributions*
- *FSSE-NSSE Combined Report*

Topics at a Glance

Topic 1: Respondent Characteristics

Lead an examination of FSSE respondents and their representativeness of faculty populations at the institution.

Topic 2: Frequency Distribution

Review and discuss faculty responses to particular items deemed essential to your institution's goals, values, and mission.

Topic 3: FSSE-NSSE Combined Report

Review and discuss distributions of faculty responses alongside actual and ideal student responses.

Facilitator Notes:

1. In advance of the workshop, make copies of selected survey results from your *Institutional Report* for each group or individual and copies of the Item Descriptors (available www.fsse.iub.edu) Be sure to select materials for the appropriate survey option (course-based or typical student) administered at your institution
2. Create a statement of objectives and desired outcomes for the workshop or discussion.
3. For each topic it is your choice whether to focus on faculty who teach first years, seniors, or both. Be sure to indicate your decision to your audience.

Topic 1: Respondent Characteristics

Purpose

1. Compare characteristics of faculty respondents and faculty groups on campus for level of representativeness
2. Compare institution's survey respondents to the entire FSSE cohort
3. Consider your response rate and sampling error

Exercise

Facilitator leads a group in a review of demographic features of faculty respondents.

1. Does the FSSE sample reflect our faculty profile? Compare respondents' demographic characteristics to all faculty on your campus.
2. If the sample seems skewed, what cautions might be exercised in reviewing the results?
3. How does our institution compare to the FSSE cohort in terms of demographic features? Compare respondent demographics to information found in the *FSSE Overview*.
4. Consider our response rate and sampling error.
5. What generalizations about our campus are or are not possible based on this information?

Terms and Definitions for FAQs

FSSE Sample Size vs. Number of Respondents:

FSSE sample size is the number of faculty contacted to participate as provided in the file submitted by the institution. The number of respondents is how many faculty actually completed the survey.

Response rate: $\text{Response rate} = \text{number of respondents} / \text{sample size}$

An institution's response rate is calculated by dividing the number of respondents by the sample size. It is important to remember that non-deliverable addresses are subtracted from the denominator prior to calculating the response rate.

Sampling Error:

Another way to gauge the quality of data is through sampling error, an estimate of the margin by which the "true" score for an institution on a given item could differ from the reported score for one or more reasons.

Example:

If 60% of faculty reply "very often" to a particular item and the sampling error is +/- 4%, there is a 95% chance that the true or population value is between 56% and 64%.

To calculate your sampling error for FSSE visit www.nsse.iub.edu/html/error_calculator.cfm and use your institution's "Number of invited faculty" in the first two fields, zero for the third field, and your actual FSSE response rate for the fourth field.

Facilitator Notes:

1. Review *FSSE Respondent Characteristics* terms and definitions. Be prepared to explain response rate, sampling error, and faculty characteristics.
2. Prepare an institutional faculty profile in advance of the session.
3. Information for FSSE Cohort can be found in the *FSSE Overview*.

WORKSHEET FOR TOPIC 1: Respondent Characteristics

(Example Chart for Worksheet, PowerPoint, or Overhead)

Demographic and Other Characteristics ¹	Faculty at our institution	Faculty at our institution who responded to FSSE	Faculty in the US ²

Note 1: Possibilities include general discipline of academic appointment, rank, tenure status, highest degree earned, employment status, number of courses taught, years of teaching experience, age, gender, race/ethnicity, citizenship status

Note 2: See *FSSE Overview* for this information

Topic 2: Frequency Distributions for selected FSSE items

Purpose

Review and discuss faculty responses to particular items deemed essential to the institution's goals, values, and mission.

Exercise

Identify the most important items to the institution, unit, or department. Invite participants to explore if the percentage distributions are appropriate for these items. Do the responses correspond with what our institution, unit, or department expected? For example, if an institution places a high value on "faculty working with undergraduates on research", is it acceptable for 33% of faculty respondents to indicate they do not do this at all during a typical week?

Lead group discussion on the following questions (should be adapted based on your audience):

1. What results are adequate? Which need attention?
2. What results are reflective of our institutional type and mission?
3. What additional information do we need to better understand these results (i.e. further qualitative studies, other institutional data)
4. What action steps or recommendations can be made from these results?

A Note about Comparisons

Campus groups who are familiar with NSSE may ask how their faculty responses compare to other peer institutions. Unlike NSSE, mean peer comparisons are not made possible for FSSE. First and foremost participating faculty are promised results will only be used to better understand student engagement on their campus. This contributes to the high response rates, as comparisons to their colleagues at other institutions would raise the stakes of the instrument. Also since institutions participating in FSSE are not required to sample their entire faculty population, mean comparisons may not make sense between institutions that have used different sampling approaches. To give a sense of how groups of institutions respond to FSSE, we report "grand" frequencies for all participants and by Carnegie classification. To download these reports, visit the FSSE Web site: www.fsse.iub.edu.

Facilitator Notes:

1. Review *FSSE Frequency Distributions*. It is not necessary to go into great depth when exploring these results. Asking questions for group discussion can help facilitate reflection and understanding.
2. Identify items that might be of greatest interest to the institution and/or the department given its mission and goals. Consider presenting these percentages to participants as a way to capture their attention.
3. Be sure to present institutional mission and goals before beginning the exercise above. Keep in mind that there may be a difference between enacted and espoused values at your institution.

WORKSHEET FOR TOPIC 2: Frequency Distributions for selected FSSE items

(Example Chart for Worksheet, PowerPoint, or Overhead)

Selected FSSE Items	Value placed on this Item by the institution (High, Medium, Low)	Value placed on this Item by faculty (High, Medium, Low)	% Response *

*The response set will vary based on the item you select. Thus for each selected item be sure to not only list the numerical percentage but also what it represents. In these types of exercises, it can be helpful to focus on the higher end of the scale, combining two categories (i.e. Often or Very Often; Important or Very Important; etc.)

Topic 3: FSSE-NSSE Combined Report

Purpose

To review and discuss frequencies with which faculty and students responded to similar from FSSE and NSSE, respectively. Assign levels of concern for a future action plan.

Exercises

Use the provided tool to examine faculty and student responses listed in the FSSE-NSSE Combined Report. Facilitate a group discussion about:

1. Which items have important differences between faculty and student responses?
2. What resources are available to address major discrepancies? To continue doing what we are doing well? To address items that need attention?
3. What strategies can be developed to continue doing what we are doing well? To monitor selected items? To address items that need attention?

Facilitator Notes:

What do faculty know about your students? Do faculty attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors shed any light on student responses? Because beliefs and assumptions play a role in shaping expectations and actions, it is helpful to account for them when trying to understand something as complex as the undergraduate experience.

1. Select several items of interest from the *FSSE-NSSE Combined Report*.
2. Ask session participants to identify which items are of particular concern after considering the percentage of faculty and students who responded 'never' or 'not important.'
3. Have session participants rate their level of concern by assigning green (acceptable), yellow (needs monitoring), or red (needs immediate attention) flags to each item.
4. Discuss reasons why items labeled green are deemed acceptable.
5. Discuss how and the length of time items labeled yellow should be monitored before action is necessary.
6. Discuss strategies to address items labeled red (needs immediate attention).

WORKSHEET FOR TOPIC 3: FSSE-NSSE Combined Report

(Example Chart for Worksheet, PowerPoint, or Overhead)

Before completing this worksheet, choose whether to focus on (a) responses from faculty who teach mostly first-year students and first-year student responses, OR (b) responses from faculty who teach mostly seniors and senior responses.

Selected Items from FSSE-NSSE Combined Report	Faculty <u>perception</u> of first-year students	First-year students' response	Acceptable? (green, yellow, red)