

## FSSE 2012 Overview

The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) complements the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and is coordinated by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. FSSE (pronounced ‘fessie’) measures faculty members’ expectations of student engagement in educational practices that are empirically linked with high levels of learning and development. The survey also collects information about how faculty members spend their time on professorial activities, such as teaching and scholarship, and the kinds of learning experiences their institutions emphasize.

FSSE results can be used to identify areas of institutional strength, as well as aspects of the undergraduate experience that may warrant attention. The information can be a catalyst for productive discussions related to teaching, learning, and the quality of students’ educational experiences.

This *Overview* provides general information about the institutions and faculty members that participated in the 2012 administration of FSSE, and highlights ways institutions can use their results. The *Overview* is divided into two sections. First, we compare the characteristics of participating institutions and faculty members with U.S. profiles as well as provide general information about response rates. In the second section, we provide guidelines for using and interpreting FSSE 2012 results, and highlight resources for analyzing and presenting FSSE findings. Resources intended to help with the use and interpretation of FSSE data are also available on the FSSE Web site.

### FSSE 2012 Institutions and Respondents

In 2012, 15,148 faculty responded from 117 bachelor’s-granting colleges and universities (116 U.S. and 1 Canadian) that selected their own faculty samples. Faculty members at participating institutions were sent invitation emails and asked to respond to the online survey. Institutions chose one of two survey options, with either “course-based” or “typical-student” questions. Of the 2012 participating institutions, 64% (75) administered course-based questions to their faculties and 36% (42) administered typical-student questions. Nearly all (107)

of these institutions also administered NSSE to their students in 2012; 10 used NSSE in a previous year. Having recent data from NSSE allows participating institutions to examine how faculty members and students respond to similar questions. Each campus receives electronic copies of its reports and data file, along with a list of participating institutions. The list is also publicly available through the FSSE Web site.

Tables 1 and 2 on the following pages provide more information about the participating institutions and faculty members who responded to the survey. While included here and in each institution’s *FSSE 2012 Respondent Characteristics*, certain demographics (e.g., gender, rank, and employment status) are withheld from each institution’s data file to ensure that responses remain anonymous.

### Profile of FSSE 2012 Institutions

The FSSE 2012 institutions are similar in many ways to the U.S. profile of bachelor’s-granting colleges and universities (Table 1). Based on the 2010 Basic Carnegie Classification, the distribution of FSSE institutions mirrors that of all U.S. bachelor’s-granting institutions. In addition, FSSE institutions mirror the U.S. distribution in terms of location in cities, towns, and rural areas. Like NSSE 2012, there are a few places where the FSSE 2012 profile differs slightly from the U.S. profile. For



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**Table 1**  
**Profile of U.S. FSSE and NSSE 2012 Institutions Against All U.S. Bachelor's-Granting Institutions<sup>a</sup>**

	FSSE 2012	NSSE 2012	US <sup>b</sup>
<b>Carnegie Classification – Basic 2010<sup>c</sup></b>			
RU/VH	2%	4%	6%
RU/H	13%	9%	6%
DRU	6%	5%	5%
Master's L	27%	30%	25%
Master's M	11%	12%	11%
Master's S	8%	7%	8%
Bac/A&S	15%	16%	16%
Bac/Diverse	18%	17%	23%
<b>Sector</b>			
Public	43%	37%	33%
Private	57%	63%	67%
<b>Undergraduate Enrollment</b>			
Fewer than 1,000	9%	11%	19%
1,000 – 2,499	33%	33%	33%
2,500 – 4,999	19%	22%	19%
5,000 – 9,999	25%	18%	14%
10,000 – 19,999	11%	10%	10%
20,000 or more	4%	6%	6%
<b>Region</b>			
New England	9%	7%	8%
Mideast	18%	20%	18%
Great Lakes	14%	16%	15%
Plains	4%	11%	10%
Southeast	34%	28%	24%
Southwest	6%	8%	7%
Rocky Mountains	3%	4%	4%
Far West	10%	7%	11%
Outlying Areas	2%	1%	2%
U.S. Service Schools	0%	<1%	<1%
<b>Location</b>			
City	57%	48%	46%
Suburban	18%	21%	23%
Town	21%	24%	20%
Rural	4%	7%	10%

Carnegie Classifications

RU/VH	Research Universities (very high research activity)	Master's M	Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)
RU/H	Research Universities (high research activity)	Master's S	Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)
DRU	Doctoral/Research Universities	Bac/A&S	Baccalaureate Colleges-Arts & Sciences
Master's L	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)	Bac/Diverse	Baccalaureate Colleges-Diverse Fields

a. Percentages are based on U.S. postsecondary institutions that award baccalaureate degrees and belong to one of the eight Carnegie classes in the table. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

b. U.S. percentages are based on the data from the 2010 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics file.

c. For information on the 2010 Carnegie Classifications, see: [classifications.carnegiefoundation.org](http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org).

example, public institutions are overrepresented and small (undergraduate enrollment less than 1,000) institutions are underrepresented among FSSE institutions compared to the U.S. distribution. However, with a few modest exceptions, the distribution of FSSE 2012 institutions reflects that of all U.S. institutions, which helps ensure that FSSE results represent a broad cross-section of faculty members from across the nation.

## Profile of FSSE 2012 Respondents

Table 2 shows selected characteristics of faculty members who completed FSSE in 2012. The first column represents faculty members who responded to the FSSE survey and the second column represents the U.S. profile of instructional faculty and staff at all bachelor's-granting institutions based on National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data.

### *Gender*

As with NSSE respondents and most other surveys, women are overrepresented among FSSE respondents. While women make up 40% of faculty members at U.S. bachelor's-granting institutions, they were 49% of FSSE respondents.

### *Race and Ethnicity*

The racial and ethnic profile of FSSE respondents was similar to that of all U.S. faculty. Black or African American faculty were slightly overrepresented in FSSE respondents while White (non-Hispanic) faculty were slightly underrepresented. The NCES data used for the U.S. column in Table 2 do not contain comparable information for the "Other" category.

### *Employment Status*

Eighty-two percent of FSSE respondents were full-time faculty members, whereas 18% were employed on a part-time basis. This departs significantly from the U.S. figures for all public and private bachelor's-granting colleges and

**Table 2**  
**Characteristics of FSSE 2012 Respondents and Faculty Population at All U.S. Bachelor's-Granting Institutions**

	FSSE Respondents	US <sup>a</sup>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	51%	60%
Female	49%	40%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
American Indian or other Native American	<1%	<1%
Asian American or Pacific Islander	6%	8%
Black or African American	9%	5%
White (non-Hispanic)	78%	82%
Hispanic or Latino	3%	3%
Multiracial	1%	2%
Other	2%	-
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Full-time	82%	66%
Part-time	18%	34%
<b>Rank</b>		
Professor	22%	22%
Associate Professor	25%	18%
Assistant Professor	24%	20%
Instructor or Lecturer	23%	19%
Other	6%	21%

a. U.S. percentages come from the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty and are based on faculty at U.S. postsecondary institutions that award baccalaureate degrees.

**Table 3**  
**Percentage of Faculty by Disciplinary Area and Gender**

Disciplinary Area	Male		Female		Total	
	FSSE <sup>a</sup>	US <sup>b</sup>	FSSE <sup>a</sup>	US <sup>b</sup>	FSSE <sup>a</sup>	US <sup>b</sup>
Arts and Humanities	25%	20%	27%	24%	26%	22%
Biological Science	7%	9%	6%	6%	6%	7%
Business	11%	9%	7%	5%	10%	8%
Education	4%	7%	9%	17%	6%	11%
Engineering	7%	7%	2%	1%	4%	5%
Physical Science	15%	11%	8%	6%	12%	9%
Professional	4%	14%	16%	20%	10%	16%
Social Science	13%	11%	14%	11%	14%	11%
Other	14%	12%	10%	11%	12%	12%

a. FSSE distributions based on 5,835 male and 5,563 female respondents.

b. U.S. percentages come from the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty and are based on faculty at U.S. postsecondary institutions that award baccalaureate degrees.

universities, which indicate that only two-thirds of faculty members at such institutions are employed full time. This may reflect the decision of some institutions to survey only full-time faculty as well as the possibility that part-time faculty may respond at a lower rate than their full-time colleagues.

#### *Academic Rank*

Assistant and associate professors are slightly overrepresented in FSSE 2012 while faculty that fit the “other” category are considerably underrepresented.

#### *Discipline*

Table 3 shows the distribution of faculty respondents by disciplinary area and gender. The percentages indicate that faculty members in education and professional fields are



Goucher College

underrepresented. The distributions by gender indicate how men and women separate into disciplinary areas differently. There are four disciplinary areas where female respondents outnumbered males. Females largely outnumber males in education (517 female and 217 male FSSE respondents) and professional fields (907 female and 210 male FSSE respondents). In the two other fields, female and male respondents were at near parity: arts and humanities (1497 female and 1468 male FSSE respondents) and social sciences (775 female and 765 male FSSE respondents).

### **Response Rates**

After adjusting for faculty members who could not be reached (usually because of incorrect email addresses), a response rate (total number of responses divided by the total number of faculty members contacted) is calculated for each FSSE institution. In 2012, 40% of the faculty contacted responded to the survey. Response rates at individual institutions ranged from 14% to 83%. The average institutional response rate was 46%.

### **Using FSSE Results**

Before sharing FSSE results on campus, individuals should become familiar with the nature of the data, the reports, and “story line” of their institution’s performance.

### **Becoming Familiar with FSSE Reports and Resources**

Each institution receives several reports and a data file that will help individuals better understand their FSSE results. The reports are delivered in hard copy in the *Institutional Report 2012* binder and are available electronically through the Institution Interface (each campus has up to

three representatives who can access the Interface from the NSSE or FSSE Web sites using their own unique username and password). The data file, codebook, list of participating institutions, this *Overview*, and other supporting materials are also available through the Interface.

Institution-specific resources include:

- A *FSSE 2012 Respondent Characteristics* report summarizing demographic information from faculty members who responded. Much of this information is not contained in the institutional data file in order to protect respondents' identities.
- A *FSSE 2012 Frequency Distributions* report providing the response percentages for each survey item broken down by the level of the students taught by faculty members.
- A *FSSE-NSSE Combined Report* presenting faculty results side-by-side with student results, which allows institutions to identify areas of correspondence.
- A data file which allows for additional analyses while still protecting the identity of individual respondents (some demographic data are not contained in the file; see the "Protecting Respondent Anonymity" section of this *Overview*).
- The *FSSE 2012 Codebook* provides details of each question, variable name, and response set for the survey option used by an institution.

In addition, the FSSE Web site ([fsse.iub.edu](http://fsse.iub.edu)) includes several important documents and resources:

- Copies of the FSSE survey instrument
- Frequency reports by Carnegie Classification based on faculty responses from all participating institutions
- Topical findings that can be used as examples of different ways to use FSSE data on its own (e.g., examining the proportion of class time devoted to lecturing, small group work, and experiential activities by disciplinary area) or in combination with NSSE (e.g., comparing faculty expectations to faculty estimates and student self-reports of time spent studying). Topical findings can also be used for comparison purposes.
- Examples of how to display FSSE results in tables and graphs
- A facilitator's guide to assist in presentations of FSSE findings to campus audiences

- Examples of how other institutions share their FSSE results with different audiences

## Check Data Quality

An essential early step in reviewing a campus's results is comparing the *FSSE 2012 Respondent Characteristics* report with institutional data on faculty—the closer the characteristics match, the more confidence an institution can have that their respondents represent the faculty surveyed.

Another way to gauge data quality 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, such as differences in important characteristics between the sample and the populations. For example, if 60% reply "very often" to a particular item and the sampling error is +/- 4%, there is a 95% chance that the population value is between 56% and 64%.

## Communicating FSSE Results

We offer the following suggestions for communicating FSSE results to interested parties:

- Examine representativeness as described above.
- Check the sample size and sampling error since questions often arise as to whether a small sample adequately represents the population from which it is drawn.
- Use student and faculty matched items to stimulate discussion about student engagement, its relationship to learning, and which engagement activities to emphasize on campus.
- There are many reasons faculty and student



Loyola University New Orleans



Elon University

responses can differ. For example, students and faculty may be given different framing for a question (e.g., over an academic year or in a particular class) or FSSE and NSSE items and response options may not match exactly. A strong understanding of the instruments as well as one's institutional context should help interpret differences that exist.

- Meet with those responsible for faculty development and undergraduate improvement initiatives to begin sharing results and discussing ways in which FSSE data can be used to enhance teaching and learning. Use the worksheets in *Working with FSSE and NSSE Findings: A Facilitator's Guide* to help focus these discussions (see the Resources section under the Tools and Services tab on the FSSE Web site).
- Consult *Using FSSE Data* and *Using NSSE Data* (found online or in the User Resources section of the *Institutional Report 2012* binder) for examples of how other institutions use FSSE and NSSE in professional development and assessment initiatives.
- Contact the NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice ([nsse.iub.edu/institute](http://nsse.iub.edu/institute)) for additional ideas about making the best use of FSSE and NSSE results on campus.

## Protecting Respondent Anonymity

As noted previously, the FSSE project takes several measures to ensure the anonymity of respondents. For example:

- Each institution's data file excludes faculty members' responses to demographic questions such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, number of

years as a faculty member, appointment status, rank, and tenure status.

- To mask faculty members' particular disciplines, disciplines have been collapsed into, at most, nine categories (see codebook) which parallel major organizational units on campus.
- Customized reports by faculty demographics are available for institutions wishing to examine FSSE findings while protecting respondent anonymity. Costs for these reports vary by the complexity of the request. Contact FSSE ([fsse@indiana.edu](mailto:fsse@indiana.edu)) for information.

*Protecting respondent anonymity is critical to ensure that faculty members respond to the survey and answer as honestly as possible.*

**We want to hear from our users. Please send us descriptions of how FSSE results are being used on campus. We also invite suggestions for improving the FSSE project and the quality and utility of the information it provides. Please direct correspondence to the project staff at [fsse@indiana.edu](mailto:fsse@indiana.edu).**



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