

Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) 2004 Survey Report: Executive Summary

The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) was designed by Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning and was intended to be used in conjunction with the popular student engagement instrument entitled the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

The administration took place during the Spring of 2004. Faculty were contacted via email and asked to respond to the web-based instrument. In the initial email faculty members were asked to choose one course they were teaching that semester to reflect upon when answering the survey items. An item later in the survey asked the faculty members to designate if the course they chose was an upper division, lower division, or other type of course. This factor was then used in breaking the responses into a three level category of student level (upper division, lower division, other course). The other responses included graduate courses and courses with a wide mix of student levels. A total of 242 faculty members responded to the request for participation

This is a brief summary of some of the more compelling findings. To read the full report please log on to <http://www.radford.edu/~assessmt> and click on the link for Survey Research. Additional information about the FSSE and a copy of the instrument can be found at <http://www.iub.edu/~nsse/html/fsse.htm>.

FSSE 2004 Results and Comparisons between Responses of Faculty Teaching Lower Division Courses, Upper Division Courses and Other Courses **Student Engagement Activities and Faculty-Student Interaction**

In general, students taking the lower division classes are perceived by the faculty members as being less engaged in the classroom activities and with the faculty member. Specifically, significant differences were found for the following items:

- Frequently ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions
- Frequently come to class without completing readings or assignments
- Occasionally use e-mail to communicate with you
- Occasionally discuss grades or assignments with you
- At least once, talk about career plans with you
- At least once, discuss ideas from readings or classes with you outside of class
- Work with other students on projects during class
- Participate in a community-based project as part of your course

Assignments and Student Preparation

As reported by faculty, lower division and upper division students are assigned similar amounts of readings. However, faculty assign students in the upper division and other types of courses more papers between 5 and 10 pages in length and more papers over 10 pages in length.

Interestingly, faculty teaching lower division courses expect students to put in the same amount of class preparation time as do faculty members teaching upper division courses. In addition, upper division faculty and lower division faculty believe the amount of time that their students are actually spending in class preparation is the same. However, faculty members teaching upper division classes felt that student activities such as working on a paper or project that requires integrating ideas or information from various sources, working with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments, and putting together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions were more important than responding lower division faculty felt. In fact, faculty members in upper division courses reported spending more time in their class having students conduct presentations or small group activities. Not surprising, faculty in upper division courses also reported spending more time "supervising internships or other field experiences" than faculty members in lower division courses.

Importance of College and Undergraduate Activities and Institutional Emphasis

Faculty members were asked to rate how important they believed it was for undergraduates to participate in certain activities. Two interesting findings were that faculty teaching lower division courses expressed that student participation in practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience was less important than did responding

faculty teaching upper division courses. In addition, the latter group felt that it was more important for students to participate in community service or volunteer work.

NSSE 2004 and FSSE 2004 Item Comparison

Academic and Intellectual Experiences

In general students' perceptions of their own behaviors differ from the faculty members' perceptions of the students' behavior. For example, only 4% of the faculty members teaching lower division courses stated that over 50% of the students in their course discussed ideas from readings or classes with them outside of the class at least once. Only 17% of the upper division faculty members stated that their students engaged in this activity. However, 15% of the responding NSSE freshmen students stated that they "very often" or "often" participated in this activity with 35% of the senior respondents stated that they did this "often" or "very often."

For the item regarding asking questions in class, 49% of freshmen respondents and 77% of senior respondents stated they asked questions or contributed to class discussions "often" or "very often." However, only 19% of the faculty from the lower division courses reported seeing this behavior 50% of the time or more, and only 36% of the upper division faculty reported seeing this behavior 50% of the time or more.

Mental Activities

Both the NSSE and FSSE ask questions pertaining to the cognitive activities of undergraduate students. For most items, the percentages between faculty and student respondents correspond relatively well. However, for two items the perceptions of faculty and students are quite different:

- Both freshmen and senior respondents believe that they participated in "memorizing facts, ideas, or methods" more often than faculty believe they are asking students to do these things.
- Both freshmen and senior respondents believe that they participated less often in "synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences" than faculty believe they are expecting.

Educational and Personal Growth and Enriching Educational Experiences

For items involving the educational and personal growth of students, many students believe that their experiences are contributing more to their development than faculty believe they are structuring their course to meet these areas. For example, 82% of the freshmen respondents and 84% of the senior respondents believe that their experiences at this institution have contributed either very much or quite a bit to their acquisition of a broad general education. However, only 70% of the faculty in the lower division courses and 57% of the faculty in the upper division courses state that they are tailoring their course structure to meet this objective (either very much or quite a bit).

Overall, faculty members see the following educational activities as the most important (percentages are those responding "Very Important" or "Important"):

- Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience (Lower Division = 73%, Upper Division = 81%)
- Culminating senior experience (Lower Division = 67%, Upper Division = 76%)

The activities in which most students stated they did participate or plan to participate are:

- Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience (Freshmen = 84%, Seniors = 74%)
- Community or volunteer work (Freshmen = 75%, Seniors = 70%)

Institutional Environment

In general, faculty and students perceive the institutional environment similarly with a few notable exceptions. For each of these items student respondents rated the item higher than did faculty respondents.

- Institutional emphasis on "spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work."
- Institutional emphasis on "encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds."
- Institutional emphasis on "encouraging students to attend campus events and activities."