

Introduction

Efforts to improve undergraduate education are most promising when they are based on evidence of the performance and experience of students and faculty inside and outside the classroom. In addition, institutions' evidence of their achievements and of how they use data to inform improvement efforts is expected in their responses to heightened demands for accountability and multiple pressures to increase student persistence and completion, support diversity, and ensure high-quality learning for all students.

The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) was designed to complement the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) by measuring faculty expectations and student engagement. Whether a campus is interested in assessing the importance faculty place on various areas of learning and development or the nature and frequency of faculty-student interaction, FSSE provides colleges and universities with diagnostic, actionable information that can inform efforts to improve the experience and outcomes of undergraduate education.

FSSE results can inform efforts to enhance student learning and success across campus offices and projects including curricular reform, marketing and communications, faculty development, learning support, and scholarship of teaching and learning. As an assessment instrument, FSSE can be used to identify both areas of strength as well as opportunities for growth, to help make the classroom and campus environments more cohesive with student needs and expectations.

Making FSSE data accessible and useful is key to engaging various campus audiences in identifying and analyzing institutional and program successes and shortcomings and for developing targeted strategies for continuous improvement—critical steps in institutional growth and change. How can institutions determine who is interested in FSSE results? What are the best ways to connect campus groups and committees with this information? What audiences could use this information in responding to campus challenges and opportunities?

An early step in making the best use of FSSE data and reports is to revisit your institution's rationale for

participating in FSSE. *What motivated your FSSE participation and what does the campus intend for the results?* Knowing if your campus plans to use FSSE for accreditation, for routine assessment, or for faculty development efforts is important for determining where data are most relevant and for informing audiences eager to use the results.

Simply reporting FSSE results will not lead to action.

Using FSSE data effectively also requires accurately interpreting the results and disseminating the interpretations along with the results to people who can do something about student engagement. Simply reporting FSSE results will not lead to action. Many institutions have found that sharing results at retreats, faculty workshops, first-year experience task force meetings, and other group gatherings is a productive way to stimulate interest and action.

This Guide's Purpose

Although FSSE's reports are designed for usability, the path to using the data may not readily emerge in reviewing them. Determining how to encourage the use of FSSE data where it has potential to bring improvement and to ensure that the reports influence campus action can be challenging. To help institutions address these challenges, this guide outlines strategies, gives suggestions, and provides worksheets with exercises to help institutional leaders facilitate discussions with a wide range of campus stakeholders to make meaning from the results, identify priorities for action, and formulate uses of FSSE data for accountability, assessment, and improvement.

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Overcoming Potential Obstacles to Using FSSE Results Effectively

Converting assessment information into action is a challenge for all colleges and universities.

Below, we provide ways to address some of the more common obstacles.

Obstacle	Approach
Small number of respondents	Check your FSSE respondent characteristics to compare the representation of the sample to your campus population. Review the sampling error. In future administrations, consider ways to increase the number of respondents and promote survey participation in new ways.
Questions about validity and reliability	<p>The validity of self-reported data can be affected by the ability of respondents to provide accurate and truthful information in response to questions. Research shows that people generally tend to respond accurately on questions about their past behavior unless the questions are sensitive or make them uncomfortable. Further research suggests that self-reported data are valid under five conditions, all of which FSSE was designed to satisfy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The requested information is known to respondents2. The questions are phrased clearly and unambiguously3. The questions refer to recent activities4. The respondents take the questions seriously5. The questions do not threaten, embarrass, or violate respondents' privacy
Limited capacity to analyze and report results	The reports that FSSE sends institutions can be quickly packaged and sent to faculty and staff with little work. All data files, reports, and supporting documents related to FSSE <i>Institutional Reports</i> are available in electronic format, which allows for easier print or electronic distribution.
Lack of faculty awareness of or interest in learning about and using student engagement results	Consider administering FSSE as a way to look at student engagement from the faculty perspective. Results may be useful for discussions at a retreat or workshop. Also, make available a summary of the literature on the value of effective educational practices.

Worksheet Topics at a Glance

Worksheet #1: Guiding Questions

This one-page worksheet offers four reflective prompts essential to initiating and focusing FSSE data use.

Worksheet #2: Administration and Respondent Details

Determine whether respondents to FSSE are representative of your faculty, then think about how to address any lack of representativeness.

Worksheet #3: Frequencies for Selected Items

Examine your assumptions about your faculty's practices and expectations by selecting a theme, predicting your results, and comparing predictions to actual data.

Worksheet #4: High-Impact Practices

Consider and discuss how faculty encourage high-impact practices with students on your campus

Worksheet #5: Adding Context to NSSE with FSSE

Review and discuss how faculty and students responded to similar items from FSSE and NSSE respectively.

Worksheet #6: Disciplinary Engagement

Facilitate conversations around how promotion of engagement occurs within disciplinary areas.

Worksheet #7: FSSE and Campus Strategic Goals

Review FSSE data in comparison with your campus strategic goals and initiatives.

By now, you have read through your institutional reports and are ready to start using your data. Knowing where to begin can be overwhelming, especially with the array of reports and data at your disposal. Before you dive into your results, take a moment to identify your main intentions for pursuing faculty practices and expectations and the most appropriate audiences for this information at your institution. The following questions are a reflection activity to help frame contexts to consider, understand what results mean, and disseminate the findings.

1. Reflect on your reasons for administering the FSSE survey. What strengths, concerns, or points of interest do you want to know about your faculty's practices and expectations for students?
2. Are there any FSSE Scale scores, or item-level results that you want to know more about? Do these matters require attention before results are shared with other audiences?
3. What are some prominent campus goals and priorities at your institution right now? Is first-year student retention a concern? Is strategic planning on the campus agenda? Are you preparing for reaffirmation of accreditation? Is there a program that you want to improve or develop for a certain faculty population? What are your institution's priorities? Jot down these ideas to keep in mind as you move forward with presenting and using your FSSE results.
4. What audiences would be interested in or could benefit from a greater understanding of your FSSE results? Identify key groups from and add to this list of offices and people to consider:
 - ✓ Accreditation organization(s)
 - ✓ Alumni
 - ✓ Board of trustees
 - ✓ Center for teaching and learning
 - ✓ Faculty and departments
 - ✓ Faculty development
 - ✓ Faculty learning communities
 - ✓ Faculty senate and committees
 - ✓ General education assessment committees
 - ✓ Internal and external media
 - ✓ Prospective students and parents
 - ✓ State agencies and commissions
 - ✓ Student affairs offices and units

Before delving into specific FSSE findings, it is important to examine whether or not your respondents are representative of your faculty as a whole. The questions below will guide you in these explorations. For this exercise, please look at your faculty respondent characteristics and *FSSE Administration Summary* reports.

1. Does the FSSE sample reflect your faculty profile? Compare respondents' demographic characteristics to all faculty on your campus.
2. If the sample seems to be skewed, what cautions might be exercised in reviewing the results?
3. Consider your response rate and sampling error. What do these numbers imply for your results?
4. What generalizations about your campus are not possible based on the above information?
5. In your next administration, what can be done to encourage more responses from segments of your faculty population that are underrepresented here?

What do you know about your faculty? Because beliefs and assumptions play a role in shaping expectations and actions, it is helpful to account for them when trying to understand the undergraduate experience.

We suggest you determine a salient theme (diverse interactions, supportive environment, etc.) and fill in related questions and items in the chart below. Then, in the “Predict” column record whether you believe this is a “strength” or an infrequent practice among your faculty (see the key below). Under “Prefer” indicate the level of your preference for faculty engagement in this practice. Under “Actual” write the result for that item from your interactive Tableau dashboard report.

Examine the gaps between actual responses and your predictions and preferences as a catalyst for group discussion about faculty expectations and experiences.

Questions and items

	Predict*	Prefer*	Actual %**

Key

- * Use “+” to identify a strength, something faculty do frequently, “=” to identify something a fair proportion of faculty do, “-” to identify an infrequent experience.
- ** % “Very Often” or “Often” / “Very much” or “Quite a bit” —Actual percentage distribution is available from the FSSE interactive Tableau dashboard reports.

This exercise is designed to facilitate consideration of and discussion about faculty support of the High-Impact Practices (HIPs) reported in FSSE results. Predict the percentage of your faculty who believe participation in these activities is “Important” or “Very Important.” Similarly, you can record what you would prefer this percentage to be. Comparisons of your predictions and preferences to actual FSSE results are then possible.

This information can be found in the *FSSE-NSSE Combined Report* in your *NSSE Institutional Report*. Student values can also be found on this report. Record the student value for “Done or in progress” by class level.

Consider what the differences between faculty values and your predictions, preferences, and student participation reveal about the quality of the student experience at your institution. How might your institution address these differences?

High-Impact Practices Participation

Respondent Group	High-Impact Practices	Prediction of Faculty Importance	Preference for Faculty Importance	Actual Faculty Importance*	Actual Student Participation**
First-Year Students	Learning Community				
	Service-Learning				
	Research with Faculty				
Senior Students	Learning Community				
	Service-Learning				
	Research with Faculty				
	Internship or Field Experience				
	Study Abroad				
	Culminating Senior Experience				

Key

* % “Very Important” or “Important”

** Percentage of students who report “done or in progress”

How well do your faculty know your students? Do faculty attitudes and behaviors shed any light on student responses to NSSE? Because both 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. The following questions are a reflection activity to help frame contexts to consider, understand what results mean, and disseminate the findings.

1. Using the *FSSE-NSSE Combined Report*, found in your *NSSE Institutional Report*, locate items on which you are satisfied or dissatisfied with your NSSE results. List those items briefly, along with their scores, below.
2. To look more deeply into these topics, find the analogous items on FSSE. List those items briefly, along with their scores, below.
3. Next, compare the two sets of responses on these items. Please note that subtracting faculty response percentages from student response percentages will not yield any useful data. Instead, we'll use the FSSE results to add context to your NSSE results by examining these faculty perspectives. Note any relationships, connections, or discrepancies between student behaviors and faculty actions.
4. Consider what the differences between student and faculty responses reveal about the quality of the student experience on these factors at your institution. Are any of these differences surprising?
5. How might your institution address the differences in responses on your selected items? Is action necessary? If so, what might be a few first steps to begin discussions of these results among campus constituents?

This exercise is designed to facilitate consideration of and discussion about the quality of the student experience from the perspective of faculty by using FSSE's ten scales. These scales, which mirror NSSE's Engagement Indicators, are broad measures of educational effectiveness and are grouped within four overarching themes. Scores for these scales are reported in your FSSE interactive Tableau dashboard reports.

Keep your own discipline in mind as you work on this exercise. For each of the ten FSSE scales, record if you think this is an area of strength (+), an area that your discipline does well enough (=), or an area that needs improvement (-). Similarly record your preferences for your discipline and actual scores of your discipline relative to the average faculty member at your institution. Compare your predictions and preferences to actual scale scores.

Consider what the gaps between faculty responses and your predictions and preferences reveal about the quality of the student experience at your institution in relation to the particular scale you have chosen. What ideas might you have to address some of these gaps? Are these gaps discipline-related and, if so, is that acceptable for your institution?

FSSE Scale Scores

Themes	Scales	Prediction*	Preference*	Actual Score Relative to Average Faculty Member**
Academic Challenge	Higher Order Learning			
	Reflective & Integrative Learning			
	Learning Strategies			
	Quantitative Reasoning			
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning			
	Discussions with Diverse Others			
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction			
	Effective Teaching Practices			
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions			
	Supportive Environment			

Key

* + strength, = done well enough, – needs improvement

** Find these comparisons on your FSSE interactive Tableau dashboard reports

This worksheet is designed to facilitate conversation and discussion across faculty, staff, and administrators as they review FSSE response data in comparison with existing campus strategic goals. In this guided exercise, campus representatives will familiarize themselves with the FSSE instrument, review their campus goals, and select one to use for the activity.

Select a campus strategic goal for this activity. Keep in mind that not all strategic goals have corresponding indicators among FSSE questions, so it may be helpful to reference the survey while selecting.

Campus strategic goal selected for this activity:

1. Review the FSSE instrument and identify 5–6 items that most relate to your campus strategic goal. Among these items, select 3 that you prefer a large proportion of your faculty to support—in other words, the FSSE items for which you would like the percentage of “Never” (or “Very little,” “Not important,” etc.) participating to be as close to 0% as possible.
2. Why did you select these items?
3. Looking at the results for these items, are you surprised? Did you expect different results; if so, what results did you expect?
4. What activities could you do on campus to try to affect the responses?
5. What existing campus offices, committees, student organizations, and individuals would be interested in the responses to these items?