



# Faculty Survey of Student Engagement

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## FSSE 2009 OVERVIEW

The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) was designed to complement 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 is intended to be a catalyst for productive discussions related to teaching, learning, and the quality of students’ educational experiences.

This *Overview* provides some general information about the institutions and faculty members that participated in the 2009 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 overall response rates. In the second section we provide guidelines for using and interpreting FSSE 2009 results, in addition to highlighting resources available 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: [www.fsse.iub.edu](http://www.fsse.iub.edu).

## FSSE 2009 Institutions and Respondents

In 2009, 18,736 faculty responded from 148 baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities that selected their own faculty samples. Faculty members at participating institutions were sent invitation e-mails and asked to respond to the online survey. In 2009, institutions chose between two survey options (“course-based” or “typical-

student” questions). Of the 2009 participating institutions, 66% (97) administered course-based questions to their faculties and 34% (51) administered typical-student questions. Nearly all (139) of these institutions also administered NSSE to their students in 2009; nine used NSSE in 2008 or 2007. 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:

[www.fsse.iub.edu](http://www.fsse.iub.edu).

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 2009 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 2009 Institutions

The FSSE 2009 institutions are similar in many ways to the U.S. profile of baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities (Table 1). Based on the 2005 Basic Carnegie Classification, the distribution of FSSE institutions mirrors that of all U.S. baccalaureate-granting institutions. In addition, FSSE institutions mirror the U.S. distribution in terms of location in cities, towns, and rural areas. Like NSSE 2009, there are a few places where the FSSE 2009 profile differs slightly from the U.S. profile. For example, baccalaureate arts and sciences institutions are underrepresented and public institutions are overrepresented in FSSE compared to the pool of U.S. institutions. Also, a smaller percentage of FSSE institutions were small (undergraduate enrollment less than 1,000) compared to the U.S. distribution. With a few modest exceptions, the distribution of FSSE 2009 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.

**Table 1**  
**Profile of U.S. FSSE and NSSE 2009 Institutions against All U.S. Baccalaureate-Granting Institutions<sup>a</sup>**

	FSSE 2009	NSSE 2009	US <sup>b</sup>
<b>Carnegie Classification – Basic 2005<sup>c</sup></b>			
RU/VH	4%	5%	6%
RU/H	10%	10%	7%
DRU	7%	6%	5%
Master’s L	27%	25%	22%
Master’s M	10%	12%	12%
Master’s S	10%	7%	8%
Bac/A&S	10%	16%	18%
Bac/Diverse	23%	19%	23%
<b>Sector</b>			
Public	44%	40%	35%
Private	56%	60%	65%
<b>Undergraduate Enrollment</b>			
Fewer than 1,000	10%	13%	19%
1,000 – 2,499	36%	32%	33%
2,500 – 4,999	23%	21%	18%
5,000 – 9,999	18%	15%	15%
10,000 – 19,999	12%	13%	10%
20,000 or more	2%	6%	5%
<b>Region</b>			
New England	6%	9%	9%
Mideast	21%	18%	18%
Great Lakes	18%	16%	15%
Plains	10%	10%	11%
Southeast	24%	26%	24%
Southwest	10%	9%	8%
Rocky Mountains	5%	3%	3%
Far West	6%	8%	10%
Outlying Areas	1%	1%	2%
<b>Location</b>			
City	47%	49%	46%
Suburban	21%	20%	24%
Town	23%	22%	21%
Rural	9%	9%	9%
RU/VH.....Research Universities (very high research activity)			
RU/H.....Research Universities (high research activity)			
DRU.....Doctoral/Research Universities			
Master’s L.....Master’s Colleges and Universities (larger programs)			
Master’s M.....Master’s Colleges and Universities (medium programs)			
Master’s S.....Master’s Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)			
Bac/A&S.....Baccalaureate Colleges-Art & Sciences			
Bac/Diverse.....Baccalaureate Colleges-Diverse Fields			

a. Percentages are based on U.S. postsecondary institutions that award baccalaureate degrees and belong to the categories in the table. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.  
b. U.S. percentages are based on data from the 2008 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics file.  
c. For information on the 2005 Carnegie Classifications, see: [www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications](http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications).

## Profile of FSSE 2009 Respondents

Table 2 shows selected characteristics of faculty members who completed FSSE in 2009. 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 baccalaureate-granting institutions based on National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data.

### *Gender*

In the U.S., women make up 40% of faculty members at baccalaureate-granting institutions. As with NSSE respondents and most other surveys, women were overrepresented among FSSE respondents, 48% of whom were women.

### *Race and Ethnicity*

Respondents' race and ethnicity closely matched U.S. faculty percentages. The NCES data used for the U.S. column in Table 2 do not contain comparable information for the "Other" category.

### *Employment Status*

Seventy-nine percent of FSSE respondents were full-time faculty members, whereas 21% were employed on a part-time basis. This departs significantly from the U.S. figures for all public and private baccalaureate-granting colleges and 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 as well as instructors and lecturers were slightly overrepresented in FSSE 2009 while instructional staff and faculty that fit the "other" category were considerably underrepresented.

### *Discipline*

Table 3 shows the distribution of faculty respondents by disciplinary area and gender. The percentages indicate that faculty members in the arts and humanities were overrepresented, while faculty members in professional

**Table 2**  
**Characteristics of FSSE 2009 Respondents and Faculty Population at All U.S. Baccalaureate-Granting Institutions**

	FSSE Respondents	US <sup>a</sup>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	52%	60%
Female	48%	40%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
American Indian or other Native American	1%	<1%
Asian American or Pacific Islander	6%	8%
Black or African American	7%	5%
White (non-Hispanic)	81%	82%
Hispanic or Latino	3%	3%
Multiracial	1%	2%
Other	2%	-
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Full-time	79%	66%
Part-time	21%	34%
<b>Rank</b>		
Professor	22%	22%
Associate Professor	24%	18%
Assistant Professor	26%	20%
Instructor or Lecturer	22%	19%
Other	7%	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	26%	20%	28%	24%	27%	22%
Biological Science	6%	9%	5%	6%	6%	7%
Business	12%	9%	7%	5%	10%	8%
Education	4%	7%	11%	17%	7%	11%
Engineering	6%	7%	1%	1%	3%	5%
Physical Science	14%	11%	8%	6%	11%	9%
Professional	3%	14%	14%	20%	8%	16%
Social Science	14%	11%	15%	11%	14%	11%
Other	14%	12%	12%	11%	13%	12%

a. FSSE distributions based on 7,527 male and 6,777 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.

fields were underrepresented. Males outnumbered females in all disciplinary areas except education (731 female and 336 male FSSE respondents) and professional fields (928 female and 262 male FSSE respondents) where faculty members were predominantly women.

## Response Rates

After adjusting for faculty members who could not be reached (usually because of incorrect e-mail addresses), a response rate (total number of responses divided by the total number of faculty members contacted) is calculated for each FSSE institution. In 2009, 42% of the faculty contacted responded to the survey. Response rates at individual institutions ranged from 17% to 89%. The average institutional response rate was 50%.

## 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.



California State University, Long Beach

## Becoming Familiar with FSSE Reports and Resources

Each institution receives several reports and a data file that will help individuals better understand the institution’s FSSE results. The reports are delivered in hard copy in the *Institutional Report 2009* 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; each representative has a unique username and password to access the institution’s files). The data file, codebook, list of participating institutions, this *Overview*, and other supporting materials are also available through the Interface.

Institution specific resources include:

- Each institution’s *FSSE 2009 Respondent Characteristics* report summarizes demographic information from faculty members who responded. Much of this data is not contained in the institutional data file in order to protect respondents’ identities.
- Each institution’s *FSSE 2009 Frequency Distributions* report provides the response percentages for each survey item broken down by the level of the students taught by faculty members.
- Each institution’s *FSSE-NSSE Combined Report* presents faculty results side-by-side with student results allowing institutions to identify areas of correspondence as well as gaps.
- An institution’s data file allows for additional analyses while still protecting the identity



of individual respondents since some demographic data are not contained in the file (see the “Protecting Respondent Anonymity” section of this *Overview*).

- The *FSSE 2009 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, [www.fsse.iub.edu](http://www.fsse.iub.edu), includes several important documents and resources:

- Copies of the FSSE survey instrument in multiple formats (.html and .pdf)
- Grand frequency reports by Carnegie Classification based on faculty responses from all participating institutions
- Selected analyses that can be used for comparison purposes and as examples of different ways to use FSSE data on their 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)
- 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 have shared their FSSE results with different audiences

## Check Data Quality

An essential early step in reviewing a campus’s results is to compare faculty respondents’ demographic characteristics, summarized in the institution’s *FSSE 2009 Respondent Characteristics*, with institutional data on faculty—the closer the characteristics match, the more confidence an institution can have in their FSSE results.

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 one or more 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 interpreting and communicating FSSE results to interested parties:

- In addition to examining representativeness as described above, check the sample strategy and size since questions often arise as to whether a small sample size adequately represents the population from which it is drawn.
- There are many reasons faculty and student responses can differ. Faculty and student items and response options may not match exactly and institutional context should be considered to help interpret any differences that may exist.
- Consider using student and faculty matched items as a way to begin general discussions about which engagement activities might become a greater priority on campus, and about student engagement and its relationship to learning.
- Meet with others on campus 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 [www.fsse.iub.edu/html/resources.cfm](http://www.fsse.iub.edu/html/resources.cfm)).
- Consult *Using FSSE Data* and *Using NSSE Data* (found in the User Resources section of the *Institutional Report 2009* binder) for examples of how other institutions are using FSSE and NSSE in professional development and assessment initiatives.
- Contact the NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice ([www.nsse.iub.edu/institute](http://www.nsse.iub.edu/institute)) for additional consultation on maximizing the use of FSSE and NSSE results on campus.



Texas A&M University

## Protecting Respondent Anonymity

As noted previously, the FSSE project takes several measures to ensure the anonymity of those who responded to the survey. 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, more than 80 disciplines have been collapsed into nine categories (see codebook) designed to parallel major organizational units on campus.
- To aid institutions wishing to examine FSSE findings by faculty demographics while protecting respondent anonymity, customized reports are available. Costs for these reports vary by the complexity of the request. Contact FSSE ([fsse@indiana.edu](mailto:fsse@indiana.edu)) for information about these special analyses.

*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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