Using FSSE Data

Institutions often use FSSE to corroborate NSSE results and gain a better understanding of student engagement on their campuses. Building on the foundation laid by *Using NSSE Data*, this guide offers topics and tips that will help you make use of your FSSE findings. Many FSSE institutions are sharing their results in useful and distinct ways, including the following:

- Accreditation self-studies
- Assessment and improvement
- Curricular reform
- Faculty development programs
- Faculty workshops and retreats
- Grant proposals/applications and progress reports
- Institutional research
- Scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) initiatives

Whether you are seeking to attract faculty attention to campus dialogue on student engagement, attempting to involve your colleagues across campus in such discussions, or looking for examples of how FSSE results have been used at different institutions, you will find helpful hints on the following pages.

Where to Begin

Further along in this document you will find specific examples of how various institutions are using their FSSE results and information on the resources we have available to participating institutions. However, you may be pondering where to even begin with your survey results. If you are just getting started with your FSSE findings, here are some steps to guide your work:

Identify Resources on Your Campus

In “Effectively involving faculty in the assessment of student engagement” (*New Directions for Institutional Research, No. 141*, pp. 71-81) Nelson Laird, Smallwood, Niskodé-Dossett, and Garver (2009) outline four roles that faculty can assume in institutional assessment efforts. The four roles (see the table below) include serving as a source of data, as audience members for the presentation of findings, as data analysts, and as beneficiaries of assessment knowledge that has been used to inform campus decisions and programming.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Role</th>
<th>Role Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source of data</td>
<td>Information can be collected from faculty about their observations of students, the importance they place on aspects of student engagement, and the practices they use to encourage student engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Assessment findings should be presented to faculty members through multiple avenues, including reports, meetings, lectures, and workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analyst</td>
<td>Faculty members with expertise in data analysis can assist their institutions through investigations that use assessment data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiary of assessment knowledge</td>
<td>The knowledge derived from assessment processes should be used to inform the development and adaptation of campus programs, including those aimed at improving faculty understanding and instructional practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Reproduced from Nelson Laird et al. (2009).
Familiarize Yourself with Your Reports and Data File

In addition to the raw data file, each institution receives three customized FSSE reports in their Institutional Report binder: a table of respondent characteristics, frequency distributions, and a combined report which presents NSSE and FSSE response distributions together. Browsing through these reports will give you a good idea of what information exists. Colleagues who are able and willing to serve as data analysts may be helpful in this process. As you view your FSSE reports, decide where to focus your attention by thinking about the types of information that will both interest your campus colleagues and be most useful to your assessment efforts. There may be other assessment results archived in your office or projects underway that will help corroborate your FSSE findings. Try to make these connections.

If you are still having trouble deciding where to focus after an in-depth view of your reports, try working through some of the exercises in the Working with FSSE and NSSE Findings: A Facilitator’s Guide on your own. Doing this will help you gain a better understanding of the information contained in your reports and select interesting points to share with campus colleagues. Additionally, it will familiarize you with the exercises, should you decide to lead one with a group of colleagues at a later date. A copy of the facilitator’s guide may be downloaded from www.fsse.iub.edu/links/FSSE_Facilitators_Guide.pdf.

Know Your Audience(s) and Tailor a Presentation to Fit Them

Often, FSSE users prepare multiple reports highlighting different findings for use with different audiences. Knowing your target audience can serve as a filter for your survey results and guide your decisions regarding which information to include.

When preparing to present survey results to a specific audience, it is important to remember that you may encounter skepticism or resistance. Begin by drafting a list of anticipated questions, and then structure your presentation to address these issues up front and ease the concerns of your listeners. Alternatively, you may want to schedule a preliminary conversation with key members of your target audience to better understand their concerns and the type of information that will be of greatest use to them. This type of conversation can help to foster buy-in, better tailor your presentation to a group of colleagues, and guide future work with the group.

Use Web Tools and Resources to Generate Useful Reports

The online resources detailed on page 4 are useful aids for not only generating reports, but for helping you highlight interesting findings, such as how your institution’s faculty compare to the overall FSSE population. The Selected Results are especially helpful in this manner. However, once you have decided which FSSE items are of most use in your campus assessment initiatives and selected an audience, you may find that we do not yet have Selected Results that cover these items. If this is the case, please let us know. We are constantly collecting and generating ideas for new Selected Results. You may send your suggestions to fsse@indiana.edu.

Communicating Results

FSSE institutions are finding innovative ways to share and use their survey results. Most participating institutions have reported a larger focus on sharing their FSSE results internally than externally. While quite a few institutions post FSSE reports on their Web sites, some are only made accessible to internal audiences. Almost all institutions report sharing their FSSE results with faculty members. This is usually done through a presentation during Faculty Council meetings. The manner in which FSSE results are shared with others—what audiences to include, avenues of communication with internal versus external audiences, which results are shared—should be guided by an institution’s assessment needs and purpose for administering the survey. Below are some examples of how other institutions have approached this task. You may contact us for additional detail on any of these examples.

Examples of Sharing FSSE Results across Campus

Luther College’s Faculty Assessment Committee, which operates under the umbrella of the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research, assists in packaging student engagement data in a manner that will be most useful to colleagues across campus. Most recently, Student Engagement in Learning: Luther Faculty & Senior Students, a report comparing faculty responses from FSSE 2007 to student responses from NSSE 2005 and 2006, was developed and disseminated.
In an effort to disseminate and build interest in NSSE and FSSE findings, the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (School of Mines) developed a card game to engage small groups of campus constituents—including faculty, staff, and students—in discussions about student engagement data. According to the School of Mines, the game was deemed useful in raising awareness about the types of data collected as well as stimulating conversations regarding future implications and applications of survey findings. Most importantly, the game helped to reduce some of the barriers that exist among faculty, staff, and students. The School of Mines has published and presented on this technique, resulting in the card game being adapted by other campuses.

At the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, the Office of Budget and Planning dedicated the May 2006 issue of their *M Know Blue* newsletter to discussing the institution’s FSSE results. The section titled “A Word About FSSE” provides general background information on the survey instrument and administration, while “Crossing the Chasm” discusses UM’s specific results from their 2003 FSSE administration. Back issues of the newsletter are archived on the institutional Web site.

At Viterbo University, FSSE results have been used to support a Title III grant and HLC/NCA Comprehensive Self-Study Report. Additionally, Viterbo recently used FSSE data to inform a review of the campus’s general education program.

Westminster College’s (UT) Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) hosts an annual Institutional Effectiveness Retreat in January. The half-day retreat includes senior staff members, deans, and members of the Board of Trustees. To prepare, OIRA staff members spend the fall semester analyzing data from various surveys (e.g., NSSE, FSSE, BCSSE, CLA, and multiple internal surveys), paying close attention to longitudinal progress. Though the retreat is only two years old, it has proven to be an effective tactic to facilitate a discussion on campus assessment efforts and how results can be best applied to enhance institutional effectiveness.

**Coordinated Uses of FSSE Results**

FSSE cautions against comparing results across institutions due to possible inconsistencies in sampling procedures and potential negative effects on faculty participation. However, some participating institutions have worked collaboratively to identify new uses of FSSE results. Here are two examples:

In 2005, six Midwestern, residential, liberal arts colleges collectively applied for a grant from the Teagle Foundation’s Outcomes and Assessment project to explore central aspects of liberal arts education. The grant, which uses FSSE and NSSE data as measures for evaluating environment, was awarded as a part of the Teagle initiative to support faculty driven value-added assessment collaboratives. The consortium of institutions includes Alma College, Augustana College, Gustavus Adolphus College, Illinois Wesleyan University, Luther College, and Wittenberg University. As part of the grant parameters, each institution administered the course-based version of FSSE. They have used FSSE’s Special Analysis service to share their survey results with each other.

The second example comes from a NSSE consortium—the Consortium for the Study of Writing in College (CSWC)—that assisted in developing a set of extra items for the 2009 FSSE administration. The CSWC is a group of institutions with a common interest in learning about the writing practices of their undergraduate students in order to better support faculty in writing-across-the-curriculum and writing-in-the-discipline programs. The extra items focused on effective undergraduate writing processes and were based on a comparable set of student items. While there are currently no plans to share faculty responses across institutions, each CSWC institution that registered for FSSE was able to administer these items and will be able to make the connection between faculty and student responses once reports are received.
Maximize the Impact of FSSE Data

FSSE provides services and resources to help participating institutions make use of their survey results. An explanation of each of these is provided below:

Online Resources

Several FSSE resources, listed below, are available from the “Resources” section of the FSSE Web site. The purpose of these resources is to help institutional leaders facilitate workshops, presentations, and discussions with campus colleagues about FSSE results and student engagement practices.

Presentations and Publications. Throughout the year, FSSE staff members participate in several professional meetings and conferences. Papers and presentations presented at these conferences are archived on the FSSE Web site, where they may be downloaded for free. Once on the Web site, www.fsse.iub.edu, simply visit the “Papers & Presentations” tab in the left-hand menu. If you are unable to attend a particular meeting where FSSE staff members will be presenting, visit the Web site after the meeting and print a copy of the presentation.

Selected Results. The Selected Results page contains illustrated findings from past FSSE administrations. It also has downloadable SPSS syntax that FSSE participants may use to easily reproduce the featured illustrations using their own data. The featured illustrations assist with the task of presenting FSSE results to campus audiences in a manner that is readily understandable.

Working with FSSE and NSSE Findings: A Facilitator’s Guide. The facilitator’s guide debuted at the 2008 POD Network in Higher Education conference. Akin to an instructor’s manual, the facilitator’s guide provides preparation notes for facilitators, outlines for addressing topics related to FSSE and NSSE data, and exercises and worksheets that may be used to help others understand the utility of the survey data to a specific campus environment.

Outreach Services

FSSE Webinars. In 2008, the Center for Postsecondary Research instituted a series of live Webinars. All Webinars are free and interactive, allowing participants to pose questions to the presenters, as well as engage in discussion with the presenters. This past year, the FSSE staff hosted the first FSSE Webinar in this series. The recording of this Webinar, as well as a copy of the PowerPoint presentation, is available to be downloaded from www.nsse.iub.edu/webinars/archives.cfm. Once at the site, click “All” in the year category and enter “FSSE” in the search field. We will send invitations to past FSSE participants when future FSSE-related Webinars are scheduled.

Users Workshops. The NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice provides many services to the users of the Center’s various survey instruments. Among these services are NSSE Users Workshops, which are hosted twice a year—once in the spring and once in the fall. Representatives from participating institutions are encouraged to attend Users Workshops to interact with both staff members from the Center and colleagues from other institutions that administer the same survey instruments. In the past, FSSE staff members have presented at the Users Workshops on topics that are helpful for users who want to present their survey results in the manner that is most applicable for their institutional assessment needs and tailored to fit particular audiences. Copies of past presentations may be found at: www.nsse.iub.edu/workshop_presentations.

Special Analyses

In addition to tools that assist users in analyzing their own data, FSSE offers the option of requesting special analysis reports. Because FSSE ensures the anonymity of faculty respondents, certain demographic and academic variables are not returned to participating institutions. For an additional fee, FSSE staff will create customized aggregated reports to allow comparison between groups of faculty. Information on the timeline and costs for a special analysis report is available on the FSSE Web site.
Final Word

Information on how FSSE institutions are using their survey results is collected using various methods, including the FSSE Report Card feedback process, interviews with repeat users, and a recent Internet search that collected examples from institution Web sites. We share examples of how institutions are using and sharing their survey data and results by highlighting user stories on the FSSE Web site throughout the year. If you would like to have your institution’s story featured on the FSSE Web site, or need additional information regarding any of the services mentioned above, please contact us at fsse@indiana.edu.