

California State University, Stanislaus
The Undergraduate Faculty Survey of Student Engagement, Spring 2007
Executive Summary

Survey Purpose

The California State University, Stanislaus participates in the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) administered by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. The FSSE undergraduate survey annually obtains information from random samples of faculty who primarily teach undergraduate students. The FSSE data are organized into two main components of undergraduate instruction: faculty who primarily teach first-year students, and faculty who primarily teach seniors.

The survey is designed to measure faculty members' expectations of undergraduate student learning and development. The extent to which students are engaged in the educational process is a key measurement component of FSSE. FSSE also gathers data to understand how faculty members spend their time in professional activities, to understand the nature of the undergraduate experience from the faculty perspective, as well as to understand the kinds of learning the institution emphasizes (FSSE 2007 Overview 2007:1).

Survey Methodology

At CSU Stanislaus, 362 faculty members were invited to respond to the survey. Of these, 148 faculty members responded for a response rate of 42 percent. Of the 148 faculty respondents, 52 indicated they mostly teach first-year students, and 87 faculty members indicated they mostly teach seniors. Eight faculty members indicated they teach "other" students, and one faculty member did not respond to the question. The following summary is based on the responses of 139 faculty members who teach undergraduate first-year students and seniors, and thus exclude the 9 faculty members that either teach "other students" or did not answer the question.

Respondent Characteristics

About one-third (32%) of the faculty respondents are at the rank of professor; 17 percent are at the associate professor rank; another 25 percent are assistant professors. Nearly half (48%) are tenured, about one-quarter (26%) are on tenure track but not tenured, and one-quarter (26%) are not on tenure track. Most faculty members (74%) have a doctoral degree, and 21 percent have a master's degree as their highest degree level.

The majority of faculty respondents (81%) are full-time faculty. About one-third (32%) of all faculty members teach in the Arts & Humanities disciplines; 14 percent teach in the business disciplines, and 15 percent in the social sciences.

Eighty-nine percent of the faculty indicated they taught 4 or more classes in 2006-07 (40%, 4-6 classes, and 49%, 7 or more classes).

Fourteen percent of faculty members have 4 years or less of teaching experience. However, 44 percent have 15 years or more of teaching experience.

The survey also finds 11 percent of faculty respondents are 34 years of age or younger; 28 percent are 54 years of age or older; and thus 61 percent are between the ages 35-54 years.

The survey also shows 53 percent are male; the majority are White non-Hispanic (68%), 11 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and only 2 percent are African American. The survey also reports 7 percent of faculty respondents are Hispanic/Latino.

Summary of Results

The summary presents results for faculty who teach primarily first-year students (n=52) and for faculty who teach seniors (n=87). The online survey was comprised of a battery of 130 items organized along 13 topical questions or dimensions. The following outlines the most salient results of the FSSE.

It should be noted first of all that fully 95 percent of faculty indicate their teaching format is classroom, on-campus instruction. Thus only a scant 2 percent of faculty respondents teach in classrooms at some auxiliary location, and a small 3 percent teach under the distance education format.

Faculty members were asked how important is it for undergraduate students to experience particular educational tasks, such as a practicum or an internship, independent study, or in studying abroad, to name a few.

Responding overall about undergraduate students as a whole and regarding the importance of certain educational tasks, the top two ratings by faculty are for “culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)” at 76 percent, and for “practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment” (67%). The lowest ratings are for: independent study or self-designed major (21%) and studying abroad (31%).

Regarding the importance of the quality of student relationships, faculty members were asked to rate (using a 7 point Likert Scale, from 1-unfriendly, unsupportive to 7-friendly, supportive) student-to-student relationships, student-to-faculty, and student-to-administrative relationships. Collapsing the Likert Scale where a rating of 5, 6, and 7 equals a “positive relationship,” the results show faculty members believe student-to-faculty relationships to be overwhelmingly positive at 86 percent. Also highly rated are student-to-student relationships at 82 percent. Positive student-to-administrative relationships was rated the lowest percentage at 38 percent, according to faculty.

Faculty members were asked to rate the extent to which the institution emphasizes various tasks for students that would help their success. The item response categories were “very little,” “some,” “quite a bit,” or “very much.” Combining responses of “quite a bit” and “very much” the data show faculty members believe strongly that the institution encourages students to use computers in their academic work (83%). This is followed next by 72 percent that say the institution emphasizes providing students the support they need to help them succeed academically.

According to faculty, the least emphasis of the institution is on providing students the support they need to thrive socially (21%), and in helping students cope with their non-academic responsibilities, such as with work and family issues (22%).

Faculty also responded to a series of questions about the number of hours in a typical 7-day week they work on various academic tasks. Here, because the data are fixed into interval level response

categories of hours, such as, 0 hours, 1-4, 5-8, 9-12, and so forth, the modal response is used in summarizing tendencies.

More than half of faculty members (52%) spent 9-12 hours per week teaching undergraduate students. More than half (55%) spent between 1-4 hours per week giving other forms of written and oral feedback to students. And 44 percent of faculty members spend about 5-8 hours per week preparing for class.

While large proportions of faculty (47%) spent from 1-4 hours per week working with students on activities other than coursework, such as, committees, orientation, and student life activities, and also 1-4 hours per week on other interactions outside of the classroom (53%), a large percentage (51%) say they do not spend any time working with undergraduate students on advising, nor on supervising internships or other field experiences (59%), nor on conducting service activities (44%).

As for the undergraduate course section faculty members teach, about one-third (33%) teach in the arts and humanities sections, 15 percent in business, 15 percent in the social sciences, 9 percent physical science, and 6 percent education.

About one-quarter (24%) of faculty members spend on average 50-74 percent of their class time in lecture; 36 percent say 10-19 percent of their time in teacher-led discussion; about 55 percent indicate anywhere from 1 to 19 percent of their class time is in small group activities. A large proportion of faculty members (58%) do not spend any time in their classes on student computer use, or in in-class writing (48%).

Faculty members also responded to a battery of 25 items about the educational tasks of the typical student they taught during the academic year. The items are based on the fixed response set of, "never," "sometimes," "often," and "very often." The summary combines the responses for "often" and "very often."

Eighty-three percent of faculty members indicate students receive prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on their academic performance "often" or "very often"; 67 percent say students used email to communicate with an instructor. Half (52%) indicated students worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources, "often" or "very often"; 52 percent also say students asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions, "often" or "very often."

Items receiving the lowest percentages of "often" or "very often" are whether or not students have tutored or taught other students (11%), or worked with faculty member on activities other than coursework (12%), or participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course. However, across all other remaining items of student engagement in study and academic learning activities, 40 to 50 percent of faculty members say undergraduate students come to class ready with completed assignments, and that students work with other students on class projects inside as well as outside of class. In addition, nearly half indicate students discussed their grades or assignments with an instructor, in addition to nearly half again that indicate students learned something that changed the way they understood an issue or concept.

Faculty report the typical student is assigned between 1-4 textbooks, books, or book length packs of course readings during the academic year; that 70 percent read on their own between 1-4 books; about 53 percent of students write between 1-4 papers or reports of 20 pages or more; about 46 percent write between 1-4 papers or reports of 5-19 pages; and 42 percent write papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages each during the academic year.

The survey also asked faculty about the amount of student homework in a typical week. The modal response shows about 42 percent of students take 1-2 problem sets that take more than one hour to complete, while about 45 percent take 1-2 problems sets that take less than an hour to complete.

There was a wide range of opinion regarding how many hours a student should spend in study and preparing for class. The data show about one-third believe students should spend 21 hours or more in a typical 7-day week; one-third say between 11-20 hours per week; and one-third indicate between 1-10 hours per week.

All faculty agree students should not work for pay on campus for more than 20 hours per week, and only 5 percent believe students should spend 21 hours or more per week working for pay off campus. It should be noted one-in-five faculty members believe students should not work at all, either on or off campus. About 60 percent believe students should spend between 1-5 hours per week participating in co-curricular activities on campus.

But what do faculty members believe students actually do? Seventy-five percent believe students actually spend between 1-10 hours per week preparing for class. Five percent believe students actually work for pay on campus for more than 20 hours per week, and 42 percent believe students actually work for pay off campus for more than 20 hours per week. About 57 percent believe students actually participate in co-curricular activities for about 1-5 hours per week.

Faculty members were asked how much during the current school year do they believe the student's coursework emphasized mental activities in the learning process. Faculty members were asked to respond, "very little," "some," "quite a bit," or "very much" to questions about students' mental activities in coursework. Those responding "quite a bit" or "very much" shows, the memorization of facts (67%), analysis of ideas (62%), synthesis of ideas (50%), application of theory (49%), and making judgments about the value of information (39%), to be the types of mental activities emphasized by the student coursework.

The FSSE posed a battery of 16 items about the student's experiences at the university that contributed to his or her knowledge, skills, and personal development. Those responding "quite a bit" or "very much" summarizes the results. The highest ratings are for, acquiring a broad general education (66%), using computing and information technology (61%), and thinking critically and analytically (60%). Also higher than 50 percent are for, writing clearly and effectively (58%), acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills (55%), working effectively with others (55%), and learning effectively on his or her own and speaking clearly and effectively (both items, 51%). The lowest ratings are for, developing a deepened sense of spirituality (3%), voting in local, state, or national elections (9%), and contributing to the welfare of his or her community (19%).