

FSSE 2014 Civic Engagement Module Findings

New to FSSE for the 2013 administration were topical modules, short sets of questions on a topic related to current issues in higher education and student engagement. The Civic Engagement module assessed institutional emphasis on conflict resolution skills and examined how often students are encouraged to engage with local, state, national, and global issues.

These results use responses from 2,051 faculty members from 14 institutions who responded to the 2014 Civic Engagement module. About a half of faculty members (52%) said that their institution substantially “(very much” or “quite a bit”) encouraged their undergraduate students to contribute to the well-being of their community. In addition, about a half of faculty members reported that their institution substantially emphasized the following activities for undergraduate students: “helping people resolve their disagreements with each other” (42%); “resolving conflicts that involve bias, discrimination, and prejudice” (48%); and “leading a group where people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included” (55%). Across all disciplinary areas, faculty said that their institution emphasizes conflict resolution skills to a high extent. Faculty in social service (61%) and engineering disciplines (62%) reported the highest rates of emphasis, while biology sciences and social sciences (39%) reported lowest rates of emphasis.

With respect to the frequency of student engagement with local, state, national and global issues, most faculty at least sometimes encouraged students to discuss local and campus issues (88%) and state or national issues (89%). However, about one-third of faculty members said that they never encourage their students to ask others to address local (31%) or national issues (31%). Further, nearly half (42%) of faculty members said that they never encourage their students to organize others to work on either local or national issues. Across all disciplinary areas, faculty encouraged students to engage in local and national issues to a moderate extent. In particular, faculty in social service and communication, media and public relations disciplines reported the highest percentage of encouragement compared to that of the other disciplinary areas while faculty in physical sciences reported the lowest rate of encouraging students’ engagement in both state and national issues. For example, the figure below shows how encouragement of students to raise awareness about state, national, or global issues differs by discipline.

