FSSE 2014 Development of Transferable Skills 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 Development of Transferable Skills module, adapted from a project of the American Association of States Colleges and Universities, examines student engagement in activities that develop useful and transferable skills for the workplace.

These results use responses from 2,782 faculty members from 20 institutions that responded to the 2014 Development of Transferable Skills module. Over 70 percent of faculty members said that they have substantially ("quite a bit" or "very much") encouraged students to critically evaluate multiple solutions to a problem (73%) or creatively think about new ideas or about ways to improve things (74%) while only about one-third of faculty members (37%) reported that they have substantially encouraged students to give a speech to a group or work in a group with people who differ from them in terms of background, political orientation, points of view, etc. In addition, a majority of faculty reported that their students have at least sometimes written something (paper, report, article, blog, etc.) that used information from a variety of sources (92%), included ideas from more than one academic discipline (87%), presented multiple viewpoints or perspectives (88%), and assessed the conclusions of a published book (81%). Across all disciplinary areas, faculty said that their students used these four skills when they write to a moderate extent. Faculty in social service and social service professions reported the highest rates of emphasis, while physical sciences reported the lowest rates of emphasis.

The extent to which faculty encouraged students to do the activities that develop transferable skills differs across disciplinary areas. In particular, faculty in communications reported the highest percentage of encouragement with respect to giving a speech to a group (67%) and faculty in engineering (84%) reported the highest emphasis on critically evaluating multiple solutions to a problem. Furthermore, faculty in social service professions reported the highest rate of encouraging students to discuss the ethical consequences of a course of action (81%) and creatively think about new ideas (84%). The figure below shows disciplinary differences on faculty encouragement of their students' participation in activities that focused on creatively thinking about new ideas or ways to improve things.

Figure FSSEtrn1: Percentage of Faculty who encouraged students to participate in activity that focused on creatively think about new ideas or about ways to improve things