

FSSE 2014 Experiences with Diverse Perspectives 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 Experiences with Diverse Perspectives module examined opportunities for students to engage in activities that promote greater understanding of societal differences.

These results use responses from 1,363 faculty members from 11 institutions who responded to the 2014 Experiences with Diverse Perspectives module. About three-fifths of faculty members (58%) said that their institution substantially (“very much” or “quite a bit”) had offered events or activities that emphasized perspectives on societal differences (economic, ethnic, political, religious, etc.). In addition, more than a half of faculty members reported that they have at least sometimes encouraged students to attend events or activities that focused on examining their understanding of the following societal issues: economic or social inequality (64%); issues of race, ethnicity, or nationality (63%); religious or philosophical differences (54%); different political viewpoints (57%), and issues of gender or sexual orientation (50%). Across all disciplinary areas, faculty said that their institution offered events or activities that emphasized perspectives on societal differences (economic, ethnic, political, religious, etc.) to a moderate extent. Faculty in social service (67%) and arts & humanities disciplines (61%) reported the highest rates of emphasis, while engineering (48%) reported the lowest rates of emphasis.

With respect to the frequency of faculty structuring a class section around topics related to societal differences, more than a half faculty at least sometimes structured their class section around: economic or social inequality (58%); issues of race, ethnicity, or nationality (56%) and different political viewpoints (51%). However, about more than a half of faculty members said that they never structured their class section around issues of gender or sexual orientation (57%) or religious or philosophical differences (52%).

Disciplinary area differences also exist for the extent to which faculty encouraged students to attend events or activities that focused on examining their understanding of the following societal issues: economic or social inequality; issues of race, ethnicity, or nationality; religious or philosophical differences; different political viewpoints, and issues of gender or sexual orientation. In particular, faculty in social services (93%) and social sciences disciplines (83%) reported the highest percentage of encouragement compared to that of the other disciplinary areas, while faculty in physical sciences (28%) reported the lowest rate of encouraging students’ engagement in economic or social issues. The figure below shows how faculty encouragement of their students attending events that focused on economic or social inequality issues differs by discipline.

Figure FSSEdiv1: Percentage of Faculty who encouraged students to attend events that focused on economic or social society

