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The Supportive Environment scale (*fSE*) includes questions pertaining to faculty perceptions of the extent to which institutions emphasize and provide services that support student learning and development. Instructors answer a variety of questions across domains including the cognitive, interpersonal, and physical. This document provides basic findings for the FSSE Supportive Environment scale and its individual component items.

Data Description

The data in this brief come from faculty respondents at 158 four-year colleges and universities that administered the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) in 2022 or 2023. If an institution participated in both years, we only used their most recent year of data. Most, 13,625 out of 15,353 faculty, at these institutions responded to at least one of the items in the Supportive Environment items. FSSE collects information annually at hundreds of four-year colleges and universities from faculty who teach at least one undergraduate course in the current academic year. The results provide information about faculty expectations for student engagement in educational practices that are empirically linked with student learning and development. Institutions use their data to identify aspects of the undergraduate experience that can be improved through changes in policy and practice. For more information, visit the FSSE website: fsse.indiana.edu.

Item Information

The Supportive Environment Scale consists of 8 items under one question stem. Information on these items can be found in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 contains counts, means, and standard deviations; it additionally contains factor loadings for the items that fit within this scale. Table 2 contains frequency percentages for all the items' response options.

With the highest average and largest proportion of faculty responding "Very important" or "Important," faculty most substantially emphasize providing support to help students succeed academically, providing support for students' overall well-being, and encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds. Faculty least substantially emphasize students attending campus activities and events and students attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues.

Table 3 contains significant correlations between the individual items in the Supportive Environment scale. Moderate relationships exist among most of the items with the strongest relationship between providing support to help students succeed academically and students using learning support services ($r = .606, p < .01$). Some other notable moderate relationships include providing support for students' overall well-being and providing opportunities for students to be involved socially ($r = .574, p < .01$); helping students manage their non-academic responsibilities and providing support for students' overall well-being ($r = .526, p < .01$); and students attending campus activities and events and students attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues ($r = .587, p < .01$).

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Scale Information

The individual items within Supportive Environment are combined together to create the Supportive Environment scale. First, the individual responses are recoded to a 0 to 60 scale: Very important=4 is recoded to 60, Important=3 is recoded to 40, Somewhat=2 is recoded to 20, and Not important=1 is recoded to 0. Individual faculty responses on this 0-60 scale are then averaged together to create an aggregate scale score. Information on the Supportive Environment Scale can be found in Table 4. The intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) suggests that .4% of the variation in *fSE* is at the institution level.

Correlations

Table 3 presents significant correlations between the individual component items within the Supportive Environment scale. Table 5 presents correlations between the Supportive Environment scale and the core survey FSSE Scales. Faculty who place greater importance on aspects of Supportive Environment also emphasize more Reflective & Integrative Learning, perceive that they display more Effective Teaching Practices, and incorporate more Learning Strategies and Higher-Order Learning activities in their courses.

Disciplinary Differences

Faculty perception of a supportive environment (*fSE*) varies by faculty's disciplinary area appointment (Figure 1). Faculty who exhibit greater levels of importance for increasing Supportive Environment are in the fields of Social Service Professions, Business, and Arts & Humanities. Faculty who exhibit lower levels of importance for increasing Supportive Environment are in the fields of Communications, Media, & Public Relations; Engineering; Physical Sciences, Mathematics, and Computer Science; and Biology, Agriculture, and Natural Resources. There is noticeable variation within disciplinary areas as well. For example, Business faculty have a relatively small interquartile range, suggesting that faculty in this field more consistently exhibit an importance for increasing Supportive Environment. Other fields, such as Health Professions, have a slightly larger interquartile range, suggesting that faculty in this field have a greater diversity in their emphasizing of the importance of Supportive Environment.

Our Related Papers

For more information about FSSE and Supportive Environment see the following publications, conference papers and presentations, research reports or other FSSE investigations focused on Supportive Environment:

- National Survey of Student Engagement. (2015). [Faculty perceptions of safety and support](#). In *Engagement Insights: Survey Findings on the Quality of Undergraduate Education-Annual Results 2015*. Bloomington, IN Indiana Center for Postsecondary Research.
- Priddie, C., Silberstein, S., & BrckaLorenz, A. (2018). [Support by any other name: Disaggregating supportive environments for faculty](#). [Conference presentation]. 2018 Assessment Institute, Indianapolis, IN, United States.

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- BrckaLorenz, A., & Brandon, J. (2022, January 20). [*Motivating Teaching Excellence: Identifying Supportive Environments for Diverse Faculty*](#). [Conference presentation]. Annual Meeting for the American Association of Colleges and Universities, Washington, D.C., United States.

Predictors

Some types of faculty, courses, and institutions are more or less likely to place greater importance on increasing aspects of Supportive Environment. Table 6 presents significant ($p < .05$) predictors of increased importance placed on Supportive Environment by faculty and institutional characteristics. Following Table 6 are figures representing the average Supportive Environment differences by these faculty and institutional characteristics.

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Table 1. Supportive Environment Item Descriptives

How important is it to you that your institution <i>increase</i> its emphasis on each of the following?				
<i>Response options: 4=Very important, 3=Important, 2=Somewhat important, 1=Not important</i>				
	Count	Mean	Std. Dev.	Factor Loading
Providing support to help students succeed academically (<i>fSEacademic</i>)	13,625	3.48	.699	.351
Students using learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.) (<i>fSElearnsup</i>)	13,625	3.30	.755	.361
Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.) (<i>fSEdiverse</i>)	13,625	3.39	.792	.654
Providing opportunities for students to be involved socially (<i>fSEsocial</i>)	13,625	3.08	.847	.755
Providing support for students' overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.) (<i>fSEwellness</i>)	13,625	3.46	.728	.666
Helping students manage their non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) (<i>fSEnonacad</i>)	13,625	2.96	.865	.631
Students attending campus activities and events (performing arts, athletic events, etc.) (<i>fSEactivities</i>)	13,625	2.69	.864	.807
Students attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues (<i>fSEevents</i>)	13,625	2.80	.870	.817

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Table 2. Supportive Environment Item Frequencies

How important is it to you that your institution <i>increase</i> its emphasis on each of the following?				
	Very important (%)	Important (%)	Somewhat (%)	Not important (%)
Providing support to help students succeed academically (<i>fSEacademic</i>)	58.9	31.6	8.3	1.2
Students using learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.) (<i>fSElearnsup</i>)	46.5	38.7	13.3	1.6
Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.) (<i>fSEdiverse</i>)	55.1	31.3	10.6	3.0
Providing opportunities for students to be involved socially (<i>fSEsocial</i>)	35.5	41.1	18.8	4.5
Providing support for students' overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.) (<i>fSEwellness</i>)	58.2	30.8	9.4	1.6
Helping students manage their non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) (<i>fSEnonacad</i>)	30.7	40.0	24.3	5.0
Students attending campus activities and events (performing arts, athletic events, etc.) (<i>fSEactivities</i>)	18.3	41.0	32.4	8.4
Students attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues (<i>fSEevents</i>)	22.5	42.4	27.7	7.4

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Table 3. Significant Correlations between Supportive Environment Items

	fSE 02b	fSE 02c	fSE 02d	fSE 02e	fSE 02f	fSE 02g	fSE 02h	fSE 02i
fSE 2b								
fSE 2c	.606**							
fSE 2d	.400**	.405**						
fSE 2e	.365**	.345**	.485**					
fSE 2f	.474**	.416**	.494**	.574**				
fSE 2g	.369**	.360**	.410**	.428**	.526**			
fSE 2h	.253**	.280**	.346**	.507**	.387**	.367**		
fSE 2i	.276**	.300**	.492**	.440**	.411**	.415**	.587**	

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 4. Supportive Environment Scale Descriptives

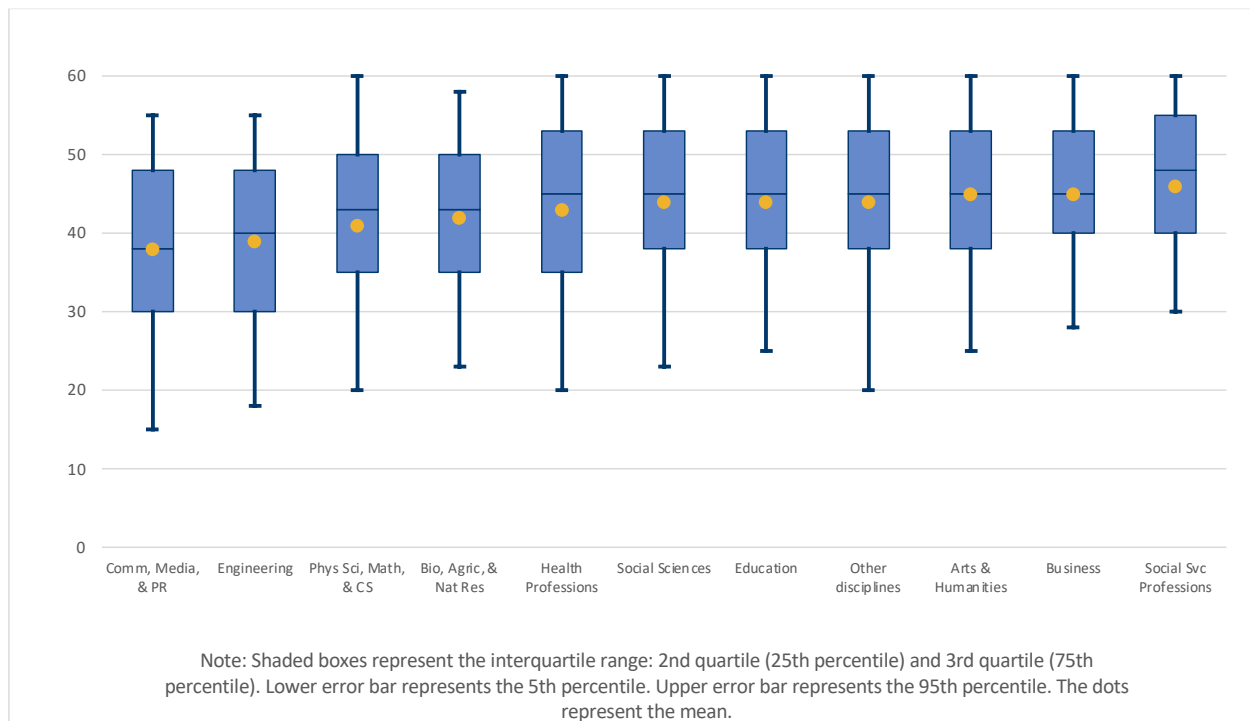
Scale	Count	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Cronbach's Alpha	ICC
<i>fSE</i>	13,610	0	60	42.9	11.26	.851	.004

Table 5. Significant ($p < .001$) Correlations between Supportive Environment and FSSE Scales

Higher-Order Learning ($r = .204$)	Quantitative Reasoning ($r = .107$)	Student-Faculty Interaction ($r = .214$)
Reflective & Integrative Learning ($r = .408$)	Collaborative Learning ($r = .187$)	Effective Teaching Practices ($r = .241$)
Learning Strategies ($r = .231$)	Discussions with Diverse Others ($r = .161$)	Quality of Interactions ($r = .098$)

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Figure 1. fSE by Discipline



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Table 6. Faculty, Course, and Institution Characteristic Predictors for Supportive Environment Scale (continued on next page)

		<i>fSE</i>		
		Unstd. B	SE	Sig.
(Constant)		.314	.097	**
Course division	Lower-division course			
	Upper-division course	-.048	.017	**
	Other division course	.061	.026	*
Course size	Small course size (<21 students)			
	Medium course size (21-30 students)	.029	.014	*
	Large course size (31+ students)	-.032	.015	*
Course format	Entirely in-person on campus	.053	.027	*
	Entirely in-person at auxiliary location			
	Entirely online, synchronous (2021-present)	-.110	.050	*
	Entirely online, asynchronous (2021-present)	-.108	.037	**
	A mix of in-person and online instruction	.109	.031	***
Disciplinary area	Arts & Humanities	.184	.023	***
	Bio Sciences, Agriculture, & Natural Resources			
	Physical Sciences, Math, & Computer Sciences	-.110	.034	**
	Social Sciences			
	Business			
	Communications, Media, & Public Relations	-.397	.048	***
	Education	.103	.032	**
	Engineering	-.305	.029	***
	Health Professions			
	Social Service Professions	.273	.062	***
Other disciplinary fields	.141	.040	***	
Academic rank	Professor			
	Associate Professor			
	Assistant Professor			
	Instructor			
	Lecturer			
	Other rank	.081	.032	*
Tenure status	No tenure system			
	Not on tenure track			
	Tenure track			
	Tenured	-.07	.026	**

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. All continuous variables were standardized before entry in the model so that unstandardized coefficients can be interpreted similar to effect sizes. Effect coding was used so that coefficients can be interpreted as compared to the average faculty member as opposed to a selected reference group.

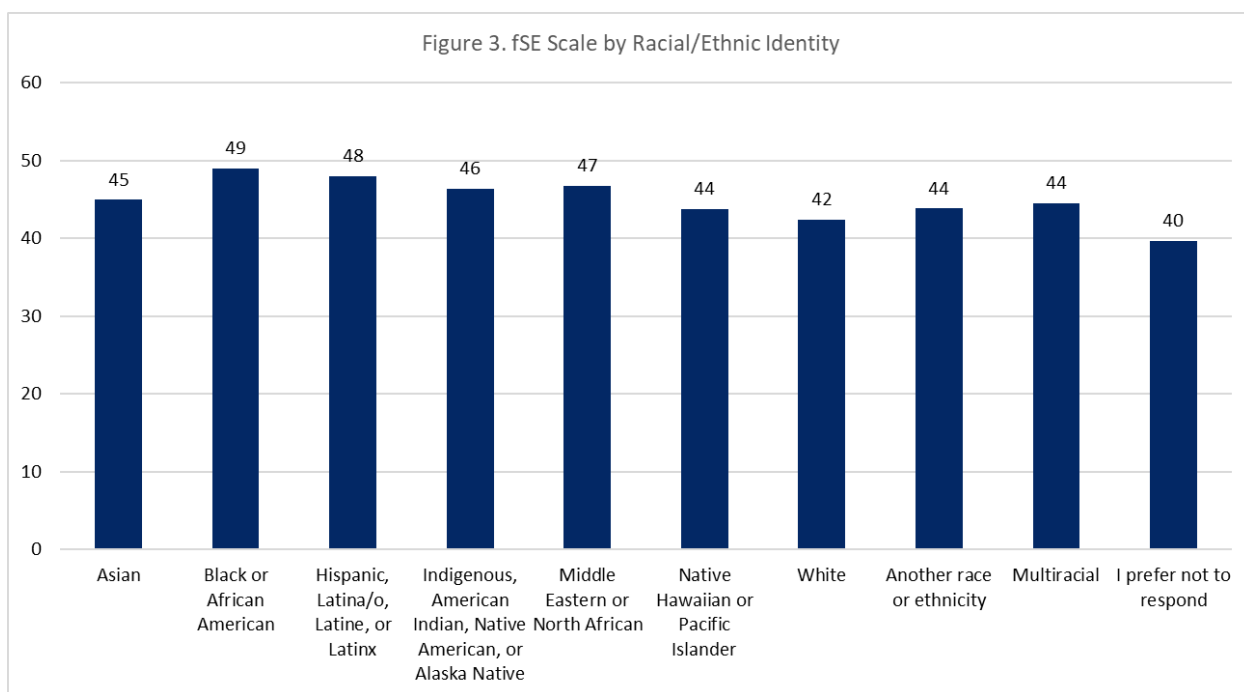
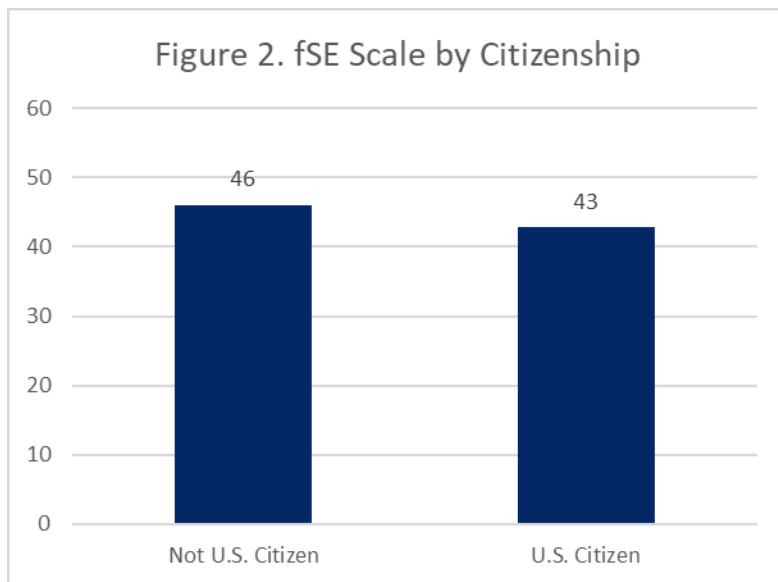
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Table 6. Faculty, Course, and Institution Characteristic Predictors for Supportive Environment Scale (continued)

		<i>fSE</i>		
		Unstd. B	SE	Sig.
Number of courses taught this school year				
Years of teaching experience		-.053	.015	***
Age in years		.066	.014	***
Gender identity	Woman	.118	.035	***
	Man	-.178	.036	***
	Nonbinary+	.256	.086	**
	I prefer not to respond	-.197	.059	***
Racial/ethnic identification	Asian			
	Black or African American	.287	.066	***
	Hispanic, Latina/o, Latine, or Latinx	.235	.07	***
	Indigenous, American Indian, Native American, or Alaska Native			
	Middle Eastern or North African			
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander			
	White	-.22	.055	***
	Another race or ethnicity			
	Multiracial			
I prefer not to respond	-.423	.072	***	
Sexual orientation	LGBQ+	.12	.071	***
	Not LGBQ+			
	I prefer not to respond	-.085	.032	**
Holds a terminal degree				
US citizen				
Private institution		-.049	.023	*
Undergraduate enrollment in thousands		-.023	.011	*
Carnegie basic classification	Doctoral Universities			
	Master's College and Universities			
	Baccalaureate Colleges			
	Other Carnegie classification			

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. All continuous variables were standardized before entry in the model so that unstandardized coefficients can be interpreted similar to effect sizes. Effect coding was used so that coefficients can be interpreted as compared to the average faculty member as opposed to a selected reference group.

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