



# FSSE & NSSE (2017) Comparison Report

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## Executive Summary

Every three years SF State participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). In 2017, SF State also participated in the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE). Overall, 16% ( $n = 1,961$ ) of the students invited to participate in the survey partially or fully completed it. The response rate was 13% among first-year students ( $n = 471$ ) and 17% among seniors ( $n = 1,490$ ). Among faculty the response rate was 28% ( $n = 476$ ). Almost half (47.5%) of the faculty respondents were full, associate, or assistant professors, and another 25.4% were lecturers. The remaining respondents were instructors (4.4%), graduate teaching assistant (3.4%), or other (4.0%). Twenty other CSU campuses made up the CSU comparison group against which the SF State responses were compared.

The FSSE-NSSE Combined Report revealed that faculty and student perceptions differed considerably. In general, faculty perceived that their coursework emphasized the various engagement indicators (types of learning, interactions, practices, etc.) to a greater extent than did their students. In addition, faculty estimated the quality of interactions between students and various campus communities (faculty, academic advisors, etc.) to be less than the students' perceived the quality of these relationships. Some of the most notable differences between faculty and student responses included:

- Over half (54%) of lower-division faculty estimated that their typical students worked 16 or more hours per week, while 21% of first-year students reported those hours.
- Faculty underestimated the extent to which memorization is emphasized in coursework as compared to the perceptions of students.
- Nearly half of all faculty rated undergraduate participation in research with faculty as important, however only 15% of senior students indicated they had participated in research.
- The smallest response differences were found among the discussion with diverse others items which suggests students and faculty similarly perceive emphasis on diversity at SF State

Many of the differences between faculty and student responses were similar to those found in the 2014 administration of the NSSE and FSSE, which suggests these differences in perception may continue if not addressed. While the cause of the differences in perception is not clear, the results indicate that there is large differences in the ways students and faculty members see life at SF State.

## What are the NSSE and FSSE?

The **National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)** measures students' engagement in their university education through questions that explore students' behaviors and experiences. The survey is administered at SF State every three years, and the results are compared with the results at other CSU campuses, at other institutions in the same Carnegie Class and with the national cohort from the two most recent NSSE administrations.

The **Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)** measures faculty perception of students' engagement in their university education based on faculty experiences teaching undergraduates. The FSSE is a complementary survey to the NSSE which asks many or the same (or similar) questions as those asked of undergraduate students.

Both surveys are comprised of questions which are categorized into 10 **Engagement Indicators (EI)** and 6 **High Impact Practices (HIPs)**. The EIs are arranged under the following four themes: Academic Challenge, Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, and Campus Environment. These themes highlight and summarize the focus of the questions in each group. The HIPs included internship or field experience, leadership in a student organization, learning community, study abroad, research with faculty, culminating senior experience, and courses featuring service-learning.

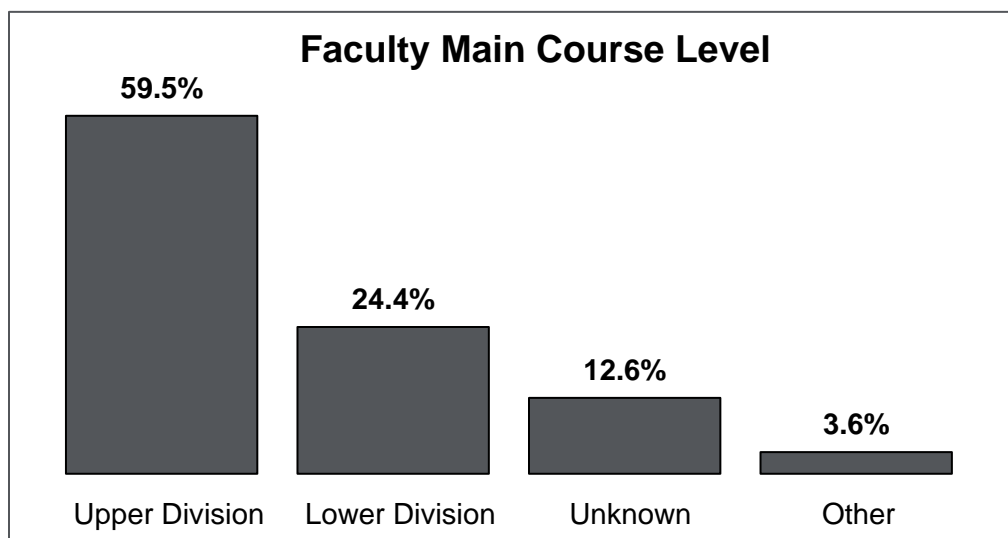
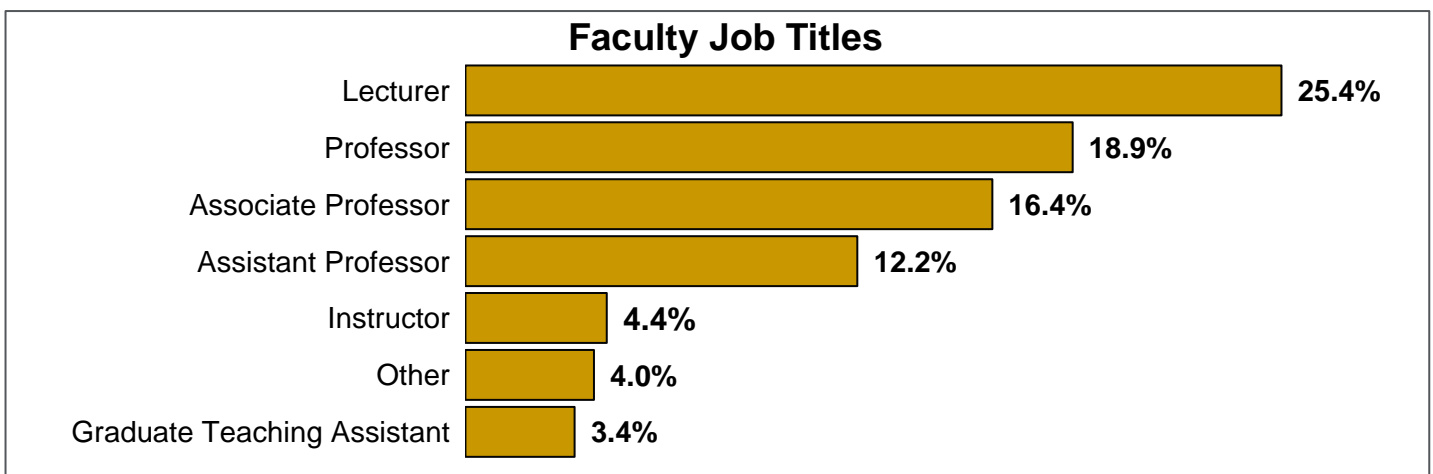
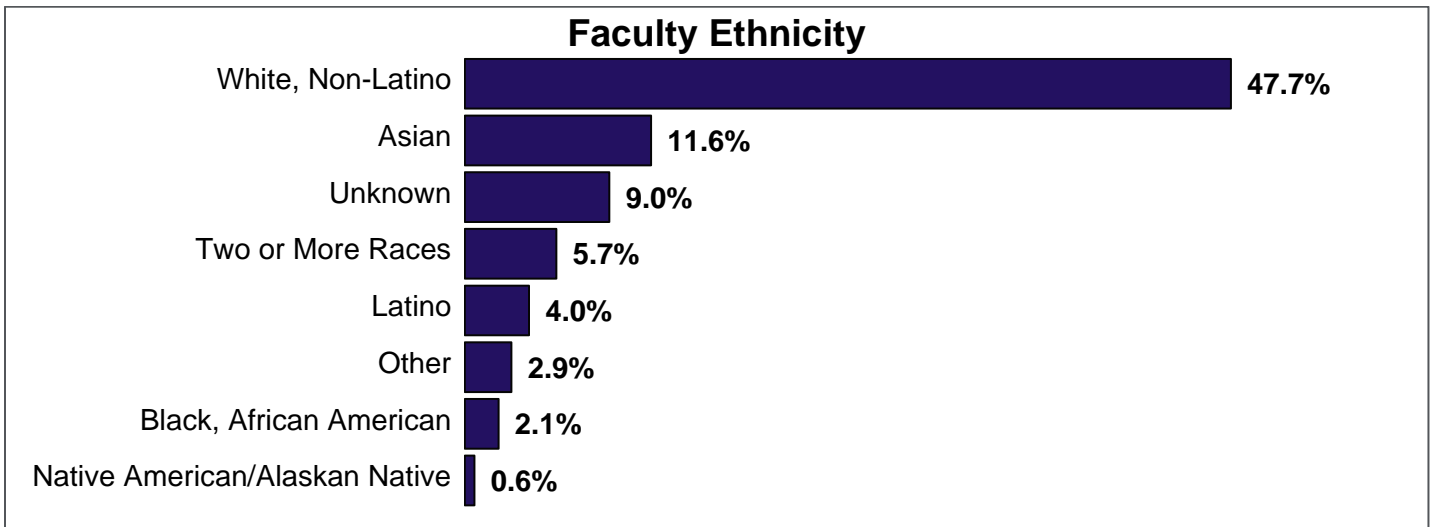
In this report, the response patterns and differences between the NSSE and FSSE at SF State in 2017 are summarized.

*For more information about EI and the individual questions under each section click [here](#).*

## Demographics and Response Rates

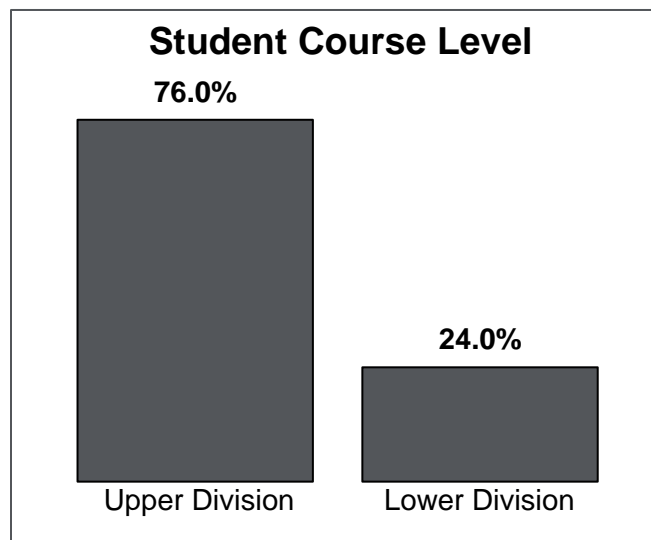
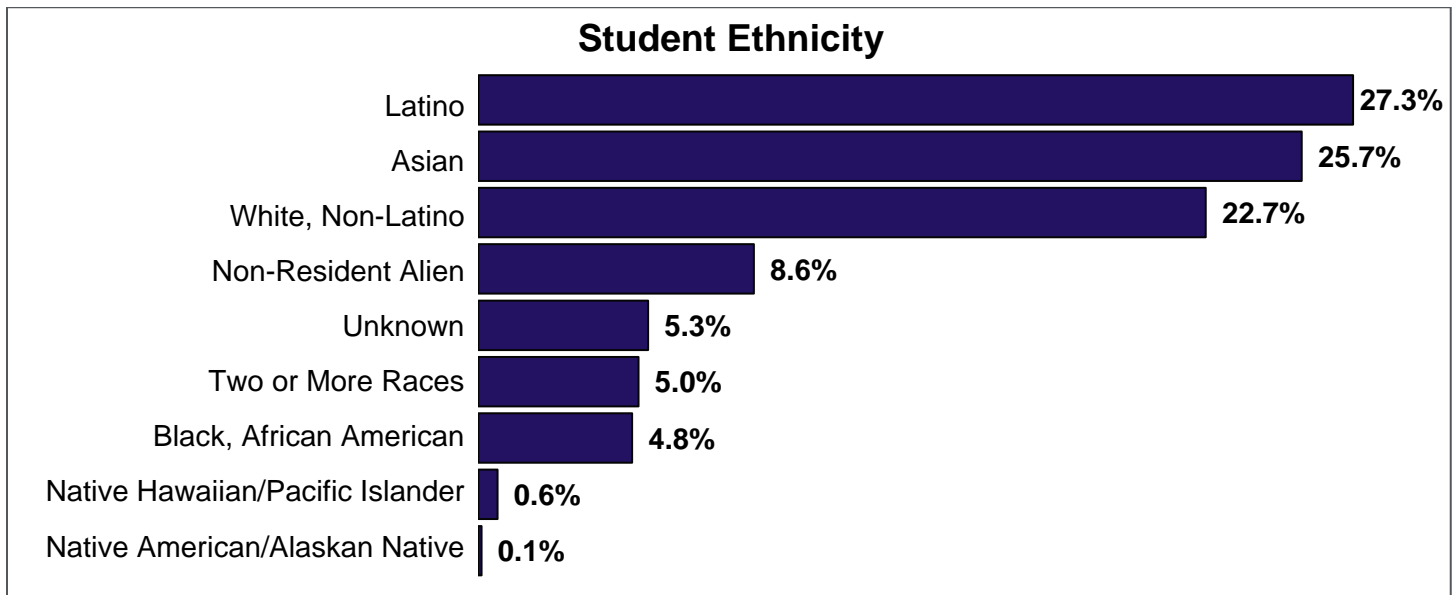
### Faculty

- $n = 476$  (28% response rate)



Students\*

- Total:  $n = 1,961$  (16% response rate)
  - Seniors:  $n = 1,490$  (17% response rate)
  - First-Years:  $n = 471$  (13% response rate)



\*Visit the IR website here for more information on the demographics of the student respondents to the NSSE

## Comparison of Faculty and Student Responses

Student and faculty responses in the NSSE and FSSE include similar questions which address perceptions of engagement and environment at SF State. The differences in responses between the two groups are included below. For the purposes of this report, student responses are reported in terms of class level (e.g. First-Year or Senior) and faculty responses are reported based on the course level the majority of the classes (e.g. Lower Division or Upper Division) taught by the faculty member fall under. Groups of items are categorized by each of the four themes.

### Theme 1: Academic Challenge

*Items from this theme focused on student and faculty perceptions of activities which challenge students and support engagement in deep learning. An example item included “how often have you connected your learning to societal problems or issues”.*

Faculty consistently indicated that coursework emphasized concepts surrounding the integration of ideas – such as forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information – more than reporting students. Student and faculty responses differed by approximately 10 percentage points (mean percentage difference = 9), which was a relatively small amount compared to other items. The difference between faculty and student responses about the emphasis of “evaluating a point of view, decision or information source” was one of the smallest which indicates both groups see this topic being emphasized in similar amounts.

The percentage of faculty who rated the reflective and integrative learning tasks as important was consistently higher than the amount of students who reported they often performed these tasks in courses. The largest discrepancy ( $M = 24$ ) was found when respondents were asked about examining the strengths and weaknesses of the students’ own views on a topic or issue. Another large discrepancy was found between the importance lower-division faculty placed on evaluating what others had concluded from numerical information and the percentage of reporting first-years who indicated they did this often in the past school year. On only one question from this section were faculty perceptions lower than student perceptions. This item asked “how often have you reviewed your notes after class”. Although the percentage difference was small ( $M = 6$ ), this was notable in this section for being the only item where upper-division and lower-division faculty perceived students performing an activity less than students reported.

Nearly identical percentages of faculty and students reported SF State emphasized spending significant amounts of time on studying and academic work. On average, faculty perceived higher levels of emphasis on the topics and behaviors addressed than students perceived or carried out the behaviors. This shows that there is a discrepancy between what faculty are aiming to emphasize and what students are doing in regards to academic challenge topics.

Notable Differences: Academic Challenge					
Question	Item	Course Level	FSSE	NSSE	% Diff
How much does coursework emphasize	Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source	LD	79%	76%	+3
		UD	77%	74%	+2
F: How important? S: How often?	Examine the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	LD	88%	62%	+26
		UD	89%	68%	+22
	Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information.	LD	51%	37%	+15
		UD	51%	45%	+6

Question	Item	Course Level	FSSE	NSSE	% Diff
F: How much encourage? S: How often done?	Reviewed your notes after class.	LD	56%	62%	-6
		UD	55%	61%	-6
How much does institution emphasize?	Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work.	LD	72%	70%	+2
		UD	78%	77%	+1

### Theme 2: Learning with Peers

Items from this theme focused on student and faculty perceptions of developing social competence to help students’ better deal with complex problems following graduation. An example item from this theme was “how often have you asked another student to help you understand course material”.

This theme had two main questions. The first was about working with other students in various capacities. Faculty emphasis on collaborative learning items was not directly related to students indicating they completed the activities more often. In fact, faculty reported often encouraging behaviors about 20% (M = 17) more than students reported completing these activities often.

The second was about interactions between students from different backgrounds. Faculty underestimated the amount of opportunities students had to interact with students of other races, backgrounds and political views. However, these discrepancies were small (under 10%) for each of the different groups which indicates faculty are aware of the opportunities for diverse interactions between students at SF State.

Notable Differences: Learning with Peers					
Question	Item	Course Level	FSSE	NSSE	% Diff
F: How much do you encourage? S: How often have you done?	Ask another student to help you understand course material	LD	75%	50%	+25
		UD	67%	45%	+22
	Prepare for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students	LD	67%	40%	+27
		UD	67%	48%	+19
F: How much opportunity do students have? S: How often have you?	Had discussions with people of a race or ethnicity other than your own	LD	77%	74%	+3
		UD	80%	81%	-1
	Had discussions with people of a race or ethnicity other than your own	LD	63%	69%	-6
		UD	72%	74%	-2

### Theme 3: Experiences with Faculty

Items from this theme focused on student and faculty perceptions of interactions with faculty both inside and outside the classroom setting. An example item included “how often have you discussed your academic performance with a faculty member”.

This theme focused on two aspects of students’ experiences with faculty. The first focus was on interactions outside of the classroom – such as faculty and students discussing career plans. Faculty overestimated—and/or students underreported—the frequency of student-faculty interaction, especially discussion of course content outside of class and discussion of students’ academic performance. There were



large differences ( $M = 32$ ) between how much faculty and students reported taking part in these activities.

The second focus was on the teaching practices of faculty within the classroom setting. Faculty again consistently reported higher levels ( $M = 22$ ) of effective teaching practices than students reported faculty engaging in. The largest difference ( $M = 28$ ) for both upper-division and lower-division students and faculty was on the question about whether faculty had “provided prompt and detailed feedback”. Overall, this theme featured some of the largest and most consistent patterns of discrepancy between faculty and student responses.

Notable Differences: Experiences with Faculty					
Question	Item	Course Level	FSSE	NSSE	% Diff
How often have you done?	Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class	LD	61%	16%	+45
		UD	65%	28%	+38
	Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member	LD	70%	21%	+48
		UD	68%	29%	+39
To what extent have instructors?	Taught course sessions in an organized way	LD	95%	68%	+27
		UD	99%	74%	+25
	Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments	LD	90%	60%	+30
		UD	90%	63%	+27

#### Theme 4: Campus Environment

*Items from this theme focused on student and faculty perceptions of quality and supportiveness of campus relationships. An example item included “how much does SF State emphasize providing opportunities to be involved socially”.*

The first focus of this theme was the perceptions of quality of interactions between students and various other campus groups – such as other students and academic advisors. Notably there were moderate differences between faculty perceptions and students ratings. Most importantly, faculty consistently perceived lower quality of interactions than students themselves reported. Faculty ratings of high quality interactions were approximately 20% lower than students for all groups.

The second focus of this theme was the amount of emphasis SF State placed on creating a supportive environment for students. The percentages of faculty who indicated that it is important that SF State increase its emphasis on various facets of a supportive campus environment (e.g., providing support to help students succeed academically) were consistently higher than the percentages of students who indicated that SF State currently emphasizes them.

Notable Differences: Campus Environment					
Question	Item	Course Level	FSSE	NSSE	% Diff
F: Perception of students' quality of interactions S:Quality of interactions	Student interactions with Faculty	LD	20%	34%	-13
		UD	31%	47%	-16
	Student interactions with Academic Advisors	LD	6%	30%	-24
		UD	14%	38%	-24

Question	Item	Course Level	FSSE	NSSE	% Diff
F: Important to increase? S: How much emphasis?	Providing support to help students succeed academically.	LD	94%	65%	+29
		UD	96%	58%	+38
	Helping students manage their non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	LD	73%	35%	+38
		UD	69%	28%	+41

## Additional Items

Some questions from the NSSE and FSSE were not included under a specific theme. The perceptions among faculty and students about these additional items are therefore discussed below.

Faculty underestimated—and/or students overreported—the extent to which memorization is emphasized in coursework. This difference was the largest underestimation by faculty (approximately 38%). Another large underestimation was reported in the perception of how many students spent more than 16 hours preparing for class each week. In addition, 30% more first years and 37% more seniors than faculty estimated indicated that they spent more than 16 hours each week preparing for class. In addition, faculty also overestimated the number of hours students (especially among first-year students) work for pay on and off-campus. Approximately half of lower-division faculty estimated that their typical students worked 16 or more hours per week, while approximately 20% of first-year students reported those hours. This overestimation among faculty was also found in the 2014 administration of the NSSE and FSSE at SF State.

The NSSE and FSSE asked about whether students gained skills in particular areas. The percentage of students who indicated they gained more knowledge, skills, and personal development in the areas was greater than percentage of faculty included in their courses. These differences were the largest in the following areas: speaking clearly and effectively for first year students, and analyzing numerical and statistical information for senior students. In addition, the percentage of lower-division faculty who indicated they structured their courses to focus on development of critical and analytical thinking skills, was greater (approximately 20% difference) than the amount of first-years students who said they gained such skills while at SF State.

Notable Differences: Additional Items					
Question	Item	Course Level	FSSE	NSSE	% Diff
How much does coursework emphasize?	Memorizing course material	LD	25%	62%	-37
		UD	21%	60%	-39
How many students spend 16 or more hours?	Preparing for class	LD	5%	34%	-30
		UD	6%	43%	-37
	Working for pay off campus	LD	54%	21%	+33
		UD	72%	53%	+18
How much has SF State improved?	Thinking critically and analytically skills	LD	94%	71%	+23
		UD	96%	80%	+16
	Ability to analyze numerical and statistical information	LD	36%	53%	-17
		UD	35%	62%	-27

## High-Impact Practices

The NSSE also focused on extracurricular activities known as high-impact practices based on the impact these activities can have on student engagement. Faculty indicated how important they perceived each practice and if they participated in the applicable practices with undergraduate students. Faculty indicated that senior culminating experience was the most important high-impact practice. This was followed by internship or field experience in terms of importance level. While the majority of faculty indicated internships were important, only 27% indicated they personally participated with students in either an internship or field experience.

There was differences between how important faculty perceived each high-impact practice and how many students reported participating in each practice. Nearly half of all faculty rated research with faculty as important, while only 15% of senior students indicated they had participated in research. This pattern was also found in regards to learning communities. Approximately half of faculty surveyed indicated learning communities were important, however only 15% of seniors and 9% of first-year students had participated in a learning community.

Notable Differences: High Impact Practices				
HIP	Faculty Importance	Faculty Participation	Student Level	Student Participation
Learning Community	51%	--	FY	9%
			SN	15%
Service-Learning	59%	48%	FY	55%
			SN	63%
Research with Faculty	53%	42%	FY	2%
			SN	15%
Internship or Field Experience	77%	27%	FY	7%
			SN	37%
Study Abroad	35%	--	FY	2%
			SN	5%
Senior Culminating Experience	79%	--	FY	0%
			SN	30%

## Conclusion

The responses to NSSE and FSSE questions varied greatly between students and faculty. While some topics received similar responses (such as seen in the questions about discussions with diverse others), other questions had discrepancies as large as almost 50% between faculty and student response rates. Despite this variation, some overarching patterns emerged between the two groups. For a majority of the questions and themes, faculty overestimated the amount of time spent on and the frequency of behaviors related to student engagement. This pattern of greater perception in faculty compared to students was also found in the 2014 administration of the NSSE and FSSE at SF State which suggests this is a common occurrence. The notable underestimation of students' responses by faculty in the quality of interactions with various campus groups and amount of emphasis on memorization on coursework, were also found in the 2014 survey. While the origin of these differences in perception is unknown, it is clear that SF State students and faculty view many aspects of course and campus life very differently.

## Additional Resources

Office of Institutional Research:

<https://air.sfsu.edu/>

SF State NSSE and FSSE Results:

[https://air.sfsu.edu/ir/student\\_engagement](https://air.sfsu.edu/ir/student_engagement)

Official NSSE Website:

<http://nsse.indiana.edu/>

Official FSSE Website:

<http://fsse.indiana.edu/>

All NSSE (2017) Items by Theme:

[http://nsse.indiana.edu/2017\\_Institutional\\_Report/pdf/NSSE17%20Engagement%20Indicators%20\(NSSEville%20State\).pdf](http://nsse.indiana.edu/2017_Institutional_Report/pdf/NSSE17%20Engagement%20Indicators%20(NSSEville%20State).pdf)