



FSSE 2004 Report Western Michigan University

Presented and Compiled by:

Susan L. Caulfield, Ph.D.
Professor, Sociology
Western Michigan University

June 29, 2005

[Student Engagement at WMU]

- ❖ “Western Michigan University is a *student-centered research university*, building intellectual inquiry, investigation, and discovery into all undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs.” (WMU Mission Statement, 1991)
- ❖ As part of the priority to advance opportunities for student engagement, WMU will “nurture and prepare students for research, service, and creative inquiry” (Priority #5, Strategic Plan, January 20, 2004).

[What is meant by engagement?]

- ❖ “Students are engaged when they devote substantial time and effort to a task, when they care about the quality of their work, and when they commit themselves because the work seems to have significance beyond its personal instrumental value.”

(Newmann, as cited in Haymore, Ringstaff and Dwyer, 1994, p. 1)

[What is meant by engagement?]

- ❖ “Behaviors contributing to learning and development. For example, how often students contribute to class discussions, when students work harder than they thought they could to meet instructor expectations, when students have serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity, or when students work on research or creative activities with faculty members.” (WMU NSSE Report, November 13, 2003)

Why examine engagement?

- ❖ “The research is unequivocal: students who are actively involved in both academic and out-of-class activities gain more from the college experience than those who are not so involved.”
(Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991)
- ❖ “Integrating faculty perceptions of the importance of student engagement activities with student reports of the frequency of occurrence of engagement is a valuable strategy for deciding which engagement activities to facilitate.”
(FSSE Invitation to Participate, 2005)

FSSE – Faculty Survey of Student Engagement

- ❖ FSSE (“fessie”) is the faculty version of the National Survey of Student Engagement (“nessie”).
- ❖ FSSE, pilot tested in Spring 2003, was first used in the 2003-2004 academic year.
- ❖ Both FSSE and NSSE are administered by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning

[What is FSSE?]

- ❖ It is designed to measure faculty expectations for student engagement in educational practices that are known to be *empirically linked* with high levels of learning and development.
- ❖ Results are intended to be a catalyst for productive discussions related to teaching, learning, and the quality of students' educational experience.

Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practices

- ❖ From NSSE:
 - ❖ Level of Academic Challenge
 - ❖ Student Interactions with Faculty Members
 - ❖ Active and Collaborative Learning
 - ❖ Enriching Educational Experiences
 - ❖ Supportive Campus Environment

[FSSE Perspective]

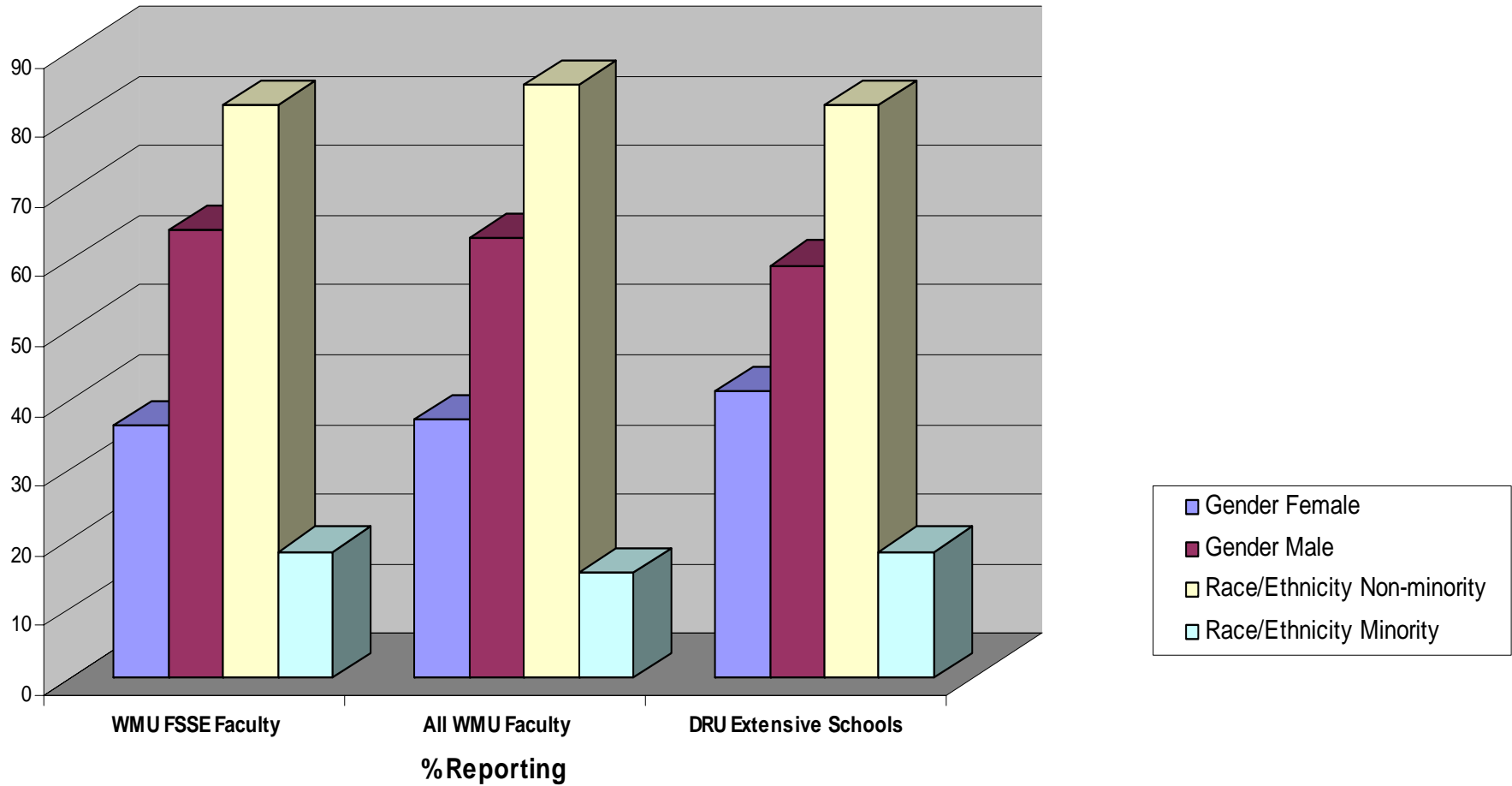
- ❖ Faculty perceptions of how often their students engage in different activities.
- ❖ The importance faculty place on various areas of learning and development.
- ❖ The nature and frequency of faculty-student interactions.
- ❖ How faculty members organize class time.

[FSSE Categories of Inquiry]

- ❖ FSSE categories closely parallel the benchmarks. FSSE categories are:
 - ❖ Academic and Intellectual Experiences
 - ❖ Evaluations of Student Performance
 - ❖ Mental Activities
 - ❖ Educational and Personal Growth
 - ❖ Enriching Educational Experiences
 - ❖ Quality of Student Relationships
 - ❖ Institutional Environment

WMU – FSSE Participant Characteristics

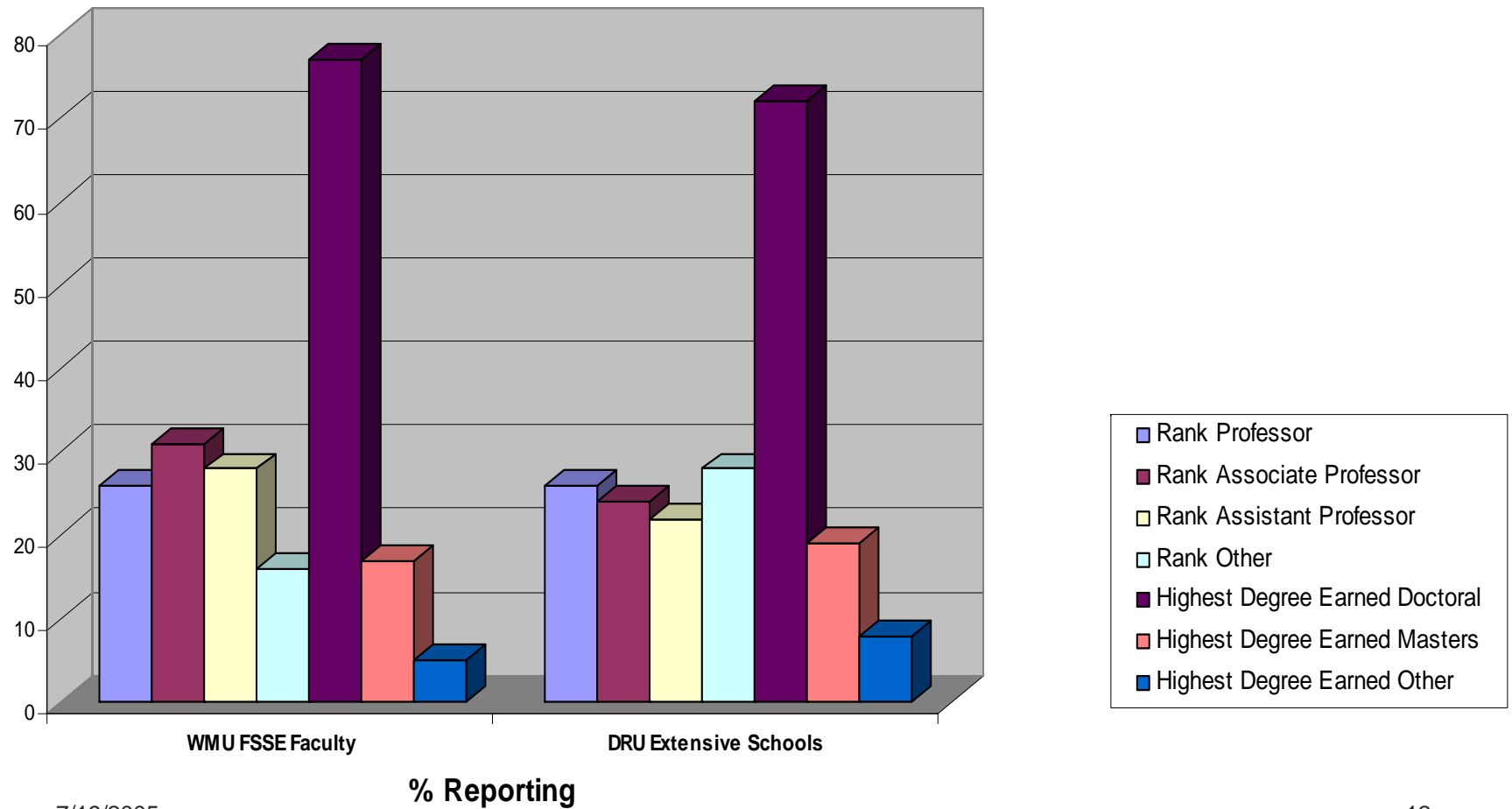
Participant Characteristics



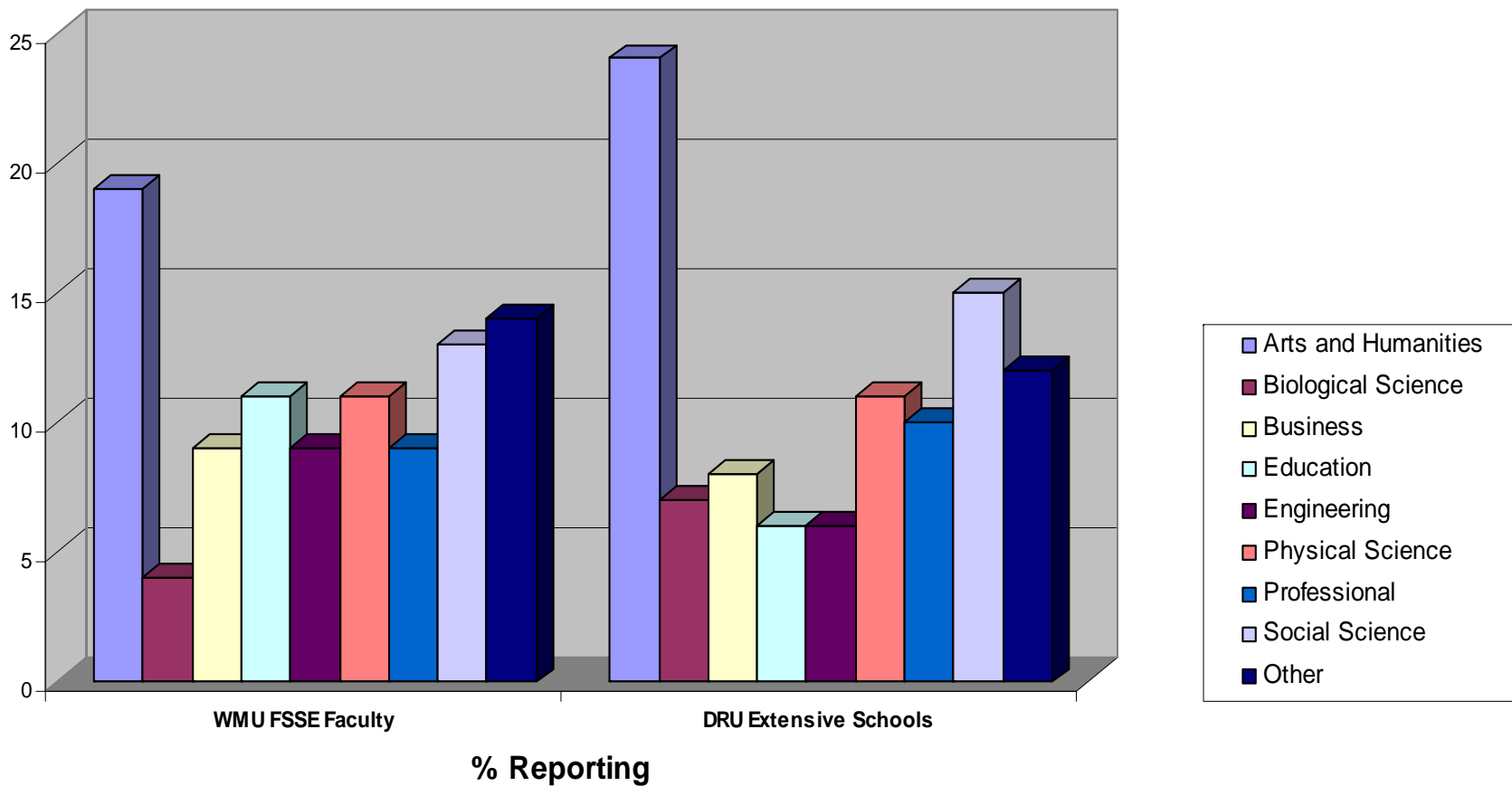
7/19/2005

Additional Characteristics

Participant Characteristics



[Discipline of Appointment]



[Methodology Notes]

- ❖ Response rate was 37.64%. The average response rate for FSSE is 46%.
- ❖ Faculty responded to most questions in reference to a specific course section, either lower division (mostly 1st years and sophomores) or upper division (mostly juniors and seniors).

Overview of Outcomes

- ❖ Outcomes regarding engagement.
 - ❖ organized by the seven categories, these capture the questions of engagement also asked of students through NSSE
 - ❖ can compare WMU faculty with faculty at other DRU-extensive schools
 - ❖ can compare WMU faculty with the latest NSSE survey of WMU undergraduates
- ❖ Outcomes regarding faculty use of time, expectations, and perceptions.

1. Academic and Intellectual Experiences

[ask questions, come to class prepared, work harder, discuss things with faculty]

- ❖ WMU is comparable to and, at times, higher than DRU schools. Upper division courses reflect higher amounts of interaction than do lower division courses.
- ❖ Faculty report lower percentages of student participation than do student self-reports.

1. Academic and Intellectual Experiences, continued

[prepare 2 or more drafts, integrate ideas, work with others both in and out of class]

- ❖ WMU is comparable to and, at times, higher than DRU schools. WMU faculty for both lower and upper division courses report more importance to “work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignment”, evidencing a focus on active learning principles.
- ❖ While 63% of first years report having prepared 2 or more drafts, this is true for only 40% of seniors.

1. Academic and Intellectual Experiences, continued

[work with diverse perspective, work with diverse others, have serious conversations with diverse others]

- ❖ WMU compares favorably with other DRU schools on 5 of the 7 measures
- ❖ WMU does not fare as well when the measures address serious conversations with diverse groups. Here, both lower and upper division groups are lower than DRU schools (23% and 24% versus 36% and 37%; 23% and 30% versus 36% and 37%).
- ❖ However, WMU students report much higher percentages for the conversation variables (52 to 59%).

2. Evaluations of Student Performance

[extent to which performance evaluations challenge student to do their best work]

- ❖ WMU averages the same or higher than other DRU schools.
- ❖ WMU students see themselves less challenged than do the faculty. Whereas faculty reported that they did this “very much” at 20% and 24% (lower and upper divisions), only 13% of first years and 14% of seniors reported “very much” on being challenged to do their best work.

3. Mental Activities

[memorizing, analyzing, synthesizing, making judgments, applying]

- ❖ WMU faculty comparable to DRU school faculty, with higher percentages placing emphasis on all activities except for memorizing.
- ❖ While lower percentages of faculty reported an emphasis on memorizing (39% lower and 23% upper), 78% of first years and 64% of seniors reported more of an emphasis on memorization.

4. Educational and Personal Growth

[writing and speaking clearly and effectively, thinking critically, understanding self, solving real world problems]

- ❖ WMU faculty reported higher percentages of course structure being supportive of these factors than did DRU school faculty. The one exception was that less WMU faculty placed an emphasis on acquiring a broad general education.

4. Educational and Personal Growth, continued

[writing and speaking clearly and effectively, thinking critically, understanding self, solving real world problems]

- ❖ Lesser percentages of WMU students found these various activities to be structured into coursework. Notably, this was true for “thinking critically and analytically,” “learning effectively on your own,” “solving real-world problems,” and “acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills.”

5. Enriching Educational Experiences

[practicum, community service, learning community, research project, foreign language and study, culminating senior experience]

- ❖ Percentage of WMU faculty reporting these activities as very important or important is equal to or higher than faculty in DRU schools, with the exception of “study a foreign language,” where less WMU faculty rate it as important.

5. Enriching Educational Experiences, continued

[practicum, community service, learning community, research project, foreign language and study, culminating senior experience]

- ❖ Percentages of seniors planning to do or having done these activities is lower than the percentages of first year students, for all but working on a research project and culminating senior experience.

6. Quality of Student Relationships

[with other students, with faculty, with administrative personnel and offices]

- ❖ WMU faculty percentages are comparable to faculty at other DRU schools.
- ❖ WMU students are more likely to see relationships with other students as friendly and supportive.

6. Quality of Student Relationships, continued

[with other students, with faculty, with administrative personnel and offices]

- ❖ WMU faculty and students are comparable regarding sense of relationship between students and faculty, with slightly more students reporting positive relationships.
- ❖ WMU students are not very positive when it comes to relationships with administrative personnel and offices. Here, positive %s decrease from first year students to seniors, while negative %s increase.

7. Institutional Environment

[academic focus, support for academic and non-academic success, contact among diverse groups, attendance at campus events]

- ❖ Findings comparing WMU faculty with DRU school faculty are mixed. More WMU faculty report an emphasis on:
 - co-curricular activities
 - attending campus events
 - use of computers in academic work

7. Institutional Environment, continued

[academic focus, support for academic and non-academic success, contact among diverse groups, attendance at campus events]

- ❖ Less WMU faculty report an emphasis on:
 - significant time on academic work
 - support to succeed academically
 - encouraging contact among diverse groups
- ❖ Overall, WMU students see greater emphasis than do faculty on all activities, except for computer use.

Faculty Time, Expectations and Perceptions

[TIME - how many hours in a typical 7-day week are spent on various activities]

- ❖ WMU faculty report comparable and, at times, higher percentages for teaching undergraduates, especially when the number of hours per week is 9-12. 20% of WMU faculty reported more than 12 hours spent preparing for class, while 32% reported more than 12 hours spent on research and scholarly activities.

Faculty Time, Expectations, and Perceptions, continued

[TIME - how many hours in a typical 7-day week are spent on various activities]

❖ WMU faculty reported higher percentages than did DRU school faculty for:

research and scholarly activities

advising undergraduate students

supervising internships or other field experiences

working with students on intramurals, etcetera

conducting service activities

Faculty Time, Expectations, and Perceptions, continued

[TIME - how many hours in a typical 7-day week are spent on various activities]

- ❖ **WMU faculty reported lower (regarding 1-8 hours) and higher (regarding 9-12 hours) percentages than did DRU school faculty for:**

- teaching undergraduate students**

- grading papers and exams**

- giving other forms of feedback**

- preparing for class**

- reflecting on ways to improve one's teaching**

- working with undergraduates on research**

Faculty Time, Expectations, and Perceptions, continued

[Student Time - in a typical 7-day week, how many hours do you expect students to spend on your class and how many hours do you think they actually spend on your class]

- ❖ With one exception, WMU faculty have higher expectations than do DRU school faculty. The exception is that 6% of DRU faculty expect students to work 1-2 hours a week (4% for WMU).
- ❖ 30-35% of WMU faculty expect students to spend 5-6 hours per week on their class, and 15-20% expect 7-8 hours of time spent on their class.

Faculty Time, Expectations, and Perceptions, continued

[Student Time - in a typical 7-day week, how many hours do you expect students to spend on your class and how many hours do you think they actually spend on your class]

- ❖ Across the board, faculty perceive that students spend less time on their course than faculty expect them to spend. Most faculty reported that students spend 1-2 hours per week, followed by those who reported 3-4 hours per week. Clearly, faculty expect more from students than they believe students are contributing.

Faculty Time, Expectations, and Perceptions, continued

[Homework – how many homework problem sets do you require that take more or less than one hour to complete]

- ❖ While higher percentages of WMU faculty require homework problems sets than do DRU school faculty, 35-41% of faculty at WMU report requiring no problem sets that take more than one hour, and 50-60% report requiring no problem sets that take less than one hour to complete.
- ❖ The latter point suggests that 50-60% of WMU faculty do not require any homework at all.

Faculty Time, Expectations, and Perceptions, continued

[Reading and Writing – number of assigned readings, papers that are less than 5 pages, 5-10 pages, or more than 10 pages in length]

- ❖ WMU faculty are comparable to DRU school faculty in terms of requiring one textbook, and higher than DRU school faculty in requiring 2-3 textbooks.
- ❖ 35% of upper division faculty at WMU required a paper that is more than 10 pages in length, compared to 14% of lower division faculty and 25% of DRU faculty.

Faculty Time, Expectations, and Perceptions, continued

[Reading and Writing – number of assigned readings, papers that are less than 5 pages, 5-10 pages, or more than 10 pages in length]

- ❖ Across all writing assignment categories, WMU upper division faculty require more than do WMU lower division faculty or DRU school faculty.

[Summary Findings]

- ❖ WMU Faculty and DRU School Faculty
 - ❖ Overall, in terms of engagement, lower division faculty at WMU were less likely to report engagement favorable responses than were upper division faculty at WMU.
 - ❖ With the exception of the importance of studying a foreign language, WMU upper division faculty were comparable or even higher than DRU school faculty in terms of engagement favorable responses.

Summary Findings, continued

- ❖ WMU Faculty and WMU students
 - ❖ Students report a greater degree of faculty-student interaction than do faculty.
 - ❖ More faculty place emphasis on tasks such as preparing two or more drafts, while fewer students report having done so.
 - ❖ Very high percentages of WMU faculty report giving prompt feedback, while far fewer students report having often received prompt feedback.
- ❖ Overall, there appear to be disconnects between how faculty and students perceive academic and intellectual processes at WMU.

[Summary Findings, continued]

❖ WMU Faculty Time and Expectations

- ❖ Lower division faculty spend more time on lecture, while upper division faculty make more use of small-group activities. Many of the upper division faculty percentages are in line with DRU school faculty.
- ❖ More WMU faculty report advising undergraduate students, supervising field experiences, and conducting service activities.
- ❖ While more DRU school faculty spend more than 12 hours a week engaged in research and scholarly activities, WMU upper division faculty are not far behind.
- ❖ Higher percentages of WMU faculty assign homework that takes more than an hour to complete, while lower percentages of upper division WMU faculty report not assigning papers longer than 10 pages.

[Limitations]

- ❖ Response Rate – only 38% responded.
- ❖ Level of Course – as much as 71% of respondents were referring to upper division courses.
- ❖ Language Concerns – inconsistent use across “comparable” variables in NSSE.
- ❖ Artificial Distinctions – referring to one course, based on usual expected students

[Future Steps]

- ❖ Outreach to faculty to increase participation in the next FSSE survey.
- ❖ Establish a FSSE readers' panel to discuss implications and actions.
- ❖ Determine better comparison groups that fit with the FSSE protocol.
- ❖ Increase efforts at WMU to inform the university community of the meanings behind and indicators of student engagement.

[Works Cited]

- ❖ Delene, L.M. and Loizides, G. (2003). *National Survey of Student Engagement: The "NSSE" Assessment Project, Western Michigan University's First-Year Participation Report*. WMU.
- ❖ Haymore, J., Ringstaff, C. and Dwyer, D.C. (1994). Student engagement revisited: Views from technology-rich classrooms. *Apple Classrooms of Tomorrow Report #21*, retrieved from the WWW, June 20, 2005:
<http://images.apple.com/euro/pdfs/acotlibrary/rpt21.pdf>
- ❖ Pascarella, E.T. and Terenzini, P.T. (1991). *How College Affects Students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.