Faculty Success Initiative: An innovative approach to professional faculty onboarding and development
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Abstract:	Higher education institutions have been increasingly dependent on adjunct faculty to provide instruction at undergraduate and graduate levels. At professional schools, most faculty begin teaching graduate courses with limited to no formal training or teaching experience as industry expertise is the primary requirement for employment. Despite the availability of ample pedagogical resources to advance teaching, these faculty require additional support during their induction into academia. This paper describes the design and operationalization of the New York University Faculty Success Initiative (FSI), an innovative, semi-structured, faculty-centered onboarding and professional development program that provides quality, longer-term preparation to new faculty throughout their first semester of instruction to increase their teaching effectiveness and their sense of connection to their academic unit. An analysis of multiple qualitative and quantitative data sources indicates that FSI led to an increase in teaching effectiveness and played a significant role in transitioning professional faculty from practitioners to educators.
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Faculty Success Initiative:
An innovative approach to professional faculty onboarding and development

Background

With their continually constrained budgets, colleges and universities have been over-relying on part-time faculty to provide instruction. Often these adjuncts feel disconnected from the institutions, and even their departments, and need to navigate through their first semester with little cohesive assistance.

A common model for onboarding new faculty is a half- or full-day of orientation, periodic meetings with an administrator, those who have recently been hired to share their experience, or a few follow-up workshops (Buller, 2017). As a result, most new faculty find the transition into their institutions to be a source of anxiety, and many report a sense of isolation during the process (O'Meara, Lounder, Campbell, 2014; Wilson, 2006). Oftentimes, new faculty need personal, social, and professional assistance, so a series of regular check-ins throughout their first year of teaching has proved to promote an effective transition period (Buller, 2017). Acknowledging that "there is minimal literature regarding a structured onboarding process for faculty," Baker and DiPiro (2019) note this period is "a critical strategic event . . . that involves a significant investment of time, attention, effort, and money" (Ross, Huang, & Jones, 2014, as cited in Baker & DiPiro, 2019, para. 3) and assert that "a structured process and tool for managing the onboarding process" tend to improve the onboarding experience for new faculty (para. 19).

In an attempt to address some of these challenges, several faculty professional development models and approaches, such as Faculty Learning Communities (FLC), have been implemented at various institutions to promote "collaborative and reflective" professional development in supporting faculty pedagogical efforts (Cox, 2001; Furco & Moely, 2012; Richlin & Cox, 2004 as cited in Cruz & Groccia, 2013, p. 130). This model has proved to be effective in many ways; however, there are two limitations to these learning communities: they are inclusive of all faculty in a department and may not necessarily address the new faculty's specific needs, and they are seldom sustained over time.

The abundance of pedagogical information on publicly accessible sites, institutional resources, and faculty workshops, make the task of navigating and finding the right information at the right time daunting, and often counterproductive, for new faculty. Given their limited time and attention, their attendance in workshops is voluntary and usually sparse, and the massive amount of information and resources available to them can be

overwhelming (Webb, Wong, & Hubball, 2013). Therefore, providing new faculty with a "professional development toolbox from which they can select the most appropriate tools" for their particular needs can facilitate their transition to their instructional role (Yendol-Hoppey & Dana, 2010, p. 54).

The issue of faculty preparedness demands greater attention at professional schools which typically employ practitioners, with industry experience and expertise, who come from non-academic careers. Although discipline expertise is one of the core requirements for teaching at these schools, teaching experience is not. As a result, most professional faculty begin teaching with limited to no training or experience as educators, "enter[ing] a new professional community . . . unaware of the different value systems awaiting them within higher education" (King, Roed, & Wilson, 2018, p. 474). Therefore, institutions should particularly attend to the "transition and socialization" of professional faculty and provide them with "transformative learning" (Mezirow, 1978) opportunities that result in "changes in [their] beliefs and behavior" and promote their long-term learning and growth (Geijsel & Meijers, 2005; Kelchtermans 2009, & Illeris 2014, as cited in Meijer, et al., 2017). Additionally, institutions should assist these faculty in the formation of successful instructional practices and promote their reflection and learning from practical experience (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983; Shulman, 1988; Jarvis, 1999).

To address the needs of its new faculty, who are all practitioners and professionals in their fields, the Division of Programs in Business at the NYU School of Professional Studies (NYUSPS) launched a project entitled, "Faculty Success Initiative (FSI)," in Fall 2019 to onboard its new faculty in its graduate programs over a period of 25 weeks, from the point of hire through the end of their first semester of teaching. The FSI program was designed with the following overarching goals: socializing new faculty into their roles, creating a sense of connection to the Division, and providing quality, longer-term preparation to increase their teaching effectiveness through transformative learning.

This paper discusses the outcomes and impact of this initiative on the experience of these new faculty based on the data gathered from the participating faculty surveys and interviews since the program's inception.

Study Context

The main objective of the FSI program was to promote transformative learning among new faculty, both part- and full-time, changing their behaviors and perspectives from practitioners to educators, and socializing them

2

into their new roles. To that end, the program was focused on providing faculty with a robust "toolset" and appropriate instructional "skillset" to form a new "mindset" as educators.

The FSI team, formed in early 2019, consisted of an experienced full-time faculty with a senior academic administrative role, an adjunct faculty with a significant record of teaching effectiveness, and an academic administrator, all the coauthors of this paper. The team, based on mapping the new faculty lifecycle, compiled a list of the information, tips, policies and procedures, and pedagogical resources to communicate to new faculty, at the exact time they needed each, throughout their first semester. For instance, the initial emails focused on course preparation (developing syllabi and assessment strategies) followed by those that shared pedagogical best practices (for student engagement and course management), and concluded with a set of emails focusing on summative assessments and grading. The project began with a cohort of 43 participants in Fall 2019, and continued with all the new faculty employed each semester since then (13 in Spring 2020, 9 in Fall 2020, and 12 in Spring 2021).

The team devised two strategies for sharing the necessary information: push and pull communications. The push communication was sent in the form of 25 relatively short weekly emails containing pedagogical tips, tools, and resources with corresponding links and attachments. The FSI emails provided information in an easy-to-use, "just-in-time" format and focused on sharing 1) pedagogical best practices and tips (e.g., promoting student engagement, inclusive teaching) , 2) articles and reading materials (e.g., crafting effective syllabi, providing feedback), 3) policies, procedures, and processes (e.g., grading, course evaluations), 4) the relevant University and School instructional resources (instructional guides, Center for Teaching resources, 5) assessment strategies (e.g., rubrics, grading), and 6) professional development opportunities (e.g. workshops, seminars). The emails were organized to introduce key concepts and strategies, which would be reinforced in subsequent communications or faculty development workshops. The pull communication included a Learning Management Site with a weekly, as well as an alphabetical, list of the shared tips and resources. This resulted in the creation of an organized "toolbox" for the new faculty, which they could access and use during and beyond their first semester of instruction.

Additionally, the initiative included a curated series of faculty workshops on a variety of pedagogical topics including experiential learning, students' learning preferences, instructional technology for student engagement, cooperative learning, and inclusive instruction to enhance faculty's instructional effectiveness through modeling and

sharing of best practices. The program also included a "Welcome Session" with the divisional key team members for networking purposes.

Theoretical Framework

The FSI program was designed to prepare new faculty through a five-step process of socialization, deliberation, collaboration, application, and reflection. By providing faculty with the appropriate support and resources, this initiative focused on socializing the faculty into their new role, assisting them in making deliberate choices about their instructional approaches and strategies, providing them with opportunities for collaboration and peer learning, promoting their application of best practices, and encouraging them to reflect on their teaching for further learning and improvement.

The study was guided by the theories of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978) and reflective practice (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983; Shulman, 1988; Shulman, 1998; Jarvis, 1999). These theories provide insights into how practitioners make meaning of their experiences and evaluate, and potentially alter, their past understandings or practices based on the new information they receive.

The theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978) asserted that when presented with new information, adults typically evaluate their past ideas and form new understandings that can transform their perspectives and interpretation of their experiences. This type of learning experience grants learners the opportunity to examine and challenge all of their prior knowledge and reorganize their frame of reference (King, 2002).

Mezirow's transformative learning theory described how learners develop their assumptions, perspectives, and interpretations (Misawa & Mcclain, 2019). In his later publications, Mezirow (2000) presented a 10-step process that would result in transformative learning which starts with "a disorienting dilemma" and continues with "self-examination," "a critical assessment of assumptions, exploration of options for new roles, planning a course of action, acquiring the required knowledge and skills, provisional trying of new roles, building competence and self-confidence," and formation of new perspectives (p. 22). He added that transformative learning may involve "objective or subjective reframing" and defined objective reframing as the critical reflection in regard to the assumptions made "in a narrative or task-oriented problem solving" and subjective reframing as the "critical self-reflection of one's own assumptions." Mezirow concluded that learners must "make an informed and reflective decision" to have a mindful transformative learning experience" (p. 23).

4

This process is reflected in new faculty life cycle as they enter the academic arena as subject matter experts who need to assume the role of an educator. Faced with the challenges of teaching, they go through the process of transformative learning until they build competence and confidence as educators through self-examination and reflection. Such critical reflection is one of the central characteristics of transformative learning and beneficial to faculty when learning new teaching practices in higher education. Those who want to institute exemplary pedagogy have a discourse with themselves and others and critically reflect on their teaching approaches (Collay, 2017). The FSI program was designed to scaffold new faculty's efforts in this process by providing them with the appropriate tools and resources to promote critical reflection on their teaching practices.

Reflection, as applied to education, was defined by Dewey in 1933 as "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 6). According to Dewey, this process starts with uncertainty about a belief or knowledge and develops through reasoning to reach an end-point. Expanding on Dewey's concept of reflection, Schon (1983) emphasized the context and time in which reflection takes place and suggested that for practitioners, reflective thinking occurs both retrospectively and spontaneously. Such reflections can be in the form of "thinking back" on what practitioners did to discover how their "knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome" or they may take place "in the midst of action without interrupting it to reshape" the action (p. 26). This type of reflection relies on "practice-based common knowledge" and is more practical than Dewey's theoretical definition of reflection based on "scientific or intellectual knowledge" (Zeichner, 1996, as cited in Fendler, 2003, p. 19).

According to Schon (1983) and Jarvis (1999), practitioners go through the processes of learning, doing, thinking, and reflecting on what they do, to form a body of knowledge about their own practice that can help them provide services to their clients. Jarvis refers to this type of knowledge as "personal theory," because it is "individual, personal, subjective, and dynamic," enabling practitioners to adjust their practices while learning from their innovations (p. 133).

As the preceding review of the literature on practitioners' knowledge suggests, accumulation of practical knowledge begins with the discipline knowledge practitioners gain through formal education, continues as they practice and watch others in the practice situation, and develops further as they reflect upon what they do.

5

Professional faculty, like other practitioners, possess content knowledge but need to form practices as educators and further reflect on and modify them. Acknowledging the importance of reflection on the formation of effective teaching practices, faculty onboarding and development programs need to provide opportunities to prompt faculty to reflect on their practices because that allows these faculty to check their assumptions regarding good practices, continuously monitor their efforts to discover and research their assumptions about teaching, and to form new ones (Brookfield, 2002). One of the main objectives of the FSI program was to provide new faculty with transformative learning opportunities and encourage them to reflect on their teaching practices to help them modify their assumptions, perspectives, and approaches to instruction.

Methodology and Data Sources

Setting

This research study was conducted at the NYUSPS Division of Programs in Business which employs approximately 500 adjunct faculty. These part-time educators, in conjunction with a small number of clinical faculty, teach graduate courses in a variety of business-focused master's programs. The data for this study were collected from the 77 new adjunct and clinical faculty who joined the Division during academic years 2019-21.

Data Sources

Our analysis was drawn from a mixed-methods study focused on the feedback of the participating faculty collected through two surveys conducted at the end of each semester since Fall 2019, and interviews with a select group of these faculty in Summer 2020. The data drew from the Fall 2019 (N=29), Spring 2020 (N=13), Fall 2020 (N=7), Spring 2021 (N=4) survey respondents, and faculty interviews (N=15), representing all graduate programs. Participants in all cohorts had varying amount of teaching experience prior to joining NYUSPS, but approximately half of the participants had no or fewer than two years of teaching experience. As depicted in Figure 1, the participants taught in various modalities, with an increase in online instruction during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

6

Figure 1

Faculty Teaching Modality*
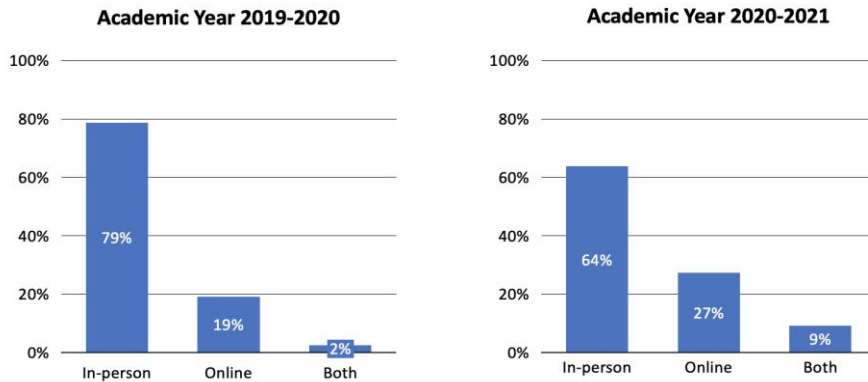
* All courses were taught virtually for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester due to the pandemic.

Surveys

        The FSI team administered a descriptive survey to gather participants' "perceptions, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs" about the initiative (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010, p. 28). The survey included six multiple-choice, 13 Likert scales, and three open-ended questions. Using the Likert scale (1931) to assess respondents' attitudes, 13 questions were designed to allow participants to express their satisfaction or agreement with the statements on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest level; two questions were adjusted in the Spring 2020 survey to reflect the faculty's experience due to the pandemic and transition to remote instruction. One of the Likert scale questions about in-person faculty workshops was removed because all events were held virtually after the pandemic, and a question about FSI support with remote instruction transition was added. The survey was sent to 42 new faculty at the end of Fall 2019 with a response rate of 69% (N=29), 13 at the end of Spring 2020 with a response rate of 100% (N=13), 9 at the end of the Fall 2020 with a response rate of 78% (N=7), and 12 at the end of Spring 2021 with a response rate of 33% (N=4).

        Employing correlational research, "a nonexperimental quantitative method that investigates the possibilities and degrees of relationship between two or more variables," the researchers analyzed the survey data "to determine, through application of a quantitative statistical analysis, whether a relationship exists between the variables under investigation" (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 34). Statistical analysis on the survey results was performed to

determine if there was a correlation between participation in FSI and the faculty's sense of connection to the

institution, changes in their teaching styles and pedagogical approaches, and their satisfaction with their onboarding

experience.

Interviews

Interviews were a central data collection approach to obtain the first cohort of participants' descriptions and

impressions in addition to the survey responses, developing "an understanding by means of conversations" (Kvale,

1996, p. 11) with these participants to explore how they described "their lived world" as new faculty (p. 1). In

particular, understanding the participants' experience with different aspects of the initiative and examining their

perceptions and impressions of the program through interviews provided the researchers with additional insights to

confirm or contradict the survey data.

Prior to data collection, the team designed a semi-structured interview guide, attending to the specific

objectives of the interview based on the research questions. Upon receiving consent from 15 of the faculty who had

participated in FSI, the researchers conducted semi-structured, one-hour interviews via Zoom. The 15 faculty, 10

male and five female, were all part of the Fall 2019 cohort, teaching in five graduate programs. Two participants had

taught in the past at NYU and re-entered the Division.

After each interview, the researchers completed an interview summary sheet to capture their notes,

reflections, and impressions. The recorded interview transcripts from Zoom were then verified and used for coding

and data analysis based on the grounded theory approach (Creswell, 2003; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Robson, 2002),

"to identify categories and concepts that emerge from text" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 278) and to further capture

the perceptions and experiences of these faculty with FSI.

Data Analysis

Results of the survey data contained multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended responses from the four

cohorts. All multiple-choice and Likert Scale responses were calculated into percentages for a more seamless

reporting. The first four multiple-choice questions collected demographic and background information which were

not analyzed. To better understand the reported perceptions of the participating faculty overall, the results of the

Likert scale questions from the two cohorts were combined, with the exceptions of three questions that differed in

the two surveys, as noted previously.

The survey included three groups of Likert-type items to capture respondents' impressions on aspects of FSI related to outreach, communications, and events. It included a 5-point ordinal scale to rate and rank the responses although "the distance between the responses [was] not measurable" (Sullivan & Artino, 2013, p. 541). As is common in survey research, the team created a set of Likert-type items, grouped them into a scale, and calculated the total or mean score for the scale items (Sullivan & Artino, 2013).

The team used the Cronbach alpha test to determine the reliability of the overall assessment (Goforth, 2015) and whether the scales were intercorrelated and the grouped items measured the intended variable (Sullivan & Artino, 2013). Based on the recommended and accepted minimum alpha coefficient of 0.65-0.80 (Goforth, 2015) all of the coefficients' Likert-scale data collection groups, presented in Table 1, were above the minimum, and therefore, deemed reliable for the assessment of the FSI program.

Table 1

Likert-scale Data Collection Groups and Reliability Coefficients

Scale	Cronbach's alpha
Impressions on aspects of FSI outreach (relevance, depth, breath, and frequency of emails and the provided resources)	0.96
FSI communication	0.97
Aspects of events	0.97

Interview data

To analyze the interview data, the FSI team designed a coding scheme based on the research questions and emerging patterns of data. The scheme included 21 codes organized in three categories (Background, FSI Program Components, Recommendations) and two valence sub-codes to capture "positive" and "negative" attitudes and feelings of the participants regarding the discussed topics. All interviews were recorded with participant consent, transcribed, and uploaded to the qualitative data analysis software Dedoose for analysis. Each excerpt, expressing a full thought communicated in a few sentences, was coded with more than one or more sub-codes, as needed.

Each transcript was coded by two team members, and the third member reviewed all 15 to identify and address any inconsistencies in coding. Throughout the coding process, the researchers met to review challenging

9

transcript excerpts and to refine code definitions, as necessary. Once all the transcripts were coded, the team created an outline of the data categories, identified the corresponding codes for each, focused on various categories of data analysis, and prepared memos to describe the findings based on the review of coded excerpts. The researchers then reviewed the written memos and used the captured information in writing the data analysis results.

Data Triangulation

After analyzing the survey and interview data, the team engaged in data triangulation as "a means of improving the rigor of the analysis by assessing the integrity of the inferences [drawn] from more than one vantage point" (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p. 579). Due to the intentional overlap between the survey and interview questions, the researchers connected the datasets in relation to each research question to ensure the validity of the data, confirm the results, identify any data divergence, and use illustrative qualitative data to capture the multidimensionality of participants' experience. Addressing each research question, the team used the survey results as the baseline data and looked for the participants' comments in the coded excerpts that confirmed or challenged those results. Using the survey data alone, it was not possible to understand why a small percentage of participants did not agree or were not satisfied with some of the program components or aspects, but reviewing the interview data shed light on participants' differing perspectives and experiences with FSI.

Findings

Analysis of the FSI survey datasets suggests that the majority of the respondents benefited from their involvement in this initiative, except for a few who did not fully utilize the program resources due to their time constraints. The following sections address each research question by first reporting the survey results and providing quotes from participants' interviews to further explain their perceptions and impressions of each program component.

Connection to the Academic Unit

Based on the survey data, 49% of respondents strongly agreed and 32% somewhat agreed that they felt connected to the Division because of participation in FSI. Participants identified two main factors that contributed to their sense of belonging and connection to their academic unit:

1) The presence and regular communications from the FSI team, continuously providing valuable resources and support, which created a feeling of affiliation and pride in participants' association with the Division and the School;

2) The FSI workshops and networking events that prompted the new faculty to connect with their peers and learn about instructional strategies, resources, and best practices.

Role of the FSI Team

Participants claimed that one of the greatest contributors to their sense of connection to the Division was the presence of a support team and the regularity of the FSI communications. Rather than overwhelming new faculty all at once with everything they would need to know and learn at the beginning of their first semester (e.g., through an orientation session), the FSI team strategically and methodically sent out "just-in-time" weekly emails throughout the semester to provide the information the faculty would need at any given point in time. These weekly emails also helped the faculty to know whom to contact to ask questions and seek guidance whenever they faced challenges. They knew that they could always reach out to the FSI team, and as a participant said, get their *"first response from somebody whom you can go to, and then you decide whether or not [you] physically need to go somewhere else and get any more detail."* Another participant who had faced difficulties with a few students in class and had reached out to the FSI team for advice stated that they were "*very helpful at figuring out how I could…get to a solution."* Participating faculty also knew that they could reach out to the FSI team whenever they *"had doubts [to] get a response within a couple of hours,"* describing the response rate as *"just legendary."* Overall, the connection with the FSI team made these faculty feel that, *"somebody was thinking that [they were] out there."*

Unlike full-time faculty, adjuncts, do not often have as many resources available to them –or know where to find them– so they greatly appreciated the resources provided to them. The weekly emails from FSI introduced faculty to a wide range of resources available to them not only from within the Division, and the School, but from the entire university, *"making [them] feel a part of the organization* and *"a larger team" and "part of the university."* This sense of belonging specifically contributed to the participants' satisfaction with FSI.

Engagement Opportunities

Another aspect of FSI contributing to how connected the new faculty felt to their academic unit and fellow faculty members, was the faculty engagement events. Most participants stated that through the pedagogical

11

workshops and social events such as the "Welcome Session," they were given an opportunity to meet other faculty both from within and outside their programs, including a few who had "*bumped into*" former colleagues and clients with whom they enjoyed being reunited. Some participants made peer connections at these workshops while being asked to "*pair up with people and do group exercises with them.*"

Through these introductions, participants not only initiated new peer relationships they further developed in the future, but many immediately leveraged these new connections to share "*best practices*" and even invited one another to their classes as guest speakers. As one participant stated, even discussing "*some of the common concerns people were having*" at these events was "*a learning experience for all.*" A couple of participants underscored the importance of being able to meet the divisional leadership and administrative team members at these events, after which, having been introduced, they felt a sense of connection and a level of comfort in reaching out to them in the future.

While most of the faculty who took advantage of these opportunities found them to be highly beneficial, "*making a lot of connections*" and beginning to feel part of a "*community,*" a few found these connections "*fairly limited*" and not necessarily "*long lasting.*" One participant stated that "*it was…hard to take advantage of all the different parts of support*" due to other responsibilities outside of their role as a part-time faculty.

Regardless of how much time they were able to allot to FSI-provided social and pedagogical events, most faculty expressed appreciation that it was made available to them, that the information provided was accessible at any time via the LMS or emails, as needed, and felt that this initiative reduced their feeling of isolation and contributed to making them feel part of a larger community. In general, many participants expressed that they enjoyed the "*social*" and "*educational*" aspects of these "*mixers,*" in that they were given opportunities to "*pair up*" virtually or in person to "*get to know*" each other and "*exchange ideas*" with their peers, all contributing to a feeling of community, camaraderie, and connection, and ultimately satisfaction with their onboarding experience.

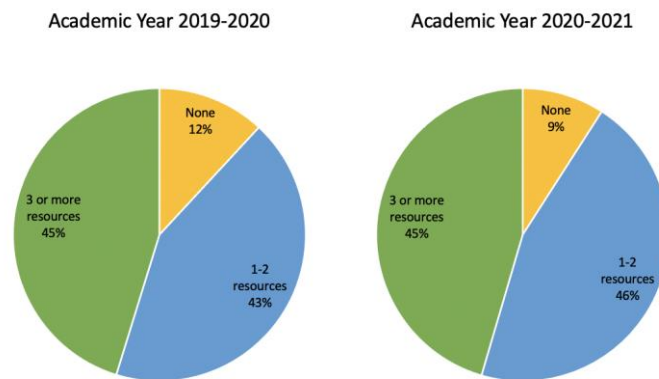**Impact on Teaching**

Based on the survey results, it appeared that FSI had a significantly positive impact on respondents' teaching effectiveness with 51% who strongly agreed and 34% who somewhat agreed that their experience with FSI directly and positively impacted their teaching style and pedagogical approach.

With the abrupt transition to remote instruction in Spring 2020 due to the pandemic, 85% of the new faculty in the Spring cohort felt that FSI proved to be particularly helpful to them in making the necessary modifications since they could leverage the customized workshops and resources the team was providing to address the faculty needs during this period. Figure 2 illustrates the survey results, indicating that only few participants did not use or adopted any FSI resources.

Figure 2

Survey Participants' Adoption of FSI Resources

The interview data confirmed that overall FSI impacted participants' teaching in a variety of ways such as creating a shift in their teaching philosophy or approach; raising their awareness about various aspects of instruction; helping them better organize, prepare for, and craft their lessons; manage their classes; and interact with their students. It appeared that participants had benefited from the regular FSI emails, pedagogical workshops, and peer engagement and collaborative learning opportunities. The following sections present participants' perceptions on how each program component provided them with transformative learning opportunities.

FSI Emails

New faculty received many tips and resources through the FSI weekly emails. During the interviews, they reported that while some of the tips were new, others served as useful "*reminders*." One commented on the applicability of the information shared through FSI, saying that with *"all the emails that I was getting, I would get ideas and take them [and] applied [them] into my class right away."* Another commented that while he may not have used some of the tips "*right away*," it was valuable to have these tips "*stored away as future ideas*."

Because information was strategically and methodically, one participant remarked that each email *"came right at the right time for me to take a look"* Another participant referred to the FSI emails as *"thought starters"* since they created a new sense of awareness regarding the wide variety of possible approaches to teaching and encouraged faculty to focus attention on their effectiveness as instructors. This is in line with Mezirow's transformative learning steps of "acquiring the required knowledge and skills," "critical assessment of assumptions," and "exploration of options" when experiencing transformative learning.

Faculty Workshops

The FSI workshops provided pedagogical strategies and tips and facilitated faculty interaction and peer-to-peer sharing and learning. As illustrated in Figure 3, the survey results indicated that most participants were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with these workshops' topics, length, and frequency throughout each semester even during the pandemic when they were all offered online.

Figure 3

Satisfaction with Faculty Workshop*
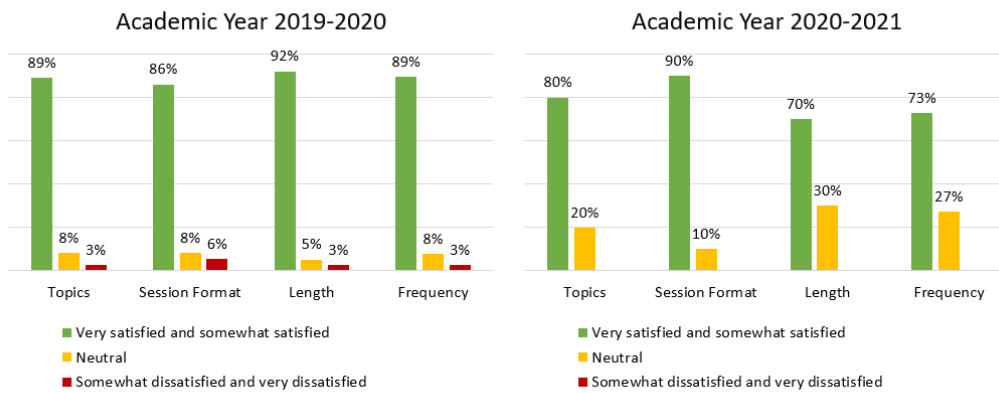
* No participant selected "very dissatisfied."

During the interviews, participants were asked to comment on how often and to what extent they took advantage of these workshops; their responses were overwhelmingly and enthusiastically positive. With the exception of a few who were unable to attend any, mainly due to scheduling conflicts, most FSI participants attended at least a few of the workshops, with some attending all.

Participants primarily attended these workshops to acquire new *"teaching tips," "do's and don'ts,"* and *"best practices"* and learned how to increase student engagement and class participation and make their teaching more interactive. One participant stated that after attending these workshops, he shifted his ratio of lecture-to-interactivity from *"99-1"* to *"50-50,"* and another stated that these events led to *"adjusting [his] entire syllabus"* and "*rejigger[ing] [his] whole [course] design,"* to make things more interactive and increase students' retention and recall.

Several participants expressed their satisfaction with the design and delivery of these workshops in which the FSI facilitators would *"model"* the instructional strategies, techniques, or use of the tools they were sharing with the faculty. Therefore, faculty would not only learn about a pedagogical strategy but also would experience it as a learner in the workshop.

Most participants claimed that they learned *"two or three things out of [each session] and adapt into [their] class,* and *"always took some nuggets that [they] could apply,"* and referred to each as "*a game changer"* in how they planned and delivered their classes. One faculty mentioned that he appreciated being introduced to "*tips and tools [he] could use immediately.*" Another highlighted the value of having these sessions as they "*built on*" the previous ones and aided in comprehension and "*recall.*"

Overall, having been introduced to different instructional methods, most participants found the workshops to be "*extremely helpful*" in terms of the immediate impact on their pedagogical knowledge and overall teaching abilities. As part of their transformative leaning experience, they appeared to have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills, tried the alternative approaches presented, and formed new perspectives after attending these sessions.

Satisfaction with Onboarding Experience

The survey results indicated that almost all the participants found FSI to be extremely helpful, providing them with a positive onboarding experience and a seamless transition to their academic role, even those who had not been able to engage in it as much. Surveys completed by four cohorts indicated that 62% of these faculty had extremely positive and 27% somewhat positive impressions of FSI and believed that it had a significant impact on their experience. They particularly appreciated the design of the program and the frequency of the communication to promote their engagement, as well as the relevance, depth, and breadth of the content and resources shared in weekly emails and workshops. The following sections include interview data that present participants' overall

15

impression of the FSI program, their comments on the communication strategy, and how the program impacted their onboarding experience.

Overall Impressions

The survey results presented a total mean score of 4.49 on a 5-point scale for the Likert-type items in overall impression on the aspects of FSI outreach (i.e., relevance, depth, breath, and frequency of emails and the provided resources). The calculated mean score of 4.49 suggests that most participants had a positive impression of FSI outreach as echoed in the interviews. When asked to comment on their perceptions of FSI, most participating faculty stated that the program was a positive and valuable experience. Many commented on their ease of access to all the necessary *"information," "help,"* or *"support," "without having to go through eight hours of training."* Some faculty considered FSI as a *"center of excellence for pedagogical approach,"* an *"interactive"* orientation, a *"support structure,"* and even a *"concierge service [which was] always available to you, but never imposed upon you."* Most participants commented on how the initiative kept them engaged and connected with the administrative team, provided them with seamless access to resources, and helped them to improve their teaching.

Referring to the overwhelming amount of information available to the faculty at NYU as *"an embarrassment of riches,"* which sometimes made the new faculty feel *"like drinking from a firehose,"* many participants stated that FSI provided *"data pointers"* and *"directions that made [the transition] a lot better."* The FSI was seen as *"a way to get up to speed much more quickly,"* and to *"get insights"* from those who were *"more experienced,"* as opposed to just going through a *"trial and error"* period.

FSI also helped new faculty to overcome the *"deer in the headlights kind of feeling,"* knowing that if they were *"struggling with something, that it was an available resource."* One participant described the impact of FSI as *"jumping out of an airplane and knowing that you have a parachute if you need it."* Adjunct faculty particularly found FSI useful as they believed

> *as a part-time, you don't have the resources available to you. You don't have the interaction with other colleagues. And you don't get together for like as much for faculty meetings and things like that. I think the FSI sort of brings that to part- time faculty.*

FSI became a *"focused resource"* for the faculty on *"how to be a better teacher."* The program was deemed beneficial to faculty in "building competence and self-confidence", which often results from going through a transformative learning experience (Mezirow, 2000).

The FSI design also addressed the diversity in the new faculty teaching experience since they *"could actively choose to participate in certain things that were of real value"* to them from among the provided tips and resources. They could decide what to participate in and what to return to at a later time.

Communication Strategy

The majority of participants offered positive comments on the design, frequency, and content of the FSI emails and their impact on their preparedness and instructional effectiveness. As depicted in Figure 4, survey respondents indicated that the most positive aspect of FSI communications was that the weekly emails provided them with appropriate resources when they needed each.

Figure 4

FSI Communication Strategy*
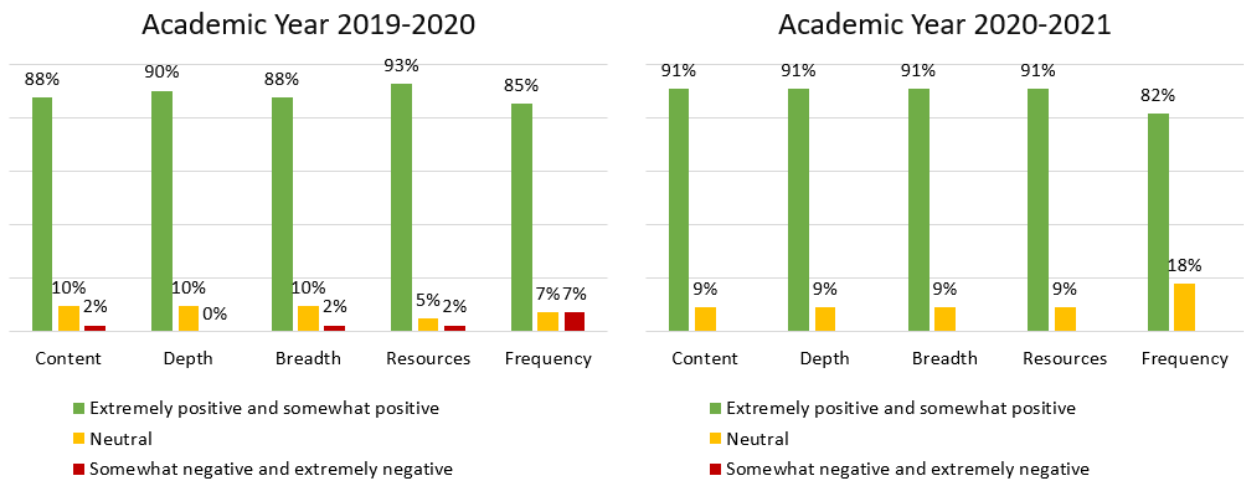
* *No participant selected "extremely negative."*

Based on the participants' comments, it appeared that these emails provided them with the *"right amount of information"* through *"the regular tips and suggestions [that] were very helpful, particularly for a relatively new adjunct,"* as they were broken into *"bite size"* and appeared to be like a *"connected chain."* Participants particularly appreciated the sequential nature of the communication that *"was slowly given,"* where every email would be focused on *"the next steps."*

Participants had utilized these emails in a variety of ways either *"on the spot"* or *"over time."* In describing his strategy, one faculty stated that after browsing through each email, he would *"create a list of things I would need to follow up on," "earmark them for future use,"* or *"just file it for, you know, when I had free time to catch up on things."* Similarly, another faculty would review each email, as he said, to *"decide whether it was actionable today, actionable tomorrow, or purely informational."*

Even those with some teaching experience found the information beneficial as at times they served as *"a nice reminder of an effective practice," "a twist on something based on the tips,"* or *"an opportunity for learning"* a new strategy. A few of the faculty with time constraints, *"stored the [emails] for later use," "could actively choose to participate in certain things of real value to [them], or identify things to keep [them] on track."* Commenting on her experience in preparing to teach her first course, a participant said that initially she felt like

> *. . . cartoon characters with circles around them and question marks. And then I think I got the first [email which] welcomed us and said . . . you will be showing us step by step what needs to be done. . . And when I went through every link that you sent, so that opened up my mind. So that was the first thing. The next week, another email would come and give me a few more ways of doing things.*

Reflecting on the impact of FSI email communications on his teaching practice, one faculty said, *"I found that emails about how to connect with students and how to make learning more efficient and the efficacy of different method helped me."*

A few participants identified limitations associated with email communications: email fatigue and the length of some emails. Although FSI emails were sent once a week, they were not the only ones these faculty were receiving. This sentiment was reflected in the survey results where only 66% of the respondents said they would like to receive more FSI communications in the future. One participant identified email fatigue as a factor contributing to less involvement in FSI as the semester went on due to the sheer number of emails sent to the faculty in general, and at times interviewees could not identify who had sent certain emails they had found beneficial. One participant also commented that because some of the emails were *"extremely long, I tried to skim them, so I can stay on top of information."* Based on this feedback, the team attended to and adjusted the length of the weekly emails in the following academic year.

18

Despite these challenges, it appeared that the regular email communication had helped faculty to *"organize [their] thoughts," "understand what was the main thing what was the important stuff," "kept them engaged,"* and made them feel *"more part of the community."*

Onboarding Experience

The data suggested that FSI played a significant role in new faculty satisfaction with their introduction to the Division due to its design and core components. In their interviews, faculty expressed their deep appreciation for the resources and support provided to them by the team and considered FSI *"comprehensive"* and *"superb"* and a support system for the faculty.

Participants with teaching positions at other institutions claimed that FSI was *"a much more efficient way to be onboarded,"* and helped new faculty to not *"start from ground zero."* In describing his experience, a participant expressed, *"All the communication [from FSI] can improve my skills as a faculty member . . . and how to be successful as an adjunct."* Commenting on his experience at another institution, one interviewee said, *"A main difference between the onboarding experience is NYUSPS has the FSI which is not available at other institutions."* Another participant appreciated that FSI *"gave [them] a place and comfort level, knowing that [they] had a place to go."* In the interviews, only three participants shared some onboarding differences from other institutions which included a mentoring system, meet and greet with students, and a scheduling program as components that FSI did not include but may consider adding to augment the program in the future.

Discussion

This study offers an innovative approach to faculty onboarding and development based on a "just-in-time" and "on-demand" training design, which does not require new faculty to attend any orientation sessions. Such sessions traditionally provide faculty with an overload of information that they may not retain when needed at a later time. Instead, the FSI design allowed for the delivery of the appropriate tools, tips, and resources as they related to what the new faculty needed to learn and do at every stage while it served to create a sense of connection to their academic unit and provided them with a direct point of contact for support.

Based on the collected data, it appears that FSI, with its innovative design and the five-step process of socialization, deliberation, collaboration, application, and reflection successfully provided new faculty with quality long-term preparation to design and teach their courses. Providing a transformative learning experience, FSI

19

engaged the participants in the Mezirow's steps of "self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, exploration of options for new roles, planning a course of action, acquiring the required knowledge and skills, provisional trying of new roles, building competence and self-confidence," and "formation of new perspectives." It also encouraged faculty to share and apply various pedagogical practices and strategies, and continuously reflect on their teaching. Although the program was designed for the purpose of new faculty onboarding, many claimed that it had a lasting effect on their professional growth as educators; an outcome that many orientation sessions and brief onboarding periods fail to achieve.

Limitations

This study, focused on a small sample at a particular institution during a specific period, had limitations in terms of generalizability (the applicability of research findings to other sites or theories), reliability (the consistency of the research findings), and validity (the correctness of research data and findings) (Kvale, 1996; Maxwell, 2005). Although the study does reflect "internal generalizability" limited to "generalizability of a conclusion within the setting or group studied" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 115), it was designed, more pointedly, to offer "analytical generalization." Generalization deemed to be "analytical" offers "reasoned judgment[s] about the extent to which the findings from one study" (Kvale, 1996, p. 233) can be used to shed light on and potentially guide other similar phenomena.

The team also sought to increase the reliability of the study through data triangulation, avoiding leading questions, inaccurate transcription, and biased data analysis to the fullest extent possible. To ensure data validity, the researchers took various measures to ensure the correctness of data and findings by recording all the interviews, taking careful notes during interviews, writing memos during coding, and meeting regularly as a team throughout the data analysis process. Another limitation of this study was the positionality of the co-authors who were considered participants' peers. To address this issue, the researchers made the surveys completely anonymous and made it very clear to the participants that their engagement in the interviews was absolutely voluntary and that they could choose to stop the interviews, not respond to certain questions, or not be recorded during the entire or any part of the interviews.

This study, despite its limitations, offers an alternative "model of practice" for faculty onboarding and development; one which is more aligned with faculty needs and expectations and the new ways of information sharing and learning.

Implications for Practice

The study suggests that participants found FSI to be a valuable resource and support structure, offering an effective and efficient onboarding and professional development process. The quantitative and qualitative data indicated that the program met its primary objectives of socializing new professional faculty into their roles as educators, creating a sense of connection to their academic unit, and providing quality, longer-term preparation to increase their teaching effectiveness through transformative learning. All new faculty, regardless of their disciplines and areas of expertise, benefited from this program since it provided a support structure to scaffold their transition and improve their pedagogy and teaching effectiveness.

The program's unique design, "just-in-time" communication strategy, and "on-demand" resource sharing created a seamless faculty onboarding experience that was completely different from the traditional orientation sessions typically offered at higher education institutions. In fact, at NYUSPS, several FSI resources were later scaled and adopted for division- and school-wide faculty use.

The FSI workshops provided opportunities for peer connection, learning, and mentoring, which contributed to community building among faculty, who were mostly part-time and had limited time and bandwidth to engage with each other and their academic unit outside instructional time. These workshops were open to all the faculty within the Division, and by design, included both new and experienced educators to promote their learning and engagement with each other and the FSI team members.

The FSI's intentional and semi-structured design reflected various stages in the new faculty lifecycle, and therefore, can be replicated at other institutions and tailored to any faculty group to fit their specific needs.

Conclusion

Given the limited bandwidth of professional faculty, who are often part-time instructors and have limited teaching experience, professional schools need to provide structured onboarding programs to support these faculty during their first semester of teaching. Data gathered for the present study supported the importance and positive

21

impact of such an onboarding program on the teaching effectiveness of the participating faculty who benefited from

the tips and resources provided to them as they transitioned from their role as practitioners to educators.

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Faculty Success Initiative:
An innovative approach to professional faculty onboarding and development

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Abstract

Higher education institutions have been increasingly dependent on adjunct faculty to provide instruction at undergraduate and graduate levels. At professional schools, most faculty begin teaching graduate courses with limited to no formal training or teaching experience as industry expertise is the primary requirement for employment. Despite the availability of ample pedagogical resources to advance teaching, these faculty require additional support during their induction into academia. This paper describes the design and operationalization of the New York University Faculty Success Initiative (FSI), an innovative, semi-structured, faculty-centered onboarding and professional development program that provides quality, longer-term preparation to new faculty throughout their first semester of instruction to increase their teaching effectiveness and their sense of connection to their academic unit. An analysis of multiple qualitative and quantitative data sources indicates that FSI led to an increase in teaching effectiveness and played a significant role in transitioning professional faculty from practitioners to educators.

Keywords: Faculty development, Professional training, Onboarding program

Declarations:

Table 1

Likert-scale Data Collection Groups and Reliability Coefficients

Scale	Cronbach's alpha
Impressions on aspects of FSI outreach (relevance, depth, breath, and frequency of emails and the provided resources)	0.96
FSI communication	0.97
Aspects of events	0.97

Figure 1

Faculty Teaching Modality*
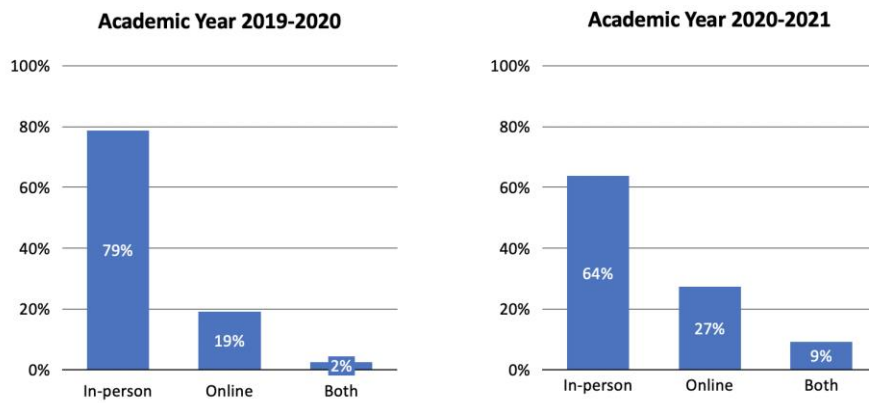
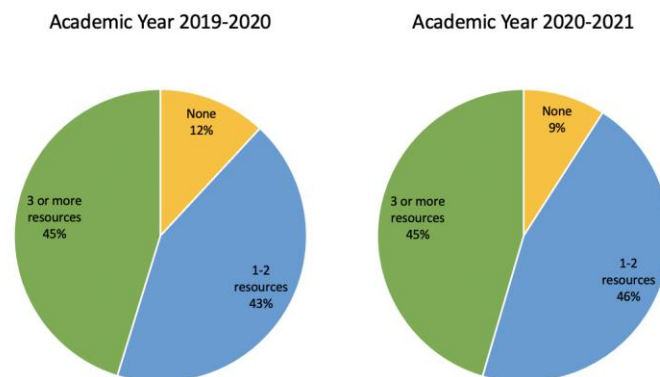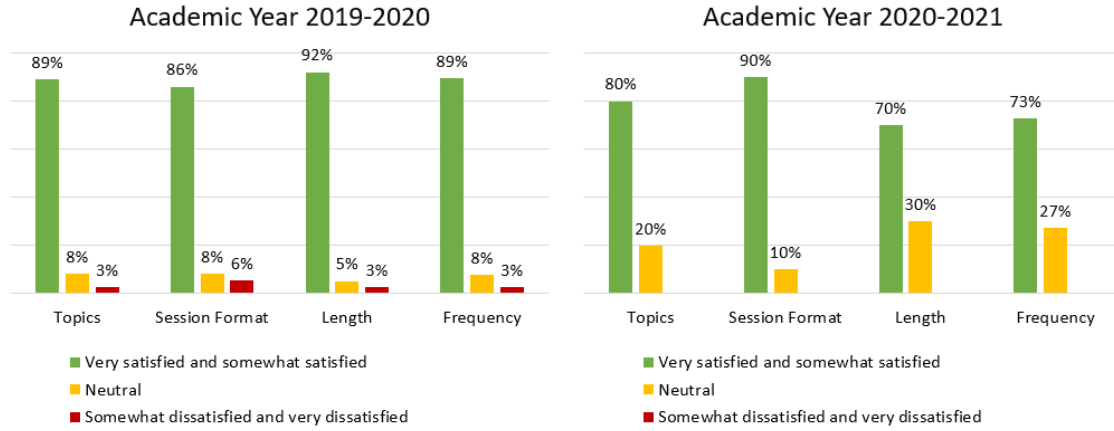** All courses were taught virtually for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester due to the pandemic.*

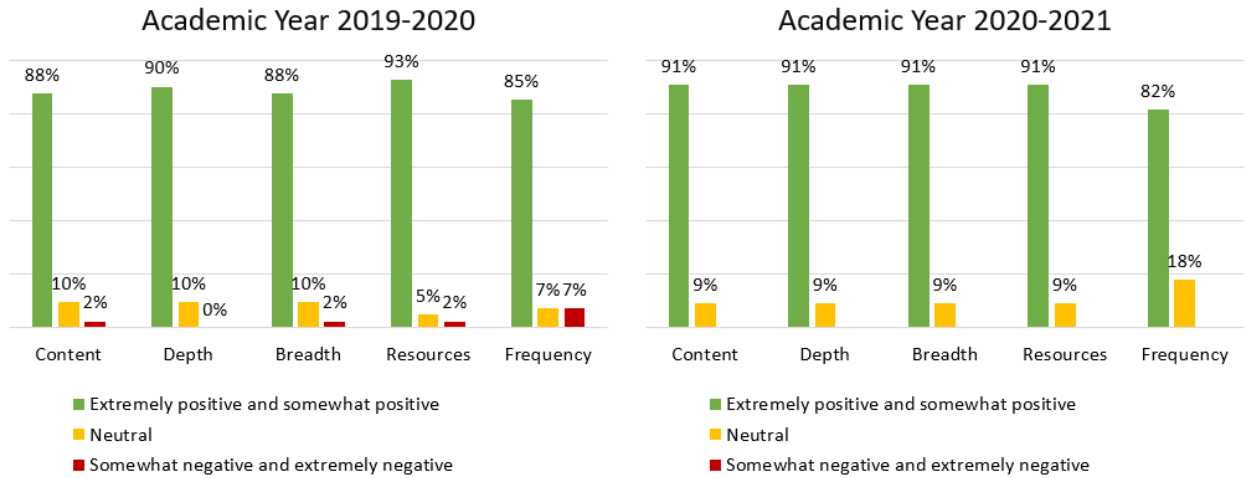**Figure 2**

Survey Participants' Adoption of FSI Resources

Figure 3

Satisfaction with Faculty Workshop*

Academic Year 2019-2020

	Topics	Session Format	Length	Frequency
Very satisfied and somewhat satisfied	89%	86%	92%	89%
Neutral	8%	8%	5%	8%
Somewhat dissatisfied and very dissatisfied	3%	6%	3%	3%

Academic Year 2020-2021

	Topics	Session Format	Length	Frequency
Very satisfied and somewhat satisfied	80%	90%	70%	73%
Neutral	20%	10%	30%	27%
Somewhat dissatisfied and very dissatisfied				

* No participant selected "very dissatisfied."

Figure 4

FSI Communication Strategy*

Academic Year 2019-2020

	Content	Depth	Breadth	Resources	Frequency
Extremely positive and somewhat positive	88%	90%	88%	93%	85%
Neutral	10%	10%	10%	5%	7%
Somewhat negative and extremely negative	2%	0%	2%	2%	7%

Academic Year 2020-2021

	Content	Depth	Breadth	Resources	Frequency
Extremely positive and somewhat positive	91%	91%	91%	91%	82%
Neutral	9%	9%	9%	9%	18%
Somewhat negative and extremely negative					

* No participant selected "extremely negative."