

FIT Student Opinion Survey Results for 2015 Summary Report

Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness

October 2015



**Fashion Institute
of Technology**

Table of Contents

About the Student Opinion Survey.....	1
FIT's Rank among 27 SUNY Colleges on Key Questions	2
Summary of Rankings among SUNY Colleges.....	3
Detailed Results.....	4
Item-Level Comparison of FIT and SUNY Results, by Category	6
Table 2. General Satisfaction	6
Table 3. Satisfaction with Academics.....	7
Table 4. Campus Environment	8
Table 5. Satisfaction with Services	9
Conclusions	10

About the Student Opinion Survey

The Student Opinion Survey is administered every three years for the purpose of collecting information on student satisfaction with their academic experiences, student support services, and campus resources and programs. All 27 bachelor's degree granting SUNY institutions participate, which allows comparisons between FIT and system-level outcomes.

The SOS is one of three large-scale student surveys that FIT uses. The schedule, universe and content of these surveys are summarized in the table below. Taken together, these three surveys provide data that help shape and guide institutional policy. The NSSE and SOS surveys also produce comparative data that help institutions track their progress in relation to selected groups of institutions.

Survey	Frequency	Population	Content
National Survey of Student Engagement	Every 3 years	First-year and seniors (First-year AAS and second-year bachelor)	Amount and type of academic and non-academic activities engaged in, campus environment, skills emphasized, and quality of advising
Alumni Survey	Every year	Alumni who graduated in the prior year	Job placement, satisfaction, skills gained at FIT
Student Opinion Survey	Every 3 years	Associate and bachelor students	Satisfaction with educational quality, specific services, facilities, programs, and advising. Amount and types of academic activities engaged in

The 2015 SOS consists of 142 questions. Twenty-seven pertain to student characteristics or activities, and there are 108 SUNY-wide questions regarding student satisfaction. Seven FIT-specific questions were included to gather more detailed information on advising outcomes. The topics for the satisfaction questions include general satisfaction with the college, academic experiences, and experiences with administrative services. Most of the questions were asked in both 2012 and 2015. In 2012, 2,052 students responded to the survey, for a 26% response rate. In 2015, the total number of responses was 1,316, for a 17% response rate.

This executive summary introduces readers to the survey methodology and basic results. An 18 question subset of the 142 questions provide an overview of the results on satisfaction with the college in general, academics, the campus environment, and selected services such as advising, financial aid, registration, billing, and career planning. A follow-up report presents results for all questions, with the questions grouped by topic or functional area. In that way, readers can focus on their areas of interest. For example, those concerned with academic advising, or career/internship services, can refer to the separate sections of the report that are dedicated to those topics.

FIT's Rank among 27 SUNY Colleges on Key Questions

Rankings are based on the scaled responses to each survey item. Responses are assigned a numerical score on a scale of one to five (e.g., strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, etc.) and then averaged across all respondents. The rank indicates how FIT's scaled scores compared to the other 26 four-year SUNY institutions that participated in the survey.

Initial Interest in the School

FIT was the first choice for 83% of students at this college in 2015, about the same as the 82% reported in 2012. At other SUNY schools, only 54% indicated that their current school was their first choice.

Table 1. Rankings among 27 SUNY Colleges, 2012 and 2015

	Rankings	
General Satisfaction	2012	2015
If you could start over, would you choose to attend this college again?	3 rd	3 rd
This college has helped me meet the goals I came here to achieve.	5 th	8 th
How satisfied are you with this college in general?	12 th	17 th

	Rankings	
Satisfaction with Academics	2012	2015
Comparing the cost to the quality of education, this college is a good value.	5 th	9 th
What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?	6 th	8 th
What is your satisfaction level with the quality of instruction?	7 th	20 th

	Rankings	
Campus Environment – What is your satisfaction level with:	2012	2015
Faculty respect for students.	5 th	24 th
Non-teaching staff respect for students.	25 th	26 th
Campus acceptance of individual differences.	3 rd	3 rd
Campus openness to opinions of others.	3 rd	3 rd
Your sense of belonging to this campus.	14 th	27 th

	Rankings	
Satisfaction with Services – What is your satisfaction level with:	2012	2015
General academic advising	21 st	11 th
Academic advising in your major	24 th	23 rd
Financial aid services	16 th	25 th
Course registration process	21 st	25 th
Billing and payment process	14 th	24 th
Career planning services	14 th	25 th

Summary of Rankings among SUNY Colleges

The rankings include a mixture of positive and negative results. On the positive side, FIT students want to be here. Eighty-three percent of our students list their college as their first choice in the application process, compared to 54% of students at other SUNY schools. FIT ranked 3rd among the 27 SUNY colleges in terms of how likely students were to attend their college again, unchanged from 2012. FIT ranked 8th in 2015 and 5th in 2012 on how well the college helped students meet their goals. However, FIT's rank on the item "How satisfied are you with this college in general" fell from 12th in 2012 to 17th in 2015.

Three questions focus on education and academic satisfaction. In 2015, FIT ranked 9th (slightly lower from 5th in 2012) on the responses to the item "Comparing the cost to the quality of education, this college is a good value." Similarly, FIT ranked 8th in 2015 (6th in 2012) in terms of "Overall impression of the quality of education at this college." The rankings for those two questions were about that same as those in 2012. However, FIT's rank fell considerably on the question about satisfaction with the quality of instruction – 20th in 2015, down from 7th in 2012.

Results for the "campus environment" questions are decidedly mixed. Students report that FIT is a tolerant place. In both years, FIT ranked 3rd in terms of both campus acceptance of individual differences and campus openness to opinions of others. In contrast, FIT ranks near the bottom in terms of non-teaching staff respect for students -- 26th in 2015 and 25th in 2012. Faculty respect for students seems to have declined, with FIT ranking 24th in 2015, down from 5th in 2012. FIT ranks last among the 27 SUNY schools in students "sense of belonging to this campus," down from 14th in 2012.

FIT ranked in the bottom five of the 27 SUNY colleges in terms of satisfaction with a variety of administrative services that include financial aid services (25th), billing and payment services (24th), career services (25th), course registration (25th), and advising in the major (23rd). Almost all of these results represent declines from 2012. There was an improvement in students' satisfaction with general academic advising, where FIT ranked 24th in 2012 and rose to 11th in 2015.

Detailed Results

The next step is to look at more detailed results to see if the story told by the rankings holds up. Rankings are easy to understand, but they can obscure valuable (but more complicated) details in the data. For example, rankings can be misleading if the outcomes for all schools are tightly bunched together. If all results for an item are very similar, the difference between the 5th and 20th places might not be very large. Also, it is useful to see the actual response data, i.e., % satisfied or very satisfied. A high ranking on an item for which all schools did poorly could mislead someone into thinking that the school is doing well in an area that actually needs improvement.

What follows is an expanded data presentation that shows the percentage of FIT students who selected the top two responses on each question's five-point response scale, the scale score average, and the rankings. The scale score average is calculated by assigning a number to each response option (definitely yes=5, probably yes=4, and so on) and averaging across all respondents. For all questions, the minimum scale score is one and the maximum score is five. Having these three points of data, in comparison with 2012's survey results, provides a better understanding of what we can take away regarding our students' satisfaction over the last 3 years.

Some discussion about the significance of differences in the survey results across time is in order. "Significance" has at least two aspects. First, we can ask about statistical significance -- what is the likelihood that an observed difference in the results is due to chance? Second, we can ask whether or not a statistically significant difference is large enough to matter to us. Given the large numbers of FIT students responding to the survey in both years, about 2,000 in 2012 and about 1,300 in 2015, even small difference in the proportions and the scale score averages can be statistically significant. The results depend on the number of responses, the levels of the proportions, and the variation in the question responses. However, we can employ some useful "rules of thumb."

If most respondents answered a question and the proportion is around 80%, even a 3% difference in the proportions is significant at the .95 level of confidence. As the number of responses decreases and/or the proportions decrease, a larger observed difference is required for statistical significance. For example, if we had 1000 responses in 2012 and 650 in 2015, and the proportion was around 60%, a 5% difference is required for significance at the .95 level of confidence.

For the scale score averages, differences of .07 are significant at the .95 level of confidence if most respondents answered the question. If the responses were around 1000 in 2012 and 650 in 2015, a difference of .10 is required for significance at that level.

Differences in scale score averages don't have an obvious interpretation. What does it mean if an average shifts from 4.0 to 4.10? If the average is 4.0, the responses center around the 2nd best response, such as "satisfied." An increase in the average to 4.1 could be obtained if 10% of the respondents chose an answer that was one level up on the scale -- from "satisfied" to "satisfied," for example. A difference of .20 would occur if 20% of respondents made such a shift.

Given this discussion, statistical significance is not likely to be an issue for any differences that are large enough to care about. Intuitively, we might view a difference of two or three percentage points in proportions as "about the same." We will probably focus on differences in the proportions of five percent or higher. Likewise, we might choose to pay more attention to questions where the differences in scale score averages changed by .10 or more, because this means that about 10% of our students shifted their opinions.

Item-Level Comparison of FIT and SUNY Results, by Category

Table 2. General Satisfaction

	FIT Rankings (among 27 SUNY schools)		% of FIT Students Responding in Top 2 of 5 Categories		Scale Scores, FIT	
	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015
If you could start over, would you choose to attend this college again?	3 rd	3 rd	80%	76%	4.15	4.07
This college has helped me meet the goals I came here to achieve	5 th	8 th	68%	72%	3.80	3.93
How satisfied are you with this college in general?	12 th	17 th	80%	74%	3.95	3.78

Three questions gage the levels of students’ general satisfaction with FIT. On the first question, “If you could start over, would you choose to attend this college again?” FIT ranked 3rd among the 27 SUNY schools in both years. The percentage of FIT students responding in the top 2 of 5 categories (Definitely yes and Probably yes), was 80% in 2012 and 76% in 2015. The scale score averages (4.15 in 2012 and 4.07 in 2015) indicate that the responses to this question centered around “Probably yes.” The outcomes for the question, “This college has helped me meet the goals I came here to achieve,” stayed about the same. FIT’s rank dipped slightly from 5th to 8th, but the percentage of students choosing either strongly agree or Agree went up slightly. The scale score average increased a little, from 3.80 in 2012 to 3.93 in 2015. Lastly, FIT’s rank on the question “How satisfied are you with this college in general?” dropped from 12th in 2012 to 17th in 2015. Fewer respondents were Very satisfied or Satisfied in 2015 (76%) than in 2012 (80%). Correspondingly the scale score average fell from 3.95 in 2012 to 3.78 in 2015.

Table 3. Satisfaction with Academics

	FIT Rankings (among 27 SUNY schools)		% of FIT Students Responding in Top 2 of 5 Categories		Scale Scores, FIT	
	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015
Comparing the cost to the quality of education, this college is a good value	5 th	9 th	81%	80%	4.17	4.10
What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?	6 th	8 th	70%	67%	3.83	3.74
What is your satisfaction level with the quality of instruction?	7 th	20 th	80%	70%	3.98	3.72

Three questions gage the levels of students’ satisfaction with academics at FIT. On the first question, “Comparing the cost to the quality of education, this college is a good value,” FIT ranked 9th among the 27 SUNY schools in 2015, a slight decrease from the 5th place ranking in 2012. The percentage of FIT students responding in the top 2 of 5 categories (Strongly agree and Agree), was 81% in 2012 and 80% in 2015. The scale score averages (4.17 in 2012 and 4.10 in 2015) indicate that the responses to this question centered around “Agree.” The outcomes for the question, “What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?” stayed about the same. FIT’s rank was 6th in 2012 and 8th in 2015, and the percentage of students choosing either Very high or high was 70% in 2012 and 67% in 2015. The scale score average decreased a little as well, from 3.83 in 2012 to 3.74 in 2015. Lastly, FIT’s rank on the question “What is your satisfaction level with the quality of instruction?” dropped from 7th in 2012 to 20th in 2015. This is also reflected in the decline in the percentage of respondents picking either Very satisfied or Satisfied from 80% in 2012 to 70% in 2015 (70%) than in 2012 (80%). Correspondingly the scale score average fell from 3.98 in 2012 to 3.72 in 2015.

Table 4. Campus Environment

	FIT Rankings (among 27 SUNY schools)		% of FIT Students Responding in Top 2 of 5 Categories		Scale Scores, FIT	
	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015
What is your satisfaction level with:						
Faculty respect for students?	5 th	24 th	81%	72%	4.09	3.86
Campus acceptance of individual differences?	3 rd	3 rd	88%	85%	4.37	4.25
Campus openness to opinions of others?	3 rd	3 rd	83%	78%	4.23	4.09
Your sense of belonging to this campus?	14 th	27 th	59%	48%	3.61	3.33
Non-teaching staff respect for students?	25 th	26 th	67%	67%	3.74	3.72

Students’ reporting satisfaction with the campus environment depends considerably on the specific question being asked. The five questions presented here provide a mix bag of information. For “Campus acceptance of individual differences?” and “Campus openness to opinions of others?” FIT ranked 3rd among 27 SUNY schools in both 2012 and 2015. The percentages of FIT students reporting that they were satisfied or very satisfied with those aspects of the campus environment were relatively high. Eighty-five percent of students were satisfied or very satisfied with the acceptance of individual differences. Seventy-eight percent were satisfied or very satisfied with FIT’s openness to the opinions of others. While the rankings were unchanged, the reported satisfaction levels declined by a few percentage points. Similarly, the scale score averages for these two questions decreased.

Students’ satisfaction with “Faculty respect for students,” which had been fairly high in 2012, declined in 2015. In 2012, FIT ranked 5th among the 27 SUNY schools, with 81% of students reporting that they were satisfied or very satisfied. FIT’s ranking fell to 24th in 2015, with a corresponding 9% decrease in students with satisfied or very satisfied responses (81% to 72%). The results for “Non-teaching staff respect for students” are also cause for concern. FIT’s rank on this question was 25th in 2012 and 26th in 2015. The percentage of students responding in the top 2 of 5 categories for this question remained was 67% in both years and the average scale score was virtually the same at 3.74 in 2012 and 3.72 in 2015. FIT saw a drop in its ranking on students’ sense of belonging to the campus, from 14th in 2012 to 27th in 2015. Only 48% of FIT students in 2015 reported that they were satisfied with their sense of belonging to the campus. The percent of responders picking the top 2 of 5 categories shows a decrease from 59% in 2012 to 48% in 2015. The average scale score from 3.61 in 2012 to 3.33 in 2015 shows the average response centering closer to neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Table 5. Satisfaction with Services

	FIT Rankings (among 27 SUNY schools)		% of FIT Students Responding in Top 2 of 5 Categories		Scale Scores, FIT	
	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015
What is your satisfaction level with:						
General academic advising?	21 st	11 th	55%	64%	3.39	3.67
Academic advising in your major?	24 th	23 rd	59%	57%	3.55	3.55
Financial aid services?	16 th	25 th	57%	47%	3.53	3.33
Course registration process?	21 st	25 th	50%	39%	3.28	3.02
Billing and payment process?	14 th	24 th	64%	54%	3.68	3.49
Career planning services?	14 th	25 th	59%	50%	3.55	3.40

Two questions about advising – general advising and advising in the major – were part of the SUNY-wide survey. In 2012, FIT ranked toward the bottom in both areas – 21st in general advising and 24th in advising in the major. Results improved for general advising in 2015. FIT’s rank increased to 11th and the percentage reporting that they were satisfied or very satisfied increased from 55% in 2012 to 64% in 2015. Results for advising in the major stayed about the same. FIT ranked 23rd in 2015 and 57% of our students reported being at least satisfied (down from 59% in 2012).

Results for financial aid services, course registration, billing and payment, and career planning services declined across the board, both in terms of rankings and the percentage of students who were satisfied. In 2012, FIT ranked 16th in satisfaction with financial aid services, with 57% of students being satisfied or very satisfied. In 2015, the ranking fell to 25th and less than half (47%) of students were satisfied with financial aid services. Results for billing and career planning were similar. In both areas, FIT ranked 14th in 2012, with billing and payment services falling to 24th in 2015 and career planning falling to 25th. The percentage of students who were satisfied with these services fell about 10% in both areas – 64% to 54% for billing and 59% to 50% for career planning. Satisfaction with course registration was never high, with a rank of 21st in 2012 and 50% of students being satisfied or very satisfied. In 2015, the ranking for course registration satisfaction fell to 25th and the percentage of students being at least satisfied fell to 39%.

Conclusions

The Student Opinion Survey provides FIT with a wealth of information about the satisfaction of students with their academic experiences and the administrative services provided by the college. In both 2012 and 2015, the college did well in some areas. These include helping students achieve their goals, providing an open and accepting campus environment, and being a college they would attend again. FIT students also believe that their college is a good value considering its cost.

Just as in 2012, FIT students in 2015 reported low levels of satisfaction with non-teaching staff respect for students. FIT was 25th in 2012 and 26th in 2015 among the 27 SUNY schools in this area.

Some of the results related to the educational experience, either because of their levels or trends, may be a cause for concern. While FIT ranked 8th in terms of students' overall impression of the quality of education at this college, only two-thirds of them were satisfied or very satisfied with that quality. In terms of satisfaction with instruction, FIT ranked 20th in 2015, down from 7th in 2012. Only 70% of FIT students reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of instruction in 2015, down from 80% in 2012. On faculty respect for students, FIT ranked 24th in 2015, down from 5th in 2012. Only 72% of FIT students were satisfied or very satisfied with the respect they received from faculty.

The results for one question about the campus environment probably raises more questions. Only 48% of FIT students were satisfied or very satisfied with their sense of belonging to this campus, ranking 27th among all SUNY schools. This is a decline from 2012, when FIT ranked 14th and 59% of students were at least satisfied with their sense of belonging.

Students were asked about their satisfaction with financial aid services, course registration, billing and payment services, and career planning services. In 2012, FIT's ranks on these questions ranged from 14th to 21st, with between 50% and 64% of students being satisfied or very satisfied with those services. In 2015, those results got worse, both in terms of rankings and absolute levels of reported satisfaction. FIT students' satisfaction with billing and payment services ranked 24th, and satisfaction with financial aid services, course registration, and career planning services all ranked 25th.

We had mixed results for advising. On satisfaction with general advising, FIT ranked 21st in 2012, rising to 11th in 2015. Sixty-four percent of FIT students were at least satisfied with general advising, up from 55% in 2012. The results for advising in the major stayed about the same. FIT's rank for advising in the major was 24th in 2012 and 23rd in 2015; 57% of FIT students were satisfied with advising in the major in 2015, compared to 59% in 2012.