CCSSE
Community College Survey of Student Engagement

Act On Fact

Using Data To Improve Student Success

2006 Findings

Acknowledgments

It requires continuing acts of courage — on the part of community college presidents, other administrative leaders, faculty, and staff — to "hold up the mirror" to institutional performance, routinely review data that insistently tell the truth about students' experiences in our colleges, and then use those truths to inform decisions about how to increase successful outcomes for a diverse student population. *CCSSE* dedicates this 2006 National Report to those colleges and individuals for whom that courageous work increasingly becomes the norm. Through their decisions to act on fact, they set an example and a standard for all of higher education — changing institutions to change lives.

"Take nothing on its looks; take everything on evidence. There's no better rule."

— Charles Dickens (1812–1870), Great Expectations

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Contents

"I've had many times when I had to make the decision between quitting school and getting another job or taking out another loan to continue in school. I guess part of it is that I'm very stubborn, and the other part is that I have good academic advisors."

— Student, Maui Community College (HI)

Foreword: Modeling Good Behavior

Education is no place for modest ambitions. I suspect that most people would agree with this statement, yet higher education institutions across the country are stymied by just that problem — ambitions that are decidedly too limited — or worse, by their own comfort with failure.

Every day, we ask community college students to set higher goals and to strive for them, to make their education a priority even as they juggle multiple jobs and care for their families. But are we holding ourselves to a comparable standard?

To explore this question, it's instructive to look at how other professions examine their own performance. As an example, during a study of the quality of medical education, I recently observed an M&M (Morbidity and Mortality) conference at the teaching hospital of a major American medical school. The medical profession has long used the M&M as a tool to review failures — and to figure out how to avoid repeating them.

At the M&M I attended, the team was addressing a persistent failure in the intensive care unit (ICU): an unacceptably high infection rate, primarily associated with running central lines into femoral arteries. The facilitator noted that every major hospital has this problem and that Johns Hopkins had reported how they successfully addressed it.

How did Johns Hopkins fix a problem that plagues hospitals everywhere? The answer is simple: They knew what had to be done and decided to take the necessary action.

The medical team had the facts. They knew what practices would lower infection rates, but collectively, they needed discipline and commitment to apply them.

So the medical school dean and university president, working with the hospital staff, developed a rigorous protocol for running central lines. The protocol involved a range of practices, such as how carefully and frequently hands are washed and never using the same line to draw blood and deliver medication — an approach that is easier but is associated with much higher infection rates.

Nurses were empowered to enforce the protocol, and they were instructed to abort a procedure if the protocol was violated, whether by an intern or the department chair. Every nurse also had the home phone numbers of the medical school dean and the university president. The nurses were instructed to call one of those numbers, at any time of the day or night, if any physician failed to follow the protocol and refused to abort the procedure.

We were told that such a phone call happened only once. Subsequently, at Johns Hopkins, the infection rate for this procedure approached zero.

Like failures to control infection rates, failures of education often are procedural. And solutions, while not out of reach, often require taking a harder path, making a sustained effort, and being vigilant.

What I watched at this teaching hospital was an institution actively investigating the quality of its work — knowing, caring, and operating cooperatively to improve its practice. Where is a similar culture in higher education? Do we regularly come together and ask why students are not learning mathematics or economics well and, more important, what the leaders of institutions, departments, and programs should do to fix the problems?

Nationwide, I would argue that we do not. But more and more, community colleges are moving in the right direction. This *CCSSE* report is filled with examples of colleges that are electing to question the status quo. These colleges have decided that the refrain "that's the way we've always done it" isn't a good enough reason for doing anything. They are engaging faculty and staff and encouraging them to examine data and act on what they discover and value. They are identifying strategies to improve performance and holding themselves accountable for student success.

These colleges are raising their sights, elevating their ambitions, and eliminating their comfort with failure. They are modeling the behavior they want their students to adopt, and in doing so, they are showing those students a clearer path to success. They are taking responsibility and asking their students to do the same.

Lee S. Shulman
President
The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education Emeritus
Stanford University

Everything's Coming Up Data

CCSSE's Passion for Dispassionate Data

Each year, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*) presents the results of its annual survey — and helps colleges use that information to improve student learning and persistence. *CCSSE* results give community colleges objective and relevant data about students' experiences at their colleges so they can better understand how effectively they are engaging their students — and identify areas for improvement.

This work is essential. Community colleges often serve students who have the fewest options and the greatest challenges. If they do not succeed at their community colleges, these students likely will not have access to further education, productive jobs, or any of the benefits these opportunities bring. When this happens, it isn't just the students who lose. Our neighborhoods and our nation need these students to succeed. More and more, we rely on every individual to participate productively in our economy, our democracy, and the worldwide community.

CCSSE's work is conducted with passion but firmly rooted in evidence: objective, relevant, indisputable, impossible-to-ignore, rock-solid data. This work centers on helping colleges use data to better serve their students.

CCSSE encourages colleges to build a culture of evidence — an institutional standard of using data to drive decisions. Colleges that have a culture of evidence regularly collect, analyze, and share data related to student persistence, learning, and attainment. They engage people — faculty, staff, administrative leaders, and others — in discussions about data and the picture data paint of students' educational experiences. And they use data to set goals for student success and identify strategies to achieve them.

Perhaps most important, colleges with a culture of evidence understand that the best way to promote student success is to base every decision — about programs, policies, budgets, and staffing — on the answer to this question: Which course of action will have the best effect on student learning? And the only way to *know* which practices have the best results is to repeatedly, unfailingly, unapologetically look at the data.

FIFTEEN WORDS, LAYERS OF CHALLENGES

It's easy to understand the mission of community colleges — *provide quality education and the necessary support to help all students attain their educational goals* — but it can be difficult to comprehend the many challenges embedded in those 15 words.

Community colleges:

- provide full access to education through open admissions;
- serve a diverse mix of students with dramatically varying goals, from earning a degree to receiving on-the-job training;
- serve students who have significant time commitments — to their families, their jobs, and their communities — in addition to their studies;
- serve students who likely attend college part-time and, therefore, spend limited time on campus;
- serve students who were not well served by their previous public school education and, therefore, are likely to have academic challenges;
- serve students who are highly qualified academically but seek an affordable and accessible start to their college experience;
- serve disproportionately high numbers of low-income and first-generation college students; and
- address all of these challenges while dealing with severe resource constraints.

Addressing these challenges is the critical work of community colleges. It is a formidable goal, but it is achievable — and *CCSSE* exists to help them do so.

The Bandwagon Is Moving

This year, *CCSSE* is pleased to note that there is an unprecedented commitment — from foundations, accreditation agencies, government agencies, and community colleges themselves — to make better use of data to improve student outcomes at community colleges. Current initiatives and activities in this area include the following:

- **Achieving the Dream** is a multiyear national initiative to help more community college students succeed (earn degrees, earn certificates, or transfer to other institutions to continue their studies), particularly low-income students and students of color. The initiative's efforts include work with community colleges

and in research, public engagement, and public policy. Lumina Foundation for Education, an original and continuing supporter of *CCSSE*, funded the initiative's startup. Lumina now has been joined by College Spark Washington, The Heinz Endowments, Houston Endowment Inc., KnowledgeWorks Foundation, and Nellie Mae Education Foundation to fund data-driven improvement efforts at 58 colleges in nine states.

WHY STUDENT ENGAGEMENT? WHY *CCSSE*?

Research shows that the more actively engaged students are — with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter they study — the more likely they are to learn, to stick with their studies, and to attain their academic goals. Student engagement, therefore, is a valuable yardstick for assessing the quality of colleges' educational practices and identifying ways they can produce more successful results — more students across all subgroups learning at higher levels and attaining their academic goals.

CCSSE's survey, *The Community College Student Report*, focuses on institutional practices and student behaviors that promote student engagement. *CCSSE* works with participating colleges to administer the survey, which measures students' levels of engagement in a variety of areas. The colleges then receive their survey results, along with guidance and analysis they can use to improve their programs and services for students.

Beginning this year, all *CCSSE* data analyses include a three-year cohort of participating colleges. Using a three-year cohort increases the number of institutions and students in the national dataset, optimizes representation of institutions by size and location, and therefore, increases the reliability of the overall results.

This year's three-year cohort — called the 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort — includes all colleges that participated in *CCSSE* from 2004 through 2006. If a college participated more than one time in the three-year period, the cohort includes data only from its most recent year of participation. The 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort includes 249,548 students from 447 institutions in 46 states.

All *CCSSE* work is grounded in research about what works in strengthening student learning and persistence. *CCSSE* also is completing a three-pronged validation research study that examines the relationship between student engagement and outcomes *for community college students* — the first such research on a large scale. The study, contracted with respected external research and data analysis experts and funded by Lumina Foundation for Education, broadly confirms *CCSSE*'s fundamental assumption that student engagement matters. These findings, moreover, are consistent with the existing literature about students at four-year colleges and universities.

- The Ford Foundation's **Community College Bridges to Opportunity Initiative** involves six states and their community and technical colleges. Bridges to Opportunity focuses on identifying and implementing state policy and institutional practices that help move more low-income students into and successfully through community colleges — and on to further education and family-supporting careers.
- The **Joint State Data Project** is a collaborative effort of Bridges and Achieving the Dream, born from the two initiatives' emphasis on data. The project's work includes developing tools to help state agencies collect, analyze, and communicate about data in ways that inform policy and practice and helping states build their capacity to use data for improvement.
- Since 2002, the ***MetLife Foundation Initiative on Student Success*** (part of *CCSSE*) has recognized 16 community and technical colleges for exemplary performance in strengthening student retention. The *Initiative* also has shared promising practices from those colleges so others can learn from their successes.
- *CCSSE* also is working on two new projects. **Building Relationships for Student Success**, which is funded by the MetLife Foundation, focuses on identifying and sharing information about the relationships that are critical to community college students. **Starting Right** seeks to capture the voices of entering community college students to more fully understand their needs and how they can be better served.
- The **regional accrediting associations** are emphasizing student learning outcomes and the value of using data to improve curriculum, instruction, and other practices that can lead to improved outcomes.
- **The Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education**, created by Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, is focused on more innovation, transparency, and accountability in higher education. A September 2006 commission report calls for publicly reported data about student success and offers *CCSSE* as an example of a comprehensive, readily usable assessment. The report also calls for benchmarks in the areas of student access, retention, and success; data about part-time students and those who stop and restart; and disaggregated data in state-by-state reports.

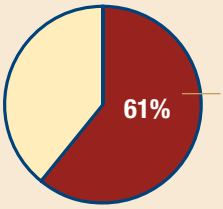
Characteristics and Challenges of Community College Students

Community colleges educate a diverse mix of students with dramatically varying goals; significant demands on their time; and a range of personal, academic, and financial challenges.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS CONTEND WITH COMPETING PRIORITIES

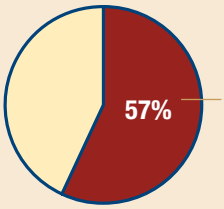
Students' commitments to work and family mean that they spend limited time on campus — making it both more difficult and essential for colleges to engage them when they are there.

Most Students Are Enrolled Part-Time



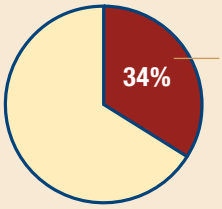
Source: IPEDS, fall 2004.

Most Students Work



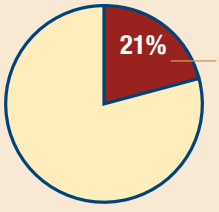
Source: 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data.

Many Students Care for Dependents



Source: 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data.

Most Students Commute, Many Spend Significant Time Commuting



Source: 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data.

STUDENTS' GOALS

Indicate which of the following are your reasons/goals for attending this college.

	Primary goal	Secondary goal	Not a goal
Complete a certificate program	29%	19%	52%
Obtain an associate degree	58%	21%	21%
Transfer to a four-year college or university	50%	21%	28%
Obtain or update job-related skills	41%	27%	33%
Self-improvement/personal enjoyment	39%	34%	26%
Change careers	30%	16%	55%

Source: 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data.
Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

REASONS STUDENTS MIGHT NOT RETURN TO COLLEGE

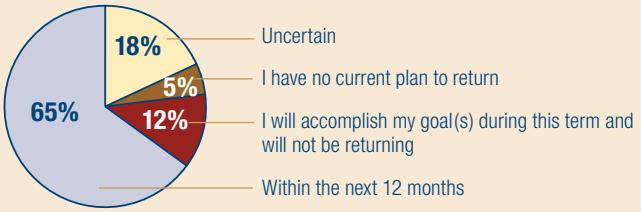
How likely is it that the following issues would cause you to withdraw from class or from this college?

	Students responding *likely* or *very likely*
Transfer to a four-year college or university	49%
Lack of finances	45%
Working full-time	37%
Caring for dependents	29%
Academically unprepared	18%

Source: 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data.

STUDENTS' PLANS AFTER THE CURRENT SEMESTER

When asked when they plan to take classes at this college again, 23% had no plan to return or were uncertain about their future plans.



Source: 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data.

Start with the Truth: Building a Culture of Evidence

"We gain strength, and courage, and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face. … We must do that which we think we cannot."
— Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962)

Understand the Facts

Better educational outcomes do not just happen. They are the result of relentlessly focused efforts over a sustained period of time — and of using data to identify where, when, and how to marshal resources.

Given community colleges' limited resources, building a culture of evidence — establishing an institutional expectation that individual and collective actions *typically* will be prompted and supported by data — is the only way to create real change. When decision-makers don't look at data, they tend to base decisions on their own personal experiences. However, institutionwide data, regularly collected and analyzed, are systematic. They show the *typical* student experience and, when disaggregated, they accurately reflect the experience of various student groups.

Consider the experience of part-time and full-time students as shown by the 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data. It will not surprise most people that part-time students typically are less engaged than their full-time peers in school-related activities outside the classroom.

- 17% of part-time students versus 26% of full-time students say they *often* or *very often* work with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments; and
- 49% of part-time students versus 32% of full-time students say they *never* do so.
- 19% of part-time students versus 30% of full-time students say they *often* or *very often* talk about career plans with an instructor or advisor; and
- 38% of part-time students versus 25% of full-time students say they *never* have those conversations.

Given part-time students' schedules and limited time on campus, these results, while not desirable, have come to be expected. But what about time spent inside the classroom? Part-time students obviously spend fewer hours per week in the classroom, but one might expect that their in-class experiences would be comparable to those of full-time students. The data, however, show that they are not.

- **Part-time students are less likely to work with other students on projects during class.** Forty-two percent of part-time students versus 50% of full-time students say they *often* or *very often* do so; 17% of part-time students versus 8% of full-time students say they *never* work with other students during class.

DOES YOUR COLLEGE HAVE A CULTURE OF EVIDENCE?

When a college operates with a culture of evidence, its administrators, faculty, and staff use data honestly and unflinchingly to assess student and institutional performance to identify means for improvement. This is difficult work. Data can challenge assumptions and traditions, threaten the status quo, and disrupt informal power structures. But data also can help chart a course to excellence.

The characteristics of a culture of evidence include the following:

- The institution regularly collects systematic, timely, useful, and user-friendly information about student persistence, learning, and attainment — and makes it readily available.
- The institutional culture encourages everyone — governing board members, administrators, faculty, staff, and students — to rigorously examine and openly discuss institutional performance.
- The institution tracks cohorts of entering students to measure outcomes and identify areas for improvement.
- The institution disaggregates data by student characteristics, such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, and income level.
- The results of student and institutional assessments routinely inform institutional decisions regarding strategic priorities, resource allocation, faculty and staff development, and improvements in programs and services.
- Beliefs and assertions about "what works" in promoting student learning and attainment are evidence-based.

Source: McClenney, K., and B. McClenney, *Student Learning, Persistence and Attainment: A Community College Inventory*, 2003.

- **Part-time students are less likely to make class presentations.** Twenty-two percent of part-time students versus 35% of full-time students say they *often* or *very often* make class presentations; 41% of part-time students versus 22% of full-time students say they *never* make class presentations.

- **Part-time students are less likely to participate in a community-based project as part of a course.** Four percent of part-time students versus 8% of full-time students say they *often* or *very often* do so; 84% of part-time students versus 74% of full-time students say they *never* participate in a community-based project as part of a course.

These findings demonstrate the importance of disaggregating data or breaking them down by various student characteristics (e.g., race and ethnicity, income, gender, and in this case, enrollment status) to see how different student groups are faring. This work is particularly crucial as community colleges become more focused on addressing the all-too-common disparities in outcomes based on race/ethnicity and income.

Disaggregating the data is equally important for improving the effectiveness of developmental education. As a large proportion of community colleges' entering students require at least one developmental course, colleges that are serious about improving outcomes for more students are focusing efforts on improving the effectiveness of developmental education.

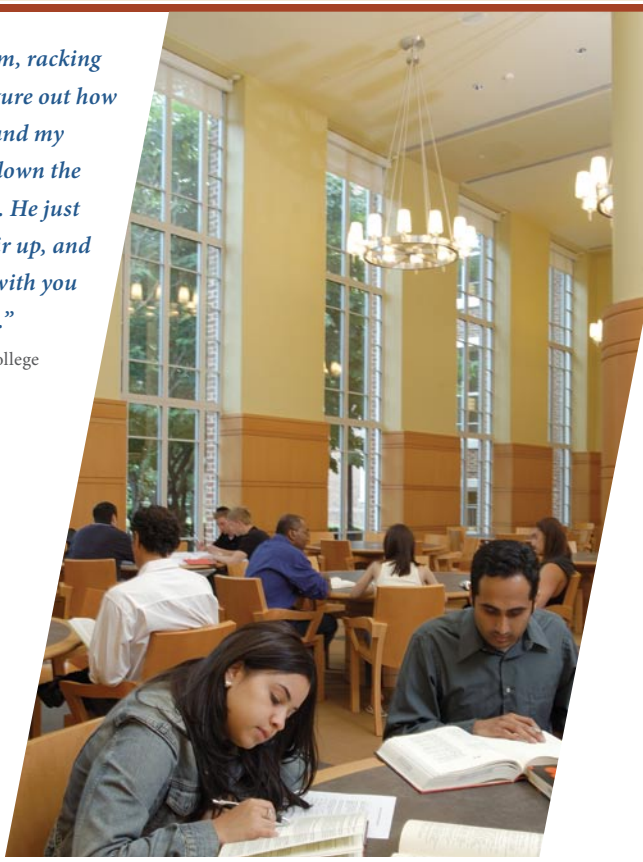
Share the Facts

In a college that has a culture of evidence, these findings would be shared and discussed broadly. Sharing the information is critical because to improve performance, stakeholders must understand the data and their implications. The more key stakeholders engage with the data — and make discoveries about issues they value — the more likely they are to address concerns raised by the findings.

In a culture of evidence, for example, findings that part-time students have a qualitatively different classroom experience would spark questions, conversations, and likely, requests for additional data. Participants might, for example, look at the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement *(CCFSSE)** to see how instructors spend their time in class. In the 2006 *CCFSSE* Cohort, 22% of faculty members report spending none of their class time on small-group activities.

"I'll be sitting in a room, racking my brain trying to figure out how this problem works, and my instructor will walk down the hall and see me there. He just comes in, pulls a chair up, and sits there and works with you however long it takes."

— Student, Community College of Denver (CO)



Act On the Facts

The evidence also should raise questions about a range of institutional behaviors and assumptions. For example, colleges might ask, is there a difference in classroom practices between full-time and part-time faculty members? What roles should part-time faculty members play at our college? What additional training might they need? What might we consider changing (e.g., our assumptions, requirements for full-time and part-time faculty members, rewards for faculty members) to make part-time students' classroom experiences more engaging?

These kinds of data-driven conversations should inform every aspect of a college's work. Without data, colleges tend to base decisions on guessing at what might improve student performance, adopting the latest reform *du jour*, or implementing someone's pet idea. However, when data drive decisions, every decision about programs, policies, budgets, and staffing is based on how that decision likely will affect student learning.

**CCFSSE*, which is aligned with *CCSSE*, elicits information from faculty, including how they spend their professional time both in and out of class. See page 20 for more information about *CCFSSE*, including comparisons of full-time and part-time faculty responses.

Colleges Act On Fact

To engage faculty members in reviewing *CCSSE* results, **North Hennepin Community College (MN)** gathered faculty members and asked them to predict students' responses to the survey items. Instead of doing this exercise on paper, the college used personal-response system "clickers," and the participants received immediate feedback after reviewing each survey item. The actual student data then were displayed for discussion. After getting this feedback, the faculty members were randomly divided into groups and assigned one *CCSSE* benchmark. Each group identified two priorities for change related to their benchmark. These priorities now are part of the college's assessment plan initiatives.

After its first *CCSSE* administration, **Cedar Valley College (TX)** set a goal of making tutoring available to more students. The first objective was to provide tutoring to every CVC student who needed it — a change from the earlier practice of providing tutoring only to students who met particular guidelines. CVC created a tutoring center located in the middle of its campus to provide tutoring in all disciplines, for all students. The president committed funds to the center, and the college hired a director, employed additional tutors, and trained tutors extensively. The new tutoring center established relationships with faculty members, who broadly advertised its services. When CVC completed its second *CCSSE* administration, the college scored significantly higher than other colleges in the frequency of use of tutoring services. CVC also learned that students ranked tutoring as one of the three services with which they were most satisfied.

"In the Academic Development Center, we have a specialist who could work with a student in whatever subject the student was having trouble with. I found that to be very helpful. Having tutoring, the specialist, and the teachers with an open door who are willing to work with you, that really helped me."

— Student, Parkland College (IL)

CCSSE congratulates **Richland College (TX)**, a recipient of the 2006 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. This is the first time a community college has received this prestigious award, which is based on rigorous performance criteria that include using data for continuous quality improvement. Richland, one of the 12 *CCSSE* pilot colleges, continues its regular participation in the survey, and Richland President Steve Mittelstet was a founding member of *CCSSE*'s National Advisory Board.

CCSSE offers a range of tools to help its members build a culture of evidence. These include a Course Feedback Form, which is an end-of-course evaluation instrument that is aligned with *CCSSE* items; a Classroom Observation Form, which can be used in faculty development and evaluation efforts; a Focus Group Toolkit, which gives colleges the materials they need to plan and conduct student focus groups; an Accreditation Toolkit, which helps colleges use *CCSSE* results in the accreditation process; and a *CCFSSE* Tip Sheet, which helps colleges make better use of *CCFSSE* results. All materials are free to *CCSSE* members at www.ccsse.org.

Benchmarking Effective Educational Practice

Benchmarking is a process for gauging and monitoring an institution's performance in areas that are central to its work. Often the term *benchmarking* is associated primarily with comparing one's own institution with like peers.

CCSSE, however, takes a broader approach to benchmarking. It is useful for colleges to benchmark against the national average, but this work takes them only so far. Colleges, policymakers, and other stakeholders must continually ask whether current performance is good enough; whether the national average is good enough; and what measures of success ultimately are most appropriate, relevant, and useful.

THE *CCSSE* BENCHMARKS OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Benchmarks are groups of conceptually related survey items that address key areas of student engagement. *CCSSE*'s five benchmarks comprise 38 engagement items that reflect many of the most important aspects of the student experience. The benchmarks measure behaviors that educational research has shown to be powerful contributors to effective teaching, learning, and student retention.

The *CCSSE* benchmarks are **active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, and support for learners.** To see descriptions of the benchmarks or the specific survey items associated with each benchmark, visit www.ccsse.org.

Every college has a score for each benchmark. These individual benchmark scores are computed by averaging the scores on survey items that compose that benchmark. Benchmark scores are standardized so that the mean — the average of all participating students — always is 50 and the standard deviation is 25.

The standardized score provides an easy way to assess whether an individual college is performing above or below the mean (50) on each benchmark. The standardized scores make it possible for colleges to compare their own performance across benchmarks and with groups of similar colleges.

Thus, community colleges use *CCSSE* benchmarks to compare their performance to that of similar institutions and to the full *CCSSE* population of community colleges; compare their own performance across benchmarks and across time; and identify areas in need of improvement. Because the results are public, benchmarks also can stimulate conversations — within colleges and among policymakers — about effective educational practice.

Benchmarking — and Reaching for Excellence

CCSSE offers five ways that colleges can use benchmarks to better understand their institutional performance — and to reach for excellence in student engagement. Colleges can:

1. Compare their performance to that of the national average — and at the same time, *resist the average*. Comparing themselves to the average of participating colleges (the 50 mark) on any given benchmark is a starting point. But then colleges should assess their performance on the individual survey items that make up the benchmark. Most colleges will find areas for improvement at the item level.

2. Compare themselves to high-performing colleges. A college might, for example, aspire to be at or above the 85th percentile on some or all benchmarks. Colleges also can learn from high-performing institutions by examining the practices that contribute to their success.

3. Measure their overall performance against results for their least-engaged group. A college might aspire to make sure all subgroups within its population (e.g., full-time and part-time students; developmental students; students across all racial, ethnic, and income groups, etc.) engage in their education at similarly high levels.

4. Gauge their work in areas their college strongly values. They might focus, for example, on survey items related to service to high-risk students or on survey items related to academic rigor (e.g., are they asking students to read and write enough?).

5. Make the most important comparison: where they are now, compared with where they want to be. This is the mark of an institution committed to continuous improvement.

CCSSE *Is a Starting Point: How Colleges Use Data*

For colleges, participating in *CCSSE* and getting the results are not ends unto themselves. In fact, they are just the beginning of understanding — and acting on — student results.

Colleges that use data wisely — colleges that operate with a culture of evidence — are in a never-ending cycle of gathering, analyzing, and most important, *using* data. Their work looks like this:

The inarguable fundamentals

1. The center of community college work is student learning, persistence, and success.
2. Every program, every service, every academic policy is perfectly designed to achieve the exact outcome it currently produces. If a program isn't producing the desired outcome, the only rational action is to modify or discontinue it.

The cycle of using *CCSSE* data to assess, inform, and act

1. **Identify the areas that are most important to your college.** What priorities are identified in your strategic plan? What issues does your college most value? What are the needs of your students? These answers may be defined broadly (e.g., we place a high value on student-faculty interaction) or narrowly (e.g., how can we better serve students who need developmental education? Or how can we strengthen the emphasis on writing across our college curriculum?).
2. **Identify the survey items that address the identified priorities *and* the student groups in need.** Continuing with the examples above, the college concerned about student-faculty interaction would pay close attention to the individual survey items associated with that benchmark. The colleges concerned about strengthening students' writing skills might carefully examine writing expectations across the curriculum, devise appropriate assessments of writing, and agree on rubrics to maximize consistency in feedback for students.
3. **Review and analyze the data — part 1: Start with the benchmarks.** Benchmark scores highlight a handful of key areas of the student experience. They don't tell the whole story, but they paint broad outlines — and give clues about where colleges should look more closely. Colleges typically perform well on some benchmarks and not so well on others, leading users to explore the differences, question whether the varying benchmark scores reflect institutional priorities, and so on.
4. **Review and analyze the data — part 2: Look at individual survey items associated with each benchmark.** For each item, ask whether the college's performance is what users expect and what they desire. Focus attention on educational practices, programs, and policies that may be in need of improvement and those worthy of celebration.
5. **Review and analyze the data — part 3: Disaggregate the data** to gauge engagement and outcomes among various student groups. For example, colleges concerned about developmental education students should

CCSSE OPPOSES RANKING

CCSSE opposes using its data to rank colleges for a number of reasons.

- There is no single number that can adequately — or accurately — describe a college's performance; most colleges will perform relatively well on some benchmarks and need improvement on others.
- Each community college's performance should be considered in terms of its mission, institutional focus, and student characteristics.
- Because of differences in these areas — and variations in college resources — comparing survey results between individual institutions serves little constructive purpose and likely will be misleading.
- *CCSSE* member colleges are a self-selected group. Their choice to participate in the survey demonstrates their interest in assessing and improving their educational practices, and it distinguishes them. Ranking within this group of colleges — those willing to step up to serious self-assessment and public reporting — might discourage participation and certainly would paint an incomplete picture.
- Ranking does not serve a purpose related to improving student outcomes. Improvement over time — where a particular college is now, compared with where it wants to be — likely is the best gauge of a college's efforts to enhance student learning and persistence.

compare the responses of students who need developmental education with those of students who do not need developmental education. They can go deeper by comparing students who need just one developmental class to those who need developmental classes in multiple areas. The goal is to look at the data and see which students are being well served and which may need more intervention. All colleges should disaggregate data by race and ethnicity, income, and enrollment status (full-time versus part-time) to identify their more- and less-engaged student groups.

6. **Get members of your college community involved and encourage them to ask questions.** Involve faculty members and others and see what questions they raise about the data — and do so early in the process. Efforts to initiate change typically are more effective when key groups identify areas of interest or concern themselves. Thus, at the college with a high population of first-generation students, faculty members may note that first-generation students place a higher value on academic advising but are less likely to use that service. At a college focused on student-faculty interaction, they might find large discrepancies between responses from full-time and part-time students.

7. **Design strategies that address concerns and set targets for progress.** To address the types of concerns discussed in the examples above, colleges might build career advising into coursework to expand student-faculty interaction, establish a better way to monitor and support the progress of developmental students, require a visit with an academic advisor in the first week of classes, or have a visible presence of staff and faculty helping students navigate around campus in the first weeks of classes.

8. **Share the data and plans to address them with a broad range of stakeholders**, including faculty, staff, students, families of students, community members, business leaders, and policymakers. Involve these people in improvement efforts.

9. **Track progress by measuring outcomes.** Use *CCSSE* (comparing the same survey items after each administration of the survey), student cohort tracking, program/service evaluations, student focus groups, student learning assessments, and other means to collect data. Continue to disaggregate data and look at outcomes for the same groups of students.

10. **Scale up efforts that are working; modify or discontinue those that are not.** Channel resources where they will best serve students and lead to better student outcomes.

11. **Repeat.**

Colleges Act On Fact

When **Illinois Central College (IL)** received its *CCSSE* results, the college gathered faculty members and staff to review them. Participants broke into small groups and discussed four questions regarding the college's results: Do the data reflect your experience at ICC? Do the data mean something for you in your role? Is average where we want to be as a college? If not, how can we attempt to improve the results in the future? Each group focused on one benchmark. Participants then shared responses and suggestions for improvement.

Paradise Valley Community College (AZ) held a series of workshops to provide an overview of *CCSSE* survey data and lay out an action plan and timeline. The action plan called on each division or department to share *CCSSE* findings with faculty and staff, identify data-driven strategies for improving teaching and learning, and document ways in which faculty and staff implemented the pilot strategies. A series of e-briefings related to *CCSSE* shared promising practices from other colleges and relevant research. For example, "A Dozen Easy-To-Implement *CCSSE* Plans for Faculty" included suggestions such as scheduling appointments with students and requiring internship experiences. PVCC also created the Student Engagement-*CCSSE* Awards program, through which faculty members who submitted *CCSSE* action plans could win stipends to purchase resources for teaching and learning.

Surprised at its relatively low benchmark scores in the areas of student support and student-faculty interaction, **Century College (MN)** sent teams of faculty and administrators to visit best practice community colleges. Drawing on models from Valencia Community College (FL) and the Community College of Denver (CO), Century College is implementing an advising/counseling model, called the GPS Life Plan, that uses teaching faculty and case managers to work with students on educational, career, and life plans. *CCSSE* data provided the compelling evidence the college needed to build support for changing its actions. Future *CCSSE* surveys will help gauge the model's effectiveness.

2006 *CCSSE* Cohort Results: Looking Behind the Numbers

As colleges review their *CCSSE* results — looking at individual survey items and disaggregating findings to see how various student groups are faring — they work to get at the student experiences behind the numbers. They ask questions, such as:

- Which students are having a more productive college experience? For whom is our current practice working? Who, if anyone, might be left behind?
- What are the differences in various students' experiences? Are certain practices mandatory for some students but not for others? Should they be required for all students?
- What practices are built into the classroom experience now? Should we incorporate more expectations, activities, or services into coursework?

Colleges ask questions like these to identify actions that will lead to improving their practices and better serving their students. Below we provide results for the 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort along with a discussion of how colleges might analyze the data — and examples of how veteran *CCSSE* colleges have acted on similar data. The results are organized by benchmark, but they focus on the specific survey items associated with each benchmark. For detailed results for every survey item associated with each benchmark, visit www.ccsse.org.

Active and Collaborative Learning

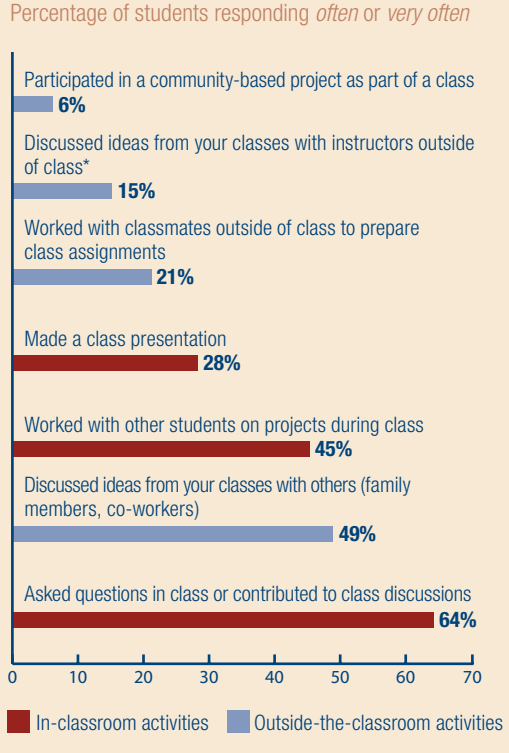
Survey items associated with this benchmark assess whether students are actively involved in their education, have opportunities to think about and apply what they learn in different settings, and collaborate with others to solve problems or master challenging content. The survey asks respondents about behaviors such as contributing to class discussions, engaging with classmates in and out of the classroom, and discussing ideas from readings or classes with others (students, family members, co-workers, etc.) outside of class.

When reviewing the survey items associated with the active and collaborative learning benchmark, it often is useful to compare activities that happen in the classroom with those that happen outside the classroom. Given the competing demands for students' time (working, caring for dependents, commuting) and the fact that most students attend college part-time, colleges have limited time to engage their students. The more colleges understand current patterns of student engagement, the better they can design programs to expand active and collaborative learning.

Key findings

More students are engaged in active and collaborative learning inside the classroom than outside. For example, whereas 21% of students *often* or *very often* work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments, more than double that number, 45%, *often* or *very often* work with other students on projects during class.

ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING: IN THE CLASSROOM COMPARED WITH OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM



*This survey item is not part of the active and collaborative learning benchmark but is included here to help illustrate the differences in student experiences inside and outside the classroom.

Source: 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data.

Next steps

Based on this information, colleges might strengthen active and collaborative learning by expanding what is working, adding new efforts, or both. For example, faculty members may decide to build more collaborative projects into their classroom activities. Colleges also may change curriculum guidelines to mandate the inclusion of community-based projects in certain classes or introduce more learning communities or study groups to encourage more collaboration among students. Finally, colleges may consider professional development that helps faculty members become more comfortable with interactive teaching, such as instructor-led discussion, hands-on projects, and group work, as opposed to lecturing.

Colleges act on fact

Santa Fe Community College (FL) focused on providing the time and space necessary for its commuter student population to work together actively and collaboratively. The college created learning communities to improve engagement and collaboration among students and faculty, and it devoted resources to designing and furnishing informal learning spaces on its campuses. Finally, the college established an institutional focus on research in undergraduate education to promote student-faculty partnerships that encourage active and deep learning.

To improve active and collaborative learning on its campus, **Bucks County Community College (PA)** created a Writing to Learn Program, a student engagement task force, and a student engagement focus for all faculty professional development. This effort is giving faculty members access to a range of resources, including workshops on brain research and its implications for teaching and learning, an institute on techniques for improving student engagement through active learning, and an online course to help instructors learn how to facilitate more productive group and collaborative projects. The work is paying off: The college's 2006 *CCSSE* results show that its active and collaborative learning score is moving in the right direction.

Student Effort

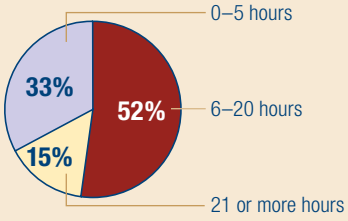
These survey items indicate to what extent students are applying themselves in the learning process and engaging in activities important to their learning and success. They ask about behaviors including preparing multiple drafts of papers, using tutoring services and skill labs, and preparing for class.

When reviewing the items associated with the student effort benchmark, colleges may compare performance of different student groups. They also should ask questions about how much students *should be* studying, reading, and writing. These discussions are productive, as are comparisons between faculty members' expectations and students' reports of their own behavior.

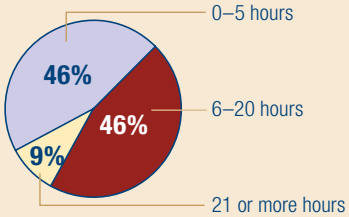
STUDENT EFFORT: WOMEN AND MEN

About how many hours do you spend in a typical seven-day week preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or performing other activities related to your program)?

Responses of Full-Time Women



Responses of Full-Time Men



Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data.

Key findings

More than a third of full-time students (38%) spend five hours per week or less preparing for class. Full-time women put forward more effort by this measure than full-time men: 33% of women, versus 46% of men, spend between zero and five hours preparing for class; and 52% of women, versus 46% of men, spend between six and 20 hours preparing for class.

Next steps

Colleges that are focused on encouraging greater student effort may consider mandating a first-year student success course that addresses learning strategies and expectations. They also may find ways to connect all students with college services — writing and math centers, peer tutoring,

and other resources that promote student success — in the first weeks of their academic experience.

To further engage men in particular, colleges might review other survey items to see where men are engaged and then create programs that build study skills and academic engagement into those areas of the student experience.

Colleges act on fact

Central Arizona College (AZ) was pleased with the results of its first *CCSSE* administration, but the college did not look closely to determine which activities or processes were in place to generate such positive results. In its second *CCSSE* administration, results dramatically changed. The college began to investigate reasons for the downturn in results, and it addressed issues highlighted by particular survey items. For example, the college was unsatisfied with the number of students who came to class unprepared, so faculty members began to work cooperatively to implement stricter reading requirements and to build activities and assessments around the required reading and assignments.

Zane State College (OH) was disappointed to see nearly three-quarters (73%) of students reporting that they *sometimes*, *often*, or *very often* came to class unprepared. After discussing the finding in the Dean's Council and academic division meetings, the college responded by offering more flexibly scheduled courses to accommodate students' busy schedules, including distance-learning courses, condensed courses between quarters, and weekend courses.

Academic Challenge

Survey items included in this benchmark address the nature and amount of assigned academic work, the complexity of cognitive tasks presented to students, and the standards faculty members use to evaluate student performance. For example, respondents are asked about how much their coursework emphasizes analyzing ideas, synthesizing ideas, and applying concepts, and they are asked about the number of assigned books they read and papers they wrote during the academic year.

When analyzing these data, colleges might compare students' responses on survey items that correspond with higher-level cognition with their responses about memorizing facts and ideas.

Key findings

The 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort responses indicate that students' coursework emphasizes rote memorization as much as, or more than, higher-level cognition. Almost two-thirds (64%) of students report that their coursework emphasizes work associated with memorizing facts *quite a bit* or *very much*. A similar percentage of respondents say their coursework emphasizes analyzing ideas (65% of respondents say *quite a bit* or *very much*), and fewer respondents report that their coursework emphasizes synthesizing ideas or information (57% *quite a bit* or *very much*), making judgments about the value and soundness of information (49% *quite a bit* or *very much*), and applying concepts to practical problems or in new situations (53% *quite a bit* or *very much*).

KEY FINDINGS FOR ACADEMIC CHALLENGE

*This survey item is not part of the academic challenge benchmark but is included here for purposes of comparison.

Source: 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data.

Next steps

Colleges with similar results may focus on learning outcomes or core competencies that all students are expected to meet to graduate and identify how each course contributes to these outcomes. Some colleges implement writing requirements in most courses. Others create interdisciplinary faculty teams that develop strategies, such as oral presentations in math classes, that bring core skills to all types of classes. Colleges also may consider faculty development that focuses on bringing higher-level thinking into coursework.

Colleges act on fact

Surry Community College (NC) based its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for regional accreditation on the institution's 2003 *CCSSE* benchmark scores. After gathering input from faculty, SCC decided to focus on improving the critical thinking skills of all its students. The college used relevant *CCSSE* findings as baseline data in its analyses and in initial campuswide conversations. It plans to measure progress by comparing these results to future *CCSSE* administrations. SCC also plans to tie the QEP into the institutional planning process so the college's focus on critical thinking will extend over a longer period of time.

The ePortfolio initiative at **LaGuardia Community College (NY)** gives students a means for collecting their academic work and reflections on their learning as well as a mechanism for sharing their portfolios on the Internet. But the ePortfolio was not designed just for gathering materials for program assessment — it was meant to be a tool for deepening student engagement. To determine whether ePortfolio was achieving this critical goal, LaGuardia compared 2003 and 2005 *CCSSE* data from ePortfolio and non-ePortfolio classes. *CCSSE* data showed major gains for ePortfolio students around critical thinking, writing, and collaborative learning. This finding helped persuade the college to commit new resources for faculty development, labs, and ePortfolio staff.

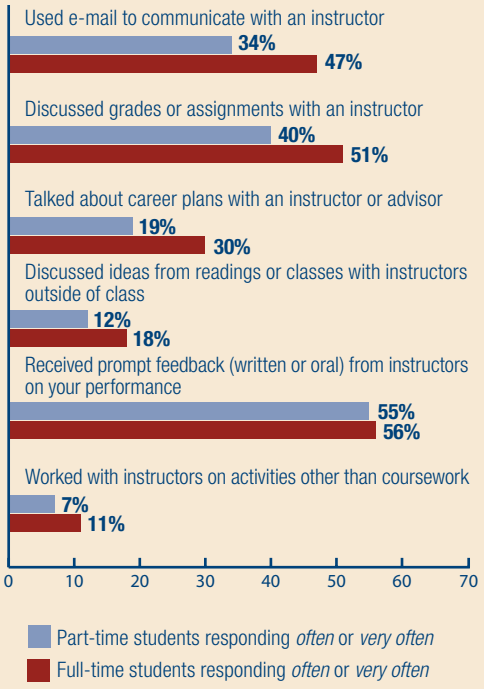
Student-Faculty Interaction

Interaction with faculty members strengthens students' connections to the college and helps them focus on their academic progress. The items used in this benchmark assess the extent of these interactions, both in and outside the classroom. Respondents are asked about behaviors such as talking with faculty members about classwork and careers, receiving prompt feedback from instructors, and working with instructors on activities other than coursework.

As always, disaggregating data will give colleges information about how they are reaching various student groups. As *CCSSE* has reported in the past, its data reveal intriguing engagement differences for black men, whose connections to the college tend to emphasize out-of-class and social activities. Black men, for example, are more likely than other groups to work with instructors on activities other than coursework. Colleges whose data reflect these types of differences may better serve black male students if they find ways to build on out-of-class interests to strengthen students' academic engagement.

STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION: PART-TIME AND FULL-TIME STUDENTS

In your experience at this college during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?



Source: 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data.

Key findings

It is particularly useful to compare part-time and full-time students' responses to survey items associated with student-faculty interaction. In the 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort, responses to all but one survey item associated with student-faculty interaction show significant differences between part-time

and full-time students. Part-time students are less likely than full-time students to use e-mail to communicate with an instructor (34% of part-time students, versus 47% of full-time students, say they *often* or *very often* do so), talk about career plans with an instructor or advisor (19% of part-time students versus 30% of full-time students), and discuss grades or assignments with an instructor (40% of part-time students versus 51% of full-time students).

Next steps

Given the dramatic differences in the experience of part-time and full-time students, colleges might explore ways to maximize such interactions for students who spend limited time on campus. They might, for example, revisit advising roles for both full-time and part-time faculty, bearing in mind that part-time faculty typically teach at least half of all sections taught at community colleges — and are more likely to teach in the evenings, when part-time students are more likely to attend classes. Faculty members might become more creative about when and where they hold office hours so they are more accessible to students. Colleges also might strongly encourage participation in some out-of-class activities each semester to give students and faculty more opportunities to interact.

Colleges act on fact

Estrella Mountain Community College (AZ) describes its 2004 *CCSSE* results as a strong motivator for improvement. After seeing that its student-faculty interaction benchmark score was below the national average, the college refocused on the most critical elements of student engagement. Its responses included building private meeting space for adjunct faculty to meet with students, implementing adjunct faculty workshops focused on student engagement, and designing learning spaces that facilitate student-faculty interaction. The college's 2006 *CCSSE* results suggest that the improvement strategies are paying off. It is performing well on the student-faculty interaction benchmark relative to its peers.

Results for **Phoenix College (AZ)** led the college to focus on student-faculty interaction. Disappointed with student responses in this area, Phoenix College initiated ongoing discussions at department and adjunct faculty meetings, began encouraging all students to e-mail instructors, established a system to facilitate delivering students' phone messages to adjunct faculty, and extended department chair availability during summer months.

Support for Learners

Items associated with this benchmark indicate to what extent students are using key academic and student support services and how much importance they ascribe to these services. The survey items ask about advising, academic and career planning, academic skill development, financial aid, and other services that can affect learning and retention.

Once again, the story behind the numbers emerges through disaggregating the data. Each year, *CCSSE* data show significant differences in engagement between academically underprepared students and their more prepared peers across all benchmarks. Academically underprepared students, in general, exert more effort, experience greater support from their colleges, and use academic services more extensively than their adequately prepared peers. They also experience greater academic challenges and, as high-risk students, are more likely to discontinue their studies.

Research shows that early success and, therefore, early intervention are critical for retaining these students — and that these efforts yield high dividends. Consider, for example, two recent data analyses from Achieving the Dream, which is tracking cohorts of students from 58 community colleges in nine states. Data from the initial 27 participating colleges show that among students who begin in developmental math, only 17% had completed their developmental math sequences two years into their collegiate experience.

At the same time, research among the same 27 colleges shows that focusing on early success pays off. Students who successfully completed a developmental course — any developmental course — in their first semester (earning a grade of C or better) were, from that point forward, more likely to persist and succeed than other student groups, including those who did not need any developmental education. Colleges that are focusing on better serving developmental students may choose to put more resources into supporting developmental students in their first semester of work.

Key findings

Academically underprepared students use services more than their adequately prepared peers, but far fewer than half of academically underprepared students report using these services often. Among all students, the gap

between perceived importance and use of these services also indicates that more students value these services than use them.

Next steps

Colleges that want more students to take advantage of services must make services inescapable by integrating them into students' educational experiences and providing them at times and in places that accommodate students' schedules. Colleges might, for example, make use of certain services mandatory or build them into coursework, or they might offer services in the evenings and on weekends, when students — and in particular, high-risk students — can more easily take advantage of them. Colleges also might consider expanding their pool of advisors (perhaps defining new roles for paraprofessional and/or student advisors) so they can offer more assistance to, and more proactive follow-up for, each student. Finally, colleges might bolster marketing strategies to build awareness of student resources and encourage students to use them.

Colleges act on fact

Miami Dade College (FL) created several new initiatives based on its *CCSSE* findings. The college developed long-term academic planners (originally printed documents, now available online) that map out students' courses, term by term, so students can chart their progress toward their goals. In an effort to improve transfer assistance, the college held general and discipline-specific transfer workshops on each campus and launched a campaign to emphasize the advantages of completing an associate degree prior to transferring. MDC also developed a dual-degree opportunity with Florida International University so students can be dually admitted to the two institutions. Students can complete their associate degrees while making connections with FIU faculty and staff and preparing to transfer to upper-division programs.

Cecil Community College (MD) launched a campaign to increase awareness of financial aid availability. The campaign included informational workshops, targeted mailings, and phone calls to students who were eligible for financial aid but had not enrolled. As a result of the campaign, financial aid participation rates increased from 33% to 39% in two years, and retention rates of financial aid recipients increased slightly (1%). The college also expanded staff and computer support in its learning centers and retooled career and job placement services.

SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS: DEVELOPMENTAL AND NONDEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

How often do you use the following services?

	Developmental students*		Nondevelopmental students	
	Often	Rarely/ never	Often	Rarely/ never
Academic advising/planning	18%	26%	9%	41%
Career counseling	10%	41%	3%	53%
Job placement assistance	5%	41%	2%	47%
Peer or other tutoring	11%	38%	4%	48%
Skill labs (writing, math, etc.)	24%	26%	9%	42%
Child care	4%	31%	2%	38%
Financial aid advising	26%	25%	12%	35%
Computer lab	39%	19%	27%	27%
Student organizations	8%	38%	3%	45%

*Students taking developmental education in three areas.

How important are the following services?

	Developmental students*		Nondevelopmental students	
	Very	Not at all	Very	Not at all
Academic advising/planning	67%	6%	53%	16%
Career counseling	58%	14%	42%	28%
Job placement assistance	43%	29%	33%	41%
Peer or other tutoring	47%	21%	31%	39%
Skill labs (writing, math, etc.)	57%	14%	33%	35%
Child care	32%	50%	23%	59%
Financial aid advising	65%	17%	54%	29%
Computer lab	66%	10%	54%	21%
Student organizations	30%	33%	19%	48%

*Students taking developmental education in three areas.

Source: 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data.

Special Focus: Academic Advising and Planning

Roadmaps for Success

This year, *CCSSE* introduced a new feature for its survey: five *special focus* survey items that examine an area of student experience and institutional performance that is critical for student success. Each year, the special focus items will concentrate on a different topic. With this structure, *CCSSE* can present fresh ideas and address current interests — and keep the core survey stable so colleges can make comparisons across survey years.

The 2006 special focus items help colleges take a closer look at academic advising and planning. Every year, *CCSSE* respondents place more value on academic advising than on any other student service, and consistently, there is a gap between the number of students who value advising and those who use it. In the 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort, 89% of respondents say that academic advising is *somewhat* or *very important*; 55% report using that service *sometimes* or *often*.

The importance of academic advising and planning is well documented. Having a plan — a clear goal and a roadmap for reaching it — plays a critical role in students' choosing to return to school the next day, next month, and next year. Anyone interested in reaching a goal is well served by having clear milestones for progress. In focus groups, community college students report a particularly strong need for these milestones because their educational goals compete with work, caring for dependents, and other responsibilities.

Faculty Members' Roles in Advising

The special focus survey items show that students value advising from faculty members more than from any other source. When asked about their best source of advising, 43% of respondents choose faculty members. More than one-quarter of students (26%) name friends, family, or other students as their best sources of advice, indicating that these sources are serving students better than services provided by their colleges. Only 7% of students say that online services are their best source of advising, suggesting that students value the personal interaction that is part of an advising relationship.

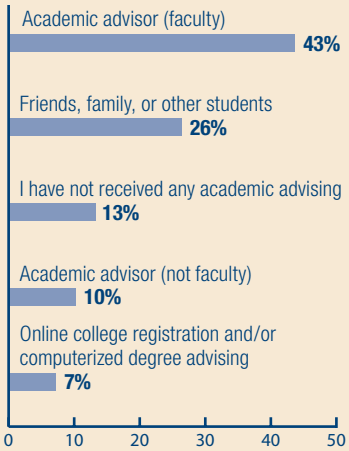
Asked to rate the strength of their relationships with their advisors, 23% of all students say they do not use advising services. Disaggregating this finding by enrollment status shines a brighter light on these data. Nearly a third (29%) of part-time students, versus 16% of full-time students, say they do not use advising services in response to this survey item. Because part-time students represent two-thirds of community college students, the number of students not receiving advising services is even higher than it appears.

Disaggregating this finding by credit hours earned also uncovers noteworthy information. There is growing evidence that having a goal — and a plan to achieve it — correlates positively with persistence in college.

Yet when asked to rate the strength of their working relationships with their academic advisors, more than a quarter (26%) of students in the 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort with 0–29 credit hours say they do not use advising services, as compared with 17% of students with 30 or more credit hours. This indicates that a large percentage of students may receive no assistance in developing an educational plan in their first year of college.

KEY FINDINGS: ACADEMIC ADVISING AND PLANNING

While attending this college, what has been your best source of academic advising?



Source: *CCSSE* 2006 data.

Because two-thirds of students have earned 0–29 credit hours, looking at the same survey item in terms of number of respondents (rather than percentage of respondents) paints a clearer picture: 13,277 students with 0–29 credit hours and 4,432 students with 30 or more credit hours say they do not use advising services.

Colleges Act On Fact

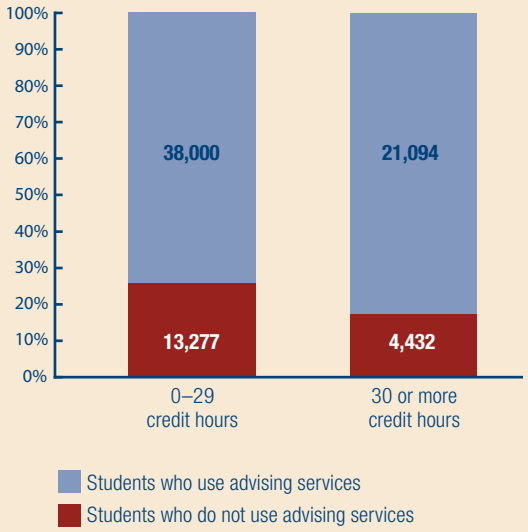
At **J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College (VA)**, *CCSSE* results revealed low levels of engagement with various services, particularly academic and career advising. As a result of those findings, the college developed a new student orientation program. Results from surveys and other data indicate that high percentages of participants either clarified or changed their curriculum as a result of the early advising. In addition, new data suggest that participants were retained at a higher rate than nonparticipants.

Brevard Community College (FL) is focused on the success of students within their first 24 hours of college credit. The college created a First-Year Experience that includes mandatory advising, educational planning, and career guidance; advising workshops with small groups as well as individual sessions; and a clear goal of identifying a major. Moreover, all first-time college students registered for one or more developmental courses are assigned a student services mentor who provides additional guidance and helps the student connect with tutoring and other services.

To address lower-than-desired student satisfaction with academic advising, career counseling, and other student services, **Capital Community College (CT)** intensified orientation and advising through continuous college tours and information provided by Welcome Center staff, a pre-college program for prospective students prior to their first semester, a First-Year Success course that provides ongoing orientation and advising, and an early warning system that triggers interventions for at-risk students.

STUDENTS' USE OF ADVISING SERVICES

Whether or not students use advising services, based on responses to the survey item, "How would you rate the strength of your working relationship with your current academic advisor?"



Source: 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data.

"Advisement is very, very important to students. I was fortunate to have a wonderful advisor, and when we initially sat down we mapped out the whole two-year schedule that I should cover."

— Student, Gainesville State College (GA)

CCFSSE: Go to the Head of the Class

The Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement *(CCFSSE)*, which is aligned with *CCSSE*, elicits information from faculty about their teaching practices, the ways they spend time both in and out of class, and their perceptions regarding students' educational experiences. *CCFSSE* now is in its second year, and this year, all *CCFSSE* analyses use a two-year cohort of participating colleges. This year's cohort — called the 2006 *CCFSSE* Cohort — includes all colleges that participated in *CCFSSE* in 2005 and 2006 (each college's most recent year of participation). Next year, *CCFSSE* results will be reported in terms of a three-year cohort and will include faculty survey data from 2005 through 2007.

All institutions that participated in the 2006 administration of the *CCSSE* survey were invited to participate in *CCFSSE*, which was administered via the Web. At colleges that chose to participate, every faculty member teaching credit classes in the spring term was eligible to respond to the survey, and faculty respondents generally mirror the national two-year college faculty population. The notable exception is employment status: Nationally, 33% of two-year college faculty members are employed full-time, while 61% of *CCFSSE* respondents are employed full-time. For more information about *CCFSSE*, visit www.ccsse.org.

CCFSSE *data are based on results from all colleges in the 2006* CCFSSE *Cohort. When student* (CCSSE) *and faculty* (CCFSSE) *views are presented side by side in this report, the student responses include data only from colleges that participated in the faculty survey. Also, while* CCSSE *results are presented in terms of benchmarks, which are created through a complex statistical analysis and expert judgment, there are no benchmarks for* CCFSSE. *For this report,* CCFSSE *results are presented in groupings of survey items that correspond to the* CCSSE *benchmarks.*

To create this chart of student and faculty views, responses to CCSSE *and* CCFSSE *items were rescaled. All scores were converted to proportions of their totals so that the low end of the scale always was zero and the high end always was one. For example, a four on a seven-point scale and a three on a five-point scale both equal 0.5.* Don't know/not applicable *responses on items measuring frequency of use were not included in the computation of these scores.*

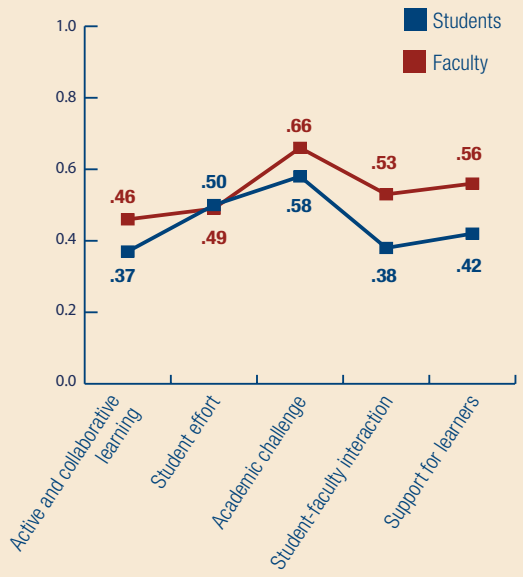
Three items were excluded from these data. A CCSSE *survey item about the number of books students read on their own can't be asked on the faculty survey. Items about the number of books read and papers assigned for classes were omitted because students report on those activities for the full year, while faculty members report on those activities for their particular classes.*

A Tale of Two Perspectives

Like *CCSSE* results, *CCFSSE* responses can help a college recognize its strengths, identify issues of concern, and zero in on areas of focus for faculty development. Many colleges compare faculty perceptions with student responses. While this exercise can lead to productive conversations, it is important to note that these comparisons are not always equivalent. Students report their experiences throughout the current academic year, while faculty members are asked to describe their practices in a specific, randomly selected course and also to indicate their perceptions of student experiences in the college more generally. Nonetheless, the student and faculty responses provide a useful starting point for discussion, particularly where faculty and students have differing perceptions.

Overall, faculty members perceive higher levels of student engagement than students report. This difference is not unexpected. In part, it shows the difference between personal data (what each person personally observes and experiences) and systematically collected data, which

EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES: STUDENT AND FACULTY RESPONSES



Source: 2006 *CCSSE* and *CCFSSE* Cohort data.

show what typically is happening to students on campus. For example, an instructor may work closely with the students who participate in a particular campus student organization. That faculty member personally experiences a high level of student-faculty interaction, but he or she is interacting with only a small percentage of the college's students.

How Faculty Members Spend Their Time

This year's *CCSSE* special focus survey items target academic planning and advising because of their demonstrated value in helping students succeed. Students, moreover, identify faculty members as their best source of academic guidance. Given that finding, it is disheartening to note that 22% of faculty members do not spend any time in a typical week advising students.

Disaggregating that finding shows an even greater gap between students' reported needs and faculty members' reported activities. Four in 10 part-time faculty members (40%) report spending zero hours in a typical week advising students. At community colleges, part-time faculty members typically teach at least half, and in some cases upward of two-thirds, of all course sections. If 40% of part-time faculty are not advising students, there are large percentages of students who have little opportunity to receive guidance from faculty members.

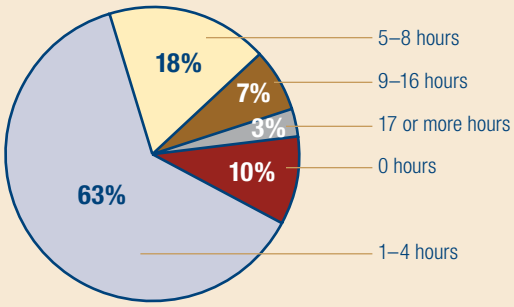
A review of how faculty members spend their class time also yields noteworthy results. Almost a third of faculty respondents report that they spend more than half of their class time lecturing. On the other end of the spectrum, more than half (51%) of respondents say they spend less than 20% of their class time on teacher-led discussion, and 91% of faculty respondents say that they spend less than 20% of their class time on in-class writing. Half of faculty respondents say they spend none of their class time on in-class writing.

As with *CCSSE* results, colleges should analyze their *CCFSSE* results in terms of their institutional priorities. These findings suggest that to boost student engagement colleges might encourage more faculty members to use more engaging instructional strategies, integrate courses through learning communities, support each other with team teaching, and build service learning and other experiential learning opportunities into their coursework. *CCFSSE* results also can help colleges identify areas of focus for professional development.

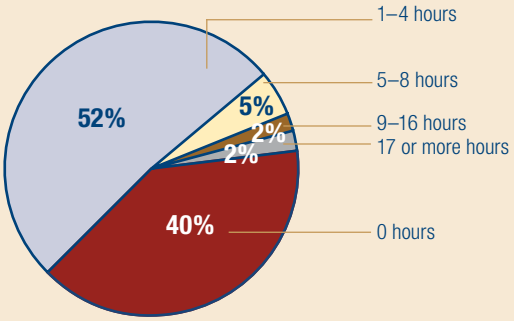
CCFSSE: TIME SPENT ADVISING STUDENTS

About how many hours do you spend in a typical seven-day week advising students?

Responses of Full-Time Faculty



Responses of Part-Time Faculty



Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: 2006 *CCFSSE* Cohort data.

"Our assignments make us go and be a part of student activities, which I didn't do too much before. So now I'm going to all these campus events and going to the library. I'm all studious!"

— Student, Central Piedmont Community College (NC)

CCFSSE: HOW FACULTY MEMBERS USE CLASS TIME

In your selected course section, on average, what percentage of class time is spent on each of these activities?

	0%	1–19%	20–49%	50–74%	75–100%
Lecture	2%	27%	40%	22%	9%
Teacher-led discussion	4%	47%	38%	8%	3%
Teacher-student shared responsibility	24%	45%	25%	5%	2%
Small-group activities	22%	53%	20%	4%	1%
Student presentations	39%	50%	10%	1%	1%
In-class writing	50%	41%	7%	1%	< 1%
Experiential	64%	17%	12%	4%	2%
Hands-on practice	27%	34%	22%	9%	7%

Source: 2006 *CCFSSE* Cohort data.

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Colleges Act On Fact

Genesee Community College (NY) sprang into action after seeing its below-the-mean benchmark score for active and collaborative learning. Data reviewers also noted a large discrepancy between student and faculty responses *(CCSSE* and *CCFSSE)* regarding how much coursework emphasized rote memorization. Half of faculty respondents, as compared with 65% of student respondents, said courses emphasized memorization *quite a bit* or *very much*. Genesee saw these results and identified a need for professional development to help faculty members employ alternatives to traditional lecturing, even for basic course information. The college has submitted a grant application to change the teaching culture at Genesee by giving faculty members support (time, funds, and equipment) to develop alternative instructional approaches. If the grant is not funded, the college plans to promote faculty attendance at workshops and conferences where they can learn new instructional techniques that more directly engage students.

"The big thing for me is not just to learn about something, but to actually do it. It's that hands-on approach that I love about this school. You learn a topic, then the instructor turns around and says, 'Okay, show me.'"

— Student, Zane State College (OH)

Overview of the 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort

Each year, the *CCSSE* survey is administered in the spring during class sessions at *CCSSE* member colleges. In the past, results from each year's survey were analyzed separately. Beginning this year, however, all *CCSSE* data analyses use a three-year cohort of participating colleges. This year's three-year cohort — called the 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort — includes data from all colleges that participated in *CCSSE* from 2004 through 2006.

Using a three-year cohort increases the number of institutions and students in the national dataset, optimizes representation of institutions by size and location, and therefore, increases the reliability of the overall results.

An overview of the 2006 cohort's participating colleges and their students follows. Details are available at www.ccsse.org.

- A total of 249,548 students from 447 institutions in 46 states are included in the 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort.
- 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort member colleges enroll a total of 2,684,223 credit students, or about 42% of the total credit-student population in the nation's community colleges.
- Of the 447 participating colleges, 55% are classified as small (up to 4,499 students), 24% as medium (4,500–7,999 students), 13% as large (8,000–14,999 students), and 8% as extra large (15,000 or more students). Nationally, 56% of community colleges are small, 22% are medium, 13% are large, and 9% are extra large.
- Colleges reported their locations as 26% urban, 27% suburban, and 47% rural. Fall 2004 IPEDS data indicate that among all U.S. community colleges, 39% are urban, 24% are suburban, and 37% are rural.
- 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort respondents generally reflect the underlying student population of the participating colleges in terms of gender and race/ethnicity. Part-time students, however, were underrepresented in the *CCSSE* sample because classes are sampled rather than individual students. (About 31% of *CCSSE* respondents are enrolled part-time, and 69% are enrolled full-time. IPEDS shows that the national figures are 61% part-time and 39% full-time.) To address this discrepancy, *CCSSE* results are weighted by part-time and full-time status to reflect the institutions' actual proportions of part-time and full-time students.
- 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort respondents are 60% female and 40% male. These figures are similar to the national community college student ratio, which is 59% female and 41% male.
- 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort respondents range in age from 18 to 65 and older.
- With respect to race/ethnicity, 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort respondents and the national community college population may be compared as follows:

Race/ethnicity	*CCSSE* respondents	National percentages
White	65%	59%
Latino/Hispanic	9%	14%
Black	11%	13%
International*	6%	1%
Asian	3%	6%
Native American	2%	1%
Other	3%	5%

*International students are not citizens or nationals of the United States and are in the country on a visa or temporary basis.

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Sources: 2006 *CCSSE* Cohort data; IPEDS, fall 2004.

Noteworthy Facts

- The 2006 *CCSSE* membership (colleges that administered the survey in 2006) includes statewide participation in Connecticut, Hawaii, and New Hampshire. Other state-based consortia include groups of colleges in Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, New Mexico, Tennessee, and Texas.
- 2006 was the second year of participation for the Achieving the Dream Consortium, the third year of participation for the Hispanic-Serving Institutions/Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Consortium, and the third year of participation for the Texas Small Colleges Consortium. It was the first year of participation for the Campus Compact Consortium.

CCSSE National Advisory Board

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Survey Operations Coordinator

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CCSSE Member Colleges

For a list of *CCSSE* member colleges, visit www.ccsse.org.

"I always run to my advisor in residence. It feels good to always have someone you can talk to."

— Student, St. Philip's College (TX)

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Community College Leadership Program
The University of Texas at Austin

1 University Station D5600
Austin, TX 78712-0378
T: 512.471.6807
F: 512.471.4209
E: info@ccsse.org
www.ccsse.org