

Accreditation Guide: Using *CCSSE* & *SENSE* Data to Support Accreditation

Profiles from institutions using
Center survey data for accreditation



Center for
Community College
Student Engagement



ACCJC: Sacramento City College

SACRAMENTO CITY COLLEGE (CA) has participated in *CCSSE* every other year since 2006 and uses survey data for various aspects of the accreditation process. For the 2009 accreditation process, the college used *CCSSE* results as a general information source on the Self-Evaluation. The college had previously utilized Center survey data as part of its evaluation of Student Learning Outcomes, employing Center survey results as indirect measures of student outcome data.

In 2014, research deans at Sacramento City College and Cosumnes River College initiated extensive mapping of the items on *CCSSE* to ACCJC accreditation standards, after which the district research council at Los Rios Community College District approved the mapping for all district colleges' use in the accreditation process.

For the 2015 accreditation process, the college examined *CCSSE* results aligned to the General Education standard. For example, the college examined numerous *CCSSE* items (4b–d, f–g, i–j, r; 5b–f; 6c; 9a, g; and 12a–j) to support Standard IIA3b requiring that a student's general education include "A capability to be a productive individual and lifelong learning; skills include oral and written communication, information competency, computer literacy, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis/logical thinking, and the ability to acquire knowledge through a variety of means." The college also shared that *CCSSE* Items 9b and 13 to support Standard II.C.1.c ("The institution provides students and personnel responsible for student learning programs and services adequate access to the library and other learning support services.").

Not only does the college use *CCSSE* results to support the accreditation process, it also used survey results to assist in improvement planning processes, which in turn support the accreditation study. For example, Sacramento City College used Center survey data to enhance the Week of Welcome and orientation programming for incoming students. The college also used Center survey results to support its Student Voices report aimed at garnering student opinion and input on engagement strategies implemented by the college. This report is then disseminated campus-wide and included in the accreditation documentation.



HLC: Zane State College

ZANE STATE COLLEGE (OH) has frequently participated in Center surveys since 2004 and uses Center survey data in much of its continuous improvement work, including accreditation. Accredited through HLC via the AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) pathway, Zane State uses Center survey data to make comparisons to peer institutions (in the Achieving the Dream consortium as well as other Ohio institutions), with comparisons made at both the benchmark and individual item level, especially in the area of student support. The college also utilizes Center survey data throughout the AQIP Systems Portfolio, specifically in "Helping Students Learn," "Meeting Student and Other Key Stakeholder Needs," "Valuing Employees," and "Knowledge Management and Resource Stewardship."

For example, in utilizing Center survey data to support "Category One: Helping Students Learn," Zane State implemented two projects: "Building and Scaling Learner Analytics" and "Mandatory Advising." The "Building and Scaling Learner Analytics" project was developed as a pilot for an early intervention initiative and used specific *SENSE* items (19e, 20d[2], 20f[2], 20h[2], 21a-c) and *CCSSE* items (4h, 4m, 9b-d, 9f, 13a[1], 13b[1], 13d[1], 13e[1], and 13h[1]) as the benchmarks against which to measure progress.

The "Mandatory Advising" project at Zane State initially used insights from *CCSSE* Promising Practices Item 16 "(Before the end of my first semester/quarter at this college, an advisor helped me develop an academic plan [a personalized plan with a defined sequence of courses for completing a college certificate or degree and/or for transferring to a 4-year college or university])" as the impetus for continuous improvement work. Combining survey results with data on retention and course evaluations, the college used the subsequent results as a metric for defining success of the project in support of the AQIP accreditation category "Helping Students Learn."

In the 2011 accreditation review, peer reviewer feedback in the results section of "Helping Students Learn" recognized Zane State as having a strength for its use of *CCSSE* and *SENSE* data in assessing improvement efforts.

The college believes that Center survey data align particularly well with AQIP "Category One: Helping Students Learn" and plans to continue to include these data to demonstrate process improvement in its upcoming Systems Portfolio for re-accreditation.



NECHE: Capital Community College

CAPITAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE (CT) has participated in Center surveys on a state-wide cycle since 2004. In the summer of 2016, the college was finishing the third draft of its accreditation self-study report and used Center survey data for multiple aspects of the process.

Specifically, the college utilized *CCSSE* data to support the following NEASC Standards* (new standards took effect July 2016): “Planning and Evaluation” (Standard 2), “Students” (Standard 5), and “Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship” (Standard 6). Regarding “Planning and Evaluation,” the college triangulated *CCSSE* results with a college-wide self-study survey administered for a NEASC comprehensive 10th-year evaluation and the college’s annual graduation survey to measure institutional effectiveness. College staff also compared institutional *CCSSE* benchmark scores over time and to other colleges in the cohort.

To support Standard 5, the college compared survey results between full-time and part-time developmental students. The college also examined barriers to persistence by comparing results of *CCSSE* Item 14 (“How likely is it that the following issues [working full-time; caring for dependents; academically unprepared; lack of finances; transfer to a 4-year college or university] would cause you to withdraw from class or from this college?”) to those of other small colleges and to the 2015 cohort. The college utilized *CCSSE* Item 13 to support its analysis of student services as part of the self-study.

In analyzing Standard 6, the college created a side-by-side comparison chart of *CCSSE* and faculty survey (*CCFSSE*) results to reveal discrepancies in perceptions of student engagement and faculty interaction between students and faculty. Institutional researchers at the college disseminated this information at faculty meetings, and also shared the information with deans and departmental administrators. In turn, the college created professional development activities for faculty in order to help close the gap between student experiences and faculty perceptions.

Though NEASC standards changed, Capital Community College plans to continue utilizing Center survey data to support its next iteration of the self-study and future accreditation efforts.

*As of 2018, the accrediting agency for colleges and universities in the six New England states now operates as NECHE (New England Commission of Higher Education) [<https://www.neasc.org/colleges-and-universities>].



NWCCU: Helena College

HELENA COLLEGE (MT), which has participated in several Center survey administrations since 2010, utilizes survey results as performance indicators of campus-wide objectives that determine the extent of mission fulfillment as evaluated by NWCCU. In evaluating its mission, the college focuses on 1) access and support for students, 2) academic excellence, and 3) community orientation.

Helena College's accreditation process requires the institution to provide evidence of planning and assessment that results in continuous improvement of academic programs and support services for students. As such, faculty and staff routinely examine *CCSSE* and *SENSE* data through institutional committees. These committees, such as Enrollment Management, Student Life, and Strategic Planning and Assessment, created recommendations to improve new student orientation programs; academic advising policies and protocols; communication between faculty, staff, and students; early alert and academic intervention strategies; and the delivery of services in the areas of admission, financial aid, career services, the library, tutoring, and the registrar's office.

In 2010, in the midst of a recession, college enrollment more than doubled. Previously, the college utilized a very individualized advising system; however, with the enrollment increase, college leaders quickly realized the need to revise the advising process. Using multiple data sources including Center survey results (*CCSSE* Items 13a[1], 13b[1], 9b; *SENSE* Items 18p, 18d–18h and 23), the college developed an early alert system, mandatory orientation for new students, created check points throughout the semester for students, and added professional development opportunities for staff around advising.

In the evaluation of its 2014 Year-Three Accreditation Self-Study, the college focused on the first attribute of its mission—to provide high quality student support—and highlighted the changes to its advising system to meet new student demand. In the accreditation report, the peer review team complimented “Student Services for the work it has accomplished in the past two years to improve advising at the College.”

As the college has participated at least three times in both *CCSSE* and *SENSE* since 2010, it has now established longitudinal data to evaluate changes in student engagement, which helps to assess the success of past efforts and the direction of future actions and initiatives. The institution continues to measure achievement by aiming to score the average or higher on Center survey benchmarks, both comparing institutional results to previous results, the participating cohort, and similarly-sized colleges.



SACSCOC: Gaston College

GASTON COLLEGE (NC) has participated regularly in Center surveys since 2008. The college utilizes the results of Center surveys to set goals and help measure behaviors related to student learning, retention, and engagement. The college uses that information to implement strategies to improve student engagement through initiatives aimed at improving student-faculty interactions and student advising services.

Gaston College also used its *CCSSE* results as part of the decennial SACSCOC re-affirmation process in 2012. The college cited *CCSSE* results in the narratives for both Core Requirements and Comprehensive Standards in the Compliance Report. Specifically, the college referenced the *CCSSE* instrument in CR 2.5 (Institutional Effectiveness); CR 2.10: Student Support Services (Items 9b, 13a–d, g, i–k); CS 3.4.9: Academic Support Services (Items 13a–b); CS 3.4.12: Technology Use (Item 13f[1]); and CS 3.5.1: College-level Competencies (Items 4j–k, n; 5b–f; 6a–c). Additionally, the college utilizes *CCSSE* benchmark results in its Strategic Plan, which informs accreditation work in planning and continuous improvement.

In analyzing the college's *CCSSE* benchmark results, both across time and across the 2012 cohort, the college discovered that it scored lower than the average of medium colleges, the average of Achieving the Dream colleges, and the average of the entire cohort on the active and collaborative learning benchmark. In response, the college provided several professional development opportunities for faculty. For example, the college included collaborative learning techniques on the faculty development webpage of the college website; had a guest lecture on learning styles of millennial students; and had the Scale Institute (a project at Patrick Henry Community College), which specializes in active and cooperative learning, present workshops on two different occasions. This work not only aimed to improve faculty-student engagement techniques, but also helped to support their work regarding the Faculty Development (CS 3.7.3) component of the accreditation review.

In the 2012 re-accreditation process, Gaston College was found in compliance with all areas in which the college employed Center survey results.