



Imagine Success

Engaging Entering Students

2008 Field Test Findings

Acknowledgments

Imagine Success is the first report published by the Center for Community College Student Engagement, newly established by the College of Education and the Community College Leadership Program at The University of Texas at Austin. The Center is an umbrella organization for our continuing efforts to provide data, services, and support to colleges seeking to improve student learning, persistence, and attainment.

When we launched the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) in 2001 and then followed it with the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE) and the new Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), we could only imagine that by 2009 we would have worked with more than 700 community colleges to survey nearly a million students in 49 states, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and the Marshall Islands.

Yet over that period of time, we have been part of a sea change in community college education. Communities, colleges, and students increasingly are recognizing the critical role of college education in securing our individual and collective futures. Accordingly, community college educators at the leading edge are demonstrating a new commitment to data-informed decisions and evidence-based strategies for improvement. It is clear, given daunting challenges both fiscal and educational, that those strategies must be bold and imaginative. Our students deserve nothing less.

We gratefully dedicate this report to community college leaders at every level who dare to *imagine success* and then to make the changes necessary to attain it.

Kay McClenney

Director

Center for Community College Student Engagement

Supported by grants from

Houston Endowment Inc.

Lumina Foundation for Education

MetLife Foundation

Co-sponsored by

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

“Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.”

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832)

Published by the Center for Community College Student Engagement.

© 2009 Permission granted for unlimited copying with appropriate citation.

Please cite this report as: Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2008). *Imagine Success: Engaging Entering Students (2008 SENSE Field Test Findings)*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program.

“You can’t depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus.”

— Mark Twain (1835–1910)

Contents

Foreword — What If? Why Not?	2
The Benefits and Challenges of Successfully Engaging Entering Students	3
Six Design Principles: Features of a College Designed for Student Success	5
<i>Principle #1: Personal Connections</i>	
<i>Principle #2: High Expectations and Aspirations</i>	
<i>Principle #3: A Plan and a Pathway to Success</i>	
<i>Principle #4: An Effective Track to College Readiness</i>	
<i>Principle #5: Engaged Learning</i>	
<i>Principle #6: An Integrated Network of Financial, Social, and Academic Support</i>	
Implications: Doing Education Differently	17
Overview of the 2008 SENSE Field Test Respondents	19
CCCSE National Advisory Board	20
SENSE Technical Advisory Panel	20



Foreword

What If? Why Not?

We all are familiar with the litany of national reports on the status of American education: We face a rising tide of mediocrity, we are falling toward the bottom rung among developed nations, and so on. The reports, combined perhaps with the daily challenges inherent in community college work, have affected both our expectations and our aspirations. We have come to expect — and even possibly to accept — the worst.

Community colleges have begun to undertake the courageous discipline of using data to develop an honest understanding of student experiences. But as we develop this culture of evidence, we see that by many measures — effective student engagement, success in developmental education, persistence, attainment of credentials — our results are not what they need to be.

But what if we started attaining our most ambitious goals, and the reports began to herald outstanding, mind-boggling success for our efforts? What if the reports began to certify major gains in student outcomes? What might that successful experience look like? What would students do in their earliest weeks of college? In what ways would those experiences be strikingly different from what typically happens now?

If our innovative and persistent efforts lead to greatly increased success for entering students, we will face a new and ironic challenge: Have we designed our colleges to handle success, or would dramatically higher levels of student achievement turn our colleges upside down?

Attaining significantly better outcomes requires transformational change in practice and in policy. But it begins with change in institutional culture — specifically, with an affirmation of values and beliefs that place student success as our highest priority. We are beginning to operate on a *culture of evidence*, but we also need to concern ourselves with *evidence of culture* — a culture ensuring that these values and beliefs undergird every institutional and individual action.

“There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why. ... I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?”

— Robert Kennedy (1925–1968)

Imagine a college at which administrators, faculty, and staff all:

- ★ Affirm that every community college student can be successful.
- ★ Believe that, given the right conditions, all students can learn.
- ★ Exorcise “the right to fail” from the collective vocabulary.
- ★ Deeply value personal connection with every student.
- ★ Genuinely respect students’ time as well as the strengths and experiences they bring with them to college.
- ★ Put into practice *at scale* what we know works.

And imagine a college where we thoughtfully, purposefully set up the conditions for success in the first three weeks of each student’s college life.

Where failure has become the too-frequent pattern — even the expectation — a genuine commitment to success requires dramatic interventions to shatter that pattern and engage students in new ways of learning and living. In colleges that intentionally create conditions for success in the early weeks of college, students not only are exposed to patterns of success — they are more likely to adopt them and become adept at navigating and sustaining them, both independently and confidently.

Imagine a focus on developing this competence and confidence in learning and living well during each student’s earliest weeks of college. And then imagine what we would do in week four, in week 10, and for the rest of the year, and next year, and the year following. This second national report from the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (*SENSE*) shows us emerging strategies for engaging entering students — and encourages us to consider not only how to promote greater achievement, but also how we would have to adapt our current “ways of doing education” if we succeed.

Terry O’Banion

President Emeritus, League for Innovation in the Community College

Director, Community College Leadership Program, Walden University

The Benefits and Challenges of Successfully Engaging Entering Students

Imagine an America in which the vast majority of community college students finish what they start. Imagine that close to 90% of students complete demanding courses with a grade of C or better. That nearly all developmental education students complete their developmental coursework and successfully transition to college-level courses. These improvements could lead to others: Imagine that first- to second-year persistence increases from about 50% to 75% and then continues to rise. If these milestones came to be, we might soon double the number of community college students who complete certificates, earn degrees, or transfer to four-year institutions to continue their education.

This report presents preliminary findings from the 2008 field test of the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE). It asks readers to use these findings to understand the experiences of entering students at community colleges today — and to envision a path to a dramatically different future. The prospect of genuine, large-scale success has powerful implications for students, communities, the nation, and the way community colleges approach their work.

Success (or Failure) Begins at the Front Door

Community colleges today typically lose about half of their students prior to the students' second year of college. Other students remain in school but struggle with developmental courses and don't progress to college-level work. A recent study of Achieving the Dream colleges determined that 14% of entering students do not earn a single college credit in their first term. In turn, this dramatic lack of success lowers persistence rates — just 15% of students who earn no credits in their

first term persist to the following term, compared to 74% of students who earn credit in their first term.

These results are unacceptable and fall far short of students' aspirations. After all, how many students go through the intake process and register for college with an expectation of earning zero credits?

There is good news. In recent years, a growing number of community colleges have become serious about using evidence to make decisions. In those institutions, administrators, faculty members, and staff are examining data and engaging fully and honestly with it. This willingness to act on fact — rather than on assumptions or wishful thinking — is a critical first step in helping more students thrive.

Two-thirds of American community college students attend institutions that have participated in CCSSE, SENSE, or both. Many of these colleges are actively and continuously looking for ways to improve their educational practice. They are implementing proven strategies, developing innovative approaches, introducing and evaluating pilot projects, and working to bring promising programs to scale.

The imperative for improving student success now calls community colleges to next steps: envisioning, planning, and implementing the bold changes that will lead to far-reaching success. This process begins with a focus on the front door.

Achievement at community colleges cannot meaningfully improve when nearly half of all new students leave after only one or two terms. To attain significant educational goals, students must, at a minimum, stay in school. But the real reason colleges must focus on entering students is that early success sets the stage for

“Be willing to consider everything. The mistake we make so often is thinking we can improve a largely dysfunctional process by making small, incremental changes ... If you're not willing to rethink everything, you end up simply rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, and there's no way we're going to bring about significant change doing that.”

— Steven Murray, President, Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas (AR)



future achievement. Current research indicates that completing the equivalent of the first semester (12–15 credit hours) improves students' chances of returning for subsequent semesters, reaching key milestones, and ultimately earning certificates and degrees. More and more, colleges are recognizing the importance of laying this strong foundation.

Doing What Works ...

As colleges examine data about their students, they often discover that what they *know* — about their students and about strong educational practice — is disconnected from what they *do*.

Community colleges know, for example, that their students are likely to arrive academically underprepared, attend college part-time, have job and family obligations, and struggle with financial obstacles. Yet colleges — from course scheduling and staffing to academic policies, instructional approaches, and student support — often are designed as if most students do not face these challenges.

It is time to consider what would happen if colleges redesigned their educational approaches to reflect the reality of student characteristics. It is time to consider the results of incorporating practices shown by evidence to be successful and of implementing those practices *at scale* so they define the experience of all students, not just a fortunate few.

“If all you ever do is all you’ve ever done, then all you’ll ever get is all you ever got.”

— Texas wisdom

New questions would arise. How, for example, might colleges have to change the way they do business — course scheduling, staffing, and so on — if many more students completed their developmental courses? Would we know how to manage a community college at which half of all students were taking sophomore-level classes? What would have to change so there would be enough clinical placements, internships, and science labs for advancing students? What other adjustments would success require?

Some will argue that today’s economic realities render it impossible to make fundamental changes or consider new initiatives. The fact, however, is that when resources

SENSE: Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The Center’s work with entering students has two central components: the *SENSE* survey, which provides detailed quantitative data, and the *Starting Right* initiative, which provides qualitative data.

The survey is administered during the fourth and fifth weeks of the fall academic term in courses most likely to enroll entering students. The survey asks students about institutional practices and student behaviors — those that research indicates are associated with improved student success — during the early weeks of college. Each year, the *SENSE* survey instrument includes both the core survey, which will be the same from year to year, plus several optional special-focus modules. Each special-focus module delves deeply into a key issue related to entering student engagement. The 2008 field test included three special-focus modules — Commitment and Support, Financial Assistance, and Student Success Courses. Participating colleges chose to include zero, one, or two modules in the survey of their students. In this report, data from the special-focus modules are integrated with data presented from the core survey.

In addition to the quantitative data from the survey, the *Starting Right* initiative, supported by the MetLife Foundation and Houston Endowment Inc., conducts qualitative research about the entering student experience. Through focus groups and interviews at select colleges, *Starting Right* gathers the perspectives of new students as well as faculty, student services professionals, and presidents, elevating their voices and painting a more complete picture of the entering student experience. The Center continues to share promising practices identified through this work.

SENSE’s rich survey data help colleges better understand *what* is happening. Data from the focus groups and interviews can help them figure out *why*. Throughout this report, quantitative and qualitative findings are presented side by side because each informs our understanding of the other.

are limited, it becomes more important to set clear priorities, find ways to be more effective, and direct funds to activities that produce the greatest benefit for the largest number of students. If community colleges are going to help more students succeed — and help our country thrive — now is the time to act, and to act boldly.

The value of engaging students — and in particular, making sure this engagement begins early in their college experience — is well documented. Certainly, the desire for increased student success is palpable. Already, many community colleges are developing educational strategies based on current research and data about their students’ performance. Already, there are results to celebrate on campuses across the country. Now we must turn to expanding these early successes to serve all students — a goal that will require rethinking the fundamentals of community college work.

Six Design Principles: Features of a College Designed for Student Success

The six design principles discussed on the following pages describe critical elements of engagement for entering students. For each, *SENSE* field test data and focus group findings report current practices and indicate the level of work needed to maximize entering student success. Descriptions of colleges' current strategies demonstrate the results of using data to set priorities and make decisions.

At a college designed for success, these six principles would define the entering student experience; every entering student would be engaged in all six ways and students' experiences would be well integrated rather than compartmentalized. Moreover, the design elements naturally overlap, and a college designed for success would capitalize on these intersections, finding new ways to make connections with its students and across its organizational boundaries.

The six design principles should be inescapably integrated into the critical time period for entering students — the period that begins with the college's initial contact with the student (which may be weeks or months before he or she starts college) and ends as the student successfully completes the earliest weeks of college. Many of these principles can and should continue throughout students' college careers, but *SENSE* data and this report focus on this entering student timeframe.

Principle #1: Personal Connections

Imagine a college at which every student is intentionally connected to an individual person who feels responsible for that student's success — and that these connections are made before completion of the intake process.

In *Starting Right* focus groups, students consistently underscore the role that personal connections play in student persistence. When students tell their personal

stories, they describe many reasons for feeling discouraged or thinking about dropping out. But their reasons for persisting almost always include one element: a strong connection to someone at the college. Relationships with faculty members, advisors, staff members, and other students play a critical role in engaging students and encouraging them to stick with their studies.

For this reason, most community colleges encourage instructors to learn students' names — and encourage students to learn each others' names — as quickly as possible. Recognizing students by name demonstrates an investment in them. Making a personal connection encourages students to attend class because they know their absences will be noted; in many cases, this investment can improve student performance.

Some institutions extend this responsibility to the entire college community, encouraging everyone on campus — from maintenance crews to administrative support staff to the college president — to play a role in connecting with and supporting students.

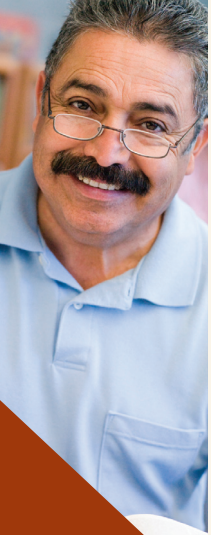
Preliminary Findings

The *SENSE* survey includes several items that gauge whether students feel welcome and personally connected to instructors, staff, and other students during their first three weeks of college.

- ★ Asked whether they agree with the statement, "The very first time I came to this college, I felt welcome," 80% of entering students *agree* or *strongly agree*, and 4% *disagree* or *strongly disagree*.
- ★ In response to the statement, "I was able to get the information I needed to register for classes," 88% of entering students *agree* or *strongly agree*, and 6% *disagree* or *strongly disagree*.

“In our college, if you don't teach, your job is to help students get to class in the best condition for learning. Everybody has that responsibility. When someone violates that, they violate more than a policy. They violate a core value.”

— Bill Law, President, Tallahassee Community College (FL)



SENSE respondents report the quality of their relationships at the college during the first three weeks of their first academic term using a scale of 1–7, on which 1 indicates *unfriendly, unsupportive, and sense of alienation*, and 7 designates *friendly, supportive, and sense of belonging*. Students report the quality of their relationships as follows:

- ★ Regarding administrative personnel and office staff, 48% indicate a 6 or 7; 5% report a 1 or 2.
- ★ Regarding other students, 53% of entering students describe their relationships as 6 or 7; 3% report a 1 or 2.
- ★ Regarding instructors, 64% classify their relationships as 6 or 7; 2% indicate a 1 or 2.

Students report the most positive relationships with instructors. Similarly, in focus groups, students indicate that they consider instructors to be an essential source for support and feedback. As one student said, “Of course we can get encouragement from family and friends, but that instructor giving you that pat on the back ... it makes coming to class more rewarding.”

Some students develop personal connections with faculty and other students through social activities and clubs. However, given most students’ limited time on campus, the best opportunities to build relationships often are found in engaged learning (both in and out of the classroom) and other structured experiences. To retain entering students, the earlier and more frequently such experiences occur, the better.

SENSE data indicate that colleges can create more opportunities for building strong connections early. For example, fewer than one-quarter of entering students (24%) reply yes to the question, “Was a specific person assigned to you so you could see him/her each time you needed information or assistance?”

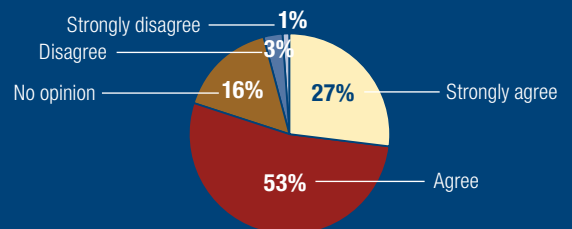
“It just seems that again and again, we see students who have really personal connections at the college being successful.”

— Faculty member

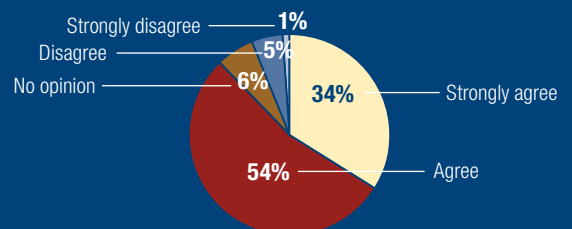
During the intake process, colleges can increase students’ opportunities to form personal connections with faculty and staff by requiring academic advising and planning and by pairing entering students with case managers or mentors. In their courses, instructors can facilitate students’ connections with one another by building group projects, study groups, and other collaborative efforts into coursework.

Entering Students’ First Impressions of Their Colleges

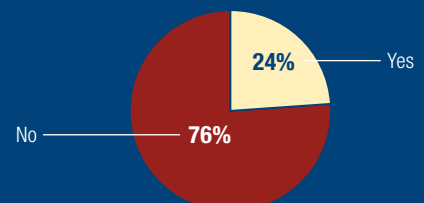
The very first time I came to this college, I felt welcome.



I was able to get the information I needed to register for classes.



Was a specific person assigned to you so you could see him/her each time you needed information or assistance?



Source: 2008 SENSE field test data.

Colleges Apply the Principle

Northwest Vista College (TX) requires all first-time-in-college students to take its Student Success Seminar. Unlike many other freshman seminars, which are pass/fail, students in this course receive letter grades. In recent semesters, the college has offered themed sections of the course, such as “I Hate Math,” “For Psych Majors Only,” and “You Go Girl Women’s Studies.” Faculty members from almost every discipline on campus teach the course and serve as resources for incoming students; many also maintain an informal mentoring role for years. With the addition of the themed sections, students connect with faculty members with whom they share a career interest or from whom they can get needed assistance.

The Ping Pong Club at **Santa Fe Community College (NM)** is a formal, student-run campus organization. Club members meet at a ping pong table in the college’s campus center, which is located next to the cafeteria. The college placed the table in this high-traffic space to attract students and encourage them to spend time together. The strategy was sound; the Ping Pong Club is one of the strongest clubs on campus, successfully growing its membership each year. Recruitment is informal — generally students see their peers playing and ask how they can join — and the club sponsors tournaments at all player levels each semester. One measure of the club’s popularity is its use of equipment: The college has to replace the paddles every semester due to wear and tear.

At **Cuyahoga Community College (OH)**, student ambassadors serve as mentors for new students, particularly high-risk students. The ambassadors help their peers discover and use campus resources, make connections on campus, and successfully navigate their educational experience. The program began in 2003 as a way to provide peer-based student services, and in 2008, it expanded as student ambassadors were trained to be mentors to a particular group of scholarship recipients. The college has noted higher retention rates among students who had mentors.

Principle #2: High Expectations and Aspirations

Imagine a college at which every new student is clear about the college’s high expectations for performance — and every student has high aspirations for his or her own success.

In the words of Vincent Tinto, “No one rises to low expectations.” On any college campus, it is easy to determine if the college community is setting high expectations for all students.* The belief that *all* students can learn either does — or does not — permeate the campus. And this tone, whether positive or negative, sets the stage for student performance.

When colleges set high expectations for all students, they often find that students’ aspirations rise. Students begin to *believe* they can succeed — even if they did not succeed in high school, even if their parents and grandparents never set foot on a college campus, even if they have to work two jobs, even if English is not their first language. Then, students not only become more likely to attain their goals but also begin to reach for more. Those who started out seeking a certificate might consider an associate degree. Those on track for an associate degree start planning for the bachelor’s degree they will earn next.

Preliminary Findings

In response to the statement, “I have the motivation to do what it takes to succeed in college,” 68% of entering students *strongly agree*. While this motivation is critical, it has little value — indeed it is wasted — if students do not understand what it takes to be successful and adopt behaviors that lead to achievement. For example, nearly a third (32%) of entering students report that they turned in at least one assignment late, 25% say they failed to turn in one or more assignments, 47% report that they came to class unprepared, 29% say that they skipped

“If the teacher seems to care, it motivates the student. If somebody ... calls you when you miss ... that light bulb comes on in your head.”

— Male student

*For more information on this topic, see the 2008 CCSSE National Report, *High Expectations and High Support*.



class, and 10% report skipping class multiple times — all during the first three weeks of their first academic term. If these negative behaviors are not addressed, they too often become habits.

In *Starting Right* focus groups, both students and faculty members acknowledge that entering students need to learn how to be successful students, and that clear expectations are essential for this goal. As one faculty member notes, “Many of the students have no idea what they are into, due to no fault of theirs. So my rule the first week of class is to make sure they feel comfortable and know clearly what is expected of them.”

“*The instructors are more than willing to help me. I’ve always felt that if I’m willing to work, they’re willing to work just as hard. I think that’s the quality of a good instructor.*”

— Male student

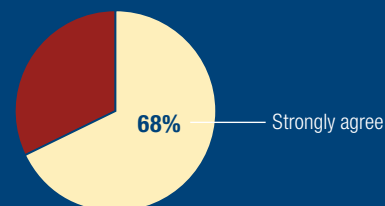
One student’s comments indicate the need to set unambiguous expectations early: “They didn’t tell me when I signed up for class that for every hour of class, I have to do two hours of studying. They didn’t give me any expectations until I actually sat down in the classroom. I think that before you even enroll, you should be able to know what you are getting into.” Unfortunately, nearly six in 10 full-time entering students (59%) report that they spent five or fewer hours per week preparing for class during their first three weeks of college.

Colleges can and should help students understand expectations about the level of effort required to be successful in college as well as about specific assignments and academic goals. Colleges also need to act when students are not meeting the standard. In a *Starting Right* focus group, one student says, “They told us the first week, ‘If you miss X number of classes, then this happens,’ ... [but I still was surprised when] I got a letter from my advisor saying I had missed two days of class. I thought, ‘Oh, they were serious about that,’ ... I’ve been on time ever since. I have not missed a class. I’m passing my quizzes, reading my text.”

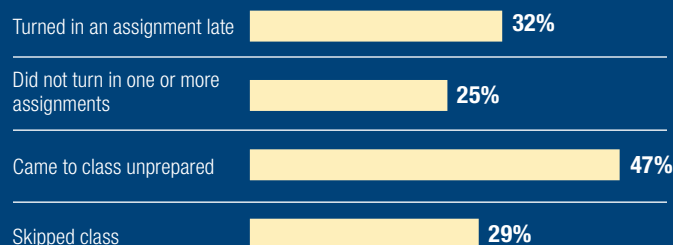
When colleges set high expectations, they also should communicate their belief that students can meet them. Yet only about half of entering students (51%) *strongly agree* with the statement, “The faculty at this college wants me to succeed.”*

Entering Students Need Clear and High Expectations

I have the motivation to do what it takes to succeed in college.



Percentage of students who, at least once during their first three weeks of college:



Source: 2008 SENSE field test data.

Finally, setting clear and high expectations should go hand in hand with providing information about academic and support services and, at least for some students, a requirement to use them. *SENSE* data show that one quarter (25%) of entering students *strongly agree* that instructors clearly explained the academic and student support services available at the college.

Colleges Apply the Principle

Students at **Lawson State Community College (AL)** were entering college with poor writing skills, so the institution decided to emphasize writing throughout students’ academic experiences. The college analyzed and revised the curriculum for four key classes — Developmental English I and II, and English Composition I and II — to emphasize teaching the skills and communicating the importance of high-quality writing. Specific areas addressed include number and length of papers required as well as accuracy in writing.

*Data from the 2008 *SENSE* Commitment and Support special-focus module.

Principle #3: A Plan and a Pathway to Success

Imagine a college at which every entering student, in the first three weeks of college, defines his or her educational goals and develops a plan for attaining them. Imagine further that these plans are updated regularly, with guidance, as students progress.

Preliminary Findings

There is ample evidence to document the importance of academic advising and planning. Having a plan — clearly defined goals and a roadmap for reaching them — plays a critical role in student persistence. Yet, despite their high aspirations, 21% of entering students are uncertain when they plan to take classes again.

More than three-quarters (76%) of entering students *agree* or *strongly agree* that an advisor helped them select their courses, but only 39% of entering students *agree* or *strongly agree* that an advisor helped them to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them.

Further, for many entering students, going to college is but one of a number of obligations. Yet, just more than a quarter (27%) *agree* or *strongly agree* that a college staff member talked with them about their commitments outside of school (work, children, etc.) to help them figure out how many courses to take.

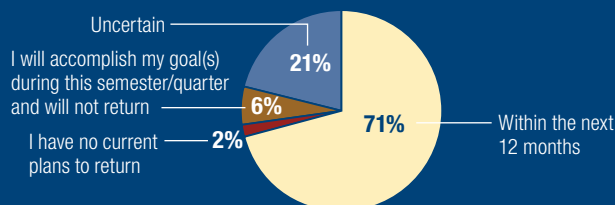
In *Starting Right* focus groups, students lament the fact that advising seems to be more effective for course selection than for goal setting. One student notes, “Advisors ask, ‘What’s your schedule?’ ... I wish I had more of a run through about what I’m going to need for my degree as well as my schedule.”

Students also consistently assert the need for mandatory academic advising and planning. One student, for example, recommended “a scheduled time slot at the beginning of the semester to discuss classes, degrees, and goals with an advisor plus a mid-semester meeting to discuss how we’re doing and next steps.”

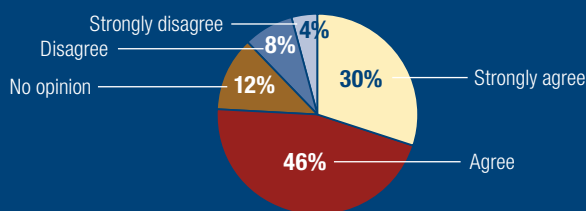
Finally, students also consistently recommend mandatory orientation, particularly guided tours of the college campus, for all new students. Students’ comments about orientation, however, are retrospective — they

Entering Students and Academic Planning

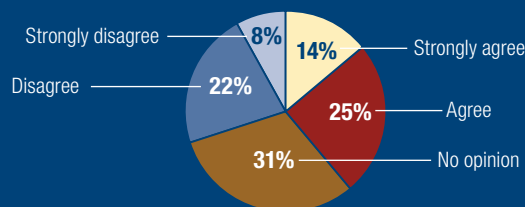
When do you plan to take classes at this college again?



An advisor helped me to identify the courses I needed to take during my first semester/quarter.



An advisor helped me to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them.



Source: 2008 SENSE field test data.

“Students have their dreams and goals in hand, but their action plan is blank. We, as professors, educators, and staff, should be able to help them fill in the blanks.”

— Faculty member



understand the value of orientation long after the useful time to participate in it has passed. Indeed, fewer than half of entering students (44%) attended an on-campus orientation prior to the beginning of classes. One in five students (21%) report that they were unaware of college orientation. These findings support students' assertions that colleges can better serve their entering students by making orientation inescapable.

Colleges Apply the Principle

The president of **Santa Fe Community College (NM)** attends commencement ceremonies at local high schools and gives all graduating students an acceptance letter to SFCC. (To make this possible, college staff visit the high schools a few months before graduation to explain the college's application process.) The letter of admission congratulates students and indicates the next steps they should take to enroll in college. It also emphasizes the time-sensitive nature of the New Mexico state lottery scholarship; students who fail to enroll in a state two- or four-year college the semester after graduating from high school lose eligibility for the scholarship forever. Students frequently arrive at the enrollment office with their letter in hand, ready to complete the next step in the enrollment process.

Durham Technical Community College (NC) took notice when its *SENSE* results indicated that 67% of entering students were unaware of the college's pre-enrollment orientation and only 22% had attended. The college reorganized the orientation program with two goals: increasing participation and maintaining quality. After the reorganization, 743 new students attended the orientation — an increase of 350% over the previous year and a record attendance. Of the students who attended the orientation, 92% indicated they had learned skills necessary to get a good start at the college.

The student success course at **Houston Community College (TX)** requires students to explore careers, learn about the programs offered at HCC, work with academic advisors to declare a major, and file a degree plan. The class has positive effects for all students, but the strongest gains have been among Hispanic and African-American students. Hispanic students' persistence rates increased 15% first-fall-to-spring, 14% first-fall-to-fall, and 26% first-fall-to-second-year-spring. African-American

students' persistence rates increased 5% first-fall-to-spring and 13% first-fall-to-second-year-spring. The HCC student success course has been so successful, it now is required for all new students who have fewer than 12 credits and have not filed a degree plan for a declared major.

Principle #4: An Effective Track to College Readiness

Imagine a college at which all academically underprepared students have an effective, efficient path to completing developmental education and beginning college-level work.

An estimated 62% of community college students are underprepared for college-level courses, and at some colleges that number exceeds 90%.

Proper placement for students is critical, of course. Moreover, a recent Community College Research Center study of Achieving the Dream colleges underscores the value of requiring students to enroll in the developmental courses indicated by their placement tests. The study found that more students exit a remedial sequence by failing to enroll in the first course than by failing a developmental course in which they are enrolled.*

The tasks of identifying and appropriately enrolling large numbers of underprepared students are only part of the challenge. The same study of Achieving the Dream colleges found that many students who begin in developmental classes never make it to college-level classes — 69% of developmental math students do not complete their developmental math sequence, and 57% of developmental reading students do not complete their developmental reading sequence.

Given incoming students' academic challenges, community colleges cannot improve student achievement without making sure that students enroll in the developmental courses they need and then successfully move from developmental to college-level courses. While colleges have made strides in assessment and placement, completion rates indicate that developmental education students are not being served effectively. Creating an effective track to college readiness clearly will require new approaches, implemented at scale.

*Bailey, T., Jeong, D.W., & Cho, S. (2008). *Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges*. (CCRC Working Paper No. 15). New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University, Community College Research Center.

Preliminary Findings

Of the *SENSE* field test respondents, 64% of entering students tested into at least one developmental area: 29% of entering students are enrolled in developmental reading, 32% are enrolled in developmental writing, and 54% are enrolled in developmental math.

Among entering students who tested into at least one developmental class, more than one in 10 (11%) report that their college *did not require* them to enroll during their first academic term in the classes indicated by their placement tests. More positively, among the least-prepared students (those testing into three developmental areas), 96% report that their college *did require* them to take the classes they need in their first academic term.

Across the field test colleges, actual enrollments in developmental education courses suggest that testing and placement policies are ensuring that the majority of students enroll in the developmental classes they need during their first term:

- ★ Among entering students who tested into developmental reading, 88% actually enrolled during their first academic term.
- ★ Among entering students who tested into developmental writing, 88% actually enrolled during their first academic term.
- ★ Among entering students who tested into developmental math, 87% actually enrolled during their first academic term.

When colleges adopt and enforce mandatory assessment and placement policies, students cannot postpone the coursework most critical to their long-term success. Leaving the decision to students about whether to enroll in developmental classes is not likely to serve their best interest.

Additionally, there is growing evidence that participating in student success courses leads to improved student outcomes, particularly (though not exclusively) for developmental students. Yet even though 64% of entering

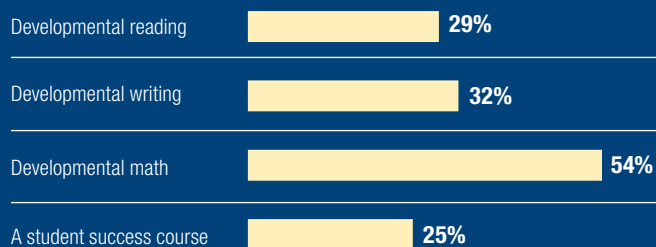
students indicate that they are enrolled in at least one developmental education class, only 25% are enrolled in a student success course.

Sixty-five field test colleges administered the *SENSE* special-focus module on student success courses. Among these respondents, most students who were enrolled in a student success course *somewhat agree* or *strongly agree* that they gained key skills and knowledge:

- ★ 63% say they developed skills to become a better student.
- ★ 69% report improving their time management skills.
- ★ 75% say they learned to understand their academic strengths and weaknesses.
- ★ 80% report learning about college services available to help students succeed in their studies.
- ★ 81% report learning about college policies and deadlines that affect them.

Entering Students and Developmental Education

Percentage of entering students who are enrolled in:



Source: 2008 *SENSE* field test data.

Further, 58% of entering students who enrolled in a student success course developed a written plan for how and when they can achieve their academic goals, compared to 30% of all entering students. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of entering students enrolled in a student success course say such courses should be mandatory for all entering students.

Ultimately, colleges may be better able to meet students' needs by incorporating student support services such as academic advising and planning into student success courses.

“You mean there are classes that teach people how to study? That’s the problem. I don’t know how to study. I do not know how to study.”

— Male student



Colleges Apply the Principle

Broward College (FL) uses a case management model to improve outcomes for its developmental students. The college has trained eight Success Specialists, each of whom advises approximately 250 entering students who place into two or more college prep (developmental education) subject areas. The specialists assign the students to theme-based learning communities, most of which include a three-credit Student Life Skills course, college prep classes, and a general education course. Broward created four different types of learning communities, all of which produced improved outcomes on retention, course completion, or both. Students who were in learning communities and received holistic advising had the greatest success: 82% fall-to-spring retention, compared with 70% for students who were in learning communities but did not receive this broad, intensive advising; 58% fall-to-fall retention, compared to 53% for students who did not receive holistic advising.

Ninety percent of entering students at **College of the Marshall Islands (MH)** require developmental education. To better serve them, the college created a first-year college experience program that combines course work, tutoring, and student life programs along with developmental instruction. Students participate in learning communities, and they attend a semester-long course that orients new students to the first-year experience and facilitates their transition to college. After the first-year experience program was implemented, developmental student retention increased by 10 percentage points.

Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas (AR) has three levels of developmental mathematics, and the college uses the ICAN Learn Interactive Math Program to deliver instruction to the three classes. Each class includes 42 to 46 self-paced modules designed to provide quick, incremental learning. Students must successfully complete each lesson before moving to the next lesson, and they must complete all modules to successfully complete the course. Using this approach, students can complete as many as three levels of developmental math within one semester. PCCUA data indicate that students who successfully completed the developmental sequence performed better in college algebra and on the CAAP test, but the actual number of students completing the course within one semester declined. Further evaluation indicated that the biggest problem was time on task, so the college required students to spend an additional hour per week in the math lab to increase instructional time.

Principle #5: Engaged Learning

Imagine a college at which engaged learning is intentional, inescapable, and the norm for all students.

Most community college students attend college part-time and must find ways to balance class and study time with work and family responsibilities. As a result, they often spend little time on campus beyond the hours they attend classes. Colleges can make the most of class time by using the instructional approaches that are most likely to engage students, help them learn, encourage them to build relationships and take advantage of campus resources — and make them want to come back for more.

Preliminary Findings

Ample evidence shows that engaging learning strategies — including those CCSSE terms *active and collaborative learning* — are related to desired student outcomes such as persistence and academic achievement. *SENSE* data indicate, however, that large proportions of entering students are not experiencing these instructional approaches during their first three weeks of college. For example:

- ★ 75% of entering students say they are not enrolled in a student success course.
- ★ 96% say they are not enrolled in a learning community.
- ★ 85% report *never* participating in a required study group outside of class.
- ★ 22% say they *never* worked with other students on a project or assignment during class, and 69% *never* did so outside of class.
- ★ 31% say they *never* received prompt feedback (oral or written) about their performance from an instructor.
- ★ 27% report *never* asking for help from an instructor regarding questions or problems related to class.
- ★ 71% say they *never* discussed ideas from readings or assignments with instructors outside of class.

“All of my classes are learning labs, and I think that makes it a lot better because it’s so interactive.”

— Female student

While the overall percentage of students who have had these early experiences is useful, it also is instructive to consider the responses across colleges. For example, at the college with the highest participation in on-campus orientations, 90% of students participated. This suggests that colleges can achieve high rates of student participation in orientation and other high-impact entering student activities.

Starting Right focus group findings indicate that both faculty and students who have experienced engaging instructional approaches highly value them. One student, for example, appreciated it when his instructor made small-group work inescapable, recalling, “In English, we’ve been doing a lot of group work. If we raise our hands, she [the instructor] won’t pick on the person who’s raising their hand. She’ll pick on someone else in the group and expect them to know it, too. So before we even raise our hand, we have to talk it out with our group.”

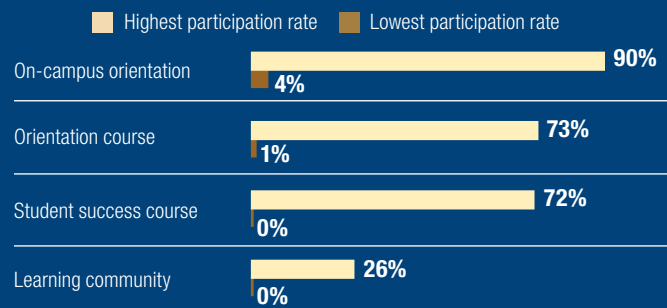
“*There is excitement, especially if they’re working in groups and you can see on their faces they’re engaged. They’re laughing, they’re having a good time, they’re excited about learning.*”

— Faculty member

Faculty members use a variety of approaches to encourage students to invest in one another. One faculty member explains, “I divide the students into groups and let them know they’ll be working with this group for a long period of time. It makes it easier for them to connect with each other. When one student stopped coming to class, the students in her group would not let her stop. They kept calling her and calling her. Finally she showed up.”

Colleges can find many ways to build these types of structured interactions into students’ day-to-day experiences. In addition to collaborative work in class, colleges can require study groups, make interactive work part of assignments, and build community service or other hands-on experiences into coursework.

Engaging Experiences: Range of Responses by College



Source: 2008 SENSE field test data.

Colleges Apply the Principle

Prairie State College (IL) carved out time for four African-American male faculty members (one each from English, communications, sociology, and psychology) to spend time together immersed in the literature on practices that foster academic success for African-American male students. The following fall, each of the professors taught a section of a college success seminar based on his research. The goal was to jump start the college experience for young African-American men. This program builds important relationships and complements a mentoring program that focuses on African-American male students.

At **Lane College (TN)**, Fast Lane to Success is a learning community for first-year college students that began with two linked classes — Effective Learning and a college success course — that focused on helping students develop academic and personal skills. It was fully enrolled, well received, and had a positive effect on retention and success. Fast Lane to Success then was expanded to include three levels of writing classes, and plans are underway to develop a section that includes a math class. Student surveys indicate that those who participated in Fast Lane to Success were more engaged with their studies, instructors, fellow students, and the college overall than their peers who did not participate.

LaGuardia Community College (NY) places all incoming students into one of three academies — Business/Technology, Allied Health, and Liberal



Arts — and placement is based on the student's major. Each academy functions as a school-within-a-school and offers themed basic skills courses linked with discipline-area courses. For example, Basic Writing is paired with Introduction to Business. The academies also provide career development courses and an array of co-curricular activities that contribute to student success and development. All of these activities are centered around the academy's discipline. The Allied Health academy, for example, might offer career orientation events in health fields, study skills workshops using health-related materials, and speakers from the health profession. Academy students' retention rate is 6% higher than that of their nonparticipating peers, and their pass rate in discipline-area courses also is 6% higher.

Principle #6: An Integrated Network of Financial, Social, and Academic Support

Imagine a college at which every entering student is met with a personalized network of financial, academic, and social support.

Entering students are most likely to succeed when expectations are high and they receive the support they need to achieve at high levels. This support includes financial aid advising; academic support, such as tutoring and skill labs; and social support so students do not feel isolated when facing challenges.

Preliminary Findings

The ability to take advantage of student support services begins with knowing both that they exist and how to access them. Unfortunately, *SENSE* data indicate that less than a third of entering students are aware of key student services during the first three weeks of college.

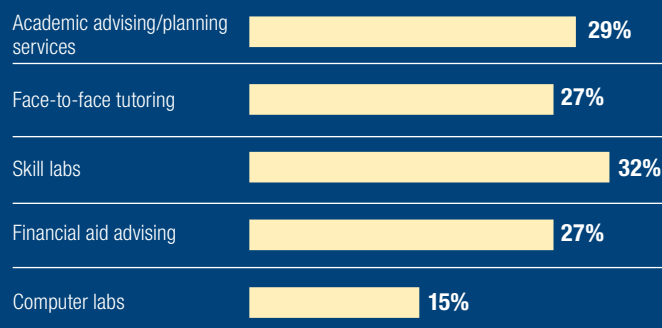
- ★ 29% of entering students say they did not know about academic advising/planning services.
- ★ 27% report not knowing about face-to-face tutoring.
- ★ 32% say they were unaware of skill labs.
- ★ 27% say they did not know about financial aid advising.
- ★ 15% say they were unaware of computer labs.

In *Starting Right* focus groups, students repeatedly say they want more information — about registration, advising, resources, and so on: “more people talking to us,” “more handouts,” “a more complete check-off list for admissions.” One student, frustrated in her quest for information, notes, “Trying to navigate the college's Web site is like trying to figure out a calculus problem when you have no clue what calculus is.”

Colleges can improve both awareness and use of student services by integrating them into the classroom experience. This has the dual advantage of making the services inescapable and tying them directly to the course content. In addition, for some services, such as financial aid advising, colleges can start working with students when they still are in high school.

Entering Students' Awareness of Support Services

Percentage of entering students who are unaware of particular support services during their first three weeks of college:



Source: 2008 *SENSE* field test data.

Colleges Apply the Principle

Austin Community College District (TX) visits local high schools to provide college pre-enrollment services, including financial aid planning, to high school seniors. ACC offers day and evening information sessions for parents and students to help them understand the process, deadlines, and materials needed for financial aid applications. The college also conducts day and evening FAFSA workshops on high school campuses to provide one-on-one assistance to families completing the FAFSA.

ACC serves more than 15,000 high school seniors each year, and the outreach is working. In 2007–08, 1,423 seniors completed the FAFSA. Halfway through the 2008–09 academic year, 2,007 seniors had completed the FAFSA, an increase of 29%.

Florida Community College at Jacksonville (FL) created its Toolbox Scholar Project to provide maximum resources to students with developmental needs in mathematics. The project gives college-prep (developmental) mathematics faculty a “toolbox” of support resources for their students, including the use of master’s students for supplemental instruction (both in the classroom and in the Learning Commons), diagnostic and prescriptive software packages, and tracking systems for student progress. Tracking students’ progress allows faculty to intervene quickly, either with individual or small-group sessions on topics of concern. Assigning mandatory sessions in the Learning Commons for all students in the class removes the stigma of seeking tutoring. Initial data indicate that students who have been engaged in this project have been more willing to seek assistance in the Learning Commons in subsequent semesters.

Butler Community College (KS) developed an early alert initiative after its *SENSE* data revealed that 9.6% of the college’s entering students skipped class several times during the first three weeks of their first academic term. This percentage was significantly higher than the 4.9%

average of the other 2007 participating colleges. In fall 2008, Butler piloted an early alert initiative with 55 faculty participants. The program allows faculty to identify at-risk students and refer them to the college’s director of first-year experience or to an advisor. That staff member then conducts needs assessments and connects students to appropriate support services, such as tutoring, counseling, disability services, and even off-campus social service agencies.

“When people come here, they need somebody to talk to ... they need somebody to reach out to them.”

— Male student

Athletic performance grants are among the financial assistance options at **Tyler Junior College (TX)**, and the college helps its scholar-athletes succeed with academic support designed to improve their retention, academic success, GPA, and graduation rates. First-time athletes are required to take a college study skills course focused on transitioning into college as an athlete. Study hall just for athletes — staffed by qualified tutors — is scheduled four nights a week, and attendance is mandatory.





Imagining a New Community College

In spring 2008, the **City University of New York (CUNY)** began designing a new CUNY community college to address projected enrollment growth at its six existing community colleges and to explore the possibility of wholly restructuring the community college experience to improve outcomes.

With a charge from Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, a staff planning team undertook the work, which included input from CUNY faculty and administrators as well as national experts. A steering committee of CUNY leaders, including Presidents Regina Peruggi of **Kingsborough Community College** and Gail Mellow of **LaGuardia Community College**, is overseeing the planning process.

John Mogulescu, CUNY Senior University Dean for Academic Affairs and Dean of the School of Professional Studies, notes, “The opportunity to imagine a new institution, one that is singularly focused on the need to dramatically increase graduation rates, has been incredibly valuable.” A concept paper summarizes the exploratory work and describes a set of key ideas and practices deemed essential for the new college. Over the next 18 months, CUNY will promote further discussion and refinement of the recommendations, briefly summarized below.

The challenge. Approximately 14% of first-time full-time freshmen enrolled in CUNY associate degree programs graduate within three years, while about 25% are still enrolled. As in most other community colleges, graduation rates are lowest for students of color and those from low-income backgrounds.

Defining elements. The new college will require students to enroll full-time, at least in the first year. Every course of study will address the theme of “creating and sustaining a thriving New York City,” to create both a coherent curriculum and opportunities to connect with the city’s public institutions, private firms, cultural organizations, unions, and other entities for internships and field placements related to student coursework.

Pre-college programs, admissions/assessments, and the summer program. The full plan has extensive recommendations about student services, including assigning each student to a staff member who will help him/her navigate the enrollment process. The emphasis is on students’ *using* services, not just being aware of them, and the planners assert that the college should not forego the need to make demands of students if those demands are tied to substantially increasing their chances for success. For example:

- ★ Interviews will be a required part of the admissions process, impressing upon students that open access should not amount to *uninformed* access.

- ★ A full-time, three-week summer program will help students begin to develop reading, writing, and research skills necessary for the first-year program; begin the intensive work of the college’s math program; become acquainted with resources available at the college; and develop a sense of comfort and familiarity with the college.
- ★ All students will be presumed to need remediation. Instead of traditional placement assessments, students’ skills will be assessed through demonstrated proficiency in reading and writing assignments during the summer program. A comprehensive online math placement test will be used for math.

Educational model. Major features of the educational model include:

- ★ Required credit-based coursework for all first-year students, whether college ready or academically underprepared.
- ★ No zero-credit remedial classes and no “traditional and isolated” introductory courses.
- ★ A required first-year core curriculum incorporating a City Seminar, a Math Topics course, and a Professional Studies course in conjunction with workplace education.
- ★ Shorter modules in place of traditional semesters.
- ★ Full-scale implementation of learning communities.
- ★ A first-year program of studies with no predetermined credit value; rather, credits will be awarded based on the quality and quantity of a student’s work.
- ★ A central role for student advising.
- ★ A limited number of fields of study chosen carefully for their relevance to New York City’s needs and job market, now and into the future. Majors would be organized into Liberal Arts, Health and Human Services, Information Studies, and Urban Systems.

Accountability. Data will be used to help build a community of teachers and learners who can examine and understand the efficacy of their own work and how to improve it. The college will have clear goals, including an initial target of 30% graduation and readiness for next steps, within three years, for all students. Extended graduation and readiness targets are 35% in four years and 40% in five years.

Source: City University of New York, “A New Community College: Concept Paper,” August 15, 2008.

Implications: Doing Education Differently

What are the potential consequences of a commitment to attain much higher levels of student success? If a college makes changes that promote far-reaching student success, there are significant implications for its culture, its organizational structure, and its allocation of both fiscal and human resources. Colleges have to ask themselves if they are prepared to bring successful practices to scale and, if not, what current policies and practices may have to be changed to make full-scale implementation possible. They have to look carefully at their campus

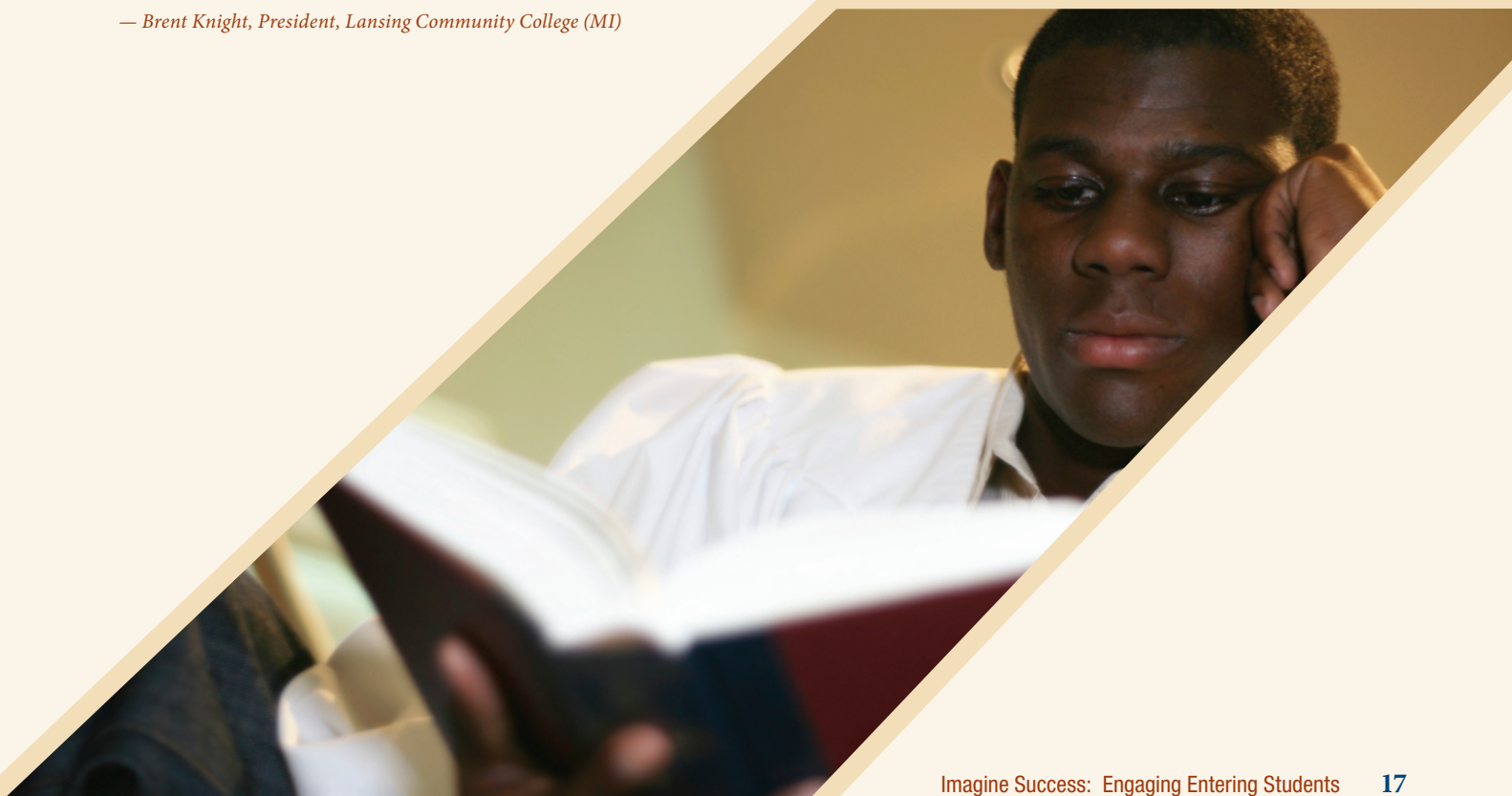
“Our community and our college are facing some very significant fiscal and educational challenges ... I don’t want to lead a ‘slash and burn’ approach to addressing those challenges. Rather, we must rethink our work, imagining how we would build, from the ground up, a community college designed for student success. And then we need to ensure that our priorities reflect our commitment to becoming that college.”

— Brent Knight, President, Lansing Community College (MI)

cultures to assess whether their stated values, attitudes, and practices are conducive to significant change. For example, what happens to a student’s “right to fail” at a college redesigned to significantly improve student outcomes?

To help many more students succeed, colleges have to look at every aspect of their practice, including the college intake process; teaching practices; class scheduling; and academic policies, particularly decisions about mandatory and optional experiences and assignments. Then, when colleges do achieve large-scale success, they may have to revisit the same issues again because success promises to bring new challenges: Serving a college of successful students is bound to require some dramatically new strategies. And wouldn’t that be a wonderful challenge to face?

Community college educators in constrained economic environments may worry that student success is unaffordable. Newly developed tools offer a different perspective. Several efforts are underway to help colleges better analyze the costs of student success strategies in comparison with their benefits, particularly the benefit of increased revenue from tuition and state funding





generated by improved student retention. These analyses can help colleges allocate resources appropriately. For example:

- ★ **The Making Opportunity Affordable** initiative's Investing in Student Success project, funded by Lumina Foundation for Education and Wal-Mart Foundation, is developing an analytic tool to help colleges and universities determine whether programs designed to retain students are cost-effective investments. The project ties program-level cost data to student outcomes and explores the extent to which the additional revenue colleges and universities generate by increasing student retention offsets the additional cost of such programs.
- ★ The Basic Skills Initiative Project at **Skyline College (CA)** created a model that demonstrates the value of focusing on student retention. Using a return-on-investment (ROI) framework, the research team looked at real-world data for a range of nontraditional and supposedly expensive developmental education programs. It found that, if the programs are successful, they often more than pay for themselves, including up-front costs that exceed the cost of traditional programs.*

All of this happens in the context of America's renewed focus on a culture of responsibility. Now is the time for community colleges to tackle their greatest challenge: not only serving students with significant need, but ensuring their success.

Next Steps for *SENSE*

In the coming year, *SENSE* will conduct its first national administration and introduce new online tools to help participating colleges and the public.

- ★ **First national administration in fall 2009.** In early and mid-2009, the Center will finalize the *SENSE* survey instrument based on additional student interviews, data analyses, and ongoing psychometric analyses. The Center will conduct the first national administration of *SENSE* in fall 2009. Registration for this administration closes April 3, 2009. Colleges are encouraged to register online at www.enteringstudent.org.

- ★ **Special-focus modules.** In addition to the core survey instrument, participating colleges may add up to two special-focus modules, which provide insight into key topics of interest. Modules available in 2009 will include Financial Assistance, Commitment and Support, Student Success Courses, and Technology. Additional special-focus modules, including Academic Advising and Relationships on Campus, will be introduced for the 2010 *SENSE* administration.

“We would argue that colleges and universities have a moral, ethical, and societal obligation to focus on increasing achievement of student goals. The work we have undertaken simply suggests that they also have a financial incentive for doing so.”

— Robert Johnstone, Dean, Planning, Research, and Institutional Effectiveness, Skyline College

- ★ **Second annual Entering Student Success Institute (ESSI).** Teams from 20 colleges that participated in the 2008 *SENSE* field test will convene in Santa Fe, NM, in late April for the second ESSI. At the institute, colleges will dig into their *SENSE* results, along with other critical institutional data, to deepen their understanding of their students' earliest college experiences. Through focused interaction with nationally recognized speakers and colleagues from other field test colleges, and with the assistance of expert resident faculty, attendees at this teams-only event will learn about strategies and develop a written action plan for improving the entering student experience at their colleges.
- ★ ***SENSE* Web site.** With the release of the field test data, *SENSE* launched an interactive Web site that allows member colleges to create customized data reports. This dynamic search capability will be available on the public site after the completion of the first national administration.

*For more information about the California Basic Skills Initiative, visit www.cccbsi.org.

Overview of the 2008 *SENSE* Field Test Respondents

The 2008 *SENSE* field test survey was administered at 89 community colleges and yielded 57,547 usable surveys. The survey was administered in classes randomly selected from the population of all first college-level English and math courses and all developmental education courses (excluding ESL courses).

Colleges chose to include zero, one, or two of the three special-focus modules in their surveys: 50 colleges administered the Financial Assistance special-focus module, 54 administered the Commitment and Support module, and 65 administered the Student Success Courses module. In all, 86 colleges administered special-focus modules.

Both entering students (those in their first term at the college) and returning students responded to the survey, but the preliminary findings in this report focus only on entering students.

The data presented in this report represent the field test sample only. The following comparison of characteristics of entering and returning students offers a preliminary indication of which students may be at greatest risk of leaving college before starting their second year. For example, 43% of entering students are male, but only 37% of returning students are male.

Characteristics of 2008 Field Test Respondents

Characteristic	Entering students	Returning students	All respondents
Male	43%	37%	41%
Female	57%	63%	59%
Enrolled part-time	27%	38%	31%
Enrolled full-time	73%	62%	69%
Traditional-age (18–24)	82%	63%	74%
Nontraditional-age (25 and older)	18%	37%	26%
Work more than 20 hours per week	40%	53%	45%
Report that English is their first language	88%	84%	87%
Married	11%	20%	15%
Have children living with them	20%	32%	25%

Race/Ethnicity of 2008 Field Test Respondents

Race/ethnicity	Entering students	Returning students	All respondents
Latino/Hispanic	12%	14%	13%
White	63%	58%	61%
African American	15%	17%	16%
Asian	4%	5%	4%
Native American	1%	1%	1%
Native Hawaiian	<1%	<1%	<1%
Other	4%	5%	4%

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

Source: 2008 *SENSE* field test data.

SENSE Sampling Note

The results from the *SENSE* field test are considered preliminary because full-time students may be overrepresented in the pool of respondents.

This overrepresentation may be the result of the survey's sampling strategy: To reach the highest proportions of entering students at participating colleges, the *SENSE* survey is administered in a random selection of particular courses. These specific courses — developmental reading, writing, and mathematics sections as well as first-level college English and mathematics courses — often have high proportions of entering students.

Center staff are exploring weighting strategies that would allow results to represent the proper proportion of full- and part-time students in the overall population of entering students.

SENSE and Student Engagement

SENSE is one of three surveys administered by the Center for Community College Student Engagement. The others are the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*) and the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (*CCFSSE*). All are tools that assess student engagement — how engaged students are with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with their studies — and help colleges improve their educational practice so more students will succeed.

Why student engagement? Research shows that the more actively engaged students are, the more likely they are to learn, to persist 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 help more students succeed.

CCSSE, now in its seventh national administration, surveys more experienced students to gather information about their overall college experience. *SENSE* focuses on the first three weeks of students' college experience and assesses practices that are most likely to engage entering students and encourage them to stay in college until they attain their academic goals. *CCFSSE* provides faculty perspectives on student experiences as well as their own work. Together, *SENSE* and *CCSSE* offer complementary pieces of the student success puzzle, with *CCSSE* providing a comprehensive look at the overall quality of all students' educational experiences and *SENSE* offering a focused snapshot of new students and their earliest college experiences.



CCCSE National Advisory Board

Peter Ewell, Chair

*Vice President
National Center for Higher
Education Management Systems
(NCHEMS)*

David Armstrong

*President
Broward College (FL)*

Rose Asera

*Senior Scholar
The Carnegie Foundation for the
Advancement of Teaching*

George Boggs

*President and CEO
American Association of
Community Colleges*

Walter G. Bumphus

*Chairman, Department of
Educational Administration
The University of Texas at Austin*

Jacqueline Claunch

*President
Northwest Vista College (TX)*

Larry Ebbers

*Professor, Educational Leadership
and Policy Studies
Iowa State University*

Terrence Gomes

*President
Roxbury Community College (MA)*

George Grainger

*Senior Grant Officer
Houston Endowment Inc.*

William Law

*President
Tallahassee Community College (FL)*

Byron N. McClenney

*Program Director
Achieving the Dream
The University of Texas at Austin*

Alexander McCormick

*Director
National Survey of Student
Engagement (NSSE)
Indiana University Bloomington*

Christine Johnson McPhail

*Professor Emeritus
Morgan State University (MD)*

Jan Motta

*Executive Director
Massachusetts Community College
Executive Office (MA)*

John E. Roueche

*Director, Community College
Leadership Program
The University of Texas at Austin*

Gerardo de los Santos

*President and CEO
League for Innovation in the
Community College*

Anne Stanton

*Program Director
The James Irvine Foundation*

Vincent Tinto

*Distinguished Professor
Syracuse University (NY)*

Evelyn Waiwaiole

*Director
NISOD — National Institute for Staff
and Organizational Development*

SENSE Technical Advisory Panel

Tom Bailey

*Director
Community College Research Center
Teachers College, Columbia
University (NY)*

Kimberly Coutts

*Director of Institutional Research
MiraCosta Community College (CA)*

Peter Ewell

*Vice President
National Center for Higher
Education Management Systems
(NCHEMS)*

Bob Gonyea

*Associate Director, Center for
Postsecondary Research
Indiana University Bloomington*

George Grainger

*Senior Grant Officer
Houston Endowment Inc.*

Gary Hanson

*Senior Research and Policy Analyst
(Retired)
The University of Texas System*

Steve Head

*President
Lone Star College-North Harris (TX)*

C. Nathan Marti

*Manager of Consulting Services
Division of Statistics and Scientific
Computation
The University of Texas at Austin*

Alexander McCormick

*Director
National Survey of Student
Engagement (NSSE)
Indiana University Bloomington*

Ann M. Toomey

*Director
System Research and Grants
Community College System of
New Hampshire*

Alice Villadsen

*President Emeritus
Brookhaven College (TX)*

Ted Wright

*Special Assistant to the President
(Retired)
Broward Community College (FL)*

CCCSE Staff

Kay McClenney
Director

Jeff Crumpley
Associate Director, Operations

Angela Oriano-Darnall
*Assistant Director, Survey of Entering
Student Engagement*

Arleen Arnsperger
*Project Manager, Initiative on
Student Success*

Courtney Adkins
Survey Operations Coordinator

Karla Fisher
College Relations Coordinator

Christine McLean
Senior Associate

Chris Cosart
Web and Database Administrator

Shanna Howard
Webmaster

Beiyi Cai
Research Associate

Erika Glaser
Research Associate

Rowland Cadena
College Liaison

Sandra Shannon
*Project Coordinator, Initiative
on Student Success*

Kerry Mix
Research Assistant

Judy Row
Administrative Manager

Chris Lynch
Accountant

Annine Miscoe
Administrative Associate

Johna Crump
Administrative Associate

Marlana Rodgers
Administrative Associate

Michael Merck
Administrative Associate

Chris Orozco
Office Assistant

SENSE Member Colleges

For a list of colleges that participated in the 2008 SENSE field test, visit www.enteringstudent.org.



Center for Community College Student Engagement

Community College Leadership Program
College of Education
The University of Texas at Austin
3316 Grandview Street
Austin, TX 78705
T: 512.471.6807 F: 512.471.4209
www.enteringstudent.org