

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)

2004 Institutional Report: Overview

Introduction

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) provides information about effective educational practice in community colleges and assists institutions in using that information to promote improvements in student learning and persistence. CCSSE's goal is to provide member colleges with results that can be used to inform decision making and target institutional improvements. **Student engagement**, or the amount of time and energy that students invest in meaningful educational practices, is the underlying foundation for CCSSE's work. CCSSE's survey instrument, the *Community College Student Report (CCSR)*, is designed to capture student engagement as a measure of institutional quality.

This overview encompasses six key sections and is organized to provide a general understanding of the findings from CCSSE's 2004 survey administration. First, we highlight the 2004 CCSSE member colleges, consortia, and student respondents. Second, we compare CCSSE institutions and their students with all U.S. public community colleges. Third, we showcase selected findings. In the fourth section, we provide information to help college leaders understand their CCSSE results. The fifth section focuses on communicating results. Finally, in the sixth section, we illustrate ways to use data to drive decision making.

CCSSE Member Colleges

CCSSE conducted its pilot survey in 2001, a field test in 2002, the first national administration in 2003, and the second national administration in spring 2004. A total of 152 institutions across 30 states participated in the 2004 administration. Seventeen of these member colleges are classified by size as extra-large institutions (15,000 + credit students), 25 as large (8,000-14,999), 35 as medium (4,500-7,999), and 75 as small (< 4,500)¹. Forty of the 2004 member colleges are located in urban areas, 51 in suburban areas, and 61 in rural areas.

¹These enrollment statistics are based on Fall 2002 IPEDS data.



CCSSE Consortia

A consortium is a group of five or more colleges in a district, system or state – or another group with common interests or challenges. Consortium members share reports and can add up to 20 additional questions to the survey.

State consortia participating in *CCSSE's* 2004 administration include member colleges from Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, and New Mexico. Twenty-three Texas small colleges, 15 Hispanic-Serving Institutions or members of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and 17 colleges participating in the League for Innovation's College and Career Transitions Initiative (CCTI) comprise other *CCSSE* consortia. Four consortia elected to add questions to the survey instrument in order to gain additional information about their students and institutions.

Student Respondents

Credit classes were randomly selected – stratified by time of day (morning, afternoon, and evening) – from institutional class data files to participate in the survey. Of those sampled, 92,301 students submitted usable surveys. The number of completed surveys produced an overall “percent of target” rate of 80%. Percent of target rate is the ratio of the adjusted number of completed surveys to target sample sizes. (The adjusted survey count is the number of surveys that were filled out properly and did not fall into any of the exclusionary categories.²)

2004 Student Respondent Profile

To compare the characteristics of student respondents with the characteristics of the underlying student population for each participating college, *CCSSE* uses the data reported by the institution in its 2002 IPEDS Enrollment Report for the following variables: gender, race and ethnicity, student age, and enrollment status (full- or part-time). The data are aggregated to compare the 2004 *CCSSE* survey respondent population to the total student population of 2004 *CCSSE* member colleges.

Gender

Of the 90,303 student respondents who answered this item, 40% are male and 60% are female. This mirrors the full population of *CCSSE* community college students, comprised of 41% males and 59% females.

² See exclusionary rules on pp.4-5.



Age

2004 CCSSE student respondents range in age from 18 to 65+ years old. Approximately 89% are between 18 to 39 years old; 64% are 18 to 24 years old while 25% are 25 to 39 years old.

Racial Identification

Sixty-one percent of student respondents identify themselves as White/non-Hispanic, 13% as Hispanic/Latino/Spanish, 10% as Black or African American, and 4% as Asian. Two percent of the student respondents are Native American. Three percent marked “other” when responding to the question, “What is your racial identification?”

International Students

Responses to the question, “Are you an international student or foreign national?” reflect variations related to college size. Four percent of small college respondents answered “yes,” while 6% of medium size college respondents responded “yes.” In large institutions, approximately 8% of the students who completed the survey indicated international/foreign student status. Extra-large institutions have the highest representation of international students at 11%.

Enrollment Status

Sixty-six percent of the student respondents report attending college full-time, while 36% of the CCSSE 2004 colleges’ total student population attended full-time. Only 34% of the surveyed students report being part-time college students, compared to 64% as reported to IPEDS. This inverse representation is a result of the sampling technique and the in-class administration process. For this reason, survey results are either weighted or disaggregated on the full-time/part-time variable so that reports will accurately reflect the underlying student population.

The following student respondent categories are weighted according to Fall 2002 IPEDS population data.

Limited English Speaking Students

Students with limited English speaking skills, or those whose native language is not English, comprise a significant proportion of students in community colleges. Among CCSSE participants, small institutions include 9% of non-native English speakers, while medium institutions enroll 12% of non-native English speakers. Comparatively, large numbers of non-native English speaking students attend large (13%) and extra-large (20%) institutions.



First-Generation Status

Of the students who indicate that neither parent has earned a degree higher than a high school diploma nor has college experience, nearly one-third (27%) are considered “first-generation” status. Thirty-four percent indicate that their mothers’ highest level of education is a high school diploma (with no college experience), and 31% indicate that level for their fathers.

Educational Attainment

Sixty-eight percent of the respondents report starting their college careers at the community college where they completed the survey. Approximately 72% of students indicate that their highest level of educational attainment is a high school diploma or GED; 67% have completed fewer than 30 credit hours of college-level work; 18% report either a certificate or an associate degree; 7% have earned a bachelor’s degree; and 2% have earned an advanced degree.

Credit Hours Earned

Forty-seven percent of students have completed fewer than 15 credit hours; 21% have completed 15-29 credit hours; and 32% have completed more than 30 credit hours.

Grades

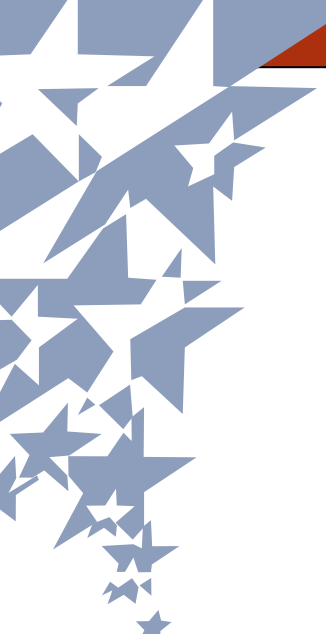
Forty-six percent of students report that they earned grades of *B+* or higher, while 20% of students report that they earned grades of *C-* or lower.

External Commitments

Sixty percent of students work 21 or more hours per week; 28% of students care for dependents at least 11 hours per week; and 15% of students spend at least six hours per week commuting to class.

Excluded Respondents

The total counts of respondents in an institution’s raw data file will differ from the numbers reported in the institutional reports due to intentional exclusion of certain surveys. Exclusion in accord with consistent decision rules serves the purpose of ensuring that all institutional reports are based on the same sampling methods and that results therefore are comparable across institutions. Respondents may be excluded from institutional reports for the following reasons:

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- ✘ The respondent did not indicate whether he or she was enrolled part- or full-time at the institution. *Because all results are either weighted or broken down by enrollment status, this is essential information for reporting.*
 - ✘ The survey is out of range for its corresponding class packet. *This rule ensures that CCSSE collects information only from the classes that were randomly sampled.*
 - ✘ The survey is invalid³.
 - ✘ Students reported their age as under 18.
 - ✘ Students indicated that they had taken the survey in a previous class.
 - ✘ Over-sampled respondents are not included. These are surveys that individual institutions paid an additional fee to acquire. Because there are no requirements stipulating how these students are sampled, these data are not included in the standard institutional report.

Respondents Included in the College's Raw Data File

Raw data files contain responses from all students who completed the CCSR, including over-sample and/or on-line respondents, with the exception of invalid surveys and those completed by students under the age of 18.

Representation

CCSSE Institutions Compared to All U.S. Public Community Colleges

Overall, CCSSE's 2002, 2003, and 2004 college membership represents a total of 230⁴ (unduplicated) colleges across 36 states. Of the 230 member colleges, 119 are classified⁵ as small (< 4,500); 49 as medium (4,500-7,999); 38 as large (8,000-14,999); and 24 as extra-large (15,000+). Member colleges self-classify in terms of urbanicity: 76 classify as urban, 69 as suburban, and 85 as rural.⁶

2004 CCSSE membership includes 152 colleges across 30 states. The table on the next page provides information about the representation of 2004 CCSSE member colleges as compared to community and technical colleges across the nation. CCSSE uses 2002 IPEDS enrollment data for comparisons in this table.

³ If a student does not answer any of the 21 sub-items on item 4, answers "Very Often" to all 21 items, or answers "Never" to all, the survey is excluded.

⁴ Includes U.S. public, associate-degree granting institutions; does not include hospital-based institutions.

⁵ Institutional size is based on Fall 2002 IPEDS enrollment figures and is defined as small, medium, large, and extra-large.

⁶ CCSSE member colleges self-classify in terms of rural, suburban, and urban locations, while colleges in the national population are classified using IPEDS data.

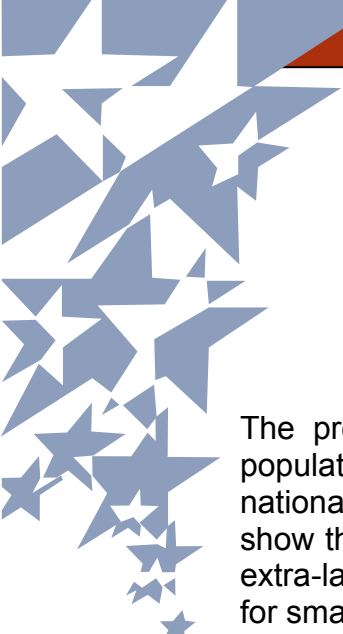


Specifically, the numbers and accompanying percentages in parentheses displayed in the first two columns, “2004 CCSSE Member Colleges” and “National Population,” represent within category data. In other words, there are 25 large CCSSE member colleges representing 16% of the 152 total 2004 CCSSE colleges while there are 154 large colleges in the national population, representing 14% of the overall total of 1,077. Meanwhile, the percentages displayed in the last column represent the proportion of CCSSE colleges found in the national population overall as well as by size and urbanicity. For instance, there are 40 urban 2004 CCSSE member colleges, constituting 10% of the 416 urban colleges nationwide.

Colleges by Size and Urbanicity

	2004 CCSSE Member Colleges	National Population⁷	CCSSE Proportion of National Population
By Size			
# of Institutions	152 (100%)	1,077 (100%)	14%
Extra-Large (15,000+)	17 (11%)	91 (8%)	19%
Large (8,000-14,999)	25 (16%)	154 (14%)	16%
Medium (4,500-7,999)	35 (23%)	207 (19%)	17%
Small (up to 4,499)	75 (49%)	625 (58%)	12%
By Urbanicity			
# of Institutions	152 (100%)	1,083 (100%)	14%
Urban	40 (26%)	416 (38%)	10%
Suburban	51 (34%)	259 (24%)	20%
Rural	61 (40%)	408 (38%)	15%

⁷ Includes all colleges in the target population that have valid IPEDS enrollment data.



The proportion of 2004 *CCSSE* member colleges as compared to the national population ranges from 10% to 20% and fundamentally reflects the underlying national population of colleges by size and location. The percentages in red font show that colleges by size generally mirror the national population (11% and 8% for extra-large, 16% and 14% for large, 23% and 19% for medium, and 49% and 58% for small).

CCSSE Student Respondents across Member Institutions

In addition, it also is valuable to examine the percentages of students represented across participating *CCSSE* institutions.

Overall, *CCSSE*'s survey respondents in 2002, 2003, and 2004 represent a total credit enrollment of 1,682,757 students across 230 *CCSSE* member colleges. *CCSSE*'s entire college membership represents approximately 21% of the nation's community colleges (1,102 accredited, public associate-degree-granting institutions) and 27% of its credit students (6,310,849).

2004 *CCSSE* member colleges enroll a total of 1,127,073 credit students, or about 18% of the total credit-student population in the nation's community colleges. The table on the next page shows a comparison of the adjusted number of *CCSSE* survey respondents displayed alongside the total student enrollment at participating colleges. The column labeled "2004 *CCSSE* Member Colleges Adjusted Respondents" shows the number of usable surveys (those not affected by *CCSSE*'s exclusionary rules). The column labeled, "2004 *CCSSE* Member Colleges Enrollments" reflects institutions' populations as reported to IPEDS for fall 2002 enrollment reports.

These data are examined by institutional size (small, medium, large, and extra-large) as well as urbanicity (rural, suburban, and urban).

Adjusted Respondents by Size and Urbanicity

	2004 CCSSE Member Colleges Adjusted Respondents ⁸	2004 CCSSE Member College Enrollments
	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Credit Enrollments</i>
	92,301 students (100%)	1,127,073 students (100%)
By Size		
Extra-Large (15,000+)	15,604 (17%)	445,817 (40%)
Large (8,000 - 14,999)	20,564 (22%)	281,899 (25%)
Medium (4,500-7,999)	23,291 (25%)	209,159 (19%)
Small (up to 4,499)	32,842 (36%)	190,198 (17%)
By Urbanicity		
Urban	28,717 (31%)	517,446 (46%)
Suburban	34,180 (37%)	410,470 (36%)
Rural	29,404 (32%)	199,157 (18%)

2004 CCSSE student respondents generally reflect their respective CCSSE member college populations with the exception of enrollment status. (Please see the section on Weighted Results for more information.) The representation of students is highlighted in red font, showing within category comparisons by size and urbanicity. Table 3⁹ displays additional comparisons between 2004 CCSSE student respondents and their respective CCSSE member colleges by race/ethnicity, gender, and age.

⁸ Minus exclusions (see exclusionary rules on pp. 4-5).

⁹ See Appendix.

CCSSE Member College Enrollments Compared to All U.S. Public Community Colleges

Finally, CCSSE's 2004 member college enrollment figures represent 18% of the national student population in community colleges. The table below shows the number of students from CCSSE member colleges as compared to the number of students across the nation by size and urbanicity.

Specifically, the numbers and accompanying percentages in parentheses displayed in the first two columns, "Students Enrolled in 2004 CCSSE Member Colleges" and "National Student Population in Community Colleges," represent within group data. In other words, 190,198 students enrolled in small-CCSSE member colleges represent 17% of the 1,127,073 total students enrolled in those colleges while 1,327,585 students enrolled small colleges nationwide represent 21% of the nationwide enrollment of 6,310,849. Meanwhile, the percentages displayed in the last column represent the proportion of students enrolled in CCSSE member colleges found in the national population by size and urbanicity. For instance, there are 199,157 students enrolled in rural-CCSSE member colleges which represents 22% of the 901,665 students enrolled in rural colleges nationwide.

Enrollments by Size and Urbanicity

	Students Enrolled in 2004 CCSSE Member Colleges	National Student Population in Community Colleges	Proportion of Students Enrolled in CCSSE Member Colleges
	Total Credit Enrollment	Credit Enrollment	
	1,127,073 CCSSE students (100%)	6,310,849 national population (100%)	
By Size			
Extra-Large (15,000+)	445,817 (40%)	2,078,214 (33%)	21%
Large (8,000-14,999)	281,899 (25%)	1,675,867 (27%)	17%
Medium (4,500-7,999)	209,159 (19%)	1,229,183 (19%)	17%
Small (up to 4,499)	190,198 (17%)	1,327,585 (21%)	14%

Enrollments by Size and Urbanicity (continued)

	Students Enrolled in 2004 CCSSE Member Colleges	National Student Population in Community Colleges	Proportion of Students Enrolled in CCSSE Member Colleges
	Total Credit Enrollment 1,127,073 CCSSE students (100%)	Credit Enrollment 6,285,965 national population (100%)	
By Urbanicity			
Urban	517,446 (46%)	3,258,979 (52%)	16%
Suburban	410,470 (36%)	2,125,321 (34%)	19%
Rural	199, 157 (18%)	901,665 (14%)	22%

In general, students enrolled in CCSSE member colleges represent students in public community colleges nationwide by size (extra-large at 40% and 33%, large at 25% and 27%, medium at 19% for both, small at 17% and 21%) and urbanicity (urban at 46% and 52%, suburban at 36% and 34%, and rural at 18% and 14%).

Selected Findings

Many crucial questions that community colleges need answered — *What are our students' goals? What issues keep our students from persisting? How effectively are we engaging students in the classroom? How satisfied are our students with the support services we offer?* — can be answered by investigating the percentage of student responses to specific CCSSE survey items.

This section on Selected Findings from the 2004 CCSR is organized in terms of five key topics: Academic Experience, Educational Goals, Barriers to Persistence, Student Satisfaction, and Student and Academic Support Services.

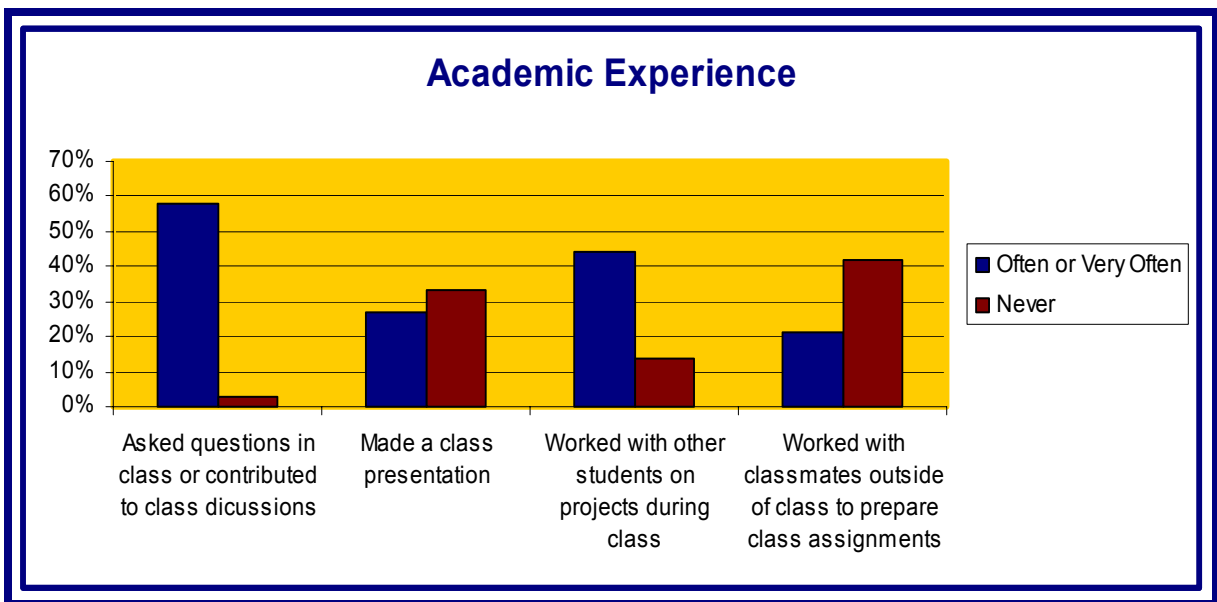


Academic Experience

A positive academic experience is a product of many ingredients, one of which is the amount of time and energy that students invest in their academic work. The CCSR asks students to respond to seven survey items in order to gauge how actively they are involved in their education. Students were given the opportunity to mark *Very Often*, *Often*, *Sometimes*, or *Never* in response to items such as the following:

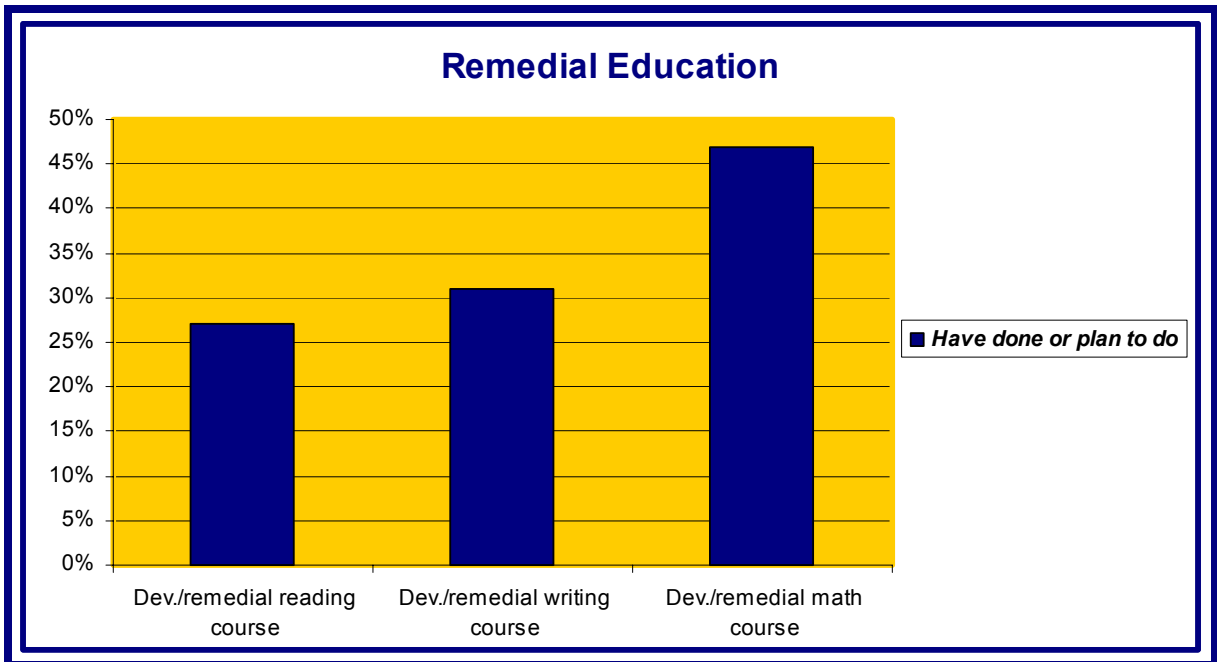
- ✘ “Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions”
- ✘ “Made a class presentation”
- ✘ “Worked with other students on projects during class”
- ✘ “Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments”

While some students are highly involved in their academic experience (those who marked *Often* or *Very Often*), others are less engaged, as illustrated by their responses of *Never* as displayed in the figure below.



Remedial Education

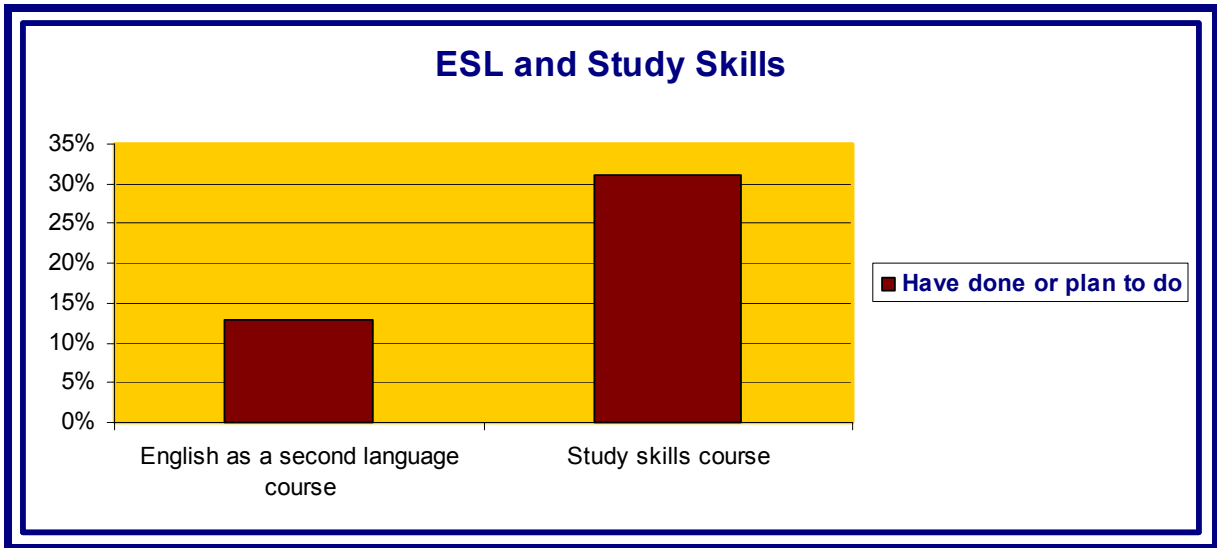
Community colleges have quite diverse student populations, and in order to adequately serve student needs, the institutions offer a variety of courses and special programs. Question 8 on the CCSR asks students to identify which course paths they are following. As shown in the figure below, large percentages of students either have taken or plan to enroll in remedial reading, writing, and/or math courses.





ESL and Study Skills

Additionally, more than 10% of students have taken or will enroll in an ESL course and more than 30% have taken or will enroll in a study skills course.



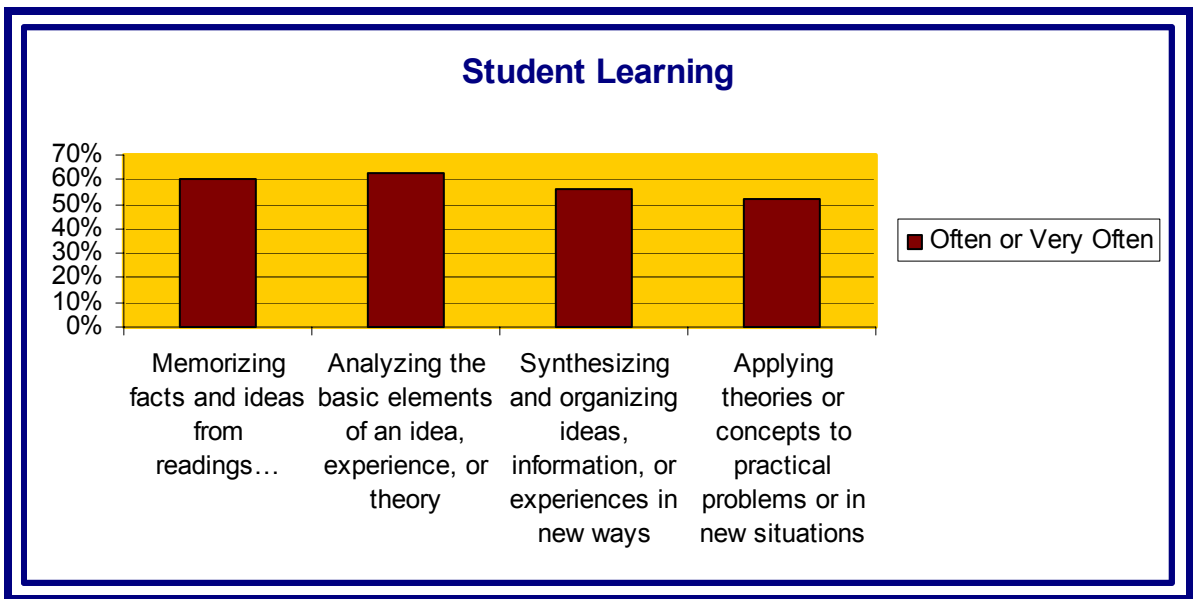
Curricular Experiences

The table below shows the percentage of students who have taken or plan to enroll in internships, honors courses, college orientation courses, and organized learning communities.

Curricular Experiences	<i>Have done or plan to do</i>
Internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	55%
Honors course	27%
College orientation program or course	38%
Organized learning communities (linked courses/study groups led by faculty or counselors)	26%

Student Learning

Focused learning outcomes are also fundamental aspects of positive academic experiences. Student respondents indicate how much their coursework emphasized intellectual processes such as memorization, the application of theories and concepts to practical problems, analysis, synthesis and organization, making value judgments, and using learned information to perform new skills. The figure below illustrates students' perceptions of the extent to which their respective colleges promoted these educational outcomes.



Educational Goals

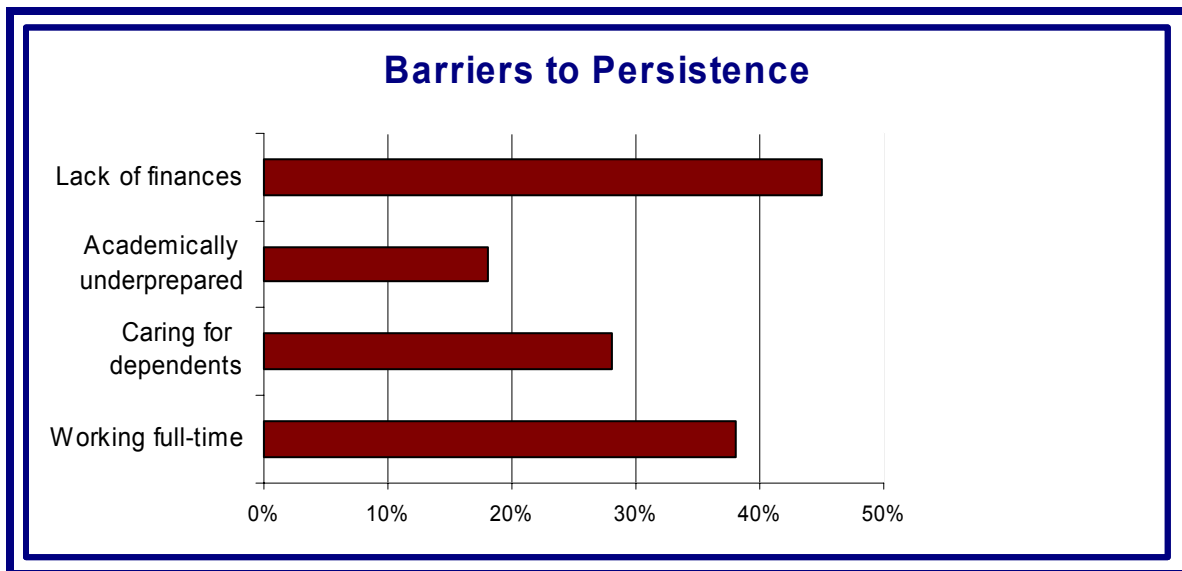
Community colleges have many missions and goals, as do their students. Students responding to the survey were given the opportunity to mark *Primary Goal*, *Secondary Goal*, or *Not a Goal* in response to a list of possible goals for attending their particular college. As a result, many students marked more than one primary goal; therefore, the percentages in the table below do not sum to 100%.

Educational Goals	Primary goal	Secondary goal	Not a goal
Complete a certification program	27%	19%	55%
Obtain an associate degree	59%	20%	21%
Transfer to a 4-year college or university	53%	21%	26%
Obtain or update job-related skills	39%	27%	34%
Self-improvement/personal enjoyment	39%	34%	27%
Change careers	29%	16%	55%

As seen in the table on the previous page, students identified various educational goals. Nearly 59% of the student respondents are interested in obtaining an associate degree. Fifty-three percent are interested in transferring to a 4-year college or university while 39% are interested in obtaining or updating job-related skills. Twenty-nine percent of respondents seek to change careers and 27% aspire to complete a certification program.

Barriers to Persistence

CCSSE also asks students to indicate the issues that would require them to withdraw from college. That is, what keeps students from achieving their educational goals? The percent of students who report that the various factors would result in their withdrawing from class or from college are highlighted in the graph below. Again, students marked more than one factor; therefore, percentages will not sum to 100%.



Other barriers to persistence include little peer or family support. Twenty-two percent of students reported that their friends are *Somewhat* or *Not Very* supportive of “your attending this college” while only 13% respond similarly about support from their immediate families.

Student Satisfaction

A useful measure of satisfaction is whether a student recommends a service or institution to others. The CCSR asks students if they would recommend this college to a friend or family member. Ninety-five percent report they would make such a recommendation. Another item asks students to evaluate their entire educational experience. Eight-seven percent describe their experience as *Good* or *Excellent* and only 1% rate their experience as *Poor*.

Another measure of student satisfaction is the percent of returning or successful students. Sixty-seven percent of the students indicate that they plan to enroll in this college within the next 12 months, while 11% report that they have accomplished their goals and will not be returning. Twenty-two percent report they are uncertain or have no plans to return.

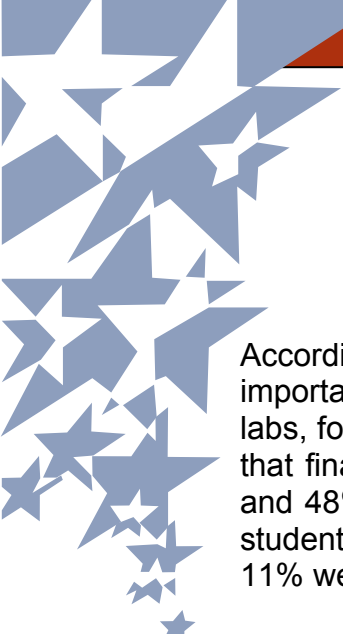
Student and Academic Support Services

Often surveys ask a combination of questions relating to satisfaction, use, or importance levels of services, but rarely are surveys designed in a way that asks students to link all three, as does *CCSSE*. The table below displays use, satisfaction, and importance of a number of key academic and student support services. The first column reports the percent of students who say that they used the service either *Sometimes* or *Often*; the second column shows the percent of students who report they were *Somewhat* or *Very Satisfied* with the service; and the third column reports the percent of students who rate the service as *Very Important*.

Student Services by Use, Satisfaction, and Importance

Student Services	Use	Satisfaction	Importance
Academic advising/planning	54%	70%	88%
Career counseling	30%	46%	79%
Job placement assistance	10%	21%	63%
Peer or other tutoring	25%	38%	69%
Skill labs (writing, math, etc.)	40%	51%	74%
Child care	5%	11%	45%
Financial aid advising	43%	48%	76%
Computer lab	59%	69%	82%
Student organizations	15%	26%	57%
Transfer credit assistance	27%	37%	71%
Services to students with disabilities	8%	17%	58%

The services highlighted in dark gold are rated most highly (above 50%) at all levels and the services highlighted in light gold are among the lowest rated (below 50%).




Accordingly, students are most likely to use, express satisfaction with, and rate as important the following services: academic advising and planning and computer labs, followed by skills labs. In another key service area, 76% of the students report that financial aid advising is *Very Important*; 43% of the students used the service, and 48% were satisfied with their financial aid experience. While nearly half of the students reported child care as important, only 5% used child care services and only 11% were satisfied with this service.

The first 20 items on the CCSR ask students to indicate how often they have engaged in particular activities during the current academic year. For purposes of analysis, *CCSSE* collapsed the response categories *Often* and *Very Often* to report substantial levels of engagement; the criterion for inclusion was that 50% of the students had to report participating in the activity. This information is highlighted in the table below.

Percentage of Students Who Reported Participating Often or Very Often in Selected Activities by Enrollment Status

Most Frequent Student Activity Items	All	Less Than Full-time	Full-time
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	63%	61%	65%
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	59%	52%	70%
Used the Internet or instant messaging to work on an assignment	57%	51%	68%
Received prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors on your performance	56%	55%	56%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.)	50%	49%	53%
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	50%	46%	57%

Across the board, part-time students are less likely than are their full-time peers to indicate substantial levels of engagement.



In comparison, it is also important to note what students are *not doing* in college as frequently as one might expect. To report the least frequent activities, CCSSE used the *never* response category. The list consists of items where 30% or more of the students reported *never* engaging in that particular activity.

Percentage of Students Who Reported Never Participating in Selected Activities by Enrollment Status

Least Frequent Student Activity Items	All	Less Than Full-time	Full-time
Participated in a community-based project as a part of a regular course	80%	84%	74%
Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework	74%	78%	67%
Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	73%	77%	66%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class	49%	54%	41%
Skipped class	48%	54%	38%
Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	42%	48%	32%

Part-time students are more likely than are their full-time peers to report “never” with regard to significant levels of engagement.



CCSSE in Action: Understanding Survey Results

CCSSE recommends that college leaders familiarize themselves with CCSSE findings before communicating about the results. The following are some things to consider:

CCSSE Benchmarks¹⁰


Benchmarks are groups of conceptually related items that address key areas of student engagement, learning, and persistence. CCSSE's five benchmarks denote areas that educational research has shown to be important in quality educational practice. The five benchmarks of effective educational practice in community colleges are **active and collaborative learning**, **student effort**, **academic challenge**, **student-faculty interaction**, and **support for learners**. These benchmarks are tools that can be used to compare college performance across benchmarks, to similarly sized institutions, and to the full CCSSE population of community colleges.

Enrollment Status

Enrollment status (part-time versus full-time) receives special attention in CCSSE reports; all results are either presented separately for part-time and full-time students or are weighted by enrollment status. In the CCSSE sampling procedure, classes are selected, not students. Accordingly, full-time students, who by definition are enrolled in more classes than part-time students, are more likely to be sampled. As a result, though approximately two-thirds of the students enrolled at the participating institutions are part-time students, the proportion in the CCSSE sample is nearly opposite. In the data analysis process, therefore, CCSSE assigns weights to responses based on respondents' enrollment status, thereby producing more accurate measures of student engagement.

Weighting is a technique that proportionally adjusts an individual respondent's contribution to a statistic, such as a mean or frequency; thus, some responses are weighted more heavily than others. If subgroups (e.g., part- versus full-time students) differ in their responses, then aggregate results will be biased in favor of the larger subgroup. Bias occurs, for example, when a disproportionate number of full-time students complete the survey as compared to the population.

¹⁰ Please see the Benchmark Overview for specific information regarding calculations of benchmark scores.



With the assignment of weights, subgroups (part-time) that are disproportionately small in the sample relative to the population have larger weights that increase their impact on summary statistics; the converse is true for subgroups (full-time) that are disproportionately large in the sample relative to the population.

There are several other individual characteristics, such as race, sex, or credit hours completed, where there could potentially be differences in subgroups. This observation begs the question: *Why does CCSSE weight data on enrollment status and not on other individual characteristics?* The answer is simple: there is no reason to do it. The only systematic bias that occurs is with enrollment status.


Effect Size as a Measure of Notable Differences

Effect size is a measure of group differences. In the *CCSSE* results, it refers to mean differences between your institution and the group of colleges to which your institution is being compared divided by their standard deviation. This procedure rescales all effect sizes to the same scale (differences in standard deviations) and thus allows for comparisons.

CCSSE uses both statistical significance and standardized effect sizes to identify items on which a college's performance differs from comparison groups. An asterisk (*) highlights items for which students' responses differ at a statistically significant level ($p < .001$) **and** have standardized effect sizes equal to or greater than (.2). Statistical significance is based on the effect size, the number of respondents, and the variability in their responses; as a single number, it also is the probability that the observed difference between outcomes would occur where there is truly no difference. While this is a useful guideline for identifying differences between groups, very small differences can be statistically significant in very large sample sizes such as the *CCSSE* national data set. Thus, items where notable differences occurred were identified as standardized effect sizes of (.2) or greater.

Statistical Significance Meets Practical Significance

In addition to focusing on items meeting the criteria highlighted above, look for patterns in students' responses. For example, are students consistently above or below the mean of the comparison group in certain areas of engagement? Are the differences explainable in terms of a college's mission, the nature of the undergraduate program, or certain students' characteristics? Also, do not rely exclusively on statistical significance tests to identify areas that warrant attention. A consistent pattern of scoring above the mean, even though all the items may not reach statistical significance, may indicate the institution is doing the right things in terms of good educational practice. At the same time, some institutions have very



high expectations for student engagement and may fall short of their own aspirations even though comparisons with other institutions are favorable. And in some cases, of course, it may be that the national mean is itself unacceptably low.

CCSSE Consortia Results

CCSSE consortium colleges¹¹ that added questions to the survey instrument will find their corresponding frequency results in the Frequency Distributions tab. In addition to a college's comparison to its consortium group and the 2004 CCSSE population, a consortium college also will receive a comparison to other colleges in its size category, provided on the institutional report cd.

Over-sampling

CCSSE's sample sizes are determined by institutional size, as reported in IPEDS. Colleges can elect to over-sample in order to examine results for specific groups (such as students enrolled in developmental courses or students attending particular campus sites) or in order to increase overall sample size. The over-sample dataset is included on the college's institutional report CD.

CCSSE in Action: Communicating Survey Results

Each member college's results should be considered in terms of its own mission, institutional focus, and student characteristics. Therefore, each college will need to devise an approach for communicating survey results. The 10-step plan below can be tailored and implemented to help you share your college's results — and launch a dialogue with key internal and external constituencies. CCSSE's Web site (www.ccsse.org) also offers various resources, including an online search engine, references, and other tools, to help you communicate about your results.


A Plan for Interpreting and Using Survey Results

Step 1:

Before reviewing your data, you may want to identify key issues by answering questions like these:

- ✘ How do your mission and specific programs at your college relate to the CCSSE benchmarks and survey items?
- ✘ What are the high-priority objectives in your college's strategic plan?

¹¹ See p. 2 for information about CCSSE consortia.

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- ✘ What benchmarks, trends, or services are most important to your college?
Examples might include particular benchmarks (academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, etc.); critical issues, such as retention; and services, such as career planning or academic advising.
 - ✘ What educational practices most concern your college?
 - ✘ What issues are particularly important in your community or region?
Examples might be technology jobs, workforce development, budget cutbacks, layoffs, or high school performance. You'll want to tie the data to these issues.
 - ✘ What new programs are being developed at your college?
 - ✘ What issues have been identified for your college through self-study for reaffirmation of accreditation — or recommendations from the visiting team?
 - ✘ What strengths or opportunities for improvement in your college have been identified through other data-gathering or institutional research efforts?

Step 2:

Identify your internal and external audiences. Internal constituencies may include governing board members, administrators, faculty, staff, and students.


External audiences might include the media, policymakers, business leaders, K-12 educators, and community-based organizations. What do you want them to know about the survey and your results? What questions will they have? What do you want them to do with the information?

Step 3:

Set parameters — for yourself and your various audiences — that establish what data will and won't be used for. For example, you may choose to use results to design faculty development opportunities, noting that they are inappropriate for use in evaluation of individual faculty members. You may want to use data immediately with external audiences, or you may choose to focus internally at first and then, at a later date, demonstrate data-driven changes to external audiences.

Step 4:

Look at your benchmark reports and scores, comparing your college's results to the national average benchmark score (50). Compare your college's performance across all benchmarks, attending to internal variations. Then compare your college's performance to that of other colleges that are similar in terms of size, location (urban, suburban, rural), or other variables that are meaningful to you. Through this process, begin evaluating the areas in which you are most different from the full *CCSSE* population and the relevant peer college group(s). Then, identify strengths and areas for improvement; when doing so, make sure to look at results of individual survey items which comprise the benchmarks. Finally, assess how these areas dovetail with your key issues defined in step 1. For example, if your college scored low on *student-faculty interaction*, ascertain the specific survey



items of that benchmark that require attention; or, if your college scored high on all benchmarks, focus on ways to continue strengthening these areas.

Step 5:

Review the data for individual survey items, looking for results that distinguish your college (numbers with a relatively large positive or negative effect size) so that you can see how your institution differs from the full *CCSSE* population. Then, look at reports that compare your college to other colleges that are similar in terms of size, location (urban, suburban, rural), or other variables that are meaningful to you. By November 2004, the *CCSSE* Web site's "Search the Results" section will include 2004 survey data for these and other comparisons.

Step 6:

Develop storylines that relate to issues relevant to your college and geographic area. Ask yourself, "What are the stories our students are telling us through this survey? What do these stories say about the educational experience we are providing?" Examples of potential storylines are included in the "Communications Tools." <http://www.ccsse.org/members/communications.cfm>

Step 7:

Engage your audiences, particularly your internal audiences, in ways that encourage them to move forward. Create forums that help people understand what the data mean so they can use the information to develop improvement strategies.

Step 8:

Work within your college's culture. For example, some colleges may want to organize conversations by department; others will benefit more from interdisciplinary and cross-functional discussions. Some will find it natural to incorporate improvement initiatives into their annual planning process, and some will want to convene an annual convocation or launch a special initiative on student engagement.

Step 9:

Listen to your various audiences. The best ideas often come from unexpected places. By all means, report back to the college community on action taken in response to survey results — and the ideas generated in discussions about the survey. And don't forget students. The survey emphasizes that they have a role to play in their own learning, and these are their observations on their educational experiences. Meet with student government and encourage student-faculty discussions. Consider using selected *CCSSE* items in new venues, such as incorporating them into students' evaluations of courses and faculty.

**Step 10:**

Don't shy away from the data. Information, whether positive or negative, can help improve educational practice and performance. Use it to dispel myths, showcase your college's best practices, and set the bar higher for the future.

CCSSE in Action: www.ccsse.org

CCSSE's Web site, www.ccsse.org, is aimed at promoting public understanding of the work of community colleges, supporting institutional improvement, and advancing public discussion about new ways of defining and examining quality in higher education.

The Web site is a primary vehicle for reporting survey results and putting them in context. Special features for CCSSE member colleges include a Toolkit (<http://www.ccsse.org/members/communications.cfm>) that contains resources to help colleges understand their survey results, communicate them to various audiences, and use them to target institutional improvement initiatives. The Toolkit contains the following documents:

[A 10-Step Plan for Interpreting and Working with Your Survey Results](#)

CCSSE gives its members a lot of information. The 10-Step Plan offers suggestions for sorting through it — and making the best use of it.

[Developing Storylines To Communicate Results](#)

The sample storylines use hypothetical situations with hypothetical data to provide ideas for stories that can be told using CCSSE results. This isn't about spin. CCSSE's purpose is to be straightforward about data, both when the results make us shine and when they cause us to question — and improve — our current practices. The storylines are intended to inform, engage, and highlight important issues. Similar stories, geared to your college, your community, and your survey results, might be used with internal college groups, governing board members, community groups, and other audiences.

[PowerPoint Presentation Template](#)

The PowerPoint template (and the related talking points) can be used as a starting point for custom presentations to both internal and external audiences. The template will be updated for 2004 by September.



PowerPoint Presentation Talking Points

The talking points, organized by slide, are the companion for the PowerPoint template. They provide background information and additional facts that will help you elaborate on the information included in the slides. More details about using the template and talking points are provided at the beginning of the document.

Sample News Release

The sample news release is a starting point for writing a news release about your college. There are blanks in the text because the release is about your college, its survey results, and how you plan to use them.

Sample Fact Sheet

The sample fact sheet provides information about CCSSE 's survey instrument, ***The Community College Student Report***. You can use it as is or customize it by adding details about your college, its survey results, and how you plan to use them.

Sample Letters to the Editor

These sample letters to the editor provide background on key educational issues. Customize them with your specific CCSSE results and tie them to events in your area.

Tips for Working with the Media

You can use these tips to be better prepared in talking with the media about your CCSSE results and other aspects of college quality and performance.

The Web site also features a comprehensive search-the-data section—for example, the user can generate a report showing CCSSE results for all large, urban colleges, for all small, rural colleges, or for the participating colleges in a particular state or accrediting region. Results are presented in drill-down charts that display information in easy-to-manage steps. Users first see a graph that shows general results; then, they can click on various parts of the graph to get the details behind the numbers at <http://www.ccsse.org/members/search/>

PLEASE NOTE: CCSSE 2004 data will be posted on the Web site in November 2004.

We intend to regularly update the CCSSE Web site with other examples about how community colleges are using their CCSSE data as we learn about them. In that regard, please keep us informed about how you are using, or plan to use, your CCSSE results by contacting CCSSE at info@ccsse.org or at 512.471.6807.



CCSSE in Action: Using Data to Drive Decisions

To anchor discussion about the quality of undergraduate education in empirical evidence, *CCSSE* suggests that colleges circulate a copy of this Overview section and other selected sections to groups such as:

- ✘ Governing board members;
- ✘ President and president's cabinet;
- ✘ Senior administrators, deans, and department/division chairs;
- ✘ Faculty committees, faculty development workshops and retreats, and various academic councils; and
- ✘ Students (via discussion with student leaders and articles in student newspapers, etc.).

Once these materials are circulated, we encourage colleges to conduct guided conversations or focus groups with these key constituencies to promote understanding of the findings and their potential implications for improvement initiatives. For instance, student focus groups could be organized to hear direct student voices about their college experiences and to ask students what the college could do to improve in deficient but identified areas. Discussions about faculty perceptions of students' responses could set the foundation for faculty to assess ways to collaborate to enhance student engagement in the classroom.

Institutional Improvement

CCSSE data serve a diagnostic function by identifying institutional strengths and weaknesses in terms of effective educational practice. Toward this end, *CCSSE* results are especially useful for benchmarking, the process of comparing and measuring an institution against high-performing colleges. One approach to benchmarking is a **normative approach**, whereby students' responses are compared to those of students at other colleges.

The second approach to benchmarking is **criterion referenced**, whereby the college's performance is evaluated against a pre-determined value or level that is appropriate for students, given the institutional mission, size, curricular offerings, funding, and so forth. Criterion-referenced benchmarking can also be done at the department or major field level if enough students have participated, and this is a particularly effective way of stimulating faculty interest in the findings.



Planning, Accountability, and Institutional Research

Because all regional accreditation associations require evidence of student learning and of efforts to improve student outcomes, *CCSSE* results could be appropriately used in institutional self-studies. This information is particularly powerful if *CCSSE* results are corroborated by other institutional data such as the results from other national or local surveys, review of institutional records, focus groups, and so forth. Finally, institutions may utilize *CCSSE* data to call attention to various dimensions of collegiate quality in the following ways:

- ✘ incorporating *CCSSE* data in newsletters and other publications to describe the undergraduate experience in terms of college activities, educational and personal growth, and satisfaction; and
- ✘ preparing stories for local, regional, and national media about distinctive aspects of the student experience.



Fast Facts

Survey Instrument: *The Community College Student Report (CCSR)*

- * Paper administration, in-class; approximately 30-35 minutes to complete
 - * Web-based pilot administration; approximately 15 minutes to complete
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CCSSE Participants

- * 92,301 students from 152 institutions in 30 states completed the CCSR in 2004.
 - * 191,056 students from 232 institutions in 36 states and British Columbia completed the CCSR across 2002, 2003 and 2004.
-

2004 Respondents

Gender: Male student respondents – 40% Female student responses – 60%

Race/Ethnicity

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| * Asian – 4% | * Native American – 2% |
| * Black – 10% | * White – 61% |
| * Latino/Hispanic – 13% | * Other – 3% |
| * International – 7% | |

Enrollment Status: Part-time – 34% Full-time – 66%

2004 CCSSE Consortia and other groups

- * State consortia: Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, New Mexico
 - * Texas Small Colleges consortium: 23 small colleges across Texas
 - * Hispanic Serving Institutions/Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HSI/HACU) consortium: 15 colleges
 - * League for Innovation's College and Career Transitions Initiative (CCTI): 17 colleges
-

CCSSE Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

- * Active and Collaborative Learning (items: 4a, 4b, 4f, 4g, 4h, 4i, and 4r)
 - * Student Effort (items: 4c, 4d, 4e, 6b, 10a, 13d, 13e, and 13h)
 - * Academic Challenge (items: 4p, 5b, 5c, 5d, 5e, 5f, 6a, 6c, 7, 9a)
 - * Student-Faculty Interaction (items: 4k, 4l, 4m, 4n, 4o, and 4q)
 - * Support for Learners (items: 9b, 9c, 9d, 9e, 9f, 13a, and 13b)
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Validity and Reliability

For a detailed explanation of CCSSE's sampling and analysis methodologies, see "Overview of the CCSSE Instrument and Psychometric Properties," provided in the Appendix and online at <http://www.ccsse.org/Aboutsurvey/psychometrics.pdf>

Future Plans

- * Development and implementation of the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement – pilot available in fall 2004
- * Web-based survey administration for distance learning courses