

# *A Matter of Degrees*

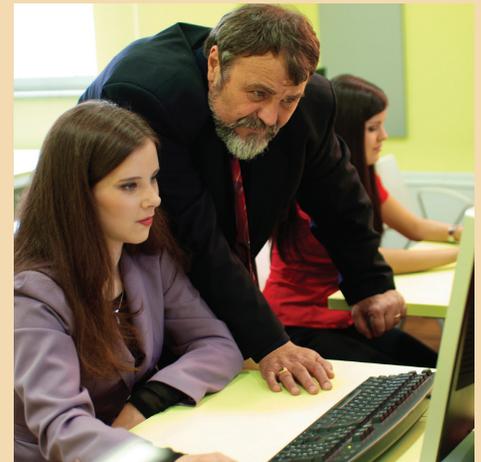
Engaging  
Practices



Engaging  
Students



High-Impact  
Practices for  
Community  
College Student  
Engagement



## Acknowledgments

Throughout the past two years, the Center for Community College Student Engagement has been exploring high-impact educational practices in community colleges. Like all meaningful work, our effort is possible because we stand on the shoulders of others and benefit from the support of many.

We express special thanks to George Kuh, Chancellor's Professor of Higher Education Emeritus at Indiana University Bloomington, for his early work on high-impact educational practices, initially published in a 2008 research report, *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*. That report built on past and continuing work by Carol Geary Schneider and her colleagues at the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Alexander McCormick, Jillian Kinzie, and others at the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) are highly valued colleagues who share generously what they have learned from NSSE's focus on high-impact practices in the baccalaureate college and university sector.

Through this report, along with the 2012 and forthcoming 2014 companion publications, the Center seeks to deepen the understanding of high-impact practices in the community college field. Armed with this knowledge, community college leaders, faculty, and staff can consider the most effective ways to heighten the quality of educational experiences for larger numbers of students.

For guidance at the outset of a very complex research initiative, the Center owes a continuing debt of gratitude to members of its Technical Advisory Panel. Special thanks go to partner colleges that hosted student focus groups conducted by the Center for this initiative and worked with us to develop profiles of their own high-impact practices: Community College of Baltimore County (MD), Durham Technical Community College (NC), Houston Community College System (TX), Kingsborough Community College (NY), Tallahassee Community College (FL), and Zane State College (OH). And the work simply would not have been possible without generous support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation.

We are grateful, to be sure. And we are hopeful. Hopeful because community college education is indeed one of society's most hopeful endeavors. And hopeful that this work will contribute to the colleges' critical efforts to improve lives through educational attainment.

*Kay McClenney*  
Director  
Center for Community College Student Engagement

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*Student*

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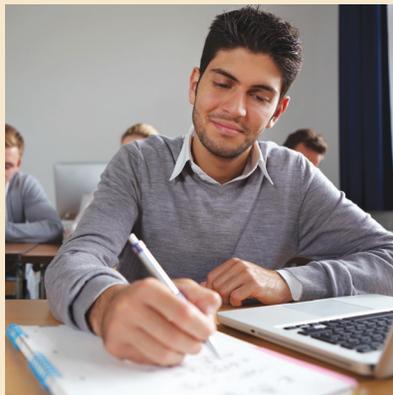
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## Characteristics of Community College Students

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“It was reassuring that they’re actually looking to see and following up and verifying that, yeah, you are on track to complete this in the two years.”

*Student*



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## *Relentless Focus on Practices That Work*

The community college field is evolving dramatically. It has been 10 years since the Center for Community College Student Engagement presented results from the first national administration of its flagship survey. Over the past decade, institutions enrolling more than 80% of U.S. community college students have used Center surveys to assess their students' engagement so they can improve institutional practice and student outcomes. This focus on engagement is one of many changes in the ways community colleges are using data to understand and improve the educational experiences of their students.

Now, as colleges increasingly understand the importance of intentionally engaging students, the field must turn to the game-changing challenge: *bringing high-impact practices to scale as part of a concerted effort to increase college completion rates*. In an era of growing demand, shrinking budgets, and greater accountability, meeting this challenge requires singular focus. Colleges must make decisions—about every hour spent, every dollar allocated, every policy set, and every practice implemented—based on whether those decisions will make engagement inescapable for large numbers of their students.

This is the second of three reports that are part of the Center's special initiative, *Identifying and Promoting High-Impact Educational Practices in Community Colleges*. The first report described preliminary findings about 13 promising practices in community colleges. This report looks at which of these practices appear to engage students effectively. These findings, along with those in the upcoming third report, give colleges information they can use to focus resources on practices that are most likely to help more students complete college successfully.



## Engagement Matters

The connection between student engagement and student success is well documented. Learning, persistence, and attainment in college are consistently associated with students' being actively engaged with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter they are studying. Recent research underscores this connection. A study using data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) shows that student engagement—in particular, the CCSSE benchmarks of *active and collaborative learning* and *support for learners*—is an important predictor of college completion.<sup>1</sup>

Colleges have a growing body of evidence they can use to design educational experiences that engage students starting with their first interaction with the college. With its high-impact practices initiative, the Center continues to add knowledge to the field about what constitutes quality in community college education.

### What Makes a Practice a High-Impact Practice

For the past two years, the Center has been evaluating 13 educational practices—and for this report in particular, the relationship between students' participating in each practice and being more highly engaged in their overall college experience.

The Center focused on identifying *notable differences*\* in engagement among students who participated in each of the 13 practices and students who did not. When these notable differences exist, a practice can reasonably be labeled *high impact*.

\*A *notable difference* is defined in the note on methodology below.

As there are a variety of ways to approach this data analysis, the second and third reports in the high-impact practices series will use different criteria and analytic approaches to determine whether a practice is high impact. Each approach provides a window into the relationship between participating in individual practices and student engagement—and between participation and student outcomes. Each view can help colleges determine how to allocate scarce resources so they will have the greatest impact.

- In this, the second report, the Center examines **relationships between participation in particular practices and students' benchmark scores on CCSSE and the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE)**. Specifically, the report shows when participation in a given practice has a notably positive relationship with higher scores on CCSSE and/or SENSE benchmarks.
- The third report, which will be published in fall 2014, will explore the **relationship between participation in these practices and student outcomes**. Using data from student records matched with student survey responses, analysis will focus on the relationship between student participation in individual practices and student outcomes such as persistence, course completion, and credit hours earned.

### A Note on Methodology

The questions raised in this national report are complex, and addressing them requires appropriate analytic methods. Center staff used analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to evaluate the relationships between the promising practices and benchmarks for both *CCSSE* and *SENSE*. Benchmark scores used in all analyses were standardized to have a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 25.

ANCOVA can be used as a statistical matching procedure in situations where random assignment to treatment groups is not possible.<sup>2</sup> This method calculates adjusted group means—thereby representing what the means would be if all respondents had the same values on the other variables in the model. Covariates for the analyses were enrollment status, developmental status, first generation status, and, in *CCSSE* only, number of credit hours earned. It is these adjusted means, also known as estimated marginal means, that are presented in this report.

The minimum criterion for the results of the ANCOVA models to be considered having a *notable difference* and to be included in this report was that the overall model R-squared had to exceed 0.03 and the variance explained by the promising practice had to exceed 1% after controlling for the covariates. See [www.ccsse.org/hip2](http://www.ccsse.org/hip2) for technical details about these analyses and additional results. Models that do not meet these criteria are not discussed in this report.

Unless otherwise noted, results from *CCSSE*, *CCFSSE*, and *SENSE* presented in this report are based on data from U.S. colleges only from the 2012 administrations of those surveys. *SENSE* results are limited to entering students only. When other data from these surveys are presented, they are based on the 2012 three-year cohort (respondents from 2010, 2011, and 2012). Results from CCIS are based on 2012 responses only.



# Quality, Scale, and Intensity: Foundations of Success

The Center's research confirms that the practices discussed on the following pages are high-impact practices in community colleges. Thus, they are worth pursuing as potentially valuable elements of students' collegiate experiences. Their impact, however, depends entirely on how they are implemented (quality), how many students they reach (scale), and how many practices students experience (intensity).

**Quality.** The value of an educational practice or program resides in the way it is designed *and* implemented. While colleges have to design practices that work for their students, they don't have to reinvent the wheel. In addition to basing program design on current research, colleges benefit from interaction with peer institutions doing similar work so they can observe and learn from effective programs in action. The design principles for effective practice, explained below, also provide a useful blueprint.

**Scale.** A significant number of colleges report employing these high-impact practices. However, the effects of these practices are seriously limited because such small percentages of the student population are experiencing them. Until colleges make high-impact practices inescapable for all students who need them, these

practices will be only minimally effective in promoting the major gains sought in student success and college completion. Decisions about which practices to implement and at what scale also will require consideration of the characteristics of a particular college's students, such as the percentage of first-generation or underprepared students. See page 38 for a national snapshot of the characteristics of community college students.

**Intensity.** Colleges should consider how best to integrate multiple high-impact strategies. Effectively designing and implementing individual practices will help some students, but offering a collection of discrete practices won't lead to the significant change required to achieve greatly improved outcomes institution-wide. In fact, Center research indicates that there is a positive relationship between intensity—the number of particular high-impact practices students experience—and students' levels of engagement (see page 34). Moreover, a growing body of research indicates that the next-level solution lies in designing pathways—structured and coherent educational experiences that integrate high-impact practices to establish a clear roadmap for every student.

## Design Principles for Effective Practice

There is emerging consensus that certain design principles are critical for student success. All of these principles maximize student engagement by making it both intentional and intensive.

No matter what program or practice a college implements, it is more likely to be successful if its designers consider the following questions:

**Does the practice help ensure that entering students get a strong start?** Helping students succeed through the equivalent of the first semester can dramatically improve subsequent success rates.

**Does the practice integrate student support with coursework?** Students are more likely to use supports, such as skill development and supplemental instruction, if they are integrated into course requirements rather than provided separately.

**Does the practice set high expectations and provide strong support?** Students do their best work when colleges set high expectations and provide the support students need to meet them.

**Does the practice encourage learning in context?** People learn best when information

is presented in a context relevant to them. For students, this means learning that includes authentic assignments that are related to their lives, work, and chosen educational pathways.

**Will the practice accelerate student progress toward completion?** The more time students spend in college, the less likely they are to graduate. Approaches designed for intensive academic skill-building, self-paced mastery, and seamless pathways rather than disjointed course sequences help students progress more quickly and effectively.

**Is the practice integrated into clear, coherent pathways for students?** These pathways give students a step-by-step roadmap to goal achievement—whether associate degree, certificate, transfer, or employment—and ensure that critical engagement

opportunities are part of every student's college experience.

**Is the practice designed for scale?** Successful programs do more than serve students well; they serve *many* students well. Given the magnitude of the challenge of increasing educational attainment, colleges should invest intentionally in practices that can be brought to scale.

**Does the practice include strategically focused professional development?** Widespread, lasting improvement requires everyone at a college to rethink their roles and build their skills in serving students. Professional development for everyone—staff, faculty, administrators, and governing board members—is essential for effectively implementing this level of change.

The design principles are based on the Center's 2012 report, *A Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success (A First Look)*; an expanded description in "Designing New Academic Pathways," by Kay McClenney and Donna Dare (*Community College Journal*, June/July 2013, 21–26); and effective practices research conducted by the Community College Research Center with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, available at <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/introduction-assessment-of-evidence.html>.

## Four Surveys, Four Perspectives: *SENSE*, *CCSSE*, *CCFSSE*, and *CCIS*

The Center administers four surveys that complement one another: Survey of Entering Student Engagement (*SENSE*), Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*), Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (*CCFSSE*), and Community College Institutional Survey (*CCIS*). All are tools that assess student engagement—how connected students are to college faculty and staff, other students, and their studies—and institutional practice.

Each of the four surveys collects data from a particular perspective, and together they provide a comprehensive understanding of educational practices on community college campuses, how they are implemented, and which students are participating in them.

***SENSE*** is administered during weeks four and five of the fall academic term in classes most likely to enroll first-time students. *SENSE* focuses on students' experiences from the time of their decision to attend their college through the end of the first three weeks of the fall term. The survey collects data on practices that are most likely to strengthen early student engagement. Entering students are those who indicate that it is their first time at the college where the survey is administered.

***CCSSE***, administered in the spring, surveys credit students and gathers information about their overall college experience. It focuses on educational practices and student behaviors associated with higher levels of learning, persistence, and completion.

***CCFSSE*** is administered in conjunction with *CCSSE* to all faculty teaching credit courses in the academic term during which the college is participating in the student survey. The faculty survey reports on instructors' perceptions about student experiences as well as data about their teaching practices and use of professional time.

***CCIS***, the Center's newest instrument, was developed as part of the Center's initiative on identifying and promoting high-impact educational practices in community colleges. *CCIS* collects information about whether and how colleges implement a variety of promising practices.

*The Center uses the same surveys each year but this year applied additional analyses to the survey results. Please see page 3 for an explanation of the methodology. Visit [www.ccsse.org/hip2](http://www.ccsse.org/hip2) to see the four survey instruments and the special-focus items addressing promising practices that are the topic of this report.*

*CCIS is a voluntary survey offered to community colleges nationwide. Not all colleges choose to participate, so respondents are a self-selected group. Moreover, the online survey's branching structure can result in no response on items that do not apply to particular colleges. These factors constrain the number of responses and may affect their representativeness. Because of this variation from item to item, each data point in the report is accompanied by the number of respondents.*

### The Power of Multiple Perspectives

The Center encourages colleges to examine data across surveys while cautioning that direct comparisons naturally come with caveats. For example, *CCSSE* and *SENSE* use different sampling approaches, and their survey items are not always parallel. Yet they provide a useful tool for comparing the experiences of new students and students who typically have persisted beyond the first semester. *CCSSE* and *CCFSSE* also are a useful pairing. It's important to note that in *CCSSE*, students report their personal experiences over the current academic year, while in *CCFSSE*, faculty members indicate their perceptions of student experiences based on, for most items, one particular class section. Nonetheless, when there is an apparent gap between the student experience and the faculty's perception of that experience, the data can inspire powerful

conversations about why an apparent gap exists and what it may mean. Many Center member colleges report that looking at student and faculty data side by side has been the impetus for significant faculty-led change on their campuses.

### Core Surveys and Special-Focus Items

*SENSE* and *CCSSE* each has a core set of survey items, which is the same from year to year, as well as a mechanism to add items that can change from year to year. The core surveys provide a large amount of data that are stable over time, while special-focus items and modules examine areas of student experience and institutional performance that are of particular interest to the field. Special-focus items for the 2012 surveys address promising practices for promoting student success and completion.

### Amplifying the Student Voice

The Center uses both quantitative and qualitative data to paint a complete picture of students' college experiences. The four surveys provide detailed quantitative data. In addition, the Center gathers qualitative data through focus groups with students, faculty, student services professionals, and college presidents. Findings from focus groups enrich understanding of the quantitative data, bringing perceptiveness as well as poignant humanity to the work. Throughout this report, representative quotations from student focus groups highlight student voices.

# High-Impact Practices Increase Student Engagement

Please visit [www.ccsse.org/hip2](http://www.ccsse.org/hip2) for descriptions of the educational practices that are the focus of this report:

- Academic goal setting and planning
- Orientation
- Accelerated or fast-track developmental education
- First-year experience
- Student success course
- Learning community
- Experiential learning beyond the classroom
- Tutoring
- Supplemental instruction
- Assessment and placement
- Registration before classes begin
- Class attendance
- Alert and intervention

## Exploring Relationships Between Practices and Engagement

For the phase of investigation that led to this report, the Center focused its data analysis on understanding relationships between experiencing these practices and overall levels of student engagement. The Center also ascertained the extent to which colleges are offering or requiring participation in these practices and the proportions of students who actually are experiencing them.

Practice by practice, this report shows *notable differences* in engagement, as measured by higher or lower student scores on the *CCSSE* and *SENSE* benchmarks—in other words, **it describes whether students who experienced the practice, on average, had higher or lower benchmark scores than their peers who did not experience the practice.**

Using this definition of high impact, 12 of the 13 practices are high-impact practices. The current analyses do not show a notable relationship (positive or negative) between the 13th practice, *registration before classes begin*, and benchmark scores.

However, it would be premature to conclude that *registration before classes begin* is not a high-impact practice. The Center chose these 13 practices based on research in the field and on-the-ground experience in community colleges. The relationship between *registration before classes begin* and student outcomes will be further explored in the Center's third report on high-impact practices in community colleges.

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“In college, no one is going to say, ‘Do you need help with this?’ or ‘Do you want this?’ You have to go and actually find out for yourself what you’re going to need help with. That was my biggest problem. I didn’t know where to start at to ask for help.”

Student

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## Important Data With Practical Implications

The data behind these findings are not always precise because colleges do not have standard definitions for these practices. For example, a practice that is called a *student success course* at one college might be identified as a *first-year experience* at another college. And characteristics of a *learning community* at different colleges may vary considerably.

Moreover, the analysis of a practice's relationship with benchmark scores has limitations. For example, there likely are relationships between the educational practices and individual survey items that are masked when data are analyzed by benchmark. The relationship between these practices and student outcomes such as GPA, successful course completion, and persistence will be the focus of the Center's next report.

Despite these limitations in the data, **some differences in engagement are pronounced.** Given the standard established for a *notable difference*, these findings have real meaning for colleges because they show where the relationships between practices and engagement are strongest.

The findings also raise a number of issues for colleges to consider, including both quality of design and scale of implementation.

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“We all had really good experiences. The hometown feeling ... everyone knew who you [were] or if they didn’t, they’d act like you were some lost relative. If you had a question, no matter what it was, there’s always someone to answer it.”

Student

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## Design

As noted, colleges define practices and programs differently, even when they share common labels. The best way to gain traction may be to focus on specific components of the practices, such as study skills, time management, and learning about college services and resources. By focusing on components, colleges can construct the practices to meet explicit goals for learning, skill building, and student support. In other words, the labels commonly used to identify practices are less important than what students are actually experiencing.

Colleges can use the data in this report as a starting point for examining their own practices to determine which components have the most significant relationships with increased student engagement and improved student outcomes—and then focus on delivering those components to larger numbers of students with high levels of quality and intensity.

## Scale and Intensity

For each practice discussed in this report, the findings include data on student participation from the perspectives of students, faculty, and institutions. Typically, small numbers of students participate in most of the activities, even though a large percentage of colleges offer them. This reality echoes earlier Center reports noting that students and colleges often know which practices will benefit students. However, colleges don't always take steps to ensure that all or most of the students who most need these experiences actually have them.

Moreover, there is growing evidence that students benefit from greater intensity—experiencing multiple high-impact practices that involve structured group learning (see page 34).

This report's identification of high-impact educational practices is of limited value if only small percentages of students experience them. Often, the most effective way to get students to experience an engaging practice is for the colleges to *require* participation in it. Naturally, the effectiveness of such requirements hinges on each institution's capacity for high-quality implementation.

## The *CCSSE* and *SENSE* Benchmarks

Benchmarks are groups of conceptually related survey items that address key areas of student engagement. The *CCSSE* and *SENSE* benchmarks measure behaviors that educational research has shown to be powerful contributors to effective teaching, learning, and student retention.

### The *CCSSE* Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

- Active and collaborative learning
- Student effort
- Academic challenge
- Student-faculty interaction
- Support for learners

### The *SENSE* Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice With Entering Students

- Early connections
- High expectations and aspirations
- Clear academic plan and pathway
- Effective track to college readiness
- Engaged learning
- Academic and social support network

For more information about benchmarks, visit [www.ccsse.org](http://www.ccsse.org).



# Academic Goal Setting and Planning

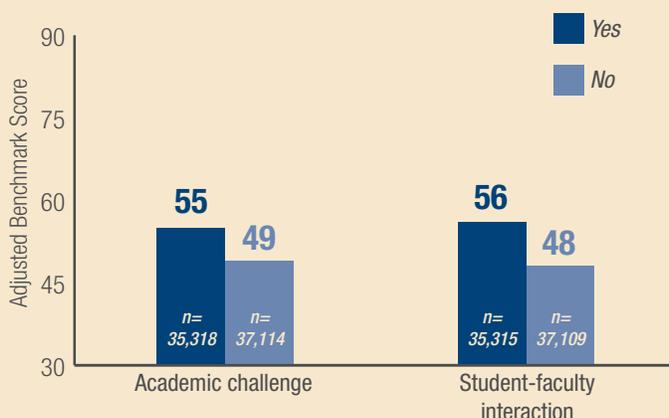
Participation in academic goal setting and planning has a notably positive relationship with two *CCSSE* benchmarks: *academic challenge* and *student-faculty interaction*. For these two benchmarks, *CCSSE* respondents who say an advisor helped them develop an academic plan have higher adjusted benchmark scores, on average, than those who say an advisor did not help them develop such a plan.

Participation in academic goal setting and planning has a notably positive relationship with four *SENSE* benchmarks: *early connections*, *effective track to college readiness*, *engaged learning*, and *academic and social support network*.

## LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

### Notable differences in engagement on the *CCSSE academic challenge* and *student-faculty interaction* benchmarks

Before the end of my first term at this college, an advisor helped me develop an academic plan.



“At first I thought it would be a little rough, but I met with an advisor here, and she talked to me about all the things that you can do, and I decided to go part time for my first quarter so that I didn’t get overwhelmed, and I think that helped me a lot.”

Student

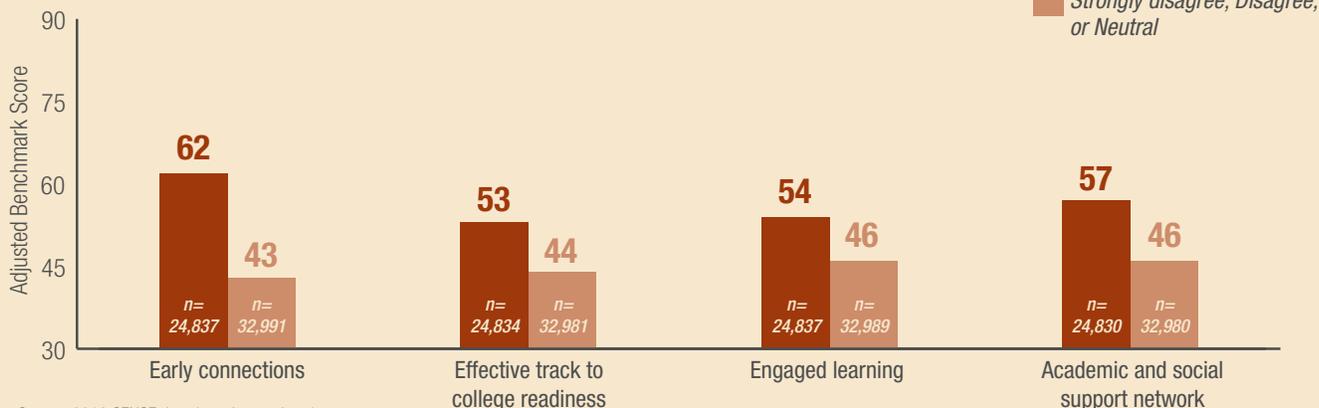
Note: The *No* respondents include those who said an advisor did not help them develop an academic plan and those who said they had not yet developed an academic plan.

Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

**What makes a difference notable?** Levels of engagement are reported as adjusted marginal mean scores on benchmarks. See page 3 for an explanation of the approach to data analysis.

### Notable differences in engagement on four *SENSE* benchmarks

During my first three weeks at this college, an advisor helped me to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them.

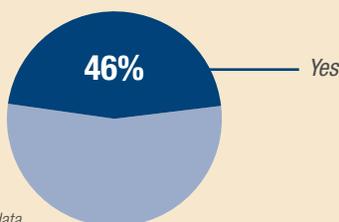


Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

## PARTICIPATION

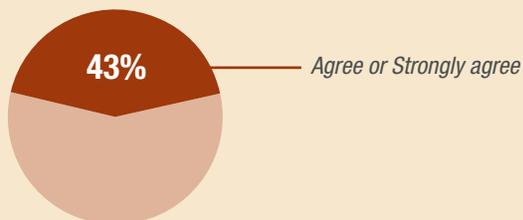
Less than half of students develop an academic plan during their first term, even though about two-thirds of colleges (66%) have a process for helping entering students set academic goals by the end of their first term.

Before the end of my first term at this college, an advisor helped me develop an academic plan. (N=94,514)



Source: 2012 CCSSE data

During my first three weeks at this college, an advisor helped me to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them. (N=54,782)



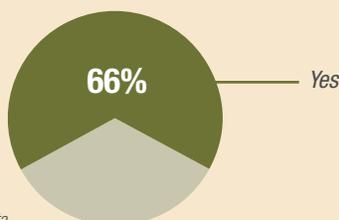
Source: 2012 SENSE data (entering students)

How often do you incorporate the use of academic advising/planning services into your selected course section?



Source: 2012 CCFSSSE data

Does your college have a systematic process whereby entering students will have received advising in the area of setting academic goals by the end of their first term? (N=338)



Source: 2012 CCIS data

## ZANE STATE COLLEGE

### Intrusive Advising Provides a Foundation for Success

Zane State College (OH) is committed to making personal connections and building relationships with students to help them succeed. College leaders introduced a core philosophy, Personal Touch—Respect, Responsibility, and Responsiveness, which is built into every initiative, undergirding everything the college does. Personal Touch is embedded in the mission and value statements, integrated into orientation and professional development activities, and enacted by individual faculty and staff members.

The college participated in the Foundations of Excellence self-study and audit of the first-year experience. As a result, a team of faculty, staff, and students developed FIT for Success: Finding Inspiration Together. Three principles guided the team: building on the Personal Touch philosophy, recognizing that the first year begins not on the first day of classes but at the first point of contact with students, and speaking to differences between first-year and second-year students.

The college introduced mandatory experiences for the nearly 1,000 new students who enter each year. All entering students are required to take placement tests and to attend a new-student orientation. A mandatory first-year experience course was associated with a 10% increase in fall-to-fall student retention during its first year of implementation. With a recent transition to semesters, Zane State College has implemented a Welcome Week (zero week) during which all new students attend a five-day intensive first-year experience course that culminates with the new student convocation and one-on-one and group advising time with their program faculty. In its initial year, first-year experience course completions with a grade of C or better rose from the five-year average of 78% to 94%.

Intrusive advising is a key strategy at Zane State College for helping at-risk and underprepared students succeed. Designed to foster personal connections with students, the intrusive advising activities include personal phone calls, mandatory meetings, e-mails, and Facebook postings. This ongoing interaction has made it possible for advisors to remind students of peer and professional tutoring, writing workshops, and other services available to them.

The combination of first-year initiatives is paying off. Fall-to-fall retention of those students deemed most at risk ( $n=598$  for cohorts 2006 to 2011) has increased by an average of 11 percentage points during this period over the baseline data, and these at-risk students perform as well as or better overall than their less at-risk peers. At the same time, comparing the 2010 cohort to 2004 baseline data, the percentage of students successfully completing required developmental education courses within the first year of enrollment increased from 50% (74 of 149) to 58% (138 of 236) in reading and from 47% (75 of 161) to 60% (158 of 264) in writing. Using the 2009 cohort (the last available before a significant curriculum revision) and 2004 baseline data, the college saw a similar increase from 14% (21 of 153) to 41% (106 of 259) in the number of students completing developmental math requirements. In addition, the college's fall-to-fall retention averaged 59% for the last seven cohort years. Fall-to-fall retention of part-time students increased from 34% in 2004 ( $n=81$ ) to 43% in 2010 ( $n=132$ ).

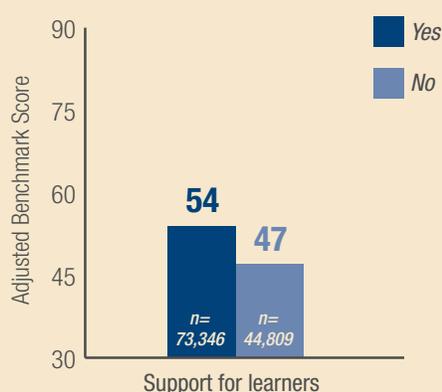
# Orientation

Participation in orientation has a notably positive relationship with the *CCSSE support for learners* benchmark. For this benchmark, *CCSSE* respondents who say they participated in orientation have a higher adjusted benchmark score, on average, than those who say they did not participate.

## LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

### Notable differences in engagement on the *CCSSE support for learners* benchmark

I took part in an online orientation, I attended an on-campus orientation prior to the beginning of classes, or I enrolled in an orientation course as part of my course schedule during my first term at this college.



Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

**What makes a difference notable?** Levels of engagement are reported as adjusted marginal mean scores on benchmarks. See page 3 for an explanation of the approach to data analysis.



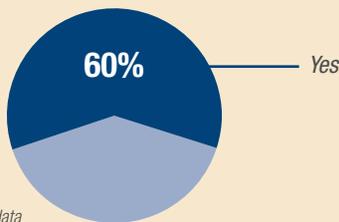
“I participated in what my college calls the Student Orientation. ... Walking into the room [with] a bunch of other people ... they had as little idea of what they were doing as I did. Seriously, you could cut the air in that room with a knife—everyone glancing from side to side, kind of nervously, almost no movement except thumbs over phones. [Then] the speaker started telling us everything we need to know to succeed at our college ... financial aid, attendance policies ... . She just laid it out there for us—kind of a packaged gift to the new students.”

*Student*

## PARTICIPATION

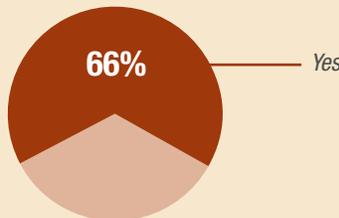
Nearly all colleges (97%) offer some form of orientation, and well over half of students participate; still, large numbers do not.

I took part in an online orientation, I attended an on-campus orientation prior to the beginning of classes, or I enrolled in an orientation course as part of my course schedule during my first term at this college. (N=154,136)



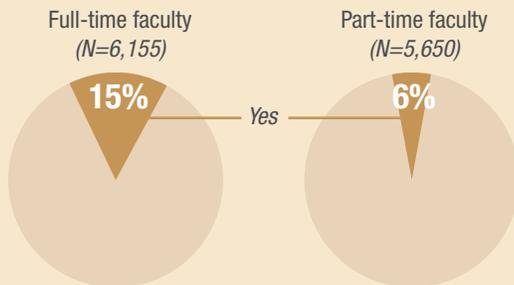
Source: 2012 CCSSE data

I took part in an online orientation, I attended an on-campus orientation prior to the beginning of classes, or I enrolled in an orientation course as part of my course schedule during my first semester/quarter in this college. (N=54,078)



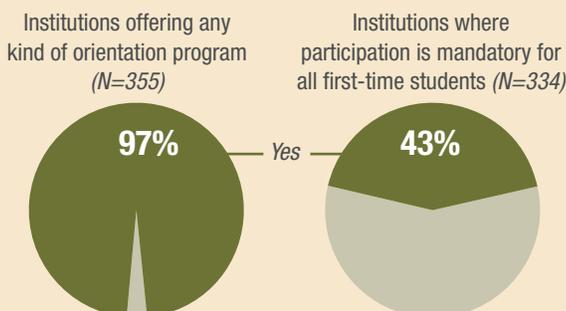
Source: 2012 SENSE data (entering students)

During the current academic year at this college, have you taught or facilitated college orientation?



Source: 2012 CCFSSSE data

What are your college's practices with regard to orientation?



Source: 2012 CCIS data

## TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### Orientation Improves Retention and Course Completion

In 2007, Tallahassee Community College (FL) administered CCSSE for the second time. The college saw gains in its *academic challenge* and *student-faculty interaction* benchmark scores (as compared to other colleges and to its 2003 CCSSE administration), and its score on the *support for learners* benchmark was above average. However, the college was still below average on the *active and collaborative learning* and *student effort* benchmarks. Thus, college leaders began an institutional conversation focused on developing strategies to address these issues.

As part of the discussion, Tallahassee developed a set of roles and responsibilities for students, faculty, and staff. Student orientation was a natural vehicle for helping students understand the college's expectations, their own role in being successful, and the roles of others at the institution.

#### RESULTS: IMPROVED RETENTION AND COMPLETION RATES

In 2008, the college began offering a newly designed orientation program that was delivered in either a full-day or half-day session. Students also had the option of attending alone or with a family member.

Tallahassee saw gains in fall-to-spring retention among students who attended full-day orientations or attended with a parent or family member. Eighty-five percent of students who attended full-day orientation ( $n=2,102$ ) enrolled the following spring compared to 78% of students who attended the half-day program ( $n=310$ ). Ninety percent of students ( $n=142$ ) who attended with a family member re-enrolled the following spring, while 84% of students without a family member present re-enrolled. Fall-to-spring retention for the institution as a whole increased from 80% to 84% for the 2008 cohort.

Based on these findings, in 2011–12, college staff provided orientation for almost 8,000 students. The college now is refining orientation to address varied student needs, maximize efficiency, leverage expertise of faculty and staff, and use technology and resources effectively.

One upcoming change is developing different orientation experiences for different types of students. Based on student feedback, college leaders determined that adult learners returning for a new credential, for example, do not need the same level of orientation as first-time-in-college students placing into developmental studies.

Sessions for different groups will vary both in content and in duration and will provide information for successful transition to the college. Orientation activities will be followed by educational and career planning provided through student success courses as well as through proactive academic advising strategies.

“When I pulled up on the campus, I did not know where my first class was. I was kind of late, and I had to go and ask three or four different people, run back and forth, like, ‘Am I going the right way to my math class?’ It was really nerve-racking.”

Student

# Accelerated or Fast-Track Developmental Education

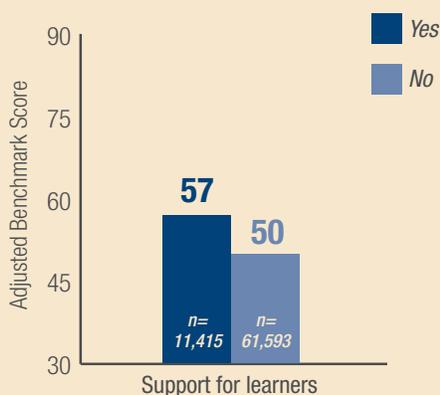
Among developmental students, participation in accelerated or fast-track developmental education has a notably positive relationship with the *CCSSE support for learners* benchmark. For this benchmark, *CCSSE* developmental education student respondents who say they participated in accelerated or fast-track developmental education have higher adjusted benchmark scores, on average, than those who say they did not have that experience.

For entering developmental students, participation in accelerated or fast-track developmental education has a notably positive relationship with the *SENSE engaged learning* benchmark.

## LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

### Notable differences in engagement on the *CCSSE support for learners* benchmark

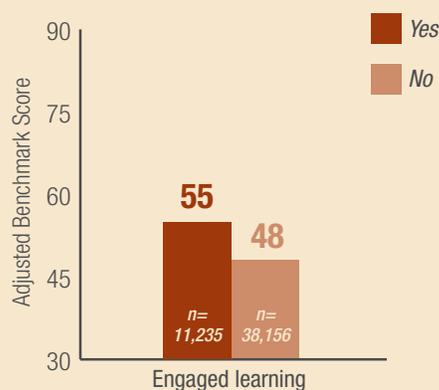
Among developmental education students: During my first term at this college, I participated in one or more accelerated courses/fast-track programs to help me move through developmental/basic skills/college prep requirements more quickly.



Source: 2012 CCSSE data

### Notable differences in engagement on the *SENSE engaged learning* benchmark

Among developmental education students: At this college, I am participating in one or more accelerated courses/fast-track programs to help me move through developmental/basic skills/college prep requirements more quickly.



Source: 2012 SENSE data (entering students)



**What makes a difference notable?** Levels of engagement are reported as adjusted marginal mean scores on benchmarks. See page 3 for an explanation of the approach to data analysis.

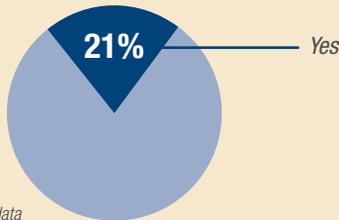
“There [are] people in the class that sit there and for something that should take five or 10 minutes to explain, you have to sit there for an hour and a half listening to him explain it again and again and them still not getting it.”

Student

## PARTICIPATION

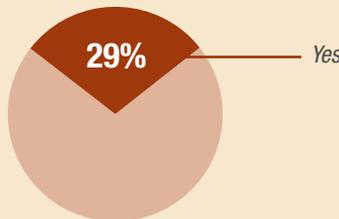
Less than 30% of developmental students participate in accelerated courses, even though nearly 70% of colleges offer such programs.

Among developmental education students: During my first term at this college, I participated in one or more accelerated courses/fast-track programs to help me move through developmental/basic skills/college prep requirements more quickly. (N=49,566)



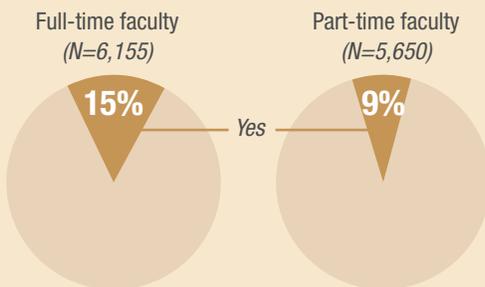
Source: 2012 CCSE data

Among developmental education students: At this college, I am participating in one or more accelerated courses/fast-track programs to help me move through developmental/basic skills/college prep requirements more quickly. (N=29,868)



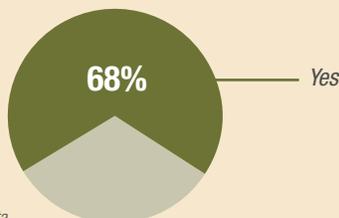
Source: 2012 SENSE data (entering students)

During the current academic term at this college, have you taught or facilitated an accelerated course or a fast-track program?



Source: 2012 CCFSE data

Does your college implement any kind of accelerated course or fast-track program in developmental/remedial education? (N=347)



Source: 2012 CCIS data

## COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF BALTIMORE COUNTY

### Accelerated Learning Program Advances Course Completion

Community College of Baltimore County (MD) took action after noting that developmental writing sections were growing at a faster pace than were English 101 sections, an indication that students were not successfully moving into and completing college-level classes. College leaders looked at longitudinal data for all students who placed into developmental writing programs, and one finding caught their attention: Only 33% of developmental students placed in developmental English completed English 101 within four years.

The college began a focused effort, including reviewing literature and attending conferences, to create a program that would help developmental writing students successfully complete the entire sequence of English courses. Ultimately, the college created a unique model called the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP).

#### CREATING A COHORT WITH CONCURRENT DEVELOPMENTAL CLASSES

ALP is offered to all students who place into upper-level developmental writing. These students are advised that they have the option to take the developmental writing class and English 101 (the college-level course) concurrently through ALP. Students who choose ALP register for a designated section of English 101 that enrolls 20 students: 10 ALP students (all of whom placed into upper-level developmental writing) and 10 students who placed into English 101 (college-ready students).

The 10 ALP students become a cohort. Their paired classes—English 101 and the developmental course—are taught by the same instructor, and they typically are scheduled during consecutive class periods. As a result, the ALP students and their instructor spend six hours per week together, and half of that time is in a small section of just 10 students.

#### RESULTS: IMPROVED COURSE COMPLETION

In early pilots, the college doubled the success rates of developmental writing students with a simple change in the delivery platform. The project got the attention of the Community College Research Center (CCRC). In December 2012, after analyzing longitudinal data, CCRC concluded, “participation in ALP is associated with substantially better outcomes in terms of English 101 and English 102 completion.” Moreover, “ALP students were more likely to persist to the next year than non-ALP students.”

After matching for student characteristics, CCRC studied 592 ALP students and 592 students in the traditional upper-level developmental writing course. CCRC’s data indicate that 74% of the ALP students successfully completed English 101, as compared to 33% of students in the traditional developmental course. Furthermore, 33% of the ALP students passed English 102, as compared to 10% of students in the traditional developmental course.

The college now offers about 250 sections per year. ALP has proved to be easily scalable. All students who place into the upper-level developmental course are permitted to enroll in it. Advisors are eager to recommend the program because developmental students are relieved to begin college with a credit-level course. Faculty members have expressed enthusiasm about teaching in the program because of the opportunity to work more individually with students.

# First-Year Experience

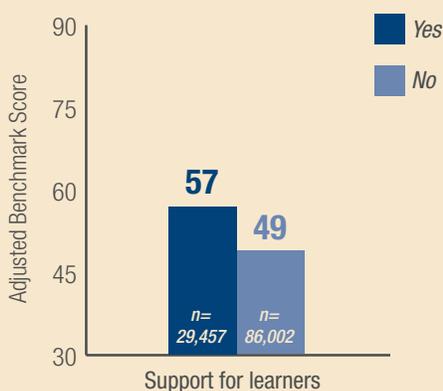
Participation in a first-year experience program has a notably positive relationship with the *CCSSE support for learners* benchmark. For this benchmark, *CCSSE* respondents who say they participated in a first-year experience have higher adjusted benchmark scores, on average, than those who say they did not participate.

Participation in a first-year experience program has a notably positive relationship with three *SENSE* benchmarks: *early connections*, *effective track to college readiness*, and *engaged learning*.

## LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

### Notable differences in engagement on the *CCSSE support for learners* benchmark

During my first term at this college, I participated in a structured experience for new students (sometimes called a “freshman seminar” or “first-year experience”).



Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

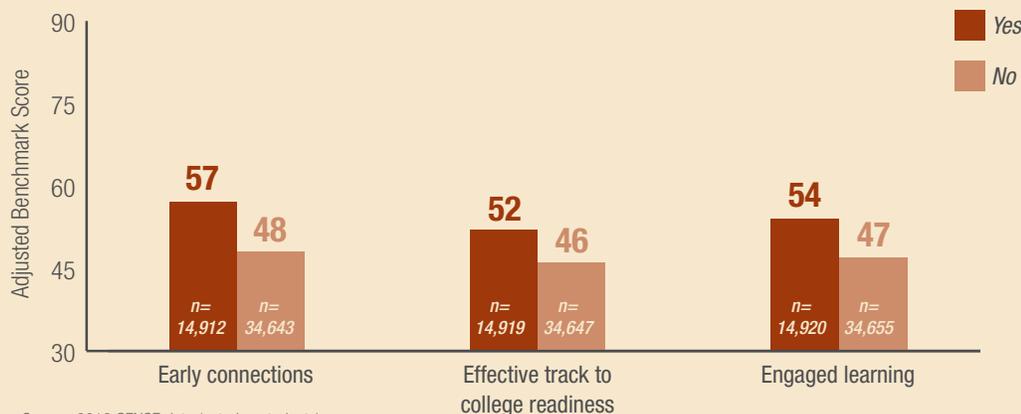
“The main focus [of the freshman seminar class] is for you, the college student, to figure out what your pathway is to get to your goal of graduating.”

Student

**What makes a difference notable?** Levels of engagement are reported as adjusted marginal mean scores on benchmarks. See page 3 for an explanation of the approach to data analysis.

### Notable differences in engagement on three *SENSE* benchmarks

At this college, I am participating in a structured experience for new students (sometimes called a “freshman seminar” or “first-year experience”).

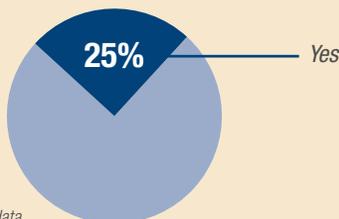


Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

## PARTICIPATION

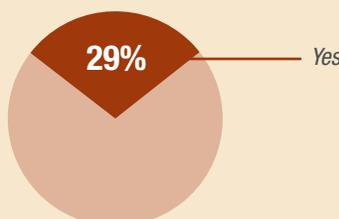
While more than 60% of colleges offer first-year experiences programs, less than 30% of students participate.

During my first term at this college, I participated in a structured experience for new students (sometimes called a “freshman seminar” or “first-year experience”). (N=150,379)



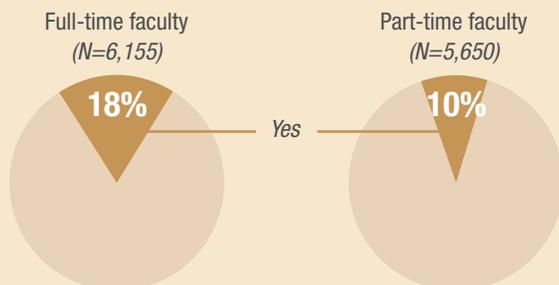
Source: 2012 CCSSE data

At this college, I am participating in a structured experience for new students (sometimes called a “freshman seminar” or “first-year experience”). (N=46,938)



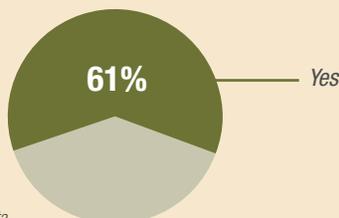
Source: 2012 SENSE data (entering students)

During the current academic year at this college, have you taught or facilitated a structured experience for new students (sometimes called a “freshman seminar” or “first-year experience”)?



Source: 2012 CCFSSSE data

Does your college implement any kind of structured first-year experience or freshman seminar? (N=374)



Source: 2012 CCIS data



### DURHAM TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## First-Year Experience Leads to Higher SENSE Benchmark Scores

Over the last five years, faculty, staff, and students at **Durham Technical Community College (NC)** identified a need to redesign the college’s front-door experience. Results from the 2007 pilot administration of *SENSE* confirmed this need for new processes.

At that time, the college had optional pre-enrollment orientation, mandatory advising, and an elective college success course. *SENSE* results indicate that only 22% of entering students attended the orientation, and 67% of entering students were not even aware that the college offered an orientation. Only 36% of entering students enrolled in the college success course. Perhaps most troubling, only 35% of new students indicate that an advisor helped them with goal planning, and only 67% indicate that they felt welcome at the college.

Durham Tech responded to these findings by reorganizing its first-year experience. The college set two overarching goals for fall 2008: require participation for at-risk students and create a welcoming front-door experience.

In fall 2010, Durham Tech began requiring orientation and established learning outcomes across the orientation, advising, and first-semester experience programs. The college also integrated advising activities into the college success course to help students develop clear academic pathways. Finally, the college doubled the number of college success course sections and made it mandatory for all entering students.

### RESULTS: IMPROVED ENGAGEMENT

Today, more than 1,400 Durham Tech students participate in orientation each term. *SENSE* 2012 results demonstrate the impact of these interventions: More than 90% of entering student respondents report that they attended an orientation, the majority of which (75%) attended a face-to-face orientation. Only 5% of students were not aware of orientation. Moreover, 55% of entering students report that they had enrolled in a college success course.

Among students who attend orientation, 92% indicate they learned the skills necessary to get a good start at the college, and 95% indicate that the college welcomed them. Each year more than 1,000 students also enroll in Durham Tech’s college success course, during which they complete a comprehensive academic plan from first semester to goal completion.

# Student Success Course

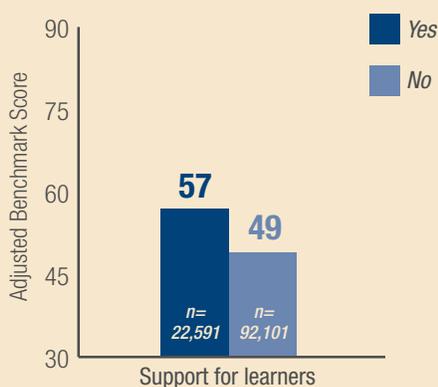
Participation in a student success course has a notably positive relationship with the *CCSSE support for learners* benchmark. For this benchmark, *CCSSE* respondents who say they participated in a student success course have higher adjusted benchmark scores, on average, than those who say they did not participate.

Participation in a student success course has a notably positive relationship with the *SENSE effective track to college readiness* and *engaged learning* benchmarks.

## LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

### Notable differences in engagement on the *CCSSE support for learners* benchmark

During my first term at this college, I enrolled in a student success course (such as a student development, extended orientation, student life skills, or college success course).



Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

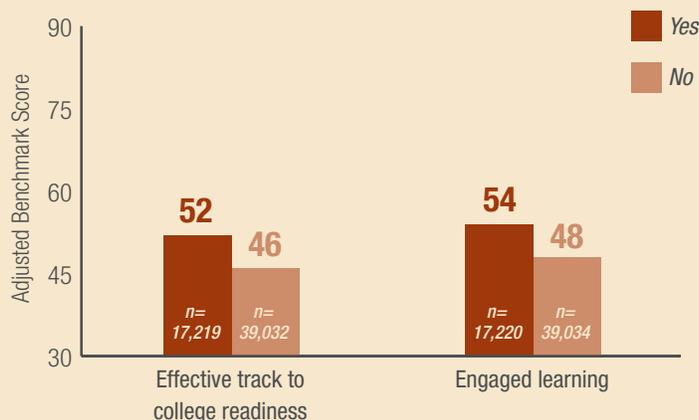
“I started researching the career I’m looking at, athletic training, and I discovered it was completely different from the job I thought it was. I wouldn’t have known that if I didn’t have that assigned to me. They gave us, in assignment form, the research we should have been doing on our own to find out the things we need to know about our future.”

Student

**What makes a difference notable?** Levels of engagement are reported as adjusted marginal mean scores on benchmarks. See page 3 for an explanation of the approach to data analysis.

### Notable differences in engagement on the *SENSE effective track to college readiness* and *engaged learning* benchmarks

During my first semester/quarter at this college, I was enrolled in a course specifically designed to teach skills and strategies to help students succeed in college (e.g., a college success or student success course).

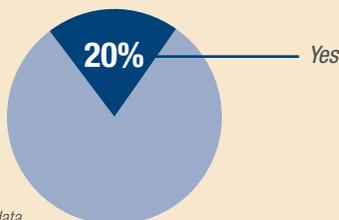


Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

## PARTICIPATION

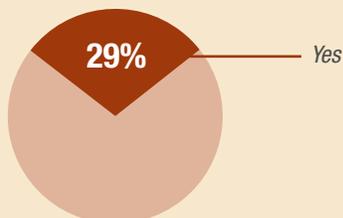
Two in 10 *CCSSE* respondents and fewer than three in 10 *SENSE* respondents took a student success course during their first term, even though 84% of colleges offer such courses.

During my first term at this college, I enrolled in a student success course (such as a student development, extended orientation, student life skills, or college success course). (*N*=149,336)



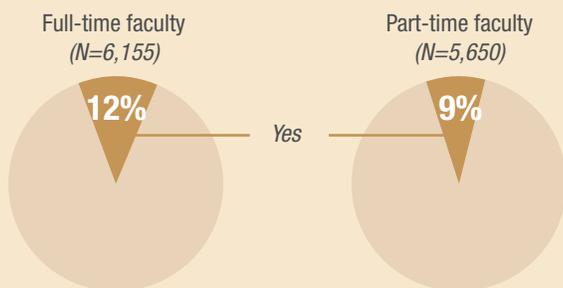
Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

During my first semester/quarter at this college, I was enrolled in a course specifically designed to teach skills and strategies to help students succeed in college (e.g., a college success or student success course). (*N*=53,156)



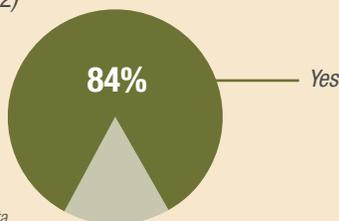
Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

During the current academic year at this college, have you taught or facilitated a student success course (such as a student development, extended orientation, study skills, student life skills, or college success course)?



Source: 2012 *CCFSSE* data

Does your college implement any kind of student success course? (*N*=352)



Source: 2012 *CCIS* data

## HOUSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

### Building Skills for Academic Success

Beginning in 2007, **Houston Community College System (TX)** institutionalized a student success course requirement for all new and transfer students with fewer than 12 earned credit hours. These success courses were designed to prepare students for the demands of college and success in the workplace. Students interested in health care, engineering, or education could elect to take student success courses specific to their major.

The largest of the student success courses was Guided Studies (GUST) 1270: College and Career Planning. The course, designed for students who had not yet declared a major, emphasized skills in priority setting, time management, effective listening, retaining information, note taking, critical thinking, problem solving, research, and test taking. It also helped students with academic planning and decision making. Students were required to declare a major and file a degree plan by the end of the semester.

In July 2012, the college reclassified GUST 1270 so it would be a transferable, credit-bearing course. The new course, Education 1300: Learning Frameworks, emphasizes the same skills—and incorporates new ones including financial literacy, learning theories and approaches, and career awareness. In addition, students are required to meet with their advisors twice during the semester; as with GUST 1270, they must select a major and file a degree plan.

#### RESULTS: IMPROVED PERSISTENCE

Gains in persistence rates for developmental and non-developmental students taking the freshman success courses have been documented through cohort tracking. In order to identify gains in student persistence, results from students taking a freshman success course were compared to results from Houston Community College students included in the 2003 Achieving the Dream cohort, which served as a baseline comparison group. Students in this baseline comparison group (*n*=868) had been enrolled in their first semester at Houston Community College, had been referred to developmental coursework, and had not taken a student success course.

The first group that the college compared to the baseline was composed of fall 2009 cohort students who were developmentally assessed and attended the GUST 1270 freshman success course. To be included in this group, students had to be referred to developmental coursework in at least one academic field primarily based on placement test scores. These students (*n*=3,879) far surpassed the baseline group with term-to-term persistence gains of 9 percentage points for the first fall to spring, 7 percentage points for the first fall to fall, and 23 percentage points for the first fall to the second spring.

The second group compared to the baseline was composed of fall 2009 cohort students who were not developmentally assessed and attended the GUST 1270 freshman success course. These students (*n*=888) also surpassed the baseline group with term-to-term persistence gains of 7 percentage points for the first fall to spring, 0.1 percentage points for the first fall to fall, and 19 percentage points for the first fall to the second spring.

A third analysis compared fall 2009 cohort students who participated in any of the freshman success courses in their first fall semester or in the pre-summer session with all other students in the fall 2009 cohort. The students who participated (*n*=5,783) persisted through three long semesters significantly more than the average for the entire fall 2009 cohort of 12,869 students, with persistence rates of 80% compared to the average 75% for fall to spring, 58% compared to the average 52% for fall to fall, and 52% compared to the average 46% for fall to second spring.

# Learning Community

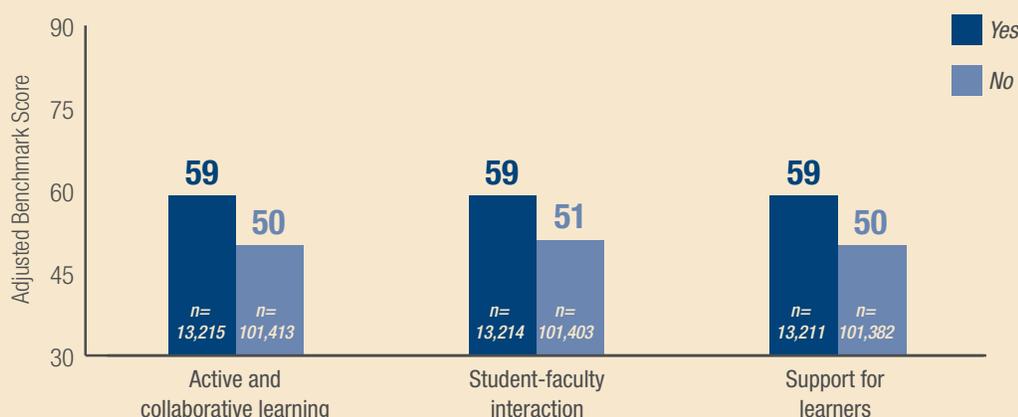
Participation in a learning community has a notably positive relationship with three *CCSSE* benchmarks: *active and collaborative learning*, *student-faculty interaction*, and *support for learners*. For these three benchmarks, *CCSSE* respondents who say they participated in a learning community have higher adjusted benchmark scores, on average, than those who say they did not participate in such programs.

Participation in a learning community has a notably positive relationship with the *SENSE engaged learning* benchmark.

## LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

### Notable differences in engagement on three *CCSSE* benchmarks

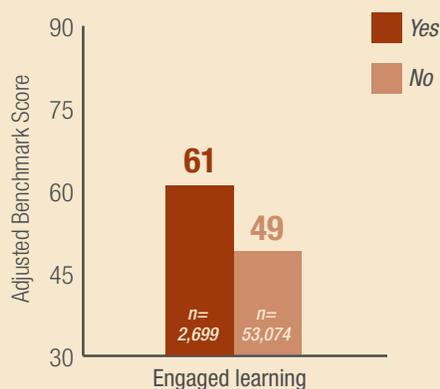
During my first term at this college, I enrolled in an organized “learning community” (two or more courses that a group of students take together).



Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

### Notable differences in engagement on the *SENSE engaged learning* benchmark

During my first semester/quarter at this college, I was enrolled in an organized “learning community” (two or more courses that a group of students take together).



Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

“The first day, everyone hit it off. We were exchanging numbers, and then we started having study groups, and then we were hanging out outside of class ... I don’t even call them classmates. They’re more like family.”

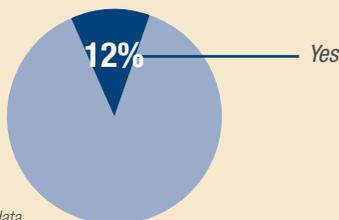
Student

**What makes a difference notable?** Levels of engagement are reported as adjusted marginal mean scores on benchmarks. See page 3 for an explanation of the approach to data analysis.

## PARTICIPATION

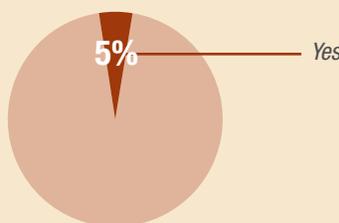
More than half of colleges (54%) offer learning communities, but only 12% of *CCSSE* respondents and 5% of *SENSE* respondents had this experience during their first term in college.

During my first term at this college, I enrolled in an organized “learning community” (two or more courses that a group of students take together). (N=149,292)



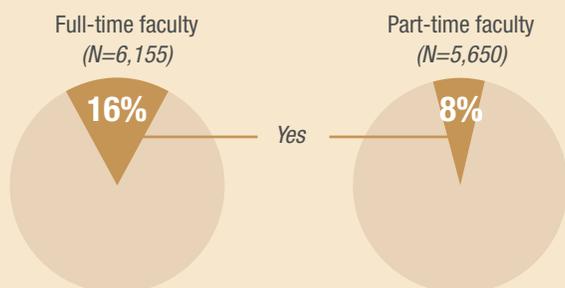
Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

During my first semester/quarter at this college, I was enrolled in an organized “learning community” (two or more courses that a group of students take together). (N=52,695)



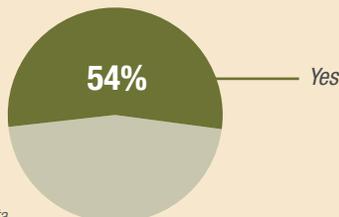
Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

During the current academic year at this college, have you taught or facilitated an organized “learning community” (two or more courses that a group of students take together)?



Source: 2012 *CCFSSE* data

Does your college implement any kind of a learning community? (N=365)



Source: 2012 *CCIS* data

## KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### Learning Communities Increase Credits and Degrees Earned

In the past 10 years, **Kingsborough Community College (NY)** has taken learning communities from a small pilot to a robust commitment that now serves 1,200 students each semester. The college is continuing to build its learning community programs for entering and continuing students.

In 2003, as part of the MDRC Opening Doors project\*, Kingsborough launched multiple learning communities for first-time, full-time freshmen. Cohorts of 25 students coregistered into three classes during their first semester. These classes included English (college-level or developmental, based on proficiency); a standard transferable college general education course; and a student success seminar taught by an academic advisor. The learning communities had tutors in the classroom, supplemental instruction, and individualized case management (one case manager per 75–100 students). Students also received textbook vouchers to offset their costs.

From the beginning, college leaders committed to having rigorous courses in the learning communities, and they held faculty members accountable for supporting students’ efforts to integrate their coursework. Faculty members teaching in each learning community were asked to work collaboratively on curricula, coordinate shared assignments, and work together in evaluating student progress.

The 1,534 students participating in the initial Opening Doors project were randomly assigned over four semesters (fall 2003, spring 2004, fall 2004, and spring 2005). These students reflected the general composition of the college’s student body. Students who were not selected to participate in the learning communities served as a control group. (There were 769 program group students, and 765 control group students.)

#### RESULTS: MORE CREDITS AND DEGREES

MDRC’s longitudinal analyses show that a comprehensive one-semester program can improve student outcomes. Findings at the two-year mark did not show significant gains in students’ fall-to-spring persistence rates (77% for learning community students vs. 75% for control students in the first year; 61% vs. 59% in the second year). After six years, however, MDRC found that learning community students graduated at a rate of 36%, as compared to a 31% graduation rate among control group students. This 5 percentage point gain represents about a 15% increase in degrees earned.

#### COLLABORATION AND COMMITMENT

With outcomes that continue to be encouraging, Kingsborough is deeply committed to learning communities. Faculty and student services staff attend weekly meetings to collaborate and discuss student progress, curriculum, and pedagogy. This cooperative time drives the academic affairs/student affairs collaboration that is at the heart of the program. Everyone who works with students is represented at the table. Participants listen to and learn from one another, and they continually discuss and refine their understanding of *student-centered*. Learning communities have changed the institutional culture—collaboration is now the way they do business, and the group favors evidence-based practices.

\*The MDRC Opening Doors project focused on interventions designed to address the persistence and completion rates of at-risk students. According to MDRC’s six-year follow up report, this project was the first large-scale study on learning communities using random assignments.

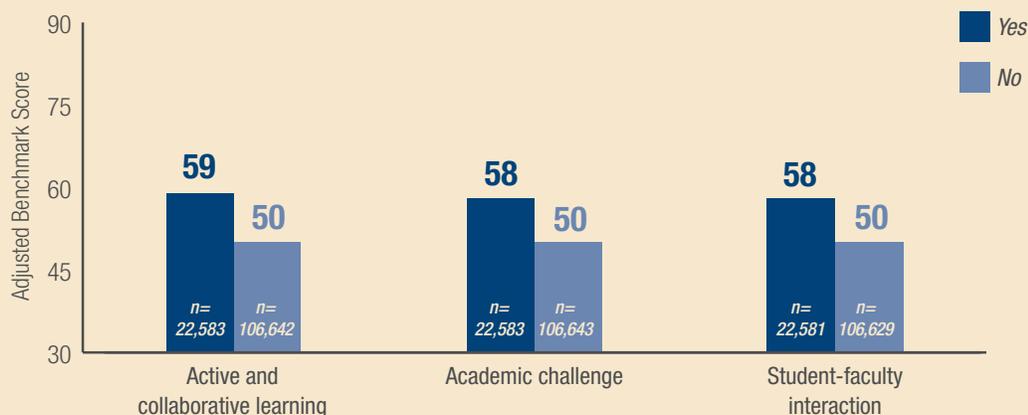
# Experiential Learning Beyond the Classroom

Participation in experiential learning beyond the classroom has a notably positive relationship with three *CCSSE* benchmarks: *active and collaborative learning*, *academic challenge*, and *student-faculty interaction*. For these three benchmarks, *CCSSE* respondents who say they participated in experiential learning beyond the classroom have higher adjusted benchmark scores, on average, than those who say they did not participate.

## LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

### Notable differences in engagement on three *CCSSE* benchmarks

I have done an internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment while attending this college.



**What makes a difference notable?** Levels of engagement are reported as adjusted marginal mean scores on benchmarks. See page 3 for an explanation of the approach to data analysis.

Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

“For many of the classes, even for science classes, they ask you to visit a museum, and that’s fine because they give you student discounts at the museums. For my dance class, it’s a one-credit [course], and I have to go see a dance concert.”

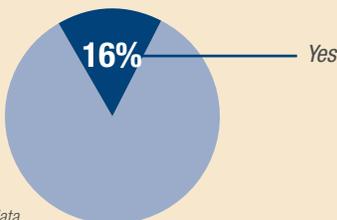
*Student*



## PARTICIPATION

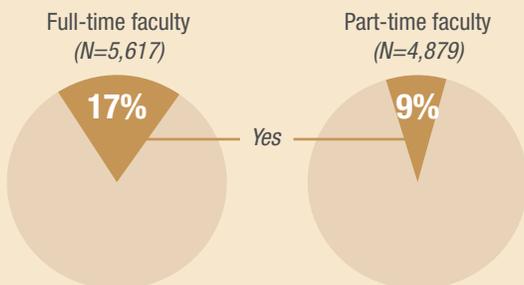
Fewer than two in 10 *CCSSE* respondents participate in experiential learning programs. Two-thirds of colleges (67%) require such programs for vocational/technical students, while 27% require them for non-vocational/technical students.

I have done an internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment while attending this college. (N=170,575)



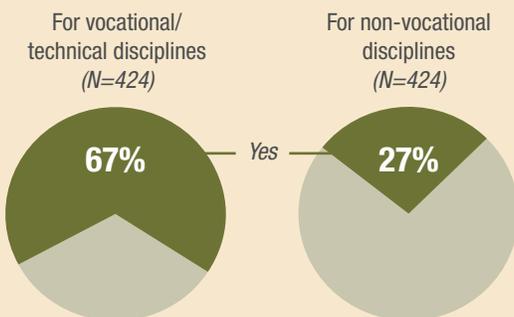
Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

In your selected course section, do you require students to be involved in an internship, apprenticeship, clinical placement, or other “hands-on” learning experience beyond the classroom?



Source: 2012 *CCFSSE* data

Does your college require at least one type of out-of-class “hands-on” learning experience (internships, apprenticeships, clinical placements, or field experiences)?



Source: 2012 *CCIS* data

“Basically every class that I’ve had, we’ve had to go to the [art museum] and it’s been a lot more enriching. At first, I was like, ‘Oh, now I have to go do all this, go into the city,’ but at the end of day and the end of the paper, it’s a great experience.”

*Student*



## Kapi’olani Community College

In 1995, **Kapi’olani Community College (HI)** launched an initiative to integrate service learning into its course curricula. Since then, service learning has become increasingly institutionalized and recognized as a strong student engagement strategy. It is a faculty-driven emphasis that weaves through the Kahikoluamea (pre-college courses), liberal arts, and careers curricula. The college’s emphasis on service learning, moreover, continues to increase.

Recent service-learning activities include the following:

- More than 100 students restore Native Hawaiian watershed ecosystems per year.
- Dozens of students every year work with low-income, limited-English-proficient children from Palolo Housing to help increase their math proficiency above the state average. Recognition has come from the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of University Partnerships for this sustained partnership.
- The Health Promotion Team supported the collection of 300 pints of blood between August 2010 and July 2011—enough to save 900 lives.
- Members of the International Café were active in generating community support for Japan relief efforts after the tsunami on March 11, 2011.
- Project SHINE (stands for Students Helping in the Naturalization of Elders), a national consortium that includes Hawai’i, received the E Pluribus Unum Prize from the Migration Policy Institute for promoting immigrant integration.

Data on students participating in service learning are promising. From 1995 to the present, 10,708 Kapi’olani Community College students contributed 237,452 hours to the community. Their work builds bridges across cultures and generations.

In spring 2011, the 280 students who participated in service learning had a course completion rate (grade of C or better) of 89%, compared to a 71% completion rate for students not involved in service learning.

Developmental education students involved in service learning had a course completion rate of 76%, compared to a 56% completion rate for developmental education students not involved in service learning.

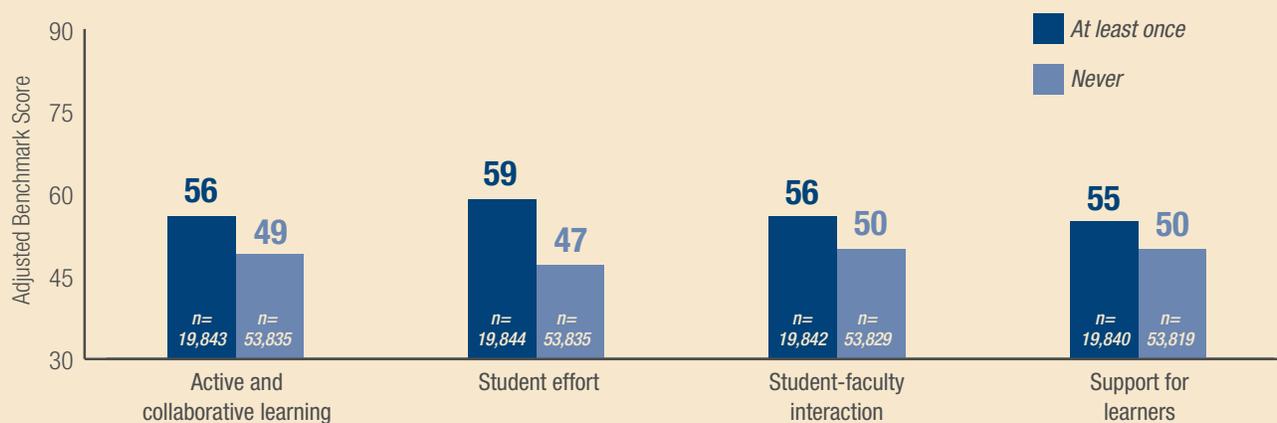
# Tutoring

Participation in tutoring has a notably positive relationship with four *CCSSE* benchmarks: *active and collaborative learning*, *student effort*, *student-faculty interaction*, and *support for learners*. For these four benchmarks, *CCSSE* respondents who say they participated in tutoring have higher adjusted benchmark scores, on average, than those who say they did not participate.

## LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

### Notable differences in engagement on four *CCSSE* benchmarks

During the current academic year, I participated in tutoring provided by this college.



Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

#### What makes a difference notable?

Levels of engagement are reported as adjusted marginal mean scores on benchmarks. See page 3 for an explanation of the approach to data analysis.

“Nobody really wants to go in [the tutoring center] and ask for help because they feel dumb, but then it helps when they go in there.”

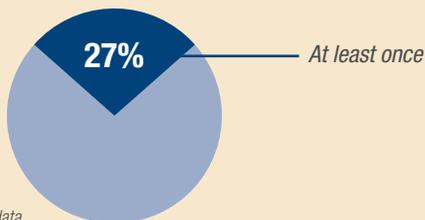
*Student*



## PARTICIPATION

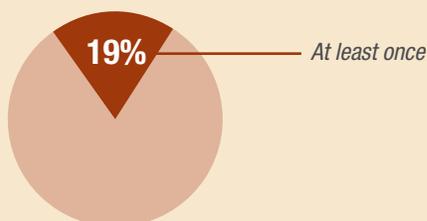
Nearly all colleges (99%) offer tutoring. Fewer than one in five *SENSE* respondents (19%) use tutoring, compared with 27% of *CCSSE* respondents.

During the current academic year, I participated in tutoring provided by this college. (*N*=96,338)



Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

Through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester/quarter, how often did you use face-to-face or online tutoring? (*N*=51,495)



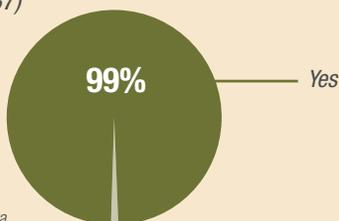
Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

How often do you refer students to peer or other tutoring?



Source: 2012 *CCFSSE* data

Does your institution offer tutoring services for students at this college? (*N*=337)



Source: 2012 *CCIS* data

## West Virginia University at Parkersburg

After reviewing its 2011 *CCSSE* data, West Virginia University at Parkersburg (WV) introduced new strategies to improve student retention and success. To better support its students, the college took a more active role in identifying its least successful students. College personnel, for example, began to check whether failing students (those with a grade of D or lower) were using the tutoring center, and they paid careful attention to students returning from suspension and students on probation. The college also used GPA, course load, withdrawals, and late registrations to identify students who needed extra support.

Through this monitoring process, Parkersburg identifies students who are at risk for failing a course or multiple courses and/or at risk for withdrawing from college. The college can then determine whether these students are using academic support, including tutoring, academic counseling, and behavioral counseling.

In spring 2012, 99% of students who took advantage of Parkersburg's on-campus tutoring center registered for courses the following semester. Moreover, from fall 2011 to spring 2012, the number of students receiving tutoring in the college's Student Success Center increased, and the number of F grades and withdrawals decreased. The Student Success Center documented 3,280 drop-in tutoring sessions in fall 2011 and 4,034 drop-in sessions in spring 2012. During that time frame, the number of F grades decreased from 1,718 to 1,508, and the number of course withdrawals decreased from 1,934 to 1,506. While enrollment did decrease by 9% between the two semesters, data still show proportionately fewer withdrawals and F grades on student records.



"The tutors would go out of their way to help you understand things that you don't understand."

Student

# Supplemental Instruction

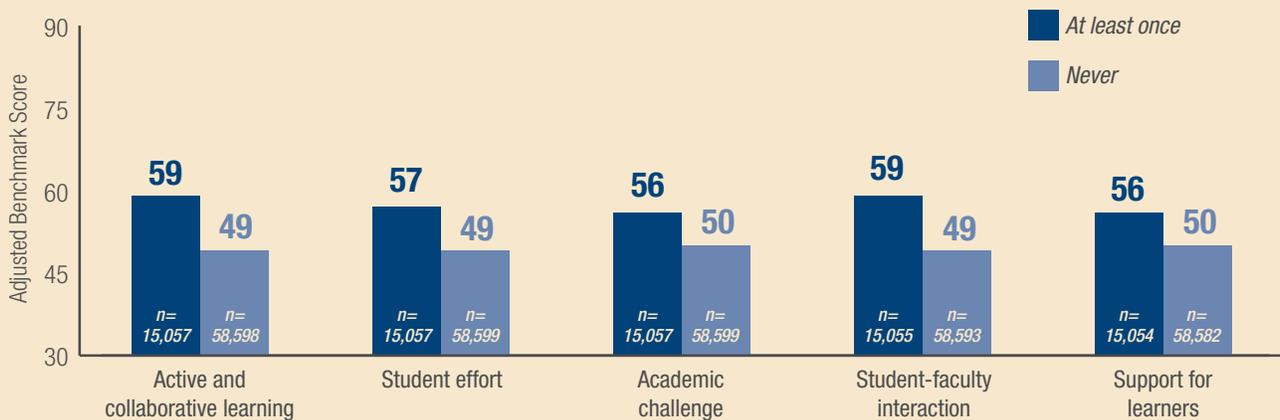
Participation in supplemental instruction has a notably positive relationship with all five *CCSSE* benchmarks. *CCSSE* respondents who say they participated in supplemental instruction have higher adjusted benchmark scores, on average, than those who say they did not participate.

Participation in supplemental instruction has a notably positive relationship with the *SENSE early connections* benchmark.

## LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

### Notable differences in engagement on all five *CCSSE* benchmarks

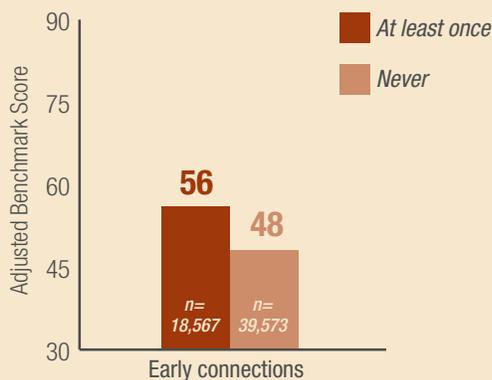
During the current academic year at this college, I participated in supplemental instruction/supplemental learning (extra class sessions with the instructor or an experienced student).



Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

### Notable differences in engagement on the *SENSE early connections* benchmark

During the first three weeks of your first semester/quarter at this college, how often did you participate in supplemental instruction (extra class sessions with an instructor, tutor, or experienced student)?



Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

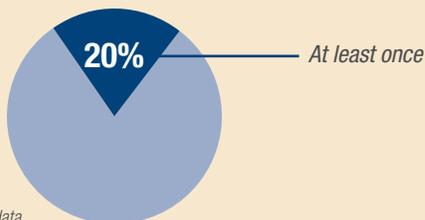
**What makes a difference notable?** Levels of engagement are reported as adjusted marginal mean scores on benchmarks. See page 3 for an explanation of the approach to data analysis.



# PARTICIPATION

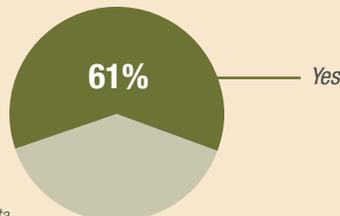
More than six in 10 colleges (61%) offer supplemental instruction. One in five *CCSSE* respondents (20%) and about one-third of *SENSE* respondents (31%) participate in supplemental instruction.

During the current academic year at this college, I participated in supplemental instruction/supplemental learning (extra class sessions with the instructor or an experienced student). (N=96,309)



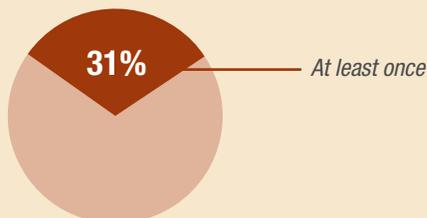
Source: 2012 CCSSE data

Does your institution offer supplemental instruction services for students at this college? (N=335)



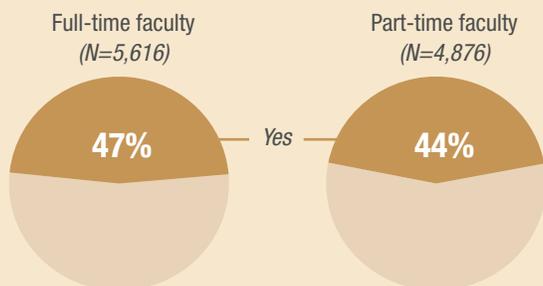
Source: 2012 CCIS data

During the first three weeks of your first semester/quarter at this college, how often did you participate in supplemental instruction (extra class sessions with an instructor, tutor, or experienced student)? (N=55,087)



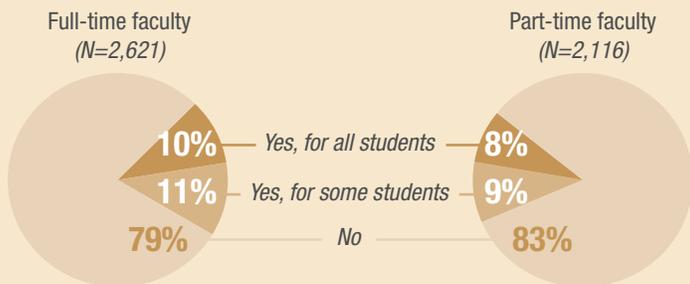
Source: 2012 SENSE data (entering students)

In your selected course section, is supplemental instruction (extra class sessions with an instructor or experienced student) available to students?



Source: 2012 CCFSE data

In your selected course section, do you require students to participate in supplemental instruction (extra class sessions with an instructor or experienced student)?



Source: 2012 CCFSE data

## Austin Community College

In 2007, **Austin Community College (TX)** piloted supplemental instruction in three courses: College Algebra, Intermediate Algebra, and Chemistry 1.

Supplemental instruction is voluntary for both professors and students. Professors can request supplemental instruction for their classes, and students can choose to participate in sections that offer supplemental instruction when they register for classes. (The course schedule indicates which sections include supplemental instruction, and students who want to participate can register for those sections at no additional cost.) Each week, classes with supplemental instruction dedicate three hours to extra sessions that focus on the most difficult material and study skills.

Since supplemental instruction was introduced, students who attend the supplemental instruction sessions have been more likely to complete their courses and have earned higher grades.

In the 2007–08 pilot, students who attended supplemental instruction had a 73% completion rate (n=397), compared to a 52% completion rate for those who did not attend. In 2011–12, supplemental instruction students had a 69% completion rate (n=1,063), compared to a 54% completion rate for their peers who did not participate.

In addition, students who attended supplemental instruction in 2007–08 had an average GPA of 2.6 (n=397) on a 4.0 scale, compared to an average GPA of 2.3 for those who did not attend. In 2011–12, supplemental instruction students had an average GPA of 2.7 (n=1,063), compared to an average GPA of 2.4 for their peers who did not participate.

The college is scaling up supplemental instruction on a five-year plan. At the end of the five years, 20% of the sections in the six gateway courses (Elementary Algebra, Intermediate Algebra, College Algebra, History 1, Composition 1, and U.S. Government) will be supported by supplemental instruction.

Thus far, supplemental instruction has been added to History 1, Composition 1, U.S. Government, Chemistry 2, Introduction to Anatomy and Physiology, History 2, Spanish 1 and 2, Introduction to Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy, and College Mathematics. Currently, only 7% of Austin students are enrolled in sections that offer supplemental instruction. Among students enrolled in sections supported by supplemental instruction, 30% participate in the practice. At the end of this five-year growth plan, Austin will launch another plan to further expand supplemental instruction.

# Assessment and Placement

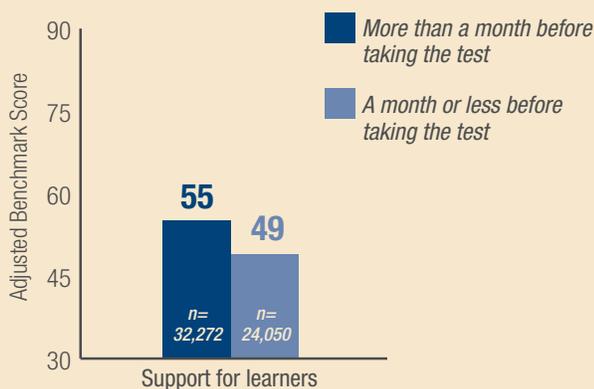
The Center’s student surveys address various aspects of students’ experiences with academic skills assessment and course placement. Elements of assessment and placement have a notably positive relationship with two *CCSSE* benchmarks: *student-faculty interaction* and *support for learners*. For example, *CCSSE* respondents who say they prepared for placement tests had higher adjusted benchmark scores, on average, than those who say they did not prepare for placement tests.

Elements of assessment and placement have a notably positive relationship with two *SENSE* benchmarks: *effective track to college readiness* and *engaged learning*.

## LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

### LEAD TIME FOR TESTING: Notable differences in engagement on the *CCSSE support for learners* benchmark

Among students who took a placement test: I became aware that I was required to take a placement test (ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.) at this college.

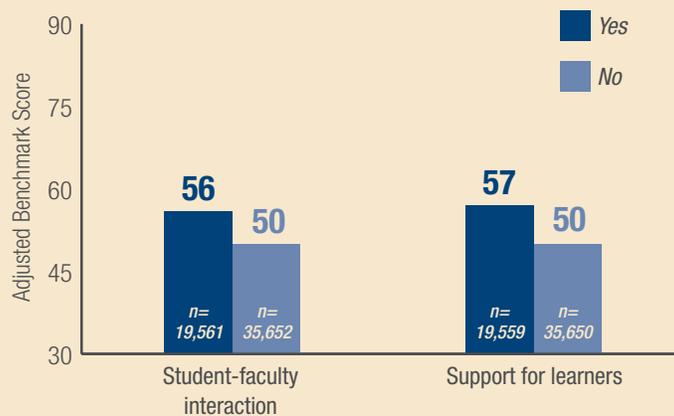


Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

**What makes a difference notable?** Levels of engagement are reported as adjusted marginal mean scores on benchmarks. See page 3 for an explanation of the approach to data analysis.

### TEST PREPARATION: Notable differences in engagement on the *CCSSE student-faculty interaction* and *support for learners* benchmarks

Among students who took a placement test: Before enrolling at this college, I prepared for this college’s placement test (ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.).



Note: The Yes respondents say they prepared on their own by using online or printed materials provided by the college, participated in a brief brush-up/refresher workshop, or participated in a multi-day or multi-week brush-up/refresher program.

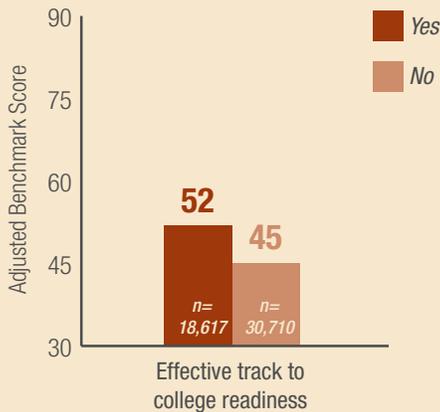
Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

“I didn’t see it at first, but the second semester I started to understand the reasoning behind it, and now I’m very grateful that the placement test was there.”

Student

## TESTING IN HIGH SCHOOL: Notable differences in engagement on the *SENSE* effective track to college readiness benchmark

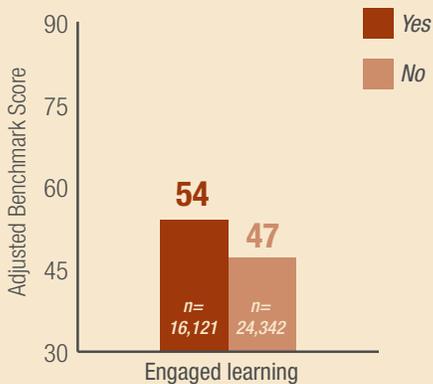
While I was in high school, besides taking the SAT or ACT, I completed this college's placement test (ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.) to assess my academic skills in reading, writing, and/or math.



Source: 2012 SENSE data (entering students)

## TEST PREPARATION: Notable differences in engagement on the *SENSE* engaged learning benchmark

Among students who took a placement test: Before enrolling at this college, I prepared for this college's placement test (ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.).



Note: The Yes respondents say they prepared on their own by using online or printed materials provided by the college, participated in a brief brush-up/refresher workshop, or participated in a multi-day or multi-week brush-up/refresher program.

Source: 2012 SENSE data (entering students)

## Camden County College

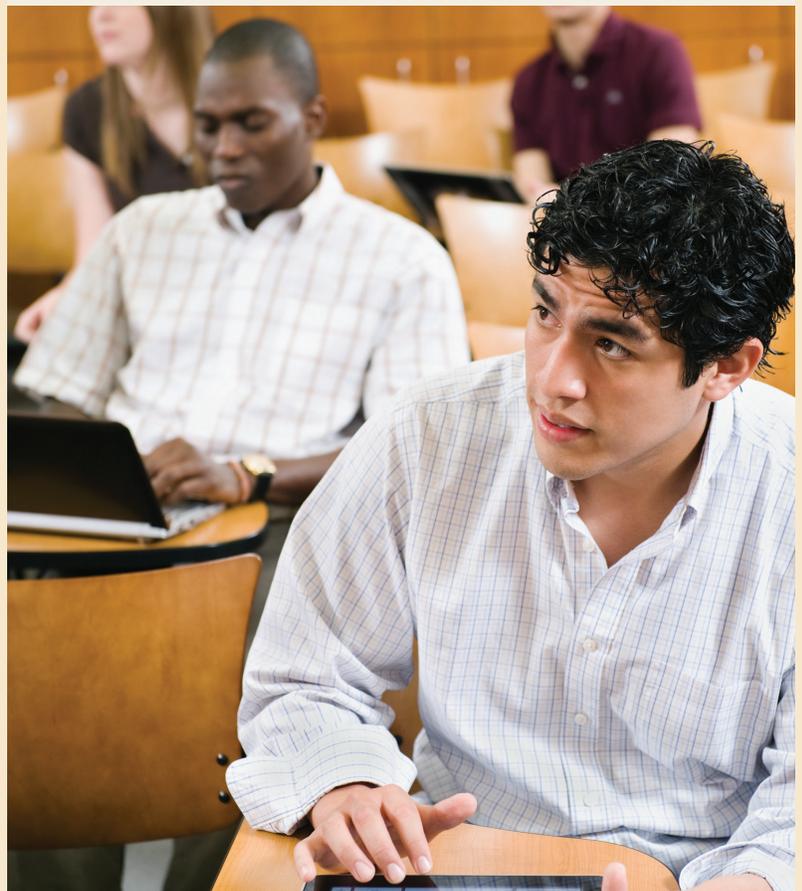
For more than 25 years, the math department at **Camden County College (NJ)** has offered two accelerated one-credit math review courses: Math Fundamentals Review and Elementary Algebra Review. The classes are available to new or continuing students who meet one of two criteria: their placement test scores were slightly below the cut-off margin for the next higher level math course or they had already enrolled and completed a developmental math course but failed the final exam marginally.

Students enter the course based on their placement test scores or through a referral from their instructor. The college offers morning and evening classes on all three campuses to accommodate students' schedules.

The accelerated review courses, which are offered several different weeks throughout the summer and the week before spring classes begin in January, meet for four days. The first three days include three and a half hours of instruction. The fourth is dedicated to retaking the placement test. Students earn credit in the form of pass/fail rather than letter grades.

In fall 2012, Math Fundamentals Review courses served 330 students in 15 sections, and Elementary Algebra Review had 502 students enrolled in its 22 sections.

Pass rates in these courses exceed 91% for new students and 50% for those who failed their final in the original course. Students who pass the Math Fundamentals Review register for Elementary Algebra Traditional. Students who pass Elementary Algebra Review register for college-level math. Once enrolled in college-level math, students who complete the four-day Elementary Algebra Review course perform similarly (within 5 percentage points) to students whose assessment scores had deemed them college ready.

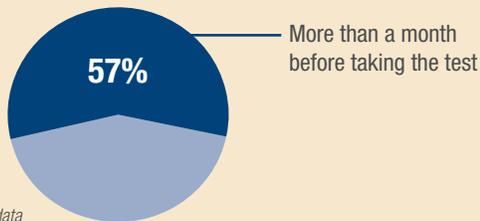


## Assessment and Placement (continued)

### PARTICIPATION

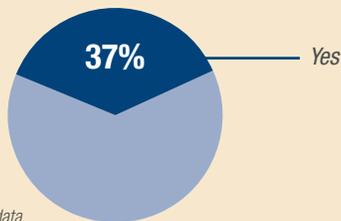
More than half (57%) of *CCSSE* respondents learned about placement tests more than a month before taking the tests, but only 37% of *CCSSE* respondents and 40% of *SENSE* respondents prepared for the tests. Nearly all colleges provide placement tests, but fewer offer test preparation.

Among students who took a placement test: I became aware that I was required to take a placement test (ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.) at this college. (N=73,499)



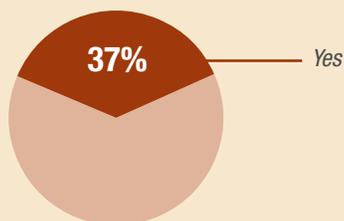
Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

Among students who took a placement test: Before enrolling at this college, I prepared for this college's placement test (ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.). (N=72,160)



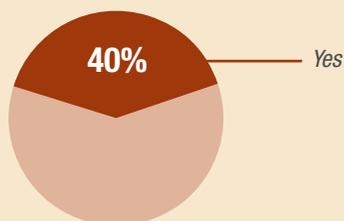
Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

While I was in high school, besides taking the SAT or ACT, I completed this college's placement test (ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.) to assess my academic skills in reading, writing, and/or math. (N=46,683)



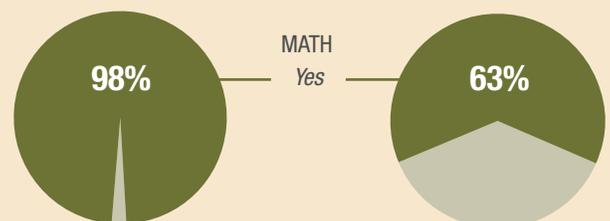
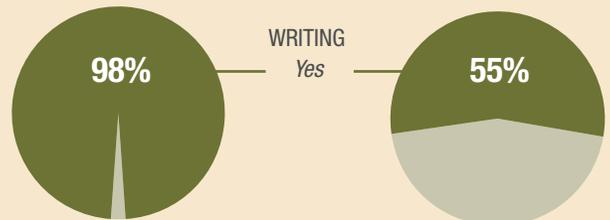
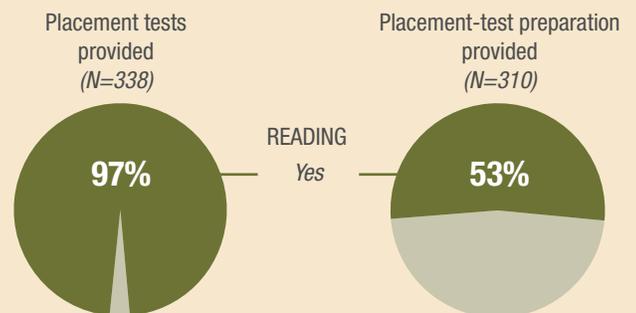
Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

Among students who took a placement test: Before enrolling at this college, I prepared for this college's placement test (ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.). (N=38,494)

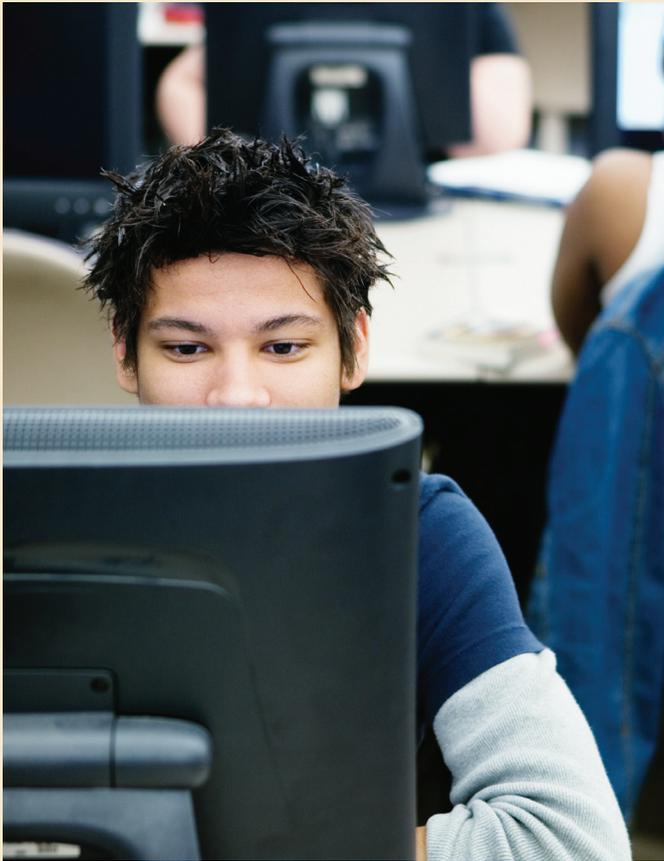


Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

Does your college provide a placement test (such as ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.) and/or a placement test preparation experience (such as an intensive skills "brush-up" workshop, summer program, or the like to help students prepare for your college's placement tests)?



Source: 2012 *CCIS* data



## Athens Technical College

**Athens Technical College (GA)** redesigned and implemented multiple ways to help more students complete their developmental coursework successfully and expeditiously. The college implemented a Fast Pass program that enables students to take part in a modified skills brush-up/refresher program and then retake the placement assessment. The program, on average, has helped students reduce their developmental education course requirements by 1.5 courses while at the same time lowering costs for the college.

Using a newly developed modularized approach to developmental mathematics, students now progress at their own pace. The college, however, requires them to participate in both scheduled classes and labs. Tutoring services are also embedded in the lab sessions. To ensure that students meet all learning outcomes, they must pass a comprehensive departmental exam once they have completed the required modules.

During fall 2011 and spring 2012, 60% of the 163 students in the redesigned format passed Elementary Algebra, as opposed to only 51% of the 431 students in the traditional delivery format. (The college focused on Elementary Algebra for the pilot phase. All three math learning support courses are now taught in the modularized format.) Furthermore, 7% of these students completed both Elementary Algebra and Intermediate Algebra in one nine-week summer session.

In fall 2012, all learning support math sections (Basic Math, Elementary Algebra, and Intermediate Algebra) were scaled to the redesigned format. Results are encouraging, and improvement efforts are continuing.

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“That placement test is an actual test, so don’t fool around and think, like, it’s just a little thing. It’s real.”

*Student*

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“A lot of my classes ... they have a set speed, and if you don’t understand what they’re saying at that set speed, then you can kiss it to a W.”

*Student*

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“As soon as you learn it, you can’t even retain it because you’ve got to go through three more chapters.”

*Student*

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# Class Attendance

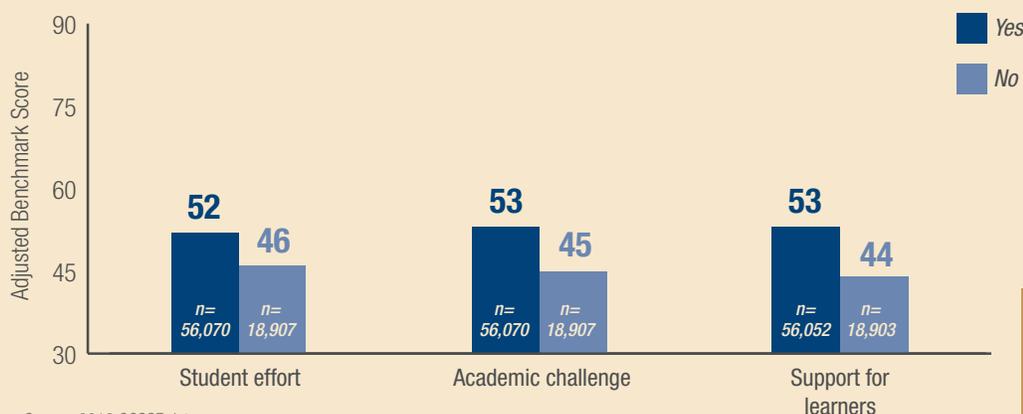
Having a clearly explained class attendance policy and penalties for missing classes has a notably positive relationship with three *CCSSE* benchmarks: *student effort*, *academic challenge*, and *support for learners*. For these three benchmarks, *CCSSE* respondents who say all of their instructors clearly explained a class attendance policy have higher adjusted benchmark scores, on average, than those who say only some or none of their instructors did so.

Having a clearly explained class attendance policy that specifies how many classes could be missed without penalty has a notably positive relationship with four *SENSE* benchmarks: *early connections*, *high expectations and aspirations*, *effective track to college readiness*, and *academic and social support network*.

## LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

### Notable differences in engagement on three *CCSSE* benchmarks

During the current term at this college, all of my instructors clearly explained a class attendance policy that specified how many classes I could miss without penalty.



Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

**What makes a difference notable?** Levels of engagement are reported as adjusted marginal mean scores on benchmarks. See page 3 for an explanation of the approach to data analysis.

### Notable differences in engagement on four *SENSE* benchmarks

At this college, all of my instructors clearly explained a class attendance policy that specified how many classes I could miss without penalty.

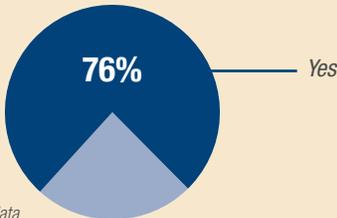


Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

## PARTICIPATION

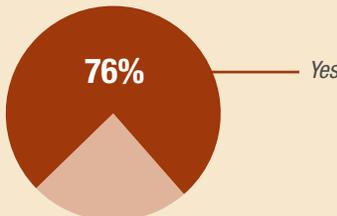
The same percentage of *CCSSE* and *SENSE* respondents (76%) say that all of their instructors clearly explained a class attendance policy. Similarly, 79% of full-time faculty and 82% of part-time faculty have a course attendance policy that specifies the effect of missing class on students' grades.

During the current term at this college, all of my instructors clearly explained a class attendance policy that specified how many classes I could miss without penalty. (N=98,235)



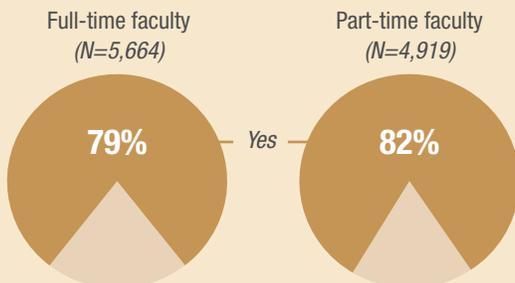
Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

At this college, all of my instructors clearly explained a class attendance policy that specified how many classes I could miss without penalty. (N=47,196)



Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

For your selected course section, do you have a class attendance policy that specifies the adverse impact missing class has on students' grades?



Source: 2012 *CCFSSE* data

“Whenever somebody is not in class, she’ll be like, ‘Have you seen Jordan? Have you seen Peter?’ She knows everyone by name, and she wants to know if they’re OK. She’s on it.”

Student



### Glen Oaks Community College

**Glen Oaks Community College (MI)** believes attendance is critical for student success. As part of the college’s mandatory orientation program, college personnel explain the college’s attendance policy, the importance of attending class, and the possible consequences of not regularly attending.

The college requires all full-time and part-time faculty to track and report attendance during the first three weeks of the term. Absences are reported to student services, including financial aid advisors, who use this information to contact students so they can explain financial aid implications and attempt to get the students back to class. The financial aid office may freeze financial aid for students who are not attending class regularly. This approach also helps minimize the number of students who jeopardize their financial aid eligibility. Each student receives a letter outlining six alternatives, from seeking free tutoring to withdrawing from the course.

Students are reminded that if they miss more than 15% of class time in any semester, instructors have the authority to withdraw them from class. Faculty have the latitude to determine whether a student who exceeds the 15% should be allowed to remain in the course. In the past, instructors manually submitted the names of students who should be contacted by the chief academic officer to address their attendance issues. However, beginning in fall 2013, all faculty will use an electronic grade book in which they will record attendance. This method will enable student services to pull queries at the end of each week, which the college hopes will help to increase the policy’s impact.

“Their attendance policy is very important because, being a mother, [you could have a] doctor’s appointment or a child is sick ... anything can happen, but I definitely don’t want to miss too many days.”

Student

# Alert and Intervention

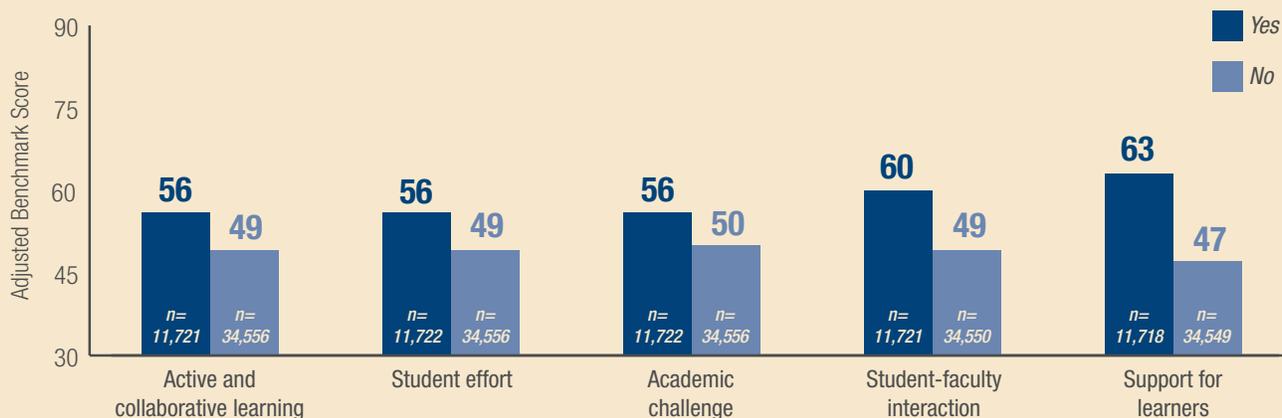
Participation in an alert and intervention system has a notably positive relationship with all five *CCSSE* benchmarks. *CCSSE* respondents who say that someone at the college contacts them if they are struggling with their studies have higher adjusted benchmark scores, on average, than those who say that was not the case.

Participation in an alert and intervention system has a notably positive relationship with four *SENSE* benchmarks: *early connections*, *clear academic plan and pathway*, *effective track to college readiness*, and *academic and social support network*.

## LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

### Notable differences in engagement on all five *CCSSE* benchmarks

Among students who indicate they are struggling: Someone at this college contacts me if I am struggling with my studies to help me get the assistance I need.



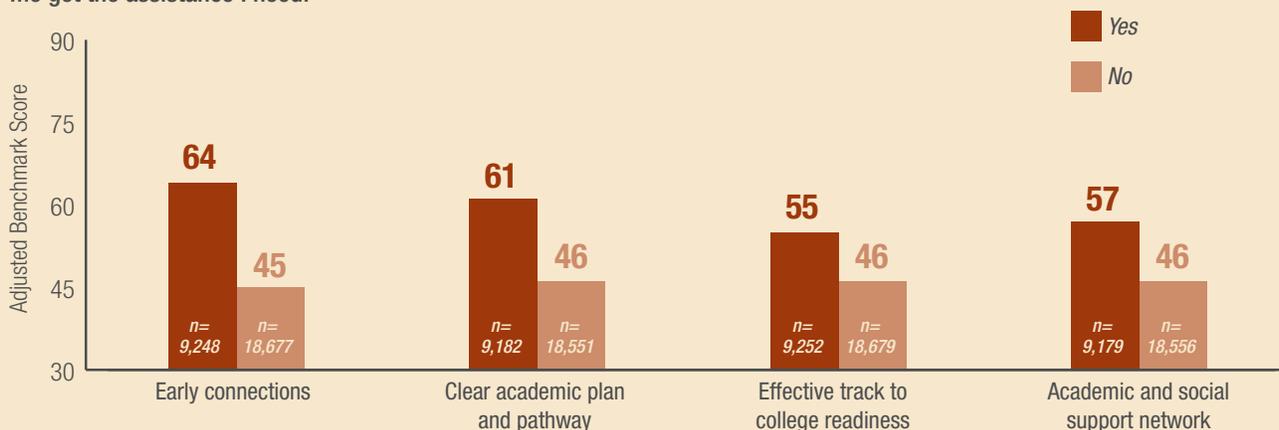
Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

“I have someone who calls or texts if I’m not in class.”

Student

### Notable differences in engagement on four *SENSE* benchmarks

Among students who indicate they are struggling: Someone at this college contacts me if I am struggling with my studies to help me get the assistance I need.



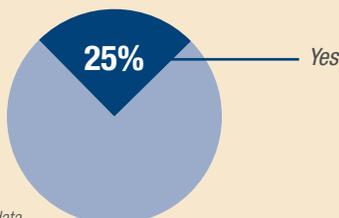
Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

**What makes a difference notable?** Levels of engagement are reported as adjusted marginal mean scores on benchmarks. See page 3 for an explanation of the approach to data analysis.

## PARTICIPATION

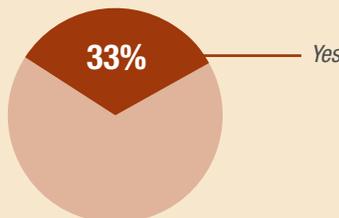
Eight in 10 colleges (80%) have implemented an intervention process. However, among students who indicate that they are struggling academically, only 25% of *CCSSE* respondents and 33% of *SENSE* respondents say that someone contacted them.

Among students who indicate they are struggling: Someone at this college contacts me if I am struggling with my studies to help me get the assistance I need. (N=61,639)



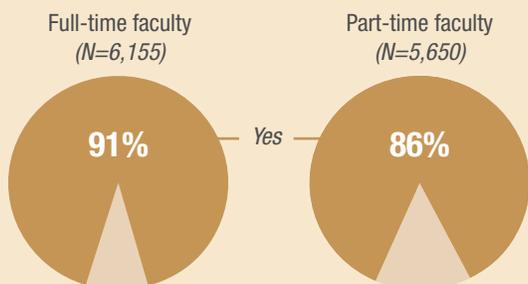
Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

Among students who indicate they are struggling: Someone at this college contacts me if I am struggling with my studies to help me get the assistance I need. (N=26,439)



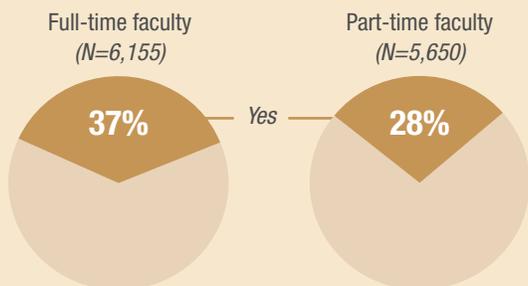
Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

During the current term in your selected course section, have you taken action in regard to students who have been struggling academically?



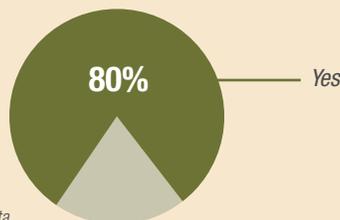
Source: 2012 *CCFSSE* data

During the current term in your selected course section, have you contacted someone else at the college when a student is struggling academically (as part of a formal or informal academic warning system)?



Source: 2012 *CCFSSE* data

Has your institution implemented a systematic early academic warning/early intervention process? (N=334)



Source: 2012 *CCIS* data

### Northeast Alabama Community College

In 2005, **Northeast Alabama Community College (AL)** developed and implemented an early intervention plan to identify and assist students who were having academic difficulty while enrolled in developmental reading, English (developmental or college-level writing), and/or math. The plan outlined a systematic process for contacting students with excessive absences (students who have missed up to 50% of class) or students who were struggling with their coursework.

After the second week of classes, developmental reading, English, and math instructors tell the director of developmental studies which students in their courses have an excessive number of absences. The director personally contacts each student, asking them what is keeping them out of class and discussing support services.

Four weeks into the semester, instructors again tell the director which students in their courses have too many absences. At this point, the director notifies the financial aid department and sends each student a letter that encourages him or her to attend classes regularly. The letter has two enclosures: a tutor schedule and a brochure with information about student support services.

By mid-term, instructors report once more, identifying students with excessive absences as well as any student who is experiencing academic difficulty. Finally, two weeks before the final drop/withdrawal date of the semesters, instructors again give the director names of students at risk of failing. This time, instructors suggest whether it would be in the best interest for the student to withdraw from the course or to offer further focused support.

The college used student record data, specifically the rate of successful completion with a grade of A, B, or C, to assess whether this plan was effective. After collecting four years of data prior to the plan's implementation (2000–04) and comparing these data to the most recent four years of data (2008–12), the college found that the early alert intervention plan improves students' rate of successful course completion in most subjects.

Although the college saw a decline of 2 percentage points in completion rates for lower-level developmental writing courses, course completions for all other courses increased: upper-level developmental math by 8 percentage points (65% to 73%), lower-level developmental math by 6 percentage points (66% to 72%), upper-level developmental writing by 7 percentage points (77% to 84%), and developmental reading by 2 percentage points (68% to 70%).

# Intensity and Higher Engagement: The Value of Participating in Multiple High-Impact Practices

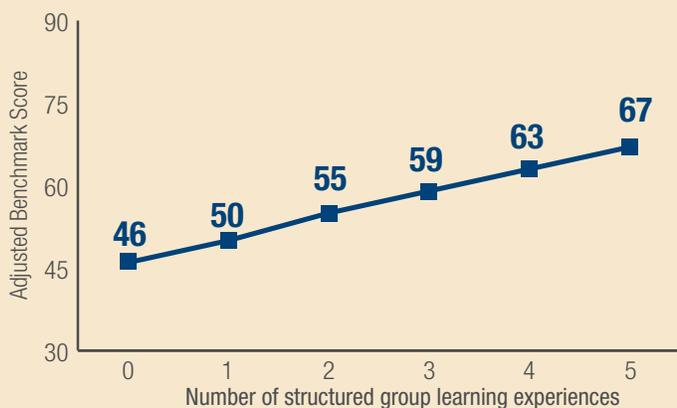
Most of this report focuses on the results of students' experiencing one particular high-impact practice. Given the measurable benefit of experiencing one high-impact practice, it only makes sense to assess the effect of greater intensity—participation in more than one practice. To explore this issue, the Center analyzed the five high-impact practices described in CCIS as structured group learning experiences: orientation, accelerated or fast-track developmental education, first-year experience, student success course, and learning community.

## A Positive Relationship Between Greater Intensity and High Engagement

Findings indicate a consistently positive relationship between intensity—experiencing a greater number of structured group learning experiences—and engagement. Engagement levels rise as students participate in more structured group learning experiences, and this relationship holds for all *CCSSE* and *SENSE* benchmarks. See [www.ccsse.org/hip2](http://www.ccsse.org/hip2) for additional detail about the consistently positive relationship between intensity and engagement.

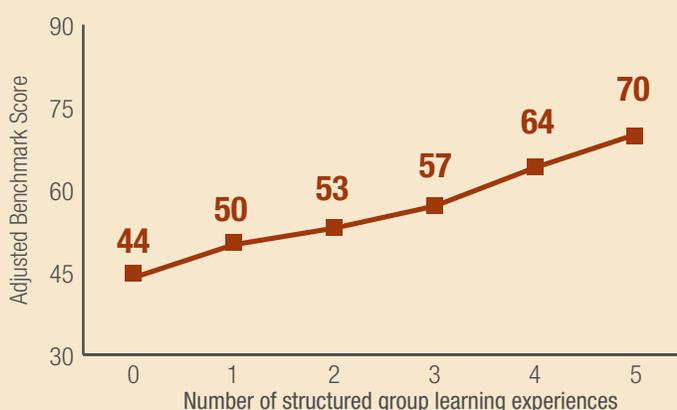
For *CCSSE*, the relationship is strongest for the *support for learners* benchmark, and for *SENSE*, it is strongest for the *early connections* benchmark. The graphs below show adjusted benchmark scores for students participating in 0–5 structured group learning experiences.

**Intensity: Participating in multiple structured group learning experiences and the *CCSSE support for learners* benchmark**



Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

**Intensity: Participating in multiple structured group learning experiences and the *SENSE early connections* benchmark**



Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

## Participation in the Five Structured Group Learning Experiences

Only 37% of *CCSSE* respondents and 41% of *SENSE* respondents participated in more than one structured group learning experience. About one-quarter of students indicated that they had not participated in any of the five practices and about one-third of students indicated that they had participated in one of the five.

In addition to the evident impact on engagement related to students' participation in multiple high-impact practices, two important observations emerge from review of these data. First, the proportions of students participating in multiple practices are notably small. Just as important, the lesson taken should not be to simply put students through a random collection of experiences, but to intentionally weave those experiences together in ways that increase educational coherence and momentum for success.

***CCSSE*: Participation in multiple structured group learning experiences**

| Number of structured group learning experiences | Number of students participating | Percentage of students participating |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 0   | 43,802                           | 28%                                  |
| 1   | 54,722                           | 35%                                  |
| 2   | 31,383                           | 20%                                  |
| 3   | 15,302                           | 10%                                  |
| 4   | 7,199                            | 5%                                   |
| 5   | 2,852                            | 2%                                   |

Source: 2012 *CCSSE* data

***SENSE*: Participation in multiple structured group learning experiences**

| Number of structured group learning experiences | Number of students participating | Percentage of students participating |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 0   | 11,336                           | 19%                                  |
| 1   | 22,885                           | 39%                                  |
| 2   | 13,733                           | 23%                                  |
| 3   | 7,773                            | 13%                                  |
| 4   | 2,386                            | 4%                                   |
| 5   | 340                              | 1%                                   |

Source: 2012 *SENSE* data (entering students)

# Next Steps for Colleges

## Repeat: Design, Implementation, Scale, Intensity

The findings in this report have practical implications for colleges—critical information about educational practices associated with increased student engagement.

That said, these things bear repeating:

**Quality of design matters.** Whatever practices or programs are contemplated, the design should be focused on promoting intentional and intensive student engagement so the program or practice makes a difference. The design task also involves determining—through data review and by listening carefully to students—which components of complex practices (e.g., time management or study skills) have the strongest relationships to student engagement and success. The design can then give priority to those components, rather than defaulting to the strategy of “throw everything in there and hope for the best.”

**Quality of implementation matters.** As everyone working in community colleges knows, it is possible to execute any of these high-impact practices poorly, leading to low or no positive impacts for students. Conversely, colleges committed to excellence in execution recognize the importance of the following:

- Sustaining sharp focus on the work
- Clearly defining key indicators of effectiveness
- Evaluating practice, monitoring progress, and refining design and implementation
- Providing continuing professional development for the people charged with implementation
- Listening systematically and often to students, who can be invaluable contributors to the design and evaluation of their own educational experiences

**Scale matters.** Implementing high-impact practices for small numbers of students cannot come close to creating the level of student success and college completion needed at community colleges. Yet the findings in this report are clear: **While the numbers of colleges offering high-impact student experiences may be growing, the numbers of students participating in them are, in most places, way too low.** Now is the time to focus on scale: designing practices and programs for high impact, engineering them for scale, and then requiring them for all students who can benefit from them—even if this means *all students*.

**Intensity matters.** Finally, Center research indicates that there is a positive relationship between the number of particular high-impact practices students experience and students’ levels of engagement. Given this synergy, colleges may be most effective by intentionally weaving multiple high-impact practices into inescapably engaging experiences for students.

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“When new students first come in, I think they should have a mandatory one-on-one sit-down with a counselor to really discuss in detail their degree plan and stuff.”

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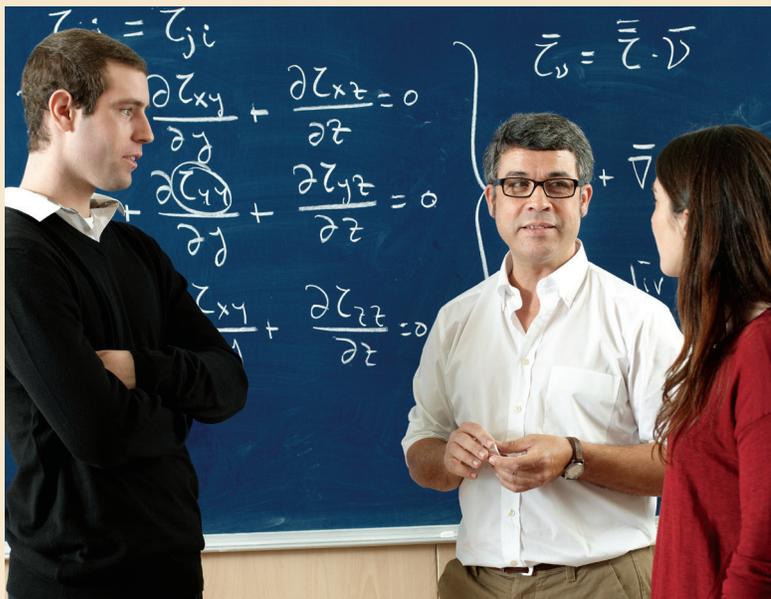
*Student*

---

“They have a welcome packet that they give out. When you tell them what program you’re interested in, they have a form for each of those programs, a description of the program, what classes you take, and who your advisor is.”

---

*Student*





## Campus Discussions: Promoting High-Impact Practices

As colleges examine and redesign students' educational experiences, they will benefit from thoughtful discussions that include a range of stakeholders. These discussions should be informed whenever possible by data, so participants can evaluate the effectiveness of the college's current practices as well as those under consideration. Key questions include the following:

- Do we regularly review and fully understand the data describing students' current experiences at our college—data about student engagement, learning, progress, and attainment?
- What percentages of students at our college participate in each of the identified high-impact practices? What are the target levels of participation?
- What are the characteristics of students who participate—and of those who do not—in terms of enrollment status, day versus evening enrollment, race/ethnicity, gender, age, etc.? In other words, which students appear to have access to these experiences, and which students do not?
- Do any particular groups of students appear to benefit from participation in one or more of these practices in disproportionately positive ways? Are there student groups at our college who do not experience those benefits?
- What percentages of students at our college participate in multiple high-impact practices—a pattern that evidence suggests will further heighten their engagement levels and prospects for success?
- At our college, what are the relationships between participation in high-impact practices and students' overall levels of engagement?
- How well are we incorporating key design principles (see page 4) into these experiences for students?
- What are our plans and our processes for ensuring quality of implementation and routinely evaluating the effectiveness of these practices?
- What is the standard of evidence that would lead us to make certain experiences *mandatory* for some or all students? Once such requirements are established, what measures must we take to ensure that experiences *intended* to be mandatory *actually* are mandatory?
- In what ways can we analyze and document the return on investment in bringing high-impact practices to substantial scale?
- How can we engage the college community in thinking about how high-impact practices can be integrated into clear, coherent, structured academic and career pathways for students?

## From Practices to Pathways

Community college students frequently encounter conditions that may pose significant barriers to success. These include the following:

- A plethora of choices that students often are unprepared to make
- Academic skill development needs that may lead to multiple semesters of coursework unconnected to the content areas that interest them
- The need to choose from a massive number of available courses, often in the absence of an educational plan
- Limited or confusing information for decision making about transfer and employment alternatives
- An array of important services that are provided by the college but optional for students
- A lack of the personal connections with peers, faculty, and staff that help students come to believe that they belong in their college

As a consequence of these and other factors, far more students aspire to graduate and/or transfer than actually do. Too many new students never complete a single college credit. Others complete too many, wandering aimlessly around the curriculum. Some accrue enough credits for a credential but do not earn one.

These are the features and the results of education as currently designed. The designs are not working well for many—or even most—students. The needed solution? Redesign the college experience.

### What Would College Redesign Look Like?

In 2004, the Center published one of its earliest national reports, *Engagement by Design*, asserting then as now that community college student engagement and success will be achieved not by accident, but through intentional design of educational experiences. That proposition now is augmented through converging research from an interesting array of sources—brain science, decision theory, behavioral economics, and both local and national community college research.

In brief, the implications of the research are that students will benefit from more structure, clearer educational plans, the earliest possible entry into academic and career pathways (i.e., clusters of related programs of study or meta-majors), early and frequent feedback, and academic supports integrated into their learning experiences. An effective educational experience built around these ideals also would feature intensive student engagement through cohort experiences, group work, active learning, interaction with faculty and advisors, co-curricular assignments, and so on.

The Center's work on identifying high-impact practices has from inception been accompanied by the caution that the practices under the microscope do not comprise a checklist. If this work results in more colleges involving more students in a collection of discrete high-impact practices, that development will reflect real progress. But it is unlikely to produce the magnitude of improvement in college completion and equity that community colleges seek.

Emerging knowledge and lessons from experience are pushing community colleges to a new level of work needed to expedite progress toward having more students achieve their goals: certificates, degrees, transfer, and/or employment. In its 2012 report, *Reclaiming the American Dream*, the 21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, mindful of those needs, called on community colleges to reimagine the student experience, constructing coherent, structured pathways to certificate and degree completion.

Given the Center's long-term commitment to intentional design of educational experiences, the challenge of redesign comes as a natural extension of a decade of work. And colleges across the country are taking up the call, some already on the brink of remarkable transformation.

To facilitate this work, the Center's upcoming third report in the high-impact practices series will explore links between students' participation in the practices and student outcomes such as course completion, persistence, and credit hours earned. The report also will feature examples of community colleges' progress in creating evidence-based pathways for students, weaving high-impact practices into coherent undergraduate experiences. The report will be accompanied by print and electronic tools, available on the Center's website, that colleges can use in planning their work and assessing their progress.

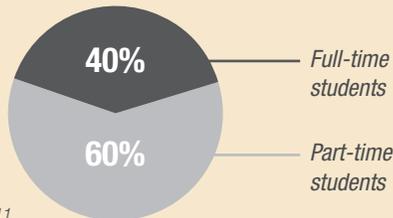
Community colleges are embarking on new and inventive efforts on behalf of their students. The Center for Community College Student Engagement, working with colleagues on campuses and in partner organizations across the country, maintains its commitment to inform, support, and illuminate that work.

# Characteristics of Community College Students

## Students Juggle Priorities

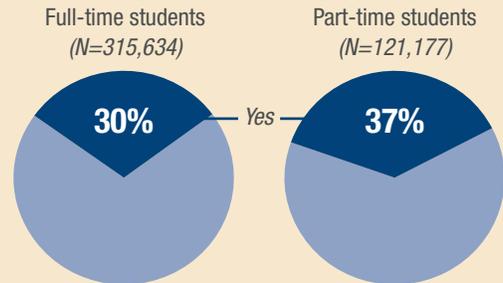
Most students attend classes and study while working; caring for dependents; and struggling to balance personal, academic, and financial challenges. Colleges can help students plan their coursework around their other commitments and develop skills to manage the demands on their time.

Attending college (N=7,147,084)



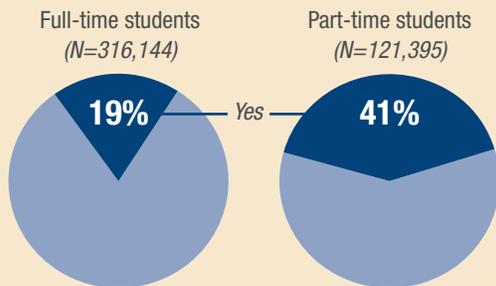
Source: IPEDS, fall 2011

Caring for dependents 11 or more hours per week



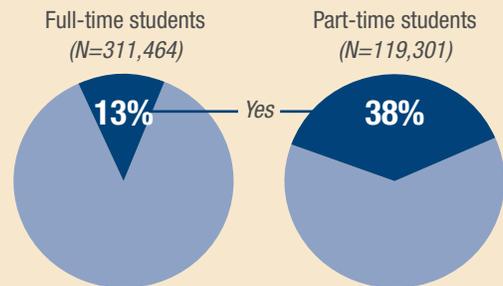
Source: 2012 CCSSE Cohort data

Working more than 30 hours per week



Source: 2012 CCSSE Cohort data

Taking evening and/or weekend classes

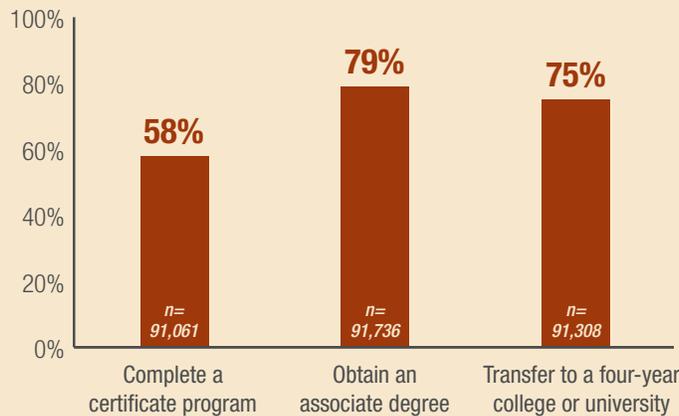


Source: 2012 CCSSE Cohort data

## Students' Aspirations and Attainment: Fewer Than Half of Students Reach Their Goals

Available data show a sizable gap between the percentage of entering students who aim to complete a credential and the percentage of those who actually do.

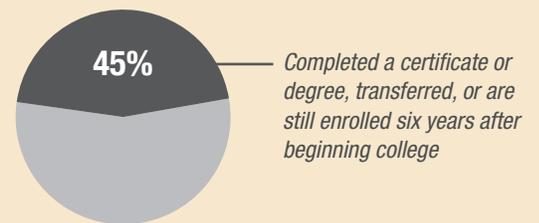
Please indicate whether your goal(s) for attending this college include the following:



Note: Respondents may indicate more than one goal.

Source: 2012 SENSE Cohort data (entering students)

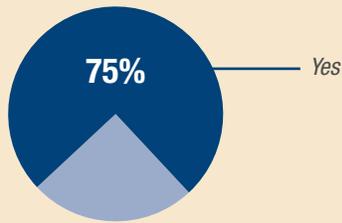
Six years after beginning community college, fewer than half of students who entered college with a goal of earning a degree or certificate have earned a credential, have transferred to a four-year institution, or are still enrolled in their community college.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, NCES. (2001). Beginning postsecondary students longitudinal study 1996–2001 (BPS: 96/01). Analysis by Community College Research Center.

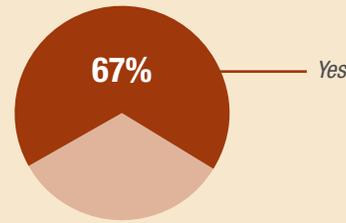
## Testing Indicates Many Students Are Underprepared

CCSSE respondents who report that they took a placement test and the test indicated that they needed developmental education in at least one area (N=69,767)



Source: 2012 CCSSE Promising Practices data

SENSE respondents who report that their placement tests indicated they needed developmental coursework in at least one area (N=49,942)

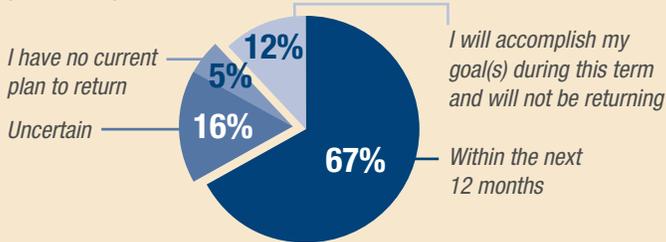


Source: 2012 SENSE Cohort data (entering students)

## Students' Plans After the Current Semester

Asked about their plans after the current semester, almost one-quarter (21%) of CCSSE respondents report that they have no plan to return to college or are uncertain about their future plans. These data suggest an opportunity for colleges to help students establish academic plans and pathways that will help them persist in college.

When do you plan to take classes at this college again?  
(N=434,944)



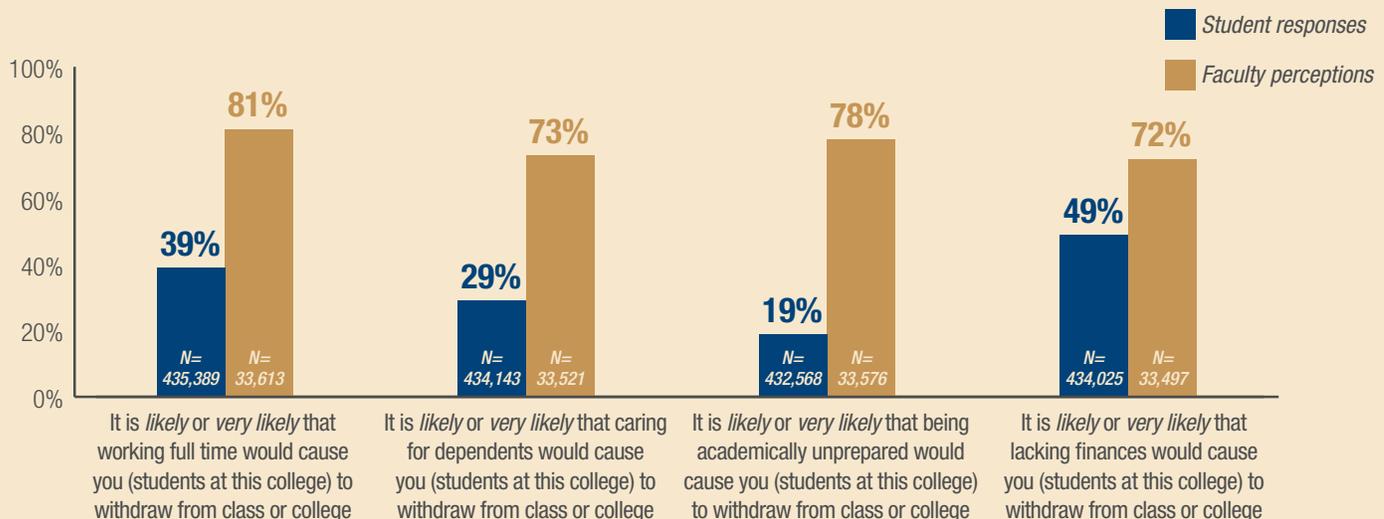
Source: 2012 CCSSE Cohort data

“I was going to go full time, but with my schedule and the kids, and working, it wasn’t realistic. [My advisor] helped me be more realistic with planning my classes. I’m [attending] part time now, and I can’t imagine taking one more class right now.”

Student

## Student and Faculty Views: What Stands Between Students and Their Aspirations

CCSSE and CCFSSSE data indicate that many faculty members are more likely than students to believe that various circumstances, including working full time, caring for dependents, or being academically underprepared, would be likely causes for students to withdraw from classes or college.



Sources: 2012 CCSSE Cohort data and 2012 CCFSSSE Cohort data

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## CCSSE and SENSE Member Colleges

For lists of CCSSE and SENSE member colleges, visit [www.cccse.org](http://www.cccse.org).

## Endnotes

- 1 Price, D., & Tovar, E. (in press). Student engagement and institutional graduation rates: Identifying high-impact educational practices for community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*.
- 2 Tabachnick, B.G. & Fidell, L.S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon/Pearson Education.

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