



2008 Institutional Report

Overview of National 2008 CCSSE Cohort Survey Results

Introduction

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

CCSSE again this year has used a three-year cohort of participating colleges (2006 through 2008) in all of its data analyses, including the computation of benchmark scores. This cohort is referred to as the **2008 CCSSE Cohort** throughout all reports and documentation.¹

This approach increases the total number of institutions and students contributing to the national dataset, which in turn increases the reliability of the overall results. In addition, the three-year cohort approach minimizes the impact, in any given year, of participation by statewide consortia.

This overview encompasses four key sections and is organized to provide a general understanding of findings from the 2008 CCSSE Cohort. First, 2008 CCSSE Cohort colleges and student respondents are highlighted as well as data concerning the 2008 CCSSE Consortia. Second, CCSSE institutions and their students are compared to all U.S. public community colleges. In the third section, selected findings are showcased. In the fourth section, information is provided to help college leaders understand and use their CCSSE results.

CCSSE Member Colleges

The 2008 CCSSE Cohort is comprised of a total of 585 institutions across 48 states, plus British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and the Marshall Islands. Two hundred ninety-five of these member colleges are classified as small (< 4,500), 147 as medium (4,500-7,999), 96 as large (8,000-14,999), and 47 as extra-large institutions (15,000 + credit students).² One hundred fourteen of the Cohort member colleges are classified as urban-serving, 129 as suburban-serving, and 342 as rural-serving.³

CCSSE Consortia

A CCSSE consortium may comprise two or more colleges in a multi-college district, system, or state—or alternatively, a group of five or more colleges with common interests or challenges. Consortium members share reports and can add customized questions to the survey.

2008 CCSSE membership includes statewide participation in Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Virginia, and West Virginia; other state-based consortia include Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, and South Carolina. The Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Ivy Tech (Indiana), New Jersey, Kentucky, Maricopa, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, and Virginia consortia added questions to the *Community College Student Report* for purposes of statewide assessment, to respond to accrediting agencies, and/or for internal review.

This is the fourth year for the Achieving the Dream Consortium. The Achieving the Dream Consortium comprises 34 colleges from 11 states that are part of a national initiative focused on improving success rates for community college students, particularly those that traditionally have been underserved in American higher education.

The Hispanic Student Success (HSS) Consortium is a group of colleges that are designated by the federal government as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (those with at least 25% Hispanic full-time equivalent enrollment and of the Hispanic student enrollment at least 50% are low income) and/or hold current membership in the Hispanic

¹For returning participants, the college's most recent year of participation is included in data analyses. For example, if a college participated in 2007 and 2008, only the 2008 data would be used in the three-year cohort.

²Size classifications are based on the college's enrollment size during their most recent year of CCSSE participation; this may or may not match the college's current size classification.

³These designations are based on the Carnegie Foundation Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

Association of Colleges and Universities (ACU). In its fifth year, the HSS Consortium brings together 26 institutions across seven states to build collaborative and networking relationships and to highlight promising practices through publications and at national and regional community college conferences. This consortium also adds questions to the *Community College Student Report* and will use CCSSE data and comparative reports to make informed decisions about how to improve these unique institutions.

This is the fifth year for the Texas Small Colleges Consortium. These 18 Texas small community colleges have joined CCSSE to gain valuable information about the engagement, learning, and retention of the students they serve—and to build institutional capacity for collecting, understanding, and using data about educational practices and student success. With support from the Houston Endowment, Inc., all of the institutions have gathered and reviewed baseline data in a previous survey year, sought to implement necessary changes for improvement in the following year, and have administered one follow-up survey.

Student Respondents

Credit classes are randomly selected—stratified by time of day (morning, afternoon, and evening)—from institutional class data files to participate in the survey. Of those sampled, 343,378 students submitted usable surveys. The number of completed surveys produced an overall “percent of target” rate of 79%. Percent of target rate is the ratio of the adjusted number of completed surveys to target sample sizes. The adjusted survey count is the number of usable surveys that were filled out properly and did not fall into any of the exclusionary categories.⁴

Student Respondent Profile

To compare the characteristics of student respondents to the characteristics of the underlying student population for each participating college, CCSSE uses the data reported by the institution in its most recent IPEDS Enrollment Report for the following variables: gender, race and ethnicity, student age, and enrollment status (part- or full-time). The data are aggregated to compare the 2008 CCSSE Cohort survey respondent population to the total student population of the 2008 CCSSE Cohort member colleges.

Gender

Of the 335,907 student respondents who answered this item, 41% are male and 59% are female. This mirrors the full population of 2008 CCSSE Cohort community college students, comprised of 42% males and 58% females.

Age

2008 CCSSE Cohort student respondents range in age from 18 to 65+. Approximately 90% are between 18 and 39; 67% are 18 to 24, while 23% are 25 to 39.

Racial Identification

Sixty-four percent of student respondents identify themselves as White/non-Hispanic, 12% as Hispanic/Latino/Spanish, 12% as Black or African American, and 6% as Asian. Two percent of the student respondents are Native American. Four percent marked “other” when responding to the question, “What is your racial identification?”

International Students

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

Enrollment Status

Seventy percent of the student respondents report attending college full-time, while 38% of the 2008 CCSSE Cohort colleges’ total student population attended full-time. Only 30% of the surveyed students report being part-time college students, compared to 62% as reported to IPEDS. This inverse representation is a result of the sampling technique and the in-class administration process. For this reason, survey results are either weighted or disaggregated on the full-time/part-time variable so that reports will accurately reflect the underlying student population.

⁴ See exclusionary rules on pg. 3

The results for the following student respondent categories are weighted according to the most recent IPEDS population data.

Limited English Speaking Students

Students with limited English speaking skills, or those whose native language is not English, comprise a significant proportion of students in community colleges. Among CCSSE participants, small institutions include 7% non-native English speakers, while 11% of medium institutions' students are non-native English speakers. Comparatively, large numbers of non-native English speaking students attend large (17% of enrollees) and extra-large institutions (25%).

First-Generation Status

Thirty-three percent of students indicate that neither parent has earned a degree higher than a high school diploma nor has college experience; accordingly, these students are considered "first-generation" status. Of these first-generation students who provided responses for mother's **and** father's education level, 66% percent indicate that their mothers' highest level of education is a high school diploma, and 60% indicate that level for their fathers.

Educational Attainment

Sixty-eight percent of the respondents report starting their college careers at the community college where they completed the survey. Meanwhile, 73% of students indicate that their highest level of educational attainment is a high school diploma or GED; 18% report either a certificate or an associate degree; 5% have earned a bachelor's degree; and 1% have earned an advanced degree.

Credit Hours Earned

Forty-six percent of students report having completed fewer than 15 credit hours; 21% have completed 15-29 credit hours; and 33% have completed more than 30 credit hours.

Grades

Forty-four percent of students report that they earned grades of A- or higher, while 2% of students report that they earned grades of C- or lower.

External Commitments

Fifty-seven percent of students work 21 or more hours per week; 23% of students care for dependents between 1 and 10 hours per week; and 69% of students spend between 1 and 5 hours per week commuting to and from class.

Excluded Respondents

The total counts of respondents in an institution's raw data file will differ from the numbers reported in the institutional reports due to intentional exclusion of certain surveys. Exclusions serve the purpose of ensuring that all institutional reports are based on the same sampling

methods and that results are therefore comparable across institutions. Respondents may be excluded from institutional reports for the following reasons:

- ★ The respondent did not indicate whether he or she was enrolled part- or full-time at the institution. *Because all results are either weighted or broken down by enrollment status, this is essential information for reporting.*
- ★ The survey is invalid.⁵
- ★ The student reported his or her age as under 18.
- ★ The student indicated that he or she had taken the survey in a previous class or did not respond to the item.
- ★ Oversampled respondents are not included. These are surveys that individual institutions paid an additional fee to acquire. Because there are no requirements stipulating how these students are sampled, these data are not included in the standard institutional report.

Respondents Included in the College's Raw Data File

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

⁵ If a student does not answer any of the 21 sub-items on item 4, answers "Very Often" to all 21 items, or answers "Never" to all, the survey is excluded.

Representation

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

Table 1 provides information about the representation of the 2008 CCSSE Cohort member colleges as compared to community and technical colleges across the nation.⁶ CCSSE uses the most recent IPEDS enrollment data for comparisons in this table.

Table 1: Colleges by Size and Urbanicity

	2008 CCSSE Cohort Member Colleges	National Population ⁷	2008 CCSSE Cohort Proportion of National Population
By Size			
# of Institutions	576	1,052	55%
Small (up to 4,499)	288	574	50%
Medium (4,500-7,999)	147	229	64%
Large (8,000-14,999)	94	157	60%
Extra-Large (15,000+)	47	92	51%
By Urbanicity			
# of Institutions	576	1,054	55%
Urban-serving	112	184	61%
Suburban-serving	127	223	57%
Rural-serving	337	647	52%

⁶ Hospital-based institutions, private institutions, and institutions located outside the fifty states are not included in representation charts.

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

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

Table 2 shows the number of credit-enrolled students from CCSSE member colleges as compared to the number across the nation by size and urbanicity.⁸ Overall, CCSSE's 2008 Cohort survey respondents represent a total credit enrollment of 3,753,575 students across 585 CCSSE member colleges. CCSSE's entire college membership represents approximately 55% of the nation's community colleges (1,054 accredited, public associate degree-granting institutions) and 58% of the national student population (6,431,166 credit students).

Table 2: Enrollments by Size and Urbanicity

	Students Enrolled in 2008 CCSSE Cohort Member Colleges	National Student Population in Community Colleges	Proportion of Students Enrolled in 2008 CCSSE Cohort Member Colleges
	Credit Enrollment 3,753,575 CCSSE students	Credit Enrollment 6,431,166 national population	58%
By Size			
Small (up to 4,499)	687,650	1,287,794	53%
Medium (4,500-7,999)	885,571	1,381,342	64%
Large (8,000-14,999)	1,031,797	1,696,524	61%
Extra-Large (15,000+)	1,148,557	2,065,506	56%
By Urbanicity			
Urban-serving	1,352,462	2,171,928	62%
Suburban-serving	1,105,350	1,944,315	57%
Rural-serving	1,259,763	2,314,923	54%

⁸ Hospital-based institutions, private institutions, and institutions located outside the fifty states are not included in representation charts.

CCSSE Student Respondents across Member Institutions

Table 3 shows a comparison of the adjusted number of CCSSE cohort survey respondents displayed alongside the total student enrollment at participating colleges. The column labeled “2008 CCSSE Cohort Member Colleges Adjusted Respondents” shows the number of usable surveys (those not affected by CCSSE’s exclusionary rules). The column labeled, “2008 CCSSE Cohort Member Colleges Enrollments” reflects institutions’ populations as reported to IPEDS for the most recent enrollment reports.

These data are displayed by institutional size (small, medium, large, and extra-large) as well as urbanicity (rural-serving, suburban-serving, and urban-serving). The data from Table 3 highlight an over-representation of student respondents from small institutions, which in turn results in an under-representation of respondents from extra-large colleges.

Table 3: Adjusted Respondents by Size and Urbanicity

	2008 CCSSE Cohort Member Colleges’ Adjusted Respondents⁹	2008 CCSSE Cohort Member Colleges’ Enrollments
	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Credit Enrollments</i>
	343,378 students (100%)	3,939,236 students (100%)
By Size		
Small (up to 4,499)	118,253 (34%)	692,266 (18%)
Medium (4,500-7,999)	94,745 (28%)	950,925 (24%)
Large (8,000-14,999)	78,477 (23%)	1,147,488 (29%)
Extra-Large (15,000+)	51,903 (15%)	1,148,557 (29%)
By Urbanicity		
Urban-serving	83,785 (24%)	1,357,446 (34%)
Suburban-serving	89,450 (26%)	1,274,317 (32%)
Rural-serving	170,143 (50%)	1,307,473 (33%)

⁹ Minus exclusions (see exclusionary rules on pg. 3).

Selected Findings

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

This section on Selected Findings from the 2008 CCSSE Cohort data is organized in terms of seven key topics: Educational Goals, Time on Task, Relationships, Academic Experience, Barriers to Persistence, Student Satisfaction, and Student and Academic Support Services.

Educational Goals

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

As seen in Table 4, students identify various educational goals. Fifty-nine percent of the student respondents identify obtaining an associate degree as a primary goal. Fifty-two percent are interested in transferring to a 4-year college or university, while 41% are primarily interested in obtaining or updating job-related skills. Twenty-nine percent of respondents seek to change careers, and 29% aspire to complete a certification program.

Table 4: Educational Goals

	Primary goal	Secondary goal	Not a goal
Complete a certification program	29%	19%	52%
Obtain an associate degree	59%	21%	20%
Transfer to a 4-year college or university	52%	21%	27%
Obtain or update job-related skills	41%	27%	32%
Self-improvement/personal enjoyment	39%	35%	26%
Change careers	29%	16%	55%

Time on Task

Students' behaviors contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will attain their educational goals. "Time on task" is a key variable, and there are a variety of settings and means through which students may apply themselves to the learning process.

Table 5 highlights that only 12% of full-time students spend at least 21 hours per week preparing for class while 37% spend 5 hours or fewer preparing for class.

Table 5: Time on Task

	Part-time			Full-time		
	5 hours or fewer	6-20 hours	21 hours or more	5 hours or fewer	6-20 hours	21 hours or more
Preparing for class	50%	43%	6%	37%	50%	12%
Working for pay	20%	14%	65%	31%	24%	44%
Participating in college-sponsored activities	97%	3%	<1%	93%	6%	2%

Not surprisingly, part-time students spend more time working for pay, more than 21 hours per week, than their full-time counterparts (65% vs. 44%); however, these findings highlight the competing priorities facing all students attending community colleges. Finally, there is minimal participation in college-sponsored activities among all students.

Relationships

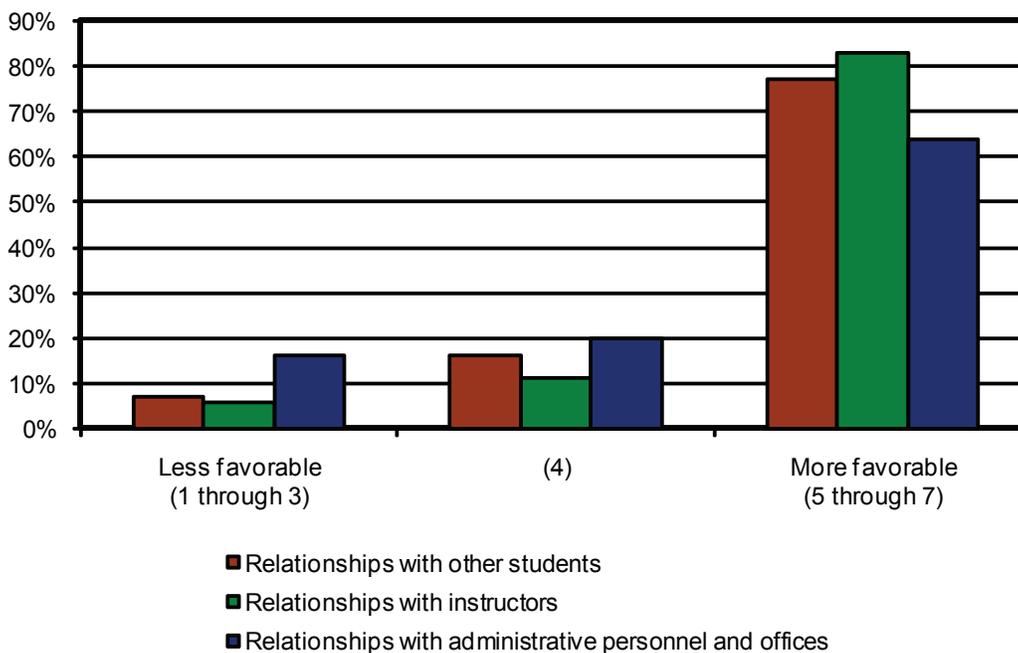
Many educators believe in the power of their individual connections to students – a belief that is supported by higher education research as well. In point of fact, the level of student-faculty interaction is one of the most powerful predictors of student persistence in college. And, in numerous focus groups conducted with community college students, it was found that when asked to cite the factor that was most important in helping them stay in school and succeed there, students inevitably talk about *relationships*.

Various items on the survey can address the level and extent of students' relational experience while attending the college. Item 4q on the survey asks students to indicate how often they worked with instructors on activities other than coursework. Nearly three-fourths (71%) indicated they "Never" engaged in such activities. When asked how much their college encouraged contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds, 48% stated that this occurred "Quite a bit/

Very much." Over two-thirds (69%) indicated that their college provided "Some/Very little" of the support needed to thrive socially while only 9% indicated this occurred "Very much." Finally, 78% of their friends are "Quite a bit/Extremely" supportive of their attending the college while 87% of their families were supportive of this decision.

Figure 1 highlights results from item 11 on the survey, which ask specifically about students' relationships with other students, instructors, and administrative personnel and offices at the college. Overall, students gave high ratings to their relationships. Regarding relationships with other students, respondents judged the quality of their relationships quite favorably with a rating of 5 or higher given by 77%. An even higher percentage (83%) gave favorable ratings to the quality of their relationships with instructors, while relationships with administrative personnel and offices were given a slightly lower favorable rating (64%).

Figure 1: Relationships



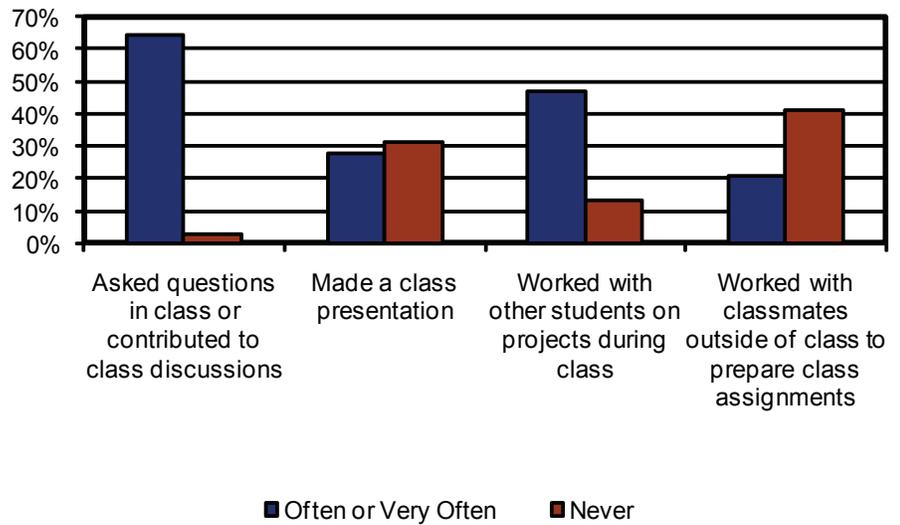
Academic Experience

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

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

While some students are highly involved in their academic experience (those who marked *Often* or *Very Often*), others are less engaged, as illustrated by their responses of *Never*, as displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Academic Experience

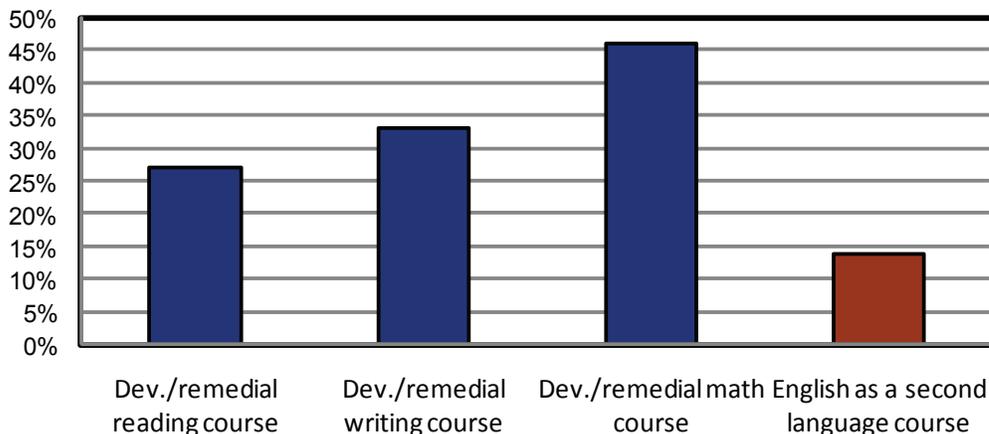


Developmental Education and ESL

Community colleges have quite diverse student populations, and in order to adequately serve student needs, the institutions offer a variety of courses and special programs. Item 8 on the *CCSR* asks students to identify which course paths they are following. As shown in Figure 3, large percentages of students either have taken or plan to enroll in developmental reading, writing, and/or math

courses, while a smaller percentage plan on taking an ESL course.

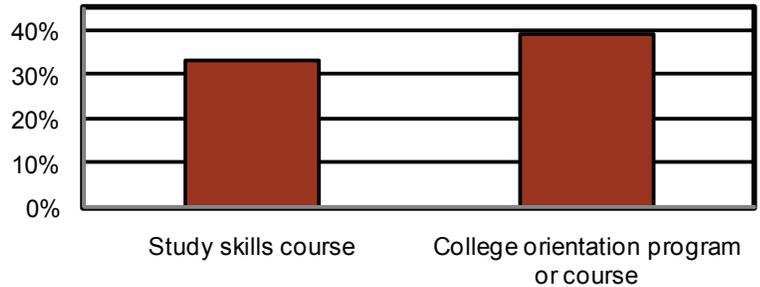
Figure 3: Developmental Education and ESL (Have Done or Plan to Do)



Study Skills and Orientation Courses

A third of students have taken or will enroll in a study skills course, and 39% have taken or will enroll in an orientation course, as highlighted in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Study Skills and Orientation Courses
(Have Done or Plan to Do)**



Curricular Experience

Table 6 shows the percentage of students who have taken or plan to enroll in internships, honors courses, or organized learning communities.

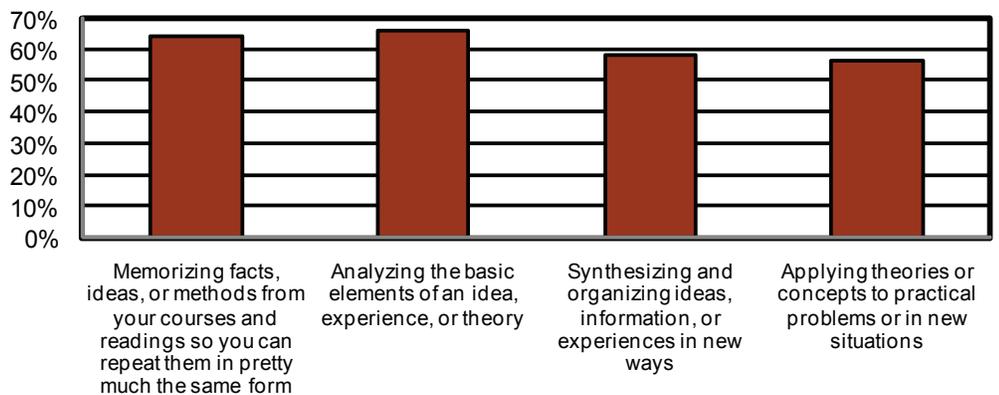
Table 6: Curricular Experiences

	Have done or Plan to do
Internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	58%
Honors course	27%
Organized learning communities (linked courses/study groups led by faculty or counselors)	27%

Student Learning

Student respondents indicate how much their coursework emphasizes intellectual processes such as memorization, the application of theories and concepts to practical problems, analysis, synthesis and organization, making value judgments, and using learned information to perform new skills. Figure 5 illustrates students' perceptions of the extent to which their respective colleges promote these cognitive activities.

**Figure 5: Student Learning
(Quite a bit or Very Much)**

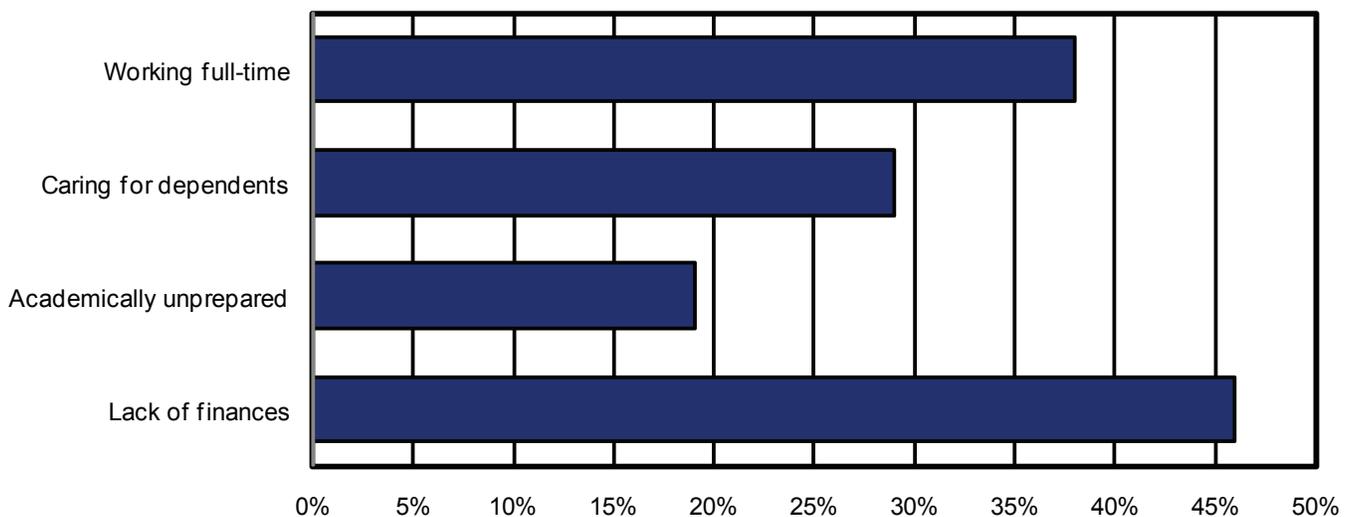


Barriers to Persistence

CCSSE also asks students to indicate the issues that would require them to withdraw from college. That is, what keeps students from achieving their educational goals? The percentage of students who report that the various factors would result in their withdrawing from class or from college is highlighted in Figure 6. Again, students could mark more than one factor; therefore, percentages will

not sum to 100%. Other barriers to persistence include lack of peer or familial support. Twenty-two percent of students report that their friends are *Somewhat* or *Not Very* supportive of “your attending this college” while only 13% respond similarly about support from their immediate families.

**Figure 6: Barriers to Persistence
(Likely or Very Likely)**



Student Satisfaction

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

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

Student and Academic Support Services

Often surveys ask a combination of questions relating to satisfaction, use, or importance levels of services, but rarely are surveys designed in a way that asks students to link all three, as does *CCSSE*. Table 7 displays use, satisfaction, and importance of a number of key academic and student support services. The first column reports the percentage of students who say that they used the service either *Sometimes* or *Often*; the second column shows the percentage of students who report they are *Somewhat* or *Very Satisfied* with the service; and the third column reports the percentage of students who rate the service as *Somewhat* or *Very Important*.

Accordingly, students are most likely to use, express satisfaction with, and rate as important the following services: academic advising and planning and computer labs. While almost half of the students report child care as important, only 5% use child care services and only 12% are satisfied with this service. Similarly, 66% of respondents rate job placement assistance as important, but only 12% use this service and only 23% are satisfied with it.

Table 7: Student Services by Use, Satisfaction, and Importance

	Use (Sometimes/Often)	Satisfaction (Very/Somewhat)	Importance (Very/Somewhat)
Academic Advising/planning	56%	72%	90%
Career Counseling	29%	45%	79%
Job placement assistance	12%	23%	66%
Peer or other tutoring	25%	40%	70%
Skills labs (writing, math, etc.)	39%	50%	76%
Child care	5%	12%	46%
Financial aid advising	44%	50%	78%
Computer lab	62%	72%	85%
Student Organizations	16%	29%	59%
Transfer credit assistance	28%	38%	73%
Services to students with disabilities	9%	18%	60%

Note: The services highlighted in bright blue in each column are the three highest ratings in that area while the services highlighted in orange are among the lowest rated in each area.

Participation in Selected Activities

The first 21 engagement items on the *CCSR* ask students to indicate how often they have engaged in particular activities during the current academic year. For purposes of analysis, *CCSSE* collapsed the response categories *Often* and *Very Often* to report substantial levels of engagement; the criterion for inclusion was that half of **all** students had to report participating in the activity. This information is highlighted in Table 8.

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

Table 8: Percentage of Students Who Reported Participating Often or Very Often in Selected Activities by Enrollment Status

Most Frequent Student Activity Items	All	Part-Time	Full-time
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	64%	63%	66%
Used the Internet or instant messaging to work on an assignment	63%	57%	71%
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	60%	53%	69%
Received prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors on your performance	56%	56%	58%

In comparison, it is also important to note what students are not doing in college as frequently as one might expect. To report the least frequent activities, *CCSSE* uses the *never* response category. Table 9 consists of items where 30% or more of all students report never engaging in that particular activity.

Part-time students are more likely than are their full-time peers to report never when responding to student activity items.

Table 9: Percentage of Students Who Reported Never Participating in Selected Activities by Enrollment Status

Least Frequent Student Activity Items	All	Part-Time	Full-time
Participated in a community-based project as a part of a regular course	78%	82%	72%
Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	73%	77%	67%
Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework	71%	76%	64%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class	47%	52%	40%
Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	41%	48%	32%
Made a class presentation	31%	39%	20%
Talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor	31%	36%	23%

2008 Special Focus Questions: Student Financial Aid

CCSSE has established a regular feature that will allow participating colleges and national researchers to delve more deeply into areas of student experience and institutional performance that are key to student success. The five 2008 “Special Focus Questions,” developed in collaboration with the Congressionally-designated Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, elicited new information about students’ experiences with financial aid. Results from these responses are provided in the Frequency Distributions section of your Institutional Report and will be highlighted in CCSSE’s 2008 National Report. In future years, the special focus questions will be determined by college interests and national trends.

Student Financial Aid Results

Community colleges have long been a primary access point for traditionally underrepresented students, and increasingly are becoming an entry point for all student populations. Enrollments at community colleges have dramatically increased over the past several decades, while funding for these institutions in many locations

has significantly declined, resulting in higher tuition and fees for students. However, 41% of student respondents to the 2008 Special Focus Questions report not submitting the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) to seek aid that might help pay for college expenses. As illustrated by Table 10 on the next page, full-time students are 15% more likely to receive financial aid than part-time students. Full- and part-time students are more likely to receive assistance in the form of grants and scholarships than in the form of loans. Of students who did not submit a FAFSA, 40% of first-generation students and 39% of non-first-generation students did not do so because they thought they would not qualify for assistance. Further, 30% of first-generation students report that they did not submit a FAFSA because they did not need any financial aid. Non-first-generation students cite their best source for learning about the financial aid process as parents or other family members, while first-generation students are more likely to garner such information from high school teachers, counselors, and college personnel.

Figure 7: 2008 Special Focus Questions, Item #1

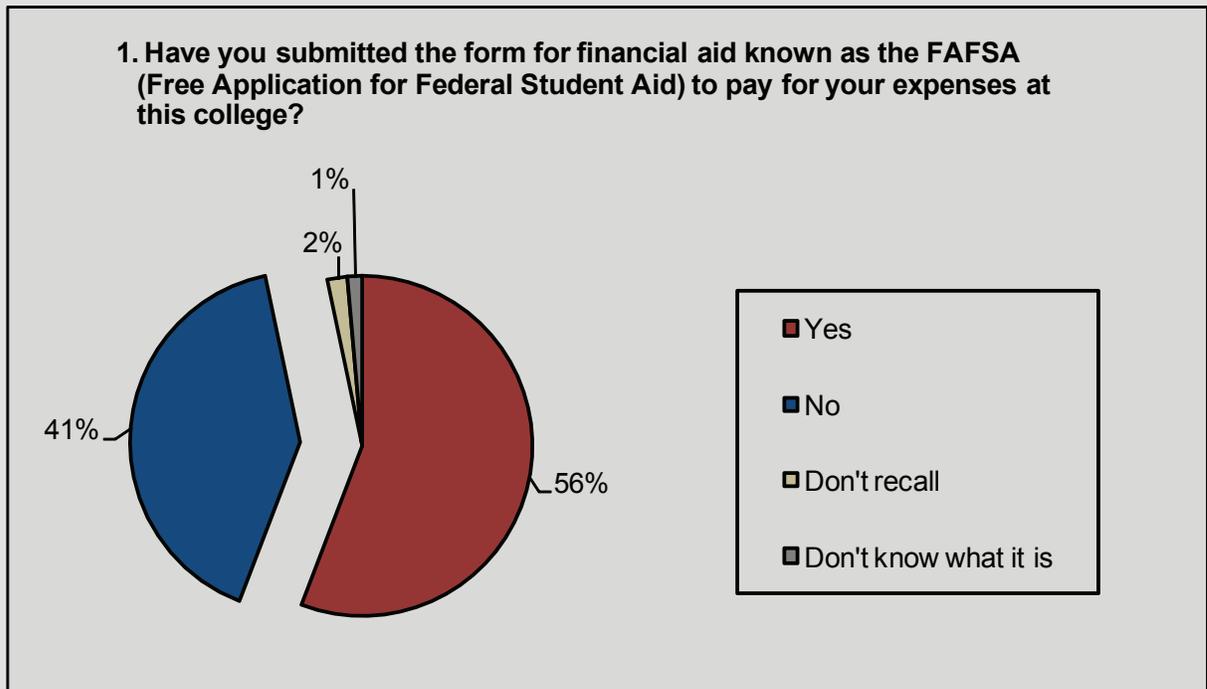


Table 10: Selected Special Focus Questions Frequencies

Did you receive (or have you been notified that you will receive) ANY TYPE of financial aid (scholarships, grants, loans) to help pay for college? Mark only one response.			
	Part-time	Full-time	All Students
Did not receive any type of financial aid	46%	31%	35%
Received or will receive scholarship(s) and/or grant(s) (money that DOES NOT have to be paid back)	26%	36%	33%
Received or will receive loan(s) (money that DOES have to be paid back)	9%	11%	10%
Received or will receive both scholarship(s)/ grant(s) and loans	8%	12%	11%
Don't know yet whether I will receive financial aid	11%	10%	11%
If you did not fill out the form for financial aid (FAFSA), what was the main reason you did not? Mark only one response. *Frequencies calculated only for those students indicating that they did not submit FAFSA.			
	First-generation	Not First-generation	All Students
Did not want to provide sensitive personal information (such as tax or immigration information)	2%	1%	2%
The form was too complicated/complex to fill out	6%	5%	5%
Did not think I would qualify for financial aid	40%	39%	39%
Did not need any financial aid	30%	39%	37%
Other	21%	16%	18%
Which ONE of the following BEST describes the source from which you originally learned about the process for applying for financial aid to help pay for college? Mark only one response.			
	First-generation	Not First-generation	All Students
Parents or other family members	19%	31%	27%
High school counselor or teacher	26%	26%	26%
College employee/staff member	24%	17%	20%
Friend or other student	18%	11%	14%
Did not learn about the financial aid application process	13%	15%	14%

CCSSE in Action: Understanding Survey Results

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

CCSSE Benchmarks¹⁰

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

As a reminder, the benchmark results highlight data from the 2008 CCSSE Cohort, which includes 585 institutions and 343,378 student respondents. The larger number of institutions and students contributing to the national dataset increases the reliability of the overall results. In addition, the three-year cohort approach minimizes the impact, in any given year, of statewide consortia participation.

Enrollment Status

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

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

population.

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

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

Effect Size as a Measure of Notable Differences

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

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

Statistical Significance Meets Practical Significance

In addition to focusing on items meeting the criteria highlighted above, look for patterns in students' responses. For example, are students consistently above or below the mean of the comparison group in certain areas of engagement? Are the differences explainable in terms of a college's mission, the nature of the undergraduate program, or certain students' characteristics? Also, do not rely exclusively on statistical significance tests to identify areas that warrant attention. A consistent pattern of scoring

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

above the mean, even though all the items may not reach statistical significance, may indicate the institution is doing the right things in terms of good educational practice. At the same time, some institutions have very high expectations for student engagement and may fall short of their own aspirations even though comparisons with other institutions are favorable. And in some cases, of course, it may be that the national mean is itself unacceptably low.

CCSSE Consortia Results

CCSSE consortium colleges that added questions to the survey instrument will find their corresponding frequency results behind the Frequency Distributions tab.¹¹ In addition to a college's comparison to its consortium group and the 2008 CCSSE Cohort, a consortium college also will receive a comparison to other colleges in its size category.

Oversampling

CCSSE's sample sizes are determined by institutional size, as reported in IPEDS. Colleges may elect to oversample in order to examine results for specific groups (such as students enrolled in developmental courses or students attending particular campus sites) or in order to increase overall sample size. The oversample dataset is included on CCSSE's Web site for download.

Student Identifier Data

In accordance with Texas state law and The University of Texas policies, CCSSE no longer provides student-identifier data in the Institutional Report raw data file available for download via the CCSSE Web site. For those colleges that depend upon the student identifier field in the CCSSE raw data file for institutional analyses, we will be happy to release that information in a separate and secure transmission. If you would like these data, please contact your liaison, and CCSSE will provide you the raw data file with student identifiers included on an encrypted CD-ROM. The decryption password will be supplied in an email.

¹¹See pp. 1-2 for information about CCSSE consortia.

Fast Facts

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

- ★ Paper administration, in-class completion time ranges from 35 to 50 minutes

CCSSE Participants

- ★ 343,378 students from 585 institutions in 48 states, plus British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and the Marshall Islands have completed the *CCSR* between 2006 and 2008.

2008 CCSSE Cohort Respondents

Gender: Male student respondents – 41% Female student respondents – 59%

Race/Ethnicity

- ★ Asian – 6%
- ★ Black – 12%
- ★ Latino/Hispanic – 12%
- ★ International – 6%
- ★ Native American – 2%
- ★ White – 64%
- ★ Other – 4%

Enrollment Status: Part-time – 30% Full-time – 70%

2008 CCSSE Consortia

- ★ Statewide and state-based consortia include Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia.
- ★ Texas Small Colleges Consortium: 18 small colleges across Texas
- ★ Hispanic Student Success Consortium: 26 colleges
- ★ Achieving the Dream Consortium: 34 colleges
- ★ Maricopa Community Colleges

CCSSE Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

- ★ Active and Collaborative Learning (items: 4a, 4b, 4f, 4g, 4h, 4i, and 4r)
- ★ Student Effort (items: 4c, 4d, 4e, 6b, 10a, 13d1, 13e1, and 13h1)
- ★ Academic Challenge (items: 4p, 5b, 5c, 5d, 5e, 5f, 6a, 6c, 7, 9a)
- ★ Student-Faculty Interaction (items: 4k,4l,4m,4n,4o,and 4q)
- ★ Support for Learners (items: 9b, 9c, 9d, 9e, 9f, 13a1, and 13b1)

Validity and Reliability

CCSSE's validation research study, "Exploring Relationships Between Student Engagement and Student Outcomes in Community Colleges: Report on Validation Research," is available on the *CCSSE* Web site.

Future Plans

- ★ National Field Test of *Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE)* -- fall 2008 (registration full)
- ★ Focus group research on entering student experiences in community colleges -- continuing fall 2008
- ★ First National Administration of *Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE)* -- fall 2009 (open registration deadline February 1, 2009)
- ★ Development of a survey of online student engagement (underway)