

2010 Findings



# The Heart of Student Success

Teaching, Learning, and College Completion



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## Acknowledgments

This report is dedicated to those who teach, in whatever role, at whatever level, in whatever location ... to those who believe deeply that all students, given the right conditions, can learn ... who affirm that students' right to learn to succeed trumps their right to fail ... who expect much from their students and then support them so they can rise to those expectations ... who refuse to accept as tolerable the attainment gaps that separate low-income students and students of color from their classmates.

We extend our respect and gratitude to those who are passionate about teaching ... who use that passion to light the fire of curiosity in their students' minds and to instill a lifelong habit of inquiry ... who go the extra mile to work with struggling students and to challenge those who shine with promise.

To those who join with colleagues in claiming collective responsibility for student success ... who see themselves as learners, seeking new strategies and skills for improving student success.

To those who take time to notice, to connect, to care.

To those who match their love of learning with love of learners.

*Kay McClenney*

*Director*

*Center for Community College Student Engagement*

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*“All my [high school] teachers told me, ‘Your teachers in college, they wouldn’t care whether you showed up, they wouldn’t care if you turned in your assignments, they wouldn’t care if you failed.’ But at the community college, all my teachers are really showing that they are interested in us succeeding. I didn’t expect that.”*

— STUDENT

# Foreword

*“The American education system today is experiencing the most sustained, diverse, wide-spread, and persistent challenge ever to confront it. Virtually everyone agrees that something has gone wrong, that corrective action is needed.”*

The quotation above is from 1970, part of a presentation by Leon Lessinger, then Associate Commissioner of the U.S. Department of Education. Dr. Lessinger’s challenges to American schools and colleges rang true as my colleagues, George Baker and Richard Brownell, and I were writing our first book, *Accountability and the Community College* (AACC, 1972). The book highlighted calls (now almost four decades old) for increased attention to student progress and success, including course completion rates, persistence rates, and the number of entering community college students who graduate with certificates or degrees.

Since these early calls to accountability, augmented by numerous reports in the mid-1980s, we have seen too little improvement in the success of our students in public schools and community colleges. It is well known that the great majority of students enrolling in community colleges require remediation in one or more of the basic academic skills and that most community colleges function as “emergency rooms” for many of their entering students.

Not only are many students still alarmingly underprepared for college, but they too often have developed an active aversion to mathematics, English, and the educational process more generally. This poses a double whammy challenge for instructors, who must then address not only skill deficits but students’ lack of confidence in themselves as learners and a pervasive sense that what students are asked to learn — particularly in developmental and introductory college courses — has little to do with what really matters to them in their lives.

The Center for Community College Student Engagement, part of the Community College Leadership Program at The University of Texas at Austin, has for the past decade been at the forefront of work with community colleges across the nation and beyond to improve educational quality and outcomes for their students. Amidst the renewed calls for national leadership and for policy change at state and federal levels, it is critical to remember that the goal of ensuring that more of our students attain high-quality certificates and degrees can ultimately be achieved

only by strengthening the purposeful interactions that occur between students and faculty, between students and student services professionals, and among the students themselves.

Further, improved community college outcomes will not be achieved without the heart-and-soul commitment of college faculty and staff. Most of our faculty have been well prepared in the disciplines they teach, but too few have been prepared for the reality of today’s students — the ways they learn, and the cognitive and affective challenges they bring with them through the open door.

We must focus on hiring and developing faculty members who enjoy working with students even more than they enjoy their discipline, who are convinced that students are capable of learning, and who have the skills to engage students actively in the learning process. In so doing, we will increase the odds that our faculty and staff are well prepared to “make magic” in community college classrooms.

The calls for increased college completion come at a time of increasing student enrollments and draconian budget cuts; and too often in those circumstances, efforts to develop faculty and staff take low priority. It is essential to invest in professional development if we are to make good on the promise of the open door. In this report, the Center focuses on teaching and learning as the heart of student success. The focus could not be more timely or more important.

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# Defining College Success

College completion is on the agenda — from the White House to the statehouse to the family house. Improving college completion is essential, but increased degree and certificate completion, in and of itself, is not a sufficient measure of improvement. Genuine progress depends on making sure that degree completion is a proxy for real learning — for developing thinking and reasoning abilities, content knowledge, and the high-level skills needed for 21st century jobs and citizenship.

## The Unquestionable Importance of College Completion

Educational attainment and college completion matter — for the prospects of individual students and for the future viability of both the U.S. economy and the American democracy.

The higher a person's educational attainment, the more likely he or she is to be gainfully employed, pay taxes, volunteer, participate in the democratic process, and be capable of taking care of the health and educational needs of his or her children. Conversely, higher levels of education make it less likely for individuals to be publicly dependent.<sup>1</sup>

Today's collective focus on college completion is a shift in U.S. higher education, and particularly in community colleges, from the historical emphasis on providing access to postsecondary education opportunities. A legitimate point of pride is that almost three-quarters of American young people enter some kind of postsecondary training or education within two years of graduating from high school.<sup>2</sup>

However, for far too many community college students, the open door also has been a revolving door:

- Only 28% of first-time, full-time, associate degree-seeking community college students graduate with a certificate or an associate degree within three years.<sup>3</sup>

## A Shared Commitment to Increasing College Completion

For many years now, the Center for Community College Student Engagement, together with colleagues in the Community College Leadership Program at The University of Texas at Austin, has focused its efforts on improved college completion.

Working with community colleges across the United States and beyond, the Center focuses colleges and other stakeholders on using data about effective practice to improve educational experiences for community college students — and thus to strengthen student learning, persistence, and completion.

In spring 2010, the Center for Community College Student Engagement joined five other national community college organizations in signing the Community College Completion Commitment — a pledge to promote and support the goal that U.S. community colleges will produce 50% more students with high-quality degrees and certificates by 2020, while also increasing access and quality. The Center's partners in this pledge are the American Association of Community Colleges, the Association of Community College Trustees, the League for Innovation in the Community College, the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, and Phi Theta Kappa.<sup>4</sup>

The commitment and leadership within the community college field are consistent with the challenge issued by President Barack Obama as he established the ambitious 2020 goal — and urged the United States to once again lead the world in the proportion of citizens with postsecondary credentials. U.S. Undersecretary of Education Martha Kanter, a former

community college chancellor, has asserted, "We are solely, deeply and personally committed to what President Obama has set for us to achieve . . . Everything we are doing in the Department of Education is aimed at achieving this goal."<sup>5</sup>

Further impetus comes from leading foundations that support the community college student success agenda. The Lumina Foundation's Big Goal is "to increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by the year 2025."<sup>6</sup>

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's postsecondary success goal is "to help double the number of low-income adults who earn a college degree or credential with genuine marketplace value by age 26."<sup>7</sup>

Regional and state-based foundations have made similar commitments. As one example, the Greater Texas Foundation aspires to "increase rates of post-secondary enrollment and completion for all Texas students, with a particular focus on students who may encounter barriers to post-secondary success."<sup>8</sup>

In the policy arena, Complete College America, a new organization funded by at least five major foundations, is building an Alliance of States (23 states and growing) that have committed to taking "bold actions to significantly increase the number of students successfully completing college and achieving degrees and credentials with value in the labor market and close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations."<sup>9</sup>



- Fewer than half (45%) of students who enter community college with the goal of earning a degree or certificate have met their goal six years later.<sup>10</sup>
- Slightly more than half (52%) of first-time full-time college students in public community colleges return for their second year.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, America is losing ground in educational attainment, not only by comparison with other countries but also, unfortunately, when comparing successive generations of its own citizens.

- The United States, long ranked first worldwide, now ranks 10th in the percentage of young adults who hold a college degree.<sup>12</sup>
- If current trends hold, the current generation of college-age Americans will be less educated than their parents, for the first time in U.S. history.<sup>13</sup>

*“Set unreasonable goals, and then chase them unreasonably.”*

— LALITA BOOTH

Formerly a child of poverty, high school dropout, and homeless single mother.

Today, a graduate of Florida’s Seminole State College (formerly Seminole Community College) and candidate for joint Master of Public Policy and Master of Business Administration degrees at Harvard Business School.

- American employers are reporting shortages of workers with the skills needed to fill jobs, and there is the growing risk that more and more of those opportunities will be exported to other countries.

### Connecting Improved Learning to College Completion

College completion alone won’t address all of these challenges. In fact, it is easy to imagine scenarios in which more degrees are awarded but less learning occurs. That outcome must be rejected as unacceptable. The push for more degrees will produce the desired results for individuals and the society only if *college completion* reflects the learning required for family-supporting jobs, effective citizenship, and further studies.

Teaching quality is an essential link between improved college completion and improved learning. Just as access to college is an empty promise without effective practices that promote student success, improved college completion will have real meaning only with serious and sustained attention to the quality of what goes on between teachers and students.

This year, the Center for Community College Student Engagement focuses its national report on college completion — and the teaching and learning that must be the foundation for high-quality certificates and degrees. Effective teaching and meaningful learning: They are the heart of student success.

# Characteristics of Community College Students

Each semester, community colleges meet the needs of a diverse student body that includes recent high school graduates, workers returning to college to learn new skills, and first-generation college students. These students come to college with widely differing goals and a range of academic preparation.

As different as they are, most community college students share one attribute: limited

time. Most are attending classes and studying while working; caring for dependents; and juggling personal, academic, and financial challenges.

The student characteristics described on these pages are the reality of community colleges today. To help more students succeed, colleges must not use these challenges to rationalize low expectations. Instead, they

must use these facts to connect with their students — to understand their needs, help them address barriers to their success, and build relationships that help them stay in college and succeed.

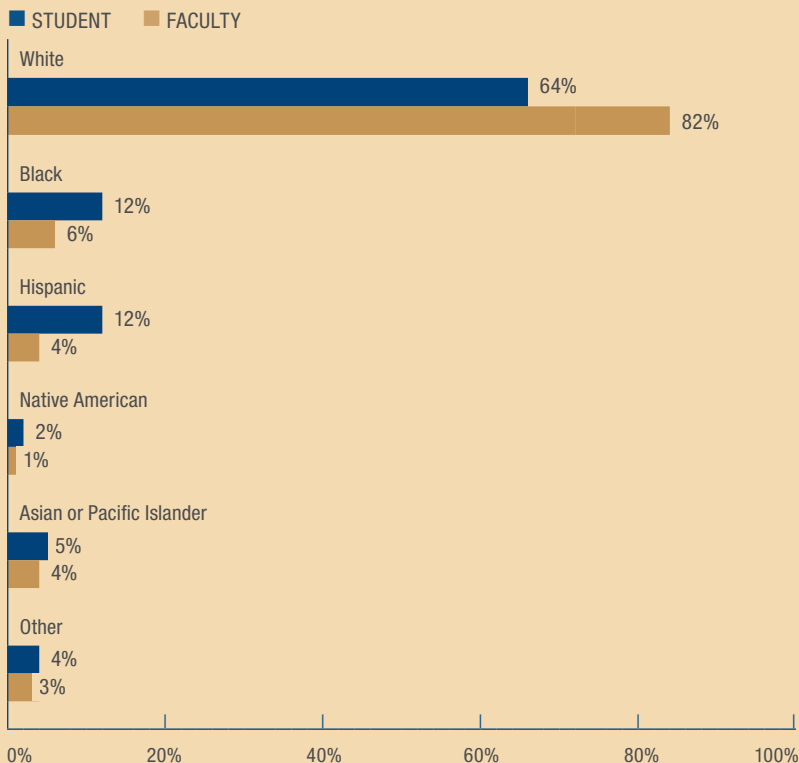
*“We have to work across the cultures so that most students grasp most of what we are teaching.”*

— FACULTY MEMBER

## Student and Faculty Demographics

Differences in student and faculty demographics often are a concern for colleges in that they may restrict students’ opportunities to interact with role models or mentors from similar backgrounds.

### Key Demographics: Students and Faculty Members



Sources: 2010 CCSSE Cohort data and 2010 CCFSSSE Cohort data.

## Students’ Aspirations

Not all students attend community college to earn a certificate or degree. However, the data show a sizable gap between the percentage of students who aim to complete a credential and the percentage of those who actually do. Among CCSSE respondents, 52% report that completing a certificate is a goal, and 84% say obtaining an associate degree is a goal. Yet fewer than half (45%)<sup>14</sup> of students who enter community college with the goal of earning a degree or certificate have met their goal six years later.

## Students’ Goals

Indicate which of the following are your reasons/goals for attending this college.

|   | SENSE respondents (entering students) |            | CCSSE respondents |            |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|
|   | A goal                                | Not a goal | A goal            | Not a goal |
| Complete a certificate program                | 58%                                   | 42%        | 52%               | 48%        |
| Obtain an associate degree                    | 79%                                   | 21%        | 84%               | 16%        |
| Transfer to a four-year college or university | 74%                                   | 26%        | 75%               | 25%        |
| Obtain or update job-related skills           | N/A                                   |            | 70%               | 30%        |
| Self-improvement/personal enjoyment           | N/A                                   |            | 74%               | 26%        |
| Change careers                                | N/A                                   |            | 43%               | 57%        |

Note: Respondents may indicate more than one goal.

Sources: 2009 SENSE data and 2010 CCSSE Cohort data.

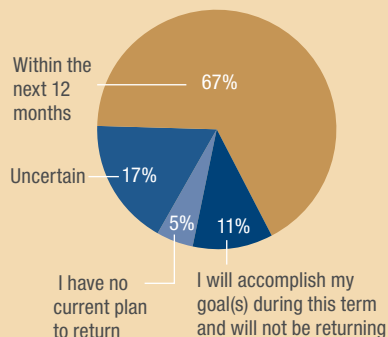
## Students' Persistence

The contrast between student and faculty responses shows that faculty are far 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 drop out of college.

Asked about their plans after the current semester, 22% of students report that they have no plan to return or are uncertain about their future plans. These data clearly point to an opportunity for colleges, through strengthened academic planning and advising, to help students establish an academic plan and pathway that will help them persist in college.

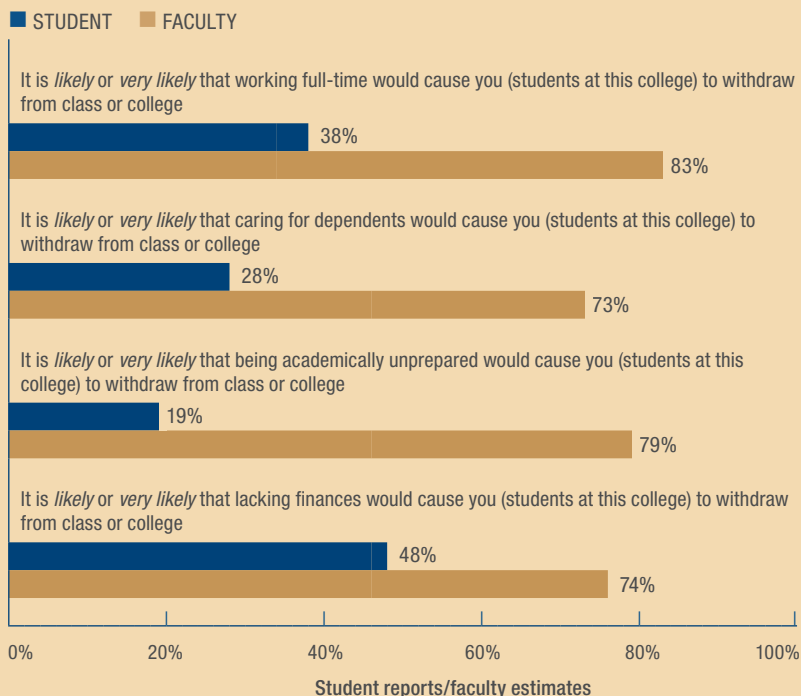
### Students' Plans after the Current Semester

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



Source: 2010 CCSSE Cohort data.

### Barriers to Returning to College: Student and Faculty Perceptions



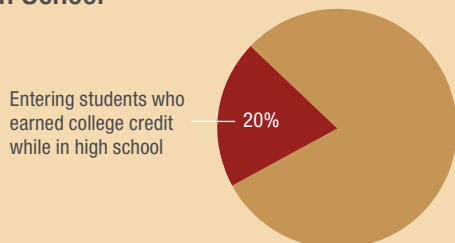
In addition, 49% of students and 46% of faculty say that transferring to a four-year college or university is a likely or very likely reason that they (or their students) would not return to this college.

Sources: 2010 CCSSE Cohort data and CCFSSSE Cohort data.

## Contrasts in College-Going Backgrounds

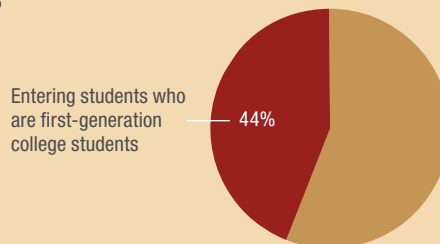
Students come to community college with varying levels of college experience — and corresponding levels of comfort and confidence. For example, one in five entering students earned college credit in high school, while more than two in five are first-generation college students (neither their mothers nor their fathers attended college).

### Entering Students Who Earned College Credit while in High School



Source: 2009 SENSE data.

### Entering Students Who Are First-Generation College Students



Source: 2009 SENSE data.



## The Center: Collecting Data from Many Perspectives

### ***CCSSE, CCFSSSE, and SENSE***

The Center for Community College Student Engagement administers three surveys that complement one another: *CCSSE*, *CCFSSE*, and *SENSE*. All are tools that assess student engagement — how engaged students are with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with their studies.

Each of the three surveys collects data from a particular perspective, and together they provide a comprehensive view of educational practice on community college campuses.

Why student engagement? All of the Center's work is grounded in a large body of research about what works in strengthening student learning and persistence. Research shows that the more actively engaged students are, the more likely they are to learn, to persist in college, and to attain their academic goals. Student engagement, therefore, is an important metric for assessing the quality of colleges' educational practices and identifying ways colleges can help more students succeed.

- The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*), now in its eighth year, surveys more experienced students and gathers information about their overall college experience. It focuses on educational practices associated with higher levels of learning, persistence, and completion. In this report, *CCSSE* data include only respondents who indicate that they do not currently hold a college degree.
- The Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (*CCFSSE*), now in its sixth year, is always administered in conjunction with *CCSSE*. The faculty survey provides instructors' perspectives on student experiences as well as data about faculty members' teaching practice and use of professional time.
- The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (*SENSE*), now in its second national administration, 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 academic term. The survey assesses practices that are most likely to engage entering students and ensure that they successfully complete the critical first term of college and create pathways for further advancement. In this report, *SENSE* data include only entering students who indicate that they do not currently hold a college degree. Entering students are those who indicate that this is their first time at their college.

The Center works with participating colleges to administer the surveys, and then the colleges receive their survey results, along with guidance and analyses they can use to improve their programs and services for students.

The Center encourages colleges to compare faculty perceptions with student responses and share those data with faculty members. The comparison is not perfect because students report their personal experiences while faculty members indicate their perceptions of student experiences in the college. Nonetheless, the comparison can inspire powerful conversations because faculty and students typically have different perceptions regarding the degree of student engagement.

### **Qualitative and Quantitative Data**

The Center for Community College Student Engagement uses two approaches to better understand students' college experiences: the surveys, which provide detailed quantitative data, and the *Initiative on Student Success*, which provides qualitative data.

The *Initiative on Student Success*, supported by Houston Endowment Inc. and the MetLife Foundation, conducts focus groups and interviews at select colleges, gathering the perspectives of students, faculty, student services professionals, and presidents to paint a more complete picture of the student experience.

The surveys' rich data help colleges better understand *what* is happening. Data from the focus groups and interviews can help them begin to figure out *why*.

### **Core Surveys and Special-Focus Items**

Both *CCSSE* and *SENSE* include a core survey, which is the same from year to year, and special-focus items that examine an area of student experience and institutional performance of special interest to the field.

*CCSSE* includes five special-focus survey items that are different each year. The 2010 special-focus items are about educational practices and experiences that promote deep learning.

*SENSE* offers several optional special-focus item modules, each of which delves deeply into a key issue related to entering student engagement. The 2009 administration included four special-focus options — commitment and support, financial assistance, student success courses, and engagement through technology. Participating colleges may choose to include zero, one, or two modules in the survey of their students.

# Strategies to Promote Learning That Matters

In the following pages, *The Heart of Student Success* describes four key strategies to promote the strengthened classroom experiences that ultimately are requisite to both increased levels of college completion and deeper levels of learning. In this report, the term *classroom experiences* refers to any activity that takes place as part of a regularly scheduled course.

The key strategies are:

- Strengthen classroom engagement
- Integrate student support into learning experiences
- Expand professional development focused on engaging students
- Focus institutional policies on creating the conditions for learning

Using data from its three surveys — the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), and the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE) — the Center explores the challenges associated with college completion and how these strategies address them.

## Strengthen Classroom Engagement

Moving the needle on student outcomes at community colleges substantially depends on what happens in the classroom. Colleges must make the most of the time students spend with their instructors. To do so, they should raise expectations; promote active, engaged learning; emphasize deep learning; build and encourage relationships; and ensure that students know where they stand.

### Raise expectations

In school, work, and play — in life generally — people perform better when they are expected to do so. To help students reach their potential, colleges must demand high performance. Instructors should set high standards and communicate them clearly, deliberately, and consistently.

Unfortunately, there are many people who believe that some students cannot or will not succeed. But when instructors believe this about their students, the potential for damage is most severe. Addressing these issues requires courageous conversations, but

discussing, and if necessary shifting, faculty attitudes has great power in closing student achievement gaps.

For example, colleges should actively ascertain whether faculty and staff believe that “some students don’t belong in college — they just aren’t college material.” Students readily sense this belief, and it too often negatively affects their ability to learn. Conversely, students attest to the powerful effect of faculty and advisors who believe in their potential and hold high expectations for their performance.

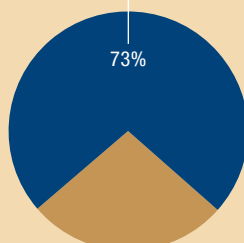
*“Students need someone to show them empathy, kick them in the butt, and raise the bar.”* — FACULTY MEMBER

SENSE and CCSSE data indicate that instructors typically explain expectations for students in their classes. For example, almost nine in 10 (88%) of SENSE respondents *agree* or *strongly agree* that all instructors clearly explained course grading policies, and 91% *agree* or *strongly agree* that all instructors clearly explained course syllabi.

## Expectations: Student and Faculty Perceptions

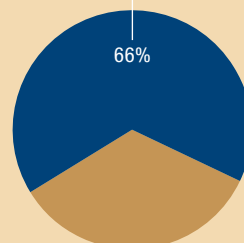
### The college's role in encouraging studying

Percentage of students saying their college encourages them to spend significant amounts of time studying quite a bit or very much



Source: 2010 CCSSE Cohort data.

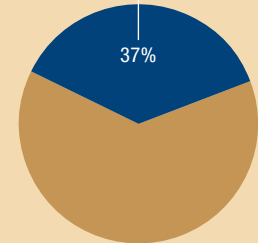
Percentage of faculty members saying their college encourages students to spend significant amounts of time studying quite a bit or very much



Source: 2010 CCFSSSE Cohort data.

### Time spent studying

Percentage of full-time students who report spending five or fewer hours per week preparing for class



Source: 2010 CCSSE Cohort data.

On the other hand, there are indications that in some instances, expectations for students may not be as high as they need to be. While nearly three-quarters (73%) of CCSSE respondents say their college encourages them to spend significant amounts of time studying *quite a bit* or *very much*, a smaller percentage of faculty survey respondents (66%) indicate that their college encourages this behavior *quite a bit* or *very much*. Moreover, other more specific inquiries about student behaviors raise questions about how expectations for performance are expressed and enforced. For example:

- More than one-quarter (28%) of SENSE respondents and 19% of CCSSE respondents report that they *never* prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in.
- Approximately one third (37%) of full-time CCSSE respondents report spending *five or fewer hours per week* preparing for class.
- More than four in 10 (44%) of SENSE respondents and 69% of CCSSE respondents report that they came to class unprepared one or more times.
- Approximately one-quarter (26%) of SENSE respondents report skipping class one or more times in the first three weeks of class.

*Initiative on Student Success* focus group participants indicate that students appreciate faculty members who are both demanding

*“If you can’t encourage your students to do better, then you don’t need to be a teacher.”*

— STUDENT

## 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 are **active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, and support for learners.**

The SENSE Benchmarks of Effective Practice with Entering Students are **early connections, high expectations and aspirations, clear academic plan and pathway, effective track to college readiness, engaged learning, and academic and social support network.**

Visit [www.ccsse.org](http://www.ccsse.org) to see descriptions of the benchmarks, specific survey items associated with each benchmark, key findings organized by benchmark, and information about how a college’s benchmark scores are calculated.

and supportive. For example, one student defines a good teacher as one who is “not too stern but stern enough to know when you’re slipping.” Another participant comments that when students come to class unprepared, faculty members don’t let them hide: “When they [instructors] ask questions, and you don’t know, it’s clear ... they pick on you.”

Faculty focus group participants report using a range of strategies to explain and remind students of expectations. One faculty member says, “I talk with them about rules — be nice to each other, listen when I speak, turn off cells. I tell them what I expect, what grades they’re going to get, what cheating is. I go through the syllabus. I give them a form that says they read the expectations and understood them. I have them sign the form, and I keep it.”

### *Colleges get to the heart of student success*

In fall 2008, **Kingsborough Community College, City University of New York (NY)**, centralized its work with students placed on academic probation. Through a partnership between the Health Careers and Retention Center and the registrar’s office, the new process includes a group experience (workshops)

and one-on-one interaction (advising). Both address the consequences of probation, the importance of students’ doing well in their current classes, tutoring, and other support.

In fall 2006, **Houston Community College (TX)** launched a new Freshman Success Course for entering students who require remediation and have not yet declared a major. The course, Guided Studies 1270: College and Career Exploration, teaches students cognitive strategies for academic success and introduces the expectations and responsibilities students will face in college and later as employees. Students develop experience in setting priorities, time management, effective listening, note-taking, critical thinking, problem-solving, and test-taking skills. They also attend two mandatory career conferences. By the end of that semester, students are required to declare a major and file a degree plan, actions that are known to increase persistence. The course was introduced at HCC-Southwest College and subsequently expanded to all HCC colleges in fall 2007. In fall 2008, the college began to require the course for all students entering HCC with 12 or fewer credits.

## Promote active, engaged learning

Students learn and retain more information — and persist and succeed at higher levels — when they are actively involved in learning rather than passively receiving information. Student focus group participants say active instructional approaches that encourage engaged learning, such as small-group work and student-led activities, make them more enthusiastic about their classes and more likely to attend and participate.

Data from Center surveys indicate that there are opportunities to heighten the level of collaborative learning that happens both in and outside the classroom.

- Nearly one-quarter (22%) of *SENSE* respondents and 12% of *CCSSE* respondents report that they *never* worked with other students on projects during class.
- More than two-thirds (68%) of *SENSE* respondents and 40% of *CCSSE* respondents report that they *never* worked with

classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments.

In addition, students and faculty report similar views of the amount of collaborative learning in the classroom. Their responses differ, however, regarding the extent to which students work together on projects or assignments outside the classroom. This finding merits further consideration and raises the question of whether colleges should require out-of-class study groups or other collaborative work.

In *Initiative on Student Success* focus groups, students say that interactive classes are more interesting and engaging and help them better understand and retain the material.

One student praises an instructor's approach, saying, "She has us team up, check on each other, make sure we're getting our notes, and work together like a family."

Faculty members also acknowledge that student interaction generates increased interest

in the subject matter and fosters relationships among students. In the words of one instructor, "Their personal relationships with each other get strengthened and their relationship with me gets strengthened."

*"Just because you have taught, it doesn't mean students have learned."* — FACULTY MEMBER

## Colleges get to the heart of student success

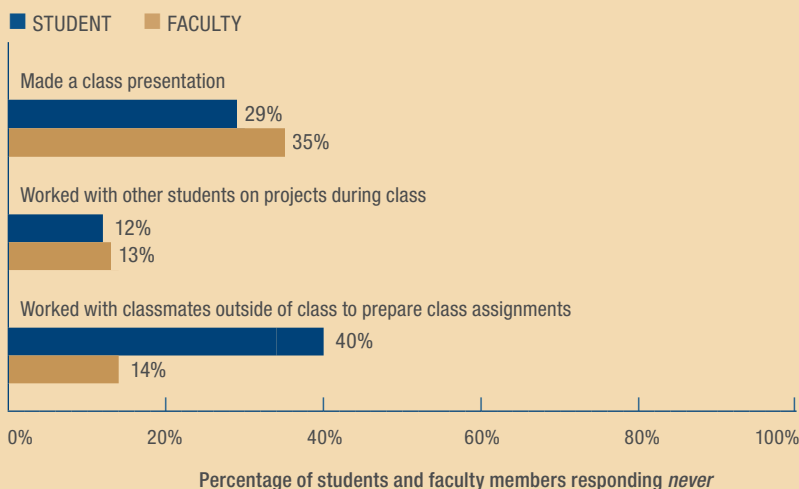
The Classroom Research Initiative at **The Lone Star College System** (TX) invites faculty members to explore how *CCSSE* data can be used to design classroom activities and promote student engagement. While the program includes professional development for all faculty, it centers on individual data analyses and action plans developed by faculty members. Ten faculty members from each of the system's campuses participate. Each designs a data-based classroom strategy, implements it, evaluates it, and shares results with colleagues and administrators. In the past year, faculty projects have focused on increasing engagement with group projects, the value of learning students' names, and using a blog to promote engagement among English composition students.

**Santa Fe College** (NM) redesigned its intermediate algebra class and compared final exam results for students in a pilot of the redesigned course with those of students in the traditional course. Each instructor teaching the redesigned class also taught a traditional class, and those sections formed the comparison groups. The traditional course was conducted predominantly by lecture, and all students were expected to complete homework assignments outside of class. The redesigned course, called the studio course, included smaller sections as well as required time in the math studio, which was staffed by instructors and tutors. The studio course focused on active learning and individualized assistance, both in person during time in the math studio and through the interactive software My Math Lab, which

## Engaged Learning: Student and Faculty Perceptions

**Students:** In your experiences at this college during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following activities?

**Faculty:** How often do students in your selected course section do the following activities?



Sources: *CCSSE 2010 Cohort data* and *CCFSSE 2010 Cohort data*.

*“Our strategy for helping students master challenging course content has been guided by a single concentrated effort to get them talking. Our perfect world is students talking to students about course content, as soon as possible, as much as possible, and for as long as possible. ... Whoever does most of the talking does most of the learning.”*

— F. KIM WILCOX<sup>15</sup>

was incorporated into the program. In the fall 2009 cohort, studio students’ average final exam score was 6% higher than the average score of non-studio students. Moreover, using the percentage of students that scored 70% or better as a measure of success, the studio students outperformed the non-studio students by 19 percentage points: 78% of studio students versus 59% of non-studio students scored 70% or higher. In the spring 2001 cohort, studio students’ average final exam score was 11% higher than the average score of non-studio students. The studio students outperformed the non-studio students by 25 percentage points: 72% of studio students versus 47% of non-studio students scored 70% or higher.

More than half of all students at **Cabrillo College (CA)** require developmental education, and the college’s learning communities help improve outcomes for these students. The Academy for College Excellence (ACE) learning community groups students in a cohort for all of their classes and uses interactive learning to help participants become successful students while preparing for a career. ACE also is piloting a new program to accelerate the learning process for developmental math and English students. Cabrillo has nine semesters of data for students who participated in ACE and accelerated ACE. The ACE students outperformed the comparison group on every measure, including college credits earned, transfer credits earned, and persistence. The accelerated ACE students did even better: 49 credits earned, as compared with 28 for the comparison group; 95% persistence for one semester and 82%

persistence for two semesters, compared with 80% and 63% for the comparison group; and 68% chance of passing transfer-level English as opposed to 37% for the comparison group.

The final project in one foreign language class at **College of the Siskiyous (CA)** is a group activity in which teams of students perform coffeehouse skits. The students research French cafés, write script directions that set the scene, write dialogue that includes exchanges between waiters and patrons (locals and tourists), and perform the skits. Students hone their language skills, learn how to assume specific responsibilities within a group, and become resources for one another.

## Emphasize deep learning

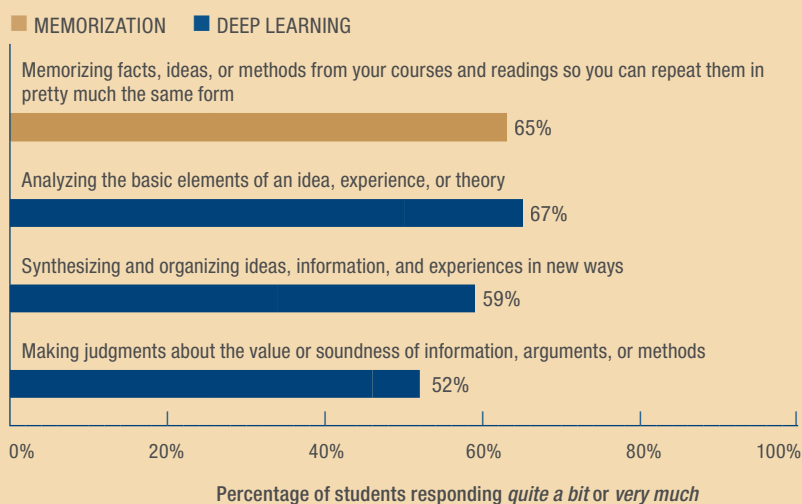
Deep learning refers to broadly applicable thinking, reasoning, and judgment skills — abilities that allow individuals to apply information, develop a coherent world view, and interact in more meaningful ways. Deep learning — learning associated with higher-order cognitive tasks — is typically contrasted with rote memorization. Memorization may help students pass an exam, but it doesn’t necessarily expand students’ understanding of the world around them, help them make connections across disciplines, or promote the application of knowledge and skills in new situations.

CCSSE’s 2010 special-focus items, along with several items from the core survey, explore a variety of experiences that promote deep learning. Differences in student and faculty perceptions can be used to illuminate conversations regarding the nature and quality of students’ learning.

- One in 10 CCSSE respondents (10%) report that they *never* worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas

### CCSSE Respondents: Memorization vs. Deep Learning

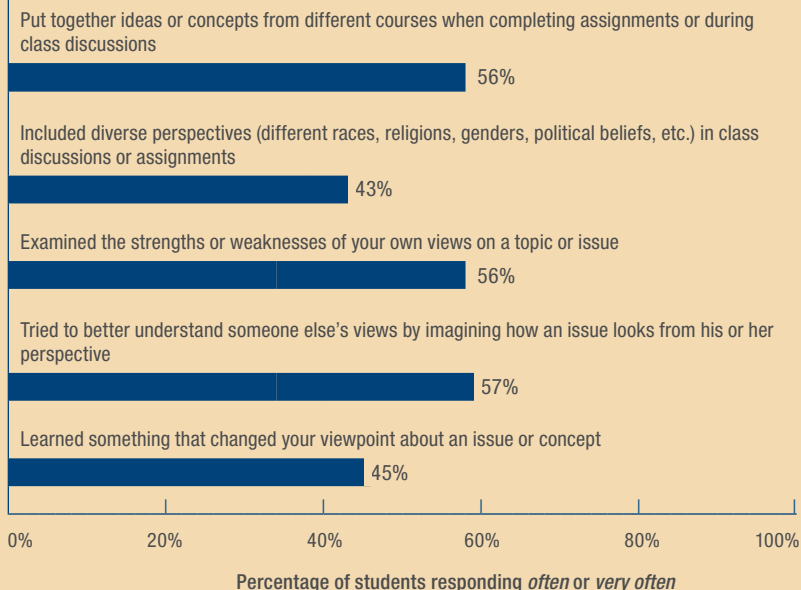
During the current school year, how much of your coursework at this college emphasized (does the coursework in your selected course section emphasize) the following mental activities?



Source: 2010 CCSSE Cohort data.

## CCSSE 2010 Special-Focus Items: Deep Learning

In your experience at this college during the current school year, about how often have you:



Source: 2010 CCSSE data.

or information from various sources; about one-quarter (24%) of students report doing so *very often*.

- More than four in 10 CCSSE respondents (41%) say they *have not done, nor do they plan to do* an internship, field experience, or clinical assignment. Close to nine in 10 CCSSE respondents (87%) say it is *somewhat important* or *very important* for students to have these experiences, yet 66% of faculty do not incorporate these experiences into their coursework.

In *Initiative on Student Success* focus groups, when students are asked to comment on their

learning, they make it clear that deep learning better engages them. Asked to describe a good class, one student says, “When you have to do work, and you’re getting it. It’s linking what I already know to what I didn’t know.”

Deep learning also instills the habit of inquiry. As one student exclaims, “I’m just so excited about my computer science class. When I go home, the first thing that I do is my homework. It’s all of the information that I’m taking in from it. I read the book, even sections that I’m not required to read, just because I want to learn more. It inspires you to look into something a bit deeper than what your class is requiring of you.”

*“One thing [that needs improvement] is writing across the curriculum. We are seeing students progress through college years without the ability to express and communicate.”*

— FACULTY MEMBER

### *Colleges get to the heart of student success*

Learning communities are the cornerstone of the student success agenda at **Bunker Hill Community College (MA)**. The college has three tiers of learning communities that have been taught by faculty and staff from a broad range of disciplines, and the college offers them professional development that focuses on engaged learning. Data from faculty interviews and student surveys indicate that the college’s most successful learning communities use active and interactive teaching and learning, collaboration and integration across disciplines, and integration of support services into the classroom. One learning community — the Alternative Spring Break Common Interest Community — brought students to the Gulf Coast for a service learning project. Fall-to-spring retention for students enrolled in learning communities in fall 2009 was 82%, compared to 73% for all BHCC students.

## The Center Opposes Ranking

CCCSE opposes using its data to rank colleges for a number of reasons:

- There is no single number that can adequately — or accurately — describe a college’s performance; most colleges will perform relatively well on some benchmarks and need improvement on others.
- Each community college’s performance should be considered in terms of its mission, institutional focus, and student characteristics.
- Because of differences in these areas — and variations in college resources — comparing survey results between individual institutions serves little constructive purpose and likely will be misleading.
- CCCSE member colleges are a self-selected group. Their choice to participate in the survey demonstrates their interest in assessing and improving their educational practices, and it distinguishes them. Ranking within this group of colleges — those willing to step up to serious self-assessment and public reporting — might discourage participation and certainly would paint an incomplete picture.
- Ranking does not serve a purpose related to improving student outcomes. Improvement over time — where a particular college is now compared with where it wants to be — likely is the best gauge of a college’s efforts to enhance student learning and persistence.

## Build and encourage relationships

Personal connections are an important factor in student success. Most students struggle at one time or another. Focus group participants report that relationships with other students, faculty, and staff members strengthened their resolve to return to class the next day, the next month, and the next year.

Survey results reveal both areas in which colleges are doing well and areas for improvement in creating multiple, intentional connections with students, beginning with the first point of contact with the college.

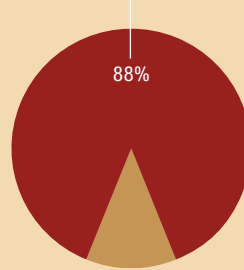
*“Everyone in my student success course is networked. I still see those people. It’s like freshman year elsewhere. It keeps you in the community.”*

—STUDENT

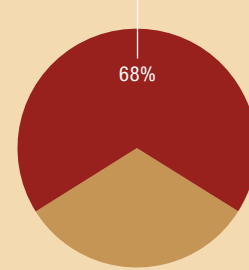
- Nearly nine in 10 *SENSE* respondents (86%) *agree* or *strongly agree* that at least one instructor learned their names; 81% *agree* or *strongly agree* that at least one other student learned their names; and 44% *agree* or *strongly agree* that at least one staff member (other than an instructor) learned their names.
- Nearly nine in 10 *SENSE* respondents (88%) *agree* or *strongly agree* that they knew how to get in touch with their instructors outside of class.
- More than half (56%) of *SENSE* respondents used an electronic tool to communicate with an instructor about classwork at least once during the first three weeks of the semester, and 52% used an electronic tool to communicate with another student about classwork at least once during the first three weeks of the semester.

## Entering Students’ Interaction with Faculty

Percentage of entering students who *agree* or *strongly agree* that they knew how to get in touch with their instructors outside of class



Percentage of entering students who report that they *never* discussed ideas from readings or classes with instructors outside of class



Source: 2009 *SENSE* data.

However, there are survey results that clearly indicate opportunities for colleges to increase their intentionality in seeking to build meaningful connections with students:

- More than two-thirds (68%) of *SENSE* respondents and 47% of *CCSSE* respondents report that they *never* discussed ideas from readings or classes with instructors outside of class.

Personal connections may boost attendance and retention. *Initiative on Student Success* focus group participants suggest that just knowing someone else’s name can make a wary student feel more comfortable. Moreover, being called by name, which eliminates the option of hiding behind anonymity, is a powerful motivator. Thus, many community college instructors devise ways to learn students’ names — and help students learn one another’s names — in the first few class meetings.

Indeed, students remember these exercises positively. “My first year, I had a teacher who gathered all of us around and had us do a bunch of silly and embarrassing question-asking and storytelling, including saying what our name was. By connecting our names

with the stories, by the end of the first two days we knew everybody’s name.”

## Colleges get to the heart of student success

To make relationships central to its daily operations, **Zane State College (OH)** codified a personal touch philosophy: Personal Touch — Respect, Responsibility, and Responsiveness in all relationships. The philosophy’s rollout included revising the college’s mission statement and adjusting individual job descriptions to include the personal touch. Employees’ annual reviews include rating their ability to approach their day-to-day work using the personal touch philosophy. The college also conducts student focus groups to assess students’ connection to the college.

The First Year Seminar at **Aims Community College (CO)** strengthens new students’ academic performance and increases their knowledge and use of student services. Perhaps most important, it promotes a sense of community among participants. The college offers the seminar in two formats: a three-credit class for students who test into three developmental classes and a one-credit format for students who test into fewer than

three developmental classes. The classes are mandatory for all students testing into developmental courses. From fall 2007 to spring 2008, retention in the one-credit class was 75%, and from fall 2008 to spring 2009, that figure increased to 76%. By comparison, the college's overall retention rate was 53%.

*“I try to call students who stopped coming to class. They come back, and they are appreciative that you called.”* — FACULTY MEMBER

In response to *CCSSE* and *SENSE* data showing that nearly 40% of students felt that the college did not provide the support they needed to help them succeed and that fewer than 25% of full-time students participated in orientation, **Sacramento City College (CA)** started using the complete community college experience to improve communication, better connect students, and show them that faculty and staff care about them. The outreach now begins before students arrive on campus and includes letters, postcards, e-mail, and phone calls. Once students are on campus the college uses a series of memorable slogans — including “It’s Not Over in October” and “Stay ’Til May” — to engage students, remind them of key deadlines, and connect them with advising and other services.

*“Within the first week, students have an in-class paper that I have graded and given back with comments. If I see they have issues, I connect them with the writing center.”*

— FACULTY MEMBER

### Ensure that students know where they stand

Feedback on academic performance greatly affects student retention. Feedback identifies areas of strength and weakness, so students have a greater likelihood of improving and ultimately succeeding. In addition, regular and appropriate assessment and prompt feedback help students progress from surface learning to deep learning.

Some community college students may need help understanding where they stand and how to use feedback productively. In focus groups, students frequently report that they were unaware of their poor academic standing in a particular course until it was too late to salvage their grade.

- 27% of *SENSE* respondents and 8% of *CCSSE* respondents report that they *never* received prompt written or oral feedback from instructors on their performance. By contrast, fewer than 1% of *CCFSSE* respondents say their students *never* received prompt written or oral feedback on their performance.
- 35% of *SENSE* respondents and 9% of *CCSSE* respondents report that they *never* discussed grades or assignments with an instructor.

In faculty focus groups, participants describe a variety of strategies to give feedback, most of which also help build the instructors' relationships with the students. One faculty member explains, “In math lab, I am alerted on my computer if a student is having problems. If they've worked a lesson two times unsuccessfully, the computer locks up until I give them a code. Then I go to them individually and help them.”

Another faculty member describes a skills course that helps students assess their own progress as they learn about grade point averages (GPAs). “Students need to understand what the GPA is, how to calculate it, and [how it can put them] on the verge of probation. We designed a packet with which students project their GPAs. Then, when they have their mid-term grades, they can compare their [actual] GPA with the one they predicted.”

### Colleges get to the heart of student success

**Lone Star College-North Harris (TX)** has a comprehensive early intervention program that addresses poor attendance; low test scores; incomplete assignments; and non-academic distractions such as transportation issues, job schedules, and personal or family health problems. When an instructor thinks a student needs additional support, he or she refers the student through an online or paper-based system. The intervention staff then contacts the student and encourages him or her to take advantage of services, including one-on-one tutoring. The college compares completion and retention for students who respond to the alert with those who are referred but do not respond and with non-referred students.

**Kodiak College, University of Alaska Anchorage (AK)**, starts telling students where they stand before they even get to campus. The college provides early college placement testing to high school juniors and seniors so students and their parents can become more aware of what it means to be college-ready. The college advisors work on site with high school counselors to offer interventions to improve students' scores. If students are juniors, the two advisors recommend senior-year courses that will prepare the student for college-level work. For seniors, the advisors recommend interventions, such as practice testing, college-preparatory programs, tutoring, or labs to focus on specific skills. When students arrive at Kodiak College, they are given assessments to determine their “skill and will” for college success, and advising is based on the results.



## Integrate Student Support into Learning Experiences

Students are most likely to succeed when expectations are high and they receive the support they need to rise to those expectations. Community colleges offer a wide variety of support services, but students cannot use services if they are unaware of them. In addition, students don't take advantage of services when they don't know how to access them, find them to be inconvenient, or feel stigmatized by using them.

Among *CCSSE* respondents, 34% report *rarely* or *never* using academic advising/planning services. In addition, 37% report *rarely* or *never* using skill labs.

*SENSE* data show that while students are aware of some services, they too rarely take advantage of them. A cause for more concern is that *SENSE* data also indicate that many entering students do not even know that critical support services exist.

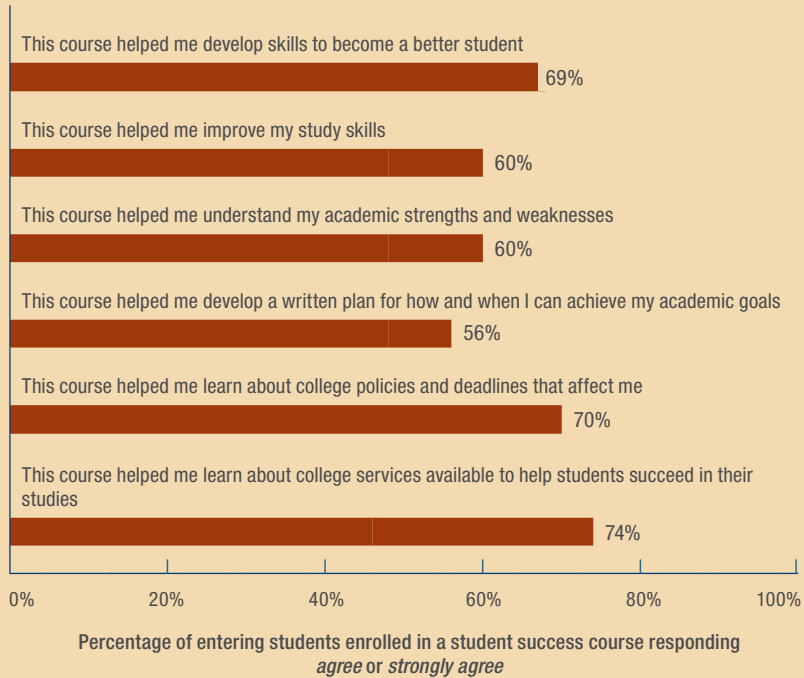
- Among *SENSE* respondents, 72% say *yes*, they know about their college's academic advising/planning services, yet 47% report *never* using these services.
- Among *SENSE* respondents, 70% say *yes*, they know about their college's writing, math, or other skill labs, yet 65% report *never* using these services.

- Among *SENSE* respondents, 19% are unaware that their college has an orientation program or course, 26% do not know about financial assistance advising, and 28% do not know about academic advising and planning.

Intentionally integrating student support into coursework circumvents many of the barriers that keep students from using services. Examples of this approach include requiring freshman seminars or student success courses; making participation in

### *SENSE*: The Value of Student Success Courses

Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement:



Source: 2009 *SENSE* Student Success Course Special-Focus Module respondents who indicated enrollment in a student success course (3,846 responses).

### *CCSSE*: Students' Use and Value of Student Services

How important are the following services?

|                                  | Very | Not at all |
|----------------------------------|------|------------|
| Academic advising/planning       | 64%  | 8%         |
| Career counseling                | 51%  | 19%        |
| Peer or other tutoring           | 40%  | 27%        |
| Skill labs (writing, math, etc.) | 45%  | 22%        |

Source: 2010 *CCSSE* Cohort data.

How often do you use the following services?

|                                  | Rarely/Never |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Academic advising/planning       | 34%          |
| Career counseling                | 51%          |
| Peer or other tutoring           | 47%          |
| Skill labs (writing, math, etc.) | 37%          |

### *CCFSSE*: Faculty's Use of Student Services in Classes

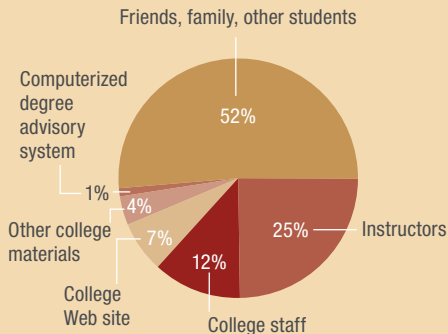
How much do you incorporate the use the following services in your selected course section?

|                                  | Rarely/Never |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Academic advising/planning       | 36%          |
| Career counseling                | 43%          |
| Peer or other tutoring           | 27%          |
| Skill labs (writing, math, etc.) | 33%          |

Source: 2010 *CCFSSE* Cohort data.

## SENSE Respondents' Main Source of Academic Advising

What has been your main source of academic advising from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester?



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

Source: 2009 SENSE data.

supplemental instruction, tutoring, or skill labs mandatory; incorporating counseling and advising and academic planning into learning communities or first-year experiences; and including career counseling as part of technical and professional programs.

Wrapping student support into coursework makes the support services inescapable, eliminates obstacles of time and place, and takes advantage of the time when colleges have the best access to their students.

Moreover, integrating support services creates a new type of shared experience for the students, thereby nurturing their relationships and their ability to support one another. Students need not feel singled out or stigmatized by being referred for help because support becomes simply a feature of being a student at their college.

*“Freshman Seminar was required [for me]. It’s an awesome class. It motivates you ... test taking, job experience, home ... it helps with a lot of fields.”*

— STUDENT

In faculty focus groups, participants recognize that students are more likely to take advantage of support when it is not optional. A developmental education professor explains, “The added labs — the extra hour in reading, writing, and math — help the students who maybe need more time in class, need more support, because they’re not going to come after class for help.”

Another faculty member provides incentives for students to help each other: “I give one point for every 30 minutes of outside support to both the student giving the support and the student receiving it. Those who process information rapidly sit down and help those who take longer. Then each person signs off on each other’s sheet.”

### Colleges get to the heart of student success

**Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas (AR)** provides orientation in all entry-level English classes offered in the fall term. This program began because PCCUA students don’t enroll early enough to participate in a summer orientation, and the college wanted an orientation that would be meaningful to students, easy to launch quickly, and cost-effective for the institution. Key administrators conduct the orientations and distribute a resource guide to all students.

**Delta College (MI)** brings trained tutors into all first-level developmental math and English courses — the college’s courses with the greatest risk of student failure. By bringing tutors into the classroom, the college is offering intensive content-based study sessions to reinforce new material and discuss learning strategies. All students are invited, and students who are averaging a course grade lower than B are required to attend. The sessions

are scheduled with the class section, so the students can have no excuse for skipping them. In the first-level developmental English course, students who participate in the study sessions have an overall course GPA of 2.43 and a success rate of 67%, compared with an overall course GPA of 0.32 and a success rate of 8% for those who did not participate. In the first-level developmental math course, students who participate in the study sessions have an overall course GPA of 2.54 and a success rate of 75%, compared with an overall course GPA of 1.73 and a success rate of 20% for those who did not participate.

**Hillsborough Community College (FL)** added academic coaching to a study skills course that is required for students who enroll in both developmental reading and a success course. The courses are taught by instructors who also serve as success coaches. They provide a range of activities, strategies, and interventions designed to help students overcome traditional barriers to academic persistence. As part of the course, students are required to create an academic plan, which helps them understand course sequencing and progressive academic achievement.

### Expand Professional Development Focused on Engaging Students

Research abounds about what works in teaching and learning. Instructors, however, must be given the opportunities necessary to learn more about effective teaching strategies and to apply those strategies in their day-to-day work.

Bringing effective strategies to scale to promote learning, persistence, and college completion for larger numbers of students is a complex endeavor. It requires venues and facilitation for faculty collaboration as well as administrative support through reallocation of scarce resources. *Any effective strategy for dramatically increasing college completion must include a substantial commitment to*

*“The professional development ... is very stimulating. I think that’s what revitalizes you as a teacher. You’re not just standing in there regurgitating the same old stuff.”* — FACULTY MEMBER

professional development for individual faculty members and for college teams.

CCFSSE data indicate that close to one-third (31%) of instructors report spending at least 50% of class time lecturing. Only 27% spend at least 20% of class time on small-group activities. Professional development can help more faculty members become skilled and comfortable using more engaging teaching strategies.

This professional development work is critical to teaching effectiveness, particularly when faculty are asked to implement new and promising practices to enhance student success. Moreover, professional development activities cannot be limited to full-time employees. Given that about two-thirds of community college faculty members teach part-time, opportunities to expand instructors’ skills and collaborative faculty efforts must be extended to include all faculty.

Instructors’ comments in focus groups underscore the divide in professional development opportunities for full-time and part-time faculty. A full-time faculty member notes, “One of the problems with having so many part-time adjuncts is it’s up to the teachers to take advantage of the professional development opportunities that are there. It causes an uneven experience for students when one classroom is using new techniques of engaging students and another is taught by an adjunct who has been doing the same thing for some time.”

That thought should be balanced with the input from an adjunct faculty member who says, “Frankly, part of your professional development equation is I don’t get paid money or benefits for this time. I have to calculate how close to McDonald’s wages I’m making for doing this work.”



## National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD)

Since 1978, NISOD has been dedicated to the professional development of community college faculty, administrators, and staff and to the continued improvement of teaching and learning. A service and professional development initiative of the Community College Leadership Program in the College of Education at The University of Texas at Austin, NISOD hosts the International Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence, the largest community college conference of its kind, featuring an annual “Celebration of Excellence” to recognize the exemplary contributions of faculty members from around the country. For information on NISOD membership, resources including publications and webinars, and the NISOD conference, visit [www.nisod.org](http://www.nisod.org).

### How Faculty Members Use Class Time

Percentage of faculty reporting that they never engage in these activities

|                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Lecture                               | 2%  |
| Teacher-led discussion                | 4%  |
| Teacher-student shared responsibility | 25% |
| Small group activities                | 21% |
| Student presentations                 | 40% |
| In-class writing                      | 50% |
| Experiential work                     | 66% |
| Hands-on practice                     | 27% |

Source: 2010 CCFSSSE Cohort data.

### Faculty Use of Professional Time, by Part-Time and Full-Time Status

How many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?

|  | 0–4 hours         |                   | 5–12 hours        |                   | 13–20 hours       |                   | 21+ hours         |                   |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|  | Part-time faculty | Full-time faculty | Part-time faculty | Full-time faculty | Part-time faculty | Full-time faculty | Part-time faculty | Full-time faculty |
| Teaching   | 35%               | 8%                | 52%               | 28%               | 10%               | 48%               | 4%                | 16%               |
| Advising students                                      | 92%               | 73%               | 6%                | 22%               | 1%                | 3%                | 1%                | 1%                |
| Supervising internships or other field experiences     | 97%               | 88%               | 2%                | 9%                | 1%                | 3%                | <1%               | 1%                |
| Other interactions with students outside the classroom | 93%               | 82%               | 5%                | 15%               | 1%                | 2%                | 1%                | 1%                |

Source: 2010 CCFSSSE Cohort data.

### *Colleges get to the heart of student success*

**Florida State College at Jacksonville (FL)** encourages its part-time faculty to participate in professional development. Through its online programs, CREOLE (Creating Optimal Learning Environments), and the college's Hybrid program, Florida State College provides a stipend to faculty for participating in this training. Upon completion, part-time instructors receive a certificate and are eligible to be paid at the same per credit-hour rate as full-time faculty.

The Common Standards of Good Teaching, introduced at **Central Oregon Community College (OR)** in 1994, outline faculty conduct standards that support student engagement and success. The standards give guidance about engaging students; monitoring progress; being accessible; and adapting course materials so they are appropriate for students of varied backgrounds, interests, and skills. Students' evaluations of faculty members include questions about the instructor's availability, timeliness and value of feedback, and other elements of the standards.

In 2008, a team of **Norwalk Community College (CT)** faculty, staff, and administrators attended the Washington Center National Summer Institute, which focused on planning, organizing, and conducting learning communities. The same year, in a separate intervention, the English department chair led a professional development session for adjunct faculty. The session focused on structuring curriculum and teaching around clearly articulated learning outcomes. After these two interventions, the department saw an increase in course completion rates and retention for developmental English. One of the successes of this program is a linked English and introductory criminal justice course, which is popular among African American men, who place into developmental education at a higher rate than the overall college

population. The percentage of students who passed this English class increased 6 percentage points from fall 2005 to fall 2008 (from 59% to 65%).

The learning loft at **Eastfield College (TX)** is a high-tech space where faculty can build their technology skills, develop practical ways to integrate technology into their curriculum, and collaborate with one another. The loft houses all of the equipment in the college's high-tech classrooms, including the symposium (a computer monitor that responds to the touch of a finger or pen), a document camera, a teacher interactive platform, and faculty workstations loaded with software. The college offers one-on-one training and support in curriculum development, and faculty can earn professional development credit for their time.

### **Focus Institutional Policies on Creating the Conditions for Learning**

Institutional policies focused on student success are most effective when colleges mandate student participation in activities that are shown to increase persistence and improve student outcomes. For example, colleges can require students to participate in orientation or to meet with an advisor before registering for classes or to enroll in a student success course in their first academic term. Institutional policies also can help faculty members be consistent in their requirements of students. For example, an institution-wide policy can require student participation in study groups, and faculty can help enforce that policy by making it a requirement for their courses.

Survey data indicate mixed results on issues related to institutional policy:

- Only 58% of *SENSE* respondents participated in a college orientation program (either on campus or online) or as part of a course during their first semester.
- 16% of *SENSE* respondents report adding or dropping classes within the first three weeks of college, including 7% who did so without discussing their decision with a staff member or instructor.
- 4% of *SENSE* respondents registered for courses after classes began.

*Initiative on Student Success* focus groups indicate that faculty and students alike benefit from institutional policies that go beyond encouraging students to engage. Faculty want policies requiring students to engage in behaviors that improve student success. For example, one faculty member touts the value of a freshman seminar class but laments the value is limited because students aren't required to participate: "Students in the freshman seminar class get a very good experience for career planning, the whole works. As that stands right now that's not required . . . It's encouraged but not required."

While clarifying institutional policies for faculty members is essential, directly involving them in discussions of institutional policy has greater benefits, including uncovering misconceptions, generating robust ideas, and building internal support for college-wide policies that enhance student outcomes.

Students also value policies that help them stay on track. One student recalls learning about — and initially dismissing — her college's policy of introducing consequences for

*"One of the problems is that our orientation doesn't orient them. We just talk at them. Even if it's mandatory and provided ... just because there's output doesn't mean there is input."*

— FACULTY MEMBER

*“We have found that if students are going to invest in themselves and give of themselves ... we owe it to them to provide them with the support systems they need ... to graduate.”*

— ADMINISTRATOR

missing classes: “When I got the letter from my advisor, I realized they were serious. I read it and tore it up because I didn’t want my mom to see it. I’ve been on time ever since, passing my quizzes and reading.”

#### *Colleges get to the heart of student success*

Starting in fall 2008, **Linn State Technical College (MO)** began preregistering new students and provided them with a class schedule when they attended a new-student registration session. This policy was created to help students prepare to enroll and to jump-start progress on their individual education plans. The college also administers the COMPASS test every week. After completing the test, students meet with an admissions representative, who interprets their score and gives them an overview of LSTC programs and admission requirements. Campus tours also are available, and students are invited to meet with other faculty and staff on campus.

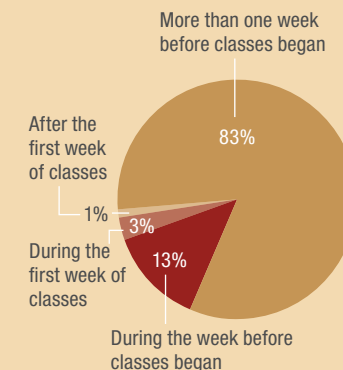
Beginning with the fall 2009 semester, **Bay College (MI)** revamped its academic advising and orientation program in response to student dissatisfaction and operational inefficiencies. The college always offered

academic advising after orientation, but students often had to stand in long lines while they waited for an academic advisor. Then, students would see the next available faculty advisor, not necessarily an advisor from the student’s declared discipline. Changes began with the orientation program itself. Orientation facilitators incorporated iClickers into their sessions so students could answer questions and provide immediate feedback. For academic advising, students now are directed to their own faculty advisor’s office. This significantly reduces students’ waiting time and allows them to create a personal connection with their advisors before leaving orientation.

Several successful interventions at **Broward College (FL)**, including learning communities, got their start when the administration and faculty union leadership agreed on how to fairly compensate participating faculty. Administrators and the leadership of United Faculty of Florida set a precedent when they came to an understanding about the commitment required of faculty who design and deliver learning communities. All parties agreed to follow the contractual zone schedule for stipends and supplements, a practice that remains in place today. The same contractual zone stipends became the standard for other programs in which compensation for faculty engagement (beyond the contractual commitment) is recognized.

### SENSE Respondents’ Registration Timing

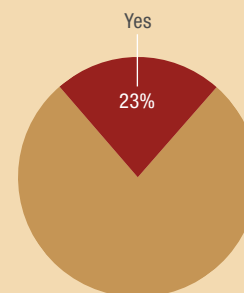
When did you register for your courses for your first semester?



Source: 2009 SENSE data.

### SENSE Respondents’ Early Connections

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



Source: 2009 SENSE data.

### SENSE Respondents’ Enrollment in Courses Based on Placement Scores

Before I could register for classes, I was required to take a placement test (COMPASS, ASSET, ACCUPLACER, SAT, ACT, etc.) to assess my skills in reading, writing, and/or math



This college required me to enroll in classes indicated by my placement test scores during my first semester



0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Percentage of students responding yes

Source: 2009 SENSE data.

# Teaching and Learning Matters

It is time for community colleges to start imagining what is possible. It is time to challenge the notion that some students will not succeed. It is time to relinquish our resistance to *require*. It is time to raise not just our students' aspirations but to raise our own.

Perhaps most of all, it is time to assert that access to college is just not enough. Student success matters. College completion matters. And teaching and learning — the heart of student success — matter.

What will it take to change the view of what is possible at community colleges — and then to convert possibility into reality? Colleges should:

- **Reconceptualize the classroom.** Colleges can improve student success by integrating critical student support services — academic advising and planning, tutoring, career planning, and the like — into the experience traditionally called a course. Most students cannot succeed only by showing up for class and then leaving. However, given the limited time community college students are on campus, the time they spend in their classes is often the only time to engage them. The traditional model of referring students to academic and student support services is likely to be ineffective because great numbers of students don't use support services outside of the classroom. Thus, both colleges and their students must think of — and use — the classroom experience in new ways.
- **Build a culture of evidence.** Good education is driven by passion, but it must be firmly rooted in evidence. Since its inception, the Center has encouraged colleges to build a culture of evidence — one in which administrators, faculty, and staff use data to set goals, monitor progress, and improve practice. Individuals operating in a culture of evidence embrace data and share it widely because they know transparency builds credibility, ownership, and support for change.



- **Conduct courageous conversations.** The use of data may uncover uncomfortable truths — facts that are difficult to acknowledge or long-held beliefs that aren't supported by the facts. Whether these uncomfortable truths are about lower expectations for a particular group of students, the value of a specific program, or a college policy, it is better to air them than to hide them. Colleges must be willing to have honest dialogue that addresses the stickiest, most sensitive issues. They must create environments in which faculty, staff, and students feel safe airing their observations, their ideas, and even their fears because they are confident they will be met with a thoughtful, constructive response.
- **Maintain standards while affirming that all students can learn.** In discussions about increasing the number of students earning credentials, faculty members' first concern typically is about lowering

standards. It is not acceptable to lower standards so more students pass courses and earn credentials. At the same time, faculty and staff at community colleges must convey the conviction that all students can learn. Language matters — and the difference between describing students in terms of strengths rather than deficits is palpable.

- **Look for leadership across the campus.** Everyone must play a leadership role in advancing the college completion agenda, particularly faculty members, who can have the most direct effect on student success. According to analysis across colleges participating in the national community college initiative Achieving the Dream, colleges that more successfully engage faculty get more traction on their success agendas than do colleges where faculty engagement is limited.

- **Revise academic policies.** How many papers should students write? How many books should they read? Is a grade of D considered a successful outcome? Is class attendance important enough to require it? Faculty can set the standard so it is consistent across the college — and rigorous enough to promote high expectations, real learning, and increased success.
- **Engage unions.** Involved early and often, unions can be powerful leaders for promoting a student success agenda, particularly with clarification of commonly sought outcomes, discussion of stakeholder roles and issues, and continuing attention to communication and transparency.
- **Provide strategically targeted professional development for all faculty.** All instructors, both full- and part-time, must have the training they need to fully engage their students and to implement effective practice at scale. Engaging full-time faculty with part-time faculty, as well as supporting and compensating part-time faculty for participation in professional development, cannot be overlooked.
- **Design institutional policies that foster student success.** Policy should make it clear that student success is everyone's job. When properly implemented, policy creates the conditions within which faculty, staff, and administrators can improve their practice. These policies empower and require faculty to do — and appropriately support them in doing — work that will lead to higher levels of student learning, persistence, and completion.

## The Center: What's New and What's Next

- **The Community College Completion Commitment.** Through a variety of ongoing activities and special projects — research, special studies, publications, workshops, work with individual colleges and state systems, and providing national leadership — the Center will promote and contribute to collaborative efforts to dramatically increase community college completion rates.
- **Special Study to Identify High-Impact Practices in Community Colleges.** The Center will build on emerging knowledge about high-impact practices — those that most effectively promote student success in community colleges — with a special-focus module to be included in the spring 2011 national administration of CCSSE. Practices included in the high-impact module will be based on a vetted list of promising practices. The 2011 CCFSSSE administration will explore the extent of faculty members' use of the identified promising practices. Finally, a companion online institutional survey will explore institutional policies and practices related to student engagement through high-impact practices.
- **New Key Findings Summaries for CCSSE and SENSE Member Colleges.** In response to member college requests, the Center has introduced localized executive summaries of each college's student engagement survey results. Starting with CCSSE 2010, upon data release for each survey administration, member college presidents and system leaders receive copies of a *Key Findings* booklet. These customized-for-each-college booklets provide college-specific data in an easy-to-read and easy-to-share format. Additional copies are downloadable free of charge or available from the Center for a modest fee.
- **On-site Training for Colleges, Consortia, and State Systems.** In addition to hosting an annual Center workshop in conjunction with the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) convention in Austin each May, Center staff and associates travel nationwide to assist member colleges in interpreting and using survey results for improving student outcomes.
- **The Center Goes Greener.** Member colleges frequently express concern about the amount of paper and shipping the Center's survey operation requires. To address this concern, the Center developed *SENSE* with a robust electronic reporting system, and CCSSE moved to similar electronic reporting in summer 2010. The *SENSE* and CCSSE online reporting systems offer intuitive, point-and-click access to data and flexibility in creating custom reports, while helping to radically reduce our carbon footprint.
- **Supporting Implementation of Evidence-Based Strategies for Entering Student Success.** The Center's Entering Student Success Institute (ESSI) brings together teams from colleges that have participated in *SENSE*, helping them better understand and make productive use of their *SENSE* findings and other institutional data. Teams drill down into their data and develop written action plans for communicating about their *SENSE* results and identifying ways to improve the entering student experience at their colleges.

# Overview of the Respondents

## The *CCSSE* and *CCFSSE* 2010 Cohorts

Each year, *CCSSE* is administered in the spring during class sessions at *CCSSE* member colleges. All institutions that participate in the *CCSSE* administration are invited to participate in *CCFSSE*, which is administered online. At colleges that choose to participate in *CCFSSE*, every faculty member teaching credit classes in the spring term is eligible to respond to the survey.

All *CCSSE* and *CCFSSE* data analyses use a three-year cohort of participating colleges. Using a three-year cohort increases the number of institutions and students in the national data set, optimizes representation of institutions by size and location, and therefore, increases the stability of the overall results.

This year's three-year cohorts — called the 2010 *CCSSE* Cohort and the 2010 *CCFSSE* Cohort — include data from all colleges that participated in *CCSSE* from 2008 through 2010.

All *CCSSE* data presented in this report include only respondents who indicate that they do not currently hold a college degree.

- More than 400,000 students from 658 institutions in 47 states as well as British Columbia, the Marshall Islands, Nova Scotia, and Ontario are included in the 2010 *CCSSE* Cohort.

- 2010 *CCSSE* Cohort member colleges enroll a total of 4,373,761 credit students — approximately 62% of the total credit-student population in the nation's community colleges.

- Of the 658 participating colleges, 322 (49%) are classified as small (up to 4,499 students), 163 (25%) as medium (4,500–7,999 students), 110 (17%) as large (8,000–14,999 students), and 63 (10%) as extra large (15,000 or more students). Nationally, 54% of community colleges are small, 21% are medium, 15% are large, and 10% are extra large.

- According to the Carnegie Classifications,<sup>16</sup> the 2010 *CCSSE* Cohort includes 126 (19%) urban-serving colleges, 139 (21%) suburban-serving colleges, and 393 (60%) rural-serving colleges. Fall 2008 data indicate that among all U.S. community colleges, 18% are urban, 21% are suburban, and 61% are rural.

- 2010 *CCSSE* Cohort respondents generally reflect the underlying student population of the participating colleges in terms of gender and race/ethnicity. Part-time students, however, were underrepresented in the *CCSSE* sample because classes are sampled rather than individual students. (About 25% of *CCSSE* respondents are enrolled part-time, and 75% are enrolled full-time. IPEDS reports the national figures as 62% part-time and 38%

full-time.) To address this sampling bias, *CCSSE* results are weighted by part-time and full-time status to reflect the institutions' actual proportions of part-time and full-time students.

- 2010 *CCSSE* Cohort respondents are 58% female and 42% male. These figures mirror the full population of *CCSSE* Cohort community college students, which is 57% female and 43% male.
- 2010 *CCSSE* Cohort respondents range in age from 18 to 65 and older.
- *CCFSSE* respondents generally mirror the national two-year college faculty population. The notable exception is employment status: Nationally, 31% of two-year college faculty members are employed full-time, and 56% of 2010 *CCFSSE* Cohort respondents indicated they are employed full-time.

## 2009 *SENSE* Respondents

In this report, *SENSE* data include only entering students who indicate that they do not currently hold a college degree. Entering students are those who indicate that this is their first time at their college.

- The *SENSE* survey is administered during the fourth and fifth weeks of the fall academic term.



- The 2009 *SENSE* survey was administered at 120 community colleges from 30 states and yielded more than 50,000 usable surveys from entering students. These colleges represent a total enrollment of 789,012 students.
- The survey was administered in classes randomly selected from the population of all first college-level English, first college-level math, and developmental education courses (excluding ESL courses). These are the courses most likely to enroll entering students.
- In *SENSE* sampling procedures, students are sampled at the classroom level. As a result, full-time students, who by definition are enrolled in more classes than part-time students, are more likely to be sampled. To adjust for this sampling bias, *SENSE* results are weighted based on the most recent publicly available IPEDS data.

With respect to race/ethnicity, 2010 *CCSSE* Cohort respondents, 2009 *SENSE* respondents, and the national community college population may be compared as described below.

### Respondent and Population Characteristics

| Race/ethnicity  | <i>CCSSE</i> respondents | <i>SENSE</i> respondents | National percentages |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| White           | 64%                      | 53%                      | 55%                  |
| Latino/Hispanic | 13%                      | 20%                      | 16%                  |
| Black           | 12%                      | 17%                      | 13%                  |
| Asian           | 5%                       | 4%                       | 6%                   |
| Native American | 2%                       | 2%                       | 1%                   |
| Other           | 4%                       | 4%                       | 8%                   |

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

Sources: 2010 *CCSSE* Cohort data; 2009 *SENSE* data; IPEDS, fall 2008.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>The College Board. (2010). *Education Pays 2010*. Available at: [http://trends.collegeboard.org/files/Education\\_Pays\\_2010.pdf](http://trends.collegeboard.org/files/Education_Pays_2010.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Available at: [www.completecollege.org/completion\\_shortfall/](http://www.completecollege.org/completion_shortfall/)

<sup>3</sup> Available at: [www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=24&year=2008&level=nation&mode=graph&state=0](http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=24&year=2008&level=nation&mode=graph&state=0)

<sup>4</sup> Available at: [www.ccsse.org/](http://www.ccsse.org/) and [www.aacc.nche.edu/newsevents/News/articles/Documents/collection\\_04202010.pdf](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/newsevents/News/articles/Documents/collection_04202010.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) address. (April 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Available at: [www.luminafoundation.org/goal](http://www.luminafoundation.org/goal)

<sup>7</sup> Available at: [www.gatesfoundation.org/postsecondary\\_education](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/postsecondary_education)

<sup>8</sup> Available at: [www.greatertexasfoundation.org](http://www.greatertexasfoundation.org)

<sup>9</sup> Available at: [www.completecollege.org](http://www.completecollege.org)

<sup>10</sup> Available at: [www.achievingthedream.org/Portal/Modules/936b3989-b5a5-4cf9-ac87-93495e5eea3b.asset?](http://www.achievingthedream.org/Portal/Modules/936b3989-b5a5-4cf9-ac87-93495e5eea3b.asset?)

<sup>11</sup> Available at: [www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=229&year=2008&level=nation&mode=graph&state=0](http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=229&year=2008&level=nation&mode=graph&state=0)

<sup>12</sup> Available at: [www.oecd.org/document/62/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_39263238\\_43586328\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html#4](http://www.oecd.org/document/62/0,3343,en_2649_39263238_43586328_1_1_1_1,00.html#4)

<sup>13</sup> Available at: [www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/?level=nation&mode=data&state=0&submeasure=240](http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/?level=nation&mode=data&state=0&submeasure=240)

<sup>14</sup> Available at: [www.achievingthedream.org/Portal/Modules/936b3989-b5a5-4cf9-ac87-93495e5eea3b.asset?](http://www.achievingthedream.org/Portal/Modules/936b3989-b5a5-4cf9-ac87-93495e5eea3b.asset?)

<sup>15</sup> Wilcox, F.K. (2008). "Thirty-Five Years of Supplemental Instruction." *Supplemental Instruction: Improving First-Year Student Success in High-Risk Courses*. The Freshman Year Experience: Monograph Series No. 7. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina.

<sup>16</sup>*CCSSE* uses the Carnegie Classifications (from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching) to identify colleges as urban-serving, suburban-serving, and rural-serving.

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## CCSSE and SENSE Member Colleges

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



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