Survey of Entering Student Engagement

Mission College

2013 Key Findings

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The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) benchmarks are groups of conceptually related survey items that address key areas of entering student engagement. The six benchmarks denote areas that educational research has shown to be important to entering students’ college experiences and educational outcomes; thus, they provide colleges with a useful starting point for looking at institutional results.

Ideally, colleges engage entering students in all six benchmark areas, beginning with a student’s first contact with the institution and continuing through completion of the first three weeks of the initial academic term. This time is decisive because current research indicates that helping students succeed through the first academic term can dramatically improve subsequent success, including completing courses and earning certificates and degrees.

While many student behaviors and institutional practices measured by the benchmarks can and should continue throughout students’ college careers, the SENSE items and the resulting data focus on this critical entering student timeframe.

SENSE benchmark scores are computed by averaging the scores on survey items composing the benchmarks. Benchmark scores are standardized to have a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 25 across all entering student respondents.
Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice With Entering Students

The standardized benchmark scores allow colleges to gauge and monitor their performance in areas of entering student engagement. In addition, participating colleges have the opportunity to make appropriate and useful comparisons between their performance and that of groups of other colleges.

Performing as well as the national average or a peer-group average may be a reasonable initial aspiration, but it is important to recognize that these averages are sometimes unacceptably low. Aspiring to match and then exceed high-performance targets is the stronger strategy.

Community colleges can differ dramatically on such factors as size, location, resources, enrollment patterns, and student characteristics. It is important to take these differences into account when interpreting benchmark scores—especially when making institutional comparisons. The Center for Community College Student Engagement has adopted the policy “Responsible Uses of CCSSE and SENSE Data,” available at www.cccse.org.

SENSE uses a three-year cohort of participating colleges in all core survey analyses. The current cohort is referred to as the 2013 SENSE Cohort (2011-2013) throughout all reports.

**Effective Track to College Readiness**

Nationally, more than six in 10 entering community college students are underprepared for college-level work. Thus, significant improvements in student success will hinge upon effective assessment, placement of students into appropriate courses, and implementation of effective strategies to ensure that students build academic skills and receive needed support.

**Engaged Learning**

Instructional approaches that foster engaged learning are critical for student success. Because most community college students attend college part-time, and most also must find ways to balance their studies with work and family responsibilities, the most effective learning experiences will be those the college intentionally designs.

**Academic and Social Support Network**

Students benefit from having a personal network that enables them to obtain information about college services, along with the academic and social support critical to student success. Because entering students often don’t know what they don’t know, colleges must purposefully create those networks.

For further information about SENSE benchmarks, please visit www.cccse.org.

**SENSE Benchmarks**

Continued from Page 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission College</th>
<th>2013 SENSE Cohort</th>
<th>2013 Top-Performing Colleges*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective Track to College Readiness</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic and Social Support Network</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Benchmark scores are standardized to have a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 25 across all respondents. For further information about how benchmarks are computed, please visit www.cccse.org.

*Top-Performing Colleges are those that scored in the top 10 percent of the cohort by benchmark.
Aspects of Highest Student Engagement

Benchmark scores provide a manageable starting point for reviewing and understanding SENSE data. One way to dig more deeply into the benchmark scores is to analyze those items that contribute to the overall benchmark score. This section features the five items across all benchmarks (excluding those for which means are not calculated) on which the college scored most favorably and the five items on which the college scored least favorably relative to the 2013 SENSE Cohort.

The items highlighted on pages 4 and 5 reflect the largest differences in mean scores between the institution and the 2013 SENSE Cohort. While examining these data, keep in mind that the selected items may not be those that are most closely aligned with the college’s goals; thus, it is important to review all institutional reports on the SENSE online reporting system at www.cccse.org.

Figure 2 displays the aggregated frequencies for the items on which the college performed most favorably relative to the 2013 SENSE Cohort. For instance, 72.2% of Mission College students, compared with 67.8% of other students in the cohort, responded never on Item 19c. It is important to note that some colleges’ highest scores might be lower than the cohort mean.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>Item Number</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations and Aspirations</td>
<td>19c</td>
<td>Frequency: Turned in an assignment late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning</td>
<td>19k</td>
<td>Frequency: Used an electronic tool to communicate with another student about coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning</td>
<td>19q</td>
<td>Frequency: Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Track to College Readiness</td>
<td>21a</td>
<td>Learned to improve my study skills within a class, or through another experience at this college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Track to College Readiness</td>
<td>21b</td>
<td>Learned to understand my academic strengths and weaknesses within a class, or through another experience at this college</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

For Item(s) 19, except 19c, 19d, 19f, and 19s, once, two or three times, and four or more times responses are combined.

For Item(s) 19c, d, f, and s, responses have been reversed. The frequency displayed is the percentage of students who report never doing the activities described in the items.

For Item(s) 21, strongly agree and agree responses are combined.
Aspects of Lowest Student Engagement

Figure 3 displays the aggregated frequencies for the items on which the college performed least favorably relative to the 2013 SENSE Cohort. For instance, 36.4% of Mission College students, compared with 52.7% of other students in the cohort, responded *strongly agree* or *agree* on Item 18i. It is important to note that some colleges’ lowest scores might be higher than the cohort mean.

![Figure 3](image)

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>Item Number</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Connections</td>
<td>18i</td>
<td>The college provided me with adequate information about financial assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic and Social Support Network</td>
<td>18r</td>
<td>At least one instructor learned my name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning</td>
<td>20d2</td>
<td>Frequency: Used face-to-face tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning</td>
<td>20r</td>
<td>Frequency: Used writing, math, or other skill lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning</td>
<td>20h2</td>
<td>Frequency: Used computer lab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

For Item(s) 18, *strongly agree* and *agree* responses are combined.

For Item(s) 20, *once, two or three times*, and *four or more times* responses are combined.
**SENSE Special-Focus Module Items**

*SENSE* special-focus modules allow participating colleges and researchers to delve more deeply into areas of early student experience and institutional practices that are related to student success. The bar charts across pages 6 and 7 display frequency results for five items from the Promising Practices module.

To access compete special-focus module frequency reports, please visit the *SENSE* online reporting system via [www.cccse.org](http://www.cccse.org).

For colleges that did not participate in this special-focus module, respondent data for the Promising Practices for Community College Student Success module are displayed.

Figure 4: At this college, I completed registration before the first class session(s).

![Figure 4: At this college, I completed registration before the first class session(s).](image)

Figure 5: I became aware that I was required to take a placement test (ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.) at this college:

![Figure 5: I became aware that I was required to take a placement test.](image)
Figure 6: At this college, I am participating in a structured experience for new students (sometimes called a ‘freshman seminar’ or ‘first-year experience’).

![Graph showing percentages of students participating in structured experiences.]

Figure 7: At this college, my instructors clearly explained a class attendance policy that specified how many classes I could miss without penalty.

![Graph showing percentages of students whose instructors explained class attendance policies.]  
- ALL of my instructors explained a class attendance policy: 75.9%  
- MOST of my instructors explained a class attendance policy: 13.8%  
- SOME of my instructors explained a class attendance policy: 7.0%  
- NONE of my instructors explained a class attendance policy: 3.3%  

Figure 8: Someone at this college contacts me if I am struggling with my studies to help me get the assistance I need.

![Graph showing percentages of students assisted by college.]

- Yes: 19.3%  
- No: 39.9%  
- Not applicable; I have not experienced academic difficulties at this college: 40.8%
Academic Goal Setting and Planning

Most community colleges have academic and goal setting policies that are intended to help all students start right. Yet, often these policies, even when they are ostensibly mandatory, might not be implemented in ways that ensure success for all students. The disaggregated data below illustrate the student experience with academic goal setting and planning at your college. Nationally, more than 60% of community college students are enrolled less than full time. Thus, while looking at these data, it is important to consider the institution’s enrollment patterns. Are all of your entering students starting right?

Figure 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>18e</th>
<th>18f</th>
<th>18g</th>
<th>18h</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Less than full-time</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Less than full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>