



# High Expectations High Support

*Imagine you have started a new job in a brand new place. You have a title and job description, but how these broad outlines translate into day-to-day responsibilities is a mystery. You find your desk and computer, but you don't have the password to log in. Days and weeks pass. You figure out the basics, but still you are idling — and your potential is largely untapped.*

*No one would expect an employee, particularly one in his or her first job, to excel in these conditions. Not without training, resources, and support from a supervisor and colleagues.*

*And we shouldn't expect community college students put in a similar position to succeed. In addition to outfitting them with the title "student," community colleges have to help students engage in their college experience. Two essential tools for doing so are high expectations and high support.*

## **You Can't Have One without the Other**

This year, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) zeroes in on high expectations and high support as it presents the results of its 2008 survey. Both are critical to student success: Students do best when expectations are high *and* they receive support that helps them achieve at high levels. Lower the standard, and quality

suffers. Eliminate the support, and students flounder. But colleges that demonstrate both high expectations and high support give their students essential tools to succeed.

The value of high expectations and high support is well documented. Most students do their best when the bar is high but within reach. Colleges must set the standard and do so deliberately, clearly, and consistently. They also must provide the support — financial aid, advising, academic support, and so on — that makes the high standard accessible to all students.

Of course, there is no magic wand: Helping a student develop an academic plan in and of itself will not lead to success. Simply telling students that tutoring services are available may or may not help them. Students, like most busy people, do not necessarily make time for optional activities.

But community colleges that are determined to help students succeed recognize these realities and work with them. With the help of CCSSE and other data sources, these colleges continuously assess strengths and weaknesses in their educational practices. They then make improvements that actively engage students — all students, not just some — in learning.

# The Whole Is Greater than the Sum of Its Parts

Colleges with high expectations and high support purposefully build a student-centered culture in which every aspect of college life reflects these attributes. Faculty and staff, moreover, take collective responsibility for maintaining the standard and for helping more students succeed.

## Intentionally Engaging Students

Literature shows that use of certain key services is significantly related to student success. But many community college students spend limited time on campus and therefore have limited opportunities to make use of these services.

Colleges can address this challenge by making engagement strategies and support services inescapable, either by integrating them into the classroom experience, making them mandatory, or otherwise bringing them to students.

Data consistently show that students are more engaged in the classroom than anywhere else. For example, 46% of students *often* or *very often* work with other students on projects during class, but fewer than half that number — just 21% — *often* or *very often* work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments.

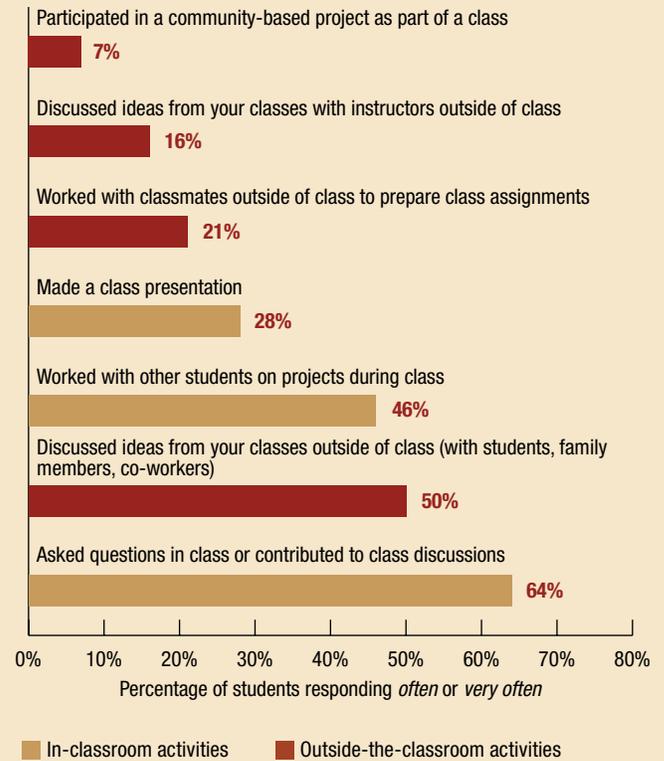
Given these data, colleges can ask themselves whether students who need support services should be sent across campus, to an unfamiliar building, at a time that meets the scheduling needs of an unknown staff member — or whether the services should be provided at times and places convenient to students, including those enrolled part-time.

## Intentionally Engaging Faculty

Colleges' focus on high expectations and high support should extend to faculty, including both full-time and part-time instructors. Faculty should be expected to maintain high standards for students, engage students in learning with active teaching strategies, and provide support to help students succeed. To do this work, faculty need professional development, peer support, and other opportunities to develop their skills and share their results.

## Engagement In and Out of the Classroom

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



Source: 2008 CCFSSSE Cohort data.

Colleges can use their Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE) results to target areas for professional development. For example, CCFSSSE results indicate that there are opportunities for professional development in the area of active teaching and learning strategies.

- ★ Nearly a third (31%) of the 2008 CCFSSSE Cohort (faculty respondents) say that they spend 50–100% of their class time lecturing.
- ★ More than half (53%) of faculty members allocate less than 10% of their class time to small group activities.
- ★ 89% of faculty members report spending less than 20% of their class time on in-class writing.
- ★ 50% of faculty respondents spend no class time on student computer use.

# Data Show the Way: 2008 *CCSSE* Benchmarks and *CCFSSE* Results

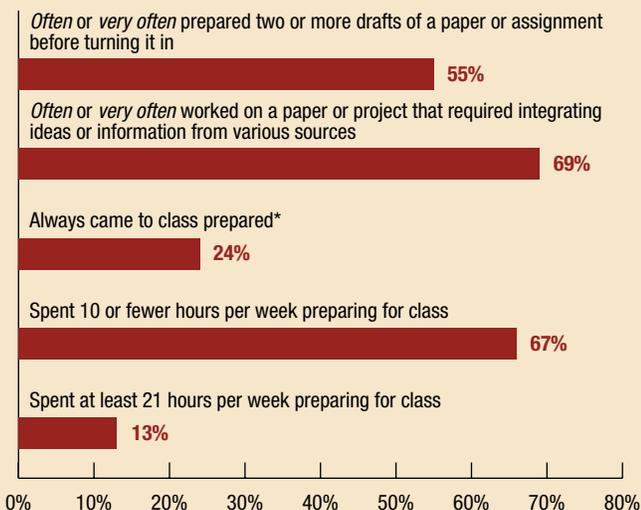
Three of the five *CCSSE* benchmarks — **student effort**, **academic challenge**, and **support for learners** — can help colleges assess whether they are setting high expectations and providing high support. Therefore, this report of the 2008 findings focuses on these three benchmarks. To learn more about findings for all benchmarks as well as individual survey items, visit [www.ccsse.org](http://www.ccsse.org).

## Student Effort

Survey items that are part of this benchmark indicate to what extent students are applying themselves in the learning process and engaging in activities important to their learning and success. These survey items ask about student behaviors such as preparing multiple drafts of papers, using tutoring services and skill labs, and preparing for class.

### Student Effort: Preparing for Class and Assignments

Full-time students who ...



\*This survey item asks students how often they come to class without completing readings or assignments. Never responses are reverse coded here.

Source: 2008 *CCSSE* Cohort data.

Among full-time students:

- ★ 55% *often* or *very often* prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in.
- ★ 69% *often* or *very often* worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources.
- ★ 67% spent 10 or fewer hours per week preparing for class.
- ★ 13% spent at least 21 hours per week preparing for class.

If a college is setting high expectations — demanding that its students demonstrate high-level understanding and skills — it should be reflected in these survey items. There is ample evidence, moreover, that colleges' actions can increase student effort and thereby improve student success.

## Academic Challenge

Survey items included in this benchmark address the nature and amount of assigned academic work, the complexity of cognitive tasks presented to students, and the standards faculty members use to evaluate student performance.

- ★ About half (49%) of *CCSSE* respondents report that they *often* or *very often* worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations; 11% of students say they *never* did so.
- ★ 71% of respondents say their college *quite a bit* or *very much* encourages them to spend significant amounts of time studying; 4% say their college does so *very little*.
- ★ 58% of 2008 *CCSSE* Cohort respondents say that their coursework emphasizes synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways *quite a bit* or *very much*, and 55% report that their college emphasizes applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations *quite a bit* or *very much*. These are examples of higher-level cognition, or greater academic challenge. By contrast, 64% of students say that their coursework emphasizes memorizing facts and ideas *quite a bit* or *very much*.

## Support for Learners

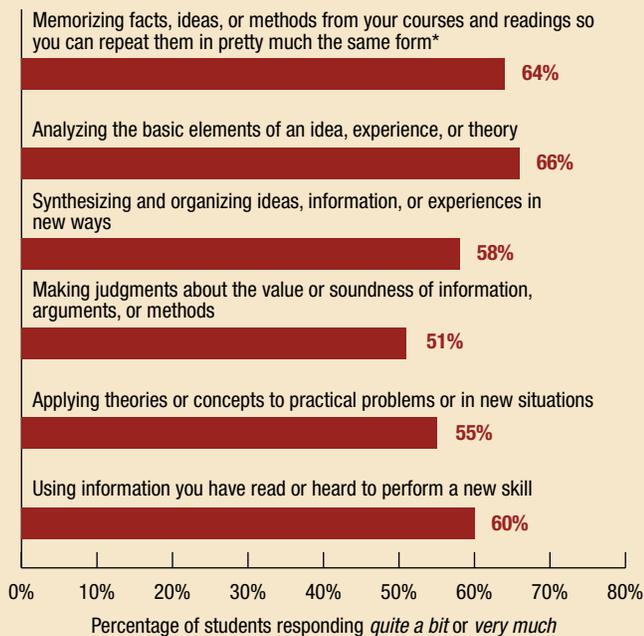
Survey items associated with this benchmark indicate the extent to which students use key academic and student support services as well as how important they consider these services to be. The survey items address advising, academic and career planning, academic skill development, financial aid, and other services that can affect learning and retention.

More than seven in 10 students (71%) say that their college provides the support they need to succeed in college *quite a bit* or *very much*. At the same time:

- ★ Fewer than half of students (45%) report that their college provides the financial support they need to afford their education *quite a bit* or *very much*; more than a quarter (28%) say their colleges provide this support *very little*.

### Academic Challenge: Critical Thinking

*During the current school year, how much has your coursework at this college emphasized the following mental activities?*



\*This survey item is not part of the academic challenge benchmark but is included here for purposes of comparison.

Source: 2008 CCSSE Cohort data.

- ★ One-quarter (25%) of students say that their college helps them cope with their nonacademic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) *quite a bit* or *very much*; 41% say their colleges provide this support *very little*.

Although students say they value many services highly, they do not use these services often. To provide better support to students, colleges can close the gap between perceived importance of student services and regular use of these services. Colleges can increase the use of services by making them mandatory, integrating them into coursework, and providing them at times and in places that are convenient to both full-time and part-time students. Colleges also can conduct further research (surveys or focus groups) to

### Support for Learners: Use and Value of Student Services

*How often do you use the following services?*

	<i>Often</i>	<i>Rarely/never</i>
Academic advising/planning	13%	35%
Career counseling	6%	51%
Job placement assistance	3%	47%
Peer or other tutoring	7%	46%
Skill labs (writing, math, etc.)	15%	37%
Child care	2%	37%
Financial aid advising	17%	33%
Computer lab	32%	24%
Student organizations	5%	45%
Transfer credit assistance	7%	36%

*How important are the following services?*

	<i>Very</i>	<i>Not at all</i>
Academic advising/planning	62%	10%
Career counseling	50%	21%
Job placement assistance	37%	35%
Peer or other tutoring	39%	29%
Skill labs (writing, math, etc.)	44%	25%
Child care	28%	54%
Financial aid advising	60%	22%
Computer lab	60%	15%
Student organizations	24%	41%
Transfer credit assistance	51%	27%

Source: 2008 CCSSE Cohort data.

determine whether most students on their campuses are aware of these resources — what services are offered as well as how to access them — and to identify factors that might discourage students from using services. Some colleges may find that they need to expand efforts to build awareness of student services and encourage students to use them.

### CCFSSE: Data Inform Personal Experience

The Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE), which is aligned with CCSSE, elicits information from faculty about their teaching practices, the ways they spend time both in and out of class, and their perceptions regarding students' educational experiences.

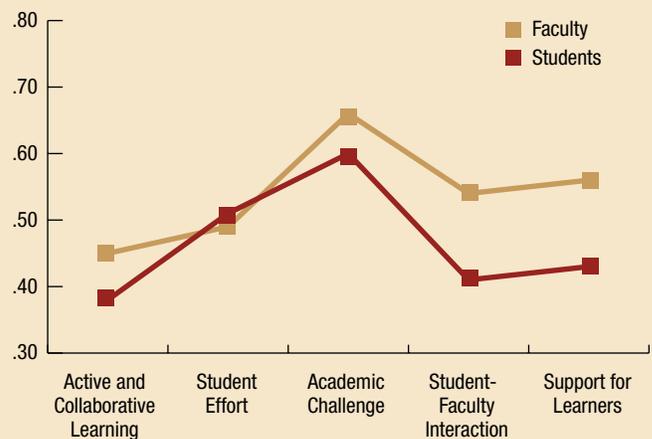
CCSSE encourages colleges to compare faculty perceptions with student responses and share those data with faculty members. The comparison is not perfect because students report their experiences throughout the current academic year, but faculty members are asked to describe their practices in a specific, randomly selected course and also to indicate their perceptions of student experiences in the college more generally. Nonetheless, the comparison can inspire powerful conversations because faculty and students typically have different perceptions of the degree of student engagement.

Overall, faculty members consistently report higher levels of student engagement than students do. This difference in perception likely stems, at least in part, from the difference between personal data (what each individual personally observes and experiences) and systematically collected data, which show what typically is happening to students on campus.

Survey items related to student-faculty interaction reveal the

greatest difference in student and faculty perceptions. For example, 30% of faculty members report that they *often* or *very often* discuss ideas from readings or class work with students outside of class; 15% of students report having these conversations *often* or *very often*. This difference makes sense in the context of an instructor who talks with a half dozen students after every class. If the group of students changes each day, then the instructor would engage with everyone in the class over time. But if the faculty member interacts with the same students repeatedly, then the instructor is experiencing daily student-faculty interaction, but most of his or her students are not.

**Student Engagement: Student and Faculty Views**



Source: 2008 CCSSE Cohort data and 2008 CCFSSSE Cohort data.

CCFSSE data are based on results from all colleges in the 2008 CCFSSSE Cohort. When student (CCSSE) and faculty (CCFSSE) views are presented side by side in this report, the student responses include data only from colleges that participated in the faculty survey. Also, although CCSSE results are presented in terms of benchmarks, which are created through a complex statistical analysis and expert judgment, there are no benchmarks for CCFSSSE. For this report, CCFSSSE results are presented in groupings of survey items that correspond to the CCSSE benchmarks.

To create this chart of student and faculty views, responses to CCSSE and CCFSSSE items were rescaled. All scores were converted to proportions of their totals so that the low end of the scale always was zero and the high end always was one. For example, a four on a seven-point scale and a three on a five-point scale both equal 0.5. Don't know/not applicable responses on items measuring frequency of use were not included in the computation of these scores.

Three items were excluded from these data. A CCSSE survey item about the number of books students read on their own cannot be asked on the faculty survey. Items about the number of books read and papers assigned for classes were omitted because students report on those activities for the full year, but faculty members report on those activities for their particular classes.

## Special Focus: Financial Assistance

CCSSE's 2008 special focus survey items, developed in collaboration with the congressionally appointed Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, explore issues related to financial assistance. The five special focus survey items, which address a different topic each year, are separate from the core survey, which does not change.

For many students, financial aid is the first and most important element of student engagement. If they miss this step — if they do not get financial aid — nothing else the college does will matter because the students will not be able to enroll and stay in school. The consequences, moreover, extend beyond the students themselves. Making sure that students complete college is important to local, state, and national economies.

### Completing the FAFSA

Securing federal financial aid begins with a complex, often intimidating application form called the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). According to the American Council on Education (ACE), more than half (55%) of community college students did not complete a FAFSA in 2003–04, as compared with 37% of students at public four-year institutions. Nearly one-third of the lowest-income community college students did not file a FAFSA.\*

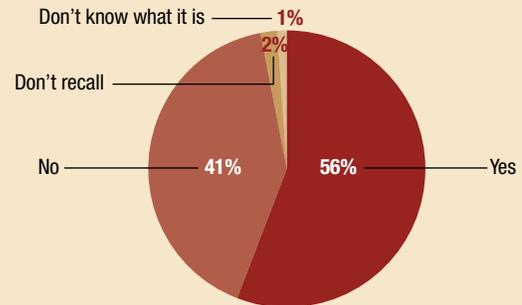
The CCSSE special focus survey items show that slightly more than half (56%) of respondents completed the FAFSA. Most students who did not complete it say they did not think they would qualify for financial aid (38%), say they did not need financial aid (37%), or cite another unspecified reason (18%).

CCSSE recognizes that its survey is completed only by students who are enrolled in college. Thus, although the complexity of the FAFSA is seen as a significant barrier to applying for financial aid, only 5% of respondents who did not complete the FAFSA attribute their inaction to the form's complexity. It is likely that this percentage would increase if the survey included students who did not enroll in college.

\*American Council on Education (ACE). (2006). *Missed Opportunities Revisited: New Information on Students Who Do Not Apply for Financial Aid*. Washington, DC: ACE Center for Policy Analysis.

### FAFSA Completion

*Have you submitted the FAFSA to pay for your expenses at this college?*



Source: 2008 CCSSE data.

Among students who did not complete the FAFSA because they believed they would not qualify for financial aid, just more than half (53%) say they thought they and/or their families had incomes too high to qualify, while 12% report that they believed they were not taking sufficient credit hours to qualify. Nearly a quarter (24%) cite another unspecified reason.

### Awarding of Financial Aid

Among students who did complete the FAFSA, 39% report that they did not receive any type of financial aid, 30% report receiving scholarships and/or grants (money that does not have to be repaid), 10% say they received loans (money that must be repaid), 10% report a combination of scholarships/grants and loans, and 11% did not yet know if they would receive aid. Full-time students are more likely to receive financial aid than are part-time students. Both full- and part-time students are more likely to receive grants and scholarships than loans.

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