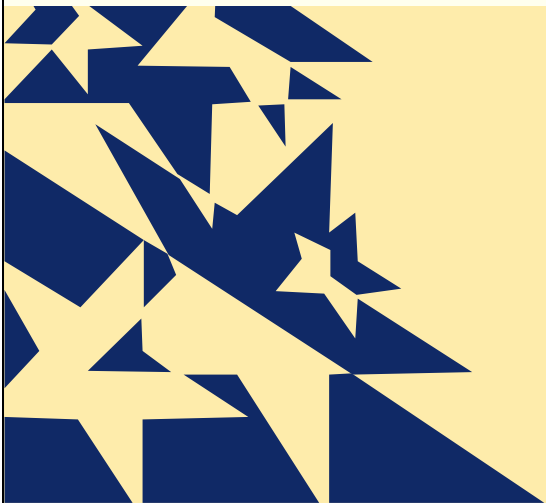


Essential Elements of Engagement

Community College Survey of Student Engagement
Belmont Technical College, June 24, 2010



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CCSSE: A Tool for Improvement

CCSSE helps us:

- § **Assess quality in community college education**
- § **Identify and learn from good educational practice**
- § **Identify areas in which we can improve**

Belmont Technical College, like other community colleges, is working to help students learn and achieve their academic goals. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*) is a tool that helps us be intentional about this work — intentional about assessing our educational practice and intentional about improving student outcomes by designing engagement strategies geared to our students.

CCSSE is a tool that helps us assess quality in community college education, focus on good educational practice (practice that promotes high levels of student learning and retention), and identify areas in which we can improve programs and services for students.



Using *CCSSE* to inform Continuous Quality Improvement

Start with the benchmarks.

Look at individual survey items.

Disaggregate the data and identify the least engaged student groups.

Involve the college community.

Design strategies and set targets.

Share the data and plans to address them.

Track progress by measuring outcomes.

Scale up efforts that are working. Modify or discontinue those that are not.

Repeat.

Review and analyze the data — start with the benchmarks. Benchmark scores highlight a handful of key areas of the student experience. They don't tell the whole story, but they paint broad outlines — and give clues about where colleges should look more closely. Colleges typically perform well on some benchmarks and not so well on others, leading users to explore the differences, question whether the varying benchmark scores reflect institutional priorities, and so on.

Look at individual survey items associated with each benchmark. For each item, ask whether the college's performance is what users expect and what they desire. Focus attention on educational practices, programs, and policies that may be in need of improvement and those worthy of celebration.

Disaggregate the data to gauge engagement and outcomes among various student groups. Also look at disaggregated data related to your college's priorities. For example, colleges concerned about developmental education students should compare the responses of students who need developmental education with those students who do not need developmental education. They can go deeper by comparing students who need just one developmental class to those who need developmental classes in multiple areas. The goal is to look at the data and see which students are being well served and which may need more intervention. All colleges should disaggregate data by race and ethnicity, income, and enrollment status (full-time versus part-time) to identify their more- and less-engaged student groups.



CCSSE: A Tool for Community Colleges

CCSSE data analyses include a three-year cohort of participating colleges.

§ The 2009 CCSSE Cohort includes more than 343,000 community college students from 585 institutions in 48 states, British Columbia, the Marshall Islands, and Nova Scotia.



The *CCSSE* survey focuses on institutional practices and student behaviors that promote student engagement — and are positively correlated with student learning and retention.

The *CCSSE* survey is administered directly to community college students during class sessions. These classes were selected at random from all credit classes, excluding distance learning, studio, and lab classes.

The colleges then receive their survey results, along with guidance and analysis they can use to improve their programs and services for students. All *CCSSE* work is grounded in research about what works in strengthening student learning and persistence.

CCSSE data analyses include a three-year cohort of participating colleges. The 2009 *CCSSE* Cohort includes all colleges that participated in *CCSSE* from 2006 through 2009. If a college participated more than one time in the three-year period, the cohort includes data only from its most recent year of participation.

The 2009 *CCSSE* Cohort includes more than 343,000 community college students from 585 institutions in 48 states, British Columbia, the Marshall Islands, and Nova Scotia.



CCSSE: A Tool for Accountability

CCSSE:

- § **Provides reliable data on issues that matter**
- § **Reports data publicly**
- § **Is committed to using data for improvement**

CCSSE opposes using its data to rank colleges.



Accountability requires reliable, relevant data; public reporting; and a commitment to use data for continuing improvement. These are *CCSSE*'s basic principles.

CCSSE results are public, and they are presented for the full *CCSSE* population, various subgroups within the full population, and individual colleges. All survey results, plus background information and the ability to customize data searches, are available at www.ccsse.org.

CCSSE is committed to using information about performance to inform the public discourse on higher education and to better define quality in higher education.

One important note: ***CCSSE* opposes using its data to rank colleges.** 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 likely will be misleading. Most important, ranking does not serve a purpose related to improving student outcomes.

Improvement over time — measuring where we are now compared with where we want to be — likely is the best gauge of our efforts to enhance student learning and persistence.



CCSSE Benchmarks for Effective Educational Practice

The five CCSSE benchmarks are:

§ Active and Collaborative Learning

§ Student Effort

§ Academic Challenge

§ Student-Faculty Interaction

§ Support for Learners

CCSSE reports survey results in two ways: students' responses to individual survey items, which are presented in absolute terms, and national benchmarks.

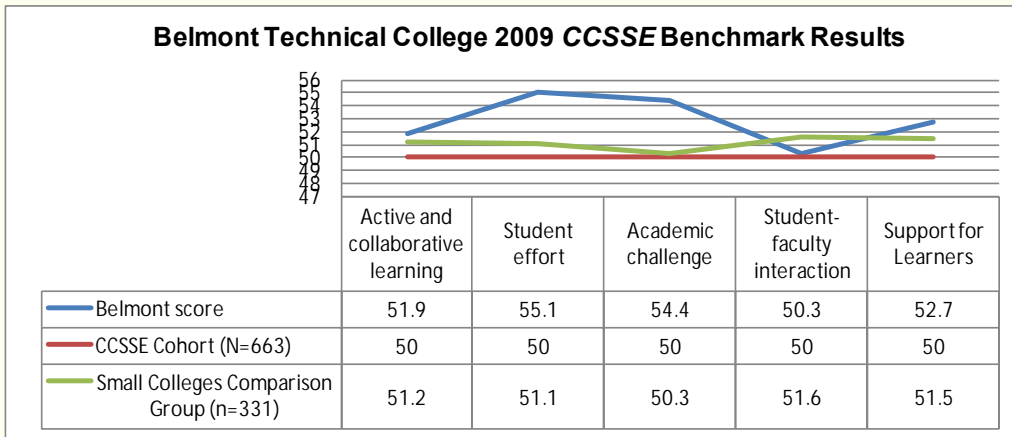
Benchmarks are groups of conceptually related items that address key areas of student engagement. *CCSSE*'s five benchmarks denote areas that educational research has shown to be important in quality educational practice.

The five benchmarks of effective educational practice are **active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, and support for learners.**



Student Engagement at Belmont

CCSSE is used as a tool to measure student engagement across five dimensions. *Student engagement* is defined as: “the amount of time and energy that students invest in meaningful educational practices.”



CCSSE Survey Results retrieved from <http://www.ccsse.org/survey/survey.cfm>

This chart, *Belmont Technical College 2009 CCSSE Benchmark Results* displays scores for the five dimensions: active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, Student-faculty interaction, and support for learners. The way in which scores are reported allows institutions to compare their performance with benchmarks for the national cohort and also for a cohort based on the number of students enrolled in an institution. In this chart, Belmont's scores are shown with national and small college benchmarks. The **blue line** represents the rating by Belmont students. The **red line** is set at 50 on each dimension and represents the benchmark for the 2009 *CCSSE* cohort of 663 institutions. The **green line** follows the ratings for 331 small colleges that are one part of the national cohort. The rating by Belmont students in 2009 on each of the dimensions is above the national benchmark. Only in one area, student-faculty interaction, is Belmont's score below the small college benchmark.

Small colleges are those institutions with enrollments of up to 4,499 students.



Most and Least Engaged Students*

Most Engaged	Least Engaged
Full-time students	Part-time students
Nontraditional-age students (those over age 24)	Traditional-age students (those 24 and younger)
Students seeking credentials	Students not seeking credentials
Students who have completed 30 or more credits	Students who have not completed 30 or more credits
Female students	Male students
Black students	Students who are not black
International students	U.S. students
Financially dependent students (those using funds other than their own income or savings as the major source to pay the tuition)	Financially independent students (those using their own income or savings as the major source to pay the tuition while not using their parents' or spouse's money)
Students who work fewer than 30 hours per week	Students who work more than 30 hours per week
Students who have taken developmental courses	Students who have not taken developmental courses
Students who have taken study skill courses	Students who have not taken study skill courses
Students who have participated in orientation	Students who have not participated in orientation
Students who have participated in learning communities	Students who have not participated in learning communities

*This analysis does not include students who hold degrees.

Source: 2009 CCSSE Cohort data.

CCSSE data consistently show that high-risk students, such as those who take developmental courses, typically are more engaged than their lower-risk peers. A notable exception is part-time students (a sizable group of high-risk students), who consistently are less engaged than their full-time peers.

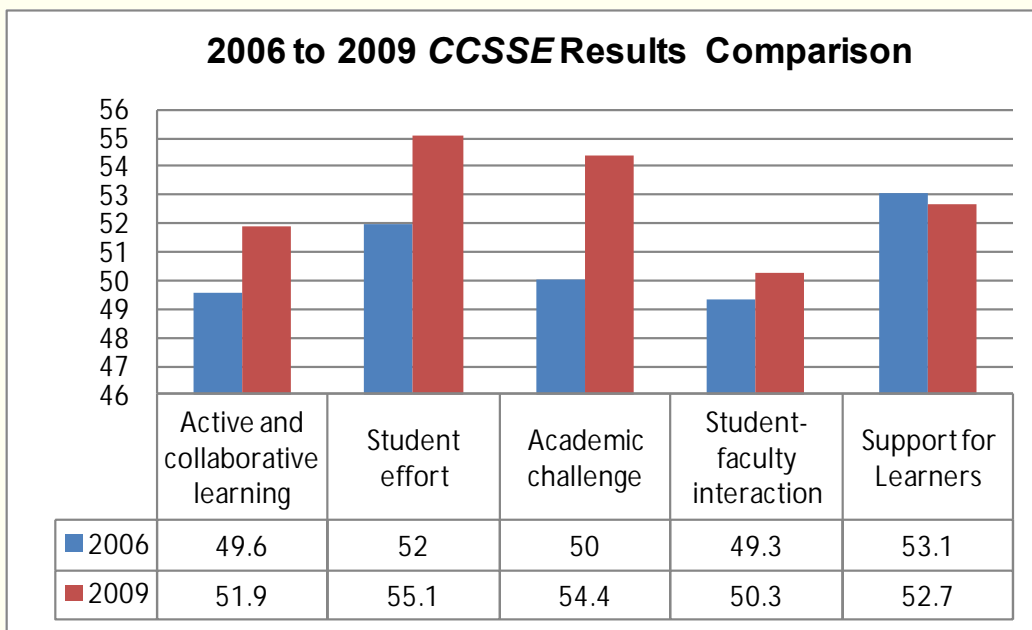
But consider the case of part-time students who participate in developmental education. On four of five *CCSSE* benchmarks, these students are less engaged than full-time students but more engaged than their part-time peers who did not take developmental courses. On the fifth benchmark, support for learners, part-time students who participate in developmental education are more engaged than even full-time students: They are 15% of the 2009 *CCSSE* Cohort, but they represent 16% of the most engaged students on this benchmark.

Thus, even though part-time students are consistently less engaged than full-time students, taking developmental courses is a mitigating factor that affects their engagement levels in all areas. Students in other less engaged groups — male students, traditional-age students, and students who work more than 30 hours per week — have similar outcomes when they take developmental courses.

This effect, moreover, is not limited to students taking developmental courses. Students from typically less engaged groups are more engaged than their peers when they participate in college orientation, study skill courses, and learning communities.



Reaching for Excellence at Belmont



The most important comparison: where you are now, compared with where you want to be.

The side-by-side comparison of Belmont's 2006 and 2009 *CCSSE* results documents the progress that has been made in four of the five areas. The 2009 score for the *Support for Learners* category is four tenths of a point below where it was in 2006. In both 2006 and 2009, Belmont's results were above the national benchmark which is set statistically at the 50th percentile.



Next steps in *CCSSE* analysis and action planning

- ü Examine benchmarks.
- ü Look at individual survey items.
- ü Analyze Data and identify the least engaged student groups.
- ü Involve the college community in analysis and share results.
- ü Design strategies, develop tactics, and set targets for improvement.
- ∅ Track progress on measurable outcomes.
- ∅ Scale up efforts that are working. Modify or discontinue those that are not.
- ∅ Repeat *CCSSE* administration in 2012.

For colleges committed to working within a culture of evidence, participating in *CCSSE* is not an end unto itself. It is the beginning of understanding — and acting on — student results.

Colleges that use data wisely — colleges that operate with a culture of evidence — are in a never-ending cycle of gathering, analyzing, and most important, *using* data.

Their work starts with these inarguable fundamentals:

1. The center of community college work is student learning, persistence, and success.
2. Every program, every service, every academic policy is perfectly designed to achieve the exact outcome it currently produces. If a program isn't producing the desired outcome, the only rational action is to modify or discontinue it.