

## **What is SOSE?**

The Survey of Online Student Engagement (SOSE) is an online companion to the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). SOSE helps community and technical colleges gather engagement data from online-only students at their institutions. The survey focuses on aspects of student engagement unique to online learning environments.

## **How does the Center define ‘online-only’ students?**

Online-only students are those who are enrolled only in online courses at the college during the spring academic term in which SOSE is administered.

## **When is the survey administered?**

The survey is administered during the spring academic term, concurrent with CCSSE and the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE).

## **Do colleges need to participate in CCSSE to be eligible for SOSE administration?**

Yes. SOSE is a companion to CCSSE, and the Center’s processes for SOSE administration are tied to the CCSSE administration process.

## **How is the survey administered?**

SOSE is administered as an online survey: Participant colleges will receive a link to the survey from the Center, and are then responsible for using e-mail, a learning management system, or the appropriate college-specific courseware to invite online-only students to complete the survey.

## **How much does SOSE administration cost?**

SOSE pricing can be found on the [Membership Options](#) page of the CCSSE website.

## **Is it possible to include additional survey items in our SOSE administration?**

No, not at this time.

## **Can someone other than our CCSSE Campus Coordinator be in charge of SOSE?**

Center policy is that institutions maintain one point of contact with the Center for CCSSE, CCFSSE, and SOSE. The Campus Coordinator may work closely with other staff members (i.e. colleagues from the institution’s IT and/or online education departments) to plan and facilitate SOSE administration. However, CCSSE Liaisons and Center staff will direct all SOSE-related communications to the CCSSE Campus Coordinator, who is responsible for sharing this information with colleagues as he or she sees fit.

## **Will SOSE have any impact on faculty?**

SOSE is administered online and during students’ out-of-class time. As such, the survey should not have any impact on faculty. One exception would be if the college elects to have faculty teaching online courses remind students to complete the survey, which may be an effective strategy to boost completion rates.

**Does the Center have one memo to faculty that explains all three surveys: CCSSE, CCFSSSE, and SOSE?**

The Center does not currently have such a memo. It is worth noting that not all faculty will need to know about *SOSE* unless the college would like them to—the Campus Coordinator might want to inform only those who teach online courses. However, the Campus Coordinator is welcome to take the *CCFSSE* memo and add a sentence or two about *SOSE*.

**Can students in on-campus courses take *SOSE* to save paper/ facilitate administration/ save class time?**

No. *CCSSE* and *SOSE* are different survey instruments aimed at different student populations. Students taking at least some classes on campus are able to report on their student engagement experience in terms of face-to-face interactions, use of physical campus services and facilities, etc. Students taking courses only online interface with the college and with their courses in different ways, and these differences are reflected in *SOSE* survey items.

Although many colleges have expressed interest in administering *CCSSE* online, response rates for *CCSSE* and *SOSE* suggest that the best way to obtain robust data at the community college level is through in-class paper-and-pencil survey administration. The *CCSSE* cohort response rate over the past three administrations has averaged between 75 and 80 percent of target, whereas *SOSE* response rates are markedly lower.

**How should we make the *SOSE* survey link available to students?**

The best way to distribute the *SOSE* link depends on how the college usually contacts its online-only students. During previous *SOSE* pilots, some colleges have e-mailed the link to students and others have posted the link using a learning management system.

**Is *SOSE* distributed at the class level? Do students receive personalized links to the survey?**

There is only one non-password protected survey link for each year's *SOSE* administration. Many of the *SOSE* administration logistics were informed by pilots and field tests of the survey. These experiences indicated that member colleges have different ways of identifying and reaching out to online-only students. Some colleges send individual e-mail invitations to all of their online-only students, others embed the link within courseware for specific online classes, and others embed the link in learning management system platforms available to all students. All three of these options are fine.

**Why doesn't the Center e-mail *SOSE* invitations/links to our students?**

In order to facilitate the best response rate possible, member colleges need to determine the college's most reliable method of contacting online-only students. Previous *SOSE* administrations have shown that for some colleges this may be through

individual e-mail addresses, but for other colleges posting the link to students and/or classes through the college's online courseware system is preferable.

### **What happens if we accidentally provide the SOSE link to some students who are also enrolled in on-campus courses?**

SOSE includes an item that asks whether students are taking any on-campus courses during the current academic term and filters out those who are taking on-campus courses and therefore eligible for CCSSE sampling and participation.

### **How will we know whether students are actually completing the survey?**

Shortly after Campus Coordinators receive the SOSE link, CCSSE Liaisons will e-mail Campus Coordinators access to a Responder Tool that can be used to monitor student survey access and completion.

### **How long does the survey take to complete?**

The survey typically takes 20 to 25 minutes to complete.

### **Do students need to complete the survey in one sitting?**

As SOSE is relatively brief and online data settings may vary from one device to another, it is best to encourage students to complete the survey in a single sitting.

### **Why are students asked to list their online instructors' names on the survey?**

These data are provided in the raw data file so that colleges can verify that a given respondent is a student at their institution, rather than a false entry or an individual not affiliated with the college. Data from this item are not used by the Center in any way.

### **How can I track our SOSE response rate?**

In order to track SOSE response rates, Campus Coordinators will need to know how many students the survey was distributed to (when the link is posted in general online locations, such as online course pages or to the college's learning management system). The number of students to whom the link was made available can be used in conjunction with the survey completion number from the SOSE Responder Tool to calculate the college's response rate. However, note that factors such as an incomplete list of e-mail addresses for the college's online-only students, or the posting of the survey link on a platform that is available to some, but not all, of the college's online-only students will decrease the accuracy of this figure.

### **How will I know which students have completed SOSE?**

SOSE is completely anonymous, meaning that there is no way to identify whether a specific student has completed the survey. However, all colleges have access to a Responder Tool with data on the number of students from their institution who access the survey, reach the survey's midpoint, and complete the survey.

### **If login credentials are not required to access the survey, how can I be sure that our responses are from actual students enrolled at the college?**

For data to be included in the college's raw data file and frequency report, all respondents must select the college's name from a dropdown list of participating institutions. Respondents are also asked to write in the name of at least one online class as well as the name of an instructor associated with their online coursework at the college during the current academic term. Researchers may wish to use data from these write-in fields to verify respondents in the college's raw data file.

### **What should we do if our institution has a low number of survey respondents or a low response rate?**

The Center encourages colleges to discuss response rates and student representation in the *SOSE* respondent group prior to using *SOSE* data for institutional planning. Center research staff are available at [data@cccse.org](mailto:data@cccse.org) to discuss these issues.

### **Why doesn't the Center offer *SOSE* benchmark scores?**

While several *CCSSE* benchmark items have been adapted for the *SOSE* survey, response rates suggest that data from the majority of *SOSE* institutions may not be representative of those institutions' online student populations. Under these conditions it would not be good research practice to use *SOSE* for benchmarking purposes.

### **Why doesn't the Center offer comparison data in its *SOSE* reports?**

Response rates and the ability to successfully deploy the *SOSE* vary greatly from one institution to the next. Under these circumstances, the Center does not recommend comparing *SOSE* results across institutions.

### **Does the Center clean the data from the survey's write-in response items?**

No, data from write-in items are provided to the college in raw data format only, and it is the responsibility of the institution to clean these data according to their own needs and intended uses.