NEWS RELEASE

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS A WORK IN PROGRESS

AUSTIN, TX – Charged with improving student retention, producing more graduates, ensuring academic quality, and retreading the American work force, community colleges understand that increased limelight comes with high expectations. Given those expectations, many colleges are seeking better understanding of what works in promoting student success and of effective ways to bring promising educational practices to scale. New survey results from the Center for Community College Student Engagement reveal both progress and a tough road ahead.

The pattern of findings from four different but related Center surveys reflects a series of incongruities in implementation of policies and programs that colleges will need to address. For example, the Center's new report raises questions such as the following:

- **How can colleges close the gap between student aspirations and results?** Survey data show that 79% of entering students aim to complete an associate degree; yet fewer than half (45%) of entering students who intend to earn an associate degree or certificate meet their goal within six years.
- **Can more students test out of developmental education?** 74% of students report that they were required to take an academic placement test, but only 28% say they used materials or resources provided by the college to prepare for those tests. Smaller percentages report participating in any kind of intensive skills brush-up experience to enhance test performance. While 44% of participating colleges report offering some sort of test preparation, only 13% make test preparation mandatory.
- **Are students getting the academic support they need?** 72% of students who took a placement test report that they needed developmental education, but 82% of students say they never participated in supplemental instruction and 76% say they never participated in

tutoring. At the same time, 87% of participating colleges report that they offer supplemental instruction, but only 14% make it mandatory for developmental education students.

- **Does academic planning set students up for success?** 42% of part-time students and 19% of full-time students work more than 30 hours per week. More than half care for dependents. But only 26% of entering students say a college staff member talked with them about their commitments outside of class to help them figure out how many courses to take.

According to Kay McClenney, director of the Center for Community College Student Engagement, the report provides significant direction for community colleges. "These colleges have to do better– and they clearly can," she says. "To make needed progress, colleges must focus their efforts on those educational practices that produce the greatest positive impact for the largest possible numbers of students."

The report, *A Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success,* brings together survey responses from entering students, experienced students, faculty and institutions. Data sources include results from the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (*SENSE*), the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*), and the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (*CCFSSE*), plus preliminary findings from the newly-launched Community College Institutional Survey (CCIS). The report is based on responses to the core student surveys from approximately 75,000 entering students (*SENSE*) and over 440,000 experienced students (*CCSSE*) in multi-year cohorts. The promising practices items, administered in 2011, produced responses from about 35,000 entering students and from 130,000 to 230,000 experienced students, as *CCSSE* colleges that added custom items to the survey administered only the first five items from the promising practices set. About 35,000 respondents are included in faculty survey results. The pilot administration of the institutional survey produced responses from 228 colleges.

The report is the first in a series exploring 13 promising practices for strengthening community college student engagement and success: assessment and placement, orientation, academic goal setting and planning, timely registration, accelerated or fast-track developmental education, first-year experience or seminar, student success course, learning community, class attendance, early academic alert and intervention, experiential learning beyond the classroom, tutoring, and supplemental instruction.

As part of the early stages of a multi-year Center initiative—Identifying and Promoting High-Impact Educational Practices in Community Colleges—the report also offers guidance to college administrators, faculty, and staff willing to take the next steps.

The report may be downloaded free of charge at www.cccse.org. The Center is a research and service initiative of the Community College Leadership Program in the College of Education at The University of Texas at Austin.

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A Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success is available online:
http://www.ccsse.org/center/resources/docs/publications/A_Matter_of_Degrees_02-02-12.pdf