



# Engagement MATTERS

formerly *CCSSE Highlights*

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## New Accreditation Toolkits Help Build a Framework for Success

Though quality improvement and assurance are high priorities for college leaders, demonstrating quality to an accrediting entity requires immense effort and allocation of resources. The more reliable data available, the more effective colleges can be in accurately describing their educational practice.

From developing the framework for a self-study to providing evidence to visiting accreditation teams, *CCSSE* results can be used to depict student experiences and more effectively target improvement activities. Multiple administrations of *CCSSE* over time can reveal trends at an institution, supporting long-term self-evaluation and demonstrating the college's commitment to continuous improvement.

The recently updated and improved accreditation toolkits aligned to the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*) allow member colleges to use their student engagement data, coupled with direct measures of student learning outcomes, as evidence when answering to accreditation standards.

In addition to revising the *CCSSE* toolkits, the Center has developed an entirely new set of accreditation toolkits aligned to its newest national survey of educational practice, the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (*SENSE*).

The *CCSSE* and *SENSE* accreditation toolkits are tailored for each of the six higher education accrediting bodies. Each toolkit aligns the survey items to respective accrediting bodies' standards and criteria. Also included are tips for implementing survey data into accreditation processes, a regional accreditation timeline, and advice about including survey administrations in that timeline.

The new accreditation toolkits are available online as downloadable PDF documents. Colleges are welcome to make unlimited copies with appropriate citation.

## Working with the New Accreditation Toolkits

**Choose an approach to mapping survey items and accreditation standards.** Each accreditation toolkit includes two components that allow users to either review survey item numbers mapped to standards or standard numbers mapped to survey items. Which approach an accreditation team finds most useful will depend upon its areas of focus and where the institution is in the accreditation timeline.

**Compare items that appear on both instruments.** The toolkits also highlight items that are found on both *CCSSE* and *SENSE*, indicating where on each survey similar or identical items appear. Colleges using both instruments for accreditation purposes will have an easier time gathering evidence by utilizing this feature.

**Develop a long-term plan.** Two model timelines—one based on a three-year accreditation cycle and the other on a ten-year accreditation cycle—are provided in the toolkits. The timelines suggest when to incorporate survey administrations throughout the selected time period.

**Consider a few additional tips.** This newsletter offers some advice for using *CCSSE* data for accreditation (see page 2). Additional insight into successful accreditation efforts can be found in the tip section of the accreditation toolkits.

**TOOLKITS ONLINE** 

**CCSSE Accreditation Toolkits**

[www.ccsse.org/resources/accreditation.cfm](http://www.ccsse.org/resources/accreditation.cfm)

**SENSE Accreditation Toolkits**

[www.ccsse.org/sense/resources/accreditation.cfm](http://www.ccsse.org/sense/resources/accreditation.cfm)

## Tips on Using Survey Results for Accreditation

**Many hands make lighter work.** Gather a cross-functional team to review Center data in light of accreditation work. While this team may or may not contain members of your current in-house accreditation committee, it should represent all areas of the college to ensure diversity in feedback and opinion. This can be a great opportunity to involve faculty and staff who may not be familiar with accreditation activities yet have valuable “frontline” information to share.

**Identify key areas for improvement.** Note where gaps occur between accreditation criteria and current practices at your institution. This may serve as a foundation for discussion with your in-house accreditation committee or may spur the creation of such a committee if one doesn't currently exist.

**Understand that progress is incremental.** Begin addressing areas of concern raised in the review of the data—but recognize that it takes time to create change at the institutional level. Invite as many faculty and staff as possible to participate; the more people who buy into improvement efforts, the more quickly change can occur.

**Reconsider Center membership if your status has lapsed.** In today's difficult economic environment, it's more important than ever for community and technical colleges to make wise choices about where to invest scarce resources. For almost a decade, *CCSSE* has been an invaluable tool that allows colleges to gauge their performance on powerful indicators of effective educational practice, both on institutional priorities and goals—and also in comparison with colleges within their system, state, accrediting region, and/or across North America.

**Attend a *CCSSE* Workshop.** Center staff members provide free and low-cost workshops at national conferences, as well as on-site events tailored for single institutions, systems, states, and regions. Workshop agendas are tailored to the needs of attendees around topics such as understanding and using survey results for improvement, using accreditation toolkits, and communicating those results to internal and external groups. Center workshops can energize attendees and help focus their efforts to achieve improvements more quickly.

For information about *CCSSE* or *SENSE* membership and workshops, visit [www.ccsse.org](http://www.ccsse.org) or contact the Center for Community College Student Engagement at [info@ccsse.org](mailto:info@ccsse.org) or 512-471-6807.

## Calendar Notes

### November 2, 2009

Registration Open for *SENSE* 2010

### November 16, 2009

2009 *CCSSE* National Report Release

### December 2, 2009 • 1 p.m. CST

*“Making Connections”*

NISOD Webinar featuring *CCSSE*

More info at: [www.nisod.org/webinars](http://www.nisod.org/webinars)

### December 22, 2009 - January 2, 2010

Center closed for Holiday Break

## *CCSSE* Colleges in Action

In fall 2008, **River Valley Community College (NH)** was granted accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges with a fifth-year interim report due for consideration in spring 2013. During the college's accreditation work, 2006 *CCSSE* results, along with results of the college's Graduate Satisfaction Survey, were presented to the College Advisory Board, the President's Council, and the college community at large. The self-study refers to the college's use of *CCSSE* and includes the recommendation that an ad-hoc assessment team continue to review, evaluate, and make recommendations from the results of these tools. The college also participated in *CCSSE* in 2008. Those results were combined with other data and presented to the college community in fall 2009, and are now being used in the process of finalizing the college's strategic plan.

**Lower Columbia College (WA)** currently is preparing for its ten-year accreditation visit in 2010 by researching and writing its self-study document. The college will use *CCSSE* data in this process and will include *CCSSE* reports in its documentation room. For almost a decade, the college has focused on 25 Key Performance Indicators, which include *CCSSE* results as well as data from the National Community College Benchmarking Project. The college is committed to serious annual assessment of its performance indicators: Seven teams research and analyze the institution's performance each year and prepare monitoring reports to be reviewed by the college's senior administrators and board of trustees. Lower Columbia College just completed its 10th annual cycle of this intensive monitoring process, which feeds directly into its annual and strategic planning cycles and supports its accreditation work.