



ENGAGEMENT MATTERS

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Excellencia in Education recently named Examples of Excellencia: college programs that have demonstrated success in improving educational outcomes for Latino students. During the nomination process, the organization collected more than 100 descriptions of promising practices across the country. All colleges are invited once again to submit examples via their website, www.edexcellencia.org.

The Center has been soliciting similar vignettes—rooted in data—for several years, and is currently engaged in a large-scale research initiative that explores 13 promising practices for community colleges (please see the College Spotlight section on page 3 for more information).

Given our common agendas, the two organizations have agreed to partner in continuing work to identify effective practices in serving Latino students and to collaborate in further work to help colleges understand their diverse student populations and implement effective practices at scale.



Keys to Student Success:

Strengthening the Role of Part-Time Faculty in Community Colleges

Did you know that part-time faculty in America's community colleges teach approximately two-thirds of the course sections? Community colleges across the country are intensifying their focus on college completion, and faculty members are being asked to fundamentally redesign students' educational experiences in order to improve early success, learning, attainment, and equity in student outcomes. As colleges consider opportunities for strengthening student success, it is clear that there are real limits on potential improvements unless college leaders rethink, and substantially revamp, the ways they hire, orient, develop, evaluate, and compensate part-time faculty—and effectively integrate those individuals into the college's culture and agenda to improve student learning and success.

With support from MetLife Foundation, the Center has established a project—Strengthening the Role of Part-Time Faculty—to define for the community college field the key challenges and promising solutions pertaining to the critical role of part-time faculty in promoting student success. Major activities include the following:

- Conducting focus groups and interviews at select community colleges with part-time faculty, full-time faculty, and college leaders who play a key role in implementing innovative approaches to the college's work with part-time faculty; then producing an edited collection of video clips from focus groups for use in publications and presentations, as well as on the Center's website

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Fear not! Horror-themed learning community pilot yields promising results at Center member college.

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CENTER DEFINED

The **Center for Community College Student Engagement** is a research and service initiative of the Community College Leadership Program at The University of Texas at Austin that provides important resources for assessing and improving educational practice in community colleges through the following projects and initiatives:

Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) /'se'sē/, administered to students in the spring, includes items that assess institutional practices and student behaviors correlated with student learning and retention.

Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE) /'sē'sē'fesē/, an online companion to CCSSE, elicits information from instructors about their students' educational experiences, their teaching practices, and how they spend their professional time.

Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) /sens/, administered in early fall to entering students, gathers information about their academic and non-academic experiences from the time of their decision to attend the college through the first three weeks of class.

Community College Institutional Survey (CCIS) collects data on high-impact educational practices in community colleges as well as new knowledge about the implementation, design, and scale of these practices.

High-Impact Practices Initiative is a grant-funded project that combines quantitative and qualitative findings in efforts to identify proven effective educational practices.

Initiative on Men of Color is a grant-funded project that aims to assist colleges in improving educational outcomes for African-American and Latino males.

Strengthening the Role of Part-Time Faculty is a grant-funded project that aims to identify major issues and promising solutions pertaining to the critical role of part-time faculty in promoting student success.

Initiative on Student Success conducts focus groups and interviews at select colleges, gathering student, faculty, staff, and administrators' perspectives to paint a rich picture of the student experience.

Student Success BY THE NUMBERS is a grant-funded initiative designed to build the capacity of community and technical colleges in Texas to understand and communicate data depicting student success and institutional performance.

Learn more about these projects and initiatives at www.cccse.org

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- Creating a special analysis of data gathered from more than 80,000 community college faculty members (both full- and part-time) through CCFSSE
- Developing a literature review and an annotated bibliography on part-time faculty and a fact sheet that will capture the importance and magnitude of pertinent issues
- Producing a special report, highlighting findings from the initiative
- Developing an online toolkit for colleges to use in their work with part-time faculty

The Center will launch a webpage dedicated to this work in spring 2013. Check back at www.cccse.org for more details. Further, the Center would like to hear how your college is working in innovative ways with part-time faculty. Please contact Christine McLean at mclean@cccse.org.

LISTEN UP

At the Center, we're always listening! Since 2001, the Center has been uplifting the student voice through surveys and focus groups, helping community college practitioners better understand their students' experiences.

Entering Students' Experiences Point to Need for Redesigning Academic Advising Practices

Practitioners and students alike agree that academic advising is vital to student success. Despite consistently indicating on CCSSE that academic advising is the most important college service (when selecting from an array), many students also report being unaware of the service or never using it. SENSE data point to the need for rethinking academic advising because far too many entering students are not engaging in ways that help them chart a successful course. Entering students (during class weeks four and five) responding to SENSE report the following:

- 70% *strongly agree* or *agree* an advisor helped them to identify the courses they needed to take during their first term. However, just 26% *strongly agree* or *agree* that a staff member talked with them about their outside commitments to determine how many courses to take.
- 48% *strongly disagree* or *disagree* that a staff member discussed their outside commitments as part of the course selection process.
- 59% *strongly agree* or *agree* an advisor helped them to select a course of study, program, or major. Yet, only 38% *strongly agree* or *agree* an advisor helped them to set academic goals and create a plan for achieving them.

Findings from the Academic Advising and Planning SENSE Special-Focus Module provide deeper insight into students' experiences:

When asked if a college staff member explained...

- how placement test scores are used to determine if they were ready for college-level courses or if they needed to take courses to help them become college ready—61% *strongly agree* or *agree*; 18% *disagree* or *strongly disagree*;
- approximately how many hours outside of class (per week) are needed to spend preparing and studying for each course they are taking—48% *strongly agree* or *agree*; 30% *disagree* or *strongly disagree*; and
- where to find help if they were considering dropping out of or withdrawing from college—44% *strongly agree* or *agree*; 37% *disagree* or *strongly disagree*.

These data reveal that, for many students, the complex and critically important process of academic advising has been reduced to an interaction with a college staff person—counselor, advisor, or other—consisting of course selection without much consideration for creation of a plan and path to goal achievement or students' outside commitments. One way colleges are strengthening academic advising is through student success courses. Analysis of SENSE data indicates that students who enroll in a success course are more likely to experience a more engaging academic advising experience.

Is your college interested in learning more about the experience of first-time students, and digging more deeply into academic advising, student success courses, or other topical areas? Registration for the fall 2013 administration of SENSE is open through April 30, 2013, at www.cccse.org.

COLLEGE SPOTLIGHT

Collaboration Across Curriculum: Not So Scary

At **LONE STAR COLLEGE-MONTGOMERY (LSC-M)** (TX), a hybrid form of learning communities has emerged, creating waiting lists for participating classes and, more important, improving student engagement, completion, and success. During academic year 2011–12 students were able to take part in the college's Fear and Horror learning networks.

The college offered students an entire lineup of fear- and horror-themed classes. Participating students studied urban legends, alternate realities, exorcisms, a zombie apocalypse, and alien invasions. According to professor of sociology Jared Cootz, who helped initiate the program, "This can be used to reinvent a traditional curriculum making learning fun and intriguing for the students while at the same time maintaining core requirements and standards."

After preliminary discussion during summer 2011, 13 LSC-M instructors (both full- and part-time) launched the initial learning network, offering 14 different horror-themed classes. Disciplines included anthropology, biology, criminal justice, English, information technology, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. Important to the learning network concept is that, while it is a group of classes related in subject matter, the students have the option to enroll in just one or a group of the courses.

Cootz's usual Sociology 1301 class, introducing the basics of the study of society, took on a different twist when learning network students explored how everything would change if a zombie apocalypse were to occur. The required reading included *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War* and *The Zombie Survival Guide: Complete Protection From the Living Dead*, both written by Max Brooks. Other participating classes have similarly customized reading selections. Another English professor transformed a traditional sophomore English class into English 2332: Here, There Be Monsters, studying literature relating to the famous monsters contained within.

Professors encourage their students—through grade points and college credits—to participate in other campus activities, such as attending college theatre productions, participating in campus blood and food drives, and joining in other community service activities.

Despite the very small sample size, preliminary results from the pilot year are promising. Learning network students experienced post-test gains on all 10 of the Learning and Studies Strategy Inventory (LASSI) scales. And, initial results show increases in course completion and success rates (students who complete with grade of C or higher). Ongoing systematic data collection, including examining engagement levels of students participating versus the overall population, is planned for future terms.

While the initial Fear and Horror learning network in fall 2011 included just more than 400 students, a relatively small number considering LSC-M's enrollment, by spring 2012 the number of participants increased to more than 800—and, the number of learning network course sections nearly doubled. LSC-M faculty and staff acknowledge the challenges of bringing the approach to scale, but are committed to continuing to grow the program, implementing different themes along the way, so long as future results show increases in course completion, grades, retention, and student engagement. As one college member notes, "There is no reason we cannot bring this to scale because it doesn't cost the college more money. It just requires faculty to consider undertaking a different approach to their courses."

SHARE YOUR COLLEGE'S STORY

Has your college used Center data to strengthen student engagement and improve student success? Are *CCSSE*, *CCFSSE*, and/or *SENSE* results included in materials submitted to your accrediting region? If so, please visit the Engagement in Action section of www.cccse.org to submit a vignette.

Your story may be featured in our publications, online, or as part of conference presentations.

The Center is committed to continually improving its services to better meet member colleges' needs. Accordingly, following each survey administration, the Center solicits feedback on survey materials and services, and invites suggestions for improvement.

To learn more about Center improvement efforts, please review the annual *Improvement Through Feedback* reports that provide responses to the most common questions and requests the Center receives from member colleges following a one-year *CCSSE-SENSE* administration cycle. They are available online at www.cccse.org.



Changes in Survey Shipping Procedures Boost Efficiency

Based on member college feedback, the Survey Operations team is making two updates to its procedures—beginning with the *CCSSE* 2013 administration—that should make the distribution and return of survey packets an easier process for institutional contacts.

- Many multi-campus colleges participate in Center survey projects, and if institutional contacts include a campus location variable in the Course Master Data File, Center staff will now pack survey packets by campus to make the sorting and distribution of the packets a more efficient process for college staff members.
- The Center has always provided institutional contacts with pre-paid return shipping labels to use when returning completed surveys. To further ease the return shipment process for institutional contacts, the Center will now also provide participants with return shipping boxes. On the most recent evaluation of the survey administration process, several institutional contacts related that it can be difficult to find sturdy, appropriately-sized boxes in which to return completed surveys, so the Survey Operations team will send between four and six new 20-pound shipping boxes to each participating college.

ON THE ROAD

Look for our sessions at the following upcoming events:

Achieving the Dream — DREAM
February 5 – 8, 2013
Anaheim, CA
www.achievingthedream.org

TAIR — Annual Conference
February 11 – 13, 2013
Galveston, TX
www.texas-air.org/conference/2013

FYE — Annual Conference
February 23 – 26, 2013
Orlando, FL
www.sc.edu/fye/annual

League — Innovations Conference
March 10 – 13, 2013
Dallas, TX
Center Booth: 109
www.league.org/i2013

Center/CCLP — Student Success BY THE NUMBERS Institute
April 3 – 5, 2013
San Antonio, TX
www.cccse.org

Center — High-Impact Practices Institute
April 7 – 9, 2013
San Antonio, TX
www.cccse.org

AACC — Annual Convention
April 20 – 23, 2013
San Francisco, CA
Center Booth: 629
www.aacc.nche.edu/convention

AERA — Annual Meeting
April 27 – May 1, 2013
San Francisco, CA
www.aera.net

AIR — Annual Conference
May 18 – 22, 2013
Long Beach, CA
www.airweb.org

League — Learning Summit
June 9 – 12, 2013
Chandler, AZ
www.league.org/lcs

Register for the Center's first regional workshop!

STRENGTHENING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Monday, June 17, 2013 — Overland Park, KS

Co-hosted with Johnson County Community College, in conjunction with the National Benchmarking Conference

Plenary Session Featuring



Arleen Arnsparger
Project Manager for
the Center's Initiative
on Student Success

**FREE for up to
five people from
a member college**

For more information, go to www.cccse.org

We can also come to you:

The Center offers to colleges and college systems custom workshops for working with survey results.

Many colleges also invite Center associates to speak at faculty/staff professional development events.

Direct inquiries to info@cccse.org. Book early to ensure availability!

To view all events and more details, visit our calendar at www.cccse.org

DELVING INTO DATA

Longitudinal Analysis

Over the past 10 years, CCSSE has served as a source of information for evidence-based decision making in efforts to improve student outcomes. However, improvement doesn't happen overnight; it takes time for new programs and interventions to have a measurable impact on outcomes. As a result, monitoring progress toward a goal requires repeated evaluation using the same measures over time. With the objective of facilitating analysis of change over time, the Center has not changed the main survey since 2005.

Over the past 12 months, the Research team at the Center has received an increasing number of questions from colleges about analyzing their CCSSE data over time. In response to these inquiries and the increasing number of colleges that now have administered CCSSE three or more times, we believe this is an opportune time to develop guidance for the field on how to approach analyzing CCSSE data over the long term. (These same guidelines and processes apply to analysis of SENSE data.)

This newsletter is not best suited for communicating this information due to the complexity of the topic. However, we will provide a sneak peek at a paper currently being prepared on analyzing CCSSE data over time and directions on how to learn more.

The first thing to consider before attempting a longitudinal analysis of your data is the number

of time points (or administrations) you have; a minimum of three time points is necessary for a trend to emerge. With three time points, you will be able to tell if there is a pattern to the trend (increasing, decreasing, or mixed). Of course, with more time points, it is possible to have more confidence in the results of your analyses.

As emphasized on our website, the Center strongly recommends not using the standardized benchmark scores for analysis over time. The obvious question for many is, "Why?" Each year the Center creates a three-year cohort consisting of the current administration and the colleges that participated in the two previous years. For the purpose of comparisons between your college's results and those of the other colleges in the three-year cohort as a snapshot in time, we re-standardize the benchmark scores based on the membership in the current three-year cohort.

As a result, for example, a 2011 standardized benchmark score of 50 for a college that participated in 2011 will not be the same as the standardized benchmark score for that college in the 2012 three-year cohort. To elaborate, one college that participated in two administrations three years apart had a standardized score of 54.1 for one of the benchmarks in the first year and a standardized score of 51.2 on that same benchmark three years later. This would lead one to believe that this college experienced fairly substantial decline over the three-year period in

this benchmark. However, the corresponding raw benchmark scores show the opposite: 0.417 in 2009 and 0.420 in 2012, a slight increase. The reason for this apparent contradiction is the nature of the 2009 and 2012 cohorts.

How to learn more: Mike Bohlig, Senior Research Associate at the Center, will be presenting papers on this topic at the TAIR Conference and AIR Forum this year. Details are available on the Center calendar at www.cccse.org. The presentation files also will be posted on the Center website following the events.

Please send questions for Center researchers to data@cccse.org

Center for Community College Student Engagement

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