



Talking SENSE

Published by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement

INAUGURAL ISSUE

Welcome to *Talking SENSE*

CCSSE is pleased to provide you with this inaugural issue of *Talking SENSE*, a new CCSSE resource for community college professionals launched in conjunction with the pilot test of our new survey, the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (*SENSE*).

Talking SENSE will feature member college profiles, information about promising practices for entering students, and highlights of upcoming *SENSE* events. Published biannually in paper format with periodic electronic updates, we hope you find this newsletter a rich and useful resource in working with students.

Another new resource is the *SENSE* Web site. Visit www.enteringstudent.org to find a *SENSE* sample survey, research on entering students, and tools to help your college support entering students.

Whether your college has participated in our previous surveys and events or is new to CCSSE, we look forward to sharing our findings and communicating with you about how to help your entering students succeed!

Sincerely,

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CCSSE Launches *SENSE*

To Improve Entering Student Experiences and Outcomes

Is your college's "front door" a revolving door? Does it seem like you lose almost as many students each term as you gain? Do you know why they leave? What can you do about it?

SENSE can help answer these and many other important questions—questions that can aid colleges in retaining students, advancing learning, and improving achievement. Developed by educational leaders from the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin and a Technical Advisory Panel of nationally recognized experts, *SENSE* focuses on institutional practices and student behaviors in the earliest weeks of college.

Focus Up Front

Evidence shows that if students can successfully complete 12 to 15 credit hours (the equivalent of one semester), then they are more likely to attain further milestones and, ultimately, certificates and degrees.

Administered directly to students at *SENSE* member colleges during the fourth and fifth weeks of the fall academic term, *SENSE* provides unique insight into entering students' experiences. *SENSE* data and analyses should be useful in improving course completion rates and rates of student persistence to completion of their educational goals.

Like *CCSSE's* original survey, the *Community College Student Report*, *SENSE* is intended not just to gather data, but to provide colleges a systematic way to examine the entering student experience and improve student learning and achievement. To fulfill that purpose, *SENSE* staff is developing tools, resources, and learning events designed to help participating colleges:

- Deepen their understanding of students' earliest college experiences
- Analyze their survey results
- Use data to design improvement strategies
- Monitor the impact of their efforts

SENSE Pilot Test

This year, the *SENSE* survey instrument was administered at 22 pilot colleges (listed at right). Additional focus groups and interviews will provide supplementary feedback on instrument terminology and survey items.

The instrument will be refined based on the pilot test feedback, then administered in a broader field test in 2008. We look forward to publishing a First Look Report with data from the Pilot Test in the spring of 2008.

SENSE Field Test

The fee-based *SENSE* national field test in 2008 will allow for expanded participation and will provide final feedback for adjustments in the survey and administration process before *SENSE* is implemented nationwide in 2009.

CCSSE is currently recruiting for the *SENSE* Field Test, with spaces available for up to 100 colleges. To register for possible participation, visit the *SENSE* Web site: www.enteringstudent.org.

Please note: Registering online indicates that your college is interested in participating in the *SENSE* Field Test. It does not obligate you to participate, nor does it guarantee an available slot for your institution. Due to commitments related to grant funding, priority will be given to colleges participating in the national initiative on Achieving the Dream. One registration per college, please.

SENSE Pilot Colleges

Alvin Community College
(www.alvincollege.edu)

Brazosport College
(www.brazosport.cc.tx.us)

Broward Community College
(www.broward.edu)

Butler Community College
(www.butlercc.edu)

College of the Mainland
(www.com.edu)

Community College of Denver
(www.ccd.edu)

Durham Technical Community College
(www.durhamtech.edu)

El Paso Community College
(www.epcc.edu)

Houston Community College System
(www.hccs.edu)

Kingsborough Community College
(www.kbcc.cuny.edu)

Lee College
(www.lee.edu)

North Harris Montgomery Community College District
(www.nhmccd.edu)

Northeast Lakeview College
(www.accd.edu/nlc)

Northwest Vista College
(www.accd.edu/nvc)

Palo Alto College
(www.accd.edu/pac)

Paul D Camp Community College
(www.pc.vccs.edu)

Richland College
(www.rlc.dcccd.edu)

San Antonio College
(www.accd.edu/sac/sacmain/sac)

Sinclair Community College
(www.sinclair.edu)

St. Phillip's College
(www.accd.edu/spc)

Wharton County Junior College
(www.wcjc.cc.tx.us)

Zane State College
(www.zanestate.edu)