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Approaching CCFSSSE Results

The Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE), designed as a companion to the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), elicits information from faculty about their teaching practices; the ways they spend their professional time, both in and out of class; and their perceptions regarding students' educational experiences. The Center for Community College Student Engagement encourages each member college to consider CCFSSSE results in terms of its own mission, institutional focus, and faculty and student characteristics. To assist colleges in this process, the Center has developed a set of recommendations regarding the analysis and interpretation of results.

Examining Key Elements

CCFSSE results can help member colleges identify areas of strength, as well as recognize challenges or gaps that may require further consideration. In reviewing your results, there are several key elements to examine, including gaps in responses, benchmark scores, and how faculty spend their time.

Please note: As you work with your CCFSSSE data, it is important to determine whether your sample is an accurate reflection of your faculty population. If there is an over- or under-representation of certain faculty (e.g., part-time or full-time), interpret overall results with caution.

I. Gaps

Examining divergent responses between students and faculty can shed light on potential areas for improvement. Review your college's Student and Faculty Frequency Distribution report, available on the CCFSSSE tab of the CCSSE online reporting system to

view student and faculty responses on similar survey items side-by-side.

- ▶ **Examine gaps between faculty and student responses on items of interest to your college**—Comparisons of student and faculty responses on items of specific interest to the institution provide a useful prompt for campus discussions, particularly in those areas where students and faculty seem to be reporting divergent perceptions of the same experience

As your college moves through this process, it is important to note that side-by-side tables, while illustrative, are not entirely equivalent. CCSSE asks students to report perceptions and experiences across the period of the current academic year. Faculty, in contrast, are asked to describe their practices in a selected course, as well as to indicate their perceptions of student experiences at the college more generally.

- ▶ **Examine gaps between faculty and student responses on items comprising the five CCSSE benchmarks**—If, in reviewing CCSSE data, your institution has identified specific benchmark areas on which to focus, comparing faculty and student responses to benchmark items may provide further insight into the improvement process.

II. CCSSE Benchmarks

To assist colleges in their efforts to reach for excellence, CCSSE reports national benchmarks of effective educational practice in community colleges. CCSSE benchmarks focus on institutional practices and student behaviors that promote student engagement—and that are positively related to student learning and persistence.

The five benchmarks of effective educational practice in community colleges are active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, and support for learners.

Utilizing the “*CCSSE/CCFSSE* Crosswalk”, available in the Tools section of the *CCSSE* website, in conjunction with the Student and Faculty Frequency Distributions report member colleges can identify areas of strength as well as recognize challenges or gaps that may require further consideration.

III. How Faculty Members Spend Their Time

CCFSSE results enable colleges to examine the ways faculty spend their professional time, both in and out of class. Analyzing and discussing the types of professional activities—and the amount of time spent on these activities—in which faculty are engaged can help colleges evaluate how these activities are supporting the mission of the college. Review your college’s Faculty Frequency Distributions report to examine how faculty members spend their time both in and out of the classroom.

- ▶ **In-class activities**—When examining classroom engagement specifically, colleges can use *CCFSSE* results to take a closer look at the classroom activities faculty members incorporate into their courses. Such activities include lecture, teacher-led discussion, teacher-student shared responsibility (seminar, discussion, etc.), student computer use, small group activities, student presentations, in-class writing, testing and evaluation, performance in applied and fine arts (dance, drama, music), experiential activities (labs, field work, art exhibits, clinical placements, internships), and hands-on practice.
- ▶ **Out-of-class activities**—*CCFSSE* results enable colleges to further examine how faculty spend their time outside of class during a typical week, engaging in such activities as grading papers, providing feedback, preparing for class, reflecting and working on ways to improve teaching, advising students, conducting service activities, mentoring other faculty, etc.

Reaching for Excellence

The Center always recommends examining results in light of your institution’s vision, mission, and/or

strategic objectives. As faculty begin to work with the college’s data and present recommendations for improvement, colleges may want to identify key issues on which faculty can focus. Below are two examples of specific areas of focus colleges may want to consider: gauging work in areas most strongly valued by the institution and looking at where the college is now compared to where it wants to be in the future.

Once questions such as these have been addressed, and *CCSSE* and *CCFSSE* results have been examined in conjunction with other institutionally-relevant data, a set of strategic goals can be established and pursued at your college.

Gauge Work in Areas Most Strongly Valued

- ▶ What are the high-priority objectives in our college’s strategic plan?
- ▶ What benchmarks, trends, or services are most important to our college? Examples might include particular benchmark areas (academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, etc.); critical issues, such as retention; or services that are key to student success, such as academic advising or college orientation.
- ▶ What educational practices most concern our college?
- ▶ How do our mission and specific programs at our college relate to the *CCSSE* benchmark items and corresponding *CCFSSE* survey items? For example, if a college scores low on the student-faculty interaction benchmark, an area of high priority for the campus, the college will want to investigate the specific *CCSSE* items that compose that benchmark and the corresponding items on *CCFSSE*. Following up with focus group work also may shed light on the “why” factor.

Compare Where the College is Now with Where it Wants to Be

Another useful way to examine an institution’s results is to perform a gap analysis looking at where the college is now versus where it wants to be. Questions to consider include the following:

- ▶ What issues have been identified for the college through self-study for reaffirmation of accredita-

tion—or recommendations from the visiting team?

- ▶ What strengths or opportunities for improvement in the college have been identified through other data-gathering or institutional research efforts?
- ▶ Are there emerging trends in the data that fit with our college's strengths?
- ▶ Are there emerging trends in the data that amplify areas where our college needs improvement?

Engaging Faculty in Data-Driven Discussion

A key component in using data to drive institution-wide improvement is to share and discuss data with faculty.

In preparing for discussions with faculty, the Center recommends that the goals for participating in *CCFSSE* are clearly outlined and communicated to faculty; this will serve as both a reminder to faculty about why the college opted to participate in the survey and will provide focus when discussing the findings. The Center also recommends that colleges spend time educating faculty on the student survey, *CCSSE*, so that they are aware that the two surveys work in tandem.

The Center provides member colleges with several tools for sharing and discussing data with faculty. These tools are all located in the Tools section of the *CCSSE* website.

- ▶ **CCFSSE Drop-In Overview Report Template and Presentation Template**—To assist colleges in sharing results with faculty and other constituents, the Center provides member colleges with templates in both Word and PowerPoint formats for colleges to drop-in data from their *CCFSSE* results. These templates can be used as a starting point for custom presentations that highlight both *CCSSE* and *CCFSSE* data.
- ▶ **Faculty Predictions Exercise**—To support colleges in examining gaps between faculty and student responses, the Center has developed the Faculty Predictions exercise. Colleges can use this tool to jump-start discussions with faculty by asking them to fill in their predicted answers to

the survey items listed on the exercise worksheet. The group facilitator can then have faculty go through the items and discuss actual student responses from your college's Institutional Report. This exercise is designed to help spark discussion about whether and why faculty predictions differ from actual student responses.

- ▶ **Focus Group Toolkit**—Your college's *CCFSSE* data, in conjunction with *CCSSE* data, may help point the institution to specific areas on which to focus attention. As the institution begins work on improvement strategies, the college may benefit from more in-depth discussions with faculty about their experiences and their perceptions of student engagement. These structured discussions may help the college uncover possible strategies for improvement and shed light on the college's survey results. The Focus Group Toolkit provides detailed instructions for planning and conducting focus group sessions and can be tailored to fit a variety of constituent groups, including faculty.