SURVEY OF ENTERING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Benchmarks of Effective Practice with Entering Students

For use with *SENSE* 2011-2025

Early Connections

When students describe their early college experiences, they typically reflect on occasions when they felt discouraged or thought about dropping out. Their reasons for persisting almost always include one common element: a strong, early connection to someone at the college.

SENSE Items

18a	Agreement: The very first time I came to this college I felt welcome
18i	Agreement: The college provided me with adequate information about financial assistance (scholarships, grants, loans, etc.)
18j	Agreement: A college staff member helped me determine whether I qualified for financial assistance
18p	Agreement: At least one college staff member (other than an instructor) learned my name
23	Was a specific person assigned to you so you could see him/her each time you needed information or assistance?

High Expectations and Aspirations

Nearly all students arrive at their community colleges intending to succeed and believing that they have the motivation to do so. When entering students perceive clear, high expectations from college staff and faculty, they are more likely to understand what it takes to be successful and adopt behaviors that lead to achievement. Students then often rise to meet expectations, making it more likely that they will attain their goals. Often, students' aspirations also climb, and they seek more advanced credentials than they originally envisioned.

SENSE Items

18b	Agreement: The instructors at this college want me to succeed
18t	Agreement: I have the motivation to do what it takes to succeed in college
18u	Agreement: I am prepared academically to succeed in college
19c	Frequency: Turn in an assignment late
19d	Frequency: Not turn in an assignment
19f	Frequency: Come to class without completing readings or assignments
19s	Frequency: Skip class

Clear Academic Plan and Pathway

When a student, with knowledgeable assistance, creates a road map—one that shows where they are headed, what academic path to follow, and how long it will take to reach the end goal—that student has a critical tool for staying on track. Students are more likely to persist if they not only are advised about what courses to take, but also are helped to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them.

SENSE Items

18d	Agreement: I was able to meet with an academic advisor at times convenient for me
18e	Agreement: An advisor helped me to select a course of study, program, or major
18f	Agreement: An advisor helped me to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them
18g	Agreement: An advisor helped me to identify the courses I needed to take during my first semester/quarter
18h	Agreement: A college staff member talked with me about my commitments outside of school (work, children, dependents, etc.) to help me figure out how many courses to take

Effective Track to College Readiness

Nationally, more than six in 10 entering community college students are underprepared for college-level work. Thus, significant improvements in student success will hinge upon effective assessment, placement of

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students into appropriate courses, and implementation of effective strategies to ensure that students build academic skills and receive needed support.

SENSE Items

12a	Before I could register for classes I was required to take a placement test (COMPASS, ASSET ACCUPLACER, SAT, ACT, etc.) to assess my skills in reading, writing, and/or math
12b	I took a placement test (COMPASS, ASSET ACCUPLACER, SAT, ACT, etc.)
14	This college required me to enroll in classes indicated by my placement test scores during my first semester/quarter
21a	Agreement: Within a class or through another experience at this college, I learned to improve my study skills (listening, note taking, highlighting readings, working with others, etc.)
21b	Agreement: Within a class or through another experience at this college, I learned to understand my academic strengths and weaknesses
21c	Agreement: Within a class or through another experience at this college, I learned skills and strategies to improve my test-taking ability

Engaged Learning

Instructional approaches that foster engaged learning are critical for student success. Because most community college students attend college part time, and most also must find ways to balance their studies with work and family responsibilities, the most effective learning experiences will be those the college intentionally designs.

SENSE Items

19a	Frequency: Ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions
19b	Frequency: Prepare at least two drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
19e	Frequency: Participate in supplemental instruction (extra class sessions with an instructor, tutor, or experienced student)
19g	Frequency: Work with other students on a project or assignment during class
19h	Frequency: Work with classmates outside of class on class projects or assignments
19i	Frequency: Participate in a required study group outside of class
19j	Frequency: Participate in a student-initiated (not required) study group outside of class
19k	Frequency: Use an electronic tool (e-mail, text messaging, Facebook, MySpace, class Web site, etc.) to communicate with another student about coursework
19l	Frequency: Use an electronic tool (e-mail, text messaging, Facebook, MySpace, class Web site, etc.) to communicate with an instructor about coursework
19m	Frequency: Discuss an assignment or grade with an instructor
19n	Frequency: Ask for help from an instructor regarding questions or problems related to a class
19o	Frequency: Receive prompt written or oral feedback from instructors on your performance
19q	Frequency: Discuss ideas from readings or classes with instructors outside of class
20d2	Frequency of use: Face-to-face tutoring
20f2	Frequency of use: Writing, math, or other skill lab
20h2	Frequency of use: Computer lab

Academic and Social Support Network

Students benefit from having a personal network that enables them to obtain information about college services, along with the academic and social support critical to student success. Because entering students often don't know what they don't know, colleges must purposefully create those networks.

SENSE Items

18l	Agreement: All instructors clearly explained academic and student support services available at this college
18m	Agreement: All instructors clearly explained course grading policies
18n	Agreement: All instructors clearly explained course syllabi (syllabuses)
18o	Agreement: I knew how to get in touch with my instructors outside of class
18q	Agreement: At least one other student whom I didn't previously know learned my name
18r	Agreement: At least one instructor learned my name
18s	Agreement: I learned the name of at least one other student in most of my classes

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