

## **Tidewater Community College Community College Survey of Student Engagement 2013 Results: Focus on Student Affairs**

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) is a voluntary, national survey designed to provide knowledge about student behaviors that relate closely to student success and student retention. TCC participated in the 2013 survey administration of CCSSE along with 280 other colleges across the nation, including four Virginia community colleges. (see [http://www.tcc.edu/welcome/collegeadmin/OIE/briefs/documents/CCSSEbrief2013\\_FINAL\\_000.pdf](http://www.tcc.edu/welcome/collegeadmin/OIE/briefs/documents/CCSSEbrief2013_FINAL_000.pdf) ) For comparison purposes, CCSSE uses a three-year cohort based on data from 2011, 2012, and 2013 participating colleges. CCSSE survey items are grouped conceptually into five key areas, or benchmarks, of student engagement and success. This report focuses on the benchmark, Support for Learners.

### **2013 Highlights: Student Affairs**

This section of the report highlights survey results that pertain to student affairs, focusing on student engagement as it relates to student success within three broad areas: best practices, perception of college support, and perception of college experiences. The last section summarizes results of usage, satisfaction, and importance of designated student services.

#### **Student Success— Promising Practices for Freshmen**

Each year CCSSE augments the core survey with a series of questions designed to elicit information regarding educational practices in a focused area of student success. The 2013 survey focused on students' experiences with early registration, orientation, freshman seminars, organized learning communities, and student success courses—all components of a successful first year orientation to college. Since the 2008 administration of the CCSSE, TCC created and implemented a First Year Success system, designed to improve learning and assist new students in achieving academic and personal success during their first year of college. The system was the final result of TCC's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), completed as part of the 2006 accreditation process. Recognizing that most students need additional assistance as they transition to college, TCC's comprehensive orientation system includes four components: Orientation, Student Development Courses, Family and Friends Information Sessions, and Academic Alert. Based on TCC's results, the QEP is yielding excellent results and has put the college in the forefront when compared to other colleges across the nation. Table 1 illustrates TCC's progress in comparison to the cohort of extra-large colleges and all 2013 survey participants.

**Table 1:** Promising Practices for Freshman Comparisons

Survey Item	% TCC	% Ex-Large Colleges	% 2013 Promising Practices Response
Registered for all courses BEFORE the first class session(s)	90.8	87.0	89.5
Attended on-campus orientation	42.0	37.1	41.6
Participated in structured experience for new students (FYE) in first term	26.8	19.2	22.4
Enrolled in a structured learning community during first term	9.0	6.9	7.9
Enrolled in a Student Success Course in first term	46.9	16.4	16.7

The results shown above indicate that the college is doing a good job in preparing students for success in their first year. The greatest difference is in the percentage of TCC students who enroll in a Student Success Course (46.9%) in the first term as compared to other extra-large colleges (16.4%) and all 2013 participating colleges (16.7%). Several tenets of the QEP have placed the college in the forefront of promising practices with regard to the freshman experience—namely, register early before classes start, participate in an orientation session before enrolling in classes, and enroll in a Student Success Course during the first term of enrollment.

**Observations:** Although 35% of respondents indicated they participated in a structured first-year experience (FYE) at some point (26.8% in their first term), 65% of the TCC respondents indicated they did not participate in a FYE for new students (compared to 74% of the extra-large college respondents). While great strides have been made in the last ten years regarding orientation and intrusive advising of entering students, the momentum does not appear to carry forth throughout the entire first year. Perhaps the introduction of the Student Assistance and Intervention for Learning Success (SAILS) program for students identified as having academic difficulties will be one tool to help keep students engaged and mentored through the first-year continuum.

### **Student Success— Perception of College Support**

Most respondents (75%) indicated the college provides the support they need to succeed at the college, particularly with regard to academics and studying. However, outside the academic domain of support, less than half (31%) of the respondents felt they had quite a bit or very much support to cope with non-academic responsibilities. Additionally, while it was noted that contact is encouraged among students of different backgrounds (57%), less than half (36%) felt the college provides quite a bit or very much support to thrive socially. Over half (56%) indicated the college provides quite a bit or more support to afford their education.

**Table 2:** Perception of College Support (Responding Very Much/Quite a Bit)

Survey Item	% TCC	% Ex-Large Colleges
Encourage you to spend significant amounts of time studying	76.2	74.0
Help you cope with your non-academic responsibilities	31.1	26.7
Provide the support you need to help you succeed at this college.	74.5	71.4
Encourage contact among students from different socio-economic, racial, ethnic background	56.5	53.2
Provide the support you need to thrive socially	36.3	34.3
Provide the support you need to afford your education	56.3	50.0

**Observations:** With the majority of community college students falling in the category of “non-traditional,” it is crucial that support structures exist to assist them with external pressures associated with finances, family responsibilities, and social differences, to name a few. TCC has many support systems in place for students, yet it is possible they are unaware of the various options that are available. All forms of communication must be updated, consistent across the college, and targeted to reach the unique student body of TCC. The new student centers on each campus may encourage a better atmosphere for social interaction and a new vehicle to promote and publicize services that are available to students.

### Student Success— Perception of College Experience

Most students perceived that their college experience had provided them with the ability to effectively learn on their own (73%) and work effectively with others (62%). In addition, the majority felt they had developed clearer career goals (59%) and gained information about career opportunities (54%). Less than half of the respondents indicated their college experience contributed significantly to their personal development regarding civic duty, personal code of ethics, and understanding people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds.

**Table 3:** Perception of College Experience and Personal Development (Responding Very Much/Quite a Bit)

Survey Item	% TCC	% Ex-Large Colleges
Work effectively with others	61.5	60.3
Understand people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds	46.9	49.3
Learn effectively on your own	71.7	70.1

Understand yourself	58.2	56.3
Develop a personal code of ethics	48.0	47.0
Contribute to the welfare of your community	32.4	29.7
Develop clearer career goals	59.3	57.1
Gain information about career opportunities	53.6	50.2

**Observations:** TCC is committed to providing quality education for both college transfer and career and technical students to prepare them for a chosen career path. As a companion to the formal educational coursework, the college might consider enhancement of its formal and informal learning experiences that will foster service and citizenship, as well as an appreciation for diversity and cultural differences. Programming could be expanded to include civic responsibility, and opportunities could be increased for service learning and volunteerism. This is further supported by the fact that 79% indicated they had never participated in a community-based project as a part of regular coursework (a data item that informs another benchmark, Active and Collaborative Learning).

### **Usage, Satisfaction, and Importance of Designated Student Services**

There is a wide variance between respondents who consider some student services to be important and the corresponding rate of usage for services. For the most part, satisfaction ratings with student services is high; with the exception of job placement assistance and disability services, over 80% of the respondents indicated they are very or somewhat satisfied with the various services.

Academic advising was considered very or somewhat important by 90% of the respondents, yet slightly more than half (56%) answered that they often or sometimes use advising. Most students who used it (90%) were satisfied with the service. Similarly, transfer credit assistance was often or sometimes used by 34% of the respondents, but considered important by 79% of the students with an 80% satisfaction rating.

Less than one third of the students often or sometimes used career counseling, although 80% deemed it important, and those who used it were satisfied (83%) with the service. Additionally, 11% often or sometimes used job placement assistance, compared to 66% who considered it very or somewhat important.

Less than a third of the respondents often or sometimes took advantage of the skill labs and peer tutoring. However, 74% and 72%, respectively, indicated they were important services, and over 85% were satisfied with these services. Computer labs were used by 56% of the respondents with a 93% satisfaction rating.

Student organizations were utilized by 17% of the respondents and 63% considered them important. For those who did take advantage of this service, 81% were satisfied.

**Table 4:** Usage, Satisfaction, and Importance of Various Services

SERVICES	USAGE		SATISFACTION <sup>2</sup>		IMPORTANCE	
	% Often/Sometimes		% Very/Somewhat		% Very/Somewhat	
	TCC	Cohort <sup>1</sup>	TCC	Cohort <sup>1</sup>	TCC	Cohort <sup>1</sup>
Academic Advising	56	56	90	85	90	91
Career Counseling	32	30	83	76	80	82
Job Placement Assistance	11	10	65	59	66	68
Peer /Other Tutoring	26	30	86	83	72	75
Skill Labs	32	42	88	88	74	78
Financial Aid Advising	53	48	84	79	81	81
Computer Lab	56	60	93	93	82	85
Student Organizations	17	17	81	74	63	61
Transfer Credit Assistance	34	27	80	76	79	76
Disability Student Services	9	9	74	69	60	60
<sup>1</sup> Cohort = 2013 CCSSE Cohort of Extra Large Colleges						
<sup>2</sup> Satisfaction doesn't include NA responses.						

**Observations:** The new campus student centers should provide opportunities to enhance student engagement activities. Currently, satisfaction is high among users of the various services—there is simply a low usage rate among students. If various services are considered important, a lack of facilities, poor scheduling, or simply a lack of awareness may be driving low usage rates. Again, it is important that communication across campuses is consistent and accurate.

### 2013 Highlights: Custom TCC Questions

The 2013 administration of the CCSSE provided individual colleges the option to add customized questions specific to each college. TCC elected to include 14 additional questions that target the use of technology in student learning and communications, as well as satisfaction and usage of specific student services.

#### Technology—Access and Communications

The vast majority of respondents (93%) had access to a computer either at home or work that could be used for schoolwork and 92% had access to a computer with internet at their home. For those who used computers on campus, 78% were satisfied with the availability of computers, 17% were neutral, and 5% were dissatisfied.

Almost all students (96%) indicated that they use online communications for their education (email, Blackboard, MyTCC), with 84% using it several times a week and 49% using it almost

every day. Almost all respondents (96%) used the TCC website to find information, with 78% using it frequently or occasionally.

**Observations:** Computers are an integral part of the learning experience and students generally have access to a computer both on- and off-campus. Given the reliance on technology for learning, educational services, and communications, it is imperative that computer service is reliable, security is constantly monitored, and upgrades are available as needed. In addition, website information must be constantly monitored for accuracy, consistency, and reliability.

### **Student Services—Satisfaction and Usage**

#### **Usage Extracurricular Activities**

When asked about attendance at meetings for extracurricular activities such as clubs, organizations, and student government, 87% of the respondents answered never or seldom. This parallels the main CCSSE instrument where 80% of the TCC respondents cited spending 0 hours per week in extracurricular college activities. About 63% of the respondents felt that student organizations are very or somewhat important.

#### **Usage Academic Support Services**

The majority of students (53%) indicated they never used academic support services such as tutoring or academic assistance. Twenty-three percent stated they seldom used this service, followed by 24% who indicated they occasionally or frequently used academic support. Similarly, 48% of the respondents to the main CCSSE instrument indicated they rarely/never used peer or other tutoring, and 41% indicated they rarely/never used a skills lab. Yet, when asked how important tutoring was to their education, 72% of TCC respondents answered very or somewhat important. Additionally, 74% of TCC students answered that skills labs were very or somewhat important services.

#### **Satisfaction with Specific Support Services.**

**Table 5: TCC Custom Questions-Satisfaction with Support Services**

<b>Survey Item</b>	<b>% Satisfied</b>	<b>% Neutral</b>
TCC's variety of scheduling options (weekend, evening classes, etc.)	79.5	15.2
TCC's registration period (6 week pre-registration for returning students)	86.1	12.0
Quality of TCC's college transfer advisement	56.8	34.7
Quality of TCC's student orientation program	58.1	34.3
Quality of TCC's SDV course in helping you to develop skills to become a better student	65.5	24.1

Students were very satisfied with scheduling options and registration. The larger percentage of students who had no opinion about college transfer advisement and orientation may not have had much experience with the two items; less than 10% were dissatisfied with either item. Two thirds of the respondents were satisfied with the SDV course.

The last two questions asked about the importance of volunteering in a community service project and obstacles to academic progress. Approximately 83% of respondents felt volunteering in a community service project was important to some extent. Comparable to other TCC survey results, the two biggest obstacles to academic progress are money and family obligations.

## **Conclusions and Next Steps**

The 2013 survey results show overall improvement in each of the five benchmark areas. The college continues to strive to improve engagement practices and adopt new ideas that show promise in the advancement of student success. While the survey results describe student experiences, they do not tell us the “why” about experiences. For example, we know that students tend not to use many of the available services that are available and considered by national research to be key to student success, but we do not know why they are not using the services. Digging deeper into some of the results will help to examine specific details about student engagement activities. One way to do this is through focus groups that will provide structured discussion and lead the college to uncover possible strategies for improvement. The CCSSE website provides a comprehensive toolkit for planning and conducting focus groups and includes sample materials to use as a guide for organizing, conducting, and reporting findings from focus group work. <http://www.ccsse.org/center/initiatives/iss/focusgrouptoolkit.cfm>

Resources include:

- Planning Focus Groups
- Recruiting Focus Group Participants
- Focus Group Discussion Guidelines
- Analyzing and Reporting on the Focus Group Discussion

CCSSE results can be useful tools in determining how TCC retention and student success strategies and efforts compare to those offered by other community colleges. Indeed, by accessing the CCSSE web site ([www.ccsse.org](http://www.ccsse.org)), members of the public can obtain scores from any of the participating schools, as well as group scores by various institutional characteristics. However, some caution should be exercised in examining all scores, as they are indirect (or self-reported) measures, and thus not as reliable as direct, or “hard” measures.