

Tidewater Community College Community College Survey of Student Engagement 2013 Results

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. In the 2013 survey administration, 280 colleges participated, including four Virginia community colleges.¹ For comparison purposes, CCSSE uses a three-year cohort based on data from 2011, 2012, and 2013 participating colleges. The 2013 cohort consists of over 459,000 students at 718 colleges in 48 states, District of Columbia, and several non-U.S. islands and territories.

CCSSE survey items are grouped conceptually into five key areas, or benchmarks, of student engagement and success:

1. **Active and Collaborative Learning**, based on the idea that students learn more when they are actively engaged in their own learning and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings;
2. **Student Effort**, based on the notion that the more effort students put into their learning, the more successful they will be;
3. **Academic Challenge**, based on the idea that the more students are challenged intellectually and creatively, the better they will learn;
4. **Student-Faculty Interaction**, based on the concept that student learning will be more effective and student persistence toward educational goals will be stronger with more interaction between students and faculty; and
5. **Support for Learners**, based on the notion that students are more satisfied with, and will learn more from, colleges that actively support their learning.

Survey questions, which in 2013 totaled 37 or more, are grouped into one of these five benchmark areas, and the scores are calculated so that the mean, or average, CCSSE score for any benchmark is always 50, and the standard deviation, or spread around the mean, is always 25. This provides instant feedback to a community college as to whether it is performing at, above, or below the national average (50). This also makes it easy for an institution to compare its scores with those of other, similar institutions.

CCSSE benchmark data is provided in several different categories: 2013 cohort, an aggregation of all participating colleges for the last three years; data aggregated by institutional size; data aggregated by accreditation region; and consortium data for various institutional groupings such as statewide consortia. For the purposes of this report, institutional size is considered the best benchmark comparison, as there is a significant difference between the institutional culture and resources available at larger colleges in comparison to smaller colleges.

¹ 2013 Virginia college participants include Central Virginia Community College, Eastern Shore Community College, Piedmont Virginia Community College, and Tidewater Community College.

Overview of Results

According to Table 1, TCC scored above the national average (50.0) in all benchmark categories. In 2008, TCC scored at or above the national average on only 2 of the 5 benchmark areas, *Academic Challenge* and *Student-Faculty Interaction*, and slightly below in *Student Effort*, *Support for Learners*, and *Active and Collaborative Learning*. Additionally, TCC scored higher on all five benchmark categories than the average for the 80 extra-large colleges included in the 2013 cohort. Extra-large colleges are defined as those with 15,000 or more students.

Table 1: CCSSE Benchmark Comparisons (2013)

Benchmarks	TCC	Extra-Large Colleges	SACSCOC	Top* Performers
Active & Collaborative Learning	50.5	49.7	50.1	60.0
Student Effort	50.1	49.4	50.8	57.8
Academic Challenge	51.0	50.0	50.3	57.3
Student-Faculty Interaction	51.1	48.6	51.4	58.3
Support for Learners	51.9	48.9	52.1	59.7

*Top-performing colleges are those that scored in the top 10% of the 2013 cohort by benchmark.

In comparison to all colleges within the SACSCOC (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges) region, TCC scored higher in the categories of *Active and Collaborative Learning* and *Academic Challenge*. Although the college has improved in every category, there is still room for improvement to reach the level of the top-performing schools in terms of the five benchmarks (Keep in mind that the top-performers include schools of all sizes).

To date, TCC has participated in the *CCSSE Survey* during three administrations of the survey, 2005, 2008, and 2013. From Table 2 below, one can see that in every one of the five categories, TCC improved on its scores over the eight-year period. The largest gains have been in *Active and Collaborative Learning* and *Student-Faculty Interaction*.

Table 2: TCC Benchmark Score Comparisons 2005, 2008, 2013

Benchmark	2005 Score	2008 Score	2013 Score	2005-2013 Change
Active & Collaborative Learning	45.2	47.5	50.5	+5.3
Student Effort	47.9	49.6	50.1	+2.2
Academic Challenge	48.0	50.3	51.0	+3.0
Student-Faculty Interaction	45.8	50.0	51.1	+5.3
Support for Learners	48.1	49.5	51.9	+3.8

Highest Student Engagement

When examining the survey results, it is useful to note the areas of highest student engagement and, conversely, the areas of lowest student engagement. In the latest administration, the five items that rated the highest engagement scores relative to the 2013 cohort are shown below in Table 3:

Table 3: 2013 Highest Student Engagement Comparisons*

Survey Item and Benchmark	% TCC	% Ex-Large Colleges	% 2013 Cohort
Made class presentation (<i>Active & Collaborative Learning</i>)	37.9	33.2	31.1
Worked on paper or project integrating information or ideas from various sources (<i>Student Effort</i>)	69.1	64.9	63.5
Used email to communicate with instructor (<i>Student-Faculty Interaction</i>)	66.5	61.9	62.3
Encouraging contact among students from different socio-econ., racial, ethnic background (<i>Support for Learners</i>)	56.5	53.2	51.7
Helping you cope with non-academic responsibilities (<i>Support for Learners</i>)	31.1	26.7	27.7

*% who responded often/very often or quite a bit/very much

In each example above, TCC outperformed both the extra-large college cohort and the overall 2013 cohort. The one benchmark that does not appear above is *Academic Challenge*.

Lowest Student Engagement

The areas of lowest student engagement were highlighted by the benchmark, *Student Effort*. Three of the five examples in Table 4 cite frequency of usage for student support activities such as tutoring and skills labs. In these examples, TCC scored lower than the extra-large colleges and the 2013 cohort.

Table 4: 2013 Lowest Student Engagement Comparisons*

Survey Item and Benchmark	% TCC	% Ex-Large Colleges	% 2013 Cohort
Worked with other student on projects in class (<i>Active & Collaborative Learning</i>)	43.7	48.3	48.5
Assigned 5 or more textbooks, manual, books, course readings (<i>Academic Challenge</i>)	52.9	55.6	56.4
Sometimes or often use peer or other tutoring (<i>Student Effort</i>)	25.9	29.7	29.1
Sometimes or often use skills lab such as writing or math lab (<i>Student Effort</i>)	32.2	41.6	41.9
Sometimes or often use computer lab (<i>Student Effort</i>)	55.8	59.7	62.7

*% who responded sometimes, often, very often

2013 Special Focus: Promising Practices for Freshman

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 5 illustrates TCC's progress in comparison to the cohort of extra-large colleges and all 2013 survey participants.

Table 5: 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.

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. 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), 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.