



# Field Test Overview 2002

## Introduction & Background

This is a brief overview of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) Spring 2002 Field Test administration. CCSSE (pronounced 'sessie') provides a new focus on educational practices that research shows are related to student success. CCSSE is the 'daughter' of the National Survey of Student

Engagement (NSSE), headquartered at Indiana University and directed by George Kuh. The CCSSE project is supported by grants from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Lumina Foundation for Education.

This overview is designed to provide a general understanding of the

procedures and findings of the 2002 Field Test administration. It includes information about the characteristics and representativeness of the survey population, the sampling and administration process, and highlights of the survey results

## Field Test Participants & Respondents

Following the Fall 2001 Pilot administration, CCSSE opened the participation to all community and technical colleges across the United States. A total of 48 colleges chose to participate in the Field Test administration. CCSSE sent approximately 40,000 surveys to the colleges and received approximately 33,517 completed unduplicated surveys, producing an overall 'percent of target' rate of 84.1% (see Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**CCSSE Field Test 2002 Response Rates by Institution Size & Overall**

Field Test Groups by Total Enrollment	Actual	Targeted	Percent of Target
Small Colleges (<3000)	7,050	8,625	81.7%
Medium (3000 to 7999)	12,007	14,350	83.7%
Large (8000 plus)	14,460	16,875	85.7%
All Field Test Colleges	33,517	39,850	84.1%

For the Field Test administration, CCSSE had a target number of respondents for each college. To assist the colleges in obtaining the targeted response numbers, CCSSE

provided each college with randomly selected supplemental courses to adjust for student absenteeism and cancelled classes. As a result, six colleges actually surpassed their

targeted number and obtained a percent of target rate over 100%.

## Survey Procedures and Process

### Sample Selection

Each institution submitted a data file that included Spring 2002 “for-credit” courses that counted toward a degree or certificate program. CCSSE requested that the following courses be excluded from the data file: labs, distance learning, independent projects, and studio classes. Two random stratified samples for each college were created—primary and alternate. The stratum employed was start time—morning, afternoon, and evening courses. The alternate sample was used in instances where primary sample courses were cancelled prior to survey administration and/or a faculty member declined to participate. After

CCSSE created and sent the samples, the institutions were asked to verify enrollment figures, class locations, and instructor names to ensure that all information was correct for the survey administration process.

### Survey Administration Process

CCSSE prepared two template letters (President’s memo and Dean’s letter) for institutions to customize and send to their faculty and staff. The first was a general memo from the president informing faculty, staff, and administrators of their institution’s participation in the survey. The second letter targeted faculty members whose courses were selected. The purpose

of this letter was to inform faculty that a survey administrator would be contacting them to select a convenient day to have their students complete the survey.

The survey administrator(s) contacted the selected faculty members and arranged a day to implement the surveys during class. All survey administrators read the CCSSE script to each class and instructed students to complete the survey. Students took from 25 to 45 minutes to complete the surveys. At the end of the allotted time, surveys were collected, placed in an envelope with the class cover sheet, and returned to CCSSE for scanning and analysis.

## Profile of CCSSE 2002 Field Test Respondents

**Table 2**  
Comparison of the 2002 CCSSE Field Test Colleges to the Underlying Population

	CCSSE 2002 College Responders	CCSSE 2002 College Population
<b>Percent of Target Gender<sup>a</sup></b>	84.1%	
Female	59.4%	57.1%
Male	40.6%	42.9%
<b>Race/Ethnicity<sup>a</sup></b>		
White	55.2%	62.0%
Asian	8.2%	9.3%
Latino	14.2%	13.8%
Black	8.4%	9.7%
Native American	2.8%	1.0%
International	7.6%	1.9%
Other	3.6%	2.3%
<b>Enrollment Status<sup>b</sup></b>		
Full-time	65.0%	36.2%
Part-time	35.0%	63.8%
<b>Student Age<sup>c</sup></b>		
Under 18	6.7%	4.8%
18 to 24	58.4%	52.2%
25 to 29	12.6%	13.7%
30 to 39	12.2%	15.5%
40 to 49	7.1%	9.4%
50 and over	3.0%	4.5%

Table 2 shows a comparison of Field Test respondent characteristics to the underlying population of the Field Test colleges. The first column represents the CCSSE Field Test respondents, as reported on the survey. The second column shows the student characteristics as reported on the Field Test colleges’ 2000-01 IPEDS enrollment reports. Two colleges, Carl Albert and Redlands reports were not available through NCES’ website and therefore the information was requested directly from the college. Overall, the respondents reflect the underlying population at the participating 48 community and technical colleges, with the exception of enrollment status.

Notes:

<sup>a</sup> The categories for gender, race and ethnicity are those reported by the institutions for the 2000 IPEDS Enrollment report except for Carl Albert and Redlands Community Colleges.

<sup>b</sup> Lake Superior and New Hampshire are not in the full-time and part-time comparison

<sup>c</sup> Central Arizona, Fairmont, Lake Superior and New Hampshire colleges are not represented in the age comparison groups or national. Only West Valley’s full-time students are represented in the age breakdown, but not their part-time students.

### Gender

Of the 33,517 respondents, 40.6% were male and 59.4% female. This mirrors the population of community college students of 42.9% and 57.1%, respectively.

### Race

Overall, Black and White students were under-represented by 1.3% and 6.8%, respectively, while Native American and international students were over-represented by 1.8% and 5.7%, respectively. CCSSE used separate items to identify international students and students with an Hispanic origin. As a result, some Hispanic students wrote in 'Other' to identify race instead of one of the predetermined race categories.

### Enrollment Status

Approximately 65% of the respondents reported attending the college full-time, while approximately 36% of the colleges' total student population attended full-time. Only 35% of the surveyed students reported being part-time college students, compared to 64% as reported to IPEDS. This inverse representation is a result of the in-class administration process.

### Education Level

Seventy-seven percent of all respondents reported that they have earned either a high school diploma or a GED, while 15% reported either a vocational certificate or an associate degree. Five percent have a bachelor's

degree and 2% reported either a master's, doctoral or professional degree.

### Parents' Education

Twenty-one percent of the students reported their mother holds at least a bachelor's degree, while 27% reported their father holds at least a bachelor's degree. Slightly more than a quarter reported that either their mother or father has only a high school degree.

### College Experience

Sixty-five percent of the respondents reported starting their college career at the community college that they were presently attending.

## College Student Activities

The first 20 items on *The Community College Student Report* ask students to respond to activities that they have engaged in during the current academic year. For the purposes of analysis, CCSSE collapsed the response categories 'often' and 'very often' to report

substantial levels of engagement (Table 3). The criterion for inclusion here was that 50% of the students had to report participating in the activity.

In comparison, it is also important to note what students are *not* doing in

college as frequently as one might expect. To report the least frequent activities (Table 4), CCSSE used the 'never' response category. This list consists of items where 30% of the students reported never engaging in that particular activity.

**Table 3**  
**Percent of Students Who Reported Participating Often or Very Often in the Following Student Activities by Class Level**

Most Frequent Student Activity Items	All	≤29	30+
		credit	credit
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	63%	59%	70%
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	60%	58%	64%
Received prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors on your performance	55%	54%	58%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.)	54%	52%	58%
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	53%	53%	52%

**Table 4**  
**Percent of Students Who Reported Never Participating in the Following Student Activities by Class Level**

Least Frequent Student Activity Items	All	≤29 credit hours	30+ credit hours
Participated in a community-based project as a part of a regular course	76%	79%	69%
Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework	69%	73%	63%
Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	67%	70%	60%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class	44%	48%	36%
Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	36%	41%	26%
Used an electronic medium (list-serv, chat group, Internet, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	36%	39%	30%
Used email to communicate with an instructor	32%	36%	37%
Talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor	30%	33%	36%

## Student Satisfaction

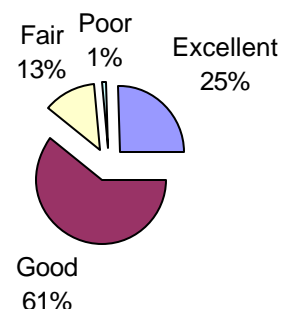
A good measure of satisfaction is whether a person recommends a service or institution to others. The Community College Student Report asks students if they would recommend this college to a friend or family member. Ninety-four percent reported they would make such a recommendation.

Another item asks students to evaluate their entire educational experience. Figure 1 shows that 86% described the education as

good or excellent and only 1% reported their experience as poor.

Another measure of student satisfaction is the percent of returning or successful students. Seventy-two percent of the students reported they would return for either the Summer or Fall 2002 quarter or semester, while 9% reported they accomplished their goals and would not be returning. Only 15% reported they were uncertain or had no plans to return.

**Figure 1**  
**Entire Educational Experience**



## Goals & Retention Factors

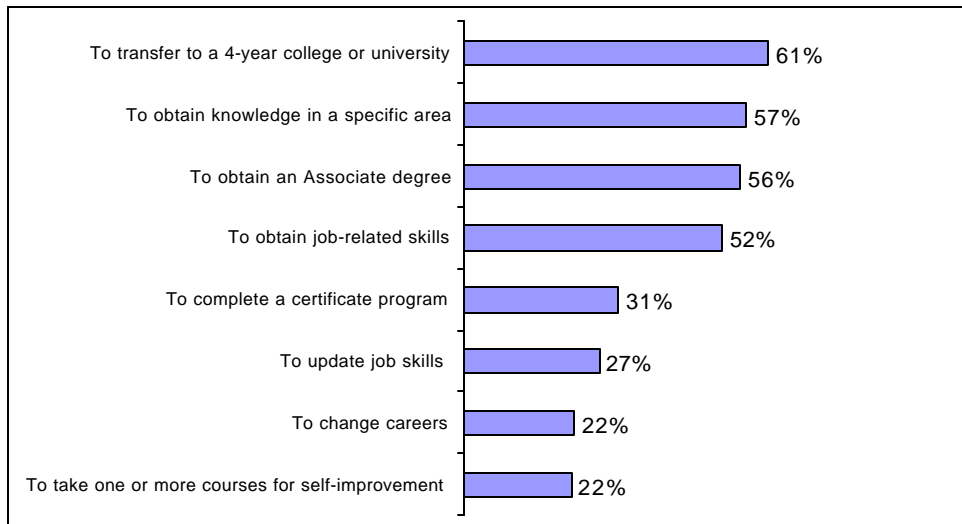
Students were given the opportunity to mark 'primary goal,' 'secondary goal' or 'not a goal' in response to a list of possible goals for attending their particular college. As a result, many students marked more than one primary goal and therefore the percentages in Figures 2 and 3 do not sum to 100%.

Community colleges have many missions and goals, as do their students. Figure 2 shows the percent of students by their educational objectives and goals. As can be seen, the preponderance of students are interested in transferring to a 4-year college or university. Fifty-six percent want to earn an associate degree, while 57% are interested in obtaining knowledge in a specific area (includes

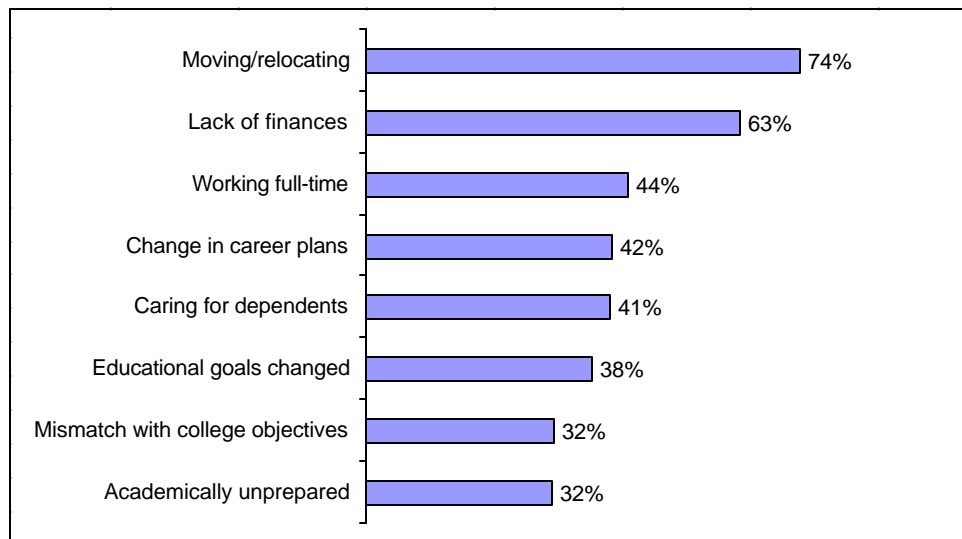
students who may or may not plan to transfer). Only 22% of respondents are interested in changing careers.

We asked students what issues would force them to withdraw from college. Figure 3 shows the percent of students who reported that the various risk factors would result in their withdrawing from class or college.

**Figure 2**  
**Student Primary Goal**



**Figure 3**  
**Factors that Result in Student Departure**



## Student Services

Unique to the *Community College Student Report* is the section on student services. Often surveys ask a combination of satisfaction, use, or importance, but rarely are surveys designed in a way that asks students to link all three, as does *CCSSE*. Table 5 displays use, satisfaction and importance of each

service. The first column is percent of students who reported they used the service either sometimes or often; the second column represents the percent of students who reported they were somewhat or very satisfied with the service; the third column corresponds to the percent of students who reported the service is very

important; and the last column represents the percent of students who reported the service is 'not available/applicable.'

Students reported using computer labs (71%) and academic advising/planning (63%) more than any other service campuses provided. It is

heartening to see that these services were among the most important and had high satisfaction ratings as well. Nonetheless, it is disheartening to see

areas that students describe as important, yet not available or not used. On the other hand, 57% of the students reported that financial aid

advising is very important, while 58% of the students used the service, and 80% were satisfied with their financial aid experience

**Table 5**  
**Student Services by Use, Satisfaction & Importance**

Service Item	Use	Satisfaction	Importance	N/A
Computer lab	71%	93%	56%	13%
Academic advising/planning	63%	87%	54%	8%
Financial aid advising	58%	80%	57%	23%
Skill labs (writing, math, etc.)	54%	88%	42%	20%
Transfer credit assistance	46%	80%	48%	33%
Career counseling	41%	80%	48%	16%
Peer or other tutoring	36%	82%	35%	27%
Student organizations	29%	78%	21%	35%
Job placement assistance	22%	70%	35%	38%
Services for people with disabilities	20%	82%	43%	55%
Child care	12%	65%	26%	55%

Note: The denominator for 'Use' and 'Satisfaction' excludes students who marked N/A.

## Guidelines for Interpreting CCSSE Results

We recommend, before you share your results college-wide, that you familiarize yourself with your CCSSE findings. CCSSE and NSSE suggest that you become familiar with the nature of the data and “story line(s) of your school’s performance.” The following are some things to consider:

### ***Check the Representativeness of Your Respondents***

The first step in any survey research project is to determine whether the sample is representative of the college’s underlying population with regard to various demographic characteristics. Table 1, in your

institutional report behind the “Your CCSSE Findings” tab, compares your CCSSE respondents to your college’s population as reported in the Fall 2000 IPEDS Enrollment Report. It is equally important to know the underlying

population characteristics of the comparison groups CCSSE created; therefore, the table also provides comparisons for your comparison group (small, medium, large) and all 2002 CCSSE colleges.

### ***Weighted versus Unweighted Results***

For all analyses that involved the pooling of data across institutions, a weighting technique (e.g., Kish, 1965) was employed to ensure that the aggregate results would be representative of the entire body of students enrolled at the participating colleges. The weights were applied

at the institutional level to correct for differences in effective sampling rates. The weighting formula, listed below, ensures that the responses from students at each institution have only as much influence on the total sample as that institution’s share of the total enrollment across institutions.

A similar weighting methodology was implemented at two different levels of aggregation: across all institutions to yield 2002 Aggregate results, and across all institutions within a given size class to yield Size comparisons. The formula below indicates how the weights were calculated for each

institution, depending on that institution's enrollment, total enrollment across institutions (or across all of a given size), that institution's sample size, and the total sample across all institutions (or all of a given size). The weight for institution  $i$  is given by:

$$w_i = \frac{\text{Enrollment}_i \times \text{Total Sample}}{\text{Total Enrollment} \times \text{Sample}_i}$$

It is worth noting that when an institution's share of the total enrollment is equal to its share of the total sample, the formula produces a value of 'one' for the weight, and therefore no adjustment is made. When, however, an institution sampled too many students in proportion to its total enrollment, its assigned weight was smaller, while those who sampled too few were assigned larger weights.

Data in the following outputs were weighted: 1) the Means Summary Report comparisons; 2) Size comparison frequency results (counts and percentages); and 3) 2002 Aggregate frequency results (counts and percentages). However, institution-level frequency results were NOT weighted (e.g., Survey Look-Alike, Frequency Distributions).

## ***Look Carefully at Items with Large Effect Sizes***

In the Means Summary Report an asterisk (\*) marks those items where your students' responses differ at a statistically significant level from students at colleges in your respective comparison group or at all CCSSE 2002 colleges. Because of the large number of students in CCSSE 2002, we set a very high statistical significance threshold to reduce the probability that the differences noted are due to chance ( $p < .001$ ). Even so, the actual magnitude of some item score differences may seem trivial, even though they are highly reliable and statistically significant. For this reason we also report the effect size

associated with those item comparisons that are statistically significant. The effect size represents the magnitude of the discrepancy in the student or institutional behavior represented by the item. When the effect size is large, or a pattern of moderate effect sizes exists, it is likely that the quality of the student experience represented by the survey question(s) is appreciably different and, therefore, may be of practical as well as statistical significance.

Finding large effect sizes is not that common in most areas of non-experimental educational and social

science research, including both the CCSSE and NSSE projects. So, if your results include some medium or large effects, something may be going on that warrants immediate attention, especially if other empirical or anecdotal information corroborate the CCSSE data. Here are some general guidelines for determining the relative importance of the Cohen's  $d$  effect size.

- .20 is a small effect
- .5 is a medium effect
- .8 is a large effect

## ***Look for Patterns in Item Differences***

In addition to focusing on items with medium to large effect sizes, look for patterns in your students' responses. For example, are your students consistently above or below the mean of your comparison group in certain areas of engagement? Are the differences explainable, perhaps a function of your

school's mission, the nature of the undergraduate program, or certain students' characteristics? Also, don't rely exclusively on statistical significance tests to identify areas that warrant attention. A consistent pattern of scoring above the mean, even though all the items may not reach statistical significance, may

indicate the institution is doing the right things in terms of good educational practice. At the same time, some institutions have very high expectations for student engagement and may fall short of their own aspirations even though comparisons with other institutions are favorable.

## ***The Results for Size and 2002 Aggregate Comparisons Do Not Include Oversampled Students***

CCSSE's 2002 target sample sizes were determined by Fall IPEDS (headcount) enrollment in credit classes. Table 6 below provides the breakdowns.

It is possible to add students to the target sample size by oversampling, which requires an additional fee. Some institutions requested oversampling to increase the probability that their sample was representative of their underlying student population. Others

**Table 6**  
**CCSSE 2002 Target Sample Sizes**

<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Target Sample Size</b>
Less than 3,000	625
3,000 to 7,999	875
More than 8,000	1,125

oversampled in order to respond to specific data requests from outside agencies (e.g., accrediting).

CCSSE's policy is to use only respondents from the institution's regular random sample when creating the Size and 2002 Aggregate comparison groups. However, if your college requested an oversample, the responses from all your students (regular sample and oversample) **are included** in your institution's reports and data file.

## ***All Respondents Are Included In Your Raw Data File***

Your institution's raw data contains responses from all students who completed ***The Community College Student Report***, including those who

completed it more than once. CCSSE did not delete cases from your raw data file where students indicated that "Yes" they had taken the survey in

another class that term. However, these duplicate respondents (8% total) are excluded from all reported results.

## **Helpful Tips from NSSE in Using CCSSE Results\***

CCSSE reports point to areas where a college can take action almost immediately to begin to improve student learning and institutional effectiveness. Given this is the first year CCSSE has collected data, we are including the following excerpt from "NSSE's 2001 Overview" as a guide to using your CCSSE results.

### ***Understanding Key Aspects of the Student Experience***

To anchor discussion about the quality of undergraduate education in empirical evidence, we suggest schools circulate a copy of the Overview section of the institutional report and other selected sections to such groups as:

- Governing board members
- President and president's cabinet
- Senior administrators, Deans, and Department chairs
- Faculty committees, faculty development workshops and retreats, and various academic councils
- Students (via discussion with student leaders and articles in the student newspapers)

Once these materials are circulated, guided conversations or focus groups with the above groups to provide some qualitative data to help understand the findings is suggested. For instance, student focus groups could be organized to ask the students what the college could do to improve in the identified areas. Or, faculty could decide to work together to create ways of getting students more engaged in the classroom.

\*Note: Most of this section is from the National Survey of Student Engagement's 2001 Overview



## ***Institutional Improvement***

CCSSE data serve a diagnostic function by identifying institutional strengths and weaknesses in terms of effective educational practice. Toward this end, CCSSE results are especially useful for benchmarking, the process of comparing and measuring an institution against high-performing colleges and adapting best practices in order to improve. There are two approaches to benchmarking. One or both may be appropriate, depending on your institution's situation.

The first is a **normative** approach, whereby you compare your students' responses to those of students at other colleges. This can also be done

at the department or major field level if enough students have participated, which is a particularly effective way of stimulating faculty interest in the findings.

The second approach to benchmarking is **criterion referenced**, whereby you examine your school's performance against a predetermined value or level that you and your colleagues deem appropriate for your students, given your institutional mission, size, curricular offerings, funding, and so forth (see *CCSSE Tool Kit tab, for Expected versus Actual worksheet*).

Faculty-student interaction is another area where legitimate differences may exist across units in interpreting the meaning of absolute values of student responses to certain questions. For example, "occasional" conversations between students and faculty about career options may be "educationally effective." But in terms of giving students prompt feedback or challenging them to work harder than usual to meet an instructor's standards, we might want most students to say they experience this "often" or "very often."

## ***Documenting the Efficacy of Improvement Initiatives***

The CCSSE project focuses on effective educational practices so the results are instructive for faculty and staff members who are working on various teaching and learning initiatives. CCSSE data can be a resource for estimating and improving the impact of such initiatives over time. Here are some examples:

- Assessing the impact of learning communities by comparing responses of students enrolled in learning communities with their peers who are not enrolled.
- Estimating the quality of intentional first-year programs by comparing CCSSE responses of students participating in orientation or college success courses and organized learning communities with their counterparts who are not in such programs.
- Sharing CCSSE data with advisors so that they can help their advisees better manage their time and use other academic resources.
- Incorporating CCSSE results into relevant faculty and staff development workshops and retreats.
- Using student engagement as the theme for a campus-wide symposium and emphasizing the implications of CCSSE results for teaching and learning initiatives and managing student culture.

## ***Planning, Accountability & Institutional Research***

All regional accreditation associations require evidence of student learning, therefore CCSSE results could be appropriately used in

institutional self-studies. This information is particularly powerful if CCSSE results are corroborated by other institutional data such as the

results from other national or local surveys, review of institutional records, and so forth

## ***Communicating Collegiate Quality to the Public***

Finally, your institution might utilize *CCSSE* data to call attention to various dimensions of collegiate quality by:

- Incorporating *CCSSE* data in newsletters and other publications to describe the undergraduate experience in terms of college activities, educational and personal growth, and satisfaction.
- Preparing stories for local, regional, and national media about distinctive aspects of the student experience.

## ***Closing Notes***

We hope these suggestions are helpful and welcome comments about how we can make this and other *CCSSE* reports practical and relevant to your needs. We intend to regularly update the *CCSSE* website with other examples about how schools are using their *CCSSE* data as we learn about them. In that regard, please keep us informed about how you are using, or plan to use, your *CCSSE* results.