

2012

Targeted Report: Ethnicity

The Community College Survey of Student
Engagement (CCSSE)

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Research by Tinto and others has shown that student engagement is directly related to retention and student success. The University of Texas (Austin) developed the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) to measure levels of student engagement in five benchmark areas: Student/Faculty Interaction, Support for Learners, Active in Class Learning, Student Effort, and Academic Challenge.

During the Spring semesters in the years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2012 the Office of Assessment, Research, and Planning (ARP) administered the Community College Survey of Student Engagement to students in randomly selected classes. ARP analyzed the results of each of the survey administrations focusing on the benchmarks, and previously distributed those analyses in comprehensive written reports and briefings to members of the college community. Yet another way to organize the CCSSE questions/results is based on campus activity or program. This brief, targeted report provides results of CCSSE benchmarks as they relate to African American and White students at MTC.

Analysis

African American students at MTC are more engaged than White students on all the CCSSE benchmarks. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, African American student's 2012 means are statistically higher than the white, non-Hispanic cohort. African American student benchmark means have risen every year since 2007 with *Student-Faculty Interaction* having the greatest increase, 8.1%. For the *Academic Challenge* benchmark, African American student's benchmark mean is statistically significantly higher as compared to 2007. African American student's perception is that a higher level of student effort is needed in order to meet the academic challenges at MTC, compared to White student's perception.

White student's perception of engagement also has risen since 2007 on all benchmarks with the exception of *Student Effort*. The *Student Effort* benchmark for White students has continued to drop since 2007. For the *Student-Faculty Interaction* benchmark, White student's benchmark mean is statistically significantly higher as compared to 2007.

Statistically significant differences:

- White student scores are significantly **higher** in 2012 for *Student-Faculty Interaction* than 2007.
- African American student scores are significantly **higher** in 2012 for *Academic Challenge* than 2007.
- African American student scores are significantly **higher** in 2012 for all benchmarks as compared to white students. These results suggest that further research may be needed to determine the root cause of the differences in the perception of engagement between the two groups in all benchmark areas.

Figure 1. MTC Benchmarks by Year and Ethnicity – White, Non-Hispanic

		Active and Collaborative Learning		Student Effort		Academic Challenge		Student-Faculty Interaction		Support for Learners	
Year		Mean	% chg.	Mean	% chg.	Mean	% chg.	Mean	% chg.	Mean	% chg.
2007	White	0.317		0.450		0.561		0.381		0.409	
2008	White	0.350	9.4%	0.439	-2.7%	0.568	1.1%	0.392	2.7%	0.410	0.1%
2009	White	0.327	3.1%	0.445	-1.2%	0.575	2.4%	0.385	0.9%	0.390	-4.9%
2011	White	0.352	9.8%	0.443	-1.7%	0.588	4.5%	0.392	2.6%	0.395	-3.6%
2012	White	0.343	7.4%	0.439	-2.5%	0.578	2.9%	0.411↑	7.2%	0.407	-0.5%

↑↓ Note: Directional arrows highlight those items in 2012 that are significantly above or below the mean of 2007. Using one-way analysis of variance the items highlighted are significant at $p < .05$, a 95% confidence level.

Figure 2. MTC Benchmarks by Year and Ethnicity – African American or Black, Non-Hispanic

		Active and Collaborative Learning		Student Effort		Academic Challenge		Student-Faculty Interaction		Support for Learners	
Year		Mean	% Change	Mean	% Change	Mean	% Change	Mean	% Change	Mean	% Change
2007	African American	0.348		0.479		0.577		0.411		0.479	
2008	African American	0.387	9.9%	0.491	2.4%	0.600	3.8%	0.425	3.3%	0.512	6.5%
2009	African American	0.346	-0.6%	0.489	2.1%	0.621	7.2%	0.421	2.4%	0.495	3.3%
2011	African American	0.361	3.6%	0.497	3.6%	0.638	9.6%	0.425	3.3%	0.505	5.3%
2012	African American	0.367*	5.1%	0.484*	1.0%	0.615↑*	6.3%	0.447*	8.1%	0.497*	3.6%

↑↓ Note: Directional arrows highlight those items in 2012 that are significantly above or below the mean of 2007. Using one-way analysis of variance the items highlighted are significant at $p < .05$, a 95% confidence level.

*Note: Significant difference between the groups in 2012. Using a T-test (2-tailed) the differences in the means are significant at $p < .05$, a 95% confidence level.

Next steps

College teachers and researchers often suggest that African American students, particularly African American males, are less engaged and at “higher risk” than White students, hence less likely to persist to their second semester, less likely to complete their college programs. McClenney, in citing nationwide data from the CCSSE, indicates that high risk students in community colleges including African Americans are often *more engaged* than their low-risk counterparts however. Female students, older students, students who work, African Americans, and students who participate in orientation are often the most engaged, hence likely to overcome obstacles, the nationwide CCSSE data shows (CCSSE; 2008). The reason these groups are more engaged is that colleges, particularly community colleges, have developed programs which actively provide the at-risk student the support needed to succeed.

The CCSSE results suggest that MTC programs such as strengthened orientation and special mentoring for African American males are succeeding in raising the engagement level of African Americans, particularly African American males. ARP will continue to monitor class and program success to ensure that this higher engagement translates into better grades and graduation rates.

Colleges are challenged to find ways to expand support programs to meet the needs of others, when there are limited resources available. According to Tinto (2008) and Kuh (2005), one strategy is to bring student support programs to the classroom. Since community college students have important responsibilities away from college, they often leave when not in class. Tinto and Kuh indicate that integrating support activities such as tutoring, advising, active learning, and mentoring into the classroom environment can overcome this hurdle.

As a second strategy, some colleges are working to involve their non-teaching faculty. Students work closely with non-teaching staff on financial aid matters, library research, both formal and informal counseling and advising, and other activities. Research has shown that the quality of these encounters can enrich the student experience.