

2012

Targeted Report: Faculty-Student Interaction

The Community College Survey of Student
Engagement (CCSSE)

For additional information regarding this report contact:

The Office of Assessment, Research and Planning

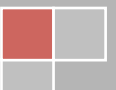
Survey Research Lab

Midlands Technical College

Airport Campus, Saluda Hall Room 110

West Columbia, SC 29170

Phone: (803) 822-3581



Targeted Report: Faculty-Student Interaction

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 CCSSE to students in randomly selected classes. ARP elsewhere has analyzed the results of each of the survey administrations focusing on the benchmarks, and distributed those results through 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 questions which relate to Faculty-Student interaction.

Analysis

Personal interaction with MTC faculty members is a key element of student engagement. It strengthens students' connections to the college and helps them focus on their academic progress. Working with an instructor on a project or serving with faculty members on a college committee lets students see first-hand how experts identify and solve practical problems. Through such interactions, MTC faculty members become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, lifelong learning.

There is substantial research to support the other Student-Faculty Interaction questions. Tinto (1993) synthesis of this research suggests retention comes from the deliberate development of a "strong sense of inclusive educational and social community on campus." Central to "community" is the importance of the classroom experience. Research has been conducted to examine both the positive and negative effects of email communication between students and faculty (Hinkle).

Student-Faculty Interaction of Time. The level of *Student-Faculty Interaction* at MTC has been steadily increasing since 2007. All six benchmark questions have a higher mean score since 2007. MTC students report statistically significant increases in email communication with their instructor as compared to 2007. MTC students increasingly engage their instructors in many ways as illustrated in the benchmark questions in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. Student-Faculty Interaction questions

Question	MTC 2007 Mean	MTC 2008 Mean	MTC 2009 Mean	MTC 2011 Mean	MTC 2012 Mean	Difference from 2007 to 2012
In your experience at this college during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? (Scale: 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very Often)						
4k. Used email to communicate with an instructor	2.52	2.53	2.60	2.72	2.82↑	10.6%
4l. Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	2.58	2.59	2.64	2.59	2.65	2.8%
4m. Talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor	2.12	2.20	2.15	2.09	2.18	2.9%
4n. Discussed ideas from your reading or classes with instructors outside of class	1.70	1.73	1.68	1.78	1.77	3.7%
4o. Received prompt feedback from instructors on your performance	2.71	2.73	2.69	2.74	2.72	0.2%
4q. Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework	1.32	1.44	1.33	1.38	1.40	5.4%

↑ ↓ 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.

Faculty use of emails (and other technologies) to communicate with students may affect retention. For example, Lundquist, Spalding, and Landrum (*College Student Retention Research, Theory and Practice*, 4(2) 123-133) conducted a study of faculty attitudes and behaviors as they relate to student retention. The authors found three factors have significant impact on predicting student thoughts about leaving college:

- Faculty members being supportive of student needs;
- Returning telephone calls and emails in a timely fashion (questions 4o and 4k); and
- Being approachable.

Similarly, Murbach-Ad and Sokolove (2002) found that use of email and student-centered, active learning methods in first year classes promotes student-faculty interaction.

Student-Faculty Interaction 2012. ARP also compared the college's 2012 benchmark score with those of other colleges. MTC's *Student-Faculty Interaction* benchmark score (51%) is below the SC Consortium Colleges (53.4%) but above the Large Colleges (49.1%).

MTC students are above the Large Colleges on four of six benchmark items. However, MTC scores are below the SC Consortium Colleges on every item except 4o. See Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Student-Faculty Interaction Questions

	MTC Mean	SC Consortium Colleges Mean	Large Colleges Mean	CCSSE Cohort Mean
In your experience at this college during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? (Scale: 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very Often)				
4k. Used email to communicate with an instructor	2.82	2.92	2.82	2.81
4l. Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	2.65	2.70	2.56	2.59
4m. Talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor	2.18	2.24	2.03	2.08
4n. Discussed ideas from your reading or classes with instructors outside of class	1.77	1.84	1.75	1.77
4o. Received prompt feedback from instructors on your performance	2.72	2.72	2.69	2.70
4q. Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework	1.40	1.44	1.41	1.43

↑↓ Note: Directional arrows in charts highlight those items where MTC falls notably above or below the mean of the comparison group. Using a T-test (2-tailed) the items highlighted are significant at $p < .001$ with an effect size greater than or equal to 0.2.

Finally, the question in Figure 3 below is not a part of the *Student-Faculty Interaction* benchmark, however, this additional question may help in understanding this benchmark and how it relates to student engagement. MTC student's perception is that instructors now are slightly less available, helpful and sympathetic as compared to 2007.

Figure 3. Questions not a part of the *Student-Faculty Interaction* benchmark

Question	MTC 2007 Mean	MTC 2008 Mean	MTC 2009 Mean	MTC 2011 Mean	MTC 2012 Mean	Difference from 2007 to 2012
The quality of your relationships with people at this college. Your relationship with instructors (Scale: 7=Available, helpful, sympathetic ... 1=Unavailable, unhelpful, unsympathetic)						
11b. Instructors	5.59	5.58	5.42	5.48	5.45	-2.6%

↑↓ 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.

Next Steps

MTC students perceive student-faculty interaction at the college is increasing. CCSSE average scores for questions in the *Student-Faculty Interaction* benchmark have risen since 2007. For the question involving student/faculty interaction through email, the increase is statistically significant from years 2007 through 2012, the last year the survey has been administered.

Despite these upward trends over time, when *MTC's Student-Faculty Interaction* benchmark question means are compared with other South Carolina colleges, MTC remains below on nearly all of the question mean scores. When asked about their relationships with faculty members (question 11b), students reflect through the CCSSE that the quality of their relationships with their instructors has actually deteriorated since 2007.

The quality and frequency of faculty interaction with students, both inside and outside the classroom, has an impact on student retention. The CCSSE Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark data shows that this interaction is improving, but lags behind those of other community colleges in the state. Since MTC faculty normally teach six class sections each semester, maintain regular office hours for student consultation, and the college has limited “outside of class” activities to bring faculty and students together, Tinto and others would suggest perhaps that interaction in the classroom might be the best avenue for improvement.