

Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE): Special Focus Items - Promising Practices for Student Success Spring 2015

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OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES

The purpose of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success Initiatives is to conduct analytical studies and provide information in support of institutional planning, policy formulation, and decision making. In addition, the office provides leadership and support in research related activities to members of the NOVA community engaged in planning and evaluating the institution's success in accomplishing its mission.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	2
CCSSE Special Focus Item 1: On-Time Registration	3
Figure 1. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 1	3
Figure 2. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 1	3
CCSSE Special Focus Item 2: Orientation	4
Figure 3. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 2	4
Figure 4. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 2	4
CCSSE Special Focus Item 3: First-Year Experience	5
Figure 5. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 3	5
Figure 6. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 3	5
CCSSE Special Focus Item 4: Learning Communities	6
Figure 7. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 4	6
Figure 8. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 4	6
CCSSE Special Focus Item 5: Student Success Course	7
Figure 9. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 5	7
Figure 10. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 5	7
CCSSE Special Focus Item 6: Placement Testing Requirement	8
Figure 11. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 6	8
Figure 12. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 6	8
CCSSE Special Focus Item 7: Awareness of Placement Testing	9
Figure 13. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 7	9
Figure 14. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 7	9
CCSSE Special Focus Item 8: Placement Testing in High School	10
Figure 15. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 8	10
Figure 16. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 8	10
CCSSE Special Focus Item 9: Preparation for Placement Test	11
Figure 17. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 9	11
Figure 18. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 9	11
CCSSE Special Focus Item 10: Placement in Developmental Education	12
Figure 19. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 10	12
Figure 20. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 10	12

CCSSE Special Focus Item 11: Requirement of Developmental Courses in First Term	13
Figure 21. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 11	13
Figure 22. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 11	13
CCSSE Special Focus Item 12: Enrollment in Developmental Courses in First Term	14
Figure 23. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 12.....	14
Figure 24. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 12	14
CCSSE Special Focus Item 13: Appropriate Placement in English Course.....	15
Figure 25. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 13.....	15
Figure 26. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 13	15
CCSSE Special Focus Item 14: Appropriate Placement in Math Course	16
Figure 27. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 14.....	16
Figure 28. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 14	16
CCSSE Special Focus Item 15: Advisement on Skill Level of English Course .	17
Figure 29. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 15.....	17
Figure 30. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 15	17
CCSSE Special Focus Item 16: Advisement on Skill Level of Math Course	18
Figure 31. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 16.....	18
Figure 32. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 16	18
CCSSE Special Focus Item 17: Concurrent Enrollment in College-Level and Developmental English	19
Figure 33. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 17.....	19
Figure 34. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 17	19
CCSSE Special Focus Item 18: Concurrent Enrollment in College-Level and Developmental Math.....	20
Figure 35. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 18.....	20
Figure 36. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 18	20
CCSSE Special Focus Item 19: Computer-Based Instruction in On-Campus Developmental Math Course	21
Figure 37. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 19.....	21
Figure 38. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 19	21
CCSSE Special Focus Item 20: High School GPA	22
Figure 39. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 20.....	22
Figure 40. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 20	22

Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) 2015: Special Focus Items – Promising Practices for Student Success

Executive Summary

- In general, students who **registered for courses before the first class session**, who took part in **orientation**, and who participated in a **first-year experience, learning community, or student success course** tended to report higher scores than other students on all five benchmarks of student engagement.
- Conversely, students who did not register for any courses before the first class session or who did not participate in an orientation, first-year experience, learning community, or student success course consistently reported lower scores on the student engagement benchmarks.
- Students who **prepared for their placement tests** had higher scores on all student engagement benchmarks than those who did not.
- Students who reported that they **placed into and subsequently enrolled in at least one developmental course** had higher scores on all benchmarks than students who placed into those courses but did not enroll.
- Overall, students gave the highest scores on the *Student-Faculty Interaction* benchmark, and the lowest on the *Support for Learners* benchmark.

Introduction

What is CCSSE?

- The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) is a survey of a national cohort of community colleges that includes questions about institutional practices and student behaviors related to student engagement, a key indicator of learning.
- CCSSE designates five areas of effective educational practice as benchmarks for assessing institutional performance. Each of these benchmarks corresponds to a group of conceptually related items on the survey.
 - *Active and Collaborative Learning*
 - *Student Effort*
 - *Academic Challenge*
 - *Student-Faculty Interaction*
 - *Support for Learners*

In this Report

- In Spring 2015, **1,588** NOVA students participated in the survey.
- This Report presents NOVA students' responses to a ***supplemental portion*** of the survey that includes special-focus items related to promising practices for student success.
- Special-focus items specifically address assessment and placement practices, such as preparing for placement tests and enrolling in developmental education courses based on placement test results.
- Such practices relate to several of NOVA's recent policy changes on issues such as on-time registration, Student Orientation, enrollment in a Student Development/Success course, mandatory placement testing, and mandatory enrollment in developmental courses during the first semester, if placed.

Data Notes

- Benchmark scores were calculated by averaging the scores of items that comprise that benchmark. The scores were then standardized such that the ***national average is always 50*** for all benchmarks.
- In this way, the scores of other colleges can be viewed as relative scores; this provides an easy way to assess whether an individual college or a group of colleges are performing above or below the mean (50.0) on each benchmark.

CCSSE Special Focus Item 1: On-Time Registration

During the current term at this college, I completed registration before the first class session(s).

A. Yes; I was registered for **all** of my courses before the first class session(s)

B. Mostly; I was registered for **most** of my courses before the first class session(s)

C. Partly; I was registered for **some** of my courses before the first class session(s)

D. No; I was not registered for any of my courses before the first class session(s)

Nearly all students who responded to this question registered for at least some of their courses before the first session (Figure 1). The results in Figure 2 show that students who did not register for any courses before the first class session were generally less engaged than students who did, as demonstrated by the lower benchmark scores. However, for most benchmarks, scores varied little (by less than 3 points) regardless of whether students registered for all, most, or some of their classes before the first class session.

Figure 1. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 1

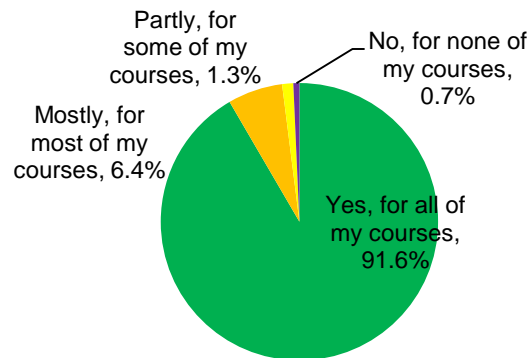
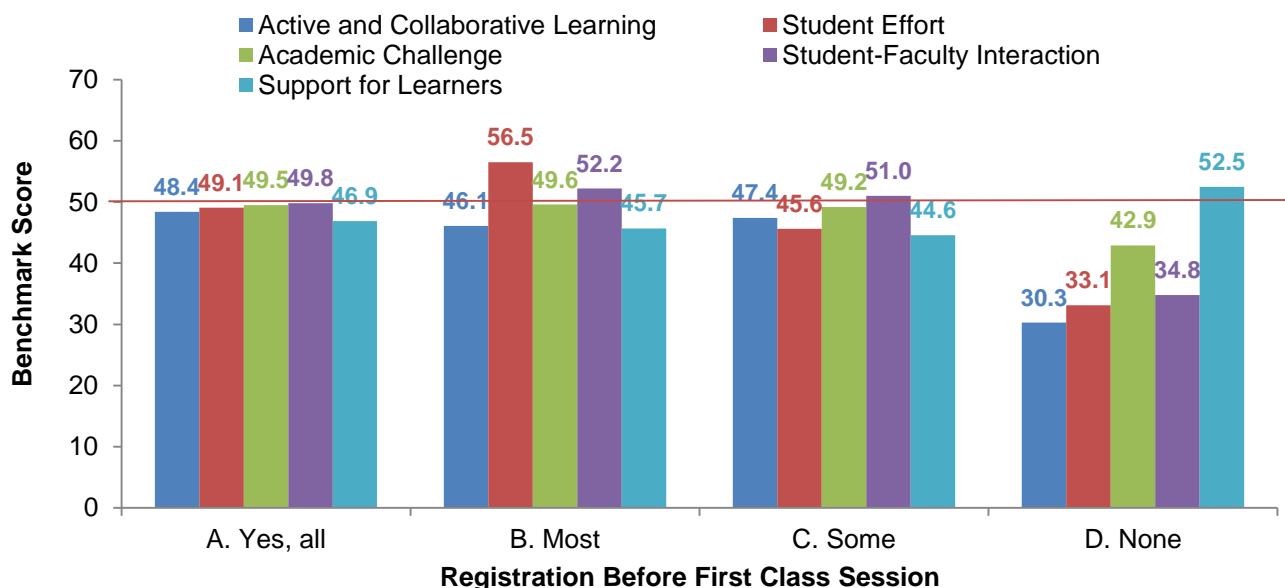


Figure 2. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 1



CCSSE Special Focus Item 2: Orientation

The one response that best describes my experience with orientation when I first came to college is...

- A. I took part in an **online orientation** prior to the beginning of classes
- B. I attended an **on-campus orientation** prior to the beginning of classes
- C. I enrolled in an **orientation course** as part of my course schedule during my first term at this college
- D. I was **not aware** of a college orientation
- E. I was **unable to participate** in orientation due to scheduling or other issues

Students who took part in an online orientation prior to the beginning of classes gave the highest scores for each benchmark. Those students who reported that they were not aware of a college orientation or were unable to participate in orientation gave lower scores on each benchmark than students who attended any type of orientation.

Figure 3. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 2

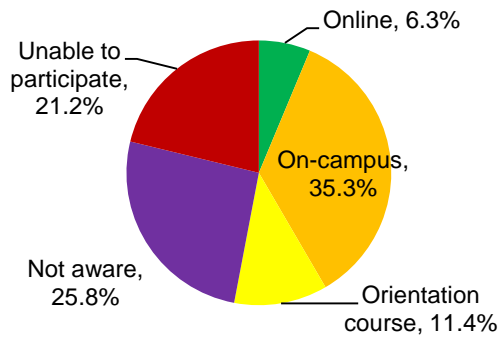
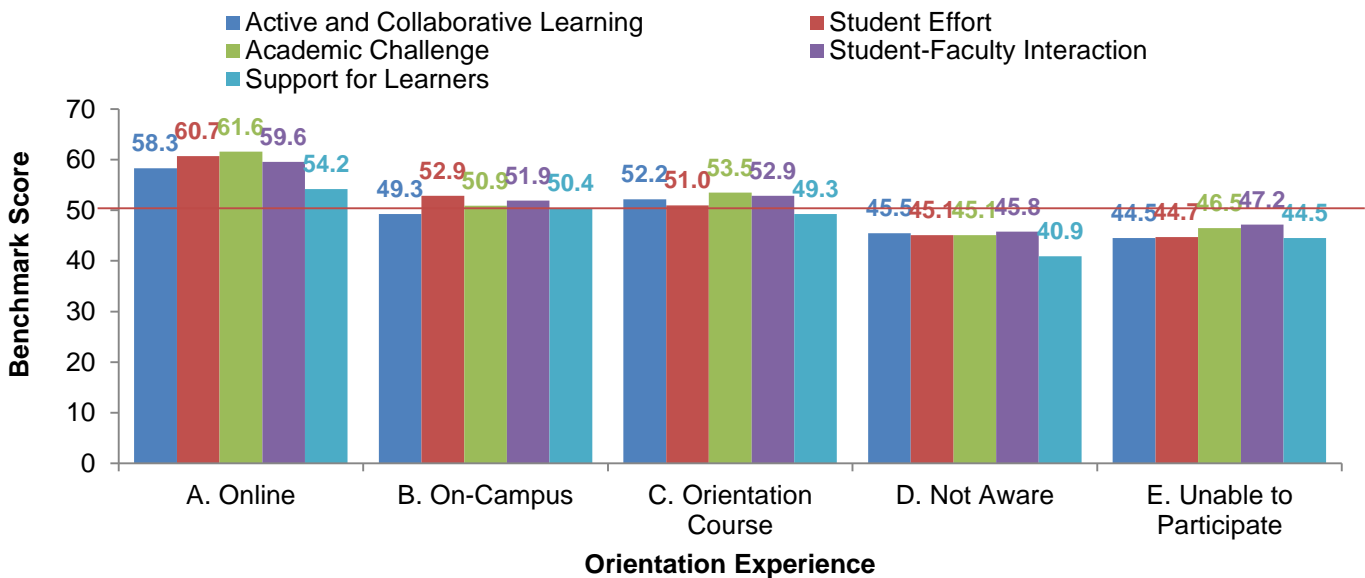


Figure 4. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 2



CCSSE Special Focus Item 3: First-Year Experience

During my first term at this college, I participated in a structured experience for new students (sometimes called a "freshman seminar" or "first-year experience").

- A. Yes, in my first term at this college
- B. Yes, in my first **and** in at least one other term at this college
- C. Yes, but **not** in my first term at this college
- D. No, I did not

Although the majority of respondents indicated that they did not participate in any first-year experience activities (Figure 5), students who did participate in a first-year experience consistently reported higher student engagement scores than those who did not. In fact, students who participated in a first-year experience (regardless of in which term) reported scores above the national average for *Student Effort*, *Student-Faculty Interaction*, and *Support for Learners*.

Figure 5. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 3

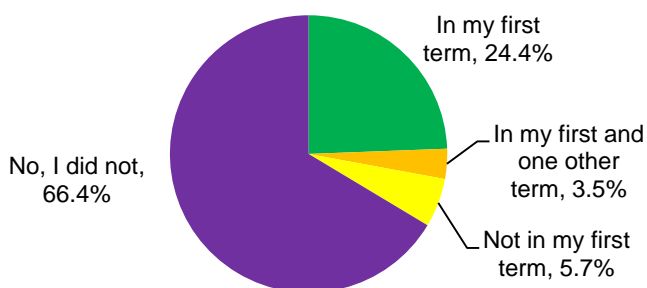
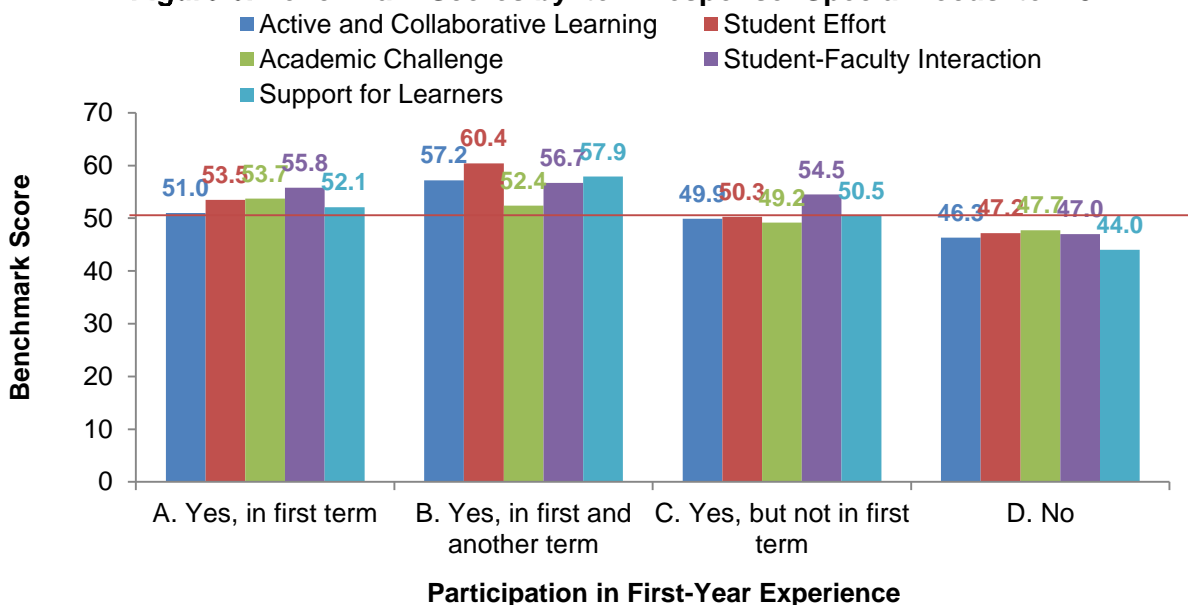


Figure 6. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 3



CCSSE Special Focus Item 4: Learning Communities

During my first term at this college, I enrolled in an organized “learning community” (two or more courses that a group of students take together).

- A. Yes, in my first term at this college
- B. Yes, in my first **and** in at least one other term at this college
- C. Yes, but **not** in my first term at this college
- D. No, I did not

As with the previous question on first-year experience, although the majority of respondents did not participate in learning communities (Figure 7), those who did reported much higher student engagement scores than those who did not. In particular, students who participated in a learning community reported scores 13 to 17 points higher on the *Support for Learners* benchmark than those who did not.

Figure 7. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 4

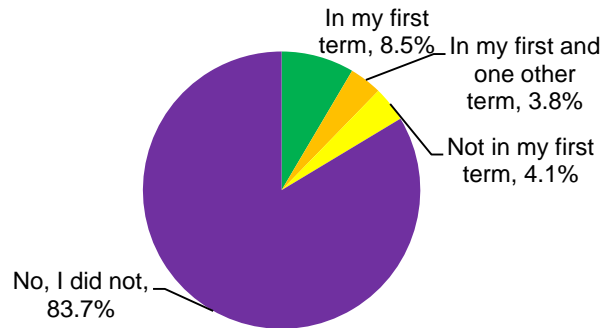
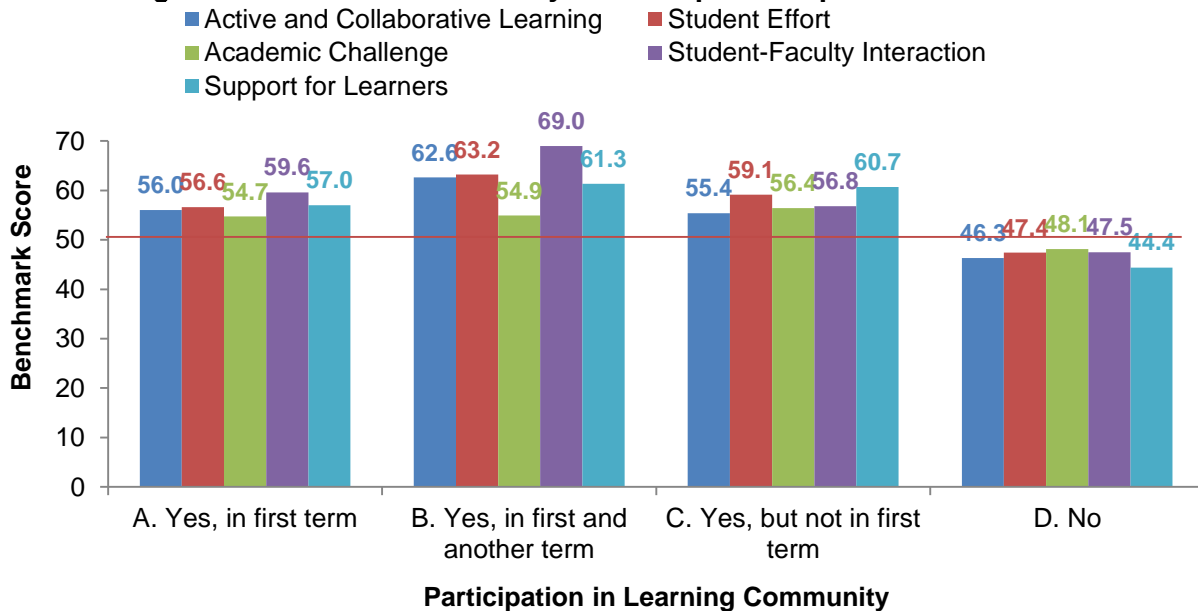


Figure 8. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 4



CCSSE Special Focus Item 5: Student Success Course

During my first term at this college, I enrolled in a student success course (such as a student development, extended orientation, student life skills, or college success course).

- A. Yes, in my first term at this college
- B. Yes, in my first **and** in at least one other term at this college
- C. Yes, but **not** in my first term at this college
- D. No, I did not

Students who reported having taken a student success course in their first term reported higher student engagement scores than both students who did not take a student success course or students who only took the course after their first term. Students who enrolled in a student success course in their first term scored 10 points higher on the *Support for Learners* benchmark than those who did not. This difference was smaller (about 4 points) for the *Active and Collaborative Learning* benchmark.

Figure 9. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 5

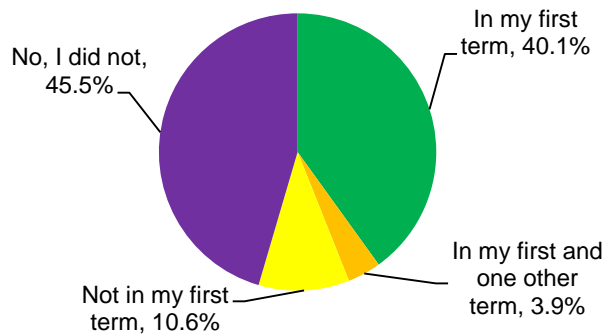
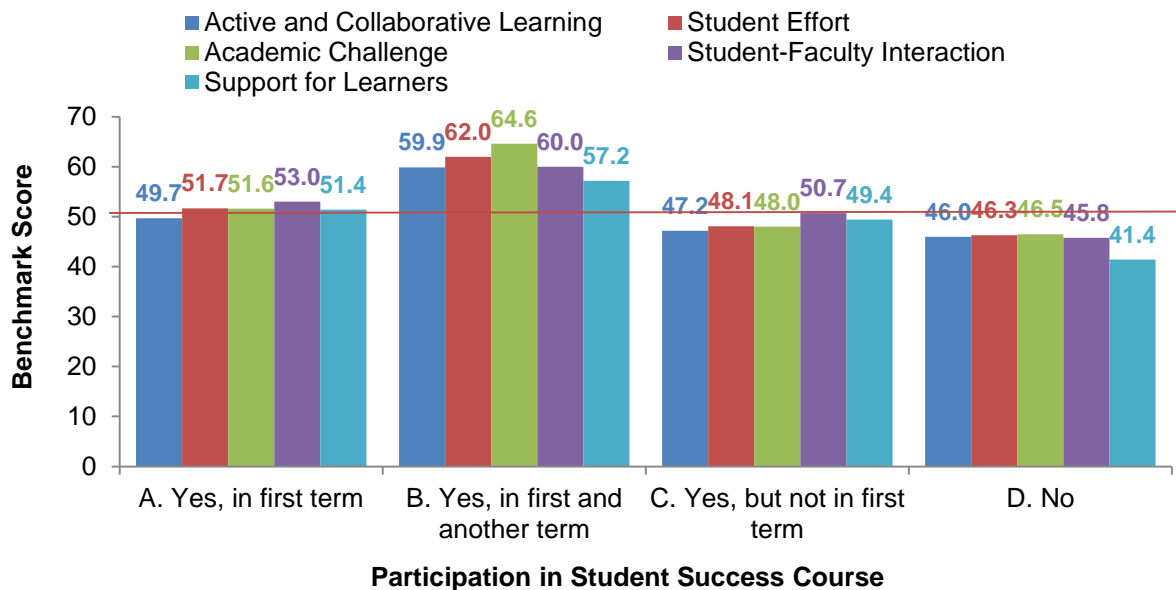


Figure 10. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 5



CCSSE Special Focus Item 6: Placement Testing Requirement

Before I could register for my first term at this college, I was required to take a placement test (ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.) to assess my academic skills in reading, writing, and/or math.

- A. Yes, and I took it
- B. Yes, it was required, but I did not take it
- C. No, it was not required

Special Focus Item 6 asked students about testing practices and behaviors for placement into developmental English and/or math. The majority of students (79 percent) reported that they were required to take a placement test and that they did so. These students scored higher on all benchmarks than those who were not required to take a placement test. Students who were not required to take a placement test scored below the national average on all benchmarks. Interestingly, students who reported that a placement test was required but that they did not take it (only 4 percent of respondents) gave the highest scores on four of the five benchmarks.

Figure 11. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 6

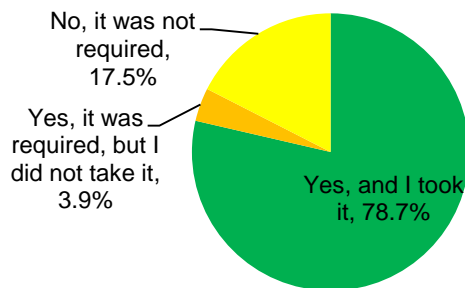
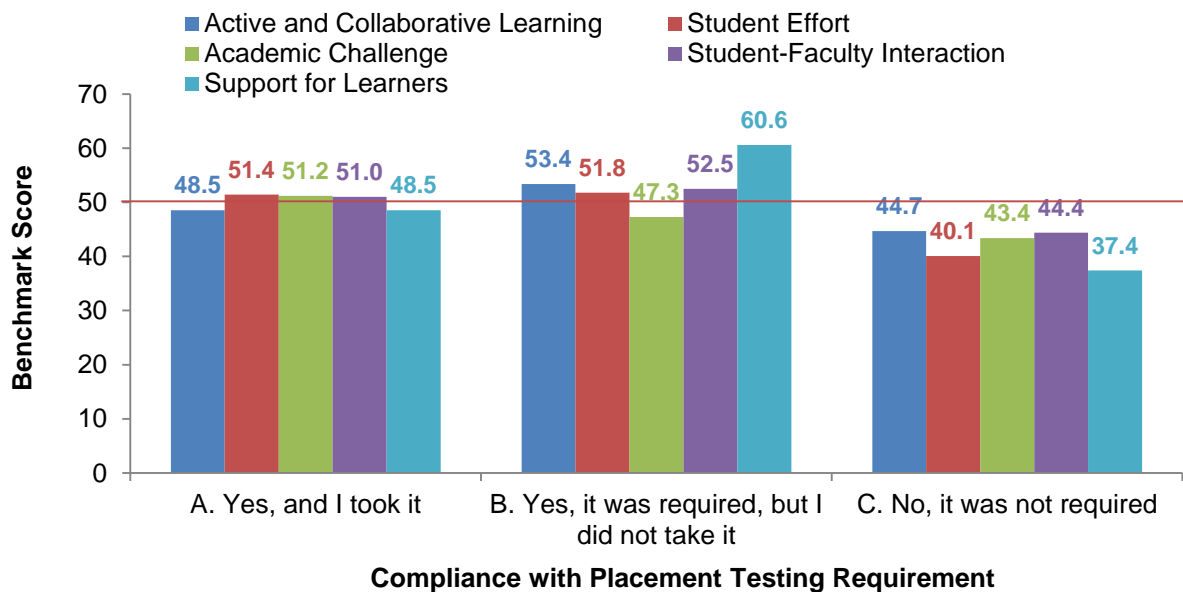


Figure 12. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 6



CCSSE Special Focus Item 7: Awareness of Placement Testing

I became aware that I was required to take a placement test (ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.) at this college...

- A. More than a month before taking the test
- B. About 1 to 4 weeks before taking the test
- C. About 1 to 6 days before taking the test
- D. The same day I took the test
- E. N.A., I did not take a placement test

Half of the respondents reported that they learned of NOVA's placement testing requirement more than a month prior to taking the test. Scores for this item were relatively close (within a 4 to 6 point range) for all benchmarks, with the exception of scores for students who did not take a placement test.

Figure 13. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 7

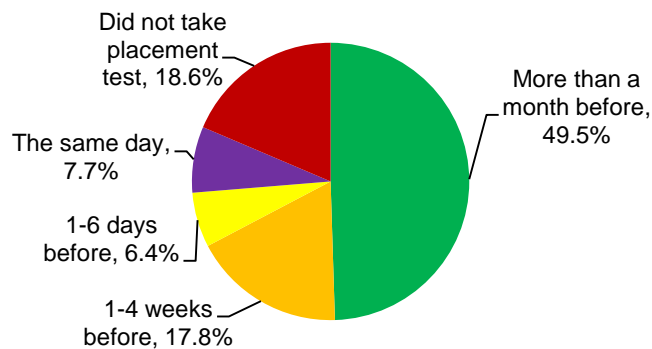
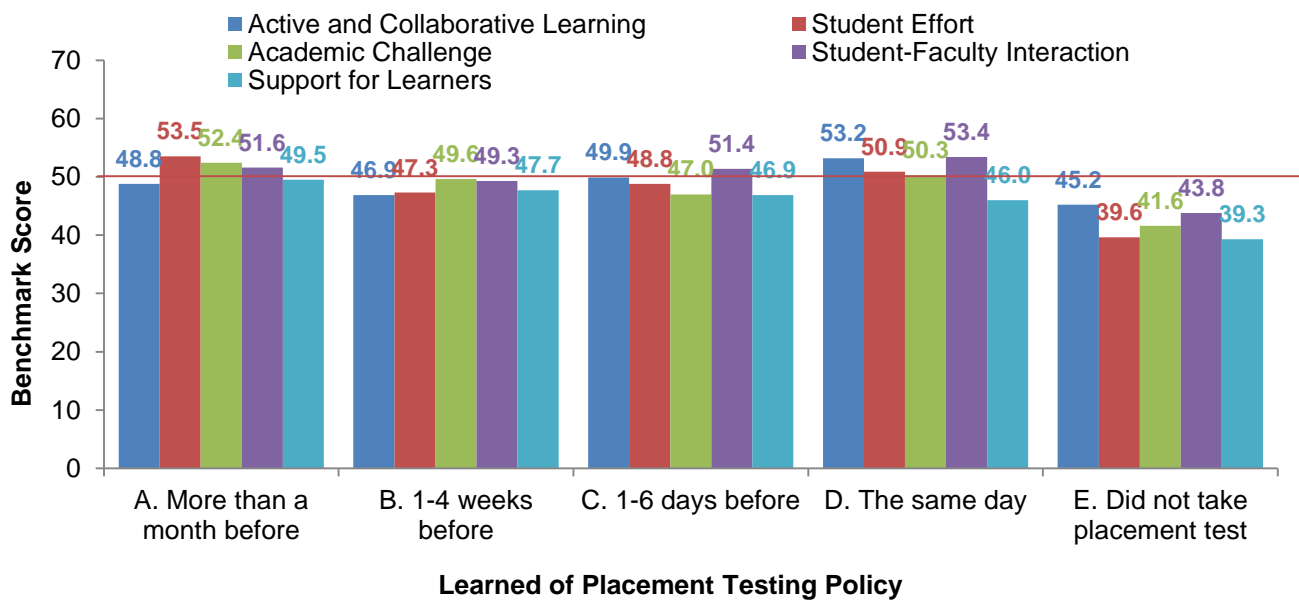


Figure 14. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 7



CCSSE Special Focus Item 8: Placement Testing in High School

While I was in high school, I completed this college's placement test (ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.) to assess my academic skills in reading, writing, and/or math.

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. I don't remember

The majority of students (57 percent) reported that they did not take their developmental placement tests in high school. In general, student engagement scores were close to the national average (within 6 points over or under) for all benchmarks on this item, regardless of the response.

Figure 15. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 8

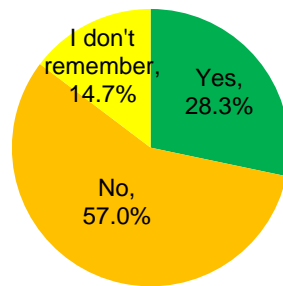
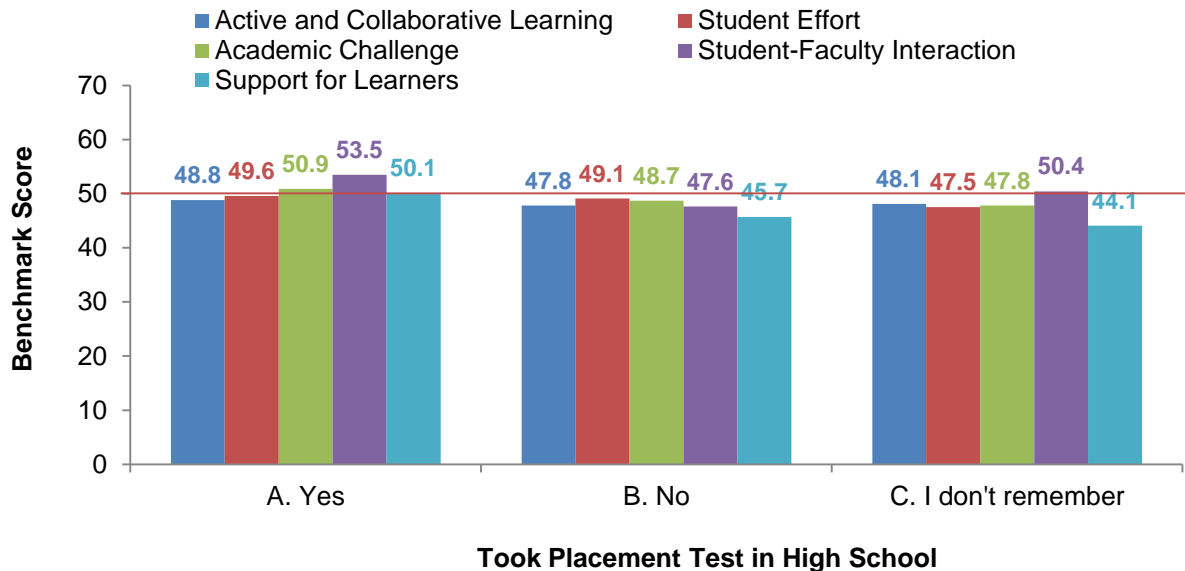


Figure 16. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 8



CCSSE Special Focus Item 9: Preparation for Placement Test

Before enrolling at this college, I prepared for this college's placement test (ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, etc.) in the following way:

- A. On my own using online or printed materials provided by the college
- B. Participating in a brief (8 hours or less) intensive brush-up/refresher workshop
- C. Participating in a multi-day or multi-week brush-up/refresher program
- D. I did not do anything to prepare for this college's placement test
- E. N.A.; I did not take a placement test

Most students reported that they either did not prepare for their placement tests (47 percent) or that they prepared on their own using online or printed materials provided by NOVA (26 percent). Students who prepared on their own scored higher on all benchmarks than those who did not prepare, and this difference was greatest with respect to the *Student Effort* benchmark, on which students who prepared on their own scored 11 points higher than those who did not prepare.

Figure 17. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 9

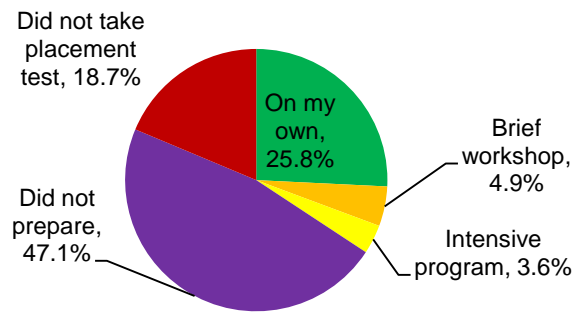
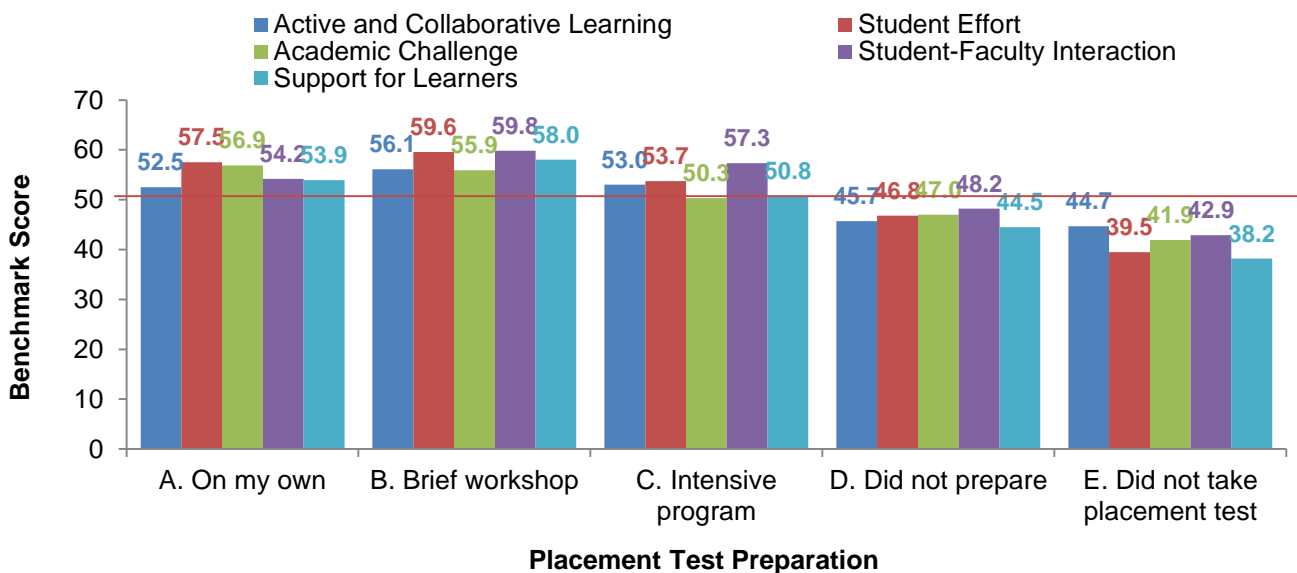


Figure 18. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 9



CCSSE Special Focus Item 10: Placement in Developmental Education

The results of the placement test I took at this college indicated that I needed to take a developmental/basic skills/college prep course...

- A. In more than one academic skill area (reading, writing, and/or math)
- B. In one academic skill area (reading, writing, and/or math)
- C. N.A.; My placement test results did not indicate that I needed to take any of these
- D. N.A.; I did not take a placement test

Students who were placed in at least one developmental course reported higher levels of student engagement across all five benchmarks than those who were not placed or who did not take a placement test. In fact, students who were placed in more than one developmental course (16 percent of respondents) reported the highest scores on all five benchmarks. On *Student Effort* and *Support for Learners* in particular, students who placed in more than one developmental course gave scores 11 to 12 points higher than those who were not placed in a developmental course.

Figure 19. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 10

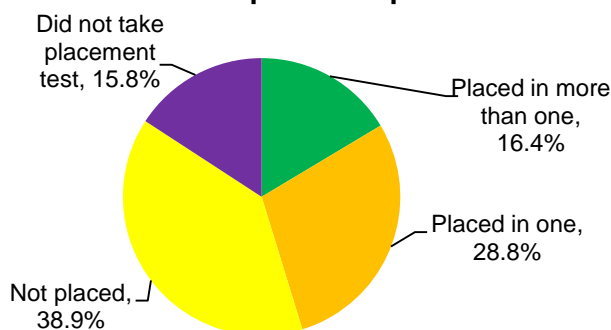
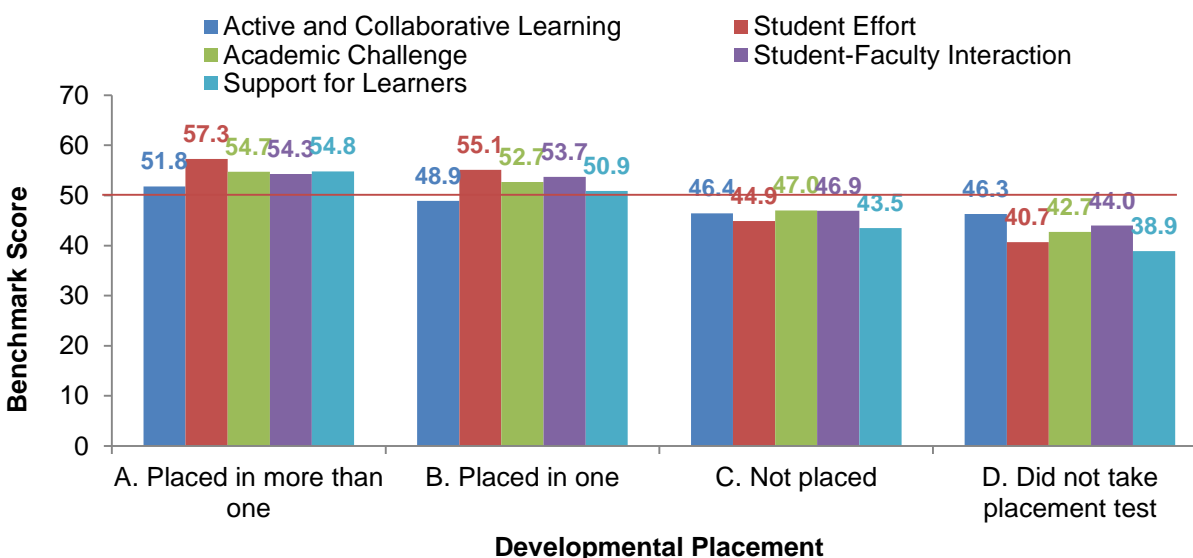


Figure 20. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 10



CCSSE Special Focus Item 11: Requirement of Developmental Courses in First Term

Because my placement test results indicated that I needed to take at least one developmental/basic skills/college prep course, I was...

A. Told that I was required to take more than one of these courses in my first term
 B. Told that I was required to take one of these courses in my first term
 C. Told that I should or could take one of these courses, but I was not required to in my first term
 D. N.A.; My placement test results did not indicate that I needed to take any of these
 E. N.A.: I did not take a placement test

Special Focus Item 11 focused on what students were told after receiving the results of their placement test. In general, students who were told that they were required to take at least one developmental course in their first term scored above the national average on all benchmarks.

Figure 21. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 11

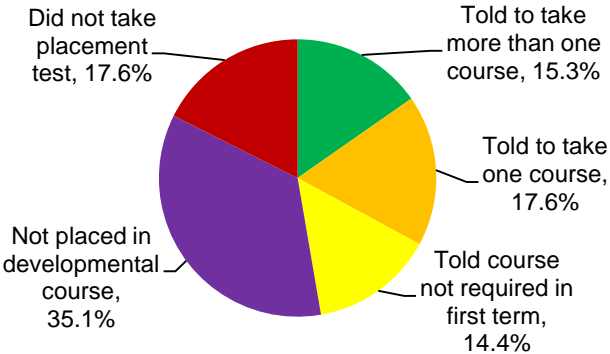
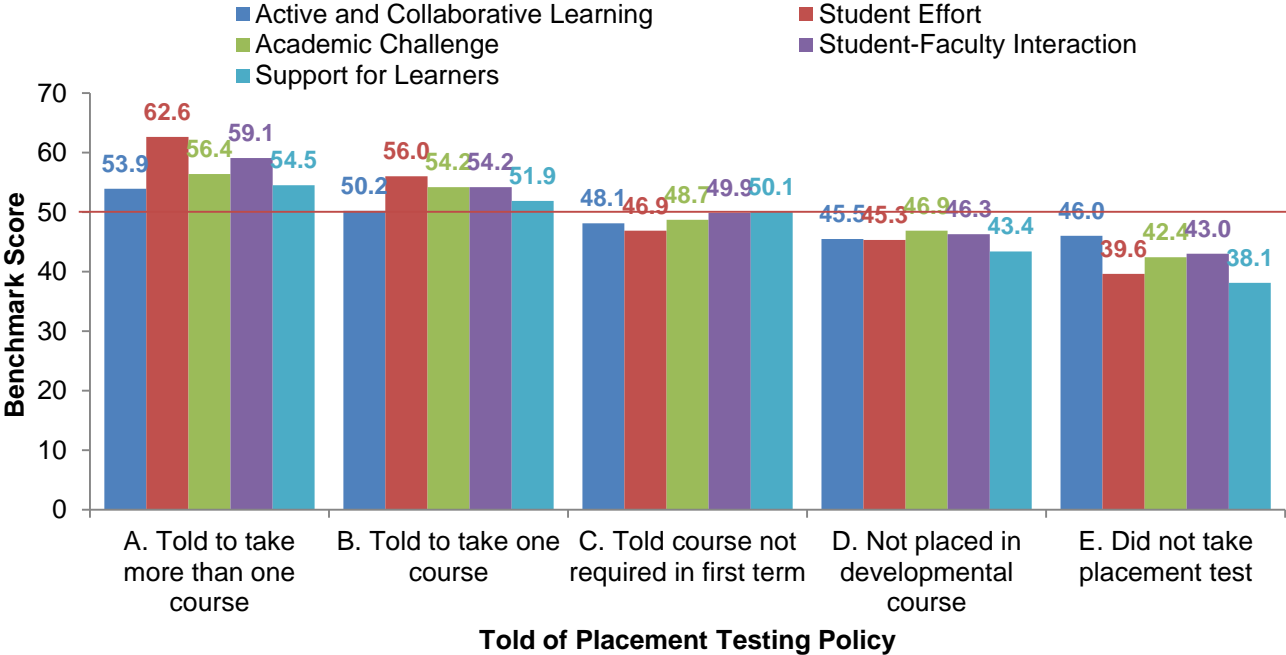


Figure 22. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 11



CCSSE Special Focus Item 12: Enrollment in Developmental Courses in First Term

I was told that I was required to enroll in a developmental/basic skills/college prep course in my first term, and I...

- A. Did enroll in more than one of these courses
- B. Did enroll in one of these courses
- C. Did not enroll in any of these courses
- D. N.A.

Students who enrolled in more than one developmental course after being told they were required to do so (15 percent of respondents) gave higher scores than other students on each benchmark and all scores were above the national average. However, the differences in scores between students who enrolled in only one developmental course and students who did not enroll in any developmental courses were relatively small – between 2 and 6 points – although students who enrolled in one course nonetheless scored higher on all benchmarks.

Figure 23. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 12

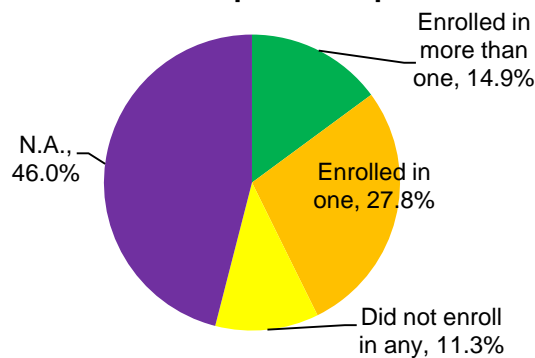
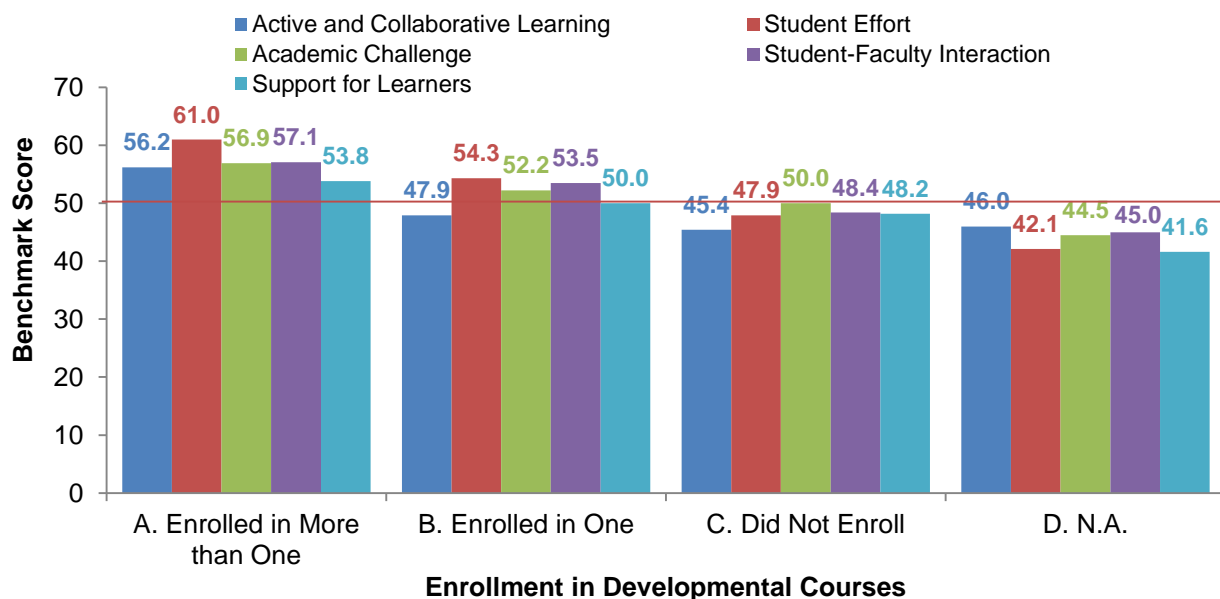


Figure 24. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 12



CCSSE Special Focus Item 13: Appropriate Placement in English Course

I enrolled in the English course indicated by my placement test results, and I felt that the course level was...

- A. Above my skill level at that time
- B. Appropriate for my skill level at that time
- C. Below my skill level at that time
- D. N.A.

Benchmark scores varied little across responses to this question, with the exception of students who selected “N.A.,” who scored lowest on all benchmarks. Scores were also generally close to the national average, regardless of response, although students who reported being placed in an English course below their skill level tended to score slightly lower than those who were placed in an English course at or above their skill level, while those placed above their level scored highest on three of the five benchmarks.

Figure 25. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 13

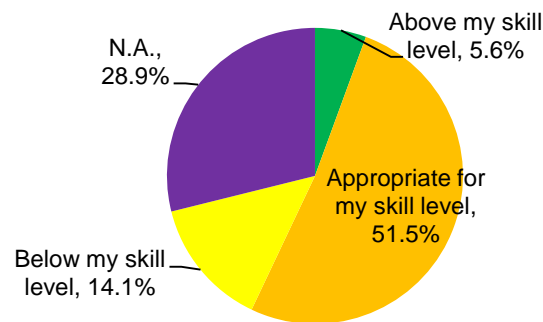
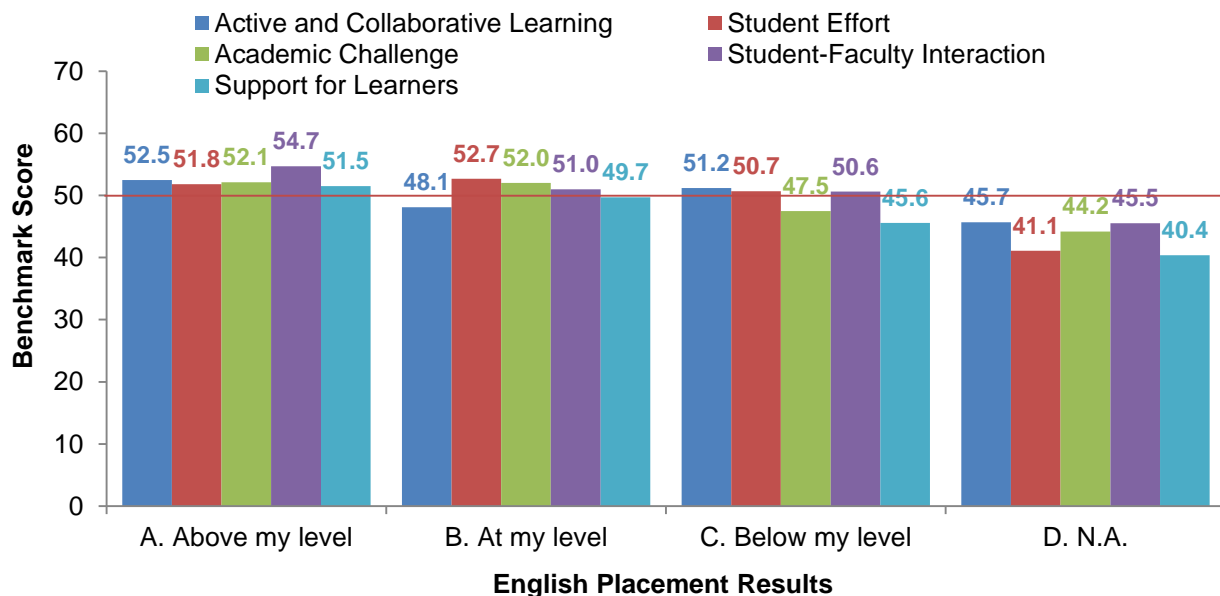


Figure 26. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 13



CCSSE Special Focus Item 14: Appropriate Placement in Math Course

I enrolled in the math course indicated by my placement test results, and I felt that the course level was...

- A. Above my skill level at that time
- B. Appropriate for my skill level at that time
- C. Below my skill level at that time
- D. N.A.

As with English, most students (44 percent) felt that they were placed into an appropriate level math course. However, students were more likely to report that their math class was above their skill level than with the English question (10 percent versus 6 percent). Those students who reported being placed in a math class appropriate for their skill level reported higher scores on *Student Effort*, *Academic Challenge*, and *Support for Learners* than those placed in math courses above or below their skill level.

Figure 27. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 14

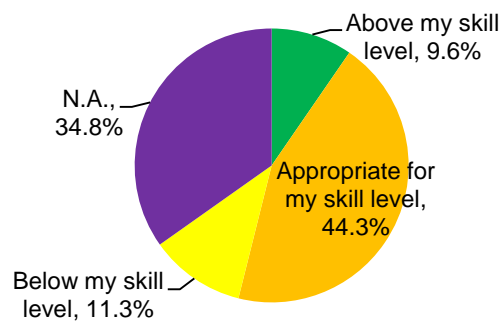
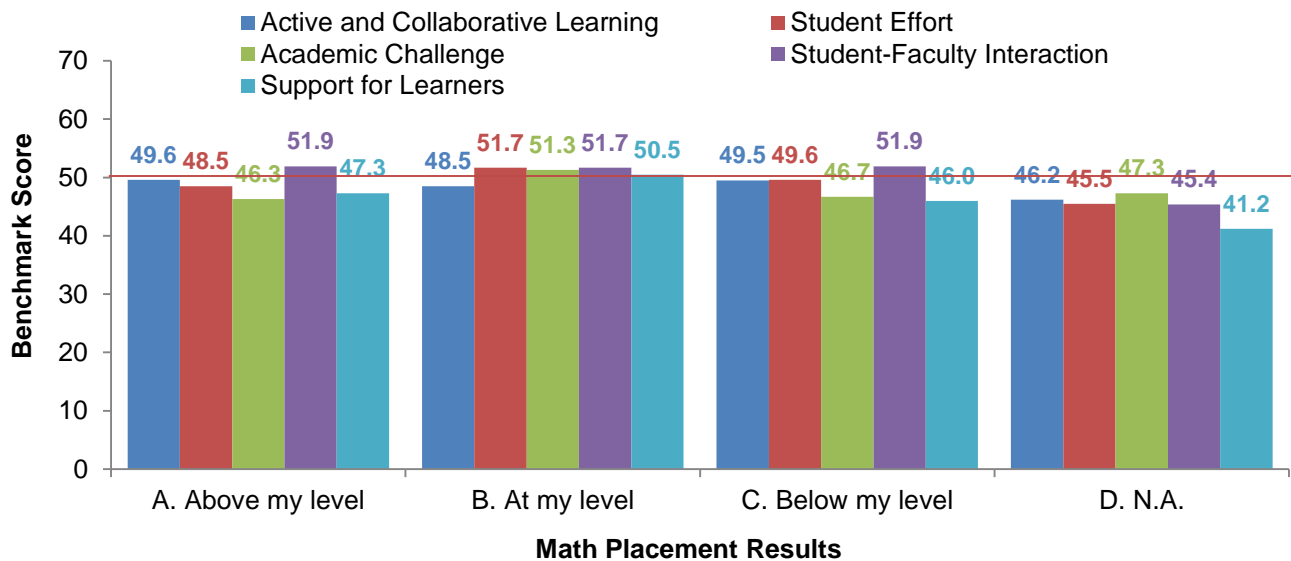


Figure 28. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 14



CCSSE Special Focus Item 15: Advisement on Skill Level of English Course

During the first few class sessions of an English course at this college, my instructor advised me to enroll in a higher or lower level course.

- A. Yes, a higher level
- B. Yes, a lower level
- C. No, I was not advised to enroll in a higher or lower level English course
- D. N.A.; I have not enrolled in an English course at this college

Although the majority of students (61 percent) reported that they were not advised to enroll in either a higher or lower level English course, the relatively small percentage of students (6 percent) who reported that they were advised by their instructor to enroll in a lower level English course consistently gave higher scores on all benchmarks. In particular, students who were advised to enroll in a lower level English course scored 16 points higher on *Support for Learners* than those who were not advised to do so.

Figure 29. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 15

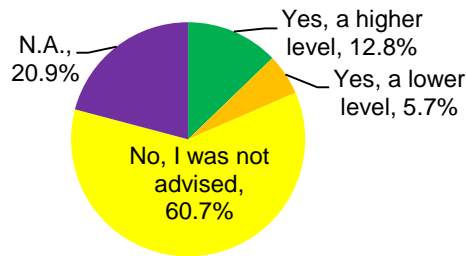
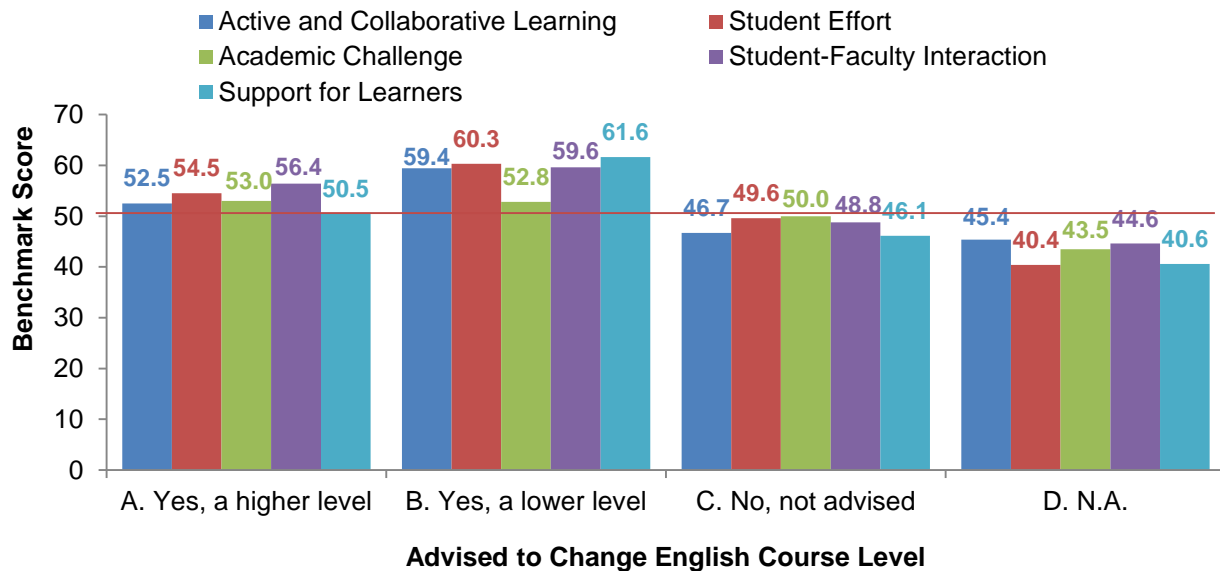


Figure 30. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 15



CCSSE Special Focus Item 16: Advisement on Skill Level of Math Course

During the first few class sessions of a math course at this college, my instructor advised me to enroll in a higher or lower level course.

- A. Yes, a higher level
- B. Yes, a lower level
- C. No, I was not advised to enroll in a higher or lower level math course
- D. N.A.: I have not enrolled in an math course at this college

As with English, most students were not advised to enroll in a math class at either a higher or lower level. However, the 8 percent of students who were advised to enroll in a higher level math course scored 11 points higher on *Student-Faculty Interaction* than those who were not advised. The 7 percent of students who were advised to enroll in a lower level math course scored 12 points higher on *Support for Learners*.

Figure 31. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 16

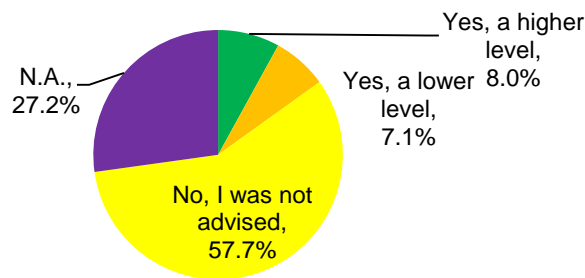
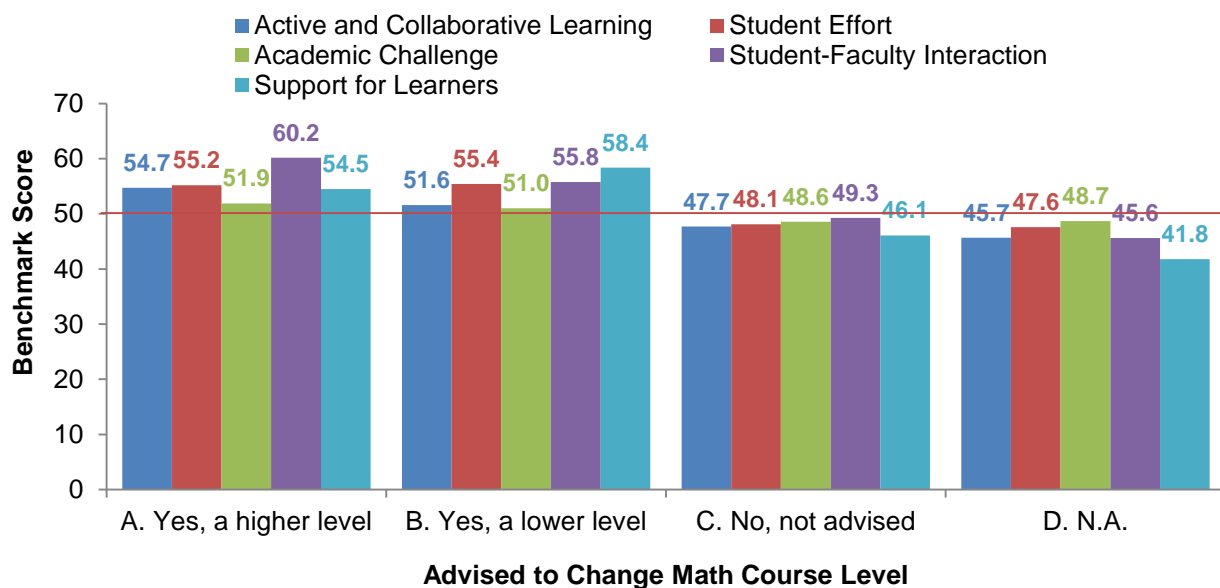


Figure 32. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 16



CCSSE Special Focus Item 17: Concurrent Enrollment in College-Level and Developmental English

While at this college, I have enrolled in a college-level English course and a developmental English (reading/writing) course during the same academic term.
 A. Yes
 B. No

Although the majority of students (77 percent) reported that they had not enrolled in both a college-level and a developmental English course during the same term, those who did consistently gave higher scores on each benchmark than students who reported that they had not, with differences between the two groups ranging from 6 to 12 points. In particular, students enrolled in both college-level and developmental English scored 12 points higher on **Student Effort** than those who did not.

Figure 33. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 17

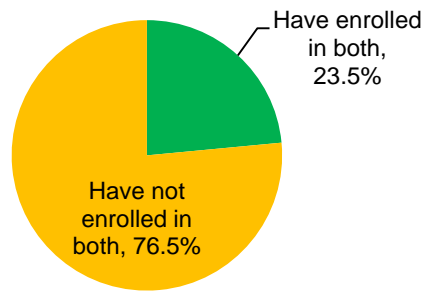
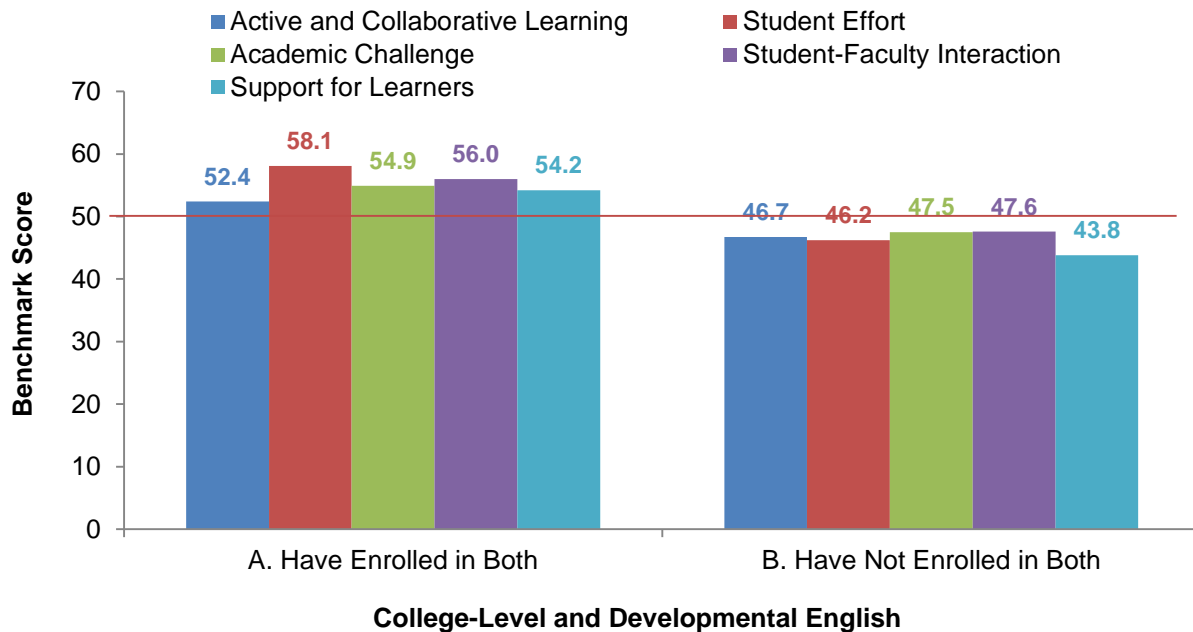


Figure 34. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 17



CCSSE Special Focus Item 18: Concurrent Enrollment in College-Level and Developmental Math

While at this college, I have enrolled in a college-level math course and a developmental math course during the same academic term.

- A. Yes
- B. No

As with the previous question on English, the majority of students (85 percent) had not enrolled in both a college-level and a developmental math course during the same term, although those who did so consistently gave higher scores on each benchmark than those who had not. For *Student Effort*, *Student-Faculty Interaction*, and *Support for Learners*, these students scored 11 to 12 points higher than students who had not enrolled in both courses in the same term.

Figure 35. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 18

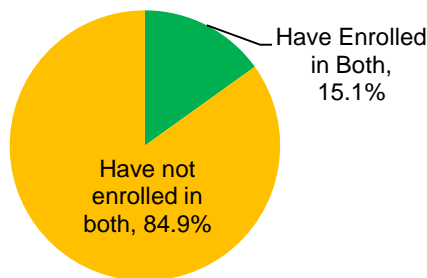
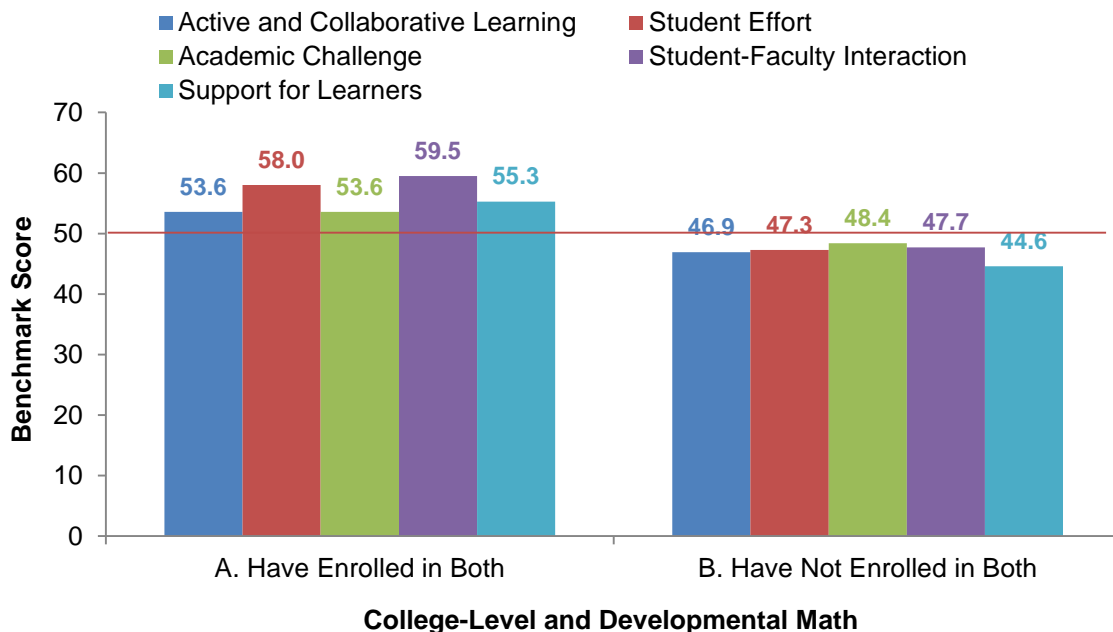


Figure 36. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 18



CCSSE Special Focus Item 19: Computer-Based Instruction in On-Campus Developmental Math Course

While at this college, I have enrolled in an on-campus developmental math course that uses computer-based instruction.
 A. Yes
 B. No

Students who reported having had enrolled in an on-campus developmental math course that used computer-based instruction (25 percent of respondents) scored 3 to 10 points higher on each benchmark than those who had not. Students who had received computer-based instruction in a developmental math course scored highest on the **Student Effort** benchmark, while students who had not received this instruction scored highest on **Academic Challenge**.

Figure 37. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 19

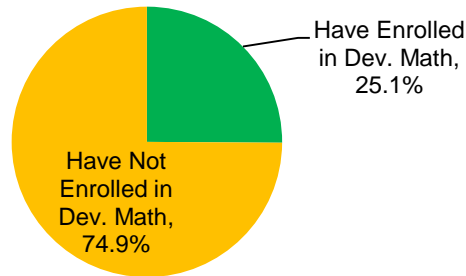
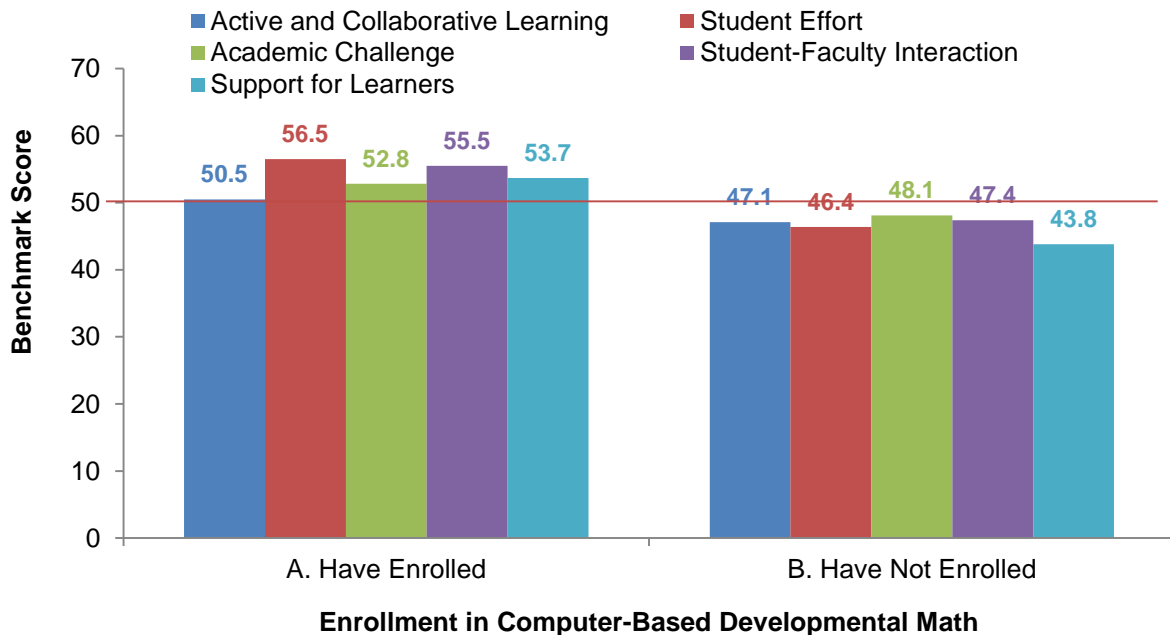


Figure 38. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 19



CCSSE Special Focus Item 20: High School GPA

In what range was your overall high school grade point average (GPA)?

- A. A
- B. B
- C. C
- D. D or lower

The final Special Focus Item asked students about their overall high school GPA. Students who reported a high school GPA in the A range scored higher than other students in three benchmarks: *Active and Collaborative Learning*, *Student Effort*, and *Academic Challenge*. However, students with a D or lower high school GPA reported higher scores than other students in *Student-Faculty Interaction*. The lowest scores for each benchmark were given by students who reported having a high school GPA in the C range, and all scores from those students were below the national average.

Figure 39. Breakdown of Responses: Special Focus Item 20

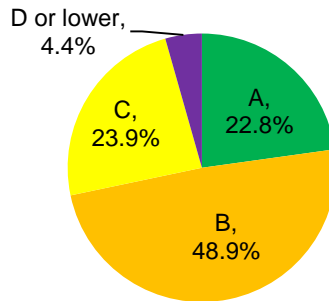
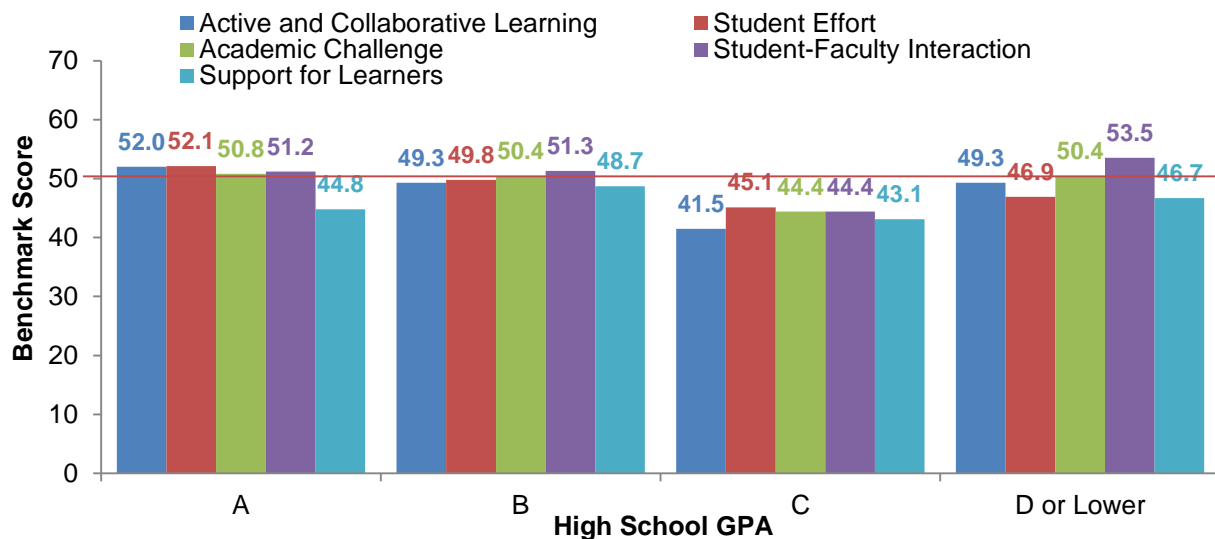


Figure 40. Benchmark Scores by Item Response: Special Focus Item 20



NOVA Mission and Strategic Goals: 2005 – 2015

Mission

With commitment to the values of access, opportunity, student success, and excellence, the mission of Northern Virginia Community College is to deliver world-class in-person and online post-secondary teaching, learning, and workforce development to ensure our region and the Commonwealth of Virginia have an educated population and globally competitive workforce.

Strategic Goals

- I. **STUDENT SUCCESS** – Northern Virginia Community College will move into the top tier of community colleges with respect to the college readiness, developmental course completion, retention, graduation, transfer, and career placement of its students.
- II. **ACCESS** – Northern Virginia Community College will increase the number and diversity of students being served to mirror the population growth of the region.
- III. **TEACHING AND LEARNING** – Northern Virginia Community College will focus on student success by creating an environment of world-class teaching and learning.
- IV. **EXCELLENCE** – Northern Virginia Community College will develop ten focal points of excellence in its educational programs and services that will be benchmarked to the best in the nation and strategic to building the College's overall reputation for quality.
- V. **LEADERSHIP** – Northern Virginia Community College will serve as a catalyst and a leader in developing educational and economic opportunities for all Northern Virginians and in maintaining the quality of life and economic competitiveness of the region.
- VI. **PARTNERSHIPS** – Northern Virginia Community College will develop strategic partnerships to create gateways of opportunity and an integrated educational system for Northern Virginians who are pursuing the American Dream.
- VII. **RESOURCES** – Northern Virginia Community College will increase its annual funding by \$100 million and expand its physical facilities by more than one million square feet in new and renovated space. This includes the establishment of two additional campuses at epicenters of the region's population growth, as well as additional education and training facilities in or near established population centers.
- VIII. **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS** – Northern Virginia Community College will be recognized as a leader among institutions of higher education in Virginia for its development and testing of emergency response and continuity of operation plans.

NOVA

**Northern Virginia
Community College**

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