

# RESEARCH BRIEF

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## What Are CCSSE, CCFSSSE, and SENSE?

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- CCSSE, CCFSSSE, and SENSE are all survey products of the Center for Community College Student Engagement:<sup>1</sup>
  - **Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)** is an assessment tool that helps institutions focus on good educational practices and identify areas in which they can improve their programs and services for students. The survey is comprised of items that assess institutional practices and student behaviors that are highly correlated with student learning and retention.<sup>2</sup>
  - **Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSSE)** is a companion survey to the CCSSE. CCFSSSE measures faculty teaching practices, professional activities, and perceptions of their students' college experiences.<sup>3</sup>
  - **Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE)** is a complementary assessment tool to CCSSE. SENSE focuses on understanding the earliest experiences (academic and services-related) of entering students and discovering why some entering students succeed and others do not.<sup>4</sup>

### Who Participates in CCSSE, CCFSSSE, and SENSE?

- **CCSSE:** The 2017 administration of CCSSE includes 297 institutions from 40 states and one Canadian province. CCSSE participants between 2002 and 2015 represent over 80 percent of the nation's public community colleges and 86 percent of the national community college student population.
  - NOVA participated in CCSSE in 2004, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2015, and 2017.
- **CCFSSSE:** Participation in CCFSSSE is limited to institutions participating in CCSSE during the same year. In the 2017 administration of CCFSSSE, 86 colleges participated from 27 states.
  - NOVA participated in CCFSSSE in 2008, 2011, 2015, and 2017.
- **SENSE:** The 2016 SENSE cohort (a three-year cohort spanning 2014 through 2016) includes 266 institutions from 39 states and the District of Columbia.
  - NOVA participated in SENSE in 2009, 2010, 2012, 2015, and 2017.

<sup>1</sup> The Center for Community College Student Engagement is part of the Program for Higher Education Leadership in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy at The University of Texas at Austin. <http://www.ccsse.org/center/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ccsse.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ccsse.org/CCFSSSE/CCFSSSE.cfm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ccsse.org/sense/>

## Why Should NOVA Participate in These Surveys?

Community colleges must respond to expectations of quality, performance, and accountability set by governing boards, state and federal governments, accrediting organizations, and the public. Key among those expectations is that colleges should emphasize assessment and improve student retention and learning. CCSSE, CCFSSSE, and SENSE each help NOVA meet this need. SENSE, in particular, offers a tool for assessing NOVA's Quality Enhancement Program, GPS for Success. The surveys have many uses:

1. **Analyzing:** generating reports to assess college performance.
2. **Benchmarking:** comparing performance of community and technical colleges to national norms. The Center has established national benchmarks for assessing institutional performance:

CCSSE Benchmarks	SENSE Benchmarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Active and Collaborative Learning</li><li>➤ Student Effort</li><li>➤ Academic Challenge</li><li>➤ Student-Faculty Interaction</li><li>➤ Support for Learners</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Early Connections</li><li>➤ High Expectations and Aspirations</li><li>➤ Clear Academic Plan and Pathway</li><li>➤ Effective Track to College Readiness</li><li>➤ Engaged Learning</li><li>➤ Academic and Social Support Network</li></ul>

3. **Diagnosing:** identifying areas in which the college can focus improvement efforts by disaggregating results to explore differences among student groups (e.g., male vs. female, developmental vs. non-developmental, full-time vs. part-time, etc.).
4. **Monitoring:** documenting and improving institutional effectiveness over time.
5. **Responding:** using results to demonstrate accountability to the college community and accrediting agencies.

## How Are CCSSE, CCFSSSE, and SENSE Administered at NOVA?

- The sampling unit is a class of students, and the principal objective is a random selection of students. CCSSE and SENSE are administered as a pencil-and-paper survey to be completed in one 50-minute class period. CCFSSSE is administered online.
- Administration windows and sample populations vary by survey:
  - **CCSSE:** CCSSE is administered during the spring academic term (February through May). The sample population includes for-credit courses in the spring semester.<sup>5</sup>
  - **CCFSSSE:** CCFSSSE is administered concurrently with CCSSE. All faculty teaching CCSSE-eligible classes are invited to participate.
  - **SENSE:** SENSE is administered during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> weeks of the fall academic term (September). The sample population includes:<sup>6</sup>
    - All developmental reading, writing, and math
    - First college-level English and first college-level math
    - Student success, college skills, first-year experience, freshman seminar, and/or orientation courses

<sup>5</sup> Sample population excludes non-credit courses, dual-enrollment, distance learning, practicums, clinics and internships, lowest-level ESL, lab sections associated with a lecture, individual instruction, and independent study.

<sup>6</sup> Sample population excludes ESL courses, courses offered to incarcerated populations, courses with > 49% high school students, labs associated with lectures, and multiple courses per cohort, co-requisite, learning community, or stacked course section pairs.

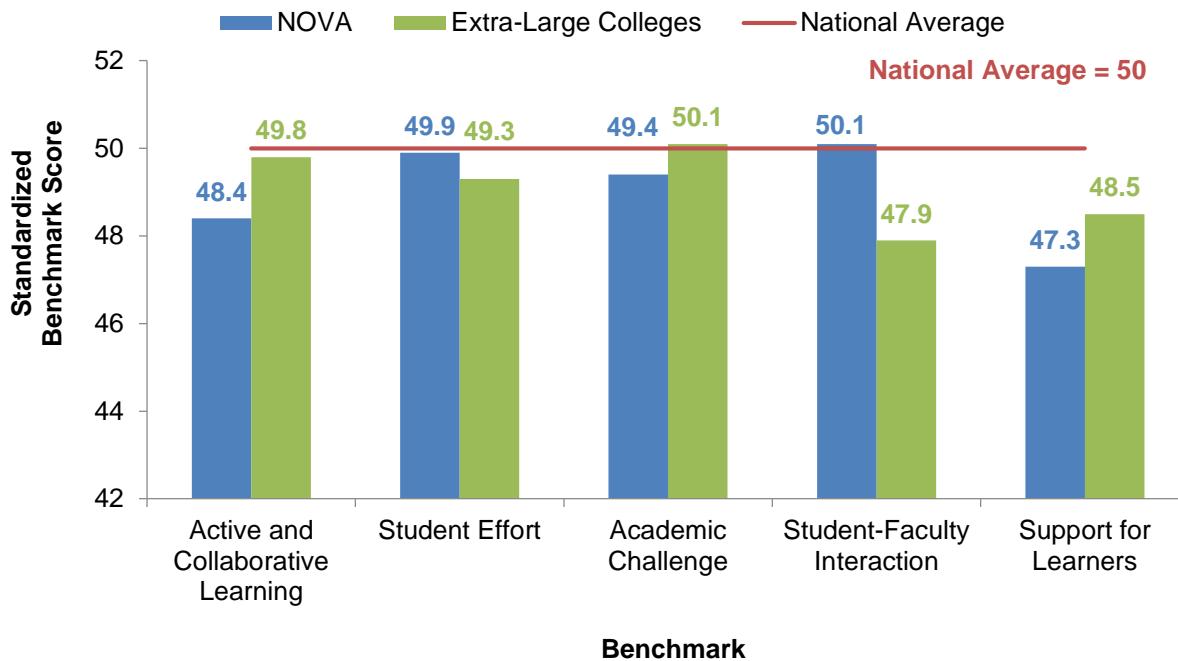
## Other FAQs

- **What are the CCSSE/SENSE special-focus items?** The special-focus items are a set of items that are added to the surveys. Each year in the CCSSE survey, a different topic is selected for the special item set. In 2017, the CCSSE topic was *Academic Advising and Planning*. SENSE allows colleges to add up to two special-focus modules to their survey, chosen from the Center's list of modules.
- **Approximately how many classes were included in the NOVA sample?** The average number of classes sampled is based on institution size.
  - Enrollment: 22,000+ students
  - Target sample size: 1,500 students
  - Average number of classes: 95-100 (CCSSE); 115 (SENSE)
- **Do students have to participate?** The surveys are entirely voluntary for students. The survey administration script states that students can opt out of completing the survey, and can stop their survey participation at any time.
- **If instructors have multiple classes chosen, can one of the classes be omitted from the sample?** Sampling rules state that if instructors have multiple classes chosen, they cannot omit any of those classes from the sample as this may affect the random sampling of the student body. It is the students in the class, rather than the class itself, that is being sampled.

## Most Recent Results on Benchmarks

- **CCSSE:** NOVA's scores on each benchmark were not significantly different from the national average (50) and were within three points of other extra-large colleges.

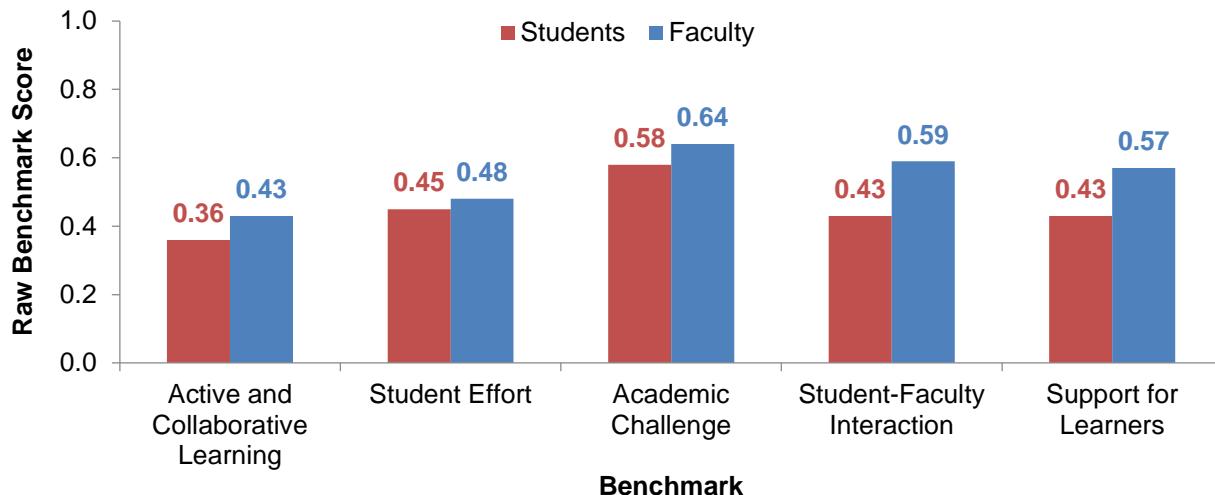
**Figure 1. CCSSE 2015 Benchmark Summary: NOVA vs. Extra-Large Colleges**



Note: Results are standardized so that the average of all participating students is 50 and the standard deviation is 25. Sample size: 1,588 students.

- **CCSSE/CCFSSE Comparison:** Faculty scores were higher than student scores on all benchmarks, most evidently for *Student-Faculty Interaction*. This suggests faculty perceived students to be more engaged than students believed themselves to be.

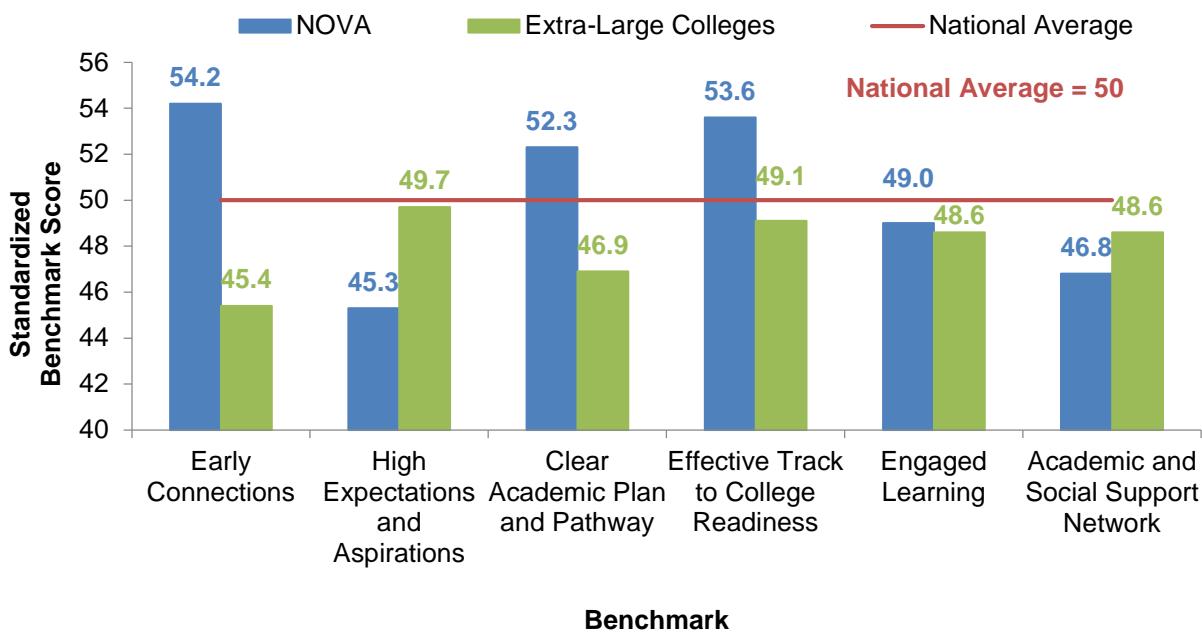
**Figure 2. CCSSE 2015 and CCFSSE 2015 Comparison of Faculty and Student Responses on the Five Benchmarks of Student Engagement**



Note: Raw scores were transformed to make the scale uniform on a 0-1 scale, with 0 being the lowest and 1 being the highest rating of engagement. The scores in this figure present NOVA's raw scores and are not standardized so that the national average is 50. Sample size: 285 faculty; 1,588 students.

- **SENSE:** For three of the six benchmarks – *Early Connections*, *Clear Academic Plan and Pathway*, and *Effective Track to College Readiness* – NOVA scored above the national average (50.0).

**Figure 3. SENSE 2015 Benchmark Summary: NOVA vs. Extra-Large Colleges**



Note: Results are standardized so that the average of all participating students is 50 and the standard deviation is 25. Sample size: 963 students.