

RESEARCH BRIEF

**Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) 2017:
Benchmark Scores by Student Characteristics**

The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) is an annual nation-wide survey conducted by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCSSE) in Austin, Texas. The goal of the survey is to explore institutional practices and new students' experiences in the earliest weeks of college. The information collected helps colleges better understand students' early college experiences, assist in identifying early obstacles to student progress, and improve practices in ways that can increase student success in the first year of college.

The survey is comprised of six **Benchmarks of Effective Practice with Entering Students**. These benchmarks are sets of conceptually related survey items that are grouped together to serve as yardsticks to measure performance on various domains of early student engagement.

The six benchmarks are as follows:

1. Early Connections
2. High Expectations and Aspirations
3. Clear Academic Plan and Pathway
4. Effective Track to College Readiness
5. Engaged Learning
6. Academic and Social Support Network

In This Brief

This Brief presents NOVA's performance on each benchmark from the 2017 administration of SENSE, which was administered to students during the fourth and fifth weeks of class during the Fall 2016 semester, by selected student characteristics. For each of the six benchmarks, scores are disaggregated by: age, gender, race/ethnicity, enrollment status, first generation status, and developmental course enrollment status.

All benchmark scores are on a standardized scale where the average of the 2017 cohort of participating institutions (referred to as the National Average) is set equal to 50.

At NOVA, **1,721 students** participated in the SENSE survey in Fall 2017.

Summary of Findings

Enrollment Status

- On average, full-time students gave NOVA higher scores than part-time students on five of the six benchmarks, suggesting full-time enrollment is conducive to higher levels of engagement as an entering student.

Gender

- Overall, female students assigned NOVA higher scores than male students on five of the six benchmarks of entering student engagement.
- In particular, on the Engaged Learning and High Expectations and Aspirations benchmarks, female students gave NOVA a score that was five points higher than that given by male students. This suggests female students may be more engaged academically at NOVA.

Age Group

- Students of the traditional college age (ages 18-24) rated NOVA higher on only one benchmark: Early Connections. However, only a small number of non-traditional students responded to the survey so the reader should interpret results with caution.

First Generation Status

- First generation students rated NOVA higher on two benchmarks: Effective Track to College Readiness and Engaged Learning.
- Conversely, continuing generation students rated NOVA higher on four benchmarks: Early Connections; High Expectations and Aspirations; Clear Academic Plan and Pathway; and Academic and Social Support Network. This suggests continuing generation students have higher levels of engagement during the first year of navigating the college experience.

Race/Ethnicity

- Overall, black students rated NOVA the highest on four of the six benchmarks, while white students rated NOVA the lowest on three of the six benchmarks.
- Asian students and white students rated Early Connections the highest of the six benchmarks.
- Black students and Hispanic students rated Effective Track to College Readiness the highest of the six benchmarks. Black students rated Academic and Social Support Network the lowest, while Hispanic students rated High Expectations and Aspirations the lowest.

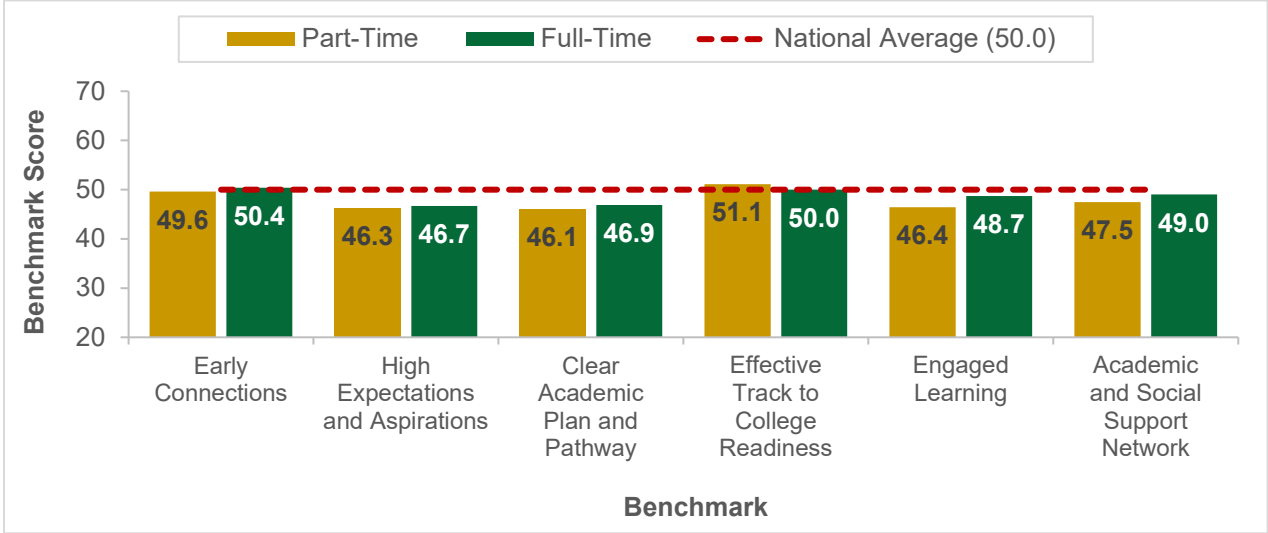
Developmental Course Enrollment Status

- Compared to non-developmental students, developmental students scored higher on five out of six benchmarks, suggesting developmental coursework may help students feel more engaged during the critical first few weeks of college.

Enrollment Status

Compared to part-time students, full-time students rated NOVA higher on five out of six benchmarks: Early Connections; High Expectations and Aspirations; Clear Academic Plan and Pathway; Engaged Learning; and Academic and Social Support Network. Part-time students rated NOVA higher on Effective Track to College Readiness.

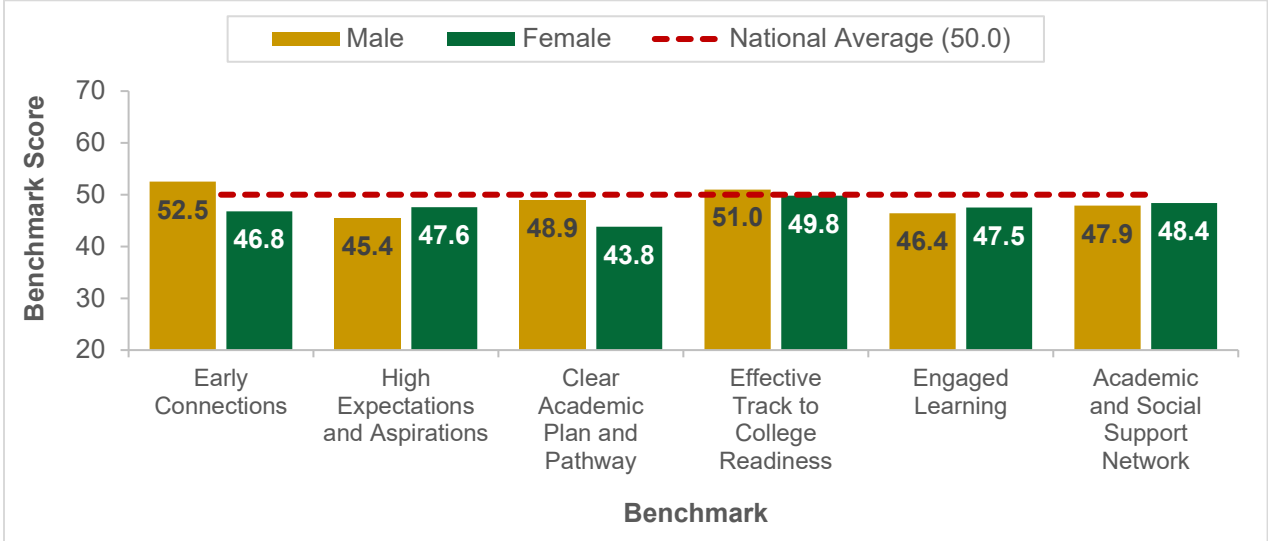
Figure 1. SENSE Benchmark Scores by Enrollment Status: Fall 2017



Gender

Male students rated NOVA higher on the following three benchmarks: Early Connections; Clear Academic Plan and Pathway; and Effective Track to College Readiness. Conversely, female students rated NOVA higher on the following three benchmarks: High Expectations and Aspirations; Engaged Learning; and Academic and Social Support Network.

Figure 2. SENSE Benchmark Scores by Gender: Fall 2017

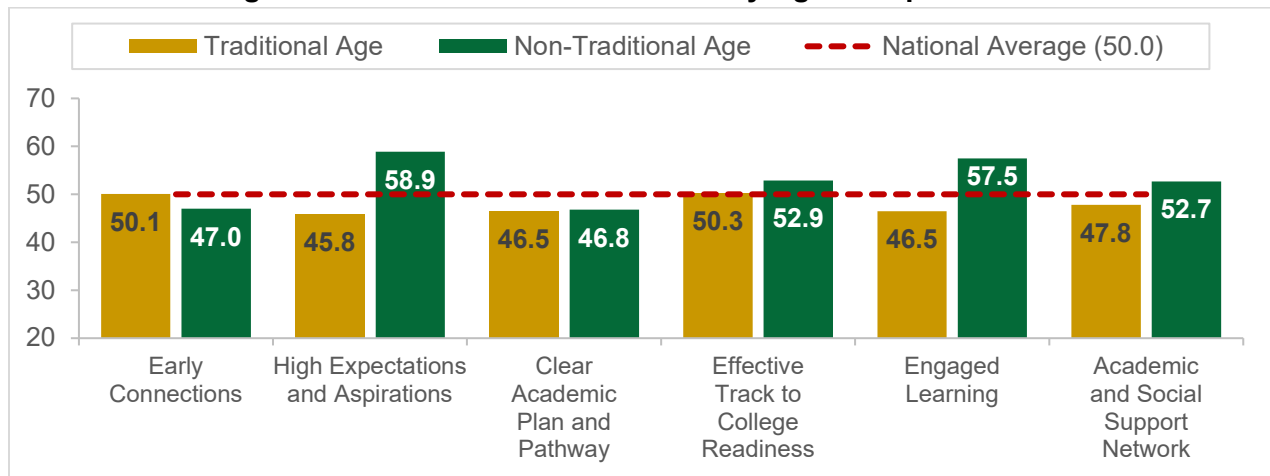


Age Group

SENSE classifies students aged 18-24 as “traditional age” and students aged 25 or older as “non-traditional age.” Only a small number of students from the sample were of a non-traditional age, so the reader should interpret results with caution.

Compared to traditional age students, non-traditional age students scored higher on five out of six benchmarks: High Expectations and Aspirations; Clear Academic Plan and Pathway; Effective Track to College Readiness; Engaged Learning; and Academic and Social Support Network.

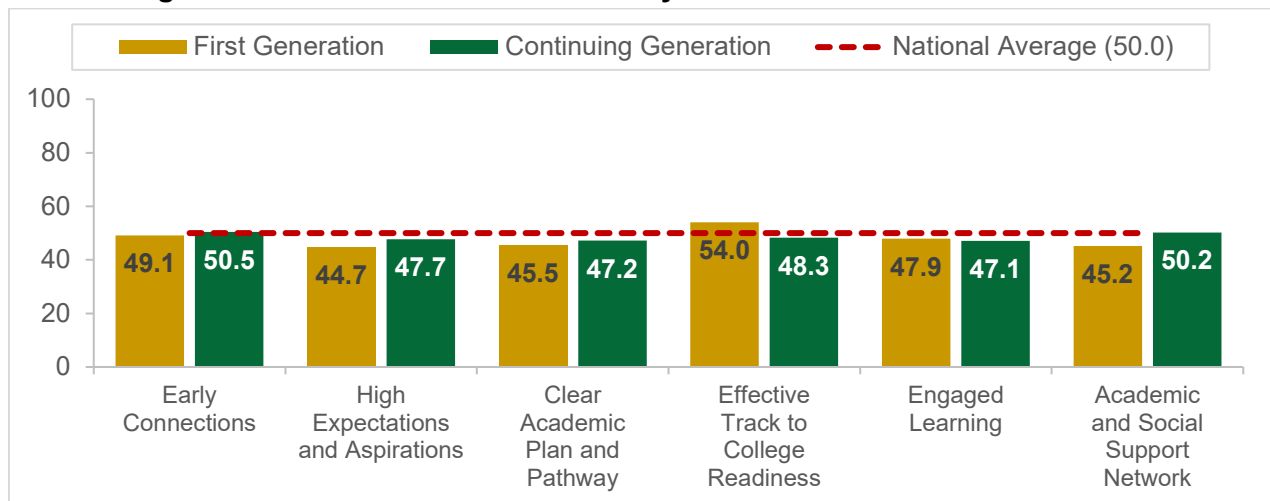
Figure 3. SENSE Benchmark Scores by Age Group: Fall 2017



First Generation Status

First generation students rated NOVA higher on the following two benchmarks: Effective Track to College Readiness; and Engaged Learning. Conversely, continuing generation students rated NOVA higher on the following four benchmarks: Early Connections; High Expectations and Aspirations; Clear Academic Plan and Pathway; and Academic and Social Support Network.

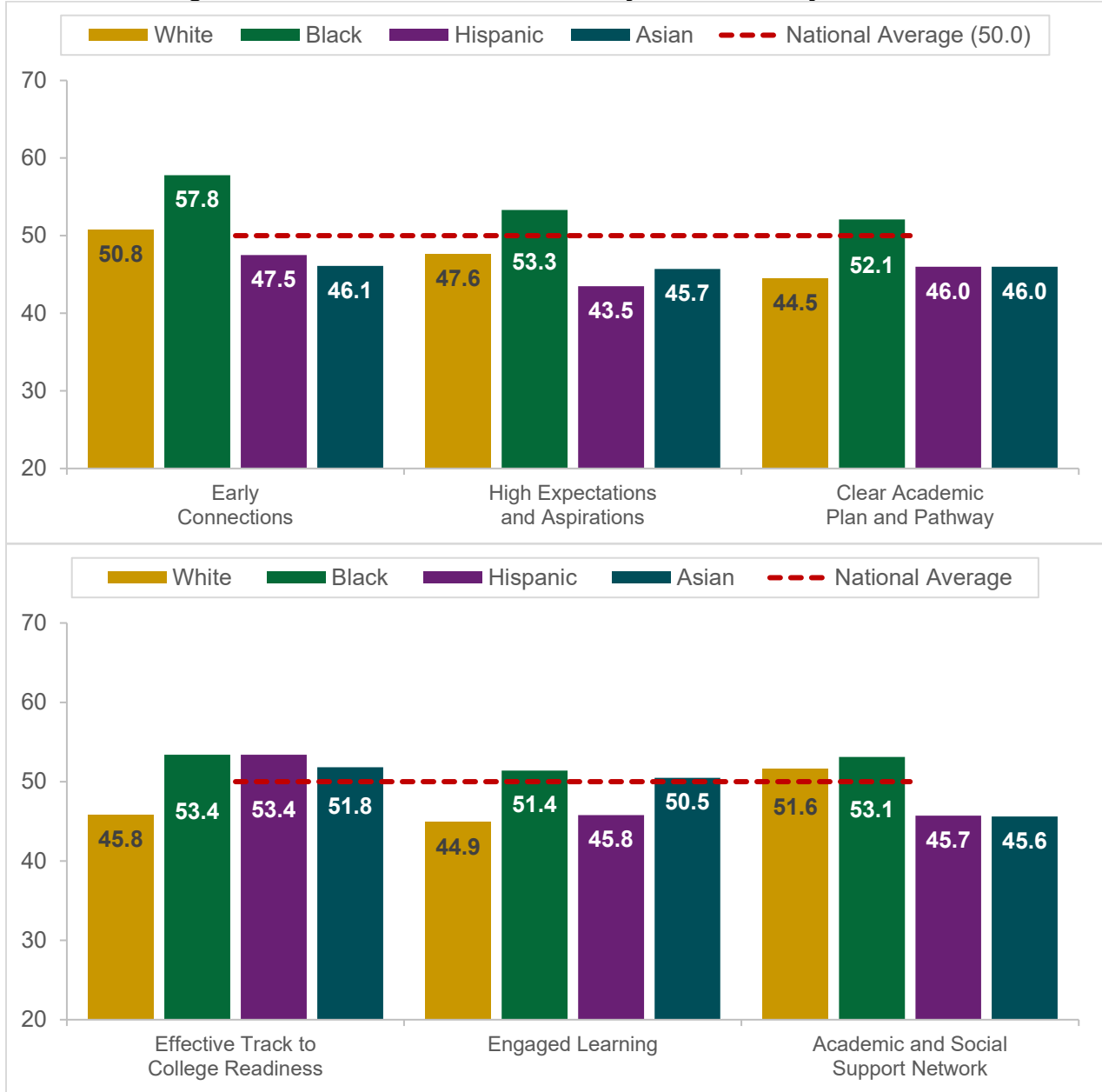
Figure 5. SENSE Benchmark Scores by First Generation Status: Fall 2017



Race/Gender

Black students rated NOVA the highest on all six benchmarks of early student engagement. Conversely, Asian and Hispanic students rated NOVA the lowest on most benchmarks.

Figure 4. SENSE Benchmark Scores by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2017



Developmental Course Enrollment Status

Compared to non-developmental students, developmental students scored higher on five out of six benchmarks: Early Connections; High Expectations and Aspirations; Clear Academic Plan and Pathway; Effective Track to College Readiness; and Engaged Learning.

Figure 6. SENSE Benchmark Scores by Developmental Course Enrollment Status: Fall 2017

