The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE):
Summary of 2008 Survey Results

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Introduction

This brief report summarizes the results of the 2008 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) for Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA). CCSSE is designed to capture student engagement as a means of institutional quality and provide community colleges with useful information for improving student learning and persistence. The survey provides information on students’ levels of engagement in five benchmarks of effective educational practices in community colleges identified by CCSSE.

NOVA participated in the survey in 2004, 2005, and 2008. This report presents the 2008 results and consists of two sections. Section I presents NOVA’s results by each benchmark for the three years NOVA participated in the survey. It also compares NOVA’s 2008 results with those of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) Consortium1 and with those of the 2008 CCSSE cohort2. Section II compares NOVA’s 2008 results with those of three area colleges that participated in the 2008 survey.

The five benchmarks identified by CCSSE and addressed in this report are:

1) Active and Collaborative Learning
2) Student Effort
3) Academic Challenge
4) Student-Faculty Interaction
5) Support for Learners

These benchmarks allow institutions to monitor students’ experiences in those areas and compare their results with other institutions. Each college participating in the survey receives a score for each benchmark. Individual benchmark scores are an average of the scores on survey items that comprise that benchmark3. Benchmark scores are standardized so that the average of all participating students (CCSSE cohort) is always 50. This allows colleges to determine if their performance for a benchmark is above or below the average.

NOVA focuses on providing access to higher education, fostering student success, and being a leader in higher education. CCSSE results assist NOVA in identifying effective educational practices to meet these goals and, in turn, meet the needs of its students.

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1 The VCCS consortium refers to all colleges in the Virginia Community College System that participated in CCSSE in 2008.
2 The 2008 CCSSE cohort refers to all community colleges that participated in CCSSE in 2008.
3 To compensate for disproportionately large numbers of full-time students in the sample, all averages used in the creation of the benchmarks are weighted by full-time and part-time status. Institutions’ benchmark scores are calculated by taking the weighted average of their students’ standardized scores.

Benchmark 1 - Active and Collaborative Learning

The benchmark *Active and Collaborative Learning* states that students learn more when they are actively involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings.

The seven survey items that were used in the calculation of this benchmark are:

- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Made a class presentation
- Worked with other students on projects during class
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
- Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)
- Participated in a community-based project as a part of a regular course
- Discussed ideas from their readings or classes with others outside of class
  (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)

Figure 1 displays survey results for NOVA for the years 2004, 2005, and 2008. As the figure shows, the *Active and Collaborative Learning* benchmark score increased from 46.2 in 2004 to 47.1 in 2008.

**Figure 1. Active and Collaborative Learning - Northern Virginia Community College**

Figure 2 compares the *Active and Collaborative Learning* benchmark score for NOVA students to that of students from the VCCS consortium and the average of 50 for the 2008 CCSSE cohort. As shown in the figure, the *Active and Collaborative Learning* benchmark score for NOVA students was below the average at 47.1, while the benchmark score for the VCCS consortium was 48.6.
Benchmark 2 - Student Effort

The benchmark *Student Effort* states that students’ own behaviors contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will successfully attain their educational goals.

The eight survey items that were used in the calculation of this benchmark are:

- Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
- Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources
- Came to class without completing readings or assignments (*reverse coded*)
- Used peer or other tutoring
- Used skill labs
- Used a computer lab
- Number of books read on their own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment
- Number of hours spent in a typical week preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, or other activities related to their program)

Figure 3 presents survey results for NOVA for the years 2004, 2005, and 2008. As the figure shows, the *Student Effort* benchmark score decreased from 47.9 in 2004 to 46.7 in 2008.
Figure 3. Student Effort - Northern Virginia Community College

![Bar chart showing Student Effort scores for Northern Virginia Community College from 2004, 2005, and 2008.]

Figure 4 compares the Student Effort benchmark score for NOVA students to that of students from the VCCS consortium and the average of 50 for the 2008 CCSSE cohort. As shown in the figure, the Student Effort benchmark score for NOVA students was below the average at 46.7, while the benchmark score for the VCCS consortium was 49.9.

Figure 4. Student Effort - Comparative Data 2008

![Bar chart showing comparative Student Effort scores for NOVA, VCCS consortium, and 2008 CCSSE Cohort in 2008.]

- Northern Virginia Community College
- Consortium
- 2008 CCSSE Cohort
Benchmark 3 - Academic Challenge

The benchmark Academic Challenge states that challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality.

The ten survey items that were used in the calculation of this benchmark are:

- Worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations
- Analyzed the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory
- Synthesized and organized ideas, information, or experiences in new ways
- Made judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods
- Applied theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Used information you have read or heard to perform a new skill
- Number of assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course readings read
- Number of papers or reports of any length written
- To what extent have the examinations challenged the student to their best work
- Encouraged students to spend significant amounts of time studying

Figure 5 displays survey results for NOVA for the years 2004, 2005, and 2008. As the figure shows, the Academic Challenge benchmark score fluctuated from 49.1 in 2004 to 49.2 in 2008.

Figure 5. Academic Challenge - Northern Virginia Community College
Figure 6 compares the Academic Challenge benchmark score for NOVA students to that of students from the VCCS consortium and the average of 50 for the 2008 CCSSE cohort. As shown in the figure, the Academic Challenge benchmark score for NOVA students was below the average at 49.2, while the benchmark score for the VCCS consortium was 48.9.

![Figure 6. Academic Challenge - Comparative Data 2008](image)

Benchmark 4 – Student-Faculty Interaction

The benchmark Student-Faculty Interaction states that the more contact students have with their teachers, the more likely they are to learn effectively and to persist toward achievement of their educational goals.

The six items used in the calculation of this benchmark are about students’ experiences in these areas:

- Used email to communicate with an instructor
- Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor
- Talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor
- Discussed ideas from readings or classes with instructors outside of class
- Received prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors on performance
- Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework

Figure 7 displays survey results for NOVA for the years 2004, 2005, and 2008. As the figure shows, the Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark score increased from 48.9 in 2004 to 50.4 in 2008.
Figure 7. Student-Faculty Interaction - Northern Virginia Community College

Figure 8 compares the Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark score for NOVA students to that of students from the VCCS consortium and the average of 50 for the 2008 CCSSE cohort. As shown in the figure, the Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark score for NOVA students was above the average at 50.4, while the benchmark score for the VCCS consortium was 51.9.

Figure 8. Student-Faculty Interaction - Comparative Data 2008
Benchmark 5 - Support for Learners

The benchmark *Support for Learners* states that students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relationships among different groups on campus.

The seven survey items used to calculate this benchmark attempt to find out how much the college supported students in the following areas:

- Provided the support needed to help the student succeed at this college
- Encouraged contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Helped the student cope with non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Provided the support the student needed to thrive socially
- Provided the financial support the student needed to afford education
- Used academic advising/planning services
- Used career counseling services

Figure 9 displays survey results for NOVA for the years 2004, 2005, and 2008. As the figure shows, the *Support for Learners* benchmark score fluctuated from 47.9 in 2004 to 47.6 in 2008.

![Figure 9. Support for Learners - Northern Virginia Community College](image)

Figure 10 compares the *Support for Learners* benchmark score for NOVA students to that of students from the VCCS consortium and the average of 50 for the 2008 CCSSE cohort. As shown in the figure, the *Support for Learners* benchmark score for NOVA students was below the average at 47.6, while the benchmark score for the VCCS consortium was 50.5.
Figure 10. Support for Learners - Benchmark Comparative Data 2008
Section II: Comparison of NOVA’s Benchmark Scores with Selected Area Colleges

Section II presents the 2008 survey results for NOVA and three other area colleges: J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College, Montgomery College, and Prince George’s Community College. Each figure displays scores for the five CCSSE-identified benchmarks. As the figures show, each individual benchmark score for Montgomery College (MD) and Prince George’s Community College (MD) was higher than NOVA’s individual benchmark scores. Each individual benchmark score for NOVA was higher than J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College’s individual scores, with the exception of the Student Effort benchmark.

Figure 11. Snapshot of Survey Results 2008 – Northern Virginia Community College

![Bar chart for NOVA showing benchmark scores]

Figure 12. Snapshot of Survey Results 2008 – J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College

![Bar chart for J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College showing benchmark scores]
Figure 13. Snapshot of Survey Results 2008 – Montgomery College (MD)

Figure 14. Snapshot of Survey Results 2008 – Prince George’s Community College (MD)