



Survey of Entering Student Engagement

College of Southern Idaho



Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice With Entering Students

SENSE Benchmarks

€ **Early Connections**

When students describe their early college experiences, they typically reflect on occasions when they felt discouraged or thought about dropping out. Their reasons for persisting almost always include one common element: a strong, early connection to someone at the college.

€ **High Expectations and Aspirations**

Nearly all students arrive at their community colleges intending to succeed and believing that they have the motivation to do so. When entering students perceive clear, high expectations from college staff and faculty, they are more likely to understand what it takes to be successful and adopt behaviors that lead to achievement. Students then often rise to meet expectations, making it more likely that they will attain their goals. Often, students' aspirations also climb, and they seek more advanced credentials than they originally envisioned.

€ **Clear Academic Plan and Pathway**

When a student, with knowledgeable assistance, creates a road map—one that shows where he or she is headed, what academic path to follow, and how long it will take to reach the end goal—that student has a critical tool for staying on track. Students are more likely to persist if they not only are advised about what courses to take, but also are helped to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them.

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Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice With Entering Students

The standardized benchmark scores allow colleges to gauge and monitor their performance in areas of entering student engagement. In addition, participating colleges have the opportunity to make appropriate and useful comparisons between their performance and that of groups of other colleges.

Performing as well as the national average or a peer-group average may be a reasonable initial aspiration, but it is important to recognize that these averages are sometimes unacceptably low. Aspiring to match and then exceed high-performance targets is the stronger strategy.

Community colleges can differ dramatically on such factors as size, location, resources, enrollment patterns, and student characteristics. It is important to take these differences into account when interpreting benchmark scores—especially when making institutional comparisons. The Center for Community College Student Engagement has adopted the policy “Responsible Uses of *CCSSE* and *SENSE* Data,” available at www.cccse.org.

SENSE uses a three-year cohort of participating colleges in all core survey analyses. The current cohort is referred to as the 2013 *SENSE* Cohort (2011-2013) throughout all reports.

SENSE Benchmarks

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Aspects of Highest Student Engagement

Benchmark scores provide a manageable starting point for reviewing and understanding *SENSE* data. One way to dig more deeply into the benchmark scores is to analyze those items that contribute to the overall benchmark score. This section features the five items across all benchmarks (excluding those for which means are not calculated) on which the college scored most favorably and the five items on which the college scored least favorably relative to the 2013 *SENSE* Cohort.

The items highlighted on pages 4 and 5 reflect the largest differences in mean scores between the institution and the 2013 *SENSE* Cohort. While examining these data, keep in mind that the selected items may not be those that are most closely aligned with the college’s goals; thus, it is important to review all institutional reports on the *SENSE* online reporting system at www.ccse.org.

Figure 2 displays the aggregated frequencies for the items on which the college performed most favorably relative to the 2013 *SENSE* Cohort. For instance, 68.7% of College of Southern Idaho students, compared with 63.4% of other students in the cohort, responded *strongly agree* or *agree* on Item 18d. It is important to note that some colleges’ highest scores might be lower than the cohort mean.

Figure 2

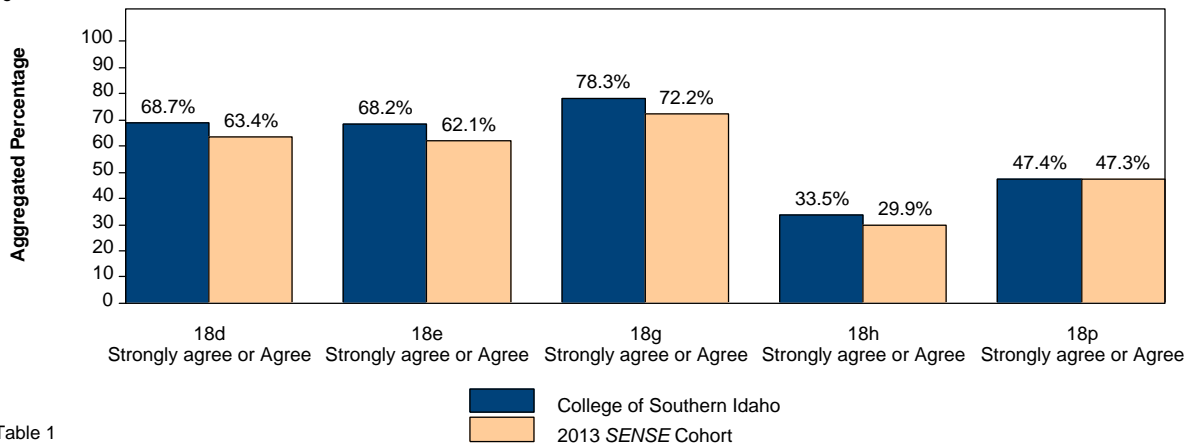


Table 1

Benchmark	Item Number	Item
Clear Academic Plan and Pathway	18d	Able to meet with an academic advisor at times convenient for me
Clear Academic Plan and Pathway	18e	An advisor helped me to select a course of study, program, or major
Clear Academic Plan and Pathway	18g	An advisor helped me to identify the courses I needed to take during my first semester/quarter
Clear Academic Plan and Pathway	18h	A college staff member talked with me about my commitments outside of school to help me figure out how many courses to take
Early Connections	18p	At least one college staff member (other than an instructor) learned my name

Notes:

For Item(s) 18, *strongly agree* and *agree* responses are combined.

Aspects of Lowest Student Engagement

Figure 3 displays the aggregated frequencies for the items on which the college performed least favorably relative to the 2013 *SENSE* Cohort. For instance, 55.2% of College of Southern Idaho students, compared with 68.9% of other students in the cohort, responded *strongly agree* or *agree* on Item 18l. It is important to note that some colleges' lowest scores might be higher than the cohort mean.

Figure 3

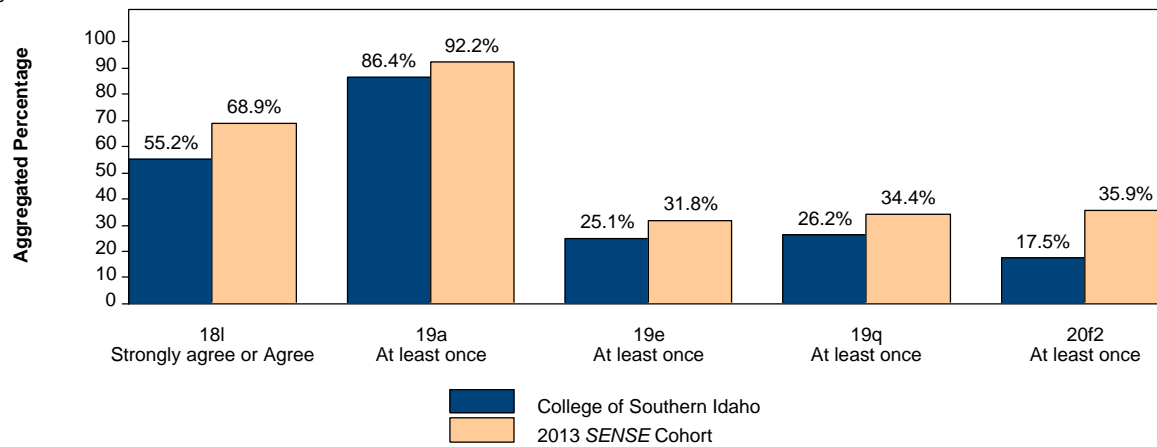


Table 2

Benchmark	Item Number	Item
Academic and Social Support Network	18l	All instructors clearly explained academic and student support services available at this college
Engaged Learning	19a	Frequency: Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
Engaged Learning	19e	Frequency: Participated in supplemental instruction
Engaged Learning	19q	Frequency: Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class
Engaged Learning		

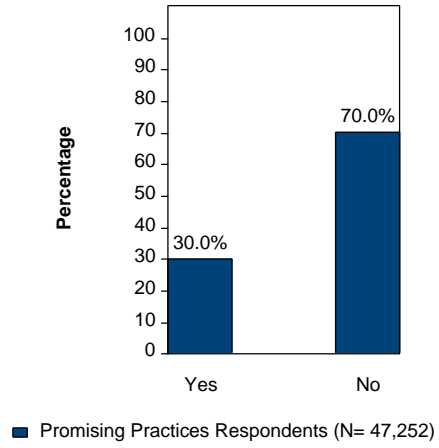


SENSE Special-Focus Module Items

SENSE special-focus modules allow participating colleges and researchers to delve more deeply into areas of early student experience and institutional practices that are related to student success. The bar charts across pages 6 and 7 display frequency results for five items from the Promising Practices module.

To access complete special-focus module frequency reports, please visit the *SENSE* online reporting system via www.ccse.org.

Figure 6: At this college, I am participating in a structured experience for new students (sometimes called a ' freshman seminar ' or ' first-year experience ').

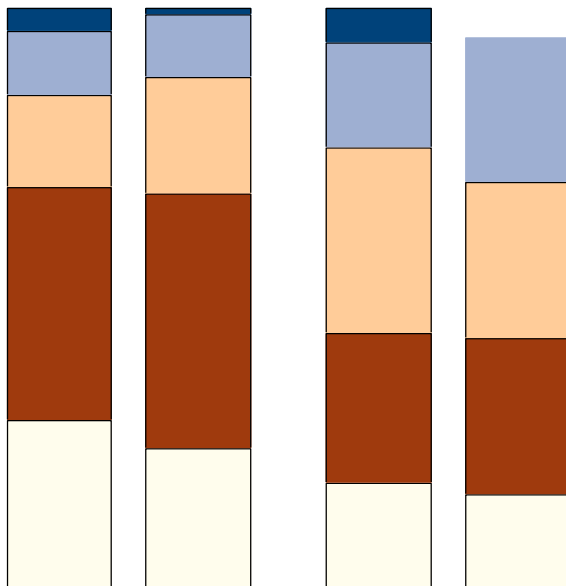




Academic Goal Setting and Planning

Most community colleges have academic and goal setting policies that are intended to help all students *start right*. Yet, often these policies, even when they are ostensibly mandatory, might not be implemented in ways that ensure success for all students. The disaggregated data below illustrate the student experience with academic goal setting and planning at your college. Nationally, more than 60% of community college students are enrolled less than full time. Thus, while looking at these data, it is important to consider the institution's enrollment patterns. Are all of your entering students starting right?

Figure 9



Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree