

**Suffolk County  
Community College**

Report on the  
Community  
College Survey of  
Student  
Engagement  
(CCSSE)

Spring 2015 Administration

Prepared by the Office of Planning and  
Institutional Effectiveness – October 28, 2015

---

## **Report on the College's Participation in the Spring 2015 Administration of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement**

In the spring of 2015, Suffolk County Community College participated in the administration of the Community College Study of Student Engagement. Participation in the CCSSE was one of the culminating activities for the College's Title III Project: *Student Engagement through Informed Support*. The information gathered through administration of the CCSSE will be utilized by the College's Student Engagement Committee to determine areas for further study. The College last administered the CCSSE in the spring of 2009.

The CCSSE is used by college's nationally to gauge student engagement, which the literature shows supports student learning, retention, and persistence. The instrument consisted of 38 main items, many with sub-items seeking student response. In total students were asked to respond to 121 separate items. The instrument is designed to provide information in five areas: *Active and Collaborative Learning; Student Effort; Academic Challenge; Student-Faculty Interaction; and Support for Learners*.

Ninety-two class sections were chosen by CCSSE to include a cross-section of students, including students on all campuses, both full-time and part-time, across disciplines, and day, night, weekend classes, involving 1549 students. The survey was administered in class by the teacher of the course. Surveys were collected and returned to CCSSE for collation of data.

CCSSE provided the College with both frequencies and means of responses for each item, benchmarks scores, and a report on "Key Findings." The survey results were weighted to adjust scores for the difference in part-time and full-time students. These key findings included:

- benchmarks indicating that at Suffolk, part-time benchmarks for each area were lower than those of full-time students;
- SCCC results compared to the mean of all colleges in the CCSSE cohort and 2015 top-performing colleges;
- the five items with the highest student engagement scores at SCCC;
- the five items with the lowest engagement scores at SCCC;
- 2015 special focus items dealing with testing and placement; and
- Results of the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE), comparing cohort faculty and students responses to survey items.

The frequencies, means and benchmark scores are available to the public on the CCSSE website. The CCSSE Report on Key Findings is available on the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness website.

The CCSSE is meant to be used as a comparative tool, which would require a complex review of means, frequencies, and disaggregated responses by subgroups for items and sub-items. However, SCCC does not fit neatly with the chosen cohort. Some characteristics of Suffolk students make comparisons with other institutions problematic. For instance, SCCC students skew much younger than those of the cohort, more Suffolk students work for pay (88.5%

compared to 80% nationally), and they work more hours, with almost 60% working more than 20 hours a week in addition to study, and almost one third working 30 hours or more.

Because the CCSSE will be used at SCCC to guide further study rather than as a comparative tool, incorporated into this report are the frequencies for the “Key Findings” questions of the instrument, as well as some benchmark means from the 2015 administration and the 2009 administration, and data regarding “areas of interest” because linked questions provide opportunities for deeper analysis or because data suggested further exploration. Finally, there is a list of areas that present emerging themes that may be the focus of further research, and recommendations.

## 2015 FULL COHORT – ALL PARTICIPATING COLLEGES

“Key Findings” material is provided by CCSSE; SCCC data in the right columns has been added.

### Key Findings: Active and Collaborative Learning

While the majority of students report that they often contribute to class discussions and work with other students in class, much smaller numbers report making class presentations and working with other students outside of class or in their communities.

| Cohort results  | SCCC % |
|---|--------|
| Nearly two-thirds (65%) of students <i>often</i> or <i>very often</i> ask questions or contribute to class discussions.   | 58.4   |
| Over two-thirds (73%) have made a class presentation.   | 78.3   |
| Most have worked with other students on projects <u>during class</u> with 50% reporting they have done so <i>very often</i> or <i>often</i> and 38% reporting they have done so at least <i>sometimes</i> . | 37.8   |
|   | 44.0   |
| Almost one quarter (25%) of respondents have <i>very often</i> or <i>often</i> worked with classmates <u>outside of class</u> to prepare class assignments.   | 19.3   |
| Nearly three-quarters (72%) have <i>never</i> tutored or taught other students.   | 78.5   |
| Over three-quarters (75%) have <i>never</i> participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course.  | 80.0   |
| Half (49%) have discussed ideas from their readings or classes with others outside of class <i>often</i> or <i>very often</i> and more than one-third (38%) have done so at least <i>sometimes</i> .        | 46.5   |
|   | 41.4   |

### Key Findings: Student Effort

Most students report spending time preparing for their courses outside of class and utilizing school computer labs, but many also report coming to class without completing reading or assignments and few take advantage of tutoring services.

| Cohort results  | SCCC % |
|---|--------|
| Though half (51%) of students <i>often</i> or <i>very often</i> prepare two or more drafts of a paper before turning it in, over one-fifth (20%) <i>never</i> do. | 47.1   |
|   | 21.7   |
| Over half (64%) <i>often</i> or <i>very often</i> work on a paper or project that requires integrating ideas or information from various sources.                 | 72.3   |
| Thirty-four percent of students <i>never</i> come to class without completing readings or assignments, while 13% do so <i>often</i> or <i>very often</i> .        | 31.1   |
|   | 15.5   |
| Nearly half (46%) <i>rarely</i> or <i>never</i> use peer or other tutoring resources.   | 76.1   |
| Four in 10 (43%) <i>sometimes</i> or <i>often</i> use a skills lab.   | 36.5   |
| Nearly two-thirds (62%) use a computer lab <i>sometimes</i> or <i>often</i> , with one-third (31%) using one <i>often</i> .                                       | 49.1   |
|   | 19.0   |
| Three in 10 (32%) students haven't read any books for personal enjoyment or   | 35.2   |

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| academic enrichment.  |             |
| The vast majority of students spend at least some time preparing for class, with two in five (40%) spending between one and five hours, and three in 10 (30%) spending six to ten hours and (29%) eleven hours or more. | <b>49.1</b> |
|   | <b>30.3</b> |
|   | <b>18.0</b> |

## Key Findings: Academic Challenge

Most students report using complex critical thinking skills in their coursework and working hard to meet their instructors' expectations, yet many are neutral as to whether their exams challenge them to do their best work.

| Cohort results   | SCCC %      |
|--|-------------|
| Over half (55%) of students <i>often</i> or <i>very often</i> work harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectation.                         | <b>51.7</b> |
| Over two-thirds (70%) say their coursework puts <i>quite a bit</i> or <i>very much</i> emphasis on analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory.                | <b>61.8</b> |
| The majority (63%) say their coursework puts <i>quite a bit</i> or <i>very much</i> emphasis on synthesizing and organizing ideas, information or experiences in new ways.       | <b>60.2</b> |
| Over half (55%) say their coursework puts <i>quite a bit</i> or <i>very much</i> emphasis on making judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments or methods. | <b>43.5</b> |
| Over half (60%) say their coursework puts <i>quite a bit</i> or <i>very much</i> emphasis on applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations.           | <b>54.6</b> |
| The majority (65%) say their coursework puts <i>quite a bit</i> or <i>very much</i> emphasis on using information they have read or heard to perform a new skill.                | <b>59.6</b> |
| Most students report having assigned reading materials, with two in five (42%) having between one and four assigned books and one in three (30%) having between five and 10.     | <b>35.4</b> |
|  | <b>33.2</b> |
| One in 10 (9%) students report <i>never</i> having to write papers for their courses.  | <b>3.6</b>  |
| One-quarter of students (25%) are neutral on whether their exams challenge them to do their best work, compared with two-thirds (66%) who agree they do.                         | <b>32.5</b> |
|  | <b>57.7</b> |
| Three-quarters (75%) say their college puts <i>quite a bit</i> or <i>very much</i> emphasis on spending significant amounts of time studying.                                    | <b>67.7</b> |

## Key Findings: Student-Faculty Interaction

While the majority of students have communicated with instructors through e-mail and received prompt feedback from instructors on their performance, most do not report having meaningful communications with instructors outside of the classroom.

| Cohort results   | SCCC %      |
|--|-------------|
| Over half (65%) of students have used e-mail to communicate with an instructor <i>often</i> or <i>very often</i> , compared with only 6% of students that have <i>never</i> done so. | <b>67.6</b> |
|  | <b>4.5</b>  |
| Half (51%) have discussed grades or assignments with an instructor <i>often</i> or <i>very</i>   | <b>50.5</b> |

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <i>often</i> , compared with only 9% of students that have <i>never</i> done so.  | <b>10.3</b> |
| Over one quarter (31%) have talked about their career plans with an instructor or advisor <i>often or very often</i> , but 26% have never done so.          | <b>26.2</b> |
|   | <b>32.2</b> |
| Over half (56%) have discussed an idea from their readings or classes with an instructor outside of class at least sometimes, but 44% have never done so.   | <b>50.5</b> |
|   | <b>49.0</b> |
| The majority of students report receiving prompt feedback from instructors on their performance, with only 7% reporting they have <i>never</i> received it. | <b>8.1</b>  |
| Over two-thirds (67%) have <i>never</i> worked with instructors on activities other than coursework.  | <b>68.3</b> |

## Key Findings: Support for Learners

The majority of students feel that their colleges emphasize providing the support they need to help them succeed, yet smaller numbers use support services. Significant numbers also feel that their colleges do not offer support for non-academic, social and financial issues.

| <b>Cohort results</b>   | <b>SCCC %</b>                                  |
|---|--|
| Nearly three-quarters (74%) of students say that their college puts <i>quite a bit</i> or <i>very much</i> emphasis on providing the support they need to help them succeed.  | <b>61.5</b>                                    |
| Half (54%) say that their college puts <i>quite a bit</i> or <i>very much</i> emphasis on encouraging contact among student from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds.  | <b>45.5</b>                                    |
| Nearly two-fifths (37%) say that their college puts <i>very little</i> emphasis on helping them cope with non-academic responsibilities.  | <b>45.8</b>                                    |
| Over one-quarter (26%) say that their college puts <i>very little</i> emphasis on providing the support they need to thrive socially.   | <b>32.1</b>                                    |
| Half (53%) say that their college puts <i>quite a bit</i> or <i>very much</i> emphasis on providing the financial support they need to afford their education, but nearly one-quarter (21%) say their college puts <i>very little</i> emphasis on this service. | <b>45.6</b>                                    |
|   | <b>27.7</b>                                    |
| Over half (61%) of students use academic advising services <i>sometimes</i> or <i>often</i> , and one-third (32%) <i>rarely</i> or <i>never</i> use them.   | <b>54.5</b>                                    |
|   | <b>36.1</b>                                    |
| Just over half (50%) of students say they <i>rarely</i> or <i>never</i> use career counseling services.   | <b>50.5</b>                                    |
|   | <b>Only 27.2% have used career counseling.</b> |

**2015 Benchmark Summary Report -Suffolk County Community College**  
[Weighted\*]

| Benchmark                         | 2015 Score | 2009 Score |
|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Active and Collaborative Learning | 43.5       | 46.4       |
| Student Effort                    | 45.3       | 47.3       |
| Academic Challenge                | 48.1       | 50.0       |
| Student-Faculty Interaction       | 47.3       | 46.3       |
| Support for Learners              | 44.1       | 48.3       |

*Mean = 50*

*\*Weighted indicates scores are adjusted for part-time full-time enrollment difference.*

## Responses to Student Services Items

|                                   | Percent of students have used services “sometimes” or “often” | Percent of students either “very” or “somewhat” satisfied | Percent students believe service is “very” or “somewhat” important |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Academic Advising                 | 54.5%   | 81.5%   | 87.0%  |
| Career Counseling                 | 27.2%   | 70%   | 76.8%  |
| Job placement assistance          | 11.6%   | 57%   | 66.5%  |
| Tutoring                          | 24.0%   | 75%   | 67.9%  |
| Skills labs (writing, math, etc.) | 36.5%   | 82%   | 72.6%  |
| Child care                        | 6.4%  | 52%   | 47.2%  |
| Financial Aid advising            | 45.3%   | 76%   | 77.3%  |
| Computer lab                      | 49.1%   | 88%   | 76.1%  |
| Student Organizations             | 19.4%   | 75%   | 62.3%  |
| Transfer credit assistance        | 25.3%   | 72%   | 72.0%  |
| Disabilities services             | 10.9%   | 71%   | 59.9%  |

### Other data of interest:

Mother (some college, no degree or below) – 58.6%

Father (some college, no degree or below) – 66.1%

58% of students work more than 20 hours a week.

32.1% students work more than 30 hours a week.

11.5% of students don’t work. (Nationally 20%)

| Student relationships with:         | Positive | Negative |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Other students                      | 63.3     | 13.4     |
| Instructors                         | 72.8     | 10.5     |
| Administrative and office personnel | 48.3     | 28.7     |



### **Findings that may suggest further study:**

- 91.1% of students would recommend SCCC to someone else; 93.4% would recommend their college in the cohort.
- Over 10% more students start study at SCCC than other institutions (80.65 to 70.5%).
- SCCC skews higher on questions dealing with papers or projects requiring integration of info (72.3% often, very often to 64.9%).
- SCCC skews lower on “worked with classmates outside of class on projects” (46.25 say never to 37.4%).
- SCCC skews significantly high in the number of papers or reports required, and by page length.
- SCCC has 9.8% of students who said they took a study skills course (17.2% for comparative schools).
- SCCC skews lower on “providing support you need to succeed in college” ...38.5% say very little or some as opposed to 24.7% in cohort.
- SCCC skews lower on “helping you cope with non-academic responsibilities” (45.8% say very little; 37.4% for cohort).
- On providing support you need to thrive socially, 32.1% rated the College provided very little support as opposed to 25.6 in cohort.
- Providing financial support you need, 27.7% said very little; 20.6 in cohort.
- Using computers in academic work, SCCC scores about 13-14% lower in general.
- 51.7% of SCCC students say they prepare “none” to 1-5 hours for school, 41% for cohort. 18% of SCCC students claim to prepare between 11-and more than 30 hours for school; 29.8 elsewhere.
- 11.5% SCCC students say they don’t work (In 2009, 15% did not work...); 24.8% in the cohort; 58% of SCCC students work 21 to more than 30 hours; cohort is 48.8.
- SCCC students claim to provide more hours of care for dependents than the cohort.
- Use of computer technology is about 12% lower than other institutions.
- SCCC scores much lower on students working effectively with others.
- SCCC scores much lower on contributing to welfare of the community.
- SCCC scores significantly lower in student use of tutoring, skill labs, and computer labs.
- SCCC scores lower in use of academic advising, career counseling, job placement assistance.
- Working full-time is seen as a significantly higher cause of leaving college for SCCC students. (Transfer being the second highest and higher than cohort).
- Why (reason) student is here was higher for get a degree, and for transfer and much lower for change of career.
- Percent of SCCC students much higher for paying using money from parents/significant other.
- Percent of SCCC students much lower for tuition being paid by grants and scholarships.
- Only 19.8% of SCCC students rate the College as excellent (30.9% in cohort);26.9% SCCC students rate the College fair/poor; 16% in cohort.
- Only 8% SCCC students are married; 17.7% of cohort.

There are three themes/questions that emerge from the above:

- Age – Because SCCC students are significantly “younger” than the average in the cohort, questions dealing with aspirations, expectations, use of certain services (career counseling, job placement), and other maturity-related topics may be affected.
- Time – More SCCC students work for pay than those of the cohort, and they work more hours. Student time issues could result in the inability to access services or engage in student activities. (Note: In the coordinated questions on services, often students rate a skill as important, but many fewer use the service.) This also may be responsible for the lack of student collaboration outside of class, etc. Time pressures also may impede students spending more time preparing for class. Time pressures due to the need to work could also contribute to the general critical responses reflecting the balance between school and work as a “burden.”
- Regional considerations – SCCC is placed in a cohort dependent primarily on size and suburban-serving locations; however, this may not make comparisons helpful. Long Island’s distinct characteristics such as expectation of level of service, the demands of the high cost of living, traditional view of higher education, etc. may all contribute to generally lower scores.

It should be noted that despite scores regularly falling below the mean, 91.1% of SCCC student would recommend the school to others.

SCCC scores relatively better when students are asked for factual responses -- (number of papers required needing integration of material; number and length of papers required) -- rather than “perception” questions.

Coordinated questions may suggest further study. For instance, when asked about relationships with faculty, students rate the College relatively well (72.8% positive and only 10.5 % negative), and when asked about relationships with students the favorable percent drops (63.3% positive; 13% negative), but when asked about administrative offices and personnel it drops precipitously (48.3% positive; 28.7% negative).

### **Recommendations:**

While the SCCC scores presented, most of which fell below the cohort mean, may lead the reader to make judgments about student engagement at Suffolk, because of the themes/questions detailed above, more research needs to be done to provide usable data. The CCSSE provides data responses, but the instrument never asks the question, “Why?” So, for instance, the instrument asks about how often a service is used, but does not ask why it is or is not used: Is low use due to inadequacy of the service, or is it because the student has no time to use it due to outside time pressures, or is it not offered at a convenient time? These are the types of questions that may to be pursued in further study.