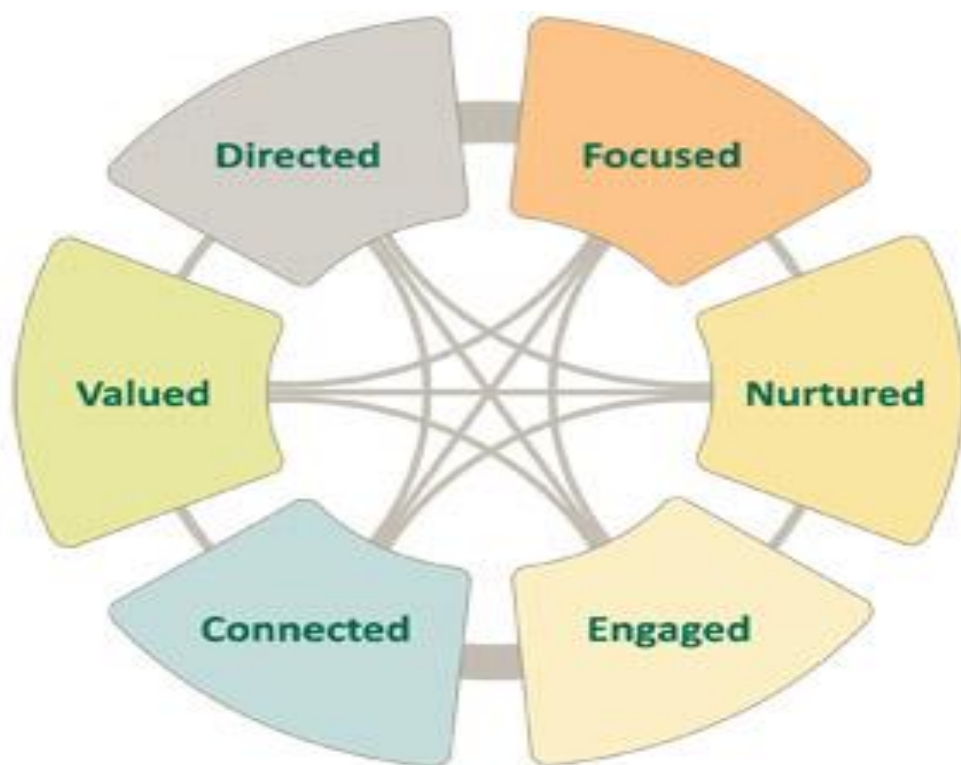


RPEC's Report of Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) Survey DVC 2016 Results

Introduction

DVC's Strategic Plan calls on the college to increase student success through programs and activities informed by a deep understanding of student learning, equity and excellence. As the 2016 State of the College Report observes, the college has engaged in many activities and programs to increase student success. The analysis of the 2015-2016 Enrollment Management Report shows that these efforts, however, have not necessarily been informed by an understanding of the importance of inclusion as a key condition for student success. The RP Group's model of institutional conditions supporting student success (Student Support (Re)Designed 2014) emphasizes the interaction of six elements: students **know** how to achieve success; students **stay focused** on their educational goal; students **feel nurtured**—someone wants and helps them to succeed; students are **engaged** in class and in extracurricular activities; students feel **connected** as part of the college community; students feel **valued**: their skills, talents, abilities and experiences are recognized and appreciated.



These six principles, taken together, describe institutional conditions that support student completion and success.

The 2016 CCSSE Survey allows us to inquire about the college's practices of these principles through students' self-assessments of their engagement with the college—in their classes and coursework, with student services, and with other students. Because DVC also administered the survey in 2014, the 2016 survey also allows us to inquire into areas in which we have improved our practices.

The CCSSE Survey is a high-quality national survey that gives colleges data about students' perceptions of their own behaviors and attitudes that indicate how they engage in their academic endeavors. The CCSSE Survey is built on the premise that student engagement — as measured by students' experience of their own academic experiences — is significantly related to student learning, persistence, and academic attainment. The connection between student engagement and student success is grounded in decades of research.

The survey is administered at hundreds of community colleges in the U.S. every year, allowing DVC to compare its scores with other colleges nationally (the CCSSE cohort) and in California (the AACJC cohort). Because it was administered at all three CCCC colleges, DVC can also compare its practices with Contra Costa and Los Medanos Community Colleges. At DVC, the survey was administered in April 2016 to 1111 students. 63 classes were selected by CCSSE to assure that the responses came from a representative sample of students. The return rate was 90%. The questions, and the survey as a whole, have been subjected to rigorous psychometric testing to insure their internal and external validity. These validity studies have verified the positive relationship between the CCSSE measures of student engagement and student outcomes, like persistence and success. CCSSE reports the survey findings utilizing five benchmarks of effective practice, each of which clusters together different survey questions. The benchmarks and the survey questions that comprise each of them are described in **Appendix A**. *Caution must be taken not to impose meanings on the benchmarks that go beyond the items included in them since each is comprised of multiple survey questions that are clustered together.*

What We Do Well

The survey results (Table 1) show that DVC scores above or at the mean in comparison to the CCSSE cohort of colleges in the following domains: Active and Collaborative Learning, Faculty Interaction, and Academic Challenge. The highest rated individual items on which DVC was above the mean for the ACCJC and CCSSE cohorts were:

- Worked with other students on projects during class (Active Learning benchmark)
- Analyzing basic elements of an idea, experience or theory (Academic Challenge benchmark)
- Writing more than five papers per semester (Academic Challenge benchmark)
- Received prompt feedback on performance (Faculty Interaction benchmark)

- Frequency of career counseling (Student Support Domain). (DVC scored higher than the CCSSE colleges mean, but below the ACCJC colleges mean).

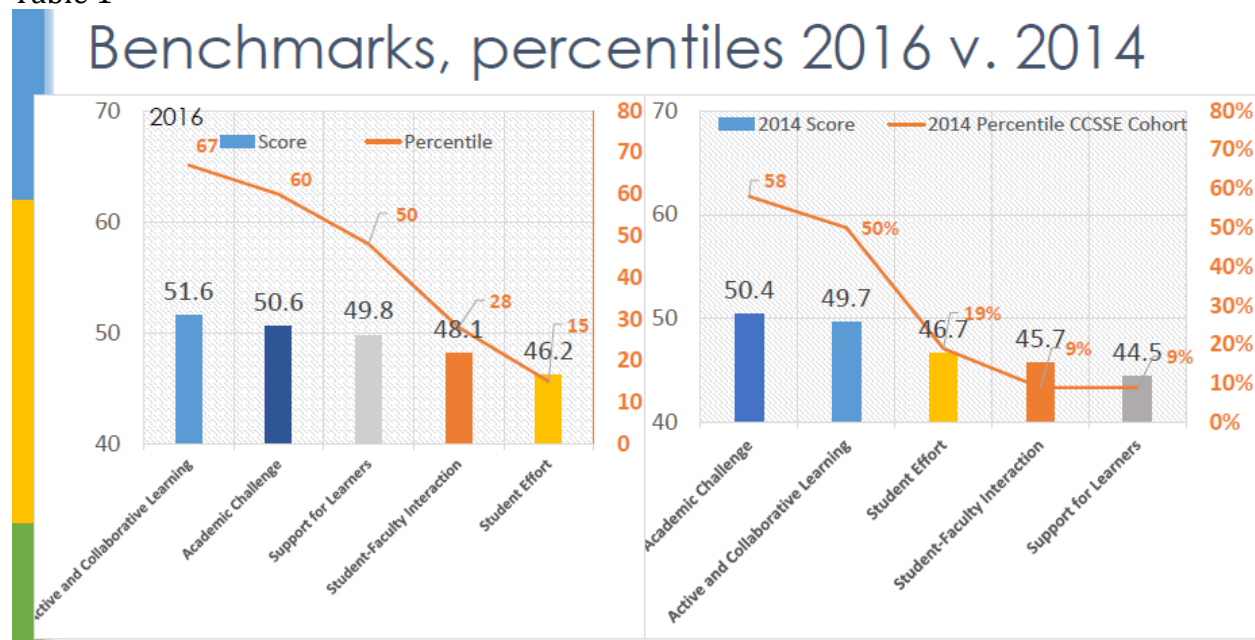
In addition, 85.5% of students reported their overall experience at DVC was excellent or good.

DVC made improvements in scores relative to other CCSSE colleges as measured by percentiles. The domains in which DVC improved from 2014 to 2016 were: Support for Learners (from the 9th to the 15th percentile), Student Faculty Interaction (9th to 28th percentile) Active and Collaborative Learning (50th to 67th percentile).

Asian and Hispanic students report scores at or above the mean scores for DVC on all five domains.

While these results are encouraging, they show DVC roughly at the average student rating for all CSSE and AACJC colleges. A mean score places DVC in the middle of the colleges, not at the top. As the CCSSE Report states, “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 a stronger strategy.” (Executive Summary, p.3)

Table 1



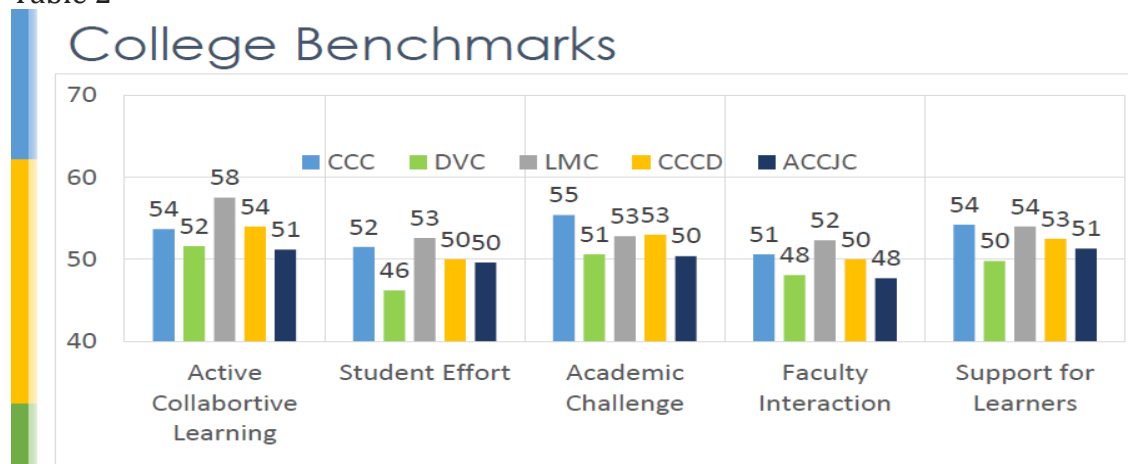
Areas for Improvement

In comparison to the other 4CD colleges (Los Medanos and Contra Costa College), DVC scores below the other colleges on every domain. In fact, DVC’s scores, given the numbers

of students reporting, actually weigh down the 4CD averages for all CCSSE benchmarks. (Table 2)

As well as looking at the benchmark data, it is useful to also note the specific items on which DVC generally compared poorly to other colleges. In comparison to the ACCJC colleges and all CSSE colleges, the CCSSE results found that DVC students reported fewer occurrences of having class assignments where two or more drafts of a paper were required, fewer discussions with faculty about grades/assignments, and fewer discussions with faculty about their career plans. Furthermore, DVC students report fewer visits to the tutoring, computer, and skill labs when compared to the two other colleges. These items cross over a number of benchmarks. Therefore, while thinking about these questions is not the same as reflecting on the benchmarks, they merit consideration as individual items because they offer the college an opportunity to look at areas to improve its practices.

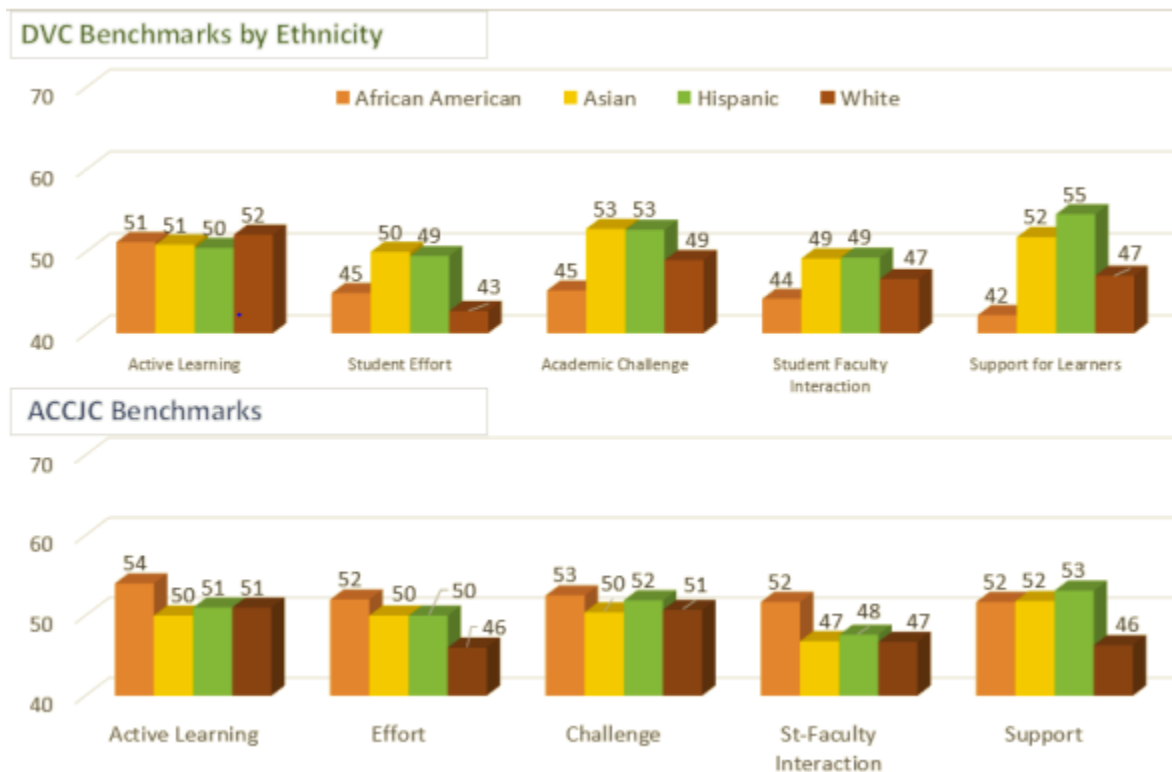
Table 2



The CCSSE benchmark data is disaggregated by four racial/ethnic groups: (Black/African American, Asian/ Asian American, Hispanic, white). (Table 3) allows for a comparative analysis of the reported experiences of different groups of students with the behaviors measured by each benchmark. The small sample size of African American students (N=50) means that any conclusions from this data about all black students' experiences at DVC must be taken with some caution.

- DVC results are significantly lower than AACJC colleges for black students on all benchmarks. Black students report lower levels of student effort, being academically challenged, student-faculty interaction and support for learning.
- Hispanic students, like Asian students, gave relatively high scores on all of the benchmarks. But, for Hispanics, higher CCSSE scores do not predict success. While Hispanic students report being active learners, making a lot of effort, feeling academically challenged, having relatively high levels of student-faculty interaction, and feeling that DVC is committed to their success, DVC's Student Success Scorecard shows significantly lower rates of Hispanic persistence, 30-unit attainment, and degree/transfer attainment.
- White students report lower average ratings across the benchmarks, but have relatively high rates of success.

Table 3



Recommendations

The RP Group's conception of inclusion serves as a point of reference for the CCSSE survey results. The following recommendations are based on this model.

1. The most important site for increasing students' perception of inclusion is the classroom. Improvements in student engagement with the college must be focused there. The low scores for some of the faculty interaction items suggest that professional development in this area is needed and should be prioritized if we want to improve these scores.
2. The low levels of engagement reported by black students indicate a need for a comprehensive institutional strategy for this population, including professional development.
3. The high scores given by Hispanic students may indicate high aspirations for engagement, but they do not translate into high success rates for this group. This finding suggests that there is a gap between Hispanic students' self-perception of their academic motivation and their experience at DVC. A comprehensive strategy for addressing this gap is indicated.
4. The CCSSE findings overall challenge DVC's self-conception as an excellent and inclusive community college. While some students thrive at DVC, with high scores on engagement and high success rates, the middling to quite low scores on inclusion for the college as a whole suggest that DVC should focus on understanding the institutional conditions for inclusive excellence.

Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

The *CCSSE* benchmarks are groups of conceptually related survey items that address key areas of student engagement. The five benchmarks denote areas that educational research has shown to be important to students' college experiences and educational outcomes. Therefore, they provide colleges with a useful starting point for looking at institutional results and allow colleges to gauge and monitor their performance in areas that are central to their work. 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.

CCSSE uses a three-year cohort of participating colleges in all core survey analyses. The current cohort is referred to as the 2016 *CCSSE* Cohort (2014-2016) throughout all reports.

CCSSE Benchmarks

★ Active and Collaborative Learning

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. Through collaborating with others to solve problems or master challenging content, students develop valuable skills that prepare them to deal with real-life situations and problems.

★ Student Effort

Students' own behaviors contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will successfully attain their educational goals.

★ Academic Challenge

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. These survey items address the nature and amount of assigned academic work, the complexity of cognitive tasks presented to students, and the rigor of examinations used to evaluate student performance.

★ Student-Faculty Interaction

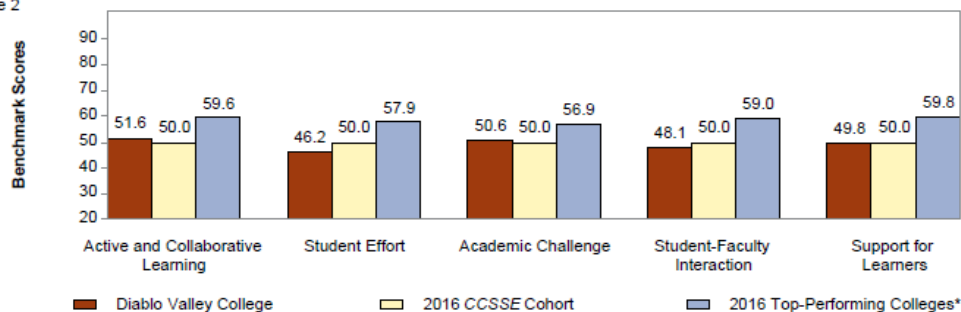
In general, the more contact students have with their teachers, the more likely they are to learn effectively and to persist toward achievement of their educational goals. Through such interactions, faculty members become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, lifelong learning.

★ Support for Learners

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that provide important support services, cultivate positive relationships among groups on campus, and demonstrate commitment to their success.

For further information about *CCSSE* benchmarks, please visit www.cccse.org.

Figure 2



*Top-Performing colleges are those that scored in the top 10 percent of the cohort by benchmark.

Notes: Benchmark scores are standardized to have a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 25 across all respondents. For further information about how benchmarks are computed, please visit www.cccse.org.