

**Community College Survey of Student Engagement
(CCSSE)
Executive Summary**

*Office of Institutional Research
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CCSSE Background and History at Illinois Valley Community College

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) is designed to provide information on *Student Engagement* which can be used as a proxy measure of institutional quality. Research has demonstrated that *student engagement*, or the amount of time and energy that a student invests in educational activities, is the cornerstone of student success. Past research indicates that the more connected a student feels to the college, the faculty, the staff, other students, and the subject matter, the more likely the student will achieve his/her educational goals. IVCC's goal is to measure that engagement and use this knowledge to improve students' success.

During the spring 2015 semester, Illinois Valley Community College successfully administered the CCSSE survey to approximately 517 students. Fifty-six randomly selected courses were chosen by CCSSE for participation. Students in those classes therefore had a random chance of being selected for inclusion. However, a student could only participate once even if more than one of his or her classes was selected. This happened many times. The 517 students that completed valid surveys represent 86% of the targeted 600 student sample. CCSSE over samples courses and thus students in hopes of reaching the desired sample size goal. A good portion of this discrepancy is due to duplicate students being removed from the final sample. Many students self-select out of the second administration while other students are removed for incomplete or bogus responses. On this measure, IVCC outperformed the small college cohort, which only managed to hit 70 percent of its target. Nationally, over 185,151 students from 307 participating colleges participated in the 2015 survey. The 2015 National Cohort (three years) includes 704 institutions and 442,202 students from 47 states, many of them on a three year cycle, similar to IVCC. IVCC last administered the CCSSE in spring of 2012.

CCSSE Benchmarks

The cornerstone of the CCSSE Survey is its ability to benchmark student engagement measures against local and national comparison groups. In IVCC's case the local group consists of other Illinois Community Colleges. The CCSSE Benchmarks are classified by five different categories.

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.

According to CCSSE, the 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". CCSSE goes on to state that, "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". CCSSE adds a word of caution, "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”. Therefore, keep in mind that the following results should be used as a guide and compared to what we know about the college vis-à-vis the student population.

IVCC’s 2015 Results

The CCSSE survey combines results from 38 questions into five benchmark categories which contribute greatly to student success. Each benchmark is then normed to a scale with 50 as the mean. Scores above and below the mean help gauge a college’s success relative to the CCSSE Cohort. Based on the 2015 IVCC students surveyed the college’s five benchmark results are listed in Table1.

Table 1

IVCC Historical Benchmarks

<u>Benchmark</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2015</u>
Active and Collaborative Learning	50.5	49.9	49.3	48.3
Student Effort	50.2	50.1	51.1	48.0
Academic Challenge	52.6	47.0	47.3	46.7
Student-Faculty Interaction	54.1	51.8	49.8	48.4
Support for Learners	51.6	49.9	49.5	50.1

As can be seen in the results above, only *Support for Learners* showed any increase (0.6) from 2012 and is modest at best. Previously in 2012, only *Student Effort* demonstrated any significant improvement (1.0) from the previous year. Now, in 2015, the four remaining benchmarks are in decline. The most noticeable drops occurred in the *Student Effort* (-3.1) and *Student-Faculty Interaction* (-1.4). *Student Effort’s* relatively large decline should be of some concern. Since 2006, all five benchmarks have experienced declines with *Academic Challenge* and *Student-Faculty Interaction* dropping almost six points. To put this decline in perspective, in 2006 all of IVCC’s benchmarks were at or above the cohort mean. Now each has dropped below the mean in all but one benchmark, *Support for Learners*, which

comes in at 50.1. When compared against the Illinois community college cohort and the general college cohort the benchmark scores for IVCC do not look all that impressive either (Table 2). Both IVCC's and the Illinois cohort scores are below the national scores on most measures. IVCC outranks both cohorts only on the *Support for Learners* benchmark. Compared to the Illinois cohort only *Academic Challenge* falls significantly below at -3.1.

Table 2

IVCC Comparison vis-à-vis Illinois and the National Cohorts

<u>Benchmark Score</u>	IVCC	Illinois		2015 Cohort	
	<u>Score</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Active and Collaborative Learning	48.3	49.1	-0.8	50	-1.7
Student Effort	48.0	49.7	-1.7	50	-2.0
Academic Challenge	46.7	49.8	-3.1	50	-3.3
Student-Faculty Interaction	48.4	49.9	-1.5	50	-1.6
Support for Learners	50.1	49.3	0.8	50	0.1

While the overall magnitude of the differences is small and probably not significant, the general downward trend is concerning and should be tracked.

Three overarching questions evoked responses which indicate some improvement and a point of concern in Table 3.

Table 3

IVCC General Experience Indicators

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2015</u>
Evaluation of entire education experience at IVCC (<i>good or excellent</i>)	87%	88%	81%	83%
Would you recommend IVCC to a friend or family member? (<i>yes</i>)	94%	96%	94%	95%
When do you plan on enrolling again at IVCC? (<i>within the year</i>)	80%	84%	75%	76%

* excluding students who have reached their goal

IVCC students' evaluation of their entire educational experience at the College has improved slightly from 81 to 83 percent, after falling the two previous administrations. A crucial test of the College's appeal asks whether students would recommend IVCC to a friend or family. In 2015, the percent increased by one point but the more important figure is the steady trend holding in the 94 to 96 percent range. Overall, IVCC students are happy and would recommend the College to family and friends. The final overarching question asks when students plan on enrolling again at IVCC. This number

has dropped a bit since 2006 and appears to have stabilized around 76 percent from a high of 84 percent in 2009. However, this drop should be a point of concern. This number appears to correlate with the recent drop in IVCC's retention and graduation rates. A higher percent of students not returning leads to lower retention rates. More research is needed to compare these numbers.

There are ten individual questions which cover areas of interest for the College and the Small College Cohorts:

Item	Benchmark	2015 IVCC	2015 Small Cohort
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	Student Effort	2.45	2.52
Worked with other students on projects during class	Active or Collaborative Learning	2.56	2.57
Frequency: Academic Advising/planning	Support for Learners	1.91	1.89
Frequency: Career Counseling	Support for Learners	1.60	1.46
Frequency: Computer Lab	Student Effort	2.08	2.12
Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary) (often or very often)	Active or Collaborative Learning	1.33	1.41
Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways (quite a bit or very much)	Academic Challenge	2.71	2.79
Number of written papers or reports of any length (five or more)	Academic Challenge	2.72	2.89
Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds (quite a bit or very much)	Support for Learners	2.49	2.60
Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to your program) (11 or more hours)	Student Effort	1.87	2.03

Overall, there is very little variation between IVCC and the Small College Cohort. In fact, IVCC out scores the cohort in two areas: *Academic Advising/planning* and *Career Counseling*, and the difference is negligible. The data from this table are important when individual questions are compared with benchmarks. For instance, when one compares the results of “Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in” to the benchmark for Student Effort and then compares that over time and notices the benchmark’s decline one can get a sense of the individual components that may be driving this drop. Compare that with the lower frequency of “Computer lab” use and one gets a picture how students may not be pushing themselves to fully engage with their studies. This lack of engagement may lead some students to believe that IVCC is not a very rigorous place from an academic standpoint. Then add in “Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to your program) (11 or more hours)” and notice that it ranks lower than the Small College Cohort and one gets to see why this may have some truth to it.

Conclusions

Overall, this summary indicates that Illinois Valley Community College’s engagement rates are similar if not slightly lower than both the cohort of Illinois community colleges and the national cohort. These comparisons, while close, only tell half the story. It is the long term trend of declining ratings that indicate where action needs to be focused. Having benchmarks similar to IVCC’s comparison groups is reassuring but it doesn’t tell the complete story. The declining numbers, some of which appear to have stabilized, appear to validate what many in the College already know. Declining enrollments have led both students, faculty and staff to have less than ideal impressions of the college. This in turn may lead to further declines and the cycle perpetuating itself.

Appendix

Illinois Participating Colleges since 2013 (31). Nine colleges participated in 2015.

College	City	Most Recent Year of Participation
Carl Sandburg College	Galesburg	2015
College of DuPage	Glen Ellyn	2014
College of Lake County	Grayslake	2014
Elgin Community College	Elgin	2014
Harold Washington College	Chicago	2014
Harper College	Palatine	2015
Heartland Community College	Normal	2014
Highland Community College	Freeport	2013
Illinois Valley Community College	Oglesby	2015
Joliet Junior College	Joliet	2015
Kankakee Community College	Kankakee	2013
Kaskaskia College	Centralia	2013
Kennedy - King College	Chicago	2014
Lake Land College	Mattoon	2013
Lincoln Land Community College	Springfield	2015
McHenry County College	Crystal Lake	2015
Moraine Valley Community College	Palos Hills	2014
Morton College	Cicero	2014
Oakton Community College	Des Plaines	2015
Olive - Harvey College	Chicago	2014
Parkland College	Champaign	2014
Prairie State College	Chicago Heights	2014
Rend Lake College	Ina	2014
Richard J. Daley College	Chicago	2014
Rock Valley College	Rockford	2014
Shawnee Community College	Ullin	2015
Spoon River College	Canton	2013
Triton College	River Grove	2015
Truman College	Chicago	2014
Waubonsee Community College	Sugar Grove	2014
Wilbur Wright College	Chicago	2014