



***Community College Survey of Student Engagement  
Illinois Valley Community College  
Executive Summary  
Spring, 2018***

***Office of Institutional Research  
November, 2018***

**Abstract**

Illinois Valley Community College utilizes the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) to assess the level of student involvement within and across five academically related benchmarks. Each benchmark is comprised of multiple questions designed to help assess how well IVCC students engage the college environment. The survey has been administered every three years in the spring semester to a random sample of students. This longevity helps IVCC measure CCSSE's effectiveness across multiple academic and social engagement measures.

Matthew P. Suerth, M.A.  
Matt\_Suerth@ivcc.edu

**Community College Survey of Student Engagement**  
**Executive Summary**  
**Spring, 2018**

**Institutional Research**  
**Illinois Valley Community College**  
**November, 2018**

**Background & Benchmarks**

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) is designed to provide high quality evidence detailing *Student Engagement* which is often used as a proxy measure of institutional excellence. Research has demonstrated that student engagement, or the amount of time and energy that students invest in their 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 or her educational goals. IVCC's goal is to measure that engagement and use this knowledge to improve students' chances of academic success. IVCC last administered the CCSSE in spring of 2015 keeping with its three year cycle.

During the spring 2018 semester, Illinois Valley Community College successfully administered the CCSSE survey to approximately 554 students. Sixty 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 several times. The 554 students that completed valid surveys represent 92% 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 sample size discrepancy is due to duplicate students being removed from the final sample. Many students self-select out of the second course administration while other students are removed for giving incomplete or inaccurate responses. Students absent from class are not given the opportunity to retake the survey which also accounts for the smaller number of participants. On this measure, IVCC outperformed the small college cohort, which only managed to hit 62 percent of its target population size. Nationally, over 122,000 students provided usable data from 263 colleges which participated in the 2018 survey. The 2018 CCSSE National Cohort (two year), used for comparison purposes, includes 537 institutions and 302,000 students from 48 states, many of them on a three year survey cycle similar to IVCC.

**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 a contingent of 12 Illinois community colleges (see Appendix for complete list of schools). The CCSSE benchmarks are classified into five separate categories based on the results of individual items and sub-questions related to each benchmark. The following summaries explain what each benchmark consists of and the rationale for inclusion in each category.

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

Student Effort: Students' own behaviors contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will successfully attain their educational goals. This benchmark asks students a variety of questions meant to quantify how much effort is put into their studies and interactions with fellow students, faculty and support staff.

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.

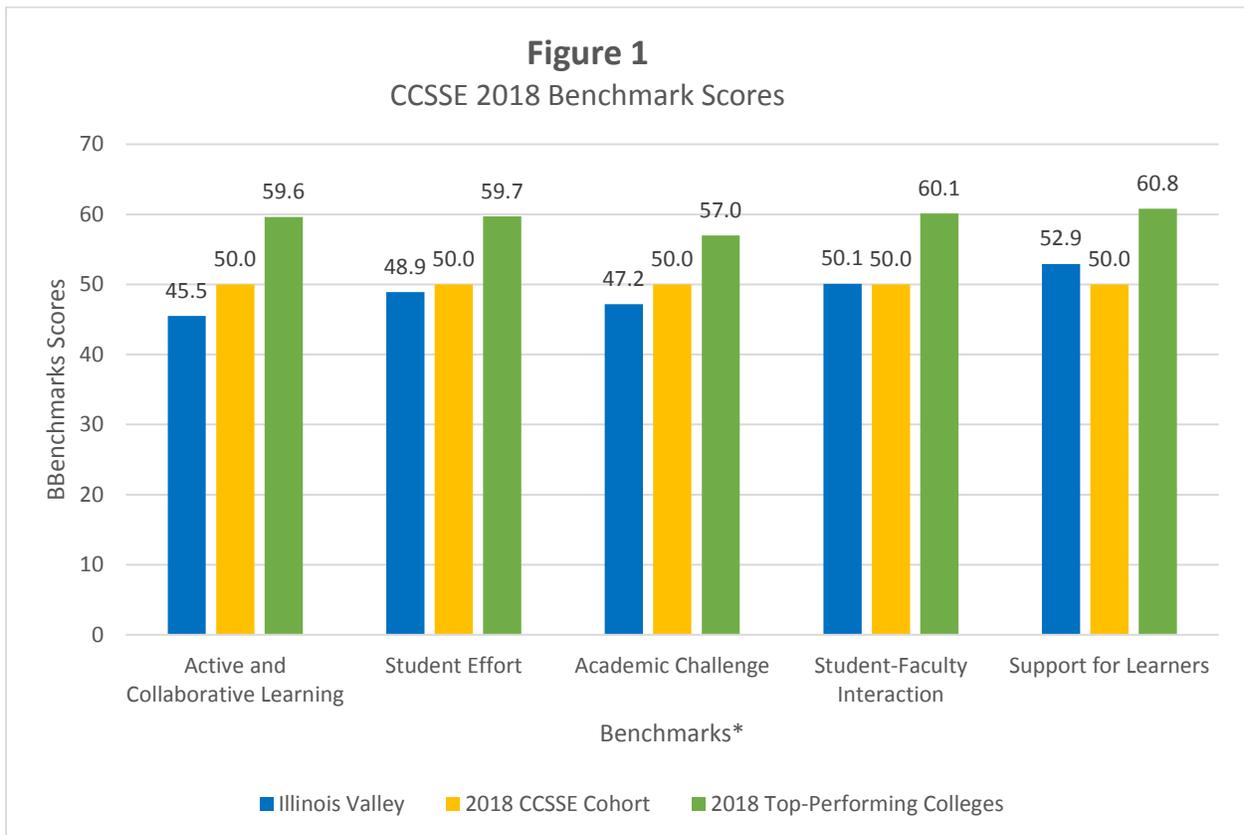
According to CCSSE, the benchmarks consist of, "groups of conceptually related survey items that address key areas of student engagement. The five benchmarks denote areas that educational research has shown to be important to students' college experiences and educational outcomes. Therefore, they provide 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." IVCC has the opportunity to incorporate findings from each benchmark in order to promote institutional strengths as well as identify problems and target solutions that are achievable and meaningful. The CCSSE also allows for informative comparison purposes. CCSSE states 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." Context is needed when comparing results among schools. Simply surpassing the comparison groups' numbers will not help if the numbers are low to begin with. It may be a good initial starting point but striving for more is better. 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." It's important to note that four of the 12 participating Illinois colleges are large suburban schools that differ in size, location, demographic makeup and most importantly, resources. Large

suburban colleges will most likely skew the comparison statistics. This does not invalidate them; it just requires acknowledgement that differences may exist that put IVCC’s ability to surpass them beyond reach. Therefore, keep in mind that the following results should be used as a guide and compared to what we know about Illinois Valley Community College vis-à-vis its student population.

### IVCC’s 2018 Benchmark Results

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) combines results from 48 items which contain multiple sub-questions (plus five special-focus items on promising practices) into five benchmark categories which, presumably, contribute directly to student collegiate success. Each benchmark is then normed to a scale with 50 as the mean for comparison purposes. Scores above and below the mean help gauge a college’s success relative to the CCSSE Cohorts. The first analysis compares IVCC’s benchmark results with the 2018 CCSSE Cohort and the 2018 Top-Performing Colleges.

Figure 1 graphically depicts IVCC’s benchmark scores relative to the CCSSE Cohorts and reveals that IVCC ranks below the 2018 CCSSE Cohort on three benchmarks (*Active and Collaborative Learning*, *Student Effort*, *Academic Challenge*), matches on a fourth (*Student-Faculty Interaction*) and surpasses on the fifth (*Support for Learners*) benchmark. IVCC is well below the 2018 Top-Performing Colleges on all benchmarks.



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

Comparative benchmarks are important but they do not tell the complete story at IVCC. For that it is best to look at historical data to see what the benchmark trends tell us. When compared to previous survey years, a slightly different and more positive picture emerges. According to Table 1, IVCC's benchmarks have fluctuated from year-to-year. 2018 results reveal an uptick in four of the five benchmarks since the 2015 administration. The results are modest but positive in two benchmarks (*Student Effort* and *Academic Challenge*) and slightly better in two others (*Student-Faculty Interaction* and *Support for Learners*). However, the *Active and Collaborative Learning* benchmark has shown an overall consistent decline since 2009, while *Support for Learners* has continued to demonstrate significant improvements since 2012.

**Table 1**  
**Illinois Valley Community College**  
**CCSSE Historical Benchmarks**

Benchmark	2009	2012	2015	2018	Change*
Active and Collaborative Learning	49.9	49.3	48.3	45.5	-2.8
Student Effort	50.1	51.1	48.0	48.9	0.9
Academic Challenge	47.0	47.3	46.7	47.2	0.5
Student-Faculty Interaction	51.8	49.8	48.4	50.1	1.7
Support for Learners	49.9	49.5	50.1	52.9	2.8

\*2015-18 change.

CCSSE is administered every three years in spring term

As evidenced in Table 1, the only benchmark to demonstrate a decrease from the 2015 CCSSE administration is *Active and Collaborative Learning* which posted a decrease of -2.8 points. Having only one benchmark decline is relative but positive news after several years of multiple benchmark declines. Previously, in 2015, only *Support for Learners* demonstrated any improvement (0.6) which was modest at best from the previous survey year (2012). Now, in 2018, four of five benchmarks show increases in engagement benchmark scores. The most noticeable increases occurred in the *Student-Faculty Interaction* (+1.7) and *Support for Learners* (+2.8). *Student Effort* (+0.9) and *Academic Challenge's* (+0.5) relatively small increases helped reverse several years of decline. Prior to 2018, four of the five benchmarks experienced declines with *Student Effort* dropping just over three points. To put this decline in perspective, in 2009 four of IVCC's benchmarks were at or just below the CCSSE cohort mean (50.0). Now three are near or above the mean while only *Active and Collaborative Learning* comes in the lowest at 45.5.

When compared alongside the 2018 Illinois community college contingent and the 2018 CCSSE general college cohort, IVCC's benchmark scores reveal a mixed bag of success and continued need for attention (Table 2). Two of IVCC's and three of the Illinois contingent's scores are at or slightly above the national scores (50.0) on most measures. IVCC outranks both cohorts on the *Support for Learners*

benchmark (+2.9). Compared to the Illinois consortium only *Academic Challenge* falls significantly below at -3.2 which is similar to the 2015 benchmark score of -3.1.

**Table 2**  
**IVCC Comparison vis-à-vis Illinois and the National Cohorts**

	IVCC	Illinois Consortium		2018 CCSSE Cohort	
Benchmark Score	Score	Score	Difference	Score	Difference
Active and Collaborative Learning	45.5	46.8	-1.3	50.0	-4.5
Student Effort	48.9	48.6	0.3	50.0	-1.1
Academic Challenge	47.2	50.4	-3.2	50.0	-2.8
Student-Faculty Interaction	50.1	50.5	-0.4	50.0	0.1
Support for Learners	52.9	50.0	2.9	50.0	2.9

While the overall magnitude of the difference in scores is relatively small, the lower scores in *Active and Collaborative Learning* and *Academic Challenge* are areas the College needs to concentrate its efforts on improving the specific environmental factors which may be impacting these scores. Specifically, what factors can be identified that lead to these lower scores and what if anything can the College do to improve them?

A closer look at individual questions will help further explain benchmark scores. The questions in Table 3 examine General Experience indicators which may help explain what the trends mean. Three overarching questions evoked responses which indicate small improvements and a point of concern.

**Table 3**  
**IVCC General Experience Indicators**

	2009	2012	2015	2018
Evaluation of entire education experience at IVCC ( <i>good or excellent</i> )	88%	81%	83%	88%
Would you recommend IVCC to a friend or family member? ( <i>Yes</i> )	96%	94%	95%	95%
When do you plan on enrolling again at IVCC?* ( <i>within the year</i> )	84%	75%	76%	62%

\* excluding students who have reached their goal

IVCC students' evaluation of their entire educational experience at the College has improved significantly from 83 to 88 percent, after falling in 2012 and now matches the engagement score in the 2009 survey. In an essential test of the College's continuing appeal, the CCSSE asks whether students would recommend IVCC to a friend or family. In 2018 the percent agreeing held firm at 95 percent. It appears the trend is holding stable within the 94 to 96 percent range. Overall, IVCC students are happy and would recommend the College to family and friends. The third overarching question asks when

students plan on enrolling again at IVCC. This number has dropped since 2009 after holding steady around 76 percent in 2012 and 2015. Despite the decline, IVCC’s rating is higher than the Small College Cohort (57 percent) and 2018 CCSSE Cohort (60 percent) ratings.

Table 4 contains ten individual questions which cover areas of interest to the College and the Small College Cohort. These questions represent a sample and are highlighted to help the reader who may be interested in examining individual ratings closer in order to get a better understanding of the complexities involved when analyzing individual student engagement measures below the benchmark level.

**Table 4**  
**Select Individual Student Engagement Indicators Mean Survey Items**

<b>Item</b> (calculated Individual Mean Item values)	<b>Benchmark</b>	<b>IVCC 2018 (2015 Value)</b>	<b>Small 2018 Cohort (2015 Value)</b>
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in. (4c). <i>(Mean, 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often)</i>	Student Effort	2.39 <i>(2.45)</i>	2.51 <i>(2.52)</i>
Worked with other students on projects during class. (4f). <i>(Mean, 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often)</i>	Active or Collaborative Learning	2.52 <i>(2.56)</i>	2.62 <i>(2.57)</i>
Frequency: Academic Advising/Planning. (12.1a). <i>(Mean, 0=Never, 1= 1 time, 2=2-4 times, 3=5 or more)</i>	Support for Learners	1.61 <i>(1.91)</i>	1.62 <i>(1.89)</i>
Frequency: Career Counseling. (12.1b). <i>(Mean, 0=Never, 1= 1 time, 2=2-4 times, 3=5 or more)</i>	Support for Learners	0.96 <i>(1.60)</i>	0.60 <i>(1.46)</i>
Frequency: Computer Lab. (12.1h). <i>(Mean, 0=Never, 1= 1 time, 2=2-4 times, 3=5 or more)</i>	Student Effort	1.48 <i>(2.08)</i>	1.56 <i>(2.12)</i>
Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary). (4.0h). <i>(Mean, 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often)</i>	Active or Collaborative Learning	1.34 <i>(1.33)</i>	1.41 <i>(1.41)</i>
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations. (4o). <i>(Mean, 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often)</i>	Academic Challenge	2.68	2.67
Number of written papers or reports of any length. (6c). <i>(Mean, 0=None, 1=1-4, 2=5-10, 3=11-20, More than 20)</i>	Academic Challenge	1.60 <i>(2.72)</i>	1.81 <i>(2.89)</i>
Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds. (9c). <i>(Mean, 1=Very little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very much)</i>	Support for Learners	2.61 <i>(2.49)</i>	2.65 <i>(2.60)</i>
How many hours preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to your program) (10a). <i>(Mean, 0=None, 1=1-4, 2=5-10, 3=11-20, More than 20)</i>	Student Effort	1.80 <i>(1.87)</i>	1.99 <i>(2.03)</i>

Overall, there is little variation between IVCC and the Small 2018 College Cohort on these ten engagement indicators. In fact, IVCC outscores the cohort in just two areas: *Career Counseling* and *Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations*. Despite this, the overall differences are negligible. The data in this table are important when individual questions are compared with their associated 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 how individual components effect benchmark scores. Compare that with the lower frequency of *"Computer lab"* use and one may get the sense that students may not be pushing themselves to fully engage with their studies by using campus resources to their advantage. Interestingly, this may also be an indicator of the changing nature of computer lab usage on campus and not a true indicator of student engagement. As more students bring their own laptop to campus, they may no longer need to take advantage of on-campus access to computer labs as they previously did. Now campus Wi-Fi frees them up to work anywhere on campus. Students can now work on their laptops in the Cyber Café while interacting with fellow students in a way that actually enhances their campus experience.

### **Conclusions**

Overall, this executive summary indicates that Illinois Valley Community College's student engagement rates are on the rise and similar to if not slightly lower than the contingent of Illinois community colleges and the CCSSE 2018 National Cohort. These comparisons, while close, only tell part of the story. The recent uptick in the long-term trend of declining benchmark scores indicate where improvements have been made and where actions need to be focused. Having benchmarks similar to the comparison groups is reassuring but it doesn't tell the complete story.

The benchmark numbers, some of which appear to have stabilized if not risen slightly, still leave two areas of concern. The lower benchmark scores in *Active and Collaborative Learning* and *Academic Challenge* are areas the College should concentrate its efforts on improving the collegiate factors and/or environments which impact these scores. A closer examination of the individual components, the components that that the College can take active measures to improve, may yield insights into the necessary steps that can be taken to improve these critical benchmark scores and hence students' academic experience and success at Illinois Valley Community College.

## Appendix

### Participating Institutions in the Illinois Consortium

Participating Illinois colleges since 2013 (31). Twelve Illinois colleges participated in the **2018 survey**.

College	City	Most Recent Year of Participation
Carl Sandburg College	Galesburg	2015
College of DuPage	Glen Ellyn	2014
<b>College of Lake County</b>	Grayslake	<b>2018</b>
Elgin Community College	Elgin	2014
Harold Washington College	Chicago	2014
<b>Harper College</b>	Palatine	<b>2018</b>
Heartland Community College	Normal	2014
<b>Highland Community College</b>	Freeport	<b>2018</b>
<b>Illinois Valley Community College</b>	Oglesby	<b>2018</b>
Joliet Junior College	Joliet	2015
Kankakee Community College	Kankakee	2013
Kaskaskia College	Centralia	2013
Kennedy - King College	Chicago	2014
Lake Land College	Mattoon	2013
<b>Lincoln Land Community College</b>	Springfield	<b>2018</b>
McHenry County College	Crystal Lake	2015
Moraine Valley Community College	Palos Hills	2014
<b>Morton College</b>	Cicero	<b>2018</b>
<b>Oakton Community College</b>	Des Plaines	<b>2018</b>
Olive - Harvey College	Chicago	2014
<b>Parkland College</b>	Champaign	<b>2018</b>
<b>Prairie State College</b>	Chicago Heights	<b>2018</b>
Rend Lake College	Ina	2014
Richard J. Daley College	Chicago	2014
<b>Rock Valley College</b>	Rockford	<b>2018</b>
<b>Shawnee Community College</b>	Ullin	<b>2018</b>
Spoon River College	Canton	2013
<b>Triton College</b>	River Grove	<b>2018</b>
Truman College	Chicago	2014
Waubonsee Community College	Sugar Grove	2014
Wilbur Wright College	Chicago	2014