About SENSE

Developed by national experts in the field of community and technical college research and practice, the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) is designed to provide a clear picture of both student behaviors in the earliest weeks of college and the institutional practices that affect students during this critical time. SENSE is a research-based tool with multiple uses:

★ Analyzing — Through the SENSE online reporting system, member colleges have the capability of generating frequency and means reports using either weighted or unweighted data.

★ Benchmarking — The SENSE Benchmarks of Effective Practice with Entering Students denote areas that educational research has shown to be important to entering students' college experience and educational outcomes. Every SENSE member college receives a standardized score for each benchmark. Each individual benchmark score is computed by averaging the scores on survey items that compose that benchmark. The standardized scores make it possible for colleges to compare their own performance across benchmarks and to compare their own performance with groups of similar colleges.

★ Diagnosing — The SENSE online reporting system makes it very easy for colleges to target improvement efforts by disaggregating results to explore differences among student groups.

★ Monitoring — With multiple administrations of SENSE, colleges can document and measure institutional effectiveness over time to examine the impact of interventions aimed at improving students' earliest collegiate experiences.

★ Responding — Institutions may choose to use SENSE data to demonstrate accountability to the college community, as well as to accrediting agencies' calls for institutional self-study and quality improvement strategies.

SENSE was piloted in 2007 by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (the Center) and has since been administered annually. The Center, a service and research initiative of the Program in Higher Education Leadership in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy in the College of Education at The University of Texas at Austin, provides important information about effective educational practice in community colleges.

For more information about SENSE or the Center, please visit www.cccse.org or contact us at info@cccse.org or 512-471-6807.
Survey of Entering Student Engagement

United Tribes Technical College

2017 Key Findings

Table of Contents

Benchmark of Effective Educational Practice With Entering Students   2
Aspects of Highest Student Engagement   4
Aspects of Lowest Student Engagement   5
Academic and Student Support Services   6
Academic Goal Setting and Planning   8
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 roadmap—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.

Continued on Page 3

The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) benchmarks are groups of conceptually related survey items that address key areas of entering student engagement. The six benchmarks denote areas that educational research has shown to be important to entering students’ college experiences and educational outcomes; thus, they provide colleges with a useful starting point for looking at institutional results.

Ideally, colleges engage entering students in all six benchmark areas, beginning with a student’s first contact with the institution and continuing through completion of the first three weeks of the initial academic term. This time is decisive because current research indicates that helping students succeed through the first academic term can dramatically improve subsequent success, including completing courses and earning certificates and degrees.

While many student behaviors and institutional practices measured by the benchmarks can and should continue throughout students’ college careers, the SENSE items and the resulting data focus on this critical entering student timeframe.

SENSE benchmark scores are computed by averaging the scores on survey items composing the benchmarks. Benchmark scores are standardized to have a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 25 across all entering student respondents.

![Figure 1a](image-url)

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](http://www.cccse.org).
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 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 2017 SENSE Cohort (2015-2017) throughout all reports.

Figure 1b

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark Scores</th>
<th>Effective Track to College Readiness</th>
<th>Engaged Learning</th>
<th>Academic and Social Support Network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>United Tribes Technical College</td>
<td>2017 SENSE Cohort</td>
<td>2017 Top-Performing Colleges*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>66.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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.
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 2017 SENSE Cohort.

The items highlighted on pages 4 and 5 reflect the largest differences in mean scores between the institution and the 2017 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.cccse.org.

Figure 2 displays the aggregated frequencies for the items on which the college performed most favorably relative to the 2017 SENSE Cohort. For instance, 81.5% of United Tribes Technical College students, compared with 54.7% of other students in the cohort, responded strongly agree or agree on Item 18i. It is important to note that some colleges’ highest scores might be lower than the cohort mean.

![Figure 2](image)

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>Item Number</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Connections</td>
<td>18i</td>
<td>The college provided me with adequate information about financial assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Connections</td>
<td>18j</td>
<td>A college staff member helped me determine whether I qualified for financial assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Connections</td>
<td>18p</td>
<td>At least one college staff member (other than an instructor) learned my name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning</td>
<td>19m</td>
<td>Frequency: Discussed an assignment or grade with an instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning</td>
<td>20h2</td>
<td>Frequency: Used computer lab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

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

For Item(s) 19, except 19c, 19d, 19f, and 19s, once, two or three times, and four or more times responses are combined.

For Item(s) 20, once, two or three times, and four or more times 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 2017 SENSE Cohort. For instance, 28.8% of United Tribes Technical College students, compared with 63.7% of other students in the cohort, responded never on Item 19c. It is important to note that some colleges' lowest scores might be higher than the cohort mean.

![Figure 3](image)

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>Item Number</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations and Aspirations</td>
<td>19c</td>
<td>Frequency: Turned in an assignment late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations and Aspirations</td>
<td>19d</td>
<td>Frequency: Not turn in an assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning</td>
<td>19j</td>
<td>Frequency: Participated in a student-initiated study group outside of class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations and Aspirations</td>
<td>19s</td>
<td>Frequency: Skipped class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning</td>
<td>20f2</td>
<td>Frequency: Used writing, math, or other skill lab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

For Item(s) 19, except 19c, 19d, 19f, and 19s, once, two or three times, and four or more times responses are combined.

For Item(s) 19c, d, f, and s, responses have been reversed. The frequency displayed is the percentage of students who report never doing the activities described in the items.

For Item(s) 20, once, two or three times, and four or more times responses are combined.
Academic and Student Support Services

The bar charts across pages 6 and 7 display frequency results for five items related to academic and student support services. Figure 4 focuses on whether or not faculty communicated information regarding these services to students by the end of the third week of the academic term. Figures 4–12 focus on whether or not students knew about specific support services, and if so, how often they reported using those services by the end of the third week of the academic term. To access complete frequency reports, please visit the SENSE online reporting system via www.ccsce.org.

Figure 4: All instructors clearly explained academic and student support services available at this college.

Figure 5: Did you know about academic advising/planning services?

Figure 6: If so, how often did you use academic advising/planning services?
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 13

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>18e</th>
<th>18f</th>
<th>18g</th>
<th>18h</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>