

Community College Survey of Student Engagement

University of Montana-Helena College
of Technology

2011 Key Findings

Table of Contents

Key Findings: A Starting Point	2
Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice	3
Aspects of Highest Student Engagement	4
Aspects of Lowest Student Engagement	5
2011 <i>CCSSE</i> Special-Focus Items	6
<i>CCFSSE</i>	8

Key Findings: A Starting Point

The Key Findings report provides an entry point for reviewing results from University of Montana-Helena College of Technology’s administration of the 2011 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The report provides college-specific data in an easy-to-share format including benchmark comparisons between the college, top-performing colleges, and the CCSSE cohort. It also highlights aspects of highest and lowest student engagement at the college, as well as results from five of the CCSSE special-focus items on promising educational practices. Select faculty survey (CCFSSE) data are also highlighted (cohort data are provided for colleges that did not administer CCFSSE).

Promising Practices for Student Success

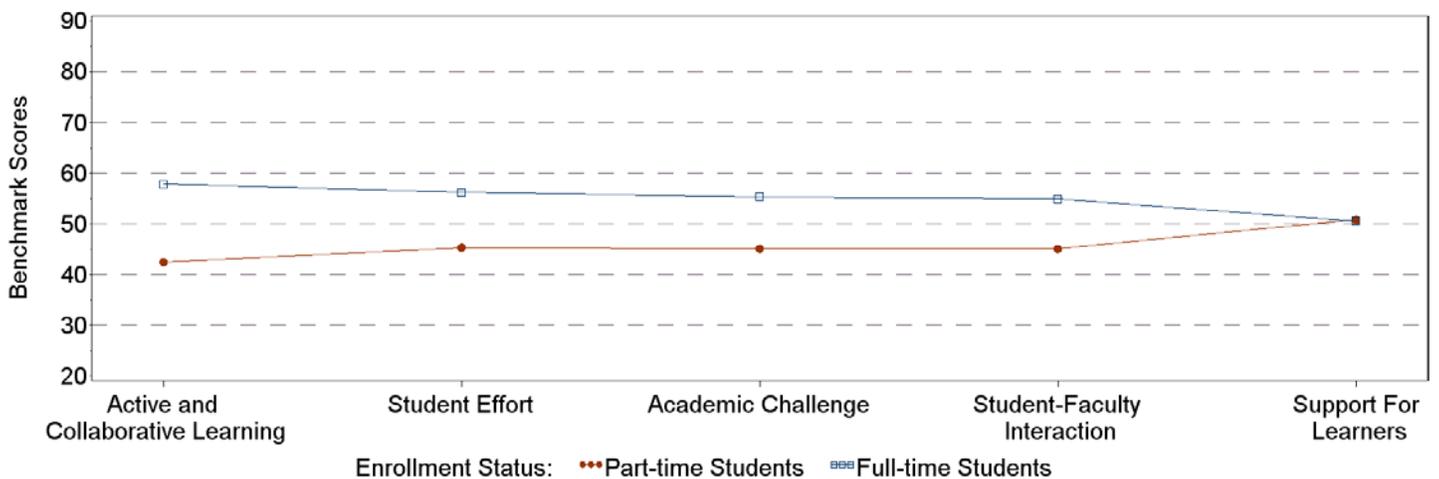
In each annual administration, CCSSE has included “special-focus items” to allow participating colleges and national researchers to delve more deeply into areas of student experience and institutional performance of great interest to the field. The 2011 special-focus items are part of a special national study focused on community college students’ participation in a defined collection of “promising practices” for which there is emerging evidence of effectiveness in strengthening student learning, persistence, and attainment. This study will link data from the 2011 CCSSE special-focus items; related items on the 2011 faculty survey (CCFSSE), which explore the extent of faculty members’ use of the identified promising practices in their teaching; and institutional data collected from the new Community College Institutional Survey (CCIS) that address questions about how these promising practices are implemented across varied institutions. Additionally, a corresponding special-focus module will be included in the 2011 SENSE survey administration.

This data collection will provide empirical confirmation of promising educational practices in community colleges; quantification of the extent to which those practices are part of the current experience of our students; and information about whether participation in these types of practices varies across subgroups of students. Ongoing data analysis will provide new evidence of how student participation in these practices is related to overall student engagement, academic progress, and college completion.

Benchmark Overview by Enrollment Status

Figure 1 below represents University of Montana-Helena College of Technology’s CCSSE benchmark scores by students’ enrollment status.

Figure 1



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 other groups of similar 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.

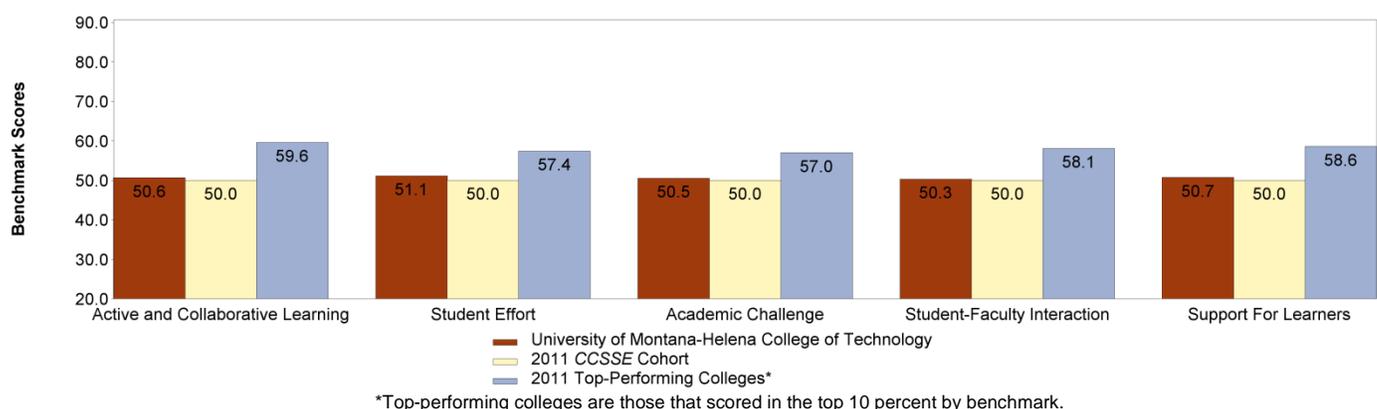
Community colleges can differ dramatically on such factors as size, location, resources, enrollment patterns, and student characteristics. It is important to take these differences into account when interpreting benchmark scores—especially when making institutional comparisons. Furthermore, the Center for Community College Student Engagement has adopted a policy on “Responsible Uses of *CCSSE* Data,” available at www.ccsse.org.

CCSSE uses a three-year cohort of participating colleges in all core survey analyses. The current cohort is referred to as the 2011 *CCSSE* Cohort (2009-2011) 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.

Figure 2



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

Aspects of Highest Student Engagement

Benchmark scores provide a manageable starting point for reviewing and understanding *CCSSE* 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 highest and the five items on which the college scored lowest in comparison to the 2011 *CCSSE* Cohort.

The items highlighted on pages 4 and 5 reflect the largest differences in mean scores between the institution and the 2011 *CCSSE* 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 the full Institutional Report on the *CCSSE* online reporting system.

Figure 3 displays the aggregated frequencies for the items on which the college performed most favorably compared with the 2011 *CCSSE* Cohort. For instance, 72.5% of University of Montana-Helena College of Technology students (n=440), compared with 65.2% of other students in the cohort, responded 'Often' or 'Very often' on item 4a.

Figure 3

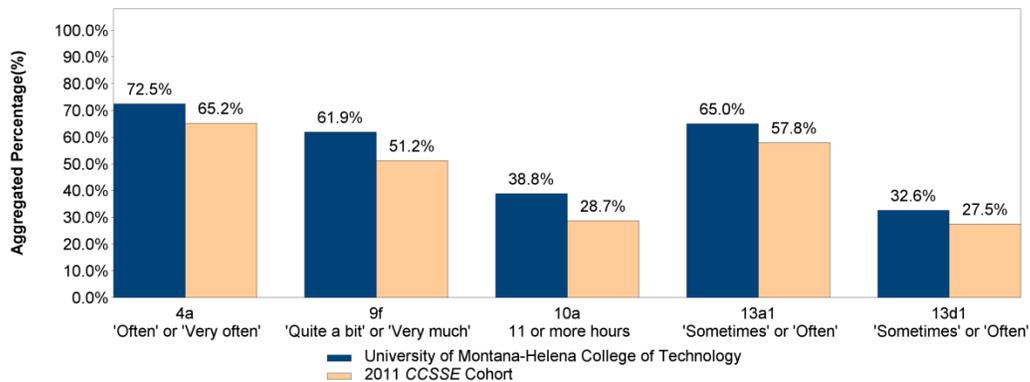


Table 1

Benchmark	Item Number	Item
Active and Collaborative Learning	4a	Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
Support for Learners	9f	Providing the financial support you need to afford your education
Student Effort	10a	Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to your program)
Support for Learners	13a1	Frequency: Academic advising/planning
Student Effort	13d1	Frequency: Peer or other tutoring

Notes:

For Item(s) 4, 'Often' and 'Very Often' responses are combined.

For Item(s) 9, 'Quite a bit' and 'Very much' are combined.

For Item(s) 10, '11 to 20,' '21-30,' and 'More than 30' hours are combined.

For Item(s) 13, 'Sometimes' and 'Often' are combined.

Aspects of Lowest Student Engagement

Figure 4 displays the aggregated frequencies for the items on which the college performed least favorably compared with the 2011 CCSSE Cohort. For instance, 24.3% of University of Montana-Helena College of Technology students (n=440), compared with 29.3% of other students in the cohort, responded 'Often' or 'Very often' on item 4b.

Figure 4

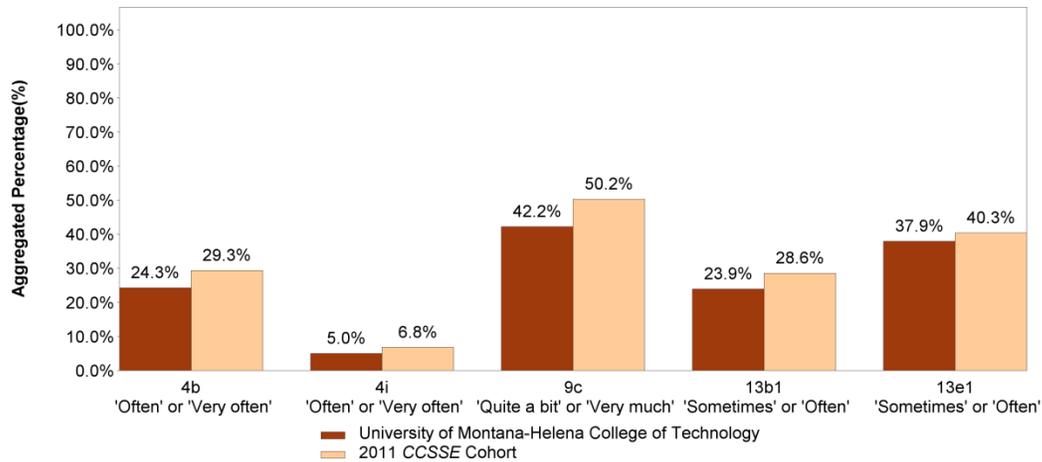


Table 2

Benchmark	Item Number	Item
Active and Collaborative Learning	4b	Made a class presentation
Active and Collaborative Learning	4i	Participated in a community-based project as a part of a regular course
Support for Learners	9c	Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
Support for Learners	13b1	Frequency: Career counseling
Student Effort	13e1	Frequency: Skill labs (writing, math, etc.)

Notes:

For Item(s) 4, 'Often' and 'Very Often' responses are combined.

For Item(s) 9, 'Quite a bit' and 'Very much' are combined.

For Item(s) 13, 'Sometimes' and 'Often' are combined.

2011 CCSSE Special-Focus Items

The Center adds special-focus items to *CCSSE* each year to augment the core survey, helping participating colleges and the field at large to further explore fundamental areas of student engagement. The 2011 special-focus items elicited new information about students' experiences associated with promising educational practices such as early registration, orientation, freshman seminars, organized learning communities, and student success courses. Frequency results from the first five "promising practices" items for University of Montana-Helena College of Technology (n=410) and the 2011 *CCSSE* Cohort are displayed across pages 6 and 7.

Figure 5: During the current semester/quarter at this college, I completed registration before the first class session(s).

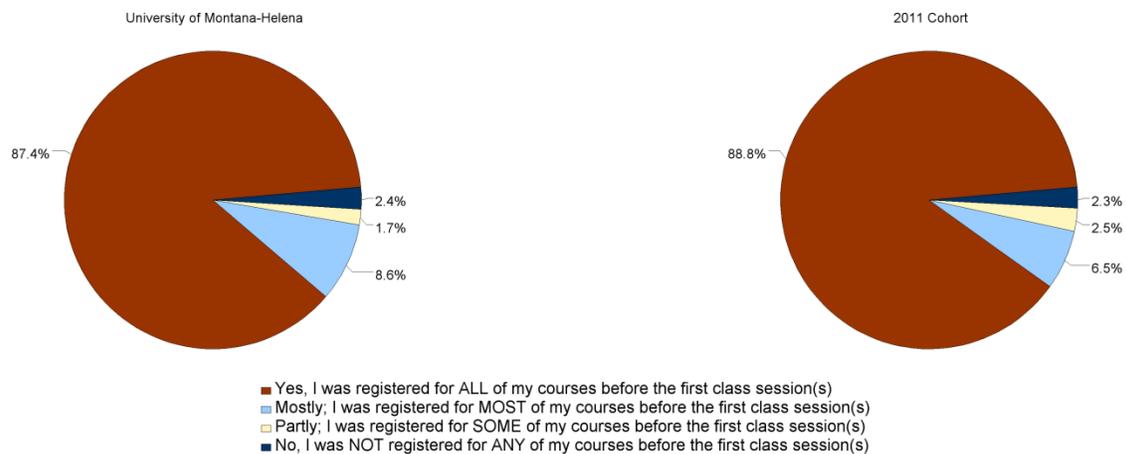


Figure 6: The ONE response that best describes my experience with orientation when I first came to this college is...

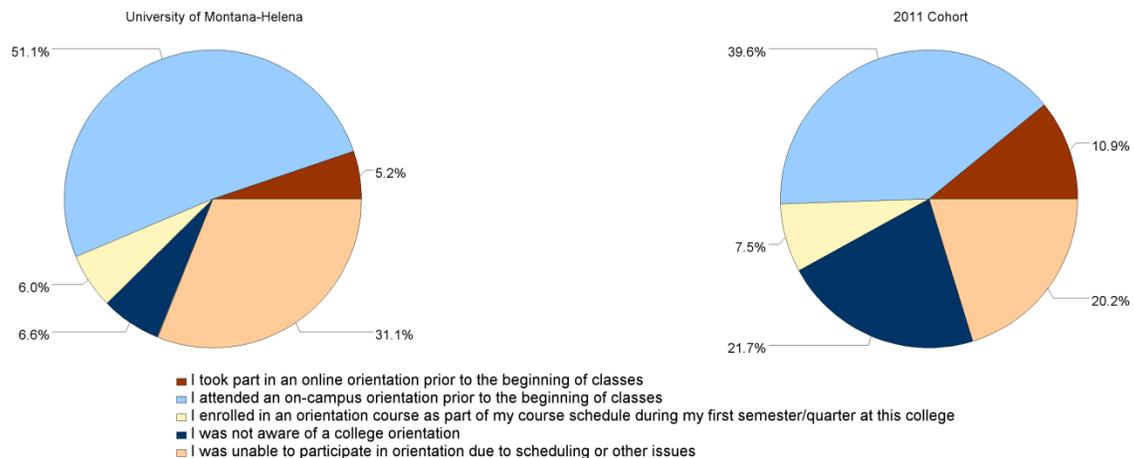


Figure 7: During my first semester/quarter at this college, I participated in a structured experience for new students (sometimes called a "freshman seminar" or "first-year experience").

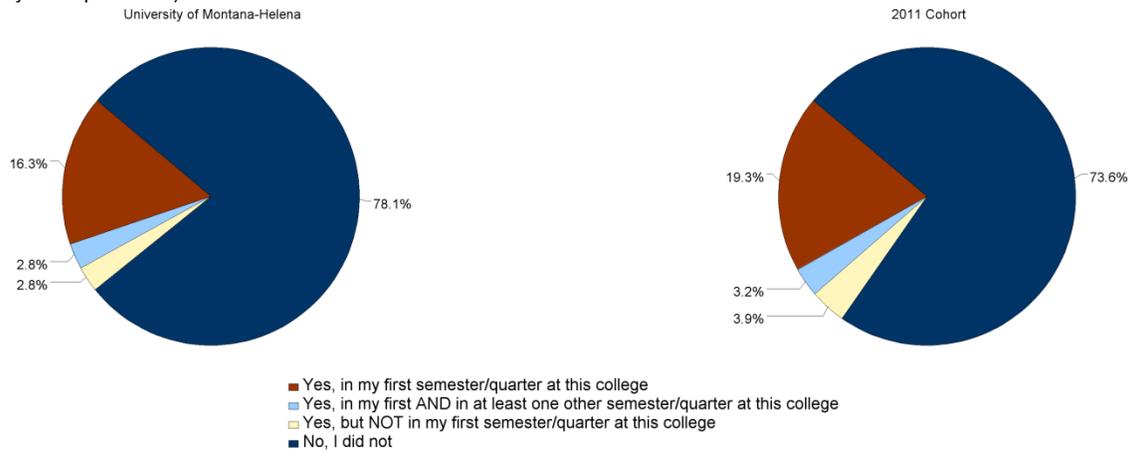


Figure 8: During my first semester/quarter at this college, I enrolled in an organized "learning community" (two or more courses that a group of students take together).

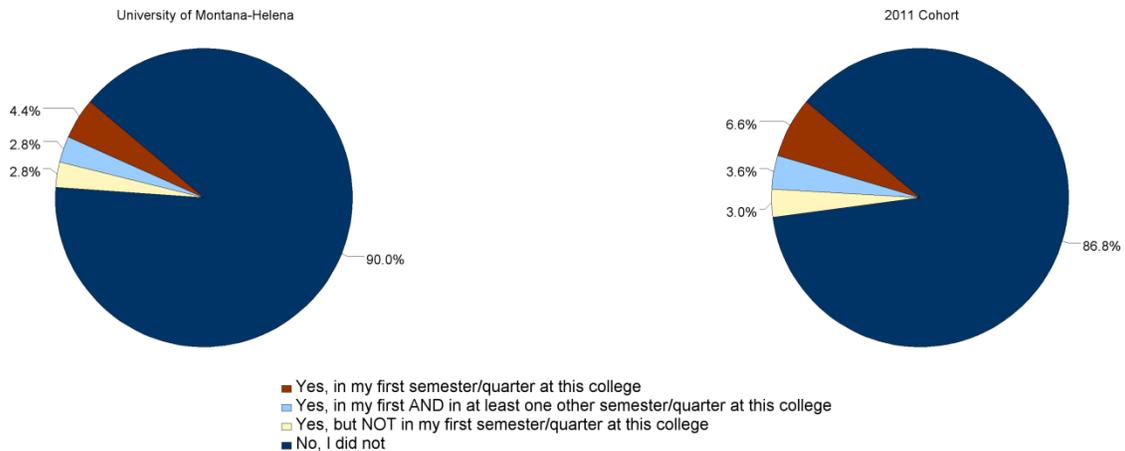
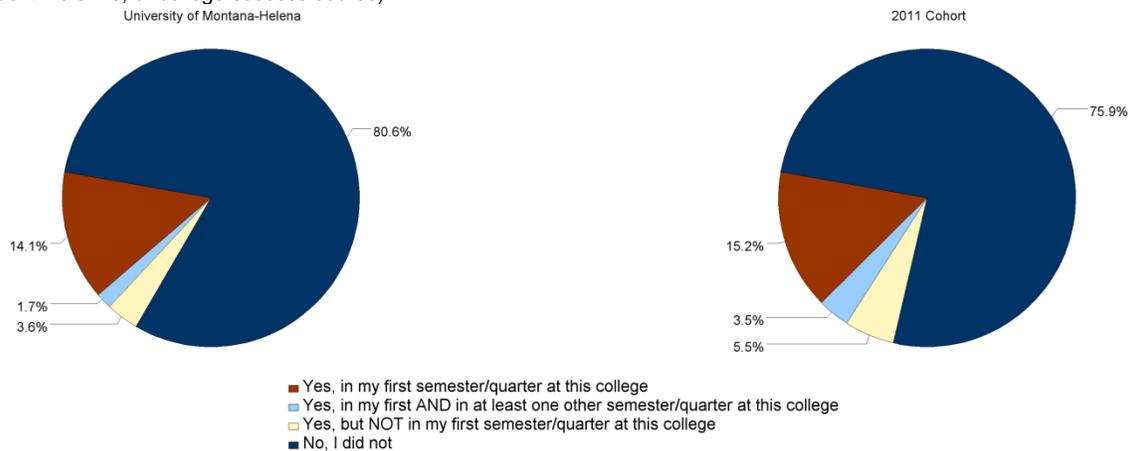


Figure 9: During my first semester/quarter at this college, I enrolled in a student success course (such as a student development, extended orientation, study skills, student life skills, or college success course).

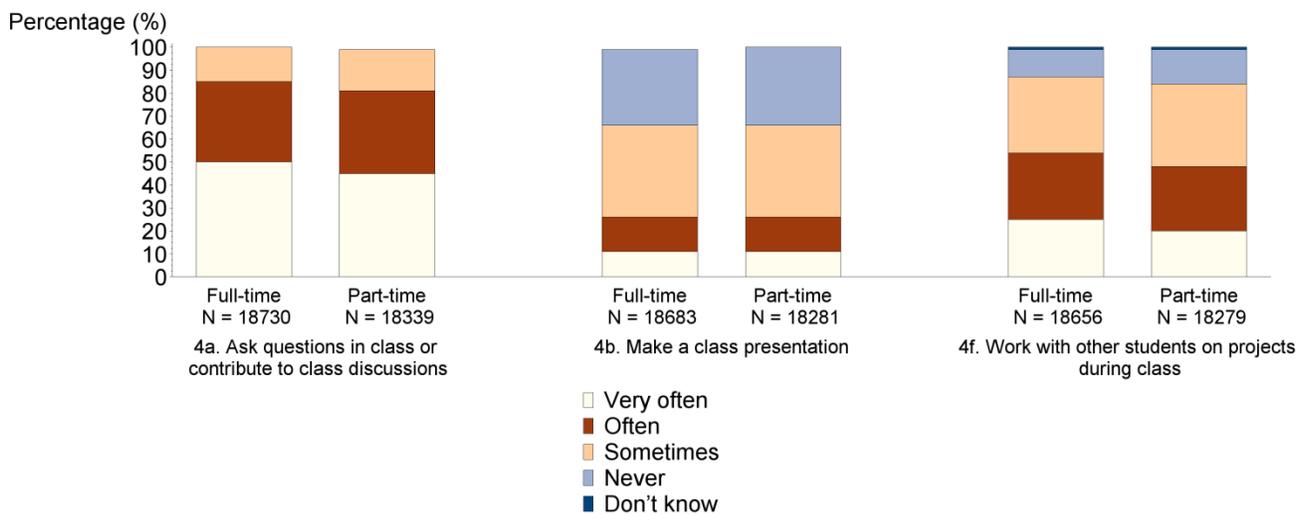


CCFSSE

The Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (*CCFSSE*), designed as a companion survey to *CCSSE*, elicits information from faculty about their teaching practices; the ways they spend their professional time, both in and out of class; and their perceptions regarding students' educational experiences. *CCFSSE* data not only help participating colleges identify areas of strength, but also enable them to recognize challenges or gaps that may require further consideration. The *CCFSSE* results displayed below reveal full- and part-time faculty members' perceptions of three in-class student experiences. *Cohort data are provided for colleges that did not administer CCFSSE.*

Faculty Perceptions of Student Experiences by Employment Status

Figure 10



Response	4a. Ask questions in class or contributed to class discussions		4b. Make a class presentation		4f. Work with other students on projects during class	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Very Often	49.8%	45.3%	11.3%	10.9%	25.2%	19.7%
Often	34.6%	36.1%	15.5%	14.8%	29.3%	27.7%
Sometimes	15.4%	18.3%	40.0%	39.5%	33.2%	36.5%
Never	0.2%	0.2%	32.9%	34.5%	11.6%	14.9%
Don't Know	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.7%	1.1%