

El Camino College Compton Center

The Survey of Entering Student Engagement

Overview of 2014 Survey Results



Introduction

The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (*SENSE*), a survey from the Center for Community College Student Engagement, helps community colleges discover why some entering students persist and succeed and others do not.

Administered during the 4th and 5th weeks of the Fall 2014 academic term, *SENSE* asked students to reflect on their earliest experiences (academic and services-related) with El Camino College Compton Center. *SENSE* serves as a complementary piece to the [Community College Survey of Student Engagement \(CCSSE\)](#), with a more narrowed focus on early student experiences.

SENSE Member Colleges

SENSE data analyses are based on a three-year cohort of entering student data from participating colleges. This approach increases the total number of institutions and students contributing to the national data set, which in turn increases the reliability of the overall results. In addition, the three-year cohort approach minimizes the impact, in any given year, of statewide consortium participation. If a college participated more than one time in the three-year period, the cohort includes data only from that college's most recent year of participation.

The *SENSE* 2014 (2012-2014) cohort includes 267 institutions in 39 states, the District of Columbia, British Columbia, and Nova Scotia. One-hundred and two 2014 cohort colleges are classified as small (<4,500), 65 as medium (4,500-7,999), 66 as large (8,000-14,999), and 34 as extra-large institutions (15,000 + credit students). Sixty-eight of the colleges are classified as urban-serving, 57 as suburban-serving, and 142 as rural-serving.

SENSE Sampling

In *SENSE* sampling procedures, students are sampled at the classroom level. The survey was administered in classes randomly selected from those courses most likely to enroll entering students, with a random sample pulled from all first college-level English and math courses and all developmental reading, writing, and math courses, excluding ESL courses.

Of those entering students sampled at Compton Center, 399 respondents submitted usable surveys. The number of completed surveys produced an overall "percent of target" rate of 40%. The percent of target rate is the ratio of the adjusted number of completed surveys (surveys that were filled out properly and did not fall into any of the exclusionary categories) to the target sample size. The margin of error is $\pm 4.6\%$.

Excluded Respondents

Exclusions serve the purpose of ensuring that all institutional reports are based on the same sampling methods and that results are therefore comparable across institutions. Respondents are excluded from institutional reports for the following reasons:

- ✘ The respondent did not indicate whether he or she was enrolled full-time or less than full-time.
 - ✘ The respondent did not indicate whether he or she was an entering or returning student.
 - ✘ The survey is invalid. A survey is invalid if a student answered all sub-items of Item 19 as either *never* or *four or more times*.
 - ✘ The student reported his or her age as under 18.
 - ✘ The student indicated that he or she had taken the survey in a previous class or did not respond to item 1.
 - ✘ Oversample respondents are not included because they are selected outside of *SENSE's* primary sampling procedures.
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2014 Student Respondent Profile

Enrollment Status

Thirty percent of Compton Center entering student respondents report being less than full-time college students, compared to 27% of the 2014 *SENSE* Cohort colleges' entering student respondents. Seventy percent of the entering student respondents at Compton Center report attending college full-time, while 73% of the 2014 *SENSE* Cohort colleges' entering student respondents attended full-time. Population data¹ for all students at Compton Center are 77% less than full-time and 23% full-time. This inverse representation is a result of the sampling technique and the in-class administration process. For this reason, survey results are either weighted or disaggregated on the full-time/less than full-time variable so that reports will accurately reflect the underlying student population.

Age

Entering student respondents at Compton Center range in age from 18 to 64 years old. Seventy-nine percent are between 18 and 24 years old. Students at Compton Center are older than the 2014 *SENSE* Cohort respondents, of which 82% of students are between 18 and 24.

Gender

Forty percent of Compton Center entering student respondents are male and 56% are female, which is comparable to the 2014 *SENSE* Cohort, which is 43% male and 54% female.

Racial/Ethnic Identification

One percent of Compton Center entering student respondents identified themselves as White, Non-Hispanic; 61% as Hispanic, Latino, Spanish; 20% as Black or African American; and 3% as Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander. One percent of the student respondents are American Indian or Native American. Three percent marked *other* when responding to the question, "What is your racial/ethnic identification?" Compton Center's student sample has a different racial/ethnic composition than the 2014 *SENSE* Cohort, which is comprised of 49% White/Non-Hispanic; 19% Hispanic, Latino, Spanish; 15% Black or African American; 3% Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander; and 2% American Indian or Native American respondents.

¹ Population data are those reported for the most recent IPEDS enrollment report.

International Students

Eight percent of Compton Center entering students responded yes to the question, “Are you an international student or nonresident alien?” Compton Center has more international students than in the 2014 *SENSE* Cohort, of which 5% are international.

First-Generation Status

Sixty-eight percent of entering student respondents indicated that neither parent has college experience.

The results for the following student respondent categories are weighted according to the most recent IPEDS population data.

Language Background

At Compton Center, 40% of *SENSE* respondents indicated that English was not their first language.

Orientation

Fifty-eight percent of entering student respondents report attending an on-campus orientation prior to the beginning of classes, while 28% report attending an online orientation. Three percent of entering student respondents report enrolling in an orientation course during their first semester at Compton Center.

Courses Dropped

Seventeen percent of entering student respondents report dropping at least one course after the first day of class.

External Commitments

Twenty-two percent of entering student respondents work 21 or more hours per week.

Goals

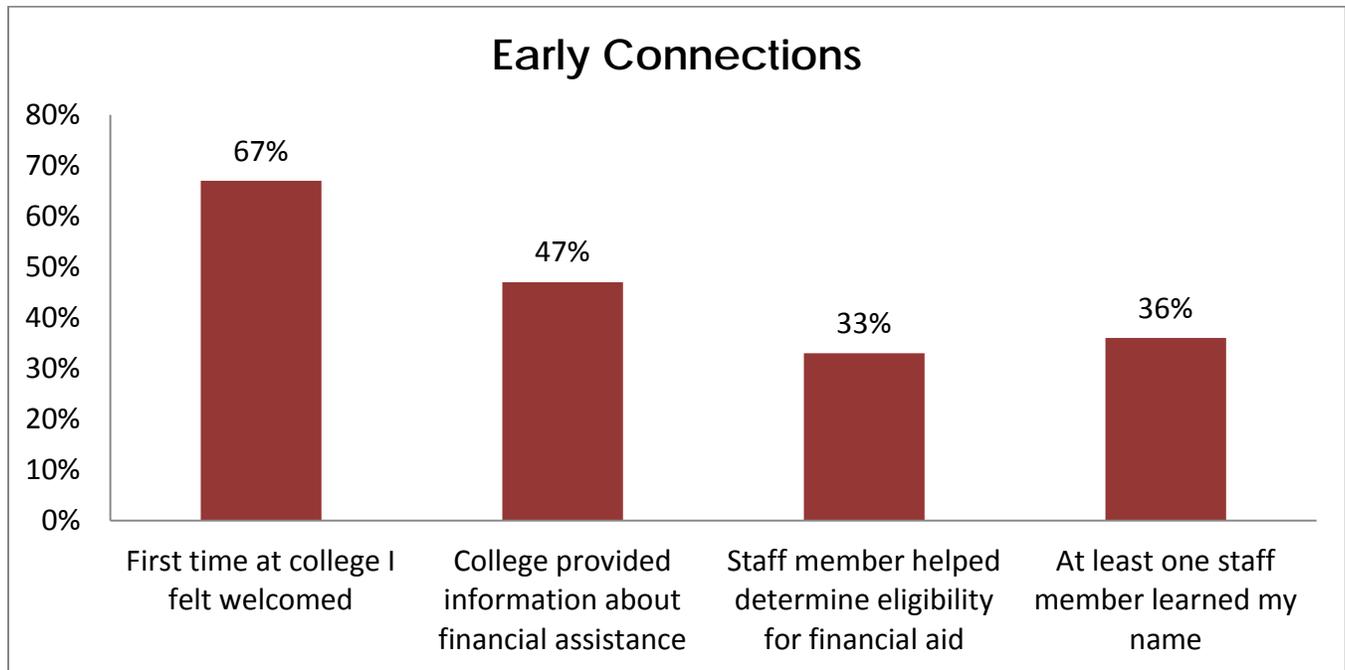
Entering student respondents were asked to indicate their reasons or goals for attending this college; students could choose more than one goal. Sixty-two percent indicated that completing a certificate is a goal, 83% indicated that obtaining an Associate degree is a goal, and 87% indicated that transfer to a 4-year college is a goal.

SENSE Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

To assist colleges in their efforts to reach for excellence, the Center for Community College Student Engagement reports national benchmarks of effective practice with entering students in community colleges. Research shows that the more actively engaged students are—with faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter—the more likely they are to learn and to achieve their academic goals. *SENSE* benchmarks are groups of conceptually related survey items that focus on institutional practices and student behaviors that promote student engagement early in the college experience—and that are positively related to student learning and persistence. The six benchmarks of effective educational practice with entering students in community colleges are early connections, high expectations and aspirations, clear academic plan and pathway, effective track to college readiness, engaged learning, and academic and social support network.

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. Sixty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they felt welcomed the first time they came to Compton Center. In terms of financial aid assistance, 47% of respondents indicated that they were provided information about financial assistance, while 33% indicated a staff member helped them determine their financial aid eligibility. Additionally, respondents were asked “*was a specific person assigned to you so you could see him/her each time you needed information or assistance?*” and a low percentage, 26%, reported yes. Overall, Compton Center students reported lower levels of agreement than the national cohort sample.



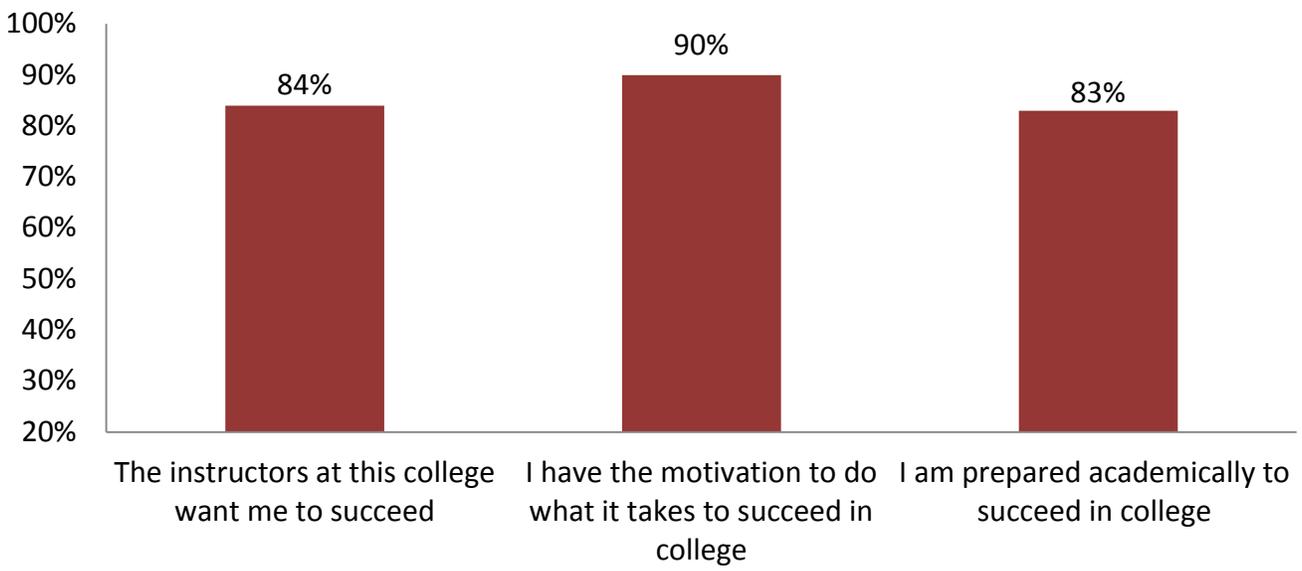
Note: Reporting percentage of those who agreed/strongly agreed

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.

Eighty-four percent of students were in agreement that their instructors wanted them to succeed. When students were asked “I have the motivation to do what it takes to succeed in college,” 90% of respondents were in agreement. Moreover, 83% of students were in agreement that they are academically prepared to succeed in college. Overall, Compton Center responses were comparable to the national cohort responses.

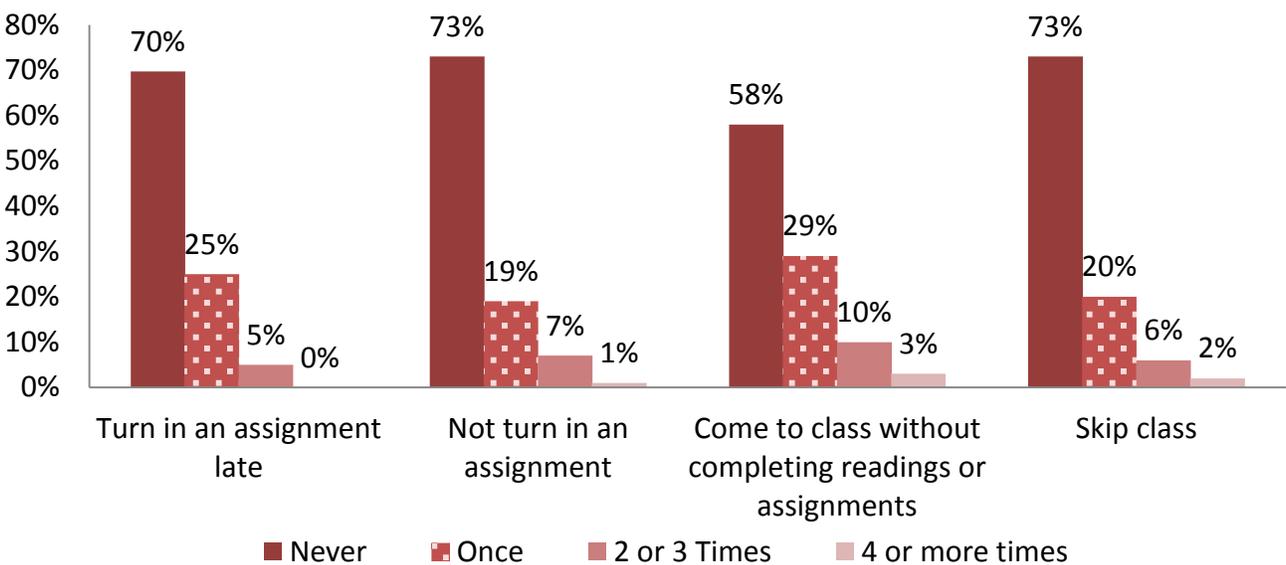
High Expectations and Aspiration



Note: Reporting percentage of those who agreed/strongly agreed

Students were also asked about their classroom behaviors. When asked how often students “turned in an assignment late,” 70% of respondents answered never, slightly higher than the national cohort sample (67%). When asked how often they did not turn in an assignment, 73% answered never while 19% said once. The percentage of respondents answering once was the same as the national cohort sample. In addition, students were asked how often they attended class having not completed their assignments or readings. A majority of respondents indicated never (58%) and once (29%), similar to the national cohort sample. Lastly, students were asked how often they skipped school. A majority of respondents, 73%, answered never, which was two percentage points lower than the national cohort sample.

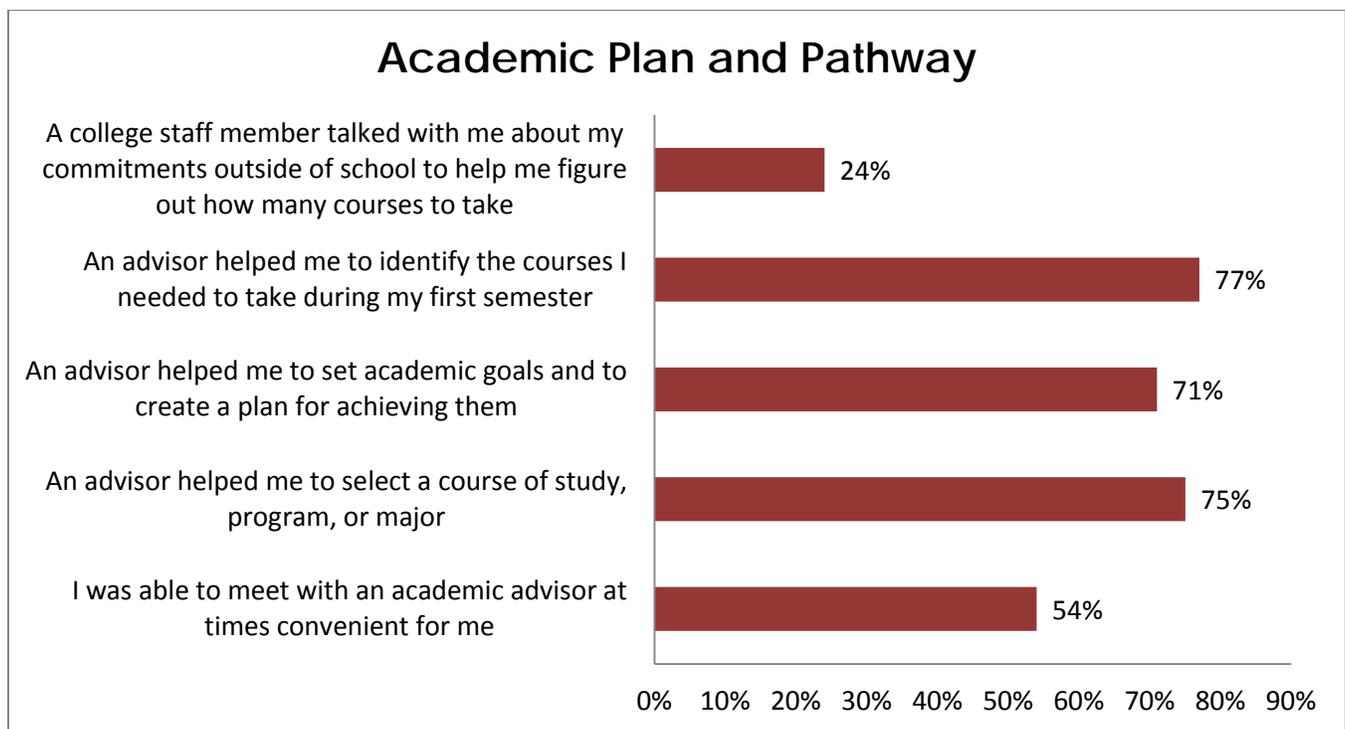
Classroom Behaviors



Clear Academic Plan and Pathway

When a student, with knowledgeable assistance, creates a road map — 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.

Students were asked various questions regarding their interaction with academic advisors. When asked about their ability to meet with academic advisors during times convenient to them, a little more than half of respondents (54%) answered agree or strongly agree. Seventy-seven percent of respondents acknowledged that advisors assisted them with identifying the courses needed for their first semester, while 75% reported having an advisor help them select a course of study, program or major. Additionally, 71% of students reported that an advisor helped them set academic goals and create a plan for achieving them. When students were asked about the type of advice obtained from Compton Center staff members in general, about a fourth of respondents (24%) agreed that a staff member had talked to them about outside commitments when determining how many courses to take.

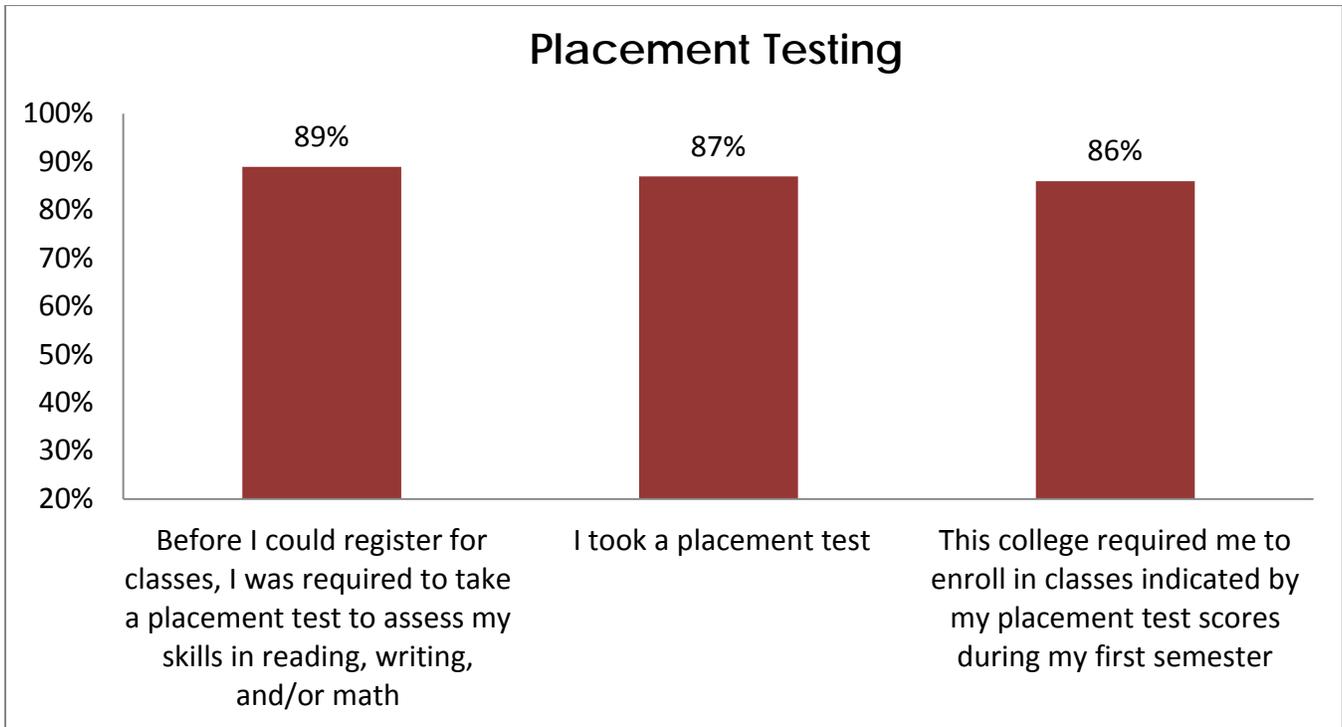


Note: Reporting percentage of those who agreed/strongly agreed

Effective Track to College Readiness

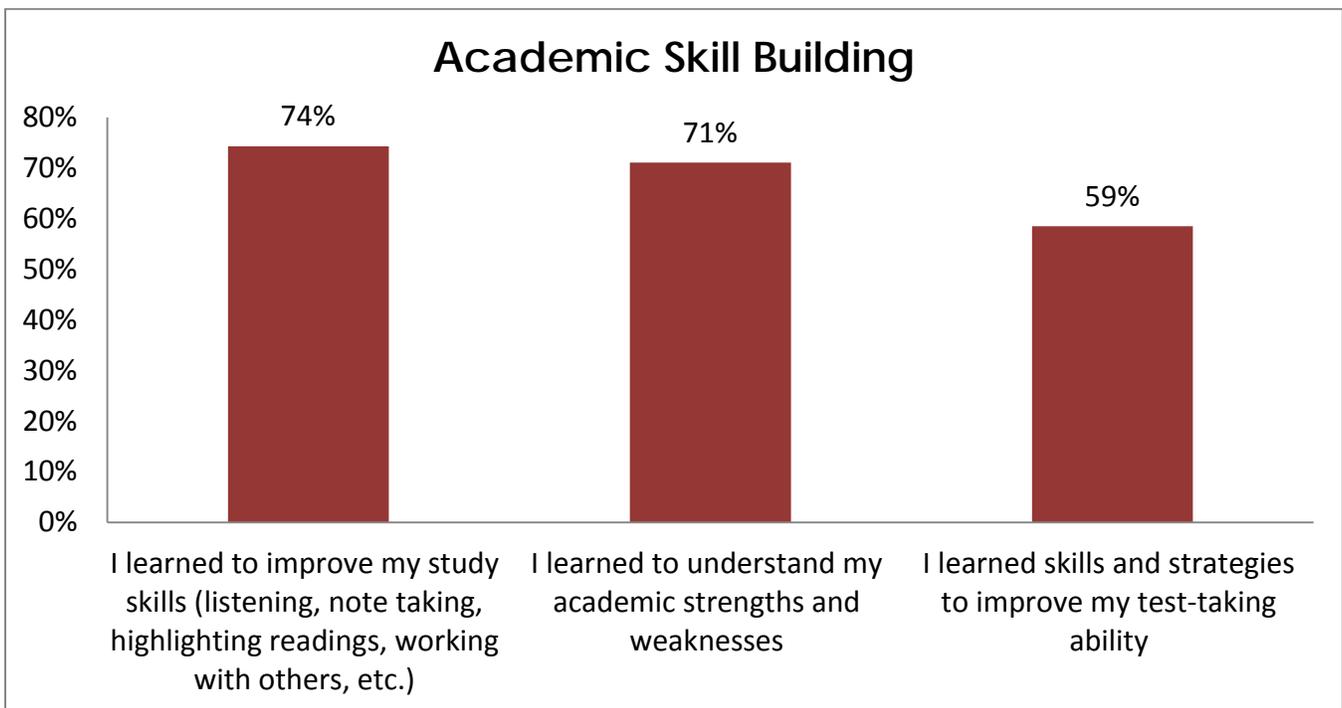
Nationally, more than 6 in 10 entering community college students are underprepared for college-level work. Thus, significant improvements in student success will hinge upon effective assessment, placement of students into appropriate courses, and implementation of effective strategies to ensure that students build academic skills and receive needed support.

Compton Center students were asked about their experience with placement testing. Eighty-nine percent of respondents reported they were required to take a placement test prior to registering for classes and 87% stated having taken a placement test. Furthermore, 86% of students indicated the "college required me to enroll in classes indicated by my placement test scores during my first semester."



Note: Reporting percentage of those who responded Yes

The survey also asked questions regarding academic skill building. Students were asked if experiences at the Compton Center helped to improve their study skills and 74% of respondents indicated they agreed or strongly agreed. Additionally, 71% of respondents indicated they learned to “understand their academic strengths and weaknesses” and over half of all respondents specified learning skills and strategies to improve test-taking ability.



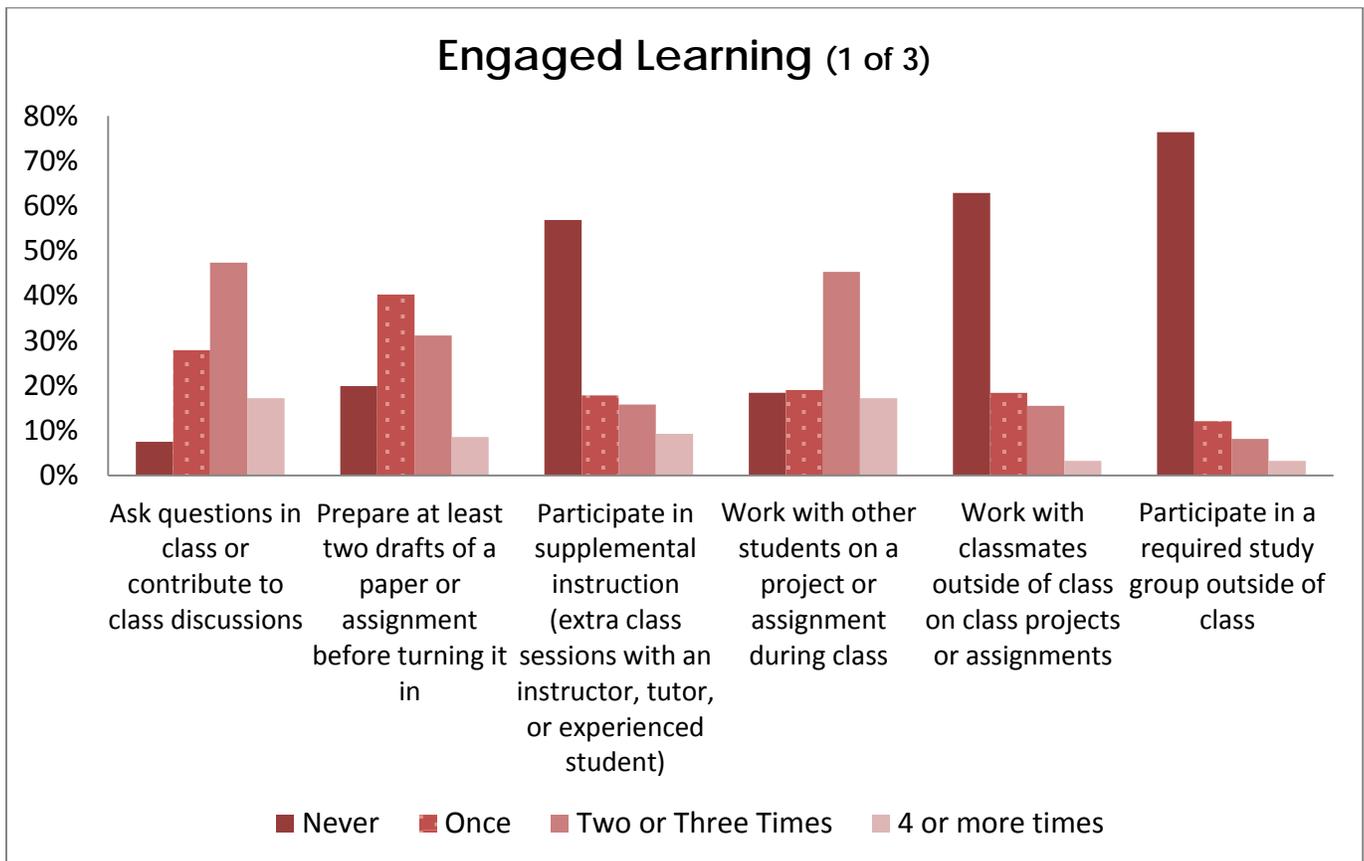
Note: Reporting percentage of those who agreed/strongly agreed

Engaged Learning

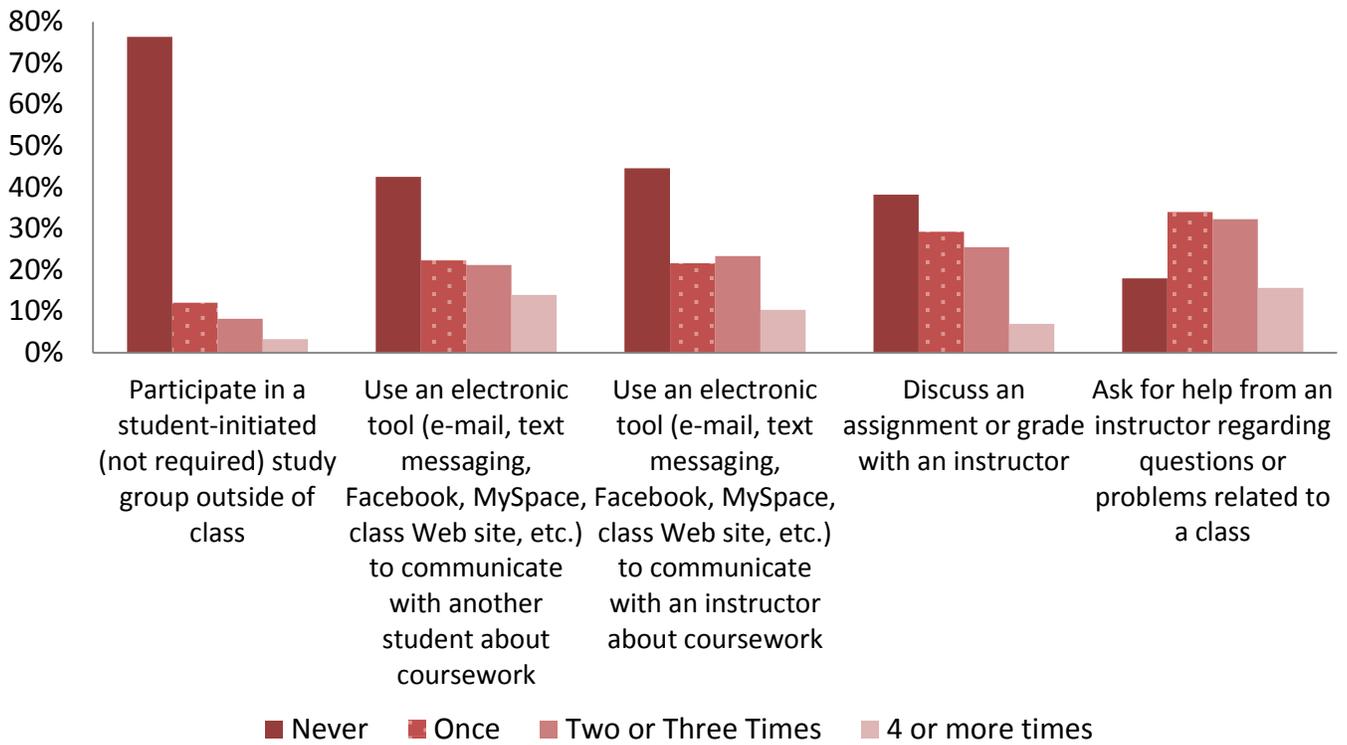
Instructional approaches that foster engaged learning are critical for student success. Because most community college students attend college part-time, and most also must find ways to balance their studies with work and family responsibilities, the most effective learning experiences will be those the college intentionally designs.

Respondents were asked various questions about their involvement in institutionalized engaged learning activities. For activities in which students engaged two or more times, only three had half or more respondents acknowledge involvement. The majority of respondents, 65%, indicated they engaged in asking questions or contributing to class discussions while 63% reported working with other students on a project or assignment during class. Additionally, 54% indicated using the computer lab at least 2 times.

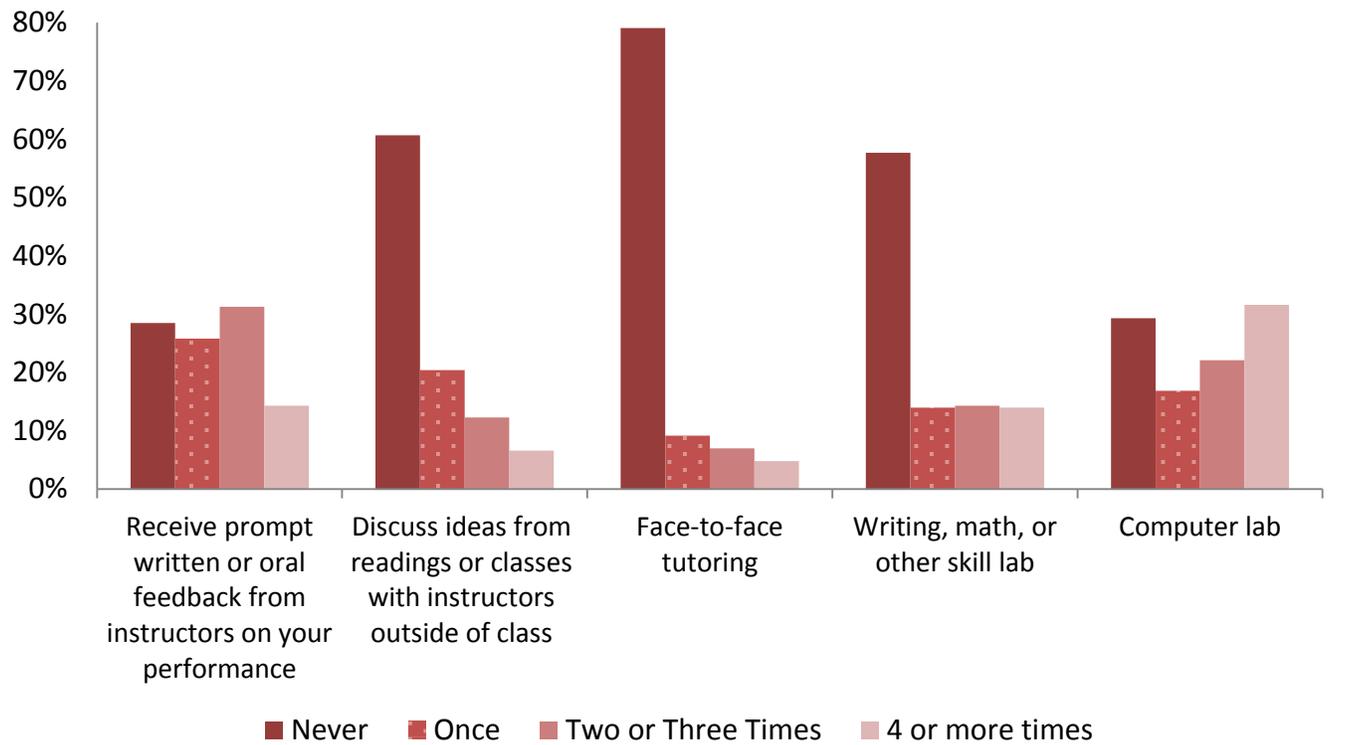
For activities in which students engaged only one time, the highest activities indicated were preparing at least two drafts of a paper (40%), asking help from instructors (34%), and discussing an assignment or grade with an instructor (29%). The learning activities with the highest reported responses of no engagement included face-to-face tutoring (79%), participating in a voluntary study group outside of class (76%), and participating in a required study group outside of class (74%).



Engaged Learning (2 of 3)



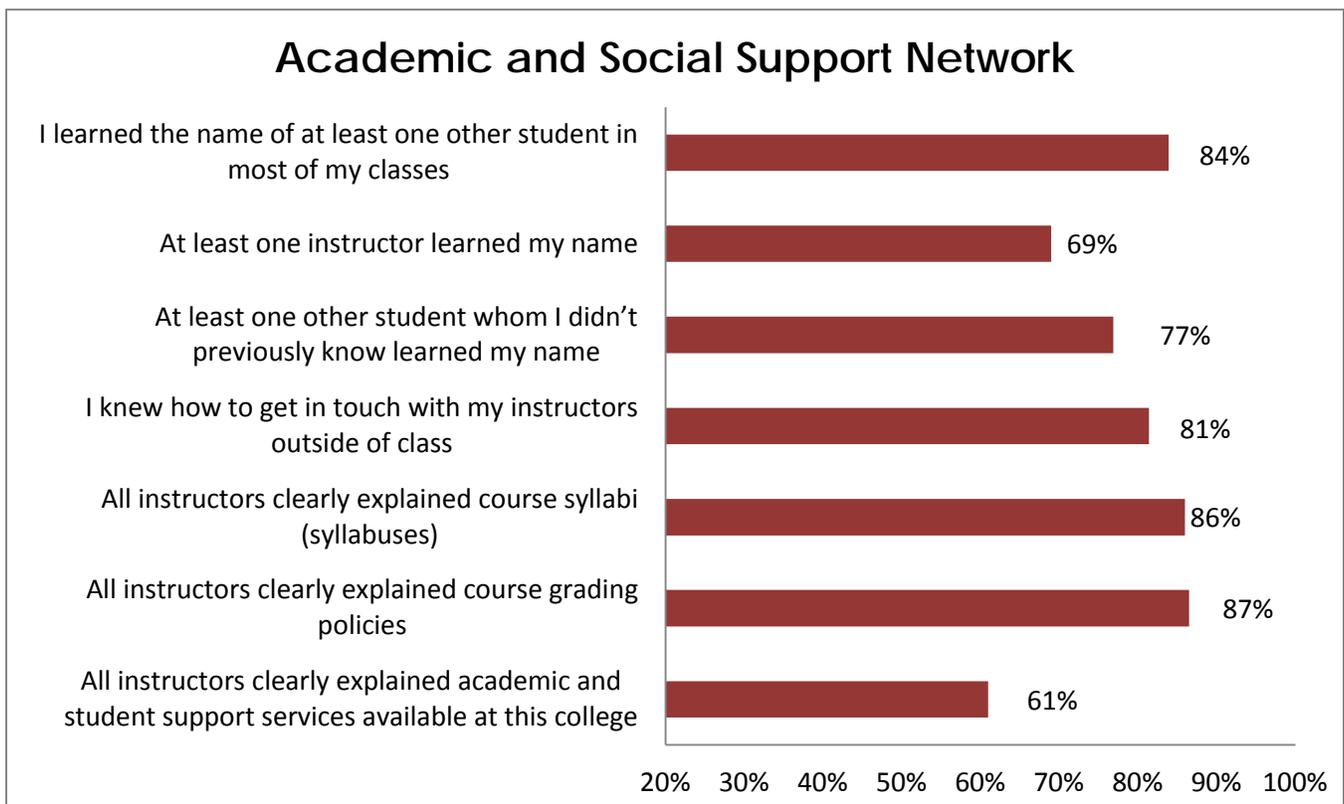
Engaged Learning (3 of 3)



Academic and Social Support Network

Students benefit from having a personal network that enables them to obtain information about college services, along with the academic and social support critical to student success. Because entering students often don't know what they don't know, colleges must purposefully create those networks.

Compton Center students were asked questions regarding the type of support they received from faculty and fellow peers. Eighty-seven percent of students surveyed agreed that their instructors communicated the course grading policies. A similar percentage (86%) agreed that instructors clearly explained the expectations and requirements of their courses clearly. Over three-fourths of students (81%) indicated they knew how to get in touch with an instructor outside of class and 84% of students acknowledged learning the name of at least one other student.

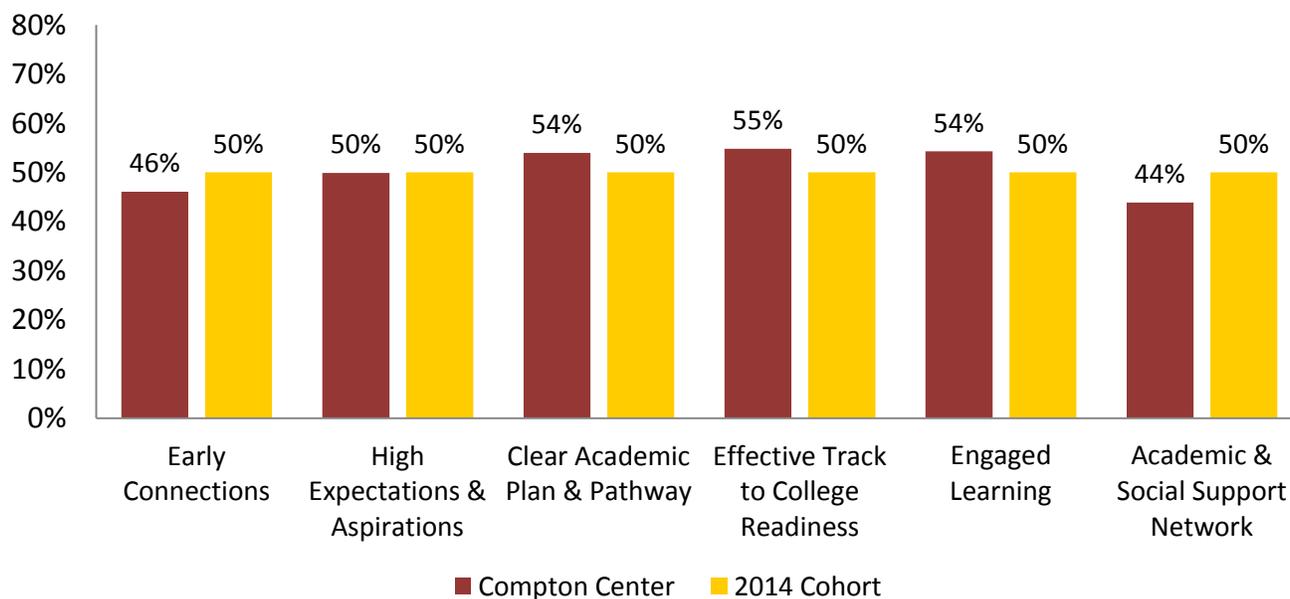


Note: Reporting percentage of those who agreed/strongly agreed

SENSE Benchmark comparisons

Benchmarks are used to compare each institution's performance to that of similar institutions and with the *SENSE* Cohort. Each individual benchmark score is computed by averaging the scores on survey items that make up that benchmark. Benchmark scores are then standardized so that the mean (the average of all participating students) always is 50 and the standard deviation is 25.

SENSE Benchmark Scores for Compton Center Compared to 2014 Cohort



Among the six *SENSE* benchmarks, Compton Center's highest benchmark score was that of effective track to college readiness followed by engaged learning. The lowest benchmark scores were academic & social support network, and early connections. Additionally, in comparison to the 2014 Cohort scores, the Compton Center benchmark scores were lower in early connections and academic & social support network.

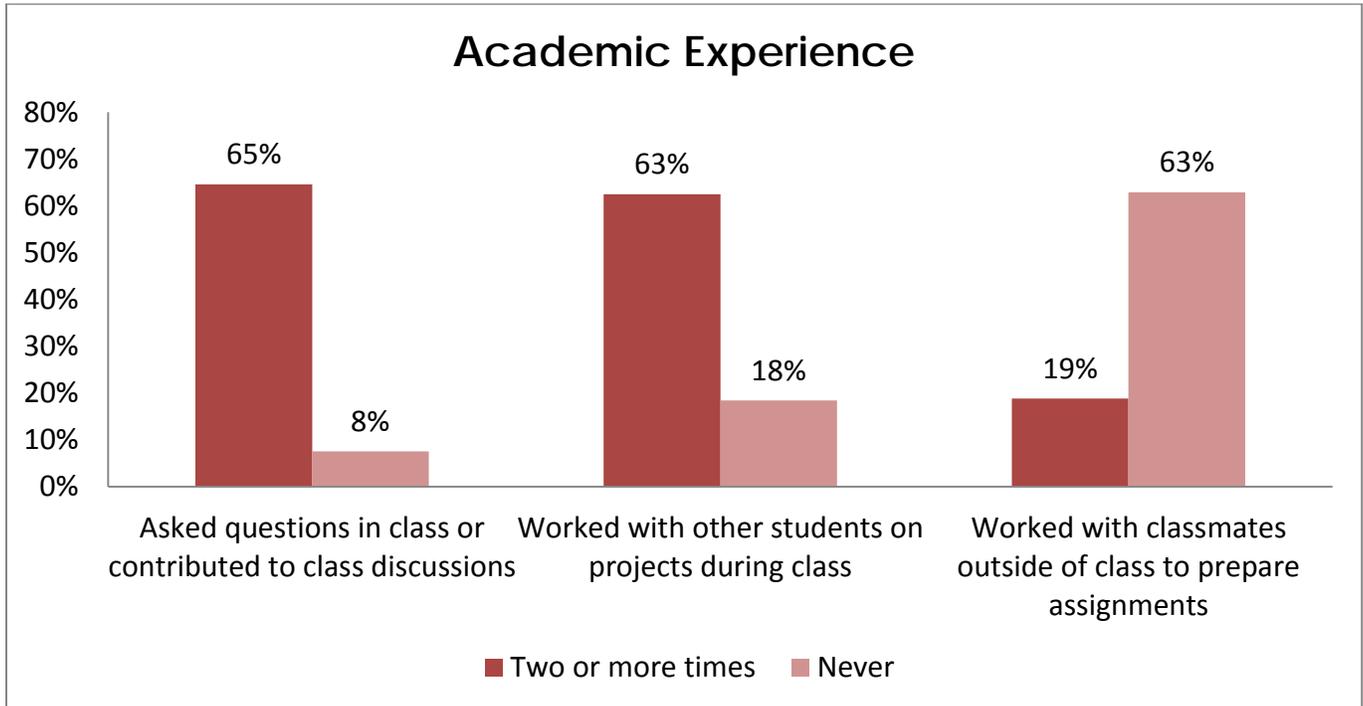
Selected Findings

Academic Experience

A positive academic experience is a product of many ingredients, one of which is the amount of time and energy students invest in their academic work and spend collaborating with others. SENSE asks students to respond to several survey items in order to gauge how actively they are involved in their education. Students are given the opportunity to mark never, once, two or three times, or four or more times in response to items such as the following:

- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Worked with other students on projects during class
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments

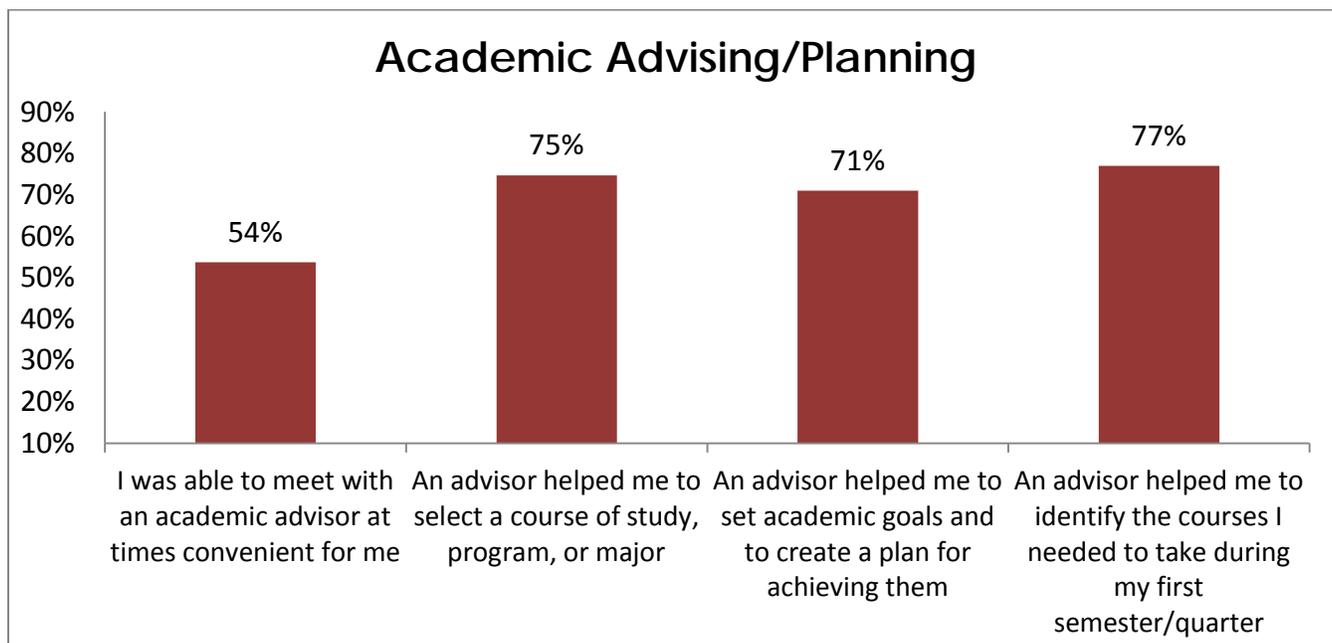
While some students are highly involved in their academic experience (those who marked two or more times), others are less engaged, as illustrated by their responses of never, as displayed in the following graph.



Academic Advising/Planning

Most community colleges have academic and goal setting policies to help students start right. Students were asked about their experiences with academic advising and planning. Sixty-nine percent of respondents reported knowing about academic advising/planning. Seventy-one percent of students reported using academic advising/planning at least once. Of those students, only half the students (49%) reported being very satisfied with the service. The low satisfaction rate could be due to students not being able to meet with an academic advisor at a convenient time. Only 54% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to meet with an advisor at a time convenient for them. Also, 74% of students reported not being assigned to a specific person to see each time they needed assistance.

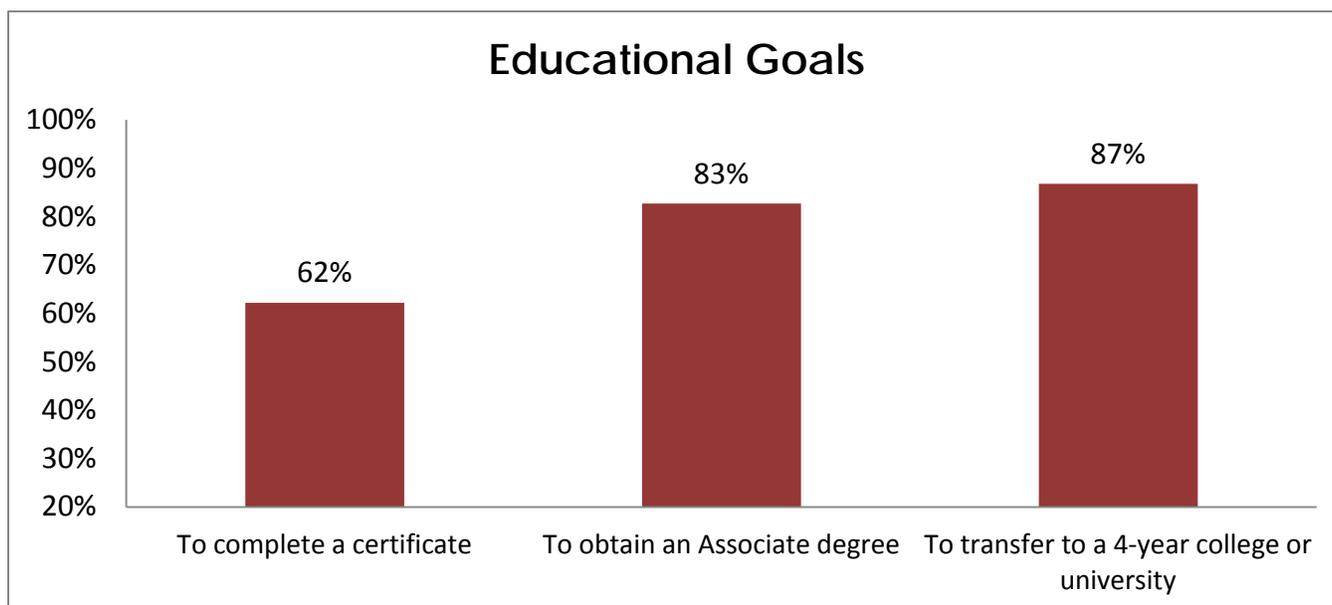
It is also important to ensure students are being helped appropriately when meeting with an academic advisor. Overall, the majority of students reported their advisor helping them with selecting a course of study, program or major (75%), setting academic goals and creating a plan to achieve them (71%), and identifying necessary courses to enroll in during their first semester (77%).



Note: Reporting percentage of those who agreed/strongly agreed

Educational Goals/Reasons for Attending College

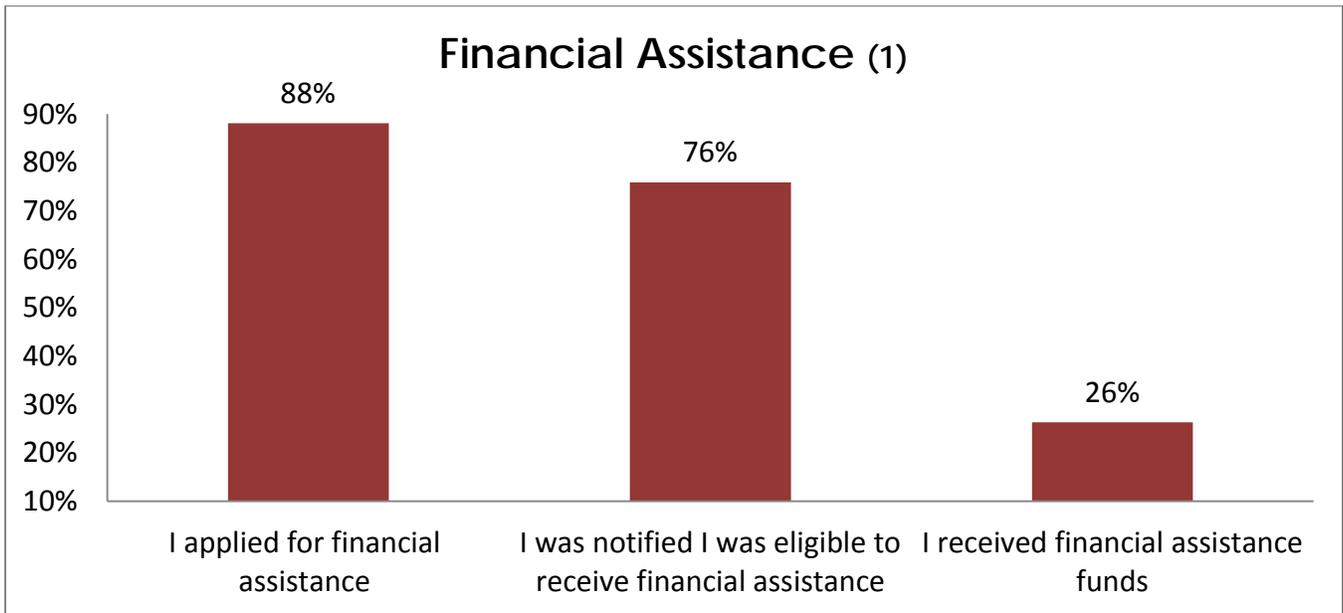
Community colleges have multiple missions and goals, as do their students. Students responding to the survey were given the opportunity to report their educational goals. They had the opportunity to indicate whether or not completing a certificate, obtaining an Associate degree, or transferring to a 4-year college or university was an educational goal. Students were allowed to indicate more than one goal. The majority of Compton Center students indicated that transferring to a 4-year college or university (87%) or obtaining an Associate degree (83%) as their educational goal.



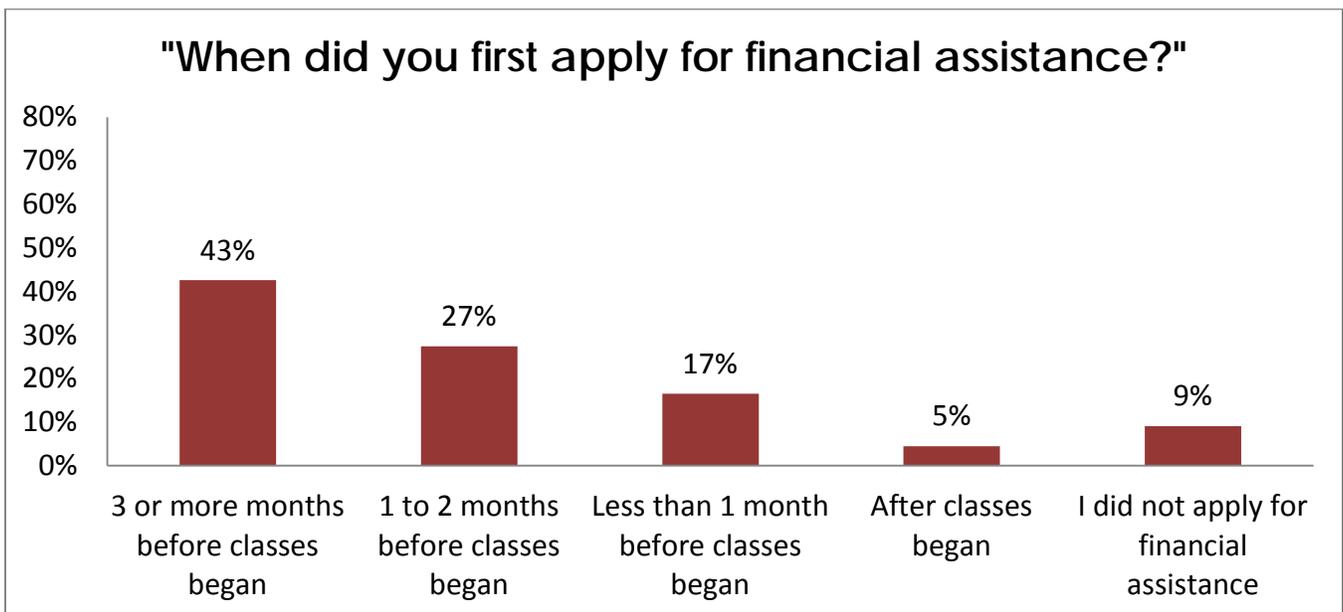
Note: Reporting percentage of those who responded Yes

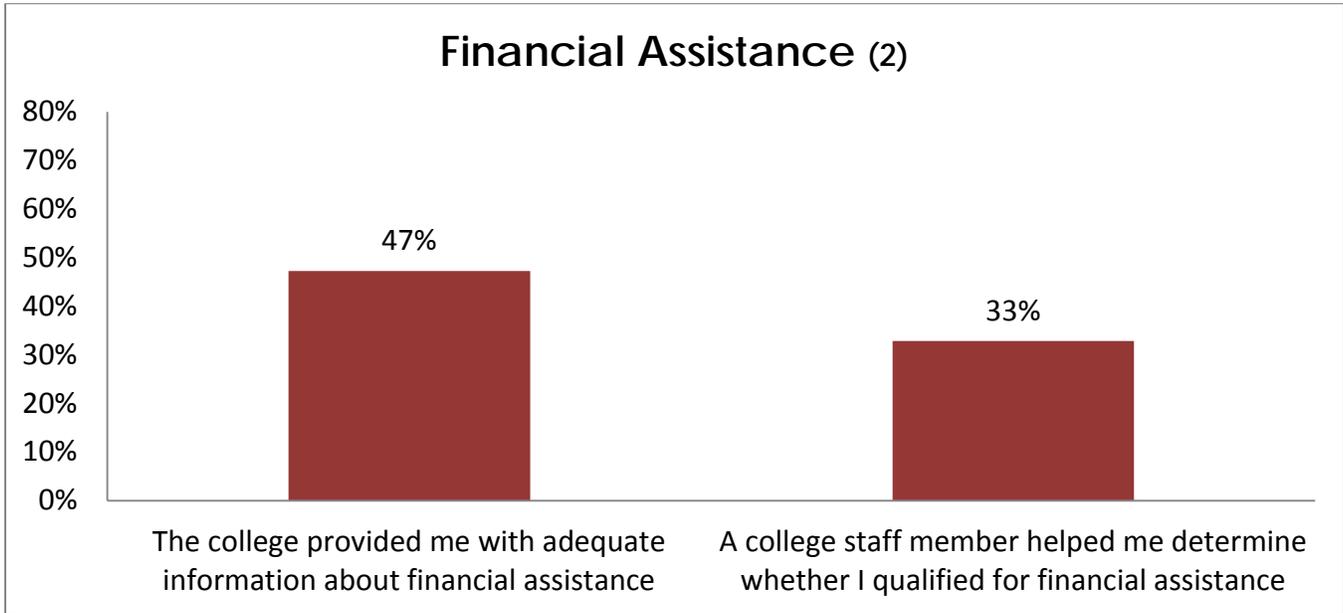
Financial Assistance

Paying for college can be a large obstacle for some students, and not receiving financial assistance could determine whether or not a student enrolls. It is important for these students to be aware of the financial assistance that is available to them. A large percentage of respondents applied for financial assistance (88%). However, only 78% of students reported knowing about financial assistance advising and 34% reported using financial assistance two or more times. Of those who reported using financial aid assistance, only 40% reported being very satisfied with the service. Forty-seven percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the college provided adequate information about financial assistance, and only 33% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a college staff member helped them determine their qualifications. The majority of students applied for financial assistance at least one month before classes began (70%). After applying for financial assistance, 76% of respondents were notified of being eligible to receive financial assistance. However, only 26% reported receiving financial assistance funds.



Note: Reporting percentage of those who responded Yes

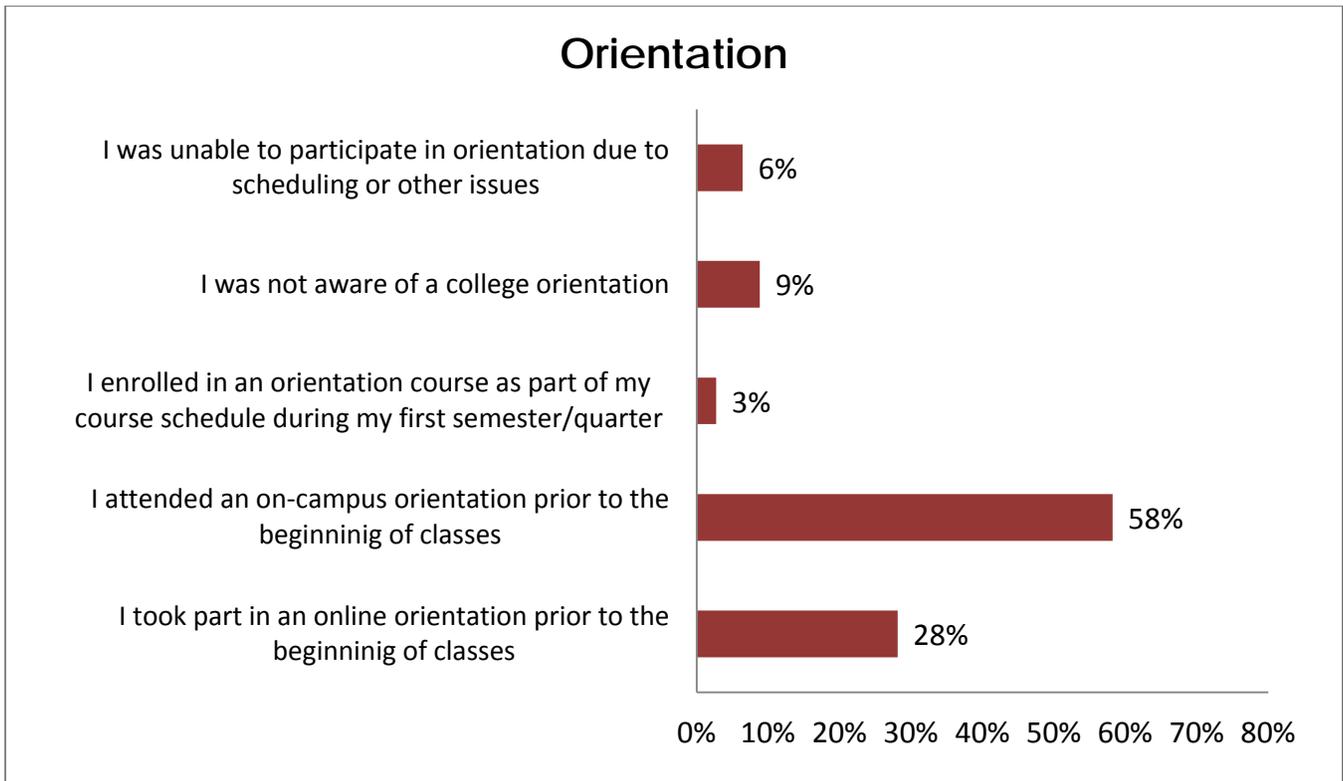




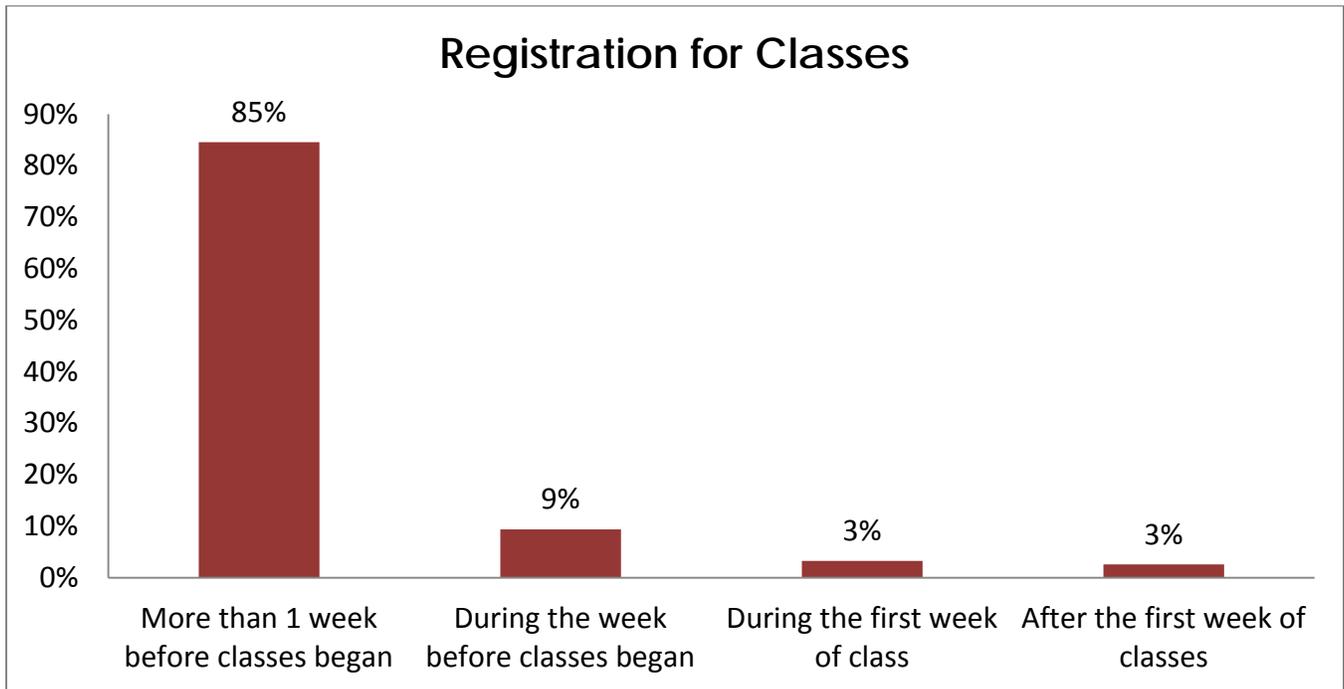
Note: Reporting percentage of those who agreed/strongly agreed

Orientation and Registration

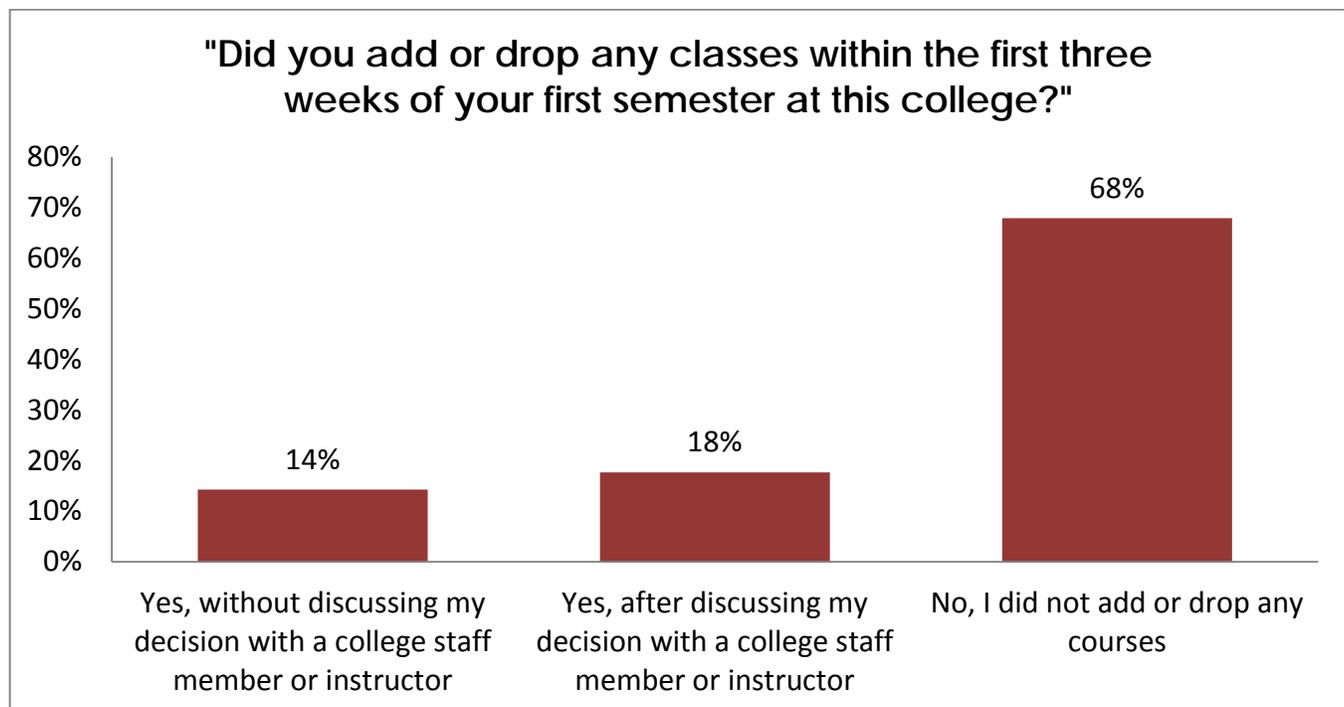
It is important to examine whether students are enrolling at the college with knowledge about the campus and the process of obtaining an education. They can obtain this knowledge through orientation. The majority of students participated in orientation either online (28%) or on-campus (58%) prior to the beginning of classes. Also important to notice is that 9% of the students were not aware of orientation, which can be a reason for some students not completing the requirements for obtaining a degree or certificate.



Equally important is to examine students' enrollment in classes. Below shows when students enrolled in their classes. The majority of students enrolled in classes before classes began (94%).

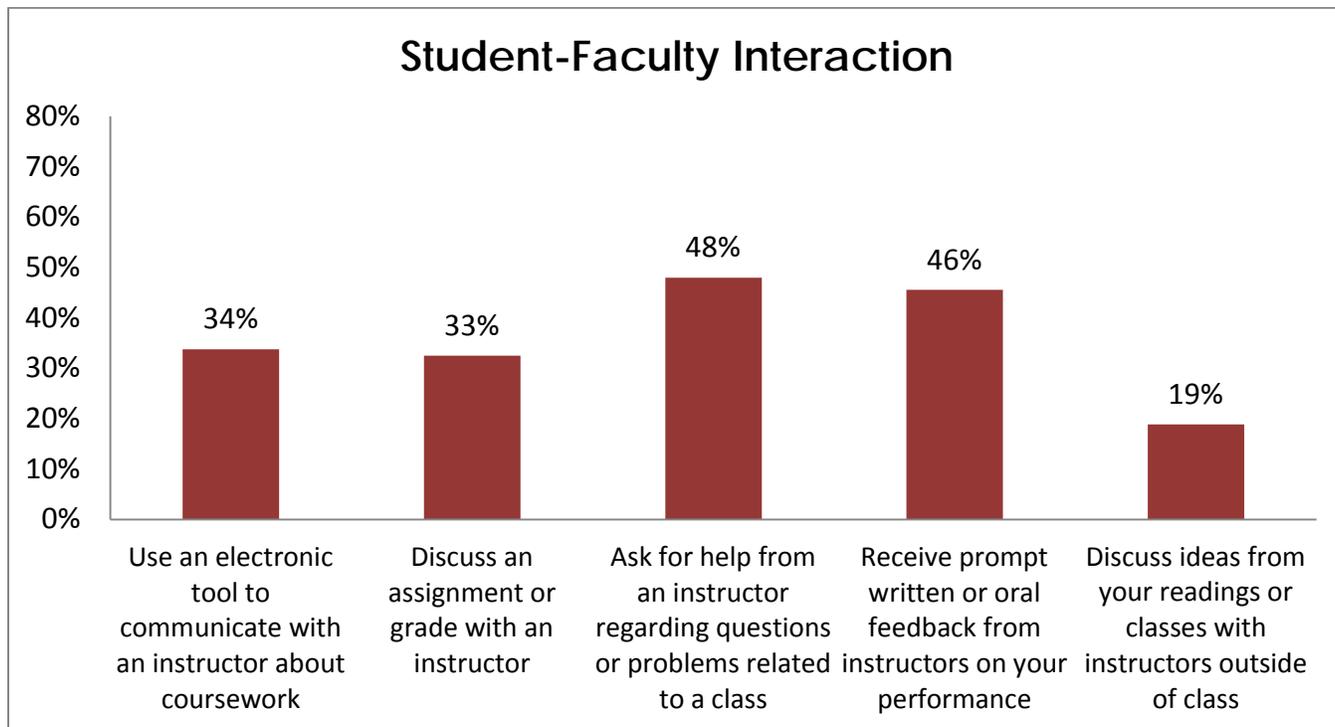


The majority of students reported enrolling in three courses (37%), with 28% enrolling into two courses, 27% in four or more, and 9% in one course. After enrollment, the majority of students did not drop a course within the first three weeks of the semester (68%). Of those who did drop a course within the first three weeks, the majority discussed their decision with a college staff or instructor. Of those who dropped courses, the majority dropped only one course.



Student-Faculty Interaction

A large factor in a student's academic experience is their engagement and interaction with their professors. Various items on the survey addressed the extent of interaction between student and faculty. Overall, less than half of the respondents engaged with their instructors two or more times in various situations. Below shows data for students who reported engaging in specific student-faculty interactions at least twice. Students were more likely to ask for help from an instructor regarding questions or problems related to a class, and least likely to discuss readings or classes with the instructor outside of the class. Also, 69% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that at least one instructor learned their names.



Note: Reporting percentage of those who reported engagement of these activities at least twice

Student Satisfaction

A useful measure of satisfaction is whether a student recommends a service or institution to others. Students were asked if they would recommend Compton Center to a friend or family member. Eighty-seven percent report they would make such a recommendation, lower than the national SENSE cohort (94%).

Support Services

Often surveys ask a combination of questions relating to satisfaction, use, or importance levels of services, but rarely are surveys designed in a way that asks students to link all three, as does the SENSE. Table 1 displays awareness of service, use, and satisfaction of a number of key academic and student support services. The first column reports the percentage of students who say that they are aware of the service; the second column shows the percentage of students who reported having used the service 2 or more times; the third column shows the percentage of students (who used the service) who report they are Very Satisfied with the service.

Over half of the Compton Center respondents reported being aware of seven of the eleven services. Many Compton Center students do not use the variety of student services available to them. Fifty-four percent of students indicated that they use computer labs 2 or more times. No other services were used by more than one-third of the Compton Center respondents.

Students were most satisfied with the computer labs, services to students with disabilities, and child care services. Students were least satisfied with job placement assistance, financial aid advising, and online tutoring, although job placement assistance and online tutoring represent categories of low usage.

	Aware of Service (Yes)	Use (2+ times)	Satisfaction* (Very)
Academic advising/planning	69%	24%	49%
Career counseling	66%	17%	50%
Job placement assistance	37%	3%	29%
Face-to-face tutoring	73%	12%	54%
Online tutoring	29%	5%	41%
Writing, math, or other skill lab	73%	28%	59%
Financial assistance advising	78%	33%	40%
Computer lab	88%	54%	71%
Student organizations	43%	5%	43%
Transfer credit assistance	46%	7%	55%
Services to students with disabilities	55%	3%	61%

*Sample excludes those who responded N/A to level satisfaction

Conclusion

Overall, the respondents seem to be aware of the basic academic pathway, with the majority reporting transferring as their goal, registering for classes at least 1 week before classes begin, and applying for financial assistance. However, lacking is their awareness of student services and participation of effective engaging behavior.