

El Camino College

The Survey of Entering Student Engagement

Overview of 2014 and 2016 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. El Camino College (ECC) participated in the *SENSE* in Fall 2014 and Fall 2016. This report will compare the results from the 2014 and 2016 *SENSE*.

Administered during the 4th and 5th weeks of the Fall academic term, *SENSE* asked students to reflect on their earliest experiences (academic and services-related) with ECC. *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* cohort includes 266 institutions in 39 states, the District of Columbia. One-hundred and three 2016 cohort colleges are classified as small (<4,500), 67 as medium (4,500-7,999), 63 as large (8,000-14,999), and 33 as extra-large institutions (15,000 + credit students). Sixty-six of the colleges are classified as urban-serving, 52 as suburban-serving, and 137 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 ECC, 662 respondents submitted usable surveys. The number of completed surveys produced an overall "percent of target" rate of 44%. 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.

Excluded Respondents

Exclusions ensure all institutional reports represent the same sampling methods and results are therefore comparable across institutions. Exclusions from institutional reports are made for the following reasons:

- ✘ The respondent did not indicate whether he or she was enrolled full-time or less than full-time at ECC.
- ✘ 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.

2014 and 2016 ECC Student Respondent Profiles

Entering student respondents at ECC range in age from 18 to 65+ years old. Ninety-six percent of ECC respondents in 2014 and 2016 are between 18 and 24 years old. Students at ECC are younger than the *SENSE* cohort respondents, of which 88% of students are between 18 and 24 in 2016.

Forty-four percent of 2016 ECC entering student respondents are male and 53% are female, which is similar to the 2016 *SENSE* cohort, which is 42% male and 58% female.

The racial/ethnic identification of ECC respondents is similar to ECC's student population. The majority of ECC respondents are Hispanic/Latino/Spanish while *SENSE* cohort respondents are mostly white, non-Hispanic; this has remained consistent in the past two years.

	2014		2016	
	ECC	SENSE	ECC	SENSE
Age				
18-24	96%	82%	96%	88%
25 or older	4%	18%	4%	12%
Gender				
Female	53%	54%	53%	58%
Male	43%	43%	44%	42%
Racial/Ethnic Identification				
American Indian or Native American	1%	2%	1%	2%
Asian, Asian America, or Pacific Islander	11%	3%	13%	4%
Black or African American	11%	15%	11%	13%
Hispanic, Latino, Spanish	53%	19%	46%	23%
White, Non-Hispanic	12%	49%	15%	47%

Twenty-five percent of ECC entering student respondents report being less than full-time college students, compared to 27% of the 2016 SENSE cohort colleges' entering student respondents. Seventy-five percent of the entering student respondents at ECC report attending college full-time, while 73% of the 2016 SENSE cohort colleges' entering student respondents attended full-time. Population data¹ for all students at ECC are 67% less than full-time and 33% full-time. This inverse representation is a result of the sampling technique and the in-class administration process. For this reason, survey results are weighted so that reports will accurately reflect the underlying student population.

Nineteen percent of ECC entering student respondents work 21 or more hours per week while two-thirds of the SENSE cohort work 21 or more hours. Over half of 2016 ECC respondents do not work for pay; this is a change from the 2014 ECC respondents where 62% did not work.

Entering student respondents were asked to indicate their reasons/goals for attending this college; students could choose more than one goal. Sixty-two percent indicated that completing a certificate is a goal and 77% indicated that obtaining an Associate degree is a goal. Almost all ECC respondents (94%) indicated that transferring to a 4-year college is a goal while 79% of the SENSE cohort had this same goal.

Six percent of ECC entering students responded yes to the question, "Are you an international student or nonresident alien?" ECC has the same amount of international students as the 2016 SENSE cohort.

Fifty-one percent of ECC respondents indicated that neither parent has college experience which are the criteria for being a first-generation college student.

At ECC, 33% of respondents and 18% of the SENSE cohort indicated that English was not their first language.

	2014		2016	
	ECC	SENSE	ECC	SENSE
Enrollment Status				
Full-time	74%	73%	75%	73%
Part-time	26%	27%	25%	27%
Working for Pay				
Do not work	62%	37%	54%	36%
1-20 hours per week	22%	28%	26%	28%
21+ hours per week	16%	35%	19%	36%
Educational Goal				
Certificate	67%	59%	62%	60%
Associate Degree	76%	80%	77%	82%
Transfer	91%	77%	94%	79%
Other Characteristics				
International student/nonresident alien	7%	5%	6%	6%
First-Generation College Student	55%	NA	51%	43%
English not first language	35%	16%	33%	18%

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

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 achieve their academic goals.

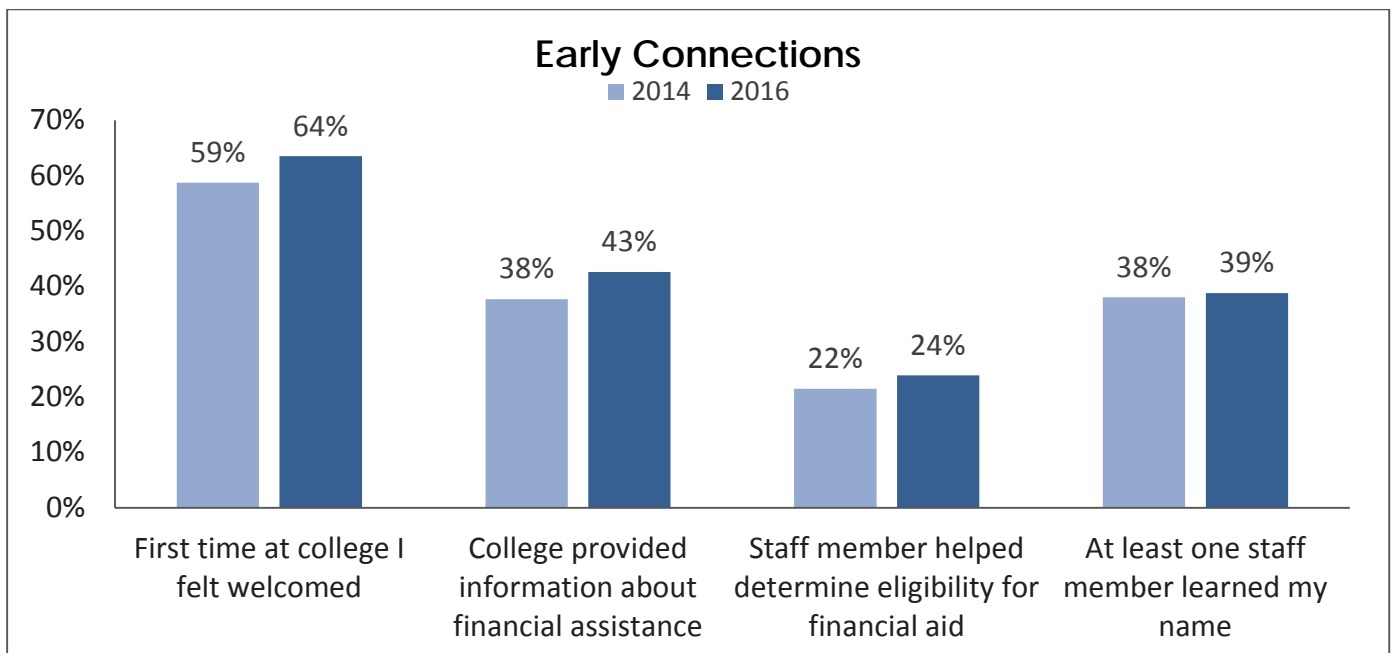
SENSE benchmarks are groups of conceptually related survey items that focus on institutional practices and student behaviors that promote student engagement early in the college experience—and that are positively related to student learning and persistence. The six benchmarks of effective educational 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.

In 2016, 64% of respondents indicated that they felt welcomed the first time they came to ECC. This is a 5% increase from the previous SENSE survey at ECC in 2014, however, did not surpass the national response rate (75%). In terms of financial aid assistance, 43% of respondents indicated that they were provided financial assistance information, while 24% 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, 24%, reported yes. Overall, ECC students reported lower levels of agreement than the national cohort sample.



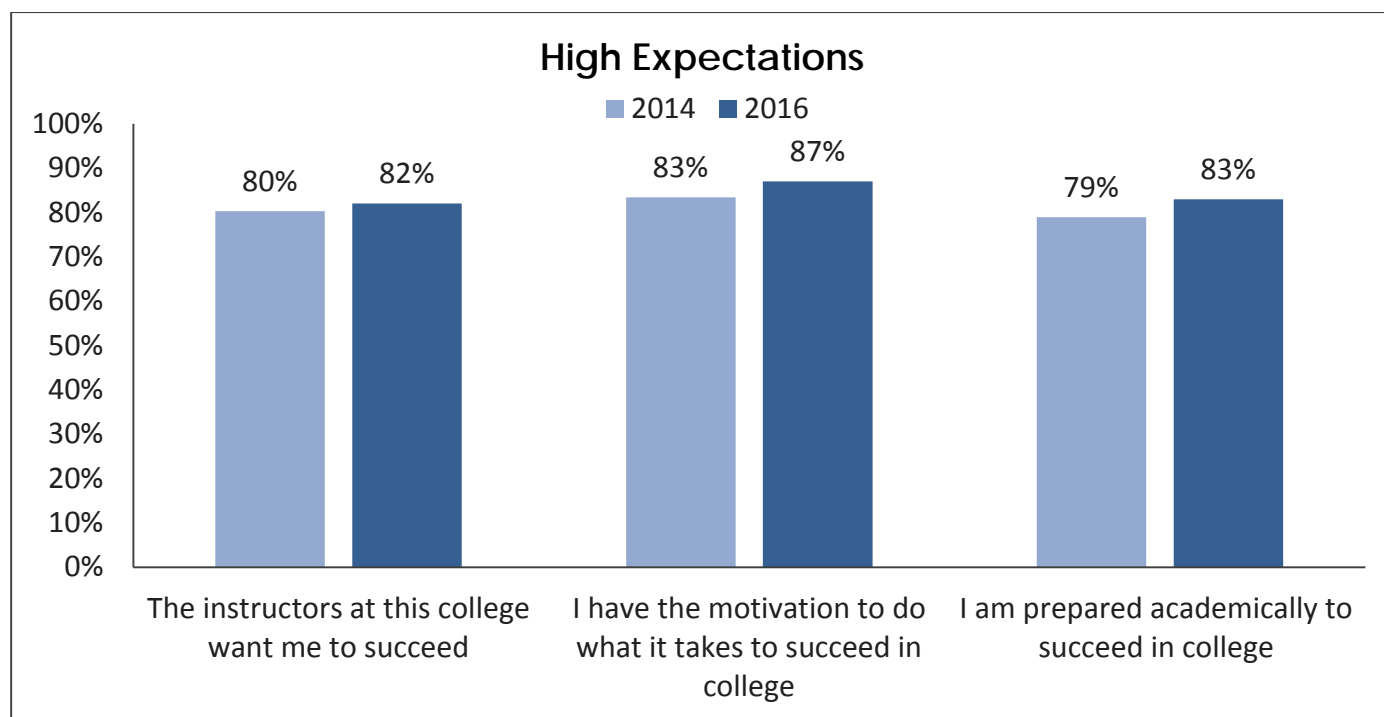
Note: Reporting percentage of those who agreed/strongly agreed

High Expectations and Aspirations

The majority of students arrive at their community colleges intending to succeed and believing that they have the motivation to be successful. 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-two 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," 87% of respondents were in agreement. Moreover, 83% of students were in agreement that they are academically prepared to succeed in college.

Overall, El Camino College responses gained in all areas from the 2014 SENSE survey, however all responses were below the national cohort responses.



Note: Reporting percentage of those who agreed/strongly agreed

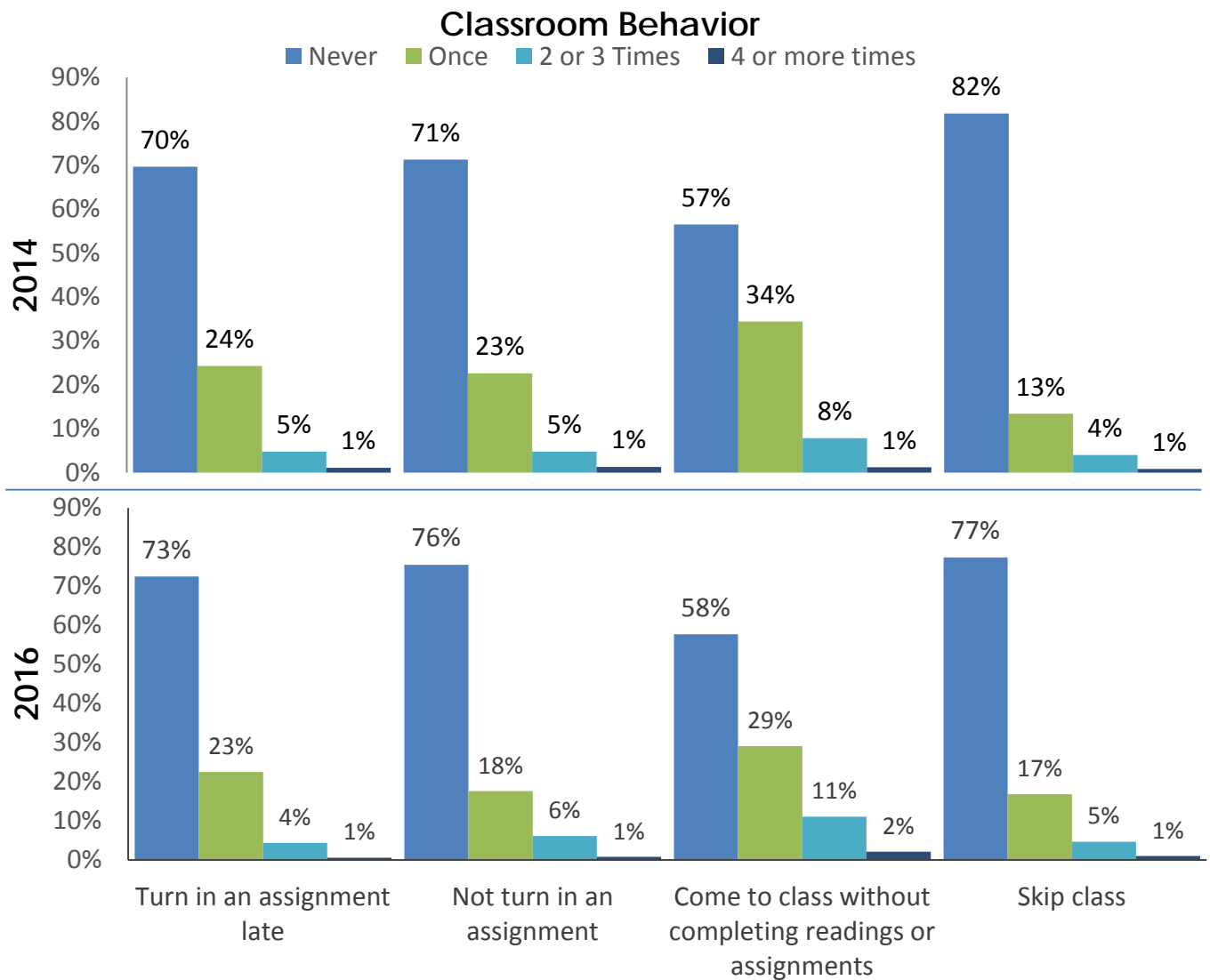
Classroom Behaviors

Entering students were asked about their classroom behaviors and assigned coursework. These classroom behaviors provide additional insight into the tangible actions students take during the semester.

When asked how often students "turned in an assignment late," 73% of respondents answered never, higher than the previous year's responses rate (70%) and significantly higher than the national cohort sample (65%). When asked how often they did not turn in an assignment, 76% answered never while 18% said once. Both of these responses were improvements from the previous 2014 SENSE survey and the national survey responses.

In addition, students were asked how often they attended class having not completed their assignments or readings. A majority of ECC respondents indicated never (58%) and once (29%). Compared to the previous SENSE survey, students that never attended class without completing an assignment increased by 1%, whereas there was a 5% increase from students that attended class once without completing an assignment. In relationship to the 2016 SENSE national cohort sample, ECC students responded higher amongst students answering never and once.

Lastly, students were asked how often they skipped school. A majority of respondents, 77%, answered never, which was five percentage points decrease from 2014.



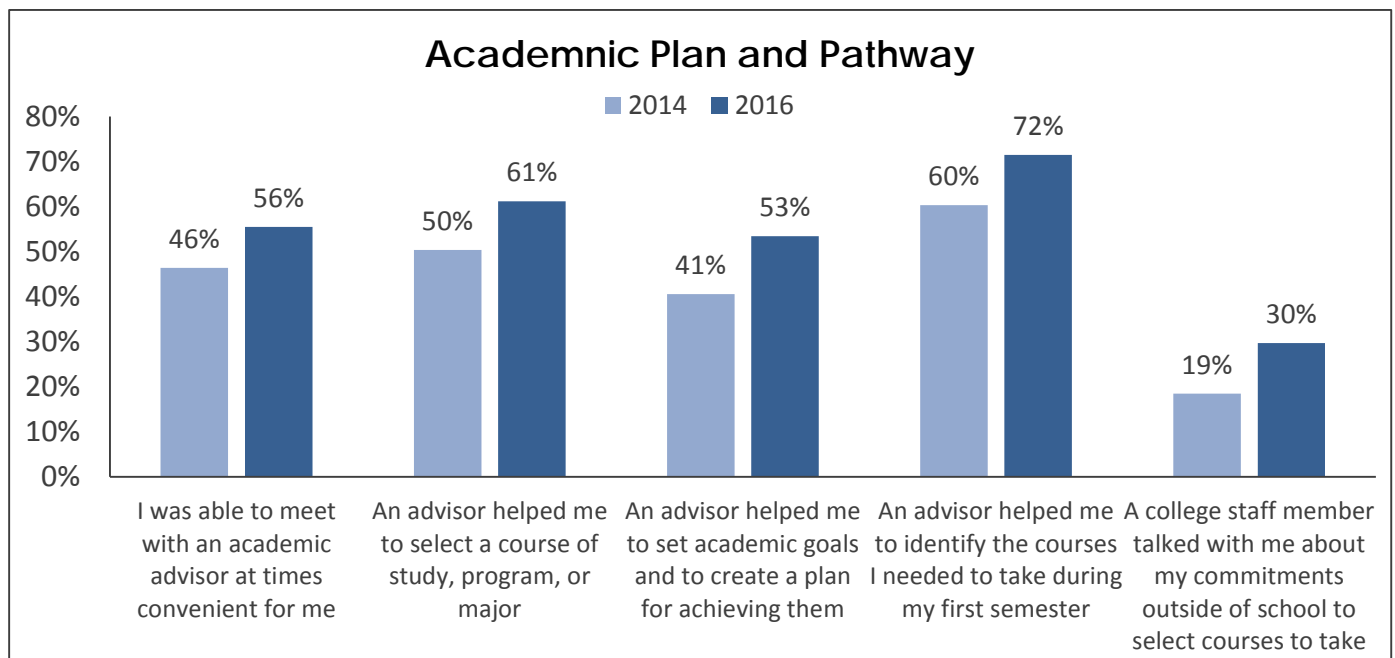
Clear Academic Plan and Pathway

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. Additionally, students who account for other commitment and activities outside of coursework are more likely to achieve their set goals.

Students were asked various questions regarding their interaction with academic advisors to help aid in attaining their career goals. When asked about their ability to meet with academic advisors during times convenient to them, more than half of respondents (56%) answered agree or strongly agree, which marked a 10% increase from the SENSE 2014 results. Seventy-two percent of respondents acknowledged that advisors assisted them with identifying the courses needed for their first semester, while 61% reported having an advisor help them select a course of study, program or major. When students were asked about the type of advice obtained from ECC staff members in general, 30% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that a staff member had talked to them about outside commitments when determining how many courses to take.

Additionally, 53% of students reported that an advisor helped them set academic goals and create a plan for achieving them. This marked a 12% increase and jumped above the SENSE 2016 cohort by 6%.

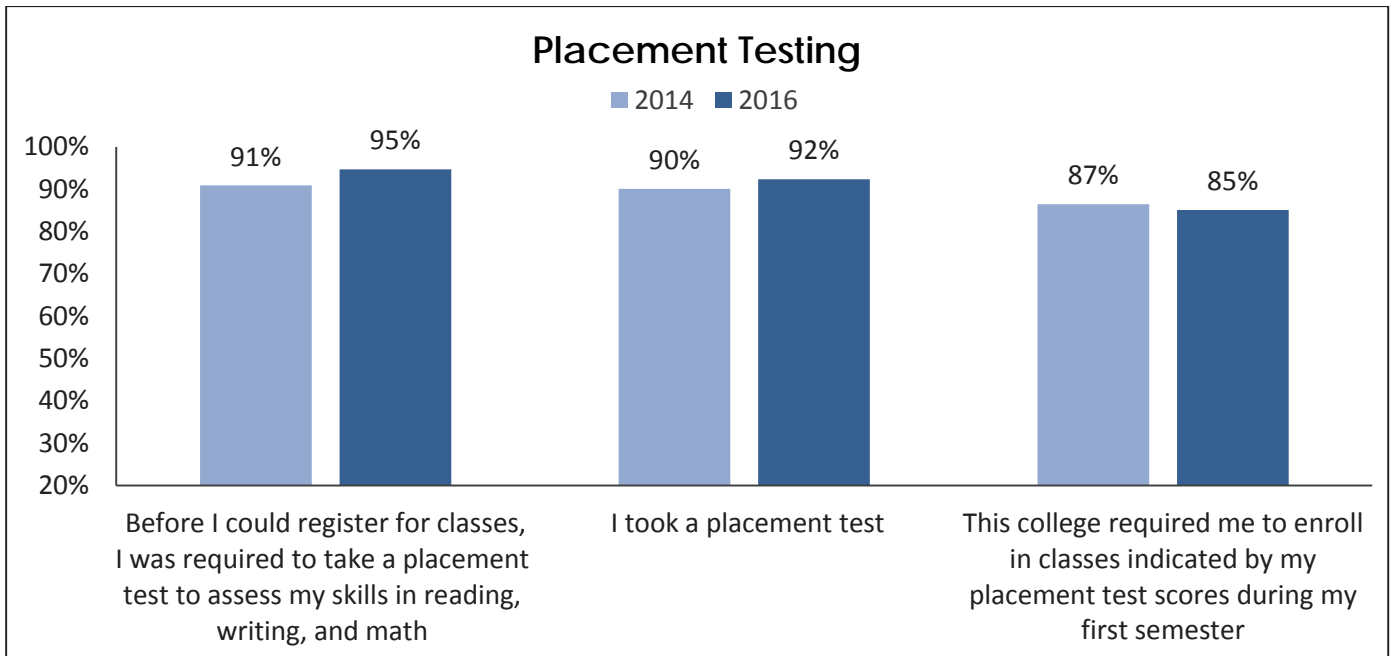


Note: Reporting percentage of those who agreed/strongly agreed

Effective Track to College Readiness

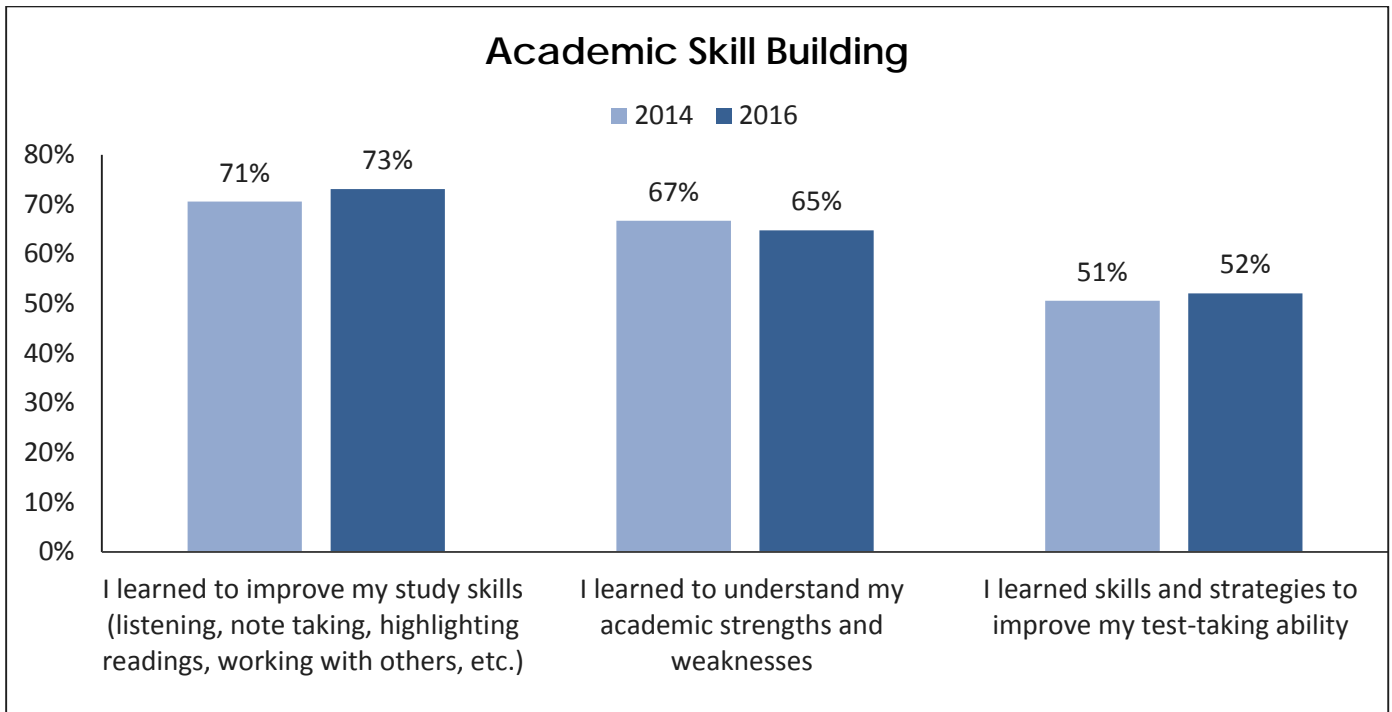
Nationally, more than 6 in 10 entering community college students are underprepared for college-level work. Thus, significant improvements in student success will hinge upon effective assessment, placement of students into appropriate course, and implementation of effective strategies to ensure that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

ECC students were asked about their experience with placement testing. Ninety-five of respondents reported they were required to take a placement test prior to registering for classes and 92% stated having taken a placement test. Furthermore, 85% 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

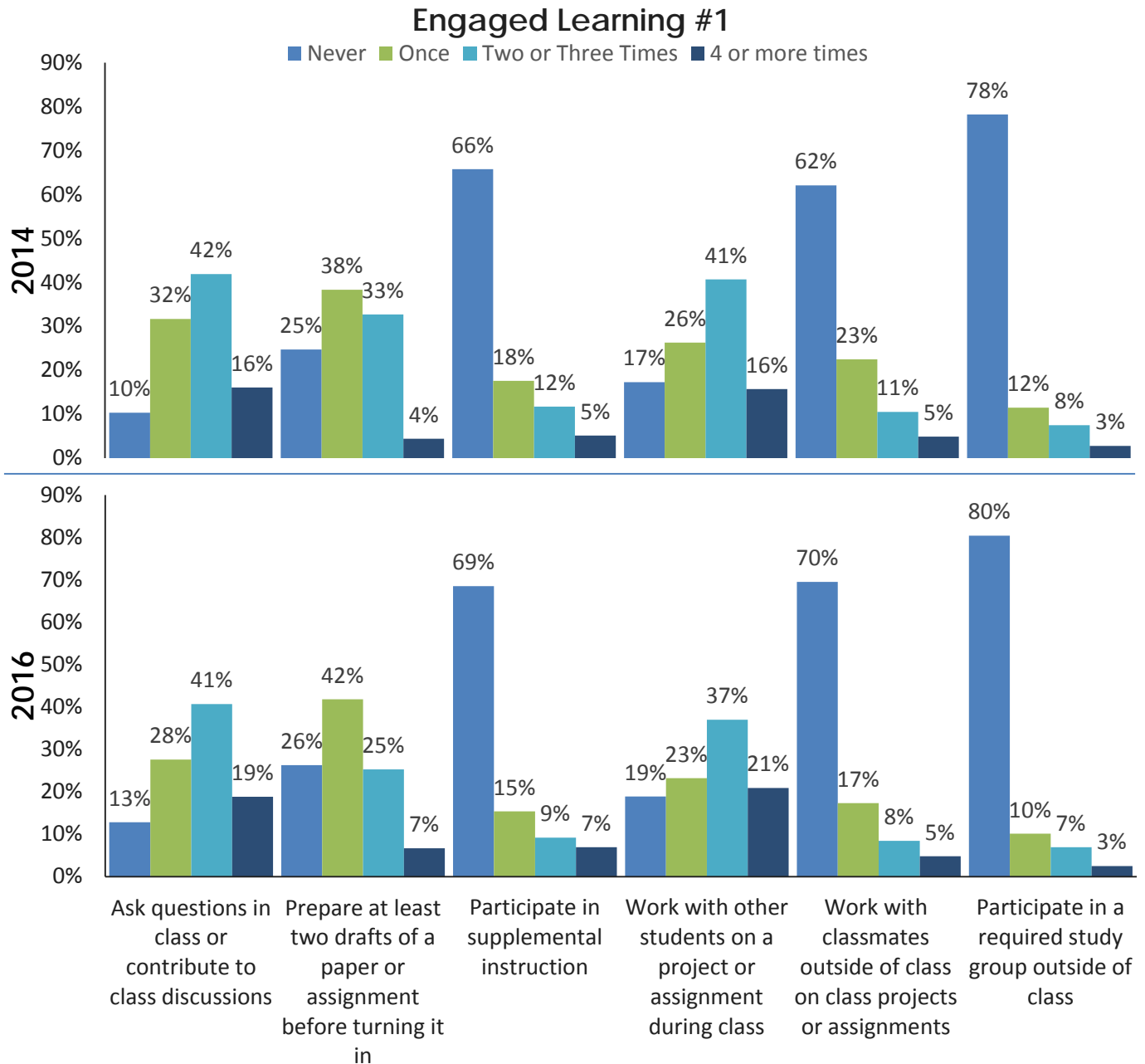
The survey also asked questions regarding academic skill building. Students were asked if experiences at ECC helped to improve their study skills and 73% of respondents indicated they agreed or strongly agreed. Additionally, 65% of respondents indicated they learned to “understand their academic strengths and weaknesses” and 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

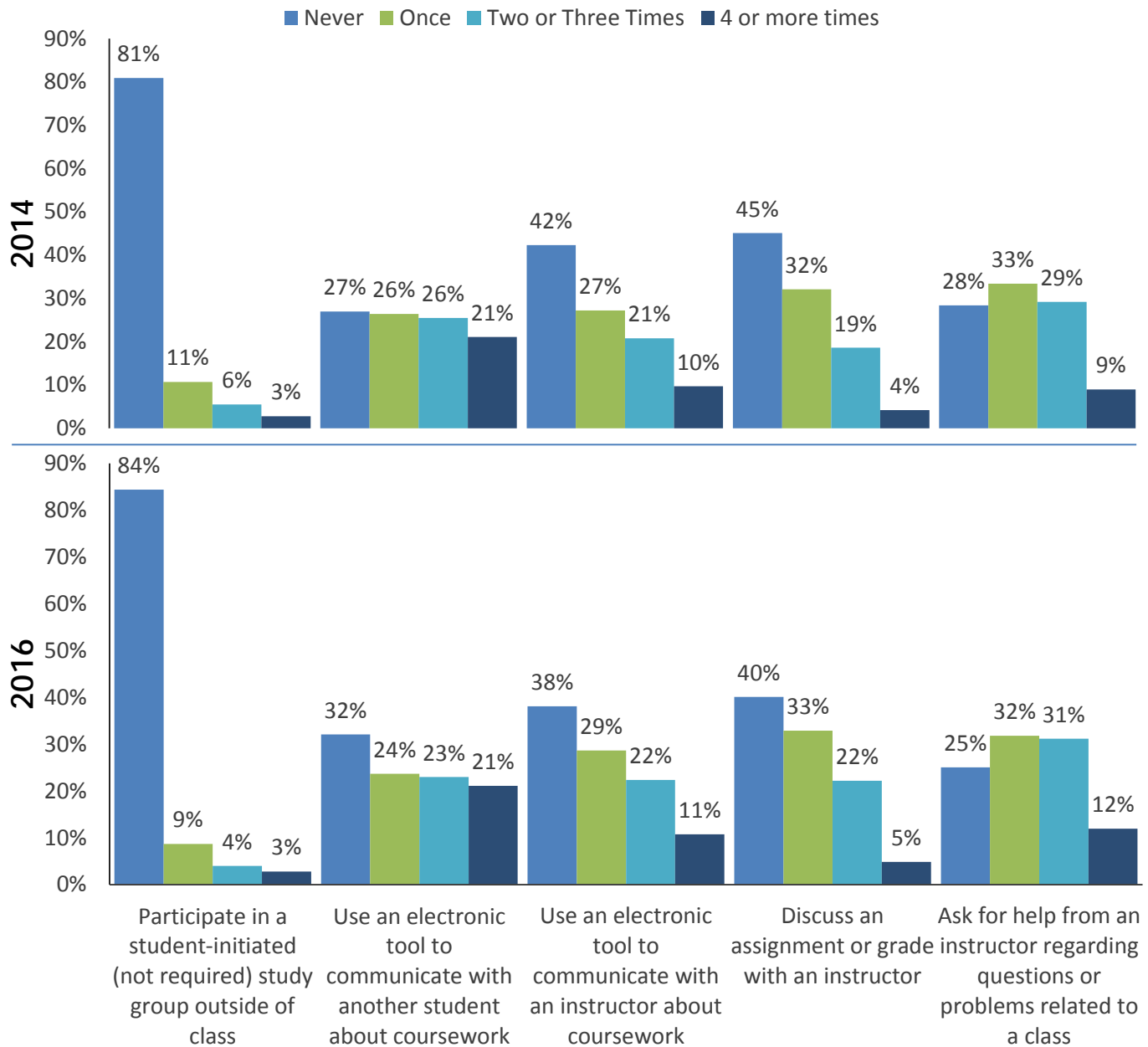
Instructional approaches that foster engaged learning are critical for student success. Because most community college students attend college part-time, and most also must find ways to balance their studies with work and family responsibilities, the most effective learning experiences will be those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



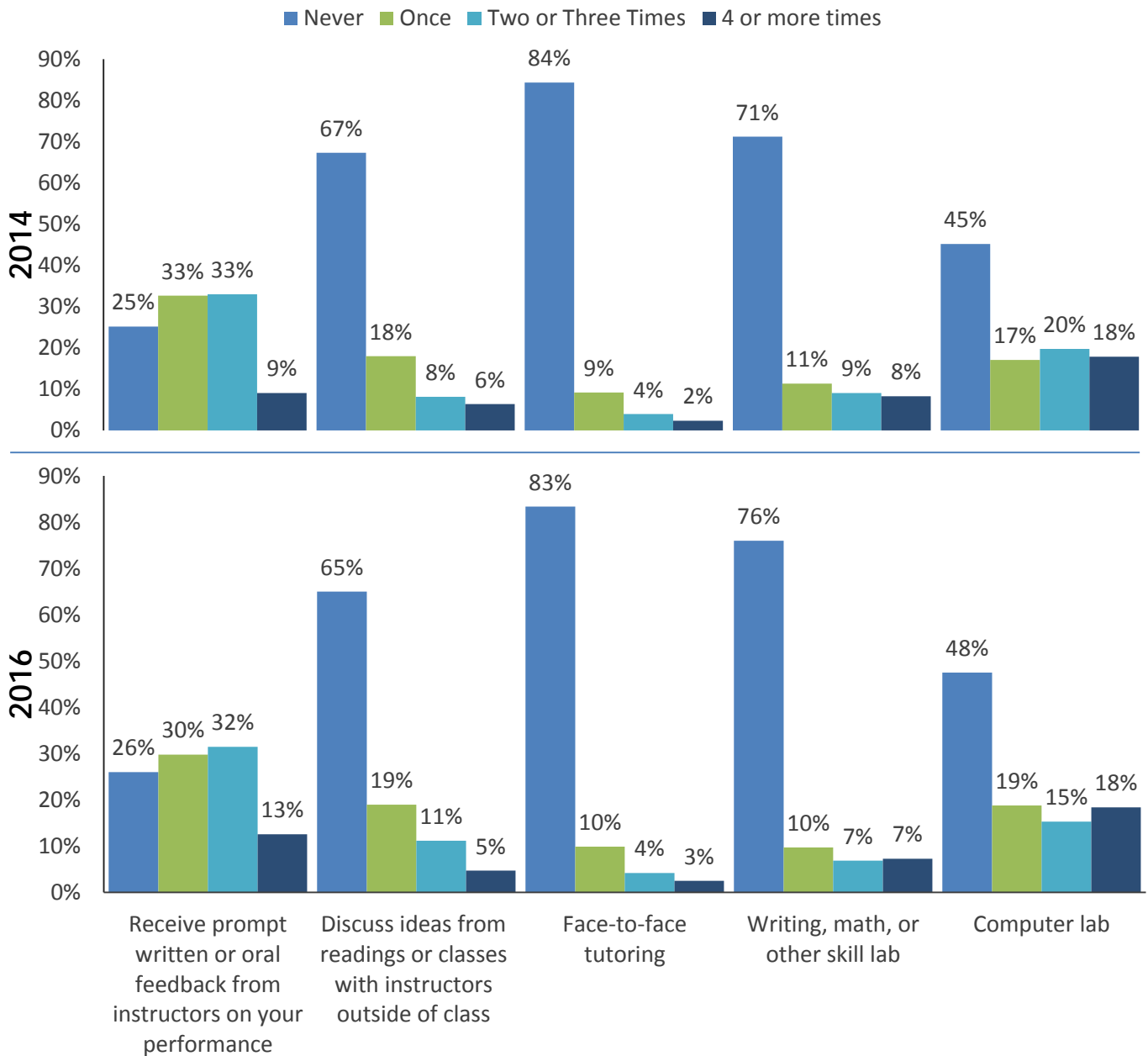
Respondents were asked various questions about their involvement in institutionalized engaged learning activities. Results indicate combined totals of students that engaged two or more times in learning activities. Sixty percent of students indicated they engaged in asking questions or contributing to class discussions while 58% reported working with other students on a project or assignment during class. Additionally, 45% indicated receiving written or oral feedback from instructors.

For activities in which students engaged only one time, 41% indicated they prepared at least two drafts of a paper, 32% asked for help from instructors, and 30% receiving written or oral feedback from their instructors. The learning activities with the highest reported responses of no engagement included face-to-face tutoring (83%) and participating in a required (80%) or non-required (84%) study group outside of class (80%).

Engaged Learning #2



Engaged Learning #3

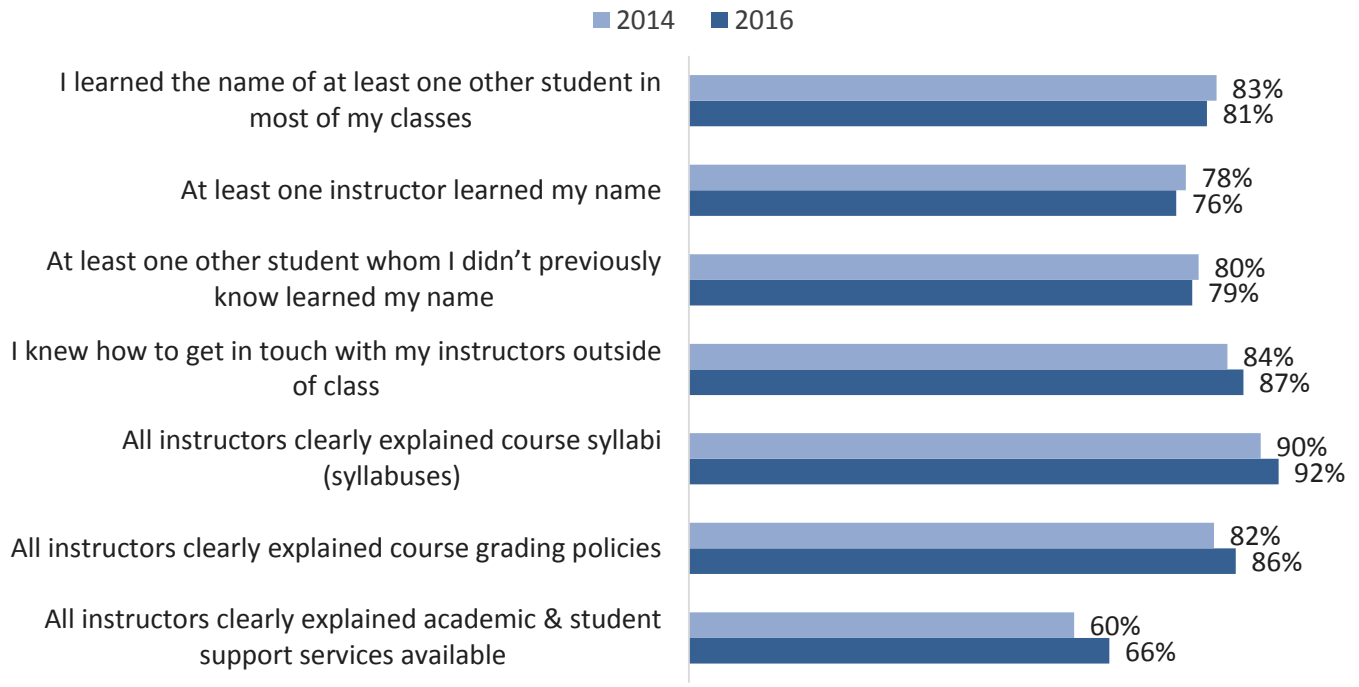


Academic and Social Support Network

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. However, creating this network can be difficult and colleges must purposefully aid in the creation of those networks.

ECC students were asked questions regarding the type of support they received from faculty and peers. Sixty-six percent of students surveyed agreed that their instructors communicated the expectations and requirements of their course clearly. Eighty-seven indicated they knew how to get in touch with an instructor outside of class and 81% students learned the name of at least one other student.

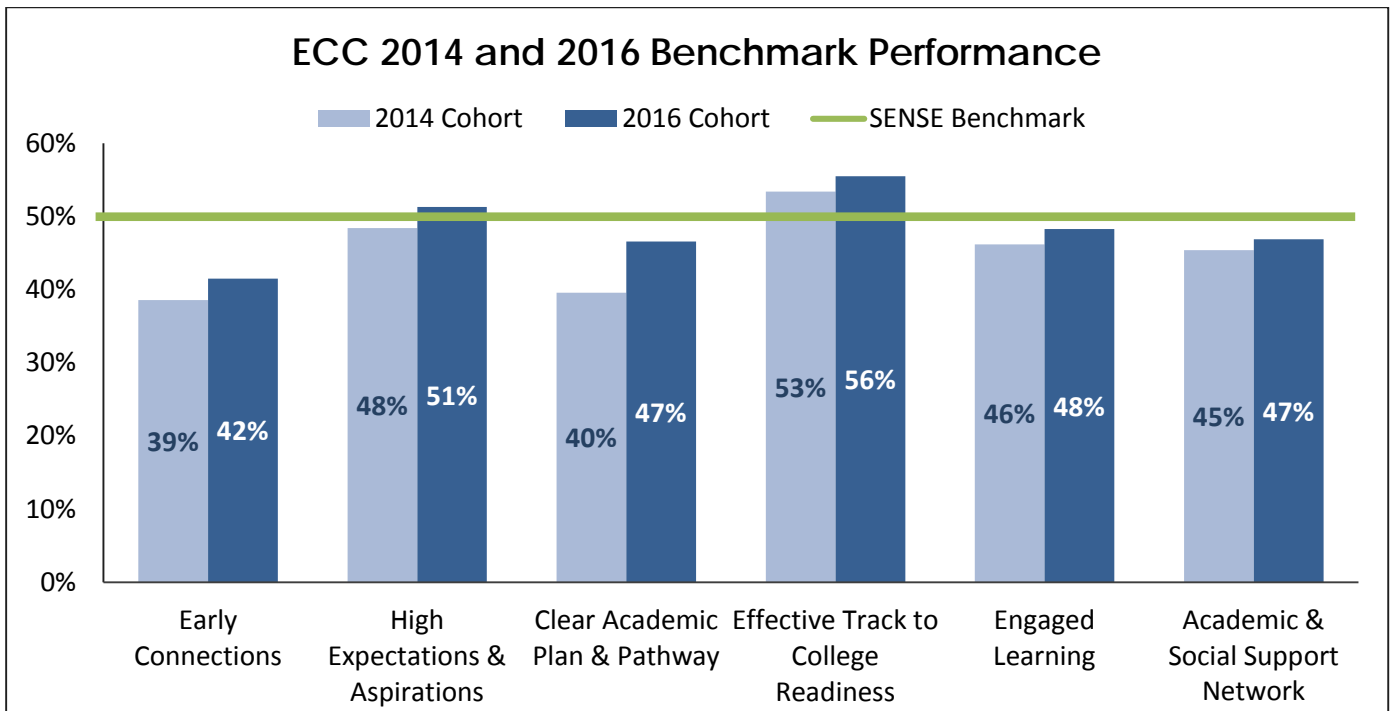
Academic and Social Support Network



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.



Among the six *SENSE* benchmarks, El Camino College made improvements between 2014 and 2016 results. The highest benchmark score at ECC was that of effective track to college readiness, showing a 3% increase from 2014. The second highest benchmark score for ECC was high expectations and aspirations, which also passed the *SENSE* benchmark. The lowest benchmark score was early connections, however this benchmark increased from 2014. An area of concern from the *SENSE* 2014 results was the “clear academic plan and pathway” category, showing a 40% marker. This increased the greatest amount (7%) and is close to surpassing the *SENSE* national benchmark.

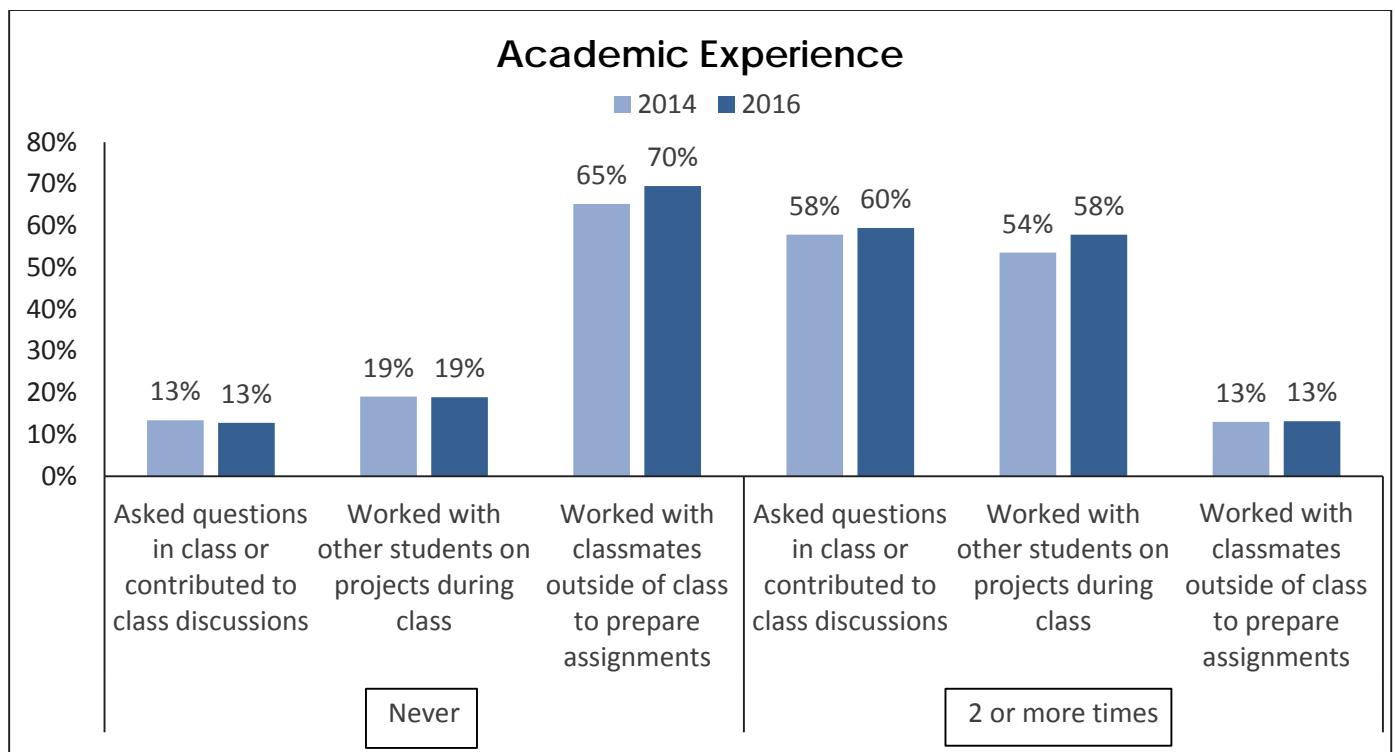
Selected Findings

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.

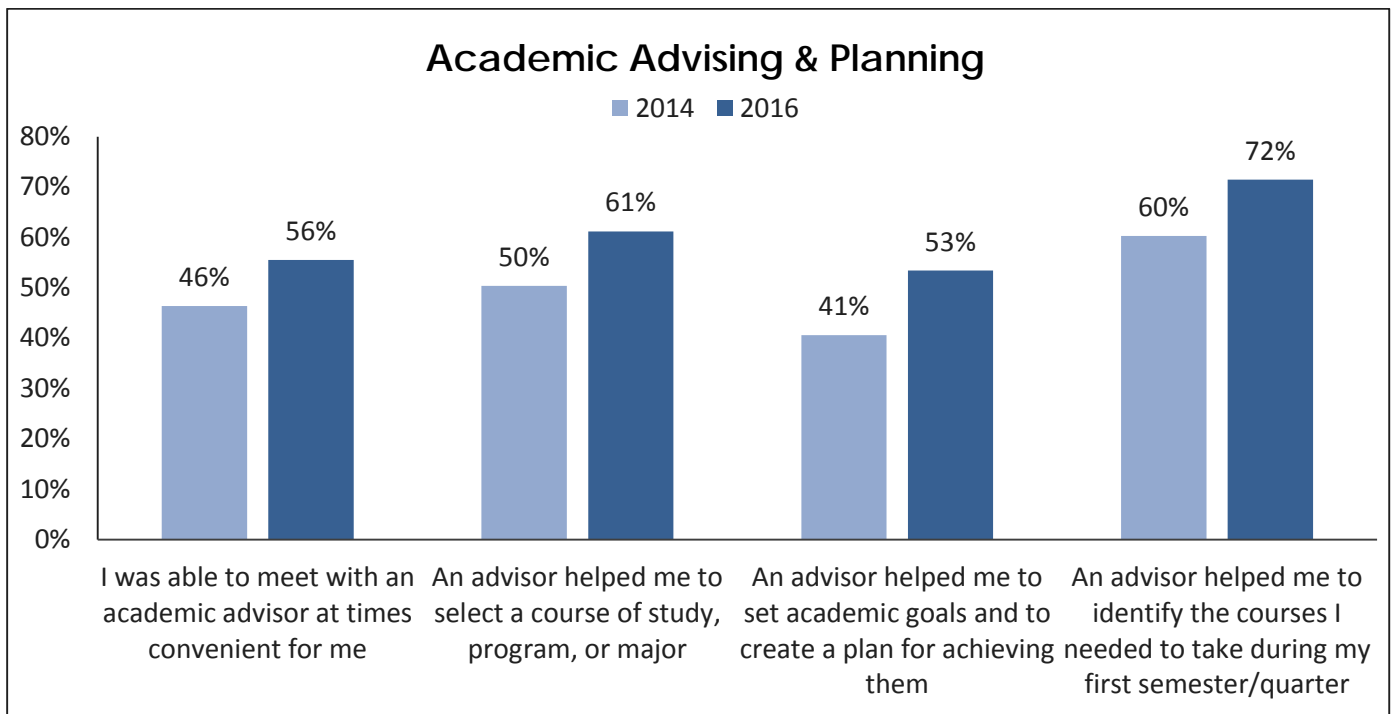


Academic Advising/Planning

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.

Eighty percent of respondents reported knowing about academic advising/planning. Sixty-five percent of students reported using academic advising/planning at least once. Of those students, 27% reported being very satisfied with the service, while 56% of respondents reported meeting with an academic advisor at a convenient time, this is also a marked improvement from 2014, growing by 10%. Also, 79% of students reported not being assigned to a specific person to see each time they needed assistance.

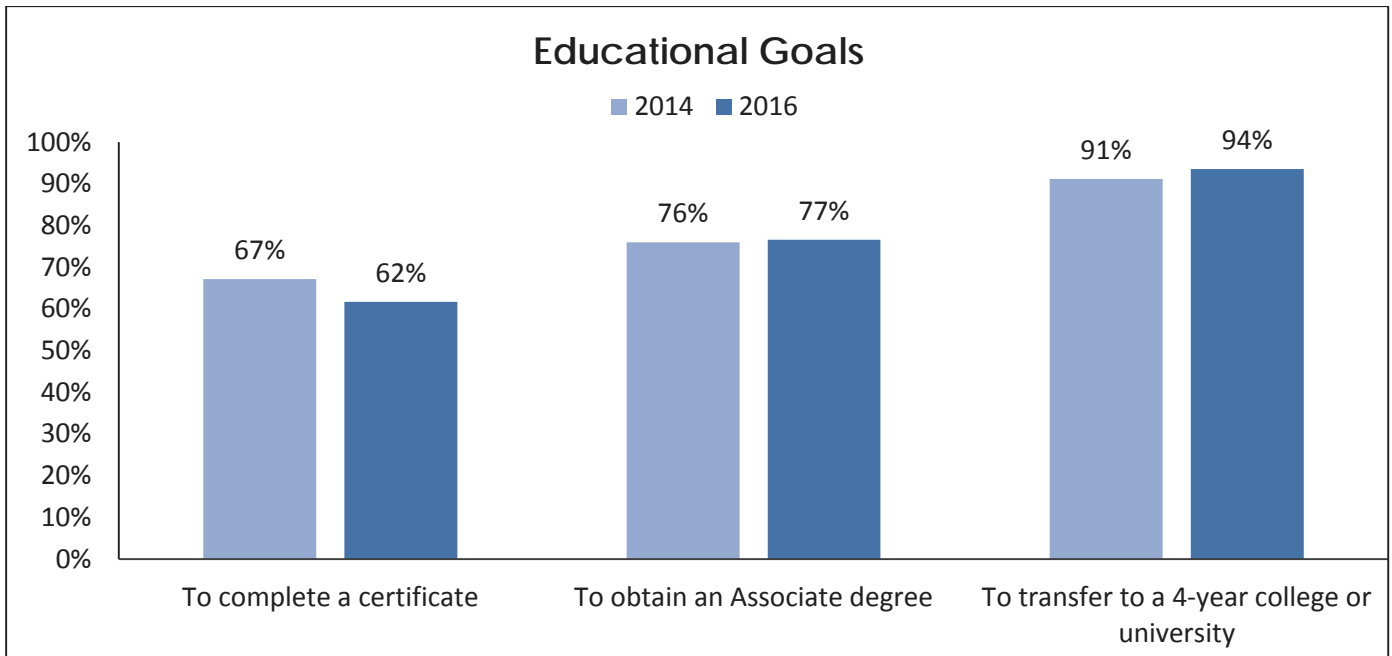
It is also important to ensure students are being helped appropriately when meeting with an academic advisor. The majority of students reported an advisor helped them to identify necessary course to enroll in during their first semester (72%). A majority of the respondents also reported their advisor helping them with selecting a course of study, program, or major (61%), while over half indicated an advisor helped them set academic goals and creating a plan to achieve them (53%).



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. Options included completing a certificate, obtaining an Associate degree, or transferring to a 4-year college or university as an educational goal. Students were allowed to indicate more than one goal. The majority of El Camino College students indicated that transferring to a 4-year college or university (94%) or obtaining an Associate degree (77%) as their educational goal, both increases from 2014.

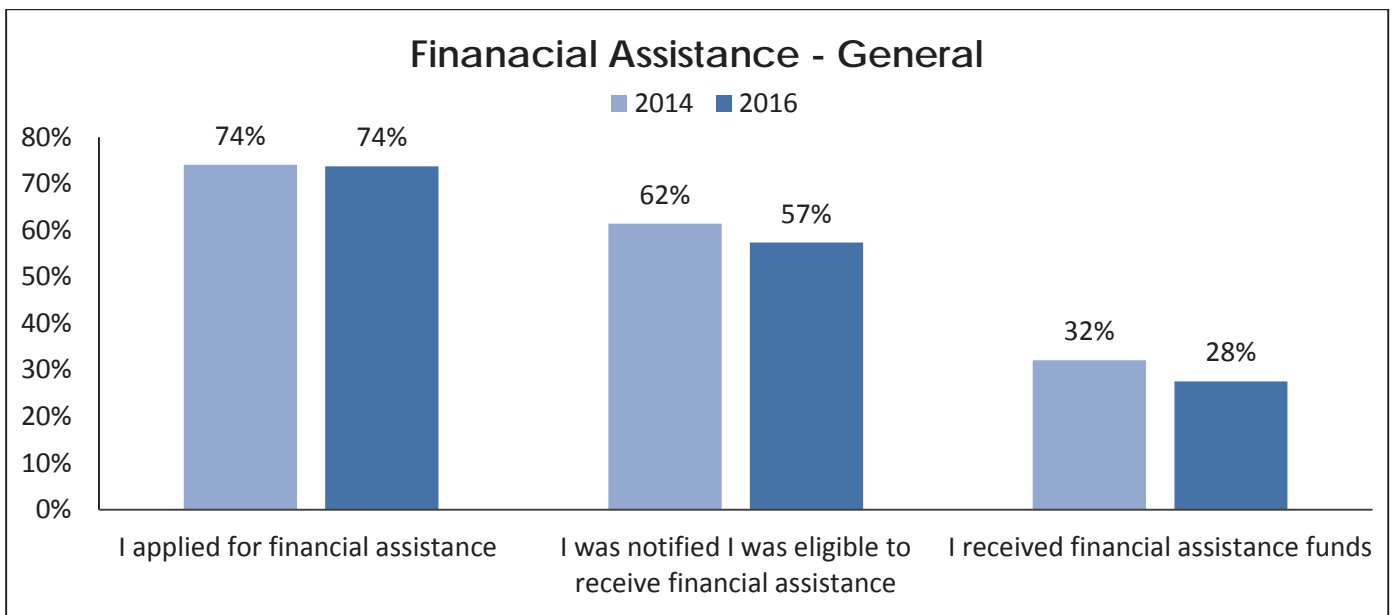


Note: Reporting percentage of those who agreed/strongly agreed

Financial Assistance

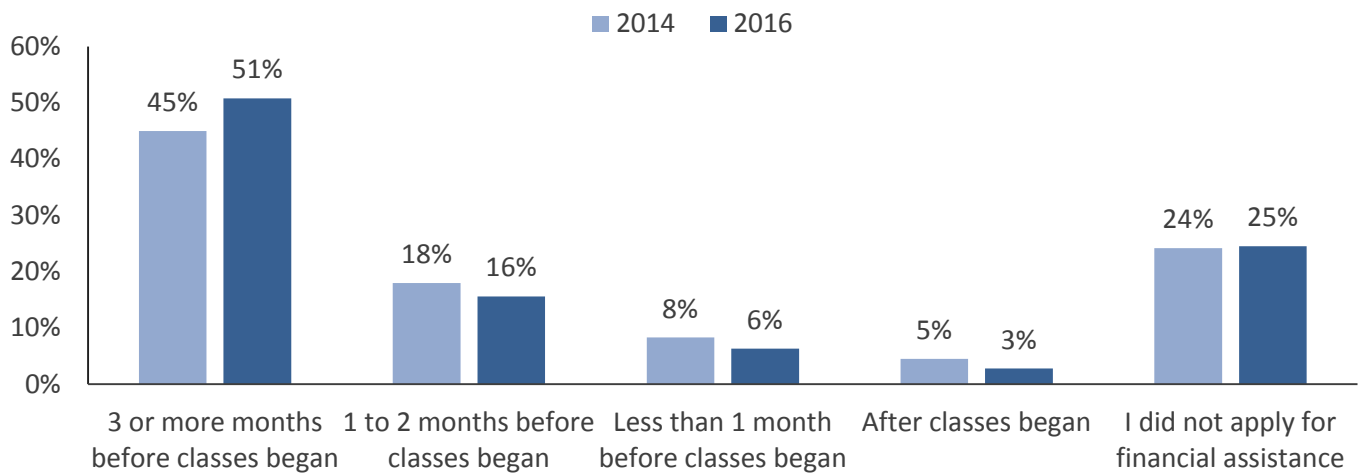
Paying for college can be a large obstacle for some students, and not receiving financial assistance could determine whether or not a student enrolls. It is important for these students to be aware of the financial assistance that is available to them. A large percentage of respondents applied for financial assistance (74%). However, only 57% of students reported being notified about their eligibility for financial assistance and 28% reported receiving funds. The majority of students applied for financial assistance at least one month before classes began (63%) and about a quarter did not apply for assistance.

Forty-three percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the college provided adequate information about financial assistance, and only 24% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a college staff member helped them determine their qualifications.

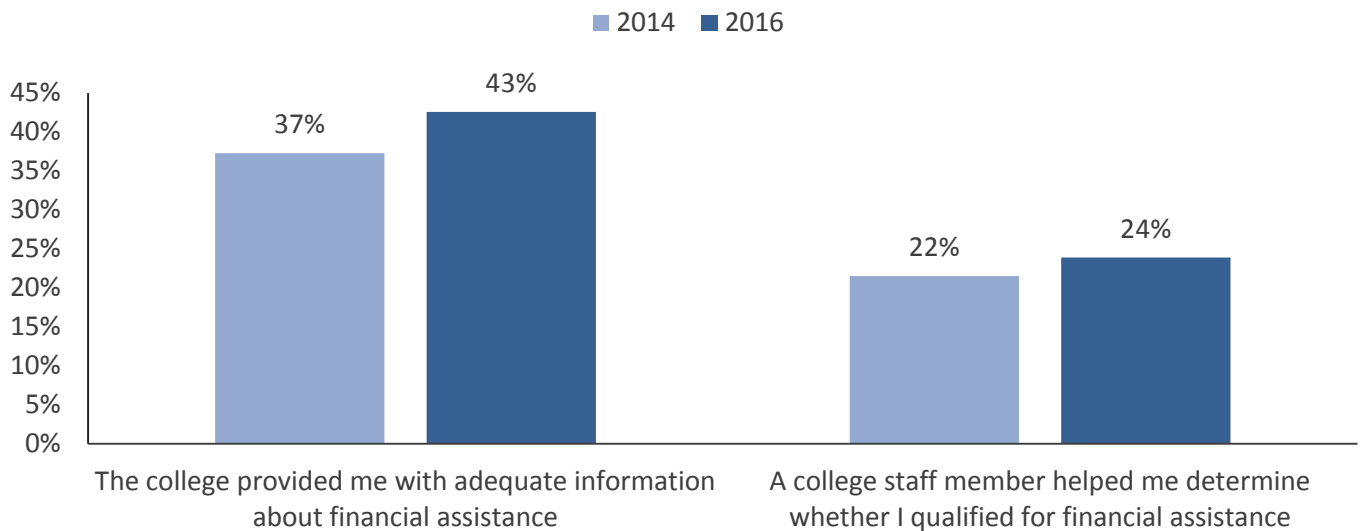


Note: Reporting percentage of those who responded Yes

Financial Assistance - First Applied for Assistance



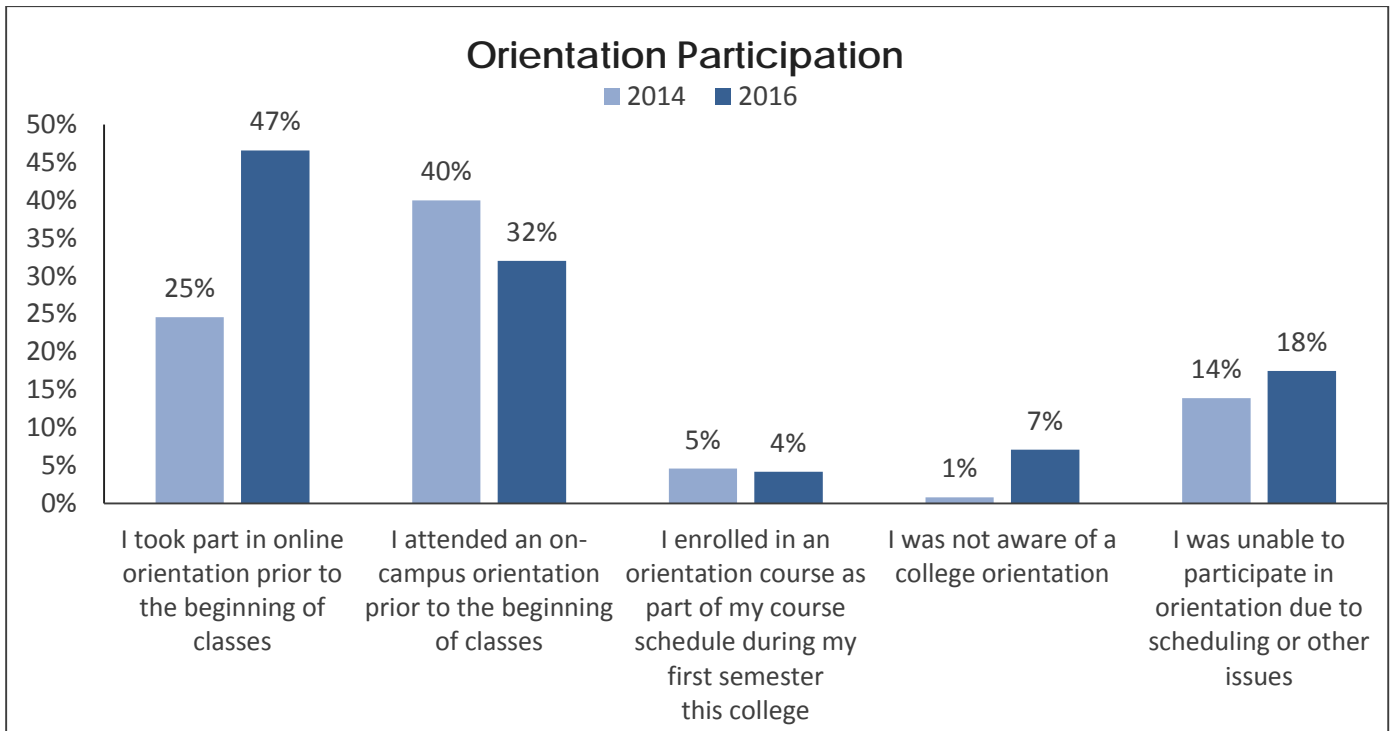
Financial Assistance - Information & Eligibility



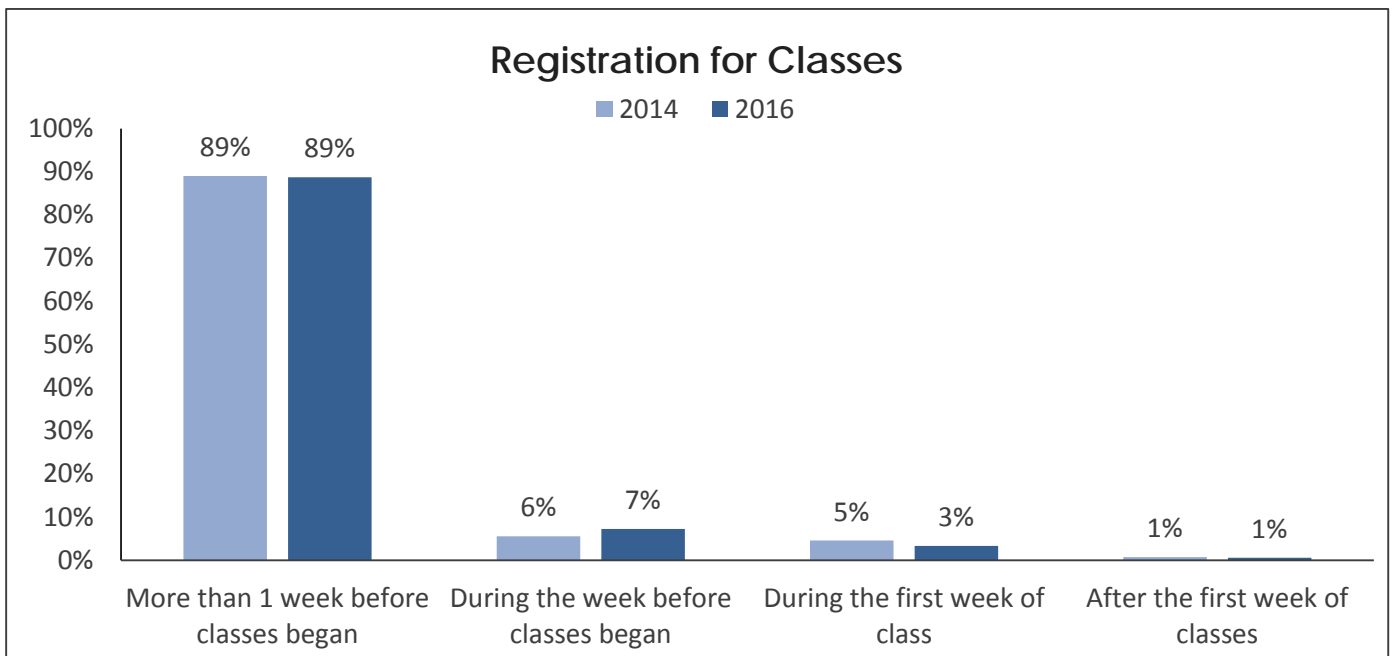
Note: Reporting percentage of those who agreed/strongly agreed

Orientation and Registration

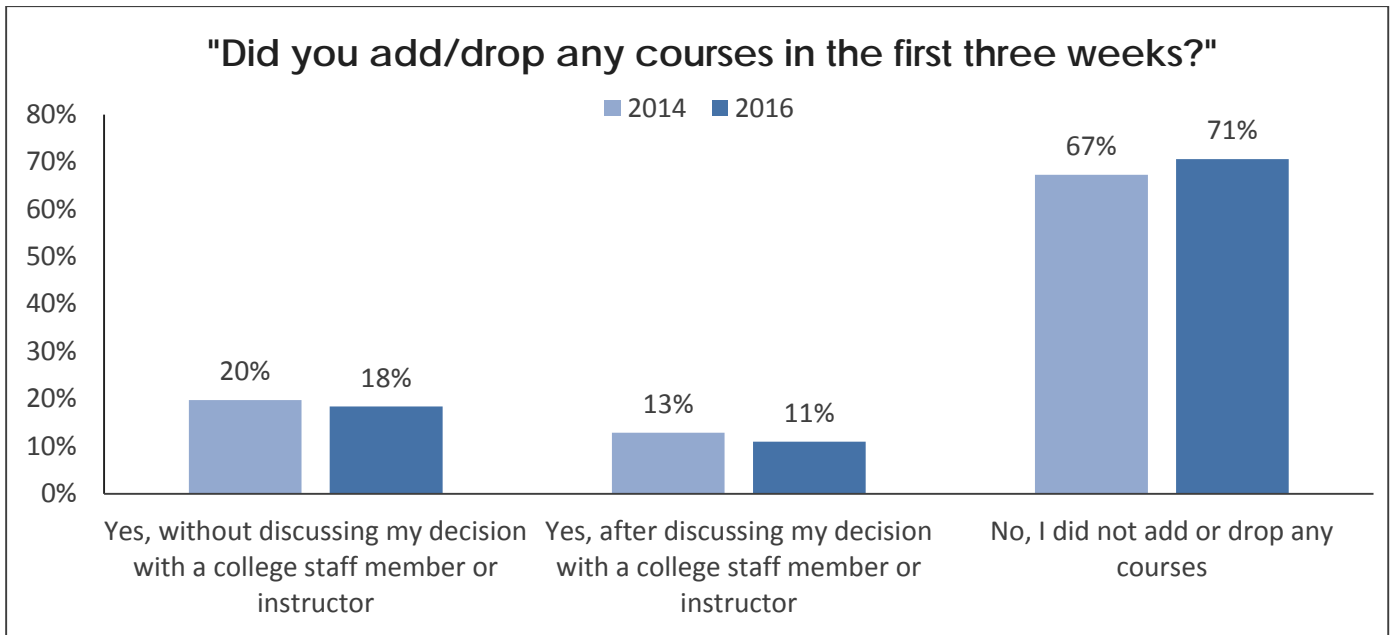
It is important to examine whether students are enrolling at the college with knowledge about the campus and the process of obtaining an education. They can obtain this knowledge through orientation. The majority of students participated in orientation either online (47%) or on-campus (32%) prior to the beginning of classes. Also important to notice is that 7% 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. From 2014 to 2016, there has been an increase in online orientation participation and a decrease in on-campus orientation participation.



Equally important is to examine students' enrollment in classes. The graph below shows when students enrolled in their classes. The majority of students enrolled in classes before classes began (89%).



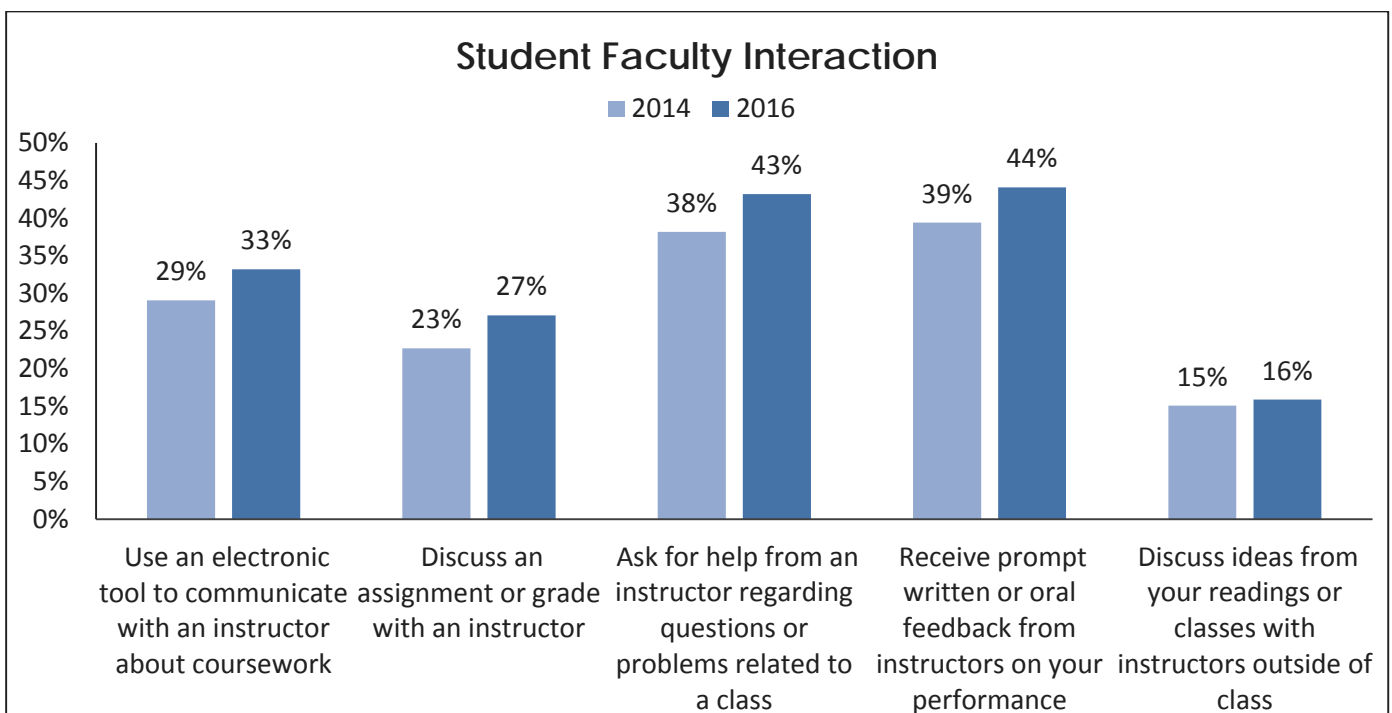
The majority of students reported enrolling in four or more course (39%), with 35% enrolling into three courses, 23% in two, and 4% in one course. After enrollment, the majority of students did not drop a course within the first three weeks of the semester (71%) as seen in the next graph. Of those who did add or drop a course within the first three weeks, 11% discussed their decision with a college staff or instructor. Of those who dropped course, 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, student faculty interactions increased from 2014 to 2016 across all SENSE categories.

The graph below shows data for students who reported engaging in specific student-faculty interactions at least twice. Students were more likely to receive prompt written or oral feedback from instructors on their performance and least likely to discuss ideas from readings or classes with the instructor outside of class. Also, 76% 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 El Camino College to a friend or family member. Ninety-three percent report they would make such a recommendation, slightly lower than the national SENSE cohort (94%) but an increase from 2014 (92%).

Support Services

The table below 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 two 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 El Camino College respondents reported being aware of eight of the eleven services. The level of awareness for all services increased in 2016 from 2014 levels. The percentage of students using the services two or more times remained similar for 2014 and 2016 respondents. The rates of students being very satisfied with all services increased in 2016 from 2014 rates. The category with the highest rate of students being very satisfied was the services to students with disabilities.

	Aware of Service		Use		Satisfaction*	
	(Yes)		(2+ times)		(Very)	
	2014	2016	2014	2016	2014	2016
Academic advising/planning	72%	80%	15%	18%	36%	41%
Career counseling	60%	66%	8%	7%	40%	47%
Job placement assistance	30%	33%	2%	2%	25%	37%
Face-to-face tutoring	67%	77%	7%	7%	53%	55%
Online tutoring	31%	33%	3%	3%	32%	36%
Writing, math, or other skill lab	69%	77%	18%	14%	44%	60%
Financial assistance advising	64%	72%	12%	15%	34%	40%
Computer lab	83%	84%	38%	34%	58%	58%
Student organizations	51%	57%	7%	6%	37%	44%
Transfer credit assistance	45%	46%	3%	4%	39%	50%
Services to students with disabilities	57%	60%	3%	2%	54%	61%

*Sample excludes those who responded N/A to level satisfaction and indicated never using service.

Conclusion

Overall, El Camino College saw increases across most measures in the SENSE 2016 results compared to results from the SENSE 2014. When comparing benchmark scores in 2016, ECC scores fell below the SENSE cohort scores in all but two of the six categories; this is an improvement from 2014 when ECC was below the SENSE cohort in all but one of the categories. ECC is scheduled to conduct the SENSE again in 2018 which will allow for continued monitoring of progress towards improvements in student engagement.