

# Research Briefs

## KEY FINDINGS

- STC is one of the top 4% of colleges in the nation for providing academic, financial, and social support for learners
- Although STC full-time students scored STC higher on the benchmark than did the part-time students, both groups scored STC higher than their peers at other extra-large colleges.
- 6 of 7 of the survey elements used to compute the benchmark score have a positive or flat 3 year trend.

## IMPLICATIONS

### For Practice:

- Provide opportunities to share these successes with other similar colleges
- Continue to inquire about the differences between support needs of part-time and full-time students to close the performance gap between them

### For Policy:

- Review policies and procedures to ensure that part-time students are provided equal levels of support as full-time students

### For Research:

- Further study is needed to understand the relationships and interactions between the variables collected on the CCSSE
- Develop a qualitative method to understand students interpretation of frequency of use of advising and how they might consider faculty advisement when scoring the survey.

## A Trend Analysis of Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) Support for Learners Benchmark

### A 2008 Study of CCSSE Data

South Texas College began conducting the first phases of trend analysis of CCSSE data upon completion of three consecutive years of participation in the national community college survey. Based on the College's Benchmark Scores for Support for Learners, students indicated that the College is doing very well in providing academic, financial, and social support for learners. Each of the three years, the Support for Learners benchmark score was significantly and consistently above the CCSSE mean benchmark score of 50. STC placed at the 96th percentile among its CCSSE peers in the 2008 administration.

### Background

STC has historically been described by its students as a friendly, caring institution where students feel like they are part of a family. Since STC is dedicated to excellence, the College took advantage of the suggestion to participate in

data for peer institutions. The College has participated annually since 2006 and has been ranked among the top institutions each of the three years.

College has begun the initial phases of a thorough trend analysis to try to understand the longitudinal trends and interaction among the variables.

### Purpose of Study

From the first year of participation in the CCSSE, the College

### Methodology

Approximately 1100 students were enrolled in randomly se-

CCSSE Benchmark Scores - 3 Year Trends and 2008 Percentile Rank

Benchmarks	CCSSE Cohort 2006	CCSSE Cohort 2007	CCSSE Cohort 2008	STC 2006	STC 2007	STC 2008	STC %tile Rank 2008
Support for Learners	50	50	50	<b>60.7</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>58.9</b>	96
Support for Part-Time Learners	48.6	48.4	48.5	<b>58.7</b>	<b>57.7</b>	<b>56.7</b>	94
Support for Full-Time Learners	54.5	53.8	53.7	<b>64.1</b>	<b>62.4</b>	<b>62.7</b>	96

**Bold text indicates STC score notably ABOVE the CCSSE cohort score and are significant at p<.01.**

CCSSE along with many of its peers who were also participating in the national campaign *Achieving the Dream*. The nationally recognized CCSSE Survey would provide an external source for measuring student engagement in community colleges and provide comparative

has used the data to promote courageous conversations and dialogues about strategies for more aggressively pursuing increasingly higher levels of excellence in the critical areas found by researchers to promote student engagement in higher education. With three years of data, the

lected course sections and voluntarily completed the student survey each year. The survey questions making up the Support for Learners benchmark score were analyzed separately to try to understand performance trends for each question



## A Trend Analysis of Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) Support for Learners Benchmark (cont.)

and to identify areas of needed improvement.

### Research Questions

The Support for Learning CCSSE Benchmark is computed by averaging the scores on survey items in which the students were asked how much the College emphasizes:

- Providing the support you need to help you succeed at this college
- Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Providing the support you need to thrive socially
- Providing the financial support you need to afford your education

Also included in the benchmark is the score for frequency of use of these services:

- Academic advising/planning
- Career counseling

### Key Findings

South Texas College has maintained the highest Support for Learning benchmark score among its Extra-Large College peers for each of the three years and in 2008 scored at the 96th percentile for the larger and entire CCSSE Cohort. Both the full-time and the part-time students at STC scored the College at least 10 points higher than their peers at other extra-large colleges scored their institution.

the mean of the total CCSSE cohort, and also the mean of the Achieving the Dream (ATD) cohort.

The two questions regarding the frequency of use of academic advising and career counseling are particularly interesting since a major effort referred to as the Beacon Advisement program in which over 400 faculty were trained to assist in student advisement of majors in their programs was implemented the first year in 2005. A study of this CCSSE data indicated that although the frequency score for use of advising services decreased slightly from initial year, two other potentially

Support for Learners	Your College Mean				Other ExLarge	CCSSE Cohort		ATD Cohort	
	2006	2007	2008		2008	Above / Below 2008	Above / Below 2008	Above / Below 2008	Above / Below 2008
9b. Providing the support you need to help you succeed at this college	3.09	3.11	3.15	↑	2.91	▲	2.95	▲	2.99
9c. Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	2.54	2.54	2.58	↑	2.52	▲	2.47	▲	2.58
9d. Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	2.25	2.21	2.31	→	1.89	▲	1.92	▲	1.98
9e. Providing the support you need to thrive socially	2.45	2.45	2.48	↑	2.08	▲	2.11	▲	2.18
9f. Providing the financial support you need to afford your education	2.83	2.87	2.74	→	2.28	▲	2.39	▲	2.40
13a1. Frequency: Academic advising/planning	1.85	1.81	1.81	→	1.71	▲	1.75	▲	1.76
13b1. Frequency: Career counseling	1.60	1.54	1.52	↓	1.46	▲	1.43	▲	1.48

In the first question regarding the support needed to succeed at this college, the students have indicated an increasingly higher vote of confidence each year with the latest year at 3.15 of a maximum score of 4.00. Scores regarding encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds and for thriving socially have also increased slightly over the 3 years.

In four of the seven questions, STC has scored significantly above the 2008 mean of other extra-large colleges, the

related survey questions in which students were asked if they have discussed ideas from their readings or classes with instructors outside of class, and if they have worked with

instructors on activities other than coursework showed slight increases. It may be that students don't associate the frequency of use of advising with faculty advising, but rather only with the Advising center.

### Implications for Further Research

Further investigation should be made to provide deeper understanding regarding the interaction of variables regarding student advising and student interaction with faculty.

