

## ***Executive Summary***

### **Introduction**

During Assessment Week 2008 (Feb. 25 – March 1), Mesa Community College (MCC) participated in the *Community College Survey of Student Engagement* (CCSSE) for the first time. The survey was administered to randomly selected sections in which 1,246 completed surveys were collected and sent to CCSSE for processing and analysis. The CCSSE is administered at several of the other colleges in the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD). In 2008, Gateway, Phoenix and Scottsdale Community Colleges joined MCC in administering the CCSSE.

The CCSSE survey instrument, *The Community College Student Report*, consists of 122 items measuring student engagement, student behaviors, student demographics and institutional practices developed by CCSSE out of the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin. CCSSE groups 38 of the engagement items into five “Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice”: active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction and support for learners. According to CCSSE, these benchmarks “reflect many of the most important aspects of the student experience” and “are some of the most powerful contributors to effective teaching, learning, student retention, and student success.” In addition to the standard items, five CCSSE special focus questions asked students about financial aid matters and 10 satisfaction rating scale items specific to MCCCD addressed areas of student satisfaction, student access, inclusiveness/diversity, workforce development/transfer education and global engagement.

The 2008 CCSSE Cohort is comprised of a total of 585 institutions across 48 states, plus British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and the Marshall Islands. Of these member colleges, 295 are classified as small (< 4,500), 147 as medium (4,500-7,999), 96 as large (8,000-14,999), and 47 as extra-large institutions (15,000 + credit students). One hundred fourteen of the Cohort member colleges are located in urban areas, 129 in suburban areas, and 342 in rural-serving areas.

MCC falls into the extra-large college comparison group. The average IPEDS enrollment of the 47 colleges in this cohort is 24,437 with a low of 15,053 and a high of 51,329. MCC’s Fall 2007 45th day enrollment of 24,470 falls remarkably close to the median of the cohort. This report will not discuss comparisons between MCC and the overall CCSSE Cohort or other MCCCD colleges administering the CCSSE this year, as these comparison groups include colleges much smaller than MCC. It will compare MCC to the other similarly sized colleges in the extra-large college cohort.

It is important to note that an inverse proportion of full-time and part-time students responded to the survey than attend MCC: 64% of the student respondents report attending college full-time, while the college’s actual full-time student enrollment is 30% (IPEDS). Only 36% of surveyed students report attending part-time compared to 70% as reported to IPEDS. 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/part-time variable so that reports will accurately reflect the underlying student population.

This report includes a number of analyses and comparisons:

- Overall student responses at MCC for part-time, full-time and all students.
- MCC compared to other extra-large community colleges using CCSSE Benchmarks.
- MCC student responses to the CCSSE special focus questions and additional MCCCD questions.

The last time MCC surveyed students in this manner was the *Student Assessment of the College Environment* (SACE) in fall 2003. This SACE results found statistically significant differences in the responses of day and evening students: day students were generally more positive about their experience at the college. Further, MCC enrollment trends indicate a decline in evening enrollment between fall 2007 and fall 2008. For these reasons, the Office of Research and Planning (ORP) has requested data on day and evening students' responses to the survey from CCSSE. A report on these findings will be forthcoming.

## Method

Credit classes were randomly selected – stratified by time of day (morning, afternoon, and evening) – from institutional class data files to participate in the survey. Of those sampled at our institution, 1,246 students submitted usable surveys. The number of completed surveys produced an overall response rate of 83%. This equates to a confidence interval of  $\pm 2.7\%$  at the 95% confidence level.

Faculty members were notified prior to administration of the survey that they had been randomly selected to participate. Course and section information was provided in this notice for verification purposes. Upon verification, survey materials were distributed the week prior to administration and faculty were asked to administer the survey during MCC's Assessment Week. Department chairs promoted participation of faculty and disseminated survey notices, letters, and materials.

Upon return of the surveys, they were prepared for scanning and shipped to CCSSE for processing, analysis and reporting.

## Highlighted Results

### Part I: Respondent Profile

Characteristics of the CCSSE sample were found to be similar to those of the entire student body with two exceptions: age and enrollment status. Students responding to the survey were slightly younger than MCC's population. Also, 64% of the student respondents report attending college full-time, while the college's actual full-time student enrollment is 30% (IPEDS). Only 36% of surveyed students report attending part-time compared to 70% as reported to IPEDS. For this reason, survey results are either weighted or disaggregated on the full-time/part-time variable so that reports will accurately reflect the underlying student population.

### Part II: Overall Results by Benchmark

CCSSE Benchmark scores are standardized so that the weighted mean for each score is 50. The table below lists MCC's benchmark scores. Active and Collaborative Learning is highest and falls at the mean. All other benchmarks fall below the mean, with student effort ranking lowest.

<b>Benchmark</b>	<b>Score</b>
Active and Collaborative Learning	50.3
Student-Faculty Interaction	47.2
Academic Challenge	46.2
Support for Learners	45.3
Student Effort	44.8



Mean scores for each survey item contained within the benchmarks can be found on pages 3-5.

Part III: Overall Results by Item

Overall, students indicated a high level of satisfaction with their experiences at the college. Nine out of ten respondents indicated their entire educational experience at MCC was either excellent or good. Almost all respondents (97%) said that they would recommend MCC to a friend or family member.

Students indicated having favorable relationships with other students, faculty and administrative staff. Over 80% indicated a positive relationship with faculty, three-quarters of respondents indicated a positive relationship with other students, and over half said the same about administrative personnel.

Further, over 75% of respondents indicated MCC provides the courses they need to meet academic goals, they are satisfied with the quality of instruction at MCC, and it is easy to register for class at MCC. About two-thirds agreed the library meets their needs, and information about programs of study is easy to find.

When asked about five issues that might cause students to withdraw from classes, students selected transferring to university, lack of finances and working full-time as the most likely reasons. Further, 19% of students indicated that their friends were “not very” or only “somewhat” supportive of their attending MCC and 12% indicated the same low level of support from their families. Almost two-thirds of respondents, though, indicated that they planned on taking classes at MCC again within the next year.

<i>Potential cause of withdrawing from MCC</i>	<i>Very Likely / Likely</i>	<i>Somewhat Likely</i>	<i>Not Likely</i>
Transferring to a 4-year college or university	53%	16%	31%
Lack of finances	43%	23%	33%
Working full-time	38%	23%	39%
Caring for dependents	25%	23%	51%
Being academically unprepared	19%	21%	60%

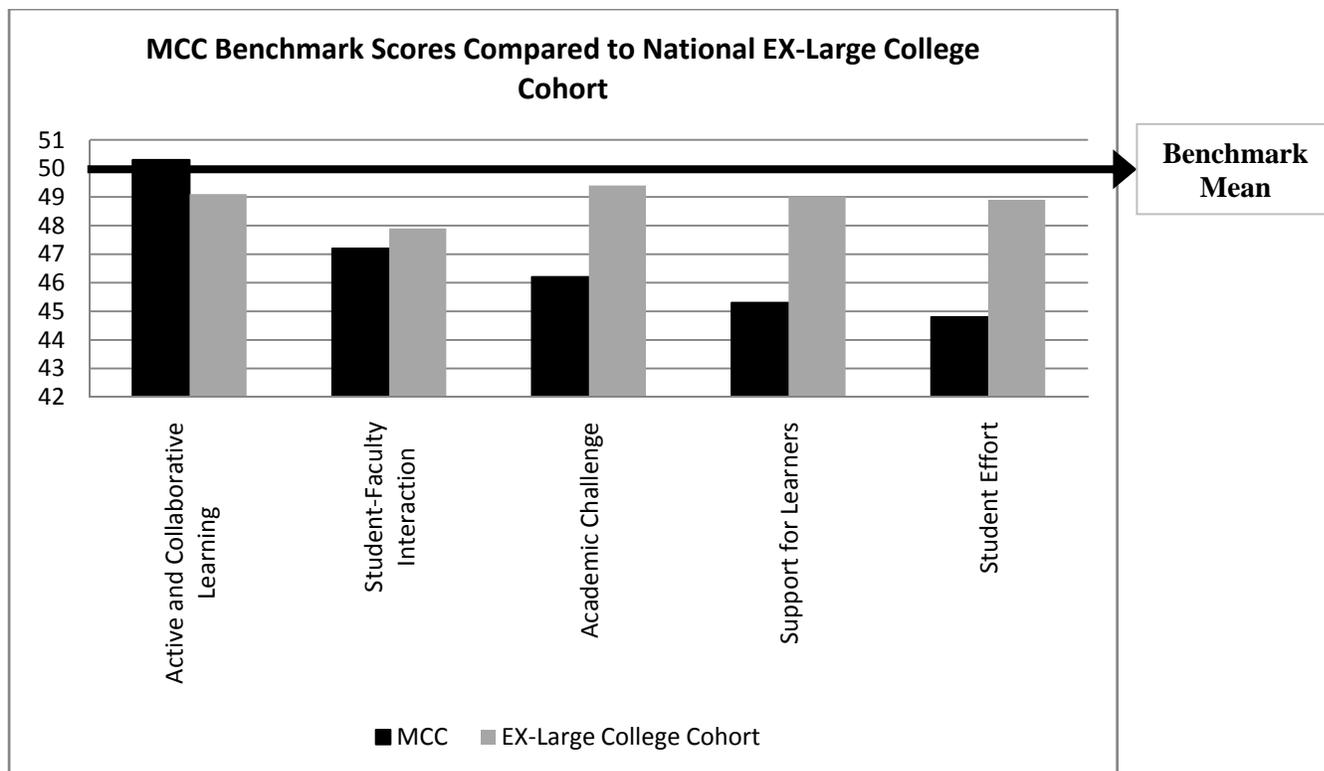
Two-thirds of students said the college emphasized “very much” or “quite a bit” providing the support needed to help students succeed. On the other hand, almost half of respondents indicated the college provides very little emphasis on helping students cope with non-academic responsibilities, and over a third of respondents said the college places very little emphasis on providing the financial support needed to finance their education.

Graphic results for each survey item can be found on pages 6-33.

Part IV: MCC Results Compared to National Extra-large College Cohort<sup>1</sup>

MCC’s benchmark scores are lower than those of national extra-large community college cohort for four of the five areas. MCC scores higher in only the active and collaborative learning benchmark and scores noticeably lower in the academic challenge, support for learners and student effort benchmarks. This suggests that on average, the college results are lower than what is being found in 47 other similarly-sized community colleges administering the CCSSE nationwide.

<sup>1</sup> The national extra-large college cohort contains data from 47 community colleges participating in the last three years of CCSSE administration.



Survey items within each benchmark that show statistically significant differences between MCC and those in the extra-large college cohort are listed on pages 34-40.