

Executive Summary

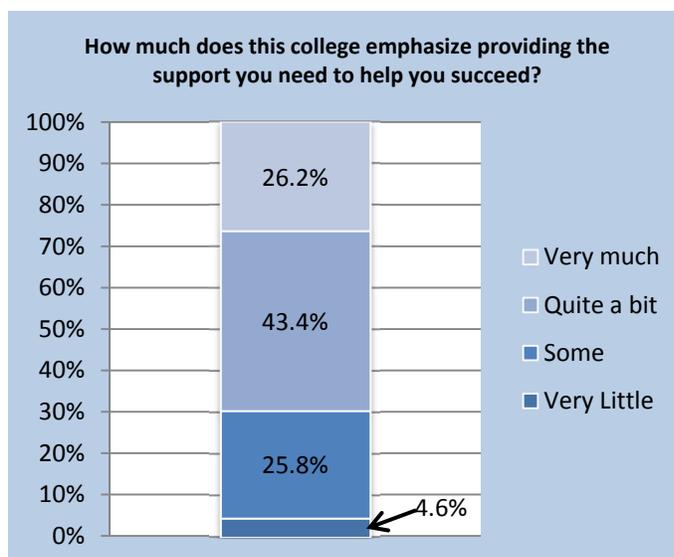
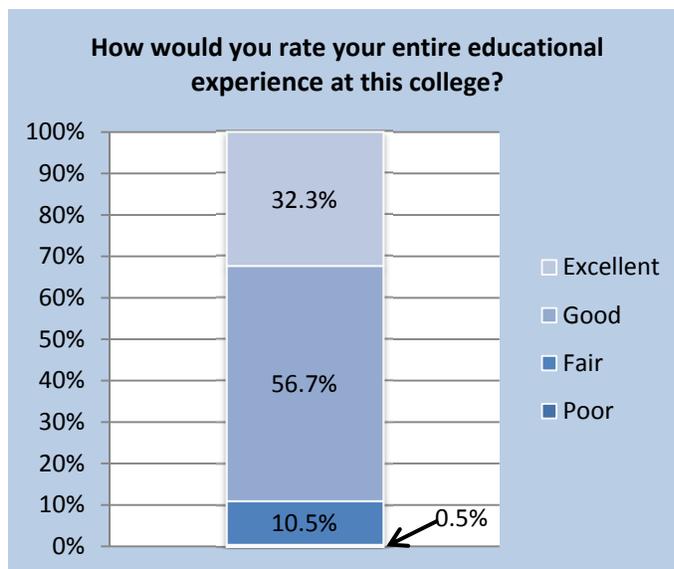
Introduction

During Assessment Week 2011 (Feb. 28 – March 5), Mesa Community College (MCC) participated in the *Community College Survey of Student Engagement* (CCSSE) for the second time. The survey was administered to randomly selected sections in which 1,415 completed surveys were collected and sent to CCSSE for processing and analysis. This year marks the first CCSSE administration where all colleges in the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) participated during the same year.

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 certain first-semester experiences and 10 MCCCD custom survey items relating to library usage, student involvement, and community service.

The 2011 CCSSE Cohort includes 699 institutions from 48 states and the District of Columbia, five Canadian provinces, plus Bermuda and the Mariana Islands. Of these member colleges, 313 are classified as small (< 4,500), 185 as medium (4,500-7,999), 125 as large (8,000-14,999), and 76 as extra-large institutions (15,000 + credit students). One hundred forty nine of the cohort member colleges are located in urban areas, 149 in suburban areas, and 401 in rural areas.

MCC falls into the extra-large college cohort (XLCC). Of the 76 colleges in the XLCC, 71 were found in the IPEDS reporting system. The average IPEDS fall 2009 enrollment of these 71 colleges is 24,267 with a low of 14,991 and a high of 54,942. MCC’s fall 2009 45th day enrollment of 25,960 falls remarkably close to the mean enrollment 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. Comparisons will be made between MCC and other similarly sized colleges in the extra-large college cohort (XLCC) as well as between MCC's 2008 and 2011 results.

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 MCCC questions
- MCC results from 2008 compared to results from 2011

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, 1,415 students submitted usable surveys. The overall student response rate was 61%, and the overall class participation rate was 89%. The large sample size produces a large confidence that the survey results are representative of the overall opinion of the MCC student body: confidence interval of $\pm 3.34\%$ at the 99% confidence level.

The Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Office of Research and Planning (ORP) sent faculty members several notifications of their selection prior to administration of the survey. Course and section information were 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 helped to disseminate survey notices, letters, and materials. Upon return, surveys were prepared for scanning and shipped to CCSSE for processing, analysis, and reporting.

Highlighted Results

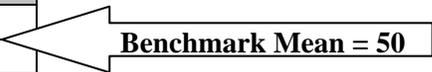
Part I: Respondent Profile

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. It is important to note that an inverse proportion of full-time and part-time students responded to the survey than attend MCC: 69% of the student respondents report attending college full-time, while the college's actual full-time student enrollment is 34% (IPEDS). Only 31% of surveyed students report attending part-time compared to 66% as reported to IPEDS. This inverse representation is a result of the sampling technique and the in-class administration process. For this reason, most survey results are either weighted or disaggregated on the full-time/part-time variable so that reports will accurately reflect the overall student population.

Part II: Overall Results by Benchmark with 2008-2011 Comparison

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.

<i>Benchmark</i>	<i>Score</i>
Active and Collaborative Learning	50.1
Academic Challenge	47.3
Support for Learners	46.4
Student-Faculty Interaction	46.2
Student Effort	44.8



Because CCSSE does not provide comparison reporting for institutions to compare survey results from administration to administration, ORP conducted an analysis of the unweighted raw survey data to determine statistically significant differences between 2008 and 2011 results. It should be noted that this comparison gives equal weight to responses of full-time and part-time students while most CCSSE results are weighted to compensate for the inverse proportion of full-time and part-time students responding to the survey.

- The 2011 cohort perceived that MCC has increased emphasis in areas such as encouraging study time, helping with non-academic responsibilities, providing financial support, and encouraging diverse interactions.
- **Student satisfaction with some services increased** by a statistically significant margin: peer and other tutoring, skill labs (writing, math, etc.), child care, and financial aid advising. Satisfaction levels with other college areas remained stable from 2008 and did not decrease: academic advising/planning, career counseling, job placement assistance, computer labs, student organizations, transfer credit assistance, and disability services.
- **MCC students said they are more engaged in challenging academic work** than in 2008; students indicated coursework now has a greater emphasis in skills of memorizing, analyzing, synthesizing, and making judgments.
- **Students reported participating in some academic experiences more often** in 2011 than in 2008:
 - Completing more drafts of papers and assignments
 - Integrating sources into papers and projects
 - Using technology to communicate (e-mail, instant messaging and internet)
 - Working harder than they thought possible to meet instructors' expectations
 - Discussing ideas from class and readings with others outside of class
 - Having serious conversations with diverse groups of students
- Students reported **taking more developmental math and reading courses** than in 2008, which follows the actual enrollment trend at MCC. Developmental enrollment at 45th day in math has increased from 2,257 students in fall 2008 to 3,144 students in fall 2011, and developmental enrollment at 45th day in reading has increased from 549 students in fall 2008 to 982 students in fall 2011.
- The **amount of time students indicate working for pay decreased by a significant margin**. This likely reflects continued economic problems and high unemployment rates in both the country and the MCC's surrounding community. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor

Statistics, the unemployment rate for the Phoenix-Mesa-Glendale Metropolitan Statistical Area more than doubled from 4.0% at the time of the spring 2008 CCSSE administration to 8.7% at the time of the 2011 survey.

- Students indicated **taking fewer classes concurrently at other institutions**, and fewer students reported attending a 4-year university or college before coming to MCC.
- MCC students report being **more likely to withdraw from a class or college due to a lack of finances**.
 - Compared to 2008, students said they rely more on grants, scholarships, loans, and other public assistance to pay tuition, which also corresponds to the actual MCC trend. During FY2010-11, MCC awarded over \$75 million in federal aid to 14,077 students compared to FY2007-208
 - The amount indicating the use of personal or family income and savings to pay for college decreased.

Part III: Overall Results by Item

Overall, students indicated a high level of satisfaction with their experiences at the college. Nearly nine out of ten respondents (89%) indicated their entire educational experience at MCC was either excellent or good. Almost all respondents (98%) said that they would recommend MCC to a friend or family member.

A majority of MCC students indicated having favorable relationships with other students, faculty and administrative staff: 84% indicated a positive relationship with faculty; 77% indicated a positive relationship with other students; and 56% indicated a positive relationship with administrative personnel.

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% of students indicated the same low level of support from their families. Just over 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	55%	20%	25%
Lack of finances	50%	23%	27%
Working full-time	39%	23%	38%
Caring for dependents	28%	22%	50%
Being academically unprepared	18%	28%	61%

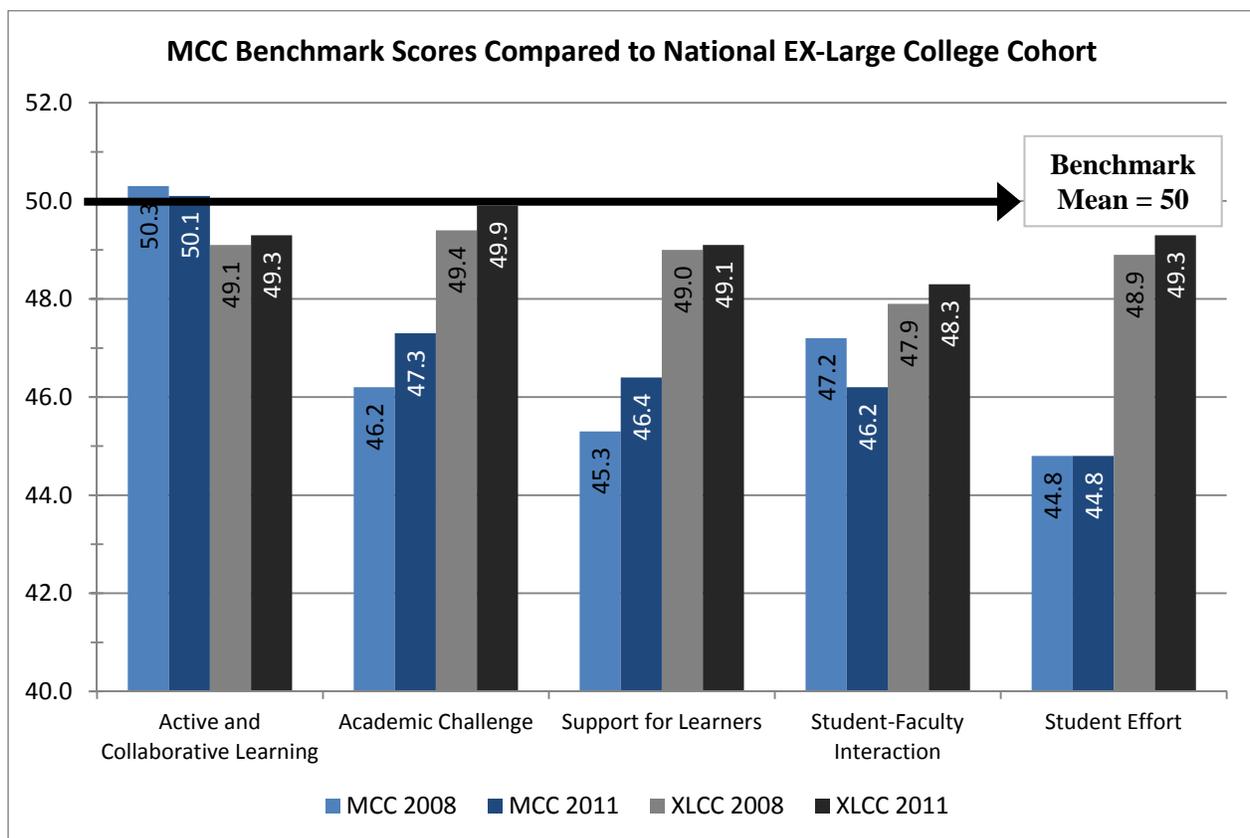
Over two-thirds of students said the college emphasized “very much” or “quite a bit” providing the support needed to help students succeed; however, 43% of respondents indicated the college provides very little emphasis on helping students cope with non-academic responsibilities, and over one-quarter of respondents said the college places very little emphasis on providing the financial support needed to finance their education.

Part IV: MCC Results Compared to National Extra-large College Cohort¹

MCC only scored higher than XLCC in the Active and Collaborative Learning Benchmark, outperforming 60% of other XLCC colleges in this benchmark. In the other areas, MCC scored in the lowest third of XLCC colleges in the Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark, in the lowest fifth of XLCC colleges in the Academic Challenge and Support for Learners benchmarks, and in the lowest tenth of XLCC colleges in the Student Effort benchmark.

MCC’s total benchmark scores are lower than those of XLCC for four of the five areas; however, the benchmark comparison does not tell the whole story. Few individual items within these benchmarks are flagged by CCSSE as statistically significant, so MCC may be performing more similarly to the XLCC on an item by item basis than the overall benchmark scores indicate. CCSSE encourages colleges to take a closer look at items with statistical significance, as this indicates “a difference to be worthy of further investigation.” MCC falls below the XLCC on the following four items:

- Academic Challenge: Number of written papers or reports of any length
- Support for Learners: Frequency of career counseling
- Student Effort: Frequency of computer lab use
- Non-benchmark item: Satisfaction with career counseling



¹ The national extra-large college cohort contains data from 76 community colleges participating in the last three years of CCSSE administration.