Phillips
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

SENSE
Survey of Entering
Student Engagement
a CCSSE Initiative

Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas

Student Engagement

SENSE 2009
(Survey of Entering Student Engagement)

PCCUA Data Comparison Fall 2008 and Fall 2009

Published September 2010

ACHIEVING
THE DREAM
COMMUNITY
COLLEGES
COUNT

SENSE

Survey of Entering Student Engagement

PCCUA *SENSE* Data Fall 2009

Benchmarks of Effective Practice with Entering Students

- **Early Connections**
- **High Expectations & Aspirations**
- **Clear Academic Plan and Pathway**
- **Effective Track to College Readiness**
- **Engaged Learning**
- **Academic and Social Support Network**

The *SENSE* benchmarks are groups of conceptually related survey items that address key areas of student engagement.

The six *SENSE* benchmarks reflect critical elements of engagement for entering students.

Early Connections

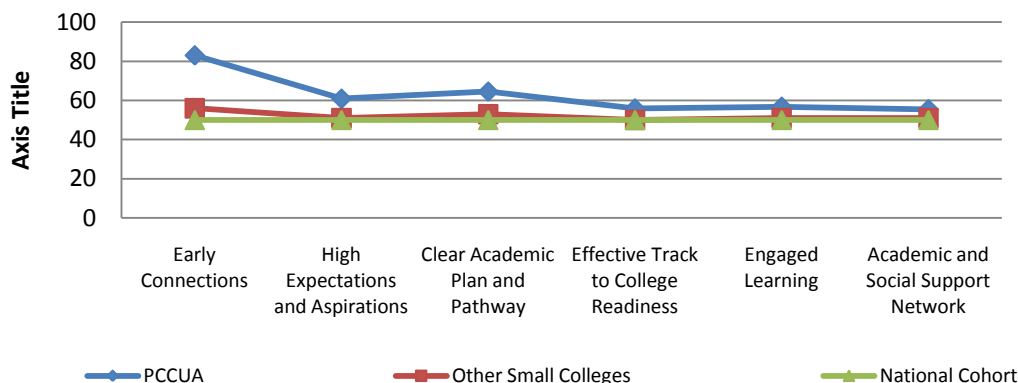**The following five items comprise this benchmark:**

Thinking about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester respond to each item (using a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree).

- ❖ The very first time I came to this college I felt welcome
- ❖ The college provided me with adequate information about financial assistance (scholarships, grants, loans, etc.)
- ❖ A college staff member helped me determine whether I qualified for financial assistance
- ❖ At least one college staff member (other than an instructor) learned my name
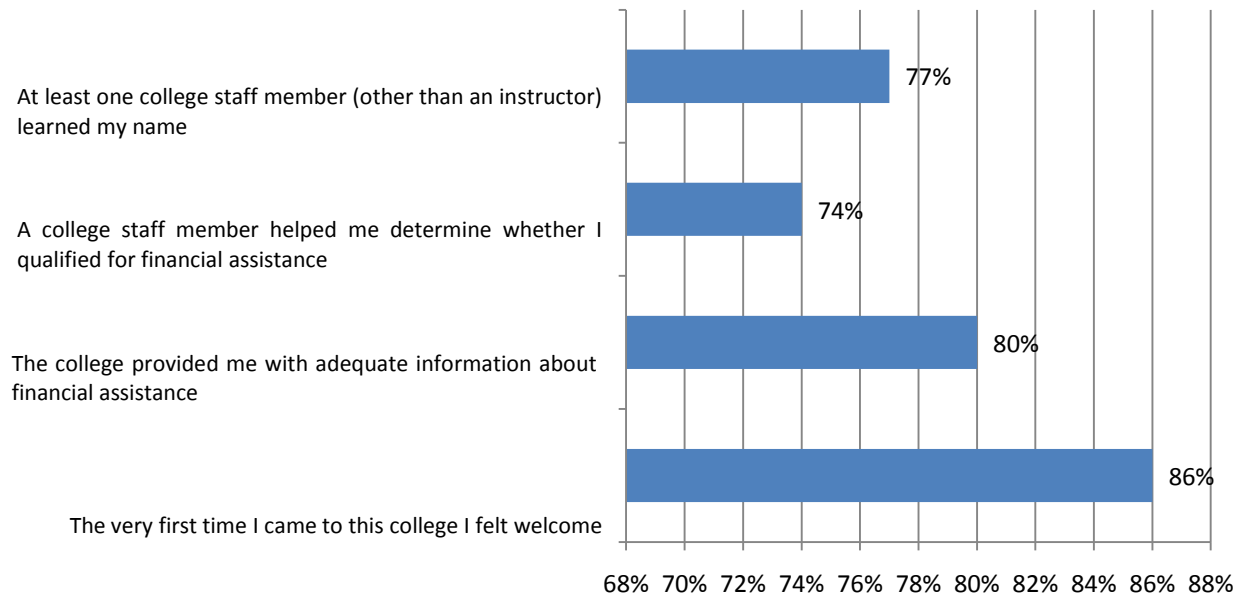
Thinking about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your semester, respond (answering yes or no).

- ❖ A specific person was assigned to me so I could see him/her each time I needed information or assistance.
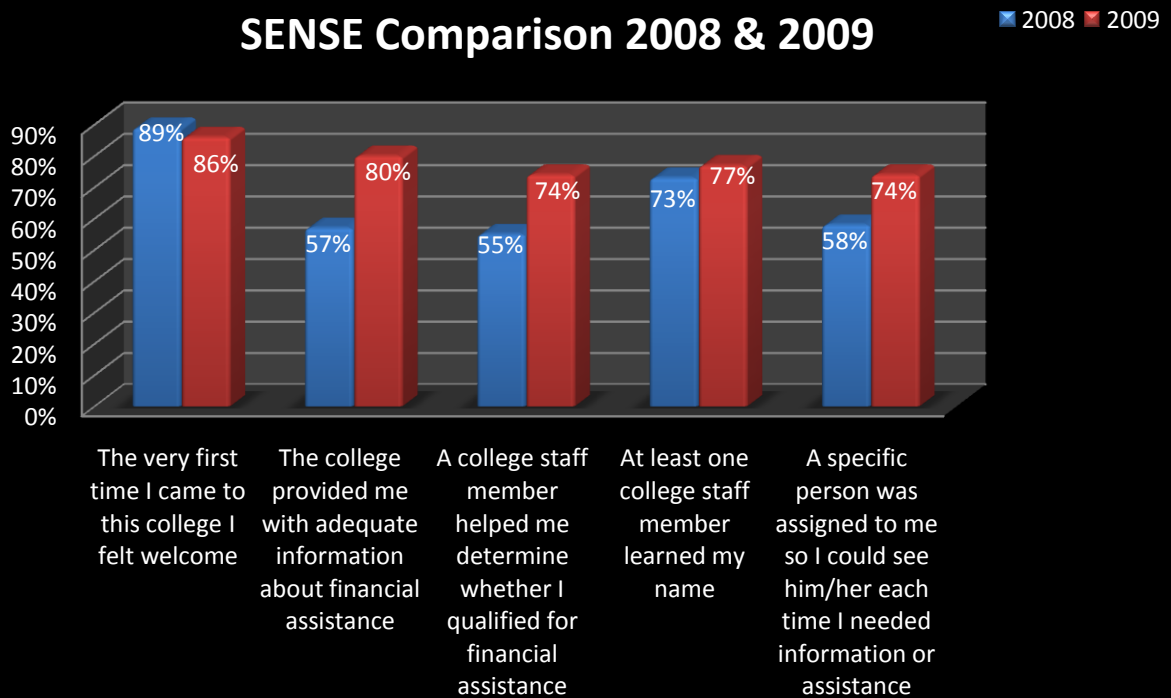

SENSE 2009 Benchmarks

2009 SENSE Data

Early Connections Key Findings 2009

At least one college staff member (other than an instructor) learned my name — 77%

A college staff member helped me determine whether I qualified for financial assistance — 74%

The college provided me with adequate information about financial assistance — 80%

The very first time I came to this college I felt welcome — 86%

68% 70% 72% 74% 76% 78% 80% 82% 84% 86% 88%

2009 SENSE Data

Early Connections
SENSE Comparison 2008 & 2009

■ 2008 ■ 2009

	The very first time I came to this college I felt welcome	The college provided me with adequate information about financial assistance	A college staff member helped me determine whether I qualified for financial assistance	At least one college staff member learned my name	A specific person was assigned to me so I could see him/her each time I needed information or assistance
2008	89%	57%	55%	73%	58%
2009	86%	80%	74%	77%	74%

High Expectations and Aspirations

When 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.

The following seven items comprise this benchmark:

Thinking about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester, respond to each item (using a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree).

- ❖ The instructors at this college want me to succeed
- ❖ I have the motivation to do what it takes to succeed in college
- ❖ I am prepared academically to succeed in college

During the first three weeks of your first semester at this college, how often did you:

- ❖ Turn in an assignment late
- ❖ Not turn in an assignment
- ❖ Come to class without completing readings or assignments
- ❖ Skip class

Key Findings

Entering students state they have high motivation and are prepared for college, but their actions do not always reflect behaviors for success.

- ❖ Ninety four percent (94%) of PCCUA students *agree or strongly agree* that they have the motivation to do what it takes to succeed in college.
- ❖ 89% of PCCUA students surveyed believe that they are prepared academically to succeed in college.
- ❖ More than three quarters (92%) of PCCUA students feel that instructors at this school wants them to succeed.
- ❖ 15% report that they did not turn in an assignment at least once, while almost one-quarter of respondents (24%) say they turned in an assignment late at least once.
- ❖ More than one-quarter of respondents (27%) report coming to class without completing readings or assignments at least once.
- ❖ Less than one-quarter (19%) report skipping class one or more times.

Disaggregating *SENSE* data by gender and race reveals findings about men of color and may be noteworthy to look at ways to address gaps in educational attainment across student groups.

SENSE data are listed for the benchmarks by gender groups in the tables below:

SENSE 2009
Benchmarks and Gender Comparison


SENSE 2009 Benchmarks and Male Gender Comparison
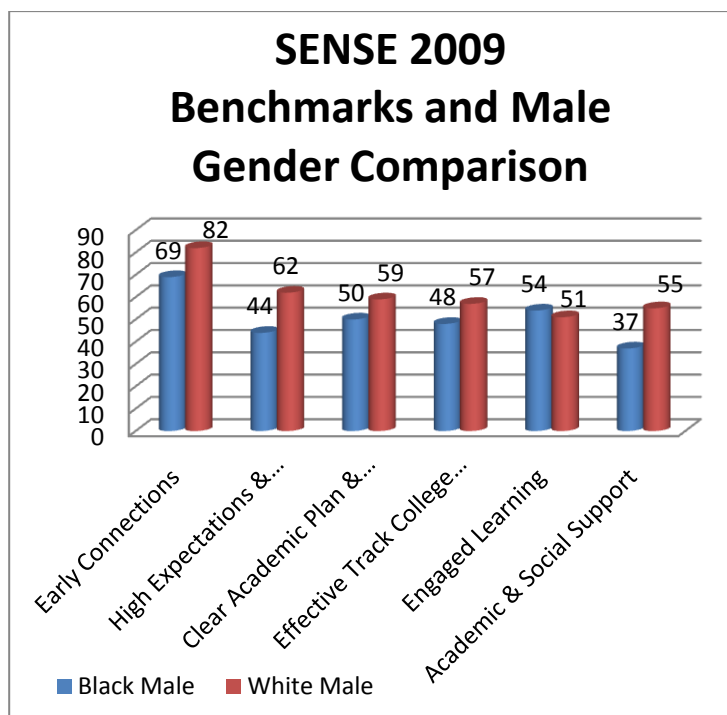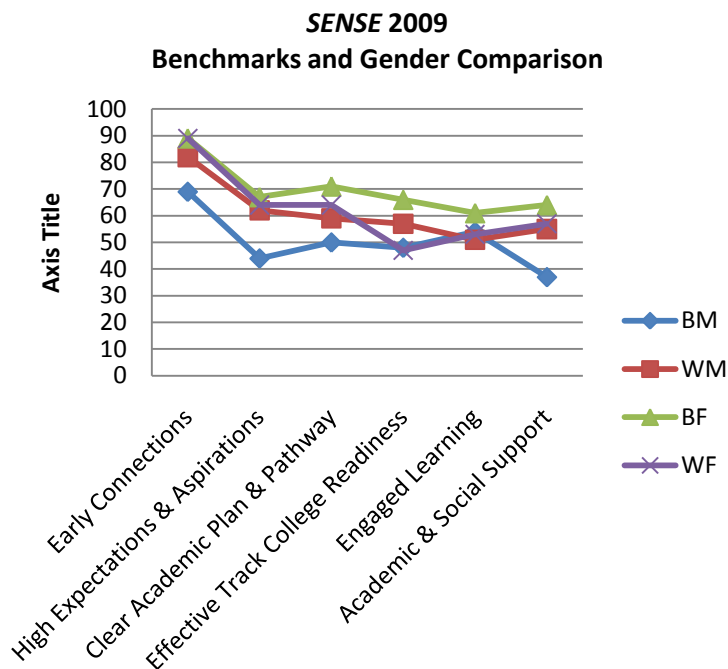
Source: *SENSE* 2009 data

High Expectations and Aspirations benchmark broken out by specific questions (frequencies) by gender and ethnicity. This is the next step in analyzing important data to use in developing strategies for student success.

High Expectations & Aspirations Frequencies Gender and Ethnicity 2009

Source: *SENSE* 2009 data

High Expectations and Aspirations Sense Comparison 2008-2009
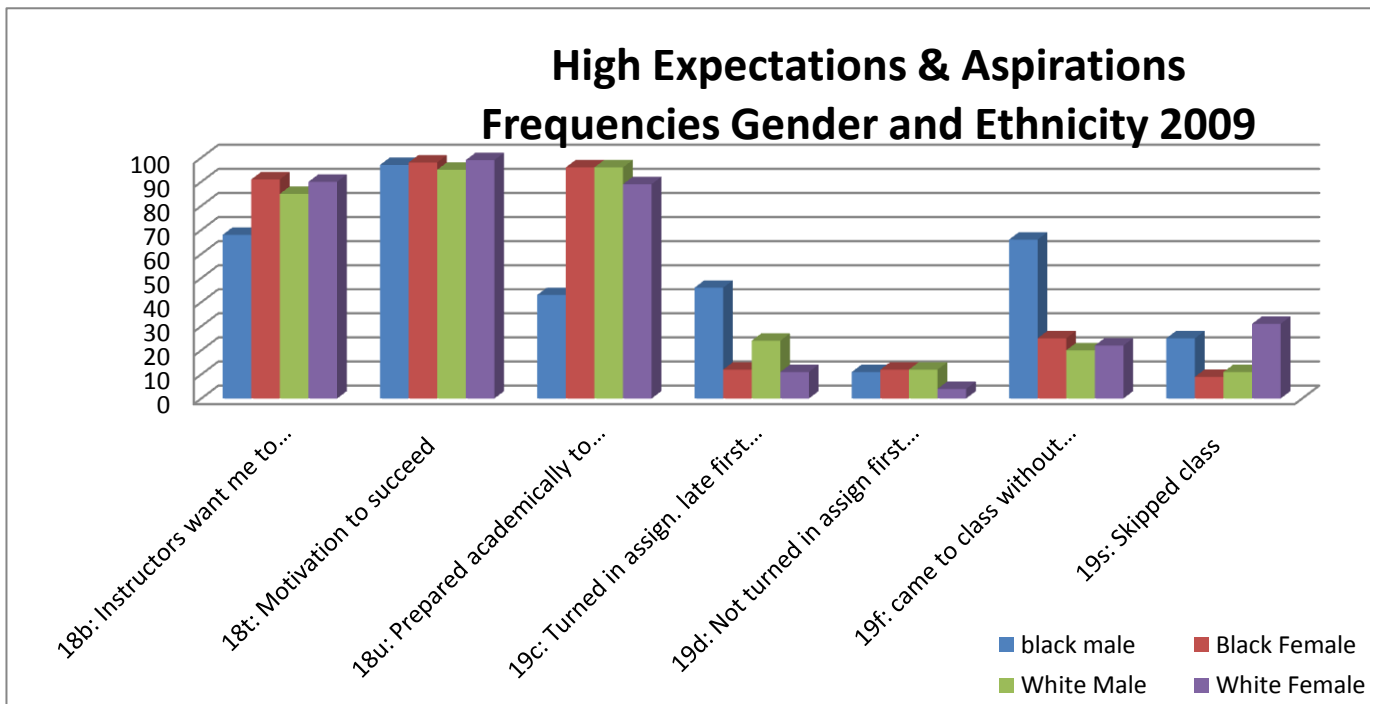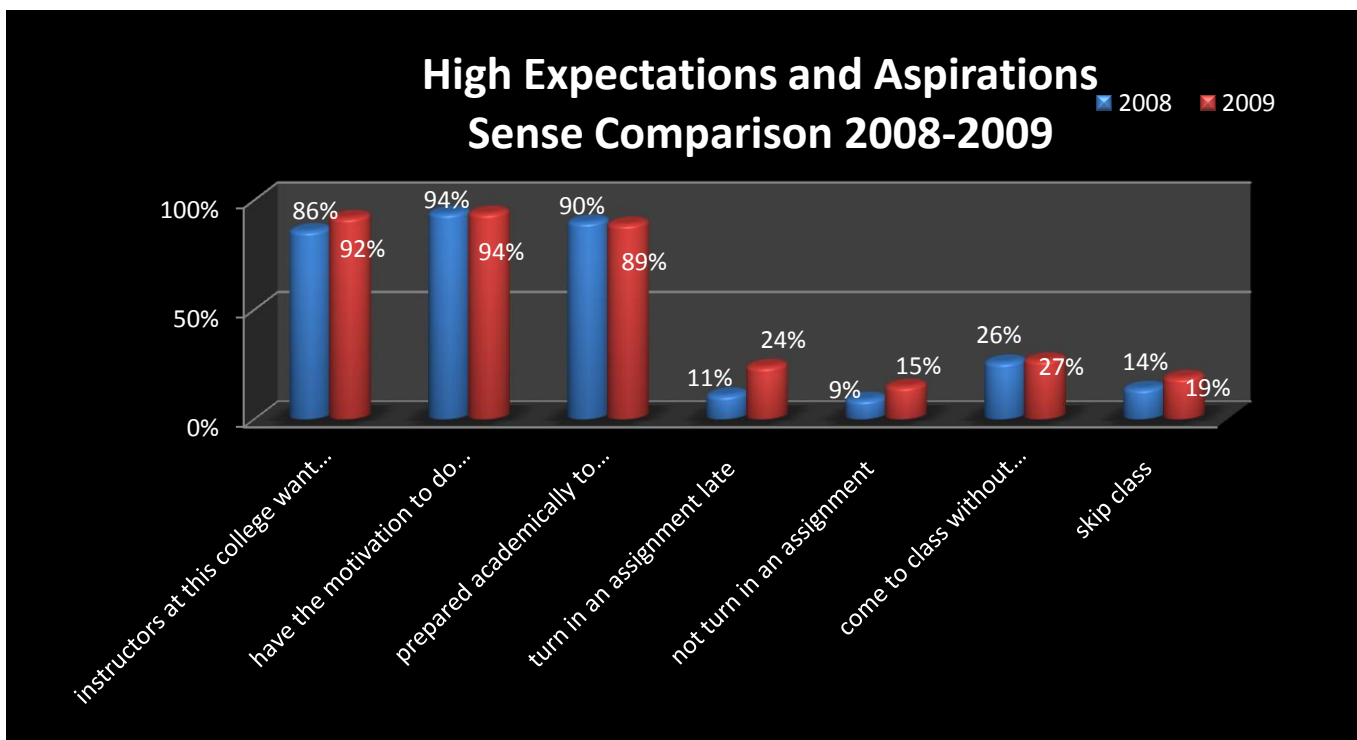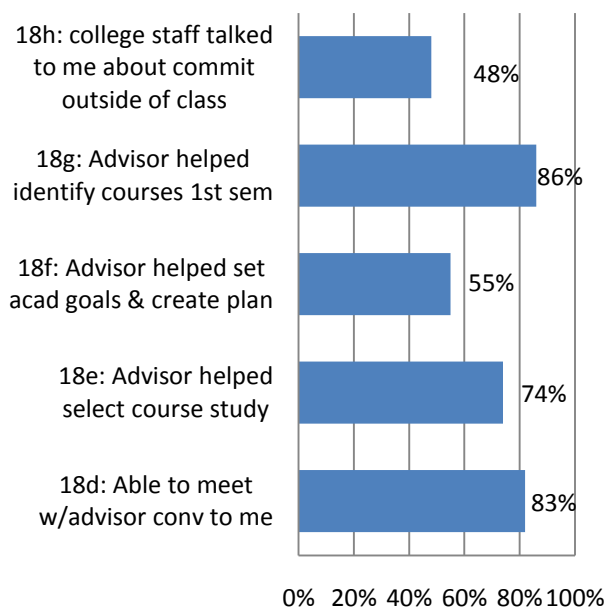
Clear Academic Plan and Pathway

Students are more likely to persist if they are advised on which courses to take in addition to assistance with creating a plan, and setting goals to achieve the plan.

The following five items comprise this benchmark:

Thinking about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester, respond to each item (using a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree)

❖ I was able to meet with an academic advisor at times convenient for me.

❖ An advisor helped me to identify the courses I needed to take during my first semester.

❖ An advisor helped me to select a course of study, program, or major.

❖ An advisor helped me to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them.

❖ A college staff member talked with me about my commitments outside of school (work, children, dependents, etc.) to help me figure out how many courses to take.

Key Findings

Entering PCCUA student respondents (74%) indicated that they had a specific person assigned to them and agreed that they had assistance with selecting courses and creating a schedule but a smaller percentage say they had help with setting academic goals and developing plans.

❖ 83% of entering PCCUA student respondents *agree or strongly agree* that they were able to meet with an academic advisor at times convenient for them.

❖ 86% *agree or strongly agree* that an advisor help them to identify the courses need to take during their first semester.

❖ Only 55% *agree or strongly agree* that an advisor helped them set academic goals and create a plan for achieving them.

❖ Almost half (48%) *agree or strongly agree* that a college staff member talked with them about their commitments outside of school to help them figure out how many courses to take.

Clear Academic Plan and Pathway 2009

Source: SENSE 2009 Data

Clear and Academic Pathway SENSE Comparison 2008 & 2009
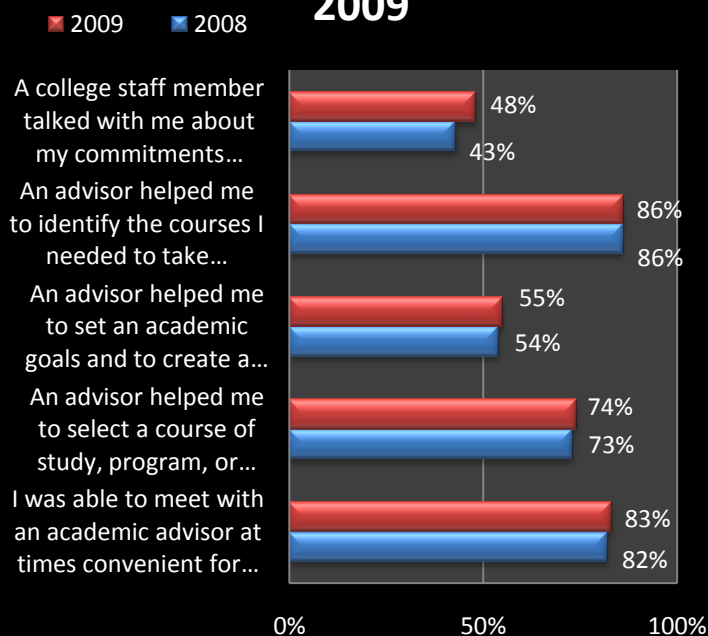
Effective Track to College Readiness

Thinking about your experiences from the time of our decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester, respond answering yes or no:

- ❖ Before I could register for classes I was required to take a placement test (COMPASS, ASSET, SAT, ACT, etc.).

- ❖ I took a placement test (COMPASS, ASSET, SAT, ACT, etc.).

- ❖ This college required me to enroll in classes indicated by my placement test scores during my first semester.

Thinking about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks in your first semester, respond to each item:

- ❖ Within a class or through another experiences at this college, I learned to improve my study skills (listening, note-taking, highlighting readings, working with others, etc.).

- ❖ Within a class or through another experiences at this college, I learned to understand my academic strengths and weaknesses.

- ❖ Within a class or through another experiences at this college, I learned skills and strategies to improve my test-taking ability.

Key Findings

In the SENSE survey, a higher percentage of PCCUA students reported taking placement tests than at other small colleges and 78% of entering students indicated that they placed into a developmental course.

- ❖ 47% of entering students enrolled in developmental reading

- ❖ 58% enrolled in developmental writing

- ❖ 63% enrolled in developmental math

- ❖ 41% enrolled in a student success course

Colleges Creating a Clear Academic Plan and Pathway – PCCUA Recognized in *SENSE* 2009 National Publication.

Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas (AR) created its Student Success Pass to connect academic advising and planning to Pell grant and scholarship disbursements. The only way a student can get a success pass is to meet with his or her assigned advisor—and students must show their success passes to pick up their grant and scholarship checks. The success pass ensures that students contact their advisors every semester.

Source: Center for Community College Student Engagement.(2009). *Benchmarking & Benchmarks: Effective Practice with Entering Students.* Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program.

Entering Students and Developmental Education Fall 2009

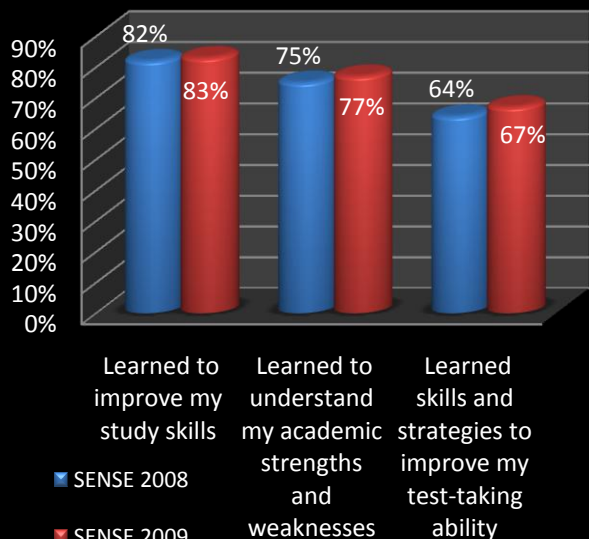| Category	Percent
student success course	41%
developmental math	63%
developmental writing	58%
developmental reading	47%
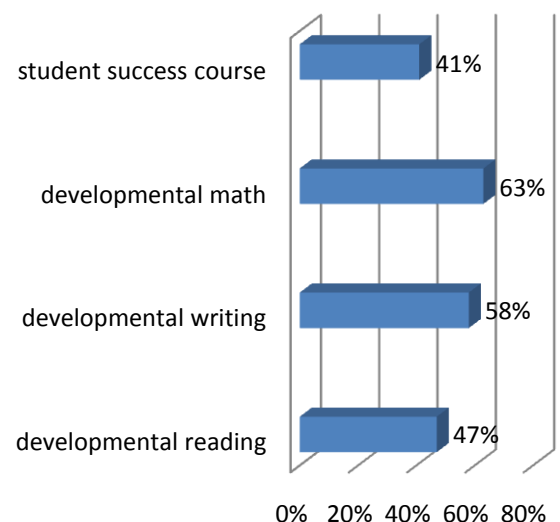
Source: SENSE 2009 Data

Additionally, there is growing evidence that participating in student success courses leads to improved student outcomes, particularly for developmental students.

PCCUA participated in the *SENSE* special-focus module on student success courses and those students who responded to the survey questions indicated that they *agree or strongly agree* that they gained key skills and knowledge.

- ❖ 83% gained skills to be a better student

- ❖ 73% helped students feel more connected to the college

- ❖ 51% report improving their time management skills

- ❖ 77% say they learned to understand their academic strengths and weaknesses

- ❖ 63% report learning about college services available to help students succeed in their studies

- ❖ 56% report learning about college policies and deadlines that affect them

- ❖ 83% learned to improve study skills

- ❖ 67% learned skills and strategies to improve test -taking ability
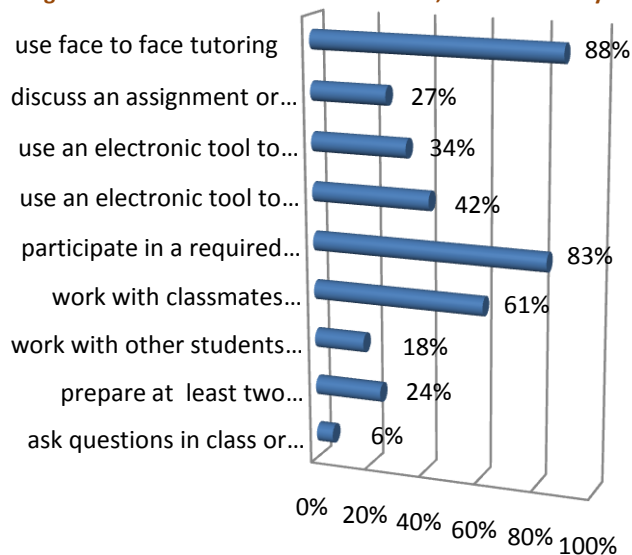
Engaged Learning

Instructional approaches that foster engaged learning are critical for student success. Students must find ways to balance their studies with work and family responsibilities, the most effective learning experiences will be those the college intentionally designs.

The following 16 items comprise this benchmark:

- ❖ Asked questions in class
- ❖ Prepare two drafts or assignment
- ❖ Participate in supplemental instruction
- ❖ Work with other students during class
- ❖ Work with other students outside class
- ❖ Discuss ideas from readings with instructor
- ❖ Use face to face tutoring
- ❖ Used writing, math, other skill labs
- ❖ Used computer lab
- ❖ Participate In student initiated study groups not required
- ❖ Used electronic tool to communicate with another student
- ❖ Discuss assign or grade with instructor
- ❖ Ask for help from instructor
- ❖ Receive prompt written or oral feedback from instructor
- ❖ Participate in required study groups outside class
- ❖ Use electronic tool to communicate with instructor

Effective Track to College Readiness SENSE Comparison 2008-2009

Engaged Learning 2009

During the first three weeks of first semester, how often did you:

use face to face tutoring	88%
discuss an assignment or…	27%
use an electronic tool to…	34%
use an electronic tool to…	42%
participate in a required…	83%
work with classmates…	61%
work with other students…	18%
prepare at least two…	24%
ask questions in class or…	6%

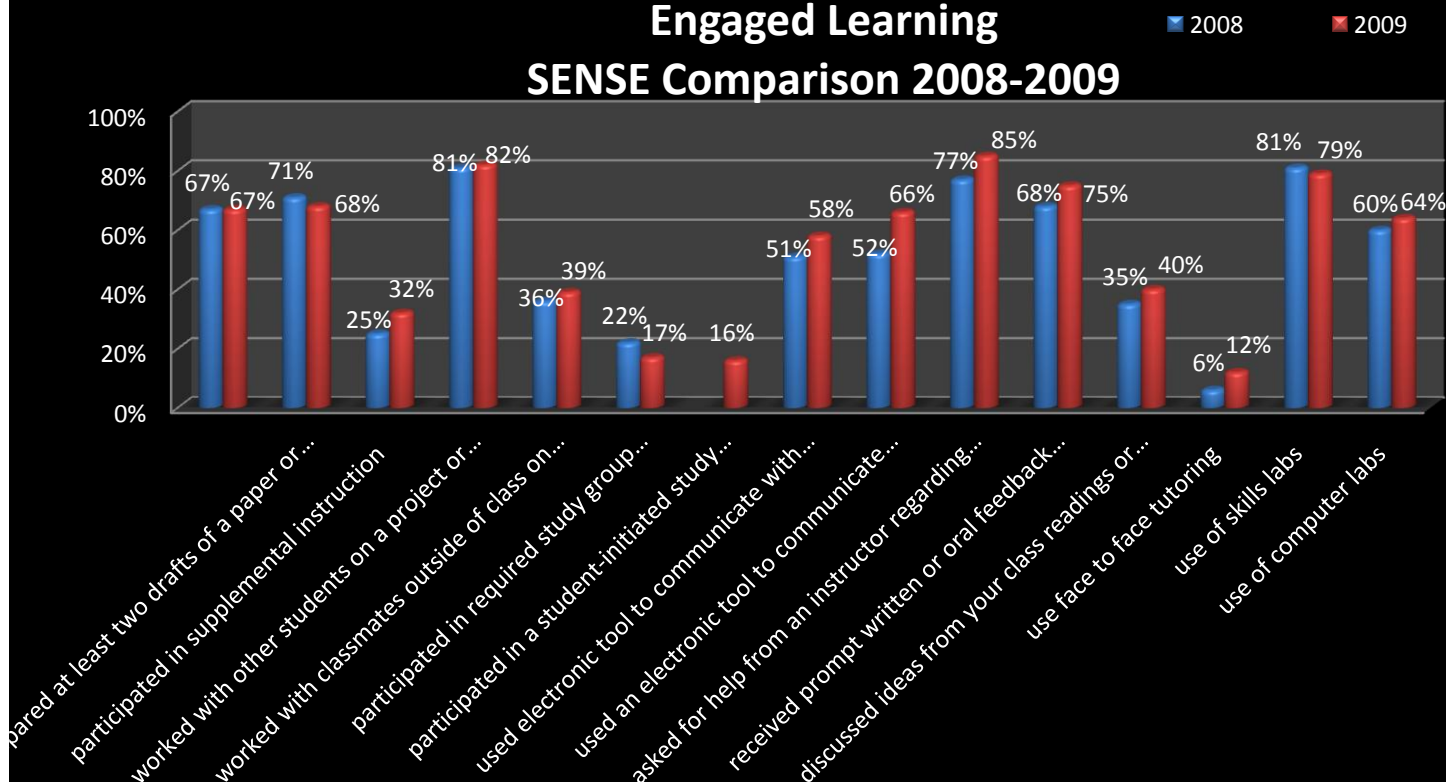**Percentage of entering students responding *never***
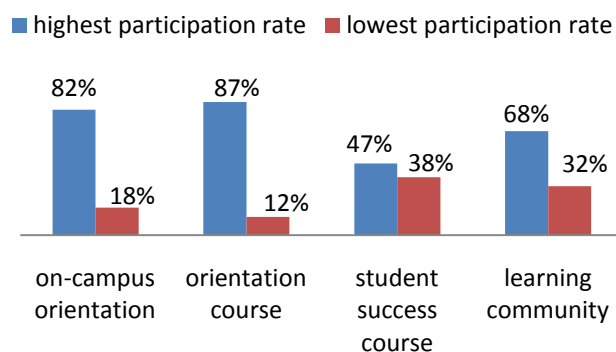
Source: SENSE 2009 Data

Key Findings

In the first three weeks of college PCCUA entering students responded:

- ❖ 47% say they **are not** enrolled in a student success course.

- ❖ 6% report that they **never** asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions.

- ❖ 24% say they **never** prepared at least two drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in.

- ❖ 68% report that they **never** participated in supplemental instruction.

- ❖ 18% say they **never** worked with other students on a project or assignment during class.

- ❖ 61% say they **never** worked with classmates outside of class on class projects or assignments.

- ❖ 83% say they **never** participated in a required study group outside of class.

- ❖ 84% report that they **never** participated in a student-initiated (not required) study group outside of class.

- ❖ 34% say they **never** used an electronic tool to communicate with an instructor about coursework.

- ❖ 27% say they **never** discussed an assignment or grade with an instructor.

- ❖ 20% say they **never** asked for help from an instructor regarding questions or problems related to a class.

- ❖ 25% say they **never** received prompt written or oral feedback from instructors on their performance.

- ❖ 60% report that they **never** discussed ideas from readings o classes with instructors outside of class.

- ❖ 88% report that they **never** used face to face tutoring.

- ❖ 21% say they **never** used writing, math, or other skill labs.

- ❖ 35% say they **never** used a computer lab.

- ❖ 42% say they **never** used an electronic tool to communicate with another student about coursework.

Engaged Learning SENSE Comparison 2008-2009

Engaged Learning SENSE 2009

■ highest participation rate ■ lowest participation rate

	highest participation rate	lowest participation rate
on-campus orientation	82%	18%
orientation course	87%	12%
student success course	47%	38%
learning community	68%	32%

Source: SENSE 2009 Data

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.

The following seven items comprise this benchmark:

- ❖ All instructors clearly explain academic & support services

- ❖ All instructors clearly explain course grading policy

- ❖ All instructors clearly explain course syllabus

- ❖ Knew how to get in touch w/instructors

- ❖ At least one instructor learned my name

- ❖ Learned the name of at least one other student

- ❖ I learned the name of at least one other student in most of my classes
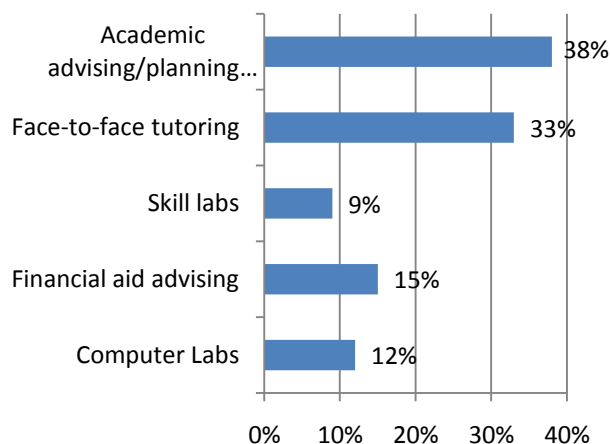
Key Findings

Most of the PCCUA students responded positively to the questions that asked about building support networks.
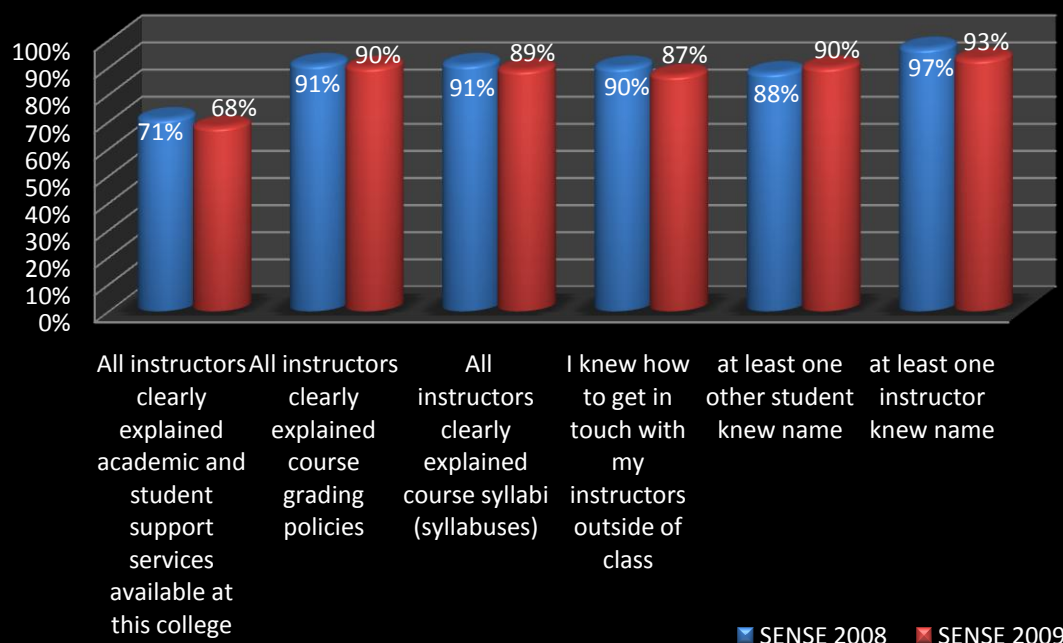
- ❖ 67% of respondents *agree or strongly agree* that all instructors clearly explained academic and student support services available at their college.

- ❖ 90% *agree or strongly agree* that all instructors clearly explained course grading policies.

- ❖ 89% *agree or strongly agree* that all instructors clearly explained course syllabi.

- ❖ 87% *agree or strongly agree* that they knew how to get in touch with their instructors outside of class.

- ❖ 90% *agree or strongly agree* that at least one other student whom they didn't previously know learned their name.

- ❖ 93% *agree or strongly agree* that at least one instructor learned their name.

- ❖ 91% *agree or strongly agree* that they learned the name of at least one other student in most of their classes.

Although PCCUA students responded positively to the survey items, there is still room to improve the quality of the institutions services and connect students to information to help them succeed.
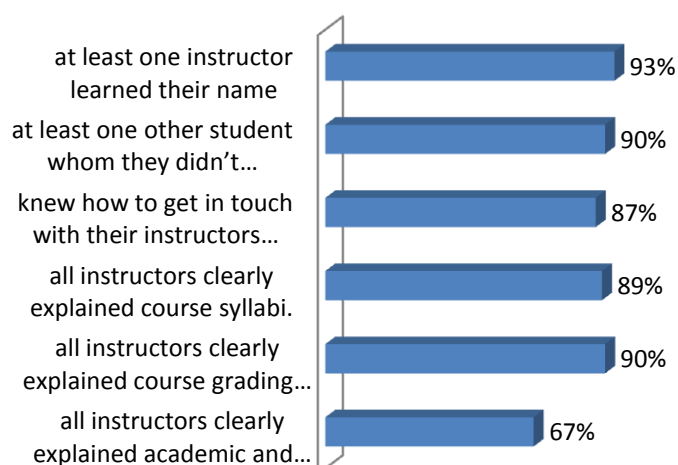
Percentage of entering students who are unaware of particiular support services during their first three weeks of college

Academic advising/planning…	38%
Face-to-face tutoring	33%
Skill labs	9%
Financial aid advising	15%
Computer Labs	12%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40%

Academic and Social Support Network
SENSE Comparison 2008-2009

Category	SENSE 2008	SENSE 2009
All instructors clearly explained academic and student support services available at this college	71%	68%
All instructors clearly explained course grading policies	91%	90%
All instructors clearly explained course syllabi (syllabuses)	91%	89%
I knew how to get in touch with my instructors outside of class	90%	87%
at least one other student knew name	88%	90%
at least one instructor knew name	97%	93%

Academic and Social Support Network Key Findings

Finding	Percent
at least one instructor learned their name	93%
at least one other student whom they didn't…	90%
knew how to get in touch with their instructors…	87%
all instructors clearly explained course syllabi.	89%
all instructors clearly explained course grading…	90%
all instructors clearly explained academic and…	67%

Source: SENSE 2009 Data

Overview of PCCUA 2009 *SENSE*

The 2009 *SENSE* survey was administered during the fall 2009 to 250 student respondents. The survey was administered in classes randomly selected from the population of all first college-level English and math courses and all developmental education courses.

Characteristics of 2009 Respondents

Characteristics	Entering Students
Male	32%
Female	68%
Enrolled part-time	14%
Enrolled full-time	86%
Traditional age (18-24)	76%
Non-traditional age (25-older)	24%
Work more than 20 hrs per week	29%
Married	11%
Have children living with them	36%

Source: *Sense* 2009 data

Sharing of Data- During the Fall semester *SENSE* and *CCSSE* data facts will be emailed to college list each Friday. See example below:

 Student Engagement Facts –PCCUA Data Tidbits

Students persist when they:

- **Are active and engaged learners**

- **Feel connected to the college**

- **Navigate successfully through college systems, processes & procedures**

- **Make a connection between now & their future (setting goals)**

- **Establish meaningful relationships with faculty, staff, and peers**

In the *SENSE* 2009 data (Survey of Entering Student Engagement- PCCUA):

- **83% of respondents indicated that they had a strong early connection to someone at this college**

- **93 % of respondents stated that college staff knew their name**

- **74% of respondents say that a specific person was assigned to them**

- **74% of respondents stated college staff helped them determine whether they qualified for financial aid**

Data Decision Making-Survey Data

❖ **What did the data tell us?**

❖ **How will PCCUA use the data as a culture of evidence to make informed decisions and recommendations for strategies or priorities to improve student success?**

The following tables indicate priorities and strategies developed by two teams (administrative team-2009 and faculty team-2010) who have worked to analyze the data and create strategies/priorities for PCCUA to improve student success and retention. The priorities/strategies continue to be ongoing and are linked to the college's Achieving the Dream Initiative.

ESSI –Entering Student Success Institute 2009		
Administrative Team analyzed SENSE 2008 data to establish three priorities for 2009-10		
Priority 1: New Student Orientation	**Priority 2: Intrusive Advising**	**Priority 3: Aligning PCCUA policies, practices, and initiatives to promote the student success agenda throughout the college.**
Increase student awareness of college purpose, processes, and procedures (credits of learning, resource availability, introduction to administration) **Improve** students readiness for classes, motivation to become engaged, and encouragement to seek assistance (Let students know they are valued)	**Provide** students with direction to assist with identification of vocational/academic goals. **Create** an academic plan. **Assist** students with identification of courses needed to meet goals. **Provide** intrusive, close advisor contact ensuring that students can identify and are using advising services . **Require** students to meet with advisor for 1) Registration, 2) Third week update (receive student pass to pick up Pell grant check), 3) Mid-term update 4) Pre-registration for next semester	**Increase** student awareness of policies and practices **Increase** student awareness of financial and academic obligations related to enrollment, discipline, disability, and grade appeals **Develop** student skills to enable them to use college resources which promotes independence and self-sufficiency **Improve** student awareness of functional areas of operation-*Student Services* **Build** relationship with students

ESSI –Entering Student Success Institute 2010		
Faculty Team analyzed SENSE 2009 data to establish three priorities for 2010-11		
Priority 1: **Communication: Interactive Data Sharing-Faculty Engagement** (targets effective track to college readiness, engaged learning and academic and social support network benchmarks)	**Priority 2:** **Reinforce Early Alert** (targets high expectations and engaged learning benchmarks)	**Priority 3:** **Classroom Student Engagement-Faculty Professional Development** (targets engaged learning and academic and social network benchmarks)
Organize student success summit-Data Carousel **Conduct** student focus groups **Create** email "snippets" or "Did you know?" of data information weekly **Discuss** SENSE benchmarks and post data on college Student Engagement Webpage	**Instruct** "chunking" of information **Assess** early and provide feedback during the first three weeks of class **Share** academic distress checklist **Share** faculty development best practices **Broaden** early alert to include non-developmental classes (all courses) **Refer** for tutoring early	**Create** "Great Teachers Workshop"- Fall 2010 **Provide** Professional Development speaker- Student Engagement Techniques **Provide** Professional Development-Collaborative/Cooperative Learning Model Resource

SENSE is one of three surveys administered by the Center for Community College Student Engagement. The others are the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Community College Faculty Survey of Student engagement (CCFSSE). All are tools that assess student engagement—how engaged students are with college, faculty and staff, with other students, and with their studies—and help colleges improve their educational practice so more students will succeed.

Why student engagement? Research shows that the more actively engaged students are, the more likely they are to learn, or persist with their studies, and to attain their academic goals. Student engagement, therefore, is a valuable yardstick for assessing the quality of colleges' educational practices and identifying ways they can help more students succeed.

> ➤ *CCSSE,* now in its eighth national administration, surveys more experienced students to gather information about their overall college experience.

> ➤ *SENSE* focuses on the first three weeks of students' college experience and assesses practices that are most likely to engage entering students and encourage them to stay in college until they attain their academic goals.

> ➤ *CCFSSE* provides faculty perspectives on student experiences as well as their own work.

>> ○ Together, *SENSE* and *CCSSE* offer complementary pieces of the student success puzzle with *CCSSE* providing a comprehensive look at the overall quality of students' education experiences and *SENSE* offering a focused snapshot of new students and their earliest college experiences.

Source: Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2009). *Benchmarking & Benchmarks: Effective Practice with Entering Students.* Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program.

Adapted from: Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2008). *Imagine Success: Engaging Entering Students* (2008 SENSE Field Test Findings). Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program

Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2009). *Benchmarking & Benchmarks: Effective Practice with Entering Students*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program.

NOTES:

Developed by: Debbie Hardy
Director of Assessment
and Institutional Effectiveness
dhardy@pccua.edu

Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas
Office of Assessment
P.O. Box 785/1000 Campus Drive
Helena, Arkansas 72342
870-338-6474, ext. 1242
www.pccua.edu/student_engagement

For more information about SENSE: http://www.enteringstudent.org

Sources:

Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2009). *Benchmarking & Benchmarks: Effective Practice with Entering Students*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program.

Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2009). *SENSE 2009 Frequency Distributions-Main Survey Entering/Returning Students* for Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas, from http://www.enteringstudent.org

2008 & 2009 SENSE *Commitment and Support* Special Module

2008 & 2009 SENSE *Student Success Course* Special Module

***SENSE* 2008 & 2009 Institutional Reports for Phillips College of the University of Arkansas, http://www.enteringstudents.org**

SENSE and CCSSE Surveys funded through Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream is a national initiative to help more community college students succeed. The initiative is particularly concerned about student groups that traditionally have faced significant barriers to success, including students of color and low-income students.