

Suggested Strategies for Student Engagement

The following strategies were developed by the Health & Exercise Science Division to align with the research-based conference of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement. The strategies also align with the Adjunct Faculty Evaluation.

What is CCSSE?

CCSSE's survey, The Community College Student Report, focuses on institutional practices and student behaviors that promote student engagement. CCSSE works with participating colleges to administer the survey, using research-based items to measure students' levels of engagement in a variety of areas. The colleges then receive their survey results, along with guidance and analysis they can use to improve their programs and services for students.

Research shows that the more actively engaged students are—with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter they study—the more likely they are to learn and persist toward achieving their academic goals. Student engagement, therefore, is a valuable yardstick for assessing whether, and to what extent, an institution is employing educational practices likely to produce successful results—more students across all subgroups achieving their academic goals.

Engage Early, Engage Often

Community colleges typically lose about half of their students prior to the beginning of the sophomore year, and data indicate that most students who leave college before achieving their goals do so early in their collegiate experience.

Colleges can address this precipitous loss of students by designing engagement efforts that start from the moment of students' first interactions with the college — and continue with powerful focus during their first few weeks and months as college students.

Such efforts can focus on students who likely are less familiar with negotiating a college campus, such as first-generation college students, who represent one-third (33%) of CCSSE respondents.

General Profile of Community College Students

Most community college students work, nearly all commute, and many spend time caring for dependents. With these competing priorities, most students spend little time on campus. In fact, CCSSE data indicate that overall the most successful engagement strategies currently occur in classrooms.

CCSSE, through the use of five benchmarks of effective educational practice, measures the level of student engagement in the learning process. The five benchmarks are: 1) active and collaborative learning, 2) student effort, 3) academic challenge, 4) student-faculty interaction, and 5) support for learners.

1. Active and Collaborative Learning

Students learn more when they are actively involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings. Through collaborating with others to solve problems or master challenging content, students develop valuable skills that prepare them to deal with the kinds of situations and problems they will encounter in the workplace, the community, and their personal lives.

Implementation Ideas:

- **Think-pair-share** is a simple activity you can use in any classroom format. Give students time to think and write a few points or statements about a topic, turn to their neighbor for a short discussion, and then share the results with the rest of the class or with a small group.

Minute Papers provide students with the opportunity to synthesize their knowledge and to ask unanswered questions. Give students a few minutes at the end of class to answer anonymously the following questions in writing: What was the most important thing you learned today? What important question remains unanswered? Variations of these questions, and the student questions and answers they generate, enhance your students' learning process and provide you with feedback on students' understanding of the subject material. Answer the most frequently asked questions at the beginning of the next class.

Writing activities of many kinds offer students the opportunity to think about and process information. For example, in addition to minute papers, you could pose a question and then give students time to **free write** their answers. You could also give students time to free write about topics.

Brainstorming is another simple technique that can involve the whole class in a discussion. Introduce a topic or problem and then ask for student input, which you record on the board.

Games related to the subject can easily be incorporated into the classroom to foster active learning and participation. Games can include matching, mysteries, group competitions, solving puzzles, Pictionary, etc

Debates staged in class can be effective tools for encouraging students to think about several sides of an issue. This method can even be used online through *Blackboard*..

Group work allows every participant the chance to speak, share personal views, and develop the skill of working with others. Cooperative group work requires all group members to work together to complete a given task. Break the class into groups of 2-5 students. Give each group articles to read, questions to answer and discuss, information to share, subjects to teach to other groups, etc.

Subject Summaries asks the students to summarize similarities and differences among two different methodologies, theories, opinions, or a research finding.

Research or independent study is an effective way for deep learning to occur. Ask students to suggest research projects, field trips, or other course activities. Encourage use of professional journals.

Use Technology to encourage active learning. Have students do a Web activity, prepare a Power Point presentation, use Blackboard for group work or discussions outside the classroom, etc. (The Fitness field has numerous ways to incorporate technology into the teaching and learning process).

Case studies use real-life stories and primary source materials that describe what happened to a community, family, school, or individual to prompt students to integrate their classroom knowledge with their knowledge of real-world situations, actions, and consequences. Incorporate current news events related to the concepts/skills covered in class.

Simulations, role-playing, or labs are also active learning methods that can fully engage the students.

Tutor or work with classmates outside of class to prepare for class.

Make lectures more “learning-friendly”. Use a cooperative learning strategy called "turn to your partner". At various times, stop lecturing and give the students a mini assignment, reinforcing the lecture, that they complete in a pair, or ask them to compare notes so they can both be sure they have all the information.

Spice up lectures with challenging questions in which you invite the students to discuss - sometimes argue about - the topic in hand with their classmates.

Provide red, yellow and green cards to your students to use in communicating with you during a lecture. If they are following you, they put up a green card. If they are starting to get lost, yellow. If the students are disagreeing or completely lost, the red goes up.

Questions: wait after a question has been posed or after asking “what are your questions?” (up to a minute), to allow the person to collect his or her thoughts, and to make sure he or she has had the chance to respond fully. (Note: if you ask “do you have any questions?”, few students will respond. Use “what are your questions?” so students understand that you expect questions).

Incorporate Service Learning into your class projects. Contact the Service Learning office at PVCC to help get your project off to a successful start (paperwork is required for any off-campus learning activities required in a course).

PVCC Students are asked in CCSSE surveys & in the PVCC semester instructor evaluation “During the current school year, how often have you...”

- worked with other students on projects during class?
- worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments?
- tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)?
- participated in a community-based project as a part of a regular course?
- asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions?
- made a class presentation?

2. Student Effort

Students' own behaviors contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will successfully attain their educational goals.

Implementation Ideas:

Ask students to complete a self-assessment that teaches them about their learning habits. An assessment tool is available on the OnCourse web site by Skip Downing Skip@OnCourseWorkshop.com.

http://college.hmco.com/collegesurvival/downing/on_course/4e/students/assess/index.html

Anyone is welcome to subscribe to the free ON COURSE NEWSLETTER. To SUBSCRIBE send a blank message to OnCourse-on@mail-list.com

Require multiple drafts of a paper or an assignment before they turn in their paper that is graded to encourage more thorough work.

Award points for students who have answered the questions or provided an outline of material related to a reading assignment that is due at class time. This will influence the number of student preparing for class.

Require multiple sources as references when assigning a paper or project.

Provide a recommended reading list. Assign bonus points for those completing the extra reading (students can write a summary or statements of how this resource could be used when working with others).

Communicate the expected amount of time they should spend preparing for class. Tell students that you expect them to work hard in the class. Students need to understand that full-time study is a full-time job that requires forty or more hours a week.

Help students set challenging goals for their own learning. Introduce them to the PVCC learning tool “iGoal” (located on the PVCC web-site). Encourage the students to set goals using this tool by giving a class assignment to set their learning goals in iGoals and then printing a copy to share with you.

Expect students to complete their assignments promptly. Explain to students what will happen if they do not complete their work on time (in writing in the syllabus).

Meet with students who fall behind to discuss their study habits, schedules, questions.

Appeal to students needing extrinsic motivation. Inform students how the course helps prepare them for careers in the field of study. Link new knowledge to its usefulness in occupational skills.

Don't hesitate to **refer students to learning skills professionals** in the PVCC Learning Support Center or in our through our PVCC Counseling Services Division.

PVCC Students are asked in the CCSSE survey & in the PVCC semester instructor evaluation “During the current school year, how often have you...”

-prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
-worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources

-come to class without having completed readings or assignments

During the current school year...

-how many hours did you spend in a typical week preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to your program)

-how many books did you read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment)

3. Academic Challenge

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Ten survey items address the nature and amount of assigned academic work, the complexity of cognitive tasks presented to students, and the standards faculty members use to evaluate student performance.

Implementation Ideas:

Ask students to **analyze** an idea, experience, or theory as a small-group learning activity.

Provide a case study assignment. This challenges students to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-life experiences. This method is a “must do” in an occupational educational program.

Once several authors' information, research, or methods have been reviewed, ask students to complete an assignment that requires them to judge the value or soundness of this information.

Choose textbook and additional reading assignments that appropriately challenge the students to explore deeply into the course learning competencies.

Require written papers that are graded using the PVCC writing rubrics (available on the PVCC assessment website).

Require oral presentations that are graded using the PVCC oral communications rubric (available on the PVCC assessment website).

PVCC Students are asked in the CCSSE survey & in the PVCC semester instructor evaluation “How much does your coursework at this college emphasize...”

- analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory
- synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways
- making judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods
- applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- using information you have read or heard to perform a new skill

During the current school year...

- how many assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course reading did you read?
- how many papers or reports of any length did you write?
- to what extent have your examinations challenged you to do your best work?

How much does this college emphasize...

- encouragement to spend significant amounts of time studying.

4. Student-Faculty Interaction

In general, the more contact students have with their teachers, the more likely they are to learn effectively and persist toward achievement of their educational goals. Through such interactions, faculty members become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, lifelong learning

Implementation Ideas:

Provide a first day exercise in which **students share** past educational and work experiences, educational goals, personal accomplishments, learning styles, hobbies, travel experiences, etc.

This information gathering will help you tailor your course materials.

Ice Breakers are a great way for you to get to know your students and for students to meet each other.

Interact with enthusiasm and energy (eye contact, voice tone/pace, move around the class, etc...)

Treat students as human beings with full real lives; ask how they are doing.

Use email regularly to encourage and inform.

Get to know your students by name by the end of the first few classes. Use name tents if you are having trouble remembering names.

Advise students about career or cooperative learning opportunities

Share your experiences, values, and attitudes

Show an interest in student's extra-curricular activities and life outside of college.

Serve as a mentor or informal advisor to students

Prepare classroom exercises which **give students immediate feedback** on how well they are doing.

Return examinations and papers within a week with written feedback on the papers.

Use software that allows you to give feedback regularly. PVCC has a record-keeping tool called Micrograde. This tool or others like it allow you to easily print weekly reports to keep students fully informed on their total points earned. The software also calculates their current grade.

Accentuate the positive. Positive humor can stimulate learning.

Student discipline actions should be handled in private conversation. Avoid public confrontation with a student.

Foster good lines of communication in both directions. Be clear on your expectations, but invite student feedback.

Call or send an email to students that miss a class.

Discuss the results of the final examination with students at the end of the course.

PVCC Students are asked in the CCSSE survey & in the PVCC semester instructor evaluation “During the current school year, how often have you...”

- used email to communicate with an instructor
- discussed grades or assignments with an instructor
- talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor
- discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class
- received prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors on your performance
- worked with instructors on activities other than coursework

5. Support for Learners

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relationships among different groups on campus.

Implementation Ideas:

- Take the students on a campus tour to see and discuss the resources available to them (Library, Learning Support Center, Computer Commons, Advising, Counseling, Student Life, etc...)
- Assign students to group activity providing opportunities for diverse students to interact.
- If you are aware of financial hardships for students, refer them to the PVCC financial aid office.
- Encourage students to set up an appointment with the advisement office to plan their educational pathway.
- Invite the PVCC Counseling Department to one of your classes to discuss the services offered through their office (or refer students to the department website)
- Inform students that PVCC has a Job Placement Service.

PVCC Students are asked in the CCSSE survey & in the PVCC semester instructor evaluation “How much does this college emphasize...”

- 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

During the current school year, how often have you:

- used academic advising/planning services
- used career counseling services

Sources Cited:

Faculty Inventory, 7 Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education, The Johnson Foundation, Inc.

Nilson, Linda B Nilson, “Teaching at It’s Best”

PVCC CCSSE Website (CCSSE Overview Slideshow) www.pvc.maricopa.edu/CCSSE

Skip Downing Skip@OnCourseWorkshop.com.

Winona State University, Seven Principles for Good Practice: Enhancing Student Learning

Recommended Resource: Teaching At Its Best, A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors, Linda B. Nilson (Available through your supervisor or Division Chair)