

# Report identifies high-impact educational practices for community colleges

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(Phys.org) —The University of Texas at Austin's Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) has released a report that shares 12 high-impact educational practices that community colleges can employ to increase student engagement and success.

Recommendations include making participation in services such as orientation and placement tests mandatory and encouraging students to take part in several structured group learning experiences such as student success courses and learning communities.

"Community [colleges](#) contend with greater student diversity, volatile enrollment, continuing financial restraint and more demands for accountability, all while trying to improve student retention and graduation rates," said Kay McClenney, CCCSE director. "The data-driven, high-impact policies and practices we've identified should help them increase efficiency, effectiveness and student engagement without requiring significantly more resources."

Among the high-impact practices suggested in the report are:

- Help students set academic goals and plan their academic paths early on.
- Clearly explain class attendance policy and penalties for missing classes.
- Offer accelerated or fast-track developmental education courses, and encourage students to participate in them at the outset of

their college careers.

- Require that freshmen participate in a structured experience for new students ("freshman seminar"/"first-year experience").
- Create learning communities (two or more courses that a group of students take together), and strongly encourage participation or make the courses mandatory.
- Monitor students who are academically at risk and refer those in need of assistance to campus tutoring services.

The connection between [student engagement](#) and [student success](#) has been well established, said McClenney, and engagement has proved to be an important predictor of college completion. Learning, persistence and attainment in college are consistently associated with students being actively engaged with college faculty members and staffers, other students and the subject matter they are studying.

The report, titled "A Matter of Degree: Engaging Practices, Engaging Students," describes the relationships between students' participation in specific high-impact practices and their levels of college engagement. It also provides participation data on each practice from the perspectives of students, [faculty members](#) and institutions.

The report is based on responses from about 99,500 entering students (Survey of Entering Student Engagement) and more than 458,000 experienced students (Community CCSSE) in multiyear cohorts. Special promising practices items, administered in 2012, produced responses from about 48,000 entering students and 95,000 or more experienced students. Approximately 36,000 respondents are included in faculty survey results. Reported findings from the Community College Institutional Survey (CCIS) are based on responses from up to 441 colleges.

This [report](#) is the second in a series of three and is part of a multiyear

center initiative to identify and promote high-impact educational practices in community colleges. The initiative is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation.

"We're offering colleges a framework to examine their own practices and note gaps between what students need and what colleges are providing and then the additional gaps between what colleges provide and what [students](#) actually experience," said McClenney. "With that perspective in mind, colleges can make better decisions about which practices to discontinue, redesign or bring to scale."

**More information:** [www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter\\_of\\_Degrees\\_2.pdf](http://www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter_of_Degrees_2.pdf)

Provided by University of Texas at Austin

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