Introduction

The Achieving the Dream initiative defines gatekeeper courses as *first level curricular courses that students must pass before enrolling in more advanced courses in their major field*. The Academic Affairs Office designated the following as CCP gatekeeper courses: Math 017, Math 118, English 098, English 101, Biology 106, and Computer Information Science 103.

This Fact Sheet examines student engagement associated with the five benchmarks of effective educational practice in community colleges that are part of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). Descriptions of the benchmarks are available in IR Report #167, titled *Community College Survey of Students Engagement Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice*. Average scores on the five benchmarks, which appear in Table 1, are presented separately for students who completed the CCSSE survey in a gatekeeper or non-gatekeeper course. Higher benchmark scores indicate greater levels of engagement. The information in the column titled *Mean Group Differences* reflects the disparity between average group scores.

Table 1
Benchmark Score Associated With Students in Gatekeeper and Non-Gatekeeper Courses

Benchmark	Gatekeeper Average	Non-Gatekeeper Average	Mean Group Difference	Statistically Significant Difference
Active and Collaborative Learning	52.47	53.48	1.01	No
Student Effort	56.88	56.18	.70	No
Academic Challenge	53.30	58.06	4.76	Yes
Student-Faculty Interaction	52.04	59.07	7.03	Yes
Support for Learners	52.46	51.67	.79	No

Statistically significant group differences emerged in two areas: 1) Academic Challenge and 2) Student-Faculty Interaction. Students who completed the CCSSE survey in a gatekeeper course were significantly less academically challenged and experienced significantly less faculty-student interaction than students who completed the survey in non-gatekeeper courses.

Ten items contribute to the Academic Challenge benchmark (Table 2) and six items contribute to the Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark (Table 3). As a group, students in gatekeeper courses indicated lower levels of engagement than students in non-gatekeeper courses across most of the survey items that comprise the benchmarks.

Academic Challenge and Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark Items

Table 2: CCSSE Items That Comprise the Academic Challenge Benchmark	Gatekeeper Average	Non-Gatekeeper Average	Mean Group Difference	Statistically Significant Difference
4p. Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or experience	2.61	2.75	.14	Yes
5b. Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experiences in or theory	2.74	2.96	.22	Yes
5c. Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways	2.79	2.89	.10	No
5d. Making judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods	2.52	2.76	.24	Yes
5e. Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	2.62	2.73	.11	No
5f. Using information you have read or heard to perform new skill	2.69	2.85	.16	Yes
6a. Number of assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course readings	3.07	3.17	.10	No
6c. Number of written papers or reports of any length	3.28	3.07	.21	Yes
7. Examinations during the current school year challenged you to do your best work at this college	4.97	5.03	.06	No
9a. Spent significant amounts of time studying	3.05	3.06	.01	No

Table 3: CCSSE Items That Comprise the Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark	Gatekeeper Average	Non-Gatekeeper Average	Mean Group Difference	Statistically Significant Difference
4k. Used email to communicate with an instructor	2.49	2.73	.24	Yes
4l. Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	2.55	2.74	.19	Yes
4m. Talked about career plans with an instructor or an advisor	2.02	2.21	.19	Yes
4n. Discussed ideas from you readings or classes with instructors outside of class	1.88	1.97	.09	No
4o. Received prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors on your performance	2.62	2.80	.18	Yes
4q. Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework	1.40	1.49	.09	No

Response Scale for Survey Interns

Question 4:	1=Never	2= Sometimes	3= Often	4= Very
Question 5:	1=Never	2= Sometimes	3= Often	4= Very
Question 6:	1= 1-4 books/papers	2= 5-10 books/papers	3= 11-20 books/papers	4= 20+
Question 7:	1= Extremely Easy	to	7= Extremely Challenging	
Question 9:	1=Never	2= Sometimes	3= Often	4= Very