



The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (*SENSE*)

Overview of 2016 Survey Results Tarrant County College Trinity River Campus

Introduction

The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (*SENSE*) is a product and service of the Center for Community College Student Engagement. Administered during the 4th and 5th weeks of the fall academic term, *SENSE* asks students to reflect on their earliest experiences with the college and aims to help community colleges investigate reasons why some entering students may persist and succeed while others may not. Students' responses are used to develop scores on key benchmarks found to be related to student persistence and success. Results from this exploratory research may provide insight into students' perspectives and may be used to facilitate discussions within academic programs, student services, or campus-wide.

After a short description of the *SENSE* cohort and *SENSE* sampling methods, the 2016 student profile is presented. Scores on the benchmarks are then provided, followed by an examination of the individual items TCCD performs highest and lowest on compared to the *SENSE* cohort.

SENSE Member Colleges

SENSE data analyses are based on a three-year cohort of entering student data from participating colleges. If a college participated more than one time in the three-year period, the cohort includes data only from that college's most recent year of participation. The *SENSE* 2016 (2014-2016) cohort includes 266 institutions in 39 states and the District of Columbia. One hundred and three 2016 cohort colleges are classified as small (<4,500), 67 as medium (4,500-7,999), 63 as large (8,000-14,999), and 33 as extra-large institutions (15,000 + credit students). Sixty-six of the colleges are classified as urban-serving, 52 as suburban-serving, and 137 as rural-serving.

SENSE Sampling

In *SENSE* sampling procedures, students are sampled at the classroom level. The survey was administered in classes randomly selected from those courses most likely to enroll entering students, with a random sample pulled from all first college-level English and math courses, all developmental reading, writing, and math courses, and student success courses. Of those entering students sampled at TCCD, 1,248 respondents submitted usable surveys, with 134 (10.7%) being from students on TR campus.

2016 Student Respondent Profile Trinity River Campus

Enrollment Status

Students surveyed District-wide and on Trinity River campus endorsed a similar proportion of full-time/part-time status, with 37% being part-time and 63% being full-time for the District and 39% part-time and 61% full-time on TR. This is compared to 27% part-time and 73% full-time for the SENSE cohort. Of note, the population of all students (not just those surveyed) at TCCD are 69% part-time and 31% full-time. This inverse representation is a result of the sampling technique and the in-class administration process. For this reason, survey results are either weighted or disaggregated on the full-time/part-time variable so that reports will accurately reflect the underlying student population.

Age

Entering student respondents for TCCD and the SENSE cohort range in age from 18 to 65+ years old, with entering student respondents on Trinity River ranging in age from 18 to 64 years old. For TCCD, 87% of entering student respondents are between 18 and 24 years old, and 88% of the overall SENSE cohort are between 18 and 24 years old. Students at Trinity River have a higher percentage of student age 18-24, at 93%.

Sex

For Trinity River campus 37% of entering student respondents are male and 63% are female, which is different than the District, where 44% is male and 56% female. All SENSE cohort respondents are 44% male and 53% female.

Racial/Ethnic Identification

For the Trinity River campus, 21% of entering student respondents identified themselves as White, Non-Hispanic; 66% as Hispanic, Latino, Spanish; 9% as Black or African American, Non-Hispanic; 2% as Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander; 1% as American Indian or Native American, and 2% marked "other." This is somewhat different than the District, where 33% of entering student respondents identified themselves as White, Non-Hispanic; 40% as Hispanic, Latino, Spanish; 14% as Black or African American; and 8% as Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander; and 1% of the student respondents are American Indian or Native American. 4% marked *other* when responding to the question, "What is your racial/ethnic identification?" Both are more diverse than the SENSE cohort, which is composed of 47% White/Non-Hispanic; 23% Hispanic, Latino, Spanish; 13% Black or African American; 4% Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander; and 2% American Indian or Native American respondents.

Goals

Entering student respondents were asked to indicate their reasons or goals for attending TCCD; students could choose more than one goal. On Trinity River campus, 61% reported that completing a certificate is a goal, 82% indicated that completing an associate's degree is a goal, and 89% indicated that transferring to a 4-year college is a goal. As a District, 53% indicated that completing a certificate is a goal, 80% indicated that obtaining an Associate degree is a goal, and 89% indicated that transfer to a 4-year college is a goal. As a whole, 60% of the SENSE cohort endorsed completing a certificate as a goal, 82% had obtaining an associates as a goal, and 79% planned to transfer to a 4-year university.

SENSE Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

To assist colleges in their efforts to reach for excellence, the Center reports national benchmarks of effective practice with entering students in community colleges. Research shows that the more actively engaged students are—with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter—the more likely they are to learn and to achieve their academic goals.

SENSE benchmarks are groups of conceptually related survey items that focus on institutional practices and student behaviors that promote student engagement early in the college experience—and that are positively related to student learning and persistence. Benchmarks are used to compare each institution's performance to that of similar institutions and with the *SENSE* Cohort. Each individual benchmark score is computed by averaging the scores on survey items that make up that benchmark. Benchmark scores are then standardized so that the mean (the average of all participating students) is always 50 and the standard deviation is 25. The six benchmarks:

Early Connections

When students describe their early college experiences, they typically reflect on occasions when they felt discouraged or thought about dropping out. Their reasons for persisting almost always include one common element: a strong, early connection to someone at the college.

High Expectations and Aspirations

Nearly all students arrive at their community colleges intending to succeed and believing that they have the motivation to do so. When entering 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. Students then often rise to meet expectations, making it more likely that they will attain their goals. Often, students' aspirations also climb, and they seek more advanced credentials than they originally envisioned.

Clear Academic Plan and Pathway

When a student, with knowledgeable assistance, creates a road map — one that shows where he or she is headed, what academic path to follow, and how long it will take to reach the end goal— that student has a critical tool for staying on track. Students are more likely to persist if they not only are advised about what courses to take, but also are helped to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them.

Effective Track to College Readiness

Nationally, more than six in 10 entering community college students are underprepared for college-level work. Thus, significant improvements in student success will hinge upon effective assessment, placement of students into appropriate courses, and implementation of effective strategies to ensure that students build academic skills and receive needed support.

Engaged Learning

Instructional approaches that foster engaged learning are critical for student success. Because most community college students attend college part-time, and most also must find ways to balance their studies with work and family responsibilities, the most effective learning experiences will be those the college intentionally designs.

Academic and Social Support Network

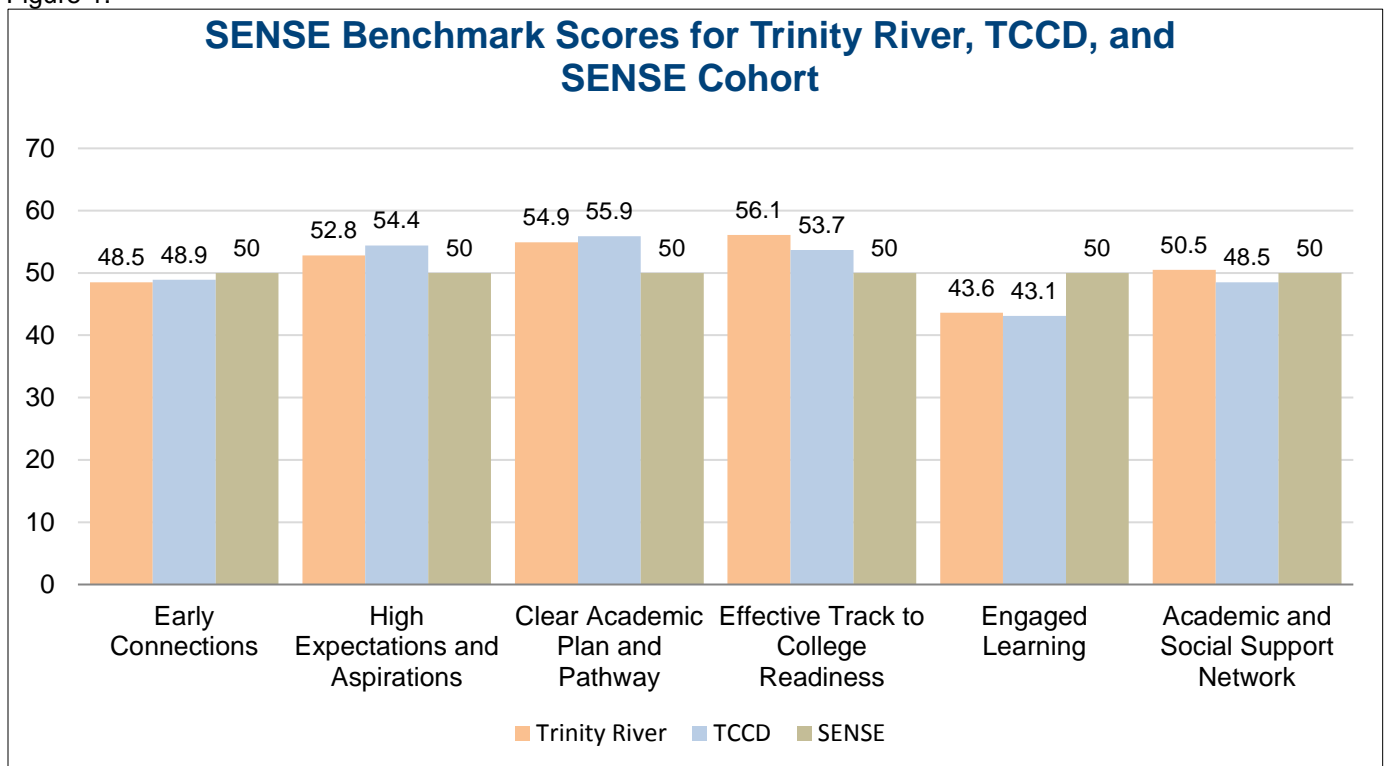
Students benefit from having a personal network that enables them to obtain information about college services, along with the academic and social support critical to student success. Because entering students often don't know what they don't know, colleges must purposefully create those networks.

Trinity River Campus Benchmark Scores

Figure 1 below provides Trinity River's performance on the Benchmarks (described in previous section) and is given in relation to the SENSE cohort as a whole. Trinity River compares favorably to the SENSE cohort in regard to High Expectations and Aspirations, Clear Academic Plan and Pathway, Effective Track to College Readiness, and Academic and Social Support Network, while comparing less favorably on Early Connections and Engaged Learning.

In order to delve more deeply into students' responses, the next two sections examine some of the constituent items that make up the benchmark scores. Specifically, the five items which TCCD compares most and least favorably to the SENSE cohort are examined.

Figure 1.

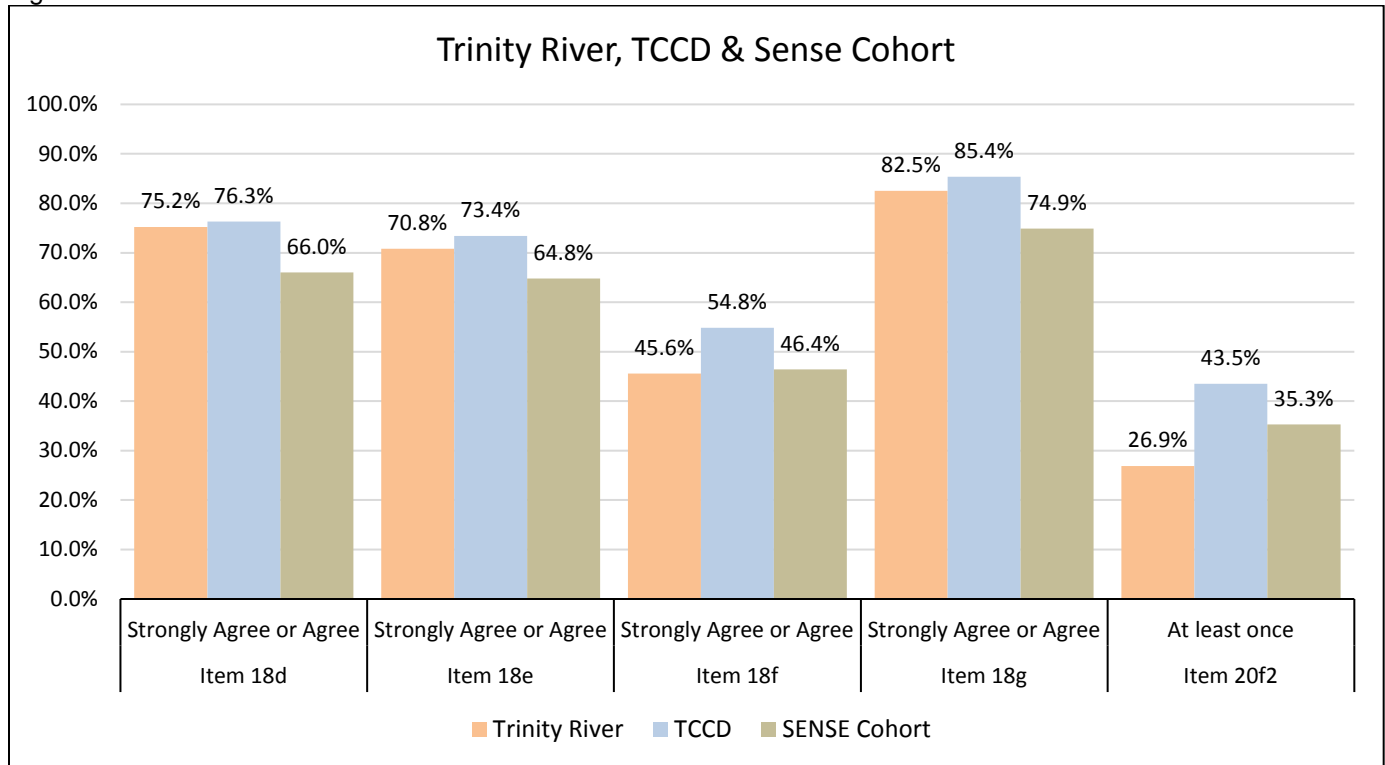


Aspects of Highest Student Engagement Trinity River Campus

Benchmark scores provide a useful means of reviewing and understanding key points from the SENSE data. A way to dig more deeply into the benchmark scores is to examine the specific items that contribute to the overall benchmark score. The next two sections highlight the five items where TCCD scores most and least favorably compared to the total 2016 SENSE cohort.

Figure 2 displays the percentage students who endorsed items on which TCCD compared most favorably to the 2016 SENSE cohort, and how Trinity River students rated those items. Taken together, these items suggest that compared to the SENSE cohort, Trinity River students receive some aspects of good support and guidance from advisors. Specifically, students are able to meet at convenient times with advisors, who then help students develop a course of study and select classes for that plan and this happens at about the same rate as the District as a whole. Opportunities for growth lie in helping students set academic goals, and students using writing, math, or other skill labs in courses.

Figure 2.

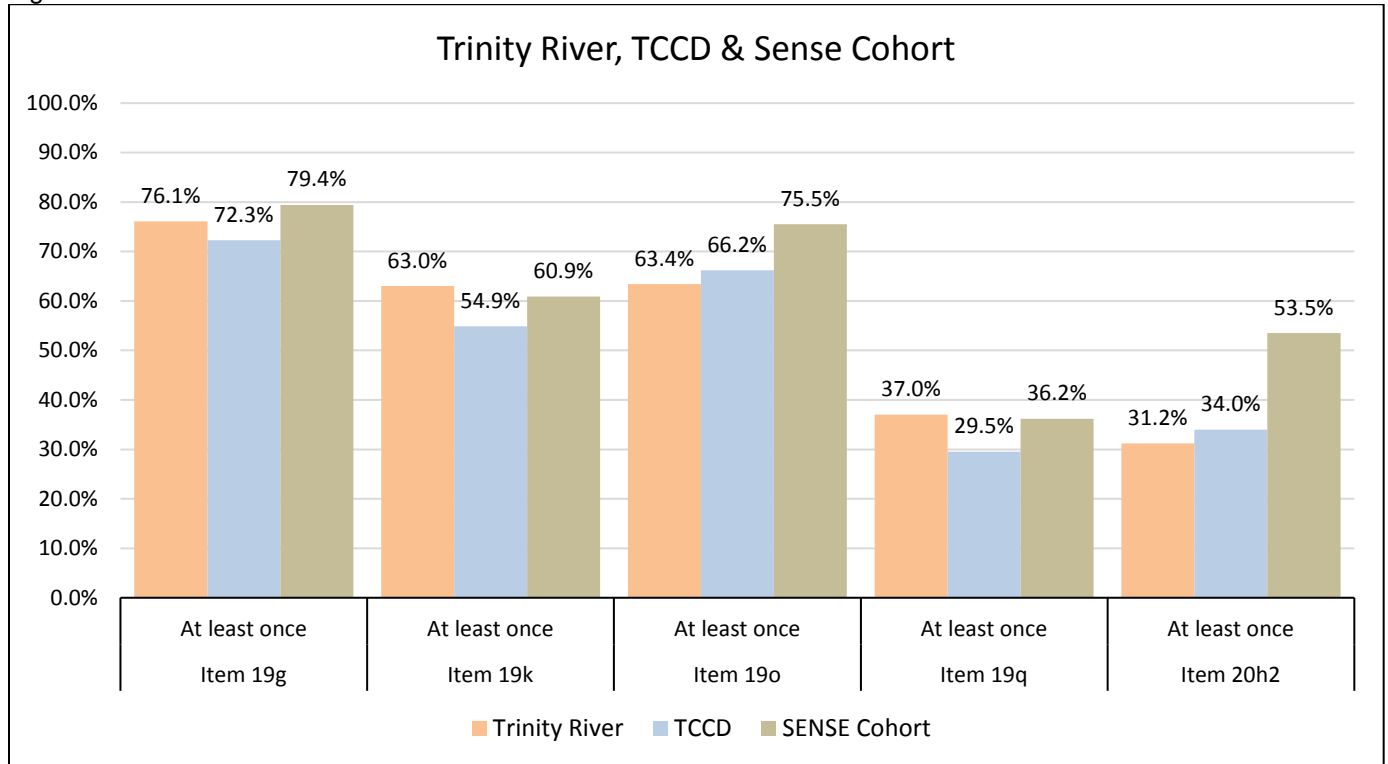


Benchmark	Item Number	Item
Clear Academic Plan & Pathway	18d	Able to meet with an academic advisor at times convenient for me
Clear Academic Plan & Pathway	18e	An advisor helped me to select a course of study, program, or major
Clear Academic Plan & Pathway	18f	An advisor helped me to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them
Clear Academic Plan & Pathway	18g	An advisor helped me to identify the courses I needed to take during my first semester/quarter
Engaged Learning	20f2	Frequency: Used writing, math, or other skill lab

Aspects of Lowest Student Engagement Trinity River Campus

Figure 3 displays the percentage of Trinity River students who endorsed items on which TCCD compared least favorably to the 2016 SENSE cohort. As a whole, these items indicate mixed endorsement of student engagement. Areas of engagement that Trinity River students endorsed higher than the District and Sense Cohort include using electronic means of communication with other students regarding coursework and discussing coursework with instructors outside of class. Engagement areas that Trinity River student endorsed less than the District and SENSE cohort include what they felt was prompt feedback from performance and using a computer lab as part of coursework.

Figure 3.



Benchmark	Item Number	Item
Engaged Learning	19g	Worked with other students on a project or assignment during class
Engaged Learning	19k	Used an electronic tool to communicate with another student about coursework
Engaged Learning	19o	Received prompt written or oral feedback from instructors on your performance
Engaged Learning	19q	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class
Engaged Learning	20h2	Used computer lab