



## The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (*SENSE*)

# Overview of 2016 Survey Results Tarrant County College Northwest 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 191 (15%) being from students on Northwest campus.

## 2016 Student Respondent Profile Northwest Campus

### Enrollment Status

Students surveyed District-wide and on Northwest 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 34% part-time and 66% full-time for Northwest. 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 Northwest also ranging in age from 18 to 65+ 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 Northwest have a slightly higher percentage of students age 18-24, at 90%.

### Sex

For Northwest campus 47% of entering student respondents are male and 54% are female, which is slightly 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 Northwest campus, 41% of entering student respondents identified themselves as White, Non-Hispanic; 36% as Hispanic, Latino, Spanish; 12% as Black or African American, Non-Hispanic; 6% as Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander; 1% as American Indian or Native American, and 4% 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 Northwest campus, 55% reported that completing a certificate is a goal, 84% indicated that completing an associate's degree is a goal, and 90% 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.

Percentages may not add up to 100% in each category due to missing data and/or rounding.

Some respondents were excluded in accordance with SENSE data exclusion rules.

*Survey of Entering Student Engagement & Office of Institutional Intelligence and Research*

## ***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**

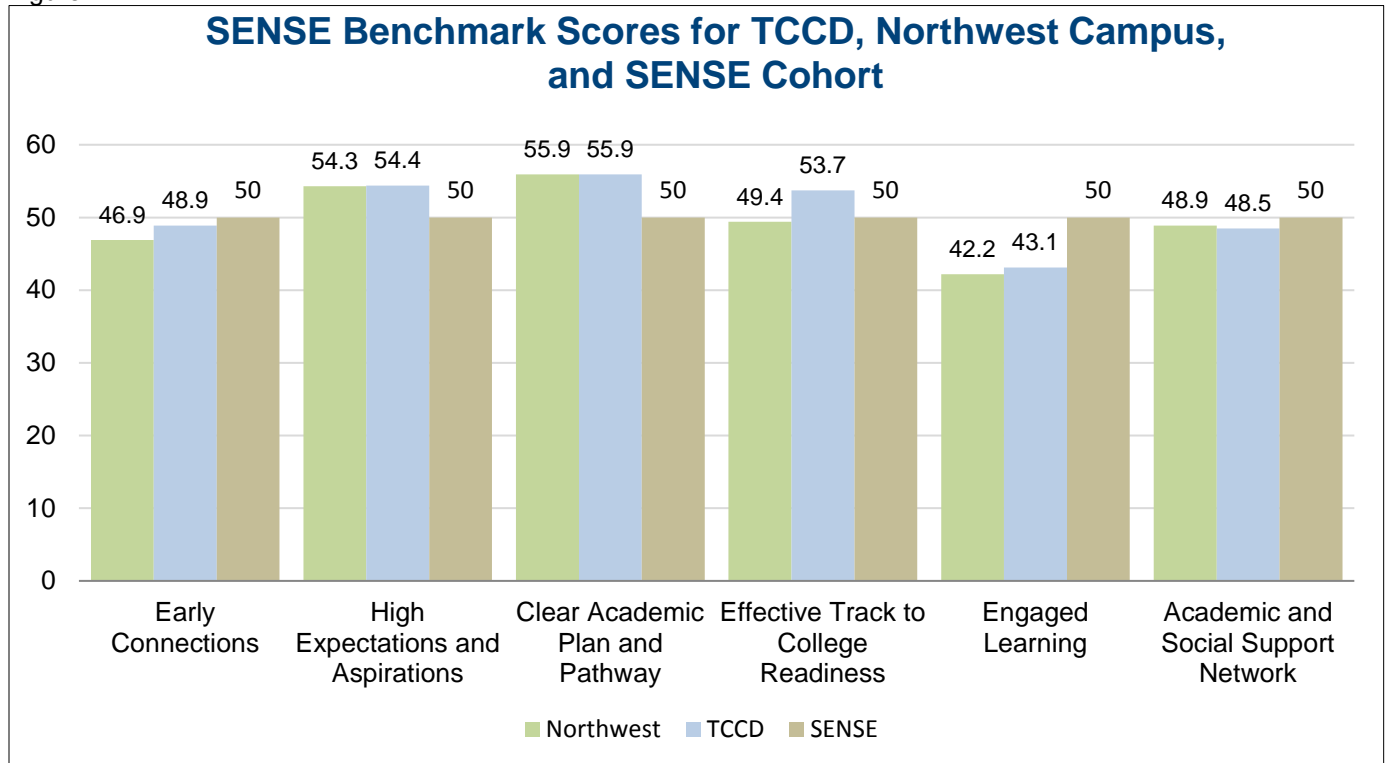
Students benefit from having a personal network that enables them to obtain information about college services, along with the academic and social support critical to student success. Because entering students often don't know what they don't know, colleges must purposefully create those networks.

## Northwest Campus Benchmark Scores

Figure 1 below provides Northwest's performance on the Benchmarks (described in previous section) and is given in relation to the SENSE cohort as a whole. Northwest campus and TCCD compare favorably to the SENSE cohort in regard to High Expectations and Aspirations, and Clear Academic Plan and Pathway. Areas of improvement for Northwest in comparison to TCCD include Early Connections, Effective Track to College Readiness, 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.

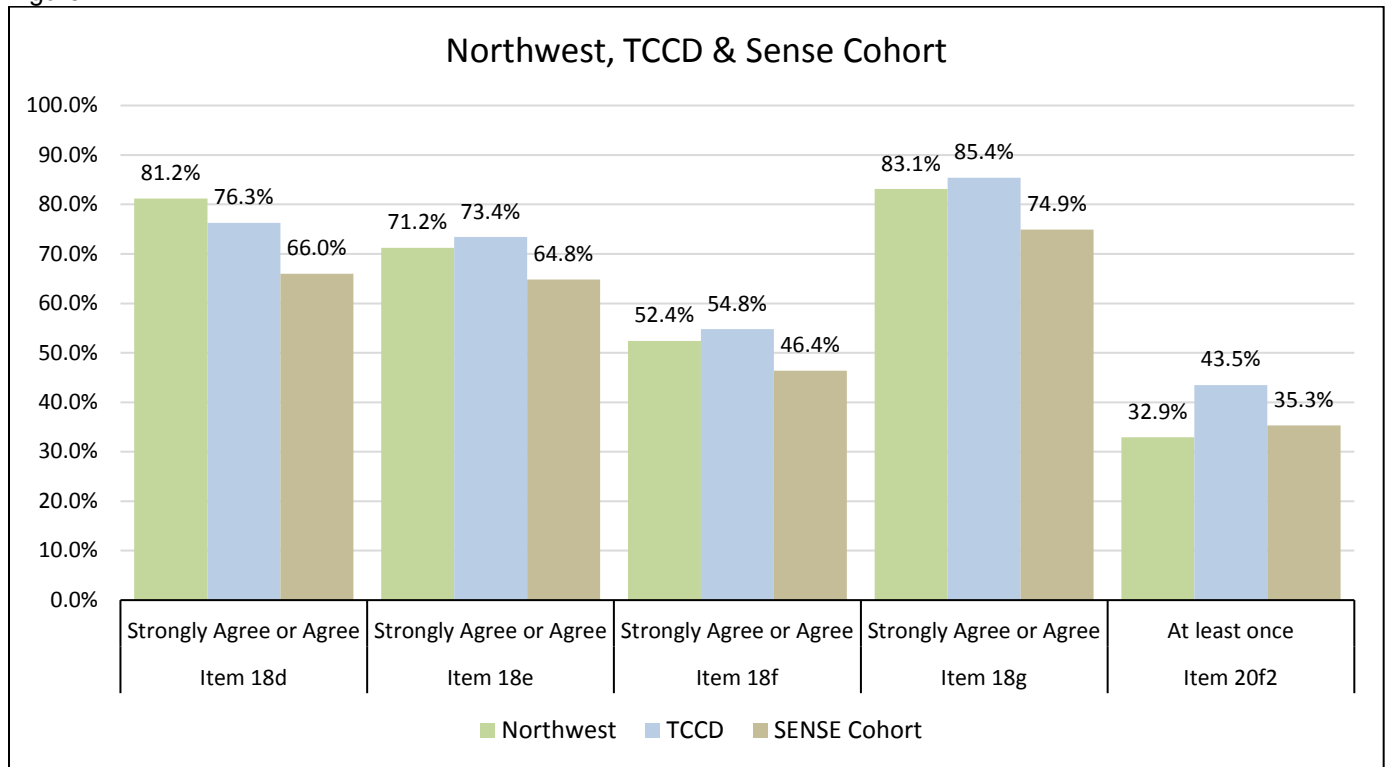


## Aspects of Highest Student Engagement Northwest Campus

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 Northwest students rated those items. As a whole, these items suggest that compared to the SENSE cohort, Northwest students receive aspects of good support and guidance from advisors, while being slightly less likely to use labs as a part of coursework. Specifically, students are able to meet at convenient times with advisors who then help students develop goals and a course of study, and then select classes for that plan. Northwest students meet with advisors at convenient times more often than the District as a whole, while selecting a course of study and setting goals slightly less than the District. Opportunities lie in using writing, math, or other skill labs more frequently.

Figure 2.

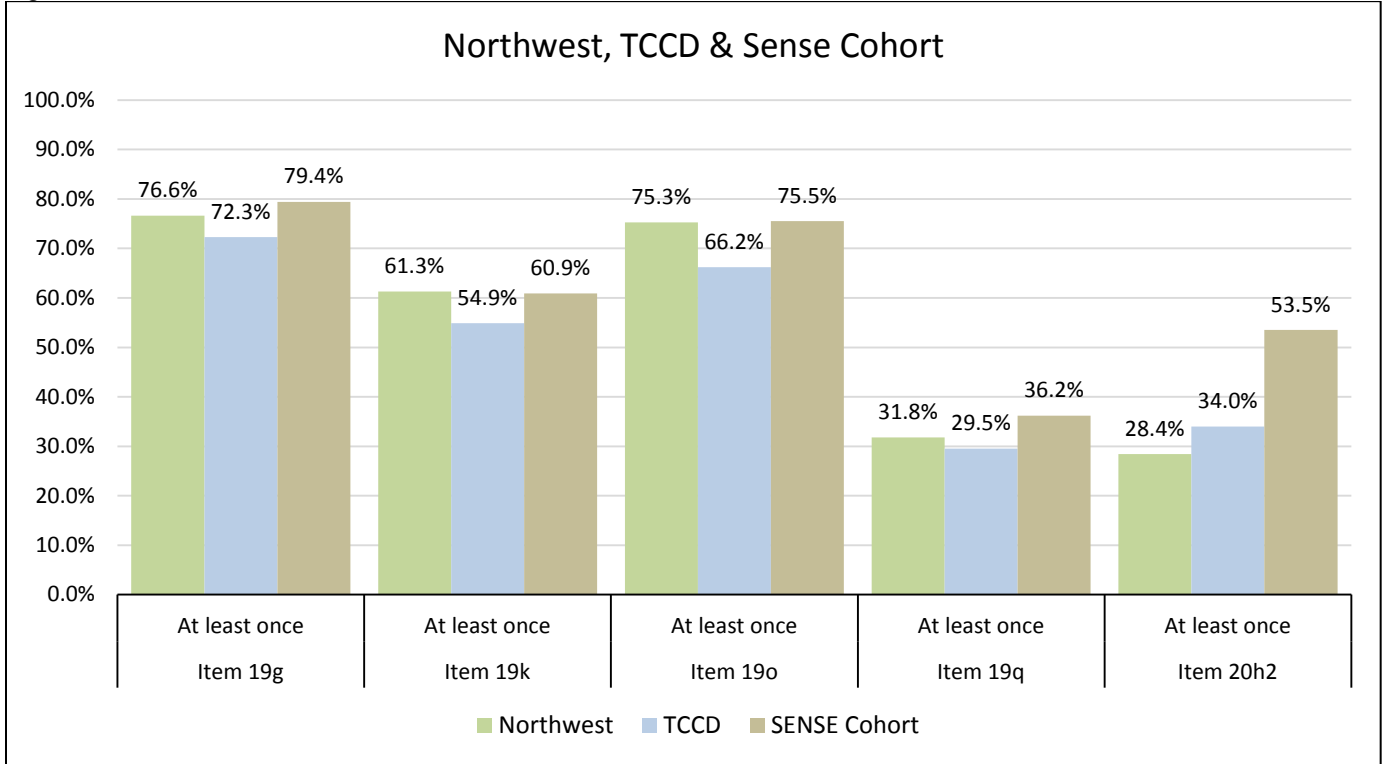


Benchmark	Item Number	Item
Clear Academic Plan & Pathway	18d	Able to meet with an academic advisor at times convenient for me
Clear Academic Plan & Pathway	18e	An advisor helped me to select a course of study, program, or major
Clear Academic Plan & Pathway	18f	An advisor helped me to set academic goals 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 Northwest Campus

Figure 3 displays the percentage of Northwest students who endorsed items on which TCCD compared least favorably to the 2016 SENSE cohort. Compared to the SENSE cohort, entering students on Northwest are much less likely to use a computer lab, while being slightly less likely to work with classmates on a project and discuss ideas outside of class with instructors.

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