

## **GWC CCSSE Custom Questions Report**

**November 24, 2014**

### **Abstract**

Golden West College administered the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) for the second time in Spring 2014. This survey provides campuses with key indicators of student engagement. GWC added 15 custom survey items to this administration of the CCSSE to address issues particularly important to the campus at this time. Results revealed that students are largely satisfied with many aspects of their experience at GWC, including campus safety, the provision of academic support, faculty's communication of SLOs and assessments, and instructors' provision of motivational support. However, over 40% of students indicated low sense of belonging on campus and there was evidence of low levels of engagement with co-curricular activities and certain academic support options. Additionally, of students who indicated significant barriers to their academic progress, nearly 50% reported that money, work, and family obligations were the most significant barrier.

### **Introduction**

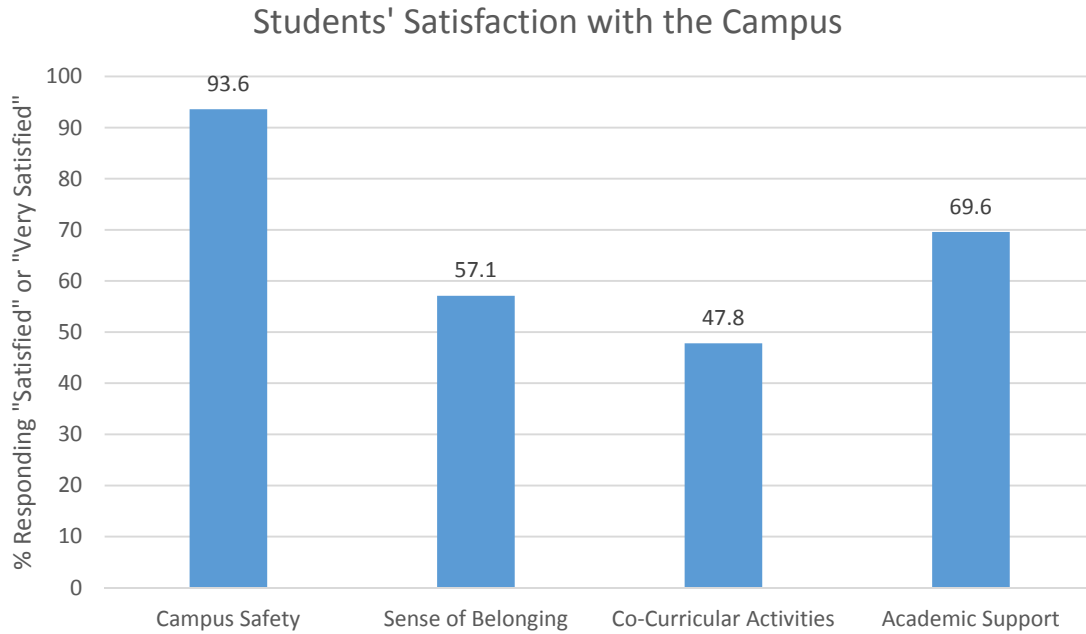
The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) is a nation-wide research initiative out of the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin. CCSSE provides campuses with information on student engagement, a key indicator of learning and, therefore, of the quality of community colleges. The survey, administered to students, asks questions that assess institutional practices and student behaviors that correlate highly with student learning and retention.

Golden West College administered the CCSSE in spring 2014 for the second time. The first administration at the College was in spring 2011. This report provides information and results for 15 custom questions that were added to the main survey specifically for GWC. The questions could be broadly categorized into three groups. Questions regarding students' satisfaction with the campus addressed issues of safety, sense of belonging, co-curricular activities, and academic support. Questions regarding students' relationships with faculty addressed instructors' communication about SLOs, provision of motivational support, and frequency of student visits to office hours. Finally, questions about issues regarding personal motivations and success included perceived barriers to academic progress, students' behaviors related to various academic issues. The individual questions within these three categories will be discussed in turn, followed by some general comments on the most interesting findings and a brief discussion of how results from some of the individual questions may relate to one another. The sample size ranged from 770 to 847, depending on the question.

### **Students' Satisfaction with the Campus**

Students indicated relatively high levels of satisfaction with campus safety, sense of belonging, co-curricular programs, and academic support services. In all of these areas except for co-curricular activities, over half of respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied. In regards to co-curricular activities, although only about 48% of students indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied, 44% indicated never having participated in co-curricular activities. Thus, of the respondents who had participated, the vast majority were satisfied. Figure 1 shows the percentage of respondents indicating that they were satisfied or very satisfied with these 4 aspects of campus life. Although 57% of respondents indicated that the college made them feel like they belong, about 1/3 of respondents only

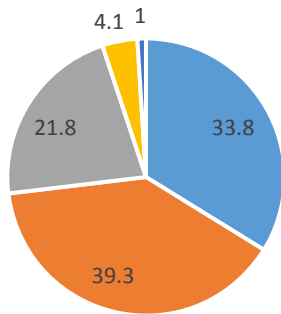
indicated “some” sense of belonging, suggesting that a rather significant portion of students feel somewhat alienated from the college. Only 11%, however, felt like they belonged “very little.”



### Students' Relationships with Faculty

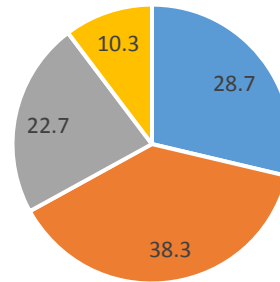
The vast majority of students (83%) reported that their professors clearly explained course learning outcomes and how these outcomes would be assessed either very often or often. Likewise, most students reported that their professors gave them motivational support in achieving academic goals at least sometimes (38%) if not often (29%). However, students reported rarely, if ever, visiting professors during their office hours.

SLOs and Assessment Clearly Explained



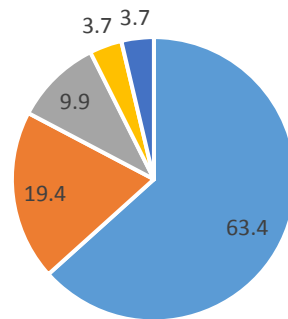
■ Very Often ■ Often ■ Sometimes ■ Rarely ■ Never

Instructors Give Motivational Support



■ Often ■ Sometimes ■ Rarely ■ Never

Visited an Instructor during Office Hours

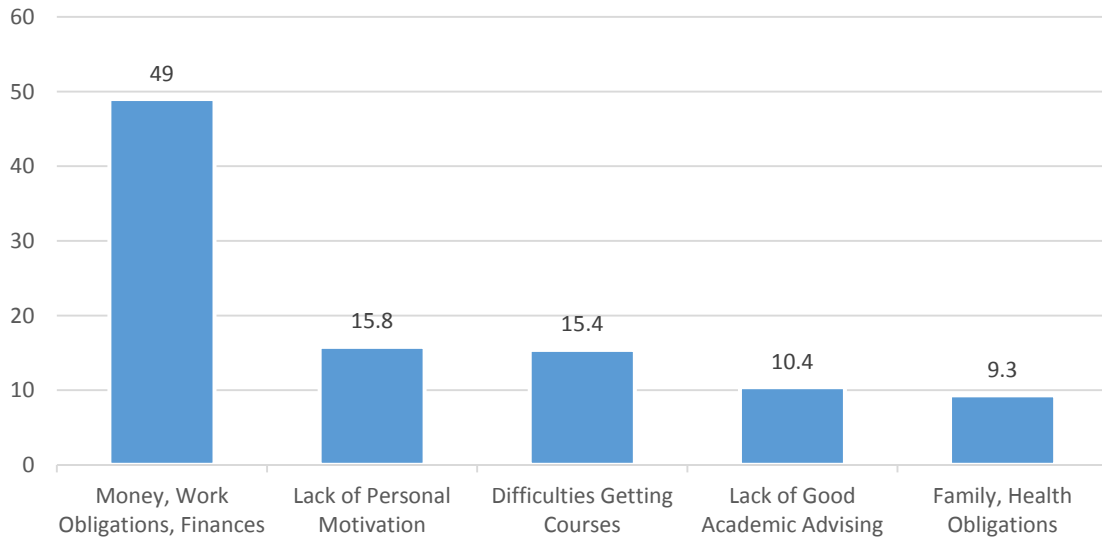


■ Never ■ 1 time ■ 2 times ■ 3 times ■ >3 times

### Issues Regarding Personal Motivations and Success

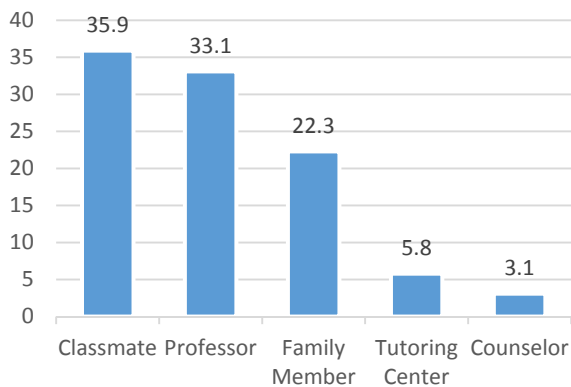
Students were asked to report the biggest obstacle to their academic success, if any. Seven hundred and seventy students answered the question. Thus, the majority of students who responded to the survey indicated some barrier to their academic success. Money, work obligations, and finances present the most significant barrier, with nearly half of responding students selecting this category. This was followed by difficulties getting needed courses and lack of personal motivation, each selected by about 15% of respondents.

## Obstacles to Academic Progress

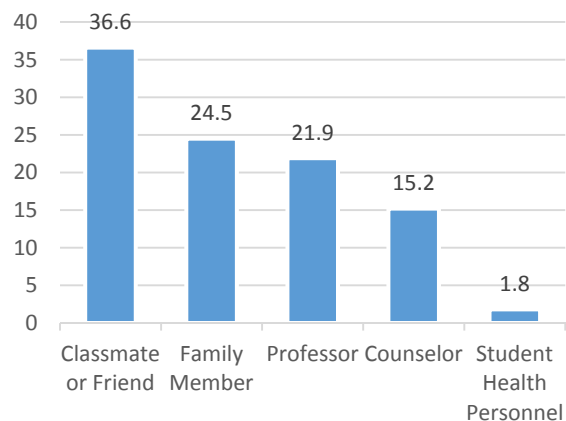


Students were asked 3 questions regarding sources of help or motivation when dealing with academic issues. Most students indicated that they go to either a classmate (33.1%) or professor (35.9%) for help when they are struggling in a specific course. For help with academic struggles in general, most students reported going to either a classmate/friend (36.6%) or family member (24.5%). Finally, students indicated that, when choosing a major, the top influences on their choice were interesting courses (32.1%) and job prospects (31.3%).

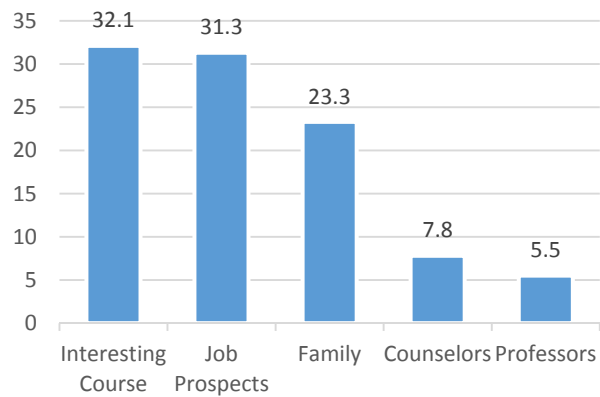
Who do you go to when you are struggling with a specific course?



Who do you go to when you are struggling with your overall academic progress?

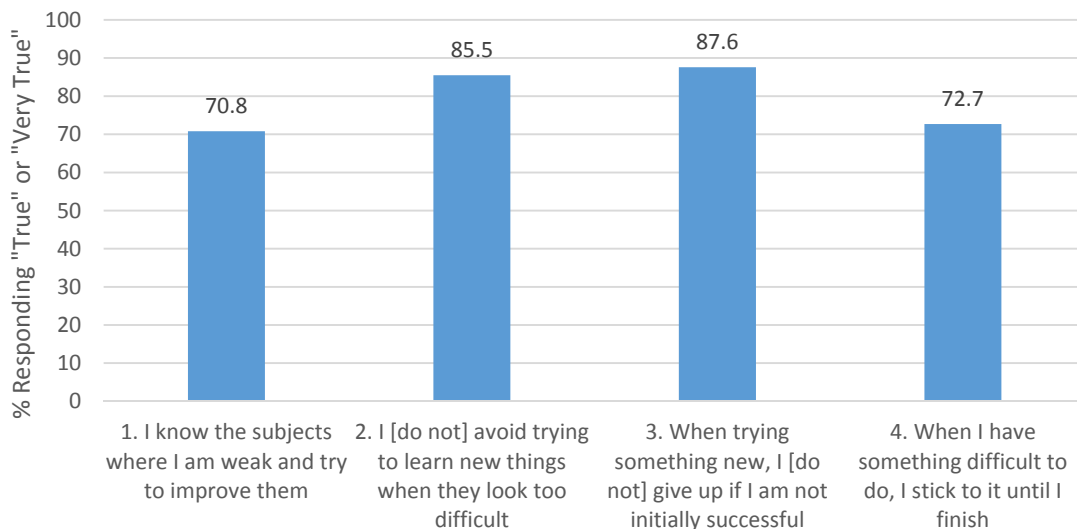


### Which factor influences your decision in selecting a major?



Finally, students were asked 4 questions regarding their perceptions of their own behavior related to learning. Students were asked how true the 4 following statements were for them: 1) I know the subjects where I am weak and I try to improve them; 2) I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me; 3) When trying something new, I soon give up if I am not initially successful; and 4) When I have something difficult to do, I stick to it until I finish it. Students were asked to respond on a 4 point scale from 1 (Not True) to 4 (Very True). For ease of presentation, questions 2 and 3 were reverse-coded so that “true” and “very true” would correspond to positive behavior.

### Perceptions of Learning Behavior



### Summary and Conclusions

Results generated by the 15 GWC custom items on the Spring 2014 administration of the CCSSE were largely positive, but also indicated some areas of concern. Perceptions of campus safety were

particularly impressive, with over 93% of students indicating that they were satisfied or very satisfied with safety on campus. Measures of students' perceptions of their relationships and communication with faculty were also encouraging. Almost three-quarters of students indicated that SLOs and assessments were clearly explained by instructors, and nearly 70% indicated that their instructors provided motivational support often.

Less encouraging was the fact that over 40% of students indicated feeling only "some" or "little" sense of belonging on campus. Perhaps this statistic can be explained at least partially by the fact that 44% of students indicated no participation in co-curricular activities on campus, and thus a large portion of GWC students may not be engaging with GWC and with fellow students in ways that give them a sense of connectedness to the campus.

Almost 70% of students indicated satisfaction with academic support services. However, several other metrics suggest that students do not take full advantage of academic support available to them, and this may contribute to the over 30% of students who indicated dissatisfaction with support services. For example, almost two-thirds of students reported never having gone to an instructor's office hours, only one-third reported going to an instructor for help when struggling with a course, and only 6% reported seeking help from the tutoring center in the same circumstance.

A factor underlying students' overall low participation in both co-curricular activities and academic support services may be related to financial, work, and family obligations. Nearly half of students reported that these obligations constituted the number one barrier to academic progress. If students have trouble fitting in classes and coursework around work and family obligations, they may have an even harder time utilizing support services outside of class time to improve their mastery of course material. Additionally, it is likely that these other obligations also affect students' ability to participate in campus activities outside of academics.

Future research to address the underlying causes of some of the trends discussed here would benefit from utilizing student focus groups, which would allow in-depth probing of students' underlying motivations, feelings, and personal circumstances that may lead to higher vs. lower sense of belonging and utilization of campus resources.