



MT. SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE

# INSIGHTS

*on the college*

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## **COMPARING MT. SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE TO OTHER U.S. COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) (pronounced "sessie") was distributed in 93 colleges across the United States in spring 2003. Mt. San Antonio College (Mt. SAC) was one of the participating colleges.

CCSSE is a survey that examines different aspects of students' educational activities (e.g., ask questions in class). These educational activities have been shown to be related to student success. The survey was developed based on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) at Indiana University. The project is supported by grants from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Lumina Foundation for Education.

The main report can be found at <http://research.mtsac.edu/factbook.html> under Student Engagement Survey. The following is a further review of the data collected.

### **STATISTICAL VERSUS PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Throughout the survey results, there were times when Mt. SAC's students' responses were, on average, higher, lower, or about the same as their comparison group of extra large colleges. Although sometimes these results were statistically significant, these differences were not of "practical significance" because the effect size was lower than 0.5. Effect size indicates the "practical significance" of the magnitude of the mean difference. It is calculated by dividing the mean difference between Mt. SAC and its comparison group by the standard deviation of the comparison group. Although there were statistically significant differences in some items between Mt. SAC and the extra large colleges, these differences were not large enough to be of "practical significance."

## COMPARING MT. SAC TO OTHER COLLEGES

Although the differences outlined in the remainder of this paper are not of “practical significance” (see previous section), they are worthwhile noting for comparison purposes.

As a College, Mt. SAC needs to decide two factors with all results/items in this report:

1. Which of the items are relevant to Mt. SAC and its students?
2. Of those items that are relevant, what are the percentage benchmarks for deciding if the results are acceptable or not. For example, if 60% or more of the students are satisfied with their learning experiences, does that mean that Mt. SAC should be proud of that outcome or should interventions be suggested?

### EXCEEDING

The following areas are those in which Mt. SAC students said they were experiencing/doing **MORE** than students from other comparable Colleges. Mt. SAC students tended to make more classroom presentations and did more group work than other community college students (table 1.)

<b>Table 1. COLLEGE ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>Mt. SAC  (“very often” or  “often”)</b>	<b>United States  Comparison  Colleges</b>	<b>GAP (Mt. SAC  minus U.S.)</b>
1. Made a class presentation	32%	27%	+5% points
2. Worked with other students on projects during class	55%	48%	+7% points

Mt. SAC students felt more encouragement to spend time studying and interacting with students from different areas (table 2). Mt. SAC students felt more support with non-academic issues than other community college students in the U.S. comparison group.

<b>Table 2. OPINIONS ABOUT MT. SAC</b>	<b>Mt. SAC  (“very often” or  “often”)</b>	<b>United States  Comparison  Colleges</b>	<b>GAP (Mt. SAC  minus U.S.)</b>
3. Encouraging students to spend significant amounts of time studying	75%	70%	+5% points
4. Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	50%	43%	+7% points
5. Helping students cope with their non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	28%	23%	+5% points
6. Providing the support they need to thrive socially	32%	27%	+5% points

As far as Mt. SAC students' educational growth is considered, the highest difference with the U.S. comparison group was found with 'understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds' (table 3). Mt. SAC students were more likely to understand other racial and ethnic groups than the other students. Mt. SAC students were more likely to feel that they were writing and speaking clearly than the other group.

<b>Table 3. EDUCATIONAL AND PERSONAL GROWTH</b>	<b>Mt. SAC ("very often" or "often")</b>	<b>United States Comparison Colleges</b>	<b>GAP (Mt. SAC minus U.S.)</b>
7. Acquiring a broad general education	73%	67%	+6% points
8. Writing clearly and effectively	67%	56%	+11% points
9. Speaking clearly and effectively	62%	51%	+11% points
10. Working effectively with others	62%	57%	+5% points
11. Understanding yourself	61%	53%	+8% points
12. Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	53%	39%	+14% points
13. Developing a personal code of values and ethics	46%	39%	+7% points

When examining issues that could cause students to withdraw from the program, there is only one item where the differences between Mt. SAC and the U.S. are noteworthy (table 4). Mt. SAC students are more likely to think that working full-time will negatively impact their ability to stay in school.

<b>Table 4. ISSUES THAT COULD CAUSE WITHDRAWAL</b>	<b>Mt. SAC ("very often" or "often")</b>	<b>United States Comparison Colleges</b>	<b>GAP (Mt. SAC minus U.S.)</b>
14. Working full-time (60% of Mt. SAC students said it was very likely or likely that working full-time would cause them to withdraw)	60%	42%	+18% points

## LAGGING

The following areas are those in which Mt. SAC students said they were experiencing/doing **less** than students from other comparable Colleges. Mt. SAC students are less likely to ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions than their counterparts in the U.S. (table 5). Mt. SAC students are also less likely to discuss grades with the instructor or receive prompt feedback from instructors on their performance.

<b>Table 5. COLLEGE ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>Mt. SAC ("very often" or "often")</b>	<b>United States Comparison Colleges</b>	<b>GAP (Mt. SAC minus U.S.)</b>
15. Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	50%	64%	-14% points
16. Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	40%	45%	-5% points
17. Received prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors on your performance	52%	57%	-5% points

When asked if Mt. SAC was providing the financial support needed to afford their education, Mt. SAC students were less likely to think so than the comparison group (table 6).

<b>Table 6. OPINIONS ABOUT MT. SAC</b>	<b>Mt. SAC ("very often" or "often")</b>	<b>United States Comparison Colleges</b>	<b>GAP (Mt. SAC minus U.S.)</b>
18. Providing the financial support you need to afford your education	32%	42%	-10% points

## CONCLUSION

Given the number and breadth of questions on the CCSSE survey, Mt. SAC has done well to exceed other U.S. community Colleges in numerous areas from college activities to education growth. These areas should be recognized and celebrated. When examining those areas in which Mt. SAC was lagging the other Colleges, there are clearly some areas for further consideration. Is it time to encourage students to ask more questions in class? Is it time to research the promptness of the feedback received by students? Are students' expectations for feedback realistic? How many of these findings are truly reflective of Mt. SAC and should be explored further?

The most salient findings to each department of the College should be celebrated if it is a success and addressed with an intervention process if it is a barrier to success for students. Formative evaluation should be done throughout the next year to determine if the intervention is successful.