**Suggested Strategies for Student Engagement**

These strategies were developed by Paradise Valley Community College to align with the research-based conference of the **Community College Survey of Student Engagement. *(CCSSE.)***The text here has been shortened and modified slightly to include resources and offices available at Ventura College.The full CCSSE report is available at [www.insidehighered.com/.../CCCSE+2010+report+FINAL\_high-res.pdf](http://www.insidehighered.com/.../CCCSE+2010+report+FINAL_high-res.pdf) .

**What is CCSSE?**

CCSSE’s survey, The Community College Student Report, focuses on institutional practices and student behaviors that promote student engagement. CCSSE works with participating colleges to administer the survey, using research-based items to measure students’ levels of engagement in a variety of areas. The colleges then receive their survey results, along with guidance and analysis they can use to improve their rograms and services for students.

Research shows that the more actively engaged students are—with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter they study—the more likely they are to learn and persist toward achieving their academic goals. Student engagement, therefore, is a valuable yardstick for assessing whether, and to what extent, an institution is employing educational practices likely to produce successful results—more students across all subgroups achieving their academic goals.

**General Profile of Community College Students**

Most community college students work, nearly all commute, and many spend time caring for dependents. With these competing priorities, most students spend little time on campus. In fact, CCSSE data indicate that overall the most successful engagement strategies currently occur in classrooms. CCSSE, through the use of five benchmarks of effective educational practice, measures the level of student engagement in the learning process. The five benchmarks are:

1. **active and collaborative learning,**
2. **student effort,**
3. **academic challenge,**
4. **student-faculty interaction, and**
5. **support for learners.**

**1. Active and Collaborative Learning**

Students learn more when they are actively involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings. Through collaborating with others to solve problems or master challenging content, students develop valuable skills that prepare them to deal with the kinds of situations and problems they will encounter in the workplace, the community, and their personal lives.

*Implementation Ideas:*

* Think-pair-share is a simple activity you can use in any classroom format. Give students time to think and write a few points or statements about a topic, turn to their neighbor for a short discussion, and then share the results with the rest of the class or with a small group.
* Minute Papers provide students with the opportunity to synthesize their knowledge and to ask unanswered questions. Give students a few minutes at the end of class to answer anonymously the following questions in writing: What was the most important thing you learned today? What important question remains unanswered? Variations of these questions, and the student questions and answers they generate, enhance your students’ learning process and provide you with feedback on students’ understanding of the subjectmaterial. Answer the most frequently asked questions at the beginning of the next class.
* Writing activities of many kinds offer students the opportunity to think about and process information. For example, in addition to minute papers, you could pose a question and then give students time to free write their answers. You could also give students time to free write about topics.
* Brainstorming is another simple technique that can involve the whole class in a discussion. Introduce a topic or problem and then ask for student input, which you record on the board.
* Games related to the subject can easily be incorporated into the classroom to foster active learning and participation. Games can include matching, mysteries, group competitions, solving puzzles, Pictionary, etc
* Debates staged in class can be effective tools for encouraging students to think about several sides of an issue. This method can be used online, as well.
* Group work allows every participant the chance to speak, share personal views, and develop the skill of working with others. Cooperative group work requires all group members to work together to complete a given task. Break the class into groups of 2-5 students. Give each group articles to read, questions to answer and discuss, information to share, subjects to teach to other groups, etc.
* Subject Summaries asks the students to summarize similarities and differences among two different methodologies, theories, opinions, or a research finding.
* Use Technology to encourage active learning. Have students do a Web activity, prepare a Power Point presentation, use online course sites (such as Desire2Learn) for group work or discussions outside the classroom, etc.
* Simulations, role-playing, or labs are also active learning methods that can fully engage the students.
* Questions: wait after a question has been posed or after asking “what are your questions?” (up to a minute), to allow the person to collect his or her thoughts, and to make sure he or she has had the chance to respond fully. (Note: if you ask “do you have any questions?”, few students will respond. Use “what are your questions?” so students understand that you expect questions).

**2. Student Effort**

Students' own behaviors contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will successfully attain their educational goals.

*Implementation Ideas:*

* Ask students to complete a self-assessment that teaches them about their learning habits. An assessment tool is available on the OnCourse web site by Skip Downing: Skip@OnCourseWorkshop.com. <http://college.hmco.com/collegesurvival/downing/on\_course/4e/students/assess/index.html >
* Award points for students who have answered the questions or provided an outline of material related to a reading assignment that is due at class time. This will influence the number of student preparing for class.
* Communicate the expected amount of time students should spend preparing for class. Tell them that you expect them to work hard in the class.
* Meet with students who fall behind to discuss their study habits, schedules, questions.
* Appeal to students needing extrinsic motivation. Inform students how the course helps prepare them for careers in the field of study. Link new knowledge to its usefulness in occupational skills.
* Refer students whose reading, writing, or study skills are below college to the Reading and Writing Center in the LRC. (Students with English 1A skills and above can seeking help in the Tutoring Center.) Also, don’t hesitate to refer students to learning skills professionals in EAC.

**3. Academic Challenge**

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality.

*Implementation Ideas:*

* Ask students to analyze an idea, experience, or theory as a small-group learning activity.
* Provide a case study assignment. This challenges students to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-life experiences. This method is a “must do” in an occupational educational program.
* Once several authors' information, research, or methods have been reviewed, ask students to complete an assignment that requires them to judge the value or soundness of this information.
* Choose textbook and additional reading assignments that appropriately challenge the students to explore deeply into the course learning competencies.

**4. Student-Faculty Interaction**

In general, the more contact students have with their teachers, the more likely they are to learn effectively and persist toward achievement of their educational goals. Through such interactions, faculty members become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, lifelong learning .

*Implementation Ideas:*

* Provide a first day exercise in which students share past educational and work experiences, educational goals, personal accomplishments, learning styles, hobbies, travel experiences, etc. This information gathering will help you tailor your course materials.
* Ice Breakers are a great way for you to get to know your students and for students to meet each other.
* Interact with enthusiasm and energy (eye contact, voice tone/pace, move around the class, etc…)
* Treat students as human beings with full real lives; ask how they are doing.
* Use email regularly to encourage and inform. Call or send an e-mail to students who miss too many classes.
* Get to know your students by name by the end of the first few classes. Use a seating chart if you are having trouble remembering names.
* Advise students about career or cooperative learning opportunities
* Share your experiences, values, and attitudes
* Show an interest in student’s extra-curricular activities and life outside of college.
* Serve as a mentor or informal advisor to students
* Prepare classroom exercises which give students immediate feedback on how well they are doing.
* Return examinations and papers within a week with written feedback on the papers.
* Accentuate the positive. Positive humor can stimulate learning.
* Student discipline actions should be handled in private conversation. Avoid public confrontation with a student.

**5. Support for Learners**

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relationships among different groups on campus.

*Implementation Ideas:*

* Assign students an activity to locate and visit the resources available to them (Library, Reading and Writing Center, Tutoring Center, EAC, Counseling, etc…)
* If you are aware of financial hardships for students, refer them to the financial aid office and/or EOPS.
* Encourage students to set up an appointment with a counselor to plan their educational pathway.
* Invite representatives from EOPS, EAC, and/or Counseling to make a brief presentation to your class on their services.