



CCSSE SNAPSHOTS

report on the community college survey of student engagement

Benchmarks: How do we stack up?

TC3 – Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) 2009

What is the CCSSE?

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement is a national survey of community college students. In 2009, 663 institutions in 48 states, Canada, and the Marshall Islands including TC3 participated. About half (331) of these colleges were classified as small (with a student population of under 4,500), TC3 among them. In each institution a random sample of credit courses, stratified by time of class, was selected for administration. In 2009 this yielded 400,886 usable surveys overall and 611 surveys at TC3. TC3 was one of the few participating colleges to achieve 100 percent of its targeted goal for the survey yield, thanks to strong faculty cooperation.

During the spring 2009 semester, TC3 conducted the CCSSE in 53 classes selected by CCSSE for inclusion. This was the first time SUNY actively supported participation in the survey by SUNY community colleges, and consequently, 29 of them conducted the survey. This provided an opportunity for benchmarking with SUNY schools as a group, as well as the national average.

Why did TC3 participate in CCSSE?

Over the past few years TC3 has been involved in an ongoing process of institutional assessment and renewal. Through the work of the College Planning and Assessment Council, annual Fall Day retreats, and other evaluation and assessment initiatives, TC3 has made reflection on how we do things and how we can improve a priority. As part of these processes, it is essential that there be some standardized criteria for comparison both internally over time, as well as with external metrics. For these reasons, TC3 has elected to utilize the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) as a central tool in this assessment process.

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What are the benchmarks?

One of the main outcomes of the CCSSE is a benchmark or composite score in five areas deemed of central importance for community colleges:

- **Student-Faculty Interaction**
- **Support for Learners**
- **Active and Collaborative Learning**
- **Student Effort**
- **Academic Challenge**

The benchmark results are constructed from 38 key questions included in the survey that “reflect many of the most important aspects of the student experiences. These institutional practices and student behaviors are some of the most powerful contributors to effective teaching, learning, student retention, and student success.”

As an example, questions used to estimate academic challenge include: “In your experience at this college during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following: ...Worked harder than you thought you could to meet and instructor’s standards or expectations” and “During the current school year, how much has your coursework at this college emphasized the following mental activities...Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways.”

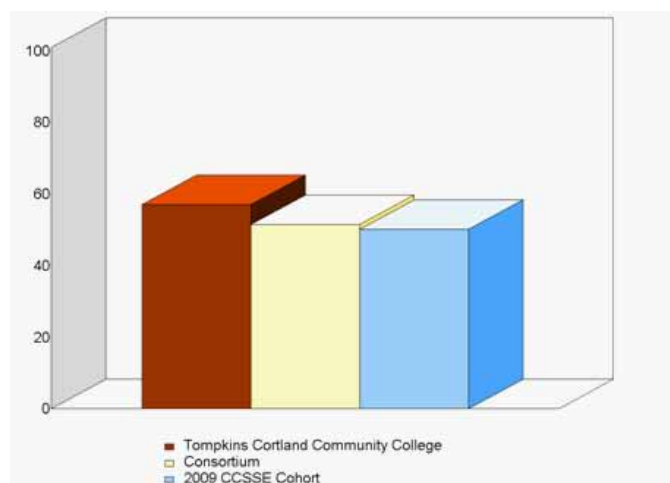
In the following tables “Consortium” refers to participating SUNY community colleges, and “CCSSE Cohort” is made up of all community colleges participating in the CCSSE over the last three years. The scores are adjusted so that 50 is the norm – any score above that is better than the CCSSE Cohort average.

How does TC3 stack up?

1 Student-Faculty Interaction

Description – 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.

TC3 did notably better than both comparison groups in the area of Student-Faculty Interaction, indicating that students feel connected to faculty. This reflects an important area of strength for the College and an improvement over the College’s 2007 CCSSE score of 55.3 for this benchmark.

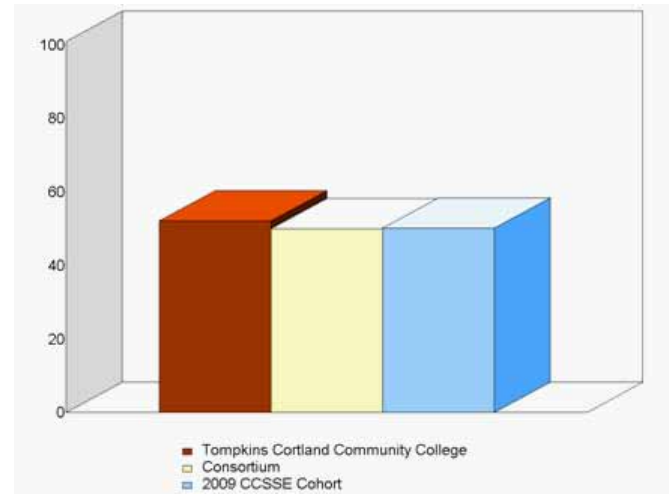


Benchmark Scores

	Tompkins Cortland Community College	Consortium	2009 CCSSE Cohort
All Students	57.0	51.4	50.0

2 Support for Learners

Description – 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. This is an area where TC3 has focused attention and resources in response to organizational growth and change, and reflects a positive trend in that direction. That focus is strongly reflected by the increase from a score of 47.9 in the 2007 CCSSE, to a 52 in 2009.



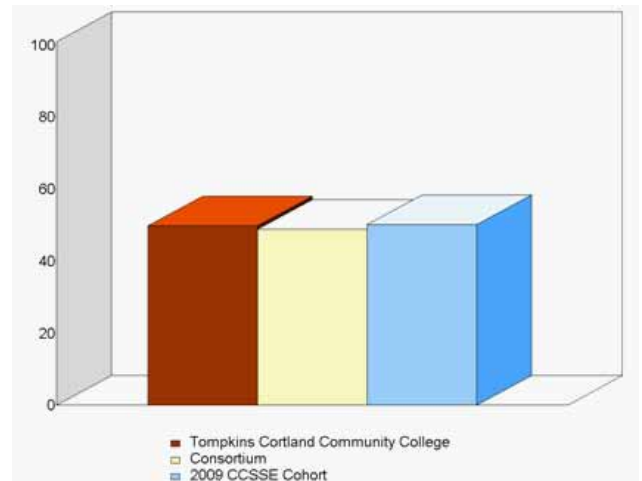
Benchmark Scores

	Tompkins Cortland Community College	Consortium	2009 CCSSE Cohort
All Students	52.0	49.9	50.0

3 Active and Collaborative Learning

Description – Students learn more when they are actively involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they learn 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.

In the Active and Collaborative Learning benchmark TC3 scores very close to the norm, and a little bit higher than SUNY peers. This indicates an area deserving of investigation.

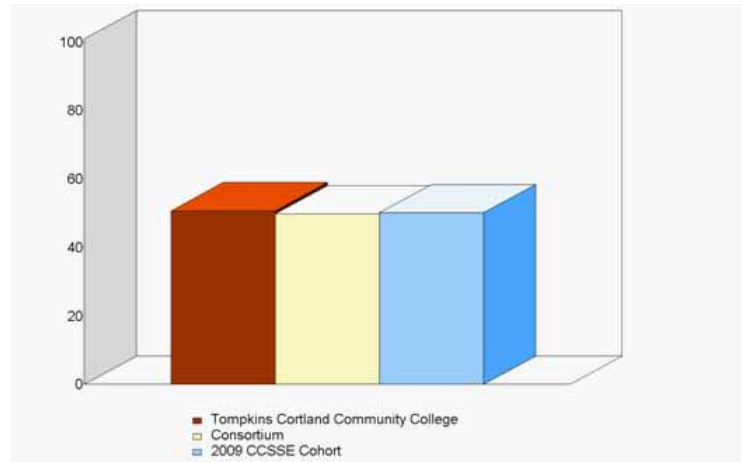


Benchmark Scores

	Tompkins Cortland Community College	Consortium	2009 CCSSE Cohort
All Students	49.7	48.7	50.0

4 Student Effort

Description – Students’ own behaviors contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will successfully attain their educational goals. Looking at Student Effort, TC3 did a little better than both comparison groups but the difference was not large. There was also an increase from the 2007 CCSSE benchmark score of 49.4, evidence of a trend in the right direction.



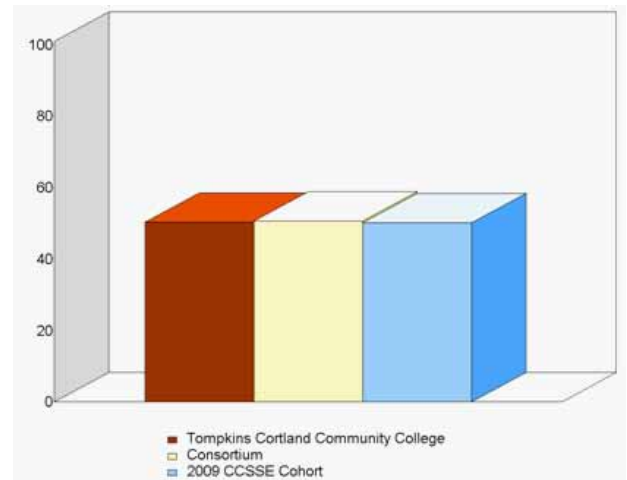
Benchmark Scores

	Tompkins Cortland Community College	Consortium	2009 CCSSE Cohort
All Students	50.6	49.5	50.0

5 Academic Challenge

Description – Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Ten survey items address the nature and amount of assigned academic work, the complexity of cognitive tasks presented to students, and the standards faculty members use to evaluate student performance.

Again, this score is very close to the norm, and a small improvement from the 2007 CCSSE score of 49.8.



Benchmark Scores

	Tompkins Cortland Community College	Consortium	2009 CCSSE Cohort
All Students	50.2	50.6	50.0

What do these results say about TC3?

Compared with community colleges in SUNY and across the nation, TC3 is holding its own and in some cases doing better, most notably in the area of student - faculty interaction. There are several areas that deserve more investigation and insight. But to understand what these numbers really mean we need to dig a little deeper into the specific survey questions as well as special segments of the student population – which we will be doing in upcoming CCSSE Snapshots.