

RESEARCH BRIEF

**Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) 2019:
Benchmark Scores by Student Characteristics**

The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) is an annual, nationwide survey conducted by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) in Austin, Texas. The goal of the survey is to explore institutional practices and new students' experiences in the earliest weeks of college. The information collected helps colleges better understand students' early college experiences, assist in identifying early obstacles to student progress, and improve college practices in ways that can increase student success in the first year of college.

The survey is comprised of six **Benchmarks of Effective Practice with Entering Students**. These benchmarks are sets of conceptually related survey items that are grouped together to serve as yardsticks to measure performance on various domains of early student engagement.

The six benchmarks are as follows:

1. Early Connections
2. High Expectations and Aspirations
3. Clear Academic Plan and Pathway
4. Effective Track to College Readiness
5. Engaged Learning
6. Academic and Social Support Network

In This Brief

This Brief presents NOVA's performance on each benchmark from the 2019 administration of the SENSE, which was administered to students during the fourth and fifth weeks of class during the Fall 2019 semester, by selected student characteristics. For each of the six benchmarks, scores are disaggregated by: age, gender, race/ethnicity, enrollment status, first generation status, and developmental course enrollment status.

All benchmark scores are on a standardized scale where the average of the 2019 cohort of participating institutions (referred to as the National Average) is set equal to 50.

At NOVA, **1,173 students** participated in the SENSE survey in Fall 2019.

Summary of Findings

Enrollment Status

- On average, full-time students gave NOVA higher scores than part-time students on four of the six benchmarks, suggesting full-time enrollment is conducive to higher levels of engagement as an entering student.

Gender

- Overall, male students assigned NOVA higher scores than female students on four of the six benchmarks of entering student engagement.
- However, on the Engaged Learning and High Expectations and Aspirations benchmarks, female students gave NOVA a score that was around three points higher than that given by male students. This suggests female students may be more engaged in their academic pursuits than male students at NOVA.

Age Group

- Students of the traditional college age (ages 18-24) rated NOVA higher on only two benchmarks. However, only a small number of non-traditional students responded to the survey so the reader should interpret results with caution.

First Generation Status

- First generation students rated NOVA higher on the following four out of six benchmarks: Early Connections; High Expectations and Aspirations; Clear Academic Plan and Pathway; and Effective Track to College Readiness.
- Conversely, continuing generation students rated NOVA higher on two benchmarks: Engaged Learning; and Academic and Social Support Network.

Race/Ethnicity

- Overall, black students rated NOVA the highest on five of the six benchmarks. Black students rated NOVA the highest on the Early Connections benchmark, and they rated NOVA the lowest on the High Expectations and Aspirations benchmark.
- Conversely, white students rated NOVA the lowest on three of the six benchmarks. White students rated NOVA the highest on the Academic and Social Support Network benchmark, and they rated NOVA the lowest on the Clear Academic Plan and Pathway benchmark.

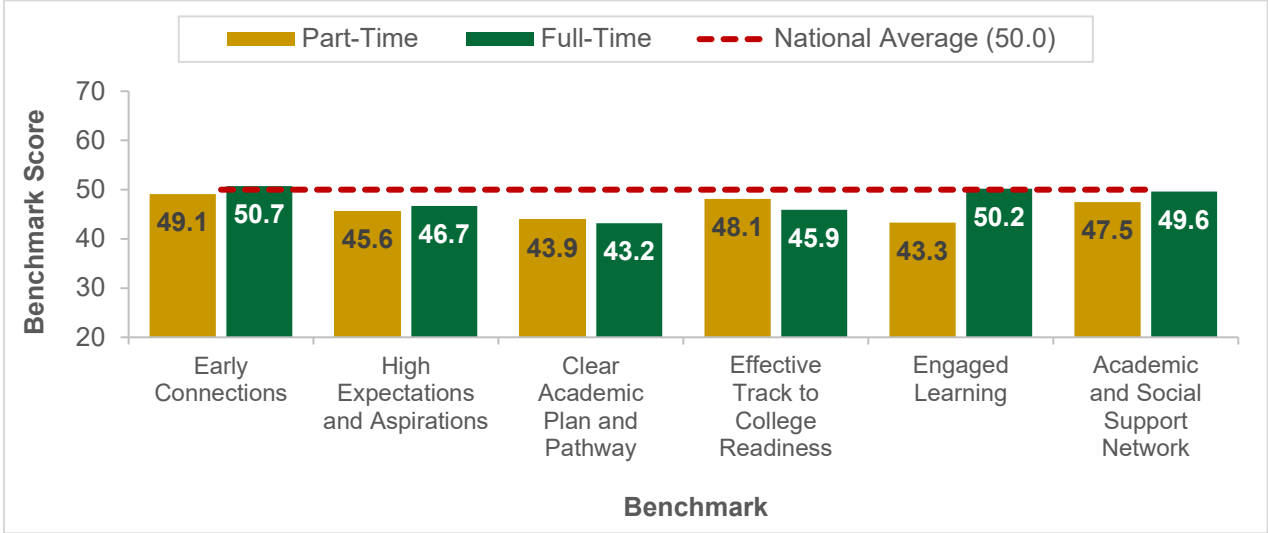
Developmental Course Enrollment Status

- Compared to non-developmental students, developmental students rated NOVA higher on all six benchmarks. This suggests that developmental coursework may provide for a more engaging student experience during the critical first few weeks of college.

Enrollment Status

Compared to part-time students, full-time students rated NOVA higher on four out of six benchmarks: Early Connections; High Expectations and Aspirations; Engaged Learning; and Academic and Social Support Network. Part-time students rated NOVA higher on Clear Academic Plan and Pathway and Effective Track to College Readiness.

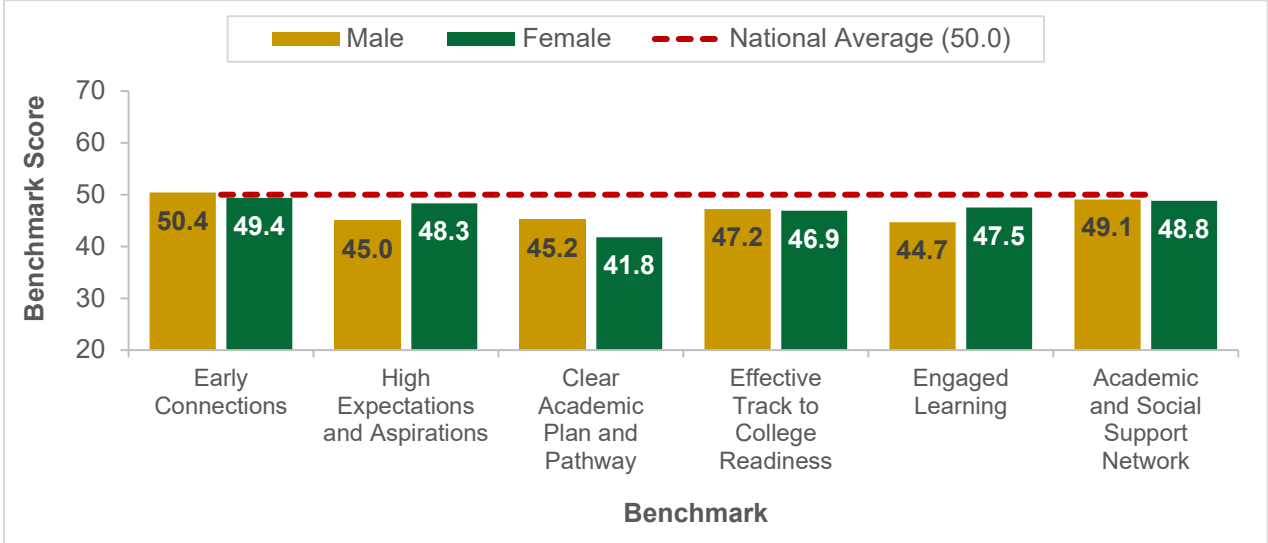
Figure 1. SENSE Benchmark Scores by Enrollment Status: Fall 2019



Gender

Male students rated NOVA higher on the following four benchmarks: Early Connections; Clear Academic Plan and Pathway; Effective Track to College Readiness; and Academic and Social Support. Conversely, female students rated NOVA higher on the following two benchmarks: High Expectations and Aspirations; and Engaged Learning.

Figure 2. SENSE Benchmark Scores by Gender: Fall 2019

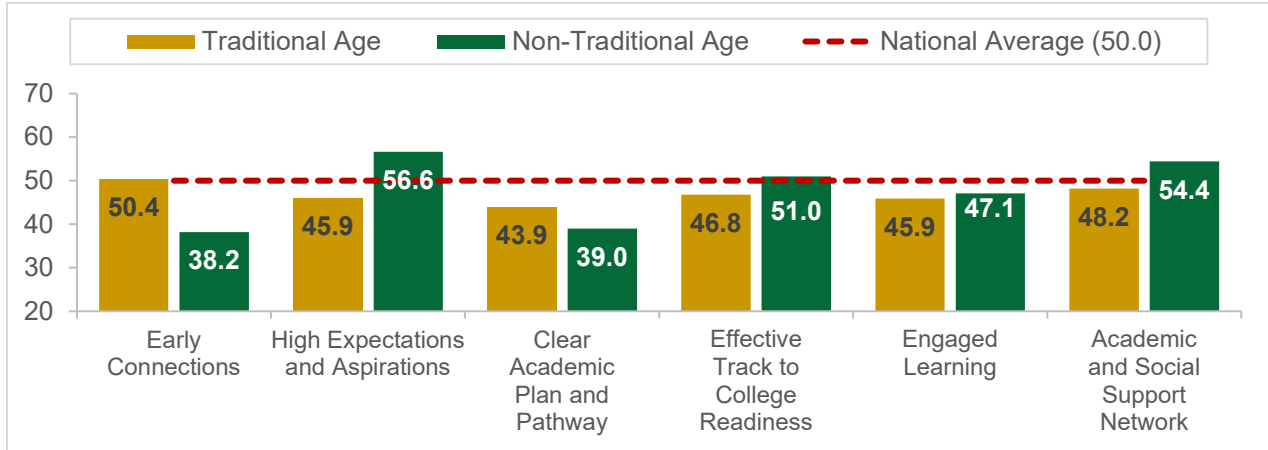


Age Group

SENSE classifies students aged 18-24 as “traditional age” and students aged 25 or older as “non-traditional age.” Only a small number of students from the sample were of a non-traditional age, so responses may be unrepresentative of NOVA’s non-traditional age student population.

Compared to traditional age students, non-traditional age students rated NOVA higher on four out of six benchmarks: High Expectations and Aspirations; Effective Track to College Readiness; Engaged Learning; and Academic and Social Support Network.

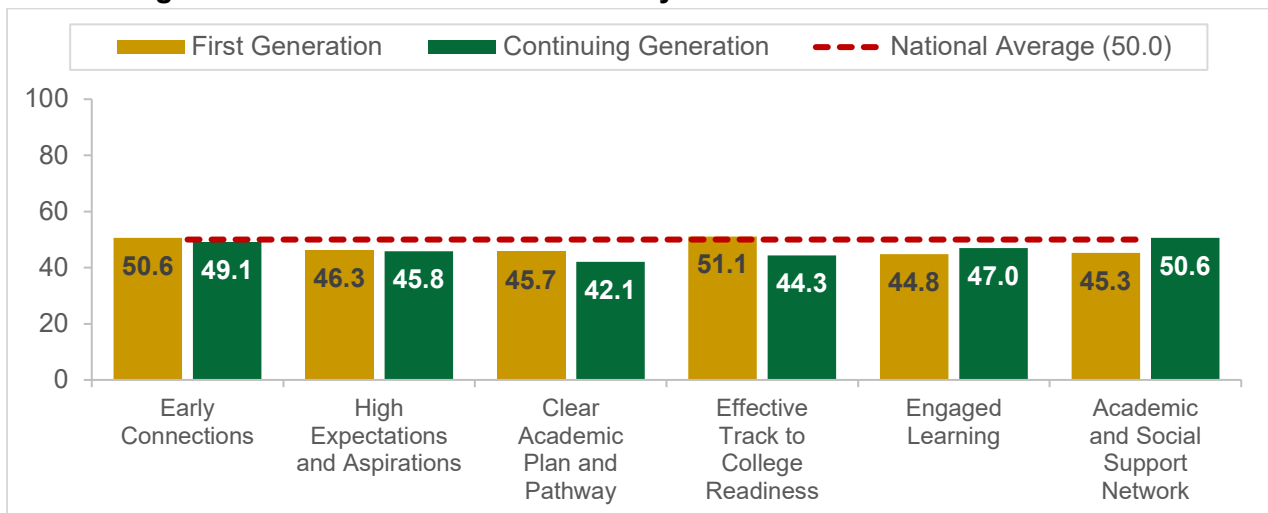
Figure 3. SENSE Benchmark Scores by Age Group: Fall 2019



First Generation Status

Compared to continuing generation students, first generation students rated NOVA higher on four out of six benchmarks: Early Connections; High Expectations and Aspirations; Clear Academic Plan and Pathway; and Effective Track to College Readiness. Conversely, continuing generation students rated NOVA higher on two benchmarks: Engaged Learning; and Academic and Social Support Network.

Figure 5. SENSE Benchmark Scores by First Generation Status: Fall 2019



Race/Gender

Black students rated NOVA the highest on five out of six benchmarks of early student engagement. Conversely, white students rated NOVA the lowest on four out of six benchmarks.

Figure 4. SENSE Benchmark Scores by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2019



Developmental Course Enrollment Status

Compared to non-developmental students, students enrolled in developmental coursework rated NOVA higher on all six benchmarks of early student engagement.

Figure 6. SENSE Benchmark Scores by Developmental Course Enrollment Status: Fall 2019

