

Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) 2019: Overall Benchmark Comparisons Report

Research Report No. 25-20

Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success
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NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT SUCCESS

The purpose of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success is to conduct analytical studies and provide information in support of institutional planning, policy formulation, and decision making. In addition, the office provides leadership and support in research-related activities to members of the NOVA community engaged in planning and evaluating the institution's success in accomplishing its mission.

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Introduction

What is SENSE?

- The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) is an annual nation-wide survey conducted by the Center for Community College Student Engagement that explores institutional practices and new students' experiences in the earliest weeks of college.
- Survey data can help colleges to understand students' critical early experiences and improve institutional practices that affect student success in the first year of college.
- NOVA administers the SENSE survey to students in selected classes during the fourth and fifth weeks of the fall term. The Center randomly selects courses for participation in the survey, with a focus on those most likely to enroll entering students (for example, ENG 111 or SDV 100 courses, among other common first-term courses).

What are Benchmarks?

- The SENSE 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.
 - Early Connections
 - High Expectations and Aspirations
 - Clear Academic Plan and Pathway
 - Effective Track to College Readiness
 - Engaged Learning
 - Academic and Social Support Network

In This Report

- For each of the six benchmarks, this report presents NOVA's results alongside the national average and the results for other extra-large colleges.

Data Notes

- In Fall 2019, **1,173** NOVA students participated in the survey.
- Benchmark scores are calculated by averaging the scores of items that comprise that benchmark. The scores are standardized such that the **national average is always 50** for all benchmarks. In this way, the scores of other colleges can be viewed as relative scores; this provides an easy way to assess whether an individual college or a group of colleges are performing above or below the mean (50) on each benchmark.
- The scores of the comparison groups and national average exclude NOVA's scores.

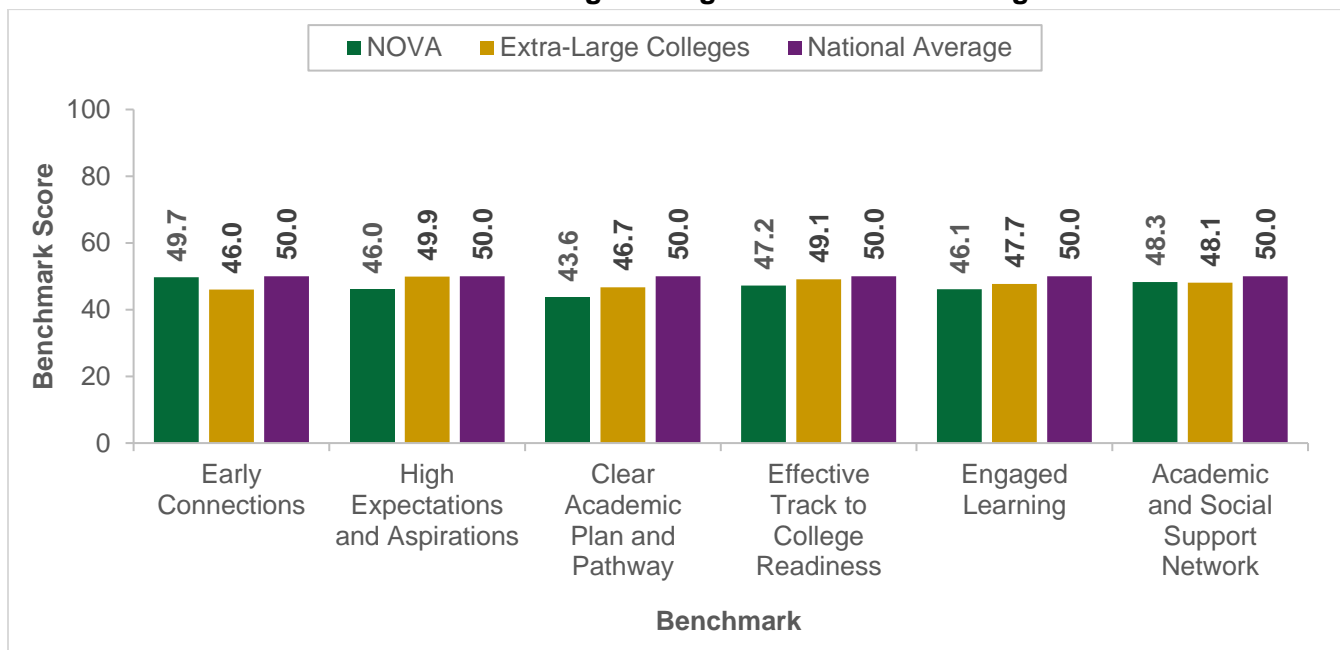
Executive Summary

This section summarizes key findings from NOVA's results on the 2019 SENSE survey, compared to other extra-large colleges and the national average.

Benchmark Summary (Figure 1)

- NOVA scored below the national average on every benchmark of early student engagement.
- NOVA scored below other extra-large colleges on four of six benchmarks: High Expectations and Aspirations; Clear Academic Plan and Pathway; Effective Track to College Readiness; and Engaged Learning.

**Figure 1. SENSE 2019 Benchmark Summary:
NOVA vs. Extra-Large Colleges vs. National Average**



Benchmark #1: Early Connections (↓)

- NOVA scored slightly lower than the national average, but higher than other extra-large colleges, on the Early Connections benchmark.
- Of the survey items comprising the *Early Connections* benchmark, NOVA students most strongly agreed with the statement, "The very first time I came to this college I felt welcome." NOVA students least strongly agreed with the survey item asking whether a college staff member helped determine whether they qualified for financial aid.
- Results suggest that NOVA students may struggle most with navigating financial aid.

Benchmark #2: High Expectations and Aspirations (↓)

- NOVA scored below the national average and other extra-large colleges on the High Expectations and Aspirations benchmark.
- Compared to students at other extra-large colleges and the national average, NOVA students were substantially less likely to agree that instructors wanted them to succeed; they were motivated to succeed; and they were academically prepared to succeed.
- Compared to students at other community colleges, the results suggest that NOVA students are less likely to believe they have the academic preparation and support to be successful in college.

Benchmark #3: Clear Academic Plan and Pathway (↓)

- NOVA scored below the national average and other extra-large colleges on the Clear Academic Plan and Pathway benchmark.
- For this benchmark, there was a statistically significant difference in NOVA's scores compared to some or other extra-large colleges and the national average on the following statement: "An advisor helped me set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them."
- NOVA students were least likely to agree with the survey item asking whether a college staff member talked with them about commitments outside of school. NOVA students were most likely to agree that advisors helped them identify courses they needed to take during their first semester.
- This suggests that students are receiving help in selecting courses. However, NOVA staff can improve how they help students set academic goals and plans, as well as better understand how coursework and time spent on campus fits in with their other responsibilities outside of school, such as work or childcare.

Benchmark #4: Effective Track to College Readiness (↓)

- NOVA scored lower than the national average and other extra-large colleges on the Effective Track to College Readiness benchmark.
- Compared to students at other community colleges, a smaller percentage of NOVA students indicated they took a placement test prior to enrolling in courses for the first semester. However, compared to other students, a higher percentage of NOVA students indicated they were required to enroll in classes indicated by their placement test scores.
- However, NOVA scored significantly lower than other extra-large colleges and the national average on the following statement: "I learned skills and strategies to improve my test-taking ability." This suggests there is room for improvement regarding how NOVA helps students develop their test-taking skills.

Benchmark #5: Engaged Learning (↓)

- NOVA scored below the national average and other extra-large colleges on the Engaged Learning benchmark.
- NOVA students reported they most frequently would “ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions” but least frequently would “participate in a required study group outside of class.” This suggests NOVA students may have higher levels of academic engagement in class, but lower levels of academic engagement outside of class.
- Compared to other colleges, NOVA students were less likely to report using on-campus resources such as math labs, computer labs, and tutoring services. NOVA can improve students’ engagement with the learning process by improving access and utilization of on-campus and online learning resources.

Benchmark #6: Academic and Social Support Network (↓)

- NOVA scored below the national average on the Academic and Social Support benchmark, but scored slightly higher than other extra-large colleges.
- NOVA, other extra-large colleges, and the national average scored the lowest on the “instructors explained available support services” item. This suggests that many colleges may struggle with integrating classroom instruction with on-campus services to support students academically.
- Both NOVA and other extra-large colleges scored lower than the national average on items measuring whether instructors or other students learned a student’s name in class, suggesting large colleges may struggle more with fostering personal connections.

Benchmark #1: Early Connections

Often, students' personal experiences at college—such as feeling accepted by the college, their fellow students, and faculty; and developing strong connections with the people around them—can positively influence students' decisions about persisting at the college. The **Early Connections** benchmark seeks to measure this aspect of student life in the first few weeks of college.

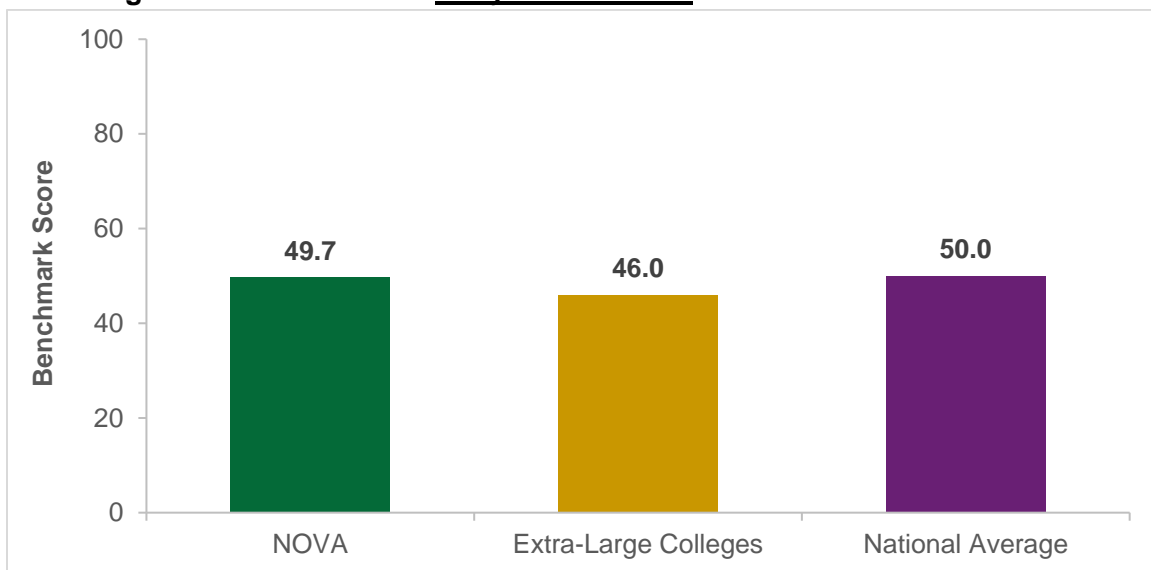
The following five items are included in this benchmark. For the first four items, students responded using a five-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). For the last item, students responded on a dichotomous scale of *yes* or *no*.

1. The very first time I came to this college I felt welcome
2. The college provided me with adequate information about financial assistance (scholarships, grants, loans, etc.)
3. A college staff member helped me determine whether I qualified for financial assistance
4. At least one college staff member (other than an instructor) learned my name
5. A specific person was assigned to me so I could see him/her each time I needed information or assistance

Overall Benchmark Score (Figure 2)

NOVA scored similar to the national average on the Early Connections benchmark. Additionally, NOVA scored *higher* than other extra-large colleges on this benchmark.

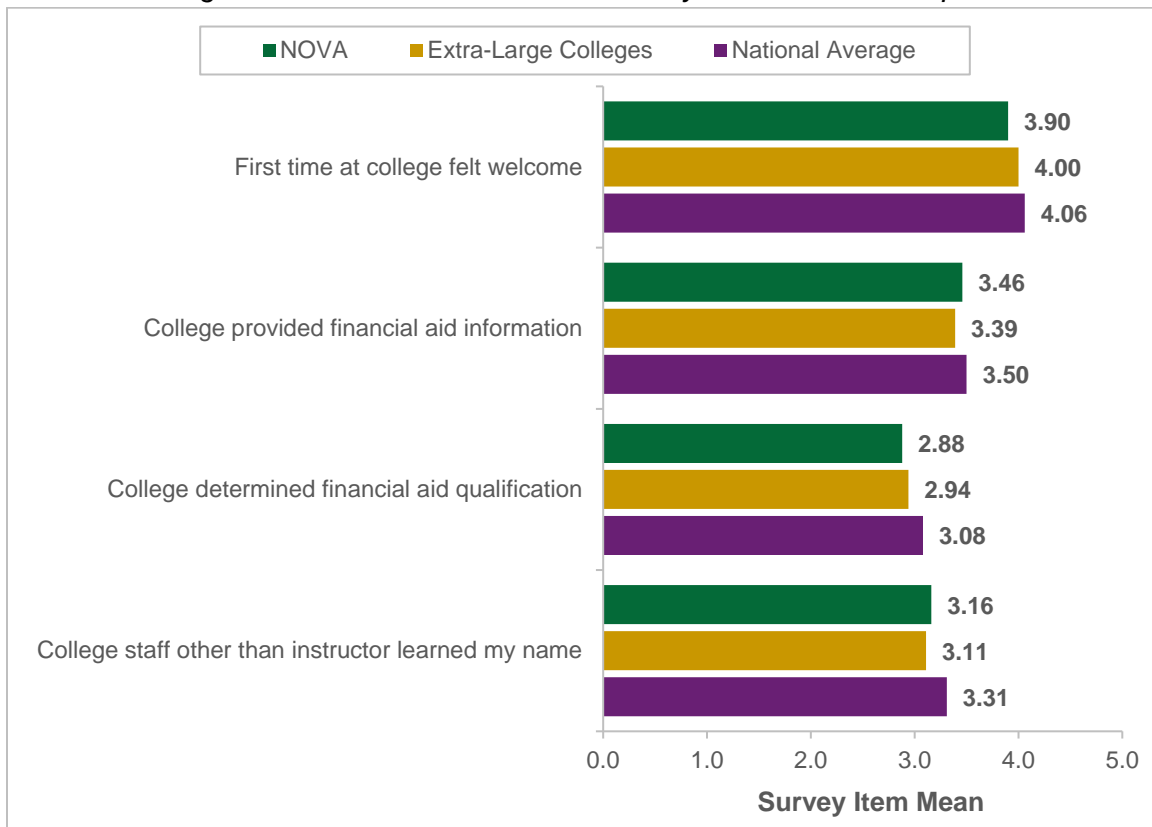
Figure 2. SENSE 2019 – Early Connections: Overall Benchmark Score



Benchmark Item Scores (Figures 3 and 4)

- For the individual items comprising this benchmark, there was no statistically significant difference between NOVA’s scores and those of NOVA’s peer groups nor the national average. Thus, differences between NOVA’s scores and those of NOVA’s peer groups are small enough that they may be due to chance.
- NOVA students most strongly agreed with the statement, “The very first time I came to this college I felt welcome.”
- NOVA students were least likely to agree with the survey item asking if a staff member helped determine whether they qualified for financial aid. Additionally, NOVA scored below other extra-large colleges and the national average on this question.
- Both NOVA and other extra-large colleges scored substantially below the national average on the item regarding whether college staff other than an instructor learned their name, suggesting students in large institutions may be struggling to make early connections with staff outside of the classroom.

Figure 3. SENSE 2019 – Early Connections: Means for Benchmark Items
Think about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester/quarter.

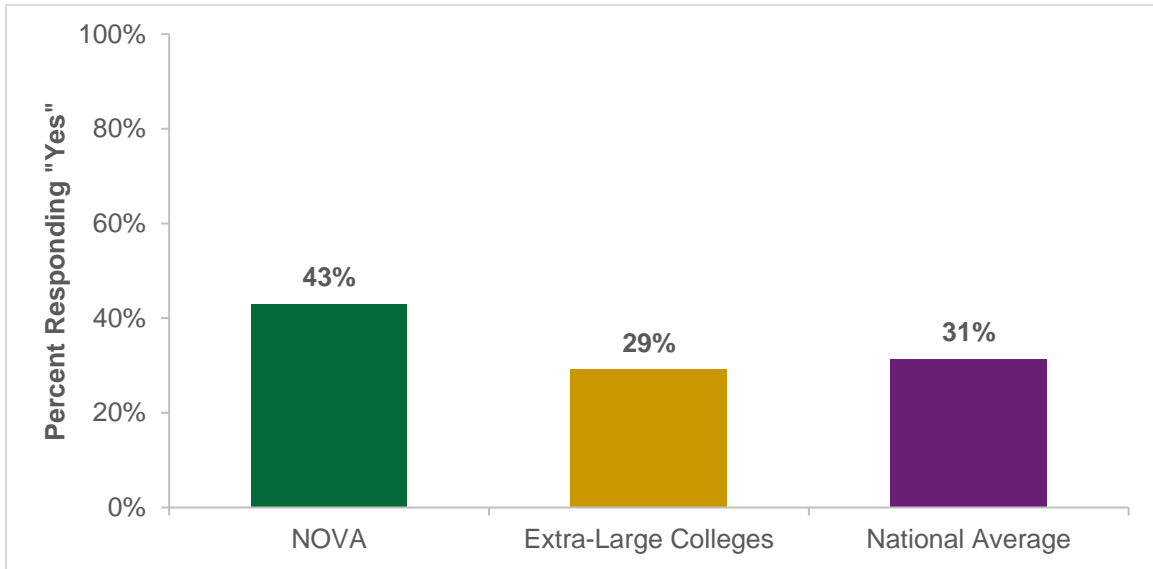


Note: Scores were calculated on a scale of 1 to 5; 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree.

A higher percentage of NOVA students, compared to other extra-large colleges and the national average, said a specific person was assigned to them if they needed help.

Figure 4. Early Connections: Percent Yes for Benchmark Item

Was a specific person assigned to you so you could see him/her each time you needed information or assistance?



Benchmark #2: High Expectations and Aspirations

Students' aspirations and the goals they set for themselves, their perception of faculty expectations, and the amount of effort they put into their studies are all important determinants of academic success. The **High Expectations and Aspirations** benchmark addresses these aspects of early student engagement.

The following seven items are included in this benchmark. For the first three items, students responded using a five-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5).

1. The instructors at this college want me to succeed
2. I have the motivation to do what it takes to succeed in college
3. I am prepared academically to succeed in college

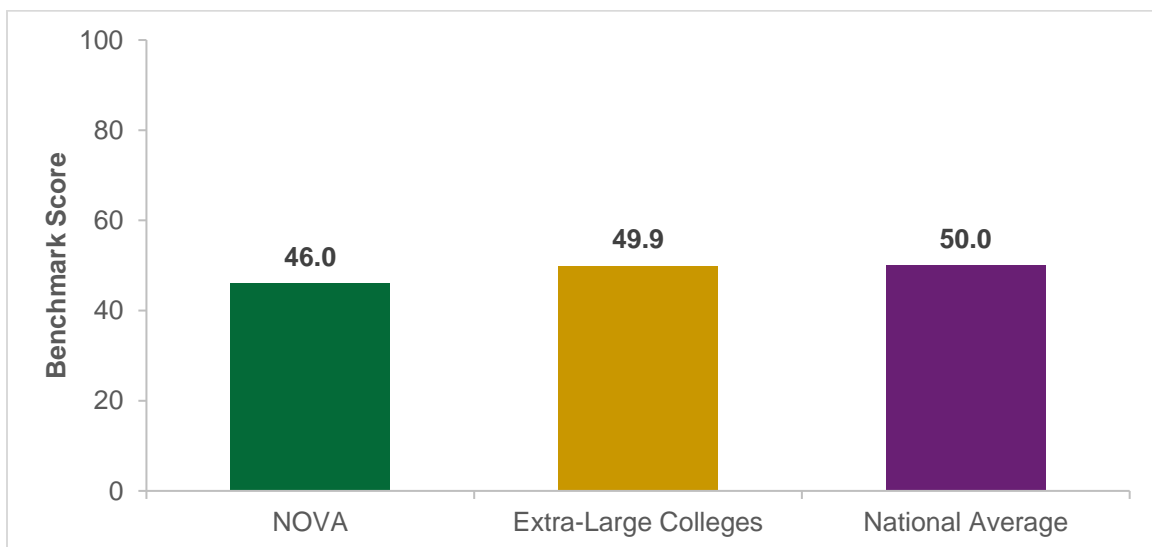
For the last four items, students responded on a four-point scale of *Never* (1), *Once* (2), *Two or three times* (3), *Four or more times* (4) to the following question: During the first three weeks of your first semester or quarter at this college, how often did you:

4. Turn in an assignment late
5. Not turn in an assignment
6. Come to class without completing readings or assignments
7. Skip class

Overall Benchmark Score (Figure 5)

NOVA scored below the national average and other extra-large colleges on the High Expectations and Aspirations benchmark.

Figure 5. SENSE 2019 – High Expectations and Aspirations: Overall Benchmark Score

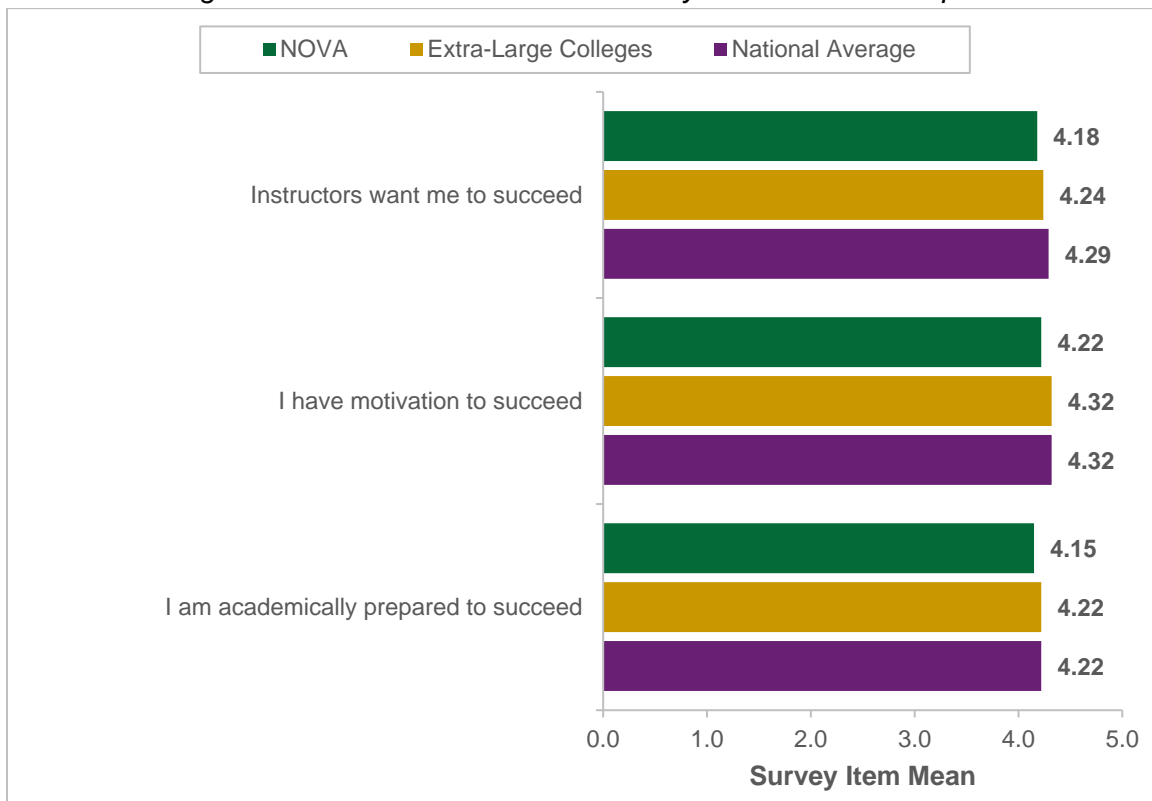


Benchmark Item Scores (Figures 6 and 7)

- For the individual items comprising this benchmark, there was no statistically significant difference between NOVA's scores and those of NOVA's peer groups or the national average. Thus, differences between NOVA's scores and those of NOVA's peer groups are small enough that they may be due to chance.
- Compared to students at other extra-large colleges and the national average, NOVA students were less likely to agree that instructors wanted them to succeed; they were motivated to succeed; and they were academically prepared to succeed.
- Compared to other extra-large colleges and the national average, NOVA students were more likely to say they had gone to class without completing readings or assignments. However, NOVA students were less likely to say they skipped class during the first three weeks of college, compared to other students.

**Figure 6. SENSE 2019 – High Expectations and Aspirations:
Means for Benchmark Items (1 of 2)**

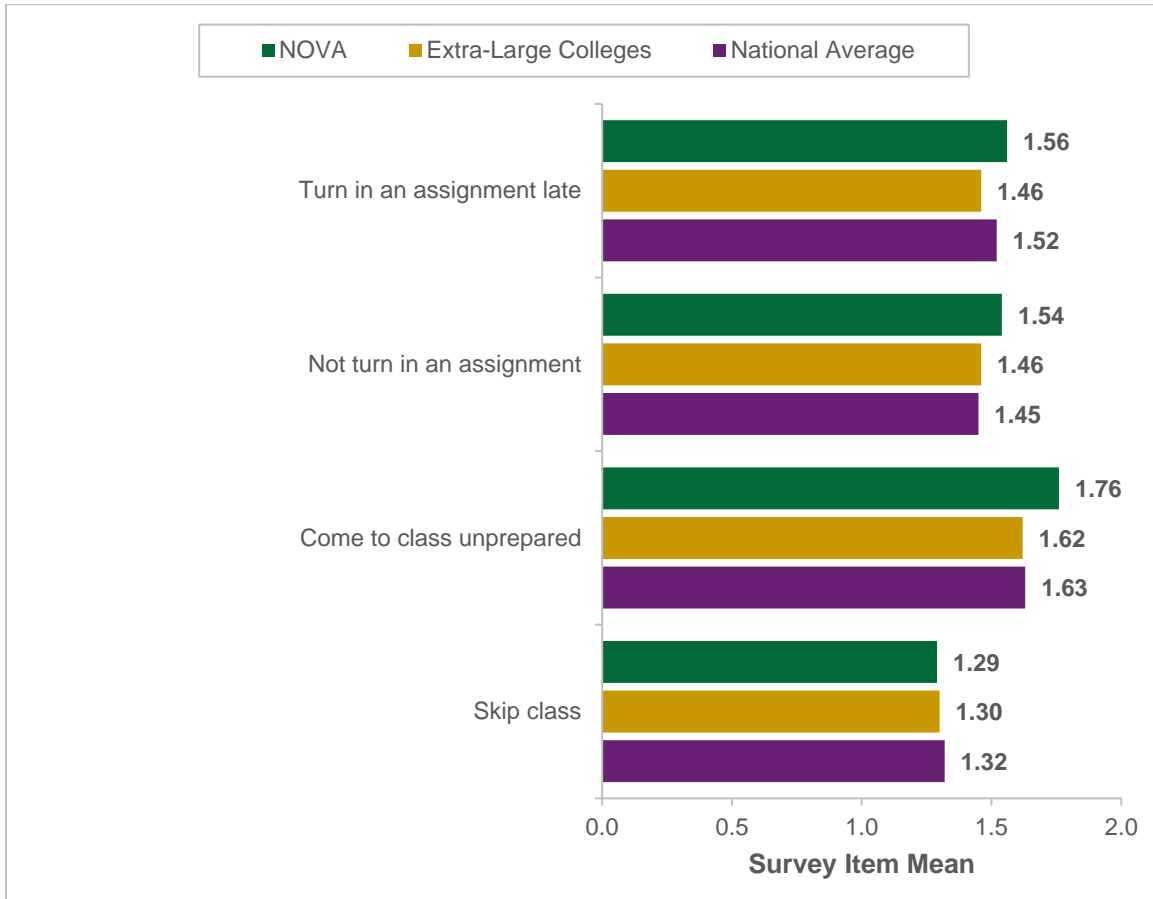
Think about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester/quarter.



Note: Scores were calculated on a scale of 1 to 5; 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree.

**Figure 7. SENSE 2019 – High Expectations and Aspirations:
Means for Benchmark Items (2 of 2)**

During the first three weeks of your first semester/quarter at this college, about how often did you do the following?



Note: Scores were calculated on a scale of 1 to 4; 1=Never; 2=Once; 3=Two or Three Times; 4=Four or More Times.

Benchmark #3: Clear Academic Plan and Pathway

In addition to students' personal motivations and aspirations, students need guidance in defining goals, choosing appropriate courses and programs to pursue, visualizing their career path, and assistance with planning steps to achieve their goals in order to be successful. The **Clear Academic Plan and Pathway** benchmark measures the amount of assistance students receive in this domain.

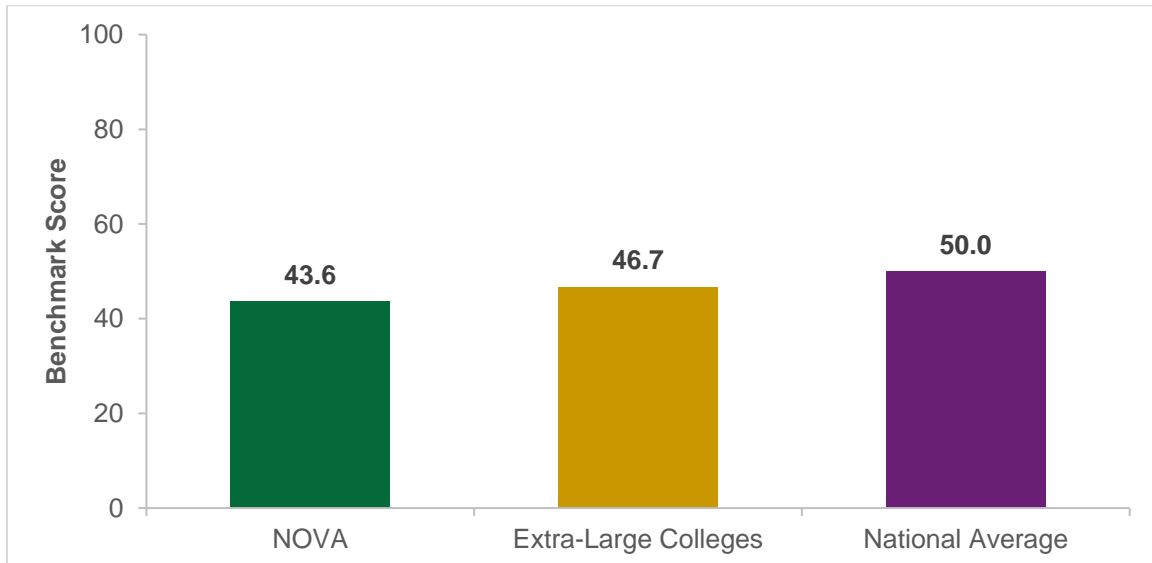
The following five items are included in this benchmark. Students responded using a five-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5).

1. I was able to meet with an academic advisor at times convenient for me
2. An advisor helped me to identify the courses I needed to take during my first semester/quarter
3. An advisor helped me to select a course of study, program, or major
4. An advisor helped me to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them
5. A college staff member talked with me about my commitments outside of school (work, children, dependents, etc.) to help me figure out how many courses to take

Overall Benchmark Score (Figure 8)

NOVA scored below the national average and other extra-large colleges on the Clear Academic Plan and Pathway benchmark.

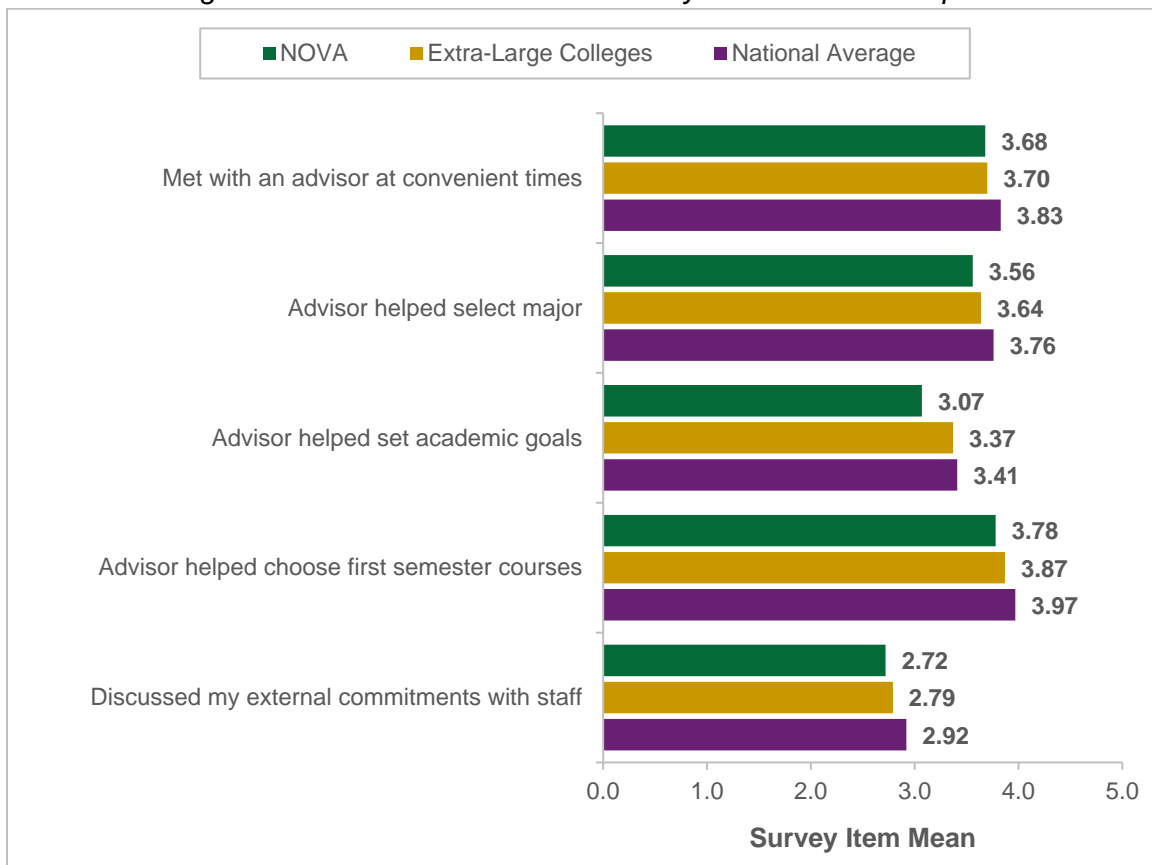
Figure 8. SENSE 2019 – Clear Academic Plan and Pathway: Overall Benchmark Score



Benchmark Item Scores (Figure 9)

- For this benchmark, there was a statistically significant difference in NOVA’s scores compared to some or all of the comparison groups on the following item: “An advisor helped me set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them.” (Figure 9)
 - NOVA scored significantly lower than other extra-large colleges and the national average on this survey item. In comparison to other community college students, this suggests that NOVA students may be less likely to believe they receive adequate advising assistance for setting academic goals and plans.
- Of the survey items comprising this benchmark, NOVA students (as well as students at other colleges) most strongly agreed with the statement, “An advisor helped me to identify the courses I needed to take during my first semester.”
- NOVA students (as well as students from other colleges) were least likely to agree with the survey item asking whether a college staff member talked with them about their commitments outside of school. This suggests that NOVA staff can improve how they help students understand the demands of coursework in relation to other responsibilities.

Figure 9. SENSE 2019 – Clear Academic Plan and Pathway: Means for Benchmark Items
Think about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester/quarter.



Note: Scores were calculated on a scale of 1 to 5; 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree.

Benchmark #4: Effective Track to College Readiness

A large proportion of students entering community colleges are underprepared for college-level courses. Placement testing and enrollment in appropriate developmental courses (when necessary) not only equips students with the skills required for college education, but also increases their likelihood for success in college. The **Effective Track to College Readiness** benchmark addresses students' experiences in relation to academic preparedness.

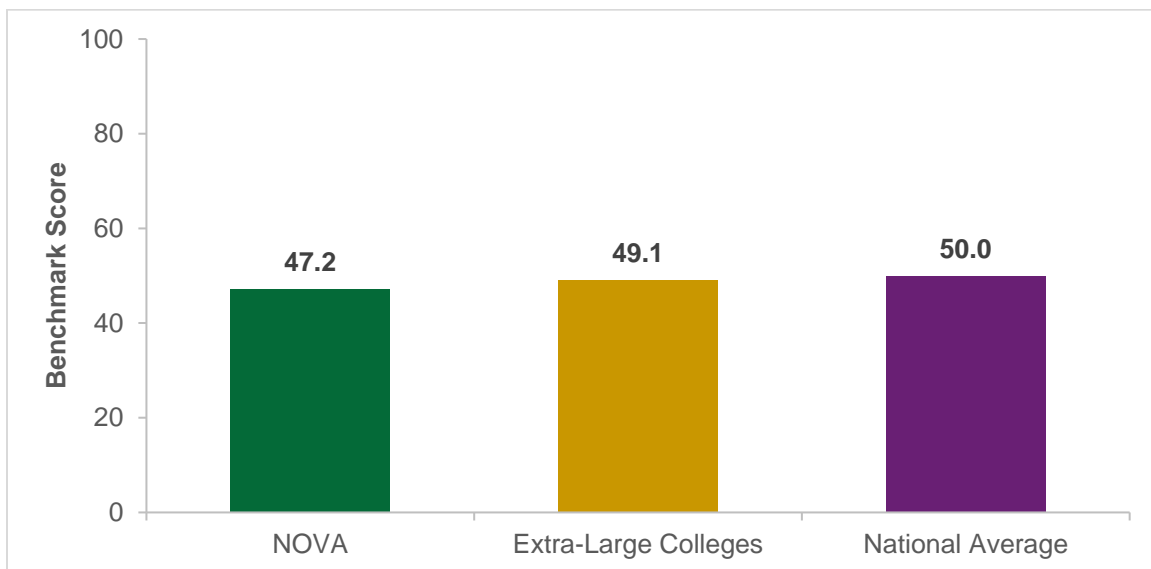
The following six items are included in this benchmark. For the first three items, students responded on a dichotomous scale of *yes* or *no*. For the remaining three items, students responded using a five-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5).

1. Before I could register for classes, I was required to take a placement test to assess my skills in reading, writing, and/or math
2. I took a placement test
3. This college required me to enroll in classes indicated by my placement test score during my first semester/quarter
4. I learned to improve my study skills (listening, note-taking, highlighting readings, working with others, etc.)
5. I learned to understand my academic strengths and weaknesses
6. I learned skills and strategies to improve my test-taking ability

Overall Benchmark Score (Figure 10)

NOVA scored lower than both the national average and other extra-large colleges on measures of the Effective Track to College Readiness benchmark.

Figure 10. SENSE 2019 – Effective Track to College Readiness: Overall Benchmark Score

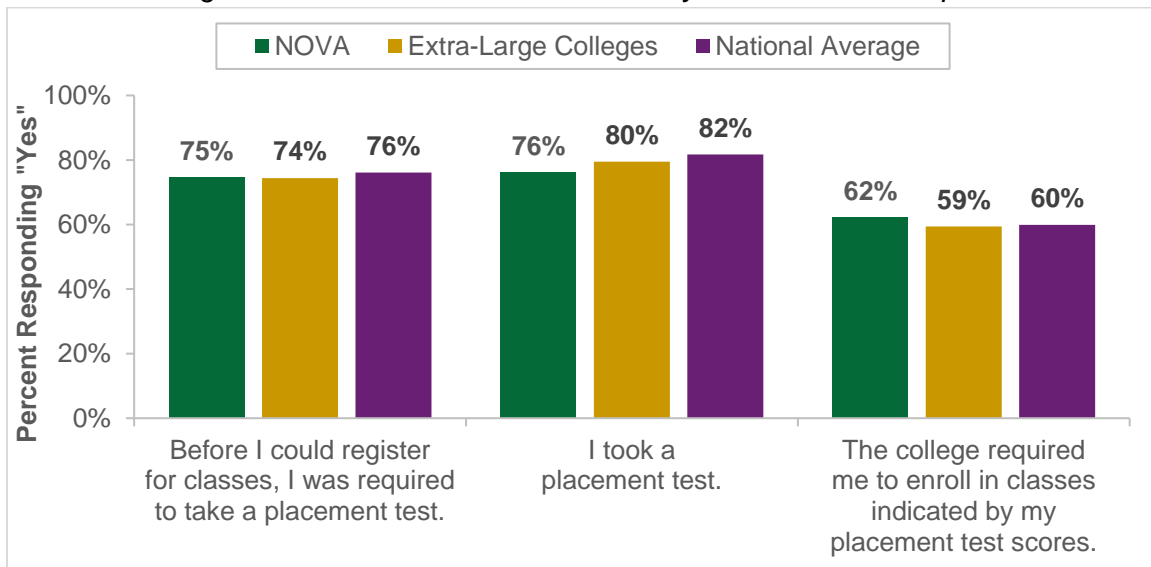


Benchmark Item Scores (Figures 11 and 12)

- Compared to students at other community colleges, a smaller percentage of NOVA students indicated they took a placement test prior to enrolling in courses for the first semester. However, compared to other students, a higher percentage of NOVA students indicated they were required to enroll in classes indicated by their placement test scores.
- For this benchmark, there was a statistically significant difference in NOVA's scores compared to some or all of the comparison groups on the following item: "I learned the skills and strategies to improve my test-taking ability." (Figure 12, next page)
 - NOVA scored significantly lower than the national average on this benchmark item. This suggests that NOVA students may be less likely to believe they are learning valuable test-taking skills and strategies compared to other community college students.
- For the remaining survey items, there were no statistically significant differences between NOVA's scores and those of other extra-large colleges or the national average.

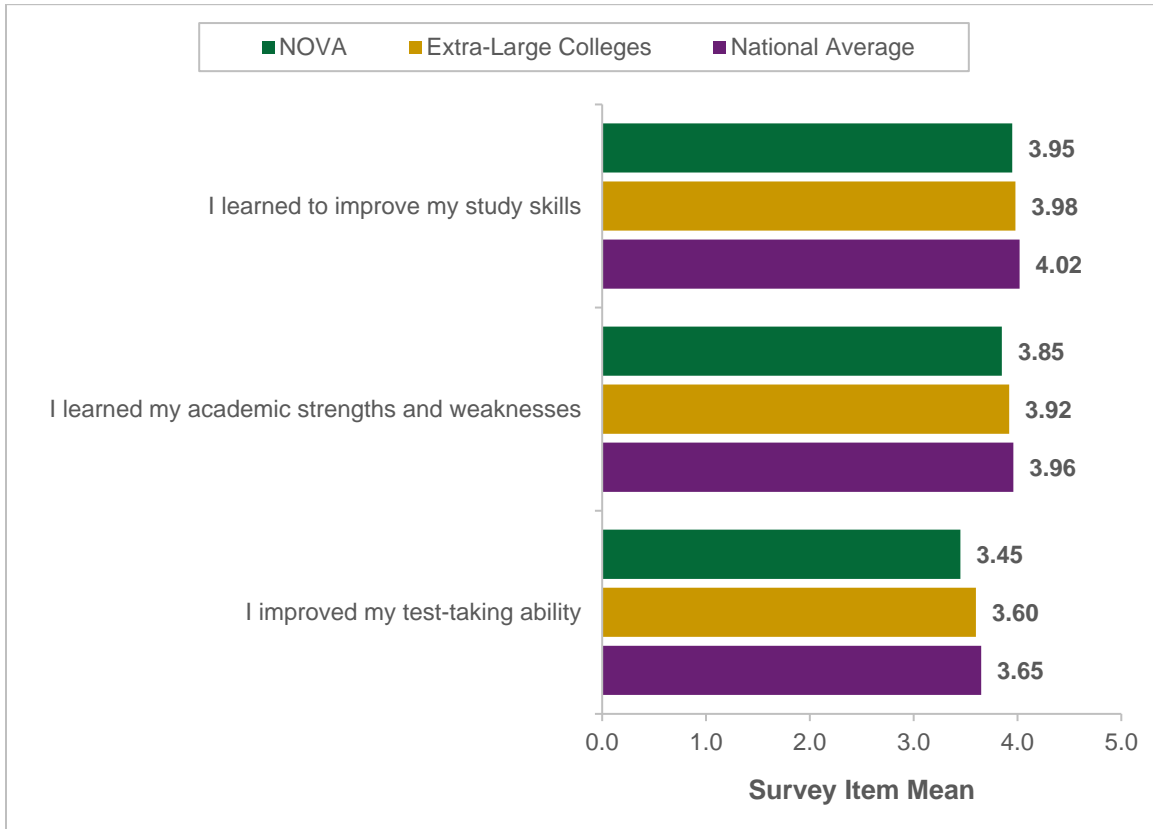
**Figure 11. SENSE 2019 – Effective Track to College Readiness:
Percent Yes for Benchmark Items**

Think about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester/quarter.



**Figure 12. SENSE 2019 – Effective Track to College Readiness:
Means for Benchmark Items**

Think about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester/quarter.



Note: Scores were calculated on a scale of 1 to 5; 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree.

Benchmark #5: Engaged Learning

The community college student population is primarily composed of commuter and part-time students. These students spend relatively less time on campus than students at four-year institutions and tend to have additional job- and family-related responsibilities. This, in turn, translates into fewer opportunities to engage in the process of learning. Thus, an organized effort on the part of the college to encourage certain aspects of engagement is necessary. For example, encouraging student-student and student-faculty interactions within and outside the classroom and developing ways to motivate students to spend more time and effort on their studies. These strategies can prove effective in enhancing student learning and persistence. The **Engaged Learning** benchmark explores aspects of student behavior related to engagement.

The following sixteen items are included in this benchmark. For the first thirteen items, students responded on a four-point scale of *Never* (1), *Once* (2), *Two or three times* (3), *Four or more times* (4) to the following question: During the first three weeks of your first semester or quarter at this college, how often did you do the following?

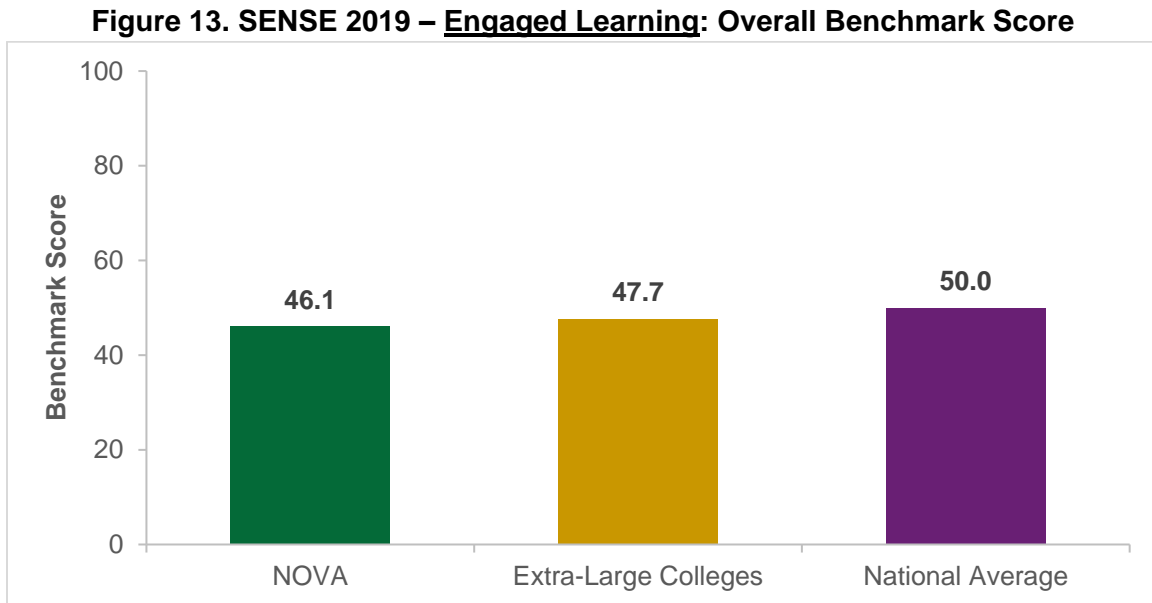
1. Ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions
2. Prepare at least two drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
3. Participate in supplemental instruction (extra class sessions with an instructor, tutor, or experienced student)
4. Work with other students on a project or assignment during class
5. Work with classmates outside of class on class projects or assignments
6. Participate in a required study group outside of class
7. Participate in a student-initiated (not required) study group outside of class
8. Use an electronic tool (email, text messaging, Facebook, MySpace, class website, etc.) to communicate with another student about coursework
9. Use an electronic tool (email, text messaging, Facebook, MySpace, class website, etc.) to communicate with an instructor about coursework
10. Discuss an assignment or grade with an instructor
11. Ask for help from an instructor regarding questions or problems related to a class
12. Receive prompt written or oral feedback from instructors on your performance
13. Discuss ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class

For the last three items, students responded on a four-point scale of *Never* (1), *Once* (2), *Two or three times* (3), *Four or more times* (4) to the following question: Think about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester/quarter. How often did you use the following services?

14. Face-to-face tutoring
15. Writing, math, or other skill lab
16. Computer lab

Overall Benchmark Score (Figure 13)

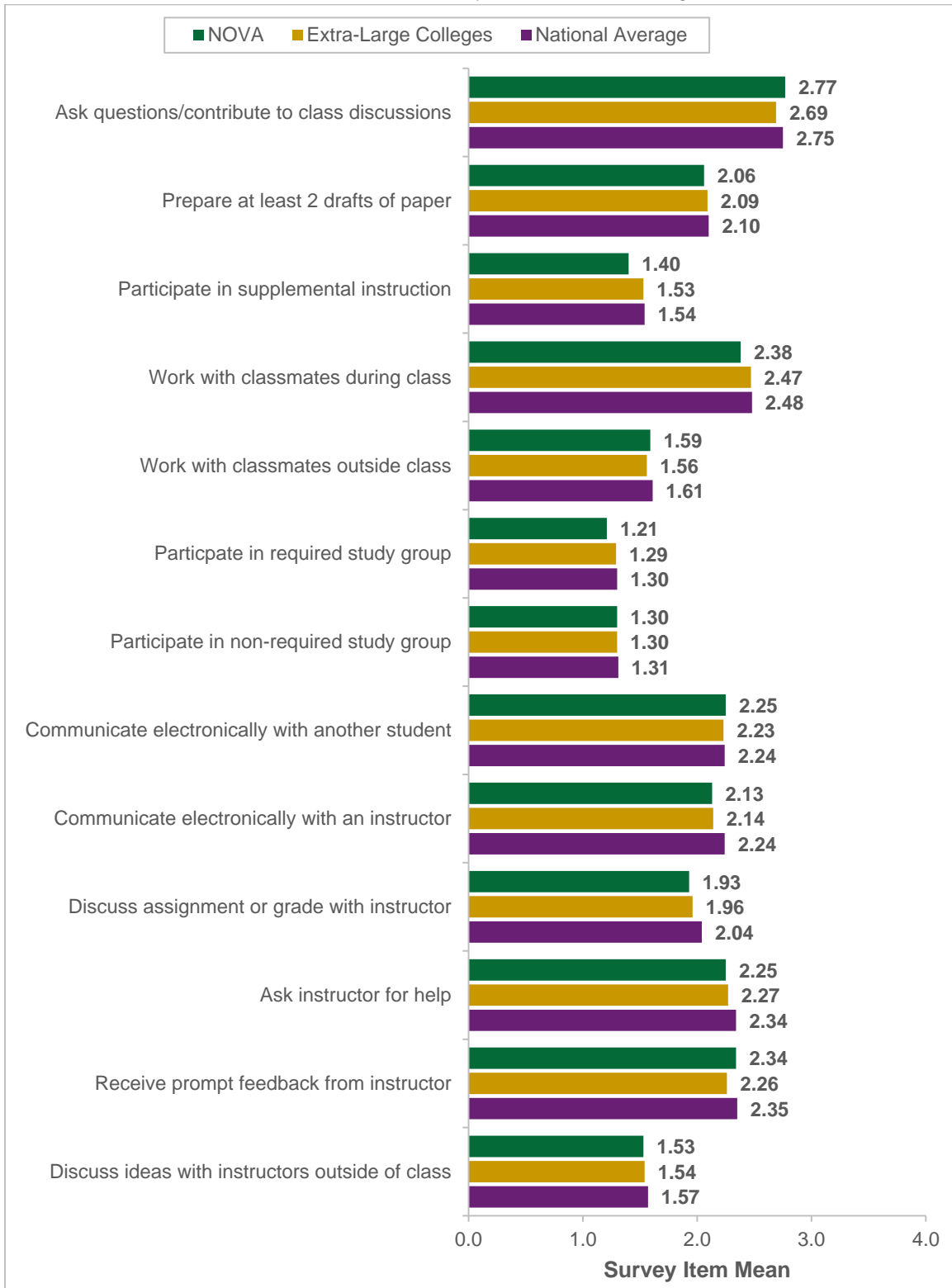
NOVA scored below the national average and other extra-large colleges on the Engaged Learning benchmark.



Benchmark Item Scores (Figures 14 and 15)

- For the individual items comprising this benchmark, there was no statistically significant difference between NOVA’s scores and those of other extra-large colleges or the national average.
- NOVA students reported they most frequently would “ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions.” NOVA students reported they least frequently would “participate in a required study group outside of class.” This suggests NOVA students may have higher levels of academic engagement in class, but lower levels of academic engagement outside of class.
- Compared to other colleges, NOVA students were more likely to communicate electronically with other students.
- Compared to other colleges, NOVA students were less likely to report using face-to-face tutoring; writing, math, or other skill labs; or computer labs. Therefore, one way in which NOVA may be able to improve student engagement is by increasing access to and utilization of online and on-campus learning resources.

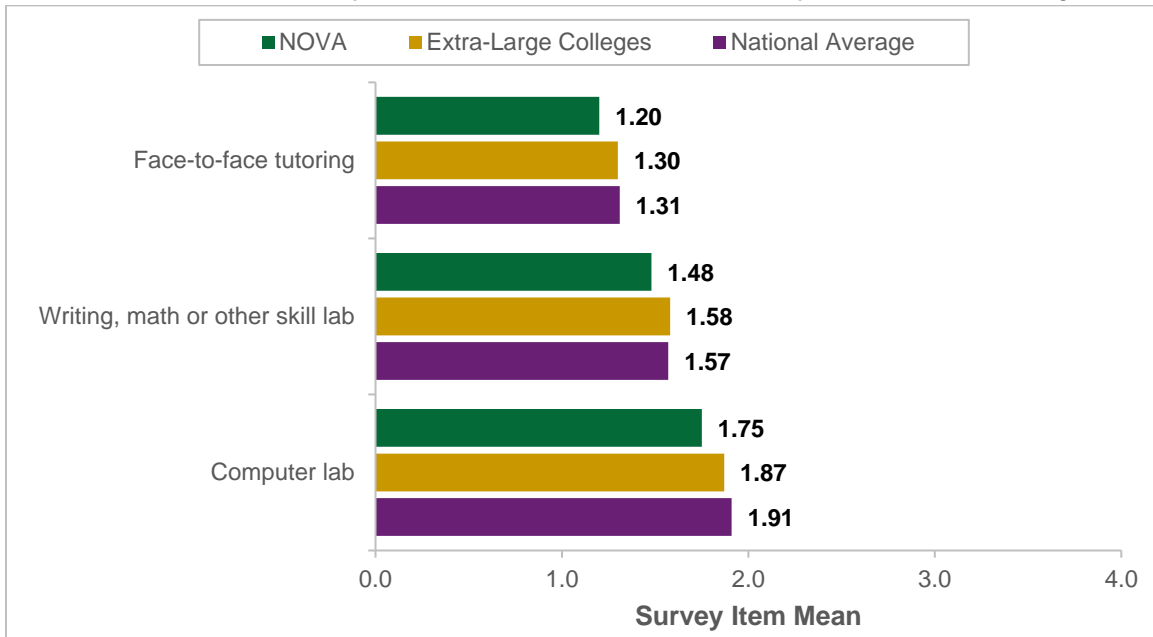
Figure 14. SENSE 2019 – Engaged Learning: Means for Benchmark Items (1 of 2)
*During the first three weeks of your first semester at this college,
 about how often did you do the following?*



Note: Scores were calculated on a scale of 1 to 4; 1=Never; 2=Once; 3=Two or Three Times; 4=Four or More Times.

Figure 15. SENSE 2019 – Engaged Learning: Means for Benchmark Items (2 of 2)

Think about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester. How often did you use the following services?



Note: Scores were calculated on a scale of 1 to 4; 1=Never; 2=Once; 3=Two or Three Times; 4=Four or More Times.

Benchmark #6: Academic and Social Support

Students entering college are faced with many unknowns, ranging from information about college policies/procedures to specific course-related matters such as grading methods and syllabi. Often, students are not aware of what they do not know. Thus, it is important that the college make a conscious effort to ensure clear communication of pertinent information to students. Encouraging students to develop academic and social networks is one effective way to enhance this information exchange. The **Academic and Social Support Network** benchmark explores how well the information exchange and student networking processes are functioning at the college.

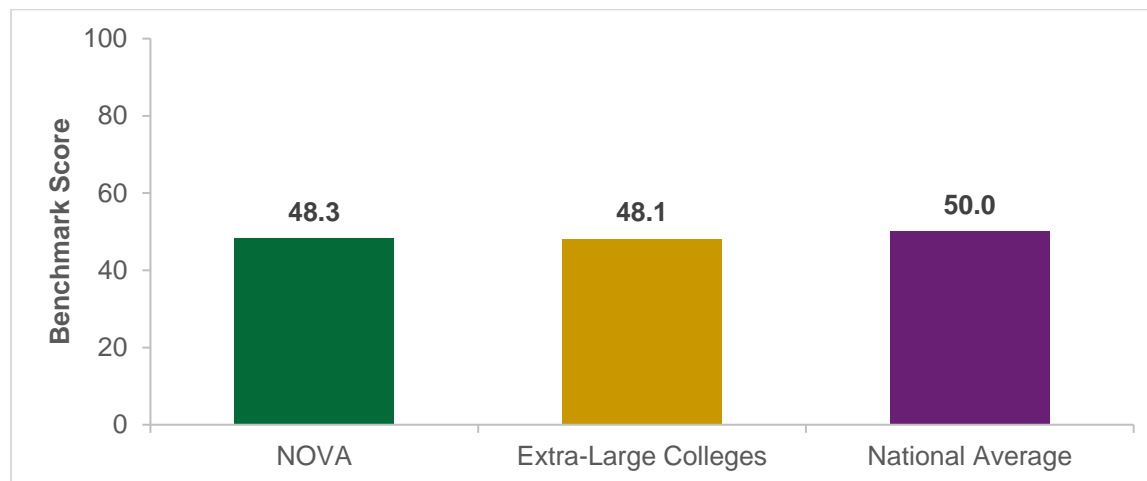
The following seven items are included in this benchmark. Students responded using a five-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5).

- All instructors clearly explained academic and student support services available at this college
- All instructors clearly explained course grading policies
- All instructors clearly explained course syllabi (syllabuses)
- I knew how to get in touch with my instructors outside of class
- At least one other student whom I didn't previously know learned my name
- At least one instructor learned my name
- I learned the name of at least one other student in most of my classes

Overall Benchmark Score (Figure 16)

NOVA scored below the national average on measures of students' academic and social support network, but scored slightly higher than other extra-large colleges.

Figure 16. Academic and Social Support: Overall Benchmark Score

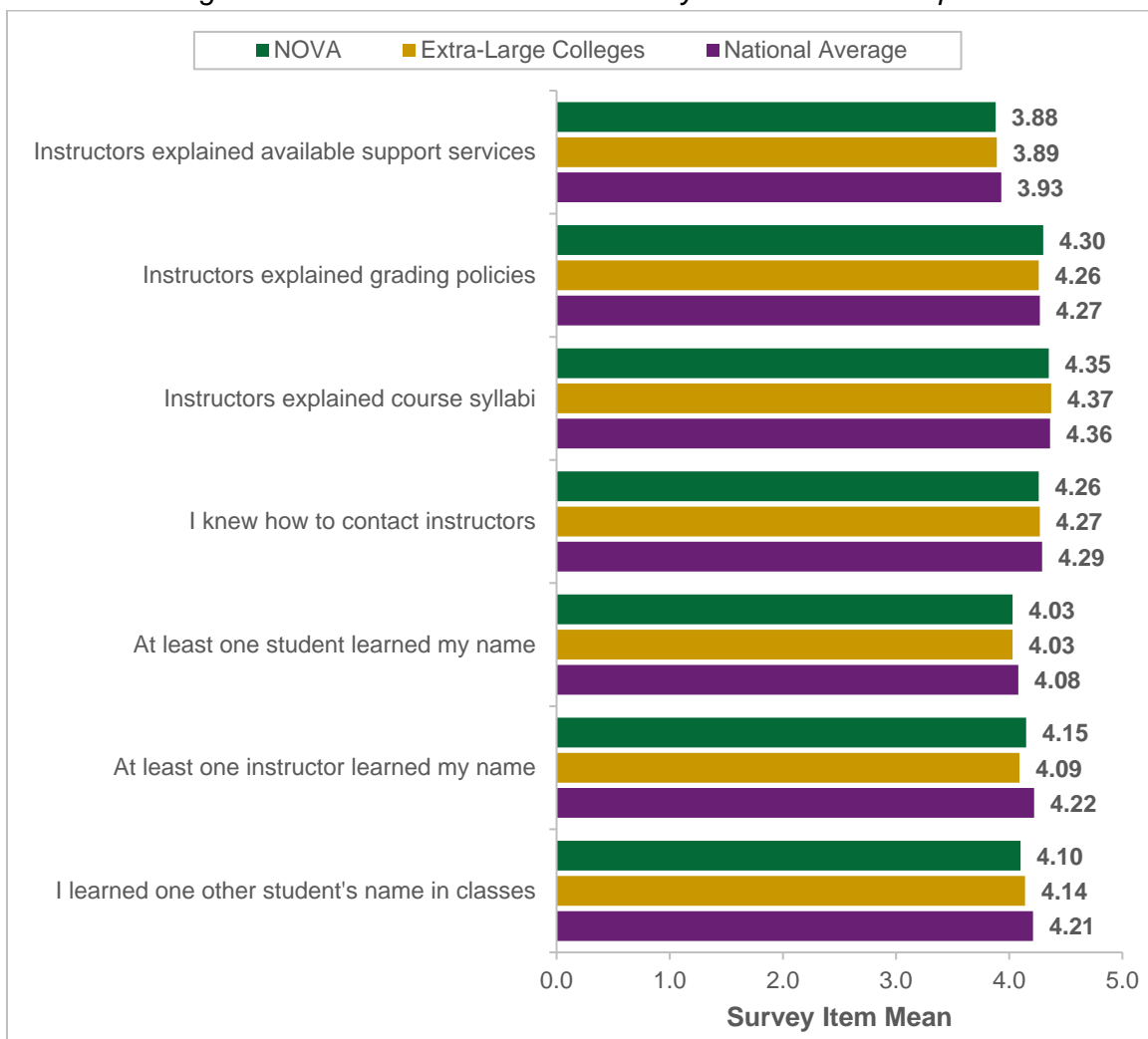


Benchmark Item Scores (Figure 17)

- For the individual items comprising this benchmark, there was no statistically significant difference between NOVA’s scores and those of other extra-large colleges or the national average.
- For all three groups (NOVA, other extra-large colleges, and the national average), the lowest scores were on the “instructors explained available support services” item.
- Both NOVA and other extra-large colleges received lower scores than the national average on items measuring whether instructors or other students learned a student’s name in class. Therefore, one way in which NOVA can improve student engagement is by fostering personal connections between students and staff.

**Figure 17. SENSE 2019 – Academic and Social Support Network:
Means for Benchmark Items**

Think about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester/quarter.



Note: Scores were calculated on a scale of 1 to 5; 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree.

Appendix: Data Tables

**Table A1. SENSE 2019 Benchmark Summary:
NOVA vs. Extra-Large Colleges vs. National Average**

Benchmark	Benchmark Score		
	NOVA	Extra-Large Colleges	National Average
Early Connections	49.7	46.0	50.0
High Expectations and Aspirations	46.0	49.9	50.0
Clear Academic Plan and Pathway	43.6	46.7	50.0
Effective Track to College Readiness	47.2	49.1	50.0
Engaged Learning	46.1	47.7	50.0
Academic and Social Support Network	48.3	48.1	50.0

Table A2. SENSE 2019 – Early Connections: Means for Benchmark Items

Item	Mean Score		
	NOVA	Extra-Large Colleges	National Average
<i>1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree</i>			
The very first time I came to this college I felt welcome	3.90	4.00	4.06
The college provided me with adequate information about financial assistance (scholarships, grants, loans, etc.)	3.46	3.39	3.50
A college staff member helped me determine whether I qualified for financial assistance	2.88	2.94	3.08
At least one college staff member (other than an instructor) learned my name	3.16	3.11	3.31

Table A3. SENSE 2019 – Early Connections: Percent Yes for Benchmark Item

Item	Percent Responding Yes		
	NOVA	Extra-Large Colleges	National Average
Was a specific person assigned to you so you could see him/her each time you needed information or assistance?	43.1	29.2	31.4

Note: One item that comprised the Early Connections benchmark was not suited to means calculations because it was a yes/no question; therefore, this table provides the percent of respondents who responded “yes.”

Table A4. SENSE 2019 – High Expectations and Aspirations: Means for Benchmark Items

Item	Mean Score		
	NOVA	Extra-Large Colleges	National Average
<i>1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree</i>			
The instructors at this college want me to succeed	4.18	4.24	4.29
I have the motivation to do what it takes to succeed in college	4.22	4.32	4.32
I am prepared academically to succeed in college	4.15	4.22	4.22
During the first three weeks at this college, about how often did you do the following? <i>1 = Never, 2 = Once, 3 = Two or three times, 4 = Four or more times</i>			
Turn in an assignment late	1.56	1.46	1.52
Not turn in an assignment	1.54	1.46	1.45
Come to class without completing readings or assignments	1.76	1.62	1.63
Skip class	1.29	1.30	1.32

Table A5. SENSE 2019 – Clear Academic Plan and Pathway: Means for Benchmark Items

Item	Mean Score		
	NOVA	Extra-Large Colleges	National Average
<i>1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree</i>			
I was able to meet with an academic advisor at times convenient for me	3.68	3.70	3.83
An advisor helped me to select a course of study, program, or major	3.56	3.64	3.76
An advisor helped me to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them	3.07	3.37	3.41
An advisor helped me to identify the courses I needed to take during my first semester/quarter	3.78	3.87	3.97
A college staff member talked with me about my commitments outside of school (work, children, dependents, etc.) to help me figure out how many courses to take	2.72	2.79	2.92

Table A6. SENSE 2019 – Effective Track to College Readiness: Means for Benchmark Items

Item	Mean Score		
	NOVA	Extra-Large Colleges	National Average
<i>1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree</i>			
I learned to improve my study skills (listening, note taking, highlighting readings, working with others, etc.)	3.95	3.98	4.02
I learned to understand my academic strengths and weaknesses	3.85	3.92	3.96
I learned skills and strategies to improve my test-taking ability	3.45	3.60	3.65

**Table A7. SENSE 2019 – Effective Track to College Readiness:
Percent Yes for Benchmark Items**

Item	Percent Responding Yes		
	NOVA	Extra-Large Colleges	National Average
Before I could register for classes, I was required to take a placement test (COMPASS, ASSET, ACCUPLACER, SAT, ACT, etc.) to assess my skills in reading, writing, and/or math	74.6	74.4	76.1
I took a placement test (COMPASS, ASSET, ACCUPLACER, SAT, ACT, etc.)	76.2	79.5	81.7
This college required me to enroll in classes indicated by my placement test scores during my first semester/quarter	62.2	59.4	59.9

Note: Some items that comprise the Effective Track to College Readiness benchmark were not suited to means calculations because they were yes/no questions; therefore, this table provides the percent of respondents who responded "yes."

Table A8. SENSE 2019 – Engaged Learning: Means for Benchmark Items

Item	Mean Score		
	NOVA	Extra-Large Colleges	National Average
During the first three weeks at this college, about how often did you do the following? 1 = Never, 2 = Once, 3 = Two or three times, 4 = Four or more times			
Ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions	2.77	2.69	2.75
Prepare at least two drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	2.06	2.09	2.10
Participate in supplemental instruction (extra class sessions with an instructor, tutor, or experienced student)	1.40	1.53	1.54
Work with other students on a project or assignment during class	2.38	2.47	2.48
Work with classmates outside of class on class projects or assignments	1.59	1.56	1.61
Participate in a required study group outside of class	1.21	1.29	1.30
Participate in a student-initiated (not required) study group outside of class	1.30	1.30	1.31
Use an electronic tool (e-mail, text messaging, Facebook, etc.) to communicate with another student about coursework	2.25	2.23	2.24
Use an electronic tool (e-mail, text messaging, Facebook, etc.) to communicate with an instructor about coursework	2.13	2.14	2.24
Discuss an assignment or grade with an instructor	1.93	1.96	2.04
Ask for help from an instructor regarding questions or problems related to a class	2.25	2.27	2.34
Receive prompt written or oral feedback from instructors on your performance	2.34	2.26	2.35
Discuss ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class	1.53	1.54	1.57
Think about your experiences from the time of your decision to attend this college through the end of the first three weeks of your first semester/quarter. 1 = Never, 2 = Once, 3 = Two or three times, 4 = Four or more times			
Face-to-face tutoring	1.20	1.30	1.31
Writing, math, or other skill lab	1.48	1.58	1.57
Computer lab	1.75	1.87	1.91

**Table A9. SENSE 2019 – Academic and Social Support Network:
Means for Benchmark Items**

Item	Mean Score		
	NOVA	Extra-Large Colleges	National Average
<i>1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree</i>			
All instructors clearly explained academic and student support services available at this college	3.88	3.89	3.93
All instructors clearly explained course grading policies	4.30	4.26	4.27
All instructors clearly explained course syllabi (syllabuses)	4.35	4.37	4.36
I knew how to get in touch with my instructors outside of class	4.26	4.27	4.29
At least one other student whom I didn't previously know learned my name	4.03	4.03	4.08
At least one instructor learned my name	4.15	4.09	4.22
I learned the name of at least one other student in most of my classes	4.10	4.14	4.21

PATHWAY TO THE AMERICAN DREAM—NOVA'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2023

THE NOVA COMMITMENT

As its primary contributions to meeting the needs of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Northern Virginia Community College pledges to advance the social and economic mobility of its students while producing an educated citizenry for the 21st Century.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To deliver on this commitment NOVA will focus its creativity and talent, its effort and energy, and its resources and persistence, on achieving three overarching goals—success, achievement, and prosperity. It will strive to enable **Every Student to Succeed, Every Program to Achieve, and Every Community to Prosper.**

To advance the completion agenda described above, thereby promoting students' success and enhancing their social mobility, ensuring that programs achieve, and producing an educated citizenry for the 21st Century, the following goals and objectives are adopted:

GOAL 1: Every Student Succeeds

- **Objective 1:** Develop a College-wide approach to advising that ensures all students are advised and have access to support throughout their time at NOVA
- **Objective 2:** Implement VIP-PASS System as the foundational technology based on NOVA Informed Pathways for student self-advising, assignment and coordination of advisors, and course registration

GOAL 2: Every Program Achieves

- **Objective 3:** Develop comprehensive, fully integrated Informed Pathways for every program to ensure seamless transitions from high school and other entry points to NOVA, and from NOVA to four-year transfer institutions or the workforce
- **Objective 4:** Develop effective processes and protocols for programmatic College-wide collective decisions that include consistent, accountable leadership and oversight of each academic program with designated "owners," active advisory committees, clear student learning outcomes and assessments, and program reviews in all modalities of instruction
- **Objective 5:** Align NOVA's organizational structures, position descriptions, and expectations for accountability with its overarching mission to support student engagement, learning, success and institutional effectiveness

GOAL 3: Every Community Prospers

- **Objective 6:** Enhance the prosperity of every community in Northern Virginia by refocusing and prioritizing NOVA's workforce development efforts
- **Objective 7:** Further develop NOVA's IT and Cybersecurity programs to support regional job demand and position NOVA as the leading IT community college in the nation
- **Objective 8:** Re-envision workforce strategies and integrate workforce development into a NOVA core focus
- **Objective 9:** Plan to expand the breadth and reach of NOVA's healthcare and biotechnology programs, and prioritize future programs to support regional economic development goals economic development goals

NOVA

**Northern Virginia
Community College**

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