

Discussion and Decision: Data for Writing and Reading

This is a summary of what we are learning from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) 2017 specific to writing. We have created this overview for faculty members and deans to be used in conversations this fall about the ways we teach writing at Valencia College.

Engaging Students Through Writing

The importance of writing to all areas of student learning has been apparent through decades of research (Astin, 1992). What is emerging is a much clearer focus on the effect of the quality and engagement level of writing exercises and assignments, and benefits extending beyond academics to personal and social development. Nationwide, large-scale student engagement surveys provide evidence of the importance of effective writing practices for improvements in learning and development.

What Our Students Tell Us

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) offers evidence of student engagement including the amount of time and energy students invest in meaningful educational practices. Valencia College has historical data from semi-annual results of the CCSSE which can provide evidence of institutional practices and student behaviors that are highly correlated with student learning, including areas where students would benefit from more effective writing practices.

1) 70.8% of the respondents in 2017 say Valencia contributed to their *writing clearly and effectively* (quite a bit or very much), down from 72.2% in 2015.

Nationwide cohort for 2017, 59.9%

2) 79.4% of the respondents say during the 2016-17 academic year at Valencia they worked on a paper or project *integrating ideas from various sources* (often or very often), up from 76.8% in 2014-15.

Nationwide cohort for 2017, 66.4%

3) 33.8% of the respondents say during the 2016-17 academic year at Valencia they *worked with classmates* outside of class to prepare assignments (often or very often), down from 34.2% in 2014-15.

Nationwide cohort for 2017, 25.9%

Related Research Findings

One large-scale, multi-institutional study produced as a collaboration between the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Council of Writing Program Administrators empirically established “more specific and more effective practices associated with enhanced learning than the simple admonition to assign ‘more writing’” (Anderson et al., 2015, p. 200). At the center of their research are three constructs of effective writing which are “more strongly associated with engagement in deep learning activities than the number of pages written” and “are positively associated with students’ Perceived Gains not only in two key areas of learning—Practical Competence and General Education Learning—but also in Personal and Social Development.” (Anderson et al., 2015, p. 227).

Discussion and Decision

The decline in students saying the college contributed to them writing clearly could be addressed with the effective practice of **clear writing expectations**, the very high number of students and frequency with which those students integrate ideas from various sources is likely a result of the effective practice of **meaning-making writing tasks**, and the limited number of students who are working with others means that more importance may need to be placed on the effective practice of **interactive writing**.

THREE CONSTRUCTS OF EFFECTIVE WRITING PRACTICES

Clear Writing Expectations

“There appears to be a reasonable basis for finding a causal relationship: the more actions instructors take to explain their assignments clearly (independent variable), the more the students will report positive behaviors and perceptions (dependent variables).”

Meaning-Making Writing Tasks

Students were asked “how often their writing assignments required them to analyze or evaluate something they read, researched, or observed; argue a position using evidence and reasoning; and summarize something they read, such as articles, books, or online publications.... We believe that the students’ responses reflected to a high degree what their instructors asked them to do.”

Interactive Writing

“Faculty can design their assignments to require peer review, instructor consultations, or other forms of interaction.”

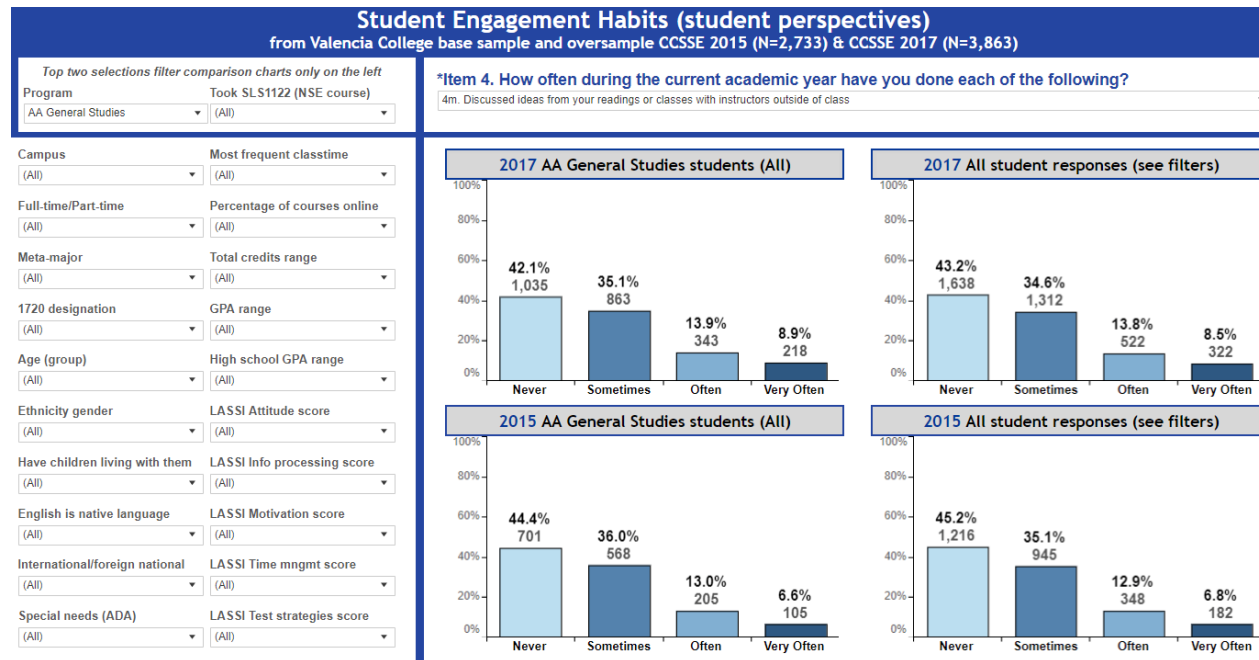
Andersen, P., Anson, C., Gonyea, R., & Paine, C. (2015, November). The contributions of writing to learning and development: results from a large-scale multi-institutional study. *Research in the Teaching of English*. 50 (2), 199-235.

In addition, there is evidence in the CCSSE regarding decreased student engagement with reading (see figures below). Very few students discuss readings and ideas from class with instructors. There is also a growing number of students who do not read any non-assigned books.

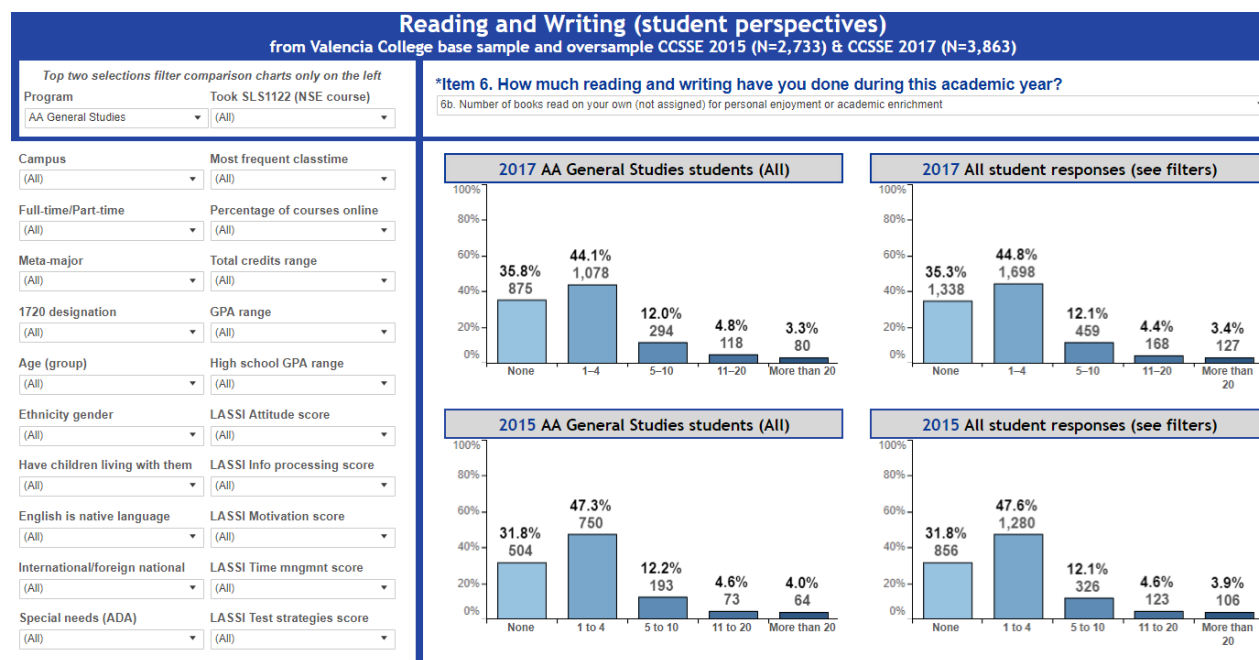


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Connect to Valencia's available data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement 2015 & 2017.
<http://valenciacollege.edu/academic-affairs/institutional-effectiveness-planning/institutional-assessment/surveys/ccsse.cfm>



4m. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class



6b. Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment

Andersen, P., Anson, C., Gonyea, R., & Paine, C. (2015, November). The contributions of writing to learning and development: results from a large-scale multi-institutional study. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 50 (2), 199-235.

Astin, A.W. (1992). What really matters in general education: Provocative findings from a national survey of student outcomes. *Perspectives*, 22, 23-46.