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. They are:

During the current school year, how often have you:

Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations

How much does your coursework at this college emphasize:

Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory
Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways
Making judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
Using information you have read or heard to perform a new skill

During the current school year:

How many assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course readings did you read

How many papers or reports of any length did you write

To what extent have your examinations challenged you to do your best work

How much does this college emphasize:

Encouraging you to spend significant amounts of time studying

What is a CCSSE Benchmark?

Benchmarks are groups of conceptually related survey items that address key areas of student engagement.

Did you Know?

**Nationwide,** 12% of students surveyed said they never worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources. At **Delgado** 16% never did so.

**Nationwide,** 25% said they spent very much of their time memorizing facts, ideas or methods from their courses and readings so they could repeat them in pretty much the same form. At **Delgado** the percentage was 30%.

**Nationwide** 59% said they Very Much or Quite a bit used information they read or heard to perform a new skill, At **Delgado** 61% responded this way.

(CCSSE, 2008)
Based on the report done by the CCSSE committee, Vice Chancellor Debbie Lea established a task force led by Dr. Lester Adelsberg to come up with a plan to implement “Writing Across the Curriculum.” The plan will include guidelines, rubrics, and support for faculty who do not teach English.

Writing is a form of learning and proving knowledge, not just about comma errors and subject verb agreement. Writing is about generating thoughts and conveying ideas. Writing compels students to analyze, synthesize and put information in their own words. Grading need not be as stringent as in an English class; however, it should be sufficient to assure the student has the communication skills necessary for their field of study.

Does this mean that students will be required to write term papers in all their classes? No, the writing assignments should be appropriate to the class. It might be a short paper or even just a paragraph.

The idea is to keep students writing once they finish their English class.

Lesson Learned from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)

1. Be Intentional. Engagement doesn’t happen by accident. It happens by design. Community Colleges serve high percentages of students who juggle school, work, family care commitments and attend college part-time. Most students are not on campus enough for engagement to happen spontaneously.

2. Engagement matters for all students, but it matters more for some than for others. There are consistent, unacceptable gaps between the outcomes for high-risk students and their peers. Students typically described as high-risk are more engaged in their college experience than their peers. At the same time, many of these students have lower aspirations and less successful outcomes. They are working harder but achieving lower results.

3. Part-time students and faculty are the reality of community colleges—and typically are not addressed in improvement efforts. An overwhelming majority of part-time students attend two year schools. Thus, it is at community colleges that these students will, succeed or fail. Community Colleges that are serious about improving student success must focus their efforts on strategies that will more effectively engage part-time students.

4. Data are our friends. Individuals operating within a culture of evidence embrace data, sharing them honestly and unflinchingly, and use them to assess student and institutional performance and to identify means for improvement. Creating a culture of evidence is difficult work. Data can challenge assumptions and traditions, threaten the status quo. And disrupt informal power structures.

Look behind the numbers. Data answers some questions and raises others. This is because quantitative data tell us what is happening, but they don’t tell us why. Qualitative data, such as that gathered from student focus groups, give us insight into the why.

For more information, the entire 2007 national report may be viewed on Docushare, under Interdepartmental, Institutional Research, CCSSE Newsletters and Information.

http://docushare3.dcc.edu/docushare/dsw/View/Collection-868

(CCSSE, 2008)