Appendix P: Frequently Asked Questions

General

1. *We have signed up to participate in* CCSSE*. What happens next?*
In November, a *CCSSE* Liaison is assigned to all participating colleges. He or she works closely with the Campus Coordinator to ensure a smooth coordination and administration process – including discussing with the Campus Coordinator all of the steps involved in implementing the *Community College Student Report* (*CCSR*). In addition, the Campus Coordinator receives the Procedure Guide in hard copy and receives access to an electronic version of the guide via the *CCSSE* Web site.

2. *Who designates the Campus Coordinator?*
Typically, the college president designates the Campus Coordinator*.*

3. *Who designates the Survey Administrator(s)?*
The *Campus Coordinator* chooses the *Survey Administrator*(s).

4. *If we have multiple campuses, should we have multiple Campus Coordinators?*
No. There is no need to have more than one Campus Coordinator.

5. *If we have multiple campuses, should we have multiple Survey Administrator(s)?*
Yes. *CCSSE* suggests that for every campus there should be a separate Survey Administrator**.**

6. *When is the survey administered?*
The survey is administered during the spring term within a March-April time period.

7. *How is the survey administered?*
The *Community College Student Report* (*CCSR*) is administered as a pencil-and-paper survey in randomly selected classes.

8. *Is it possible to administer the* CCSR *on the Web?*
No. *CCSSE* conducted two pilot tests of a Web-based version with distance-learning students only; however, response rates were extremely low and the sample of students who responded was skewed. Therefore, *CCSSE* is not currently offering this option.

9. *How does this survey work if we are on a quarter rather than a semester system?*
The survey should be administered during the winter term. Refer to the Quarter System Timeline. *CCSSE* will work with quarter-system colleges to adjust the timeline to accommodate the abbreviated time frame.

Consortium

10. *What is a consortium?*
A consortium is a group of colleges in a district, system, or state – or another group with common interests or challenges. Benefits of belonging to a consortium include discounted pricing, the opportunity to add up to 15 supplemental questions to the survey, and a special consortium report.

11. *How do I form a consortium?*
CCSSE can help institutions identify either an existing consortium they might join or recommend other institutions they might contact to form a new consortium. An individual from one of the institutions in the proposed consortium must agree to serve as the Consortium Coordinator.

12. *What is the role of the Consortium Coordinator?*
The Consortium Coordinator is responsible for coordinating communication between participating institutions, and facilitating the drafting of additional consortium questions and submitting them to *CCSSE* by the deadline noted in the 2008 Administration Timeline.

13. *Is there an additional fee for joining a consortium?*
Yes. For individual colleges joining a consortium the cost is $250/college, per consortium. For a state office, state association, or other sponsoring organization paying consortium fees on behalf of its participating colleges – applies when all system, association, or organization institutions participate – the cost is $250/college, with a maximum of $2,500 for the entire consortium.

14. *Can I belong to more than one consortium?*
Yes. A college may join two consortia that are adding supplemental question sets to the survey; however, it may only participate in the administration of <u>one</u> of the sets of supplemental questions.

Sampling and Course Master Data File

What, How, When, and Why

15. *What is the Course Master Data File?*
The Course Master Data File is an electronic file colleges send to *CCSSE* that contains all the courses offered during the appropriate academic term, excluding non-credit, dual-enrollment, distance learning, all but the highest level ESL courses, labs, individual instruction, and individual study or self-paced classes. This file is used to create the selected course samples.

16. *How do you want us to submit our Course Master Data File?*
Please send an Excel file as an email attachment to the *CCSSE* College Liaison.

17. *When do you want us to submit our Course Master Data File?*

CCSSE requests that the file be submitted as soon after the 12th class day as possible. Because there is no consistent census date across colleges, the 12th class day is *CCSSE*'s attempt at standardization.

18. *Is there a deadline for the Course Master Data File to be sent?*
No, but the sooner the file is submitted, the sooner *CCSSE* can pull the sample of courses to be surveyed, and the sooner course packets can be shipped.

19. *Why does* CCSSE *have to pull our samples?*
Since *CCSSE* is a national project, the sampling methodology must be consistently implemented across **all** participating colleges. Therefore, *CCSSE* pulls stratified, random samples for all colleges to ensure the integrity of the sample selection process.

Codebook and Data Elements

20. *What is a codebook?*
A codebook is a data dictionary. It provides information on the structure, contents, and layout of the data file.

21. *Do I have to have a codebook?*
If the Course Master Data File conforms to the example in the Coordinator Guide, a codebook is not necessary.

22. *What is a variable name and label?*
A variable name indicates the name assigned to each column of data in the data file. In Excel spreadsheets, it is typically the top row of the column.

23. *What are values and value labels?*
Values are the codes assigned to variables (e.g., DK, Y) and the labels are the definitions for the codes (e.g., 'Don't Know,' 'Yes').

24. *Our registrar informed me that we do not have all of the data elements you are requesting. What should I do?*
CCSSE would prefer that all requested data elements be provided, but the following are the data elements that **MUST** be included: 1) start time, 2) start date, 3) end date, 4) course name, and 5) actual enrollment.

25. *Why do you need class start times?*
CCSSE stratifies by start time to ensure that the sample is representative of morning (12:01 AM to 11:59 AM), afternoon (noon to 4:59 PM), and evening (5:00 PM to Midnight) classes.

26. *We run a 12-hour clock, not a 24-hour clock. Is this acceptable?*
Yes, as long as there is an AM/PM indicator in the start and end time variable fields.

27. *Our system output separates department and course number, while your template puts them together. What should we do?*
Inform the *CCSSE* Liaison, and *CCSSE* will combine the two fields as part of the data cleaning process.

28. *Our system output combines building and room number, while your template separates them. What should we do?*
This is not a critical problem, but will affect the way this information is returned (e.g., information on course packets will contain both the building and room in the building field).

29. *How critical is instructor name in the Course Master Data File?*
The instructor name field is important as it is used in conjunction with other fields to assess whether courses are cross-listed or stacked; however, if by the twelfth class day no teachers of record are listed, or "STAFF" is listed for some courses, the Course Master Data File may be submitted.

30. *What does* CCSSE *do with cross-listed or team-taught courses?*
CCSSE automatically identifies courses that are taught at the same start time and place by identifying redundancy in start times, start dates, room locations, and building locations. The enrollment for these courses is automatically combined so that survey packets are ensured to have sufficient surveys for all students in the selected courses.

31. *I have already submitted my Course Master Data File, but I have information that, now, needs updating. What should I do?*
In the event that a substantial amount of vital information (i.e. Start Date and Time, End Date and Time, Course Name, and Actual Enrollment) needs to be updated, the college should resubmit the Course Master Data File. All other updates are optional as they will not bias the sampling procedures.

32. *I noticed some courses that should have been excluded when I sent the Course Master Data File to you. What should I do?*
CCSSE's sampling procedures eliminate the majority of these occurrences, so the likelihood that your sample will include courses that should have been excluded from the CMDF is rare. In the event that courses that should have been excluded remain in the final sample, *surveys should not be administered to those courses*. Because *CCSSE* surveys 160% of the target, a few courses should not have an overall negative impact.

Sampling Methodology

33. *What is* CCSSE*'s sampling methodology?*
CCSSE utilizes a stratified random sampling methodology whereby the sampling unit is classes, which are comprised of students. The stratification variable is class start time, which ensures that the sample is representative of morning, afternoon, and evening classes.

34. *What is our Target Sample Size?*
Each college's Target Sample Size is based on its enrollment category but ranges from approximately 600 to 1,500 students. *CCSSE* does factor non-participation into our sampling strategy; therefore, each college is provided with 160% of their Target Sample Size.

Specifics: Course Exclusion/Inclusion

35. ***What does* CCSSE *mean when it refers to distance learning courses?***
Distance learning courses are courses that do not have a regular class meeting time during which the survey can be administered. Courses that meet off campus but have a regular meeting time and physical meeting location should be included in the sample.

36. ***How should I report courses that meet at different times during the week?***
If all courses identified as duplicate course numbers are classes that meet at different times on different days, *CCSSE* can simply delete all but the first instance of each course and section number.

37. ***Several courses were listed as same time and place when actually they are the same courses but are offered as weekend courses several times throughout the semester. Do we exclude them?***
As long as the course has a meeting place and time where the survey may be administered it should be included in the CMDF. *CCSSE* will determine which courses are eligible to be sampled based on Start and End Dates.

38. ***Should we include courses that run less than the 16-week term?***
Yes, as long as the course doesn't run less than four weeks or won't be in session during the survey administration period.

39. ***Do we include developmental courses if they are non-credit?***
Yes. *CCSSE* includes developmental education classes when they are offered for institutional credit (e.g., financial aid) or are required prerequisites for credit courses, even if the credit is not applicable toward a degree.

40. ***Do we include classes taught to incarcerated populations?***
No. Classes taught in incarcerated settings are not included in the *CCSSE* sample as these students are not exposed to the full breadth of the college experience.

41. ***Should we exclude combined lecture and lab classes?***
No, but *CCSSE* requests that the Course Master Data File contains only <u>one</u> entry for the combination and not a separate entry for the lab and another entry for the lecture.

42. ***Should concurrent enrollment high school classes be included?***
No. Concurrent enrollment typically means that students can obtain both high school and college credit for a course, and these courses are normally comprised entirely of high school students. *CCSSE* is not administered to classes comprised entirely of high school students because many are under 18 years of age.

43. ***In regard to which classes should be excluded, we have some self-paced classes where there is an instructor, but the instructor serves mainly as a tutor. Should this offering be included in the Course Master Data File?***
Yes, as long as there is a set meeting time with the instructor.

44. *What do we do when a class to be surveyed is mixed in with another class?*
Cross listed courses are usually identified through our sampling methodology. *CCSSE* runs a computer program that identifies such courses and combines both courses to reflect the total enrollment for the two courses. If cross-listed courses should not be combined, contact the *CCSSE* Liaison to determine how to handle these types of courses.

45. *If courses are independently scheduled by the students and the instructors, should they be excluded from the CMDF?*
Yes, if there is no scheduled meeting time.

46. *Should we include PE classes?*
Yes. All physical education courses, even if they are considered labs, should be included.

47. *We have Vocational Certificate classes for college credit that run all day. Do you want the classes eliminated from the Course Master Data File?*
No. These courses should be kept in the file.

48. *If a course includes individuals from the community who are only taking one course at the college, should it be included?*
Yes, as long as it is offered for credit.

49. *Should we include courses with a small enrollment?*
CCSSE has a minimum requirement that there be at least three students in a class in order for it to be sampled. These classes contain students who also have valid opinions about engagement, and *CCSSE* does not want to exclude them just because they are enrolled in small classes.

50. *Should we include late-start courses?*
 Yes. The administration timeframe runs from mid-March through April, so unless a course stars after the administration window has ended, please include it in the CMDF.

51. *We have both a semester and quarter system. About half of our students take courses in the traditional 16-week semester, and half take classes on an 11-week semester. Which system should we use?*
Colleges should include all courses in their Course Master Data File. Based on Start and End Dates, *CCSSE* will determine which courses are eligible to be sampled.

52. *Would you roughly estimate what proportion of total class sections would be included in our sample?*
Please refer to the table below.

Enrollment category	Target sample size	160% of target	Average number of classes
Less than 1,500	TBD	TBD	21
1,500–4,499	600	960	55
4,500–7,999	800	1,280	68
8,000–14,999	1,000	1,600	75
15,000–21,999	1,200	1,920	90
22,000 or more	1,500	2,400	108

Sample Approval

53. *The sample pulled by* CCSSE *does not include courses we wanted sampled. What can we do?*
CCSSE offers oversampling for colleges wanting to examine particular areas of the college or issues of local interest. For example, oversampling nursing classes might provide important information in advance of an accreditation visit. Oversampling may be necessary for multi-campus or multi-site institutions where there is a desire to assess performance of the individual sites.
NOTE: *Oversample course data are not included in the national database; however, they are included in your raw data file.*

54. *An instructor has refused to participate. What should we do?*
CCSSE has accounted for non-participation in our sampling strategy. One hundred sixty percent of the target sample size is provided for situations such as these.

55. *An instructor had three classes chosen. Can we omit one of his or her classes from the sample?*
No. Instructors have the option to decline; however, please explain to the instructor that he or she was not purposefully sampled more than once, he or she just happens to be associated with more than one group of students that was sampled.

56. *An instructor who wants to participate would like to substitute a class that was canceled with another class that is currently meeting; can we do this?*
No. The courses are selected through a random process, and in order to preserve that process, there can not be any course substitutions. This is not about the course itself but about the fact that it was randomly selected. If *CCSSE* were to randomly select more courses, it is very unlikely that this particular instructor and course would be selected. *CCSSE* adheres to the same sampling procedures across institutions, and it is imperative these procedures are followed to maintain the integrity of the data.

57. *A class that was chosen for the sample has stopped meeting. What should we do?*
It is not problematic if a course has ended prior to the survey administration. Because *CCSSE* pulls a sample that provides colleges with sixty percent over what is needed to meet their target, the inability to survey one course will not have an overall impact.

Survey Administration Process

58. *How long does it take to complete the survey?*
Historically, the survey has taken the students approximately 35-45 minutes to complete; however, it is possible that the survey may take an entire class period—additional time will likely be needed in developmental/remedial and ESL courses.

59. *What are the* CCSSE *Special Focus Questions?*
The special focus questions are a set of five items that *CCSSE* adds to the survey. Each year in the future, a different topic will be selected for the special item set, based on interest among *CCSSE* colleges and the research community; the national results will be shared in *CCSSE*'s annual report. This strategy will help to keep the survey fresh—addressing issues of importance to community colleges and their students—while also keeping the core survey stable, so as to facilitate comparisons across survey years.

60. *Do we have to do the* CCSSE *Special Focus Questions?*
Naturally, it is preferred that colleges complete the questions because they are relevant to the community college field; however, *CCSSE* can not "force" any institution to participate.

61. *How long will the survey take with the additional consortium questions?*
CCSSE estimates a maximum of one extra minute per additional consortium question asked.

62. *Why can't students under the age of 18 complete the survey?*
CCSSE's Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The University of Texas at Austin would require parental consent for students under age 18 to participate in *CCSSE*. Any student indicating that he or she is "Under 18" for item #29 on the survey is excluded from all analyses and data reporting, and that respondent data is not returned to the college.

63. *Do students have to complete the survey more than once?*
If a student completed the survey previously, he or she is not required to complete the survey more than once; however, the student is asked to remain in the classroom during the survey administration period in an effort to prevent disruptions or students claiming to have taken the survey in order to leave the classroom.

64. *Do I have to let faculty choose the date of the in-class administration?*
No. The Scheduling Memo can be altered in such a way as to provide faculty with a choice of pre-determined dates for the survey administration.

65. *What circle should we fill in if the survey is administered by a faculty member who does not teach the course?*
"Survey Administrator" rather than "Faculty" should be indicated. The "Faculty" option is for situations where a faculty member is administering to his or her own class.

66. *For the Community College Student Report Information Sheet, does the "number of students in attendance" mean the number who take the survey or the number present in the room?*
It means the number present in the room at the time of the administration.

67. *Regarding the number of credit hours taught this semester by faculty member teaching this class; I assume you are asking for their entire teaching load for the semester, not the credit hours of that particular class, correct?*
Yes, the teaching load for the entire semester is what should be indicated.

68. *Do we need to have students complete the student ID section? What benefits would that provide us/you?*
CCSSE assumes that colleges collect this number so that the data can be used in conjunction with other institutional research efforts at the college. There are also state databases that can be linked to using this identifier (e.g., UI wage data), which may provide useful information concerning students.

69. *How should students enter their student ID on the survey?*
Students should enter the number from left to right with no spaces, dashes, or other extraneous marks.

70. *Can we stop the survey administration process once we reach our target?*
CCSSE asks that a college continue the administration process even after reaching its target sample size for at least three reasons. First, a college's membership fee covers administration of the entire sample. Second, the more data collected, the more likely an institution will be able to "drill down" further into their results (e.g., there will be more responses when performing subgroups analyses). Finally, there may be potential bias introduced when the survey is not administered (e.g., the administrator was saving the evening classes for last).

71. *I have packets that I did not use. What should I do with them?*
Any unused surveys and ancillary materials may be recycled.

72. *What are the 100 additional surveys for?*
These surveys are intended to supplement class packets when there are more students enrolled in courses at the time of administration than there were when the Course Master Data File was submitted.

73. *How do we return completed surveys to* **CCSSE***?*
First, ensure that the surveys are in their original class packet envelopes with the corresponding Community College Student Report Information Sheet. Second, place the completed packets in a box and seal. Third, place a neon "Return to *CCSSE*" sticker on the side of the box. Fourth, place the UPS return label on the top of the box. Fifth, record the UPS tracking number for your records. Sixth, call and schedule a UPS pick-up. **Please return surveys to *CCSSE* on a weekly basis.**

NOTE: You do not need to return unused surveys, Program Code Sheets, pencils, or Supplemental Questions Sheet(s) to *CCSSE*.

74. *If envelopes are not already sealed, can we just leave them unsealed when we pack them?*
Yes.

75. *Is there a deadline when completed surveys must be returned to* **CCSSE***?*
Yes. Completed surveys must arrive in *CCSSE*'s office by no later than **May 21**.

76. *What is the raw data?*
The raw data is an electronic file containing the student-level responses to the survey.

77. *How long does it take for* **CCSSE** *to analyze survey results?*
The data are collected during early spring. Once all surveys are returned and scanned, the generation of reports begins. Colleges will be mailed their Institutional Reports by July 31.

78. *How are survey responses presented to our college?*
An Institutional Report binder is mailed to the college president by July 31. The Campus Coordinator will be sent a link to download an electronic version of the binder from the *CCSSE* Web site. The report contains an overview of the current year's national data (across all *CCSSE*-participating colleges), summary reports, means, frequencies, and benchmark data. Colleges will also be able to download their raw data files.

Student Questions

79. *What is* **CCSSE***?*
CCSSE is the Community College Survey of Student Engagement. The Community College Leadership Program at The University of Texas at Austin conducts the project, and it is located in the Educational Administration Department in the College of Education.

80. *What is the* **Community College Student Report***?*
The *Community College Student Report (CSSR)* is a survey developed to study community and technical college student experiences. The survey is designed to see what your views are on the quality of the educational programs and services you receive.

81. *Why are you surveying me?*

Classes are randomly selected from participating colleges' programs.

82. *What if I have already participated?*
When choosing a random sample across several classes, duplication of students can result. If this happens, one may choose not to take the survey again. However, it is asked that all remain in the classroom during the administration time.
CCSSE included a specific question, #3, which asks if the survey has already been taken in another class, so *CCSSE* will be able to track those who complete the survey more than once.

83. *Why don't you survey someone else?*
Classes are randomly chosen, and it is important that all students in the selected classes complete the survey, so that the results for this college will be reliable and valid.

84. *How will the survey be used?*
The data will be compiled and presented in aggregate form (as a group) to the administration at this college. Identifying what students do in and out of the classroom, and knowing students' goals and understanding their external responsibilities can help the college create an environment that can enhance student learning, development, and retention. Also, colleges' data will be compared to other colleges on a national and regional level. This will guide work aimed at supporting and strengthening teaching and learning.

85. *Will my college see my responses?*
Institutions will receive a data file containing all information provided by students completing the survey. Hence, if one provides identifying information (i.e., Student Identification Number) then a college would technically have the ability to examine his or her responses at the individual level. However, there is no intention to examine individual responses, and the reason for requesting Student Identification Numbers is to enable the college to link the data from this survey to other institutional research initiatives.

86. *How will my college use the data?*
The group data will be shared with the faculty, staff, administrators, and student leaders. College committees will use the data in their reports as they work on future planning and to inform initiatives. The information may also be used in reports to external authorities such as community college boards, accrediting agencies, and the general public.

87. *Are you surveying other colleges?*
Yes, *CCSSE* expects to survey about 300 community and technical colleges annually.

88. *When will the study results be ready?*
The results will be ready about four months following the administration of the survey—by July 31.

89. *Will I be able to see the results?*

The results will be sent to the college. Certain data will be published on the *CCSSE*
Web site at www.ccsse.org.

90. *Why should I complete this survey?*

Identifying what students do in and out of the classroom, knowing students' goals, and
understanding external responsibilities can help the college create an environment that
can enhance learning, development, and success.

91. *I have participated in many surveys; why should I complete the* CCSR*?*

The *Community College Student Report* is about the college student and the college
student's experience. It has national and local significance. The items focus on important
issues and can point to solutions that enhance students' success in college. It is
important that this college find out from its students where improvements are needed.
The survey asks about study habits, work and family obligations, contact with faculty,
etc. This college can compare those answers to students at other colleges and look for
common issues that need improvement. As the surveys are repeated over time, *CCSSE*
would hope to see a rising trend of student retention and student success as colleges
make improvements accordingly.

92. *Who is responsible for the study?*

CCSSE is responsible for the study. *CCSSE* is a research group directed by Dr. Kay
McClenney in the Community College Leadership Program in the College of Education
at The University of Texas at Austin. More can be learned about *CCSSE* by visiting
www.ccsse.org.