

The National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP) Report to Mercer County Community College Administration Institutional Research & Assessment - Fall, 2006

Introduction:

As higher education faces greater pressures toward accountability, several measures of institutional effectiveness and student success have been proposed. However, these indicators typically reflect the issues facing baccalaureate institutions to the potential detriment of community colleges. An example of this bias would be the reporting of graduation rates within a certain time frame, which are typically much lower for community colleges because students may be attending part-time or they may transfer without a degree. The NCCBP is a nation-wide effort by community colleges to establish meaningful indicators of institutional performance that are authentic to the community college experience. The survey collection and reporting are housed at Johnson Community College in Kansas. In the 2005-06 administration of the data collection, over 150 colleges participated, including Mercer, Raritan, and Bergen in New Jersey. Many states, including Pennsylvania, New York, and Florida participate as full state consortia.

The report below is in three parts. The first summarizes major findings from Mercer's inaugural participation in the areas of Students, Finance, and Academics. Mercer was not able to participate in all variables/measures in the study, because as yet, no office collects or reports the appropriate data. In the second section, findings are presented in raw form and as a percentile ranking of all 150+ participants in the study. The final section presents basic characteristics of the reporting colleges. All NCCBP institutions are publicly funded. About half have unionized faculty.

Full text of the report is available upon request from the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (mccira@mccc.edu). NCCBP regulations prevent participants from publishing the full report in public access arenas.

Part One: Major Findings:

Students:

Not surprisingly, Mercer's students were very diverse compared with the NCCBP peer schools. Minority Credit Students were 34.7% of the student population (79th percentile). Diversity was reflected in staffing as well, with Percent Minority Employees at 19.7% (69th percentile). Mercer's students spend 52% of credit hours in transfer courses, (27th percentile); 33% of credit hours in Career/Technical coursework (62nd percentile); and 16.5% in Foundations courses (80th percentile).

Mercer's semester-to-semester retention rate (72.4%) and Fall-to-Fall retention rates (50.7%) were both above the 70th percentile, possibly due to the College's relatively high level of staffing in Recruitment, Admissions, and Registration. However, with respect to counseling, an apparent paradox emerges. The College is relatively understaffed in the Counseling and Advisement area, however, on the CCSSE rankings for NCCBP schools, Mercer was in the 72nd percentile on the Support for Learners Benchmark item.

Finance:

Mercer is cost efficient, maintaining a Cost per Credit Hour at only the 38th percentile. The College has a Market Penetration Rate in the 70th percentile. However, on the Funding side, Mercer's local and state support (as a percent of budget) were at only the 8th and 10th percentile respectively. This (despite Mercer County being at the 88th percentile in household income) places a burden on tuition levels, which ranked at the 71st percentile. Tuition revenue represented 49.7% of funds (92nd percentile).

Academics:

The College exhibited an interesting pattern in the Foundations/Remedial area. Student pass rates in Foundations courses were well below the median. However, for Foundations students moving to their first college level course, the success rate was above the 90th percentile. In other words, it is hard to pass Foundations courses, but if you do and you move onto college level work, you have a better chance of passing compared with students who followed a similar path at other schools.

Mercer does a good job moving part-time students toward graduation. However, the pathway was apparently not so smooth for fulltime students. Career program completers were more likely than their peers at other NCCBP Institutions to choose to continue their education, and were near the median on finding employment in a field related to their coursework.

Unreported Areas:

As noted in the introduction, there were several areas of the NCCBP instrument where Mercer departments were not prepared to present data: Performance of Students at Transfer Institutions; Market Penetration with respect to community programming and sports; Human Resources activity; and training expenditures. Perhaps with further iterations of NCCBP Benchmarking, Mercer can move toward full participation as both data collection and data mining improve.

Part Two: Findings with Reported Value, Percentile Rank, and Number of Colleges Reporting

"% Rank" reported for data elements below includes percentile ranks, percents of all benchmark scores that fall below reported values.

Institution Information	Reported Value	% Rank	N
Service Area Total Population	366,256	50%	147
Service Area Unemployment Rate	3.80%	23%	145
Service Area Median Household Income	\$55,555	88%	144
IPEDS Enrollment (Fall 2004)	9,033	62%	152
% Transfer Credit Hours (Fall 2004)	52.00%	27%	128
% Technical/Career Credit Hours (Fall 2004)	33.00%	62%	126
% Developmental Credit Hours (Fall 2004)	16.50%	80%	131
Non-credit Headcount (Fall 2004)	3,847	53%	137
% Nonresident Alien (Fall 2004)	5.50%	93%	138
% Black, Non-Hispanic (Fall 2004)	22.70%	89%	152
% Am. Indian or Alaskan Native (Fall 2004)	0.20%	11%	149
% Asian or Pacific Islander (Fall 2004)	4.70%	90%	152
% Hispanic (Fall 2004)	7.20%	67%	152
% White, Non-Hispanic (Fall 2004)	48.80%	11%	152
% Race/Ethnicity Unknown (Fall 2004)	11.00%	89%	142
Tuition and Fees per Credit Hour (Fall 2004)	\$91.00	71%	152
Unrestricted Operating Funds (FY 2005)	\$6,450,036	7%	145
% Funds from Local Sources (FY 2005)	1.30%	8%	137
% Funds from State (FY 2005)	11.60%	10%	146
% Funds from Tuition (FY 2005)	49.70%	92%	146

	Reported Value	% Rank	N
Proportions of Students That Completed a Degree or Certificate or Transferred within Three Years (Fall 2002 GRS Cohort)			
<i>% Completed in Three Years (Col 3)</i>			
Full-time, First-time in Fall, 2002	9.91%	11%	150
<i>% Transferred in Three Years (Col 5)</i>			
Full-time, First-time in Fall, 2002	23.70%	83%	130
Credit Students Who Enrolled Next Term and Next Fall (Fall 2004)			
Next-term Persistence Rate (Col 4)	72.36%	74%	142
Fall-fall Persistence Rate (Col 7)	50.68%	71%	143

Student Satisfaction and Engagement (Most Recent Data)

CCSSE Benchmarks

Student Effort	48.8	28%	78
Support for Learners	52.0	72%	78

	Reported Value	% Rank	N
Student Goal Attainment (Most Recent Data)			
% Graduates and Completers (Col 1)	88.50%	24%	68

Credit, College-level Course Retention and Success Rates (Fall 2004)

Retention Rate (Col 4)	89.75%	69%	151
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Credit Developmental/ Remedial Course Retention and Success Rates (Fall 2004)

Math Retention Rate (Col 4)	86.88%	69%	150
Writing Retention Rate (Col 4)	84.65%	42%	143
Reading Retention Rate (Col 4)	91.00%	65%	142

Mercer's enrollee success rate in remedial courses averaged around 65%, which represents only the 25th percentile. However, those who DID pass were well qualified for the follow-on course. Success in the first college level course averaged 88% for Foundations students. This represented the 89th percentile. The notable exception was in the follow-on algebra course, where Mercer's percentile was only 45th.

	Reported Value	% Rank	N
Career Program Completers (Most Recent Data)			
Employed in Related Field (Col 2)	64.68%	47%	114
Pursuing Education (Col 3)	39.80%	82%	106

Retention and Success in Core Academic Skill Areas (Fall 2004)

Core areas include English Composition I, English Composition II, Algebra, and Speech. Mercer's retention and success rates in these courses were within the median, with the exception of within-semester retention in Speech, and success rates in Algebra.

	Reported Value	% Rank	N
Institution-wide Credit Grades (Fall 2004)			
Percent Withdrew	11.15%	41%	147
Percent Completed	88.85%	58%	147
Percent Successful	82.59%	41%	147
Percent A and B Grades	52.01%	24%	147
The percent of A & B grades may be of interest as Mercer considers issues of consistency of academic rigor across multiple sections of a course.			

Minority Participation Rates (Fall 2004)

% Minority Credit Students (Col 4)	34.73%	79%	149
% Minority Employees (Col 4)	19.70%	69%	143

Market Penetration: Credit and Non-credit Students (AY 2004-05)

Credit Student Penetration Rate (Col 3)	3.63%	65%	143
Non-credit Student Penetration Rate (Col 3)	2.72%	74%	140

This element is the headcount of students divided by the 2000 census population of Mercer County

Market Penetration: Community Participation (AY 2004-05)

Mercer was unable to report the numbers for attendance at Sporting Events, Cultural Activities, and Public Meetings. IR&A was unable to obtain these figures from relevant campus offices.

	Reported Value	% Rank	N
Fiscal Year Business and Industry Productivity (FY 2005)			

IR&A did not report Duplicated Headcount, Companies Served, Total Costs, Total Revenues, Net Revenue, Net Revenue as % of Total, as these numbers are maintained elsewhere.

Average Credit Section Size (Fall 2004)

Average Credit Section Size (Col 3)	21.1	66%	142
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Credit Course Student/Faculty Ratio (Fall 2004)

Student/Faculty Ratio (Col 3)	19.37	56%	149
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Instructional Faculty Load (Fall 2004)

% Sections by Full-time Faculty (Col 5)	42.21%	19%	129
% Sections by Part-time Faculty (Col 5)	57.79%	80%	129

**Credit Distance Learning Sections
and Credit Hours (Fall 2004)**

DL % of Credit Hours (Col 3)	3.3%	30%	132
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	Reported Value	% Rank	N
Student/Professional Student Services Staff Ratio (Fall 2004)			
Career Services (Col 3)	3,011	48%	106
Counseling and Advising (Col 3)	1,004	73%	116
Recruitment, Admissions, Registration (Col 3)	565	27%	116
Financial Aid (Col 3)	1,506	55%	116
Student Activities (Col 3)	4,516	63%	109
Testing & Assessment Services (Col 3)	4,516	69%	108

Please note that a high percentile ranking is "bad" for the above variables, as that represents a higher number of students for each available staff member in that service area.

Human Resources did not provide IR&A with data for the following data elements: Retirements Rate, Departures Rate, Grievance Rate; Harassment Rate; Development/Training Expenditures per FTE Employee

**Cost per Credit Hour and FTE
Student (FY 2005)**

Cost per Credit Hour (Col 4)	\$98	38%	141
Cost per FTE Student (Col 5)	\$2,945	38%	141

Part Three: Characteristics of NCCBP Participating Community Colleges

Institution Type

Single-campus:	81	53.30%
Multi-campus:	64	42.10%
Multi-college District:	7	4.60%

Campus Environment

Urban:	28	18.40%
Suburban:	38	25.00%
Rural:	39	25.70%
Urban and Suburban:	16	10.50%
Suburban and Rural:	16	10.50%
Urban and Rural:	10	6.60%
Urban, Suburban, and Rural:	5	3.30%