


**DIGGING
DEEPER
WITH DATA**

**College Survey
of Student
Engagement**

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OVERVIEW

- Introduction
- What is student engagement
- The College Survey of Student Engagement (CSSE)
- Results of national pilot
 - Benchmark results
 - Interesting staff findings
 - Reasons for dropout
 - Student experiences & goals
- The way forward

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INTRODUCTION

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UV**

INTRODUCTION

- **Why dig deeper with data?**
 - Research offers an evidence-based lens through which to understand some of the current challenges in a deeper and more nuanced manner.
 - **AIM OF THE PROJECT**
 - Conduct Student Engagement Research at, at least four selected FET Colleges **to better understand teaching and learning practices in FET Colleges from a student and staff perspective.**
 - **Sharing student engagement data with the DHET, Directorate and FET colleges** in the region to enhance staff capacity development initiatives and the creation of alternative learning opportunities for out-of- and post-school youth.
 - Funding for the project was provided by the **Ford Foundation**.
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INTRODUCTION

- **Major growth in enrolments** is expected in the years to come (National Planning Commission, 2011).
- **Drastic improvements in student success** and throughput rates will be required to accommodate growth successfully.
- In 2008, **25% of students enrolled at FET colleges dropped out** and there was a **pass rate of only 39%** (FSETT, 2010).
- **Highest drop-out levels are reported in Level 2** of the National Certificate (Vocational) (DHET, 2012; NPC, 2011).

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INTRODUCTION

- Focus on student engagement can help **to enhance quality and promote student success** in the post-school sector.
- Current study a pilot investigation into the appropriateness of student engagement survey as a **source of actionable data** for improvement.
- Aid in:
 - **Data-based understanding** of student learning
 - **The design and creation of effective teaching and learning environments** that promote success within **specific institutional contexts** in the FET sector.
 - A measure of the **prevalence of effective educational practices** in the college learning experience
 - **Enhancing the quality debate** by focusing on the investments that institutions make to foster proven instructional practice

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**WHAT IS
STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT?**

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EMPIRICAL FOUNDATIONS OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT?

- **Predictors of student success**

- Academic preparation

- Motivation

- Institutions increase selectivity and focus on recruiting the “best and the brightest”
- Only a few institutions can do this

- **Student engagement**

- Principle: **What students do matters to their persistence and success**

- Amount of time and effort students spend on academic activities and other activities that enhance their success
- Allocation of resources and organisation of learning opportunities and services to encourage students to participate (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Kuh et al., 2005)

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Student engagement is:

- **What students do** – time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities
- **What institutions do** – using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things
- Educationally effective institutions channel student energy towards **activities that matter**.

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**THE COLLEGE
SURVEY OF
STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT**

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RESEARCH PROCESS

- The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at the UFS developed the **College Survey of Student Engagement (CSSE)** which is adapted from international instruments.
- Administered in a **paper-and-pencil format**.
- The **five participating institutions** in the pilot where:
 - Goldfields FET College,
 - Lovedale Public FET College,
 - Maluti FET College,
 - Northern Cape Urban FET College, and
 - Motheo FET College.

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STRUCTURE OF THE CSSE

- The CSSE survey generates information on students' levels of engagement in **five benchmarks of effective educational practice**.
- **Benchmarks:**
 - Active and Collaborative Learning
 - South African Student Effort
 - Academic Challenge
 - Student-Staff Interaction
 - South African Support for Learners

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**RESULTS OF
THE NATIONAL
PILOT**

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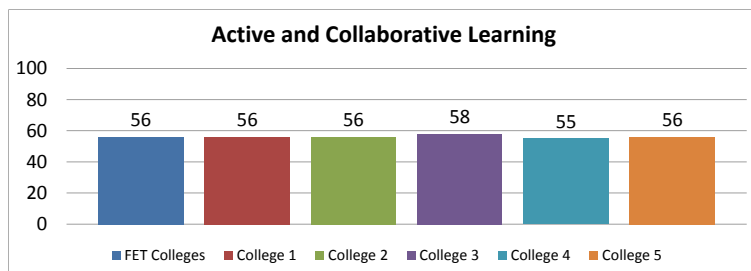
ALL PARTICIPATING FET COLLEGES

- **Overall Student Sample**
 - 1867 respondents
 - 92% Black African students
 - 51% male students; 49% female students
 - Average age of respondents: 21
 - Oldest respondent: 63; Youngest respondent: 15
- **Overall Staff Sample**
 - 194 respondents
 - 72% Black African staff
 - 19% White staff
 - 58% male staff; 42% female staff

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ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING



How often have you:

- Asked questions in class ;
- Contributed to class discussions;
- Made a class presentation;
- Worked with other students on projects during class;
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments;
- Been a peer helper (tutor) or taught other students (paid or voluntary);
- Participated in a group-work project as part of a regular course;
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others (students, family members, co-workers, etc.) outside of class .

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ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

- Students in overall sample reported relatively **high levels of active learning**, as well as relatively **high levels of collaborative learning**.
- Students at all participating FET colleges reported **low levels of peer facilitated learning**.

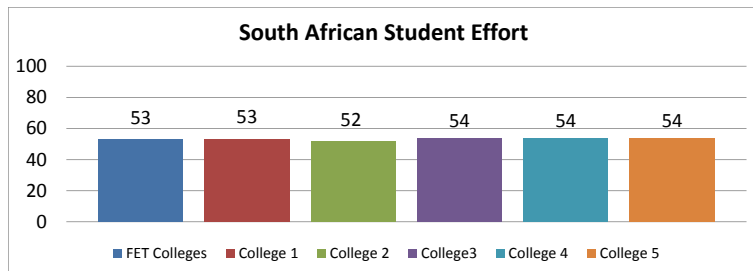
• EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATION

- Institutions can contribute to the overall success of students **by incorporating the use of peer learning facilitators** to teach, mentor and guide other students (Kuh et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).
- **Improving teaching and learning practices** during class.
- **Tutorial systems** such as Supplemental Instruction (SI) can be considered as examples of good practice in peer facilitated learning.

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SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENT EFFORT



How often have you:

- Prepared two or more drafts (versions) of an assignment before handing it in ;
- Worked on a project that required integrating (combining) ideas or information from various sources;
- Come to class without completing readings or assignments.

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

How many hours have you spent:

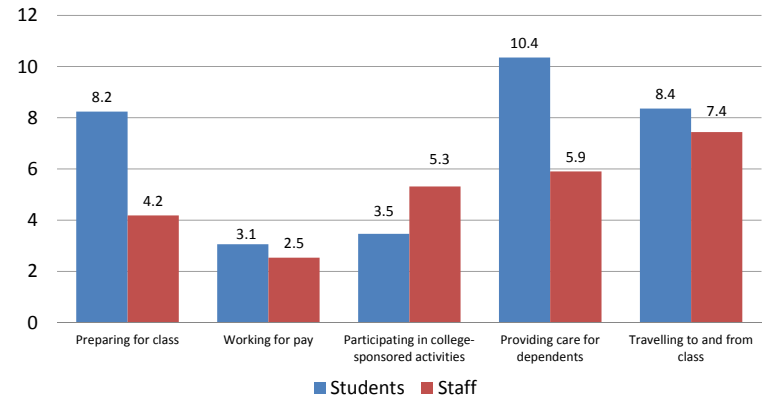
- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to your programme)

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TIME USAGE

Staff perceptions of student time usage



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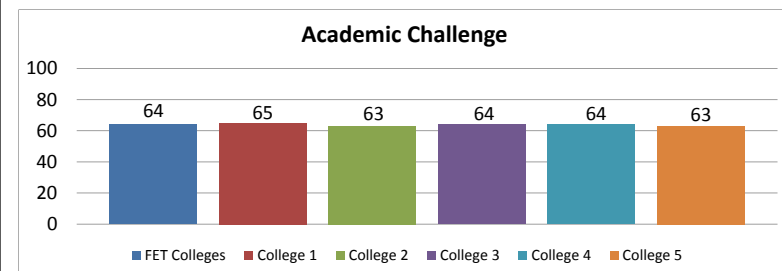
SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENT EFFORT

- Overall, students reported relatively **high mean scores** for this benchmark.
- **No significant differences** between colleges.
- **Lecturing staff underestimated the amount of effort** students put into their studies.
- **EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATION**
- **Students rise to the expectations set for them:** high expectations lead to high effort.
- Consider making **intentional effort to help lecturers understand the student population** so that they can set reasonable, yet challenging standards for their students to promote student success.

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ACADEMIC CHALLENGE



How often have you worked harder than you thought you could to achieve the expectations of the lecturer

How much have your academic activities focused on you:

- Identifying the different parts that make up an idea, experience or opinion;
- Putting together and organising ideas, information or experiences in new ways;
- Deciding what you think about new information and other people's thoughts or ways of doing things;
- Being able to take an idea that you have learned and use it to solve problems or handle new challenges;
- Using information you have read or heard to do something you have never done before.

Number of compulsory textbooks or subject readings

Number of written assignments or reports of any length

During this academic year how much have your assessment tasks (tests, exams and assignments) made you want to do your best work?

How much does this college focus on encouraging you to spend a large amount of time studying

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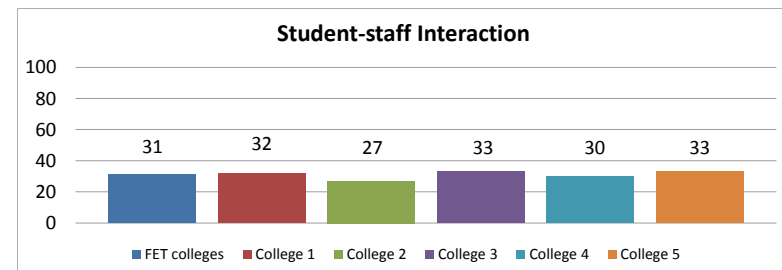
ACADEMIC CHALLENGE

- Overall, students reported relatively **high mean scores**.
 - Students reported that their **assessment tasks motivated** them to work hard.
 - Students reported that their colleges focussed on encouraging them to spend **a large amount of time studying**.
 - Students reported that their academic activities focused on **applying ideas**.
- **EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS**
 - Any improvement of the level of academic challenge needs to be buttressed on **intentional, organised institutional support**.
 - **Critical to find balance between challenge and support**. If a learning task is too easy, it can become boring; if a learning task is too hard, it can become frustrating (Barkley, 2010).

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STUDENT-STAFF INTERACTION



How often have you:

- Communicated with a lecturer using an electronic medium (SMS, email, instant messaging, etc.) outside of class;
- Discussed marks or assignments with a lecturer;
- Talked about career plans with a lecturer or counsellor;
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with a lecturer outside of class;
- Received prompt (quick) feedback (written or oral) from a lecturer on your assessment tasks;
- Worked with a lecturer on activities other than your studies.

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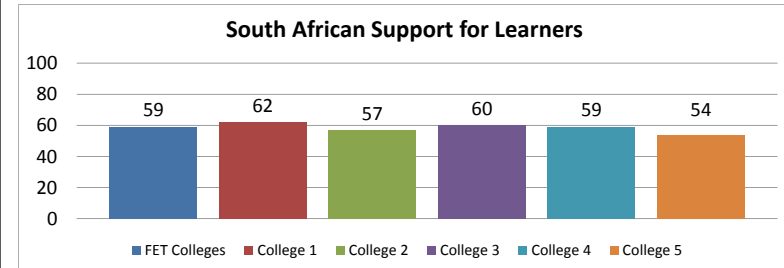
STUDENT-STAFF INTERACTION

- Overall, students reported relatively **low mean scores**.
- Students did **not communicate** with staff frequently outside of class.
- Students did **not discuss** ideas from their readings or classes with a lecturer outside of class.
- **EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS**
- Institutions must take responsibility for being **intentional about meaningful student-staff interaction**.
- By **redesigning and rearranging physical facilities** to encourage informal interaction will allow staff and students to continue class discussions outside the class.



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SOUTH AFRICAN SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS



How much does this college place focus on:

- Providing the academic support you need to help you succeed at this college;
- Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds;
- Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.);
- Providing the support you need to interact socially;
- Providing the financial support you need to afford your education.



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SOUTH AFRICAN SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

- Overall, students reported relatively **high mean scores** for this benchmark.
- Overall, students reported that their **colleges placed focus** on ways of supporting them.
- **EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS**
- **Develop peer support mechanisms** that help students successfully navigate institutional policies and comply with procedures.
- **Promoting a responsive and supportive approach** to students amongst all staff.

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INTERESTING STAFF FINDINGS

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HIGHEST QUALIFICATION EARNED

What is the highest degree you have earned?

- Doctoral degree: 1%
- Master's degree: 3%
- Honours degree: 14%
- First professional degree: 1%
- Bachelors degree: 28%
- Diploma: 43%
- Certificate: 10%
- Other: 2%

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NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING THIS SUBJECT

Prior to this academic year, how many years have you taught your subject?

- No experience: 8%
- 1 year: 14%
- 2 years: 13%
- 3 years: 19%
- 4 years: 16%
- 5 years or more: 29%

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**REASONS
FOR
DROPOUT**

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REASONS LIKELY TO LEAD TO DROP OUT

- **Lack of finances:**
 - 32% of students reported very likely
 - 56% of staff members reported very likely
- **Programme too difficult:**
 - 38% of students reported not likely
 - 48% of staff members reported very likely
- **Lecturer's style of presenting:**
 - 45% of students reported likely/very likely
 - 28% of staff members reported likely/very likely

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**STUDENT
EXPERIENCE
& GOALS**

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STUDENTS AND FET COLLEGES

- **66% of students** would recommend their college to other people.
- **55% of students** have had a good educational experience.
- **GOALS FOR ATTENDING FET COLLEGES**
 - **Complete a certificate programme:** 94% of students
 - **Transfer to a university:** 85% of students
 - **Obtain or update job-related skills:** 87% of students
 - **Self-improvement/personal enjoyment:** 75% of students
 - **Change career:** 37% of students

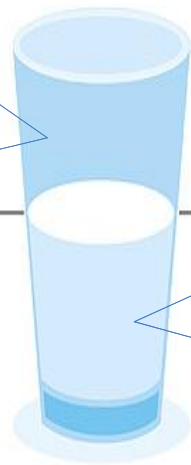
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THE WAY FORWARD

(Half-Empty/ Challenges)

- Staff capacity
- Programme quality
- Management capacity development
- Lack of evidence-based change
- Need for stronger partnerships



(Half-Full)

- Build on existing engagement
- Develop infrastructure to promote engagement
- Celebrate strong colleges and good practices
- Contributing to management information

THE WAY FORWARD

- **Collaboration** between HE and FET to promote evidence-based improvement in post-school teaching and learning and student success.

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THANK YOU

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