Halifax Community College
Receives National Recognition from
The Community College Survey of Student Engagement

Halifax Community College (HCC) is one of a select few colleges across the nation, recognized by the Center for Community College Student Engagement Making Connections: Dimensions of Student Engagement (CCSSE) for its successful student-centered approaches that consistently connect students to faculty, one another, resources, and services online, in the classroom, on campus, and beyond. Specifically, the distinction was awarded to the P.R.I.D.E. of Halifax Male Mentoring Program for its proactive services and programs that increase opportunities for student engagement.

P.R.I.D.E. was selected because its variety of high-touch interventions that create on-campus support systems that build community connections. These include business field trips, college visits, technology support (laptop loan), and assignment of a Learning Coach who serves as a primary contact for academic, personal, career, mentoring, and other needs. Coaches also help students develop a comprehensive college success plan and monitor their progress.

According to P.R.I.D.E. Director Daniel Lovett, to become a finalist, institutions had to submit an application for the distinction using the following criteria:

1. How the college defines innovation?
2. What specific local, need, challenge or opportunity has the college addressed and how?
3. Why the college’s service is distinctively innovative?
4. What evidence can the college show that the innovation has had impact or promises impact?
5. How can other institutions benefit from the knowing of this work?

Regarding the recognition, HCC President Dr. Ervin V. Griffin, Sr. states “this is an amazing accomplishment for a program in existence for less than one year. While we are happy with this accomplishment, we believe that with more time and work, we may be able to create a national student success prototype worthy of modeling and duplication”.

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement

According to the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), research shows that the more actively engaged students are — with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter they study — the more likely they are to learn, to stick with their studies, and to attain their academic goals.

This year, CCSSE is focusing on the importance of relationships among students, faculty, and staff, and with the institutions themselves: how these connections evolve, the value they add, and the importance of devoting greater effort to nurturing them. In this evaluation of connections, it is important to distinguish between communicating information and connecting. Communicating information is a one-way, self-contained event. The individual for whom the information is intended may or may not receive it, understand it, care about it, or act on it. Connecting is an interactive, iterative series of events that is personal and creates a sense of presence. No one ever asks “so what?” in the wake of a genuine connection.

The Connected College

Connected colleges effectively connect with their students and encourage them to build the relationships — with faculty, staff, other students — that are essential to student success. Connected colleges are easily identified by their campus cultures. Their language and actions communicate the belief that all students can succeed and demonstrate that everyone on campus is committed to facilitating that success.

The CCSSE Survey

The CCSSE survey focuses on institutional practices and student behaviors that promote student engagement. The Center for Community College Student Engagement works with participating colleges to administer the survey, which measures students’ levels of engagement in a variety of areas. The colleges then receive their survey results, along with guidance and analyses they can use to improve their programs and services for students. Each year, CCSSE includes five special-focus survey items that examine an area of student experience and institutional performance. These five items address a different topic each year and are separate from the core survey, which does not change. The 2009 special-focus survey items explore the use of technology for making connections.