

Executive Summary

Introduction

In order to obtain data about why students do not return to San Diego Community College District's three colleges prior to degree attainment or completion of educational goals, SDCCD's Office of Institutional Research began a two-part retention study during the Fall 2000 semester. This is part two of the study.

The first part of the study focused on three groups of students: those who applied but did not enroll, dropped before census, and those who withdrew after census. This part of the retention report focuses on two populations: students who were disqualified Fall 2000, and students who did not persist from Fall 2000 to Spring 2001.

The purpose of this study is to provide a thorough analysis of these two groups so administrators and policymakers may be more informed in their efforts to develop outreach or retention activities.

Each group was analyzed in three ways:

1. Demographic analysis: Provides a demographic profile of each group. Included in the analysis are ethnicity, educational objective, GPA, and other variables.
2. Prediction study: Identifies factors, if any, which can predict student behaviors or tendencies.
3. Survey analysis: A sample of each population was surveyed to identify reasons for not successfully matriculating.

Summary of Findings

Group 1: Students who were disqualified

The following differences in demographics were found between students who were disqualified when compared to the general student population.

- At Miramar a greater proportion of Filipino students were disqualified than the general student population (23.9% versus 11.4%). At City, a greater proportion of African American students were disqualified compared to the percent of African Americans in the student population (30.1% versus 16.3%).

- There is a smaller proportion of students who were disqualified that work 40 or more hours per week than the SDCCD population (18.9% versus 30.4%).
- There is a greater proportion of students between the ages of 19 and 21 that were disqualified compared to SDCCD population (38.9% versus 22.3%).
- All colleges had more students who were disqualified that earned less than 30 cumulative units.

Following are some key findings from the survey sent to 1,962 students who were disqualified. Only 193 responded, yielding a response rate of 7.1%. Since the response rate is low, these results should be used with caution.

- Respondents from all colleges stated that the district could have helped by having a more flexible course schedule, more financial aid, and if instructors were more flexible with grading.
- At Miramar, students indicated that more career oriented programs and more study skills classes would have helped.
- Respondents at Mesa indicated that more counseling services and more career oriented programs would have helped them succeed.
- City respondents indicated that more counseling services, more study skills classes, and longer computer lab hours would have helped.
- The majority of students who were disqualified responded that they spent 1 – 10 hours per week studying outside of class.

Group 2: Students who did not persist from Fall 2000 to Spring 2001

The following differences in demographics were found among students who did not persist from Fall 2000 to Spring 2001 and the general population.

- Fewer first time students did not persist than the SDCCD population (23.5% compared to 32.8%). At City, 46.4% of students who did not persist were first time transfer students compared to 34.1% of the population.
- 52.5% of students who did not persist were enrolled in fewer than 5 units in Fall 2000 compared to 35.5% of the population.

Following are some key findings from the survey sent to 5,000 students who did not persist from Fall 2000 to Spring 2001. There were 515 respondents, yielding a response rate of 10.3%.

- The primary reasons students did not persist from Fall 2000 to Spring 2001 were: transferred to another school, conflict with work schedule, and course scheduling problem.
- At City, personal reasons was also a top reason. At Mesa, completed degree or certificate was a top reason. At Miramar, dissatisfaction with prior instructor was a top reason, in addition to completed educational goals.

Observations and Recommendations

This retention research generates valuable information for creating efficient and effective strategies to increase student retention in the District. Based on research findings and student comments, it is recommended that SDCCD implement the following retention practices:

- Offer shorter semester terms and more flexible course schedules.
- Offer more online classes and online registration.
- Help students improve study skills.
- Increase parking capacity on campus.
- Have counseling services more accessible to students.
- Offer more career oriented programs.

Institutional Research will continue to conduct analysis of these groups in order to increase retention outcomes; including successful class completion, degree attainment, and successful matriculation.