

## GOALS AND RETENTION FACTORS

### Background

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) (pronounced “sessie”) was distributed in 93 colleges across the United States in spring 2003. Mt. San Antonio College (Mt. SAC) was one of the participating colleges.

CCSSE is a survey that examines different aspects of students’ educational activities (e.g., ask questions in class). These educational activities have been shown to be related to student success. The survey was developed based on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) at Indiana University. The project is supported by grants from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Lumina Foundation for Education.

The following excerpt from the main report will outline one of many aspects of the survey useful for accreditation and planning purposes. The main report can be found at <http://research.mtsac.edu/factbook.html> under Student Engagement Survey.

### Goals and Retention Factors

Most students (69%) indicated that their primary goal was to transfer to a four-year college (table 1). Students were less likely to have an educational goal to change careers (18%).

Table 1. Educational Goals (survey question #15)

Indicate which of the following are your reasons/goals for attending this college?

	Primary goal (%)	Secondary goal (%)	Not a goal (%)
c. To transfer to a 4-year college	69	15	17
h. To obtain knowledge in a specific area	51	29	20
d. To obtain job-related skills	47	30	22
b. To obtain an Associate's degree	44	29	28
e. To update job skills	29	27	44
a. To complete a certificate program	28	26	46
f. To take one or more classes for self-improvement	26	34	39
g. To change careers	18	15	67

When students were asked to rate the barriers to them withdrawing from class or from this college, the most frequent item chosen was because they would “transfer to a four-year college or university” (66%) (table 2). Although Mt. SAC would like its students to graduate from the College, one of its other priorities is to have student transfer to four-year institutions – something these students are thinking they would like to do. In a

more negative vein, students who were working full-time felt that their employment might make them withdraw from the class or College (50%) and lack of finances would also negatively impact them (46%). Less of an influence to the students' dropping out of College was that they would be academically unprepared (27%) or that their educational goals would change (29%).

Table 2. Retention factors (survey question #11)	Very likely (%)	Likely (%)	Somewhat likely (%)	Not likely (%)	Very likely & likely (%)
How likely is it that the following issues would cause you to withdraw from class or from this college?					
h. Transfer to a 4-year college or university	47	18	13	21	66
a. Working full-time	30	20	20	30	50
d. Lack of finances	24	22	23	31	46
g. Moving/relocating	22	20	20	38	42
b. Caring for dependents	17	19	23	41	35
f. Change in career plans	10	22	22	46	32
e. Educational goals changed	9	20	25	46	29
c. Academically unprepared	9	18	27	47	27
Group Average					

Where do students obtain money to finance their education? Most students' major source of educational money is from their own income/savings (60%) (table 3).

Table 3. Finances for tuition (survey question #16)	Major Source (%)	Minor Source (%)	Not a Source (%)
Indicate which of the following are sources you use to pay your tuition at this college? (Please respond to each item)			
a. My own income/savings	60	24	16
b. Parent or spouse/significant other's income or savings	36	18	46
d. Grants & scholarships	14	8	78
c. Employer contributions	7	9	84
f. Public assistance	5	5	90
e. Student loans (bank, etc.)	4	6	91

The most salient findings to each department of the College should be celebrated if it is a success and addressed with an intervention process if it is a barrier to success for students. Formative evaluation should be done throughout the next year to determine if the intervention is successful.

