

# WAITLISTS

Mt. San Antonio College

March 4, 2016

## The Purpose of This Survey...

was to get a better understanding of waitlist effectiveness. Stemming from an exploratory qualitative approach, a numerical data driven perspective was suggested in order to develop a fuller understanding of the waitlists and student's perceptive of its effectiveness.

## Research Questions

Based on the focus group as well as key stakeholder discussion on waitlist effectiveness, three broad questions emerged:

### Q: How do students use waitlists?

A: Overwhelmingly **92%** of students stay on waitlists for as long as possible.

### Q: Do students view waitlists as useful here at Mt. SAC?

A: **61%** of students agreed with the statement "[Waitlists] make me feel like I have a good chance of getting the class I want/need."

### Q: To what extent do students trust the waitlist system?

A: While trust, is a multidimensional concept that requires further research, one aspect of trust includes a feeling of security of someone/thing. Accordingly, **80%** of students view waitlists as **stressful**.

### (Responses from the survey)

*"I don't like the waitlist system because it makes me feel like I have a good chance of getting the class I want but it does not actually help me. I have to [spend] more time in school in order to wait for people drop the class to get into the class I want. After one or two classes, I might [not be able to get] into the class I want, which wastes my time. It is not also convenient for me to plan my schedule since I have a job to do."*

-Current Student

*"I am honestly please[d] [that] there is a waitlist just so there is somewhat of a chance of being enrolled into a class."*

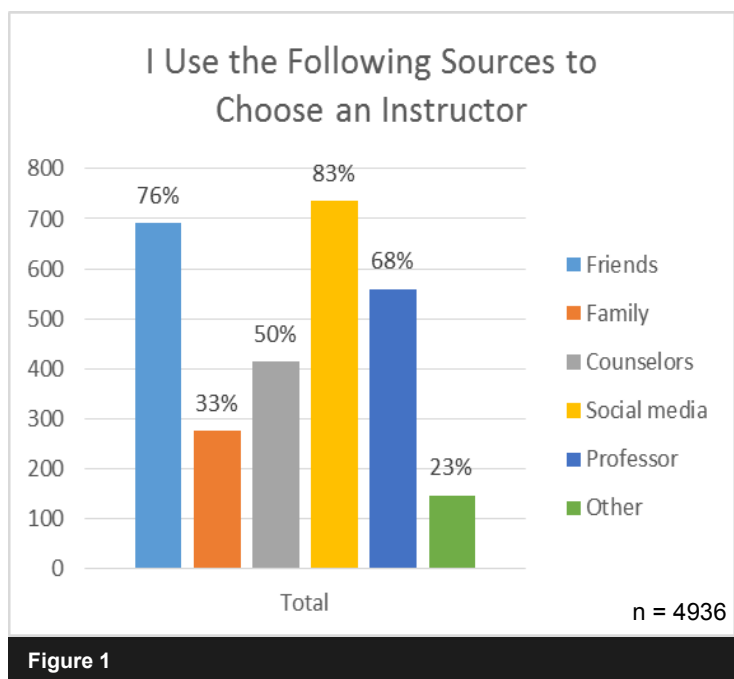
- Current Student



First week of class.

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## How Do Students Use Waitlists?

The point of this question was to understand student action and behavior regarding waitlists and how they attempted navigated the system in order to improve their chances on obtaining a class.

Figure 2 shows that **61%** of students try to **stay on waitlists** for as long as possible while only **33%** of students try to **find an easier class** to enroll into (See Figure 3).

When asked how students choose their classes, **94%** agreed with the statement that they schedule based on **days of the week and the timing**. Interestingly enough, only **78%** of students stated that they choose classes based on the **instructor**. This suggests that that students tend to place a higher priority on choosing classes based on their schedule availability rather than instructor performance.

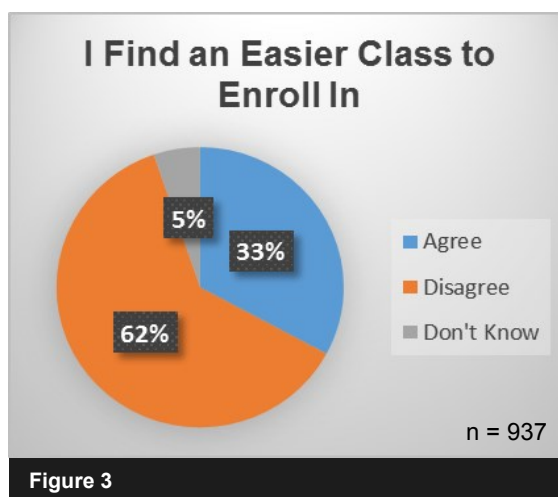
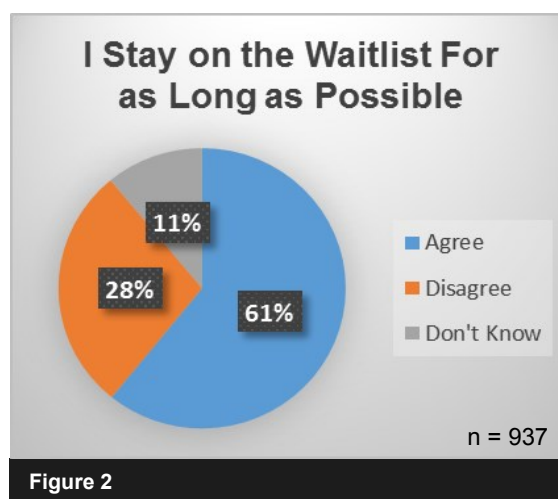
From the focus groups, a common theme of emerged where students choose classes based on the instructor. Further, the sources that students used to decide on which classes to enroll for were analyzed. Figure 1 shows that **83%** of the students surveyed regularly use **social media** to find instructors. Some of these social medias included ratemyprofessor.com, Facebook, Eduplan, and Google+.

The most confusing (and possibly most interesting of the findings) included student's actions towards available classes. The statement "There have been times where classes have been available that fit my schedule, but I have not enrolled in them" brought a fairly close divide. Of the sample, **49%** of the students surveyed **disagreed** with the statement while **46%** **agreed**.

## Methodology

An electronic survey composed on a seven point Lickert scale and fill in the blank questions was created, implemented and distributed to any **currently enrolled** students that have been on at least **one waitlist** during the **2015-2016 academic school year**.

After establishing the parameters, a target population of **7201 students** were identified and sent an email invite to complete the survey with two reminders over a one week period (2/19/16-2/29/16). When the survey was closed, **937 surveys** were completed creating a **13% response rate**. While the ideal target was **1800—2000 responses**, due to time, it was decided to close the study and begin analysis. Various statistics used included: descriptive statistics, correlations, and inferential statistics.



## The Concept of Trust and Satisfaction

Education has shifted from the traditional pedagogy style to a more consumer based model where financial and social transactions occur.

Mt. SAC is no exception to this phenomena and can be seen throughout the college. One key area of interest is course registration and waitlists. Here, students (the clients) are exchanging their time, financial resources, etc. with the College, who in turn, is providing a service (the classes) that is roughly equivalent to the students' exchange.

With repeated transactions, trust and satisfaction emerge. Trust can be define as a social system where members act in a consistent and predictive way and expect others to do the same. Should this occur, a sense of security and expectation arises. For example, within the course registration and waitlist system here at Mt. SAC, students expect to get into the classes that they want or need. If they cannot, then they can choose to enroll into the waitlist. Again, there is a sense of expectation and trust that this system will allow them to enroll into the desired class.

Wait lists...	Help Me	Do Not Help	Easier Enrollment	Harder Enrollment	Neither Help/Hurt
Agree	722	306	509	576	344
Disagree	200	566	410	331	476
Don't Know	15	65	18	30	117
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>937</b>

Figure 4

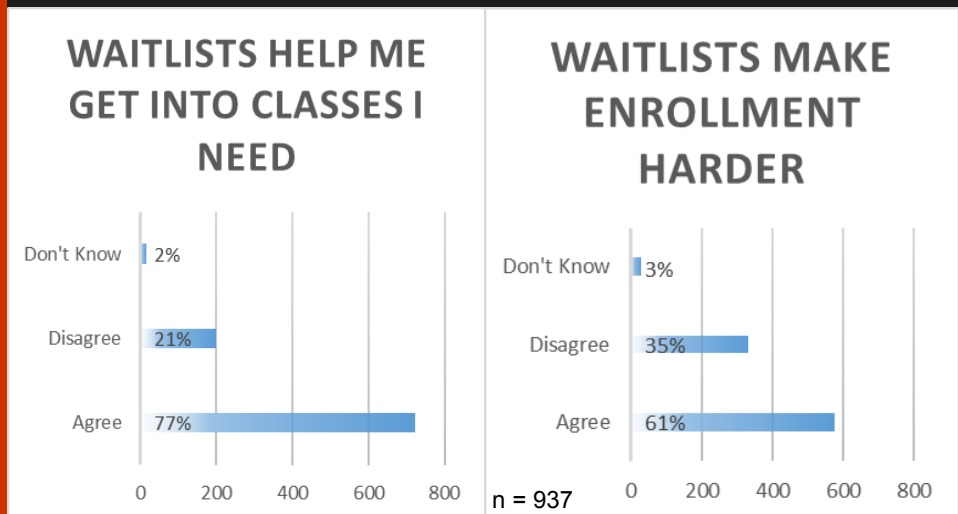


Figure 5

## How Do Students Feel About Waitlists?

Overall, students seem to view waitlists as a tool they can benefit from. According to the survey, **77%** of students viewed waitlists as beneficial in towards getting the classes that they need compared to **21%** that contradict that statement (Figure 5).

Interestingly, while students are **more likely** to suggest that waitlists **help** them get into the classes that they need, they may not necessarily view it as making class **enrollment easier**. According to the survey, **61%** of the responses agreed with the statement "Being on waitlists makes enrolling into classes harder" (Figure 5) compared to **54%** that view waitlists as being a tool to make enrollment easier.

Finally, students were assessed on whether they trust waitlists and are satisfied with them. An overwhelming **81%** of surveyed students viewed waitlists as being stressful, however **61%** of students did view waitlists as a good way of getting the classes they want or need. Further analysis seems to support the notion that while the waitlist is a tool that students view as a beneficial towards enrolling in classes, the process itself can be confusing and often creates anxiety. **In other words, students are satisfied with the end result, but less so with the process.**

# Correlations and Predictions

Throughout the analysis, students' perception of the waitlist became a topic of interest. A two variable correlation was used to determine if there is a relationship between a student's perception of waitlists helping them get into the classes they need and whether waitlists make enrollment easier or harder. Due to the limitations of the data, a non-parametric correlation was conducted and the Figure 6 and 7 report the results below.

While correlations can effectively determine whether there is a relationship between two variables or not, it has little predictive power. Therefore, an ordinal regression was run in order to assess any cause and affect. This type of analysis was used to assess how much the four variables could predict the statement "[Being on waitlists] help me get into the classes I need." Refer to "The Breakdown" for the variables used.

The results propose the these four variables can explain **36%** of the outcome variance meaning they can predict about 36% of the outcome. The results conclude: **Students are more likely to agree that waitlists makes enrollment easier in order for them to get the classes they need** as well as **more likely to agree that waitlists do not help in order to get the classes they need**. In sum, there appears to be a paradox that echos similar responses from students in the focus groups; the data suggests a significant divide of effectiveness and ease of waitlists with little variation in between.

## The Breakdown

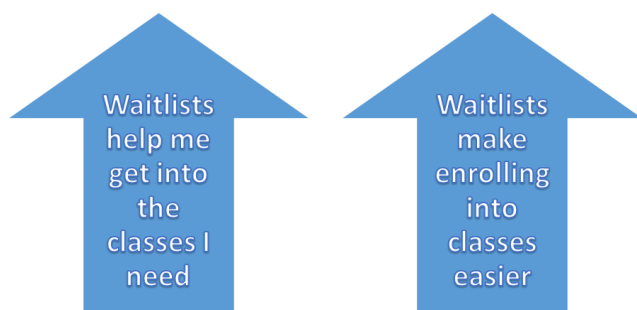
### Outcome Variable:

*"Being on waitlists helps me get into the classes I need."*

### Predictor Variables:

- 1.) Makes enrolling into classes easier
- 2.) Makes enrolling into classes harder.
- 3.) Doesn't help me at all.
- 4.) Neither helps nor hurts me

Figure 6



The results suggested **significance** for the correlations meaning that there is a strong likelihood students perceived waitlists as a tool to **make enrollment easier** and **helps them get into the classes they needed**. In other words, the more students view **waitlists** as a tool to **make enrollment easier** for them, the **more** students believe **waitlists will help them** get into the classes that they need (refer to figure 6).

Furthermore, figure 7 suggests there was a **significant relationship** between waitlists helping students get into classes they need and waitlists making enrollment harder. In other words, the **greater** the students perceived waitlists made **enrollment harder**, the **less likely they are to agree** that

**waitlists will help** them get into the classes they need.

Finally, the **more** a student agrees that **waitlists makes enrollment easier**, the **less likely** they will **agree** that waitlists will make **enrolling into classes harder**.

What can be inferred from this analysis is that there is a relationship with student's perception of the ease of using waitlists and their effectiveness of getting the classes they need.

Suggestions from the students in the survey had similar comments from the focus groups including: increasing the waitlists size, increasing the class size, and well as more counselor resources.

Figure 7

