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College Attendance Survey Fall 2023 Statewide vs. COC Results Numbered Report 341

College of the Canyons

Santa Clarita Community College District

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Institutional Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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COLLEGE OF THE CANYONS

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Introduction

Background

The California Community Colleges (CCC) College Attendance Survey, a state-wide survey developed by The Research and Planning Group (The RP Group) for CCC, was first administered in late summer/early fall 2022 to students of all 116 California community colleges. The purpose was to better understand the reasons influencing prospective and current students' decisions to enroll at a community college, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting marked decrease in community college enrollment and headcounts across the state. Results of the first state-wide survey are presented in The RP Group Statewide College Attendance Survey Fall 2022 Report. The survey was re-administered in fall 2023, with some modifications to the questions asked, and those state-wide results are summarized in The RP Group Statewide College Attendance Survey Fall 2023 Report.

This report describes the results of the fall 2023 survey administered to prospective and previously enrolled College of the Canyons (COC) students. Comparisons to state-wide 2023 and COC 2022 results are provided when available.

Research Questions

The College Attendance Survey sought to understand the following:

- Factors influencing prospective students' decisions to enroll at a community college
- Factors influencing previously enrolled students' decisions to re-enroll at a community college
- Factors influencing previously enrolled students' decisions to drop/withdraw from classes
- Type(s) of support from the college that would be most helpful to students in their decision to enroll/re-enroll
- Preferred class modality
- How supportive previously enrolled students felt that the campus climate was, in general and for students like them
- Perceived importance/value of education.

Methodology

The RP Group created the online survey and shared it, along with an email template, weblink, and QR code to the survey, with California community colleges' institutional research offices. The 42-question survey, which included both fixed- and open-ended questions, was available in both English and Spanish versions.[1] While this survey had many questions, students would only see those that were relevant to them, based on whether they were new/prospective or previously enrolled.

Colleges were provided a list of prospective students through the CCC's Data on Demand portal. The Institutional Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness (IRPIE) Office at COC downloaded this list and matched it with college application records to create a Blackboard email distribution list. In addition to prospective students, the IRPIE Office identified a list

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[1] Survey instrument in Appendix A, available upon request.

of previously enrolled students from college enrollment records. Instructional Service Agreement (ISA) students were then excluded from this list. Definitions for these two groups were as follows:

- Prospective students: students who submitted CCCApply applications to the college between November 1, 2022 and July 31, 2023
- Previously enrolled students: students enrolled at the college during the spring 2023 semester and/or the summer 2023 intersession.

The prospective and previously enrolled student lists were combined, and duplicates were removed. The final distribution list included 27,412 individuals. This list was sent to the Public Information Office to be distributed to students' personal emails and, for previously enrolled students, college emails through Blackboard. The survey invitation was sent in mid-September and was open for four and a half weeks. Reminder emails were sent half-way through this period.

Survey response data were provided by The RP Group through a weblink. Responses were downloaded and duplicates were identified and removed. A total of 945 unduplicated responses (3.4% response rate) were collected. Analysis of fixed-choice questions was done through SPSS, and open-ended questions were coded into thematic categories by student workers in the IRPIE Office. The survey included a question about previous enrollment to categorize respondents into the previously enrolled or prospective categories for analysis.

Results

Student Type

The number of COC students who responded to the fall 2023 survey (N=945) was almost exactly half the number of students who responded to the fall 2022 survey (N=1,880). This decrease in survey participants was also seen between the state-wide 2022 (N=1,292,345) and 2023 (N=29,463) surveys. While the percentage of previously enrolled students and new/prospective students was similar in the COC 2022 survey (see Figure 1), there were far fewer new/prospective student respondents to the 2023 survey.[2] State-wide survey results saw the same drop in new/prospective respondents, from 44% in 2022 to 29% in 2023.

Figure 1. COC 2022 and 2023 surveys, previously enrolled and new/prospective students

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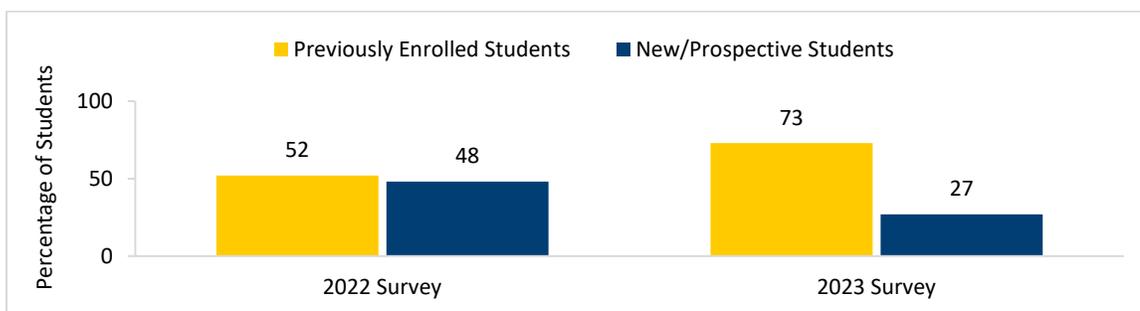
[2] Among both previously enrolled and prospective students, 724 respondents indicated they had already enrolled in Fall 2023 courses at the time of the survey.

Demographic Profile

The race/ethnicity, gender identity, and age range profiles are similar between the COC 2022 and 2023 surveys. When compared to the overall COC fall 2022 student profile, Unknown/Decline to state is overrepresented among survey participants in each of these categories, in part due to students skipping these questions on the survey. Additionally, Hispanic/Latinx students are underrepresented in both surveys (2022 survey = 34%, 2023 survey = 36%, fall 2022 student body = 52%), as are Male students (2022 survey = 24%, 2023 survey = 23%, fall 2022 student body = 46%).

Table 1. Demographic profiles COC 2022 and 2023 surveys

Demographics	2022 survey (N=1,880)	2023 survey (N=945)	Fall 2022 Student Profile (N=11,709) *
Race/Ethnicity**	%	%	%
Asian/Filipino/a/x	9%	7%	9%
Black/African American	4%	3%	5%
Hispanic/Latinx	34%	36%	54%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	<1%	-	<1%
Two or more Races	4%	9%	5%
White	24%	24%	26%
Unknown/Decline to state	24%	21%	2%
Gender Identity***	%	%	%
Female	52%	55%	53%
Male	24%	23%	46%
Non-binary/third gender	2%	3%	Not available
Unknown/Decline to state	22%	19%	1%
Age Range	%	%	%
18 to 24	44%	48%	72%
25 to 34	14%	14%	17%
35+	23%	22%	11%
Unknown/Decline to state	20%	16%	0%

*Source: Workbook: Annual Student Profile (canyons.edu). Excludes concurrently enrolled K-12, Non-credit, and In-service Agreement (ISAs).

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding error.

** Race/Ethnicity coding based on Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) methodology. Individuals selecting more than one ethnicity are included in "Two or more Races" unless one of those ethnicities is "Hispanic/Latinx," in which case they are included in "Hispanic/Latinx." Due to low counts in survey data, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian Native was grouped under Asian/Filipino/a/x. Middle Eastern/Arab/Arab American selections were grouped under White.

***Anybody who selected non-binary and another gender identity were grouped under Non-binary/third gender.

When disaggregated by student type, demographic profiles were similar between previously enrolled and new/prospective students. The exceptions were that new/prospective students had slightly higher percentages of Unknown/Decline to state in all of the three demographic categories, higher percentages for 18 to 24, and lower percentages for White and Female (see Figures 2, 3, and 4).

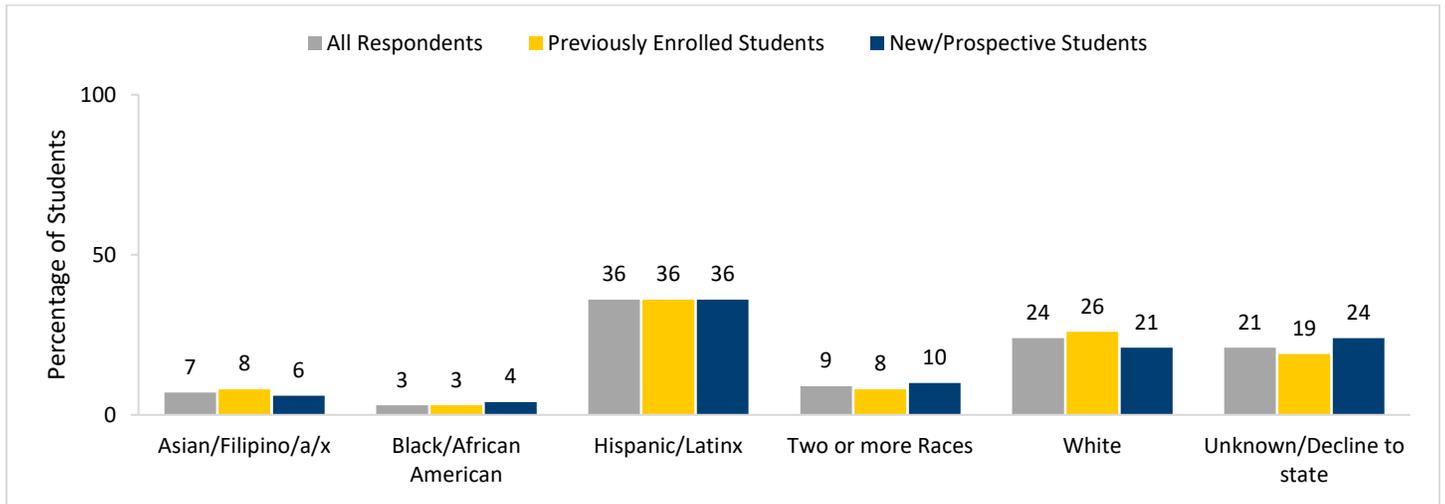*Figure 2. Race/ethnicity COC 2023 survey*

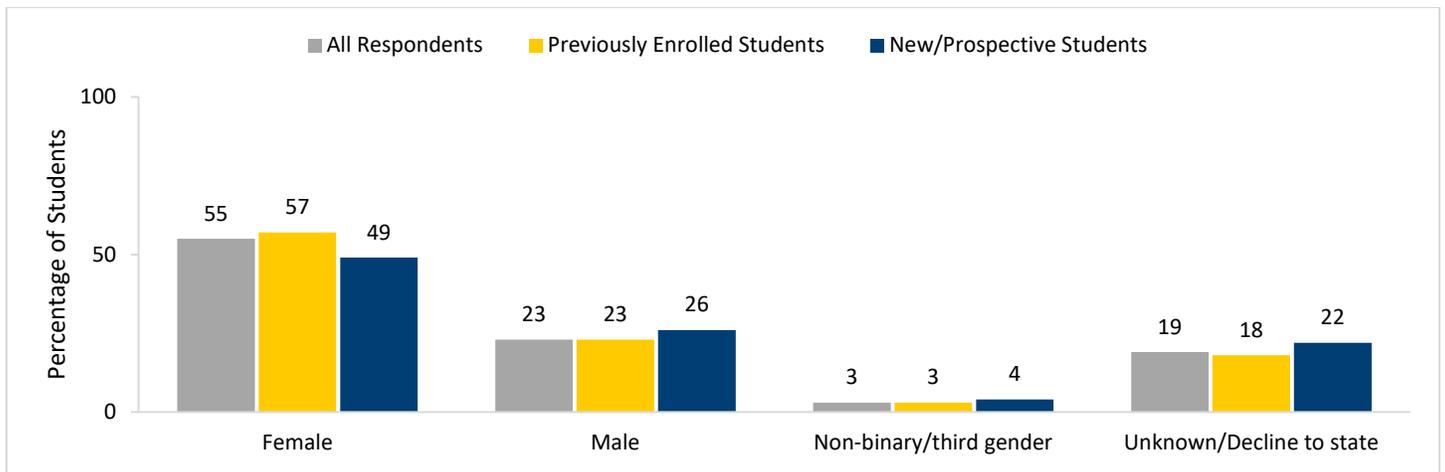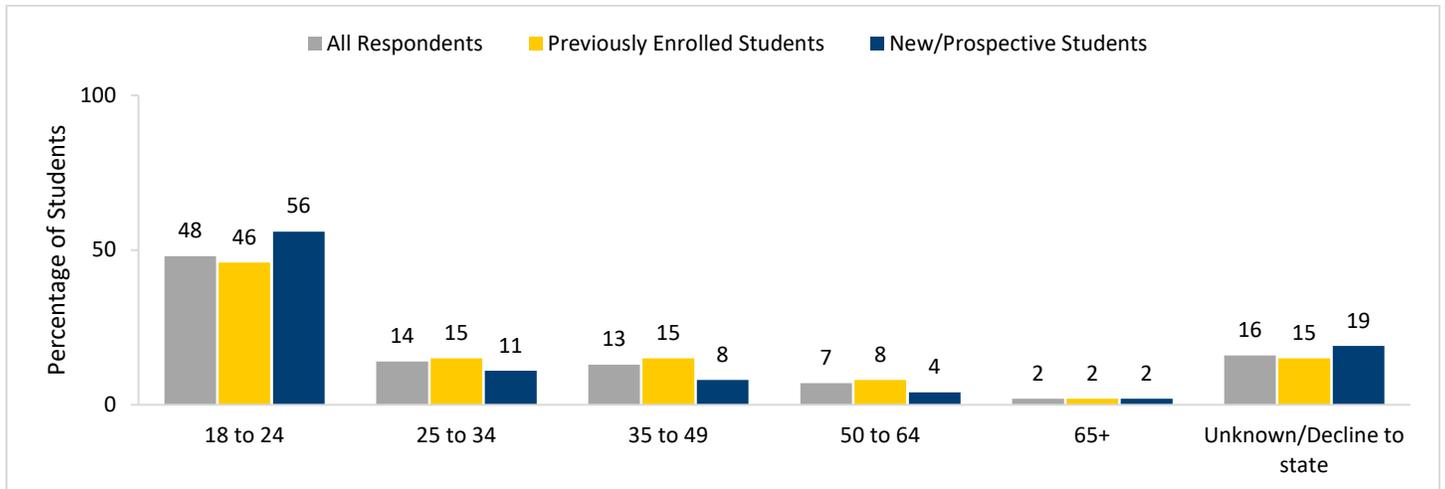*Figure 3. Gender identity COC 2023 survey*

Figure 4. Age range COC 2023 survey

The 2023 survey asked participants about their sexual orientation. Response options included Asexual, Bisexual, Gay, Heterosexual or straight, Lesbian, Pansexual, Queer, Questioning or unsure, Same-gender loving, Prefer to self-describe (Write in), and Prefer not to answer. These were recoded into the following categories for analysis: Not LGBTQIA+, LGBTQIA+, and Prefer not to answer/Unknown (see Figure 5). In a separate question asking about students' transgender status, three percent of respondents on the 2023 survey (n=31) said they identify as transgender.

Figure 5. LGBTQIA Status COC 2023 survey
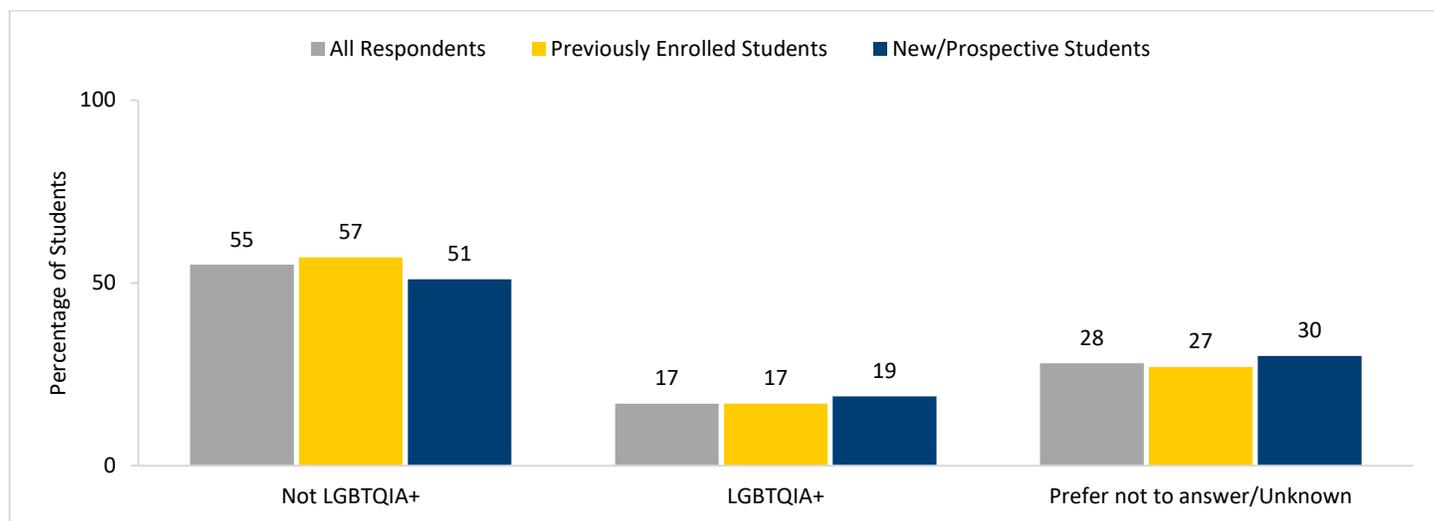
Student Characteristics

Both 2022 and 2023 surveys asked students whether they identify with specific student groups, such as if they are a veteran, if they have a disability, and if they have dependents. The 2023 survey also asked whether they are a first-generation college student, if they are/were a foster youth, and if they were formerly incarcerated. There was a slight increase in the proportion of students with a disability (11% to 16%) and a slight decrease in the proportion of students with dependents (16% to 11%) from the 2022 survey to the 2023 survey. Previously enrolled students and new/prospective students from the 2023 survey had similar response proportions in each of these categories.

Table 2. Student characteristics COC 2022 and 2023 surveys

Student Characteristics	2022 survey (N=1,880)	2023 survey (N=945)
I am the first person in my family to attend college	n/a	26%
I have a disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychological/ mental)	11%	16%
I have a child or children under the age of 18 receive more than half their support from me*	16%	11%
I am a veteran or active military service member	2%	3%
I was/am a foster youth	n/a	1%
I was formerly incarcerated	n/a	<1%

*The 2022 survey asked students if they had dependents and what age range they belonged to. To compare against 2023 answers, those who indicated they had dependents in the 0-5 or 6-18 age ranges were included in the fall 2022 counts.

In comparison to COC's survey, the state-wide results in 2023 had higher number of respondents from all of the student characteristic categories, except formerly incarcerated students. The proportions of first-generation students, students with dependents, and foster youth students were considerably larger among state-wide respondents, and the representation of students with a disability was slightly larger.

Figure 6. Student characteristics COC vs State-wide 2023 surveys
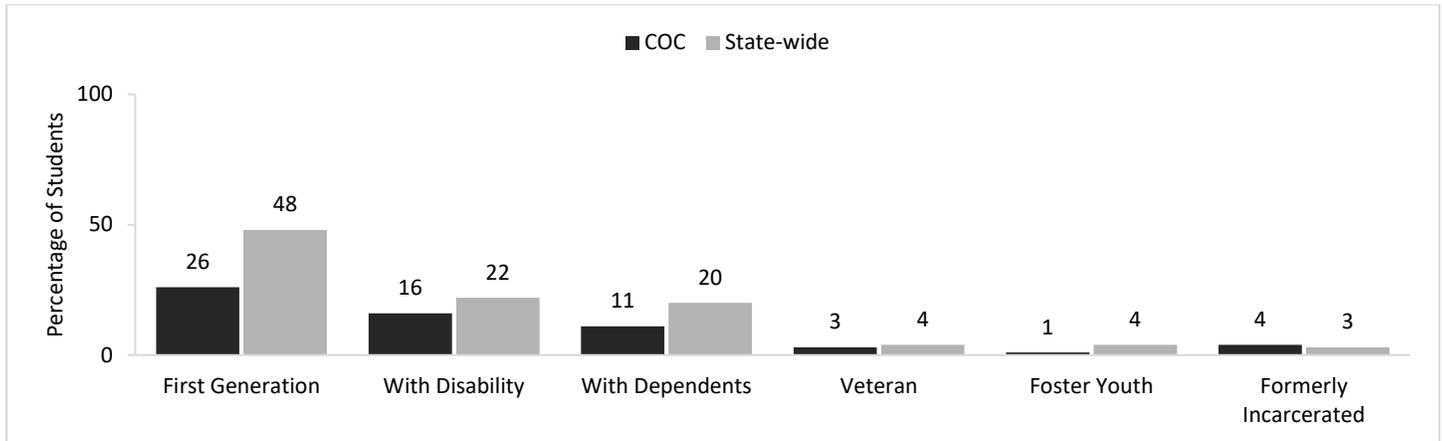
Modality Preferences

All students who took the 2023 survey were asked what type of class modality they preferred. While both previously enrolled and new/prospective students favored in-person classes above other modality options, closer to half of new/prospective students (42%) preferred it and roughly one-third of previously enrolled students (30%) preferred it. The results from COC students (see Figure 7) are nearly identical to those of the state-wide survey results. Like COC, state-wide results show that a higher percentage of previously enrolled students prefer online asynchronous courses (23%) than new/prospective students do (16%).

Figure 7. Student modality preferences COC 2023 survey
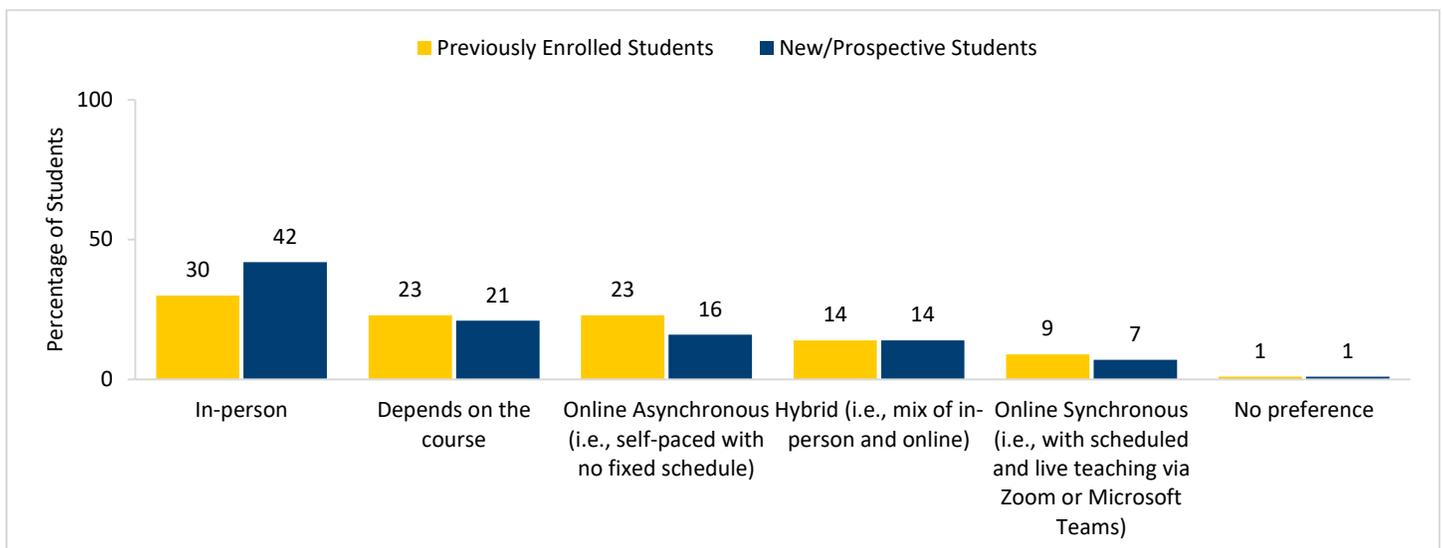
Importance of College Education

The 2022 and 2023 surveys asked students about their perceived value of a college education (see Table 3). In both surveys, more than 70% of all respondents said having a college education is very important to them. That rate drops slightly for 2023 new/prospective students to 67%. There is a large decrease in this percentage for students who indicated that they are still deciding whether or not to enroll in the Fall 2023 semester. Only 48% of these students said that a college education was very important to them (see Figure 8). Moreover, 12% of respondents who were 'still deciding' or 'did not plan to attend' indicated that the value of education was somewhat unimportant/not important at all.

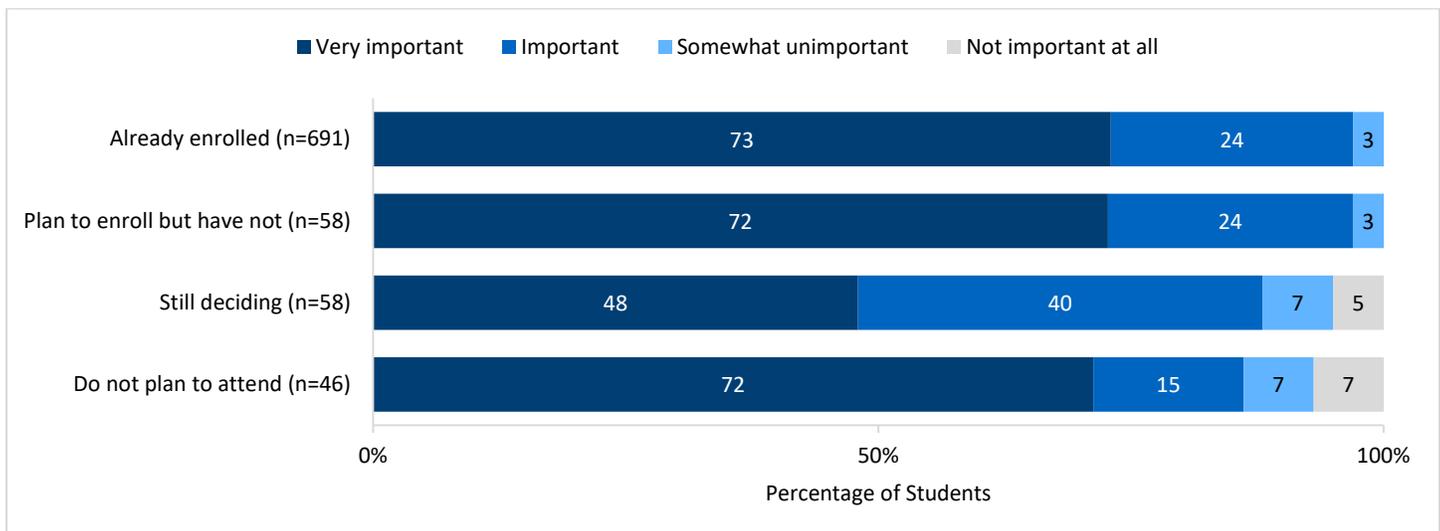*Table 3. Students' perceived value of education COC 2022 and 2023 surveys*

All Respondents	Very important	Important	Somewhat	Not important at all
Fall 2022 (N=1622)	73%	23%	4%	<1%
Fall 2023 (N=853)	71%	24%	4%	1%

Figure 8. Value of education by fall 2023 enrollment plans COC 2023 survey

Reasons Affecting Enrollment Decisions

For COC's new/prospective students in fall 2023, the top three reasons affecting their decisions to attend were:

1. Considering another college/university
2. Unsure they can balance school and other responsibilities
3. Need to prioritize work.

Figure 9 details the full list of reasons students selected. State-wide, new/prospective students' top three reasons included: unsure they can balance school and other responsibilities, cannot afford to pay for college, and considering another college/university.

Figure 9. Reasons affecting new/prospective students' decisions whether to attend (check all that apply) COC 2023 survey
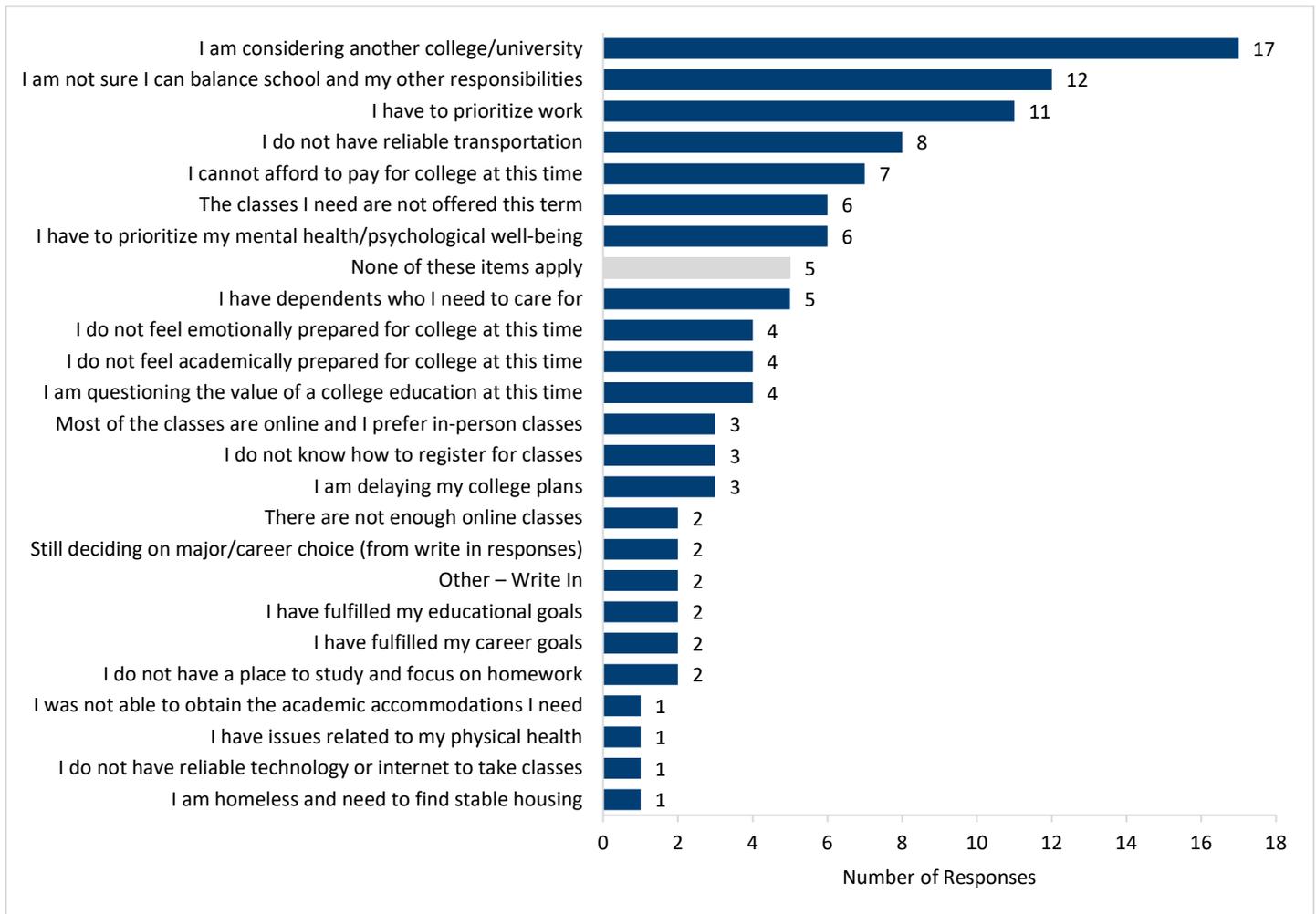
The top two reasons that COC previously enrolled students said affected their decision to re-enroll in fall 2023 was that they had already completed a certificate and/or degree and that they will be transferring to a four-year university (see Figure 10). After excluding these, the subsequent top three reasons were:

1. Unsure they can balance school and other responsibilities

2. Cannot afford to pay for college

3. Need to prioritize work.

These match the top three reasons chosen by state-wide, previously-enrolled students. Both new and returning students indicated that they are struggling to balance school with other responsibilities, including work and caring for dependents.

Figure 10. Reasons affecting previously enrolled students' decisions to re-enroll (check all that apply) COC 2023 survey

| Reason	Number of Responses
I have already completed a certificate and/or degree	42
I am or will be attending a four-year university	32
I am not sure I can balance school and my other responsibilities	26
I cannot afford to pay for college at this time	25
I have to prioritize work	16
There are not enough online classes	14
I have dependents who I need to care for	14
The classes I need are not offered this term	9
I have fulfilled my educational goals	9
None of these items apply	8
Other – Write In	8
I have to prioritize my mental health/psychological well-being	7
I am questioning the value of a college education at this time	7
I have issues related to my physical health	5
Class times do not fit personal schedule (from write in responses)	4
Most of the classes are online and I prefer in-person classes	3
I cannot keep up with the pace of classes	3
I do not have reliable transportation	3
I do not know how to register for classes	3
I have fulfilled my career goals	3
I was not able to obtain the academic accommodations I need	2
I do not have a place to study and focus on homework	2
I do not have reliable technology or internet to take classes	2
Lack of educational guidance (from write in responses)	2
I am homeless and need to find stable housing	1

For those students who indicated that they cannot afford to pay for college at this time, the top cost making college unaffordable was college fees, followed by books and related course materials (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Costs making college unaffordable (check all that apply) COC 2023 survey
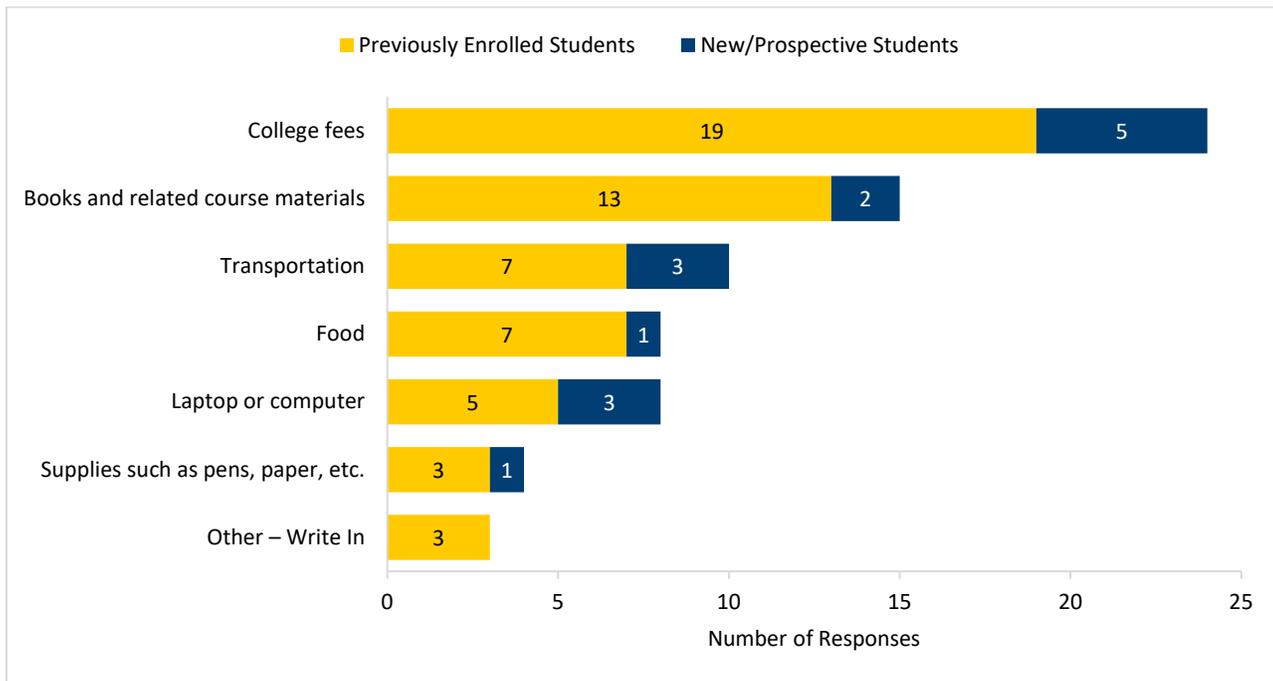
How the College Can Help

The theme of needing financial support is also seen in students' responses to the question, "What's the one thing the college can do to help you attend/stay enrolled?" Both previously enrolled and new/prospective students at COC said providing financial support was the top thing the college could do to help them with their enrollment decisions. As detailed in Figure 12, greater percentages of students indicated that adding more online classes would be helpful (29% of previously enrolled students and 18% of new/prospective students) compared to the percentage who indicated adding more in-person courses would help (8% of both student groups).

Figure 12. Main way the college can help students attend/re-enroll COC 2023 survey
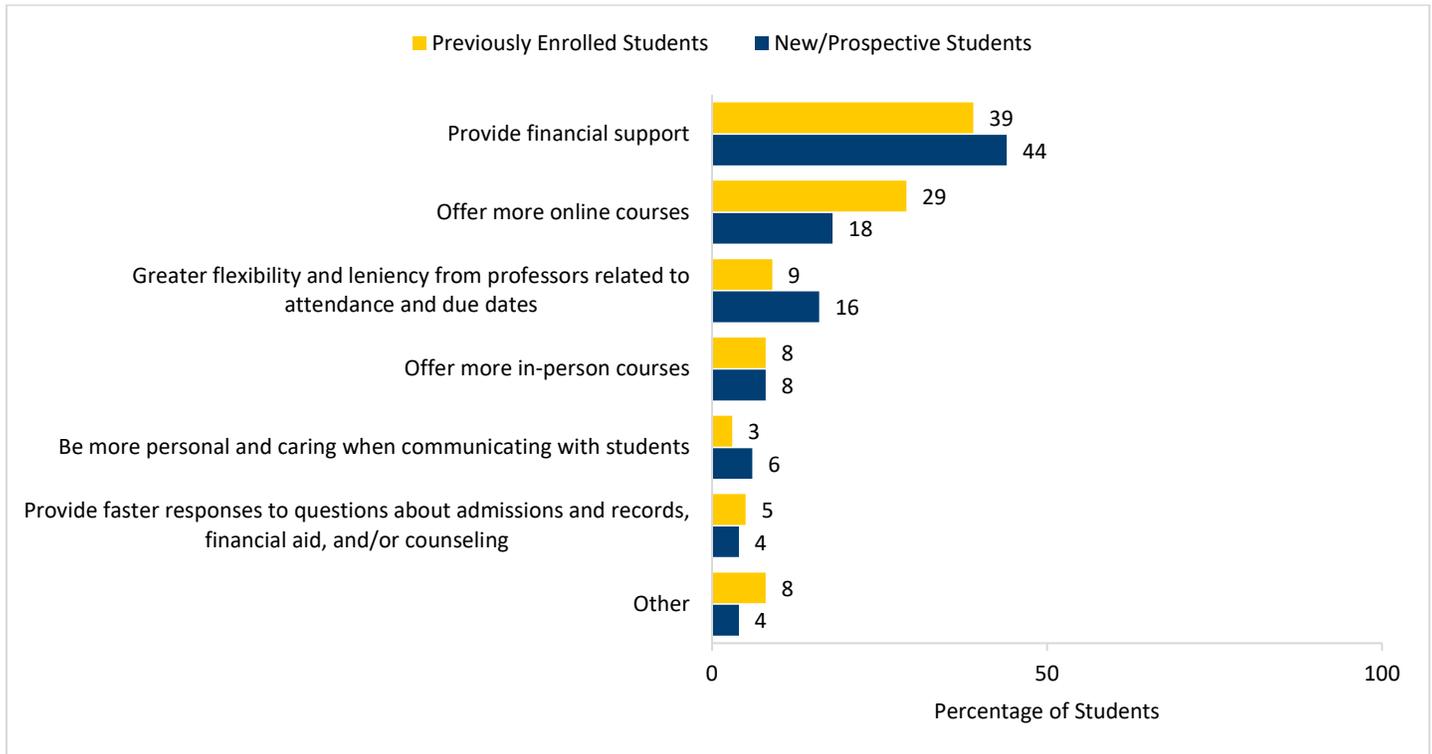
Students Enrolled Part-time

Students who indicated that they were already enrolled for courses in Fall 2023, they were planning to attend but had not enrolled yet, or they were still deciding were asked how many units they planned to take. Nearly half (49%, n=407) indicated that they planned to take 12 or more units, equivalent to full-time enrollment (see Figure 13). The proportion of survey-takers who indicate they plan to enroll full-time is higher than the proportion exhibited across the entire student body at COC. In Fall 2022, only 36% of all students were full-time (Workbook: Fall Student Profile (canyons.edu)).

*Figure 13.Units planned for Fall 2023 COC 2023 survey*
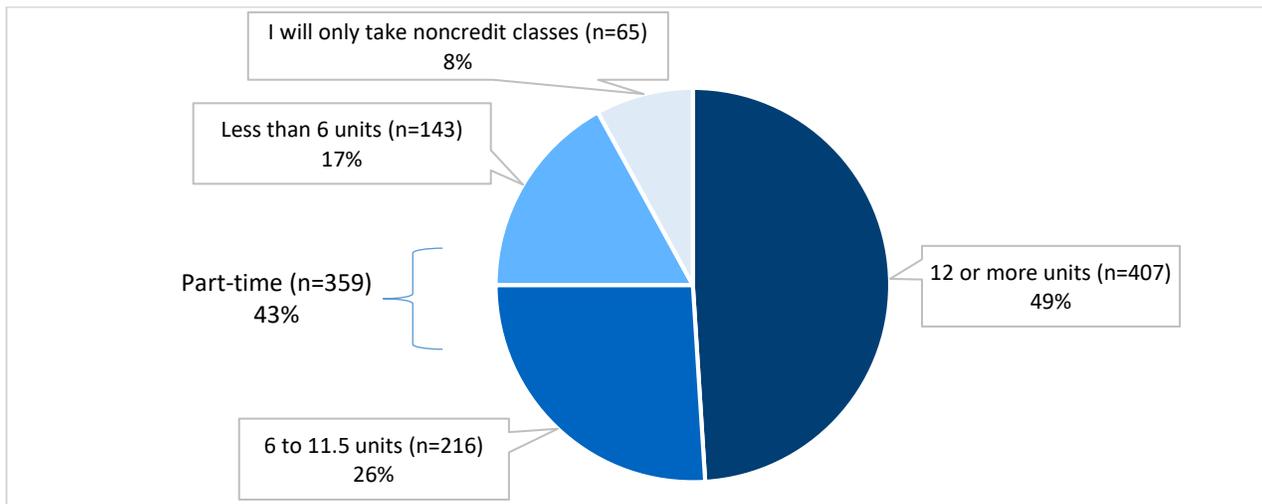
Those students who indicated they had only planned to enroll part-time were asked the open-ended follow-up question, "Is there anything the college could do to help you take more units in Fall 2023?" The most prominent theme that came from these responses was that there was not necessarily anything the college could do because the student had other personal matters that limited the amount of time they could dedicate to schooling. Multiple respondents referenced the need to balance work, family, and other responsibilities in addition to their courses. The next two themes to emerge were providing financial assistance and increased course availability (ex: additional sections, more courses during the evening and weekends, etc.).[3]

Students Who Dropped Classes

Compared to the 2022 survey, a lower proportion of students in the 2023 survey reported dropping or withdrawing from class(es) in their last term (27% in 2022 and 16% in 2023).

Figure 14. COC 2022 and 2023 surveys, did you drop or withdraw from any class(es) in your last term?

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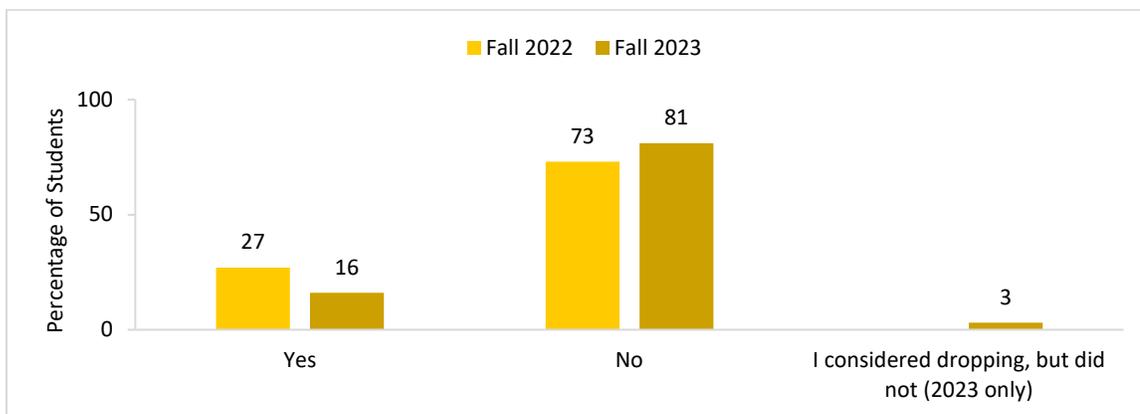
[3] Student responses in Appendix B, available upon request.

The top reasons why students dropped/withdrew from classes were:

| 2023 Survey	2022 Survey

2023 Survey

1. Prioritizing mental health/psychological well-being
2. Could not keep up with pace of classes
3. Prioritizing work

2022 Survey

1. Prioritizing work
2. Prioritizing mental health/psychological well-being
3. Could not keep up with pace of classes

These were also the top three reasons students selected in the state-wide surveys for both 2022 (1. Prioritizing work, 2. Prioritizing mental health, 3. Not able to keep up with pace of classes) and 2023 (1. Prioritizing mental health, 2. Prioritizing work, 3. Not able to keep up with pace of classes).

Figure 15. Reasons students dropped their class(es) (check all that apply) COC 2023 survey
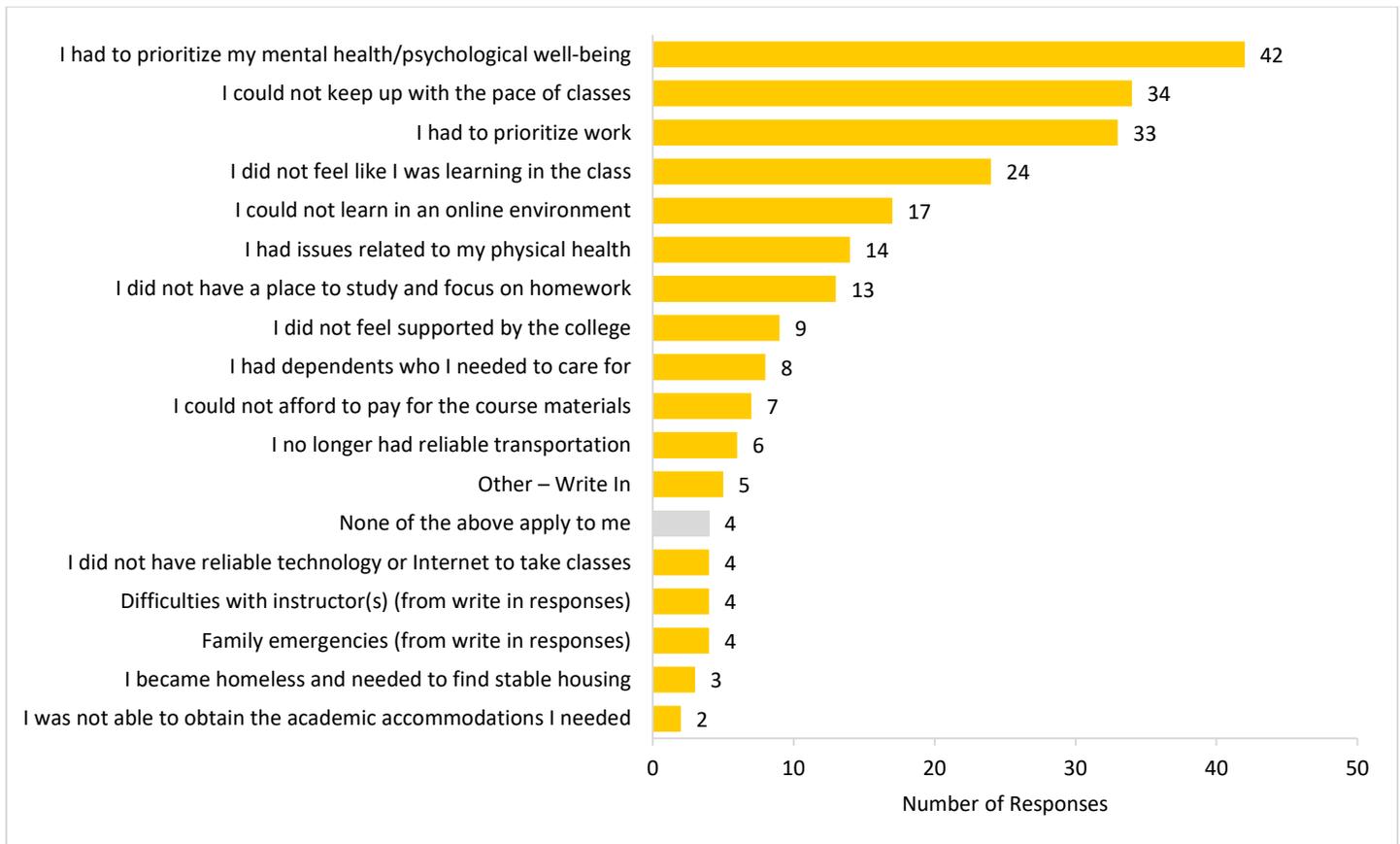
When asked what their main reason for dropping was, in an open-ended question, students primarily referenced:

1. Being overwhelmed (class workload/pace of classes/difficulty of classes) (n=26)
   a. "I dropped out because the class seemed a little too fast-paced for me"
   b. "Couldn't keep up with the course"
2. Personal matters (n=24)
   a. "I had dependents who I needed to care for…"
   b. "I had issues with my health"
3. Issues with the course(s) structure/format and/or the professor(s) (n=17)
   a. "I didn't feel like the professor covered the material adequately"
   b. "Not a good online class"

These students were then asked what they believe the college could have done to help them stay in their class(es). Responses aligned with the themes mentioned above.

"I think the pacing of some STEM classes are too intense, and they can seriously wear on a students physical and mental health"

"More teachers and options for summer and winter classes"

"Provide extra flexibility for work schedules"

Another notable theme from these responses was the need for improved communication between the college and the student, whether between faculty and students or between campus support services and students.

Campus Climate

Previously enrolled students were asked how supportive they believed the college's campus climate was, both in general and for students like themselves. For both categories, the percentage of responses for very supportive/supportive increased slightly from 2022 (88% in general, 85% students like you) to 2023 (92% in general, 88% students like you) (see Figures 16 and 17).

*Figure 16. How supportive is the campus climate at your college **for students in general**? COC 2022 and 2023 surveys*
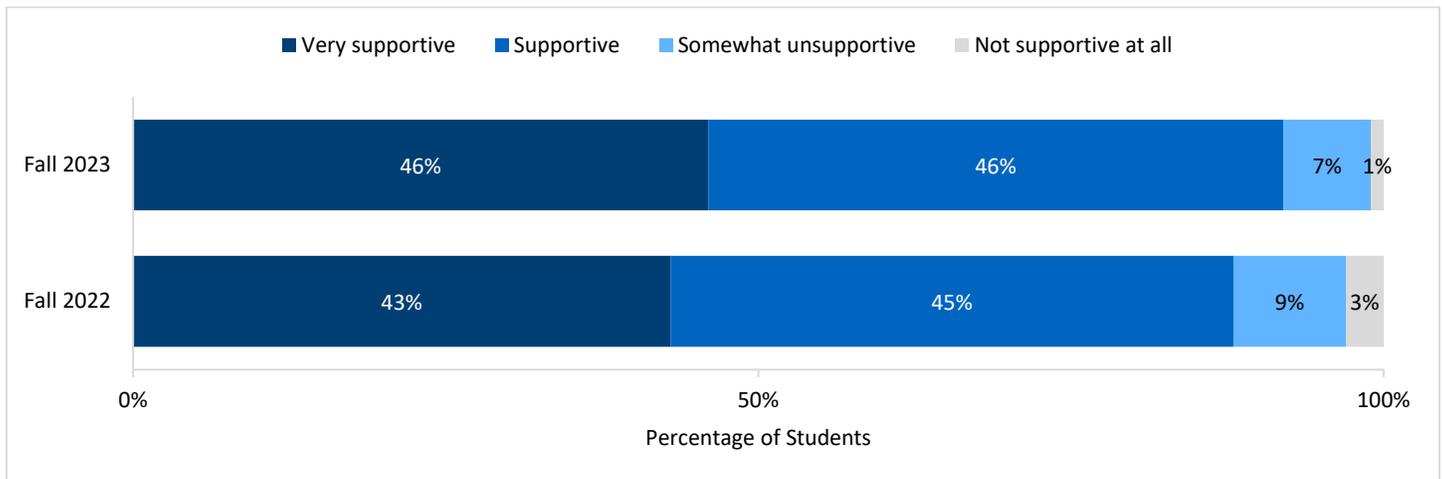

*Figure 17. How supportive is the campus climate at your college **for students like you**? COC 2022 and 2023 surveys*
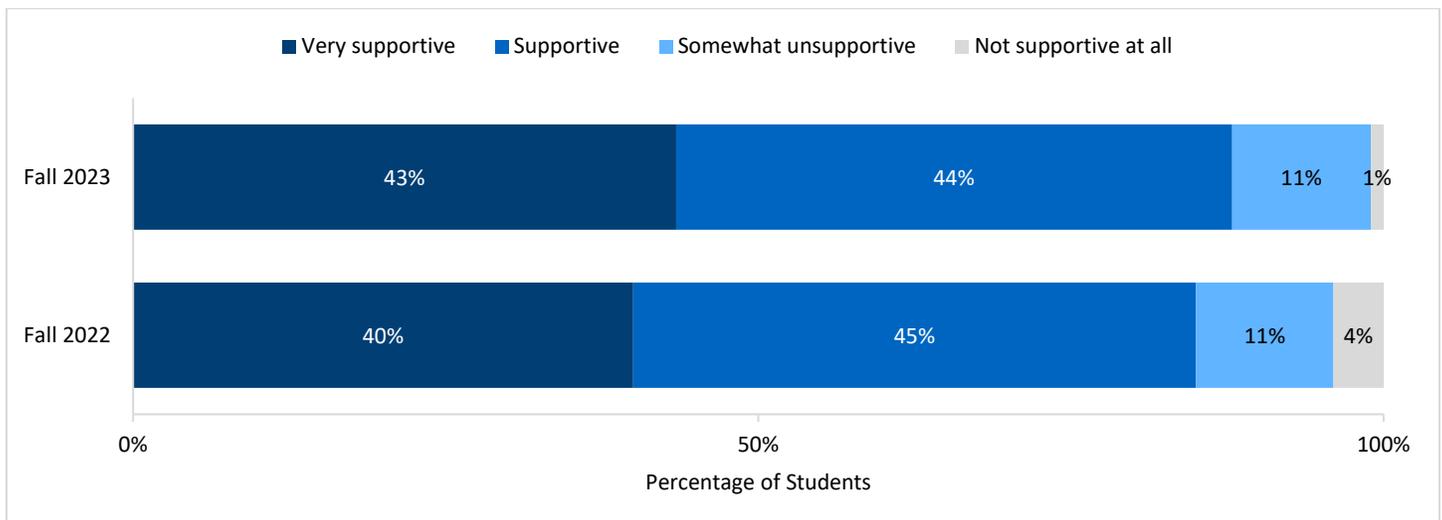
There was consistency across disaggregated groups for the rate at which they indicated they felt the campus climate was very supportive/supportive. Only two groups with N>25 had a rate that was +/- 5 percentage points from the overall rate of 88%. These groups were age group 35 to 49 (N=99, 82% very supportive/supportive) and students with dependent(s) (N=86, 81% very supportive/supportive).

Table 4. Supportive Campus Climate by disaggregated groups COC 2023 survey

How supportive is the campus climate at your college for students like you?	Very supportive/supportive	Difference from All
All respondents (N=624)	88%	n/a
Asian/Filipino/a/x (N=54)	91%	+3%
Black/African American (N=20)	85%	-3%
Hispanic/Latinx (N=248)	86%	-2%
Multiracial (N=57)	88%	0%
White (N=176)	91%	+3%
Female (N=387)	87%	-1%
Male (N=156)	90%	+2%
Non-binary/third gender (N=22)	95%	+7%
Transgender (N=24)	96%	+8%
Not Transgender (N=541)	88%	0%
LGBTQIA+ (N=116)	89%	+1%
Not LGBTQIA+ (N=388)	88%	0%
18 to 24 (N=315)	90%	+2%
25 to 24 (N=103)	85%	-3%
35 to 49 (N=99)	82%	-6%
50 to 64 (N=54)	87%	-1%
65+ (N=14)	100%	+12%
First generation student (N=182)	87%	-1%
With a disability (N=113)	86%	-2%
With dependent(s) (N=86)	81%	-7%
Veteran (N=18)	89%	+1%
Foster youth (N=10)	80%	-8%
Formerly incarcerated (N=6)	*	*

*Rates not presented for N<10.

Summary Findings

- About half as many students participated in the COC 2023 College Attendance Survey (N=945) compared to 2022 (N=1,880). Additionally, a much lower percentage of new/prospective students participated in 2023 (27%) compared to 2022 (48%). These drops were also seen in the state-wide survey.

- Both previously enrolled and new/prospective students indicated a preference for in-person classes (30% and 42%, respectively). A higher percentage of previously enrolled students (23%) prefer online asynchronous classes compared to new/prospective students (16%). However, when asked how the college can help students attend/re-enroll, more previously enrolled and new/prospective students said to offer more online courses (29% and 18%, respectively) rather than offer more in-person courses (8% for both).

- Nearly three-quarters of respondents (71%) think that having a college education is very important; however, of students who are still deciding whether or not to attend, only 48% think having a college education is very important.

- Being unsure whether they can balance school and other responsibilities, and the need to prioritize work, were two top reasons affecting students' decisions to attend/re-enroll. These were both cited as reasons why many students could only attend part-time.

- College fees and books/course materials were the top two items that students indicated were making college unaffordable.

- Previously enrolled students who dropped/withdrew from class(es) during their last term said the top three reasons for doing so were: 1) prioritizing mental health/psychological well-being; 2) could not keep up with pace of classes; and 3) prioritizing work.

- A majority of students find the COC campus climate very supportive/supportive, both in general (92%) and for students like them (88%).

Implications

The Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness office collects information on how data and research conducted assist the campus community in making evidence-based decisions. In light of this, we ask that requestors, and/or members of any department/area that utilize the data, provide action implications for each report. Using the Action Implication Form, please report actions and/or decisions that emerge from the data and findings presented in this report.

Once completed, action implications will be made available upon request.

Recommendations

Upon review of the results of the analyses, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration:

- Continue to explore providing additional course sections, especially during evenings and weekends to better accommodate working students.
- Consider providing additional resources and support for students' mental health needs.
- Continue efforts to minimize students' financial burdens, such as books/course materials, by expanding existing initiatives (ex: zero-textbook cost classes) and increasing financial aid awareness.

For questions, or more detailed information on this research brief, contact Meredith Hamilton, Research Analyst at meredith.hamilton@canyons.edu or Preeta Saxena, Ph.D., Director Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness at preeta.saxena@canyons.edu.