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Commencement Survey: Spring 2020

College of the Canyons

Santa Clarita Community College District 26455 Rockwell Canyon Road Santa Clarita, CA 91355

Institutional Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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Introduction & Background

In March 2020, in order to minimize the effects of the Coronavirus, College of the Canyons, with guidance and support from the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CA Community College Chancellor's Office, 2020), transitioned all in-person classes to online instruction. While this transition was initially considered to be short-term, the Coronavirus pandemic required an extension of mandatory online classes through, at a minimum, the end of the Spring 2020 semester. In order to recognize the success of the College's Spring 2020 graduates, the Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Office, at the request of the Commencement Committee, conducted a survey of students that petitioned to graduate in Spring 2020. The purpose of the survey was to obtain feedback on alternative options for the graduation ceremony. The results from the survey will provide information for the Commencement Committee to guide planning efforts for the Spring 2020 graduation ceremony.

Methods

<u>Procedures.</u> The list of students that petitioned to graduate in Spring 2020 were provided by the College's Admission and Records office.

<u>Subjects.</u> Out of the possible 3,616 students who were invited to participate in the survey, completed surveys were received from 791 students (22 percent response rate).

<u>Instrument.</u> The survey included three closed-ended questions intended to assess graduates' preference regarding a virtual graduation or an in-person graduation to be held in the future. The survey included one open-ended question to allow students to provide additional comments or suggestions regarding the College's plan for the Spring 2020 graduation ceremony.

Results

<u>Preferences for Graduation.</u> As indicated in Figure 1, the majority of respondents (56 percent) indicated that they prefer to postpone the Spring 2020 in-person graduation; specifically until Spring 2021 (28 percent) and December 2020 (27 percent). Forty-one percent of the respondents indicated that they prefer a virtual (all online) graduation in June 2020 that highlights the respondent and their degree (41 percent). Five percent of the respondents indicated that they do not plan to participate in graduation.

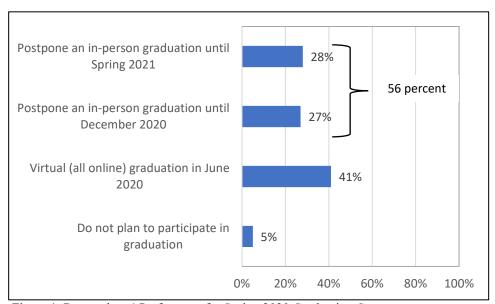


Figure 1. Respondents' Preferences for Spring 2020 Graduation Ceremony

In-Person Graduation Ceremony

When presented with **only** the option of an in-person graduation ceremony, with no virtual option offered, respondents indicated the following:

<u>In-Person Graduation Ceremony in December 2020</u>

- Would attend 45 percent (as compared to 27 percent that chose this option when presented with multiple options)
- Would not attend 30 percent
- May attend 25 percent

<u>In-Person Graduation Ceremony in Spring 2021</u>

- Would attend 23 percent (as compared to 28 percent that chose this option when presented with multiple options)
- Would not attend 46 percent
- May attend 31 percent

Additional Comments/Suggestions. Two hundred ten respondents provided additional comments or suggestions regarding the College's plans for the Spring 2020 graduation ceremony. Sixty-four of the respondents indicated that they had no additional comments or suggestions. One hundred forty-six comments/suggestions indicated the following:

- Prefer an in-person graduation 68 respondents, specifically:
 - o Prefer a December graduation 18 respondents
 - Prefer a separate ceremony 16 respondents
 - Prefer a summer ceremony 13 respondents
 - Specified that they do not want a virtual ceremony 10 respondents
- Will not be attending graduation 24 respondents, specifically:
 - Unable to attend due to transferring to another school 10 respondents
- Positive comments regarding the College 19 respondents
- Concerns about the size of graduation if combing Spring 2020 and Spring 2021 ceremonies 15 respondents
- Prefer a virtual ceremony 11 respondents
- Indicated that the ceremony should not be postponed 10 respondents
- Questions/comments regarding receiving their degree/certificate 10 respondents
- Social distancing concerns/comments 8 respondents

Recommendations

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

• Consider the results of this survey when planning future graduation ceremonies; specifically during the mandatory online education in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

References

California Community College Chancellor's Office. (2020, March 23). California Community Colleges Chancellor Takes Additional Actions to Help Students and Ensure Continuity of Instruction at 115 Colleges. Retrieved: https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/News-and-Media/Press-Releases/2020-COVID-Updates-PR

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