

Fall 2016 CRC Applicant Survey: Reasons for Not Enrolling

Background:

One of the activities outlined in Cosumnes River College's Student Equity Plan is to investigate and uncover reasons for why some students do not enroll after submitting an application. Identification of potential barriers to enrollment amongst prospective students is critical for two reasons. First, based on fall 2015 application and enrollment data, African American and Native American applicants enroll at a lower rate than their peers. Second, the College seeks to increase its enrollment to meet growth targets. Given these motivating factors, the CRC Research Office administered a survey to students who applied but did not enroll with the intention of identifying barriers for prospective students, especially those who have been historically underrepresented.

Survey Method:

In fall 2016, the Research Office administered a brief 3-item online survey to applicants who did not enroll (n=1,948). Links to the survey were sent out via mobile text messages, with each message containing a unique link for each individual. The survey was active from November 15th through December 11th, 2016. Incentives were used to increase survey participation; those who completed the survey would be entered in a random drawing, in which 20 individuals would each win a \$20 gas card. Winners were notified by text. Out of the 1,948 applicants, less than 7% participated in the survey (n=115).

Limitations:

Contacting applicants using their self-reported "day phone" number by text was more cost effective than administering the survey by phone. However, conducting the survey by phone may have yielded a higher response rate. Furthermore, the text invitation was only sent out once; the resources (student staff, their time, and the texting software) used to send out the text messages were not available to send out a reminder. Due to the low sample size, data could not be disaggregated by demographic group, and results should be interpreted with caution.

Findings:

The table below displays the ethnicity/race of the target population and the survey respondents. The targeted subgroups, Native American and African American students, were underrepresented in the Respondent group, while the Hispanic/Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander/Filipino student groups were overrepresented.

Table 1. Ethnicity/Race Breakdown by Surveyed Population and Respondents.

Ethnicity/Race	Number of Respondents	% (n=115)	Number of Target Population	% (n=1,948)	% (n=1,948)
African American	22	19.1%	415	21.3%	-2.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Filipino	30	26.1%	479	24.6%	1.5%
Hispanic/Latino	42	36.5%	600	30.8%	5.7%
Native American	<10	—	29	1.5%	-0.6%
Unknown	<10	—	46	2.4%	-1.5%
White	19	16.5%	379	19.5%	-2.9%
Grand Total	115	100.0%	1,948	100.0%	

The first question asked applicants to identify why they did not enroll for the fall 2016 semester from a set of answer choices. Respondents were permitted to select more than one answer choice. While the most frequently selected response was "Other," the feedback varied. Students who answered "Other"

indicated that they went to another school, joined the military, were addressing personal health issues, lacked transportation, or were not able to afford the cost of attending community college as a non-resident in California. The number one institutional barrier to enrolling at CRC, according to almost one-third of the respondents (30.5%), was the applicants' inability to get the classes they needed because the classes were either full (23.5%) or not offered (7.0%). More than one-fifth (21.7%) reported that they enrolled in another school. (For details, see Table 2). These findings were also true for the African American respondents (n=22).

Table 2. Survey Respondents' Reasons for not Enrolling at Cosumnes River College.

Reasons for not enrolling	Count	Percentage
Other	33	28.7%
The classes I needed were full.	27	23.5%
I enrolled at a different college or university.	25	21.7%
My work schedule makes it difficult for me to take classes.	15	13.0%
It was not easy for me to find information on how to enroll.	14	12.2%
It costs too much to attend CRC (e.g., student fees, books, parking, etc.).	11	9.6%
I have very important family responsibilities (e.g., caretaker of a family member).	11	9.6%
The classes I needed were not offered.	8	7.0%
I didn't feel like I was welcomed.	7	6.1%
The classes I needed were not offered during the times I could attend (e.g. early morning or evening classes).	7	6.1%
I was dropped from my classes and was not able to re-enroll.	1	0.9%
Total	115	100.0%

The second survey item asked survey participants what would increase their likelihood of enrolling at Cosumnes River College. Out of the 115 respondents, 90 provided feedback (78.3%). The most common theme was the need to increase communication, visibility of the enrollment process, and visibility of the College in the community. Improvements in these areas would increase understanding of how to enroll in classes, knowledge of deadlines for payments, awareness of student support services, and awareness of where services and classrooms are located on campus. Additionally, several students shared that they applied late and therefore could not enroll in the courses they needed. Finally, a total of 15 students suggested that the college needs to increase its class offerings; some even recommending more online and evening courses.

The final question asked respondents if they plan to enroll at CRC in spring 2017. More than half (54.7%) indicated they were planning to enroll at CRC ("*definitely yes*" or "*probably yes*") and 25.5% were unsure ("*might or might not*"). A larger proportion of African American respondents indicated they plan to enroll in spring 2017 than the overall respondents (68.2% vs. 54.7%).

Conclusion:

Not surprisingly, limited course offerings were major barriers identified by respondents. This finding supports the need for Instructional Services to respond to course demand and supply data. Additionally, the College should explore ways to improve access to information on enrollment and visibility in the community.