

**Non-Returning Students Survey Analysis:
Spring – Fall 2023 Persistence**

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Non-Returning Students Survey Analysis 2023

Background

After two years of college persistence drops due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students in higher education are starting to exhibit an increased commitment to furthering their education with a nearly 76% national Fall-to-Fall persistence rate among students who started college in Fall 2021 – a return to pre-pandemic levels (National Student Clearinghouse, 2023). In California, Fall-to-Fall persistence rates have also returned to pre-pandemic levels with 73% of students who started college in Fall 2021 persisting in their education through Fall 2022 (National Student Clearinghouse, 2023).

A similar national trend can be seen at the community college level with a 61.6% national Fall 2021-to-Fall 2022 persistence rate (National Student Clearinghouse, 2023). Within the California Community College system, however, term-to-term persistence rates have dropped below pandemic levels with a 67% system-wide persistence rate in 2021-2022 compared to a 70% system-wide persistence rate in 2020-2021 (CCCCO Student Success Metrics Dashboard, 2023).

Modesto Junior College's (MJC) Fall-to-Fall persistence rates, however, paint a different picture for the institution compared to its system counterparts as post-pandemic persistence at MJC surpasses the pre-pandemic rate of 53.1%, with 58.8% of MJC students who started college in Fall 2022 persisting in their education through Fall 2023. Although this increase may be promising, the fact remains that MJC is still far below the state and national persistence rates for community colleges.

Purpose

The purpose of this survey was to (1) identify why non-returning students who were enrolled in Spring 2023 decided to no longer attend MJC in Fall 2023 and (2) provide a basis for future study and intervention development related to early attrition indicators among MJC students.

Motivation

The results from this survey will be used to inform decisions surrounding the attainment of Objective C.1 of the 2023-2028 MJC Strategic Plan, Objectives A.3 and B.2 of the 2023-2032 Educational Master Plan, and to support the work of the Strategic Enrollment Management workgroup on campus.

Method**Survey Development**

The survey consisted of 10 questions with the total number of questions administered to each participant varying based on their answer to the question “What is your primary reason for not re-enrolling at MJC?”. Questions administered were based on recent student attrition literature (Bailey et al., 2015; Manyanga et al., 2017; Rosenbaum et al., 2017), as well as surveys conducted by MJC in previous years. See Appendix A for complete questionnaire.

Administration

A list of non-returning students was generated based on students who attended MJC in Spring 2023, but had not registered for courses for the Fall 2023 semester as of July 25, 2023. A total of 8,095 individuals were then sent a link to the survey via email. The survey, administered

through Qualtrics, accepted responses for 15 days before data collection closed. All individuals who completed the survey were entered into a raffle to win one of four \$25 virtual Amazon gift cards.

Results

Demographics

Of the 8,095 individuals who received the survey, we received a total of 739 partial or completed responses (9% response rate). The majority of respondents were female ($N = 518$), with 202 male respondents, seven non-binary, and 10 who preferred to not provide their gender. Respondents mostly consisted of individuals 19 or younger ($N = 243$) and 20-24 ($N = 196$), with 84 aged 25-29, 69 aged 30-34, 44 aged 35-39, 51 aged 40-49, and 50 aged 50+. Mirroring the college population, most respondents were Hispanic ($N = 394$) or White ($N = 246$). The remaining 13.2% of respondents were African-American ($N = 23$), American Indian/Alaskan Native ($N < 5$), Asian, ($N = 44$), Filipino ($N = 11$), Pacific Islander ($N < 3$), or unknown ($N = 15$).

Descriptive Statistics

Overall MJC Experience. Respondents were asked to rate their experience on 10 different aspects of MJC on a five-point Likert scale (1 – extremely negative, 5 – extremely positive). Overall, respondents rated MJC as a moderate or neutral experience, with experiences related to courses ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.86$), academic program/major ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.89$), and instruction ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.90$) being rated as mostly positive, and parking ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.94$), student life ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.91$), and academic advising ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.09$) being rated as mostly neutral experiences.

Items Important in Meeting Educational Goal. Respondents were also asked to rate the importance of specific items with respect to how important they were in meeting their transfer, degree/certificate, or educational goal on a five-point Likert scale (1 – extremely negative, 5 – extremely positive). On average, respondents considered ability to take online courses ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.07$) and developing an educational plan ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.04$) very important to meeting their educational goal while being mentored by faculty/staff ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.25$) and joining a club, group or athletic team ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.31$) were considered to be of minimal importance.

Primary Reason for Leaving. When asked to provide their primary reason for not re-enrolling at MJC (figure 1), 21.5% of respondents stated they had transferred to a Four-Year Institution ($n = 146$). Approximately 7% of respondents ($n = 49$) had graduated from MJC. Aside from graduation or transfer, 8% of respondents ($n = 55$) had stated they didn't re-enroll because they couldn't get the class they needed, 6.5% didn't re-enroll because they were struggling with their mental health ($n = 44$), and 6% could no longer afford to attend ($n = 43$).

Figure 1. Primary Reason for Leaving

Primary Reason for Leaving MJC	% of Respondents
Transferred to a 4-Year Institution	21.5%
Couldn't Get the Class They Needed	8%
Graduated from MJC	7%
Struggling with Mental Health	6.5%
Could No Longer Afford to Attend	6%
Other	32%

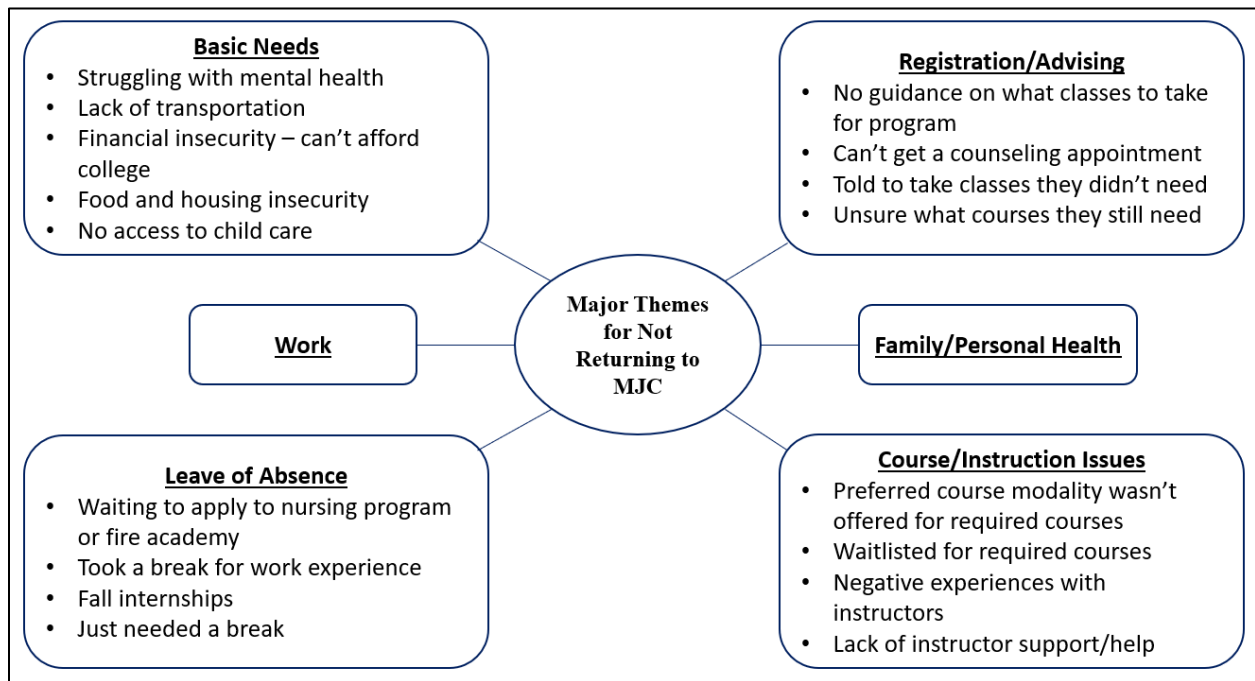
Thirty-two percent of respondents ($n = 219$) had a reason other than the list provided that they chose not to re-enroll at MJC (figures 2 & 3). A thematic analysis was conducted to derive common themes present in comments provided by respondents who selected 'other' as their

primary reason for not re-enrolling. Of these comments, six major themes emerged: Basic Needs, Family/Personal Health, Work, Leave of Absence, Registration/Advising, and Course/Instruction Issues.

Figure 2. Primary Reason for Leaving (Other)

Primary Reason for Leaving MJC (Other)	% of Respondents
Basic Needs	20.3%
Family/Personal Health	16.1%
Leave of Absence	12.6%
Work	12.6%
Registration/Advising	11.2%
Course/Instruction Issues	11.2%

Figure 3. Major Themes for Not Returning to MJC (Other)



Correlational Analysis

Overall MJC Experience. A Pearson's r correlational analysis was used to examine the relationship between experience with one's academic program/major and their overall experience at MJC. Results indicated that there was a significant positive correlation between a student's experience with their academic program/major and their experience with courses ($r(550) = .736, p < .001$), instruction ($r(554) = .652, p < .001$), financial aid/scholarships ($r(552) = .421, p < .001$), registration ($r(548) = .520, p < .001$), academic advising ($r(552) = .547, p < .001$), student life ($r(549) = .551, p < .001$), student services ($r(550) = .576, p < .001$), and other MJC staff ($r(550) = .560, p < .001$).

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this survey was to (1) identify why non-returning students who were enrolled in Spring 2023 decided to no longer attend MJC and (2) provide a basis for future study and intervention development related to early attrition indicators among MJC students. The results from this survey will be used to inform decisions surrounding the attainment of Objective C.1 of the 2023-2028 MJC Strategic Plan, Objectives A.3 and B.2 of the 2023-2032 Educational Master Plan, and to support the work of the Strategic Enrollment Management workgroup on campus.

The thematic analysis conducted identifies six overarching themes outside of transfer and graduation that may point to why students are not returning to MJC: Basic Needs, Family/Personal Health, Work, Leave of Absence, Registration/Advising, and Course/Instruction Issues. These themes are further supported by respondents rating developing an educational plan and the ability to take online courses as very important in helping them meet their educational goal. Interestingly, many respondents reported having positive experiences with academic advising,

registration, courses, instruction, financial aid, and student services which, on face value, seems contradictory to the overarching non-returning themes. However, when looking to the correlational analysis conducted on overall MJC experience, strong positive correlations were found between a student's experience when interacting with their *academic program/major* and their experience with courses, instruction, financial aid/scholarships, registration, academic advising, and student services. This suggests that, while some students may have positive experiences in the areas of registration/advising, course/instruction, and basic needs assistance, this experience seems largely dependent on connecting with their academic program/major. Future research should be conducted to identify how interaction with Schools and departments improve students' experiences with registration/advising, course/instruction, and basic needs assistance.

References

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Appendix A: Non-Returning Student Survey Items

Q1: What is your primary reason for not re-enrolling at MJC?

- A. I transferred to a four-year university
- B. I graduated
- C. I couldn't get the class I needed
- D. I enrolled at another two-year college
- E. I didn't like the class/classes
- F. I could no longer afford to attend
- G. I got a job
- H. I wasn't sure where to turn for help
- I. I only needed the specific course(s) for another school
- J. I became a primary caretaker for a family member
- K. I am struggling with my mental health
- L. I didn't have access to childcare
- M. I am struggling with housing security
- N. I am struggling with food security
- O. Other; specify below

Q2 (Shown if 'A' was selected from Q1): Congratulations on your transfer! Which 4-Year Institution are you now attending?

(Short text answer)

Q3 (Shown if 'A' was selected from Q1): What is your major(s) at this 4-Year Institution?

(Short text answer)

Q4 (Shown if 'B' was selected from Q1): Congratulations on graduating! What degree or certificate did you receive from MJC?

(Short text answer)

Q5 (Shown if 'C' was selected from Q1): If you left MJC because of specific course needs, please identify the course(s) below:

(Short text answer)

Q6 (Shown if 'D' was selected from Q1): Which Community College are you now attending?

(Short answer text)

Q7 (Shown if 'D' was selected from Q1): What is the primary reason you chose to attend a different community college?

- A. It was closer to home
- B. The classes I needed were offered there
- C. The program I wanted to study was offered there
- D. I liked it better than MJC
- E. My friends/family were going there
- F. They offered more in-person courses
- G. They offered more online courses
- H. Other; specify below

Q8(Shown if 'E' was selected from Q1): What did you not like about the courses?

(Short answer text)

Q9 (Shown if 'F' was selected from Q1): Please rate each statement based on why you were unable to afford staying enrolled at MJC on a scale of 1-5 (1-Extremely disagree, 5-Extremely agree):

- A. Tuition and fees were too expensive
- B. I applied for financial aid but was not eligible
- C. Transportation was too expensive
- D. I had other financial needs that made paying for college less of a priority
- E. The cost of books was too expensive
- F. Child care was too expensive
- G. Food insecurity
- H. Shelter insecurity

Q10 (Shown if 'G' was selected from Q1): Congratulations on the job! Is your new job related to your MJC major?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Somewhat

Q11 (Shown if 'G' was selected from Q1): Did you use the Career Center or other MJC Services to find your new job?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Q12 (Shown if 'A' was selected from Q11): Please rate your satisfaction with the MJC Career Center.

- A. Extremely dissatisfied
- B. Somewhat dissatisfied
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat satisfied
- E. Extremely satisfied

Q13 (Shown if 'A' was selected from Q11): What MJC Career Center Services did you use? Select all that apply.

- A. Jobspeaker
- B. Internships
- C. Employment Search/Application Assistance
- D. Resume/Cover Letter Review
- E. Two-Year Career Action Plan
- F. Interview Prep
- G. Other; specify below

Q14: Please rate your experience with the following aspects of MJC on a scale from 1-5 (1-Very Negative, 5-Very Positive):

- A. Academic Program/Major
- B. Courses
- C. Instruction
- D. Financial Aid/Scholarships
- E. Registration
- F. Academic Advising
- G. Student Life
- H. Student Services
- I. Parking
- J. Other MJC Staff

Q15: Please rate the following items on regard to how important they were in meeting your transfer, degree/certificate, or educational goal on a scale from 1-5 (1-Not at all important, 5-Extremely important):

- A. Developing an education plan
- B. Selecting a major/program of study
- C. Guidance from a counselor/advisor
- D. Joining a club, group, or athletic team
- E. Being mentored by a faculty or staff member
- F. Being supported by family and friends
- G. Ability to take a variety of online courses
- H. Ability to take a variety of in-person courses

Q16: Please rate your experience with the following course aspects:

- A. Delivery (in-person)
- B. Delivery (online)
- C. Course Content
- D. Course Structure
- E. Instruction
- F. Course Day/Time

Q17: Which day of the week would you prefer to take courses on campus?

- A. Monday
- B. Tuesday
- C. Wednesday
- D. Thursday
- E. Friday
- F. Saturday
- G. Not at all, I prefer online courses

Q18: Which time slot do you prefer to schedule your in-person classes?

- A. Early Morning (6:30am to 8:30am)
- B. Morning (8:30am to 11:30am)
- C. Late Morning – Early Afternoon (11:30am to 1:30pm)
- D. Afternoon (1:30pm to 4:30pm)
- E. Late Afternoon (4:30pm to 10:00pm)
- F. Not at all, I prefer online courses

Q19: Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience at MJC?

(Short text answer)

Q20: We are committed to helping students navigate the community college experience. If we can answer any questions or help you with re-enrollment, please provide your name and contact information below and someone will be in touch with you.

(Short text answer)