



Nonmatriculation Study

Fall 1995

Oakland Community College

What questions are we trying to answer?

- Why do some students who have applied to the college choose not to enroll in courses?
- Do reasons for nonmatriculation vary by gender and race?

What methods were used?

- Study was conducted at OCC in September and October, 1995
- Survey instrument designed and pretested by OCC staff from Planning & Analysis and other areas of the college
- Data collected by telephone interviewers over ten-day period

Whom did we survey?

- From a total of 2,229 nonmatriculants in the applicant file, we surveyed 417 nonmatriculants who had indicated an intention to enroll in Fall 1995 but had not done so by the end of registration

Who responded to the survey?

- 62% female, 38% male
- 63% white, 28% African-American, 4% Asian, 3% Hispanic
- Respondents comparable to nonrespondents in race, gender, and age
- College-wide enrollment in Fall 1995: 60% female, 40% male; 81% white, 12% African-American, 4% Asian, 2% Hispanic

Why did respondents apply to OCC?

Reason	% Citing
Increase knowledge in academic field	85.0
Personal interest/enrichment	83.8
Degree or certificate	79.2
Gain skills for new career	71.0
Complete courses for transfer	51.0
Convenient location	43.6
Gain skills for job advancement	42.9
Take a specific class	19.3
OCC has a good reputation	15.7
To meet employer requirements	12.5

Which pre-enrollment services did respondents use?

Enrollment Service	% Using Service
Participated in orientation program	11.3
Spoke with financial aid officer about financial aid	11.8
Took ASSET or MTELP placement test	24.9
Spoke with OCC counselor about classes	35.0
Received written materials about OCC	65.7

What were the reasons for nonmatriculation?

Reason Category	% Citing
Financial	41.0
Personal	36.3
OCC-related	21.4
Employment-related	19.8

What were the financial reasons?

Financial Reason	% Citing
Did not have money to pay tuition	85.7
No deferred tuition plan available	50.6
Did not apply for financial aid	40.1
Applied for financial aid but received funds too late	15.4
OCC tuition is too high	15.2
Applied for financial aid but did not receive adequate funds	13.2

What were the personal reasons?

Personal Reason	% Citing
Unspecified personal	37.0
Enrolled at 4-year institution	26.3
Enrolled at another community college	22.0
Uncertain about attending OCC	19.2
Child care problems	12.2
Family illness	11.4
Personal illness	11.3
Lost interest in attending college	6.3
Moved out of area	5.6

Do nonmatriculants plan to enroll at OCC in the future?

- 83% of respondents plan to enroll at OCC in the future
- Of those who plan to enroll, 64% intend to enroll in the Winter 1995 term
- Of those who do not plan to enroll at OCC in the future, 63% planned to attend or are already attending another two or four year institution

Are there gender and racial differences in nonmatriculation?

- Whites are more likely than nonwhites to speak to a counselor about classes
- Nonwhites are more likely than whites to speak to a financial aid officer about financial aid
- White and nonwhites are equally likely to receive written materials about the College

Are there gender and racial differences in nonmatriculation?

- Nonwhite students are more likely to cite financial reasons for nonmatriculation.
- Nonwhite students are more likely to indicate that they did not receive enough financial aid, or that they received aid packages too late

Are there gender and racial differences in nonmatriculation?

- Whites and nonwhites are equally likely to say they did not have money when tuition was due, and to cite the lack of a deferred tuition payment plan

Are there gender and racial differences in nonmatriculation?

- Men and women are equally likely to cite financial reasons for nonmatriculation
- Women are more likely to say that the classes they wanted were offered at the wrong campus, and that they were not accepted into the desired program

Are there gender and racial differences in nonmatriculation?

- Men are more likely than women to cite employment-related reasons for nonmatriculation
- Women are more likely to cite personal reasons, especially child care problems
- Men are more likely to cite a general loss of interest in attending college

Non-Matriculating Student Survey
Oakland Community College
Fall 1995

OCC is currently in the process of contacting people who have applied for admission to the college but, to our knowledge, have never registered for courses. We hope that this will help us identify some ways in which the college can better serve its potential students. Would you be willing to help OCC by answering a few questions?

1. First, I need to confirm whether you have ever applied to OCC for admission:

Yes, I have applied to OCC for admission
 No, I have never applied to OCC for admission (end survey)

2. Before continuing, I also need to confirm that you have never registered for a class at OCC:

Yes, I have registered for a class at OCC (end survey)
 No, I have never registered for a class at OCC

3. When you filled out your OCC application form, which of the following did you do?

	Yes	N
Talked with an OCC counselor about classes	1	0
Talked with an OCC financial aid officer about financial aid	1	0
Took the ASSET placement test	1	0
Participated in an orientation program	1	0

4. We would also like to learn why you decided to apply to OCC. Please tell me which if any of the following reasons apply to your decision to apply to OCC:

	Yes	N
To increase my knowledge in an academic field	1	0
To obtain a degree or certificate	1	0
To complete courses necessary for transfer to another college	1	0
To obtain skills and knowledge to qualify for a new career	1	0

To obtain skills and knowledge to advance in current career	1	0
To meet my employer's requirements	1	0
For personal enrichment	1	0
Other (please explain):	1	0

5. I am going to read you a list of reasons why some students who have applied for admission to OCC do not register for classes. Please tell me which, if any, of these reasons apply to your decision not to register for classes:

	Yes	N
Decided to work full or part time instead of attending OCC	1	0
Classes conflicted with work schedule	1	0
The cost of attending OCC is too high	1	0
Did not receive adequate financial aid	1	0
Moved out of the area	1	0
Child care problems	1	0
Illness in family	1	0
Classes I wanted were filled/closed	1	0
Was not accepted into program I wanted	1	0
Changed my mind about attending OCC	1	0
Enrolled at another college instead	1	0
Personal or family problems	1	0
Other reasons	1	0

6. Can you give me any more details about the reasons you just mentioned? (probe)

7. When you first applied to OCC, were you interested in enrolling in a specific program or course, or were you undecided about what classes you would take?

Yes, I had a specific program or course in mind

No, I was undecided about what classes I would take (skip to 8)

8. What program and/or classes were you interested in when you applied for admission?

9. Do you plan to reapply for admission and enroll in courses at OCC at any point in the future?

Yes (go to 10)

No (skip to 11)

10. Do you know when in the future you might reapply to and enroll at OCC?

Next semester

Next year

Do not know

Other (please write in)

11. Are there any specific reasons why you don't plan to reapply and enroll in classes?

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to participate. The information you provided will help OCC improve its programs and services for future students.

Over the past several decades, numerous attrition and retention studies have sought to determine the reasons why college students leave or remain in higher education. Much of the extensive literature on attrition from four-year institutions takes Tinto's (1975, 1987) model as a starting point. Tinto's characterization of the attrition process integrates the pre-entry attributes of the student with institutional characteristics and the student's experiences at the institution to generate the student's decision to leave or remain at the institution. Additional literature has identified a series of pre-entry characteristics common to students who are likely to drop out: they tend to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Astin, 1964); from less supportive families (Hackman & Dysinger, 1970); and may have less academic ability (Wegner & Sewell, 1970) or less commitment to a career goal (Astin, 1964). Institutional characteristics which have been found to influence attrition include type (Astin, 1972), quality (Astin, 1971), and size (Tinto, 1975).

A attrition subgroup which has received somewhat less attention in the literature is comprised of students who apply for admission, are accepted, but never enroll in classes. At colleges and universities where competition among peer institutions is increasingly intense, attention to this issue often takes the form of marketing studies to determine where students who have been accepted have opted to enroll. The increasingly common practice of applying to multiple institutions and selecting the "best offer" has resulted in growing numbers of students who apply and are accepted but do not enroll. While numerous studies have sought to determine where these students are opting to enroll and why, fewer have considered who these students are and what the institution may be doing which is influencing their decisions not to enroll.

In community colleges, the issue of nonmatriculating students is often not adequately addressed. The "open door" policy means that community colleges offer admission to all applicants; at institutions where not application fee is assessed, being accepted is as simple as filling out a form. Even at institutions where applications are not processed without payment of a deposit, nonmatricuation rates appear to be rising significantly. In the fall of 1987, Tompkins Cortland Community College reported 456 non-attendees from pool of roughly 800 applicants with paid deposits. This figure represented an 800% increase from 1985. Other institutions have reported nonmatriculation rates of 30-40% (Ross, 1990).

Community colleges which have surveyed nonmatriculating students have found that there are multiple reasons why students apply but never enroll in courses. A 1982 study at Mott Community College found that 17% of those surveyed did not enroll due to personal or family problems, while an additional 14% stated that the classes they wanted to take were full or cancelled. Inability to pay tuition prohibited 12% from enrolling in classes, and another 10% did not enroll because of difficulties with financial aid. Tompkin Cortland Community College's 1987 study found that the largest group of nonmatriculating students (46%) did not enroll because they had found employment, while an additional 43% had enrolled in another college. However, both studies reported difficulty tracking down this population--Tompkins Cortland was able to contact only 52 of the 176 sample population, and Mott surveyed only 100 of its 241 sample. The reported difficulty in contacting this population is noteworthy for two reasons. First, it increases the possibility that the responses of those contacted are not representative of the larger population. Second, the fact that an unusually large percentage of the sample proved unreachable by phone and mail raises some interesting questions about the characteristics of the

population in general.

In Fall 1995, Oakland Community College's Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis conducted a survey of ? students who had applied for admission to the College between ? and ? but never registered for classes. This figure represents ?% of the total nonmatriculating population for this time period.

NONMATRICULATING STUDY MEETING SUMMARY

During the Fall 1995 semester, the Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis at OCC conducted a study of nonmatriculants. Literature suggests that growing nonmatriculation rates are of increasing concern to community colleges; some institutions have reported rates as high as 30-40%. While there have been a limited number of studies of nonmatriculation in community colleges, none have attempted to determine whether race and/or gender might play a role in nonmatriculation. In order to address this issue at OCC, staff in Planning & Analysis surveyed 417 nonmatriculants. Analysis of the survey data focused on two questions: why do some students choose not to matriculate, and do reasons for nonmatriculation vary by gender and race?

In July 1996, a group of OCC staff gathered to discuss study findings. What follows is a summary of this conversation.

- The overrepresentation of African-Americans in the nonmatriculating population was of particular concern. In the Fall 1995 term, OCC enrollment was 81% white and 12% African-American. The nonmatriculating population was 28% African-American--more than double the proportion of the collegewide enrollment.
- While two-thirds of nonmatriculants surveyed reported that they had received written materials about OCC, very few had participated in an orientation program or had spoken with a financial aid counselor about financial aid. Nearly one-quarter had taken ASSET or MTELP, while about one-third had spoken to a college counselor about classes.
- Over one-third of respondents cited financial and/or personal reasons for nonmatriculation. Fewer (about one-fifth) stated that their reasons were college or employment-related.
- In examining the specific financial reasons cited by respondents, group participants made a distinction between reasons beyond the college's control, and those reasons which the institution may be able to address. The most commonly cited reason--a lack of money to pay tuition at the deadline--is difficult to interpret, as respondents may have lacked the money for any number of reasons. However, several other commonly cited reasons--such as the lack of a deferred tuition payment plan and problems with the financial aid process--may be within the college's control, and are therefore worth additional consideration.
- The most commonly cited personal reason fell into the "other" category, indicating that either the response categories provided were inappropriate or that respondents were unwilling to discuss private information. Nearly half of those citing a personal reason stated that they did not enroll in classes at OCC because they had chosen to attend another two or four-year institution. Group members wondered whether these respondents were choosing local colleges which OCC considers competition or were enrolling in institutions beyond the college's traditional service area.

- Over three-quarters of respondents said that they plan to enroll at OCC at some time in the future, and nearly two-thirds said they would enroll in the Winter 1996 term. In reality, one-fifth of these respondents were enrolled in classes in Winter 1996.
- Survey findings suggest several race and gender differences in reasons for nonmatriculation. While nonwhite students are more likely to speak to a financial aid officer about aid opportunities, whites are more likely to speak to a college counselor about classes. Whites and nonwhites are equally likely to cite the lack of a deferred tuition payment plan as a reason for nonmatriculation.
- Men and women are equally likely to cite financial reasons for nonmatriculation. While women are more likely to say personal issues influenced their decision not to enroll, men are more likely to cite employment-related reasons, or to say that they have lost interest in attending college. Group members discussed ways in which these findings of race and gender differences might be used to improve services in several areas of the college, including recruitment, admissions, financial aid and counseling, as well as others.