
Colorado Community College System

Spring 2016 Student Satisfaction Survey Results

Office of Institutional Research

August 2016



Introduction

The Colorado Community College System (CCCS) conducts a survey every two years to collect student opinions on their experiences at CCCS colleges. The 2016 survey is the fifth installment of these surveys, and is meant to ascertain students' level of overall satisfaction with their institution as well as with specific operational areas such as instruction, student services, advising, financial aid, and billing. The survey also included questions regarding the educational intent of respondents and why they attend a CCCS college.

In total, 3,203 students responded to the survey. The responses of those surveyed were overwhelmingly positive, revealing that students attending CCCS colleges are very satisfied with their educational experience. Highlights of the survey include but are not limited to the following:

- 93 percent of students are satisfied or very satisfied with their CCCS institution.
- Over 40 percent of students said they had already recommended their school to another person and an additional 49 percent say they are likely to recommend their college to others.
- The most common student goal for attending a community college is to attain credits for transfer; 49 percent of students go to a CCCS college to earn some credits for transfer, while over 33 percent attend for job-related purposes.

- Students strongly believe their institution is committed to the quality of their education, to safety, and to serving students of color, veterans, and students with disabilities.
- When asked to rate various attributes and departments at their college, students did not indicate a single negative average response throughout the survey when measured on a scale of one to five.
- The top four reasons students choose to enroll in their community college are: the academic programs offered, the low cost of tuition, the availability of financial aid, and the geographic location of the college.
- Students had very high opinions of their classes, rating the class size, content of courses, and campus study areas most favorably. Meanwhile, students' opinions of faculty were overwhelmingly positive, particularly with respect to the faculty knowledge of the subject area and enthusiasm for the subject.
- More than half of the students responding already had some previous college education before coming to CCCS. Indeed, more than 25 percent already had a postsecondary degree or certificate, up 5 percentage points from the 2014 survey. In total 11.5 percent already had a bachelor's or graduate degree. This is much higher than the national average of 5.8 percent.

- Over 60 percent of respondents were employed while attending school and worked an average of 29 hours per week. Thirty five percent of the student work 40 or more hours, while 28 percent were unemployed.
- Female students and older students were more likely to respond to the survey than their respective proportions of the spring headcount.
- 30.5 percent of the respondents reported that they are first-generation students. This is a lower proportion than in our overall population of 56 percent.

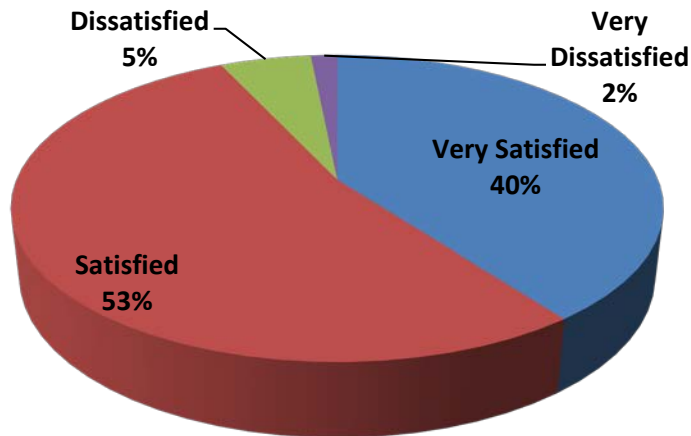
The remainder of this report summarizes the results of the survey in more detail.

Student Satisfaction with Their CCCS Institution

General Satisfaction

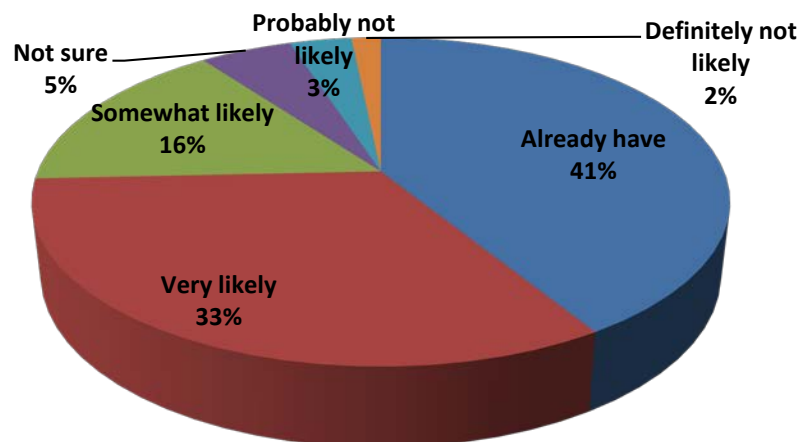
Survey respondents showed a high satisfaction rate with the college they were attending, as 93 percent said they were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their college of choice (Figure 1). This is nearly identical to the response rates of the 2014 survey which returned a 94 percent positive response rate for the same two categories, indicating that CCCS institutions have maintained a high satisfaction rate over the past two years. Indeed, this high level of satisfaction has been evident over the ten-year period the survey has been conducted.

Figure 1 – Overall Satisfaction with Colorado Community Colleges



Students also overwhelmingly responded that they would recommend their school to others, as nearly 90 percent of respondents said they were either likely to recommend or already had recommended their institution to others (Figure 2). In fact, 41.2 percent of respondents said they had already recommended their school to someone else.

Figure 2 – How Likely Students are to Recommend Their School to Others





To assess student opinions on various attributes, experiences, and offices at their colleges, respondents provided numeric ratings to describe their attitudes on each subject. The numeric answers demonstrate the degree to which a student falls on the positive or negative end of each question scale, with “1”, constituting the lowest opinion of a given topic and an answer of “5” demonstrating a very favorable impression of the subject. The responses to these questions are presented through the averages returned for each variable. An average less than three, therefore, demonstrates an overall negative attitude, while an average above three falls on the positive end of the spectrum. No topic, however, fell below three, thus there were no negative perceptions on any of the topics.

Figure 3 – How Committed is Your Institution to the Following?

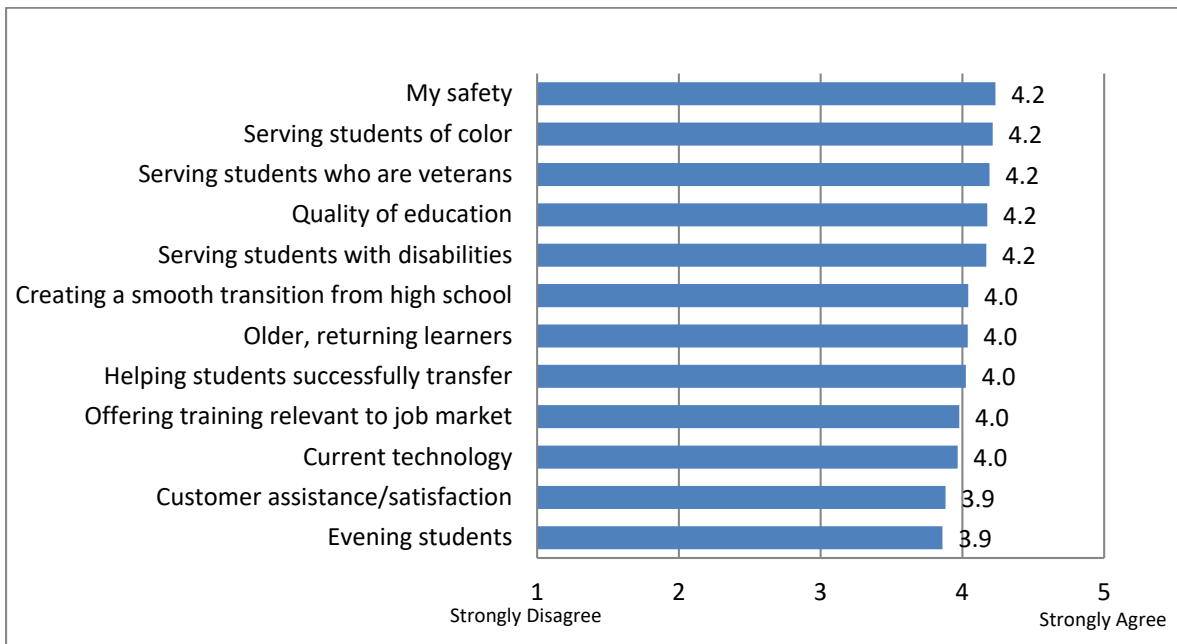


Figure 3 (above) shows responses pertaining to the commitment of CCCS institutions to various categories, with the average responses shown in descending order.



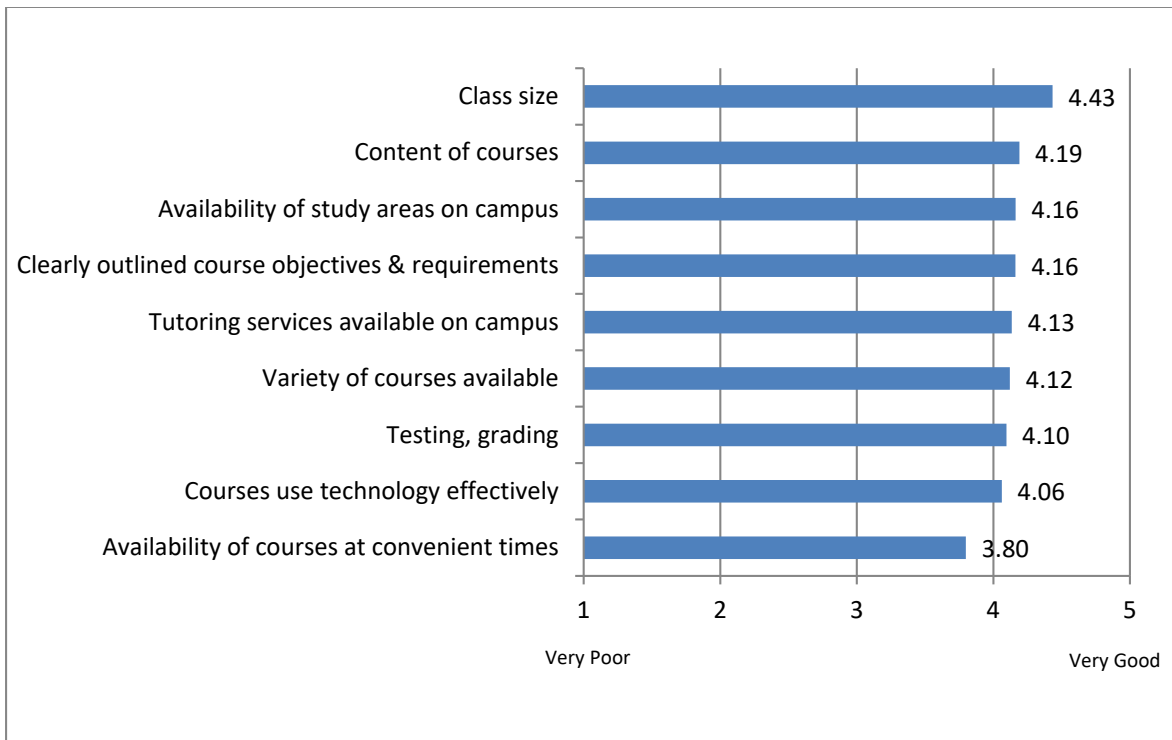
All twelve questions indicated a positive opinion from students, with all but two exhibiting an average response of four or higher out of five. On average, students rated their institution's commitment to the quality of their education, safety, and serving those who are veterans, have disabilities, and are students of color the highest at 4.2 out of five.

The CCCS has devoted significant resources to safety initiatives at our colleges, hence it is gratifying to see that students believe we strive to do as much as we can to assure their safety, as this ranked at the top in terms of the topics queried. Similarly, we have made concerted efforts to assure inclusion and success for students of color, veterans, and those with disabilities. The results of this survey are confirming of our efforts.

Satisfaction with Instruction

Students had a very positive opinion of the classes at their college (Figure 4). All but one category scored above a four out of five among the various topics presented. Class size was rated the most positively of all the topics, with an average response of 4.43 out of five. The lowest score came from availability of courses at convenient times, at 3.8. Nonetheless, 3.8 still indicates overall satisfaction.

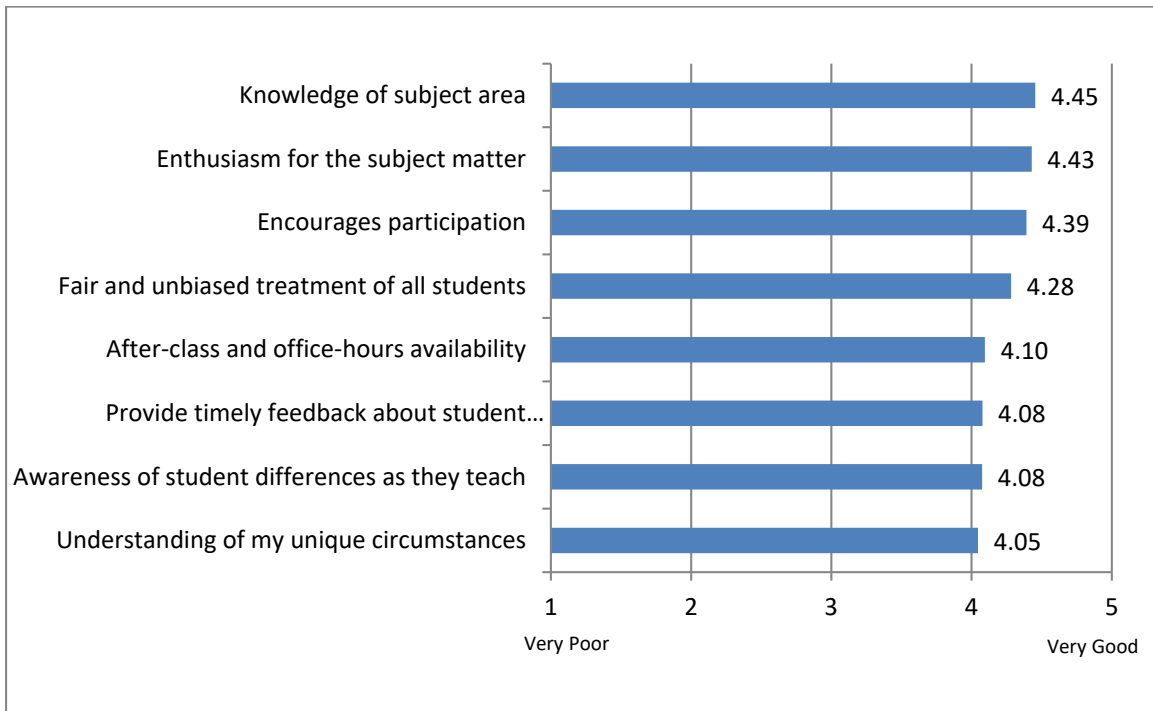
Figure 4 – Students Opinion of Classes



Satisfaction with Instruction

Students have high opinions of their teachers and believe them to genuinely display enjoyment and mastery of their field (Figure 5). Not only did every answer return a positive rating (above three), but there was not a single attribute presented that scored below a four out of five. Those with the highest scores were “knowledge of subject area”, and “enthusiasm for the subject matter” respectively. In fact, the faculty’s knowledge of their subject area scored the highest of any question on the survey.

Figure 5 – Students’ Opinion of Faculty

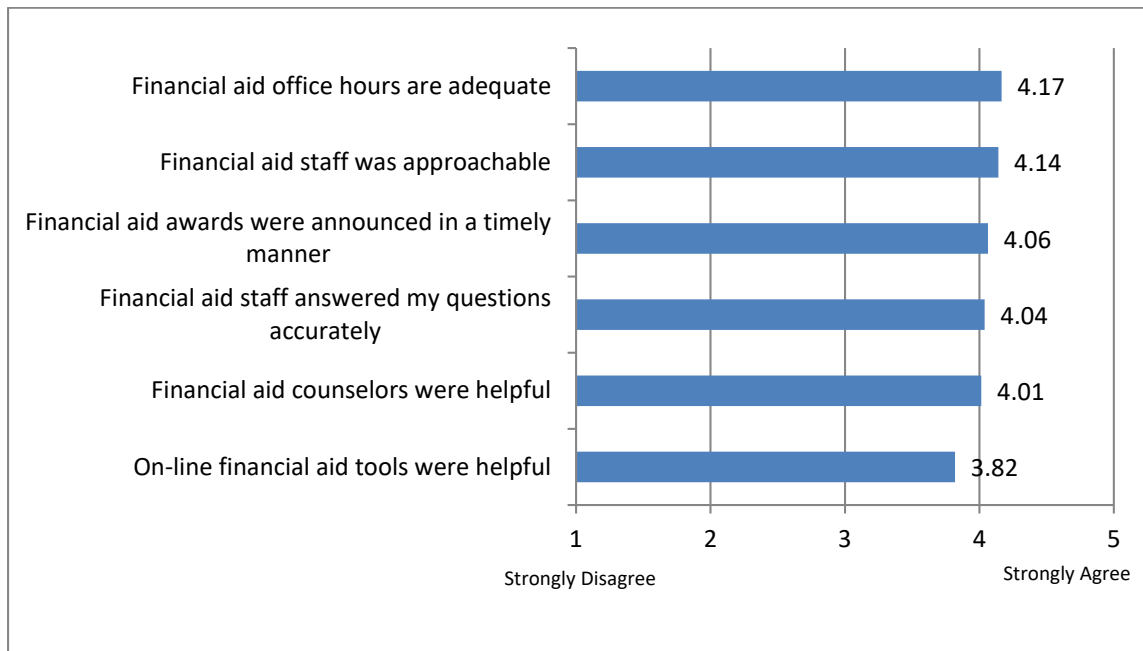


Satisfaction with Student Services

Students were asked a series of questions regarding student services in a wide variety of areas, including financial aid, registration, billing, testing and assessment, and academic advising.

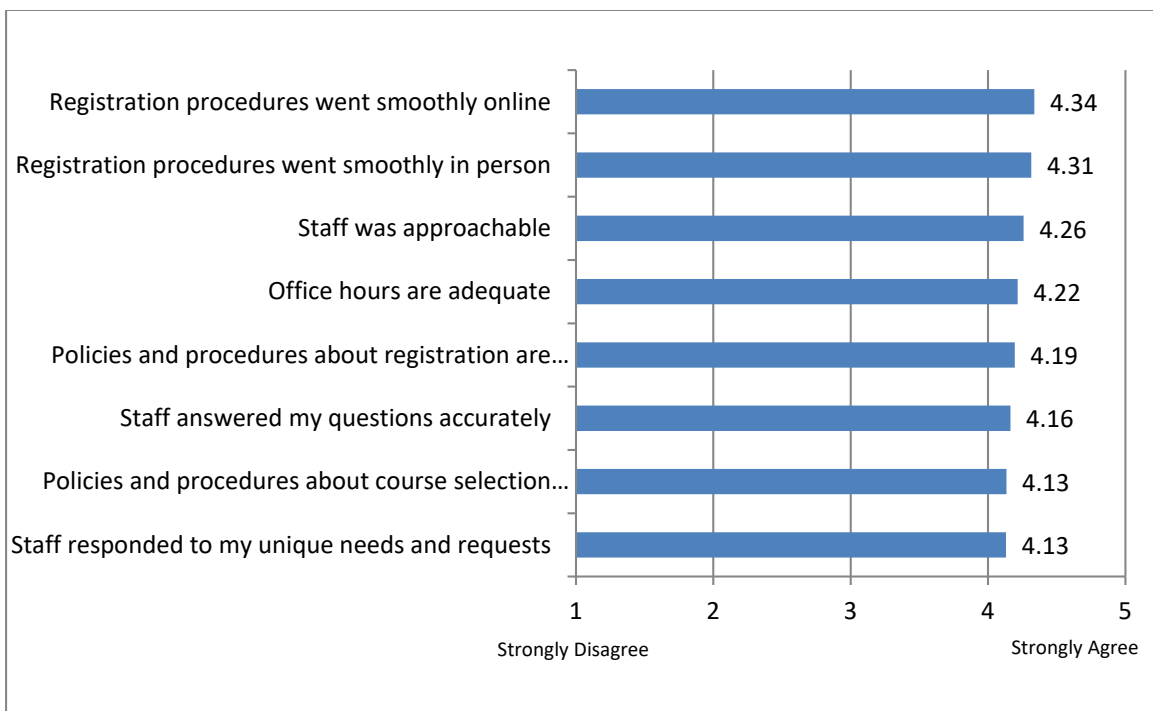
With respect to **financial aid**, financial aid staff scored high (Figure 6), with respondents agreeing most with the statement that financial aid office hours are adequate and the staff was approachable. The lowest score related to the helpfulness of online financial aid tools, which could merit further exploration but still produced an overall positive response at 3.82.

Figure 6 – Opinion of Financial Aid Office/Staff



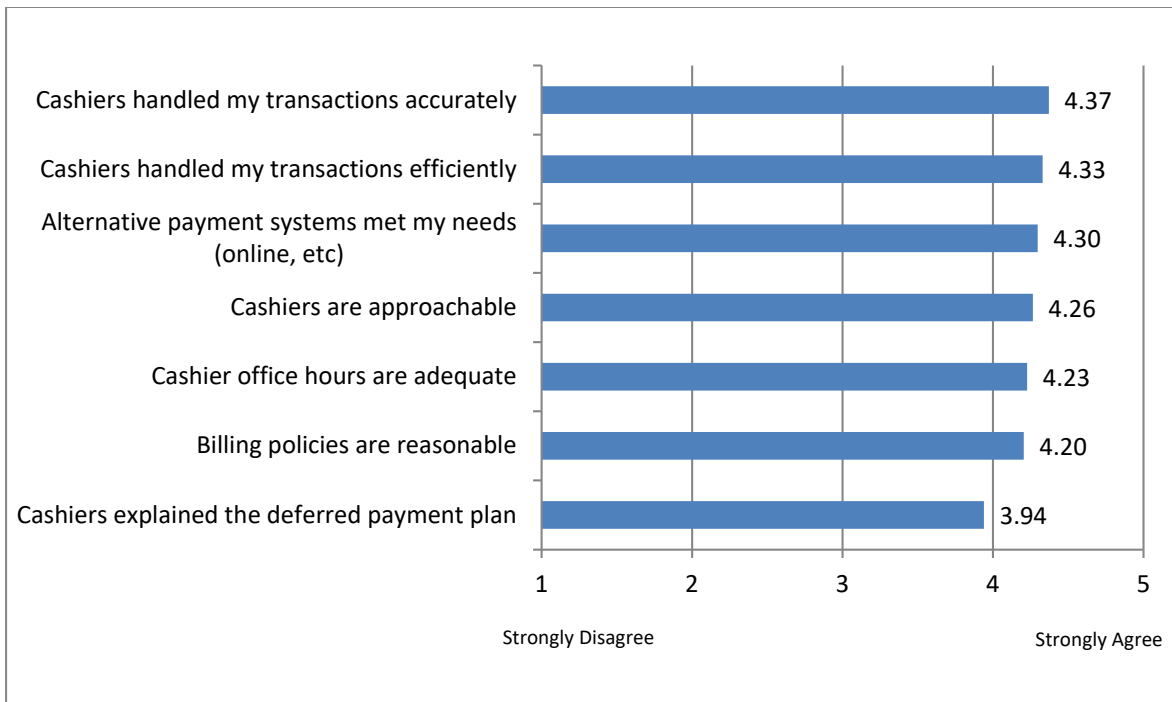
The following questions (Figure 7) involve opinions on the **admissions and registration** process. The highest satisfaction rating was given to registration procedures going smoothly, both online and in person. All answers averaged a rating above a four out of five. Students believe the staff to be approachable, to provide accurate and helpful information, and believe policies and procedures are clear in regards to these student services.

Figure 7 – Opinion of Admissions and Registration



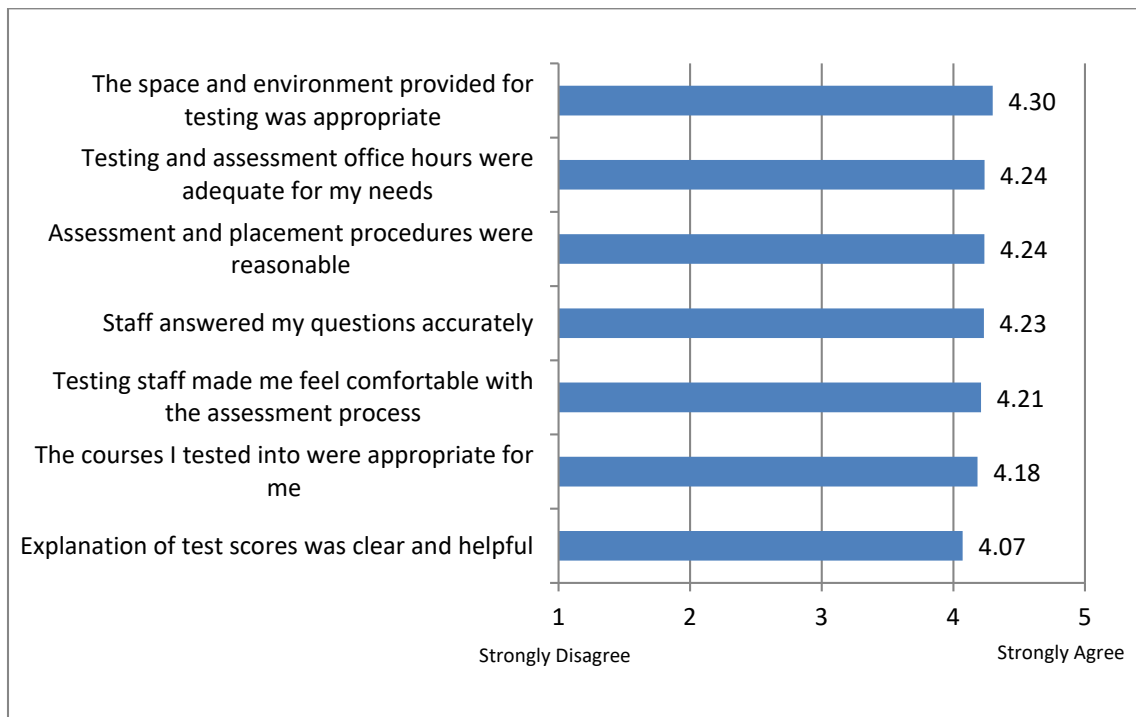
Students were asked questions regarding the **billing and payment** processes on their campuses, and provided feedback on how reasonable they felt the policies were. Students had a favorable assessment of these services as well. Students indicated that their cashier handled their transactions accurately, as this was the highest rating among the billing questions. Respondents also indicated (with the second highest average rating) that cashiers handled their transactions efficiently.

Figure 8 – Billing Processes



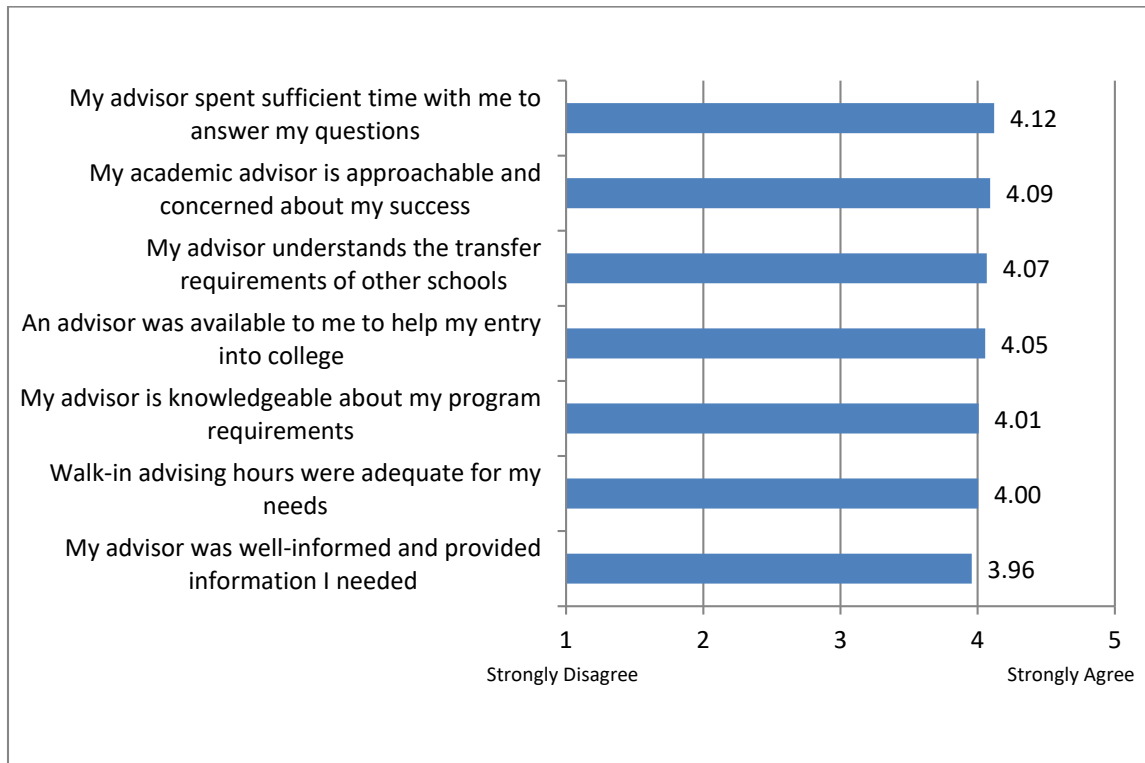
Students were asked a series of questions regarding **testing and assessment**, including opinions regarding the staff and the process of placement into courses. Those attributes scoring the highest were the space and environment provided for testing, followed by testing hours and the degree to which students felt the assessment and placement procedures are reasonable. Again, responses were demonstrably positive across all questions answered, and all averages were at or above four. Importantly, with respect to the topic of whether the course placement via the assessment was appropriate, students rated this aspect as 4.18 out of 5. One of the important aspects of our developmental redesign was appropriate placement, hence student opinions provide valuable feedback on this effort.

Figure 9 – Opinion of Testing and Assessment



Students answered questions pertaining to the quality of **academic advising** on their campuses. Questions addressed both the office as a whole, as well as the advisor a student interacted with during their registration process. Overall opinions on academic advising were strongly positive, with all attributes returning positive averages. Students are most positive about the adequacy of the time they spent with their advisor, that their advisor is approachable and concerned about their success, and feel their advisors understand the transfer requirements of other schools well.

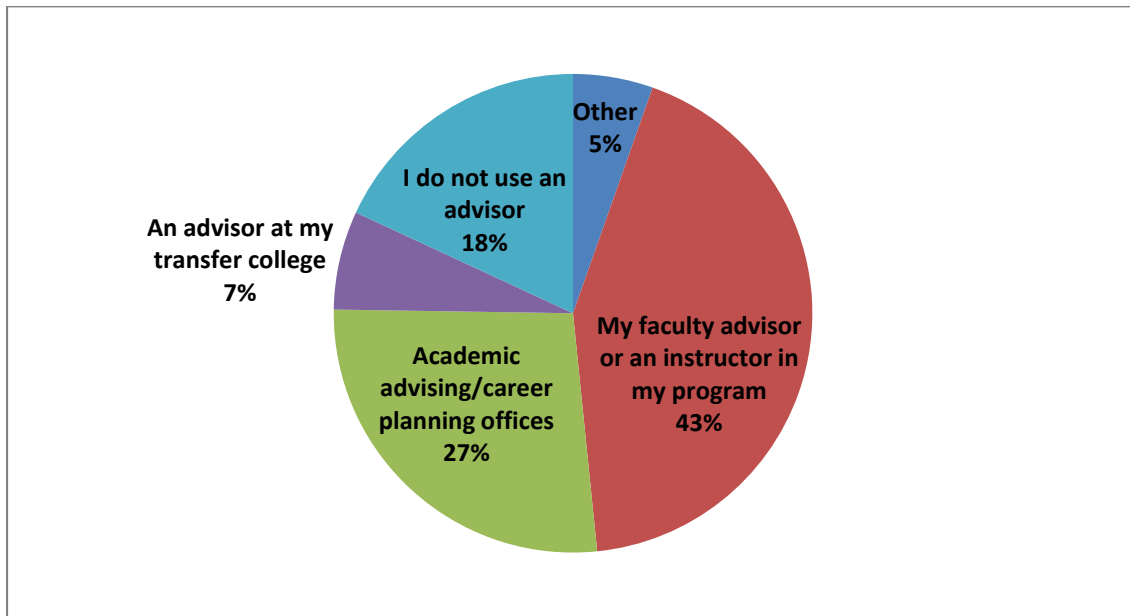
Figure 10 – Opinion of Academic Advising



Most students prefer to seek their advising from a faculty advisor or an instructor in their program, as 43 percent preferred to get advising from faculty, whereas 27 percent preferred the academic advising and career planning offices. These numbers have shifted

in the past two years, as the academic advising and career planning offices were the most common response in 2014. Those preferring faculty over advising staff have increased by 7 percentage points from the previous survey.

Figure 11 – Source of Primary Advising



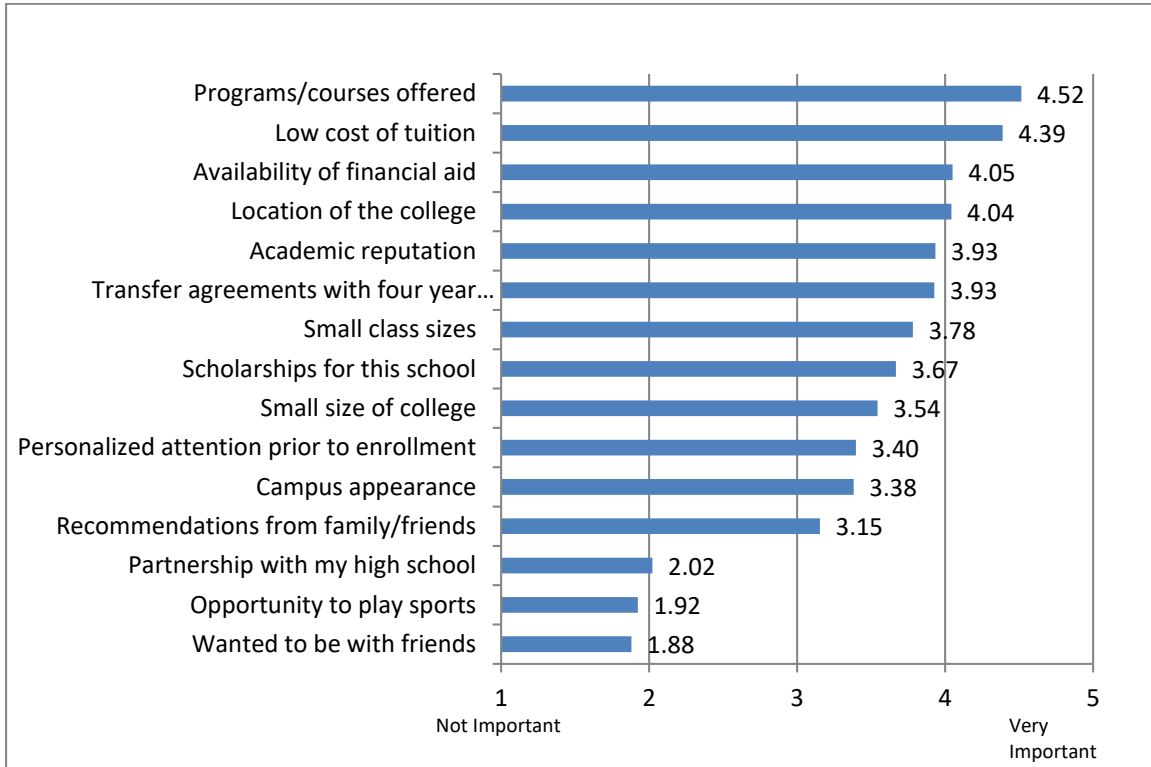
Educational Intent and Background

Why Do Students Attend CCCS Colleges?

The following results relate to the various intentions, educational background, and selection criteria of respondents as they apply to their particular institution. The most important reasons students decide to enroll in a CCCS college are the programs and courses offered (a mean response of 4.52 out of five), low cost of tuition, availability of financial aid, and location of the college in that order. This is consistent with 2014 survey

findings, in which programs offered were also the top reason for enrolling, followed by geographic location and low cost of tuition (Figure 12).

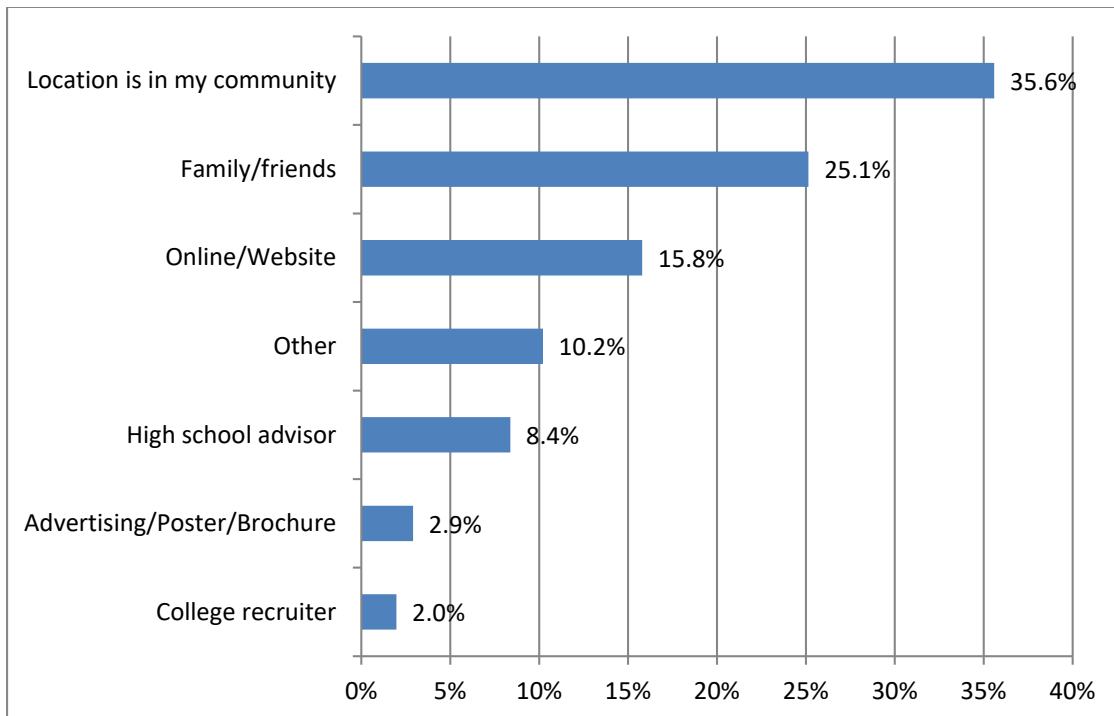
Figure 12 – Factors in Deciding to Enroll at CCCS Institution



Partnerships with high school, opportunity to play sports, and the desire to be with friends were rated as unimportant factors. Please note that concurrent enrollment students were not included in this survey, which is a population that most likely would have affected the relevance of high school partnerships. When the same question is narrowed down to only include those schools that have athletic programs, the opportunity to play sports becomes more important but still just averages 2.59 out of five.

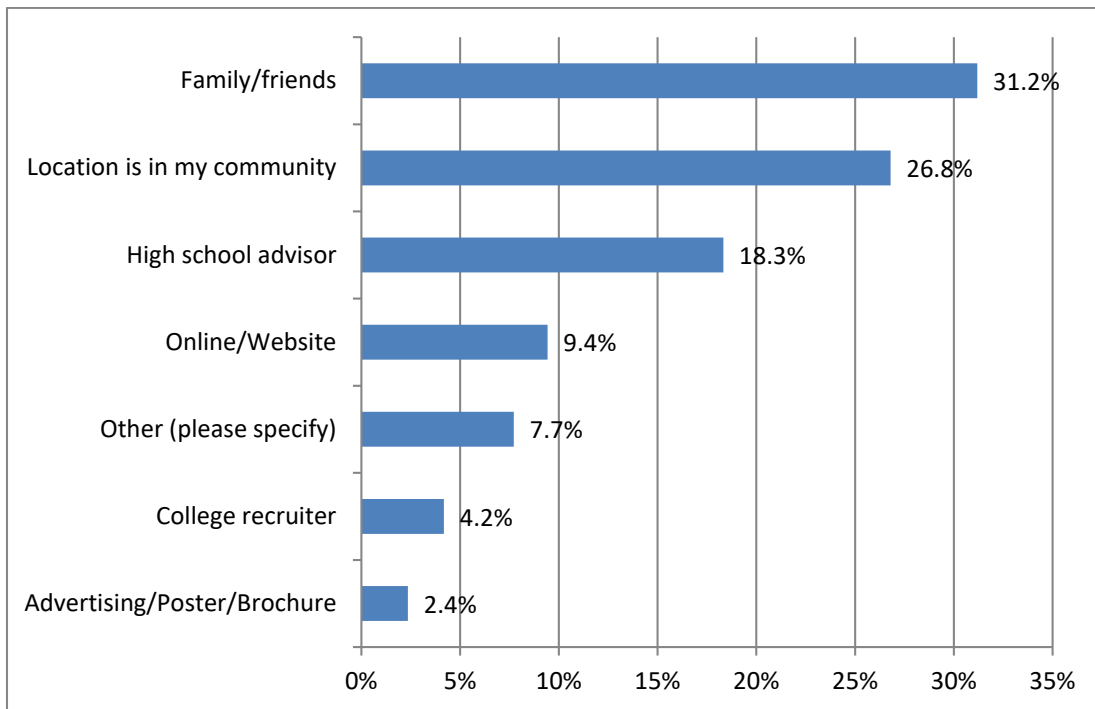
Location is also an important factor in the initial discovery of a student’s institution, as this was the most common way respondents first became aware of their college. The least common way respondents found out about their college was through a college recruiter, as only 2 percent said this is how they discovered their school. Family and friends appear to be another great source of discovery, but as seen previously in Figure 12 their influence is not particularly strong in deciding to actually register.

Figure 13 - How Students First Became Aware of Their College



For those students in the “traditional” age group, of 18-24 years of age, high school advisors are much more important in how they become aware of their CCCS college. While the top two responses, location and family/friends, are still the primary ways 18-24 year-olds discovered their college, a high school advisor was the third most common way those students became aware of their college (Figure 14).

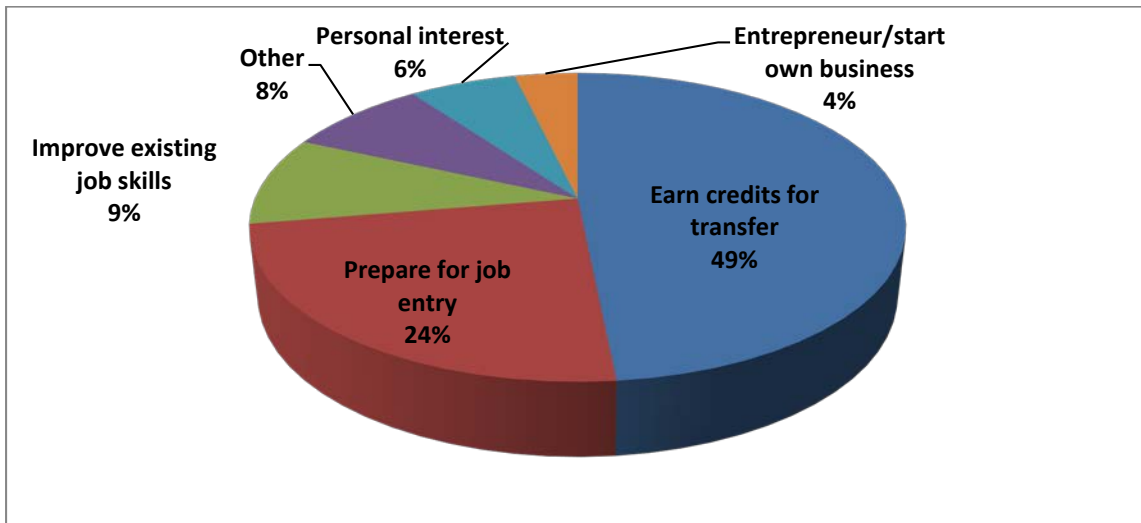
**Figure 14 – How Students First Became Aware of Their College
18-24 Year Olds Only**



What are the Reasons Students Attend Colorado Community Colleges?

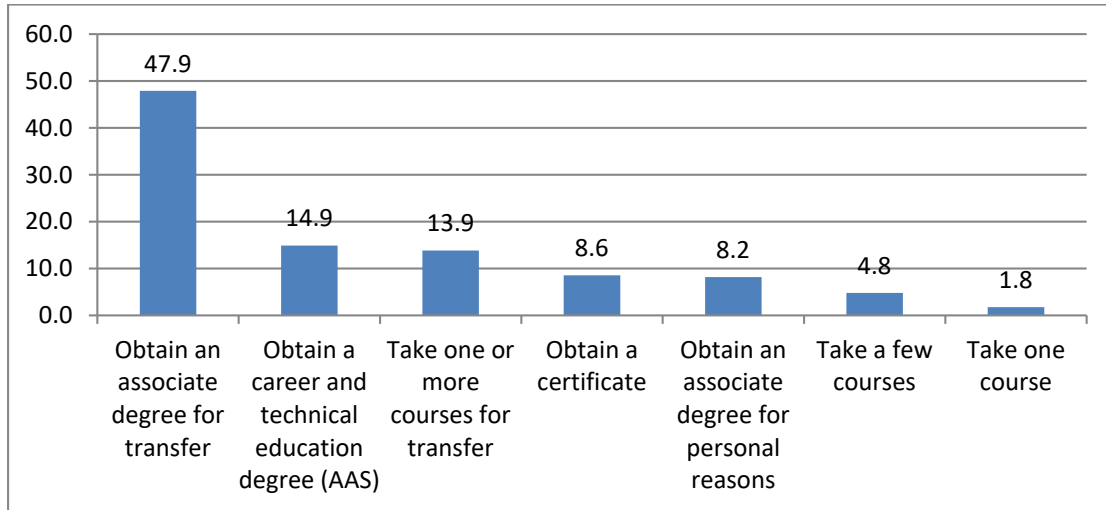
Almost half – 49 percent – of students indicated that they are attending a CCCS college to earn university or college credit for transfer (Figure 15). This is the same percentage indicated in 2014. This was easily the most common response by a large margin, as the next highest reason was to prepare for job entry, at 24 percent, and then to improve job skills at 9 percent. In order of response rate, all other answers were ranked exactly the same as in 2014.

Figure 15 – Primary Reason for Attending a Colorado Community College



These reasons are further reinforced by students’ responses concerning educational intent. The vast majority of respondents intend to transfer their coursework to a four-year university, as demonstrated by the 61.8 percent of students that said they either plan on obtaining an associate degree for transfer or want to take one or more courses for transfer (Figure 16).

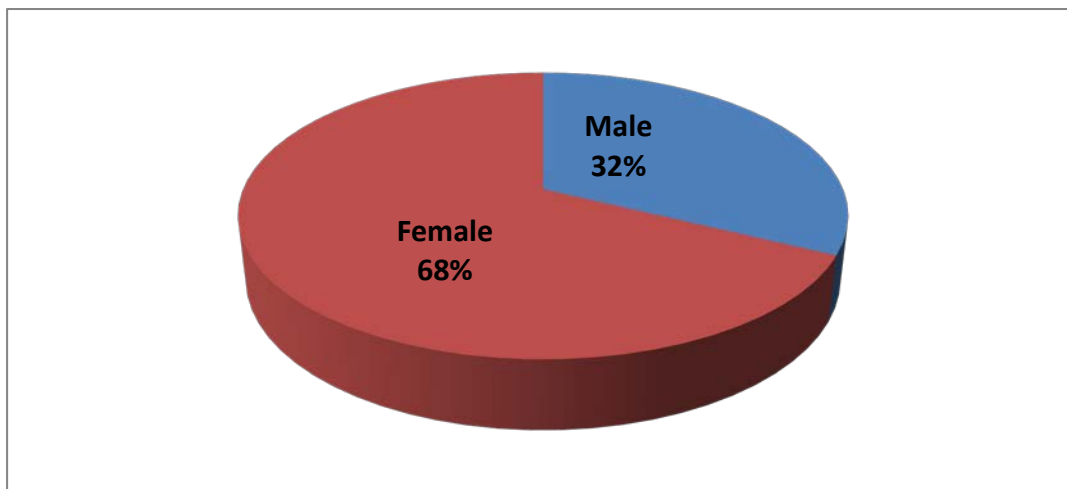
Figure 16 - Educational Intent



Respondent Demographics

Survey respondents were predominately and disproportionately female and tended to be older. Of those students responding to the question, 68 percent said they were female, compared to 32 percent male. This compares to the overall student population enrolled for spring 2016, which was 56 percent female and 44 percent male.

Figure 17 – Respondent Gender



Respondents also tended to skew toward older or non-traditional students. The overall median age of survey respondents was 29, compared to a median age of 24 for the overall enrolled, non-high-school population. Most respondents (63 percent) belonged to what is referred to as the “non-traditional” age group or those over 24 years old. Traditional students are those age 18 to 24. The age breakdown of this year’s survey revealed that those 26 and older were the majority of respondents at 60 percent. This statistic was similar in 2014 at 62 percent, indicating a pattern of older students responding to the survey in greater proportions than their younger classmates.

Figure 18 – Age (Traditional vs. Non-Traditional)

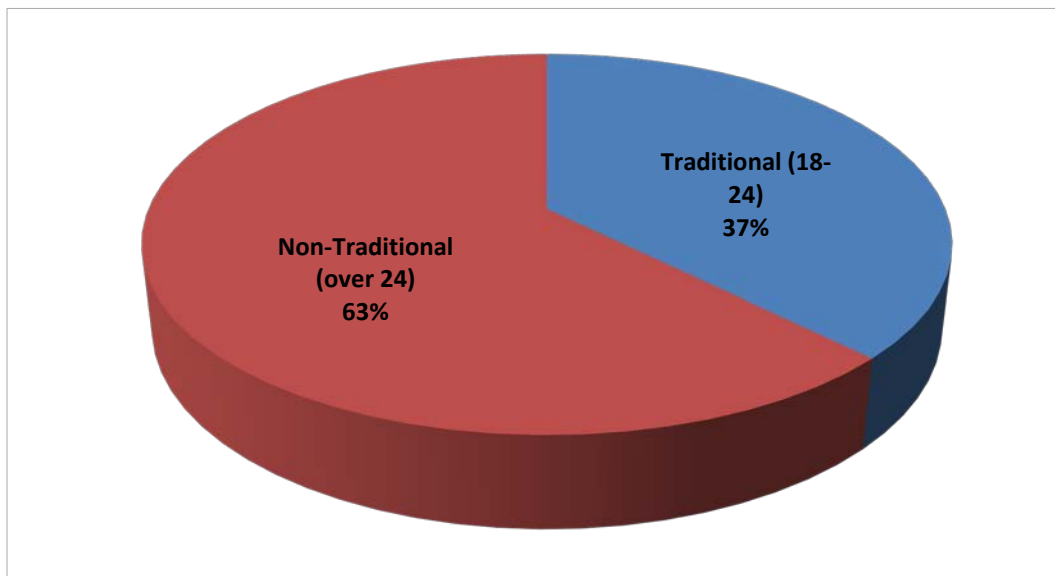
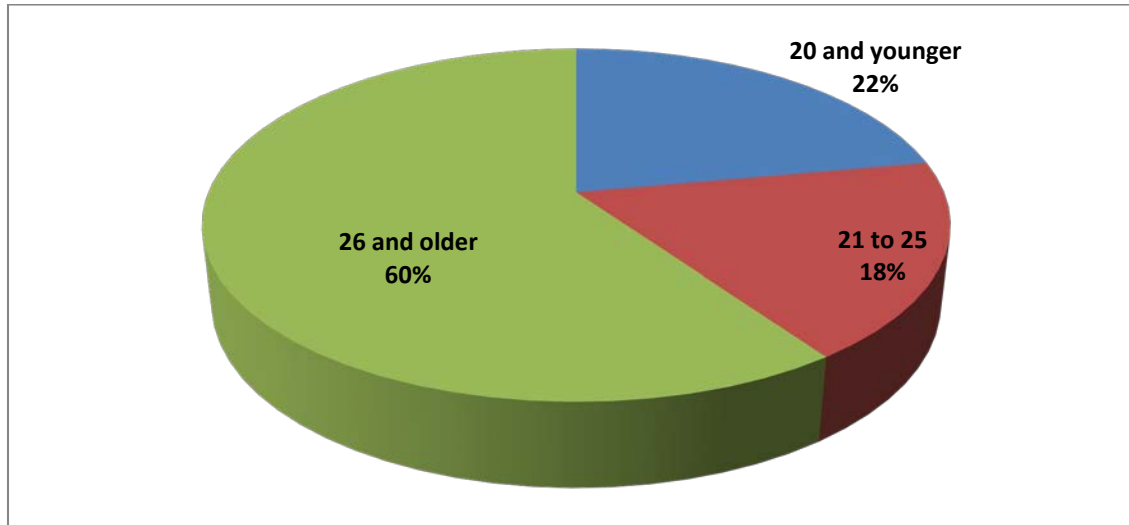


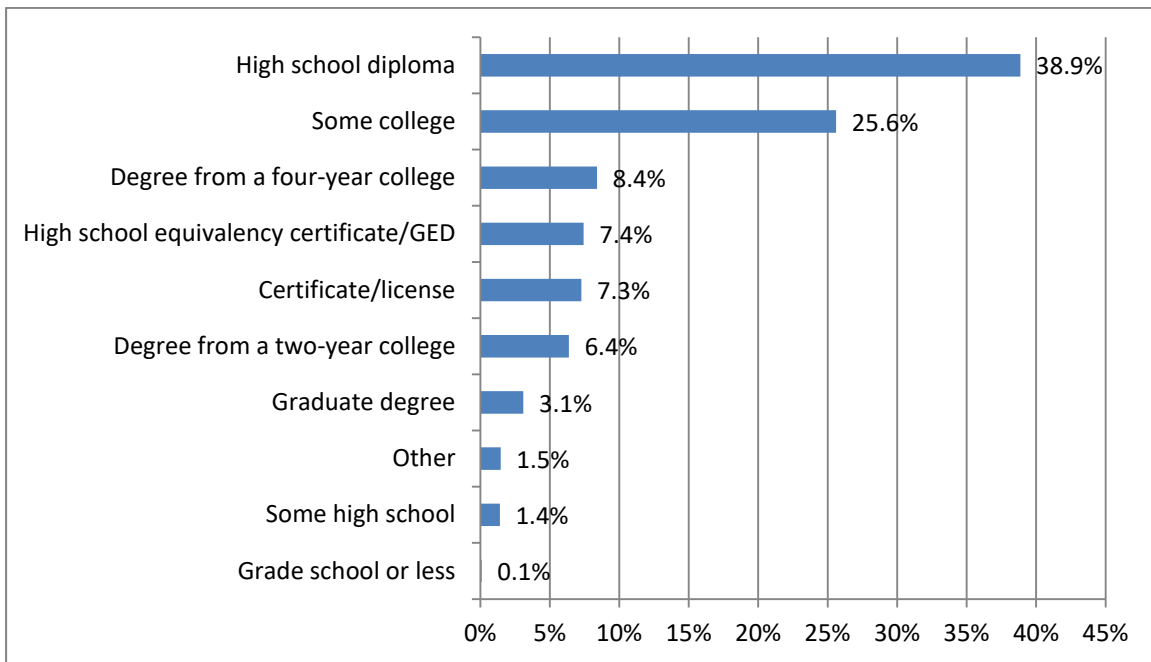
Figure 19 – Age (Clustered)



Most students said that their highest level of education achieved before enrolling in a community college was a high school diploma, at 38.9 percent of respondents (Figure 20). The next most common response was “some college” at 25.6 percent. However, when factoring in other levels of college experience, the majority of students reported having some form of college education in the past. Overall, 50.7 percent of students report having some previous college education, while 46.3 percent say their highest education attained was either a high school diploma or a GED. Those indicating high school or GED on this question remained roughly the same as in 2014, a year in which 46 percent said their highest education level was high school.

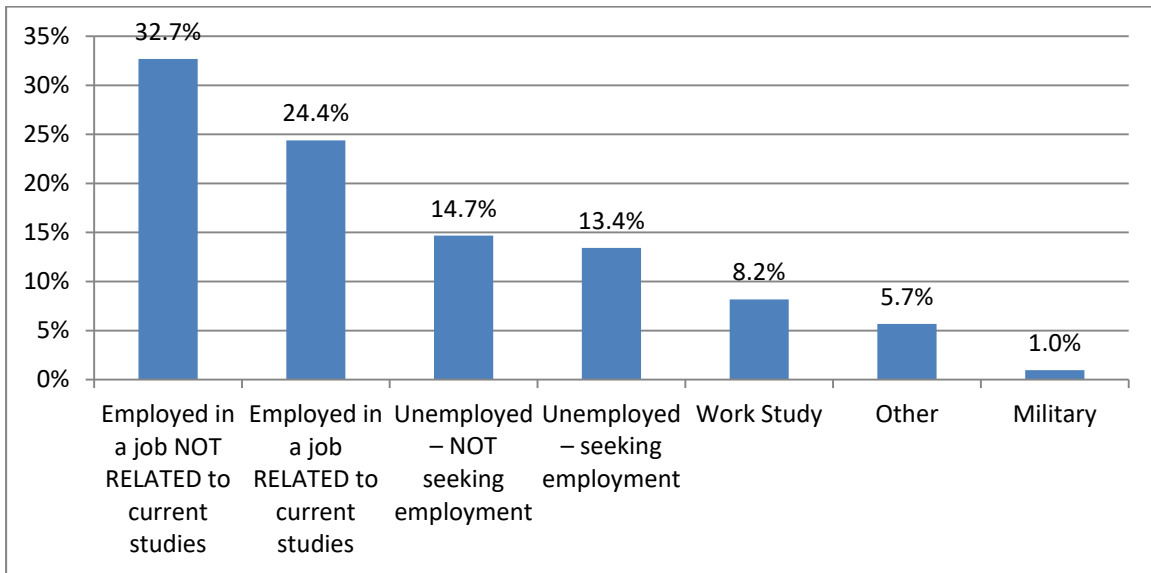
In total, 50.8 percent came to CCCS with previous college experience, from some college up through a graduate degree. This was up 4.8 percentage points from 2014, in which 46 percent of students indicated they had attended college previously to some extent. Additionally, 25.2 percent of students came to their CCCS institution already with a postsecondary degree, up from 19.4 percent in 2014.

**Figure 20 – Highest Level of Education Achieved
Before Enrolling in Community College**



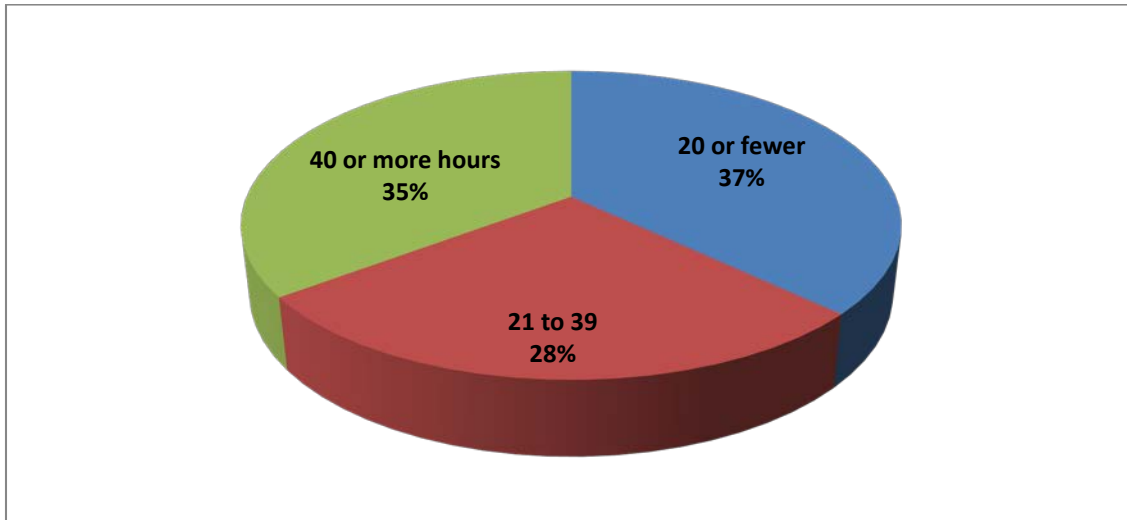
When asked about their employment status, most students indicated that they were employed in some fashion (Figure 21). Most said they were employed in a job unrelated to their current studies (32.7 percent) while 24.4 percent were currently employed in a job related to their studies. A combined 28 percent said they were unemployed at the time of responding to the survey. This is approximately 5.1 percentage points lower than in the 2014 survey, but high school students were included two years ago. Of the unemployed respondents, just under half were seeking employment.

Figure 21 – Current Employment Status



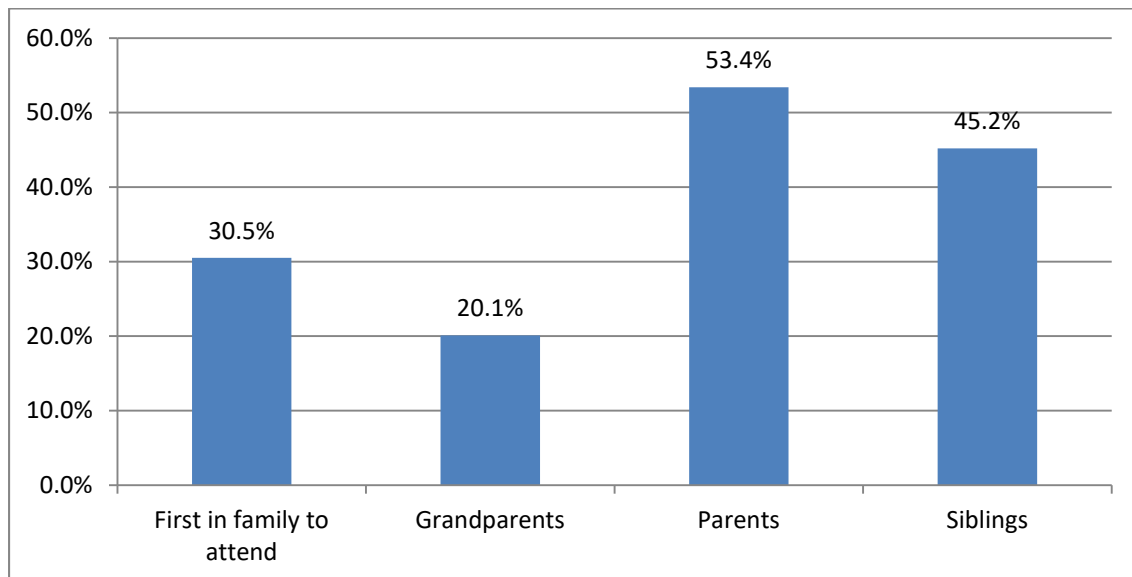
When asked about how many hours a week they work, students reported an average work week of 29 hours overall. This average represents those that indicated they were employed. Over a third of those surveyed said they are employed full-time, as 35% said they work 40 or more hours a week. 37 percent said they work 20 or fewer hours per week.

Figure 22 – Hours Worked Per Week



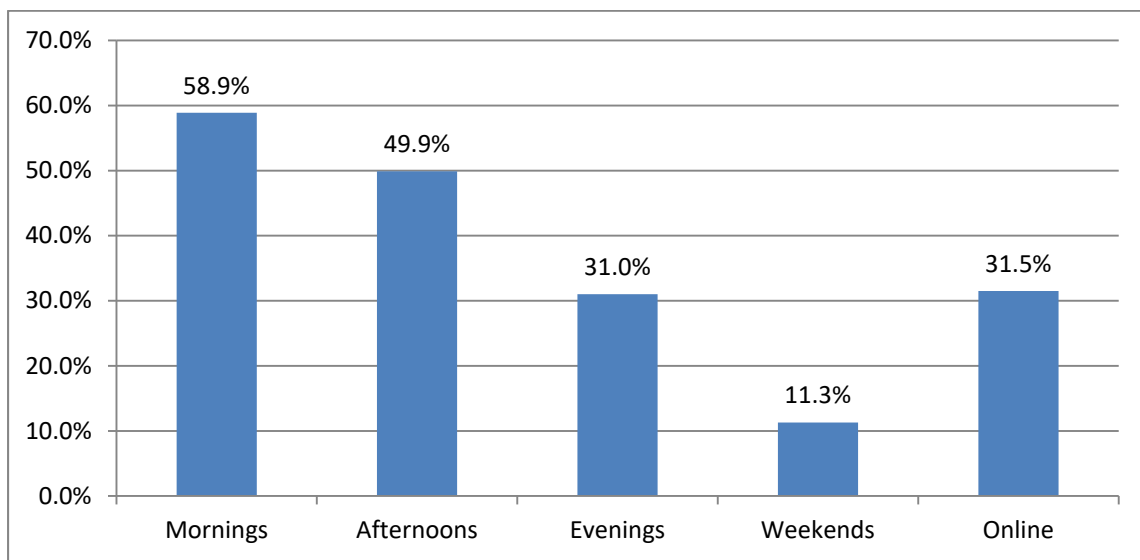
The majority of students have someone in their family that has attended college: 53 percent of students report that one or more of their parents have attended college. Of those surveyed, 30.5 percent say they are the first in their family to attend (Figure 23).

Figure 23 – Family Members that Have Attended College



The most preferred time for students to take classes is in the morning, at 58.9 percent of respondents. This was followed by afternoons and online, respectively. Figure 24 displays the various preferences for class times, as indicated by students. Note that responses total more than 100 percent because students were asked to mark all that apply.

Figure 24 – Preferred Class Times (Mark All That Apply)

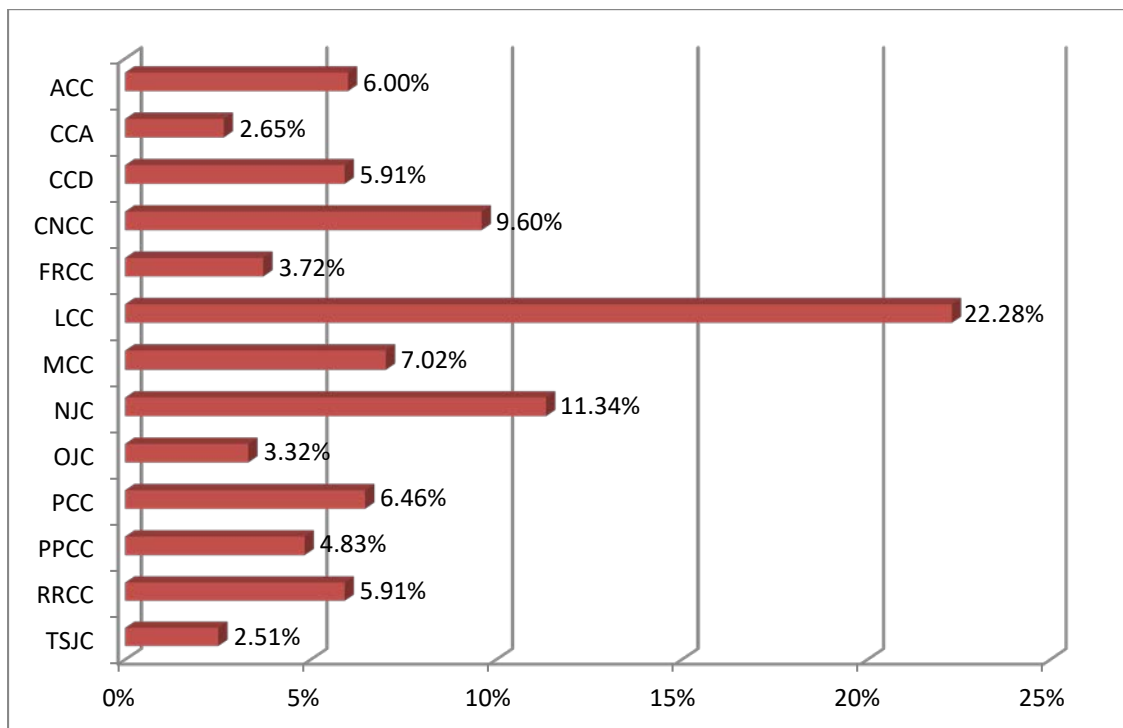


Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted using the online questionnaire generator Survey Monkey, and separate drafts were created for each CCCS institution. All surveys contained the same core questions regarding general satisfaction, department and office satisfaction levels, educational intent and background, as well as basic demographic information. Each college was given the opportunity to add a set of their own questions at the end, the analysis of which would be performed by the colleges themselves.

A total of 61,414 e-mail invites were sent to students enrolled for the spring 2016 term. In contrast with the 2014 survey, high school students were excluded from the population and did not receive the invite. This was done because the purpose of the survey is to measure the attitudes of students who are more likely to be accessing services on campus. The survey opened on March 1st, 2016 and remained active until May 16th, 2016. The invite and subsequent reminders yielded 3,203 completed surveys for an overall response rate of 5.2 percent. Response rates varied among colleges, as seen in Figure 25.

Figure 25 – Survey Response Rates by College



The sampling plan of the 2016 survey also differs from 2014, in that the entire population was given the opportunity to provide feedback on all subject matter in the



survey. In the previous survey run, subsets of the population answered questions about specific areas of interest (examples include student services or instruction). Respondents to the 2016 survey answered questions pertaining to all subjects. While this change may have resulted in fewer students completing the survey, the responses are stronger overall as they relate to the extent of subject matter.

In addition the scaling of some questions, most notably those involving department-specific ratings, were changed to include the option of neutrality for respondents that don't feel strongly either way toward a given question. They were also given a "no response" option should they feel they don't have the information necessary to provide feedback. The answers were also converted from strictly nominal or categorical answers to numerical responses between one and five. For this reason certain questions cannot be compared directly to previous results, but in this way a mean can be computed from the answers. This opens up a number of possibilities for ranking and statistical analysis as well as easier comparison in the future, and demonstrates a more accurate depiction of the direction and magnitude of students' collective opinion.

The survey instrument was reviewed by the institutional research directors at each college, as well as their respective vice presidents of student services. The survey was constructed and distributed following the review and consensus of all involved.