

## **Student Persistence: Continuing Enrollment of Students at Mesa Community College**

### **Background Information and Student Profile:**

Mesa Community College is located in the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. General education, career and technical, developmental, and non-credit personal interest courses are all available through the college. As a result of completing a program of study at the college, students can earn Associates Degrees, Transfer Partnership Degrees, Certificates, or complete the requirements for a block of transferable credits (Arizona General Education Curriculum).

Many students do not intend to complete a program of study at the college, but rather enroll to augment their studies at the university or at another community college, for personal interest or to meet short-term goals.

The majority (63%) of the 27,834 students enrolled as of fall 2004 attended on a part time basis (fewer than 12 credits per semester). On average students took 8.1 credits per semester; 34% were new to the college, 50% were continuing students, and 16% had skipped at least one prior semester. Course taking patterns are extremely varied due to the differences in programs and student intent.

### **Methodology - Persistence:**

Persistence is defined as retention of students until they achieve their academic goals or complete their degree or program, and is frequently used as an indicator of institutional effectiveness in higher education. Cohorts of beginning students are followed to determine if they persist from fall to spring or from one year to the next. Students who

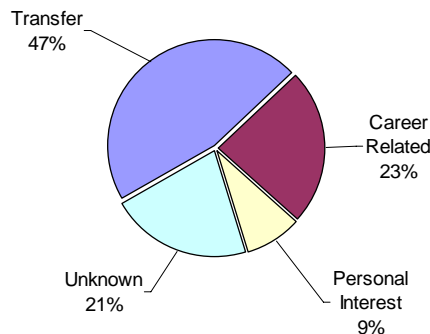
enroll for consecutive semesters are considered continuing students. Current high school students and non-credit students are excluded from the cohort.

### **Student Groups - New Students by Intent:**

For this study, cohorts of students were selected based upon their academic goal and were followed for two semesters. The college has an open enrollment policy and students are not required to declare a program or major in order to register for classes. However, they are asked to indicate their general intent at the time of registration.

- In fall 2004, there were 9,344 newly enrolled students at MCC.
- Forty-seven percent enrolled for transfer.
- Twenty-three percent enrolled for career related reasons.
- Nine percent enrolled for personal interest.
- Twenty-one percent did not specify a reason for their attendance.

**Current Intent for Newly Enrolled Students**



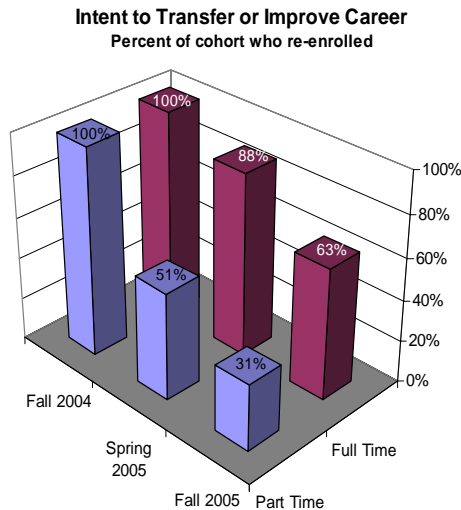
The student cohort followed in this paper is the 6,528 newly enrolled students who intended to transfer or enrolled for career-related reasons.

**Overall persistence:**

Of the 6,528 new students indicating an intent to transfer or improve their career, 73% of the students were enrolled part time and 27% were enrolled full time.

- A large majority of the full-time students (88%) remained at MCC in the subsequent spring 2005, and 63% re-enrolled in fall 2005.
- Part-time students were less likely to attend subsequent semesters. Of the part-time students 51% remained at MCC in the subsequent spring 2005 and 31% re-enrolled in fall 2005.
- Overall, 61% of all the new students re-enrolled in the subsequent spring semester and 40% re-enrolled in the subsequent fall semester.

Differences between persistence of full-time and part-time students are shown below:



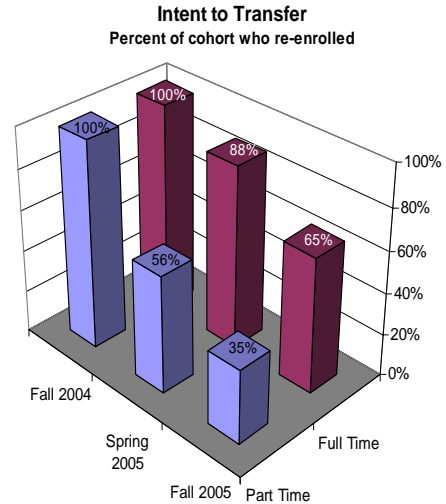
	Enrolled Fall 2004		Remaining Spring 2005		Remaining Fall 2005	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Part Time	4,740	100%	2,438	51%	1,489	31%
Full Time	1,788	100%	1,568	88%	1,126	63%

**Persistence of new students who intend to transfer:**

Of the 4,336 new students indicating the intent to transfer:

- 88% of the full-time students re-enroll in the subsequent spring semester and 56% of part-time students re-enroll.
- Nearly two-thirds of the full-time students (65%) and over a third of the part-time students (35%) re-enroll in the subsequent fall semester.
- Overall, 67% of all the new fall 2004 students indicating an intent to transfer re-enrolled in the subsequent spring 2005 semester and 45% re-enrolled in the subsequent fall 2005 semester.

Differences between persistence of full-time and part-time students with the intent to transfer is shown below:



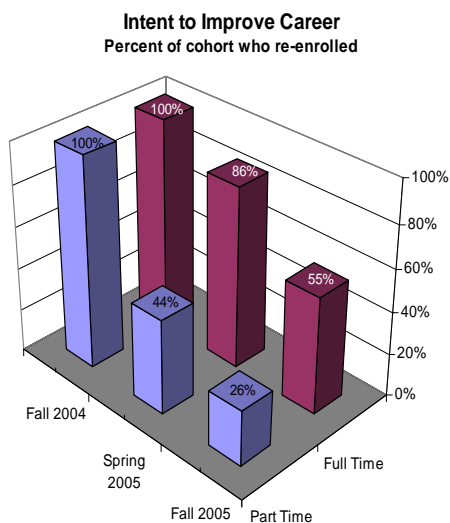
	Enrolled Fall 2004		Remaining Spring 2005		Remaining Fall 2005	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Part Time	2,890	100%	1,618	56%	1,012	35%
Full Time	1,446	100%	1,275	88%	938	65%

**Persistence of new students enrolled for career improvement:**

Of the 2,192 new students indicating an intent to improve their career:

- More full-time students (86%) re-enroll in the subsequent spring semester than part-time students (44%).
- Over half of the full-time students (55%) and slightly over a quarter (26%) of the part-time students re-enroll in the subsequent fall semester.
- Overall, 51% the new students intending to improve their career in fall 2004 re-enrolled in the spring 2005 semester and 30% re-enrolled the subsequent semester, fall 2005.

Differences between persistence of full-time and part-time students with the intent to improve their career is shown below:



	Enrolled Fall 2004		Remaining Spring 2005		Remaining Fall 2005	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Part Time	1,850	100%	820	44%	477	26%
Full Time	342	100%	293	86%	188	55%


**Summary:**

Persistence is an indicator of student progress toward meeting their academic goals. In fall 2004, Mesa Community College had over 27,800 enrolled students with the majority attending part time.

Nearly half of the new students indicated the intent to transfer and 23% enrolled for career related reasons. New students who planned to transfer or attended for career related reasons were followed for two semesters in this study.

For new students overall, 61% re-enrolled the subsequent spring and 40% re-enrolled in the following fall.

There are notable differences between the persistence of full-time and part-time students in both time periods. The share of full-time students who persisted from fall 2004 to fall 2005 is twice the share of part-time students who attended in the subsequent year. Students who intend to transfer are more persistent than students who enrolled for career related reasons.



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