

Executive Summary

Non-Returning Students Survey: Summer 2023

Background & Purpose

Modesto Junior College’s (MJC) post-pandemic Fall-to-Fall persistence 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. Though this increase may be promising, MJC is still far below the state and national persistence rates for community colleges, 67% and 61.6% respectively (CCC SSM Dashboard, 2023; NSC, 2023).

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. 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.

Results

- Total Number of Partial/Completed Responses: 739 out of 8,095 non-returning students (9% response rate)

Figure 1. Primary Reason for Leaving

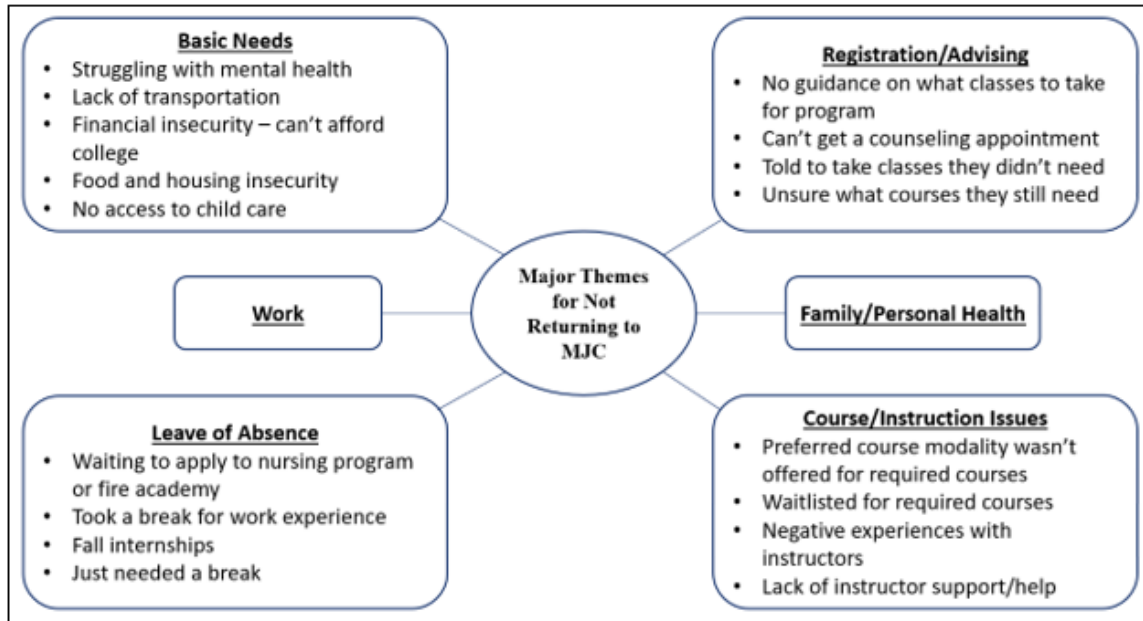
Primary Reason for Leaving MJC	% of Respondents
Transferred to a 4-Year Institution	21.5%
Couldn't Get the Class They Needed	8%
Graduated from MJC	7%
Struggling with Mental Health	6.5%
Could No Longer Afford to Attend	6%
Other	32%

- Thematic Analysis conducted to derive common themes present in comments provided by respondents who selected ‘other’ as their primary reason for not re-enrolling.

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)



- Strong positive correlation between experiences in one’s program/major and course, ($r(550) = .736, p < .001$) and experiences related to instruction, ($r(554) = .652, p < .001$)
- Moderate positive correlation between experiences in one’s academic program/major and experiences related to academic advising, ($r(552) = .547, p < .001$) and student services ($r(550) = .576, p < .001$)

Discussion & Recommendations

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.