

**Non-Returning Students Questionnaire Analysis:
Spring and Fall 2021**

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Non-Returning Students Questionnaire Analysis: Spring and Fall 2021

Background

Despite efforts from educators, policy makers, and institutions to increase college graduation rates, the fact remains that over 40% of students who start community college end up dropping out before completing a degree (Seidman, 2005; Bailey et al., 2015; Rosenbaum et al., 2017). Even more daunting, student attrition rates are higher in the United States than any other industrialized nation (Harvard Graduate School of Education 2011). Full-time Community College first-year retention rates in the U.S. have remained at approximately 60% since 2006, with part-time first-year retention rates remaining at a mere 44% (U.S. Department of Education, & National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Modesto Junior College (MJC) remained above average in terms of first-year fall to spring retention rates from 2016-2019 (73%, 73%, 72%, and 70%, respectively). Academic year 2020 took a toll on MJC's first-year fall to spring retention rates, dropping to only 67%. Additionally, the institution's retention rate from Spring 2021 to Fall 2021 decreased 11%, down to only 56% of students.

Purpose

The purpose of this questionnaire was to (1) identify why non-returning students who were enrolled in Spring 2021 or Fall 2021 decided to no longer attend MJC, (2) explore potential areas of focus to improve the overall MJC experience, and (3) provide a basis for future questionnaire development that explores early attrition indicators among MJC students.

Method

Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire consisted of 28 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 or Fall of 2021, but had not registered for courses for the Spring 2022 semester. A total of 14,006 students were then sent a link to the questionnaire via email. The questionnaire link accepted responses for five days (120 hours) before data collection closed. Questionnaire was administered through Qualtrics.

Results

Demographics

Of the 14,006 students who received the questionnaire, we receive a total of 324 responses. We received 178 responses from individuals who were last enrolled in Spring 2021 and 146 from those who were last enrolled in the Fall 2021 semester. The majority of respondents were female ($N = 219$), with 94 male respondents and seven non-binary (see figure 1). Respondents mostly consisted of 20-24 year old ($N = 113$) and 25-29 year old individuals ($N = 55$) (see figure 2), with 75% of all respondents being Hispanic ($N = 105$) or White, Non-

Hispanic ($N = 138$) (see figure 3). Of responses recorded, approximately 10% were part of EOP&S and/or DSPS ($N = 35$ and 33 , respectively).

Figure 1. Responses by gender

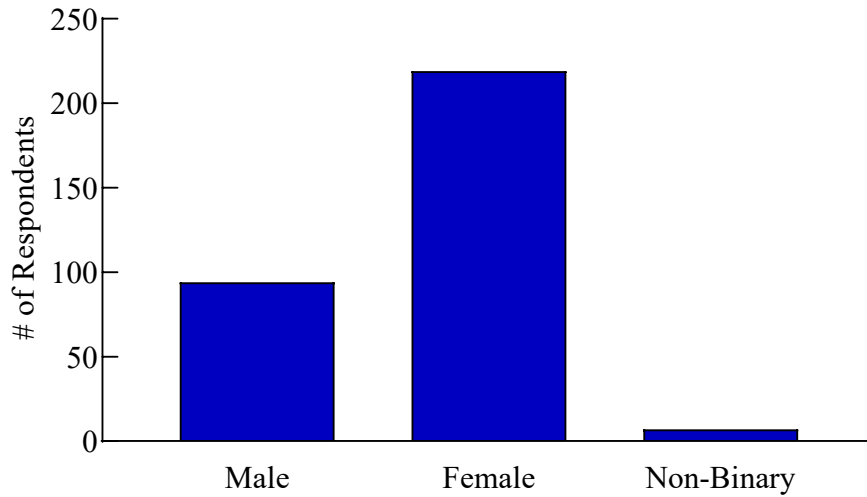


Figure 2. Responses by age

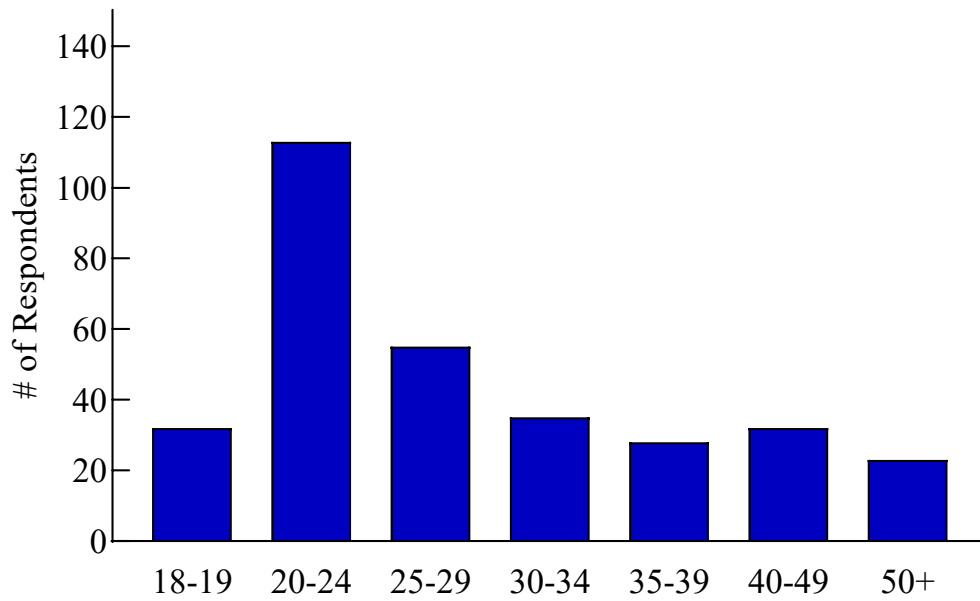
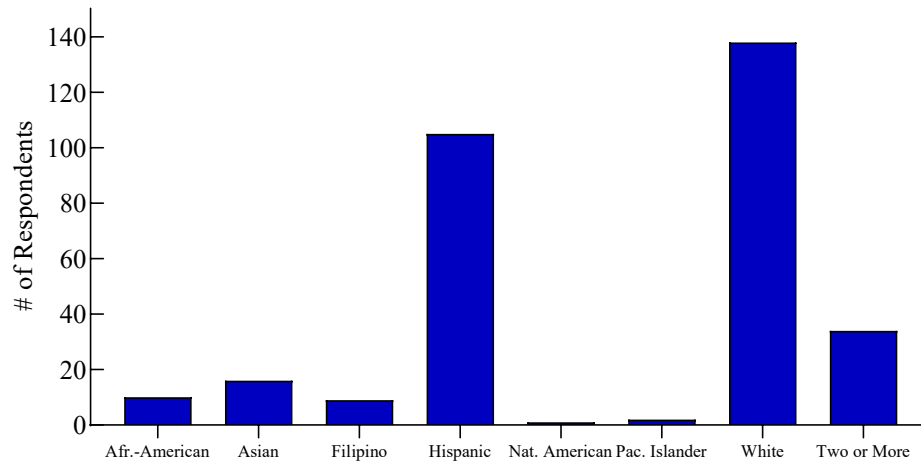
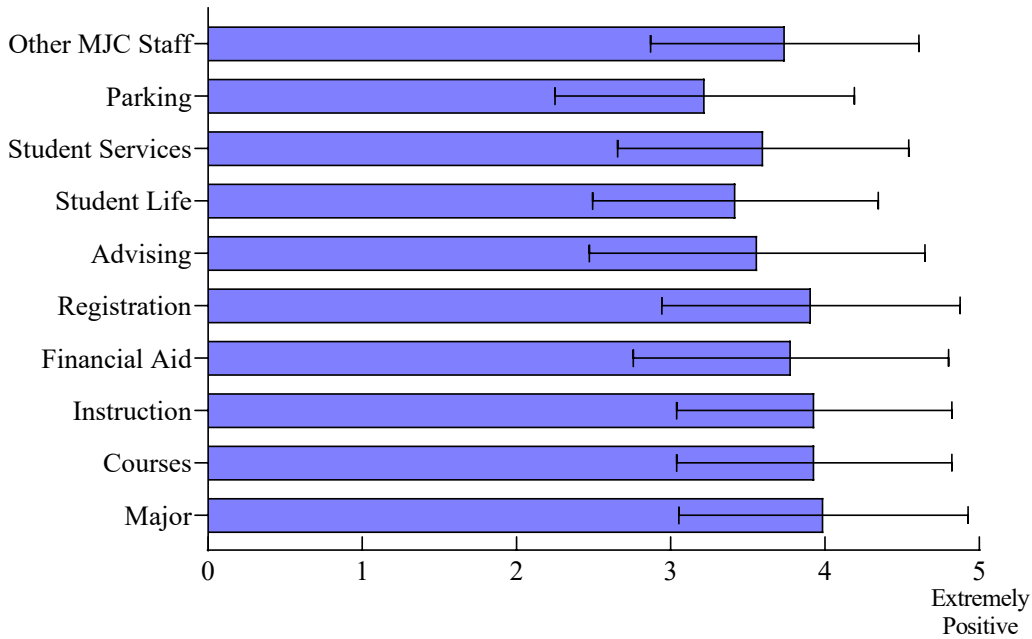


Figure 3. Responses by ethnicity

Descriptive Statistics

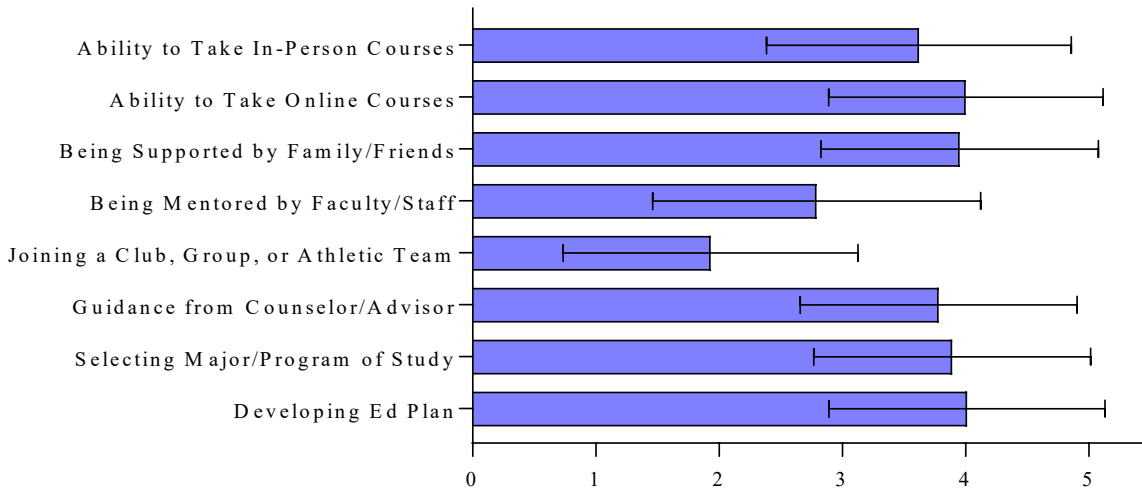
Overall MJC Experience. Respondents were asked to rate their experience on 10 different aspects of MJC on a scale of 1 (extremely negative) to 5 (extremely positive) (see figure 4). Overall, respondents rated MJC as a moderate or neutral experience, with experiences related to academic program/major ($M = 3.99$, $SD = .937$), courses ($M = 3.93$, $SD = .892$), and instruction ($M = 3.93$, $SD = .931$) being rated the highest, and parking ($M = 3.22$, $SD = .970$), student life ($M = 3.42$, $SD = .926$), and academic advising ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.088$) rated the lowest.

Figure 4. Overall MJC Experience



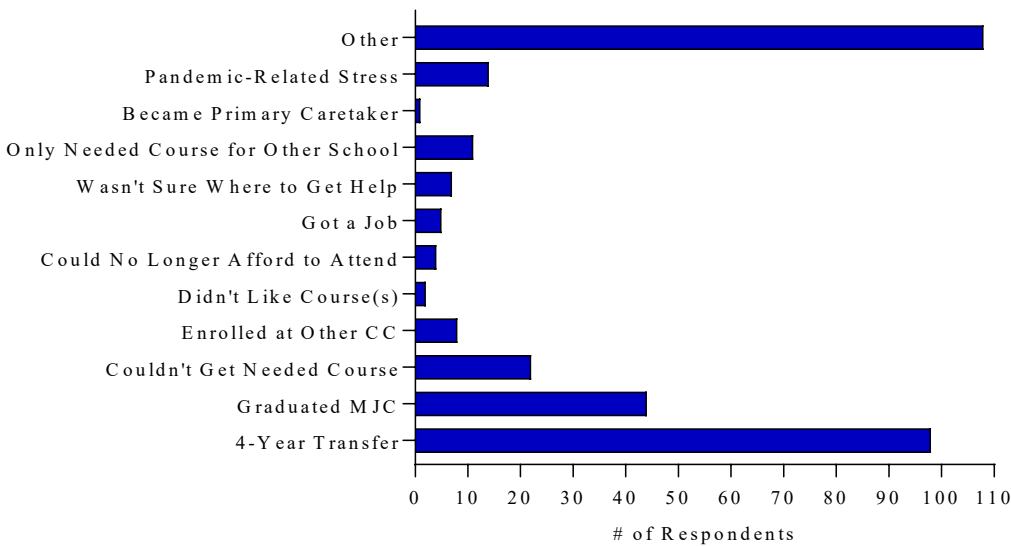
Items Important in Meeting Educational Goal. Respondents were also asked to rate the importance of specific items with respect to how important they were in meeting their transfer, degree/certificate, or educational goal on a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important) (see figure 5). On average, respondents considered developing an educational plan ($M = 4.01, SD = 1.119$) and ability to take online courses ($M = 4.00, SD = 1.113$) very important to meeting their educational goal while being mentored by faculty/staff ($M = 2.79, SD = 1.33$) and joining a club, group or athletic team ($M = 1.93, SD = 1.20$) were considered to be of minimal importance.

Figure 5. Items Important in Meeting Educational Goal



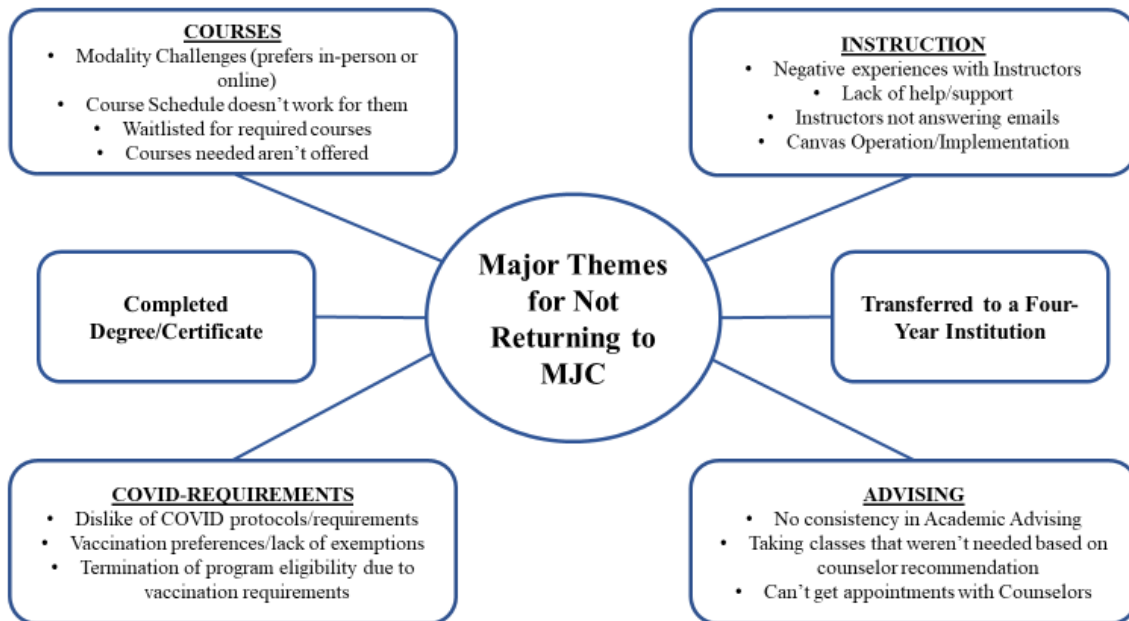
Primary Reason for Leaving. When asked to provide their primary reason for not re-enrolling at MJC (figure 6), 30% of respondents stated they had transferred to a Four-Year Institution ($n = 98$). Approximately 13% of respondents ($n = 44$) had graduated from MJC. Aside from graduation or transfer, 6.8% of respondents ($n = 22$) had stated they didn't re-enroll because they couldn't get the class they needed.

Figure 6. Primary Reasons for No Longer Attending MJC



Also of note, 33.3% of students ($n = 108$) had a reason other than the list provided that they chose not to re-enroll at MJC. 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, four major themes emerged: Courses, Instruction, Advising, and COVID Requirements (figure 7). Within the theme of Courses, respondents noted modality, scheduling, and waitlists as primary reasons for no longer attending. Those who fell under the Instruction theme pointed to negative experiences with instructors and lack of help/support as primary reasons for not re-enrolling. Under advising, respondents stated a lack of consistency in academic advising and that they were advised to take many classes they did not actually need for their program of study. Finally, those that cited COVID requirements as their reason for not returning primarily focused on a dislike of the COVID protocols/requirements, as well as vaccination preferences and lack of exemptions. Termination of program eligibility due to vaccination requirements was also noted as a reason for no longer attending.

Figure 7. Major Themes for Not Returning to MJC



Transferred to a 4-Year Institution. Ninety-eight respondents selected “Transferred to a Four-Year Institution” as their primary reason for no longer attending MJC. Of these 98 transfers, a total of 79 reported having transferred to a California State University, with 56% ($n = 55$) stated they have transferred to California State University, Stanislaus. Nine respondents reported transferring to an institution in the University of California (UC) system, and four respondents are now attending a four-year institution out-of-state. Of respondents that transferred to a four-year institution, 82% are in a program that maps onto what their major was at MJC.

Additional Reasons for Leaving MJC. Aside from transferring to a 4-Year Institution and graduating from MJC, respondents also identified ability to get into courses ($n = 22$), pandemic-related stress ($n = 14$), and only needing the specific course(s) they took for another school ($n = 11$). For a comparison of primary reasons for no longer attending MJC, see figure 6.

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 with courses, instruction, and academic advising at MJC. Results indicated that there was a significant positive correlation between academic program/major and course ($r(317) = .80, p < .001$) as well as instruction at MJC ($r(319) = .70, p < .001$). Additionally, there was a strong significant positive correlation between academic program/major and academic advising, $r(317) = .49, p < .001$.

A correlational analysis was also used to examine the relationship between experience with Academic Advising and experience with registration. Results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between academic advising and one’s experience with registration at MJC, $r(317) = .54, p < .001$.

Items Important in Meeting Educational Goal. A Pearson's r correlational analysis was used to examine the relationship between importance of in-person/online courses and importance of being mentored by a faculty or staff member. Results indicated that there was a moderate positive correlation between importance of the ability to in-person classes and the importance of being mentored, $r(308) = .39, p < .001$. Also of note, there were moderate positive correlations between the importance of being supported by family and friends and both the ability to take in-person classes ($r(308) = .33, p < .001$) and the ability to take online courses ($r(310) = .30, p < .001$).

Discussion and Recommendations

The thematic analysis conducted identified six overarching themes that may point to why students are not returning to MJC: Courses, Instruction, Advising, COVID Requirements, 4-Year Transfer, and Graduation from MJC. Although transferring to a 4-Year institution and graduating from MJC are positive reasons for students to not return, there still remain four themes that are largely negative and internal in nature. Further research should be conducted to determine the extent to which these themes impact student attrition rates at MJC.

Additionally, these four internal themes (Courses, Instruction, Advising, and COVID Requirements) accentuate potential areas of focus to improve the overall MJC experience. More specifically, the correlational analyses conducted showed strong positive relationships between (1) an individual's experience with instruction and their experience with their major/program of study, (2) an individual's experience with academic advising and their experience with their major/program of study, and (3) an individual's experiences with courses and their experience with their major/program of study. This suggests that student interactions with advising and instruction greatly impact their experience with the major, and therefore, MJC as a whole. Future

research should be conducted to dive deeper into these concepts and identify more precise attributes of these themes that impact student experience at MJC and their decision to continue attending.

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Appendix A. Non-Returning Students Questionnaire

Q1: How many semesters did you attend classes at MJC, including Fall (or Spring) 2021?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5
- F. 6 or more

Q2: What was your major(s) at MJC?

(Short text answer)

Q3: 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

Q4: 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

Q5: 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. Pandemic-related stress
- L. Other; specify below

Q6 (Shown if 'A' was selected from Q5): Congratulations on your transfer! Which 4-Year Institution are you now attending?

(Short text answer)

Q7 (Shown if 'A' was selected from Q5): What is your major(s) at this 4-Year Institution?

(Short text answer)

Q8 (Shown if 'B' was selected from Q5): Congratulations on graduating! What degree or certificate did you receive from MJC?

(Short text answer)

Q9 (Shown if 'C' was selected from Q5): If you left MJC because of specific course needs, please identify the course(s) below:

(Short text answer)

Q10 (Shown if 'C' was selected from Q5): Were you a student with Priority Registration?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. I don't know

Q11 (Shown if 'C' was selected from Q5): Which day of the week would you prefer to take courses? Select all that apply.

- A. Monday
- B. Tuesday
- C. Wednesday
- D. Thursday
- E. Friday
- F. Saturday
- G. Sunday
- H. Online

Q12 (Shown if 'C' was selected from Q5): When do you prefer to schedule your classes? Select all that apply.

- 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. Online

Q13 (Shown if 'D' was selected from Q5): Which Community College are you now attending?

(Short answer text)

Q14 (Shown if 'D' was selected from Q5): 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

Q15 (Shown if 'E' was selected from Q5): 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

Q16 (Shown if 'E' was selected from Q5): Is there anything else about the course(s) you did not like?

(Short answer text)

Q17 (Shown if 'F' was selected from Q5): 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

Q18 (Shown if 'G' was selected from Q5): Congratulations on the job! Is your new job related to your MJC major?

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

Q19 (Shown if 'G' was selected from Q5): Did you use the Career Center or other MJC Services to find your new job?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Q20 (Shown if 'A' was selected from Q19): Please rate your satisfaction with the MJC Career Center.

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

Q21 (Shown if 'A' was selected from Q19): 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

Q22: Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience at MJC?

(Short text answer)

Q23: 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)

Q24: Please indicate your gender.

- A. Male
- B. Female
- C. Non-binary

Q25: Please indicate your age range.

- A. 18-19
- B. 20-24
- C. 25-29
- D. 30-34
- E. 35-39

- F. 40-49
- G. 50+

Q26: Please indicate your ethnicity.

- A. African-American/Black
- B. Asian
- C. Filipino
- D. Hispanic
- E. Native American
- F. Pacific Islander
- G. White, Non-Hispanic
- H. Two or more

Q27: Were you an EOP&S student at MJC?

- A. No
- B. Yes

Q28: Were you an DSPS student at MJC?

- A. No
- B. Yes