



**Office of
Institutional
Research**

**Redefining Student Success
-Successful CCP ‘Drop-Outs’-**

Part A

IR Report # 178

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**Community
College
of Philadelphia**

Introduction

Large numbers of Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) students leave the College prior to earning a degree. Only 251 (6%) of the 4,179 students who left CCP after the fall 2006 term earned a degree prior to departure (Table 1). After the spring 2006 term, 854 (12.5%) of the 6,828 departing students earned a degree prior to departure.

Table 1
Departing Student Success ¹

	Departing Students	Graduated	Long-Term Success	Short-Term Success	Unsuccessful
Fall 2001	4782	6.3 %	35.5 %	19.3 %	38.9 %
Fall 2002	4773	4.8 %	30.9 %	21.0 %	43.3 %
Fall 2003	5021	5.0 %	32.2 %	19.6 %	43.3 %
Fall 2004	4973	5.3 %	31.5 %	18.6 %	44.7 %
Fall 2005	4326	6.1 %	37.0 %	17.3 %	39.6 %
Fall 2006	4179	6.0 %	34.7 %	17.8 %	41.6 %
Spring 2006					
Spring 2002	6773	11.0 %	32.2 %	19.2 %	37.6 %
Spring 2003	7052	10.9 %	34.0 %	19.0 %	36.1 %
Spring 2004	7783	12.5 %	34.8 %	17.7 %	35.0 %
Spring 2005	7877	11.8 %	35.6 %	17.1 %	35.5 %
Spring 2006	6828	12.5 %	37.6 %	17.1 %	32.7 %

While a small percentage of CCP's students earn a degree or certificate prior to 'dropping-out' of the College, many former students who did not graduate are nevertheless successful when they discontinue their studies at CCP. Table 1 provides information concerning the size of this former student group. It was previously

¹ Success categories are defined as follows:

- Graduates are students who earned certificates or associates degrees at the College.
- Long term success is defined as departure with a GPA of 2.0 or greater and 12 or more cumulative credit hours earned.
- Short term success is defined as departure with a GPA of 2.0 or greater and 11 or fewer cumulative credit hours earned.
- The unsuccessful departure group includes all departing students not otherwise classified including students who never complete a college-level course.

established that 4,179 students left CCP after the fall 2006 term and 6,828 students left after the spring 2006 term. In order to control for stop-out behavior, these departing students did not re-enroll at CCP over the next three fall and spring semesters following their departure. While few of these students left with a degree in-hand, it would be inappropriate to assume all remaining former students left the College under unsuccessful circumstances. In fact, there were 5,929 former students who did not earn a CCP degree and were academically successful at the time they discontinued their enrollment at the College. For this purpose, the measure of academic success was defined as achieving a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher at the time CCP studies were discontinued.² This group has been further divided into short-term former students who earned fewer than 12 CCP college-level course credits prior to departure and long-term former students who earned more than 11 college-level course credits at time of departure.

During spring and summer 2008, the Institutional Research Office surveyed these seemingly successful former CCP students to learn more about their reasons for enrolling at the College; their progress in achieving educational goals; their satisfaction with the college experience; and their reasons for discontinuing their enrollment at CCP. While IR Reports #179 and #180 (available at http://www.ccp.edu/VPFIN-PL/ir/irrep_on.htm) provide information related specifically to the survey, the purpose of the information in this report is to describe this population of CCP ‘drop-outs’ in greater detail.

Short-term and Long-term Success

While all of the former students described in this report earned a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0, they differ in terms of the length of time they were enrolled at the College. Short-term successful students (STS) earned fewer than 12 CCP college-level course credits prior to departure and long-term successful students (LTS) earned more than 11 college-level course credits prior to departure. After reviewing the diverse distribution of college credits earned by the LTS group, the group was split in two to separate ‘near graduates’, students who earned more than 60 CCP credits, and former students who left

² Given this definition, students who never attempted a college-level course prior to leaving the College are not represented in this report.

after earning between 12 and 60 college credits. A description of the students in these three groups is the focus of this report.

Table 2
Cumulative College Credit Hours Earned by Successful Non-Graduates

	%	#
Short-term Success (STS) 1-11 Credits	Mean = 5.5	Median = 6.0
1-3	38.3	731
4-6	32.7	622
7-9	22.9	436
10-11	6.2	117
Total	100.0	1906
Long-term Success (LTS) 12 - 60 Credits	Mean = 30.1	Median = 27.0
12-19	31.2	1001
20-29	23.2	746
30-39	18.3	588
40-49	14.1	454
50-60	13.2	423
Total	100.0	3212
Near-graduate (NG) Greater Than 60 Credits	Mean = 75.6	Median = 71.0
61-69	42.0	331
70-79	31.4	247
80-89	13.3	105
90-99	7.0	55
100+	6.3	50
Total	100.0	788

Table 2 reveals interesting persistence information. The size of the Near-graduate (NG) group is large (788) accounting for 13% of the total group of successful non-graduates from this time period. An additional 423 of the LTS group accumulated between 50 and 60 credits by the time they left CCP, which puts them close to achieving the minimum credit requirements for graduation as well.³

While students described in this report share the common characteristic of having maintained a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0, there were group differences within the 2.0

³ It is beyond the scope of this report to also consider the coherence of the courses reflected in these credit hours. It is possible that even though the quantity of credits accumulated puts these students within grasp of an associates degree, the nature of the courses may not represent a coherent cluster of courses specific to a CCP degree program.

to 4.0 GPA range (Tables 3a and 3b). In general, students who earned fewer CCP credits prior to departure achieved higher GPAs. While 35% of the STS group achieved GPAs between 3.5 and 4.0, a much smaller percentage of the more persistent groups earned GPAs within this range.

Table 3a
Mean and Median Cumulative GPA

GPA	Greater Than 60 Credits (NG)		12 - 60 Credits (LTS)		1-11 Credits (STS)	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
	2.89	2.84	2.88	2.82	3.02	3.00

Table 3b
Cumulative GPA Distribution

GPA Range	Greater Than 60 Credits (NG)		12 - 60 Credits (LTS)		1-11 Credits (STS)	
	%	#	%	#	%	#
2.0 - 2.49	21.1	166	28.4	911	26.5	506
2.5 - 2.99	38.2	301	29.4	945	12.0	226
3.0 - 3.49	27.9	220	25.6	823	26.3	503
3.5 - 3.99	12.7	100	12.8	413	9.0	170
4.0	0.1	1	3.8	121	26.2	500
Total	100.0	788	100.0	3213	100.0	1905

Another measure of the success of these former CCP students is the level of persistence/success within the courses they took while enrolled at CCP. Table 4 contains the average group ratios of credits earned/credits attempted. Across all three groups, these students successfully completed nearly all of the courses they took while enrolled at CCP.

Table 4
Mean Ratio of Credits Earned/Credits Attempted

Success Ratio	Greater Than 60 Credits (NG)	12 - 60 Credits (LTS)	1-11 Credits (STS)
	Mean	Mean	Mean
	0.97	0.96	0.97

Background Characteristics of Successful ‘Drop-Outs’

Females outnumbered males by a 2 to 1 margin across all former student groups (Table 5) and Black and Asian students were disproportionately more likely than Latino and White students to be ‘near graduates’ (Table 6). Given the temporal nature of persistence, it is not surprising to observe its positive relationship with age; older students persisted longer than younger students (Table 7). While former students in the STS group were most likely to have been eligible for PELL⁴ while enrolled at CCP, group differences were minimal (Table 8).

**Table 5
Gender of Successful Former Students**

	Greater Than 60 Credits (NG)		12 - 60 Credits (LTS)		1-11 Credits (STS)	
	%	#	%	#	%	#
Male	31.4	239	32.3	1020	34.4	645
Female	68.6	523	67.7	2141	65.6	1231
Total	100.0	762	100.0	3161	100.0	1876

**Table 6
Race of Successful Former Students**

	Greater Than 60 Credits (NG)		12 - 60 Credits (LTS)		1-11 Credits (STS)	
	%	#	%	#	%	#
Black	50.1	378	44.9	1386	45.4	816
Asian or Pacific Islander	8.0	60	6.3	194	6.9	124
Hispanic	5.2	39	5.1	156	6.2	111
White	29.6	223	35.0	1080	34.3	615
Other/Unknown	7.2	54	8.6	268	7.2	129
Total	100.0	754	100.0	3084	100.0	1795

⁴ Students were eligible for a PELL award but may not have exercised the award.

Table 7
Mean and Median Age of Successful Former Students

	Greater Than 60 Credits (NG)		12 - 60 Credits (LTS)		1-11 Credits (STS)	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
	Age	34.5	31.0	29.9	26.0	28.5

Table 8
Pell Eligibility of Successful Former Students

	Greater Than 60 Credits (NG)		12 - 60 Credits (LTS)		1-11 Credits (STS)	
	%	#	%	#	%	#
	Pell Eligible	35.4	279	39.2	1259	31.4
Not Eligible	64.6	509	60.8	1954	68.6	1313
Total	100.0	788	100.0	3213	100.0	1915

Programmatic Characteristics of Successful ‘Drop-Outs’

Most successful former CCP students were enrolled in Liberal Arts or Culture, Science and Technology but there were group differences in terms of programmatic distributions. Nearly half (48.5%) of STS students were enrolled in Liberal Arts compared to 36% of the LTS and 28% of the NG groups (Table 9). Near-Graduates were more evenly distributed throughout CCP program areas. Twenty-eight percent (28%) were in Liberal Arts; 20% were within the Economics and Business Administration area; 17% were in a Social and Behavioral Science and Human Services program; and 14% were in Culture, Science and Technology.

Redistributing majors into a Career/Transfer dichotomy reveals that students enrolled in Transfer majors were less persistent at the College than students enrolled in Career majors (Table 10). Eighty-four percent (84%) of the STS group was enrolled in a Transfer major while at CCP compared with 69% of the NG group.

Table 9
Program Areas Associated With Successful Former Students

	Greater Than 60 Credits (NG)		12 - 60 Credits (LTS)		1-11 Credits (STS)	
	%	#	%	#	%	#
Liberal Arts	28.2	222	36.4	1169	48.5	928
Arts	4.1	32	3.7	120	2.5	48
Social and Behavioral Sciences and Human Services	16.8	132	11.9	382	4.1	79
Economics and Business Administration	20.1	158	14.8	475	10.8	207
Health Careers	5.2	41	1.6	53	1.1	21
Culture, Science and Technology	14.1	111	23.3	750	17.4	334
Mathematics, Physical Sciences, and Engineering Tech	7.6	60	2.9	92	2.5	48
General Studies, Discontinued Programs and Programs not Assigned to a Division	4.1	32	5.4	172	13.1	250
Total	100.0	788	100.0	3213	100.0	1915

Table 10
Program Type Associated With Successful Former Students

	Greater Than 60 Credits (NG)		12 - 60 Credits (LTS)		1-11 Credits (STS)	
	%	#	%	#	%	#
Career	31.2	246	19.5	628	12.6	240
Transfer	68.8	542	79.4	2552	83.7	1594
Not a Degree Program	0.0	0	1.0	33	3.7	71
Total	100.0	788	100.0	3213	100.0	1905

Information concerning transfer activity was extracted from the Student Loan Clearinghouse database and revealed a positive relationship between actual transfer activity and persistence at CCP. A larger percentage of the NG group (43%) appeared on the Clearinghouse database as enrolled elsewhere in higher education subsequent to

leaving the College (Table 11). By contrast, 37% of the LTS and 28.7% of the STS groups had transferred.

Table 11
Transfer Rate of Successful Former Students

	Greater Than 60 Credits (NG)		12 - 60 Credits (LTS)		1-11 Credits (STS)	
	%	#	%	#	%	#
Transferred	43.0	339	36.9	1184	28.7	549
Did Not Transfer	57.0	449	63.1	2029	71.3	1366
Total	100.0	788	100.0	3213	100.0	1915

As a group, the successful former students described in this report transferred to approximately 220 different higher education institutions throughout the country. While it is not surprising that Temple University was the transfer institution to appear most frequently on the list, it is interesting to note the rather small percentage of transfer students who were enrolled at Temple. Only 17% of all transfers went to Temple indicating the diversity of transfer schools. The NG group was most likely to have enrolled at Temple (27%), followed by 17% of the LTS group, and 10% of the STS group. The next most likely transfer institution was Drexel University which received 8.6% of all transfers. The NG group was most likely to have enrolled at Drexel (15%), followed by 8.6% of the LTS group, and 7.3% of the STS group.

Conclusion

The information herein supports the use of a broader perspective when assessing institutional effectiveness. Even though relatively small numbers of CCP degrees are awarded annually, it appears that many CCP ‘drop-outs’ have had successful academic experiences at the College and should be factored into the measure of effectiveness. Large numbers of the former students described in this report dropped from the College after successfully completing a large number of credit courses, in many cases, a sufficient number to satisfy graduation requirements. Additionally, while many of the students in this report discontinued their enrollment at CCP, a significant proportion transferred

elsewhere after CCP thereby persisting within higher education. Others individuals were likely ‘guest’ students enrolled at other higher education institutions at the same time they took classes at the College. For these students, successful completion and transfer of their CCP courses is the measure of success.

An interesting trend across group program distributions is the greater likelihood of Liberal Arts students to have persisted for fewer than 12 CCP credits⁵. Undoubtedly, the large pool of students within Liberal Arts is very diverse in terms of their intentions. For example, a large portion of Liberal Arts students are likely ‘guest’ students who intend to complete a few CCP courses that will transfer back to their ‘mother’ institution.

Another type of Liberal Arts student is one with uncertain intentions. These undecided student are typified by the survey respondent who, when asked the *Primary reason for enrolling at CCP*, responded ‘*My mom made me*’. Prior institutional research, both at CCP and nationally, has connected unclear higher education intentions and attrition. While enrolling undecided students into a large program, such as Liberal Arts, provides an opportunity for exploration, many of these students might benefit from a more structured experience. Proactively providing higher education goal and career exploration opportunities for students with unclear intentions early in their enrollment at the College holds the possibility of encouraging more students to persist to a higher level of course completion.

Outreach to the former students described in this report represents an opportunity for the College as well as the students and the Philadelphia region. Many of the Near-Graduates and LTS students represent individuals that would be qualified to participate in the My Degree Now program which has the goal of increasing the number of Philadelphians with a college credential. My Degree Now will provide a scholarship to cover the cost of tuition and fees not supported by financial aid in order to encourage former students to return to colleges, such as CCP, to complete their degree.

The information in this report speaks to the need for programs of this sort that provide incentives to motivate larger numbers of students to persist to completion of their first credential, an associate degree at CCP. This outcome has the potential to benefit the student, the College, and the Philadelphia region as well. Unfortunately, not all of the

⁵ In the past, this was true for students enrolled in the General Studies program.

former students described in this report would meet the requirements for this Program but would benefit from other types of interventions with the goal of increasing their persistence at the College.

As mentioned in the Introduction of this report, the Institutional Research Office surveyed these former CCP students to learn more about their reasons for enrolling at the College; their progress in achieving educational goals; their satisfaction with the college experience; and their reasons for discontinuing their enrollment at CCP. IR Reports #179 and #180 (available @ http://www.ccp.edu/VPFIN-PL/ir/irrep_on.htm) provide this feedback and the information can be used to inform institutional discussions around potential strategies to encourage students to persist at CCP, perhaps to graduation, or to return to CCP to enroll in additional courses that will eventually transfer elsewhere.