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ABSTRACT

The Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) enrolls approximately 11,000 students per semester in on-campus credit courses. This report documents the enrollment patterns of the 765 spring 1990 associate degree recipients, providing selected comparisons with the 1982 graduating cohort. In addition, results of a survey returned by 379 (49.5%) of the graduates are reported. Study highlights include the following: (1) the ethnic composition of the 1990 graduate cohort was 52.9% white, 36.8% Black, 4.3% Asian, 2.6% Hispanic, and 2.4% designated as other; (2) the mean age at graduation was 31.1 years; (3) 31.6% of the graduates had taken courses at another college prior to enrolling at CCP; (4) 58.7% of the graduates had received financial aid at some point during their CCP enrollment; (5) 29.3% had taken required remedial courses at the outset of their CCP studies, completing an average of 2.0 remedial credits; (6) while 48.5% of the 1982 cohort graduated in 3 years or less, only 30.1% of the 1990 cohort completed degree requirements within 3 years, a difference attributed to stop-out behavior and fewer credits taken per semester among the 1990 cohort; (7) 26.2% of the graduates indicated that while at CCP they were very uncertain that they would have sufficient funds to finance their education; (8) both the number of dependants and the work patterns of the graduates, which remained relatively stable at CCP entry and graduation, were positively correlated with time to degree completion; and (9) finances and work commitments were the most frequently cited reasons for graduate stop-out behavior. Eighteen data tables are included. (PAA)

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A Profile of the Enrollment Behavior
of 1990 Associate Degree Recipients
at Community College of Philadelphia

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Institutional Research
Report #59

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Introduction

Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) is a large urban institution which enrolls approximately 11,000 students per semester in on-campus credit courses. Recently, CCP students were more likely to enroll on a part-time basis (64%) and were more likely to be female (64%). The mean age of students was 27.5 years while the median age was 24. Black students formed the largest racial subgroup on campus (46%), followed in magnitude by white (42%), Asian (7%), and Hispanic (5%) students. Slightly more than one-third (38%) of all students received partial or total financial aid to attend the College.

This report documents enrollment patterns of CCP students who earned associate degrees in Spring 1990. Student enrollment histories, which include years to graduation, the number of semesters enrolled prior to graduation, semester credits attempted, curriculum changes, and stop-out behavior, were compiled by tracking graduates from initial registration at CCP through the graduation semester. This enrollment information, which was readily available from the College data base, was assembled for the 765 Spring 1990 associate degree recipients.

Profile of the 1990 Associate Degree Recipients

In addition to collecting information about enrollment patterns, data related to student characteristics was gathered and used to build a profile of the graduate cohort.

Although 110 certificates were awarded by CCP in Spring 1990, the graduate cohort in this study included only the 765 associate degree recipients. White students accounted for 52.9% of the graduate cohort, 36.8% were Black, 4.3% Asian, 2.6% Hispanic, and 2.4% described their racial/ethnic background with another category. At entry, graduates ranged in age from 18 to 68 years. The mean age associated with the distribution was 31.1 years, the median age was 29. A sizeable percentage (31.6%) of the Spring 1990 graduates had taken courses at another college prior to enrolling at CCP. The number of credits that graduates transferred to CCP from other post-secondary institutions ranged from 1 to 42. The median number of transfer credits was 12, the equivalent of one semester of full-time attendance.

Over half the cohort (58.7%) received financial aid at some point while enrolled at the College. Slightly more than one-quarter (29.3%) were required to take some remedial courses at the outset of their CCP studies. The average number of remedial credits taken by this group was 2.0, the median was 0 credits.

Enrollment History

Years Elapsed Between Initial Enrollment and Graduation

Only 46 (6%) of the cohort graduated two academic years after their initial enrollment (Table 1). Tracking back

Table 1
Years Elapsed Between
Initial Enrollment and Graduation
in Spring 1990

<u>Years to Graduation</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
2 years or less	43	5.9
2+ to 3 years	185	24.2
3+ to 4 years	154	20.1
4+ to 5 years	80	10.4
5+ to 6 years	70	9.1
6+ years or more	233	30.3
Total	765	

earlier indicates that for an additional 24.2% of the cohort, three years elapsed between initial CCP enrollment and graduation. In all, half of the Spring 1990 graduates enrolled at the College for the first time more than four years prior to their graduation. At the extreme, eleven years or more elapsed between initial enrollment and graduation for 10% of the cohort.

Semesters Enrolled to Graduation

Measuring time to graduation in terms of years since initial enrollment overestimates the actual time spent at CCP for students who do not attend in consecutive semesters but instead stop-out for one or several semesters during the course of their enrollment. Of the Spring 1990 graduates, 42.2% stopped-out at least one fall or spring semester between their initial enrollment and graduation. In order to adjust time to graduation to account for intermittent attendance, the number of fall, spring and summers (two summer sessions were counted as one semester) in which the student actually enrolled at CCP was calculated and are contained in Table 2.

On average, degree recipients enrolled at the College for 9.1 semesters while the median number of enrolled semesters was 8.5.

Table 2
Number of Enrolled Semesters
Between Initial Enrollment and Graduation
in Spring 1990

<u># of Enrolled Semesters</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
4 or less	19	2.5
4.5 to 6	137	17.9
6.5 to 8	218	28.5
8.5 to 10	167	21.8
10.5 to 12	103	13.5
12.5 to 14	54	7.1
14+	<u>67</u>	8.7
Total	765	

It is interesting to note that most of the cohort (94.5%) attended at least one CCP summer session at some point during their enrollment. The mean and median number of summer sessions attended by degree recipients was 3.

Credit Hour Patterns

In addition to noncontinuous attendance, there are other enrollment factors which increase the time taken to graduate. For example, while credit hour requirements for associate degree programs at the College typically range from 60 to 68 credits, 37.1% of the graduate cohort completed over 68 CCP credits. Credit hour accumulations do not necessarily present the whole picture. Earlier in this paper it was noted that 29% of the cohort were required to enroll in at least one remedial course upon entry to the College. While remedial course hours do not count towards credit requirements in degree programs, and therefore are not added into cumulative credit hour figures, the need for remediation does add time to graduation. Incompleted courses should also be factored into the time to graduation equation.

The information in Table 3 demonstrates this point. It contains summary statistics associated with cumulative hours by the cohort. Column 1 represents credit hours earned at CCP while Column 2 contains CCP registered hours, which

includes hours accumulated from both credit and remedial course work and course hours from which the student withdrew.

Table 3
Cumulative Hours Earned
by 1990 Graduates
Summary Statistics

<u>Summary Measures</u>	<u>Cumulative CCP Credit Hours Earned</u>	<u>Cumulative Registered Hours</u>
Mean	66.1	77.3
Median	66.0	74.0
Standard Deviation	12.9	19.9
Minimum	60.0	60.0
Maximum	131.0	160.0

On average, students earned 66 CCP credits by graduation, which is within the range of credit hour requirements for most associate degree programs at the College. By contrast, the mean number of registered hours accumulated by graduation was 77.3 hours.

Curriculum Changes

Another enrollment behavior which serves to lengthen time to graduation is frequent curriculum changes, especially between unrelated curricula. With regard to this activity, only one-quarter of the group graduated in the same program in which they entered. While enrolled at the College, the mean number of curricula the graduates enrolled in was 2.4; the median was 2.

Comparison of 1990 Graduate Enrollment Patterns and 1982 Graduate Enrollment Patterns

During the summer of 1982, the enrollment patterns of Spring 1982 graduates were studied. The results of this research, which was based on the 835 associate degree recipients in that year, is documented in Institutional Research Report #23 entitled, "Student Flow of the 1982 Graduates". While the present study was not an exact replication of this earlier research, there are sufficient methodological similarities to justify a comparison of some of the findings across the two studies.

Similar to the present effort, student enrollment histories were gathered for the 1982 cohort by starting with

initial CCP registration and ending with the graduation semester. Figure 1 contains the number of years that elapsed between initial enrollment at CCP and graduation for both the 1982 and 1990 cohorts. A comparison across groups indicates that years to graduation has lengthened over time. While nearly half (48.5%) of the 1982 graduates completed their degree requirements in three years or less, 30.1% of the 1990 cohort did so in this time frame. At the other end of the scale, 7.7% of the 1982 graduates took more than six years to graduate while 30.3% of the 1990 graduates fell into this category.

Table 4 contains additional enrollment comparisons across the two cohorts. Since the time to graduation displayed in Figure 1 includes years from initial enrollment to graduation, it does not take into account the intermittent nature of student attendance, herein referred to as stopping-out. As noted earlier, stop-out behavior inflates years to graduation. The information in Table 4 indicates that 1990 graduates were more likely than 1982 graduates to have stopped-out for at least one semester while at CCP.

Figure 1
1982 and 1990 Time to Graduation
Associate Degree Recipients

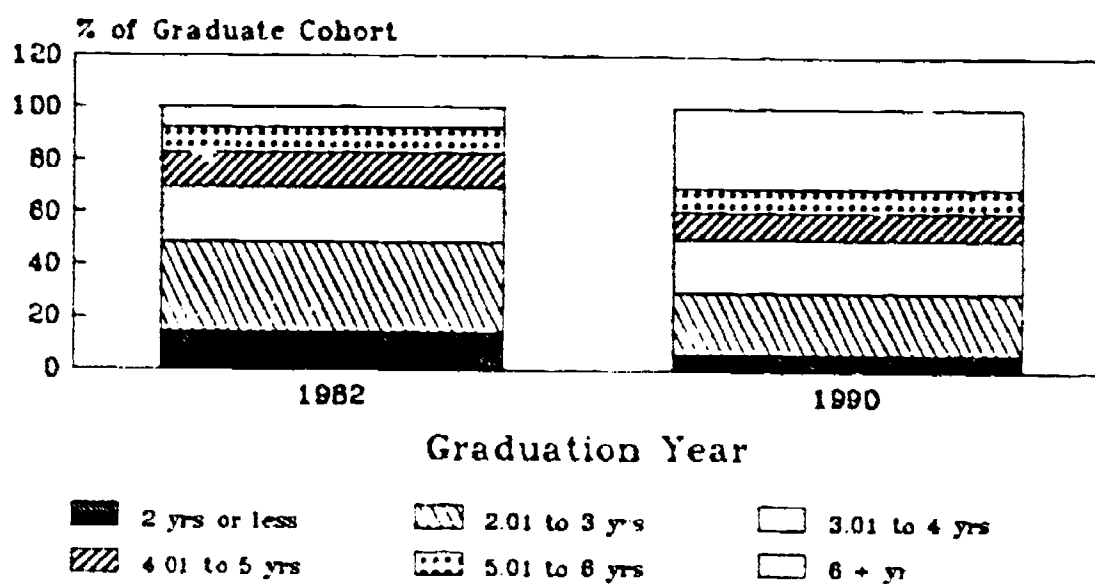


Table 4
Enrollment Patterns for
1982 and 1990 Associate Degree Recipients

<u>Enrollment Variable</u>	<u>Graduate Cohort</u>	
	1982	1990
% of cohort that stopped out at least once between initial enrollment and graduation	30.0	42.4
Mean # of semesters enrolled (does not include semesters student stopped-out)	8.7	9.1
Mean # of credits earned in a semester	9.0	8.1

While 1990 graduates were more likely to stop-out, the mean number of semesters enrolled at the College was not that dissimilar across groups. Graduates in 1990 were enrolled at CCP an average of 9.1 semesters while 1982 graduates were enrolled an average of 8.7 semesters.

Another enrollment factor which tended to lengthen the time to graduation for the 1990 cohort was the smaller number of semester credits earned by these students. The mean semester credits earned by 1990 graduates was 8.1 compared with 9.0 for 1982 graduates.

Enrollment History
Profiles of Student Subgroups

Age at Entry Comparisons

In subsequent analyses, 1990 graduates were disaggregated into subgroups which were defined by age curricular cluster and several variables related to specific enrollment behaviors. In the first of these comparative profiles, graduates were disaggregated into four subgroups representing age at entry to CCP. These categories and the distribution of students in them appear in Table 5.

Table 5
Age Categories of
Spring 1990 Graduates

<u>Age at Entry</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
Under 20 years	196	25.6
20 to 24 years	222	29.0
25 to 34 years	224	29.3
Over 34 years	<u>123</u>	16.1
. Total	765	

The percentage of graduates in the three youngest age categories was very similar. Slightly more than one-quarter of the cohort was represented by each of these age ranges. The age grouping with the smallest percentage of graduates were 35 years or older at entry.

Group means associated with enrollment and academic variables for each age subgroup appear in Table 6.

Table 6

**Group Means and Standard Deviations
Associated With Enrollment and Academic Variables
For 1990 Graduates Across Four Age Categories**

<u>Enrollment\</u> <u>Academic Variables</u>	<u>Age at Entry</u>							
	Under 20		20 to 24		25 to 34		Over 34	
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD
Years Between Initial Enrollment and Graduation	6.0	2.5	6.8	3.0	7.5	2.9	8.0	3.5
# of Enrolled Semesters	8.3	3.0	8.7	3.4	9.5	3.4	10.9	4.0
Credits Completed per Semester	9.2	2.5	8.2	2.4	7.6	2.5	6.9	2.4
Cumulative Remedial Hours Completed	2.8	5.0	1.9	4.3	1.7	4.3	1.8	5.0
Curriculum Changes	2.1	1.1	2.3	1.1	2.5	1.2	2.6	1.1
Transfer Credits from Other Colleges	2.7	6.7	6.8	10.3	7.1	11.3	3.2	7.8
Cumulative CCP and Transfer Credits	71.6	11.5	71.1	11.5	72.5	10.7	69.2	8.9
Cumulative GPA	2.78	46.7	2.86	43.3	3.11	47.3	3.11	49.1

Enrollment variables related to years to graduation, number of enrolled semesters and credits completed per semester decrease linearly across the four age groups. For example, the mean number of credits earned by students in the youngest age cohort (under 20) was 9.2. This value decreased across each of the successive age groups.

There was a similar reverse trend across age groups with regard to curriculum changes. Students in the youngest age group enrolled in 2.1 curricula while at CCP with each succeeding age group being characterized by more frequent curricular changes.

Despite taking longer to graduate, at entry, older graduates were generally better prepared academically and consequently required fewer remedial hours than younger graduates. Older graduates also did better in their CCP coursework, this being reflected by higher cumulative GPAs.

Program Comparisons

Institutional research has repeatedly indicated that the educational outcomes for students enrolled in the General Studies curriculum are different than those for students in other College programs. In order to determine if this distinction was true for graduates as well as the general CCP

student body, the cohort was dichotomized into graduates who were enrolled in the General Studies program in their last semester and graduates enrolled in all other programs.

In all, 124 (16.2%) of the cohort were in the General Studies curriculum with the remaining 641 (83.8%) enrolled in one of the other associate degree programs. Summary measures associated with enrollment and academic indicators for both programmatic subgroups appear in Table 7.

Table 7

**Group Means and Standard Deviations
Associated With Enrollment and Academic Variables
for 1990 Graduates Enrolled in General Studies
and Non-General Studies Programs**

<u>Enrollment\</u> <u>Academic Variables</u>	<u>Program of Study</u>			
	General Studies		Non- General Studies	
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD
Years Between Initial Enrollment and Graduation	7.3	3.4	6.3	3.0
# of Enrolled Semesters	9.3	4.2	9.0	3.3
Credits Completed per Semester	7.6	2.8	8.2	2.5
Cumulative Remedial Hours Completed	2.4	5.5	2.0	4.5
Curriculum Changes	2.3	1.1	2.4	1.2
Transfer Credits from Other Colleges	4.6	8.8	5.4	9.8

Table 7 cont'd

**Group Means and Standard Deviations
Associated With Enrollment and Academic Variables
for 1990 Graduates Enrolled in General Studies
and Non-General Studies Programs**

Enrollment\ Academic Variables	Program of Study			
	General Studies		Non- General Studies	
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD
Cumulative CCP and Transfer Credits	65.9	7.8	72.4	11.1
Cumulative GPA	2.85	53.7	2.97	47.8

General Studies graduates took slightly longer than the graduates in other CCP programs to graduate. The former group were enrolled an average of 9.3 semesters prior to graduation while the latter group was enrolled an average of 9.0 semesters.

General Studies students completed slightly fewer CCP credits per semester and transferred in fewer credits from other colleges than did non-General Studies students. In turn, they accumulated fewer CCP and transfer credits by graduation. Although General Studies graduates enrolled in more remedial hours than non-General Studies graduates, they achieved similar academic outcomes. The two subgroups of graduates earned very similar cumulative GPAs and changed curricula with approximately the same frequency.

Time to Graduation Comparisons

Graduates were placed into three subgroups based on time to graduation. These categories and the distribution of students that represent them appear in Table 8. The three

Table 8
Years Elapsed Between
Initial Enrollment and Graduation
Spring 1990 Graduates

<u>Years to Graduation</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
2 years or less	51	6.7
Between 2 and 3 years	185	24.2
More than 3 years	<u>529</u>	69.2
Total	765	

categories were defined to provide a clearer understanding of the profile of students who graduated 'on-time' and those who exhibited a less traditional enrollment history prior to graduation. A category of 2 years or less was included in the taxonomy since it is perceived by many external constituencies to be the normative time to graduate from a community college. The table information demonstrates this is clearly a misconception since few of the 1990 graduates were able to complete their associate degree course requirements in this time span. Extending the time to graduation an additional year captures a substantially larger

portion of the cohort, however, it typically took students more than three years to complete their course requirements.

A comparison of demographic profiles associated with each of the three subgroups indicates that females took slightly longer to complete their degree than males (Table 9). Males were more than twice as likely than females to finish in 2 years or less.

Table 9
Gender by Years to Graduation
Spring 1990 Graduates

<u>Years to Graduation</u>	<u>Gender</u>			
	Male		Female	
	#	%	#	%
2 years or less	27	11.5	24	4.5
Between 2 and 3 years	52	22.1	133	25.1
More than 3 years	<u>156</u>	66.4	<u>373</u>	70.4
Total	235		530	

Asian students took less time to graduate than students with other racial/ethnic backgrounds (Tables 10). Of the remaining three categories of students, whites took less time than either Hispanic or black students and Hispanics generally completed sooner than Blacks.

Table 10
Racial/Ethnic Background by Years to Graduation
Spring 1990 Graduates

<u>Years to Graduation</u>	<u>Racial/Ethnic Categories</u>							
	Asian		Black		Hispanic		White	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2 years or less	6	18.2	8	2.8	0	0.0	3	8.2
2 to 3 years	6	18.2	46	16.4	5	25.0	120	29.7
More than 3 years	<u>21</u>	63.6	<u>227</u>	80.8	<u>15</u>	75.0	<u>251</u>	62.1
Total	33		281		20		404	

Time to graduation increased linearly with age. The mean ages of graduates at entry in the three subgroups were as follows; 25 years for graduates who finished in two years or less, 27.2 years for graduates who finished in between two and three years, and 33.0 years for students who took more than these years to graduate.

The pattern of group means associated with the enrollment and academic variables were consistent with intuitive expectations. Graduates finished degree requirements sooner if they earned more credits per semester, earned transfer credits at other colleges prior to CCP, enrolled in fewer remedial hours, changed curricula less often, and earned higher GPAs (Table 11).

Table 11
Group Means and Standard Deviations
Associated with Enrollment and Academic Variables
For 1990 Graduates Who Completed in Different Time Frames

<u>Enrollment\</u> <u>Academic Variable</u>	<u>Years to Graduation</u>					
	2 years or Less		2 to 3 Years		3 or More Years	
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD
Credits Completed per Semester	11.7	2.0	10.2	1.7	7.0	2.0
Cumulative Remedial Hours Completed	0.3	1.4	1.6	3.2	2.7	5.2
Curriculum Changes	1.3	0.5	1.8	0.7	2.7	1.2
Transfer Credits from Other Colleges	14.1	13.9	4.9	9.3	4.5	8.9
Cumulative CCP and Transfer Credits	67.7	6.6	70.0	8.3	72.2	11.9
Cumulative GPA	3.2	0.4	3.0	0.5	2.9	0.5

Stop-Out and Nonstop-Out Comparisons

A large number of the 1990 graduate cohort exhibited intermittent enrollment behavior while working toward their associate degree. Of the 765 graduates, 323 (42.2%) stopped-out from the College for at least one semester. The next

several sections of the report compare students who enrolled continuously with those who attended intermittently.

A comparison of the demographic profiles of stop-outs and nonstop-outs indicates that males and females were equally likely to interrupt their CCP studies (Table 12).

Table 12
Gender by Stop-out Behavior
Spring 1990 Graduates

<u>Enrollment Behavior</u>	<u>Gender</u>			
	Male		Female	
	#	%	#	%
Stopped Out	95	40.4	228	43.0
Continuous Enrollment	<u>140</u>	59.6	<u>302</u>	57.0
Total	235		530	

Comparisons of stop-out behaviors across racial subcategories reveals that black students were the most likely subgroup of students to stop-out while working toward their degree, followed in magnitude by Hispanic, white and Asian students (Table 13).

Table 13
Race Background by Stop-Out Behavior
Spring 1990 Graduates

<u>Enrollment Behavior</u>	<u>Racial/Ethnic Categories</u>							
	Asian		Black		Hispanic		White	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Stopped-Out	10	30.3	151	53.7	9	45.0	145	35.9
Continuous Enrollment	<u>23</u>	69.7	<u>130</u>	46.3	<u>11</u>	55.0	<u>259</u>	64.1
Total	33		281		20		404	

Stop-outs were generally older than the graduates who enrolled continuously. The mean age associated with the former group was 34.6 years while for the latter it was 28.6. Group means associated with enrollment and academic variables appear in Table 14. It is not surprising to find that the stop-out cohort was characterized by more elapsed years between initial CCP enrollment and graduation than the continuous enrollment cohort. Even when time to graduation is adjusted for stop-out behavior, it becomes evident that graduates who did not enroll in continuous semesters took longer to graduate. Graduates who stopped-out enrolled for an average of 11 semesters while continuous enrollees were at the College for 7.7 semesters.

Table 14

Group Means and Standard Deviations Associated With Enrollment and Academic Variables For 1990 Graduates Who Stopped-Out and Attended in Consecutive Semesters

Enrollment/Academic Variable	<u>Enrollment Behavior</u>			
	Stopped-Out		Continuous Enrollment	
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD
Years Between Initial Enrollment and Graduation	10.1	2.9	4.8	1.8
# of Enrolled Semesters	11.0	3.5	7.7	2.7
Credits Completed per Semester	6.7	1.9	9.3	2.3
Cumulative Remedial Hours Completed	1.7	4.3	2.3	4.9
Curriculum Changes	2.9	1.2	2.0	0.9
Transfer Credits from Other Colleges	5.8	9.9	4.9	9.5
Cumulative CCP Credits and Transfer Credits	72.1	12.5	70.8	9.6
Cumulative GPA	2.9	49.4	3.0	48.4

Several of the other indicators in Table 14 indicate why this is the case. As a group, students who stopped-out earned fewer credits per semester, and changed curricula more

frequently. Despite their lengthened enrollment histories, graduates who stopped-out achieved similar levels of academic success, measured by GPA, graduates who attended without interruption.

The Impact of External Commitments on Enrollment Behavior

Thus far the information in this report has provided a descriptive profile of 1990 associate degree recipients. No direct attempt has been made to understand the reasons for specific enrollment behaviors. In comparing 1982 and 1990 graduates, it was noted that typical time to completion has gotten longer. An enrollment factor which appears to have had an important impact on this trend is stop-out behavior. For the students in this report, the disruption of enrollment was temporary for they eventually returned to CCP to pursue their educational degree. Consequently, these students were referred to as stop-outs. The section directly preceding this one described these students and compared them to students who did not stop-out while working on their degree requirements. This section takes a look at the impact of external commitments on this type of enrollment behavior.

Community colleges face the challenge that students frequently embrace multiple roles as they move between the community college environment and their homes, families, and jobs. These roles represent external commitments which frequently compete for a student's time and consequently, have been implicated as reasons for nonpersistence behavior.

In order to learn more about the dynamics of stopping-out behavior, a survey of the 1990 graduate cohort was undertaken. In the survey, graduates were asked about family and work commitments, both at entry to and departure from the College, their concerns about financing their education while enrolled at CCP, and, if they stopped-out, their reason(s) for doing so.

The survey, which was mailed to students along with a cover statement and instructions for returning the self-addressed, postage-paid form, resulted in 379 usable questionnaires, representing a 49.5% response rate. Comparative analyses of survey respondents and nonrespondents with regard to demographic and enrollment factors indicated there were no significant sources of nonresponse bias due to the self-selected nature of the sample.

External Responsibilities and Financial Concerns

On the questionnaire, graduates were asked several

questions concerning family and work commitments, such as the number of children or other relatives living with them for whom they were responsible and the average number of hours per week they worked at an off-campus job while pursuing their studies. Since the values associated with these factors are not necessarily constants which remain unchanged during the students' enrollment, these questions were asked twice. One set of responses applied to the first semesters of enrollment while the other set applied to semesters right before graduation.

Few of the respondents indicated having dependent responsibilities either at entry or departure from the College. During the first semesters of their enrollment, 81.6% of the respondents reported no dependent responsibility. In final semesters, this figure decreased slightly to 78.6%. The remaining survey respondents indicated family responsibilities ranging from 1 to 7 dependents, with the largest proportion reporting one or two dependents. The average number of reported dependents at entry was 0.40 while at exit it was 0.45.¹

-
1. The correlation between these distributions was extremely high ($r=0.971$) indicating little change in individual family responsibilities over the two time periods.

Work commitments at entry and exit were equally stable. At entry, 22.5% of the respondents reported working off-campus with weekly work hours ranging from 3 to 60. These numbers changed little during the graduates' final semesters. By this point, 24.9% were working between 5 and 60 hours per week. The average weekly hours reported by working graduates in their earliest semesters was 30.4, in later semesters the average was 29.2 hours.²

On the questionnaire, graduates were also asked to evaluate their level of concern regarding the financing of their education while at CCP. A little more than one-third (34.1%) of the respondents reported they were always confident of having sufficient funds, 39.7% had some misgivings about their finances while enrolled, and 26.2% indicated they were very uncertain they would have sufficient funds.

-
2. The correlation between these distribution was high (r=.98) indicating little change in individual work responsibilities over the two time periods.

Relationship of Family and Work Commitments and Financial Concern and Enrollment Behaviors

Since dependent and employment information were virtually constant across the two time measures, subsequent analyses were simplified by including external commitment indicators at exit only. The figures in Table 15 represent relationships between the three external commitment variables and the years elapsed between initial enrollment and graduation.

Table 15

Summary Measures for Relationship Between Years to Graduation and External Commitments for Spring 1990 Graduates

<u>External Commitment</u>		<u>Years to Graduation</u>					
# of dependents		2 Years or Less		2 to 3 Years		3 or More Years	
N		33		75		247	
\bar{X}		0.00		0.40		0.54	
SD		0.00		0.81		1.26	
# hours worked weekly							
N		39		72		249	
\bar{X}		4.15		4.29		8.29	
SD		9.94		9.14		16.03	
Financial Concerns							
None							
# (%)	18	(14.0)		21	(16.3)	90	(69.8)
Some							
# (%)	15	(10.0)		36	(24.0)	99	(66.0)
Extreme							
# (%)	6	(6.1)		18	(18.2)	75	(75.8)

The data in the table are not surprising. Graduates who took the longest to complete degree requirements generally had more family and work responsibilities and had more serious misgivings about their ability to finance their studies than other graduates.

While the information in Table 15 indicates the presence of an association between external commitments and years to graduating, the bivariate correlation coefficients in Table 16 are all extremely small, indicating the lack of substantive relationships between external commitments and enrollment behaviors such as the number of enrolled semesters, credits earned per semester, remedial hours completed, transfer credits, and total credits accumulated.

Table 16

**Correlation Coefficients for Relationships Between
External Commitments and Enrollment Behaviors for
Spring 1990 Graduates**

	# of Dependents	# Hours Worked	Financial Concerns
# Enrolled Semesters	0.06	0.07	-.01
# Credits Earned Per Semester	-0.12	-0.15	-.01
# Remedial Hours	0.01	0.08	.07
# Transfer Credits	-0.03	0.06	.08
# Total Credits Accumulated	-0.10	-0.01	.09

On the other hand, stop-out behavior does appear to be associated with external commitments, especially those

related to employment (Table 17). Graduates who stopped-out worked nearly twice as many weekly hours as graduates who attended in uninterrupted fall and spring semesters.

Table 17

**Summary Measures for Relationship Between
Stop-Out Behavior and External Commitments for
Spring 1990 Graduates**

<u>External Commitment</u>		<u>Enrollment Behavior</u>	
# of dependents		Stopped-out	Attended Continuously
\bar{X}		0.52	0.40
SD		1.36	0.89
# hours work weekly			
\bar{X}		9.05	5.34
SD		17.15	11.41
Financial Concerns			
None			
# (%)	51 (29.3)	78 (38.2)	
Some			
# (%)	75 (43.1)	75 (36.8)	
Extreme			
# (%)	48 (27.6)	51 (25.0)	

Stop-outs also tended to have greater familial responsibilities and concerns about financing their education.

Graduate Open-Ended Responses for Stop-Out Behavior.

These results are consistent with the self-reported reasons for stop-out cited by graduates to an open-ended survey question. Responses to this item clustered into the seven categories contained in Table 18. A total of 135 students answered the open-ended question. In several cases students cited more than one reason for stopping-out and the information in Table 18 reflects these multiple responses, thereby totaling to 159. The percentages are based on the number of responses rather than the number of graduates who answered the survey item.

Table 18
Graduate Self-Reported Reasons
for Stopping-out of CCP
Spring 1990 Graduates

<u>Reason for Stopping Out</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
Finances	45	28.3
Work Commitments	32	24.6
Family Commitments	30	18.9
Illness (own or family member)	15	9.4
Course Unavailability	15	9.4
Needed a Break	9	5.7
* Dissatisfaction with College	6	3.8
Total	159	

Financial concerns were cited most frequently by

graduates who sat-out for a time. Many of these respondents simply indicated 'financial reasons or problems', while others were more specific and reported 'did not have the funds to attend' and 'not able to afford books or a baby sitter'.

Nearly one-quarter of responses to this open-ended survey item were categorized as work commitment factors. Samples of these responses include 'conflict with work schedule and overtime', 'work hours changed in the middle of the semester and conflicted with course schedule', 'it's hard working full-time and attending college', 'working conditions changed', and 'had to work two jobs to have money for tuition'.

Family responsibilities related to pregnancies and child care were frequently cited as reasons for stopping-out. Examples of these responses are 'baby was due in middle of semester', 'had children and not able to find a sitter at times', 'no child care available', and 'raised children then returned to school'.

Course unavailability was especially problematic for graduates who were working and therefore had a narrow range of times at which they were able to take required courses. This concern is typified by the following response, 'the course I was supposed to take was not available during my off hours'. Course scheduling problems were not limited to working students. Unemployed graduates also reported that 'courses wanted were not open'.

A few students indicated other types of dissatisfaction with their CCP experiences were at the root of their stop-out behavior. Typical responses in this category were 'teacher turned me off' and 'was not happy with the quality of CCP staff'.