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ABSTRACT

This report is based on the set of Management Information System (MIS) Summaries of Student Characteristics reported by Mendocino College from fall 1992 to fall 1998. Basic student characteristics data are annually reported by each district to the California Community Colleges in the format established by the statewide MIS. An overall review of changing patterns of student characteristics is intended to provide a descriptive picture of present and past attendance patterns at Mendocino College, as influenced by both internal and external policies and practices. Overall, about two-thirds of Mendocino College students are female; one third are male. Statewide, the proportion of females gradually increased from 55% to just over 56% in the 10-year period ending in fall 1995. Viewed in the context of Lake and Mendocino County population statistics, the presence and distribution of the 15-17% of minority students at Mendocino College approximates the population as a whole. Mendocino's full-time student enrollment has not increased to the same degree as statewide figures. The percentage of evening students has varied, with a long-term stable trend over the past 3 years. The percentage of BA students has increased steadily over the same time period. (JA)

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Background: Basic student characteristics data are annually reported by each District to the California Community Colleges in the format established by the statewide Management Information System (MIS). The basis of this Report is the set of MIS summaries of Student Characteristics reported by Mendocino College from Fall, 1992 to Fall, 1998.

Overview:

An overall review of changing patterns of student characteristics is intended to provide a descriptive picture of present and past attendance patterns at Mendocino College, as influenced by both internal and external policies and practices. Thus, for example, the impact of the Differential Fee for students holding a BA degree or higher is immediately apparent both in enrollment decline and in the age and previous educational attainment of students from 1993 to 1995.

Findings: The data are presented below.

Overall, about two-thirds of Mendocino College students are Female; one third male. Statewide comparison data from the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) (1996) indicate that Mendocino College varies significantly from the overall gender distribution pattern of approximately 56% Female and 44% Male. Statewide, the proportion of Females gradually increased from 55% to just over 56% in the ten-year period ending in Fall, 1995.

Viewed in the context of Lake and Mendocino County population statistics, the presence and distribution of the 15-17% of minority students at Mendocino College approximates the population as a whole. The data suggest that Mendocino College is continuing to attract a student population that represents the diversity of the region we serve. Continued emphasis is being placed upon the

recruitment and retention of Hispanic and Native American students as specific target populations.

As of Fall, 1998, about 40% of the student population is either under 20 or over 50; about 20% each. Over time, the proportion of students in the 30 - 49 age range has declined by more than 10%. Included among these students have been the traditional re-entry student and the mid-career student seeking to upgrade or acquire vocationally related skills. Older students have tended to enroll in the Arts and Humanities courses as part-time, evening students. Additionally, many students of all age clusters are now enrolling in Computer and Information Sciences courses to establish or upgrade skills in that area.

Statewide, the percentage of full-time students gradually increased from 25.6% to 28.6% during the ten-year period ending in Fall, 1995 (CPEC, 1996); comparatively, Mendocino College has not

gained in proportion in the same degree reflected by statewide trends. In Table 5 a more detailed analysis of credit load appears. In Fall, 1998, over a third of all enrolled students were taking less than 3 units of credit. This means that great numbers of students are enrolling for short-term, limited credit courses, of for the various Physical Education courses related to fitness and health maintenance. In Fall, 1998, there were only 39.68% of the students enrolled in at least six (6) college credits, the lowest point in the seven (7) year history since Fall, 1992. As the data indicate, however, the numerical gain in the distribution was not among full-time (12+) students, but among those with fewer than 3.0 units of credit.

Over time, the percentage of Evening students has varied, with a long-term stable trend over the past three (3) years. The data do not indicate the proportion of students enrolled concurrently in both Day and Evening courses, a statistic which might reflect more

accurately the changing patterns of preference, as well as the potential for expanding a late-afternoon to evening program.

As noted earlier, Mendocino College experienced a dramatic decrease among students with BA degrees or above during the period of Differential Fees, as did the entire state system.

However, the encouraging picture is that the percentage of BA students is increasing steadily over the past three (3) academic years. Special attention should be given to the retention rate implied by the ratio of sophomores to Freshmen at Mendocino College. Statewide, the Fall, 1998 MIS data indicate that there were 499,634 Freshmen in the system, and 108,772 Sophomores; the percentage of Sophomores in relation to Freshmen statewide was thus 21.77%. At Mendocino College, the relationship was 20.52% in 1998, a substantial gain over the 16.44% of Fall, 1997. Other studies show that Mendocino College is comparable to similar institutions in the granting of degrees and certificates, so it

is not clear what the lower percentage of sophomores means, aside from slower progress to second-year status (30+ units completed). Further inquiry is warranted concerning the retention of students to sophomore standing within the particular mix of student characteristics at Mendocino College.

Reference:

California Postsecondary Education Commission, Student Profiles, 1996 (Sacramento: CPEC. October, 1996)

**Research Report 99 –2: A Seven-Year Comparison of
Mendocino College Student Characteristics**

February, 1999

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