

Relationship of Full-time vs. Part-time Enrollment on Student Certificate, Associate Degree and Transfer Attainment

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Several recently completed research studies document the benefits of students attending college full-time in terms of successful course completion rates, college persistence rates, certificate and degree completion rates, and transfer to a four-year university. More specifically, a study conducted by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center found that 75% of the students who attended SBCC on a full-time basis while at the college completed a certificate, associate degree, and/or transferred to a four-year university compared to 11% of those with the same educational objectives who attended the college on a part-time basis, and 36% for those who altered between full-time and part-time attendance.

A second study compared the successful course completion rates ("C" or higher) and semester-to-semester persistence rates of students with a goal of certificate, degree and/or transfer who attended full-time (12 or more units) compared to those who enrolled part-time. This study, which tracked students during their first three semesters at the college, found that: (1) when students were enrolled full-time, they completed an average of 80% of their units with a successful grade compared to 55% when students attended part-time; and (2) the semester-to-semester persistence rates when students were enrolled full-time was 84.8% compared to 66.7% when enrolled part-time.

A third study, conducted by NerdWallet, a San Francisco-based consumer finance company using a combination of government data and employment surveys, calculated that students lose an average of over \$43,000 a year in lost income for each additional year beyond the four years it takes them to complete their bachelor's degree.

The results of each of these studies demonstrate that students are significantly more likely to achieve their educational goals if they attend the college full-time basis compared to those with the same educational goals who enrolled exclusively part-time

or a mixture of full-time and part-time. Recommendations to help enable students to enroll full-time and be successful while at SBCC are provided.

Findings from the National Student Clearinghouse's Six-Year Longitudinal Study

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center collects data from 96% of the nation's colleges and universities. This enables the Center to track student progress from the time they first attended a higher education institution to completion of their certificate, associate degree, bachelor's, master's and/or doctorate degree. This study tracked for a six year period (fall 2009-spring 2014) the certificate, associate degree, and bachelor degree attainment rates for first time to college students (students who completed dual enrollment classes while in high school that entered SBCC in fall 2009 were considered first-time students). The certificate, associate degree, and/or the bachelor's degree completion rates are shown below in Table 1 for students who were enrolled full-time (12 or more units each semester), part-time (between 6 and 11.5 units each semester), and did not attend exclusively full-time or part-time (Mixed Enrollment) at all public community colleges in the nation and for students who attended Santa Barbara City College.

The information in Table 1 shows the completion rates (certificate, associate and/or bachelor's degree) for students who attended SBCC full-time on a continuous basis (12 or more units) with those who attended exclusively part-time (6-11.5 units), with students who did not enroll exclusively full-time or part-time (Mixed Enrollment). The data are also presented for students who attended one of the other public community colleges in the nation.

Table 1: Six-Year Certificate, Associate Degree and/or Bachelor’s Degree Completion Rates for SBCC Students and Students Who Entered Postsecondary Education at a Public Community College by Enrollment Status.

	Total Enrolled (#)		Certificate, Associate’s, or Bachelor’s Completion Rate (%)		Bachelor’s Completion Rate (%)		Still Enrolled At Any Institution (%)		Not Enrolled At Any Institution (%)	
	SBCC	Natl.	SBCC	Natl.	SBCC	Natl.	SBCC	Natl.	SBCC	Natl.
Overall	2,506	1,111,338	42.4	38.1	26.4	15.1	22.1	16.6	35.4	45.3
Exclusively Full-Time	511	260,578	75.3	54.6	56.1	24.7	2.4	3.6	22.3	41.8
Exclusively Part-Time	191	103,461	11.1	18.3	1.7	2.2	10.5	8.5	78.4	73.2
Mixed Full-Time/Part-Time	1,803	746,390	36.5	35.2	20.6	13.6	30.0	22.3	34.6	42.6

The data in Table 1 reveals that

- Of those students who attended SBCC full-time, 75.3% completed a certificate, associate degree and/or bachelor’s degree within six years of first enrolling at the college compared to 11.1% for those who attended the college exclusively part-time (6-11.5 units). The completion rate for students in the mixed enrollment status group was 36.5%.
- Of those students who attended full-time while enrolled at SBCC, 56.1% earned a bachelor’s degree within six years of first enrolling at the college compared to 1.7% who did so exclusively part-time, and 20.6% for the Mixed Enrollment group.

- After six years of entering the college, 2.4% of the students were still enrolled at a college or university compared to 10.5% for part-time students and 30% for the Mixed Enrollment group.
- With the exception of students who attended exclusively part-time, the overall completion rate for SBCC students during the six-year period studied were higher than those who started their postsecondary education at another of the nation's community colleges (42.4% vs. 38.1%) and especially were significantly greater for those who enrolled exclusively full-time while at SBCC compared to students who attended another community college (75.3% vs. 54.6%).

College Persistence Rates for Full-time vs. Part-time Students

In addition to the six-year longitudinal study reported above, a separate study was conducted comparing the four semester college persistence rates and units attempted/successfully completed ratios for students who entered the college in the 2014 Fall semester with a goal of degree and/or transfer who attended exclusively full-time (12 or more units) with those who enrolled exclusively on a part-time basis (less than 12 units per semester), and students who alternated between full-time and part-time attendance (mixed enrollment). Since many international students plan to attend the college for one year, they were not included in these analyses. Similarly, high school students taking dual enrollment classes were not included in this study. The results of this analysis are reported below in Table 2.

The data reported in Table 2 reveals that:

- The first-to-second (87% vs. 66.2%), second-to third (80% vs. 56.8%), and third-to-fourth semester (91.7% vs. 62.4%) college persistence rates were substantially higher for students who attended full-time in each of their first four semesters at the college compared to those who enrolled part-time during the same two-year time period.
- Students who changed their enrollment status from full-time to part-time after their first semester (324 students: 20%) had substantially lower second- to- third

semester persistence rates than those who continued to enroll full-time (75.7% vs. 59%).

- When students attended a previous semester full-time the average semester-to-semester persistence rates was 84.8% compared to 66.7% for those who attended the prior term on a part-time basis.

Table 2: *First-Time Student Term-to-Term Enrollment by Full and Part-time Status*

Fall 2014 Enrollment	F14 - S15 Persistence 1 st - 2 nd	Spring 2015 Enrollment	S15 - F15 Persistence 2 nd - 3 rd	Fall 2015 Enrollment	F15 - S16 Persistence 3 rd - 4 th	Spring 2016 Enrollment
Full = 1617	87.6%	Full = 1092	80.0%	Full = 690	91.7%	633
		Part = 324	59.3%	Part = 184	75.0%	138
Part = 662	66.2%	Full = 202	72.8%	Full = 102	87.3%	89
				Part = 90	77.8%	70
		Part = 236	56.8%	Full = 95	90.5%	86
				Part = 52	69.2%	36
				Full = 49	83.7%	41
				Part = 85	62.4%	53

Note. N = 2279; Full (Ft) = Full-time status; Part (Pt) = Part-time status; F14 = Fall 2014; S15 = Spring 2015; F15 = Fall 2015. Full-time status is defined as taking 12 or more unites and part-time status is defined as taking between 6 and 11.9 units. This sample is composed of first-time students, enrolled for credit, census enrolled, seeking a degree, certificate, or transfer, and not an international student.

Comparison of First- to- Fourth Semester Persistence Rates for Students Who Attended the College Exclusively Full-time vs. Exclusively Part-time vs. a Mixture of Full-time and Part-time

As shown in Table 3, the first-to-fourth semester persistence rates for students who attended each of their first four terms at the college on a full-time basis was 39.1% compared to 21.5% for those who fluctuated between full-time and part-time enrollment, and 8% for students who were enrolled on a part-time basis in each of their first four semesters at the college. Students who attended the college full-time in each of their first three semesters were 7.75 times more likely to re-enroll for their fourth semester than those who attended part-time in each of their first three semesters at the college.

Table 3. *Enrollment Persistence for 2 Academic Years by Full, Mixed, and Part-time Status*

Full/Part-time Status	Term 1 Enrollment	Enrolled in 4th term	4 th term Persistence	Average Persistence
Full-time for 4 consecutive terms	1617	633	39.1%	
Mixed full-time and part-time	0	460	21.5%	22.9%
Part-time for 4 consecutive terms	662	53	8.0%	

Note. N = 2279; Full-time status is defined as taking 12 or more units and part-time status is defined as taking between 6 and 11.9 units. This sample is composed of first-time students, enrolled for credit, census enrolled, seeking a degree, certificate, or transfer, and not an international student.

Successful Course Completion Rates

Table 4 shows the percentage of units successfully completed (“C” or higher) in a given semester for students with a goal of certificate, degree, and/or transfer who enrolled full-time (12 or more units) compared to those attending part-time (less than 12 units). Overall, the average percent of units completed in the three semesters included in this study with a grade of “C” or higher was 81% for students during the semester(s) they were enrolled full-time compared to 55% for those who enrolled part-time in one or more of their first three terms at the college. As noted below, regardless of whether students enrolled full-time or part-time in their first semester at the college, if they enrolled full-time in a subsequent semester, they had significantly higher successful course

completion rates in the semesters in which they enrolled full-time than those of students who enrolled part-time in any particular semester.

Table 4: First-time Students' Average Percent of Courses Successfully Completed by Full and Part-time Status

Fall 2014	% F14 Success	Spring 2015	% S15 Success	Fall 2015	% F15 Success
Full = 1617	80.0%	Full = 1092	82.3%	Full = 690	84.3%
		Part = 324	55.9%	Part = 184	63.0%
Part = 662	51.5%	Full = 202	75.5%	Full = 102	76.2%
		Part = 236	44.9%	Part = 90	60.5%
				Full = 95	85.3%
				Part = 52	53.0%
				Full = 49	79.3%
				Part = 85	59.0%

Note. N = 2279; Full = Full-time status; Part = Part-time status; F14 = Fall 2014; S15 = Spring 2015; F15 = Fall 2015. Full-time status is defined as taking 12 or more units and part-time status is defined as taking between 6 and 11.9 units. This sample is composed of first-time students, enrolled for credit, census enrolled, seeking a degree, certificate, or transfer, and not an international student.

Economic Benefits to Students Who Attend College Full-time

Additional evidence showing the benefits to students who attend college full-time and complete their bachelor's degree in four years is provided in a study that was reported in the June 21, 2016 issue of the Washington Post entitled, "In College, the Six-Year Plan Could Cost You More than You Think". This study was conducted by NerdWallet, a San Francisco-based consumer finance company, used a combination of government data and employment surveys.

This research study documented the substantial loss in income for each year it takes students to complete their bachelor's degree. More specifically, the study revealed the

average cost to students in lost wages, decreased savings, lower contributions to their retirement plan, and the cost of tuition for each year it takes to complete their bachelor's degree beyond the four years required if students were attending full-time (15 units per semester) and enrolled in courses that fulfilled their general education and major field graduation requirements. While the findings noted below are in terms of the time it takes to complete a bachelor's degree, similar adverse effects on post-college earning and increased cost can be extrapolated to non-transfer students who take longer than the year or two to complete their certificate and/or associate degree program at Santa Barbara City College. The major findings reported in this study are noted below.

- **Lost wages:** Researchers used data from the National Association of Colleges and Employers to determine that a student who takes five years to graduate could forgo \$46,355 in income, the average starting salary for the class of 2013. A similar student who took six years could miss out on \$94,353, assuming wage growth of 4 percent in the second year on the job, according to the study.

- **Lower retirement savings:** If you're not working, chances are you're not saving for retirement. And as the adage goes, every year you're not saving for retirement is an extra year you'll have to work. Let's assume a new college graduate would stash 7.1 percent of their income in a retirement plan, the average contribution for people under 25, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Compound those savings over 45 years based on a standard 7 percent annual return and a student who takes five years to graduate would miss out on \$82,074 in lifetime retirement savings, according to NerdWallet. Taking six years to graduate would cost that same student up to \$150,882.

- **Extra tuition:** Spending an extra year or two isn't cheap. Researchers at NerdWallet took the average tuition at public and private nonprofit colleges, coupled with the expense of repaying student loans at an annual interest rate of 4.9 percent over the standard 10 years, to figure out the added costs. An extra year at a public college would run a student an average \$12,557 in tuition and fees, plus an additional \$6,040 in interest on a student loan. At a private college, that extra year could run you \$18,992 in tuition and fees and \$7,823 in interest over 10 years.

Implications and Recommendations

The results from the studies included in this report document the strong relationship between attending college on a full-time basis vs. doing so part-time on successful course completion, college persistence, certificate, associate degree, and bachelor's degree completion rates. The data reported in this study also document the substantial loss of potential post-college earnings from delaying entering the labor force due to taking longer to complete one's degree.

The challenge is to identify the financial, academic, and student support students need to enroll and remain enrolled full-time while attending the college. This is especially challenging for those who need to work 20 or more hours per week to help pay for the cost to attend the college. According to the most recent United States Department of Education's calculations (2015-16 academic year), the estimated total cost of attending SBCC full-time (14 units) in 2015-16 was \$19,290 for California residents not living with their parents and paying rent and \$12,208 for students living at home with their parents while attending the college. Of these amounts of funds needed to attend the college, the enrollment fees to attend the college full-time accounts for a relatively small percentage of the amount needed to attend the college on a full-time basis (\$1,338). Another challenge for many students to remain enrolled full-time, especially those who need to work 20 or more hours a week and/or who have family obligations, is finding time and having the discipline to devote the requisite number of hours doing homework and other course-related assignments.

Recommendations for Increasing the Percentage of Certificate, Degree and/or Transfer Students Who Attend College Full-time

The following are suggested strategies for increasing the percentage of certificate, degree, and/or transfer students who attend the college on a full-time basis and who are successful in doing so.

Recommendation 1: Promote the importance of full-time attendance to students and their parents/guardians. Avenues available for doing so include college outreach programs to the high schools, discussions in Dual Enrollment classes, publications, and promoting the importance of attending college full-time if possible into the publications and processes for such programs as the SBCC Partnership, orientations, advising sessions, development of preliminary and comprehensive student educational plans, class discussions, and in specialized student support programs (e.g., EOPS, DSPS, iPath, ESP, STEM Transfer Program, Transfer Center, Transfer Academy, MESA).

Recommendation 2: Encourage eligible students to take part and meet the performance and full-time attendance requirements to continue to receive the benefits of being in the SBCC Promise.

Recommendation 3: Where appropriate, discuss with students pursuing a certificate, associate degree, and/or transfer the option of taking out a loan to help reduce the number of hours a week they need to work so they can attend college full-time and have adequate time to keep up with their classwork. Any loan should be coupled with instruction on personal money management including strategies for using money wisely and meeting ones' obligation for repaying the loan.

Recommendation 4: Encourage students eligible to receive CalFresh benefits (food purchased assistance) to apply for this and any other public and private financial assistance (e.g., subsidized rent and child care) for which they are eligible to help offset the need to take out a loan or to keep the amount they borrow as low as possible.

Recommendation 5: The development and review of preliminary and comprehensive student educational plans should include a plan for allocating the time needed to complete course homework and assignments. Where needed, students should be encouraged to take part in a time management and/or study skills workshop.

Recommendation 6: In order to reduce the amount of time and cost for students to complete a certificate, associate degree and/or transfer objectives, caseload management counselors should consider using one or more of the following strategies:

(1) encourage students who are placed in below transfer level English and math to take part in ESP as a means to reduce the time needed to complete their basic skills and first degree/transfer level English and math course; (2) monitor student adherence in completing courses in their educational plan and provide appropriate interventions to help their advisee to stay or get back on track the moment they deviate from completing one or more classes in their educational plan; and (3) encourage students to participate in iPath and/or the STEM Transfer Program.

Recommendation 7: High school students who have the potential of being successful in dual enrollment classes should be encouraged to enroll in as many of these classes as feasible while in high school. In as much as possible, students should be encouraged to enroll in dual enrollment courses that meet SBCC associate degree and transfer general education (IGETC) and major field requirements that are part of the Associate Transfer Degree articulation agreements with CSU and the Transfer Curriculum Pathways articulation agreements with the University of California campuses. Research conducted by the National Student Clearinghouse's Research Center showed that two-thirds of the students who completed dual enrollment classes while in high school earned a certificate, associate degree and/or bachelor's degree within six years of entering college.

Recommendation 8: Even with financial aid and student loans, many community college students need to work to earn money to cover their expenses. This is particularly true in Santa Barbara where the cost of rent is extraordinarily high. Balancing full-time enrollment with work presents a challenge for many of these students to attend college full time or close to full-time. The college should explore the feasibility of offering courses for working adults in structured year-round time blocks on Fridays and perhaps Saturday mornings. This approach could include built in time for study and tutorial assistance.

Recommendation 9: Counselors should encourage students to include in their educational plans attending one or both summer sessions. The summer sessions could be used to: (1) allow students to complete their certificate, associate degree and/or

transfer requirements in two years, which would be especially applicable to those who enter the college in need of basic skills in English and/or math; and (2) to make- up courses that students withdrew from or failed.