A Mixed Methods Approach to Determine Why Students Leave

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"I decided to leave due to lack of funding and the inability to finance my education without employment. I have moved to my hometown where I'll be attending CSUS. I also didn't like the campus culture and found it hard to make friends, and I felt alone being a student of color."

Survey Participant
HSU Fall 2010 State Enrollment by County
# HSU Fall 2010 Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Humboldt State University</th>
<th>Humboldt County*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4662</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7902</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*U.S. Census Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000
Comparison of One Year Retention Rates CSU vs. HSU

CSU Overall Retention Rates

HSU Overall Retention Rates

*All graphs range from 0.65 to 0.85 for clarity*
One Year Retention Rates of Males vs. Females

HSU Male Retention Rates

HSU Female Retention Rates
Six-Year Graduation Rates
Qualitative study done in 2009 by Dr. Rees Hughes
Cohort of first-time freshmen Fall 2006
Highlighted several reasons
  • Money Issues
  • Academic Performance
  • Closer to Home/Homesickness
  • Institutional Fit
Generally positive about HSU experience
5 Year Trend for Non Returning Spring to Fall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Freshmen</th>
<th>Sophomore</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Fall 2010 Non Returners Compared to Returners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Returned</th>
<th>Did Not Return</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>1011</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>904</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>1047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>1273</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>1422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>1547</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4735</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>5537</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Immensely enjoyed Arcata, Humboldt State, and the community culture.. but not satisfied with the general educational system.”

–Survey Participant
Deployment

- Via Survey Monkey
- Personal email from me to their HSU email address
- First invitation sent on August 24, 2010 (classes started 8/23/10)
- Second invitation sent on August 31, 2010
Who We Asked

- Undergraduates
- Not academically disqualified
- Not a transitory student
- Those eligible but not yet registered by 2nd day of classes
- N=802; 30% response rate
You have received this survey because you have not yet registered for Fall 2010 classes at Humboldt State University. Please take approximately 5 minutes to complete this survey and better inform us of students' decisions about attending HSU. This will help us to identify services needed for student success at HSU.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 244
skipped question 0

1st Question on Survey
And Then We Asked

- Critical issues in their decision to not return
- Did they contact any professors, administrators or staff prior to their decision
- Specifically who they contacted and if the information was helpful
- Geographical location
- First generation information
- Overall HSU experience
- Enrollment at another institution
Other Contacts Attempted

- Why – Try to increase response rate and obtained additional information
- Phone Calls
  - Attempted during a regular work day by graduate interns
  - Limited to freshmen who had not replied to the survey
  - Out of 130 calls only obtained 11 responses
- Focus Groups
What they said

- How would you rate your educational experience at HSU?
  - 52% rated their experience positive
  - Another 21% rated their experience somewhat positive
  - AND
  - Only 5% responded that their experience was negative
Please tell us how critical the following issues were in your decision not to return to HSU for Fall 2010.

- Money Issues: 46% Very Important, 19% Somewhat Important, 16% Not Important, 19% Does not apply
- Academic Performance: 22% Very Important, 12% Somewhat Important, 29% Not Important, 38% Does not apply
- Family Reasons: 16% Very Important, 14% Somewhat Important, 20% Not Important, 50% Does not apply
- Community Culture: 12% Very Important, 12% Somewhat Important, 33% Not Important, 43% Does not apply
- Health: 12% Very Important, 8% Somewhat Important, 25% Not Important, 55% Does not apply
- Campus Culture: 11% Very Important, 14% Somewhat Important, 31% Not Important, 44% Does not apply
- Closer to Home/Homesickness: 10% Very Important, 13% Somewhat Important, 27% Not Important, 50% Does not apply
- International Travel: 5% Very Important, 5% Somewhat Important, 24% Not Important, 66% Does not apply
- Drugs/Alcohol: 5% Very Important, 6% Somewhat Important, 25% Not Important, 65% Does not apply

Legend:
- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not Important
- Does not apply
Who did you contact? Choose all that apply.

- Professor/Advisor: 57.3%
- AIR Center: 38.9%
- Administration: 34.4%
- Other staff: 26.7%
## Did not ask for help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total No Contact</th>
<th>Did not know who to contact</th>
<th>Reasons for leaving had nothing to do with HSU</th>
<th>Received unsatisfactory information in the past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>10(12%)</td>
<td>2(7%)</td>
<td>6(15%)</td>
<td>1(9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>19(22%)</td>
<td>10(32%)</td>
<td>7(17%)</td>
<td>1(9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>17(20%)</td>
<td>6(19%)</td>
<td>9(22%)</td>
<td>2(18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>39(46%)</td>
<td>13(42%)</td>
<td>19(46%)</td>
<td>7(64%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where they went

“Transferred to a different university with a program more suited to my needs.”

–Survey Participant
Origin of Non Returners 2010

Origin of leavers by metropolitan area:
- 51 to 250
- 26 to 50
- 10 to 25
- 1 to 9

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75% said geographic location of HSU did not influence their decision to leave
½ of the responders hometown is over 500 miles away
“No assistance, Humboldt State was the best school I ever went to, but my homesickness kicked in for sure and I could not handle it anymore. Thank you for the wonderful two year experience I could never replace.”

-Survey Participant
No formal university notification required to take a semester off

2006 – Of the 866 non returners from Spring to Fall – 36% have since graduated

Of the respondents who indicated they were taking a semester off – 55% were seniors.
Further Analysis

- Match to National Clearinghouse data
- Provide information to Financial Aid
- Ask again – with expanded questions based on our findings
- Tracking seniors?
- Graduation Initiative
James Clifton, Graduate Intern
Michael Le, Graduate Intern
“Who questions much, shall learn much, and retain much.”

–Francis Bacon