Introduction

This report provides a summary of the results from the fourth survey in a series of pop-up enrollment surveys of the colleges in California community college system. The surveys were conducted to give a quickly available source of information regarding overall trends in enrollment across the state and how enrollments may be affected by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and the shift to online teaching and academic support. This report also combines data points across all four surveys to provide an analysis of enrollment and FTES trends over the approximately six weeks from June 2 to July 16.

Method

Respondents from 33 California community colleges provided enrollment and/or FTES projection data on survey #4—which was open from July 2nd, 2020 through July 16th, 2020. An invitation to participate in survey #4 was distributed on a listerv for CCC research and planning professionals on July 2nd with reminders sent out on July 7, 9, 13, and 16. The survey was hosted on Bakersfield College’s Qualtrics account. Results from three earlier surveys which ran from June 2 to June 6 (#1), June 8 to June 13 (#2), and June 23 to July 1 (#3) are included to increase the sample size for some analyses and to allow for trend analysis.

Research Questions

RQ #1: Are enrollments for fall 2020 higher or lower than they were for fall 2019 at a comparable point in time?

RQ #2: To what extent are colleges planning on offering mostly or completely online instruction in fall 2020?

RQ #3: Are there shifts in the ethnic composition and/or educational goals of students who enrolled in summer 2020 relative summer 2019 or fall 2020 relative to fall 2019?

RQ #4: To what extent are students who took an Emergency Withdrawals enrolling in summer and/or fall 2020?

RQ #5: Was there a trend in enrollments and/or FTES for fall 2020, either higher or lower, over the six-week period from early June to mid-July 2020?

Results

RQ #1: Are enrollments for fall 2020 higher or lower than they were for fall 2019 at a comparable point in time?

Most respondents (n = 28) reported that fall 2020 enrollments were down for fall 2020, relative to fall 2019, while thee reported that enrollments were flat (i.e., within 1%), and two reported that enrollments were up.
Figure 1. Enrollment for fall 2020 is lower at most colleges relative to fall 2019

The average percentage change in enrollment among the 32 colleges that provided this data point was -12.0% with a minimum of -33%, a maximum of +5.7%, and a standard deviation of 9.45. Among the 29 colleges reporting the percentage change in their FTES from fall 2019 to fall 2020, the minimum was also -33%, the maximum was +5.7%, and the average was average change was -10.7% with a standard deviation of 9.84.

Figure 2. Most colleges reported lower enrollments and FTES for fall 2020 relative to fall 2019

In general, enrollments and FTES tracked each other closely and were highly correlated (r = .91).

RQ #2: To what extent are colleges planning on offering mostly or completely online instruction in fall 2020?

Colleges are making a clear shift toward online instruction for fall 2020, with 97% percent of respondents indicating that their college will (n = 32) have a much higher prevalence of online sections in fall 2020 relative to fall 2019. Additionally, 88% of respondents (29 out of 33) indicated that they will be “completely or mostly...
online for fall 2020”. Only one college (3%) indicated that it would have approximately the same number of
online classes in fall 2020 as it did in fall 2019.

RQ #3: Are there shifts in the ethnic composition and/or educational goals of students who enrolled in summer 2020 relative summer 2019 or fall 2020 relative to fall 2019?

A subgroup of 13 colleges provided data on the representation of students from different ethnic groups in the
college’s enrollment for both 2019 and 2020. The changes in representation among subgroups from 2019 to
2020 were small on average and there were no consistent trends or overall large differences in the ethnic
composition of colleges student body on average.

RQ #4: To what extent are students who took an Emergency Withdrawals enrolling in summer and/or fall 2020?

Several survey respondents provided information regarding their local analysis of the effect of the new
Emergency Withdrawal (EW) grade notation on summer and fall 2020 enrollments. Their responses are
provided below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Out of the 2,350 students who received an EW in spring 2020, 1,004 have not registered for summer and/or fall 2020, and 1,346 have registered (57%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The number of students repeating overall, was relatively low, but looking at our more popular classes (most Math, English 1A, etc.) it was up around 10% of the students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To date, we’ve have very few EW’s. In fact, our overall withdrawal rate was less this spring than it was spring 2019.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes, it was at about the same rate and at the moment volume as last summer when combining D, F, W, MW, and EW so it did not appear to be the source of the increase. However, for that analysis we were comparing end of summer 2019 to current summer 2020 and we have a still some sessions that will be starting but I’m not expecting the conclusion to change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>61% of students who took an EW in any class in spring 2020 enrolled in at least one class in summer and/or fall 2020 (3,204/5,278). Of the 820 students took an EW in transfer-level English in spring 2020, 188 of those (23%) subsequently re-enrolled in transfer-level English in either summer 2020 (n = 53) or fall 2020 (n = 136). One student enrolled in an English in both summer and fall 2020. For Math, 953 students took an EW in one or more math classes in spring 2020; 406 (43%) subsequently enrolled in one or more math classes in either summer 2020 (n = 141) and/or fall 2020 (n = 302); 37 students enrolled in a math class in both summer and fall 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Only 29% of our students who took emergency withdrawals have enrolled in Fall 2020. Only 19% of our students who took emergency withdrawals enrolled in Summer 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>In 2020S, 861 unique students received an EW. This reflects 1,349 course entries. Almost half of the 861 Students (49.13%) re-enrolled in the fall 2020 so far. Nearly a fifth of the 861 Students (18.78%) re-enrolled in the same course for either 2020U or 2020F. That's to say that when students re-enroll, they may not be re-enrolling in the course for which they requested an EW.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ #5: Was there a trend in enrollments and/or FTES for fall 2020, either higher or lower, over the six-week period from early June to mid-July 2020?
The proportion of colleges who reported their fall 2020 enrollments as being lower (or “down”) relative to fall 2019 increased across the four survey time periods.

**Figure 3. An increasing percentage of colleges reported fall 2020 enrollments as lower than fall 2019**

Another more encouraging trend is also visible in the data, however. While more colleges reported an enrollment decline the longer fall 2020 enrollment wore on, the average size of that decline decreased over time, as shown in Figure 4. Several colleges that reported large gains only participated in the very first survey which gives rise to the possibility that these early data points are outliers that may not represent the longer-term enrollment picture of those colleges. To account for this potential source of noise in the FTES trend analysis includes an analysis of just those colleges that reported two or more data points is also included, reducing the impact of potential outliers from colleges which only reported single data points.

**Figure 4. Trend in FTES shows decreasing gap over time**
Caveats

The data in the survey is derived from a sample of voluntary participants from 35 out of 115 California community colleges and may not represent all colleges in the system equally well. Additionally, some colleges are still early in the fall 2020 enrollment cycle and there may be a great deal of variability in early enrollment numbers. Additionally, one of the impacts of the pandemic may be to delay action and enrollment either by directly affecting the systems and processes that students use to enroll or by causing uncertainty among students and potential students. The end result of these disruptions may be to cause different patterns of enrollment or delayed patterns of enrollments which may result in misleading comparisons across semesters as the typical comparative assumption of all other things being equal is certainly not being met in this instance.

Discussion: College in the Time of Pandemic

Overall, 66 California community colleges participated in at least one of the four enrollment surveys in this set, providing a useful window in the enrollment activity of students at this unique time. The trend analysis in this fourth report provides some indication that students who have been characterized as waiting on the sidelines may be beginning to get back in the enrollment game. There are clear challenges in providing the type of college experience and learning opportunities that students want. The rush to online education in spring 2020 was difficult for students, as well as for teachers and support staff. With the benefit of additional planning and training, both teachers and students may be more ready to make the most of the online opportunities afforded by the new normal.

Even though the size of the FTES decline appears to be decreasing over time, there is still much ground to made up and surveys show that most students are less enthusiastic about having access to only online learning opportunities (cf. https://bit.ly/CSAC-2020, https://bit.ly/Students-Prefer-F2F & https://bit.ly/HE-Impacts-of-COVID-19). It remains to be seen if fall 2020 enrollments will pick up enough steam to put the colleges back on track with prior years. And other challenges remain regarding shifting funding models and increased costs, and student access to online instruction.

One of the most significant challenges to overcome is a persistent digital divide. While the exact measurement varies from community to community and survey to survey, a substantial percentage of students, one in five by some measures, struggle with to access online classes in a way that will provide them with a quality experience, due to restrictions in access to Wi-Fi, internet bandwidth, and appropriate devices (cf. https://bit.ly/Digital-Gap).