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ABSTRACT

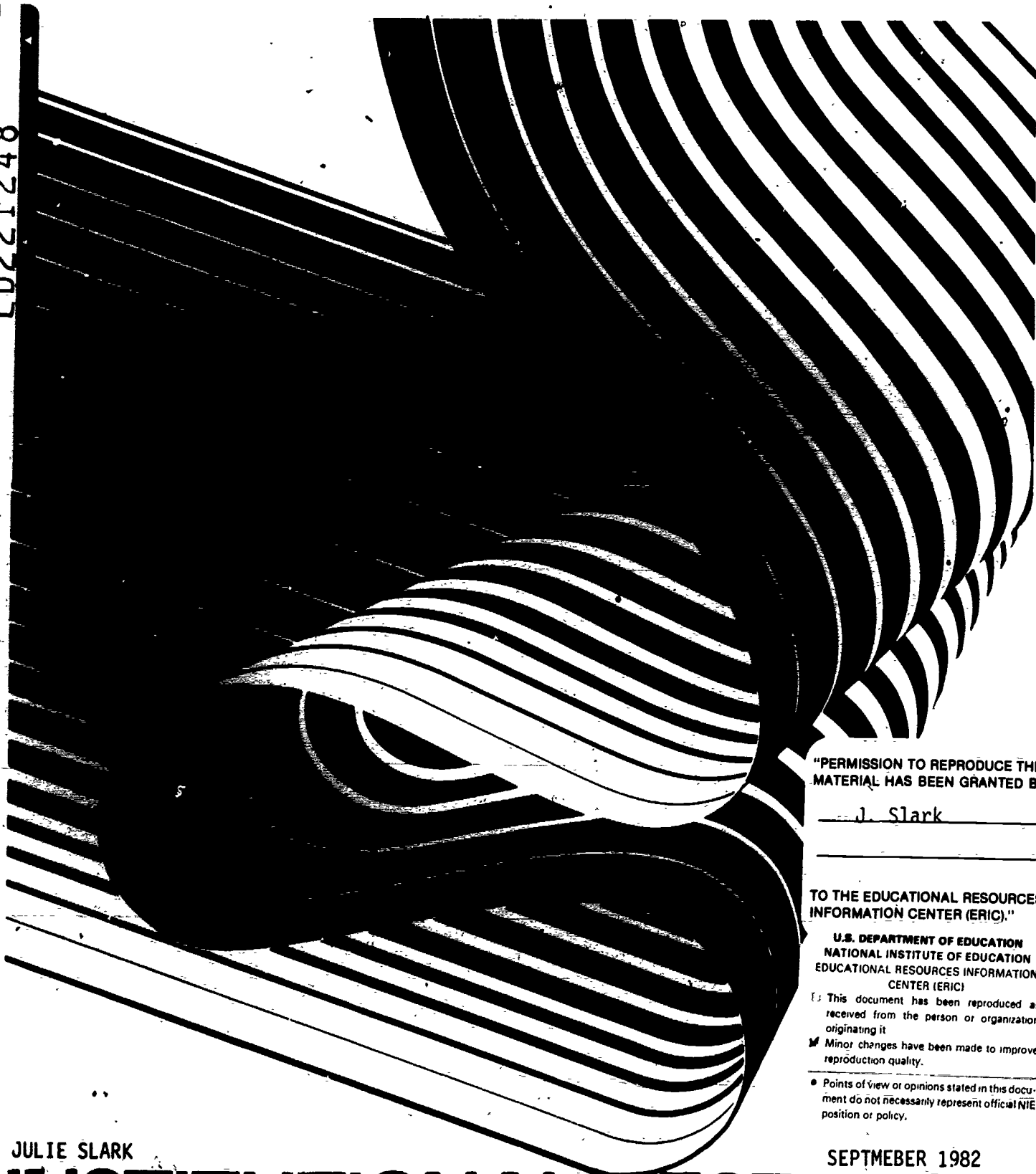
After a preliminary study revealed that 21% of all credit students at Santa Ana College (SAC) had previously attended a four-year institution, a further study was conducted to determine the educational interests and matriculation patterns of these reverse transfer students. A sample of 360 reverse transfer students was selected for interviews, representing 40 students from each of 9 categories based on educational attainment (i.e., completion of 60 units or less, or attainment of an associate degree or baccalaureate) and educational objective (i.e., vocational, transfer, or personal interest). Study findings, based on interviews with 67% of the sample, revealed that: (1) 36.7% of the students had previously attended a college located out of the state or outside the country; (2) 7% were simultaneously enrolled at a four-year institution; (3) business was the most popular major, followed by fire technology, electronics, and liberal arts; (4) 41% of the respondents left the four-year college because they had attained the degree they sought, and only 4% left because of academic difficulties; (5) respondents' satisfaction with SAC compared favorably with their satisfaction with the four-year college; and (6) of the transfer types identified, the largest group consisted of those who had completed 60 or more college units and were attending for vocational interest. The second largest group had also completed 60 or more units but were attending for personal interest. The interview schedule is appended. (HB)

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# REVERSE TRANSFER STUDENT STUDY

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JULIE SLARK

SEPTEMBER 1982

# INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

ERIC NTA ANA COLLEGE · Rancho Santiago Community College District

**Santa Ana College**  
**Reverse Transfer Student Study**

**Julie Slark**  
**Institutional Research Office**  
**Harold Bateman, Dean**  
**September 1982**

## INTRODUCTION

As interest grew in the state in early 1982 regarding community colleges "reverse transfer" population, the Santa Ana College Institutional Research Office examined its existing student records for information about this group. A "reverse transfer" student was broadly defined as a current student who had previously attended a four-year college. Tables 1 and 2 show those preliminary data: The number of "reverse transfer" students attending SAC Spring 1982 by declared educational objective, prior college credits or degrees, part-time/full-time status, and former college attended, according to SAC's records.

- 5171, or 21% of all credit students, had previously attended a four-year college. The largest number of those, 2557; or 10% of all credit students, had a B.A. degree.
- 959 of the 6782 had previously attended neighboring CSUF, 599 CSULB and 569 another CSU. The majority, however, (2485) transferred from out of state, out of country, or a private college.
- 4237 of the 5171, or 82%, were enrolled in  $\leq 6$  units. This percent age compares to 53% of the total college population who are enrolled in  $\leq 6$  units.
- Upon enrolling at SAC, each student indicates their educational objective. Responses are not always reliable; however, they are noted here as an indicator of reverse transfer students' goals:
  - 1823 (35%) are attending for vocational reasons, 982 (19%) for transfer objectives, and 2366 (46%) for personal interest. This compares respectively to 35%, 28%, and 37% for all students.

Because this data was sketchy and objectives data unreliable, further study was necessary. Two primary areas of interest included educational objectives and matriculation patterns of this group of students. Questions in the minds of educators and legislators included: Are these students returning to the community college because they experienced academic difficulty at the four-year college? Was the four-year college too costly? Is there a particular major(s) or school(s) which is more often returning students? Are reverse transfers returning with BA degrees to learn a trade? Or are they largely students engaging in lifelong learning and self-growth pursuits? This study will attempt to address these questions.

Table 1  
 Number of Students Attending SAC Spring 1982  
 Who Transferred From a Four-Year School  
 by number of prior units completed \*

Prior Units Completed	Educational Objective						TOTAL	
	n	Vocational % of total	n	Transfer % of Total	n	Personal Interest % of Total	n	% of Total
< 60 units	539	10%	541	10%	583	11%	1663	32%
AA Degree	306	6%	326	6%	319	6%	951	18%
BA Degree	978	19%	115	2%	1464	28%	2557	49%
TOTAL	1823	35%	982	19%	2366	46%	5171	100%

\* These data have been changed slightly since this table was originally published. A more refined computer program, producing more accurate data, resulted in a slight reduction of all cell sizes.

Table 2  
 Number of Students Attending SAC Spring 1982  
 Who Transferred from a Four-Year College  
 by Transfer College

Transfer College	Number of Units											
	< 6 units				> 6 units				TOTAL			
	Educational Objective				Educational Objective				Educational Objective			
	Vocational	Transfer	Personal	Total	Vocational	Transfer	Personal	Total	Vocational	Transfer	Personal	Total
<b>CSUC System</b>												
CSUF	281	146	370	797	63	74	25	162	344	220	395	959
CSULB	178	67	256	501	71	15	12	98	249	82	268	599
Other CSU	216	66	229	511	26	27	5	58	242	93	234	569
<b>U.C. System</b>												
UCI	79	48	123	250	8	24	10	42	87	72	133	292
Other UC	78	18	143	239	17	7	4	28	95	25	147	267
<b>Other</b>												
(out of state, out of country, private college)	604	239	1096	1939	202	251	93	546	806	490	1189	2485
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1436</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>2217</b>	<b>4237</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>934</b>	<b>1823</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>2366</b>	<b>5171</b>

## METHOD

Because this study is examining educational objectives and matriculation patterns of reverse transfer students, students have been grouped and identified on those bases in Table 1 and for analysis purposes in this study. Large categories of educational objectives include the pursuits of vocational education, transfer education, personal interest courses, and developmental (basic skills) courses. In Table 1, numbers of students were further identified by their level of prior educational attainment (which is one of many of the components of matriculation patterns). From this universe, a stratified random sample of reverse transfer students (forty students from each of the nine cells in Table 1;  $n=360$ ) was selected to be telephone interviewed during the summer of 1982; 237, or 67%, interviews were completed. The interview guide is appended to this report.

Students were re-identified by their educational objectives reported during their interview. The differences in objectives distributions are large:

Objective	Records Data	Interview Data
Vocational Education	35%	45%
Transfer Education	19%	28%
Personal Interest	46%	22%
Developmental	-	5%

Table 3 shows the distribution of sample respondents by educational objective (as expressed during the interviews) and prior units completed; this matrix is similar to that used in Table 1 for all reverse transfer students except that AA degree and BA degree categories of prior education were collapsed. This schema, which results in eight types of reverse transfer students, will be used to identify reverse transfer student types and analyze the interview responses for this study. A comparison of Tables 1 and 3 shows that students with less than 60 prior units are slightly under-represented in the sample---by six percentage points.

Table 3

Distribution of Reverse Transfer Sample Students  
by  
Interview Educational Objective and  
Prior Education

Prior Education	Vocational		Transfer		Personal Interest		Developmental		TOTAL	
	n	% of total	n	% of total	n	% of total	n	% of total	n	% of total
< 60 units completed	24	10%	25	11%	7	3%	5	2%	61	26%
> 60 units (AA or BA)	82	35%	42	18%	44	19%	8	3%	176	74%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>100%</b>



A group of "reverse transfer" students not analyzed separately in this study are those who are simultaneously attending a four year college and a community college. These students, called "expeditors" by some, are often picking up additional units towards their BA degree at the community college because it is more convenient or less costly. Seventeen, or 7%, of this study's sample were simultaneously attending a four-year college. However, their interview educational objectives were diverse; some were attending the community college for personal interest or to acquire job skills to help them through college. Consequently, this group is included within the eight types presented in Table 3.

## FINDINGS

Demographic Characteristics, that is, age and gender, of the sample are shown in Table 4. (Because cell sizes are small, numbers rather than percentages are shown in these tables.) Unlike the total college population, the reverse transfer sample is more often male than female. And, with the exception of transfer students with less than 60 prior units, the sample mean, 31.6 years of age, is older than that of the total population.

Previous College Attended, Table 5. The largest number of reverse transfer students and sample students previously attended a four-year college located out of the state or out of the country. This finding is indicative of our highly mobile population and our large numbers of resident refugees and offers implications for policy decisions. Locally, Cal State Fullerton returns the most students to SAC, but substantial numbers return from all other types of four-year colleges.

Years Since Attending a Four-Year College, Table 6. Again, the reverse transfer sample type who is aspiring to successfully transfer to a four-year college stands out as one who has most recently attended a four-year college. The other sample types, while less likely to return to school as the number of years since attending increase, do return after up to 50 years.

SAC Major, Table 7. SAC students do not officially declare majors until they petition to graduate. However, interview respondents were asked what they were majoring in at SAC. For those who had majors, Business was the most popular, followed by Fire Technology, Nursing, Electronics, Liberal Arts, and Computer Science. These programs normally experience large enrollments, and in this way the sample is similar to the total college population. Many vocational reverse transfers appear to be upgrading their Business and Fire Technology skills and aspiring to Nursing careers.

Reasons for Leaving Four Year Colleges, Table 8. The most (97 or 41%) respondents, primarily the vocational students with over 60 prior units, indicated that they left their four-year college because they completed the degree which they sought. Many left because they moved (27 or 11%), as previous findings support. And some left because the four-year college was too costly or they could not qualify for sufficient financial aid. These two reasons were given by 15 students, or 10% of the sample. Further analysis showed that about half of these 15 students had previously attended an out-of-state school or a private college, and half had not attended a four-year college for four or more years.

Those who left due to academic difficulty or who found coursework too difficult at the four-year college (9 respondents, or 4%) are a small group and are most often transfer students who previously attended CSUF or UCI.

Satisfaction With SAC, Table 9. Respondents were asked to rate their educational experiences at SAC and to compare them to their experiences at their four-year college. Their responses are shown in Table 9. The modal response for both questions was a rating of "5", the most favorable possible. In addition, many specific qualitative responses, offered by the respondent and recorded by the interviewer are included at the end of this report.

## SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

While the reverse transfer population is diverse in its educational objectives and activities, some generalizations and conclusions from these data may be made.

- 1.) Of the eight reverse transfer types identified, the largest group consists of those who have completed 60 or more college units and are attending SAC for vocational education-- job training, retraining and upgrading, primarily in Nursing, Fire Technology, Business, and Electronics.
- 2.) The second largest group are those who have completed 60 or more college units and attend SAC for varied personal interest courses or "lifelong learning".
- 3.) Reverse transfer students who are attending SAC for transfer education, of whom there are many, are seldom students who encountered academic difficulty at the four-year college, of whom there are few, less than 4% of the sample.
- 4.) The largest number of reverse transfer students last attended an out-of-state or out-of-country four-year college. Most who attended out-of-country colleges attend SAC to learn English.
- 5.) The largest number of reverse transfer students have completed more than 60 units of college credit.

This study represents one of the first attempts to study this segment of the community college population. These preliminary descriptive findings provide information which should be helpful to decision makers at a time when many difficult decisions are being made. Unchecked, it seems likely that the reverse

transfer population will increase in size as the amount of one's leisure time increases, as lifelong learning becomes increasingly a part of our lifestyle, as the mobility of our population continues to increase, as our technology and economy rapidly change, and as our life spans increase. Ultimately, the study of reverse transfer students will have to include an examination of the community college mission.

Table 4

Reverse Transfer Sample Types  
by  
Gender and Age

Reverse Transfer Sample Type	Gender		Age *							Total	
	Male	Female	<19	20-21	22-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-65		>65
< 60 Vocational	13	11		3	5	3	5	4	4		24
Prior Transfer	15	10		7	7	4	5	1	1		25
Personal Interest	4	3		2			1	2	1	1	7
Developmental	4	1					3	2			5
> 60 Vocational	47	35	1	0	9	24	23	21	4	0	82
Prior Transfer	27	15			3	19	15	4	1		42
Personal Interest	22	22		2	7	10	9	10	5	1	44
Developmental	4	4				3	2	2		1	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>237</b>

\* Average age = 31.6 years

**Table 5**  
**Reverse Transfer Sample Type**  
**by**  
**Previous College Attended**

Reverse Transfer Sample Type	College								TOTAL	
	CSUF	CSULB	Other CSU	UCI	Other UC	Private Colleges	Out-of State	Out-of Country		
< 60 prior units	Vocational	1	2	2	2	2	2	11	2	24
	Transfer	8	1	1	2	1	2	6	4	25
	Personal Interest	1	1		1			4		7
	Developmental								5	5
> 60 prior units	Vocational	13	13	10	3	3	6	21	13	82
	Transfer	12	4	1	4	2	1	13	5	42
	Personal Interest	13	5	4	3	4	7	6	2	44
	Developmental	1						2	5	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>237</b>	

**Table 6**  
**Reverse Transfer Sample Type**  
**by**  
**Number of Years Since Attending Four-Year College**

Reverse Transfer Sample Type	Number of Years							TOTAL	
	0	< 3	4 - 7	8 - 11	12 - 15	16 - 20	21 - 50		
< 60 prior units	Vocational	5	6	6	1	0	2	4	24
	Transfer	9	9	1	5	1			21
	Personal Interest		3						7
	Developmental			1	1	1	1	1	5
> 60 prior units	Vocational	10	20	18	10	6	8	10	79
	Transfer	10	14	9	3	4	1	1	36
	Personal Interest	9	12	7	2		6	8	40
	Developmental	1	1	4		1		1	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>237</b>	

Table 7  
Reverse Transfer Sample Type  
by  
SAC Major

Reverse Transfer Sample Type	Business	Court Reporting	Secretarial	Real Estate	Math	Engineering	Electronics	Human Services	Machine Shop	Auto Technology	Diesel	Computer Science	Art	Theatre Arts	English	Liberal Arts	Communications	Library	Art/Commercial	Carpentry	Science	Biology	Chemistry	Nursing	Pharmacy	Family & Consumer	Paramedic	Legal Assistant	Cosmetology	Dental Technology	Psychology	Political Science	Social Sciences	Fire Technology	Admin. of Justice	Human Development	Insurance	Travel Industry	Personal Interest	TOTAL		
	21 4-60 prior units	Vocational	4	1	1	1		2				2								1	1			2						2			4	2								23
	Transfer	6					3				1	2	1			3						1	1	1							1	1									2	25
	Personal Interest																																								7	7
	Developmental															5																									7	5
> 60 prior units	Vocational	12	1	1		6	1	1	2							1	3						13	1	2	2	2	1					15	5	1	5	4	2			81	
	Transfer	6				3	3	2	1	5	1					10						1	2	2							1	1							3	41		
	Personal Interest	1	1	3																						1														37	44	
	Developmental					1										5																								2	8	
TOTAL		29	1	3	5	1	3	14	2	1	1	10	3	2	10	13	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	18	1	2	3	2	2	3	1	1	1	19	9	2	5	4	58	234		

**Table 8**  
**Reverse Transfer Sample Type**  
**by**  
**Reason For Leaving Four-Year College**

Reverse Transfer Sample Type		Courses too hard/ Academic difficulty	Needed a break	Changed Goals	Employment conflict	Learned all needed	Too expensive/no financial aid	Family needs	Illness	Moved	Completed degree	Still attending Expeditors	Other reason
		<b>&lt; 60 prior units</b>	Vocational	2	1	5	3	3	4	1	1	7	3
Transfer	5		1	1	1	1	4			6	3	4	1
Personal Interest	1			1			5	2		1			3
Developmental											5		
<b>&gt; 60 prior units</b>	Vocational	2		5	7	2	5	4	3	5	46	3	3
	Transfer	5		2	3	2	4	1		6	3	6	2
	Personal Interest	1	2	2	2	2	2	2		2	30	4	2
	Developmental								1		7		
<b>TOTAL</b>		16	4	16	16	10	24	10	5	27	97	17	12



Table 9

Distribution of Satisfaction Ratings  
With SAC by  
Sample Respondents

	Percent Distribution					Average Score
	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5	
How satisfied are you with your educational experiences at SAC?	7%	10%	27%	16%	41%	3.7
Have your experiences here compared favorably to those at your four-year college?	3%	11%	25%	27%	36%	3.8

**REVERSE TRANSFER STUDENT STUDY  
INTERVIEW-GUIDE**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am calling from the Santa Ana Research Office. We are conducting a survey of SAC students who have previously attended four-year colleges. You indicated on your application that you had attended another school. May I ask you a few questions?

1. What four-year college(s) did you attend? (If more than one college, name last)

College code \_\_\_\_\_

2. When did you attend \_\_\_\_\_?  
(name of last attended)

# years between last college  
& SAC enrollment \_\_\_\_\_

3. What was your major there?

Major code \_\_\_\_\_

4. Why did you leave \_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_12

\_\_\_\_\_13

\_\_\_\_\_14

- A. Low grades
- B. Found courses too difficult
- C. Needed a temporary break from studies.
- D. College didn't offer courses I wanted to take.
- E. Courses were too easy.
- F. Changed goals
- G. Unsure about my choice of major.
- H. Accepted a job.
- I. Changed jobs
- J. Went into military service
- K. Learned what I wanted to learn.
- L. Didn't like my teachers.
- M. Couldn't get financial aid.

- N. Child care problems
- O. Husband/wife changed jobs.
- P. Classes interfered with family life.
- Q. It was difficult to meet new people.
- R. Illness - personal or family.
- S. My friends changed schools.
- T. College was too expensive.
- U. Marital situation changed my educational plans.
- V. Moved out of the area.
- W. Personal problems.
- X. Found studying too time consuming.
- Y. College was too far from home.
- Z. Completed BA.

1. Other (list) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Can't remember/Indefinite reason.

5. What was your original purpose for enrolling at SAC?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 1 = vocational
- 2 = transfer
- 3 = personal interest
- 4 = developmental
- 5 = other

15

6. Has that purpose changed? If yes, what is your current educational objective?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 1 = yes, changed
- 2 = no change

16

7. Do you have a major? If yes, what is it?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 1 = vocational
- 2 = transfer
- 3 = personal interest
- 4 = developmental
- 5 = other

17

8. How satisfied are you with your educational experiences at SAC?

\_\_\_\_\_ (interviewer scale open-ended response)

Major code

18

- 1 = not satisfied
- 5 = very satisfied

21

9. Have your experiences here compared favorably to those at your four-year college?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 1 = unfavorably
- 5 = very favorably
- 6 = not comparable

22

Thanks so much for your time and best wishes at Santa Ana College.

Perm \_\_\_\_\_ 23

1st semester at SAC \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ 29

SAC units completed \_\_\_\_\_ 32

Age \_\_\_\_\_ 31

Group # \_\_\_\_\_ 34

objective  
 prior units  
 unit load

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information \_\_\_\_\_

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges  
 96 Powell Library Building  
 University of California  
 Los Angeles, California 90024

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