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ABSTRACT

This document discusses the results of a study completed by the Colorado Community College System in 2001-2002, which analyzed community college applicants. The data was collected in order to aid in enrollment management, scheduling, advising, and other policy decision-making. The applicants were kept representative of the available population in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity. Half of the applicants were employed at least part time and 40% stated a desire to transfer to a four-year college at some point. The following are some of the key findings of the report: (1) results revealed significant differences among applicants and enrolled students along every demographic variable; (2) statistical differences were found among students who were enrolled for fall 2001 and those that were retained from fall to spring 2002; (3) students enroll for more credit hours during the spring semester than during fall semester; and (4) 65% of fall 2001 applicant enrolled during the fall 2001 or spring 2002 semesters but only 35% of these applicants enrolled for both the fall and spring semesters. Based on these findings, the authors recommend that further research should be done in order to find out why more students are not being retained and to determine changes that might be needed for both the fall and the spring semesters. Contains 4 appendices and numerous tables and graphs. (MZ)

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Colorado Community College System Analysis of Fall 2001 Applicants

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June, 2003

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	2
Purpose.....	3
Variables.....	3
Methodology.....	3
Results	
Demographic Profile of All Applicants.....	4
Enrollment.....	9
Comparison of Applicants to Enrolled Students.....	10
Comparison of Fall, 2001 Enrollees to Those Retained in Spring, 2002.....	13
Discussion/Recommendations.....	16
Appendices	
Appendix A – Variables.....	17
Appendix B – Methodology.....	19
Appendix C – Results of Chi Square Analysis of Applicants to Enrolled Students.....	20
Appendix D – Results of Chi Square Analysis of Fall, 2001 Enrollees to Those Retained in Spring, 2002.....	30
Contact Information.....	39

Colorado Community College System Analysis of Fall 2001 Applicants

Executive Summary

Over the past two years the Colorado Community College System (CCCS) has conducted an analysis of applicants to the System. This effort provides valuable information for use in enrollment management, scheduling, advising, and other policy decision-making. It also provides background data useful in the System's strategic planning processes.

A demographic profile of all applicants to System colleges during the 2001-2002 academic year was prepared and then matched to enrollment data to determine which applicants subsequently enrolled during the year. Because there appeared to be differences in demographic profiles between those who enrolled and those who did not, additional statistical tests were conducted. Results revealed significant differences among applicants and enrolled students along every demographic variable. Statistical differences were also found among students who were enrolled for fall, 2001 only and those that were retained from fall to spring, 2002.

Applicants, in general are representative of the available population in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity. Nearly half of all applicants are employed at least part-time. Nearly forty percent of applicants indicate an intent to transfer to a four-year college at some point.

Approximately sixty-five percent of fall, 2001 applicants enrolled during the fall, 2001 or spring, 2002 semesters. However, only thirty-five percent of these applicants enrolled for both the fall and spring semesters. A general pattern was identified revealing that students enroll for more credit hours during the spring semester than during fall semester.

More research is needed to investigate the reasons students are not being retained. Additional research should also be done to determine changes that might be needed to encourage more credit hour production during the fall semester. For example, student surveys and/or focus groups could be conducted to determine whether there are institutional barriers or procedural issues that need to be addressed to encourage both retention and increased credit hour production.

Findings from this study and proposed future studies can be used by System senior staff and the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education in their strategic planning processes. As this study is repeated, trend analysis will be incorporated providing richer data for use in planning.

Purpose

One of the first steps needed for effective enrollment management is to understand the flow of students within the System. This information can not only help in recruiting efforts but can also help in the design of advising, scheduling, and other student services to better serve existing students and to better address the needs of potential students.

The main purpose in conducting this study was to provide a profile of applicants to our System colleges and to determine if there are differences in various demographic variables between those applicants who subsequently enroll and those who do not. This type of information can be helpful in designing and implementing targeted recruitment initiatives.

Since retention is another critical element in enrollment management efforts, this study also examines retention from fall to spring among applicants who enrolled in the fall, 2001 semester, again looking for differences in demographic variables between students retained from fall, 2001 to spring, 2002 and those not retained. Understanding the demographic profiles of these groups can help inform efforts aimed at improving retention in general as well as retention efforts aimed at specific groups of students.

Variables

Variables used in the study are taken from prospective student application forms. All data are self-reported and no attempt has been made by the researcher to verify responses made by applicants. A list of the variables used to develop a demographic profile of applicants to System colleges can be found in Appendix A.

Methodology

For a complete description of the methodology used to conduct this study, please refer to Appendix B. A brief summary is included here.

Data were extracted from the Student Information System (SIS) on all applicants for the fall, 2001 semester and used to prepare a demographic analysis of System college applicants. Enrollment data were also extracted from the SIS and used to determine which applicants had subsequently enrolled for at least one credit during the fall, 2001 semester and/or the spring, 2002 semester.

Initial comparison of enrolled applicants to those applicants who did not enroll indicated differences existed between the two groups along some of the demographic variables. Chi square tests for independence were performed for each demographic variable to determine statistical significance.

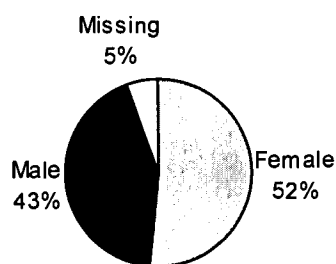
Enrollment data for students enrolled during fall, 2001 were compared to enrollment data for spring, 2002 in order to determine which students had been retained from fall to spring. Chi square tests were performed to examine the significance of differences found between the two groups on the demographic variables.

Results

Demographic Profile of All Applicants

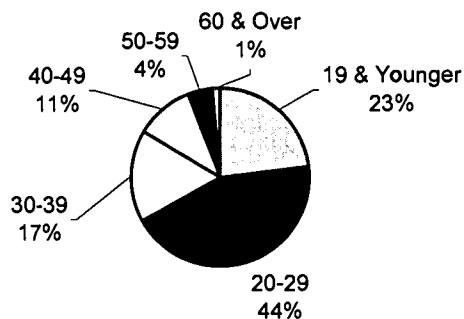
Applicants tend to be almost equally distributed in terms of gender. There are slightly more female than male applicants with females representing nearly 52 percent of all applicants.

Figure 1.
Colorado Community College System
Fall, 2001 Applicants by Gender



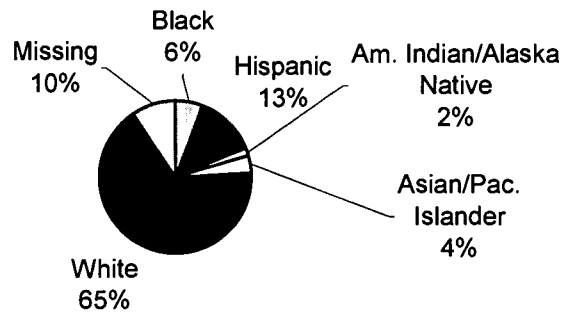
Although community colleges are often the source of continuing education for older adults, the majority of community college applicants are young. Nearly one fourth of applicants would be classified as traditional-aged. Forty-four percent of the fall, 2001 applicants are between the ages of 20 and 29. Combining the two categories, sixty-eight percent of System applicants are under the age of 30.

Figure 2.
Colorado Community College System
Fall, 2001 Applicants by Age Category



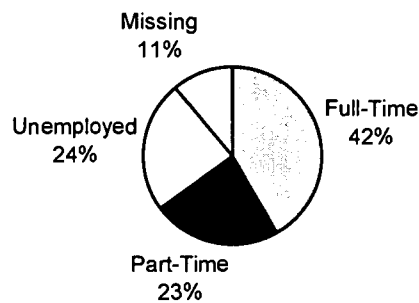
As the following chart illustrates, twenty-five percent of applicants identified themselves as ethnic minorities. Total ethnic minority representation among System applicants is actually greater than the available population percentage in the state. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Census 2000 statistics, approximately fifteen percent of the state's population age eighteen and over are ethnic minorities.

Figure 3.
Colorado Community College System
Fall, 2001 Applicants by Race/Ethnicity



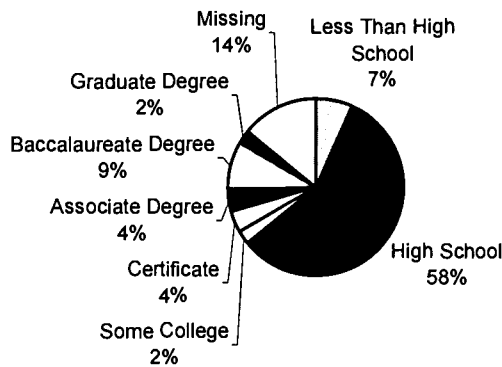
Sixty-five percent of community college applicants are working. Twenty-three percent of applicants are employed part-time. Amazingly, 42 percent of all applicants indicate they are working full-time.

Figure 4.
Colorado Community College System
Fall, 2001 Applicants by Employment Status



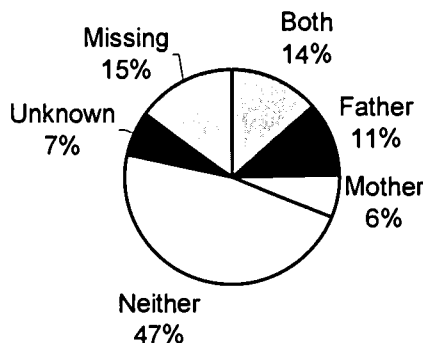
Community colleges serve students of all educational backgrounds. Twenty-one percent of the applicants indicate they already have at least some college with eleven percent indicating a previous baccalaureate degree or higher. One of the challenges faced by open admission institutions is the academic preparation of its students. Approximately seven percent of applicants indicate a previous education less than high school graduation.

Figure 5.
Colorado Community College System
Fall, 2001 Applicants by Previous Education



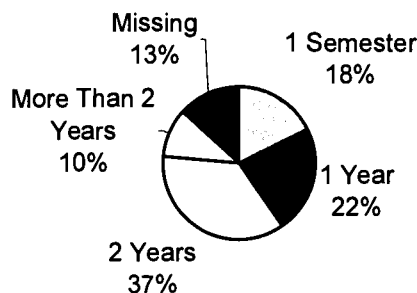
Many community college applicants are the first generation to attempt higher education within their families. Forty-seven percent of applicants indicate neither of their parents has earned a college degree.

Figure 6.
Colorado Community College System
Fall, 2001 Applicants by Parents' Degree



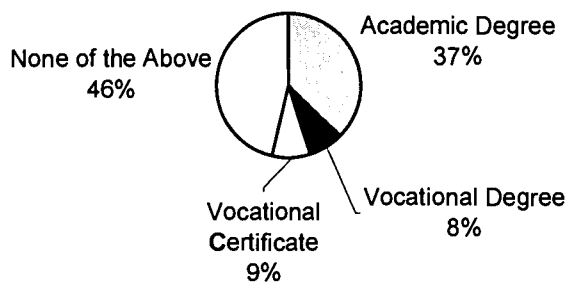
Applicants to community colleges have a wide variety of degree intentions and future plans for their study as the following figures demonstrate. Forty percent of applicants indicate a planned length of study of one year or less.

Figure 7.
Colorado Community College System
Fall, 2001 Applicants by Planned Length of Study



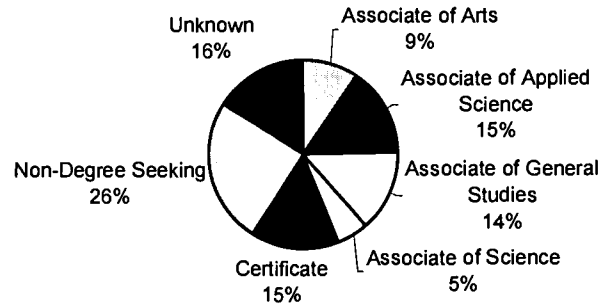
Applicants are divided nearly in half in terms of overall intent. Forty-six percent of applicants indicate they are not seeking a degree or certificate. Fifty-four percent are seeking a degree or certificate.

Figure 8.
Colorado Community College System
Fall, 2001 Applicants by Intent



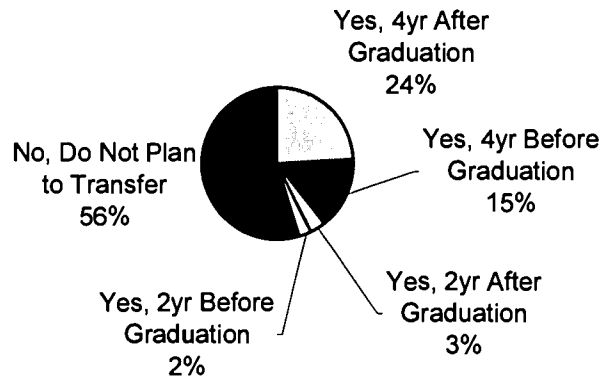
When asked to indicate a specific degree intent, forty-three percent of applicants indicate they are seeking some type of an associate degree, fifteen percent are seeking a certificate, and twenty-six percent indicate they are not seeking a degree.

Figure 9.
Colorado Community College System
Fall, 2001 Applicants by Degree Seeking



Community colleges are increasingly becoming the point of entry for students intending to earn a baccalaureate degree. Among the fall, 2001 applicants, thirty-nine percent indicate an intent to transfer from the community college System to a four-year degree-granting institution.

Figure 10.
Colorado Community College System
Fall, 2001 Applicants By Transfer Intent



Enrollment

There were 30,416 applicants for the fall, 2001 semester. Table 1 summarizes the enrollment numbers and percentages among the fall applicants. As Table 1 reflects, there is a large pool of applicants who never enroll. There are also students enrolling who are not being retained beyond one semester.

Table 1 – Enrollment Among Fall, 2001 Applicants

Semester Enrolled	Number of Applicants	Percentage of Applicants
Fall, 2001	19,701	64.8
Spring, 2002	12,077	39.7
Fall, 2001 Only	9,043	29.7
Spring, 2002 Only	1,419	4.7
Fall, 2001 & Spring, 2002	10,658	35
Not Enrolled at all	9,296	30.6

Since funding has traditionally been more directly related to credit hour production than number of students (headcount), an analysis of mean credit hour production was performed. Students enrolling during both fall and spring semesters tend to generate more credit hours per semester than students enrolled during only one of the two semesters. Another interesting pattern is that overall, students enrolled for more credits during spring semester than fall. Table 2 summarizes mean (average) credit hour production.

Table 2 – Mean Credit Hours

Semester(s) Enrolled	Mean Credit Hours – Fall	Mean Credit Hours – Spring
Fall, 2001	7.6	n/a
Spring, 2002	n/a	9.0
Fall Only	5.9	n/a
Spring Only	n/a	7.7
Both Fall and Spring	9.1	9.2

Comparison of Applicants to Enrolled Students

Initial comparison of demographic data between the group of applicants and the group of enrolled students indicated differences between the two groups. To further analyze these differences, chi square tests were performed to determine whether the differences observed were statistically significant.

Results of the chi square tests revealed that there were statistically significant differences between those applicants who subsequently enrolled during either the fall, 2001 or spring, 2002 semesters and those applicants who did not enroll along each of the ten demographic variables included in this study. Table 3 (see page 12) summarizes the results for each demographic variable. Blue shading indicates a significant over-representation within the enrolled pool versus the representation within the applicant pool. Yellow shading indicates a significant under-representation within the enrolled pool versus the representation within the applicant pool. No shading indicates approximately equal representation in the enrolled versus the applicant pool.

Several important findings are revealed by the data in this table:

- Despite the fact that there were more female than male applicants, males were more likely to enroll.
- Applicants age 19 and younger were the group most likely to enroll.
- Black and Hispanic applicants were underrepresented in the pool of enrolled students while white applicants were more likely to enroll.
- Applicants employed part-time were more likely to enroll while those employed full-time were less likely to enroll. Among those unemployed, there was no difference in representation between the two groups.
- When evaluating previous education among applicants, those with less than a high school diploma enrolled at a higher rate than their representation in the applicant pool.
- Applicants indicating neither parent had a degree were less likely to enroll.
- Applicants indicating an anticipated length of study of one semester or one year were more likely to enroll than were those indicating two years.
- Applicants indicating no degree or certificate intent were more likely to enroll than those indicating an intent to earn either an academic or a vocational degree.

- Applicants indicating an intent to earn an Associate of Applied Science or an Associate of General Studies were underrepresented in the enrolled pool. Students indicating an intent to earn a Certificate and those indicating they are Non-Degree Seeking were overrepresented in the enrolled pool.
- Finally, applicants intending to transfer to a four-year college or university before graduating from a community college were more likely to enroll.

Table 3 – Comparison of Applicants to Enrolled Students

Variable/Value	Representation Within Applicant Pool	Representation Within Enrolled Pool
Gender		
Female	54.5%	53.2%
Male	45.5%	46.8%
Age		
19 and Younger	23.1%	25.8%
20-29	44.1%	41.3%
30-39	16.4%	16.0%
40-49	10.6%	10.9%
50-59	4.4%	4.5%
60 and Over	1.4%	1.5%
Race/Ethnicity		
Black	6.3%	5.4%
Hispanic	14.5%	13.7%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.9%	1.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.9%	3.9%
White	73.3%	75.1%
Other	.1%	0.1%
Employment Status		
Full-Time	47.0%	45.3%
Part-Time	26.1%	27.4%
Unemployed	27.0%	27.3%
Previous Education		
Less Than High School	11.5%	12.9%
High School	66.3%	65.8%
Some College	0.1%	0.1%
Certificate	4.5%	3.9%
Associate Degree	5.0%	4.7%
Baccalaureate Degree	10.0%	9.9%
Graduate Degree	2.6%	2.7%
Parents' Degree		
Both	16.1%	16.9%
Father	13.5%	13.7%
Mother	7.5%	7.6%
Neither	56.5%	55.5%
Unknown	6.4%	6.2%
Length of Study		
1 Semester	20.6%	22.1%
1 Year	25.9%	27.5%
2 Years	41.6%	39.3%
More Than 2 Years	11.9%	11.4%
Student Intent		
Earn an Academic Degree	41.5%	38.8%
Earn a Vocational Degree	8.6%	7.6%
Earn a Vocational Certificate	9.7%	10.2%
None of the Above	40.3%	43.4%
Degree Seeking		
Associate of Arts	9.4%	9.1%
Associate of Applied Science	15.2%	12.8%
Associate of General Studies	14.0%	12.8%
Associate of Science	5.5%	4.6%
Certificate	15.1%	17.5%
Non-Degree Seeking	28.1%	30.3%
Unknown	12.8%	12.8%
Transfer Intent		
4-Year After Graduation	29.3%	28.4%
4-Year Before Graduation	17.3%	18.6%
2-Year After Graduation	3.9%	3.7%
2-Year Before Graduation	2.6%	2.4%
Do Not Plan to Transfer	46.9%	46.8%

Comparison of Fall, 2001 Enrollees to Those Retained in Spring, 2002

Chi square tests were performed to determine whether or not differences exist between the group of students who enrolled during fall, 2001 only and those who enrolled during fall, 2001 and were retained through spring, 2002. Statistically significant differences were found between the two groups of students along all demographic variables except for gender. Table 4 (see page 15) summarizes the comparison of enrolled students who were retained to those who were not retained from fall 2001 to spring 2002. Blue shading indicates a significant over-representation within the retained pool versus the representation within the enrolled pool. Yellow shading indicates a significant under-representation within the retained pool versus the representation within the enrolled pool. No shading indicates approximately equal representation in the retained versus the enrolled pool.

Again, several important findings are revealed by the data in this table:

- Retention from fall to spring was most likely among students under 30. Students age 30 to 59 were significantly underrepresented among the retained student pool.
- In general, ethnic minority representation was equal between the students retained and those who enrolled during fall, 2001 only. The exception was among Hispanic students who were underrepresented in the retained student pool. White students were overrepresented in the retained student pool.
- Students employed full-time were underrepresented in the retained student pool while those employed part-time or not employed were overrepresented.
- Students with less than a high school education, with a previous associate degree, and with a previous baccalaureate degree were underrepresented in the pool of retained students. Students with a high school education were overrepresented in the retained student pool.
- Whether a student's parents had earned a baccalaureate degree had no effect on student retention with one exception. Students whose father had earned a baccalaureate degree were more likely to be retained from fall to spring.
- Students indicating an intended length of study at one year, two years, or more than two years were retained at higher rates than would be expected. Despite the fact that students indicating an intent to study for only one semester were underrepresented in the retained student pool, twenty-eight percent were retained to the following semester.
- Students intending to earn either an academic or vocational degree were retained at higher rates than would be expected. Those indicating no degree intent were retained at lower rates than would be expected. Students indicating an intent to earn a vocational certificate were represented approximately equally between the two groups.

- All students indicating an intent to earn an associate degree were retained a higher than expected rates while those indicating an intent to earn a certificate and those who were non-degree seeking were retained at lower than expected rates.
- Students indicating an intent to transfer to a four-year institution were retained at higher rates than would be expected. Those indicating no intent to transfer were retained at lower than expected rates.

Table 4 – Comparison of Enrolled to Retained Students

Variable/Value	Representation Within Applicant Pool	Representation Within Enrolled Pool
Gender		
Female	52.9%	52.8%
Male	47.1%	47.2%
Age		
19 and Younger	26.1%	33.5%
20-29	40.9%	42.3%
30-39	15.9%	11.9%
40-49	11.0%	8.4%
50-59	4.6%	2.9%
60 and Over	1.5%	1.0%
Race/Ethnicity		
Black	5.1%	5.5%
Hispanic	13.6%	12.2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.7%	1.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.0%	4.2%
White	75.7%	76.5%
Other	0.1%	0.1%
Employment Status		
Full-Time	44.7%	39.4%
Part-Time	27.9%	30.3%
Unemployed	27.4%	30.4%
Previous Education		
Less Than High School	13.6%	12.1%
High School	66.2%	73.4%
Some College	0.1%	0.1%
Certificate	3.9%	3.5%
Associate Degree	4.7%	3.7%
Baccalaureate Degree	10.3%	6.4%
Graduate Degree	1.2%	0.7%
Parents' Degree		
Both	17.3%	17.3%
Father	13.9%	14.6%
Mother	7.5%	7.7%
Neither	55.1%	54.6%
Unknown	6.2%	5.8%
Length of Study		
1 Semester	22.6%	10.9%
1 Year	27.5%	28.8%
2 Years	38.7%	47.6%
More Than 2 Years	11.2%	12.7%
Student Intent		
Earn an Academic Degree	38.0%	46.4%
Earn a Vocational Degree	7.4%	9.1%
Earn a Vocational Certificate	10.2%	9.3%
None of the Above	44.3%	35.2%
Degree Seeking		
Associate of Arts	9.4%	13.2%
Associate of Applied Science	12.6%	16.5%
Associate of General Studies	12.9%	16.5%
Associate of Science	4.7%	6.6%
Certificate	18.7%	12.6%
Non-Degree Seeking	28.3%	22.0%
Unknown	13.4%	12.6%
Transfer Intent		
4-Year After Graduation	28.0%	34.6%
4-Year Before Graduation	18.6%	20.6%
2-Year After Graduation	3.7%	4.1%
2-Year Before Graduation	2.4%	2.6%
Do Not Plan to Transfer	47.2%	22.1%

Discussion/Recommendations

As the demographic analysis of applicants demonstrates, community college applicants tend to be nontraditional along a variety of characteristics. The applicants to our System, in general, are in their twenties, are almost equally distributed between males and females, are fairly representative of the ethnic makeup of the geographic area, are likely to be employed, and are likely to indicate an intent to pursue a certificate or degree. Almost half of the applicants have parents with no college degree. Forty percent of applicants indicate an intent to transfer to a four-year college or university.

Despite large numbers of applicants to System colleges, only about sixty-five percent became students within two semesters of application and only about one third enrolled for both fall and spring semesters. This means there are a substantial number of people for whom various types of services may be performed who don't end up enrolling in one of the System community colleges. In light of current budget constraints, further study into this issue should be done to identify specific resources used to serve these non-students and the fiscal impact associated with continuing to provide such services at no charge to the recipients.

Students tended to enroll for more credit hours during spring semester than fall. This pattern held for students enrolling in only fall, only spring, as well as those enrolling for both fall and spring semesters. Largest per semester credit hour production was found among students enrolling for both fall and spring semesters. Additional research is needed to identify reasons for this enrollment pattern. Research results can be used to determine if changes are needed in scheduling or other college procedures that could encourage greater credit hour production during the fall semester.

Most troubling are the findings from this study related to retention of those students who enrolled for the fall, 2001 semester. Only thirty-five percent of applicants enrolled for both the fall, 2001 and spring, 2002 semesters. Community college students enroll for many different reasons and it is clear that not all students enrolling intend to remain for more than one semester. However, more investigation should be done to determine if students leaving after only one semester of attendance are doing so because their educational goal was achieved or because of other reasons.

The data gleaned from this study as well as the proposed future studies can also be used by System senior staff and the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education (SBCCOE) in their strategic planning processes. This study has been conducted for the past two years and will be repeated for the 2002-2003 fiscal year in the near future. Combining data from all three studies may be useful in future planning processes as trend analysis will be incorporated into the future studies.

Appendix A

Variables

The following list includes the variables and valid values used to develop demographic profiles of applicants to System colleges.

Gender

- Male
- Female

Age Categorized

- 19 & Younger
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 & Over
- Missing

Race/Ethnicity

- Black
- Hispanic
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Other
- Missing

Employment Status

- Employed Full-Time
- Employed Part-Time
- Unemployed
- Missing

Previous Education

- Less than High School
- High School (Includes GED)
- Some College
- Certificate
- Associate Degree
- Baccalaureate Degree
- Graduate Degree
- Missing

Parents' Degree –asks whether parent (s) earned a baccalaureate degree or higher

- Both
- Father
- Mother
- Neither
- Unknown
- Missing

Length of Study Planned

- 1 Semester
- 1 Year
- 2 Years
- More than 2 Years
- Missing

Student Intent

- Earn an Academic Degree
- Earn a Vocational Degree
- Earn a Vocational Certificate
- None of the Above
- Missing

Degree Seeking

- Associate of Arts - AA
- Associate of Applied Science - AAS
- Associate of General Studies - AGS
- Associate of Science - AS
- Certificate
- Non-degree Seeking
- Unknown
- Missing

Transfer Intent

- Yes, to a 4-year after graduation
- Yes, to a 4-year before graduation
- Yes, to a 2-year after graduation
- Yes, to a 2-year before graduation
- No, do not plan to transfer
- Missing

Appendix B

Methodology

Data were extracted from the Student Information System (SIS) on all applicants for the fall, 2001 semester to create applicant files for each of the thirteen System colleges. A demographic analysis was prepared for the fall, 2001 applicants by individual college. The individual college applicant files were then combined to create a System applicant file. A demographic analysis of fall, 2001 applicants for the System was prepared.

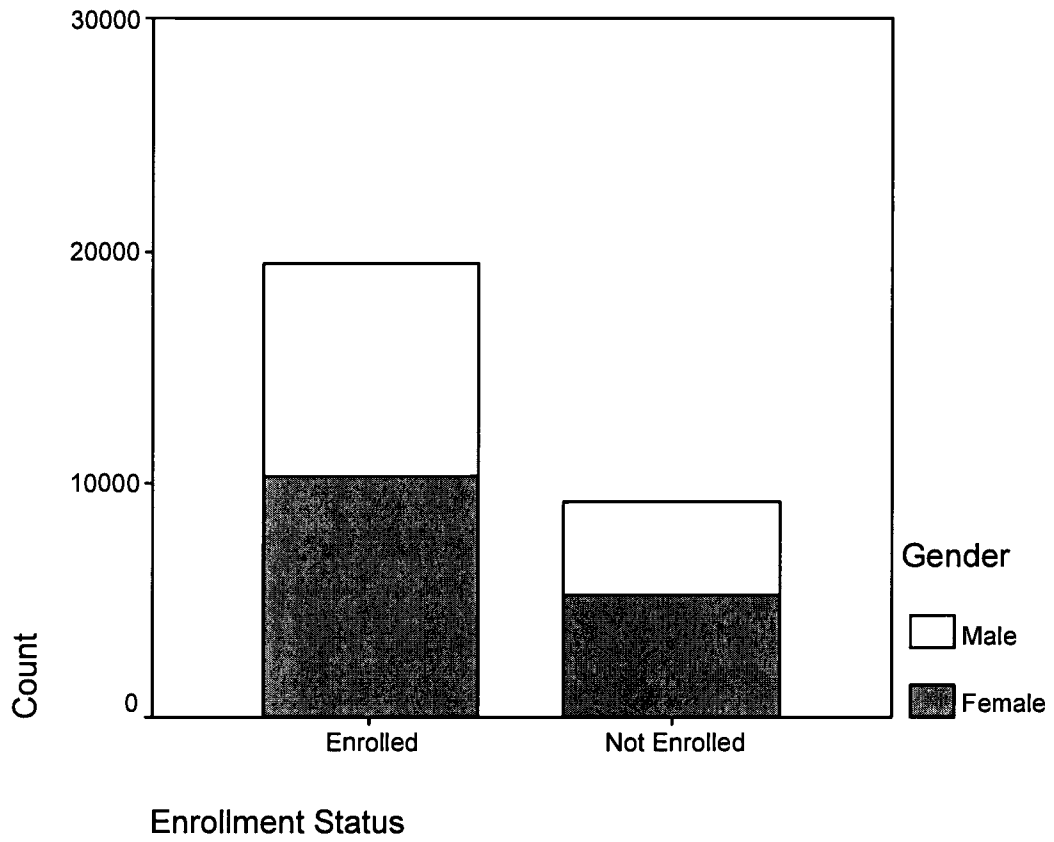
Enrollment files were also created from the SIS and consisted of all students enrolled for at least one credit during fall, 2001 and/or spring, 2002. As with the applicant files, enrollment files were created for each college and for the System as a whole.

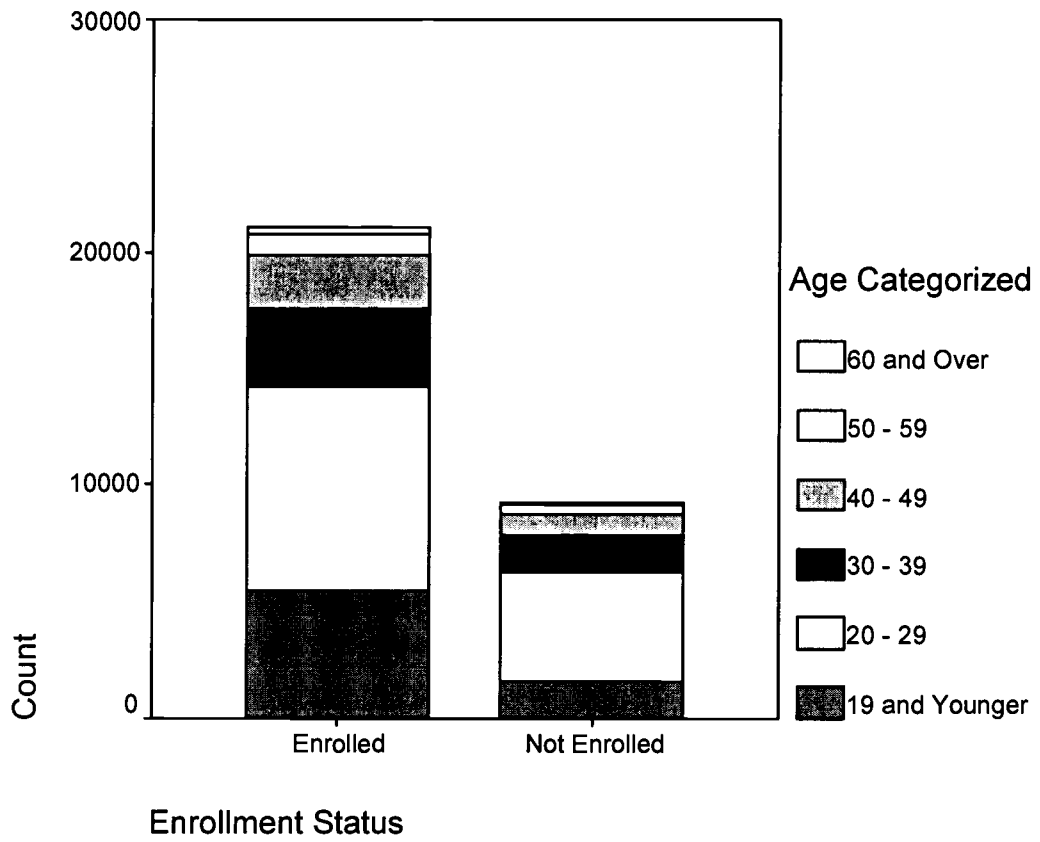
Applicant files were then matched with enrollment files to create master files of applicants who enrolled for at least one of the two semesters. The resulting analysis consisted of comparing demographic profiles made from the original applicant files with demographic profiles made from the master matched data file of applicants who enrolled for at least one credit during fall, 2001 and/or spring, 2002.

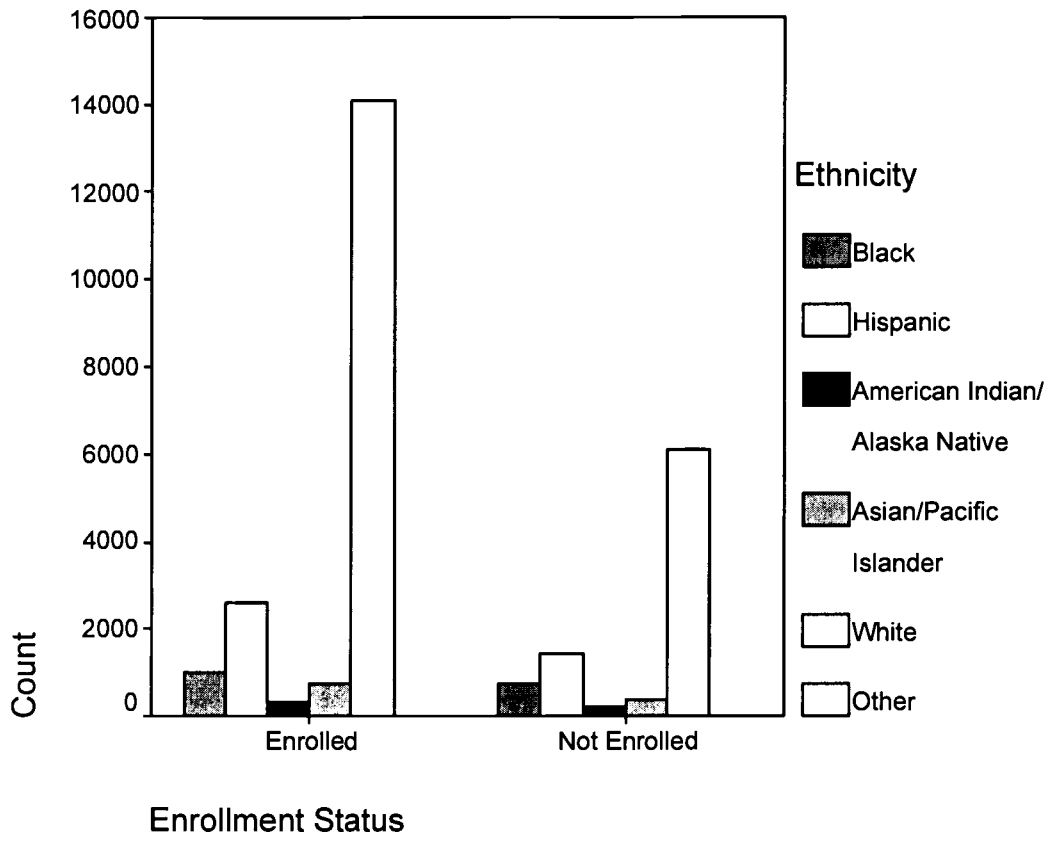
Initial comparison of enrolled applicants to those applicants who did not enroll indicated differences between the two groups along some of the demographic variables. Chi square tests for independence were performed for each demographic variable to determine whether the differences observed between the two groups were large enough to be attributed to an actual difference in the demographic profiles of the two groups or were merely the result of chance alone.

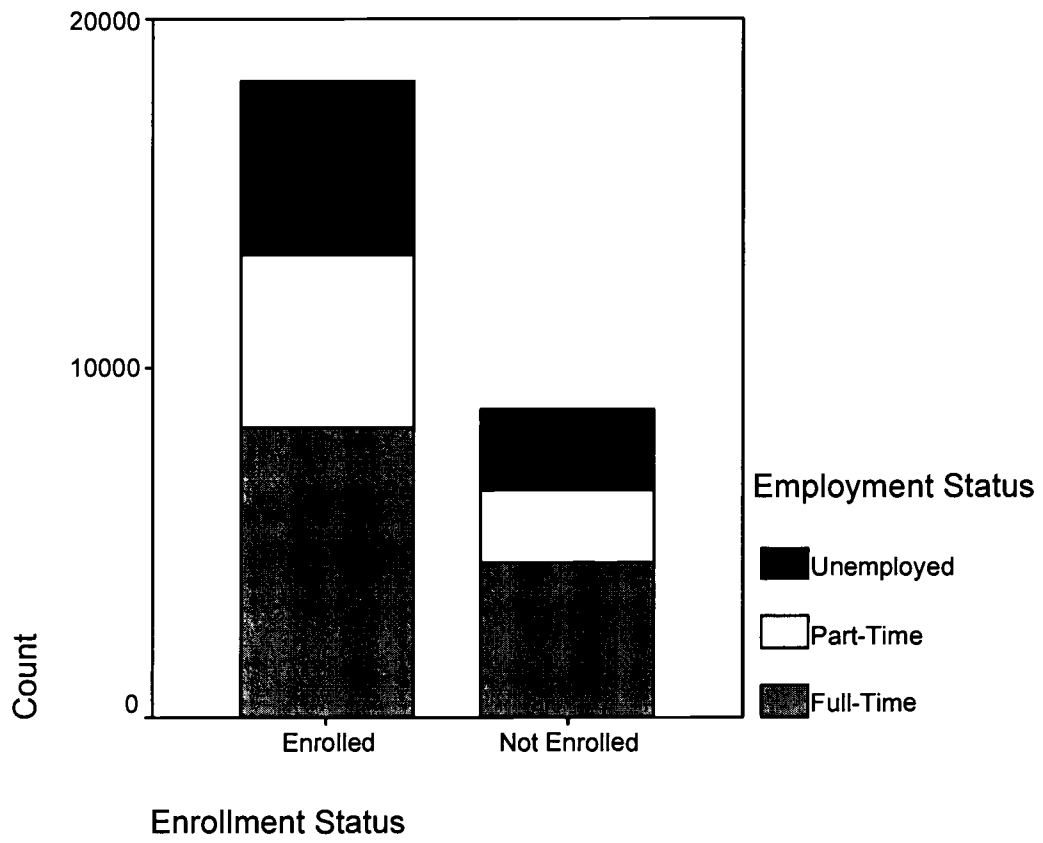
Applicants who enrolled for at least one credit during the fall, 2001 semester were then compared to spring, 2002 enrollment files to determine whether or not the student had been retained. Chi square tests for independence were performed for each demographic variable to determine whether there were significant differences between the group of students retained from fall, 2001 to spring, 2002 and the group of students who were not retained for this period.

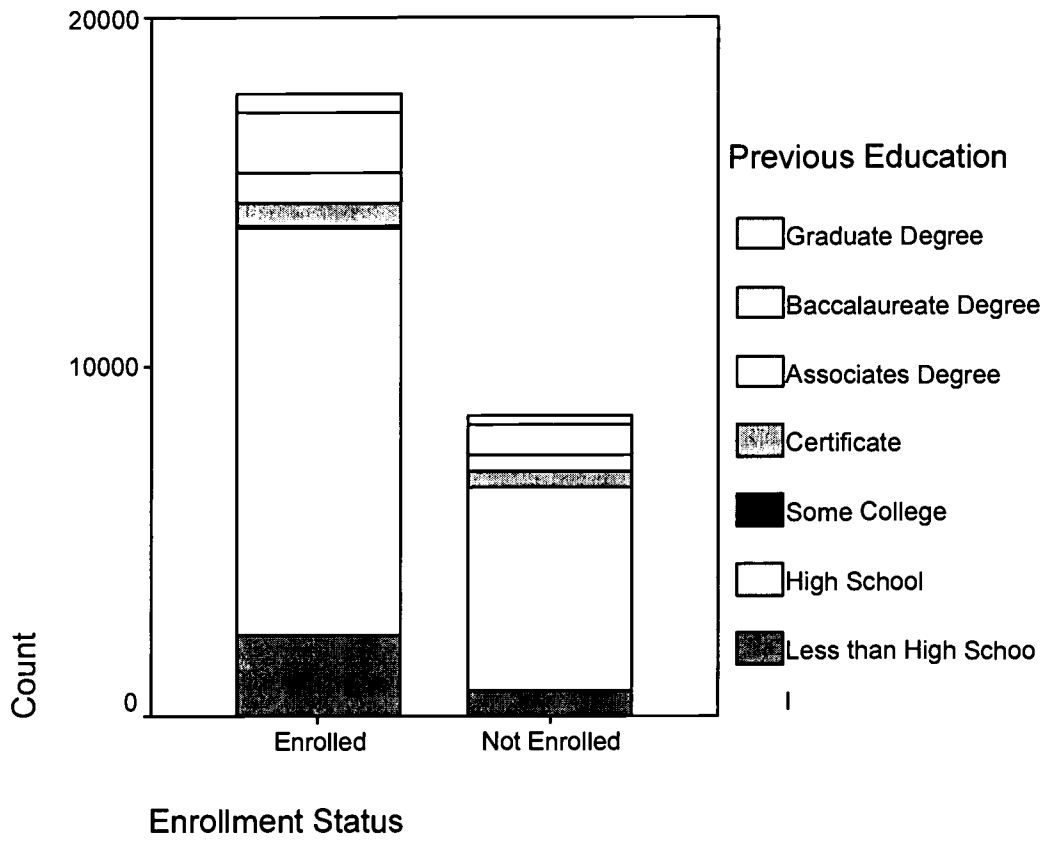
Appendix C
Results of Chi Square Analysis of Applicants to Enrolled Students

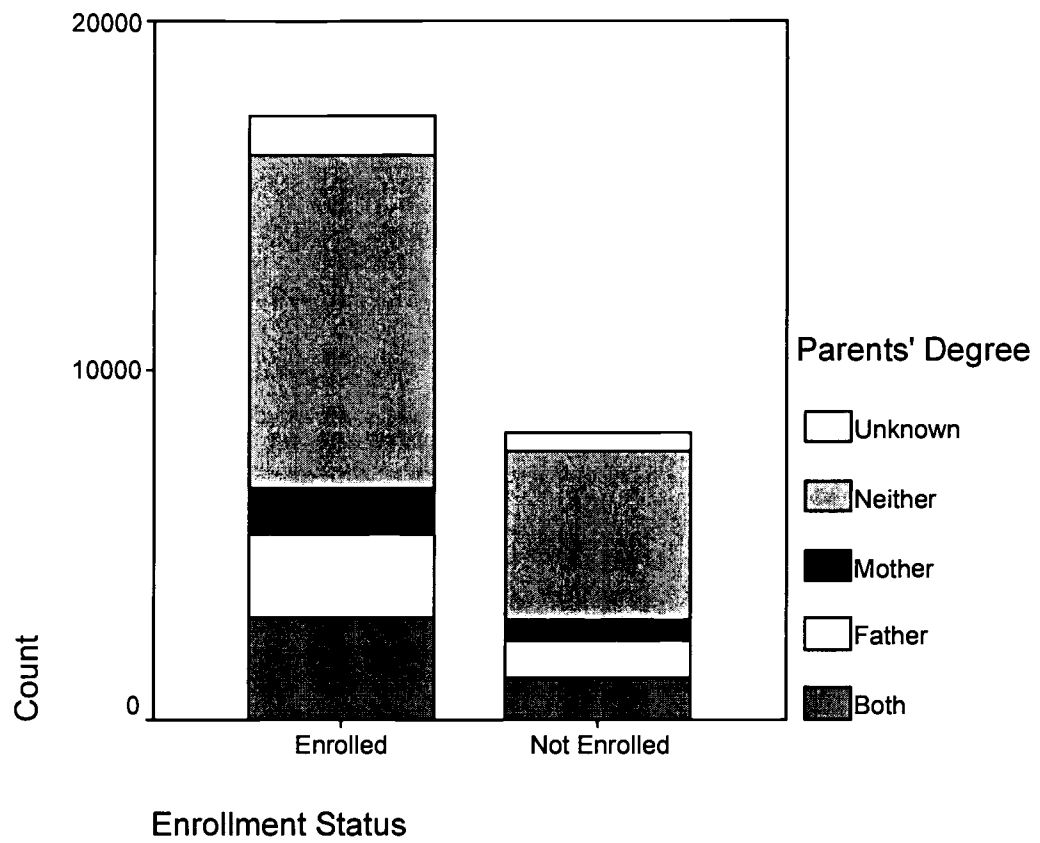


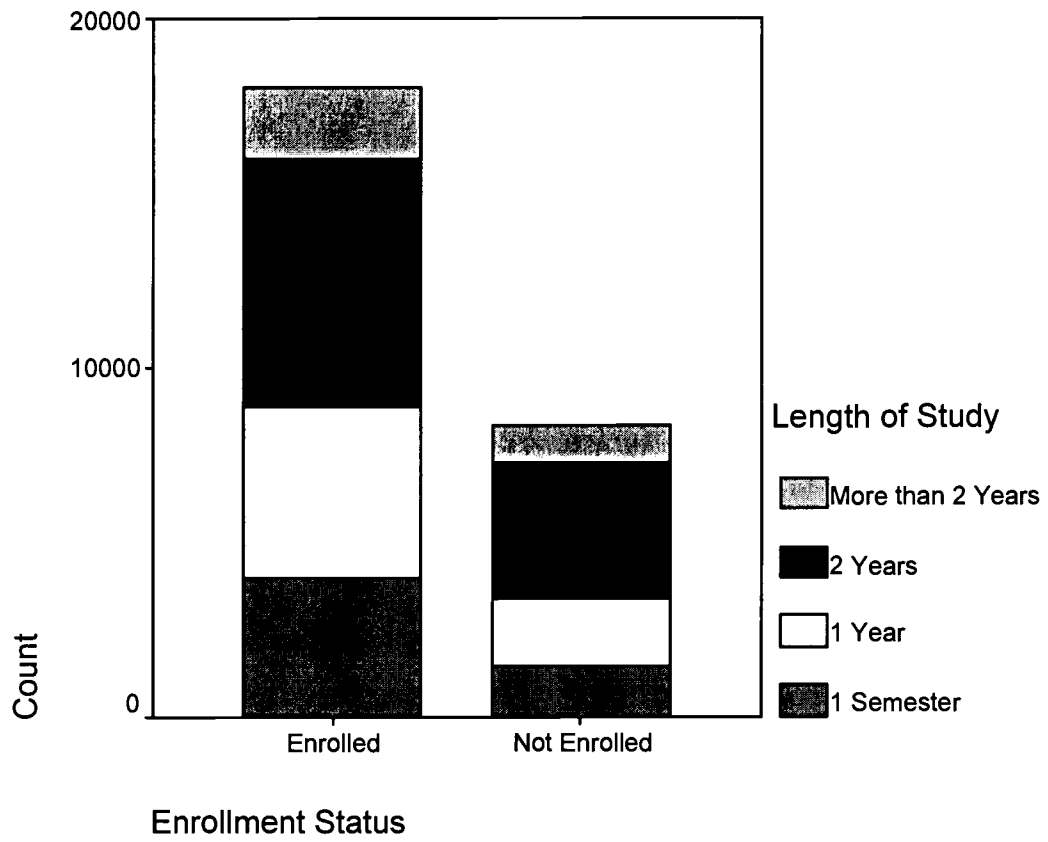


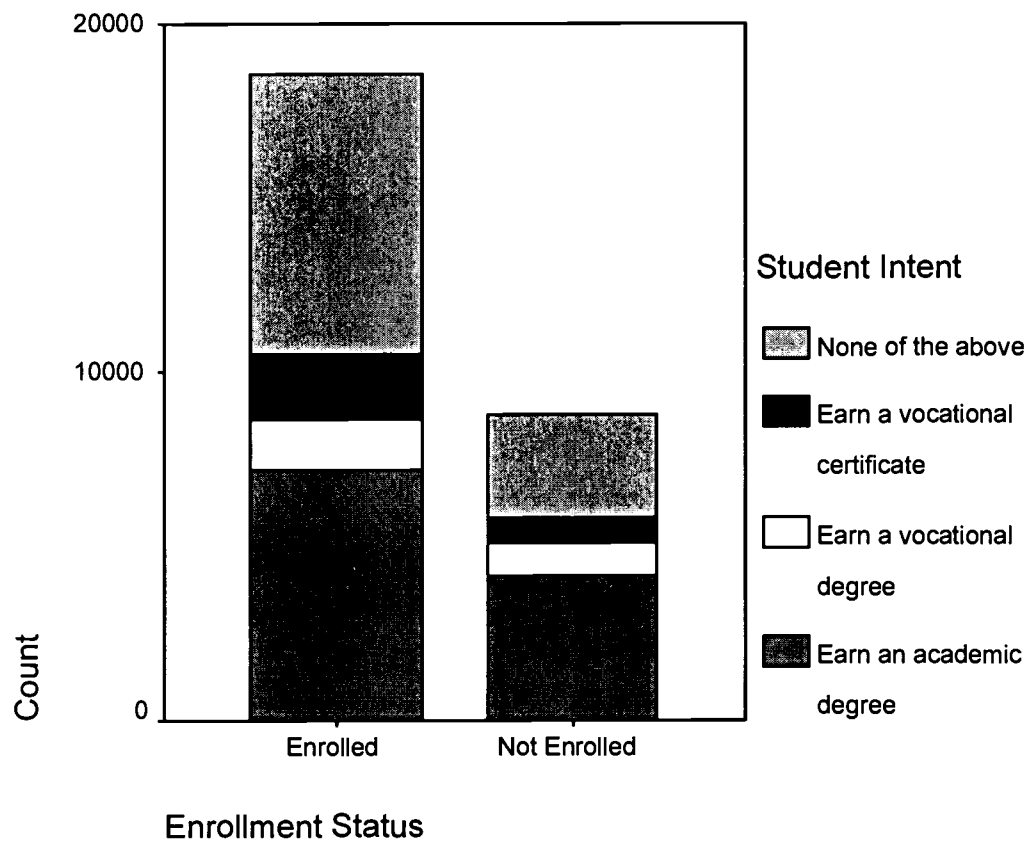


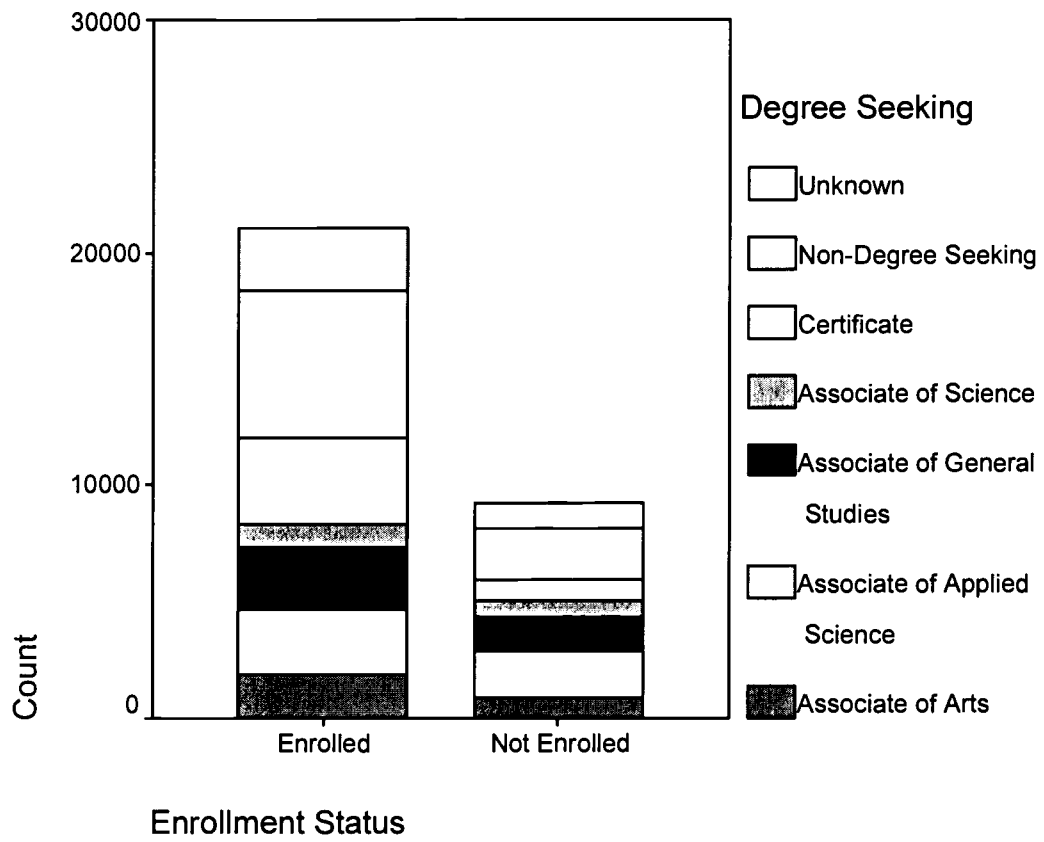


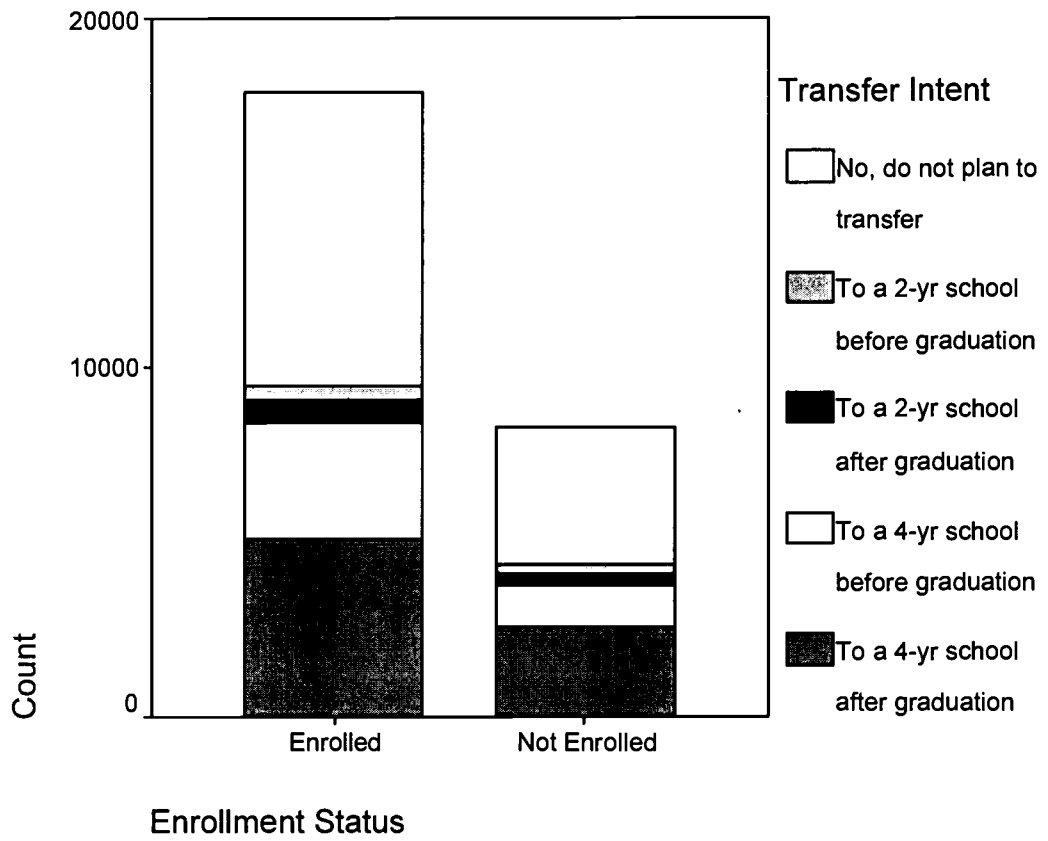




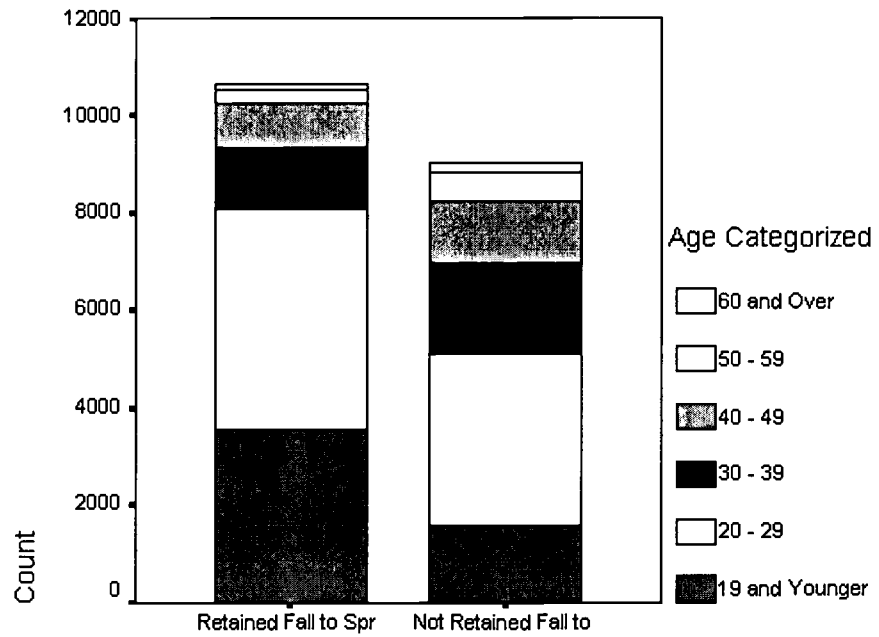




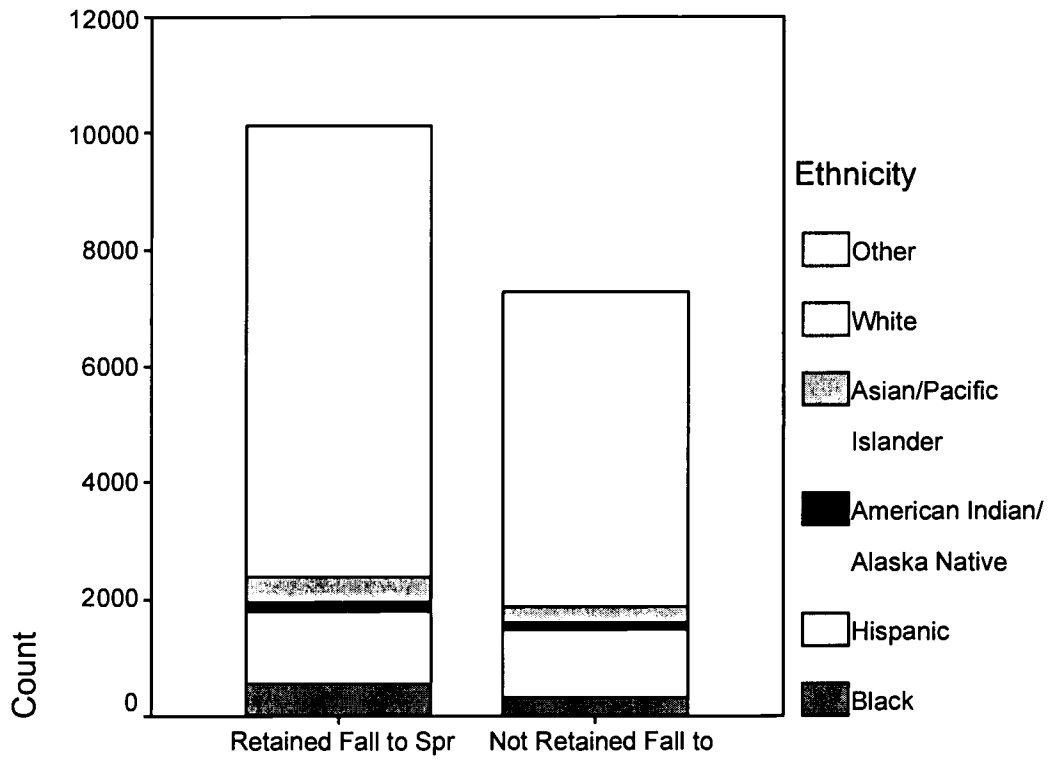




Appendix D
Results of Chi Square Analysis of Enrolled Students to Retained Students



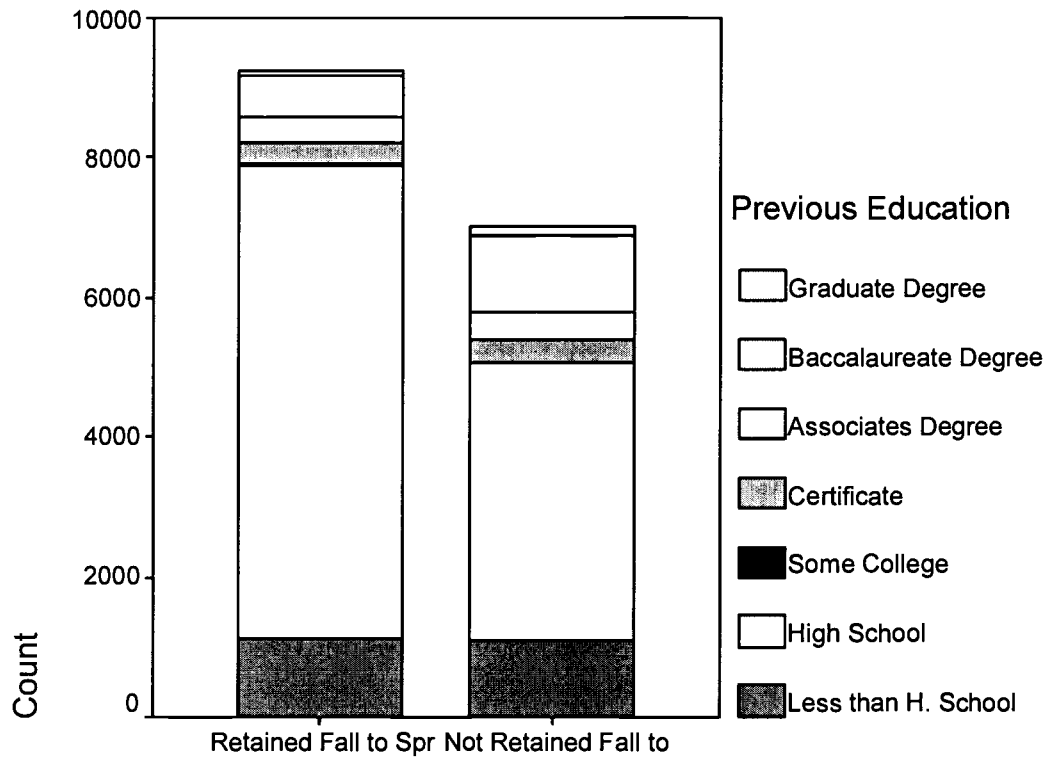
RETAIN



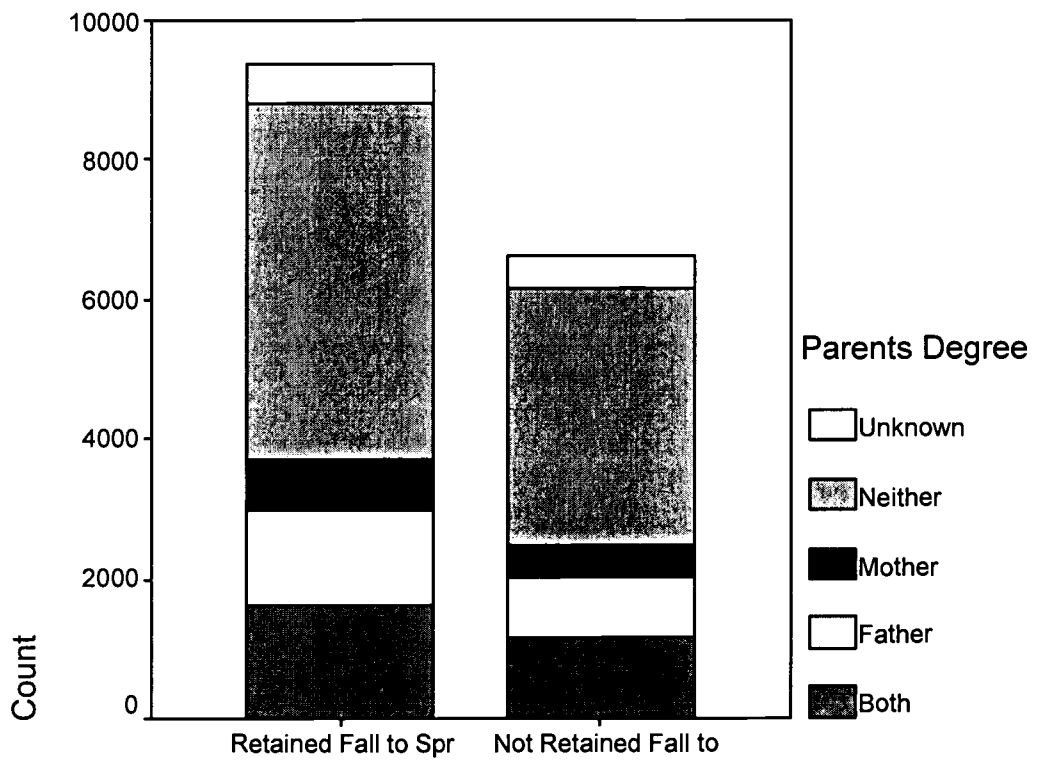
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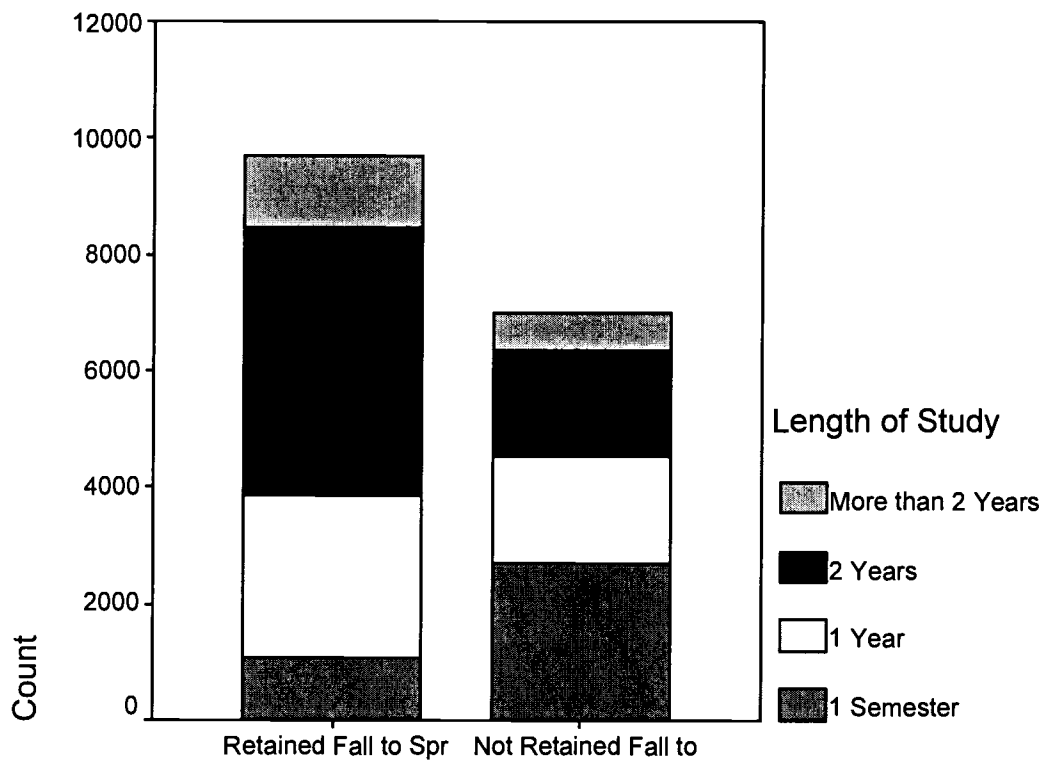
RETAIN



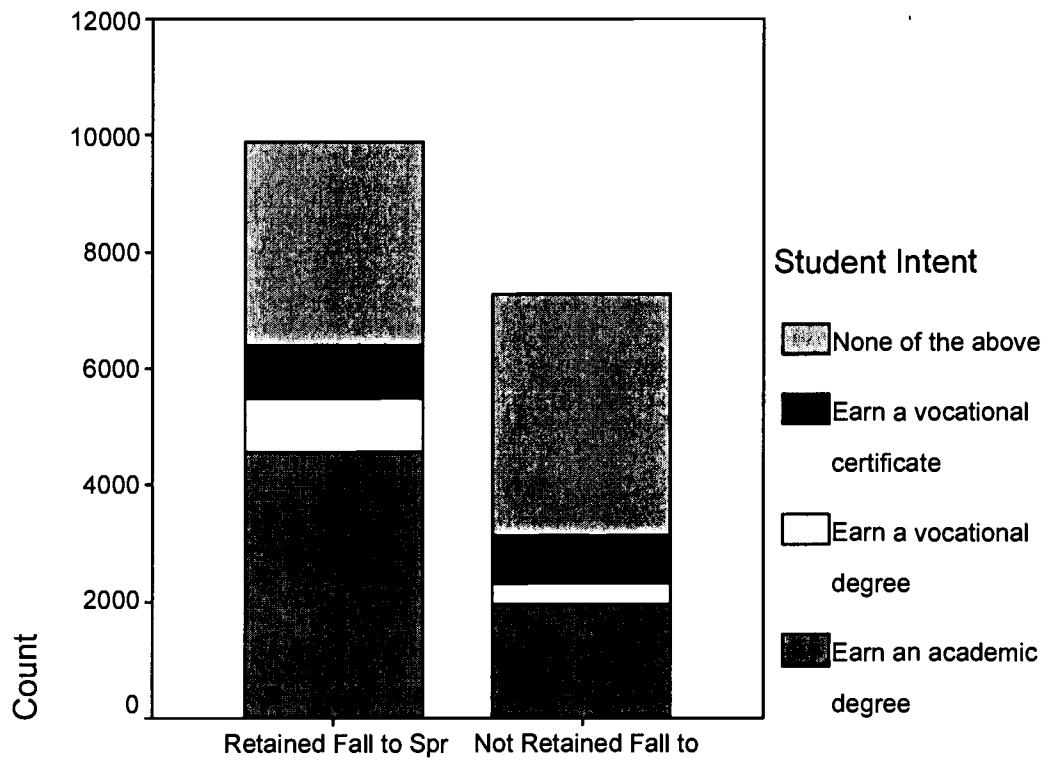
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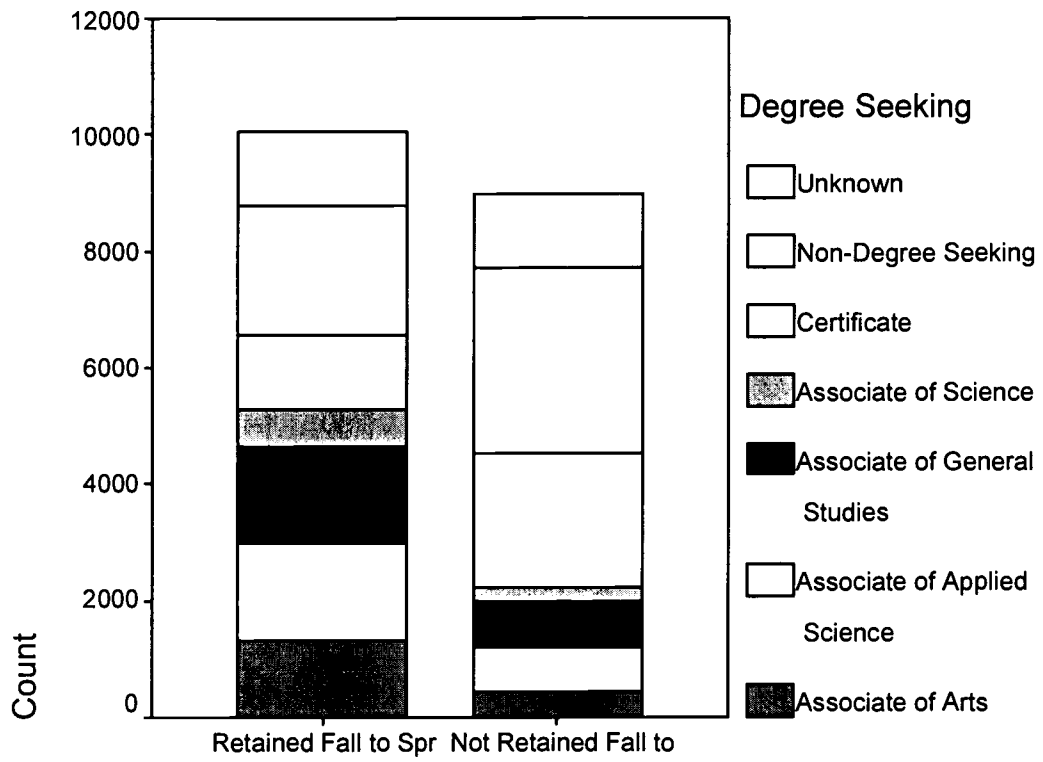
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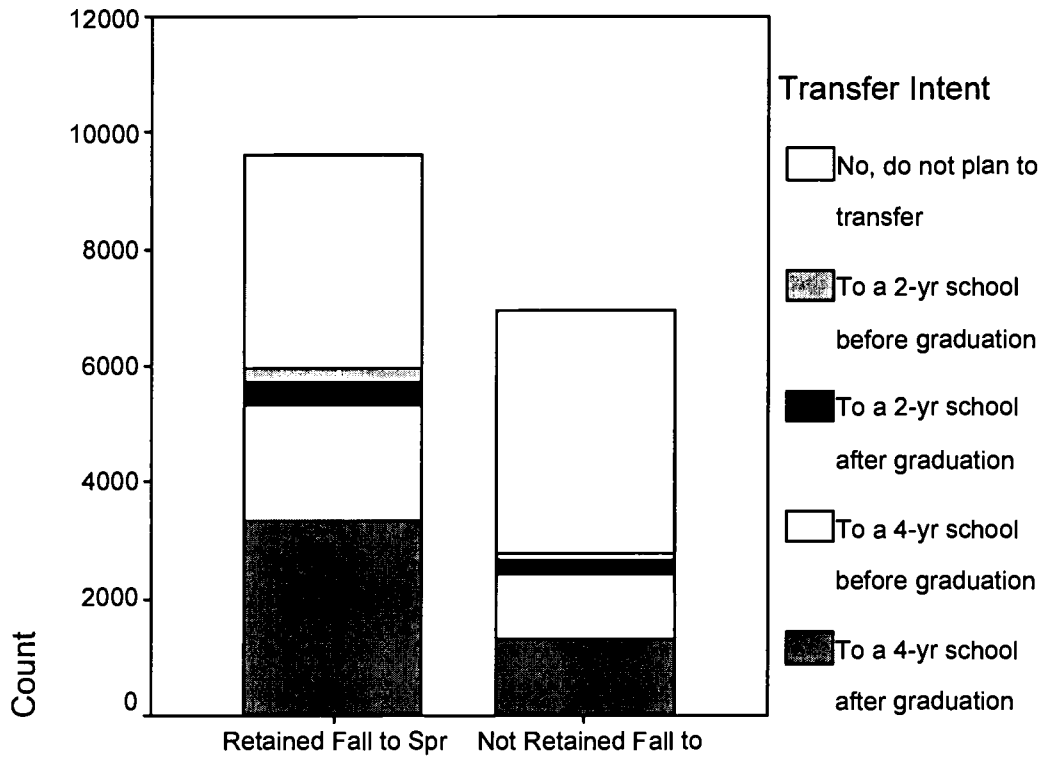
RETAIN



RETAIN



RETAIN



RETAIN

Questions regarding this study may be directed to:

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