OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL
EFFECTIVENESS & STUDENT SUCCESS

SPOTLIGHT

CHARTING STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH DATA & RESEARCH

NON-RETURNING STUDENTS: RETENTION & SUCCESS

Who are
NON-RETURNING
STUDENTS?

Why do
STUDENTS
LEAVE NOVA?

How can
NOVA help
STUDENTS
SUCCEED?

NOVA
Northern Virginia
Community College

THE NON-RETURNING STUDENT EXPERIENCE

WHY STUDENTS LEAVE COLLEGE EARLY

A non-returning student is a student who chooses not to re-enroll for another semester, despite not graduating and/or transferring. Many non-returning students make substantial progress toward their academic goals while enrolled, but leave college short of achieving them. There are many reasons why students choose to leave college early. Some students may struggle to balance educational pursuits with family responsibilities, employment, and/or health issues. Other students may wonder how they can continue to finance their education, or they may find the registration process to be too confusing or difficult.

Each semester, hundreds of students make the decision to discontinue their enrollment at NOVA. While some of these students may return to NOVA or enroll at another institution in the future, many will not return to college at all. To better understand the reasons why some NOVA students have chosen not to return to campus, the College surveyed a population of recent non-returning students. The survey asked students why they chose to leave NOVA and what obstacles they encountered that prevented them from re-enrolling. Addressing the challenges identified by these students will be critical to NOVA's efforts to improve the retention, persistence, and long-term success of all students who step foot on campus.

[1] (2018). *Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Rates: 2015 to 2016*. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

[2] (2018). *Community Insights: Emerging Benchmarks and Student Success Trends from Across The Citivas*. Citivas Learning.

[3] Porter, Stephen R. and Umbach, Paul D. (2019). *What Challenges to Success Do Community College Students Face?* Revealing Institutional Strengths and Challenges (RISC), Percontor, LLC.

[4] Juszkiewicz, Jolanta. (2017). *Trends in Community College Enrollment and Completion Data, 2017*. American Association of Community Colleges.

[5] NOVA Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success.

[6] (2018). *NOVA Survey of Non-Returning Students, Fall 2018*. NOVA Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success.
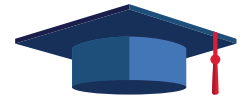
NATIONWIDE NUMBERS

81%
Fall-to-fall retention rate of first-time, full-time students at public, four-year institutions.[1]

62%
Fall-to-fall retention rate of first-time, full-time students at public, two-year institutions.[1]

1-in-5
students who left college without a degree completed 75 percent or more of the credits needed to graduate.[2]

34%
of surveyed community college students said their employment was an obstacle to their success.[3]
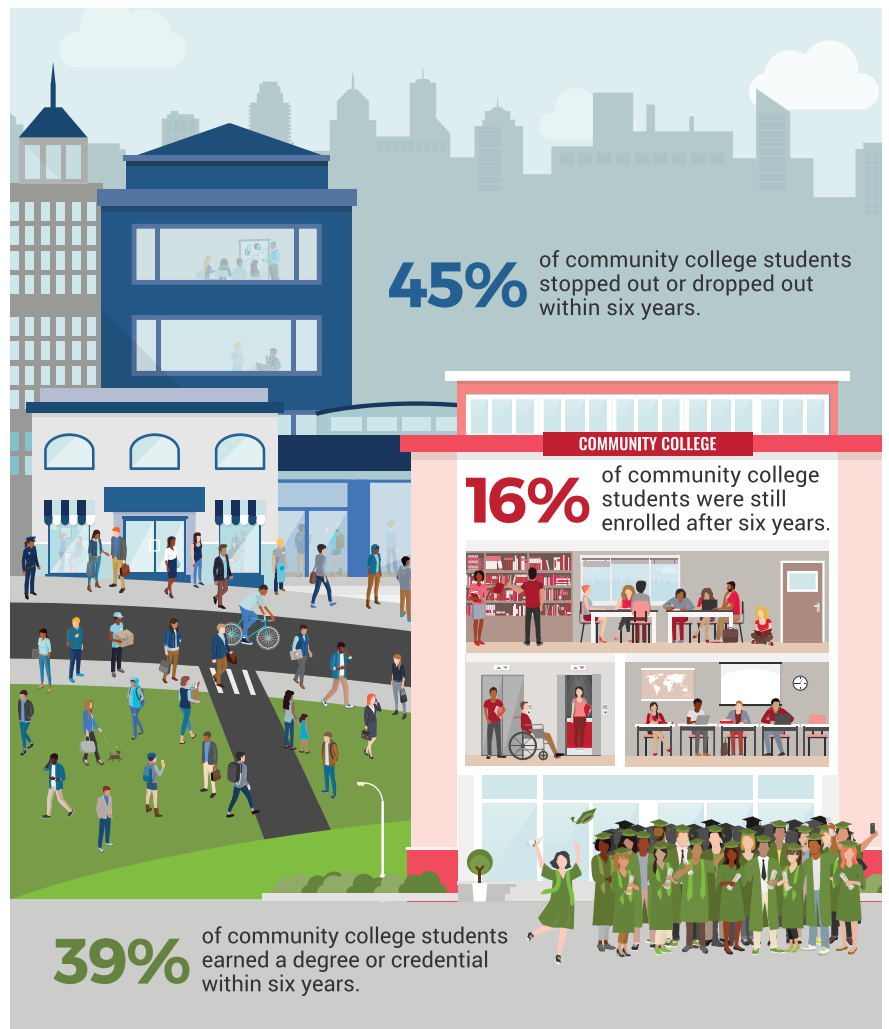
19%
of surveyed community college students said paying for tuition was an obstacle to their success.[3]

SUCCESS RATES AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Each year, hundreds of thousands of students will enroll at community colleges nationwide. Many of these students enter college with a goal of graduating with a two-year degree or credential and/or transferring to a four-year institution. However, after six years, nearly half of all community college students have dropped out or stopped out without achieving their goals.[4]

45% of community college students stopped out or dropped out within six years.

16% of community college students were still enrolled after six years.

39% of community college students earned a degree or credential within six years.

SUCCESS RATES AT NOVA

Similar to students at community colleges nationwide, many NOVA students will leave college before achieving their academic goals. Indeed, almost half of first-time in college students stopped out or dropped out within six years of initial enrollment at the College.[5]

SIX-YEAR OUTCOMES

Graduated from NOVA or another two- or four-year institution

28%

Transferred to another two- or four-year institution

20%

Still enrolled at NOVA or another two- or four-year institution

4%

Dropped out or stopped out

47%

RETURNING TO COLLEGE

The NOVA survey asked non-returning students whether they planned to re-enroll in college in the future. While some students indicated plans to return to NOVA, half of those surveyed indicated plans to continue their education at a post-secondary institution other than NOVA.[6]

■ *Yes*　■ *Maybe*　■ *No*

Do you plan to return to NOVA?

| 42% | 24% | 34% |

Do you plan to attend another post-secondary institution?

| 51% | 26% | 23% |

NOVA SURVEY OF NON-RETURNING STUDENTS

In Fall 2018, over one-thousand non-returning students participated in a survey about their experiences while enrolled at NOVA. From this survey, the following challenges were identified as the primary reasons students decided to discontinue their enrollment at NOVA before they earned a degree or transferred.[6]

PERSONAL

41% of surveyed students indicated they stopped attending NOVA due to **PERSONAL** reasons.

42% Family responsibilities

36% Busy work schedule

22% Health issues

FINANCIAL

38% of surveyed students indicated they stopped attending NOVA due to **FINANCIAL** reasons.

60% Could not afford tuition

38% Issues attaining financial aid

37% Unexpected financial obligations

INSTITUTIONAL

20% of surveyed students indicated they stopped attending NOVA due to **INSTITUTIONAL** reasons.

40% College procedures/ policies prevented registration

36% Dissatisfied with the facilities

26% Dissatisfied with course selection

ACADEMIC

16% of surveyed students indicated they stopped attending NOVA due to **ACADEMIC** reasons.

55% Dissatisfied with academic performance

45% Dissatisfied with instructors

43% Dissatisfied with academic advising/ counseling

THE NOVA NON-RETURNING STUDENT EXPERIENCE

NOVA's non-returning students encountered a variety of challenges while enrolled that impacted their decision to leave school.[6]

"Online courses do not work for everyone, so evening courses or possible weekend courses should be an option."

"I wish the class registration process was easier to navigate."

"My issue is that I make too much money in my day job to get financial aid, but not enough to pay for college."

"As a first generation college student, I needed more guidance than what was provided."

"[There is] limited availability of the courses I need to obtain the certificate I want."

LEARN MORE

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF

Students choose to enroll at community colleges in order to pursue a wide variety of personal and academic goals. However, due to the significant investment of time and effort required to attend college, many students will stop out or drop out before they reach their academic goals. Many obstacles can lead students to discontinue their enrollment, including personal, financial, institutional, and academic reasons.

NOVA offers a variety of support services to help students overcome the multitude of challenges they may face that could delay their path toward completion.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

The **Financial Aid Office** provides financial assistance and advising to help students understand how they can cover the cost of college. Students are encouraged to apply for federal, state, and NOVA-specific scholarships, grants, and loans, including need-based financial aid.

Learn more about financial aid and how to apply at:
http://www.nvcc.edu/financialaid/index.html

ACADEMIC CHALLENGES

Counselors and advisors are available on all campuses to assist students with course selection and career advice. By exploring academic programs, choosing a major early, and meeting regularly with an advisor, students can stay on track toward graduation and/or transfer.

Learn more or speak with a virtual counselor at:
http://www.nvcc.edu/advising/index.html

PERSONAL CHALLENGES

The **NOVACares Office** provides assistance, resources, and interventions to members of the NOVA community. The Office has information on stress management, understanding grief and loss, and local mental health providers.

Learn more and find available resources at:
https://www.nvcc.edu/novacares/resources.html
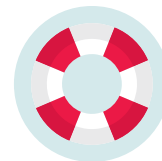
EMERGENCY CHALLENGES

The **Student Emergency Grant** program provides one-time financial support to students experiencing an enrollment-threatening financial emergency, such as job loss, homelessness, medical or dental emergencies, theft, or loss of child care.

Find the application and more information about eligibility at:
https://blogs.nvcc.edu/wssn/student-emergency-grant

VISIT SPOTLIGHT ONLINE AT BLOGS.NVCC.EDU/SPOTLIGHT

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