

Chabot College Persister Study: Fall 1998

Obstacles students overcome to stay in college

The study

The Fall 1998 Persister Study sought to understand what motivates students to persist and stay in college and to identify their major obstacles and sources of support. Focus groups in 15 classes and a written survey in 40 classes produced data from continuing (including returning & transfer) students.

The classroom survey

The classroom survey confirmed that the major obstacles for most students are time, money or family pressures. However, more than half of the students experienced obstacles at Chabot that made their progress difficult, such as not finding courses at the time or semester they needed, having instructors with a poor teaching method or attitude, having to take General Ed. courses that seemed irrelevant, not finding a parking place, finding too little information about and too many barriers to services or classes, and getting conflicting counseling advice.

The focus groups

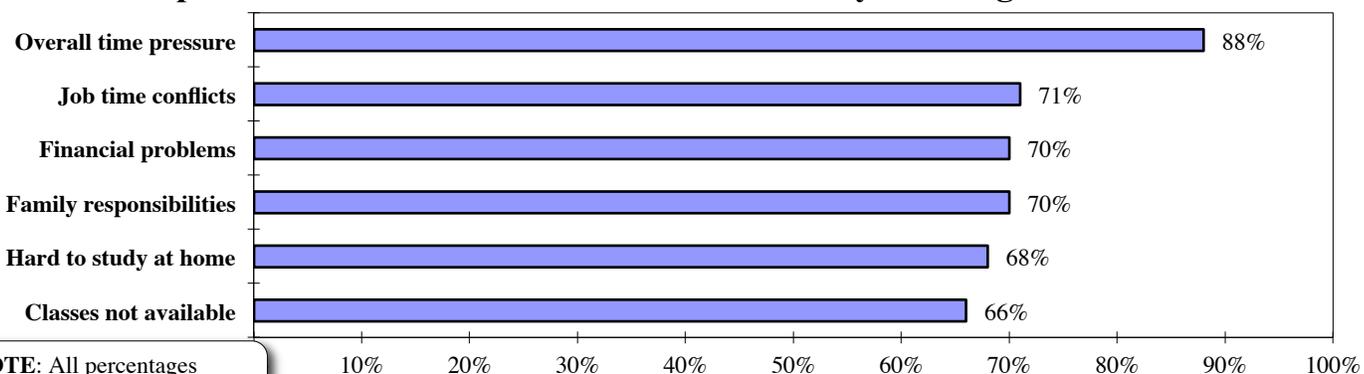
The focus groups provided moving testimonies by students about the importance of their education at Chabot, what they go through to remain here, and how Chabot does or does not help them stay.

Most students had time, job, or financial pressures because most needed to work while in college, and they were constantly juggling school, work, and family schedules. Full-time workers had little time for homework or sleep; part-time workers had little spending money. Responsibilities for children or other family members added more pressure, and conflicts at home made it hard to study. One third of students had transportation problems and were not able to depend on buses or BART; they had to find a ride to Chabot *every day*. Many students also struggled with their own self discipline/motivation to stay in college, including being discouraged by family or friends.

At Chabot, most students had experienced at least one instructor or counselor as an obstacle, although they received help from others.

What is remarkable is that students keep persisting at Chabot despite these obstacles.

Top six obstacles for Chabot students who stay in college



NOTE: All percentages have a margin of error of 2 to 4 percentage points.

Percent who experience problem some or all of the time

Obstacles for Chabot students who stay in college: ordered by importance

Percent who rated obstacle as a problem some or all of the time		Percent who rated obstacle as a problem some or all of the time	
Overall time pressure	88%	Financial aid: too hard or too slow to get	49%
Job pressures (time/schedule conflicts)	71%	Not enough counselors, tutors, or other staff at times I ne	48%
Financial problems (not having enough \$\$)	70%	Lack of motivation and interest in attending college	42%
Family pressure or responsibilities	70%	Lack of help in finding a job that fits with class schedule	41%
Distractions/conflicts at home (hard to study)	68%	Health or personal problems of self or family	41%
Classes not at time or term I need them	66%	Not enough hours or materials in library or labs	40%
Instructors: poor teaching method or attitude	65%	Transportation problems	29%
General ed courses I don't like/seem irrelevant	61%	On academic probation or doing poorly	28%
Parking	59%	Language problems: learning English	19%
Not enough info about classes/majors/degs/transfe	57%	Housing problems	19%
Too much to go through to get services or courses	54%	Discrimination/prejudice	17%
Counselors: conflicting or wrong advice	53%	Childcare problems	17%
Lack of self discipline to study or go to classes	52%		