

First-Term Stop-Outs and Drop-Outs at COM: How Did They Do and Where Did They Go?

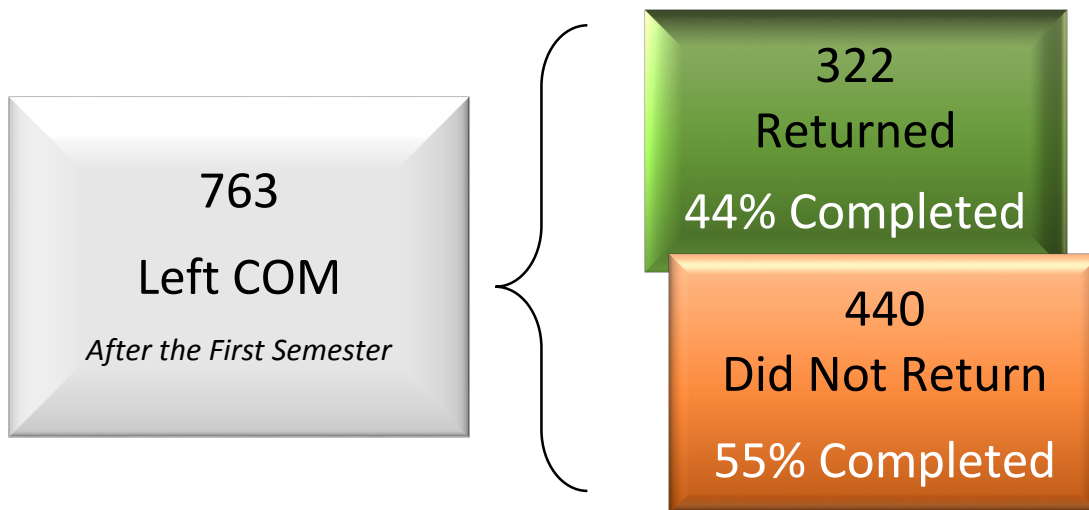
College of Marin’s strategic planning goals include improving student success and increasing enrollment. To provide basic information that contributes to our understanding of these issues, this analysis focuses on COM students who stop out or drop out after the first term. Did they stop pursuing their education? Or do they attend another college?

The data used are from the California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CO) Student Success Scorecard. Data include five cohorts of first-time degree and/or transfer-seeking¹ students who entered COM in Academic Years 2004-05 through 2008-09. The CO tracks first-time students for 6 years to calculate the Scorecard metrics. These data are used in this analysis because the CO is evaluating all California community colleges’ performance using these data and metrics. The more we know about these students, and their similarity to current cohorts, the more likely we are to be able to improve their success and our enrollment. To determine if and where students enrolled after they left COM, we used the National Student Clearinghouse StudentTracker data.

How Did They Do?

Thirty-one percent, or 763 students, left COM after just one semester. Of these first-semester leavers, half ultimately completed², either by returning to COM or at another institution.

Figure 1
Students Who Left COM, Subsequent Enrollment and Completion



The majority of students who left, did not return to COM. Further, they completed at a higher rate than those who did return.

¹ The CO defines degree and/or transfer-seeking students as first-time students who earn a minimum of 6 units and take English or math in the first three years of enrollment.

² The CO definition of completion is: Degree-seeking students who achieved any of the following outcomes within 6 years of entry: 1) earned AA/AS or CO approved credit certificate; 2) transferred to a 4-year; and/or 3) achieved “transfer-prepared”—student successfully completed 60 UC/CSU transferable units with a GPA \geq 2.0.

Where Did They Go?

StudentTracker data were available for 717 (94%) of the students who left COM after the first semester. They were tracked across 6 years. Of these students, 46 dropped out. They never attended another college or university in that time period. However, most did continue their education, at least for awhile. 20% (N=144) returned to COM after stopping out. They did not attend any other institution. 44% (314) attended another California community college. 18 transferred to a private or out-of-state 2-year college. The remaining 195 (27%) transferred to a four-year university.

Table 1
**Students Leaving COM After One Term
 and Enrolling at Another Institution (N=527):
 Next Institution Attended**

	College	N	Percent
Bay Area 10 + SRJC	Santa Rosa Junior College	104	19.7
	City College of San Francisco	31	5.9
	Cabrillo College	12	2.3
	Contra Costa College	10	1.9
	Diablo Valley College	8	1.5
	College of San Mateo	5	0.9
	Skyline College	5	0.9
	Other Bay Area 10 College	17	3.2
	Total Bay Area 10 + SRJC	192	36.4
Other CCC	Santa Barbara City College	31	5.9
	Cuesta College	11	2.1
	San Diego Mesa College	11	2.1
	Butte College	8	1.5
	Sacramento City College	8	1.5
	College of the Redwoods	6	1.1
	Other CCC campus	47	8.9
	Total-Other CCC Campuses	122	23.1
CSU	Sonoma State University	9	1.7
	CSU Sacramento	7	1.3
	San Francisco State University	7	1.3
	California Polytechnic State University	5	0.9
	CSU Chico	5	0.9
	Other CSU Campus	16	3.0
	Total CSU Campuses	49	9.3
	UC	UC Santa Cruz	15
UC Davis		12	2.3
UC Santa Barbara		9	1.7
UC San Diego		5	0.9
Other UC Campus		6	1.1
Total UC Campuses		47	8.9
	In-state private college	42	8.0
	Out-of-state college	75	14.2
	Total	527	100.0

As might be expected, students chose a wide variety of colleges and universities. Of those who went to another institution after COM, half selected institutions in the Bay Area. Most commonly, they enrolled at Santa Rosa Junior College. (See table 1 for specific institutions.)

Conclusion and Recommendations

The majority of students who stop out of COM after the first term, but ultimately return, do not complete. However, their return gives us a second chance with them. Identifying students who are returning after stopping out following their first semester would offer the opportunity to intervene. Doing so would contribute to both our student success and enrollment goals.

All colleges and universities lose some students due to fit between the institutions' programs or environment and students' preferences. However, the fact that more students left COM and completed at another community college, instead of returning to COM, raises the question of why they left. Though their completion is reflected in COM's Scorecard metrics, regardless of where they complete, it would help improve enrollment if they stayed at COM instead.