## This Month's Topic: National student enrollment patterns and implications for enrollment strategies

This literature review summarizes findings and suggests implications on enrollment strategies stemming from the *Even One Semester: Full-Time Enrollment and Student Success* report published by the Center for the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE).

### Three Types of Enrollment Statuses

While the higher education field tends to reference fixed classifications amongst students as either part-time or full-time, many students change their enrollment status throughout their college education. Researchers have found students fit into three types of enrollment statuses:

- Always part-time – 29% of students
- Fluid attendance pattern (sometimes full-time, sometimes part-time) – 54% of students
- Always full-time – 18% of students

### At Least One Full-Time Term Improves Engagement

According to the report, students with fluid attendance patterns often resemble always-full-time students' more than always part-time students. When looking at engagement by benchmarks, always-full-time students are the most engaged, always-part-time students are the least engaged, and fluid-attendance pattern



Most Students Have Fluid Attendance Patterns
Students who attended three terms (N= 18,887)

students fall in-between always part-time and always full-time, although closer to their always-full-time peers. This suggests that having any experience as a full-time student for at least one term improves student engagement. National transcript data illustrated that having any full-time enrollment improves student outcomes, including completion of gateway courses, persistence, and completion of a certificate or degree. CCCSE also found that students who always enroll full-time are the most successful, 34% of those who enrolled full-time for at least some of their community college career earned an associate degree or a certificate, yet only 23% of always part-time peers did so.
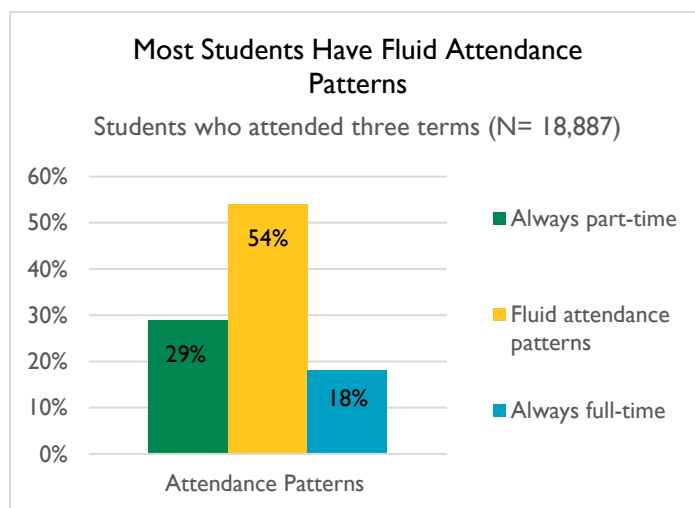
### Potential Implications for Crafton Hills College

- *Encourage students to attend one semester full-time:* although this may not be possible for many students, closely mirroring full-time student educational experiences in terms of interacting with faculty and staff on campus is a starting point.
- *Study how full-time student experiences* are different from the *part-time student experiences:* advising experiences, engagement experiences with faculty and other students, and the use of student support services.
- *Based on the research conducted on the different experiences between part-time and full-time students, develop processes to ensure that part-time students have the same experiences as full-time students.*

### Methodology and Limitations

CCCSE collected survey findings from two sources. The spring 2016 CCSSE administration sampled 60,730 community college students across 253 institutions. The other source was transcript data for 17,085 students at 28 institutions, from students whose first year of enrollment was between 2005 and 2011, and who completed CCSSE between 2005 and 2013.

Data provided only captures students who completed CCSSE and provided a valid student identifier on the survey. In addition, CCSSE is administered in the spring; therefore, students who started in the fall but did not persist to the spring did not have the opportunity to offer their input, limiting generalizability. Additional research is needed to further assess the extent of the benefit of attending full-time for one semester at least, and to further investigate how much helpful each additional full-time term may be. In the meantime, Crafton Hills College can engage students, faculty, and staff in conversations about enrollment status and explore ways to help students who cannot attend full-time have a similar educational experience as their always full-time peers to promote student success.

Reference: Center for Community College Survey of Student Engagement. (2017). *Even one semester: Full-time enrollment and student success.* Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Educational Administration, Program in Higher Education Leadership.

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