

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

# Los Angeles Mission College Student Survey - Fall 2013

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BARRIERS TO COMPLETION OF DEGREES,  
CERTIFICATES AND TRANSFER

February 10, 2014

## **Introduction**

The Los Angeles Mission College (LAMC) Office of Institutional Effectiveness conducted a comprehensive survey of campus services and student experiences during the Fall 2013 term to determine the level of student satisfaction with existing programs and services and to identify areas for improvement. This report summarizes the findings from the section on Course Enrollment and Success, which covers barriers to student success and the completion of degrees, certificates and/or transfer to four-year institutions. A total of 954 survey responses were received.

Commonly recognized barriers to educational success include outside obligations (such as work, personal and/or family obligations), financial difficulties, poor academic preparedness, lack of academic or career advising, and lack of availability of courses (full, not offered, conflicting with other courses, etc.). The main barriers self-reported by LAMC students in the student survey reflect these general trends and include financial obligations (including the high cost of textbooks); the inability to enroll in the classes needed to complete their degree and/or certificate or to transfer; job and/or family obligations; and poor study skills.

## **Profile of Respondents**

The majority (71 percent) of respondents were continuing students; 17 percent were new students; and 12 percent were returning students who had been away for one semester or more. Among the continuing students, 67 percent had been in continuous enrollment at LAMC for two academic years or less and 33 percent had been in continuous enrollment for more than two academic years. Just over one-third (34 percent) of respondents were enrolled full-time (12 or more units), while 62 percent were enrolled part-time (1-12 units) and four percent were enrolled in non-credit courses only.

As in higher education generally, the proportion of women (67.5 percent) was larger than the proportion of men (32.5 percent). Reflective of the student population at LAMC, over half of respondents (56 percent) were Hispanic or Latino/a, 22 percent were White, 16 percent self-reported as "other" or mixed race, five percent were Black or African American and two percent were Asian or Asian American. The vast majority (92 percent) indicated that English was their preferred language.

38 percent of respondents were under 22 years of age; 34 percent were between 22 and 30 years of age; and 28 percent were 30 or older. One-third of respondents (33 percent) indicated that they had children under 18 living with them. 45 percent of respondents indicated that they do not work while attending school; 40 percent work part-time; and 15 percent work full-time.

Almost two-thirds of respondents (63 percent) were first generation college students, and 15 percent had already completed an associate's degree or higher. Seven percent of respondents reported that they had been diagnosed with a disability or impairment. Less than three percent of respondents were current or former members of the U.S. Armed Forces. See Appendix A for more information on the profile of survey respondents.

## Barriers to Student Success

Section 9 of the Fall 2013 Student Survey on Course Enrollment and Success covers barriers to student success and reasons behind the failure to complete programs within the normal time. Student respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which 18 factors were a problem for them in succeeding in their classes at LAMC. Figure 1 lists the factors that were most commonly indicated as barriers to academic success and the percentage of respondents who indicated that each factor was a problem for them in succeeding in their classes. Figure 2 shows the extent to which each factor was considered a problem. Appendix B contains more detailed information on individual factors.

*Figure 1: Barriers to Student Success*

<u>Factor</u>	<u>% of students who reported this factor is a barrier to their success</u>
Cost of textbooks	77.6%
Financial obligations	47.6%
Unable to enroll in the classes needed	47.6%
Family obligations	45.6%
Poor study skills	42.2%
Job obligations	42.0%
Personal problems	39.4%
Quality of high school preparation in math	38.1%
Could not get textbooks in time	34.4%
Too much expected by instructors	31.4%
Lack of motivation	30.0%
Quality of high school preparation in reading/writing	29.1%
Instructors not teaching to students' level of knowledge/abilities	24.1%
Instructors not taking student interests into account	23.6%
Lack of adequate tutoring	19.9%
English not primary language	18.9%
Lack of library resources	15.7%
Child care	14.3%

The most commonly reported factors affecting student success were financial issues and the inability to register for the courses students needed. About half of respondents (48 percent) reported financial obligations as being a problem for them in succeeding at LAMC. Among these, 44 percent reported it as being only a minor problem, 32 reported it was a moderate problem, and 24 percent reported it was a major problem for them. The high cost of textbooks, in particular, was reported as a problem by over three-quarters (78 percent) of respondents. Students dealt with this problem in a number of ways, including delaying buying books (45 percent), not buying all of the required textbooks (31 percent),

renting textbooks (28 percent), taking fewer classes (24 percent) or not buying textbooks at all (six percent). Students may choose more than one method of coping with the high cost of textbooks.

*Figure 2: Extent of Barriers to Student Success\**

	<b>Major Problem</b>	<b>Moderate Problem</b>	<b>Minor Problem</b>	<b>Not a Problem</b>
Cost of textbooks	no data	no data	no data	32.1%
Financial obligations	11.2%	15.4%	21.0%	52.4%
Unable to enroll in the classes needed	14.8%	13.7%	19.1%	52.4%
Family obligations	8.4%	13.8%	23.4%	54.4%
Poor study skills	7.9%	9.9%	24.5%	57.8%
Job obligations	8.5%	14.6%	19.0%	58.0%
Personal problems	5.3%	10.7%	23.4%	60.6%
Quality of high school preparation in math	9.5%	10.0%	18.6%	61.9%
Could not get textbooks in time	4.8%	8.9%	20.6%	65.6%
Too much expected by instructors	2.3%	7.8%	21.3%	68.7%
Lack of motivation	4.3%	5.8%	19.9%	70.0%
Quality of high school preparation in reading/writing	5.3%	7.0%	16.8%	70.9%
Instructors not teaching to students' level of knowledge/abilities	3.2%	5.7%	15.2%	75.9%
Instructors not taking student interests into account	3.9%	5.2%	14.5%	76.4%
Lack of adequate tutoring	3.4%	4.1%	12.5%	80.1%
English not primary language	5.0%	5.5%	8.4%	81.1%
Lack of library resources	2.0%	2.9%	10.8%	84.3%
Child care	2.5%	4.7%	7.0%	85.7%

*\* Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding.*

Almost half of respondents (48 percent) indicated that not being able to enroll in the classes they needed for their degree, certificate or transfer was a problem. Fifteen percent indicated that this was a serious problem, 14 percent indicated that it was a moderate problem, and 19 percent indicated that it was a minor problem (fig. 2). During the fall 2013 semester, almost half (46 percent) of respondents reported not being able to register for all of the classes they needed. Among these students, 65 percent indicated that this was due to the classes already being full (closed) when they attempted to enroll, 47 percent reported that the classes they needed were not offered at a time that was convenient for their schedule, 24 percent reported that the classes they needed were not offered that term, and ten percent indicated other reasons (missed first day of class, registration holds, did not meet prerequisites, did not take placement test, etc.). Students unable to enroll in more than one class may have faced more than one of the issues mentioned above.

Among those who were unable to enroll in all of the classes they needed, over half (53 percent) indicated that the course they were unable to enroll in was for a general education requirement. Almost half (46 percent) of respondents indicated that the course they were unable to enroll in was either for their major or for transfer. Twenty-nine percent indicated that the course they were unable to register for was a pre-requisite for another required course. Figure 3 summarizes the purposes of the courses students were unable to enroll in. Student may have been unable to enroll in multiple courses.

*Figure 3: Purpose of Classes Student Were Not Able to Get (N=413)*

	<b><u>If you were not able to get all of the classes you needed, for what purpose did you need the course you were unable to get? (N=413)</u></b>	<b><u>% of Total</u></b>
General Education	217	52.5%
Transfer	191	46.2%
Major	188	45.5%
Prerequisite	119	28.8%
Interest	49	11.9%
Certificate	46	11.1%
Basic skills	32	7.7%
Other	10	2.4%

Other significant barriers to student success include family obligations (reported by 46 percent of respondents), poor study skills (42 percent), job obligations (42 percent), and other personal problems (39 percent).

Students were also asked whether financial problems, work or family obligations and/or academic unpreparedness were likely to cause them to withdraw from classes or from LAMC. Lack of finances were the most likely to cause students to withdraw, with 58 percent of respondents indicating that this was a possibility. Figure 4 summarizes the responses.

*Figure 4: Reasons for Withdrawal*

<b><u>Issue</u></b>	<b><u>Not likely</u></b>	<b><u>Somewhat likely</u></b>	<b><u>Likely</u></b>	<b><u>Very likely</u></b>	<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>
Lack of finances	42.2%	25.3%	15.8%	16.7%	100.0%
Work obligations	57.8%	22.3%	11.6%	8.3%	100.0%
Family obligations	66.8%	16.9%	9.3%	7.0%	100.0%
Lack of academic preparation	68.3%	18.8%	8.6%	4.2%	100.0%

## **Summary**

According to the Fall 2013 Student Survey, the main barriers to student success reported by LAMC students reflect general trends and include financial obligations (reported as a problem by 48 percent of respondents) - including the high cost of textbooks (a problem for 78 percent of respondents), the inability to enroll in the classes need (reported as a problem by 48 percent of respondents), family obligations (46 percent), poor study skills (42 percent), and job obligations (42 percent).

LAMC may be able to assist financially challenged students by encouraging faculty to consider the cost of textbooks when choosing their teaching materials, by offering more vouchers to students for the purchase of required textbooks, or by offering extended payment plans for the purchase textbooks.

Expanding course offerings and offering additional course sections would also enable motivated students to finish their programs on time. According to the survey, general education courses, such as English and Math, are the most in demand, due to the large number of students who need these courses and the fact that they often serve as prerequisites to other courses. Students also most frequently requested these courses to be available in online format. As one student summarized, "Offer more of the basic subject classes, like English, especially if they fill up so fast and so many people need them."

In sum, LAMC students face many of the same challenges as students elsewhere, in particular financial challenges and being able to enroll in the classes they need. These challenges are not insurmountable and LAMC can do much to break down the barriers impeding its students' success.

## Appendix A: Profile of Respondents

### Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	New	160	16.8	16.8	16.8
	Continuing	676	70.9	70.9	87.6
	Returning	118	12.4	12.4	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

### How long have you been in continuous enrollment at LAMC?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	New	185	19.4	19.4	19.4
	2 semesters	155	16.2	16.2	35.6
	3 to 4 semesters	300	31.4	31.4	67.1
	5 to 6 semesters	189	19.8	19.8	86.9
	7 or more semesters	125	13.1	13.1	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

### Units this semester

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0 units (all non-credit)	34	3.6	3.6	3.6
	1-6 units	344	36.1	36.1	39.6
	7-11 units	249	26.1	26.1	65.7
	12 or more units	327	34.3	34.3	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

### Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	644	67.5	67.5	67.5
	Male	310	32.5	32.5	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Ethnicity**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	American Indian or Alaska Native	3	.3	.3	.3
	Asian or Asian American	48	5.0	5.0	5.3
	Black or African American	27	2.8	2.8	8.2
	Hispanic or Latino	645	67.6	67.6	75.8
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4	.4	.4	76.2
	White	116	12.2	12.2	88.4
	Other	37	3.9	3.9	92.2
	Mixed Race	74	7.8	7.8	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Is English your preferred language?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	65	6.8	6.8	6.8
	Yes	889	93.2	93.2	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Age Group**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under 18	9	.9	.9	.9
	18-19	136	14.3	14.3	15.2
	20-21	214	22.4	22.4	37.6
	22-24	182	19.1	19.1	56.7
	25-29	138	14.5	14.5	71.2
	30-34	78	8.2	8.2	79.4
	35-39	64	6.7	6.7	86.1
	40-49	75	7.9	7.9	93.9
	50-64	52	5.5	5.5	99.4
	65 and over	6	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Do you have children under 18 years of age who live with you?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	640	67.1	67.1	67.1
	Yes	314	32.9	32.9	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	



**Hours Worked**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None	432	45.3	45.3	45.3
	1-9 hours	38	4.0	4.0	49.3
	10-19 hours	100	10.5	10.5	59.7
	20-39 hours	244	25.6	25.6	85.3
	40 or more	140	14.7	14.7	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**First generation**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	349	36.6	36.6	36.6
	Yes	605	63.4	63.4	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**What is the highest academic credential that you have already completed?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Did not finish high school	24	2.5	2.5	2.5
	High school or GED	687	72.0	72.0	74.5
	Vocational/technical certificate	96	10.1	10.1	84.6
	Associate's degree	87	9.1	9.1	93.7
	Bachelor's degree	45	4.7	4.7	98.4
	Master's degree	10	1.0	1.0	99.5
	Doctoral or professional degree	5	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Disability**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	890	93.3	93.3	93.3
	Yes informed	41	4.3	4.3	97.6
	Yes not informed	23	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Veteran**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	929	97.4	97.4	97.4
	Yes current	5	.5	.5	97.9
	Yes former	20	2.1	2.1	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

## Appendix B: Barriers to Student Success Data

### Are costs of textbooks a problem?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	198	20.8	32.1	32.1
	Yes I take fewer classes as a result	77	8.1	12.5	44.6
	Yes I don't buy all of the required books	78	8.2	12.7	57.3
	Yes I delay buying books	163	17.1	26.5	83.8
	Yes I don't buy any books	11	1.2	1.8	85.6
	Yes I rent one or more books	89	9.3	14.4	100.0
	Total	616	64.6	100.0	
Missing	System	338	35.4		
Total		954	100.0		

### Financial obligations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	500	52.4	52.4	52.4
	Minor problem	200	21.0	21.0	73.4
	Moderate problem	147	15.4	15.4	88.8
	Major problem	107	11.2	11.2	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

### Unable to enroll in the classes needed

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	500	52.4	52.4	52.4
	Minor problem	182	19.1	19.1	71.5
	Moderate problem	131	13.7	13.7	85.2
	Major problem	141	14.8	14.8	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

### Family obligations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	519	54.4	54.4	54.4
	Minor problem	223	23.4	23.4	77.8
	Moderate problem	132	13.8	13.8	91.6
	Major problem	80	8.4	8.4	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Study skills**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	551	57.8	57.8	57.8
	Minor problem	234	24.5	24.5	82.3
	Moderate problem	94	9.9	9.9	92.1
	Major problem	75	7.9	7.9	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Job obligations**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	553	58.0	58.0	58.0
	Minor problem	181	19.0	19.0	76.9
	Moderate problem	139	14.6	14.6	91.5
	Major problem	81	8.5	8.5	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Personal problems**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	578	60.6	60.6	60.6
	Minor problem	223	23.4	23.4	84.0
	Moderate problem	102	10.7	10.7	94.7
	Major problem	51	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Quality of high school preparation in math**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	591	61.9	61.9	61.9
	Minor problem	177	18.6	18.6	80.5
	Moderate problem	95	10.0	10.0	90.5
	Major problem	91	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Could not get textbooks in time**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	626	65.6	65.6	65.6
	Minor problem	197	20.6	20.6	86.3
	Moderate problem	85	8.9	8.9	95.2
	Major problem	46	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Too much expected by instructors**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	655	68.7	68.7	68.7
	Minor problem	203	21.3	21.3	89.9
	Moderate problem	74	7.8	7.8	97.7
	Major problem	22	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Lack of motivation**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	668	70.0	70.0	70.0
	Minor problem	190	19.9	19.9	89.9
	Moderate problem	55	5.8	5.8	95.7
	Major problem	41	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Quality of high school preparation in reading/writing**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	676	70.9	70.9	70.9
	Minor problem	160	16.8	16.8	87.6
	Moderate problem	67	7.0	7.0	94.7
	Major problem	51	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Instructors not teaching to students' level of knowledge/abilities**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	724	75.9	75.9	75.9
	Minor problem	145	15.2	15.2	91.1
	Moderate problem	54	5.7	5.7	96.8
	Major problem	31	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Instructors not taking student interests into account**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	729	76.4	76.4	76.4
	Minor problem	138	14.5	14.5	90.9
	Moderate problem	50	5.2	5.2	96.1
	Major problem	37	3.9	3.9	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Lack of adequate tutoring**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	764	80.1	80.1	80.1
	Minor problem	119	12.5	12.5	92.6
	Moderate problem	39	4.1	4.1	96.6
	Major problem	32	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**English not primary language**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	774	81.1	81.1	81.1
	Minor problem	80	8.4	8.4	89.5
	Moderate problem	52	5.5	5.5	95.0
	Major problem	48	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Lack of library resources**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	804	84.3	84.3	84.3
	Minor problem	103	10.8	10.8	95.1
	Moderate problem	28	2.9	2.9	98.0
	Major problem	19	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	

**Child care**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a problem	818	85.7	85.7	85.7
	Minor problem	67	7.0	7.0	92.8
	Moderate problem	45	4.7	4.7	97.5
	Major problem	24	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	954	100.0	100.0	