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Humboldt State  
University

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## **WHY DO SECOND YEAR STUDENTS LEAVE HSU?**

This qualitative study focuses on the experiences and profiles of students who began as first-time HSU freshmen fall, 2006, but did not return for the beginning of their third year. In addition to information gathered on all students in this cohort, phone interviews were conducted with or about 112 of the 178 students in the study population. Ten primary findings are reported along with five policy recommendations. Greater detail regarding survey results is reported in an extensive appendix.

In the 23-campus California State University system, the cohort of first-year students at Humboldt State University who entered Fall, 2006 had the third highest average SAT score but ranked 20<sup>th</sup> in their two-year retention rate (Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, 2009). CSRDE data for the past eight years reveal a consistent pattern of high levels of student attrition at HSU. The systemwide mean two-year retention rate for entering first-year students was 69.9 percent which compared to 61.7 percent for HSU. Why? Are there attributes of HSU students or their Humboldt experience that might help understand this phenomenon? Are there programs, services or strategies that HSU might consider to improve the success of these students?

In an effort to answer these questions, this study examines all 178 students who began as first-year students at HSU during the fall semester, 2006, were enrolled through fall semester census, 2007, but were no longer attending HSU as of census fall semester, 2008. Demographic, academic, and financial aid information was collected on all 980 students who began at HSU that year. National Clearinghouse data was gathered on the 178 students who departed and telephone surveys were administered to 112 students or parents regarding their Humboldt experience and their decision to leave.

## **Procedure**

Following a limited review of the literature and interviews with a number of HSU staff and faculty, a survey instrument was developed, piloted with a small number of current students, and a telephone protocol was established. Calls were conducted in April and May, 2009, with a few follow-up calls made at later times. Responses were then coded and entered into an Excel file for analysis. A study session was held in mid-May with a number of campus staff and faculty who reviewed preliminary findings with suggestions for further exploration and observations regarding patterns in the results.

For the most part, the profile of the 112 students or parents (63%) who were interviewed does not depart substantially from the study population (see Appendix 1). A variety of demographic categories and other characteristics were examined, e.g., gender, ethnicity, academic college, residency, applying for and being offered financial aid in 2008, low income standing, being an exceptional admit, region of origin, being a first generation college student. The 112 respondents were slightly over-represented by students from the College of Natural Resources and Sciences and under-represented by students from San Diego and those who were disqualified academically. These would appear to be minor differences.

It is important to understand that this study focuses on one cohort at one medium-sized, rural, residential public university. Changes in externalities (e.g., like the economy), variations in the student population, changes in campus policies and programs, etc. will also impact the student experience from year to year.

## Findings

More detailed reporting of the survey results can be found in Appendix 2. A summary of ten primary findings is reported below.

Some of the attrition reflects a natural “stopping out” process.[1] In fact, 25 of the 252 who started as first-time freshmen fall semester, 2006 but did not enroll the following fall were again HSU students in 2008. Thirteen of those who were not enrolled for fall semester, 2008 (the beginning of their third year), were Humboldt students for spring semester, 2009 and 15 (13.4%) of the 112 students surveyed indicated that they aspired to return to Humboldt. Several of the stop-outs participated in non-CSU study abroad or exchange programs. An additional 40 students out of the 178 in the study group, had been academically disqualified and two had been removed through the University disciplinary process. As a result, less than 70% of the study group were eligible to return but did not return to HSU (n= 123). [2]

**1. Leavers Continue Their Education.** Based upon data from 128 of the students, ninety-four (73.4%) indicate that they were enrolled elsewhere with a majority transferring to community college (Table 1). College of the Redwoods was home to 21

Table 1. What Type of Institution Did Students Transfer To?

Institution Type	Percentage
Community college	54.1%
Other CSU	27.0%
Other Public 4-year Institution	10.8%
Other Private 4-year Institution	1.4%
On Exchange	4.1%
Other	2.7%

of the students (roughly half of those attending a community college) and four students reported transferring to both Sacramento State and to California State University, Chico (no single CSU campus or other institution had more than four).

Interestingly, HSU records indicate that only 55 students had requested transcripts. This suggests that frequently institutions either do not require transcripts or students do not provide them.

**2. No Single Reason.** Not surprisingly, there is no single, overriding reason for student departure. Most students articulated multi-faceted explanations for their decision to leave. Four clusters (see Table 2) dominate, however:

- 1) **Money Issues** (Financial/Work/Travel Costs),
- 2) **Academic Performance**,
- 3) **Closer to Home/Homesickness**, and,

4) **Institutional Fit** (HSU Not for Me/Campus Culture/Arcata Too Small/Local Community)

Table 2. Top Reasons for Leaving HSU

Top Reasons for Leaving	1 <sup>st</sup> Most Important Reason	2 <sup>nd</sup> Most Important Reason
<b>Money Issues</b> (Financial Issues/Needed Work/Travel Costs)	14 respondents	16 respondents
<b>Academic Performance</b>	21	8
<b>Closer to Home/Homesickness</b>	14	10
<b>Institutional Fit</b> (HSU Not for Me/Campus Culture)	4	6
<b>Institutional Fit</b> (Arcata Too Small/Local Community)	4	4
<b>Personal Reasons</b>	5	1
<b>International Travel/Study Abroad</b>	5	0
<b>Health</b>	3	2
<b>Family Reasons</b>	2	4
<b>Drugs/Alcohol</b>	0	5
<b>Racism/Racism Off Campus</b>	2	0

**3. Early Indication of Being at Risk for Leaving.** The risk factors for departure tend to be evident early in a student’s time at Humboldt. Nothing appears to be more telling than academic progress – grade point average and units earned. Of the 178 students who did not return for their third year, 78 had GPAs under 2.00. This is just under 44% of those who left the university. Of the 575 who stayed only 46 [8%] had GPAs under 2.0. As first-year students, nearly one third (32.0%) of these 178 students had GPAs below 2.0. This compares with 13.6% (78) of the 575 retained students.

Table 3. Units Earned After Two Years at HSU

Units Earned By May, 08	Those Who Left During or After 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Those Who Stayed
Less than 30 units	31.5%	2.4%
30 - 39 units	20.8%	9.1%
40 – 49 units	17.4%	15.3%
50 – 59 units	14.6%	25.5%
60 -	15.7%	71.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>550</b>

Just as with GPA, units earned appears to be an indicator that a student is at risk of leaving HSU. Although Table 3 reports data from the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, these 178 students tend to struggle to make academic progress in their first year too. (See Table 4)

Table 4. Trouble Shows Up Early: Units Earned After One Year at HSU

Units Earned By May, 07	Those Who Left During or After 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Those Who Stayed
10 units or less	9.6%	.7%
10.5 – 20 units	25.8%	14.0%
20.5 – 30 units	38.2%	39.1%
30.5 units or more	26.4%	46.2%
TOTAL	178	550

**4. Financial Issues.** Almost 30 percent of the respondents indicated that financial factors were moderately or greatly involved in their decision to leave HSU. This was consistent with the large number of students who cited some aspect of finances as being either the most or second most important reason for leaving Humboldt.

The follow-up questions that were asked revealed that three primary financial issues were in play: inability of the family to contribute as much as they had before, a negative change in the student’s personal financial situation, and inability to find work while at HSU.

The most striking data compared the number of these 178 students who received a Financial Aid offer as first-year students with the number who received an offer for fall semester, 2008. (Table 5) This is of special concern because, over a third of these students applied for aid for 2008-09. Interestingly, reduction in financial aid support was not frequently indicated as a moderate or great factor in the decision to leave. In fact, most of the students who reported financial difficulties did not even apply for financial aid in 2008. An audit of these students is underway to better understand this dynamic.

Table 5. Distribution of Financial Aid Offers

	THOSE WHO LEFT HSU	THOSE WHO REMAINED AT HSU
2008 FA Offer – Yes	13 (7.3%)	320 (58.2%)
2008 FA Offer – No	165 (92.7%)	230 (41.8%)
2006 FA Offer – Yes	127 (71.3%)	367 (66.7%)
2006 FA Offer – No	51 (28.7%)	183 (33.3%)

**5. Family Issues.** In addition to Financial and Academic Issues, the third factor that was most frequently mentioned was the desire or need to be closer to home. Nearly one third

Table 6. You Left Because You Wanted To Be Closer to Family/Relatives or Friends

Ethnicity	Not at All	Slightly	Moderately	Greatly
American Indian	6 respondents	--	--	--
Asian/Filipino/Pacific Islander	3	--	--	1
Black	2	3	1	2
Latino/Mexican American	6	--	--	4
Unknown	20	2	3	9
White	27	3	2	10

of the respondents indicated that their desire to be closer to family, relative, or friends moderately or greatly influenced their decision to leave HSU. Twenty-one percent indicated that pressure from family/relatives to be closer to home moderately or greatly influenced their decision to leave.

Not surprisingly, roughly half of those students who left because they wanted to be closer to family/relatives or friends indicated that they also left because family/relatives needed or wanted them to be closer to home. When these responses were examined by ethnicity, the numbers were less meaningful because of the small cell size and large proportion of respondents classified as 'unknown'. See Table 6.

**6. Personal Responsibility.** A significant majority of the students did not feel that HSU was responsible for their departure and indicated that there was little that the University could have done about their decision. For example, over 80 percent of those who expressed disappointment with their HSU academic experience attributed it moderately or greatly to their own poor performance. Similarly, three quarters of the respondents felt that there was nothing HSU could have done that might have helped them stay or better supported them in their experience at HSU.

**“I did poorly overall as a student. The blame is on me.”**

**“No academic reasons ‘outside of myself’. It was my fault.”**

**“I was really lazy.”**

To what extent have the students who left HSU truly invested in their educational experience? As well-established by Pace (1987), application of effort is fundamental to educational success. It is difficult to capture this measure of motivation. However, it may be revealing that there is no difference in the SAT scores of those who stay and those who leave, but there is a difference in High School GPA [3]:

Freshmen Who Return – 3.17 (mean HS GPA)  
Freshmen Who Leave – 3.00 (mean HS GPA)  
Sophomores Who Return – 3.22 (mean HS GPA)  
Sophomores Who Leave – 3.01 (mean HS GPA)

Another indicator may be making the effort to change majors. Of the 178 students who departed at the end of their second year, only 35.4% had changed departments. Of those students who remained 51.8% had changed departments. Similarly, 74% of those who stayed had changed majors (compared with 53.4% of those who left).

Of special interest are undeclared students. Of the 28 students who were still undeclared as of fall 2008, 16 (57.1%) were among the 178 who left HSU at the end of their second year.

7. **Ethnicity.** There are certainly some alarming figures embedded in Table 7 but the small numbers in many cells result in greater variability. That being said, out of 21 American Indians in the initial cohort, only 6 remain (28.6%). Out of 68 blacks, only 26 remain (38.2%). And half of the Latinos have left the university. Although difficult to interpret, a large number of "Female Unknown" students also left during their second year. On the other hand, and more positively, 69.2% of the Mexican Americans remain after two years.

Table 7. Ethnicity By Departure

	<b>Amer. Indian</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Filipino</b>	<b>Latino</b>	<b>Mexican American</b>	<b>Pacific Islander</b>	<b>Unkn</b>	<b>White</b>
<b>Male 2006</b>	10	10	26	5	19	28	2	97	229
<b>Departed 2007</b>	5	4	11	1	6	6	0	21	59
<b>Departed 2008</b>	3	1	3	0	2	5	1	15	35
<b>Remain</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>Female 2006</b>	11	15	42	7	31	50	3	137	258
<b>Departed 2007</b>	4	2	17	2	11	7	0	27	69
<b>Departed 2008</b>	3	2	11	0	6	6	0	41	31
<b>Remain</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>158</b>

Closer examination of Native American and black students to see what impact affiliation with a support program might have is inconclusive. Cohort numbers are small enough that there may be substantial variability.

Table 8. Impact of Special Program Affiliation for Native American & Black Students [4]

	<b>EOP/ITEPP (Native American)</b>	<b>Non EOP/ITEPP (Native American)</b>	<b>EOP (black)</b>	<b>Non EOP (black)</b>
FTF 2006	8	13	28	38
Departed First Year	2	7	9	19
Departed Second Year	4	3	9	5
Enrolled Fall, 2008	3	3	11	15

While the results of this survey provide no definitive answers (again because of small numbers), there is some indication (consistent with other campus studies) that campus and community climate are factors for black students. See Appendix 2. As one black student commented, "The campus was fine but you can't go into town." Several black students cited a specific incident that clearly resonated through the entire black student population.

**8. Who Do Students Talk To?** Virtually all students reported talking to family regarding their decision to leave HSU. The highest rated *campus* connection (about one third of departing students) was their ‘advisor’. The important role that families play in this process reinforces the value of insuring that parents also understand the campus resources available to students.

It is not surprising that the decision to leave HSU is often made well before the actual departure. Almost 28 percent of the students indicated that they made their decision to leave during their first or second semester even though they did not act on that decision for more than a year. Four out of ten decided during or after spring semester, 2008. For most, it appears that the decision to leave receives consideration over time. What is not as clear is just how HSU might insert itself earlier in the process. [5]

**9. Non-factors.** Of equal interest are factors that did not emerge as salient in this study: gender, being from out-of-state, region of origin, SAT scores, academic goals when coming to HSU, weather, difficulty in getting classes, ease or challenge of classes, concerns about quality of faculty, and concerns about the value of college.

**10. Generally Positive About HSU.** Even though one would expect the study population to have more negative perceptions of HSU, three quarters of the students assessed their entire HSU educational experience as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. Similarly, when asked to rate their relationships with students, faculty, and staff, student participants were very positive (89.5% positive for students, 83.5% for faculty, and 81.2% for staff and administrative personnel). Although the NSSE respondents rated their overall HSU experience slightly higher, they were actually less positive about their

fellow students, faculty, staff and administrators than the students who left the University. This may also be reflected in their general reluctance to hold the institution responsible for their decision to leave.

**“I love the school. It just wasn’t working out for me at the time.”**

**“Being at a UC now, I realize HSU’s redeeming qualities.”**

### Conclusion

Why do these students stay a second year before leaving? Higher education in general and HSU in particular represents a major investment of time and money. Students come with the intent of staying and succeeding. Leaving typically means uprooting and leaving friends (positive student relationships) and beginning again elsewhere (might explain why so many stay at the College of the Redwoods).

A decision to leave an institution if the experience is unequivocally negative tends to be relatively easy. As is often the case, if there is some good to balance the bad as appears to be the case with HSU, the choice to leave is more difficult. Unfortunately, the sophomore year tends to lack the excitement and newness of the first year and precedes immersion in major coursework (Lemons and Richmond, 1987; Wilder, 1993; Graunke

and Woosley, 2005). *It may be that Humboldt is not so much providing reasons for students to leave but not providing them with reasons to stay.*

Many universities have implemented programs in response to the ‘sophomore slump’ (as diverse as University of Central Arkansas, Minnesota State University at Mankato, Sacred Heart University). While this may be a difficult time for Humboldt State to consider such initiatives, there are five recommendations I would strongly advocate (reported in order of impact).

## **Recommendations**

**Systematic Early Identification of At-Risk Students and Follow-up.** The importance of early identification of students who are at-risk is always identified as a best practice in retention literature (Seidman, 2005). Focus the limited resources available on those students most likely to leave. Given the paucity of available resources and the importance of intervention, I might suggest modifying the existing Freshman Interest Group (FIG) program. **Require** all freshmen whose academic performance is poor (under 2.0) following their first semester (and continuing through the fall semester of their second year as long as their GPA remains below a 2.0) and/or units earned low (less than 20 by the end of their first year) to take a 1-unit class. This class would incorporate some manner of assessment, intrusive advising, and an individualized action plan (e.g., career and major planning for the undecided student or the student considering a major change; tutoring and study skills for those struggling to master; etc.).

If a current student requests a transcript be sent to another institution or does not apply for financial aid by a specific date or withdraws during a term, there should be a personal call made to that student as quickly as possible. Ideally, this call would be made by someone who has an existing relationship with the student (e.g., academic advisor, coach). Follow-up, which often involves multiple calls or in-person contact, is critical.

We know that students who have not selected a major by the end of their second year are at risk for leaving. There needs to be some manner of systematic intervention required by the end of the third semester for these students. This could range from Advising Center follow-up with each individual to a required class focusing on major choice (see above).

By far, the most important campus contact for these students is their academic advisor. It is very important that the advisor have a personal relationship with the student. Over the years, a number of recommendations have been made regarding the improvement of advising. These data would support the value of making continued efforts to strengthen advising for lower division undergraduates. Whether the intervention is a class targeting students who are not making adequate academic progress or augmented advising, it must be intrusive and continuous (Seidman, 2005).

**Use the Budget Crisis as an Opportunity to Increase Admissions Selectivity and Emphasize Fit.** Use this opportunity to increase selectivity at the time of admission. No factor has a greater impact on retention than admissions selectivity (ACT, 2009).

By fall semester, 2008, 55 percent of the 317 students who were admitted by exception as first-time freshmen in 2006 had left HSU (which compares with 38.6% of regular admits). Similarly, students with English and math remediation obligations are also more likely to leave HSU. As detailed in Table 9, by the end of their second year at HSU no category of remedial student is retained at a rate above the mean rate of 58.7%.

Table 9. Retention Rate of Students with Remedial English and/or Math Obligations

	Students with 1 Semester of English Remediation	Students with 2 Semesters of English Remediation	Students with 1 Semester of Math Remediation	Students with 2 Semesters of Math Remediation
	50.8% of 238 remain	47.7% of 86 remain	57.2% of 138 remain	47.9% of 240 remain
Students with 1 Semester of English Remediation			48.9% of 47 remain	44.7% of 85 remain
Students with 2 Semesters of English Remediation			53.8 % of 13 remain	44.3% of 61 remain

**Give Sophomores A Reason to Stay.** A number of colleges and universities across the country have recognized the problem of the ‘sophomore slump’ and worked to respond. In some cases they have packaged existing campus programs (Minnesota State University Mankato - <https://lib.mnsu.edu/students/sophomores/>) and promoted them for sophomores (e.g., Sophomore Jump, Sophomore Connection). Roosevelt University, like many other institutions with sophomore-focused initiatives, emphasizes study abroad, internship, and service opportunities and works to connect second-year students with these opportunities as quickly as possible. In other cases, special programs have been designed specifically for second year students. Clemson University has established a Sophomore Year Experience Program that packages some existing programs and unique offerings (e.g., a first-of-the-year barbeque, a faculty-student dinner). Other institutions, like Emory University, emphasize residential programs and opportunities through campus housing. Please refer to the following url for a more comprehensive listing of institutions with sophomore programs:

<http://www.sc.edu/fye/resources/soph/school.html>

In the case of HSU, it seems that the opportunity to package and promote existing resources would make the most economic sense.

**Convert Drop outs to Stop outs.** HSU should strive to maximize the proportion of leavers who depart with the intent of returning. More could be done to convert drop outs to stop outs beyond the existing Educational Leave option and the “call back” program.

- Returning should be made as simple as reasonably possible and the process widely understood.
- Could the current one-year limit on Educational Leave (with an additional year possible in “special circumstances”) be more open-ended without creating problems for the University?
- Currently students on Educational Leave receive re-enrollment information via e-mail near the conclusion of the leave period. Establish a more elaborate and systematic communication plan with students who take Educational Leave or withdraw, not unlike currently exists for prospects. For example, as soon as a student withdraws they would begin receiving periodic e-mail messages about upcoming academic deadlines, have an opportunity to participate in an on-line chat about re-enrolling, receive updates about new campus programs or developments, be invited to attend a sporting event, be encouraged to utilize the Advising Center. At some point, students who withdraw would receive a follow-up phone call (ideally from an advisor or coach that has some on-going relationship with the individual). It is important that HSU maximize the feeling these students would have of being wanted and minimize the number of ‘hoops’ they would need to jump through to continue their education at HSU.
- Treat departed students as a part of the HSU family. As this study has demonstrated, most students leave with positive feelings about their HSU experience. Not only do they have the potential to remain ambassadors for the institution, but they can be made to feel welcome to return.

**Involve Families in the University Life.** The reality is that families and parents are ever more involved in the education of their sons and daughters (Daniels and Savage, 2008; Wartman and Savage, 2008; Carney-Hall, 2008). Facilitated by cell phones and enabled by today’s smaller families, this trend is destined to continue. Families *can* be important allies in efforts to intervene with students.

Over the past decade, HSU has increasingly programmed for families. Beginning with receptions coordinated by the Admissions Office, continuing with Family Orientation, Family Weekend, the parent list serve, the Parent Newsletters and Handbook, Humboldt has worked to integrate families into university life. The results of this study have reinforced the essential role that families play in, among other things, the decision to leave HSU. Since students do not often talk with University personnel until they have already made their plans, it seems that ensuring that families have complete information about the HSU services, support, and options available for students struggling with some aspect of campus or academic life. Possibilities include: Articles in the fall parent newsletter, entries on the list serve, including a section in the Parent Handbook addressing, “What to say to your son or daughter if they are thinking about leaving school?”, reaching out to the families of first-generation college students, etc.

## Additional Research Questions

1. A disproportionate number of College of Professional Studies and All University students who left the University were first generation students. Additional focused study would be required to understand these data. It would be appropriate to begin by examining retention data from other years to see if this is an isolated occurrence or part of a pattern. Are there plausible explanations?
2. Who are the students who identify their ethnicity as 'unknown'? This mystery assumed more significance when the 'female unknown' group experienced such an unusually high rate of attrition after their second year. Students who identified as 'unknown' expressed some concerns with campus and community culture but it is difficult to design a response without knowing more about who they are.
3. There is a limited understanding of the stop out phenomenon. How does HSU compare with other CSU campuses or other peer institutions?
4. The audit of financial aid records of a proportion of this study population needs to be completed. Why the dramatic decline in both application for and receipt of financial aid packages? What is the dynamic at play and what, if anything, can be done about it?
5. Qualitative studies generally involve small numbers. It is often tempting to over-reach and generalize. There is some useful information imbedded in these results from students of color but the 'cells' tend to be small. In most cases, more study will be required.

### Acknowledgments:

Although many people contributed significantly to this study, I would especially like to thank Ward Headstrom for his support. Without Ward's thorough knowledge of the University data base and his patient willingness to respond to my many questions, this project would not have been possible.

While several people made calls and conducted surveys, Sheila Pierre tenaciously pursued the students in the sample and completed the vast majority of the surveys. Sheila played a critical role in the success of this study. It is difficult to appreciate the challenge involved in contacting these students.

### Notes:

[1] I spoke with Sutee Sujitparapitaya, Associate Vice President for Institutional Research at San Jose State University, regarding their stop-out rates. Sutee responded, "For SJSU, our 1<sup>st</sup> year attrition had been 20 – 25%. Of those, only 1 – 3% returned a year later. However, 12 – 17% returned during a 5 year period." In a study of students who left CSU Bakersfield Winter term, 2006, VanGilder and Berri (2006) found that 23% of the undergraduates returned for Spring term, 2006. I followed up with Philip

Garcia, Senior Director of Analytic Studies at the CSU Chancellor's Office on July 13, 2009. He replied as follows: "*Sorry, computing stop-out rates is not part our regular production schedule. Long ago, we did look at stop outs among new first-time freshmen. Every campus had them, and the 3rd semester and 9th semester were the modal terms for leaving the university. Like many internal reports, the electronic copy was archived then lost when the office shifted from a MAC environment to a IBM environment.*" I also spoke with Sherry Woosley, who oversees Ball State's annual Withdrawing Student Survey who affirmed the paucity of true stop-out information. More effort will be required to secure comparable data for HSU to assess stop-out rates.

[2] Comparisons were made between the 40 students who were academically disqualified and the 138 students who were still academically eligible to return. Sixty percent of the disqualified students were enrolled in the College of Natural Resources and Sciences (versus 47 percent of the total study population), 70 percent were female (versus 59% of all 178 in the study population), and half were exceptional admits (versus 35% of the study population). Interestingly, over 90% were enrolled elsewhere (virtually all in a community college).

[3] This analysis of high school GPA and SAT scores of those who stay and those who leave was conducted by Rick Vrem.

[4] These numbers do not fully capture the stop-out activity of these students. For example, one of the Native American students who did not enroll fall 2007 did return spring, 2009. However, another Native American student did not return that same term. There was some similar movement among black students. Two of those who did not return fall 2007 returned the following year. Since that time, one of them left along with five others prior to census spring semester, 2009.

[5] When asked why they did not "talk with a staff or faculty member at HSU", the most common response was that "I had already made up my mind."

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**Appendix 1.**  
Interview Respondents vs. Study Population

Characteristic	Category	Respondents (n=112)	Study Population (n= 178)
Gender	Female	59.8%	59.0%
	Male	40.2%	41.0%
Ethnicity	Native American	6.3%	3.9%
	Latino/Mexican-American	9.0%	10.7%
	Asian	4.5%	2.9%
	Black	7.1%	7.9%
	White	41.1%	42.1%
College	Unknown	32.1%	32.6%
	All University	12.5%	15.2%
	Science and Natural Resources	50.9%	47.2%
	Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences	25%	24.2%
California Residents	Professional Studies	11.6%	13.5%
		90.2%	93.3%
Academic Standing	Disqualified	17.0%	22.5%
Low Income '08	Low Income	40.2%	43.3%
Exceptional Admits	Classified as disadvantaged and other exceptional admits	36.6%	35.4%
Region	Bay Area	22.3%	21.9%
	Central CA	8.0%	8.4%
	Local	17.9%	14.0%
	Los Angeles	25%	24.7%
	Northern CA	14.3%	12.9%
	San Diego	3.6%	9.0%
	Foreign	0%	.6%
First Generation	Out of State	8.9%	8.4%
		50.9%	52.8%
	Applied for Financial Aid '08	33.9%	34.3%
	Rec'd Financial Aid Offer '08	11.6%	8.4%
	Enrolled at HSU Spring, '08	10.7%	7.3%

## Appendix 2.

### Results Sophomore To Junior Retention Study – Class of Fall, 2006

Reported here are results generally not included in the body of the report. This is not intended to be an exhaustive reporting of all analysis or potential analysis.

1. There are 178 students who left HSU after completing their first year and beginning their second year at HSU.

2. 980 students began in this cohort in Fall, 2006. By Fall, 2007 252 had left HSU (25.7%). By Fall 2008 an additional 178 had departed (24.5% of the cohort who started Fall 2007). By Fall 2008, 58.7% of the original cohort remained at HSU.

	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008
Attending HSU	980	728	550 (+25 FTF stop-outs who returned to HSU)
Retention as % of original cohort		74.3%	58.7%

3. **ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.** Nearly 40 percent of the respondents indicated that disappointment with their overall academic experience contributed moderately or greatly to their decision to leave HSU. The follow-up questions reveal that their disappointment was primarily related to their displeasure with their own academic performance. It was not an issue of HSU not offering their major or having difficulty getting classes or finding the courses too difficult or easy or with the quality of the faculty.

Survey Item	Affected decision to leave HSU			
	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Greatly
Disappointed with the quality of the faculty	52.5%	22.5%	10%	12.5%
Courses were not challenging	86.5%	2.7%	8.1%	2.7%
Courses too difficult	87.5%	2.5%	7.5%	2.5%
Experienced trouble getting the courses you needed	78.4%	5.4%	8.1%	8.1%
Major not offered by HSU	95%	2.5%	--	2.5%
You were displeased with your own academic performance	12.8%	5.1%	17.9%	64.1%
	Fourteen of the fifteen DQ'd students surveyed responded moderately or greatly to this question			

4. **STOPPING OUT.** Another phenomenon at play is 'stopping out', that is, temporarily leaving the university. Thirteen of the 178 returned for the Spring Semester, 2009. Another 33 completed formal Educational Leave papers.

Educational Leave does appear to be an indicator of risk. For example, of the 33 students in this cohort who took Educational Leave beginning fall, 2007, only 10 were enrolled for fall, 2008. [Not surprisingly, students who Withdrew were even less likely to return. 23 students in this cohort withdrew during Fall, 2008. Of those 23, three attended HSU during spring, 2009 and four were on Leave for spring, 2009.]

55 of the 178 students (30.9%) requested transcripts (compared with only 12.9% of those who stayed).

5. **FIRST GENERATION.** Another demographic characteristic of leavers is being disproportionately a first generation college student. [We do not have information on 3 individuals in the cohort.]

	Second Year Students Who Did Not Return	All FTF in the 2006 Cohort
First Generation	54.0%	46.3%
Not First Generation	46.0%	53.7%

College	Not First Generation		First Generation		Unknown	
	Proportion Who Left After 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Proportion in Original Cohort	Proportion Who Left After 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Proportion in Original Cohort	Proportion Who Left After 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Proportion in Original Cohort
All University	40.7%	54.4%	55.6%	40.6%	3.7%	5.0%
AHSS	51.2%	59.8%	46.5%	37.0%	2.3%	3.2%
NRS	48.8%	48.8%	48.8%	48.6%	2.4%	2.7%
PS	25.0%	43.7%	75.0%	52.1%	0%	4.2%

6. **GENDER.** This is an interesting given HSU freshmen to sophomore retention data over the years. 59.0% of the students who left after their second year were female. After the first year, 57.4% of the cohort remaining at HSU were female so it is not overly disproportionate. But, for every year that we have measured freshmen to sophomore retention at HSU, men have departed at a substantially higher rate than females (which was the case with this cohort too; 27.9% of the males left after their first year versus 24.0% of the females).

7. **OUT OF STATE.** This does not appear to be correlated with departure. Only 8 WUE students (42 remained) and only 2 were from out of state (non-WUE) were among the 178 leavers. However, 12 of 30 non-WUE students did leave after their first year (40%) and the total of all out-of-state students remaining after two years was just slightly above the retention rate for the total cohort.

8. **ETHNICITY.** Responses to three campus climate questions follow:

**You Left Because You Felt Racial or Ethnic Tension**

	Not At All	Slightly	Moderately	Greatly
American Indian	3 respondents	1	1	-
Black	2 respondents	2	1	3
Asian/Pacific Islander	3 respondents	1		
Latino/Mexican	7 respondents	3		
American				
White	36 respondents	2		1
Unknown	23 respondents	8	1	2

**You Left Because You Were Disappointed With the Off-Campus Community**

	Not At All	Slightly	Moderately	Greatly
American Indian	3 respondents	2	1	-
Black	3 respondents		2	3
Asian/Pacific Islander	2 respondents	2		
Latino/Mexican	5 respondents	2		3
American				
White	29 respondents	2	6	4
Unknown	21 respondents	2	5	7

**You Left Because You Were Disappointed With the Quality of Campus and Student Life**

	Not At All	Slightly	Moderately	Greatly
American Indian	2 respondents	3	1	-
Black	5 respondents	1	1	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	1 respondent	2	1	
Latino/Mexican	5 respondents	2	1	2
American				
White	29 respondents	4	4	5
Unknown	17 respondents	5	7	5

9. **FINANCIAL ISSUES.** Nearly 30 percent of those surveyed indicated that financial factors moderately or greatly affected their decision not to enroll at HSU last fall semester. Of those who left HSU after their second year, 44% were classified as 'Low Income' versus only 39.2% of those remaining in school. For respondents who indicated that financial factors either moderately or greatly impacted their decision to leave HSU, they responded to the follow-up questions as follows:

Survey Item	Affected decision to leave HSU			
	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Greatly
The financial aid you received was not as much as you had expected	67.7%	9.7%	16.1%	6.5%
Your family was unable to contribute as much toward the cost of your education this year	29.0%	22.6%	6.5%	41.9%
Your personal financial situation changed for the worse (e.g., shortage of summer	32.3%	6.5%	10.1%	49.3%

jobs, unexpected expenses)				
You were unable to get a job while at HSU	36.7%	16.7%	13.3%	33.3%
You did not budget your money correctly	80%	10%	--	10%
Employment prospects for a degree/the major you had chosen are currently poor	90%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%

**10. REGION OF ORIGIN.** It is difficult to draw any conclusions regarding the influence of where one comes from.

Region	% in 2006 Cohort	% of total of those who left in 2008	% of total of those who remained in 2008
Bay Area	18.1%	21.9%	17.8%
Central California	12.0%	8.4%	13.8%
Foreign	.5%	.6%	.7%
Local	12.1%	14.0%	11.8%
Los Angeles	25.3%	24.7%	24.2%
Northern California	13.0%	12.9%	12.7%
Out of State	11.9%	8.4%	12.2%
San Diego	7.0%	9.0%	6.7%

**11. JUDICIAL HISTORY.** 26 students or 14.6% of the Study Group have had significant judicial history with the University.

**12. CAMPUS LIFE AND COMMUNITY CLIMATE.** Although there were many different comments, the following five represent the variety received:

*“I expected HSU and Arcata to be different. I felt some racial tension in Arcata.”*

*“The community was too small too slow.”*

*“The environment is just not the same as LA”*

*“I didn’t fit. The drug culture was unpleasant.”*

*“More of a city guy.”*

Survey Item	Affected decision to leave HSU			
	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Greatly
You just wanted to do something other than go to college	82.9%	6.7%	7.6%	2.9%
You were uncertain about the value of a college education	89.5%	8.6%	1.0%	1.0%
You were disappointed with the quality of campus and student life	57.1%	17.1%	13.3%	12.4%
You were disappointed with the off-campus community	61.0%	9.5%	13.3%	16.2%
You wanted to be closer to friends or family/relatives	61.0%	7.6%	6.7%	24.8%
Your family/relatives needed or wanted you to be closer to home	66.3%	12.5%	5.8%	15.4%
You felt racial or ethnic tension	73.3%	17.8%	3.0%	5.9%
The lack of availability of on-campus housing past your first year	91.2%	2.0%	2.9%	3.9%

You felt alone or isolated	67.4%	16.8%	6.3%	9.5%
You experienced health or emotional issues	81.0%	6.7%	3.8%	8.6%
You experienced conflict with your roommate(s)	89.2%	3.8%	1.0%	5.9%

### 13. NSSE QUESTIONS.

<b>Relationships with other HSU students</b>							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Respondents	Unfriendly Unsupportive				Friendly Supportive		
1 <sup>st</sup> Yr NSSE Students 2008	2%	2%	6%	10%	23%	30%	27%
Senior NSSE Students 2008	3%	3%	6%	11%	20%	28%	29%
Exit Survey Respondents	-	1.0%	2.9%	6.7%	26.7%	35.2%	27.6%
<b>Relationships with faculty members</b>							
1 <sup>st</sup> Year NSSE Students 2008	1%	3%	3%	14%	23%	34%	22%
Senior NSSE Students 2008	2%	2%	5%	13%	21%	27%	30%
Exit Survey Respondents	-	4.9%	3.9%	7.8%	21.4%	44.7%	17.5%
<b>Relationships with staff and administrative personnel</b>							
1 <sup>st</sup> Year NSSE Students 2008	6%	6%	11%	21%	25%	17%	14%
Senior NSSE Students 2008	10%	15%	12%	20%	16%	14%	12%
Exit Survey Respondents	-	5.8%	7.8%	4.9%	27.2%	43.7%	10.7%

#### How would you evaluate your entire education experience at HSU?

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
1 <sup>st</sup> Year NSSE Students 2008	2%	11%	55%	31%
Senior NSSE Students 2008	4%	14%	50%	32%
Exit Survey Respondents	2.0%	23.5%	54.9%	19.6%