

PORTERVILLE COLLEGE

ALTERNATIVE CALENDAR SURVEY

Spring 2002

Report on Survey Results

The Porterville College Alternative Calendar Committee is seeking input from various campus constituencies to make a decision regarding a possible change from an 18-week semester to a 16-week one. In order to gather information from students, a survey was conducted early in the Spring 2002 semester. This report presents the findings of that survey.

A 28-question survey instrument was designed for use in the spring of 2002. This instrument is duplicated in this report as an Appendix which begins on page 12. The Alternative Calendar Committee chose to survey classes meeting on Tuesdays at 10 AM, 2 PM and 7PM in order to obtain information from students who attend at a variety of times. We conducted the survey during the second week of the semester to pick up students who might normally drop out of classes due to scheduling conflicts. The survey instrument was pilot-tested in one class during the fall 2001 semester. A total of 14 classes were surveyed on January 22nd, 2002, including 374 students.¹

The issues involved in changing the college calendar are complex and it would be impossible for students to fully understand the implications of the decision in a brief quantitative survey. Therefore, rather than simply asking students about their calendar preference, the committee chose to use the survey to gather information from students on the various aspects of the decision that would affect them. Thus, the survey could not provide a definitive answer regarding the students' needs and desires regarding a calendar change. Instead, it gives us supporting information on several aspects of students' lives that affect the calendar decision. Much of this information may be useful in the future in other college decision-making.

The survey covered five main topics: demographics, obstacles to class attendance, days and times classes are offered, summer and winter classes, and class and semester preferences. Data for each of these is displayed in the pages below in graphical form.

¹ These totals include the pilot test, conducted late in the Fall 2001 semester. Because no problems were found with the survey instrument, data from students who participated in the pilot test were also included in the results discussed here.

Results

We collected four pieces of demographic information: gender, age, ethnicity, and the class meeting time. The students surveyed were similar to the college population in terms of gender. However, the surveyed students tended to be somewhat younger and were more likely to be Hispanic than the college population. Detailed information on the college's class attendance distribution are not immediately available, but morning, afternoon, and evening classes were all well represented.

Students were asked about five possible factors which might prove to be obstacles to attending class. These included family responsibilities, work schedule, child care, course schedule, and transportation. The most common obstacles students face are work schedules and course schedules, both of which were problems for more than half of the students surveyed. Family responsibilities also was an obstacle for almost half of the students. Child care and transportation are problems for just over one in five students surveyed.

About half of the survey questions dealt with the days and times when classes are offered. In particular, the committee was interested in learning the extent to which students are willing to take classes in early mornings, afternoons, evenings, and in block schedules on Fridays and Saturdays. Students were asked how likely they would be to attend a class offered at various times. Willingness to attend classes varied greatly depending on the day and time offered, but the most significant finding is that almost any time suggested finds a substantial number of students willing to attend classes. The least popular class time was 6:00 AM, yet even for this time, 18.2% of students indicated that they were "very likely" or "likely" to take a class offered at that time. Projected over the entire student population, at least 800 students would be willing to take 6:00 AM classes.

Students were asked if they would be more likely to take summer classes if more were offered and about their likelihood of taking classes during a winter intercession, which could possibly be added if a calendar change is made. The respondents were very much in favor of more summer classes. More than 70% said they would be more likely to take summer classes if more were offered, while only 20% said they would not. The remaining 10 percent were already taking summer classes. Sixty percent of students said they would be "very likely" or "likely" to take classes during a winter intercession.

Next, students were asked to give their preference between a class that meets three times per week for 62 minutes and a class that meets twice per week for 85 minutes.² Over 70 percent of students prefer that classes meet two days per week. Also, students were asked their preference between an 18 week semester in which 3-unit classes meet for 3 hours per week (the current situation) and a 16 week semester in which 3-unit classes meet for 3 hours and 23 minutes per week. Sixty-two percent of the students surveyed preferred a 16-week schedule.

² The class times asked here assume a change to a 16-week calendar. Currently, most 3-unit classes meet for 50 minutes 3 times per week or for 80 minutes twice per week. These classes meet for 18 weeks each semester.

Finally, students were asked about their preferences regarding semester starting and ending dates. Students were asked to choose between an early fall semester that begins in mid-August and ends in mid-December and a later starting fall semester in which classes begin in early September and end a few days before Christmas. Similarly, students were asked to choose between an early starting spring semester which begins in early January and ends in early May and a later starting spring semester which begins in early February and ends in early June. In both cases, more than 70 percent of students prefer the earlier starting semester. This percentage was slightly higher for spring than for fall.

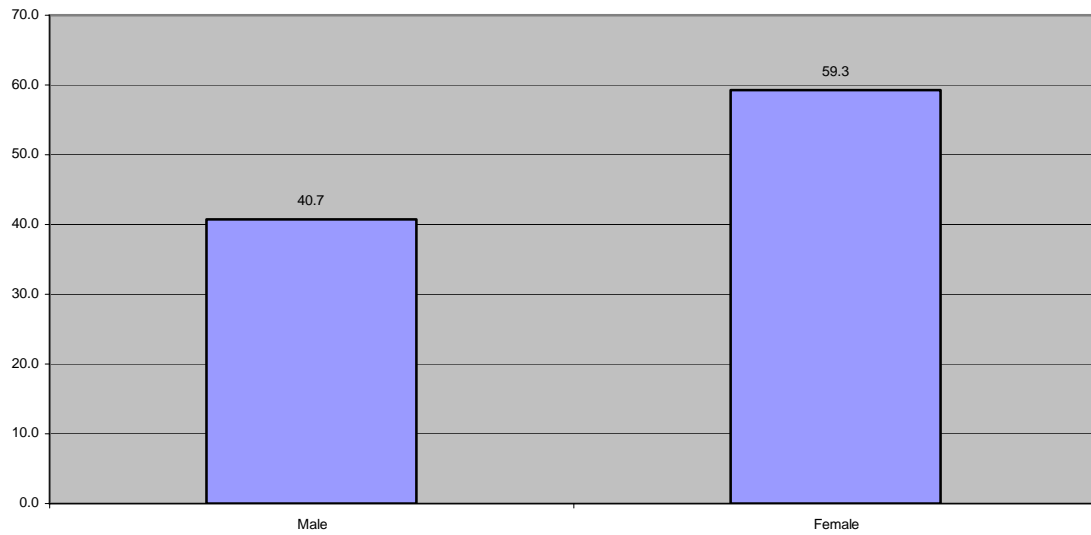
These results, along with input from other campus and community groups, will be used to make decisions regarding the type of calendar Porterville College will offer in upcoming years. For more information on the calendar change, contact Dr. Ronald Glahn, co-chair of the Alternative Calendar Committee (rghahn@pc.cc.ca.us). For more information on the student survey, contact Michael Carley, Director of Institutional Research (mcarley@pc.cc.ca.us).

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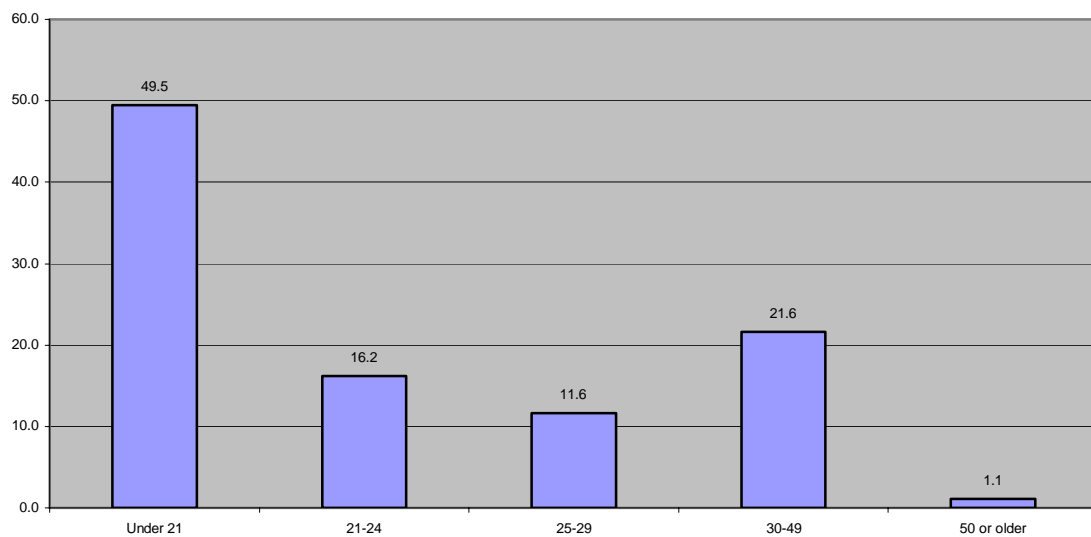
Demographics

Chart 1: Percentage of students by gender



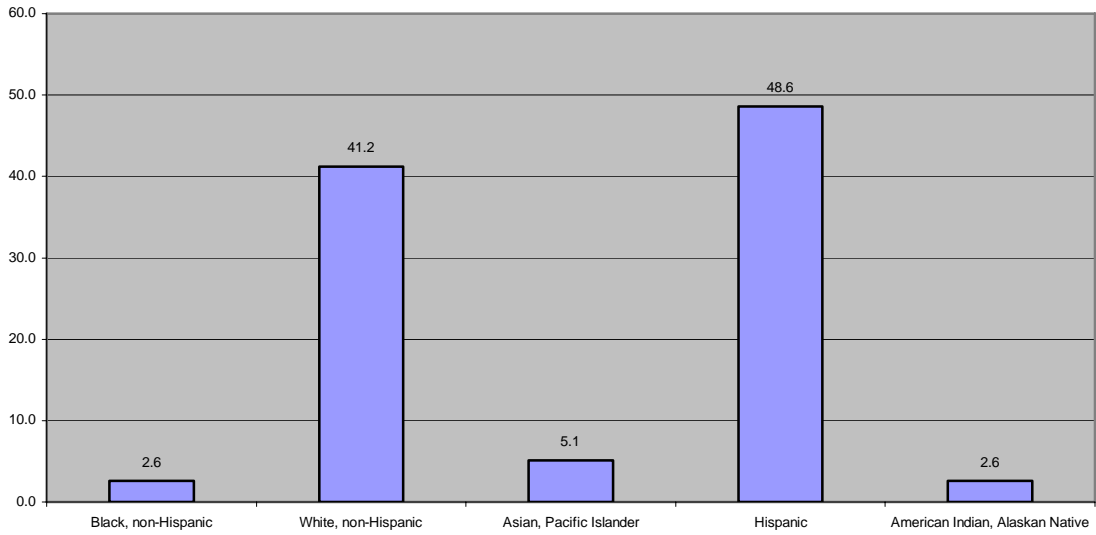
Notes: N=366.

Chart 2: Percentage of students by age



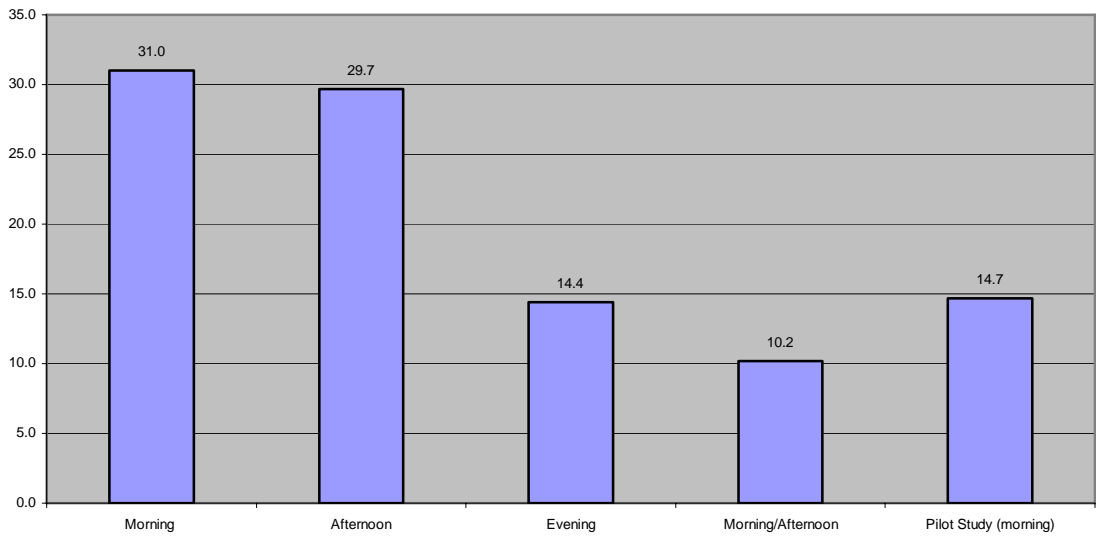
Notes: N=370.

Chart 3: Percentage of students by ethnicity



Note: N=352.

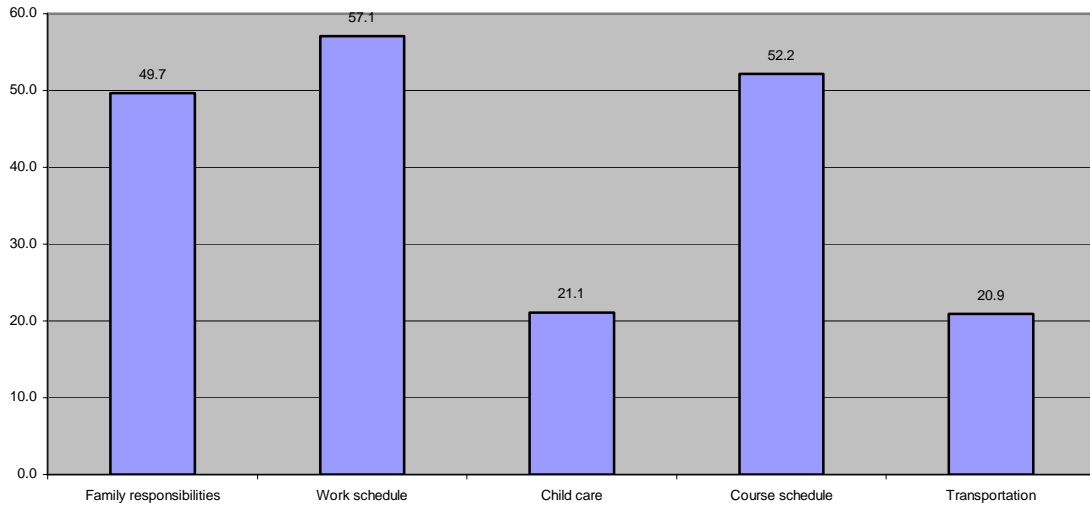
Chart 4: Percentage of students by class meeting time



Notes: N=374.

Obstacles to Attending Class

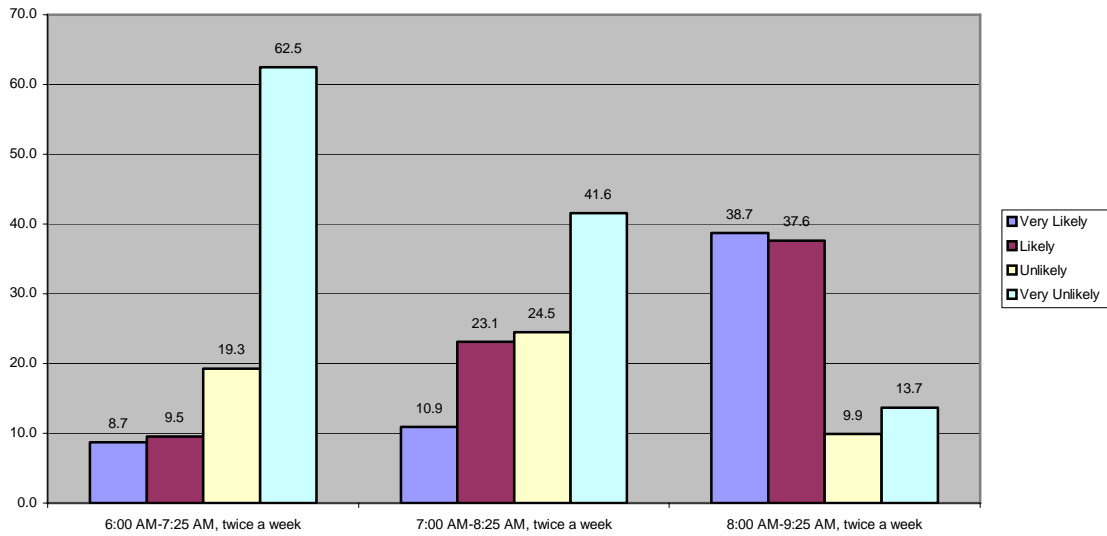
Chart 5: Percentage of students who have encountered specific obstacles to class attendance



Notes: N=370 for family responsibilities, 373 for work schedule, 369 for child care, 368 for course schedule, and 369 for transportation.

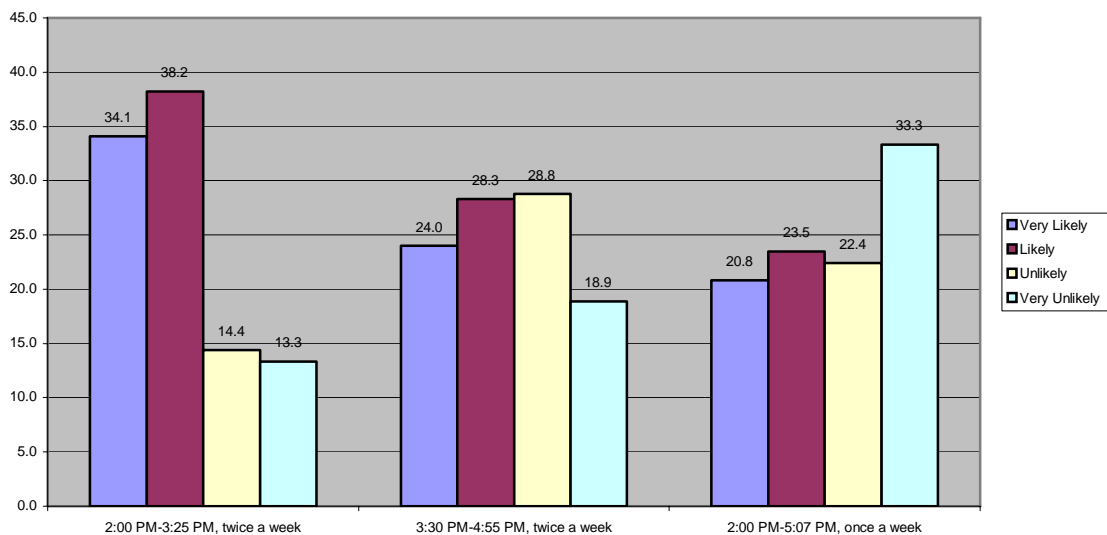
Days and Times Classes are Offered

Chart 6: Student likelihood of taking morning classes



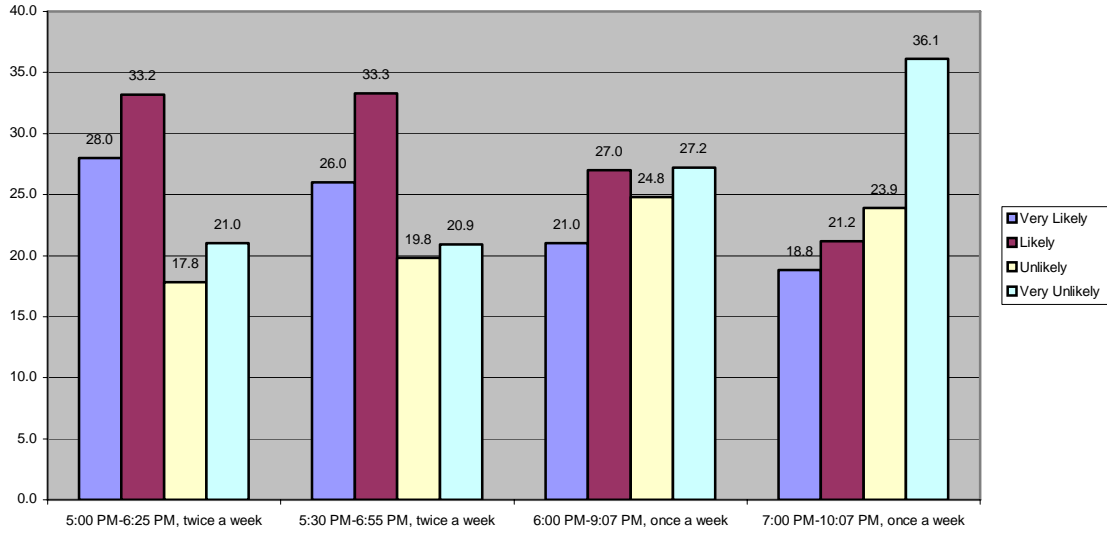
Notes: N=368 for 6:00 and 7:00 classes and 372 for 8:00 classes.

Chart 7: Student likelihood of taking afternoon classes



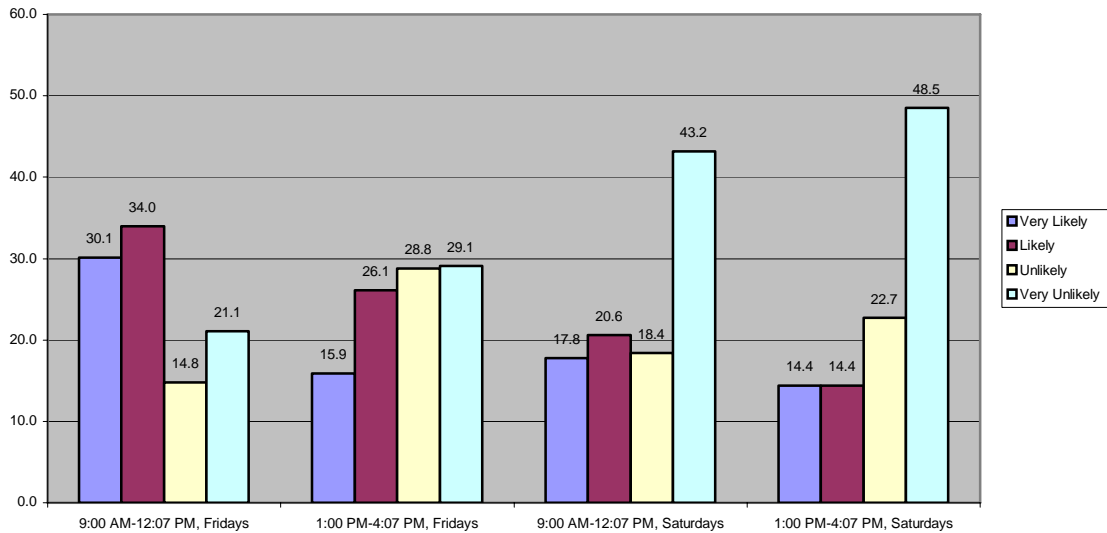
Notes: N=369 for 2:00, twice a week classes 371 for 3:30 classes, and 366 for 2:00, once a week classes.

Chart 8: Student likelihood of taking evening classes



Notes: N=371 for 5:00 classes, 369 for 5:30 classes, 367 for 6:00 classes, and 368 for 7:00 classes.

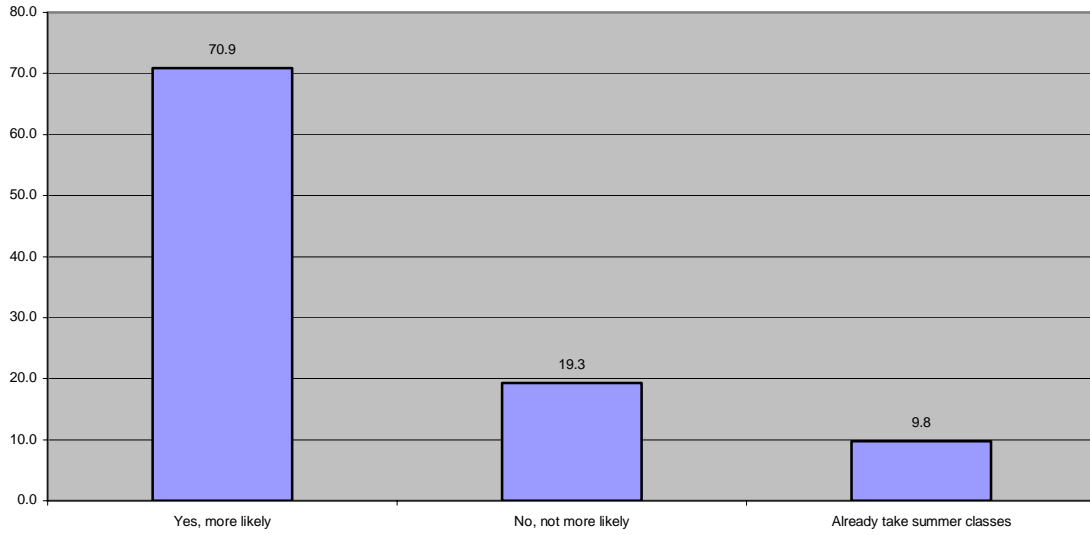
Chart 9: Student likelihood of taking Friday and Saturday classes



Notes: N=365 for Friday, 9:00 AM classes, 364 for Friday 1:00 classes, 359 for Saturday 9:00 AM classes, and 361 for Saturday, 1:00 classes.

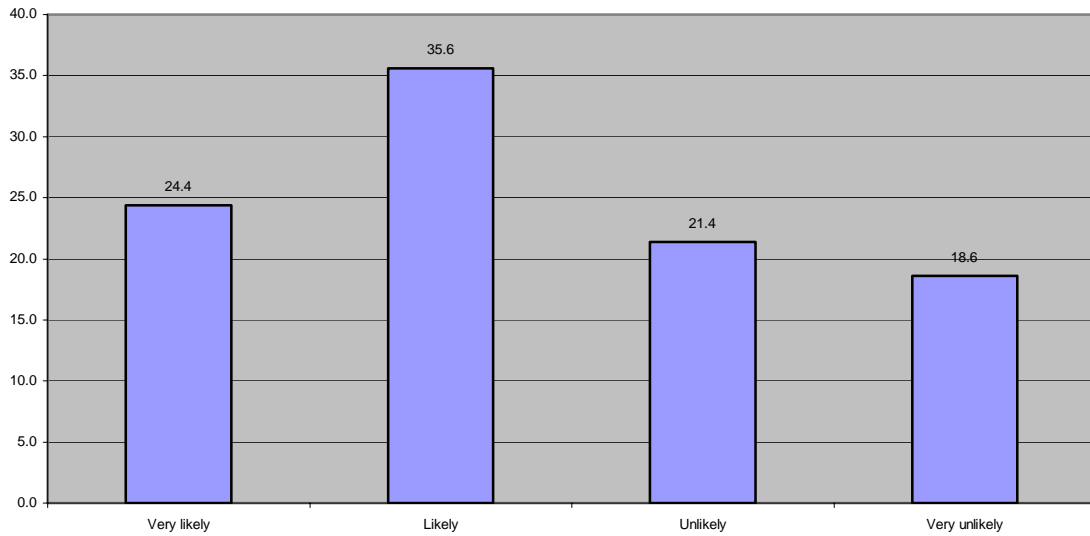
Summer and Winter Classes

Chart 10: Student likelihood of taking more summer classes if more were offered



Notes: N=368.

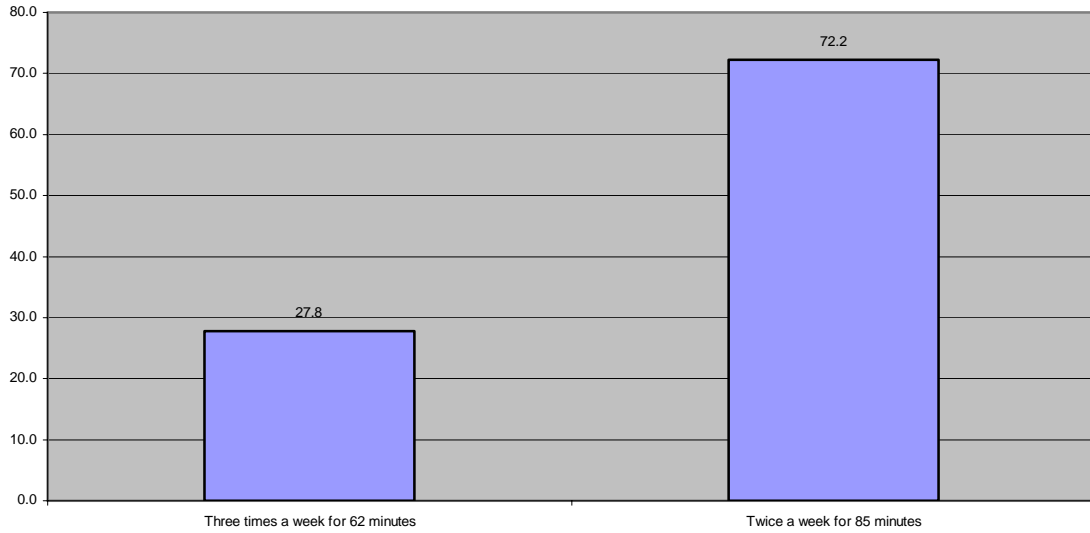
Chart 11: Student likelihood of taking winter intercession classes if offered



Notes: N=365

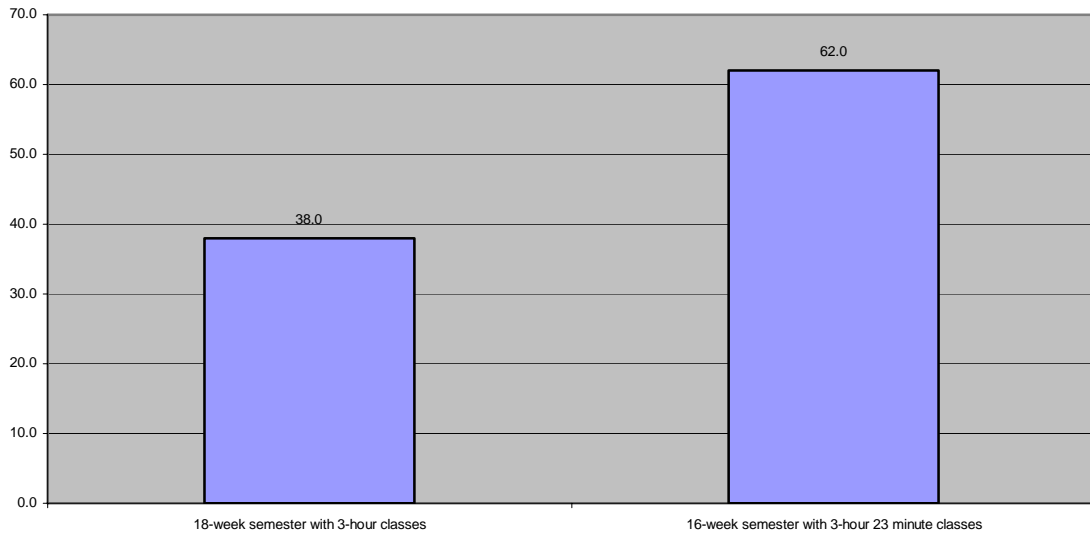
Class and Semester Preferences

Chart 12: Student preferences for class length and sessions per week



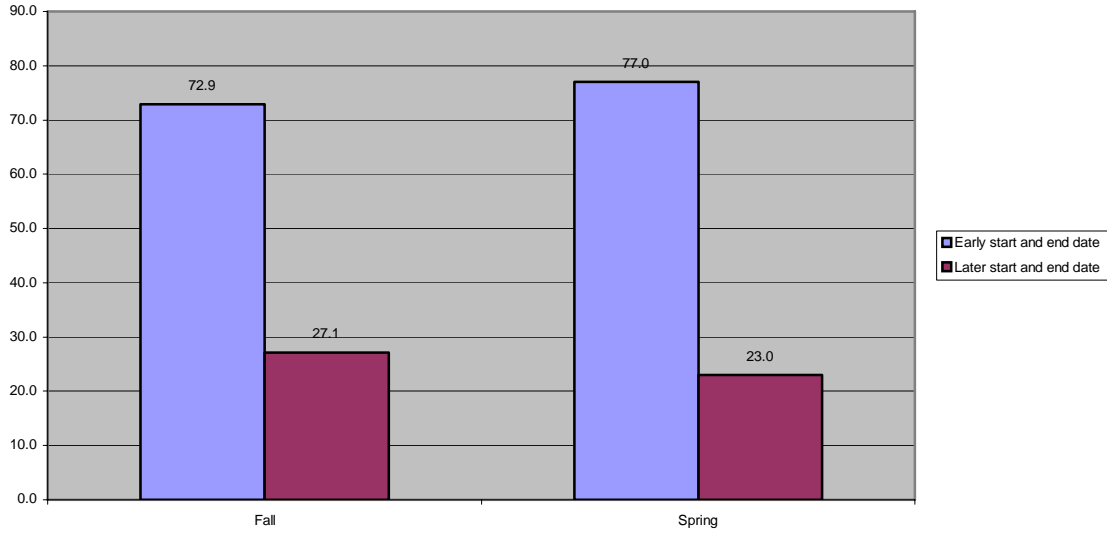
Notes: N=367.

Chart 13: Student preference for semester and class session length



Notes: N=371.

Chart 14: Student preference for semester start and end dates



Note: N=369 for both fall and spring.

Appendix

PORTERVILLE COLLEGE Alternative Calendar Survey Spring 2002

Hello Porterville College students.

This brief survey is being conducted to help in planning for the future of Porterville College. It is confidential and anonymous. Please do not write your name or your answers on these pages. Just fill in the bubble for the most appropriate answer to each question on the Scantron form provided.

Obstacles to Class Attendance

Which, if any, of the following things have you encountered that limit the hours when you can attend class?

| | | Yes | No |
|---|-------------------------|-----|----|
| 1 | Family responsibilities | a | b |
| 2 | Work schedule | a | b |
| 3 | Child care | a | b |
| 4 | Course schedule | a | b |
| 5 | Transportation | a | b |

Days and times Classes Are Offered

How likely would you be to take a 3-unit class offered at the following times?

| | Very Likely | Likely | Unlikely | Very Unlikely |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|--------|----------|------------------|
| <u>Morning Classes</u> | | | | |
| 6. 6:00 AM to 7:25 AM, twice a week | a | b | c | d |
| 7. 7:00 AM to 8:25 AM, twice a week | a | b | c | d |
| 8. 8:00 AM to 9:25 AM, twice a week | a | b | c | d |
| <u>Afternoon Classes</u> | | | | |
| 9. 2:00 PM to 3:25 PM, twice a week | a | b | c | d |
| 10. 3:30 PM to 4:55 PM, twice a week | a | b | c | d |
| 11. 2:00 PM to 5:07 PM, once a week | a | b | c | d |
| <u>Evening Classes</u> | | | | |
| 12. 5:00 PM to 6:25 PM, twice a week | a | b | c | d |
| 13. 5:30 PM to 6:55 PM, twice a week | a | b | c | d |
| 14. 6:00 PM to 9:07 PM, once a week | a | b | c | d |
| 15. 7:00 PM to 10:07 PM, once a week | a | b | c | d |

Friday or Saturday Classes that Meet Once a Week

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. Friday mornings (9:00 AM to 12:07 PM), once a week | a | b | c | d |
| 17. Friday afternoons (1:00 PM to 4:07 PM) , once a week | a | b | c | d |
| 18. Saturday mornings (9:00 AM to 12:07 PM) , once a week | a | b | c | d |
| 19. Saturday afternoons (1:00 PM to 4:07 PM) , once a week | a | b | c | d |

Summer and Winter Classes

20. If more classes were offered in the summer, would you be more likely to attend summer classes?
- a Yes b No c I already take summer classes
21. If the college offered classes during winter break (between the fall and spring semesters) how likely would you be to enroll in those classes?
- a Very Likely b Likely c Unlikely d Very Unlikely

Class and Semester Preferences

22. Which of the following two options would you prefer for a typical 3-unit class?
- a. Option A: A class that meets three times per week for 62 minutes (one hour and 2 minutes) each session. b. Option B: A class that meets twice per week for 85 minutes (one hour and 25 minutes) each session.
23. Which of the following two options would you prefer for a typical 3-unit class?
- a. Option A: An 18-week semester in which a typical 3-unit class meets for 3 hours per week. b. Option B: A 16-week semester in which a typical 3-unit class meets for 3 hours and 23 minutes per week
24. Which of the following two options would you prefer for the fall semester?
- a. Option A: An early starting semester, which begins in mid-August and ends in mid-December. b. Option B: A later starting semester, which begins in early September and ends a few days before Christmas.

25. Which of the following two options would you prefer for the spring semester?

a. Option A: An early starting semester, which begins in early January and ends in early May.

b. Option B: A later starting semester, which begins in early February and ends in early June.

Demographics.

The following questions will be used for statistical purposes only

26. What is your age?

- a Under 21
- b 21-24
- c 25-29
- d 30-49
- e 50 or older

27. What is your gender?

- a Male
- b Female

28. What is your ethnicity?

- a Black, non-Hispanic
- b White, non-Hispanic
- c Asian, Pacific Islander
- d Hispanic
- e American Indian, Alaskan Native