2011 Demographics Report Shows Changes in PC Student Body Over 5 Years

The fall student demographics report has been posted to the research web site. The report provides student information on demographics and participation in a variety of areas and shows differences over the past five years. Here are a few things to note:

- Our students are substantially younger than just a few years ago. In the fall of 2007, 54.3% of Porterville College students were under age 25. As of fall 2011, that number was 63.9%.
- The last time we updated this report, there were problems reporting ethnicity data, which are now fixed. Corresponding with the youth movement, we have a higher proportion of Hispanic students. Hispanics represented 54.3% of our students in 2007 versus 63.9% today. This trend will likely continue as Porterville Unified school district currently 74.3% Hispanic (as of 2010-11).
- Our liberal studies majors were changed a few years ago and the data now show the number of students in each of the current ones, along with students who selected the old version and haven’t changed it. There are ongoing discussions about changes in liberal studies; these numbers should be examined when considering changes. A note: the report shows all majors selected by more than 2% of our students; those with fewer than 2% are grouped into an “other” category.
- The number of “undeclared” majors has decreased a bit from 28.7% to 23.4%. This may be due in part to the increase in the percentage of students being awarded financial aid (see below) as selecting a major is a financial aid requirement.
- Another interesting things to note about majors is that as of fall 2011, we have 647 students who’ve selected “Nursing, LVN” as their major and 148 who have selected psychiatric technology. (Another 75 selected “Registered Nursing”; this is not shown in the report because they represent fewer than 2% of all fall 2011 students). There are fewer than 100 openings per year into those three health careers programs combined. The majority of students who have selected these majors will not get in. We’ll need to find them something else in which they can be successful.
- We have fewer students than just a couple of years ago, but they take more units. Only 3.5% of our fall 2011 students took fewer than 3 units compared with 5.9% in 2007; we have no significant non-credit program, so we now have no students taking only non-credit courses. At the same time, the percentage of students who are taking 12 or more units has increased from 35.7% to 40.0%.
- Although we have more Hispanic students than previously, they seem to be largely English-speaking. The percentage of students whose primary language is something other than English has remained nearly the same: 18.3% in 2007 and 18.2% in 2011.
We are enrolling fewer out of state and foreign students. Students from high schools outside California and foreign high schools combined comprised 6.2% of our students in 2007, but just 1.4% in 2011.

The percentage of students with “undecided” goals increased from 19.6% in the fall of 2007 to 23.7% in 2011. This is disturbing in particular because a recent study conducted by the district research team concluded that, controlling for other factors, students who had selected a goal by their first term were 20% more likely to be successful in obtaining a degree, certificate, transfer, or being prepared to transfer.

In looking at academic standing and honors, there are two interesting changes. There has been an increase in the percentage of students on probation, from 11.2% in 2007 to 13.0% in 2011. However, there has also been an increase in honor students: the dean’s list has gone from 18.2% to 21.0% of students and the president’s honor list has gone from 5.6% to 7.6%. As Roger Miller once sang, “Where have all the average people gone?”

We all know categorical programs have taken major cuts in the past few years and the number of students involved in those programs has declined significantly. The need for the programs likely has not.

The need in the community is increasing. The percentage of students having been awarded financial aid increased from 61.2% in 2007 to 78.3% in 2011. Similarly, 28.2% of our students were receiving some form of public assistance in the fall of 2011, compared with 22.7% in 2009 (the first year in which valid data was available).

With wars winding down in Iraq and Afghanistan, veterans are returning and they need education. While the overall numbers are still small, we have seen an increase from 1.1% of our students being veterans in 2007 to 2.0% in 2011.

The percentage of students completing each of the four components of matriculation (assessment, orientation, seeing a counselor, and completing a student education plan) varies significantly from year to year. In the fall of 2011, just 36.1% of our students had completed all four components.

Again, click here for the full demographics report and contact the research office if you have questions.