



2016 Colorado Mountain College Community Survey Results- Executive Version

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Zachary Haberler, PhD
Institutional Research
Analyst II

p. 970-384-8527

zjhaberler@coloradomtn.edu

Executive Summary

In the summer of 2016, Colorado Mountain College (CMC) surveyed community members within CMC district and service areas using an internet survey. The survey contained a wide-range of questions, including questions about the quality of education offered by CMC, the programs that CMC should consider adding, and the cost of tuition at CMC. Analysis of survey data (N=963) emphasizes several key findings (For more detailed discussion of survey collection and analysis methodologies, please reference the full *2016 Colorado Mountain College Community Survey Results* report).

Perceptions of CMC are influenced by familiarity with the college system. Analysis indicates that the more experience a person had with CMC, either as a student or as a citizen living in a CMC service area, the more likely they were to report having positive perceptions of CMC's educational quality and impact, cultural or economic, on the community.

Perceptions of CMC are not strongly influenced by proximity to a specific branch of the college. Analyzing the questions about CMC's educational quality and impact on the communities by CMC location indicates that there are no significant differences in experiences across campus locations with one exception. Respondents from the Chafee County area reported more negative perceptions of CMC than other locations.

Women more consistently reported positive perceptions of CMC than men. This finding is not surprising in light of the fact that women tend to enroll in CMC more often than men.

A large majority of respondents would recommend CMC to someone else. Nearly 90 percent of survey respondents indicated that they would positively recommend CMC to others (N=797).

Tuition costs should increase incrementally to maintain the status quo. Respondents overwhelmingly favored increasing tuition to keep pace with inflation so that CMC could maintain its current level of programming and support services.

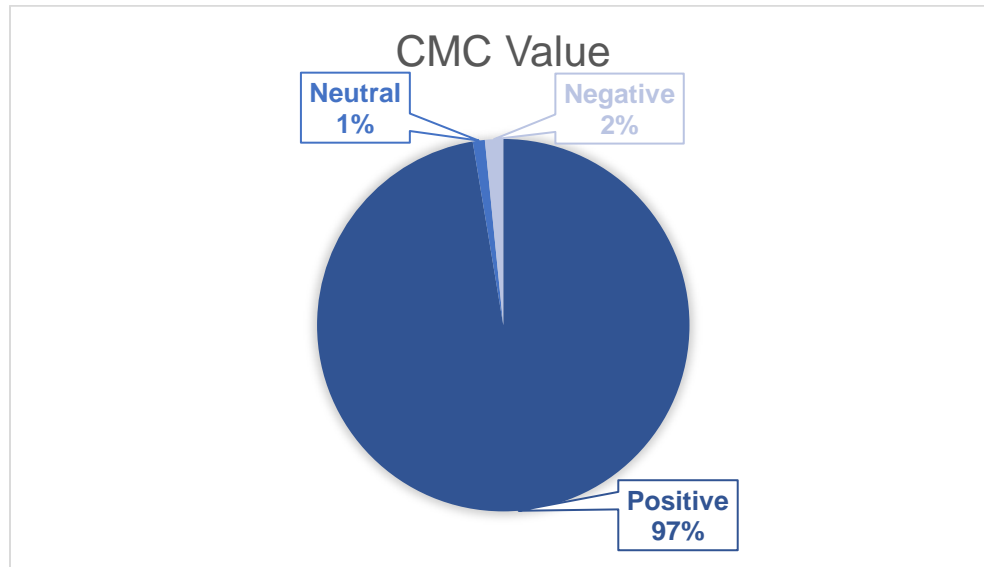
Yet, respondents would still like to see CMC increase its program and course offerings. The most common requests for new programs included offering more Bachelor's programs in general (in science, engineering, and the humanities disciplines) or spreading existing Bachelor's programs to more locations. The most common requests for more courses included offering more of the courses that are already available or offering them at more CMC locations.

Results

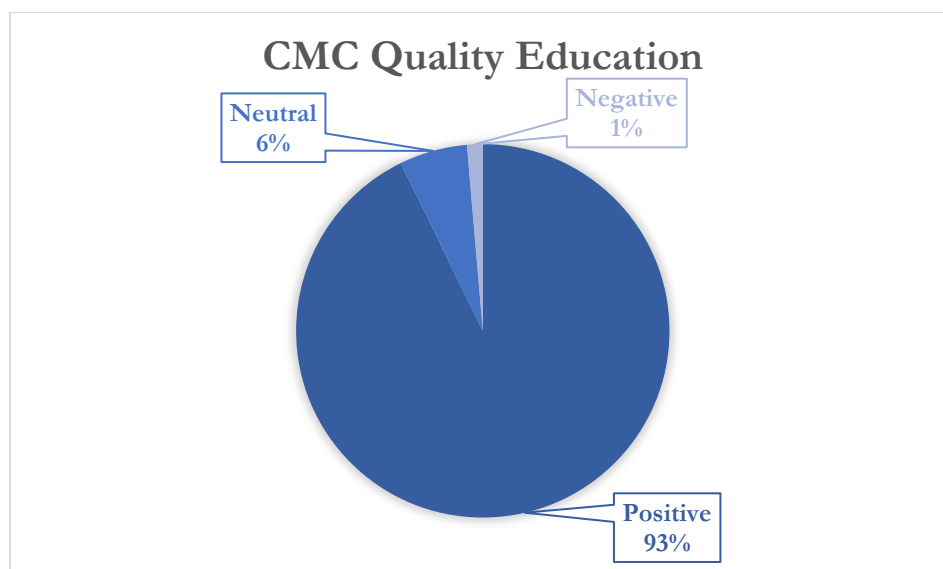
Perceptions of CMC

After cursory analysis it became clear that four of the questions asking respondents about their perception of a particular aspect of CMC should be grouped for further analysis. The following Likert-Items fostered answers so similar to one another that it made sense to analyze their interactions with other variables collectively:

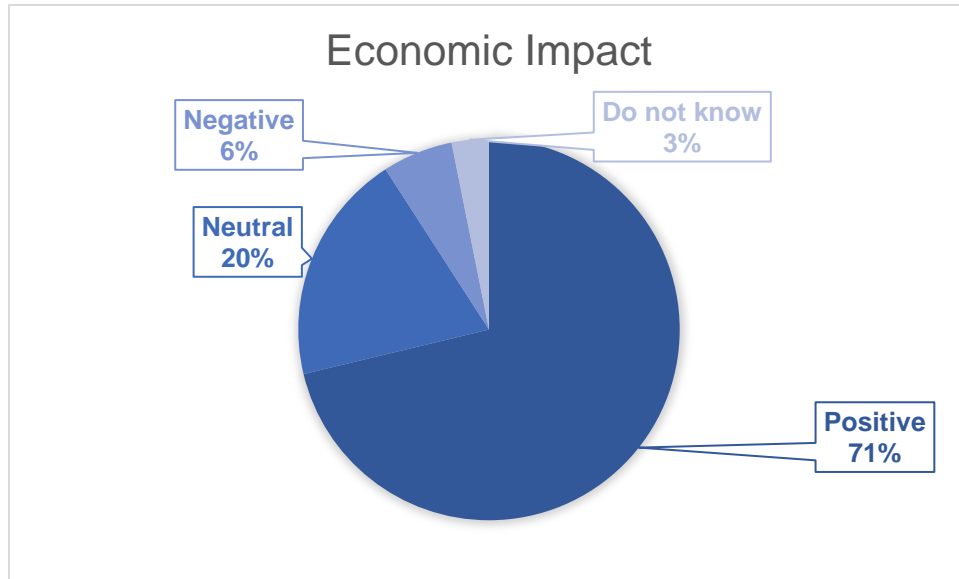
- Q5: How much do you agree with this statement: “Colorado Mountain College is a good value.”?



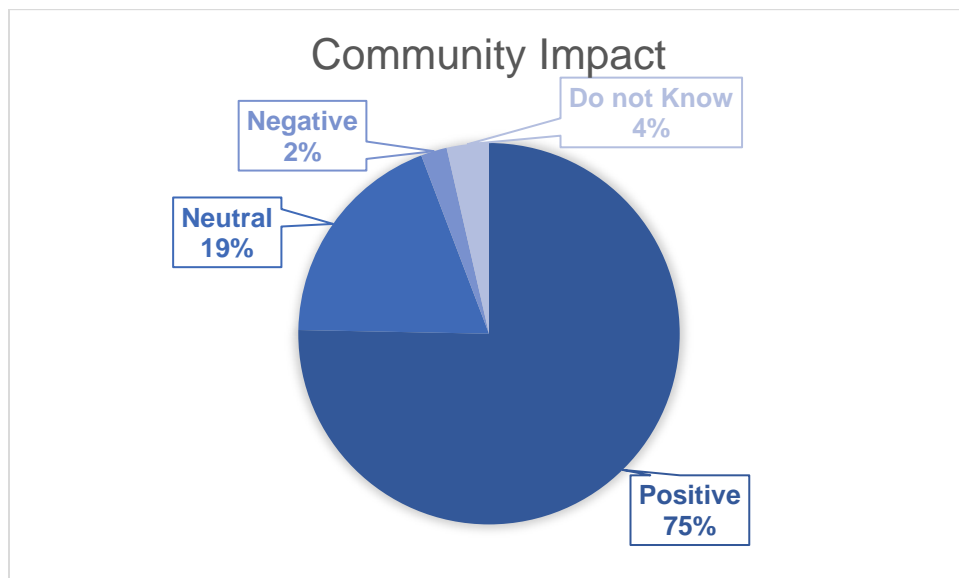
- Q8: How much do you agree with this statement: “Colorado Mountain College provides a high quality education.”?



- Q7: Based on your observations, how important is Colorado Mountain College to economic development in your community?

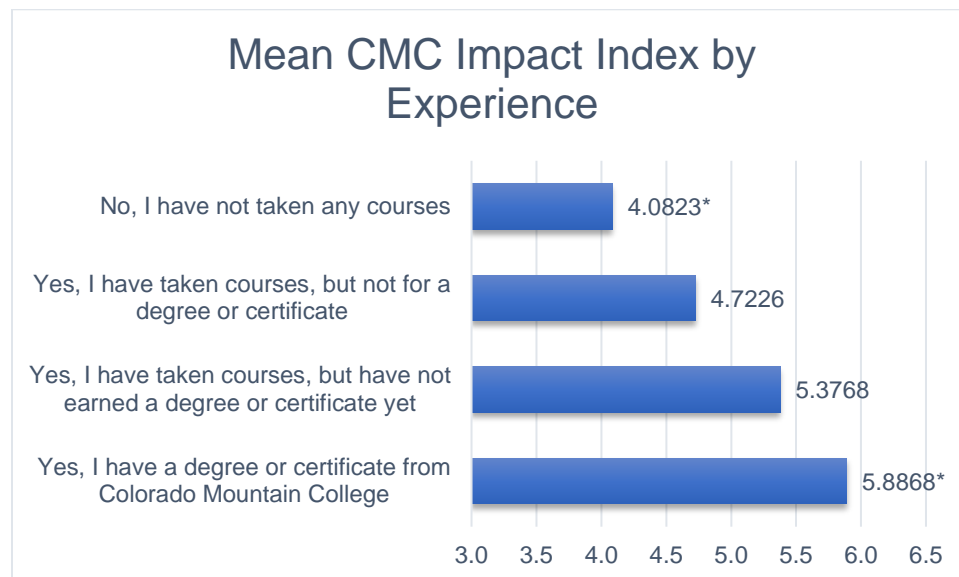


- Q12: Based on your observations, how would you rate Colorado Mountain College's impact on community enrichment?



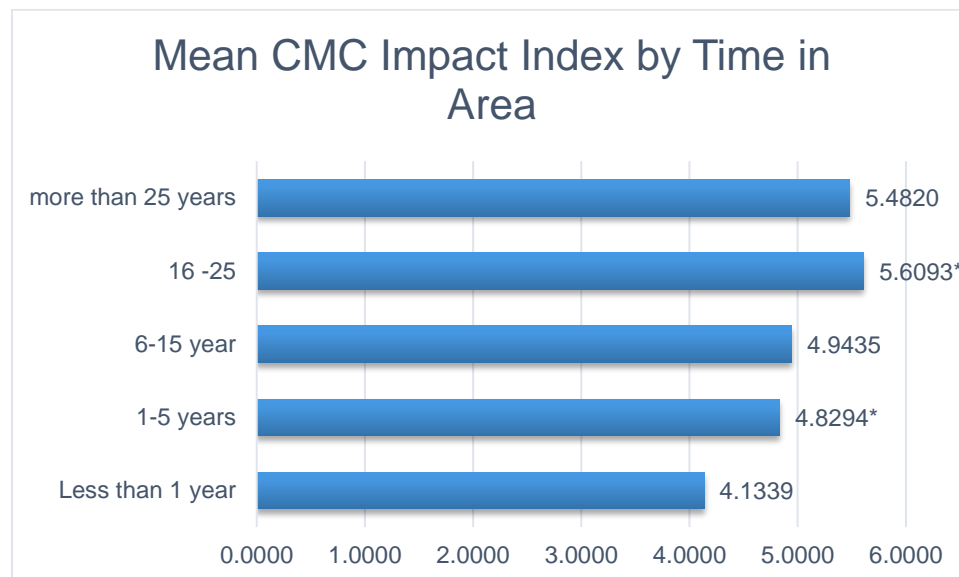
Two of these questions utilized a 7-point scale, with 1 representing the strongest positive answer and 7 representing the strongest negative answer, and two utilized a 6-point scale with 1 and 5 representing the strongest positive and negative answers, respectively, and 6 representing “I don’t know.” A scale reliability study of these four items provided strong evidence that there was considerable overlap in the perspectives recorded by each of these questions and strong correlations in how individuals answered each question (Cronbach’s Alpha= .958). This suggests that this group of questions collectively pointed to a deeper underlying general perspective about CMC. For the purposes of this report, then, these items were combined and standardized to create a composite

index of respondent perspectives of CMC, which was named the CMC Impact index. The CMC Impact Index was standardized around a mean of 5. Thus, values above 5 are above average perceptions of CMC and those that fall below 5 are below average perceptions of CMC.



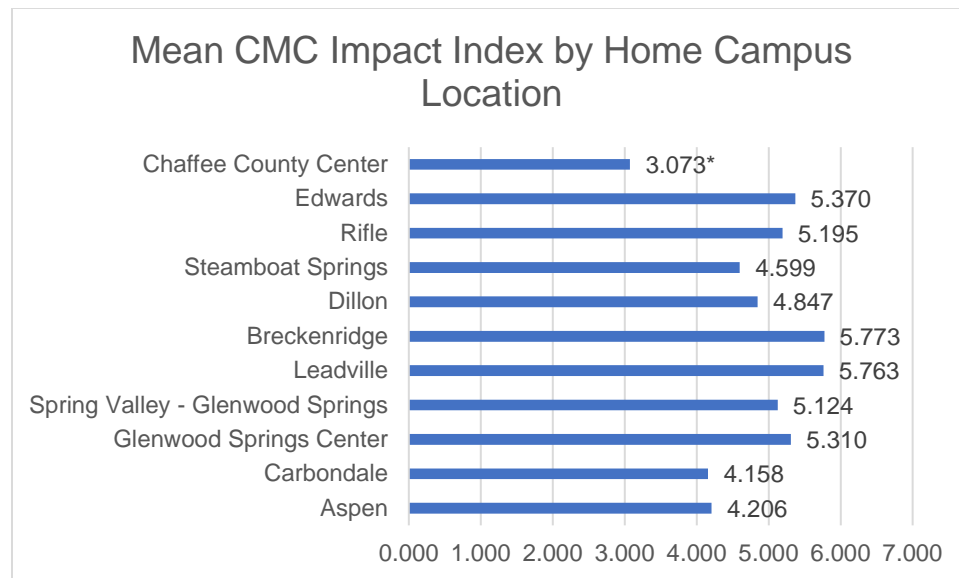
*Differences between these two groups are statistically significant at 99.9% confidence level (p-value < .001)

Survey respondents with less experience as a student at CMC consistently reported less positive perceptions regarding CMC's educational value, quality, and impact on the local economy and community. This difference was most significant between the respondents who completed a degree or certificate and those who had never taken a course at CMC.



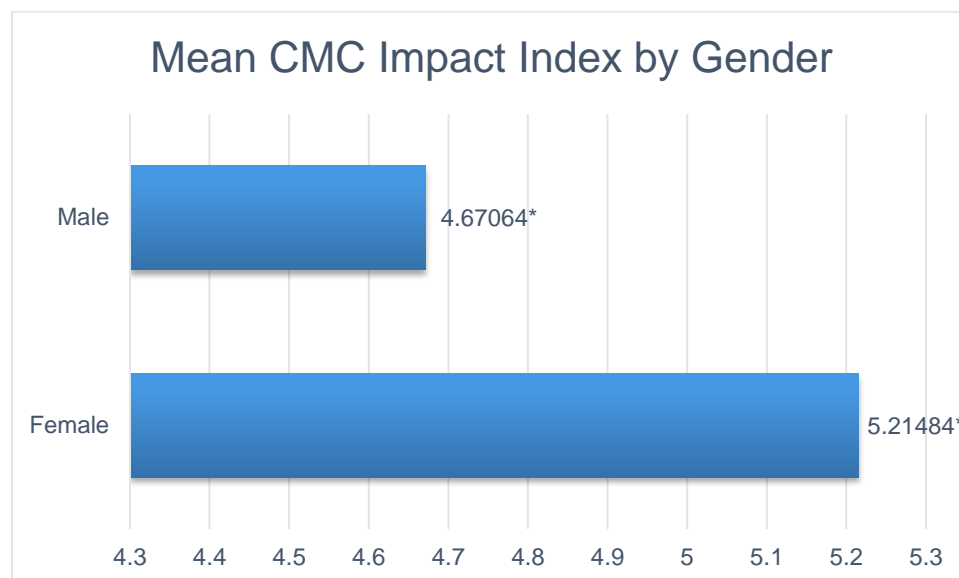
*Differences between these two groups are statistically significant at 95% confidence level (p-value < .05)

Similarly, CMC respondents with less time lived in a CMC service area consistently reported less positive perceptions regarding CMC's educational value, quality, and impact on the local economy and community.



*Chaffee County Center was the only location that was different from any of the others on a statistically significant level (95% confidence, p-value <.05)

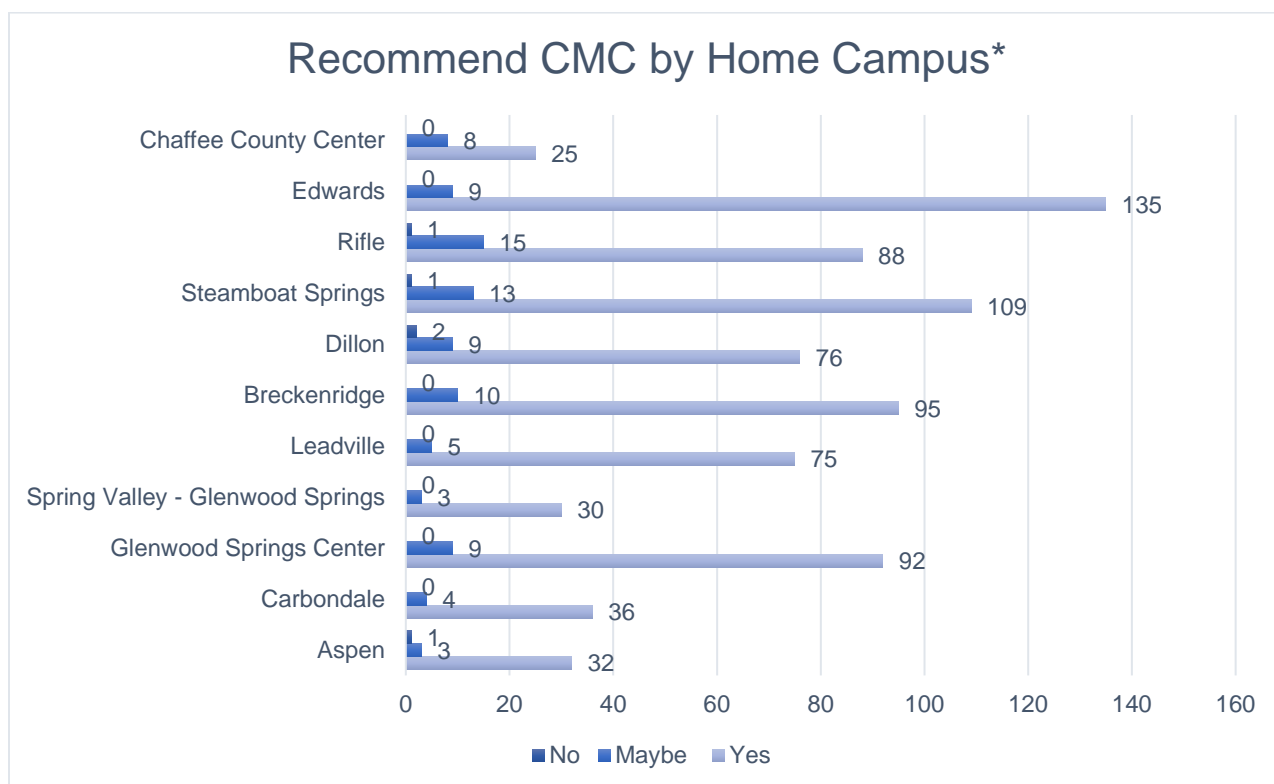
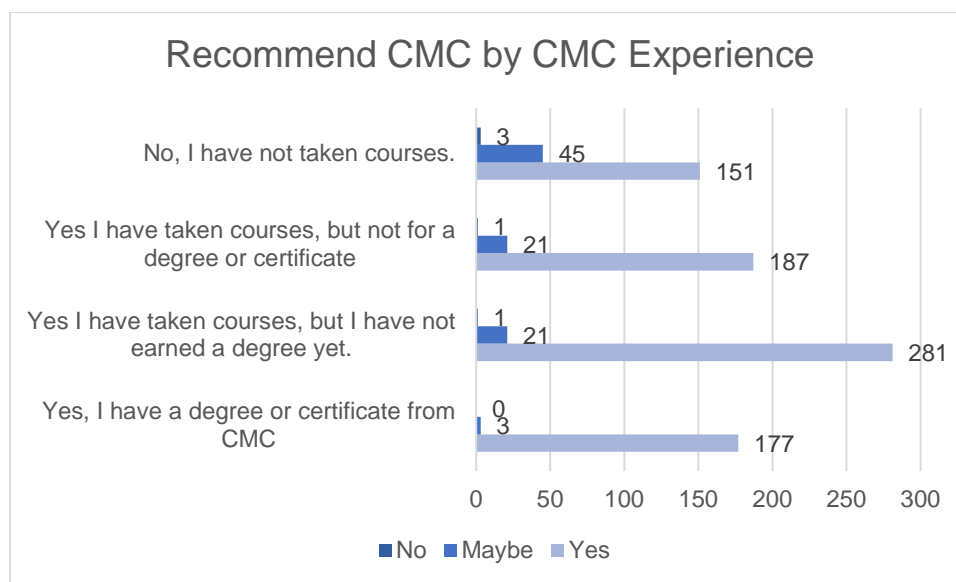
Studying CMC Impact Index by home campus location (based on respondents' self-reported answers) reveals minimal differences. Leadville and Breckenridge came in with the most positive index scores with Chaffee County Center bringing in the rear with the most negative score.



* Differences between these two groups are statistically significant at 95% confidence level (p-value <.05)

The survey results reveal that women consistently reported more positive perceptions of CMC's educational value, quality, and impact on the local economy and community than men.

Recommending CMC to Others

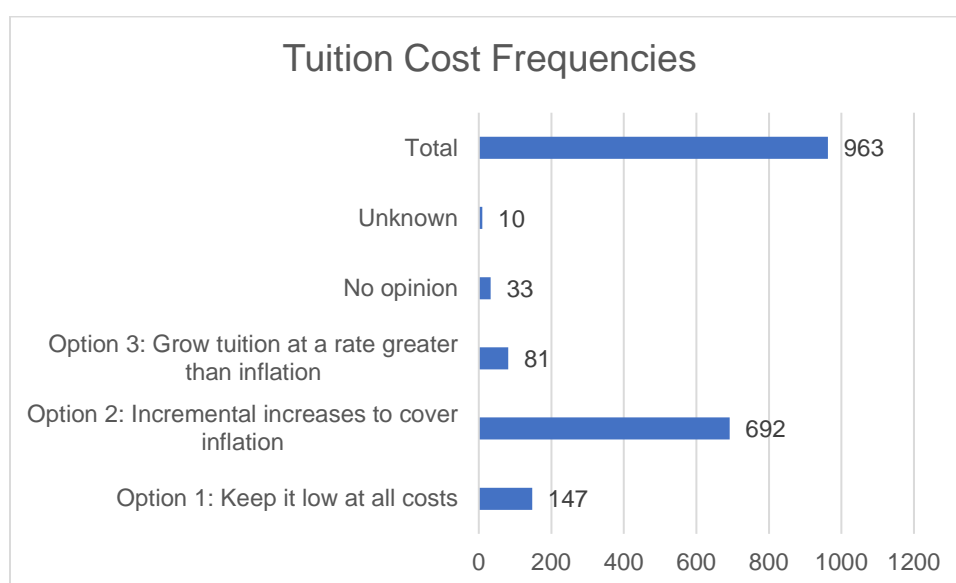


*There were minimal differences between reported home and work campus locations so analysis was done using home location only.

A large majority of respondents, nearly 90%, indicated that they would recommend CMC to someone else. The charts above break this down by self-reported experience with CMC and self-reported CMC home campus, respectively. Individuals with less experience were more likely to respond with “maybe” or “no” when answering the recommendation question. For campus location, differences between groups were influenced by sub-sample size and randomness (Aspen, Carbondale, and Spring Valley, for example, had far fewer respondents). This graph does give an indication of where the sample came from as well as how the “maybe” answers were distributed.

Tuition Costs

The cost of CMC is an important issue for those who responded to the survey. Nearly 65%% (N=623) indicated that keeping tuition affordable was the most important issue for them and their family, and nearly 90% ranked it in their top three concerns.



However, they do not favor keeping tuition low at all costs. Instead, a majority of respondents, nearly 72% (N=692), valued CMC enough to accept incremental increases in tuition so that CMC could maintain its current level of service and programming.

Suggestions for more Programs and Courses

Analysis of the series of open-ended questions that enabled participants to offer their suggestions about new CMC programs or courses included the use of a word-count program to quickly identify the topics that occurred the most across all survey responses. Here are lists of common notable response items for potential degree or certificate programs and potential courses.

Potential programs:

- More bachelor's programs: Sciences, Nursing, Arts, Engineering, Humanities disciplines

- General topics suggested without specified program level: Computer science, nutrition, agriculture, medical programs, art, engineering, languages, and online programs
- Masters degrees

For both suggested programs and courses, it was clear that respondents were interested in seeing more options within already existing programs and courses. In many cases, respondents requested having programs or courses that are offered at other CMC locations offered at their home campus location.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Analysis of the results of the CMC Community Survey 2016 provokes several conclusions and corresponding recommendations:

- **Perceptions of CMC are influenced by familiarity with the CMC system.** This is not surprising. However, this finding also serves as a reminder that the survey sampling frame did a better job of sampling those already close to CMC than it did those who have little experience or knowledge of CMC. This provokes two questions:
 - *What do we already know about the individuals who do not choose to attend CMC?*
 - *What more do we need to know about these individuals to make informed decisions about whether CMC appeals to them and can meet their needs?*
- **Perceptions of CMC are not strongly influenced by proximity to a specific branch of the college.** This finding comes with an asterisk: the sampling design for the survey was not set up to systematically sample individuals from specific campus service areas or regions. That being said, the differences between Chaffee County Center and a few of the other campus locations were statistically significant despite Chaffee County having a lower sub-sample size.
 - We stress, however, that this result is not an indication of shared practices or even shared quality across the CMC system. Instead, *these results indicate a similarity in public perception about the educational value, quality, and impact on local communities across the CMC system.*
- **Women more consistently reported positive perceptions of CMC than men.** This finding is likely influenced by the higher number of female students who have attended and completed degrees at CMC in recent years and that women are more likely to take surveys than men (Sax, Gilmartin, & Bryant, 2008; Underwood, Kim, & Matier, 2000). This provokes two questions:
 - *What makes CMC more appealing to women than to men?*
 - *How can CMC gain a better understanding of the local subpopulation of men who do not attend or know much about what CMC can do for them?*
- **A large majority of respondents would recommend CMC to someone else.** Nearly 90 percent of survey respondents indicated that they would positively recommend CMC to others (N=797).

- Though this is a very positive result it begs the question: *How do we translate this vote of confidence in CMC into actual increased enrollment?*
- **Tuition costs should increase incrementally to maintain the status quo.** While rising costs of college are clearly a major concern for the people who participated in the survey, the majority of respondents still indicated they would rather see tuition increase than a decline in what CMC offers to its communities.
- **Yet, respondents would still like to see CMC increase its program and course offerings.** Though there were a wide range of suggested courses and programs, survey results do offer guidance on how to better serve local communities.
 - Requests for the spread of existing programs and courses to new campus locations suggests that CMC should 1) consider the option of having their *bachelor's programs be system-wide rather than limited to specific locations*, 2) *bolster efforts to advertise and market these programs* and ensure that students know what options are available to them for participating in a program offered elsewhere, or 3) *augment its online education offerings to help bridge the course and program gaps across the various campuses*.
 - Increasing CMC's online education options (formal degree programs, IVS, WebEx, or hybrid courses) resonates with the geographical constraints of its service areas and with recent feedback from the National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP). *Since 2010, CMC's average national rank among all NCCBP participating community colleges in the amount of online education offered to students is the 30th percentile* (Using NCCBP's benchmark tracking the % of total credit sections that are designated online). In fact, we have only cracked the 50th percentile once since we started participating in NCCBP (first year of participation was 2007).

Resources Cited:

Sax, L. J., Gilmartin, S. K., & Bryant, A. N. (2008). Assessing response rates and nonresponse bias in web and paper surveys. *Research in Higher Education* 44, 409-432.

Underwood, D., Kim, H., & Matier, M. (2000). To mail or to web: Comparisons of survey response rates and respondent characteristics. Paper presented at the Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research. Cincinnati, OH. ED446513.