

# Foothill College Fall 2009 Student Survey

## Purpose

The purpose of the survey was to identify which college services students were most interested in and how they would like to receive information from the college. Findings from the survey will be used to help plan marketing campaigns and communication strategies through out the 2009-2010 academic-year.

## Key Survey Findings

### Choosing a College:

- Referral by family or friends (59%), remain a key component in how students hear about Foothill.
- Course offerings, the location of the college and tuition costs rank in the top three reasons students choose to attend Foothill.
- Earning a degree and transferring to a four-year college (51%) are the main reasons Foothill students attend college.

### Which college services are important to Foothill student's to reach their educational goal:

- Counseling services (59%) are in strong demand amongst students and frustration from the lack of access to counselors was the most mentioned comment.
- While financial aid wasn't a priority when choosing a college, for nearly half of our students (48%), it is a priority once they attend Foothill.
- The majority of students were very happy with Foothill's current support services.

### Communication with students:

- 75% of students felt the information they received from Foothill was just right and that the information they received from the college was very helpful.
- Unfortunately, 80% of respondents indicated that they did not receive *Foothill Fusion*, the college's e-newsletter. Those that did receive it, 53% said the information was useful.
- 62% of respondents don't remember receiving the college printed newsletter, *The Heights*, but those that did, 68% found the information in it very useful.
- Email (82%) was the top method, which students liked to receive information from the college.

## Sample

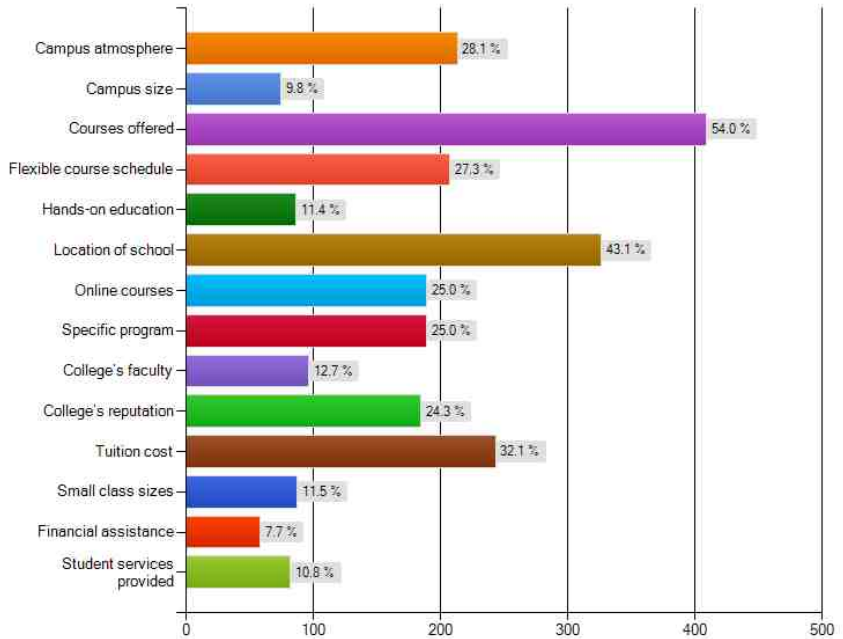
- A random sample of 3,451 currently enrolled Foothill students received the URL for the online Fall 2009 Student survey via email.
- There were 776 respondents, for a 22% response rate.
- The responses were anonymous and administered through SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool.
- The survey consisted of 21 multiple-choice or fill in questions and covered three main topic areas: 1) Choosing a College; 2) College Services; 3) Communication.
- Approximately 56% of the respondents were full-time (enrolled in 12+ units). 47% of the respondents were between the ages of 18-24; 22% were between the ages of 25-39, and 31% of the respondents were 40 or over.

# RESULTS

## Choosing a College

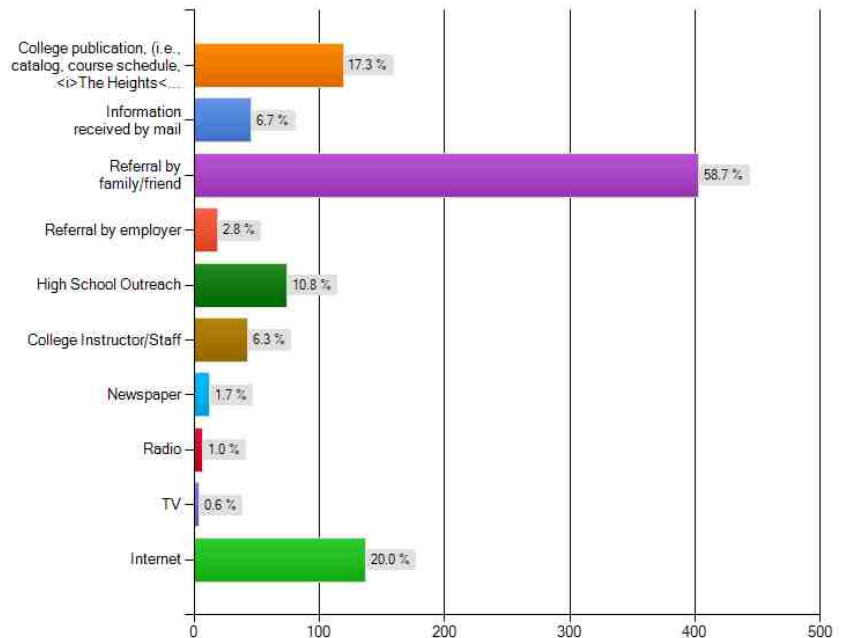
***Q#1: Which factors influenced your decision to attend Foothill College? (Choose a maximum of three.)***

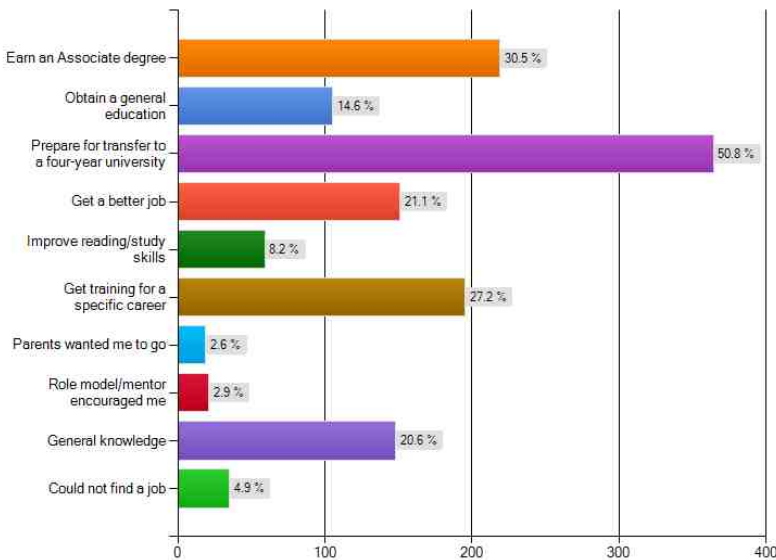
Course offerings, location of school and tuition costs were the top three indicators respondents chose for attending Foothill. Financial assistance, campus size and small class size were least relevant.



***Q#2: How did you hear about Foothill College?***

Family and friend recommendations remain a key factor in how students hear about Foothill, with nearly 60% of the responses. In other comments, many respondents list growing up in the area and just knowing Foothill existed.



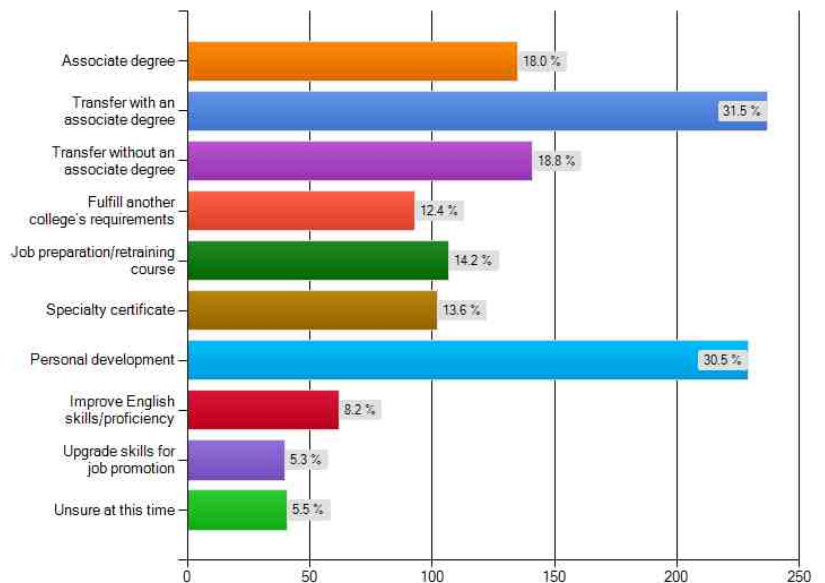


**Q#3: Why are you attending college?**

Preparing to transfer to a four-year university (over 50%), earning an Associate degree (30%) and training for a specific career (27%) remain the top three reason respondents said they chose to go to college.

**Q#4: What is your educational goal?**

Earning a degree and personal development ranked high as educational goals. Even in this challenging job climate, Job advancement/preparation didn't rank high as an educational goal.



Questions 5 & 6 were specifically related to the budget effect one community colleges and students access to classes.

**Q#5: Had you heard any news reports about community colleges before you registered for fall classes?**

53% said they had not heard any news.

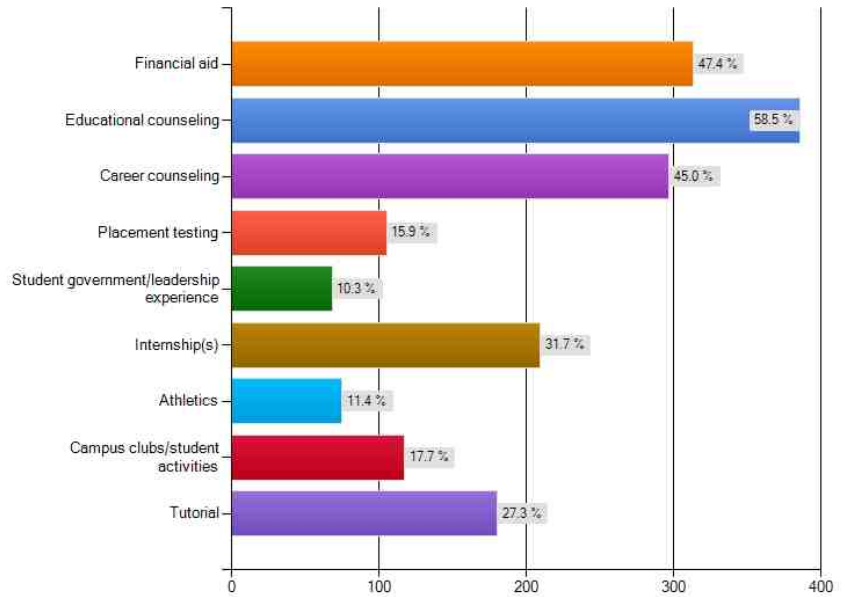
**Q#6: If yes, did these news reports prompt you to register earlier for college classes?**

56% said no it did not affect their decision to register earlier for classes.

## COLLEGE SERVICES

### ***Q#7: Which student services are important to you to reach your educational goals?***

Nearly 59% of respondents indicated educational counseling was very important to reaching their educational goal. While financial assistance was not an import factor in choosing a college, once they're here, nearly 48% of respondents indicated it was very important in helping them achieve their goal. Other comments included specific support services, such as the EOPS, Pass the Torch, Adaptive Learning services.

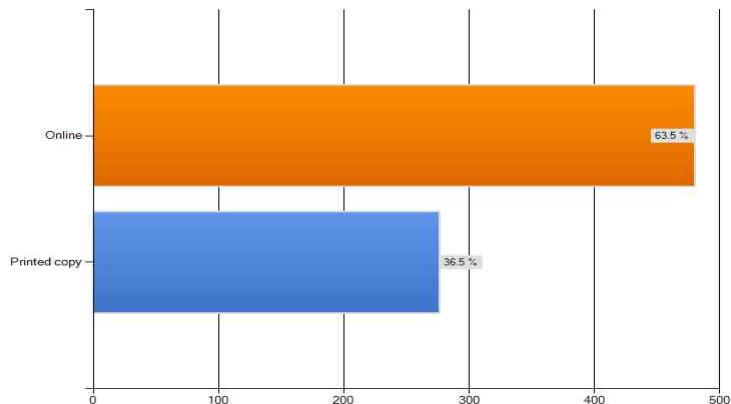


### ***Q#8: Is there a student service currently not available that you'd like to see offered?***

The majority of those who responded to this write in question, were very happy with our current student services offerings and couldn't think of any additional services they would like to see. Some specific mentions for improvement where the wait times and quality of service in the counseling department, the "invisibility" of online students, and better facilities for bicyclists.

### ***Q#9: Which Schedule of Classes format do you prefer?***

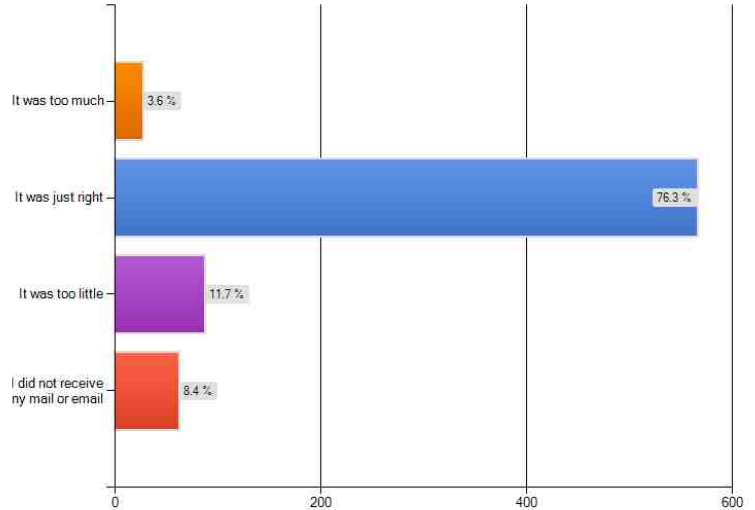
Nearly two-thirds of respondents prefer the online version.



## COMMUNICATION

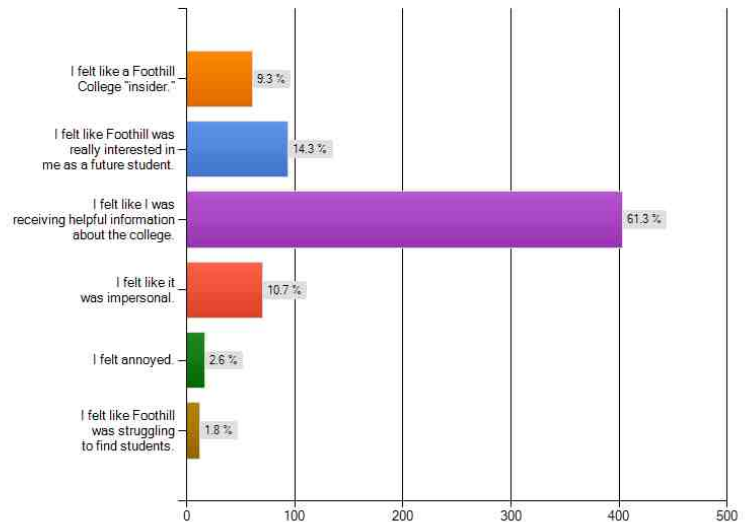
**Q#10: Which of the following best describes how you felt about the quantity of mail and e-mail you received from Foothill College?**

The overwhelming majority (76%) felt the amount of information they received was just right.



**Q#11: Which of the following best describes the content of the mail or email you received?**

Over 60% of the respondents felt like they were receiving helpful information about the college. However, many of the comments in the “other” category, respondents couldn’t remember receiving anything from Foothill.



**Q#12: Do you receive the college’s e-newsletter, Foothill Fusion?**

80% said no.

**Q#13: If yes, did you find the information useful?**

Just over half, 53% said it was useful.

**Q#14: Did you receive the college printed newsletter, The Heights?**

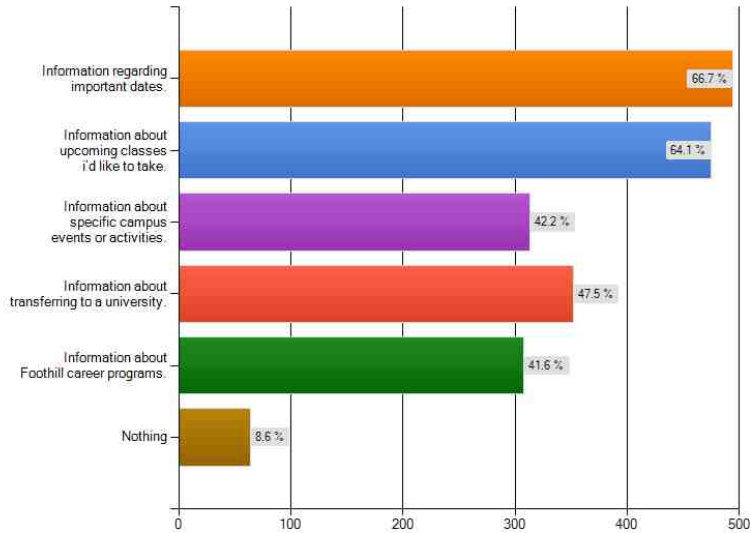
62% of respondents said no.

**Q#15: If yes, did you find the information useful?**

The majority (68%) did find information from the Heights usefully.

**Q#16: What types of information would you like to receive from Foothill College?**

Information regarding important dates (68%) and information about upcoming classes (64%) were high on the list for information respondents wanted to receive. Less than 9% did not want to receive any information.

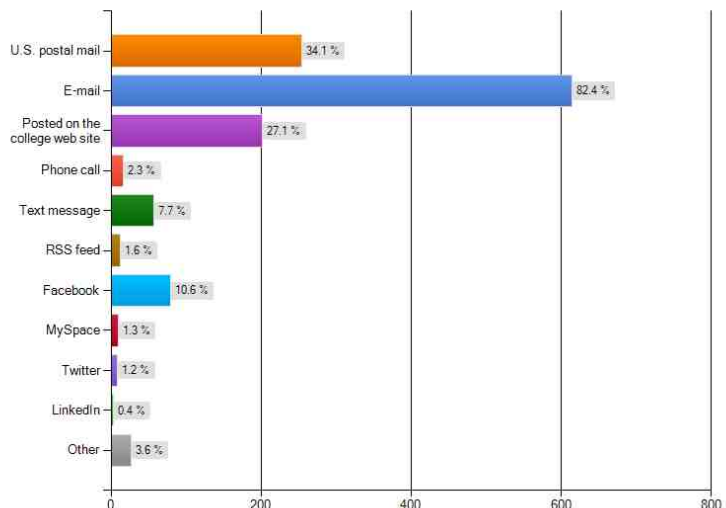


**Q#17: What could we do to improve our communications with you?**

Many respondents liked how we are communicating now, but there is always room for improvement. Some specific suggestions included; keeping students more informed of changes, like notification for canceled classes; for ease of readability, a less-cluttered website and e-newsletter; and make it easier to find contact information for persons in authority when someone has a concern or complaint.

**Q#18: How would you like to receive information from Foothill College?**

82% of respondents indicated email as the primary source for which they wanted to receive information from the college. 10% of the respondents liked using social media as a communication venue.



## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

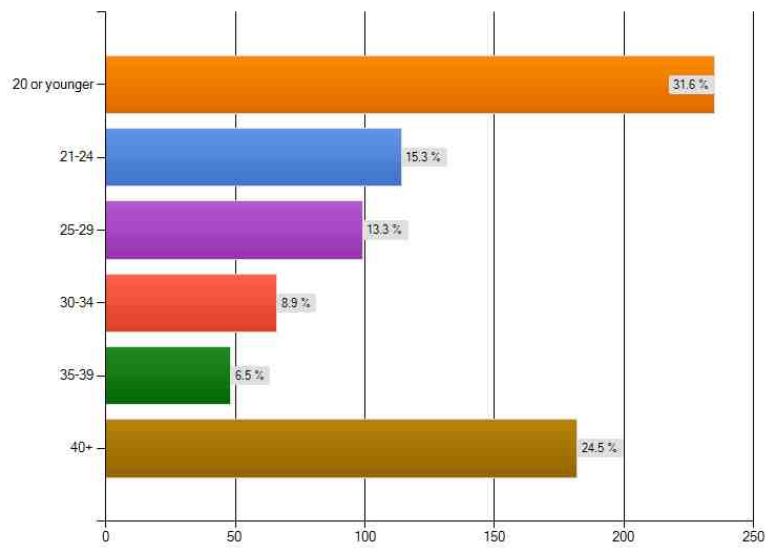
### *Q#19: Student Status*

56% of respondents were full-time students (enrolled in 12+ units).

### *Q#20: Gender*

65% of respondents were female.

### *Q#21: Age*



## **Selection of Open-Ended Comments**

### **Choosing a college:**

- “The attention I received from your staff, as a returning student 45 years of age, and the lack of knowledge of what I needed to do. Your staff was the most helpful of the four area colleges I checked into.. Including SJ City.”
- “Uh, I grew up here. Kind of hard to miss.”
- “Friends who attended De Anza while taking classes at Foothill recommended it.”
- “Great selection of classes.”

### **Which college services are important to Foothill student’s to reach their educational goal:**

- “I need more help to set up my classes to transfer to a four year.”
- “Student friendly registration, and the lack of suddenly, surprisingly and rudely being dropped from classes without announcement.”
- “Broad offering of courses geared towards working professionals' schedules.”
- “I think that the quality of services at Foothill is very high and I've been very satisfied. However, as part of my current financial aid application, I needed to see a counselor and I was very disappointed. This man didn't seem to care at all about me nor my education. He seemed to "go through the motions" just wanting to give his signature and get me out of his office. I had to be quite assertive in getting him to help me with the information I needed. This experience has been repeated throughout my high school and college attendance. I've never had a counselor that guided me or showed he or she cared about my academic and career success.”
- “Counseling on financial aid for students or potential students who do not already receive financial aid. Appointments with financial aid specialists are not currently available for students who have not yet received financial aid. It's something like a Catch 22.”

### **Communication with students:**

- “I really don't recall receiving much at all.”
- “I didn't receive anything. I was going to take an online class but I received no instruction about it and ended up dropping it. ANY information on how the online classes work, or when/where to get started would have been helpful. It would have been nice to get a welcome to the college, here are services and a map... And also email with the registration dates, drop by dates, first and last day of class dates. I found them on the website but an email would have been helpful.”
- “I will say that the newspaper/ catalog that comes by mail is too cluttered and hard to read. I prefer the online format for finding classes, but that is also cluttered and hard to navigate, with many pieces of information on specific degrees out of date or not clear.”
- “Online means of communication are fine and preferable, but postal mail is also a good supplemental information source and reminder.”

## Overall conclusions and recommendations

To improve marketing campaigns and communications strategies, Foothill College could:

- **Increase the reach of *Foothill Fusion***
  - Make sure the distribution list includes all currently enrolled students. Update the week before classes start and again after census. Do this quarterly.
  - Be consistent in the look and feel of the e-newsletter.
  - Follow a published timeline.
- **Increase more personalized communications with students**
  - E-mail reminders with students date and time to register for classes.
  - Send specialized emails about events, classes related to students area of study.
- **Continue to develop articles/stories for *The Heights* and the college web site that cover topics which students have indicated an interest in**
  - Classes students would be interested in taking
  - Student services that will help them achieve their educational goals
- **Provide consistent, accurate information regarding class schedules**
  - Eliminate the printed schedule of classes and provide a pdf option for students to download.