

January 18, 2013 Enrollment Trend Question to CIO Listserv
Compilation of responses, February 2, 2013

Prompting Question

CIO Colleagues:

I know enrollment can be a sensitive topic but we at Ohlone College would appreciate some reactions from your vantage points to what we are seeing from ours.

After two or three years of strong student demand for course sections, somewhat artificially intensified by the fairly drastic decrease in the supply of sections, we are sensing a “softening” of that demand. We will have no problem meeting our workload cap, this but the fill rates are going down a bit and the waitlist activity is a bit lower.

We wonder if there is a growing student “fatigue” with trying to enroll in classes only to find them full. And we wonder if there is a developing public perception of “you can’t find classes so why even try?” It may be too early to tell, but we also wonder about the current and eventual impact of the Student Success Task Force agenda, which some feel will decrease access students.

And of course, we all know when the economy is bad more folks who lose their jobs want to go back to school; but because the economy is bad the state funds us less, making it difficult to meet the new demand. Conversely, when the economy brightens and state funding picks back up, people are working more and less able to go to school; leaving it difficult at times to generate growth (or restoration!) enrollment. We think some of the latter is starting to kick in.

Sorry for the mini-lecture but I wanted to set the context.

Again, we at Ohlone would appreciate hearing from others on your enrollment fronts.

I will be happy to collate responses and not list college names, since enrollment can be a touchy local public relations matter.

Jim Wright

Compilation of Responses

At _____, our Fall 12 enrollment was down 3%, which translated into a 1.5% decline in FTES. The Spring 13 enrollment is down 5%, we will not know until census the effect on FTES. Even with the slight decline in FTES we anticipate meeting our workload for 2012-13.

Enrollment has been soft at _____ we will be struggling to meet our FTES target.

Enrollment at _____ remains high in general education courses. FTE is strong with fulltime enrollment up, but part time enrollments are down. We are also seeing wait lists not full (currently we only keep 12 spots open on each waitlist) and enrollments in ABE and ESL are very low.

At _____, our enrollment remains robust with no signs of decreased enrollment due to the factors you describe. However, this is our first semester of reduced section numbers.

At _____ we have not had a decrease in demand and consistently meet our targets BUT to do so we are losing efficiency in trying to meet the 50% law.

You have perfectly described what we are experiencing at _____. Last year we were approx 8% over cap and this year we expect to be at cap or slightly above. We, too, are seeing less demand: fewer applications, smaller waitlists, and, surprisingly, lower enrollments in basic skills reading and writing. We believe the causes for this shift are the same as what you have stated. That said, there are still areas in our schedule that have huge unmet demand (we cut approx 15% of our sections over the last three years), so we will most likely be adding sections back in fall.

We have experienced a slight "softening" in some areas. While we are functioning slightly over cap, waitlists are noticeably lower. We are seeing some effects from both repeatability changes, as well as state and federal financial aid changes.

1. I agree with your overall assessment Jim: fatigue; economy on the mend; AND we are already seeing the "3 takes" limit some students' ability to enroll.
2. Our rural college suffered an enrollment decline over past two years (so we buck the recent trend)
3. We do expect to return to our cap this year, largely through added online (seats open at Siskiyous!) and other program enhancements.
4. I do agree that, over the next 3-4 years, enrollment will soften for the following reasons:
 - fatigue leads to seeking alternatives
 - economy improves
 - MOOCs and other low-cost, under-regulated options
 - population trends (lower birth rates approaching college age)

I haven't noticed a significant decrease in demand here at this point, but these are the issues I am watching in terms of enrollment trends:

1. I have been waiting for productivity to decrease as time passes with classes that are over-enrolled by permission of the faculty. They will certainly get tired of teaching so many extra students at some point.
2. I believe that the limit on enrollment may decrease student access to courses after they have not successfully completed on the third attempt.
3. I am convinced that "word on the street" is very powerful in discouraging new students to try to enroll.
4. I wonder also if concerns about transfer to the CSUs certain semesters becomes a factor that deepens discouragement for students.
5. I suspect as well that as more components of the Student Success Act are implemented we will be able to serve fewer students and our enrollments will drop.
6. I understand that enrollments in the K-12 schools are decreasing, and at some point that will hit us as well.

We are not seeing any softening of demand. We added 50 sections just a few weeks ago in response to prop 30 and they are all filled.

We do not have wait lists, so I cannot comment on that type of demand; however, we are not observing a decrease in demand.

I believe your insights are valid, and that some in less densely populated areas may be experiencing this more than urban schools.

Similar issues as you are having...

We positioned ourselves very well for the failure of Prop.30.

In doing so, we had offered a lean Fall and Summer course schedule.

We have extended our Spring schedule, and the enrollment of our students has been good, but slow.

Some of this has to be due to the overall lack of availability of courses for the last few semesters causing many students to quit trying.

We will hit our base targets in FTES, but achieving new monies, designated as growth, will be difficult to achieve due to the trend you have elicited below. We are experiencing much of the same thing that you are experiencing.

It would be really "nice", if some (or all) of these monies were actually 'restoration' and not growth.

We first noticed softness *last* spring semester but made our target anyway. In fall, we were well short. This spring things seem to have stabilized.

_____ has a very large online program in comparison to its size (3000 FTES total, approx. 50% of it online), and the softness is directly attributable to lower online demand. We've been offering fewer sections to meet the declining demand, and even when sections are filled, waitlists are considerably

smaller. We suspect that we are getting a double-whammy—not just our own students ebbing away but since many of our online students are spillovers from across the state, they are now finding spots back at their home institutions, adding to the exodus.

we are trying to increase our enrollment, as our target FTES was set based on the premise that both a parcel tax and Prop 30 would not pass. When both did our district increased our FTES Target so we scrambled to add over 40 sections to Spring 2013.

Our Fall FTES was down 12% from Fall 2011 but that was by design. For Spring 2013 we are up 5% over Spring 2012 so far (today was the first day of classes), but still 10% under our adjusted cap. We will probably offer a spring intersession and work our summer to be able to count it for this year depending on what happens.

Demand for gatekeeper courses ENGL and MATH remains strong so far.

_____has continued to experience strong enrollments and large waitlists.

I have been following the comments in this email chain with interest.

_____is still full and overenrolled in almost all courses. Our wait lists are full and faculty have been adding extra students if the classroom space accommodates. We have been running reports to address high demand classes and adding these courses, when possible.

However, I find it interesting that in some areas of the state, enrollment is softening. This is a caution to those who still have robust enrollments that we need to be managing our courses, emphasizing the high demand courses, and continuing to employ creative scheduling methods and course delivery options to address student needs. Once the enrollment crush wanes, these things will continue to draw students. I appreciate the question and the responses.

It is interesting to notice that most of the colleges responding to all CIOs who are seeing a decreased enrollment are in rural areas vs. the high density population areas. I don't know about the other colleges, but, being in an economically depressed area, 70% of our student population is on financial aid. Thus, we attribute much of our decline to the new financial aid guidelines. As some other colleges already noted, a lot of our decline is in the basic skills area. Not sure what that means. But, it will be interesting to see the next student demographics report to see if there is any change.

I agree we need to increase the “high demand classes”, but, I don't know if you experience the same thing we find, which is, many of our high demand classes are popular classes that may not be a part of a TMC, vocational education or transfer program. Often times, they are electives. Thus, we are in discussion about how we increase these classes to maintain our FTES, which may move us away from our mission?

Additionally, it is interesting to note the governor is pushing to use ending enrollment vs. census to determine our apportionment, which would decrease our apportionment. There is always a fine line between playing the game of what do I need to do to earn my FTES workload and how do I meet the mission of the college. I envy those basic aid colleges.

Like so many colleges, we are trying to find ways to diversify our income to rely less on the state. I would be interested in knowing what other colleges are doing to diversity their income to become less dependent on apportionment. Besides the usual enrollment management techniques, we have found that we are increasing our community services, foundation advertising, contract education and grants. We do this in a planned way so as not to compete with our credit classes.

_____ is experiencing an increase in student headcount and FTES at around 3.5%. This is commensurate with an increase in sections of about 3.25%. Our efficiency is running around 535 WSCH/FTEF as a college average with 631 in the social sciences (note: the standard lecture room is 45 seats). We have some soft enrollments in some CTE programs (paralegal, Design Model Making). Overall, we are not seeing a softening of demand. We will be about 400 FTES below base by the end of this semester and therefore have planned to pull back FTES from Summer 13 to hit the base target.

We are also experiencing enrollment softening. Since 09-10 we have been reducing sections because we were above cap by quite a bit. So students experienced that _____ did not have classes and we speculate

they went to some neighbor colleges that were still trying to build enrollment to get to cap -even during the years of reduction. We do have some neighbor colleges that were in that situation plus we have some basic aid neighbor colleges.

Our dilemma right now is how much money to put into restoring our FTES.

We will capture restoration funding for 12-13. However we are concerned about 13-14 and we are adding sections for F13. When we know how Sp13 enrollment and Su13 enrollment and F13 enrollment looks, we'll determine how many classes we can afford to add Sp14 which will be determined by our projection of: Can we capture 13-14 restoration/growth funding.

_____ begins the spring semester on Feb. 4, and we have increased section offerings by 1%. Compared to this point in the registration process last year, we have a 2% increase in registered students.