

Serving Students Who Have Aspirations to Thrive

An Overview of Oxnard College Experiences

VERONICA TERRIQUEZ, VICTORIA CIUDAD-REAL, AND JOSE NEGRETE

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Introduction

Serving over 5,000 students in Ventura County, Oxnard College (OC) offers an array of programs and courses that help students achieve their academic and career goals. Additionally, the school provides specialized student support resources for low-income, first-generation, single-parent, veteran, and undocumented students.

This report seeks to inform the efforts of Oxnard College's leadership, professors, and staff to support students' educational achievement and overall well-being. It begins by describing the demographic characteristics, financial challenges and obligations, and high school experiences of students aged eighteen and over. Next, it examines students' educational expectations, access to college services and programs, and perspectives on their college experience. The report also summarizes students' career aspirations and interest in the college's Employee Pipeline Program. One of a series of reports on Oxnard's young adult population, this research summary draws on a representative sample survey of 1,620 students aged eighteen and over collected as part of the Thriving Youth Study. The response rate for this survey was 32.2 percent. A separate methodological report provides more information about this study.

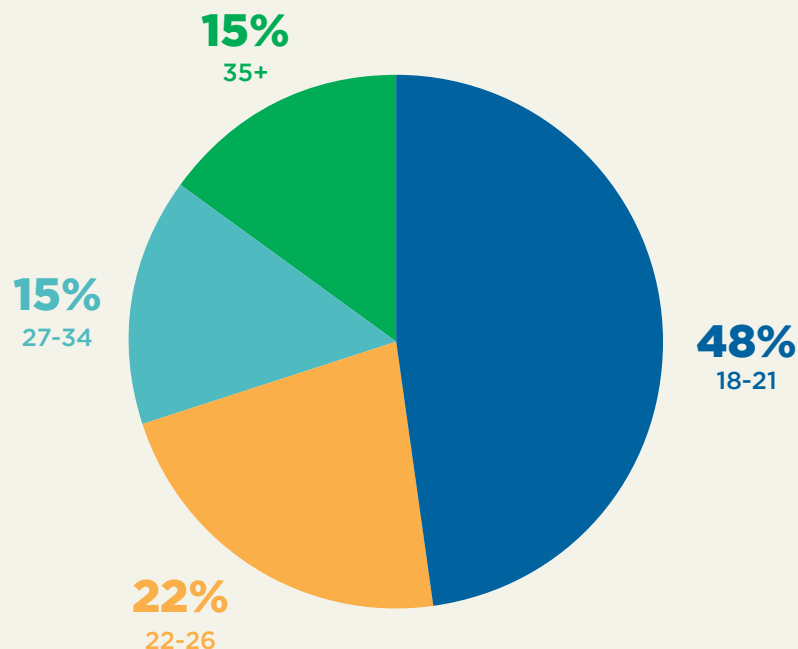


Demographics

Age Distribution

Oxnard College serves a student population with a wide age range. The student body includes high-school-aged adolescents in concurrent enrollment, an adult population comprising mostly younger adults and older residents who may be returning to school or seeking further education. Among the students aged eighteen and older who were enrolled in Spring 2023, approximately 48 percent were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, 22 percent between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-six, and 15 percent between the ages of twenty-seven and thirty-four, and another 15 percent were aged thirty-five and older (fig. 1).

Figure 1.
Age Distribution for Oxnard College Students (Aged 18 and Older)
Source: Thriving Youth Study, 2023



Gender and Sexual Orientation

Students who identified as women comprised the majority (54 percent) of the student population, while 44 percent identified as men, and just under 2 percent reported their gender identity as nonbinary. Survey results indicate that about one in six students (17 percent) identified as LGBTQ+.

Racial/Ethnic and Immigrant Background

Located in a predominantly Latinx city, Oxnard College is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Seventy-nine percent of the students in our survey identified as Hispanic/Latinx. Of the remaining students, 10 percent identified as White, 5 percent as American or Pacific Islander, and 2 percent as Black. Four percent identified as Native American, and many of these students also reported a Mexican immigrant family background.

Indeed, Oxnard's agricultural industry has long attracted Mexican migrants from Indigenous communities, and a large population of Indigenous Mexican migrants and their families have settled in the Oxnard area. Approximately 10 percent of respondents came from an Indigenous migrant background, as measured either by their self-identification with a Mexican or Central American Indigenous ethnic group or by reporting that they spoke an Indigenous language (primarily Mixteco and Zapoteco) at home.

Most students (70 percent) came from immigrant families, meaning that they or at least one parent was born in another country. In fact, 12 percent were immigrants themselves. Among the immigrant students, 67 percent were born in Mexico, while 9 percent were born in the Philippines and about 3 percent in El Salvador. The remaining students came from other countries across the globe. Most students were US citizens. Roughly 2 percent were permanent legal residents, and just under 5 percent had a temporary or precarious legal status.

First-Generation College Students

Oxnard College primarily serves first-generation college students. Among the entire sample, only 14 percent were raised by at least one parent who had a bachelor's degree or higher. This signals that most OC students may require additional guidance in navigating higher education systems.

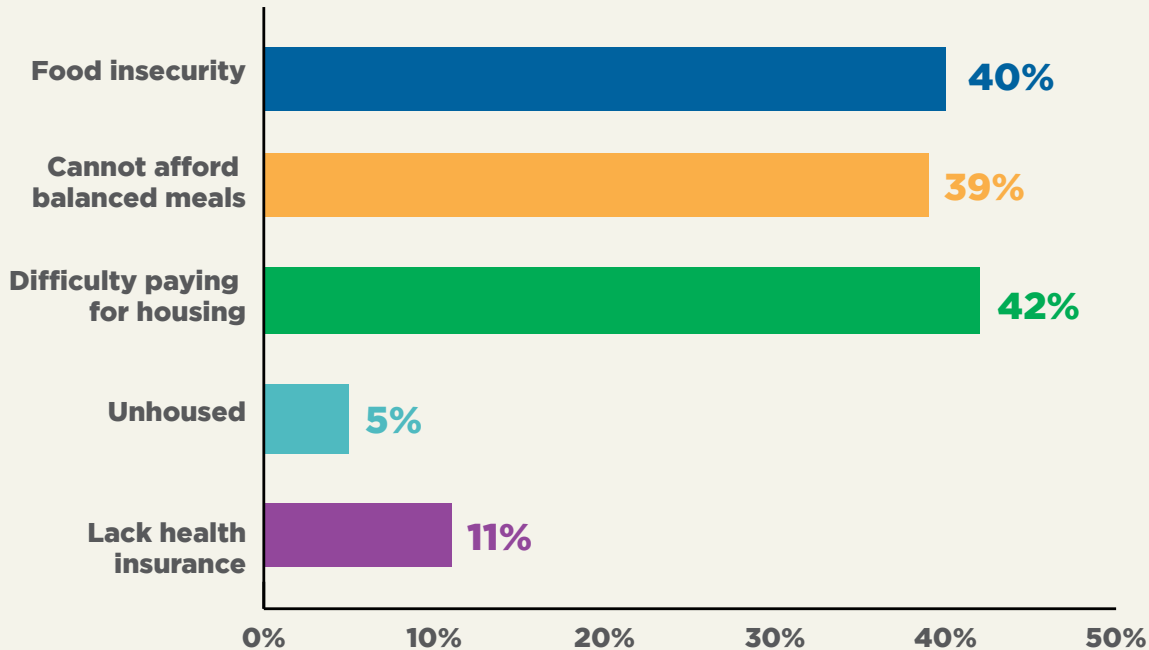


Financial Challenges and Obligations

Oxnard students largely come from low-income backgrounds, and survey results evidence the types of financial hardships and family burdens they encounter. One indicator of this precarity is food insecurity. When reacting to the statement, “The food that (I/we) bought just didn’t last, and (I/we) didn’t have money to get more,” 40 percent of OC students indicated that this was often true or sometimes true. Similarly, 39 percent said that it was often or sometimes true that they struggled to eat balanced meals because of the cost. Forty-two percent of students reported experiencing difficulty paying for housing while

5 percent were unhoused. Finally, 11 percent of students reported lacking health insurance, with most (58 percent) citing the high cost as a reason for being uninsured. These findings demonstrate that alarming percentages of students are facing precarious economic circumstances that necessitate access to additional financial support for basic necessities and stable housing accommodations (fig. 2).

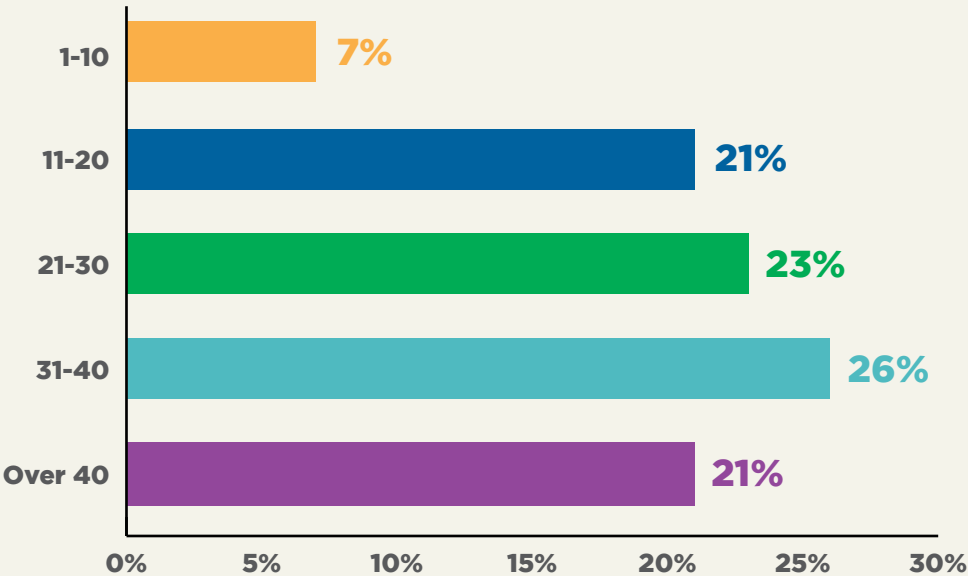
Figure 2.
Financial Challenges Experienced by Oxnard College Students
Source: Thriving Youth Study, 2023



Many OC students also have caregiving responsibilities. Just over one in five were parents, and another 28 percent reported acting as caregivers to individuals other than their own children. This could include caring for other children, parents, grandparents, or other adult family members.

Many OC students were also balancing work on top of their school and domestic responsibilities. Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) were working for pay at the time of the study. While most were working one job; 16 percent were working two or more jobs. As shown in Figure 3, about one quarter (26 percent) of all employed OC students were working thirty-one to forty hours a week. Notably, about one in five (21 percent) were working more than forty hours a week. These findings suggest that most students have significant constraints on their time, which can make it difficult for them to focus on their studies.

Figure 3.
Hours Worked per Week by Employed Oxnard College Students
Source: Thriving Youth Study, 2023



Transportation

Oxnard College is geographically accessible to students who live in the city and surrounding areas. Most respondents lived within the city’s boundaries, but a minority (around 18 percent) lived outside city boundaries, mostly in neighboring Port Hueneme. Still, students largely relied on private transportation to get to school, with 71 percent using their own vehicle as their primary mode of transportation, while 15 percent relied on carpools. Smaller percentages used alternative forms of transportation such as walking (4 percent), biking (<1 percent), skateboarding (<1 percent), using rideshare or taxis (1 percent), or taking the bus (7 percent). Of those students who rode the bus, nearly 30 percent reported being extremely satisfied with the service, and over 50 percent said they were satisfied.



High School Experiences

High school is a formative period for youth, setting them up for their future academic and career journeys. To capture the high school experiences of Oxnard College students, the survey asked students about their grades, participation in various programs, and extracurricular activities.

Most Oxnard College students, 92 percent, had a regular high school diploma, suggesting that they attained their diplomas in accordance with normative timelines, given that those with a GED are more likely to attain their diploma outside of traditional high school pathways.

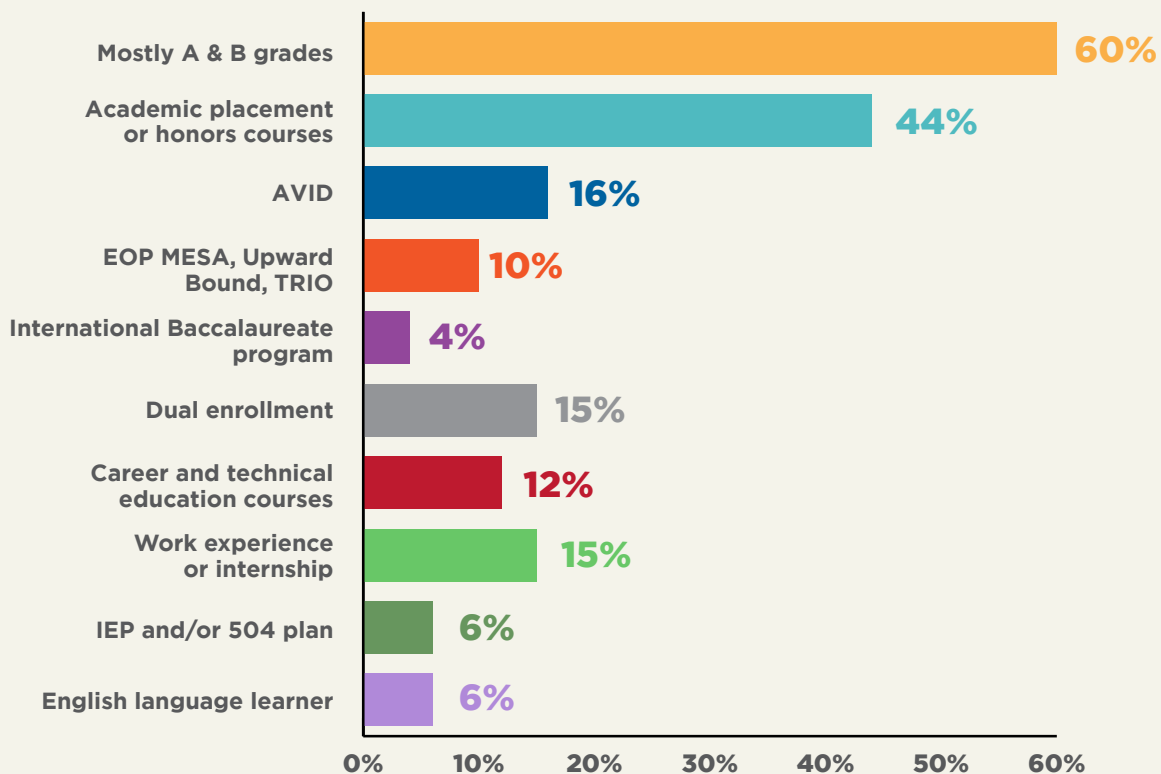
Academic Coursework and Programs

The survey gathered information on high school performance, coursework, and program participation. Self-reported findings suggest that most students did fairly well in high school, with more than half (60 percent) earning grades that were mostly A's and B's, as shown in Figure 4. Twenty-five percent reported earning mostly B's and C's, and the remaining 15 percent received lower grades. Survey results also offer some indicators of college readiness. Forty-four percent of students indicated participating in Advanced Placement or honors courses. At the same time, 16 percent said that they had been in an AVID (college-preparatory) program, and roughly 15 percent had participated in dual enrollment programs at a college while they were in high school.

A minority of students participated in some career or employment-related program. Twelve percent enrolled in career and technical education courses, and 15 percent took part in a work experience, internship, or job placement program while in high school.

Some Oxnard College students reported receiving support from specialized programs during their high school years. Six percent of students reported having an individualized education plan (IEP) and/or a 504 plan (for students with a disability), and roughly 6 percent of students took part in an English language learners (ELL) program.

Figure 4.
Oxnard Students' Program Participation and Academic Outcomes during High School
Source: Thriving Youth Study, 2023



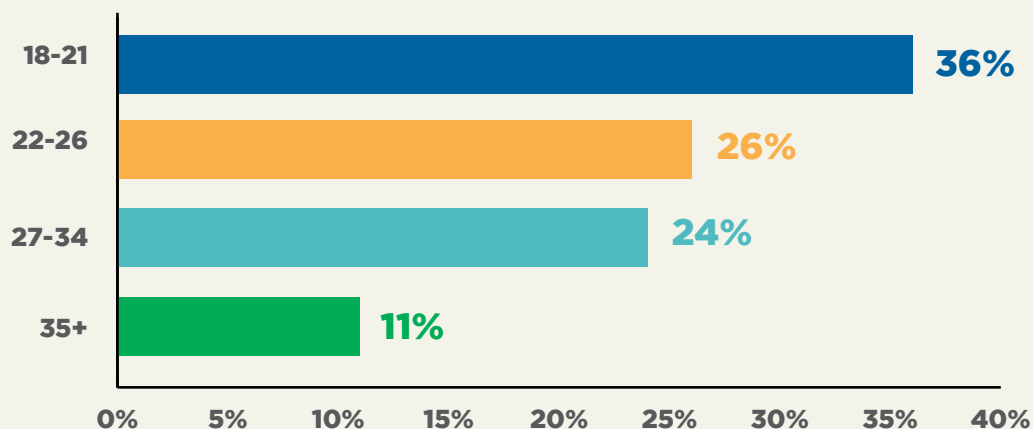


Oxnard College Experiences

Enrollment Patterns

Spring 2023 enrollment data provide insights into the educational pathways of Oxnard students. Survey results indicate that most students—77 percent—were enrolled exclusively at Oxnard College, with the others reporting that they were also enrolled at another school. More than half (58 percent) of students indicated that they were enrolled in at least one online class. Most students enrolled in an average of 7.8 units per semester. Only a minority (28 percent) could be considered full-time students—that is, enrolling in 12.0 units or more. Figure 5 shows the percentage of full-time students by age group. Younger students were more likely to be enrolled full-time than were older students. Still, only 36 percent of students aged eighteen to twenty-one were enrolled full-time, suggesting that their path toward completing transfer requirements or an associate’s degree would likely take time.

Figure 5.
Percentage of Oxnard College Students Enrolled Full-time, by Age Group
Source: Thriving Youth Study, 2023



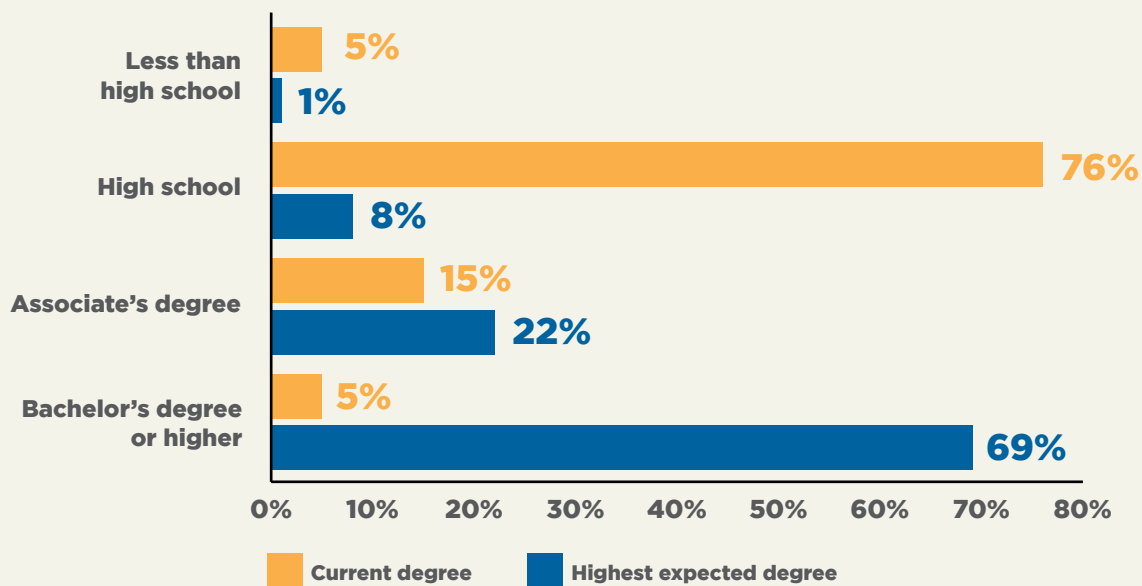
Educational Attainment and Aspirations

Oxnard College students have high educational aspirations. Figure 6 compares reported educational goals and degree attainment. About 5 percent of students had not attained a high school diploma, and most of these young people were concurrently enrolled high school students aged eighteen or nineteen. Meanwhile, roughly three out of four (76 percent) of students had a high school diploma. A much smaller proportion, 15 percent already had an associate's degree, and 5 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. When asked about the highest degree they expected to attain, only 8 percent indicated a high school degree. Notably, most students who were not seeking an associate's degree or higher were pursuing a vocational certificate.

Figure 6.

Oxnard College Student's Degree Status and Expectation for Degree Attainment

Source: Thriving Youth Study, 2023



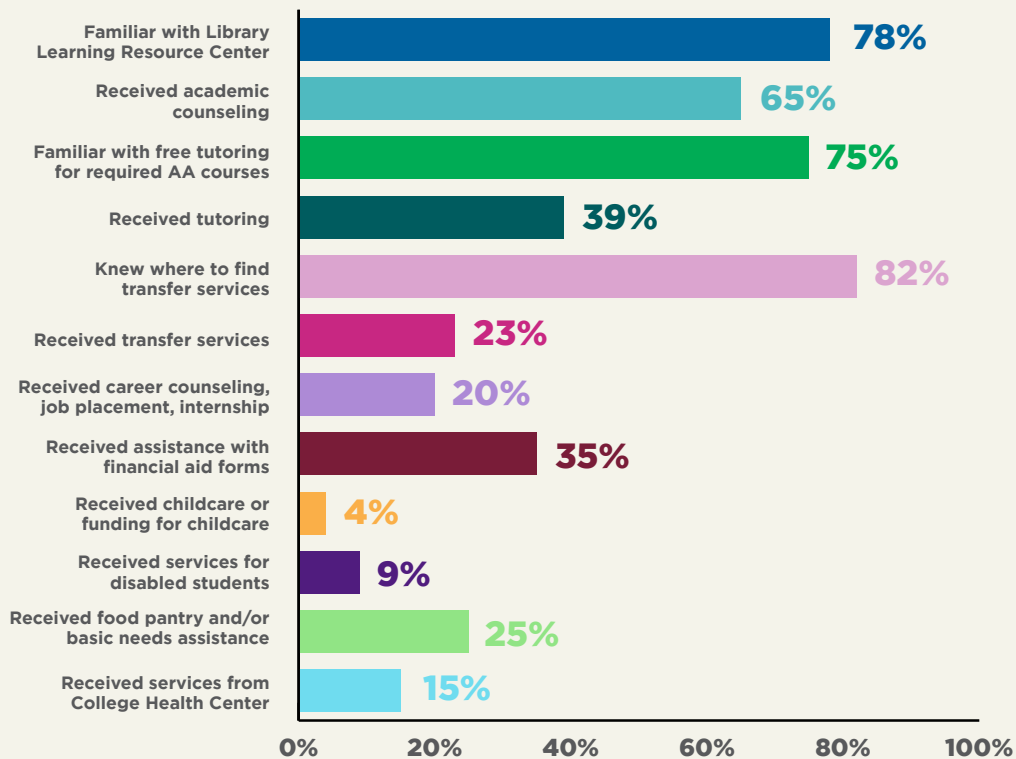
Survey results also indicate that 22 percent of students expected to attain an associate's degree, and another 69 percent expected to secure a bachelor's degree or higher. While students reported high educational ambitions, we should note that more than half (51 percent) of those aspiring to earn a college degree reported that they were having a difficult time passing the required courses for an associate's degree. Students' aspirations significantly exceeded current patterns of degree attainment. Just under 7 percent of Oxnard students transfer to four-year degree-granting institutions (California Community College Chancellor's Office 2021-24), and approximately 21 percent of Oxnard residents aged twenty-five and older hold a bachelor's degree (American Community Survey five-year statistics, 2018-22, authors' calculations). These findings point to the critical importance of providing students with guidance in calibrating and achieving their degree goals.

Campus Services and Support Programs

The TYS survey asked students about their familiarity with or use of a range of campus services (fig. 7). The Library Learning Resource Center seeks to support students' academic success, offering a range of research and academic services. These resources were known to most students, with 78 percent reporting that they were familiar with the center.

Figure 7.
Oxnard College Students' Familiarity with and Use of Student Services

Source: Thriving Youth Study, 2023



Although students may be familiar with services offered by the college, not all use them. Three out of four students (75 percent) said that they knew where to find free tutoring for courses required to obtain an associate's degree. Only 39 percent, however, reported taking advantage of this resource. Eighty-two percent of students were aware of transfer services, which can be crucial for providing students with guidance for transferring into a four-year college or university. Yet only 23 percent of students claimed to have used transfer services. (Survey data cannot be used to determine whether students are underutilizing existing services or whether service programs lack the capacity to meet student demand.)

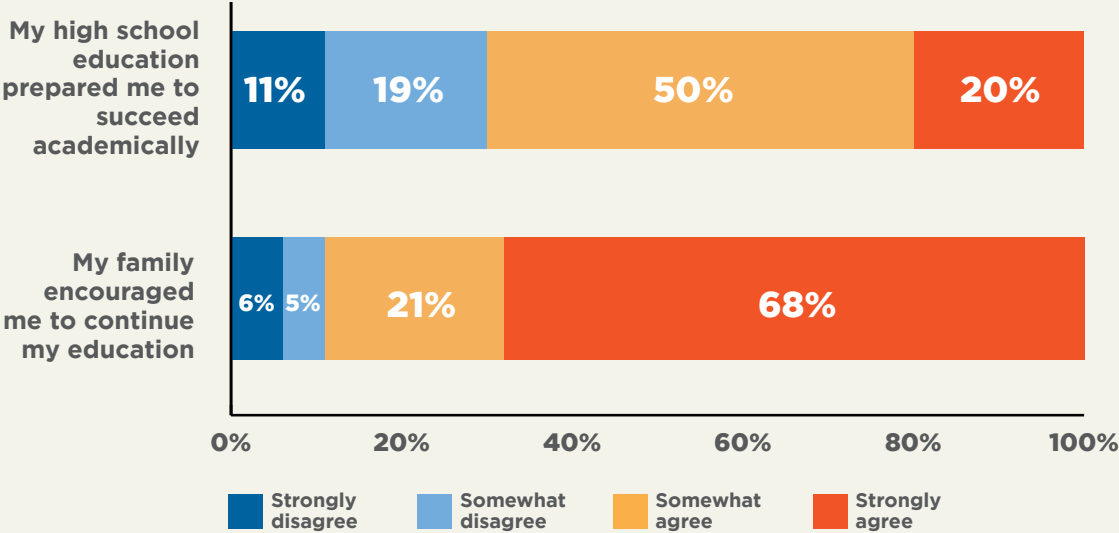
Furthermore, just 20 percent of students said that they had made use of the college’s career counseling services, job placement services, or job internship resources, and only 35 percent received assistance with filling out financial aid forms.

For specialized services, about 4 percent of OC respondents said they used the college’s childcare facilities or received funding to help with childcare, and 9 percent accessed disabled student services. About a quarter of students reported using the food pantry or receiving assistance to meet their basic needs. A small proportion of students (15 percent) accessed health or mental health services through the college health center.

Student Perspectives

A series of survey questions asked students to indicate their level of agreement with statements pertaining to high school preparation, familial support, coursework, financial aid, and campus climate. Their replies provide insights into how students view their postsecondary educational experience (fig. 8).

Figure 8.
Oxnard College Students’ Perspectives on Family Support and High School Preparation
Source: Thriving Youth Study, 2023
Note: Percentages may include rounding.



When asked to react to the statement, “My high school prepared me to succeed academically,” only 20 percent strongly agreed with the statement. Another 50 percent of respondents somewhat agreed, and 30 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. These results suggest that a significant proportion of students are struggling with or are challenged by Oxnard College’s coursework.

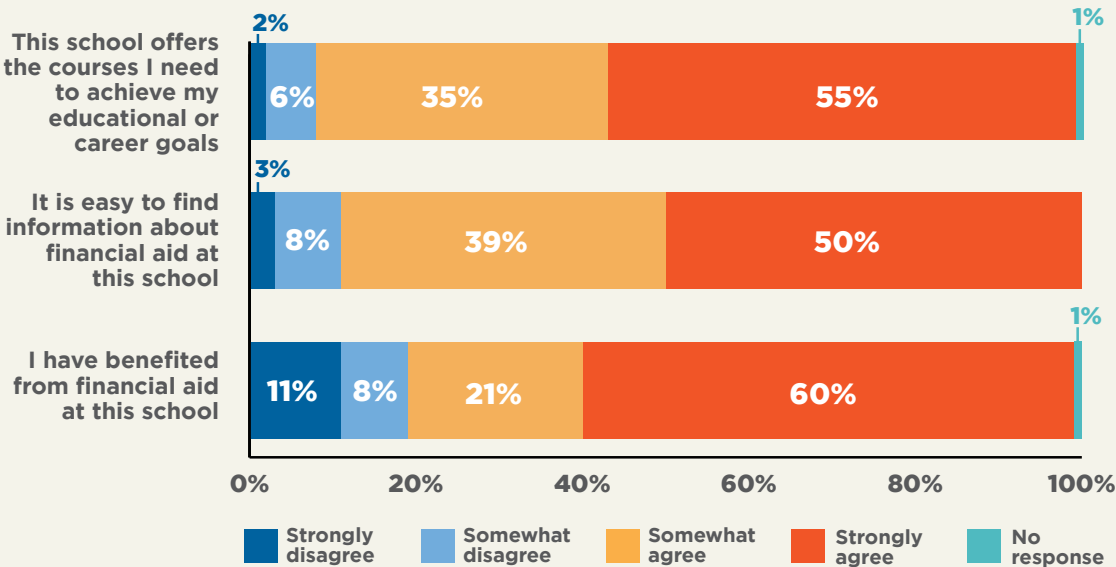
It appears that most students can count on some level of family support for their academic journeys. Specifically, 68 percent of students strongly agreed that their families encouraged them to continue their education, while 21 percent somewhat agreed. However, about 11 percent of students strongly or somewhat disagreed.

When it comes to coursework options and financial aid awareness, survey results trend in a positive direction, although there is room for improvement (fig. 9). For example, more than half of students (55 percent) strongly agreed that Oxnard College offers courses that they need to achieve their educational or career goals, and another 35 percent somewhat agreed with the statement. A small minority either somewhat disagreed (6 percent) or strongly disagreed (2 percent). In terms of financial support, most students either strongly agreed (50 percent) or somewhat agreed (39 percent) that it was easy to find information about financial aid at Oxnard College. Only a small percentage disagreed with the statement, suggesting that the college’s outreach efforts were, for the most part, successful. Additionally, 60 percent of students strongly agreed, and 21 percent somewhat agreed that they had benefited from financial aid at Oxnard College. Around 19 percent strongly disagreed or somewhat disagreed with this statement; some of these students may not have applied or qualified for financial aid.

Figure 9.
Oxnard College Students’ Perspectives on Coursework and Financial Aid

Source: Thriving Youth Study, 2023

Note: Percentages may include rounding





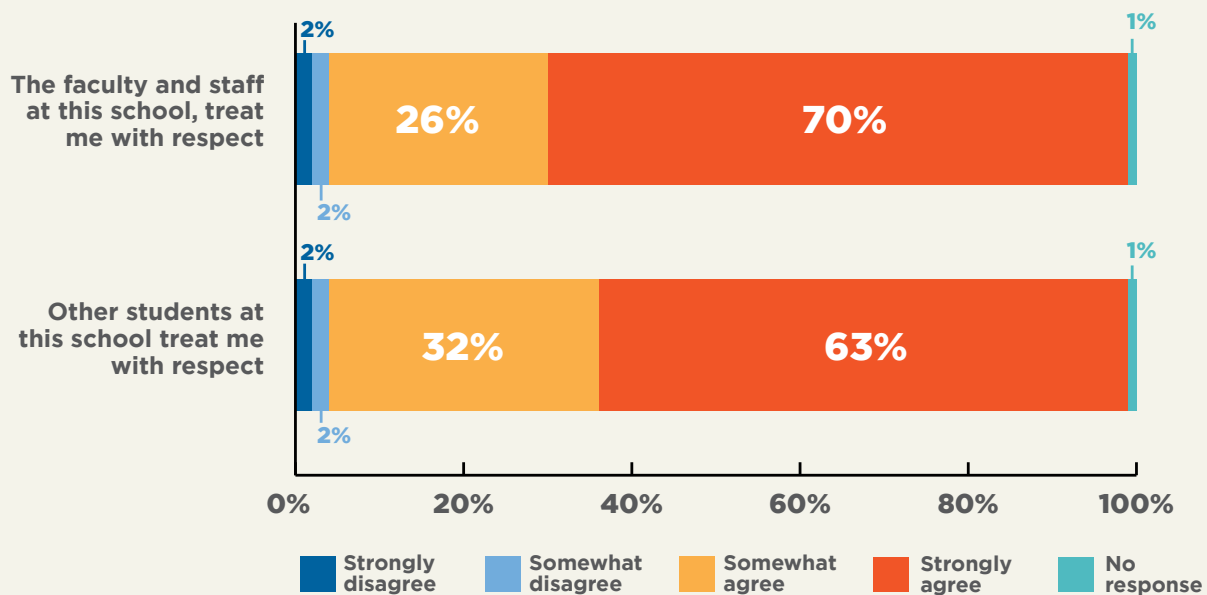
Campus Climate

Survey results point to a generally healthy campus climate at Oxnard College (fig. 10). Almost all students either strongly agreed (70 percent) or somewhat agreed (26 percent) that Oxnard College faculty and staff treated them with respect. A similar proportion also agreed that other Oxnard College students treated them with respect, with 63 percent reporting that they strongly agreed and 32 percent that they somewhat agreed.

Figure 10.
Oxnard College Students' Perspectives on Campus Climate

Source: Thriving Youth Study, 2023

Note: Percentages may include rounding





The Employee Pipeline Program

The Oxnard Employee Pipeline Program can offer relevant job training for students, especially those who are not on track to obtain a bachelor's degree. Operated as a partnership that comprises Oxnard College, the City of Oxnard, and the West Ventura County Business Alliance, the program helps local residents obtain job-readiness skills and offers them a guaranteed interview with Oxnard companies that typically offer above-average entry-level wages, health benefits, and opportunities for career advancement. Although the program was in its early stages when the survey was conducted, 73 percent of respondents indicated they were interested in learning more about it. As the program further develops its curriculum, refines its outreach strategies, and expands its ties to local employers, it should consider targeting students who may be struggling to complete the coursework required for an associate's degree or to transfer to a bachelor's degree-granting institution. The Employee Pipeline Program, along with other vocational certificate programs, can be further strengthened and possibly expanded to broaden career opportunities for local residents.



Career Expectations and Training

As students prepare for the labor market and further education, Oxnard College could find it helpful to learn more about students' career expectations. To this end, the TYS asked students about the occupation that they would like to have in five years. Only 5 percent of respondents (mostly older students) indicated that they wanted to keep their current job, while 34 percent reported that they did not know; this was especially the case among younger students, with 41 percent of students aged eighteen to twenty-one reporting that they did not have a clear occupation in mind.

Slightly over 60 percent of students named a specific occupation, and of these students, 18 percent indicated that their desired job required an associate's degree. Another 55 percent said that their desired job required a bachelor's degree. This finding highlights the importance of providing Oxnard students with career guidance about viable career options, given their academic preparation and training.



Conclusion

Oxnard College has an important role in advancing the educational development and career training of residents in Oxnard and surrounding communities and in enabling the upward mobility of its students. As evidenced by this research, the college serves a student population that encounters a number of financial and socioeconomic constraints, with a significant proportion working many hours to make ends meet. Despite these challenges, students who were enrolled at the college demonstrated their commitment to furthering their education and expanding their career options. Some of these students were still in the process of setting future career goals, while others hoped to obtain a bachelor's degree and/or secure a particular job. Oxnard College offers valuable services to students, although they do not appear to be sufficient to meet the wide-ranging needs of its students, particularly those experiencing compounded economic hardships (including food and housing insecurity). Nonetheless, students overwhelmingly reported feeling respected by instructors and peers at the school.

Oxnard College can benefit from refining its policies and practices, along with making targeted investments that can not only expand pathways to four-year colleges and universities but also improve access to training for living-wage jobs. Tutoring, counseling, transfer services, the Employee Pipeline Program, and other vocational training programs are among the interventions that can be fine-tuned and expanded to assist students in calibrating and attaining their goals. Efforts to support students' career success can include expanded coordination with local employers who offer high-quality jobs that do not require a bachelor's degree. Given its location and its healthy campus culture, Oxnard College has great potential to further serve as an engine of socioeconomic mobility for local Indigenous, immigrant, and working-class residents.





ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Veronica Terriquez is a UCLA Professor and Director of the Chicano Studies Research Center.

Victoria Ciudad-Real is a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at UC Irvine.

An alum of Oxnard College, Jose Negrete received a master's degree in urban and regional planning from UCLA.

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