

Thursday, December 11, 2014

QCC Survey of Non Returning Students

Report to the Retention Management Committee

During the Spring 2014 semester, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment administered an online survey to non-returning students to examine the reasons why QCC students leave prior to graduation as well as their attitudes toward QCC. A summary of the spring 2014 survey findings is presented in this report.

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Methodology

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment administered an online survey to former degree students who were no longer enrolled at QCC in spring 2014. The survey was proposed by and developed with input from the Retention Management Committee. The purpose of the survey was to assess the experience of non-returning students, understand their reasons for leaving, and receive information about their current educational status. Topics covered in the survey included students' attitudes towards their QCC experience, effectiveness of QCC's general education learning outcomes, current educational and employment status, areas of academic struggle, and reason(s) for leaving QCC. Student responses are reported in aggregate format and split by three groups according to number of credits completed at the end of the Spring 2014 semester: 0-10 credits completed; >10 to 30 credits completed, and >30 credits completed before leaving QCC.

The survey was conducted between April 24, 2014, and June 14, 2014. An initial invitation to complete the survey was sent via personal email addresses to 2,711 students who were no longer enrolled at QCC and never received a degree. A series of reminder emails were sent over a seven-week period. A total of 199 students completed the survey. The response rate was 7.3 percent. The margin of error was 6.69 percent, larger than the commonly accepted rate of <5.00 percent. In addition, the survey respondents were not a close representation of the survey sample. See student demographics on page 5 for details.

Executive Summary

In general, students who had earned more than 30 credits before leaving QCC without a degree were more likely to have transferred to another school. They were also more likely to be *"doing really well"* in their current program of study. Students who had earned more than 30 credits before leaving typically were more satisfied with the services and the education at QCC and were more likely to have left because *"a four year college was their first choice"* than students who left sooner.

Here is a breakdown of the main findings:

- Forty-eight percent of the survey respondents were enrolled in another institution at the time of the survey. Of the students who were enrolled elsewhere, 76 percent were full time, and 64 percent had all or most of their credits transfer.
- Sixty-one percent reported that they were not experiencing any difficulty at their current school. Twenty-two percent were experiencing difficulty in advanced math and science while 21 percent were experiencing difficulty in their program-specific courses.
- Sixty-three percent were working either full- or part-time at the time of the survey. Thirty-eight percent worked without attending school, 26 percent worked while attending school (percentages are rounded). Another 14 percent were looking for work while attending school and 12 percent were looking for work and were not in school.
- Students were asked to rate their QCC experience. Satisfaction rates varied by area and time spent at QCC before leaving. Students who had earned more than 30 credits before leaving typically had higher satisfaction rates than those who left sooner. "Student support" as well as "student clubs and activities" received high frequency responses of "I don't know," possibly indicating that non-returning students are less likely to utilize these resources.
- Satisfaction rates were mostly positive, either satisfied or very satisfied, when asked about faculty (78 percent), quality of academic programs (79 percent), and academic support (69 percent). Twenty-four percent were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with academic support.
- Seventy-five percent of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the Library and campus technology resources overall.
- The helpfulness of staff received the lowest satisfaction rating (67 percent). Thirty percent of students were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the helpfulness of staff at QCC.
- Respondents were asked to rate the QCC education received on a scale of "not at all helpful" to "extremely helpful" in achieving QCC's general education outcomes (pages 14 to 16). Responses varied by outcome. Overall, between 52 and 66 percent responded with *"extremely helpful"* or *"very helpful"* and roughly 20 percent with *"slightly helpful."* The less credits a student had earned before leaving QCC, the more likely they were to say a learning objective did not apply to them. Quantitative reasoning received the highest percent of *"not at all helpful,"* at 14 percent.
- When asked why they left QCC before earning a degree, students referred mostly to external factors such as too much going on outside of school (34 percent of the time) followed by financial difficulties (31 percent). Twenty-two percent left because *"four-year college was [their] first choice so they transferred as soon as possible."* Fifteen percent each left because they were *"only interested in taking courses and never intended to earn a degree"* or because they *"did not like QCC."* Hardly anybody left because credits needed to graduate would not transfer to a senior college (8 percent).

Student Demographics

Table 1: Demographics of Survey Respondents and Comparison to Survey Sample and QCC-wide Fall 2013 Degree and Certificate seeking students

	Survey Respondents		Total Survey Sample (invited)		Fall 2013 QCC wide
Group Totals	182		2,711		14,354
<u>Gender</u>	#	%	#	%	%
Male	49	27%	1,332	49%	47%
Female	133	73%	1,379	51%	53%
<u>Last Time Status</u>					
Full-time	68	37%	1,255	46%	67%
Part-time	114	63%	1,456	54%	33%
<u>Ethnicity</u>					
American Indian or Native Alaskan	3	2%	19	1%	1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	45	25%	556	21%	25%
Black, Non-Hispanic	55	31%	817	30%	25%
Hispanic	40	22%	840	31%	30%
White, Non-Hispanic	37	21%	479	18%	19%
<u>Last Term Enrolled</u>					
Winter 2013	2	1%	59	2%	NA
Fall 2013	95	52%	1,260	46%	
Summer 2013	21	12%	206	8%	
Spring 2013	62	34%	1,169	43%	
Winter 2012	2	1%	17	1%	

Table 2: Cumulative GPA before leaving QCC	Survey Respondents	Total Survey Sample (invited)
<u>Quartiles</u>	<u>GPA</u>	<u>GPA</u>
25th Quartile	1.57	0.77
Median	2.28	1.92
75 Quartile	3.07	2.70

Table 3: Cumulative credits acquired before leaving QCC	Survey Respondents ¹		Total Survey Sample (invited)	
Credit range	#	%	#	%
0-10 credits	47	24%	1,040	38%
>10-30 credits	66	33%	810	30%
> 30 credits	86	43%	861	32%
Total	199	100%	2,711	100%

¹ 17 students were surveyed by Brian Kerr in a reverse transfer project.

Comparing the group of survey respondents to the sample of all not-returning students invited to the survey, we found that more female and part-time students responded to the survey. They were academically better performer as measured by the cumulative GPA statistics displayed in table 2, and had more credits completed before leaving (table 3) than the entire sample. Hispanic students were underrepresented in the respondents group (22%). All over- and underrepresented groups were highlighted in red in the tables 1 to 3.

Transfer and Employment Status

Transfer Status

The following questions addressed transfer and enrollment status in another institution by students who had left QCC at the time of the survey, including specific aspects of their enrollment.

Q 4 Are you currently attending school?

	0-10 Credits		>10-30 Credits		> 30 Credits		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
No	28	68%	30	59%	31	40%	89	52%
Yes, I attend a four year college	9	22%	11	22%	32	41%	52	31%
Yes, I attend a community college	2	5%	8	16%	7	9%	17	10%
Yes, I attend a graduate or professional school	2	5%	0	0%	3	4%	5	3%
Yes, I attend a technical, trade, or other special school	0	0%	2	4%	5	6%	7	4%
Total	41	100%	51	100%	78	100%	170	100%

The more credits a student acquired prior to leaving QCC, the more likely they were to have transferred to another school. Of respondents with over 30 credits earned before leaving QCC, 60 percent were attending school at the time of the survey. The transfer rate was 41 percent for students who earned between 10.5 and 30 credits and only 32 percent for students with 10 or less credits earned at QCC.

Q5 Are you currently in school full-time or part-time?

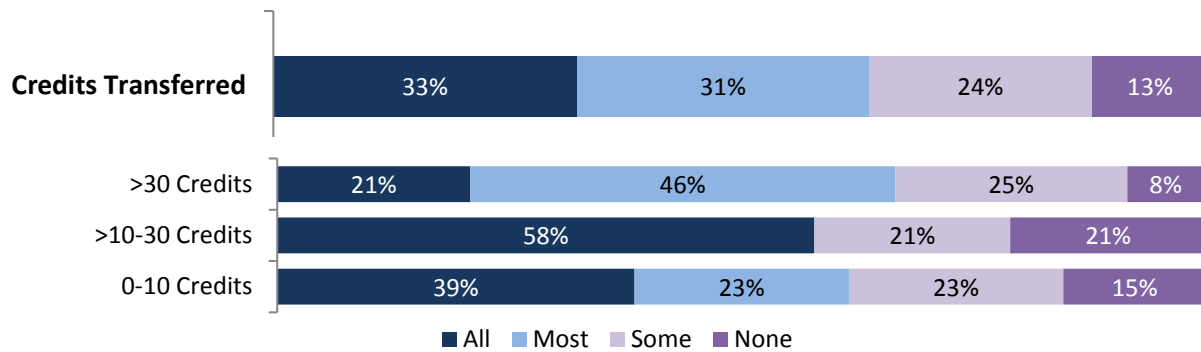
	0-10 Credits		>10-30 Credits		> 30 Credits		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Full-time	11	79%	17	77%	37	76%	65	76%
Part-time	3	21%	5	23%	12	25%	20	24%
Total	14	100%	22	100%	49	100%	85	100%

Of non-returning students currently enrolled in another school, 76 percent were enrolled full time. A chi square test on full time status and credits earned at QCC groups indicated no statistically significant association between the two factors.

Transfer Status

Q6 How many of the credits you earned at QCC transferred to your current school?

	0-10 Credits		>10-30 Credits		>30 Credits		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
All	5	39%	11	58%	10	21%	26	33%
Most	3	23%	0	0%	22	46%	25	31%
Some	3	23%	4	21%	12	25%	19	24%
None	2	15%	4	21%	4	8%	10	13%
Total	13	100%	19	100%	48	100%	80	100%

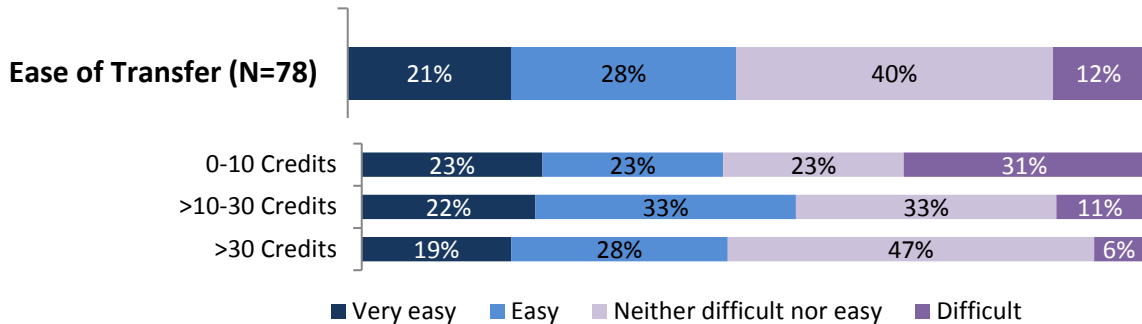


Of non-returning students currently enrolled at another school, 64 percent report that all or most of their credits transferred. Students that earned 30 or more credits are less likely to have all credits transfer.

Transfer Experience

Questions 7 and 8 were administered only to students who indicated they were currently enrolled at another school. These questions addressed difficulty in adjusting to their current school and specific academic difficulties faced in their current school.

Q7 How difficult was it to adjust to your current school?



The majority of respondents found adjusting to their new school to be "neither difficult nor easy," "easy" or "very easy." Only 12 percent of respondents found adjusting difficult. The more credit non-returning students had earned before leaving QCC, the less likely they were to have difficulty adjusting to their new school.

Q8 Are there classes in which you are experiencing difficulty at your current school (check all that apply)?

	0-10 Credits		>10-30 Credits		>30 Credits		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Advanced Math and Science	6	50%	6	40%	5	10%	17	23%
Academic program specific courses	4	33%	1	7%	10	21%	16	21%
None, I am doing really well in all my subjects	4	33%	8	53%	34	71%	47	63%
Total Number of Students	12	100%	15	100%	48	100%	75	100%

The majority of respondents (61 percent) reported that they were not experiencing any difficulty at their current school. Twenty-two percent were experiencing difficulty in advanced math and science while 21 percent were experiencing difficulty in their program specific courses. Again, the more credits students had earned before leaving, the more likely they were to be "doing really well" in all of their subjects. Seventy-one percent of respondents who earned 30 or more credits reported to be "doing really well" in all of their classes compared to 53 percent of students who earned 10 to 30 credits and 33 percent of students with less 10 credits.

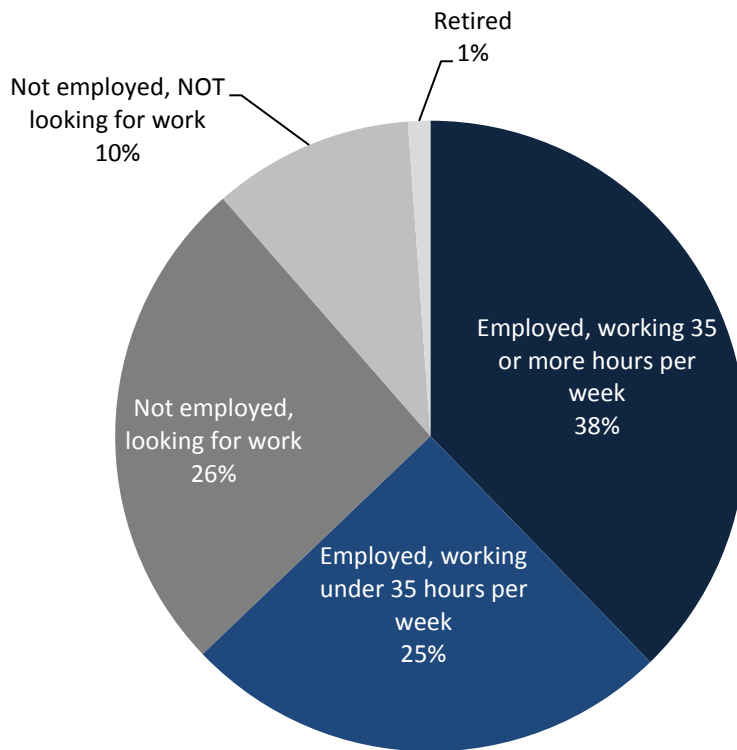
Employment Status

According to the self-reported employment status (question 3 on the survey), more than a third (38 percent) worked more than 35 hours a week, 25 percent worked less than 35 hours a week, 26 percent were unemployed but were looking for work, and 11 percent were not employed and were not looking for work or had retired.

Q3 Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

	Headcount	Percent
Employed, working 35 or more hours per week	66	38%
Employed, working under 35 hours per week	44	25%
Not employed, looking for work	45	26%
Not employed, NOT looking for work	18	10%
Retired	2	1%
Total	175	

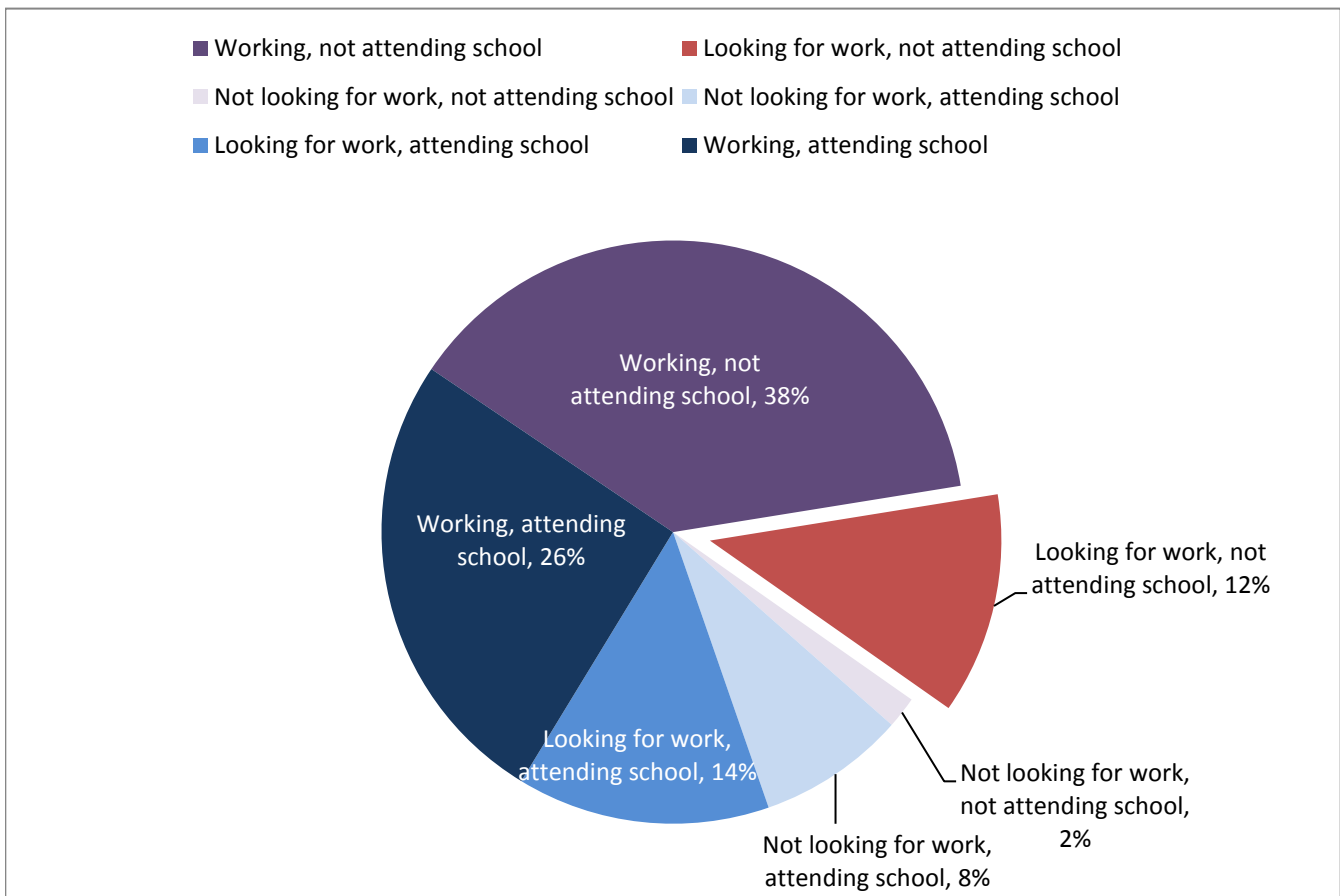
Employment Status (N=175)



Employment and/or Transfer Status

A cross tabulation of responses to education and employment status is shown below. Thirty-eight percent of respondents were working and not attending school. Twenty-six percent were both working and attending school, and another 14 percent were attending school while looking for work. Twelve percent of respondents were looking for work and not attending school at the time of the survey. Twelve percent of respondents were looking for work and not attending school at the time of the survey.

		Headcount	%	
Not In School	Working, not attending school	65	38%	52%
	Looking for work, not attending school	21	12%	
	Not looking for work, not attending school	3	2%	
In School	Not looking for work, attending school	14	8%	48%
	Looking for work, attending school	24	14%	
	Working, attending school	44	26%	
Total Answered		171		

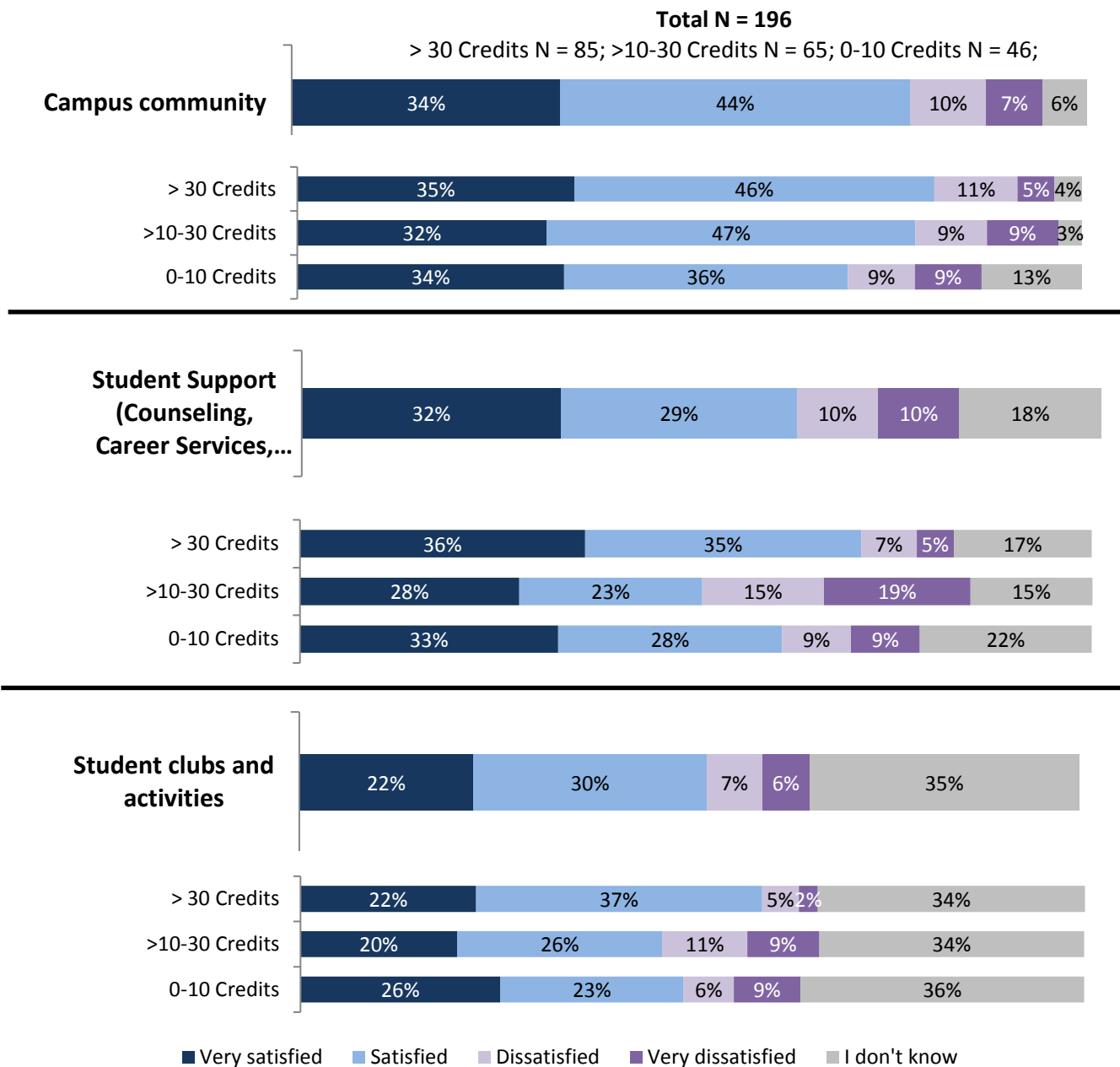


QCC Satisfaction

Community

Respondents were asked to rank their various experiences on a scale from "very satisfied" to "very dissatisfied." Responses to campus community were largely positive, with 77 percent of respondents either satisfied or very satisfied. Student support as well as student clubs and activities received a high frequency of "I don't know" responses, accounting for 18 and 35 percent of all answers respectively, which suggests that non-returning students are less likely to utilize these resources.

How would you rate your experience at QCC?

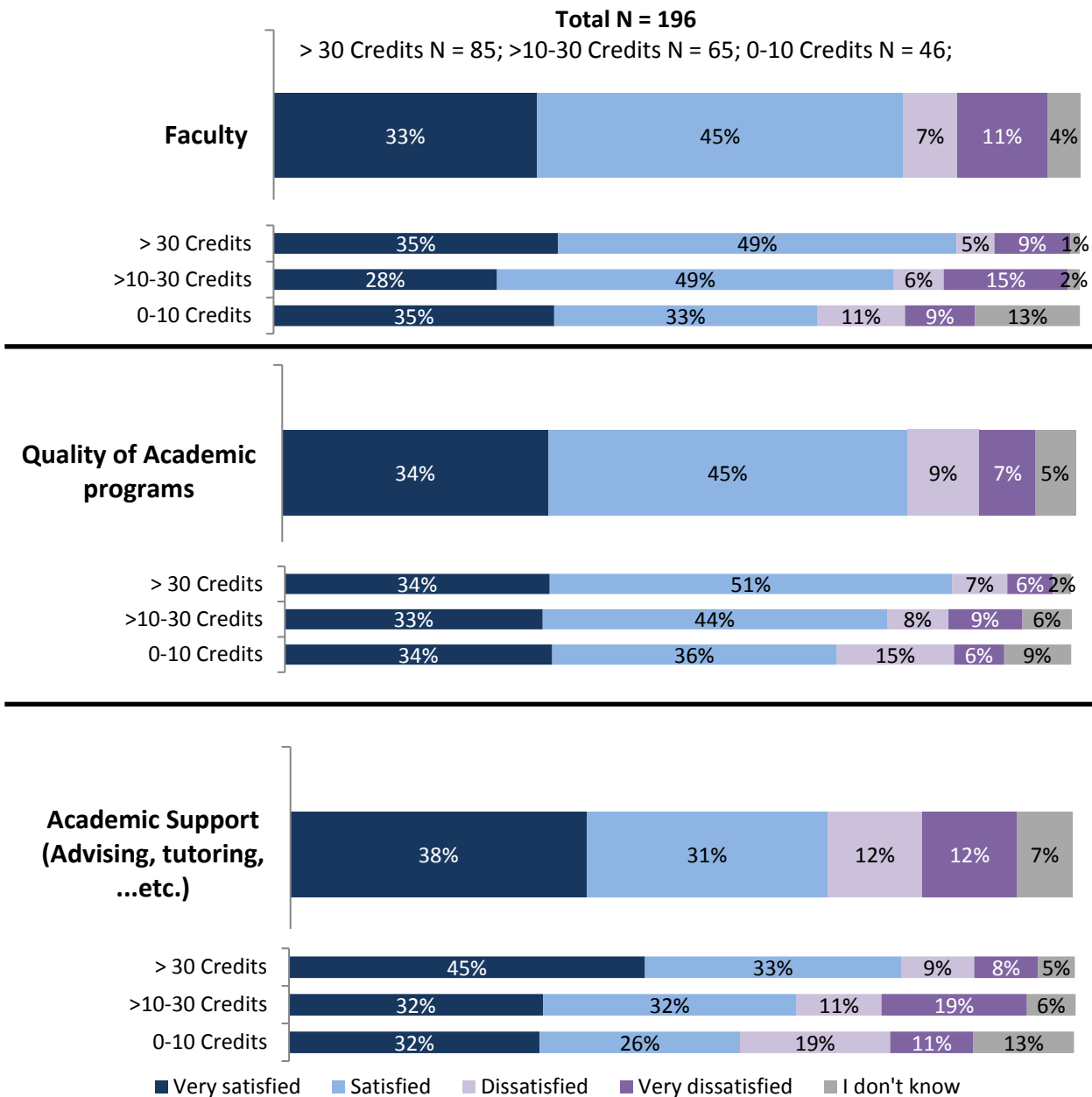


QCC Satisfaction

Academics

Results were mostly positive, either satisfied or very satisfied, when asked about faculty (78 percent), quality of academic programs (79 percent), and academic support (69 percent). Twenty-four percent were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with academic support. Students who had accumulated more than 30 credits before leaving QCC were less often dissatisfied (17 percent), and students who left with fewer credits were more often dissatisfied (30 percent). The less credit non-returning students had accumulated, the more likely they were to respond "I don't know."

How would you rate your experience at QCC?

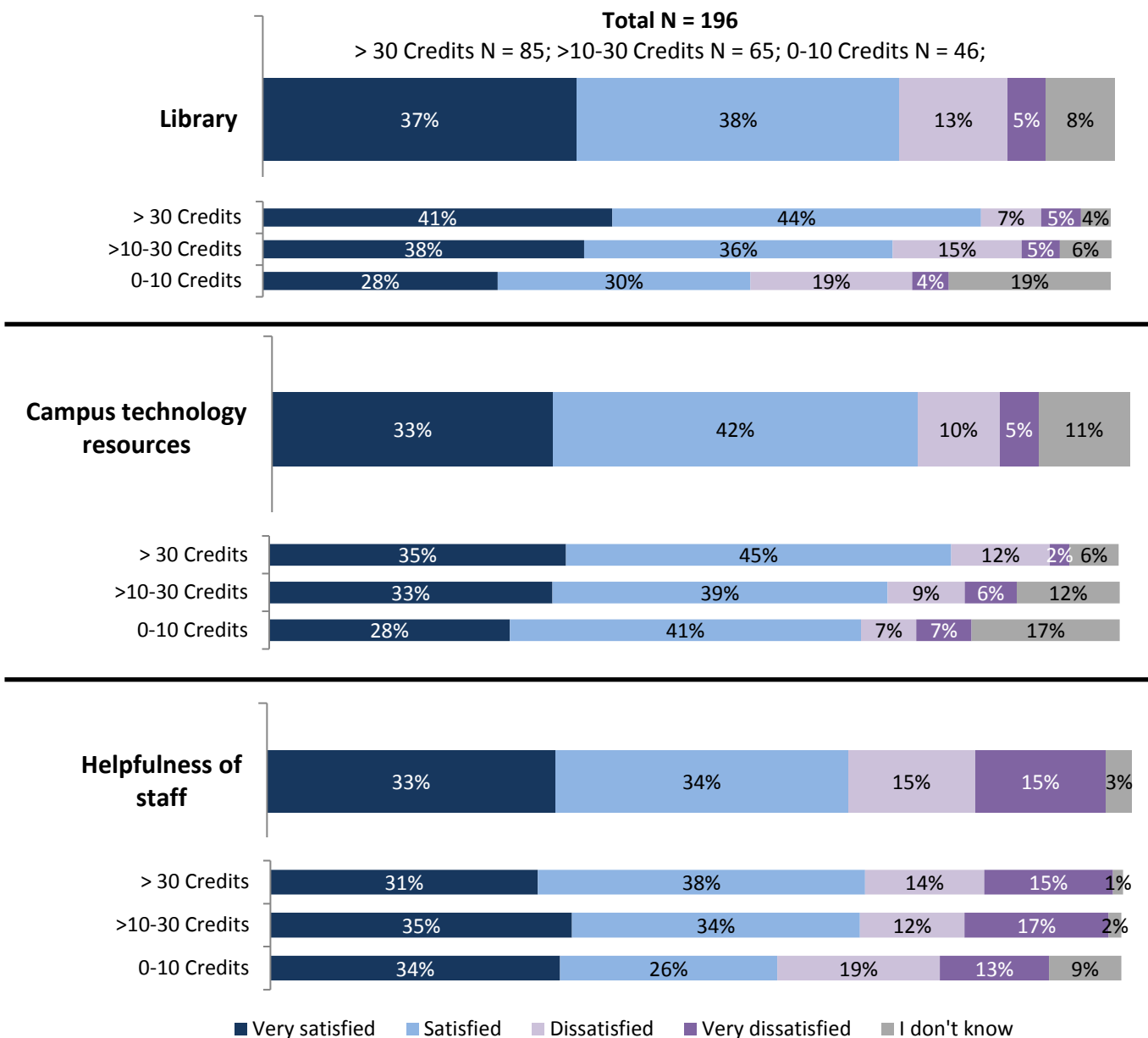


QCC Satisfaction

Academic Resources

Seventy-five percent of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the Library and campus technology resources overall. Eighty-five percent of students who had earned over 30 credits before leaving were satisfied with the Library. Students who left with ten or less credits earned responded "I don't know," more often indicating that they may not have used these resources while attending QCC. The helpfulness of staff received the lowest satisfaction rating (67 percent satisfied or very satisfied). Thirty percent of students were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the helpfulness of staff at QCC.

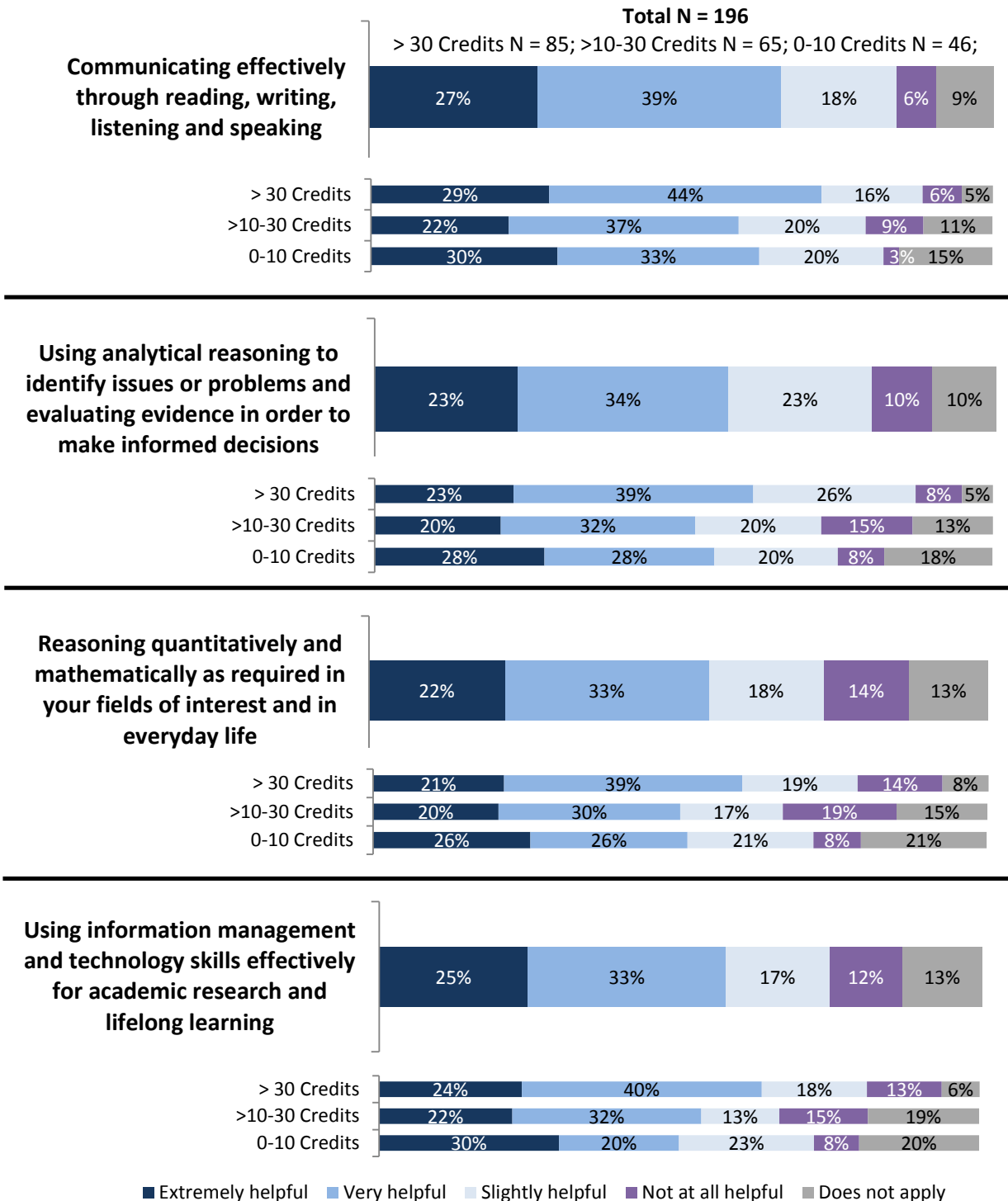
How would you rate your experience at QCC?



Learning Outcomes

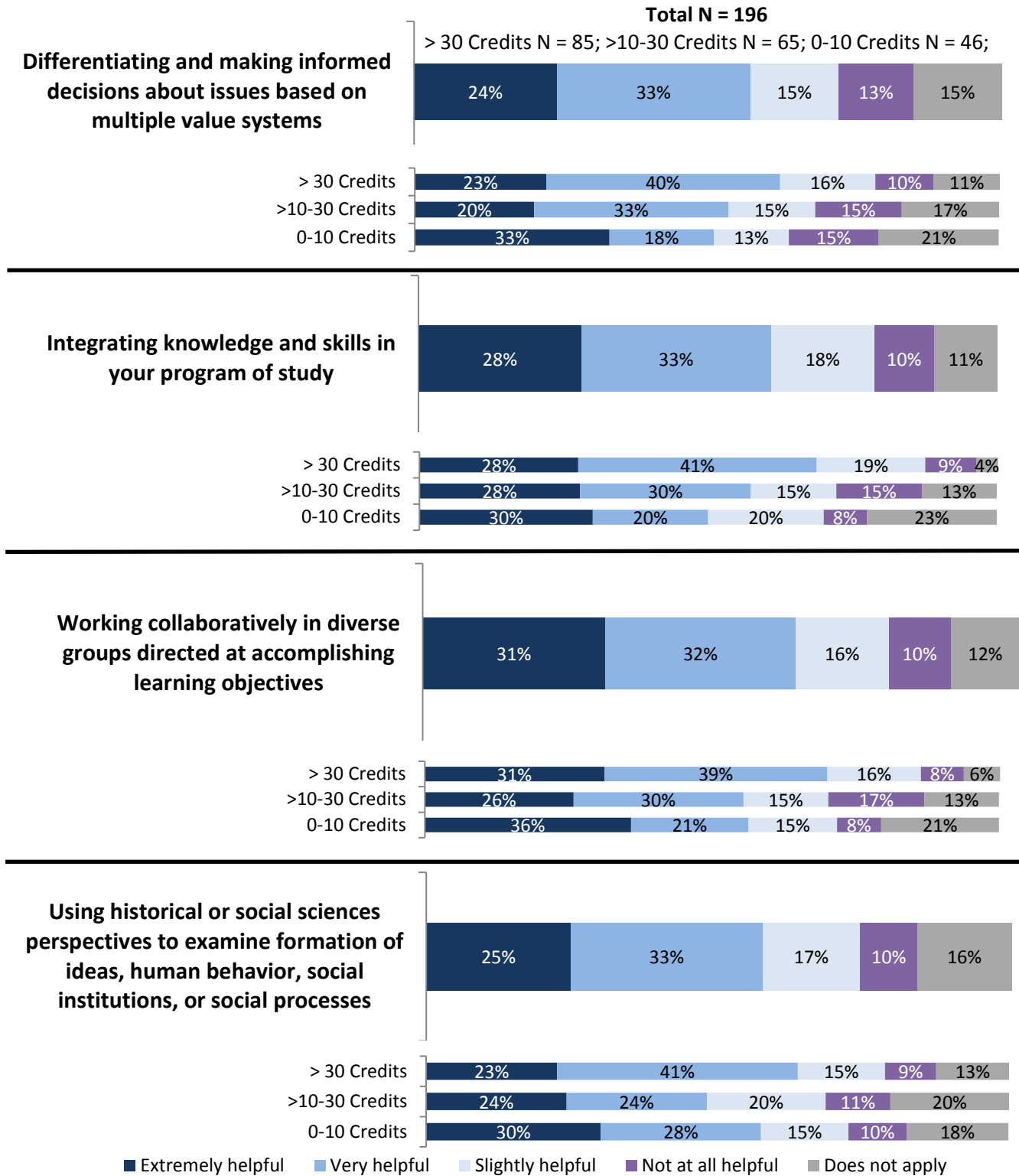
Respondents were asked to reflect on QCC's general education outcomes and to rate their education at QCC based on how helpful it was to prepare them for these skills. The less credits a student earned, the more likely they were to say a learning objective did not apply to them. Quantitative reasoning received the highest percent of "not at all helpful" (14 percent).

Q2 Reflecting on your current situation, how helpful is what you have learned at QCC for ...



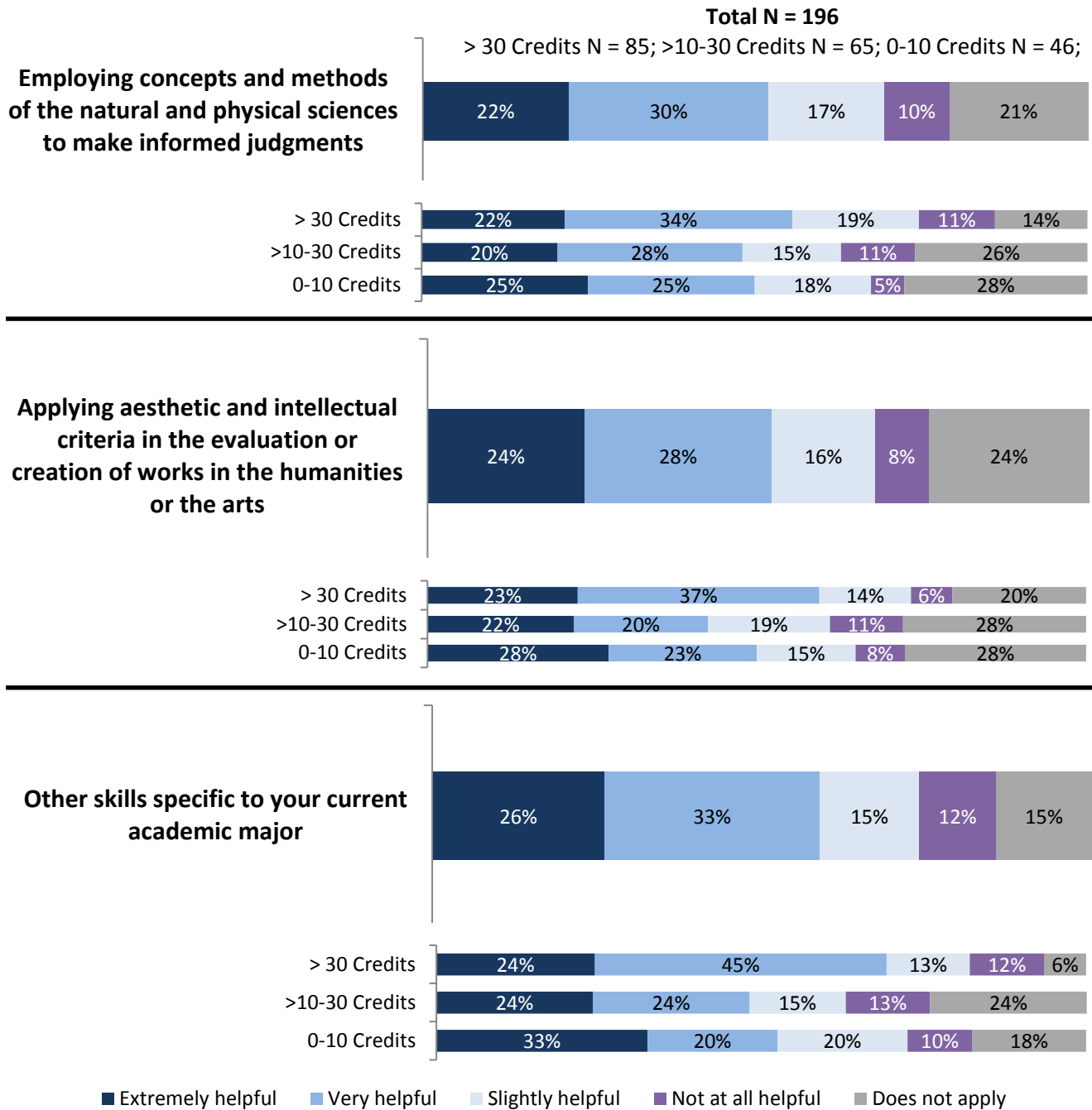
Learning Outcomes

Q2 Reflecting on your current situation, how helpful is what you have learned at QCC for ...?



Learning Outcomes

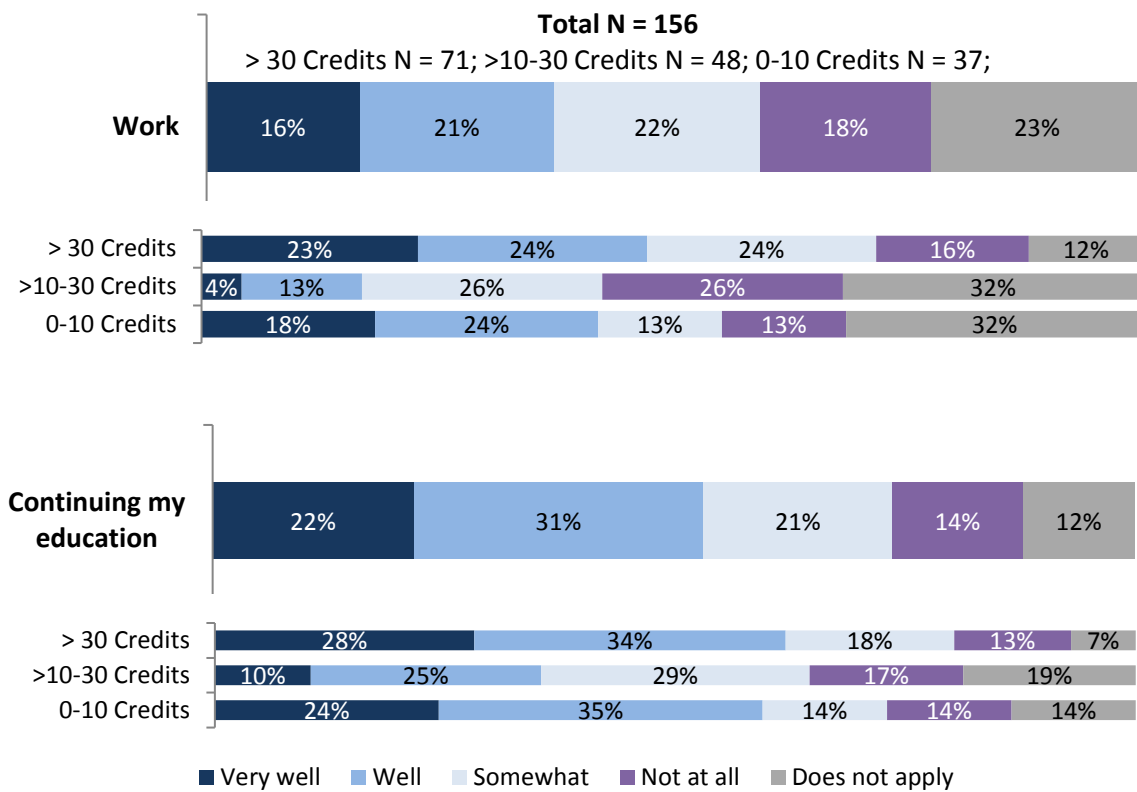
Q2 Reflecting on your current situation, how helpful is what you have learned at QCC for ...?



Preparedness

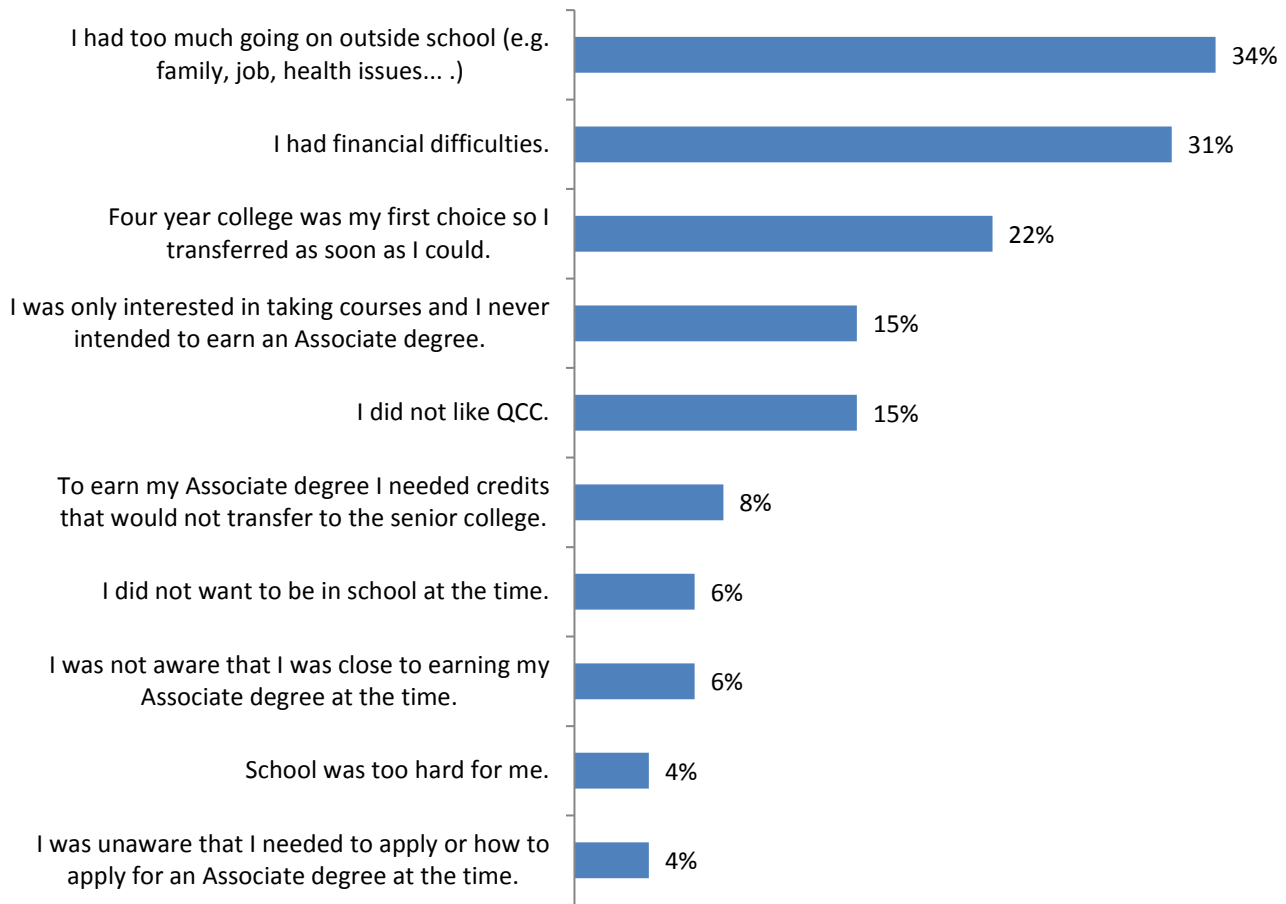
The following question was administered to everybody who participated in the survey, regardless of whether they were working or enrolled in school at the time of the survey. Responses were fairly even when asked how well QCC prepared them for work. Sixteen percent responded "very well," 21 percent responded "well," 22 percent responded "somewhat" and 18 percent responded "not at all." Students with over 30 credits earned felt more prepared for work. When asked how well QCC prepared them for continuing their education, responses skewed more positive. Twenty-two percent responded "very well," 31 percent responded "well," 21 percent responded "somewhat" and 14 percent responded "not at all." Again, students with over 30 credits earned before leaving QCC felt better prepared than the average respondent.

Q9 How well did QCC prepare you for what you do now?



Reasons for not returning to QCC

Q10 Why did you leave QCC before earning your degree? (Check all that apply)



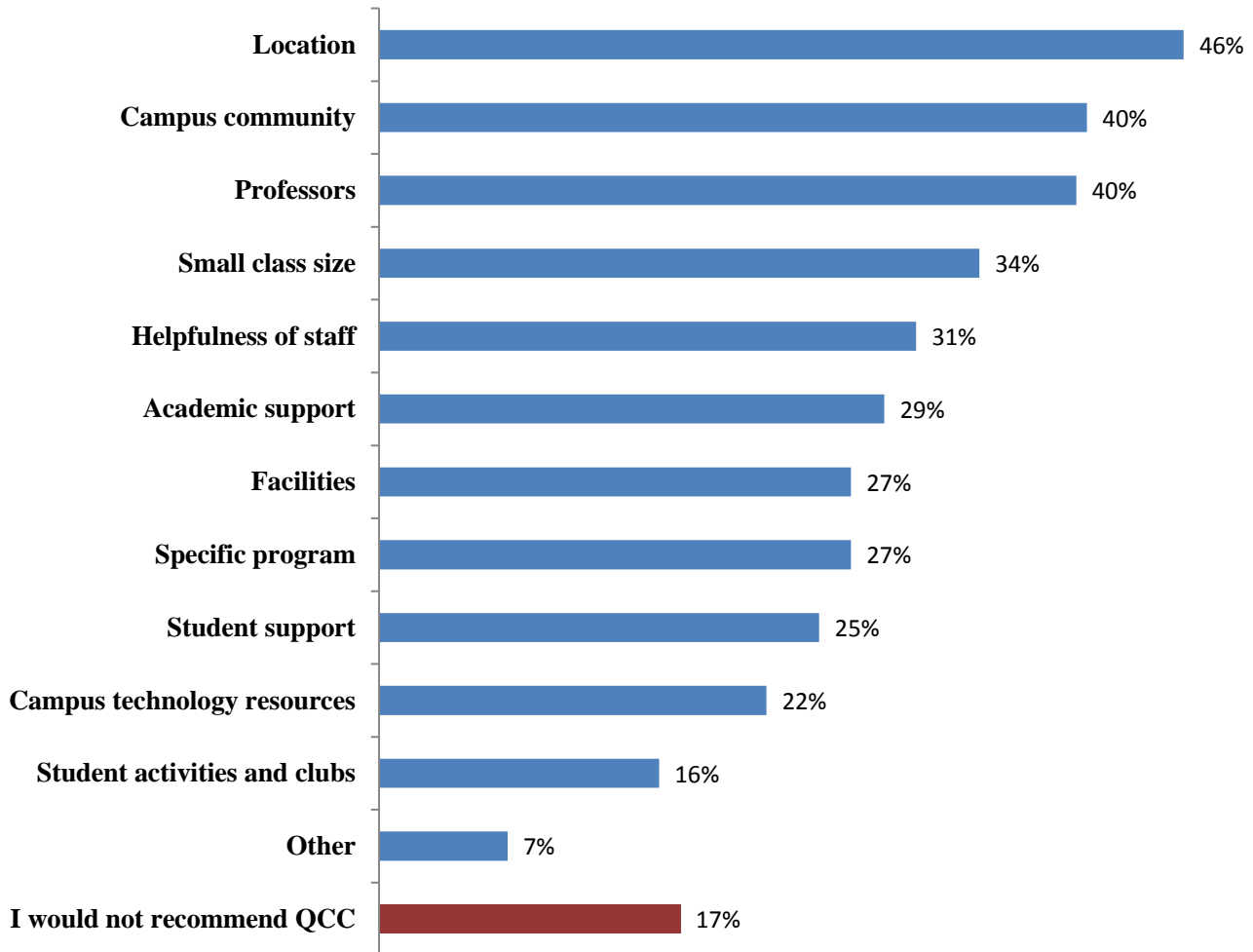
When asked why they left QCC before earning their degree, students referred mostly to external factors such as too much going on outside of school (34 percent of the time) followed by financial difficulties (31 percent). Students with 30 or more credits were more likely to report that "*four-year college was their first choice*" or that accumulating credits that would not transfer were reasons for transferring than respondents who had accumulated less credits before leaving (page 19).

Q10 Why did you leave QCC before earning your degree? (Check all that apply)

	0-10 Credits		>10-30 Credits		> 30 Credits		Total	
	#	% of Cases	#	% of Cases	#	% of Cases	#	% of Cases
I had too much going on outside school (e.g. family, job, health issues... .)	14	42%	12	33%	17	29%	43	34%
I had financial difficulties.	11	33%	15	42%	14	24%	40	31%
Four year college was my first choice so I transferred as soon as I could.	7	21%	5	14%	16	27%	28	22%
I was only interested in taking courses and I never intended to earn an Associate degree.	5	15%	5	14%	9	15%	19	15%
I did not like QCC.	5	15%	4	11%	10	17%	19	15%
To earn my Associate degree I needed credits that would not transfer to the senior college.	2	6%	1	3%	7	12%	10	8%
I did not want to be in school at the time.	3	9%	1	3%	4	7%	8	6%
I was not aware that I was close to earning my Associate degree at the time.	1	3%	2	6%	5	9%	8	6%
School was too hard for me.	1	3%	4	11%	--	--	5	4%
I was unaware that I needed to apply or how to apply for an Associate degree at the time.	1	3%	4	11%	--	--	5	4%
Total Number of Students	33	100%	36	100%	59	100%	128	100%

Would Recommend QCC

Q11 If you would recommend QCC to others, it would be because of...



Survey respondents were asked to "select all that apply" when indicating the reason or reasons they would recommend QCC to others. Location, campus community, and the professors were most often selected (46, 40, and 40 percent of the time, respectively). Only 17 percent of respondents selected that they would not recommend QCC to others. The table on page 21 breaks down the responses by the three credit groups.

Q11 If you would recommend QCC to others, it would be because of...

	0-10 Credits		>10-30 Credits		> 30 Credits		Total	
	Frequency	Percent of Cases	Frequency	Percent of Cases	Frequency	Percent of Cases	Frequency	Percent of Cases
Location	15	39%	19	40%	41	53%	75	46%
Campus community	15	39%	19	40%	32	42%	66	40%
Professors	20	51%	15	31%	30	39%	65	40%
Small class size	13	33%	13	27%	30	39%	56	34%
Helpfulness of staff	14	36%	12	25%	24	31%	50	31%
Academic support	14	36%	6	13%	27	35%	47	29%
Facilities	12	31%	13	27%	19	25%	44	27%
Specific program	11	28%	14	29%	19	25%	44	27%
Student support	8	21%	11	23%	22	29%	41	25%
Campus technology resources	8	21%	8	17%	20	26%	36	22%
Student activities and clubs	5	13%	7	15%	14	18%	26	16%
Other	2	5%	6	13%	4	5%	12	7%
I would not recommend QCC	6	15%	11	23%	11	14%	28	17%
Total Number of Students	39	100%	48	100%	77	100%	164	100%

Cross tabulation of reasons for leaving QCC with recommending QCC

Cross tabulation: reasons for leaving with recommending QCC

Number of Students	Reasons for leaving QCC (based on multiple responses)	Top Three Recommendations (based on multiple responses) -- number of students in parentheses
5	School was too hard	Specific program (3)
43	I had too much going on	Location (26), Campus community (21), Academic Support (16), Professors (16)
8	I did not want to be in school	Campus community (3), Location (3), Small class size (3)
38	I had financial difficulties	Location (21), Campus community (16), Professors (14)
18	I was only interested in taking courses	Small class sizes (11), Professors (11), Location (7)
28	Four year college was my first choice	Professors (16), Small class size (16), Location (14)
4	I was unaware I needed to apply	Professors (2), Location (2)
5	I was not aware I was close to earning my degree	Location (4), Student activities and clubs (4)
10	To earn my associates degree I needed credits credits that would not transfer to the senior college.	Professors (5), Location (4), Specific program (4)
19	I did not like QCC	I would not recommend QCC (13)

The cross tabulation table lists the top three items for which students would recommend QCC to others grouped by reasons for leaving QCC. The first column of the table counts the number of students that belonged to the group by reason for leaving. For most groups, the top three recommendations were very similar to that of all survey respondents -- location, campus community, and professors. It is interesting to see that students who left because they "had too much going on" chose Academic Support as an item for recommendation. Small class sizes, professors, and location were the three most often mentioned items for recommendations for students who "were only interested in taking courses" and for students who left because "four year college was [their] first choice."

Conclusion & New Questions Raised

The Retention Management Team requested a survey of non-returning students to understand better why those students left the College before earning a degree, how they experienced the resources and education received while at the College, and what they did after they left. Some major findings of the survey include:

- Of the students who were enrolled in another institution at the time of the survey, 76 percent were full-time students and 64 percent had transferred all or most of their credits.
- Students who transferred with more credits accumulated at the college scored higher satisfaction rates than those students who transferred with fewer credits accumulated.
- The most cited reasons for leaving the college before completing a degree were external factors, including “too much going on” and “financial difficulties.”
- The helpfulness of the staff received a lower satisfaction rating (67 percent).

Considering that the sample size of the survey was small ($N = 199$) and the margin of error was 6.69 percent, these results should be interpreted cautiously. Nevertheless, most of the findings are not surprising. Perhaps the most troubling, however, is the low rating on the helpfulness of the staff.