In response to questions about enrollment patterns and student needs, the Office of Institutional Research undertook a study of West Valley College students who were enrolled in 6.5 to 11.5 units—committed students who for some reason were not enrolled full-time. Utilizing the data warehouse, the 2,267 students who fit that description during the Fall 2008 term were identified, and a profile was generated. When compared with the student population as a whole, the only category on which this group differed significantly was age—31% were between 21 and 25, compared with 23% of students overall.

We then distributed an email survey to all students in the group, soliciting feedback about their student experiences. Not surprisingly for a slightly older group of students, many work outside the home and/or have dependents living at home. One-third are their household’s primary wage-earner. Only 18% receive financial aid. Notably, many in the group cited a desire to take more courses than they were—nearly 10% wanted to take more than 12 units, and 57% said their preferred course load is 9-12 units.

Their responses to questions about classes and scheduling were surprising; more responded that the times/days that courses are offered have a greater effect on their resultant course load than either work or family responsibilities. Among students who responded that there were factors preventing them from enrolling in additional units, work and family were the most-cited responses, with course scheduling third, at 14.8%. Many of these respondents requested additional evening and distance learning offerings. Based on this feedback, we analyzed the schedule of courses that fulfill IGETC requirements, categorizing them by day, night, and distance formats, and distributed the report to division and department chairs, who will evaluate their respective areas to ensure that they provide sufficient options for transfer- and Associate-bound students.

In consideration of these findings, the Office of Instruction is working with PGC to refine course schedules to meet student needs.