In October 2011, there were 6,277 students who had applied for the Fall 2011 semester, but were currently not registered at the time of this survey. NOVA randomly selected 20% of these students (1,256) and asked them a few questions relating to not being registered for Fall 2011 at NOVA. Approximately 35% of the respondents indicated that payment related issues were part of the reason they did not register. By approximation we can assume that over 2,000 (approximately 35% of the 6,277 potential students) are not currently registered because of payment related issues.

Listed here are descriptions of common payment-/documentation-related issues that students faced when attempting to find a payment option.

**ISSUES**

1. **Frustrated with process**
   - Some of these students could not obtain the information they needed to complete application process (e.g., documentation requirements, other related requirements, etc.)
   - Some of these students gave up on registering because the process was too long/too confusing/too frustrating.
   - Others gave up because errors in their application made the process more difficult.

2. **Wrong (contradicting) information**
   - Some of these students were misinformed regarding needed information, documents, deadlines, etc.
   - Some indicated that they were not informed as to what they needed further to complete the process.

3. **Untimely responses**
   - Some made contact with NOVA counselors/advisors/FA staff but did not obtain timely responses to their questions. Most of the time, e-mails and phone calls were not returned.
   - Some NOVA staff were not polite, friendly, or helpful.

4. **Unsure of Next Steps**
   - Some of these students could not figure out how to proceed with their applications for financial aid/payment plan.

5. **Waiting on/problems with Documentation**
   - **Account holds/issues**
     - Most of these students were unable to make progress with their applications because of holds on their accounts.
   - **Domicile requirements**
     - Most of these students expected to be considered in-state tuition, but only qualified for out-of-state.
   - **Delayed Aid**
     - Most of these students said that the process of being accepted/issued financial aid funds took too long and they were unable to resolve issues in time to register.
     - Others said that there were errors with their paperwork which held up the process and delayed their ability to register.
   - **Military/GI Bill**
• Most of these students applied with their VA but had issues with getting paperwork finished in time to register.
  • Some of these students wished their VA officers were more helpful in answering questions, etc.
    o Misc. Forms
      • Most of these students were missing forms/documents, and according to some of them, there were too many forms compared to other institutions.
    o Student Visa
      • Most of these students did not get their Visas or citizenship statuses approved/processed in time to complete their applications.
    o Transcripts
      • Most of these students had issues receiving appropriate transcripts (e.g., HS diploma, transferring credits, translation of foreign transcripts) before applying to NOVA, and therefore delayed applying for FA.
  6. FA application deadlines are too early
    • The majority of these students had not planned in advance how to pay for college. The realization of the need to accumulate funds to pay for college came late in the process, and therefore they could not apply early enough for financial aid. They are exploring various avenues to pay for college in order to attend college at a later time.
  7. Did not qualify for Financial Aid
    • These students did not qualify for the aid they expected and were forced to obtain the funds elsewhere which therefore delayed enrollment. They came to know the FA decision very late in the process and therefore were not able to register on time.
  8. Missed Deadline
    • These students missed various deadlines in applying for FA (e.g., FAFSA, NelNet, assembling necessary documents, etc.)
  9. Additional needs for funds
    • Some stated that they had unexpected expenses arise (car trouble, family issues, etc.) and were forced to postpone registration in spite of getting financial aid.

SUGGESTIONS
10. Be more accessible/Return inquiries
    • Most of these students indicated that they made contact with NOVA counselors/advisors/FA staff but did not have their inquiries answered or returned in a timely manner (by email or by phone).
    • Some indicated that they wished there were more opportunities to meet with NOVA staff in person as well as online.
    • Some indicated that the staff was not very friendly or eager to help.
    • Some indicated that they’d like more options to pay their tuition.
  11. Make processes clearer
    • Most indicated that they did not receive (or could not find) enough information on the steps relating to financial aid/payment plans, what documentation was necessary, different deadlines, etc.
    • Transfer students indicated that they would like a more organized list of necessary steps for the FA application process, etc.
  12. Need more help from an Advisor/Counselor/FA Staff
    • Students indicated that the wait to see an advisor/counselor was too long and too difficult.
    • Some indicated that advisors/counselors were not very friendly or eager to help.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Focus more on being responsive to inquiries (calls, emails, visits, etc.).
2. Break information into usable, customer-friendly formats.
3. Devise multiple modes of communication with applicants.
4. Ask the question whether NOVA is making the process more cumbersome.
5. Make information on FA application status accessible to the applicants through a self-service tool.
6. Be friendly, polite, and helpful to callers and visitors.
7. Empower the staff especially those who are on the front line.