The purpose of the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment is to conduct analytical studies and provide information in support of institutional planning, policy formulation and decision making. In addition, the office provides leadership and support in research related activities to members of the NOVA community engaged in planning and evaluating the institution’s success in accomplishing its mission.

When citing data from this report, the Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment must be cited as the source.
NOVA Non-Returning Student
Survey Report: Spring 2009

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Introduction

NOVA conducted a survey of non-returning students, individuals who enrolled at NOVA for classes in the fall 2008 semester and then did not return in the spring 2009 semester. The purpose of this telephone survey was to gain a deeper understanding of the various reasons that prevent students from returning to NOVA. During a two-week period in summer 2009, 892 individuals were contacted by telephone. Two hundred thirty-one (231) people agreed to answer the survey questions for a 26% response rate. Individuals were promised confidentiality and were asked why they did not return to NOVA in Spring 2009 and if they would consider returning to NOVA in the future. Student responses are summarized in this report. Individual responses are provided in the appendix.
Section I: Reasons for Not Returning to NOVA
In telephone interviews, respondents were asked to indicate their reason(s) for not returning to NOVA in Spring 2009. Students were able to provide more than one reason for not returning. The reasons most often cited were the achievement of academic goals, personal reasons, finances, and work responsibilities. Table 1 presents the categories of reasons for not returning to NOVA.

Table 1: Reasons Given by Non-Returning Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Not Returning to NOVA</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieved Academic Goals</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Reasons</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Reasons</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Responsibilities</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relocation/Distance</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred to Another School</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied with Instructor(s)/Course(s)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unavailability of Courses/Programs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied with College Administrators/Requirements</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Reason Given</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Respondents could provide more than one reason for not returning to NOVA.

Figure 1 presents the top six reasons for not returning and the percentages of respondents who gave these reasons.
In talking to more than 200 students, it became clear that many of their reasons for not returning related to factors beyond NOVA’s control. The most frequently provided reason for not returning was that students had achieved their educational goals, with 75 respondents indicating this as a reason (33%). For the majority of respondents in this category, they had never intended to attend NOVA for more than a limited time; as one student said, her “time at NOVA was temporary by design.” Various reasons for short-term enrollment at NOVA included taking individual courses to transfer credits to another institution (18 responses), work-related purposes (13 responses), to fulfill prerequisites for graduate school (11 responses), personal enrichment (11 responses), for certification/licensure (10 responses), and dual enrollment (8 responses). As one student expressed, his “intention was never to be at NOVA permanently.” Four respondents indicated other reasons related to academic goals. Because responses related to achieving one’s educational goals are so numerous and varied, the main subcategories are presented in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: Achieved Academic Goals Main Subcategories](image)

Another overarching category encompasses reasons related to present-life circumstances (26%). The second largest group of respondents cited personal or family reasons for preventing their return. The most common personal reasons included: “personal” reasons without further elaboration (6 responses), pregnancy/new motherhood (5 responses), busy schedule (5 responses), a needed break (4 responses), health issues (3 responses), academic challenges (5 responses), and lack of interest/motivation (4 responses). As one respondent said, “life simply gets in the way.” The remaining responses related to other personal/family reasons. Additionally, several students cited location as their reason for not returning in Spring 2009. They did not return because either they were no longer in the area, permanently or temporarily (15 responses), or the distance to NOVA was too great (3 responses).

As might be expected during a recession, a very common reason for not returning to NOVA was finances (15%). Unemployment was one cause of financial difficulties (4 responses), while
other respondents did not return because their work would not reimburse them or pay for the course (3 responses). Over one-third of the students who did not return for financial reasons mentioned financial aid as a reason for not returning, either because they did not receive financial aid after applying (9 responses) or they had difficulties in applying for financial aid (4 responses). While deferred payment is a possible means for paying one’s tuition, some students were not aware of this option (2 responses). For the remaining finance-related responses, some students had unique financial reasons (out-of-state tuition, medical expenses, etc.), while still others provided no further elaboration beyond “purely financial” reasons or that one “couldn’t afford it.” Many students indicated that they will apply for financial aid again or use the deferred payment option when they return in the future.

Another large group of respondents cited work demands as an influence in their decision not to return to NOVA (13%). The majority of these respondents indicated that their work schedule made it very difficult to continue taking classes (19 responses). Several students did not return because of new employment opportunities (7 responses). Additionally, either new or increased military obligations kept other students from returning to NOVA (5 responses).

At community colleges, the goal of many students is to transfer to another institution; this was another common reason for non-return (5%). While a four-year institution was the destination for some students (5 responses), still others continued their education at another community college (4 responses). Some (3 responses) indicated transferring to other types of institutions.

While most reasons for not returning to NOVA did not relate directly to student satisfaction, a minority of students did cite a deficiency on NOVA’s part for not returning (9%). Respondents provided examples of dissatisfaction with either NOVA’s instructors, courses or both (8 responses). Other students detailed unpleasant interactions with NOVA’s administrative units or personnel in those units (4 responses) or dissatisfaction with NOVA requirements (2 responses). Several students wanted to return to NOVA the following semester but could not because NOVA either no longer offered their program or the desired courses were not scheduled for the Spring 2009 semester (7 responses).
Section II: Possibility of Returning to NOVA

Respondents were asked if they will return to NOVA; over half of the students addressed this topic (123 responses). Of the students who answered this question, one-half indicated that it could be possible that they would return to NOVA in the future; these responses were often conditional and dependant on finances, work, health, or their personal lives. Some of these students indicated they “would consider returning,” while others expressed definite hopes that they could return to NOVA at some time in the future. One-third of the students indicated that they were returning for the next academic year. For most this meant the Fall 2009 semester, while others indicated the Spring 2010 semester. However, many of these students indicated this would be contingent on receiving financial aid. A small group of students said that they will not return (8%). Most of these students did not give a specific reason, although several had achieved their educational goals. Still others expressed such dissatisfaction with NOVA that they do not want to return. Lastly, several students had already re-enrolled by the time the telephone survey was conducted and were taking classes in the summer with every intent of continuing in the fall (8%). Table 2 presents the responses to the question of returning to NOVA in the future.

Table 2: Possibility of Returning to NOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possibility of Returning to NOVA</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would Possibly Return</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will Return the Following Year</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will Not Return</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had Already Returned and Will Continue</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentages were based upon number of respondents who addressed this question (123).
## APPENDIX

### Reasons Provided by Respondents for Not Returning to NOVA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achieved Education Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Took needed class for employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was applying to grad school and needed another semester of economics. Was happy with class and is now in grad school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just took some classes for self-improvement. Is possibly interested in becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant. Talked to her about the Medical Education Campus, and she’ll research their programs online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a police officer who took some classes at the police academy that were taught by NOVA professors. Was not enrolled in NOVA itself, but enjoyed the classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just took a class he needed for teacher licensing. It was “great,” and he would have come back, but NOVA didn’t offer the grad level classes he needed to take next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinks NOVA is “awesome.” Took writing classes to help with his master’s degree. Would be happy to attend NOVA in the future, especially if his workplace continues to pay for the classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just attended NOVA to take some refresher courses for her full-time job. She already has a degree, and she would consider attending NOVA in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Already has her bachelor degree. Attended NOVA to fill a pre-requisite for grad school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took necessary class for teacher recertification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a high school student who was dual enrolled. Would consider NOVA in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only needed a couple courses for a graduate degree. Overall, he felt his time at NOVA was a “pretty positive” experience. He was impressed with the professors and students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended NOVA to pick up a class needed for work. Had hoped to take more classes for his job, but his employer wouldn’t pay for others. He may return in the future on a continuing education basis. He already has a master’s degree. Thought NOVA was great and his instructor was one of the best he’s ever had.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed a class for teaching certification. Would consider returning to NOVA in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Already has a bachelor degree. Just taking some refresher courses. Will be back in the fall. Is happy with NOVA and likes the convenience of the evening hours and online courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took needed pre-requisite for grad school. Would return if similar need arose in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just needed a class to qualify for grad school. Has “gobs” of post-secondary education and enjoyed her time at NOVA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took part in the dual enrollment program last fall and didn’t need any other courses in the spring. Will attend full-time this fall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took online course while attending Univ. of Va. Thought it was excellent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOved the class he took through the dual enrollment program in the fall as a junior in high school. Hopes to take more classes this year and may consider attending NOVA after high school graduation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Just took one class that enabled her to complete her associate degree. She really enjoyed the chemistry class and thought the professor was fantastic. The campus was on her way home from work, so she found it very convenient. Her only minor complaint was the parking fee. She felt it was rather pricey for someone who is taking only one class. She may take more classes in the future, but finances are a little tight. She recently got married and no longer qualifies for financial aid because of her husband’s income. However, she noted he’s currently paying off student loans.

Was enrolled in a NOVA class through the Arapahoe Community College in Colorado. Never actually attended NOVA, but was linked through a correspondence/electronic system. Thought the class was excellent.

Picked up a class she needed to complete her bachelor degree. Had a wonderful time at NOVA.

Needed a class to fill pre-requisites for a grad school program. Had a good time at NOVA. Thought the system was “fabulous.”

Took a class for her work and was very happy with it. She’s currently awaiting approval from her employer to take another class at NOVA.

Is a firefighter and took a class to become a medic. Everything was “fine.”

Had a great experience at NOVA, but was just taking a class she needed to get into a PhD program at George Mason.

Took class needed for employment.

Dual enrollment student.

Took a class she needed for nursing. Now on a schedule where it’s extremely hard for her to take classes, but she would consider a return to NOVA in the future.

Fulfilled his goal of attending an EMT class. Already has a couple master’s degrees and didn’t need any other NOVA courses. Was happy with his class.

Was accepted at Virginia State University for the spring semester, so she took some classes at NOVA in the fall to pick up a few credits until she could begin at VSU. Enjoyed her time at NOVA.

Took a specific class in engineering for his work. He would like to come back in the future, but the classes he takes must be directly related to his work. His place of employment pays for his classes.

Was a student at George Mason. Just took a class for a transfer credit.

Graduated and now living in Hawaii.

Took a statistics class to supplement her learning but was very disappointed with the online experience. She complains her professor didn’t respond to her questions and she feels that if this is an example of classes at NOVA, she doesn’t want to attend in any way in the future.

Took a grammar course for her teacher certificate and really enjoyed it. Afterward, she tried to seek additional help from the writing center, but she was told they could no longer help her because the class had ended. Enjoyed her class here but won’t be returning anytime soon. She just had a baby.

Took a work-related class for a certificate. Had only planned on taking one course but would consider NOVA in the future if it offered something she needed.

Took a class for work and thought it was good. May return to NOVA in the future.

Only needed to take one class, a nursing class, to transfer it from NOVA to Georgetown University. Her time at NOVA was temporary by design. The online class satisfied the requirement, but she wishes the professor did a better job of communicating with students and providing feedback. It would take three to four days for the professor to get back to her.

Took a class for teacher certification but got sick and was hospitalized. She said despite her illness, she had a good experience with NOVA and will come back in the future for more classes for teacher certification.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Class</td>
<td>Was a high school student who took classes on the Manassas campus. She will probably take more classes during the fall. The student and her older siblings have all taken classes at NOVA, according to the student’s mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technician Class</td>
<td>Came to NOVA for one class. He is a technician who needed to complete a class to gain certification for emissions testing of vehicles in Virginia. He was pleased with the campus staff and instruction. Parking wasn’t a problem because his classes were after hours. “It was pretty nice. Everything was good.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Emissions Inspection Class</td>
<td>Took one class for a state emissions inspection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Business Class</td>
<td>Took one class in the fall of 2008. He is only interested in taking occasional classes. He already has an associate’s degree. He enjoyed NOVA and may come back, but he isn’t really pushing for another degree. He admitted he was “goofing off.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Business Classes</td>
<td>Took two courses for a driving instructor’s school requirement. They were completed and he did not to return to NOVA. He said the NOVA experience was positive. He will take classes at NOVA in the future if he needs course work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Class</td>
<td>Took a Spanish class because he wanted to learn Spanish. He was pleased with his grade and his experience at NOVA. He did not take a second class because of his work schedule. He is a full-time graphic designer. He will consider online classes in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Graphic Design Class</td>
<td>Wanted to take a single class in graphic design. She completed the class and would have considered other classes, but she is now a mother. She had baby and has not had the time to come back for other classes. She enjoyed her time at NOVA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Web Design Class</td>
<td>Really wasn’t looking for a degree, but an additional class for web design. She took a single class and enjoyed. She may take others if they interest her. No problems with NOVA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics Class</td>
<td>Needed a statistics class as prerequisite to entering a graduate school program. She took the class and needed nothing else and had no complaints with NOVA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paramedics Class</td>
<td>Needed two courses as prerequisites for a paramedics program. He took the classes and did not need to return. He works for the fire department in Fairfax County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Italian Class</td>
<td>Her son took classes at NOVA in preparation for Virginia Tech. She decided to join him on the campus and took a class in Italian. It was mother-son bonding activity. She only wanted one class to be near her son.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Business Class</td>
<td>Was high school student who took a business class at his high school which had an arrangement with NOVA that allowed him to earn some college business credits. He never came to NOVA’s campus. He graduated this spring and will go on to Howard University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Business Class</td>
<td>Did not plan on getting a degree, but rather to take a few courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Business Class</td>
<td>Took one class during the fall of 2008 to help her enroll in a graduate program at George Mason University. She enjoyed the online class and is now in graduate school at George Mason University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Business Classes</td>
<td>Took two classes in the fall of 2008. They were transferred to Virginia Commonwealth University. He did not plan to get a degree at NOVA but rather to take a few classes and transfer them to Virginia Commonwealth. His experience at NOVA was positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Business Class</td>
<td>Took two classes in the fall of 2008 and was very pleased. One economics class was taken so that she could go to graduate school and a second class in emergency medical technology was to receive certification. She wasn’t planning on getting a degree from NOVA. She just wanted to take a few classes at the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Business Class</td>
<td>Took classes for teacher certification. Once they were complete she did not need to come back to NOVA. She said she had a good experience and will use NOVA in the future if needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Business Class</td>
<td>Took courses at NOVA to satisfy her parents after coming back from Europe. She didn’t finish the classes and is now at George Mason University finishing her undergraduate degree. This student wasn’t serious about getting a degree at NOVA. She just kept mom and dad happy by taking online classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statements</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took four classes in 2008. They were auto mechanics classes he needed to get a professional license.</td>
<td>Once he completed the classes he didn’t need to come back NOVA. He said the NOVA experience was good and that maybe he will come back to the college in the future to take English Second Language classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives in Colorado. She took a class out in Colorado, but the professor was a NOVA instructor.</td>
<td>She was not taking classes to get a degree. She wanted one class for personal enjoyment. She enjoyed the experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a high school student who also took a couple of classes at NOVA.</td>
<td>She graduated and went on George Mason University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a student at Virginia Tech.</td>
<td>He was involved in a bad accident and was unable to go back to Virginia Tech. His mother said that she had him audit a class at NOVA just to see if he was ready to try college again. He did well here and has gone back to Virginia Tech. His intention was never to be NOVA permanently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attends college in New York. She lives in NOVA and while here she took a class for transfer credit.</td>
<td>She enjoyed the experience and is back in school in New York.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took a single class in communications because his work requested he try a course to improve his communication with customers.</td>
<td>He is in sales. He enjoyed the course and will take others during the future as they are offered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred her credits to another university.</td>
<td>Enjoyed her time at NOVA. She took classes to get the proper credits for licensing on her job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came to NOVA to take a couple of courses only and not for a degree program.</td>
<td>Those courses are being transferred to George Mason University. She thought the professor in her anatomy and physiology classes was not very patient and not very communicative with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student’s father said that his son got accepted at a South Carolina university, but that it was deferred acceptance. For one semester, the student had nothing to do and decided to take courses at NOVA. Once the semester was up he transferred to the four-year university.</td>
<td>The father said his son didn’t have any complaints about NOVA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took three or four classes during the fall of 2008 at NOVA. He transferred those classes to George Mason University.</td>
<td>His intention was to take classes for transfer not to get a degree at NOVA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was dual enrolled and just graduated. Will be coming back for more classes in the fall.</td>
<td>Enjoyed her time at NOVA. She took classes to get the proper credits for licensing on her job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was transferring between colleges and took a semester at NOVA to fill in the gap.</td>
<td>Had a “wonderful experience” at NOVA and is now attending William and Mary. Credits transferred with no problem. NOVA did a “great job.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student’s mother answered the phone. She said that her daughter attended a four-year school but didn’t like it and decided to leave and wait until the following year go to another four-year school.</td>
<td>During the interim semester, her daughter decided to take courses at NOVA. She had a good experience and then took the classes and transferred them to another four-year school. Her intention was to use NOVA as a stopgap measure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said she took classes during the fall of 2008 and managed to finish a program.</td>
<td>She did not come back in the spring because she had completed a program. She will be attending dental hygienist school this fall. She said it is through a Germanna – NOVA program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took an on-line class in Spanish.</td>
<td>She had many problems with registration. She got dropped three times from the class and had her tuition check returned more than once. She talked to seven different people to get the problem corrected. When she did get in the class she enjoyed the class. She transferred the credits back to Longwood University and has graduated. She probably won’t take additional classes because she has her bachelor’s degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signed up for one class in the fall of 2008 but had to cancel it for personal reasons.</td>
<td>He withdrew from that class but is now going to Virginia Tech. His intention was to take a class at NOVA and transfer to Virginia Tech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Reasons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He had an accident and broke his ankle. He was bedridden for up to six weeks. He had to drop his classes because he couldn’t keep up. He will think about NOVA in the future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t return to NOVA because she’s pregnant and saving money for the delivery. Will probably move to Florida once the baby is born.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took one class in the fall of 2008. She was out in the spring of 2009 because of pregnancy. She plans to come back in the fall.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took a break because she was turning 21 and wanted some time off. Will be returning this fall.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student’s dad said she was “just not ready for school.” She couldn’t wait to get out of high school. There was nothing NOVA could have done differently.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal problems prevented his return in the spring. He’ll attend in the fall.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had “family issues.” Hopes to return in the future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not really ready for school. Got a job instead.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a “change of heart” about going to school. Took a full-time job, but would consider returning in the future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t return for “personal reasons.” Nothing wrong with the school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Personal reasons.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a “very good” experience, but “I’m 19 and don’t have a lot of motivation.” He hopes to return in the future. Took classes on campus and online. Did not care for the online classes as much. Thought they could be more “creative.” Didn’t care for the “read this, go talk through a blog” style of learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just had a baby. Hopes to return at a later date. Was very happy with her English professor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student’s mother said she is quite worried about her son and has pushed him repeatedly to return to school. He has other ideas. He has a minimum wage job and now lives with friends after being booted out of the house. His college career doesn’t look very promising.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a senior citizen who took an exercise class for fun. Her schedule got busy and she decided during the spring to leave the next class for someone who has time and can regularly attend.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took classes for one semester but got stressed out and dropped them. It was too much. Now he is in a reading class at NOVA and has enrolled in fall classes. He wants to go into psychology. He says he is getting the help he needs at NOVA and that if he needs additional assistance he will ask for it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took four classes in the fall of 2008. He ended up dropping three classes and taking an incomplete in a fourth class. He said he initially didn’t want to go back after the first semester. He was aware the school has counselors, but didn’t go to see his academic counselor. “I didn’t want to talk to a counselor. They were there, but I didn’t go.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made some bad choices for classes. Didn’t particularly care for the subjects and was not too impressed with the teachers. So, she took a break in the spring. She’ll be back this fall.</td>
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<td>Student’s mother said she took a semester off to “regroup,” work and put some more money aside for college. She says she just had “too much on her plate” with classes and work last fall. She will return in the upcoming fall semester, and the family is happy with NOVA. Their older daughter just graduated NOVA with an associate degree.</td>
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<td>Came to NOVA while on probation from another four-year school he had attended. He took four classes and did not pass any of them. He says he is to blame. He is considering culinary school in the future.</td>
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<td>Didn’t do so well his first semester at NOVA. He doesn’t blame the college at all or think there is anything we could have done. He said he had a lack of interest in school and that his mind really wasn’t on studying. He still may come back in the future.</td>
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<td>Liked NOVA but said he didn’t have the self-discipline to handle the three classes he took. He dropped them. He may come back in the future.</td>
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<td>Spoke of wanting to return to NOVA. He took one class in 2008. He took an incomplete in the English class because of personal troubles. He completed work for that class during the spring and received a final grade. He is trying to get his transcripts from Central Texas College and the U.S. Army training program accepted by NOVA. He plans to come back in the fall of 2009 and will take a math placement test.</td>
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<td>Took one class during the fall of 2008 and has described NOVA as a good experience. He did not come back during the spring of 2009 because of personal reasons. He did not elaborate. He said he will consider NOVA during the future.</td>
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<td>Took several classes in the fall of 2008. He said it was his first time on a college campus and that he found it just wasn’t right for him. He didn’t have any issues with NOVA and couldn’t offer any suggestions of things NOVA could do to help.</td>
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<td>Is working full-time right now. When she took a course at NOVA she was also pregnant and not able to complete her microbiology class. She took an incomplete. That was last fall and now with the baby it is very difficult to go back to NOVA. She wanted to take a microbiology class to help satisfy a requirement to get into Georgetown nursing school. Her enrollment in the nursing program was conditional. She needed to take three classes at NOVA and get an acceptable grade of B to go to Georgetown. She has a master’s degree and is a pandemic influenza educator for Fairfax County. She said a nursing degree would make her more marketable. She will come back to NOVA when her situation stabilizes. She said the experience here was very beneficial. She said she does wish NOVA offered more weekend and night classes for microbiology, physiology and anatomy.</td>
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<td>Was new to the United States. He came from Sierra Leone. He took three classes during the fall of 2008. He decided to sit out the spring 2009 semester to concentrate settling into the United States. He wants to come back but needs to make sure that his work will allow him to take classes.</td>
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<td>The student’s father and he is very worried about her. She had a chance to go to Mary Washington Univ. and other four-year schools but chose NOVA because of a boyfriend living in the area. The family, everyone except the student, moved to Pa. She came to NOVA and did very poorly. The father said she had a 1.85 GPA. She stopped going to class during the final weeks of the semester. Father thinks the problem is the student’s boyfriend who is isolating her from her family and friends.</td>
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<td>Took two classes in the fall of 2008. She decided she needed a break for the spring. She may come back in January. No other details were available from this respondent.</td>
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<td>Got pregnant and had morning sickness. She took three classes. She said the two English classes were OK, but she didn’t have a good experience in the math class because she couldn’t understand the professor who had a heavy foreign accent. She wants to come back to NOVA in January.</td>
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<td>Took a class during the fall of 2008. She got sick and was hospitalized and did not take the final exam. She didn’t call the professor to schedule a make-up. She did not take another class during the spring because she felt her schedule was too busy for class. She may come back to school in the future.</td>
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<td>Took an English Second Language class in the fall of 2008. She wanted to better her English and find people to associate with because she was lonely. The experience at NOVA was a good one, but she is busy now and won’t be taking a second class.</td>
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<td>Took three classes in the fall of 2008. She took a break the next semester for family reasons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Story</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Took two classes during fall of 2008 and was pleased with the experience.</strong> She did not take classes during the spring of 2009 because she had vacation time scheduled and knew she would not be attending some classes. During the summer of 2009 she began taking other classes at NOVA. She took an online class.</td>
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<td><strong>Left a four-year school and then took one class during the fall of 2008 because her parents insisted she do so.</strong> She did not finish the one class at NOVA and subsequently decided she didn’t want to go back to college (NOVA) or to the four-year school she attended earlier. She said this was not NOVA’s fault. She just wasn’t interested in college.</td>
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<td><strong>Took two or three courses in the fall of 2008 and was pleased with the experience.</strong> These were courses in federal taxation and auditing. He thought about taking a class during the spring, but he decided against it because of time commitments.</td>
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<td><strong>Is an international student who came to the U.S. and had his visa status terminated.</strong> He had 12 credit hours at NOVA. He did not return the spring semester. He got a work permit to stay in the U.S. and can work. He hopes to come back to NOVA in the future.</td>
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<td><strong>Signed up for two classes in fall of 2008 and ended up dropping one class.</strong> He didn’t do so well with his ethics class. He took non-credit classes at NOVA during the spring. He wants to return to NOVA during the fall.</td>
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<td><strong>Took five classes in the fall of 2008 and found it overwhelming.</strong> She took a semester off as a result. She will come back in the fall of 2009 and take a greatly reduced load. She admitted taking too many classes. She still has positive things to say about NOVA.</td>
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<td><strong>The student’s daughter said that her mother took a class to keep her teacher certification current.</strong> The calculus class she took was quite a challenge, and the student decided against taking another class in the spring. She wanted to take a break but will be back in the future.</td>
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<td><strong>The student’s wife said he took some computer courses at NOVA and then later decided that he really wanted a master’s degree.</strong> She said there was nothing wrong with NOVA. He decided after attending that what he really needed was a master’s degree.</td>
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**Financial Reasons**

- **Left for “purely financial” reasons.** Wife lost job. They have three children. He had to return to work while juggling classes and didn’t have enough time to keep up with his studies. He left because he was concerned that low grades would impact his GPA, and he would like to return to NOVA or another college in the future when money allows.

- **Said “couldn’t afford it.”** Thought the classes were great and the teachers were good. Plans to return when she gets a job and can afford NOVA.

- **Had a “great experience” and is trying to return for the next semester.** Getting loans is taking time, but the financial people at NOVA have been very helpful.

- **Had “money issues.”** Had hoped to return this fall, but can’t afford it. Worked with the financial aid office, but still wasn’t able to make things work.

- **Job changed and she was no longer eligible for reimbursement from her office for the classes she planned to take.** She took an online course in the fall and was generally happy with it. However, she felt there was a bit of a “disconnect” with her professor. Not being in class, it was harder to determine what the professor was focusing on and what he deemed to be the most important issues to study. She would consider returning to NOVA in the future, especially if she is reimbursed through work.

- **Lost his job and didn’t have the money to return last spring.** He’s looking into financial aid and hopes to be able to afford NOVA by next spring.

- **He and his wife were both students, but they couldn’t afford for both of them to continue.** He’s bowing out for now, allowing his wife to complete her coursework because she’s much closer to her degree than he is. He opted not to try for financial aid.

- **Thinks NOVA is “awesome.”** Plans to return in the fall but still trying to get paperwork together for financial aid. Awaiting document from the IRS.

- **Took the spring semester off to earn more money for college.** Will return this fall. Got help through the financial aid office.

- **Couldn’t afford the spring semester and was working a lot.** Will return in the fall.

- **Is working to get enough money to return to NOVA.** Will be in touch with the financial aid office in hopes of returning in the spring.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Reason for Leaving</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Did not return</td>
<td>He could not afford NOVA, and pay for an apartment and other basic necessities. He was aware of our tuition installment plan. He was not a U.S. citizen, but he did get in-state tuition. He loves NOVA. “I went to George Mason University the first year and I hated it. NOVA made me love school again.” He wants a degree in advertising or marketing so he can work in the wine industry. He is planning to come back to NOVA when his financial situation improves.</td>
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<td>Was not home, but</td>
<td>Her father, however, said his daughter took one class, an English class, and then decided not to continue because of money. He said she is working two jobs right now, but that income is competing with the need to get a college degree. The student’s father said his daughter prefers work to school.</td>
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<td>Left during his</td>
<td>He had his face shattered and was forced to sit out for one month. He did get some of his money back, but he has incurred medical expenses because of surgery on his face. “My face has healed, but my wallet hasn’t.” He did have a good experience with NOVA and may consider it in the future if his finances improve.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Took two classes</td>
<td>He said he failed to pay tuition and fees in full. He said he made the check out by an amount that was 50 cents short of what the college required. His account was credited and he was dropped from the course during the spring 2009. He is in need of financial aid and hopes to come back in the fall if he can get financial aid. He thought he was going to get financial aid for the fall 2008 but did not receive any assistance. Classes during the first semester didn’t go so well for him. He took psychology and world history.</td>
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<td>Left after taking</td>
<td>“It was very expensive. I like it a lot, but it was so expensive.” Applied for financial aid but was not approved.</td>
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<td>two classes</td>
<td>Was upset because she was charged out-of-state tuition for one class. She said the cost deterred her from taking other classes. She said she waited to be eligible for in-state tuition only to learn she would still have to pay out-of-state tuition. She also signed up for a summer class only to have it cancelled. Upset, she decided to take classes at ITT.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Never took any</td>
<td>He did not get financial aid so he wasn’t able to take any classes. He is hoping to attend this August and is again working with financial aid and talking to college officials about his citizenship status.</td>
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<td>classes at NOVA</td>
<td>Took one class for a certification program and had a good experience. She did not qualify for financial aid and then maxed out her loans. She did not come back because of finances. She will come back to NOVA in the future if finances permit.</td>
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<td>but did register</td>
<td>Family’s home in Arizona faced foreclosure. He had to leave during the semester by withdrawing from NOVA. Finances are difficult and it is unlikely he will return. He did find that registration was pain while at NOVA and that financial aid was difficult to obtain.</td>
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<td>in 2008. He did</td>
<td>Took two classes in the fall of 2008 and would come back for more, but her financial aid was not approved.</td>
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<td>not get financial</td>
<td>Took three classes in the fall of 2008, but is unemployed right now and can’t afford to take any more classes.</td>
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<td>aid so he wasn’t</td>
<td>Took two classes in fall 2008. Her problems appear to be financial. She has not been able to get financial aid and wants to come back in August but is still waiting for information from financial aid.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>able to take any</td>
<td>Took four classes in fall 2008. She had a good experience. Her ability to continue at NOVA is greatly affected by finances. She signed up for financial aid for spring of 2009 but didn’t get it. She is hoping to get it for the fall of 2009 so she can return. She said she had a good experience.</td>
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<td>more classes.</td>
<td>Came during the fall of 2008 but did not return in spring of 2009 because she didn’t get financial aid. She wants to return in the fall, but she is waiting on financial aid.</td>
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<td>Took one class in the fall of 2008. It was an introduction to photography class and he was not pleased with his teacher. He said he didn’t get enough hands-on assistance from the teacher. He had a digital camera while other students had more advanced cameras. His camera couldn’t do what the other cameras could so he needed additional help. He did not take another class during the spring because of finances. He came to NOVA with the idea of taking a few classes and simply exploring possibilities for the future.</td>
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<td>Sat out after one semester because of finances. He hopes to come back in the future.</td>
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Did not return because of finances. He took 12 credits during the first semester.

Took three classes in the fall of 2008 and had a positive experience. He did not enroll during the spring because of finances but will come back in the fall and use the deferred payment plan at NOVA. He didn’t learn about deferred payment until it was too late to register for classes during the spring.

Was in the web design certification program. She completed it by taking four classes in the spring of 2008. She wasn’t happy with the instruction. Her professor taught all four classes but moved too fast for her to understand what was going on. She relied on her brother to figure out what was taught in class. “The classes were very hard for me. The teacher was so fast. I would have to go home and try to do everything from the beginning.” She wants to come back to NOVA to take other classes, but with a different professor. She can’t because she can’t get financial aid because she doesn’t have a work permit.

**Work Responsibilities**

Got a job offer she couldn’t refuse. Will consider NOVA in the future.

Said the experience was good and the instructors were great. NOVA made things “easy” especially since this was the first time taking college courses. Didn’t return because of work obligations. More night or weekend classes would not have helped because he’s not working on a regular schedule. Hopes to return in the future.

Took a full-time job. Not really an “academic kid.” Wants to come back eventually, but school isn’t for him right now.

Had “other plans.” Got a different job. No plans to return.

Military got in the way. Would consider a return to NOVA in the future.

Too busy with work. Would consider returning to NOVA in the future if things don’t continue working out well with his job.

Was taking classes at NOVA to expand his knowledge and had planned on returning in the spring, but he changed jobs and became too busy. He liked NOVA and would consider returning in the future when his workload gets lighter.

Took an Italian class for fun and had to leave early because of a work assignment overseas. Really enjoyed the class, is a big supporter of community colleges, and is perusing the catalog for more possible classes in the future.

Skipped spring semester to get a job. Is back this summer and will return in the fall.

Is planning to return next spring. Recently got her CNA and is too busy now, working two jobs and caring for her two children. She has also had some problems getting her financial aid lined up, but she is working with her social worker to get things straightened out by spring. She wants to attend full-time then and work part-time.

Joined the military.

Unable to attend classes because she travels too much with her job. She’ll soon be moving to Australia.

No time for school right now with her job. She may consider a return in the future, after she gets her son through college.

Wasn’t working at the time she attended NOVA, but then got a full-time job. Between work and raising children, she just doesn’t have time now for college. She hopes to return in the future. All the classes she took were online, and she was very happy with the experience.

Had a good experience at NOVA but got busier at work because her boss had a baby. Is considering a return, possibly by taking online courses.

Got a full-time job and didn’t have time for class in the spring. Will return in the fall.

Didn’t have time for class due to work demands.

The student’s father returned my phone call. The student has gone into the military. He is actually out in Texas and going through boot camp.
Classes at NOVA were too tough for him. He didn’t have grades to go to a four-year college.

Signed up for three classes and ended up dropping two after speaking to professors about the attendance requirement. He said his job would conflict with his school schedule. He stayed in the third course for three weeks before dropping it because of conflicts with work. He is going to consider online courses at NOVA.

Transferred from a university to NOVA and took one class in the fall 2008. He sat out in the spring of 2009 to work. He enrolled in NOVA for summer classes and will be here in the fall.

Started a class, but didn’t finish it. She said that she stopped because she got a job that requires her to work long hours. She said she wants to finish her education, but that it will have to take a back seat.

Is enrolled in school, but his work schedule interferes with taking additional classes. He would like to see more online classes in fields such as construction management and project management.

Is back in school. He got half-way through an earlier semester and was called for deployment by the U.S. Army. He had to drop his class and was deployed overseas. Once the deployment ended he came back and is now taking classes. He said getting financial aid and transcripts at NOVA is difficult and needs improvement.

Took a history class in the fall of 2008, but had a hectic work schedule that kept him from making it to class. He eventually dropped the class. He is in the military and will be leaving for Hawaii. He won’t be back to NOVA.

Took two classes during the fall of 2008. Nothing wrong with the classes, but he started a new job and found it too hard to balance school and the job. The classes were during the day and his priority shifted to money and the job. “To attend class became a burden,” he said. He took a break during the spring of 2009 as a result. He hopes to come back to NOVA in the future.

Came to NOVA to take a single accounting class for work. After taking the first class she thought seriously about taking other classes but couldn’t due to her work schedule. She will likely come back in the future to take other classes if her schedule permits. She had a positive experience at NOVA.

Took the spring semester off while job hunting. Wanted flexibility in accepting employment. Is currently enrolled in the summer semester and will continue classes in the fall.

Took a math class just for fun. The class was for five credits and was pre-calculus. He has an MBA and an undergraduate in economics. The class started off really well and by mid-term he was expecting an A. Things changed when his work schedule picked up requiring him to miss classes. He also got sick, possibly pneumonia, and was not able to prepare for the final exam. He was gone from class at least 13 days. He said he did not take the final exam and was really disappointed with the outcome of the course. A bit demoralized he did not take a second course in the spring. But he said he will be back this fall. He liked his first math teacher and doesn’t blame the teacher or the college for what happened in the pre-calculus class. He said there really isn’t anything the college could have done to help him.

Took four classes during the fall of 2008 and didn’t do as well as he would have liked to for his first semester. He took the spring of 2009 off to work and will return in the fall of 2009 for an X-ray Technician program.

Plans to return in the spring. Was just too busy last fall with work.

Relocation/Distance
Will return in the fall. Was out of town last spring.
Didn’t return in the spring because she was out of the country. Is currently attending classes and will return in the fall.
Was out of the country dealing with a family situation in the spring. Will return in the fall.
His girlfriend had visa problems and couldn’t stay in the country, so he returned with her to the Ukraine. He had hoped to attend NOVA in the fall.
Experience at NOVA was “great.” Getting ready to move overseas.

Moved to California and is now attending college in that state. She would come back to NOVA because she enjoyed it very much.

Took two classes in the fall of 2008 and was satisfied. She is initially from Kentucky and had to return to Kentucky in the spring because of family obligations. That meant she couldn’t come back to NOVA. Well, she is back in northern Virginia now and will be back in NOVA during the fall to continue studying psychology. She enjoyed her time here.

Took four classes during the fall of 2008. They were in the IT field and he said he was pleased with NOVA. He left the country during the spring semester of 2009 to return home to Pakistan. He is back in the states and plans to attend NOVA during the fall semester.

Moved out of state.

Moved out of state for a while. Plans to return to NOVA soon.

Had no problems with NOVA. Moved out of state.

Living arrangements in Northern Virginia didn’t work out. Moved back home to Virginia Beach and is now attending Tidewater Community College.

Had a great experience at NOVA but just wanted to move away from home for a while. She’s now attending Lynchburg College. She has no suggestions for improving things at NOVA.

Didn’t return in the spring because she was out of the country. Is currently attending classes and will return in the fall.

Is moving out of the area and will attend another community college.

Too far to commute from Lake Anna area while working part-time. Has just applied to Germanna Community College and had credits transferred from NOVA. Was happy with experience here.

Is attending a community college closer to home.

Is now attending Blue Ridge Community College. Better location for him. Enjoyed his time at NOVA.

**Transferred to Another School**

Now attending Virginia Union. Nothing wrong with NOVA but wanted to attend a four-year school.

Left NOVA after one semester to go to DeVry University. He wanted to try another school but will be coming back to NOVA in the fall to study computers. There isn’t too much NOVA could have done to keep him here initially.

Now attending Lord Fairfax Community College.

Now attending New River Community College.

Is a student at Germanna Community College. Looked into taking some courses at NOVA, but wasn’t sure if the credits would transfer.

Is enrolled in an online class and is still completing the coursework. He’ll attend Christopher Newport University in the fall.

Returned to New River Community College, where he had signed a lease for an apartment. His sister will attend NOVA in the fall.

Took four classes in the fall of 2008 at NOVA. He chose this campus over the University of Nebraska-Lincoln because of finances. In the spring of 2009, University of Nebraska-Lincoln offered him a school scholarship so he transferred most of his credits to that school. He did have problems transferring one class.

Started by taking a full load during the fall of 2008. Work forced him to drop to one class. He performed well in the class, but has since gotten accepted into American University’s PhD program in political science. He obviously won’t be coming back to NOVA.

Was in NOVA to get personal training certification. She found out she could also get it through the International Sports Science Association. She decided to get certification through the association.
Took classes at another school in the spring and will return in the fall.

**Dissatisfied with Instructor(s)/Course(s)**

Took two classes and did fairly well but was disappointed with the instructors. He consulted ratemyprofessor.com to find teachers whose classes weren’t too stressful. He was disappointed that the PE class concentrated more on book work than weight training. He said the math class was easy but the professor had an accent that was hard to understand and there wasn’t enough time after class to speak with the professor. He said there was not enough information about homework online. When a professor failed to update homework assignments on the website, he fell behind in his homework and had a hard time catching up between his job and classes. He is still considering a return to NOVA but is trying to balance his job and class work. He would recommend that websites are updated a semester in advance, or at least a week in advance. He did not make use of NOVA counselors. He was concerned about walk-in availability and was warned away by fellow students. They told him the counselors were not very compassionate. He also was upset with the number of students who disregarded the no smoking signs on campus. He suffers from asthma, and the smoke was a problem. He enrolled with his brother, and his brother is still taking classes.

Said the course he took wasn’t right for him, and he thought it was misnamed. He complained at the time and didn’t get any satisfaction. He signed up for “Introduction to Photography,” but he said it was too advanced. He dropped out after just a few classes. He also said he’s a senior citizen and had to pay for the class when other seniors who were attending did not pay. He’s very soured by the experience and will not attend NOVA again.

Had a very bad experience with an online class and has no interest in returning to NOVA. She complained that her instructor gave poor directions, didn’t reply in a timely manner to phone calls and emails and didn’t post announcements. She also found it very frustrating that she was taking an English class and the instructor responded to her using poor English. She generally found the online system confusing because there was no consistency in how instructors used it. This was not her first online class experience. She said the online classes at other schools were better because of the amount of instructor feedback.

Was disappointed with his online class. He said it was great in the beginning, but after a while there was a long lag time between the time he submitted papers and the time the instructor responded. He felt the instructor’s enthusiasm didn’t match his own, and that was especially disappointing because it was his first return to college in 20 years. He is considering coming back in the spring, and he notes that his office helps offset the cost of the classes. He also said he was unhappy with the testing experience at the testing center. He complained that on more than one occasion people at the counter outside the testing area were too loud and disruptive while he was taking his tests.

Lost interest in the courses. Didn’t find the instructors “dynamic” enough and thought the pacing of the web design class was too slow. He was also upset that a Spanish class he intended to take with a friend was closed before his friend could register. He was taking class for free because he’s a senior citizen, but he found the book costs to be “enormous.” He feels if something is supposed to be free, there should be no additional cost. Might consider NOVA in the future.

Took an accounting class at NOVA in fall 2008 and had a horrible experience with her professor. He did everything on Power Point and refused to do examples on a bulletin board when students asked. She said many students failed his last exams and that he had little if any sympathy. She said the questions on the exam were not clear. She will think twice about taking a class at NOVA’s Annandale campus.

**Unavailability of Courses/Programs**

Didn’t return in the spring or summer because the classes she wanted were dropped. She hopes to take classes this fall.

Enjoyed his time at NOVA, but NOVA doesn’t offer the associate degree he was seeking in management. If it did, he would return “in a heartbeat.”
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Experience and Complaints</th>
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<td>Didn’t return in the spring because there were no classes being offered in the evenings that fit her needs. She's working on a degree and needed higher-level (not 100 series) classes. She hopes to return this fall, but she has complaints about the Student Services office in Loudon. She’s been trying to get hold of a paper copy of the catalog. She was told they are no longer being mailed out, so she contacted Student Services to try to arrange a time for her to pick one up at the school. Because of her work schedule, she couldn’t go to the campus during regular business hours. She asked Student Services to leave a catalog out somewhere for her to pick up, but they said they couldn’t do that. She really enjoyed her class last fall, but she thinks someone should know that the Student Services office has been hard to work with on this and other matters.</td>
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<td>Took three classes in the fall of 2008. He tried to enroll in courses during the spring, but they were not offered by NOVA that term. He plans to take those courses this fall because they should be offered. The courses are in IT and would be helpful for his work.</td>
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<td>Is in the military. She took two English classes and enjoyed them. The second semester she did not take additional classes because she didn’t find subjects that appealed to her and fit in her schedule. Classes are taught on her military base and the offering is limited. She said she would like more classes in art, graphic design or art history. Only classes in English, business, law, medicine and education are offered there currently.</td>
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<td>Is trying to get more classes at NOVA but can’t. He is looking for an English Second Language class, but it has already filled up. His employer is paying for these classes and the student is trying to get them. He is looking at other colleges if he can’t get what he needs at NOVA. He was given the number for the college call center.</td>
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**Dissatisfied with College Administrators/Requirements**

Was very frustrated by her dealings with people at the medical campus and isn’t sure if she would ever return to NOVA. She got very upset with the front desk people at student services. They insisted she show proof that she took a year of biology in high school in order to take the class she wanted at NOVA. She didn’t have those records easily available, but she did present her college transcripts, which showed she graduated with a degree in biology. The desk people kept insisting she present an electronic record of the high school class or her high school diploma. She explained that she attended high school before the era of computers and electronic files, and she was unable to locate her diploma at home. She sought the help of a counselor in Billing and Coding who said she would try to help her get around the problem, but she never heard back from the counselor. She’s given up in disgust.

Is very frustrated by her first experience at NOVA. She was taking an online course and arrived at the Woodbridge campus testing center for her final exam 1 ½ hours in advance of the testing time, as instructed. The person at the testing center turned her away, saying all the computers were taken. She asked to be allowed to stay in hope of taking over a computer once someone else had finished. She was refused. The person at the testing center told her to contact her professor. She emailed, explained what happened and asked for an extension. The professor refused. To make matters worse, she later found out from the financial aid office in Springfield that she would not be reimbursed for the cost of the class because it was only three credits. She had been led to believe she would be reimbursed. So, now she finds she has to pay out-of-state tuition for a class she wasn’t allowed to complete. She said that had she known the aid wasn’t available, she would at least have waited to meet the in-state residency requirements. She moved here from North Carolina, where she attended classes at a community college. She found the financial aid system there to be much easier to navigate. They explained step-by-step what needed to be done. She felt that since coming to NOVA, she’s had nothing but “doors closed in my face.” She is now reluctantly considering a return to NOVA because she will qualify for in-state tuition and the Woodbridge campus is closer to her than Germanna, which she also considered. She said she is being very careful as she navigates the financial aid system this time, but she remains frustrated by the confusing system.

Wanted to take classes for a certification program, but found that NOVA wasn’t going to let him transfer classes he had already taken into the program. He complained about having to re-take some classes. He decided against coming back.
Was a high school student taking a class at NOVA during the fall of 2008. He was pleased with the class but not with the reaction he got from NOVA officials when he tried to take another class during the spring of 2009. He called the campus to find out if he needed to deal with his high school principal a second time to have permission for a course. He got conflicting information from NOVA staff who he described as unorganized and difficult to understand. Apparently, someone he spoke to was difficult to understand because of a heavy accent. He came to the Dean’s office on the Annandale campus to get some information. He said a staffer in the office was very rude. The staffer said the student did not call anyone at NOVA and accused the student of lying to get an extension so he could take a NOVA class in high school. He said he resisted the urge to call the staffer a name back, but he left furious. He has told his friends not to come to the Annandale campus after the treatment he received. He has graduated and will go to Johns Hopkins University in the fall.

Wanted to take classes to supplement her bachelor’s degree in physical therapy. She took one class and had a good experience and decided to take an English composition class, but she ran into problems. She wanted to take the class, but she said because she was a foreigner she was required to take an English Second Language class. She did not want to do that, but NOVA required it before moving on to English composition. She decided not take additional NOVA classes and instead enrolled in Strayer University’s online English composition class.

Was really upset over an encounter with the financial aid department. A superior at the department was incredibly callous and rude. She has a full-time job and was trying to take a psychology class. She arrived at the financial aid office at 3:30 p.m. and waited for an hour and a half before being called for assistance. The officer looks up and notices the time is 5 p.m. and tells the student she will have to come back the next day. She protests because it is quite a distance from her work to NOVA. She is a DC resident and came seeking financial aid because for three credits she was charged $1,000. She couldn’t get the aid, but the financial aid officer was rude and insisted that the student leave or that the department would close the doors with her locked inside. “It was unbelievable.” She went back the next day much earlier, but there was no one around to assist her. She warns that the financial aid office is turning people off from NOVA. She wondered how would an experience like her experience impact an 18-year-old who is unsure about school and could be easily detoured from coming by an unsympathetic financial aid person. She is in her late 20s and is now in George Washington University. She had concerns about her psychology class. It was cancelled two-thirds of the time. The class met at 6 p.m. so it was a really an effort for the student to get to the NOVA campus from work. She was angry the class was cancelled so much when she paid out-of-state tuition. She said the professor was also not challenging students enough. He looked at a paper she wrote and commented on all the sources she had and noted she couldn’t be a NOVA student because her research was so in-depth. “It was unfortunate. I didn’t feel I was challenged enough.”

No Reason Given

Currently studying to be a medical assistant. May return in the future for more English classes.

Reached during class at another school.

Is still taking classes at NOVA. She wants to start a business has been taking classes since the fall of 2008. She sat during the spring but returned to take classes during the summer and has plans for classes this fall. She enjoyed her experience at NOVA.

Currently enrolled in two classes here.

Was in the NOVA counselor’s office when reached by phone. Not sure why he didn’t come back in the spring but is trying to register now.

* Some respondents gave multiple reasons for not returning to NOVA. However, each respondent is listed only once and the response is categorized by the apparent main reason for not returning.
**NOVA Mission and Strategic Goals: 2005 – 2015**

**Mission**
The mission of Northern Virginia Community College is to respond to the educational needs of its dynamic and diverse constituencies through an array of comprehensive programs and services that facilitate learning and workforce development in an environment of open access and lifelong educational opportunities.

**Strategic Goals**

I. **STUDENT SUCCESS** - Northern Virginia Community College will move into the top tier of community colleges with respect to the retention, graduation, transfer, and career placement of its students.

II. **ACCESS** – Northern Virginia Community College will increase the number and diversity of students being served to mirror the population growth of the region.

III. **TEACHING AND LEARNING** – Northern Virginia Community College will focus on student success by creating an environment of world-class teaching and learning.

IV. **EXCELLENCE** — Northern Virginia Community College will develop ten focal points of excellence in its educational programs and services that will be benchmarked to being the best in the nation and strategic to building the college's overall reputation for quality.

V. **LEADERSHIP** – Northern Virginia Community College will serve as a catalyst and a leader in developing educational and economic opportunities for all Northern Virginians and in maintaining the quality of life and economic competitiveness of the region.

VI. **PARTNERSHIPS** – Northern Virginia Community College will develop strategic partnerships to create gateways of opportunity and an integrated educational system for Northern Virginians who are pursuing the American Dream.

VII. **RESOURCES** – Northern Virginia Community College will increase its annual funding by $100 million and expand its physical facilities by one million square feet in new construction. This includes the establishment of two additional campuses in Western Fairfax and Loudoun Counties, as well as additional education and training facilities in or near established population centers.