



Sense of Belonging Survey Report 2024

Institutional Research and Planning
Palomar College

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Introduction

The purpose of this study was to provide a greater understanding of Palomar College's students' sense of belonging. This report focuses on students' sense of belonging, how it might differ by demographic categories, how it relates to other attitudes. The report also examines how sense of belonging relates to student outcomes. The report provides a description of the data, a presentation of the results, and a brief summary.

Data

The data came from an online survey of Palomar students in the Fall 2024 term, as well as Palomar student records. The survey items were part of a larger data collection effort, the Fall Student Survey, aimed at gathering student input in various areas. The Sense of Belonging questionnaire items can be found in Appendix A. The survey was launched just after the midpoint of the fall semester (October 23, 2024), and was fielded through November 9, 2024. An email with a link to the survey was sent to randomly selected students with a valid email address, with up to four reminders to nonrespondents. A total of 601 students completed the survey.

Results

Respondent Demographics

Tables 1 through 6 summarize the demographics and other student characteristics of the survey respondents. The survey respondents were generally representative of the student population, though survey respondents were more likely to be white, and less likely to be Hispanic compared to the overall student population. They were also more likely to be female, younger, and full-time students compared to the general student population.

Table 1. Race and Ethnicity for Survey Respondents		
Race and Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Asian	34	5.7
Black/African American	15	2.5
Filipino	20	3.4
Hispanic	244	40.9
Multi Ethnic	44	7.4
Pacific Islander	1	0.2
Unknown	6	1.0
White	232	38.9
Total	596	100.0

Table 2. Gender for Survey Respondents		
Gender	Number	Percent
Female	356	59.7
Male	215	36.1
Non-binary	11	1.8
Unknown	14	2.3
Total	596	100.0

Table 3. Age Category for Survey Respondents

Age Category	Number	Percent
18 to 20	261	44.8
21 to 24	81	13.9
25 to 29	34	5.8
30 to 39	75	12.9
40 and Above	132	22.6
Total	583	100.0

Table 4. Course Load for Survey Respondents

Course Load	Number	Percent
Part Time	280	47.0
Full Time	316	53.0
Total	596	100.0

Table 5. Credit Status for Survey Respondents

Credit Status	Number	Percent
Credit	583	97.8
Non Credit	13	2.2
Total	596	100.0

Table 6. Time of Attendance for Survey Respondents

Time of Attendance	Number	Percent
Day Only	430	72.3
Day and Evening	143	24.0
Evening Only	22	3.7
Total	595	100.0

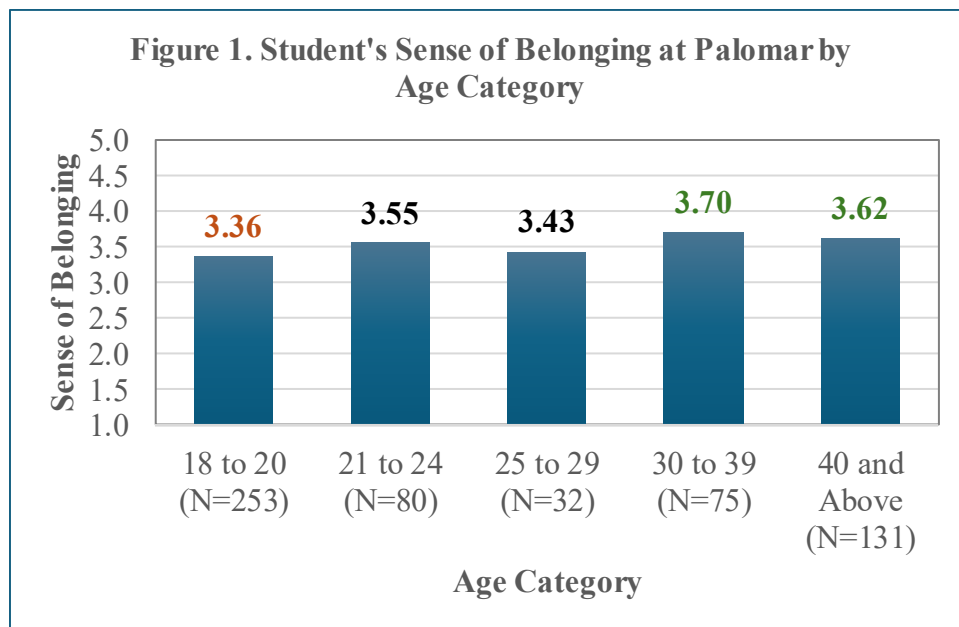
Sense of Belonging

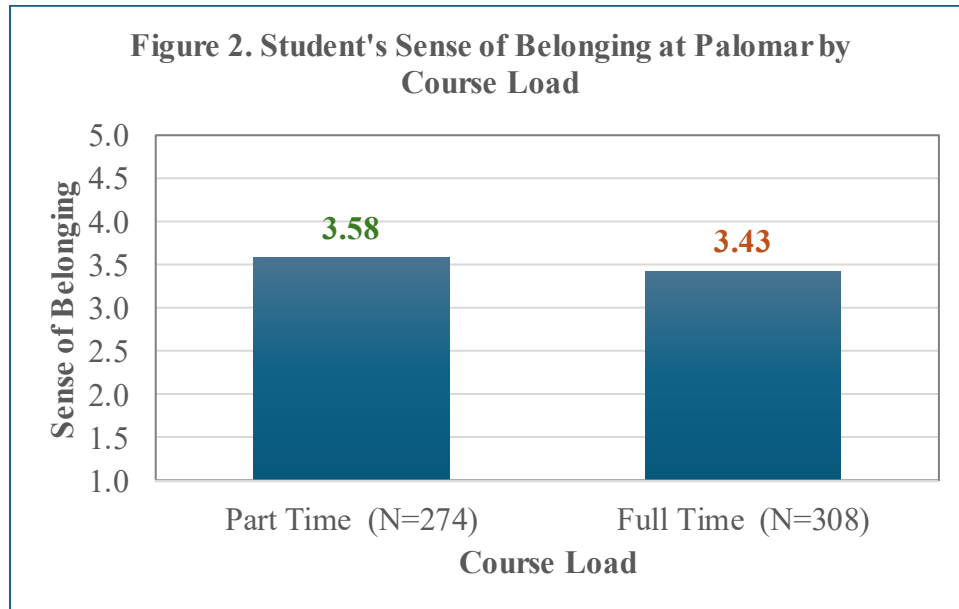
Eight survey items were combined to form the Sense of Belonging Scale, with a possible range of 1 to 5. As indicated in Table 7, the scale had a mean of 3.5, and a high degree of internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's Alpha (0.93). Table 8 shows the distribution of responses for each of the items constituting the Sense of Belonging Scale.

Table 7. Statistics for Belonging Scale			
	Number	Mean	Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)
Student's Sense of Belonging at Palomar	587	3.50	0.93

Table 8. Belonging Scale Items							
Sense of Belonging Scale Items		Not at all	A little bit	Some	A lot	Completely	Total
Feel Supported by Faculty	Number	13	45	134	225	168	585
	Percent	2.2%	7.7%	22.9%	38.5%	28.7%	100.0%
Feel Connected to the College	Number	62	119	226	100	70	577
	Percent	10.7%	20.6%	39.2%	17.3%	12.1%	100.0%
Palomar is the Right Place for the Student	Number	12	43	113	195	207	570
	Percent	2.1%	7.5%	19.8%	34.2%	36.3%	100.0%
Student Belongs at Palomar	Number	20	79	173	164	122	558
	Percent	3.6%	14.2%	31.0%	29.4%	21.9%	100.0%
Feel Supported at Palomar	Number	21	66	168	205	127	587
	Percent	3.6%	11.2%	28.6%	34.9%	21.6%	100.0%
Palomar Wants Student to Be Successful	Number	6	42	104	229	185	566
	Percent	1.1%	7.4%	18.4%	40.5%	32.7%	100.0%
Feel Like a Part of Palomar	Number	46	129	199	118	76	568
	Percent	8.1%	22.7%	35.0%	20.8%	13.4%	100.0%
Feel Important at Palomar	Number	65	109	191	108	81	554
	Percent	11.7%	19.7%	34.5%	19.5%	14.6%	100.0%

The students' sense of belonging varied by age category. As illustrated in Figure 1, students in the 18-to-20-year range had a lower sense of belonging than did students in the 30 to 39 and 40 and above ranges. Figure 2 shows that part-time students had a higher sense of belonging than did full-time students. These two findings are related, as the older students, who had a greater sense of belonging, were much more likely to be part-time.





Sense of Belonging and Other Attitudes

The associations of a sense of belonging and three other attitudes were assessed. Table 9 shows that the Sense of Belonging Scale was correlated with (1) students' sense of being directed to their goal, (2) students' level of engagement with faculty, and (3) students' sense of being valued at the college.

Table 9. Correlations of Student's Sense of with Other Attitudes		
Attitudes		Sense of Belonging
Student's Sense of Being Directed to Their Goal	Correlation	.695**
	Number	573
Student's Level of Engagement with Faculty	Correlation	.346**
	Number	585
Student's Sense of Being Valued at the College	Correlation	.829**
	Number	549

Sense of Belonging and Student Outcomes

The associations of a sense of belonging with various student outcomes were assessed. Specifically, (a) units earned, (b) course success rate, and (c) fall-to-spring persistence were all examined to determine if they were associated with the students' sense of belonging. No association was detected between sense of belonging and these outcomes. However, the timing of the survey administration should be considered when evaluating links between sense of belonging and subsequent outcomes. The survey was administered in the second half of the fall semester, so student attrition to that point may have resulted in range restriction on the belonging measure. That is, students toward the lower end of the belonging scale range may have been more likely to attrite prior to the survey administration than were other students, resulting in an attenuation of the observed relationship between belonging and subsequent outcomes.

Summary

The data for this study came from the Fall Student Survey, administered in the Fall 2024 semester. Sense of belonging varied by age, with students in the 18-to-20-year range having a lower sense of belonging than did students 30 and above. Further, part-time students had a higher sense of belonging than did full-time students. These are not independent effects, as older students were more likely to be part-time. Sense of belonging was correlated with students' (1) sense of being directed, (2) level of engagement with faculty, and (3) sense of being valued at the college. No relationships between sense of belonging and the student outcomes examined (units accumulated, success rate, and persistence) was found, though range restriction on the belonging measure may have obscured these relationships.

Appendix A – Questionnaire Text for Sense of Belonging Items

S1. How much do you feel supported by the faculty you interact with?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Completely

- ☐ Don't know

S2. Would you say that you feel connected to the college?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Completely

- ☐ Don't know

S3. Would you say that Palomar is the right place for you?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Completely

- ☐ Don't know

S4. How much would you say that you belong at Palomar?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Completely

- ☐ Don't know

S8. How much do you feel supported at Palomar?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Completely

- ☐ Don't know

S16. How much would you say that people at Palomar want you to be successful?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Completely

- ☐ Don't know

S21. How much do you feel like you are a part of Palomar?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Completely

- ☐ Don't know

S22. How much do you feel like you are important at Palomar?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Completely

- ☐ Don't know