

Non-returning Student Survey: Fall 2009 to Spring 2010

Executive Summary

Jeffrey Alan Johnson, Senior Research Analyst
Institutional Research and Information

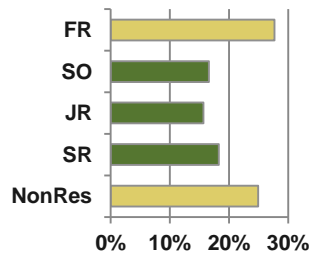
The Fall 2009 to Spring 2010 Non-returning Student Survey was designed to identify the major factors that led students registered in Fall 2009 to not register in Spring 2010, and to identify the plans and activities that those students pursued rather than studying at UVU. The survey canvassed all non-returning, degree-seeking students from Fall 2009. The margin of error was 2.0%, based on a sample of 1,544 respondents drawn from a population of 4,052 non-returning degree-seeking students.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

- Students have embraced UVU as a full-fledged university and see it as more than a community college.
- Student persistence is a consequence of decisions under UVU's control or influence.
- Student attrition is largely among students seeking degrees from UVU.
- The most important reasons for not returning were financial or work-related.
- Concerns about programs and courses are important motivations to transfer.
- Students want courses at a wide range of times, with strong demand in morning and evening.

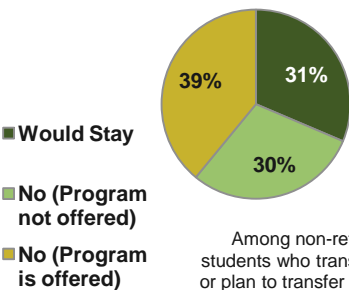
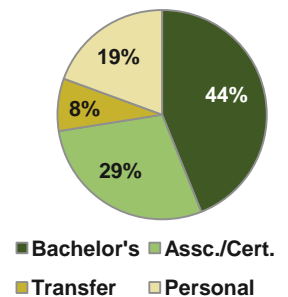
Persistence among freshmen and non-residents

More than one in four Fall 2009 freshmen did not return in Spring 2010, a rate more than 60% higher than other undergraduates. Only 12% of non-returning freshmen are leaving to serve a religious mission after one semester. This suggests that improvements in freshman retention should result in improved overall graduation rates as students are much less likely to withdraw in subsequent years. In addition, students without Utah residency are 30% more likely to withdraw than Utah residents.



Persistence of students pursuing UVU degrees

Student attrition is primarily among those who enrolled with the intention of receiving a degree from UVU. This is generally consistent with Fall 2006 students who did not return in Spring 2007. Attrition thus does not reflect a relatively large population of students who see UVU as a transfer-oriented institution.



Among non-returning students who transferred or plan to transfer (34%).

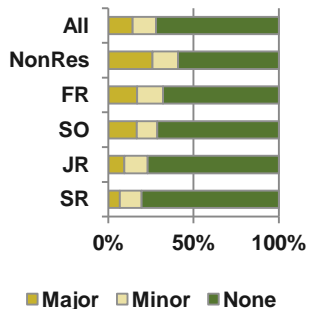
Persistence and transfer students

Only one-third of non-returning students transferred or plan to transfer. Less than one-third of transferring students would have stayed at UVU if the program were offered here and two of every five left even though UVU offers their preferred program. Three-fourths of non-returning students planned to re-register at UVU. This represents a substantial increase over the Fall 2006 to Spring 2007 survey, in which only 48% planned to return.

Economics reasons for not returning

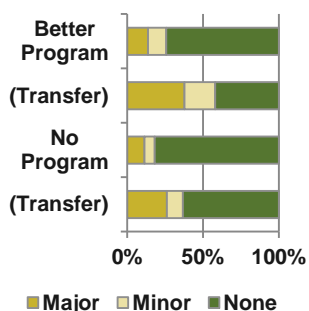
Schedule conflict with work was the most commonly reported overall (major or minor) and major reason for not registering. Availability of on-campus jobs, though a relatively uncommon reason overall, was a great concern of international students

The second most common overall and third most common major reason was insufficient financial aid. Students without Utah residency were twice as likely as Utah residents to report that insufficient financial aid was a major reason for leaving. This was also more likely to be of major concern to freshmen and sophomores than juniors and seniors.



Academic reasons for not returning

A better program elsewhere was the fourth most commonly cited major reason for leaving and fifth most common major or minor reason. But it was the most commonly reported reason for not returning among students who transferred. The importance of this reason to non-returning students increases over time, peaking in the junior year.



The lack of a preferred program was a less common reason but for those who indicated this reason it a major reason. Concerns with program availability peak at 25% in the junior year. This was the third most commonly reported reason among students who transferred.

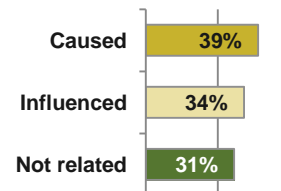
Non-returning students give exceptionally high ratings for educational quality, comparable to that of graduates. While few non-returning students cited any aspect of faculty performance or the campus environment as a major reason for not returning, one in five cited quality of instruction as an overall reason for not returning. Transferring students were more than twice as likely to report that quality of instruction and helpfulness of staff and faculty were reasons (mainly minor ones) for not returning.



The stress of college was not ranked highly overall but was the most commonly reported minor reason for not returning, affecting one in four students. Campus environment issues were the least often cited overall and major reasons.

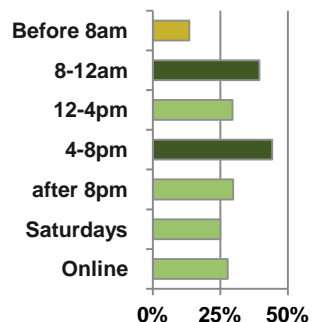
What UVU can do

Student persistence is primarily not an outside force but a consequence of how decisions made by the University affect individual students. More than two-thirds of non-returning students reported major reasons within UVU's influence. Three out of every five students who transferred reported at least one major reason that was a consequence of UVU's policies or actions. While UVU's influence over these effects does not necessarily suggest that the potential retention gains outweigh the wisdom of existing policies or practices, decision-making should consider the retention dimension of decisions that are not themselves about retaining students.



Health care and engineering programs are the most prominently requested programs among non-returning students that are not currently offered at UVU. But many of those who noted the lack of a particular program often suggested programs in areas where UVU offers a reasonably large number of programs.

Nearly half of non-returning students would prefer that classes be offered in late afternoon or early evening. But there is strong demand for courses virtually any time of the day, on weekends, and online, suggesting that students expect UVU to provide university-level service with classes throughout the day rather than a primarily morning schedule.



For More Information

Web: Detailed presentations, full administrative reports, and data tables are available through the IRI web site: <http://www.uvu.edu/iri>.

Contact: Jeffrey Alan Johnson, Senior Research Analyst
Institutional Research & Information
jeffrey.johnson@uvu.edu
(801) 863-8993