NON-RETURNING STUDENTS SURVEY RESULTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1,064 students accepted our invitation to participate in the survey of non-returning students. This represents a response rate of about 3 percent.

Number of Terms Enrolled at Ivy Tech

One fourth of non-retuning students were enrolled at Ivy Tech for only 1 term, 30 percent were enrolled for 2 terms, 21 percent for 3 terms, 24 percent for 4 terms, and zero percent for 5 or more terms.

Reasons for Leaving (respondents could select more than one)

- Personal reasons (45 percent)
- Academic reasons (32 percent)
- Financial issues (24 percent)
- Employment issues (21 percent)
- Scheduling reasons (14 percent)
- Problems with SAP status (9 percent)
- Transportation problems (3 percent)
- Military service (less than one percent)

Support Systems that May Have Helped (respondents could select more than one)

- More/better follow-ups or contacts with your academic advisor (46 percent)
- More/better follow-ups with financial aid office (42 percent)
- More course options during evenings/weekends (40 percent)
- Easier access to find answers to your questions (39 percent)
- More online course options (37 percent)
- Tutors within your specific program (31 percent)
- More Visible Career Counselor (30 percent)
- Tutors Available on Evenings/Weekends (29 percent)
- Student success course teaching strategies for being successful in college (25 percent)
- Availability of daycare services (17 percent)
- Other (13 percent)

Future plans to enroll

Fifty-nine percent of non-returning students indicated that they would be interested in attending classes at Ivy Tech again in the future. This is slightly down from the 62 percent reported in spring 2013.

Seventy-eight percent of non-returning students reported they would recommend Ivy Tech to others. This is down 4 percentage points since the spring 2013 semester.
INTRODUCTION

For the past 6 years, Ivy Tech has periodically conducted surveys of former Ivy Tech students who have not completed a degree or technical certificate to gather information about their current employment and educational status, to identify the factors that contributed to their departure from Ivy Tech, and to assess their overall satisfaction with Ivy Tech.

Recent changes in Ivy Tech’s funding structures and the mandate from the Board of Trustees have placed special emphasis on the over-arching objectives of significantly increasing the completions of associate degrees and technical certificates and/or transfer to a 4-year institution. As the college seeks to enhance retention and successful completion for students at Ivy Tech, it is particularly important to establish a more in-depth and up-to-date understanding of the circumstances surrounding students’ departure, attitudes about Ivy Tech and its various attributes, and feedback about whether and how Ivy Tech could have better met their needs.

This information suggests ways Ivy Tech could improve from a student perspective and can help assess and prioritize proposed approaches to increasing student retention, graduation, and transfer rates.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Ivy Tech’s Office of Institutional Research collaborated with the Blackboard Calling Center (BCC) on this project. The sample included the spring 2013 students who were enrolled at the end of spring 2013 term but did not return in fall 2013 (Census Day). In order to maximize the response rate, Ivy Tech utilized both Web- and telephone-based survey methods. The first phase of the project involved an e-mailed invitation sent to non-returning students requesting that they complete the survey online. Each survey respondent received a unique invitation code. The second phase of the project consisted of a BCC phone call to those non-returning students who did not complete the survey online to request participation in the survey. The phone portion of the survey ended on September 23, 2013.

SURVEY RESULTS

More than 1,000 (1,064) non-returning students accepted our invitation to participate in the survey. This represents a response rate of about 3 percent.
Number of Terms Enrolled at Ivy Tech

Of the 216 non-returners who responded to this question, about 55 percent stated they were enrolled at Ivy Tech for 2 terms or less. This is 7 percentage points lower than what non-returning students reported in spring 2013 (55 percent in fall 2013 compared to 62 percent in spring 2013 and 74 percent in 2011).

![Number of Terms Enrolled at Ivy Tech](image)

Figure 1: Terms Enrolled at Ivy Tech

Entrance into Ivy Tech

There seems to be a shift in the prior work and educational experience of the non-returning students from 2011 to 2013. Of the 351 non-returning students who responded to the question, only 9 percent reported having entered Ivy Tech directly from high school with an additional 39 percent entering after working for a period of time. About 15 percent of respondents entered Ivy Tech as in-bound transfers. This is fairly comparable to the proportion of in-bound transfer students who participated during the spring 2013 non-returning survey administration.

Other responses included after being unemployed, after obtaining a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree, after being released from prison, after raising children, after the loss of a loved one, and after changes in marital status.
Figure 2: Entrance into Ivy Tech Community College

**Level of Preparedness at the Time You Entered Ivy Tech**

When asked how well prepared they were at the time they entered Ivy Tech, 73 percent of non-returning students reported being “quite well prepared” or “very well prepared” to pass all their courses. A higher proportion of fall 2013 non-returners (58 percent vs. 50 percent) admitted to being “quite well prepared” or “very well prepared” to work with their advisors to select a major that matched their career goals.

A lower proportion of non-returners in the fall 2013 survey administration stated that they were either “quite well prepared” or “very well prepared” to select classes, to ask for help when they need it, and to manage their time effectively than did the spring 2013 respondents.
Figure 3: Prepared to Ask for Help When Needed

**Effect of Economic Climate on Decision to Attend Ivy Tech**

About 43 percent of non-returning students stated they were planning to attend Ivy Tech anyway, irrespective of the current economic climate. About 28 percent of non-returners reported that they chose Ivy Tech to reduce their educational expenses, 32 percent were concerned about losing their job or had already lost their job, and an additional 16 percent decided to attend Ivy Tech for other reasons.

Figure 4: Effect of the Economic Climate on Decision to Attend Ivy Tech
Employment while Attending Ivy Tech

Of the 209 respondents who were working, 20 percent had a part-time status (up to 20 hours). Nearly two-thirds of the working non-returners spent 31 or more hours per week at their job while also taking classes at Ivy Tech. This is fairly similar to what non-returners reported in spring 2013.

Figure 5: Number of Hours Worked Per Week

Rating of Overall Education and Training

Nearly eight in ten non-returning students gave Ivy Tech an “excellent” or “good” rating when asked about the overall education and training they received. The percentage of non-returners who gave Ivy Tech a “poor” rating declined from spring 2013 to fall 2013. This is an encouraging trend.
Issues that Contributed to Their Decision to Stop Taking Classes at Ivy Tech

Non-returning students stated several reasons for leaving Ivy Tech. Chief among them were personal reasons (45 percent), followed by academic reasons (32 percent), financial issues (24 percent), employment issues (21 percent), scheduling reasons (14 percent), problems with SAP status (9 percent), transportation problems (3 percent), and military service (less than one percent) (see figure 7).
Figure 7a: Reasons for Leaving – Personal Reasons

Figure 7b: Reasons for Leaving – Academic Reasons
Figure 7c: Reasons for Leaving – Financial Issues

- You were unable to pay: 34%
- You lost your financial aid: 21%
- You did not receive enough financial aid: 15%
- Your financial aid package was not ready prior to the start of the term: 8%
- Other: 23%

Figure 7d: Reasons for Leaving – Employment Issues

- You needed to work full-time: 46%
- You could no longer afford to attend due to a change in your employment status (i.e., job loss, reduced hours and/or earnings): 12%
- You got a better paying job that you could not turn down/could not afford not to take: 9%
- You were able to find a new job or were returned to active work status so you could not continue as a student: 8%
- Other: 25%
Figure 7e: Reasons for Leaving – Scheduling Reasons

Figure 7f: Reasons for Leaving – Problems with SAP Status
Ideas that Could Have Helped Non-Returning Students Stay

For the most part, the most well-liked and the least well-liked ideas remained the same from 2011 to 2013. Having more follow-ups with academic advisor, offering more course options during the weekends/evenings, receiving more help/assistance from the financial aid office received a top 2 box score of 36 to 46 percent (see figure 8).
Of the ideas listed with the lowest ratings, tutors within their specific programs, more visible career counselors, tutors available at different times, student success courses teaching strategies for success, and the availability of daycare services received a bottom 2 box score of 33 to 48 percent (see figure 9).

**Figure 8: Rating of Ideas – 5 Highest**

**Figure 9: Rating of Ideas – 5 Lowest**
**Educational Objectives**

Personal interest or self-improvement, preparing to change careers, completing an Ivy Tech degree or technical certificate, earning credits to transfer to another institution, and preparing to enter/re-enter the job market continue to be the top 5 most important educational objectives selected by non-returning students (see figure 10). When asked if they completed their educational goals prior to leaving Ivy Tech, 43 percent reported they did compared to 37 percent in spring 2013 and only 25 percent in 2011. Nevertheless, fewer than half of respondents stated that they left Ivy Tech before completing their educational goal. This is down from a high of 72 percent in 2011 (see figure 11).

When asked about their current educational objective, 78 percent indicated that they wanted to earn a credential: certificate (8 percent), Associate (27 percent), Bachelor (24 percent), Master’s or a higher degree (19 percent) (see figure 12). Only 14 percent of non-returning students stated that they already achieved their current educational goal.

![Figure 10: Most Important Educational Objective](image)
Figure 11: Achievement of Educational Goal Prior to Leaving Ivy Tech

Figure 12: Current Overall Educational Goal

Career Goals after Graduation

Nearly three-fourths of non-returners reported that they had clear career goals. Half of them knew what they needed to do to achieve them while the other 23 percent did not know how to achieve them. About 27 percent did not have clear career goals (see figure 13).
More than 40 percent of non-returners wanted to pursue a career in health care and social assistance, an additional 14 percent in professional, scientific, and technical services (e.g., legal services, computer systems design, etc.), and 13 percent in educational services (see figure 14).

**Figure 13: Clear Career Goals after Graduation**

**Figure 14: Primary Industry of Your Intended Career Goal**
Expectations of Coursework Requirements

About half of non-returning students indicated that the time and effort required by the coursework was what they expected. About 38 percent of non-returning students stated that their coursework was “somewhat more than they expected” or “much more than they expected” compared to 39 percent in spring 2013 and only 23 percent in 2011.

![Expectations of Coursework Requirements](image)

*Figure 15: Expectations of Coursework Requirements*

Rating of Ivy Tech Courses by Objectives

Non-returning students who attended Ivy Tech to fulfill a personal interest gave the coursework the highest rating (84 percent) followed by those who were earning credits to transfer (79 percent), those who wanted to enter or re-enter the job market (78 percent), those who sought to improve their skills for a current job (76 percent), and those who were preparing to change careers (76 percent).
Situation after Leaving Ivy Tech

About 45 percent of non-returning students reported that they did not return to a college or university since they left Ivy Tech but are planning on furthering their education now. Another 34 percent stated that they pursued their education at another institution either directly after leaving Ivy Tech or shortly after leaving Ivy Tech – 25 percent transferred to another college or university after Ivy Tech, 6 percent took some time off from college but enrolled at another institution, and 3 percent graduated from another college or university.

More than one in five respondents indicated that they did not return to a college or university since they left Ivy Tech and had no plans to attend one at this time. This is fairly similar to the 23 percent of non-returning students who gave the same response in the spring 2013 semester.
Most Frequently Selected Institutions Receiving Non-Returning Students

IUPU campuses, Purdue University- West Lafayette, Indiana Wesleyan University, and Western Governors University received the highest percentage of transfers from non-returning Ivy Tech students.

When asked about the college or university they attended after they left Ivy Tech or plan to attend in the future, nearly half of non-returning students stated other institutions.
Transfer of Credits

About 70 percent of non-returning students were able to transfer all or more than half of their Ivy Tech credits to another college/university. This upward trend is encouraging as Ivy Tech continues to forge transfer agreements with 4-year institutions.

![Transfer of Credits](image)

**Figure 19: Transfer of Credits**

Current Employment Status

The percentages of non-returning students who were employed and unemployed have not changed much since 2011. About 45 percent of the respondents are currently employed full-time with an additional 25 percent employed part-time or temporarily. About 30 percent of non-returning students are currently unemployed.
Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of non-returning students reported that their current employment position was "somewhat related" or "definitely related" to their coursework at Ivy Tech compared to 52 percent in spring 2013 and 40 percent in 2011. About 37 percent of non-returners indicated that their current position was not at all related to the courses they took at Ivy Tech. This is down from 59 percent in 2011 and 48 percent in spring 2013.
Impact of Ivy Tech Coursework on Salary

More than half of non-returning students reported that taking courses at Ivy Tech did not have any impact on their salary. About 29 percent stated that their salary “increased” or “remained the same” as a result of taking some classes at Ivy Tech.

![Impact of Ivy Tech Coursework on Salary](Figure 22: Impact of Ivy Tech Coursework on Salary)

Interested in Attending Ivy Tech Again

About 59 percent of non-returning students indicated that they were interested in attending classes at Ivy Tech again, down from 62 percent in spring 2013 and 70 percent in 2011. About 23 percent of non-returners reported they were not interested in coming back to Ivy Tech.
Participation in New Student Orientation

Of the 321 respondents to this question, 77 percent completed new student orientation. About 47 percent of them reported that the information they received during new student orientation was “above average” or “excellent.” This is about 24 percentage points lower than what non-returners reported in the spring 2013 term.
Enrollment in Student Success Courses

Of the 322 valid responses to this question, about 69 percent indicated that they enrolled in one of the student success courses when they were enrolled at Ivy Tech. Nearly half of the non-returning students gave the student success courses a rating of “above average” or “excellent.”

![Bar chart showing the rating of the content of student success courses for Spring 2013 and Fall 2013.](Image)

**Figure 25: Rating of the Content of Student Success Courses**

Effectiveness of Financial Aid Verification Communication

More than half (56 percent) of non-returners in the fall 2013 term indicated that the financial aid email communication received from Ivy Tech was effective. More than one third (37 percent) of non-returners stated that the financial aid verification outbound calls were not at all effective, which is fairly similar to the proportion of non-returners who reported that the verification outbound calls were not effective. The latter merits special attention from both the financial aid and marketing departments.
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The survey results indicate that non-returning students left Ivy Tech for multiple reasons. Chief among them were personal issues, academic reasons, financial problems and employment-related problems. Even though the category “transportation issues” did not rank at the top of the list, it is one problem that Ivy Tech can address in some municipalities by partnering with local transit authorities.

Ivy Tech could also reach out to non-returning students who have expressed an interest in returning to Ivy Tech. In addition, Ivy Tech could invest more resources in some of the ideas that non-returners valued and thought would have helped them persist. Chief among them were having more follow-ups with their academic advisors, offering more course options during the weekends/evenings, and receiving more assistance from the financial aid offices.

Finally, Ivy Tech could evaluate the various services and courses available to help students succeed to determine if they are adequate and meet student needs. The financial aid and marketing departments could also evaluate the content of the financial aid verification outbound calls to ensure that they address the students’ questions.