

2017 National Freshman Motivation to Complete College Report



Are you ready for today's incoming students?
And are they ready for you?

RUFFALOSM
NOEL LEVITZ

THREE FOCAL POINTS FOR UNDERSTANDING INCOMING FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO COMPLETE COLLEGE

What gets in the way of incoming students' strong motivation to complete a degree?



95% of today's entering freshmen report being "strongly dedicated to finishing college," yet only **58%** percent finish at four-year private institutions, only **37%** finish at four-year public institutions, and only **22%** finish at two-year public institutions.¹

(See *Desire to finish college*, page 7.)

ABOUT THIS STUDY



In 2016, nearly 100,000 entering freshmen filled out an **early-alert**, college completion risk survey and self-assessment. For details about the survey, see page 16. For a profile of respondents, see page 13.

See separate findings for specific student populations throughout this report and its Addendum by Race/Ethnicity, and visit RuffaloNL.com/MotivationToFinish for additional populations.

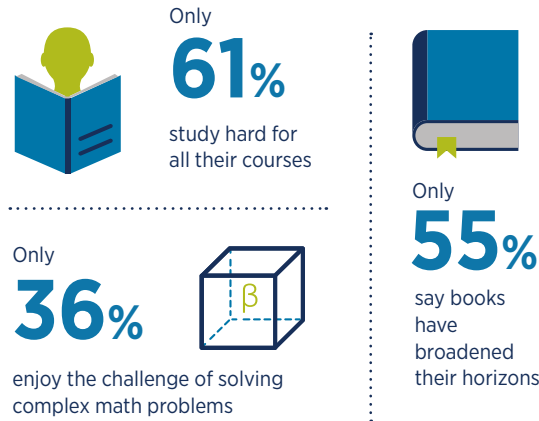
- ADULT LEARNERS
- MALE FRESHMEN
- FEMALE FRESHMEN

¹ ACT, Inc. (2016). National collegiate retention and persistence to degree rates (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, Inc.), p. 7.

SAMPLING OF ACADEMIC MOTIVATIONAL BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

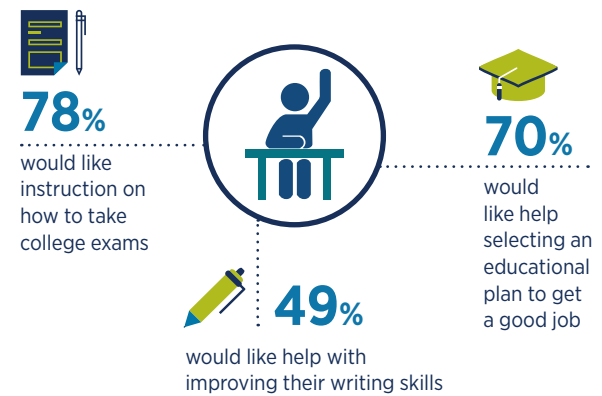
Overall National Highlights

Not all students come to college academically equipped to be successful. For example,

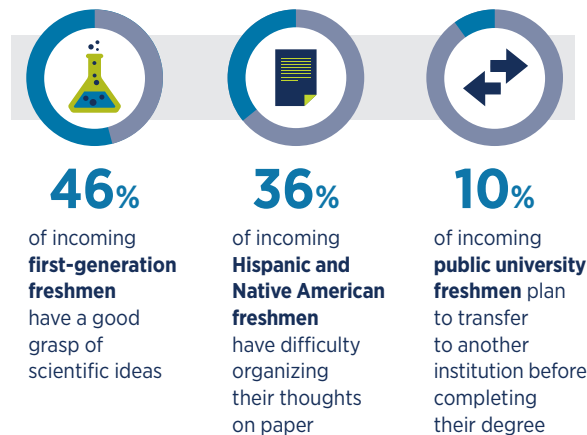


Requests for Assistance Highlights

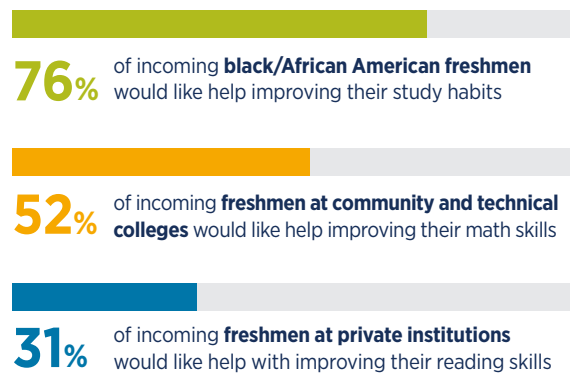
Incoming students' academic requests for assistance from their institution:



Highlights from Specific Populations



Requests from Specific Populations



TAKEAWAYS & RECOMMENDATIONS

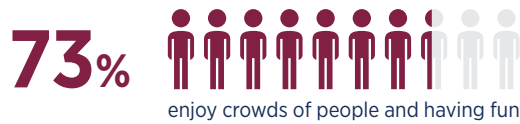
- Early identification of students with academic risks (beyond high school GPA) can lead to early and effective interventions
- Connect students as soon as possible with the assistance they are requesting
- Identify areas in which certain populations of students have unique needs and address these as early as possible
- Don't overlook beginning students' strong desire to finish, and their strong desire for career/educational planning assistance

For complete findings, please see the Appendix starting on page 7 and the Addendum by Race/Ethnicity.

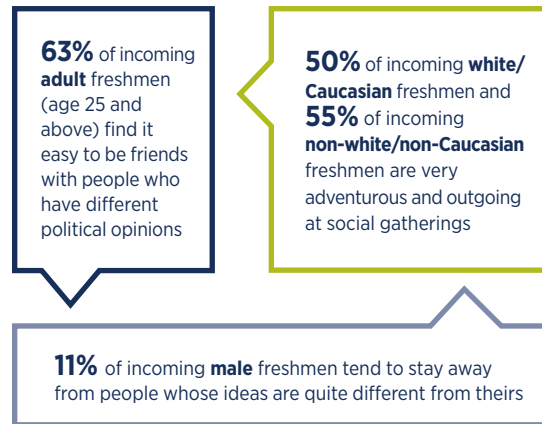
SAMPLING OF SOCIAL MOTIVATIONAL BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Overall National Highlights

Inclinations toward being social can lead to high levels of engagement but can also be a distraction from focusing on academic success.

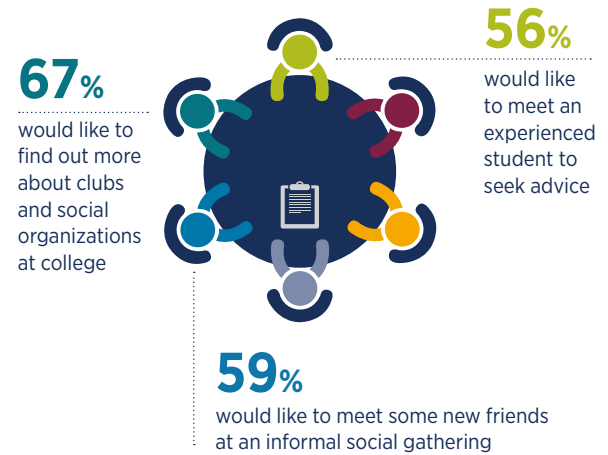


Highlights from Specific Populations

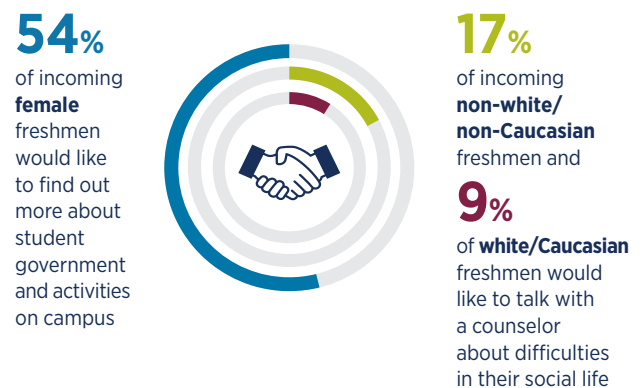


Requests for Assistance Highlights

Incoming students' social requests for assistance from their institution:



Requests from Specific Populations



TAKEAWAYS & RECOMMENDATIONS

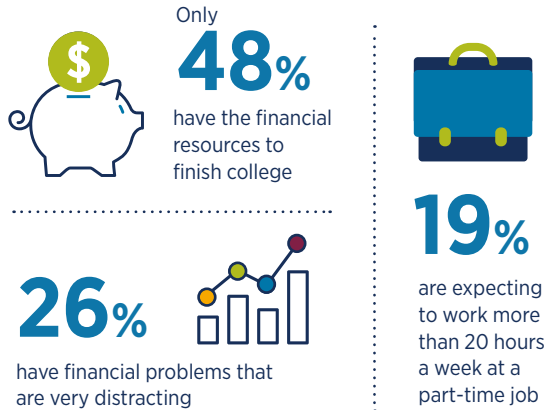
- Although students appear socially comfortable, they are still looking for institutional direction for opportunities to engage socially
- Explore ways to increase students' tolerance of people who are different from them
- Dig into, and answer, the varying social needs and requests of specific populations
- Provide support for students who need to balance their social interests with academic priorities

For complete findings, please see the Appendix starting on page 7 and related reports available at RuffaloNL.com/MotivationtoFinish.

SAMPLING OF FINANCIAL MOTIVATIONAL BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Overall National Highlights

Freshman financial motivational barriers:

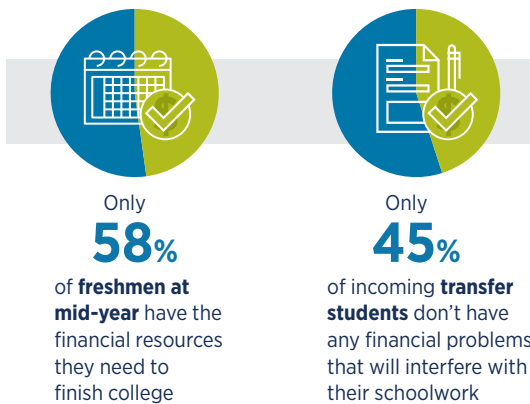


Requests for Assistance Highlights

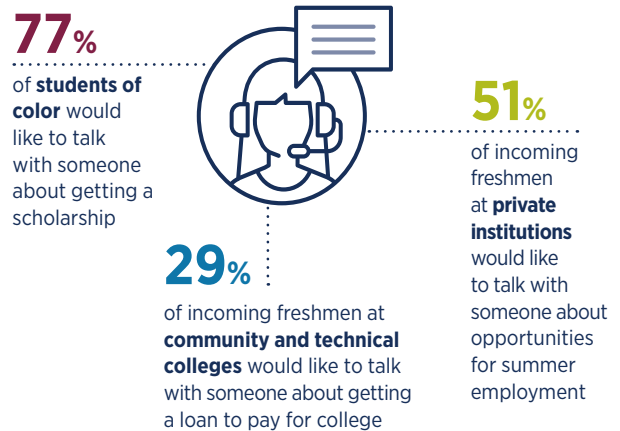
Incoming students' financial requests for assistance from their institution:



Highlights from Specific Populations



Requests from Specific Populations



TAKEAWAYS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Allocate financial aid to increase completion rates
- Emphasize pathways to efficient completion as a means to manage finances
- Maximize jobs on campus to minimize time away from studies
- Offer financial counseling, literacy programs, and information to evaluate the use of loans, such as outcomes by major, type of employment, and salary

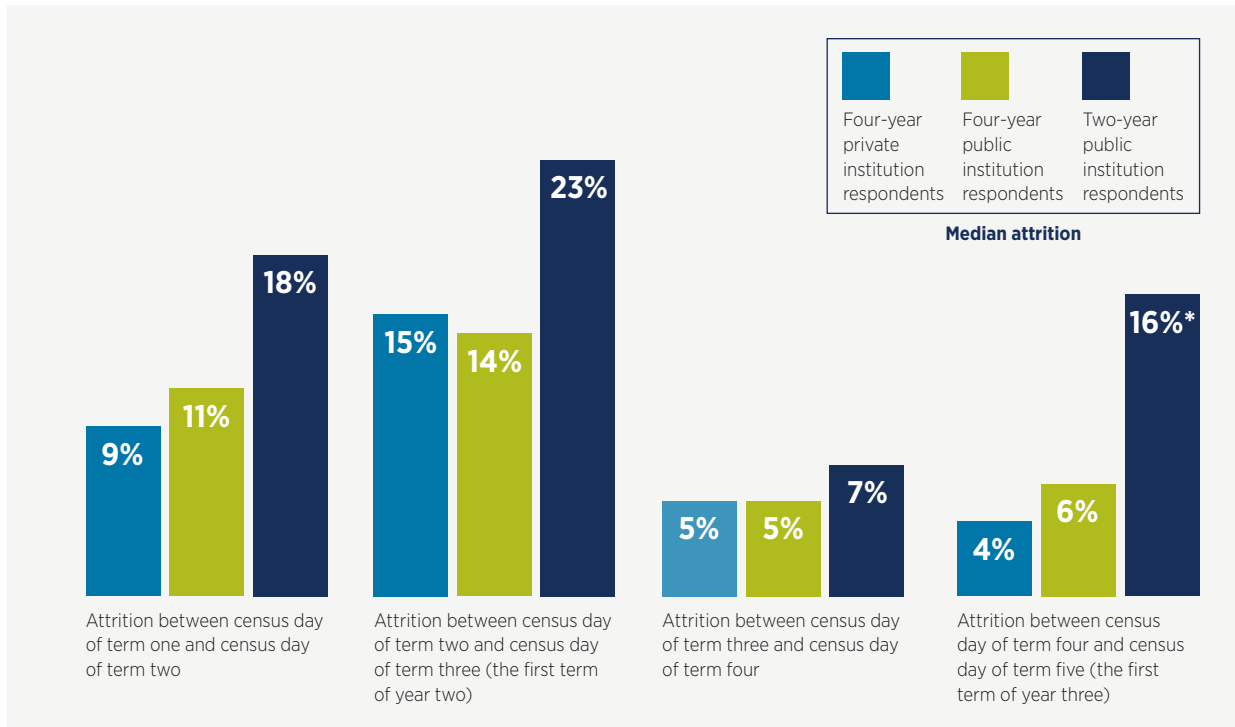


Early-Alert Survey Available for Campus Use

The 100-item survey used in this study, available for campus use, generates timely alerts of incoming students' needs and risks. Learn more on page 16.

ATTRITION: A TERM-BY-TERM BREAKDOWN

Statistics from a separate, recent Ruffalo Noel Levitz study² show college student attrition continues throughout the first four terms despite entering students' strong motivation to finish:



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DATA

As shown here, undergraduate attrition peaks between census day of term two and census day of term three (second set of bars shown). Note that attrition in year two, shown in the last two sets of bars, is less than attrition in year one, but remains substantial. The statistics shown above for first-year attrition are generally in line with national retention rate data from ACT.³

TAKEAWAYS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a first- through fourth-term college completion plan
- Pay attention to your second-year students, too, where double-digit attrition still occurs
- Evaluate performance and set realistic goals by comparing your term-to-term persistence against historic campus trends and current external benchmarks

² Ruffalo Noel Levitz (2017). Student retention indicators benchmark report. Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Ruffalo Noel Levitz. Retrieve from RuffaloNL.com/BenchmarkReports in spring 2017 (estimated release date).

³ ACT, Inc. (2016). National collegiate retention and persistence to degree rates (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, Inc.), p. 3.

*Excludes graduates, students who completed their programs

Appendix: Complete findings for freshmen overall, by institution type, and more

See more findings in the Addendum by Race/Ethnicity and related reports available online at RuffaloNL.com/MotivationtoFinish.

Proportions of 2016 entering freshmen in agreement

Green numbers = greater contrasts between first-generation and non-first-generation students

ALL SURVEY ITEMS:	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PRIVATES	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PUBLICS	STUDENTS AT 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	NON-FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	OVERALL NATIONAL PERCENTAGES
Desire to finish college						
I have a very strong desire to continue my education, and I am quite determined to finish a degree.	95.6%	96.0%	91.9%	94.6%	95.3%	95.1%
I am very strongly dedicated to finishing college—no matter what obstacles get in my way.	95.4%	95.8%	93.0%	94.8%	95.3%	95.2%
I am deeply committed to my educational goals, and I'm fully prepared to make the effort and sacrifices that will be needed to attain them.	92.0%	92.4%	89.8%	91.7%	91.8%	91.8%
Of all the things I could do at this point in my life, going to college is definitely the most satisfying.	82.9%	84.6%	78.1%	84.8%	82.1%	82.8%
I often wonder if a college education is really worth all the time, money, and effort that I'm being asked to spend on it.	22.3%	20.7%	22.8%	24.5%	20.8%	21.7%
I can think of many things I would rather do than go to college.	10.9%	10.3%	15.2%	11.8%	11.3%	11.4%
I wish that society did not put so much pressure on people to go to college, as I'd really rather be doing other things at this point in my life.	13.2%	12.7%	17.1%	14.9%	13.3%	13.7%
I dread the thought of going to school for several more years, and there is a part of me that would like to give up the whole thing.	9.0%	8.4%	13.1%	11.1%	9.0%	9.5%
Attitude toward educators						
The teachers I had in school respected me as a person and treated me fairly.	82.2%	83.8%	78.1%	81.5%	82.4%	82.1%
Most of my teachers have been very caring and dedicated.	81.7%	79.8%	78.9%	80.5%	80.4%	80.4%
I liked my teachers, and I feel they did a good job.	76.6%	78.3%	73.9%	75.7%	77.2%	76.8%
Most teachers have a superior attitude that I find very annoying.	15.4%	15.9%	13.8%	15.3%	15.3%	15.3%

Green numbers = greater contrasts between first-generation and non-first-generation students

ALL SURVEY ITEMS:	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PRIVATES	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PUBLICS	STUDENTS AT 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	NON-FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	OVERALL NATIONAL PERCENTAGES
Most of the teachers I had in school were too opinionated and inflexible.	16.1%	14.5%	16.8%	17.5%	14.9%	15.5%
In my opinion, many teachers are more concerned about themselves than they are about their students.	13.3%	15.1%	12.9%	14.0%	14.0%	14.0%
Intellectual interests						
Over the years, books have broadened my horizons and stimulated my imagination.	53.8%	57.8%	52.6%	51.1%	56.6%	55.2%
I get a great deal of personal satisfaction from reading.	42.2%	46.4%	48.0%	45.6%	44.8%	45.0%
I don't enjoy reading serious books and articles, and I only do it when I have to.	45.3%	41.7%	39.5%	43.2%	42.6%	42.8%
Books have never gotten me very excited.	39.4%	35.1%	39.2%	38.9%	37.1%	37.5%
Study habits						
I take very careful notes during class, and I review them thoroughly before a test.	66.6%	65.4%	67.1%	68.7%	65.4%	66.2%
I study very hard for all my courses, even those I don't like.	61.4%	60.2%	62.2%	63.7%	60.3%	61.1%
I have developed a solid system of self-discipline, which helps me keep up with my schoolwork.	60.6%	60.6%	55.3%	59.0%	59.9%	59.6%
My studying is very irregular and unpredictable.	31.3%	33.3%	32.6%	33.8%	31.9%	32.4%
When I try to study, I usually get bored and quit after a few minutes.	29.4%	30.5%	29.8%	32.5%	29.0%	29.9%
I have great difficulty concentrating on schoolwork, and I often get behind.	18.8%	18.2%	25.9%	22.4%	19.0%	19.9%
Math and science confidence						
I have a very good grasp of the scientific ideas I've studied in school.	51.6%	57.4%	45.0%	46.2%	55.1%	52.8%
I have a hard time understanding and solving complex math problems.	42.2%	39.7%	50.0%	47.1%	41.0%	42.6%
Math has always been a challenge for me.	40.5%	37.1%	51.8%	46.0%	39.5%	41.2%

Green numbers = greater contrasts between first-generation and non-first-generation students

ALL SURVEY ITEMS:	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PRIVATES	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PUBLICS	STUDENTS AT 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	NON-FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	OVERALL NATIONAL PERCENTAGES
I have always enjoyed the challenge of trying to solve complex math problems.	34.9%	39.3%	32.7%	35.5%	36.7%	36.3%
I have a very good understanding of general biology (e.g., cell structure, metabolism, genetics, and the circulatory system).	41.9%	45.8%	38.3%	38.7%	44.3%	42.9%
My understanding of the physical sciences is very weak.	22.4%	20.1%	25.8%	26.2%	20.7%	22.1%
Verbal confidence						
I am capable of writing a very clear and well-organized paper.	64.2%	67.2%	58.5%	57.9%	66.7%	64.4%
I pick up new vocabulary words quickly, and I find it easy to use them in my speech and writing.	55.6%	59.4%	59.3%	55.3%	58.7%	57.9%
I am very good at figuring out the deeper meaning of a short story or novel.	51.5%	53.1%	51.4%	49.9%	52.9%	52.1%
I have difficulty organizing my ideas in a paper, and I tend to make a lot of punctuation and grammar mistakes.	30.2%	26.8%	33.0%	35.5%	27.1%	29.3%
In English classes, I've had difficulty analyzing an author's style and theme.	29.0%	28.3%	27.3%	30.0%	27.9%	28.4%
Learning new vocabulary words is a slow and difficult process for me.	17.3%	15.0%	17.4%	19.7%	15.2%	16.4%
Career closure						
I have found a potential career that strongly attracts me.	81.8%	79.2%	82.7%	81.0%	80.9%	80.9%
I have made a firm decision to enter a certain occupation and have begun planning my life around that decision.	64.5%	61.6%	69.6%	66.7%	63.4%	64.2%
I become very confused when I try to choose an occupation.	19.4%	22.5%	22.7%	22.7%	20.8%	21.3%
I am very confused about what occupation to pursue.	18.1%	21.4%	18.1%	19.9%	19.3%	19.5%
Family emotional support						
When I was a child, my parents usually understood me, respected my judgment, and treated me in ways that helped me grow.	79.3%	79.0%	69.2%	70.1%	79.9%	77.3%

Green numbers = greater contrasts between first-generation and non-first-generation students

ALL SURVEY ITEMS:	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PRIVATES	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PUBLICS	STUDENTS AT 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	NON-FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	OVERALL NATIONAL PERCENTAGES
My family and I communicated very well when I was young, and we had a good understanding of each other's point of view.	68.9%	68.3%	60.6%	60.6%	69.6%	67.2%
My family had one way of looking at me when I was a child, and they didn't understand my feelings very well.	14.5%	14.5%	20.4%	20.6%	13.8%	15.6%
When I was a child, the other members of my family often said hurtful things that caused unpleasant feelings.	12.6%	12.2%	17.2%	17.4%	11.9%	13.3%
Sense of financial security						
I have the financial resources that I need to finish college.	48.3%	49.2%	43.6%	35.7%	52.0%	47.8%
I don't have any financial problems that will interfere with my schoolwork.	39.5%	41.1%	35.4%	27.9%	43.5%	39.4%
I have financial problems that are very distracting and troublesome.	26.0%	24.6%	31.2%	38.1%	22.3%	26.4%
I am in a bad financial position, and the pressure to earn extra money will probably interfere with my studies.	15.8%	15.8%	19.1%	24.3%	13.7%	16.4%
Sociability						
I greatly enjoy getting together with a crowd of people and having fun.	74.0%	75.4%	64.7%	70.6%	73.7%	72.9%
I am very adventurous and outgoing at social gatherings.	52.4%	53.9%	49.0%	51.7%	52.7%	52.4%
Participating in large social gatherings is of little interest to me.	28.4%	27.0%	36.5%	33.0%	28.0%	29.3%
It is hard for me to relax and just have fun with a group of people.	14.6%	14.5%	16.6%	16.3%	14.4%	14.9%
Opinion tolerance						
I get along well with people who disagree with my opinion openly.	59.4%	60.9%	63.7%	62.7%	60.2%	60.8%
I can feel comfortable with someone who thinks quite differently than I do on major social issues.	58.6%	60.1%	61.8%	60.8%	59.5%	59.8%
I find it easy to be friends with people whose political ideas differ sharply from my own.	49.7%	49.8%	52.4%	50.5%	50.2%	50.2%

Green numbers = greater contrasts between first-generation and non-first-generation students

ALL SURVEY ITEMS:	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PRIVATES	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PUBLICS	STUDENTS AT 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	NON-FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	OVERALL NATIONAL PERCENTAGES
When someone's opinions strongly disagree with my own, I tend to develop unfriendly feelings and to avoid close contact with the person.	12.5%	12.8%	11.0%	10.6%	12.9%	12.3%
I feel uneasy and distrustful toward people whose way of thinking is quite dissimilar to my own.	9.5%	9.1%	9.8%	9.3%	9.4%	9.4%
Because they irritate me, I tend to stay away from people whose ideas are quite different from my own.	10.4%	10.4%	11.1%	10.4%	10.5%	10.5%
Requests for academic assistance						
I would like to receive some instruction in the most effective ways to take college exams.	78.4%	80.5%	73.2%	80.5%	77.7%	78.4%
I would like to receive some help in improving my study habits.	60.2%	63.7%	58.4%	66.8%	59.5%	61.4%
I would like to receive some individual help in improving my math skills.	47.0%	48.4%	51.8%	55.7%	45.9%	48.5%
I would like to receive some individual help in improving my writing skills.	50.0%	49.4%	43.1%	54.6%	46.3%	48.5%
I would like to receive tutoring in one or more of my courses.	47.8%	52.4%	43.0%	53.3%	47.3%	48.9%
I would like to receive some training to improve my reading skills.	30.8%	30.3%	28.6%	36.9%	27.8%	30.2%
Requests for career counseling						
I would like some help selecting an educational plan that will prepare me to get a good job.	70.1%	74.4%	61.1%	72.3%	69.5%	70.2%
I would like to talk with someone about the qualifications needed for certain occupations.	64.7%	71.2%	58.8%	67.9%	65.8%	66.3%
I would like to talk with someone about the salaries and future outlook for various occupations.	56.5%	61.5%	48.2%	58.2%	56.7%	57.1%
I would like to talk with someone about the advantages and disadvantages of various occupations.	50.3%	55.7%	42.3%	51.0%	51.1%	51.1%
I would like some help selecting an occupation that is well suited to my interests and abilities.	47.2%	53.1%	42.1%	51.2%	47.9%	48.7%

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ALL SURVEY ITEMS:	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PRIVATES	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PUBLICS	STUDENTS AT 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	NON-FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	OVERALL NATIONAL PERCENTAGES
Requests for financial guidance						
I would like to talk to someone about getting a scholarship.	66.0%	71.7%	59.4%	72.5%	65.4%	67.2%
I would like to talk to someone about getting a part-time job during the regular school year.	53.1%	54.4%	37.2%	53.2%	49.8%	50.7%
I would like to talk to someone about the opportunities available for summer employment.	51.2%	52.2%	40.9%	53.8%	48.3%	49.7%
I would like to talk with someone about getting a loan to help me through school.	27.8%	28.8%	29.2%	34.8%	26.3%	28.5%
Requests for personal counseling						
I would like to talk with a counselor about my general attitude toward school.	17.2%	19.3%	19.2%	22.3%	17.2%	18.5%
I would like to talk with a counselor about some difficulties in my personal relationships or social life.	13.1%	11.5%	12.4%	14.3%	11.6%	12.3%
I would like to talk with a counselor about eliminating an unwanted habit (involving food, drugs, cigarettes, or alcohol, etc.).	8.9%	8.9%	11.1%	11.7%	8.5%	9.3%
I would like to talk with a counselor about some emotional tensions that are bothering me.	11.5%	9.9%	10.3%	11.9%	10.1%	10.6%
I would like to talk with a counselor about some feelings of discouragement or unhappy thoughts that keep bothering me.	11.3%	10.0%	10.6%	11.9%	10.1%	10.6%
I would like to talk with a counselor about some family problems.	7.4%	6.4%	7.5%	9.0%	6.3%	7.0%
Requests for social enrichment						
I would like to attend an informal gathering where I can meet some new friends.	61.9%	63.7%	43.1%	55.2%	60.7%	59.2%
I would like to find out more about the clubs and social organizations at my college.	69.1%	74.2%	44.7%	63.4%	67.9%	66.8%
I would like to find out more about student government and the various student activities on campus.	50.7%	53.3%	36.0%	49.6%	48.9%	49.1%

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ALL SURVEY ITEMS:	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PRIVATES	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PUBLICS	STUDENTS AT 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	NON-FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	OVERALL NATIONAL PERCENTAGES
I would like to meet an experienced student who can show me around and give me some advice.	56.4%	61.4%	42.3%	57.1%	55.5%	55.9%
Desire to transfer						
I have no desire to transfer to another school before finishing a degree at this college or university.	70.0%	66.3%	50.3%	60.7%	66.4%	64.9%
I plan to transfer to another school before completing a degree at this college or university.	7.0%	10.2%	21.2%	13.1%	10.2%	10.9%
Total number of students	39,779	41,374	18,191	24,717	73,491	99,344
Average age of students	18.7	18.4	22.9	20.4	19.0	19.4

Respondent demographics and additional findings

The following data are for freshmen who completed surveys in 2016 at 290 U.S. colleges and universities.

RESPONDENT INFORMATION	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PRIVATES	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PUBLICS	STUDENTS AT 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	NON-FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	OVERALL NATIONAL PERCENTAGES
Number of respondents	39,779	41,374	18,191	24,717	73,491	99,344
Percent of respondents	40.0%	41.6%	18.3%	24.9%	74.0%	100.0%
Percent female	53.8%	57.6%	54.0%	59.1%	54.1%	55.4%
Percent male	45.5%	42.0%	45.8%	40.6%	45.3%	44.1%
Racial/Ethnic origin						
Black/African American	18.0%	13.3%	16.5%	18.4%	14.7%	15.8%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.9%	0.9%	1.9%	1.5%	0.9%	1.1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4.3%	6.0%	3.9%	5.2%	4.8%	4.9%
White/Caucasian	60.8%	57.6%	52.2%	39.4%	64.5%	57.9%
Hispanic or Latino	9.8%	16.1%	17.4%	29.1%	8.6%	13.8%
Multiethnic or other ethnic origin	4.1%	4.2%	4.5%	4.0%	4.3%	4.2%
Prefer not to respond	2.0%	1.8%	3.5%	2.4%	2.1%	2.2%

RESPONDENT INFORMATION	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PRIVATES	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PUBLICS	STUDENTS AT 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	NON-FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	OVERALL NATIONAL PERCENTAGES
Highest education level of mother						
8 years or less	2.2%	3.4%	6.4%	12.7%	0.4%	3.5%
Some high school	4.4%	5.3%	11.4%	20.2%	1.3%	6.1%
High school diploma	24.0%	22.6%	32.8%	67.1%	11.0%	25.0%
1 to 3 years of college	24.9%	23.2%	28.4%	0.0%	33.2%	24.9%
Bachelor's degree	27.0%	27.6%	13.0%	0.0%	33.2%	24.7%
Master's degree	13.2%	13.4%	5.3%	0.0%	15.9%	11.8%
Professional degree	3.9%	4.3%	2.4%	0.0%	5.1%	3.8%
Highest education level of father						
8 years or less	2.8%	4.0%	8.0%	14.7%	0.8%	4.3%
Some high school	7.2%	7.5%	15.0%	24.2%	3.7%	8.8%
High school diploma	29.6%	27.1%	36.3%	61.1%	19.6%	29.8%
1 to 3 years of college	20.3%	20.0%	22.3%	0.0%	27.7%	20.5%
Bachelor's degree	22.9%	23.4%	10.6%	0.0%	28.1%	20.8%
Master's degree	10.9%	11.3%	4.4%	0.0%	13.3%	9.9%
Professional degree	5.2%	6.0%	2.4%	0.0%	6.8%	5.0%
Highest degree planned by respondent						
None	0.1%	0.0%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
1-year certificate	0.2%	0.0%	3.5%	1.5%	0.5%	0.7%
2-year degree (associate)	3.1%	0.4%	29.7%	11.2%	5.4%	6.8%
4-year degree (bachelor's)	39.1%	36.6%	36.8%	42.1%	36.2%	37.7%
Master's degree	34.6%	33.8%	17.1%	25.8%	32.9%	31.1%
Professional degree	22.7%	29.1%	12.4%	19.3%	24.9%	23.5%
Time expecting to spend at work						
0 (I have no plans to work)	26.6%	26.6%	16.6%	17.5%	27.3%	24.8%
1 to 10 hours per week	30.9%	25.2%	14.8%	20.1%	27.5%	25.6%
11 to 20 hours per week	28.6%	33.4%	28.7%	33.4%	29.7%	30.6%
21 to 30 hours per week	9.4%	11.1%	21.4%	18.0%	10.4%	12.3%
31 to 40 hours per week	3.4%	3.1%	13.7%	8.5%	4.0%	5.2%
Over 40 hours per week	0.9%	0.6%	4.7%	2.5%	1.2%	1.5%

RESPONDENT INFORMATION	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PRIVATES	STUDENTS AT 4-YEAR PUBLICS	STUDENTS AT 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	NON-FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	OVERALL NATIONAL PERCENTAGES
Average grades as senior in high school						
A	24.6%	31.3%	9.1%	15.7%	27.7%	24.6%
A to B	39.9%	40.3%	30.8%	38.5%	38.4%	38.4%
B	17.1%	15.3%	19.5%	17.0%	16.7%	16.8%
B to C	14.5%	10.9%	28.7%	21.9%	13.4%	15.6%
C	2.6%	1.6%	7.1%	4.2%	2.6%	3.0%
C to D	1.1%	0.5%	4.0%	2.3%	1.0%	1.4%
D	0.2%	0.1%	0.8%	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%
Self-assessment of academic knowledge						
Highest 20%	18.9%	26.8%	9.8%	12.3%	23.4%	20.5%
Next to highest 20%	36.4%	35.5%	26.6%	29.9%	35.8%	34.3%
Middle 20%	42.8%	36.2%	58.1%	53.9%	39.0%	42.9%
Next to lowest 20%	1.6%	1.3%	4.6%	3.3%	1.6%	2.0%
Lowest 20%	0.2%	0.2%	0.8%	0.6%	0.2%	0.3%
Self-assessment of academic ability						
Considerably below average	0.3%	0.2%	0.7%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%
Slightly below average	3.3%	2.4%	6.0%	5.1%	2.8%	3.4%
Average	27.4%	23.2%	44.4%	40.1%	24.8%	28.7%
Slightly above average	38.0%	36.2%	30.8%	34.0%	36.6%	35.9%
Considerably above average (top 20%)	28.1%	33.5%	16.3%	18.4%	31.6%	28.2%
Extremely high (top 5%)	2.8%	4.5%	1.8%	1.8%	3.8%	3.3%
Timing of decision to attend chosen college/university						
Decision made few days before	2.1%	1.7%	4.4%	3.5%	2.0%	2.4%
Decision made weeks before	12.0%	9.5%	21.1%	16.0%	11.5%	12.6%
Decision made many months before	85.7%	88.7%	74.4%	80.4%	86.5%	84.9%

About the statistical processes

Due to the large sample sizes, virtually all differences in the means shown in this report proved to be statistically significant based on either a t-test (using two-level variables such as first-generation/non-first-generation) or ANOVA analysis (using multi-level variables such as institution type). To identify greater contrasts between first-generation/non-first-generation (the items that appear in green), Cohen's d was used to identify items with small or medium effect sizes. Virtually all other differences between first-generation/non-first-generation, although statistically significant, registered negligible effect sizes.



ABOUT THIS STUDY AND RNL'S **EARLY-ALERT** SURVEYS AVAILABLE FOR CAMPUS USE

The RNL survey used for this study—the **RNL College Student Inventory, Form B**—sounds off early alerts before entering students even begin classes to increase persistence and completion. Additional RNL surveys, the **Mid-Year Student Assessment** and the **Second-Year Student Assessment**, continue that risk-identification into the second year of enrollment.

See survey samples at
[RuffaloNL.com/
EarlyAlertSurveys](https://RuffaloNL.com/EarlyAlertSurveys)

Although a portion of incoming students will persist without intervention, well-managed institutions that are able to identify the needs of their incoming students early, and to form proactive responses, will be best positioned to help their students succeed and to raise completion rates.

The nearly 100,000 students in this study completed RNL's early-alert, 100-item, college completion risk survey and self-assessment during orientation or within their first weeks of classes. The RNL College Student Inventory, Form B is part of the RNL Retention Management System Plus™ and RNL Student Success™. After students complete the survey, RNL immediately provides detailed, online, early-alert student risk reports to guide early interventions at the institutions. Individual findings for each student, along with the aggregated findings for specific populations, are available to:

- Increase persistence, retention, and completion rates overall and for specific populations;
- Identify each incoming student's noncognitive, motivational risks to completion and requests for assistance;
- Prioritize academic support services and student success interventions early in the term;
- Equip advisors and student success professionals to engage students in timely conversations and to proactively connect them with relevant support services;
- Develop each institution's first- and second-year programming with a focus on student engagement.

Learn more about RNL early-alert surveys at RuffaloNL.com/EarlyAlertSurveys. Using the findings, educators are able to proactively address students' specific strengths, weaknesses, needs, and concerns, and to ultimately increase their institution's completion and graduation rates.

Call 800.876.1117 or email ContactUs@RuffaloNL.com to discuss your interest in student risk assessment with a student success specialist, or visit RuffaloNL.com/MotivationToFinish to download the complete findings of this series.

About Ruffalo Noel Levitz

Ruffalo Noel Levitz provides higher education and nonprofit organizations with technology-enabled services, software, and consulting for enrollment and fundraising management. Since 1973, we have partnered with more than 3,000 colleges and universities and numerous nonprofit clients worldwide.

Find more higher education reports and research at RuffaloNL.com.

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