

IM:IR

Research Brief

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A Survey of Non-Returning Students

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Introduction

This edition of *Research Brief* summarizes the results of the "Non-Returning Student Survey." This survey was undertaken to gain a better understanding of the reasons that IUPUI students fail to re-enroll, either voluntarily, or because of non-payment of fees. The survey also examines what these students are doing now and whether they plan to return to IUPUI in the future. Overlaying all of these questions is a larger question of whether the university can do anything to increase the return rate of this group of students.

Three groups of non-returning students were interviewed by phone in October, 1993 to determine why they failed to enroll for the Fall Semester. The three groups included students who registered early but did not follow through by paying their fees--referred to as early registrants; students who registered in the final days of registration but who did not follow through with payment--referred to as final registrants; and students who were enrolled in the Spring of 1993, who were neither dismissed nor graduated, but failed to register for Fall 1993 --referred to as non-registrants.

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How the Survey was Conducted: A Methodological Note

This survey was conducted for the Office of Information Management and Institutional Research by the Indiana University Public Opinion Laboratory. Three populations of Fall 1993 non-returning students were sampled for this study. Two of the three groups included students who registered for classes during either early or final registration only to have their registration canceled for non-payment of fees. The third group consisted of students previously enrolled in the Spring 1993 Semester who did not enroll for Fall 1993.

A stratified random sampling approach was used to select students who would be interviewed by phone for this survey. The initial sample included approximately one-quarter of the non-registrants (population N=2,500; sample n=623), one-third of the early registrants (N=1,150; n=432), and all of the final registrants (N=n=116). Final respondent targets were set at 300 non-registrants, 200 early registrants and all 116 final registrants. The final numbers of respondents were 302, 196, and 69 respectively. The combined counts for the three groups, as reported in the tables, were weighted to restore correct population proportions.

An analysis was done to determine whether the sample was representative of the population on the following demographic and institutional variables: sex, age, ethnicity, entry status, and entry school. No significant differences were found between the sample and the remainder of the sub-populations with regard to these variables. It can therefore be reasonably assumed that this sample is

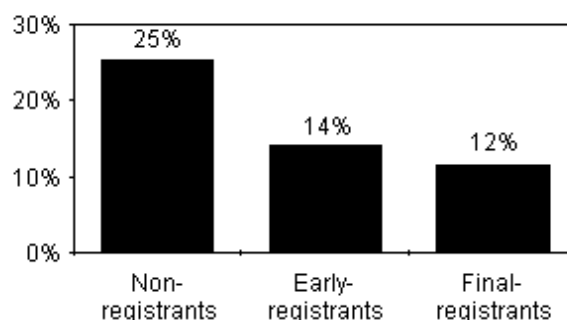
representative of the population of non-returning students.

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Survey Results: Students Who Enrolled Elsewhere

Non-returning students were asked if they were currently enrolled in courses or a training program at another institution. Overall, one-fifth of those students interviewed indicated they were enrolled at another institution. Display 1 shows that non-registering students were nearly twice as likely to have transferred to another institution compared to students who registered and were canceled for non-fee payment. Specifically, one-quarter of the non-registrants transferred to another institution compared to one-eighth of those who registered, but didn't pay.

Display 1. Percent of Non-Returning Students Enrolled Elsewhere



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Survey Results: Where they enrolled

Display 2 shows where transferring students enrolled for the Fall 1993 Semester. Nearly one-third of these students enrolled at IU Bloomington. Another eight percent transferred to other IU campuses, making total transfers within the IU system forty percent. An additional one-fourth of the transferring students enrolled locally, either at IVY-TECH (10.7%), or one of several other area colleges (14.9%). The remaining 30 percent of transfers were distributed among some 23 other institutions.

Display 2. Students Transferring Elsewhere By Institution

	Percent
IU, Bloomington	31.9%
IV-TECH	10.7%
Other IU Campuses	8.1%
U of I	6.9%
Marian College	6.9%
Purdue	4.6%
Other Local Colleges	1.1%

Other Institutions 29.8%

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Survey Results: What attracted students to a different institution?

When transferring students were asked what attracted them to another institution, the three major reasons were the curriculum, location and convenience of the other institution, and getting into the desired program, in that order. Display 3 shows these results. These three reasons were as much as four times more important to these students than was the availability of financial aid or special support services.

Display 3. Reasons for Transferring to Other Institutions

	Number	Percent*
Curriculum	36	29.9%
Location/Convenience	33	26.7%
Getting into desired program	26	21.2%
Times when courses available	10	7.9%
Financial aid	7	5.9%
Availability of support services	4	3.3%
Other	40	32.6%

*Respondents could select multiple reasons so the percentages total to more than 100%.

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Students Not Enrolled Elsewhere: What kept non-transferring students from re-enrolling here?

Several questions on the survey asked non-returning students, who did not enroll elsewhere, what kept them from re-enrolling at IUPUI this Fall. Specifically, students were asked about any changes in their work or family situation which might have prevented them from returning.

Changes in work circumstances were cited as a reason for not re-enrolling by one-half of the students who did not transfer elsewhere. Early registrants were most affected by work-related changes, followed by non-registrants, then final registrants. Among those who said that work changes affected their decision not to enroll, having to work more hours (65.2%), a job change (48.4%) and more responsibilities (37.2%) were the most important of these reasons.

Final registrants who reported a change in work circumstances as a reason for not returning were particularly likely to mention an increase in work hours. Ninety percent of these students cited an increase in work hours as a factor in their decision not to re-enroll. Display 4 illustrates these results.

Display 4. Reasons for Not Returning: Changes in Work Circumstances

	Total Wgt'd (461)	Non Reg (231)	Early Reg (171)	Final Reg (61)	grp. diff.
YES	48.7%	44.2%	57.9%	41.0%	**
What changes:					
More hours	65.2%	66.2%	61.8%	88.2%	*
More responsibilities	37.2%	42.3%	29.1%	23.5%	
Job change	48.4%	44.3%	57.4%	29.4%	
No employer financ. sup't	12.7%	8.5%	20.0%	17.6%	
Schedule conflict	9.8%	7.5%	13.5%	17.7%	
Other	31.0%	29.9%	34.6%	0.0%	

*p<.05; **p<.01; respondents could choose multiple reasons so percentages total to more than 100%.

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Changes in student family circumstances were also cited as a reason for not re-enrolling at IUPUI this Fall by nearly one-third of those students not transferring to another institution. Among those students citing family reasons, one-third mentioned child related issues - not including lack of child care. Nearly one-fifth said they had family problems and one-eighth mentioned changes in spouse's work, followed closely by marriage and lack of child care.

Display 5 shows these results. Early registrants were twice as likely as non-registrants to have mentioned that their children were a reason they were unable to enroll in the Fall. Final registrants, on the other hand, were twice as likely as non-registrants to have mentioned lack of child care as a reason for not returning.

Display 5. Reasons for Not Returning: Changes in Family Obligations

	Total Wgt'd (455)	Non Reg (227)	Early Reg (169)	Late Reg (61)	grp diff
YES	31.8%	36.6%	23.7%	23.0%	**
What Changes:					
Children	(133) 33.1%	(96) 26.0%	(34) 52.6%	(3) 25.6%	
Other family problems	18.5%	19.1%	17.4%	11.1%	
Changes in spouse's work	13.2%	14.5%	10.8%	0.0%	
Marriage	12.1%	13.6%	8.4%	8.5%	

Lack of child care	11.1%	11.8%	8.1%	23.1%	*
Prob with older relatives	2.6%	2.6%	2.7%	0.0%	
Other	22.8%	25.7%	14.1%	34.1%	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; respondents could choose multiple reasons so percentages total to more than 100%.

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Students Not Enrolled Elsewhere: Other reasons for not returning

In addition to being asked specifically about work and family reasons, students were asked about other reasons they may have had for failing to enroll in the Fall. An analysis of these results reveals that the most important set of other reasons involved difficulties students experienced in dealing with the institution.

Display 6. Reasons for Not Returning: Institutional and Financial Obstacles

	Total Wgt'd (331)	Non Reg (202)	Early Reg (117)	Final Reg (12)	grp diff
Institutional problems	48.8%	42.0%	62.6%	31.6%	
Lack of sufficient financial aid	11.0%	8.8%	14.8%	11.1%	
Couldn't pay tuition until aid was recvd	10.5%	6.9%	17.2%	7.4%	*
Couldn't get desired courses	8.9%	8.8%	9.4%	5.6%	
Hassles with enrolling	6.2%	4.4%	9.4%	5.6%	
Couldn't get desired major	4.7%	6.9%	1.6%	0.0%	
Unsure of major, what I want to do	3.8%	2.5%	6.3%	1.9%	
Didn't receive info on aid soon enough	3.7%	3.7%	3.9%	0.0%	
Financial problems, insufficient funds	24.5%	20.0%	31.3%	33.3%	**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; respondents could choose multiple reasons so percentages total to more than 100%.

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Display 6 shows that one-half of the non-transferring students surveyed mentioned one of several institutionally-based obstacles that influenced or determined their decision not to re-enroll. They were in order of importance, lack of sufficient financial aid, couldn't pay until their aid was received, couldn't get desired courses, hassles with enrolling, couldn't get desired major, unsure of what they wanted to do in terms of a major, and didn't receive information on financial aid soon enough. Early registrants were more than twice as likely to mention that they couldn't pay their tuition until they

received financial aid.







In addition, financial problems were mentioned by one-quarter of students who did not re-enroll at IUPUI or transfer elsewhere as an influence in their decision not to return in the Fall. Early and final registrants were significantly more affected by financial difficulties than non-registrants. Nearly one-third of these students mentioned financial difficulties compared to one-fifth of non-registrants.

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Students Not Enrolled Elsewhere: Non-enrolling student summary

Display 7 combines and summarizes the primary reasons students gave for not returning to IUPUI this Fall. In order to account for multiple reasons, the percentages among reasons chosen by non-transferring students have been adjusted to reflect percent of total choices, rather than percent of respondents.

Display 7. Overall Reasons for Not Returning to IUPUI

	<i>Percent</i>	
Transferred	21.3%	
Change in Work Circumstances	21.0%	
Institutional Obstacles	15.3%	
Change in Family Circumstances	13.8%	
Financial Problems	7.6%	
Other	21.2%	

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One-fifth of all those surveyed did not return to IUPUI in the Fall Semester because they transferred to another institution. Another one-fifth did not return because of changes in their work circumstances. The third most important set of reasons students gave for not re-enrolling had to do with difficulties they experienced with the institution. Fifteen percent mentioned these reasons. The fourth most mentioned set of reasons had to do with changes in family circumstances. Nearly fourteen percent said family matters prevented them from re-enrolling in the Fall. Finally, financial problems, aside from the financial aid problems included among institutional problems, prevented eight percent of the surveyed students from re-enrolling in the Fall.

These five reasons accounted for 80% of the students who failed to enroll for the Fall 1993 Semester. Another one-fifth of the respondents cited other reasons which, taken separately, represent less than two percent of all responses.

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All Non-Returning Students: Attempts to register

The survey asked non-returning students if they ever attempted to register for courses at IUPUI for the Fall 1993 Semester. Display 8 shows the responses to this question broken down by type of non-returning student. One-third of the non-registering students indicated that they attempted to register for Fall classes. An attempt in this instance could range anywhere from getting a busy signal

when they called to register and not going any farther with the process to actually getting into classes and withdrawing prior to the official census.

Display 8. Did You Attempt to Register for Fall 1993 Classes?

	Total Wgt'd (576)	Non Reg (302)	Early Reg (196)	Final Reg (69)	grp diff
Yes	51.9%	36.1%	82.7%	85.5%	**
No	48.1%	63.9%	17.3%	14.5%	

*p<.05; **p<.01; respondents could choose multiple reasons so percentages total to more than 100%.

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Given the size of this group and range of interpretations for "attempted to register", additional information needs to be collected to determine if any institutionally induced obstacles caused these students not to return in the Fall. One would expect that early and final registrants would report they attempted to register for the Fall Semester. However, as Display 8 shows, seventeen percent of early registrants and fourteen percent of final registrants said they did not attempt to register for the Fall Semester.

Possible explanations for this finding range from 1) some students may not be sure when the registration process ends and they are officially registered 2) some schools in the health fields register their students for classes 3) the term "attempt to register" may have been interpreted by these student to mean tried but failed to register whereas they did register. What constitutes an "attempt to register" may have different meaning for students compared to the official institutional perspective.

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All Non-Returning Students:: Termination for non-payment

Non-returning students were asked if they got into classes only to have their enrollment terminated for non-payment. As would be expected, and as shown in Display 9, most all non-registering students marked no for this question. However, eight percent of these students said their registration was canceled for non-payment of fees, contrary to institutional records.

Display 9. If Yes, Were Your Classes Canceled for Non-Payment?

	<i>Total Wgt'd</i> (302)	<i>Non Reg</i> (111)	<i>Early Reg</i> (163)	<i>Final Reg</i> (59)	grp diff
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Yes	37.7%	8.1%	63.8%	57.6%	**
No	62.3%	91.9%	36.2%	42.4%	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; respondents could choose multiple reasons so percentages total to more than 100%.

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Examination of the Bursar's records reveals that these students registered, but officially withdrew before the washout period. A more difficult finding to explain is why a large percentage of students (36 percent of early registrants and 42 percent of late registrants) reported that their registration was not terminated for non-payment of fees when it was. One possibility is that these students did not intend to enroll and viewed the action as voluntary on their part, they simply chose not to pay their bill.

Students who said they knew their registration was canceled for non-payment were asked if they were aware this was going to happen. Overall, seventy percent said they were aware this was going to happen. Early registrants were significantly more likely to be aware of this policy than final registrants. Whereas three-quarters of the early registrants knew their registration would be canceled, only half of the final registrants did. Display 10 shows these results.

Display 10. Did You Know that Your Registration Would Be Terminated?

	<i>Total Wgt'd</i> (121)	<i>Non Reg</i> (13)	<i>Early Reg</i> (106)	<i>Final Reg</i> (34)	grp diff
Yes	71.4%	46.2%	77.4%	50.0%	**
No	28.6%	53.8%	22.6%	50.0%	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; respondents could choose multiple reasons so percentages total to more than 100%.

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Students who were not aware that their registration would be canceled, some 35 students out of 567 respondents, were asked what they thought was going to happen. As Display 11 shows, one-quarter thought that they had more time. One-fifth thought they had financial aid, while one-sixth thought they would get another bill. When asked whether they were concerned that being terminated for non-payment would be counted against them when they decided to register in the future, seventy percent said they were not concerned. On the other hand, some thirty percent of these students were concerned about this happening.

Display 11. If No, What Did You Think Was Going to Happen?

Total Wgt'd	Non Reg	Early Reg	Final Reg
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	(35)	(4)	(27)	(25)
I thought I had more time	24.9%	25.0%	25.9%	20.0%
I thought I had financial aid	18.9%	25.0%	14.8%	32.0%
I thought I'd get another bill	16.5%	25.0%	14.8%	16.0%
I thought my fees were paid	12.9%	0.0%	14.8%	16.0%
Other	26.8%	25.0%	29.6%	16.0%

*no significant group differences

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The Registration Process: Were students adequately informed?

As Display 12 reveals, the vast majority (86%) of non-returning students believed they had received adequate information about registration procedures at IUPUI. While most final registrants believed they had received adequate registration information (71.6%), they were least likely of the three groups of non-returners to feel this way.

Display 12. Did You Receive Adequate Information About Registration?

	<i>Total Wgt'd</i> (571)	<i>Non Reg</i> (299)	<i>Early Reg</i> (195)	<i>Final Reg</i> (67)	grp diff
Yes	86.3%	87.6%	84.6%	71.6%	**
No	13.7%	12.4%	15.4%	28.4%	

*p<.05; **p<.01; respondents could choose multiple reasons so percentages total to more than 100%.

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The Registration Process: Preparation for registering

Three questions on the survey asked students what they did in preparation for registering. The results indicate that three-quarters of all non-returners said that they had picked up a course schedule, one-half said they saw an advisor or counselor, and one-third said they saw someone from an academic department. As would be expected, non-registrants were least likely to have picked up a course schedule, though two-thirds of them did, and nearly one-half reported that they consulted with an advisor. Final registrants were less likely to have consulted an advisor compared to early registrants. Display 13 shows these results.

Display 13. Activities in Preparation for Registering

	<i>Total Wgt'd</i> (575)	<i>Non Reg</i> (302)	<i>Early Reg</i> (195)	<i>Final Reg</i> (69)	grp diff
Picked up a course schedule	73.1%	66.1%	87.2%	82.6%	**
Saw an advisor or counselor	52.3%	44.3%	68.7%	56.5%	**
Saw someone from academic dept.	33.6%	33.8%	33.8%	24.6%	

*p<.05; **p<.01; respondents could choose multiple reasons so percentages total to more than 100%.

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Future enrollment at IUPUI

Two items on the survey asked non-returning students whether they intended to enroll at IUPUI in a future semester. Display 14 shows that one-half of non-registrants and early registrants and two-thirds of the final registrants said they intended to enroll in the Spring of 1994. Among those who did not intend to enroll in the Spring Semester, nearly one-half thought they would enroll at IUPUI at some later date (see Display 15). Based on their stated intentions, three-quarters of the students in the sample plan to re-enroll at IUPUI either in the Spring or at some time in the future. In addition, sixty percent of those students who transferred to another institution believe they will re-enroll at IUPUI sometime in the future.

Display 14. Do You Intend to Enroll at IUPUI in the Spring Semester?

	Total Wgt'd (575)	Non Reg (302)	Early Reg (195)	Final Reg (69)	grp diff
Yes	50.3%	50.0%	49.7%	65.2%	**
No	41.4%	44.4%	36.4%	24.6%	
NA	8.3%	5.6%	13.8%	10.1%	

*p<.05; **p<.01; respondents could choose multiple reasons so percentages total to more than 100%.

Display 15. If No, Do You Plan to Enroll at IUPUI at Some Later Date?

	Total Wgt'd (289)	Non Reg (152)	Early Reg (100)	Final Reg (24)
Yes	45.0%	44.1%	47.0%	41.7%

No	36.5%	36.8%	35.0%	50.0%
NA	18.5%	19.1%	18.0%	8.3%

*no significant group differences

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Students stated intentions were compared to their actual enrollment behaviors for the Spring 1994 Semester. Display 14 indicates that one-half of the total respondents intended to return in the Spring, but in fact a little less than one-fifth (18.9%) actually did. Display 16 shows the return rates for both those who said they intended to return and those who did not say they intended to return. These data reveal that students' stated intentions to return to IUPUI is not closely related to their actual behavior. Students who say they are going to return in the Spring are no more likely to actually return to the campus than students who did not say they are going to return.

Display 16. Intended vs. Actual Re-Enrollment in Spring 1994

	Total	Intended to Return			Did Not Intend to Return		
	Number*	Total	Returned	Percent	Total	Returned	Percent
Transferring students	111	21	2	9.5%	85	11	12.9%
Non-enrolling students	455	272	55	20.2%	137	33	24.1%
Final registrants	61	42	12	28.6%	13	1	7.7%
Early registrants	168	94	15	16.0%	48	9	18.8%
Non-registrants	226	136	28	20.6%	76	23	30.3%



*The total number includes respondents who indicated that they were unsure of their next semester status







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What could IUPUI have done to encourage these students to re-enroll

The final question on the survey asked students whether there was anything else IUPUI could have done to encourage them to enroll in the Fall. Display 17 shows the top five suggestions reported. They were, in order of endorsement: make financial aid more available and with less hassle, provide more classes, lower prices, let students into their desired school, and provide more and better informed staff.

Display 17. Is There Anything IUPUI Could Have Done to Have Encouraged You to Enroll? If So, What?

	<i>Wgt'd N</i>	<i>Wgt'd Pct.</i>	
No	388	69.1%	
Yes	174	30.9%	

If yes, what? (percent of yes responses)			
Financial aid: more and less hassle	24	14.5%	
Provide more classes	21	12.4%	
Lower prices	19	11.1%	
Let into desired school	16	9.6%	
More and better informed staff	14	8.5%	
Other	75	43.9%	

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Summary and Implications

The survey of non-returning students provides information on the attitudes, behaviors and intentions of previously enrolled students who failed to return to IUPUI in the Fall of 1993. Nearly one-fifth of IUPUI's non-returning students for the Fall of 1993 transferred to another institution. Most likely the other institution was another IU campus: forty percent transferred within the IU system, in particular to Bloomington, where one-third of transferring students enrolled. On average, transferring students were younger, female, and had higher GPAs compared to those non-returning students who did not transfer elsewhere.

Balancing work, family and school demands causes many IUPUI students to interrupt their college studies. Forty percent of the non-returning students cited changes in work and family circumstances, along with financial problems. These factors are for the most part outside the control of the institution and to some extent outside the control of the individual.

Fifteen percent of the students who did not return in the Fall mentioned problems related to the institution. These problems ranged from not enough financial aid, as well as not getting it in time to pay their bill, to not being able to get into their desired courses and majors, to general hassles with enrolling.

As far as the registration process itself was concerned, the vast majority of these students reported that they had adequate information about it and one-half of them got as far as seeing an advisor. Nevertheless there is still a feeling among some of these students that dealing with IUPUI as a student is difficult, and that the problems they experienced contributed to their decision not to re-enroll.

The majority of students who did not return to IUPUI did so for reasons beyond the control of the university. Furthermore, although a number of students cited institutional problems, these were often cited along with other reasons relating to work, family, and personal finances. It is interesting to note that non-returning students' concerns over institutional processes are not that different from continuing students concerns as reflected in the responses to last year's continuing student survey.

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