



2019 National Freshman Motivation to Complete College Report

A study of the challenges and opportunities for
completing a college degree, based on an analysis
of more than 95,000 college freshmen



STUDENT SUCCESS



How are the motivations of incoming freshmen changing?

As entering students begin their college careers, they have been exposed to many mixed messages about whether college is “worth it”—from the media and public figures, to parents, to peers. There have also been significant changes in demographics, economics, college preparedness, and other key areas that may be influencing how freshmen anticipate the college experience. How have these changes shifted student attitudes and motivations toward earning a college degree?

The **2019 National Freshman Motivation to Complete College Report** examines that question by tracking trends in freshman attitudes. Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) has been tracking freshman motivations annually for more than a decade, and this year we’re seeing some significant shifts in key areas.

Our report delves into historical data collected over the last five years (2013 to 2018) to understand if there have been shifts in student patterns over that time. For example:

	2018	2013
Fewer students in 2018 say that going to college is satisfying.	79%	86%
More question if college is worth their investment.	23%	21%
More students want help in selecting an education plan that leads to a good job.	70%	67%
Students increasingly want help in improving their reading skills.	38%	30%
A significantly higher percentage request assistance in meeting new friends.	73%	56%



As you look at current trends in freshman motivations, here are some key questions:

- How can you use the type of noncognitive motivational data in this report to make sure students remain committed to finishing a college degree?
- How can you ensure your student success plans align with changing cohort expectations? Are your on-campus programs in sync with students' needs? For example, in 2018, the top request for assistance from entering first-year students was meeting new friends at informal gatherings (73 percent in 2018 compared to 56 percent in 2013). Knowing that, what are ways you can help students get connected?
- How important is college success beyond the first year? Section 8 of this report emphasizes the importance of having a plan for the first four terms to maximize student success, including offering students academic support and skill development throughout their tenure, as well as access to professional development programs to assist them with career direction.
- Do you understand the needs of Generation Z? What about the growing number of adult and online learners? Knowing the needs of each cohort will increase the success of your student interventions, retention strategies, and completion rates.



95%

of incoming freshmen said they are deeply dedicated to finishing college BUT

23%

also question if college is worth the time, money, and effort.

This report includes eight strategies that help institutions intervene with students in more effective and strategic ways, guiding more students toward success and improving retention in the most critical moments of students' college careers.

- 1 Adapting your student success approaches to changing student behaviors and expectations
- 2 Guiding your strategies by knowing where first-year students need the greatest assistance
- 3 Building a full first-year student success program
- 4 Equipping student success advocates with the most relevant data
- 5 Analyzing and adapting programs for the different populations in your cohort
- 6 Addressing the specific risks of adult learners and taking advantage of their strengths
- 7 Addressing professional and career development needs of students from day one
- 8 Building a first-through-fourth semester student success plan

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This report is based on responses from more than 95,000 entering freshmen who completed two motivational, noncognitive assessment surveys—one as they entered college, another at mid-year. **For details about the assessment instruments, students surveyed, and methodology, please see page 19.**

1 Adapt your student success approaches to changing student behaviors and expectations

KEY FIVE-YEAR TRENDS FOR FRESHMAN MOTIVATIONS (2013-2018)

	2018	2013
The Value of College		
Of all the things I could do now, going to college is the most satisfying	79%	86%
I wonder if college is worth the time, money, and effort (value)	23%	21%
Confusion Over Career Decision Making		
I am confused when trying to choose an occupation	25%	21%
I am confused about which occupation to pursue	24%	20%
Financial Resources		
I have the financial resources to finish college	49%	47%
I have financial problems that are distracting	29%	29%
I am in a bad financial position, and pressure to earn extra money will interfere with my studies	22%	17%
Receptivity to Academic Assistance		
I would like instruction on how to take college exams	68%	77%
I would like help improving my reading skills	38%	30%
No desire to transfer to another institution	65%	60%

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Nearly one in four entering freshmen are unsure whether college is worth the cost.
- Nearly one in four students have some level of confusion about their career choices.
- While the trends have stabilized, many students still deal with difficult financial issues that distract them from their studies and career goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Analyze trends in your data. For example, distinguish what may be emerging trends among your Generation Z students.

Align your resources (programs, services, intervention strategies) with data based on the needs of your current students. The interest in career services illustrates this point. Connecting students with career services early in their education can help them develop appropriate academic and career objectives and show them the value of earning a degree.

Make the most of your financial aid resources to align with both institutional goals and student needs. Utilizing financial aid leveraging strategies can help you maximize the impact of awards on meeting your enrollment goals for both recruitment and retention. (Learn how RNL does this at RuffaloNL.com/Yield.)

Maximize your student employment program to employ as many first-year students as possible. Provide training to student employment supervisors and link them into your early alert systems.

Regularly assess student satisfaction and watch for emerging trends. Satisfaction is a proven indicator of student retention and completion. For additional insights, refer to RNL's 2009 study, *Linking Student Satisfaction and Retention*, which examines the correlation between college student satisfaction and student success. (Available at RuffaloNL.com.)

2 Align strategies with the greatest needs of first-year students

Areas of desired assistance	2018	2013	Change
Would like to meet some new friends at informal gathering	73%	56%	17%
Help selecting education plan to get a good job	70%	67%	3%
Talk about qualifications needed for certain occupations	69%	64%	5%
Receive help to improve study habits	69%	60%	9%
Would like instruction on how to take college exams	68%	77%	-9%
Talk about getting a scholarship with someone	66%	64%	2%
Find out more about clubs and social organizations at college	66%	61%	5%
Talk with someone about salaries and future for occupation	59%	54%	5%
Help selecting occupation suited to my interests	56%	45%	11%
Meet an experienced student to seek advice	56%	50%	6%

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- As the highlighted areas show, four out of 10 requests were focused on career concerns. Establish programs and connections early on with experienced students in similar studies/career paths and with career advisors.
- “Meeting friends” is a top desire for incoming students, including being introduced to experienced students who can offer education and career advice. Develop ways for students to make on-campus, in-person connections (for example, through clubs), as well as social connections via the campus’s digital networks and groups.
- Two out of three students want help with studying and exam taking.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Have these data available over the summer, before classes start. Managing the hand-off between admissions and first-year programs can help reduce “summer melt” (students who deposit but do not enroll) and improve enrollment yields.

Value “peer power.” Enlist currently enrolled students as peer leaders/mentors in helping connect your newest students to your community in both face-to-face interactions during orientation and virtual experiences online and through social media.

Utilize these data with campus partners to coordinate relevant programming and outreach plans. Doing so can create an integrated approach to meeting the needs of first-year students.

Share these requests with entering students. Being transparent helps to normalize the experience of asking for help and can encourage students to use your institution’s resources.

3 Build a full first-year program

RNL's Mid-Year Student Assessment results indicate that, by the second term, a significant percentage of students do not get the help they requested, and a significant number of students are still seeking help in these areas. This is evidence that intentional and integrated support for first-year students is needed in the second term as well as in the first.

TOP REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE OF ENTERING FRESHMEN AND RESULTS AT MID-YEAR	Requested 1st term	Received 1st term	Still want 2nd term
Like to meet new friends in an informal setting	73%	40%	26%
Get help selecting an education plan to get a good job	70%	48%	49%
Talk about qualifications for certain careers	67%	44%	48%
Receive help to improve study habits	69%	54%	34%
Instruction on how to take college exams	68%	51%	34%
Find out more about clubs and organizations	66%	52%	32%
Talk with someone about salaries and future occupations	59%	33%	49%
Get help in selecting an occupation suited to my interests	56%	38%	44%

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- While a large portion of students are receiving academic support services, there are gaps in the assistance first-year students seek and what they say they received.
- Almost half of the students responding want help with career planning and developing an educational plan that aligns with their career goals, as well as learning about salaries and potential occupations. Only a third were able to pursue that interest in their first semester.
- More than one-third of respondents are seeking academic support, including improving study habits and preparing for exams.

At mid-year, students' top concerns were career related. For more details, see Section 7 about career needs on p. 10.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Utilize motivational data collected as students enter college and mid-way through their first year to build a true "first-year experience" program. The greatest attrition occurs between the second and third semesters—proactive programming and outreach can increase the number of students who return to their second year.

Develop multichannel communication campaigns for your newest students (texting, social media, email).

We recommend a "CAN" approach—communications that emphasize *congratulating*, *alerting*, and *nudging* students through multiple means. Create messages that appeal not only to students who are seeking help, but those who may be reluctant to take advantage of resources for assistance.

Reset your outreach and programming with data gathered from students at mid-year. Intervene with students who tell you at the end of the first term that they may not come back for the second; help students who are now indicating they want a part-time job to find student employment on campus; target academic support to those who want help improving their academic performance in the second term.

4 Equip student success advocates with individual risk and receptivity data

Student success advocates (also known as advisors, faculty, staff, success coaches, first-year seminar instructors, and peer mentors) need to be aware of data that could indicate whether **a student possesses risk factors or behaviors that could impact their collegiate success.**



TWO-YEAR STUDENTS HAVE LESS CONFIDENCE AND MORE CHALLENGES IN KEY AREAS:

	Two-Year	Four-Year Private	Four-Year Public
Confidence in grasping complex scientific ideas	47%	58%	61%
Confidence in writing clear and well-organized papers	62%	71%	73%
Challenges solving complex math problems	51%	42%	41%
Challenges organizing ideas on paper	29%	23%	22%



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- To mitigate challenges entering students may experience, make attending to their individual requests for assistance a priority.
- Reading skills development may be as important as writing and math skills development.
- Student success advocates must have the knowledge and training to work holistically with first-year students (and beyond).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Train student success advocates. Ensure that all student success advocates (advisors, faculty, staff, and peer mentors) understand their roles in connecting students with relevant resources.

Inform your campus community about student interests and needs. The more people know about students' desires and needs, the better equipped they are to help. Collaborate with financial aid colleagues to coordinate outreach and programming to address students financial concerns.

Empower parents with information about available resources to reinforce with their students. Use aggregate data to guide discussions with parents about students' needs and the ways in which your institution provides resources to meet those requests and respond to deadlines (course registration, financial aid) in time for the best outcomes.

Align all new-student orientation programs with incoming freshmen's needs. Develop a planning process that utilizes motivational, noncognitive data to develop a holistic and integrated approach to programs and services for (summer bridge/orientation programs, "welcome week" sessions, first-year seminars, programming in the residence halls.

5 Analyze and adapt for the different populations in your cohort

First-generation students are just as committed to earning a college degree as their peers with college-educated parents (with a few differences). They have greater risks in math and science confidence and are more receptive to academic financial assistance.

CONFIDENCE AND RECEPTIVITY		First-Generation Students	Students With College-Educated Parents
Math and Science Confidence			
Good grasp of scientific ideas		47%	59%
Math has always been a challenge		49%	40%
Have a hard time solving complex math problems		50%	42%
Receptive to Academic Assistance and Financial Guidance			
Improve study habits		75%	66%
Improve writing skills		58%	47%
Improve math skills		61%	48%
Improve reading skills		48%	35%
Receive tutoring		54%	45%

95%
of first-generation students and students of color are strongly committed to finishing college.

Students of color show higher levels of receptivity compared to their white peers, but also are more likely to have distracting financial problems.

	Students of Color	White Students
Distracting financial problems	36%	24%
Career choice confusion	26%	24%
Receptive to assistance with improving study habits	78%	61%
Help in selecting occupation suited to their interests	62%	51%

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Students of color, at statistically significant higher rates, come to college wanting assistance.
- Identifying the common needs students have can help with coordinating outreach and support efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Tailor communications for specific populations. Develop targeted communication campaigns (social media, texting, email) to connect students of color with the appropriate assistance.

Train to work with diverse populations. Provide data to faculty, staff, and peer leaders (orientation guides, student mentors, residence life leadership, peer tutors) to help provide proper cultural training and create inclusive experiences.

Create connections between alumni of color and new students. Promote persistence by encouraging alumni of color to interact with new students of color in order to show the value of earning a degree from your institution.

6 Address adult learners' specific risks and take advantage of their strengths

The success of adult and online learners will be a growing concern for colleges and universities. As the enrollment growth of traditional-aged students is expected to flatten to 3 percent between now and 2027, adult learner enrollment is also predicted to increase (according to the U.S. Department of Education). Enrollment in online courses has also been steadily increasing. And despite the questions about the worth of college, the data support the significant value of a college degree in today's job market, which may encourage the millions of adults who have some college but no degree to enroll.

Between 2015 and 2026, enrollment for adult learners is projected to increase

11%*

Here are how the motivations of incoming adult learners compare to those of traditional students:

MATH AND SCIENCE CONFIDENCE

	Traditional	Adult
Math has always been a challenge	42%	55%
Have a hard time solving complex math problems	44%	52%
Pick up new vocabulary quickly	63%	71%
Figure out deeper meanings in their readings	56%	62%
Be friends with people who have different political opinions	72%	83%
Have higher levels of career decision making	65%	74%
Have lower levels of confusion about career directions	25%	18%

TOP 5 REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE FOR ADULT LEARNERS



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Adult learners bring many strengths with them to college. Find ways to utilize these in the classroom and in the campus community.
- Adult learners also have their own needs and challenges, particularly in the area of math. Comparing their motivational data to traditional students will help tailor your outreach older students so that they are more likely to persist.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Know your adult students. Be sure to collect noncognitive, motivational data on your adult learners.

Share results. Keep faculty informed in order to enhance their classroom practices and interactions with adult learners and share these data with your adult students—they may be surprised to learn that their individual needs for assistance are similar to both their adult and traditional-age peers.

Create initiatives specifically for adult learners. Utilize data to differentiate the needs of adult learners.

Make use of these insights in your recruiting practices for adult learners. Incorporate the top requests for assistance, and the resources you have available for adult learners, into your marketing materials, especially your webpages dedicated to adult learners.

*Smith-Barrow, D. (24 August 2018). "Is college enrollment among older adults increasing? Depends who you ask." *The Hechinger Report*.

7 Address students' professional and career development needs at the start of the first term

As noted in Section 2, four of the top requests for assistance were related to careers, including:



The top five requests at mid-year were also career-related:



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Career development is as important to entering students as academic advising, support, and social engagement.
- Acknowledge early on the “future planning” needs of first-year students.
- Since 2013, the demand for career development support among incoming students has been growing.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Develop an “eco-system” approach to career development. Do so by embedding exposure, education and opportunities into student classes as well as co-curricular experiences students are pursuing and information available online.

Align professional development plans with goals. Develop a four-year (or two-year for community colleges) professional development plan for each student that complements their academic and graduation plans.

Promote alumni networks. Utilize alumni, particularly younger alumni, to introduce first- and second-year students to internships and career opportunities.

8 Build a first-through-fourth semester student success plan

A student's second year is another critical juncture. Institutions need to address the needs of returning sophomores much in the same way they do incoming freshmen.

DATA FROM RNL'S SECOND-YEAR STUDENT ASSESSMENT SHOW THE TOP AREAS FOR ASSISTANCE FOR SOPHOMORES:

Desired areas of assistance	Students who requested*
Identify work experiences or internships related to my major	75%
Define goals suited to my major or career interests(s)	62%
Explore advantages and disadvantages of my career choice(s)	61%
Prepare a written academic plan for graduation	54%
Figure out the impact of my grades on my desired major(s)	53%
Discuss options for financing my education	48%
Find tutors in one or more of my courses	48%
Find better ways to manage my personal finances, including loans, work and credit cards	43%
Get help with study skills (time management, taking notes, concentrating, exam skills, etc.)	42%
Find ways to balance the demands of school with work	41%

*Data from surveys of students 2016-18

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Professional and career development are top of mind for second-year students.
- Financing the remainder of their undergraduate experience is also on their minds.
- Second-year students want academic support and skills development.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Create momentum for second-year success. Build a “sophomore jump” mentality to counter the “sophomore slump” reality for many students.

Repeat successes and address gaps. Build on what you are already doing and add what may be missing based on your data.

Engage second-year students in their own success. Encourage second-year students to assist with designing what a successful second-year program will look like on your campus.

Appendix: Complete responses and about the respondents

Complete findings by overall traditional-aged students and adult learners

The following are the responses to every item from the RNL College Student Inventory, Form B, which formed the basis for this report. The results are broken down by scale from the survey.

This year's report also shows results by institution type, as well as comparisons between adult learners (age 24 and older) and traditional-aged freshmen.

BY SCALE	INSTITUTION TYPE			STUDENT POPULATION		OVERALL NATIONAL
	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	TWO YEAR	ADULT	TRADITIONAL	
Commitment to College						
Strong desire to continue my education	97%	97%	95%	97%	96%	96%
Strongly dedicated to finishing college	96%	96%	93%	96%	95%	95%
Deeply committed to my educational goals	94%	95%	92%	96%	94%	94%
Of all the things I could do now, going to college is most satisfying	80%	81%	74%	83%	78%	79%
Wonder if college is worth the time, money, and effort	22%	23%	25%	15%	24%	23%
Societal pressure to attend college and would rather do something different	12%	13%	17%	9%	14%	14%
Many things I would rather do than go to college	9%	10%	15%	10%	11%	11%
Dread school and would like to give it up	8%	8%	13%	12%	9%	10%
Interactions With Previous Teachers						
Teachers respected and treated me fairly	84%	85%	80%	82%	83%	83%
Most teachers have been very caring and dedicated	83%	81%	76%	77%	80%	80%
Liked my teachers and feel they did a good job	78%	79%	73%	81%	76%	77%

BY SCALE	INSTITUTION TYPE			STUDENT POPULATION		OVERALL NATIONAL
	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	TWO YEAR	ADULT	TRADITIONAL	
Most teachers have superior attitude that is annoying	15%	16%	16%	8%	16%	16%
Teachers I had were too opinionated and inflexible	15%	13%	15%	11%	14%	14%
Teachers are more concerned about themselves than students	13%	15%	14%	8%	14%	14%
Reading Interests						
Books have broadened my horizons and stimulated my imagination	57%	60%	57%	75%	57%	58%
Get personal satisfaction from reading	40%	41%	47%	66%	41%	42%
Books have never gotten me very excited	38%	36%	36%	28%	38%	37%
Don't enjoy reading serious books and articles	47%	45%	41%	27%	46%	45%
Study Habits						
Take careful notes during class and review them before a test	69%	67%	69%	79%	68%	69%
Study very hard for all my courses	69%	68%	68%	84%	68%	69%
Have developed system of self-discipline	60%	59%	55%	67%	58%	58%
My studying is irregular and unpredictable	32%	35%	34%	21%	34%	33%
When I study, I get bored and quit	28%	31%	32%	13%	31%	30%
Difficulty concentrating on school work	20%	20%	26%	19%	22%	22%
Math and Science Confidence						
Have very good understanding of general biology	59%	60%	59%	63%	59%	59%

BY SCALE	INSTITUTION TYPE			STUDENT POPULATION		OVERALL NATIONAL
	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	TWO YEAR	ADULT	TRADITIONAL	
Good grasp of scientific ideas	58%	61%	47%	50%	56%	56%
Hard time solving complex math problems	42%	41%	51%	52%	44%	44%
Math has always been challenge	40%	37%	53%	55%	42%	43%
Enjoy challenge of solving complex math problems	33%	38%	31%	36%	34%	34%
Weak understanding of physical sciences	20%	19%	24%	24%	21%	21%
Verbal Confidence						
Capable of writing a clear and well-organized paper	71%	73%	62%	67%	69%	69%
Pick up new vocabulary words quickly	64%	65%	63%	71%	63%	64%
Good at figuring out deeper meaning in short story or novel	52%	53%	52%	62%	52%	52%
Had difficult time analyzing style and theme of authors in English classes	28%	28%	28%	23%	28%	28%
Difficulty organizing ideas in paper	23%	22%	29%	29%	24%	25%
Learning new vocabulary is slow and difficult process for me	14%	14%	18%	16%	15%	15%
Career Plans						
Have found attractive potential career	82%	80%	80%	89%	80%	81%
Made decision to enter certain occupation	66%	64%	67%	74%	65%	66%
Confused when trying to choose occupation	23%	27%	26%	18%	25%	25%
Confused about occupation to pursue	22%	26%	24%	17%	24%	24%

BY SCALE	INSTITUTION TYPE			STUDENT POPULATION		OVERALL NATIONAL
	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	TWO YEAR	ADULT	TRADITIONAL	
Family Support						
As child, parents respected and understood me	81%	79%	68%	61%	78%	77%
My parents and I communicated well as a child	78%	77%	72%	76%	76%	76%
Family had one-sided way of looking at me as a child	15%	16%	22%	24%	17%	17%
As a child, family members often said hurtful things toward me	12%	13%	17%	21%	13%	14%
Financial Security						
Have the financial resources needed to finish college	51%	50%	46%	47%	49%	49%
Don't have financial problems that interfere with schoolwork	44%	45%	39%	41%	43%	43%
Have financial problems that are distracting	28%	28%	31%	35%	29%	29%
Bad financial position and pressure to earn extra money will interfere with school	20%	22%	23%	20%	22%	22%
Receptivity to Social Engagement						
Enjoy crowd of people and having fun	89%	89%	76%	73%	89%	85%
Adventurous and outgoing at large social gatherings	58%	58%	53%	56%	56%	56%
Little interest in large social gatherings	24%	24%	36%	38%	27%	27%
Hard for me to relax and have fun with a group of people	15%	15%	18%	18%	16%	16%

BY SCALE	INSTITUTION TYPE			STUDENT POPULATION		OVERALL NATIONAL
	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	TWO YEAR	ADULT	TRADITIONAL	
Capacity for Tolerance						
Easy to be friends with people who have different political opinions	74%	73%	72%	83%	73%	73%
Feel comfortable with someone who thinks different on major social issues	68%	69%	65%	75%	67%	67%
Get along well with people who disagree with my opinion	61%	62%	63%	74%	61%	62%
Tend to stay away from people whose ideas are quite different than mine	9%	9%	10%	8%	9%	9%
Feel uneasy and distrust toward people who think dissimilar to me	8%	8%	9%	6%	8%	8%
I am unfriendly and avoid people with different opinions than my own	6%	6%	7%	5%	7%	6%
Receptivity to Academic Assistance						
Receive help to improve study habits	67%	70%	70%	63%	69%	69%
Would like instruction on how to take college exams	68%	71%	66%	68%	68%	68%
Receive individual help to improve math skills	48%	50%	59%	57%	51%	51%
Receive help on improving my writing skills	50%	50%	51%	49%	50%	50%
Receive tutoring for one or more of my courses	46%	50%	46%	45%	48%	47%
Receive training to improve my reading skills	37%	37%	42%	37%	38%	38%

BY SCALE	INSTITUTION TYPE			STUDENT POPULATION		OVERALL NATIONAL
	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	TWO YEAR	ADULT	TRADITIONAL	
Receptivity to Career Counseling						
Help selecting education plan to get good job	72%	75%	62%	54%	71%	70%
Talk about qualifications needed for certain occupations	68%	73%	65%	58%	70%	69%
Talk with someone about salaries and future for occupation	60%	64%	52%	44%	60%	59%
Help selecting occupation suited to my interests	55%	59%	52%	44%	57%	56%
Talk about advantages and disadvantages of certain occupations	55%	60%	49%	40%	56%	55%
Receptivity to Financial Guidance						
Talk about getting a scholarship with someone	64%	72%	62%	59%	67%	66%
Talk to someone about a part-time job	54%	53%	35%	26%	50%	48%
Talk to someone about the opportunities available for summer employment	52%	52%	38%	32%	49%	48%
Talk about getting loan to help get through school	26%	27%	23%	30%	25%	25%
Receptivity to Personal Counseling						
Talk with counselor about general attitude toward school	17%	19%	21%	21%	19%	19%
Talk with counselor about difficulties in my social life	15%	14%	15%	11%	10%	15%
Talk with counselor about emotional tensions	15%	15%	14%	12%	15%	15%

BY SCALE	INSTITUTION TYPE			STUDENT POPULATION		OVERALL NATIONAL
	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	TWO YEAR	ADULT	TRADITIONAL	
Talk with counselor about feelings of discouragement and unhappy thoughts	13%	13%	13%	11%	13%	13%
Talk with counselor about eliminating unwanted habit	9%	10%	12%	11%	10%	10%
Talk with counselor about family problems	7%	7%	8%	7%	7%	7%
Receptivity to Social Engagement						
Would like to meet some new friends at informal gathering	79%	80%	57%	52%	75%	73%
Find out more about clubs and social organizations at college	71%	75%	50%	39%	68%	66%
Meet an experienced student to seek advice	56%	61%	48%	40%	57%	56%
Find out about student government and activities on campus	57%	59%	44%	40%	55%	54%
Desire to Transfer						
No desire to transfer	73%	72%	43%	63%	65%	64%
I plan to transfer before completing degree at this college	6%	8%	29%	13%	13%	13%
Total Number of Students	38,076	30,664	26,650	5,763	89,627	95,390
Average Age	18.4	18.2	21.7	33.9	18.3	19.2

Increase retention and student success through assessment instruments for the first two years

ABOUT THE INSTRUMENTS USED IN THIS REPORT

Campuses cannot maximize their retention potential without intervention and initiative. As this study shows, students are eager to complete college, open to assistance, and also have many challenges that could undermine their success. To retain them, you need actionable data to inform interventions, assistance, and planning.

This study uses data from 95,390 students who completed the RNL College Student Inventory™ (CSI), a college completion risk survey and self-assessment administered during orientation or in the first weeks of classes, including:

FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE 38,076 (40%)	FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC 30,664 (32%)	TWO-YEAR COLLEGES 26,650 (28%)	ADULT LEARNERS (average age 34) 5,763 (6% of the sample)
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The data and reports provided by the CSI help institutions:

- 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

This study also uses the data from:

Mid-Year Student Assessment Form B

9,301 respondents	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE 5,815 (63%)
FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC 2,500 (27%)	TWO-YEAR 986 (11%)

Second-Year Student Assessment

7,531
respondents
(2016 - 2018)

In addition, this study includes data from the RNL Mid-Year Student Assessment™, given at the mid-point of the first year. To keep up the assessment efforts into the third and fourth terms, institutions also use the RNL Second-Year Student Assessment™.

Learn more at
RuffaloNL.com/EarlyAlert



ABOUT RNL

RNL is the leading provider of higher education enrollment, student success, and fundraising solutions. More than 1,900 colleges, universities, and nonprofit organizations rely on RNL for advanced analytics, personalized engagement, and industry-leading insights to achieve their missions. The firm is distinguished by its powerful portfolio of solutions focused on the entire lifecycle of enrollment and fundraising, assuring students find the right college or university, graduate on time, secure their first job, and give back to support the next generation. RNL conferences, research reports, papers, and articles help clients stay on top of current trends.



LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

RNL offers a full suite of solutions to increase student outcomes, including:

- Early-alert assessment instruments
- Student retention planning
- Student satisfaction and priorities assessments
- Yield and engagement to prevent stop-outs
- Resources for career services
- Predictive analytics for student retention



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