

Students Who Leave RIC After the Fall Term

**Insights from the 2017 & 2018 Administration of the
*Non-Returning Student Survey***

**Institutional Research & Planning
August, 2019**



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

Description of Survey

- **What:** Homegrown survey created by Institutional Research & Planning (IRP) in partnership with Enrollment Management team, with questions regarding students' reasons for leaving RIC, their plans for the future, and how we might encourage them to re-enroll.
- **Why:** To gather information on why students leave RIC to improve retention efforts.
- **Who:** Degree-seeking undergraduates who were enrolled in the fall term but did not re-enroll in the spring or graduate by the end of the fall.
- **When:** Survey conducted in spring 2017 and spring 2018.
- **How:** Administered on line and sent to students' personal e-mail addresses; a drawing for \$25 Amazon gift cards offered as an incentive for completion.



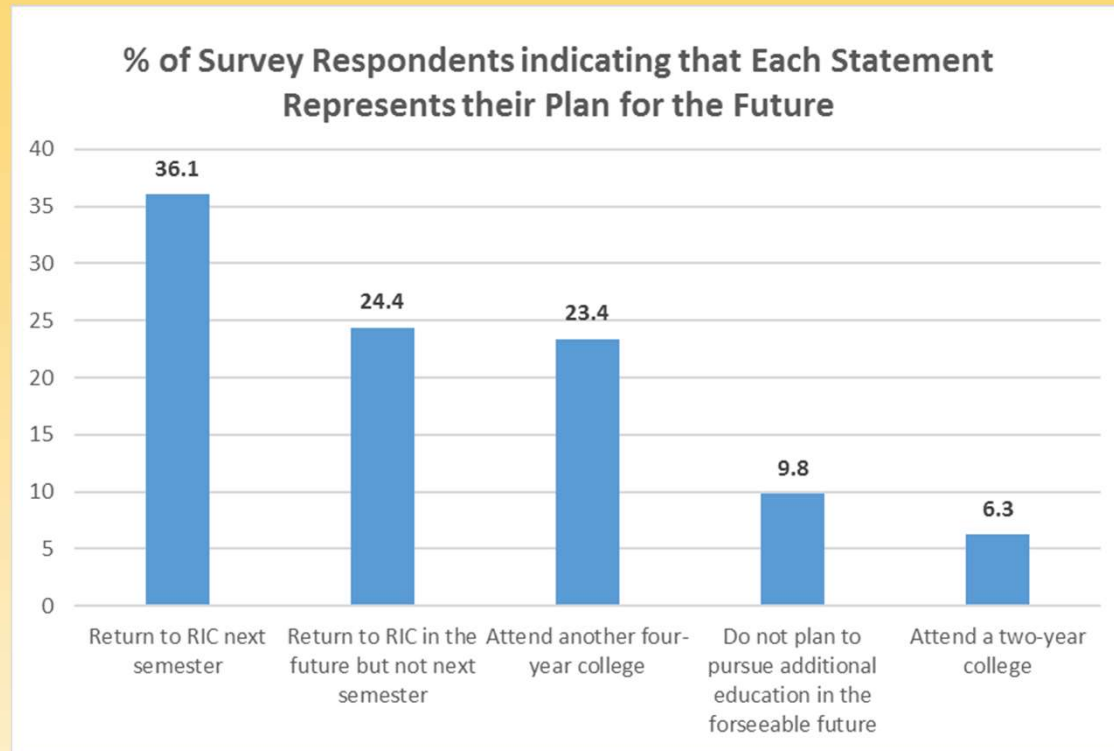
Survey Administration/Response Rates

Year	Population	Respondents	Rate
2017	753	111	14.7%
2018	700	102	14.6%
Total	1,453	213	14.7%

- Difficult to get large numbers of student who leave to respond to survey.
- Several reminder e-mails sent both years.
- Given small number of respondents each year, this presentation combines responses of survey for both years.



Categories of Departing Students Based on Future Plans



- Over a third of students intend to re-enroll in the following term, and 60.5% intend to re-enroll at some point in the future.
- Of those who indicated they were planning to re-enroll in the future, 42.7% actually enrolled in the following fall or spring terms.
- Nearly 30% of non-returning students reported that they intended to go to another 2- or 4-year college, and nearly 60% of these students actually attended another college at some point; most common institution attended was CCRI*.



Reasons Students Leave RIC

*% Indicating Each Statement is a 'Major Reason' and Mean Response
(Sorted by Mean Response)*

	Major Reason (%)	Mean
Tuition was too expensive	26.5	1.81
Personal problems	28.0	1.74
Family responsibilities interfered with studies	27.1	1.73
Not enough financial aid	29.4	1.72
Other	34.0	1.72
Difficulty getting needed courses	20.5	1.60
Campus staff were not helpful	19.0	1.53
Work responsibilities interfered with studies	16.7	1.53
Not happy in major	13.3	1.45
Dissatisfied with the quality of teaching in classes	13.3	1.43
Unhappy with academic performance	13.3	1.42
Didn't feel welcome	11.8	1.39
Faculty were not approachable	11.4	1.39
Health problems	14.8	1.38
Didn't know where to go for help or support	10.0	1.37
Uncertain of life goals at this time	10.6	1.36
Did not feel like they fit in with other students	9.0	1.34
Unhappy with quality of major	11.8	1.34
Some or all courses were too difficult	6.7	1.30
Changed career goals	9.0	1.27
Dissatisfied with courses outside of major	8.5	1.26
Accepted to another college they would prefer to attend	10.9	1.25
Dissatisfied with RIC's reputation	9.0	1.24
Transportation issues	6.7	1.22
Uncertain of the value of a college education	2.8	1.17
Dissatisfied with living arrangements at RIC	4.5	1.14
Felt the neighborhood around RIC was unsafe/undesirable	2.4	1.11
Courses were not challenging enough	1.9	1.11
Dissatisfied with availability/quality of on-campus student activities	2.8	1.10

Scale: 1=Not a Reason, 2=Minor Reason, 3=Major Reason

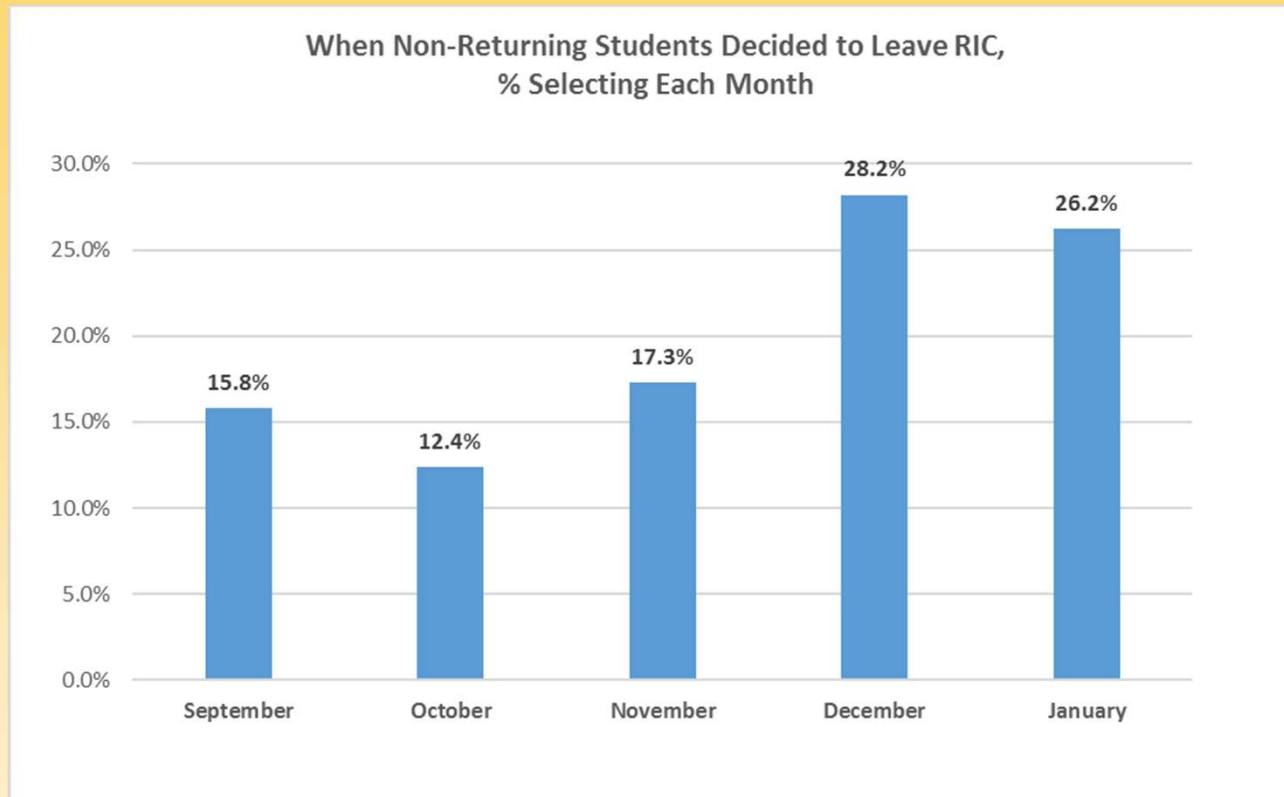


Reasons Students Leave RIC, Continued

- **Financial** and **personal** reasons have highest mean ratings among respondents.
- However, institutional issues are also reasons students select for leaving RIC; over 20 percent of respondents indicated that **“difficulty in getting needed courses”** was a major reason for not returning to the college between the fall and spring terms.
- Nearly 20 percent of respondents also indicated that **“campus staff were not helpful”** was a major reason for not returning.
- Reasons for leaving RIC varied somewhat based on departing students’ plans. Those who intended to come back in future terms tended to cite **personal and financial** reasons (family responsibilities, work responsibilities, tuition, and insufficient aid) more frequently, while those planning to transfer to another institution tended to give more weight to **institutional factors** (course availability, helpfulness of staff, quality of major, and fit).
- Respondents were also asked to select their PRIMARY reason for leaving RIC; of those who responded to the question, the most common answer given was **“Other,”** followed by **“Tuition was too expensive.”**



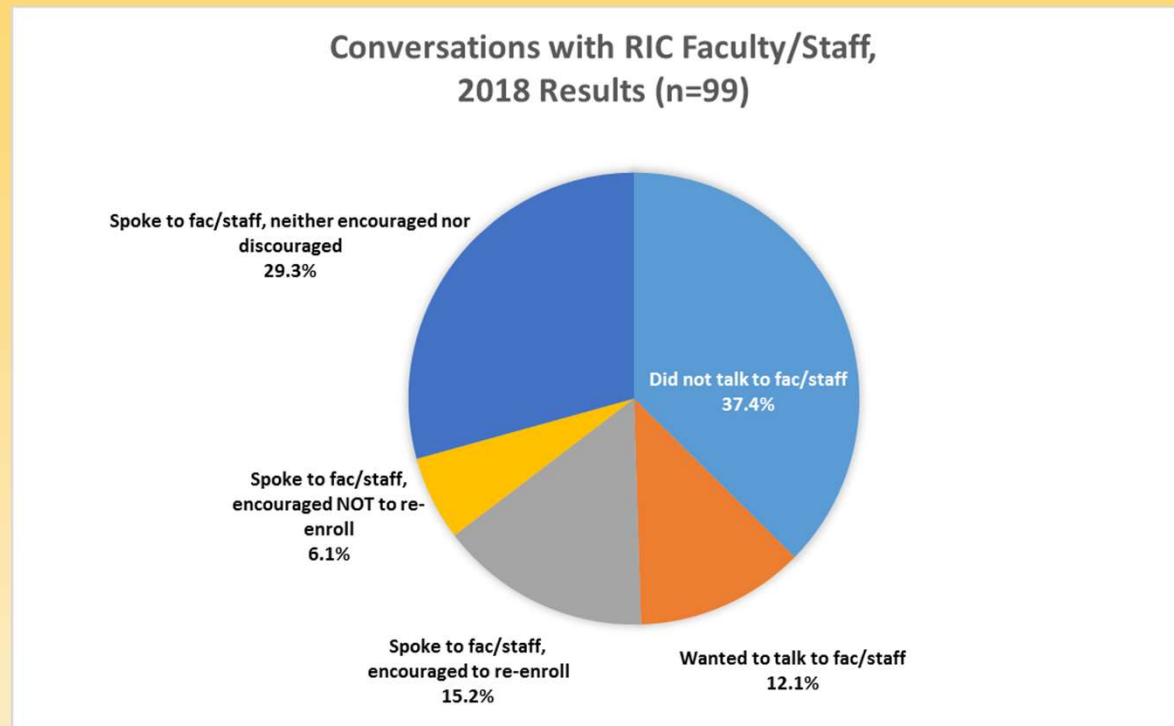
Timing of Decision not to Return to RIC



- Over half of non-returning students decided not to return to RIC in the spring at the end or after the end of the fall semester.
- However, 15.8% made the decision within the first month of the term.
- Note that a higher proportion of respondents to the 2017 survey (20.8%) reported that they made the decision to leave RIC in September.



Conversations with Faculty/Staff Regarding Leaving RIC



- 37.4% of departing students left without talking to any faculty or staff.
- 12.1% wanted to speak to someone but did not know who.
- 29.3% of non-returning students spoke to faculty/staff and were neither encouraged nor discouraged to re-enroll in the spring; 15.2% spoke to a faculty/staff member and were encouraged to re-enroll; and 6.1% spoke to faculty/staff and were NOT encouraged to re-enroll.
- For the very few students who were encouraged NOT to re-enroll (6 respondents in total), factors faculty/staff cited were money issues, lack of academic focus, and dismissal from program of interest.



What RIC Could Do to Encourage Students to Return

Categories of Responses to Question, "What could we do to come back to RIC to complete your degree?"

Category	# of Responses
Offer more financial assistance/reduce cost	32
Nothing/NA	21
Offer more flexible course delivery	20
Planning to return/graduate	16
Improve advising/guidance	12
Increase course availability	12
Improve responsiveness/communication	11
Make improvements to specific academic program	8
Improve faculty	7
Need to address personal issues	5
Will not return	5

- Most common response is to offer more financial assistance or reduce cost of attendance.
- Many students intend to return to RIC, while others said there was nothing we could do to make them return; several of these respondents were quite disparaging of the college.
- Offering courses in a more flexible manner was a common response; many students said it would be helpful to have fewer class meetings during the week, more offerings on the weekend, and more on-line options.
- Some students mentioned that they had personal issues they needed to resolve before they could return.



Summary

- There are several types of students who choose not to re-enroll in the spring; many are simply taking a break for a term, intend to re-enroll in a later semester and, in fact, do. Others transfer to another school or decide that college is not for them.
- The reasons students give for leaving the college vary, to some extent, based on their future plans, but most cite a combination of personal, financial, and institutional factors for not re-enrolling; common reasons are:
 - Cost
 - Family responsibilities
 - Difficulty getting needed classes
 - Lack of helpfulness from campus staff.
- Students make their decision about whether to re-enroll relatively late in the term, and many do so without talking to RIC faculty or staff.
- While some non-returning students say there is nothing we can do to make them come back, many say they could use additional financial assistance, more flexible course offerings, and better advisement.