

The Office of Institutional Research (OIR) produces *Research Clips* to provide the university community a brief report on a variety of topics. In most cases the "clips" are from a more detailed research project or survey analysis which can be found on the OIR website at <http://www.und.edu/dept/datacol/index.html>.

What can we learn from non-returning students?

An analysis of non-returning freshmen students from the class of 2007

In the fall of 2007, 12,559 students enrolled at University of North Dakota, 1,835 of which were first-year (FYR) students. The following fall 2008, 1,435 (78.2%) FYR students returned to UND and 400 did not. This report takes a closer look at the 400 FYR students who did not return and looks at differences between the students who stayed and those who didn't. The report presents data on student demographics, academic performance, perceptions, aspirations, and satisfaction scores as well as where students enroll once they leave UND.

Retention by region

Table 1 shows the region where students come from and the drop rates of the non-returners. While the greatest percentages of non-returners are lost from southern states and those states which fall under the "other" category, the greatest numbers of non-returners are from Minnesota (n=186 or 46.5% of 400) and North Dakota (n=152 or 38.0% of 400). The Northeastern states, Montana, and Midwest states have the highest rates of returning students.

Table 1. Non-returning students by region

Region	Total of 2007 FYR Students	Non-returners		
		Number	% not returning (row %)	% of total (column %)
Other	41	12	29.3%	3.0%
South	25	7	28.0%	1.8%
MN	751	186	24.8%	46.5%
ND	766	152	19.8%	38.0%
SD	46	9	19.6%	2.3%
West	82	16	19.5%	4.0%
Midwest (other than above)	87	16	18.4%	4.0%
MT	20	2	10.0%	0.5%
Northeast	17	0	0.0%	0.0%
Total	1,835	400	21.8%	100.0%

Ethnic and Racial Diversity

Table 2 reports FYR non-returners by race/ethnicity. Overall, minorities make up 6.5% of the overall FYR population but represent 10.2% of the non-returners.

The largest minority, American Indian/Alaskan students, have the highest percentage of non-returners at 45.7%, followed by African Americans at 37.5%, and Hispanic students at 35.0%. Asian students have the lowest rate of the non-returners at 19.0%.



Table 2. Non-returning students by race/ethnicity

Race	Total of 2007 FYR Students	Non-returners		
		Number	% not returning (row %)	% of total (column %)
American Indian/Alaskan	35	16	45.7%	4.0%
African American	16	6	37.5%	1.5%
Hispanic	20	7	35.0%	1.8%
Non-Resident Alien	23	7	30.4%	1.8%
White	1,664	352	21.2%	88.0%
Asian	21	4	19.0%	1.0%
n/a	56	8	14.3%	2.0%
Total	1,835	400	21.8%	100.0%

Gender

Of the 400 non-returners, 47% were female and 53% were male. This is representative of the overall gender distribution of the 2007 FYR class.

Age

At the beginning of fall 2007, the average age was 18 for both the non-returners and returning students.

What differences are seen on the College Student Inventory (CSI) tool?

Students who attend Getting Started participate in the Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory (CSI). The CSI asks questions regarding students' academics, personal and social experiences, and perspectives. Student responses allow UND to assess various scales such as FYR dropout proneness, those needing academic assistance, students who might benefit from career counseling, and other indicators.

Data from the CSI was categorized according to returning and non-returning status and analyzed to determine the differences. Three of the four scales tested (*dropout proneness, academic difficulty, and educational stress*) were found to be significantly higher in the non-returning group compared to the returners. *Receptivity to institutional help* was tested to see if there were differences between the two groups, but no significant difference was found.

Four of sixteen subscales (*desire to finish college, sense of financial security, study habits, and family emotional support*) were also analyzed to see if differences existed between the two groups. With all four scales, the non-returners had lower mean scores than the returning students and were found to be significantly different ($p < .05$). The scale with the largest statistical difference was *sense of financial security*. These differences are also reflected in the action items that students responded to. Of 25 action items, the items with the largest differences are focused around getting financial and tutoring assistance (Table 3).

Table 3. Items (top 10 of 25) of greatest differences (0-low..10-high)

Action Item from 2007 College Student Inventory (CSI)	Mean NON-RETURNER (191)	Mean RETURNER (808)	MEAN DIFFER
get help obtaining loan	5.459	4.905	0.553
get help finding summer job	5.226	4.761	0.465
get help with math	5.802	5.435	0.367
get help finding p/t job	5.361	5.023	0.338
get help with exam skills	6.126	5.836	0.290
get help obtaining scholarship	5.708	5.456	0.252
get help with reading	5.795	5.546	0.249
get help with writing	5.689	5.446	0.243
get tutoring	5.457	5.244	0.213
get help with study habits	6.376	6.192	0.184

What differences are seen on the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey?

Students attending Getting Started also participate in the CIRP Freshman Survey. The CIRP is designed to assess demographic characteristics, experiences, current opinions, and aspirations of FYR students.

The student responses from CIRP were categorized into the two groups of students to analyze if differences existed between the non-returners (NR) and the returning (R) students. Of the 82 items tested, the following are the top 10 where the non-returners' responses are lower:

- * Income level of parents (NR=8.9, R=9.4),
- * Math ability (NR=3.1, R=3.4),
- * Academic ability (NR=3.6, R=3.8),
- * Participate clubs/groups (NR=2.9, R=3.1),
- * Drive to achieve (NR=3.8, R=4.0),
- * Used internet for homework (NR=2.6, R=2.7),
- * Attended religious service (NR=2.2, R=2.3),
- * Performed volunteer work (NR=1.9, R=2.0),
- * Make at least a "B" average (NR=3.4, R=3.5),
- * Leadership ability (NR=3.6, R=3.8).

The above items show that non-returning students rank themselves lower in academic abilities and rate themselves less likely to participate in college activities. It would better serve these students to possibly have required group activities as well as required advisement sessions. The challenge is to either identify these students early on, or make these requirements of the entire entering FYR class.

Of the 82 items tested, the following are the top 10 where the non-returners' responses are higher:

- * Smoked cigarettes (NR=1.3, R=1.2),
- * Work FT while attending clg (NR=1.9, R=1.8),
- * Self-confidence (social) (NR=3.7, R=3.6),
- * Be successful in own business (NR=2.2, R=2.1),
- * Drank beer (NR=1.5, R=1.4),
- * Came late to class (NR=1.7, R=1.5),
- * Discussed religion (NR=2.1, R=2.0),
- * Change career choice (NR=2.6, R=2.5),
- * Participate in study abroad (NR=2.5, R=2.4),
- * Concern about financing clg (NR=1.8, R=1.7).

Again, while the differences are small, the above items show that non-returning students have a financial concern and feel the need to work full-time while attending college.



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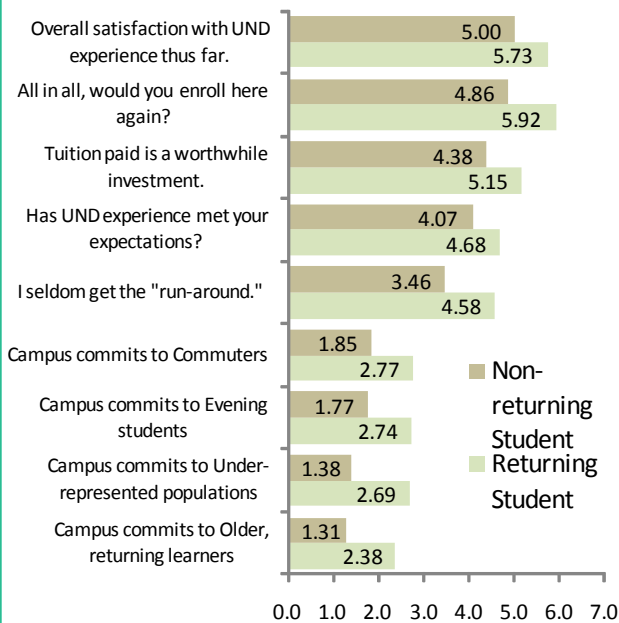
For more detailed information about Non-returning students please refer to **2007 ACT Withdrawing/Nonreturning Student Survey**: <http://www.und.edu/dept/datacol/reports/surveydesc.html>

Student Satisfaction-areas of highest satisfaction and largest differences

Students who participated in the 2008 Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory were asked to rate their satisfaction in several areas. The data was then merged to see if differences existed between first-year (FYR) students who would later withdraw/not return (non-returned group) and FYR students who continued their UND enrollment. Highest on the list of satisfied items for the non-returning students was *student center is a comfortable place to spend leisure time* (6.08 mean), *bookstore staff are helpful* (5.77 mean), and *there are adequate services to help me decide upon a career* (5.69 mean). Unfortunately, items such as tuition costs, billing policies, student activity fees, and adequate financial aid are low on the list of satisfied items for the non-returning students.

The graph below shows the areas with the largest differences in satisfaction between the non-returning and returning students where the non-returning ratings are LOWER than the returners. The largest mean difference is in *satisfaction that campus demonstrates commitment to under-represented populations* (1.30 mean difference) and *I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information on this campus* (1.12 mean difference).

Graph 1. Largest differences with satisfaction. Non-returners ratings LOWER than returners.



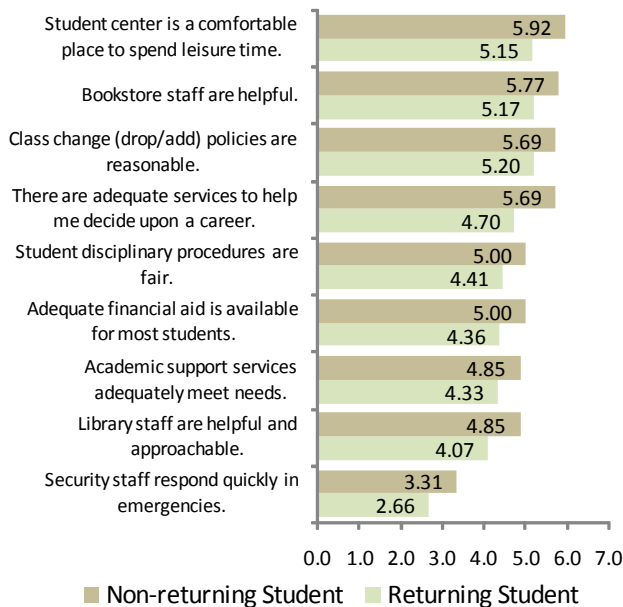
Scale: 1=not satisfied at all, 2=not very satisfied, 3=somewhat dissatisfied, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat satisfied, 6=satisfied, and 7=very satisfied.

The largest differences for the non-returners as compared to the returning students are found in many areas where students are not seeing an institutional commitment and where UND has not met their expectations. The non-returners' overall satisfaction is also lower than the returning students.

On the other hand, there are some similar satisfaction items between the two groups of students. Areas where returning and non-returning students rank their satisfaction VERY SIMILAR (mean difference of 0.01) are, *students are made to feel welcome on this campus, this institution has a good reputation within the community, and there is a commitment to academic excellence on this campus.*

Graph 2 shows the areas where non-returning students rank areas HIGHER than their returning counterparts. The two items making the list for the greatest differences are also the items ranked as the highest items of satisfaction - *student center is a comfortable place to spend leisure time* followed by *bookstore staff are helpful*. The largest mean differences exist in, *there are adequate services to help me decide upon a career* (0.99 mean difference) and *library staff are helpful and approachable* (0.77 mean difference).

Graph 2. Largest differences with satisfaction. Non-returners ratings HIGHER than returners.



Scale: 1=not satisfied at all, 2=not very satisfied, 3=somewhat dissatisfied, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat satisfied, 6=satisfied, and 7=very satisfied.



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For more detailed information on the satisfaction rankings of Non-returning students please refer to **2008 NDUS Student Satisfaction Inventory**: <http://www.und.edu/dept/datacol/reports/subFolder/ssi2008/ssi2008.htm>

Academic Performance

Prior studies have shown the importance of doing well academically in the first semester. The better (academically) a student does the very first semester, the more likely he/she continues and the more likely he/she is to eventually graduate. The 2007 FYR students are no different. At the end of the 2007 fall semester, the overall term grade point average (tgpa) of all entering FYR students was 2.76 (see Table 4). For the non-returning students, the tgpa was 2.00 with a total of 195 (49%) averaging below a 2.00. According to academic policy, students are placed on academic probation if their UND grade point average falls below a 2.00. At the end of the probationary semester a student who again earns less than a 2.0 will be suspended from the University (and unless for extenuating circumstances, will have to sit out for at least one semester). At a glance, academic suspension is most likely the cause for at least one-half of the students' inability to return to UND. For the other half, these students were in good academic standing at the end of their first semester. That is, a total of 205 (51%) non-returners averaged a 2.00 or above with 13 students (3%) receiving a 4.00.

For the returning students, the percentages are quite different. Nearly 9 in 10 (89%) of the returning students were in good academic standing (2.00 or greater) at the end of their first semester and only 11% (n=167) of the returning students averaged below a 2.00. This group of 167 students could have very likely been part of the non-returning group, due to academic suspension, as they would have also been put on probation at the end of their first semester. However, these students overturned their probationary status and were able to continue their UND education in good academic standing.

Other noteworthy findings of differences between non-returners (NR) and returning (R) students:

- * 25% of the NR FYR had a financial hold,
- * The top three majors of the non-returners:
 - * Undecided (n=82 or 20%),
 - * Pre-nursing (n=33 or 8.2%),
 - * Pre-commercial aviation (n=30 or 7.5%),
- * Average high school gpa (NR=3.16, R=3.41),
- * Average ACT (NR=22.18, R=23.61),
- * 8 non-returners were presidential scholars.

Where did they go?

By using the *Enrollment Search* tools from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSCH), the non-returning group of students was tracked to see if and where they may have transferred to. Of the 400 non-returning students, NSCH data indicates that 67 of these students transferred to another institution. Of the 67 students, 35 students transferred to a 4-year public institution, 30 students transferred to a 2-year public institution, and 2 students transferred to a 4-year private institution. Eight of the 67 students transferred to another ND institution and 59 of the 67 transferred out of state.

The school with the largest number of UND transfers was Northland Community and Technical College (a total of 9 students). This group of students also had the lowest average grade point average (UND gpa=1.97). Six students transferred to Minnesota State Community and Technical College (UND gpa=2.06). Transfers to four-year institutions include: University of MN-Duluth (N=4, UND gpa=3.04), Minnesota State University (N=4, UND gpa=2.93), St. Cloud State University (N=3, UND gpa=2.99), and University of WI-Eau Claire (N=3, UND gpa=3.17).

Table 4. Fall 2007 - End of term grade point averages of the 2007 FYR students

FYR Type	OVERALL TOTAL		CURRENT TERM GPA RANGE											
	N	TERM GPA Mean	0.00 - 1.99			2.00 - 2.99			3.00 - 3.99			4.00		
			N	ROW %	TERM GPA Mean	N	ROW %	TERM GPA Mean	N	ROW %	TERM GPA Mean	N	ROW %	TERM GPA Mean
Non-returner	400	2.00	195	48.75	0.94	114	28.50	2.44	78	19.5	3.37	13	3.25	4.00
Returner	1,455	2.96	167	11.48	1.39	491	33.75	2.53	640	43.99	3.42	157	10.79	4.00
TOTAL	1,855	2.76	362	19.51	1.16	605	32.61	2.51	718	38.71	3.41	170	9.16	4.00