RISC
Revealing Institutional Strengths and Challenges

INSTITUTIONAL REPORT
RISC STUDENT SURVEY SPRING 2023
IOWA WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

RISC SURVEY OVERVIEW 01

SURVEY DESCRIPTION

The Revealing Institutional Strengths and Challenges (RISC) Survey provides detailed, actionable data about student success, using the latest advances in survey research and technology. Survey results pinpoint where students are experiencing obstacles and identify campus offices that excel in helping students succeed in college. The survey has three main sections.

The survey first asks students about facing challenges during the current semester in five broad areas: academic support services, campus environment, finances and financial aid, succeeding in their courses, and work and personal issues. Each section has multiple challenges, with over 80 unique challenges to student success across the five areas, such as errors with financial aid paperwork, not being told to take a course necessary for their degree, or difficulty using course technology in online classes.

Next, the survey asks students about their interactions with campus offices. Our research indicates that students want office staff who are accessible, concerned about helping them, and able to effectively solve their problem. Students describe five campus offices on these three dimensions; IWCC chose the specific offices that appeared in the survey. The survey used office names specific to IWCC, so that students saw office names they recognized.

Finally, students provide their overall perceptions of the college. Students are asked if they would recommend the college to a friend, whether the college is a good value, and how well the college is helping them meet their enrollment goals, such as improving job and career opportunities or preparing for a four-year degree.

Students are also given two open-response questions, where they could write out an answer: what is IWCC's greatest strength, and if IWCC could change one thing to increase student success, what should it change? See your college contact for the written responses to these two questions.

The survey concludes with a section asking about student demographic information.

Interactive and printable versions of the survey can be found at:

https://www.risc.college/two-year-survey

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

The survey was administered in Spring 2023 to 2,698 IWCC students. There were 562 responses used in this report, for a 20.8% response rate. Median time IWCC students spent taking the survey was 7.9 minutes.

The table below provides some background information about your college's benchmark sample. Forty-four other community colleges participating in the survey during the past two years are used for the benchmark numbers in this report; each college is weighted equally when calculating benchmarks. Your benchmark sample has a total of 28,724 respondents.

Table 1.1   Community colleges in the benchmark sample

Carnegie classification		Urbanicity		Student enrollment	
High Career & Technical	28%	City	45%	Under 1,000	7%
Mixed	38%	Suburb	24%	1,000-4,999	31%
High Transfer	24%	Town	14%	5,000-9,999	28%
Other	10%	Rural	14%	10,000-19,999	28%
				20,000 and above	0%

CHALLENGES TO STUDENT SUCCESS

02

MAIN CHALLENGE AREAS

The RISC survey contains over 80 unique challenges that students face during college, and students can indicate they faced more than one challenge. The specific challenges are divided into five main areas:

- ▸ Academic support services
- ▸ Campus environment
- ▸ Finances and financial aid
- ▸ Success in courses
- ▸ Work and personal

The survey begins by asking students if they faced challenges in each of these these areas, and then asks about more specific challenges, depending on how students initially respond. The challenge order is randomly assigned for each respondent.

For example, students are asked:

Think about your finances and financial aid. Have you had any challenges in the following areas?

	Yes	No
Paying college and living expenses	○	○
Working with financial aid office	○	○
Military and employer tuition benefits	○	○

Students choosing "yes" to one or more of these response options are coded as having a challenge with finances and financial aid.

Table 2.1 provides an overview of the main challenges students faced at IWCC in Spring 2023 in the five main areas. *Work and personal issues* is the area where your students most frequently reported having challenges, with 57% reporting one or more challenges in this area.

A negative number in the *Diff.* column indicates a lower proportion of students at your institution reported challenges in an area, compared to the benchmarking group. These are presented graphically with green bars. Positive numbers indicate a greater proportion of your students are reporting challenges, and are presented with red bars.

Table 2.1 Major challenges to student success

	IWCC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	n
Work and personal issues	57	60	−3	323
Success in courses	49	52	−3	275
Finances and financial aid	42	38	**+4**	237
Campus environment	40	19	**+21**	225
Academic support services	29	32	−3	165

Notes

Green indicates that IWCC has a lower proportion of students reporting a challenge compared to the benchmark sample proportion; red indicates IWCC has a higher proportion. Bold indicates a statistically significant difference from the benchmark sample (two-sample test of proportions, $p < .05$). Percentages do not sum to 100 because students could choose multiple challenges across the five topic areas. n in table row is the number of students choosing a challenge in that area at your college; overall sample n=562.

Tables 2.2 to 2.6 provide more detail about student challenges. For example, if a student answered "yes" to "Paying college and living expenses", they were prompted with a follow-up question:

> **Where did you have issues paying expenses? Please check all that apply.**
>
> ☐ Tuition and fees
> ☐ Paying college and living expenses
> ☐ Living expenses (housing, food, healthcare)
> ☐ Childcare
> ☐ None of the above

To help uncover where your students are facing challenges, we rank the major categories of challenges in descending order. We then rank the more specific challenges within each major category in descending order.

For example, 57% of your students chose one or more challenges in the major category of *Work and personal issues*. The most common subcategory was *Work*, with 37% choosing challenges in this subcategory. The most common specific challenge within the *Work* subcategory was *Pay is not enough to cover expenses while in school*, with 20% of your students mentioning this as a challenge to their success. All percentages in these tables are calculated as the percentage of the entire respondent sample.

Table 2.2   Challenges with work and personal life

	IWCC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Work and personal issues	57	60	−3	323
Work	37	38	−1	208
Pay is not enough to cover expenses while in school	20	17	+3	114
Work hours do not leave me enough time to study	20	22	−2	112
Work schedule conflicts with classes	11	14	−3	62
Work schedule prevents campus resource use	11	13	−2	61
Work schedule is not flexible during the semester	10	10	+0	54
None of the above	4	5	−1	21
Family	32	36	−4	181
Difficulty balancing demands of family and college	23	25	−2	132
Difficulty dealing with health of family	13	14	−1	71
Family does not support me going to college	4	4	+0	24
Difficulty finding childcare	3	5	−2	18
None of the above	5	6	−1	26
Health and disability issues	18	23	−5	101
Emotional/mental health issue	13	16	−3	75
Physical health issue	10	12	−2	57
Disability services did not provide necessary support	2	1	+1	9
Faculty did not provide necessary accomodations	1	1	+0	6
Pregnancy and childbirth	0	1	−1	2
Campus is difficult to navigate with my disability	0	1	−1	2
None of the above	1	3	−2	7
Transportation to campus	11	15	−4	60
Travel to campus takes a long time	5	6	−1	26
Car or carpool not reliable	5	7	−2	26
Public transportation system not reliable	1	4	−3	8
Campus transportation system not reliable	1	2	−1	4
None of the above	3	3	+0	19

Notes

Percentages do not sum to 100 because students could choose multiple challenges within this topic area. Denominator for percentages is the total number of survey respondents; *n* in table row is the number of students choosing a challenge in that area.

Table 2.3   Challenges with success in courses

	IWCC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Success in courses	49	52	−3	275
Online classes	25	30	−5	138
Difficulty learning the material on my own	14	17	−3	81
Lack of interaction with faculty	12	14	−2	69
Difficulty keeping up because no regular class time	9	12	−3	50
Difficulty using course technology	5	8	−3	30
Lack of interaction with other students	5	10	−5	29
Difficulty taking exams at testing center	3	3	+0	15
None of the above	2	4	−2	12
Faculty	21	17	+4	116
Did not teach well	12	11	+1	70
Not concerned about my academic success	9	7	+2	52
Not helpful outside of class	8	6	+2	43
Feedback on assignments not helpful	8	8	+0	43
Took too long to grade assignments	7	7	+0	38
Not responsive to email	6	6	+0	35
Not available to meet in person	2	2	+0	10
None of the above	4	3	+1	22
Developmental courses (math, reading, or writing)	17	21	−4	95
Courses were too hard	6	7	−1	34
Did not prepare me for college-level courses	4	4	+0	21
Required to take too many	3	4	−1	18
Courses were too easy	1	1	+0	6
None of the above	5	9	−4	30
Doing college-level work	15	20	−5	83
Poor study skills	7	9	−2	38
Poor planning and time management skills	7	11	−4	37
Not motivated to study	6	9	−3	35
Reading or writing assignments were difficult	3	7	−4	17
Required level of math was difficult	3	5	−2	16
Took too many classes	2	4	−2	10
Skipped too many classes	1	1	+0	6
None of the above	2	3	−1	11

Notes

Percentages do not sum to 100 because students could choose multiple challenges within this topic area. Denominator for percentages is the total number of survey respondents; *n* in table row is the number of students choosing a challenge in that area.

Table 2.4 Challenges with finances and financial aid

	IWCC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Finances and financial aid	42	38	+4	237
Paying college and living expenses	38	34	+4	214
Living expenses (housing, food, healthcare)	26	24	+2	146
Tuition and fees	23	19	+4	130
Books, software, and other supplies	16	19	−3	90
Childcare	4	4	+0	21
None of the above	2	1	+1	11
Working with financial aid office	12	13	−1	69
Process was unclear	6	6	+0	31
Difficult to meet with, speak to, or email staff	4	5	−1	25
Errors processing financial aid	4	5	−1	24
Unable to answer questions	3	4	−1	18
Gave me wrong information	3	3	+0	16
Delays in getting money	3	5	−2	15
None of the above	3	2	+1	15
Military and employer tuition benefits	2	2	+0	11
Did not know process for obtaining benefits	1	1	+0	8
Experienced delays receiving benefits	1	1	+0	4
Received wrong information about benefits	0	1	−1	0
None of the above	0	1	−1	1

Notes

Percentages do not sum to 100 because students could choose multiple challenges within this topic area. Denominator for percentages is the total number of survey respondents; *n* in table row is the number of students choosing a challenge in that area.

Table 2.5   Challenges with the campus environment

	IWCC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Campus environment	40	19	+21	225
Parking	33	12	+21	187
Difficulty finding parking on or near campus	31	9	+22	175
Difficulty getting parking pass	2	1	+1	10
Parking on or near campus is too expensive	1	1	+0	8
None of the above	2	2	+0	10
Interactions with other students	10	9	+1	54
Did not know many other students	5	6	−1	30
Did not feel welcome due to my gender identity	1	1	+0	3
Did not feel welcome due to my race or ethnicity	0	1	−1	2
Did not feel welcome due to my sexual orientation	0	0	+0	1
None of the above	4	3	+1	22
Safety and crime	4	3	+1	24
Campus not safe	2	1	+1	13
Parking lots not safe	1	1	+0	7
Was a victim of a crime	1	1	+0	4
None of the above	1	1	+0	6

Notes

Percentages do not sum to 100 because students could choose multiple challenges within this topic area. Denominator for percentages is the total number of survey respondents; *n* in table row is the number of students choosing a challenge in that area.

Table 2.6   Challenges with academic support services

	IWCC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Academic support services	29	32	−3	165
Registering for courses	16	18	−2	91
Course was offered but full	6	7	−1	36
Course not offered at times I needed	6	7	−1	34
Had a registration hold	4	4	+0	25
Course not offered this semester	4	4	+0	20
None of the above	4	6	−2	25
Academic advising	12	14	−2	70
Difficult to meet with, speak to, or email advisor	7	8	−1	42
Not told to take necessary course	4	5	−1	23
Told to take unnecessary course	2	4	−2	13
Course/program materials were incorrect	1	2	−1	7
None of the above	3	3	+0	16
Tutoring	6	8	−2	35
Tutoring not available in the subject area I needed	3	3	+0	18
Tutors not available when I need assistance	2	3	−1	12
Tutoring hours not convenient	2	3	−1	12
Tutoring not helpful	1	2	−1	5
None of the above	1	2	−1	7
Computer and science labs	5	6	−1	28
Problems using computers and equipment	3	2	+1	15
Lab busy when needed	1	1	+0	4
Lab hours not convenient	1	1	+0	4
None of the above	2	2	+0	11
Library	4	5	−1	23
Staff not helpful	1	1	+0	7
Resources I needed not available online	1	1	+0	4
Hours not convenient	1	1	+0	3
Study spaces not available when needed	0	1	−1	1
None of the above	2	2	+0	9

Notes

Percentages do not sum to 100 because students could choose multiple challenges within this topic area. Denominator for percentages is the total number of survey respondents; *n* in table row is the number of students choosing a challenge in that area.

STUDENT–OFFICE INTERACTIONS

Table 3.1 shows the administrative support units your college chose for the RISC Survey. Unit names appeared on the survey exactly as they are listed in this report. College Success Advisor was the most commonly used office, with 59% reporting using the office during the Spring 2023 semester, followed by Library (40%) and Recruiter/Admissions Advisor (31%).

Table 3.1   Office usage

	IWCC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	n	
College Success Advisor	59	57	+2	329	
Library	40	35	+5	222	
Recruiter/Admissions Advisor	31	28	+3	172	
Housing/Residence Life Staff	25	20	+5	138	
Campus Safety and Security	18			101	

If students indicated they interacted with an office during the semester, they were asked three questions about their interactions with staff:

How available were [unit name] staff when you interacted with them?

○ Very available
○ Somewhat available
○ Somewhat unavailable
○ Very unavailable

How concerned were [unit name] staff about addressing your issue?

○ Very concerned
○ Somewhat concerned
○ Somewhat unconcerned
○ Very unconcerned

How effective were [unit name] staff when addressing your issue?

○ Very effective
○ Somewhat effective
○ Somewhat ineffective
○ Very ineffective

Results are presented in Table 3.2, which shows the percentage of respondents choosing the top category (*very available/concerned/effective*). Because each college chose the administrative offices for this set of questions, the table only presents benchmarks comparisons for an administrative office when at least five other colleges surveyed students about the same type of office.

Table 3.2 Student-administration interactions

	IWCC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	n
Campus Safety and Security				
Available	63			100
Concerned	46			99
Effective	60			99
College Success Advisor				
Available	73	63	**+10**	328
Concerned	65	58	**+7**	327
Effective	71	66	+5	324
Housing/Residence Life Staff				
Available	54	68	**−14**	138
Concerned	35	60	**−25**	138
Effective	56	66	**−10**	138
Library				
Available	75	82	**−7**	222
Concerned	50	65	**−15**	222
Effective	69	79	**−10**	222
Recruiter/Admissions Advisor				
Available	74	67	+7	170
Concerned	62	56	+6	170
Effective	72	68	+4	169

Notes

Percentage is the proportion of students rating an office in the top response category (*very available/concerned/effective*). Green indicates that IWCC has a higher proportion of students choosing the category compared to the benchmark sample proportion; red indicates IWCC has a lower proportion. Bold indicates a statistically significant difference from the benchmark sample (two-sample test of proportions, $p < .05$). *n* in table row is the total number of students at your college rating an office on that dimension; i.e., the denominator for the row percentage.

STUDENT VIEWS OF THE INSTITUTION

Besides challenges and office interactions, students were asked several questions about IWCC overall.

The first question, "Based on your experiences, how likely are you to recommend IWCC to a friend?", is a summative measure of how students view your institution. Results are presented in Figure 4.1, with IWCC represented by the black line and the benchmark sample by the gray line. 93% of your students would be somewhat or very likely to recommend IWCC. The IWCC distribution of responses is statistically significantly different from the benchmark sample.
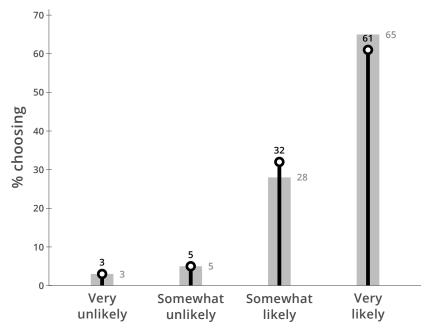
Figure 4.1   Would student recommend IWCC to a friend?

Notes
IWCC is the black bar; benchmark sample is gray. $\chi^2 = 10.3, p < .02; n = 556$.

Next, students were asked to rate the overall value of their education at IWCC (see Figure 4.2). 94% of your students believe their education is worth what they paid (or even worth more). The IWCC distribution of responses is statistically significantly different from the benchmark sample.
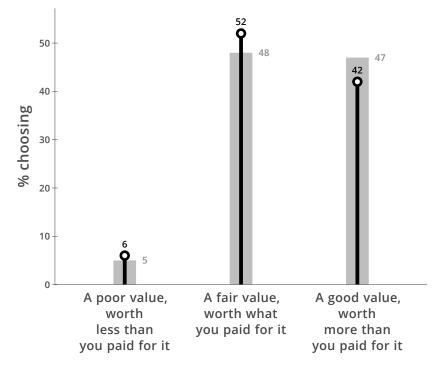
Figure 4.2   Overall value of education?

Notes

IWCC is the black bar; benchmark sample is gray. $\chi^2 = 21.3, p < .01; n = 556$.

The last set of questions asks students how well your college is doing in preparing students for their educational goals. The top half of Table 4.1 lists students' responses to their primary reason for attending IWCC. 48% chose *Increase job and career opportunities* as their primary purpose for attending your institution.

Students were then asked how well IWCC is helping them achieve the specific goal they chose. Students could choose from *very well*, *fairly well*, *somewhat*, or *not at all*. Responses from the top category are presented in the bottom half of Table 4.1. For example, 54% of the students who chose *Increase job and career opportunities* as their primary goal indicated that IWCC is doing *very well* in terms of increasing their job and career opportunities.

Table 4.1   How well is education helping accomplish goals

	IWCC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	n	0 10 20 30 40 50 60
Purpose of taking courses at IWCC					
Increase job and career opportunities	48	41	**+7**	270	
Prepare for a four-year degree	45	49	−4	248	
Self-improvement	7	10	**−3**	39	
How well is education at IWCC …					
Increase job and career opportunities	54	46	**+8**	270	
Prepare for a four-year degree	38	47	**−9**	248	
Self-improvement	56	49	+7	39	

Notes

Top panel row percentage is the proportion of students choosing one of the three educational goals. Bottom panel row percentage is the proportion of students choosing *very well* in response to the preparation question for that goal. Bold indicates a statistically significant difference from the benchmark sample (two-sample test of proportions, $p < .05$). n in table row is the total number of students responding to the question; i.e., the denominator for the row percentage. Difference bars in the top panel of the table are in black, to reflect that schools may score high or low on these measures, depending on their institutional mission. In the bottom panel, green indicates that IWCC has a higher proportion of students reporting that IWCC is helping them achieve their educational goal compared to the benchmark sample; red indicates a lower proportion.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS 05

Table 5.1   Gender identity

	%	n
Female/Woman	67	366
Male/Man	31	166
Transgender Female/Transgender Woman	0	0
Transgender Male/Transgender Man	1	3
Another gender identity	1	8

Table 5.2   Race/ethnicity

	%	n
African American or Black	11	59
Asian American or Asian	4	19
Native American or Alaska Native	2	10
Hispanic or Latino	12	62
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	3
White	79	422

Notes

Percentages may not sum to 100 because students could choose more than one category.

Table 5.3   Age

	%	n
18 or younger	9	51
19-24	56	306
25-34	20	112
35-44	10	52
45-54	4	20
55 or older	1	6

Table 5.4 Part-time/full-time status

	%	n
Part-time (less than 12 credit hours)	34	187
Full-time (12 or more credit hours)	66	357

Table 5.5 Total credit hours earned at IWCC

	%	n
None	4	24
1-15 credits	35	190
16-29 credits	26	141
30-45 credits	16	87
46 or more credits	19	101