



NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY REPORT 1999-2003

Introduction

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness has administered the Non-Returning Student Survey since Spring 1999. This standardized survey attempts to ascertain the reasons students do not return to Texas Southern University (TSU) as well as to provide a profile of the typical non-returning student. Despite increases in enrollment since 1999, approximately 18% of the student population does not return each year. Student retention is an ongoing concern for the administration of TSU and they continue to work diligently to reverse this trend.

The survey is mailed to non-returning students each semester. A follow-up request is sent to non-returning approximately a month after the initial mailing. A non-returning student is defined as one who is enrolled at Texas Southern University, either part-time or full-time, but does not enroll in classes the following semester. The years covered in this study are 1999 to 2003.

The section that follows addresses the non-returning students' plans for re-enrolling in classes next year. The report then presents an evaluation of the reasons non-returning students choose not to continue their education at the university. The final portion of the report evaluates the non-returning students' satisfaction levels with various academic components, enrollment services, university facilities as well as rules and policies. The report concludes with an analysis of the non-returning students' perceptions of TSU based on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates the lowest level of satisfaction and 5 rates the highest.



Background Information

Figure 1 displays the number of non-returning students sampled and the proportion of non-returning students that respond to the survey. The response rate tends to fluctuate between 10% and 13% over the years with a low of 5% in 2002. The largest number of non-returning students occurs in 2002.

Figure 1: Percentage of Respondents

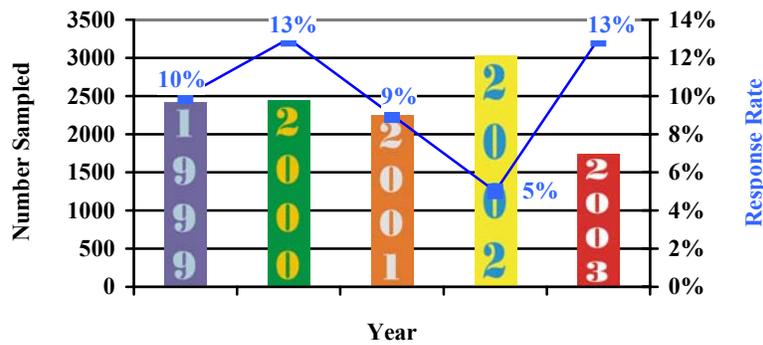


Table 1 displays several background characteristics collected from non-returning students each year. In excess of 60% of non-returning students each year are female.

Approximately 89% are residents of Texas. An increasing proportion of international students do not return each year while the proportion of out-of-state students who do not return is decreasing. A larger proportion of full-time students are not returning each year. Sixty-nine percent of non-returning students in 1999 are full-time students while 78% of non-returning students in 2003 are full-time students.



Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Gender	Percentage of Respondents				
Male	33.7	35.3	32.1	36.4	36.0
Female	66.3	64.7	67.9	63.6	64.0
Residency	Percentage of Respondents				
In State	88.0	92.9	89.5	86.3	86.0
Out-of-State	7.6	6.1	5.3	5.8	4.5
International	4.4	1.0	5.3	7.9	9.5
Enrollment Status	Percentage of Respondents				
Full-time Student	68.7	68.1	61.1	75.2	77.8
Part-time Student	31.3	31.9	38.9	24.8	22.2
N	251	312	191	141	232

Table 2 displays proportions of non-returning students from each school and college. The proportion of non-returning students from the College of Liberal Arts and Behavioral Sciences has remained somewhat stable, has increased in the Schools of Business and Pharmacy and Health Sciences, and has decreased in the School of Science and Technology, College of Education and the School of Law over the five-year period.

Table 2: School or College of Non-Returning Students

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
	Percentage of Respondents				
College of Liberal Arts & Behav. Sci	26.7	33.0	27.2	23.9	26.7
School of Business	3.3	13.2	16.7	17.7	18.8
College of Education	26.7	29.7	24.1	24.8	13.9
College of Pharmacy & Health Sci.	16.7	7.7	19.1	20.4	22.3
School of Science & Technology	26.7	13.2	13.0	11.5	16.8
Law School		3.3		1.8	1.5
N	251	312	191	141	232

The largest proportion of non-returning students is in the 30 to 39 years old age group (Table 3). At least 80% of non-returning students are African-American. A noteworthy finding is the relatively large proportion of non-returning Mexican American



students in 2002. Eleven percent of non-returning students that year are Mexican American compared to less than 4% in any other year.

Table 3: Age and Ethnicity of Non-Returning Students

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Age	Percentage of Respondents				
18 and Under	2.4	2.6	4.2	1.4	4.3
19	11.6	7.1	7.3	11.3	10.3
20	7.6	9.3	8.9	10.6	16.4
21	5.6	4.8	6.3	9.9	9.1
22	6.8	3.8	3.7	3.5	7.3
23 to 25	14.3	12.8	12.6	16.3	13.4
26 to 29	12.4	22.4	17.3	11.4	8.2
30 to 39	20.7	23.4	26.7	23.5	15.1
40 to 61	18.6	12.8	13.0	11.4	15.9
62 and Over		1.0		0.7	
Race	Percentage of Respondents				
Afro-American	85.2	84.9	83.2	79.7	85.1
American Indian			0.5		.5
Caucasian	4.0	2.6	2.6	3.6	3.6
Mexican American	3.2	3.9	3.7	10.9	3.6
Asian-American	2.4	2.6	.5	2.9	2.7
Puerto Rican or Other Hispanic	1.6	2.8	3.1		1.8
Other	2.0	1.0	3.1	0.7	1.4
Prefer Not to Respond	1.6	2.2	3.1	2.2	1.3
Type of school attended prior to TSU	Percentage of Respondents				
High School	45.7	39.3	39.2	44.0	50.5
Vocational or Tech	2.5	3.6	4.8	3.5	3.2
2 year College	16.5	17.0	14.3	14.9	13.6
4 year College	27.2	27.2	26.5	19.1	23.6
Graduate or Prof College	6.1	9.3	10.7	14.2	6.4
Other	2.0	3.6	4.7	4.3	2.7
N	251	312	191	141	232

Approximately 44% of respondents are enrolled in high school prior to attending TSU (Table 3). Twenty five percent report attending another four-year college prior to enrolling at TSU. Those non-returning students that attend a four-year college prior to enrolling at TSU are undergraduate transfer students as well as graduate and professional students.



Purpose for Enrolling at TSU & Future Plans

This portion of the survey addresses the reasons non-returning students initially choose to attend TSU. These reasons are important in that they may indicate if the intent of the student who does not return to TSU is to complete a degree or to eventually transfer to another institution. The analysis of these factors significantly assists in developing an accurate profile of the typical non-returning student. Approximately 50% of the respondents enroll at TSU with the intent of obtaining a bachelor’s degree (Table 4). Approximately 12 % report enrolling at the university to pursue a master’s degree and 14% indict the pursuit of a PhD or professional degree as their reason for attending TSU.

Table 4: Purpose for Entering TSU^o

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
	Percentage of Respondents				
B.A.	57.2	52.6	47.1	51.9	48.3
M.A.	12.0	11.6	12.3	10.5	13.8
Ph.D. or Professional Degree	12.8	17.2	15.0	13.5	9.5
Needed for Transferring to Another College	4.4	1.7	3.7	3.8	7.8
Certification	8.4	10.6	13.9	10.5	7.3
No Definite Purpose	.8	1.0	1.1	3.0	6.5
Associate Degree	3.6	.7	5.3	5.3	6.0
Job Related Courses	.4	1.0	1.1	.8	.4
Vocational or Technical Program	.4	1.3			.4
Self-Improvement		2.3	.5	.8	
N	251	312	191	141	232

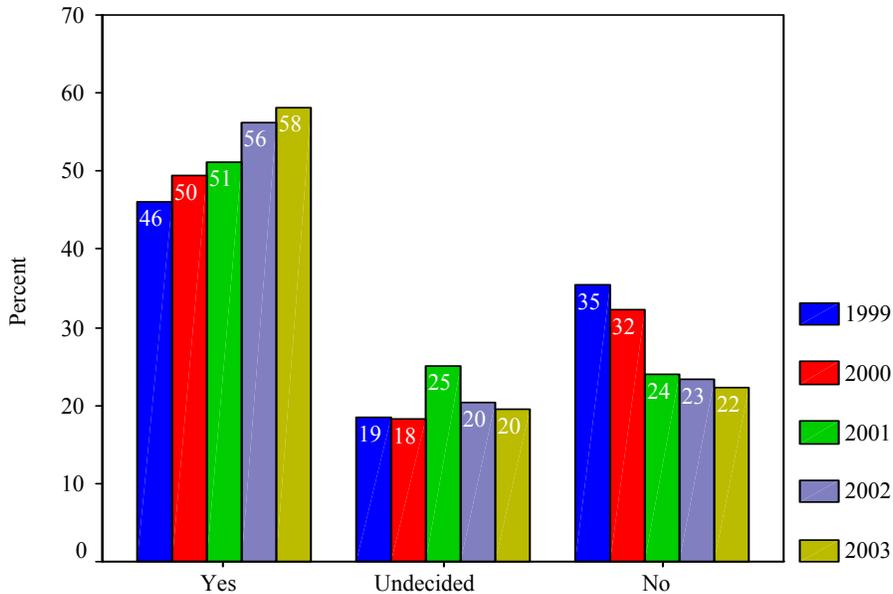
^o Responses are listed according to their 2003 ranking.

Many non-returning students express a desire to re-enroll at TSU (Figure 2). While 46% of non-returning students plan on re-enrolling at TSU in 1999, 58% intent to return in 2003. Approximately 20% of the non-returning students are undecided on



returning to TSU. This represents a significant percentage of students that should be targeted to re-enroll.

Figure 2: Percentages Intending to Re-enroll at TSU



Non-returning students are also surveyed on their plans for the upcoming year (Table 5). Approximately 36% plan on obtaining employment as well as continuing their education. An average of 26% plan on working full-time or part-time while the same percentage intend on returning to the university but do not intend to seek employment.

Table 5: Plans for Next Year^o

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
	Percentage of Respondents				
Obtain Job & Enroll In College	31.7	37.5	36.6	38.9	37.7
Enroll in College	26.0	14.5	27.4	26.0	36.4
Work Full Time or Part Time	28.5	31.6	26.3	24.4	18.6
Other	6.9	6.9	3.8	3.1	4.1
Care for a Home or Family	2.0	4.3	3.2	6.9	.9
Undecided	4.9	5.3	2.7	.8	2.3
N	251	312	191	141	232

^o Responses are listed according to their 2003 ranking.



Reasons for Not Returning to TSU

This portion of the survey examines the reasons students decide to not return to TSU. These reasons as well as the corresponding percentages of are listed in Table 6.

Table 6: Top Ten Reasons Students Decide Not to Return^{1, 2}

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
	Percent Indicating Item as a Reason²				
Decided to attend different college	35.0	28.7	38.9	32.0	40.1
Could not afford tuition & fees	41.7	38.9	34.9	40.5	35.7
Disappointed with the quality of instruction	33.8	28.2	23.8	20.6	32.0
Encountered unexpected expenses	33.8	29.9	32.3	29.8	31.2
Dissatisfied with grades	29.9	27.3	23.3	31.0	29.6
Academic advising was inadequate	33.2	28.7	29.3	25.6	27.7
Family responsibilities were too great	21.1	22.9	25.8	29.1	27.4
Experienced class scheduling conflict	36.7	28.3	31.5	32.0	26.1
Impersonal attitude of college faculty	37.5	30.0	25.5	27.2	24.5
Applied for financial aid, did not receive	35.2	25.2	31.3	29.4	22.3

¹ Responses are listed according to their 2003 ranking. ² Original survey items “major” and “minor” reasons are combined into one category “reason.”

The largest percentage of respondents (40%) in 2003 chooses to attend a different college. Given that only 4% of non-returning students enroll at TSU with the intention of transferring to another university (Table 4), one may assume that the majority of these students initially plan on pursuing a degree at TSU.

Financial issues are also key determinants in students not returning to TSU. An average of 38% of non-returning students could not afford the tuition and fees. Approximately 31% encounter unexpected expenses while 29% did not receive the financial aid for which they applied. It may be inferred that a larger proportion of students may choose to return if they possessed the financial means necessary to do so.

Other significant reasons for not returning include student dissatisfaction with their grades, inadequate academic advising, disappointment with the quality of



instruction, and the impersonal attitude of the faculty. Family responsibilities and class scheduling conflicts are also reported as reasons for not returning to TSU.

Ratings of TSU Services

Non-returning students are also asked to rate their level of satisfaction with various services offered by the university. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 where 1 represents least satisfied and 5 most satisfied. The ten most highly rated services and the ten least satisfactory services are presented in Tables 7 and 8 respectively.

In 2003, the services that are rated most highly receive mean ratings of 3.64 to 3.82, indicating that non-returning students are somewhat satisfied with these services. Non-returning students are most satisfied with class size relative to the type of course taken. Library facilities and services, course content in the student major, and TSU’s testing/grading system all receive the same mean rating of 3.73 in 2003. The rating of the college orientation program in 2002, with an average score of 3.93, receives the highest rating across all years.

Table 7: Most Satisfactory Services

Level of Satisfaction ^o					
					
1-Very Dissatisfied 2-Dissatisfied 3-Neutral 4-Satisfied 5-Very Satisfied					
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Class size relative to type of course	3.88	3.83	3.78	3.79	3.82
Library facilities and services	3.54	3.52	3.75	3.77	3.73
Course content in your major field	3.65	3.63	3.61	3.72	3.73
Testing/grading system	3.49	3.55	3.69	3.60	3.73
Racial harmony	3.82	3.74	3.86	3.87	3.72
College- orientation program	3.43	3.49	3.53	3.93	3.67
Athletic facilities	3.53	3.37	3.23	3.42	3.66
Variety of courses offered by this college	3.39	3.49	3.47	3.48	3.65
College-sponsored social activities	3.41	3.63	3.45	3.61	3.64
Instruction in major field	3.64	3.64	3.64	3.61	3.64

^o Items are ranked based on 2003 rating.



Instruction in one’s major field of study is consistently rated 3.6 throughout the years indicating that non-returning students are somewhat satisfied with the quality of instruction received.

Table 8 lists the services that are rated least satisfactory by non-returning students. In 2003, the services that are rated least satisfactory receive mean ratings of 2.79 to 3.29, indicating that non-returning students are somewhat dissatisfied to neutral with these services. Non-returning students are least satisfied with financial aid services. It is important to note that financial aid services receive the largest increase in mean satisfaction ratings of all services throughout the years. Financial aid services receive a mean rating of 2.07 in 1999 but increases to 3.24 in 2003. Other services with which non-returning students are dissatisfied include parking facilities, registration services, student employment services and the availability of courses at desired times.

Table 8: Least Satisfactory Services

Level of Satisfaction ^o						
	1-Very Dissatisfied	2-Dissatisfied	3-Neutral	4-Satisfied	5-Very Satisfied	
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	
Parking facilities	2.79	2.73	2.89	2.88	2.79	
General registration procedures	2.38	2.67	2.99	3.30	3.00	
Student employment services	2.92	3.03	3.11	3.19	3.03	
Availability of courses at specific times	2.79	2.89	3.01	3.02	3.04	
Attitude of college non-teaching staff	2.85	2.77	3.02	3.22	3.15	
Job placement services	3.00	3.19	3.13	3.25	3.21	
Financial aid services	2.07	2.49	2.73	3.22	3.24	
Student voice in college policies	2.92	2.96	3.12	3.35	3.25	
Residence hall services	2.69	3.12	2.89	3.18	3.26	
Concern for you as an individual	3.14	3.14	3.31	3.55	3.29	

^o Items are ranked based on 2003 rating.



Summary

The typical student who does not return to TSU is:

- female,
- African-American,
- a resident of Texas,
- 30 to 39 years old,
- a full-time student and
- a Liberal Arts and Behavioral Science or College of Education major.

Approximately 51% of non-returning students enroll at TSU with the intention of pursuing a bachelor's degree. An average of 25% transfer to TSU after attending another four-year college. An average of 52% of non-returning students plan to re-enroll at TSU. Approximately 20% of the non-returning students are undecided on returning to TSU. This represents a significant percentage of students that should be targeted to reenroll.

Forty percent of non-returning students in 2003 choose to attend another college and not return to the university. Financial issues are also key determinants of students not returning to TSU. An average of 38% could not afford the tuition and fees. Approximately 31% encounter unexpected expenses while 29% did not receive the financial aid for which they applied. A larger proportion of students may choose to return if they possessed the financial means necessary to do so.

While non-returning students are somewhat satisfied with academic services, such as, course content in their major, the testing and grading system, variety of courses offered, and library facilities and services, student satisfaction with these areas still requires improvement. Efforts to improve student satisfaction with financial aid services,



registration services, student employment services, the quality of academic advising, classroom instruction and course scheduling may go a long way in encouraging students to return to the university.