

Non-Returning Student Survey Fall 2007



**Southeastern Louisiana University
Office of Institutional Research and Assessment**

February 2008

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Introduction

In Fall 2007, Southeastern's enrollment was below expectations. In particular, continuing students showed a 4.4% decrease at the undergraduate level and a 5.2% decrease at the graduate level. The retention rate of the Fall 2006 cohort was the lowest it had been since admissions standards were implemented. A better understanding about why students had not returned was needed. The Office of Institutional Research & Assessment contracted with the Southeastern Social Science Research Center to conduct the Non-Returning Student Survey, a phone survey of students who had been enrolled in Fall 2006 but were not enrolled in Fall 2007.

Students who had graduated in Fall 2006, Spring 2007, or Summer 2007 were not included in the sample. Also excluded were students who had been suspended and those who had not met their developmental requirements in two semesters and were asked to leave the university. This report details the results of the Non-Returning Student Survey.

Method

Participants

The participants in this survey were 473 students, who were enrolled in Fall 2006 and were not enrolled in the Fall of 2007. None of the participants had graduated, nor were they suspended. In addition, those new students who did not meet their development requirements in two semesters and were asked to leave the university were excluded.

Table 1
Characteristics of the Sample vs. the Population

	Sample	Population
Size	473	3,310
Class		
Freshmen	38.3%	42.8%
Sophomore	18.6%	16.8%
Junior	12.7%	12.0%
Senior	14.4%	12.8%
Graduate	16.1%	15.6%
Gender		
Female	63.8%	63.1%
Male	36.2%	36.9%
Race		
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.8%	1.0%
Black, Non-Hispanic	15.4%	16.7%
Hispanic	2.3%	2.2%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1.3%	0.7%
Unknown	2.3%	2.8%
White, Non-Hispanic	77.8%	76.7%
Full or Part Time Fall 2006		
Full-time	66.4%	67.4%
Part-time	33.6%	32.6%

Table 1 cont. Characteristics of the Sample vs. Population		
Type of Student Fall 2006		
First-time Freshman	21.8%	23.9%
New Graduate Student	5.5%	6.2%
New Transfer Student	6.6%	6.0%
Continuing Student	55.6%	53.8%
Readmitted Student	8.9%	8.4%
Exchange Student (Superior Junior, Cross-enrolled, etc.)	1.1%	1.4%
Other (SPA)	0.6%	0.3%

Table 1 provides demographic information of the sample vs. the population. The characteristics are very similar between the sample and the population. The only major difference is that freshmen are under-represented in the sample as compared to the population.

Procedure

The Office of Institutional Research & Assessment contracted with the Southeastern Social Science Research Center to conducted the Non-Returning Student Survey. The survey was administered by phone, using trained and experienced student interviewers.

Instrument

The survey first asked a series of questions to determine if students planned on returning to Southeastern in the future, and if they had intended to obtain a degree when they began at Southeastern. Respondents who indicated they did not plan on returning to Southeastern were given a list of forty-three possible reasons why a student might leave college, and were asked to

Results

The first set of questions was to determine whether students were: 1) Drop-Outs, those students who no longer plan to continue their education at Southeastern, including those who plan on or have transferred elsewhere; 2) Stop-outs, those students who plan to return to Southeastern at some point. Based on these definitions, 54% (n=254) of the respondents are Drop-Outs, and 45% (n=213) are Stop-outs.

Stop Outs

Most of the Stop-outs (54%) planned on returning to Southeastern in Spring 2008, with over half (63%) of those in fact enrolled at Southeastern in Spring 2008. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of stop-outs plan on returning to Southeastern within the next year, 9% plan on returning within the next two years, 1% plan on returning within the next five years, and 8% are not sure when they will return to Southeastern.

Next, Stop-outs were asked to indicate whether each of nine possible reasons was a Major Reason, a Minor Reason, or Not a Reason for their decision to stop attending Southeastern for a while. “Had family responsibilities to take care of” was the item with the largest endorsement, with 57.0% of respondents indicating it was a reason they stopped attending Southeastern. This was followed by “Need to earn more money” which 49.2% of respondents indicated was a reason they stopped attending.

Table 1 provides the percentage of endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason for each item.

Table 1
Stop-Out Reasons

	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
Had family responsibilities to take care of	38.6%	18.4%	42.1%
Need to earn more money	28.1%	21.1%	49.1%
Needed a break from school	16.7%	27.2%	55.3%
Work interfered with school	20.2%	14.0%	64.9%
Academic problems	12.3%	15.8%	71.1%
Could not schedule the classes you needed	13.2%	11.4%	74.6%
Health reasons	18.4%	7.9%	72.8%
Military obligation	5.3%	7.0%	86.8%
Religious obligation	0.9%	7.9%	90.4%

In addition to the overall response, four groups of students were analyzed separately, cohort students, all other undergraduates, degree-seeking graduate students, and non-degree seeking graduate students. Table 2 provides information on when each group plans on returning to Southeastern.

Table 2

	Cohort	Other Undergraduates	Degree-Seeking Graduates	Non Degree-Seeking Graduates
Next semester	59.3% (16)	55.7% (88)	47.4% (9)	11.1% (1)
Within the next year	18.5% (5)	23.4% (37)	42.1% (8)	77.8% (7)
Within the next two years	7.4% (2)	9.5% (15)	5.3% (1)	0%
Withing the next five years	0%	0.6% (1)	0%	0%
Not sure at this time	11.1% (3)	7.6% (12)	5.3% (1)	11.1% (1)
Total in Group	27	158	19	9

Tables 3-6 provide information on reasons to stop attending Southeastern by the various groups. There were some differences between the groups. For both Cohort students and degree-seeking graduate students, “Needed a break from School” was the top reason, whereas for Other Undergraduates, family responsibilities was the top reason for stopping out.

Table 3
Stop-out Reasons - Cohort

	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
Needed a break from school	14.8%	29.6%	51.9%

Stop-out Reasons - Other Undergraduates

	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
Had family responsibilities to take care of	44.3%	17.1%	35.4%
Need to earn more money	36.7%	17.1%	41.8%
Needed a break from school	17.7%	25.9%	53.2%
Work interfered with school	26.6%	15.8%	54.4%

Table 6
Stop-out Reasons - Non-Degree-Seeking Graduate Students

	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
Need to earn more money	44.4%	11.1%	44.4%
Had family responsibilities to take care of	55.6%	0.0%	44.4%
Needed a break from school	33.3%	11.1%	55.6%
Work interfered with school	22.2%	11.1%	66.7%
Health reasons	0.0%	11.1%	88.9%
Could not schedule the classes you needed	0.0%	11.1%	88.9%
Military obligation	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Religious obligation	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Academic Problems	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Drop Outs

Most of the Drop-outs (77%) intend to finish their education elsewhere, although only 50% of the Drop-outs had already enrolled in another school. When asked what school they have or will enroll in, the most commonly cited school was Louisiana State University. Table 7 provides the schools students identified as having enrolled in or planning to enroll in.

Table 7
Schools Where Respondents Have or Plan to Enroll

School	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Arizona State	1	0.5%
Atlantic University West Palm	1	0.5%
Baton Rouge Community College	13	6.5%
Charity	1	0.5%
CIU Online	1	0.5%
Columbia College	1	0.5%
Consumnes River College	1	0.5%
CTT	1	0.5%

Table 7

Schools Where Respondents Have or Plan to Enroll cont.		
Southwest Mississippi	1	0.5%
Southern	5	2.5%
St. Leo University	1	0.5%
SUNO	1	0.5%
Texas Community College	1	0.5%
Tulane	1	0.5%
University of Louisiana - Lafayette	6	3.0%
University of Louisiana - Monroe	2	1.0%
UNL	1	0.5%
University of Central Florida	1	0.5%
University of Little Rock	1	0.5%
University of New Orleans	9	4.5%
University of Memphis	1	0.5%
University of Phoenix	1	0.5%
University of Southern Mississippi	1	0.5%
University of Wyoming	1	0.5%
Vermont College	1	0.5%
Undecided	29	14.5%
William Carey	2	1.0%
Xavier	3	1.5%

Respondents were then asked what was the main reason they decided to attend another school. Twenty percent (20%) of the respondents said they decided to attend another school because the major or program they were interested in was not available at Southeastern. Eighteen percent (18%) indicated they wanted to attend a school closer to home/work, or they were tired of commuting to Southeastern. An additional 10% indicated they had moved, and 7% transferred because attending would be cheaper for them. Finally, 7% indicated they transferred because they could not get into Southeastern's Nursing program.

Next, Drop-outs were asked to indicate whether each of thirty-eight possible reasons was a Major Reason, a Minor Reason, or Not a Reason for their decision to leave Southeastern. "Decided to attend a different college" was the item with the largest endorsement, with 56.9% of respondents indicating it was a reason they left Southeastern. This was followed by "Moved to a new location" (38.5%) and "Tired of commuting to Southeastern" (29.3%).

Table 8 provides the percentage of endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason for each item.

Table 8
Percentage of Endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason

	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
Decided to attend a different college	48.8%	8.1%	40.4%
Moved to a new location	27.7%	10.8%	56.5%
Tired of commuting to Southeastern	16.2%	13.1%	66.5%
Too much stress	11.2%	15.0%	71.2%
The major you wanted was not available at Southeastern	16.5%	8.1%	72.7%
Family or personal health-related problem	11.9%	7.7%	73.8%
Wanted a break from your college studies	5.4%	16.5%	75.4%
Too much conflict between the responsibilities of work and school	10.8%	10.8%	75.4%
The cost of gas was too high to commute	10.8%	10.8%	75.4%
Dissatisfied with your grades	10.0%	11.2%	75.8%
Family responsibilities were too great	8.1%	12.3%	76.5%
Did not intend to get a degree when you started at Southeastern	10.4%	7.3%	79.6%
Could not get into the program you wanted	10.4%	7.3%	79.6%
Wanted to get work experience	6.9%	10.8%	79.6%
Too much conflict between the responsibilities of family and school	8.5%	10.4%	78.5%
Did not receive enough financial aid	9.6%	6.9%	80.0%
Dissatisfied with your major	6.5%	10.4%	80.4%
Had problems scheduling classes	4.2%	11.5%	80.8%
Accepted a full-time job	11.2%	5.0%	80.8%
You were disappointed with the quality of instruction at Southeastern	3.8%	11.5%	81.5%
Academic advising was inadequate	6.2%	8.1%	82.3%
Encountered unexpected expenses	7.3%	7.3%	82.7%
Table 8 Percentage of Endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason cont.			
	Major	Minor	Not a

	Reason	Reason	Reason
There were too many required courses	5.4%	8.5%	83.1%
Dealing with hurricane related problems	4.2%	9.2%	83.5%
Southeastern did not promote an atmosphere that was conducive to learning	3.8%	8.5%	84.6%
Dissatisfied with the social life at Southeastern	4.2%	7.3%	85.8%
Courses were too difficult	2.7%	8.5%	86.2%
Courses were not challenging	1.9%	8.5%	86.5%
Did not have the study skills required to succeed in college	2.3%	7.7%	87.3%
Impersonal attitudes of college faculty and/or staff	1.9%	7.7%	87.3%
Lost your TOPS Scholarship	4.6%	4.6%	87.7%
Could not find affordable housing you liked	3.1%	5.8%	88.5%
Did not feel like you fit in	1.5%	6.5%	89.2%
Suspended or placed on probation	4.2%	3.5%	89.6%
Could not find and/or afford child care	3.5%	3.5%	90.0%
Southeastern was too small for you	1.2%	6.2%	90.0%
Unhappy with Southeastern's rules and regulations	3.1%	4.2%	90.0%
Could not find part-time work	1.9%	5.4%	90.0%
Southeastern was too large for you	1.2%	5.4%	90.8%
Experienced racism, prejudice or sexism	1.2%	4.6%	91.2%
Your parents and/or other relatives influenced you to quit	1.5%	3.5%	92.3%
Inadequate facilities for physically handicapped students	0.8%	3.5%	93.1%
Credit card debt was too much	1.2%	2.3%	93.8%

Tables 9-12 provide information on reasons to drop out by the various groups. There were 69 students in the Cohort group, 139 in the Other Undergraduate group, 16 in the Degree-Seeking

Table 10
Percentage of Endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason cont.
Other Undergraduate Group

	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
Too much conflict between the responsibilities of family and school	11.5%	10.8%	73.4%
The cost of gas was too high to commute	12.9%	8.6%	74.1%
Could not get into the program you wanted	15.8%	3.6%	76.3%
Dissatisfied with your major	7.9%	10.1%	77.7%
Too much conflict between the responsibilities of work and school	9.4%	8.6%	77.7%
Wanted a break from your college studies	5.0%	12.2%	78.4%
Dissatisfied with your grades	9.4%	7.9%	78.4%
The major you wanted was not available at Southeastern	12.9%	4.3%	78.4%
Had problems scheduling classes	4.3%	12.9%	78.4%
Dealing with hurricane related problems	6.5%	10.1%	79.1%
Academic advising was inadequate	9.4%	6.5%	79.9%
Did not receive enough financial aid	10.1%	5.0%	79.9%
Encountered unexpected expenses	7.2%	7.9%	80.6%
Did not intend to get a degree when you started at Southeastern	6.5%	7.2%	82.0%
There were too many required courses	5.8%	7.2%	82.0%
Wanted to get work experience	5.8%	7.9%	82.0%
Accepted a full-time job	10.8%	2.2%	82.0%
You were disappointed with the quality of instruction at Southeastern	2.9%	9.4%	82.7%
Suspended or placed on probation	5.8%	5.0%	84.9%
Dissatisfied with the social life at Southeastern	4.3%	6.5%	84.9%
Courses were too difficult	3.6%	6.5%	85.6%
Southeastern did not promote an atmosphere that was conducive to learning	2.9%	5.8%	86.3%
Could not find affordable housing you liked	5.0%	3.6%	87.1%
Impersonal attitudes of college faculty and/or staff	1.4%	7.2%	87.1%
Lost your TOPS Scholarship	3.6%	3.6%	87.8%
Did not have the study skills required to succeed in college	2.9%	4.3%	88.5%

Percentage of Endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason Degree-Seeking Graduate Students			
	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
Credit card debt was too much	0.0%	6.3%	93.8%
Your parents and/or other relatives influenced you to quit	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Suspended or placed on probation	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Lost your TOPS Scholarship	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Did not have the study skills required to succeed in college	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Table 12 Percentage of Endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason Non-Degree Graduate Students			
	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
Did not intend to get a degree when you started at Southeastern	25.0%	6.3%	68.8%
The major you wanted was not available at Southeastern	15.6%	12.5%	71.9%
Tired of commuting to Southeastern	12.5%	9.4%	78.1%
Dissatisfied with your grades	6.3%	12.5%	78.1%
Accepted a full-time job	9.4%	12.5%	78.1%
The cost of gas was too high to commute	0.0%	18.8%	78.1%
Wanted a break from your college studies	3.1%	15.6%	81.3%
Decided to attend a different college	9.4%	9.4%	81.3%
You were disappointed with the quality of instruction at Southeastern	9.4%	9.4%	81.3%
Too much conflict between the responsibilities of work and school	9.4%	9.4%	81.3%
Family responsibilities were too great	6.3%	9.4%	84.4%
Moved to a new location	9.4%	3.1%	84.4%
Courses were too difficult	0.0%	12.5%	87.5%
Courses were not challenging	6.3%	6.3%	87.5%
Could not get into the program you wanted	3.1%	9.4%	87.5%
Had problems scheduling classes	6.3%	6.3%	87.5%

Table 12 Percentage of Endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason			
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The last portion of the survey asked participants for demographic information that is not readily available as part of the student record system. Answers to these questions help give a better understanding as to what type of student will leave Southeastern either temporarily or permanently. Almost half (41%) of the respondents traveled more than 30 miles (one way) to Southeastern's main campus, while only 13% lived on campus. Approximately 69% of the respondents worked off campus. An additional 5% worked both on and off campus, and 6% worked on campus. Fifty percent (50%) of those who worked, spent more than 30 hours a week working, with an additional 20% spending 21-30 hours a week working. Thirty percent (30%) of the respondents are first-generation college students, which according to Terenzini et al (1996) is a student who has no parent with any college or university experience.

References

Terenzini, P.T., Springer, L. Yaeger, P.M., Pascarella, E.T., & Nora, A. (1996). First-generation college students: Characteristics, experiences, and cognitive development. Research in Higher Education, 37(1), 1-22.

Appendix A
Non-Returning Student Survey

Hello, my name is _____ and I am calling from the Southeastern Louisiana University. May I please speak with _____. To better serve our students, we are conducting a confidential and voluntary survey of former Southeastern students who are not enrolled here this semester. The survey will take only a few minutes. Will you participate?

Intro questions

1. Do you plan to continue your education?
If no, go to Non-Returning
If yes continue to intro 2
If Don't Know, go to Non-Returning

2.
 - a. Do you plan to continue your education at Southeastern or somewhere else?
If Southeastern, go to Stop Out questions
 - b. Have you enrolled in another school yet?
1=No 2=Yes
 - c. What school have/will you enroll(ed) in?

7. Academic problems
8. Health reasons
9. Could not schedule the classes you needed

Demographics:

Southeastern is looking for ways to help students remain in school. The following information may help us better meet the needs of students like yourself.

1. The last time you attended Southeastern, how many miles did you have to travel (one

- 5-Bachelor's Degree
- 6-Graduate or Professional Degree
- 7-Unknown or refused

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact:

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