

Can I do it? Do I belong? Why should I do it?*

Analyzing Retention at ISU using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

*From Social Psychological Approaches to College Student Success, H. Williams & M. Murphy, in [How College Students Succeed](#)



RETURNING STUDENT PROFILE

Returners feel like they **belong at ISU**.

Returners are **engaged in interactions with others**. These interactions are **frequent and positive**.

Returners **collaborate with other students** in the classroom and in academic work outside of the classroom.

Returning students are more **certain about their decision to attend ISU** and college in general.

NON-RETURNING STUDENT PROFILE

Non-returning students feel **less belonging** at ISU.

Non-returning students have **less interactions** with other students.

Non-returning students **exert effort and work hard**. They put in as much time and effort into academic activities as returning students, including reading and writing.

Non-returning students are **less certain about their place** at ISU and in college in general.

Data Notes.

Data from 2023 National Survey of Student Engagement. Returners identified as students who returned for their 2nd year of college. Non-returners did not return. Contact [University Assessment Services](#) (UAS) with questions. More data at the UAS [Institutional Surveys](#) and [Assessment Dashboards](#) websites. Click on the Campus Press article associated with this visualization for more information.

Returners have a strong sense of belonging.

I feel comfortable being myself at this institution



I feel like part of the community at this institution.



I feel valued by this institution.



Question: **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?** Data from 2023 National Survey of Student Engagement. Contact [University Assessment Services](#) (UAS) with questions. More data at the UAS [Institutional Surveys](#) and [Assessment Dashboards](#) websites.

BELONGING IS EXPERIENCED DIFFERENTLY BY STUDENT GROUPS

First-year students from many identity groups, including culturally dynamic, queer & trans, and first-generation students report [lower belonging](#).

SPACES & RELATIONSHIPS PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN BELONGING

Physical spaces, on-campus jobs, affirming experiences and communicating confidence in students' abilities to succeed can play significant roles in retention.

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[How Identity Groups Experience Belonging at ISU](#)

An interactive dashboard from University Assessment

[What helps students feel like they belong?](#)

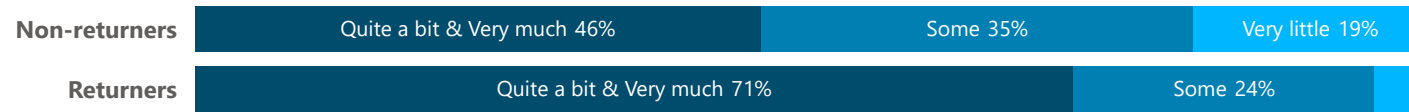
A report from the University of Illinois using the **Sense of Social Fit** scale to examine student success

[Fall to Fall Retention Dashboard](#)

An interactive dashboard from Planning, Research and Policy Analysis (PRPA)

Returners have more frequent and positive interactions with others, inside and outside the classroom.

How much has your experience at ISU contributed to your your skills in working with teams?



SOME STUDENTS MAY NEED TO LEARN ACADEMIC COLLABORATION & SOCIAL INTERACTION

Teaching students who lack the skills or confidence to interact with others could have a positive impact on retention. Returners spend more time in co-curricular activities than non-returners.

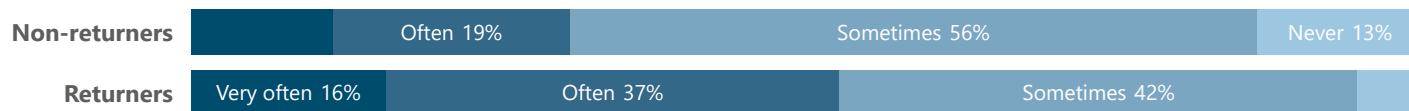
How would you rate the quality of your interactions with other students at ISU?



ISU SENIORS REPORT POSITIVE INTERACTIONS AND MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Compared to peer institutions, ISU seniors report [highly positive interactions](#) with faculty, staff and students. This suggests ISU does foster positive interactions beyond the first year.

How often have you explained course material to one or more students?



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[How Identity Groups Experience Belonging at ISU](#)

An interactive dashboard from University Assessment

[The Power of Relationships in Higher Education](#)

A summary on how to cultivate positive interactions for students.

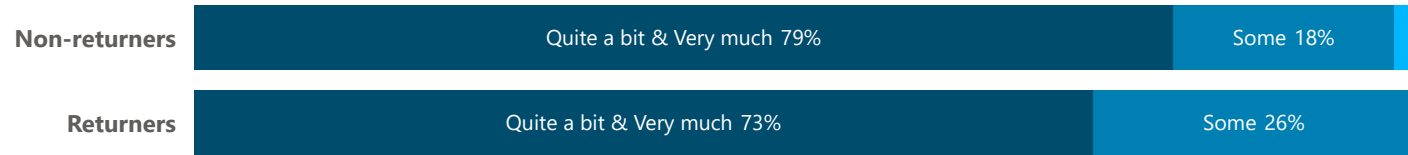
[Fostering Peer Relationships through an Experimental Intervention](#) (Milner Library)

This journal article highlights the importance of social integration, support, and involvement for student retention.

See [Data Tables tab](#) for more information on interactions and relationships. Data from 2023 National Survey of Student Engagement. Contact [University Assessment Services](#) (UAS) with questions. More data at the UAS [Institutional Surveys](#) and [Assessment Dashboards](#) websites.

Non-returners get the message. They know academic effort is important. They spend more hours on pretty much everything, especially work.

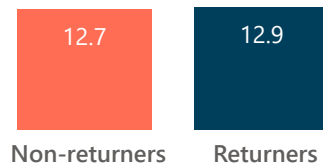
How much does ISU emphasize spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work



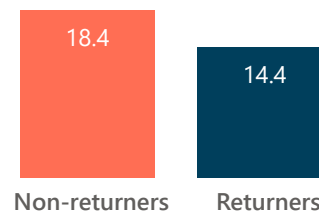
NON-RETURNERS SPEND JUST AS MUCH TIME ON ACADEMIC EFFORT AND PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING

Non-returners report writing more pages in a semester (60) than returners (49). Non-returners spend as much time on assigned reading as returners. Non-returners spend a lot more time on working, especially more time working off-campus.

Average hours per week on academic work and studying



Average hours per week working off campus



WHILE NON-RETURNERS INVEST AS MUCH ACADEMIC EFFORT AS RETURNERS, THEY ARE LESS ENGAGED IN USING KEY LEARNING STRATEGIES & HIGHER ORDER LEARNING

Potential non-returners may respond well to growth-mindset approaches, expressions of confidence in their ability to succeed, and being challenged.

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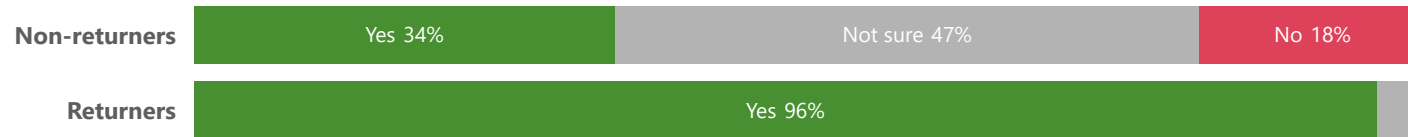
[Recognizing the Reality of Working College Students](#)

L. Perna & T. Odle

[Interactive Data from NSSE: National Comparisons](#)

Returners are confident in their decision to be at ISU and in college in general.

Do you intend to return to this institution next year?



WHEN AM I EVER GOING TO USE THIS?

When students see a class or activity as relevant to life, learning, or career goals, they are much more likely to be engaged (see [How College Students Succeed](#)).

Having a clear answer to the question "when am I ever going to use this?" helps students be more confident about their place in college.

If you could start over again, would you go to the SAME INSTITUTION you are now attending?



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[Peer University Comparisons](#)

See how ISU compares in expectations to peer groups

[Fall to Fall Retention Dashboard](#)

An interactive dashboard from Planning, Research and Policy Analysis (PRPA)

Returners feel higher belonging, regularly engage with other students socially and academically, and are more certain about their place at ISU.

NSSE Factors

p < .10 in green

Scale	p values
Overall satisfaction with ISU	● 0.00
Collaborative learning	● 0.02
Quality of interactions	● 0.03
Supportive environment	● 0.06
Sense of belonging	● 0.13
Effective teaching practices	● 0.13
Student-faculty interaction	● 0.16
Learning strategies	● 0.24
Perceived learning gains	● 0.32
Higher order learning	● 0.37
Quantitative reasoning	● 0.53
Diverse discussions	● 0.84
Reflective & integrative learning	● 0.99

ISU Factors

p < .10 in green

QuestionID	p values
Belonging & satisfaction	● 0.00
Quality of interactions	● 0.01
Collaborative learning	● 0.03
Time engagement	● 0.08
Effective teaching practices	● 0.25
Diverse discussions	● 0.33
Learning strategies	● 0.47
Institutional emphasis - social	● 0.48
Reflective & integrative learning	● 0.48
Institutional emphasis - support	● 0.58
Quantitative reasoning	● 0.64
Student-faculty interaction	● 0.66
Perceived learning gains	● 0.86
Academic preparation outside of class	● 0.92

MONITORING SATISFACTION & BELONGING COULD BE JUST AS IMPORTANT AS GPA

GPA is one of the, if not the most, strongest predictor of retention (not included in this model). **GPA, however, is as much an indicator of academic progress as it is a signaling device to students about their place in college.**

Regular check-ins with students, reaffirming their decision to attend ISU, and sending targeted communications could improve retention.

INSTITUTIONAL EMPHASIS ON WELL-BEING AND TEACHING STUDENTS HOW TO INTERACT WITH OTHERS COULD IMPROVE RETENTION

Academic effort in terms of time did not play a significant role in retention, at least not in this model. Non-returners know effort is important. They could lack skills in the areas of collaboration and learning strategies outside of class.

Momentum is key. Non-returners are uncertain about their fit and lack a commitment to ISU and maybe college in general.

Non-returners work longer hours off campus and may have more responsibilities that impede that momentum.

METHOD

Binary logistic regression was selected because the outcome is dichotomous: either first-year students returned or they did not. NSSE and ISU factors are the covariates or independent variables. These are based on engagement indicators created by the Indiana University [Center for Postsecondary Research](#). A factor analysis was employed to create ISU factors. ISU factors exhibited a high correlation with NSSE factors, providing similar results.

