RISC

Revealing Institutional Strengths and Challenges

INSTITUTIONAL REPORT
RISC STUDENT SURVEY FALL 2020
IOWA CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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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; Iowa Central chose the specific offices that appeared in the survey. The survey used office names specific to Iowa Central, 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 Iowa Central's greatest strength, and if Iowa Central 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 Fall 2020 to 2,786 Iowa Central students. There were 544 responses used in this report, for a 19.5% response rate. Median time Iowa Central students spent taking the survey was 8.1 minutes.

The table below provides some background information about your college's benchmark sample. Twenty-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 14,144 respondents.

Table 1.1 Community colleges in the benchmark sample

Carnegie classification		Urbanicity		Student enrollment	
High Career & Technical	20%	City	20%	Under 1,000	10%
Mixed	40%	Suburb	35%	1,000-4,999	45%
High Transfer	30%	Town	20%	5,000-9,999	25%
Other	10%	Rural	25%	10,000-19,999	20%
				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	○	○

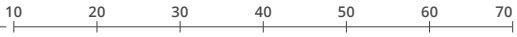
Students choosing "yes" to one or more of these response options are coded as having a challenge with finances and financial aid.

Table 2.1 provides an overview of the main challenges students faced at Iowa Central in Fall 2020 in the five main areas. *Success in courses* is the area where your students most frequently reported having challenges, with 66% 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

	IC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	*n*
Success in courses	66	60	**+6**	358
Work and personal issues	57	58	−1	312
Finances and financial aid	43	39	**+4**	235
Campus environment	32	19	**+13**	173
Academic support services	22	33	**−11**	117



Notes

Green indicates that Iowa Central has a lower proportion of students reporting a challenge compared to the benchmark sample proportion; red indicates Iowa Central 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*=544.

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, 66% of your students chose one or more challenges in the major category of *Success in courses*. The most common subcategory was *Online classes*, with 53% choosing challenges in this subcategory. The most common specific challenge within the *Online classes* subcategory was *Difficulty learning the material on my own*, with 38% 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 success in courses

	IC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Success in courses	66	60	+6	358
Online classes	53	45	+8	287
Difficulty learning the material on my own	38	31	+7	208
Lack of interaction with faculty	29	23	+6	160
Lack of interaction with other students	27	19	+8	148
Difficulty keeping up because of no regular class times	24	22	+2	132
Difficulty using course technology	15	14	+1	79
Difficulty taking exams at testing center	7	4	+3	36
None of the above	5	4	+1	25
Developmental courses (math, reading, or writing)	23	21	+2	124
Courses were too hard	8	7	+1	44
Did not prepare me for college-level courses	5	4	+1	28
Required to take too many	4	4	+0	22
Courses were too easy	0	1	−1	2
None of the above	10	10	+0	56
Doing college-level work	19	18	+1	105
Poor planning and time management skills	10	10	+0	56
Not motivated to study	9	9	+0	49
Poor study skills	8	8	+0	45
Reading or writing assignments were difficult	6	6	+0	31
Required level of math was difficult	6	5	+1	31
Took too many classes	3	3	+0	18
Skipped too many classes	3	1	+2	17
None of the above	4	3	+1	22
Faculty	17	17	+0	95
Did not teach well	12	11	+1	64
Not responsive to email	10	7	+3	52
Not concerned about my academic success	8	7	+1	44
Not helpful outside of class	7	6	+1	40
Feedback on assignments not helpful	7	8	−1	39
Took too long to grade assignments	6	6	+0	34
Not available to meet in person	4	2	+2	20
None of the above	1	2	−1	8

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 work and personal life

	IC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Work and personal issues	57	58	−1	312
Work	39	38	+1	213
Work hours do not leave me enough time to study	23	22	+1	124
Pay is not enough to cover expenses while in school	19	16	+3	103
Work schedule conflicts with classes	11	13	−2	62
Work schedule prevents campus resource use	10	12	−2	57
Work schedule is not flexible during the semester	10	10	+0	54
None of the above	7	6	+1	36
Family	37	37	+0	200
Difficulty balancing demands of family and college	25	26	−1	137
Difficulty dealing with health of family	13	14	−1	69
Family does not support me going to college	4	3	+1	23
Difficulty finding childcare	3	5	−2	19
None of the above	8	5	+3	41
Health and disability issues	18	20	−2	98
Emotional/mental health issue	12	13	−1	67
Physical health issue	9	10	−1	47
Faculty did not provide necessary accomodations	1	1	+0	5
Pregnancy and childbirth	1	1	+0	4
Disability services did not provide necessary support	1	0	+1	3
Campus is difficult to navigate with my disability	0	0	+0	1
None of the above	3	2	+1	15
Transportation to campus	10	9	+1	55
Travel to campus takes a long time	5	3	+2	26
Car or carpool not reliable	4	4	+0	24
Public transportation system not reliable	3	2	+1	14
Campus transportation system not reliable	1	1	+0	4
None of the above	1	2	−1	4

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

	IC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Finances and financial aid	43	39	+4	235
Paying college and living expenses	42	32	+10	226
Living expenses (housing, food, healthcare)	28	20	+8	153
Tuition and fees	27	19	+8	148
Books, software, and other supplies	21	20	+1	113
Childcare	4	4	+0	20
None of the above	2	1	+1	10
Working with financial aid office	8	14	−6	43
Process was unclear	5	7	−2	27
Unable to answer questions	3	5	−2	19
Errors processing financial aid	3	6	−3	17
Difficult to meet with, speak to, or email staff	3	7	−4	15
Delays in getting money	3	5	−2	14
Gave me wrong information	1	3	−2	5
None of the above	1	2	−1	8
Military and employer tuition benefits	2	1	+1	12
Did not know process for obtaining benefits	1	1	+0	7
Experienced delays receiving benefits	0	1	−1	1
Received wrong information about benefits	0	0	+0	1
None of the above	1	0	+1	5

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

	IC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Campus environment	32	19	+13	173
Parking	22	9	+13	119
Difficulty finding parking on or near campus	18	7	+11	99
Difficulty getting parking pass	1	1	+0	5
Parking on or near campus is too expensive	0	1	−1	2
None of the above	3	1	+2	18
Interactions with other students	15	9	+6	79
Did not know many other students	10	6	+4	52
Did not feel welcome due to my race or ethnicity	1	1	+0	6
Did not feel welcome due to my sexual orientation	1	0	+1	3
Did not feel welcome due to my gender identity	0	0	+0	1
None of the above	5	3	+2	26
Safety and crime	3	2	+1	19
Campus not safe	1	1	+0	5
Parking lots not safe	1	1	+0	4
Was a victim of a crime	1	0	+1	3
None of the above	2	1	+1	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.

Table 2.6 Challenges with academic support services

	IC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Academic support services	22	33	−11	117
Tutoring	10	8	+2	56
Tutors not available when I need assistance	4	3	+1	24
Tutoring hours not convenient	4	3	+1	23
Tutoring not available in the subject area I needed	3	2	+1	15
Tutoring not helpful	2	2	+0	11
None of the above	2	2	+0	11
Academic advising	9	14	−5	50
Difficult to meet with, speak to, or email advisor	5	9	−4	27
Not told to take necessary course	2	4	−2	13
Told to take unnecessary course	2	3	−1	9
Course/program materials were incorrect	1	2	−1	3
None of the above	3	3	+0	14
Registering for courses	7	15	−8	39
Course not offered at times I needed	2	5	−3	9
Course not offered this semester	1	4	−3	5
Course was offered but full	1	5	−4	4
Had a registration hold	1	4	−3	4
None of the above	4	6	−2	24
Computer and science labs	6	7	−1	34
Problems using computers and equipment	3	2	+1	16
Lab hours not convenient	2	2	+0	10
Lab busy when needed	0	1	−1	1
None of the above	2	3	−1	12
Library	4	5	−1	22
Study spaces not available when needed	1	1	+0	8
Hours not convenient	1	2	−1	7
Resources I needed not available online	1	2	−1	5
Staff not helpful	1	1	+0	5
None of the above	2	2	+0	10

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 03

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. Advising was the most commonly used office, with 59% reporting using the office during the Fall 2020 semester, followed by Financial Aid (47%) and Admissions (37%).

Table 3.1 Office usage

	IC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	*n*
Advising	59	55	+4	
Financial Aid	47	43	+4	
Admissions	37	34	+3	
Academic Resource Center (ARC)	36			
Housing	19			

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

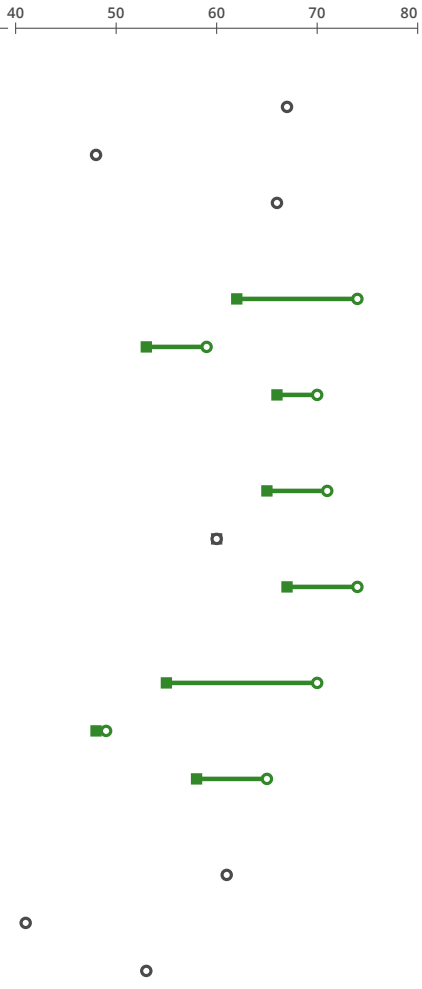
How effective were [unit name] staff when addressing your issue?

- ○ 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 5 other colleges surveyed students about the same type of office.

Table 3.2 Student-administration interactions

	IC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	*n*
Academic Resource Center (ARC)				
Available	67			195
Concerned	48			195
Effective	66			191
Admissions				
Available	74	62	**+12**	200
Concerned	59	53	+6	198
Effective	70	66	+4	197
Advising				
Available	71	65	**+6**	316
Concerned	60	60	+0	315
Effective	74	67	**+7**	314
Financial Aid				
Available	70	55	**+15**	254
Concerned	49	48	+1	251
Effective	65	58	**+7**	248
Housing				
Available	61			102
Concerned	41			100
Effective	53			98



Notes

Percentage is the proportion of students rating an office in the top response category (*very available/concerned/effective*). Green indicates that Iowa Central has a higher proportion of students choosing the category compared to the benchmark sample proportion; red indicates Iowa Central 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.

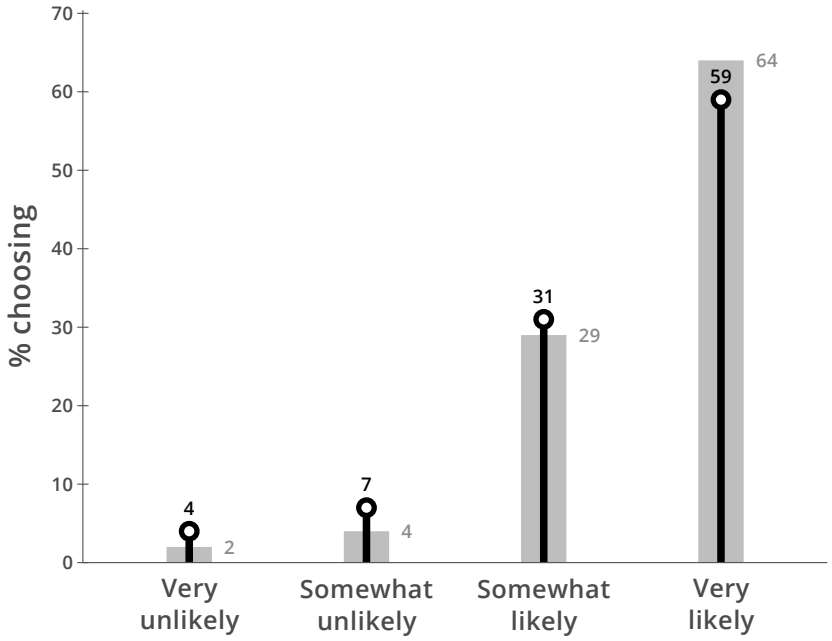
STUDENT VIEWS OF THE INSTITUTION

04

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

The first question, "Based on your experiences, how likely are you to recommend Iowa Central to a friend?", is a summative measure of how students view your institution. Results are presented in Figure 4.1, with Iowa Central represented by the black line and the benchmark sample by the gray line. 90% of your students would be somewhat or very likely to to recommend Iowa Central. The Iowa Central distribution of responses is statistically significantly different from the benchmark sample.

Figure 4.1 Would student recommend Iowa Central to a friend?

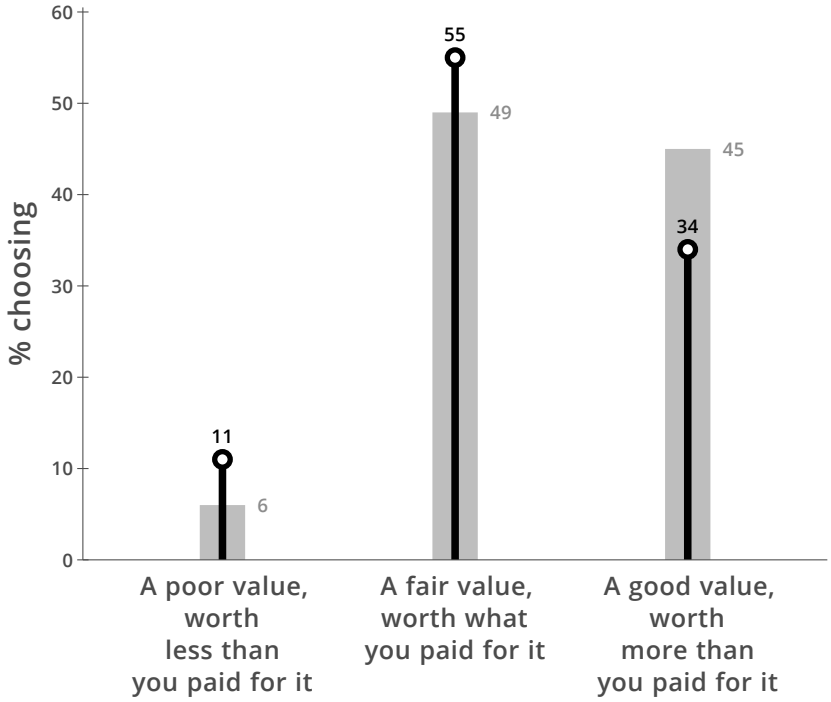


Notes

Iowa Central is the black bar; benchmark sample is gray. $\chi^2 = 14.7, p < .01$; $n = 531$.

Next, students were asked to rate the overall value of their education at Iowa Central (see Figure 4.2). 89% of your students believe their education is worth what they paid (or even worth more). The Iowa Central distribution of responses is statistically significantly different from the benchmark sample.

Figure 4.2 Overall value of education?



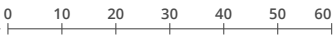
Notes
Iowa Central is the black bar; benchmark sample is gray. $\chi^2 = 45.8, p < .01$; $n = 527$.

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 Iowa Central. 50% chose *Increase job and career opportunities* as their primary purpose for attending your institution.

Students were then asked how well Iowa Central 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, 42% of the students who chose *Increase job and career opportunities* as their primary goal indicated that Iowa Central is doing *very well* in terms of increasing their job and career opportunities.

Table 4.1 How well is education helping accomplish goals

	IC %	Bench. %	Diff.	*n*
Purpose of taking courses at IC				
Increase job and career opportunities	50	41	**+9**	262
Prepare for a four-year degree	44	51	**−7**	233
Self-improvement	6	8	−2	34
How well is education at IC ...				
Increase job and career opportunities	42	44	−2	260
Prepare for a four-year degree	39	44	−5	232
Self-improvement	21	45	**−24**	34



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 Iowa Central has a higher proportion of students reporting that Iowa Central 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	62	314
Male/Man	36	185
Transgender Female/Transgender Woman	1	3
Transgender Male/Transgender Man	0	1
Another gender identity	1	6

Table 5.2 Race/ethnicity

	%	*n*
African American or Black	13	63
Asian American or Asian	4	19
Native American or Alaska Native	2	9
Hispanic or Latino	13	66
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	5
White	76	383

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

Table 5.3 Age

	%	*n*
18 or younger	23	118
19-24	50	254
25-34	13	69
35-44	9	47
45-54	3	15
55 or older	2	9

Table 5.4 Part-time/full-time status

	%	*n*
Part-time (less than 12 credit hours)	20	102
Full-time (12 or more credit hours)	80	403

Table 5.5 Total credit hours earned at Iowa Central

	%	*n*
None	23	118
1-15 credits	30	155
16-29 credits	16	84
30-45 credits	18	94
46 or more credits	12	60