

# UK Institutional Research Brief:

## Results of UK's New Student Attrition Survey

October 2010

To learn more about the expectations and experiences of non-returning freshmen and sophomores, the Office of Institutional Research administered a survey to students from the last two cohorts who did not register for fall classes. During this first phase of the administration, the survey was e-mailed to 320 students from the 2008 cohort and 484 students from the 2009 cohort who did not register for the fall semester during the spring 2010 registration period. A high percentage of students, 52 percent of the 2008 cohort and 36 percent of the 2008 cohort, indicated that they intended to register and come back to UK in the fall. These students were asked only whether they needed further information or assistance. Those who requested help were contacted by the Office of Undergraduate Education. The remaining respondents, 46 from the 2008 cohort and 110 from the 2009 cohort, completed the questionnaire. In phase two of the administration, the survey was e-mailed on August 29<sup>th</sup> to all students from the two cohorts who had not returned in the fall; students who had responded earlier in the spring were excluded. In total, 84 students from the 2008 cohort and 190 students from the 2009 cohort responded to the survey.

The 2008 cohort sample did not differ significantly from the population (see Table 1). A higher percentage of female students and a lower percentage of Black students appeared in the sample, but the differences were not statistically significant. There were significant differences between the non-returning sample and the respective non-returning population from the 2009 cohort. The sample was skewed towards students with higher UK GPAs and towards female and White students.

**Table 1 – Representativeness of the Sample**

Variable	Comparison statistic	Cohort 2008 Non-returning F2010 Population	Cohort 2008 Non-returning F2010 Sample	P-value	Cohort 2009 Non-returning F2010 Population	Cohort 2009 Non-returning F2010 Sample	P-value
<b>Residency Status</b>	Prct Resident	77.1%	77.4%	0.951	77.1%	72.6%	0.143
<b>Gender</b>	Prct Female	46.7%	56.0%	0.089	47.1%	58.4%	0.002
<b>Race</b>	Prct Non-White	23.3%	19.0%	0.357	23.0%	16.3%	0.029
- Black		15.0%	10.7%		15.1%	11.1%	
- White		76.7%	81.0%		77.0%	83.7%	
- Other		8.3%	8.3%	0.542	7.9%	5.2%	0.089
<b>HS GPA (ohsgpa)</b>	Mean	3.28	3.33	0.338	3.24	3.37	0.001
<b>ACT (outacte)</b>	Mean	23.19	23.08	0.779	23.18	23.63	0.100
<b>UK GPA</b>	Mean	2.32	2.38	0.488	1.93	2.34	<0.001

## Survey Highlights for the 2009 Cohort (First-Year)

The overwhelming majority of students (84%) planned to attend another institution, 14 percent wanted to take a break and come back, and 2 percent did not plan to enroll in college. Student responses differed by their first-year UK GPA (GPA<3.0 vs. GPA>=3.0). There were 55 respondents in the GPA>=3.0 group and 135 with GPA <3.0. Students who planned to attend another institution had a higher average UK GPA than the other two groups (2.49 vs. 1.27 for those planning to take a break and 2.08 for those not planning to enroll in college). Out-of-state students constituted 40% of the higher GPA group (22 out of 55) and 22% of the lower GPA group (30 out of 135).

### Findings on Reasons for Leaving UK

When asked an overall question listing four reasons for leaving UK, students in both the relatively high and low GPA groups most frequently selected Personal Reasons (see Table 2). However, students in the higher GPA group checked Adjustment/Campus Environment as their second most important reason. For the lower GPA group, Academic and Financial Reasons were rated as more important reasons.

**Table 2 – Most Important Reason for Not Returning by GPA**

Most Important Reason	GPA Less than 3.0	GPA 3.0 or higher	Total
<b>Academic</b>	34 25.56%	6 10.91%	40
<b>Adjustment to College/Campus Environment</b>	15 11.28%	13 23.64%	28
<b>Financial</b>	27 20.3%	6 10.91%	33
<b>Personal</b>	57 42.86%	30 54.55%	87
<b>Total</b>	133	55	188

- Responses to detailed follow-up questions on reasons for leaving UK suggested academic performance was the single most important reason for students with GPAs less than 3.0 (63% vs. 11% of students with GPA>=3.0). On the other hand, students in the higher GPA group most frequently selected “I wanted to be closer to home, family, or friends” (56%) and “It has been difficult for me to meet and make friends” (53%).

- In both groups a high percentage of students selected ‘large class sizes’ as an important or very important reason for leaving UK (41% in GPA $\geq$ 3.0 and 40% in GPA $<$ 3.0).
- Moderately high percentages of students with GPA $\geq$ 3.0 chose the following as important or very important reasons for leaving UK: “I am more serious about my education than most undergraduates at UK” (39%), “I had difficulty adjusting to the social environment of campus” (38%), “Quality of Courses” (35%), “Quality of Teaching” (37%), “I did not feel UK provided enough opportunities for me to get to know other people and have an active social life” (32%), and “Quality of Campus Housing” (36%).
- Moderately high percentages of students in the lower GPA group selected the following reasons as important or very important: “Lack of motivation” (41%), “Stress of college life” (39%), “I wanted to be closer to home, family, or friends” (39%), “I do not have enough money to continue my education at UK” (38%), “I spent less time studying than I should have to be successful academically” (38%), “Difficulties with time management” (37%).

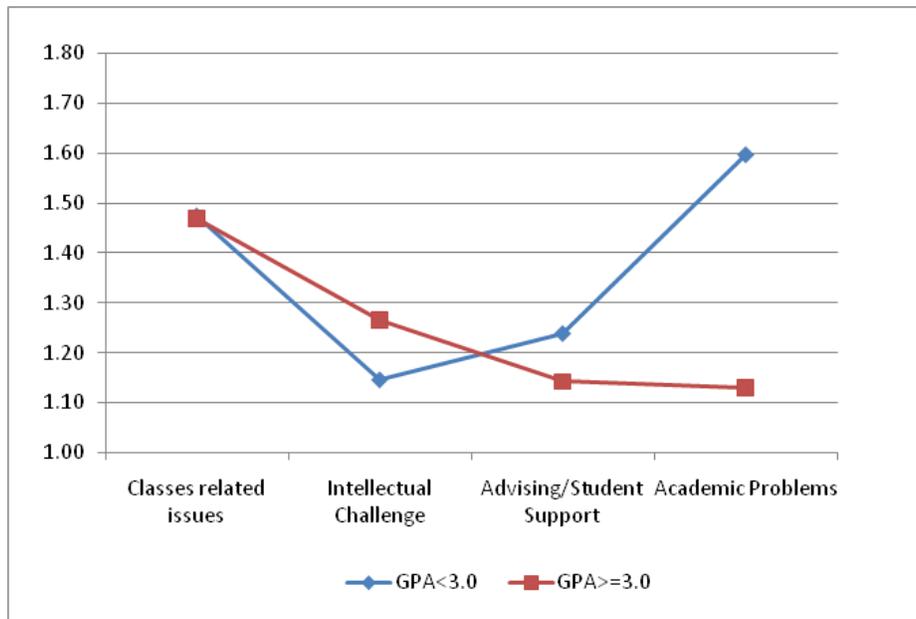
### **Examination of Academic-Related Reasons for Leaving UK by Cumulative First-Year GPA**

To explore the relative importance of academic-related reasons in students’ decisions to leave UK, IR staff used Principal Components Analysis on the questions comprising the Academic Reasons portion of the survey. Four factors were extracted from this analysis:

1. **Classes- related Issues** (e.g., quality of classes and teaching, large classes, course availability)
2. **Intellectual Challenge** (e.g., lack of academic challenge, lack of intellectual atmosphere, availability of challenging opportunities like seminars and research)
3. **Advising/Student Support** (e.g., quality of tutoring, accessibility of advisor, accuracy of information provided by advisor)
4. **Academic Problems** (e.g., academic performance, difficulties with time management, ineffective high school preparation)

The four factors accounted for 71 percent of the total variance in the Academic Reasons items, suggesting the factors were a good representation of the original items. The factor scores were computed as the means of the highest loading items. The importance of the four factors differed significantly between the two UKGPA groups. A repeated-measures analysis of variance yielded a significant interaction between the four factors and the UK GPA group ( $p$ -value $<$ 0.001). Figure 1 shows students who earned a UK GPA  $\geq$ 3.0 rated *Classes-related issues* as their most important factor, followed by *Intellectual Challenge*, *Advising/Academic Support*, and *Academic Problems*. For students

who earned a UK GPA under 3.0, the most important factor in leaving UK was *Academic Problems*, followed by *Classes related issues* and *Advising/Student Support*. *Intellectual Challenge* was rated the least important factor by this group. The post hoc comparisons between the UK GPA groups, separately for each factor, indicated significant differences between groups for “Intellectual Challenge” and “Academic Problems”.



**Figure 1- Mean Factor Scores for Academic-Related Reasons by UK GPA**

### Reasons for Leaving UK Students’ Residency Status

Table 3 shows student responses differed by their residency status (Kentucky residents vs. out-of-state students). A total of 138 Kentucky residents and 52 out-of-state students responded to the survey. When asked an overall question listing four reasons for leaving UK, more out-of-state students selected Adjustment to College and/or Campus Environment reasons (21% vs. 13% for in-state students).

- Responses to detailed follow-up questions on reasons revealed that out-of-state students’ single most important reason was the desire “to be closer to home, family, or friends” (59% vs. 38% of in-state students). For in-state students the most frequently selected reason pertained to “My academic performance” (53% vs. 33% for out-of-state students).

**Table 3 – Most Important Reason for Not Returning by Residency**

<b>Most Important Reason</b>	<b>In-State</b>	<b>Out-of-State</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Academic</b>	29 21.32%	11 21.15%	40
<b>Adjustment to College/Campus Environment</b>	17 12.5%	11 21.15%	28
<b>Financial</b>	24 17.65%	9 17.31%	33
<b>Personal</b>	66 48.53%	21 40.38%	87
<b>Total</b>	136	52	188

- In addition, a high percentage of out-of-state students selected the following as reasons for leaving UK: “It has been difficult for me to meet and make friends” (41% vs. 28% of KY residents), “I did not feel UK provided enough opportunities for me to get to know other students and have an active social life” (37% vs. 16%), “I had difficulty adjusting to the social environment of campus” (36% vs. 28%), “Quality of recreational activities and facilities on campus” (32% vs. 8%), and “Availability of good places to hang out between classes” (35% vs. 18%). “Lack of student diversity” was selected as important by 25% of out-of-state students, compared to 9% of KY residents.
- Kentucky residents chose the following reasons more frequently than out-of-state students: “Large class sizes” (47% vs. 22%), “I do not have enough money to continue my education at UK” (36% vs. 24%), “Stress of college life” (39% vs. 14%), “Difficulties with time management” (35% vs. 19%), “I spent less time studying than I should have to be successful academically” (35% vs. 14%), “Ineffective high school preparation” (25% vs. 8%) and “I will have difficulty paying for college because of losing my scholarship or grant” (22% vs. 8%).

**Additional Findings**

- For those who planned to attend another institution, the choice of the institution depended on their residency status. Only 11% of the out-of-state students planned to transfer to a community college or state university in Kentucky. Of the Kentucky residents, 27% planned to go to a community college, and 40% to another state university.

- Two-thirds (68%) of students who were transferring to BCTC or KCTC indicated they would probably or definitely come back to UK to complete a bachelor's Degree.
- Just over half (53%) of the students planning to attend another college indicated they would pursue the same major. Students who wanted to pursue the same major had a higher UK GPA (2.61 vs. 2.47).
- Residents who wanted to pursue the same major were more likely to transfer to a Kentucky state university (46% to a state university, 28% to a community college) than those who wanted to change their major (33% to a state university, 26% to a community college). They were also more likely to indicate that losing KEES money was not a factor in their decision to leave UK (83%) compared to those who wanted to change their major (73%).
- Over 40% of students with GPA $\geq$ 3.0 and 54% of students with GPA $<$ 3.0 indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their time at UK. Over 52% of in-state and 45% of out-of-state students expressed satisfaction with their time at UK.

### **Survey Highlights for the 2008 Cohort (Sophomore)**

The sample size for the sophomore group was very small, just 84 students. There were 65 KY residents and 19 out-of-state students. Twenty students (24%) had GPA $\geq$ 3.0 and 64 had GPA $<$ 3.0. Out-of-state students earned higher GPAs than in-state students (2.63 vs. 2.40). Even though the sample was too small to reliably analyze the data by residency status and UK GPA, comparisons by UK GPA are available from IR Office staff. Responses to the overall question on reasons for leaving (Q6) indicated some differences between in-state and out-of-state sophomores and between the GPA groups. These differences, however, were not statistically significant.

#### **Findings on Reasons for Leaving UK**

- Nearly three-quarters (73%) of the students planned to transfer to other institutions, most of the remaining students (24%) wanted to take a break from college. Students planning to transfer earned a higher average UK GPA than those who were planning to take a break (2.56 vs. 2.15).

- The following reasons for leaving UK were selected by the highest percentages of sophomores: “My academic Performance” (44%), “I spent less time studying than I should have to be successful academically” (40%), “I wanted to be closer to home, family, or friends” (35%), “Lack of motivation” (34%), “Losing KEES money makes it difficult for me to continue at UK” (33%), “Stress of College Life” (30%).
- Students who earned a ‘B’ average or higher most frequently chose the following reasons: “I wanted to be closer to home, family, or friends” (58%), “I am more serious about my education than most undergraduates at UK” (32%), “Quality of teaching” (37%) and “Quality of courses” (32%).
- Students who earned less than a ‘B’ average, selected the following reasons most often: “My Academic Performance” (51%), “I spent less time studying than I should have to be successful academically” (48%), “Lack of motivation” (40%), and “Losing KEES money makes it difficult for me to continue at UK” (40%).

### **Additional Findings**

- For those planning to attend another institution (n=61), their choice was related to their residency status. Only 1 of the out-of-state students planned to attend a community college or a state university in Kentucky. Of the 46 KY residents, 43% (n=20) planned to go to a state university, 22% (n=10) or a community college. The remaining 35% (n=16) planned to attend a private or out-of-state college.
- Of 10 students planning to transfer to BCTC or KCTCS, seven answered “Probably or definitely yes” when asked if they were interested in coming to UK to complete Bachelor’s Degree.
- About half (52%) of the students planning to attend another college indicated they would pursue the same major. Students who wanted to pursue the same major had a higher UK GPA (2.60 vs. 2.50).
- 60% of students indicated that they were satisfied or strongly satisfied with their time at UK.