



Revealing Institutional
Strengths and Challenges

Three vertical gray bars of varying heights are positioned in the background. The leftmost bar is medium height, the middle bar is the shortest, and the rightmost bar is the tallest.

INSTITUTIONAL REPORT
RISC STUDENT SURVEY SPRING 2020
**UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
ANCHORAGE**

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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; UAA chose the specific offices that appeared in the survey. The survey used office names specific to UAA, 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 graduate school.

Students are also given two open-response questions, where they could write out an answer: what is UAA's greatest strength, and if UAA could change one thing to increase student success, what should it change? See your college contact for the written responses to these 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/four-year-survey>

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

The survey was administered online in Spring 2020 to 791 UAA students. There were 397 responses used in this report, for a 50.2% response rate. Median time UAA students spent taking the survey was 8.5 minutes.

Because too few four-year institutions administered the survey, there are no benchmark data for your college. For future administrations we should have sufficient numbers for benchmark scores.

CHALLENGES TO STUDENT SUCCESS

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	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working with financial aid office	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Military and employer tuition benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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 UAA in Spring 2020 in the five main areas. *Campus environment* is the area where your students most frequently reported having challenges, with 61% reporting one or more challenges in this area.

Table 2.1 Major challenges to student success

	UAA % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	<i>n</i>
Campus environment	61			241
Success in courses	60			238
Work and personal issues	60			239
Finances and financial aid	51			202
Academic support services	48			190

Notes

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*=397.

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, 61% of your students chose one or more challenges in the major category of *Campus environment*. The most common subcategory was *Parking on campus*, with 52% choosing challenges in this subcategory. The most common specific challenge within the *Parking on campus* subcategory was *Difficulty finding parking on or near campus*, with 44% 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 the campus environment

	UAA %	Bench. %	Diff. %	<i>n</i>
Campus environment	61			241
Parking on campus	52			205
Difficulty finding parking on or near campus	44			173
Parking on or near campus is too expensive	39			154
Difficulty getting parking pass	8			33
None of the above	1			5
Activities outside of class	13			51
Difficulty finding activities that fit my schedule	9			36
Difficulty finding activities that interest me	7			29
Overcommitted to student groups (clubs, etc.)	2			8
Spent too much time socializing	1			4
None of the above	1			5
Interactions with other students	11			43
Did not know many other students	7			28
Did not feel welcome due to my race or ethnicity	1			5
Did not feel welcome due to my gender identity	1			4
Did not feel welcome due to my sexual orientation	1			2
None of the above	3			13
Safety and crime	7			29
Campus not safe	5			19
Parking lots not safe	3			13
Was a victim of a crime	1			2
None of the above	2			6
Housing	7			28
Roommate problems	3			10
Difficulty finding off-campus housing	2			6
Live too far from campus	1			5
Difficulty finding on-campus housing	1			3
None of the above	3			11

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

	UAA %	Bench. %	Diff. %	<i>n</i>
Work and personal issues	60			239
Work	42			167
Work hours do not leave me enough time to study	26			102
Pay is not enough to cover expenses while in school	22			88
Work schedule prevents campus resource use	21			82
Work schedule conflicts with classes	17			69
Work schedule is not flexible during the semester	11			43
None of the above	2			9
Family	34			136
Difficulty balancing demands of family and college	23			93
Difficulty dealing with health of family	13			51
Family does not support me going to college	4			16
Difficulty finding childcare	3			10
None of the above	5			18
Health and disability issues	21			85
Emotional/mental health issue	16			63
Physical health issue	11			45
Pregnancy and childbirth	1			3
Campus is difficult to navigate with my disability	1			3
Faculty did not provide necessary accommodations	1			3
Disability services did not provide necessary support	0			1
None of the above	2			8
Transportation to campus	13			52
Travel to campus takes a long time	6			23
Car or carpool not reliable	5			21
Public transportation system not reliable	4			17
Campus transportation system not reliable	1			5
None of the above	2			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 2.4 Challenges with success in courses

	UAA %	Bench. %	Diff. %	<i>n</i>
Success in courses	60			238
Online classes	29			115
Difficulty learning the material on my own	12			49
Lack of interaction with faculty	12			48
Difficulty keeping up because of no regular class times	12			46
Difficulty using course technology	10			38
Lack of interaction with other students	9			36
Difficulty taking exams at testing center	7			28
None of the above	4			15
Faculty	22			88
Did not teach well	16			62
Feedback on assignments not helpful	11			43
Took too long to grade assignments	10			40
Not concerned about my academic success	9			36
Not responsive to email	8			31
Not helpful outside of class	8			30
Not available to meet in person	2			9
None of the above	3			11
Doing college-level work	21			85
Poor planning and time management skills	14			55
Poor study skills	13			51
Not motivated to study	11			43
Required level of math was difficult	7			28
Took too many classes	5			21
Reading or writing assignments were difficult	4			17
Skipped too many classes	2			7
None of the above	2			7
Academic majors	21			82
Can't decide on a major	6			25
Graduation delayed due to changing major	5			19
Course load too heavy due to changing major	4			16
None of the above	10			38
Being a transfer student	10			38
Some courses did not transfer in	7			29
Courses outside major are difficult	2			7
Courses in major are difficult	2			6
None of the above	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 finances and financial aid

	UAA %	Bench. %	Diff. %	<i>n</i>
Finances and financial aid	51			202
Paying college and living expenses	44			176
Tuition and fees	39			153
Books, software, and other supplies	29			117
Living expenses (housing, food, healthcare)	28			112
Childcare	4			15
None of the above	0			1
Working with financial aid office	19			76
Process was unclear	10			40
Errors processing financial aid	9			35
Unable to answer questions	8			31
Delays in getting money	8			31
Difficult to meet with, speak to, or email staff	7			28
Gave me wrong information	5			19
None of the above	1			5
Military and employer tuition benefits	7			28
Experienced delays receiving benefits	3			13
Did not know process for obtaining benefits	3			11
Received wrong information about benefits	2			6
None of the above	2			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

	UAA %	Bench. %	Diff. %	<i>n</i>
Academic support services	48			190
Academic advising	29			116
Difficult to meet with, speak to, or email advisor	17			69
Told to take course not needed for major/to graduate	10			38
Not told about course needed for major/to graduate	9			34
Course/major materials were incorrect	5			19
None of the above	7			26
Registering for courses	25			100
Course not offered at times I needed	16			63
Course was offered but full	13			50
Course not offered this semester	12			48
Had a registration hold	8			33
None of the above	4			14
Tutoring	12			46
Tutors not available when I need assistance	7			29
Tutoring hours not convenient	4			16
Tutoring not available in the subject area I needed	4			16
Tutoring not helpful	4			15
None of the above	1			4
Computer and science labs	7			27
Lab hours not convenient	4			15
Lab busy when needed	2			8
Problems using computers and equipment	2			8
None of the above	1			4
Library	6			22
Staff not helpful	2			7
Hours not convenient	2			6
Resources I needed not available online	1			5
Study spaces not available when needed	1			5
None of the above	2			6

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

Table 3.1 shows the administrative support units your university chose for the RISC Survey. Unit names appeared on the survey exactly as they are listed in this report. UAA Library was the most commonly used office, with 54% reporting using the office during the Spring 2020 semester, followed by Academic Advising Office (50%) and Financial Aid Office (32%).

Table 3.1 Office usage

	UAA %	Bench. %	Diff.	<i>n</i>
UAA Library	54			
Academic Advising Office	50			
Financial Aid Office	32			
Student Account Payment Office	26			
Information Technology (IT) Services	16			

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*).

Table 3.2 Student-administration interactions

	UAA %	Bench. %	Diff.	n
Academic Advising Office				
Available	61			190
Concerned	53			190
Effective	57			189
Financial Aid Office				
Available	41			118
Concerned	35			118
Effective	43			118
Information Technology (IT) Services				
Available	71			59
Concerned	53			59
Effective	68			57
Student Account Payment Office				
Available	28			96
Concerned	25			93
Effective	39			93
UAA Library				
Available	78			201
Concerned	44			200
Effective	69			199

Notes

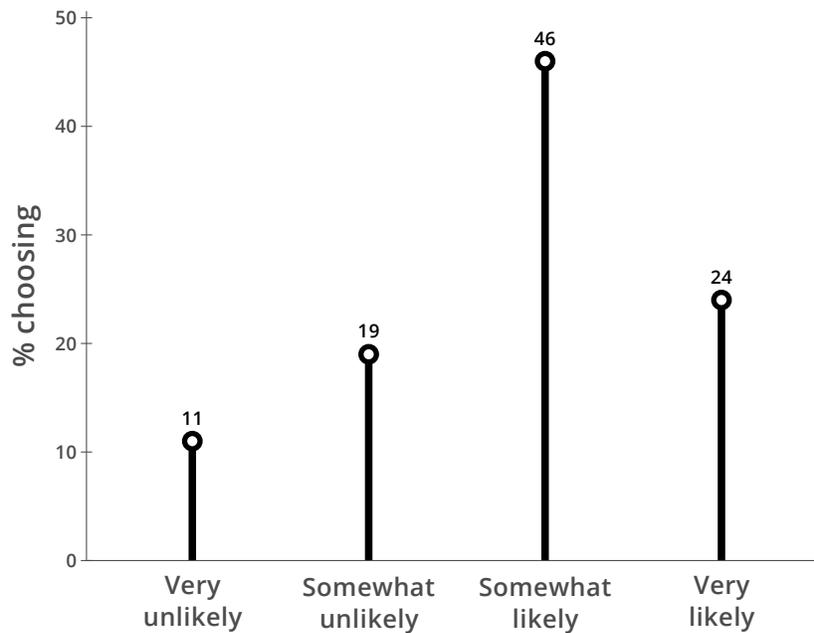
Percentage is the proportion of students rating an office in the top response category (*very available/concerned/effective*). *n* in table row is the total number of students at your college rating an office on that dimension; i.e., the denominator for the row percentage.

STUDENT VIEWS OF THE INSTITUTION

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

The first question, “Based on your experiences, how likely are you to recommend UAA to a friend?”, is a summative measure of how students view your institution. Results are presented in Figure 4.1; 70% of your students would be somewhat or very likely to recommend UAA.

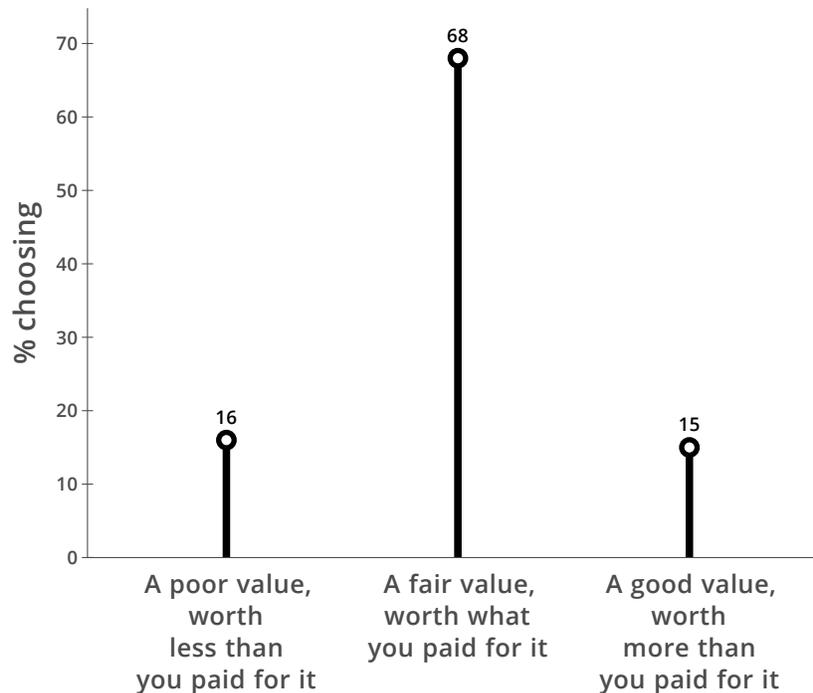
Figure 4.1 Would student recommend UAA to a friend?



Notes
n = 377.

Next, students were asked to rate the overall value of their education at UAA (see Figure 4.2). 83% of your students believe their education is worth what they paid (or even worth more).

Figure 4.2 Overall value of education?



Notes

n = 377.

The last set of questions asks students how well your university 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 UAA. 64% chose *Increase job and career opportunities* as their primary purpose for attending your institution.

Students were then asked how well UAA 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, 26% of the students who chose *Increase job and career opportunities* as their primary goal indicated that UAA is doing *very well* in terms of increasing their job and career opportunities.

Table 4.1 How well is education helping accomplish goals

	UAA % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	<i>n</i>	
Purpose of taking courses at UAA					0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70
Increase job and career opportunities	64			244	○
Prepare for graduate school	29			109	○
Self-improvement	7			26	○
How well is education at UAA ...					
Increase job and career opportunities	26			244	○
Prepare for graduate school	19			109	○
Self-improvement	15			26	○

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. *n* in table row is the total number of students responding to the question; i.e., the denominator for the row percentage.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Table 5.1 Gender identity

	%	<i>n</i>
Female/Woman	67	248
Male/Man	32	119
Transgender Female/Transgender Woman	0	0
Transgender Male/Transgender Man	0	0
Another gender identity	1	4

Table 5.2 Race/ethnicity

	%	<i>n</i>
African American or Black	6	21
Native American or Alaska Native	12	46
Hispanic or Latino	11	39
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	8
White	65	239
Other	5	20
Asian American or Asian	22	80

Notes

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

Table 5.3 Age

	%	<i>n</i>
18 or younger	16	59
19-24	55	206
25-34	20	76
35-44	5	19
45-54	3	11
55 or older	1	2

Table 5.4 Part-time/full-time status

	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>
Part-time (less than 12 credit hours)	30	111
Full-time (12 or more credit hours)	70	261

Table 5.5 Total credit hours earned at UAA

	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>
None	7	26
1-15 credits	31	116
16-29 credits	18	68
30-45 credits	13	47
46 or more credits	31	114