



DROPPED STUDENT SURVEY

Prepared for Highline College

February 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3** / Introduction
- 7** / Recommendations
- 9** / Key Findings
- 20** / Respondent Characteristics

INTRODUCTION

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OVERVIEW

KEY OBJECTIVES

- To understand why students choose to leave Highline College (Highline).
- To gauge how students who leave perceive Highline in terms of strengths and weaknesses.
- To identify ways to improve students' educational/engagement experience.
- To explore the likelihood that dropped students will return to Highline.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION & SURVEY SAMPLE

- The survey was administered online in Winter 2020/2021 using the Qualtrics platform.
- Respondents were recruited from a list provided by Highline.
- The analysis includes a total of 125 respondents following data cleaning.

RESPONDENT QUALIFICATIONS

- Respondents must have once been enrolled in a course at Highline.
- Respondents must have stopped or suspended study at Highline for one semester or more.

INTRODUCTION

METHODOLOGY

- Highline offers a \$10 gift card to the first 90 respondents as an incentive to complete the survey.
- Subsequently, Highline offers those who took the survey after the first 90 respondents a chance to win one of two \$50 gift cards.
- Sample sizes vary across questions as some questions only pertain to a subset of respondents.
- Conclusions drawn from a small sample size ($n < 20$) should be interpreted with caution.
- For full aggregate, segmented, and verbatim results, please consult the accompanying data supplement.
- Statistically significant difference (95% confidence level) between groups are noted with an asterisk (*).
- After data collection, Hanover identified and removed low-quality respondents.
- “Don’t Know or Not Applicable” responses, and equivalent, are often excluded from the figures and analysis in order to focus on respondents who did express an opinion.
- Percentages may sum up to exceed 100% for questions where respondents could select more than one answer option.
- Question text and answer options marked with † are truncated for clarity and brevity.

SEGMENTS

The data are segmented in five different ways in the data supplement: Enrollment Group, Unenrollment Reason, Enrollment Type, Instruction Type, and Degree Type. Analyses in this report include aggregate findings as well as results segmented by Enrollment Group and Unenrollment Reason. Other segmentations are detailed below.

Enrollment Type

60% (n=75) of respondents report that they were part-time students while enrolled, while the other 40% (n=50) indicate they were attending Highline full-time.

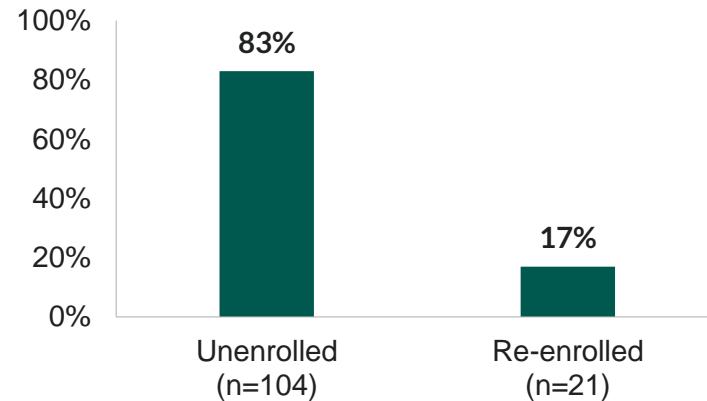
Instruction Type

About half of the respondents (46%, n=58) indicate they took classes in a mixed format (both online and in-person). 38% (n=47) report having taken online classes, while 16% (n=20) say they took classes in-person.

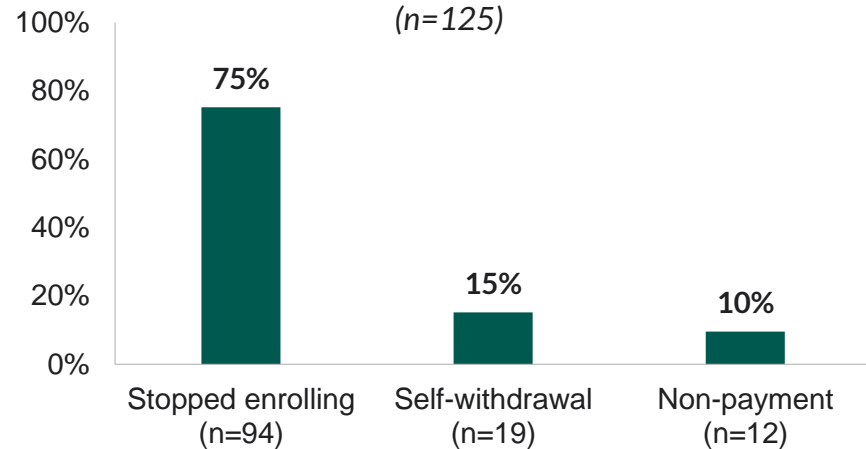
Degree Type

Most respondents (63%, n=79) indicate they were pursuing an associate's degree. Another 11% (n=14) indicate they intended to receive a certificate, while 8% (n=10) report they were pursuing a bachelor's degree.

Enrollment Group
(n=125)



Unenrollment Reason
(n=125)



RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS



Highline should seek ways to ease students' financial burdens. 35% of the respondents left Highline due to financial reasons. Among them, most dropped from Highline due to *a pay cut or job loss or unwillingness to take on more student loan debt*. Additional financial reasons include their *ineligibility for financial aid, loss of financial aid or scholarship, expensive tuition, and not having received enough financial aid*. Further, both *financial aid* and *financial aid services* are among the least satisfactory areas of Highline for dropped students. Half of the respondents indicate that *lower tuition rates* would have improved their experience at Highline. Highline should explore ways to lower tuition, optimize financial aid, and help students navigate and obtain external financial aid and secure better employment.



Highline should strive to improve the quality of online education, course availability, scheduling flexibility, and faculty interaction. *Online education due to COVID-19 and the impact on education* is a top academic reason for dropping. Other influential academic reasons for dropping include the *inability of enrolling in a class needed, courses offered during inconvenient times, and faculty's lack of interest/engagement*. All of them are also cited as top ways that Highline would have improved dropped students' experience. Additionally, *particular faculty members* played a key role in helping some students feel connected to Highline; *working more closely with faculty members* is also a primary way for disconnected students to feel more connected to Highline.



Highline should improve career services and support. *Career responsibilities interfering with studies* is among the top personal reasons for dropping. In addition, both *career coaching* and *career services/student employment* are among the least satisfactory aspects of Highline for dropped students. Furthermore, the key financial reason for dropping – *pay cut* and *job loss* – is intertwined with employment. On the other hand, among those who resumed studies at Highline after leaving, *degree required for the career field* is a top reason for re-enrollment. These trends indicate that Highline will likely increase student retention by providing better career services and support, which focus on helping students balance their work and study and finding employment that matches with their level and field of education.



Highline should engage with dropped student immediately after they leave. Dropped students' likelihood to re-enroll declines over time regardless of their primary reasons for dropping. However, the non-payment respondents are most likely to re-enroll during the time of leaving compared to the self-withdrawal and stopped-enrolling groups. As re-enrolled respondents resumed primarily due to *degree required for their career field* and *encouragement from colleagues/family/friends*, Highline should leverage relevant messaging and sources when persuading dropped students to continue their studies at Highline. Highline should also seek to develop and communicate specific policies and practical solutions that match with students' primary reasons for dropping.

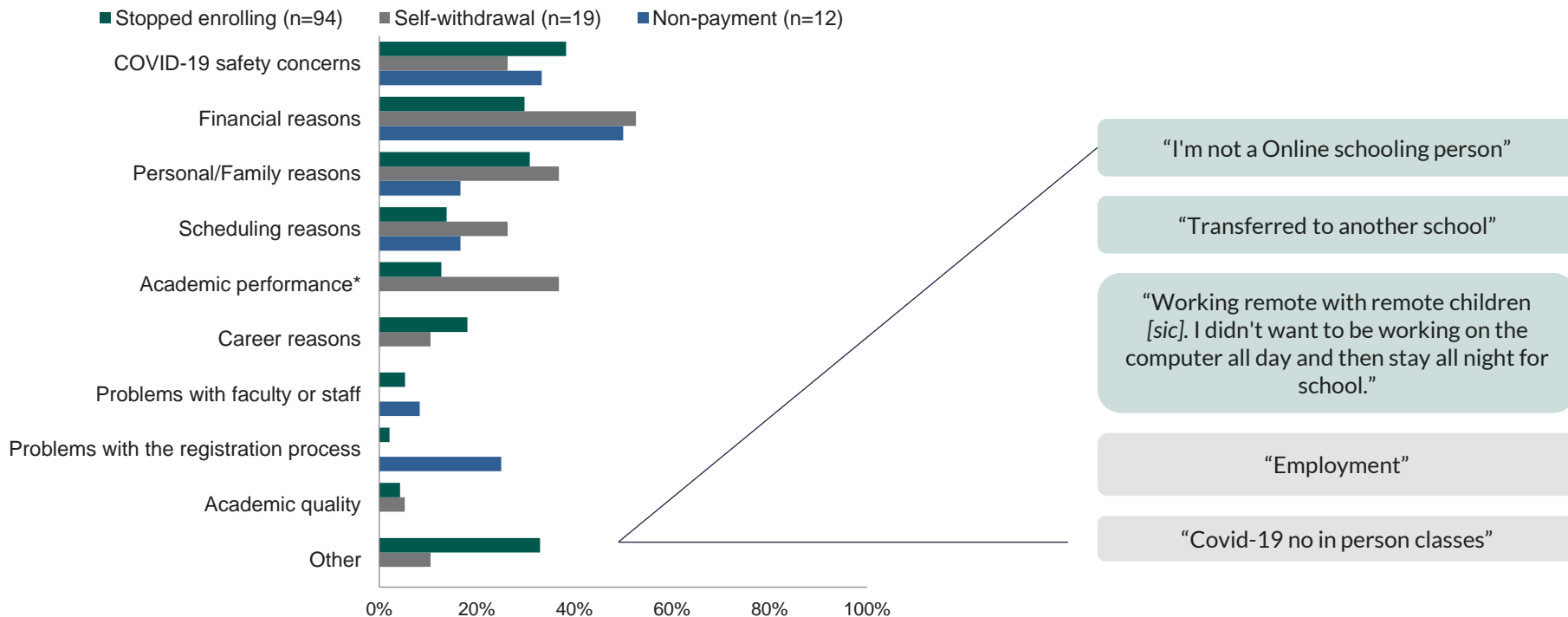
KEY FINDINGS

OVERARCHING REASONS FOR DROPPING

COVID-19 safety concerns, financial reasons, and personal/family reasons are the most cited reasons for students to leave Highline, with more than a third of respondents choosing each reason (36%, 35%, 30%, respectively).

- COVID-19 safety concerns is a top reason for those who stopped enrolling (38%, n=36), while half of the self-withdrawal and non-payment groups dropped from Highline for financial reasons (n=10 and n=6, respectively).
- Additionally, more than a third of the self-withdrawal group left Highline due to academic performance and personal/family reasons (37%, n=7 for both reasons).

What were your reasons for leaving Highline? Please select your top three reasons



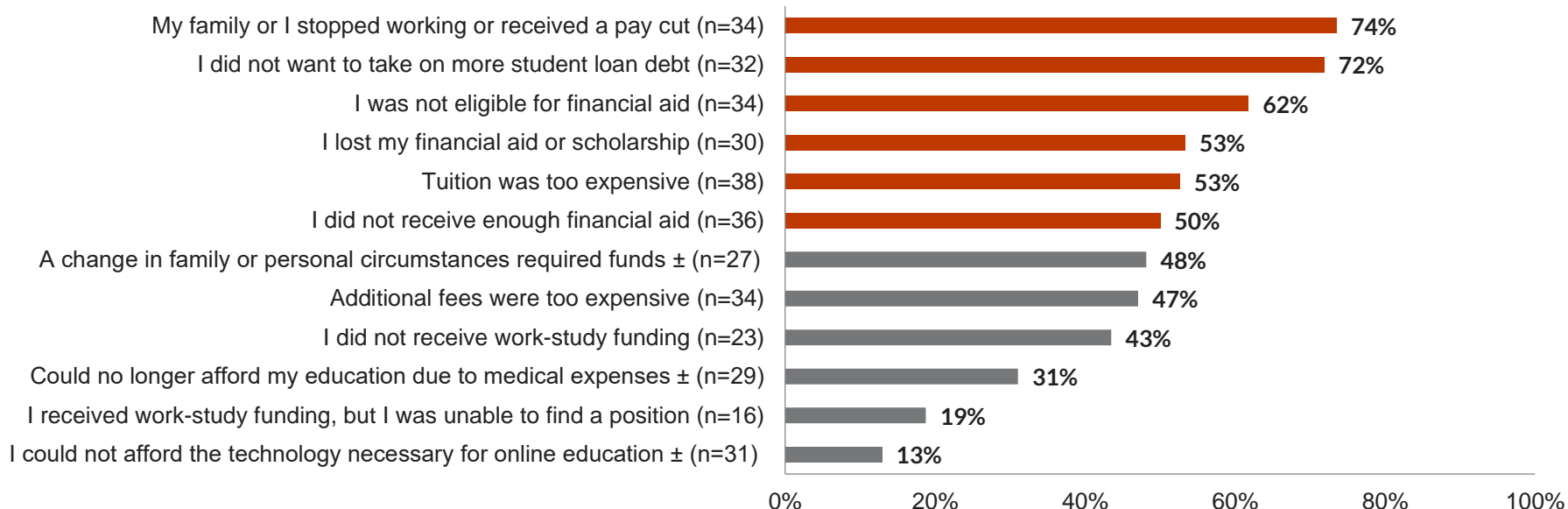
Note: green boxes correspond with "other" responses from respondents who stopped enrolling, while grey boxes are for respondents who self-withdrew.

FINANCIAL REASONS FOR DROPPING

Nearly three-quarters of the 44 respondents who left for financial reasons identify *pay cuts or job loss* and *reluctance to accumulate student loan debt* as very or extremely influential in their decision to leave Highline (74%, n=25 and 72%, n=23).

- Additional influential financial reasons include *not eligible for financial aid* (62%, n=21), *having lost financial aid or scholarship* (53%, n=16), *tuition was too expensive* (53%, n=20), and *having not received enough financial aid* (50%, n=18) – these are cited by more than half of the dropped students who left for financial reasons.

Please rate how influential each of the following financial factors was on your decision to leave Highline. % Very influential + Extremely influential



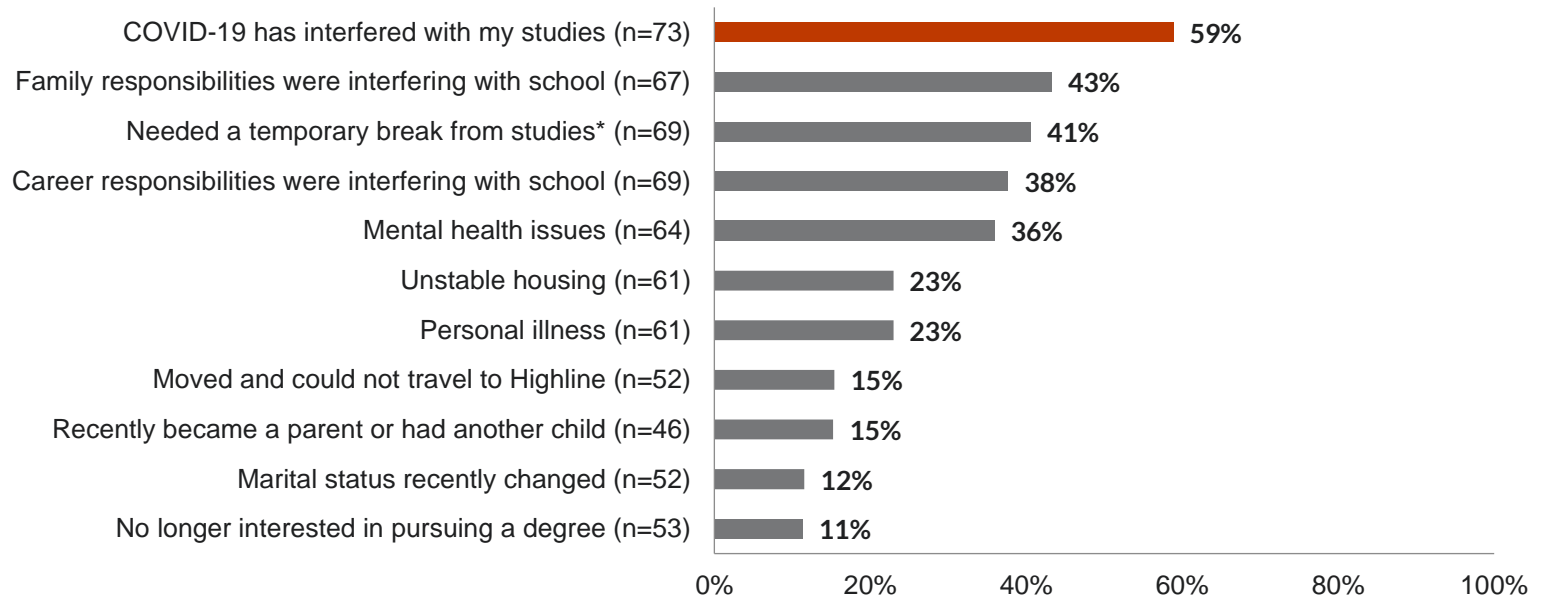
Note: only respondents who cite financial factors (“Financial reasons”) among their top three reasons for leaving receive this question (n=44). Sample sizes differ because “Not Applicable” responses are excluded. ± Response item text is abbreviated. See the accompanying data supplement for unabridged item text.

PERSONAL REASONS FOR DROPPING

Over half (59%, n=43) of dropped students who left for personal reasons cite *COVID-19's interference with their studies* as very or extremely influential on their decision to leave Highline.

- Additional influential personal reasons include *family responsibilities that interfered with school* (43%, n=29), *a need for a temporary break from studies* (41%, n=28), *career responsibilities that interfered with school* (38%, n=26), and *mental health issues* (36%, n=23).
- Significantly more re-enrolled students indicate that they left due to *a need for a temporary break from studies* (69%, n=9 of 13) compared with only 34% (n=19 of 56) of unenrolled respondents.

Please rate how influential each of the following personal factors was on your decision to leave Highline. % Very influential + Extremely influential



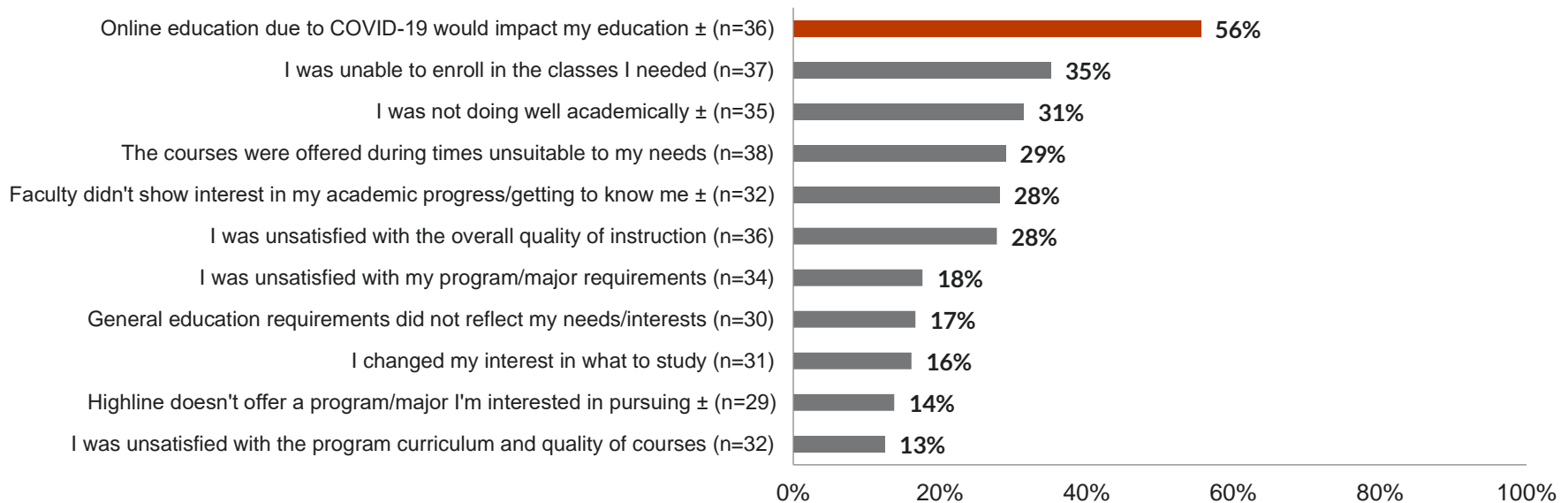
Note: only respondents who cite personal factors ("Personal/Family reasons," "Career reasons," or "COVID-19 safety concerns") among their top three reasons for leaving receive this question (n=102). Sample sizes differ because "Not Applicable" responses are excluded.

ACADEMIC REASONS FOR DROPPING

More than half of (56%, n=20) dropped students who left for academic reasons indicate *online education due to COVID-19 and the associated impact on their education* was very or extremely influential on their decision to leave Highline.

- Other influential academic reasons include *the inability to enroll in the classes that respondents needed* (35%, n=13), *not doing well academically* (31%, n=11), *courses offered during times unsuitable to respondents' needs* (29%, n=11), *lack of faculty interest or engagement* (28%, n=9), and *dissatisfaction with the overall quality of instruction* (28%, n=10). In contrast, educational requirements, Highline's academic portfolio, and program curriculum and quality are least cited academic-related reasons for dropping.

Please rate how influential each of the following academic factors was on your decision to leave Highline. % Very influential + Extremely influential

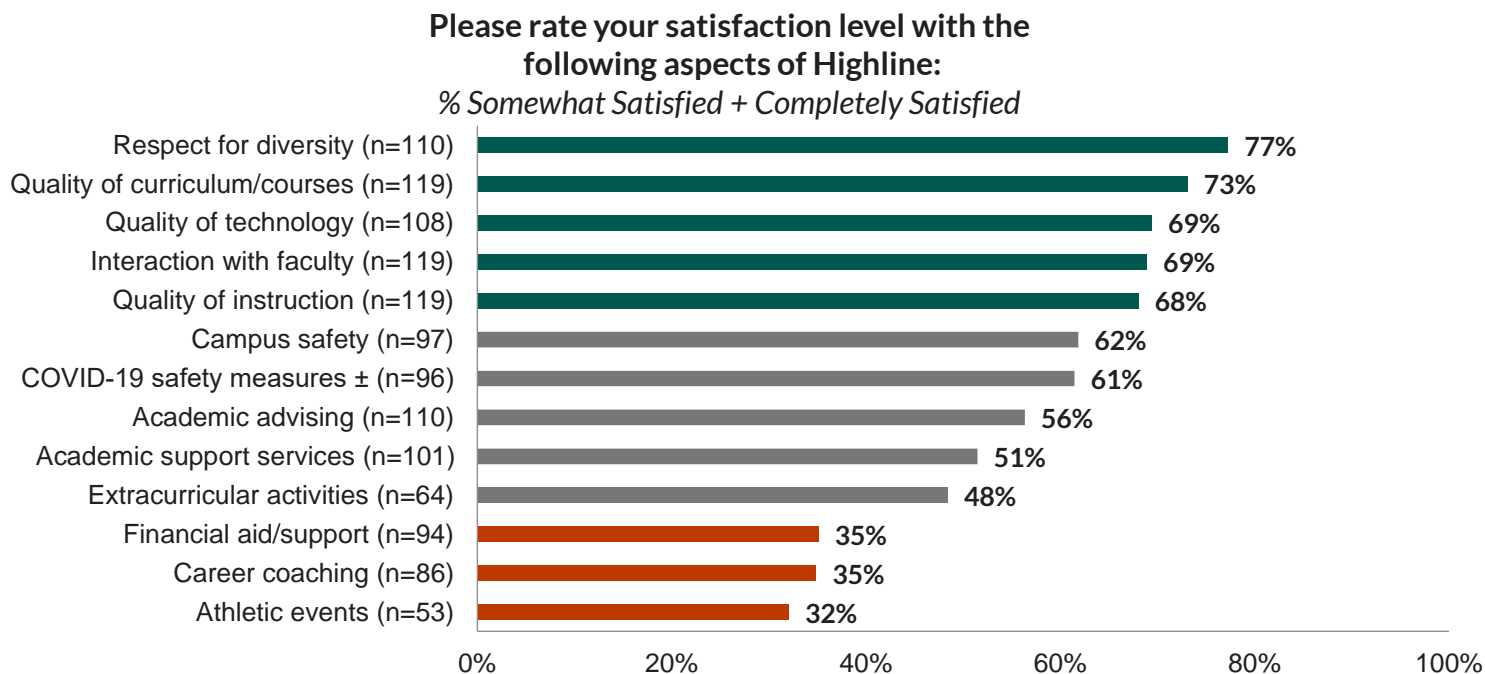


Note: only respondents who cite academic factors ("Scheduling reasons," "Academic performance," "Problems with faculty or staff," or "Academic quality") among their top three reasons for leaving receive this question (n=50). Sample sizes differ because "Not Applicable" responses are excluded. ± Response item text is abbreviated. See the accompanying data supplement for unabridged item text.

SATISFACTION: ASPECTS OF HIGHLINE

About three-quarters of dropped students are somewhat or completely satisfied with Highline's *respect for diversity* and *quality of curriculum/courses* (77% and 73%, respectively).

- Nearly 70% of respondents are also somewhat or completely satisfied with Highline's *quality of technology* (69%), *interaction with faculty* (69%), and *quality of instruction* (68%), indicating that Highline is generally performing well on these aspects but there is room for further improvement.
- In contrast, respondents are least satisfied with Highline's *financial aid/support* (35% somewhat + completely satisfied), *career coaching* (35%), and *athletic events* (32%).
- Additionally, a scan of ratings provided by different groups indicate that the self-withdrawal group tends to rate Highline less positively on most aspects, except for *academic support services*, *respect for diversity*, *financial aid*, and *campus safety*.



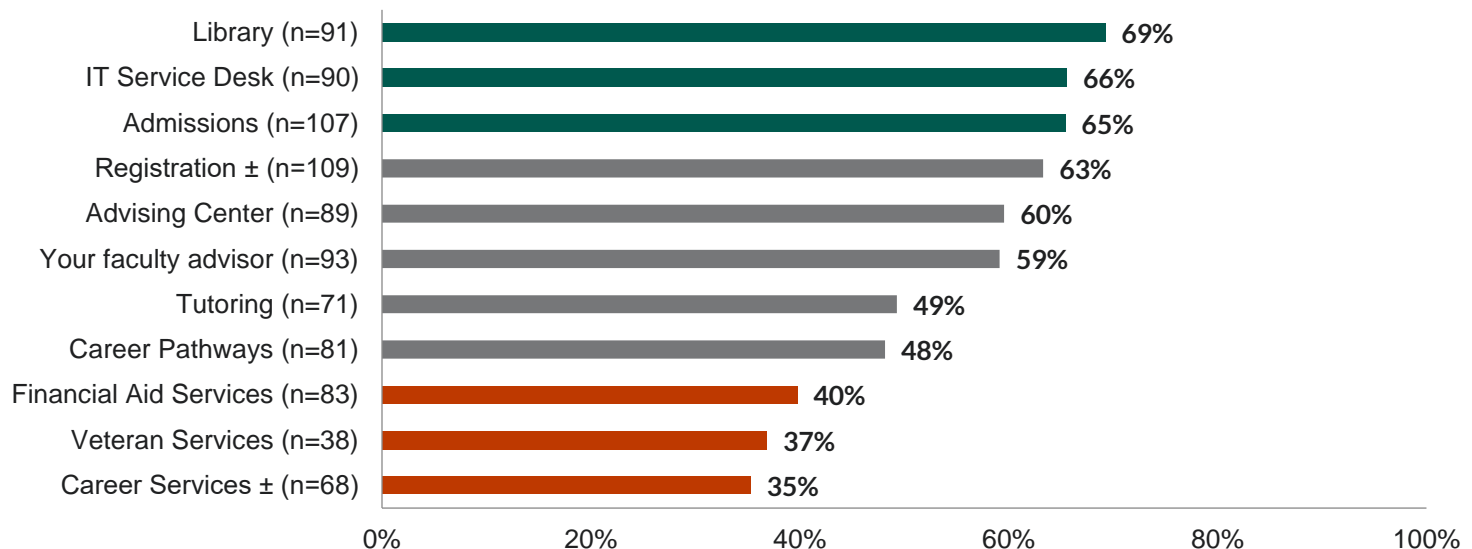
Note: ± Response item text is abbreviated. See the accompanying data supplement for unabridged item text.

SATISFACTION: DEPARTMENTS OF HIGHLINE

About two-thirds of dropped students are somewhat or completely satisfied with Highline's *library* (69%), *IT service desk* (66%), and *admissions department* (65%).

- In addition, over half of the respondents are relatively satisfied with Highline's *registration* (63% somewhat + completely satisfied), *advising center* (60%), and their *faculty advisor* (59%).
- Mirroring [findings](#) on the previous page, dropped students are least likely satisfied with Highline's *financial aid services* (40% somewhat + completely satisfied), *veteran services* (37%), and *career services* (35%).

Please rate your satisfaction level with the following departments/offices at Highline:
% Somewhat Satisfied + Completely Satisfied



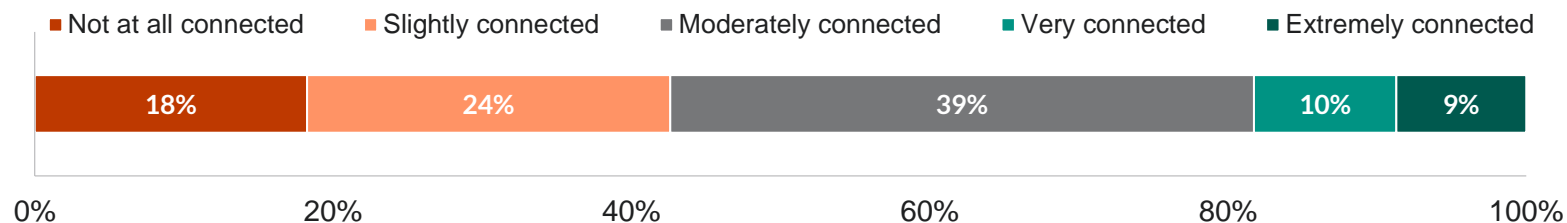
Note: ± Response item text is abbreviated. See the accompanying data supplement for unabridged item text.

FEELINGS OF CONNECTEDNESS

More than half (58%) of the respondents felt at least moderately connected to Highline while they were enrolled. 18% (n=21) felt very or extremely connected.

- *Having friends who also enroll at Highline and working closely with faculty members are key drivers for the feelings of connectedness. Having family members who previously attended Highline and participation in extracurricular activities can likely contribute to feelings of connectedness as well.*

How connected did you feel to Highline while enrolled (due to a connection with friends, a faculty member, an extracurricular club, etc.)? (n=115)



For those who did not feel connected † (42%, n=49), having more friends who were also enrolled at Highline (55%, n=27) and working more closely with faculty members (43%, n=21) would have helped them feel more connected.

22% of these respondents also indicate that *participating in more extracurricular activities/clubs* would have helped them feel more connected.

For those who felt connected † (58%, n=66), friends who also enrolled at Highline and particular faculty members played a key role in their feelings of connectedness.

57% (n=37) attribute their connectedness to friends, while 45% (n=29) felt connected due to particular faculty members. Another 28% (n=18) felt more connected due to family members who previously attended Highline.

† Only respondents who indicate that they felt not at all or only slightly connected are asked what would have made them feel more connected. Only respondents who indicate that they felt at least moderately connected asked what made them feel connected.

IMPROVING STUDENT EXPERIENCES

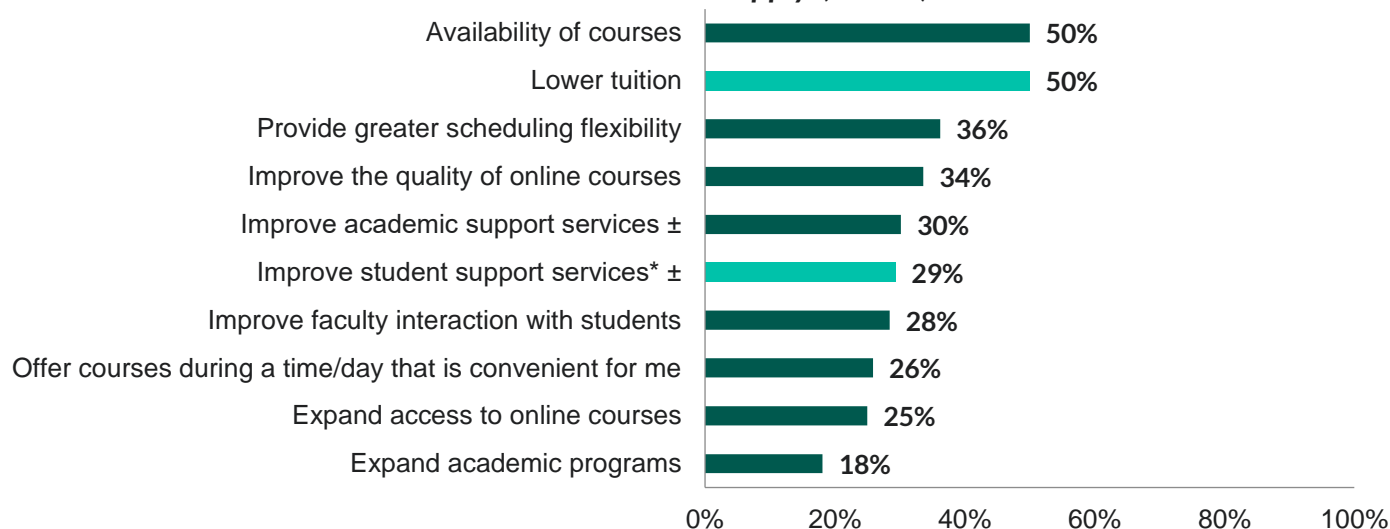
Highline can improve student experiences primarily through increasing the *availability of courses* (e.g., *offering them every quarter instead of once a year*) and *lowering tuition*.

- About half of the respondents (n=58) cite both methods. More than a third of dropped students also would like Highline to *provide greater scheduling flexibility* (36%), *improve the quality of online courses* (34%), and *improve academic support services* (30%), in order to enhance student experiences.

Eight of the top 10 areas of improvement are related to academics.

- These range from course/program availability, scheduling flexibility, quality and access to online courses, academic support, and faculty interactions.
- Significantly more re-enrolled students (48%, or n=10 of 21) than unenrolled respondents (25%, or n=24 of 95) indicate that *improved academic support services* would have improved their experience at Highline.

How could Highline have improved your student experience? Please select all that apply. (n=116)



Note: Percentages may sum to more than 100%. This chart presents only the top ten responses.

± Response item text is abbreviated. See the accompanying data supplement for unabridged item text.

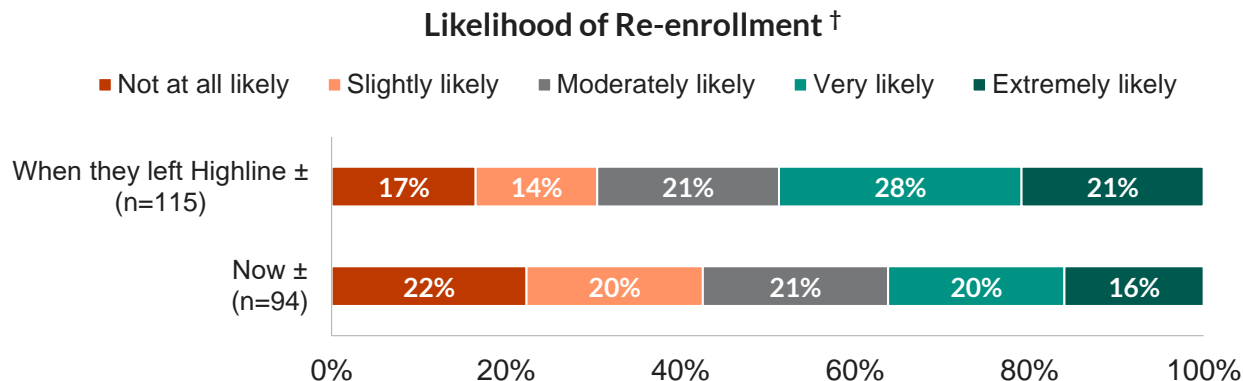
LIKELIHOOD OF RE-ENROLLMENT

Dropped students' likelihood of re-enrolling in Highline declines over time.

- The proportions of respondents who are *not at all likely* to re-enroll in Highline grow from 17% (n=19 of 115) to 22% (n=21 of 94) from the time they first left to now. Related, the proportions of respondents who are *very or extremely likely* to re-enroll in Highline drop from 49% (n=56 of 115) to 36% (n = 34 of 94) during the same timeframe. These trends indicate that Highline should engage with dropped students soon after they left Highline.

Financial is the top factor that will likely influence unenrolled students' re-enrollment decisions; re-enrolled students resumed primarily due to degree required for their career field.

- Among unenrolled respondents who are *at least slightly likely* to re-enroll in Highline now, 32% (n=23 of 73) cite *financial factor* as a primary driver for their re-enrollment decision, followed by *personal* and *academic factors*.
- Among the 21 respondents who re-enrolled at Highline, 52% (n=11) resumed due to *degree required for their career field*. About a third made the decision because *personal factors were no longer interfering with enrollment* (33%, n=7) and *encouragement from friends/family/colleagues* (29%, n=6). Only three cite *financial factors were no longer interfering with enrollment* as a reason for re-enrollment, even though 48% of re-enrolled students left Highline due to financial reasons (n=10 of 21).



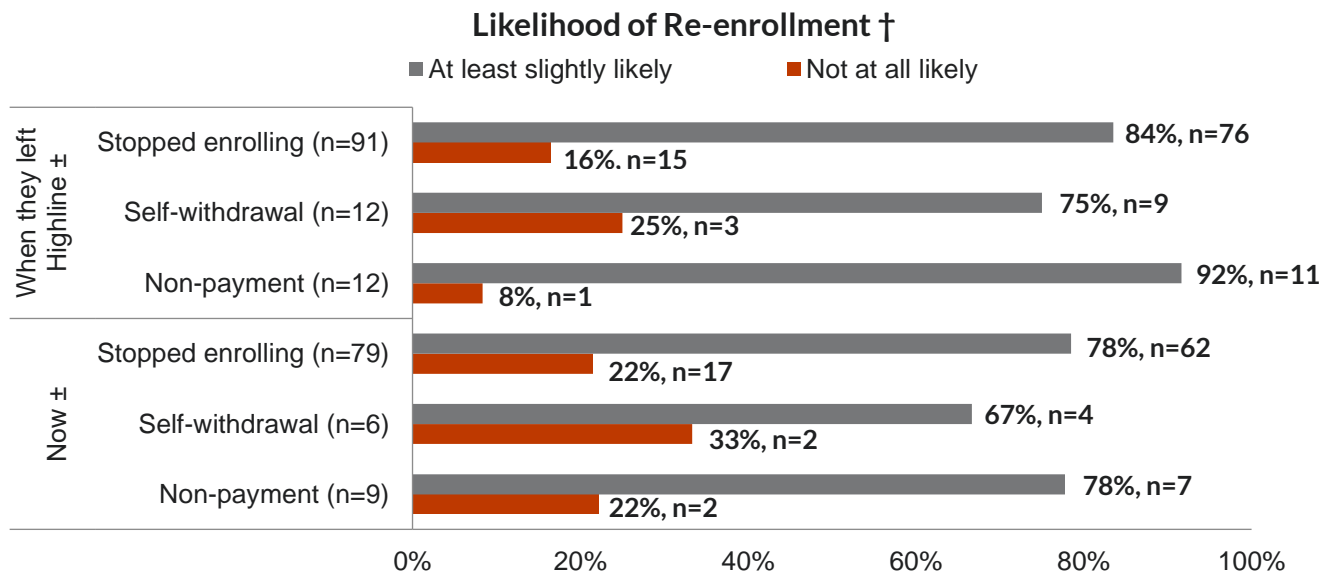
Note: respondents are asked, “when you left highline, how likely did you think it would be that you would resume enrollment at Highlight in the future?” Subsequently, only participants in the “unenrolled” group are asked, “How likely is it now that you will return to Highline to continue your studies?”

± Response item text is abbreviated. See the accompanying data supplement for unabridged item text.

LIKELIHOOD OF RE-ENROLLMENT

Likelihood of enrollment decreases for all Unenrollment Reason groups with time, but the self-withdrawal group is least likely to re-enroll in Highline among all three groups, both during the time they first left Highline and now.

- Three quarters (75%, n=9 of 12) of self-withdrawal respondents were *at least slightly likely* to resume their studies at Highline when they left, compared to 84% of stopped-enrolling respondents (n=76 of 91) and 92% of non-payment students (n=11 of 12). Likelihood drops to 67% for self-withdrawal respondents now (n=4), compared to 78% for the other two groups (n=62 and 7 for stopped enrolling and non-payment groups, respectively).
- The non-payment respondents are most likely to resume during the time of leaving (92%, n=11 *at least slightly likely* to re-enroll), among all three groups.



Note: respondents are asked, “when you left highline, how likely did you think it would be that you would resume enrollment at Highline in the future?” Subsequently, only participants in the “unenrolled” group are asked, “How likely is it now that you will return to Highline to continue your studies?” † Response item text is abbreviated. See the accompanying data supplement for unabridged item text. Sample sizes are very low for relevant questions and segments, and results should be interpreted with caution.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

First Generation (n=113)

Yes	51%
No	42%
Prefer not to respond	7%

Parents' Education Level (n=113)

Some high school	12%
High school diploma	24%
Some college	21%
2-year degree	9%
4-year degree	18%
Master's degree	2%
Doctorate	2%
Prefer not to respond	12%

Probation/Suspension (n=113)

No	72%
Yes	24%
Prefer not to respond	4%

Employment While Enrolled (n=112)

Employed full-time	42%
Employed part-time	32%
Not employed	20%
Other	3%
Prefer not to respond	4%

Annual Household Income (n=112)

\$0 to \$24,999	19%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	28%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	15%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	5%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	2%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	0%
\$150,000 or above	4%
Prefer not to respond	28%

Race (n=112)

White	46%
Asian	22%
Black/African American	20%
American Indian/Alaska Native	7%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	3%
Prefer not to say	15%

GPA while enrolled (n=113)

4.0 or above	6%
3.5 to 3.99	31%
3.0 to 3.49	28%
2.5 to 2.99	18%
Below 2.5	6%
Prefer not to respond	12%

Gender (n=112)

Female	68%
Male	28%
Other/Non-binary	2%
Prefer not to respond	3%

Age (n=112)

Under 18	3%
18 to 24	46%
25 to 34	26%
35 to 44	12%
45 to 54	8%
55 or above	4%
Prefer not to respond	2%

Ethnicity (n=112)

Not Hispanic or Latino/a	78%
Hispanic or Latino/a	16%
Prefer not to respond	6%

State of Residence (n=112)

Washington	95%
Ohio	1%
Texas	1%
I do not reside in the U.S.	4%



Thank you.

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