RISC

**Revealing Institutional
Strengths and Challenges**

INSTITUTIONAL REPORT
RISC STUDENT SURVEY SPRING 2021
FOOTHILL COLLEGE

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RISC SURVEY OVERVIEW 01

SURVEY DESCRIPTION

The Revealing Institutional Strengths and Challenges (RISC) Survey provides detailed, action-able 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, suc-ceeding 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; Foothill chose the specific offices that appeared in the survey. The survey used office names specific to Foothill, 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 Foothill's greatest strength, and if Foothill 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 Spring 2021 to 10,514 Foothill students. There were 1,606 responses used in this report, for a 15.3% response rate. Median time Foothill students spent taking the survey was 7.8 minutes.

The table below provides some background information about your college's benchmark sample. Forty-two 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 35,283 respondents.

Table 1.1   Community colleges in the benchmark sample

Carnegie classification		Urbanicity		Student enrollment	
High Career & Technical	22%	City	30%	Under 1,000	8%
Mixed	35%	Suburb	22%	1,000-4,999	41%
High Transfer	30%	Town	22%	5,000-9,999	24%
Other	14%	Rural	27%	10,000-19,999	22%
				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 Foothill in Spring 2021 in the five main areas. *Work and personal issues* is the area where your students most frequently reported having challenges, with 58% 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

	FC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	*n*	20	30	40	50	60
Work and personal issues	58	60	−2	938					○━■
Success in courses	54	60	**−6**	861				○━━━■	
Finances and financial aid	36	40	**−4**	581			○━■		
Academic support services	35	34	+1	555		■○			
Campus environment	22	21	+1	358	■○				

Notes

Green indicates that Foothill has a lower proportion of students reporting a challenge compared to the benchmark sample proportion; red indicates Foothill 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*=1,606.

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, 58% of your students chose one or more challenges in the major category of *Work and personal issues*. The most common subcategory was *Family*, with 39% choosing challenges in this subcategory. The most common specific challenge within the *Family* sub-category was *Difficulty balancing demands of family and college*, with 28% 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 work and personal life

	FC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Work and personal issues	58	60	−2	938
Family	39	37	+2	623
Difficulty balancing demands of family and college	28	26	+2	449
Difficulty dealing with health of family	16	15	+1	263
Family does not support me going to college	4	3	+1	71
Difficulty finding childcare	4	5	−1	57
None of the above	6	6	+0	89
Work	38	38	+0	614
Work hours do not leave me enough time to study	22	22	+0	361
Pay is not enough to cover expenses while in school	16	15	+1	263
Work schedule conflicts with classes	16	13	+3	256
Work schedule is not flexible during the semester	12	10	+2	196
Work schedule prevents campus resource use	12	11	+1	195
None of the above	6	6	+0	101
Health and disability issues	25	21	+4	400
Emotional/mental health issue	19	14	+5	308
Physical health issue	11	11	+0	183
Disability services did not provide necessary support	1	1	+0	18
Faculty did not provide necessary accomodations	1	1	+0	18
Campus is difficult to navigate with my disability	0	0	+0	7
Pregnancy and childbirth	0	1	−1	7
None of the above	2	3	−1	39
Transportation to campus	10	10	+0	163
Travel to campus takes a long time	7	4	+3	106
Public transportation system not reliable	4	2	+2	72
Car or carpool not reliable	4	5	−1	58
Campus transportation system not reliable	1	1	+0	21
None of the above	1	2	−1	19

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 success in courses

	FC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Success in courses	54	60	−6	861
Online classes	39	43	−4	634
Difficulty learning the material on my own	26	29	−3	421
Lack of interaction with other students	24	19	+5	387
Lack of interaction with faculty	22	22	+0	349
Difficulty keeping up because of no regular class times	19	20	−1	301
Difficulty using course technology	9	13	−4	149
Difficulty taking exams at testing center	5	4	+1	73
None of the above	3	4	−1	47
Doing college-level work	24	19	+5	380
Not motivated to study	14	9	+5	232
Poor planning and time management skills	14	10	+4	232
Poor study skills	11	8	+3	173
Reading or writing assignments were difficult	9	6	+3	142
Took too many classes	6	3	+3	97
Required level of math was difficult	5	5	+0	77
Skipped too many classes	2	1	+1	27
None of the above	2	3	−1	34
Developmental courses (math, reading, or writing)	21	22	−1	340
Courses were too hard	8	7	+1	128
Required to take too many	5	4	+1	74
Did not prepare me for college-level courses	4	4	+0	62
Courses were too easy	0	1	−1	4
None of the above	8	10	−2	136
Faculty	16	17	−1	249
Did not teach well	10	10	+0	157
Feedback on assignments not helpful	7	7	+0	115
Not responsive to email	6	7	−1	98
Took too long to grade assignments	6	6	+0	98
Not helpful outside of class	6	6	+0	92
Not concerned about my academic success	6	7	−1	91
Not available to meet in person	2	2	+0	37
None of the above	2	2	+0	34

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

	FC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Finances and financial aid	36	40	−4	581
Paying college and living expenses	32	32	+0	519
Living expenses (housing, food, healthcare)	24	21	+3	389
Books, software, and other supplies	21	20	+1	335
Tuition and fees	20	18	+2	320
Childcare	3	4	−1	49
None of the above	1	1	+0	13
Working with financial aid office	12	14	−2	189
Difficult to meet with, speak to, or email staff	6	7	−1	103
Process was unclear	6	7	−1	98
Errors processing financial aid	4	5	−1	66
Unable to answer questions	4	5	−1	62
Delays in getting money	3	5	−2	54
Gave me wrong information	2	3	−1	27
None of the above	2	2	+0	26
Military and employer tuition benefits	1	2	−1	20
Did not know process for obtaining benefits	0	1	−1	7
Experienced delays receiving benefits	0	1	−1	6
Received wrong information about benefits	0	0	+0	1
None of the above	1	1	+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.

Table 2.5   Challenges with academic support services

	FC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Academic support services	35	34	+1	555
Registering for courses	21	16	+5	340
Course was offered but full	12	6	+6	197
Course not offered at times I needed	10	6	+4	159
Course not offered this semester	7	4	+3	112
Had a registration hold	5	4	+1	80
None of the above	4	6	−2	70
Academic advising	15	14	+1	233
Difficult to meet with, speak to, or email advisor	9	9	+0	138
Not told to take necessary course	4	5	−1	71
Told to take unnecessary course	3	3	+0	42
Course/program materials were incorrect	2	2	+0	38
None of the above	3	3	+0	56
Tutoring	9	8	+1	148
Tutoring hours not convenient	3	3	+0	54
Tutors not available when I need assistance	3	3	+0	52
Tutoring not available in the subject area I needed	2	3	−1	37
Tutoring not helpful	2	2	+0	36
None of the above	2	2	+0	39
Library	8	6	+2	125
Resources I needed not available online	4	2	+2	58
Study spaces not available when needed	3	1	+2	41
Hours not convenient	2	2	+0	27
Staff not helpful	1	1	+0	10
None of the above	2	2	+0	29
Computer and science labs	7	7	+0	115
Lab hours not convenient	2	2	+0	37
Problems using computers and equipment	2	3	−1	34
Lab busy when needed	1	1	+0	22
None of the above	3	3	+0	44

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 the campus environment

	FC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	*n*
Campus environment	22	21	+1	358
Interactions with other students	15	10	+5	233
Did not know many other students	12	7	+5	190
Did not feel welcome due to my race or ethnicity	1	1	+0	17
Did not feel welcome due to my gender identity	0	0	+0	5
Did not feel welcome due to my sexual orientation	0	0	+0	3
None of the above	2	3	−1	40
Parking	11	11	+0	175
Difficulty finding parking on or near campus	9	9	+0	145
Parking on or near campus is too expensive	4	2	+2	67
Difficulty getting parking pass	2	1	+1	27
None of the above	1	1	+0	17
Safety and crime	2	3	−1	40
Parking lots not safe	1	1	+0	9
Campus not safe	0	1	−1	8
Was a victim of a crime	0	0	+0	2
None of the above	1	1	+0	24

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. Counseling was the most commonly used office, with 42% reporting using the office during the Spring 2021 semester, followed by Admissions & Records (32%) and Financial Aid (22%).

Table 3.1   Office usage

	FC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	*n*					
				10	20	30	40	50	
Counseling	42	46	−4					○——■	
Admissions & Records	32	31	+1			■○			
Financial Aid	22	42	**−20**		○————————■				
Tutoring	18	17	+1	■○					
Library	13	20	**−7**	○——■					

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 five other colleges surveyed students about the same type of office.

Table 3.2   Student-administration interactions

|	FC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	*n*
Admissions & Records				
Available	45	63	**−18**	511
Concerned	36	55	**−19**	505
Effective	53	67	**−14**	502
Counseling				
Available	61	64	−3	677
Concerned	58	60	−2	672
Effective	64	68	**−4**	669
Financial Aid				
Available	45	55	**−10**	344
Concerned	35	48	**−13**	339
Effective	48	58	**−10**	335
Library				
Available	61	73	**−12**	210
Concerned	47	60	**−13**	206
Effective	64	74	**−10**	205
Tutoring				
Available	66	70	−4	291
Concerned	54	62	**−8**	288
Effective	61	67	**−6**	287

Notes

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

The first question, "Based on your experiences, how likely are you to recommend Foothill to a friend?", is a summative measure of how students view your institution. Results are presented in Figure 4.1, with Foothill represented by the black line and the benchmark sample by the gray line. 97% of your students would be somewhat or very likely to recommend Foothill. The Foothill distribution of responses is statistically significantly different from the benchmark sample.

**Figure 4.1   Would student recommend Foothill to a friend?**
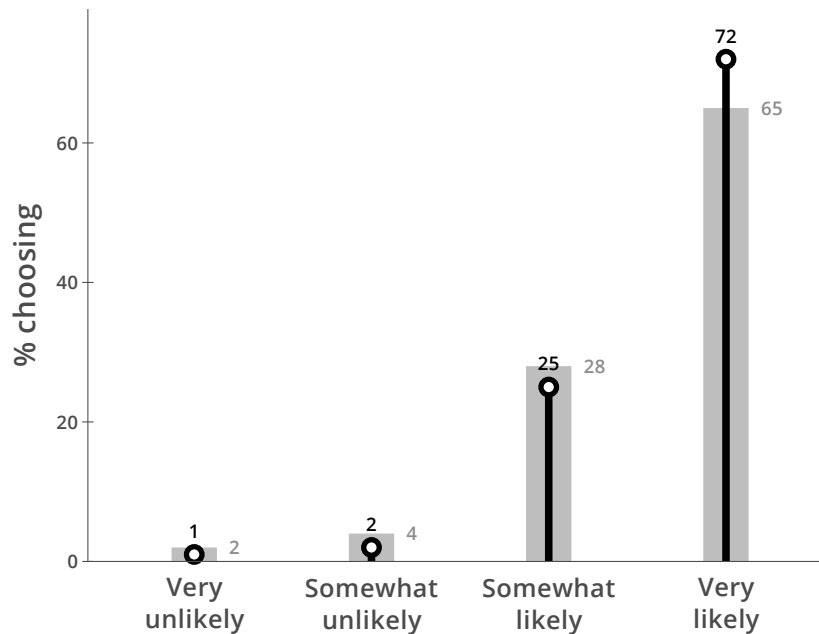
Notes
Foothill is the black bar; benchmark sample is gray. $\chi^2 = 61.2, p < .01; n = 1585$.

Next, students were asked to rate the overall value of their education at Foothill (see Figure 4.2). 98% of your students believe their education is worth what they paid (or even worth more). The Foothill distribution of responses is statistically significantly different from the benchmark sample.

Figure 4.2   Overall value of education?
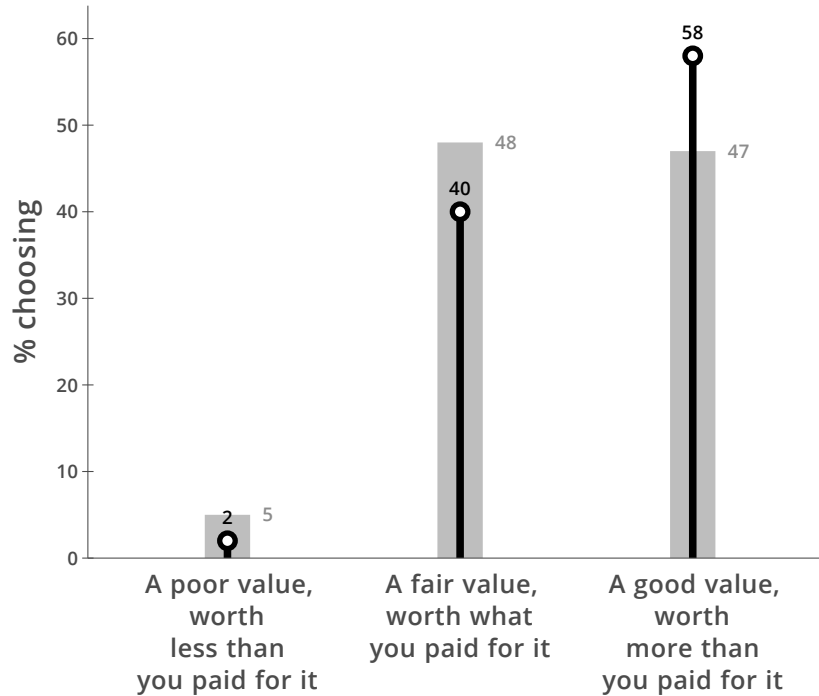
Notes
Foothill is the black bar; benchmark sample is gray. $\chi^2 = 91.8, p < .01; n = 1580$.

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 Foothill. 57% chose *Prepare for a four-year degree* as their primary purpose for attending your institution.

Students were then asked how well Foothill 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, 47% of the students who chose *Prepare for a four-year degree* as their primary goal indicated that Foothill is doing *very well* in terms of preparing them for a four-year degree.

Table 4.1   How well is education helping accomplish goals

	FC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	n	0 10 20 30 40 50 60
Purpose of taking courses at FC					
Prepare for a four-year degree	57	50	**+7**	900	
Increase job and career opportunities	33	42	**−9**	521	
Self-improvement	10	8	**+2**	164	
How well is education at FC …					
Prepare for a four-year degree	47	46	+1	897	
Increase job and career opportunities	41	45	−4	520	
Self-improvement	55	46	**+9**	165	

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 Foothill has a higher proportion of students reporting that Foothill 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	67	996
Male/Man	31	466
Transgender Female/Transgender Woman	0	3
Transgender Male/Transgender Man	0	4
Another gender identity	1	22

Table 5.2   Race/ethnicity

	%	*n*
African American or Black	6	81
Asian American or Asian	43	627
Native American or Alaska Native	2	24
Hispanic or Latino	23	345
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3	37
White	38	554

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

Table 5.3   Age

	%	*n*
18 or younger	12	181
19-24	40	606
25-34	23	349
35-44	12	184
45-54	8	114
55 or older	5	68

Table 5.4   Part-time/full-time status

	%	*n*
Part-time (less than 12 credit hours)	54	816
Full-time (12 or more credit hours)	46	690

Table 5.5   Total credit hours earned at Foothill

	%	*n*
None	11	162
1-15 credits	26	394
16-29 credits	19	290
30-45 credits	14	204
46 or more credits	30	453