



Revealing Institutional  
Strengths and Challenges

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INSTITUTIONAL REPORT  
RISC STUDENT SURVEY FALL 2020  
**GOTHAM 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; Gotham College chose the specific offices that appeared in the survey. The survey used office names specific to Gotham College, 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 study.

Students are also given two open-response questions, where they could write out an answer: what is Gotham College's greatest strength, and if Gotham College 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/four-year-survey>**

## SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

The survey was administered online to 6,536 Gotham College students, using college email addresses, in November 2020. The response rate was 20.2%, resulting in 854 responses used for this report. Median time Gotham College students spent taking the survey was 7.8 minutes.

The table below provides some background information about your college's benchmark sample. Twenty other four-year institutions 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 16,939 respondents.

**Table 1.1 Four-year institutions in the benchmark sample**

Carnegie classification		Urbanicity		Student enrollment	
Doctoral	22%	City	33%	Under 1,000	22%
Master's	33%	Suburb	33%	1,000-4,999	56%
Baccalaureate	33%	Town	33%	5,000-9,999	11%
Other	11%	Rural	.%	10,000-19,999	11%
				20,000 and above	.%

# 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?**

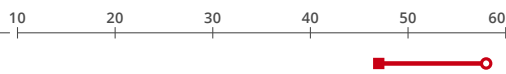




	Yes	No
Paying college and living expenses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working with financial aid office	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Military and employer tuition benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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 Gotham College in Fall 2020 in the five main areas. *Success in courses* 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**

	GC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	<i>n</i>	
Success in courses	58	47	<b>+11</b>	495	
Work and personal issues	47	53	<b>-6</b>	401	
Academic support services	42	29	<b>+13</b>	359	
Finances and financial aid	40	42	-2	342	
Campus environment	13	31	<b>-18</b>	111	

**Notes**

Green indicates that GC has a lower proportion of students reporting a challenge compared to the benchmark sample proportion; red indicates GC 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  $n=854$ .

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 *Success in courses*. The most common subcategory was *Online classes*, with 28% choosing challenges in this subcategory. The most common specific challenge within the *Online classes* subcategory was *Difficulty keeping up because of no regular class times*, with 16% 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**

	GC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	<i>n</i>
Success in courses	58	47	+11	495
Online classes	28	21	+7	239
Difficulty keeping up because of no regular class times	16	9	+7	137
Difficulty learning material on my own	14	11	+3	120
Lack of interaction with faculty	12	9	+3	102
Lack of interaction with other students	8	5	+3	68
Difficulty using course technology	7	6	+1	60
Difficulty taking exams at testing center	5	3	+2	43
None of the above	3	2	+1	26
Doing college-level work	21	17	+4	179
Poor planning and time management skills	14	8	+6	120
Poor study skills	10	7	+3	85
Not motivated to study	9	6	+3	77
Reading or writing assignments were difficult	6	5	+1	51
Required level of math was difficult	5	5	+0	43
Took too many classes	3	3	+0	26
Skipped too many classes	0	1	-1	0
None of the above	2	2	+0	17
Faculty	19	16	+3	162
Did not teach well	14	11	+3	120
Feedback on assignments not helpful	9	7	+2	77
Not helpful outside of class	6	4	+2	51
Not concerned about my academic success	6	6	+0	51
Took too long to grade assignments	5	5	+0	43
Not responsive to email	4	5	-1	34
Not available to meet in person	2	2	+0	17
None of the above	2	2	+0	17
Academic majors	11	7	+4	94
Graduation delayed due to changing major	5	3	+2	43
Courseload too heavy due to changing major	4	2	+2	34
Can't decide on a major	4	3	+1	34
None of the above	2	1	+1	17
Being a transfer student	8	8	+0	68
Courses in major are difficult	4	6	-2	34
Courses outside major are difficult	2	1	+1	17
Some courses did not transfer in	6	7	-1	51
None of the above	9	6	+3	77

**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**

	GC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	<i>n</i>
Work and personal issues	47	53	-6	401
Family and friends	29	31	-2	248
Difficulty balancing demands of family and college	20	22	-2	171
Difficulty finding childcare	11	4	+7	94
Difficulty dealing with health of family	3	11	-8	26
Family does not support me going to college	2	4	-2	17
None of the above	2	4	-2	17
Work	26	34	-8	222
Work schedule not flexible during semester	11	9	+2	94
Work hours do not leave me enough time to study	8	20	-12	68
Pay is not enough to cover expenses while in school	2	17	-15	17
Work schedule prevents campus resource use	1	12	-11	9
Work schedule is not flexible during the semester	1	12	-11	9
None of the above	6	3	+3	51
Health and disability issues	19	17	+2	162
Pregnancy and childbirth	12	1	+11	102
Faculty did not provide necessary accommodations	10	1	+9	85
Campus is difficult to navigate with my disability	1	0	+1	9
Disability services did not provide necessary support	1	1	+0	9
Emotional/mental health issue	1	10	-9	9
Physical health issue	0	9	-9	0
None of the above	1	2	-1	9
Transportation to campus	4	12	-8	34
Car or carpool not reliable	2	5	-3	17
Campus transportation system not reliable	2	1	+1	17
Travel to campus takes a long time	1	6	-5	9
Public transportation system not reliable	0	3	-3	0
None of the above	1	2	-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 2.4 Challenges with academic support services**

	GC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	<i>n</i>
Academic support services	42	29	+13	359
Registering for courses	27	17	+10	231
Course was offered but full	21	6	+15	179
Course not offered at times I needed	19	8	+11	162
Course not offered this semester	12	5	+7	102
Had a registration hold	5	3	+2	43
None of the above	3	5	-2	26
Academic advising	19	13	+6	162
Difficult to meet with, speak to, or email advisor	11	7	+4	94
Not told to take necessary course	10	5	+5	85
Told to take unnecessary course	7	4	+3	60
Course/major materials were incorrect	3	2	+1	26
None of the above	2	2	+0	17
Tutoring	11	7	+4	94
Tutoring not available when I need assistance	5	3	+2	43
Tutoring not helpful	4	2	+2	34
Tutoring hours not convenient	4	3	+1	34
Tutoring not available in subject area I needed	3	2	+1	26
None of the above	2	1	+1	17
Computer and science labs	9	5	+4	77
Lab busy when needed	5	1	+4	43
Lab hours not convenient	3	1	+2	26
Problems using computers and equipment	2	2	+0	17
None of the above	1	1	+0	9
Library	6	4	+2	51
Study spaces not available when needed	3	1	+2	26
Staff not helpful	2	1	+1	17
Hours not convenient	2	1	+1	17
Resources I needed not available online	1	1	+0	9
None of the above	2	2	+0	17

**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**

	GC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	<i>n</i>
Finances and financial aid	40	42	-2	342
Paying expenses	31	36	-5	265
Books, software, and other supplies	22	22	+0	188
Tuition and fees	17	19	-2	145
Living expenses (housing, food, healthcare)	15	26	-11	128
Childcare	3	3	+0	26
None of the above	1	1	+0	9
Working with financial aid office	23	15	+8	196
Delays in getting money	12	6	+6	102
Unable to answer questions	11	5	+6	94
Process was unclear	11	8	+3	94
Difficult to meet with, speak to, or email staff	10	5	+5	85
Errors processing financial aid	7	6	+1	60
Gave me wrong information	6	4	+2	51
None of the above	1	2	-1	9
Military and employer tuition benefits	2	1	+1	17
Did not know process for obtaining benefits	1	1	+0	9
Received wrong information about benefits	1	0	+1	9
Experienced delays receiving benefits	0	1	-1	0
None of the above	0	0	+0	0

**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**

	GC %	Bench. %	Diff. %	<i>n</i>
Campus environment	13	31	-18	111
Activities outside of class	9	26	-17	77
Spent too much time socializing	8	23	-15	68
Overcommitted to student groups (clubs, etc.)	0	1	-1	0
Difficulty finding activities that interest me	0	3	-3	0
Difficulty finding activities that fit my schedule	0	3	-3	0
None of the above	1	2	-1	9
Interactions with other students	8	8	+0	68
Did not know many other students	4	6	-2	34
Did not feel welcome due to my race or ethnicity	2	1	+1	17
Did not feel welcome due to my sexual orientation	0	0	+0	0
Did not feel welcome due to my gender identity	0	0	+0	0
None of the above	2	2	+0	17
Housing	4	7	-3	34
Roommate problems	3	3	+0	26
Difficulty finding on-campus housing	0	1	-1	0
Difficulty finding off-campus housing	0	3	-3	0
Roommate problems	0	3	-3	0
None of the above	1	2	-1	9
Safety and crime	2	2	+0	17
Parking lots not safe	1	1	+0	9
Was a victim of a crime	0	0	+0	0
Campus not safe	0	0	+0	0
None of the above	1	1	+0	9
Parking on campus	2	2	+0	17
Difficulty finding parking on or near campus	0	5	-5	0
Difficulty getting parking pass	1	2	-1	9
Parking on or near campus is too expensive	0	3	-3	0
None of the above	1	2	-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.

# STUDENT-OFFICE INTERACTIONS

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. Student Success Center was the most commonly used office, with 86% reporting using the office during the Fall 2020 semester, followed by Financial Aid (55%) and Admissions (41%).

**Table 3.1 Office usage**

Office	% using	<i>n</i>
Student Success Center	86	734
Financial Aid	55	470
Admissions	41	350
Testing Center	32	273
Disability Services	8	68

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 benchmark 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**

	GC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	<i>n</i>	
<b>Admissions</b>					
Available	76	72	+4	350	
Concerned	55	61	-6	350	
Effective	73	60	<b>+13</b>	350	
<b>Disability Services</b>					
Available	43	70	-27	68	
Concerned	57	74	-17	68	
Effective	48	60	-12	68	
<b>Financial Aid</b>					
Available	61	73	-12	470	
Concerned	54	56	-2	470	
Effective	66	77	-11	470	
<b>Student Success Center</b>					
Available	81	70	<b>+11</b>	734	
Concerned	60	55	<b>+5</b>	734	
Effective	68	65	+3	734	
<b>Testing Center</b>					
Available	87	69	<b>+18</b>	273	
Concerned	64	52	<b>+12</b>	273	
Effective	78	78	+0	273	

### Notes

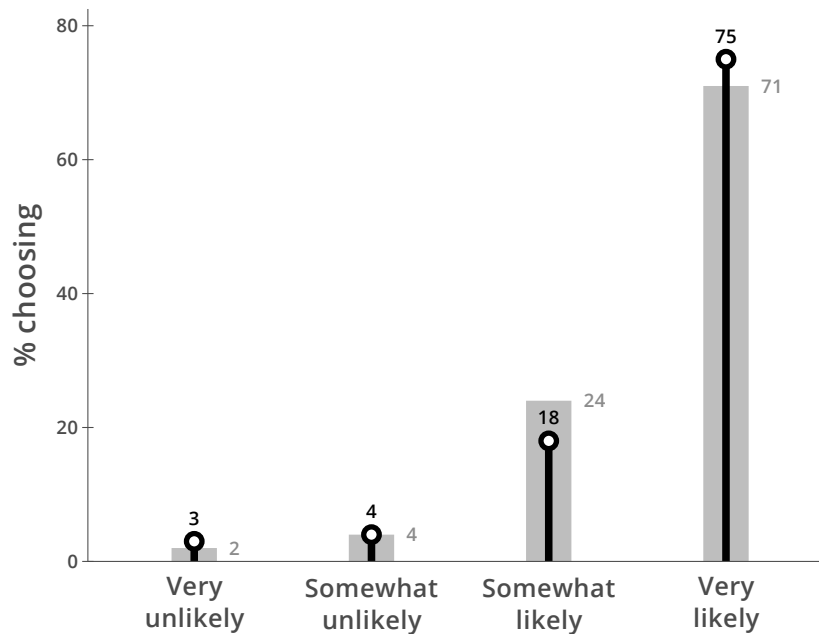
Percentage is the proportion of students rating an office in the top response category (*very available/concerned/effective*). Green indicates that GC has a higher proportion of students choosing the category compared to the benchmark sample proportion; red indicates GC has a lower proportion. Bold indicates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

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

The first question, “Based on your experiences, how likely are you to recommend Gotham College to a friend?”, is a summative measure of how students view your institution. Results are presented in Figure 4.1, with Gotham College represented by the black line and the benchmark sample by the gray line. 93% of your students would be somewhat or very likely to recommend Gotham College. The Gotham College distribution of responses is statistically significantly different from the benchmark sample.

**Figure 4.1** Would student recommend Gotham College to a friend?

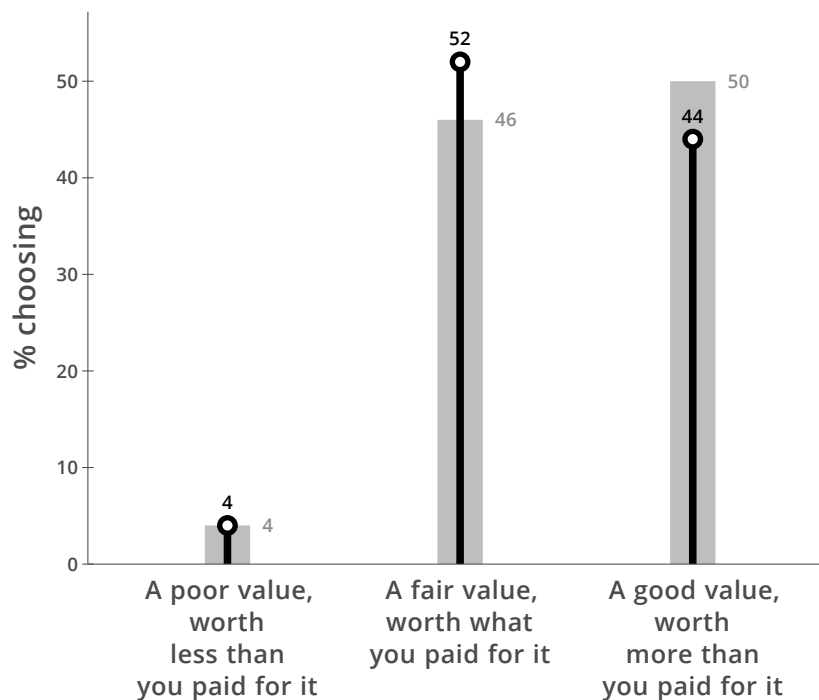


**Notes**

GC is the black bar; benchmark sample is gray.  $\chi^2 = 17.3, p < .01; n = 854$ .

Next, students were asked to rate the overall value of their education at Gotham College (see Figure 4.2). 96% of your students believe their education is worth what they paid (or even worth more). The Gotham College distribution of responses is statistically significantly different from the benchmark sample.

**Figure 4.2 Overall value of education?**



**Notes**

GC is the black bar; benchmark sample is gray.  $\chi^2 = 11.5, p < .01; n = 854$ .

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 Gotham College. 52% chose *Prepare for graduate study* as their primary purpose for attending your institution.

Students were then asked how well Gotham College 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, 54% of the students who chose *Prepare for graduate study* as their primary goal indicated that Gotham College is doing *very well* in terms of preparing them for a four-year degree.

**Table 4.1 How well is education helping accomplish goals**

	GC % ○	Bench. % ■	Diff.	<i>n</i>	
<b>Purpose of taking courses at GC</b>					
Prepare for graduate study	52	41	<b>+11</b>	444	
Increase job and career opportunities	37	50	<b>-13</b>	316	
Self-improvement	11	10	+1	94	
<b>How well is education at GC ...</b>					
Prepare for graduate study	54	48	<b>+6</b>	444	
Increase job and career opportunities	50	52	-2	316	
Self-improvement	40	47	-7	93	

**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 GC has a higher proportion of students reporting that GC is helping them achieve their educational goal compared to the benchmark sample; red indicates a lower proportion.



# RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

**Table 5.1 Gender identity**

	<b>%</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>
Female/Woman	66	554
Male/Man	32	269
Transgender Female/Transgender Woman	0	0
Transgender Male/Transgender Man	1	8
Another gender identity	1	7

**Table 5.2 Race/ethnicity**

	<b>%</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>
African American or Black	29	244
Asian American or Asian	8	67
Native American or Alaska Native	3	25
Hispanic or Latino	29	244
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3	25
White	49	412

**Notes**

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

**Table 5.3 Part-time/full-time status**

	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>
Part-time (less than 12 credit hours)	41	344
Full-time (12 or more credit hours)	59	496

**Table 5.4 Total credit hours earned at Gotham College**

	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>
None	20	168
1-15 credits	17	143
16-29 credits	19	160
30-45 credits	16	134
46 or more credits	28	235