

Briefing on Illinois College -Going Survey: 4-Year College-Goers

Meg Bates, PhD
Mariana Barragán Torres, PhD
IWERC, University of Illinois

In partnership with:
Office of the Governor J. B. Pritzker
Illinois Board of Higher Education
Illinois Community College Board
Illinois State Board of Education
Illinois Student Assistance Commission



ILLINOIS WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION
RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

The Central Issue

What factors animate the college decision-making process for Illinois high school seniors, particularly the choice to stay in or leave the state?

The Central Issue

What factors animate the **college decision-making process** for Illinois high school seniors, particularly the choice to stay in or leave the state?



Today's
Focus:
4-Year



Survey
Distribution:
May 2022



Survey
Distribution:
May 2022



Total
Responses:
2,464

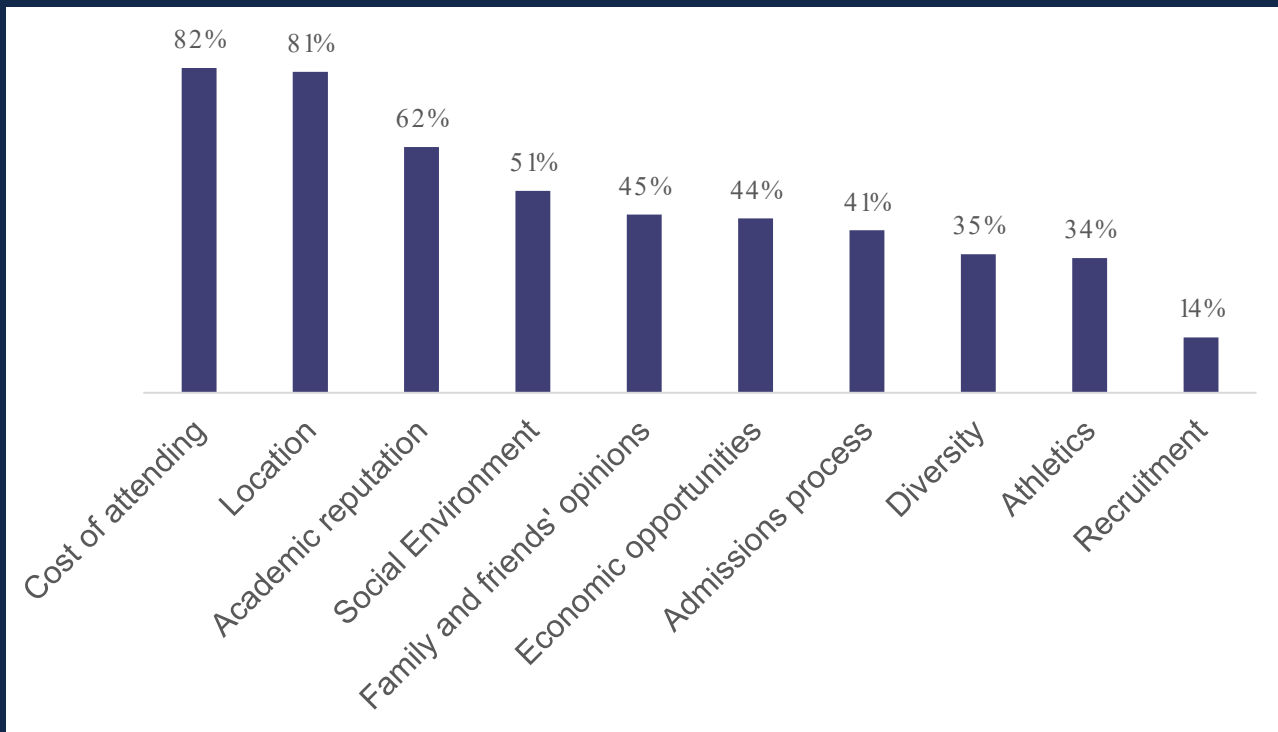




*This sample allowed us to make accurate statistical **comparisons** by race/ethnicity, region, and outmigration status.

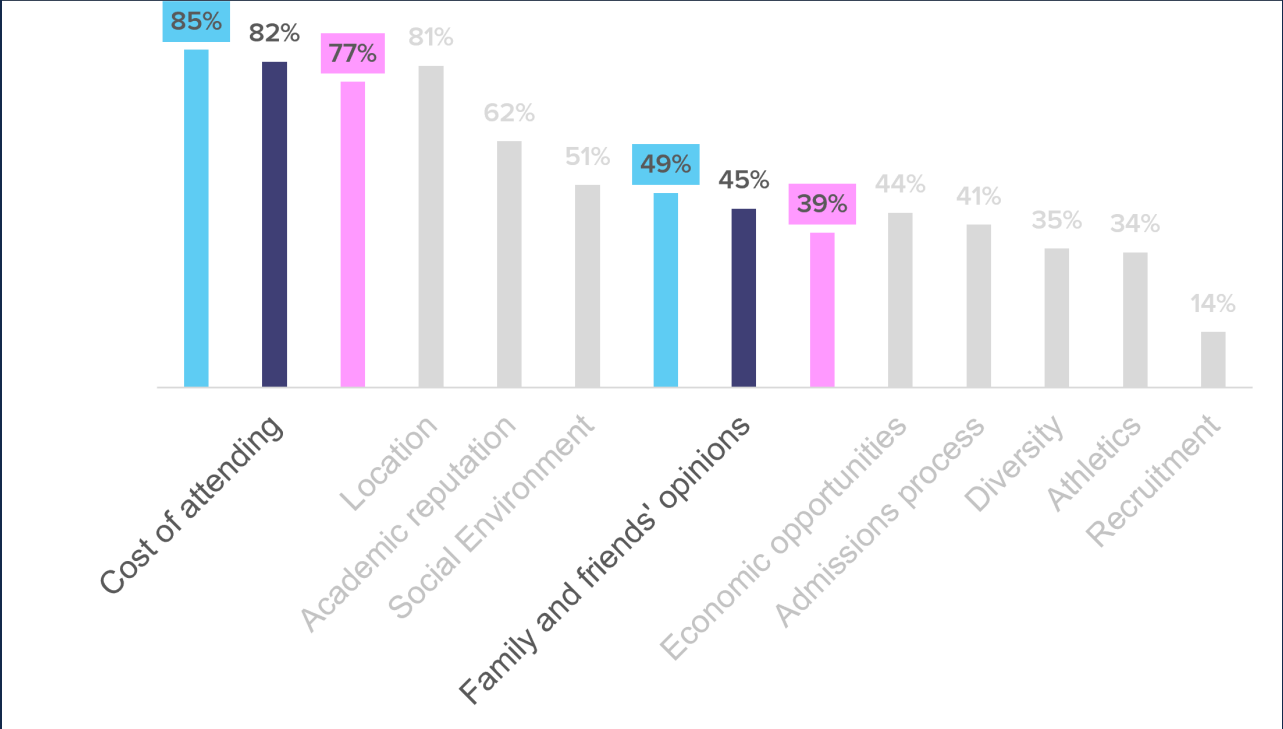
Five Key Findings

Finding #1: The **general factors** that *most* 4-year college-goers consider are cost, location, reputation, and social environment.



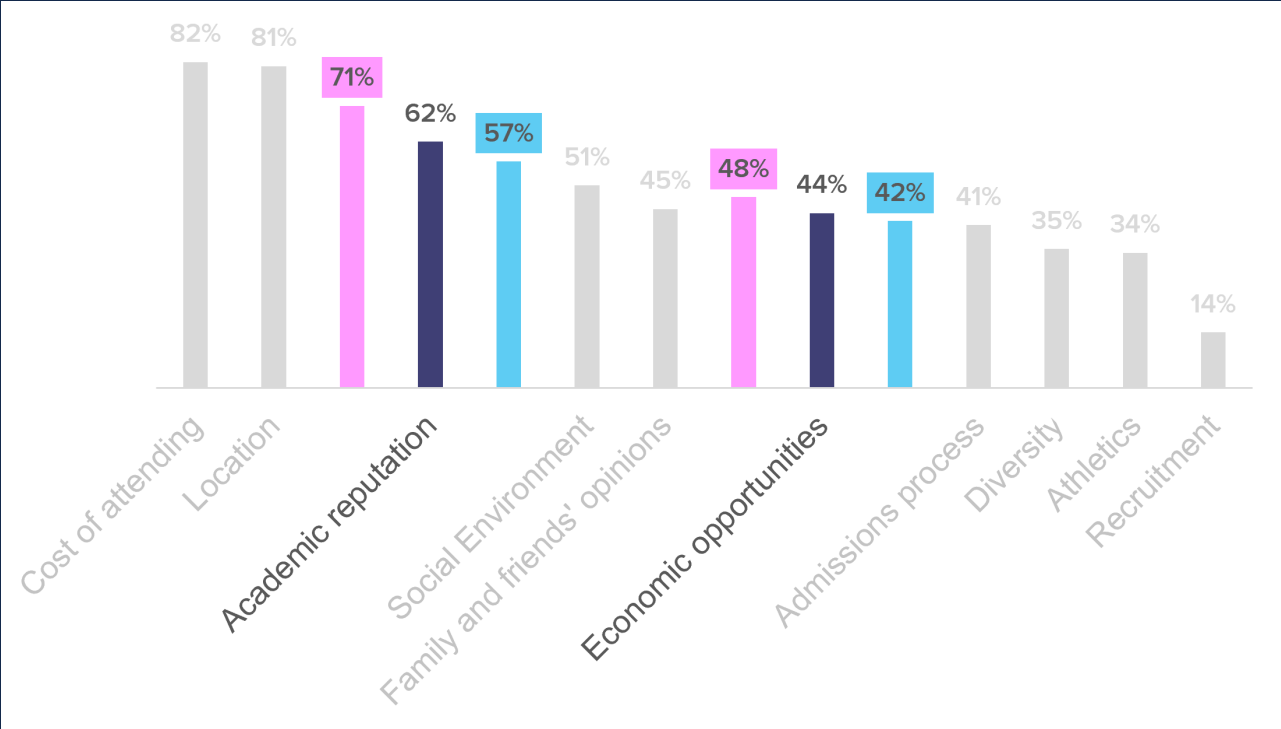
NOTE: Respondents could select all that apply to all colleges they *considered*.

Stayers are significantly more likely to consider cost and family and friends' opinions than **leavers**.



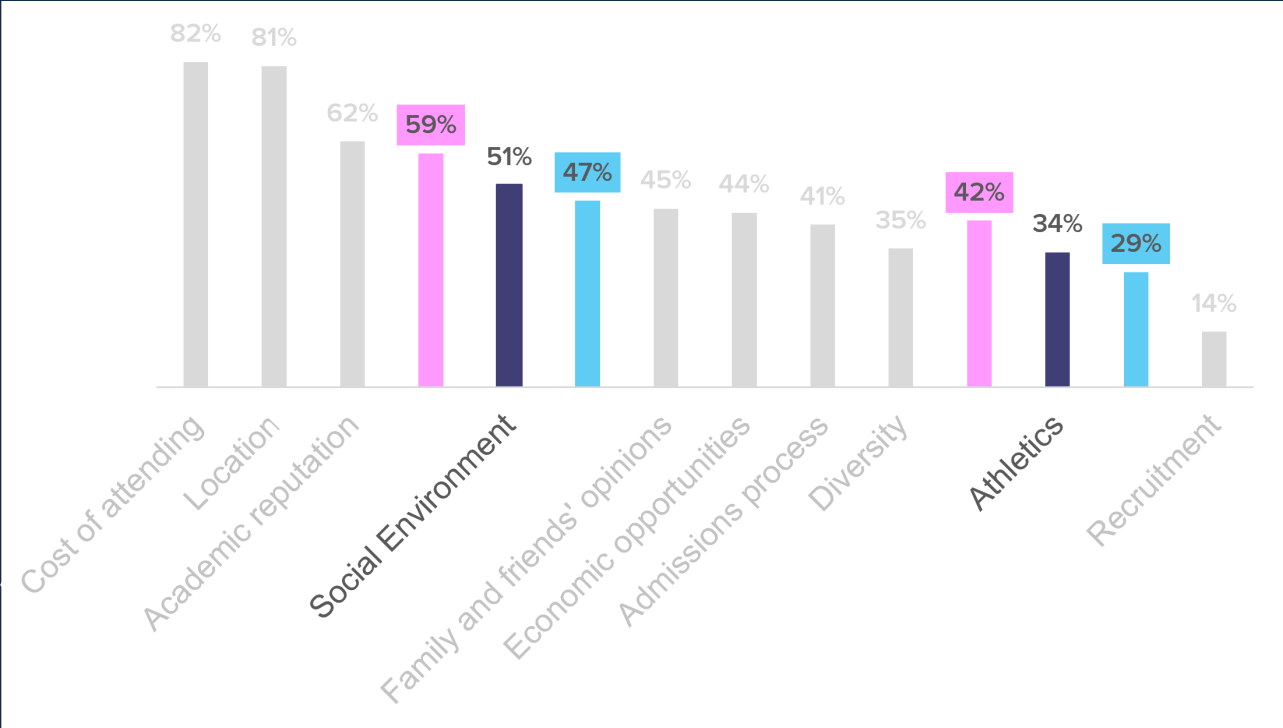
NOTE: Respondents could select all that apply to all colleges they *considered*.

Leavers are significantly more likely to consider academic reputation and economic opportunities than **stayers**.



NOTE: Respondents could select all that apply to all colleges they *considered*.

Leavers are also significantly more likely to consider social environment and athletics/extracurriculars than **stayers**.



NOTE: Respondents could select all that apply to all colleges they *considered*.

Finding #2: The **single decisive factor** that the biggest proportion of 4-year college-goers consider is cost.

Overall, it has the most reasonable **cost** of attendance. 32%

It has the best **academic reputation** (or ranking). 17%

It gives me the best opportunity for **employment after college**. 12%

It has the best **social environment** or campus climate for me. 10%

It's in the best **location**. 8%

It gives me the best **work opportunities during college**. 5%

Cost appears to maintain its importance as a factor in the final decision, while **location** seems to diminish in importance.

Overall, it has the most reasonable **cost** of attendance.

32%

82% generally
considered (1st)

It has the best **academic reputation** (or ranking).

17%

It gives me the best opportunity for **employment after college**.

12%

It has the best **social environment** or campus climate for me.

10%

It's in the best **location**.

8%

81% generally
considered (2nd)

It gives me the best **work opportunities during college**.

5%

Stayers were more likely to cite a decisive factor of cost or work opportunities during college.

Overall, it has the most reasonable **cost** of attendance.

32%

37% stayers vs.
24% leavers

It has the best **academic reputation** (or ranking).

17%

It gives me the best opportunity for **employment after college**.

12%

It has the best **social environment** or campus climate for me.

10%

It's in the best **location**.

8%

It gives me the best **work opportunities during college**.

5%

7% stayers vs.
3% leavers

Leavers were more likely to cite a decisive factor of academic reputation or social environment.

Overall, it has the most reasonable cost of attendance.	32%	
It has the best academic reputation (or ranking).	17%	22% leavers vs. 13% stayers
It gives me the best opportunity for employment after college .	12%	
It has the best social environment or campus climate for me.	10%	16% leavers vs. 6% stayers
It's in the best location .	8%	
It gives me the best work opportunities during college .	5%	

Critical Point:

Leavers and stayers care about similar issues (like cost), but weight them differently in decision-making.

Finding #3: Both leavers and stayers agreed—albeit with a large gap—that Illinois colleges had the better cost of attendance.

Percent selecting Illinois colleges as superior on each factor.

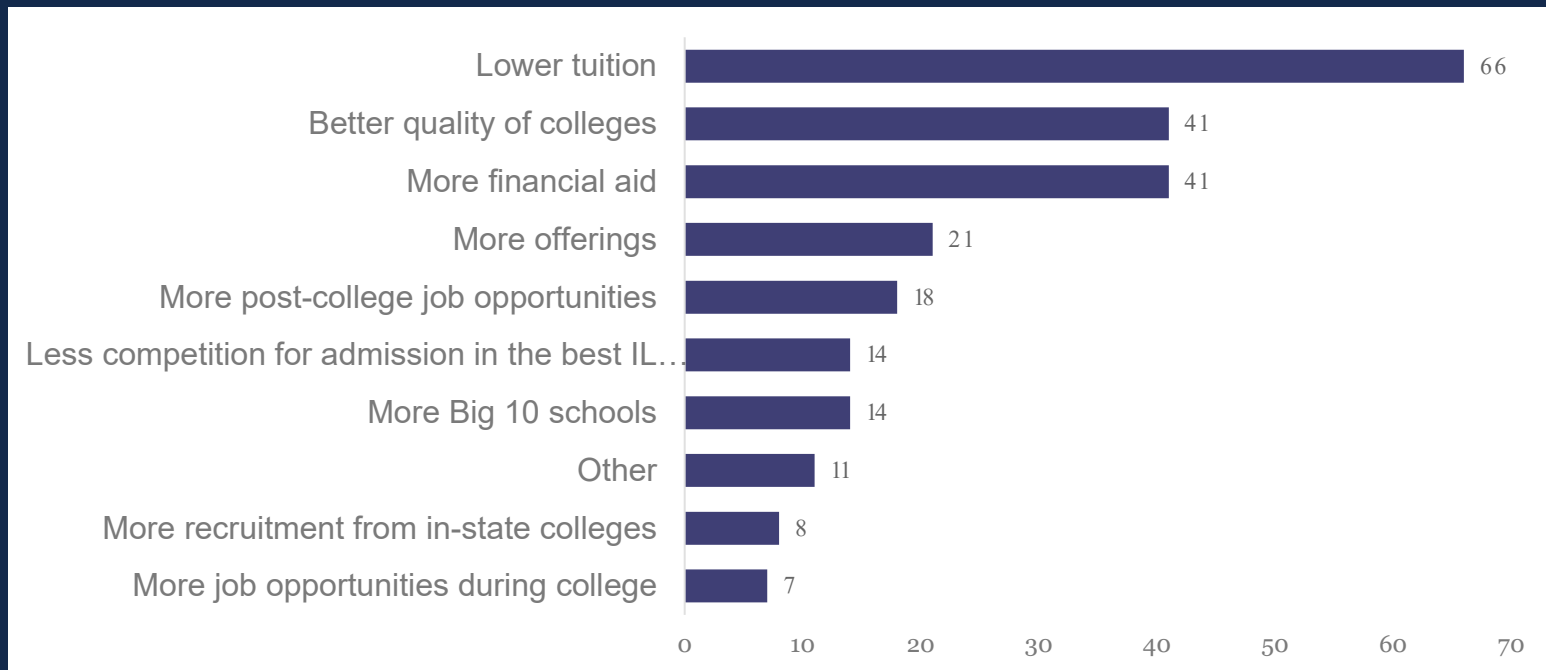
	Leavers	Stayers
Cost of attendance	55%	92%

On all other factors, however, the students' choices to leave or stay aligned with their opinions of Illinois colleges. All differences were significant.

Percent selecting Illinois colleges as superior on each factor.

	Leavers	Stayers
Cost of attendance	55%	92%
Academic reputation	13%	61%
Economic opportunities	12%	67%
College location	18%	74%
College social environment	10%	72%
College diversity	28%	68%
Athletics/extracurriculars	16%	59%
Recruitment process	24%	75%
Likelihood of being admitted	49%	92%
Family and friends' opinions	32%	90%

Finding #4: **Leavers** expressed that **cost-related issues**, as well as better **college quality**, could have encouraged them to stay.



Critical Point:

While **leavers** may weigh cost less than **stayers**, cost could still be a great lever for keeping students in-state, especially as most **leavers** go to neighboring states.

Finding #5: A sampling of responses shows how decision-making factors varied significantly by **race/ethnicity** and **region**.

White students were most likely to consider athletics/extracurriculars and family/friends' opinions.

They were least likely to consider diversity.

Latinx students were least likely to consider social environment.

Black students were most likely to consider diversity, and least likely to consider family/friends' opinions.

Chicago students were most likely to consider diversity.

Suburban/Collar and downstate students were more likely to consider academic reputation and social environment.

More from the report...

- All findings by race/ethnicity and region
- Detailed responses about each factor considered
- Specific colleges chosen and considered
- Information about recruitment, financial aid, and modality of attendance

More from the report...

- All findings by race/ethnicity and region
- Detailed responses about each factor considered
- Specific colleges chosen and considered
- Information about recruitment, financial aid, and modality of attendance

Forthcoming...

- Report on 2-year college-goers
- Report on non-college-goers
- Report on pandemic influence on college decision-making



Appendix Slides

Summary of Findings:

[1] Most 4-year college-goers *consider* cost, location, reputation, and social environment in college decision-making. **But:**

- **Stayers** are more likely to *consider* cost and family/friends' opinions.
- **Leavers** are more likely to *consider* academic reputation, social environment, athletics/extracurriculars, and economic opportunities.

[2] 4-year college-goers make a *final college decision* largely based on cost. **But:**

- **Stayers** are more likely to *decide* based on cost and opportunity to work during college than **leavers**.
- **Leavers** are more likely to *decide* based on academic reputation and social environment than **stayers**.

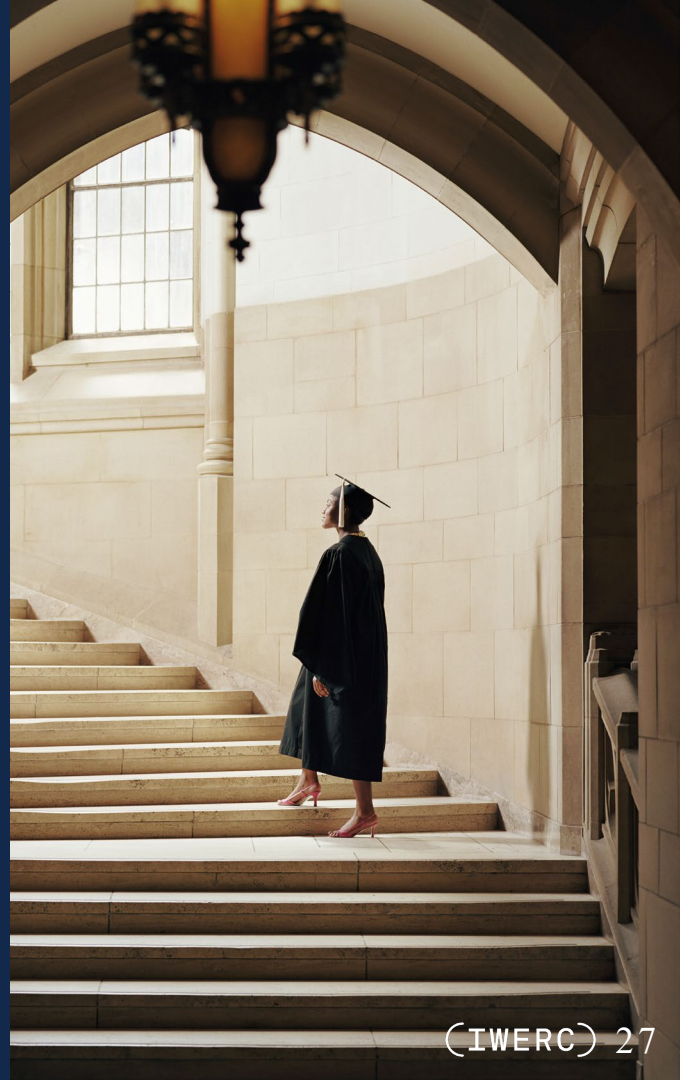


Summary of Findings:

[3] Both leavers and stayers agreed—albeit with a large gap—that Illinois colleges had the better **cost** of attendance. On all other factors, however, the students' choices to leave or stay aligned with their opinions of Illinois colleges.

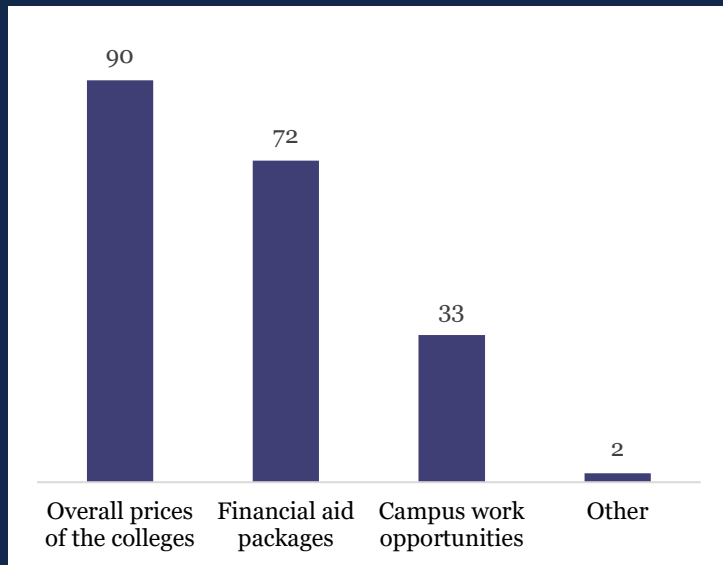
[4] Leavers expressed that **cost-related issues**, as well as better **college quality**, could have encouraged them to stay.

[5] Decision-making patterns also differed by race/ethnicity and region.



What did students who considered **cost** really consider?

Overall:

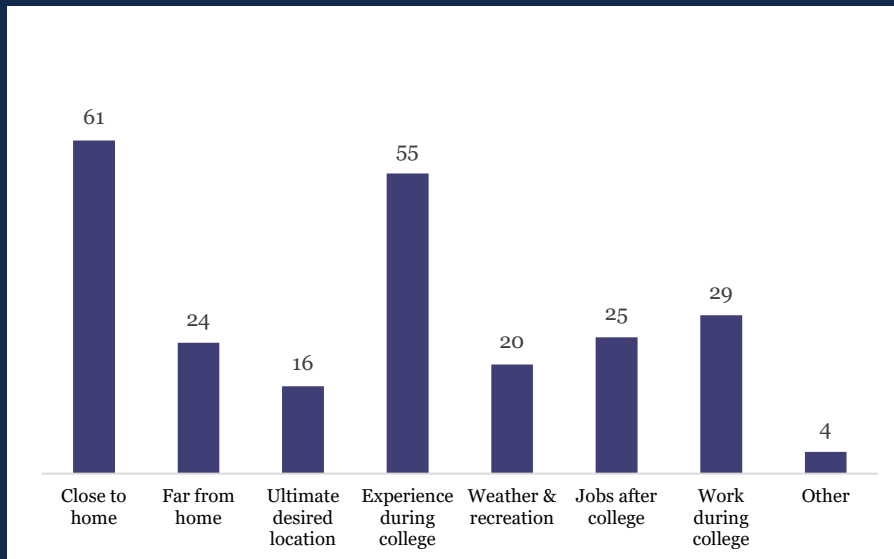


Notable differences by student groups:

Stayers were more concerned about campus work opportunities than **leavers**.

What did students who considered **location** really consider?

Overall:



Notable differences by student groups:

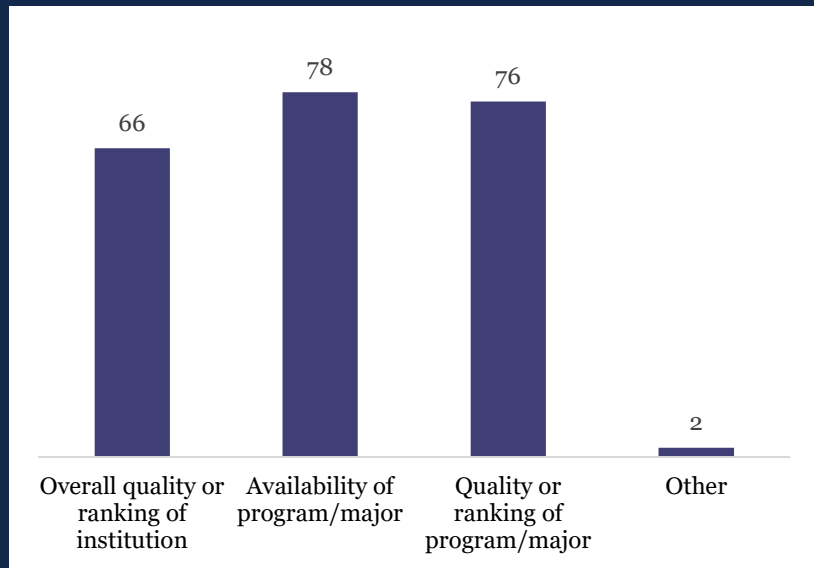
Stayers were more concerned about being close to home and work opportunities during college than **leavers**.

Leavers were more concerned about being far from home, being in their ultimate desired location, experiences and weather/recreation during college, and job opportunities after college than **stayers**.

Latinx students wanted more to be closer to home, while Black students wanted to be farther from home.

What did students who considered **academic reputation** really consider?

Overall:

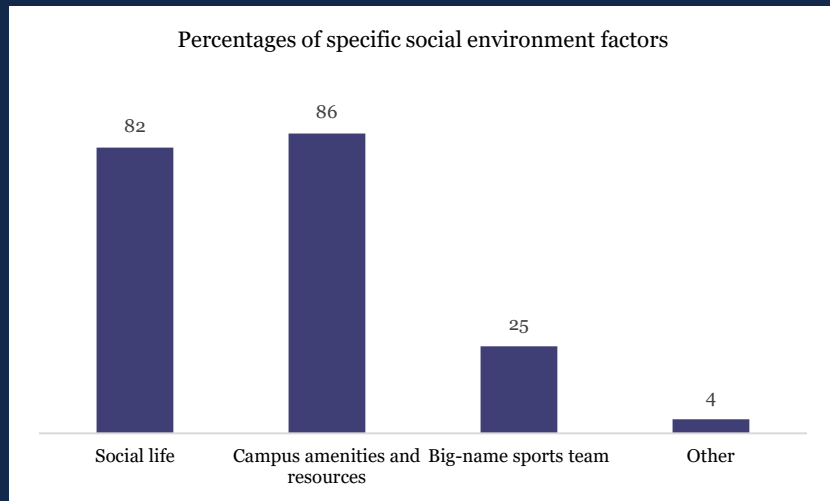


Notable differences by student groups:

There were no real differences between **stayers** and **leavers** on these factors.

What did students who considered **social environment** really consider?

Overall:



Notable differences by student groups:

Leavers were more likely to consider campus amenities and resources, as well as having a big-name sports team, than **stayers**.

Mirroring the trends found in IBHE data, **leavers** and **stayers** in our *sample* have significantly different demographic profiles.

Race/ethnicity	Leaving
White	47%
Asian	36%
Black	32%
Latinx	18%

Mirroring the trends found in IBHE data, **leavers** and **stayers** in our *sample* have significantly different demographic profiles.

Race/ethnicity	Leaving
White	47%
Asian	36%
Black	32%
Latinx	18%

Region	Leaving
Chicago	17%
Suburbs/Collar	47%
Downstate	42%

Mirroring the trends found in IBHE data, **leavers** and **stayers** in our *sample* have significantly different demographic profiles.

Race/ethnicity	Leaving
White	47%
Asian	36%
Black	32%
Latinx	18%

Region	Leaving
Chicago	17%
Suburbs/Collar	47%
Downstate	42%

Parental Ed	Leaving
Less than HS	26%
High School	30%
Some college	31%
Associate's	42%
Bachelor's	45%
Master's	52%
Doctoral/Prof.	56%

Mirroring the trends found in IBHE data, **leavers** and **stayers** in our *sample* have significantly different demographic profiles.

Race/ethnicity	Leaving
White	47%
Asian	36%
Black	32%
Latinx	18%

Region	Leaving
Chicago	17%
Suburbs/Collar	47%
Downstate	42%

Parental Ed	Leaving
Less than HS	26%
High School	30%
Some college	31%
Associate's	42%
Bachelor's	45%
Master's	52%
Doctoral/Prof.	56%

Looking intersectionally...

- 61% of White students from Suburbs/Collar were leaving.

Mirroring the trends found in IBHE data, **leavers** and **stayers** in our *sample* have significantly different demographic profiles.

Race/ethnicity	Leaving
White	47%
Asian	36%
Black	32%
Latinx	18%

Region	Leaving
Chicago	17%
Suburbs/Collar	47%
Downstate	42%

Parental Ed	Leaving
Less than HS	26%
High School	30%
Some college	31%
Associate's	42%
Bachelor's	45%
Master's	52%
Doctoral/Prof.	56%

Looking intersectionally...

- 61% of White students from Suburbs/Collar were leaving.
- 15% of Latinx students from Chicago were leaving.

Mirroring the trends found in IBHE data, **leavers** and **stayers** in our *sample* have significantly different demographic profiles.

Race/ethnicity	Leaving
White	47%
Asian	36%
Black	32%
Latinx	18%

Region	Leaving
Chicago	17%
Suburbs/Collar	47%
Downstate	42%

Parental Ed	Leaving
Less than HS	26%
High School	30%
Some college	31%
Associate's	42%
Bachelor's	45%
Master's	52%
Doctoral/Prof.	56%

Furthermore...

- 71% of White students from the suburbs who have well-educated parents are leaving.
- Affiliation with Illinois and feelings of preparation also relate to outmigration.

Critical Point:

These *sample percentages* underestimate **leavers** (see IBHE's report for more accurate statewide data), but the general *trends* in the characteristics of **leavers** and **stayers** are the same, allowing us to accurately **compare** likelihood of leaving for different groups.

What **in-state colleges** did our sample select?

Top 10 Illinois Colleges Selected by Respondents (Stayers).

	Selected College	N	%
1	Illinois State University	80	13
2	University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	71	11
3	Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville	54	9
4	Southern Illinois University-Carbondale	40	6
5	University of Illinois Chicago	38	6
6	Northern Illinois University	32	5
7	Eastern Illinois University	29	5
8	Loyola University Chicago	20	3
9	Bradley University	18	3
10	DePaul University	18	3

What **out-of-state colleges** did our sample select?

Top 10 Selected Colleges for Leavers.

Selected College	N	%
Southeast Missouri State University	19	4.31
Purdue University	15	3.4
Iowa State University	13	2.95
Saint Louis University	12	2.72
University of Missouri	12	2.72
University of Alabama	11	2.49
University of Iowa	11	2.49
Marquette University	10	2.27
University of Kentucky	10	2.27
University of Wisconsin-Platteville	9	2.04

Possible Leaver Thought Process #1

Southeast Missouri State (SEMO) and Southern Illinois University-Carbondale (SIUC) are about the same cost, and SEMO is offering me a scholarship on top of that! Both are close to home and have engineering programs, so SEMO it is. If SIUC had offered me a scholarship, I might have gone there.

Southern Illinois-Carbondale

Tuition (in-state): \$15.4k

Average net cost (in-state): \$24.6k

Has engineering program



Southeast Missouri State

Tuition (out-of-state): \$15.6k

Average net cost (out-of-state): \$25.5k

Has engineering program

NOTES: 6 of the 19 students who chose SEMO in our sample also considered SIUC. Cost statistics are from U.S. News. Leavers and stayers in our sample had statistically significant differences in financial aid.

Possible Leaver Thought Process #2

I really wanted to go to Illinois for engineering, but I got waitlisted. The other Illinois programs are just way too expensive (\$63k tuition at Northwestern?) or not ranked highly enough for me. Iowa State is about the same price and quality.

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

U.S. News Ranking: #41

Tuition (in-state): \$17k

Total cost (in-state): \$33k

Top-ranked engineering program



Iowa State University

U.S. News Ranking: #127

Tuition (out-of-state): \$25k

Total cost (out-of-state): \$37k

Well-ranked engineering program

Critical Point:

Students choose between in-state and out-of-state schools in roughly the same cost and prestige brackets.

Making **cost** transparently and clearly better for in-state schools—including scholarships—might keep more students here.

For others, more **quality** options in a reasonable cost bracket (or more seats at those options) might keep them here.

Importantly, improving cost and quality supports both **stayers** and potential **leavers**.

Sneak peek: 2-year college-going findings

858 respondents indicated they were attending 2-year college or trade school, with 537 providing demographic information.

- Most students are White (60%) from the Downstate region (56%) or Latinx (21%) from the Cook and Collar counties (30%)

65% of students were planning to transfer to a 4-year college, and 21% were unsure

94% of 2-year college-goers planned to stay in-state.

Cost (78%) and location (74%) were the most considered factors for this group.

Cost (48%) was by far the most decisive factor.

Only 16% of students felt very prepared; 43% felt prepared

Sneak peek: Not college-going findings

355 respondents indicated they were not furthering their education, with 261 providing demographic information.

- 61% were White; 21% were Latinx—all other groups had samples smaller than 20

Of these students, most were:

- Working (58%)
- Taking a gap year (22%)
- Joining the military (20%)
- Deferring enrollment to winter 2023 (5%)
- Unsure (18%)
- Other (16%)

We are examining factors that would encourage them to pursue higher education.

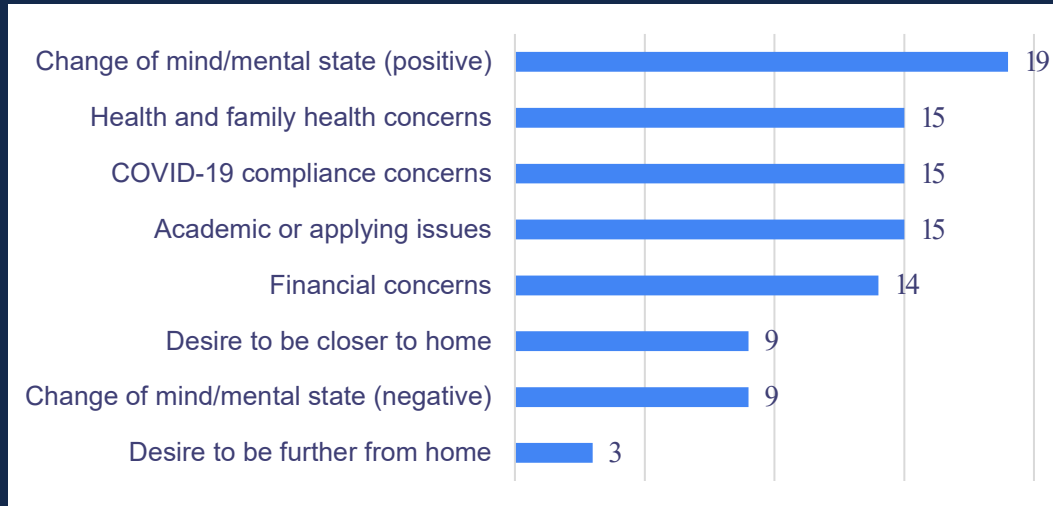
- More educational options
- More support from “those around me”
- Help with financial cost of attending postsecondary education

Sneak peek: Pandemic effects on college-going

Respondents were asked whether the pandemic affected their college decision-making.

- For **4-year college-goers**, 15% said it affected their plans, with 2% unsure.
- For **2-year/trade college-goers**, 21% said it affected their plans, with 5% unsure.
- For **non-college-goers**, 18% said it affected their plans, with 8% unsure.

We have coded the explanations that those who were “unsure” or were affected by the pandemic gave for how the pandemic changed their decision-making. Percentages are below.



Polarizing issues:

- COVID: too many or not enough restrictions
- Change of mental health (although more positive)
- Family and interpersonal relations