The Role of Residence Life in Undergraduate Persistence

Kevin Fosnacht, Robert M. Gonyea, Polly Graham & Kyle Fassett
Indiana University Bloomington

This research was funded by the ACUHO-I Research and Educational Foundation. We thank the foundation and their donors for their support!
• Background of problem
• Overview of NSSE & the housing study
• Bivariate findings
• Multivariate results
• Future research
• Q&A
Has the impact of living on campus changed?

Living on-campus was “the single most consistent within-college determinant of the impact of college.” - Pascarella and Terenzini (1991)
Background

Engagement/involvement

Living on campus

College outcomes
Study Goals

- Better understand the relationship between students’ residential conditions, their engagement, and their persistence
- Communicate the study’s findings to stakeholders to assess the value of residence life
- Disseminate ideas for best practices
Study participants

Requirements
- U.S. institutions that offer residential housing
- Participate in NSSE 2018
- Complete the ACUHO-I Campus Housing Index

Participants
- 76 institutions
- Nearly 45,000 respondents
  (26,402 FY students and 18,363 sophomores)
Data Sources

Campus Housing Index

Engagement & residential conditions

NSSE: National Survey of Student Engagement

Data!

IPEDS: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

Institution characteristics

Enrollment information
Supplemental Questions About Student Living Arrangements
Additional Housing Questions

Living situation
- On-/off-campus
- Distance to campus
- Building type
- Roommates (# and how they met)

Sleep

Homesickness

Living-learning community participation

Satisfaction

Scales
- Perceived housing impact
- Belongingness and safety
- Residential learning activities
- Financial stress
Before we begin…

Students who persisted are those who were enrolled in the spring term and re-enrolled at the same institution in the fall.

Thus, our persistence rates are higher than most national estimates that operate on a fall to fall definition.

Small changes matter. The average first-year student at a 4-year institution accumulates about $6,000 in debt (NCES).
Persistence rate

First-year students
- On-campus: 92%
- Off-campus: 90%
- W/ Parents: 91%

Sophomores
- On-campus: 95%
- Off-campus: 93%
- W/ Parents: 92%
Time to campus

First-year students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persistence Rate</th>
<th>70%</th>
<th>75%</th>
<th>80%</th>
<th>85%</th>
<th>90%</th>
<th>95%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-campus</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 mins</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 mins</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 mins</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 mins</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-45 mins</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-60 mins</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 60 mins</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sophomores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persistence Rate</th>
<th>70%</th>
<th>75%</th>
<th>80%</th>
<th>85%</th>
<th>90%</th>
<th>95%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-campus</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 mins</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 mins</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 mins</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 mins</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-45 mins</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-60 mins</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 60 mins</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Housing Scales by Persistence

First-year students

- Residential Learning Activities: 0.18
- Belongingness & Safety: 0.33
- Perceived Housing Impact: 0.36
- Financial Stress*: 0.21

Sophomores

- Residential Learning Activities: 0.18
- Belongingness & Safety: 0.34
- Perceived Housing Impact: 0.28
- Financial Stress*: 0.31

Note: On-campus students only; Financial Stress is reverse-coded
Multivariate Results
Methods

- Logistic regressions (binary outcomes)
- Models estimated separately for first-year and sophomore populations
- Housing variables entered into the models discretely
- Average marginal effects – percentage point changes

- Controls include SAT/ACT, sex, race, average per capita income in ZIP code, age, parental education, major field, athlete status, greek-life participation, financial stress, institutional control, selectivity, MSI status, undergraduate enrollment, and Carnegie classification
### Persistence rate by housing location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First-Year Students</th>
<th>Sophomores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%age pt. diff. from on-campus</td>
<td>%age pt. diff. from on-campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-campus w/ parents</td>
<td>-3% 0.021</td>
<td>-1% 0.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1% 0.238</td>
<td>-2% 0.051</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- First-year, off-campus students (not at home) persisted at lower rates than on-campus peers.
- Sophomores living with parents persisted at lower rates than on-campus peers.
Time to campus

There’s no real trend for FYs, but sophomores living more than 10 mins away persisted at lower rates than on-campus students.
First-year students living in apartments had lower persistence rates. The same for sophomores living in houses?
Residential Learning Communities

First-year students who participated in RLCs were retained at higher rates.

Excludes students living with their parents
Residential Learning Activities

Persistence Rate

Residential Learning Activities (standardized)

Excludes students living with their parents

Participation in residential learning activities is positively related to persistence.
Belongingness & Safety

Belongingness & safety is positively related to persistence, particularly for first-year students.

Excludes students living with their parents
Perceived Housing Impact

First-year students

Sophomores

Excludes students living with their parents

Students who believed their living arrangement had a positive impact were more likely to persist, particularly first-year students.
Financial Stress

Students under less financial stress were more likely to persist.

First-year students

Sophomores
Residents per live-in staff

First-year students

Sophomores

Staffing levels were not significantly related to persistence.

On-campus students only
While not significant for FY students, sophomores persisted at higher rates in larger buildings.
Would pick the same housing type again?

First-year students

Students satisfied with their housing experience were more likely to persist!
Summary

Housing matters! But it is not the silver bullet to fix our college completion crisis.

The influence of housing varies between first-year and sophomore students.

After controlling for other factors, the structure of housing (staffing levels, room type, building size) does not appear to influence persistence.

Experiences like residential activities and RLCs, and perceptions of belongingness improve persistence.
What’s next?

- Test if engagement moderates the relationship between housing and persistence
- Examine how the relationship between living environments and persistence varies across subpopulations (race, sex, income)
- Suggestions from the field

Find our slides and other information about NSSE nsse.indiana.edu

Email: rgonyea@indiana.edu
Blog: NSSEsightings.indiana.edu
Twitter/FB: @NSSEsurvey

#acuhoi