today’s disengaged learner is tomorrow’s adult learner

NOVEMBER 2021
Overview
A shifting economy, uncertainty during the pandemic and troubles within the higher education landscape are causing more traditional age students to disengage, sit-out, take a gap year, seek alternative forms of education, or go straight to the workforce. This joint study by StraighterLine and UPCEA examines a portion of the student population that disengaged with their institution after previous enrollment. The research focuses on what may have caused students to disengage and what might get them to reenroll. Participants were asked about their level of engagement with their institution, satisfaction with engagement, and likelihood of reengaging and reenrolling.

Understanding the situations and motivations that caused learners to disengage with their institutions is an important way for institutions to be able to be proactive about their engagement with their current students as well as after they leave the institution. As technology dominates the future of the workforce, more and more students are looking at higher education with less value than before. This potential trend can be reversed with better planning, systems, and programs to reengage the learner of the future.

Methodology
UPCEA and StraighterLine partnered to identify the reasons why individuals are no longer enrolled in a college or university. The results of this study focus on why new learners across different demographics and generations have disengaged with their institutions and how institutions can reengage with them. The survey targeted individuals between the ages of 20 and 34 who had college credits but are no longer enrolled in a college or university. In total, 3,236 individuals participated in the survey of which 1,021 met all study qualifications. The survey took place between April 30th and May 12th, 2021.
Executive Summary
To best represent and understand the generational and demographic differences of respondents, six personas were created and tracked to present six segments. These personas were utilized to demonstrate how generational and gender markers influence the behaviors, motivations, and preferences of disengaged learners. When considering why certain learners may have first chosen to enroll in their program, 62% of respondents said it was a personal goal, while 44% cited career advancement. Older groups were more likely to say they were motivated by personal goals than those younger. Those more recently disengaged were more likely to cite career advancement as a goal.

What Causes Learners to Disengage with Higher Education?
In order for higher education institutions to curb student disengagement early on, it is important to determine the reasons for their unenrolling. Thirty-two percent of respondents said they ultimately left their institution because of personal/family issues, while 24% said money, and 11% said work/pursue a career path. The youngest disengaged learners were most likely to say they left because they were disinterested or dissatisfied. They were also more likely to cite the pandemic. Those newly disengaged were less likely to cite money (18%) as the reason, compared to those intermediately disengaged (22%) or long-term disengaged (29%).

Respondents less satisfied with their institution were more likely to give multiple reasons for leaving, citing financial issues, not being a good fit with the institution, or a change in program delivery. Those who were more satisfied were more likely to cite family commitments as why they had to leave.

Engagement during a learner’s time at school is important for long-term retention of a student. Respondents indicated that they were extremely (14%) or very engaged (27%) with the institution during their time as a student, while another 41% were somewhat engaged. As time away from the institution increased, respondents were more likely to say their institution was not very or not at all engaged with them during their time as a student and satisfaction also decreased. In total, 48% of newly disengaged learners were satisfied with their institution, compared to 39% of intermediately disengaged learners, and 28% of long-term disengaged learners.

How Does Institutions’ Engagement with Learners Apply? Respondents who said their institution was more engaged with them when they were a student were more likely to say they have reengaged with the institution. As engagement of the institution decreased, the percentage of respondents who were not interested in reengaging with their institution increased. Respondents newly disengaged (14%) were more likely to have reengaged with their institution than those who have been intermediately (10%) or long-term disengaged (9%). Respondents who were more satisfied with their institution were more likely to reengage with the institution.

Why Have Students Not Reengaged with Their Institution?

UPCEA. StraighterLine
Among respondents who have not reengaged, 24% said it is because they are not interested/have no direct reason to, while 20% cited time/commitment issues, and 19% personal/family issues. Those who were more satisfied with their institution were more likely to cite time/commitment issues or personal/family issues, compared to those less satisfied.

**What Could Institutions do to Reengage These Learners?**
In order to prepare to reengage learners who have disengaged from their institution, administration needs to realize what learners hoped to see previously and what they can do to implement these initiatives moving forward. When asked what their institution could have done to keep them enrolled, 46% of respondents said there was nothing their institution could have done, while 20% said there was. Those who said their institution was less engaged or were less satisfied were more likely to say there was something the institution could have done to have kept them enrolled. For those who have reengaged, the most common method was to reapply or reenroll (16%), followed by engaging electronically (15%) or by phone (9%).

Respondents who indicated there was something their institution could have done to keep them enrolled were asked about the effectiveness of potential strategies and tactics. Providing a certificate for credits earned was seen as the most effective tactic for student retention (43% extremely effective), followed by providing a subsection of courses at a lower price (40% extremely effective), and providing workshops that address the struggles of being a student (32% extremely effective).

**How Likely Would Potential Learners Reenroll and Continue Their Education?**
Forty-three percent of respondents were extremely likely (21%) or very likely (22%) to continue their education. Those more recently disengaged were more likely to say they would continue. Those enrolled in a healthcare program had the highest percentage who were extremely or very likely to continue their education.

About a quarter of respondents were extremely likely (12%) or very likely (14%) to reenroll at their college or university. As time away from the institution increased, the percentage of respondents extremely or very likely to reenroll decreased.

Fourteen percent said their future career goal was to start/own a business, while 10% said to pursue a degree/certificate and further their education, and 10% said career advancement.
Disengaged Learner Segments

To best represent and understand the generational and demographic differences of respondents, six personas were created and tracked to present six segments. These personas were utilized to demonstrate how generational and gender markers influence the behaviors, motivations, and preferences of disengaged learners.

![Figure 1: Disengaged Learner Personas]

Respondents were divided into three generational segments: Generation Z age range 20-22 (29%), Young Millennial age range 23-26 (19%), and Mid-Millennial age range 27-34 (36%). The gender breakdown was composed of 63% female, 33% male, and 4% gender-variant, non-conforming, non-binary, or prefer not to say.
Detailed Findings

What Caused These Learners to Disengage from Higher Education?

**Key Insight:** *Multiple factors, not just one, were cited as reasons respondents left their institution.*

**Figure 2: Reason for Leaving Institution**

Which of the following were reasons for leaving your institution? Please select all that apply. (n=992)

- Financial Reasons: 42%
- Family Reasons/Commitments: 32%
- Not the Right Fit For Me: 30%
- Lack of Time: 24%
- Health Reasons: 15%
- Loss of Job/Change in Employment: 11%
- Change in Program Delivery (i.e., in-person to virtual): 9%

The three most cited reasons respondents left their institution were financial (42%), family reasons/commitments (32%), and not the right fit (30%).
Key Insight: Overall, the youngest generation’s primary reason was Not the Right Fit signaling their priorities aren’t tied to financial independence like the older demographics.

Figure 3: Reason for Leaving Institution - By Age

Which of the following were reasons for leaving your institution? Please select all that apply.

Traditional-age college students (18 to 22) were much less likely to cite finances as a reason for leaving the institution. However, with older generations, financial reasons were most common (42%) followed by family reasons/commitments (32%) and not the right fit (30%).

Figure 4: Reasons for Leaving Institution - By Persona

The youngest generation’s primary reason was “Not the Right Fit” signaling their priorities aren’t tied to financial independence like the older demographics.
Key Insight: Those newly disengaged were less likely to cite money (18%) as the reason they left their institution, compared to intermediately disengaged (22%) and long-term disengaged (29%) respondents. Additionally, newly disengaged respondents were more likely to say they were disinterested with their institution compared to intermediately disengaged (11%) and long-term disengaged (7%) respondents.

Figure 5: Reason for Leaving Institution - By Date of Last Enrollment
Key Insight: Respondents less satisfied were more likely to cite financial reasons, not being a good fit with the institution, or a change in program delivery as reasons for leaving their institution. They were also more likely to give multiple reasons for leaving. Those more satisfied were more likely to cite family reasons or commitments as why they had to leave.

Figure 6: Reason for Leaving Institution - By Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat Satisfied</th>
<th>Not Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Not at all Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Family/Commitments 42%
- Financial Reasons 41%
- Financial Reasons 35%
- Family/Commitments 35%
- Lack of Time 23%
- Lack of Time 29%
- Family/Commitments 32%
- Lack of Time 23%
- Change in Program Delivery 23%

Key Insight: The four most commonly cited reasons for leaving an institution by engagement level were personal/family issues, time/commitment issues, financial problems, and no interest.

Figure 7: Reasons for Leaving Institution - By Engagement-Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely Engaged</th>
<th>Very Engaged</th>
<th>Somewhat Engaged</th>
<th>Not Very Engaged</th>
<th>Not at all Engaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Personal/Family Issues 27%
- Personal/Family Issues 23%
- No Interest 24%
- No Interest 34%
- No Interest 45%
- Time/Commitment Issues 19%
- Time/Commitment Issues 23%
- Time/Commitment Issues 21%
- Personal/Family Issues 17%
- Issues w:/Institution 16%
- Financial Problems 15%
- Financial Problems 20%
- Personal/Family Issues 16%
- Time/Commitment Issues 15%
- Financial Problems 15%
- Negative Attitudes/Not Ready 15%
- Financial Problems 12%
- Negative Attitudes/Not Ready 12%
Key Insight: Respondents listed various reasons for their leaving their institution, signaling the importance of institutions’ differentiating what reasons are actionable to reengage with their learners and what are out of their control.

![Figure 8: Reason for Ultimately Leaving Institution](image)

Thirty-two percent of respondents ultimately left their institution due to personal/family issues, while 24% cited money, 11% said work/pursue a career path, and 10% being disinterested/dissatisfied with school.

Key Insight: The youngest disengaged learners (18 to 19) were most likely to say they left their institution because they were disinterested or dissatisfied. Younger populations were also more likely to cite the pandemic.

![Figure 9: Reason for Ultimately Leaving Institution - By Age](image)
**Key Insight:** As engagement of the institution decreased, the percentage of respondents who were not interested in reengaging with their institution increased.

**Figure 10: Reasons for Not Reengaging with Institution**

Why have you not reengaged with the institution? (n=888)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Interested/No Direct Reason to</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/Commitment Issues</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Family Issues</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/Career</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Attitudes/Not Ready</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with Institution</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covid-19/Pandemic</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning/intend to</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know/Not Sure</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among respondents who have not reengaged with their institution, 24% said they have not because they are not interested/have no direct reason to, while 20% said time/commitment issues, and 19% personal/family issues.

**Key Insight:** Older populations were more likely to cite personal or family issues as reasons for not reengaging with an institution, while younger populations were more likely to say they weren’t interested or had time/commitment issues.

Across generations, the most commonly cited reasons were Not Interested/No Direct Reason to, Time/Commitment Issues, and among Mid-Millennials Personal/Family Issues as well.

**Figure 11: Reasons for Not Reengaging with Institution - By Age**

Why have you not reengaged with the institution?
**Key Insight:** Across all personas, the most commonly cited reason for not reengaging with their institutions was Not Interested/No Direct Reasons To. For Young Millennials, however, the primary reason was Personal Family Issues which may indicate early family obligations being more common than other generations.

**Figure 12: Reasons for Not Reengaging with Institution - By Persona**

- **Newly Disengaged**
  - Valentina (21) Gen Z Female
  - Gen Z Cited Their Top 2 Reasons As:
    - Not Interested/No Direct Reason To: 35%
    - Time/Commitment Issues: 20%

- **Intermediately Disengaged**
  - Max (22) Gen Z Male
  - Young Millennial Cited Their Top 2 Reasons As:
    - Personal Family Issues: 25%
    - Not Interested/No Direct Reason To: 25%

- **Long-Term Disengaged**
  - Elise (24) Young Millennial Female
  - Mid-Millennial Cited Their Top 2 Reasons As:
    - Not Interested/No Direct Reason To: 22%
    - Personal Family Issues: 11%

- **Carla (28) Mid-Millennial Female**
  - Gen Z Cited Their Top 2 Reasons As:
    - Not Interested/No Direct Reason To: 30%
    - Time/Commitment Issues: 25%

- **Chris (31) Mid-Millennial Male**
  - Not Interested/No Direct Reason To: 22%
  - Time/Commitment Issues: 17%

**Key Insight:** Respondents who were more satisfied with their institution were more likely to cite time/commitment issues or personal/family issues as reasons for not reengaging. Those who were less satisfied were more likely to cite issues with their institution, negative attitudes or being unprepared, and lacking interest.

**Figure 13: Reasons for Not Reengaging with Institution - By Satisfaction**

- **Not Interested/No Direct Reason To**
  - Extremely Satisfied (n=121): 18%
  - Very Satisfied (n=220): 22%
  - Somewhat Satisfied (n=367): 27%
  - Not Very Satisfied (n=117): 3%
  - Not at all Satisfied (n=63): 2%

- **Time/Commitment Issues**
  - Extremely Satisfied (n=121): 11%
  - Very Satisfied (n=220): 14%
  - Somewhat Satisfied (n=367): 16%
  - Not Very Satisfied (n=117): 2%
  - Not at all Satisfied (n=63): 2%

- **Personal/Family Issues**
  - Extremely Satisfied (n=121): 12%
  - Very Satisfied (n=220): 13%
  - Somewhat Satisfied (n=367): 14%
  - Not Very Satisfied (n=117): 2%
  - Not at all Satisfied (n=63): 2%

- **Money**
  - Extremely Satisfied (n=121): 6%
  - Very Satisfied (n=220): 7%
  - Somewhat Satisfied (n=367): 9%
  - Not Very Satisfied (n=117): 2%
  - Not at all Satisfied (n=63): 2%

- **Work/Career**
  - Extremely Satisfied (n=121): 5%
  - Very Satisfied (n=220): 6%
  - Somewhat Satisfied (n=367): 8%
  - Not Very Satisfied (n=117): 2%
  - Not at all Satisfied (n=63): 2%

- **Negative Attitudes/Not Ready**
  - Extremely Satisfied (n=121): 4%
  - Very Satisfied (n=220): 6%
  - Somewhat Satisfied (n=367): 8%
  - Not Very Satisfied (n=117): 2%
  - Not at all Satisfied (n=63): 2%

- **Issues with Institution**
  - Extremely Satisfied (n=121): 3%
  - Very Satisfied (n=220): 4%
  - Somewhat Satisfied (n=367): 6%
  - Not Very Satisfied (n=117): 2%
  - Not at all Satisfied (n=63): 2%

- **Covid-19/Pandemic**
  - Extremely Satisfied (n=121): 1%
  - Very Satisfied (n=220): 1%
  - Somewhat Satisfied (n=367): 2%
  - Not Very Satisfied (n=117): 2%
  - Not at all Satisfied (n=63): 2%

- **Planning/Intend to**
  - Extremely Satisfied (n=121): 1%
  - Very Satisfied (n=220): 1%
  - Somewhat Satisfied (n=367): 2%
  - Not Very Satisfied (n=117): 2%
  - Not at all Satisfied (n=63): 2%

- **Other**
  - Extremely Satisfied (n=121): 7%
  - Very Satisfied (n=220): 7%
  - Somewhat Satisfied (n=367): 10%
  - Not Very Satisfied (n=117): 4%
  - Not at all Satisfied (n=63): 4%

- **Don’t Know/Not Sure**
  - Extremely Satisfied (n=121): 8%
  - Very Satisfied (n=220): 8%
  - Somewhat Satisfied (n=367): 10%
  - Not Very Satisfied (n=117): 8%
  - Not at all Satisfied (n=63): 8%
Key Insight: As the level of engagement with the institution decreased, the percentage of respondents who were not interested in reengaging increased.

Figure 14: Reasons for Not Reengaging with Institution - By Engagement Level

Respondents who said their institution was more engaged with them when they were a student were more likely to say they have reengaged with the institution since they left. Respondents who were newly disengaged (14%) were more likely to say they have reengaged than those who have been intermediately disengaged (10%) or long-term disengaged (9%). Respondents who were more satisfied with their institution were more likely to reengage with the institution.
**Key Insight:** Overall, respondents were extremely (15%) or very satisfied (26%) with the institution in which they were previously enrolled. Young Millennial learners were the most satisfied (47%) while Mid-Millennial learners were the least satisfied (22%). Satisfaction with the institution tended to decrease with age.

**Figure 15: Satisfaction with the Institution - By Persona**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newly Disengaged</th>
<th>Intermediately Disengaged</th>
<th>Long-Term Disengaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valentina (21) Gen Z Female</td>
<td>Elise (24) Young Millennial Female</td>
<td>Carla (28) Mid-Millennial Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max (22) Gen Z Male</td>
<td>Chen (25) Young Millennial Male</td>
<td>Chris (31) Mid-Millennial Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43% Extremely/Very Satisfied</td>
<td>47% Extremely/Very Satisfied</td>
<td>38% Extremely/Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39% Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>39% Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>40% Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18% Not Satisfied</td>
<td>14% Not Satisfied</td>
<td>22% Not Satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How Did Institutions Fail to Engage with These Learners?**

**Key Insight:** The majority of students did not feel strongly engaged with their institution during their time in higher education. Throughout the rest of the survey, those who indicated that they felt extremely or very engaged with their institution had greater positive sentiment towards learning and engagement with their institution. Somewhat engaged students may represent opportunities for reengagement.

**Figure 16: Level of Engagement with Institution**

Please rate the level of engagement the institution had with you during your time as a student. (n=992)

- 14% Extremely Engaged
- 27% Very Engaged
- 41% Somewhat Engaged
- 13% Not Very Engaged
- 5% Not at all Engaged

Forty-one percent of respondents were extremely (14%) or very engaged (27%) with the institution during their time as a student, while another 41% were somewhat engaged.
Key Insight: Those 18 to 19-years-old were least likely to say that the institution was extremely engaged with them while 23 to 26-year-olds were most likely.
Key Insight: As time away from the institution increased, respondents were more likely to say their institution was not very or not at all engaged with them during their time as a student.

Figure 19: Level of Engagement with Institution - By Date of Last Enrollment

Please rate the level of engagement the institution had with you during your time as a student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Engaged</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Engaged</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Engaged</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very Engaged</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Engaged</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Insight: Individuals who were more satisfied with their institution were more likely to say the institution had a greater level of engagement with them during their time as a student.

Figure 20: Level of Engagement with Institution - By Satisfaction
**Key Insight:** Engineering students were most likely to say their institution was at least somewhat engaged, and the results show varied prioritization of students and their engagement by the institution.

**Figure 21: Level of Engagement with Institution - By Subject Studied**
What Could Institutions Do to Reengage These Learners?

**Key Insight:** When asked what their main motivation for initially enrolling in their program was, most respondents said their main motivation was to start a career or a business.

![Figure 22: Main Motivation for Enrollment](image)

Most respondents said their main motivation for initially enrolling in their program was career advancement or business, while 15% said curiosity/interest in/enjoy the field. Responses varied across different categories.

**Key Insight:** Overall, motivation for enrollment is relatively consistent regardless of the date of last enrollment. Newly disengaged respondents were more likely to say their initial motivation for enrollment was career advancement or to start a business, while those further removed from enrollment were more likely to cite curiosity or interest in the field.

![Figure 23: Main Motivation for Enrollment - By Date of Last Enrollment](image)
Key Insight: Motivating factors for enrollment were similar to previous data where career/starting a business greatly dominated as the main motivation. Curiosity/interest in/enjoying the field followed.

Figure 24: Motivating Factors for Enrollment

Sixty-two percent of respondents said it was a personal goal to enroll in a program, while 44% said their motivating factor was career advancement, and 42% said love of learning. Responses were coded for multiple answers.

Key Insight: Those more recently disengaged with their institution were more likely to cite career advancement as a goal. Intermediately disengaged individuals were most likely to cite five of the nine categories.

Figure 25: Motivating Factors for Enrollment - By Date of Last Enrollment
Key Insight: Older populations were more likely to say they were motivated by personal goals than those younger. Career advancement was most often cited by 18- to 19-year-olds.

Figure 26: Motivating Factors for Enrollment - By Age

Overall, the top four motivations for learners when selecting a program were personal goal, career advancement, love of learning, and improving salary.

Key Insight: The most important motivating factor for enrollment across all personas was that higher education was a personal goal of theirs. Love of learning and career advancement were the second and third-most cited motivating factors with Gen Z also indicating that improving their salary was significant as well.

Figure 27: Motivating Factors for Enrollment - By Persona
**Key Insight:** Forty-six percent of respondents said no, there was nothing the institution could have done to keep them enrolled, while 20% said yes, there was.

**Figure 28: Institution Enrollment of Respondents**

Is there anything the institution could have done to have kept you enrolled?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall (n=989)</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>46%</th>
<th>34%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 to 19 (n=30)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 22 (n=139)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 to 26 (n=210)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 to 29 (n=209)</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 34 (n=401)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Insight:** When asked if there was anything their institution could have done to keep them enrolled, more respondents said no than yes. Younger generations were more likely to say that there was something that could have done than older generations.

**Figure 29: Institution Enrollment of Respondents - By Persona**

We posed the question: Is there anything the institution could have done to have kept you enrolled?

Valentina (21)  
Gen Z Female  
1  
26.5% said Yes  
48.0% said No

Max (23)  
Gen Z Male  
2  
22.2% said Yes  
48.9% said No

Elise (24)  
Young Millennial Female  
3  
24.8% said Yes  
41.3% said No

Chen (25)  
Young Millennial Male  
4  
14.5% said Yes  
43.5% said No

Carla (28)  
Mid-Millennial Female  
5  
18.0% said Yes  
49.7% said No

Chris (31)  
Mid-Millennial Male  
6  
21.9% said Yes  
41.0% said No
**Key Insight:** Respondents who were intermediately disengaged (last enrolled 2015 to 2018) were most likely to say the institution could have done something to keep them enrolled (25%).

**Figure 30: Institution Enrollment of Respondents - By Date of Last Enrollment**

Is there anything the institution could have done to have kept you enrolled?

- Newly Disengaged (2019 - 2021, n=215): 22% Yes, 50% No, 27% Not Sure
- Intermediately Disengaged (2015 to 2018, n=303): 25% Yes, 39% No, 36% Not Sure
- Long-Term Disengaged (Before 2015, n=471): 16% Yes, 49% No, 35% Not Sure

**Key Insight:** Those who said their institution was less engaged were more likely to say there was something the institution could have done to have kept them enrolled.

**Figure 31: Institution Enrollment of Respondents - By Level of Engagement**

- Extremely Engaged: 14.6% Yes, 33% No, 52% Not Sure
- Very Engaged: 27.3% Yes, 36% No, 37% Not Sure
- Somewhat Engaged: 40.4% Yes, 36% No, 24% Not Sure
- Not Very Engaged: 13.1% Yes, 41% No, 46% Not Sure
- Not at all Engaged: 4.5% Yes, 60% No, 36% Not Sure
Key Insight: Those who were not very or not at all satisfied with their institution were more likely to say there was something the institution could have done to have kept them enrolled.

Figure 32: Institution Enrollment of Respondents - By Satisfaction

Key Insight: Respondents who had been enrolled in a science (biological and physical) or business program were most likely to say there was something the institution could have done to have kept them enrolled, while those in education were least likely. This may indicate more attention towards the STEM departments than those that lean towards liberal arts.

Figure 33: Institution Enrollment of Respondents - By Subject

Communication and engineering students were most likely to say there was nothing that their institutions could have done to keep them enrolled.
**Key Insight:** Respondents who indicated there was something their institution could have done to keep them enrolled felt providing a certificate for credits earned would be most effective for student retention.

**Figure 34: Effectiveness of Tactics for Student Retention**

Please rate how effective the following tactics or strategies would have been to retain you as a student? (n=200)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Extremely Effective</th>
<th>Very Effective</th>
<th>Somewhat Effective</th>
<th>Not Very Effective</th>
<th>Not at all Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide a Certificate for Credits Earned</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide You With a Subsection of Courses That You Could Take at a Lower Price</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Workshops to Address Your Struggles as a Student.</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Counseling to Reengage You</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a Concierge Service That Would Help You</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Providing a certificate for credits earned was seen as most effective for student retention (43% extremely effective), followed by providing a subsection of courses at a lower price (40% extremely effective), and providing workshops addressing the struggles of being a student (32% extremely effective).
Key Insight: By personas, generation Z males and young-millennial females were the most likely to find all strategies and tactics effective while mid-millennial females were least likely to find any strategy effective.

Figure 35: Effectiveness of Tactics for Student Retention - By Persona

If respondents said yes, what strategies would help retain these students?
**Key Insight:** Based off the strategies above, the effectiveness of tactics for student retention were able to address specific struggles that each learner persona faced and how institutions could address these issues in these example instances.

**Figure 36: Effectiveness of Tactics for Student Retention - By Persona**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons For Learners Leaving Their Institutions...</th>
<th>What Could Institutions Do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Valentina (21)  
Gen Z Female  
Valentina ultimately left her institution due to her family moving out of the state she attended college in. Due to those family issues, she had to withdraw and leave her institution to help at home. | Valentina would value a workshop to address her struggles with her family issues. |
| Max (22)  
Gen Z Male  
Max originally enrolled in school because of his parents, however, after a short time in his institution, he didn’t think that his institution was the right fit for him, so he dropped out of higher-ed. | Max would like to see his institution offer more subsection courses that are engaging to him. |
| Elise (24)  
Young Millennial Female  
Elise dealt with a personal emergency with her family’s business and had to unenroll from her institution temporarily and never got around to re-engaging. | Elise would like to see her institution prioritize counseling services to help re-engage her after she left. |
| Chen (25)  
Young Millennial Male  
Chen set aside funding for his college education, but eventually ran out of funds. Without additional university or community support, Chen did not have the means to support himself at school. | Chen would value a concierge service to help him with his personal issues. |
| Carla (28)  
Mid-Millennial Female  
Carla had to leave her institution to make more money to support her and her family. She wasn’t able to continue studying in her institution without a stable source of income. | It’s difficult to re-engage Carla, however she would most value a certificate program to showcase her credits. |
| Chris (31)  
Mid-Millennial Male  
Chris dealt with some personal problems at school that he could no longer be a full-time student. He had to ultimately leave to focus on himself and work a part-time job until further notice. | Chris would like to see a counselling service to help him work through his personal issues and re-engage him. |
What is the Likelihood of Reenrollment and Continuing Education?

**Key Insight:** Across all age groups, the majority of learners would be at least somewhat likely to continue their education. As age increased, learners were more likely to say that they were only somewhat likely. Twenty-three- to twenty-six-year-olds were most likely to say they would continue their education (27%) than any other age group.

Overall, 21% would be extremely likely and 22% very likely to continue their education. Those 23-26 would be most likely (27%).
**Key Insight:** Overall, forty-three percent were extremely likely (21%) or very likely (22%) to continue their education. Young millennials were the most likely to say they would continue their education and mid-millennial males were the least likely to continue their education. Overall females were more likely than males to indicate that they were very likely to continue.

![Figure 38: Likelihood of Continuing Education - By Persona](image)

*calculated with the sum of “Extremely” and “Very” Likely responses
**calculated with the sum of “Not very” and “Not at all” Likely responses
Key Insight: Those newly or intermediately disengaged are more likely to continue their education, suggesting that if institutions want to get disengaged learners to reenroll, they need to reengage with them soon after they drop out.

Half of those newly or intermediately disengaged would be very likely to reenroll, as opposed to only 1/3 of long-term disengaged individuals.

**Figure 39: Likelihood of Continuing Education - By Date of Last Enrollment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Newly Disengaged (21.7%)</th>
<th>Intermediately Disengaged (31.2%)</th>
<th>Long - Term Disengaged (47.1%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019 - 2021</td>
<td>Very Likely 52%</td>
<td>Very Likely 50%</td>
<td>Somewhat Likely 42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Likely 30%</td>
<td>Somewhat Likely 34%</td>
<td>Very Likely 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Very Likely 19%</td>
<td>Not Very Likely 15%</td>
<td>Not Very Likely 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 - 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Insight: All degree majors were at least somewhat likely to say they would continue their education.

Half of healthcare and social sciences majors would be very likely to continue their education while only about a third of law and computer science and math majors would be.

**Figure 40: Likelihood of Continuing Education - By Subject**

- Very Likely*
- Somewhat
- Not Likely**

*calculated with the sum of “Extremely” and “Very” Likely responses  
**calculated with the sum of “Not very” and “Not at all” Likely responses
**Key Insight:** Overall, more than half of respondents would be at least somewhat likely to reenroll at their university, with 12% extremely and 14% very likely to do so. Younger individuals would be more likely to reenroll than those older.

Twenty percent of respondents 23 to 26 would be extremely likely to reenroll at their college or university. Only 9% of those 27 to 34 would be extremely likely and 20% said they would be not all likely.

**Figure 41: Likelihood of Reenrollment**

How likely would you be to reenroll at your college or university? (n=980)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Extremely Likely</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely</th>
<th>Not Very Likely</th>
<th>Not at all Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall (n=980)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 19 (n=30)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 22 (n=138)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 to 26 (n=209)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 to 29 (n=206)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 34 (n=397)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Insight: Younger generations were the most likely to reenroll in their institution after they left with young millennial females saying they were very likely to reenroll (38%). The older generations were least likely to say they would be likely to reenroll in their institution indicating that the urgency of reengaging students by age can provide a more likely reenrollment outcome.

![Figure 42: Likelihood of Reenrollment - By Persona](image)

Key Insight: As time away from the institution increases, the percentage of respondents who are extremely or very likely to reenroll at their college or university decreases.

![Figure 43: Likelihood of Reenrollment - By Date of Last Enrollment](image)
Key Insight: Respondents who were more satisfied with their institution were more likely to consider reenrolling at their college or university.

**Figure 44: Likelihood of Reenrollment - By Satisfaction**
How likely would you be to reenroll at your college or university?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Level</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely</th>
<th>Not Very Likely</th>
<th>Not at all Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Satisfied (n=147)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Satisfied (n=253)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied (n=393)</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very Satisfied (n=120)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Satisfied (n=67)</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Insight: Of respondents who would be extremely likely to continue their education, nearly half said they would be extremely likely to reenroll at their college or university.

**Figure 45: Likelihood of Reenrollment - By Likelihood of Continuing Education**
How likely would you be to reenroll at your college or university?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likelihood of Continuing Education</th>
<th>Extremely Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely</th>
<th>Not Very Likely</th>
<th>Not at all Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Likely (n=205)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Likely (n=211)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Likely (n=359)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very Likely (n=148)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Likely (n=57)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Insight: Individuals who felt their institution was more engaged were more likely to say they would reenroll at their college or university.

Figure 46: Likelihood of Reenrollment - By Engagement-Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Level</th>
<th>Extremely Likely</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely</th>
<th>Not Very Likely</th>
<th>Not at all Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Engaged (n=141)</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Engaged (n=262)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Engaged (n=397)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very Engaged (n=130)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Engaged (n=50)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Insight: Individuals who have reengaged with their institution since they left were much more likely to reenroll at their college or university.

Figure 47: Likelihood of Reenrollment - By Reengagement

How likely would you be to reenroll at your college or university?

Yes (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely Likely</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely</th>
<th>Not Very Likely</th>
<th>Not at all Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No (n=881)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely Likely</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely</th>
<th>Not Very Likely</th>
<th>Not at all Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Key Insight:** There are many factors that play into the reenrollment. Those who were more satisfied and engaged while at school are more likely to reenroll at their higher education institution.

**Figure 48: Likelihood of Reenrollment - Composite Additional Drivers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Last Enrollment</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Likelihood of Continuing Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As time away from the university increases, the percentage of respondents who are extremely likely or very likely to reenroll at their university decreases</td>
<td>Respondents who were more satisfied with their institution were significantly more likely to consider re-enrollment than those who were not satisfied</td>
<td>The more likely respondents were to continue their education (extremely likely and very likely), the more likely they were willing to re-enroll in their institution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Re-Engagement</th>
<th>Subject-Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who felt their institution was more engaged were more likely to say they would reenroll at their college or university</td>
<td>Individuals who have re-engaged with their institution since they left were much more likely to reenroll at their college or university</td>
<td>Engineering students were most likely to say they would reenroll at their college or university, followed by education and healthcare students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Time Away Increases, Re-Enrollment Likelihood Decreases
- Satisfied
- Not Satisfied
- Engagement with Institution Increases, Re-Enrollment Likelihood Increases
- YES
- NO
- Engineering, Education, Healthcare
How Can Institutions Keep Learners Engaged and Enrolled?

Key Insight: Nine out of ten individuals have not reengaged with their institution. Respondents who said their institution was more engaged with them when they were students were more likely to have reengaged with their institution.

Figure 49: Reengagement with Institution

Key Insight: The young millennial generation has had the highest engagement of the age groups, and younger respondents were more likely to have reengaged with their institution.

Figure 50: Reengagement with Institution - By Persona
**Key Insight:** Respondents who were more satisfied with their institution were more likely to reengage with the school.

![Figure 51: Reengagement with Institution - By Satisfaction](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Level</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Satisfied</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very Satisfied</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Satisfied</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Insight: When asked if respondents had engaged with the institution since they left, respondents who said their institution was more engaged with them when they were a student were more likely to have reengaged with the institution. This indicates that the more engaged institutions can be with students while enrolled, the more likely they are to re-engage with their institution after they unenroll or leave higher education.

Figure 52: Reengagement with Institution - By Engagement - Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Level</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Engaged</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Engaged</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Engaged</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very Engaged</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Engaged</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We posed the question: Have you re-engaged with the institution since you left?
**Key Insight:** The longer it has been since an individual left their institution, there is less likelihood that they have reengaged with their school.

![Figure 53: Reengagement with Institution - By Date of Last Enrollment](image)

Respondents who were newly disengaged (14%) were more likely to say they have reengaged with their institution since they left than those who have been intermediately disengaged (10%) or long-term disengaged (9%).

**Key Insight:** Respondents who were enrolled in a law program were most likely to reengage with an institution (18%), followed by education (16%), and communications (15%) students.

![Figure 54: Reengagement with Institution - By Subject Studied](image)
Key Insight: The most common methods of reengagement were to reapply or reenroll, (16%), engaging electronically (15%), followed by reengagement by phone (9%).

Figure 55: Means of Reengagement with Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Re-apply/Re-Enroll</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging Electronically</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Phone</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Responses Included:

- Ordering Transcripts ("other" 27%)
- Mail ("other" 27%)
- Letters of Intent ("other" 27%)
- Spoke with Institution (6%)
- Institutional Event (4%)
- Institution Reached Out (2%)

Key Insight: Gen Z and Young Millennials have the highest extremely satisfied ratings. Mid-Millennials have the most very satisfied but also the greatest percentage not at all satisfied.

Figure 56: Satisfaction with Reengagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Extremely Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat Satisfied</th>
<th>Not Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Not at all Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valentina</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Gen Z Female</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Gen Z Male</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elise</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Young Millennial Female</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Young Millennial Male</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Mid-Millennial Female</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Mid-Millennial Male</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Can Institutions Prepare to Reengage and Retain Their Learners?

**Key Insight:** Understanding the generational and behavioral differences that lead to a student’s reason behind unenrolling from their institution is a key variable for how institutions can reengage those disengaged. For each different reasoning and generational differences, institutions need to look at what benefits and tactics can best suit their needs.

**Figure 57: How to Prepare Personas**

- **Valentina (21)**
  *Gen Z Female*
  As a Gen Z female, Valentina ultimately had to leave her institution due to family/personal problems. She would value a workshop to address her struggles with her family, and also is looking to be re-engaged with quickly after her withdrawal.

- **Elise (24)**
  *Young Millennial Female*
  Elise had to deal with a personal emergency in her family’s business and had to unenroll temporarily. To help re-engage her, Elise would like to see counseling services to help her work through some of her issues. Institutions should reach out to Elise fairly quickly after her withdrawal to aid her.

- **Max (22)**
  *Gen Z Male*
  Max began to feel disinterested in the field of study he was learning and decided that higher-education was not for him. To appeal to his needs, he would like to see the institution offer more engaging content through a subsection of low cost courses.

- **Carla (28)**
  *Mid-Millennial Female*
  Carla had to leave her institution to find a more stable source of income with a new job. It is difficult to re-engage Carla because of her financial and familial obligations so she would value a part-time certificate course program to help her gain additional skills while still supporting her family.

- **Chen (25)**
  *Young Millennial Male*
  As a young millennial male, Chen ran into financial issues when his college funds ran out. He does not have the means to support himself, so he is looking for his institution to bring in specialized services to help him navigate.

- **Chris (31)**
  *Mid-Millennial Male*
  Chris has been out of school for some time and requires engagement consistently and persistently in order to re-engage him. Some of the needed strategies and tactics include counseling services and providing lower cost courses.
Impact on Higher Education
Over the course of the last decade, higher education has not held the same value for students as it has in the past. With technology dominating the landscape of the workplace and providing unique opportunities that didn’t previously exist, students are disengaging from higher education at a higher rate. In addition, generational differences as well as the mental health effects of the pandemic are at play. These factors, coupled with a rapidly changing economy, are forcing students to question their investment in and commitment to higher education.

The reasons that drive why different generations disengage more than others demonstrate the importance of institutions focusing on the generational and demographic differences of their current and disengaged students. While much of the literature now focuses on the mindset of disengaged learners, the research of UPCEA and StraighterLine looks at how institutions can best understand the perception and reasons of those disengaged and change the trajectory of their offerings, engagement, and communication.

Overall, respondents indicated that the three primary reasons they left their institutions were finances (42%), family reasons/commitments (32%), and that it was not the right fit (30%). However, the younger generations indicated that their primary reason was not the right fit compared to older generations who cited financial issues as their primary reason for leaving. Institutions need to look at the reasons for disengagement and identify those on which they can tangibly take action. The survey indicates the more satisfied and engaged learners felt while still at school, the better the chances of their reengaging.

Overall, about a quarter of respondents were at least very likely to reenroll at their college or university, providing a basis on which institutions could begin to develop a reenrollment plan. To address what institutions could do to better prepare, it is important to identify what initially motivated students to enroll in their institutions. Across all generations, the primary motivation factor was their having a personal goal and wanting to advance their career. Institutions can learn from this data and establish key strategies and tactics to reengage their students. For respondents who indicated that there was something their institution could have done to retain them, providing a certificate for credits, a subsection of courses at a lower price, and workshops that address students’ struggles were seen as effective strategies.

The findings of this study demonstrate the necessity of institutions dedicating time and effort to a wide variety of students while they are still at school and the urgency to reengage as soon as possible after they might disengage.