

Fall 2024

Student Well-Being Institutional Support Survey

Executive Summary

Prepared by: Sarah Lewis (selewis@loyola.edu), Associate Director of Messina
Jason Parcover (jparcover@loyola.edu), Assistant Vice President Student Wellbeing

BACKGROUND

The SWISS Survey (Student Well-being Institutional Support Survey) is an assessment tool developed by Butler University from an extensive review of higher education literature and is designed to capture student perceptions of how well their institutions support various aspects of their well-being. The SWISS helps gather valuable insights into how well Loyola is supporting various aspects of student well-being, ensuring that we can continuously improve the resources and opportunities available to students. This not only aligns with our Jesuit values of *Cura Personalis*, caring for the whole person, but also reflects what we know regarding increased student well-being leading to more positive outcomes for students and institutions -- research has shown that higher well-being leads to higher GPAs, student retention, and career outcomes.

The SWISS survey consists of a base question set (17 questions), along with additional questions related to Jesuit Identity and Retention (4 questions). Loyola also included an optional question set related to Belonging (17 questions). The final 13 questions of the survey included self-reported demographic questions that were not explored in this initial report but may be useful in the future for study by individual departments. The full survey instruments can be viewed on the [Student Development Assessment webpage](#).

Fall 2024 marked the inaugural administration of the SWISS at Loyola, with plans to administer the survey to all students, including graduate students, every three years. From October 15 to November 5, 4,955 students were invited to participate, including 3,885 undergraduates, 1,059 graduate students, and 11 students from other categories. A total of 1,009 students (20.4%) began the survey, and 636 completed the final set of questions, resulting in an overall response rate of 12.8%. The average response rate across the seven participating institutions for FA24-SP25 was 28%. Typically, a response rate of 30% is considered desirable for better generalizability of the results, and since this response rate is below that threshold, we must exercise caution when drawing conclusions. However, the survey still provides valuable insights that can highlight potential areas for further exploration before the next administration of the survey.

Preliminary analysis was completed using demographic data obtained from Loyola University records. For clarity, the number of responses for each question group is provided throughout this report where relevant. The distribution of responses by class year and other demographic categories generally mirrored that of the student body.

STATISTICAL METHODS

Summary Statistics – The initial data exploration was conducted using standard summary statistics, including counts, percentages, and measures such as the median and mode, which are more suitable than mean for analyzing Likert scale data.

Ordinal Logistic Regression – A statistical technique useful for analysis of Likert scale data, which models the relationship between one or more independent variables (such as student demographics) and an ordinal outcome variable (the student's response), while also identifying which variables are statistically significant.

Multiple Correspondence Analysis – Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) is a statistical technique used to examine the relationships between multiple categorical variables by identifying clusters of related variables. It is particularly useful for identifying intersectional identities that may influence responses. In many cases, a single identity category may appear relevant but not be statistically significant on its own, making MCA valuable for uncovering more complex patterns.

KEY FINDINGS

Preliminary analysis of the SWISS survey data reveals generally positive results, indicating that Loyola provides a strong foundation for student well-being. Students consistently reported feeling supported, safe, and informed about available wellness and academic resources on campus. The main areas of improvement include better integration of the graduate student experience into campus culture and more effective communication of campus traditions and programming. More findings are detailed below. These results serve as a benchmark for future iterations of this survey.

AREAS OF STRENGTH IN STUDENT SUPPORT

Imparting Jesuit Values: Students appreciate the positive impact of Jesuit values, with 84% of students (n=633) indicating that they *agree* or *strongly agree* that their Loyola experience is positively impacted by the University's Jesuit Catholic mission, identity, and values. Students also appreciate Loyola's commitment to building habits of life-long learning and values discernment, with 85% and 86% (n=662), respectively, agreeing that Loyola encourages these habits *quite a bit* or *very much*.

Cultivating a Sense of Belonging: Other areas of strength include providing a sense of belonging, including fostering an environment of being open to others' world views and an emphasis on inclusion for all. Students also feel that Loyola provides spaces to feel welcome, relax, and engage with other students with similar interests, and they feel safe in residence halls and outdoor spaces. Highlights of areas within Student Development which received high rates of agreement are summarized below in Table 1:

		Agree + Strongly Agree
Residence Life & Housing	To what extent do you agree that your housing situation allows you to do the following:	
	• Connect intellectually with other students (Loyola only) (n=1004)	90%
	• Feel safe (n=1004)	93%
	• Pursue creative interests (n=1004)	85%
	• Pursue recreational interests (n=1004)	87%
Wellness: FAC, Counseling Center, Student Health Services	To what extent do you agree that your institution provides adequate:	
	• Exercise/Fitness facilities (n=902)	83%
	• Counseling/mental health services (n=901)	77%
	• Physical health services (n=901)	70%
	To what extent do you agree that you know where to go on campus if you are:	
	• Worried about your mental health (n=693)	83%
	• Worried about your physical health (n=697)	77%
Office of Student Engagement	To what extent do you agree that your institution provides:	
	• Opportunities for you to meet other students (n=717)	89%
	• Activities for students on campus or close to campus (n=718)	86%
	• Opportunities for you to pursue non-academic interests (n=718)	80%
	• Ways for you to connect with the local community (n=716)	79%
	• Spaces to engage with students who have similar interests (n=716)	90%

Table 1. Highlights of Student Responses related to Student Development

Providing Academic Support: Survey responses indicate that academic support is a notable strength within the student experience. A strong majority of students (88%, n=765) reported that they often or very often are encouraged by faculty to explore new ideas, reflecting our Jesuit values and a campus culture that values intellectual curiosity and academic growth. Additionally, the vast majority of students *agree* or *strongly agree* that Loyola encourages exploration of a variety of academic interests (97%; n=659) and encourages students in setting academic goals (93%; n=662).

Specific academic services also received high marks, where another strong majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that Loyola offers adequate academic advising (85%, n=763), and tutoring services for a variety of subjects (81%, n=763). Importantly, 85% (n=695) of respondents indicated that they *agree* or *strongly agree* that they know where to go on campus if they are struggling academically. This level of awareness points to visibility of academic resources, reinforcing the university's commitment to ensuring students are well-supported in their academic journey.

IDENTIFIED GAPS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Communication regarding Campus Involvement: Survey data revealed a gap in how students receive information about campus programs and services. When asked how they most often learn about campus events, programs, or services, no single method emerged as the clear favorite, reinforcing the communication gap. The top three responses were Regular Campus Email Blasts (27.4%), Word of Mouth (15.4%), and The Bridge (13.8%).

Additionally, 32% of students (n=697) selected *disagree* or *strongly disagree* with the statement that they know where to go on campus if they feel socially isolated. (As a point of comparison, students were more confident in knowing where to seek help for academic or mental health concerns, with only 15% (n=696) selecting *disagree* or *strongly disagree* with relation to academic support, and 17% with mental health support.) Similarly, 38% of students (n=718) reported being uncertain about whether Loyola provides campus traditions that unite all students, with higher negative responses from graduate students (46.5%), commuter students (42.6%), and students identifying as Black (43.6%) or Hispanic (43.8%).

When compared to responses from Table 1 that indicate that most students are aware of resources and opportunities, these findings suggest that students are unclear on how to access and engage with this information effectively. This points to a clear communication gap specifically regarding campus involvement. Addressing this gap could improve student participation, satisfaction, and sense of belonging.

Expansion of Financial Literacy Resources: Resources related to financial literacy emerged as a largely agreed-upon area of needed improvement. When asked “To what extent do you agree that your institution provides adequate resources for you to learn about: Managing your money; Paying bills; Loan management; Saving and/or Investing; Salaries or wages; Employment benefits,” 67–75% of students responded with *disagree*, *strongly disagree*, or *I don’t know*, which is a notably higher rate of uncertainty/disagreement compared to other survey items.

Interestingly, responses to a separate question regarding contributors to stress during the academic year suggest that financial concerns are not a major source of stress for most students: 75% (n=635) reported that finances contributed *very little* or *some* to their stress, while 10% selected *not applicable*. Therefore, further exploration is recommended to clarify whether this represents a general interest or a specific gap in support.

Graduate Student Connection to Campus: While graduate students appear to be less of a retention risk, they are more likely to feel disconnected from campus resources and culture, as evidenced by notable uncertainty and/or disagreement in their responses. Examples are highlighted in Table 2. Loyola’s current Strategic Plan includes initiatives to create a more consistent graduate student experience across programs, highlighting the need to assess for future improvements in campus engagement. The areas in Table 2 may present a starting point to explore the level of interest among graduate students toward expansion of these resources.

	All Students	Graduate Students
<i>How often do you have opportunities to interact with a diverse array of people through:</i>	Responses of “never” or “not applicable”	
Student clubs or organizations	16%	58%
Attendance at campus programs/events	13%	41%
Campus Common Spaces	15%	37%
<i>To what extent do you agree that your institution offers adequate:</i>	Responses of “I don’t know”	
Tutoring for a variety of subjects	13%	33%
Opportunities to learn effective study skills	10%	23%
Spaces where students can engage with students who have similar interests	10%	20%
Spaces where students can relax	11%	31%
Activities for students on or close to campus	7%	24%
Ways to connect with local community	7%	22%
Campus traditions that unite all students	15%	34%

Table 2. Graduate students tend to respond negatively or with uncertainty at higher rates when asked about opportunities available on campus

AREAS OF EXPLORATION

Student Perception of Identity:

An interesting pattern emerged in student responses to two related questions: *How much does your institution emphasize the importance of “Understanding aspects of your own identity” vs. “Understanding aspects of others’ identities”* (both n=826). This contrast prompted further demographic analysis, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Preliminary analysis using ordinal logistic regression showed limited statistical significance overall, with notable p-values ($p < 0.05$) primarily among students identifying as white. This suggests that additional analysis may help uncover relevant intersectional identities.

While it's unclear whether this represents an area requiring intervention, the findings indicate a potential opportunity to explore how students perceive identity development. Some may view self-reflection and learning about others as distinct processes, suggesting a need to reinforce messaging around the interconnectedness of identity exploration.

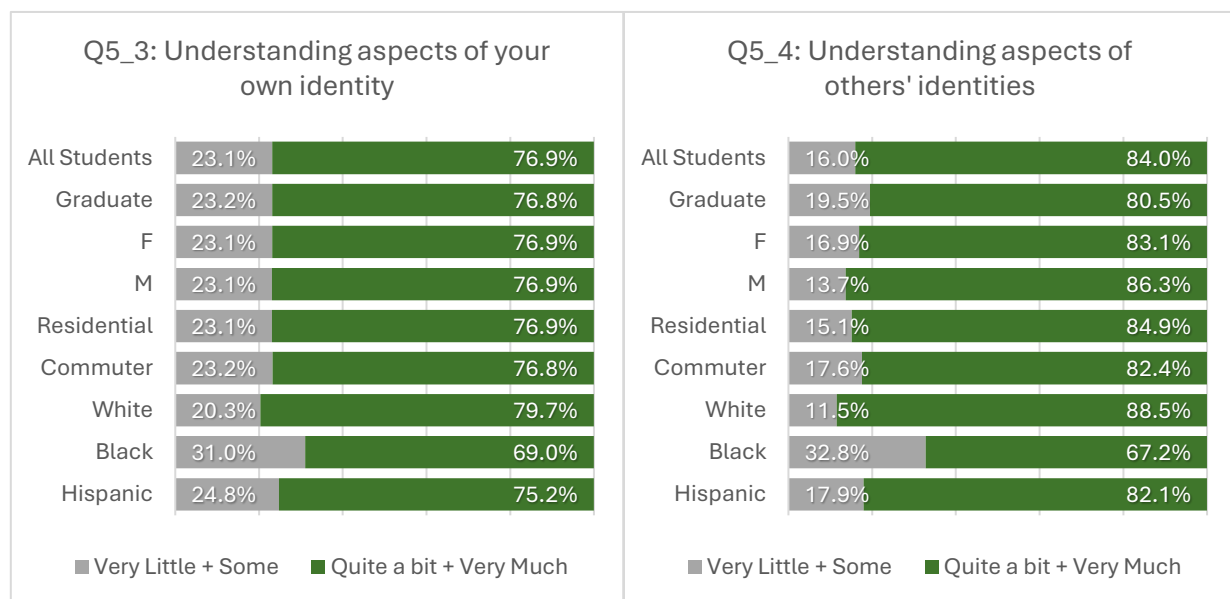


Figure 1. Comparison of Perceptions of Identity Exploration

Student Skills and Needs Affecting Retention: 27.7% of students (n=636) reported having considered leaving Loyola at some point, with statistically significant differences observed among men (34.4%) and graduate students (18.5%). Common reasons cited for considering departure include financial need, mental health concerns, and social transition difficulties. Reasons for remaining include community of friends and/or teammates, family support and encouragement, difficulty of transferring, and the desire to persevere and not lose progress toward a degree. This suggests that, together with sense of belonging, intrinsic motivation is a key area for student success and retention.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the data provide valuable insights into areas where further exploration and improvement are needed. To build on this foundation, we recommend the following actions:

- **Department-Level Review:** Individual departments should examine these results from their own lens to better understand and address the specific needs of their students.
- **Expanded Demographic Analysis:** While this report includes basic roster demographics, future research should incorporate available information regarding more detailed demographic categories. Additionally, while there are some differences in responses based on demographic factors, many of these differences were not individually statistically significant, so further investigation should be done to consider intersectionality of identities. Multiple Correspondence Analysis suggests potential identity clusters, such as First-Generation Status/Race/Ethnicity and Gender/Commuter Status, that may help explain these responses. MCA could also be applied to additional self-reported categories for further context.
- **Enhanced Communication:** Improving the clarity and accessibility of communication channels is essential to help students navigate and engage with campus programs and resources more effectively.
- **Focused Support for Graduate Students:** Given their distinct responses and needs reflected in the survey, graduate students should be given targeted attention in future planning and support initiatives.

Over time, this assessment will also allow us to track the impact of the well-being components of Loyola's new [Strategic Plan](#). In the spirit of the *magis*, we remain dedicated to these improvements and striving for excellence, ensuring that every student feels welcome, and that their Loyola journey is engaging and transformative.