

**Academic Leadership
Learning Collaborative**



First-Year Student Retention:
Significant Differences in Profiles and
Engagement Experiences of Retained
Versus Non-Retained Students

Custom Analysis
November 2009

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Executive Summary and Recommendations **5**

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To Help Sustain and Enhance Student Success, It Is Important To Identify Traits and Engagement Experiences of Those Who Are Retained Versus Those Who Are Not During Their First Year

What factors impact student success/retention their first year at JSC?



What traits characterize students who succeed during their first year?



How can JSC enhance first-year student retention and success?

All research findings presented in this report represent statistically significant differences identified between NSSE responses of retained versus non-retained students ($p < .05$) – *Recommendations for identifying and better supporting students at risk of retention are highlighted accordingly.*

Eduventures Approached This Research Investigation Using the Following Methodology

<p style="text-align: center;">Phase I</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Develop Research Objective</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Phase II</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Identify Research Questions</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Phase III</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Retrieve and Analyze Data*</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Phase IV</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report Results and Recommendations*</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective: Identify statistically significant differences between demographics and engagement experiences of retained and non-retained first-year students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors impact student success/retention their first year at JSC? • What traits characterize students who succeed during their first year? • How can JSC enhance first-year student retention and success? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrieve, merge, and analyze 2008 NSSE data with Spring and Fall 2009 student information data/snapshots (N=91): Test (ANOVA, cross-tabulations) for statistically significant differences between retained and non-retained student experiences regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Level of Academic Challenge – Active and Collaborative Learning – Student-Faculty Interaction – Enriching Educational Experiences – Supportive Campus Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ There are select and statistically significant demographic, academic, and engagement differences between retained and non-retained first-year students. ✓ On average, non-retained students score significantly lower with regard to NSSE's Supportive Campus Environment and Academic Challenge. ✓ Based on identified differences, there are opportunities for JSC to better target and engage first-year students.

*Note: Only responses in which statistically significant differences emerged between retained (n=73) and non-retained (n=18) first-year students are reported, unless noted otherwise; While differences emerged as being statistically significant, it is important to take into account the small sample size of non-retained students when interpreting results.

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There Are Select Demographic and Academic Differences Between Retained and Non-Retained First-Year Students

Profiling First-Year Students at Risk of Retention*		
Indicator	Finding(s)	Recommendation(s)
Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A slightly, but significantly, higher percentage of non-retained first-year students were out of state and/or took courses fully online. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Help target students at risk of retention early-on in their first year by flagging those who enrolled part-time, out-of-state, or attended online. ✓ Evaluate its 100% online programming to determine the extent to which it may impact retention.
Academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-retained students earned slightly lower high school and college GPAs, and took slightly fewer credits than their retained counterparts. Non-retained students were significantly more likely to negatively perceive their educational experience; However, they were also more likely to provide a poor evaluation of advising. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students with fewer credits, such as those who are part-time, and those earning lower GPA's (>3.0, average) may be more at risk of retention their first-year and should be targeted for outreach (e.g., academic support) ✓ It is possible that students at risk of retention may be in need of greater advising support; JSC may want to consider better promoting available advising support services to these particular students.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all students who leave do so because they are dissatisfied: Over one third of non-retained students indicated in their last semester that they would go to JSC if they could start over again; half (50%) provided a positive evaluation of their entire educational experience so far. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ While this suggests there may be factors beyond JSC's control that are impacting first-year retention (e.g., personal, financial, family-related), JSC may want to further investigate whether there are opportunities to better provide/promote social, financial, and personal support services. ✓ Strengthen or create an exit interview process to help consistently collect data from non-retained students to better inform retention strategies.

*All differences reported in this table are statistically significant (p<.05).
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To what extent do these findings strengthen, support, and inform current knowledge about first-year student success at JSC?

On Average, Non-Retained Students Score Significantly Lower With Regard to NSSE's Supportive Campus Environment and Academic Challenge Benchmarks

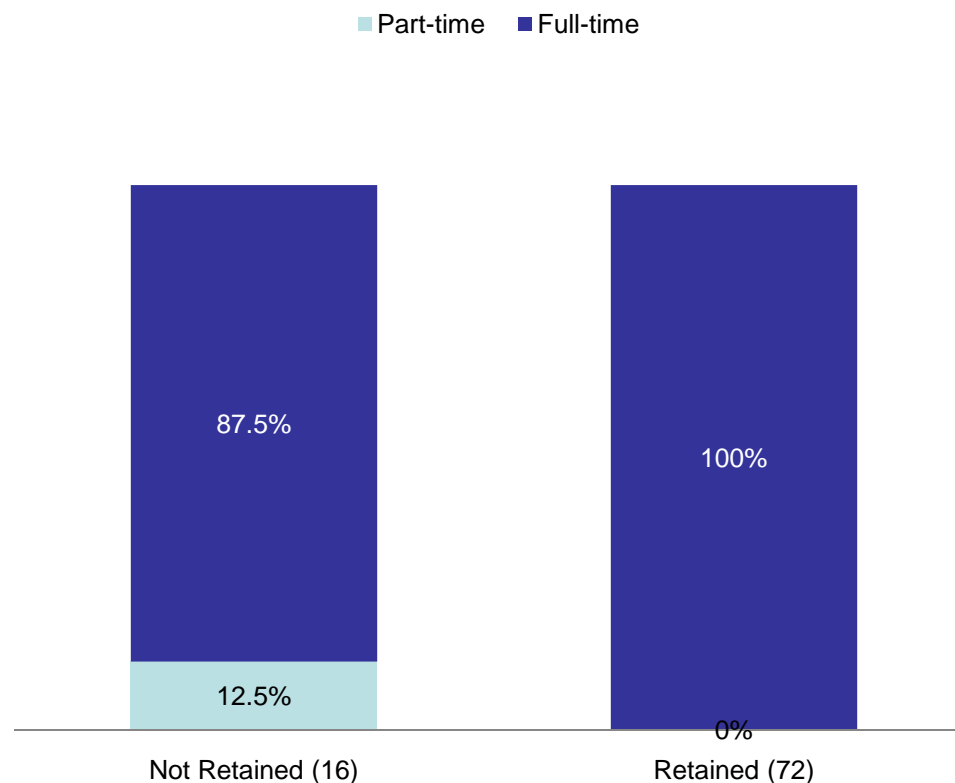
Engagement Experiences of Retained Versus Non-Retained First-Year Students		
Benchmark	Significant Differences in Engagement (p<.05)	Recommendation(s)
Level of Academic Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compared to non-retained students, retained students report they are more frequently challenged to work harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Address perceived lack of academic challenge by focusing on those areas in which non-retained students report their experience did not contribute to: Acquisition of a broad general education and job, speaking, problem-solving, writing and quantitative analysis skills, and an understanding of themselves and people with diverse backgrounds.
Student-Faculty Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-retained students report receiving prompt feedback from faculty on their academic performance significantly less frequently than retained students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure that faculty have the professional development necessary to target and approach at-risk first-year students who may not seek their feedback otherwise ✓ Refer to the one-page tip sheet in the AL-LC's <i>Creating a Retention Management Culture</i> Collaborative Report (2009) for academic strategies to enhance student-faculty engagement.
Supportive Campus Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-retained students provide a significantly lower mean rating for the quality of their relationships with faculty. Non-retained students are significantly less likely than those who are retained to think that JSC provides the support they need to thrive socially. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ JSC may want to consider increasing or better promoting social activities and support services to first-year students, especially those which this report profiles as at-risk for retention.

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Profiling Freshmen At Risk of Retention (Significant Differences Between Retained and Non-Retained Student Demographics and Academics)

Non-Retained, First-Year Students Are Significantly More Likely To Have Been Part-Time Students ($p < .05$)

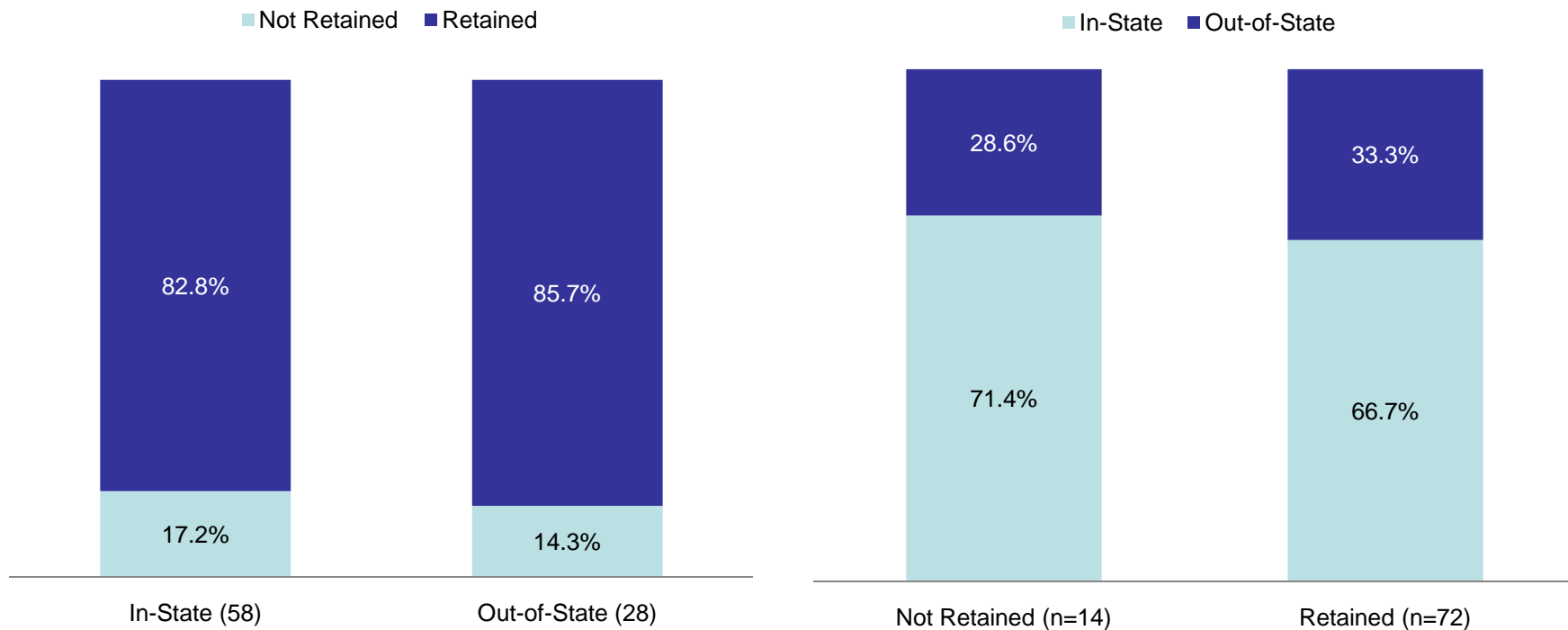
Institution reported: Enrollment status



To help target students who may be particularly at risk of retention early-on in their freshman year, consider flagging those who are enrolled part-time; in addition, consider assessing a larger sample of full-time beginners to better understand their potential motivations for leaving.

A Slightly, But Significantly, Higher Percentage of Non-Retained, First-Year Students Were Out of State Residents

Residency



In addition to flagging part-time students for first-year retention efforts, include also those who are out-of-state; JSC may also want to evaluate its 100% online programming to determine the extent to which it may be impacting retention.

On Average, Non-Retained First-Year Students Earned Slightly Lower High School and College GPAs, and Took Slightly Fewer Credits Than Their Retained Counterparts

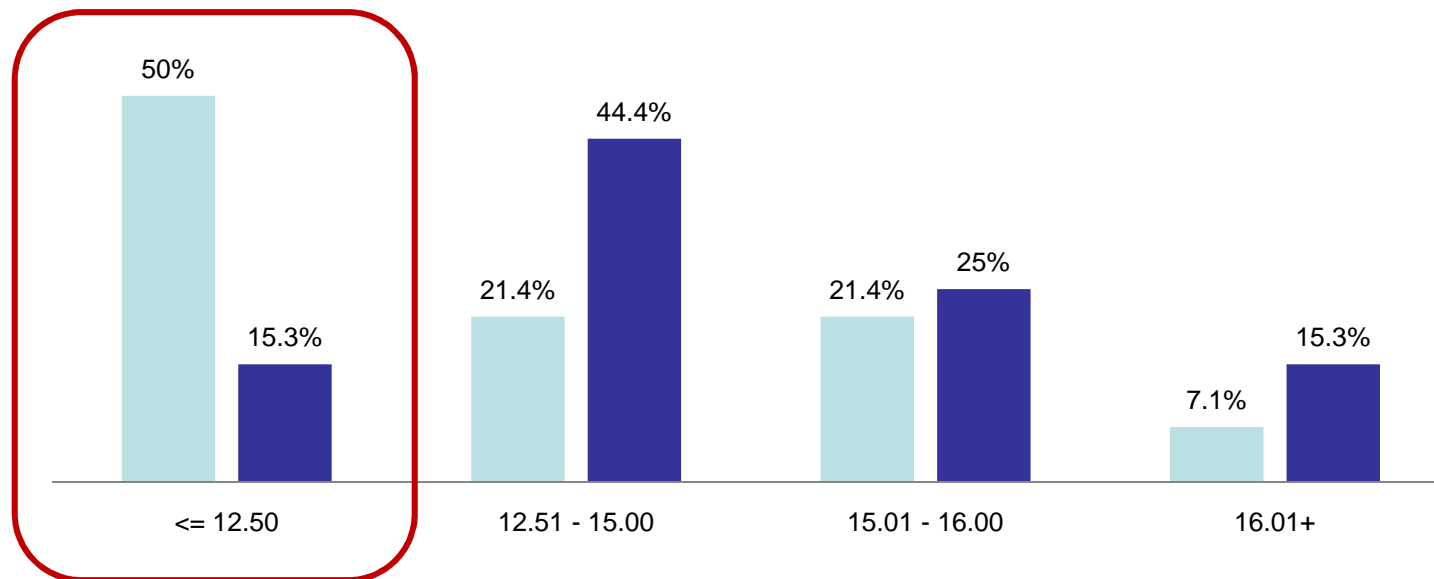
Academic Traits	H.S. GPA (Adjusted)		Spring 2008 Term GPA		Spring Term Credits	
	<i>Not Retained</i>	<i>Retained</i>	<i>Not Retained</i>	<i>Retained</i>	<i>Not Retained</i>	<i>Retained</i>
Mean	81	85	2	3	13	15
Minimum	72	73	0	1	9	9
Maximum	89	98	3.9	4	19	20
N	10	58	10	72	14	72

While these differences emerged as being statistically significant, it is important to take into account the small sample size of non-retained students when interpreting results.

In Their Spring Term, Non-Retained Students Earned Significantly Fewer Credits Than Retained Students, with Half Earning Less Than 12.5 Credits

Spring Term Credits, by range

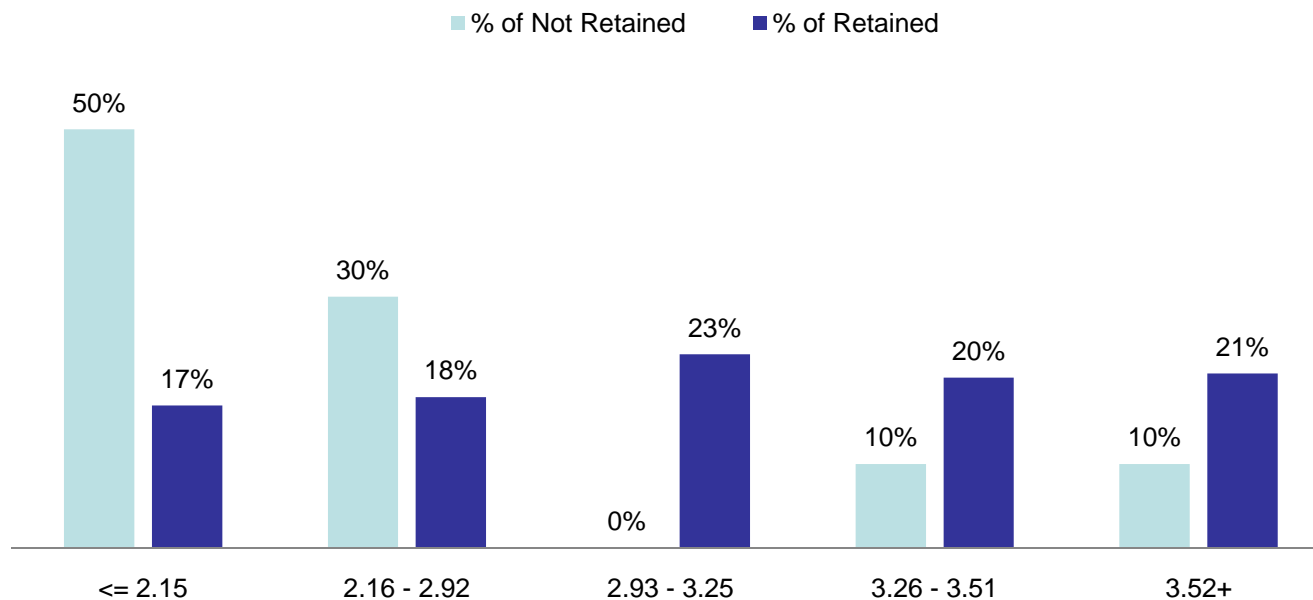
■ % of Not Retained (14) ■ % of Retained (72)



These differences are statistically significant ($p < .05$), showing that not retained students were more likely to be taking fewer credits.

Half of Non-Retained Students Had a Spring GPA of Less Than 2.15; However, Differences Between GPA Ranges Were *Not* Found To Be Statistically Significant

Spring 2008 GPA, by range



Non-retained students may have been in greater need of academic support – *JSC may want to take steps to enhance awareness and/or availability of existing academic support services and improve faculty identification of/intervention with students who appear to be experiencing academic difficulty.*

Research Findings

By Spring of Their Freshman Year, Non-Retained Students Were Significantly Less Likely Than Their Counterparts to Think Their JSC Experience Contributed to Acquisition of a Broad General Education and Job, Speaking, Problem-Solving, and Writing Skills, and an Understanding of Themselves and People with Diverse Backgrounds

Perceived Institutional Contribution (Mean)	Not Retained	Retained
Acquiring a broad general education	2.50	3.03
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	1.94	2.61
Writing clearly and effectively	2.38	3.07
Speaking clearly and effectively	2.00	2.57
Thinking critically and analytically	2.50	2.92
Analyzing quantitative problems	1.88	2.44
Using computing and information technology	2.44	2.64
Working effectively with others	2.60	2.85
Voting in local, state (provincial), or national (federal) elections	2.44	2.20
Learning effectively on your own	2.25	2.78
Understanding yourself	2.20	2.76
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	2.06	2.68
Solving complex real-world problems	1.94	2.66
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	2.00	2.50
Contributing to the welfare of your community	2.00	2.47
Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	2.07	1.90

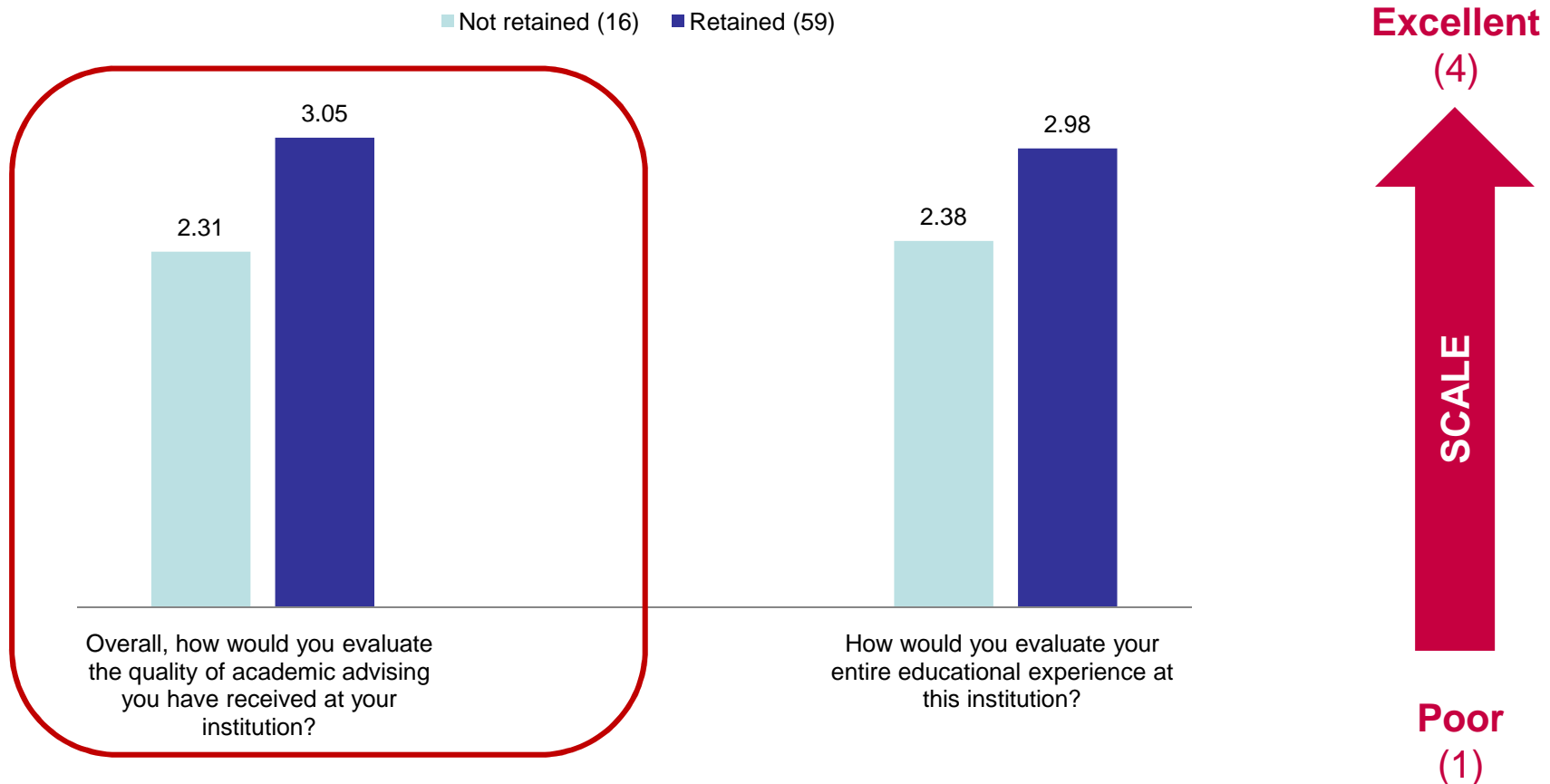
Very Little
(1)

SCALE

Very Much
(4)

Note: Circled item identifies a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$); other items are included in this table to provide opportunities for comparison
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Not Surprisingly, Non-Retained Students Were Significantly More Likely to Negatively Perceive Their Educational Experience; *They Were Also More Likely to Provide a Poor Evaluation of Advising Received*

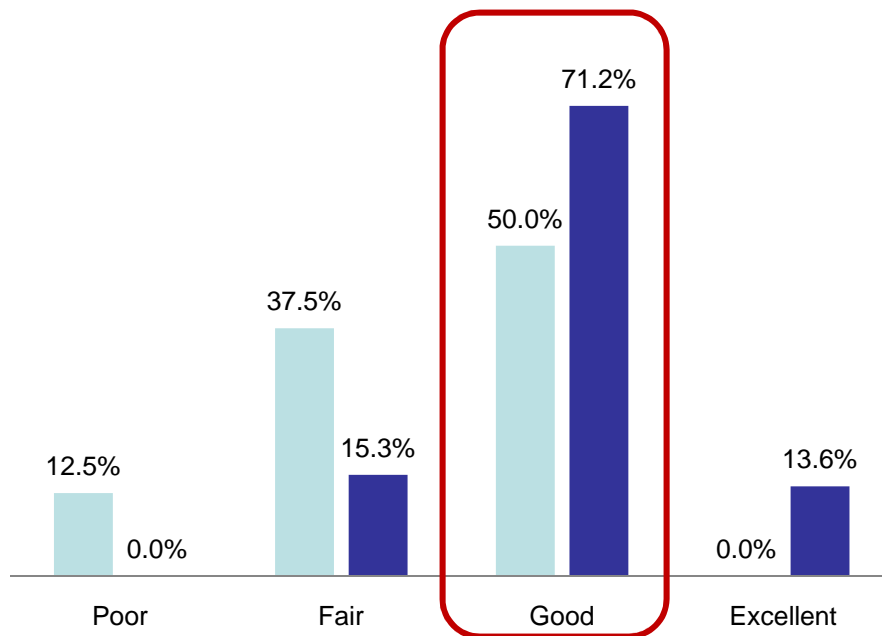


It is possible that students at risk of attrition may be in need of greater advising support; JSC may want to consider better promoting available advising support services to these particular students.

While Many Non-Retained First-Year Students Exhibit Dissatisfaction With Their Overall Experience, There Are Some Who May be Leaving for Other Reasons

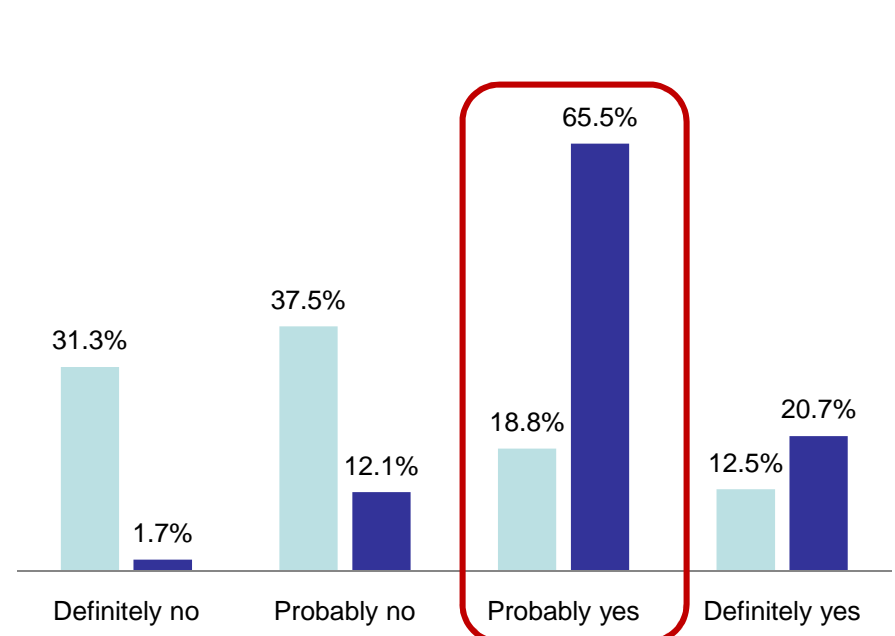
How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?

■ Not Retained (16) ■ Retained (59)



If you could start over again, would you go to the SAME INSTITUTION?

■ Not Retained (16) ■ Retained (58)



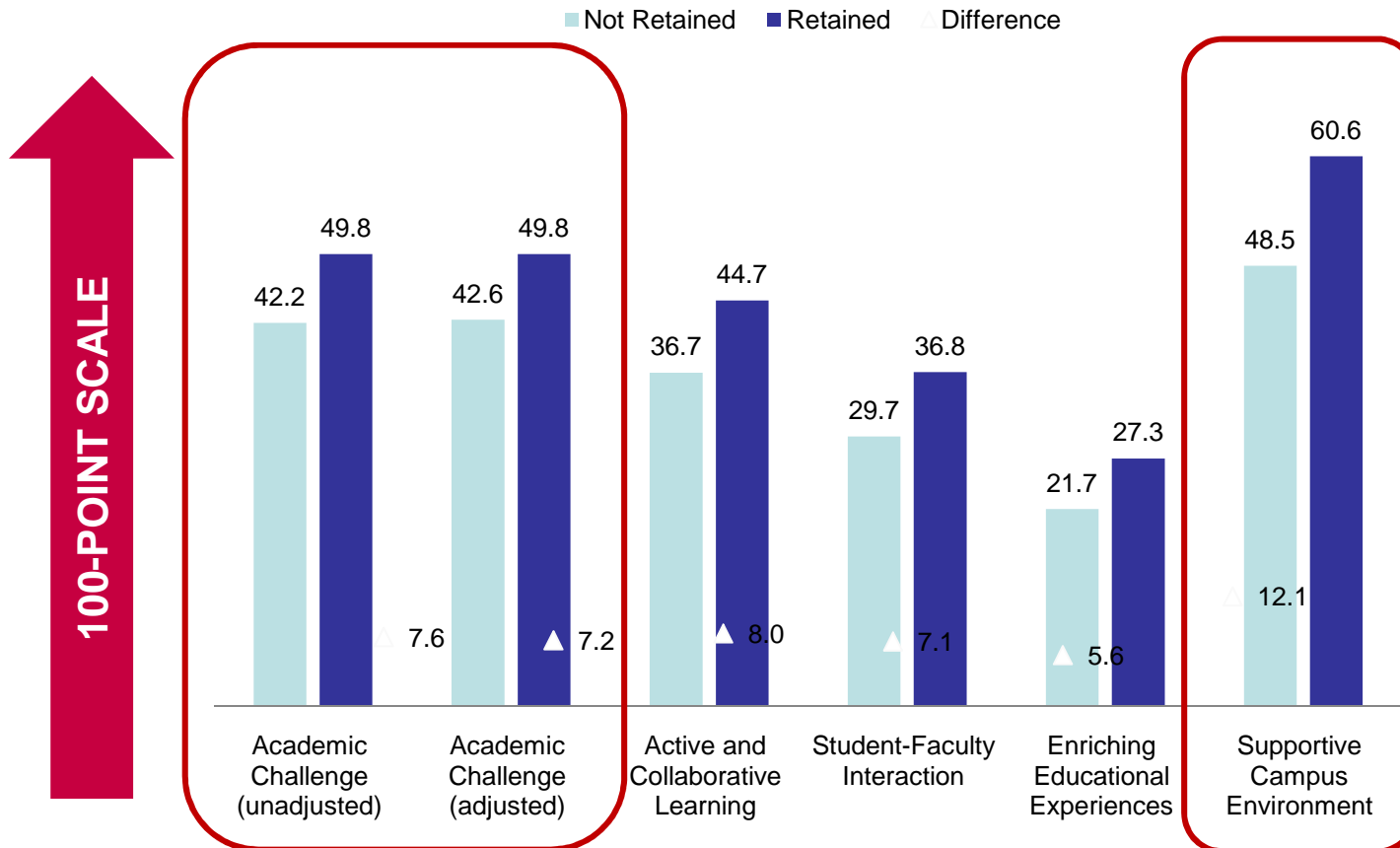
More than one third of non-retained, first-year students indicated in their last semester (Spring 2008) that they would go to JSC if they could start over again and half (50%) provided a positive evaluation of their entire educational experience so far – **While this suggests there may be factors beyond JSC’s control that are impacting first-year retention (e.g., personal, financial, family-related), JSC may want to further investigate whether there are opportunities to better provide/promote social, financial, and personal support services to enhance retention.**

**Benchmarking Engagement Experiences of
Freshmen Who Are Retained Versus Those Who Are Not
(Significant Differences Between Retained and Non-Retained
Student Engagement Experiences, by NSSE Benchmark)**

Research Findings: NSSE Benchmarks

On Average, Non-Retained Students Score Significantly Lower Than Retained Students With Regard to NSSE's Supportive Campus Environment and Academic Challenge Benchmarks

NSSE Benchmark Scores (Mean)*



This suggests there may be particular opportunities to better engage freshmen in campus and academic support services.

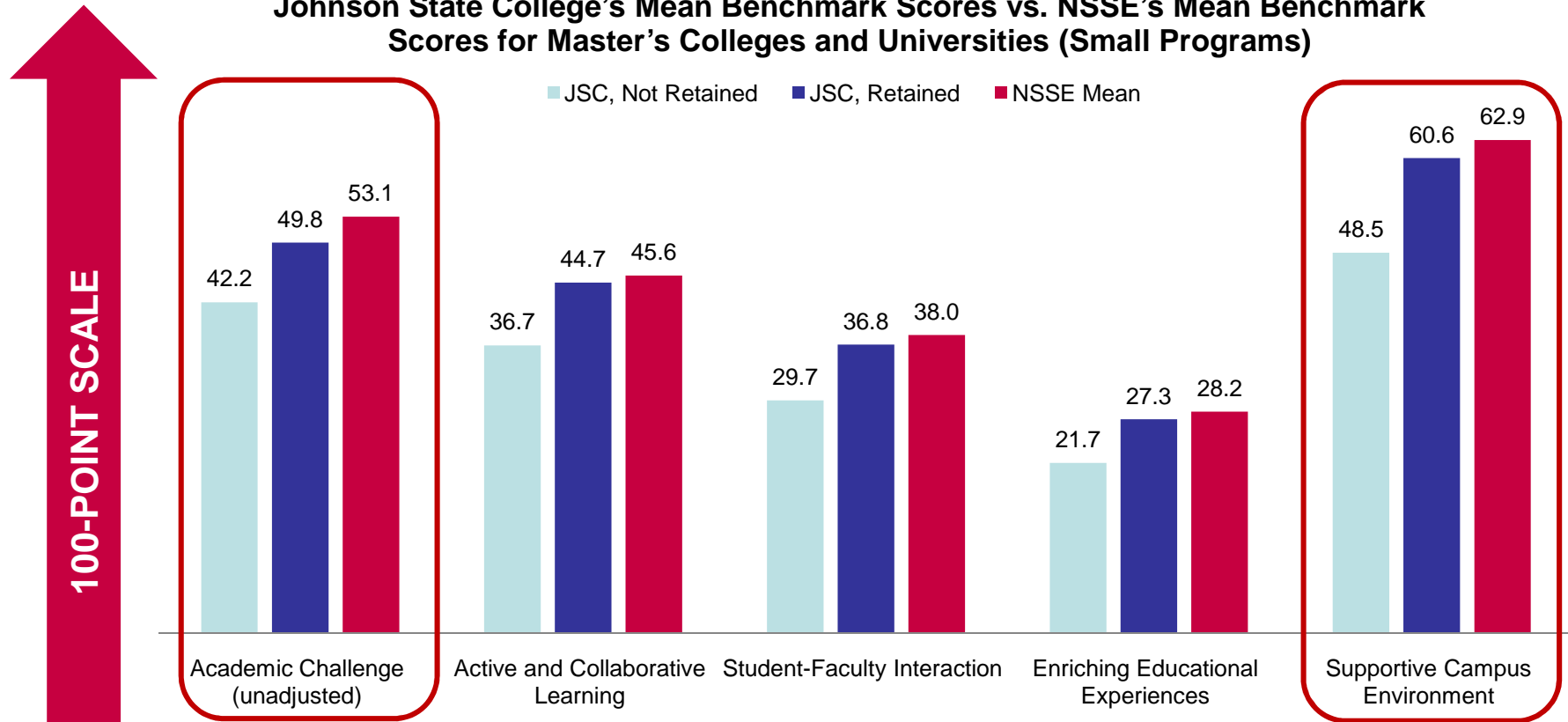
*NSSE Methodology Regarding Benchmark Scores: According to NSSE (2008), "Student-level benchmark scores are the student's average responses to items within the group, after all items have been placed on a 100-point scale. Student-level benchmark scores are created for randomly sampled first-year and senior students that answered three-fifths or more of the items within the group...The benchmark score for an institution is the *weighted mean* of these student-level scores. For more detailed information about how benchmarks are calculated, visit the NSSE Web site at www.nsse.iub.edu/html/2008_inst_report.htm."

**Note: *Academic Challenge (adjusted)* benchmark is the same as *Level of Academic Challenge*, but adjusted for part-time enrollment status.

**Note: Circled item identifies a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$); other items are included in this table to provide opportunities for comparison.

A Comparison Between JSC's Benchmark Scores and Those of Its NSSE Peers Shows That JSC's Mean Retained Student Scores Are Comparable to the National Average

Johnson State College's Mean Benchmark Scores vs. NSSE's Mean Benchmark Scores for Master's Colleges and Universities (Small Programs)



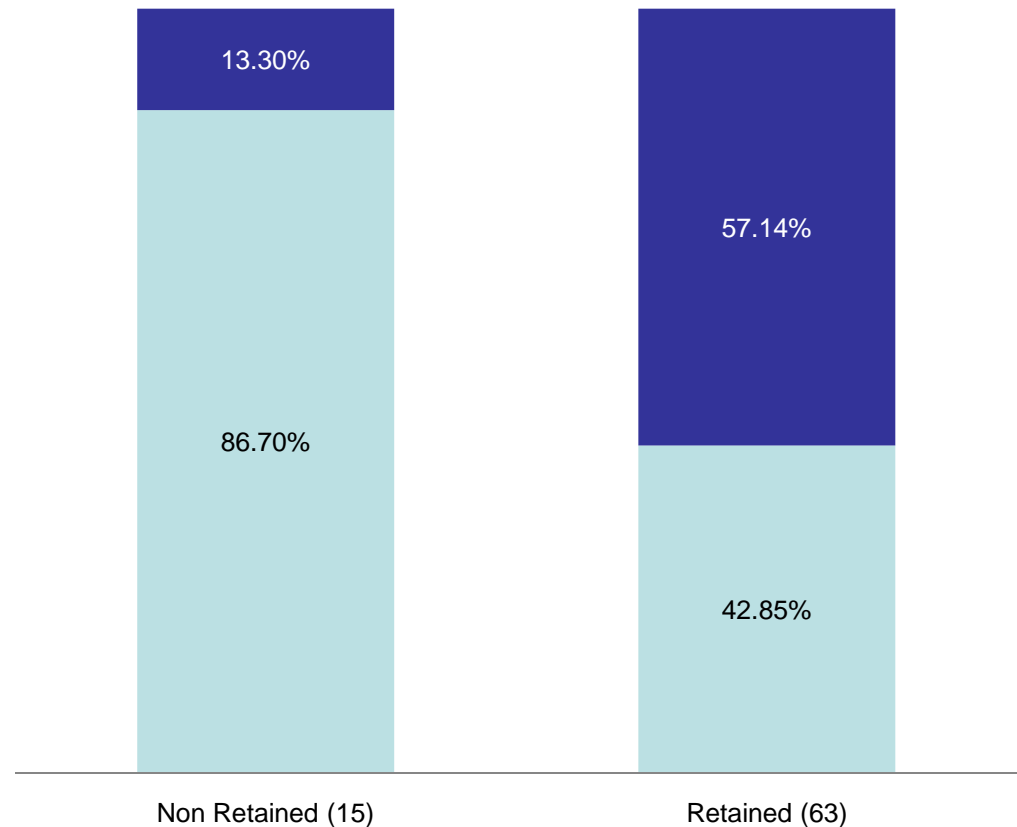
*Although JSC's mean scores for both non-retained and retained students are slightly lower than the average, it is important to keep in mind the small sample size: For JSC, sample sizes are between 77 and 88. For NSSE, the sample size is between 6,131 and 7,094. Note: Circled item identifies a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$); other items are included in this table to provide opportunities for comparison.

Non-Retained Students Perceive They Are Significantly Less Challenged Than Retained Students

[About how often have you:] **Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations** [?]

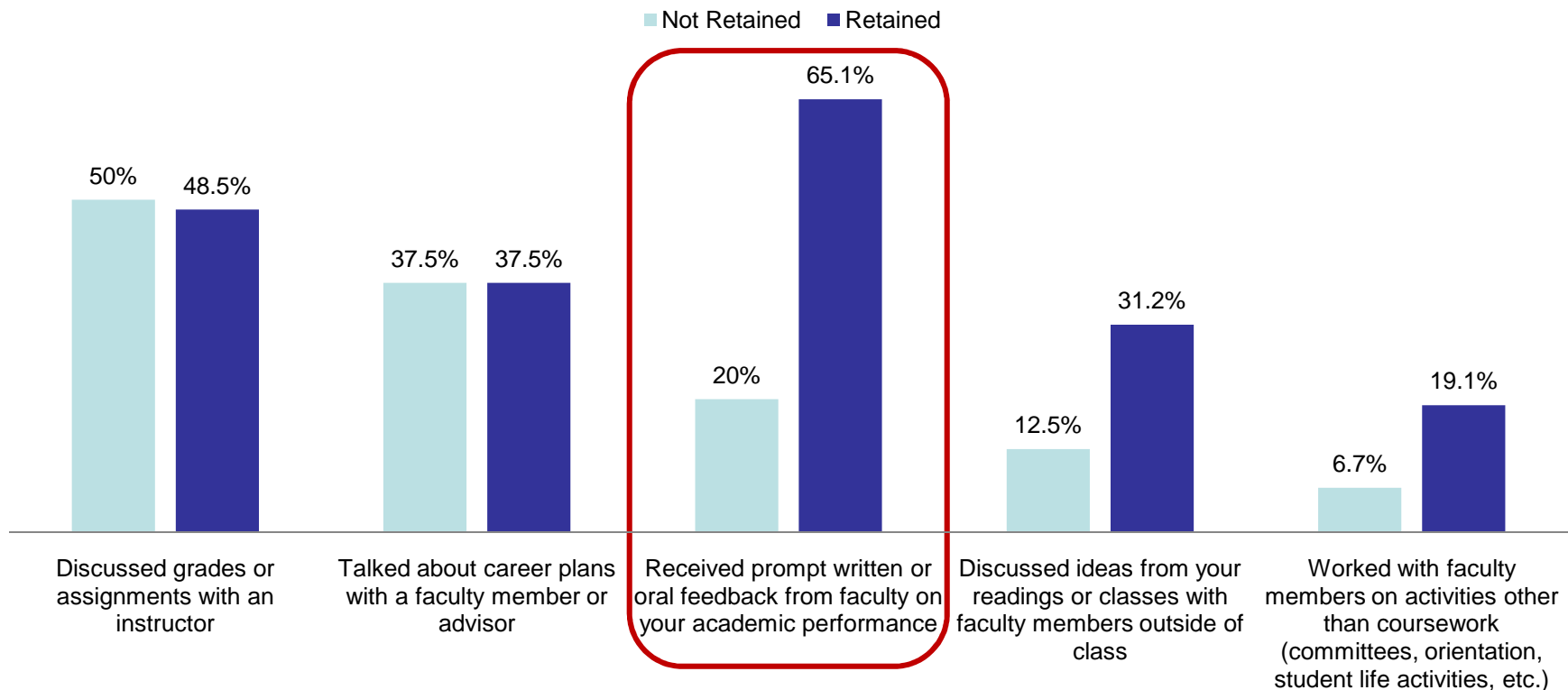
■ Never/Sometimes ■ Often/Very Often

Compared to non-retained students, retained students report they are more frequently challenged to work harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations. On a scale of 1 to 4 (1=Never; 4=Very Often), the mean response to the item "Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations" for non-retained students is 1.943(n=15), versus a mean of 2.63 for retained students (n=63) ($p < .05$).



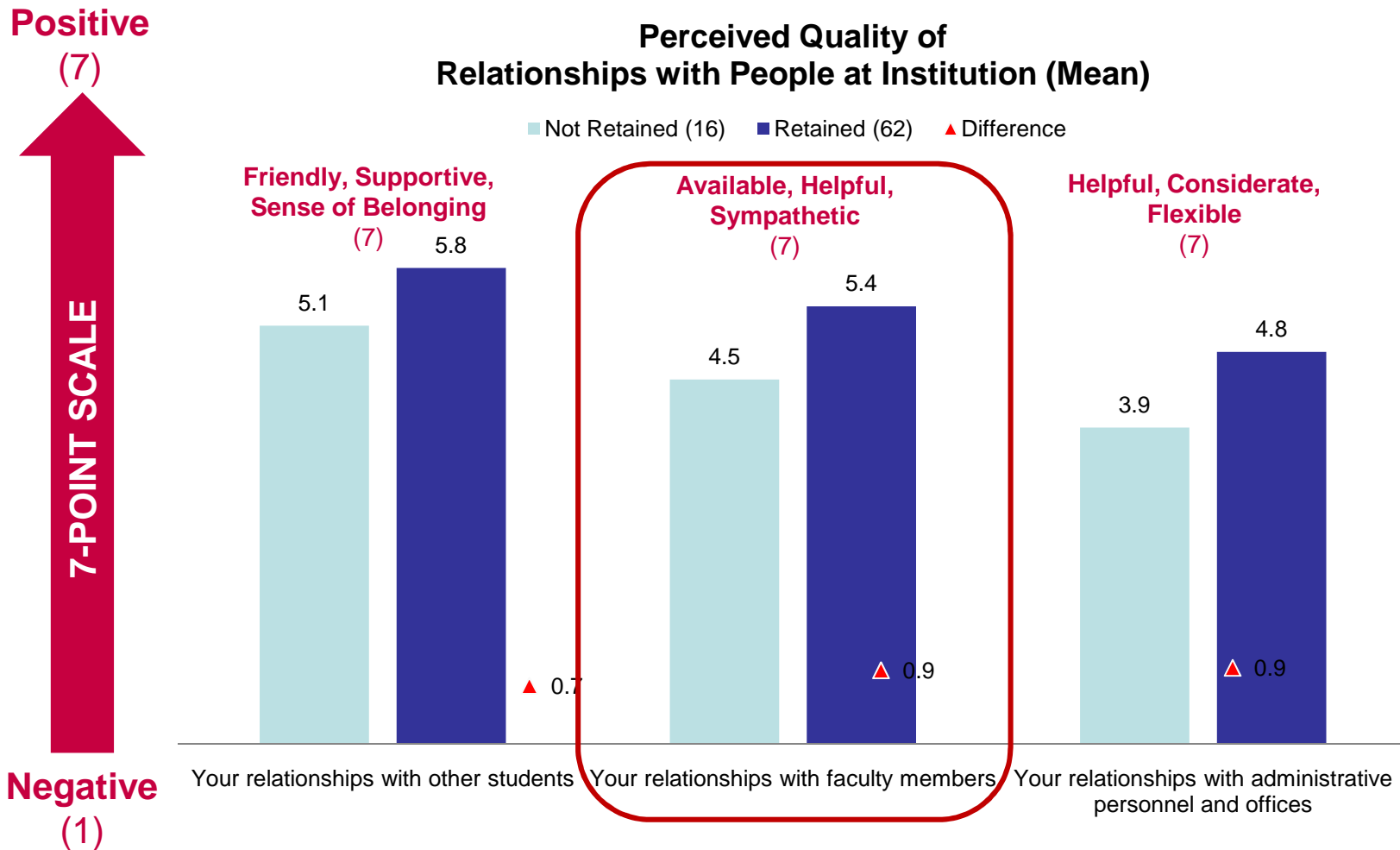
Non-Retained Students Report Receiving Prompt Feedback From Faculty on Their Academic Performance Significantly Less Frequently Than Retained Students

In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? (Often/Very Often)



Note: Circled item identifies a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$); other items are included in this table to provide opportunities for comparison
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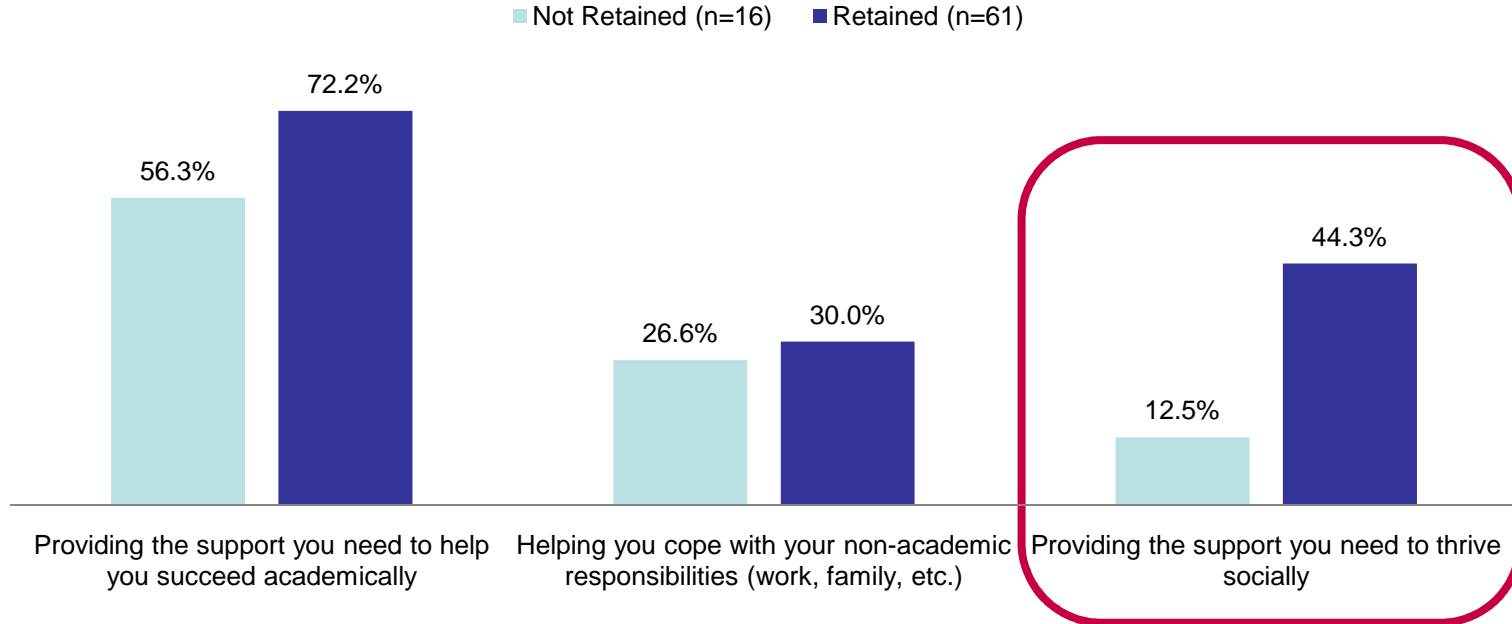
Non-Retained Students Provide Significantly Lower Ratings For the Quality of Their Relationships With Faculty, On Average



Note: Circled item identifies a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$); other items are included in this table to provide opportunities for comparison
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Compared to Retained Students, Non-Retained Students Are Significantly Less To Perceive That JSC Provides the Support They Need to Thrive Socially

To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following?
(Quite a Bit/Very Much)



JSC may want to consider increasing or better promoting social support services to first-year students, especially those which this report profiles as at-risk of attrition.

Note: Circled item identifies a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$); other items are included in this table to provide opportunities for comparison