

Student Achievement at Southwestern University

Southwestern University is a leader in innovative undergraduate education; offering a life-enriching residential liberal arts and sciences experience for talented individuals who share a passion for intellectual exploration, engagement, and growth. The University commits to empowering students to think, create, and make meaning through intentional connections, innovative academic pursuits, and a vibrant residential community.

In 2016, Southwestern University initiated its most recent strategic plan, *The Vision, Direction, and Goals for Southwestern University*. One of the primary goals of this strategic plan is to enroll and retain students who have significant potential for academic excellence. In order to track progress towards this goal, Southwestern has established objectives and targets for student graduation, retention, and outcomes. *The Vision, Direction, and Goals for Southwestern University* strategic plan covers a ten-year timeframe from 2016 to 2026, with five-year targets expected to be obtained by fall 2021 and ten-year targets expected to be obtained by fall 2026.

After reviewing data collected on the strategic plan initiatives, it was determined that Southwestern University was not on schedule to meet five-year targets. So, in 2020, the University developed a five-year tactical plan aligned with *The Vision, Direction, and Goals for Southwestern University* strategic plan. The *2021-2026 Tactical Plan* allows the University the opportunity to adjust the tactics being implemented and the measures being used to track progress towards the strategic plan goals.

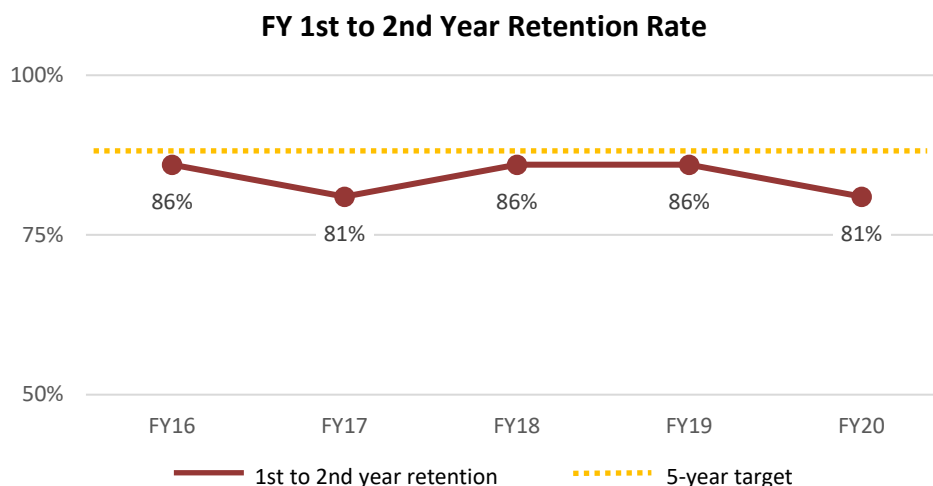
The following information is published to provide information for prospective and current students, parents, alumni, and all others interested in student achievement at Southwestern University.

Institutional Objectives for Undergraduate Student Achievement

Retention and Graduation

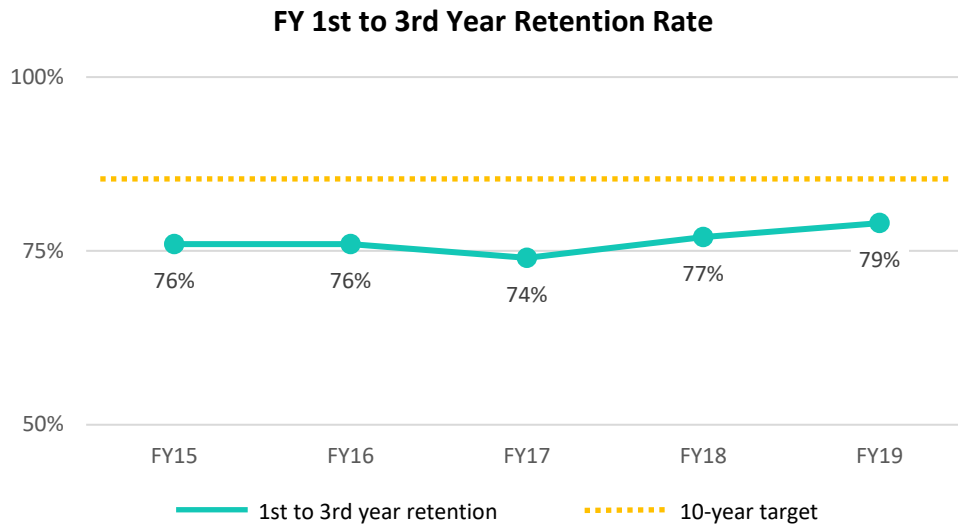
Criterion 1: First-to-Second Year, First-to-Third Year Retention

Strategic Plan Objective 1.2 (part a): Achieve a 1st to 2nd year retention rate of 88% (by fall 2026). The original target deadline was fall 2021. This deadline has been extended to fall 2026 to align with the new tactical plan.



Progress toward Target: Over the last five years the University has not been able to reach the 1st to 2nd year retention rate target. The retention rate will continue to be monitored as the University implements tactical plan initiatives to improve campus amenities, update technology infrastructure, and expand tutoring programs.

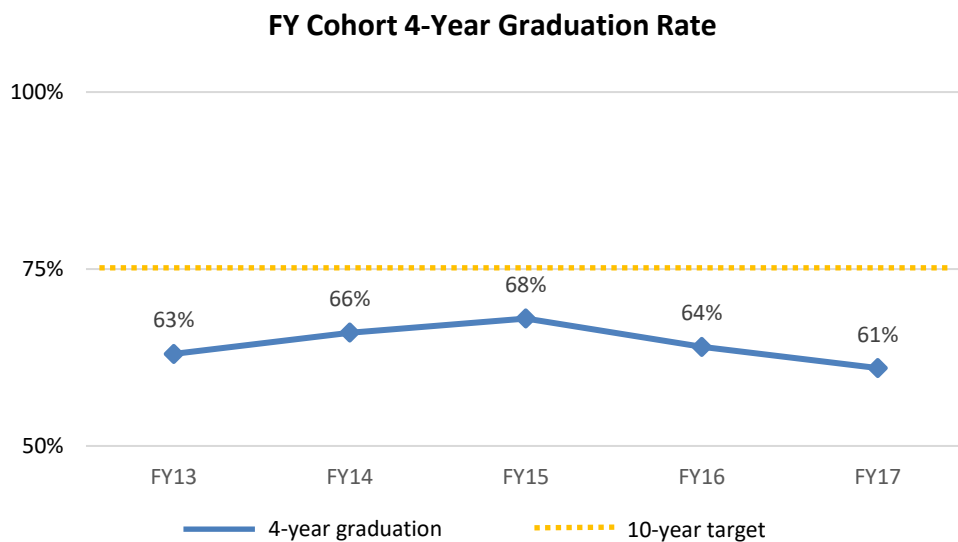
Strategic Plan Objective 1.2 (part b): Achieve a 1st to 3rd year retention rate of 85% (by fall 2026).



Progress toward Target: The University has made some progress toward this target, but the 1st to 3rd year retention rate will continue to be monitored as tactical plan initiatives are implemented.

Criterion 2: Four-Year and Six-Year Graduation Rates

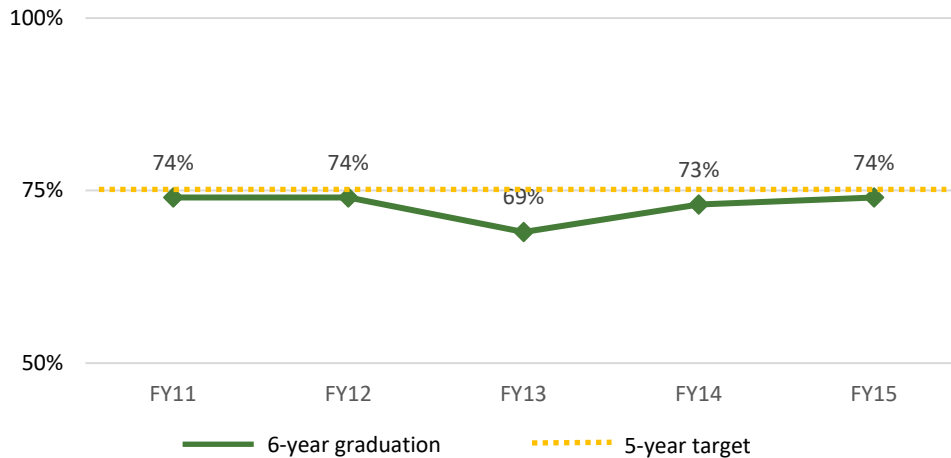
Strategic Plan Objective 1.3 (part a): Achieve a 4-year graduation rate of 75% (by fall 2026).



Progress toward Target: The University has not made progress towards this target. The 4-year graduation rate will continue to be monitored and initiatives around a new advising program and need-based student scholarships are being implemented as part of the tactical plan to help increase graduation rates.

Strategic Plan Objective 1.3 (part b): Achieve a 6-year graduation rate of 75% (by fall 2026). The original target deadline was fall 2021. This deadline has been extended to fall 2026 to align with the new tactical plan.

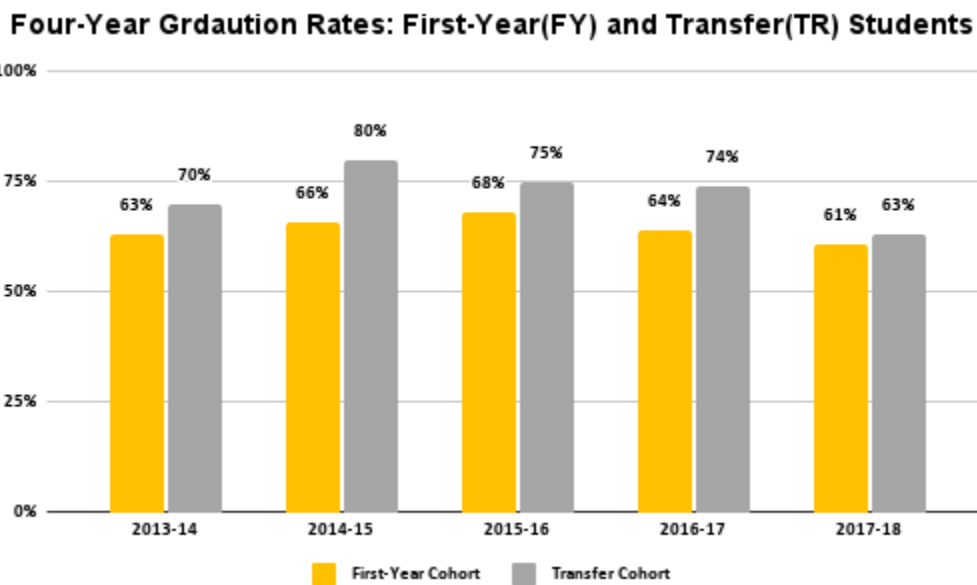
FY Cohort 6-Year Graduation Rate



Progress toward Target: The 6-year graduation rate has been just below the target of 75% for four of the last five years. The same initiatives that help to increase the 4-year graduation rate should also improve the 6-year graduation rate.

Criterion 3: Transfer (TR) Student Quality

Linked to Strategic Plan Objective 1.4: Recruit transfer students of similar academic quality as first-year students, determined by a comparison of four-year graduation rates.



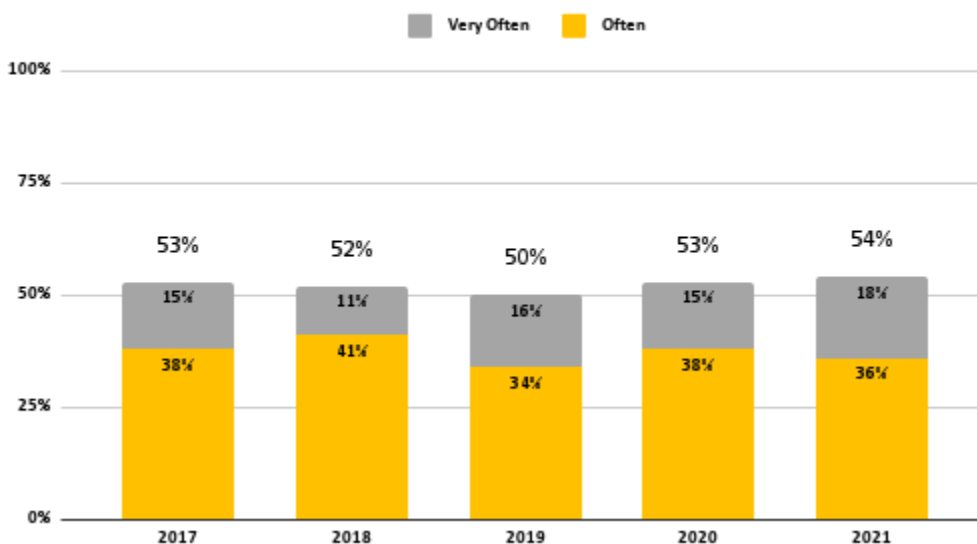
Progress toward Target: TR cohort graduation rates have been similar to and slightly higher than FY graduation rates over the last five-years. Southwestern University will continue to monitor graduation rates of TR and FY cohorts and tactical plan initiatives to fund TR and FY cohorts to ensure the success of both types on incoming students.

Skill Development

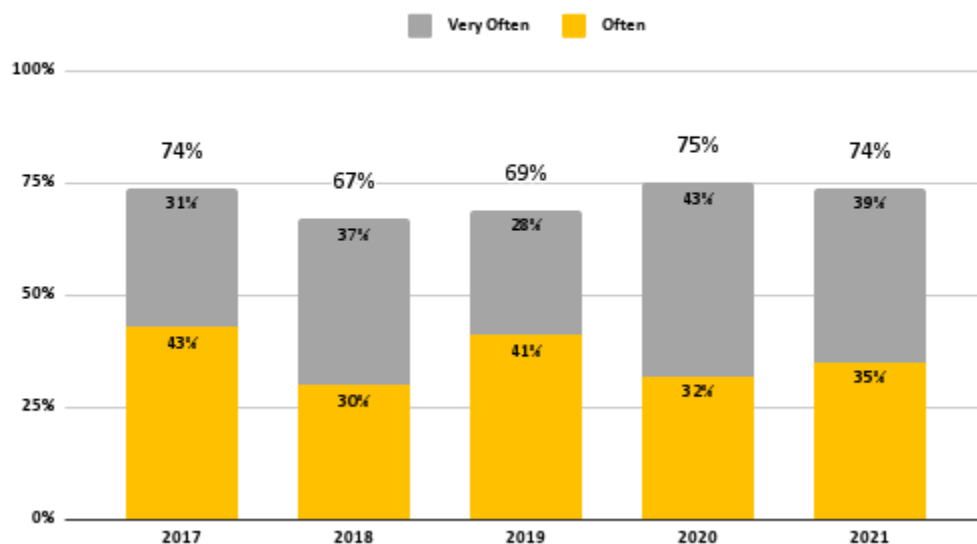
Criterion 4: Foster Intentional Connections

Linked to Strategic Plan Objective 2.4: Increase the percentage of students indicating that they have ‘often’ or ‘very often’ combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments and connected idea from courses to prior experience and knowledge.

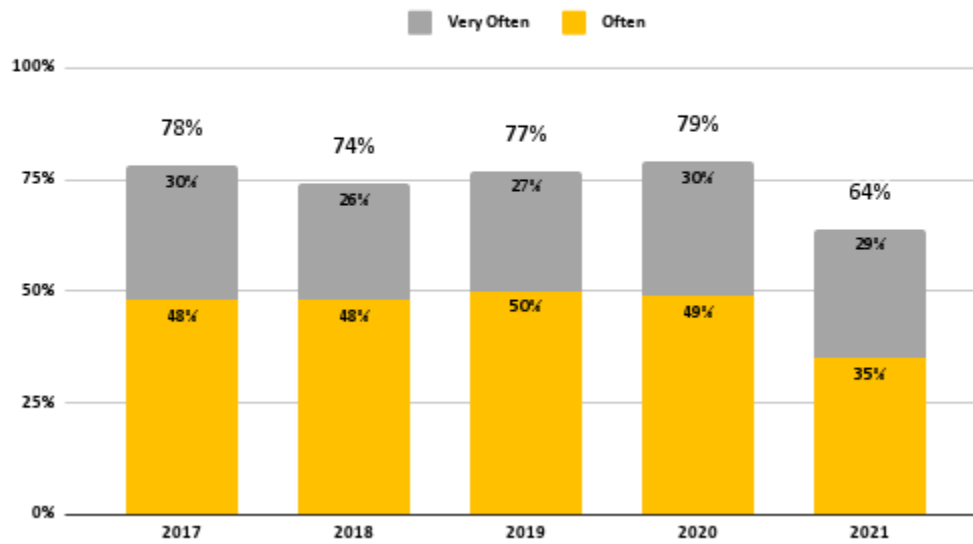
FY - During the current school year, about how often did you combine ideas from different courses when completing assignments? (NSSE 2.a)



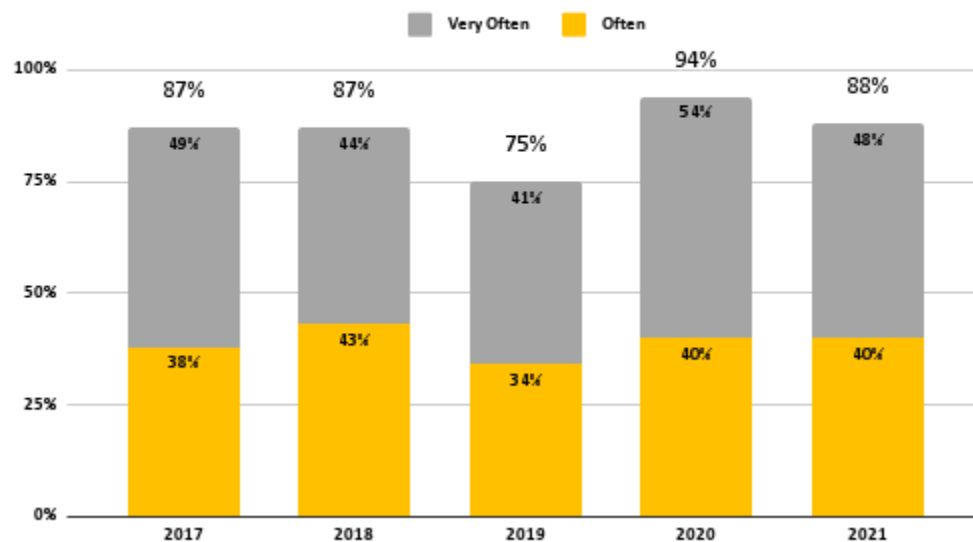
SR - During the current school year, about how often did you combine ideas from different courses when completing assignments? (NSSE 2.a)



FY - During the current school year, about how often did you connect ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge? (NSSE 2.g)



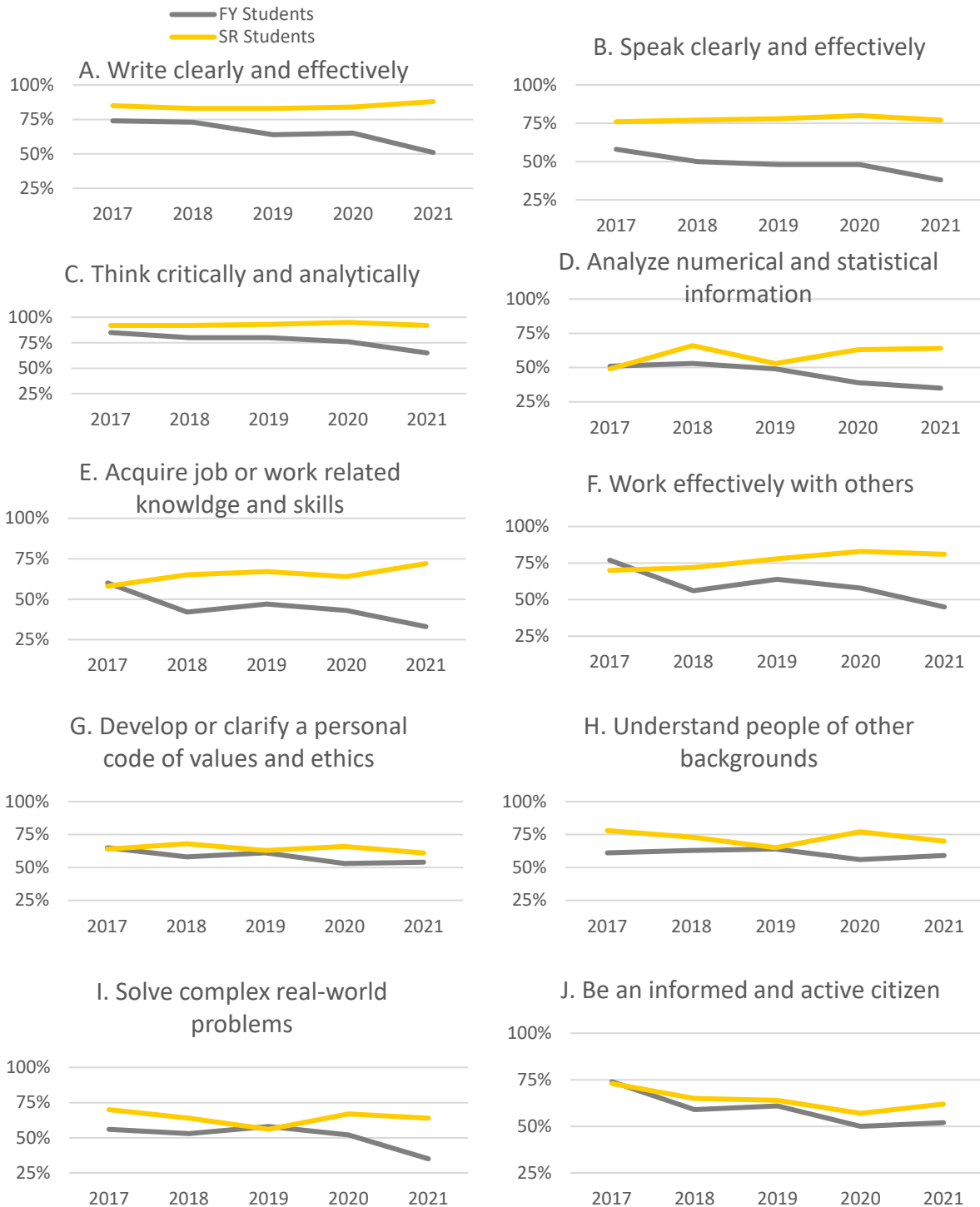
SR - During the current school year, about how often did you connect ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge? (NSSE 2.g)



Progress toward Target: There was an increase in responding 'often' or 'very often' to each question between FY and SR students for all years, with the exception of NSSE question 2.g ("During the current school year, about how often did you connect ideas from your courses to you prior experiences and knowledge?") in 2019. To continue these efforts, tactical plan initiatives include creation of a more robust student training and employment program and institutionalization of Southwestern's co-curricular program, Mosaic.

Criterion 5: Personal Development

Linked to Strategic Plan Objectives 2.4 and 2.5: Increase the percentage of students indicating that Southwestern University has contributed ‘quite a bit’ or ‘very much’ to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in specified areas.



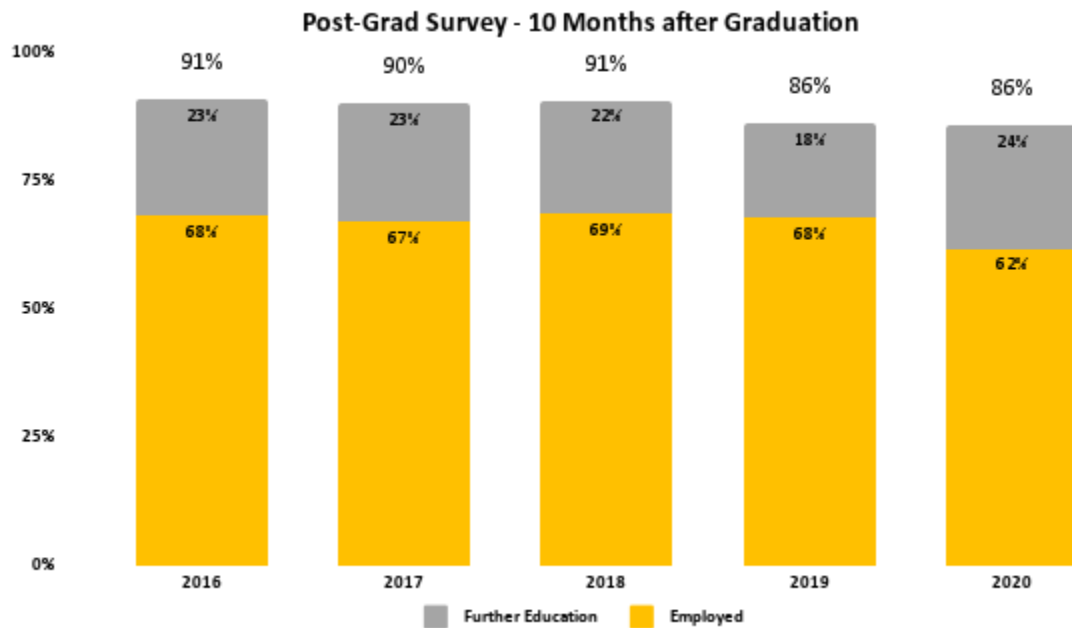
Progress toward Target: In general, more students indicated that Southwestern University contributed towards development of skills as SR rather than FY. This positive trend will continue to be monitored. Tactical plan initiatives

promoting study abroad, increased tutoring offerings, and diversity should help to increase positive responses from SR students.

Accomplishments After Graduation

Criterion 6: Center for Career and Professional Development Survey Results

Linked to Strategic Plan Goal 2: The percentage of graduates who are employed or attend graduate/professional school ten months after graduation should remain at or above 90%.



Progress toward Target: The percentage of students currently employed or in graduate/professional school decreased for the classes of 2019 and 2020. Results may have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and will be monitored to determine needed adjustments to resources available to students post-graduation. Tactical plan initiatives that could directly impact this metric include the creation of a more robust student training and employment program and strengthening student tutoring offerings.