The 2008 National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report

Four-Year Public Colleges and Universities

The Source of the Data
The student population for the four-year public colleges and universities includes 96,901 students from 101 institutions surveyed with the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory™ between the fall of 2005 and the spring of 2008. The campus personnel population includes 3,422 faculty, staff, and administrators from 17 institutions surveyed with the Noel-Levitz Institutional Priorities Survey™ during the same timeframe.

Reviewing the Data
Brief highlights regarding the data findings are offered in each section of this report. For a broader view of how satisfied students are overall and how likely they are to re-enroll, see the Executive Summary. You will also find a perspective on how the experiences of students compare across various demographic segments in the Executive Summary.

The Scales
The best place to begin is by looking at the big picture and understanding the areas on campus that matter most to students. The following table summarizes the importance, satisfaction, and performance gaps for the 12 areas (scales) for four-year public colleges and universities. The scales are listed in order of importance. This table is followed by the scale scores for campus personnel at four-year publics.

### 2008 Scales: four-year public institutions (students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Importance Mean</th>
<th>Satisfaction Mean</th>
<th>Performance Gap Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Effectiveness</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration Effectiveness</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and Financial Aid</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for the Individual</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Climate</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Centeredness</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Support Services</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Excellence</td>
<td>6.01</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Life</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness to Diverse Populations</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(7 = very important/very satisfied, 1 = not important/not satisfied at all)*

A list of the participating institutions is included in the appendix.

Satisfaction levels increased in the past year at four-year public institutions.

Continued
2008 Scales: four-year public institutions (campus personnel)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Importance Mean</th>
<th>Agreement Mean</th>
<th>Performance Gap Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concern for the Individual</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Effectiveness</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and Financial Aid</td>
<td>6.53</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>6.53</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Climate</td>
<td>6.49</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Excellence</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Centeredness</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Support Services</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration Effectiveness</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Life</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness to Diverse Populations</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(7 = very important/strongly agree 1 = not important/strongly disagree)

Students place a much higher value on Registration and Safety and Security than do campus personnel.

When reviewing the perceptions of students and campus personnel, it is helpful to identify which areas the two groups value differently. This can best be seen by comparing rank order of the importance scores. Scales were ranked 1 to 11, with 1 indicating the highest rank in importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>SSI Rank</th>
<th>IPS Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 (tie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Effectiveness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 (tie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8 (tie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration Effectiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and Financial Aid</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 (tie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for the Individual</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1 (tie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Climate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Centeredness</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Support Services</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8 (tie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Excellence</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Life</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At four-year public institutions in this study, students placed a much higher value on Safety and Security and Registration Effectiveness than did campus personnel. Students also placed a slightly higher emphasis on Academic Advising. On the other hand, campus personnel put a greater emphasis on Concern for the Individual and Service Excellence. The areas of Instructional Effectiveness, Recruitment and Financial Aid, Campus Climate, Student Centeredness, Campus Support Services, and Campus Life had similar importance rankings.
Strengths and Challenges

Strengths
Individual items on the inventory were analyzed to determine institutional strengths (high importance and high satisfaction). Institutions often incorporate their strengths into their marketing activities, recruiting materials, internal and external public relations opportunities, as well as provide positive feedback to campus personnel and students. *Strengths are defined as those items above the mid-point in importance and in the top quartile of satisfaction.*

Following are the top strengths as identified by students at four-year public colleges and universities. Strengths are listed in order of importance.

- The content of the courses within my major is valuable.
- The instruction in my major field is excellent.
- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major.
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field.
- The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent.
- The campus is safe and secure for all students.
- My academic advisor is approachable.
- Major requirements are clear and reasonable.
- There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus.
- I am able to experience intellectual growth here.
- Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours.
- Computer labs are adequate and accessible.
- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained.
- Students are made to feel welcome on this campus.
- Class change (drop/add) policies are reasonable.
- This institution has a good reputation within the community.
- Library resources and services are adequate.

Many of the strengths identified by students at four-year public institutions nationally focused on the quality of the instruction and the faculty, as well as the content and variety of courses. Advising was also a strength, especially regarding advisors' knowledge of major requirements and being approachable to students. Students generally felt safe on four-year public campuses, and they also felt welcome. The accessibility and adequateness of computer labs and library resources and services were also considered strengths.

Challenges
Inventory items were analyzed to determine key challenges (high importance and low satisfaction). These are the crucial areas to address to improve retention (each institution will have its own list of challenges). Nationally, students had high expectations in these areas, but institutions failed to meet those expectations. Areas of dissatisfaction were prioritized by their importance score, indicating those areas that mattered most to students. Challenges are defined as being above the mid-point in importance and in the bottom quartile of satisfaction or the top quartile of performance gaps.

Following, listed in order of importance, are the top challenges as identified by students at four-year public colleges and universities:

- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts.
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.
- Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students.
- Adequate financial aid is available for most students.
- Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress in a course.
- Security staff respond quickly in emergencies.
- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate.
- This institution shows concern for students as individuals.
- Financial aid awards are announced to students in time to be helpful in college planning.
- Parking lots are well-lighted and secure.
- I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information on this campus.
- Financial aid counselors are helpful.

Nationally, access to classes through registration was the number-one challenge to students at four-year public institutions, followed closely by the item regarding tuition paid is a worthwhile investment. The tuition issue may be a perception of value for tuition dollars. Two financial aid issues

Institutions often incorporate their strengths into their marketing activities, recruiting materials, internal and external public relations opportunities, as well as provide positive feedback to campus personnel and students.

More strengths than challenges were identified by students at four-year public institutions nationally.
"Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment," is an issue for four-year public universities as well as four-year private institutions.

Enrollment Factors

Institutions should be aware of the factors which influence their students’ decisions to enroll at the college or university. Institutions often use this type of information to shape their recruitment activities.

The following table reflects the average of the importance score, based on a 1 to 7 scale, with 7 being high. In this study, students at four-year public institutions placed a high value primarily on the cost of the institution. Academic reputation and financial aid rounded out the top three influential factors. Geographic setting (often considered to be location) was the next contributing factor. Students at four-year public institutions placed less priority on the size of the institution and on personalized attention prior to enrollment than students at four-year private institutions.

For 2008, the enrollment factors indicated in descending order of importance for students at four-year public colleges and universities, along with the corresponding rank and average importance score are...