

# About the Student Satisfaction Inventory

Students rate each item in the inventory by the importance of the specific expectation as well as their satisfaction with how well that expectation is being met. A performance gap is then determined by the difference in the importance rating and the satisfaction rating. Items with large performance gaps indicate areas on campus where students perceive their expectations are not being met adequately.

Because the Student Satisfaction Inventory results in three different scores for each item, a significant amount of information is generated for institutional decision makers. Importance score ratings reflect how strongly students feel about the expectation (the higher the score, the more important it is to a student, hence the stronger the expectation). Satisfaction ratings show how satisfied students are that your institution has met the expectation (the higher the score, the more satisfied the student). Performance gap scores (importance rating minus satisfaction rating) show how well you are meeting the expectation overall. A large performance gap score for an item (e.g., 1.5) indicates that the institution is not meeting students' expectations, whereas a small or zero gap score (e.g., .50) indicates that an institution is meeting students' expectations, and a negative gap score (e.g., -.25) indicates that an institution is exceeding students' expectations.

In addition to the information provided by the three measurements for each item, inventory composite scales offer a "global" perspective of your students' responses. The scales provide a good overview of your institution's strengths and areas in need of improvement.

Student responses are compared to corresponding national groups as follows: 4-year private institutions are compared with other 4-year private institutions, 4-year public institutions are compared with other 4-year public institutions, community, junior and technical colleges are compared with other community, junior and technical institutions, and 2-year career and private schools are compared with other career and private schools.

## The Items

The Student Satisfaction Inventory collects student feedback on over 100 items. Included are:

- 73 items of expectation for 4-year colleges and universities
- 10 optional items which may be defined by the institution
- 6 items that assess the institution's commitment to specific student populations
- items that assess pre-enrollment factors
- 3 summary items that assess overall satisfaction with the institution
- 13 demographic items that identify demographic characteristics of respondents
- 2 optional items that further identify the demographic characteristics of respondents (you can have students record their major or program, plus one other demographic characteristic of your choosing).

# Student Satisfaction Inventory (continued)

Again in the spring of 1999 the Office of Institutional Research in conjunction with the academic deans implemented the Student Satisfaction Inventory created by the USA Group Noel-Levitz. All the colleges and the School of Law participated in the inventory. The method in which the inventory was administered was left to the discretion of the dean of each participating unit.

## The Twelve Composite Scales

The survey measures: (1) What is important to our students. (2) How satisfied our students are. (3) How this compares to four-year private institutions? The list of four-year institutions can be found in the appendix.

Students were asked to evaluate the importance of various university topics-termed scales by Noel-Levitz. The rating range is from 1 to 7, 7 meaning very important. The 73 items of importance/satisfaction and 6 items that assessed the university's commitment to specific student populations were analyzed statistically and conceptually to provide the following 12 composite scales. The numbers in parenthesis behind each scale definition identify the questions that make up the scale.

***Academic Advising Effectiveness*** - assesses the comprehensiveness of the academic advising program. Academic advisors are evaluated on the basis of their knowledge, competence and personal concern for student success, as well as on their approachability (6, 14, 19, 33, 55).

***Campus Climate*** - assesses the extent to which the institution provides experiences that promote a sense of campus pride and feelings of belonging. This scale also assesses the effectiveness of the institution's channels of communication for students. (1, 2, 3, 7, 10, 29, 37, 41, 45, 51, 57, 59, 60, 62, 66, 67, 71)

***Campus Life*** - assesses the effectiveness of student life programs offered by the institution, covering issues ranging from athletics to residence life. This scale also assesses campus policies and procedures to determine students' perceptions of their rights and responsibilities. (9, 23, 24, 30, 31, 38, 40, 42, 46, 52, 56, 63, 64, 67, 73)

***Campus Support Services*** - assesses the quality of the support programs and services which students utilize in order to make their educational experiences more meaningful and productive. This scale cover areas such as tutoring, the adequacy of the library and computer labs, and the availability of academic and career services. ( 13, 18, 26, 32, 44, 49, 54)

***Concern for the Individual*** - assesses the institution's commitment to treating each student as an individual. Those groups who frequently deal with students on a personal level (e.g., faculty, advisors, counselors, residence hall staff) are included in this assessment. ( 3, 14, 22, 25, 30, 59)

***Instructional Effectiveness*** - assesses the students' academic experience, the curriculum, and the campus's overriding commitment to academic excellence. This comprehensive scale covers areas such as the variety of courses offered, the effectiveness of the faculty in and out of the classroom, and the effectiveness of the adjunct faculty and graduate teaching assistants. (3, 8, 16, 25, 39, 41, 47, 53, 58, 61, 65, 68, 69, 70)

***Recruitment and Financial Aid Effectiveness*** - assesses the institution's ability to enroll students in an effective manner. This scale covers issues as competence and knowledge of admissions counselors, as well as the effectiveness and availability of financial aid programs. (4, 5, 12, 17, 43, 48)

***Registration Effectiveness*** - assess issues associated with registration and billing. This scale also measures the institution's commitment to making this process as smooth and effective as possible. (11, 20, 27, 34, 50)

***Responsiveness to Diverse Populations*** - assesses the institution's commitment to specific groups of students enrolled at the institution, e.g., under-represented populations, students with disabilities, commuters, part-time students, and older, returning learners. (84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89)

***Safety and Security*** - assesses the institution's responsiveness to students' personal safety and security on the campus. This scale measures the effectiveness of both security personal and campus facilities. (7, 21, 28, 36)

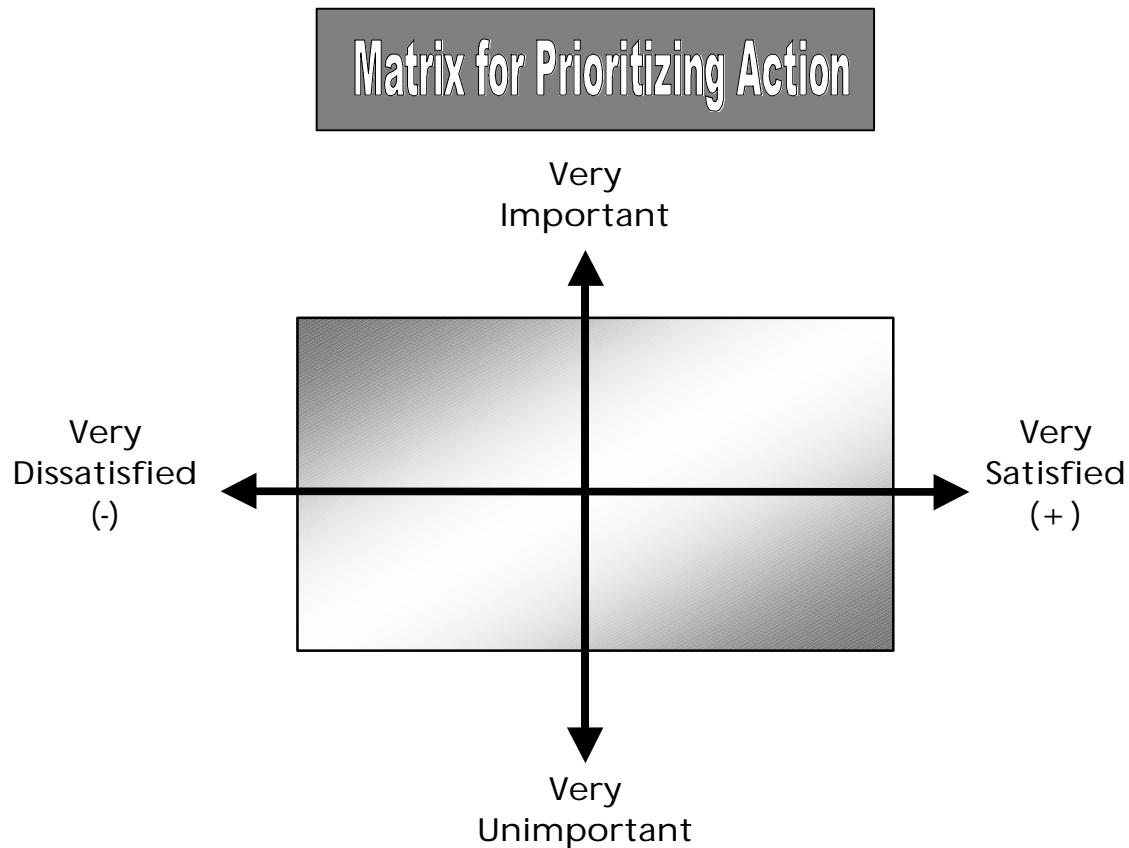
***Service Excellence*** - assesses the perceived attitude of the staff toward students, especially front-line staff. This scale pinpoints the areas of the campus where quality service and personal concern for students are rated most and least favorably. (2, 13, 15, 22, 27, 57, 60, 71)

***Student Centeredness*** - assesses the campus's efforts to convey to students that they are important to the institution. This scale measures the extent to which students feel welcome and valued. (1, 2, 10, 29, 45, 59)

## Interpreting the Results

Using the matrix below helps conceptualize student satisfaction data by both retention priorities and marketing opportunities. In addition, it helps pinpoint areas where resources can be redirected from areas of low expectation to areas of high expectation (Exhibit A).

Exhibit A



- **High importance/low satisfaction** - pinpoints areas in need of immediate attention, i.e., retention agenda/priorities.
- **High importance/high satisfaction** - showcases areas of strength that should be highlighted in promotional material.
- **Low importance/high satisfaction** - suggests areas where it might be beneficial to redirect resources to areas of higher importance.
- **Low importance/low satisfaction** - presents an opportunity to examine those areas that have low status with students.