

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NOEL-LEVITZ-1997

Student Satisfaction Inventory

The Need for Assessment As a starting point, a University retention plan requires the collection and analysis of baseline data about student needs and satisfaction. During the past decade, dramatic demographic changes have occurred in the composition of our student population. The students who attend CSU Stanislaus today are younger and more ethnically diverse than they were ten years ago. In addition, with the opening of the Residential Village (Village I in 1994, Village II in 1996), 300+ students now live on campus, approximately half of them traditional age freshmen and sophomores. The need for information about these students' needs and satisfaction with campus programs, service and atmosphere is imperative.

The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) In summer 1996, after exploring different assessment options, the campus settled on the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) for several reasons:

- It elicits student responses on both importance and satisfaction for each question asked.
- A number of open questions are allocated for university design and use.
- It provides national norms for comparison with student responses at similar institutions.
- The publisher provides analyses of both general student body responses and the responses of all target groups requested by the University.
- Lastly, the university could purchase a copy of the data disk as well as hard copy for campus use by the Office of Institutional Research.

Administration of the SSI The survey was administered to 19.4% of the students (1,200 out of 6,200) both in Turlock and Stockton. A testing prompt was prepared by the Senior Director for Retention Services and additional questions were prepared by the General Education Committee of the Academic Senate.

Who Responded? The response rate was 97.3% (1,168/1,200), for a usable response rate of 94.8% (1,138/1,200).

- 707 females (62.1 %) and 431 males (37.9%) completed the survey; this breakdown by gender mirrors the campus breakdown to within less than 0.5% (females 62.6%, males 37.4% of the total campus student population).
- Survey responses mirror the campus population as well in ethnicity and race (female, male, and total) to within 2.0%. (Seven Native American students took completed the survey, too few to determine significance of the findings.)
- Full-time students are over-represented compared to part-time students when compared to campus demographics (908/1,136, compared to 2,089/6,042), but a substantial number of part-time students took the survey.
- Breakdown by class level mirrors campus demographics with variances of 0.5% to less than 4.0%.
- By GPA, the variance is never more than 4.0%.
- Variance in educational goal (by degree level) varies up to 11.0%+.
- There is little variance as to residence classification (in-state, out-of-state, international) or disability.

Data Analysis The inventory provides data on the levels of importance and satisfaction students that ascribed to the university's academic and co-curricular programs and services. The survey was intended to help the self-study process by summarizing current student perceptions of the campus and its strengths and weaknesses and by providing national comparisons on all items. National group mean values are based on the responses of 76,161 students from 1,400+ four-year public institutions nationwide.

Using a seven-point ranking scale (1 = most negative ranking, 7 = most positive ranking), students ranked each item on IMPORTANCE and SATISFACTION. Results could be analyzed in terms of the performance gap between importance and satisfaction at this campus or by comparison of CSU Stanislaus students' responses with students' responses at comparable institutions nation-wide. Survey results indicated that students had systematically inflated the importance of most items, rendering information about performance gaps less useful than a comparison of campus and national satisfaction norms. The goal of this assessment is change, so this summary report concentrates on the top ten items with comparative gaps in satisfaction between campus and national norms, both positive and negative; all items exhibit a level of 0.05 or higher and thus merit attention.

Satisfaction Ranked by Category In comparison to national group means, Stanislaus students reported higher levels of satisfaction for 10 of 12 categories; there were significant positive differences (in descending order of magnitude) in the categories of *safety and security* (+0.62), *responsiveness to diversity* (+0.15), *concern for the individual* (+0.14), *service excellence* (+0.14), *instructional effectiveness* (+0.09), *student centeredness* (+0.09), and *campus climate* (+0.09). Student satisfaction with *registration effectiveness* was -0.06 lower than comparative national group means; *recruitment and financial aid* ranked slightly lower (-0.01) than comparable national means.

All Students For all CSU Stanislaus students, the ten highest satisfaction mean values by individual question compared to national group means were (in descending order of magnitude): adequacy of *student parking space* (+ 1.35); competent *health services staff* (+0.77); comfortable *campus housing* (+0.62); a *well maintained campus* (+0.50); a *safe and secure campus* (+0.43); a strong *commitment to racial harmony* (+0.35); a helpful and approachable *library staff* (+0.27); a caring *counseling staff* (+0.26); a responsive *security staff* (+0.25).

The ten lowest satisfaction mean values by individual question were (in descending negative order): *intercollegiate sports program* (-0.70); variety of *intramural activities* (-0.33); variety of *class offerings* (-0.31); convenient *business office hours* (-0.24); adequate *career services* (-0.24); *campus communication* (-0.24); *approachable administrators* (-0.19); reasonable *billing policies* (-0.17); student involvement in *campus organizations* (-0.17); and helpful *registration staff* (-0.16).

By Ethnicity:

African American Student Responses (sample = 43) Compared to the responses of all 1,138 CSUS students, 43 African American students indicated greater satisfaction with four of ten positive response items: a well maintained *campus* (0.86, gap of +0.36), *campus security* (0.61, gap of +0.18), well lighted and secure *parking lots* (0.44, gap of +0.09), and an approachable *library staff* (0.35, gap of +0.09). They were less satisfied than the general student population with: *health service staff* (0.41, gap of -0.36), *student parking space* (1.13, gap of -0.22), comfortable *campus housing* (0.50, gap of -0.12), a caring *counseling staff* (0.18, gap of -0.09), and a responsive *security staff* (0.17, gap of -0.09). They were dissatisfied with the campus *commitment to racial harmony* (-0.16, gap of -0.43).

African American students negatively ranked eight of the ten items of greatest sources of dissatisfaction. They ranked *intercollegiate sports* as the greatest item of comparative dissatisfaction; the gap was slightly less than for the general student body (-0.46, gap of +0.06). In descending order of discontent, they ranked *intramurals* (-0.52, gap of -0.19), *variety of classes* offered (-0.51, gap of -0.20), *career services* (-0.40, gap of -0.16), *business office hours* (-0.22, gap of +0.02) and *campus communication* (-0.22, gap of +0.02). Though below national norms, they found *administrators* more approachable than did the general student population (-0.07, gap of +0.12) and *billing policies* more reasonable (-0.08, gap of +0.09). They ranked two items above national means: they found it easy to get involved in *campus organizations* (+0.09, gap of +0.26) and they found the *registration staff* helpful (+0.16, gap of +0.32).

Asian and Pacific Islander Student Responses (sample = 96) 96 Asian and Pacific Islander students indicated greater satisfaction than all students on three of ten positive response

items: *campus housing* (0.92, gap of +0.30), *commitment to racial harmony* (0.51, gap of +0.24), and a *responsive security staff* (0.26, gap of +0.01). All other responses were positive, but not as positive as for the general student body: in descending order, they were: *adequate student parking* (0.91, gap of -0.44), *health service staff* (0.45, gap of -0.27), *well maintained campus* (0.37, gap of -0.13), *safe and secure campus* (0.25, gap of -0.18), *well lighted and secure parking lots* (0.22, gap of -0.13), *helpful and approachable library staff* (0.13, gap of -0.13), *caring counseling staff* (0.01, gap of -0.26). Asian and Pacific Islander students indicated both a substantial gap between the importance of counseling services and satisfaction with the services (gap of -1.82) and noticeably less satisfaction with these services than the general student body. Even then, comparatively speaking, they rank satisfaction with these services slightly above national group means (+0.01).

These students negatively ranked all ten items on the list of services and programs provoking the greatest comparative dissatisfaction. They too placed *intercollegiate sports* at the top of the list (0.54, gap of +0.16), followed by *registration personnel* (-0.39, gap of -0.23), *approachable administrators* (-0.29, gap of -0.10), *convenient business hours* (-0.21, gap of +0.03), and so on down the list. The only items on which this group of students expressed greater discontent than the general student body were *registration personnel* and *approachable administrators*.

Caucasian Non-Hispanic Student Responses (sample = 572) 572 Caucasian non-Hispanic students indicated greater or the same level of satisfaction than all CSUS student on all but one item on the positive listing, and the gap in that instance (*safe and secure campus*, 0.42, gap of -0.01) was negligible compared to the generally high level of satisfaction indicated. On only one item (*parking space*, 0.54, gap of +0.19) was there a substantial gap in satisfaction between all students and this group of students alone.

The gap between this group of students and all CSUS students was significant in two items on the negative listing, and the results of one of these two items was surprising. While all CSUS students indicated a hefty negative mean difference in satisfaction with *intercollegiate athletics* of -0.70 compared to national means, Caucasian students alone indicated a positive mean difference in satisfaction of +0.81 (gap of + 1.51). The other item was *billing policies* (-0.08, gap of +0.09).

Given the generally negative ranking of intercollegiate athletics at CSUS, the university should examine its contrary appeal to Caucasian students, but not the other groups surveyed, to determine, first, in what the comparatively greater appeal to Caucasian students lies and, second, whether non-Caucasian students see this program as somehow intended for Caucasian students primarily and not for them. This finding was startling to the writer of this section of the self-study, for the intercollegiate sports program has been and remains among our principal media to recruit 'minority' students, and the program has a reputation for equitable and non-discriminatory treatment of all athletes. Nonetheless, Caucasian students indicate a much higher level of satisfaction with intercollegiate athletics and all other student populations indicate considerable dissatisfaction with the program as a builder of campus spirit.

Hispanic Student Responses (sample = 214) 214 Hispanic students indicated greater satisfaction than the overall student population with all but two items on the list of the top ten highest satisfaction means: Although comparatively highly satisfied with the adequacy of *student parking space*, they were significantly less pleased with this service than the general student body (0.91, gap of -0.44) and they exhibited comparatively modest satisfaction with the responsiveness of *security staff* to emergencies (0.02, gap of -0.23). On all other eight items, they indicated even higher degrees of satisfaction with CSUS programs and services. In descending order, they ranked: *health services staff* (0.92, gap of +0.13), *campus housing* (0.78, gap of 0.16), a *well maintained campus* (0.61, gap of +0.11), a *safe and secure campus* (0.59, gap of 0.16), *caring counseling staff* (0.53, gap of +0.28), *parking lot security* (0.38, gap of +0.03), *commitment to racial harmony* (0.35, gap of +0.08), *library staff* (0.33, gap of +0.07).

Of the ten lowest satisfaction mean values compared to national means, these students indicated positive satisfaction compared to national means in two categories: *variety of classes* offered (0.03,

gap of +0.34 compared to all CSUS students) and *career services* (0.05, gap of +0.29). In all other cases, they exhibited a markedly lower level of dissatisfaction than all CSUS students (e. g., *intercollegiate sports* (-0.34, a gap of +0.36), with the exception of one item: they indicated slightly great dissatisfaction with *registration* personnel (-0.19, gap of -0.03).

Future Plans: Further Analysis Yet to analyze are student responses by class level, gender and age. The results will be appended to this report.

Future Plans: Dissemination and Action The W ASC Steering Committee will receive the executive summary first, for use by its subgroups in completing the self-study document. A detailed statistical report will be included as an attachment to the self-study report, and will be available to all faculty and staff. All items pertaining to academic affairs (e. g., adequacy of course offerings) will be referred to the Master Academic Plan Committee, as well as all items relating to academic support and related services (registration, etc.), for their review and comment. Results will also be reviewed by the Enrollment Management Retention Committee and its recommendations subsequently discussed at the Enrollment Management Committee. Summary results of these parallel discussions will be presented to the Academic Senate, Provost's Council and Cabinet. Information will be made available to students both through their involvement on campus committees, by presentation to the Student Senate, and information to the campus newspaper, the Signal.

It is premature to direct how results should be used by these various bodies, but certain points are clear.

- The survey indicates acceptable but lukewarm satisfaction with academic programs and faculty. The survey does not indicate the positive enthusiasm for academic life at CSU Stanislaus that we must promote and nourish if we are to realize our vision of excellence in teaching, research and creative activity. We should not accept this level of approval but rather look on it as a challenge to resolve. We must examine the findings to determine how best to communicate to our students the message of academic excellence and to position ourselves as the premiere learning community in central California and a model for such communities nationwide.
- The survey also indicates many areas of dissatisfaction as well with the co-curriculum, most notably with intercollegiate athletics as a promoter and builder of campus spirit, the availability and variety of intramural programs, the ease of involvement in student organizations, and the ease of communication of information on campus. Options need to be explored to enhance campus life, to create a co-curricular environment participating in and supportive of academic learning, to provide leadership and service opportunities to students, and to make the campus more exciting and appealing to students.
- The items on which students ranked the university highest may help the institution in recruiting students but they are not the core of a strong student recruitment package. The items on which the students ranked the university lowest compared to national means in many instances would provide us with very strong recruiting tools if students ranked them more positively. The Enrollment Management Recruitment Committee and Enrollment Management Marketing Committee must look at these items to see how the university can capitalize on its current assets and work to improve its deficits.
- There are enough indicators of student dissatisfaction with campus front-end services (registration, billing, business office hours) that we must examine ways to improve still further first-contact services with students and to promote a positive service ethos among everyone who deals face to face or over telephone or computer with students.
- The differences in rankings among different ethnic groups of students, and these students' general satisfaction or dissatisfaction with services, programs and campus atmosphere deserve careful attention, even though there do not seem to be wide-ranging differences in sentiment between all CSU students and particular ethnic groups of students.

- The difference in ranking of intercollegiate athletics between Caucasian non-Hispanic students, who indicated strong positive difference in satisfaction compared to national group means, and all students, who indicated strong dissatisfaction needs examination to determine what the results mean, and how they should be used for positive action.

Three Summary Questions: Overall Student Satisfaction Three summary questions were asked of students.

- To the question, "So far, how has your college experience met your expectations?" the group mean response was 4.53 (out of 7), a mean difference of +0.22 compared to the national sample.
- To the question, "Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here so far," the group mean response was 5.14 (out of 7), a mean difference of +0.16 compared to the national sample.
- To the question, "All in all, if you had it to do over, would you enroll here again?" the group mean response was 5.27 (out of 7), a mean difference of +0.18 compared to the national sample.