

# Research in BRIEF

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## 2012 NOEL-LEVITZ STUDENT SATISFACTION INVENTORY (SSI)

### Executive Summary (Administered Spring 2012)

The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), a nationally recognized survey developed to assess student satisfaction and the importance of campus issues to students, was administered to 3,784 Chapman students during the Spring 2012 semester. A random sample of half of the undergraduate population and all graduate students (excluding Law students) were invited to take the SSI. The survey was conducted on-line and sent to each student's Chapman University email address.

#### Response Rate and Demographics

Exactly 752 SSIs were completed, yielding a response rate of 19.9 percent for the entire surveyed population. When broken down by undergraduate and graduate students, the response rate was 19.4% and 21.0% respectively.

#### Population and Survey Respondents – Spring 2012

	Survey Population (n = 3,784)	All Sample (n=752)	UG Sample (n=501)	GR Sample (n=251)
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	42.9%	33.4%	34.5%	31.3%
Female	57.1%	66.6%	65.5%	68.7%
<b>Class Level</b>				
Freshman	15.7%	18.7%	27.9%	--
Sophomore	15.9%	14.9%	22.3%	--
Junior	15.8%	17.1%	25.5%	--
Senior	20.5%	15.7%	23.1%	--
Graduate	31.4%	32.9%	--	98.4%
Other	.7%	.8%	1.2%	1.6%

Findings show that females are overrepresented in the sample. A comparison of the racial/ethnic demographics is not presented due to incompatible racial/ethnic categories between the SSI and Chapman's student records. The class composition of the overall sample under represents seniors and slightly over represents freshmen and juniors.

### FINDINGS

Highlighted in this *Research in BRIEF* are some of the most salient findings from the 2012 SSI survey.

#### Importance

Students were asked to indicate how important it was to them that the university met the expectations listed, using a scale from 1-“not important” to 7-“very important.” Average mean scores were calculated for all items. The top five services/activities rated as *most* important by Chapman University students in 2012 were:

#### Undergraduates

- The content of the courses within my major is valuable. (6.77)
- The instruction in my major field is excellent. (6.77)
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (6.74)
- The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent. (6.73)
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field. (6.72)

#### Graduates

- The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent. (6.82)
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field. (6.81)
- The instruction in my major field is excellent. (6.79)
- The content of the courses within my major is valuable. (6.79)
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (6.76)

Course content, instruction quality, and class registration rated as the top three concerns among undergraduate students. In contrast, graduate students reported placing

more priority on the quality of instruction, both overall and in their field, and less emphasis on class registration ease. It should also be noted that the level of variation in mean scores between the top five choices among undergraduate and graduate students is extremely small. As a result, the intensity of preference for each of the top five choices is nearly the same for all of the listed items.

The top five services/activities rated as *least* important by Chapman University students in 2012 were:

### **Undergraduates**

- A variety of intramural activities are offered. (5.02)
- The student handbook provides helpful information about campus life. (5.42)
- The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit. (5.44)
- There are a sufficient number of weekend activities for students. (5.54)
- Library staff are helpful and approachable. (5.65)

### **Graduates**

- A variety of intramural activities are offered. (4.49)
- The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit (4.79).
- There are a sufficient number of weekend activities for students. (5.28)
- I can easily get involved in campus organizations. (5.54)
- The student handbook provides helpful information about campus life. (5.67)

Intramural activities, weekend activities, the student handbook, and the role of intercollegiate sports in fostering school spirit were commonly viewed as least important among undergraduates and graduate students. This should not be interpreted as unimportant concerns as these items still scored in the “neutral” and “somewhat important” range.

### **Satisfaction**

Students were asked to report their level of satisfaction with the service or activity listed, using a scale from 1-“not satisfied at all” to 7-“very satisfied.” Average mean scores were calculated for each item. The top five services/activities rated as *most* satisfactory by Chapman University students in 2012 were:

### **Undergraduates**

- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained. (6.51)
- The campus is safe and secure for all students. (6.20)
- The student center is a comfortable place for students to spend their leisure time. (6.09)
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field. (6.07)
- Parking lots are well-lighted and secure. (6.06)

### **Graduates**

- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained. (6.53)
- The campus is safe and secure for all students. (6.27)
- This institution has a good reputation within the community. (6.26)
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field. (6.17)
- Parking lots are well-lighted and secure. (6.14)

Campus maintenance and safety, faculty competency, and parking lot lighting all ranked in the top five highest areas of satisfaction for undergraduates and graduate students. The student center item ranked third in satisfaction among undergraduates which is most likely attributable to the new student union in Argyros Forum. The student center item did not make the top five among graduate students, instead, Chapman’s reputation within the community ranked third.

The top five services/activities rated as *least* satisfactory by Chapman University students in 2012 were:

### **Undergraduates**

- The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit. (3.79)
- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate. (4.04)
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (4.23)
- My academic advisor helps me set goals to work toward. (4.27)
- My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual. (4.55)

### **Graduates**

- There is an adequate selection of food available in the cafeteria. (4.80)
- The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit. (4.85)
- Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available. (5.01)
- A variety of intramural activities are offered. (5.01)
- Student activities fees are put to good use. (5.02)

Both undergraduate and graduate students ranked the role of athletic programs in contributing to school spirit in the top two areas of dissatisfaction. Undergraduates reported a mean score of 3.79 which corresponds with “somewhat dissatisfied” while the mean score of 4.85 fell in the “neutral” range for graduate students. Beyond this item, undergraduate and graduate students reported different areas of dissatisfaction, although the mean scores typically fell in the “neutral” range. Undergraduates reported concern over parking, class registration, and their academic advisor, while graduate students pointed to food selection, methods to express

complaints, the availability of intermural activities and fees.

### **Performance Gap: Challenges and Strengths**

The performance gap score is the mean score difference between student satisfaction and importance items. When the students' level of satisfaction is subtracted from the strength of the students' expectation (i.e., level of importance), the result suggests an unmet expectation. According to Noel-Levitz, a large performance gap score for an item indicates that the institution is not meeting the students' expectations. The services/activities listed below resulted in the largest gap scores in 2012:

#### **Undergraduates**

- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (2.51)
- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate. (2.25)
- My academic advisor helps me set goals to work toward. (1.72)
- My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual. (1.68)
- The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit. (1.65)

#### **Graduates**

- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment. (1.37)
- Adequate financial aid is available for most students. (1.36)
- Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available. (1.20)
- Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students. (1.18)
- There is an adequate selection of food available in the cafeteria. (1.13)

Undergraduates identified class registration ease and amount of student parking as the top two areas with the highest gap scores. Two items about academic advisors drew the next two highest gap scores followed by the item about intercollegiate sports contributing to school spirit. Among graduate students, concerns over the financial value of their education and the accessibility of financial aid were the top two concerns. Concern over their tuition's value may be related to the lack of channels for expressing complaints, perceived unfair treatment from faculty members, and inadequate food options.

According to Noel-Levitz, a small performance gap score for an item indicates that the institution is meeting the students' expectations in that area or that there is little difference between satisfaction and importance. Below are the services/activities with the smallest gap scores in 2012:

#### **Undergraduates**

- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained. (-.16)
- Library staff are helpful and approachable. (-.11)
- A variety of intramural activities are offered (-.10).
- Males and females have equal opportunities to participate in intercollegiate athletics. (-.04)
- The student center is a comfortable place for students to spend their leisure time. (-.03)

#### **Graduates**

- A variety of intramural activities are offered. (-.52)
- Males and females have equal opportunities to participate in intercollegiate athletics. (-.45)
- The student center is a comfortable place for students to spend their leisure time. (-.19)
- There are a sufficient number of weekend activities for students. (-.19)
- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained. (-.12)

The results showed that undergraduate satisfaction exceeded importance for several items such as campus maintenance, opportunities to participate in intramural and intercollegiate sports, library staff helpfulness, and the student center which most likely refers to the new student union in Argyros Forum. Graduate students also reported satisfaction with opportunities to participate in intramural and intercollegiate sports and the student center. The gap scores for the weekend activities and weekend activities items also made the top five, but these items were one of the least important concerns among graduate students.

#### **Scales**

Using factor analysis, Noel-Levitz created 12 scales in order to provide an overall picture of various service areas. According to the Noel-Levitz's SSI Interpretative Guide, the following scales were created:

- **Student Centeredness** scale assesses the extent to which students feel welcome and valued.
- **Campus Life** scale assesses the effectiveness of student life programs offered, as well as policies/procedures to determine students' perception of their rights and responsibilities.
- **Instructional Effectiveness** scale assesses students' academic experience, the curriculum, and the campus's commitment to academic excellence. Also covers areas such as the effectiveness of faculty in and out of the classroom, content of the courses, and sufficient course offerings.
- **Recruitment/Admissions and Financial Aid Effectiveness** scale assesses the institution's ability to enroll students in an effective manner, covering issues such as competence and knowledge of admissions counselors, as well as the effectiveness and availability of financial aid programs.
- **Campus Support Services** scale assesses the quality of support programs and services which students utilize to make their educational experiences more meaningful and productive.
- **Academic Advising Effectiveness** scale assesses the comprehensiveness of academic advising programs. Advisors

are evaluated on the basis of their knowledge, competence, personal concern for student success, and their approachability.

- **Registration Effectiveness** scale assesses issues associated with registration and billing.
- **Safety and Security** scale assesses responsiveness to students' personal safety and security on campus including parking availability.
- **Concern for the Individual** scale assesses institution's commitment to treating each student as an individual. Those groups who frequently deal with students on a personal level are included in this assessment.
- **Service Excellence** scale assesses the perceived attitude of staff, especially front-line staff, toward students.
- **Responsiveness to Diverse Populations** scale assesses institution's commitment to specific groups of students enrolled (e.g., under-represented populations, older, returning learners).
- **Campus Climate** scale assesses the extent to which institutions provide experiences that promote a sense of campus pride and feelings of belonging.

The gap scores for the SSI Scales are another avenue for detecting potential improvement points in meeting student expectations. Unlike the item gap scores, the scales combine several items to allow for a more robust measure of the concept of interest.

**2012 Undergraduate Student Satisfaction Inventory Scales**

Scale	CU Undergraduate			CU Graduate		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Registration Effectiveness	6.31	5.07	1.24	6.33	5.62	0.71
Academic Advising	6.33	4.92	1.41	6.53	5.75	0.78
Safety and Security	6.42	5.53	0.89	6.43	5.87	0.56
Recruitment and Financial Aid	6.37	5.29	1.08	6.33	5.44	0.89
Concern for the Individual	6.32	5.36	0.96	6.47	5.63	0.84
Campus Climate	6.36	5.55	0.81	6.35	5.74	0.61
Student Centeredness	6.39	5.56	0.83	6.32	5.69	0.63
Instructional Effectiveness	6.55	5.76	0.79	6.64	5.81	0.83
Service Excellence	6.17	5.36	0.81	6.17	5.62	0.55
Campus Life	5.93	5.31	0.62	5.68	5.44	0.24
Campus Support Services	6.05	5.66	0.39	6.12	5.74	0.38
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations	--	5.29	--	--	5.44	--

The results showed that undergraduate students were most concerned about the quality of registration effectiveness and academic advising since these were the only scales that scored above one. All of the items under the academic advising scale asked about the student's "academic advisor" so it not clear if the respondent's answer refers to his or her faculty advisor or Academic Advising Center advisor. In contrast, graduate students reported being most concerned with financial aid and personalized education. Both groups were least concerned about campus support services and campus life.

**Decision to Enroll and Overall Satisfaction**

Using a scale from 1-"not important" to 7-"very important," undergraduates were asked to indicate, from a list of nine items, which factors they believed were most important in their decision to enroll at their institution. Results show that top three factors influencing students' decision to attend Chapman University were financial aid, academic reputation of the institution, and cost among both undergraduate and graduate students. The last two questions on the survey ask about the student's overall satisfaction and whether they would enroll at Chapman University again. The results show that 85% and 82% of undergraduates and graduate students respectively were satisfied with their experience at Chapman University. And about 80% of students in both groups reported that they would enroll again at Chapman University.

**SUMMARY**

The findings from the 2012 SSI survey point to areas of satisfaction and improvement as identified by undergraduate and graduate students. The results showed that undergraduate and graduate students placed great importance on similar services such as registration ease and quality of instruction. Both groups also expressed high satisfaction with campus maintenance and the various services Chapman offers including safety, staff services at the library, tutoring center, bookstore, and computer labs. The high satisfaction marks from undergraduate and graduate students about Chapman's facilities is partially attributable to the new student union which most likely caused a drastic increase in the 'student center' item. Among undergraduates, the satisfaction item increased from 4.63 from 2010 to 6.09 in 2012.

While satisfaction with campus facilities is generally high, the availability of parking still remains a concern among undergraduate students. The gap scores also suggest that undergraduate students are unsatisfied with the ease of class registration and both the quality of advice about future planning and the amount of concern regarding personal success expressed by academic advisors. While it is not clear whether efforts should be directed toward faculty advisors or the Academic Advising Center, the findings suggest that advisors should direct more attention toward goal planning and individual care. In contrast, graduate students are more concerned about financial aid, personalized attention, accessible channels to express complaints, and quality of instruction. While the malleability of these areas vary, they could represent possible targets in order to improve the gap score for the, "Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment," item among graduate students.

Prepared by: Chapman's Institutional Research Office (CIRO)  
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