

Executive Summary

The **Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)** measures students' satisfaction with a wide variety of college experiences. The students rate each experience based on its importance to them and also their level of satisfaction with that particular experience. A gap measure is calculated by subtracting these two ratings. Thus, three scores result from the student ratings. The importance rating reflects the student's expectation and the satisfaction score indicates how satisfied the student is with that item. The gap measure indicates how well that expectation is being met.

The SSI generates scores on eleven scales which include:

- academic advising effectiveness,
- campus climate,
- campus life,
- campus support services,
- concern for the individual,
- instructional effectiveness,
- recruitment and financial aid effectiveness,
- registration effectiveness, ,
- safety and security,
- service excellence and
- student centeredness.

In addition, information is gathered on the institution's commitment to specific student populations, respondent demographics, some pre-enrollment factors, and items that assess the overall satisfaction with the institution.

The inventory was administered to a sample of 354 Aurora University undergraduates in the spring 2005 semester. The scale was administered during class time to students in classes that had been selected to insure a representative sample of the undergraduate population.

Results

What do AU students consider most important in their college experience?

The top five areas of importance to students, in order, are (two were tied for fifth):

- Academic Advising—approachable advisors who are knowledgeable about major requirements and are concerned with the individual student's success.
- Instructional Effectiveness-- faculty who are knowledgeable, available, fair and unbiased in their treatment of students, and excellent teachers. Students want a variety of courses offered and they also want to experience intellectual growth.
- Safety and Security-- a safe and secure campus with adequate and well-lighted parking lots.
- Recruitment and Financial Aid-- adequate financial aid that is given to students in time to be helpful in college planning. Financial aid and admissions counselors are expected to be knowledgeable and helpful
- Concern for the Individual --faculty, administration, and staff members that care about the individual student and his/her success
- Registration Effectiveness-- be able to register for classes with few conflicts and have helpful personnel in the registration process. Billing and class change (drop/add) policies that are reasonable.

Which areas receive the highest satisfaction ratings from AU students?

The SSI scales that indicated the top five areas of satisfaction to students, in order, are: instructional effectiveness, academic advising, campus support services, student centeredness, and concern for the individual.

How well are we meeting our students' expectations?

The difference between the importance rating (expectation) and the satisfaction rating was determined for each of the eleven **scales** on the SSI. In each instance, the gap score was negative which indicates that student's expectations were **not** being met. The five scales with the **smallest** gaps were: campus support services, campus life, service excellence, student centeredness, with instructional effectiveness and campus climate tied for the fifth rank.

Since a gap score can be low and reflect an important item with a high degree of satisfaction, a low score could also reflect an unimportant item with a relatively low level of satisfaction; Noel-Levitz suggests an additional calculation to identify institutional strengths and challenges.

What are AU's strengths and challenges as identified by the SSI?

Strengths are defined as those **items** which have importance ratings above the median of all items and in the upper quartile of satisfaction i.e. very important with high satisfaction. Weaknesses are defined as those **item** importance ratings that are above the median of all items and a gap score at or above 1.40 i.e. important with low satisfaction (Noel-Levitz definitions for the SSI).

AU strengths 2005 (important/high satisfaction)

- The content of the courses within my major is valuable.
- The instruction in my major field is excellent.
- The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent.
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field.
- My academic advisor is approachable.
- Major requirements are clear and reasonable.
- My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.
- Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours.
- I am able to experience intellectual growth here.
- There is a commitment to academic excellence on this campus.
- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained.
- The campus staff are caring and helpful.
- Faculty care about me as an individual.

AU Challenges (important/low satisfaction)

- There are adequate services to help me decide upon a career.
- Billing policies are reasonable.
- I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information on this campus.
- Parking lots are well-lighted and secure.
- It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus.
- Security staff respond quickly in emergencies.

- There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus.
- The campus is safe and secure for all students
- Adequate financial aid is available for most students.
- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate.
- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major
- 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.

The list of challenges includes one item that also qualifies as a strength. The reason for this seeming contradiction is that the item, “My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major” is rated as very important and has an average satisfaction rating. The Noel-Levitz consultant advised that this should be treated as a challenge, since it is rated so highly in importance that efforts should be made to increase the satisfaction level even higher than it is currently.

Conclusions/Recommendations

In general, the student expectations about their experiences are not being met adequately. There are, however, notable exceptions. The faculty’s instructional expertise and advising capabilities, along with their availability and concern about the student and his/her intellectual growth, are major strengths. Also, AU is seen as having a caring and helpful staff working at a well-maintained campus.

One area in need of attention concerns safety, security, and parking issues. Since much has been accomplished in this area since the SSI was administered, some of

these issues may have been resolved, somewhat. There are some registration, advisement, and career counseling concerns that students would like to see improved. In the faculty realm, faculty should be reminded of the importance of treating students fairly, in an unbiased manner and about being knowledgeable about requirements in the student's major. Focus groups might clarify why it is not an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus and/or why the tuition paid is not a worthwhile investment.

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