Research in BRIEF

A Newsletter of the Institutional Research Office

✳ CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

NOEL-LEVITZ STUDENT SATISFACTION INVENTORY: 1995 - 2012
Executive Summary

The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) was first administered to Chapman students in 1995 and has been implemented on a bi-annual basis since 2002. The survey was developed to assess satisfaction and the importance of campus issues and services to students. Prior to 2006, the SSI was either mailed to students or administered during class. Starting in 2006 and after, the SSI was administered on-line via an email invitation sent to each student's account. The SSI was sent typically to half of the undergraduate population and all graduate students starting in 2004. The collected sample for each survey year was usually overrepresented by female respondents and underrepresented by seniors.

FINDINGS

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." The average mean scores were calculated for all items in each year then the earliest mean score was subtracted from the latest mean score. The resulting difference for each item is reported in the parentheses after each item. The top five services/activities that changed the most during the surveyed time period were:

Undergraduates (1995 to 2012)

- Living conditions in the residence halls are comfortable (adequate space, lighting, heat, air, etc.). (.54)
- I can easily get involved in campus. (.53)
- There are a sufficient number of weekend activities for students. (.50)
- Residence hall staff are concerned about me as an individual. (.49)
- Security staff respond quickly in emergencies. (.49)

Graduates (2004 to 2012)[1]

- There are a sufficient number of weekend activities for students. (1.28)

- The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit. (.97)
- New student orientation services help students adjust to college. (.88)
- The student center is a comfortable place for students to spend their leisure time. (.87)
- The staff in the health services area are competent. (.77)

The results show that the amount of importance that undergraduates placed on any particular item did not change drastically. Each of the five item mean scores increased in importance around .5 between 1995 and 2012. Two of the items dealt with residence halls as Chapman undergraduates placed increasing importance on living hall conditions and residence staff service. Chapman undergraduates also placed greater importance on campus security responsiveness, opportunities to get involved on campus and the number of weekend activities. Similarly, graduate students placed increased importance on weekend activities along with new student orientation services, the student center, health services staff, and athletic programs contributing to school spirit.

The top services/activities rated among the highest in importance during the surveyed time period are listed below. The parentheses indicate the number of years the item was listed in the top five in importance.

Undergraduates (1995 to 2012)

- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (all years)
- The instruction in my major field is excellent. (all years)
- The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent. (all years)
- The content of the courses within my major is valuable. (6 out of 7 years)
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field. (5 out of 7 years)

Graduates (2004 to 2012)

- The instruction in my major field is excellent. (all years)
- The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent. (all years)
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field. (all years)
- The content of the courses within my major is valuable. (all years)
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (3 out of 4 years)

Among undergraduates, the ease of class registration, instruction in the student's major field, and overall quality of instruction were all enduring top priorities. In addition, receiving valuable course content in the student's major and the level of knowledge possessed by faculty members were also high priorities as expressed by undergraduates in most of the surveyed years.

Graduate students identified the same five items as undergraduates as the top areas of importance. Four items made the annual top five items every year except for the class registration item. The mean score for this item was in the top five in every year except 2010. Overall, the results show that undergraduate and graduate students were consistent in what they viewed as important over time.

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 all items in each year then the earliest mean score was subtracted from the latest mean score. The resulting difference for each item is reflected in the parentheses after each item. The top five services/activities that changed the most during the surveyed time period were:

Undergraduates (1995 to 2012)

- Library resources and services are adequate. (2.49)
- Security staff respond quickly in emergencies. (1.57)
- Parking lots are well-lighted and secure. (1.46)
- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate. (1.33)
- The campus is safe and secure for all students. (1.00)

Graduates (2004 to 2012)

- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate. (1.48)
- Males and females have equal opportunities to participate in intercollegiate athletics. (1.29)
- The student center is a comfortable place for students to spend their leisure time. (1.12)
- There are a sufficient number of weekend activities for students. (1.02)

- I generally know what's happening on campus. (.96)

Satisfaction among undergraduates in Chapman's library resources and services underwent a 2.49 mean score increase between 1995 and 2012. The opening of the Leatherby Libraries in the fall of 2004 most likely played a role in the upswing in satisfaction. The expressed level of satisfaction in library resources increased from 4.02 in 2002 to 4.81 in 2004. The mean scores for the two items about campus security also experienced at least a one point growth in satisfaction. Lastly, undergraduate students identified parking availability as another area of growing satisfaction.

Graduate students also expressed increasing satisfaction with parking availability and the student center. Not surprisingly, the student center satisfaction mean score increased from 5.62 to 6.09 between 2010 and 2012 after the renovation of Arygos Forum in 2011. In addition, graduate students identified increasing satisfaction with gender equality in sports participation, quantity of weekend activities, and their knowledge of what's happening on campus.

The top services/activities rated among the highest in satisfaction during the surveyed time period are listed below. The parentheses indicate the number of years the item was listed in the top five in satisfaction.

Undergraduates (1995 to 2012)

- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field. (all years)
- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained. (6 out of 7 years)
- The campus is safe and secure for all students. (6 out of 7 years)
- Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours. (6 out of 7 years)

Graduates (2004 to 2012)

- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained. (4 out of 4 years)
- The campus is safe and secure for all students. (4 out of 4 years)
- Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours. (3 out of 4 years)
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field. (3 out of 4 years)

During the surveyed time period, undergraduates consistently identified campus maintenance, campus safety, the knowledge level of faculty, and faculty availability as the highest areas of satisfaction. The same items were also areas of satisfaction among graduate students during the surveyed period.

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, while 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. The earliest gap score was subtracted from latest gap score and the resulting difference is reflected in the parentheses after each item. The services/activities listed below resulted in the largest gap score changes during the surveyed time period:

Undergraduates (1995 to 2012)
- Library resources and services are adequate. (-2.64)
- Parking lots are well-lighted and secure. (-1.55)
- Library staff are helpful and approachable. (-1.32)
- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate. (-1.30)
- The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit. (1.15)

Graduates (2004 to 2012)
- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate. (-1.70)
- Library resources and services are adequate. (-1.00)
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (-.75)
- Counseling staff care about students as individuals. (-.63)
- I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information on this campus. (-.60)

The gap score for the library resources item decreased from 2.92 in 1995 to .28 in 2012, a -2.64 decrease, among undergraduates. Thus, what was once an area of great concern turned into a met expectation. Similarly, the gap scores for parking lot availability, parking lot lighting, and library staff helpfulness items also dropped at least 1.30 between 1995 and 2012. The opening of the Lastinger parking structure and Knott Studio Lot in 2006 most likely helped decrease the gap score for the parking lot availability item given that the satisfaction mean score increased 1.65 between 2006 and 2008. In contrast, the gap score for the "intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit," item grew 1.15 suggesting that this an area of growing concern.

In moving to graduate students, expectations with library resources, counseling staff service, avoiding the "run-around" when seeking information, amount of student parking, and class registration ease have become increasingly met between 2004 and 2012. It should be noted that expectations about parking availability still remain unfulfilled as will be discussed shortly.

The top services/activities demonstrating the greatest gap scores during the surveyed time period are listed below. The parentheses indicate the number of years the item was listed in the top five.

Undergraduates (1995 to 2012)
- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate. (all years)
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment. (6 out of 7 years)
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (5 out of 7 years).

Graduates (2004 to 2012)
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment. (all years)
- Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available. (all years)
- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate. (2 out of 4 years)
- Adequate financial aid is available for most students. (2 out of 4 years)
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (2 out of 4 years)

Parking availability, return on investment on tuition, and class registration ease were three areas that were consistently found to have the largest gap scores for undergraduates. Return on investment on tuition and channels for expressing complaints experienced the highest gap scores for graduate students.

Scales

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

- *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 and the campus's commitment to academic quality.
- *Recruitment/Admissions and Financial Aid Effectiveness* scale assesses the institution's ability to enroll students and the effectiveness and availability of their financial aid programs.
- *Campus Support Services* scale assesses the quality of support programs and services.
- *Academic Advising Effectiveness* scale assesses the comprehensiveness of academic advising programs.
- *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.
- *Service Excellence* scale assesses the perceived attitude of staff, especially front-line staff, toward students.
- *Campus Climate* scale assesses the extent to which institutions provide experiences that promote a sense of campus pride.

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

Between 1995 and 2012, Campus Support Services gap score declined from 1.33 to .39 indicating that Chapman University has improved in meeting undergraduate expectations regarding library, computer and academic support services. In looking at the individual gap scores which compose the scale, the gap scores for the two items about the library took the steepest decline. In addition, the gap scores about campus computer labs and tutoring services declined from around 1.00 in 1995 to .29 in 2012.

Chapman University: Undergraduate Scale Gap Score

	Campus Climate	Student Center	Recruit and Financial Aid	Campus Support Services	Safety and Security	Academic Advising
1995	1.03	0.94	1.31	1.33	2.07	1.07
2002	1.24	1.10	1.61	1.16	2.20	1.48
2004	1.01	1.01	1.08	0.76	1.82	1.38
2006	1.14	1.09	1.13	0.68	1.78	1.47
2008	1.09	1.05	1.17	0.51	1.07	1.26
2010	0.87	0.86	0.95	0.37	0.97	1.09
2012	0.81	0.83	1.08	0.39	0.89	1.41

The gap score for the Safety and Security Scale declined sharply from 2.07 in 1995 to .89 in 2012 among undergraduates. The gap score for three out of the four scale items which compose this scale dropped at least one point including the parking availability item as noted earlier. In addition, the gap scores for the parking lot lighting and security staff availability items declined 1.60 and 1.08 points respectively between 1995 and 2012. While not as drastic as the Campus Support Services and Safety and Security scales, the gap score for the Service Excellence scale has also been declining, partially because the gap score for the library staff helpfulness item declined from 1.21 in 1995 to -.11 in 2012. The gap score for the Registration Effectiveness scale has been trending up and down between 1995 and 2012 but it has been trending slightly downwards since 2008.

Chapman University: Undergraduate Scale Gap Score

	Campus Life	Registration Effective	Instruction Effective	Concern for the Individual	Service Excellence
1995	0.85	1.14	0.95	1.06	1.22
2002	1.24	1.70	1.20	1.32	1.40
2004	0.85	1.21	0.99	1.08	1.05
2006	0.91	1.32	1.06	1.21	1.12
2008	0.99	1.41	1.01	1.10	0.96
2010	0.76	1.22	0.84	0.88	0.84
2012	0.62	1.24	0.79	0.96	0.81

SUMMARY

The longitudinal results from the SSI show enduring trends reported by Chapman students. Ease of class registration, quality of instruction, and the availability of faculty have consistently been important areas and services for all students. Fortunately, satisfaction with faculty availability and competency has typically been high among Chapman students. But areas such as parking availability and ease of class registration have consistently ranked as the top areas where students felt their experiences did not met their expectations. The opening of the Lastinger parking structure and Knott Studio Lot did improve student satisfaction with parking availability but the high gap score associated with this area still suggests room for improvement. The growing unmet expectation regarding the role of athletic programs in contributing to school spirit may be another area to monitor.

While parking and class registration remain an area of improvement, Chapman University has built or renovated several buildings recently and the declining gap score in the Campus Support Services scale seems to correlate with these improvements. In addition, the findings suggest that the university has done an effective job in addressing concerns about library resources/services and campus safety among undergraduates. Among graduate students, the item, "Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment," was usually one of the highest gap scores. The source of dissatisfaction could be related to the lack of channels for expressing concern since this has been a persistent unmet expectation. The recent creation of the Vice Chancellor for Graduate Education position will help address graduate student concerns. And since 2010, the availability of financial aid has been a concern for graduate students as indicated by the gap score data.

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[1] Items evaluating dormitory or related services were removed from the analysis due to their minimal relevance to graduate students in the importance, satisfaction, and gap score sections. In addition, the item asking students to evaluate graduate student teaching was removed since the use of graduate teaching assistants is not a common practice at CU.