

# Research in BRIEF

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## 2014 NOEL-LEVITZ STUDENT SATISFACTION INVENTORY (SSI)

### Executive Summary

(Administered Spring 2014)

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 4,191 Chapman University students during the Spring 2014 semester. A random sample consisting of half 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. The email invitation to students originated from the Chancellor and non-respondents were sent three additional reminders.

#### Response Rates and Demographics

Exactly 440 undergraduate and 226 graduate students completed the 2014 SSI. This yielded a response rate of 15% for undergraduates and 18% for graduate students.

#### SPRING 2014 Population and Survey Sample Respondents

	UG Population (n=2,916)	UG Sample (n=440)	GR Population (n=1,275)	GR Sample (n=226)
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	42.5%	38.6%	38.0%	38.0%
Female	57.5%	61.4%	62.0%	62.0%
<b>Class Level</b>				
Freshman	18.1%	19.8%	—	—
Sophomore	21.8%	22.1%	—	—
Junior	26.2%	30.3%	—	—
Senior	32.9%	26.7%	—	—
Graduate	—	—	96.2%	99.1%
Other/Non-Degree Seeking	1.1%	0.9%	3.8%	0.9%

Findings show that the majority of the undergraduate and graduate respondents were females, which is closely reflective of the student population. In terms of the class level, the majority of undergraduate students were juniors followed by seniors. It is important to note that due to the very low response rates, caution should be taken when trying to generalize findings to the entire student population.

### FINDINGS

This *Research in BRIEF* will focus on some of the more salient findings from the 2014 SSI. Since most respondents reported living off campus, questions related to residence life will not be discussed.

#### Importance

Students were asked to indicate how important it was that the university met the expectations listed, using a 7-point scale ranging from 1= "Not Important" to 7= "Very Important." Average mean scores were calculated for all items. The following services/activities listed below were rated as most important (mean score of 6.60 or higher) by Chapman University respondents in 2014.

#### Undergraduates

- The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent (6.73).
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts (6.72).
- The content of the courses within my major is valuable (6.71).
- It is enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus (6.70).
- The instruction in my major field is excellent (6.68).
- I am able to experience intellectual growth here (6.68).
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment (6.67).
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field (6.66).
- Major requirements are clear and reasonable (6.62).
- There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus (6.61).

#### Graduates

- The instruction in my major field is excellent (6.77).
- The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent (6.77).

- The content of the courses within my major is valuable (6.74).
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field (6.73).
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts (6.69).
- I am able to experience intellectual growth here (6.68).
- Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students (6.64).
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment (6.62).
- There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus (6.60).

Findings show that what is of top importance to undergraduate students is also of top importance to graduate students. Both graduate and undergraduate respondents reported being concerned with the quality of instruction they receive, the ability to register for classes with few conflicts, the content of their courses, the instruction in their major field, the ability to experience intellectual growth, making sure tuition paid is a worthwhile investment, and that faculty are knowledgeable in their field.

Data reveal that no service or activity was rated to be unimportant. A few of the survey items were rated in the neutral range (a mean score of 4) by graduate students but overall most services were considered at least somewhat important by the survey respondents. The activities/services listed below were among those with the lowest average mean score (mean score of 5.50 or smaller) in importance for students.

### **Undergraduates**

- A variety of intramural activities are offered (5.15).
- The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit (5.23).
- The student handbook provides helpful information about campus life (5.46).

### **Graduates**

- A variety of intramural activities are offered (4.33).
- The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit (4.64).
- There are a sufficient number of weekend activities for students (4.89).
- Males and females have equal opportunities to participate in intercollegiate athletics (5.32).
- The student handbook provides helpful information about campus life (5.43).
- I can easily get involved in campus organizations (5.46).

Data show that the services/activities that were rated least important were the same for all students: “A variety of intramural activities are offered,” “The

intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit,” and “The student handbook provides helpful information about campus life.”

### **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 services/activities rated as most satisfactory (with a mean score of 6.00 or higher) are listed below.

### **Undergraduates**

- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained (6.44).
- Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours (6.08).
- Library resources and services are adequate (6.00).

### **Graduates**

- On the whole, the campus is well maintained (6.49).
- I am able to experience intellectual growth here (6.22).
- This institution has a good reputation within the community (6.20).
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field (6.17).
- Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours (6.12).
- It is an enjoyable experience to be a student in this campus (6.04).
- The campus is safe and secure for all students (6.04).
- Parking lots are well-lighted and secure (6.03).
- Library resources and services are adequate (6.01).
- The campus staff are caring and helpful (6.00).

Data show that when compared to undergraduates, graduate student respondents reported being more satisfied overall with various services/activities. The top common items of satisfaction for graduate and undergraduate students had to do with how well the campus is maintained, the accessibility of faculty after class and during office hours, and the adequacy of the library resources/services.

Overall, findings show that few services/activities were considered to be unsatisfactory by the survey respondents. Below are the items that were rated as least satisfactory with a mean score of 4.70 or smaller.

### **Undergraduates**

- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate (3.51).
- The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit (3.92).
- My academic advisor helps me set goals to work toward (4.50).

- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts (4.71).

### **Graduates**

- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate (4.60).
- There is an adequate selection of food available in the cafeteria (4.69).
- The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit (4.71).
- Adequate financial aid is available for most students (4.72).

The top area of dissatisfaction for undergraduate and graduate respondents was: “The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate.” However, while undergraduate respondents tended to report being “somewhat dissatisfied,” graduate students were more neutral with respect to the parking item.

### **Performance Gaps**

The performance gap score is the mean score difference between student satisfaction and level of importance. When the students’ level of satisfaction is subtracted from the strengths 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. Below are the activities/services with the largest performance gap score (a gap score of 1.20 or larger) for students.

### **Undergraduates**

- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate (2.82).
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts (2.01).
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment (1.54).
- My academic advisor helps me set goals to work toward (1.44).
- My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual (1.31).
- The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit (1.31).
- Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available (1.27).
- Adequate financial aid is available for most students (1.26).
- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major (1.25).
- Student activities fees are put to good use (1.25).
- My academic advisor is approachable (1.24).
- There is an adequate selection of food available in the cafeteria (1.20).

### **Graduates**

- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate (1.72).
- Adequate financial aid is available for most students (1.69).
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment (1.40).

The item about the amount of student parking spaces resulted in the service/activity with the largest gap score. In other words, the adequacy of the amount of student parking spaces was rated by both undergraduate and graduate students to be highly important but also rated low in satisfaction. While data show that graduate students may have the same concerns as undergraduates, it appears that there are many more areas that need attention to meet the needs of undergraduate students. When you consider the items with gap scores above 1.20, findings suggest that there are many more undergraduate student expectations that have not been fully met by the university.

According to Noel-Levitz, a small performance gap score for an item indicates that the institution is meeting the students’ expectations in the area or that there is a little difference between satisfaction and importance. Below are the activities/services with the smallest performance gap score (a gap score of 0.20 or smaller) for both undergraduate and graduate students.

### **Undergraduates**

- A variety of intramural activities are offered (-0.15).
- Library staff are helpful and approachable (-0.15).
- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained (-0.05).
- Males and females have equal opportunities to participate in intercollegiate athletics (-0.01).
- Bookstore staff are very helpful (0.14).
- Library resources and services are adequate (0.18).
- The student center is a comfortable place for students to spend their leisure time (0.18).

### **Graduates**

- A variety of intramural activities are offered (-0.68).
- There are a sufficient number of weekend activities for students (-0.25).
- Males and females have equal opportunities to participate in intercollegiate athletics (-0.18).
- The student handbook provides helpful information about campus life (-0.13).
- I can easily get involved on campus organizations (-0.09).
- Library staff are helpful and approachable (-0.07).
- The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit (-0.07).
- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained (-0.07).
- I generally know what's happening on campus (-0.05).

- The student center is a comfortable place for students to spend their leisure time (-0.01).
- Bookstore staff are helpful (0.01).
- Class change (drop/add) policies are reasonable (0.09).
- I feel a sense of pride about my campus (0.12).

Findings show that there were several services/activities with small gap scores that were similar between graduate and undergraduate students. In addition, there were several items with negative gap scores which indicate that there are a number of services/activities that rated low in importance but very highly in satisfaction.

### **College Choice and Overall Satisfaction**

Students were asked to indicate if Chapman University was their first, second or third choice college. Data show that 59% of the undergraduates and 71% of the graduate students reported that Chapman University was their first choice college. In addition, students were asked to indicate how important certain factors were in their decision to enroll at Chapman University. Findings show that undergraduate and graduate students found academic reputation and cost as being important or influential reasons to attend Chapman University. Students were also asked to rate their overall satisfaction with their experience thus far at Chapman University. Data reveal that 82% of undergraduates and 91% of graduate students reported being satisfied with their college experience at Chapman University.

### **SUMMARY**

The 2014 Student Satisfactory Inventory (SSI) provides Chapman University with another opportunity to assess satisfaction and identify areas of strength and potential challenges. Data show that there were several common strengths as perceived by graduate and undergraduate students. Chapman strengths (items with high importance and high satisfaction), as identified by the 2014 SSI respondents, include:

- It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus.
- I am able to experience intellectual growth here.
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field.
- Major requirements are clear and reasonable.
- The campus is safe and secure for all students.
- Freedom of expression is protected on campus.
- Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours.
- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained.

There were also some common challenges as perceived by graduate and undergraduate student respondents. Challenges are identified as items with high importance and low satisfaction scores or large performance gaps.

The following are potential challenges as identified by the 2014 SSI respondents:

- The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent.
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts.
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.
- Adequate financial aid is available for most students.
- Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students.
- Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress in a course.
- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate.
- I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information on this campus.

Findings suggest that both undergraduate and graduate student respondents would probably welcome efforts from the university to improve registration, financial aid packages, the quality of instruction they receive in their classes, and especially the perceived lack of parking spaces on campus. Data reveal that the amount of student parking spaces resulted in the service/activity with the largest gap score for both student groups. While data also suggests that academic advising was an area of concern for undergraduate student respondents, it is unclear if this concern should be directed toward their interactions with their faculty advisor or advisor in the Academic Advising Center.

Despite the potential challenges revealed by the 2014 SSI results, findings also show that overall satisfaction with the Chapman experience was high among students. In addition, few services/activities were rated unsatisfactory by students. Findings also indicate that graduate student respondents, when compared to the undergraduate respondents, tended to be more satisfied overall with the various services and activities offered at Chapman. Both student groups also expressed high satisfaction with how well the campus is maintained. Not surprisingly, many areas which embody our mission of providing "personalized education of distinction" were also found among our strengths (e.g., the availability of faculty after class/during office hours).

It is clear that there are many more strengths to be communicated and celebrated at Chapman. Furthermore, findings from the 2014 SSI provide additional evidence that Chapman University's academic reputation is growing. In fact, among all the factors listed, academic reputation was rated most important or influential for both undergraduate and graduate student respondents in their decision to enroll at CU.

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