

REPORT

How students rate the quality service climate on campus

Excerpted data from the 2007 Noel-Levitz National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report

How satisfied are students with the service they receive—and how important is it to them?

This report documents significant strides that colleges and universities have made in recent years to improve service quality and their overall campus climate, yet also finds that campuses still have room for improvement.

A few highlights:

- While progress is evident, students continue to observe gaps in many specific areas, with varying issues on four-year public and private, two-year, and career/private campuses.
- One specific challenge students identify—getting the service “run-around”—is particularly widespread across institution types.
- Five-year trend data show the importance of continuously working to improve service quality.

The report begins by identifying specific strengths and challenges by institution type. In a subsequent section, the report provides trend data from 2002-2007 to show the changes in student expectations and satisfaction over a longer period.

The Source of Data

The findings in this report were excerpted from the 2007 National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report, the 14th annual study of student satisfaction conducted by Noel-Levitz. You may download the complete report, without charge, at <http://www.noellevitz.com/benchmark>.

The 2007 National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report was based on survey data gathered between the fall of 2004 and the spring of 2007 from students attending over 800 colleges, universities, community colleges, and career and private schools. Sample sizes were as follows: 94,131 students from four-year publics; 268,486 from four-year privates; 220,645 from two-year community, junior, and technical colleges; and 39,081 from career and private schools.

The survey instrument used in the study was the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory™. This instrument consists of over 70 items that cover the full range of college experiences. Each item is expressed as a statement of expectation. Each statement includes a rating scale of 1 to 7 (7 = *very important/very satisfied*; 1 = *not important/not satisfied at all*). Students were asked to rate the level of importance they assign to the expectation as well as their level of satisfaction that the expectation is being met.

The 70-plus items on the survey instrument are grouped into 11 scales. These include:

- Academic Advising Effectiveness
- Academic Services (two-year and career/private schools)
- Campus Climate
- Campus Life (four-year schools)
- Campus Support Services
- Concern for the Individual
- Instructional Effectiveness
- Recruitment and Financial Aid Effectiveness
- Registration Effectiveness
- Safety and Security
- Service Excellence
- Student Centeredness

“Quality customer service, like effective student retention, does not just ‘happen’ on an institutionwide basis. Both are products of carefully planned and integrated systems and strategies that cross the lines of traditional academic and administrative units.”

**Jo Hillman
Noel-Levitz**

Key Findings, Section One: Strengths and Challenges

Students' responses to the 70-plus individual survey items were analyzed to determine strengths (high importance/high satisfaction) and challenges (high importance/low satisfaction). Strengths were defined as survey items that students rated above the mid-point in importance and in the top quartile of satisfaction. Challenges were defined as items that were above the mid-point in importance and in the bottom quartile of satisfaction and/or the top quartile of performance gaps.

For the purposes of this report, only items relating directly to quality service are highlighted. Among the strengths and challenges identified by institution type are the following:

Four-Year Public Colleges and Universities

Strengths

Survey items students rated as most important/most satisfying:

- *It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus.*
- *Students are made to feel welcome.*

Challenges

Survey items students rated as most important/least satisfying:

- *This institution shows concern for students as individuals.*
- *Security staff respond quickly in emergencies.*
- *I seldom get the “run-around” when seeking information on this campus.*

Four-Year Private Colleges and Universities

Strengths

Survey items students rated as most important/most satisfying:

- *The campus staff are caring and helpful.*
- *Students are made to feel welcome on this campus.*

Challenges

Survey items students rated as most important/least satisfying:

- *Financial aid counselors are helpful.*
- *Security staff respond quickly in emergencies.*
- *I seldom get the “run-around” when seeking information on this campus.*



Two-Year Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges

Strengths

Survey items students rated as most important/most satisfying:

- *Students are made to feel welcome on this campus.*
- *It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus.*

Challenges

Survey items students rated as most important/least satisfying:

- *This school does whatever it can to help me reach my educational goals.*
- *The college shows concern for students as individuals.*
- *My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual*

Career/Private Schools

Strengths

Survey items students rated as most important/most satisfying:

- *Students are made to feel welcome at this school.*
- *It is an enjoyable experience to be a student at this school.*
- *The school staff are caring and helpful.*
- *Administrators are approachable to students.*

Challenges

Survey items students rated as most important/least satisfying:

- *This school does whatever it can to help me reach my educational goals.*
- *This school shows concern for students as individuals.*
- *Financial aid counselors are helpful.*

Special note on concern for students and the service “run-around”

As indicated, there is widespread dissatisfaction in areas that matter to students—the service run-around and concern for students as individuals. These challenges, evident for each institution type, have also been identified in a separate companion study focusing only on students 25 years and older, the 2007 National Adult Student Priorities Report. (You can download this report without charge at www.noellevitz.com/benchmark.)

While the service run-around and concern for students as individuals sound like specific problems, they aren't. They are *symptoms of several* problems as we've noted in the Noel-Levitz training curriculum, Advanced Connections™:

- Staff may lack knowledge of campus systems, policies, and procedures.
- Staff may be too busy to help.
- Staff may not take responsibility for customer problems.
- Staff may have poor access to information from other offices.
- The institution may have fragmented processes without concern for how students and other customers use them.
- Staff may not be empowered to seek solutions.

“There is widespread dissatisfaction in areas that matter to students—the service run-around and concern for students as individuals.”

Key Findings, Section Two: Five-Year Trends

The 70-plus survey items are grouped into 11 scales, of which three relate directly to the quality service climate on campuses: Concern for the Individual, Campus Climate, and Service Excellence.

Below are the three scales, the student scores, and the items that make up each scale by institution type. The 2006-07 results show that performance gaps are holding steady, or increasing slightly. The accompanying importance and satisfaction scores show the continuing importance students place on service quality, and indicate a continuing degree of dissatisfaction.

Four-Year Public Colleges and Universities

For four-year public institutions, the largest 2006-07 gap score among the three scales was in Concern for the Individual, which assesses the institution's commitment to treating each student as an individual.

Note that the sample sizes for these scores were 36,684 for 2002-03; 46,205 for 2003-04; 31,713 for 2004-05; 33,274 for 2005-06; and 28,015 for 2006-07.

Concern for the Individual 7 = very important/very satisfied; 1 = not important/not satisfied at all

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Importance	6.03	6.09	6.00	6.07	6.11
Satisfaction	4.87	4.93	4.85	4.99	4.95
Performance Gap	1.16	1.16	1.15	1.08	1.16

Items comprising this scale: Faculty care about me as an individual; My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual; Counseling staff care about students as individuals; Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students; Residence hall staff are concerned about me as an individual; This institution shows concern for students as individuals.

Service Excellence 7 = very important/very satisfied; 1 = not important/not satisfied at all

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Importance	5.93	5.98	5.91	5.97	6.02
Satisfaction	4.85	4.90	4.81	4.95	4.89
Performance Gap	1.08	1.08	1.10	1.02	1.13

Items comprising this scale: The campus staff are caring and helpful; Library staff are helpful and approachable; The staff in health services are competent; Counseling staff care about students as individuals; The personnel involved with registration are helpful; I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information on this campus; I generally know what is happening on this campus; Channels for expressing student complaints are available.

Campus Climate 7 = very important/very satisfied; 1 = not important/not satisfied at all

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Importance	6.02	6.07	6.00	6.07	6.11
Satisfaction	5.01	5.04	4.97	5.11	5.04
Performance Gap	1.01	1.03	1.03	0.96	1.07

Items comprising this scale: Most students feel a sense of belonging here; This institution shows concern for students as individuals; It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus; I feel a sense of pride about my campus; This institution has a good reputation within the community; There is a commitment to academic excellence on this campus; The campus staff are caring and helpful; Students are made to feel welcome on this campus; Administrators are approachable to students; I seldom get the “run-around” when seeking information on this campus; I generally know what’s happening on campus; Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment; There is a strong commitment to racial harmony on this campus; Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available; Freedom of expression is protected on campus; Faculty care about me as an individual; The campus is safe and secure for all students.

Four-Year Private Colleges and Universities

For four-year private colleges and universities, the largest 2006-07 gap score among the three scales was Concern for the Individual.

Note that the sample sizes for these scores were 81,165 for 2002-03; 110,384 for 2003-04; 88,024 for 2004-05; 104,561 for 2005-06; and 81,312 for 2006-07.

Concern for the Individual 7 = very important/very satisfied; 1 = not important/not satisfied at all

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Importance	6.11	6.11	6.13	6.13	6.14
Satisfaction	5.07	5.06	5.11	5.15	5.16
Performance Gap	1.04	1.05	1.02	0.98	0.98

Items comprising this scale: Faculty care about me as an individual; My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual; Counseling staff care about students as individuals; Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students; Residence hall staff are concerned about me as an individual; This institution shows concern for students as individuals.

Service Excellence 7 = very important/very satisfied; 1 = not important/not satisfied at all

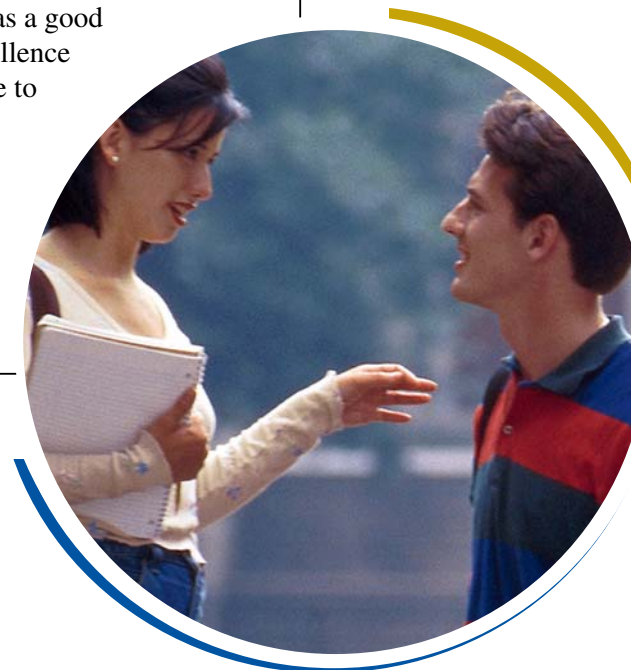
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Importance	5.97	5.97	5.99	5.97	6.00
Satisfaction	4.94	4.93	4.99	5.01	5.05
Performance Gap	1.03	1.04	1.00	0.96	0.95

Items comprising this scale: The campus staff are caring and helpful; Library staff are helpful and approachable; The staff in health services are competent; Counseling staff care about students as individuals; The personnel involved with registration are helpful; I seldom get the “run-around” when seeking information on this campus; I generally know what is happening on this campus; Channels for expressing student complaints are available.

Campus Climate 7 = very important/very satisfied; 1 = not important/not satisfied at all

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Importance	6.11	6.12	6.14	6.13	6.14
Satisfaction	5.08	5.09	5.13	5.15	5.19
Performance Gap	1.03	1.03	1.01	0.98	0.95

Items comprising this scale: Most students feel a sense of belonging here; This institution shows concern for students as individuals; It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus; I feel a sense of pride about my campus; This institution has a good reputation within the community; There is a commitment to academic excellence on this campus; The campus staff are caring and helpful; Students are made to feel welcome on this campus; Administrators are approachable to students; I seldom get the “run-around” when seeking information on this campus; I generally know what’s happening on campus; Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment; There is a strong commitment to racial harmony on this campus; Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available; Freedom of expression is protected on campus; Faculty care about me as an individual; The campus is safe and secure for all students.



Two-Year Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges

For two-year community, junior, and technical colleges, the largest 2006-07 gap score among the three scales was also for the scale Concern for the Individual.

Note that the sample sizes for these scores were 85,579 for 2002-03; 98,467 for 2003-04; 84,029 for 2004-05; 81,813 for 2005-06; and 61,064 for 2006-07.

Concern for the Individual 7 = very important/very satisfied; 1 = not important/not satisfied at all

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Importance	6.05	6.04	6.06	6.05	6.07
Satisfaction	5.15	5.12	5.17	5.19	5.18
Performance Gap	0.90	0.92	0.89	0.86	0.89

Items comprising this scale: Faculty care about me as an individual; My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual; Counseling staff care about students as individuals; Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students; This college shows concern for students as individuals.

Service Excellence 7 = very important/very satisfied; 1 = not important/not satisfied at all

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Importance	5.90	5.90	5.93	5.92	5.94
Satisfaction	5.14	5.14	5.19	5.20	5.23
Performance Gap	0.76	0.76	0.74	0.72	0.71

Items comprising this scale: The campus staff are caring and helpful; Library staff are helpful and approachable; The personnel involved with registration are helpful; I seldom get the “run-around” when seeking information on this campus; I generally know what is happening on campus; Channels for expressing student complaints are available; People on this campus respect and are supportive of each other; Administrators are approachable to students; Book-store staff are helpful.

Campus Climate 7 = very important/very satisfied; 1 = not important/not satisfied at all

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Importance	5.91	5.92	5.94	5.94	5.95
Satisfaction	5.20	5.19	5.24	5.24	5.26
Performance Gap	0.71	0.73	0.70	0.70	0.69

Items comprising this scale: Most students feel a sense of belonging here; The campus is safe and secure for all students; It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus; Students are made to feel welcome here; This institution has a good reputation within the community; This college shows concern for students as individuals; Faculty care about me as an individual; People on this campus respect and are supportive of each other; The campus staff are caring and helpful; I generally know what is happening on campus; This school does whatever it can to help me reach my educational goals; Administrators are approachable to students; New student orientation services help students adjust to college; I seldom get the “run-around” when seeking information on this campus; Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available.

Career and Private Schools

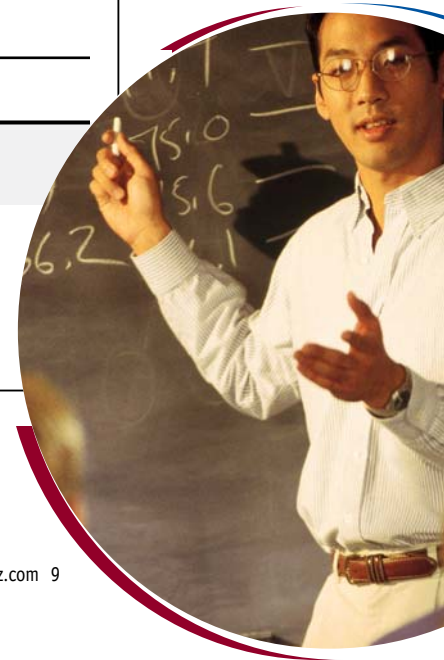
For career and private schools, the largest 2006-07 gap score among the three scales was also for the scale Concern for the Individual.

Note that the sample sizes for these scores were 18,581 for 2002-03; 14,535 for 2003-04; 22,570 for 2004-05; 14,152 for 2005-06; and 6,197 for 2006-07.

Concern for the Individual 7 = very important/very satisfied; 1 = not important/not satisfied at all

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Importance	6.22	6.18	6.29	6.29	6.20
Satisfaction	5.20	5.14	5.25	5.25	5.06
Performance Gap	1.02	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.14

Items comprising this scale: Faculty care about me as an individual; My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual; Advising staff care about students as individuals; Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students; This school shows concern for students as individuals.



Service Excellence 7 = very important/very satisfied; 1 = not important/not satisfied at all

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Importance	6.09	6.06	6.16	6.16	6.06
Satisfaction	5.16	5.11	5.19	5.22	5.07
Performance Gap	0.93	0.95	0.97	0.94	0.99

Items comprising this scale: The campus staff are caring and helpful; Library staff are helpful and approachable; The personnel involved with registration are helpful; I seldom get the “run-around” when seeking information at this school; I generally know what is happening at this school; Channels for expressing student complaints are available; People at this school respect and are supportive of each other; Administrators are approachable to students; Bookstore staff are helpful.

Campus Climate 7 = very important/very satisfied; 1 = not important/not satisfied at all

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Importance	6.17	6.13	6.23	6.23	6.14
Satisfaction	5.27	5.19	5.29	5.29	5.14
Performance Gap	0.90	0.94	0.94	0.94	1.00

Items comprising this scale: Most students feel a sense of belonging here; The campus is safe and secure for all students; It is an enjoyable experience to be a student at this school; Students are made to feel welcome at this school; This institution has a good reputation within the community; This school shows concern for students as individuals; Faculty care about me as an individual; People at this school respect and are supportive of each other; The campus staff are caring and helpful; I generally know what is happening at this school; This school does whatever it can to help me reach my educational goals; Administrators are approachable to students; New student orientation services help students adjust to school; I seldom get the “run-around” when seeking information at this school; Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available.



How to make quality service an institutionwide priority: 10 ideas

1. Build quality service expectations into job descriptions and performance evaluations.
2. Develop a meaningful and deliverable institutionwide quality service mission statement: a public commitment to quality service.
3. Name a broadly representative committee to oversee the planning and execution of an institutionwide quality service strategy.
4. Help managers learn how to hire staff who will be good agents of quality service by providing training and information about ways to interview for service skills.
5. Develop a reward and recognition system for front-line staff that is attractive and meaningful and that effectively promotes service excellence.
6. Regularly invite the input of support staff on institutional policies and procedures.
7. Encourage administrative offices and faculty units to develop their own service statements and service strategies.
8. Implement a quality service training program for front-line staff.
9. Provide better training and supervision of part-time and student employees.
10. Regularly survey students about their interaction with various offices and services.

Summary

The quality service climate on campuses is getting better, but there is still room for improvement.

Campuses that are serious about service quality will look at this national trend data as a valuable source of information, but they will not stop there. To serve students well, it is even more critical for each institution to listen to its own students' unique needs and priorities by conducting campus-specific satisfaction assessments. Resulting gaps and priorities can then be used to develop targeted action plans for retaining and serving specific student populations.

For more information

For more information on enhancing service quality on your campus, please contact Jo Hillman of Noel-Levitz at 1-866-982-4244 or 920-982-4244, or e-mail jo-hillman@noellevitz.com.

For more information on the survey instrument used in this study, the Student Satisfaction Inventory, please contact Julie Bryant of Noel-Levitz at 1-800-876-1117 or 319-337-4700, or e-mail julie-bryant@noellevitz.com.



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