Customer Satisfaction Measures

In this report, Hanover Research analyzes the best practices in measuring customer satisfaction in a university setting. The report looks at how customer satisfaction has developed within a higher education context and best practices for the design and administration of customer satisfaction assessments. We also discuss national and institutional customer satisfaction surveys and evaluate alternative customer satisfaction methodologies. Key findings regarding the design and implementation of customer satisfaction assessments and best practices for working towards improved customer satisfaction as an institution are also outlined.
Introduction

Research findings linking the satisfaction of the “customers” of a higher education institution – defined as employees, students, faculty, alumni and others served and affected by the institution – to institutional success have driven many colleges and universities to measure customer satisfaction regularly. Student satisfaction with the general university experience has been linked to higher student retention rates, a more positive word-of-mouth reputation for the institution, and a greater percentage of alumni who give regularly to the school.¹

Overall, the report provides an understanding of the reasoning and methodologies for effectively measuring customer satisfaction in higher education and thus moving towards an improved experience for all customers. The report will be organized as follows.

❖ Section 1: Customer Satisfaction in a Higher Education Setting. This section will discuss recent literature and research findings on the importance of customer satisfaction to the overall success of an educational institution. In particular, this section will answer the question: Why is student/employee satisfaction important to an institution?

❖ Section 2: Best Practices in Customer Satisfaction Assessments. This section will discuss best practices for administering customer satisfaction assessments in a higher education context as well as best practices for designing and distributing a customer satisfaction survey.

❖ Section 3: Common Customer Satisfaction Survey Tools. This section will provide comprehensive information about established survey tools that are commonly used to gauge customer satisfaction at colleges and universities, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Personal Assessment of the College Environment.

❖ Section 4: Alternative Methods for Measuring Customer Satisfaction. This section will discuss methods of measuring customer satisfaction in a university setting besides the implementation of national survey instruments. This section reviews literature on important indicators in measuring customer satisfaction, aiming to answer the questions: What are the most important questions to ask in order to gauge customer satisfaction? and What systems can be put in place at a university to monitor and improve customer satisfaction on an ongoing basis?

Key Findings and Recommendations

In this report, Hanover Research will illustrate the growing customer-centricity of higher education. By improving the satisfaction of its numerous stakeholders, an institution can improve student and employee retention, donation rates, graduation rates, and its relationship with the community. Effectively measuring customer satisfaction can involve numerous tools and techniques. This report makes several key findings in this regard including:

- **Best practices in implementing customer satisfaction assessments** at a higher education institution focus on the preparation and follow-up necessary to ensure a successful assessment process. The assessment process should have widespread institutional support to result in high response rates. Results should be processed, analyzed, and reported. Most importantly, the results should lead to quality improvements and to continuous assessment.

- **Best practices in designing and distributing customer satisfaction assessments** focus on defining quality dimensions, measuring importance and satisfaction with variables, using unbiased and robust samples, explaining the survey and its purpose to customers, and utilizing an accurate satisfaction index for comparison purposes.

- **National survey tools** including the National Survey of Student Engagement, the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Index, the Student and Personal Assessments of the College Environment, and the Higher Education Research Institute Faculty Survey, are administered by organizations which provide institutional comparisons to national benchmarks as well as analysis. These surveys focus separately on student and employee satisfaction. **Internal surveys are also used.** Such surveys can be designed, implemented, and analyzed by Hanover Research if desired.

- There are numerous **alternative customer satisfaction measures** used by higher education institutions such as institutional feedback techniques, quality management models, the Balanced Scorecard approach, customer loyalty indexes, and Customer Relationship Management.

These findings translate into several recommendations for implementing more effective measures of customer satisfaction to foster quality improvement. University administrators must **define which stakeholders it considers to be the most crucial customers** such as students, faculty, or donors. Administrators should then decide whether the University is interested purely in customer satisfaction regarding its programs, offerings, and services or whether it is interested in customer satisfaction within a larger context of quality management, customer loyalty, performance indicators, and strategic vision. For the former option, widely-utilized
national surveys (particularly the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory) are valuable tools because they provide national benchmarks and outside analysis. For the latter option, customer satisfaction measures will likely need to be customized to fit within a broader quality improvement strategy. Ultimately, establishing an institutional culture of customer service and satisfaction requires **support from administrators, employees, and students**. By creating a campus attitude of customer service in all aspects of the institution, avenues to measure campus satisfaction will be more open to administrators.
Customer Satisfaction in a Higher Education Setting

The focus on customer satisfaction as a key aspect of quality improvement in higher education is a relatively recent development. As it became technologically and efficiently possible to monitor the relationships of universities with their stakeholders, higher education institutions are increasingly able to take a customer-centric approach. This is a significant development because customer satisfaction at a university is important as both an indicator and a facilitator of institutional success. High levels of customer satisfaction positively influence graduation rates, student and employee retention, donation rates, and an institution’s relationship with its community.

Customer Satisfaction in Higher Education

The concept of “satisfaction” depends on both psychological and physical variables. Psychological variables include personal beliefs, attitudes, and evaluations. In the context of higher education, attitudes toward quality are held to be particularly important. Quality in higher education is about efficiency, high standards, excellence, value for money, fitness for purpose and customer focus. Significantly, educational stakeholders often make comparisons on these dimensions so that satisfaction is “based on the discrepancy between prior expectation and the performance perceived after passing through the educational cycle.” The closer that performance comes to meeting or exceeding expectations, the more satisfied the customers.2 Customer satisfaction incorporates numerous areas from student academic satisfaction to faculty service satisfaction.

The customer satisfaction application to higher education has been readily adopted by many higher education institutions. For example, The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) has a “Customer Service Compact” which includes the customer service goal to “support excellent academic instruction and student learning through effective services to UTEP students.” The university has customer service objectives for its interactions in the classroom, on campus, and in the community as well as a customer service standard to create a positive campus climate “by being responsive, efficient, and effective.” The university even employs a customer relations representative and adopted a method for customers to express complaints.3 Similarly, the University of Toledo in Ohio has an Office of Student Customer Service through which students’ “issues may be raised, considered, and/or resolved.” Students can discuss concerns about issues impeding their academic achievement, suggestions for improvements, or uncertainties about which resources to utilize.4 These examples illustrate the potential

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for applying the model widely across a campus. This section seeks to illustrate how the model can specifically be applied to foster quality improvement.

*Customer Satisfaction Measures and Outcomes*

Much of the literature on customer satisfaction in the higher education context focuses on the relationship between student satisfaction and retention. Examining student satisfaction should focus on two categories 1) assessing teaching and learning and 2) assessing total student experience. It is often this second category which has a positive relationship to retention. A 2004 Noel-Levitz study used the results of the Student Satisfaction Survey and the enrollment status of the participants the following fall term for 27,816 students at 65 four-year institutions to analyze the relationship between student satisfaction and retention. The study found that there was a strong relationship between the two variables – student satisfaction almost doubled the ability of researchers to predict retention beyond demographic characteristics and institutional features. Researchers were particularly able to predict retention based on student responses to campus climate statements such as “Most students feel a sense of belonging here” and “I feel a sense of pride about my campus.” The researchers also found the importance of different types of satisfaction in predicting retention. For example, first-year students were more likely to return the following year if they felt a sense of community and caring on campus while second-year students were slightly more focused on institutional features and student characteristics as well as a sense of belonging. Third-year student satisfaction and retention was based on academic success and faculty.5

A 2004 study by researchers at Pennsylvania State University and California State University examined the relationship between business student satisfaction and their intentions to remain in a college or university. Utilizing empirical data, the researchers also found a positive relationship between the two variables. The study did not look at the customer-centricity of an institution in relation to its customer satisfaction, but purely at customer satisfaction in relation to retention, however, the researchers noted that:

> One of the implications of this study is that those educational institutions that understand consumer-oriented principles may have a better chance of satisfying the wants and needs of their students more effectively.6

The study highlighted that higher education institutions have a significant incentive to improve customer satisfaction because it costs less to retain a

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student than to recruit a new student. Also, the “probability of retaining a student at a particular college or university increases if the student stays longer at that institution, because of the higher student transaction costs to switch to a competing institutions.”7 Most importantly, student satisfaction has proved a more accurate predictor of student retention than academic ability or performance because it incorporates the concepts of student intentions and attitudes which predict actual behavior. Furthermore, a 2009 study in Higher Education utilized a sample of students enrolled in different types of Australian universities and found that “student loyalty is predicted by student satisfaction, which is in turn predicted by the perceived image of the host university.”8 In other words, the “institutional image” is crucial in understanding how students value their institutions. If they value these institutions they are more likely to be satisfied. This theory does tend to lead to the conclusion that students at more prestigious institutions are more likely to value their institutions, to be satisfied and to maintain enrollment.9

Student-Advisor Satisfaction Model

A more recent sub-set of this discussion focuses on the application of the customer satisfaction paradigm to the adviser-student interaction. For example, Frank Spicuzza of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville wrote “A Customer Service Approach to Advising” stating that “the customer service marketing model provides an organizing strategy for advising in higher education.”10 With students as customers and faculty as providers, the model focuses on improving advising to increase student satisfaction and thus to increase retention rates as discussed above.

Spicuzza stated that “the key task is to know what will satisfy customers and to provide it in a way that shapes a positive attitude toward the provider.”11 Student advisees are most positively influenced by a caring attitude built on the relationships formed with their advisors. Quality advising is about building rapport over time thus perceiving students as individuals who will seek information and counseling in regards to career and academic concerns. To effectively build this kind of rapport, advisors must have communication and problem-solving skills, be conscious of individual differences, and understand available resources for their advisees. This technique of developmental advising based on trust, respect, and mutual involvement garners the highest levels of student satisfaction. Since such an integral aspect of this model is based on the success of the advisors, Spicuzza explained that it is necessary to introduce a systematic appraisal of advising to evaluate any gap between

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7 Ibid., 3.
9 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
expectations and performance in the student-advisor interaction as well as potentially a system of rewards and ongoing professional development.\textsuperscript{12}

\textit{Potential Challenges in Using Customer Satisfaction Model}

Despite these advantages, there are \textbf{warnings about the effects of applying a business model to an academic interaction}. Cynthia Demetriou of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill argued that academic institutions should develop their own language and models to determine whether students have a positive academic experience. Demetriou argued that

satisfaction is not an appropriate gauge of quality in higher education. In business, the customer is always right; however, in education the student is not always right. In fact, often the greatest learning experiences for students come from situations in which they experience considerable dissatisfaction.\textsuperscript{13}

Demetriou pointed out that while in the business world customer service is based on the presence of a product line and financial incentives for exceptional service. In education the product is “an oft intangible, value-laden process traversing an individual’s lifespan.” Furthermore, professors and administrators do not receive financial incentives for providing students with “service.” Quality improvement efforts should be focused on attaining educational excellence rather than obtaining student satisfaction.\textsuperscript{14}

These arguments underline an important point about applying the customer service paradigm to academia, particularly in regards to student satisfaction. \textbf{Relying too heavily on business terminology and models may be detrimental to pursuing the objectives of higher education.} Satisfaction models may be most applicable to services within the higher education context such as financial aid, admissions, or housing as opposed to academic situation such as advising or learning. As a result, if an institution is looking to widely apply a customer service model, it should be aware of the limitations in its quality dimensions. Or rather, an institution should ensure that its quality dimensions take into account the wider objective of an institution – to achieve educational excellence.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
Donor Satisfaction

Research has found that “a donor's satisfaction is related to their perception of the overall service quality and value received from the organizations.” This perceived quality may develop from numerous factors such as other people's reported experiences, written information and opinions. By implementing a customer satisfaction model in relation to donors, universities are able to increase perceived quality and hence satisfaction by increasing customer loyalty and customer word-of-mouth communication. In fact, a September 2010 article examined donor perceptions of service quality in college athletics and found a positive relationship between service quality and donor satisfaction that may lead to both greater donor longevity and greater gift amounts – results which are significant to any higher education program looking to improve its fundraising efforts.

Employee Satisfaction

For employees in higher education institutions satisfaction can also be an important measure of institutional quality. In fact, The Chronicle of Higher Education publishes a “Great Colleges to Work For” survey which garnered responses from more than 43,000 people at 275 institutions. The survey was based on several categories one of which concerned staff satisfaction. Employees were most satisfied with facets of institutions such as professional development programs and a shared sense of mission. One of the stand-out universities among those respondents was Wake Tech Community College where an attitude of openness and problem-solving regarding employee satisfaction results in a high level of customer satisfaction and employees feel valued. Using focus groups and open meetings to discover areas where improvement is needed, Wake Tech implemented other improvements by changing employee pay schedules and out-of-date technology, avoiding layoffs, and developing a three-year employee-leadership program.

A recent article details the emphasis the University of Southern California (USC) places on customer satisfaction for both its employees and the local community. The university relies on the concept of the “Trojan Family” where employees and their families enjoy benefits such as free tuition, housing allowances, the Center for Work and Family Life, public transportation subsidies, neighborhood safety efforts, flexible benefits, and retirement account contributions. All of these benefits fit within the

overall “close-knit, collaborative atmosphere” which defines the high employee satisfaction and retention at USC and illustrates how efforts toward quality improvement increase satisfaction.¹⁹

Furthermore, USC’s efforts have increased customer satisfaction within the community which has long had a reputation of being dangerous. Private security officers stand guard on street corners and the University encourages volunteers to take part in the Kid Watch program to watch out for children walking to and from school. Most of all, the purview of the USC police extends far beyond campus allowing local neighborhoods to use their services. USC also provides hiring advantages to residents in nearby neighborhoods to encourage a positive relationship with the community. When the current president took over in 1991 he realized the dissatisfaction in the local community and with a customer satisfaction mindset made significant efforts to improve these relationships.²⁰

Summary

This section of the report determined that the customer satisfaction model can be widely applied across university campuses to create a customer-centric climate driven towards quality improvement though warned that the model requires adaptation to be suitable for academia. If all institutional stakeholders are perceived as customers, then it is possible for improvements to occur in many processes, services, and departments.

²⁰ Ibid.
Best Practices for Measuring Customer Satisfaction

A critical determinant of the success of a customer satisfaction measurement program is whether it is continuous. **Institutions should survey their customers on a regular basis**, ensuring that lines of communication are always open, so that customers can voice even the smallest concerns before they grow into outright problems. This ensures the continuous improvement of institutional processes, products, and services. As mentioned earlier in this report, attitudes toward quality are important in understanding customer satisfaction.21 This section covers best practices for implementing satisfaction assessments as well as best practices for survey design and distribution.

Best Practices for Implementing Satisfaction Assessments

Noel-Levitz, which administers student satisfaction surveys, provides best practices in implementing a survey at higher education institutions. The following implementation strategies should be emphasized:

- **Determine that satisfaction assessment needs to be done**: Data should be gathered continuously, which requires “buy-in” from the top administrators in an institution. An institution must also be able to identify its objectives for implementing a satisfaction assessment.

- **Select a satisfaction tool that will allow the institution to**:
  - Be comprehensive in its assessment
  - Gather data on both satisfaction and importance
  - Compare itself with national benchmarks
  - Isolate data by demographic subgroups
  - Assess other populations (faculty, adults, distance learners, etc.) with comparable instruments

- **Get buy-in on campus for administering the survey**: This means informing administrators, faculty, staff, and students early on why and when the survey is being performed and how the results will be utilized. This information will generate support and preparation.

- **Determine implementation details**: Choose the appropriate time of year for administering the survey then decide on the sample (representative or targeted) and the administration method.

- **Process the results in a meaningful way**: Institutions should choose the appropriate reporting options such as comparing the institution with national or regional results or with past survey results. Institutions can also report by demographics, by year, or by discipline.

- **Highlight key findings of results**: Institutions can identify strengths and challenges brought up by the survey results.

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Share the results: Share the survey results with groups including top administrators, board of directors, deans, faculty, and students through means such as presentations, articles in internal and external publications, and online publication.

Identify action team and next steps: Institutions should select a group to be responsible for implementing change based on the results as well as a team to focus on satisfaction assessment. The action team can also look at the potential for focus groups and other ways of involving faculty, staff, and students in problem-solving for weak areas of satisfaction.

Establish a response plan: Institutions should celebrate successes by communicating them to the campus and using them for admissions and recruiting materials and in public relations materials. For areas needing improvement, institutions should look at items that can be fixed quickly and those requiring longer-term strategic plans.

Survey again to track results: In order to provide effective comparisons over time, institutions should look at how the survey administration process can be improved over time. The institution should also make the campus aware of changes that have been implemented since the previous survey in order to encourage participation.

These best practices illustrate the preparation and follow-through required for a successful customer satisfaction assessment. Institutions implementing satisfaction assessments should be willing to establish a continuous and effective process of which the actual assessment administration is only a small part.

Best Practices for Survey Design and Distribution

Surveying is one of the most commonly used methods for measuring customer satisfaction. There are seven fundamental principles that institutions should adhere to when designing and implementing an accurate and effective customer satisfaction measurement program:

Allow customers to define the criteria for measurement: Satisfaction is about doing what matters most to customers. Accordingly, the one way to ensure that institutions’ surveys measure the issues of utmost importance to their client base is to allow customers to determine the criteria to be measured. The critical incident approach is useful for developing customer surveys or for analyzing processes because customers are in the best position to determine the most relevant aspects of a service or program. Generating critical incidents means interviewing the relevant customers to obtain information regarding

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https://www.noellevitz.com/NR/rdonlyres/6C031D91-7D24-4500-A52C-EFA1017C3967/0/TenStepSatisfactionAssessment08.pdf
specific experiences which contribute to quality and then establishing quality dimensions on which to survey customers.

- **Measure importance as well as satisfaction:** Satisfaction is a relative, not absolute, concept. So for institutions to produce an accurate measure of customer satisfaction they should include some measure of importance in their surveys. Therefore, institutions are able to see customer satisfaction in terms of the importance placed on each factor by customers.

- **Use unbiased and robust samples that are representative of the entire client base:** Collecting data from customers through surveys is a scientific process, and results will be meaningful only if the sample is large enough, representative of all customer segments, and unbiased.

- **Clearly explain the survey to customers:** In order to increase the likelihood that customers complete surveys, organizations should go to great lengths to ensure that they provide respondents with clear and concrete explanations of all aspects of the survey. In other words, institutions should inform customers about what they are doing, why they are doing it, how they plan to do it, as well as the type of feedback they plan to provide respondents afterwards. According to industry research, promising feedback to customers is the single most effective driver of survey response rates. As an example, see the Higher Education Customer Satisfaction Student Survey administered by Polytechnic West in Australia which clearly lays out the purpose/intent, policy objectives, scope, definitions, and feedback processes to students.23

- **Construct and employ an accurate satisfaction index:** To enable organizations to monitor customer satisfaction levels over a long period of time it is useful to use survey results to construct an overall satisfaction index. In order for a given institution’s satisfaction index to be accurate, however, it needs to be more strongly influenced by the attributes that are most important to customers. Institutions should determine their satisfaction index through the formulation of a weighted average satisfaction score. This is accomplished by assigning an importance score to each criterion measured in a survey then multiplying each satisfaction score by its respective weighting score to produce an overall weighted score. The sum of all weighted scores is the final satisfaction index for the respondent in question.

**Summary**

This section highlighted best practices in customer satisfaction assessments, focusing on best practices in survey administration and design. It highlighted the importance of involving customers in the customer satisfaction and quality improvement process. Since customer satisfaction in higher education primarily relies on quality, establishing

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the differences between performance and expectations on dimensions of quality is the key to determining customer satisfaction and to making effective improvements.
Common Customer Satisfaction Survey Tools

Popular national survey tools for customer satisfaction provide an established rubric for gauging satisfaction, as well as a set of national benchmarks enabling institutions to judge their own performance against that of many other universities. An overview of national survey tools can inform institutional decisions about the benefits and details of implementing this type of measurement tool. Most of the surveys listed below are offered by organizations which provide analysis and reports to institutions which administer them, giving benchmarks for comparison as well as demographic breakdowns of responses. The nationally used survey tools discussed in this section are either designed for employee or student satisfaction assessment.

The survey tools discussed in this section of the report include the National Survey of Student Engagement, the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, the Student and Personal Assessments of the College Environment, the Higher Education Research Institute Faculty Survey, and finally an institutional survey from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. The appendix to this report provides the statements and questions included in samples of the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, the Student Assessment of the College Environment, and the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis institutional satisfaction survey. It should be noted that information on each survey was gathered from the sponsoring organization or institution.

National Survey of Student Engagement

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was piloted in 1998 and is now administered annually to assess the extent to which first-year students and seniors at four-year colleges and universities engage in educational practices at their higher education institutions. NSSE explains that:

Student engagement represents two critical features of collegiate quality. The first is the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities. The second is how the institution deploys its resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to get students to participate in activities that decades of research studies show are linked to student learning.\(^{24}\)

One of the goals of publishing the survey results is to provide data to individual higher education institutions which can help them improve their undergraduate education. The survey does not specifically ask about student satisfaction, instead focusing on five key benchmarks and levels of activity within these benchmarks.

\(^{24}\) National Survey of Student Engagement Annual Results 2010. http://nsse.iub.edu/NSSE_2010_Results/pdf/NSSE_2010_AnnualResults.pdf#page=8
NSSE promotes certain types of success within each benchmark. The benchmarks on which the NSSE is based include:

- **Level of Academic Challenge:** Success in this category is based on challenging intellectual and creative work which promotes student learning and collegiate quality. In this category, students respond regarding their coursework.

- **Active and Collaborative Learning:** NSSE states that “students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education and are asked to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings.” Collaboration allows students to focus on problem-solving cooperatively. In this category, students respond regarding collaborative work they have performed or academic interaction with other students.

- **Student-Faculty Interaction:** This type of interaction is important to students who perceive faculty members as leaders, role models, and mentors therefore students respond to questions regarding feedback, discussions, or collaborative research.

- **Enriching Educational Experiences:** NSSE states that “complementary learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom augment the academic program.” Students are asked about areas such as diversity, technological interactions, internships, community service, capstone projects which complement their classroom learning.

- **Supportive Campus Environment:** Finally, “students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.” In this category, students respond to questions regarding the support and quality of the campus environment.25

As noted above, NSSE survey results are released annually providing results evaluated by discipline and demographic factors to measure students’ engagement against each of these benchmarks. Though the NSEE provides significant understanding of student activities and engagement, it does not directly indicate the satisfaction level of students within each of these categories. As such, the benchmarks may provide guidelines that institutions might look for adapting a customer satisfaction survey. Initiations can also administer the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE). Institutions that participated in the NSSE in the current or prior year are eligible to administer the FSSE in order to contextualize student responses to the NSSE.

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Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory

The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) focuses specifically on student satisfaction. It measures both student satisfaction and priorities thus allowing higher education institutions to weight their quality improvements. Questions on the survey range widely across issues which affect student satisfaction. As shown in Figure 1, students respond to each statement by evaluating both its importance and their level of satisfaction. Topics covered by the statements include university services, academic courses, faculty interactions, administrator and advisor interactions, extracurricular activities, social life, living conditions, academic assistance, campus environment – all of which contribute to student satisfaction. The statements “I feel a sense of pride about my campus,” “So far how has your college experience met your expectations?” Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far,” and “All in all, if you had to do it over again, would you enroll here?” are the most telling about students’ overall satisfaction and as discussed earlier in this report, can be an important predictor of student retention. Results can be analyzed in terms of demographics, student status, and discipline.

![Figure 1: The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Index](image)

Source: Noel-Levitz²⁶

²⁶ Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory.
The Noel-Levitz survey produces an annual National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report which allows institutions to compare themselves to national benchmarks. The 2009 report which included student responses over a three-year time period found various trends in regards to satisfaction. First, student satisfaction is positively related to likelihood to re-enroll (as discussed earlier in this report). For four-year private institutions 55 percent of students were satisfied with their experience and 58 percent were likely to re-enroll. Secondly, institutional choice is a key element in satisfaction. The survey results showed that satisfaction was partially based on whether an institution was the first, second, or third choice of a student. Thirdly, ethnicity, gender, and region affect student satisfaction. African-American and Asian-American students recorded much lower levels of satisfaction than other ethnicities at four-year institutions while female students recorded higher levels of satisfaction than male students across all institution types. Also, students attending institutions on the East Coast were less satisfied than students in other regions. Lastly, academic success is positively related to satisfaction. Higher GPAs tended to be positively related to greater student satisfaction.

These results illustrate how the Noel-Levitz survey or similar student satisfaction surveys allow higher education institutions to judge overall satisfaction as well as pinpoint specific areas of strength and weakness. Noel-Levitz states that “By using a combination of national benchmarks and individual assessment data, campuses can focus their resources and initiatives more precisely, improving student life and learning and fulfilling their institutional missions.”

**Student and Personal Assessments of the College Environment**

The Student Assessment of the College Environment (SACE) is administered by the National Initiative for Leadership & Institutional Effectiveness at North Carolina State University. It is designed “to promote open and constructive communication and to establish priorities for change by obtaining the satisfaction estimates of students concerning the campus climate.” Like the Noel-Levitz survey, students are asked to rank their responses to numerous statements (very satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied), with statements divided into five major categories. These major categories and some sample statements include:

- **Instructional Services Environment**
  - The quality of instruction in my field of interest
  - The extent to which my instructors clearly define course requirements
- **Student Development Environment**
  - The quality of financial aid services

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The advice I get in making educational decisions

- Administrative and Physical Environment
  - The quality of classrooms
  - The quality of laboratories

- Student Focus Environment
  - The performance of advisors and counselors
  - The effectiveness of the registration process

- Social and Cultural Environment
  - The extent to which instructors and staff are sensitive to students’ age
  - The extent to which instructors and staff are sensitive to students’ gender

Like the National Survey of Student Engagement, the National Initiative for Leadership & Institutional Effectiveness also provides a separate survey for employees, the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE). Similar to the student survey, higher education employees are asked to rank their satisfaction on various statements divided into the four categories of institutional structure, supervisory relationship, teamwork, and student focus. Ranking responses include: very satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, or not applicable. Sample statements under each category include:

- Institutional Structure
  - The extent to which the actions of this institution reflect its mission
  - The extent to which decisions are made at the appropriate level

- Supervisory Relationship
  - The extent to which my supervisor seriously considers my idea
  - The extent to which I am given the opportunity to be creative in my work

- Teamwork
  - The extent to which there is a spirit of cooperation within my work team
  - The extent to which my work team coordinates its efforts with appropriate individuals and teams

- Student Focus
  - The extent to which student needs are central to what we do
  - The extent to which students are satisfied with their educational experience at this institution

Institutions administering either the PACE or SACE surveys are able to receive reports and analysis from the National Initiative for Leadership & Institutional Effectiveness regarding the results at their institutions. Responses can be broken down according to demographics such as respondents’ length of service on campus or in education. The surveys also include free response sections where staff or students can openly respond about areas where they are most and least satisfied and

29 Ibid.
provide ideas for improvement. Comparison data can also be provided.\textsuperscript{32} Thus far, the survey has primarily been used by community and technical colleges. Regionally, these institutions include Central Virginia Community College, Baltimore City Community College, the College of Southern Maryland, Frederick Community College, Hagerstown Community College, and Harford Community College.\textsuperscript{33}

**Higher Education Research Institute Faculty Survey**

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey is a web-based survey administered by the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. The survey is designed to answer various questions about an institution’s faculty members including:

- How do faculty perceive your institutional priorities?
- How do faculty spend their time inside and outside the classroom?
- Have changes at your institution as a result of the economy affected faculty?
- What kinds of goals and expectations do your faculty have for students?
- What pedagogical strategies are your faculty using to engage students to meet those goals and expectations?
- What are the biggest sources of stress and satisfaction among your faculty?
- How are your faculty connecting learning in the classroom with practices in the local and global community?\textsuperscript{34}

As such, the HERI Faculty Survey is not solely focused on customer satisfaction, but also aims to discover faculty activities and views of the institution. The survey also has a more limited purview because it is primarily designed for faculty rather than all institutional employees. HERI notes that the survey has particularly been used as evidence for specific accreditation standards and as part of discussions on pedagogy demonstrating that customer satisfaction is not at the core of the survey. In specific regards to satisfaction, faculty members are asked to rank numerous areas by very satisfied, satisfied, marginally satisfied, not satisfied, or not applicable. These areas include:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Satisfaction Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Health benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retirement benefits</td>
<td>Opportunity for scholarly pursuits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching load</td>
<td>Quality of students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office/lab space</td>
<td>Autonomy and independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional relationships with other faculty</td>
<td>Social relationships with other faculty</td>
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\textsuperscript{34} “HERI Faculty Survey.” Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles. http://www.heri.ucla.edu/facoverview.php
There are also numerous other parts of the survey which address faculty satisfaction in a less direct manner. For example, respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with various statements such as “Faculty are sufficiently involved in campus decision making” and “My values are congruent with the dominant institutional values” – statements which play a major role in faculty satisfaction. The survey also addresses areas such as sources of faculty stress, part-time or full-time status, and salaries. There are also questions regarding diversity and social change.

More than 1,200 two- and four-year institutions have administered this web-based survey since 1989. Like most surveys included in this section of the report, institutions participating in the HERI Faculty Survey receive an institutional profile broken down by demographics as well as raw data files and comparison to national benchmarks. Importantly, institutions “also have ample opportunity to customize elements of the survey, including adding open or closed ended questions of institutional importance or in conjunction with a consortia.” This widely utilized survey provides another instrument for measuring faculty satisfaction as well as other areas of interest to institutional administrators looking to implement quality improvement.

### Surveys Adopted for Higher Education

There have been numerous other efforts to design a satisfaction-based survey for the higher education context. For example, HEdPERF (Higher Education PERFormance) was developed in 2004 as part of a range of tools to measure service quality at higher education institutions. It is primarily discussed in the context of international universities. SERVQUAL, SERVPERF, and EP were other instruments focused on private sector service quality measurement, which researchers have attempted to adapt to the higher education context. HEdPERF is a derivation of these tools which aims to address academic components as well as the “total service environment as experienced by students.” It is a “more comprehensive performance-based measuring scale that attempts to capture the authentic determinants of service quality within higher education sector.” The 41-item survey instrument addresses six

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency of colleagues</th>
<th>Job security</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Departmental leadership</td>
<td>Course assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom to determine course content</td>
<td>Availability of child care at this institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospects for career advancement</td>
<td>Clerical/administrative support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall job satisfaction</td>
<td>Tuition remission for children/dependents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Higher Education Research Institute

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36 Ibid.
dimensions of service quality at higher education institutions: non-academic aspects, academic aspects, reputation, access, program issues, and understanding. In another example, a researcher at Liberty University developed a theoretical basis for a survey focused on the need for customer satisfaction survey instruments measuring brand loyalty at higher education institutions. This section of the report indicates that there are viable and widely-used national survey tools for evaluating both faculty and student satisfaction. They benefit from having administrators to provide analysis and national benchmarks as well as opportunities for customization.

**Customized Institutional Surveys**

Some institutions are unsatisfied with these existing national survey instruments and choose to create customized institutional surveys. Hanover Research is available to design, implement, and provide analysis of custom surveys if desired. These surveys provide an internal benchmark for employee and student satisfaction from year to year for institutions to gauge the campus climate as well as gauging the effect of implemented improvement measures.

Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) has been conducting its in-house Satisfaction and Priorities Survey to its students since at least 1993. The institution also conducts a Faculty Satisfaction Survey and a Staff Satisfaction Survey. IUPUI administers these satisfaction surveys in addition to the National Survey of Student Engagement, a Graduate Professional Student survey, a recent alumni survey, a master’s five year out alumni survey, a master’s one year out alumni survey, an undergraduate five year out alumni survey, an Entering Students Survey, and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement.

Though very recent results of the Satisfaction and Priorities Survey are not available, the 1993 Student Satisfaction and Priorities Survey found that of its 873 student respondents, 85.5 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience at IUPUI though only 62.1 were satisfied or very satisfied with the sense of community at IUPUI. In order to obtain these results, the IUPUI survey addresses satisfaction with specific programs and services, academic and academic support, financial aid, student support climate, learning facilities, admissions, course availability. The survey also addresses overall satisfaction. Importantly, the survey allows students to rank the personal priorities regarding numerous factors in order to gauge satisfaction with the most important aspects of their experience – a strategy

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similar to the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory. A sampling of the results of the 1993 survey is shown in Figure 3. The results illustrate, for example, that “Overall Quality of Instruction” was overwhelmingly important to students and the majority were satisfied or very satisfied in this category. On the other hand, more students were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the “General Helpfulness of Faculty” though this was also ranked as important.

**Figure 3: IUPUI 1993 Student Satisfaction and Priorities Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfactions</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The info instructors give about course req's</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality of instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to get books required for courses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel. of coursework to career goals and obj's</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying for admission to IUPUI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic/racial diversity of the students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avail. of faculty for discussions outside class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of coursework to everyday life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining info about IUPUI prior to admission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The process of paying for classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General helpfulness of faculty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IUPUI

In regards to the faculty satisfaction survey, faculty members are asked to respond to a comprehensive range of questions about their satisfaction in the following areas: the quality of IUPUI, the campus environment, the faculty work environment, the learning environment (including instructional methods, instructional resources, non-traditional scheduling arrangements, classroom facilities, course location, and preferred class times), perceptions of student welfare, perceptions of campus services, and campus information technology support. Despite the comprehensive nature of the survey, the 2000 survey received a 54 percent response rate with 854 faculty respondents, illustrating the importance of obtaining faculty buy-in over time.

The experience of IUPUI in continuously administering customized student and faculty satisfaction surveys demonstrates the potential for an institution to develop its own benchmarks and to analyze employee and student satisfaction with numerous aspects of their experience over time. Since IUPUI caters to a large non-traditional student population, the ability to create a customized institutional survey allows specific feedback on services and academic experiences. It also allows the institution to develop its surveys over time to be more effective and to incorporate changes in the campus.

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41 Ibid.
Alternative Methods for Measuring Customer Satisfaction

Although the surveys discussed in the previous section are a popular tool in measuring customer satisfaction, some education leaders support alternative methods of measurement including management models which place an emphasis on monitoring and elevating customer satisfaction. Some methodologies focus on gauging specific indicators, such as the net-promoter index, rather than asking multiple broad questions about customer satisfaction. Other tools discussed in this section include management models, such as Total Quality Management and the Balanced Scorecard, which have been employed by colleges and universities to monitor, manage and improve customer satisfaction using a top-down methodology.

Increasing Customer Loyalty

While customer satisfaction has become a “buzz” phrase in higher education since the concept migrated from the private sector, a recent Business Week article pointed out that the private sector is now focusing on customer loyalty. While customer satisfaction is crucial, it must translate into customer loyalty in order to encourage retention. Ultimately, customer loyalty measures whether employees and students feel greater customer satisfaction than they would expect from a competing provider and ultimately whether they would be willing to recommend the institution to others and to re-enroll or pursue employment again, if they repeated the process.⁴³ Higher education institutions should similarly strive to be ahead of the curve in regards to customer satisfaction. Greater customer loyalty may in fact be more important for areas such as increased retention and donations than customer satisfaction by itself.

Net-Promoter Score

A Harvard Business Review article explains the concept of the net-promoter score, which measures customer responses to a single question – “How likely is it that you would recommend our company to a friend or colleague?” If customers respond positively, then they are promoters and the more “promoters” an institution has, the more an institution is likely to grow or to experience retention. Having high proportions of “promoters” indicates a strong sense of loyalty because it involves customers risking their reputation for the institution.⁴⁴ Though higher education institutions may not rely as much on “reviews” or “promoters” for growth, it is true that customer recommendations can be significantly important for establishing or improving the reputation of an institution. Furthermore, the simplicity of this score contrasts to the complex customer satisfaction surveys discussed in the previous section.

The *Harvard Business Review* article explains the methodology for institutions to find their net-promoter score: customers are asked “How likely is it that you would recommend our company to a friend or colleague?” on a scale of 0 to 10. When the results are collected, the institution finds the proportion of “promoters” (scores 9-10), “passively satisfied customers” (scores 7-8), and “detractors (score 0-6). The institution then subtracts the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters to obtain its Net-Promoter Score. In the private sector, “companies that garner world-class loyalty receive net-promoter scores of 75% to more than 80%.”

By focusing on increasing promoters and decreasing detractors, higher education institution can increase customer satisfaction and customer loyalty while utilizing a simple customer satisfaction measure. Promoters also decrease marketing costs. However, it is noted that for a higher education institution to increase promoters, it will have to go further into researching feedback in order to make relevant improvements. It is also worth noting, that this form of the question may not be most effective for higher education institutions. A question often included in higher education surveys is “If you had to do it all again, would you choose this institution again?” This single question could similarly be the basis of an alternative higher education net-promoter score. Furthermore, by focusing on a single question institutions are more likely to receive greater customer response rates. Ultimately, institutions may be able to lessen attrition if they better understand customer loyalty.

**Student Satisfaction Index**

Another methodology involving customer loyalty is the concept of satisfaction indexes. The American Consumer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) and the European Consumer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) are used to measure the performances of organizations, industries, departments and economies according to customers’ consumption experiences. The indexes embody the total evaluation of the market by its customers. This model has recently been applied to higher education to create the Student Satisfaction Index (SSI) which includes college reputation, student expectation, quality perception, value perception, student satisfaction, and student loyalty. A 2008 article explained how these factors should then be adjusted according to the variable of student activity which influences students’ perceptions. Ultimately, the result is an institutional index which can be used as an annual benchmark. This method still requires higher education institutions to collect customer satisfaction data through a survey and as such is distinctive primarily in the way in which the results are presented. Furthermore, the survey will be focused on the concepts of expectations relative to actual experiences and the resulting student loyalty.

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45 Ibid.
Quality Management in Higher Education

The application of quality management in higher education is another method of increasing customer satisfaction for stakeholders. Initially developed by and applied to major corporations, quality improvement models and criteria have expanded their applications, showcasing widespread utility. Applying quality improvement models to higher education is a challenging endeavor since education by nature is driven less by efficiency and the bottom-line than major corporations. Despite challenges, these models can be an effective way to measure and increase customer satisfaction. The primary quality improvement models which have been utilized in a higher education context include Total Quality Management, Six Sigma, the Baldrige Award criteria, and the Academic Quality Improvement Program. These models are centered on the concepts of measurement, customer satisfaction, and continuous improvement.

Total Quality Management

Total Quality Management (TQM) is focused on reducing errors during services, streamlining supply chains, and increasing customer satisfaction. The title of “total” refers to the fact that TQM requires the commitment of all functions of an institution to improving quality. Importantly, TQM is a management-driven model as shown in Figure 4 where the customer focus is the key priority. With total participation and an effective planning process, an institution can engage in process improvement and management.

Figure 4: Illustrating the TQM Model

Source: Edraw Soft

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Another key aspect of TQM is employee empowerment. The TQM process requires both intra-departmental and inter-departmental committees which use tools such as scatter plots, control charts, flow charts, cause and effect diagrams, focus groups, and best practice guidelines to analyze university processes. These tools allow universities to assess customer needs, staff duties, work flow, financial breakdowns, market analysis, and ultimately to determine process defects. Each process analysis should focus on aligning the process with the institution’s mission. This model was more popular in higher education institutions such as Oregon State University in the 1990s though it is still successfully applied at some institutions. It is particularly effective in creating a common language in which staff can communicate about process improvement, potentially overcoming institutional resistance to change as well as creating an awareness of the customer needs and satisfaction from an internal perspective.

Six Sigma

Six Sigma is another model largely borne of TQM though the methodology is more fact-based and data-driven. Six Sigma is focused on improving quality specifically by reducing defects (unsatisfied customers). It requires identification of a problem, measurements of the current performance, analysis of cause and effects, process improvements, and finally standards development to maintain performance. In a higher education context, Six Sigma is primarily effective for processes such as recruitment, admission, registration, and academic advising as well as support services such as IT, lodging, financial aid, and catering. Six Sigma requires a greater human resources commitment than TQM by training various levels of process improvement employees in a common language and toolsets. Since implementing the model in 2003, Illinois Central College has made it more interactive by providing a detailed description of each process undergoing improvement, including the involved supervisors, team members, and sponsors as well as details of the projects’ statuses. All stakeholders are able to complete a Six Sigma Charter worksheet if they would look to submit proposals.

Baldrige Award Criteria

Unlike TQM and Six Sigma, the Baldrige Award criteria and the Academic Quality Improvement Program mentioned above are specifically designed for higher education institutions.
education though they utilize many of the same concepts. The Baldrige Award criteria, on which the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is given each year, is divided into seven areas: leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, measurement, analysis, and knowledge management, workforce focus, process management, business results. Though institutions applying for the award often utilize some kind of structured quality improvement model such as TQM, the criteria still provide a customer satisfaction oriented framework with flexibility for discussing how institutions’ programs, offerings, and services meet or exceed the requirements of their customers. Many of the institutions applying for the award noted a change in attitude with the implementation of the framework because they were constantly defining quality dimensions and evaluating customer satisfaction along these dimensions.

Academic Quality Improvement Program

The Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) is a function of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools which uses AQIP as an alternative process for already-accredited institutions to maintain accreditation. However, all institutions can use the AQIP framework which draws from the models discussed above by “focusing on key processes, basing decisions on data, decentralizing control, empowering faculty and staff to make the decisions that directly affect their work,” systems thinking, and stakeholder focus. The process requires an institution to identify Action Projects, use peer review and feedback, and analyze their improvements based on established accountability measures. Importantly, AQIP is focused on context and explaining how a particular system fits within the larger framework of an institution and its mission, and whether the performance of this system results in satisfied customers.

Overall, the main detracting factors about quality improvement models in higher education are that they require time, commitment, and resource investment in order to be successful. There are also accusations they these models inappropriately apply private sector concepts to higher education. However, if institutions are committed to measuring and increasing customer satisfaction, they can provide an effective framework for quality improvement from an institutionally internal perspective.

Utilizing the Balanced Scorecard

The Balanced Scorecard Institute explains that the Balanced Scorecard approach “is a strategic planning and management system that is used extensively in business and industry, government, and nonprofit organizations worldwide to align business activities to the vision and strategy of the organization, improve internal and external communications, and monitor organization performance against strategic goals.”

Bond University in Australia is among those higher education institutions utilizing the Balanced Scorecard approach in the higher education context. The Balanced Scorecard is so-called because it balances between external measures for shareholders and customers and internal measures of critical business processes. In the Balanced Scorecard performance measures are divided into four areas:

- Financial perspective – how do we look to stakeholders?
- Customer perspective – how do our customers see us?
- Internal business processes – what must we excel at?
- Innovation and learning – how can we continue to improve and create value?

For higher education institutions, the Balanced Scorecard can be effective in aligning departmental goals to the institutional vision and strategy and establishing a strategic plan. Figure 5 illustrates this idea. The Balanced Scorecard requires institutions to establish objectives, measures, targets, and initiatives for each of these four areas – a similar procedure to the quality management methodologies discussed above.

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Many organizations utilize some kind of Balanced Scorecard software to design a performance dashboard ensuring that all employees are aware of the institutional status on numerous processes. In the Higher Education Forum, Brent D. Ruben suggested that a dashboard for higher education should break down the Balanced Scorecard into Teaching/Learning, Service/Outreach, Scholarship/Research, Workplace Satisfaction, and Financial as shown in Figure 6. In regards to customer satisfaction, this dashboard indicates the possibility of creating an external and internal balance of customer satisfaction measures. Internal customers include students, faculty, and staff while external customers include public bodies, organizations, alumni, and employers.

60 Ruben, Brent D. “Toward a Balanced Scorecard for Higher Education: Rethinking the College and University Excellence Indicators Framework.” Higher Education Forum, Fall 1999.
Ultimately, the Balanced Scorecard takes into account more than simply customer satisfaction. It is a framework for assessing satisfaction within the context of numerous other institutional activities. It is flexible in that the objectives, measures, targets, and initiatives can be applied to the entire institution or within specific departments or offices. Ruben stated that “having an established set of measures that operationally define ‘excellence’ for an institution/unit is of great value for assessment and over-time tracking.” However, it is noted that this methodology requires significant investment in defining and measuring success in numerous categories.

**Customer Relationship Management in Higher Education**

Corporations have long used the concept of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) as both a strategy and as a set of software tools “with the goal of reducing costs, increasing revenue, identifying new opportunities and channels for expansion, and improving customer value, satisfaction, profitability, and retention.” In a 2002 Jossey-Bass paper, the authors suggest that applying CRM methodologies to higher education allows the administration to monitor a single entity with a complete understanding of their experience. CRM is about looking at the “cradle-to-grave” customer life cycle. As customer satisfaction with each of these entities is recorded, the university can begin to gain an overall understanding of the customer satisfaction of its stakeholders. It is noted that this type of comprehensive interaction recording
requires significant investment potentially of both technology and time by the institution though it can become integrated into institutions’ functioning over time.\textsuperscript{64}

The Jossey-Bass report suggests that for students the CRM process can even begin prior to students enrolling in an institution by providing potential applicants with a unique web portal from their username which then records and provides information to them based on academic and personal interests. If the student enrolls, this portal serves as the beginning of the record of their interactions with the institution during the duration of their enrollment and as they become alumni. The success of students’ interactions with admission, financial aid, housing, and faculty can be recorded while faculty members’ interactions with administration, benefits, payroll, and professional development can be recorded.\textsuperscript{65} Faculty members could also monitor student interactions in order to effectively customize curricula. In this way, the administrative staff is able to monitor the success of interactions and to quickly pinpoint areas where students and faculty did not have successful interactions.

In regards to donor customer satisfaction, CRM can be particularly effective because it allows individualized techniques to be applied to each donor based on their interests. For example, by maintaining a CRM record for all alumni, the development staff is able to see those who were interested in athletics, music, or chemistry research during their time at the institution as well as keeping records of their current employment, interests, and location. It also allows institutions, for example, to record how a previous donation was used to encourage further donations.\textsuperscript{66} Recording donor satisfaction in all of these interactions allows institutions to more effectively fundraise in the future.

Ultimately, CRM can have many positive results if used in colleges and universities. Universities may experience:

- Increased revenue through improved recruitment and retention
- Reduced recruitment costs
- Improved customer service
- Quicker yield conversions
- Improved customer satisfaction\textsuperscript{67}

These results illustrate how the use of technology to record the success of stakeholders’ interactions with various aspects of an institution allows for targeted improvement and overall increases in customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the integration of technology into the process in order to maintain lifelong records of each stakeholder “can aid the institutions in gaining a total view of its customers and

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 32.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 31.
can help implement activities to capitalize on this knowledge.” 68 CRM allows institutions to focus on customer-centricity and quality improvement.

Creating a Campus Customer Satisfaction Culture

An overall method of customer satisfaction measurement and improvement is to foster an institutional tradition of customer service and satisfaction. Some higher education institutions place significant focus on including all stakeholders in the improvement process by rewarding customer satisfaction and creating open avenues for customer feedback.

For example, the University System of Georgia (USG) “is asking the 38,000 faculty and staff employed by Georgia’s 35 public colleges and universities to provide faster, friendlier, more efficient service to the USG’s ‘customers,’ including more than 270,000 students.” 69 In fact, the Governor’s Office of Customer Service awards Governor’s Commendation and Chancellor’s Customer Service Awards and many colleges and universities in the system employ a Director of Customer Service to oversee campus initiatives. USG maintains a list of customer service projects organized into categories such as academic procedures, disability access, dissemination of data, efficiency procedures, and residential life. For example, under academic procedures, Georgia College and State University implemented a plan to improve the academic front offices of its four deans by streamlining forms, increasing accessibility, and providing training to student support staff. 70

As mentioned earlier in this report, the University of Toledo established an Office of Student Customer Service in order to provide a feedback mechanism and clearinghouse for resolving student complaints. Creating an open avenue for customer feedback is another customer satisfaction tool. Benedictine University, for example, provides an online customer feedback form for customers to respond to the services they receive from the university. Respondents are asked to evaluation their ease in getting through to the University, the courtesy of staff, and the quality of the service. Respondents can also suggest areas for improvement in a free response section. 71 Similarly, the Customer Service Feedback Program at the University of Arizona provides a feedback form to evaluate the level of service provided by different offices to their customers. 72 Universities such as Texas Tech University have also used focus groups in conjunction with customer satisfaction surveys as assessments regarding the impact of their quality improvement measures. 73

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68 Ibid.
69 Customer Focus, University System of Georgia. http://www.customerfocus.usg.edu/
71 “Customer Feedback Form.” Benedictine University. http://www.ben.edu/contact/customer_feedback.cfm
72 “How are we doing?” The University of Arizona. http://customerservice.arizona.edu/feedback/index2.html
focus groups provide an open avenue for interested customers to provide feedback as well as suggestions for improvement that might not be clear through a customer satisfaction survey.

Summary

This section of the report indicated that though surveys are the most commonly used customer satisfaction measurement tool currently utilized in higher education, there are alternative measures available to institutions. They may involve more simplistic customer surveying or they may involve more comprehensively tracking higher education customers. Importantly, implementing many of these alternative measures offers the opportunity to establish a tradition of customer satisfaction assessment across a higher education institution which promotes constant quality improvement.
Appendix

The following figures provide a sample of statements or questions included in the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, the Student Assessment of College Environment survey, and the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis institutional survey discussed earlier in this report.

Figure A.1: Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory Sample for Four-Year Colleges and Universities

| Most students feel a sense of belonging here. | The campus staff are caring and helpful. |
| Faculty care about me as an individual. | Admissions staff are knowledgeable. |
| Financial aid counselors are helpful. | My academic advisor is approachable. |
| The campus is safe and secure for all students. | Billing policies are reasonable. |
| Financial aid awards are announced to students in time to be helpful in college planning. | Library staff are helpful and approachable. |
| My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual. | The staff in the health services area are competent. |
| The instruction in my major field is excellent. | Adequate financial aid is available for most students. |
| Library resources and services are adequate. | My academic advisor helps me set goals to work toward. |
| The business office is open during hours which are convenient for most students. | The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate. |
| Counseling staff care about students as individuals. | Living conditions in the residence halls are comfortable (adequate space, lighting, heat, air conditioning, telephones, etc.). |
| The intercollegiate athletic programs contribute to a strong sense of school spirit. | Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individuals students. |
| Computer labs are adequate and accessible. | The personnel involved in registration are helpful. |
| Parking lots are well-lighted and secure. | It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus. |
| Residence hall staff are concerned about me as an individual. | Males and females have equal opportunities to participate in intercollegiate athletics. |
| Tutoring services are readily available. | My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major. |
| I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. | The assessment and course placement procedures are reasonable. |
| Security staff respond quickly in emergencies. | I feel a sense of pride about my campus. |
| There is an adequate selection of food available in the cafeteria. | I am able to experience intellectual growth here. |
| Residence hall regulations are reasonable. | There is a commitment to academic excellence on this campus. |
| There are a sufficient number of weekend activities for students. | Admissions counselors respond to prospective students’ unique needs and requests. |
| Academic support services adequately meet the needs of students. | Students are made to feel welcome on this campus. |
| I can easily get involved in campus organizations. | Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress in a course. |
| Admissions counselors accurately portray the campus in their recruiting practices. | There are adequate services to help me decide upon a career. |
In addition to ranking the importance and satisfaction of the above statements, the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory asks the following questions:

- How satisfied are you that this campus demonstrates a commitment to meeting the needs of:
  - Part-time students?
  - Evening students?
  - Older, returning-learners?
  - Under-represented populations?
  - Commuters?
  - Students with disabilities?

- How important were each of the following factors in your decision to enroll here?
  - Cost
  - Financial aid
  - Academic reputation
  - Size of institution
  - Opportunity to play sports
  - Recommendations from family/friends
  - Geographic setting

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Campus appearance
Personalized attention prior to enrollment

So far, how has your college experience met your expectations?
- Much worse than I expected
- Quite a bit worse than I expected
- Worse than I expected
- About what I expected
- Better than I expected
- Quite a bit better than I expected
- Much better than I expected

Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far.
- Not satisfied at all
- Not very satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

All in all, if you had it to do over again, would you enroll here?
- Definitely not
- Probably not
- Maybe not
- I don’t know
- Maybe yes
- Probably yes
- Definitely yes

Figure A.2: 2007 Student Assessment of the College Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Services</th>
<th>Student Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of instruction field of interest</td>
<td>Quality of admissions and orientation services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality of instruction</td>
<td>Quality of learning assistance and tutorial services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors expertise</td>
<td>Quality of academic advising services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors attitude toward students</td>
<td>Quality of career planning and placement services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors use of a variety of teaching strategies</td>
<td>Quality of financial aid services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors clearly define course objectives</td>
<td>Opportunity for involvement in campus activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors clearly define course requirements</td>
<td>Quality of records and registration services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors clearly define grading policies</td>
<td>Quality of counseling services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of instructors outside of class</td>
<td>Quality of athletic services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to evaluate my instructors</td>
<td>Advice I get in making educational decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to participate actively in class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to work in small groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to learn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring the ability to learn on my own</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and Physical Services</td>
<td>Social and Cultural Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of classrooms</td>
<td>Personnel are sensitive to students of all ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of laboratories</td>
<td>Personnel are sensitive to students gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of physical education services</td>
<td>Personnel are sensitive to different ways that students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of computer labs</td>
<td>Personnel are sensitive to students physical challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of computer services</td>
<td>Personnel are sensitive to students ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the bookstore</td>
<td>Personnel are sensitive to students religious preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the library</td>
<td>Personnel are sensitive to sexual harassment concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of food services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of informal places to gather</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of parking spaces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience and proximity of parking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of campus lighting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of public transportation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of places to study</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Focus</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My educational needs are important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am receiving an excellent education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty meet my educational needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support services personnel are helpful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative services personnel meet my needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution is preparing me for a career</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution is preparing me for transfer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisted with my personal development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal skills are being enhanced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied with my learning experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic and cultural diversity are important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel safe on campus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tunxis Community College

Figure A.3: Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Institutional Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The info instructors give about course requirements</th>
<th>Overall quality of instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being able to get books required for courses</td>
<td>Relevance of coursework to career goals and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying for admission to IUPUI</td>
<td>Library hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic/racial diversity of the students</td>
<td>Availability of faculty for discussions outside class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of coursework to everyday life</td>
<td>Obtaining info about IUPUI prior to admission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The process of paying for classes</td>
<td>General helpfulness of faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting food while on campus</td>
<td>Getting information about major requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of technology to aid learning</td>
<td>Ethnic/racial diversity of the faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The helpfulness of IUPUI staff</td>
<td>Opportunities to take interdisciplinary courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaces for individual study</td>
<td>The classroom environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The helpfulness of IUPUI administrators</td>
<td>Availability of classes at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library holdings</td>
<td>Taking required placement tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaces for group study</td>
<td>The process of registering for classes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation to IUPUI</th>
<th>Academic advising in a specific school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining help using computers</td>
<td>Availability of classes at off-campus sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting needed courses in required sequence</td>
<td>Getting through to staff on the telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting information about career and job opportunities</td>
<td>Availability of classes on weekend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality of science laboratory facilities</td>
<td>Finding available computer in a public cluster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting information about financial aid opportunities</td>
<td>Tutoring services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying for financial aid</td>
<td>Academic advising at the UEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to attend campus cultural events</td>
<td>Opportunities to engage in extra-curricular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining financial aid checks (disbursement)</td>
<td>The amount of financial aid available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for student employment</td>
<td>Opportunities to live in vicinity of the campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The availability of child care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis"
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