

## **Executive Summary**

### **Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory: 2020 Collin College**

Prepared by  
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To understand and monitor what matters most to its students and how satisfied they are with various aspects of their educational experience, Collin College administers the Ruffalo Noel Levitz's (RNL) Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) to a representative sample of students every other spring semester. In February 2020, utilizing the Ruffalo Noel Levitz online services, an electronic survey was administered to 10,908 randomly sampled students enrolled in spring 2020 using their Collin email addresses; the sample excluded the first-time freshman, first-time transfers-in, dual credit students, and home-schooled students. Due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided to stop reminding nonrespondents about the survey once an adequate number of completed surveys had been received. A total of 753 completed responses were obtained in 2020<sup>1</sup> yielding a response rate 6.9% exceeding the roughly 600 responses that were required to generalize to the student body as a whole. Assuming that responding students were representative of all students, the completed sample size of 753 allows generalization to the overall student population with a 95 percent confidence of plus or minus 3.5 percent.

Using just over 100 items, the SSI asks students to indicate the levels of importance they placed on specific educational experiences, activities, and services along with the degree of satisfaction they associated with each. Students rated each item on a



*Figure 1. Performance gap.*

7-point Likert-type scale, where “7” represented the most positive ratings. The use of dual importance-satisfaction scales allows institutions to rate satisfaction within the context of

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<sup>1</sup>Efforts were made to ensure an adequate number of responses to the survey by sending a pre-survey message to all students included in the sample informing them about the upcoming survey, its importance to the College, and requesting them to respond. Seven timed reminders were sent to elicit responses.

importance. The difference between the importance and the satisfaction scores produces what Ruffalo Noel Levitz refers to as the “**performance gap.**” The smaller the gap—i.e., the smaller the difference between how important students rate an item and their satisfaction level—the better the institution presumably is doing in meeting students’ expectations. Larger gaps suggest areas where institutions can focus their improvement efforts, especially when larger gaps are associated with areas that students deem relatively important.

Sixty-two percent of the respondents were females. A higher percentage (38 percent) of males responded in 2020 compared to the last four administrations in which male percentages ranged between 32 and 36. A little over half of the respondents (53 percent) were between 19 and 24 years of age. In terms of their educational goals, 52 percent were interested in obtaining an associate’s degree, and another 34 percent intended to transfer to a university. Compared to the 2018 administration, in 2020, the intention to obtain an associate’s degree was up by five percentage points while the intention to transfer to a four-year degree was down by six percentage points. Without implying causality, this could probably be a reflection of Collin’s focus on program completion. Twenty-nine percent of the respondents were employed full-time and 30 percent part-time. An overwhelming majority of the respondents were classified as in-state students (91%) and a little less than half reported attending the Plano Campus (48 percent).

Collin College is proud of its efforts to keep higher education affordable. Students indicated that cost continues to be the most important factor in decisions to enroll at Collin. Compared to the 2018 survey, in 2020, slightly more students (85 vs. 83 percent) were motivated by tuition costs (mean importance score of 6.4. on the 7-point scale). Academic reputation is the second most important factor in the decision to enroll. Seventy-five percent of students enrolled at

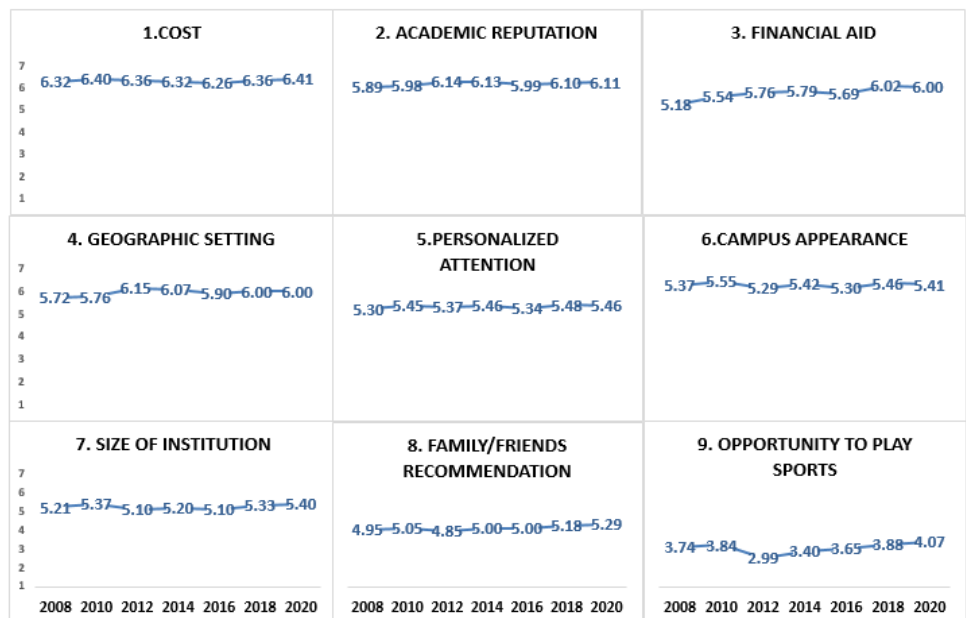


Figure 2. Factors in decision to enroll at Collin (mean importance scores on 7-point scale).

Note. Factors in the decision to enroll for 2020 are presented sequentially in descending order of importance in charts from 1 till 9.

Collin because of its academic reputation compared to 73 percent for national peers.<sup>2</sup> Other important factors in the decision to enroll at Collin were Financial Aid and Geographic Setting. It is noteworthy that opportunity to play sports as a motivation of enrollment at Collin increased by 2 percentage points between the 2018 and 2020 administrations (35 percent vs. 33 percent); at 4.07, the importance attached to playing sports is at its highest ever. A higher percentages of students enrolled at Collin for the opportunity to play sports compared to peers (34 percent vs. 29 percent), a difference of 5 percentage points. It is possible that this increase reflects Collin’s decision to initiate an intramural sports program.

Data for the last five administrations shows that the percentage of respondents selecting Collin as their first choice declined from 81 percent in 2012 to 74 percent in 2018. However, there was an increase of four percentage points in 2020 (78 percent). The declining trend after 2012 could have been associated with economic recovery following recession which may have enabled former recession-impacted students/families go to more preferred institutions. Considering the numerous college options in the area, the fact that 78 percent selected Collin as their first choice in 2020 is positive, and it is eight percentage points higher than the peers (70 percent).

Figure 3 presents results for three SSI summary items (96, 97 & 98) that gauged the bottom line overview of how students felt about their overall college experience. It is noteworthy that, with the exception of items 96 and 97 in 2016, Collin’s average response scores for the three summary items were higher, and in most cases significantly higher (dark green cells in Figure 3) than those for peer institutions.

|  | 2012   |       | 2014   |       | 2016   |       | 2018   |       | 2020   |       |
|--|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
|  | Collin | Peers | Collin | Peers | Collin | Peers | Collin | Peers | Collin | Peers |
| 96. So far, how has your college experience met your expectations?     | 5.03   | 4.81  | 4.98   | 4.86  | 4.83   | 4.87  | 5.05   | 4.92  | 5.14   | 4.98  |
| 97. Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far. | 5.71   | 5.46  | 5.64   | 5.51  | 5.47   | 5.52  | 5.67   | 5.55  | 5.66   | 5.58  |
| 98. All in all, if you had to do it over, would you enroll here again? | 6.21   | 5.72  | 6.05   | 5.74  | 5.83   | 5.75  | 6.09   | 5.78  | 6.09   | 5.83  |

Dark green fill indicates significantly higher than peers.  
 Light green fill indicates higher than peers but not significant.  
 Pink fill indicates lower than peers but not significant.

Figure 3. Average Collin scores for responses to items 96, 97, and 98 compared to peer institutions for 2012 through 2020.

These results are reassuring in view of the fact that the SSI was administered in the wake of unprecedented disruptive circumstances in which College was forced to undertake rapid conversion of all classes to online format in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The results suggest that Collin by and large is still meeting the expectations of its students.

<sup>2</sup> The means for the national peer group were based on 143,390 records in 2020.

The items on the SSI are grouped to form 12 scales<sup>3</sup> to provide a big picture. Students' ratings on these scales provide an overview of what matters to students and how satisfied they are. Figure 4 compares Collin's mean satisfaction scores for 2020 with 2018 (dark and light blue bars) and with peer institutions in 2020. Compared to 2018, the mean satisfaction scores were higher for 10 out of 12 scales in 2020 but not significantly higher. The overall higher mean satisfaction scores compared to 2018 suggest that Collin provided satisfactory services during a pandemic. Comparing Collin's 2020 results with national peers indicates (dark blue and orange bars), not only were satisfaction ratings higher on every scale for Collin students but the differences were statistically significant for 11 out of 12 scales.

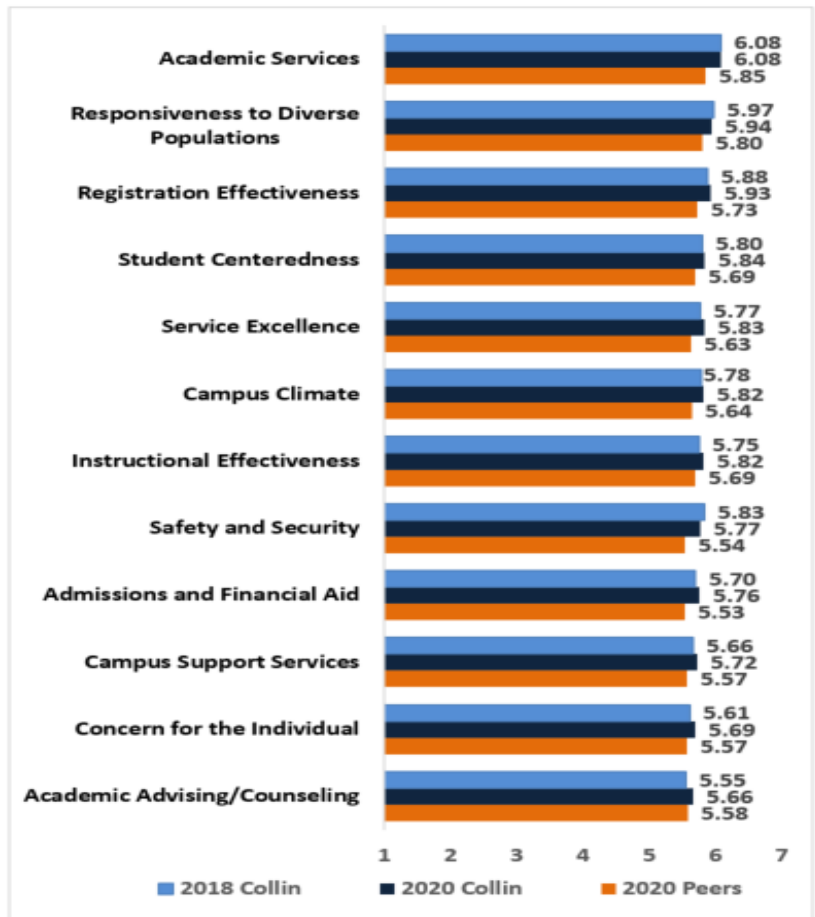
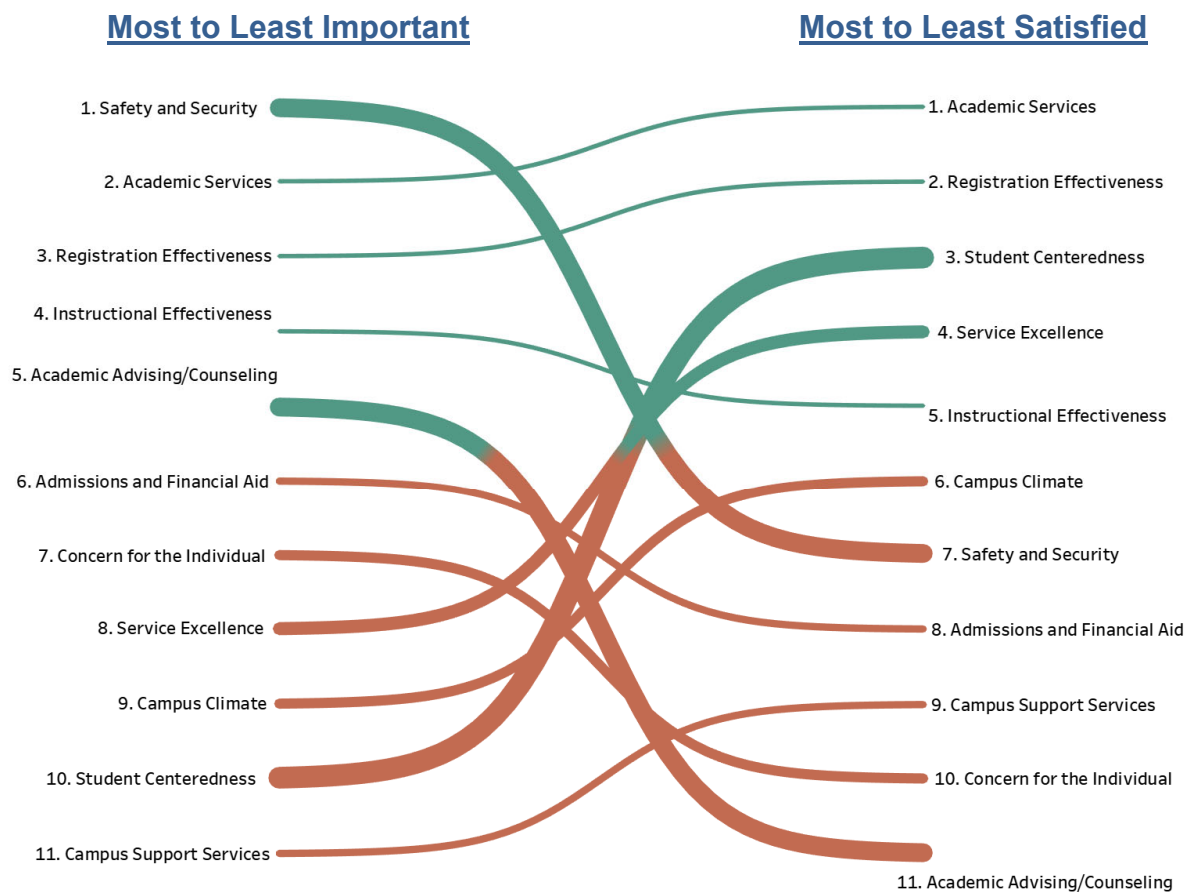


Figure 4. Comparison of Collin's 2020 and 2018 mean satisfaction scores for 12 scales & Collin's 2020 vs. peers scores.

<sup>3</sup> 1. **Academic Advising/Counseling:** assesses the comprehensiveness of academic advising program. Academic advisors and counselors are evaluated on the basis of their knowledge, competence, and personal concern for student success, as well as on their approachability.  
 2. **Academic Services:** assesses services students utilize to achieve their academic goals. These services include the library, computer labs, tutoring, and study areas etc.  
 3. **Admissions and Financial Aid:** assesses the ability to enroll students in an effective manner. It includes competence and knowledge of admissions staff as well as effectiveness and availability of financial aid programs.  
 4. **Campus Climate:** assesses the extent to which the College provides experiences that promote a sense of campus pride and feelings of belonging.  
 5. **Campus Support Services:** assess the quality of support programs and services which students utilize to make their educational experiences more meaningful and productive.  
 6. **Concern for the Individual:** assesses commitment to treating each student as an individual.  
 7. **Instructional Effectiveness:** assesses students' academic experience, the curriculum, and the campus's overriding commitment to academic excellence  
 8. **Registration Effectiveness:** assesses issues associated with registration and billing.  
 9. **Responsiveness to Diverse Populations:** assesses commitment to specific groups of students enrolled at the College; e.g., under-represented populations; students with disabilities; etc.  
 10. **Safety and Security:** assesses the College's responsiveness to students' personal safety and security on campus.  
 11. **Service Excellence:** assesses the perceived attitude of the College's staff, especially front-line staff, toward students.  
 12. **Student Centeredness:** assesses the College's efforts to convey to students that they are important to the College. This scale measures the extent to which students feel welcome and valued.

The relationships between perceived importance and satisfaction on each scale in 2020 is visualized in Figure 5. The importance scores are presented in a descending order of importance on the left side of the diagram. The right side of the diagram presents the satisfaction levels in a descending order. The thickness of the lines linking the two columns illustrates the magnitudes of the differences in rank. For instance, the widest line is for “Student Centeredness,” ranked 10<sup>th</sup> on importance and 3<sup>rd</sup> on satisfaction. “Academic Services” and “Registration Effectiveness” have the thinnest lines; they were respectively ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> on importance and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> on satisfaction.



**Figure 5.** 2018 Collin’s importance (left) and satisfaction scales (right) in descending order of students’ perceived importance and satisfaction.

Note. The above diagram visualizes only 11 scales because SSI captures data only on one dimension (Satisfaction) for the “Responsiveness to Diverse Populations” scale. Therefore, this scale is not included in the above visualization.

“Safety and Security” was deemed most important by Collin students both in 2018 and 2020 (6.44). Collin’s administration, too, views Safety and Security as very important as reflected in Priority 1 of its 2020 Vision strategic plan.” Under this scale, two items, “Campuses were safe and secure for all students” and “Security staff respond quickly in emergencies,” were underscored as strengths for Collin both in 2018 and 2020; the latter

item had a statistically significant increase in the satisfaction in 2020 compared to 2018. However, overall student satisfaction with “Safety and Security” was lower in 2020 (5.77) than in 2018 (5.83); the scale’s satisfaction rank fell from 3<sup>rd</sup> place in 2018 to 7<sup>th</sup> place in 2020. This decline in satisfaction with “Safety and Security” could be reflection of the prevailing societal anxiety with safety and security during the pandemic coupled with declines in two items within the “Safety and Security” scale. The two items, “Parking lots are well-lighted and secure” and “The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate” saw declines in satisfaction compared to 2018, and the decline was statistically significant for the latter item. Concerns about parking also were expressed in the open-ended comments.

Compared to peers, not only do Collin students place higher importance to Safety and Security (6.44 vs. 6.25 for peers), but, despite the drop in satisfaction, they still expressed higher levels of satisfaction with the “Safety and Security” (5.77 vs. 5.54); a difference that was significantly higher for Collin.<sup>4</sup> All items under the “Safety and Security” scale had statistically higher satisfaction compared to peers except for the item relating to adequacy of parking spaces where the difference was significantly lower than for peers.

As in 2018, students were most satisfied with the Academic Services (6.08) and least satisfied with the Academic Advising/Counseling (5.66). Despite campus closures due to COVID-19 and Collin’s rapid transition to an online format for all courses, it is encouraging to note an increase in satisfaction with “Instructional Effectiveness.” It was higher in 2020 than in 2018 (5.82 vs. 5.75).

An important result, in terms of satisfaction, comes from examining the big picture obtained by comparing the scale averages over time for Collin to those of national peers. The 2020 data, like 2018, indicates that Collin students were more satisfied with their College experiences, activities, and services as measured by these 12 scales than were students at the comparison institutions and the differences were statistically significantly higher for all scales compared to peers except for Advising.

Of the 12 scales, Collin’s Academic Advising had the lowest mean satisfaction score. Nevertheless, it is reassuring that the satisfaction score for Advising has been improving.<sup>5</sup> Figure 6 plots the difference between the mean satisfaction scores for Collin and peers for the Advising Scale. A negative value (below the red line) indicates that the peer’s satisfaction with Advising was higher than that of Collin students and a positive value (above the red line) indicates that Collin students were more satisfied. Historically, students at peer institutions were significantly more satisfied with their Academic Advising

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<sup>4</sup> Significance was at 0.01 level.

<sup>5</sup> Because the area of Advising has consistently been viewed relatively negatively by students over the years that SSI has been administered, the College’s chose to focus its current SACSCOC quality enhancement plan (QEP) on improving that perception.

than were Collin students. However, the gap in satisfaction scores for Advising between Collin and peers has been narrowing over time. In 2018, for the first time ever Collin students were significantly more satisfied with their Academic Advising compared to peers. The positive trend continues in 2020.



Figure 6. Differences between Collin and peer's mean satisfaction scores by year of SSI administration.

Note. Three asterisks indicate that differences were statistically significant at .001 level, two asterisks indicate the .01 level, and one asterisk indicates the .05 level.

To improve satisfaction with advising and to meet or exceed the mean satisfaction scores of peers is one of the summative outcomes of Collin's Quality Enhancement Plan<sup>6</sup> (QEP); Collin seems to have attained that goal in 2018 and 2020. The overall improvement in the satisfaction with Advising could be a manifestation of initiatives under the umbrella of QEP such as connecting students early in their first term with faculty advisors and training faculty coaches and advisors via numerous professional development activities. In 2014, five items were identified as challenges under Advising. Three were identified as challenges in 2016, four in 2018 and two in 2020. Overall, it is an encouraging trend considering the data at the beginning of QEP.

The following section presents individual items which were identified as Collin's strengths or challenges<sup>7</sup> for each scale listed in descending order of each scales' importance. Collin's **strengths** are reflected in those items which were rated by students as having both high importance and high levels of satisfaction. These are assigned a green star below. The **challenges** are posed by items with high importance and low satisfaction scores; i.e., those with large performance gaps. These are flagged in red and represent challenges that Collin may wish to address in some fashion. The percentage of students who gave ratings of 6 or 7 (6 is considered "important" or "satisfied" and 7 is considered "very important" or "very satisfied") are presented in the parenthesis following each item under each scale. In all, the 2020 survey produced 17 strengths and 12 challenges.

<sup>6</sup> The SSI was administered to QEP fall cohorts of full-time, first-time-in-college, degree seeking students in spring 2015, spring 2017, and spring 2019 to monitor progress on improving Academic Advising in the years between regular, biennial administrations.

<sup>7</sup> "**Strengths** are items with high importance and high satisfaction. They are specifically identified as items above the mid-point in importance (top half) and upper quartile (25 percent) of the satisfaction score."

"**Challenges** are items with high importance and low satisfaction or a large performance gap. Challenges are identified as items above the midpoint in importance (top half) and in the lower quartile (25%) of satisfaction scores or items above the midpoint in importance (top half) and in the top quartile (25%) of the performance gap scores.

"**The performance gap** score is the discrepancy between what students expect and their level of satisfaction with the current situation." (Noel-Levitz Campus Report, 2018)



## Safety and Security

- ★ The campus is safe and secure for all students. (92% importance vs. 81% satisfaction)
- ★ Security staff respond quickly in emergencies. (90% importance vs. 79% satisfaction)

*The following is no longer a challenge in 2020 (despite a statistically significant decline in the mean satisfaction score):*

The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate.

## Academic Services

- ★ Computer labs are adequate and accessible. (87% importance vs. 80% satisfaction)
- ★ Library resources and services are adequate. (86% importance vs. 78% satisfaction)
- ★ Library staff are helpful and approachable (85% importance vs. 80% satisfaction)
- ★ Tutoring services are readily available. (87% importance vs. 77% satisfaction)
- ★ There are a sufficient number of study areas on campus. (83% importance vs. 75% satisfaction)

*The 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> items, above, were not strengths in 2018.*

*The following was a strength in 2018 but not in 2020:*

The equipment in the lab facilities is kept up to date

## Instructional Effectiveness

- ★ I am able to experience intellectual growth here. (92% importance vs. 78% satisfaction)
- ★ Nearly all the faculty are knowledgeable in their fields. (90% importance vs. 75% satisfaction)
- ★ There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus. (88% importance vs. 79% satisfaction)
- ★ Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours. (86% importance vs. 78% satisfaction)
- ▣ The quality of instruction I receive in most classes is excellent. (91% importance vs. 67% satisfaction)
- ▣ Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress in a course. (88% importance vs. 65% satisfaction)
- ▣ Faculty are understanding of students' unique life circumstances. (85% importance vs. 64% satisfaction)

## Registration Effectiveness

- ★ There are convenient ways of paying my school bill. (88% importance vs. 79% satisfaction)
- ★ Billing policies are reasonable. (85% importance vs. 74% satisfaction)
- ▣ I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (88% importance vs. 66% satisfaction)
- ▣ Policies and procedures regarding registration and course selection are clear and well-publicized. (87% importance vs. 67% satisfaction)

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> item was not a challenge in 2018 but became a challenge in 2020.*

*The following was a challenge in 2018 but not in 2020.*

Classes are scheduled at times that are convenient for me.

*The following was a strength in 2018 but not in 2020.*

Class change (drop/add) policies are reasonable.

### Academic Advising/Counseling

- 🚩 My academic advisor is knowledgeable about my program requirements. (88% importance vs. 67% satisfaction)
- 🚩 My academic advisor is knowledgeable about the transfer requirements of other schools. (86% importance vs. 62% satisfaction)

*The following items were challenges in 2018 but not in 2020:*

My academic advisor is approachable.

This school does whatever it can to help me reach my educational goals.

### Admissions and Financial Aid

- 🚩 Financial aid counselors are helpful. (86% importance vs. 66% satisfaction)
- 🚩 Financial aid awards are announced to students in time to be helpful in college planning. (84% importance vs. 64% satisfaction)

*The above items were not challenges in 2018 but became challenges in 2020.*

### Concern for the Individual

*No items reflected strengths or challenges.*

### Campus Climate

- ★ The campus is safe and secure for all students. (92% importance vs. 81% satisfaction)
- ★ This institution has a good reputation within the community. (86% importance vs. 80% satisfaction)
- ★ Students are made to feel welcome on this campus. (84% importance vs. 77% satisfaction)

*The following was a strength in 2018 but not in 2020.*

The campus staff is caring and helpful.

*The following was a challenge in 2018 but not in 2020.*

This school does whatever it can to help me reach my educational goals.

### Service Excellence

- ★ Library staff are helpful and approachable. (85% importance vs. 80% satisfaction)

*The following was a strength in 2018 but not in 2020.*

The campus staff are caring and helpful.

### Student Centeredness

- ★ Students are made to feel welcome on this campus. (84% importance vs. 77% satisfaction)

*The following was a strength in 2018 but not in 2020.*

The campus staff are caring and helpful.

### Campus Support Services

- 🚩 There are adequate services to help me decide upon a career. (85% importance vs. 64% satisfaction)

*There were no challenges in 2018.*

Of the ten institutional items added to Ruffalo Noel Levitz's SSI by Collin College staff, there was an improvement in the satisfaction scores for three items between 2020 and 2018, five items had declines, two experienced no change, and none of the increases or declines were statistically different from 2018. While reviewing the results, it should be kept in mind that this survey was administered in the midst of a pandemic with considerable uncertainty. In 2020, the highest satisfaction was expressed with the ease of finding information about tuition charges (6.17); the adequacy of the physical space where students meet with academic advisors (6.01), veteran services (5.92) and the adequacy of Collin's support for students facing academic challenges (5.88).

Consistent with 2018, the following institutional item continues to be a strength for Collin.

- ★ I can easily find information about my tuition charges each semester. (89% importance vs. 79% satisfaction)

The performance gaps were highest for the following two institutional items, both of which were flagged as challenges like in 2018.

- 🚩 I am clear about the next steps for completing my degree/certificate requirements (89% importance vs. 63% satisfaction)
- 🚩 I can easily find the information I need at the Collin College website. (88% importance vs. 62% satisfaction)

Thematic analysis of 457 open-ended comments<sup>8</sup> indicated that 44 percent of the comments were positive, 30 percent were negative, 16 percent were suggestions, and 10 percent were classified as "other." The top three positive themes related to general

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<sup>8</sup> A total of 384 comments were received. However, many comments had more than one theme. Multi-themed comments were split and placed under the appropriate theme resulting in a total of 457 comments.

appreciation of Collin: positive feedback related to Collin facilities, culture, class schedules, and services; and appreciation of the faculty. The top three negative themes reflected criticism of student services (e.g., advising, counselling, registration, financial aid etc.); criticism of faculty members, classes, or programs; and criticism of specific services. Most of students' suggestions related to classes, services, and technology.

Interestingly, there were only 13 comments related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Of these, four were positive while nine were negative. Among the positive comments, one praised the President, another thought the "leadership has done a magnificent job managing the school and keeping the administration student-focused." The third focused on Collin's successful handling of lab classes, and the fourth related to personal preference for online testing. The negative comments focused on the transition not having been seamless as there was limited availability of resources for underrepresented students who were dependent on College resources to succeed, students needing ACCESS support, and students needing specific labs. The remaining negative comments related to unhappiness at having paid tuition for face-to-face classes and, instead, having had to take them in online format; struggling with online format; dissatisfaction with faculty members; and concern for what College was doing to counter the corona virus threat.

One way to assess how students' view Collin is by gauging their "loyalty" to the College. This is akin to customer loyalty in marketing research and can be measured via a Net Promoter Score<sup>9</sup> (NPS). NPS was estimated using responses to the question, "How likely is it that you would recommend our institution to a friend or colleague," where 0 represented "not at all likely" and 10 represented "extremely likely." An NPS was obtained by subtracting the 0 to 6 responses (detractors) from 9 or 10 scores (promoters). In 2020, Collin had an NPS of 38. Fifty-five percent of promoters were likely to make positive referrals to Collin. Collin may want to monitor NPS as positive referrals are likely drive future enrollments. Examining data related to factors that students identified as driving their decisions to enroll at Collin, 56 percent considered "recommendations from family/friends.

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<sup>9</sup> A Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a metric widely used in marketing for measuring customer satisfaction and loyalty. NPS can range from -100 to +100. Ruffalo Noel Levitz started collecting NPS data at the end of 2017-2018 academic year.