

# Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) Collin College 2016

## *Executive Summary*

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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 Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) to a representative sample of students every other spring semester. In February 2016, utilizing the Ruffalo Noel Levitz online services, an electronic survey was administered to 14,100 randomly sampled students using their Cougarmail addresses. A total of 939 completed responses were received yielding a response rate of seven percent. This represented a one percentage point decline compared to the 2014 administration<sup>1</sup> (153 less responses). For the first time the students had the option to answer via mobile devices. Answering dual scale questions probably made it cumbersome and more time consuming on small screens, which may have discouraged response. Extra reminders had to be sent out to solicit response. Assuming that the sample was representative, a completed sample of 939 students from a student population of about 28,000 allows one to generalize sample parameters to the overall population with a 95 percent confidence of plus or minus about 3 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 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 importance. The difference between the importance and the satisfaction scores produces what Ruffalo Noel Levitz refers to as the "performance gap." The smaller the



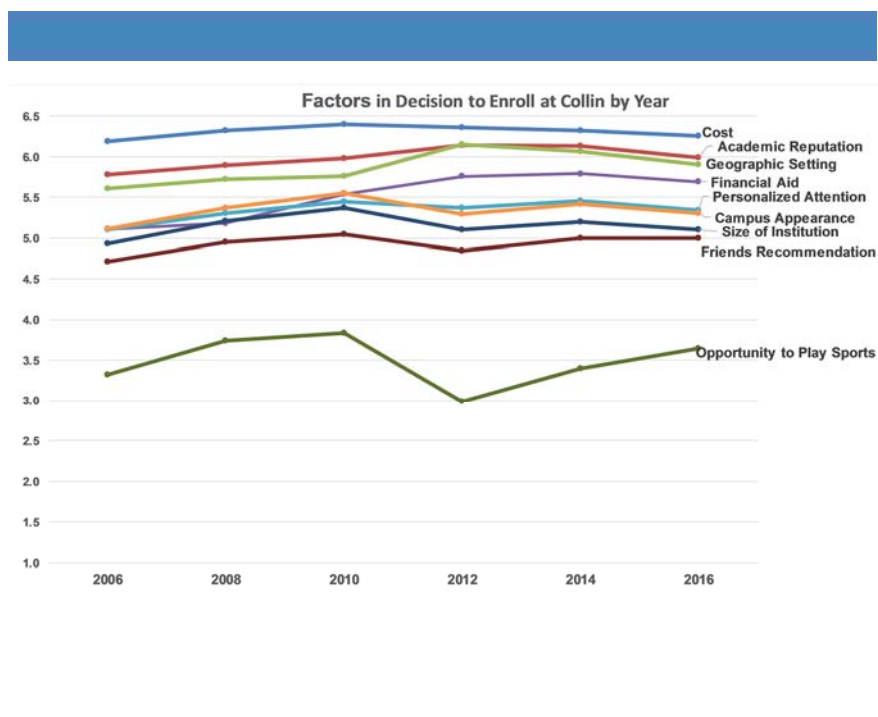
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<sup>1</sup>Efforts were made to improve the response rate compared to the previous administration. In collaboration with the Public Relations Office, prior to the survey, email messages were sent via Cougarmail informing all students about the upcoming survey, informing them about its importance, and requesting them to respond if they were selected in the sample. Instead of five timed contacts suggested by Dillman's methodology, seven contacts were made to solicit response.

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.

Sixty-eight percent of the respondents were females, and 37 percent of the respondents were between 19 and 24 years of age. In terms of their educational goals, 49 percent were interested in obtaining an associate’s degree and another 35 percent intended to transfer to a university. A majority of the respondents attended Spring Creek Campus (53 percent).

Collin College prides its efforts to keep higher education affordable. Cost continues to be the most important factor in the decision to enroll at Collin (83 percent). Academic reputation as a factor in the decision to enroll has had a rising trend till 2014; it dipped slightly from 6.13 in 2014 to 5.99 in 2016. Despite this decline, 75 percent of students enrolled at Collin because of its academic reputation compared to 72 percent for national peers. Other important factors in the decision to enroll at Collin were Geographic Setting and Financial Aid. The average importance score for Financial Aid increased steadily from 5.11 in 2006 to highest score of 5.79 in 2014 and dipped to 5.69 in 2016. Personalized attention prior to enrollment as a factor in the decision to enroll also decreased from 5.46 in 2014 to 5.34 in 2016; Collin is two percentage points below its peers (58 percent versus 60 percent) in providing personalized attention prior to enrollment. Interestingly, opportunity to play sports as a factor of enrollment at Collin increased by 6 percentage points between the last survey administration and 2016 (25 percent vs. 31 percent).



The percentage of respondents identifying Collin as their first choice institution increased till 2012, after which it shows declines (from 81 percent in 2012 to 79 percent in 2014 to 78 percent in 2016). Despite a declining trend following 2012, an overwhelming majority of students identified Collin as their first choice institution in 2016. Considering the numerous college options that exist in the area, the fact that 78 percent selected Collin as their first choice is probably not bad; it is eight percentage points higher than the peers (70 percent).

Three SSI summary items (96, 97, & 98) gauge the bottom line overview of how students feel about their overall experience at College. Statistically significant<sup>2</sup> declines were observed between 2014 and 2016 for the three summary items:

Satisfaction with College and Re-enrollment						
	2012		2014		2016	
	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
97. Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far.	5.71	5.46	5.64	5.51	5.47	5.52
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

Dark green fill indicates significantly higher than peers.  
Light green fill indicates higher than peers.  
Pink fill indicates lower than peers.

- Item 96: So far, how has your college experience met your expectations (-0.16\*)
- Item 97: Rate you overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far (-0.17\*)
- Item 98: All in all, if you had to do it over, would you enroll here again (-0.22\*\*)

The declines in summary items should be viewed in conjunction with declines in respondents' reporting of Collin as their first choice institution. Ruffalo Noel Levitz's research suggests that students who are at institutions that are not their first choice are more likely to be dissatisfied with their experiences.

When Collin's 2016 scores for the three summary items were compared to the average scores for 206 community, junior and technical colleges in the comparison group<sup>3</sup>, Collin's scores were lower compared to peers for items 96 (4.83 vs. 4.87) and 97 (5.47 vs. 5.52). For item 98, slightly more students expressed that they would re-enroll at Collin if they had to do it all over again than the students at peer institutions (5.83 vs 5.75). It should be noted that the differences were not statistically significant for any of the three items.

<sup>2</sup> One asterisk (\*) indicates significance at .05 level; two asterisks (\*\*) indicate significance at .01 level.

<sup>3</sup> The total number of students in the comparison group was 192,106. The Ruffalo Noel Levitz updated its national norm group in June 2015 and those norms stay in place till the following academic year. Collin administered the survey in Spring 2016.

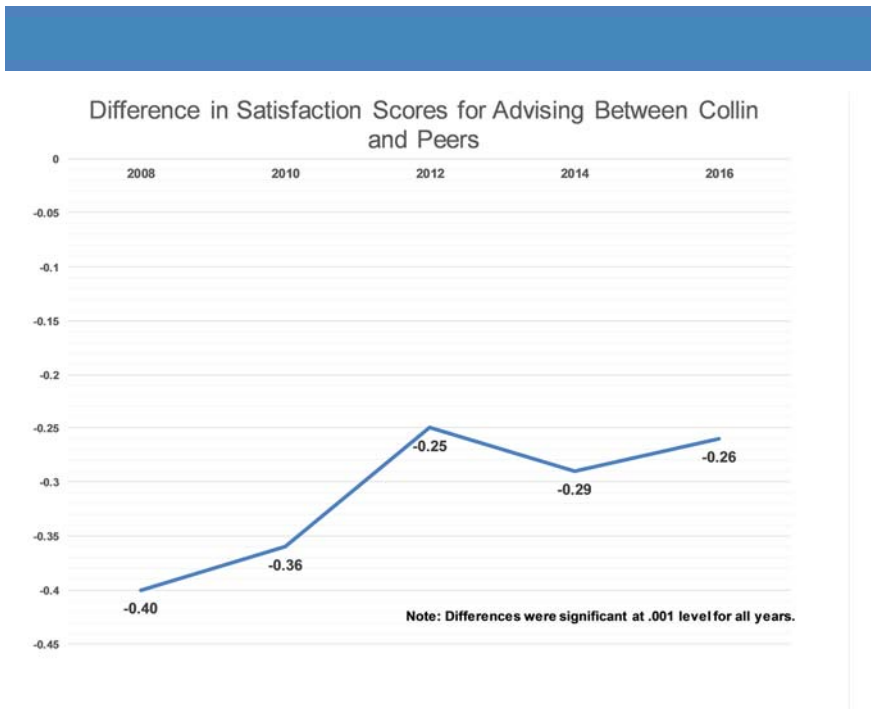
The items on the SSI are grouped to form 12 scales<sup>4</sup>. Students' ratings on these scales provide an overview of what matters to students. Among the most important results, in terms of satisfaction, is the big picture obtained by comparing the scales for Collin to those of national peers. In 2014, 10 out of 12 scales had higher student satisfaction scores compared to peers and the differences were statistically significant for eight scales. In 2016, six scales showed positive differences in satisfaction; the differences were statistically significant for three scales. This means that Collin students were more satisfied with the experiences, activities, and services measured by these scales than were students, in aggregate, at the comparison institutions. The six scales are presented in the order of students' perceived import (statistically significant scales are bolded): **Academic Services**, **Safety and Security**, **Service Excellence**, **Campus Climate**, **Campus Support Services**, and **Responsiveness to Diverse Populations**.

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<sup>4</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.

Two scales, **Academic Advising/Counseling** and **Concern for Individuals**, had lower satisfaction scores compared to peers nationwide and the differences were statistically significant. In the 2014 administration, both these scales had lower satisfaction scores compared to peers, but the difference was only statistically significant for Advising. The area of Advising has consistently been viewed relatively negatively by students over the years since SSI has been administered; one of the key reasons it is the focus of College’s SACS COC quality enhancement plan (QEP).

For 2016, Collin’s satisfaction score for Advising was significantly lower compared to peers (5.10 vs. 5.36). However, it is encouraging to note that the gap between the satisfaction scores for Collin and peers somewhat narrowed over time, though the differences remain statistically significant. Another thing warranting attention is the decline in number of items flagged as challenges under



*Academic Advising/Counseling* from 5 in 2014 to 3 in 2016. The items, “My academic advisor is approachable,” and “My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual” are no longer identified as challenges. To improve satisfaction with Advising and to reduce the number of challenge items are listed as an outcome for Collin’s QEP<sup>5</sup>. The reduction in challenge items could be a reflection of initiatives under the umbrella of QEP, such as connecting students early in their first term with faculty advisors (called faculty coaches) and training the faculty coaches and advisors via numerous professional development activities for better advisement.

The individual items under each scale provide detailed information about the College’s strengths and challenges. Collin’s strengths are reflected in those items which were rated by respondents as having high importance as well as high levels of satisfaction. These are assigned a green star, below. The challenges are posed by items with high

<sup>5</sup> It is worth mentioning the SSI was administered to QEP’s cohort of full-time, first-time-in-college degree seeking students for the first time in Spring 2015 because student satisfaction with Advising is one of its summative measures. For the *Academic Advising/Counseling* scale, the satisfaction gap between Collin’s QEP cohort and peers<sup>5</sup> was -0.17. For the first time since Collin started using SSI, the difference was not statistically significant. However, a caveat to be noted is that the comparison group was not comprised of FTIC students; it comprised of all students.

importance and low satisfaction;<sup>6</sup> 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 a 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. Some items appear under more than one scale. In all, there were 13 challenges and 23 strengths in 2016.

### Instructional Effectiveness

- ★ Nearly all the faculty are knowledgeable in their fields. (90% importance vs.69% satisfaction)
- ★ I am able to experience intellectual growth here. (89% importance vs. 73% satisfaction)
- ★ There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus. (88% importance vs. 71% satisfaction)
- 🚩 Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress in a course. (88% importance vs. 60% satisfaction)
- ★ Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours. (85% importance vs. 70% satisfaction)
- 🚩 The quality of instruction I receive in most classes is excellent. (91% importance vs. 63% satisfaction)

*The following is no longer a challenge:*

Students are notified early in the term if they are doing poorly in a class.

### Registration Effectiveness

- 🚩 Classes are scheduled at times that are convenient for me. (89% importance vs. 59% satisfaction)
- 🚩 I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (90% importance vs. 59% satisfaction)
- 🚩 The personnel involved in registration are helpful. (82% importance vs. 53% satisfaction)
- ★ There are convenient ways of paying my school bill. (84% importance vs.72% satisfaction)
- ★ Billing policies are reasonable. (85% importance vs.70% satisfaction)

### Academic Advising/Counseling

- 🚩 My academic advisor is knowledgeable about my program requirements. (88% importance vs. 52% satisfaction)
- 🚩 My academic advisor is knowledgeable about the transfer requirements of other schools. (86% importance vs. 51% satisfaction)
- 🚩 This school does whatever it can to help me reach my educational goals. (87% importance vs. 57% satisfaction)

*The following are no longer challenges:*

1. My academic advisor is approachable.

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<sup>6</sup> “Challenges are identified as items above the midpoint in importance and in the lower quartile (25%) of satisfaction scores or items above the midpoint in importance and in the top quartile (25%) of the performance gap scores (this is the difference between the importance score and the satisfaction score). The larger the performance gap, the greater the discrepancy between what students expect and their level of satisfaction with the current situation.” (Noel-Levitz Campus Report, 2016)



## 2. My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.

### Safety and Security

- ★ The campus is safe and secure for all students. (91% importance vs. 77% satisfaction)
- ★ Parking lots are well-lighted and secure. (85% importance vs. 67% satisfaction)
- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate. (85% importance vs. 56% satisfaction)

*The following is no longer a strength:*

Security staff responds quickly in emergencies.

### Academic Services

- ★ The library resources and services are adequate for my needs. (85% importance vs. 78% satisfaction)
- ★ Computer labs are adequate and accessible. (88% importance vs. 76% satisfaction)
- ★ The equipment in the lab facilities is kept up to date. (84% importance vs. 68% satisfaction)
- ★ Library staff are helpful and approachable. (83% importance vs. 78% satisfaction)

*The following emerged as a strength in 2016:*

- ★ There are a sufficient number of study areas on campus (84% importance vs. 70% satisfaction)

### Concern for the Individual

*The following is no longer a challenge in 2016:*

My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.

### Service Excellence

- The personnel involved in registration are helpful. (82% importance vs. 53% satisfaction)
  - ★ Library staff are helpful and approachable. (83% importance vs. 78% satisfaction)
- The following emerged as a strength in 2016:*
- ★ The campus staff are caring and helpful. (83% importance vs. 65% satisfaction)

### Campus Climate

- ★ The campus is safe and secure for all students. (91% importance vs. 77% satisfaction)
  - This school does whatever it can to help me reach my educational goals. (87% importance vs. 57% satisfaction)
  - ★ Students are made to feel welcome on this campus. (85% importance vs. 69% satisfaction)
  - ★ It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus. (83% importance vs. 65% satisfaction)
- The following emerged as a strength in 2016:*
- ★ The campus staff is caring and helpful. (83% importance vs. 65% satisfaction)

### Student Centeredness

- ★ Students are made to feel welcome on this campus. (85% importance vs. 69% satisfaction)
- ★ It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus. (83% importance vs. 65% satisfaction)

*The following emerged as a strength in 2016:*

- ★ The campus staff are caring and helpful. (83% importance vs. 65% satisfaction)

### Campus Support Services

*Neither any strength nor any challenge reported.*

### Admissions and Financial Aid

*The following emerged as a challenge in 2016:*

- 🚩 Admissions staff are knowledgeable. (87% importance vs. 60% satisfaction)

A comparison of 2016 and 2014 survey results indicates that out of the 12 scales, there was increase only in the mean satisfaction score for *Academic Advising/Counseling* (5.10 in 2016 vs. 5.03 in 2014). Despite improvement in satisfaction for Academic Advising/Counseling, this area still poses a challenge for Collin College. There was no change in the mean satisfaction in case of Service Excellence. All the remaining scales (*Instructional Effectiveness, Registration Effectiveness, Academic Services, Safety and Security, Admissions and Financial Aid, Concern for Individual, Campus Climate, Student Centeredness, Campus Support Services and Responsiveness to Diverse Populations*) experienced declines in the mean satisfaction scores. However, the declines were not statistically significant which suggests that they could be attributable to random variation.

Out of the ten institutional questions there was a decline in satisfaction score for six items. The following item emerged as a strength even though there was a decline in its satisfaction score between 2016 and 2014 (76% vs 80%).

- ★ I can easily find information about my tuition charges each semester (86% importance vs. 76% satisfaction)

The highest performance gaps were observed for the following three items in 2016, one of which was flagged as a challenge:

- 🚩 1) I am clear about the next steps for completing my degree/certificate requirements (92% importance vs. 58% satisfaction)
- 3) I know about the academic and career planning resources available on the Collin Web site. (78% importance vs. 52% satisfaction)
- 4) I can easily find the information I need at the Collin College Web site. (89% importance vs. 60% satisfaction)