



Seventh Annual National Research Study

2012 National Freshman Attitudes Report

An exploration of attitudes that influence student success

This annual report describes self-reported attitudes and motivations of today's first-year college students throughout the nation, based on survey responses from a sizable sample of freshmen attending college during the current academic year, 2011-2012.

Among the highlights:

- Compared to their female counterparts, many more incoming first-year males brought attitudes that reflected a low level of academic engagement, with fewer males than females indicating that they enjoy reading, take careful notes, and are receptive to academic assistance. See page 5 inside.
- In a finding that appears to demonstrate the value of higher education at cultivating tolerance toward others, a substantially higher percentage of students at the mid-point of their freshman year compared to the beginning of their freshman year agreed with the statement, "I get along well with people who disagree with my opinion openly." See page 6 inside and the box at the bottom of this page.
- Incoming Hispanic freshmen and incoming adult freshmen also appeared to be more tolerant of others' opinions, as 64 percent of incoming first-year Hispanic students and 72 percent of incoming adult freshmen agreed with the statement, "I can feel comfortable with someone who thinks quite differently on major social issues." These percentages were higher than those of other racial/ethnic groups and higher than those of traditional-age learners. See pages 8 and 9 inside.

Appendix B of this report on pages 13-19, along with the report's addenda and findings from previous years (available online) provide an extended view of these and many more freshman attitudes, offering the opportunity to examine how students' attitudes have changed over multiple years with breakdowns by gender, race/ethnicity, and by public vs. private, two-year vs. four-year institution types.

NEW! Changes in attitudes by the middle of the freshman year

The primary focus of this report is on freshman attitudes as students began the 2011-2012 academic year. To what extent did these attitudes change as students progressed through their classes? With the goal of further understanding the first-year experience, Noel-Levitz presents new data showing attitudinal shifts after the year got under way. See pages 6 and 7 and the online addenda at www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport.

This study adds another layer to existing national research on college freshmen by examining the attitudes and motivations of first-year undergraduates at the beginning—and now also at the middle—of the freshman year.



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View more freshman attitudes by race/ethnicity and for freshman at the mid-point versus the beginning of the first year

Visit www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport to access the entire series of National Freshman Attitudes Reports from Noel-Levitz, including more findings from fall 2011, multi-year trend data, and additional data from previous years' reports by gender, age, institution type, and by first-generation versus non-first-generation students. In addition, a report is available titled, *The Attitudes of Second-Year College Students*, with an addendum for transfer students, at www.noellevitz.com/SecondYearAttitudes.

Reflections and actions

For guidance on how to respond to the information in this report, Noel-Levitz offers some reflections and actions to consider in Appendix A on pages 10-12.

The source of data

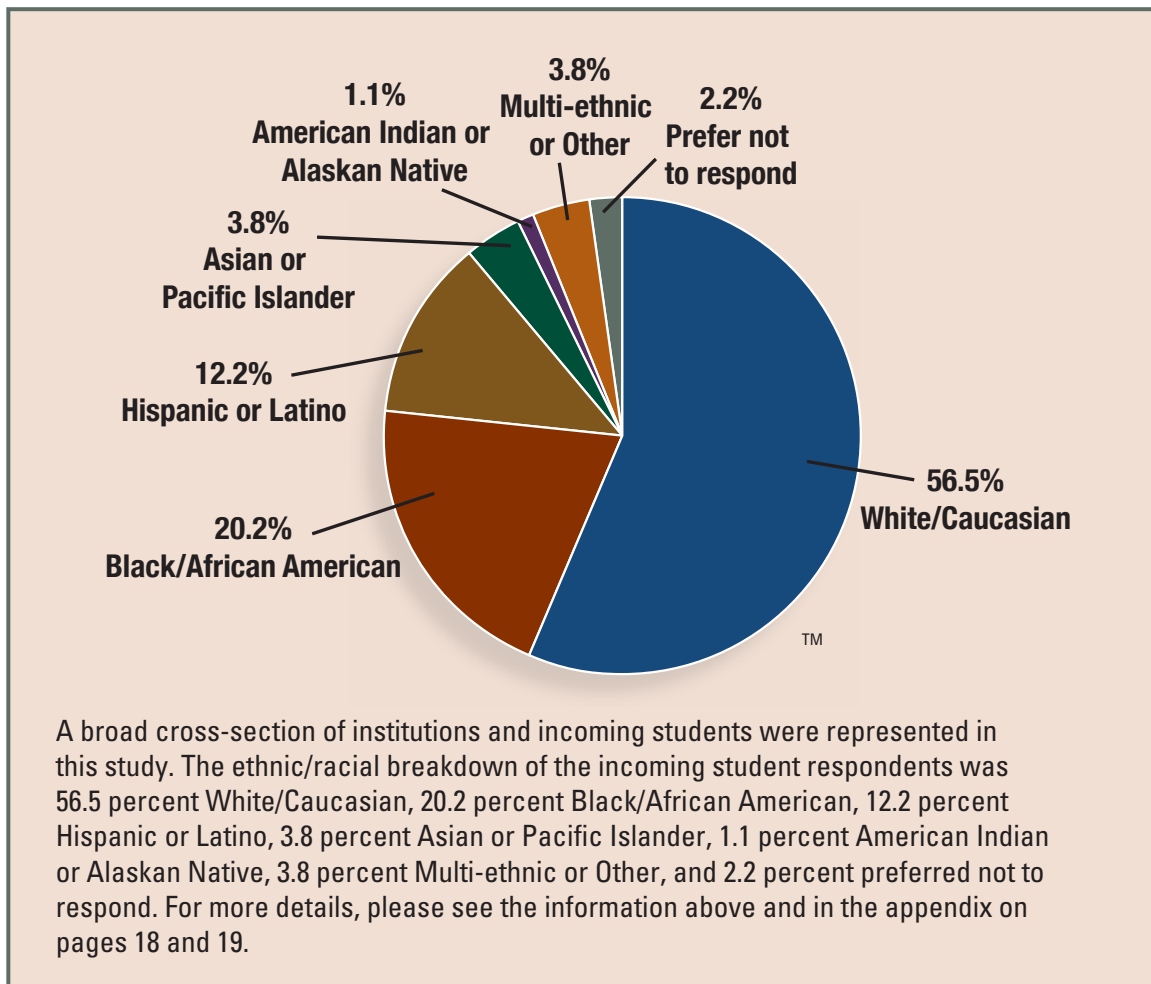
The freshman data in this report—with the exception of the data highlighted in gray on pages 6 and 7 showing attitudes at the middle of the freshman year—came from 94,202 incoming first-year college students at 315 college and universities nationwide who completed a 100-item attitudinal survey during orientation or within their first weeks of classes in the summer and early fall of 2011. The survey examined a broad range of motivational perspectives that students brought with them to their collegiate learning experience. Students completed the survey online or used a traditional paper-and-pencil format.

See Appendix B on pages 13-19 for additional findings, including a demographic breakdown of the data sample.

These 94,202 incoming student respondents were enrolled at a broad cross-section of institutions, with 45.4 percent of the respondents coming from four-year private institutions, 32.1 percent from four-year public institutions, and 22.6 percent from two-year institutions. Consistent with national enrollment trends, a slight majority of the respondents (53.9 percent) were female. The average age of the respondents was 20.4.

The survey instrument used with these incoming students was the College Student Inventory™ Form B (CSI-B), part of the Retention Management System *Plus*™ from Noel-Levitz. This motivational assessment identifies self-reported attitudes, including barriers and opportunities for students as they transition to college. For more information on Noel-Levitz motivational assessments, please see page 20.

To provide context, references to findings from earlier freshman attitudes research conducted by Noel-Levitz are included in this report. Please refer to the entire series of National Freshman Attitudes Reports available at www.noellelitz.com/FreshmanReport.



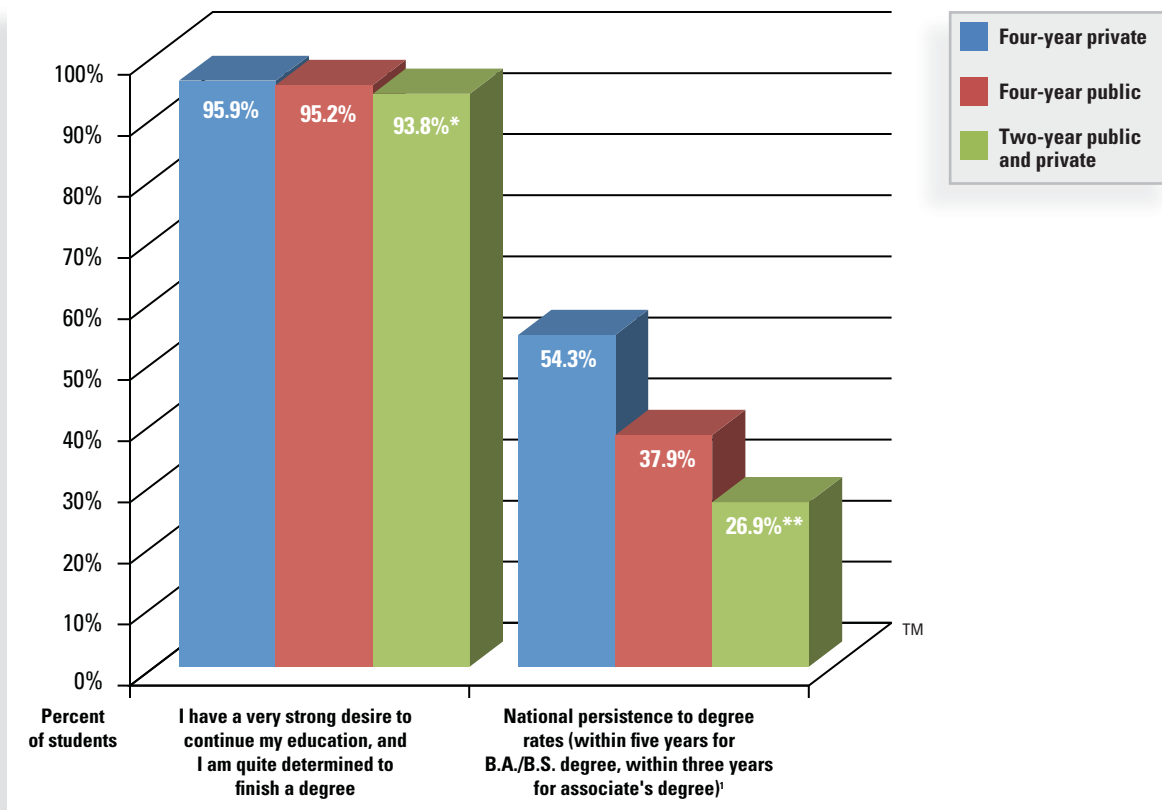
Nearly 95 percent of incoming freshmen express a strong desire to finish a college degree, but, chances are, about half won't make it

As shown in the chart below, as they began taking classes, 94 to 96 percent of incoming first-year undergraduates in fall 2011 reported that they strongly desired to finish a college degree.

However, these figures show a strong dissonance with current degree attainment levels, as only 46.0 percent of entering college students nationwide complete a degree within five years (for a bachelor's degree) or within three years (for an associate's degree).¹ In short, the aspirations and intentions of approximately half of the respondents are going unrecognized.

"What we know is that completion and graduation rates have not significantly improved during the past 30 years, even though we see data like these which suggest high levels of motivation for completion," said Kevin Crockett, Noel-Levitz president and CEO. "These findings prove the need for more consistent and constant conversation with students and families about degree planning, goal achievement, and persistence."

Desire of fall 2011 incoming freshmen to finish a degree vs. degree completion rates by institutional type



Above, a sobering contrast shows the gap between college completion rates nationally and incoming students' desires to finish a degree. However, looking on the bright side, it is clear that the vast majority of today's incoming students continue to highly value a college education, regardless of whether they attend a public or private, two-year or four-year institution. For complete findings by institution type, please see the appendix on pages 13-19.

* This is a combined rate for two-year public and private institutions.

** This is the rate for two-year public institutions. The comparable degree completion rate for two-year private institutions is 50 percent.

¹ ACT, Inc., National Collegiate Retention and Persistence to Degree Rates (Iowa City: ACT, Inc., 2011), 7.

**Highlights
from the
findings**

Incoming male freshmen tend to bring self-limiting attitudes, though many fulfill the stereotype of being confident in their math skills

As shown in the table below, many more incoming male students in fall 2011 brought attitudes that indicated lower levels of academic engagement when compared with their female counterparts. Lower percentages of males than females reported a strong desire to finish a degree, enjoyment of reading, careful note-taking, receptivity to instruction in taking college exams, and receptivity to tutoring. However, more males than females reported enjoying “the challenge of solving complex math problems” and fewer males than females indicated that “Math has always been a challenge for me.”

Selected attitudes of incoming freshmen by gender

Percent of freshmen in agreement

Selected survey items	Males	Females	Difference
I have a very strong desire to continue my education, and I am quite determined to finish a degree.	93.7%	96.5%	-2.8%
I get a great deal of personal satisfaction from reading.	37.5%	54.3%	-16.8%
I take very careful notes during class, and I review them thoroughly before a test.	52.6%	72.9%	-20.3%
I would like to receive some instruction in the most effective ways to take college exams.	70.9%	77.8%	-6.9%
I would like to receive tutoring in one or more of my courses.	39.9%	47.4%	-7.5%
Math has always been a challenge for me.	37.6%	49.2%	-11.6%
I have always enjoyed the challenge of trying to solve complex math problems.	41.8%	33.1%	8.7%

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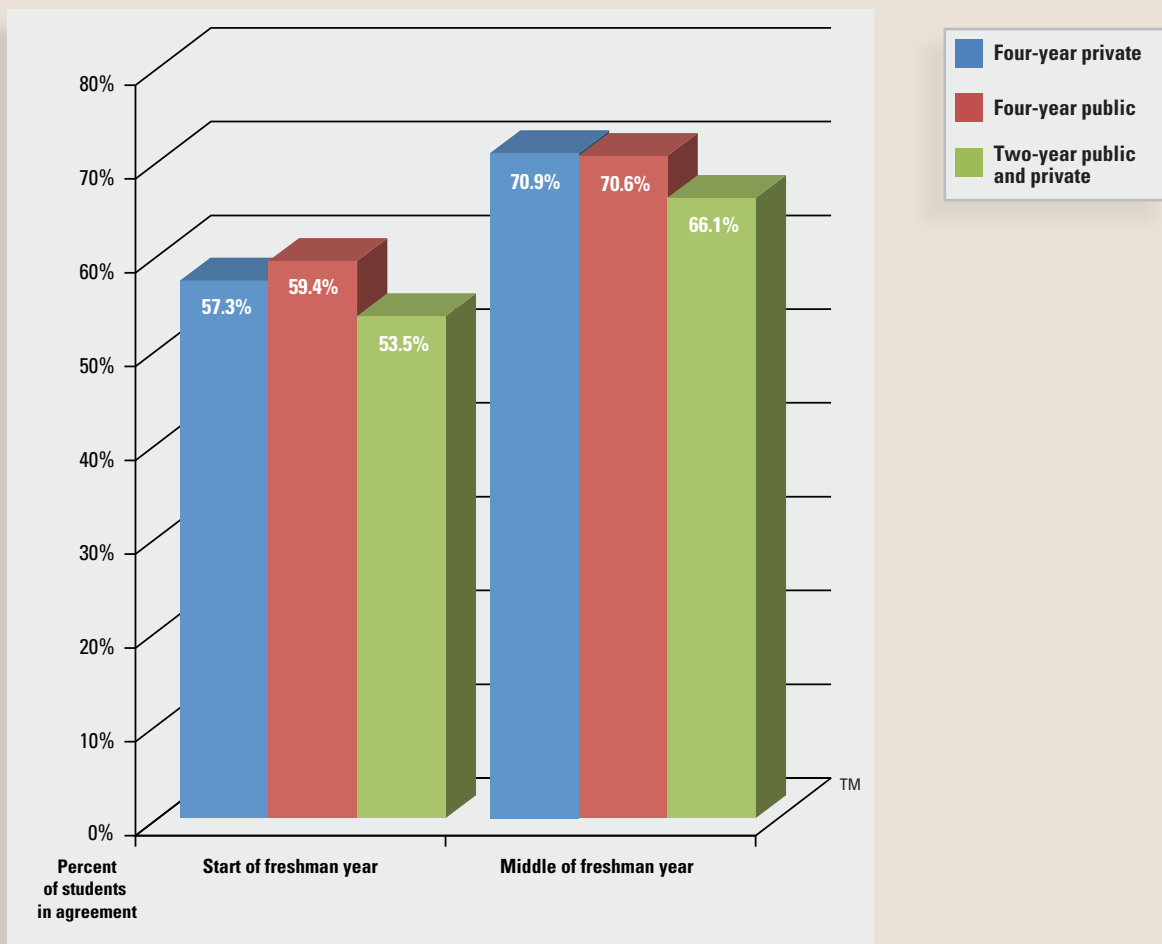
Compared to their female counterparts, many more incoming first-year males brought attitudes that reflected a low level of academic engagement, though more males than females reported they enjoyed solving complex math problems. Additional differences by gender can be seen in the appendix on pages 13-19.

NEW! How student attitudes change by the middle of the freshman year...

Freshmen appear to become more tolerant of others' opinions after half a year of college

As shown in the chart below, compared to the beginning of their freshman year, a substantially higher percentage of students at the mid-point* of their freshman year agreed with the statement, "I get along well with people who disagree with my opinion openly." This encouraging finding appears to fulfill a long-held view of higher education as a place that increases opinion tolerance.

Students' tolerance of others' opinions at the start of the freshman year compared to the middle of the freshman year, as measured by the survey item, "I get along well with people who disagree with my opinion openly"



New in this year's report, the above chart and the findings on the next page compare freshman attitudes at the beginning vs. the middle of the freshman year. For more mid-year findings, see the mid-year addendum to this report available at www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport.

* **Source of data on pages 6 and 7:** The above data and the table on the next page are drawn from 4,028 first-year students who completed Noel-Levitz's CSI-B motivational assessment at the beginning of their first year and who later completed Noel-Levitz's follow-up assessment, the Mid-Year Student Assessment (MYSA), near the end of their first term.

Many freshmen who expressed interest in receiving assistance with career planning at the beginning of the school year still hadn't received it at mid-year

The table below is an additional excerpt from the mid-year addendum to this report available at www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport. The table identifies freshman attitudes at the beginning and middle of the year along with students' actual use of services by mid-year, providing an additional, valuable perspective for monitoring student success.

Students' receptivity to assistance at the start of the freshman year compared to the middle of the freshman year, with self-reported receipt of this assistance

Percent of freshmen in agreement									
Selected survey items	Start of freshman year			Middle of freshman year			Middle of freshman year: Percentage that indicated they had <i>already</i> received some help from their college in the specified area		
	4-year private	4-year public	2-year public and private	4-year private	4-year public	2-year public and private	4-year private	4-year public	2-year public and private
I would like some help selecting an educational plan that will prepare me to get a good job.	65.3%	70.0%	69.2%	55.1%	60.9%	55.4%	37.9%	45.8%	61.4%
I would like to receive tutoring in one or more of my courses.	38.8%	48.5%	45.0%	32.3%	45.7%	41.7%	39.0%	54.1%	49.2%

The above table shows two gaps. First, more incoming students expressed interest in receiving career planning assistance than had actually received it by the time of the follow-up survey. Second, by mid-year, more freshmen had received tutoring assistance than had initially indicated a desire for tutoring.

**Highlights
from the
findings**

Incoming Hispanic freshmen bring greater opinion tolerance and a stronger desire to finish a degree

As shown below, incoming first-year Hispanic students in fall 2011 brought attitudes that signaled a greater openness to others' opinions when compared with students from other racial/ethnic groups. In addition, these students appeared to bring an even higher level of commitment to finishing a college degree. However, more Hispanic students than other students reported having a weak understanding of the physical sciences, as shown in the second-to-last item below.

Selected attitudes of incoming Hispanic freshmen versus attitudes of incoming freshmen from other racial/ethnic groups

Percent of freshmen in agreement

Selected survey items	Hispanic or Latino	Black/African American	Asian or Pacific Islander	American Indian or Alaskan Native	White/Caucasian
I can feel comfortable with someone who thinks quite differently on major social issues.	64.1%	63.3%	60.2%	60.8%	61.0%
I find it easy to be friends with people whose political ideas differ sharply from my own.	58.3%	54.6%	46.5%	56.9%	55.5%
I am very strongly dedicated to finishing college—no matter what obstacles get in my way.	95.6%	95.1%	94.2%	90.1%	94.9%
I am deeply committed to my educational goals, and I'm fully prepared to make the effort and sacrifices that will be needed to attain them.	92.4%	92.1%	88.1%	87.8%	89.9%
Of all the things I could do at this point in my life, going to college is definitely the most satisfying.	89.9%	90.5%	84.9%	84.0%	83.4%
My understanding of the physical sciences is very weak.	30.2%	28.3%	25.9%	24.7%	23.8%
I have a very good understanding of general biology (e.g., cell structure, metabolism, genetics, and the circulatory system).	37.6%	37.6%	38.9%	45.1%	37.9%

TM

Compared to students from other racial/ethnic groups, more incoming first-year Hispanic students brought attitudes that signaled tolerance of others' opinions and a strong commitment to finishing college, though more Hispanic freshmen reported having a weak understanding of the physical sciences. Additional differences by race/ethnicity can be seen in the race/ethnicity addendum online at www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport.

Incoming adult freshmen also bring greater opinion tolerance, along with a mixture of views toward educators

As shown in the table below, incoming first-year adult students in fall 2011 brought attitudes that also signaled a greater openness to others' opinions. In addition, these students appeared to bring an even higher level of commitment to finishing a college degree, greater enjoyment of reading, and stronger receptivity to academic assistance. However, fewer adult students than traditional-age students reported that "the teachers I had in school respected me as a person and treated me fairly," as shown in the second-to-last item below.

Selected attitudes of incoming adult freshmen ages 25 and up vs. attitudes of incoming traditional-age freshmen

Percent of freshmen in agreement

Selected survey items	Students age 25 and older	Traditional-age students	Difference
I get along well with people who disagree with my opinion openly.	72.0%	58.3%	13.7%
I find it easy to be friends with people whose political ideas differ sharply from my own.	64.6%	54.1%	10.5%
I can feel comfortable with someone who thinks quite differently on major social issues.	72.1%	60.7%	11.4%
I am deeply committed to my educational goals, and I'm fully prepared to make the effort and sacrifices that will be needed to attain them.	94.6%	90.0%	4.6%
I have no desire to transfer to another school before finishing a degree at this college or university.	70.6%	60.3%	10.3%
I get a great deal of personal satisfaction from reading.	63.2%	44.3%	18.9%
I would like to receive some individual help in improving my math skills.	56.3%	46.4%	9.9%
I would like to receive some individual help in improving my writing skills.	48.0%	44.8%	3.2%
The teachers I had in school respected me as a person and treated me fairly.	76.7%	82.7%	-6.0%
Most teachers have a superior attitude that I find very annoying.	8.0%	16.9%	-8.9%

TM

Compared to traditional-age freshmen, many more incoming first-year adult students brought attitudes that signaled tolerance of others' opinions, a strong commitment to finishing college, enjoyment of reading, and receptivity to academic assistance, though their attitudes toward educators showed a mixture of views. Additional differences by age can be seen in previous years' studies online at www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport.

Appendix A: Some reflections and actions to consider

In light of this report, below are some comments and suggestions on how institutions of higher learning may want to approach today's college freshmen to help ensure their success.

Zero in on student motivation—the root of retention and completion

It's no secret that college attainment has captured the attention of policy makers at the national, state, and local levels. Their calls for major, steady, and significant improvements to completion rates seem to be growing louder, with many agreeing that our nation's ability to produce greater numbers of college graduates is critical to our future success.

But what are the educational considerations underlying this concern, and what, really, are the forces underlying attainment, or a student's decision to persist or not to persist?

As this annual study suggests, understanding freshman attitudes and motivations is a critical part of the answer. At the root of every first-year student's decision of whether or not to persist to the second year is a complex combination of factors. How can a student's motivation to finish college be sustained, and how does it evolve? The holistic data in this report encourages the identification of combinations of attitudes, motivations, and behaviors in unmasking and supporting these needs.

The influence of the college experience on a student's academic motivation should not be underestimated. Indeed, researchers argue that colleges have significant power in instilling motivation in their students.¹ While the realization that motivation matters in education is established, few opportunities to reveal motivational patterns are as detailed as the survey on which this report is based.² In addition, as we are about to discuss, when motivational variables are carefully quantified and monitored for each individual student, they can be used to guide and focus successful interventions that form pathways to completion.

Using motivation and “receptivity to assistance” to influence student success

When the subject turns to college completion, questions often asked are, “How do we decide which students are at greatest risk?” or “How do we prioritize our interventions to ensure optimum success for our students?”

Receptivity to institutional help represents a key motivational ingredient in the student success formula.

While factors such as low grades, poor class attendance, or student characteristics such as first-generation/non-first-generation contribute to the assessment landscape, the data in this report suggest that also knowing students' levels of academic motivation and receptivity to assistance can be invaluable for prioritizing campus outreach.

Generally speaking, the higher the receptivity to institutional help, the greater the likelihood of successful student outcomes. However, matching students' receptivity to assistance with the institution's offering of programs and services does not ensure, of course, that students will always respond to the interventions and accrue the potential benefits. Given this reality, it's important to track student progress and follow up accordingly. It is also helpful to monitor needs and receptivity to assistance over time. For instance, a student's lack of receptivity during the first term does not necessarily translate to disinterest in assistance during the second term.

Mid-year motivation

The highlighted section on pages 6 and 7 of this report drills down to questions that illustrate how students use the programs and services available to them, and to which they are referred, by the middle of their first year, while

¹ Berrett, Dan. Can Colleges Manufacture Motivation? Chronicle of Higher Education. April 15, 2012.

² Educators whose institutions did not participate in this study are welcome to administer the instrument used in this study to their incoming class in summer or early fall 2012 (see page 20 for details).

also identifying students who want to receive services, perhaps for the first time, at mid-year. Questions that pinpoint how receptivity may have shifted and the direction of the shift since the beginning of the first term may include:

- What areas did students utilize most and least during the first term?
- In what areas are students most and least receptive to assistance in the second term?
- Where is the most and least overlap between students' receptivity to assistance in the second term and their use of assistance in the first term?

The findings on page 7 hint at how receptivity might play out on campus. At the beginning of the 2011-2012 academic year, nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of incoming students at four-year private institutions "raised their hands" to receive "some help with selecting an educational plan that will prepare me to get a good job." Yet, by the middle of the freshman year, only 38 percent of the students reported that they had received this type of assistance.

Any institution that received data on its incoming cohort that showed a similar finding would likely want to consider how to expand and/or accelerate the delivery of career planning services to freshmen. In addition, advisors and student service personnel would want to identify which students and groups of students wanted this assistance, and how they might best accommodate these students' interest in assistance.

Identify the needs of special populations

As demonstrated by the data in our National Freshman Attitude Reports, various subgroups of students bring different attitudes, e.g., males, Hispanic students, and adult learners. As these and other subpopulations continue to grow (e.g., transfer and online students), examining student risk, motivation, and receptivity by subgroup informs differentiated interventions to guide students toward optimal intellectual and personal growth, and ultimately goal achievement. For each of these subpopulations, identifying the strategies

that will engage and connect the students to the campus is important. In addition to the subgroups reviewed in this report, institutions should consider a review of the data by major, residence hall, or first-year experience course section.

Has your institution examined the differences in attitudes and persistence for various subgroups on campus and then re-allocated resources toward the groups most at risk and most receptive to interventions? Identifying differences in attitudes and persistence by subgroup on a campus helps an institution to avoid using a "one size fits all" approach that may meet the needs of some but likely overlooks the needs of others. Most institutions can expect to observe pronounced differences by subgroup when examining their first-year profile. Identifying these differences helps to further target interventions aimed at influencing student attitudes and behaviors toward goal attainment.

Paying attention to opinion tolerance

Few would disagree that in today's global economy, developing an openness to diverse social backgrounds and opinions is foundational for lifelong success. Hence, colleges and universities can celebrate the findings in this report which show growth—after just one term—in students' ability to be more accepting of others.

This improvement in opinion tolerance bodes well for academia. As students' tolerance of others' opinions increases, they are better prepared to encounter unfamiliar and potentially threatening philosophical and socio-political perspectives, including those that arise in course content.

The emphasis on student engagement in first-year experience programs may well account for the sharp rise in opinion tolerance from first to second term. In these programs, students are intentionally encouraged to engage with their instructors and fellow students inside and outside of the classroom. Students at four-year private and two-year institutions indicated higher satisfaction in these areas.³

³ For more mid-year findings, see the addendum to this report available at www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport.

In addition to identifying subgroups of students with greater (or lesser) opinion tolerance, the institutions that participated in this study were able to identify individual students whose perspectives may be at odds with the ideas introduced in such areas as philosophy, comparative religion, world literature, world history, and the social sciences. Educators who are mindful of the importance of opinion tolerance in the motivational framework find ways to use the data to acknowledge potential disconnects in course content and actively engage students in new ways of thinking about the basic issues of life without immediately accepting or rejecting them.

The study's participating institutions were also able to identify patterns of student motivation across multiple survey scales, which provided insights into the belief systems and behaviors students brought to their early college experiences. For example, the scale of "opinion tolerance" may well be influenced by the students' previous experiences at home and in their pre-college experiences. Are changes occurring across the spectrum of self, family, and school for the student? Two additional scales, in particular, are worth considering alongside opinion tolerance: a student's level of family emotional support and a student's attitude toward educators.

Here are some more results to consider as you think about students' motivational framework. Students at two-year institutions showed the greatest gains in opinion tolerance (17.2 percent), followed by students at four-year public institutions (15.5 percent) and four-year private institutions (13.7 percent). The change in family emotional support, which speaks to student beliefs about "being heard" by their families, was also highest among students at two-year institutions. In addition, students at two-year institutions registered the greatest positive change in attitude toward educators at 8.9 percent overall, compared to 4.8 percent and -4.5 percent for students at four-year private and four-year public institutions, respectively. *What are the implications of these findings? How might these scales be connected, and how might these connections be used to positively influence student motivation levels?*

Clearly, there is much to be gained by encouraging greater opinion tolerance. As students learn to listen to others' perspectives, they think about the limitations of their own perspectives; they crystallize their values; the work of education is advanced; and students are more prepared to participate in civil discourse with their families, instructors, classmates, friends, and the global community.

In conclusion

Freshman attitudes continually change, and campuses must adapt and respond to their changing needs, desires, and motivations. We hope you have found the above comments and suggestions helpful as you seek to accomplish this goal. We encourage you to dig deeply into Appendix B of this year's report to form your own conclusions. To help more students reach completion and graduation, it is critical to meet the holistic needs of all types of students through a measured, planful, and data-informed approach.

Questions? Want to discuss your strategy for student success and retention?

Please contact Noel-Levitz to schedule a complimentary telephone appointment with a retention consultant. Call 1-800-876-1117 or e-mail ContactUs@noellevitz.com.

Related references

Readers may also wish to explore the findings from other surveys of the first-year experience such as Your First College Year and the CIRP Freshman Survey. These findings, when combined with the findings of the National Freshman Attitudes Report, can offer a more complete picture of the first-year experience. Noel-Levitz also offers a blog of consultant insights on recent research and practice on student success, student retention, and enrollment management, available at <http://blog.noellevitz.com>.

Appendix B: Additional findings and data from incoming college freshmen in fall 2011

Listed in this section is a detailed breakdown of the 100 items that were captured from the 94,202 incoming college students nationally at the beginning of the 2011-2012 academic year, broken down by gender and by various institution types. Figures in **bold** in this section indicate greater contrasts between male and female students though virtually all differences are statistically significant. For a detailed explanation of the statistical processes used to produce these data, please see page 15. For a demographic breakdown of the respondents, see pages 18-19.

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2011)

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	Male students	Female students	OVERALL national percentages
Desire to finish college						
I have a very strong desire to continue my education, and I am quite determined to finish a degree.	95.9%	95.2%	93.8%	93.7%	96.5%	95.2%
I am very strongly dedicated to finishing college—no matter what obstacles get in my way.	95.5%	94.9%	93.3%	93.4%	96.0%	94.8%
I am deeply committed to my educational goals, and I'm fully prepared to make the effort and sacrifices that will be needed to attain them.	91.2%	90.3%	89.5%	87.8%	92.8%	90.5%
Of all the things I could do at this point in my life, going to college is definitely the most satisfying.	86.1%	86.9%	83.0%	81.8%	88.9%	85.7%
I often wonder if a college education is really worth all the time, money, and effort that I'm being asked to spend on it.	18.8%	18.2%	17.7%	21.9%	15.3%	18.4%
I can think of many things I would rather do than go to college.	10.7%	9.8%	12.4%	14.1%	7.9%	10.8%
I wish that society did not put so much pressure on people to go to college, as I'd really rather be doing other things at this point in my life.	10.8%	10.3%	11.3%	13.2%	8.6%	10.7%
I dread the thought of going to school for several more years, and there is a part of me that would like to give up the whole thing.	8.7%	9.3%	11.2%	10.0%	9.0%	9.4%
Attitude toward educators						
The teachers I had in school respected me as a person and treated me fairly.	82.8%	83.9%	77.6%	79.8%	83.9%	82.0%
Most of my teachers have been very caring and dedicated.	82.2%	77.8%	78.4%	78.7%	80.9%	79.9%
I liked my teachers, and I feel they did a good job.	77.9%	75.5%	73.4%	74.5%	77.5%	76.1%
Most teachers have a superior attitude that I find very annoying.	15.0%	18.2%	14.5%	18.2%	13.9%	15.9%
Most of the teachers I had in school were too opinionated and inflexible.	14.5%	15.0%	17.4%	17.3%	13.7%	15.3%
In my opinion, many teachers are more concerned about themselves than they are about their students.	12.7%	16.8%	13.6%	16.1%	12.6%	14.2%

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2011)

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	Male students	Female students	OVERALL national percentages
Intellectual interests						
Over the years, books have broadened my horizons and stimulated my imagination.	58.6%	54.8%	49.9%	48.1%	61.6%	55.4%
I get a great deal of personal satisfaction from reading.	47.6%	45.7%	45.7%	37.5%	54.3%	46.5%
I don't enjoy reading serious books and articles, and I only do it when I have to.	43.7%	46.2%	41.0%	45.0%	43.0%	43.9%
Books have never gotten me very excited.	39.0%	39.7%	41.9%	48.0%	32.9%	39.9%
Study habits						
I take very careful notes during class, and I review them thoroughly before a test.	62.3%	64.2%	65.3%	52.6%	72.9%	63.6%
I study very hard for all my courses, even those I don't like.	60.4%	58.2%	63.7%	53.2%	66.6%	60.4%
I have developed a solid system of self-discipline, which helps me keep up with my schoolwork.	59.7%	58.8%	55.8%	54.5%	62.0%	58.5%
My studying is very irregular and unpredictable.	32.4%	33.5%	30.7%	36.8%	28.5%	32.3%
When I try to study, I usually get bored and quit after a few minutes.	25.9%	29.9%	26.9%	28.3%	26.6%	27.4%
I have great difficulty concentrating on schoolwork, and I often get behind.	19.3%	20.4%	25.4%	23.5%	19.0%	21.0%
Math and science confidence						
I have a very good grasp of the scientific ideas I've studied in school.	51.1%	48.2%	40.2%	52.8%	43.4%	47.7%
I have a hard time understanding and solving complex math problems.	42.0%	44.8%	51.3%	39.4%	49.8%	45.0%
Math has always been a challenge for me.	40.0%	42.9%	53.2%	37.6%	49.2%	43.9%
I have always enjoyed the challenge of trying to solve complex math problems.	39.0%	36.8%	33.6%	41.8%	33.1%	37.1%
I have a very good understanding of general biology (e.g., cell structure, metabolism, genetics, and the circulatory system).	39.7%	39.1%	33.9%	39.5%	37.1%	38.2%
My understanding of the physical sciences is very weak.	24.1%	25.2%	29.1%	20.8%	29.7%	25.6%
Verbal confidence						
I am capable of writing a very clear and well-organized paper.	66.2%	62.9%	53.9%	60.6%	63.9%	62.4%
I pick up new vocabulary words quickly, and I find it easy to use them in my speech and writing.	56.0%	56.4%	56.0%	58.9%	53.8%	56.1%
I am very good at figuring out the deeper meaning of a short story or novel.	54.1%	52.0%	49.1%	50.0%	54.3%	52.3%
I have difficulty organizing my ideas in a paper, and I tend to make a lot of punctuation and grammar mistakes.	29.9%	32.0%	37.8%	33.3%	31.5%	32.3%
In English classes, I've had difficulty analyzing an author's style and theme.	27.5%	28.3%	29.6%	30.3%	26.5%	28.2%
Learning new vocabulary words is a slow and difficult process for me.	17.0%	17.0%	18.8%	16.1%	18.5%	17.4%

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2011)

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	Male students	Female students	OVERALL national percentages
Career closure						
I have found a potential career that strongly attracts me.	81.9%	76.9%	81.7%	78.8%	81.5%	80.3%
I have made a firm decision to enter a certain occupation and have begun planning my life around that decision.	63.5%	61.9%	69.0%	61.7%	66.4%	64.2%
I become very confused when I try to choose an occupation.	19.6%	22.9%	21.1%	21.1%	20.9%	21.0%
I am very confused about what occupation to pursue.	18.5%	22.2%	17.6%	19.7%	19.3%	19.5%
Family emotional support						
When I was a child, my parents usually understood me, respected my judgment, and treated me in ways that helped me grow.	77.9%	78.1%	70.0%	76.1%	76.3%	76.2%
My family and I communicated very well when I was young, and we had a good understanding of each other's point of view.	67.6%	68.7%	60.8%	66.6%	66.2%	66.4%
My family had one way of looking at me when I was a child, and they didn't understand my feelings very well.	14.7%	14.3%	20.0%	15.4%	16.0%	15.8%
When I was a child, the other members of my family often said hurtful things that caused unpleasant feelings.	12.9%	12.3%	16.5%	11.4%	15.3%	13.5%
Sense of financial security						
I have the financial resources that I need to finish college.	46.4%	44.6%	42.6%	47.5%	42.9%	45.0%
I don't have any financial problems that will interfere with my schoolwork.	37.5%	36.8%	35.5%	39.3%	34.7%	36.8%
I have financial problems that are very distracting and troublesome.	29.9%	29.7%	33.5%	28.1%	32.8%	30.7%
I am in a bad financial position, and the pressure to earn extra money will probably interfere with my studies.	17.9%	18.4%	19.2%	17.7%	18.9%	18.4%
Sociability						
I greatly enjoy getting together with a crowd of people and having fun.	80.1%	81.7%	72.8%	77.0%	80.6%	79.0%
I am very adventurous and outgoing at social gatherings.	55.8%	58.1%	54.1%	55.3%	56.9%	56.1%
Participating in large social gatherings is of little interest to me.	23.8%	23.8%	31.6%	27.0%	24.3%	25.5%
It is hard for me to relax and just have fun with a group of people.	12.3%	11.4%	14.0%	11.9%	12.8%	12.4%

About our statistical processes

Due to the large sample sizes, virtually all differences in the means shown in this report proved to be statistically significant based on either a t-test (using two-level variables such as male/female) or ANOVA analysis (using multi-level variables such as school type). To identify greater contrasts (the items that appear in **bold**), Cohen's d was used to identify items with small or medium effect sizes. Virtually all other items, although statistically significant, registered negligible effect sizes.

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2011)

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	Male students	Female students	OVERALL national percentages
Opinion tolerance						
I get along well with people who disagree with my opinion openly.	59.6%	58.9%	61.8%	60.6%	59.3%	59.9%
I can feel comfortable with someone who thinks quite differently than I do on major social issues.	62.7%	61.2%	61.7%	63.5%	60.7%	62.0%
I find it easy to be friends with people whose political ideas differ sharply from my own.	55.7%	54.8%	55.2%	55.5%	55.2%	55.3%
When someone's opinions strongly disagree with my own, I tend to develop unfriendly feelings and to avoid close contact with the person.	12.3%	12.3%	12.1%	12.1%	12.4%	12.3%
I feel uneasy and distrustful toward people whose way of thinking is quite dissimilar to my own.	9.0%	9.7%	9.4%	9.8%	8.9%	9.3%
Because they irritate me, I tend to stay away from people whose ideas are quite different from my own.	9.0%	9.9%	10.9%	10.3%	9.2%	9.7%
Receptivity to academic assistance						
I would like to receive some instruction in the most effective ways to take college exams.	73.5%	77.7%	72.5%	70.9%	77.8%	74.6%
I would like to receive some help in improving my study habits.	55.4%	63.0%	57.9%	56.7%	59.9%	58.4%
I would like to receive some individual help in improving my math skills.	43.4%	49.6%	53.2%	43.8%	50.8%	47.6%
I would like to receive some individual help in improving my writing skills.	44.3%	48.1%	42.6%	44.0%	46.1%	45.1%
I would like to receive tutoring in one or more of my courses.	41.6%	49.0%	41.3%	39.9%	47.4%	43.9%
I would like to receive some training to improve my reading skills.	26.9%	31.2%	29.3%	30.1%	27.7%	28.8%
Receptivity to career counseling						
I would like some help selecting an educational plan that will prepare me to get a good job.	67.4%	70.2%	60.2%	65.0%	68.1%	66.7%
I would like to talk with someone about the qualifications needed for certain occupations.	61.6%	67.2%	56.7%	60.3%	64.0%	62.3%
I would like to talk with someone about the salaries and future outlook for various occupations.	54.4%	57.8%	48.3%	55.6%	52.7%	54.1%
I would like to talk with someone about the advantages and disadvantages of various occupations.	48.9%	51.9%	39.9%	48.6%	47.2%	47.8%
I would like some help selecting an occupation that is well suited to my interests and abilities.	46.2%	50.0%	41.5%	48.3%	44.8%	46.4%

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2011)

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	Male students	Female students	OVERALL national percentages
Receptivity to financial guidance						
I would like to talk to someone about getting a scholarship.	64.8%	69.2%	55.9%	60.4%	67.5%	64.2%
I would like to talk to someone about getting a part-time job during the regular school year.	54.4%	54.8%	43.5%	51.8%	52.3%	52.1%
I would like to talk to someone about the opportunities available for summer employment.	51.7%	53.1%	44.3%	49.7%	51.1%	50.5%
I would like to talk with someone about getting a loan to help me through school.	27.6%	29.1%	33.5%	28.1%	30.5%	29.4%
Receptivity to personal counseling						
I would like to talk with a counselor about my general attitude toward school.	16.8%	20.7%	18.1%	18.1%	18.6%	18.4%
I would like to talk with a counselor about some difficulties in my personal relationships or social life.	11.2%	11.7%	11.6%	10.5%	12.2%	11.4%
I would like to talk with a counselor about eliminating an unwanted habit (involving food, drugs, cigarettes, or alcohol, etc.).	9.2%	10.5%	11.2%	10.4%	9.8%	10.0%
I would like to talk with a counselor about some emotional tensions that are bothering me.	9.5%	9.8%	8.8%	8.3%	10.4%	9.4%
I would like to talk with a counselor about some feelings of discouragement or unhappy thoughts that keep bothering me.	9.1%	9.7%	8.8%	8.5%	9.9%	9.2%
I would like to talk with a counselor about some family problems.	6.6%	7.2%	7.2%	5.9%	7.8%	6.9%
Receptivity to social enrichment						
I would like to attend an informal gathering where I can meet some new friends.	60.1%	59.4%	43.2%	52.8%	58.9%	56.1%
I would like to find out more about the clubs and social organizations at my college.	63.0%	67.0%	41.8%	54.5%	63.7%	59.5%
I would like to find out more about student government and the various student activities on campus.	48.3%	51.1%	35.7%	40.4%	51.4%	46.3%
I would like to meet an experienced student who can show me around and give me some advice.	48.4%	54.6%	39.3%	45.6%	50.6%	48.3%
Desire to transfer						
I have no desire to transfer to another school before finishing a degree at this college or university.	68.7%	57.7%	52.6%	60.9%	62.1%	61.5%
I plan to transfer to another school before completing a degree at this college or university.	8.1%	14.6%	21.4%	13.0%	13.3%	13.2%
Total number of students	42,721	30,193	21,288	43,373	50,817	94,202
Average age of students	19.9	18.7	23.7	20.5	20.3	20.4

Respondent demographics (Fall 2011)

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2011)

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	Male students	Female students	OVERALL national percentages
Number of respondents	42,721	30,193	21,288	43,373	50,817	94,202
Percent of respondents	45.4%	32.1%	22.6%	46.0%	53.9%	100.0%
Percent female	52.6%	58.0%	50.9%	0.0%	100.0%	53.9%
Percent male	47.4%	42.0%	49.1%	100.0%	0.0%	46.0%
Racial/Ethnic origin						
Black/African American	17.3%	24.2%	20.4%	18.4%	21.8%	20.2%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.7%	1.5%	1.3%	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4.4%	4.0%	2.5%	4.3%	3.4%	3.8%
White/Caucasian	61.5%	52.1%	52.8%	57.6%	55.6%	56.5%
Hispanic or Latino	9.4%	12.4%	17.6%	12.2%	12.2%	12.2%
Multi-ethnic or other ethnic origin	4.1%	3.9%	3.4%	3.7%	4.0%	3.8%
Prefer not to respond	2.4%	1.9%	2.0%	2.5%	1.8%	2.2%
Highest education level of mother						
8 years or less	2.8%	5.0%	7.0%	4.1%	4.8%	4.5%
Some high school	5.4%	6.2%	12.5%	6.7%	7.8%	7.3%
High school diploma	25.9%	28.3%	37.4%	29.1%	29.4%	29.3%
1 to 3 years of college	26.6%	27.5%	26.4%	25.6%	27.9%	26.9%
Bachelor's degree	24.5%	21.6%	10.5%	22.0%	19.1%	20.4%
Master's degree	11.1%	9.2%	4.1%	9.3%	8.6%	8.9%
Professional degree	3.5%	2.1%	1.8%	3.0%	2.4%	2.7%
Highest education level of father						
8 years or less	3.5%	5.5%	8.8%	4.9%	5.7%	5.3%
Some high school	7.4%	9.1%	15.8%	9.0%	10.6%	9.9%
High school diploma	29.8%	33.7%	41.0%	32.2%	34.7%	33.6%
1 to 3 years of college	21.0%	22.0%	19.9%	20.8%	21.3%	21.1%
Bachelor's degree	22.0%	18.7%	8.6%	19.7%	16.4%	17.9%
Master's degree	10.4%	7.4%	3.4%	8.5%	7.3%	7.8%
Professional degree	5.5%	3.3%	2.0%	4.5%	3.7%	4.0%
Highest degree planned by respondent						
None	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
1-year certificate	0.2%	0.1%	3.7%	1.2%	0.7%	0.9%
2-year degree (associate's)	2.2%	0.8%	32.0%	9.7%	7.4%	8.5%
4-year degree (bachelor's)	37.7%	37.6%	36.2%	40.8%	34.4%	37.3%
Master's degree	38.2%	36.0%	16.3%	31.8%	33.2%	32.6%
Professional degree	21.5%	25.2%	11.5%	16.2%	24.0%	20.4%

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2011)

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	Male students	Female students	OVERALL national percentages
Time expecting to spend at work						
0 (I have no plans to work)	23.6%	27.5%	17.5%	24.2%	22.9%	23.5%
1 to 10 hours per week	28.8%	24.4%	12.7%	21.4%	25.8%	23.8%
11 to 20 hours per week	27.5%	32.6%	26.5%	28.4%	29.3%	28.9%
21 to 30 hours per week	10.1%	11.1%	21.9%	13.6%	12.7%	13.1%
31 to 40 hours per week	6.9%	3.5%	15.9%	8.5%	7.4%	7.9%
Over 40 hours per week	3.0%	0.9%	5.4%	4.0%	1.9%	2.9%
Average grades as senior in high school						
A	22.3%	21.0%	6.2%	14.6%	21.4%	18.2%
A to B	35.5%	38.3%	26.5%	31.1%	37.2%	34.4%
B	19.0%	19.2%	18.1%	21.0%	17.0%	18.9%
B to C	17.0%	16.8%	31.9%	22.5%	18.5%	20.3%
C	4.1%	3.5%	10.0%	6.9%	3.8%	5.3%
C to D	1.8%	1.0%	5.7%	3.1%	1.8%	2.4%
D	0.3%	0.2%	1.5%	0.8%	0.3%	0.6%
Respondent's self-assessment of academic knowledge						
Highest 20%	20.2%	17.4%	8.4%	18.0%	15.5%	16.6%
Next to highest 20%	35.5%	35.8%	22.6%	32.9%	32.4%	32.7%
Middle 20%	42.1%	44.8%	62.1%	45.6%	49.2%	47.5%
Next to lowest 20%	1.9%	1.6%	5.6%	3.0%	2.4%	2.7%
Lowest 20%	0.2%	0.3%	1.2%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Respondent's self-assessment of academic ability						
Considerably below average	0.4%	0.4%	0.9%	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%
Slightly below average	3.3%	3.3%	6.7%	4.2%	4.0%	4.1%
Average	27.1%	29.8%	48.3%	28.7%	36.2%	32.7%
Slightly above average	36.5%	37.8%	27.9%	35.9%	34.2%	35.0%
Considerably above average (top 20%)	29.5%	26.0%	14.5%	27.1%	23.2%	25.0%
Extremely high (top 5%)	3.2%	2.6%	1.6%	3.5%	1.9%	2.7%
Timing of decision to attend chosen college/university						
Decision made few days before	2.9%	1.7%	4.5%	3.4%	2.3%	2.8%
Decision made weeks before	14.4%	10.4%	22.7%	17.9%	12.5%	15.0%
Decision made many months before	82.7%	87.8%	72.7%	78.5%	85.1%	82.1%

Questions? Want additional information?

If you would like to discuss how motivational assessment can support you in your service to incoming students, or if you have questions about this report, please contact Beth Richter, PhD, at beth-richter@noellevitz.com. Additionally, please call us at 1-800-876-1117 to learn more about how the motivational assessments of the Noel-Levitz Retention Management System *Plus* (RMS *Plus*) help campuses to focus early individual interventions with students and how this approach may be beneficial for your incoming cohorts as well.

To see samples of the survey instruments used in this study, please visit www.noellevitz.com/CSIB.

About Noel-Levitz and the survey instruments used in this study

This report has been brought to you by Noel-Levitz as part of our series of student research reports.

Noel-Levitz has served the higher education community for nearly 40 years. Campus leaders turn to the firm for consultation and resources for student recruitment, student retention, marketing, and strategic enrollment planning. Noel-Levitz has served more than 2,700 colleges and universities throughout North America.

The main survey instrument used in this study was the 100-item Form B version of the College Student Inventory (CSI-B), of the Noel-Levitz Retention Management System *Plus*[™] (RMS *Plus*). The inventory is designed to assess the motivational characteristics of incoming first-year students and provides early guidance for interventions. It profiles incoming first-year students' strengths and needs and serves as a retention management tool on hundreds of campuses nationwide. The College Student Inventory (available in Forms A, B, and C) is typically administered during summer orientation or at the beginning of the fall term.

A companion instrument, the Mid-Year Student Assessment (MYSA), follows up on individual students' concerns and serves as a mid-year checkpoint to inform action plans. In addition, the Second-Year Student Assessment (SYSA) is available to continue monitoring students' motivation levels.

Beyond illuminating first-year students' attitudes nationally in this report, the findings of Noel-Levitz motivational assessments are reported directly to the participating campuses within days of completion to guide educational interventions. Using the findings, educators are able to foster student success by building upon students' strengths and by creating proactive strategies to address students' self-identified areas of challenge.

To see sample copies of the assessments, please visit www.noellevitz.com/CSIB (click on "samples").

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RATING SCALE								
NOT AT ALL TRUE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	COMPLETELY TRUE

The rating scale at left is used by the survey instrument, CSI-B. For this report, "agreement" was defined as the aggregated number of students who selected a rating of 5, 6, or 7.

How to cite this report

Noel-Levitz. (2012). 2012 national freshman attitudes report. Coralville, Iowa: Author. Retrieved from: www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport

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