



2015 Report from Ruffalo Noel Levitz

Attitudes of Second-Year College Students

That Influence College Completion

Explore noncognitive attitudes and motivations of second-year undergraduates at four-year and two-year institutions

What needs and concerns do second-year college students have that may be impeding their success? This report goes beyond the usual predictive indicators of GPAs and credits earned to explore a wide range of student attitudes, needs, and motivations that influence college completion, with separate findings for second-year students attending four-year vs. two-year, public vs. private institutions.

The report is based on student survey responses drawn from a sizable sample of second-year undergraduates in 2013 and 2014. Although second-year college students often receive less attention than first-year students, the data reveal distinct student needs and experiences.

Highlights from the findings:

- The vast majority of second-year students in this study—94 percent overall, across private and public sectors—indicated they were strongly dedicated to finishing college, yet only 74 percent reported being able to concentrate and keep their thoughts organized during an exam.
- Half to two-thirds of the second-year student respondents indicated they would like help with exploring career options and with preparing a written academic plan for graduation.
- 16 percent of the study's respondents from four-year public institutions were either uncertain about their plans to continue at their institution or were planning to transfer.
- Survey responses from male, second-year students indicate they were less likely than female students to be receptive to assistance from advisors and student services personnel, regardless of the type of assistance offered.

See six recommendations inside for planning retention interventions using noncognitive data

- How can colleges and universities move beyond the widespread assumption that second-year students have successfully transitioned to college?
- In what practical ways can colleges and universities give second-year students the resourcing they need to persist and complete their academic programs?

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Findings color key:



Find more reports online at www.noellevitz.com/Attitudes

- 2008-15 National Freshman Attitudes Reports
- 2014 Addendum by Race/Ethnicity
- 2014 Report: Changes in Freshman Attitudes Following a Semester of Classes and Interventions
- 2013 Report: Attitudes and Motivations of College Transfer Students
- 2013 Report: Attitudes of Second-Year College Students

The source of data

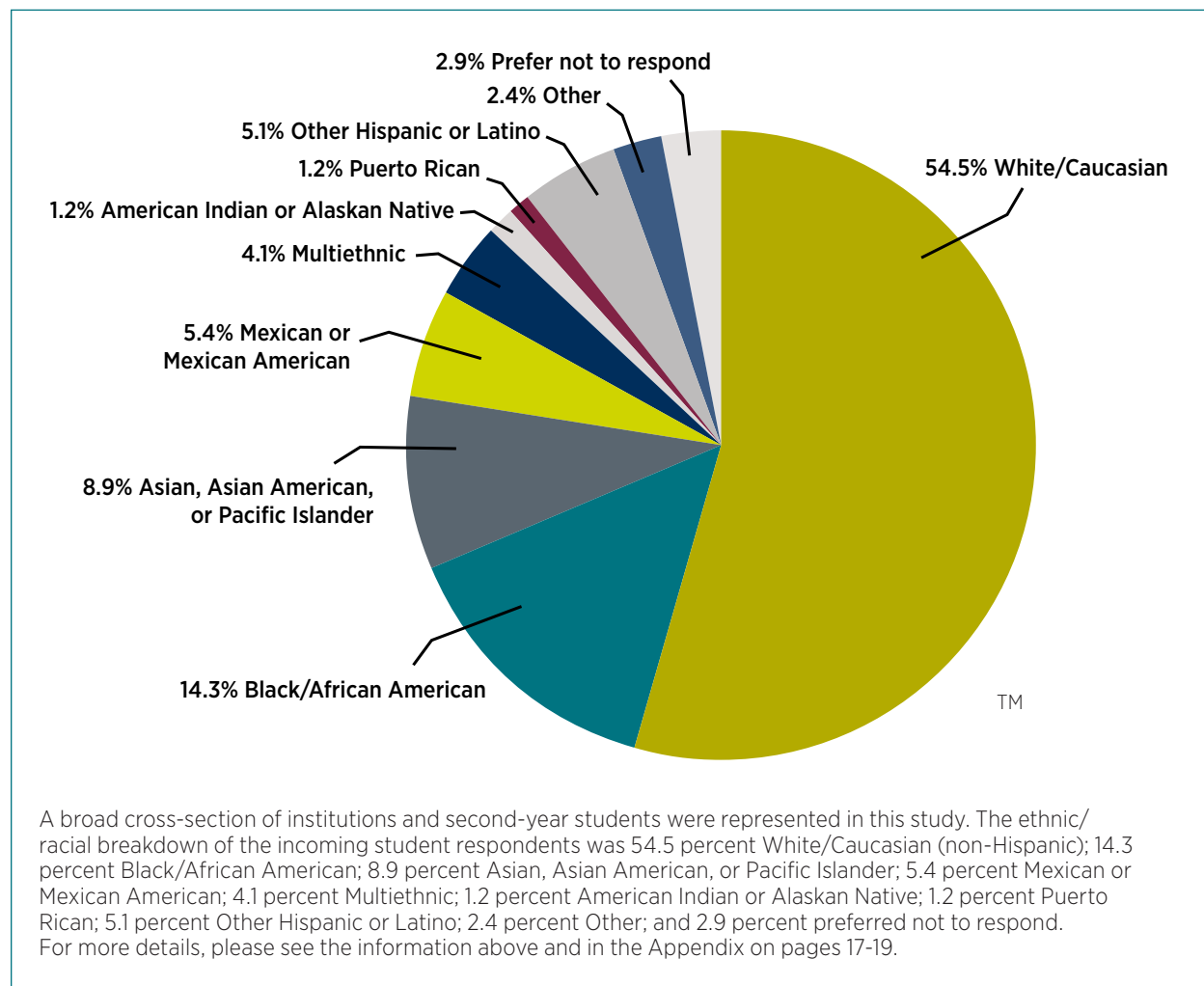
The second-year student data in this report were collected by a 68-item, online student survey administered to 5,101 second-year college students at 55 colleges and universities nationwide in 2013 and 2014. The survey examined a broad range of motivational perspectives that influence student success.

The majority of the 5,101 students were enrolled at four-year private and public institutions, but two-year public colleges were also represented. A majority of the respondents (67.2 percent) were female. The respondents completed the survey near the beginning of their second year of college or near the end of their first year.

The 68-item survey instrument was the Second-Year Student Assessment™ (SYSA), part of the Retention Management System *Plus*™ from Ruffalo Noel Levitz. This motivational, early-alert assessment identifies self-reported attitudes, motivations, needs, and interests, as well as barriers and opportunities for supporting students as they transition to the second year of college.

For more information on the survey instrument and other attitudinal assessments from Ruffalo Noel Levitz, please see page 20.

Respondent profile by race/ethnicity



Sampling of attitudes toward the college experience

Below is a sampling of second-year college students' attitudes that influence student success. To see all the attitudes examined in this study, please refer to Appendix B.

Table 1: Selected second-year student attitudes that influence student success and persistence
(percentages indicate students in agreement with each statement)

Selected survey items—attitudes toward the college experience	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year public institutions	Male students	Female students	OVERALL percentages
I am strongly dedicated to finishing college—no matter what obstacles get in the way.	94.7%	93.4%	95.2%	93.3%	94.6%	94.2%
Of all the things I could do at this point in my life, going to college is definitely the most satisfying.	85.5%	83.5%	81.2%	80.5%	85.6%	83.9%
During an exam, I am able to concentrate and keep my thoughts well organized.	77.8%	72.8%	68.9%	79.1%	71.7%	74.1%
I have many friends and feel at home here.	78.8%	65.5%	66.3%	72.5%	69.6%	70.6%
I would like to explore advantages and disadvantages of my career choice.	63.7%	71.0%	64.7%	66.7%	67.8%	67.4%
I have the financial resources that I need to finish college.	55.9%	56.1%	52.0%	57.6%	54.4%	55.5%

What the data show: Most second-year student respondents in this study were confident they made the right choice in going to college. However, only 84 percent were convinced that going to college was their most satisfying option, and only 74 percent agreed they were able to concentrate and keep their thoughts organized during an exam. In addition, approximately two-thirds of respondents indicated they would like help with career exploration. Other areas of need included financial resources (56 percent of the respondents overall) and feeling at home (only 71 percent overall).

Notice the male, second-year students in this study tended to have a slightly lower commitment to finishing college compared to their female counterparts, and they were more likely than females to be uncertain that going to college was the most satisfying thing they could be doing.

Takeaway: *Develop a more holistic view of second-year students*

The second year of the college experience continues to present challenges to students. While their determination to earn a college degree remains strong, the students in this study indicated a broad range of areas in which they could benefit from assistance. In designing a comprehensive second-year experience, campus leaders should consider:

- Collaborative and coordinated advising and career development services;
- Extending community-building activities from the first-year into the second;
- Targeting academic skills development to second-year students as well as first-year students; and
- Identifying second-year students who have concerns about finances and helping them explore their options, including financial management assistance.

Top 5 requests for assistance

Below are the top five out of 15 requests that second-year students made in response to specific survey prompts (e.g., would you like assistance in the following area?). In addition, students reported the assistance they received in their first year.

Table 2: Examples of second-year students' receptivity to assistance from their institution in key areas vs. their previous usage of the assistance (percentages indicate students in agreement with each item)

Selected survey items—receptivity to assistance	Students at 4-year private institutions			Students at 4-year public institutions			Students at 2-year public institutions		
	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)
Identify work experiences or internships related to my major.	77.5%	25.1%	52.4%	80.7%	26.0%	54.7%	69.5%	30.7%	38.8%
Define goals suited to my major or career interest(s).	64.8%	36.7%	28.2%	71.4%	36.9%	34.5%	66.1%	45.3%	20.8%
Explore advantages and disadvantages of my career choice.	63.7%	29.3%	34.4%	71.0%	30.6%	40.5%	64.7%	38.4%	26.3%
Figure out the impact of grades on my desired major.	54.4%	33.3%	21.1%	66.8%	37.5%	29.3%	64.5%	43.6%	21.0%
Prepare a written academic plan for graduation.	54.3%	37.1%	17.2%	60.9%	29.6%	31.4%	61.8%	34.2%	27.6%

What the data show: Substantial portions of second-year students across sectors were looking for assistance in critical areas that influenced their success and persistence. In addition, the data show gaps between students' desires for assistance in the second year and the assistance they received in their first year.

Takeaway: Blend noncognitive factors with knowledge of what students want and use

Colleges and universities can strengthen their service to second-year students by knowing which students are requesting assistance and which services students use most and least in year one versus year two. Students' top requests clearly point to the need for an integrated approach to academic advising and career development. While most sophomores have declared their majors, the above results indicate that they continue to have questions about their goals and direction. Recommendations to address these include:

- Continuing intrusive advising throughout the second year; make revisiting each student's educational plan the core to the advising experience;
- Formally welcoming second-year students to their majors;

- Identifying second-year students whose GPAs and credits earned put them at risk for not progressing in their intended major programs;
- Providing “academic recovery” programs to help low-achieving sophomores improve their academic records;
- Introducing second-year students to the internships and work experiences that will be available to them in the future; and
- Utilizing alumni to introduce second-year students to career pathways and mentoring to enhance the students’ decision-making resources.

Sampling of satisfaction levels (institutional impressions)

Satisfaction rates below reveal institutional strengths and challenges in the eyes of second-year students.

Table 3: Second-year students’ satisfaction—highlights from the findings (figures indicate the mean satisfaction levels with each statement on a seven-point scale, with 1 = not satisfied at all, 2 = not very satisfied, 3 = dissatisfied, 4 = neutral, 5 = somewhat satisfied, 6 = satisfied, and 7= very satisfied.)

Selected survey items—student satisfaction	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year public institutions	Male students	Female students	OVERALL percentages
Degree of academic challenge in my classes here	5.75	5.55	5.71	5.59	5.68	5.65
My overall experience as a student at this institution	5.76	5.46	5.84	5.59	5.64	5.62
Availability of service learning, internships, and/or other work experiences associated with my career interests	5.09	4.78	4.78	4.87	4.91	4.90
Frequency of communication with my academic advisor	5.10	4.71	5.26	4.88	4.95	4.93

What the data show: Second-year students in this study reported higher levels of satisfaction with the degree of academic challenge in their classes and with the student experience overall, but lower levels of satisfaction with their level of interaction with academic advisors and with the availability of relevant service learning/internship opportunities. Notice that female students’ satisfaction tended to run higher than that of male students on these survey items.

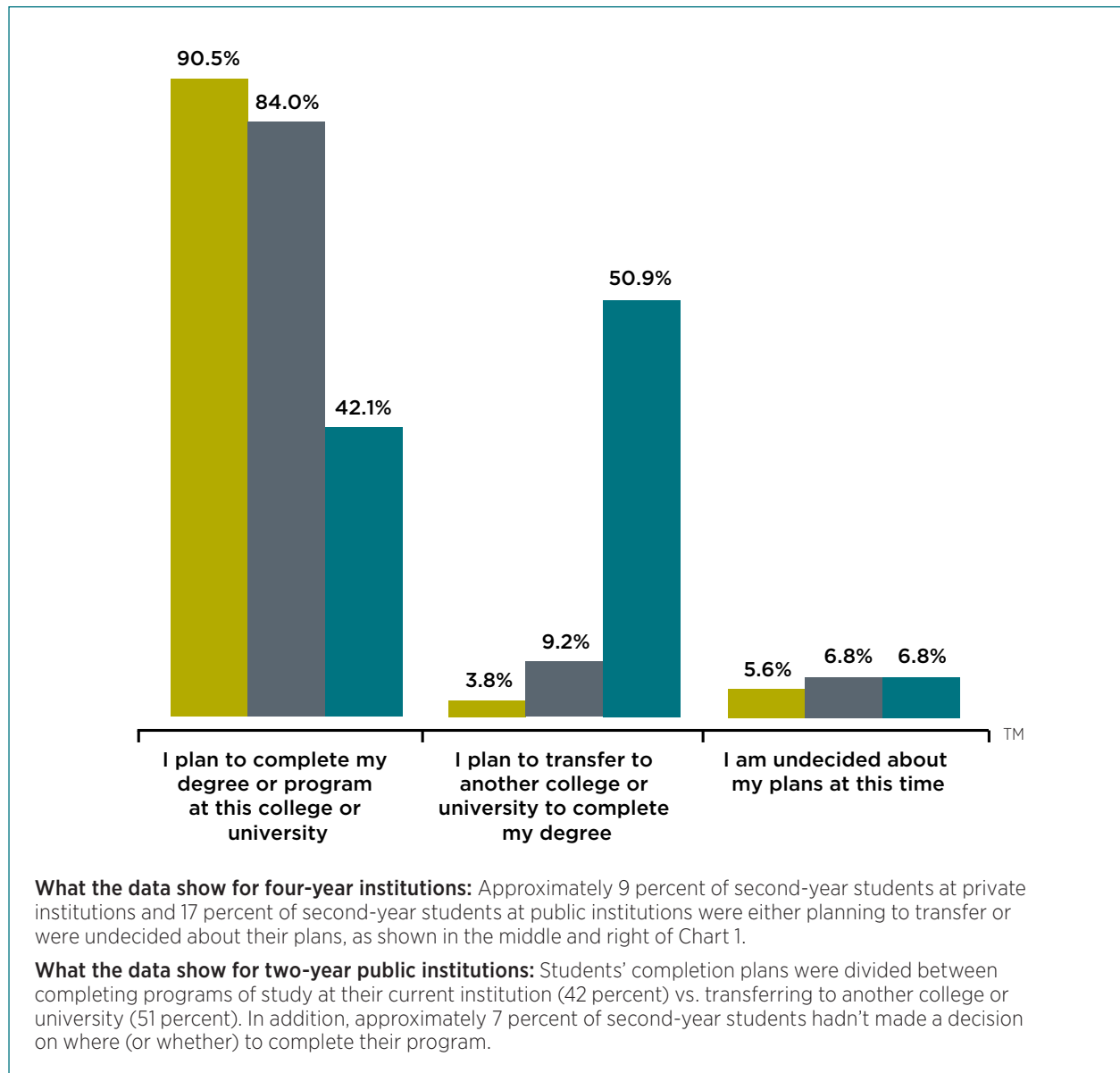
Takeaway: *Dig into satisfaction issues and create strategies to address them*

We encourage colleges and universities to use aggregated satisfaction data alongside the earlier data shown in Tables 1 and 2 to guide the development of second-year programming, including academic support services, career services, and student success interventions. Similar to the earlier data, these data illuminate the needs and concerns of students to confirm and reveal key issues. In addition, faculty, administrators, and student success professionals can more carefully pinpoint institutional strengths and weaknesses by examining disaggregated satisfaction findings for specific subpopulations.

College completion plans—a final sample finding

Second-year students' college completion plans, enrollment status, and enrollment plans were also examined in this study. For more details on these findings, please refer to the Appendix, pages 17-19.

Chart 1: College completion plans of second-year college students



Takeaway: Know the college completion plans of students

A substantial portion of second-year students are uncertain about their plans to graduate from their current institutions. Knowing which students are uncertain, and developing strategies that can directly address the concerns of these students, can help institutions not only improve retention rates but graduation rates as well.

APPENDIX A: 6 WAYS TO USE THE DATA

How might you and your colleagues use the data in this report—including the findings in Appendix B—to focus your second-year student initiatives for student success and retention? The following are some suggestions and comments from Ruffalo Noel Levitz on how institutions of higher learning may want to approach their second-year students differently in light of the findings. For further information or discussion, consider arranging a complimentary telephone consultation with a retention consultant from Ruffalo Noel Levitz.

1. **Study your own students using the same approach.** To understand your students' issues more clearly, and to develop a relevant sophomore retention strategy, Ruffalo Noel Levitz encourages educators to assess the attitudes and motivations of their second-year students with noncognitive indicators using the same instrument that was used in this study. The aggregate findings of such studies can guide the development of second-year programming and help to prioritize academic support services and student success interventions. In addition, the disaggregated findings—for specific subpopulations and for each individual student—help guide faculty, administrators, and student success professionals in addressing students' strengths, weaknesses, needs, and concerns. For details, see page 20.
2. **Develop a more holistic view of each student.** Noncognitive data looks beyond GPAs and credits earned to expose the true issues that impede student success. We encourage you to use the data to develop a more nuanced and holistic view of each student, to pinpoint the services/interventions most likely to support the student's academic, career, and personal goals, and to find out which students need help and which students want help. Work toward answering the question: What is the unique pathway forward for each cohort, each subpopulation, and each individual to facilitate goal attainment?
3. **Follow up on student requests.** An important component of noncognitive data are students' requests for assistance. These data paint a powerful picture of changing student needs and provide insight on the timing and need for offering specific services. Students who request specific services can be personally contacted, and online resources can be reviewed to be sure relevant resources are readily available for students who desire self-service options. In addition, an individual student's campus service usage can be correlated with additional "milestone" metrics, such as the student's GPA or credits earned, to assist with identifying productive pathways to college completion.
4. **Tailor interventions to the distinct differences of student subpopulations.** To target interventions to students, it can be helpful to assess and distinguish specific student issues by major, for undecided vs. decided students, male vs. female students, and other groups in order to develop customized strategies. For example, groups of students who are intellectually stimulated by their major and career choice may require different interventions than those feeling academic pressure from classes with upper-level students and uncertainty about a career focus.
5. **Notice the differences in the attitudes of male students and their lower receptivity to assistance.** Differences by gender should also continue to receive attention. The lower receptivity of male students should not be assumed to mean that they do not need assistance. Being intentional about finding ways to engage college men—through partnerships with Greek life, athletics, and/or residence life—can lead to collaborations that will help connect male students to the resources that will benefit them.
6. **Update the institutional strategic plan with strategies for second-year students.** Increasingly, campuses are putting programs for second-year students into their strategic plan, recognizing this population needs attention from a variety of different services and staff on campus, not a single area. Hence, second-year strategies for student success are being viewed as a campuswide responsibility and a continuation of services from the first year. To achieve the larger goal of increasing college completion rates, these strategies appear in the strategic plan alongside strategies and action plans for improving term-to-term persistence and return rates for year one, sometimes with follow-up strategies all the way to graduation.

Find more insights on second-year students on the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Blog for Enrollment and Student Success at <http://blog.noellellevitz.com>

APPENDIX B: COMPLETE FINDINGS

Complete findings of this study appear in this section as follows.

Note: All findings are provided separately by institution type, gender, and overall.

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Attitudinal measures included in this section:

- Academic confidence
- Commitment to college
- Engaged learning
- Leadership
- Transition
- Family support
- Financial security

Measures of receptivity included in this section:

- Receptivity to academic assistance
- Receptivity to advising
- Receptivity to career counseling
- Receptivity to assistance with finances
- Receptivity to personal support and counseling

Additional information in this section includes but is not limited to:

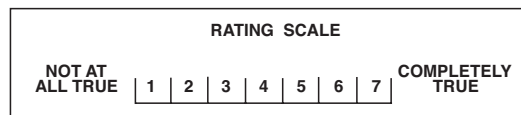
- Students' study plans
- Time expected to spend at work
- Number of classes enrolled in at other institutions
- Current decision on the selection of a major or program
- Highest degree or program planned
- Current college or program completion plan

Table I: Non-cognitive, attitudinal measures of second-year students

Twenty-seven second-year student attitudes were captured from the 5,101 respondents as shown below.

All survey items	Percent of second-year students in agreement					OVERALL percentages
	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year public institutions	Male students	Female students	
Academic confidence						
I am able to grasp complicated ideas.	88.0%	82.2%	81.3%	85.9%	83.5%	84.3%
During an exam, I'm able to concentrate and keep my thoughts well organized.	77.8%	72.8%	68.9%	79.1%	71.7%	74.1%
I have a good memory of the information that my instructors present in class.	80.9%	74.4%	75.5%	78.9%	76.0%	77.0%
I am good at figuring out what material is most important for an exam.	72.4%	67.3%	67.9%	70.9%	68.5%	69.3%
Commitment to college						
I am strongly dedicated to finishing college-no matter what obstacles get in the way.	94.7%	93.4%	95.2%	93.3%	94.6%	94.2%
I am quite confident that my decision to go to college was right for me.	93.9%	90.7%	93.3%	90.8%	92.9%	92.2%
Of all the things I could do at this point in my life, going to college is definitely the most satisfying.	85.5%	83.5%	81.2%	80.5%	85.6%	83.9%
The total college experience is very rewarding.	87.8%	80.6%	85.7%	83.8%	84.1%	84.0%
Engaged learning						
I feel as though I'm learning things in my classes that are worthwhile to me as a person.	87.1%	77.7%	88.0%	81.4%	83.2%	82.6%
I can usually find ways of applying what I'm learning in class to something else in my life.	85.9%	78.2%	82.9%	79.3%	82.9%	81.7%
I find myself thinking about what I'm learning in class even when I'm not in class.	76.5%	71.5%	79.5%	72.7%	75.3%	74.5%
I feel energized by the ideas I'm learning in most of my classes.	79.4%	71.0%	80.8%	74.0%	76.2%	75.5%

For the items in Table I, agreement was defined as the aggregated number of students who selected a rating of 5, 6, or 7.



Percent of second-year students in agreement

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year public institutions	Male students	Female students	OVERALL percentages
Leadership						
Most people have a lot of trust in my judgment and opinions.	91.3%	85.8%	85.7%	86.0%	88.8%	87.8%
Many people consider me an effective leader and look to me for direction.	80.8%	75.4%	75.5%	76.1%	78.1%	77.4%
When I'm in a group, others often turn to me as the group's leader.	69.4%	65.0%	66.9%	65.9%	67.4%	66.9%
Over the years, I have frequently been selected as a spokesperson or group leader.	60.9%	53.5%	55.9%	56.1%	56.8%	56.6%
Transition						
I feel comfortable with the changes in life style that occur in college.	86.0%	78.3%	75.4%	81.1%	80.6%	80.8%
It has been easy for me to adapt to my college living arrangements.	85.0%	77.1%	76.7%	82.1%	79.0%	80.0%
I feel good about the way I have adapted to the college social environment.	82.9%	74.2%	78.9%	78.6%	77.8%	78.1%
I have many friends and feel at home here.	78.8%	65.5%	66.3%	72.5%	69.6%	70.6%
It has been easy for me to make friends in college.	79.9%	67.6%	64.7%	73.9%	70.8%	71.8%
Family support						
My family respects my judgment on most decisions.	88.4%	81.4%	83.9%	83.6%	84.8%	84.4%
I have always felt that the rest of my family was firmly behind me.	87.7%	80.6%	79.0%	83.8%	82.7%	83.0%
My family and I understand each other's point of view.	81.7%	74.9%	76.8%	79.6%	76.8%	77.7%
I feel comfortable discussing important issues with my family.	84.2%	77.1%	82.9%	79.4%	81.1%	80.5%
Financial security						
I have the financial resources that I need to finish college.	55.9%	56.1%	52.0%	57.6%	54.4%	55.5%
I don't have any financial problems that will interfere with my studies.	50.9%	48.0%	46.0%	52.4%	47.1%	48.9%

Table II: Second-year students' receptivity to assistance by institution type

The following table measures three areas: students' receptivity to assistance at the time of completing the survey (A); students who reported they received the assistance last year (B); and the difference between the two measures (A-B).

All survey items— receptivity to assistance	Students at 4-year private institutions			Students at 4-year public institutions			Students at 2-year public institutions		
	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)
Receptivity to academic assistance									
Find tutors in one or more of my courses.	42.5%	29.3%	13.2%	57.3%	35.4%	21.9%	50.1%	34.6%	15.5%
Get help with study skills (time management, taking notes, concentrating, exam skills, etc.).	39.7%	30.0%	9.7%	51.6%	34.9%	16.7%	50.5%	40.8%	9.7%
Receptivity to advising									
Figure out the impact of my grades on my desired major.	54.4%	33.3%	21.1%	66.8%	37.5%	29.3%	64.5%	43.6%	21.0%
Prepare a written academic plan for graduation.	54.3%	37.1%	17.2%	60.9%	29.6%	31.4%	61.8%	34.2%	27.6%
Select an academic program or major.	35.9%	56.3%	-20.3%	47.4%	58.6%	-11.1%	46.6%	63.1%	-16.5%
Discuss transfer questions and issues.	23.6%	18.6%	5.0%	38.7%	22.0%	16.8%	68.3%	38.6%	29.7%
Receptivity to career counseling									
Identify work experiences or internships related to my major.	77.5%	25.1%	52.4%	80.7%	26.0%	54.7%	69.5%	30.7%	38.8%
Define goals suited to my major or career interest(s).	64.8%	36.7%	28.2%	71.4%	36.9%	34.5%	66.1%	45.3%	20.8%
Explore advantages and disadvantages of my career choice.	63.7%	29.3%	34.4%	71.0%	30.6%	40.5%	64.7%	38.4%	26.3%

A simple yes/no rating scale was used for the items in Table II, as shown in this example.

I would like to receive assistance this year.			I received assistance last year.	
YES	NO		YES	NO
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Find tutors in one or more of my courses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

All survey items— receptivity to assistance	Students at 4-year private institutions			Students at 4-year public institutions			Students at 2-year public institutions		
	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)
Receptivity to assistance with finances									
Discuss options for financing my education.	48.0%	25.8%	22.1%	57.6%	27.5%	30.1%	65.8%	44.0%	21.9%
Find better ways to manage my personal finances, including loans, work, and credit cards.	41.4%	15.4%	26.1%	50.4%	19.6%	30.8%	50.1%	25.3%	24.7%
Find ways to balance the demands of school with work.	41.3%	20.9%	20.4%	51.8%	23.3%	28.4%	51.5%	31.1%	20.4%
Receptivity to personal support and counseling									
Find ways to deal with emotional tensions that are bothering me.	25.8%	17.2%	8.6%	34.2%	15.6%	18.6%	34.9%	19.7%	15.2%
Discuss difficulties in my personal relationships and social life.	25.2%	18.6%	6.6%	32.2%	16.7%	15.4%	32.9%	22.7%	10.1%
Receive help with family issues that are distracting to me.	16.4%	11.2%	5.2%	25.7%	12.2%	13.4%	28.4%	18.4%	10.0%

Table III: Second-year students' receptivity to assistance by gender and overall

The table below continues examining second-year students' receptivity to assistance, except with a shift in focus to male students vs. female students and to the overall percentages for respondents in this study.

Percent of second-year students in agreement									
All survey items— receptivity to assistance	Male students			Female students			OVERALL percentages		
	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)
Receptivity to academic assistance									
Get help with study skills (time management, taking notes, concentrating, exam skills, etc.).	45.0%	30.1%	14.9%	47.9%	35.7%	12.3%	47.0%	33.9%	13.1%
Receptivity to advising									
Figure out the impact of my grades on my desired major.	60.5%	34.1%	26.4%	62.6%	38.1%	24.5%	61.9%	36.8%	25.1%
Prepare a written academic plan for graduation.	54.0%	30.3%	23.7%	60.8%	34.3%	26.5%	58.6%	33.0%	25.6%
Select an academic program or major.	41.9%	55.5%	-13.7%	43.6%	59.7%	-16.1%	43.0%	58.3%	-15.3%
Discuss transfer questions and issues.	35.4%	22.5%	12.9%	37.9%	23.2%	14.7%	37.1%	23.0%	14.1%
Receptivity to career counseling									
Identify work experiences or internships related to my major.	74.1%	27.0%	47.1%	79.9%	25.9%	53.9%	78.0%	26.3%	51.7%
Explore advantages and disadvantages of my career choice.	66.7%	30.7%	36.0%	67.8%	31.4%	36.4%	67.4%	31.2%	36.3%
Define goals suited to my major or career interest(s).	66.1%	35.8%	30.3%	69.2%	39.0%	30.3%	68.2%	37.9%	30.3%

Percent of second-year students in agreement

All survey items— receptivity to assistance	Male students			Female students			OVERALL percentages		
	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)	Want help now (A)	Got help last year (B)	Difference (A-B)
Receptivity to assistance with finances									
Discuss options for financing my education.	50.4%	27.3%	23.0%	57.4%	30.0%	27.4%	55.1%	29.1%	26.0%
Find better ways to manage my personal finances, including loans, work, and credit cards.	42.6%	19.0%	23.6%	49.2%	18.7%	30.4%	47.0%	18.8%	28.2%
Find ways to balance the demands of school with work.	43.6%	22.5%	21.1%	49.9%	24.0%	25.9%	47.8%	23.5%	24.3%
Receptivity to personal support and counseling									
Find ways to deal with emotional tensions that are bothering me.	25.0%	14.2%	10.8%	34.2%	18.0%	16.2%	31.2%	16.8%	14.4%
Discuss difficulties in my personal relationships and social life.	25.6%	15.1%	10.5%	31.6%	19.8%	11.9%	29.6%	18.2%	11.4%
Receive help with family issues that are distracting to me.	18.3%	10.6%	7.6%	24.7%	13.7%	11.0%	22.6%	12.7%	9.9%

Table IV: Second-year student satisfaction (institutional impressions)

This table shows the mean satisfaction scores of student respondents to 13 survey items using the seven-point rating scale shown below.

All survey items	Percent of second-year students in agreement					
	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year public institutions	Male students	Female students	OVERALL percentages
Degree of academic challenge in my classes here	5.75	5.55	5.71	5.59	5.68	5.65
My overall experience as a student at this institution	5.76	5.46	5.84	5.59	5.64	5.62
Variety of majors available here	5.37	5.35	5.47	5.31	5.41	5.38
Level of interaction with other students	5.62	5.18	5.31	5.38	5.35	5.36
Social life (both on and off campus)	5.46	5.25	5.27	5.33	5.33	5.33
Variety of courses available in my (desired) major	5.37	5.23	5.41	5.26	5.33	5.31
Sense of belonging to the college community	5.55	5.05	5.28	5.26	5.27	5.27
Frequency of interactions with my instructors	5.45	4.99	5.52	5.23	5.23	5.23
Opportunities to get involved in activities and events associated with my (desired) major	5.23	4.93	4.95	5.03	5.05	5.05
Leadership opportunities in student government and other organizations	5.18	4.95	4.99	5.02	5.05	5.04
Frequency of communication with my academic advisor	5.10	4.71	5.26	4.88	4.95	4.93
Availability of service learning, internships, and/or other work experiences associated with my career interests	5.09	4.78	4.78	4.87	4.91	4.90
Adequacy of financial assistance available to me	4.88	4.77	5.32	4.96	4.85	4.89

The figures shown in Table IV are the mean responses to this seven-point scale.

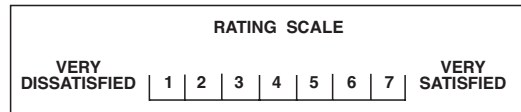


Table V: Respondent demographics, enrollment status, and enrollment plans

When reviewing this section, keep in mind that most respondents completed the survey used in this study near the beginning of their second year or near the end of their first year.

Percent of second-year students in agreement						
All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year public institutions	Male students	Female students	OVERALL percentages
Number of respondents	1,904	2,506	691	1,675	3,426	5,101
Percent of respondents	37.3%	49.1%	13.5%	32.8%	67.2%	
Racial/ethnic origin						
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.7%	1.4%	1.9%	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	6.0%	12.4%	4.3%	10.6%	8.1%	8.9%
Black/African American	8.5%	21.2%	5.4%	14.4%	14.3%	14.3%
White/Caucasian (non-Hispanic)	71.4%	39.9%	60.6%	53.1%	55.1%	54.5%
Mexican or Mexican American	1.8%	7.5%	7.8%	5.6%	5.4%	5.4%
Puerto Rican	1.5%	0.9%	1.3%	0.8%	1.3%	1.2%
Other Hispanic or Latino	3.1%	5.1%	10.7%	4.8%	5.3%	5.1%
Multiethnic	3.0%	5.0%	3.6%	3.3%	4.5%	4.1%
Other	1.4%	3.3%	1.6%	2.8%	2.1%	2.4%
Prefer not to respond	2.5%	3.3%	2.7%	3.3%	2.7%	2.9%
Time expecting to spend at work during the term in which the survey was completed						
0 (I do not work)	32.0%	39.7%	29.4%	39.7%	33.4%	35.4%
1 to 10 hours per week	36.4%	17.1%	14.8%	21.7%	25.1%	24.0%
11 to 20 hours per week	18.8%	21.2%	17.9%	19.5%	20.1%	19.9%
21 to 30 hours per week	8.0%	14.8%	13.0%	10.3%	12.8%	12.0%
31 to 40 hours per week	3.4%	4.9%	12.6%	4.8%	5.7%	5.4%
over 40 hours per week	1.4%	2.3%	12.3%	3.9%	3.0%	3.3%
Current GPA						
3.5 – 4.0	41.6%	27.2%	42.7%	30.0%	37.0%	34.7%
2.5 – 3.49	47.7%	44.8%	46.5%	46.6%	45.9%	46.1%
1.5 – 2.49	9.5%	24.5%	9.8%	20.7%	15.0%	16.9%
1.0 – 1.49	0.9%	2.8%	0.7%	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%
Less than	0.2%	0.7%	0.3%	0.7%	0.3%	0.5%

Percent of second-year students in agreement

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year public institutions	Male students	Female students	OVERALL percentages
Description of current college enrollment status						
I enrolled here with no previous college credits.	49.9%	58.5%	49.9%	56.7%	52.9%	54.1%
I enrolled here with dual-enrollment credits earned while in high school.	24.5%	21.0%	20.0%	18.6%	23.9%	22.2%
I transferred here from a community college.	10.3%	9.3%	8.1%	9.7%	9.5%	9.5%
I transferred here from a four-year college or university.	10.5%	4.2%	5.2%	6.7%	6.6%	6.6%
Other	4.8%	7.0%	16.8%	8.4%	7.1%	7.5%
Total number of college credit hours earned at current institution and at other institutions						
0 - 15 credits	11.2%	18.7%	18.1%	19.3%	14.1%	15.8%
16 - 30 credits	25.4%	25.1%	19.0%	24.8%	24.1%	24.4%
31 - 45 credits	40.2%	24.6%	24.6%	27.6%	31.8%	30.4%
46 - 60 credits	15.2%	16.7%	22.0%	15.0%	17.8%	16.9%
More than 60 credits	8.0%	14.9%	16.4%	13.3%	12.2%	12.5%
Number of classes enrolled in at other institutions during the term in which the survey was completed						
None	86.6%	78.5%	79.5%	81.6%	81.7%	81.7%
1 class	1.6%	1.9%	1.3%	1.4%	1.9%	1.7%
2 classes	0.8%	1.5%	2.2%	1.1%	1.4%	1.3%
3 classes	0.6%	3.0%	2.9%	2.3%	2.0%	2.1%
More than 3 classes	10.3%	15.1%	14.2%	13.6%	13.0%	13.2%
Study plans						
I don't think I will need to study as much as I did last year.	1.5%	1.2%	2.9%	1.7%	1.5%	1.5%
I think I will need to study about the same amount as I did last year.	29.3%	21.5%	27.4%	25.6%	25.0%	25.2%
I think I will need to study more than I did last year.	69.2%	77.3%	69.8%	72.7%	73.5%	73.3%
Current decision on the selection of a major or program						
I plan to continue with the major or program I have selected.	83.4%	73.5%	77.1%	76.9%	78.0%	77.7%
I have selected a major or program, but I'm thinking about changing it.	8.1%	14.3%	12.3%	11.2%	12.0%	11.7%
I'm actively engaged in the process of selecting a major or program.	5.5%	7.1%	4.6%	6.6%	6.0%	6.2%
I have some potential major or programs in mind, but haven't explored them yet.	2.3%	4.5%	4.6%	4.2%	3.4%	3.7%
I have not thought seriously about a major or program at this point.	0.7%	0.6%	1.3%	1.1%	0.5%	0.7%

Percent of second-year students in agreement

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year public institutions	Male students	Female students	OVERALL percentages
Highest degree or program planned						
1-year certificate	0.1%	0.0%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
2-year certificate or associate degree	0.7%	0.8%	18.2%	3.2%	3.1%	3.1%
4-year college degree (bachelor's)	37.6%	34.3%	40.4%	41.2%	34.0%	36.4%
Master's degree	36.6%	35.5%	25.0%	30.3%	36.6%	34.5%
Professional degree (medicine, dentistry, law, PhD, or other similar degrees)	23.9%	28.5%	14.8%	23.9%	25.4%	24.9%
Other	1.1%	0.8%	1.2%	1.3%	0.8%	1.0%
Current college or program completion plan						
I plan to complete my degree or program at this college or university.	90.5%	84.0%	42.1%	79.9%	81.1%	80.7%
I plan to transfer to another college or university to complete my degree.	3.8%	9.2%	50.9%	13.0%	12.8%	12.9%
College is not right for me at this time, and I do not plan to continue.	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%
I am undecided about my plans at this time.	5.6%	6.8%	6.8%	6.9%	6.0%	6.3%

Questions? Want to discuss your strategies for meeting the needs and expectations of second-year students?

Contact a Ruffalo Noel Levitz retention consultant and ask for a complimentary telephone consultation for you and your colleagues. Call 800.876.1117 or email ContactUs@RuffaloNL.com.

About Ruffalo Noel Levitz and the noncognitive, early-alert survey instrument used in this study

A trusted partner to higher education, Ruffalo Noel Levitz helps systems and campuses reach and exceed their goals for enrollment, marketing, and student success. Over the past three decades, our higher education professionals have consulted with thousands of colleges and universities nationwide.

The data in this report are drawn from the 68-item, **Second-Year Student Assessment (SYSA)**, part of the Retention Management System *Plus* from Ruffalo Noel Levitz. Student respondents (including transfer students) complete this survey near the beginning of the second year of college, near the end of their first year, or, for third-year transfer students, near the beginning of their third year.

Immediately upon the survey's completion, findings are reported electronically to the respondents' college or university for early and ongoing identification of student needs. The aggregate findings guide the development of second-year programming and help to prioritize academic support services and student success interventions. In addition, the disaggregated findings—for specific subpopulations and for each individual student—guide faculty, administrators, and student success professionals in addressing students' strengths, weaknesses, needs, and concerns.

Two companion surveys to the SYSA are also available. The College Student Inventory (CSI) is the original survey in the series. It alerts campuses to the needs of incoming first-year students. In addition, the Mid-Year Student Assessment (MYSA) identifies changes in first-year students' attitudes and motivation at the mid-point of the first year.

Using the findings of these surveys, educators are able to engage students in timely conversations and to proactively connect students with key services that make a difference.

To see sample copies of these assessments, please visit www.noellevitz.com/RMSPlus.

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