

The Institutional Priorities Survey

The Institutional Priorities Survey (IPS) closely parallels the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI). Its items are carefully worded to mirror the items on the SSI. While the SSI is designed to measure students' satisfaction with a wide range of college experiences, the IPS assesses the priority faculty, staff, and administrators believe students place on the same range of student experiences.

By administering both the IPS and SSI, your institution can determine the discrepancies (gaps) between what students expect and what faculty, staff, and administrators believe. By using the IPS and SSI at or near the same time, you'll be able to directly compare importance and agreement/satisfaction scores for each segment of your campus.

Left unexamined, competing priorities can slow the progress on your campus. Used in conjunction with your SSI data, the IPS identifies areas of agreement and disagreement before you propose new initiatives. With the results in hand, you can target areas for intervention with greater confidence and be alerted to areas in need of further examination.

The IPS asks campus personnel to respond with a level of importance and a level of agreement. A performance gap is calculated by subtracting the agreement score from the importance score.

Versions of the IPS

The Institutional Priorities Survey is available in the following versions:

Four-Year College and University Version

- Form A is the original version
- Form B is the shorter version
- Note that national comparisons are available separately for private and public four-year institutions.

Two-year Community, Junior, and Technical College Version

- Form A is the original version
- Form B is the shorter version

Canadian Two-Year CEGEP, Community, and Technical College Version

- Form A is the original version

Item Structure on the IPS

The number of items rated for importance and agreement varies by version:

- Four-year Form A: 50 items
- Four-year Form B: 45 items
- Two-year Community College Form A: 50 items
- Two-year Community College Form B: 40 items
- Canadian Two-Year Form A: 50 items

Each of the survey versions include ten optional items which may be defined by the institution and rated for importance and agreement.

The Form A version of the surveys includes six items that assess the institution's commitment to specific student populations. These items are rated for agreement only and do not include importance or performance gap scores. These items contribute to the Responsiveness to Diverse Populations Scale.

Form A and Form B both include assess pre-enrollment factors. Form A has nine items and Form B has eight items. These items only ask for an importance rating and do not include satisfaction or performance gap scores.

Three summary items are included on each of the surveys.

There are eight demographic items on each of the survey versions.

Each survey version includes two optional demographic items with up to six responses (campus personnel may only select one response). Consult your survey administrator for details on the items requested by your institution.

Each survey version includes an optional demographic item to capture the responder's department with a four-digit numeric code. Again, consult your survey administrator for details on the corresponding department.

The Scales

The items on the IPS have been analyzed statistically and conceptually to form comprehensive scales. Note that some items appear on more than one scale. The number of scales for each version is as follows. A description of the scales follows.

Four-year Form A: 12 scales

- Academic Advising Effectiveness
- Campus Climate
- Campus Life
- Campus Support Services
- Concern for the Individual
- Instructional Effectiveness
- Recruitment and Financial Aid Effectiveness
- Registration Effectiveness
- Responsiveness to Diverse Populations
- Safety and Security
- Service Excellence
- Student Centeredness
- Items not on a scale: 24 and 49

Four-year Form B: 9 scales

- Academic Advising Effectiveness
- Campus Climate
- Campus Life
- Campus Support Services
- Instructional Effectiveness
- Recruitment and Financial Aid Effectiveness
- Registration Effectiveness
- Safety and Security
- Student Centeredness

Two-year Community College Form A: 12 scales

- Academic Advising and Counseling Effectiveness
- Academic Services
- Admissions and Financial Aid Effectiveness
- Campus Climate
- Campus Support Services
- Concern for the Individual
- Instructional Effectiveness
- Registration Effectiveness
- Responsiveness to Diverse Populations
- Safety and Security
- Service Excellence
- Student Centeredness
- Items not on a scale: 6, 37, and 48

Two-year Community College Form B: 8 scales

- Academic Advising and Counseling Effectiveness
- Admissions and Financial Aid Effectiveness
- Campus Climate
- Campus Services
- Instructional Effectiveness
- Registration Effectiveness
- Safety and Security
- Student Centeredness

Canadian Two-Year Form A: 12 scales

- Academic Advising and Counseling Effectiveness
- Academic Services
- Admissions and Financial Aid Effectiveness
- Campus Climate
- Campus Support Services
- Concern for the Individual
- Instructional Effectiveness
- Registration Effectiveness
- Responsiveness to Diverse Populations
- Safety and Security
- Service Excellence
- Student Centeredness
- Items not on a scale: 6, 37, and 48

Description of Scales

Academic Advising (and Counseling) Effectiveness: assesses the comprehensiveness of your 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.

Academic Services: assesses services students utilize to achieve their academic goals. These services include the library, computer labs, and tutoring services.

Campus Climate: assesses the extent to which your institution provides experiences that promote a sense of campus pride and feelings of belonging. This scale also assesses the effectiveness of your institution's channels of communication for students.

Campus Life: assesses the effectiveness of student life programs offered by your institution, covering issues ranging from student activities to residence life. This scale also assesses campus policies and procedures to determine perceptions of students' rights and responsibilities.

Campus Services: (similar to Academic Services) assess services students utilize to achieve their academic goals. These services include the library, computer labs, tutoring, and study areas.

Campus Support Services: assess the quality of your support programs and services which students utilize to make their educational experiences more meaningful and productive. This scale covers a variety of areas.

Concern for the Individual: assesses your institution's commitment to treating each student as an individual. Those groups who frequently deal with students on a personal level (e.g. faculty, advisors, etc.) are included in this assessment.

Instructional Effectiveness: assesses the academic experience, the curriculum, and the campus's overriding commitment to academic excellence. This comprehensive scale covers areas such as the effectiveness of your faculty in and out of the classroom, content of the courses, and sufficient course offerings.

Recruitment (or Admissions) and Financial Aid Effectiveness: assesses your institution's ability to enroll students in an effective manner. This scale covers issues such as competence and knowledge of admissions counselors, as well as the effectiveness and availability of financial aid programs.

Registration Effectiveness: assesses issues associated with registration and billing. This scale also measures your institution's commitment to making this process as smooth and effective as possible.

Responsiveness to Diverse Populations: assesses your institution's commitment to specific groups of students enrolled at your institution, e.g., under-represented populations; students with disabilities; commuters; part-time students; and older, returning learners.

Safety and Security: assesses your institution's responsiveness to students' personal safety and security on your campus. This scale measures the effectiveness of both security personnel and campus facilities.

Service Excellence: assesses the perceived attitude of your staff, especially front-line staff, toward students. This scale pinpoints the areas of your campus where quality service and personal concern for students are rated most and least favorably.

Student Centeredness: assesses your campus's efforts to convey to students that they are important to your institution. This scale measures the extent to which students feel welcome and valued.

The items which contribute to each scale can be reviewed within your campus report. The HTML electronic report includes the items within the scales on the scale report; when you select the scale name it will expand to show the items. In the paper report, there is a section which provides the scales alphabetically and the list of items within the scale.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability for the IPS is high. Cronbach's coefficient alpha, which measures internal consistency, was .97 for the importance scores and .94 for the agreement scores. The three-week test-retest reliability estimate of mean importance and agreement scores is .74 and .80 respectively.

The validity of the IPS is strong. It was assessed by correlating respondents' scores on the IPS with their interview responses on a qualitative protocol reflecting the content of the instrument. The interviews with faculty, staff, and administrators were conducted and scored two weeks in advance of the written survey. The mean cross-method validity coefficients were .69 for importance scores and .60 for agreement scores and the individual scale correlations between the interview responses and the survey responses ranged from .93 to .49 for the importance scales and from .86 to .44 for the agreement scales. Ten of the 11 scale correlations were significant at the .05 level, thus indicating that the instrument adequately reflects the construct it was designed to measure.

The Inventory Development

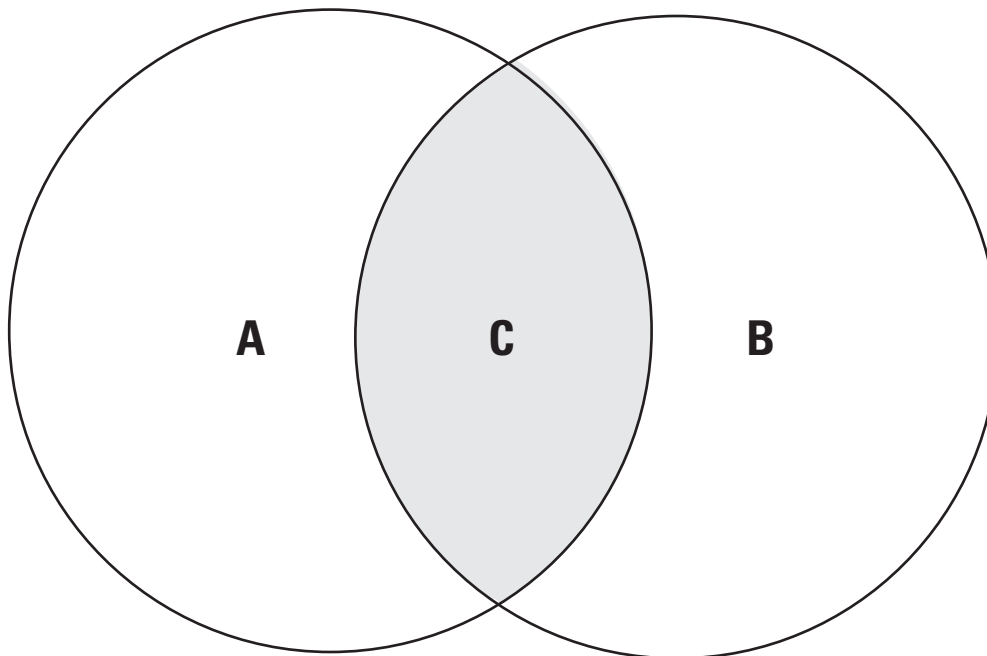
The Institutional Priorities Survey was modeled on the Student Satisfaction Inventory. The text of the items was modified to be appropriate for campus personnel responses. The survey length in the Form A version was reduced from the SSI in order to focus on items that are typically most important to institutions. The items on Form B directly match up with all items on Form B of the SSI.

The IPS was piloted in 1997 and became available that same year. As of 2008, it has been administered by more than 680 institutions and completed by over 138,000 campus faculty, administrators, and staff.

Interpreting your results

General guidelines for reviewing and interpreting your results are provided in the General Interpretive Guide. This section provides additional suggestions for reviewing and interpreting the combination of the SSI and IPS data.

The power of the IPS is in comparing the perceptions of the faculty, administration, and staff with the perceptions of your students. You want to be able to identify areas that are perceived similarly and be prepared with an understanding of the areas that may be perceived differently on campus. The following Venn diagram further illustrates this concept:



The areas of greatest institutional strength

- A. Items of highest importance/highest satisfaction (student satisfaction data)
- B. Items of highest importance/highest agreement (campus personnel data)
- C. Intersect of A & B = areas of greatest strength

The areas of highest institutional priority

- A. Items of highest importance/lowest satisfaction (student satisfaction data)
- B. Items of highest importance/lowest agreement (campus personnel data)
- C. Intersect of A & B = areas of highest priority

An Approach to Analyzing the Data

One approach to analyzing the SSI and IPS results is to compare the lists of strengths and challenges provided in each data set's Strategic Planning Overview. You will want to identify items which are:

1. Strengths for both students and campus personnel

These items are areas everyone can celebrate. They have the full support of your entire campus and provide extra strong opportunities for positive feedback and for marketing activities.

2. Challenges for both students and campus personnel

The institution has the green light to move forward with initiatives in these areas because the entire campus is on board with identifying them as areas that require improvement. There is support from all segments of the campus population to make changes.

3. Strengths for students but challenges for campus personnel

These areas provide an opportunity to share with your campus personnel that they are actually performing well based on the perceptions of the students. An institution may want to explore further why campus personnel believe the areas are challenges, but not much time or effort should be spent in these areas since students already feel it is a strength for the campus.

4. Challenges for students but strengths for campus personnel

These are another area which provide an opportunity for dialogue since they are viewed differently by campus constituencies. The emphasis should be on the fact students see the area as a challenge and additional efforts need to be made to improve the experience for students. More effort will need to be made to build support in this area since campus personnel currently view it as a strength.

5. Strengths or challenges for one group but not for the other

These areas present opportunities for further discussion and education about why certain areas are more valued by one group than the other, or why satisfaction levels may be higher or lower in one segment than the other. Areas that are viewed as challenges by campus personnel, but not by students should be explored to determine if improvements need to be made on behalf of faculty, administration and staff. However, the challenges identified by students should be the primary focus of significant resource allocation so that the institution maintains a student-centered focus.

Combination Report (optional)

The optional Combination Report, if requested by your institution, provides a side-by-side comparison of your Institutional Priorities Survey data and your Student Satisfaction Inventory data. The SSI data always appears on the left and the corresponding IPS data on the right.

This Combination Report is designed to provide you with a conceptual framework for maximizing the use of these combined data sets. The data from the SSI and the IPS are presented in two distinct formats in this combination report.

The first format presents the average scores for the scales and the individual items. The scales are arranged in alphabetical order with the items in numeric order. Note that not every item on the Student Satisfaction Inventory appears on the Institutional Priorities Survey. Those items that appear on the SSI only will have blank cells in the IPS columns.

The second format presents numeric rankings for the scales and the items. The average importance scores from the IPS are often higher than the SSI. Therefore, we recommend comparing student and campus personnel rankings for both the scales and the items as the most dynamic way to analyze the combined data sets. Only those items which appear on both the

SSI and the IPS are included in this section. On the Form A version, scales are ranked from 1 to 11 and the individual items are ranked from 1 to 50. This will vary with the Form B version. Only the items and scales which capture both an importance and a satisfaction/agreement score are included in the ranking. (Note: this means that the Responsiveness to Diverse Populations items are not included, nor are the factors in the decision to enroll). If campus items were used in the SSI and IPS administrations, this will increase the number of items ranked to 60 on Form A. The reporting assumes that the same or similar items were asked for the campus items on both the SSI and IPS. Please consult your campus survey administrator to confirm that this is the case.

Using these numeric ranking allows you to more accurately identify key areas where perceptions of institutional strength and priorities for intervention are shared by students and campus personnel, as well as identify the areas that have a differing priority. When comparing the rankings, typically it is appropriate to take notice of scales with rankings that differ by three places or more, and items which differ in rank by ten places or more. Example: a scale ranked as 2 by students, but 5 by campus personnel, or an item ranked 5 by students and 15 by campus personnel.

Please note: The numeric rankings for scales and items may reflect ties. For example, if the seventh, eighth, and ninth items of greatest importance have the same mean average score, the numeric rankings will be repeated (7, 7, 7) skipping the rankings of 8 and 9, and continuing with 10, 11, etc.

There is one report for Scale rankings and one report for Item rankings. You can select each of the columns to sort on importance, satisfaction or performance gap. As you review each listing, consider the following:

Importance:

Scores are ranked in descending order of importance to students with the corresponding campus personnel (IPS) importance ranking for

the scales and the items. The item/scale ranked number one is the most important item.

When reviewing the data this way, it is important to take note of items which have very different levels of importance to students and campus personnel. This provides an opportunity to discuss why it is so important to students, and why faculty, administration, and staff may not be aware of its importance. For those items which have higher importance to campus personnel than to students, the institution may want to explore ways to better communicate why students should value this area.

Satisfaction/Agreement:

In this view, scores are ranked in descending order of satisfaction to students with corresponding campus personnel (IPS) agreement ranking for the scales and items. The item/scale ranked number one has the highest satisfaction or agreement score.

You are able to identify areas of satisfaction/agreement which are perceived differently by students and campus personnel in this view. Institutions can explore how various areas are performing as identified by students and faculty, administration, and staff.

Performance Gaps:

Performance gap scores are ranked in descending order of largest performance gaps to smallest performance gaps by students with this sort, with the corresponding performance gap ranking for campus personnel (IPS). It is important to note that the number one ranking is actually the largest gap.

Again, by comparing the gaps which are ranked differently, you can identify where there are different perceptions of performance.

Target Group Reports

The Institutional Priorities Survey Reports include standard Target Group Reports which isolate the data by administrators, faculty, and staff. These reports provide a quick synopsis of the scores for each standard segment of your campus personnel in clear, multi-column grids. At a glance, you can compare the scores of these three groups of respondents with your overall IPS campus scores, as well as with the national comparison group specific to institutions like yours. Keep in mind that with the HTML electronic version of the reports, you can select any column to re-sort the data.

Target Group Reports for administrators, faculty, and staff are included as part of the standard reporting because Noel-Levitz has observed marked differences in the perspectives of these three groups. Each group's perceptions are understandably unique and provide the opportunity for you to further explore what each group is observing. The ranges in performance gap provide the best view of the various perspectives.

The Inventory Development

The Institutional Priorities Survey was modeled on the Student Satisfaction Inventory. The text of the items was modified by Noel-Levitz to be appropriate for campus personnel.

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For additional interpretation support, please refer to the General Interpretive Guide or contact Noel-Levitz for assistance.

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