

Understanding College Student Satisfaction*

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 Related Categories: Consumer Behavior

SURVEY OF STUDENT SATISFACTION

Using the scale below, please indicate how satisfied you have been with your experiences in each of the following areas. IF AN ITEM DOES NOT APPLY TO YOU, PLEASE LEAVE IT BLANK.

VS = Very Satisfied; S = Satisfied; N = Neutral; D = Dissatisfied; VD = Very Dissatisfied

Orientation, Advisement, and Registration		Satisfaction				
1. The academic advisement I received during new student orientation	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
2. How well new student orientation prepared me to begin college	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
3. The availability of an advisor at times reasonably convenient for me	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
4. The knowledge level of my advisor regarding major and core course requirements	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
5. The scheduling of courses at times reasonably convenient for me	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
6. Getting the courses I need in the sequence I should take them for graduation	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
7. The overall registration process	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
8. The overall advisement process	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
9. The overall process of enrolling in classes (e.g., financial aid, advising, registration, fee payment)	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
Academic Support Services		Satisfaction				
10. The Library's collection for my program of study	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
11. Online services (e.g., GALILEO) offered by the Library	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
12. Workshops offered by the librarians	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
13. The peer-tutoring program offered by the Center for Academic Success	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
14. The computerized skill-building resources offered by the Center for Academic Success	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
15. The Academic Success workshops offered by the Center for Academic Success	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
16. Overall services provided by the Center for Academic Success	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
17. Seminars (e.g., stress management, test anxiety, etc.) offered by Counseling Services	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
18. Individual counseling on career or personal concerns provided by Counseling Services	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
19. Information provided about jobs and career opportunities by Career Services	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
20. Information provided regarding ITP Choice	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	
21. The support provided by the HUB	A. VS	B. S	C. N	D. D	E. VD	

Colleges and universities are facing greater competition for students and other resources from a variety of areas, and one of the responses to this increased competition has been a greater appreciation of marketing concepts by colleges and universities, with a special focus on customer satisfaction. Many of us are familiar with some of the benefits of satisfied customers, including repeat purchases, higher spending, positive word of mouth and customer loyalty. Similarly, in the educational setting, satisfied students should be more likely to remain at the institution and help increase retention rates and may also equate to students being more inspired and motivated to more actively participate in the educational process. While there has been some debate as to whether students are in fact the customers of higher education, given that students make a variety of consumerist decisions in the higher education setting, researchers have generally concluded that students are in fact customers. Students also often perceive themselves as 'customers' of higher education, and in marketing, we know that perception is reality. Assuming that students are in fact customers of higher education, it is important to better understand their role in the university setting and examine how this affects their overall satisfaction. We will do this by extending key service and marketing concepts that relate to regular customer satisfaction in a retail or service purchase and apply them to the higher education context.

It has been suggested that in higher education, students' active participation is required for success. Meaning, it is not enough for them to simply 'show up to class.' In the retail and service environment, the result of co-participation of the customer and organization in the production process is referred to as co-production. In a college setting, co-production occurs when students become partners in the educational experience. They may participate in a variety of areas including curriculum development, teaching a class, conducting research with a professor or mentoring other students. Co-producing activities often lead to feelings of involvement, which is usually a good thing in marketing. On the other hand, students' active roles in the educational process can also lead some students to feelings of entitlement, leading some students to expect special treatment, and think that they are special and deserve certain things. Many a professor, including the author of this blog can provide tales of student's requesting higher grades because of the time and effort they have put in or because of the consequences of lower grades. If we view today's college students as customers that are co-producing in the education process, it is reasonable to expect that this may result in feelings of entitlement which in turn, may affect their satisfaction.

Understanding the relationship between co-production, entitlement, and satisfaction can help to provide guidance to relevant college and university stakeholders. For example, many colleges and universities currently offer new student orientation programs. Care should be taken to make sure that the orientation programs place emphasis on the student's role in the co-production process and sets clear expectations. Colleges and universities should also offer training to those individuals participating in the educational process (i.e., instructors, support staff) to better understand the role of the student.

What do you think? Does the link between co-production, entitlement and satisfaction seem reasonable? What other factors could affect student satisfaction? Is student entitlement a good thing or bad thing? How do you feel about students co-producing? What else can colleges and universities do to facilitate customer satisfaction in a way that preserves the integrity of the institution?

*This blog is based on a doctoral dissertation by Deborah Sisson entitled 'Role of student entitlement and co-production on satisfaction.' Her committee consists of Dr. Suri Weisfeld-Spolter (chair), Dr. John Riggs (reader) and Dr. Yuliya Yurova (methodologist).

Student Satisfaction Survey (Developed by Clayton State University).

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