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## 2018\_Noel Levitz\_National\_Student\_Satisfaction\_Report\_EM-031

Noel Levitz

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# 2018 National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report

Focusing on Satisfaction Levels for Demographic Subpopulations



Based on 896 four-year and two-year, public and private institutions  
using the RNL Satisfaction-Priorities Surveys

**RUFFALO**<sup>®</sup>  
NOEL LEVITZ

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### SOURCE OF DATA

## NATIONAL SAMPLE OF 614,800 STUDENTS FROM 896 COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

<p><b>FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE</b></p> <p>213,573 STUDENTS FROM 318 INSTITUTIONS</p> <p>26% FRESHMEN; 21% SOPHOMORES; 22% JUNIORS; 23% SENIORS</p>	<p><b>FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC</b></p> <p>64,377 STUDENTS FROM 60 INSTITUTIONS</p> <p>25% FRESHMEN; 17% SOPHOMORES; 24% JUNIORS; 26% SENIORS</p>
<p><b>COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES</b></p> <p>142,906 STUDENTS FROM 185 INSTITUTIONS</p> <p>65% FULL-TIME; 35% PART-TIME</p>	<p><b>ONLINE LEARNERS</b></p> <p>126,748 STUDENTS FROM 175 INSTITUTIONS</p> <p>66% UNDERGRADUATE; 34% GRADUATE</p>
<p><b>ADULT UNDERGRADUATES</b></p> <p>30,294 STUDENTS FROM 158 INSTITUTIONS</p> <p>73% FULL-TIME; 27% PART-TIME</p>	<p><b>ADULT GRADUATE STUDENTS</b></p> <p>36,988 STUDENTS FROM 158 INSTITUTIONS</p> <p>71% FULL-TIME; 29% PART-TIME</p> <p>94% PRIMARILY ONLINE; 6% PRIMARILY ON-CAMPUS</p>

## THREE ACADEMIC YEARS OF DATA, AGGREGATED

2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18

See page 22 for information about the RNL Satisfaction-Priorities Surveys used for this study, including the RNL Student Satisfaction Inventory™ (SSI), the RNL Adult Student Priorities Survey™ (ASPS), and the RNL Priorities Survey for Online Learners™ (PSOL).

Note: Not all demographic responses are reflected for each category, so the totals may not equal 100 percent.

# How satisfied are today's college students?

## And how satisfied are certain student demographic subpopulations?

The **Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) Satisfaction-Priorities Surveys** are the national standard for benchmarking student satisfaction in higher education. Since 1994, more than 2,900 colleges and universities have used the surveys to evaluate students' concerns that influence **student success, college completion, student recruitment, strategic planning, and re-accreditation**.

The surveys take a broad look at the **student experience**, both inside and outside of the classroom, and are compared with **peer institution benchmarks** for particular student groups. The surveys identify areas of strength, where students report **high satisfaction and high importance**, and areas of challenge, where students report **low satisfaction and high importance**.

This year's report aggregates three years of data (2015–16, 2016–17, 2017–18) and focuses on students' satisfaction levels, breaking the data down by demographic subpopulations, including race/ethnicity, gender, age, employment, type of learner (adult, online), and other key categories.

Colleges and universities can use the survey results to figure out which initiatives they should concentrate on in order to:

- Improve the overall student experience
- Increase student satisfaction levels by demographic subpopulation
- Make positive changes to build and sustain a healthy and thriving campus community

### HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **Students' overall satisfaction levels**—reported separately for six groups of students including students at four-year privates, four-year publics, and two-year publics, as well as nontraditional undergraduates, graduate students, and online learners.
- **Overall satisfaction levels for demographic subpopulations**—including indicators for institutional choice, race/ethnicity, age, gender, class levels, and others.
- **Institutional choice** and how it impacts students' perception of their experience.

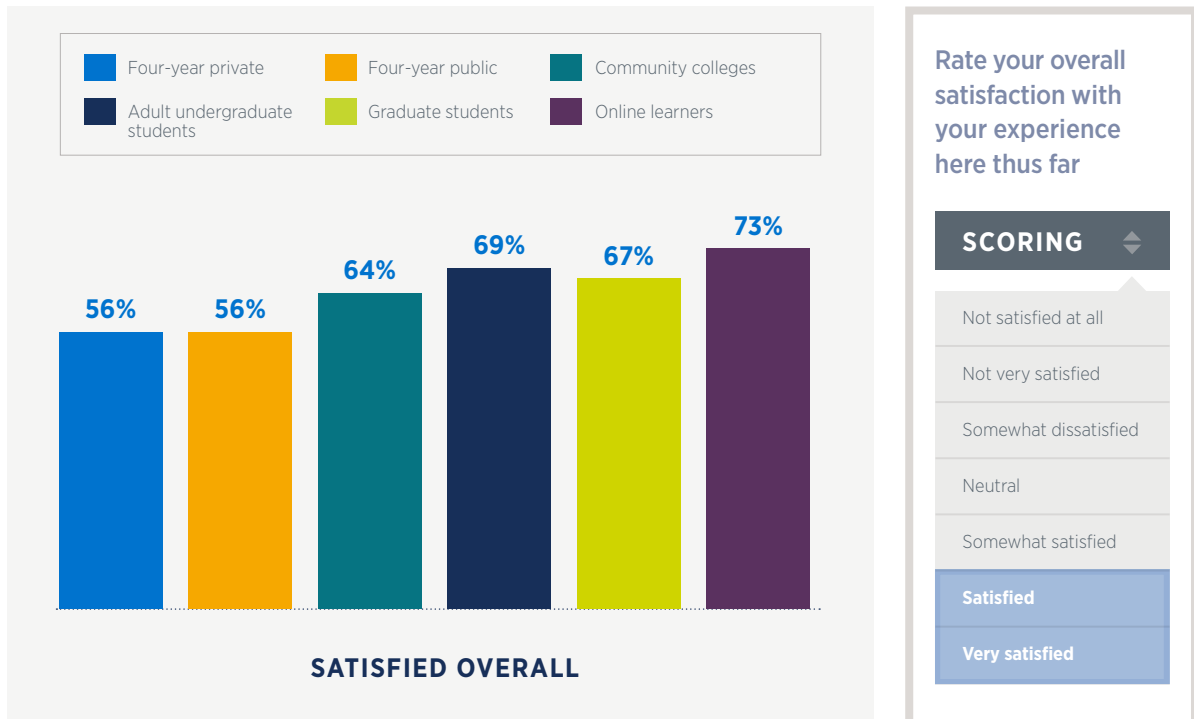
*Moving to Action*

See page 20 to learn how campuses are using the surveys' data to make positive changes.

# At a glance: How satisfied are today’s college students and how likely are they to re-enroll?



## OVERALL SATISFACTION FOR SIX GROUPS OF STUDENTS



One-half to three-quarters of college students reported they were satisfied with their experience overall at the institution they were attending.

Percentages indicate the proportions of “satisfied” or “very satisfied” scores.

Online learners, graduate students, and adult undergraduates consistently report higher overall satisfaction levels, with online learners (73 percent) having the most satisfaction.

For the first time, graduate students are slightly less satisfied than adult undergraduates.

Students at two-year institutions reported higher overall satisfaction levels than students at four-year institutions.

### Why measure student satisfaction and priorities?

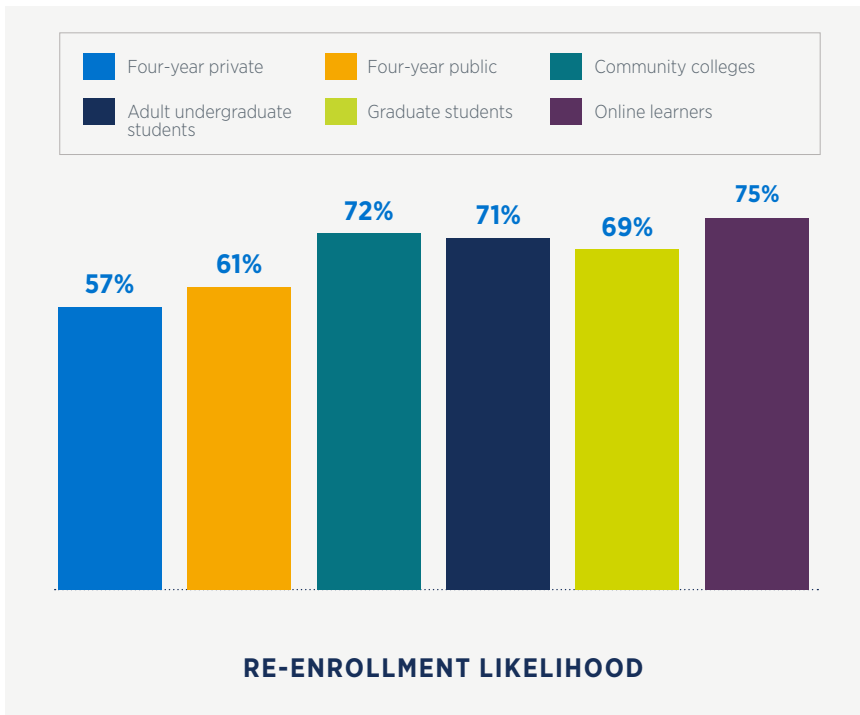
Evidence-based research has documented strong links between students’ scores on RNL Satisfaction-Priorities Surveys with several areas, including:



To learn more, download the additional reports available at [RuffaloNL.com/benchmark](https://RuffaloNL.com/benchmark)



## LIKELIHOOD TO RE-ENROLL



All in all, if you had to do it again, would you enroll here?

**SCORING**

- Definitely not
- Probably not
- Maybe not
- I don't know
- Maybe yes
- Probably yes**
- Definitely yes**

As with overall satisfaction in the previous table, one-half to three-quarters of students report they would be likely to re-enroll at the institution they were attending, if they had to do it over again.

Percentages indicate the proportions of “probably yes” or “definitely yes.”

Online learners are most likely to re-enroll compared to other student groups.

Students at two-year institutions are more likely to re-enroll compared to students at four-year colleges and universities.

### What’s driving students’ opinions?

In addition to the overall student experience at the participating institutions, different demographic mixes of students have an influence on the student’s satisfaction level. For example, two-year public institutions, which are more likely to serve older students, reflect a corresponding greater level of satisfaction than four-year privates and publics, which are more likely to have higher numbers of traditional-aged students. **Review the results on the following pages for more insights.**



## TAKEAWAYS

One of the most effective ways to improve overall satisfaction and re-enrollment scores is to drill into the survey items and slice data by demographic variables. Doing so allows institutions to develop targeted initiatives that address challenges specific to the institution type and reflected subpopulation.

By using a systematic assessment approach, institutions can select priority challenges they want to improve, explore the concerns of student subpopulations, and use focus groups to better understand the challenges. Once an institution has a good understanding of the challenges, they can develop improvement plans and target the plans by subpopulation. The changes should then be implemented and communicated widely on campus so students know that the institution was responsive to their feedback.



## Student satisfaction for demographic subpopulations at **four-year private colleges and universities**

INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE	Satisfied Overall
First choice	64%
Second choice	47%
Third choice	33%

The greatest differences in satisfaction are reflected between students attending their first-choice institution and those attending their second- or third-choice institution.

RACE/ETHNICITY	Satisfied Overall
Caucasian	60%
African American	46%
Asian	46%
Hispanic	56%

African American and Asian students are much less satisfied than Caucasian and Hispanic students.

CLASS LEVEL	Satisfied Overall
Freshmen	59%
Sophomores	56%
Juniors	55%
Seniors	54%

Freshmen are slightly more satisfied than upper class students, with satisfaction declining each year.

The likelihood to re-enroll if they had to do it over again drops even more between freshmen and seniors.

CLASS LEVEL	Re-enrollment Likelihood
Freshmen	64%
Sophomores	58%
Juniors	55%
Seniors	51%

Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far

**SCORING**

- Not satisfied at all
- Not very satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

Percentages indicate the proportions of “satisfied” or “very satisfied” scores.

GENDER	Satisfied Overall
Males	52%
Females	58%

Female students are more satisfied than males.

AGE	Satisfied Overall
24 and younger	56%
25 and older	55%

Satisfaction levels are similar for students across traditional and nontraditional age groups.

EMPLOYMENT	Satisfied Overall
Part-time off campus	53%
Part-time on campus	63%
Not employed	55%

Students working on campus have higher satisfaction levels than students working off campus or not employed.

CURRENT RESIDENCE	Satisfied Overall
Residence hall	58%
Off campus	54%

Students living on campus are slightly more satisfied than students living off campus.

Students who indicate they plan to transfer only report satisfaction levels of 31 percent, compared to 61 percent satisfaction scores for students who do not plan to transfer. It is important to intervene with students early in order to have a greater chance to improve their satisfaction levels and potentially keep them.

When deciding to enroll, financial aid is a much more important factor for students employed on campus (88 percent) as compared with those not employed (79 percent).

### Opportunities to consider at four-year private institutions:

- What can be done during the recruitment process to influence institutional choice?
- How can institutions better engage second- and third-choice students in order to increase their satisfaction levels?
- How can institutions identify ways to increase satisfaction and build community connections among students of color, especially African American and Asian students?
- Consider the implications of low student satisfaction levels for graduating seniors when it comes to alumni engagement. What initiatives can be implemented to increase student satisfaction levels each year students are enrolled?
- How can institutions build on the high satisfaction levels of students working on campus?
- What are the opportunities for building community and strengthening satisfaction among students living off campus?

#### SOURCE OF DATA

213,573 students from 318 private institutions completing the RNL Student Satisfaction Inventory Form A during academic years 2015–16, 2016–17, or 2017–18.

For a complete breakdown of the data, please see the Appendix (available separately).





## Student satisfaction for demographic subpopulations at **four-year public universities**

INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE	Satisfied Overall
First choice	65%
Second choice	49%
Third choice	31%

The greatest differences in satisfaction are reflected between students attending their first-choice institution and those attending their second- or third-choice institutions. These results are similar to the results of students at four-year private institutions.

RACE/ETHNICITY	Satisfied Overall
Caucasian	62%
African American	45%
Asian	45%
Hispanic	58%

African American and Asian students are much less satisfied than Caucasian and Hispanic students. Caucasian and Hispanic students are slightly more satisfied at four-year public institutions than they are at four-year privates.

CLASS LEVEL	Satisfied Overall
Freshmen	54%
Sophomores	55%
Juniors	57%
Seniors	58%

Satisfaction levels increase with each class level. This is a different trend from the one observed at four-year private institutions.

The likelihood to re-enroll pattern is reversed from the satisfaction results, with seniors having the higher satisfaction levels and lowest re-enrollment likelihood while freshmen have the opposite result.

CLASS LEVEL	Re-enrollment Likelihood
Freshmen	63%
Sophomores	61%
Juniors	62%
Seniors	60%

Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far

**SCORING** ▾

- Not satisfied at all
- Not very satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

Percentages indicate the proportions of “satisfied” or “very satisfied” scores.

83 percent of African American students and 86 percent of Hispanic students indicate that financial aid is an important factor in their decision to enroll, as compared to 79 percent for Caucasian students.

GENDER	Satisfied Overall
Males	52%
Females	60%

Female students are more satisfied than males.

AGE	Satisfied Overall
24 and younger	56%
25 and older	60%

Older students are more satisfied than younger students. Older students at four-year public institutions are also more satisfied than their counterparts at four-year private schools.

Students who indicate they plan to transfer only report satisfaction levels of 32 percent, as compared to 57 percent for students who do not plan to transfer. Early intervention is key, as institutions need to attempt to improve student satisfaction before students have already made the decision to transfer.

EMPLOYMENT	Satisfied Overall
Part-time off campus	56%
Part-time on campus	62%
Not employed	56%

Students working on campus have higher satisfaction levels than students working off campus or not employed.

CURRENT RESIDENCE	Satisfied Overall
Residence hall	55%
Off campus	58%

Students living off campus are slightly more satisfied than students living on campus.

### Opportunities to consider at four-year public institutions:

- What can be done during the recruitment process to influence institutional choice?
- How can institutions better engage second- and third-choice students in order to increase their satisfaction levels?
- How can institutions identify ways to increase satisfaction and build community among students of color, especially African American and Asian students?
- Consider the possible ways to build satisfaction for first-year students while also emphasizing the re-enrollment message for upper-class students.
- How can institutions build on the high satisfaction levels of students working on campus?
- What are the opportunities for building community and strengthening satisfaction among students living on campus?

#### SOURCE OF DATA

64,377 students from 60 public universities completing the RNL Student Satisfaction Inventory Form A during academic years 2015-16, 2016-17, or 2017-18.

For a complete breakdown of the data, please see the Appendix (available separately).



## Student satisfaction for demographic subpopulations at **two-year community and technical colleges**

INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE	Satisfied Overall
First choice	71%
Second choice	54%
Third choice	34%

The greatest differences in satisfaction are reflected between students attending their first-choice institution and those at their second- or third-choice institutions.

RACE/ETHNICITY	Satisfied Overall
Caucasian	67%
African American	64%
Asian	58%
Hispanic	68%

Satisfaction levels are more similar for Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic students at community colleges than they are at four-year private and public institutions. Asian students continue to be the most dissatisfied of the groups.

GENDER	Satisfied Overall
Males	61%
Female students	67%

Female students are more satisfied than males.

AGE	Satisfied Overall
24 and younger	62%
25 and older	70%

Adult learners have greater satisfaction than traditional-aged students.

Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far

**SCORING**

- Not satisfied at all
- Not very satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

Percentages indicate the proportions of “satisfied” or “very satisfied” scores.

**84 percent of African American and Hispanic students indicate that financial aid is an important factor in their decision to enroll, compared to 76 percent for Caucasian students.**

CLASS LOAD	Satisfied Overall
Full-time	64%
Part-time	65%

Part-time and full-time students have nearly identical satisfaction levels.

EMPLOYMENT	Satisfied Overall
Part-time off campus	64%
Part-time on campus	64%
Not employed	66%

Satisfaction varies only slightly by employment status.

EDUCATIONAL GOAL	Satisfied Overall
Associate degree	66%
Transfer to another institution	62%

Students with a goal of obtaining an associate degree indicate slightly higher satisfaction than students with a goal of transferring to another institution.

### Opportunities to consider at two-year community and technical colleges:

- What can be done during the recruitment process to influence institutional choice?
- How can institutions better engage second- and third-choice students in order to increase their satisfaction levels?
- Consider the student population's average age. If it trends younger, can institutions be intentional with attracting older students? Can institutions also work to build engagement and satisfaction with the students coming straight from high school?
- Can institutions target specific initiatives to increase student satisfaction levels among students who have a stated goal of transferring to another school?

#### SOURCE OF DATA

142,906 students from 185 community and technical colleges completing the RNL Student Satisfaction Inventory Form A during academic years 2015-16, 2016-17, or 2017-18. For a complete breakdown of the data, please see the Appendix (available separately).



## Student satisfaction for demographic subpopulations of **adult undergraduate students**

<b>INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE</b>	Satisfied Overall
First choice	<b>76%</b>
Second choice	<b>58%</b>
Third choice	<b>36%</b>

Similar to the results observed for traditional students, the greatest differences in satisfaction are reflected between students attending their first-choice institution and those at their second- or third-choice institutions.

<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>	Satisfied Overall
Caucasian	<b>70%</b>
African American	<b>71%</b>
Asian	<b>66%</b>
Hispanic	<b>71%</b>

Among adult undergraduate students, African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian students reflect similar satisfaction scores, with all three groups more satisfied than Asian students.

<b>GENDER</b>	Satisfied Overall
Males	<b>69%</b>
Females	<b>69%</b>

Male and female adult undergraduate students have the same satisfaction levels.

<b>AGE</b>	Satisfied Overall
24 and younger	<b>66%</b>
25 to 34	<b>65%</b>
35 to 44	<b>71%</b>
45 and older	<b>76%</b>

Satisfaction levels increase significantly for undergraduate students older than 35, with three out of every four students above the age of 45 indicating they are satisfied.

Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far

**SCORING** ▾

- Not satisfied at all
- Not very satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied**
- Very satisfied

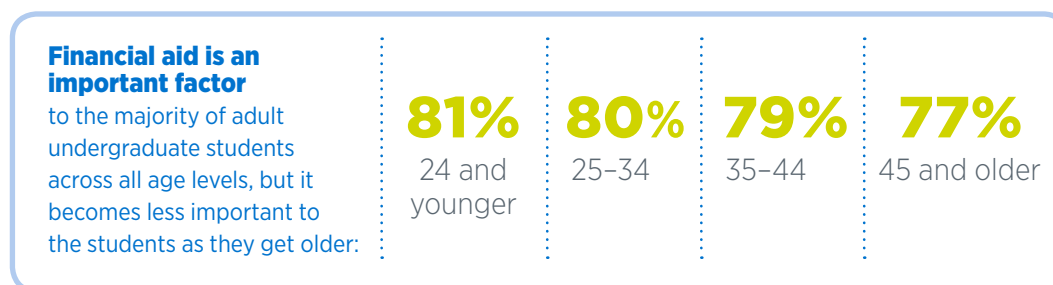
Percentages indicate the proportions of “satisfied” or “very satisfied” scores.

EMPLOYMENT	Satisfied Overall
Part-time off campus	66%
Full-time off campus	71%
Not employed	68%

Among adult students, those working full-time off campus indicate the highest levels of satisfaction. These results may be because if they are managing full-time work and school, they would not be enrolled if they were not satisfied.

CLASS LOAD	Satisfied Overall
Full-time	68%
Part-time	72%

Adult undergraduate students who are enrolled part-time are more satisfied than students enrolled full-time.



**Opportunities to consider for adult undergraduate students:**

- What can be done during the recruitment process to influence institutional choice?
- How can institutions better engage second- and third-choice students in order to increase their satisfaction levels?
- What are the opportunities to increase satisfaction levels of younger adult students (25-34)?

**SOURCE OF DATA**

30,294 adult undergraduate students from 158 institutions completing the RNL Adult Student Priorities Survey during academic years 2015-16, 2016-17, or 2017-18. For a complete breakdown of the data, please see the Appendix (available separately).



## Student satisfaction for demographic subpopulations of **graduate students**

<b>INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE</b>	Satisfied Overall
First choice	<b>72%</b>
Second choice	<b>56%</b>
Third choice	<b>35%</b>

Satisfaction levels for graduate students also decline significantly for those not attending their first-choice institution.

<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>	Satisfied Overall
Caucasian	<b>67%</b>
African American	<b>70%</b>
Asian	<b>63%</b>
Hispanic	<b>71%</b>

Among graduate students, Hispanic and African American students reflect the highest satisfaction scores, with Asian graduate students having the lowest scores.

<b>GENDER</b>	Satisfied Overall
Males	<b>67%</b>
Females	<b>66%</b>

Male and female graduate students have similar satisfaction levels.

<b>AGE</b>	Satisfied Overall
24 and younger	<b>63%</b>
25 to 34	<b>62%</b>
35 to 44	<b>68%</b>
45 and older	<b>74%</b>

Satisfaction levels jump for students 45 years of age and older.

Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far

**SCORING** ▾

- Not satisfied at all
- Not very satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

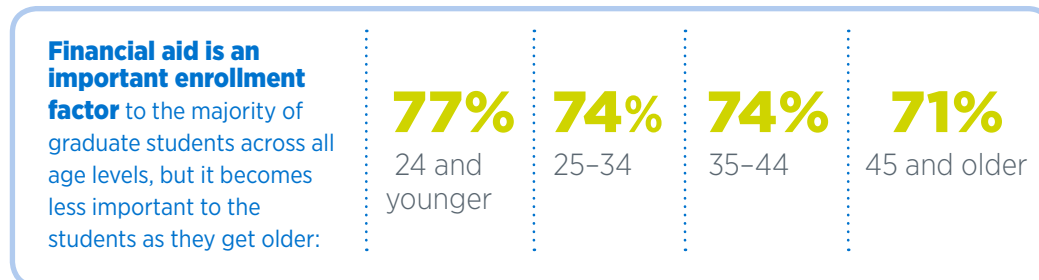
Percentages indicate the proportions of “satisfied” or “very satisfied” scores.

EMPLOYMENT	Satisfied Overall
Part-time off campus	63%
Full-time off campus	69%
Not employed	62%

Graduate students working full-time off campus indicate the highest levels of satisfaction. As noted for adult undergraduate students, this may be because if the students are managing full-time work and school, they would not be enrolled if they were not satisfied.

CLASS LOAD	Satisfied Overall
Full-time	65%
Part-time	70%

Graduate students who are enrolled part-time are more satisfied than students enrolled full-time. These part-time students may be the same students who are working full-time.



**Opportunities to consider for graduate students:**

- What can be done during the recruitment process to influence institutional choice?
- How can institutions better engage second- and third-choice students in order to increase their satisfaction levels?
- Consider opportunities to raise satisfaction levels among Asian students.
- What are the opportunities to increase satisfaction levels of younger graduate students (25-34)?

**SOURCE OF DATA**

36,988 graduate students from 158 institutions completing the RNL Adult Student Priorities Survey during academic years 2015-16, 2016-17, or 2017-18. For a complete breakdown of the data, please see the Appendix (available separately).





## Student satisfaction for demographic subpopulations of **online learners**

ENROLLMENT STATUS	Satisfied Overall
Primarily online	<b>75%</b>
Primarily on campus	<b>53%</b>

For students enrolled in online courses, those taking their classes primarily online are much more satisfied than students who are enrolled primarily in on-campus courses.

As with satisfaction, students who take courses primarily online have much higher re-enrollment likelihood levels than those who take online courses but are primarily enrolled on campus.

ENROLLMENT STATUS	Re-enrollment Likelihood
Primarily online	<b>76%</b>
Primarily on campus	<b>61%</b>

EDUCATIONAL GOAL	Satisfied Overall
Associate degree	<b>70%</b>
Bachelor's degree	<b>74%</b>
Master's degree	<b>75%</b>
Doctorate/professional degree	<b>72%</b>

Satisfaction levels are similar but are lowest among those who have an educational goal of an associate degree.

GENDER	Satisfied Overall
Males	<b>72%</b>
Females	<b>74%</b>

Male and female online learners have similar satisfaction levels.

Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far

**SCORING** ▾

- Not satisfied at all
- Not very satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied**
- Very satisfied

Percentages indicate the proportions of "satisfied" or "very satisfied" scores.

**Academic reputation is more important to students enrolled primarily online (84 percent) compared to students enrolled primarily on campus (77 percent). For online learners 25 and older, 85 percent say academic reputation is an important factor in enrollment. That figure is 77 percent for students 24 and younger.**

Note: Institutional choice indicators are not gathered on the RNL Priorities Survey for Online Learners.

AGE	Satisfied Overall
24 and younger	67%
25 and older	74%

Students 25 years of age and older have high satisfaction among online learners.

RACE/ETHNICITY	Satisfied Overall
Caucasian	74%
African American	77%
Asian	69%
Hispanic	77%

For online learners, Asian students are the only ethnic group with satisfaction levels below 70 percent.

EMPLOYMENT	Satisfied Overall
Full-time	74%
Part-time	69%
Not employed	74%

For online learners, those who are employed full-time and not employed have the same levels of satisfaction, five points higher than those employed part-time.

91 percent of African American students and 88 percent of Hispanic students indicate that financial aid was an important factor in their decision to enroll; that figure drops to 80 percent for Caucasians.

The vast majority of students also rate financial aid important to their enrollment decision regardless of employment status (88 percent for part-time employment or not employed, 82 percent for those with full-time employment).

### Opportunities to consider for online students:

- For institutions where students take online classes while being enrolled primarily on campus, be mindful of the lower satisfaction levels among these students. Be sure students are receiving the support they need with their online courses. This is especially true at two-year community colleges.
- Are students taking online classes because the class was not available to them on campus? Are students more critical of the online experience when it is not their choice to take online classes?
- What opportunities are available for building satisfaction among students 24 and younger taking online courses?

### SOURCE OF DATA

126,748 online learners from 175 institutions completing the RNL Priorities Survey for Online Learners during academic years 2015-16, 2016-17, or 2017-18.

For a complete breakdown of the data, please see the Appendix (available separately).



## THE IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE

As noted in our research, the area with the greatest difference in satisfaction levels is among students who indicate they are attending their first-choice institution as compared with those students who said they are attending their second- or third-choice institution.

Let's take a closer look at where satisfaction level differences are even more pronounced.

### 1 Higher satisfaction levels with Campus Climate items

Students at their first-choice institution are more likely to have significantly higher satisfaction with:

- It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus.
- I am able to experience intellectual growth here.
- Most students are made to feel welcome on this campus.
- This institution shows concern for students as individuals.
- I feel a sense of pride about my campus.

These items have been linked to overall student satisfaction, individual student retention, and graduation rates. How students feel on campus can make a big difference in whether they choose to stay, transfer to another institution, or drop out. These items are even more critical when it comes to lower satisfaction levels among students who perceive the institution to be their second or third choice. The combination of low satisfaction on these items along with the perception of not wanting to be at the institution can make students more vulnerable to leaving.

### 2 Higher importance of Academic Reputation as a factor in the decision to enroll

Students attending their first-choice institution are more likely to indicate academic reputation as an important factor in their decision to enroll. This perception can affect the way the students see the value of their education.

#### FACTOR TO ENROLL: ACADEMIC REPUTATION

Institution type/population	FIRST-CHOICE STUDENTS	THIRD-CHOICE STUDENTS
Four-year private	80%	70%
Four-year public	76%	66%
Community college	74%	61%
Adult undergraduates	85%	72%
Graduate students	83%	70%

If students do not place a high value on the academic reputation of the institution, they may be more likely to leave the institution if financial aid dollars are not matched after the first year.

### 3 Older students and Caucasian students more likely to be attending their first-choice institution

Higher satisfaction levels are observed across data sets for students 25 years of age and older as well as Caucasian students. They are also more likely to be attending their first-choice institution. Conversely, this means there are opportunities to improve institutional choice perceptions for students 24 years of age and younger as well as with students of color.

#### PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS ATTENDING FIRST-CHOICE INSTITUTION

Demographic	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE	FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC	COMMUNITY COLLEGE
24 and younger	60%	59%	64%
25 and older	66%	73%	82%
Caucasian	67%	68%	74%
African American	50%	46%	64%
Asian	50%	55%	66%
Hispanic	54%	57%	68%

#### PERCENTAGE OF ADULT AND GRADUATE STUDENTS ATTENDING FIRST-CHOICE INSTITUTION

Institution type/population	ADULT UNDERGRADUATE	GRADUATE STUDENTS
24 and younger	59%	70%
25-34	66%	71%
35-44	71%	73%
45 and older	75%	76%
Caucasian	75%	78%
African American	59%	63%
Asian	64%	68%
Hispanic	65%	70%

## ✓ INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE TAKEAWAYS

The good news is that institutional choice is a demographic variable that colleges and universities may be able to influence. Unless institutions change who they are recruiting and/or serving, they are not likely to change the mix of other demographic variables on their campuses such as gender, age, race/ethnicity or class level. Institutions can influence institutional choice through recruitment messaging, engagement building, and positive on-campus messaging. When campus leadership understands the impact that institutional choice has on campus perceptions of academic reputation as well as on the populations who are more likely to indicate the institution was their second or third choice, opportunities to change the way students are recruited and re-recruited can be implemented.

## MOVING TO ACTION

### How do campuses use data from the RNL Satisfaction-Priorities Surveys to make positive changes?

**Student satisfaction surveys from Ruffalo Noel Levitz are designed to be actionable.**

The surveys uncover priority items for improvement by identifying areas where students express a high level of importance along with a low level of satisfaction. Additionally, the surveys allow you to compare your findings to **peer institution benchmarks** and to monitor and track improvements in specific areas. The opportunity to slice data sets by **demographic subpopulations** allows for greater focus on certain student populations and opportunities to implement targeted initiatives for specific groups.

Actions that colleges and universities deploy range from changing policies and procedures to intentionally communicating with students to change their perceptions. Among the top priority areas for improvement indicated by students are financial aid services, timely feedback from faculty, ability to register for classes with few conflicts, and the perception of the tuition paid being a worthwhile investment.

For more information on top strengths and challenges by institution and student type, download the 2017 National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report, available here:

[RuffaloNL.com/benchmark](https://RuffaloNL.com/benchmark)

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### Four key uses for RNL Satisfaction-Priorities data

- **Student success, retention, and completion**—to prioritize areas for improvement and to show students that their institution cares about their experiences.
- **Strategic planning**—to include the student voice in the planning process.
- **Accreditation documentation**—to document areas where the institution has significantly improved the student experience over time.
- **Student recruitment and marketing**—to rank areas of institutional strength and importance factors in students' enrollment decisions.

Findings from the RNL Satisfaction-Priorities Surveys are specifically designed to be *used* and are based on **reliable and valid national norms**.

## Using demographic data slices to guide decision making

Here are a few examples of ways institutions can use data from demographic subpopulations to inform actions. In addition to the standard demographic variables reflected on a national level, institutions also have the ability to customize a list of majors/programs specific to their institution. These data slices can be very insightful. Faculty may be more receptive to the results that are unique to “their” students.

For example, institutions could explore if challenges were more or less of an issue for a particular subpopulation:



### CHALLENGE: ABILITY TO REGISTER FOR CLASSES WITH FEW CONFLICTS

- **Class level:** Freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors
- **Enrollment status:** Day, evening or full-time, part-time
- **Major/program**



### CHALLENGE: ADEQUATE FINANCIAL AID IS AVAILABLE FOR MOST STUDENTS

- **Class level:** Freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors
- **Race/ethnicity:** Caucasian, African American, Asian, Hispanic
- **Employment status:** Part-time off campus, part-time on campus, not employed



### CHALLENGE: IT IS AN ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCE TO BE A STUDENT ON THIS CAMPUS

- **Class level:** Freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors
- **Race/ethnicity:** Caucasian, African American, Asian, Hispanic
- **Institutional choice:** First choice, second choice, third choice



### CHALLENGE: THE QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION I RECEIVE IN MOST OF MY CLASSES IS EXCELLENT

- **Class level:** Freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors
- **Enrollment status:** Primarily online, primarily on-campus
- **Major/program**



### CHALLENGE: FACULTY PROVIDE TIMELY FEEDBACK ABOUT STUDENT PROGRESS IN A COURSE

- **Class level:** Freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors
- **Enrollment status:** Day, evening or full-time, part-time
- **Major/program**

By understanding where an item is more of a concern, targeted initiatives can be put in place to improve the student experience.

## Ready to benchmark your students' satisfaction and priorities with RNL Satisfaction-Priorities Surveys?

### It's easy to survey your students with RNL surveys.

By capturing both how satisfied students are, as well as levels of importance, the **Ruffalo Noel Levitz Satisfaction-Priorities Surveys** provide valuable insights for campus planning and strategy. Institutions can pinpoint their greatest challenges as well as areas of success that should be promoted. Colleges and universities use these surveys for:

See survey samples at  
[RuffaloNL.com/  
SatisfactionSurveys](https://RuffaloNL.com/SatisfactionSurveys)

- Student retention planning
- Campuswide planning projects
- Accreditation documentation
- Benefits that should be promoted in student recruitment

### Surveys specific to the populations you serve



The **RNL Student Satisfaction Inventory**, the original instrument, is designed for traditional students who are primarily enrolled on campus.



The **RNL Adult Student Priorities Survey** is available for undergraduate and graduate students at four-year institutions, primarily enrolled on campus.



The **Priorities Survey for Online Learners** is for students enrolled online at four-year or two-year institutions, at the undergraduate or graduate level.

### Why administer the survey instruments from RNL?



They measure both the level of satisfaction and the level of importance, giving you results that show what truly matters to students.



The surveys capture perceptions of the student experience inside and outside of the classroom.



You can track institutional trends, year over year, to show improvements in student satisfaction.



Most surveys can be completed in just 20 minutes online or with paper and pencil.



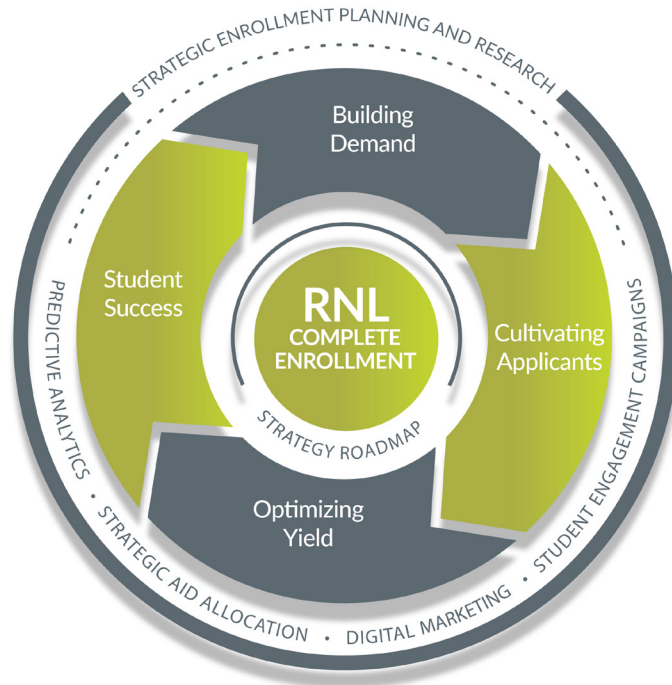
You receive benchmarks within two weeks that compare your students' scores to peer institutions, so you know where your students are significantly more or less satisfied.

## ABOUT RUFFALO NOEL LEVITZ

Ruffalo Noel Levitz is the leading provider of higher education enrollment, student success, and fundraising solutions. More than 1,900 colleges, universities, and nonprofit organizations rely on RNL for advanced analytics, personalized engagement, and industry-leading insights to achieve their missions. The firm is distinguished by its powerful portfolio of solutions focused on the entire lifecycle of enrollment and fundraising, assuring students find the right college or university, graduate on time, secure their first job, and give back to support the next generation. Ruffalo Noel Levitz conferences, research reports, papers, and articles help clients stay on top of current trends.

### Learn more about our solutions for student success

Our student success solutions include student motivational assessments, satisfaction and priorities assessments, predictive modeling for student retention, career services management, and student retention consulting.



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Visit [RuffaloNL.com/StudentSuccess](https://RuffaloNL.com/StudentSuccess) for more details, email [ContactUs@RuffaloNL.com](mailto:ContactUs@RuffaloNL.com), or call 800.876.1117

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