

## Sixth Annual National Research Study

# 2011 National Freshman Attitudes Report

## Special focus: Attitudes that may limit academic engagement

This report describes self-reported attitudes and motivations of first-year college students nationally at the beginning of the undergraduate experience, based on a 100-item motivational assessment administered in the summer and fall of 2010. Highlighted this year are attitudes that may limit academic engagement, suggesting the need for educational interventions. For context, references to earlier Noel-Levitz National Freshman Attitude Reports are included, along with a detailed appendix.

Among the highlights:

- More than 44 percent of incoming freshmen nationally agreed with the statement, "Math has always been a challenge for me," with even higher percentages agreeing among first-generation freshmen (48 percent) and adult, nontraditional-age freshmen (53 percent).
- Only 63 percent of incoming freshmen agreed with the statement, "I am capable of writing a very clear and well-organized paper," a percentage that was lower among students at two-year public and private institutions (55 percent) than at four-year public and private institutions (65-67 percent).
- Male freshmen, especially, acknowledged their irregular study habits and a limited enjoyment of books and reading, along with uncertainty about the value of their college education.
- Reflecting the uncertain economy, nearly one-third of incoming freshmen (31 percent) and even more first-generation freshmen (40 percent) arrived on campuses last fall indicating they had "very distracting and troublesome" financial problems.

The appendix of this report includes additional details on all 100 attitudes that were measured, offering a distinctive window into the attitudes of entering undergraduates at the beginning of their college experience.

### What are the implications of these findings?

How might colleges and universities respond to this information? With the goal of enhancing student success on campuses, Noel-Levitz offers some conclusions and suggestions in the appendix on how institutions of higher learning may want to approach this cohort of students differently based on the findings in this year's report.



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By examining the attitudes of first-year students at the very beginning of their college experience, this annual study adds another layer to existing national research on college freshmen.

## Highlights

Many incoming freshmen bring attitudes and behaviors that may limit their academic engagement .....	4
Some students receptive to academic assistance; others less so .....	5
Incoming male students, especially, bring potentially self-limiting attitudes and behaviors .....	6
Incoming adult learners less confident in their academic abilities, but generally more academically engaged .....	7
Financial concerns continue to weigh on the minds of many students; some improvement evident between fall 2009 and fall 2010 .....	8

## Appendix

Part A—Some conclusions and suggestions from Noel-Levitz .....	9
Part B—Additional findings .....	12
—all findings for first-generation vs. non-first-generation students	
—all findings for public and private, four-year and two-year institutions	
—demographic breakdown of the student respondents	
About Noel-Levitz and the survey instrument used in this study .....	20



### View more freshman attitudes online by race/ethnicity, by gender, and for nontraditional-age learners

Visit [www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport](http://www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport) to access the entire series of National Freshman Attitudes Reports from Noel-Levitz, including previous reports that looked at the data by gender, by race/ethnicity, and by students' age.



## The source of data

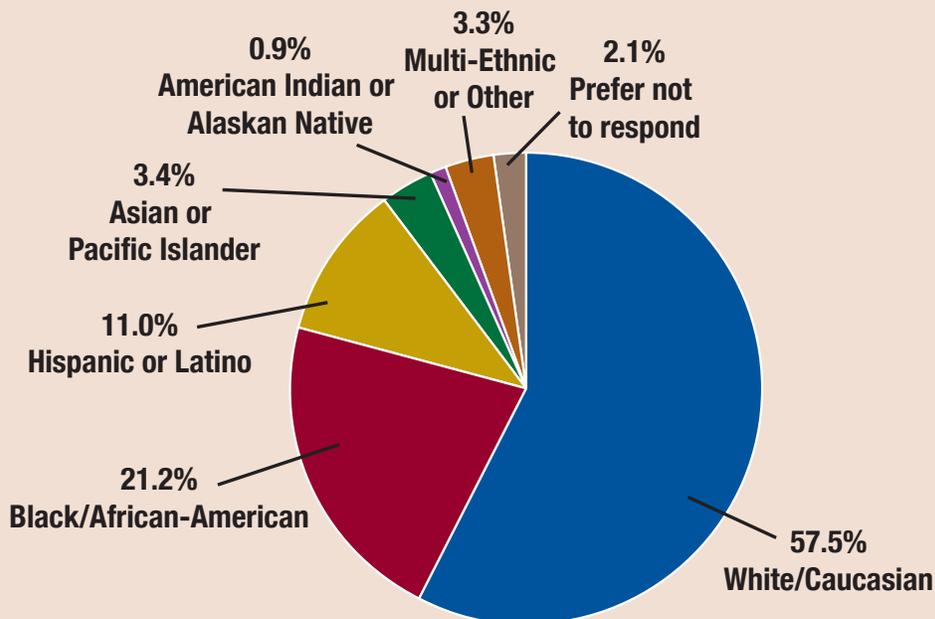
In the summer and fall of 2010, a total of 99,368 incoming first-year students at 321 colleges and universities nationwide completed a 100-item attitudinal survey during orientation or within their first weeks of classes. The survey examined a broad range of motivational attitudes that students brought with them to their collegiate learning experience. Students completed the survey online or used a traditional paper-and-pencil format.

Respondents were enrolled at a broad cross-section of institutions, with 45.6 percent of respondents coming from four-year private institutions, 32.6 percent from four-year public institutions, and 21.8 percent from two-year institutions. Consistent with national enrollment trends, a slight majority of respondents (52.3 percent) were female. The average age of respondents was 20.6.

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

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

See the appendix on pages 12-18 for additional findings, including a demographic breakdown of the data sample.



A broad cross-section of students and institutions were represented in this study. The ethnic/racial breakdown of respondents was 57.5 percent White/Caucasian, 21.2 percent Black/African-American, 11.0 percent Hispanic or Latino, 3.4 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 0.9 percent American Indian or Alaskan Native, 3.3 percent Multi-Ethnic or Other, and 2.1 percent preferred not to respond. For more details, please see the information above and in the appendix on page 17.

**Highlights from  
the findings**

**Many incoming freshmen bring attitudes and behaviors that may limit their academic engagement, suggesting a need for educational interventions**

When they arrived on campuses in fall 2010, many incoming freshmen brought attitudes and behaviors that signaled limited academic engagement, including irregular study habits, concerns about their abilities in math and writing, and questions about the value of a college education, as shown in Table 1 below. In particular, incoming first-generation students and incoming students at two-year institutions were concerned about their abilities in math and writing (see the first two entries below). For the complete data set and for multi-year trend data, please refer to the appendix on pages 12-18 and reports from previous years available at [www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport](http://www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport).

**Table 1: Attitudes and Behaviors of Incoming Freshmen in Fall 2010 That May Influence Their Academic Engagement—Highlights From the Data Set**

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2010)

Selected survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	First-generation students	Non-first-generation students	OVERALL national percentages
Math has always been a challenge for me.	41.5%	42.0%	53.0%	48.1%	42.5%	44.2%
I am capable of writing a very clear and well-organized paper.	66.5%	64.7%	55.1%	57.3%	66.0%	63.4%
My studying is very irregular and unpredictable.	32.3%	33.7%	31.9%	33.5%	32.2%	32.6%
I take very careful notes during class, and I review them thoroughly before a test.	62.1%	61.4%	64.1%	65.2%	61.1%	62.3%
I get a great deal of personal satisfaction from reading.	49.6%	45.9%	46.7%	47.6%	47.9%	47.8%
I often wonder if a college education is really worth all the time, money, and effort that I'm being asked to spend on it.	17.5%	17.1%	17.2%	19.3%	16.4%	17.3%

Incoming freshmen began the academic year 2010-2011 with a variety of attitudes that may compromise their ability to engage with college coursework, suggesting the importance of academic interventions. Above, 44 percent of entering freshmen overall indicated “Math has always been a challenge for me,” and only 63 percent of entering students agreed with the statement, “I am capable of writing a very clear and well-organized paper.”

## Some students receptive to academic assistance; others less so

Freshman attitudes toward receiving academic assistance from the college or university varied. As shown below, a range of 28 to 57 percent of incoming freshmen overall agreed with the statements in Table 2, depending on the specific statement being measured. Non-first-generation students were consistently less receptive to academic assistance than were their first-generation counterparts.

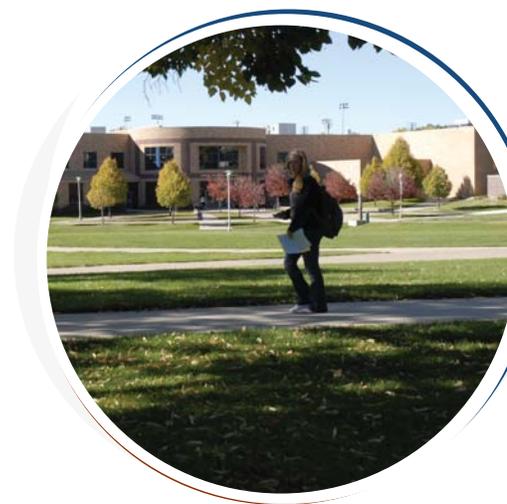
**Table 2: Receptivity to Academic Assistance Among Entering Freshmen in Fall 2010—  
Highlights From the Data Set**

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2010)

Selected survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	First-generation students	Non-first-generation students	OVERALL national percentages
I would like to receive some individual help in improving my math skills.	44.8%	49.4%	52.2%	54.1%	45.3%	47.9%
I would like to receive some individual help in improving my writing skills.	45.1%	46.8%	42.7%	50.8%	42.6%	45.1%
I would like to receive some help in improving my study habits.	55.1%	60.2%	56.4%	61.8%	54.9%	57.0%
I would like to receive some training to improve my reading skills.	27.3%	29.1%	28.8%	34.0%	25.7%	28.2%

Notably, approximately half of incoming freshmen nationally indicated they welcomed academic assistance in the areas of writing, math, and study skills. However, less than a third (28 percent) indicated they welcomed assistance with reading skills.

Successful completion of an academic degree can be affected by a student's willingness to accept assistance provided by an institution. For additional measures of receptivity to assistance, see the appendix on pages 15 and 16.



**Highlights from  
the findings**

**Incoming male students, especially, bring potentially self-limiting attitudes and behaviors**

Compared to their female counterparts, many more incoming male students in fall 2010 brought attitudes that may influence their academic engagement, as shown in Table 3 below. Higher percentages of males reported irregular study habits and uncertainty about the value of the education they were receiving, while lower percentage of males reported enjoyment of books and reading.

**Table 3: Attitudes and Behaviors of Incoming Male Freshmen in Fall 2010 That May Influence Their Academic Engagement—Highlights From the Data Set**

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2010)

Selected survey items	Males	Females	Difference between males and females	OVERALL national percentages
My studying is very irregular and unpredictable.	37.8%	28.0%	9.8%	32.6%
I take very careful notes during class, and I review them thoroughly before a test.	51.6%	71.9%	20.3%	62.3%
I have developed a solid system of self-discipline, which helps me keep up with my schoolwork.	54.7%	62.7%	8.0%	58.9%
I study very hard for all my courses, even those I don't like.	52.6%	66.3%	13.7%	59.8%
Books have never gotten me very excited.	48.4%	32.4%	16.0%	40.0%
I get a great deal of personal satisfaction from reading.	39.0%	55.8%	16.8%	47.8%
Over the years, books have broadened my horizons and stimulated my imagination.	49.5%	63.6%	14.1%	56.9%
I don't enjoy reading serious books and articles, and I only do it when I have to.	46.4%	42.7%	3.7%	44.4%
I often wonder if a college education is really worth all the time, money, and effort that I'm being asked to spend on it.	21.1%	13.7%	7.4%	17.3%
Of all the things I could do at this point in my life, going to college is definitely the most satisfying.	82.5%	89.1%	6.6%	86.0%
I am deeply committed to my educational goals, and I'm fully prepared to make the effort and sacrifices that will be needed to attain them.	88.5%	93.4%	4.9%	91.0%

Male students tended to bring attitudes that reflected a lower level of academic engagement. Above, only 52 percent of males versus 72 percent of females indicated, "I take very careful notes during class, and I review them thoroughly before a test." In addition, only 50 percent of males versus 64 percent of females indicated "Over the years, books have broadened my horizons and stimulated my imagination."

Note: Be sure to consider the inverse of the percentages shown, too. For example, while 83 percent of males agreed that "Of all the things I could do at this point in my life, going to college is the most satisfying," the inverse of that figure, 17 percent, indicates that some males were unable to affirm the statement.

**Do the findings in this study reflect the perceptions of your students? What areas ring especially true for the students whom you serve?**

## Incoming adult learners less confident in their academic abilities, but generally more academically engaged than their traditional-age counterparts

Compared to their younger, traditional-age counterparts, incoming adult learners in fall 2010 were less confident in their academic abilities, as shown in Table 4 below. However, a higher percentage of these students brought attitudes and behaviors that signaled greater academic engagement, ranging from enjoying reading to carefully taking or reviewing course notes, to picking up new vocabulary words with relative ease.

**Table 4: Attitudes and Behaviors of Incoming Adult Learners in Fall 2010—  
Highlights From the Data Set**

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2010)

Selected survey items	Students age 25 and older	Students age 16 to 24	Difference between age groups	OVERALL national percentages
<b>Adult learners less confident...</b>				
I have a hard time understanding and solving complex math problems.	53.0%	45.0%	8.0%	46.1%
Math has always been a challenge for me.	53.1%	42.8%	10.3%	44.2%
I have a very good understanding of general biology (e.g. cell structure, metabolism, genetics, and the circulatory system)	34.1%	38.5%	4.4%	37.9%
My understanding of the physical sciences is very weak.	32.6%	26.3%	6.3%	27.2%
I am capable of writing a very clear and well-organized paper.	60.7%	63.8%	3.1%	63.4%
<b>...but generally more academically engaged than traditional-age students...</b>				
I have always enjoyed the challenge of trying to solve complex math problems.	42.1%	37.4%	4.7%	38.0%
I take very careful notes during class, and I review them thoroughly before a test.	74.2%	60.5%	13.7%	62.3%
I get a great deal of personal satisfaction from reading.	63.9%	45.3%	18.6%	47.8%
Over the years, books have broadened my horizons and stimulated my imagination.	68.4%	55.1%	13.3%	56.9%
I pick up new vocabulary words quickly, and I find it easy to use them in speech and writing.	65.9%	55.4%	10.5%	56.8%

**Many incoming adult learners indicated a lower level of confidence than traditional-age students in the areas of math, writing, and science.**

Compared to traditional-age students, educators can expect greater percentages of incoming adult learners to benefit from experiences that foster academic confidence.

**Highlights from  
the findings**

**Financial concerns continue to weigh on the minds of many students;  
some improvement evident between fall 2009 and fall 2010**

Substantial levels of financial anxiety continued in fall 2010, with nearly one-third of student respondents overall (31 percent) reporting that they had financial problems that were “very distracting and troublesome,” a percentage that was virtually unchanged from fall 2009. Many first-generation students, in particular, brought concerns about finances. However, the proportion of respondents that indicated “I have the financial resources I need to finish college,” rose to 46 percent, up slightly from fall 2009. For additional findings such as students’ receptivity to financial guidance, and the number of hours students expected to work, please see Part B of the Appendix.

**How can you address the financial concerns of incoming students? See some recommendations on page 10.**

**Table 5: Attitudes of Incoming Freshmen in Fall 2010 Reflecting a Lack of Financial Security—Highlights From the Data Set**

**Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2010)**

Selected survey items	Year	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	First-generation students	Non-first-generation students	OVERALL national percentages
<b>Sense of financial security</b>							
I have financial problems that are very distracting and troublesome.	Fall 2010	31.3%	27.7%	34.0%	40.2%	26.6%	30.7%
	Fall 2009	31.6%	26.5%	35.6%	40.2%	26.9%	30.8%
	Fall 2008	29.2%	26.3%	35.0%	38.3%	25.5%	29.3%
	Fall 2007	27.9%	26.1%	35.5%	38.2%	24.9%	28.7%
I have the financial resources that I need to finish college.	Fall 2010	46.3%	46.7%	45.5%	39.0%	49.5%	46.3%
	Fall 2009	45.0%	47.2%	44.1%	38.7%	48.5%	45.5%
	Fall 2008	46.4%	47.9%	43.8%	38.5%	49.9%	46.4%
	Fall 2007	47.3%	48.9%	44.7%	39.3%	50.8%	47.4%

The effects of the economy on freshmen attitudes continued to be especially pronounced among first-generation students. Above, fully 40 percent of first-generation freshmen in fall 2010 reported having “financial problems that are very distracting and troublesome,” identical to fall 2009.

## Appendix A: Some conclusions and suggestions from Noel-Levitz regarding the findings

To assist educators with finding practical ways to use this research to enhance freshman success, Noel-Levitz offers some conclusions and suggestions below on how institutions of higher learning may want to approach this cohort of students differently based on the findings. The recommendations are divided into two sections—*Identifying strategies and Setting priorities*—and often extend beyond traditional academic support.

### Identifying strategies

This year's report focuses on attitudes that may compromise academic engagement if not addressed. As the data demonstrate, many of today's entering freshmen bring attitudes that need to be addressed through interventions, including apprehensions about academic abilities, minimal enjoyment of books and reading, and poor self-reported study habits. The fact that many students are also struggling with the burden of financial concerns adds to the complexity of the situation. The following are a few direct suggestions on how to proactively approach the fall 2010 freshman cohort and future incoming freshman cohorts, based on the report findings.

#### Reach out to both receptive and less-receptive students

As your experience may confirm, these data demonstrate that many students indicated high levels of receptivity to academic assistance, whereas many others did not. Acknowledging this difference among the students you serve, how are you paving the way for students who are receptive to academic, personal, career, financial, and social support to get connected to the resources they need during their first weeks of classes? Comparably, for the less-receptive students, especially those hard-to-reach students who have academic needs but who indicate low receptivity to assistance, what barriers or indicators may be interfering with students' receptivity to help, and how might these be addressed through interventions?

In addition, what interventions might you target toward various cohorts you serve? For instance, some first-generation students, in

particular, are reaching out for support. Is your campus proactively extending its services to first-generation students, programmatically and individually?

Note that you can use a Noel-Levitz survey<sup>1</sup> and conduct focus groups to pursue the answers to these questions and to make it easier to connect students to the resources they need. In addition, you might consider using peer tutors, success coaches, and learning communities to strengthen your interventions with the students you serve.

#### Dig deeper to more fully understand the attitudes of males

In this study, males report less-well-developed study habits than females, less enjoyment of books and reading, and greater uncertainty about the value of their college education. What might be underlying this phenomenon? We encourage you to verify and further explore the relevance of these findings to your campus, since national trends may not fully reflect the perceptions and attitudes of students on your campus. Do the findings in this study reflect the perceptions of your students? What areas ring especially true for the students whom you serve?

Stating a truism, the best way to find out about students' attitudes and motivations is to ask students through an ongoing discourse. To closely monitor students' concerns, you might also consider conducting surveys and focus groups to explore male students' attitudes and issues on your campus. Depending on what you learn, you may want to consider developing male-focused initiatives that build study skills, encourage reading, and that demonstrate the value of going to college. For example,

engaging male students in discussions about *the relevancy* of their academic studies in relation to their career and personal goals may be a productive way to strengthen their academic involvement and accompanying levels of effort. With the career orientation of many of today's students, especially males, such discussions, including the pertinence of critical thinking and skill-sets needed in future careers, may be useful in heightening students' commitment to college.

### **Build up the academic confidence of adult learners**

Since many adult learners return to college with more engaged attitudes toward reading than the traditional learner, but with less confidence in math, you may want to encourage their enrollment during the first term in courses that will capitalize on their reading to help them build a foundation for success. Clearly, though, we can't assume that all adult learners lack math confidence and are avid readers. By treating adult learners as individuals, and ensuring their enrollment in courses that align with their interests and aptitudes, we position them for successful re-entry experiences, strengthening their academic identity. Further confidence can be established as they gain ability to navigate the new college environment and balance this with their personal and work responsibilities. Be sure your adult learners know how to access academic support services, so that those with apprehensions in writing or math know how to sign up for academic support. Too, review your tutorial services for times and delivery methods that are accessible to your adult learners.

In some cases, the confidence of adult students may be easier to address than it is for traditional-age learners, as adult students' lack of confidence may result from their memories of a prior lack of success in school, which can now be overcome with their greater maturity and their strong study skills and academic engagement. Adult learners who exert more effort than they did when they were in school the last time around will enjoy better results, leading to a new level of confidence and a strengthened academic identity.

### **Identify interventions that address students' concerns about finances**

An effective first step to offset financial concerns is to regularly communicate with students and parents about the value of the education they are receiving. By reminding them of the rationale for going to college, and by emphasizing the quality of education you offer, you are helping them to value the college experience and to remain committed to staying enrolled. Some additional suggestions: make information easier to obtain on financial aid, scholarships, part-time jobs, and scholarships available from outside organizations; strive to confirm awards and on-campus job assignments earlier; equip students and parents with stronger financial literacy skills for managing their personal finances; and strive to expand student employment opportunities on your campus to address student financial concerns while increasing students' engagement with your institution.

### **Setting priorities**

In this section we offer some broad suggestions for prioritizing and justifying retention initiatives. With budgets getting tighter on campuses, it is important to strategically consolidate efforts on the most productive initiatives and to sharpen the focus of campus initiatives aimed at increasing persistence, progression, retention, and completion rates.

### **Identify high-priority subgroups**

As demonstrated by the data in our National Freshman Attitude Reports and by the previous discussion above, various subgroups of students bring different attitudes. Although it is possible for a college or university to have a group of students with minimal variances by subgroup, it is rare. More often, when we are carefully looking at an institution's first-year student profile, we see pronounced differences by subgroups. Identifying these differences becomes the starting point for designing targeted interventions aimed at influencing student attitudes and behaviors toward goal attainment. With this in mind, have you examined the differences in attitudes and

persistence for various subgroups on your campus and then re-allocated resources toward the groups most in need and most receptive to interventions?

### **Identify the most significant barriers and opportunities**

The data suggest that many entering students arrive at college with attitudes that speak to their academic and learning needs. In addition, the data identified some barriers to student success, such as financial concerns and a lack of enjoyment of reading. What factors or perceived obstacles may correlate with attrition on your campus? At what points in time do these surface, and which ones are the most pressing or significant?

Are there opportunities on your campus to strategically deploy existing resources and staffing in more productive directions or with renewed intensity toward service at a given time? Are your academic support and living/ learning communities sufficiently staffed and accessible to students? Are colleagues within academic affairs and student affairs in regular communication, to address affective concerns of students? Are you regularly collecting motivational assessment data on your students, using it to support grant-writing or to document your students' needs? Too, what resources or strategies are effective, based on your qualitative and quantitative feedback, that should be expanded or strengthened?

Identifying answers to such questions may be helpful in re-focusing and reinvigorating retention discussions and programming on your campus.

### **Examine the full range of attrition indicators**

In our experience, looking at freshman attitudes is invaluable to understanding persistence and serves as a central focus of student retention programs. But don't stop there. For example, as some of the data in this report suggest, freshman behavior<sup>2</sup> should also be considered such as their actual study habits and their usage of specific services. In addition, it is important to re-evaluate students' academic success and services to students in light of the changing student demographics in your marketplace, in view of students' prior educational experiences, and in view of each department's readiness to serve students effectively, responding to a broad range of learning needs and motivations. In your strategic planning, are you examining, and then individually weighting, the full range of attitudinal, behavioral, demographic, institutional, and environmental risk factors that influence student success and retention?

Questions? Want to discuss your retention strategy? Please contact Noel-Levitz to schedule an appointment with a retention consultant. Call 1-800-876-1117 or e-mail [ContactUs@noellevitz.com](mailto:ContactUs@noellevitz.com).

### **Related references**

Readers may also wish to explore the results from other surveys on the first-year experience such as Your First College Year and the CIRP Freshman Survey. These findings, when combined with the findings in the National Freshman Attitudes Report, can offer a more complete picture of the first-year experience. Noel-Levitz also offers a bibliography of recent research and practice on student retention, available without charge at [www.noellevitz.com](http://www.noellevitz.com).

<sup>1</sup> Educators whose institutions did not participate in this study are welcome to administer the instrument used in this study to their incoming class in summer or early fall 2011 (see page 20 for details).

<sup>2</sup> See the appendix of our recently released Mid-Year Retention Indicators Report for 2010-2011, available at [www.noellevitz.com/benchmarkreports](http://www.noellevitz.com/benchmarkreports), for additional behavioral recommendations such as monitoring students' persistence from term to term and students' ongoing success *throughout* each academic term, not just at mid-term.

## Appendix B: Additional findings and data from fall 2010

Listed in this section are the percentages of entering college students nationally that agreed with all 100 items along with the findings broken down by first-generation versus non-first-generation and by various institution types.

Figures in **bold** in this section indicate greater contrasts between first-generation and non-first-generation students and between students at two-year institutions versus four-year private versus four-year public institutions, *though virtually all differences are statistically significant.*

For a detailed explanation of the statistical processes used to produce these data, please see page 14. For a demographic breakdown of the student respondents, please see pages 17-18.

### Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2010)

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	First-generation students*	Non-first-generation students	OVERALL national percentages
<b>Desire to finish college</b>						
I have a very strong desire to continue my education, and I am quite determined to finish a degree.	96.1%	95.6%	93.8%	95.3%	95.5%	95.4%
I am very strongly dedicated to finishing college no matter what obstacles get in my way.	95.8%	95.0%	93.7%	95.0%	95.1%	95.1%
I am deeply committed to my educational goals, and I'm fully prepared to make the effort and sacrifices that will be needed to attain them.	91.9%	90.6%	90.0%	91.8%	90.8%	91.0%
Of all the things I could do at this point in my life, going to college is definitely the most satisfying.	87.0%	86.3%	83.4%	87.7%	85.3%	86.0%
I often wonder if a college education is really worth all the time, money, and effort that I'm being asked to spend on it.	17.5%	17.1%	17.2%	19.3%	16.4%	17.3%
I can think of many things I would rather do than go to college.	11.2%	11.0%	14.0%	11.9%	11.7%	11.7%
I wish that society did not put so much pressure on people to go to college, as I'd really rather be doing other things at this point in my life.	10.3%	10.6%	12.2%	11.6%	10.4%	10.8%
I dread the thought of going to school for several more years, and there is a part of me that would like to give up the whole thing.	8.7%	8.7%	10.8%	10.4%	8.6%	9.2%
<b>Attitude toward educators</b>						
The teachers I had in school respected me as a person and treated me fairly.	83.0%	83.0%	77.8%	81.2%	82.3%	81.9%
Most of my teachers have been very caring and dedicated.	82.8%	77.4%	79.8%	80.9%	80.2%	80.4%
I liked my teachers, and I feel they did a good job.	77.9%	75.4%	74.0%	75.9%	76.5%	76.2%
Most teachers have a superior attitude that I find very annoying.	15.9%	19.8%	16.5%	17.1%	17.4%	17.3%
Most of the teachers I had in school were too opinionated and inflexible.	15.8%	14.9%	19.2%	18.4%	15.3%	16.3%
In my opinion, many teachers are more concerned about themselves than they are about their students.	13.1%	16.9%	13.6%	14.4%	14.4%	14.4%

\* First-generation students were defined, for this study, as students whose parents did not have any college experience.

**Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2010)**

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	First-generation students	Non-first-generation students	OVERALL national percentages
<b>Intellectual interests</b>						
Over the years, books have broadened my horizons and stimulated my imagination.	59.7%	56.8%	<b>50.9%</b>	53.5%	58.3%	56.9%
I get a great deal of personal satisfaction from reading.	49.6%	45.9%	46.7%	47.6%	47.9%	47.8%
I don't enjoy reading serious books and articles, and I only do it when I have to.	43.5%	46.4%	43.2%	45.4%	43.9%	44.4%
Books have never gotten me very excited.	38.7%	39.6%	43.2%	42.1%	39.1%	40.0%
<b>Study habits</b>						
I take very careful notes during class, and I review them thoroughly before a test.	62.1%	61.4%	64.1%	65.2%	61.1%	62.3%
I study very hard for all my courses, even those I don't like.	61.0%	56.3%	62.5%	63.7%	58.2%	59.8%
I have developed a solid system of self-discipline, which helps me keep up with my schoolwork.	59.9%	58.6%	57.2%	59.3%	58.8%	58.9%
My studying is very irregular and unpredictable.	32.3%	33.7%	31.9%	33.5%	32.2%	32.6%
When I try to study, I usually get bored and quit after a few minutes.	26.2%	30.7%	28.7%	29.4%	27.6%	28.2%
I have great difficulty concentrating on schoolwork, and I often get behind.	20.7%	20.5%	25.8%	24.0%	20.7%	21.7%
<b>Math and science confidence</b>						
I have a very good grasp of the scientific ideas I've studied in school.	50.0%	49.8%	<b>41.0%</b>	42.9%	50.2%	48.0%
I have a hard time understanding and solving complex math problems.	43.8%	45.1%	<b>52.4%</b>	49.8%	44.5%	46.1%
Math has always been a challenge for me.	41.5%	42.0%	<b>53.0%</b>	48.1%	42.5%	44.2%
I have always enjoyed the challenge of trying to solve complex math problems.	40.0%	37.5%	34.5%	38.9%	37.6%	38.0%
I have a very good understanding of general biology (e.g., cell structure, metabolism, genetics, and the circulatory system).	38.6%	40.1%	33.5%	34.2%	39.5%	37.9%
My understanding of the physical sciences is very weak.	26.5%	25.3%	31.3%	<b>31.9%</b>	<b>25.1%</b>	27.2%
<b>Verbal confidence</b>						
I am capable of writing a very clear and well-organized paper.	66.5%	64.7%	<b>55.1%</b>	<b>57.3%</b>	<b>66.0%</b>	63.4%
I pick up new vocabulary words quickly, and I find it easy to use them in my speech and writing.	58.1%	56.2%	55.2%	54.8%	57.7%	56.8%
I am very good at figuring out the deeper meaning of a short story or novel.	57.0%	54.9%	51.2%	52.6%	56.1%	55.0%
I have difficulty organizing my ideas in a paper, and I tend to make a lot of punctuation and grammar mistakes.	31.1%	31.7%	<b>39.8%</b>	<b>39.3%</b>	<b>30.5%</b>	33.2%
In English classes, I've had difficulty analyzing an author's style and theme.	27.9%	28.2%	31.7%	31.6%	27.7%	28.9%
Learning new vocabulary words is a slow and difficult process for me.	16.8%	17.0%	20.6%	20.7%	16.4%	17.7%

### Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2010)

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	First-generation students	Non-first-generation students	OVERALL national percentages
<b>Career closure</b>						
I have found a potential career that strongly attracts me.	82.8%	77.9%	82.9%	82.4%	80.8%	81.3%
I have made a firm decision to enter a certain occupation and have begun planning my life around that decision.	64.2%	61.3%	<b>70.0%</b>	67.8%	63.2%	64.5%
I become very confused when I try to choose an occupation.	20.5%	22.5%	21.8%	22.1%	21.2%	21.5%
I am very confused about what occupation to pursue.	18.0%	21.3%	17.5%	18.5%	19.2%	19.0%
<b>Family emotional support</b>						
When I was a child, my parents usually understood me, respected my judgment, and treated me in ways that helped me grow.	76.6%	79.4%	<b>70.4%</b>	<b>69.0%</b>	<b>79.2%</b>	76.2%
My family and I communicated very well when I was young, and we had a good understanding of each other's point of view.	66.7%	68.7%	<b>61.5%</b>	<b>59.8%</b>	<b>69.0%</b>	66.2%
My family had one way of looking at me when I was a child, and they didn't understand my feelings very well.	16.1%	14.3%	<b>20.9%</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>14.3%</b>	16.6%
When I was a child, the other members of my family often said hurtful things that caused unpleasant feelings.	13.4%	11.9%	16.9%	<b>18.0%</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	13.7%
<b>Sense of financial security</b>						
I have the financial resources that I need to finish college.	46.3%	46.7%	45.5%	<b>39.0%</b>	<b>49.5%</b>	46.3%
I don't have any financial problems that will interfere with my schoolwork.	36.3%	38.1%	36.2%	<b>29.7%</b>	<b>40.0%</b>	36.9%
I have financial problems that are very distracting and troublesome.	31.3%	27.7%	34.0%	<b>40.2%</b>	<b>26.6%</b>	30.7%
I am in a bad financial position, and the pressure to earn extra money will probably interfere with my studies.	18.6%	17.3%	19.3%	<b>23.5%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	18.3%
<b>Sociability</b>						
I greatly enjoy getting together with a crowd of people and having fun.	80.0%	80.8%	<b>73.1%</b>	76.0%	80.0%	78.8%
I am very adventurous and outgoing at social gatherings.	59.0%	59.4%	56.2%	57.2%	59.2%	58.5%
Participating in large social gatherings is of little interest to me.	24.3%	23.6%	<b>32.7%</b>	30.1%	24.1%	25.9%
It is hard for me to relax and just have fun with a group of people.	12.7%	12.3%	14.9%	14.9%	12.2%	13.0%

#### About our statistical processes

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

**Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2010)**

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	First-generation students	Non-first-generation students	OVERALL national percentages
<b>Opinion tolerance</b>						
I get along well with people who disagree with my opinion openly.	65.9%	62.4%	64.9%	66.6%	63.7%	64.6%
I can feel comfortable with someone who thinks quite differently than I do on major social issues.	66.0%	63.3%	63.9%	65.2%	64.5%	64.7%
I find it easy to be friends with people whose political ideas differ sharply from my own.	59.7%	56.7%	57.4%	58.7%	58.1%	58.2%
When someone's opinions strongly disagree with my own, I tend to develop unfriendly feelings and to avoid close contact with the person.	12.5%	13.2%	13.4%	12.2%	13.3%	13.0%
I feel uneasy and distrustful toward people whose way of thinking is quite dissimilar to my own.	9.2%	9.9%	10.6%	10.2%	9.5%	9.7%
Because they irritate me, I tend to stay away from people whose ideas are quite different from my own.	8.7%	9.7%	11.1%	10.0%	9.3%	9.5%
<b>Receptivity to academic assistance</b>						
I would like to receive some instruction in the most effective ways to take college exams.	74.3%	76.8%	73.6%	78.0%	73.6%	74.9%
I would like to receive some help in improving my study habits.	55.1%	60.2%	56.4%	61.8%	54.9%	57.0%
I would like to receive some individual help in improving my math skills.	44.8%	49.4%	52.2%	<b>54.1%</b>	<b>45.3%</b>	47.9%
I would like to receive some individual help in improving my writing skills.	45.1%	46.8%	42.7%	<b>50.8%</b>	<b>42.6%</b>	45.1%
I would like to receive tutoring in one or more of my courses.	40.7%	47.3%	39.9%	46.6%	41.0%	42.7%
I would like to receive some training to improve my reading skills.	27.3%	29.1%	28.8%	<b>34.0%</b>	<b>25.7%</b>	28.2%
<b>Receptivity to career counseling</b>						
I would like some help selecting an educational plan that will prepare me to get a good job.	68.3%	67.8%	<b>61.2%</b>	69.1%	65.5%	66.6%
I would like to talk with someone about the qualifications needed for certain occupations.	62.2%	65.6%	<b>56.9%</b>	63.6%	61.6%	62.2%
I would like to talk with someone about the salaries and future outlook for various occupations.	54.9%	54.7%	49.1%	55.7%	52.6%	53.5%
I would like to talk with someone about the advantages and disadvantages of various occupations.	49.0%	49.4%	<b>40.3%</b>	48.3%	46.8%	47.2%
I would like some help selecting an occupation that is well suited to my interests and abilities.	47.3%	48.2%	42.1%	48.6%	45.6%	46.5%

**Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2010)**

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	First-generation students	Non-first-generation students	OVERALL national percentages
<b>Receptivity to financial guidance</b>						
I would like to talk to someone about getting a scholarship.	65.8%	68.6%	<b>55.7%</b>	67.6%	63.2%	64.5%
I would like to talk to someone about getting a part-time job during the regular school year.	54.5%	52.4%	<b>44.4%</b>	53.1%	50.9%	51.6%
I would like to talk to someone about the opportunities available for summer employment.	50.7%	49.8%	<b>43.0%</b>	51.7%	47.4%	48.7%
I would like to talk with someone about getting a loan to help me through school.	30.5%	29.3%	33.8%	<b>36.9%</b>	<b>28.2%</b>	30.8%
<b>Receptivity to personal counseling</b>						
I would like to talk with a counselor about my general attitude toward school.	17.5%	18.8%	18.6%	21.5%	16.7%	18.2%
I would like to talk with a counselor about some difficulties in my personal relationships or social life.	10.7%	11.0%	11.1%	12.6%	10.1%	10.9%
I would like to talk with a counselor about eliminating an unwanted habit (involving food, drugs, cigarettes, or alcohol, etc.).	8.5%	8.6%	10.3%	10.8%	8.1%	8.9%
I would like to talk with a counselor about some emotional tensions that are bothering me.	9.0%	9.4%	9.0%	10.3%	8.6%	9.1%
I would like to talk with a counselor about some feelings of discouragement or unhappy thoughts that keep bothering me.	8.9%	9.1%	8.7%	10.3%	8.3%	8.9%
I would like to talk with a counselor about some family problems.	6.7%	6.7%	7.3%	8.5%	6.1%	6.8%
<b>Receptivity to social enrichment</b>						
I would like to attend an informal gathering where I can meet some new friends.	59.6%	59.4%	<b>43.5%</b>	52.7%	57.4%	56.0%
I would like to find out more about the clubs and social organizations at my college.	61.7%	64.2%	<b>42.0%</b>	54.6%	59.7%	58.2%
I would like to find out more about student government and the various student activities on campus.	49.6%	49.8%	<b>36.9%</b>	46.9%	46.9%	46.9%
I would like to meet an experienced student who can show me around and give me some advice.	47.3%	50.3%	<b>38.3%</b>	48.0%	45.5%	46.3%
<b>Desire to transfer</b>						
I have no desire to transfer to another school before finishing a degree at this college or university.	70.5%	60.2%	<b>55.8%</b>	64.1%	63.9%	63.9%
I plan to transfer to another school before completing a degree at this college or university.	7.6%	13.5%	<b>20.0%</b>	12.8%	12.0%	12.2%
<b>Total number of students</b>	<b>45,327</b>	<b>32,402</b>	<b>21,639</b>	<b>29,483</b>	<b>69,224</b>	<b>99,368</b>
<b>Average age of students</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>23.5</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>19.9</b>	<b>20.6</b>

## Respondent demographics (Fall 2010)

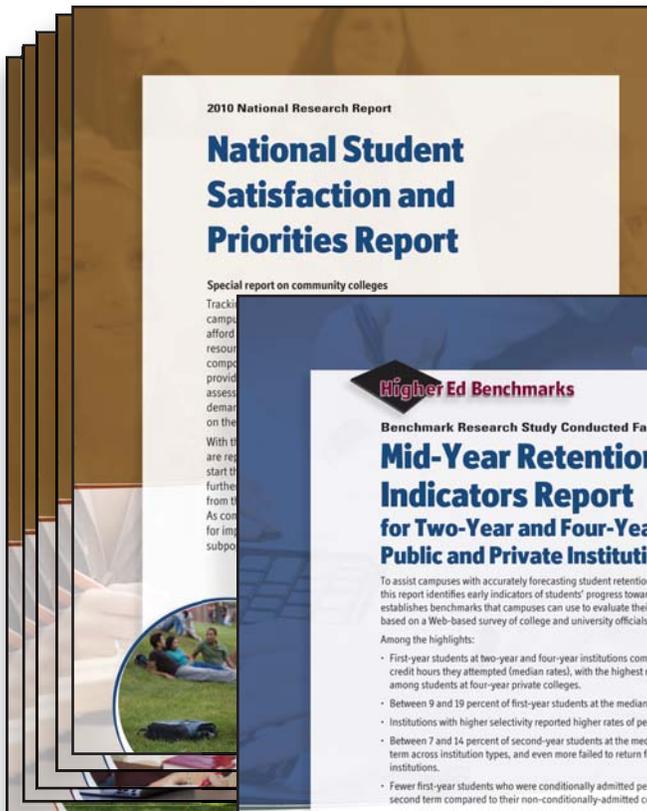
### Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2010)

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	First-generation students	Non-first-generation students	OVERALL national percentages
Number of respondents	45,327	32,402	21,639	29,483	69,224	99,368
Percent of respondents	45.6%	32.6%	21.8%	29.7%	69.7%	100.0%
Percent female	50.5%	56.3%	49.8%	53.9%	51.6%	52.3%
Percent male	48.4%	43.6%	50.2%	45.7%	47.9%	47.2%
<b>Racial/ethnic origin</b>						
Black/African-American	18.6%	25.8%	19.6%	24.1%	19.8%	21.2%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.6%	0.9%	1.3%	1.0%	0.8%	0.9%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3.9%	3.6%	2.1%	4.0%	3.2%	3.4%
White/Caucasian	58.1%	56.7%	57.5%	45.0%	63.0%	57.5%
Hispanic or Latino	11.9%	7.5%	14.4%	20.8%	6.9%	11.0%
Multi-ethnic or other ethnic origin	3.7%	3.3%	2.6%	2.9%	3.5%	3.3%
Prefer not to respond	2.3%	1.9%	2.0%	1.7%	2.3%	2.1%
<b>Highest education level of mother</b>						
8 years or less	3.8%	2.8%	6.3%	12.1%	0.6%	4.0%
Some high school	6.3%	5.5%	12.3%	20.5%	1.8%	7.4%
High school diploma	27.1%	26.3%	37.1%	67.3%	12.8%	29.0%
1 to 3 years of college	27.6%	29.0%	26.8%	0.0%	39.8%	27.9%
Bachelor's degree	22.8%	23.7%	11.1%	0.0%	29.4%	20.5%
Master's degree	9.3%	9.9%	4.3%	0.0%	12.0%	8.4%
Professional degree	3.0%	2.5%	1.8%	0.0%	3.7%	2.6%
<b>Highest education level of father</b>						
8 years or less	4.5%	3.5%	8.3%	14.4%	1.1%	5.0%
Some high school	8.3%	8.2%	14.9%	23.2%	4.0%	9.7%
High school diploma	31.3%	31.9%	41.1%	62.4%	21.7%	33.7%
1 to 3 years of college	21.2%	22.4%	20.9%	0.0%	30.9%	21.5%
Bachelor's degree	20.1%	20.5%	8.8%	0.0%	25.5%	17.8%
Master's degree	9.3%	8.7%	3.5%	0.0%	11.2%	7.8%
Professional degree	4.7%	4.1%	1.9%	0.0%	5.6%	3.9%
<b>Highest degree planned by respondent</b>						
None	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%
1-year certificate	0.3%	0.1%	4.3%	1.9%	0.8%	1.1%
2-year degree (associate's)	3.1%	0.8%	35.2%	15.7%	6.6%	9.3%
4-year degree (bachelor's)	39.1%	36.9%	34.9%	40.2%	36.3%	37.5%
Master's degree	37.2%	36.1%	15.1%	26.5%	34.4%	32.0%
Professional degree	20.2%	25.8%	10.1%	15.3%	21.7%	19.8%

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2010)

All survey items	Students at 4-year private institutions	Students at 4-year public institutions	Students at 2-year institutions (public and private)	First-generation students	Non-first-generation students	OVERALL national percentages
<b>Time expecting to spend at work</b>						
0 (I have no plans to work)	22.8%	30.9%	19.3%	19.9%	26.6%	24.6%
1 to 10 hours per week	26.1%	23.2%	12.7%	17.3%	24.3%	22.2%
11 to 20 hours per week	26.0%	30.4%	26.1%	27.7%	27.3%	27.5%
21 to 30 hours per week	11.9%	11.3%	21.8%	17.6%	12.3%	13.9%
31 to 40 hours per week	9.3%	3.5%	15.2%	12.9%	6.9%	8.7%
Over 40 hours per week	3.9%	0.8%	4.9%	4.6%	2.5%	3.1%
<b>Average grades as senior in high school</b>						
A	18.4%	21.4%	6.3%	10.7%	19.4%	16.8%
A to B	34.7%	36.4%	25.7%	30.3%	34.6%	33.3%
B	20.0%	19.3%	19.4%	19.4%	19.8%	19.7%
B to C	19.0%	17.5%	32.1%	27.1%	18.9%	21.4%
C	5.3%	3.8%	10.1%	7.7%	5.0%	5.9%
C to D	2.2%	1.3%	5.2%	4.0%	1.9%	2.5%
D	0.4%	0.2%	1.1%	0.8%	0.3%	0.5%
<b>Respondent's self-assessment of academic knowledge</b>						
Highest 20%	18.2%	18.7%	8.5%	10.5%	18.8%	16.3%
Next to highest 20%	34.9%	35.4%	22.3%	26.5%	34.8%	32.3%
Middle 20%	44.3%	43.5%	61.6%	57.0%	43.8%	47.8%
Next to lowest 20%	2.2%	2.1%	6.3%	5.0%	2.2%	3.0%
Lowest 20%	0.3%	0.3%	1.2%	0.9%	0.3%	0.5%
<b>Respondent's self-assessment of academic ability</b>						
Considerably below average	0.4%	0.4%	1.0%	0.8%	0.4%	0.5%
Slightly below average	3.5%	3.6%	6.8%	5.7%	3.6%	4.2%
Average	28.7%	28.1%	48.0%	42.8%	28.4%	32.7%
Slightly above average	36.2%	36.8%	28.3%	31.3%	36.2%	34.7%
Considerably above average (top 20%)	28.0%	28.0%	14.1%	17.6%	28.2%	25.0%
Extremely high (top 5%)	3.1%	3.0%	1.7%	1.7%	3.2%	2.8%
<b>Timing of decision to attend chosen college/university</b>						
Decision made few days before	3.6%	1.7%	4.4%	4.3%	2.7%	3.2%
Decision made weeks before	17.4%	10.1%	22.1%	20.2%	14.3%	16.0%
Decision made many months before	78.8%	88.0%	73.3%	75.3%	82.8%	80.6%

For further reading...



2010 National Research Report

## National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report

Special report on community colleges

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**National Student Satisfaction-Priorities Reports**  
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**E-Expectations Report Series**  
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**Higher Ed Benchmarks**

**Benchmark Research Study Conducted Fall 2010**

### Mid-Year Retention Indicators Report for Two-Year and Four-Year, Public and Private Institutions

To assist campuses with accurately forecasting student retention, and to help with increasing it, this report identifies early indicators of students' progress toward completing a degree and establishes benchmarks that campuses can use to evaluate their performance. The report is based on a Web-based survey of college and university officials in November 2010.

Among the highlights:

- First-year students at two-year and four-year institutions completed 77 to 93 percent of the credit hours they attempted (median rates), with the highest rates of completion reported among students at four-year private colleges.
- Between 9 and 19 percent of first-year students at the median failed to persist to the second term.
- Institutions with higher selectivity reported higher rates of persistence and retention.
- Between 7 and 14 percent of second-year students at the median failed to persist to the second term across institution types, and even more failed to return for their third year at four-year institutions.
- Fewer first-year students who were conditionally admitted persisted from the first to the second term compared to their non-conditionally-admitted counterparts.
- More first-year students were placed on probation during term one than during term two.

For guidance on using these benchmarks and on strengthening your institution's measurements of retention indicators, please see the concluding recommendations on pages 7 and 8. Noel-Levitz anticipates repeating this study every two years to continue to establish outcomes trends in these critical areas.

**About the data in this report**

All of the data in this report are based on cohorts of entering, first-time, full-time-in-college, degree-seeking freshmen. Questions about this report may be directed to Tim Culver, Noel-Levitz vice president of consulting services, at [tim-culver@noellevitz.com](mailto:tim-culver@noellevitz.com) or by calling 1-800-876-1117.

**E-Expectations 2010**

### Focusing Your E-Recruitment Efforts to Meet the Expectations of College-Bound Students

With every passing school year, the online demands of prospective college students seem to grow and evolve. In the past decade, e-recruitment has gone from relatively simple Web sites and e-mails to complex, multifaceted electronic campaigns with video, interactive Web features, and now social networking. It is a challenge for even the most e-savvy campus to stay ahead of the technological curve.

Because there is such a wide array of electronic methods for communicating with students, it's more important than ever for colleges and universities to understand what prospective students expect, so that campuses can focus on areas that will produce the greatest enrollment results.

Early in 2010, the E-Expectations research group surveyed more than 1,000 college-bound high school students, polling them on their online behaviors and expectations, as well as other key enrollment-related topics.

Highlights of the study include:

- 1 in 4 students reported removing a school from their prospective list because of a bad experience on that school's Web site.
- 92 percent said that they would be disappointed with a school or remove it entirely from their lists if they didn't find the information they needed on the school's Web site.
- 76 percent of students said they use Facebook, while 33 percent reported using MySpace.
- 76 percent of students supported schools creating their own private social networks for prospective students.
- 52 percent of students said they have viewed videos about colleges, while only 10 percent reported watching them on YouTube.
- 46 percent claimed that the current economic crisis had caused them to reconsider the schools they would apply to or attend—an increase from 34 percent just last year.
- 23 percent of respondents reported searching college sites from their smart phones.

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**To see a sample of the survey instrument used in this study, please visit [www.noellevitz.com/CSIB](http://www.noellevitz.com/CSIB).**

## How to cite this report

Noel-Levitz. (2011). 2011 national freshman attitudes report. Coralville, Iowa: Author. Retrieved from: [www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport](http://www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport)

## Questions? Want additional information?

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

## About Noel-Levitz and the survey instrument used in this study

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

Noel-Levitz has served the higher education community for 38 years. Campus leaders turn to the firm for consultation and resources for student recruitment, student retention, marketing, and strategic enrollment planning. Noel-Levitz has served more than 2,600 colleges and universities throughout North America.

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

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

To see a sample copy of CSI-B, please visit [www.noellevitz.com/CSIB](http://www.noellevitz.com/CSIB) (click on "samples").

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

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

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