

Fifth Annual National Research Study

2010 National Freshman Attitudes Report

Special focus: Exploring the influence of the economy

This report describes the self-reported attitudes and motivations of first-year students nationally at the beginning of the undergraduate experience, based on a 100-item motivational assessment administered in the summer and fall of 2009. In particular, the report examines attitudes that may have posed barriers and opportunities for students as they began their pursuit of an academic degree. For context, data collected from students who entered college in fall 2008 and fall 2007 are also included.

Highlighted in this year's report are changes in attitudes in light of the uncertain economy. Among the highlights:

- Entering students' determination to finish college did not appear to be dampened by the economic environment, as nearly 95 percent of last fall's new undergraduates reported they were highly motivated to complete a degree, consistent with previous years' findings. However, more students were pursuing only a two-year degree, corresponding with the increased enrollments at two-year institutions nationally.
- A growing proportion of entering students—31 percent in fall 2009—reported they had financial challenges that were "very distracting and troublesome."
- More than half of entering students remained receptive to a wide variety of forms of assistance ranging from career counseling to help with improving study habits to help with finding a part-time job.
- In general, females are aspiring to complete higher degrees than males, a continuing trend. In addition, many more female students, in comparison to males, continued to bring attitudes that signaled greater academic engagement.

The appendix of this report on pages 9-15 provides additional details on all 100 attitudes and motivations that were measured, offering a distinctive window into the attitudes of entering undergraduates at the beginning of their college experience.

So how does this change things for campuses?

This report indicates that the attitudes of freshmen are changing—but how should colleges and universities adjust, if at all, in response to these findings? With the goal of cultivating more student-centered campuses, Noel-Levitz student retention consultants offer some conclusions and suggestions on page 7 of this report on how institutions of higher learning may want to approach this new generation of students differently based on the findings in this year's report.



Noel-Levitz®



By examining the attitudes of first-year students at the very beginning of their college experience, this annual study, begun in 2006, adds another layer to existing national research on college freshmen.

Highlights

| | |
|---|---|
| Desire to finish college remains strong, but more students attending for only two years | 4 |
| Financial concerns increasing | 5 |
| High levels of receptivity to assistance continue, especially among African-American students | 5 |
| Females continued to bring more academically engaged attitudes than males | 6 |
| Some conclusions and suggestions from Noel-Levitz student retention consultants | 7 |

Appendix

| | |
|---|----|
| Additional findings on the attitudes measured | 9 |
| —compare all findings for first-generation vs. non-first-generation students | |
| —compare all findings for public and private, four-year and two-year institutions | |
| About Noel-Levitz and the survey instrument used in this study | 16 |



View more reports online by race/ethnicity, by gender, and for nontraditional-age learners

To access the entire series of National Freshman Attitudes Reports from Noel-Levitz, including previous reports that looked at the data by race/ethnicity, by gender, and for nontraditional-age learners, visit www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport.



The source of data

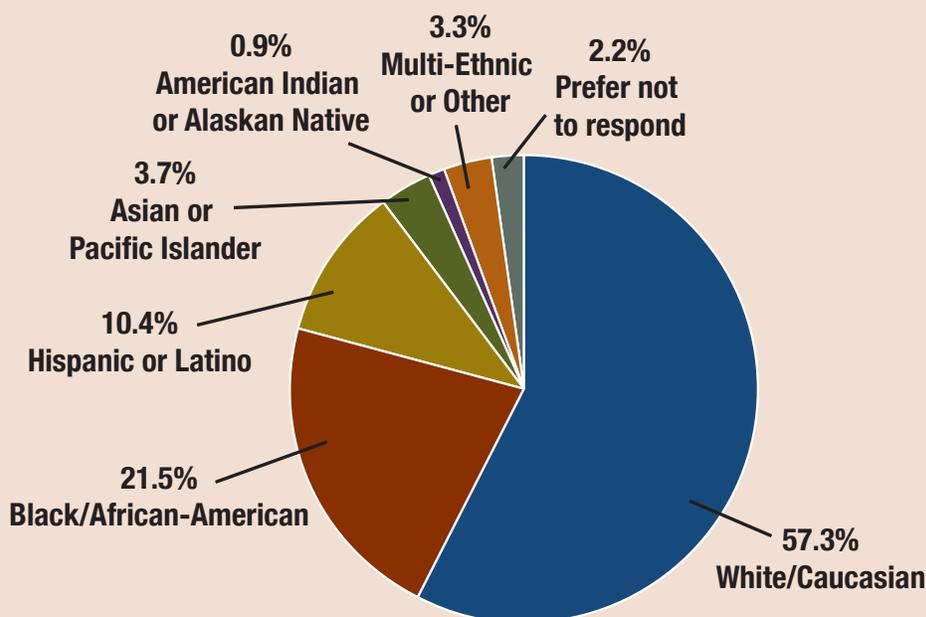
In the summer and fall of 2009, a total of 96,641 first-year students at 286 colleges and universities nationwide completed a 100-item attitudinal survey during orientation or within their first few weeks of classes. The survey examined a broad range of motivational attitudes that students brought with 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 39.1 percent of respondents coming from four-year private institutions, 35.2 percent from four-year public institutions, and 25.6 percent from two-year institutions. Consistent with national enrollment trends, a slight majority of respondents (53.1 percent) were female. The average age of respondents was 21.

The survey instrument used for this report was the College Student Inventory™ Form B (CSI-B), from the Noel-Levitz Retention Management System™. 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 16.

To provide context, selected findings from similar studies conducted in fall 2007 and fall 2008 are included in the highlights of this report on pages 4 and 5. For additional context, please refer to the entire series of National Freshman Attitudes Reports from Noel-Levitz available at www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport.

For more findings, including a demographic breakdown of the data sample, please see the appendix on pages 9-15.



A broad cross-section of students and institutions were represented in the study. The ethnic/racial breakdown of respondents was 57.3 percent White/Caucasian, 21.5 percent Black/African-American, 10.4 percent Hispanic or Latino, 3.7 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 0.9 percent American Indian or Alaskan Native, 3.3 percent Multi-Ethnic or Other, and 2.2 percent “prefer not to respond.” For more details, please see the information above and in the appendix.

**Highlights from
the findings**

The increase in the pursuit of two-year degrees corresponds with the enrollment increases at two-year institutions nationally.

Desire to finish college remains strong, but more students attending for only two years

Continuing a multi-year trend, nearly 95 percent of entering first-year students reported they strongly desired to finish a college degree. This strong commitment to finishing college held true for first-generation students as well as for students at all three of the institution types examined. However, more entering freshmen in fall 2009 than in fall 2007—particularly, first-generation students and students from two-year institutions—reported they were pursuing a two-year associate’s degree rather than continue on to attain a bachelor’s, master’s, or professional degree.

Percent of freshmen in agreement

| 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 |
|---|-----------|---|--|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Desire to finish college | | | | | | | |
| I am very strongly dedicated to finishing college—no matter what obstacles get in my way. | Fall 2009 | 95.4% | 94.5% | 93.2% | 94.8% | 94.5% | 94.5% |
| | Fall 2008 | 95.2% | 94.4% | 92.8% | 94.5% | 94.3% | 94.4% |
| | Fall 2007 | 94.8% | 94.3% | 91.4% | 93.9% | 93.9% | 93.9% |
| I have a very strong desire to continue my education, and I am quite determined to finish a degree. | Fall 2009 | 96.0% | 95.0% | 93.2% | 94.9% | 95.0% | 94.9% |
| | Fall 2008 | 95.7% | 95.3% | 93.3% | 94.8% | 95.1% | 95.0% |
| | Fall 2007 | 95.8% | 95.3% | 92.2% | 94.5% | 95.0% | 94.9% |
| Highest degree planned by respondent | | | | | | | |
| 1-year certificate | Fall 2009 | 0.3% | 0.1% | 4.2% | 2.3% | 0.8% | 1.2% |
| | Fall 2008 | 0.3% | 0.1% | 3.7% | 2.0% | 0.5% | 0.9% |
| | Fall 2007 | 0.3% | 0.2% | 4.2% | 2.0% | 0.6% | 1.0% |
| 2-year associate’s degree | Fall 2009 | 3.4% | 0.9% | 34.2% | 17.3% | 7.5% | 10.4% |
| | Fall 2008 | 3.1% | 0.7% | 31.0% | 14.4% | 5.9% | 8.3% |
| | Fall 2007 | 2.0% | 0.7% | 32.1% | 13.7% | 5.2% | 7.5% |
| 4-year bachelor’s degree | Fall 2009 | 40.2% | 36.7% | 35.0% | 40.5% | 36.4% | 37.6% |
| | Fall 2008 | 41.0% | 38.2% | 35.6% | 41.3% | 37.6% | 38.7% |
| | Fall 2007 | 38.3% | 38.2% | 35.9% | 41.2% | 36.6% | 37.8% |
| Master’s degree | Fall 2009 | 38.0% | 36.3% | 15.7% | 25.2% | 34.4% | 31.7% |
| | Fall 2008 | 37.1% | 37.0% | 18.3% | 27.2% | 35.3% | 32.9% |
| | Fall 2007 | 37.9% | 38.0% | 17.3% | 27.8% | 36.2% | 33.8% |
| Professional degree | Fall 2009 | 17.9% | 25.7% | 10.5% | 14.4% | 20.5% | 18.8% |
| | Fall 2008 | 18.3% | 23.8% | 11.0% | 14.9% | 20.4% | 18.9% |
| | Fall 2007 | 20.8% | 22.7% | 9.8% | 14.7% | 21.1% | 19.3% |

Signaling their determination, nearly 95 percent of entering students indicated they were “very strongly dedicated to finishing college—no matter what obstacles get in my way.” However, more students are now aspiring to only a two-year degree, consistent with the increased enrollments at two-year institutions nationally which were reported last fall by several higher education sources, including Noel-Levitz. (See [Fall 2009 Census Data: New Student Enrollment and Retention at Four-Year and Two-Year Institutions.](#))

Financial concerns increasing

Nearly one-third of respondents in fall 2009 (30.8 percent) reported they had financial problems that were “very distracting and troublesome,” an increase compared with fall 2007. In general, many more first-generation students reported having financial concerns than did their non-first-generation counterparts, a continuing trend. For additional findings such as students’ receptivity to financial guidance, and the number of hours students expected to work, please see pages 13 and 15 of the appendix.

Percent of freshmen in agreement

| 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 |
|--|-----------|---|--|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Sense of financial security | | | | | | | |
| I have financial problems that are very distracting and troublesome. | 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 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% |

Consistent with other national reports¹, this study found that today’s college freshmen are experiencing greater financial stress. For additional measures of financial security, please see the appendix on page 11.

High levels of receptivity to assistance continue, especially with African-American students

Students’ receptivity to assistance continued to register at generally high levels. This held true for students of all racial/ethnic backgrounds, but was especially true of African-American students. For comparison data from previous years, please refer to earlier Noel-Levitz reports with fall 2008 and fall 2007 data at www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport.

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2009)

| Selected survey items | Black/African-American | Hispanic or Latino | Asian or Pacific Islander | American Indian or Alaskan Native | White/Caucasian | OVERALL national percentages |
|---|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Receptivity to assistance by race/ethnicity | | | | | | |
| I would like to receive some instruction in the most effective ways to take college exams. | 84.9% | 78.9% | 78.2% | 71.5% | 70.0% | 74.6% |
| I would like to receive some help in improving my study habits. | 74.6% | 66.5% | 65.6% | 59.7% | 47.9% | 56.8% |
| I would like to talk to someone about getting a part-time job during the regular school year. | 60.6% | 54.3% | 58.9% | 49.4% | 45.4% | 50.6% |

Many freshmen continued to report being receptive to various forms of assistance and information, ranging from career counseling and tutoring, to receiving information about part-time employment, to help with preparing for college exams. For additional measures of receptivity to assistance, please see the appendix on pages 12 and 13.

¹ See: *With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them: A Public Agenda Report for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation* (New York: Public Agenda, 2009). Also see: CIRP Freshman Survey, *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 2009* (Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA, 2009).

**Highlights from
the findings**

Females continued to bring more academically engaged attitudes than males

In general, female students continued to bring attitudes that signaled greater academic engagement than males in most of the areas measured by the survey. In addition, the data show that females continued to aspire to higher degrees. For comparison data from previous years, please refer to the 2007 report at www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport.

Percent of freshmen in agreement (Fall 2009)

| Selected survey items | Males | Females | OVERALL national percentages |
|---|-------|---------|------------------------------|
| Desire to finish college | | | |
| 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. | 87.6% | 92.8% | 90.4% |
| Of all the things I could do at this point in my life, going to college is definitely the most satisfying. | 82.5% | 88.9% | 85.9% |
| Career closure and receptivity to career counseling | | | |
| I have found a potential career that strongly attracts me. | 78.8% | 81.6% | 80.3% |
| I would like some help selecting an occupation that is well suited to my interests and abilities. | 48.8% | 46.1% | 47.4% |
| Academic confidence | | | |
| I have a very good grasp of the scientific ideas I've studied in school. | 51.6% | 41.3% | 46.2% |
| I have a hard time understanding and solving complex math problems. | 40.8% | 51.4% | 46.4% |
| I am capable of writing a very clear and well-organized paper. | 61.0% | 64.7% | 63.0% |
| Intellectual interests and study habits | | | |
| I get a great deal of personal satisfaction from reading. | 38.4% | 56.1% | 47.8% |
| I take very careful notes during class, and I review them thoroughly before a test. | 50.0% | 70.5% | 60.9% |
| Receptivity to academic assistance | | | |
| I would like to receive some instruction in the most effective ways to take college exams. | 71.6% | 77.2% | 74.6% |
| I would like to receive some help in improving my study habits. | 55.3% | 58.2% | 56.8% |
| I would like to receive some individual help in improving my math skills. | 44.6% | 51.2% | 48.1% |
| Receptivity to financial guidance | | | |
| I would like to talk to someone about getting a scholarship. | 60.6% | 67.3% | 64.1% |
| I would like to talk to someone about the opportunities available for summer employment. | 48.2% | 48.7% | 48.5% |
| Highest degree planned by respondent | | | |
| 1-year certificate | 1.5% | 1.0% | 1.2% |
| 2-year associate's degree | 11.6% | 9.3% | 10.4% |
| 4-year bachelor's degree | 40.9% | 34.7% | 37.6% |
| Master's degree | 30.5% | 32.8% | 31.7% |
| Professional degree | 15.1% | 22.0% | 18.8% |

Compared to male students, female students continued to bring attitudes that signaled greater academic engagement, including a stronger desire to finish college and greater receptivity to most forms of assistance. They also continued to bring higher degree aspirations.

The more positive, academically-engaged attitudes that females tended to bring with them to college were unmistakable. Please see the next page for some conclusions and suggestions relating to this finding.

Some conclusions and suggestions from Noel-Levitz student retention consultants

This year's report on freshman attitudes focuses on the influence of the economy on today's freshmen. On the whole, entering freshmen appear to be holding steady in their determination to finish college, in their receptivity to assistance, and in other areas as shown in the appendix. However, the findings point to some overall changes as well, including increasing financial concerns and lower degree aspirations.

When looking at specific subgroups of students, some fairly stark contrasts were demonstrated. For example, first-generation students showed greater financial anxiety and African-American students demonstrated the greatest receptivity to assistance. These findings underscore the importance of studying specific persistence issues by subgroup, as we are about to discuss below.

Many more observations could be made about the data in this report. We encourage readers to spend time reviewing the data in the appendix for additional findings, to refer to previous years' reports for additional context, to study similar data for your students, and to continue reading the suggestions that follow.

First, a few suggestions for prioritizing retention initiatives

Before sharing specific recommendations on how to respond to the findings in the report, we'll begin with some broad suggestions for prioritizing retention initiatives. With budgets getting tighter on campuses, it is important to sharpen the focus of efforts aimed at increasing persistence, progression, retention, and completion rates. Toward these ends, Noel-Levitz student retention consultants collaborate with campus leadership teams to consolidate efforts on the most productive initiatives.

- *Focus on identifying high-priority subgroups.* As the data demonstrate, different cohorts 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. Far 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. 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 intervention?
- *Focus on identifying the most significant barriers and opportunities.* The data suggest that entering students tend to arrive at college with a strong desire to complete what they are starting. In addition, the data identified not only some barriers that tend to get in the way, such as financial anxiety, but also some opportunities, such as students' receptivity to various forms of assistance. What are the barriers that correlate with attrition on your campus, at what points in time do they surface, and which ones are the most significant? Are there opportunities on your campus to strategically deploy existing resources and staffing in more productive directions? Are you collecting motivational assessment data on your students, and are you using it to support grant-writing or to document your needs? Identifying answers to such questions can be helpful in re-focusing and reinvigorating retention programming on your campus.
- *Look at the full range of attrition indicators.* In our experience, looking at student attitudes is invaluable to understanding persistence and should be a central focus of student retention programs. But don't stop there. For example, as the data in this report show, monitoring the effects of forces from the external environment such as the economy should be considered, as these forces can significantly influence student attitudes. In addition, it is important to re-evaluate services to students in light of the changing student demographics in your marketplace, in view of student behaviors such as their usage of specific services, and in view of each department's readiness to serve students well. 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?

Specific suggestions based on the data to help your campus become more student-centered

The following are more direct suggestions on how to approach today's generation of students differently based on the findings in this year's report.

- *Capitalize on students' high levels of motivation as they enter college.* To capitalize and build on the high levels of motivation demonstrated by the data, we suggest discussing this question with your campus colleagues: Do your orientation programs, student life programs, advising structures, pedagogical approaches, and academic progress reporting systems include sufficient motivational components that are aimed at encouraging, sustaining, and

**please continue
next page**

Specific suggestions continued

celebrating students' progress toward a degree? In addition, since students are motivated to finish, might there be merit in moving career development activities to the first year of the student experience? Keep in mind that students' initial experiences are especially formative.

These observations and suggestions are provided by Noel-Levitz student retention consultants. To learn more about the Noel-Levitz retention consulting team, visit www.noellevitz.com/retentionteam.

- *Consider discussing degree aspirations more intentionally with students.* Where would your students fall on the degree attainment table shown on page 4? Are they aiming for degrees that make sense for them? Note that first-generation students, in particular, may need help with their educational plans. Consider expanding the forums and venues where degree planning conversations can happen on campus such as first-year seminars, advising, career planning events, residence halls, etc. A word of caution: do not push undecided students to decide too early on a degree or a program, or students may jump from major to major instead of engaging fully in the exploration process.
- *Reach out to both receptive and less-receptive students.* Although the data showed that many students indicated high levels of receptivity to assistance, many others did not. For receptive students, are you making it easy for them to get connected to the resources they need during their first weeks of classes? For less-receptive students, what barriers or indicators are keeping them being more receptive to help? Overall, are certain subgroups of students on your campus more and less receptive to certain types of assistance, and, if so, what interventions might you target toward each of these groups? Certainly, some minority and first-generation students, in particular, are reaching out for support. Is your campus proactively extending its services to these two subgroups, programmatically and individually? Note that you can use a Noel-Levitz survey² and conduct focus groups to pursue the answers to these questions and to make it easier to connect students to the resources they need.
- *Identify interventions that will address students' concerns about finances.* We first of all suggest regularly communicating with students and parents about the value of the education they are receiving. By reminding them of the quality of education you offer, you are helping them to value you 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' connections to your institution.
- *How can you apply the findings on gender?* Clearly, the gender data show that women bring a wealth of attitudinal strengths, ranging from greater motivation to finish a degree to greater enjoyment of reading to greater receptivity to various forms of assistance. To take advantage of these attitudes, and to help males rise to the same levels, consider adopting a strengths-based, appreciative advising model that reinforces students' strengths while helping them learn to apply their abilities to areas where they are less confident. In addition, consider how you might use the findings on gender in any areas on campus that offer gender-specific programming such as athletic programs, clubs, or social organizations. Note that on some campuses where males are a minority in the entering or graduating population, specific, male-focused interventions are sometimes needed to reinforce and motivate continuing attendance by men.

We also encourage you to verify and further explore the relevance of the findings to 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? The best way to find out about students' attitudes and motivations is to ask students to describe them. Because national trends may not fully reflect the perceptions and attitudes of students on your campus, consider conducting surveys and focus groups to explore student attitudes and issues on your campus and to more closely monitor student concerns.

² 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 2010 (see page 16 for details).

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.

Appendix with additional findings and data from fall 2009

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 11. For a demographic breakdown of the student respondents, please see pages 14-15.

| All survey items | Findings by Institution Type | | | Findings by Parent Educational Background* | | OVERALL national percentages |
|---|---|--|--|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | 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 | |
| Desire to finish college | | | | | | |
| I have a very strong desire to continue my education, and I am quite determined to finish a degree. | 96.0% | 95.0% | 93.2% | 94.9% | 95.0% | 94.9% |
| I am very strongly dedicated to finishing college—no matter what obstacles get in my way. | 95.4% | 94.5% | 93.2% | 94.8% | 94.5% | 94.5% |
| 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. | 91.2% | 90.1% | 89.3% | 91.5% | 89.9% | 90.4% |
| Of all the things I could do at this point in my life, going to college is definitely the most satisfying. | 86.7% | 86.9% | 83.2% | 87.7% | 85.1% | 85.9% |
| 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. | 16.8% | 15.5% | 17.2% | 18.5% | 15.6% | 16.5% |
| I can think of many things I would rather do than go to college. | 11.1% | 10.4% | 13.6% | 11.5% | 11.5% | 11.5% |
| 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. | 10.1% | 9.4% | 11.7% | 10.6% | 10.1% | 10.3% |
| I dread the thought of going to school for several more years, and there is a part of me that would like to give the whole thing up. | 8.4% | 8.0% | 11.2% | 10.1% | 8.5% | 9.0% |
| Attitude toward educators | | | | | | |
| The teachers I had in school respected me as a person and treated me fairly. | 83.5% | 82.6% | 78.3% | 81.3% | 82.2% | 81.8% |
| Most of my teachers have been very caring and dedicated. | 82.4% | 77.3% | 79.8% | 80.7% | 79.7% | 79.9% |
| I liked my teachers, and I feel they did a good job. | 78.0% | 75.5% | 74.4% | 76.2% | 76.3% | 76.2% |
| Most teachers have a superior attitude that I find very annoying. | 15.5% | 19.6% | 15.5% | 16.2% | 17.2% | 17.0% |
| Most of the teachers I had in school were too opinionated and inflexible. | 15.2% | 14.7% | 18.6% | 17.7% | 15.1% | 15.9% |
| In my opinion, many teachers are more concerned about themselves than they are about their students. | 12.4% | 15.8% | 13.3% | 13.5% | 14.0% | 13.8% |

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

**Findings by
Institution Type**

**Findings by Parent
Educational Background**

| 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 |
|---|---|--|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Intellectual interests | | | | | | |
| Over the years, books have broadened my horizons and stimulated my imagination. | 60.4% | 56.7% | 52.1% | 53.6% | 58.4% | 57.0% |
| I get a great deal of satisfaction from reading. | 50.1% | 45.6% | 47.3% | 48.1% | 47.8% | 47.8% |
| I don't enjoy reading serious books and articles, and I only do it when I have to. | 41.8% | 44.4% | 41.6% | 43.4% | 42.4% | 42.7% |
| Books have never gotten me very excited. | 37.6% | 38.8% | 43.3% | 41.7% | 38.6% | 39.5% |
| Study habits | | | | | | |
| I take very careful notes during class, and I review them thoroughly before a test. | 60.0% | 60.0% | 63.3% | 64.2% | 59.6% | 60.9% |
| I study very hard for all my courses, even those I don't like. | 59.9% | 55.2% | 62.4% | 63.3% | 57.2% | 58.9% |
| I have developed a solid system of self-discipline, which helps me keep up with my schoolwork. | 58.1% | 57.4% | 55.9% | 58.8% | 56.8% | 57.3% |
| My studying is very irregular and unpredictable. | 33.2% | 33.1% | 31.5% | 32.7% | 32.7% | 32.7% |
| When I try to study, I usually get bored and quit after a few minutes. | 26.5% | 30.9% | 28.2% | 29.3% | 28.2% | 28.5% |
| I have great difficulty concentrating on schoolwork, and I often get behind. | 20.5% | 20.0% | 25.8% | 23.8% | 20.8% | 21.7% |
| Math and science confidence | | | | | | |
| I have a very good grasp of the scientific ideas I've studied in school. | 47.9% | 48.3% | 40.6% | 40.9% | 48.5% | 46.2% |
| I have a hard time understanding and solving complex math problems. | 43.9% | 45.1% | 52.2% | 49.7% | 45.1% | 46.4% |
| Math has always been a challenge for me. | 41.9% | 42.1% | 52.8% | 48.6% | 43.2% | 44.8% |
| I have always enjoyed the challenge of trying to solve complex math problems. | 39.6% | 36.6% | 34.5% | 37.9% | 37.0% | 37.2% |
| I have a very good understanding of general biology (e.g., cell structure, metabolism, genetics, and the circulatory system). | 36.7% | 37.6% | 32.6% | 32.2% | 37.6% | 36.0% |
| My understanding of the physical sciences is very weak. | 27.4% | 25.7% | 31.4% | 32.1% | 26.0% | 27.8% |
| Verbal confidence | | | | | | |
| I am capable of writing a very clear and well-organized paper. | 67.0% | 64.4% | 54.9% | 56.9% | 65.6% | 63.0% |
| I pick up new vocabulary words quickly, and I find it easy to use them in my speech and writing. | 58.1% | 55.7% | 54.7% | 54.1% | 57.4% | 56.4% |
| I am very good at figuring out the deeper meaning of a short story or novel. | 57.4% | 54.7% | 50.2% | 51.8% | 55.8% | 54.6% |
| I have difficulty organizing my ideas in a paper, and I tend to make a lot of punctuation and grammar mistakes. | 30.9% | 31.5% | 39.6% | 38.8% | 31.0% | 33.3% |
| In English classes, I've had difficulty analyzing an author's style and theme. | 27.5% | 27.4% | 31.1% | 31.5% | 27.1% | 28.4% |
| Learning new vocabulary words is a slow and difficult process for me. | 16.5% | 16.3% | 20.2% | 20.9% | 15.9% | 17.4% |

**Findings by
Institution Type**

**Findings by Parent
Educational Background**

| 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 |
|--|---|--|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Career closure | | | | | | |
| I have found a potential career that strongly attracts me. | 81.3% | 77.5% | 82.6% | 81.6% | 79.8% | 80.3% |
| I have made a firm decision to enter a certain occupation and have begun planning my life around that decision. | 62.8% | 59.7% | 69.0% | 66.7% | 61.9% | 63.3% |
| I become very confused when I try to choose an occupation. | 21.3% | 21.7% | 22.7% | 22.5% | 21.5% | 21.8% |
| I am very confused about what occupation to pursue. | 19.1% | 21.4% | 17.7% | 18.9% | 19.8% | 19.6% |
| Family emotional support | | | | | | |
| When I was a child, my parents usually understood me, respected my judgment, and treated me in ways that helped me grow. | 76.8% | 79.4% | 70.2% | 69.1% | 79.0% | 76.0% |
| My family and I communicated very well when I was young, and we had a good understanding of each other's point of view. | 66.9% | 69.1% | 62.0% | 60.5% | 69.0% | 66.4% |
| My family had one way of looking at me when I was a child, and they didn't understand my feelings very well. | 15.6% | 13.3% | 20.3% | 21.1% | 13.8% | 16.0% |
| When I was a child, the other members of my family often said hurtful things that caused unpleasant feelings. | 13.0% | 11.2% | 17.4% | 17.8% | 11.6% | 13.5% |
| Sense of financial security | | | | | | |
| I have the financial resources that I need to finish college. | 45.0% | 47.2% | 44.1% | 38.7% | 48.5% | 45.5% |
| I don't have any financial problems that will interfere with my schoolwork. | 36.0% | 39.1% | 35.0% | 29.8% | 39.8% | 36.8% |
| I have financial problems that are very distracting and troublesome. | 31.6% | 26.5% | 35.6% | 40.2% | 26.9% | 30.8% |
| I am in a bad financial position, and the pressure to earn extra money will probably interfere with my studies. | 18.9% | 16.6% | 20.9% | 24.1% | 16.2% | 18.6% |
| Sociability | | | | | | |
| I greatly enjoy getting together with a crowd of people and having fun. | 80.8% | 82.1% | 73.5% | 76.6% | 80.6% | 79.4% |
| I am very adventurous and outgoing at social gatherings. | 58.9% | 60.1% | 56.5% | 57.0% | 59.5% | 58.7% |
| Participating in large social gatherings is of little interest to me. | 23.6% | 22.1% | 32.2% | 29.3% | 23.5% | 25.3% |
| It is hard for me to relax and just have fun with a group of people. | 12.4% | 11.3% | 14.5% | 14.5% | 11.8% | 12.6% |

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.

**Findings by
Institution Type**

**Findings by Parent
Educational Background**

| 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 |
|--|---|--|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Opinion tolerance | | | | | | |
| I get along well with people who disagree with my opinion openly. | 66.2% | 61.9% | 64.6% | 66.5% | 63.3% | 64.2% |
| I can feel comfortable with someone who thinks quite differently than I do on major social issues. | 65.7% | 62.7% | 63.5% | 64.8% | 63.8% | 64.1% |
| I find it easy to be friends with people whose political ideas differ sharply from my own. | 59.3% | 56.1% | 57.9% | 58.3% | 57.6% | 57.8% |
| When someone's opinions strongly disagree with my own, I tend to develop unfriendly feelings and to avoid close contact with the person. | 12.1% | 13.2% | 13.5% | 12.4% | 13.1% | 12.9% |
| I feel uneasy and distrustful toward people whose way of thinking is quite dissimilar to my own. | 8.7% | 9.6% | 10.0% | 9.8% | 9.2% | 9.4% |
| Because they irritate me, I tend to stay away from people whose ideas are quite different from my own. | 8.3% | 8.9% | 10.5% | 9.5% | 9.0% | 9.1% |
| Receptivity to academic assistance | | | | | | |
| I would like to receive some instruction in the most effective ways to take college exams. | 73.6% | 76.7% | 73.1% | 78.1% | 73.1% | 74.6% |
| I would like to receive some help in improving my study habits. | 54.2% | 60.0% | 56.5% | 61.6% | 54.8% | 56.8% |
| I would like to receive some individual help in improving my math skills. | 44.6% | 49.5% | 51.6% | 53.9% | 45.6% | 48.1% |
| I would like to receive some individual help in improving my writing skills. | 44.3% | 46.6% | 42.8% | 49.8% | 42.5% | 44.7% |
| I would like to receive tutoring in one or more of my courses. | 39.6% | 46.9% | 38.1% | 45.0% | 40.4% | 41.8% |
| I would like to receive some training to improve my reading skills. | 27.0% | 28.9% | 29.4% | 33.7% | 25.9% | 28.2% |
| Receptivity to career counseling | | | | | | |
| I would like some help selecting an educational plan that will prepare me to get a good job. | 69.1% | 69.8% | 60.8% | 69.0% | 66.5% | 67.2% |
| I would like to talk with someone about the qualifications needed for certain occupations. | 62.3% | 67.0% | 57.5% | 63.8% | 62.3% | 62.7% |
| I would like to talk with someone about the salaries and future outlook for various occupations. | 56.0% | 57.0% | 50.2% | 56.8% | 54.1% | 54.9% |
| I would like to talk with someone about the advantages and disadvantages of various occupations. | 49.2% | 51.0% | 40.8% | 48.2% | 47.4% | 47.7% |
| I would like some help selecting an occupation that is well-suited to my interests and abilities. | 48.5% | 49.6% | 42.4% | 48.8% | 46.7% | 47.4% |

**Findings by
Institution Type**

**Findings by Parent
Educational Background**

| 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 |
|--|---|--|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Receptivity to financial guidance | | | | | | |
| I would like to talk to someone about getting a scholarship. | 66.0% | 68.1% | 55.7% | 66.5% | 63.1% | 64.1% |
| I would like to talk to someone about getting a part-time job during the regular school year. | 54.7% | 53.0% | 41.1% | 51.5% | 50.2% | 50.6% |
| I would like to talk to someone about the opportunities available for summer employment. | 50.9% | 50.3% | 42.2% | 51.0% | 47.4% | 48.5% |
| I would like to talk with someone about getting a loan to help me through school. | 32.0% | 28.7% | 33.0% | 36.6% | 28.8% | 31.1% |
| Receptivity to personal counseling | | | | | | |
| I would like to talk with a counselor about my general attitude toward school. | 17.4% | 18.9% | 19.4% | 21.7% | 17.0% | 18.4% |
| I would like to talk with a counselor about some difficulties in my personal relationships or social life. | 10.4% | 10.4% | 11.1% | 12.2% | 9.9% | 10.6% |
| I would like to talk with a counselor about eliminating an unwanted habit (involving food, drugs, cigarettes, or alcohol, etc.). | 8.2% | 8.9% | 10.4% | 10.7% | 8.2% | 9.0% |
| I would like to talk with a counselor about some emotional tensions that are bothering me. | 8.7% | 8.6% | 9.0% | 9.9% | 8.3% | 8.8% |
| I would like to talk with a counselor about some feelings of discouragement or unhappy thoughts that keep bothering me. | 8.5% | 8.2% | 9.0% | 9.8% | 8.0% | 8.5% |
| I would like to talk with a counselor about some family problems. | 6.6% | 6.5% | 7.0% | 8.1% | 6.0% | 6.6% |
| Receptivity to social enrichment | | | | | | |
| I would like to attend an informal gathering where I can meet some new friends. | 60.8% | 61.3% | 43.7% | 52.7% | 58.3% | 56.6% |
| I would like to find out more about the clubs and social organizations at my college. | 60.3% | 65.7% | 40.7% | 53.3% | 58.7% | 57.2% |
| I would like to find out more about student government and the various student activities on campus. | 49.3% | 51.8% | 35.5% | 46.3% | 46.8% | 46.6% |
| I would like to meet an experienced student who can show me around and give me some advice. | 47.9% | 52.5% | 37.0% | 48.0% | 46.1% | 46.7% |
| Desire to transfer | | | | | | |
| I have no desire to transfer to another school before finishing a degree at this college or university. | 70.7% | 60.1% | 55.6% | 63.8% | 62.8% | 63.1% |
| I plan to transfer to another school before completing a degree at this college or university. | 7.4% | 13.6% | 20.4% | 13.2% | 12.8% | 12.9% |
| Total number of students | 37,834 | 34,062 | 24,745 | 28,088 | 67,393 | 96,641 |
| Average age of students | 20.6 | 18.5 | 23.4 | 22.5 | 19.8 | 20.6 |

Respondent demographics (Fall 2009)

Findings by Institution Type

Findings by Parent Educational Background

| 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 | 37,834 | 34,062 | 24,745 | 28,088* | 67,393* | 96,641 |
| Representation by institution type | 39.1% | 35.2% | 25.6% | 29.1% | 69.7% | 100% |
| Percent male | 48.4% | 44.0% | 48.5% | 45.1% | 47.6% | 46.9% |
| Percent female | 51.5% | 56.0% | 51.4% | 54.9% | 52.4% | 53.1% |
| Racial/ethnic origin | | | | | | |
| Black/African-American | 18.8% | 27.5% | 17.4% | 24.3% | 20.2% | 21.5% |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 0.6% | 0.9% | 1.3% | 0.8% | 0.9% | 0.9% |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 4.2% | 2.8% | 4.1% | 4.2% | 3.4% | 3.7% |
| White/Caucasian | 58.3% | 57.1% | 56.2% | 45.3% | 62.6% | 57.3% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 10.8% | 6.1% | 15.8% | 20.1% | 6.4% | 10.4% |
| Multi-ethnic or other ethnic origin | 3.9% | 3.2% | 2.6% | 2.9% | 3.4% | 3.3% |
| Prefer not to respond | 2.6% | 1.9% | 2.0% | 1.8% | 2.3% | 2.2% |
| Highest education level of mother | | | | | | |
| 8 years or less | 3.6% | 2.1% | 7.0% | 12.1% | 0.6% | 4.0% |
| Some high school | 5.9% | 5.2% | 12.2% | 20.3% | 1.9% | 7.3% |
| High school diploma | 27.3% | 25.8% | 36.5% | 67.5% | 13.3% | 29.1% |
| 1 to 3 years of college | 27.7% | 29.4% | 27.8% | 0.0% | 40.3% | 28.3% |
| Bachelor's degree | 22.7% | 24.4% | 10.3% | 0.0% | 28.7% | 20.1% |
| Master's degree | 9.5% | 10.0% | 3.8% | 0.0% | 11.7% | 8.2% |
| Professional degree | 2.7% | 2.6% | 1.8% | 0.0% | 3.4% | 2.4% |
| Highest education level of father | | | | | | |
| 8 years or less | 4.4% | 2.6% | 8.5% | 14.0% | 1.0% | 4.8% |
| Some high school | 7.9% | 7.4% | 15.0% | 23.0% | 4.1% | 9.5% |
| High school diploma | 30.4% | 31.9% | 38.8% | 63.0% | 21.1% | 33.1% |
| 1 to 3 years of college | 21.4% | 22.7% | 21.7% | 0.0% | 31.4% | 21.9% |
| Bachelor's degree | 20.3% | 21.5% | 9.2% | 0.0% | 25.6% | 17.9% |
| Master's degree | 9.6% | 8.6% | 3.8% | 0.0% | 11.1% | 7.8% |
| Professional degree | 4.9% | 4.2% | 1.9% | 0.0% | 5.6% | 3.9% |
| Highest degree planned by respondent | | | | | | |
| None | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.4% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.2% |
| 1-year certificate | 0.3% | 0.1% | 4.2% | 2.3% | 0.8% | 1.2% |
| 2-year degree (associate's) | 3.4% | 0.9% | 34.2% | 17.3% | 7.5% | 10.4% |
| 4-year degree (bachelor's) | 40.2% | 36.7% | 35.0% | 40.5% | 36.4% | 37.6% |
| Master's degree | 38.0% | 36.3% | 15.7% | 25.2% | 34.4% | 31.7% |
| Professional degree | 17.9% | 25.7% | 10.5% | 14.4% | 20.5% | 18.8% |

* 1,160 students did not provide the necessary data to classify them as first-generation or non-first-generation students. These students have not been included in the percentages for first-generation and non-first-generation students.

**Findings by
Institution Type**

**Findings by Parent
Educational Background**

| 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 |
|---|---|--|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Time expecting to spend at work | | | | | | |
| 0 (I have no plans to work) | 20.7% | 30.9% | 18.7% | 18.9% | 25.9% | 23.8% |
| 1 to 10 hours per week | 25.0% | 23.3% | 11.9% | 15.7% | 23.3% | 21.1% |
| 11 to 20 hours per week | 27.9% | 30.8% | 26.6% | 28.8% | 28.5% | 28.6% |
| 21 to 30 hours per week | 12.4% | 10.9% | 21.9% | 18.3% | 12.6% | 14.3% |
| 31 to 40 hours per week | 9.9% | 3.3% | 16.2% | 13.7% | 7.3% | 9.2% |
| Over 40 hours per week | 4.1% | 0.6% | 4.7% | 4.6% | 2.4% | 3.0% |
| Average grades as senior in high school | | | | | | |
| A | 18.5% | 20.1% | 6.4% | 9.9% | 18.6% | 15.9% |
| A to B | 32.8% | 35.8% | 26.4% | 29.4% | 33.4% | 32.2% |
| B | 20.5% | 20.8% | 19.6% | 19.9% | 20.5% | 20.3% |
| B to C | 19.9% | 17.8% | 31.2% | 27.6% | 19.7% | 22.1% |
| C | 5.8% | 4.0% | 10.2% | 8.4% | 5.4% | 6.3% |
| C to D | 2.2% | 1.2% | 5.2% | 3.9% | 2.0% | 2.6% |
| D | 0.4% | 0.1% | 1.0% | 0.8% | 0.3% | 0.5% |
| Respondent's self-assessment of academic knowledge | | | | | | |
| Highest 20% | 18.4% | 18.7% | 8.4% | 10.0% | 18.5% | 16.0% |
| Next to highest 20% | 34.4% | 34.8% | 22.9% | 26.0% | 34.0% | 31.6% |
| Middle 20% | 44.6% | 44.1% | 61.2% | 58.0% | 44.7% | 48.7% |
| Next to lowest 20% | 2.3% | 2.0% | 6.2% | 4.9% | 2.4% | 3.2% |
| Lowest 20% | 0.3% | 0.3% | 1.2% | 0.9% | 0.4% | 0.5% |
| Respondent's self-assessment of academic ability | | | | | | |
| Considerably below average | 0.3% | 0.3% | 0.9% | 0.7% | 0.3% | 0.5% |
| Slightly below average | 3.6% | 3.5% | 6.8% | 6.0% | 3.7% | 4.4% |
| Average | 28.3% | 27.8% | 47.9% | 43.6% | 28.7% | 33.1% |
| Slightly above average | 36.6% | 37.2% | 28.5% | 30.8% | 36.4% | 34.7% |
| Considerably above average (top 20%) | 28.2% | 28.2% | 14.3% | 17.1% | 27.9% | 24.6% |
| Extremely high (top 5%) | 3.0% | 2.9% | 1.6% | 1.6% | 3.1% | 2.6% |
| Timing of decision to attend chosen college/university | | | | | | |
| Decision made few days before | 3.7% | 1.5% | 4.1% | 4.2% | 2.5% | 3.0% |
| Decision made weeks before | 18.0% | 9.4% | 21.6% | 20.6% | 14.0% | 15.9% |
| Decision made many months before | 78.2% | 88.7% | 74.0% | 75.0% | 83.2% | 80.8% |

Contact us at:
2350 Oakdale Boulevard
Coralville, Iowa 52241-9702

Phone:
800-876-1117
319-626-8380

E-mail:
ContactUs@noellevitz.com

Web:
www.noellevitz.com

All material in this paper is copyright © by Noel-Levitz, Inc. Permission is required, in most cases, to redistribute information from Noel-Levitz, Inc., either in print or electronically. Please contact us at ContactUs@noellevitz.com about reusing material from this paper.

Questions? Want additional information?

If you have questions about this report, or to learn how motivational assessment can support you in prioritizing your resources, programs, and services, please contact Beth Richter at 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 (RMS) helps campuses to jumpstart early intervention programs, and how this approach may be beneficial for your students as well.

Related reports from Noel-Levitz

National Student Satisfaction-Priorities Reports
Visit: www.noellevitz.com/SatisfactionReports

Benchmark poll reports on student retention and recruitment trends
Visit: www.noellevitz.com/BenchmarkReports

E-Expectations Report Series
Visit: www.noellevitz.com/E-ExpectationsReports

Additional research and papers:
Visit: www.noellevitz.com/PapersAndResearch

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 more than 35 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™ (RMS). The inventory is designed to assess the motivational characteristics of incoming first-year students. 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.

In addition to illuminating first-year students' attitudes nationally in this report, the findings of the inventory were reported directly to the participating campuses within days of completion to provide guidance for early 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 (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.

Find it online.

This report is posted online at: www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanReport

Sign up to receive additional reports and papers as they become available:
www.noellevitz.com/subscribehere