

About the Institutional Priorities Survey

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

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

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

The Pilot Study

USA Group Noel-Levitz invited institutions already utilizing the Student Satisfaction Inventory to participate in the pilot study for the Institutional Priorities Survey. Seventy-five campuses across North America participated, ranging from large four-year public universities to small liberal arts colleges to two-year community and technical colleges. Data collected from this national study were used to establish the norms for the final two-year and four-year versions of the Institutional Priorities Survey.

The Survey

As with the Student Satisfaction Inventory, the Institutional Priorities Survey asks two questions instead of one. The first question, "How important is it that your institution meet this expectation?" is accompanied by a second question, "What is your level of agreement that your institution is meeting this expectation?" Campus personnel rate each item on a scale of 1-7 by the level of importance of the specific expectation as well as their level of agreement that the expectation is being met.

The Institutional Priorities Survey results in three different scores for each item: importance, agreement, and performance gap. Importance score ratings reflect how strongly personnel feel about the expectation (the higher the score, the more important

it is that the expectation be met for students). Agreement ratings indicate the extent to which personnel agree that your institution has met the expectation (the higher the score, the more in agreement). Performance gap scores (importance rating minus agreement rating) reveal how personnel perceive the expectations are being met overall. A large performance gap score for an item (e.g., 1-5) indicates a perception that your institution is not meeting expectations, whereas a small or zero gap score (e.g., .50) indicates a perception that your institution is meeting expectations. A negative gap score (e.g., -.25) indicates a perception that an institution is exceeding expectations.

In addition to the information provided by the three measurements for each item, inventory composite scales offer a "global" perspective of your personnel's responses. The scales provide an overview of perceptions of your institutional strengths and areas in need of improvement.

Two versions of the inventory are available: the Community, Junior and Technical College version and the Four-Year College and University version. Each version captures the unique features of the type of institution for which it was developed.

Responses are compared **to** corresponding national norm groups by institutional type: four-year public, four-year private, and community, junior and technical colleges.

The Items

The Institutional Priorities Survey collects feedback on over 75 items.

Included are:

- 50 items of expectation reflecting a broad range of student experiences
- 10 optional items that may be defined by the institution
- six items that assess the institution's commitment to specific student populations
- nine items that assess pre-enrollment factors
- three summary items that assess perceptions regarding students' overall satisfaction with the institution
- eight items that identify demographic characteristics of respondents
- three optional items that further identify the demographic characteristics of respondents (you can have personnel indicate their office or department, plus two other demographic characteristics of your choosing).

The Scales

The 12 composite scales are identical for the Institutional Priorities Survey and the Student Satisfaction Inventory, allowing for institutional comparisons between the two campus reports. Again, the scales are unique to the versions of the instrument, i.e., the four-year version and the community college version.

Four-Year College and University Version

Twelve scales comprise the four-year college and university version:

Academic Advising Effectiveness assesses the comprehensiveness of your academic advising program. Academic advisors are evaluated on the basis of their knowledge, competence, and personal concern for student success, as well as on their approachability.

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

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

Campus Support Services assesses the quality of your support programs and services that students utilize in order to make their educational experiences more meaningful and productive. This scale covers areas such as tutoring, the adequacy of the library and computer labs, and the availability of academic and career services.

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

Instructional Effectiveness assesses your students' academic experience, your curriculum, and your campus's overriding commitment to academic excellence. This comprehensive scale covers areas such as the variety of courses offered and the effectiveness of your full-time and adjunct faculty in and out of the classroom.

Recruitment and Financial Aid Effectiveness assesses your institutions ability to enroll students in an effective manner. This scale covers issues such as competence and knowledge of admissions counselors, as well as the effectiveness and availability of financial aid programs.

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

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

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

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

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

Some items on the inventory contribute to more than one scale. In addition, there are two items (numbers 24 and 49) that are not included in any of the four-year scales.

Reliability and Validity

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

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

Interpreting Your IPS Reports

General Information and Guidelines

It is important to utilize the information provided by both the Institutional Priorities Survey and the Student Satisfaction Inventory when reviewing your results. While the Student Satisfaction Inventory data can stand alone, the Institutional Priorities Survey data were not intended to stand alone, but rather to be interpreted in combination with the SSI data.

Like the SSI, the IPS data analyses are comprehensive and the interpretation of the results is quite straightforward. Three mean scores are reported for each item: level of importance (of the expectation), level of agreement (that the expectation is being met), and the performance gap between the two. The means for level of importance and level of agreement result from summing each respondent's rating and dividing by the number of respondents. Then a performance gap score is calculated for each item by taking the mean importance rating and subtracting the mean level of agreement rating.

When interpreting your IPS results, it is especially important to review all three scores - level of importance, level of agreement and performance gap - and then compare the three scores with your SSI results. We suggest the following four-step process to help you think about your data:

Step 1. Match the 50 items from the Institutional Priorities Survey with the corresponding items from the Student Satisfaction Inventory.

Step 2. Compare the three scores from the IPS and SSI for both the individual items and the scales:

- SSI importance scores with IPS importance scores
- SSI satisfaction scores with IPS agreement scores
- SSI performance gap scores with IPS performance gap scores

It is likely you will find that the importance scores from the IPS are higher than the scores from the SSI.

Step 3. Compare the numerical rankings of the scores from the IPS and SSI for both the individual items and scales:

- SSI importance rankings with IPS importance rankings
- SSI satisfaction rankings with IPS agreement rankings
- SSI performance gap rankings with IPS performance gap rankings

We find that comparing your student and campus personnel rankings is the most dynamic way to analyze these combined data sets. Converting the scores to numerical

rankings allows you to more accurately identify key areas where perceptions of institutional strengths and priorities for intervention are shared by students and campus personnel.

(Please note that if you are utilizing the optional SSI/IPS combination report, the numerical rankings have been computed for you.)

Step 4. Compare your IPS scores with those of the national comparison group that is similar to your own, i.e., four-year private institutions, four-year public institutions, or community, junior or technical colleges.