



Student Campus Climate Survey Highlights

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Skyline College

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Introduction

Overview

Skyline College administered a student perception survey to a representative sample of students during the first part of the spring 2006 semester. The survey provided information for the accreditation self-study process (site visit scheduled for fall 2007), as well as other college-wide assessment and planning initiatives including the Education and Facilities Master Plan. The self-study process requires an assessment of institutional performance in terms of student learning outcomes, quality of services and programs and effectiveness of operations with supporting evidence in each of these areas. One source of evidence is a campus climate study in which students provide feedback on programs, services and the learning environment. This survey provided partial evidence needed for the self-study.

It should be noted that during the administration of the survey the college was undergoing major campus construction (e.g., new buildings and building renovations). The disruption of normal academic life created by these major construction projects at Skyline may have influenced the students' perceptions and opinions.

Purpose

The purpose of this survey study was to measure current student attitudes and perceptions toward Skyline College's programs, services and learning environment. The results from the survey will be used to inform responses to the accreditation standards and may be used for planning and improvement efforts. The survey will also be useful for establishing benchmarks for future studies and for evaluating the college's mission, goals and strategies.

Sample Design

In order to contain costs and to extract representative information that could be inferred back to the entire population of students, a stratified random sample was used to build the sampling framework. The sample size was based on a 95% confidence level at a $\pm 5\%$ confidence interval (approximately 1,200 survey respondents). The sampling framework included randomly selected classes from a variety of disciplines stratified by day and evening class times. Over-sampling was employed in order to compensate for the expected 70% response rate. Of the 60 classes randomly chosen, 57 participated, and 1,106 surveys were completed. The final response rate was 92%.

Instrumentation

In order to benchmark performance against other colleges, the Noel-Levitz *Student Satisfaction Inventory* was used. This instrument used a dual perception scale, measuring both satisfaction and importance. The instrument contained the following eleven scales: Academic Advising and Counseling, Academic Services, Admissions and Financial Aid, Campus Climate, Campus Support Services, Concern for the Individual, Instructional Effectiveness, Registration Effectiveness, Safety and Security, Service Excellence, and Student Centeredness. Additionally, the survey measured overall student satisfaction, the college's responsiveness to the diversity of its students, factors that influenced student enrollment, ten customized items which the college created, and open-ended comments.

Methodology

In order to achieve representative and timely information on the entire population of students while containing costs, the data collection methodology selected for this survey study was a scannable (paper and pencil) survey that was distributed during one class period.

Implementation

Communications: All of the shared governance groups, the college leadership, and management were informed and connected to the process through continuous communication as follows:

1. Review and selection of the instrument.
2. Electronic pre-notifications to students, staff and faculty.
3. Executive summary report of results and oral briefings.

Administration: The surveys were administered during the last week of February so that reports could be distributed during the first week of May. The Office of Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness (OPRIE) bundled and distributed the surveys along with instructions and return envelopes to the randomly selected instructors, who administered the survey during one class period. The instructor returned the completed surveys in a sealed envelope to the division, from whom OPRIE collected them for processing.

Respondent Profile

The survey respondents were fairly representative of Skyline College's student body. The majority of survey respondents were female (56%) and 19 to 24 years old (52%). The survey respondents were Asian/Pacific Islander (42%), Caucasian/White (20%), Hispanic (16%), Black (2%) and other (20%). Thirty-seven percent of respondents were first year students, and 33% were second year students. About half were transfer-seeking (49%), and a quarter of the respondents were pursuing an associate's degree (23%). Most of the respondents were employed either full-time (29%) or part-time (43%). The number of day classes (73%) and full-time students (56%) that were surveyed were slightly more than the college-wide average.

Interpreting the Results

The results from the survey yielded three different scores: 1) Importance, 2) Satisfaction, and 3) Performance gap (importance score minus satisfaction score). The importance score reflected student perception on the significance of an item, while the satisfaction score reflected student opinion about the quality of a given item. Using a seven-point Likert scale, a higher score on importance indicated greater significance to the student, and therefore a stronger expectation. Similarly, a higher score on satisfaction indicated a more favorable opinion on the particular item. The performance gap reflected how well the college met students' expectations. For example, a small performance gap indicated that the college met students' expectations. A large performance gap indicated that the college did not meet students' expectations. A negative performance gap indicated that the college exceeded students' expectations.

Importance and satisfaction scores were juxtaposed in order to pinpoint strengths and opportunities. Items containing high importance and high satisfaction ratings represented strengths that the college should highlight and continue to strengthen. Items containing high importance and low satisfaction ratings pinpointed areas in need of immediate

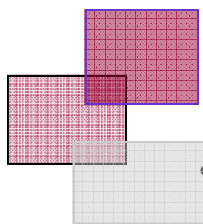
improvement. Items with low importance and high satisfaction ratings suggested areas where it would be beneficial to redirect resources. Items containing low importance and low satisfaction ratings suggested areas that need to be reexamined as areas of low priority for the college.

For the purpose of discussion and tracking trends, the following internal benchmarks were suggested for scale satisfaction and performance gap ratings:

- Scale Satisfaction: ≥ 5.03
- Scale Performance Gap: ≤ 1.01

In addition to the internal benchmarks found in the survey, comparisons and competitive benchmarking were performed between Skyline College's student responses and responses of students from other community colleges in California who have taken the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory within the previous five years (i.e., Antelope Valley College, Bakersfield College, Cerritos College, Cerro Coso Community College, College of the Siskiyous, Cuesta College, Cypress College, El Camino College, Feather River Community College District, Long Beach City College, Los Angeles Valley College, Los Rios Community College, Palo Verde College, Palomar College, Rio Hondo College, Saddleback College, San Bernardino Valley College, Southwestern College, Taft College, and Victor Valley College).

Students wrote nearly 1,600 individual comments in response to the two open-ended questions (see Appendix B-Sample of Verbatim Comments). In order to summarize the comments and provide additional information and explanation of the quantitative results from the survey, a content analysis was conducted. The content analysis employed the inter-coder reliability method. A systematic random sample of comments were first selected then coded by two readers in order to extract common themes as they related to the survey. Comments were then grouped by themes and summarized to capture the essence of the group of comments and to note salient points. These summaries can be found in the narrative report under each scale and were generally representative of the entire pool of comments.



Highlight of the Findings

- Students reported that counseling services were the most important to them, while student support services in general were the least important. Moreover, students were most satisfied with the registration process and least satisfied with safety and security.
- Academic advisors' knowledge about transfer requirements ranked highest in both importance and satisfaction on the Academic Advising and Counseling scale. Consistent with the focus group study from fall 2005, students believed that counseling services are critical to their success and an important element to the college experience. Consequently, students commented they would like more counselors available and more convenient appointment times.
- The adequacy of library resources and services ranked highest on both importance and satisfaction on the Academic Services scale. Students commented that they are pleased to have access to computers and labs. However, the availability of up-to-date equipment in labs had the largest performance gap, indicating that the college fell short of students' expectations in this area.
- The knowledge of admissions staff ranked highest in both importance and satisfaction on the Admissions and Financial Aid scale. However, there was a relatively large performance gap under the adequacy of financial aid, which was one of the top three factors students selected that influenced their decision to enroll.
- The caring and helpfulness of staff and enjoyable college experience received high scores on satisfaction. Similar to the results from the focus group study of fall 2005, many students commented that they liked the campus because it was small, cozy and conducive to learning. On the other hand, students said that the current building construction was a distraction and an inconvenience and made for an unpleasant atmosphere.
- The adequacy of career services ranked first on importance and second on satisfaction on the Campus Support Services scale. The availability of child care facilities had the smallest performance gap in the survey, indicating that the college met students' expectations in this area.
- The question which asked about fair and unbiased treatment of the students by faculty ranked highest in both importance and satisfaction. However, students expressed an interest in having more opportunities available to voice their opinions and concerns.
- Students ranked the quality of instruction highest on both importance and satisfaction on the Instructional Effectiveness scale. Students commented that the faculty are generally very knowledgeable, friendly, helpful and approachable and that they are truly concerned about students' success.
- Early notification of poor performance in class had one of the largest performance gaps in the survey, suggesting that students would like to know about their progress early enough in the semester to improve their performance.
- The convenience of class times ranked highest on importance on the Registration Effectiveness scale, but received the second to lowest score on satisfaction, creating a

relatively large performance gap. Yet, students said that it was much easier to get into classes at Skyline than at other colleges in the area.

- The Safety and Security scale ranked high on importance. However, the adequacy of student parking and the lighting in parking lots had the two largest performance gaps in the survey. Comments revealed that students would like more security officers patrolling the campus and parking lots, particularly in the evenings.
- The adequacy of smoking restrictions on campus had one of the largest gaps on the survey and numerous comments indicated that students were dissatisfied with the amount of smoking on campus.
- Factors of greatest importance in the decision to enroll at Skyline College were cost, academic reputation, and financial aid. Factors of least importance or influence were the opportunity to play sports, campus appearance, and recommendations by family and friends.
- The college experience at Skyline exceeded the expectations of 42% of respondents, while 70% were satisfied with their experience at the college thus far, and 63% said that if they had to do it over, they would probably or definitely enroll again.
- Students believed that the college was responsive to the diverse needs of its students. Many comments noted that the college offered something for everyone and that the convenience of the class schedule and variety of classes made it possible for the students to explore options they might not have explored otherwise.

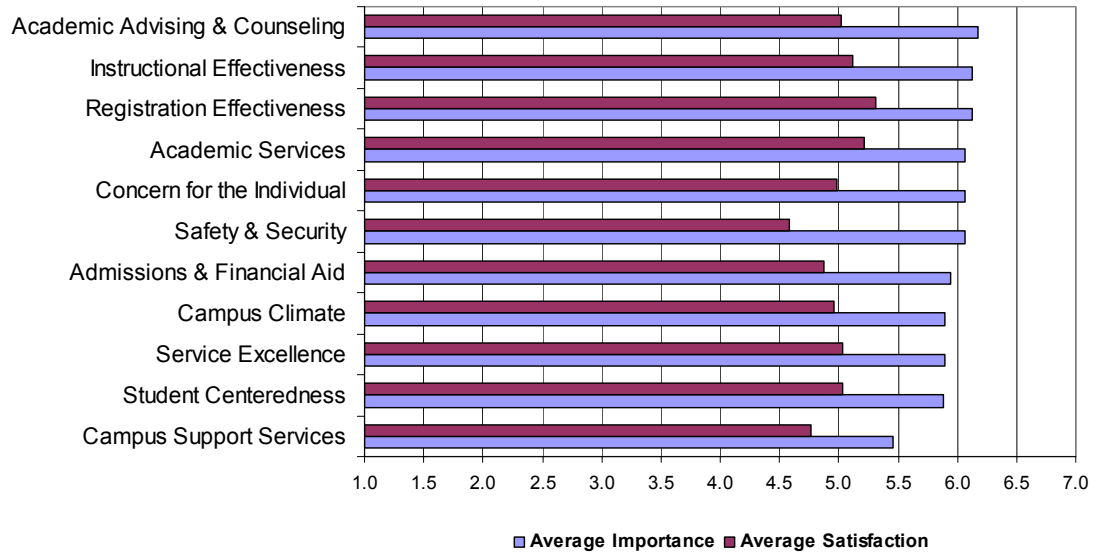
How Well Are We Meeting Student Expectations?

The survey items were grouped into eleven scales. Importance scores for the scales ranged from 6.17 (Academic Advising and Counseling) to 5.46 (Campus Support Services). Satisfaction scores for the scales ranged from 5.31 (Registration Effectiveness) to 4.58 (Safety and Security). Performance gaps for the scales ranged from 1.48 (Safety and Security) to .70 (Campus Support Services).

Academic Advising and Counseling ranked highest on importance (6.17), but ranked sixth in overall satisfaction (5.02). Tied for second highest in overall importance with an average score of 6.13 were Instructional Effectiveness, which ranked third on satisfaction (5.12), and Registration Effectiveness, which ranked highest on satisfaction (5.21). Campus Support Services ranked lowest on importance (5.46) and second to lowest on satisfaction (4.76).

Academic Services ranked second highest in overall satisfaction (5.21) and tied for fourth on importance (6.06). Safety and Security ranked lowest in overall satisfaction (4.58), but tied for fourth on importance (6.06).

Survey Scales

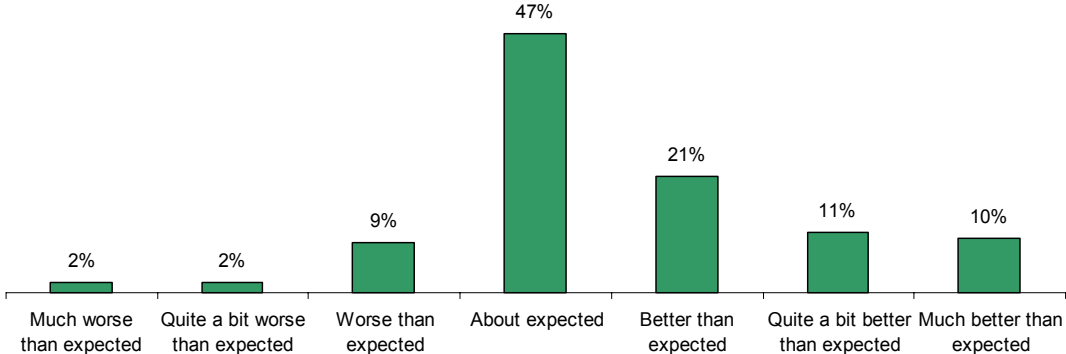


Overall Satisfaction

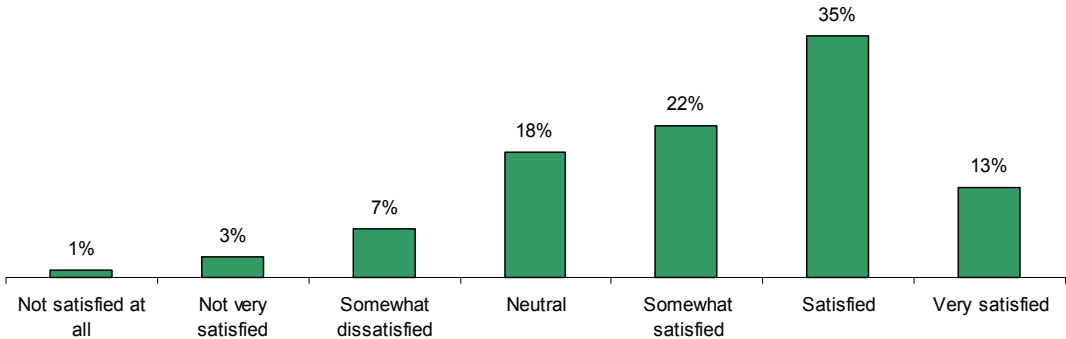
Three items on the survey addressed the students’ overall satisfaction with their experience at Skyline College. These items provided a bottom-line summary of student perceptions.

The first item assessed how well the students’ experience at Skyline College met their expectation. Forty-two percent of respondents said that their experience was better, quite a bit better, or much better than expected. The second item assessed the students’ overall satisfaction with their experience thus far. Seventy percent of respondents said that they were somewhat satisfied to very satisfied. The third item assessed whether the students would enroll at the college if they could do it over again. Sixty-three percent said they probably or definitely would enroll again.

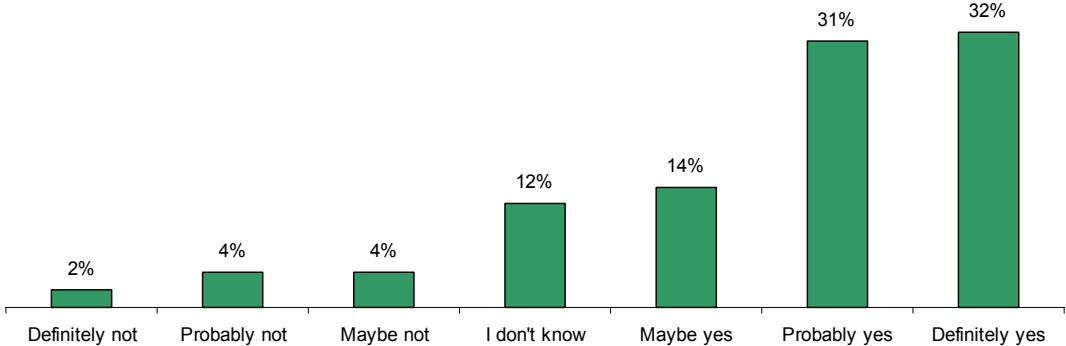
96. So far, how has your college experience met your expectations?



97. Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far.



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





Conclusions

1. The **Academic Advising and Counseling** scale ranked highest on importance, implying that students believed counseling services were critical to their learning experience and success. This scale correlated to several components of the WASC/ACCJC accreditation standards which assess the quality of support services (i.e., II.B.1 and II.B.c). Students rated the items in this scale relatively high on satisfaction, indicating that they believed that Skyline counselors were knowledgeable about transfer and program requirements and were approachable. These sentiments were validated through the related comments which suggested that students were generally pleased with the level of services provided by the counseling department and that Skyline met their expectation. The only notable complaint was the lack of counselors and the long wait or difficulty obtaining a convenient appointment with a counselor. These results were consistent with the focus group study conducted in fall 2005 which found that Skyline students were serious about their learning outcomes and recognized the importance of counseling services.
2. The **Academic Services** scale included questions regarding the library, tutoring services and learning labs, ranked in the top five on importance. This is an indication that students believed this was an area that supported their learning success. The items in this scale also correlated to a number of components in the accreditation standards, particularly those components that assess the quality and adequacy of support services as well as the technology, laboratories, and equipment (i.e., II.B.1, II.C.1, III.C.1.c and III.B.1.b). This scale also rated second highest on satisfaction. The performance gaps between importance and satisfaction ranged from .64 to 1.15, some of the smallest gaps found in the survey. This suggested that the college met students' expectations in this area. Students were particularly satisfied with the usefulness of the library and the helpfulness of the staff, as well as the value and positive benefits of tutoring services. On the other hand, the importance and satisfaction ratings as well as the comments regarding the laboratories and lab equipment indicated that Skyline fell short of students' expectations in this area.
3. The **Admissions and Financial Aid** scale captured student opinion toward how effectively Skyline enrolled students and whether financial aid was adequate. This scale correlated to a few components in the WASC/ACCJC accreditation standards that pertain to the college's portrayal of programs and services as well as the quality of admissions and financial aid services (i.e., II.A.6.c and II.B.1) This scale ranked seventh in overall importance out of eleven scales and was ninth in overall satisfaction. These rankings were identical to the comparison group of California community colleges. The item with the largest gap between importance and satisfaction pertained to the adequacy of financial aid. Although a number of students commented that they were happy with the financial aid packages and the re-payment plans, some students commented that there was insufficient information about financial aid. This is a critical area of importance as evidenced by the survey results, from the questions which asked about factors that contributed to students' decision to enroll at Skyline. Students indicated that financial aid was one of the top three factors in their decision to enroll. However, other questions around this same topic indicated

that it was likely that many students were unaware of the financial aid packages available to them.

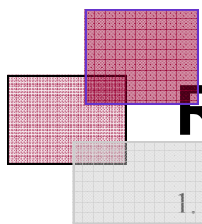
4. The **Campus Climate** scale ranked in the bottom five on overall importance and satisfaction. The three items that were rated highest on satisfaction were the items regarding the helpfulness of staff, the campus as a welcoming place, and how enjoyable the student's experience was. Numerous comments clarified these ratings by claiming that the small campus and cool weather made for a cozy atmosphere which was conducive to learning. These same attributes were described by students in the fall 2005 focus group study. The following items within this scale ranked high on importance and low on satisfaction: campus safety and security, helping students reach their education goal, and providing students with channels for expressing complaints. These areas were discussed in the student comments and were perceived as hindrances to a successful learning experience. Students also commented that there was insufficient information about events, activities, and clubs that would help them to stay connected to the college community. Many of the items in this scale, along with the related comments, correlated to various components in the WASC/ACCJC accreditation standards, specifically the components which assess treatment of students and the learning environment (III.A.4.c).
5. Although the **Campus Support Services** scale was ranked lowest in overall importance, the performance gaps between importance and satisfaction were relatively small (.33 to 1.04) with the majority of items falling in the lower end of the range. This is an indication that the college met and even exceeded student expectation in the area of campus support services (i.e., child care services and orientation services). Related comments were also indications that students were generally satisfied with many of the support services offered at Skyline, with particular mention of the transfer center, career services, child care center, and orientation/matriculation services. However, a number of comments indicated that there was lack of awareness and information about support services. Many of the items in this scale as well as related comments correlated to components in the WASC/ACCJC accreditation standards (i.e., II.B.1).
6. The items found in the **Concern for the Individual** scale were focused on the degree to which the faculty, staff, and college as a whole treat the student. This scale tied for fourth on importance and ranked seventh highest on satisfaction. Performance gaps ranged from .81 to 1.29, indicating that there were some areas in this scale where the college fully met students' expectations and other areas where the college partially met student expectation. More specifically, the item regarding fair and unbiased treatment by the faculty rated highest on importance as well as on satisfaction. The item regarding the college's concern for students as individuals rated high on importance but low on satisfaction. There was evidence in other parts of the survey and in the comments that this perception may in part have been due to lack of opportunities to express concerns or complaints as well as lack of information available on programs, services, and campus activities and events.
7. The **Instructional Effectiveness** scale ranked second most important overall and third highest on satisfaction with relatively small performance gap between importance and satisfaction of .82. Many of the items in this scale as well as related comments correlated to components in the WASC/ACCJC accreditation standards (i.e., II.A.1.a, II.A.2.c and III.A.4.c), specifically those items regarding the quality of

instruction, treatment of students, and meeting diverse student needs. The items in this scale that rated highest on importance and satisfaction related to faculty's concern for student success and treatment of students in an unbiased manner. The item that rated the lowest on satisfaction asked about students being alerted early in the term about their performance. The dissatisfaction in this area was echoed in a number of comments, claiming that students would like to know more about their progress early enough to do something about it. Other related comments in this scale indicated that most students were satisfied with the quality of instruction and the variety of courses and programs offered. Students believed that Skyline offered something for everyone, which allowed them to explore options they may not have considered otherwise.

8. The **Registration Effectiveness** scale also ranked second most important overall, but highest on satisfaction. The item that rated the highest on importance but lowest on satisfaction was regarding the convenience of the class schedule. Student comments in this area were conflicting. Many students commented that they were pleased with class scheduling and availability, which allowed for flexibility and choice. Many other students noted that they would like classes to be offered on more convenient days and times (e.g., Saturday classes, more evening classes, and more distance learning classes) and that many of the science classes filled up too quickly. A few of the items in this scale as well as related comments correlated to components in the WASC/ACCJC accreditation standards (i.e., II.B.1), specifically those related to the quality of support services.
9. The performance gap between overall importance and satisfaction in the **Safety and Security** scale was the largest scale gap in the survey (1.48). Students ranked this scale as the fourth most important overall and the lowest on satisfaction. The item in the scale that received the lowest on satisfaction with a high importance rating was regarding the adequacy of lighting and security in the parking lots. The comments echoed these ratings. Many students commented that they did not feel safe on campus, particularly at night, and would like better lighting and a greater presence of security staff patrolling the parking lots. A number of similar issues have surfaced as a result of the Education and Facilities Master Planning Project (EFMPP) which was being developed during the spring 2006 semester. Several items on the scale and related comments directly pertained to components in the WASC/ACCJC accreditation standards (i.e., III.B.1.b), which assess the college environment with regard to safety, security, healthfulness, and physical resources.
10. The **Service Excellence** scale ranked in the bottom five on overall importance and in the top five on overall satisfaction. The areas within this scale that rated highest on satisfaction and importance related to registration services and library services. Student comments reflected general satisfaction with the level of service provided. Students believed that the staff was knowledgeable, supportive, helpful, and caring.
11. The scale that ranked second lowest on importance was **Student Centeredness**. This scale had relatively small performance gaps between importance and satisfaction on most of the items, indicating that the college met students' expectations in this area. However, the item that rated second highest on importance rated lowest on satisfaction within this scale. This item asked whether the college was concerned about students as individuals. Comments related to this scale were somewhat mixed. Many students believed that faculty and staff cared about student success and

achievement of their educational goal, while others believed that the college staff could be more helpful.

12. The scale that asked students about how responsive the college was to varying student needs and interests, **Responsiveness to Diverse Populations**, examined these areas in terms of satisfaction only. This scale received an overall satisfaction rating of 5.18 on a seven point scale. The items that received the highest scores were regarding the college's commitment to part-time and evening students. Many comments echoed these ratings. Students commented about the convenience of attending school at night and how this allowed them to manage conflicting priorities such as school, work and family life. Many of these students also mentioned the need to have alternative instructional delivery modes (e.g., distance learning) available to them so that they could take classes at their convenience. Some students commented on the DSPS services and how these services helped them to succeed. Several other students commented that the college offered many opportunities for older, returning students, which had enriched their lives as a result. A few of the items in this scale as well as related comments correlated to components in the WASC/ACCJC accreditation standards (i.e., II.A.1.a) which assess the college's responsiveness to diverse student needs.
13. The survey included ten **Campus-Specific Items** asked about the usefulness of the college's website, the WebSMART registration system, class schedule, catalog, and student handbook. These items generally rated favorably with relatively high levels of importance. However, the item in this section that asked about the effectiveness of the smoking restrictions at Skyline rated the lowest on satisfaction. Numerous comments mentioned the need for a no smoking policy or smoking restrictions on campus. Many students believed there has been too much smoking on campus and that it was not only a health risk to those who did not smoke but made for an unpleasant environment.
14. Three items on the survey addressed **Overall Satisfaction**. The first item assessed whether the students' experience at Skyline College met their expectations. Forty-two percent of students indicated that their experience met or exceeded their expectations while an additional 47% indicated that it was about what they expected. The second item on overall satisfaction assessed students' experience thus far. Forty-nine percent of the students indicated that they were very satisfied or satisfied, and another 22% indicated that they were somewhat satisfied (70% total). The third item assessed whether the students would enroll at the college if they could do it over again. Sixty-three percent indicated they would probably or definitely enroll again. This figure was consistent with the college's average term persistence rate of 63%.
15. Students were asked to rate various **Factors in the Decision to Enroll** at Skyline. The three factors of greatest importance in their decision to enroll were cost, academic reputation, and financial aid. The three factors of least importance or influence were the opportunity to play sports, campus appearance, and recommendations by family and friends.



Recommendations

1. The counseling services at Skyline should be recognized as a strength to be maintained, as well as a service that is necessary in order to satisfy minimum student expectation.
2. While comments stated that students were generally pleased to have access to computers and computer labs, many students commented that the labs and lab equipment were outdated and the quality of the facilities and supplies were poor. Students also suggested in the comments that the library hours should be extended to accommodate student work and home-life schedules and that more tutors be added to The Learning Center.
3. Information on financial aid should continue to be part of the orientation and outreach communication efforts. Moreover, this information should be part of the college's general marketing efforts.
4. The college should invest more energy and resources into communicating information about college programs, services, events and activities. Providing greater and more widespread communication in these areas would likely have a positive impact on both enrollment and student retention.
5. The services within the Campus Support Services scale potentially have a positive impact on student success and retention (Astin, 1985). It is important that the college continue to maintain the quality and accessibility of these and other support services, as well as continue to promote these services wherever possible.
6. Students expressed an interest in having the college provide more opportunities for students to voice their opinions and concerns. The college has made some strides in this area the past year through the implementation of the student survey and the focus groups in the fall. The college should continue to provide opportunities for gathering students' opinions and may want to look at ways to collect on-going recommendations from students.
7. The college may want to consider an early alert system as part of the retention and enrollment management strategy. It is evident from the survey responses and comments that the college has provided a transformative experience for many students and that the instructors provided an intellectually stimulating and motivating learning environment. These are strengths that the college should promote and look for ways in which to sustain.
8. The diverse demographics and changing needs of the students at Skyline has made it more challenging to meet the demands of all students. However, continuous investigation into enrollment trends and analysis of scheduling options will help to meet these challenges and respond to the needs of Skyline College students and the community.
9. The EFMPP will likely help to remedy some of the student concerns related to safety and security (e.g., lighting in the parking lot). Moreover, an in-depth assessment of this topic and action planning will occur as part of the accreditation self-study process which will also help to remedy some of these

concerns. The college should conduct regular follow-up studies (annually or biannually) with the students to help determine how well these concerns are being addressed and if perceptions have changed.

10. The conflicting survey results regarding the college's effort to convey to students that they are first and foremost in everything the college does, indicates that this may be an area to further investigate through a focus group or a more narrowly focused survey.
11. Students felt there were many surprising advantages in attending Skyline College (e.g., something for everyone and a convenient way to explore opportunities). These unexpected advantages add to the college experience and should be promoted by the college as a value-added benefit.
12. As Skyline moves forward in its decision to manage the smoking issue on campus, it may be beneficial to communicate the effort throughout the process so that students are aware that it has been recognized as a concern and that it is being addressed.
13. Overall, the majority of students were satisfied with their college experience at Skyline and the majority would do it all over again. However, the survey and persistence data revealed that approximately 30% of the students were undecided about continuing at Skyline or college in general. This indicates that Skyline has the opportunity to influence approximately 2,500 students each semester in their decision to continue. This has strong implications for enrollment management (e.g., retention strategies).
14. Skyline has the opportunity to influence students' decision to enroll in a variety of ways. Two of the top three factors in the students' decision to enroll at Skyline, academic reputation and financial aid, should be carefully leveraged through marketing, communication and other outreach efforts.