

2023 College Student Satisfaction and Priorities

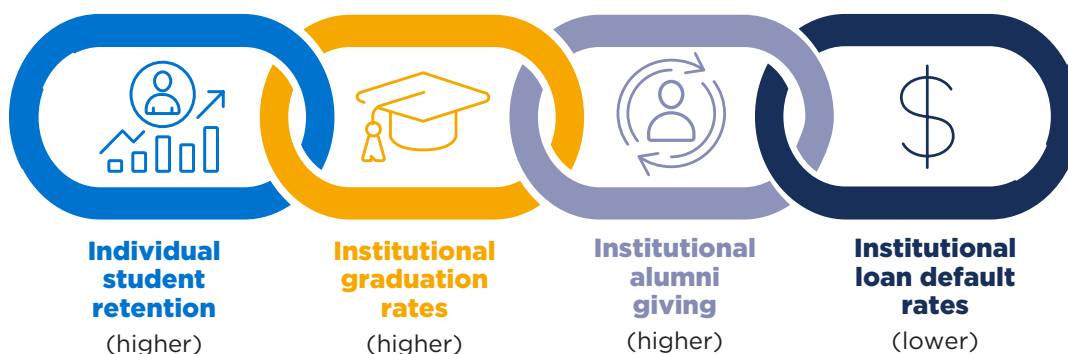
Assessing student satisfaction makes an impact

Research shows that improving student satisfaction has tremendous benefits for colleges and universities, both for students and for the institution.

Student satisfaction is linked to:

- Increasing individual student retention
- Higher institutional graduation rates
- Greater institutional alumni giving
- Lowering individual loan default rates

Student Satisfaction is linked with:



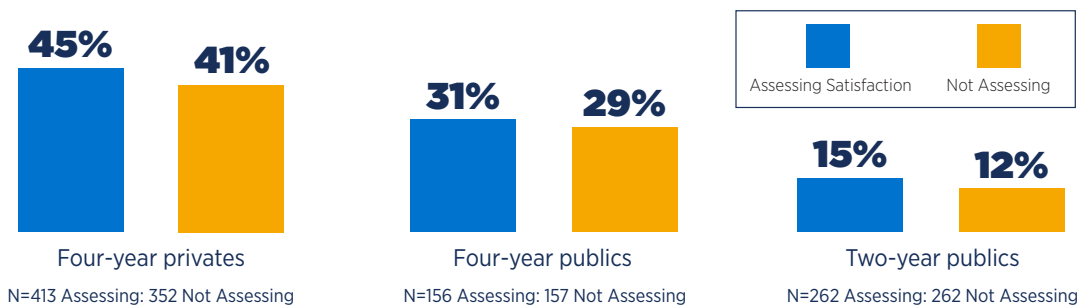
Even modest gains in retention make an impact

A two- or three-point gain in retention can have a significant impact for institutions—greater net tuition revenue, better institutional outcomes, and more satisfied students who feel their needs are being addressed.

Institutions that assess satisfaction see higher graduation rates

Institutions that actively assess student satisfaction see a positive gain in graduation rates compared to institutions that are not assessing student satisfaction. These increases occur across all institution types.

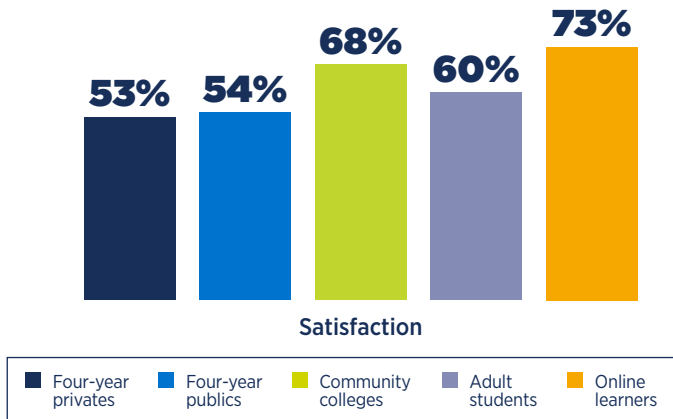
Graduation Rates for Institutions Assessing Student Satisfaction vs. Institutions Not Assessing, Across Institution Types



2023 National Student Satisfaction Results

Each year, RNL shares the national student satisfaction results for institutions that have surveyed their students over the past three academic years. When asked to indicate their overall satisfaction with their experience, the scores below reflect the students who indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied.

How satisfied are college students?



Percentages indicates the proportion of "satisfied" or "very satisfied" scores

Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far

SCORING ▾

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

Response patterns have remained consistent year over year, with online learners and students at community colleges having the highest satisfaction levels overall. Adult students reflect a mix of undergraduate adult learners and graduate-level students.

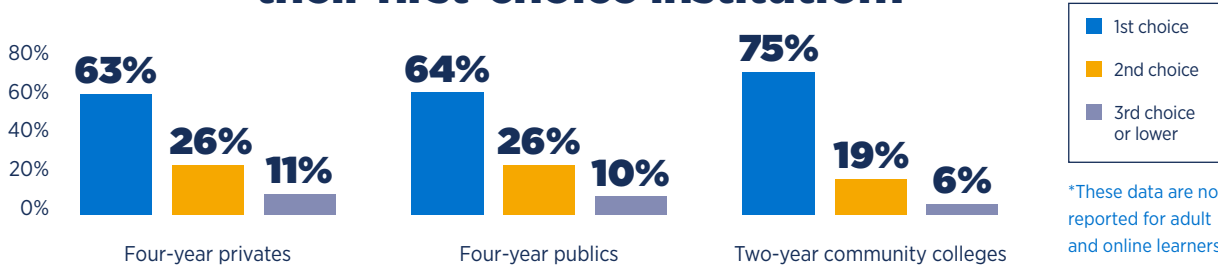
Data are from the fall 2020 through spring 2023

These institutions are using the Student Satisfaction Inventory, Adult Student Priorities Survey and/or the Priorities Survey for Online Learners from RNL.

The perception of institutional choice makes a major difference

A powerful way to influence student satisfaction at your institution is to recruit students who truly want to be there. Research shows that students who are attending their first-choice institution have higher satisfaction than students who indicate that they are attending their second- or third-choice institution.*

What percentage of students indicate they are attending their first-choice institution?



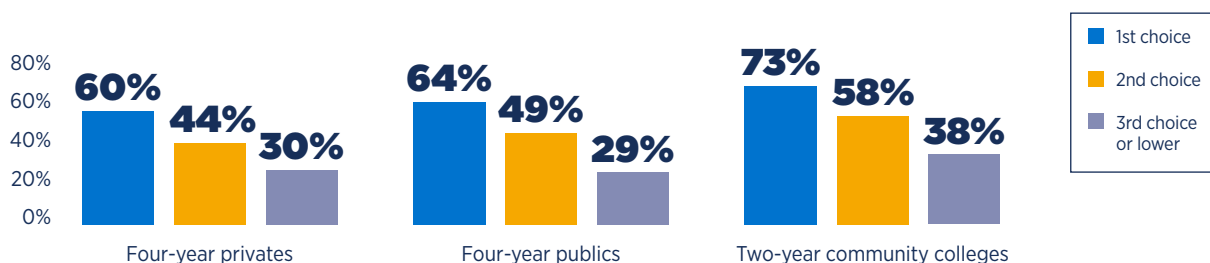
Learn more about implementing student satisfaction surveys on your campus:

RuffaloNL.com/SatisfactionSurveys

This chart indicates the percentage of students who say they are satisfied or very satisfied with their experience based on whether they said the school was their first, second, or third choice.

Satisfaction Levels by Institutional Choice

(First-choice students are the most satisfied overall)



Assess institutional choice when recruiting

Intentionally recruiting students who indicate that your institution is their first choice may result in higher retention and higher graduation rates since these students are more likely to be satisfied with their experience overall.

Which factors influence the decision to enroll?

The RNL satisfaction surveys ask students to indicate a level of importance for a variety of factors that may have influenced their decision to enroll. Here are the top indicators across institution types and for adult and online learners.

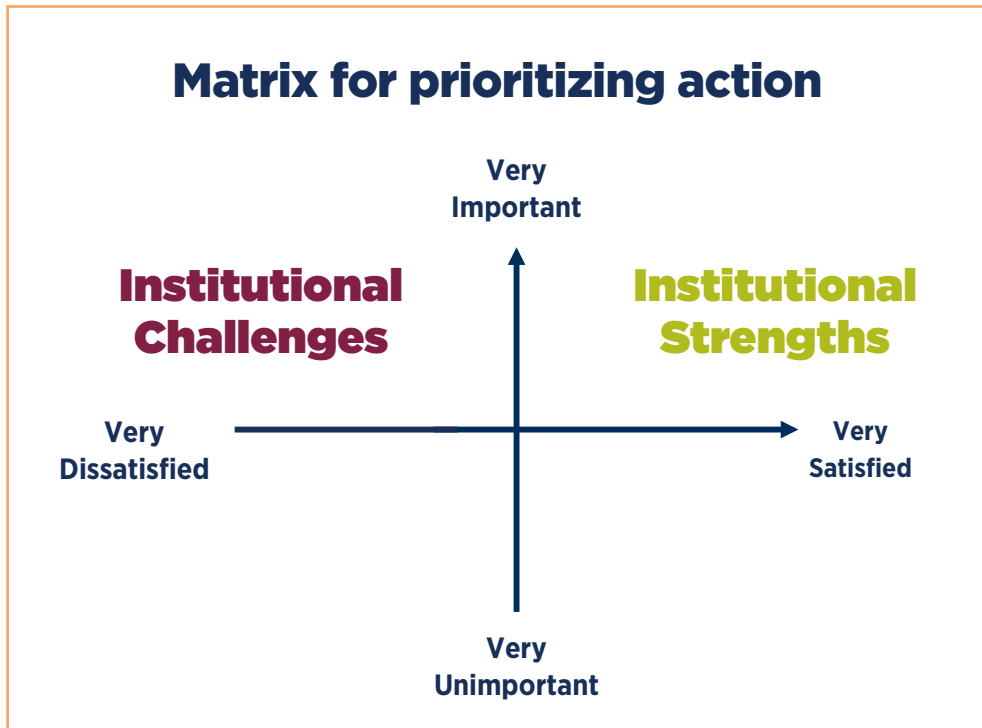
ENROLLMENT FACTOR	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATES	FOUR-YEAR PUBLICS	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	ADULT STUDENTS	ONLINE LEARNERS
Cost	81%	83%	85%	80%	85%
Financial aid	84%	82%	83%	79%	82%
Academic reputation	76%	72%	77%	79%	82%
Size of institution	59%	56%	60%	52%	N/A
Recommendations from family/friends/employer	48%	49%	59%	58%	60%
Geographic setting/campus location	60%	63%	71%	70%	66%
Personalized attention prior to enrollment	63%	59%	67%	70%	N/A

Enrollment factors can inform marketing and communications

Understanding why a student chose an institution and aligning marketing messages in areas that the institution believes matter (such as academic reputation) to further influence student perceptions is another way for the recruitment process to inform retention efforts. In addition, understanding how critical cost and financial aid are in the decision-making process can help an institution align budgets, services, and messaging accordingly.

Improve Student Success: Change the Experience or Change the Perception

The survey instruments from RNL ask students to indicate a level of importance and a level of satisfaction with a wide range of experiences at their institution, including instruction, advising, registration, financial aid, safety, support services, campus climate, and more. The combination of importance and satisfaction scores identifies institutional strengths (*high importance and high satisfaction*) and institutional challenges (*high importance and low satisfaction*). This two-part assessment provides a matrix for prioritizing action.



Each institution assessing student satisfaction receives a clear indication of their strengths to celebrate, to provide as positive feedback on campus, and to use for recruiting new students. The top priority challenges are also identified. These can inform where an institution needs to change the student experience to improve the reality, or where the institution needs to communicate better or differently with students in order to change their perceptions of their experience. Both approaches provide opportunities to improve student satisfaction and the likelihood for the student to stay enrolled.



Nationally identified strengths and challenges vary by institution type and by population served. To see the priority areas for your institution type, download your specific version at RuffaloNL.com/Satisfaction.

Assess Your Students to Know What Matters to Them

Understanding national trends and comparing across institution types is valuable, but the real value of student satisfaction is when it reflects the experience of students on your campus. Institutions who prioritize not only gathering these data regularly but who also invest the time and energy to intentionally share and use the data to inform decision making are seeing satisfaction levels improve and retention rates increase.

Student/Institutional Count: 2020-2023

Fall 2020–Spring 2023

	STUDENT COUNT	INSTITUTION COUNT
National Four-Year Privates	93,314	221
National Four-Year Publics	46,299	56
National Community Colleges	82,886	130
National Adult Students	40,430	102
National Online Learners	99,807	153



Harness the benefits of student satisfaction assessment

Do you know how satisfied your students are with the academic experience you are providing? If not, you may want to add a student satisfaction survey to your assessment calendar.

Learn more about implementing student satisfaction surveys on your campus: RuffaloNL.com/SatisfactionSurveys