

2025 College Student Satisfaction and Priorities

Assessing student satisfaction can positively impact retention and recruitment

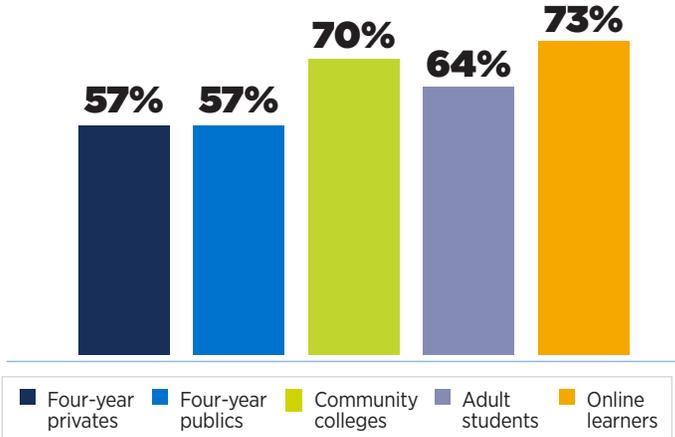
Research shows that improving student satisfaction has tremendous benefits for colleges and universities, both for students and for the institution. Student satisfaction has been positively linked with higher individual student retention and higher institutional graduation rates.

Satisfaction data from current students can also inform recruitment efforts for future students. Promoting institutional strengths, tracking student perceptions with recruitment and financial aid, and understanding what motivates students to enroll all offer valuable data to strengthen recruitment efforts.

2025 National Student Satisfaction Results

Each year, we share 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 2022 through spring 2025

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



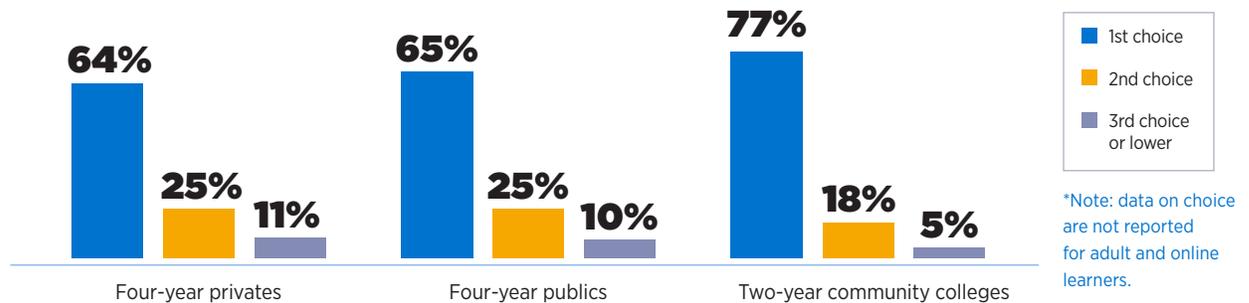
Learn more about implementing student satisfaction surveys on your campus:

RuffaloNL.com/Satisfaction

The perception of institutional choice makes a major difference

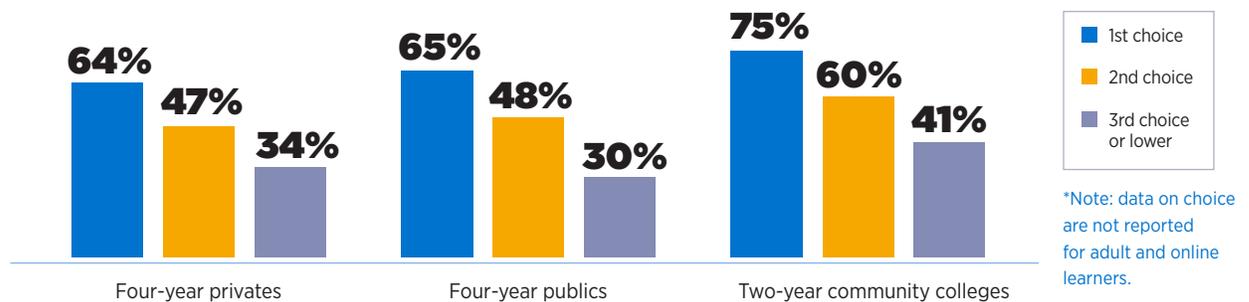
Recruiting students who truly want to be at your institution is a powerful way to influence student satisfaction. Research shows that students who are attending their first-choice institution have higher satisfaction than students who indicate that they are attending their second- or third-choice institution.*

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



The chart on Satisfaction Levels by Institutional Choice 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?

These 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%	86%	81%	86%
Financial aid	84%	83%	84%	79%	83%
Academic reputation	76%	73%	77%	80%	82%
Size of institution	59%	57%	63%	54%	N/A
Recommendations from family/friends/ employer	50%	52%	62%	59%	64%
Geographic setting / Campus location	60%	64%	73%	71%	69%
Personalized attention prior to enrollment	62%	61%	69%	69%	N/A

Enrollment factors can inform marketing and communication

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.

Student satisfaction with financial aid

Considering how currently enrolled students feel about the financial aid processes and availability of financial support is critical based on how influential financial aid is as an enrollment factor initially and how it likely continues to be a factor for students to stay enrolled.

 = **Challenge items:** High importance and low satisfaction

Four-year private institutions

ITEM	IMPORTANCE	SATISFACTION
 Adequate financial aid is available for most students	84%	46%
 Financial aid awards are announced in time to be helpful in college planning	82%	54%
 Financial aid counselors are helpful	82%	53%

Four-year public institutions

ITEM	IMPORTANCE	SATISFACTION
 Adequate financial aid is available for most students	84%	50%
 Financial aid awards are announced in time to be helpful in college planning	82%	53%
 Financial aid counselors are helpful	82%	55%

Community colleges

ITEM	IMPORTANCE	SATISFACTION
 Adequate financial aid is available for most students	86%	51%
Financial aid awards are announced in time to be helpful in college planning	85%	67%
 Financial aid counselors are helpful	86%	71%

Adult graduate and undergraduate institutions

ITEM	IMPORTANCE	SATISFACTION
 Adequate financial aid is available for most students	84%	46%
Financial aid awards are announced in time to be helpful in college planning	82%	54%
Financial aid counselors are helpful	82%	53%

Online learner institutions

ITEM	IMPORTANCE	SATISFACTION
 Adequate financial aid is available	85%	67%
I receive timely information on the availability of financial aid	86%	71%

Students more dissatisfied with Wi-Fi access

Is your Wi-Fi access meeting student expectations? For the first time, the item “Computers and/or Wi-Fi are adequate and accessible” is a challenge for both four-year private and public institutions with satisfaction scores dropping and gaps increasing in the past year. Meeting the high demand for internet access can be an important way to serve students on your campus for academic and social reasons. Wi-Fi has gone from a “nice to have” to a “must have” for students. Is this a place you need to invest in at your institution?

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: 2022-2025

Fall 2022–Spring 2025

	STUDENT COUNT	INSTITUTION COUNT
National Four-Year Privates	90,471	213
National Four-Year Publics	50,849	67
National Community Colleges	85,799	137
National Adult Students	31,196	90
National Online Learners	89,642	150



Harness the benefits of student satisfaction assessment

Do you know how satisfied your students are with your financial aid services and other aspects of the student experience including instructional effectiveness, advising, registration, campus services, among others? 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/Satisfaction