

**Beginning Student Survey: Executive Summary**  
Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness  
Excelsior College  
March 2015

## **1 Executive Summary**

The Beginning Student Survey (BSS) was developed in an effort to learn more about students' thoughts and expectations as they begin working toward completing a degree with Excelsior College. The BSS is administered daily to newly enrolled students and is reported on semiannually in September and March.

A full report of findings is attached. Key findings are as follows:

- Most students planned to complete their remaining credit requirements through Excelsior College courses (71%) or Excelsior College exams (53%). Relatively few intended to take courses at other colleges for transfer (22%)
- Most students intend to take just one (37%) or two (44%) courses or exams at a time.
- Very few students (7%) indicated an intention to take time off as they pursued their degrees. This suggests that a period of inactivity should be explored as a possible predictor of attrition.
- On average, students expected to take 2 years to complete their degree requirements.
- Newly enrolled students indicated that 'Paid employment or job related activities' will be their most time consuming task each week (32 hours). After 'Paid employment or job related activities', students estimated they would spend some 18 hours per week on 'Caring for children' and 15 hours per week on 'College studies'.
- Personal funds (53%) and military funding (29%) were the most commonly selected sources of financial support for students' work at Excelsior.
- Most students (83%) were confident that their payment sources would adequately cover their educational experiences. 7% were not confident and 10% were unsure.
- For students with previous college course experience, the mean time since their last college level course was 4.7 years and the median was 2.2 years.
- 60% of newly enrolled students have taken an online course before and just 21% have previously used a credit by examination program.
- The most common response for expected contact with advisors was 'As Needed' (45%) followed by 'Weekly' (17%).
- 54% of newly enrolled students list 'Email or message center' as their most preferred method of contact with advisors. This is followed by 26% of students preferring 'Telephone'.
- The most common response for expected contact with instructors was 'As Needed' (59%) followed by 'Once a Week' (16%).
- If students were ever to become inactive with their progress in their degree, they would like to see Excelsior respond in a multitude of ways, but the specific actions that were

selected by 50% or more of the students were 'Provide help, guidance, and problem solving', and 'Contact me', which were selected by 58, and 54% of students respectively.

- The most common way students heard about Excelsior College was 'From a friend or coworker' (46%).
- The most commonly reported reason newly enrolled students chose Excelsior College was 'Convenience, flexibility, quickest' (64%).
- When asked to identify which guidebooks students used to compare schools, 67% of students reported that they didn't use any guidebooks. The most commonly used guidebook was 'The College Handbook by College Board', which was used by 7% of students.