

# Beginning Student Survey: Executive Summary

Office of Institutional Effectiveness \*  
Excelsior College

September 2013 through March 2014

## 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 a questionnaire consisting of twenty-two questions pertaining to various topics related to the experiences of new students. The full survey can be found in the appendix. The intended outcome of this survey is to aid Excelsior in designing programs and services which meet the needs of enrolling students.

All newly enrolled students are invited, by email, to participate in the survey, daily. Surveys are completed within Qualtrics. Students previously enrolled with Excelsior College are not contacted. In the time period between September 01, 2013 and February 28, 2014, 1190 of the 4523 students invited completed the Beginning Student Survey resulting in a 26% response rate.

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

- Most students planned to complete their remaining credit requirements through Excelsior College courses (76%) or Excelsior College exams (54%). Relatively few intended to take courses at other colleges for transfer (23%)
- Most students intend to take just one (37%) or two (43%) 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 2.1 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 (33 hours). After 'Paid employment or job related activities', students estimated they would spend some 16 hours per week on 'Caring for children' and 16 hours per week on 'College studies'.
- Personal funds (52%) and military funding (37%) were the most commonly selected sources of financial support for students' work at Excelsior.

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- Most students (84%) were confident that their payment sources would adequately cover their educational experiences. 8% were not confident and 9% were unsure.
- For students with previous college course experience, the mean time since their last college level course was 4.6 years and the median was 2.2 years.
- 61% of newly enrolled students have taken an online course before and just 20% have previously used a credit by examination program.
- The most common response for expected contact with advisors was ‘As Needed’ (47%) followed by ‘Weekly’ (17%).
- 58% of newly enrolled students list ‘Email or message center’ as their most preferred method of contact with advisors. This is followed by 27% of students preferring ‘Telephone’.
- The most common response for expected contact with instructors was ‘As Needed’ (58%) followed by ‘Several Times a Week’ (13%).
- 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’, ‘Contact me’, ‘Personal contact from my advisor’, and ‘Continue to follow up with me’, which were selected by 62, 60, 59, and 50% of students respectively.
- The most common way students heard about Excelsior College was ‘From a friend or coworker’ (52%).
- The most commonly reported reason newly enrolled students chose Excelsior College was ‘Convenience, flexibility, quickest’ (66%).
- When asked to identify which guidebooks students used to compare schools, 72% 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 8% of students.