

# First Year Student Survey: Executive Summary

Office of Institutional Effectiveness \*  
Excelsior College

January 2014 through April 2014

## 1 Executive Summary

The First Year Student Survey (FYSS) was designed to provide insight into students' first year experiences at Excelsior College. The FYSS is administered daily to first time Excelsior students who have been enrolled for exactly nine months. This FYSS report summarizes the Pilot data, but the survey is currently automated and in the future will be reported on semiannually in September and March. A full report of findings is attached. Key findings are as follows:

### 1.1 Service at Excelsior College

- An overwhelming majority of respondents have taken either a course or exam with EC (0.89%).
- Average satisfaction with Departments within EC<sup>1</sup>:
  - The Office of Financial Aid: 5.9
  - The Office of the Bursar/Student Accounts/Billing: 5.5
  - The Office of Academic Advising: 5.8
  - The Office of Records and Registration: 5.9
  - Testing and Examination Services: 5.7
- Average satisfaction with EC Resources and Services:
  - Career Services: 5.7
  - Online Tutoring: 5.4
  - The OWL (online writing lab): 5.7
  - CCS100/Student Orientation Course: 5.3
  - The Bookstore: 5.4
  - Students Disability Services: 5.1
  - The Student Ombudsperson: 5.4
  - The Library: 5.9
  - MyExcelsior/Message Center: 6.2
  - Blackboard: 5.9

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<sup>1</sup>All satisfaction items are based on a 7-point likert scale in which 1 is 'Very Dissatisfied' and 7 is 'Very Satisfied.'

## 1.2 Student Engagement

- Higher Order Cognition involves processes such as analysis, evaluation and synthesis and is valuable because these skills are thought to be highly transferrable to novel situations. Below are the percentage of students who reported that they engage in the following activities 'frequently', 'usually' or 'all of the time'<sup>2</sup>:

Apply content learned to real world: 66%

Critically assess the quality of arguments and information sources: 66%

Synthesize information across sources: 61%

- Across subscale measures of 'Connection to the EC Community', students' average satisfaction was 5.2.
- The gap analysis regarding 'Guidance and Support' shows that satisfaction is highest in the areas of Excelsior Advisors (5.54), and second, Excelsior Faculty(5.15), when compared with Other Excelsior Students, Excelsior Alumni, as well as Advisors, Faculty, and Students from other institutions. While satisfaction is highest in these areas, importance is also highest among these groups. Therefore, they are the only two groups for which importance was rated higher than satisfaction. This suggests that although satisfaction is highest, Excelsior Advisors and Faculty are still the areas we should focus on.
- Across subscale measures of 'Course Engagement', students' average engagement was 3.7. The highest average course engagement was found in 'Participated in online discussion boards' (5.6). The lowest average course engagement was found in 'Received prompt feedback from instructor any medium' (2).
- Students enrolled in a course or exam, spent on average:
  - 4.8 hours Reading
  - 2.6 hours Writing/Contributing to Discussion Boards
  - 3.7 hours Writing Papers/Reports
  - 4.8 hours Studying.

## 1.3 Demographics

- From a group of 14 personal traits and contextual items, the items students identified most with (average was 6 or higher<sup>3</sup>) were 'It is important to me to finish what I start', 'I am determined to earn a college degree', 'I am confident in my ability as a student', 'I can juggle multiple responsibilities', 'My family supports my pursuit of a degree at this time.'
- 78% of respondents are employed full time and 9.2% are employed part time.
- As we know, our students are often juggling many responsibilities outside of their college studies. From a list of 7 activity types, the following areas typically require, on average, more than 10 hours per week from our respondents:
  - "College studies (coursework, preparation for examinations, and other study)" (average of 14 hours weekly)
  - "Paid employment or job related activities" (average of 27 hours weekly)
  - "Time spent caring for children" (average of 18 hours weekly)

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<sup>2</sup>All engagement items are based on a 7-point likert scale in which 1 = 'Never', 2 = 'Rarely', 3 = 'Occasionally', 4 = 'Sometimes', 5 = 'Frequently', 6 = 'Usually', and 7 = 'All of the time.'

<sup>3</sup>All agreement items are based on a 7-point likert scale in which 1='Strongly Disagree', 2='Disagree', 3='Somewhat Disagree', 4='Neither Agree nor Disagree', 5='Somewhat Agree', 6='Agree', 7='Strongly Agree'

## 1.4 Qualitative

- The main theme that was evident from the 176 written responses to ‘Describe what it is like being a student at Excelsior College.’ was the flexibility of Excelsior College and how critical that is to our students.
- Overwhelmingly, the most significant two challenges students mentioned in the 183 responses to ‘What are the biggest challenges you face to complete your degree successfully?’, were time and money.