

First Year Student Survey: Executive Summary
Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness
Excelsior College
March 2015

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. The FYSS report is released semiannually in September and March. Between September 01, 2014 and February 28, 2015, 2055 students were invited to take the FYSS and 148 responded, which is a 7% response rate. A full report of findings is attached. The ratings reported below are based on 7-point likert scale. Key findings are as follows:

1.1 Service at Excelsior College

- A majority of respondents have taken either a course or exam with EC (84%).
- Average satisfaction with Departments within EC¹:
 - The Office of Financial Aid: 5.9
 - The Office of the Bursar/Student Accounts/Billing: 5.5
 - The Office of Academic Advising: 6
 - The Office of Records and Registration: 5.9
 - Testing and Examination Services: 5.5
- Average satisfaction with EC Resources and Services:
 - Career Services 5.1
 - Online Tutoring:
 - The OWL (online writing lab): 5.5
 - CCS100/Student Orientation Course:
 - The Bookstore: 5.6
 - Students Disability Services:
 - The Student Ombudsperson:
 - The Library: 5.6
 - MyExcelsior/Message Center:
 - Blackboard: 6.1

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 time'²:

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

² 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.'

Apply content learned to real-world situation: 73%

Critically assess the quality of arguments and information sources: 69%

Synthesize information across sources: 66%

- Across subscale measures of 'Connection to the EC Community', students' average satisfaction was 5.2.
- The analysis regarding 'Guidance and Support' compares the various sources of support and guidance our students rely on. Responses indicate that satisfaction is highest for support coming from Excelsior advisors (5.6), and Excelsior faculty (5.2). While satisfaction is highest in these areas, these groups are also rated as highly important. This suggests that although satisfaction with Excelsior Advisors and Faculty is very high, these are still areas worthy of our attention.
- Across subscale measures of 'Course Engagement', students' average engagement was 3.9. The highest average course engagement was found in 'Participated in online discussion boards' (5.5). The lowest average course engagement was found in 'Received prompt feedback from instructor (any medium)' (2.4).
- Students enrolled in a course or exam, spent on average:
 - 3.1 hours Reading
 - 2.1 hours Writing/Contributing to Discussion Boards
 - 3.2 hours Writing Papers/Reports
 - 3.1 hours Studying.

1.3 Personal Factors

- From a group of 14 personal traits and contextual items, the items students identified most with (average was 6 or higher³) were 'I am determined to earn a college degree', 'It is important to me to finish what I start', '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', 'I like being a college student.'
- 85% of respondents are employed full time and 7.5% 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 11 hours weekly)
 - "Paid employment or job related activities" (average of 26 hours weekly)
 - "Time spent caring for children" (average of 20 hours weekly)

1.4 Qualitative Responses

- The main theme that was evident from the 76 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.
- The most frequently mentioned challenges in the 83 responses to 'What are the biggest challenges you face to complete your degree successfully?' were time, money and work-life balance.

³ 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'

