

Customer Satisfaction with Financial Aid Services on Participating California State University Campuses Spring 2001

Summary

A customer satisfaction survey of Financial Aid was conducted in spring 2001 and completed by over 2300 students on five CSU campuses: Bakersfield, Pomona, San Bernardino, San Jose, and Stanislaus. Overall survey results indicate that student satisfaction was consistently positive across all measures. Comparisons revealed Bakersfield and San Jose as the two most highly rated campuses. The highest rated areas were: courtesy of counselors, courtesy of reception staff, timeliness of receiving a financial aid award notice, staff knowledge, timeliness of receiving financial aid disbursement, accuracy of answers to questions, being able to navigate through the Financial Aid web site, and overall services of the Financial Aid office. Students were least satisfied with: "Level of concern demonstrated by staff", "Wait time to be served", and "Speed of routing phone calls".

Survey Methods

This part of the report briefly describes the Financial Aid survey instrument, campus data collection methods, survey returns and response rates, and respondents to the survey.

Instrument

The Financial Aid survey instrument was developed jointly in fall 2000 by the CSU systemwide Customer Satisfaction Survey Committee and the CSU Financial Aid Function Group. The survey contains 29 items of which 19 were designed to measure student satisfaction with the efficiency of Financial Aid services (e.g., timeliness, waiting time), hours of operation, quality of information, and staff communication and responsiveness, among other important areas of Financial Aid.¹ Accompanying the main survey form was a separate four-page booklet for gathering demographic information (e.g., gender, ethnicity, etc.) and written comments and suggestions for improving services. A copy of the survey instrument and Student Booklet can be found in **Appendix A: Customer Satisfaction Survey of Financial Aid.**

Data Collection

Survey data collection methods, number of completed surveys, and response rates are reported for each campus in Table 1 below:

¹ Satisfaction rating scale: 5=Very satisfied, 4=Satisfied, 3=Neutral, 2=Dissatisfied, 1=Very dissatisfied

Table 1. Data Collection Methods, Survey Returns and Response Rates by Campus

Campus	Method	Sample Size	Return Count	Response Rate
Bakersfield	U.S. mail	2,927	511	17.5%
Pomona	Classroom	1,150	834	72.5%
San Bernardino	Classroom	1,200	717	59.8%
San Jose	Convenience	NA	219	NA
Stanislaus	Convenience	NA	47	NA
Total		5,277	2,328	44.1%

NA=Not applicable

Surveys were distributed to students by U.S. mail, administered in selected classrooms, or were passed out and completed at strategic on-campus locations (i.e., convenience sampling). A total of 5,277 students were surveyed. Of this number 2,328 surveys were completed for a response rate of 44.1 percent. Campus response rates ranged from a low of 60 percent to a high of 73 percent. The response rate from Bakersfield and the return count from Stanislaus were low by survey research standards. It is important to emphasize that survey respondents from campuses with low response rates, return counts, or from campuses that employed convenience sampling may not be representative of their target populations. These campuses, therefore, need to be very cautious about generalizing survey results beyond their sample data.

Respondents

Students who responded to the survey were predominantly upper-division (56%), White (42%), female (60%), 21-25 years of age (37%), and currently working (75%). Freshmen and graduate/post-baccalaureate students each comprised about 17 percent of the respondents. There were also significant percentages of Hispanic (23%) and Asian (16%) students among the respondents. Additional survey detail describing the characteristics of survey respondents is provided in **Appendix B: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents to the Customer Satisfaction Survey of Financial Aid.**

Results

Survey results presented below focus on addressing three key issues:

- **Overall Satisfaction: Overall, how satisfied are students with Financial Aid?**
- **Strengths and Weaknesses: In what areas of Financial Aid are students most and least satisfied?**

- **Highly Rated Campuses: How does student satisfaction with Financial Aid compare across campuses?**

Survey results pertinent to these issues are summarized in Table 2, which draws upon more detailed survey results reported in **Appendix C: Student Satisfaction with Financial Aid by Campus**. Under the column heading, “CSU Ratings”, in Table 2, the following data are provided: number of respondents (**N**), the mean satisfaction rating (**Mean**), the percentage of students who reported they were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” (**Sat**), the percentage of students who reported they were either “very dissatisfied” or “dissatisfied” (**Dis**), and the relative standing (**Rank**) of the item based on the mean satisfaction rating (1=highest ranked item).

Under the heading, “Campus Ratings (Means)”, the mean score of the highest (**High**) and the lowest (**Low**) rated campus is given, along with the names of the two top-rated campuses (**Top Half**) in descending order of their mean satisfaction ratings. The results shown in Table 2 are discussed below in terms of the three guiding questions outlined above.

Overall Student Satisfaction

Overall, survey results suggest that most students are generally satisfied with services they are receiving from Financial Aid. Satisfaction ratings range from a low of 3.1 to a high of 3.7. Most ratings (15) fall within 3.5 to 3.7, the higher end of the range. Student satisfaction was strong on 8 of 19 measures as evidenced by satisfaction rating of 3.6 and higher. Students reported low to moderate levels of satisfaction in only three areas. All other areas with one exception received average ratings between 3.2 and 3.5. As a general indicator of student satisfaction, the item “Overall Services of Financial Aid Office” was rated 3.6. Survey findings also indicate that 50 - 60 percent of students reported they were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” on 15 out of 19 measures. The percentages of students who expressed some degree of dissatisfaction with Financial Aid range from 8 percent to 27 percent, with most falling between 10 - 14 percent.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The highest rated areas on the survey (i.e., 3.6 to 3.9) were:

- Courtesy of counselors,
- Courtesy of reception staff
- Timeliness of receiving financial aid award notice,
- Staff knowledge,
- Timeliness of receiving financial aid disbursement,
- Accuracy of answers to questions,
- Navigation through the Financial Aid web site, and
- Overall services of the Financial Aid office.

Student satisfaction on most of the above measures is in the 60 percent range. The lowest rated areas in Financial Aid (i.e., 3.1 to 3.3) were:

- Level of concern demonstrated by staff,
- Wait time to be served, and
- Speed of routing phone calls.

In these areas students expressed their highest levels of dissatisfaction, ranging from 19 percent to 27 percent.

Highly Rated Campuses

Table 2 lists the campuses that achieved the highest level of student satisfaction with Financial Aid. The campuses that are most consistently highly rated across all 19 satisfaction measures (i.e., potential “best practice” campuses) are:

- Bakersfield, and
- San Jose

More detailed campus comparisons are reported in **Appendix C: Student Satisfaction with Financial Aid by Campus.**

Table 2. Summary of Financial Aid Services Customer Satisfaction Survey - Spring 2001

Item	CSU Ratings					Campus Ratings (Means)		
	N	Mean	Sat (%)	Dis (%)	Rank	High	Low	Top Two (descending)
Courtesy of reception staff	1,543	3.75	67	9	2	3.86	3.50	SJ, BAK
Courtesy of telephone staff	1,382	3.57	58	13	9	3.74	3.34	BAK, SB
Courtesy of counselors	1,149	3.76	65	8	1	3.95	3.38	BAK, SJ
Timeliness of receiving financial award notice	1,533	3.64	62	14	3	3.77	3.41	BAK, SB
Timeliness of receiving financial aid disbursement	1,467	3.60	62	17	6.5	3.73	3.33	BAK, SB
Wait time to be served	1,483	3.24	44	22	18	3.45	3.02	BAK, SJ
Speed of routing phone calls	1,325	3.13	40	27	19	3.47	2.95	BAK, STAN
Timelines of response to inquiry	1,449	3.38	49	16	16	3.46	3.35	BAK, SJ
Level of concern demonstrated by staff	1,523	3.32	47	19	17	3.48	3.24	SJ, BAK
Accuracy of answers to questions	1,560	3.60	61	12	6.5	3.70	3.53	SJ, BAK
Thoroughness of answers to questions	1,553	3.52	56	13	14	3.60	3.44	SJ, SB
Consistency of information provided by staff	1,500	3.51	56	13	15	3.64	3.45	SJ, SB
Clarity of information provided by staff	1,540	3.54	58	12	12	3.62	3.40	SJ, BAK
Staff knowledge	1,517	3.63	61	10	4	3.71	3.57	SJ, BAK
Clarity of Financial Aid publications	1,366	3.56	56	9	10	3.67	3.48	BAK, STAN
Usefulness of Financial Aid publications	1,342	3.54	54	8	12	3.60	3.38	SJ, BAK
Navigation through the Financial Aid web site	1,161	3.60	58	9	6.5	3.63	3.25	POM, SB
Service hours of Financial Aid office	1,475	3.54	56	11	12	3.70	3.27	BAK, POM
Overall services of Financial Aid office	1,584	3.60	60	10	6.5	3.80	3.52	STAN, BAK

Appendix B: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents to the Customer Satisfaction Survey of Financial Aid - Spring 2001

Class Level	N	%
Freshmen	376	16.6
Sophomore	226	10.0
Junior	491	21.7
Senior	770	34.1
Grad/Postbacc	398	17.6
All	2,261	100.0

Employment	N	%
Not working	557	24.7
1 - 10 hours	169	7.5
11 - 20 hours	479	21.3
21 - 30 hours	441	19.6
31 - 40 hours	354	15.7
More than 40 hours	252	11.2
All	2,252	100.0

Race/Ethnicity	N	%
Amer.Ind./Alaskan Nat	21	1.0
Asian	348	15.9
Black/African Amer.	135	6.2
Filipino	90	4.1
Mex. Amer./Hisp.	513	23.4
Pacific Islander	14	0.6
White	919	42

Day/Evening	N	%
Day student	1,080	48.2
Evening student	416	18.6
Both day & evening	736	32.8
Weekend student	10	0.4
All	2,242	100.0

Residence	N	%
On campus	211	9.3
Off campus	2,047	90.7
All	2,258	100.0

Gender	N	%
Female	1,345	59.7
Male	908	40.3
All	2,253	100.0

Age	N	%
Under 18	5	0.2
18 - 20	628	27.8
21 - 25	842	37.3
26 - 30	298	13.2
31 - 40	250	11.1
Over 40	232	10.3
All	2,255	100.0

Years on Campus	N	%
New student	99	4.4
Less than 1 year	659	29.3
1 - 2 years	721	32.0
3 - 4 years	499	22.2
5 - 6 years	175	7.8
7 - 8 years	45	2.0
9 - 10 years	19	0.8
More than 10 years	34	1.5
All	2,251	100.0

Appendix C: Student Satisfaction with Financial Aid by Campus - Spring 2001

Table 1. Campus and Systemwide Mean Satisfaction Ratings

Satisfaction with	Data Type	Bakersfield	Pomona	San Bernardino	San Jose	Stanislaus	All
Courtesy of reception staff	Mean	3.74	3.54	3.56	3.34	3.45	3.57
	S.D.	0.99	0.93	0.99	1.14	0.52	0.99
	N	343	435	444	149	11	1,382
Courtesy of telephone staff	Mean	3.95	3.66	3.63	3.90	3.38	3.76
	S.D.	1.03	0.83	0.97	0.93	0.52	0.95
	N	324	339	334	144	8	1,149
Courtesy of counselors	Mean	3.77	3.53	3.76	3.41	3.44	3.64
	S.D.	1.06	1.01	0.99	1.08	0.63	1.03
	N	352	521	482	162	16	1,533
Timeliness of receiving award notice	Mean	3.73	3.50	3.71	3.33	3.36	3.60
	S.D.	1.12	1.04	1.10	1.13	0.63	1.09
	N	345	485	469	154	14	1,467
Timeliness of receiving disbursement	Mean	3.45	3.26	3.02	3.36	3.25	3.24
	S.D.	1.07	0.98	1.07	1.08	0.58	1.05
	N	347	503	451	166	16	1,483
Wait time to be served	Mean	3.47	3.09	2.98	2.95	3.29	3.13
	S.D.	1.11	1.01	1.13	1.19	0.73	1.11
	N	321	413	435	142	14	1,325
Speed of routing phone calls	Mean	3.46	3.35	3.35	3.40	3.39	3.38
	S.D.	1.08	0.86	1.02	1.05	0.70	0.99
	N	358	472	448	153	18	1,449
Timeliness of response to inquiry	Mean	3.36	3.24	3.33	3.48	3.30	3.32
	S.D.	1.14	0.97	1.01	1.04	0.66	1.03
	N	370	514	457	162	20	1,523
Concern demonstrated by staff	Mean	3.60	3.56	3.59	3.70	3.53	3.60
	S.D.	1.09	0.88	0.94	0.93	0.72	0.96
	N	371	535	474	163	17	1,560
Accuracy of answers to questions	Mean	3.52	3.47	3.55	3.60	3.44	3.52
	S.D.	1.12	0.86	0.96	0.97	0.73	0.97
	N	370	525	478	164	16	1,553
Thoroughness of answers to questions	Mean	3.52	3.45	3.53	3.64	3.46	3.51
	S.D.	1.10	0.88	0.95	0.90	0.66	0.96
	N	358	508	462	159	13	1,500

Appendix C: Student Satisfaction with Financial Aid by Campus - Spring 2001

Table 1. Campus and Systemwide Mean Satisfaction Ratings

Satisfaction with ...	Data Type	Bakersfield	Pomona	San Bernardino	San Jose	Stanislaus	All
Consistency of information	Mean	3.56	3.52	3.54	3.62	3.40	3.54
	S.D.	1.08	0.84	0.95	0.91	0.74	0.94
	N	367	524	470	164	15	1,540
Clarity of information	Mean	3.65	3.62	3.59	3.71	3.57	3.63
	S.D.	1.04	0.84	0.95	0.97	0.65	0.94
	N	361	507	471	164	14	1,517
Staff knowledge	Mean	3.67	3.48	3.55	3.61	3.64	3.56
	S.D.	0.85	0.87	0.91	0.90	0.50	0.88
	N	316	457	440	139	14	1,366
Clarity of publications	Mean	3.58	3.48	3.55	3.60	3.38	3.54
	S.D.	0.86	0.88	0.89	0.89	0.65	0.88
	N	308	444	432	145	13	1,342
Usefulness of publication	Mean	3.59	3.63	3.63	3.45	3.25	3.60
	S.D.	0.86	0.85	0.92	0.89	0.62	0.88
	N	231	408	391	119	12	1,161
Navigation through the web site	Mean	3.70	3.52	3.49	3.45	3.27	3.54
	S.D.	0.87	0.83	0.87	1.07	0.70	0.88
	N	352	502	455	151	15	1,475
Service hours	Mean	3.69	3.52	3.64	3.53	3.80	3.60
	S.D.	0.96	0.79	0.91	0.89	0.41	0.88
	N	377	545	482	165	15	1,584
Overall services	Mean	3.63	3.04	3.37	3.21	1.68	3.26
	S.D.	1.21	1.37	1.24	1.33	0.98	1.32
	N	494	806	711	203	47	2,261

Appendix C: Customer Satisfaction with Financial Aid by Campus Spring - 2001

Table 2. Campus and Systemwide Percent Satisfaction Ratings

Question	Data Type	Bakersfield	Pomona	SB	SJ	STAN	All
Courtesy of reception staff	Total N	363	531	476	163	10	1,543
	VS/S (%)	68.6	63.1	67.4	71.2	50.0	66.5
	Neutral (%)	21.2	29.2	23.7	21.5	50.0	25.0
	D/VD (%)	10.2	7.7	8.8	7.4		8.6
Courtesy of telephone staff	Total N	343	435	444	149	11	1,382
	VS/S (%)	66.8	56.8	57.2	47.7	45.5	58.3
	Neutral (%)	21.9	32.2	29.3	32.9	54.5	28.9
	D/VD (%)	11.4	11.0	13.5	19.5		12.7
Courtesy of counselors	Total N	324	339	334	144	8	1,149
	VS/S (%)	71.6	62.2	58.4	69.4	37.5	64.5
	Neutral (%)	20.4	32.2	31.1	25.0	62.5	27.9
	D/VD (%)	8.0	5.6	10.5	5.6		7.7
Timeliness of receiving award notice	Total N	352	521	482	162	16	1,533
	VS/S (%)	68.2	55.9	67.0	51.2	50.0	61.6
	Neutral (%)	19.3	28.8	21.2	29.0	43.8	24.4
	D/VD (%)	12.5	15.4	11.8	19.8	6.3	14.0
Timeliness of receiving disbursement	Total N	345	485	469	154	14	1,467
	VS/S (%)	68.7	56.9	66.5	47.4	42.9	61.6
	Neutral (%)	13.9	27.2	18.3	31.2	50.0	21.9
	D/VD (%)	17.4	15.9	15.1	21.4	7.1	16.5
Wait time to be served	Total N	347	503	451	166	16	1,483
	VS/S (%)	55.3	44.5	33.3	47.0	31.3	43.8
	Neutral (%)	26.2	36.4	36.1	33.7	62.5	33.9
	D/VD (%)	18.4	19.1	30.6	19.3	6.3	22.3
Speed of routing phone calls	Total N	321	413	435	142	14	1,325
	VS/S (%)	54.5	35.6	34.7	33.8	42.9	39.8
	Neutral (%)	25.9	39.5	33.3	30.3	42.9	33.2
	D/VD (%)	19.6	24.9	32.0	35.9	14.3	27.0
Timelines of response to inquiry	Total N	358	472	448	153	18	1,449
	VS/S (%)	56.1	45.6	48.4	45.8	50.0	49.1
	Neutral (%)	25.1	41.3	33.5	38.6	38.9	34.6
	D/VD (%)	18.7	13.1	18.1	15.7	11.1	16.3

Appendix C: Customer Satisfaction with Financial Aid by Campus Spring - 2001

Table 2. Campus and Systemwide Percent Satisfaction Ratings

Question	Data Type	Bakersfield	Pomona	SB	SJ	STAN	All
Concern demonstrated by staff	Total N	370	514	457	162	20	1,523
	VS/S (%)	51.1	42.2	46.2	55.6	40.0	46.9
	Neutral (%)	27.6	39.1	35.7	29.0	50.0	34.3
	D/VD (%)	21.4	18.7	18.2	15.4	10.0	18.7
Accuracy of answers to questions	Total N	371	535	474	163	17	1,560
	VS/S (%)	63.6	58.3	61.2	63.2	64.7	61.0
	Neutral (%)	19.1	31.8	26.8	27.6	23.5	26.7
	D/VD (%)	17.3	9.9	12.0	9.2	11.8	12.2
Thoroughness of answers to questions	Total N	370	525	478	164	16	1,553
	VS/S (%)	58.4	51.6	58.4	56.7	56.3	55.9
	Neutral (%)	23.0	37.7	29.1	32.3	31.3	30.9
	D/VD (%)	18.6	10.7	12.6	11.0	12.5	13.2
Consistency of information	Total N	358	508	462	159	13	1,500
	VS/S (%)	56.1	52.8	56.7	61.0	53.8	55.7
	Neutral (%)	27.7	35.8	31.0	29.6	38.5	31.7
	D/VD (%)	16.2	11.4	12.3	9.4	7.7	12.6
Clarity of information	Total N	367	524	470	164	15	1,540
	VS/S (%)	59.9	55.5	58.1	57.9	53.3	57.6
	Neutral (%)	23.7	34.5	29.8	32.3	33.3	30.3
	D/VD (%)	16.3	9.9	12.1	9.8	13.3	12.1
Staff knowledge	Total N	361	507	471	164	14	1,517
	VS/S (%)	62.6	60.4	58.8	67.7	64.3	61.2
	Neutral (%)	24.4	31.6	30.6	22.0	28.6	28.5
	D/VD (%)	13.0	8.1	10.6	10.4	7.1	10.3
Clarity of publications	Total N	316	457	440	139	14	1,366
	VS/S (%)	61.4	51.4	58.0	55.4	64.3	56.4
	Neutral (%)	32.6	38.5	30.7	36.7	35.7	34.4
	D/VD (%)	6.0	10.1	11.4	7.9	.	9.2
Usefulness of publication	Total N	308	444	432	145	13	1,342
	VS/S (%)	54.9	51.1	56.0	52.4	46.2	53.7
	Neutral (%)	39.0	38.7	34.7	42.1	46.2	37.9
	D/VD (%)	6.2	10.1	9.3	5.5	7.7	8.4

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Table 2. Campus and Systemwide Percent Satisfaction Ratings

Question	Data Type	Bakersfield	Pomona	SB	SJ	STAN	All
Navigation through the web site	Total N	231	408	391	119	12	1,161
	VS/S (%)	53.2	60.8	61.9	47.1	33.3	58.0
	Neutral (%)	39.8	31.9	28.1	42.0	58.3	33.5
	D/VD (%)	6.9	7.4	10.0	10.9	8.3	8.5
Navigation through the web site	Total N	352	502	455	151	15	1,475
	VS/S (%)	65.3	54.2	53.0	54.3	40.0	56.3
	Neutral (%)	26.1	35.9	36.0	25.8	46.7	32.7
	D/VD (%)	8.5	10.0	11.0	19.9	13.3	11.0
Overall services	Total N	377	545	482	165	15	1584
	VS/S (%)	65.0	55.0	62.7	53.9	80.0	59.8
	Neutral (%)	23.9	35.8	28.4	35.8	20.0	30.6
	D/VD (%)	11.1	9.2	8.9	10.3	.	9.6