

CSM's Student Campus Climate & Satisfaction Survey

Narrative Analysis

Spring 2012



Overview of Survey Composition:

In May through June 2011, CSM conducted the *CSM Student Campus Climate and Satisfaction Survey (CSM Student Survey)*. All CSM students were invited to participate and a link to the online survey was emailed to all students enrolled in Spring 2012 (9,039 email addresses). The college received 1,132 unique responses, a return of 13%.¹ This is a substantial number of respondents for a higher education setting.

This survey probed students' satisfaction with campus climate and a spectrum of the student experience and included such areas as:

- Overall impressions and attitudes about CSM;
- Campus safety and security;
- Effectiveness of channels of communication;
- Diversity awareness, overall campus climate, and CSM as a respectful place;
- Satisfaction with facilities and equipment;
- Effectiveness of student support programs and services, including the library; and
- Effectiveness of instructional programs and offerings.

Fast Facts Finding

Students expressed very high levels of satisfaction with CSM throughout the 101-item survey: 93% indicated they were "proud to be a CSM student."

Survey Content: Spring 2010, Spring 2011, Spring 2012

The 2012 *CSM Student Survey* was also conducted in 2011 and 2010 when it was initially developed in 2010 by CSM's Office of Planning, Research, and Institutional Effectiveness (PRIE). PRIE staff reviewed numerous models of campus climate and satisfaction surveys used at both 2-year and 4-year institutions along with several CSM surveys used in previous years for accreditation purposes.

The 2012 survey contains 101 question items and 7 questions about the demographics of the respondents. Questions were formulated about campus climate and the overall student experience. The survey also contained several questions about campus climate that parallel the faculty/administrators and classified staff satisfaction surveys, also conducted in Spring 2010, 2011, 2012.

¹ Students were offered the opportunity of winning an iPad as an incentive to participate in the survey. The gift was made possible through donations to CSM held by the San Mateo County Community Colleges Foundation.

A significant change in the 2012 and 2011 CSM *Student Survey* was the addition of questions that probed the extent to which CSM student made gains in the various institutional-level, General Education Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's).²

Survey Organization

The survey is organized into the following areas:

- *Personal Interactions at CSM*
- *My CSM Experience*
- *Impressions of CSM**
- *CSM as a Respectful Place*
- *Based on My Experience, I can...[SLO section]*
- *CSM Overall*
- *Demographics [of Student Respondents]*

*Note: For reporting purposes, "My CSM Experience" responses are grouped into the following categories: Academic Advising, Academic Services, Campus Climate, Campus Support Services, Concern for the Individual, Facilities, Instructional Effectiveness, Library, Registration Effectiveness, Responsiveness to Diversity, Safety and Security, and Student Centeredness.

DATA REPORTS

Narrative analysis is based on the findings accessible online at the PRIE website:

http://collegeofsanmateo.edu/institutionalresearch/csm_community-studentccss_2012%20.asp

Seven reports are available to provide the campus community with various perspectives when they analyze the data. They include:

- *Comprehensive Data* (includes data for all satisfaction levels, e.g. "Agree Strongly ↔ Disagree Strongly").
- *Summary Data* (summarizes satisfaction levels, e.g. "Total Agree" and "Total Disagree").
- *Ranked Responses* (data are ranked within thematic categories according to levels of satisfaction or agreement).

² In Spring 2010, in addition to administering the CSM *Student Survey*, CSM also simultaneously conducted the standardized and nationally-recognized *Noel-Levitz* to which CSM had 1,810 student respondents. In the *Noel-Levitz*, CSM was allowed to include CSM-specific questions that probed the extent to which CSM students made gains in the various institutional-level, General Education SLO's. Since CSM did not conduct the *Noel-Levitz* in Spring 2011, a section addressing SLO's was included in the Spring 2011 and 2012 versions of the CSM *Student Survey*.

In addition, other question-items previously addressed by *Noel-Levitz* were added to the Spring 2011 CSM *Student Survey*. They included items concerned with academic advising, assessment and course placement, the clarity of stated program requirements, and the availability of computer and lab equipment.

A separate seven-item section on Library usage developed for the Spring 2010 CSM *Student Survey* was collapsed into three library-related items in the Spring 2011 and 2012 versions. In addition, the Spring 2011 and 2012 versions included a new question-item addressing campus climate for LGBT students.

- *Comparative Data, 2010, 2011, and 2012* (includes comparative data; also includes percentage points change from 2010 to 2012 and from 2011 to 2012).
- *General Education SLO's* (includes summary, comprehensive, ranked, and comparative data)
- *Summary Data by Age*
- *Summary Data by Ethnicity*

METHODS OF ANALYSIS

Developed by PRIE staff, this narrative analysis identifies highlights of strengths and challenges for CSM. It does not address all response items. Discussion is organized into themes and includes comparative analysis of the findings with the *CSM Student Survey* conducted in 2010 and 2011 and with, where pertinent, the 2010 Noel-Levitz student survey.³

Generally, this analysis discusses data in terms of total satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels (e.g. a sum of "agree strongly" and "agree" or "disagree" and "strongly disagree"). CSM does not use "neutral" as a response option but does use "Does not Apply."

Highlights

The 2012 *CSM Student Survey* indicated extremely high levels of satisfaction with CSM: in the vast majority of question-items, 90% or more indicated satisfaction; only 3 items indicated satisfaction levels below 80%. With a few exceptions, results from this year's version of the *CSM Student Survey* were better than last year's (which were already quite positive). In addition, they were consistently higher than in 2010 and some items show significant improvement (4-5% or greater).

Generally, variations of a few percentage points between the two years of data are not significant as minor fluctuations are customary in surveys of large populations. However, given that CSM has now collected three years of data, we can confidently identify extremely positive "trends" in how CSM's students experience CSM. The data clearly illustrate areas of success and improvement for CSM—an institution that is thriving, growing, and improving.

Given the consistently high levels of satisfaction, possible areas of concern can be identified only when question-items are ranked by levels of satisfaction. Ranking of selected items is, therefore, addressed in this narrative analysis. Analysis of selected comparative data from Spring 2010 and Spring 2011 also suggests institutional strengths and concerns.

³ For reasons of length, not all items covered solely by the 2010 Noel-Levitz could be included in the Spring 2011 and 2012 *CSM Student Survey*.

STRENGTHS

Students' Positive Overall Experience at CSM

Overall, Spring 2012 students expressed very high levels of satisfaction with CSM, comparable to and in most cases higher than in Spring 2011 and 2010. These high levels of satisfaction are reflected in a variety of question items that probed at overall campus climate and the extent to which students feel valued, welcomed, and a sense of campus pride.

Several key questions demonstrated the overall satisfaction of CSM students: In the 2012 CSM Student Survey, 93.3% indicated that they “were proud to be a CSM student.” When asked if they would choose to attend CSM (if starting over), 91.4% said yes and 97.6% would recommend CSM to a family member or friend. When asked to rate their overall educational experience, 92.7% had a positive response (52% rated their overall experience as “excellent”; and 40.7% rated it “good”).

Students Feel Welcomed & Respected

Generally students feel “respected” at CSM—a theme that emerged in both the Spring 2010 and 2011 versions of the CSM Student Survey. In the 2012 CSM Student Survey, the Section, “CSM as a Respectful Place,” asks students to rank how CSM “respects” students according to 11 distinct demographic delimiters (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age groups, etc.). In all but two categories students indicated 96.4% or higher levels of satisfaction—extremely high ratings.

(Note: The two categories with high satisfaction levels, but ranked the lowest in the section also suggest a theme from earlier surveys: “Students with family responsibilities” (95.4%) and “Students with job responsibilities” (93%).

Students were also asked to rate the overall “friendliness” of their personal interactions with other students, campus offices and personnel, and faculty; all three areas showed improvement as compared to 2010. They see their most ‘friendly’ interactions as ranked first with faculty (84.3%), followed by students (81.7%), and students (75.8%)

When students were asked about their “Impressions of CSM,” this positive theme is further reflected in their ranking of adjectival descriptors. In all but one item they indicated increased satisfaction levels from previous years, and there were extremely high levels of satisfaction throughout (85% to 98.4%). The sixth highest ranked descriptors (96.4% to 98.4%) indicate a sense of CSM as a tolerant, welcoming place, and for the first time, “Up-to-Date” is among these six items. These words and phrases include in highest ranking order: “Safe,” “Friendly,” “Respectful,” “Tolerant of Diversity,” “Welcoming,” and “Up-to-Date.” This ranking is comparable to the previous years’ findings, with the exception of “Up-to-Date,” up 8% from 2010.

Responsiveness to Diversity

Consistent with the Spring 2010 and 2011 surveys, the Spring 2012 findings include very positive responses to campus climate questions explicitly addressing diversity. In the section, “Impressions of CSM,” the phrase “Tolerant of Diversity” remains among the

mostly highly ranked (97.8%). In the 57-question Section, "My CSM Experience," the top ranked item (98.3%) also explicitly addresses diversity: "CSM is supportive all students—regardless of ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, lifestyle, background, or sexual orientation." In addition, the entire Section, "CSM as a Respectful Place" addresses all aspects of diversity—not only were all 12 items highly rated (85.4% to 99.3%), they were slightly higher than in previous years. Clearly, the majority of students report pride in CSM and a sense that their unique attributes are respected.

Responsiveness to diversity also includes the issue of whether a free exchange of ideas is tolerated and encouraged on campus. Consistent with the previous years, in the 2012 survey, students report high levels of satisfaction with items concerned with the free exchange of ideas. Students indicate that CSM "values students' opinions" (91.2%) and encourages the "open discussion of controversial topics" (91.8%). In addition, students perceive that faculty encourage students to "examine different points of view" (91.1%).

Instructional Effectiveness (Faculty & Programs)

As in previous years, students generally report high levels of satisfaction with their faculty and instructional programs. In the 2012 survey, 93.7% indicate that they have learned a great deal from their courses and that grading practices are fair (90.9%). Students also reported that class assignments "challenged" them to do their best work (91.5%) and that program requirements are "clear and reasonable" (92%).

When asked about their experiences with faculty, 93.6% indicate that most instructors are "genuinely interested in teaching and their students" and 92.6% report they are "comfortable" approaching an instructor to ask questions. In addition, 89% indicate that the "overall quality of teaching is excellent" while 91.3% report that "most faculty carefully prepare" for classes. These findings are consistent with or slightly higher than those from Spring 2010.

Improvement in Instructional Effectiveness: Availability of Classes

When asked in the 2010 Noel-Levitz whether a "good variety of classes" are offered or scheduled at "convenient times," students' responses ranked below the national average. This was mirrored in 2010 CSM Student Survey in which a number of students indicated that they are not completely satisfied with the availability of classes. (76% indicated satisfaction, comparably among the lower ranking items.) In 2011 there was an increase in satisfaction: 81%. This year 84.3% indicated satisfaction with the availability of classes, up 8.3% since 2010. These two years of improvement is an extremely promising finding, especially as CSM has undergone several years of consolidating its offerings.

Communicating Information & Processes

In a variety of ways, CSM continues to communicate effectively key "types" of information. In 2012, 93.5% indicated they received useful information from the schedule and catalog, 93.5% found useful information on the website, and 92.3% found the website "easy to navigate." These areas showed slight increases in satisfaction as compared to previous years.

Also consistent with previous years' responses, students indicated that they are informed about the "consequences of unethical behavior" (95.4%); in a related question, 94.9% indicate that the college and faculty give clear information about what "constitutes cheating."

Facilities and Safety

Extremely positive perceptions about college facilities suggest its campus as an institutional strength. The 2012 findings show improvement since 2010 when, even then (in the midst of campus renovation), students expressed high level of satisfaction. When asked explicitly whether they "like the CSM campus and feel comfortable [here]," 95.9% expressed agreement (up 3% from Spring 2010). The question concerned with "ample places to meet and study" (85.1%) is up significantly, 11.4% from 2010. And one of the top ranked (94.6%) items is concerned with classrooms as "clean, neat, and conducive to learning."

Students indicate similar quite positive responses regarding the adequacy of lab and computer facilities: 93.4% indicated that lab equipment was "sufficiently up to date" and 94.6% indicated satisfaction with computer equipment, slightly higher than last year.

Clearly, students have positive perceptions about CSM's new campus facilities and recent renovations.

In 2010 several items in the *Noel-Levitz* were explicitly concerned with facilities and had ratings above the national average, including the adequacy of lab and computer equipment. In this year's *CSM Student Survey* students were asked similar questions which yielded similar positive responses: 91% indicated that lab equipment was "sufficiently up to date" and 93% indicated satisfaction with computer equipment.

The perception of CSM as a "safe" campus also continues to be one of CSM's strengths. In 2010 the issue of campus safety showed some of the highest rated satisfaction levels in both *CSM Student Survey* and the *Noel-Levitz*. This year the word "Safe" was ranked highest (98.4%) for words or phrases used to describe CSM, higher than in 2011 and 2010 surveys.

General Education SLO's

The ten-item section, "Based on my experience at CSM," measures students' self-assessed gains in mastering CSM's General Education (GE) Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's). Questions covered all the GE SLO's thematic areas: Effective Communication, Quantitative Skills, Critical Thinking, Social Awareness and Diversity, and Ethical Responsibility. (For detail about SLO's, see: <http://collegeofsanmateo.edu/sloac/>.)

Students were asked to rate "agreement" with statements about the skills or knowledge they have acquired using a 6-point agreement scale. The survey instrument did not identify this section as an SLO assessment.

Students reported very high levels of agreement, ranging from 96.7% to 98.9%. All items had increases in satisfaction since 2010, ranging from +2.8% to +5%.

Improvements: CSM as an “Academic” Institution

In the section “Impressions of CSM,” students rank adjectives and phrases describing CSM. Several descriptors related to the college’s academic identity as an institution showed increased levels of satisfaction as compared to 2010: “Improving” (96.6%, up 2.3%); “Changing with the Times” (95.1%, up 3.9%); “Intellectually challenging” (92.4%, up 3%); and “Academically rigorous” (89.6%, up 5.6%);

Also related to CSM’s credibility as an academic institutions are three questions concerned with student behavior on campus in the Section, “My CSM Experience.” Students reported a positive change in perception since 2010: “students understand how to behave in the classroom and on campus” (85.7%, up 5.6%) and “there is clear sense of appropriate and inappropriate behavior on campus” (86.4%, up 4.4%). Most students also believe faculty effectively handle rudeness or inappropriate behavior (89.2%, up 4.2%). However, for some students at CSM, there are issues about civility and what constitutes acceptable behavior in a college environment as these items remain among the lowest ranked.

Improvements: Campus Services and Academic Advising

Students also indicate satisfaction with personnel in support services, up slightly from previous years. Personnel in “student support services” (89.2%) and admissions and registration (87%) are reported as “informed and helpful.”

The 4 items explicitly addressing issues related academic advising in “My CSM Experience” have improved levels of satisfaction from the previous year, ranging from 86.7% to 89.4%. The items include whether a students knows what courses to take to graduate or transfer, and whether his or her or academic advisor is approachable and knowledgeable about program requirements (Q37, Q48, Q50, and Q51.) These questions were asked in the 2010 Noel-Levitz survey.

This suggests improvement. In 2010 Noel-Levitz responses to academic advising were mixed. Questions concerned with whether the student’s academic advisor is “approachable” and is “knowledgeable about program requirements” ranked below the national average.

CHALLENGES & THEMES TO INVESTIGATE

In general, as noted earlier, CSM students indicated very high levels of satisfaction with CSM in surveys conducted in 2010 and 2011. In 2012, students expressed even higher levels of satisfaction for the vast majority of questions, 80%-100% satisfaction. In fact, in the CSM Survey, the lowest ranked item for satisfaction (62.7%) still indicates that a majority of students were satisfied in that area.

The “Challenges & Themes” section is intended to identify themes in which items ranked either among the 20 lowest rated in CSM Student Survey. The challenges or themes suggested here are subtle issues and were suggested in previous surveys, including the 2010 Noel-Levitz.

Possible Challenge: Aspects of Campus Climate & Diversity

While CSM students report extremely high levels of satisfaction with virtually all question probes related to diversity, a small number of students do perceive problems with sexual harassment and a sense of racial tensions. This is consistent with 2010 and 211 findings.

In the CSM Student Survey, one question item was explicitly concerned with sexual harassment: “I think sexual harassment is a problem at CSM.” While 83.3% did not think it a problem, 16.7% agreed with the statement, up slightly from the previous year. Despite the overall very positive response, a small group, 154 individuals, indicated dissatisfaction.

When asked whether CSM “handles complaints of sexual harassment fairly,” 90.4% agreed, clearly a very positive response, up 2% from 2010. Yet 9.6% disagreed, the latter group including 90 individuals.

In addition, a small group of students perceive ethnic or racial “tensions in the classroom”: 19.3 % or 188 individuals reporting perceiving racial tensions; conversely 80.7% or 769 individuals disagreed with the statement. This is consistent with findings from previous surveys.

Possible Challenge: “Being Welcomed” vs. “Belonging”

As noted above, students feel genuinely welcomed by the faculty and staff they encounter and by the “friendly” campus as a whole.

However, though showing improvement as compared to Spring 2011 and 2010 surveys, a small proportion of students don’t feel a strong sense of “belonging” to the campus or report that the college is not concerned about students as individuals. In the section in which students were asked to describe CSM through a word or phrase, the second lowest ranked item was “concern about me as an individual” (85%, up 5.9%). In the section, “My CSM Experience,” among the lowest ranked items, include being “valued as an individual on campus” and or “[that] CSM is genuinely concerned about me as an individual.” In fact, 27.7% (263 students) report feeling “isolated within the CSM community...because of my background.” (Conversely, 73% or 685 students did not report feeling isolated.)

In 2010 these themes surfaced in the Noel-Levitz. Items ranked below the national average included the statements about whether students know “what’s happening on campus” and whether they think “most students feel a sense of belonging on campus.” In addition, the “institution’s commitment to commuters” “ranked below the national average.

Sensitivity to Working Adults with Families

A lack of a sense of “belonging” is surely connected to the fact that CSM is a commuter campus. In related themes, when asked whether CSM and faculty “accommodate” working students and those raising families, a small proportion of students (approximately 12%) were not satisfied. Among the 20 lowest ranked items for the Section, “My CSM Experience,” includes:

Q25. “Generally, CSM programs and services accommodate working students” (87.4%; 88% in 2010).

Q26. “Generally, understand the needs of people raising families” (87.6%; 89.2% in 2010).

Q27. “Generally, CSM programs and services accommodate then needs of people who have to work” (87.4%; 88.4% in 2010).

Possible Challenge: CSM’s Identity

It should be noted that in the Section, “Impressions of CSM,” students indicated high levels of agreement with all the phrases, from 85% to 98.4%. However, in a pattern similar to last year’s survey, the two items ranked lowest (85%) in agreement levels included phrases describing CSM as “Cutting Edge” and “Concerned about me as an individual.” In fact, the phrase, “Cutting Edge” showed a negative (-9.8%) shift in satisfaction levels from 2010. This ranking perhaps continues to suggest that some students may be concerned with CSM’s credibility as a contemporary academic institution adapting to a rapidly changing world. However, it should be noted that simultaneously the phrase “Up-to-date” is ranked highly at 96.4%—CSM may be perceived as modern, but not cutting edge.

As noted earlier, items related to appropriate student behavior showed improvement from previous surveys, yet these items still remain among the 10 lowest ranked. For some students at CSM, there continues to be concerns about civility and what constitutes acceptable behavior in a college environment.

Possible Challenge: Channels for Complaints and Getting Help

Students have positive views about the approachability of their instructors. They indicate they can approach their instructors when they have questions about assignments or readings (92.6%). However, consistent with previous years’ findings, some students indicate difficulties as they negotiate selected college processes.

As in previous years, students were asked whether they know where to get help for a class in which they are having problems or to register a complaint about a faculty or staff member. These were among the overall lowest ranking items for satisfaction, 83.5% and 62.7% respectively.⁴ Also among the lowest rated items was the issue of “being notified early if they are doing poorly in classes”(71.3%).

⁴ A concern with how CSM handles complaints was also suggested the 2010 Noel-Levitz: the item regarding the availability of “channels for expressing student complaints” was ranked below the national average.

Clearly, some students continue to face communication problems and feeling of isolation when they are having difficulties at CSM.

PROFILE OF STUDENT RESPONDENTS

Overall, student survey respondents have similar demographic characteristics to the general CSM student population with slight differences. They are predominately female, somewhat older, and somewhat more likely to be fulltime students than the general population in Spring 2011. Their ethnicity, however, generally reflected that of the general student population.

(For complete demographic data see data reports: http://collegeofsanmateo.edu/institutionalresearch/csm_community-studentccss_2012%20.asp)

CSM Student Survey Students

- Respondents were somewhat more likely to be full-time students (37% vs. 32%)
- Respondents were somewhat older (37% 30 years and above vs. 31%)
- Women were more likely to respond (57% vs. 49%)
- The ethnicity of respondents roughly approximated the general student population:
 - African American (2% vs. 3)
 - Hispanic (19% vs. 19%)
 - Pacific Islander (2% vs. 2%)
 - Filipino (6% vs. 7%)
 - Multi-Racial (8% vs. 12%)
 - White (35% vs. 34%)
- The day only and mix of day + evening enrollment patterns of respondents closely mirrored the general student population:
 - Day only (52% vs. 48%)
 - Day + Evening (17% vs. 20%)
- The employment status of respondents is as follows:
 - 68% were employed
 - 12% were working more than 40 hours a week
 - 29% of were unemployed (12% of whom were looking for work)
 - 3% were retired