

SIENA STUDENT SATISFACTION

Therese Buyaskas, Siena College

INTRODUCTION

Students attending an institution of higher learning are faced with certain situations. Some challenges faced by these students include socialization, expectations, study habits, organizational skills, and time management. Given my experience as a resident transfer student, and after numerous conversations with other students, including transfer students, it is my perception that transfer students are less satisfied than non-transfer students.

The first situation to be considered and addressed is socialization, defined by a student's ability to interact with other students, evidenced by social gatherings such as clubs and college team sports. The issue of socialization especially needs to be addressed when the student is living on campus, in a dorm or town house with roommates. Another factor that needs to be considered is that the student must determine expectations for him/herself when it comes to academic performance, GPA, clubs, sports, and just how active the student wants to be at the college he or she attends. People that have high expectations of themselves, will usually set higher goals, and be more likely to be able to achieve them. People that have low expectations of themselves, will usually set lower goals, and may be less likely to achieve their goals. The next situation that needs attention is establishing study habits. Study habits can lay the foundations for academic success, or set you up for failure. The student must determine the place where he or she can study best, such as the library, home/dorm room, or college provided study lounges. The student must also decide if they need to study alone, in groups, or with a tutor. Another challenge faced by students is balancing their school work load with their studying and extra curricular activities. This can be one of the hardest situations for the student. It is not uncommon to have to juggle multiple assignments such as two tests, one paper, and two quizzes all in different subjects, and all due in the same week. One final key point is organization while attending college. Good organization will likely result in less stress for the student. On the other hand, lack of organization could cause the stress level to become tremendous and overbearing for the student. New students are immediately confronted with many challenges that will set the tone for their college experience.

The situations that students are faced with can be different based on the type of institution that they attend. A different experience will be found at a two year community college, than at a four year college or a larger university. The time management skills of a community college student are often more of an issue because they may be balancing their education, a full or part-time job, a family, or other obligations. A college or university student's time is usually more focused on the college experience. Another relevant comparison is between a commuter and a resident. A commuter's experience either at a community college or at a four year institution is probably very similar. They often spend very little time at the school other than for classes or for resources. A resident's experience, however, is often more consumed by social aspects. Perhaps the student's first time away from home is a time of freedom and experiencing new things. One last category of students to mention is transfer students. Although they may come from many different places they are all in a position to compare their past academic experiences with their current situation. For some people their new school may be larger or smaller, more difficult or easier, friendlier or not, closer or farther away from home. Adjustment can be a major obstacle for a transfer student.

Satisfaction of a student in higher education can come at many levels. At a resident level, the student judges the building and grounds, living accommodations, parking, and the dining hall. At an academic level, the student judges the labs and academic intervention services, academic advisors, teaching staff, classes/class time, as well as the amount of guidance offered. One last level would be the social level where the student makes judgment on the social clubs, college events, and sports. High satisfaction in all of these areas is the goal of the college administration.

The research was aimed at discovering the challenges students are facing, and what type of students are facing these challenges, such as commuters, residents, transfer students and non-transfer students. In order to do this, a questionnaire was developed highlighting three main aspects of college life; academic, personal and social.

Within each area, a series of questions were geared towards examining the different components of an average Siena student's experience, and how it may have met, exceeded, or fallen short of their expectations.

MEASURES

A survey was developed to help identify the difference in satisfaction between commuter and resident as well as transfer and non-transfer students. Originally, several questions were developed and pilot tested with over 30 students. The students were asked to complete the survey and to help identify confusing or misleading questions.

The responses from the pilot test were used to develop the final survey. The survey had 10 demographic questions. In addition the survey was designed to assess three different areas: (1) assessing satisfaction with academic services (e.g. tutoring, quality of education, academic difficulty); (2) assessing general satisfaction (e.g. friendliness, parking, security); and (3) assessing satisfaction with the social environment (e.g. clubs, sports teams, activities). The internal consistent reliabilities (measured by Cronbach's alpha) for the three areas were .80, .83, and .87, respectively. According to the standard established by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), all reliabilities were above the standard for scale development.

SAMPLE

To assess the student satisfaction, the final survey was distributed to students in five different undergraduate classes. The surveys were completely confidential and anonymous, and were consecutively numbered for data entry with no student identification. Out of the surveys administered, we received 105 useful responses. The students were almost evenly split by gender (56 percent male, 44 percent female) and class (22 percent sophomore, 30 percent junior, 48 percent senior). Freshmen were largely not included in the survey because of their lack of experience with the various elements assessed by the survey.

RESULTS

The Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to facilitate interpretation of the responses. While analyzing the data, average means, mean differences, and standard deviations (sigma) were calculated and compared. Responses were grouped and compared based on two different sets of criteria; commuters vs. residents, and transfer students vs. not transfer students.

"Extreme" mean responses are highlighted on the attached Excel file, Schedule A. Extreme satisfaction is identified as a mean response less than 2.0 (highlighted green), and extreme dissatisfaction is identified as a mean response greater than 3.0 (highlighted blue). Two separate, perhaps overlapping, groups visibly stand out as satisfied in all three categories. Commuters and transfer students are generally more content with their Siena experience than their counterparts. The social category has the most instances of extreme satisfaction in these groups. Almost all areas of dissatisfaction involve parking availability and access on campus, and are consistent among all categories of students.

In addition, a univariate analysis of variance was conducted to assess statistically significant differences between commuter and resident as well as transfer versus non-transfer students. The results can be found in Table 2.

There was only one statistically significant difference between commuter and resident students (parking). On that question, commuters were statistically significantly less satisfied than resident students.

Concerning the differences between transfer and non-transfer students, there were several statistically significant differences (see Table 3). However, the statistically significant differences were largely centered on parking, security, and the ability to join clubs and sports teams. In all cases, transfer students indicated that they were more satisfied than non-transfer students.

This result could be due to one of two different reasons. First, students may have transferred to Siena College because of their clubs and sports, or the students could be coming from a community college with very few programs available to them in the areas of sports and clubs. In either case, Siena's program would be a more rich opportunity than their previous experience. Secondly, the survey results could be because transfer students are

upperclassmen and are less interested in sports teams and clubs. This would result in a satisfaction level that is easier to meet. The only accurate way to determine which the cause for the finding is would be for more statistical data to be gathered on the students currently participating in sports teams and clubs, to see if the mix of the students represents a higher percentage of transfer students.

The actual survey results were inconsistent with the anticipated responses. It was predicted that transfer students were less satisfied than non-transfer students. I question that the sample is a true representation of the whole student body. It would be my recommendation to redistribute the survey during a future semester to see if the results are consistent. Also, since Siena College strives for maximum satisfaction of all of its students, attention should be given to the noted areas of dissatisfaction.

Table 3
Univariate ANOVA – Commuter versus Resident

	Mean Difference	Std. Error
Q1	(0.12)	0.44
Q2	(0.50)	0.39
Q3	(0.23)	0.42
Q4	(0.05)	0.42
Q5	(0.03)	0.45
Q6	0.48	0.43
Q7	0.14	0.35
Q8	0.09	0.48
Q9	0.25	0.39
Q10	(0.47)	0.46
Q11	(0.22)	0.42
Q12	0.20	0.40
Q13	(0.32)	0.48
Q14	(0.14)	0.45
Q15	(0.17)	0.42
Q16	0.48	0.38
Q17	(0.52)	0.37
Q18	0.01	0.39
Q19	0.19	0.51
Q20	0.54	0.46
Q21	1.01*	0.46
Q22	0.51	0.49
Q23	0.54	0.51
Q24	(0.09)	0.51
Q25	0.59	0.50
Q26	0.02	0.49
Q27	(0.26)	0.39
Q28	(0.29)	0.39
Q29	(0.10)	0.37
Q30	0.05	0.45
Q31	0.07	0.34
Q32	(0.26)	0.37
Q33	0.45	0.48
Q34	0.45	0.39

Note: Mean difference equals mean for Resident minus mean for Commuter

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 3
Univariate ANOVA – Transfer versus Non-Transfer

	Mean Difference	Std. Error
Q1	0.36	0.44
Q2	(0.02)	0.39
Q3	0.15	0.42
Q4	(0.24)	0.42
Q5	(0.22)	0.45
Q6	(0.57)	0.43
Q7	(0.39)	0.35
Q8	(0.20)	0.48
Q9	(0.32)	0.39
Q10	0.11	0.46
Q11	(0.37)	0.42
Q12	(0.85)*	0.40
Q13	(0.65)	0.48
Q14	(0.42)	0.45
Q15	(0.41)	0.42
Q16	(0.38)	0.38
Q17	(0.14)	0.37
Q18	(0.57)	0.39
Q19	(0.72)	0.51
Q20	(1.27)**	0.46
Q21	(1.32)**	0.46
Q22	(1.06)*	0.49
Q23	(0.94)*	0.51
Q24	(0.99)*	0.51
Q25	(1.03)*	0.50
Q26	(0.03)	0.49
Q27	0.12	0.39
Q28	(0.05)	0.39
Q29	(0.15)	0.37
Q30	(1.00)*	0.45
Q31	(0.79)*	0.34
Q32	(0.45)	0.37
Q33	(0.36)	0.48
Q34	(0.69)	0.39

Note: Mean difference equals mean for Transfer minus mean for Non-Transfer

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$