



COLLEGE EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION SURVEY INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

The College Employee Satisfaction Survey (CESS) is designed to assess the campus environment for college and university employees (faculty, staff, and administration). The CESS is similar in structure and design to the Noel-Levitz student satisfaction and priorities surveys (such as the SSI and the ASPS) in that for each of the core satisfaction items respondents are asked to rate importance as well as satisfaction.

The survey instrument consists of 4 sections:

- Section 1: Campus culture and policies (30 standard items)
- Section 2: Institutional goals (9 standard items)
- Section 3: Involvement in planning and decision-making (8 standard items)
- Section 4: Work environment (21 standard items)

Section 1: Campus culture and policies and Section 4 Work environment

Respondents are presented with statements and asked to rate their importance to them as employees and then to rate their satisfaction. A five-point Likert rating scale is used for both importance and satisfaction.

When calculating means for the importance and satisfaction ratings the following numeric values are assigned:

Importance and Satisfaction Rating Scale

Importance rating	Satisfaction rating	Numerical value
Very important	Very satisfied	5
Important	Satisfied	4
Somewhat important	Somewhat satisfied	3
Not very important	Not very satisfied	2
Not important at all	Not satisfied at all	1

Section 2: Institutional goals

Respondents are presented with statements describing a set of institutional goals and asked to rate how important it is to them that the institution pursues each of the goals. A five-point Likert rating scale is used for importance.

When calculating means for the importance ratings the following numeric values are assigned:

Importance Rating Scale

Importance rating	Numerical value
Very important	5
Important	4
Somewhat important	3
Not very important	2
Not important at all	1

Respondents are then asked to choose three goals from the list that they believe should be the institution's top priorities and then indicate which of the three goals is their first priority goal, their second priority goal, and their third priority goal. We report a count and percentage distribution of the number of respondents that select each goal as first priority, second priority and third priority.

Section 3: Involvement in planning and decision-making

Respondents are presented with a list of types of individuals (faculty, staff, deans, trustees, alumni, etc.) and asked to rate how much involvement each type of individual has in the planning and decision-making process at the institution. A five-point Likert rating scale is used for involvement.

When calculating means for the importance ratings the following numeric values are assigned:

Involvement Rating Scale

Involvement rating	Numerical value
Too much involvement	5
More than enough involvement	4
Just the right involvement	3
Not quite enough involvement	2
Not enough involvement	1

Global satisfaction

In addition to these sections the survey includes a global satisfaction item (“Rate your overall satisfaction with your employment here so far”) using the same 5-point Likert satisfaction scale noted above and three open-ended questions:

1. Please provide any additional feedback about the campus culture and policies at (INSTITUTION)
2. Please provide any additional feedback about this institution’s goals
3. Please provide any additional feedback about the work environment at (INSTITUTION)

Calculating means and gaps

Means for importance and satisfaction for individual items are calculated by summing the respondents’ ratings and dividing by the number of respondents. Performance gap means are calculated by taking the difference between the (mean) importance rating and the (mean) satisfaction rating.

Significance Definitions and Levels

The significance level for Importance is a result of comparing your institution’s average importance score to the comparison group’s average importance score. Likewise for the Satisfaction score. The result is obtained by running an ANOVA (analysis of variance) on the two scores. The result you see is showing you the level of significance, or the p-value.

NS = no significant difference exists between the groups.

One asterisk = a p-value of .05, meaning that the two scores are significantly different, and such a difference would only be due to chance 5% of the time.

Two asterisks = a p-value of .01, meaning that the two scores are significantly different, and such a difference would only be due to chance 1% of the time.

Finally, three asterisks = a p-value of .001, meaning that the two scores are significantly different, and such a difference would only be due to chance 0.1% of the time.

Validity and Reliability

The reliability of the Noel-Levitz College Employee Satisfaction Survey (CESS) was measured by comparing year-to-year average overall satisfaction for institutions with multiple years of survey results. The school demonstrated consistent results. The correlation of overall satisfaction between successive years of the survey was .649.

Due to the absence of another instrument to compare to the CESS, validity was measured by the correlation between individual survey items and overall satisfaction. All correlations were significant at the .01 level. This is an indication that the survey items are both associated with and contribute to overall satisfaction.

Guide for Using Open-end Questions

☑ Use the quantitative results (numeric) as the only source for key findings and strategies. Once those key findings are known, in particular strengths and challenges/opportunities for change (high importance/low satisfaction OR highest gaps), read through the open-ends and pull only those that might have some relation to the quantitative as potential suggestions, but do not treat any open-end as being anything but one person's opinion.

- The open-ends are qualitative (similar to a focus group) and not everyone provides answers; they are not statistically sound. Do not share them publicly. Most campuses only allow review by a trusted executive team and/or Human Resources.
- The open-ends allow employees to vent pent up frustration so do not be surprised if some are controversial.
- The open-ends can provide helpful suggestions of quick “just do it” fixes and other longer-term ideas that might require more resources and planning.
- The open-ends can provide insight into problem areas that need further investigation (additional interviews or a survey item for next time to test it more broadly.)
- It is important to highlight any suggestions that are implemented that came from employee input, to show that the survey results were used and helped.