

# Research in BRIEF

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CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

## 2005 NOEL-LEVITZ/CAEL ADULT LEARNER INVENTORY (ALI)

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Chapman University College

Executive Summary

(Administered Term D 2005)

In 2002, Noel-Levitz, in collaboration with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), created a survey especially for students at adult-learning institutions. The Adult Learner Inventory (ALI) was developed to assess the satisfaction and the importance of campus issues for students 25 years of age or older, primarily in undergraduate programs. The ALI was administered to approximately 1,000 University College undergraduate students enrolled in Term D 2005<sup>1</sup>. Students were sent an email containing a link to the online ALI survey. Completed ALIs from 226 students were received, resulting in a final response rate of 23%.

### Sample Representation and Demographics

The survey sample accounts for 9% of the 2005 Chapman University College undergraduate Term D student population. As can be seen in the table below, the characteristics of the student-survey respondents do *not* match in every instance those of the general student population of Chapman University College for Term D 2005.

Student Population and Survey Respondents	UNIVERSITY COLLEGE TERM D 2005	
	PERCENT	
	Chapman Population (n = 2,501)	Survey Respondents (n = 226)
GENDER		
Male	37.0%	31.4%
Female	63.0%	68.6%
RACE/ETHNICITY		
African-American	7.7%	4.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.6%	3.2%
Native-American/Alaskan Native	1.2%	1.8%
Latino/Hispanic	17.3%	15.9%
White	53.0%	70.9%
Unknown/Other*	16.2%	4.1%
AGE		
34 years old or younger	56.3%	40.9%
35 years old or older	43.7%	59.1%

\* Includes Multi-ethnic, unknown and decline to state

As expected, given the student demographics of University College undergraduates, the majority of the survey sample is composed of females and White students. More than 59% of the sample is 35-years-old or older—a slightly higher percentage than what would be expected given the population figures. In addition, women are also slightly

overrepresented in the sample given their numbers in the population. Lastly, while White students are substantially overrepresented in the sample given their numbers in the population, the discrepancy may be due (in part) to the fact that the 16% of the students who could not be identified based on students records did decide to identify themselves on the survey<sup>2</sup>.

Due to the small sample size and the discrepancies noted, generalizations of these findings to the entire undergraduate population in University College should be made with caution. The results should be interpreted in the context of the over- and under-sampling of certain sub-populations.

### FINDINGS

Highlighted here are the most salient findings from the 2005 administration of the Noel-Levitz/CAEL Adult Learner Inventory (ALI). For comparison purposes, the 2002 ALI data are also presented where appropriate<sup>3</sup>.

#### Importance

Students were asked to indicate how important it was to them that the university met the expectations listed, using a scale from 1-“not important” to 7-“very important” (“does not apply” was also an option). Average mean scores were calculated for all items for Chapman University College students.

The top 5 services/activities rated as *most* important by Chapman University College students in 2005 were:

- My program allows me to pace my studies to fit my life and work schedules. (2005, 6.78; 2002, 6.58)
- Sufficient course offerings within my program of study are available each term. (2005, 6.72; 2002, 6.73)
- I have a clear understanding of what I’m expected to learn in my courses. (2005, 6.69; 2002, 6.56)
- My advisor is knowledgeable about requirements for courses and programs of interest to me. (2005, 6.67; 2002, 5.90)
- My instructors provide timely feedback about my academic progress. (2005, 6.65; 2002, 6.52)

Many of the services/activities students considered the most important in 2005 had grown in importance when compared to 2002, the last time the survey was

administered. Findings suggest that most important to students is having a program which allows them to pace their studies to fit their life and work schedules, knowledgeable advisors, and clear expectations.

The top 5 services/activities rated as *least* important by Chapman University College students in 2005 were:

- This institution periodically assesses my skill level to guide my learning experiences. (2005, 5.60; 2002, 6.29)
- This institution initiates many opportunities for me to connect with other adult learners. (2005, 5.74; 2002, 6.09)
- This institution conducts pre-enrollment assessment of the students' abilities to get them ready for their program of study. (2005, 5.80; 2002, 6.23)
- I receive the help I need to improve my technology skills. (2005, 5.84; 2002, 6.03)
- My instructors encourage student-to-student interactions through a variety of techniques. (2005, 5.91; 2002, 6.04)

When compared to all services/activities students were asked to rate, findings show that assessments of skills are least important to students. In addition, when compared to the 2002 figures, the services/activities noted above appear to have decreased in importance in the last three years.

### **Satisfaction**

Students were asked to report their level of satisfaction with the service or activity listed, using a scale from 1-“not satisfied at all” to 7-“very satisfied” (“not available/not used” was also an option). Average mean scores were calculated.

The top 5 services/activities rated as *most* satisfactory by Chapman University College students in 2005 were:

- Processes and procedures for enrolling here are convenient. (2005, 6.25; 2002, 5.85)
- The learning experiences within my program of study challenge me to reach beyond what I know already. (2005, 6.21; 2002, 4.83)
- The frequency of interactions with my instructors is adequate. (2005, 6.21; 2002, 5.88)
- I am able to obtain information I need by phone, fax, email, or online. (2005, 6.19; 2002, 5.38)
- My instructors respect student opinions and ideas that differ from their own. (2005, 6.15; 2002, 5.52)

Data show that students are very satisfied with the processes and procedures for enrolling they have experienced at a Chapman University College campus, the academic challenge in their program, the frequency of interaction with their instructors, the accessibility they have to information, and the extent to which instructors respect student opinions/ideas that are different than their own. All of these items had higher satisfaction ratings in 2005 than 2002. Most notably, there was a substantial increase in student's satisfaction with the extent to which they perceived they were being challenged academically in their programs.

The top 5 services/activities rated as *least* satisfactory by Chapman University College students in 2005 were:

- Sufficient course offerings within my program of study are available each term. (2005, 4.84; 2002, 5.91)
- I can receive credit for learning derived from my previous life and work experience. (2005, 4.97; 2002, 5.68)
- This institution assists students who need help with the financial aid process. (2005, 4.99; 2002, 5.21)
- This institution periodically assesses my skill level to guide my learning experiences. (2005, 5.06; 2002, 5.63)
- Mentors are available to guide my career and life goals. (2005, 5.10; 2002, 5.34)

Data suggest that students have grown increasingly dissatisfied with the number of course offerings available to them each term in their program, the credit they receive for learning derived from previous life/work experience, the help they receive with the financial aid process, and the availability of mentors to help guide their career and life goals. When findings are compared to the 2002 data, it appears that undergraduates have grown the most dissatisfied with the availability of course offerings in their program. While the item focused on the frequency their skill level is assessed to guide their learning was rated least satisfactory, it was also rated least important by the same students in 2005.

### **Performance Gap: Challenges and Strengths**

The performance gap score is the mean score difference between student satisfaction and importance items. When the students' level of satisfaction is subtracted from the strength of the students' expectation (i.e., level of importance), the result suggests an unmet expectation. According to Noel-Levitz, a large performance gap score for an item indicates that the institution is not meeting the students' expectations.

The services/activities listed below resulted in the largest gap scores (i.e., items rated by Chapman University College students as the most important and least satisfied) in 2005.

- Sufficient course offerings within my program of study are available each term. (2005, 1.88; 2002, 0.82)
- I can receive credit for learning derived from my previous life and work experience. (2005, 1.36; 2002, 0.45)
- This institution assists students who need help with the financial aid process. (2005, 0.97; 2002, 1.02)

Findings suggest that the areas noted above may call for some further exploration, particularly because data suggest that students' expectation with regard to these services and/or activities has changed substantially in the last two years.

Items with small performance gaps demonstrate areas of strength. In other words, according to Noel-Levitz, a small performance gap score for an item indicates that the institution is meeting the students' expectations in that

respective area. Below are the services/activities with the smallest gap scores (i.e., items rated by Chapman University students as highly important and very satisfied) in 2005.

- This institution initiates many opportunities for me to connect with other adult learners. (2005, -0.16; 2002, 0.57)
- My instructors encourage student-to-student interactions through a variety of techniques. (2005, -0.11; 2002, 0.73)
- This institution uses technology on a regular basis to reach out to me. (2005, -0.08; 2002, 0.66)
- The frequency of interactions with my instructors is adequate. (2005, 0.18; 2002, 0.49)
- I have many ways to demonstrate what I know. (2005, 0.19; 2002, 0.87)

### CAEL-ALI Scales

Using factor analysis<sup>4</sup>, data were reduced to seven scales to reflect seven of the eight *Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners* defined by CAEL. The CAEL's Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners are:

- **Outreach:** The institution conducts its outreach to adult learners by overcoming barriers in time, place, and tradition in order to create lifelong access to educational opportunities.
- **Life & Career Planning:** The institution addresses adult learners' life and career goals before or at the onset of enrollment in order to assess and align its capacities to help learners reach their goals.
- **Financing:** The institution promotes choice using an array of payment options for adult learners in order to expand equity and financial flexibility.
- **Assessment of Learning Outcomes:** The institution defines and assesses the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired by adult learners both from the curriculum and from life / work experience in order to assign credit and confer degrees with rigor.
- **Teaching-Learning Process:** The institution's faculty uses multiple methods of instruction (including experiential and problem-based methods) for adult learners in order to connect curricular concepts to useful knowledge and skills.
- **Student Support Systems:** The institution assists adult learners using comprehensive academic and student support systems in order to enhance students' capacities to become self-directed, lifelong learners.
- **Technology:** The institution uses information technology to provide relevant and timely information and to enhance the learning experience.

Findings show that there was a significant positive difference in satisfaction since 2002 in three of the seven areas: Outreach, Financing, and the Teaching and Learning Process. In other words, findings suggest that Chapman University College has improved the way that it reaches out to adult learners, promotes choice using an array of payment options for adult learners, and uses multiple methods of instruction (including experimental and

problem based methods) for adult learners to connect curricular concepts to useful knowledge and skills.

	2002 Chapman University			2005 Chapman University			Satisfaction Mean Gap Scores
	Import	Satis/SD	Gap	Import	Satis/SD	Gap	
CAEL-ALI Scale							2002 v. 2005
#1: Outreach	6.29	5.62/0.89	0.67	6.57	5.97/0.92	0.60	0.35***
#2: Life and Career Planning	6.21	5.35/0.97	0.86	6.43	5.34/1.11	1.09	-0.01
#3: Financing	6.17	5.18/1.07	0.99	6.37	5.82/1.08	0.55	0.64***
#4: Assessment of Learning Outcomes	6.20	5.46/1.10	0.74	5.99	5.58/1.00	0.41	0.12
#5: Teaching - Learning Process	6.24	5.65/0.88	0.59	6.36	6.04/0.85	0.32	0.39***
#6: Student Support Systems	6.23	5.55/1.01	0.68	6.16	5.65/0.97	0.51	0.10
#7: Technology	6.17	5.54/0.96	0.63	6.15	5.67/1.01	0.48	0.13

### Chapman University College Specific Questions

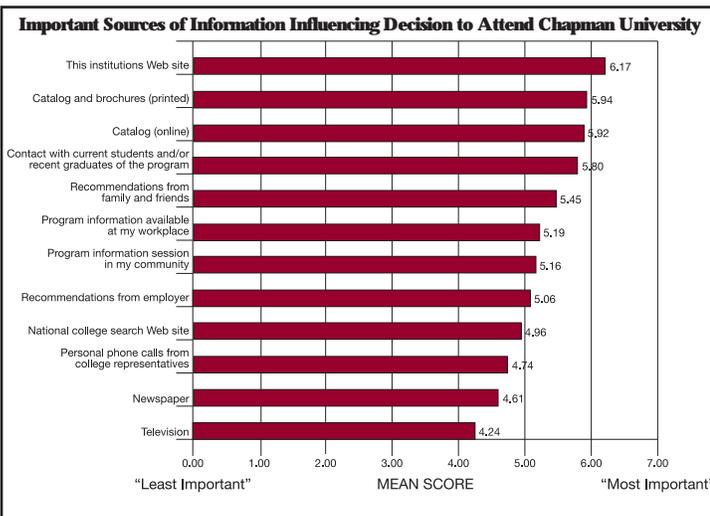
Students were also asked to respond to ten questions about Chapman University College. Specifically, they were asked to rate their level of satisfaction, as well as the level of importance of each service or activity listed, using the same seven-point scales used earlier. Average mean scores were calculated for the satisfaction and importance items.

University College Specific Questions	2005 Chapman University		
	Import	Satis/SD	Gap
Education at Chapman University matches my personal and career goals.	6.67	6.24 / 1.12	0.43
Faculty understands my needs as an adult learner.	6.54	6.10 / 1.12	0.44
Instructors provide personalized education in my courses.	6.26	5.97 / 1.14	0.29
At Chapman University, they understand me as a whole person and not just a number.	6.44	5.96 / 1.39	0.48
Staff understands my needs as an adult learner.	6.53	5.95 / 1.37	0.58
My student services needs are met allowing me to focus on learning.	6.47	5.90 / 1.33	0.57
Staff and administrators at my campus provide student services that meet my needs as an adult learner.	6.48	5.82 / 1.42	0.66
There is a team approach at my campus among faculty, staff, and administrators to meet my needs as a student.	6.34	5.75 / 1.39	0.59
It is evident that the mission of Chapman University guides the practices and policies of the institution.	5.85	5.67 / 1.31	0.18
I feel like an important part of the learning community at my campus.	6.11	5.66 / 1.44	0.45

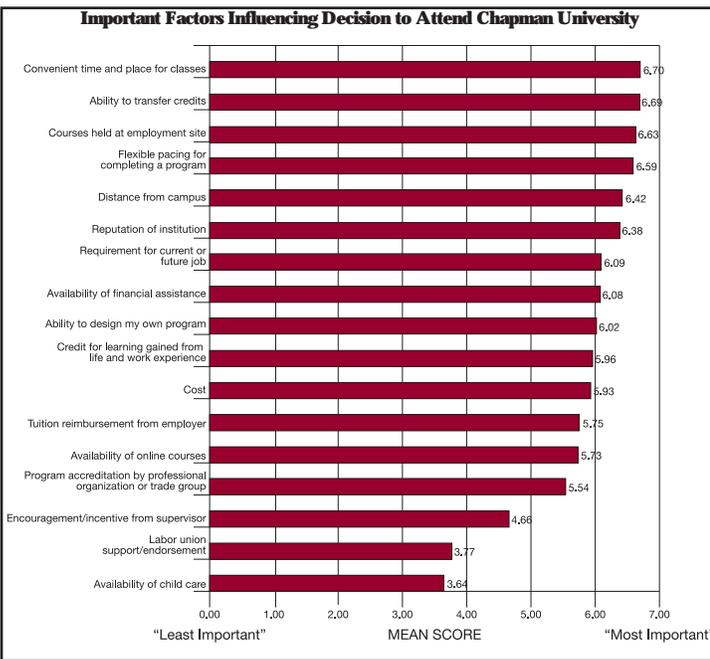
With regard to the campus-specific questions, findings reveal that the item that students rated as most important, as well as most satisfactory, was "education at Chapman University matches my personal and career goals." However, satisfaction results may reflect, in part, student's actual decision to choose Chapman University College because they knew in advance it would meet their goals. Overall, findings suggest that students at Chapman University College are receiving "personalized education."

## Factors Influencing the Decision to Enroll at Chapman University College

Using a scale from 1-“not important” to 7-“very important,” students were asked to respond to two questions regarding their choice to enroll at Chapman University College. Specifically, they were asked to indicate how important various sources of information were in their decision to enroll in their program, and how important various factors were in their decision to enroll in their program at Chapman University.



Findings show that it is the institution’s website, above all other sources of information, that aids University College students in their decision to enroll at Chapman. Findings also show that students heavily rely on catalogs, brochures, and contact with current students and/or recent graduates for information.



It is very clear from the results that convenience is the most important factor influencing students to enroll and attend Chapman University College. For example, data show that

the top five factors students reported influenced their decision to attend Chapman University College were: convenient time and place for classes, ability to transfer credits, courses held at employment site, flexibility pacing for completing a program, and distance from campus. These factors proved to be more important than the reputation of the institution or cost.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of administering the ALI at Chapman University College was to examine and identify areas of strength, as well as areas in which adult students felt that the university was not meeting their expectations (i.e., items with large performance gaps).

Findings clearly show that convenience is the most important factor influencing student enrollment at Chapman University College. This is consistent with the finding that suggested that most important to students is having a program which allows them to pace their studies to fit their life and work schedules and that they are very satisfied with the processes and procedures for enrolling they have experienced at a Chapman University College campus.

Findings from the CAEL-ALI scales reveal that Chapman University College is improving the way that it reaches out to adult learners. In addition, findings also show that it is the institution’s website, above all other sources of information, that aids University College students in their decision to enroll at Chapman. Interestingly, Chapman University College has just unveiled a new interactive online catalog which will be able to serve more students more effectively.

Large gap scores suggest attention may need to be directed toward increasing student’s satisfaction with the number of course offerings available to them each term in their program, the credit they receive for learning derived from previous life/work experience, and the help they receive with the financial aid process.

<sup>1</sup>A random sample was selected from the undergraduate student population enrolled in Term D 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Percent calculation for gender, race/ethnicity, and age for the population data were derived from using official student records, while the survey percent calculations were derived from data obtained from the survey.

<sup>3</sup> In 2002 (Term V, now known as Term E), Chapman University College was asked to participate in the administration of the ALI pilot project conducted by CAEL. Campus Directors solicited undergraduate students for participation at each local campus through flyers. From this volunteer list, students were sent email invitations to complete the survey. A total of 972 students were invited to participate with 262 completing the survey and resulting in a 27% response rate. Since the sample for the survey administration was not randomly selected, the interpretation of these comparisons must be made with caution.

<sup>4</sup> According to Noel-Levitz, final scales were tested for homogeneity by calculating coefficient alpha. The overall coefficient alpha for the importance was .79 and .83 for satisfaction.

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