

REGISTRATION FOCUS GROUP RESULTS SUMMARY

Background

Based on the results of the Noel-Levitz survey, focus groups were done during walk-in Spring registration to try to get a better understanding of why a relatively large performance gap exists for student satisfaction with registration.

The goal was to intercept 8-10 students for a total of four groups. A morning and an afternoon group were planned for both Tuesday, Jan. 6 and Thursday, Jan. 8. A discussion guide was developed by Community Relations, in coordination with Institutional Research. The Institutional Research coordinator served as moderator for the groups, and all groups were tape recorded.

Explanation of Research

The purpose of focus group research is to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions. It is exploratory research, and in this case was a follow-up to quantitative research.

It is important to note that while all comments should be taken into consideration, many specific comments were made by individuals and may not be representative of students as a whole. The purpose of these groups was to determine if there were any overall issues with the registration process, but all relevant discussions are included in this report for information and possible further study/action. Comments that were frequent are included under the summary section; all other relevant comments are included by subject area.

Recruitment of participants was difficult, and group sizes were less than optimal, ranging from 3-7. Adequate participation could not be generated for the final planned group on Thursday afternoon, so students were queried on their opinions while they were in line for the business office.

Profile of Participants

A total of 14 students participated in the focus groups. Of these, five were new students and nine were returning students. Programs of study represented included nursing, paralegal, business administration, early childhood, engineering, criminal justice and general studies. Four males and ten females participated in the groups. An additional 9 students were surveyed in the business office line.

Summary of Results

- The primary purpose of this research was to determine what issues students had with registration. Based on this research, students seem generally satisfied with their on-site registration experience. Whatever issues students had in the fall that were illustrated by

their responses on the Noel-Levitz survey were not evident during these groups. Many of the students who had been through prior registrations commented that the process had improved, which could account for the difference.

- When queried on staff, the overwhelming response was positive.
- Many students in the groups reported problems with both SOAR and phone registration.
- While most students were satisfied with the process, the students on Thursday were more critical of the business office since the wait was up to one hour long.

Specific Suggestions for Improvement

- The primary complaint with SOAR was the inability to get onto the system.
- Phone registration complaints were related to call numbers not being accepted and several students reported that after completing phone registration, they were not added to classes. One student reported that it was difficult to register for both online and campus classes via phone.
- Some students voiced frustration with VA and Pell grant slow payments.
- One student wondered why she couldn't pay dorm fees online or by phone.
- Several new students didn't know about new student orientation.
- New students especially suggested that students be provided a step-by-step description of the process when they begin registration. Another suggestion was that a checklist be provided to make sure that students bring all the documents needed.
- It was suggested that Admissions provide students with a welcome packet that includes information on campus (orientation date, student organizations, student handbook, map) when they apply.
- There was a general lack of awareness of availability of scholarships.
- While most participants got the classes they wanted, many were not happy with the times of the classes. Specific comments were made about the lack of availability of day classes for some basic courses. Nursing students voiced concern about the lack of space in many pre-requisite classes, which forced them to take a longer time to complete their degree. One nursing student suggested that on early-fill classes a limit is set for enrollment each day to give everyone an equal chance to get the class.
- Most comments related to the counselors were very positive, although students discussed some frustration that counselors weren't always able to help them and they sometimes had to see more than one. One student suggested that counselors specialize in certain programs of study.
- One student was frustrated with financial aid; she reported that she had to go back three times with different documents.

Specific positive comments

- Many positive comments on Project Pass.
- One student commented positively on a staff member that was ensuring students were in the right line (David McClure) during registration.
- Specific positive counselor comments on Marie Light, Mary Meverden, Ms. Mahone, and Robert ?.
- Specific positive comment on Jennifer in financial aid.

Other issues

- One student had been a dorm resident last semester, and wanted to be sure her comments on the dorm were passed on. Her issues (not necessarily representative of all dorm residents): Dorms were not ready to move in on time; she has not received her deposit back yet; RAs did not fix problems—there was a lot of drinking and rowdy behavior; the dorm was very dirty and there was an insect problem.