Noel-Levitz®

The College Student Inventory™ Implementation Guidelines

The Retention Management System *Plus*™

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Implementation Guidelines - College Student Inventory ™

To help you in your decision to implement this early assessment and intervention tool, we have assembled information below on several common implementation questions. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need additional or different information.

Getting started

To order the online version of the College Student Inventory (CSI), simply estimate the number of students who will need access to the CSI and indicate this preliminary number on our online order form. Note that with our online versions, you are only charged for the number of inventories that are actually accessed.

To order paper-and-pencil versions, simply indicate the approximate number of entering students you expect to enroll to the nearest 25th (rounded up) on our print version order form. An approximate number is sufficient because you can re-use the inventory booklets, and any unused answer sheets/test licenses can be used in subsequent administrations of the assessment.

Please contact us if you would like to discuss which inventory version is most suited for your situation, ways to administer the inventory (online or via paper), and the processes you may wish to use to enact timely follow-up at both the individual and programmatic levels.

Retention Data Center

The Retention Data Center is part of the Retention Management System *Plus*, serving as a robust technology platform for motivational assessment and early interventions. It serves as the location to:

- Set up the administration of the inventory;
- Establish permission rights for your colleagues' access to the data;
- Access individual and summary reports;
- Send personalized e-mail communications (for both student invitation purposes as well as support for assessment and intervention activities); and
- Filter data to tailor your outreach initiatives.

This platform allows you to customize your motivational assessment by applying your campus logo and adding supplemental items to the assessment.

Custom questions

A campus may add supplemental campus-defined questions at the end of the online College Student Inventory. These questions are created at the time the campus sets up their survey administration in the Retention Data Center, as well as inserting campus specific supplemental narrative text to the major sections of the student report.

Campus-specific paragraphs on Student Report

Whether you use the CSI paper or online inventory, you can insert campus-specific paragraphs about your services to enhance your referrals to service offices. This text displays on the written interpretive narrative text of the student report. Contact RMS-tech@noellevitz.com with your text.

Choosing a version

The CSI is available in the original, full-length Form A (194 items), the shorter Form B (100 items), and Form C (74 items), designed for students who seek to balance home, academics, and work responsibilities. All of these versions are available for administration online or via paper-and-pencil, *except for* Form C, which is available online only. Also, a Canadian version of Form B is available in online as well as the online versions of Forms A, B and C in Spanish.

You can view samples online of all versions of the assessment and their resulting reports. Suggestion: You may wish to compare the Coordinator Report for each version to see similarities and differences in the data gathered.

For more help with choosing the version that best meets your needs, please continue reading these implementation guidelines.

Inventory completion times

Students need approximately 50 minutes to complete Form A of the College Student Inventory and 30 minutes to complete CSI Form B. Online Form C can be completed in approximately 15-20 minutes. In general, online versions of the assessment take slightly less time to complete than paper-and-pencil versions.

Convenient scoring

If you use an online version of the tool, all of your reports are automatically generated and available online within moments for prompt interventions.

For paper-and-pencil versions, your scored reports will be available online via a secure link that we e-mail to you approximately two business days after we receive your completed answer sheets. Please see the instructions for shipping below.

Instructions for shipping paper-and-pencil versions

Ship completed answer sheets with our Scoring Request Form to Noel-Levitz at our Iowa address: 2350 Oakdale Boulevard, Coralville, IA 52241. To ensure that your answer sheets can be scanned and scored, please do not fold or staple them. To expedite scoring, be sure to include the Scoring Request Form and ship via an overnight service that is traceable to ensure that completed answer sheets are not lost in transit.

Resulting reports

Three individual reports are provided after each student completes the CSI—a Coordinator Report, an Advisor/Counselor Report, and a Student Report.

In addition, you access aggregate Summary and Planning Report(s) for your entire group and subgroup reports for particular classes, majors, or advisors. Subgroups may be identified by using a four-digit "group number" on the paper answer sheets or from a customized drop-down menu offered to students completing the online version.

Online access to reports

Convenient online access to the reports includes the option of assigning permission rights to appropriate campus personnel to allow them access to the reports, thus removing the need to print and distribute paper reports between offices or departments. The reports are in PDF format through Adobe Acrobat® Reader.

When to administer this motivational assessment

Institutions typically administer the CSI during summer orientation, fall orientation, or the first few weeks of freshman seminar. Online versions can be administered prior to summer orientation, so you are ready for one-on-one student conferences already in summer orientation. Try to administer the CSI early; however, also balance this with the importance of not having too great a time span between when the CSI is administered and when the Student Report is discussed with the student. Early administration allows you to prepare fully for interventions; however, if you intervene months later, the data may not have as much relevance.

How to administer this motivational assessment

Your decision regarding *when* to administer the assessment affects how you administer it to your students.

Institutions that choose to administer the online CSI prior to summer orientation do so using e-mail generated from the Retention Data Center.

Online administration via e-mail has the advantage of being timely and paperless, but may also result in lower response rates. To boost response rates, you can send e-mail reminders directly from our online system, provided you upload a student data file prior to setting up your online administration of the CSI.

If you choose to administer the CSI during orientation or during the first few weeks of freshman seminar, you may have the advantage of a captive audience and therefore see higher response rates. We recommend administering the assessment in a structured environment at a specific, designated time in a computer lab, orientation room, or classroom. For online versions, a computer lab is usually the best choice to attain high response rates. Students can complete the online CSI on any personal computer that is equipped with Internet Explorer 6.0 or higher. Please note that the data center generates a special link for computer lab settings.

How to interpret the reports

An extensive Coordinator's Guide and a detailed Advisor's Guide are available online for download and distribution as part of your account. In addition, we'll direct you to our client communities for resources. Included in these materials will be suggestions for managing the initiative, detailed guidelines for interpreting the reports, and guidance that builds on the advice below for setting up a successful early-alert program anchored by the CSI.

How to use the findings

To get the most value from this assessment, we recommend intervening at both the individual and programmatic levels.

Individual interventions

One-on-one conferences between an advisor, mentor, freshman seminar instructor, or counselor and a student have proven to be the best way to attain results from this program. In these conferences, the CSI Student Report is used to facilitate a dialogue about the student's strengths, challenges, and goals. In addition, through the referrals that result from these meetings, students become connected to campus resources that aid them in capitalizing on talents and managing areas of concern. This approach helps to strengthen student-centered initiatives while engaging the incoming class.

A variety of effective models exist for managing the one-on-one meetings and the resulting referrals to campus services. Among the most expansive of these models are collaborations between academic and student affairs.

For example, student success or academic support center colleagues may work with academic advisors to ensure outreach to students. Or, freshman seminar instructors may assign a reflective paper and action planning exercises as part of their curricula, based on the Student Report. Some campuses develop new student success coaches or mentors, trained to dialogue with the student about their report and refer them appropriately to campus services. In many cases, academic advisors or professional advisors incorporate a more proactive approach that ensures the student receives holistic advising beyond course scheduling early in the term.

We encourage you to choose one or more of these models or design a more suitable alternative. For more detailed examples, please contact us directly, read the examples below, or see a few of our clients' case studies. Detailed examples also appear in our e-journal, *Retention Success*, at www.noellevtiz.com/RMS client. Feel free to call or e-mail us to request the articles from past issues of this newsletter that would be most relevant to your institution.

How institutions are using the CSI to intervene with individual students

- Administer the CSI online prior to summer orientation, then arrange one-on-one conferences with advisors, counselors, or mentors during summer orientation.
- Administer the CSI paper or online versions during summer or fall orientation and arrange one-on-one meetings at those times or during the first weeks of the term.
- Administer the CSI paper or online versions in a freshman seminar course and schedule one-on-one meetings with instructors or advisors in conjunction with assignments.
- Administer the CSI paper or online versions through residence halls and schedule one-on-one meetings with residence staff.
- Provide small group opportunities to discuss topics related to academic motivation and personal support, then ask students to sign up for a one-on-one conference with advisors, counselors, mentors, or freshman seminar instructors to discuss their unique strengths and needs more specifically.
- If resources are limited, you may wish to start by intervening first and foremost with students who display characteristics of being at risk as identified by the assessment in the Summary Observations scales, in a discrete "triage-like" effort. Then, as your infrastructure evolves, you will be able to reach more students beyond this list, extending your personalized outreach more deeply and broadly within the incoming class.

Programmatic interventions

To enact timely interventions at the programmatic level, you'll want to look at the aggregate scales and information provided in your Summary and Planning Report to review the strengths and needs unique to your incoming class. You'll see the areas in which your students are above the mean, and the areas where they are below. From this, you'll be in a position to tailor your programming and align your resources based on the themes of motivational assessment for your incoming class.

You may find that your overall campus programming is out of step with current needs—either for the entire incoming class or for a targeted subpopulation. Or, you may learn that a specific support resource such as math tutoring should be re-focused, expanded, or consolidated with other service areas. The first few pages of the Summary and Planning Report are often shared with retention committees, given the ready profile it provides of the incoming class in the areas of academic motivation, personal support, receptivity to services, demographic overviews, and recommendations for action.

In addition to the aggregate scales, the Summary and Planning Report includes lists of students who have specific needs such as students needing academic assistance, students who might benefit from career counseling, or students with a low sense of financial security. Campuses use these lists to ensure that students with needs or interests in particular areas receive these services. A discrete list of at-risk students is also provided to assist you with developing "triage" efforts so that those students who may be most at risk and receptive to your assistance are given priority as you schedule one-on-one conferences.

The *Summary Observations with Receptivity Report* provides a snapshot of at-risk students across the summary scales—dropout proneness, predicted academic difficulty, educational stress, and receptivity to institutional help—and the individual receptivity scales—academic assistance, personal counseling, social enrichment, and financial guidance. The desire to transfer is indicated for four-year institutions. The ability to apply different filters to your data is a standard feature of this report. You simply select the value (scale) you want to filter on and define the range. An Excel file can be exported to facilitate additional analysis of your data. For instance, colleagues may appreciate the opportunity to filter their data by a value (scale), such as "Receptivity to Financial Guidance," and use the Excel table to e-mail students about relevant workshops, such as those on financial literacy.

Among the most manageable interventions at the programmatic level are workshops or small group discussion. Colleagues, for instance, will frequently use the top Recommendations for Action to tailor workshops for students during the first few weeks of the term. For example, if your Summary and Planning Report shows "get help with study habits" or "discuss qualifications for occupations" as top recommendations, you know the importance of these workshops early in the term. Residence halls and success centers also find this prioritized list of recommended actions useful in their programming. Further, freshman seminar instructors will look at their classroom subgroup data and emphasize skill-building and development in areas such as study habits, academic confidence, or career closure, wherein their students' scores may be below the mean. Powerful filters in the Retention Data Center technology platform make your targeted interventions effective and highly efficient.

Use of the CSI and a closer look at the aggregate data and individual reports often stimulate broader discussions about student success and retention among the campus community. To facilitate and extend this discussion, Noel-Levitz can bring a national perspective to the table. If you are interested in learning more about how our consultations can assist with early-alert initiatives or overall retention challenges, or if you are interested in a CSI workshop in particular, please contact us for details.

Additional guidelines

Setting goals and evaluating progress

We encourage you to identify qualitative and quantitative measures that allow you to evaluate your progress with the CSI at regular intervals. Both general and specific success measures may be appropriate, depending on your objectives and situation.

Common measures include:

- Persistence, progression, retention, or completion rates
- Quality and timeliness of interventions
- The number of students on probation
- Satisfaction levels with advising and other areas
- The use of support services on campus, including the number and quality of referrals
- Improvements in institutional net revenue based on higher retention or graduation rates
- The level of commitment and focus across your campus in proactively addressing needs of incoming students
- Qualitative feedback from advisors or mentors, referral offices, and students

Measuring your success will help you in subsequent planning to address more of your students' needs, earlier in the term, so you can continue engaging and integrating students into your campus community.

Engaging advisors and student services colleagues in this initiative

To follow up on the identified strengths and needs of each individual student in the resulting reports, most institutions depend on the involvement of their advising and student services staff. To engage them, we recommend that you first give advisors, mentors, and student service offices sufficient notice that you would like to intensify your student success initiatives through early intervention. Involve administrators and the retention committee in this new initiative and enlist their creative ideas and support for using the data. If you are using an online version, we can set up a trial batch of ten user names and passwords for you, so your colleagues can pose as students and experience the process first-hand and view the resulting reports.

To launch the initiative, most institutions plan an initial training session that focuses on uniting the efforts of advisors and student service providers. You'll want to explain the overarching goals for the effort, such as enhancing student success and retention at the programmatic level, as well as the value of the individual reports in allowing each entering student to more readily adapt to your educational environment. Be sure to specifically highlight the value of the Summary and Planning Report for prioritizing services in relation to student needs.

To ensure a strong start, you may wish to contract with a Noel-Levitz consultant to assist with launching the initiative, educating your colleagues on how to interpret the findings for individual students, and for assistance with using the aggregate findings in action plans at the programmatic level. Please contact us for details.

For further assistance

- Ask for a guided tour of the Retention Data Center, the technology platform for your use in motivational assessment and intervention initiatives. This center is also where you set up parameters to administer and customize the online versions of this tool, while also making sue of the powerful filters for outreach.
- Review selected articles from our e-journal, *Retention Success*, so you can learn more about guiding philosophies and structured programs enacted on a variety of campuses.
- Consider RMS *Plus* Workshop/Consultation Services to assist you with launching the assessment and getting the most from the findings.
- Contact us by e-mail or call us at 1-800-876-1117 between 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Eastern to discuss your student success programs and how this program may complement or jump-start your initiatives. We will invite you to describe your situation and will explore options with you for how this tool can interface.

After you place your order, you can access our detailed CSI Coordinator's Guide, Advisor's Guide, Resource Guide, and many other resources at no charge online through the client communities' resource link on our home page. In addition, we'll invite you to join us at our annual community workshop to network with colleagues to glean the most mileage and value from this tool.