College Student Inventory™

Implementation Guidelines

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Implementation Guidelines—College Student Inventory™

Part of the Retention Management System Plus™ from Ruffalo Noel Levitz, a suite of motivational surveys and analytics designed for early-alert and intervention.

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.

Who Should Complete the CSI?

The College Student Inventory (CSI) identifies the individual strengths and challenges for each member of your incoming class, as well as their receptivity to your interventions, early in the first term. This student survey provides data to make interventions more meaningful and relevant, before a student has made a decision to stay or leave. With the CSI, you prioritize your interventions more effectively; connect at-risk students to the resources they need most, and help more of your incoming students persist.

Getting Started

To order the College Student Inventory (CSI), select the survey band you wish to purchase at our [Order Form]. Upon order, RNL will process your order. You should expect details regarding your survey setup and invoice in the next week. Upon receipt of your survey details, you can customize your survey. See how you can customize your survey [here].

Choosing a CSI Version

The CSI is available in Form B (100-items) and the Form C (74-items) through the web. Form B is our most widely used, but Form C is geared toward Community Colleges and non-traditional students. On the right, is an outline of the scales as they appear on each of the forms.

CSI Form B	CSI Form C
Academic Motivation	
Study Habits	Study Skills
Reading Interests	Reading Habits
Verbal and Writing Confidence	Verbal Skills
Math and Science Confidence	Math Skills
Commitment to College	Commitment
Interactions with Previous Teachers	Attitude Toward Educators
	Use of Technology
General Coping Ability	
Family Support	Personal Support
Financial Security	Financial Security
Capacity for Tolerance	
Career Plans	Life and Career Planning
Social Engagement	
Receptivity to Support Services	
Academic Assistance	Academic Assistance
Personal Counseling	
Social Engagement	
Career Guidance	Career Planning
Financial Guidance	Financial Guidance

Samples

View all assessments and resulting reports. Suggestion: Compare the Coordinator Reports for each version to see similarities and differences in the data gathered.

Inventory Completion Times

Students need approximately:

- 25-30 minutes to complete Form B
- 15-20 minutes to complete Form C

When to Administer the CSI

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 that you are ready for one-on-one student conferences during 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 administering allows you to prepare fully for interventions however, if you intervene months later, the data may not have as much relevance.

How to Administer the Inventory

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 email generated from the Retention Data Center (discussed later in this document).

Online administration via email has the advantage of being timely and paperless, but may also result in lower response rates. To boost response rates, you can send email reminders directly from the Retention Data Center, provided you have loaded a file with student names and email addresses.

If you choose to administer the CSI during orientation or during the first few weeks of freshmen seminar, you may have the advantage of a captive audience and 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 web versions, a computer lab is usually the best choice for high response rates.

Our assessments can be delivered through your online portal. Contact our help desk at StudentSuccessTech@RuffaloNL.com for more information and instruction to use this service.

Students can complete the web version of the CSI on any personal computer or Smartphone. Individualized (personal) links can be provided through email or a general link can be provided to all students. Some schools even use a combination of both.

Retention Data Center™

Administrations and report retrieval are accomplished through the Retention Data Center. This secured site serves as the location to:

- Set up administrations
- Establish permission rights for your colleagues' access to the data
- Access individual and summary reports
- Send personalized email communications (for both student invitation purposes as well as support for assessment and intervention activities
- Filter data to tailor your outreach initiatives
- Customization and branding

The Data Center allows you to customize your web administration by applying your campus logo and adding supplemental campus-defined questions. Your logo will appear on each page of the survey along the top banner and custom questions appear at the end of the standard items found in each inventory.

Whether you use paper-pencil or web administrations, you can insert campus-specific paragraphs about your services to enhance your referrals to service offices. Each of the general topics (Academic Motivation, General Coping, and Receptivity to Support Services) allows you to enter 1,000 characters of text. This text displays as the first paragraph in the written interpretation texts found on pages 2-4 of the Student Report. You can send this text with paper-pencil administrations and Ruffalo Noel Levitz will enter it as your answer sheets are processed.

Convenient Scoring

All reports are automatically generated and available at the Retention Data Center within moments of students' clicking Finish.

Resulting Reports

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

You may 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 4-digit group number on the answer sheets or from a customized drop down menu offered to students completing at the web.

How to use the Findings

An extensive Coordinator's Guide and a detailed Advisor's Guide are available at the client community site as part of your order and can be downloaded and distributed as needed. In addition, we will direct you to additional resources for interpreting the reports and discussions with students. To get the most value from the CSI, we recommend intervening at both the individual and programmatic levels.

Student Information Systems (SIS)

Pre-defined data exports are available for your use. You may also find creation of your own templates will allow you to move data collected from the CSI into your local student systems. More information can be found in the Data Center documentation titled: Campus System Data Integration.

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 and 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 the 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.

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 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 online versions in a freshman seminar course and schedule one-on-one meetings with instructors or advisors in conjunction with assignments.
- Administer the CSI 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, and receptivity to services, demographic overviews, and recommendations for action.

In addition to 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 email 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 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 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, Ruffalo 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.

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. This will allow you to 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 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 will 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 Ruffalo 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 at ContactUs@RuffaloNL.com.