

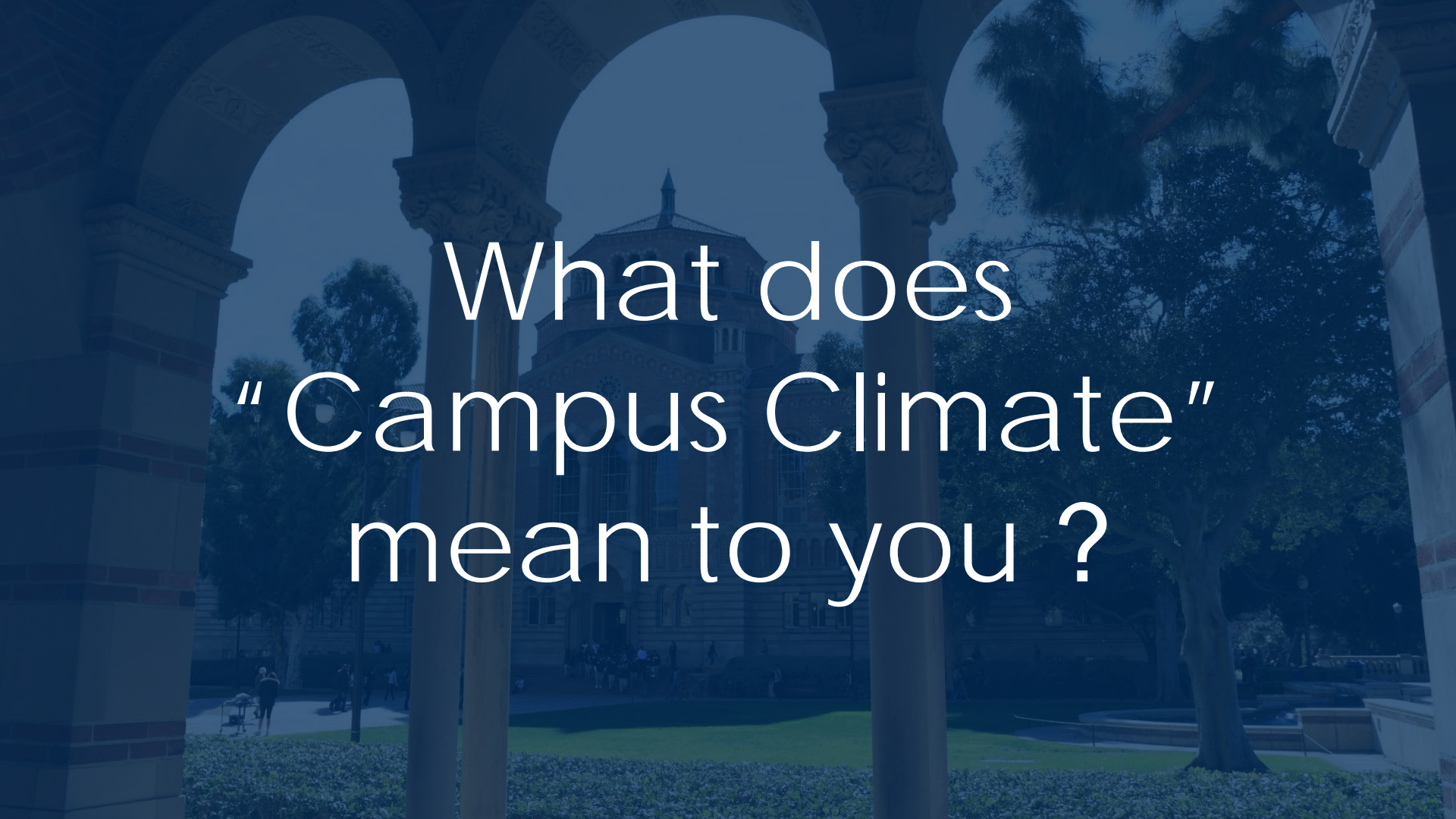


# Focus on Campus Climate for Student Success

Julie Bryant

*Vice President for Student Success, RNL*



A blue-tinted photograph of a university campus courtyard. In the foreground, there are several large, ornate stone arches supported by columns. In the background, a large, domed building with a spire is visible, surrounded by trees and a green lawn. The overall scene is a typical university courtyard.

What does  
“Campus Climate”  
mean to you ?

# Campus Climate

The extent to which an institution provides experiences that promote a sense of campus pride and belonging.

How your students FEEL at your institution.

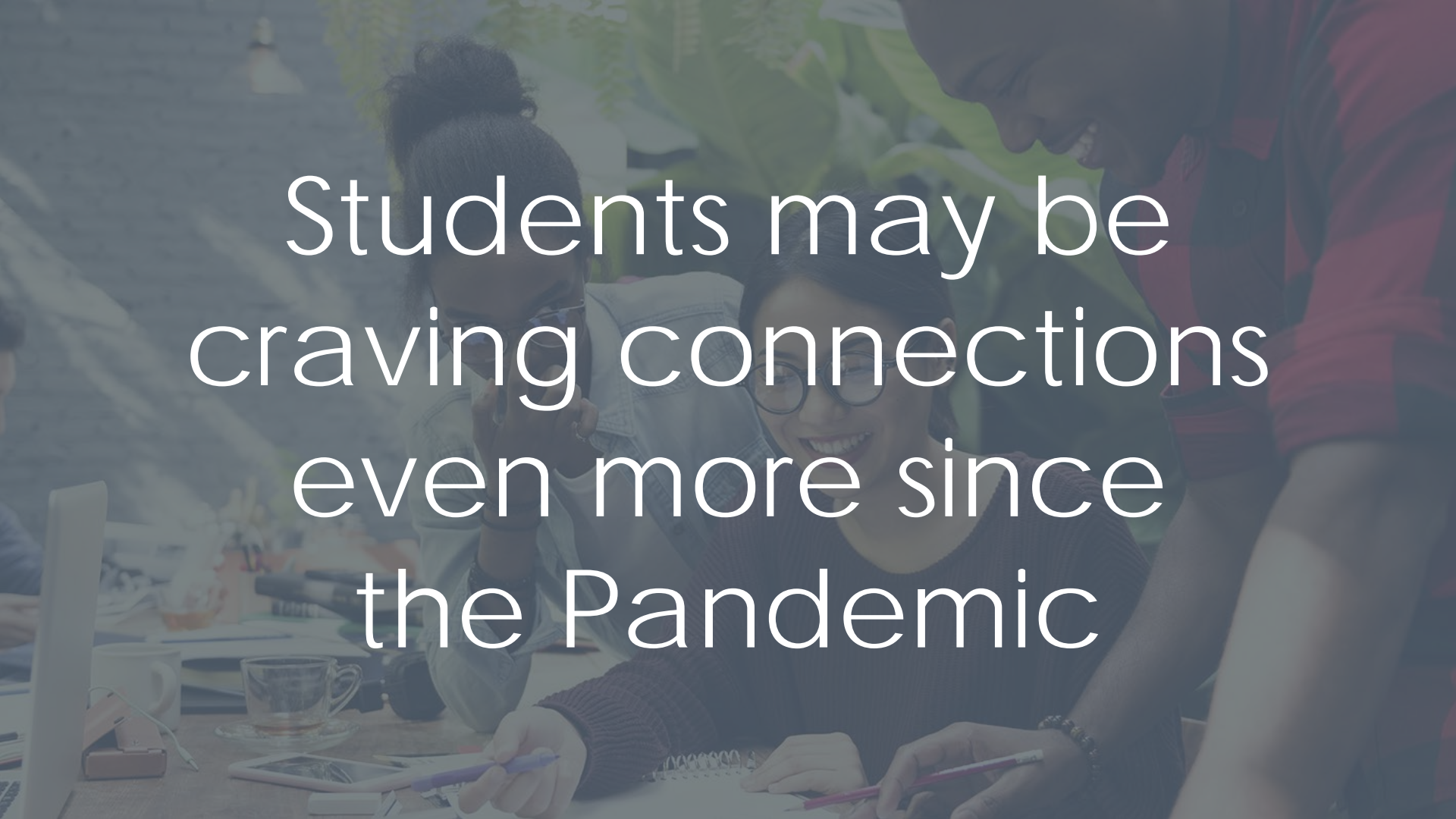
The campus culture you have or the one you are intentionally creating.



Intangible

Hard to know WHAT to do

But still critical

A group of students are gathered around a table, smiling and looking at a laptop screen. One student is pointing at the screen while others look on. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a classroom or library setting. The text is overlaid in white on a semi-transparent dark background.

Students may be  
craving connections  
even more since  
the Pandemic



Why does  
campus climate  
matter ?



Perceptions of  
**campus climate**  
have been linked with

***Student Satisfaction***

# Student Satisfaction is linked with:



**Individual  
student  
retention**  
(higher)

**Institutional  
graduation  
rates**  
(higher)

**Institutional  
alumni  
giving**  
(higher)

**Institutional  
loan default  
rates**  
(lower)



# Student Satisfaction Matters

## RESEARCH STUDY

### Linking Student Satisfaction and Retention

By Laurie A. Schreiner, Ph.D., Azusa Pacific University

Student satisfaction is of compelling interest to colleges and universities as they seek to continually improve the learning environment for students, meet the expectations of their constituent groups and legislative bodies, and demonstrate their institutional effectiveness. Unlike service industries, which hold satisfaction as a goal in and of itself, colleges and universities typically perceive satisfaction as a means to an end. Higher education tends to care about student satisfaction because of its potential impact on student motivation, retention, recruitment efforts, and fundraising. But as Astin (1977) asserted more than three decades ago, "it is difficult to argue that student satisfaction can be legitimately subordinated to any other educational outcome" (p. 164).

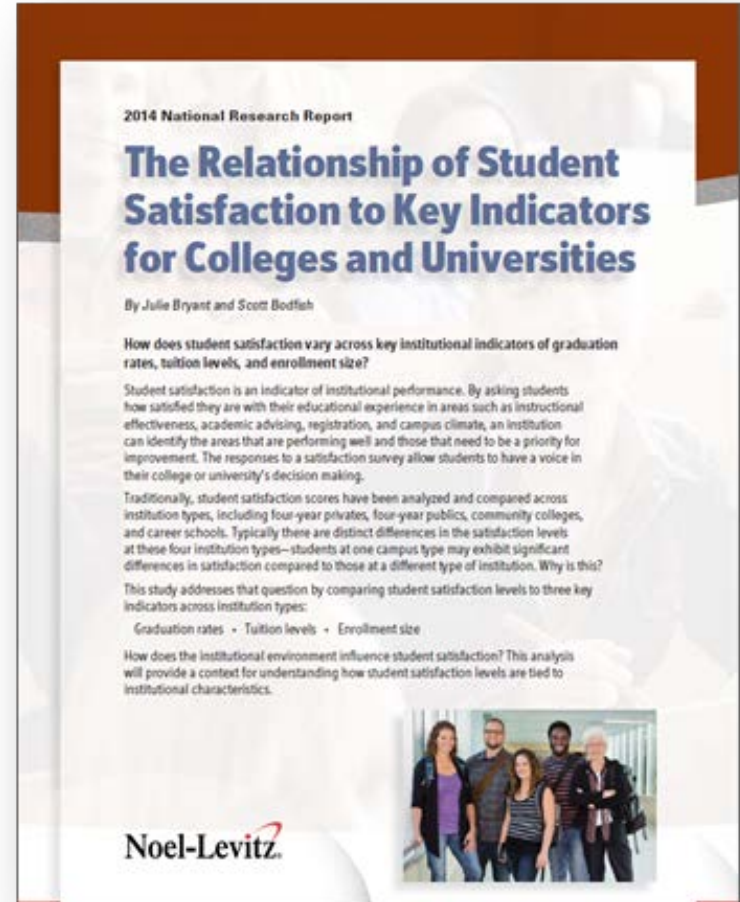
There is surprisingly little research empirically linking student satisfaction to retention, despite the widespread belief that there is indeed a positive relationship between the two. In an effort to determine whether student satisfaction is predictive of retention the following year (beyond what can be predicted about retention based on student and institutional characteristics), we conducted a study of 27,816 students at 65 four-year institutions. What follows is a description of the study, its major findings, and the implications for four-year colleges and universities. Practical recommendations are included so that institutions can use these results immediately to impact their policies and practices.

Noel-Levitz.

- Satisfaction with Campus Climate is most predictive of overall student satisfaction and individual student retention
- Campus Climate plays a strong role at all class levels, but is more important in the first two years
- Students who feel helped and empowered by their exchanges with university systems are more likely to feel loyal to the school and remain enrolled

# Student Satisfaction Matters

- Four-year private institutions with higher satisfaction on these item also had higher graduation rates:
  - It is an enjoyable experience to be student on this campus.
  - I am able to experience intellectual growth here.
  - This institution has a good reputation within the community.
  - There is a commitment to academic excellence.



# Student Satisfaction Matters

- Satisfaction with the Campus Climate cluster of items had the second highest correlation with alumni giving, after the Academic Advising cluster
- Involvement and connections on campus become increasingly influential on alumni giving as students progress from their freshmen to senior year

2015 National Research Report

## The Correlation Between College Student Satisfaction and Alumni Giving

**RUFFALO**<sup>SM</sup>  
NOEL LEVITZ



2015 Study by Julie Bryant and Scott Bodfish for RNL



Student satisfaction has been linked with four key institutional metrics

① Higher Individual student retention

TOP 3 KNOWN VARIABLES IMPACTING STUDENT RETENTION AT FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS



While 75% of the variation in student retention is unknown, student satisfaction is by far the most influential variable that can be influenced by institutions. Student satisfaction with campus climate items are the strongest predictors of individual student retention at four-year institutions.

Source: Schreiner, L (2009). *Linking student satisfaction and retention*. Cedar Rapids: Ruffalo Noel Levitz.



AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Student satisfaction was positively and significantly associated with individual student retention at community colleges. Satisfaction with "Financial aid counselors are helpful" reflected a strong positive correlation with individual student retention.

Source: Miller, K (2015). *Predicting student retention at community colleges*. Cedar Rapids: Ruffalo Noel Levitz.

- Individual reports are “out of print”
- Download a four-page overview of the studies linking student satisfaction to the key metrics of:
  - Individual student retention
  - Institutional graduation rates
  - Institutional alumni giving
- Copies of this infographic may also be available at the RNL Exhibit Booth

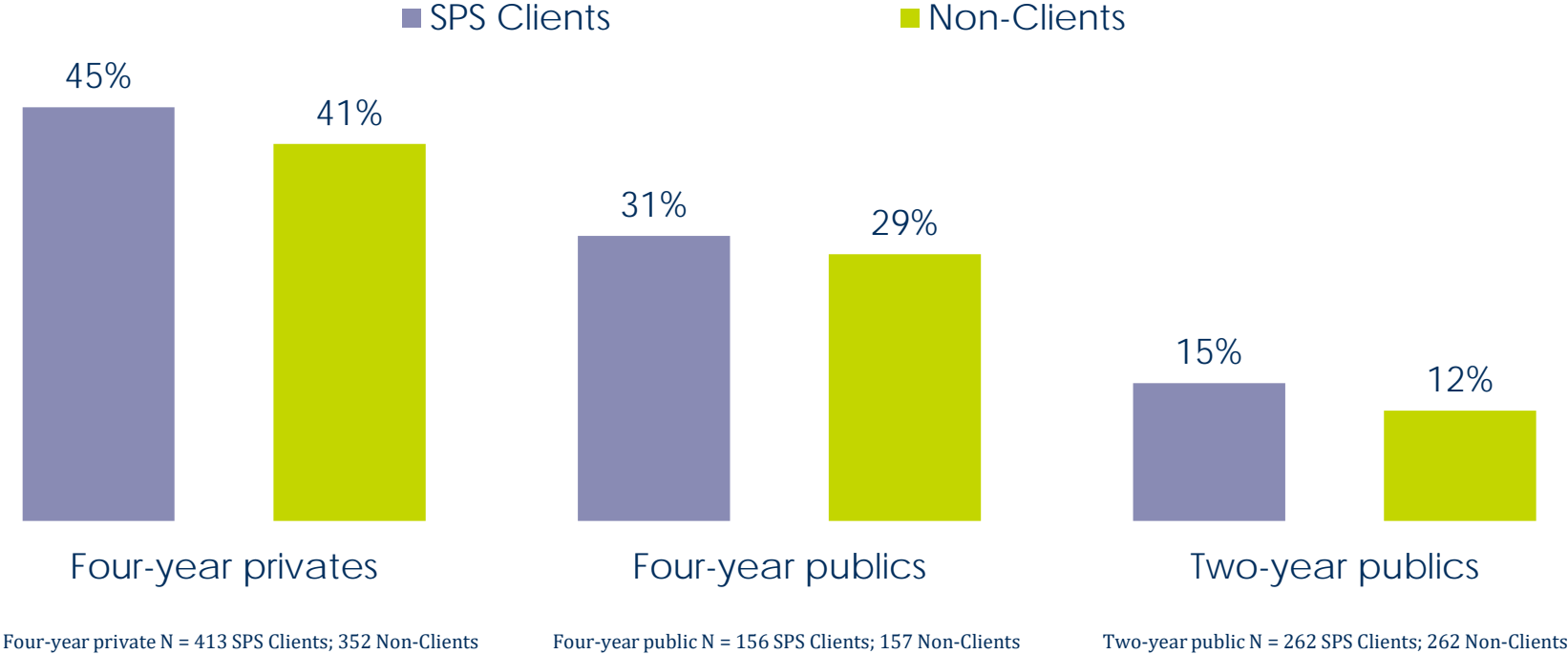
[RuffaloNL.com/Assessment](https://RuffaloNL.com/Assessment)

# The Student Satisfaction Inventory™ (SSI)

- Comprehensive assessment across class levels
- Captures experiences both inside and outside of the classroom
- Four-year and two-year versions of the survey
- Completed during the academic year through online invitations
- Most institutions survey on an every-other-year cycle
- Administered by more than 500 institutions annually
- Survey versions for adult and online learners as well

Learn more at [www.RuffaloNL.com/SSI](http://www.RuffaloNL.com/SSI)

# Graduation Rates for SPS Clients vs. Non-Clients Across Institution Types



RNL (2023). Internal Proprietary Data. Ruffalo Noel Levitz, Cedar Rapids, IA.  
U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), [2018], Graduation Rates. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data> on 01/08/2023



A closer look at  
the national  
data



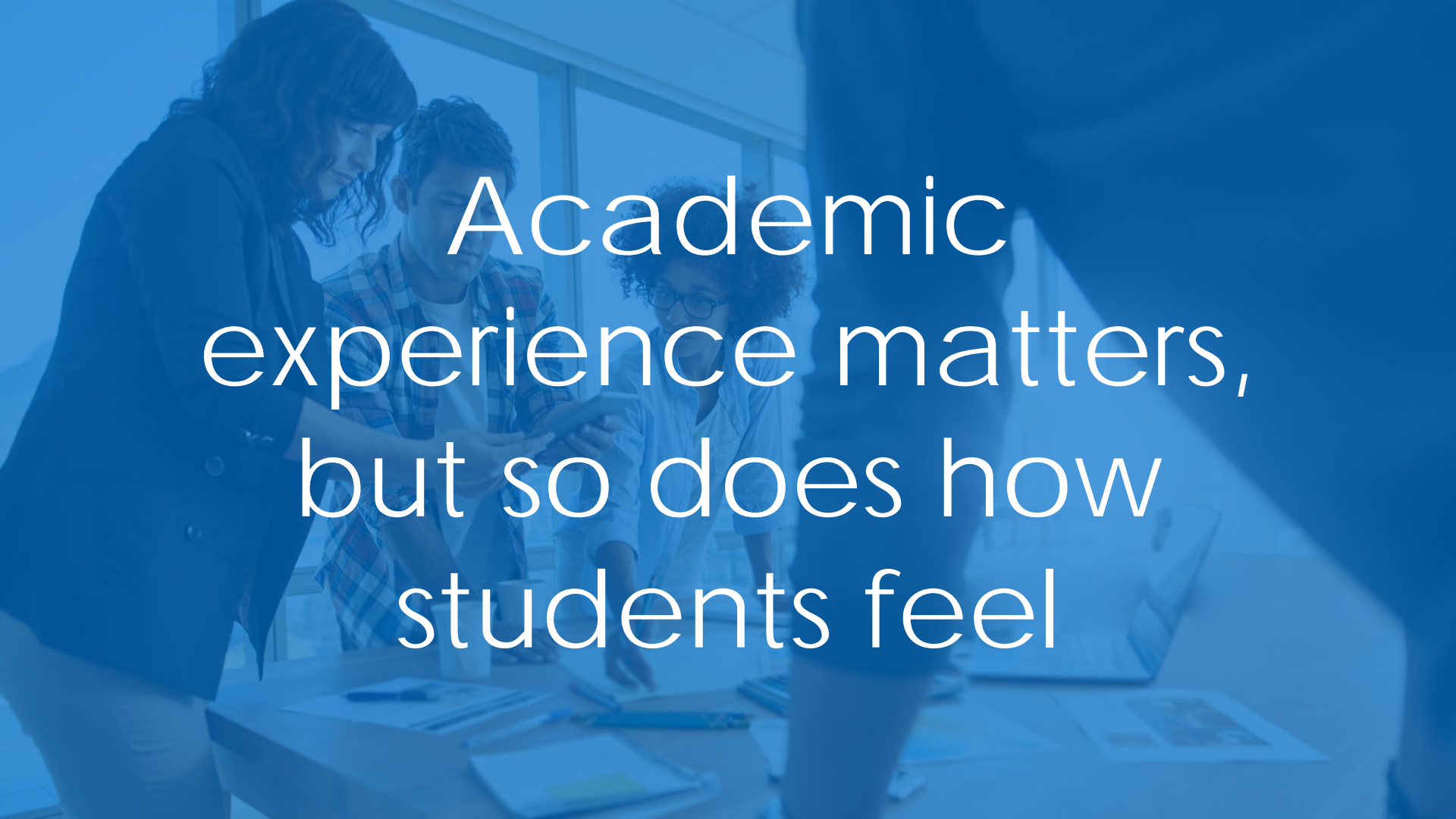
# The importance of the student voice



A group of students is sitting on bleachers in a gymnasium. They are holding laptops and papers, suggesting a classroom or workshop setting. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

# Data is a starting point

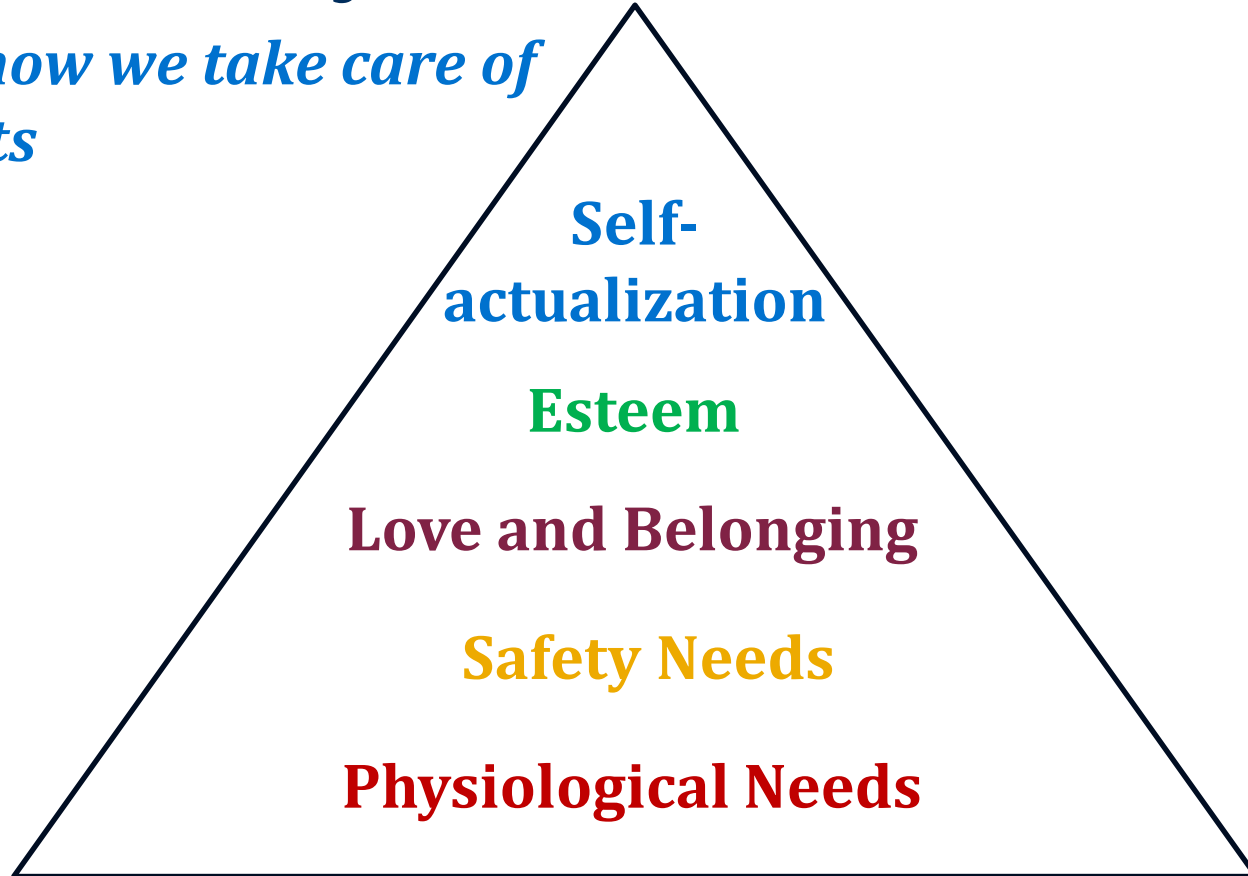
You need to change the  
student experience  
based on the information  
provided by the data



Academic  
experience matters,  
but so does how  
students feel

# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

*Can guide how we take care of our students*



A photograph of three students sitting at a table, engaged in a study session. One student is writing in a notebook while two others look on. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter. The text 'How satisfied are students with the campus climate?' is centered in white, sans-serif font.

How satisfied are  
students with the  
campus climate ?

# Campus Climate Items on the SSI

## *Priority areas for consideration*



It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus.



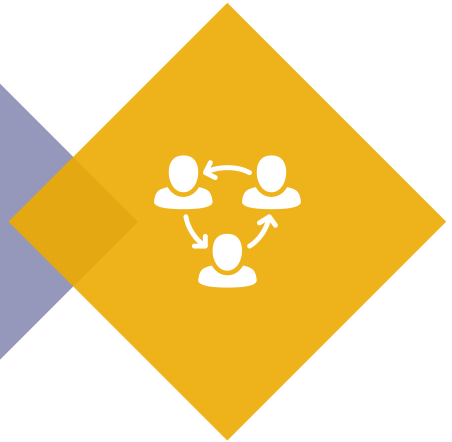
Students are made to feel welcome on this campus



Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.



The campus is safe and secure for all students.



There is a strong commitment to racial harmony on this campus.

# Source of data: Student Satisfaction Inventory

Fall of 2019 through the Spring of 2022



Four-year privates

**105,684**

students from **217** institutions

25% Freshmen    23% Juniors  
22% Sophomores    24% Seniors



Four-year publics

**44,090**

students from **52** institutions

23% Freshmen    26% Juniors  
18% Sophomores    25% Seniors



Community and  
technical colleges

**79,049**

students from **128** institutions

60% Full-time    40% Part-time

Download the full list  
of schools at  
[RNL.com/Satisfaction](https://RNL.com/Satisfaction)



2022  
National Student Satisfaction  
and Priorities Report

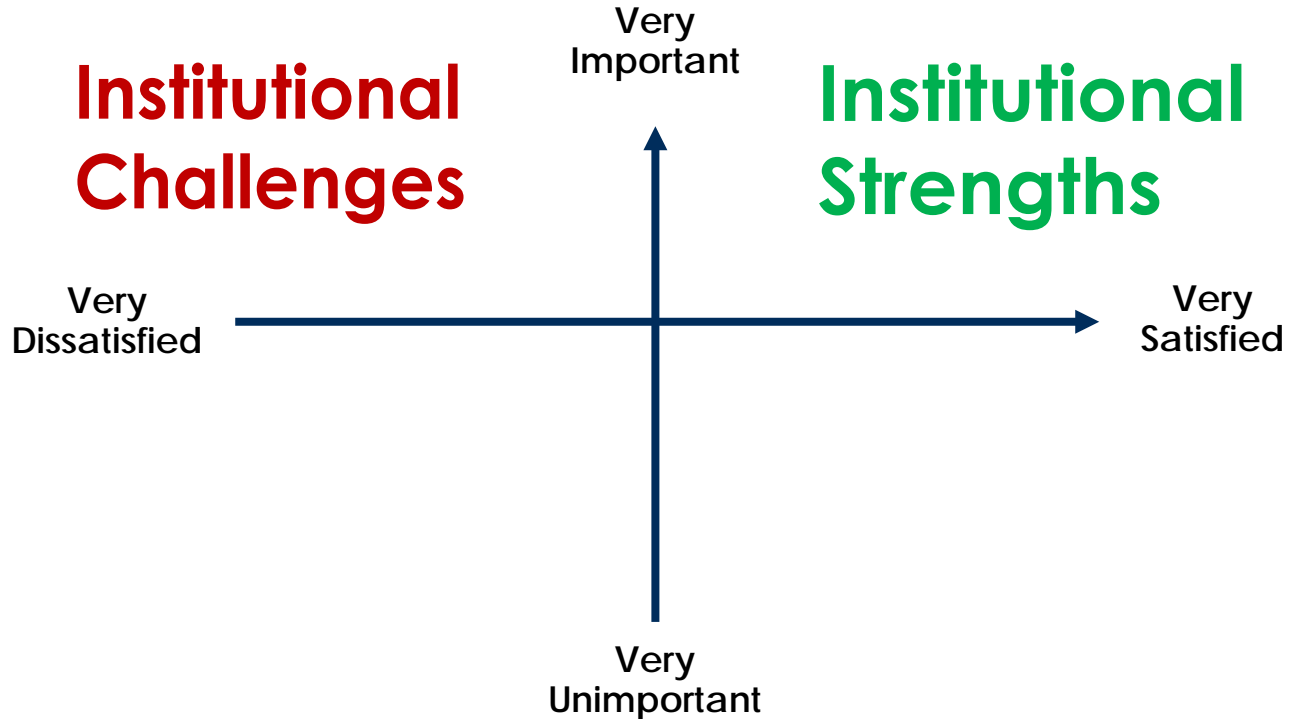
Based on 362,555 student records at 639 four-year  
and two-year colleges and universities



Download the full  
2022 National  
Student Satisfaction  
and Priorities Report  
[RuffaloNL.com/Satisfaction](https://RuffaloNL.com/Satisfaction)



# Matrix for prioritizing action

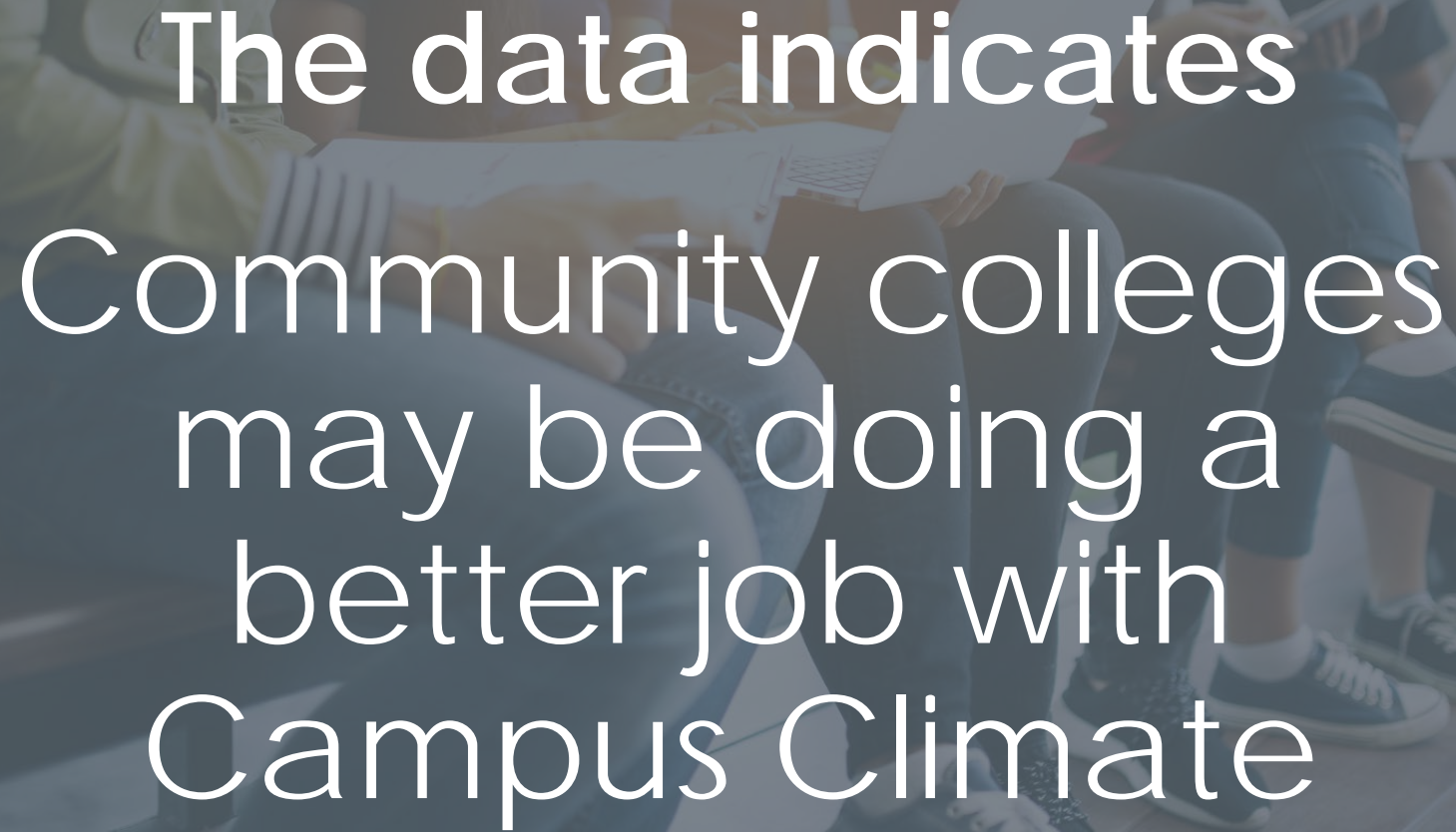




# Comparing strengths and challenges

## *Across institution types*

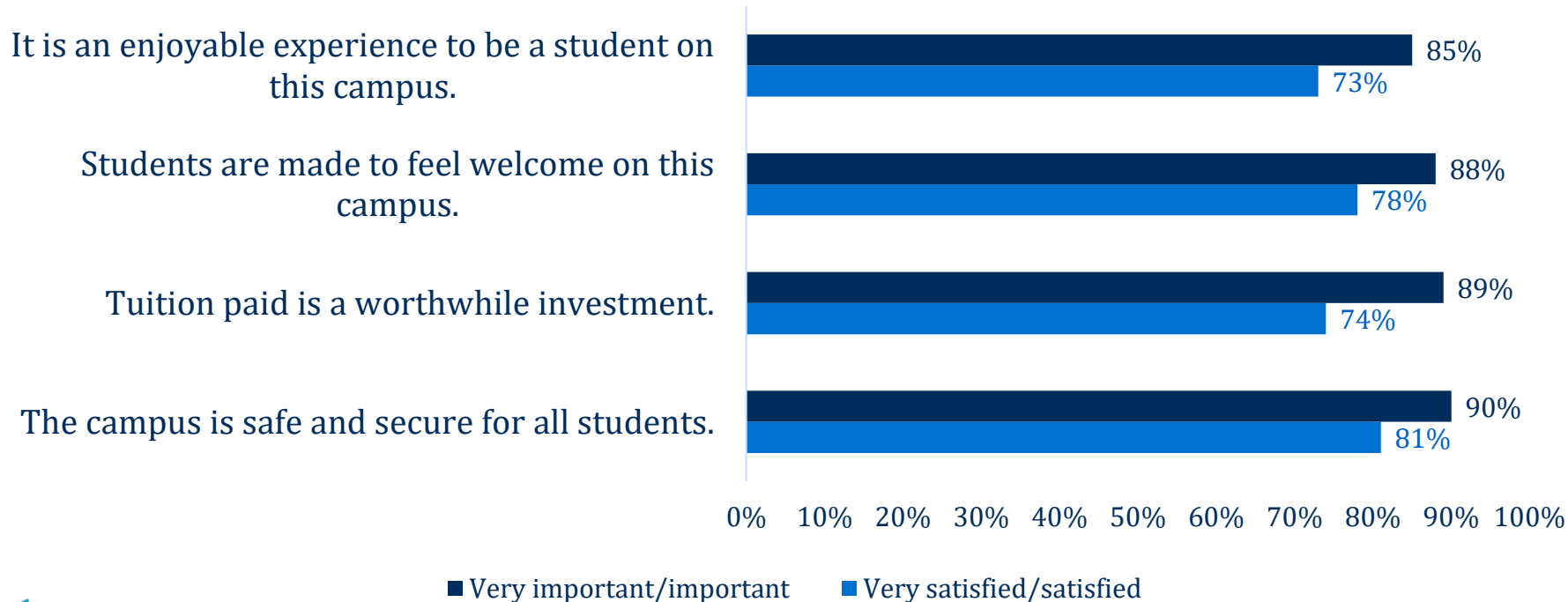
Campus Climate Items	Four-Year Privates	Four-Year Publics	Community Colleges
It is an enjoyable to be a student on this campus.	<b>Challenge</b>		
Students are made to feel welcome on this campus.			<b>Strength</b>
Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.	<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Challenge</b>	
The campus is safe and secure for all students.			<b>Strength</b>
There is a strong commitment to racial harmony on this campus.			

A group of students is sitting on bleachers, holding papers and laptops, suggesting a classroom or workshop setting. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

The data indicates  
Community colleges  
may be doing a  
better job with  
Campus Climate

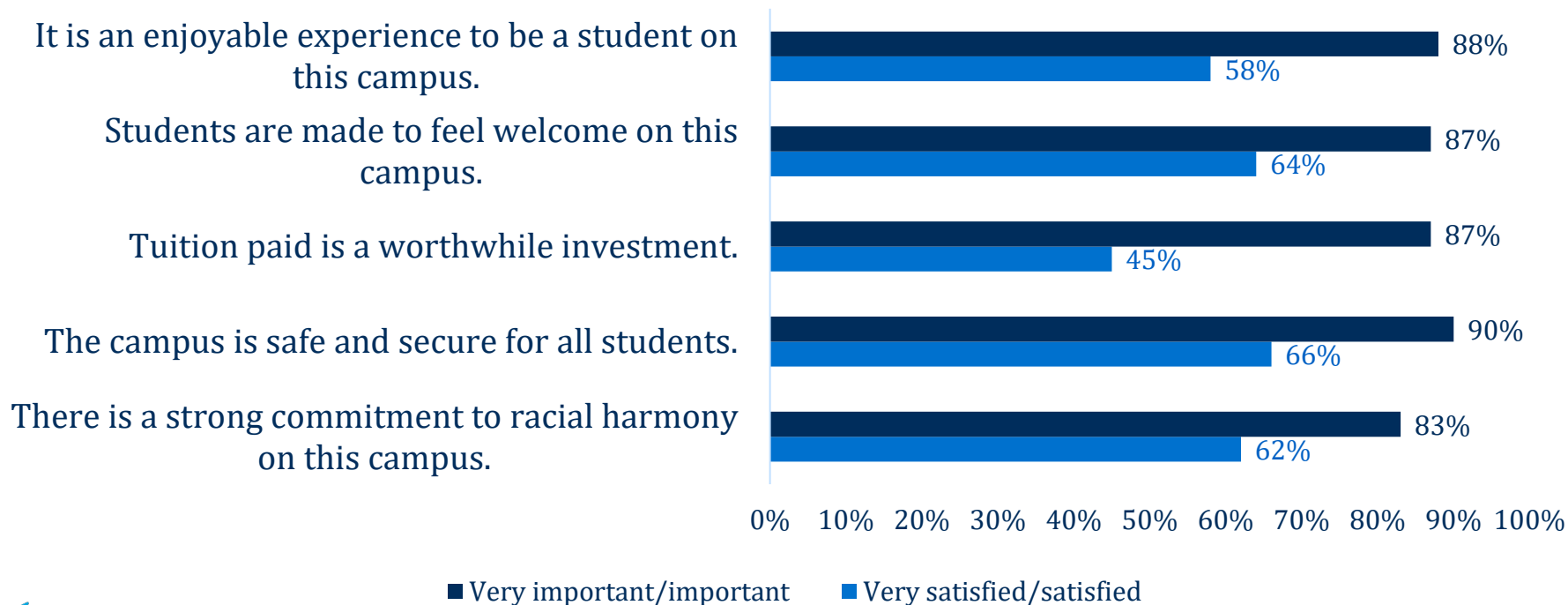
# Campus Climate Perceptions

## *Community Colleges*



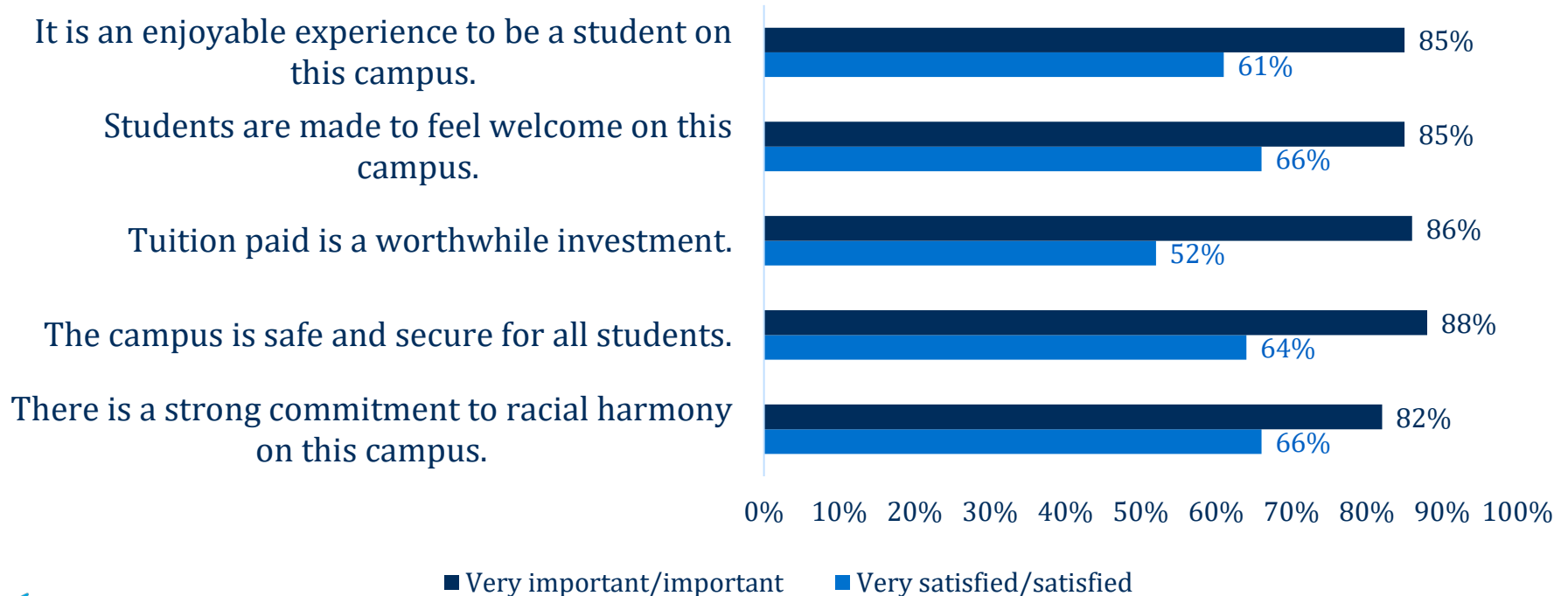
# Campus Climate Perceptions

## *Four-Year Privates*



# Campus Climate Perceptions

## *Four-Year Publics*





Let's talk  
more about  
each of  
these items



Compare  
perceptions  
across  
institution  
types

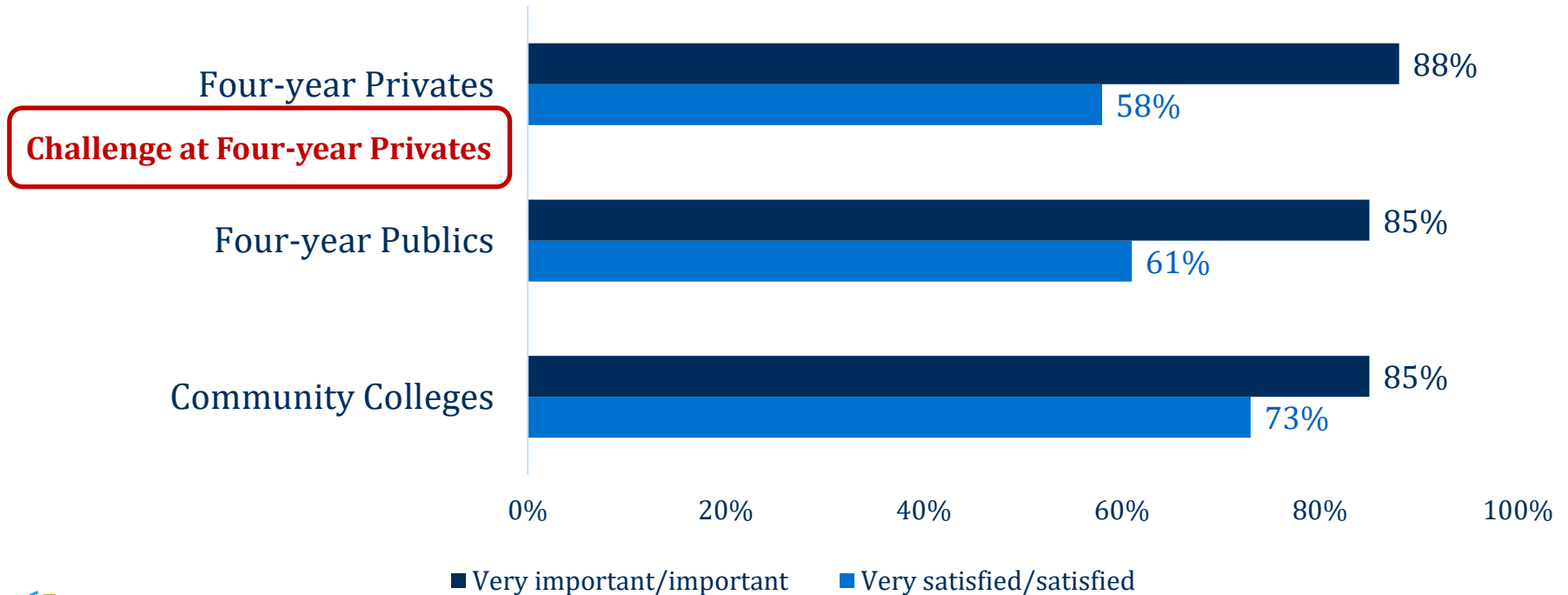


Consider  
ways you  
can take  
action  
on your  
campus



# Campus Climate Perceptions

*It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus.*



# It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus.

**Explore:** Data by class level; program; race/ethnicity

**Focus group question:** What does it mean to have an enjoyable experience?

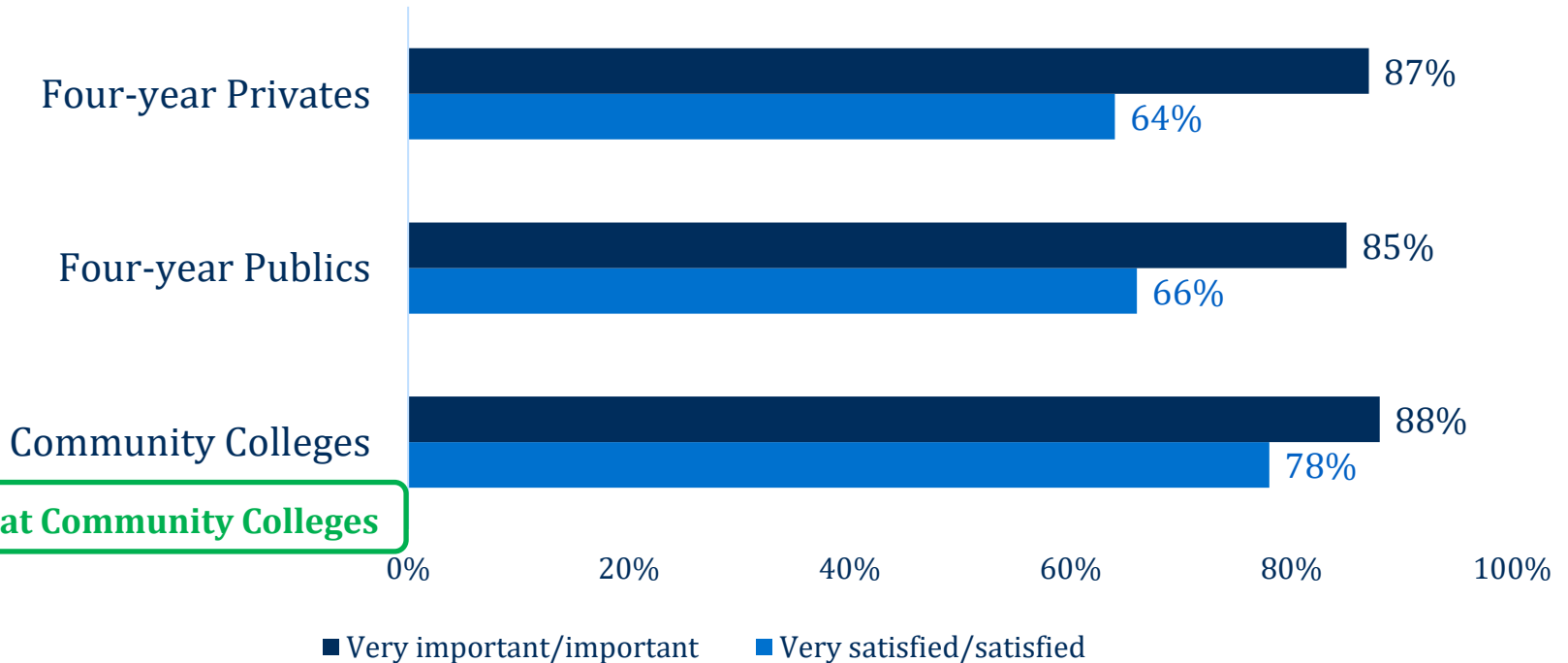
**Immediate action:** Add activities of interest to students.

**Future plans:** Look for ways to create a positive culture on campus for students, faculty, staff, and administration.

**Change perceptions with information:** Highlight stories on social media about students who love being at your institution, sharing what they find to be enjoyable; have alumni help to share their perspective in hindsight.

# Campus Climate Perceptions

*Students are made to feel welcome on this campus.*



**Strength at Community Colleges**



# Social Engagement: First-Year Students

## *Additional data points from entering first-year students*

REQUEST	4-YEAR PRIVATE	4-YEAR PUBLIC	2-YEAR PUBLIC	OVERALL
Would like to meet new friends at informal gathering	76%	79%	55%	73%
Find out more about clubs and organizations at college	67%	75%	48%	66%
Meet an experienced student to seek advice	54%	60%	46%	55%
Find out about student government and activities on campus	52%	55%	38%	50%

Reflects percentage of students who desire support.

## Data from the College Student Inventory



# Students are made to feel welcome on this campus.

**Explore:** Data by class level; age; race/ethnicity

**Focus group question:** How can the campus make you feel welcome?

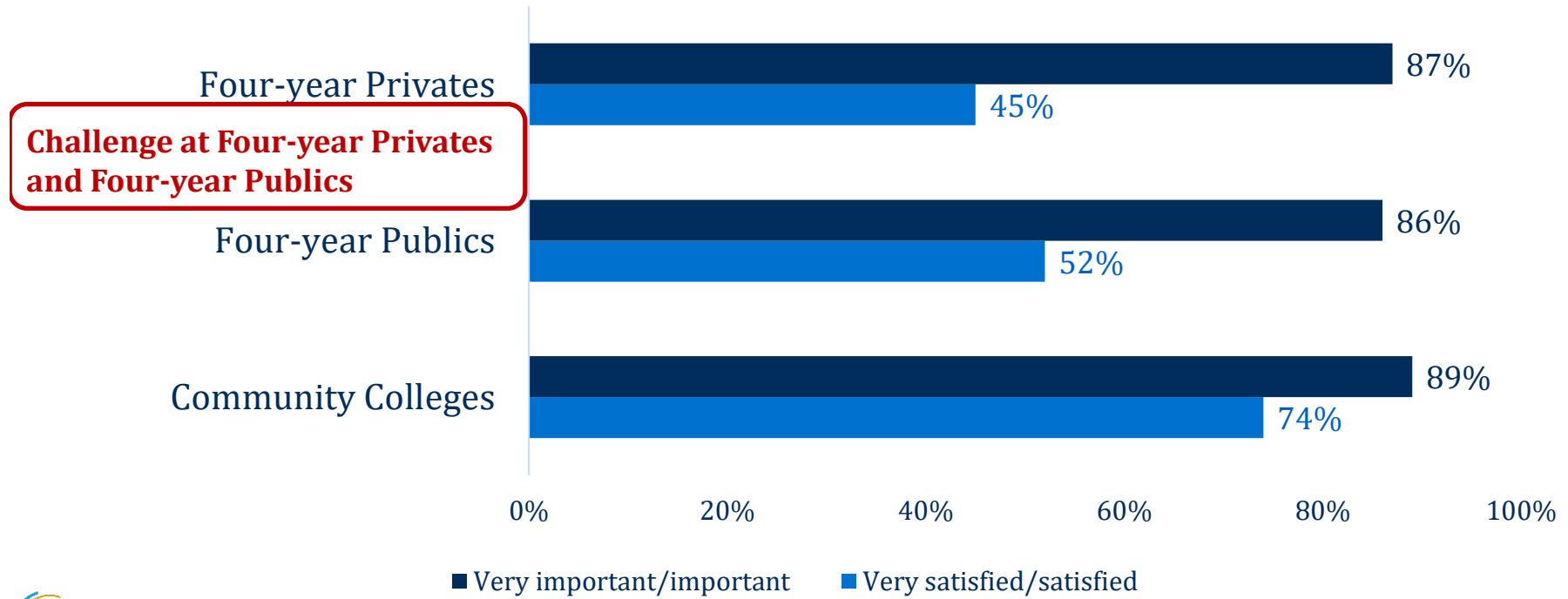
**Immediate action:** Facilitate connections between students in areas of common interest with groups and activities.

**Future plans:** Improve orientation resources and intentional programming around First-Year Experience (make both required).

**Change perceptions with information:** Create a campaign around a welcoming attitude with incentives for staff, faculty, administrators to intentionally welcome students and let them know their presence is valued; begin the welcome activities and messaging before students arrive on campus.

# Campus Climate Perceptions

*Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.*



# Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.

**Explore:** Data by class level; program; enrollment status

**Focus group question:** What does tuition being worthwhile mean to you?

**Immediate action:** Work to improve “little” but important areas that may be highly visible to students (i.e., Wi-Fi, printer access, sidewalk repair, etc.)

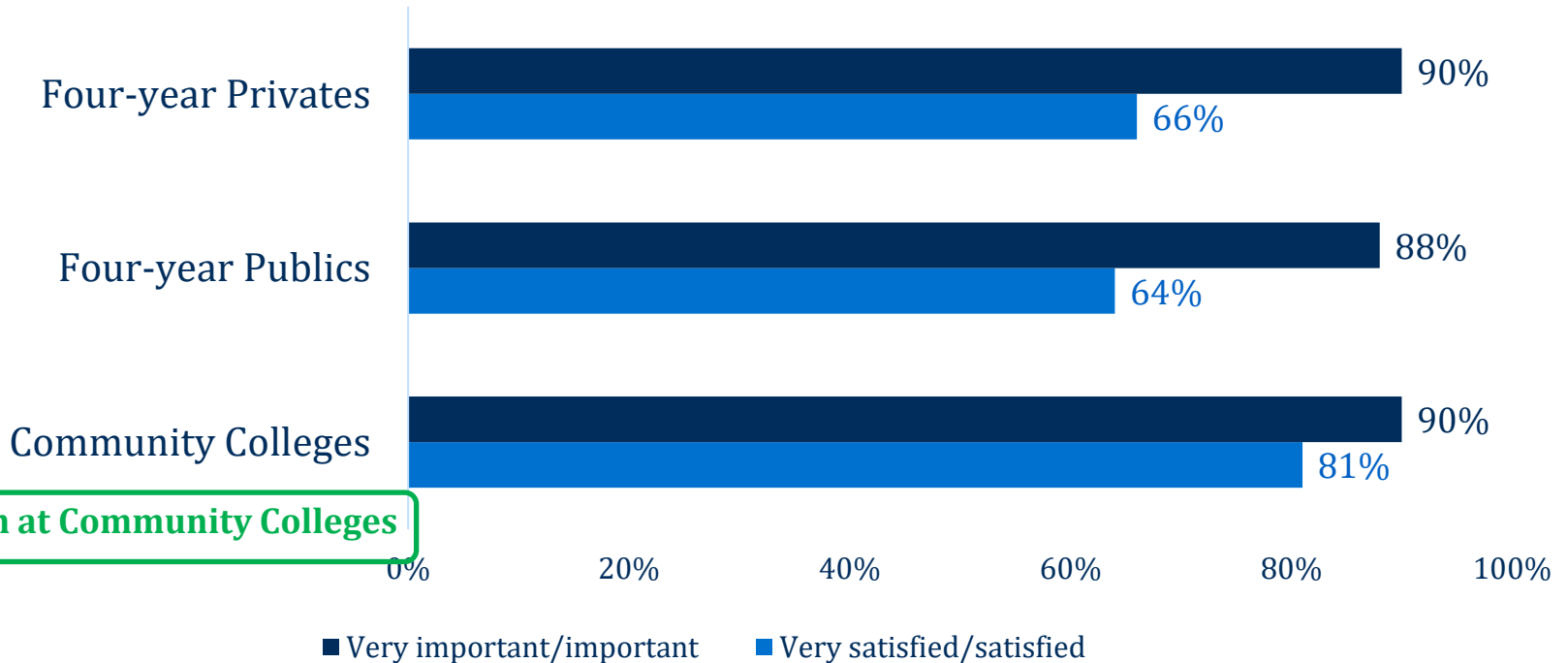
**Future plans:** Conduct price sensitivity research to assess how students feel about the cost to attend.

**Change perceptions with information:** Track and publish employment outcomes for graduates, invite alumni to campus to share their experiences in person, and use social media to highlight student success, educational quality and other points that demonstrate your institution’s value. Communicate with families as well as students.



# Campus Climate Perceptions

*The campus is safe and secure for all students.*





# The campus is safe and secure for all students.

**Explore:** Data by enrollment status (day, evening); current class load (full-time, part-time); class level; race/ethnicity; gender

**Focus group question:** Are there situations where you feel unsafe on campus?

**Immediate action:** Improve the security staff presence on campus; provide access to mental health and wellness resources.

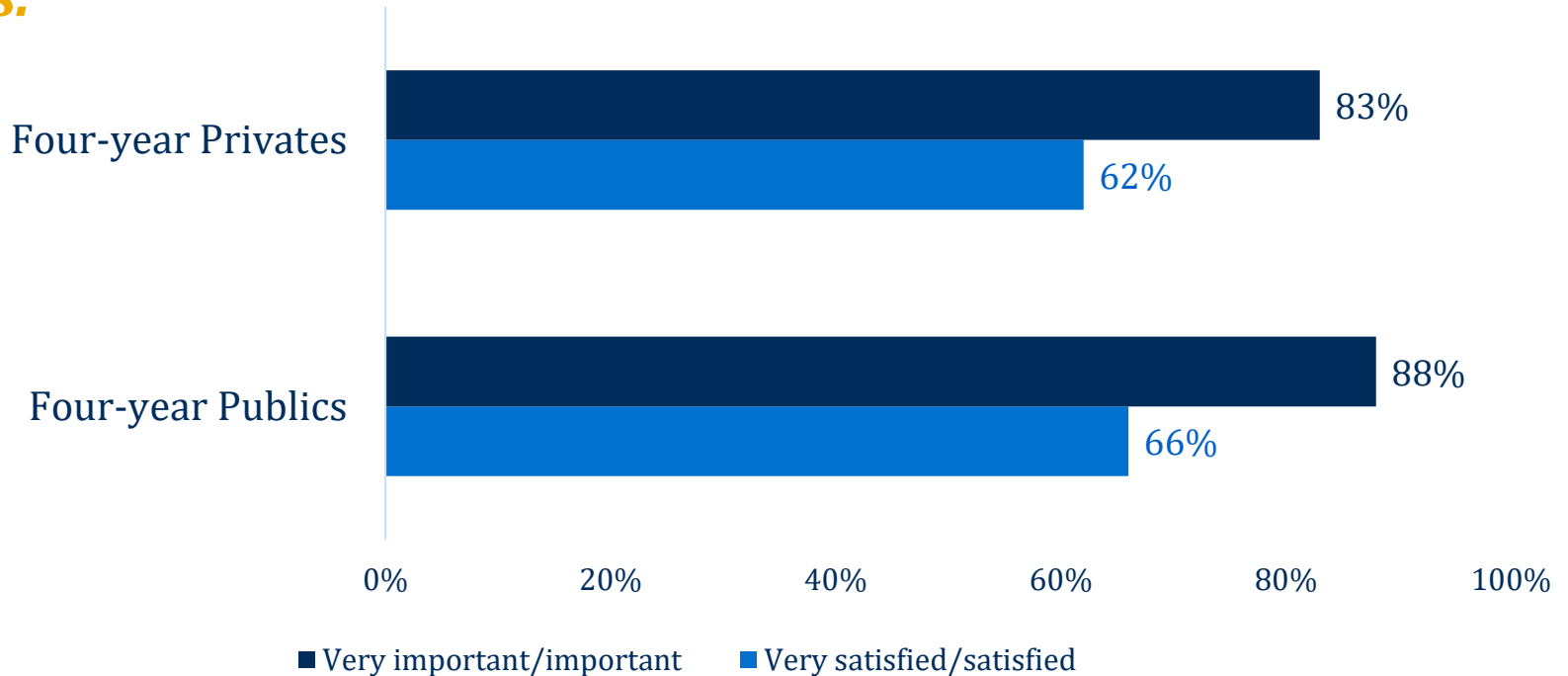
**Future plans:** Increase lighting; implement a security response app for students to use; add security staff; expand wellness resources as needed.

**Change perceptions with information:** Keep students informed regarding security incidences that are handled quickly; share data points on how safe the campus is and how leadership is focused on keeping student safe. Share this information with students' families as well. Publicize wellness resources.



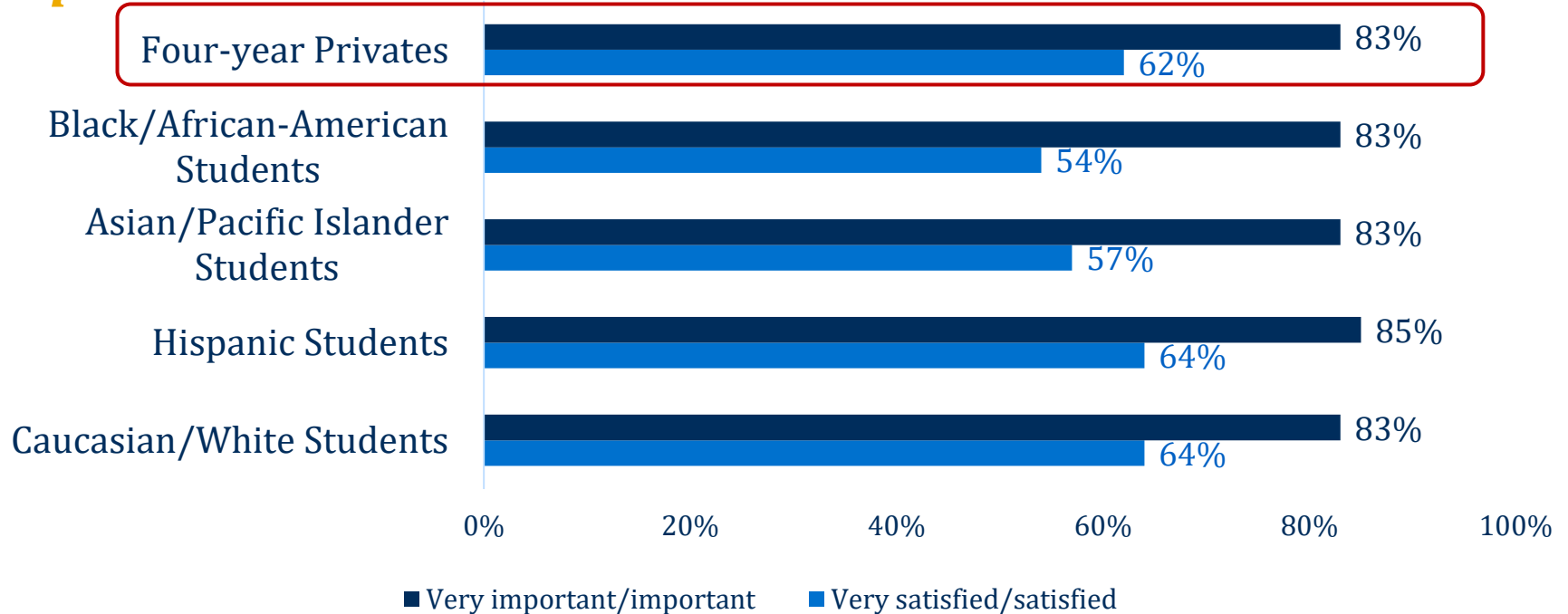
# Campus Climate Perceptions

*There is a strong commitment to racial harmony on this campus.*



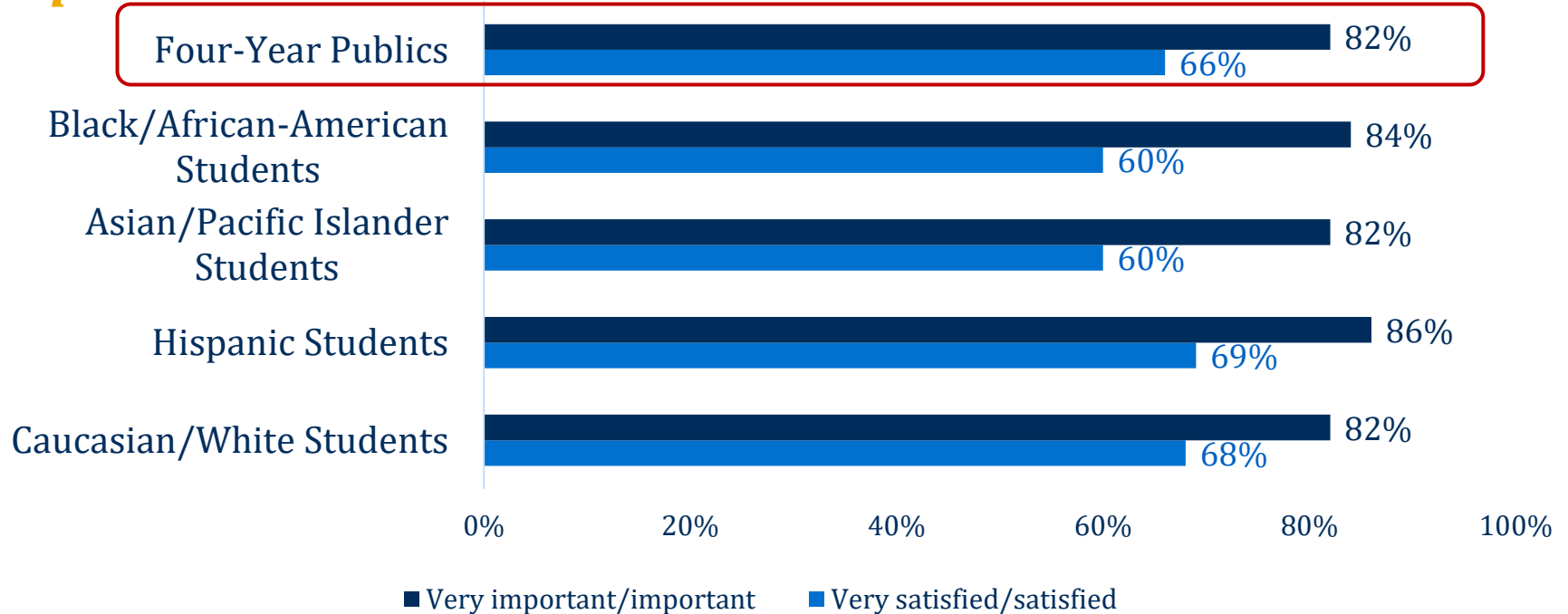
# Campus Climate Perceptions: By Race/Ethnicity

*There is a strong commitment to racial harmony on this campus.*



# Campus Climate Perceptions: By Race/Ethnicity

*There is a strong commitment to racial harmony on this campus.*



# There is a strong commitment to racial harmony on this campus.

**Explore:** Data by race/ethnicity; class level

**Focus group question:** How can this institution best reflect its commitment to racial harmony?

**Immediate action:** Work with student organizations and focus groups to explore how best to respond, to serve students better, to educate others on campus; have discussions with faculty of color to provide insight into experiences.

**Future plans:** Hire a person as the designated leader of DEI efforts (and follow recommendations); intentionally recruit students and faculty/staff of color while also creating a welcoming environment.

**Change perceptions with information:** Be proactive rather than reactive; this is an area where you need to be more than just talk.

# Influence your campus climate

## Control



what you  
can control

- For enrolling new students
- For students deciding to stay or leave
- Provide the best service to students
  - In-person
  - Virtually
- Keep students satisfied and engaged
  - With their educational experience
  - As future alumni



How can you  
improve your  
campus climate ?



How could you build a more positive campus climate?



A blue-tinted photograph of three people in a meeting. A woman on the left is leaning over a table, pointing at a document. A man in the center is looking at the document. A woman on the right is also looking at the document. There are papers, a laptop, and a cup on the table. The background shows a window with a view of a building.

Keep your ears open  
for ideas during the  
conference

Campus Climate



*Student Satisfaction*



Student Success!



# Resources from RNL

# Blog Site: [www.RuffaloNL.com/Blog](http://www.RuffaloNL.com/Blog)

The screenshot shows the RuffaloNL website header with navigation links: Enrollment, Student Success, Fundraising, Consulting, Resources, and About RNL. Below the header is a blue banner for the "EDUCATION INSIGHTS BLOG". A secondary navigation bar includes "Blog Home", "Categories", "Authors", a "Subscribe" button, a search box labeled "Search the blog", and a "Go" button.

The main content area features a post titled "Tracking Student Satisfaction – Measuring to Get It Done" under the category "student success". The author is Julie Bryant, Associate Vice President of Retention Solutions, dated February 28, 2019. The post text discusses the concept of "what gets measured, gets done" and includes an image of a person's arm wearing a black FitBit fitness tracker. A quote at the bottom of the image reads: "Tracking student satisfaction is like using a fitness tracker. You need to check data regularly and adjust behavior to achieve positive change."

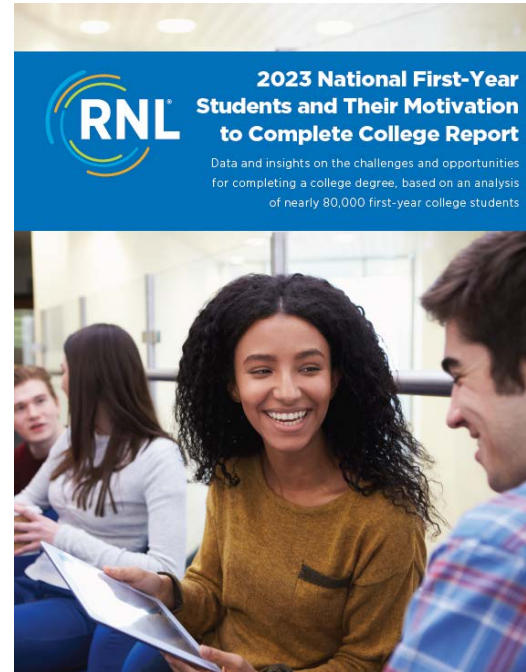
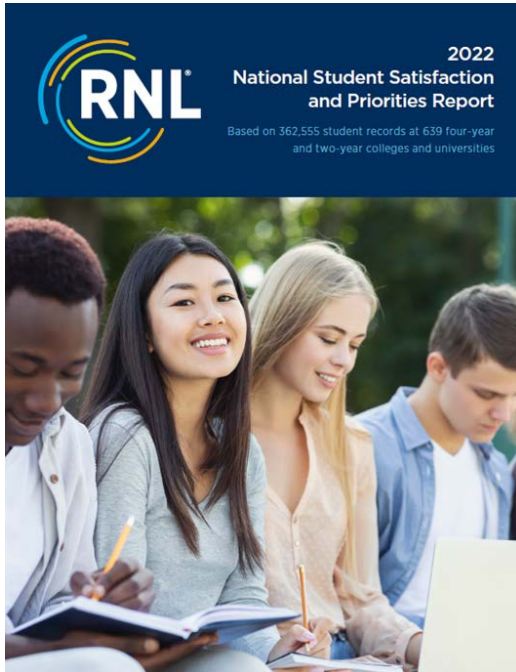
social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are visible on the left side of the post.



## Search on the word: Satisfaction

# Download the National Data Reports

*Available at [RuffaloNL.com/papers](https://RuffaloNL.com/papers)*



An aerial photograph of a vast, snow-covered mountain range, likely the Himalayas, with a blue gradient overlay. The text "We may have your data..." is centered in a yellow font.

We may have  
your data...

# We may have Satisfaction-Priorities data on file for your institution . . .

Use this QR code and fill out the Google form.

We will be in touch with a high-level overview of the data we have on file for your institution.



# Want to discuss your student satisfaction data?

## Schedule a free, virtual conversation with the leadership on your campus

Contact me to schedule a mutually convenient time





# Thank you for joining me!



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*Vice President for Student Success*

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319.247.4735 **voice mail**