Opportunities for Enrolling and Getting Your Graduate/Online Learners to the Finish Line

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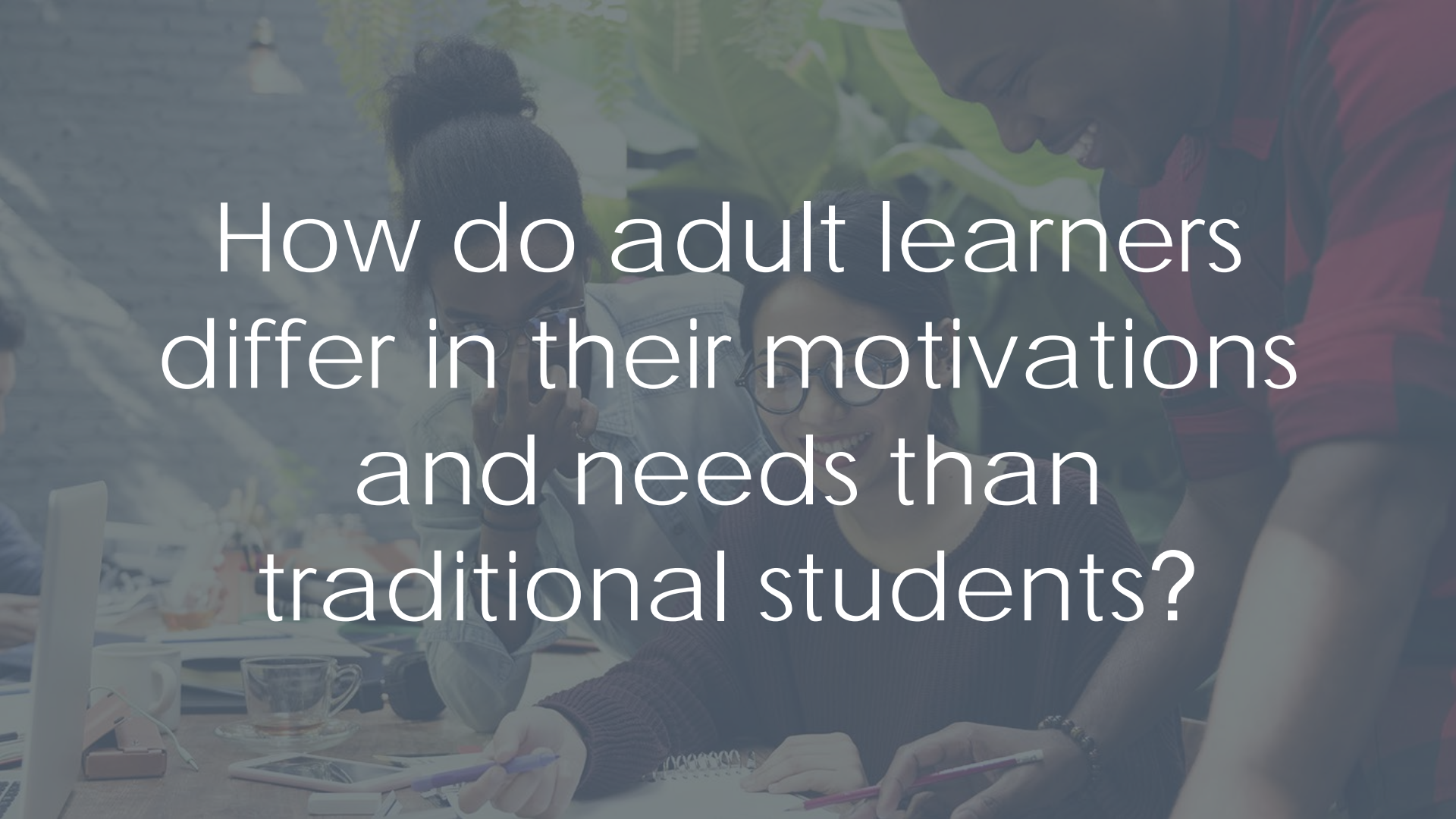
Adult learners are critical to the future of higher education

There are more than 36 million adults who have some college and no degree

A conceptual framework for retention:

Entering Student Variables + **Student Motivation Variables** + **Student Integration Variables** = **Student's Likelihood to Persist**

How do adult learners differ in their motivations and needs than traditional students?

ITEM	ADULT	TRADITIONAL
Prepared to make the sacrifices needed to reach goals	96%	89%
Have found an occupation that interests them	90%	83%
Greater family understanding and support	85%	76%
Perceive educators more positively	84%	77%
Have developed a solid system of self discipline	73%	60%
See the benefits of tutoring in one or more of their classes	67%	59%
Have a career action plan that guides their studies	61%	52%
Greater pleasure from reading	60%	37%
Ability to manage finances without having to work more hours	55%	45%
Less doubt about the value of earning a college degree	19%	36%

N =3,458 Adult Learners (25+)
N = 5,604 Traditional Students (18-24)

Adult learners: Top areas of desired assistance
Priority on career aspirations and skills to help them complete

TOP 10 AREAS OF ASSISTANCE FOR ADULT LEARNERS

#	Area	%
1	Get information about qualifications for various careers	**81%**
2	Tutoring would benefit me in one or more of my classes	**67%**
3	Help improving my writing skills	**63%**
4	Help improving my math skills	**60%**
5	Help improving my test-taking skills	**58%**
6	Learn more about salaries/opportunities for various careers	**50%**
7	Talk with a counselor about additional financial assistance	**49%**
8	Help improving my study skills	**48%**
9	Help improving my reading skills	**44%**
10	Weigh the advantages/disadvantages of various careers	**36%**

N =3,458 Adult Learners (25+)

Source: RNL First-Year Students and Their Motivation to Complete College Report

Key Takeaway: Motivational Data

Create outreach and support that meets specific needs

The experiences, life circumstances, resources and motivations of adult learners give them a different perspective on college than traditional-aged college students.

Be sure to have retention strategies and resources that will provide these students with the kind of support they need so more adult learners persist and complete their educational goals.

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Ways to help adult students get started right

A conceptual framework for retention:

Entering Student Variables + **Student Motivation Variables** + **Student Integration Variables** = **Student's Likelihood to Persist**
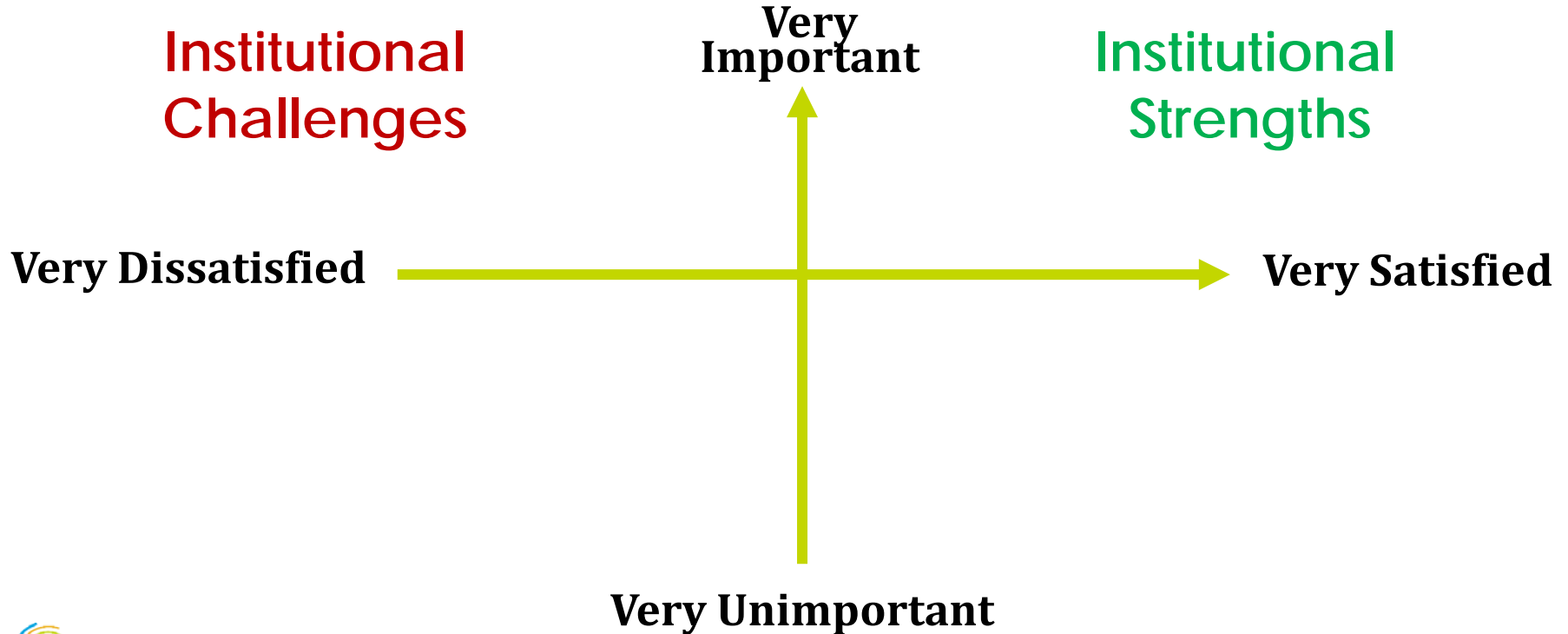
Definition of Satisfaction:

" When expectations are met or exceeded by the student's <u>perception</u> of the campus reality

Schreiner & Juillerat, 1994

Matrix for prioritizing action

Institutional Challenges

Institutional Strengths

Very Important

Very Dissatisfied

Very Satisfied

Very Unimportant

How satisfied are graduate and online students?

Source of data: RNL Satisfaction-Priorities Surveys

Fall 2019 – Spring 2022

Adult students

38,220
students from **96** institutions

39% Undergraduate
74% Full-time

61% Graduate
26% Part-time

Online learners

95,512
students from **146** institutions

67% Undergraduate
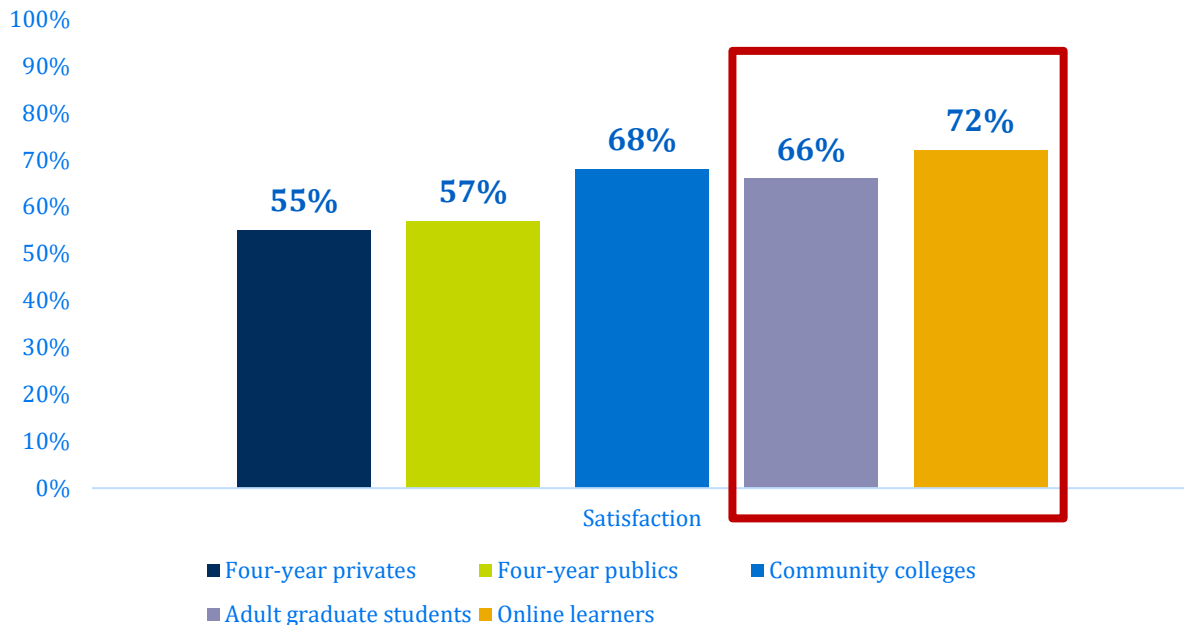94% Primarily online

33% Graduate
6% Primarily on ground

* 21,487 Graduate Students

How satisfied are college students?

Student Satisfaction

Percentages indicates the proportion of "satisfied" or "very satisfied" scores

Legend:
- Four-year privates — 55%
- Four-year publics — 57%
- Community colleges — 68%
- Adult graduate students — 66%
- Online learners — 72%

Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far

SCORING
- Not satisfied at all
- Not very satisfied
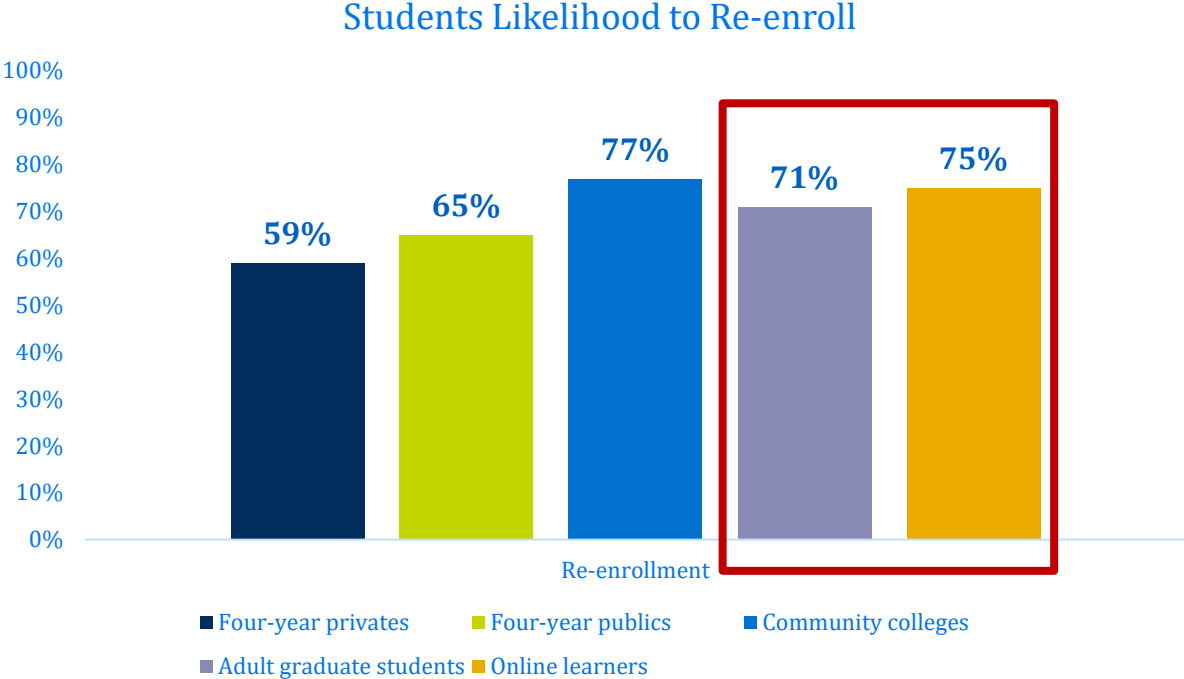- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat satisfied
- **Satisfied**
- **Very satisfied**

How likely are students to re-enroll?

Students Likelihood to Re-enroll

All in all, if you had to do it again, would you enroll here?

SCORING

- Definitely not
- Probably not
- Maybe not
- I don't know
- Maybe yes
- **Probably yes**
- **Definitely yes**

Percentages indicates the proportion of "probably yes" and "definitely yes" scores

Where are institutions performing well and what areas are priorities for improvement?

Graduate students

Top five strengths
Adult graduate students

Top strengths rated for adult graduate students	Importance	Satisfaction
Nearly all faculty are knowledgeable in their field.	**96%**	**84%**
The content of the courses within my major is valuable.	**95%**	**76%**
Major requirements are clear and reasonable.	**93%**	**77%**
My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major.	**92%**	**80%**
The staff at this institution are caring and helpful.	**91%**	**76%**

Percentages indicate the proportions of "important"/"very important" and "satisfied"/"very satisfied" scores

Listed in order of importance

N = 21,487 students from 96 institutions

Top four challenges
Adult graduate students

Top challenges rated for adult graduate students	Importance	Satisfaction
The quality of instruction I receive in my program is excellent.	**95%**	**71%**
Faculty provide timely feedback about my progress.	**90%**	**66%**
Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.	**90%**	**59%**
Adequate financial aid is available for most adult students.	**88%**	**57%**

Percentages indicate the proportions of "important"/"very important" and "satisfied"/"very satisfied" scores

Listed in order of importance

N = 21,487 students from 96 institutions

Online learners

Top five strengths

Online learners

Top strengths rated for online learners	Importance	Satisfaction
Registration for online courses is convenient.	**93%**	**84%**
Assessment and evaluation procedures are clear and reasonable.	**90%**	**78%**
Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me.	**90%**	**81%**
My program advisor is accessible by telephone and email.	**88%**	**79%**
Adequate online library resources are provided.	**88%**	**81%**

Percentages indicate the proportions of "important"/"very important" and "satisfied"/"very satisfied" scores

Listed in order of importance

N = 95,512 students from 146 institutions

Top five challenges
Online learners

Top challenges rated for online learners	Importance	Satisfaction
The quality of online instruction is excellent.	**94%**	**70%**
Instructional materials are appropriate for program content.	**93%**	**75%**
Faculty are responsive to student needs.	**93%**	**76%**
Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress.	**91%**	**72%**
Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.	**90%**	**69%**

Percentages indicate the proportions of "important"/"very important" and
"satisfied"/"very satisfied" scores

Listed in order of importance

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What issues overlap?

Overlapping challenges
Across Graduate and Online Populations

Top challenges	Graduate Students	Online Learners
The quality of instruction is excellent.	✖	✖
Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress.	✖	✖
Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.	✖	✖
Adequate financial aid is available for most adult students.	✖	
Instructional materials are appropriate for program content.		✖
Faculty are responsive to student needs.		✖

Key Takeaway: Satisfaction Data

Focus improvements on the academic experience

While non-traditional students are relatively satisfied (or they wouldn't be enrolled), there is always room for additional improvement, especially in the quality of the academic experience.

Intentionally communicate the value of their tuition investment and provide good customer service to easily enroll students and provide them the responses to their questions.

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Ways to respond to graduate and online students' top priority issues

Your Next Steps

1. Gather satisfaction and motivation data for your students.

2. Identify areas of strengths and challenges from your students' perceptions.

3. Develop, or incorporate, your student-identified challenges into a Strategic Student Success Plan.

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Download the National Data Reports

Available at RuffaloNL.com/papers
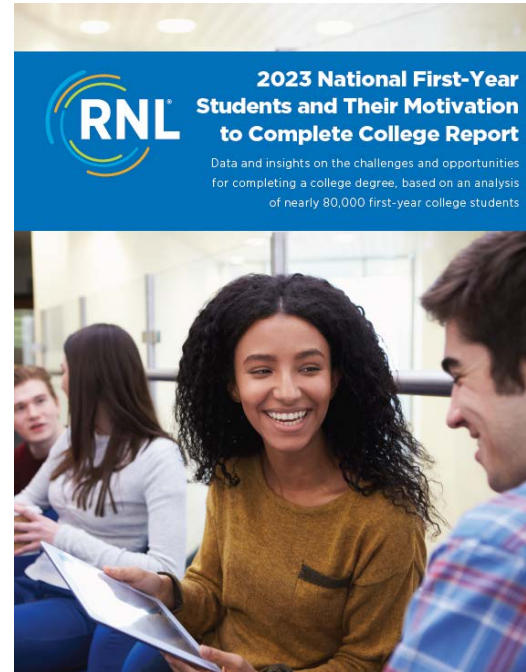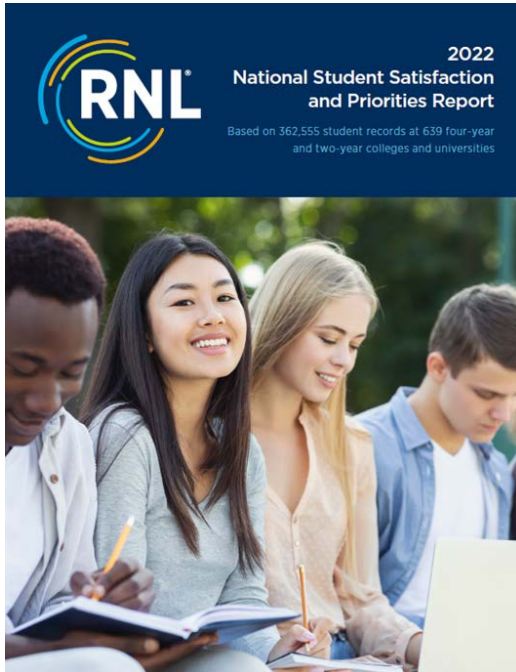
Thank you for joining us!

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Contact us with questions