

Building Strategic Advantage by Leveraging External Influences and Internal Strengths

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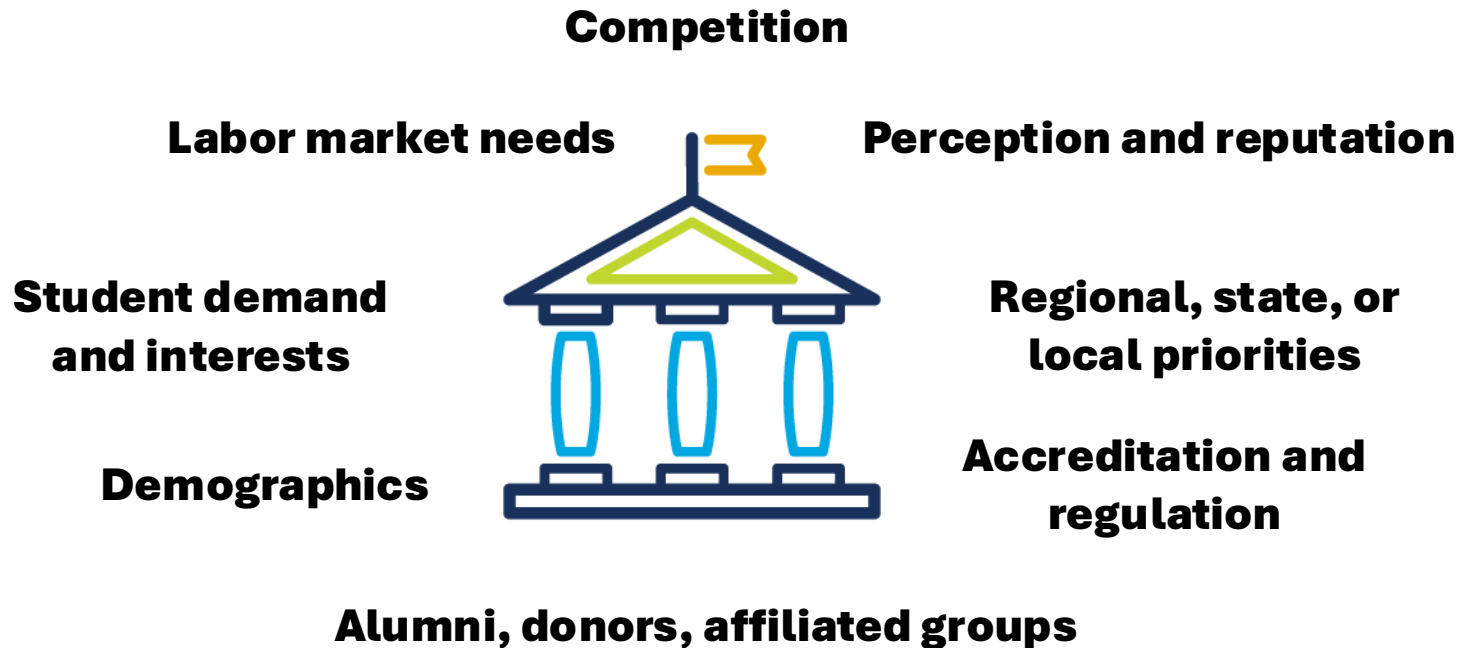
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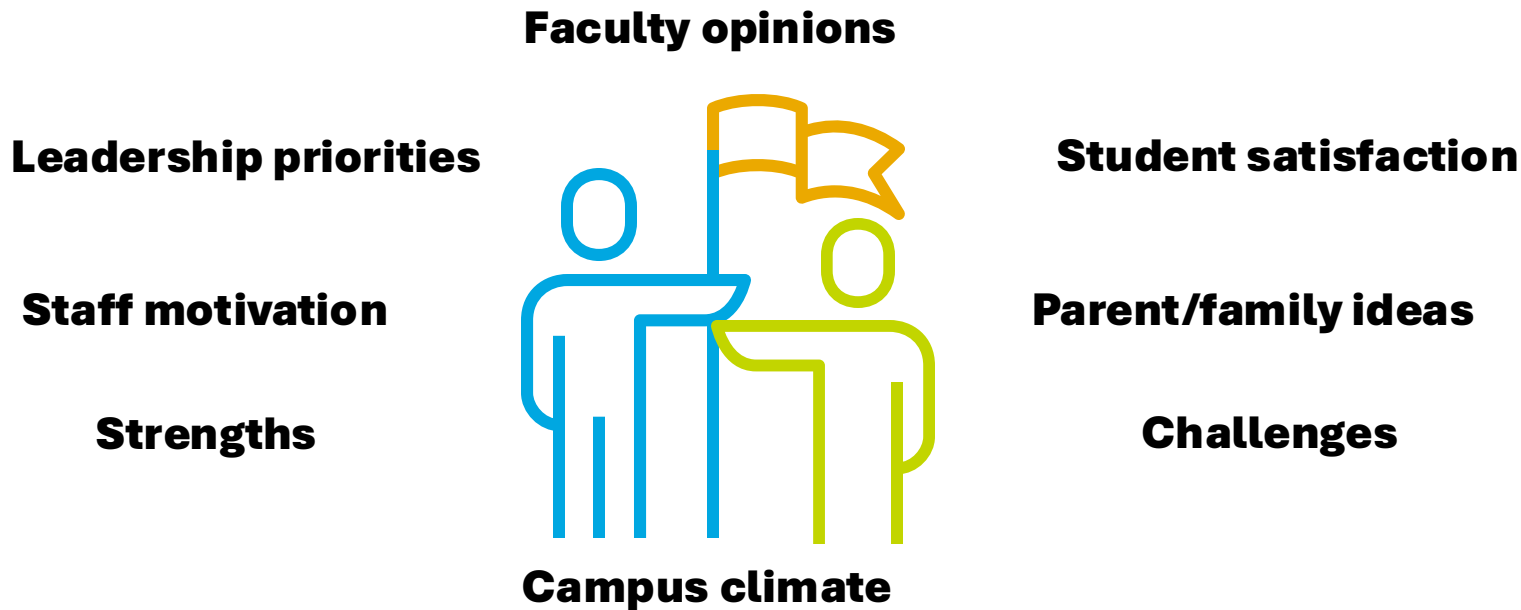
External influences

They are all around us and can have positive and negative impacts



Internal Perceptions

They are within our organizations and can have positive and negative impacts



Today's Goal:

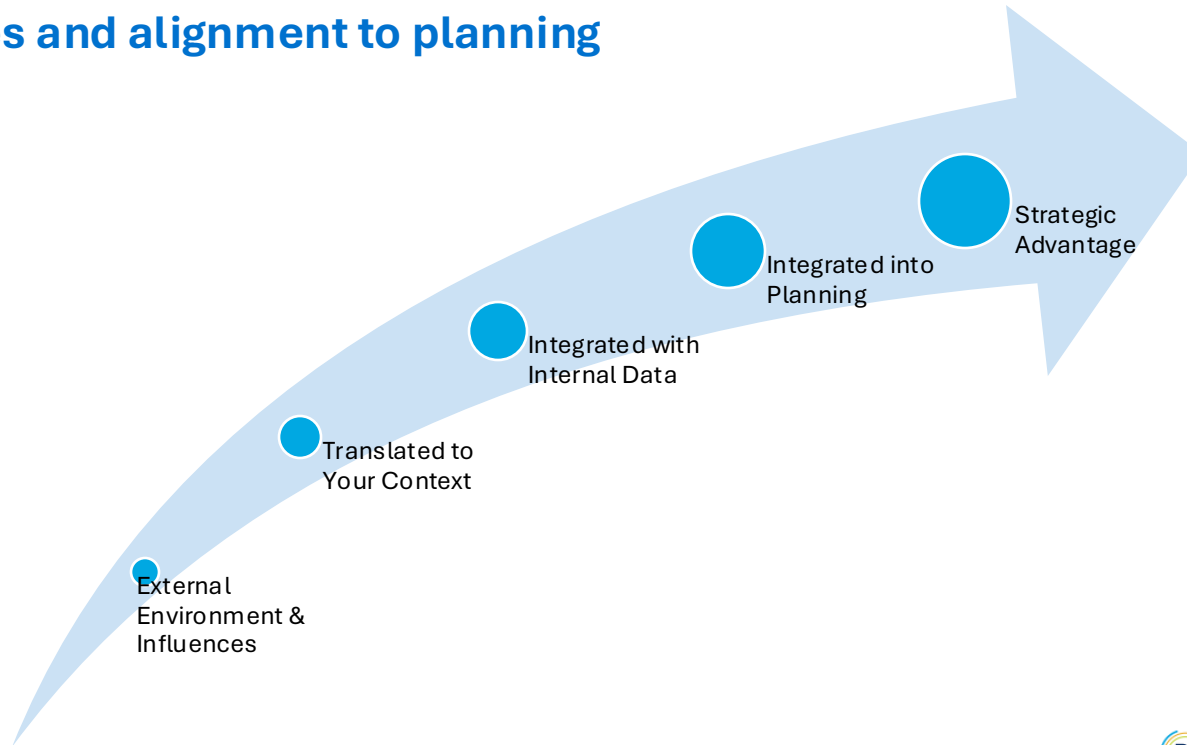
Building Strategic Advantage

1. The Why?
2. Identifying external influences
3. Understanding internal strengths
4. Discuss action steps to leverage for strategic advantage



Using External Influences and Internal Strengths for Strategic Advantage

Strategic advantage is formed by a data-informed understanding of influences and alignment to planning



Understanding External Influences



Changing Priorities, Regulations, and Requirements

Unsettled and Disrupting



Federal, State,
regional, local
priorities



Regulatory
requirements



Accreditation
requirements



Affiliated
groups



Alumni
and donors

Student and labor market demand can impact academic programs



Student demand

- What programs are students interested in?
- How does that vary by student type?
Traditionally aged students? Transfers?
Adult learners? Online learners?
- What level or education is needed?
- What modalities are students interested in that are pedagogically appropriate?



Labor market demand

- What jobs are available to your graduates?
- What fields are growing or declining?
What fields are emerging?
- Do the salaries support the cost of tuition/debt a student may incur?
- Are there corporate partnership opportunities in your area?

In the context of your academic mission

Aligning relevance, differentiation and authenticity leading to viability

Relevance

- Is there demand from interested **students**?
- Is there demand from **employers** for students with **skills** this program will provide?

Differentiation

Differentiation by degree

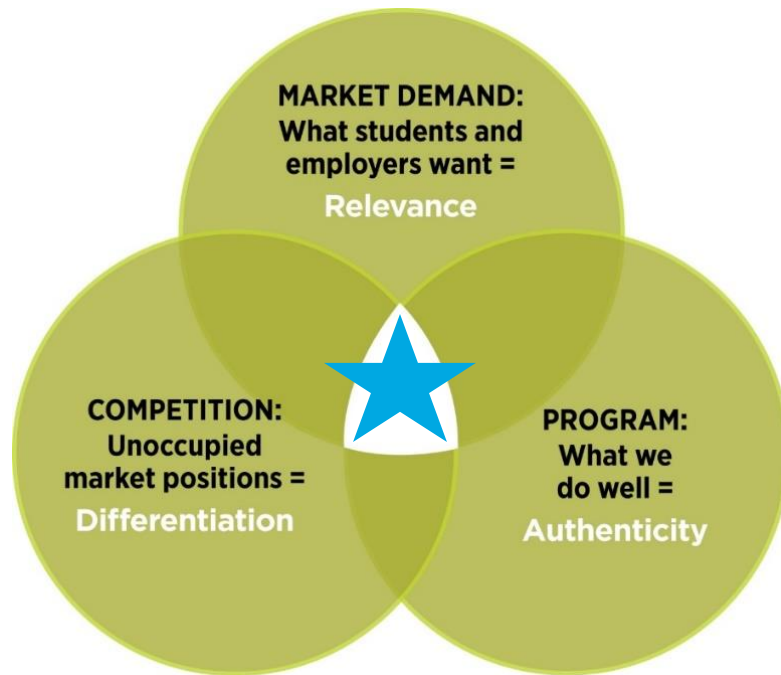
- Qualitatively better in some dimension
- Geography

Differentiation by type

- Elements of the student experience
- Forms of delivery
- Etc.

Authenticity

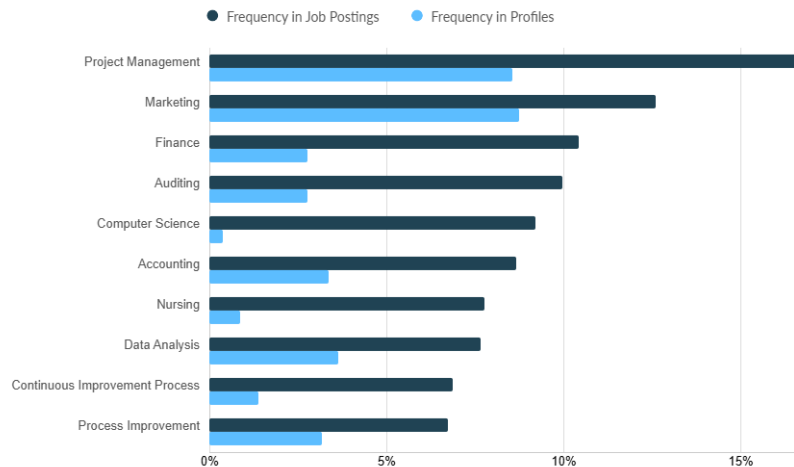
- Passion of faculty and staff
- Track record of success
- Commitment of resources for ongoing success



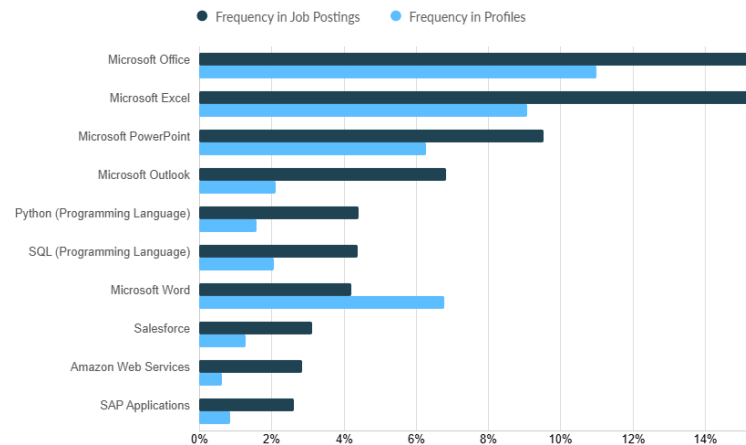
National Bachelor's Level Skills Chart

Market responsiveness throughout academic programs

Top Specialized Skills

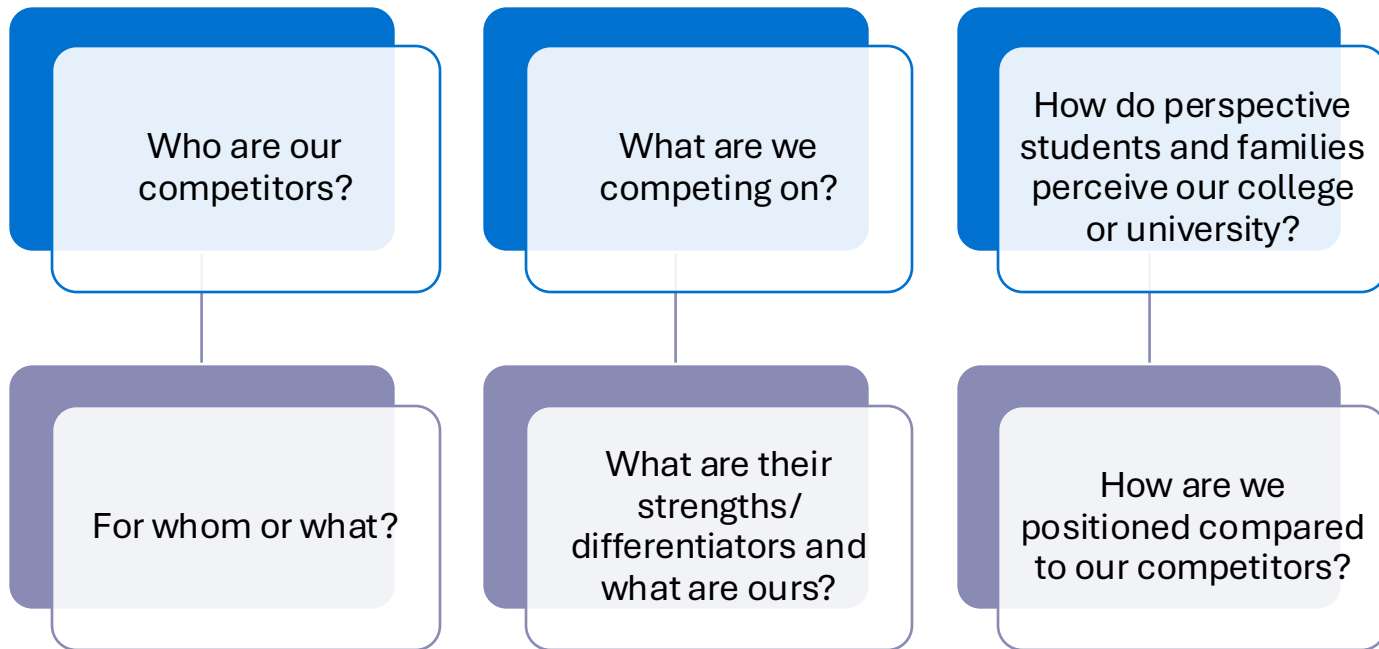


Top Software Skills



Competition and perception

What questions should you ask?



Perception and reputation matter



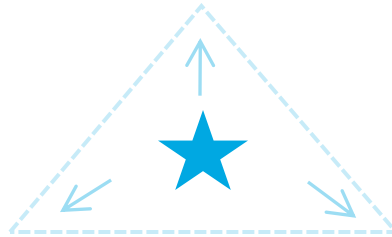
Awareness

Do they know of you?



Relevance

Does your value proposition speak to your constituent's priorities?



Preference

Are you perceived as the **best** option/provider?

Market Aware Pricing ... Can you answer the following ?

And do so honestly...

How are we setting
tuition rates?

In what ways is your
current price strategy
working (or not)?

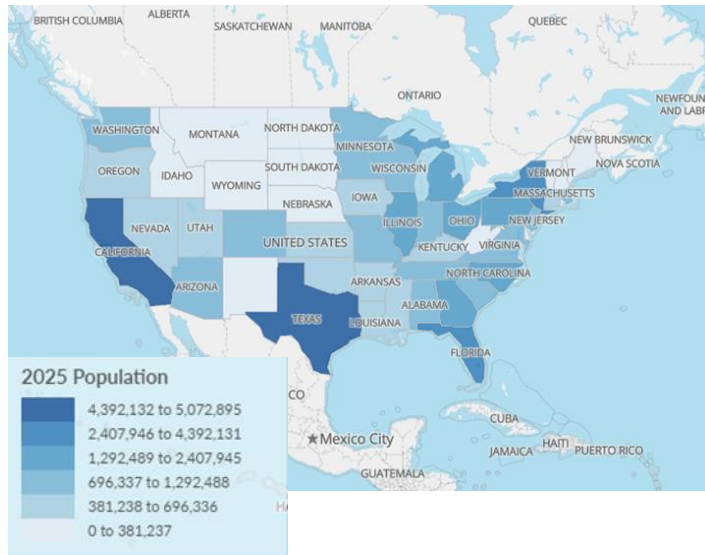
What other institutions
are you competing with
and how does your price
compare?

Why do students attend?
What is your value
proposition? What is your
market position?

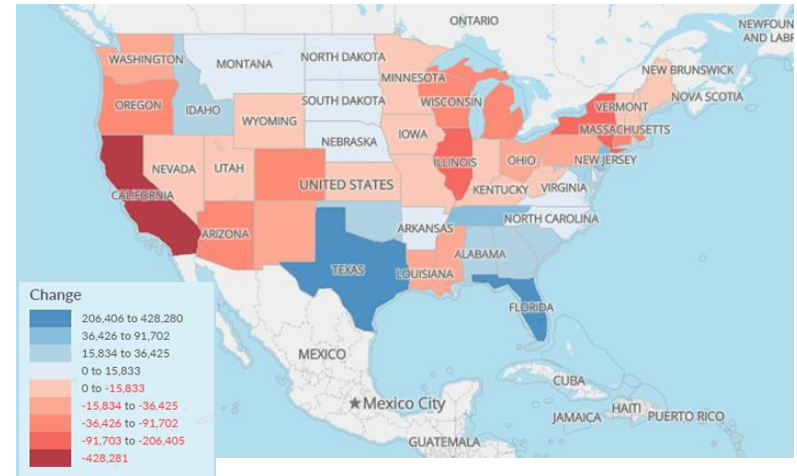
How price sensitive are
the students and families
you serve?

Demographic changes are more than the cliff

2024 Population Aged 15-24



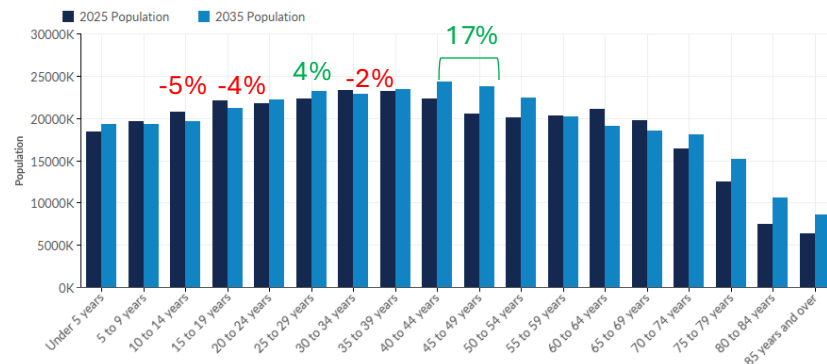
2034 Population Aged 15-24



Demographic changes are more than the cliff

National Population Increase of 4%

Population by Age Cohort



Other factors

- Region, state, locality variation
- Migration patterns—
amplified by the pandemic and
policy change
- Degree attainment rates
- Changes in racial/ethnic composition

Identifying Institutional Strengths



Start by asking our own community

- **Gather feedback from currently enrolled students**

- How satisfied are they?
- What's most important to them?
- What do they think we are doing well?
- What do they think we could be doing better?

- **Gather feedback from faculty, staff and administrators**

- What do they like about being employed at the institution?
- What would like to see improved?



**What do students
think?**

Students often identify these areas as **STRENGTHS**

Areas of high importance and high satisfaction

- I am able to experience intellectual growth here.
- Faculty are knowledgeable; faculty are available outside of class.
- Content of courses is valuable; instruction is excellent; variety of courses available.
- Advisor is knowledgeable, approachable, concerned about my success.
- Library resources and services are adequate.
- Campus staff are caring and helpful.
- Students are made to feel welcome here.

Ideas for building on these strengths: Externally

1. **Include your strengths in your marketing and recruitment messages.**
 - Attract students who are going to value what you are able to deliver on.
2. **Prepare a press release featuring your strengths.**
 - Let your local community, or target audiences, know what is valued and provided at your institution.
3. **Highlight your strengths with your alumni.**
 - Remind your former students what was positive about their experience with you and build on these strengths for continued engagement.

Ideas for building on these strengths: Internally

1. Provide positive feedback to faculty, staff and administrations.

- Emphasize what they are doing well from the student perspective to maintain a positive culture.

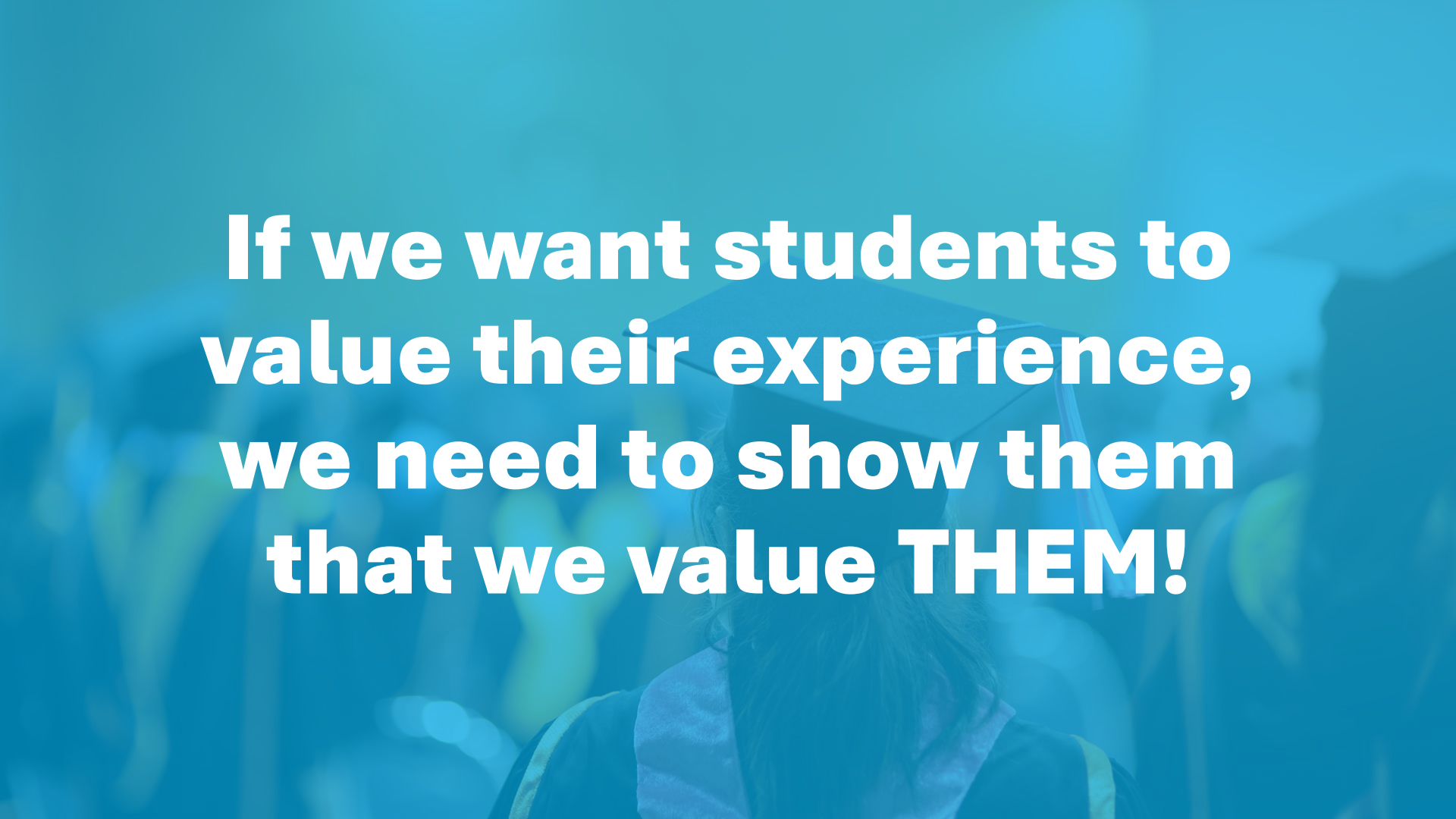
2. Share with current students so they know what their peers are thinking.

- Expand on the positive perceptions by reinforcing the areas where the institution is meeting and exceeding expectations.

3. Incorporate the strengths into your strategic planning as the student voice.

- Recognize what you are doing well from the students' vantagepoint and continue to provide resources in these area.

**What do your students think
you are doing well?**

A blurred background image of a graduation ceremony, showing graduates in caps and gowns. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

**If we want students to
value their experience,
we need to show them
that we value THEM!**



**What do college
employees think?**

Employees often identify these areas as **STRENGTHS**

Areas of high importance and high satisfaction

- Faculty, staff, and administrators take pride in their work.
- This institution promotes excellent employee-student relationships.
- This institution treats students as its top priority.
- This institution does a good job of meeting the needs of students.
- I am proud to work at this institution.
- My supervisor pays attention to what I have to say.
- The type of work I do on most days is personally rewarding.
- The work I do is valuable to the institution.
- My supervisor helps me improve my job performance.

Ideas for building on these strengths: Externally

1. Include your strengths in your employee recruitment messages.

- Attract employees who will value strengths in your culture.

2. Provide opportunities to engage others externally around strengths.

- Brag about your institution's pride! Celebrate opportunities to come together such as athletic or employee events. Share that pride with your external community.

Ideas for building on these strengths: Internally

1. Share survey findings with employees.

- Celebrate strengths! Infuse them in messaging. Use strengths as a foundation for developing strategies for areas of improvement.

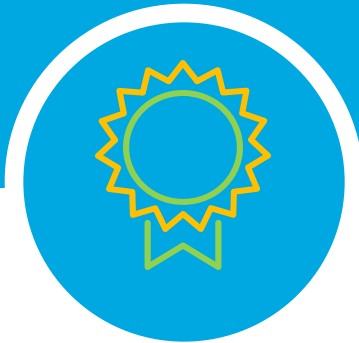
2. Come together to celebrate.

- Celebrate the positive aspects of your culture. Bring the community together for opportunities to celebrate.

3. Incorporate the strengths into planning processes.

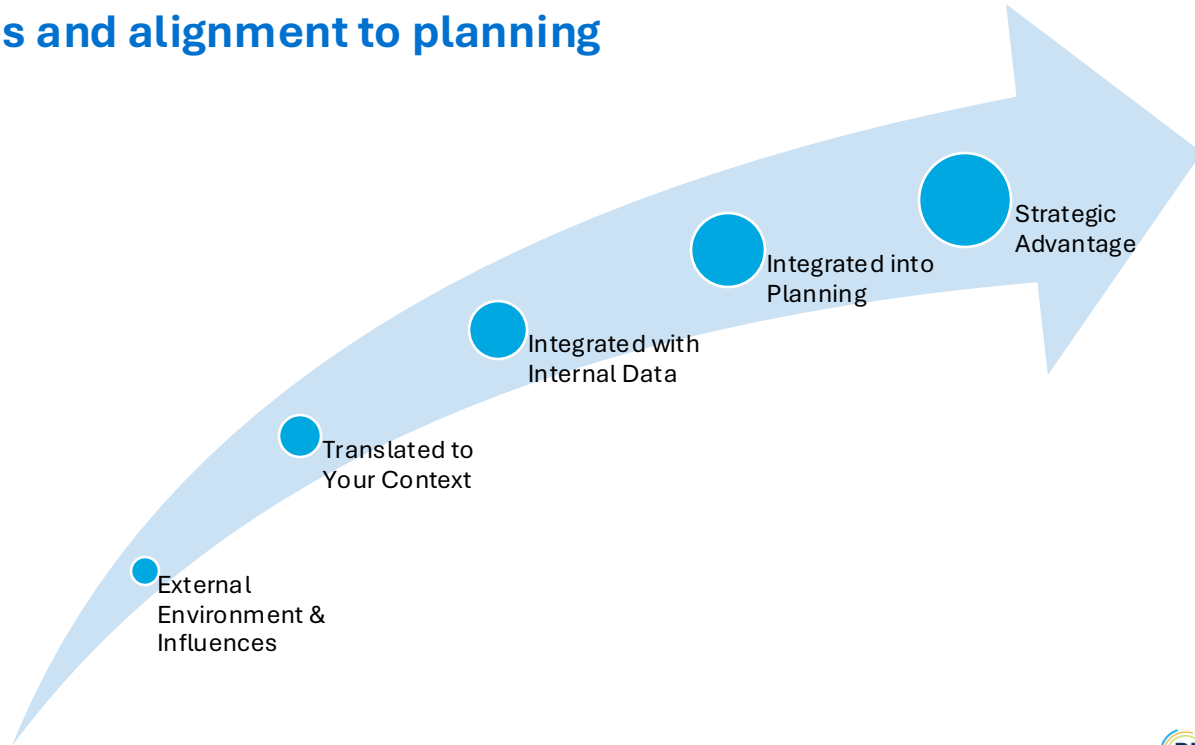
- Recognize positive aspects of your employee experience. Build upon it and take actions to promote and continue to cultivate it through your planning processes.

Strategic Advantage



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Actions You Can Take Today

Accessing and Sharing Information ... Integrating with Planning

Immediately:

Include internal strengths and external influences in strategic conversations that you are a part of.

Ongoing:

1. Determine what information you already have. Who has access to it? Who is the “owner”? How is it shared?
2. Identify data needs and conduct any needed research.
3. Understand your planning structures. How are priorities and strategies developed? Where and when? And how are those planning structures related?
4. Identify where various data can support planning activities. Establish regular processes to bring an understanding of internal strengths and external influences into those conversations. Adjust schedules as needed.
5. Think strategically, balance internal strength and external influences, commit to conversation and planning, and be willing to take steps proactively.

Resources



Download the 2024 National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report

RNL.com/Satisfaction



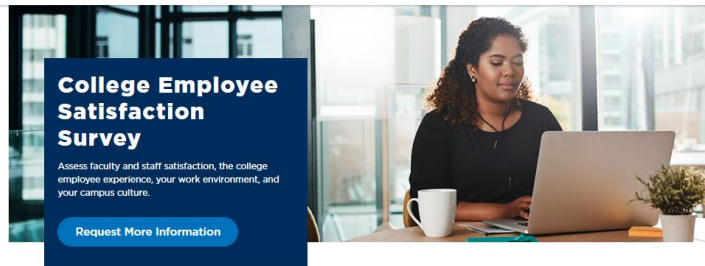
2024 National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report

Focusing on class-level subpopulation results with data
from nearly 400,000 students at 693 institutions



CESS – Refreshed!

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Understand College Employee Satisfaction and Their Experience at Your Institution

The 2024 College Employee Satisfaction Survey™ (CESS) has been refreshed based on RNL's 25 years of helping our campus partners assess faculty and staff satisfaction, the employee experience, the work environment, and campus culture. Find out how your employee community feels about these key topics as well as their prioritization of institutional goals, feedback on institutional strengths and areas for improvement, work-life balance, and likelihood to retain.

More than 60 standard survey items, plus custom questions

The survey offers a thorough array of questions, covering every facet of campus employment. You can also add up to 28 custom items specific to your campus. With the data from this survey, you

RNL is excited to announce the refreshed College Employee Satisfaction Survey

The College Employee Satisfaction Survey has been refreshed for 2024-2025 academic year.

For more information on the:
[College Employee Satisfaction Survey](#)

Contact us with any questions



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The 39th Annual National Higher Education Conference