Implementation Guidelines for the Mid-Year Student Assessment™ (MYSA)

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 MYSA?

The Mid-Year Student Assessment (see samples) is the follow-up survey to the College Student Inventory™ (CSI) and is compatible with CSI Form B and Form C. It compares the strengths and challenges of your students at the mid-point of their first year and shows you how to adjust your interventions to meet students' current needs.

Getting started

MYSA is available as a web administration; simply estimate the number of students who will need access to the MYSA and indicate this preliminary number on our MYSA order form. Note that with our web versions, you are only charged for the number of inventories that are completed.

Choosing a MYSA version

The MYSA is statistically tied to the CSI Form B (100-items) or the CSI Form C (74-items). Select the form that matches your CSI administration earlier in the term.

View samples of these assessments and resulting reports. Suggestion: Compare the Advisor/Counselor Reports for to see similarities and differences in the data gathered. We also provide Spanish versions of both forms.

Inventory completion times

Students need approximately 20 minutes to complete MYSA Forms B and C.

When to administer the MYSA

The MYSA is administered toward the end of the first term or early the following term. Institutions may also choose to administer this assessment at the end of the summer term for first-time students who completed the CSI earlier in the summer.

How to administer the inventory

The MYSA is administered primarily through email invitations generated through the Retention Data Center™. This online assessment may be administered in computer labs, through first-year seminars, classes, or other places where student have access to a computer.

Our assessments can be delivered through Blackboard Learn™ Building Blocks. 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; and
- Filter data to tailor your outreach initiatives.

Custom questions, grouping students, and branding

The Data Center allows you to customize your 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.

Group your students into areas that may provide additional interventions such as advisor, FYE instructor, residence hall, major, etc.

Convenient scoring

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

Resulting reports

Two individual reports are provided after each student completes the CSI –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.

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'll direct you to additional resources for interpreting the reports and discussions with students. To get the most value from the MYSA, we recommend intervening at both the individual and programmatic levels.

- The Academic Motivation scales serve as a springboard for dialogue between the student and the advisor. For example, if the student ranks himself high on study skills but is getting low grades, the advisor has an opportunity to consider any contributing factors such as work hours, study time, major, and matters related to course delivery.
- Students who show significant declines in two or more areas of Academic Motivation or General Coping could be targeted for personal follow-up.
- Instructors ask students to write a reflective paper on their Student Report as part of a class assignment. Advisors or first-year experience instructors then use these reflective papers to determine the areas where students need further direction or encouragement.

MYSA results are incorporated into advising or course selection appointments

- Advisors interact with students on a more personal level to determine their thinking around the current college plans they have indicated: 1) plan to complete my degree/certificate here, 2) plan to transfer, 3) do not plan to continue, or 4) undecided.
- Share reports with academic counselors to ascertain the potential relationship between the student's plan to transfer and the availability of their desired major.
- The section on the MYSA reports entitled, "Students' Needs and Interests" is used to assess the utilization of existing student support programs and determine where services are needed the second term.
- The Students' Needs and Interests section may provide insight on the impact of new student support programs, helping to document the need for new or expanded services.
- Students who indicate a desire for assistance or additional information may be targeted for special outreach through advisor's collaboration with appropriate offices.
- The Summary and Planning Report may be used as a component of the program assessment for student support services, especially those relying on special funding.
- Incorporate the composite data from the Summary and Planning Report into internal assessment processes. For example, insights into academic self-assessment and retention may be illuminated by examining composite scores on the Academic Motivation scales in relation to time for studying, work hours, and current institutional impressions.
- The Summary and Planning Report is also used to compare results across cohorts within the freshman class using custom groupings such as advisor, first-year experience course instructor, major, etc.
- Think of the comparison of the pre- and mid-year results as a "reality check" for students. Help students think through any over-estimation or under-estimation of their strengths and challenges.
- Think of the Summary and Planning Report as a campus "reality check" for all areas referenced in this student assessment. Below are some guiding questions:
- What do students' responses indicate about the integration of their needs and interests in relation to existing programs and services?
- What are the patterns observed in the increases and decreases in student motivation and general coping skills? What might these suggest?
- Do the students' responses in Institutional Impressions suggest hypotheses about current reenrollment plans?

- Do the changes noted in the demographic information provide insights for results in other sections of the report?

Student Information Systems (SIS)

Raise flags and alerts. Pre-defined data exports are available for partnerships Ruffalo Noel Levitz has with Hobsons' Retain™ and Starfish Early Alert™. You may also find creation of your own templates will allow you to move data collected from the CSI into your local student systems.

Setting Goals and Evaluating Progress

The Mid-Year Student Assessment - Form C provides you with a tool to evaluate student progress at regular intervals. Both general and specific success measures may be appropriate, depending on your objectives and situation.

Common Measures Include:

- Changes in Academic Motivation or General Coping scales, especially those that match areas of programmatic focus;
- Persistence, progression, retention, or completion rates;
- Quality, quantity, and timeliness of focused interventions for different populations;
- The number of students on probation, as well as those who effectively recover their academic standing;
- Satisfaction with level of interaction with advisors, faculty, and course offerings;
- The use of support services on campus, including the frequency and quality of referrals;
- The level of commitment and focus across your campus in proactively addressing the needs of incoming students;

Qualitative feedback from advisors or mentors, referral offices, and students.

Measuring the success of your interventions will facilitate and inform subsequent plans for addressing your students' needs throughout the first year. With more precise information, you are positioned to engage and integrate students into your campus community with greater confidence.

Engaging advisors and student services colleagues in this initiative

The most common model for maximizing the impact of the MYSA-C initiative is the direct involvement of the advising and student services staff. Engaging them as soon as possible is key to their ongoing and active involvement. Accordingly, advisors, mentors, student success coaches, and student service offices should be notified early on that mid-year reports will be made available to them.

Also, consider involving administrators and the retention committee in this new initiative by enlisting their creative ideas and support for using the data.

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 providing a current view of students' strengths and challenges within the context of their interests and needs.

Please also highlight: i) the value of the action plan in the Student and Advisor Reports, ii) the College Plans lists in the Summary and Planning Report, iii) the aggregate data in the Summary and Planning Report is valuable for prioritizing and justifying services in relation to student needs, iv) as well as other accountability data provided in the report.

A Ruffalo Noel Levitz trainer or consultant is available to assist with launching the initiative, interpreting the findings for individual students, and using the aggregate findings in action plans at the programmatic level. Please contact us for details.