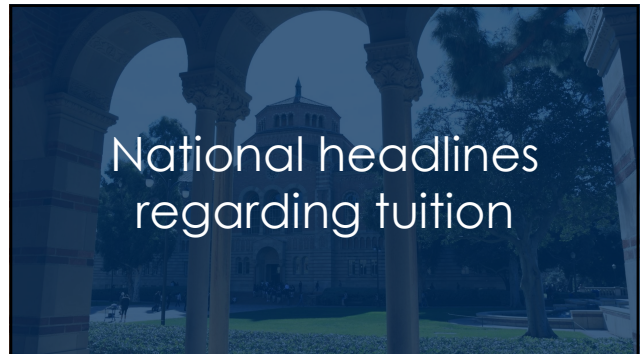






Retention Priority: Responding to the Perception of Tuition as a Worthwhile Investment

Julie Bryant, Associate Vice President, Retention Solutions  
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Twitter: [@JulieBryantNL](https://twitter.com/JulieBryantNL)


RNL Virtual National Conference • July 2020




There is a long stream of sound bites that students, prospective students, parents and recent graduates hear that may make them question the value of their educations and the investment of tuition dollars



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I googled the phrase "tuition paid worthwhile" and got 2,870,000 results in 0.55 seconds



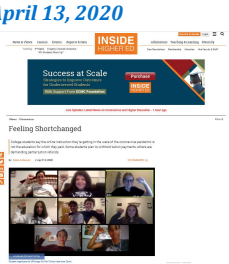
4

Some articles say, "yes" but many say, "no"



**Tuition Worthwhile in a Pandemic?**  
**April 13, 2020**

“College students say the online instruction they’re getting in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic is not the education for which they paid. Some students plan to withhold tuition payments; others are demanding partial tuition refunds.”




<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/13/students-say-online-classes-arent-what-they-paid>

**Tuition worthwhile in a pandemic?**  
**May 4, 2020**

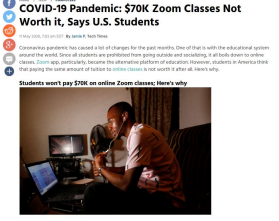
U.S. undergraduates have sued more than 50 schools, demanding partial tuition, room and board and fee refunds after they shut down.

*The Cedar Rapids Gazette*



**Tuition worthwhile in a pandemic?**  
**May 11, 2020**

“Since everyone will practice online Zoom classes, students think that charging the same amount on a regular school year with the online classes will not be fair for them.”



<https://www.techtimes.com/articles/249525/20200511/pandemic-70k-zoom-classes-not-worth-it-says-us-students.htm>


“But if colleges don’t reopen for in-person classes, students and parents may decide online learning isn’t worth paying a tuition of \$30,000 to \$70,000...”

*Nicole Gaudiano in Politico.com as shared in “The Week”, May 15, 2020*

**Tuition worthwhile in a pandemic?**  
**June 2, 2020**


“Thus, the costs associated with attending a college or university were already moving in an unfavorable direction for the average American household. But throwing the coronavirus pandemic into the equation is now presenting a multitude of issues that could accelerate this trend or send it off into erratic directions. On the other side of the equation, the colleges are facing troubling financial straits due to the disruption in tuition, fees and on-campus life.”

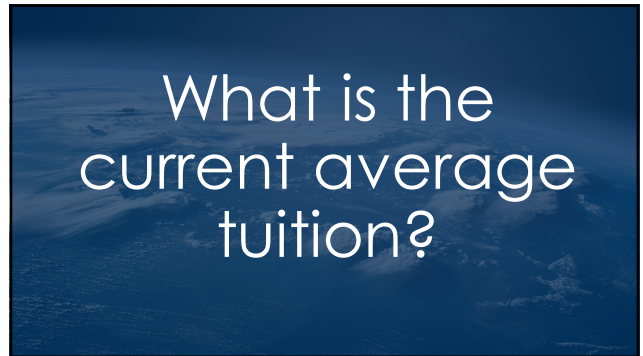
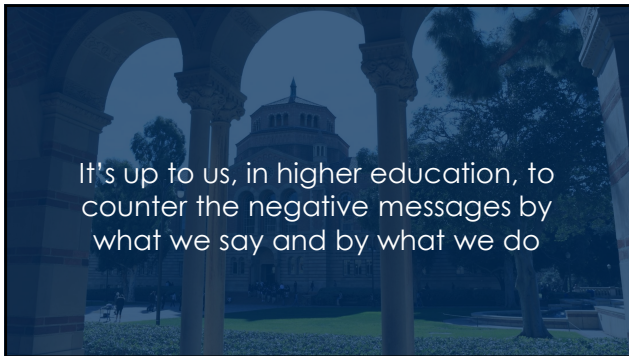
*Andrew DePietro, Forbes Magazine*



<https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewdepietro/2020/06/02/impact-covid-19-tuition-finance/>

Google  
 “Tuition paid is worthwhile”  
 and see what comes up





**Average Costs of College by Type of School**  
 Source: College Board, "Average Published Charges 2019-20"

	Public 2-Year (In-District)	Public 4-Year (In-State)	Public 4-Year (Out-of-State)	Private 4-Year
Tuition	\$3,370	\$10,400	\$26,820	\$36,880
Room and Board	\$8,990	\$11,510	\$11,510	\$12,990
Total	\$12,720	\$21,950	\$38,330	\$49,870

<https://research.collegeboard.org/trends/college-pricing/figures-tables/average-published-charges-2018-19-and-2019-20>

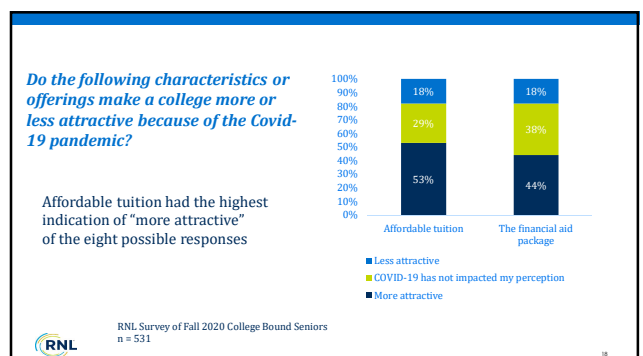


**RNL Survey of Fall 2020 College Bound Seniors**

531 high school seniors

10 minute, online survey administered in April 2020

- Over two-thirds indicated that COVID-19 has, or may, influence their college plans.
- As a result of the pandemic, students would like to see more financial assistance, communication, technology resources and online course options.





### National Data from the RNL Satisfaction-Priorities Surveys

**760**  
Institutions and 484,623 students

- Student Satisfaction Inventory
  - Traditional students
  - Four-year and two-year institutions
- Adult Student Priorities Survey
  - Adult undergraduate students at four-year institutions
  - Graduate students
- Priorities Survey for Online Learners
  - Online Learners
  - Four-year and two-year programs, as well as graduate students

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### Download the full 2019 National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report

[RuffaloNL.com/Satisfaction](http://RuffaloNL.com/Satisfaction)

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2019 National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report

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### National data sets

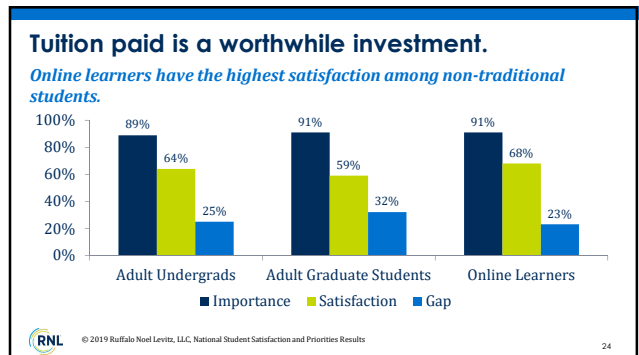
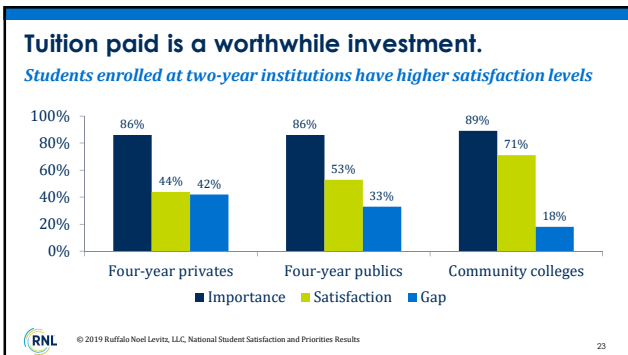
<p><b>SSI: FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE</b> 173,757 students from 297 institutions 26% freshmen; 21% sophomores; 22% juniors; 24% seniors</p>	<p><b>SSI: FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC</b> 70,712 students from 69 institutions 21% freshmen; 17% sophomores; 24% juniors; 28% seniors</p>
<p><b>SSI: COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES</b> 63,625 students from 76 institutions 68% full-time; 32% part-time</p>	<p><b>PSOL: ONLINE LEARNERS</b> 119,112 students from 166 institutions 64% undergraduate; 36% graduate 94% primarily online; 6% primarily on-campus</p>
<p><b>ASPS: ADULT UNDERGRADUATES</b> 24,702 students from 152 institutions 20% first year; 22% second year; 26% third year; 32% fourth year</p>	<p><b>ASPS: ADULT GRADUATE STUDENTS</b> 32,715 students from 152 institutions 72% full-time; 28% part-time</p>

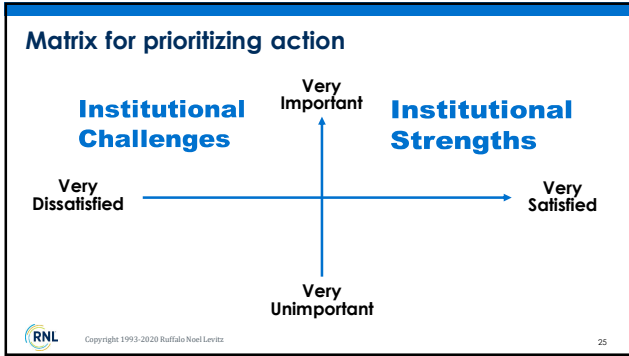
**THREE ACADEMIC YEARS OF DATA, AGGREGATED**  
2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19

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2019 National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report

Community College Data is from Form B; All other data sets are from Form A

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“  
*Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment*  
 This item has consistently been identified as a challenge among students at four-year institutions over the years.

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### Ten Year Trends

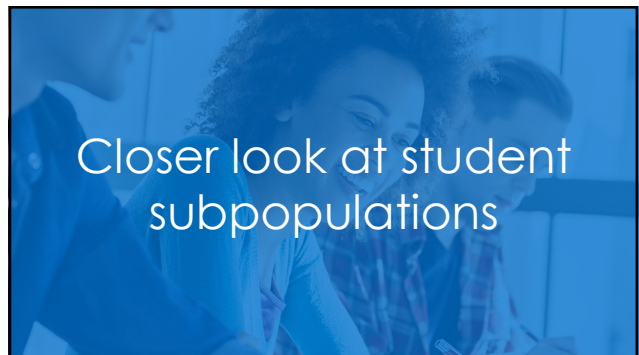
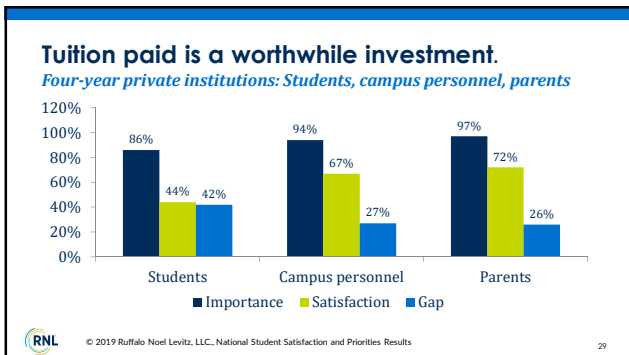
**Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.**

IMPORTANCE	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATES	FOUR-YEAR PUBLICS	ADULT UNDERGRADS	GRADUATE STUDENTS	ONLINE LEARNERS
2006-09	87%	87%	92%	94%	91%
2016-19	86%	86%	89%	91%	91%
Shift	-1%	-1%	-3%	-3%	0%

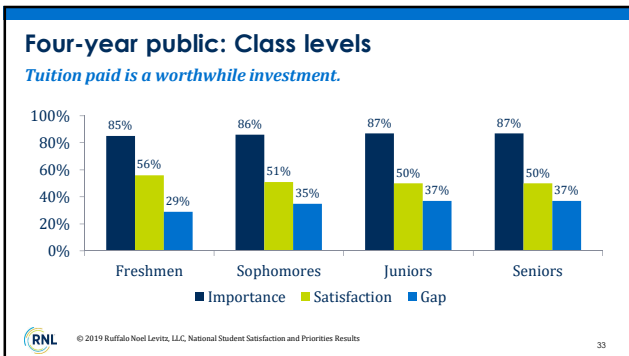
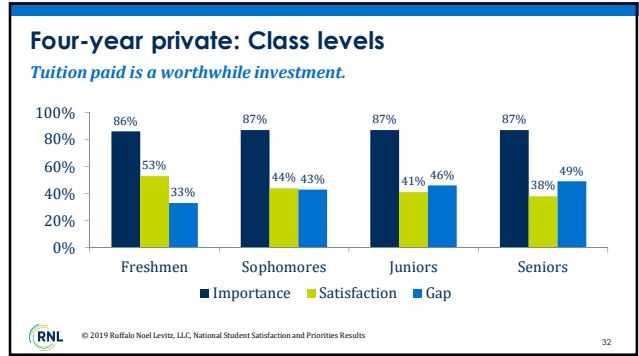
  

SATISFACTION	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATES	FOUR-YEAR PUBLICS	ADULT UNDERGRADS	GRADUATE STUDENTS	ONLINE LEARNERS
2006-09	42%	48%	57%	57%	65%
2016-19	44%	53%	64%	59%	68%
Shift	2%	5%	7%	2%	3%

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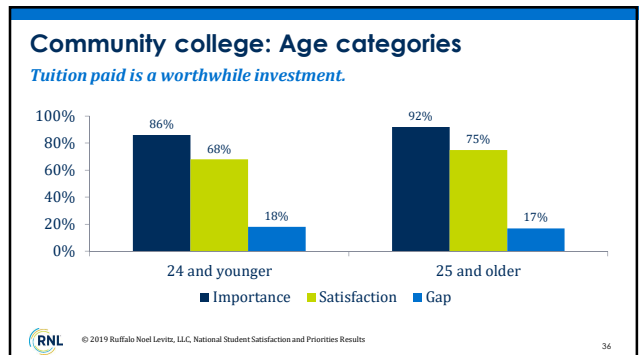
# Class Levels



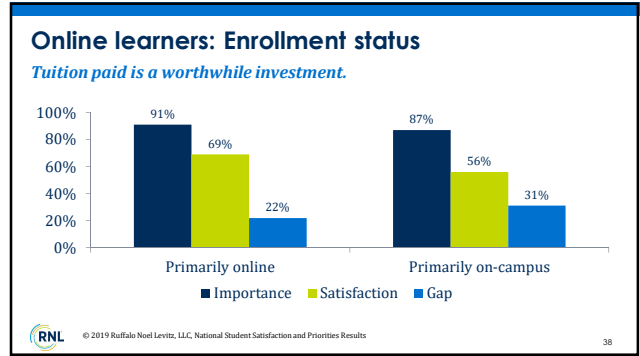
If your students' satisfaction levels with their tuition being worthwhile decline by their senior year ....

What impact will that have on their commitment to give back to the college as alumni?

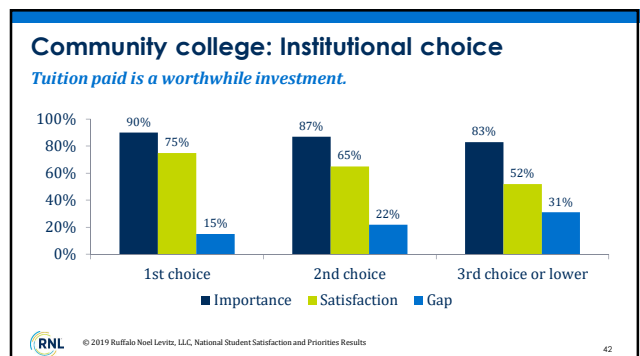
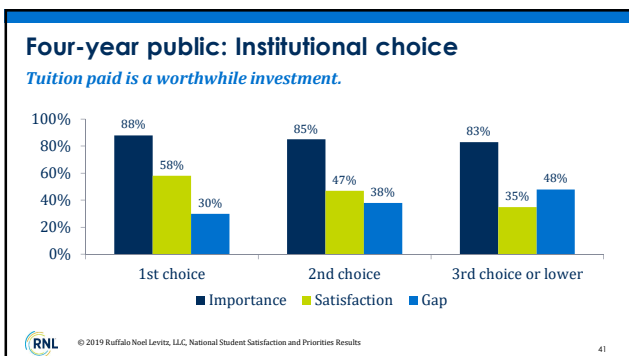
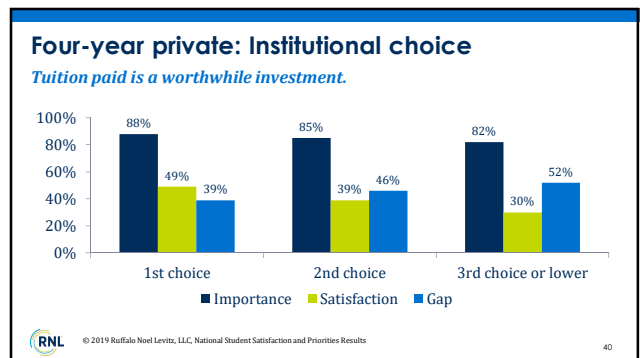
# Age

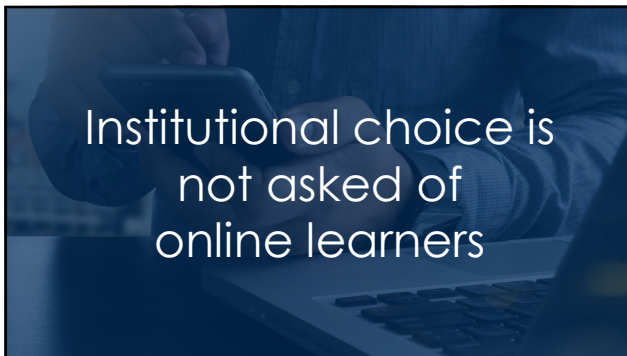
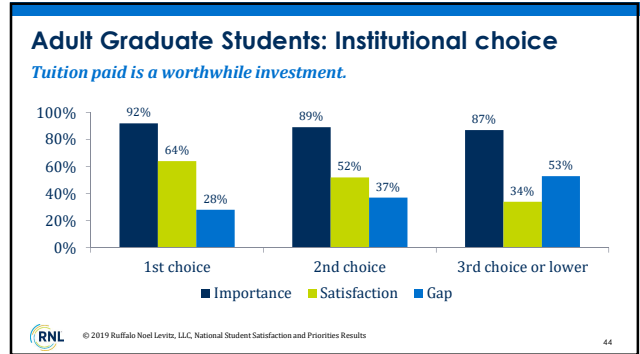
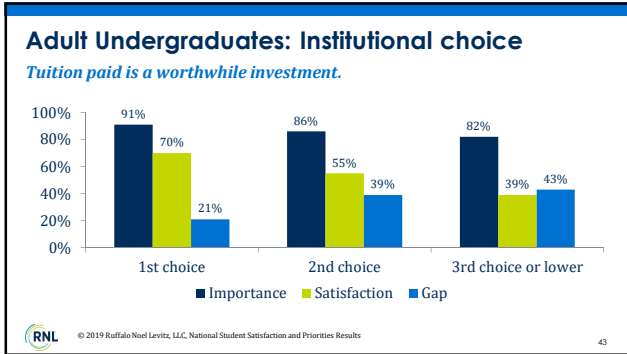


# Enrollment status: Online learners



# Institutional Choice



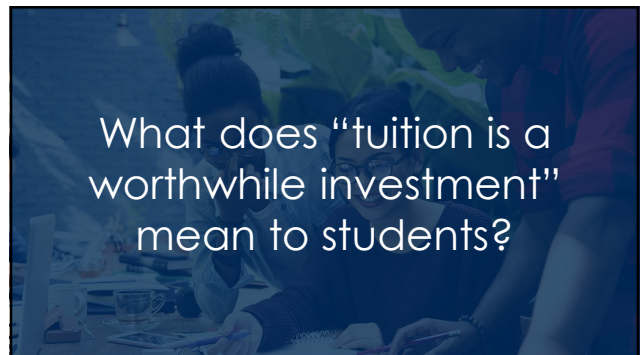


### The Power of Institutional Choice

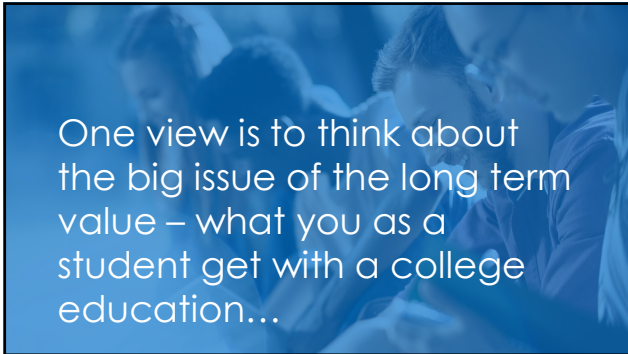
*Do you know how many of your students consider you their first choice institution?*

- If students WANT to be at your institution, they are more likely to be satisfied with their experience overall.
- As you recruit students, do you position yourself as a first-choice institution?
- Do you re-enforce the message to your currently enrolled students that they made the right choice, the best choice to attend this institution?

© 2019 RNL







### Average Salary and Unemployment by Degree Level

*Bureau of Labor Statistics*

The gap is further widened by the fact that the lower the degree, the more likely someone is to be unemployed.

According to the Georgetown University study, this can equal \$1 million in lifetime wages.

Degree Level	Avg. Weekly Salary	Unemploy. Rate
Less than high school	\$592	5.4%
High school diploma	\$746	3.7%
Associate degree	\$887	3.3%
Bachelor's degree	\$1248	2.2%
Master's degree	\$1497	2.0%
Doctoral degree	\$1883	1.1%

<https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm>

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### Do you have a poster like this on your campus?

**POST GRADUATE ACTIVITIES CLASS OF 2013**

Final Destination of 2013 Graduates

EMPLOYED 63%  
UNEMPLOYED 20%

**TOP GRADUATE SCHOOLS**

- University of Texas
- University of Missouri
- University of North Texas
- Florida State University

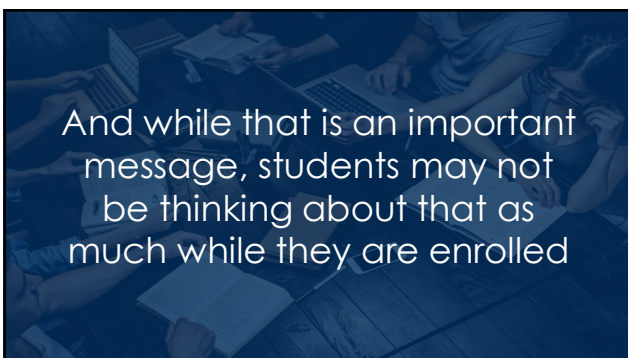
**SUMMARY OF CAREER PATHS**

- Education Administration: 17%
- Business Operations: 8%
- Business Health: 8%
- Consulting/HR Services: 7%
- Marketing Sales: 7%
- Writing: 4%
- Accounting: 4%
- Legal, Real Estate: 3%
- Business Development: 3%
- Public Services: 3%
- Classroom Management: 3%
- Government: 3%
- Other Various: 28%

**Type of Graduate/Professional Degree**

- OTHER: 4%
- LAW: 13%
- MEDICAL: 13%
- DOCTORATE: 8%
- MASTERS: 58%
- PROFESSIONAL: 1%

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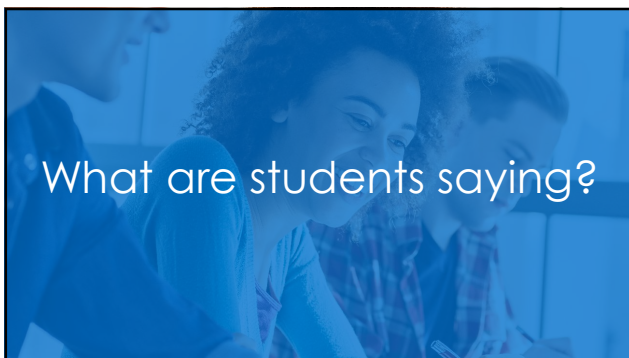
**What we are finding, is it may be more about taking care of the day-to-day experiences while they are enrolled at your institution**

The infographic features five blue circular icons arranged in a circle, each with a white icon and a label below it:
 

- Classes / Studies**: Icon of a person at a desk with a laptop.
- Connections**: Icon of two people talking.
- Schedules**: Icon of a calendar.
- Finances**: Icon of a money bag.
- Activities**: Icon of a globe.

 The RNL logo is in the bottom left corner, and the number 55 is in the bottom right corner.

Simple, minor grievances can be connected in students' minds to the tuition they are paying and the expectations they have for the quality of service they are expecting in return.



**What are students saying?**

“ We pay \$47,000 in tuition every year and the Wi-Fi doesn't even work everywhere on campus.

*My daughter Kylie, whose tuition was less than that with scholarships and who was not the one actually paying her tuition!*

RNL logo and number 58 are in the bottom left corner.

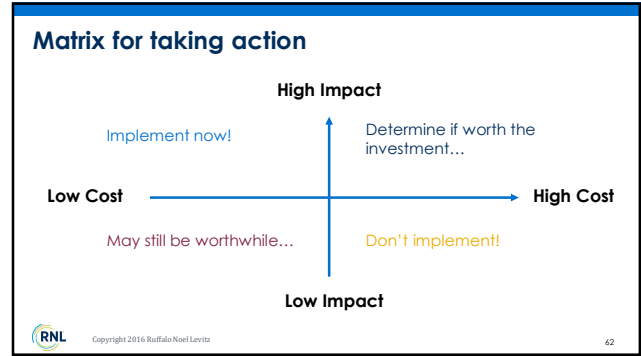
- Comments from students...**
- ✓ “The hours for the business office and health center are incredibly inconvenient because they are only open while I am in class.”
  - ✓ “I would like to receive an update at the end of each semester after I complete another course that will inform me how much closer I am to earning my degree.”
  - ✓ “Please make it quicker to see an advisor.”
  - ✓ “Great school, but you should listen to student concerns about cleaning up trash on the campus because it looks tacky.”
  - ✓ “WE NEED BETTER TOILET PAPER!”
- RNL logo and number 59 are in the bottom left corner.

“ It is distressing to pay almost as much in fees as I do tuition, and most of it is for things I do not use as a student who takes most classes online.”

*Anonymous student*

RNL logo and number 60 are in the bottom left corner.

What are the irritants on your campus that may be cost effective to respond to?



Do you have a continuous quality improvement environment on your campus?

Are you regularly gathering student feedback through surveys and listening sessions?

A side note on listening sessions


Are you celebrating your strengths and responding to your student-identified challenges?

**Gathering data is important**


Taking action as a result of the feedback is even **more** important

**Another key to influencing perceptions: Communication!**

Too often colleges try to ignore the elephant in the room by not talking about tuition, but I think it is better to address the topic in a proactive manner.




Three potential segments to influence...




Three potential segments to influence...

Building the case when you are recruiting students (and their families)



Three potential segments to influence...

Re-enforcing the messages while the students are currently enrolled (and sharing with families)

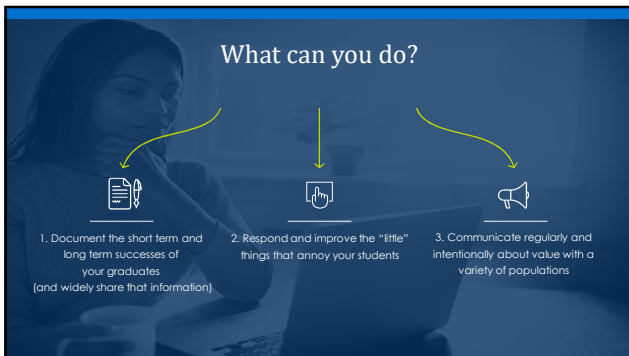
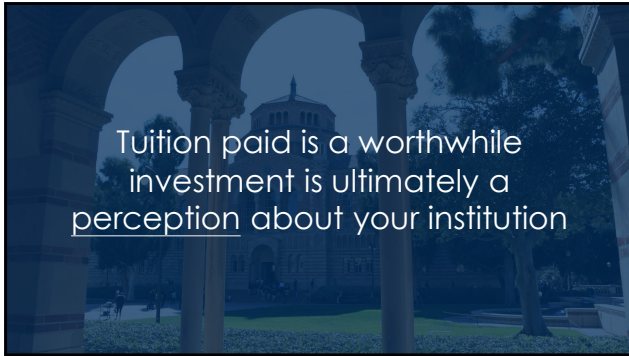


Three potential segments to influence...

Continue to share these messages with recent alumni

Contact me for a handout with communication ideas for each of these populations

Email: [Julie.Bryant@RuffaloNL.com](mailto:Julie.Bryant@RuffaloNL.com)  
Request: Tuition Paid Worthwhile Handout



### Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) Satisfaction-Priorities Survey Suite

- **Student Satisfaction Inventory™ (SSI)** is for traditional students, primarily enrolled on campus at four-year and two-year institutions.
- **Adult Student Priorities Survey™ (ASPS)** appropriate for undergraduate or graduate adult students.
- **Priorities Survey for Online Learners™ (PSOL)** for students in online distance learning programs. (Online only)
- **Institutional Priorities Survey™ (IPS)** for campus faculty, administration and staff is directly parallel to the SSI.
- **Parent Satisfaction Inventory™ (PSI)** for parents of currently enrolled students at four-year institutions (Online only)

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

### Assess student satisfaction systematically

Survey your students

Review and share the results

Explore the data

Respond to the data with new initiatives

Inform the campus

### Student Satisfaction is linked with:

<b>Individual student retention</b> (higher)	<b>Institutional graduation rates</b> (higher)	<b>Institutional alumni giving</b> (higher)	<b>Institutional loan default rates</b> (lower)
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[www.RuffaloNL.com](http://www.RuffaloNL.com)

“ You guys are doing good but there is always room for improvement. Thank you for taking the time to ask.”

*A community college student, in the comments section of the online survey*

## Thank you for joining me!

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