



**Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory:
A Gap Analysis Review
Illinois Valley Community College
Spring, 2021 Survey Administration**

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Abstract

Illinois Valley Community College administered the Spring, 2021 Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory to spring, 2021 students enrolled during the Covid-19 pandemic in hopes of measuring students' satisfaction with their learning experience during these most trying times. The results offer a mix of both satisfaction and disappointment during what can only be described as one of the most difficult periods in Illinois Valley's history as the College community continues to adjust to the protracted consequences of teaching and learning in an on-going pandemic.

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Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory
Illinois Valley Community College
Spring, 2021

The Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) was administered in the spring, 2021 semester via email to 1,792 eligible students of which approximately 305 responded (for comparison, in 2017, 2,382 students were invited to participate and 450 responded). The adjusted response rate did not surpass the anticipated national response rate of 20 percent. The 2017 survey reached 19.5 percent which equaled the spring, 2014 administration's response rate. This year, fewer than one in five Illinois Valley students responded to the Noel Levitz survey (17.0 percent). However, the response rate is respectable and closely mirrors the national average of 20 percent for community colleges. Illinois Valley has conducted the Noel Levitz SSI every three years since 2004. Originally scheduled for spring, 2020 the survey was postponed until spring, 2021 due to Covid-19 shutdowns. The original SSI format consisted of paper and pencil *Scantron* forms mailed to students. This year's SSI, like the 2017 survey, was administered via the eligible students' college and personal email accounts. Affording students multiple email options for receiving and completing the survey helps ensure optimal survey coverage participation.

Noel Levitz SSI is a *Gap Analysis* which differs from the more traditional student satisfaction survey which measures only satisfaction with students' college experience. The SSI purports to measure what students think is *Important* and then asks to what degree their *Satisfaction* is being met on multiple higher education related items. The difference between the two scores is the gap being measured.

The aim of this report is to give a comprehensive, yet brief, analysis of the spring, 2021 survey findings. The Noel Levitz SSI's 2021 outcomes highlight the strengths and challenges confronting Illinois Valley Community College in this most trying year of Covid-19 when the majority of classes were conducted online while being taught by faculty, many of whom are still new to online teaching and by students, many of whom were not at all familiar nor comfortable with classes being taught through distance education methods.

Despite this unfamiliarity, the spring, 2021 semester was technically the second full semester where students and faculty experienced online learning almost exclusively via *Zoom* and *Blackboard Learning Management* systems. Despite these limitations, the College thought it was best, if not essential, to discover how Illinois Valley students were coping under these unusual learning conditions.

Therefore, after input from administrators, faculty and staff, the decision was made to conduct the spring, 2021 survey. Despite the expected challenges, this data was needed to help guide the College community as it navigates its way through what is expected to be a difficult time for all who work for and attend Illinois Valley over the coming year(s).

Noel Levitz Student Satisfactory Inventory Overview

The heart of the Noel Levitz Student Satisfactory Inventory (SSI) is comprised of 95 statements designed to elicit responses from students that compare the gap between their perceived views of importance and satisfaction related to their collegiate experience. These 95 statements are further distilled down to 12 scales along with four stand-alone items covering four unrelated topics of interest to the college. The 12 scales cover such topics as Student Centeredness, Instructional Effectiveness, Safety & Security and Campus Climate just to name a few. A complete list of scales is provided in *Appendix D*. In addition, three *Summary Questions* designed to elicit students' satisfaction with their college choice were examined. A final section asks a series of *Demographic Questions*, such as gender, age, ethnicity and education goals along with many others totaling 15 statements in all. These questions help define who completed the survey while allowing for additional drill down analyses if required.

This year, embedded within the 95 statements are **ten Illinois Valley Community College Campus Items** that specifically ask questions related to students' satisfaction with the teaching and learning environment during the pandemic. This section will be covered in detail in this report.

Illinois Valley Survey Demographics

Almost 59 percent of survey respondents live at home with their parents while another nine percent rent a room or apartment off campus. The majority are enrolled during the day (85 percent) and take a full-time class load (64 percent). The class academic level is split almost evenly between freshmen (38 percent) and sophomore (44 percent) year. The top two educational goals are to obtain an Associate degree (56 percent) or transfer to another institution (25 percent). When asked what *choice Illinois Valley was when selecting a college* almost 84 percent indicated Illinois Valley was their first choice. Thirteen percent indicated Illinois Valley was their second choice. Asked what *most influenced a student's decision to attend Illinois Valley*, 37 percent specified *Word of mouth*. Only 11 percent mentioned *High school counselor*. Eighteen percent of respondents are nursing students. The majority of the demographic findings are similar if not identical to the responses tallied by the 2017 survey respondents. The complete list of demographic questions is provided in *Appendix B*.

Illinois Valley Strengths & Challenges

The following table examines the *Strengths & Challenges* confronting students as calculated by the 2021, SSI. This year's strengths outnumbered challenges 15 to 8. These numbers are similar to the 2017, SSI (14 vs. 9). Over half of the *Strengths* (8) carry over from the 2017 survey*. This is helpful to know since it indicates SSI's internal consistency helping to validate the 2021 results. The strengths emphasize IVCC's *knowledgeable faculty*, and *a safe & secure campus that is well maintained* where *adequate virtual library resources are provided as needed* and where *tutoring services are readily available*. In addition, *campus staff are caring and helpful* with particular attention paid to the *Admissions staff's knowledge*. Interestingly, some of the college's strengths are also found in its challenges. While academic area strengths indicate *faculty are knowledgeable in their fields* and *students had the opportunity to grow intellectually*, the bulk of the *Challenges* identified (6 of 8) impact academic related areas. In addition, six of the eight *Challenges* carry over from the 2017 survey*.

Strengths

- 31. *The campus is safe and secure for all students.*
- 58. *Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their fields.*
- 73. Campus item: My instructor is accessible by telephone, e-mail and/or virtually while I am off campus.
- 68. On the whole, the campus is well-maintained.
- 70. *I am able to experience intellectual growth here.*
- 50. *Tutoring services are readily available.*
- 05. The personnel involved in registration are helpful.
- 06. My academic advisor is approachable.
- 51. There are convenient ways of paying my school bill.
- 69. *There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus.*
- 39. The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate.
- 76. Campus item: Adequate virtual library resources are provided as needed.
- 45. *This institution has a good reputation within the community.*
- 41. *Admissions staff are knowledgeable.*
- 27. *The campus staff are caring and helpful.*

Challenges

- 07. *Adequate financial aid is available for most students.*
- 08. *Classes are scheduled at times that are convenient for me.*
- 18. *The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent.*
- 23. *Faculty are understanding of students' unique life circumstances.*
- 32. My academic advisor is knowledgeable about my program requirements.
- 40. *My academic advisor is knowledgeable about the transfer requirements of other schools.*
- 46. *Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress in a course.*
- 72. Campus item: Faculty provide timely feedback about my academic progress while in a virtual environment.

* Italicize indicates carry over from 2017 NL SSI survey.

Note: # refers to NL SSI item sequence number in full statistical report.

Most of these challenges need context in order to properly evaluate them. The inadequate support some students feel they are receiving may actually stem from issues that all students face at college and may not accurately portray the true support that Illinois Valley's faculty actually give. Indeed, as we will see briefly when compared to Midwest Region National norms, Illinois Valley compares favorably on most measures.

Illinois Valley Institutional Summary Scale Report

The complete Noel Levitz SSI is made up of 95 items plus three summary questions designed to rate students' perceived level of importance and overall satisfaction with Illinois Valley. For ease of analysis these 95 items are compressed into **Twelve Scales** allowing for a more concise examination. Each scale is comprised of multiple related items that, when combined, yield a calculated composite score. The following table ranks each *Scale* in order of importance and compares each with the National Community Colleges' Midwest Region comparison norms. The breakdown of each scale can be found in *Appendix A: Scale Summary*. *Appendix D: Twelve Summary Scales* details which individual survey Items fall under each Scale Summary.

Illinois Valley Institutional Summary Scales Spring, 2021 Scales: In Order of Importance

Scale	Illinois Valley Community College - SSI			National Community Colleges - Midwest Region			Mean Difference
	Importance	Satisfaction/SD	Gap	Importance	Satisfaction/SD	Gap	
Safety and Security	6.42	6.16/0.94	0.26	6.26	5.57/1.17	0.69	0.59***
Academic Advising/Counseling	6.38	5.90/1.25	0.48	6.32	5.66/1.32	0.66	0.24**
Admissions and Financial Aid	6.38	5.96/1.11	0.42	6.26	5.62/1.22	0.64	0.34***
Registration Effectiveness	6.38	6.06/0.97	0.32	6.31	5.79/1.03	0.52	0.27***
Instructional Effectiveness	6.37	5.85/1.14	0.52	6.35	5.75/1.08	0.60	0.10
Academic Services	6.35	6.10/0.96	0.25	6.26	5.90/1.02	0.36	0.20***
Student Centeredness	6.3	5.92/1.15	0.38	6.21	5.76/1.14	0.45	0.16*
Campus Climate	6.29	5.89/1.05	0.40	6.19	5.70/1.08	0.49	0.19**
Concern for the Individual	6.29	5.79/1.16	0.50	6.26	5.64/1.21	0.62	0.15*
Service Excellence	6.29	5.96/1.00	0.33	6.16	5.69/1.08	0.47	0.27***
Campus Support Services	6.10	5.69/1.33	0.41	5.87	5.47/1.27	0.40	0.22**
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations		6.05/1.20			5.89/1.24		0.20**

Importance = How important is it for IVCC to meet this expectation, Satisfaction = How satisfied are you that IVCC has met this expectation.

SD = standard deviation, Gap = difference between Importance and Satisfaction.

*Statistically significant difference at * 0.05 level, ** 0.01 level, ***0.001 level*

An important observation from the *Institutional Summary* is that Illinois Valley students are significantly more satisfied with their collegiate experience than the National Community Colleges - Midwest Regions cohort. The difference across 11 of 12 scales is statistically significant at moderate to high levels (between $p < .05$ - $p < 0.001$ levels). Illinois Valley students are most satisfied with *Safety & Security* on campus (6.16, 0.59***), *Academic Advising/Counseling* (5.90, 0.24**), *Admissions & Financial Aid* (5.96, 0.34***), and *Registration Effectiveness* (6.06, 0.27***). Additional scales in order of importance include *Academic Services* (6.10, 0.20***), *Student Centeredness* (5.92, 0.16*) followed by *Campus Climate* (5.89, 0.19**) which is similarly highly rated. The scales with the smallest Mean Difference score includes *Institutional Effectiveness* (5.85, 0.10), *Concern for the Individual* (5.79, 0.15*) and *Campus Support Services* (5.69, 0.22**). Rated without an *Importance* score is *Responsive to Diverse Populations* (6.05, 0.20**).

These rankings and external comparisons are important to keep in mind when analyzing Illinois Valley's satisfaction levels. When *Importance* and *Satisfaction* ratings are compared solely against what Illinois Valley students consider important and satisfied the results can be a bit misleading without noting that even Illinois Valley's challenges sometimes rank above the National Midwest norms.

Illinois Valley Summary Report

The *Item Percentage Summary Report* section is designed to provide a bottom line analysis covering the perceptions students develop while studying at Illinois Valley. It includes the average score for the responses to the summary items on the survey, as well as the percentage of responses for each of the possible indicators from Low (1) to High (7). The following table displays results for both measures along with statistically significant indicators if they are present.

The *Summary* results offer a mixed bag that are cautionary, yet offer hope for a post-pandemic learning experience at Illinois Valley. On two of the three measures Illinois Valley falls below the National Midwest norms. On the third measure Illinois Valley measures just above the National Midwest norms. The small magnitude in difference among all three measures gives hope for measurable improvements. When asked whether their (IVCC) *college experience has met their expectations*, Illinois Valley students rated it at 4.77 vs 5.01 for the Midwest cohort. This is a significant, yet small difference of -0.24 ($p < .01$). Asked to "*Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience at IVCC thus far,*" Illinois Valley students rated it at 5.52 vs. 5.62, a non-significant difference of -0.10. Finally, and of particular interest to Illinois Valley, is the third question which asks students, "*All in all, if you had to do it over,*

would you enroll here (Illinois Valley) again?" Respondents indicate in the affirmative that they would definitely consider enrolling in Illinois Valley again if given the chance. Illinois Valleys' mean score 6.00 (5.92 in 2017) is slightly higher, but not significantly, than the National Community College Midwest average of 5.91 (5.78 in 2017) yielding a non-significant mean difference of just +0.09.

**Noel Levitz SSI Spring, 2021
Item Percentage Summary Findings**

	Illinois Valley Community College - SSI	Midwest Community Colleges	Mean Difference
Summary Report			
So far, how has your college experience met your expectations?	4.77	5.01	-0.24**
1=Much worse than expected	2%	1%	
2=Quite a bit worse than I expected	2%	1%	
3=Worse than I expected	7%	5%	
4=About what I expected	32%	30%	
5=Better than I expected	25%	25%	
6=Quite a bit better than I expected	12%	15%	
7=Much better than expected	16%	19%	
Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far.	5.52	5.62	-0.10
1=Not satisfied at all	1%	1%	
2=Not very satisfied	4%	2%	
3=Somewhat dissatisfied	4%	4%	
4=Neutral	12%	10%	
5=Somewhat satisfied	11%	15%	
6=Satisfied	40%	40%	
7=Very satisfied	25%	25%	
All in all, if you had to do it over, would you enroll here again?	6.00	5.91	0.09
1=Definitely not	2%	1%	
2=Probably not	1%	3%	
3=Maybe not	3%	2%	
4=I don't know	7%	7%	
5=Maybe yes	6%	9%	
6=Probably yes	32%	30%	
7=Definitely yes	47%	44%	

**This report's top line provides a look at the average of responses that indicate an answer of 6 or 7 to the items in the survey: 6 is considered "important" or "satisfied" and 7 is considered "very important" or very Satisfied."*

*** Difference statistically significant at the .01 level*

Overall, the individual response percentages for each question do not vary greatly from their spring, 2017 survey numbers. This indicates a fair degree of stability over time and despite the ongoing pandemic.

Illinois Valley Pandemic Related Campus Items Analysis

Created and asked in response to attending Illinois Valley while still learning in the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic, Noel Levitz, in conjunction with the Office of Institutional Research, developed ten questions geared towards Illinois Valley's students that sought to measure how important and how satisfied students were with online learning and access to campus services, such as advising and library services, during the pandemic. Because these questions are mostly institution specific, there is no Midwest Region comparison group. The following questions (10) were worded and asked in such a way as to measure *Importance* and *Satisfaction* with these crucial pandemic related concerns.

1. **Campus item 71:** The quality of virtual instruction is excellent.
2. **Campus item 72:** Faculty provide timely feedback about my academic progress while in a virtual environment.
3. **Campus item 73:** My instructor is accessible by telephone, e-mail and/or virtually while I am off campus.
4. **Campus item 74:** I receive timely information on the availability of financial aid, even while we are remote.
5. **Campus item 75:** Virtual academic counseling is available.
6. **Campus item 76:** Adequate virtual library resources are provided as needed.
7. **Campus item 77:** Tutoring services are readily available virtually.
8. **Campus item 78:** Refund and billing policies are appropriate during the pandemic response.
9. **Campus item 79:** Virtual career services are available.
10. **Campus item 80:** Appropriate technical assistance is available to support virtual learning.

The Pandemic related campus items analysis can be found in *Appendix A: Item Report, Noel Levitz, Item Report, 2021 (Item 71-80)*. On average, respondents rated all ten items higher in *Importance* than *Satisfaction* which is expected given the nature of the questions. The Gap between *Importance* and *Satisfaction* averaged 0.42 across all ten questions. The largest gap, or greatest dissatisfaction belongs to Item 71, "*The quality of virtual instruction is excellent,*" which measures 0.96 (Imp = 6.19, Sat = 5.23). The smallest gap, or least dissatisfaction belongs to Item 77, "*Tutoring services are readily available virtually,*" which measures 0.17 (Imp = 6.33, Sat = 6.16). The second largest gap can be found in Item 72, "*Faculty provide timely feedback about my academic progress while in a virtual environment,*" which measures 0.90.

Item 72, "*The quality of virtual instruction is excellent,*" highlights a challenge previously identified in the *Challenge 2021 Report* section. Encouragingly, two *Strengths* are found in the Campus Item section. Campus item 73, "*My instructor is accessible by telephone, e-mail and/or virtually while I am off campus,*" which reveals a gap of 0.35. Camps item 76, "*Adequate virtual library resources are provided as needed,*" measures a gap of 0.26.

While the overall gap between *Importance* and *Satisfaction* is small, generally speaking, campus items related to virtual instruction and faculty feedback/accessibility issues saw a larger dissatisfaction gap than items related to traditional campus services such as access to counseling and library resources. Illinois Valley can take note of its online virtual performance, both good and bad, during the pandemic to better inform its response as post-pandemic learning and instruction moves forward.

A note for the *Scale Summary* and *Item Reports*: Calculating the Average Scores Means for importance and satisfaction for summary and individual items are calculated by summing the respondents' ratings (for those that responded to that specific item) and dividing by the number of respondents. The item calculation is based on the number of respondents to that item (not the total data set) and is unique for the responses to the importance and the satisfaction segments. Only responses between 1-7 are included; zero responses (for not applicable/not used) and blanks are not included when creating the average score.

Illinois Valley Item Report & Item Percentage Reports

The complete *Item Report* and *Item Percentage Report* are available in *Appendix A*. Due to their length and detail, readers are encouraged to review all 95 items at their convenience. Illinois Valley's results are compared with the Noel Levitz National Community Colleges – Midwest Region cohort. The Midwest Region was selected for comparison because it was believed to more accurately reflect and contrast with Illinois Valley's findings while not overstating the comparison. Previous research has shown that Illinois Valley's results compare very favorably to the national cohort (*NCCBP, 2021*) but less favorably to the state level cohort (*IPEDS Peer Group, 2021*). The Midwest Region cohort may better reflect where Illinois Valley stands viz-a-vis other Midwest institutions on these important satisfaction measures.

Conclusions & General Findings

The complete statistical report covers a wide range of subjects including many topics of interest to students, faculty and administrators alike. While the report should be reviewed from the student's perspective, one should keep in mind that this perspective is sometimes limited. Students may not always understand all the components that make the college work; thus certain components may seem at odds with individual expectations and experiences. From a student's perspective, Illinois Valley's strengths are in its facilities, campus security, admission, academic support services and advising approachability. Concerns can be found in perceived adequate financial aid availability, quality of

instruction in some classes, advising and satisfaction with faculty feedback, including in the virtual environment.

Ironically, several contradictions are apparent in the report. For instance, students' voice concern for the quality of instruction they receive in most of their classes while also stating that they experience intellectual growth while pursuing their education. Campus staff are caring and helpful, but students feel that faculty are not necessarily understanding of students' unique life circumstances. There is a good variety of courses provided on campus, but classes aren't scheduled at times that are convenient for students. And finally, faculty don't necessarily provide timely feedback about students' academic progress while in a virtual environment yet their instructor is accessible by telephone, e-mail and/or virtually while off campus.

These contradictions offer a cautionary tale. One should not read too much into individual survey results (Items 1-95 in complete statistical survey) without also comparing the *Institutional Summary Scales*. In order to make better sense of the internal results, one should compare Illinois Valley's results with the National Community Colleges' Midwest cohort comparison group which in many instances indicates that Illinois Valley Community College is performing equal to or better than the National Midwest average.

A final word about the conditions under which this survey was conducted is necessary to put the results in context. During the spring term of 2020, the nation's schools virtually ceased on-campus instruction and rapidly switched to virtual learning for the remainder of the semester due to the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Through hard work and a little bit of luck, the semester was concluded on time with hopes that normal on-campus operations would resume during the fall 2020 term. When it became apparent that remote learning was going to be the norm for the following academic year (2020-21), Illinois Valley, like all community colleges in the State of Illinois, switched to virtually all online learning for the duration. Exceptions were made for programs that required on-campus learning, such as nursing, and technical education programs such as truck driver training, electronics, and welding.

By the time the spring, 2021 Noel Levitz SSI was administered, Illinois Valley students had at least two and a half semesters experiencing virtual/online learning. Most classes were taught virtually, and student services were conducted for the most part via *Zoom*, internet, or phone. Despite Illinois Valley's recent, but hopefully brief, experience conducting large scale online learning, the decision was made to conduct the Noel Levitz SSI in hopes of gathering baseline data which would help guide the

College forward through the remainder of the pandemic. While the response rate was not as high (17.0 percent) as hoped for, the results nevertheless give the office of Institutional Research confidence that the findings are valid and consistent with the spring, 2017 survey (19.5 percent) which was conducted under pre-pandemic conditions.

Note: Additional analyses available upon request.

Appendices

Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory Illinois Valley Community College Spring, 2021

Appendix A: Illinois Valley Community College, Spring, 2021 Noel Levitz Statistical Results Tables

Appendix B: Illinois Valley Community College, Spring, 2021 Noel Levitz Demographic Results Tables

Appendix C: Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory: Survey Items 1-95, Summary Questions,
Demographics & IVCC Survey Academic Program Listing

Appendix D: Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory: Summary Scales (12) & Stand-Alone Items (4)