

Service Quality Assessment (SQA)

(Updated 2013)

This report presents the quantitative results of survey questions presented to undergraduate and graduate students at Excelsior College. Using data provided by the College, Hanover analyzes the 2012 service quality survey for Excelsior College. This report is a replication and extension of the reports on the 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, and 2009 service quality surveys, with the goal of aiding Excelsior in assessing and improving its service quality. A high standard of service quality is important for the reputation of the College, retention of current students, and recruiting of future students.

A total of 1,397 students participated in this survey, though only 1,174 students answered 50 percent or more of the questions and qualified to be included in the analysis. Also, per Excelsior's instructions, five students with the "DRP" degree code were dropped from the analysis. As a result, a total of 1,169 students are included in this analysis, including 1,071 undergraduate students and 98 graduate students.

The following key findings were constructed as a result of the service quality survey analysis:

- In terms of the most notable outcomes of the analysis, we find that **for undergraduate students, there has been an improvement in service quality in four of the five service dimensions – reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.** The service dimension improvement priority index for tangibles increased, showing a decline in service quality for that dimension. **For graduate students, service quality has improved in assurance and reliability, but declined in empathy, tangibles, and responsiveness.** The difference between undergraduate and graduate students can largely be attributed to higher graduate student expectations in four of the five areas, coupled with their lower perceptions in all five areas. For undergraduate students, reliability was the dimension with the greatest need for further improvement, while graduate students reported that responsiveness had the greatest need for improvement. For both undergraduate and graduate students, the remaining rank order for improvement was empathy, assurance, and tangibles.
- **For both undergraduate and graduate students, the Bursar/Student Accounts/Billing Office and Course Instructors were among the most important contributors to service gaps.** However, Academic Advisors also contributed greatly to service gaps for undergraduate students, while the Office of Registration and Records made a large contribution to service gaps for graduate students.
- Overall, results indicate that **for both undergraduate and graduate students, the online registration process and web services to search and register for courses and exams with syllabi were among their top most critical service innovations.** Among the bottom, least critical, service innovations for these two groups were shorter exams at a lower price, and the availability of EFT/direct deposit for student refunds.
- **The percentage of students who reported taking an online class decreased for both undergraduate and graduate students. Also, the mean for academic rigor (reverse scored, so higher scores indicate lower academic rigor) increased for both groups.** This indicates that students are increasingly rating the academic rigor of Excelsior's online courses lower than other

online courses they have taken. However, **the perceived value provided by Excelsior College remained largely unchanged**, with only slight decreases in some areas of value, cost, and quality at Excelsior for undergraduate and graduate students.

- **The gap in students' expectations and perceptions of staff and faculty's understanding of individual diversity when serving students increased since 2009 for both graduate and undergraduate students**, but decreased for undergraduate students compared to 2006.
- When asked about their awareness of student and academic resources at Excelsior, **undergraduate and graduate students reported being most aware of the Excelsior College Bookstore, and least aware of the Student Ombudsperson**. Students were also asked to indicate whether they had used a particular resource in the last six months, and to rate the quality of that resource. Undergraduate and graduate students were both most likely to report that they never used Student Disability Services, and least likely to report that they never used CCS100 Orientation. **Both groups of students rated Student Disability Services lowest, though undergraduate students rated CCS100 Orientation highest, while graduate students rated the Excelsior College Bookstore highest.**
- In terms of interest in implementing improvements, **undergraduate and graduate students were both fairly interested in having access to eBooks instead of physical books for Excelsior classes** (mean=5.11 and 5.23 on a seven-point scale, respectively). Both groups of students were also less interested in increased opportunities to engage outside of the classroom with other Excelsior College students (mean=3.87 and 3.82 on a seven-point scale, respectively).