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## 2012 Noel-Levitz research highlights: 7 things we learned about college students this year

1 Comment

by [Fred Longenecker](#)

Noel-Levitz conducted numerous studies in 2012 to further understand the behaviors and attitudes of prospective and current students in higher education as they relate to student success, student retention, and new student enrollment. Here are just a few highlights from all that we learned this year:

### 1. The financial need levels of incoming freshmen keep rising.

Our trend data and research from five separate studies in 2012 confirm that student finances must remain an ongoing, strategic issue for today's enrollment managers and their colleagues to address. Read [Five Financial Realities Facing Today's College Students](#).

### 2. Students over the age of 25 and online learners are among the most satisfied.

On a positive note, we examined the satisfaction levels of today's students and observed that nontraditional students are some of the most satisfied learners in higher education. Our satisfaction research also showed that a college's academic reputation is still a highly important criterion in college choice. See our [2012 National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Reports](#) and our [2012 Factors to Enroll Reports](#).

### 3. Students transferring to four-year institutions are even more receptive to career planning and academic assistance than native students.

Our research into the needs and attitudes of today's students found that many students are receptive to assistance in a variety of forms. See our [2012 National Freshman Attitudes Report](#) and a related pilot study: [The Attitudes of Second-Year College Students \(With Transfer Student Addendum\)](#).

### 4. Most prospective students can't find what they want on a college Web site because of challenges with the site navigation.

Navigation issues were the top challenge reported in a study of college-bound students' experiences with college Web sites. In two separate studies, we also learned that fewer than half of colleges offer mobile-optimized Web site experiences even though more than half of students who own a mobile device have looked at a campus Web site on their mobile device. See our [2012 E-Expectations Report](#) and our [2012 E-Recruiting Practices](#).



2012 research from Noel-Levitz shows student trends and data that colleges and universities can use to guide their planning processes.



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[Report](#). Also see our [2012 Mobile Expectations Report](#).

## 5. Secret shopping is still going strong.

About one-third of incoming freshmen and more than half of transfer students in fall 2012 were unknown to an admissions office before they submitted an application. In a separate study, we also learned that nearly half of prospective students (49 percent) "bail out" after completing only the portion of a college's net price calculator that doesn't require parents' tax information. See our [2012 Discounting Report](#) (page 8) for net price calculator usage data and watch for the secret shopper findings in our upcoming Recruitment Funnel Benchmarks Report to be released in January 2013.

## 6. Students admitted to master's programs are attracted by assistantships and opportunities to visit campus.

Hosting campus visits for admitted students, awarding assistantships, and following up on incomplete applications by e-mail all rated highly in a study of master's-level marketing and student recruitment practices conducted by Noel-Levitz and NAGAP, the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals. See the report, [2012 Marketing and Student Recruitment Practices for Master's-Level Graduate Programs](#).

## 7. Not enough students are staying to satisfy colleges' goals.

Although re-enrollments held steady or slightly improved at the median in fall 2012 for first-year students, most four-year institutions struggled to meet the demand of their higher retention goals. See our report, [Fall 2012 New Student Enrollment and Retention Outcomes](#).

You can [find more higher education papers and reports on our Web site](#) and additional student research on our [blog](#). In 2012, we also looked at special populations including [nontraditional students](#), [students of various races/ethnicities](#), and [male vs. female freshmen](#). Looking ahead to 2013, we anticipate many more studies, including further research on popular and emerging practices for student recruitment and retention.

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### About the author



*Fred Longenecker, higher education trend specialist, identifies and reports trends in the higher education marketplace using Noel-Levitz's national electronic benchmark polls and the firm's proprietary databases. He brings 19 years of experience as an educational researcher and communicator for Noel-Levitz.*

[Read more about Fred's experience and expertise »](#)

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## 1 Response to "2012 Noel-Levitz research highlights: 7

## things we learned about college students this year"



**Thomas**

**Strobel** says:

[January 10, 2013 at 2:36 pm](#)

Online courses are frightening to those who haven't taken them before because they are so different than the education we have grown up on. But I agree, once a person has gotten used to them, they often turn out better than expected just because they are often potentially allow you to learn more efficiently than in a classroom setting due to the learn-at-your-own-pace style.



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