

**MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY- MANKATO**  
**NOEL-LEVITZ PRIORITY SURVEY FOR ONLINE LEARNERS**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**JANUARY, 2007**

**Submitted by:**  
**Tracy L. Pellett, Executive Director of University Assessment**

The Noel-Levitz Priority Survey for Online Learners Inventory measured the satisfaction **and** the importance of campus issues to Minnesota State University online students in the fall, 2006. Two hundred forty-nine students out of a possible 794 (31% response rate) rated 26 items in the inventory by the importance of specific expectations as well as their satisfaction with how well those expectations were being met. These questions can be organized into 5 composite scales. In addition, ten campus specific items were provided for additional information related to MSU-Mankato.

**SCALE AREAS**  
**Academic Services**  
**Enrollment Services**  
**Institutional Perceptions**  
**Institutional Services**  
**Student Services**

**MSU Respondent Characteristics:**

Table 1 shows selected characteristics of MSU online students that completed the PSOL in 2006. The second column represents PSOL student respondents while the third column represents MSU institutional data of all online students where such data exists. This data is important as it provides some understanding as to how representative respondents were in relation to the entire institutional population group. MSU PSOL respondents mirrored institutional data fairly well with gender having a slightly higher percentage (9%) of respondents identifying as female than what is reflected in institutional data. Race and ethnicity are also fairly similar between PSOL respondents and institutional data. White students seemed to be slightly overrepresented while students categorized as unknown were less represented. Enrollment status of respondents and institutional data were also similar. Class status was also similar between PSOL respondents and institutional data except for a slightly higher percentage (9%) of respondents being graduate students and a slightly lower percentage (14%) of respondents being seniors. It should also be noted that approximately half of the MSU PSOL respondents reported working full-time and that only one in four respondents were enrolled in a complete online degree program. In addition, four-fifths (81%) of MSU PSOL respondents reported being currently enrolled in six or less online credit hours with less than half (42%) having had no previous online class experience.

**Table 1** Characteristics of MSU PSOL 2006 Respondents to Total Online Student Population

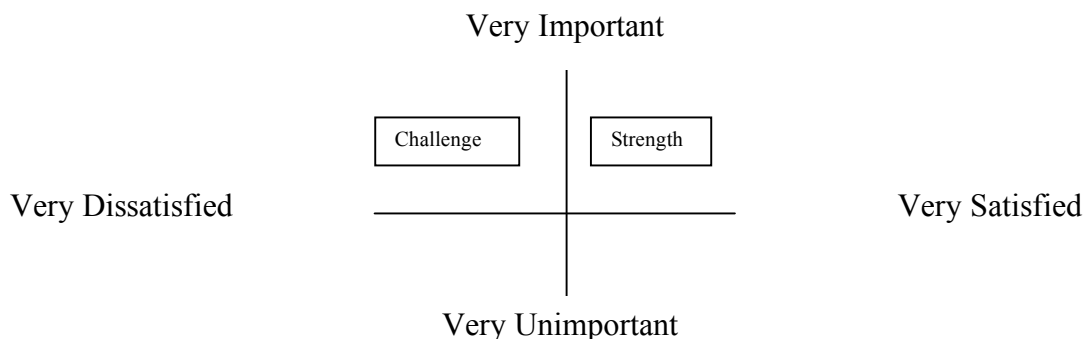
Areas	PSOL Respondents N= 249	Institution N= 794
<b>Gender:</b>		
Female	72%	63%
Male	28%	37%
<b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>		
White	91%	84%
Minority	6%	8%
Unknown	3%	8%
<b>Enrollment Status:</b>		
Fulltime	63%	62%
Part-time	37%	38%

Areas	PSOL Respondents N= 249	Institution N= 794
<b>Class Status:</b>		
First Year	3%	2%
Sophomore	10%	7%
Junior	12%	16%
Senior	25%	39%
Graduate	42%	33%
Other	9%	3%
<b>Employment:</b>		
Full-time	48%	
Part-time	41%	
Not-employed	11%	
<b>Current Academic Plans:</b>		
Complete online degree program	26%	
Complete degree on campus	54%	
Transfer Credits	3%	
Complete this course	17%	
<b>Current Online Enrollment:</b>		
1-3 credits	50%	
4-6 credits	31%	
7-9 credits	9%	
10-12 credits	5%	
13-15 credits	3%	
More than 15 credits	2%	
<b>Previous Online Enrollment:</b>		
No Classes	42%	
1-3 classes	36%	
4-6 classes	12%	
7-9 classes	4%	
10-12 classes	2%	
13-15 classes	2%	
More than 15 classes	2%	
<b>Which of the following services have you used?*</b>		
Minnesota Online Website	15%	
Minnesota Online D2L Help Desk Website	50%	
Both the MnOnline Website and the D2L Help Desk Website	13%	
Neither the MnOnline Website nor the D2L Help Desk Website	22%	

\* Institutional Question

### MSU Institutional Analysis of Items

The following individual items (i.e., questions) were determined to be strengths or challenges of the institution as based on their level of importance and satisfaction to students. Those areas rated by students of importance and satisfaction (importance above the midpoint and satisfaction in the upper quartile) were considered institutional strengths while areas of higher importance but lower satisfaction (i.e., importance above midpoint and satisfaction in the bottom quartile and/or performance gap in the upper quartile) were considered institutional challenges. The illustration below attempts to display this concept graphically:



***Institutional Strengths:***

MSU PSOL respondents had higher expectations and satisfaction for the online course delivery platform (Desire2Learn or D2L). In addition, respondents had higher expectations and satisfaction for enrollment issues relating to registration, billing and payment procedures. In relation to instruction, respondents rated faculty expectations of work quality, the appropriateness of instructional content, challenging nature of course activities, and the usability, viewability, and accessibility of media higher than other areas. It should be noted that the strengths were consistent in both the 2005 and 2006 administrations.

Item	Importance Level*		Satisfaction Level**		Performance Gap***	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
The online course delivery platform (Desire2Learn or D2L) is reliable.	6.53	6.55	5.46	5.73	1.07	0.82
Registration for online courses is convenient.	6.39	6.50	5.86	5.81	0.53	0.69
Instructional materials are appropriate for program content.	6.30	6.34	5.49	5.40	0.81	0.94
Course media are viewable, useable, and accessible.	6.28	6.37	5.62	5.42	0.66	0.95
Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me.	6.25	6.29	5.87	5.75	0.38	0.54
Faculty expectations of work and assignment quality are high.	6.25	6.24	5.61	5.47	0.64	0.77

\*(Importance Scale: 1=not important at all, 2 = not very important,3= somewhat unimportant, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat important, 6=important, 7=very important)

\*\* (Satisfaction Scale: 1-not satisfied at all, 2-not very satisfied, 3-somewhat dissatisfied, 4-neutral, 5-somewhat satisfied, 6-satisfied, 7-very satisfied)

\*\*\*Performance Gap: Higher gaps reflect incongruence in level of importance and satisfaction.

***Institutional Challenges:***

MSU PSOL respondents had higher expectations and lower satisfaction for academic areas relating to clarity and reasonableness of program requirements and the sufficiency of offerings. In addition, respondents had higher expectations and lower satisfaction regarding faculty responsiveness to students needs, providing timely feedback, and in clearly defining assignments in syllabi. Finally, overall quality of instruction and a determination as to whether the tuition paid was a worthwhile investment were areas of high importance but lower levels of satisfaction as compared to other areas for respondents. It should be noted that the challenges were consistent in both the 2005 and 2006 administrations.

Item	Importance Level*		Satisfaction Level**		Performance Gap***	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
Faculty are responsive to student needs.	6.46	6.46	5.24	5.20	1.22	1.26
Course goals and procedures (e.g., completing assignments, projects, and papers) are clearly communicated.	6.41	6.47	5.37	5.25	1.04	1.22
Program requirements are clear and reasonable.	6.42	6.45	5.28	5.13	1.14	1.32
There are sufficient offerings within my program of study.	6.41	6.38	4.97	5.02	1.44	1.36
This institution responds quickly when I request information.	6.25	6.31	5.19	5.01	1.06	1.30
The quality of online instruction is excellent.	6.36	6.40	#5.18	4.79	1.18	1.61
Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.	6.32	6.46	5.08	4.82	1.24	1.64
Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress.	6.30	6.43	4.84	4.88	1.46	1.55

\*(Importance Scale: 1=not important at all, 2 = not very important,3= somewhat unimportant, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat important, 6=important, 7=very important)

\*\* (Satisfaction Scale: 1-not satisfied at all, 2-not very satisfied, 3-somewhat dissatisfied, 4-neutral, 5-somewhat satisfied, 6-satisfied, 7-very satisfied)

\*\*\*Performance Gap: Higher gaps reflect incongruence in level of importance and satisfaction.

# Significant difference (p<.05) between 2006 & 2005 administrations

**Scale Area Summaries**

Survey questions can be organized into 5 composite scales. The scales can be considered conceptually as an overview of how important and satisfied students are with broad areas related to their online learning experience. MSU respondents rated instructional and academic services as relatively most important while reporting the greatest satisfaction with enrollment services in both the 2005 and 2006 PSOL administrations. The least satisfaction was with student services, although the greatest performance gap was with instructional services. It should be noted that differences were not great between scale areas.

Scale	Importance Level*		Satisfaction Level**		Performance Gap***	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
<b>Instructional Services</b>	6.16	6.21	5.16	5.08	1.00	1.13
<b>Academic Services</b>	6.15	6.12	5.19	5.11	0.96	1.01
<b>Enrollment Services</b>	6.11	6.18	5.47	5.38	0.64	0.80
<b>Institutional Perceptions</b>	6.05	6.09	5.20	5.12	0.85	0.97
<b>Student Services</b>	6.02	5.96	5.11	4.93	0.91	1.03

\*(Importance Scale: 1=not important at all, 2 = not very important,3= somewhat unimportant, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat important, 6=important, 7=very important)

\*\* (Satisfaction Scale: 1-not satisfied at all, 2-not very satisfied, 3-somewhat dissatisfied, 4-neutral, 5-somewhat satisfied, 6-satisfied, 7-very satisfied)

\*\*\*Performance Gap: Higher gaps reflect incongruence in level of importance and satisfaction.

### **Academic Services**

Academic Services assesses the services students utilize to achieve their academic goals. These services include advising, course offerings, technical assistance, online library sources, and tutoring services. Respondents rated program requirements and offerings as areas of most importance while online library resources and advisor accessibility as areas of greater relative satisfaction. Tutoring services was rated least in relative importance and satisfaction in both the 2005 and 2006 PSOL administrations. Note that students were less satisfied with tutoring services in 2006 than 2005.

<i>Academic Services</i>	Importance Level*		Satisfaction Level**		Performance Gap***	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
Adequate online library resources are provided.	6.06	6.04	5.47	5.63	0.59	0.41
My program advisor is accessible by telephone and e-mail.	6.36	6.30	5.46	5.33	0.90	0.97
Program requirements are clear and reasonable.	6.42	6.45	5.28	5.13	1.14	1.32
Appropriate technical assistance is readily available.	6.10	6.06	5.19	5.24	0.91	0.82
My program advisor helps me work toward career goals.	6.12	6.21	5.07	4.91	1.05	1.30
There are sufficient offerings within my program of study.	6.41	6.38	4.97	5.02	1.44	1.36
Tutoring services are readily available for online courses.	5.37	5.21	4.69	#4.23	0.68	0.98

\*(Importance Scale: 1=not important at all, 2 = not very important,3= somewhat unimportant, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat important, 6=important, 7=very important)

\*\* (Satisfaction Scale: 1-not satisfied at all, 2-not very satisfied, 3-somewhat dissatisfied, 4-neutral, 5-somewhat satisfied, 6-satisfied, 7-very satisfied)

\*\*\*Performance Gap: Higher gaps reflect incongruence in level of importance and satisfaction.

# Significant difference (p<.05) between 2006 & 2005 administrations

### **Instructional Services**

Instructional Services measures students' academic experience, the instructional materials, the faculty/student interactions, evaluation procedures, and the quality of instruction. Respondents rated faculty responsiveness to student needs as most important and instructional materials as an area of greatest satisfaction. Although rated as areas of higher importance, timely faculty feedback regarding student progress and the quality of instruction were rated lower in terms of satisfaction in both the 2005 and 2006 PSOL administrations. Note that students were less satisfied with the quality of online instruction in 2006 as compared to 2005.

<i>Instructional Services</i>	Importance Level*		Satisfaction Level**		Performance Gap***	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
Instructional materials are appropriate for program content.	6.30	6.34	5.49	5.40	0.81	0.94
Student assignments are clearly defined in the syllabus.	6.40	6.46	5.24	5.26	1.16	1.20
Faculty are responsive to student needs.	6.46	6.46	5.24	5.20	1.22	1.26
Assessment and evaluation procedures are clear and reasonable.	6.12	6.28	5.22	5.15	0.90	1.13
The quality of online instruction is excellent.	6.36	6.40	5.18	#4.79	1.18	1.61
The frequency of student and instructor interactions is adequate.	6.03	6.05	5.14	5.05	0.89	1.00
Student-to-student collaborations are valuable to me.	5.34	5.24	4.94	4.93	0.40	0.31
Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress.	6.30	6.43	4.84	4.88	1.46	1.55

\*(Importance Scale: 1=not important at all, 2 = not very important,3= somewhat unimportant, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat important, 6=important, 7=very important)

\*\* (Satisfaction Scale: 1-not satisfied at all, 2-not very satisfied, 3-somewhat dissatisfied, 4-neutral, 5-somewhat satisfied, 6-satisfied, 7-very satisfied)

\*\*\*Performance Gap: Higher gaps reflect incongruence in level of importance and satisfaction.

# Significant difference (p<.05) between 2006 & 2005 administrations

**Enrollment Services**

Enrollment Services assesses the processes and services related to enrolling students in the online program, including financial aid, including registration and payment procedures. Registration convenience was rated highest in terms of importance, while both registration and billing convenience were rated higher with regard to satisfaction. Receiving timely information regarding financial aid was rated lowest in relative importance and satisfaction in both the 2005 and 2006 PSOL administrations.

<i>Enrollment Services</i>	Importance Level*		Satisfaction Level**		Performance Gap***	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me.	6.25	6.29	5.87	5.75	0.38	0.54
Registration for online courses is convenient.	6.39	6.50	5.86	5.81	0.53	0.69
Adequate financial aid is available.	5.89	5.95	4.98	4.86	0.91	1.09
I receive timely information on the availability of financial aid.	5.83	5.87	4.93	4.82	0.90	1.05

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\*\* (Satisfaction Scale: 1-not satisfied at all, 2-not very satisfied, 3-somewhat dissatisfied, 4-neutral, 5-somewhat satisfied, 6-satisfied, 7-very satisfied)

\*\*\*Performance Gap: Higher gaps reflect incongruence in level of importance and satisfaction.

**Student Services**

Student Services measures the quality of student programs and services, including responses to student requests, online career services, and the bookstore. Institutional information response was rated highest in terms of importance while an awareness of whom to contact for information was rated highest in terms of satisfaction. Channels for addressing student complaints was rated as the area of least satisfaction in both the 2005 and 2006 PSOL administrations.

<i>Student Services</i>	Importance Level*		Satisfaction Level**		Performance Gap***	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
This institution responds quickly when I request information.	6.25	6.31	5.19	5.01	1.06	1.30
Channels are available for providing timely responses to student complaints.	5.87	5.76	4.79	4.56	1.08	1.20
Online career services are available.	5.59	5.50	5.08	4.85	0.51	0.65
I am aware of whom to contact for questions about programs and services.	6.17	6.11	5.23	4.96	0.94	1.15
The bookstore provides timely service to students.	6.13	6.03	5.16	5.21	0.97	0.82

\*(Importance Scale: 1=not important at all, 2 = not very important,3= somewhat unimportant, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat important, 6=important, 7=very important)

\*\* (Satisfaction Scale: 1-not satisfied at all, 2-not very satisfied, 3-somewhat dissatisfied, 4-neutral, 5-somewhat satisfied, 6-satisfied, 7-very satisfied)

\*\*\*Performance Gap: Higher gaps reflect incongruence in level of importance and satisfaction.

**Institutional Perceptions**

Institutional perception assesses how students perceive the institution with relation to reputation and investment. Differences between importance and satisfaction were greater in relation to whether tuition was a good investment as compared to institutional reputation in both the 2005 and 2006 PSOL administrations.

<i>Institutional Perceptions</i>	Importance Level*		Satisfaction Level**		Performance Gap***	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
This institution has a good reputation.	5.79	5.72	5.32	5.41	0.47	0.31
Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.	6.32	6.46	5.08	4.82	1.24	1.64

\*(Importance Scale: 1=not important at all, 2 = not very important,3= somewhat unimportant, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat important, 6=important, 7=very important)

\*\* (Satisfaction Scale: 1-not satisfied at all, 2-not very satisfied, 3-somewhat dissatisfied, 4-neutral, 5-somewhat satisfied, 6-satisfied, 7-very satisfied)

\*\*\*Performance Gap: Higher gaps reflect incongruence in level of importance and satisfaction.

### MSU Campus Questions

The Noel-Levitz Priority Survey for Online Learners Inventory allowed participating institutions to select items that were particularly relevant to their campus. The following items and results are reflected from items developed at MSU. The area rated of greatest importance to respondents was whether the D2L platform was reliable. Satisfaction was highest in 2005 for course media and faculty expectations of work while a reliable online delivery platform was highest in 2006.

Item	Importance Level*		Satisfaction Level**		Performance Gap***	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
Course media are viewable, useable, and accessible	6.28	6.37	5.62	5.42	0.66	0.95
Faculty expectations of work and assignment quality are high.	6.25	6.24	5.61	5.47	0.64	0.77
Course opportunities and activities allow and include diverse perspectives (different race, religion, gender, disabilities, political beliefs, etc.)	5.86	5.88	5.58	5.56	0.28	0.32
Course opportunities and activities are provided for students to think creatively and critically	6.17	6.20	5.55	5.49	0.62	0.71
The online course delivery platform (Desire2Learn or D2L) is reliable.	6.53	6.55	5.46	5.73	1.07	0.82
Searching the Minnesota Online website provides useful information about online programs and courses.	6.08	6.01	5.41	5.33	0.67	0.68
Course goals and procedures (e.g., completing assignments, projects, and papers) are clearly communicated.	6.41	6.47	5.37	5.25	1.04	1.22
Help desk and online support are effective	6.19	6.09	5.29	5.35	0.90	0.74
The quality of student interaction with faculty is excellent.	6.20	6.25	5.17	5.11	1.03	1.14
Faculty care about me as an individual	6.16	6.24	5.03	5.10	1.13	1.14

\*(Importance Scale: 1=not important at all, 2 = not very important,3= somewhat unimportant, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat important, 6=important, 7=very important)

\*\* (Satisfaction Scale: 1-not satisfied at all, 2-not very satisfied, 3-somewhat dissatisfied, 4-neutral, 5-somewhat satisfied, 6-satisfied, 7-very satisfied)

\*\*\*Performance Gap: Higher gaps reflect incongruence in level of importance and satisfaction.

### MSU Comparison to National Institutional Means

National group importance and satisfaction means allowed comparison between MSU and other institutions (i.e., 78) across the country. It should be noted that the list of institutions used for comparison varied greatly from one another in terms of offerings, levels (private; public; community college and four year). Thus, caution should be used in drawing conclusions from these comparisons. However, MSU respondents reported less overall satisfaction with all areas when compared against national means. The following table describes the differences between MSU respondents and all other respondents nationally.

Area	MSU		National		Mean Difference of Satisfaction	Significance
	Importance Mean	Satisfaction Mean	Importance Mean	Satisfaction Mean		
Enrollment Services	6.18	5.38	6.39	5.78	- 0.61	p<.001
Institutional Perceptions	6.09	5.12	6.42	5.70	-0.58	p<.001
Academic Services	6.12	5.11	6.29	5.61	-0.50	p<.001
Instructional Services	6.21	5.08	6.37	5.70	-0.62	p<.001
Student Services	5.96	4.93	6.28	5.56	-0.63	p<.001

\*(Importance Scale: 1=not important at all, 2 = not very important,3= somewhat unimportant, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat important, 6=important, 7=very important)

\*\* (Satisfaction Scale: 1-not satisfied at all, 2-not very satisfied, 3-somewhat dissatisfied, 4-neutral, 5-somewhat satisfied, 6-satisfied, 7-very satisfied)

**MSU Comparison to MnSCU Institutions  
(Bemidji State; St. Cloud State; Winona State; Metropolitan State)**

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) group importance and satisfaction means allowed comparison between MSU and other four-year institutions in the same system. Overall, MSU respondents were significantly less satisfied as online learners than other MnSCU respondents in the areas of enrollment, instructional, and student services. The following table describes the differences between MSU respondents and other MnSCU respondents.

<i>Area</i>	<i>MSU</i>		<i>MnSCU</i>		<i>Mean Difference of Satisfaction</i>	<i>Significance</i>
	<b>Importance Mean</b>	<b>Satisfaction Mean</b>	<b>Importance Mean</b>	<b>Satisfaction Mean</b>		
Enrollment Services	6.18	5.38	6.24	5.55	- 0.17	p<.05
Institutional Perceptions	6.09	5.12	6.13	5.28	-0.16	
Academic Services	6.12	5.11	6.20	5.24	-0.13	
Instructional Services	6.21	5.08	6.19	5.33	-0.25	p<.01
Student Services	5.96	4.93	6.12	5.21	-0.28	p<.001

\*(*Importance Scale*: 1=not important at all, 2 = not very important,3= somewhat unimportant, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat important, 6=important, 7=very important)

\*\*(*Satisfaction Scale*: 1-not satisfied at all, 2-not very satisfied, 3-somewhat dissatisfied, 4-neutral, 5-somewhat satisfied, 6-satisfied, 7-very satisfied)

**Enrollment Services:** MSU respondents were significantly less satisfied as online learners than other MnSCU respondents in relation to registration convenience.

**Instructional Services:** MSU respondents were significantly less satisfied as online learners than other MnSCU respondents in relation to instructional materials being appropriate for program content, faculty providing timely feedback about student progress, frequency and adequacy of student and instructor interactions, assessment and evaluation procedures being clear and reasonable, faculty responsiveness to student needs, and the overall quality and excellence of online instruction.

**Student Services:** MSU respondents were significantly less satisfied as online learners than other MnSCU respondents in relation to the institution responding quickly to requested information, channels being available for providing timely responses to student complaints, online career services being available, awareness of whom to contact for questions about programs and services, and the bookstore's timeliness and service to students.