

Adult Learner Focused Institution (ALFI) Assessment

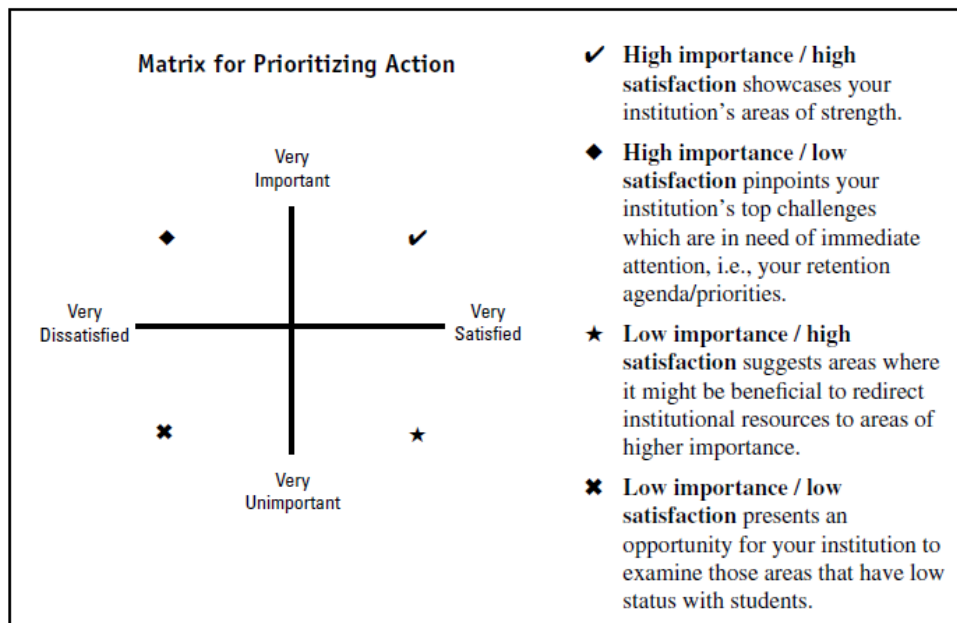
Purpose of the ALFI

As part of the *College!Now* initiative Helena College participated with the 4 former colleges of technology, 3 community colleges, and the two year programs at MSU-Northern, UM-Western, Bitterroot and Gallatin Valley in the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) Adult Learner Focused Institution Assessment (ALFI). The ALFI is designed to assess how Montana's two-year college system is aligned to serve adult students using CAEL's [Nine Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Students](#) as benchmarks. The assessment includes two components: the Adult Learner Inventory (ALI) which measures student perspectives, and the Institutional Self-Assessment Survey (ISAS) which measures administrator, staff and faculty perspectives.

Survey Administration & Response

The two surveys were administered during 2012 spring semester. The ISAS was completed by the College Council, the representative body comprised of faculty, staff and administrators charged with strategic planning and assessment. Responses to each survey item were based on council discussion and consensus and recorded on a final hardcopy of the survey. The ALI, a Noel-Levitz product, was completed electronically by adult students via a link to a secure website. An invitation and two follow-up reminders addressed from the Dean/CEO were sent to students using their student email accounts. Five \$10 gift cards to the coffee counter were provided as an incentive courtesy of the Director of Student Success. The survey population consisted of all degree-seeking students 25 year of age or older representing a total of 715 students, 56% of the total degree-seeking enrollment in spring 2012. 114 adult students completed the survey, a response rate of 16%. The majority of the respondents could be described as female students, ages 25-44, having dependents, attending full-time on campus enrolled in general transfer, accounting & business or nursing programs.

Noel-Levitz Survey Methodology



What is Important to Helena College Adult Learners (Ranking of CAEL Principles Based on Survey Results)

1. Outreach
2. Life and Career Planning
3. Financing
3. Teaching & Learning Process
4. Technology
5. Student Support Services
6. Transitions
7. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Strengths and Challenges for Helena College

Strengths (above average importance score; top 25% satisfaction score)

1. This college explains what is needed for me to complete my program
2. I have a clear understanding of what I am expected to learn
3. The learning experiences within my program of study challenge me to reach beyond what I know already
4. Technology enables me to get the services I need when I need them
5. This college assists students who need help with the financial aid process
6. My studies are closely related to my life and work goals
7. I am encouraged to apply the classes I've taken towards a degree or certificate
8. I am able to obtain information I need by phone, fax, e-mail or online
9. The college provides "one-stop shopping" for most student support services
10. Technology support is available to me when I need it

Challenges (above average importance score; bottom 25% satisfaction score/top 25% performance gap)

1. My program allows me to pace my studies to fit my life and work schedules
2. My instructors provide timely feedback about my academic progress
3. I am able to choose course delivery that fits my life circumstances
4. Sufficient course offerings within my program are available each term
5. I receive the help I need to stay on track with my classes
6. I'm evaluated on the knowledge and skills I'll need in my life and career

Benchmarks

Higher Satisfaction (compared to all responses from 58 institutions)

1. This college assists students who need help with the financial aid process
2. Technology support is available to me when I need it

Lower Satisfaction (compared to all responses from 58 institutions)

1. I have a clear understanding of what I'm expected to learn in my classes
2. My instructors provide timely feedback about my academic progress
3. The frequency of interactions with instructors is satisfactory
4. I received the help I need to stay on track in my classes

Comparison of ISAS to ALI Results at Helena College

ISAS	ALI
1. Technology	1. Technology
2. Finance	2. Finance
3. Transitions	3. Student Support Services
4. Assessment	4. Teaching/Learning Process
5. Life/Career Planning	5. Assessment
6. Strategic Partnerships	6. Transitions
7. Teaching/Learning Process	6. Outreach
8. Outreach	8. Life/Career Planning
9. Student Support Services	

Action Steps: Now What?

Market Strengths

- Technology
- Finance

Prioritize Challenges

- Outreach
- Life/Career Planning

Examine Disconnects

- Student Support Services (students rated higher than institution)
- Transitions (students rated lower than institution)
- Teaching/Learning Process (students rated higher than institution)

Incorporate into Program Planning and Assessment & Identify Specific Activities

- Align principles with mission, core themes, strategic and program goals/outcomes

CAEL Nine Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Students

Outreach

Conducts its outreach to adult learners by overcoming barriers in time, place, and tradition in order to create lifelong access to educational opportunities

Life & Career Planning

Addresses adult learners' life and career goals before or at the onset of enrollment in order to assess and align its capacities to help learners reach their goals

Financing

Promotes choice using an array of payment options for adult learners in order to expand equity and financial flexibility

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Defines and assesses the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired by adult learners—both from the curriculum and from life and work experience—in order to assign credit and confer degrees with rigor

Teaching-Learning Process

Faculty uses multiple methods of instruction (including experiential and problem-based methods) for adult learners in order to connect curricular concepts to useful knowledge and skills

Student Support Systems

Assists adult learners using comprehensive academic and student support systems in order to enhance students' capacities to become self-directed, lifelong learners

Technology

Uses technology to provide relevant and timely information and to enhance the learning experience

Strategic Partnerships

Engages in strategic relationships, partnerships, and collaborations with employers and other organizations in order to develop and improve educational opportunities for adult learners

Transitions

Supports guided pathways that lead into and from the institution's programs and services in order to ensure that students' learning will apply usefully to achieving their educational and career goals