Priorities Survey for Online Learners: 2010 Results and Comparison to 2008

Prepared for Inver Hills Community College

In the following report, The Hanover Research Council analyzes the results of the Noel-Levitz Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL). More specifically, the 2010 results of Inver Hills Community College are compared to state and national averages. In addition, we compare the 2010 results to those of 2008 in order to isolate areas of improvement and regression.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Since 2004, the Noel-Levitz Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL) has been utilized by institutions across the country in an effort to better serve the needs of online students. In particular, the survey, which collects data from over 60,000 students at over 80 institutions, is designed to help institutions learn more about the following:

- ❖ Student priorities for their learning experiences.
- ❖ Institutional strengths and challenges from the perspective of an online learner.
- ❖ The demographics of online learners.
- ❖ Influences on the decision to enroll.

The survey consists of a series of 54 statements, which seek to gather information about the four aforementioned items. Students are asked to rate how important and satisfied they are with each statement included in the survey. The ratings options are as follows:

- ❖ 1 – Not important at all or not satisfied at all
- ❖ 2 – Not very important or not very satisfied
- ❖ 3 – Somewhat unimportant or somewhat dissatisfied
- ❖ 4 – Neutral
- ❖ 5 – Somewhat important or somewhat satisfied
- ❖ 6 – Important or satisfied
- ❖ 7 – Very important or very satisfied

Based on our analysis of the survey data, we have reached the following conclusions:

- ❖ Of the 26 items where comparisons are possible, satisfaction ratings for Inver Hills Community College exceeded the state average in all but one of them. While the College's results were not quite as strong when compared to national averages, the overall results for 2010 are still generally encouraging.

- ❖ The five benchmark averages (in Academic Services, Enrollment Services, Institutional Perceptions, Instructional Perceptions, and Student Services) provided by Noel-Levitz have all increased since 2008.

- ❖ The College performed particularly well in the Enrollment Services category, where it exceeded both the state and national averages. The College's strong performance in this category is mostly due to the convenience of online registration and billing/payment procedures.

❖ There was not a single statement in the survey that experienced a decline of over a tenth of a point from 2008 to 2010, demonstrating the degree to which the program has improved over the last two years.

❖ The value of student-to-student collaborations and the timeliness of service provided by bookstore were both identified as areas for improvement, given the College's low scores in these subcategories relative to national averages.

The report that follows contains the following three sections.

❖ Methodology and Demographics
❖ Presentation of 2010 Results
❖ Comparison to 2008 Results

Methodology and Demographics

As stated earlier, the Priorities Survey for Online Learners is primarily used by institutions to learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of online learning programs as evaluated by students. Towards this end, Noel Levitz provides state and national averages for each of the 54 statements included in the survey, which gives us the opportunity to isolate areas that can be considered strengths and areas where there may be room for improvement. In addition, benchmark averages are provided for the following five categories:

❖ Academic Services
❖ Enrollment Services
❖ Institutional Perceptions
❖ Instructional Perceptions
❖ Student Services

These benchmarks can be computed by adding scores from the individual questions that compose the category. In order to learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of the online program, we will often compare the IHCC benchmark averages to the state and national averages provided by Noel-Levitz.

Average satisfaction and importance ratings are provided for each individual statement included in the survey. (For a full list of these ratings, please see Table 21 in the Appendix.) We should note that much of our discussion (especially with respect to the benchmark averages) centers around these average satisfaction ratings. It is our feeling that these satisfaction ratings are most relevant in that they provide a clear means for the institution to assess the strengths and weaknesses of its online program.

In addition to the five benchmark categories described above, respondents are also asked to rate various campus specific statements, sources of information used to evaluate colleges and universities, and factors affecting enrollment decisions. Average importance ratings have been provided for each of these items. State and national averages are not provided by Noel-Levitz for these statements, however, and we are thus unable to ascertain how Inver Hills compares to peers with respect to these variables.

Another goal of the Priorities Survey for Online Learners is to help institutions learn more about the demographic characteristics of online learners. In relation to this objective, we provide Table 1, below, which breaks down the 2010 sample by gender, race/ethnicity, age, current plans, class level, and educational goals.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of 2010 Sample

Characteristic	Percentage of Sample
Gender	
Female	70.0% (n=187)
Male	30.0% (n=80)
Ethnicity/Race	
African American	4.1% (n=11)
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.4% (n=1)
Asian or Pacific Islander	7.1% (n=19)
Caucasian	75.6% (n=201)
Hispanic	3.0% (n=8)
Other race	2.6% (n=7)
Prefer not to respond	7.1% (n=19)
Age	
18 and under	6.7% (n=18)
19-24	34.1% (n=91)
25-34	34.1% (n=91)
35-44	15.4% (n=41)
45-54	8.6% (n=23)
55-64	1.1% (n=3)
65 and over	0.0% (n=0)
Current Plans	
Complete online degree program	11.4% (n=30)
Complete degree on campus	36.7% (n=97)
Transfer credits	42.1% (n=111)
Complete this course	10.0% (n=26)
Class Level	
First year	30.5% (n=81)

Characteristic	Percentage of Sample
Second year	39.5% (n=105)
Third year	12.4% (n=33)
Fourth year	5.6% (n=15)
Special student	2.3% (n=6)
Graduate/professional	4.1% (n=11)
Other class level	5.6% (n=15)
Educational Goals	
Associate degree	46.4% (n=123)
Bachelor's degree	29.8% (n=79)
Master's degree	9.8% (n=26)
Doctorate or professional degree	4.2% (n=11)
Certification (initial or renewal)	4.2% (n=11)
Self-improvement/pleasure	0.4% (n=1)
Job-related training	1.1% (n=3)
Other educational goal	4.2% (n=11)

Presentation of 2010 Results

As stated in the previous section, each survey question can be placed into five distinct categories: Academic Services, Enrollment Services, Institutional Perceptions, Instructional Perceptions, and Student Services. In this section, we compare IHCC benchmark scores in these categories with state and national averages. These same comparisons are then made for the individual statements comprising each benchmark category. Towards the end of the section, we provide an overview of our findings.

Academic Services

We will begin our analysis of trends with Academic Services, a category that includes items such as the accessibility of program advisors, the adequacy of online library resources, and the availability of technical assistance.

Figure 1, below, compares the average satisfaction benchmark scores in the Academic Services category of three groups: Inver Hills Community College Online Learners, Minnesota Online Learners, and National Online Learners. According to the figures presented below, the IHCC benchmark average in the category fell in between the state and national averages. While the difference between the IHCC and Minnesota averages was found to be statistically significant, this was not the case when the IHCC and national benchmark averages were compared.

Figure 1: Average Academic Services Ratings
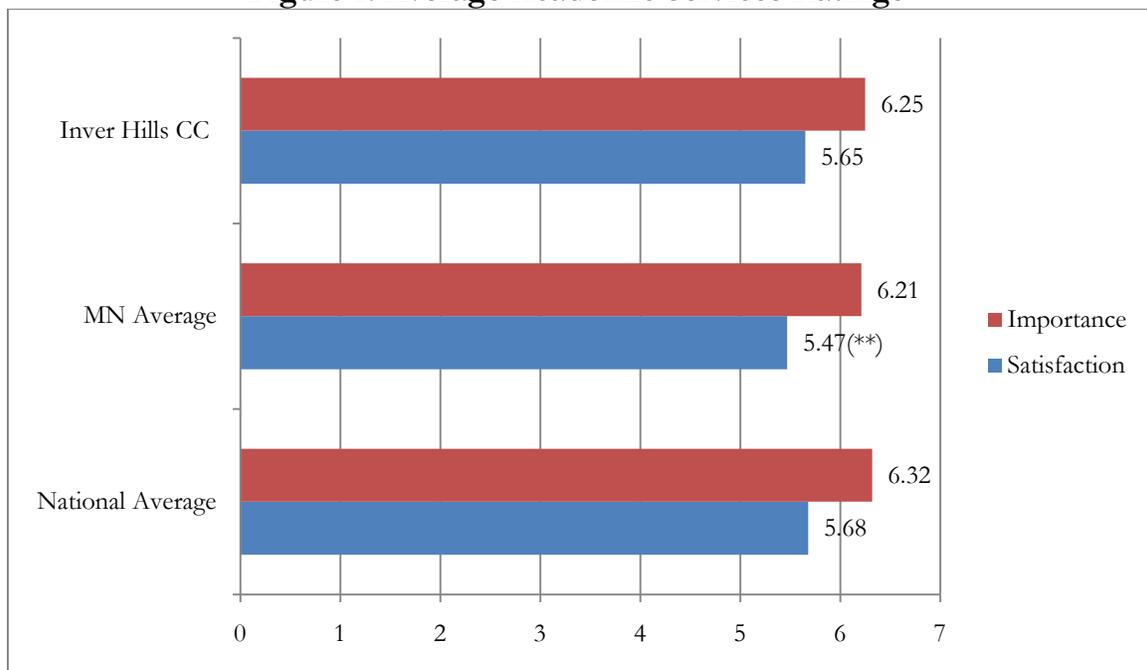
*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001

Table 2 contains the average scores for the individual statements that comprise the Academic Services category. Interestingly, most of the satisfaction scores reported by Inver Hills students are similar to the state and national averages. There was only one statistically significant difference in the category, which came when students were asked to evaluate whether there were sufficient offerings within their programs of study. Students at the national level were significantly more likely to agree with the statement than were students at Inver Hills.

Table 2: Average Score by Individual Statement for Academic Services

Statement	Import[1] 2010	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff MN	Satis Diff National
2. My program advisor is accessible by telephone and e-mail.	6.24	5.80 / 1.37	0.12	0.01
5. My program advisor helps me work toward career goals.	6.17	5.26 / 1.65	0.1	-0.05
7. Program requirements are clear and reasonable.	6.56	5.82 / 1.25	0.18	0.01
12. There are sufficient offerings within my program of study.	6.53	5.58 / 1.29	0.14	-0.18(*)
16. Appropriate technical assistance is readily available.	6.27	5.73 / 1.26	0.08	-0.07
21. Adequate online library resources are provided.	6.07	5.88 / 1.22	0.31	-0.01
24. Tutoring services are readily available for online courses.	5.80	5.41 / 1.48	0.35	0.19

*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001

Enrollment Services

Inver Hills' Enrollment Services benchmark average—which is comprised of statements which evaluate the adequacy of financial aid, online registration, and billing/payment procedures—is higher than both the state and national averages. According to Figure 2 below, students at Inver Hills also seemed to attach more importance to enrollment services than their counterparts at other state and national institutions.

---

[1] Corresponds to the average importance rating.

Figure 2: Average Enrollment Services Ratings
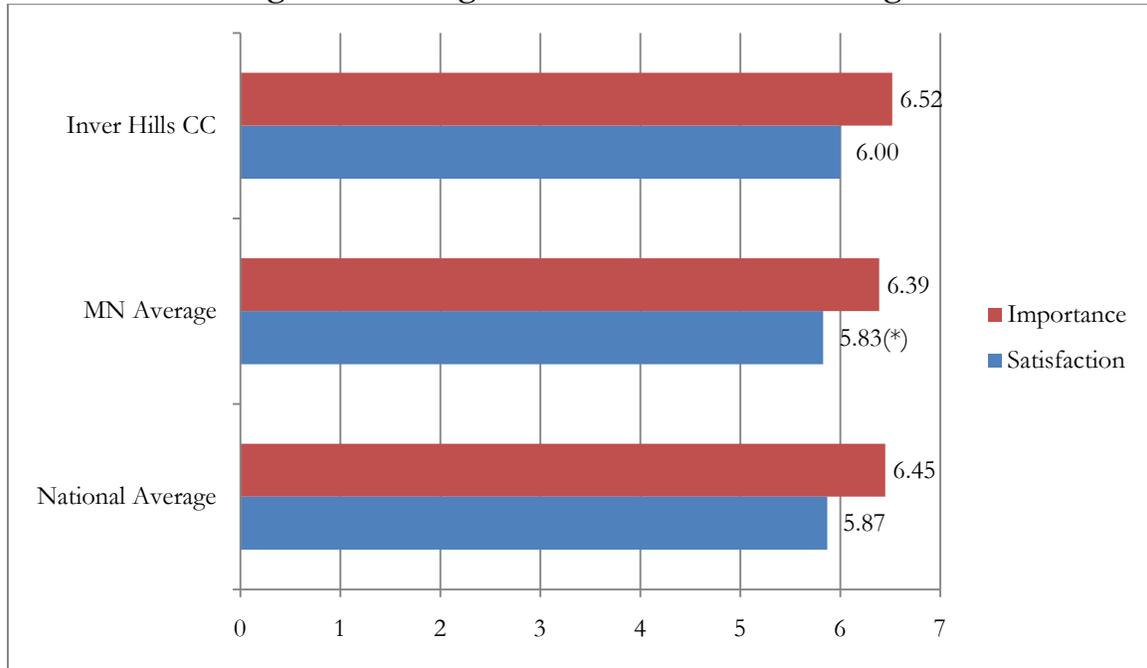
*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001

Inver Hills' strength in this category is mostly due the ease at which students are able to register for online courses and follow billing and payment procedures. While the College also received higher scores in questions pertaining to financial aid, these differences were not found to be statistically significant, as Table 3 below reveals.

Table 3: Average Score by Individual Statement for Enrollment Services

Statement	Import 2010	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff MN	Satis Diff National
9. Adequate financial aid is available.	6.55	5.68 / 1.60	0.14	0.08
14. I receive timely information on the availability of financial aid.	6.44	5.60 / 1.53	0.12	0.02
18. Registration for online courses is convenient.	6.55	6.47 / 0.89	0.26(***)	0.23(**)
23. Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me.	6.54	6.16 / 1.24	0.15	0.19(*)

*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001

Institutional Perceptions

The Institutional Perceptions category, comprised of just two statements, is aimed at evaluating the reputation of the institution and the value of tuition as an investment. Figure 3, below, indicates that Inver Hills' benchmark average in this category is

higher than both the state and national averages, though neither of these differences were found to be statistically significant.

Figure 3: Average Institutional Perceptions Ratings
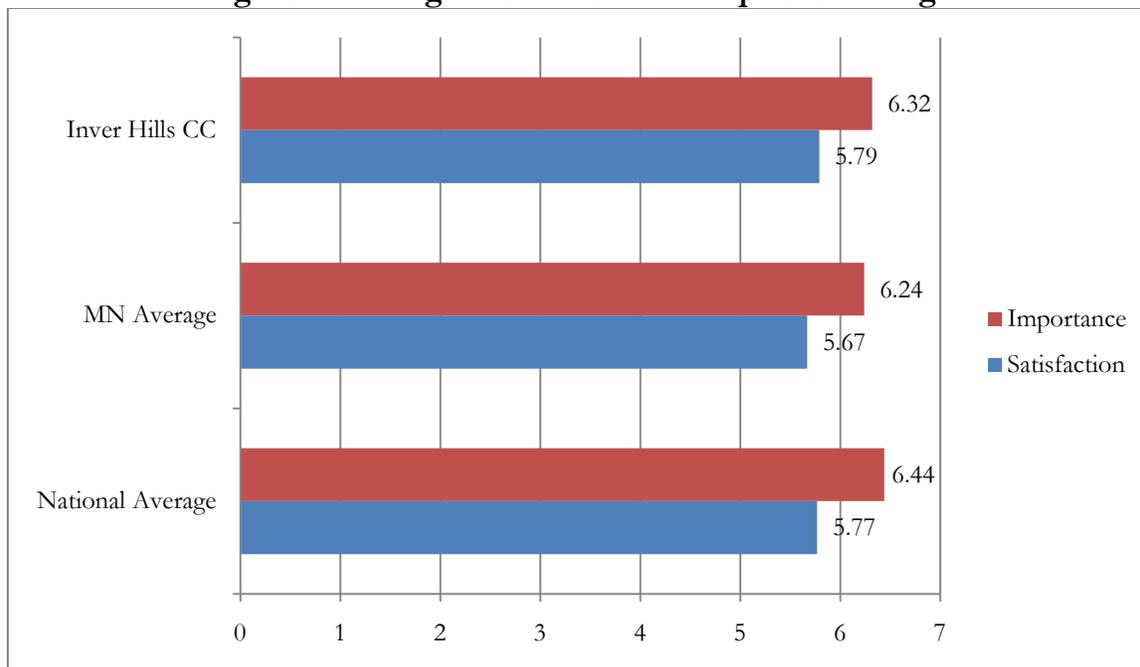
When asked to evaluate whether the institution had a good reputation, students at the national level were most likely to report high levels of agreement. Inver Hills students, on the other hand, constituted the most likely group to indicate that tuition payments were worthwhile investments. It is worth noting, however, that none of the differences in this category were found to be statistically significant.

Table 4: Average Score by Individual Statement for Institutional Perceptions

Statement	Import 2010	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff MN	Satis Diff National
1. This institution has a good reputation.	6.06	5.84 / 1.13	0.14	-0.07
6. Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.	6.59	5.74 / 1.39	0.11	0.10

Instructional Services

The Instructional Services category measures student satisfaction with items such as instructional materials, the quality of instruction, and student/faculty interaction. Figure 4 indicates the Inver Hills benchmark average in this category is higher than the state average but lower than the national average. Neither difference, however, was found to be statistically significant.

Figure 4: Average Instructional Services Ratings
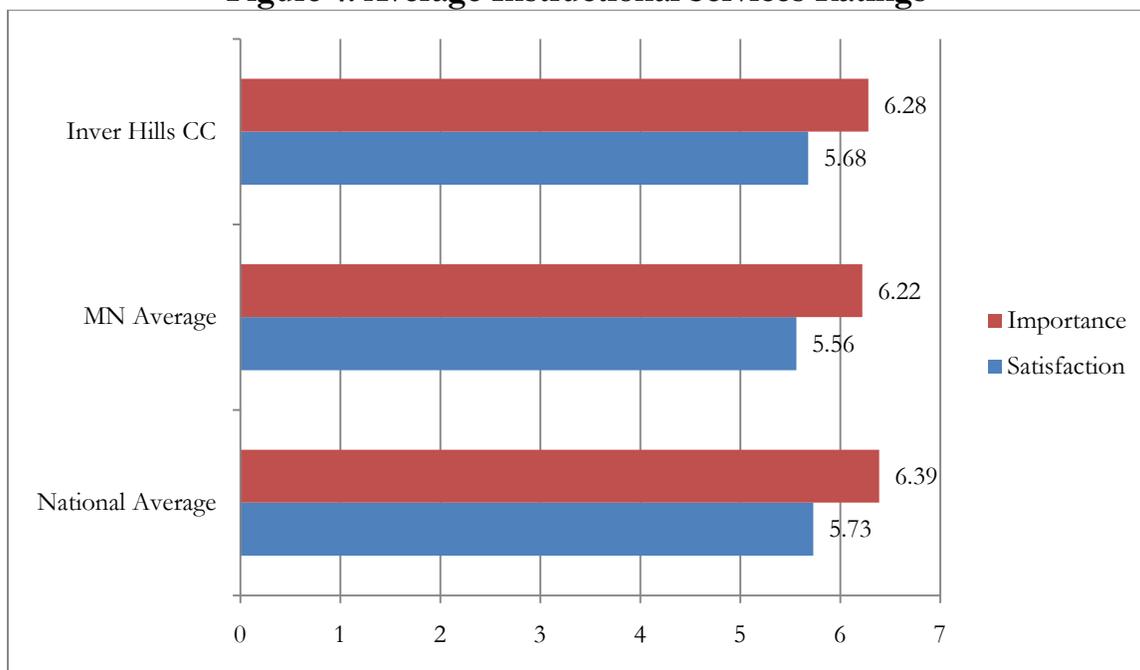
The Instructional Services category contained several statements where there were clear differences between the average scores of the three groups analyzed in the study. For instance, students at Inver Hills were far more likely to indicate that student assignments are clearly defined in the syllabus. In addition, there seems to be a high level of satisfaction with the frequency of student and instructor interactions at Inver Hills. The College did not fare quite as well, however, when students were asked to evaluate the value of student-to-student collaborations. The College's mean score in this subcategory was far below the national average.

Table 5: Average Score by Individual Statement for Instructional Services

Statement	Import 2010	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff MN	Satis Diff National
3. Instructional materials are appropriate for program content.	6.48	5.78 / 1.28	0.01	-0.12
4. Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress.	6.47	5.57 / 1.36	0.09	-0.05
8. Student-to-student collaborations are valuable to me.	4.96	5.22 / 1.36	0.05	-0.25(**)
11. Student assignments are clearly defined in the syllabus.	6.71	5.97 / 1.13	0.27	0.12
13. The frequency of student and instructor interactions is adequate.	6.16	5.77 / 1.20	0.18	0.08
17. Assessment and evaluation procedures are clear and reasonable.	6.31	5.86 / 1.13	0.18	0.05
20. The quality of online instruction is	6.58	5.52 / 1.43	0.12	-0.22(*)

Statement	Import 2010	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff MN	Satis Diff National
excellent.				
25. Faculty are responsive to student needs.	6.54	5.71 / 1.28	0.06	-0.06

*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001

Student Services

The Student Services benchmark average can be used to evaluate an institution's online career services program, its on-campus bookstore, and its student support mechanisms. The satisfaction average of Inver Hills in this category fell below the national average but was above the state average. It is worth noting, however, that none of these differences were found to be statistically significant.

Figure 5: Average Student Services Ratings
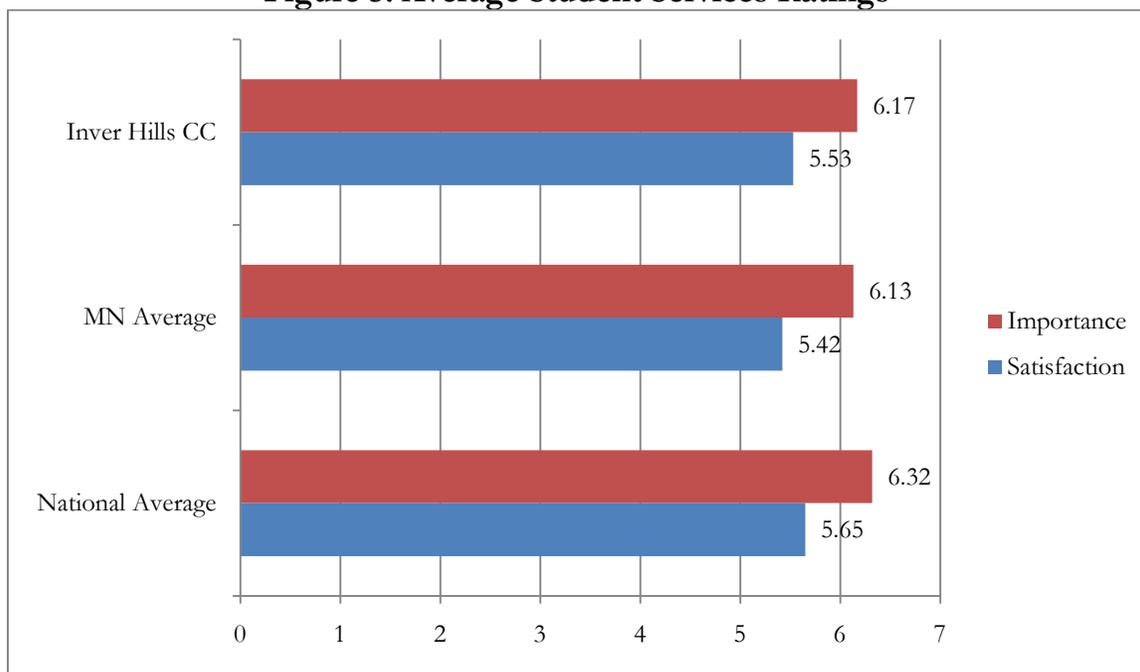
When looking deeper at this category, it is clear that one of the main reasons why Inver Hills scored lower in this category than the national average was due to the poor performance of the bookstore. In particular, students at Inver Hills were far less likely to report that that the bookstore provided timely service when compared to counterparts at other state and national institutions. On the bright side, students at Inver Hills were far more likely than students at other colleges in the state to indicate that the institution responds quickly when they request information. Students at Inver Hills were also more likely to report that channels are available for providing timely responses to student complaints.

Table 6: Average Score by Individual Statement for Student Services

Statement	Import 2010	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff MN	Satis Diff National
10. This institution responds quickly when I request information.	6.45	5.82 / 1.22	0.25	0.07
15. Channels are available for providing timely responses to student complaints.	5.91	5.30 / 1.49	0.23	0.02
19. Online career services are available.	5.86	5.37 / 1.48	0.04	-0.18
22. I am aware of whom to contact for questions about programs and services.	6.29	5.53 / 1.46	0.1	-0.12
26. The bookstore provides timely service to students.	6.22	5.54 / 1.42	-0.06	-0.41(***)

*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001

Campus Specific Statements

The survey also contained a series of campus specific statements that were designed to evaluate certain aspects of the online program. In Table 7, below, we compare the ratings of Inver Hills with state and national averages (where possible).

It is worth noting that the highest score in this category came when students were asked to evaluate whether taking an online course allowed them to stay on track with their educational goals. The lowest score, on the other hand, came when students were asked to assess the helpfulness of the evening, weekend, and daytime support provided by the Minnesota Online Call Center. Nonetheless, the average provided by Inver Hills students was still higher than the state average.

Table 7: Average Score of Campus-Specific Statements

Statement	Import 2010	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff MN	Satis Diff National
27. The Minnesota Online website provides useful information about online programs and courses, including search functions.	5.95	5.63 / 1.22	0.03	-
28. The online course delivery platform (Desire2Learn or D2L) is reliable.	6.69	6.13 / 1.12	0.05	-
29. The evening, weekend, & daytime support available to me from the Minnesota Online Call Center is helpful.	5.93	5.55 / 1.21	0.07	-
30. Interactions I have with online instructors are useful to me in the learning process.	6.44	5.69 / 1.38	0.11	-
31. Taking an online course allowed me to stay on track with my educational goals.	6.51	6.22 / 1.13	0.14	-

Statement	Import 2010	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff MN	Satis Diff National
32. Test proctoring and support services to accomplish it are adequate.	6.12	5.74 / 1.17	0.08	-
33. Layout of online courses, as designed by instructors, is easy for me to navigate and understand.	6.63	5.75 / 1.35	-	-
34. Instructional materials used in online courses have sufficient depth in content to learn the subject.	6.55	5.88 / 1.25	-	-
35. Online instructors use a variety of tools and activities (ie videos, podcasts, games, discussions).	6.19	5.61 / 1.49	-	-
36. Inver Hills provided information regarding online courses that adequately prepared me for online courses.	6.36	5.63 / 1.36	-	-

Sources of Information

The survey also included a series of statements that were designed to evaluate the importance of various aspects of the College's recruiting program. Interestingly, according to the figures presented in Table 8 below, students indicated that the college website was the most important aspect of the recruiting program. Advertisements, on the other hand, were found to be the least important source of information, as one might perhaps expect. They also received the lowest satisfaction rating in the study.

Table 8: Average Score by Individual Statement for Sources of Information

Source	Import 2010	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff MN	Satis Diff National
37. Source of information: Catalog and brochures (printed)	4.86	5.84 / 1.13	-	-
38. Source of information: Catalog (online)	5.85	5.80 / 1.37	-	-
39. Source of information: College representatives	4.85	5.78 / 1.28	-	-
40. Source of information: Web site	6.02	5.57 / 1.36	-	-
41. Source of information: Advertisements	3.57	5.26 / 1.65	-	-
42. Source of information: Recommendation from instructor or program advisor	5.21	5.74 / 1.39	-	-
43. Source of information: Contact with current students and / or recent graduates of the program	4.96	5.82 / 1.25	-	-

Factors to Enroll

The final section of the survey included a series of statements designed to evaluate how various factors impacted the student's decision to enroll. Interestingly, cost was deemed the most important factor by students in 2010, a result not seen in previous years. This finding underscores the extent to which students have been impacted by the recession.

When looking at satisfaction ratings, it is apparent that most respondents are content with the future employment opportunities offered by attending the College. An average score of 5.97 indicates that a large number of respondents chose the Satisfied or Very Satisfied response options. The lowest satisfaction rating came when respondents were asked to evaluate the ability to transfer credits. Yet the average rating for this factor was still above 5, which means that most respondents were at least somewhat satisfied.

Table 9: Average Score by Individual Statement for Factors to Enroll

Factor	Import 2010	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff MN	Satis Diff National
44. Factor to enroll: Ability to transfer credits	6.44	5.22 / 1.36	-	-
45. Factor to enroll: Cost	6.55	5.68 / 1.60	-	-
46. Factor to enroll: Financial assistance available	6.08	5.82 / 1.22	-	-
47. Factor to enroll: Future employment opportunities	6.01	5.97 / 1.13	-	-
48. Factor to enroll: Reputation of institution	5.91	5.58 / 1.29	-	-
49. Factor to enroll: Work schedule	6.47	5.77 / 1.20	-	-
50. Factor to enroll: Flexible pacing for completing a program	6.18	5.60 / 1.53	-	-
51. Factor to enroll: Convenience	6.52	5.30 / 1.49	-	-
52. Factor to enroll: Distance from campus	5.93	5.73 / 1.26	-	-
53. Factor to enroll: Program requirements	6.10	5.86 / 1.13	-	-
54. Factor to enroll: Recommendations from employer	4.39	6.47 / 0.89	-	-

Overview of 2010 Results

As we have seen, the benchmarks of Inver Hills compare very favorably with state means and are generally in line with national averages. Figure 6 contains a visual representation of these comparisons and once again underscores the College's strong performance in the Enrollment Services category. The College's benchmark average in this category was considerably higher than both the state and national averages.

Figure 6: Average Benchmark Ratings
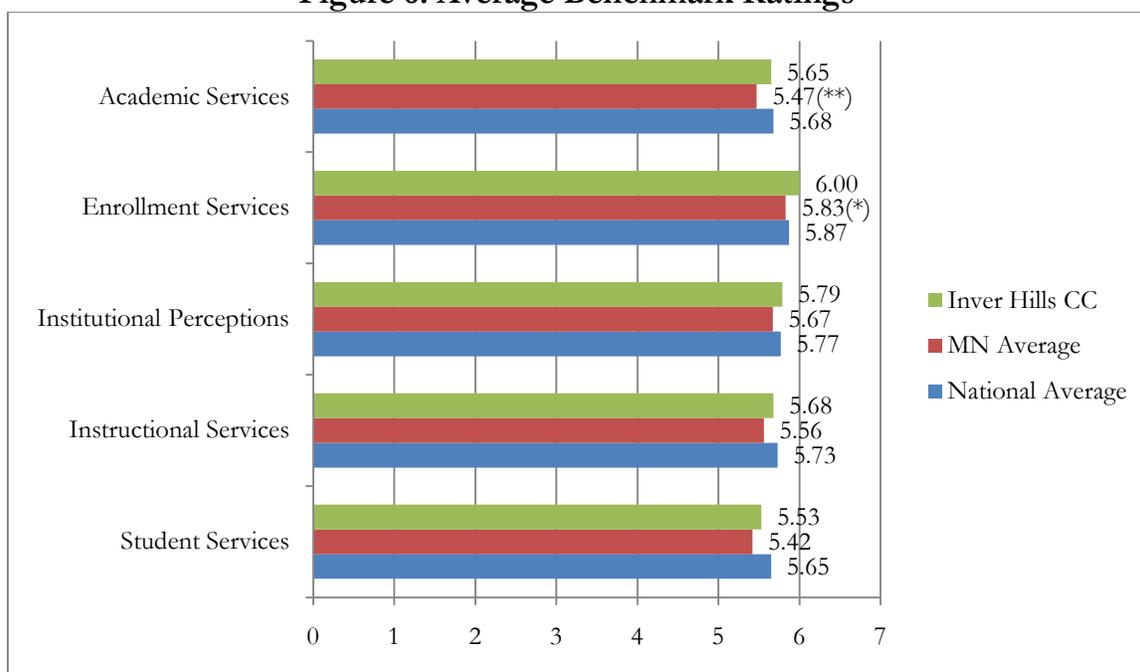
*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001

Of the 26 statements where comparisons are possible, satisfaction ratings for Inver Hills Community College exceeded the state average in all but one. While the College's results were not quite as strong when compared to national averages, the overall results are still generally encouraging.

The tables below outline areas where there are statistically significant differences in satisfaction levels between the Inver Hills sample and the state/national averages. All of the statistically significant differences between the IHCC and state averages are positive. Conversely, there is a mix of positive and negative statistically significant differences between the IHCC and national samples. This is a common theme throughout this report due to the fact that the state means are generally lower than the national averages, a trend that was also seen in previous years.

Table 10: Statistically Significant Differences between Inver Hills Community College and State of Minnesota Samples (2010)

Item	Inver Hills Satis/Import	MN Satis/Import	Mean Difference
7. Program requirements are clear and reasonable.	5.82/6.56	5.64/6.50	0.18(*)
10. This institution responds quickly when I request information.	5.82/6.45	5.57/6.38	0.25(**)
11. Student assignments are clearly defined in the syllabus.	5.97/6.71	5.70/6.56	0.27(**)

Item	Inver Hills Satis/Import	MN Satis/Import	Mean Difference
13. The frequency of student and instructor interactions is adequate.	5.77/6.16	5.59/6.13	0.18(*)
15. Channels are available for providing timely responses to student complaints.	5.30/5.91	5.07/5.91	0.23(*)
17. Assessment and evaluation procedures are clear and reasonable.	5.86/6.31	5.68/6.27	0.18(*)
18. Registration for online courses is convenient.	6.47/6.55	6.21/6.52	0.26(***)
21. Adequate online library resources are provided.	5.88/6.07	5.57/6.08	0.31(**)
24. Tutoring services are readily available for online courses.	5.41/5.80	5.06/5.75	0.35(**)

*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *$p<.05$,**$p<.01$,***$p<.001$

Table 11: Statistically Significant Differences between Inver Hills Community College and National PSOL Samples (2010)

Item	Inver Hills Satis/Import	MN Satis/Import	Mean Difference
8. Student-to-student collaborations are valuable to me.	5.22/4.96	5.47/5.30	-0.25(**)
12. There are sufficient offerings within my program of study.	5.58/6.53	5.76/6.55	-0.18(*)
18. Registration for online courses is convenient.	6.47/6.55	6.24/6.60	0.23(**)
20. The quality of online instruction is excellent.	5.52/6.58	5.74/6.66	-0.22(*)
23. Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me.	6.16/6.54	5.97/6.49	0.19(*)
26. The bookstore provides timely service to students.	5.54/6.22	5.95/6.39	-0.41(***)

*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *$p<.05$,**$p<.01$,***$p<.001$

Students were also asked a series of more general questions aimed at evaluating their overall satisfaction with the College. As Table 12 illustrates, IHCC students were generally more satisfied with their experiences than were students from the Minnesota sample, but less satisfied than were students from the national sample. It should be noted that while the former differences were not found to be statistically significant, the latter generally were.

Table 12: Summary Table for 2010

Question	IHCC Satis	MN Satis	MN Diff	National Satis	National Diff
So far, how has your college experience met your expectations?	4.77	4.67	0.10	5.05	-0.28(**)
Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far.	5.46	5.38	0.08	5.75	-0.29(***)
All in all, if you had to do it over, would you enroll here again?	5.76	5.65	0.11	5.89	-0.13

*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001

Given these results, we were able to identify institutional strengths and areas for improvement, which are listed below. The areas listed as strengths received higher scores than the state and national averages, while items listed in the areas for improvement section generally received lower scores than these means.

Strengths
- ❖ Clarity of syllabus in outlining student assignments
- ❖ Convenience of online course registration
- ❖ Ease of billing and payment procedures
- ❖ Availability of tutoring services for online courses
- ❖ Frequency of student and faculty interactions

Areas for Improvement
- ❖ Value of student-to-student collaborations
- ❖ Timeliness of service provided by bookstore

It is worth noting that many of the strengths and areas for improvement listed above were also identified in previous years. In particular, the institution seems to fare consistently well in relation to student evaluations of the College's convenience factor, especially with respect to online registration and billing/payment procedures. Conversely, the timeliness of service provided by the bookstore and the value of student-to-student collaborations are two areas where the College has typically garnered low satisfaction ratings.

Comparison of 2008 and 2010 Results

Having analyzed the 2010 results, we turn now to a summary of the trends that have emerged since 2008. In this section, we detail trends pertaining to the overall satisfaction levels of students, sources of information used during the recruiting process, and factors affecting the enrollment decision.

Figure 7, which tracks the summary ratings between 2008 and 2010, is included below. The chart indicates that ratings for the more general summary questions have increased since 2008. While none of the differences described below were found to be statistically significant, the results are nonetheless encouraging. The largest difference came when respondents were asked whether they would enroll again.[2] This figure jumped from 4.61 in 2008 to 4.77 in 2010.

Figure 7: Summary of Ratings, 2008 and 2010
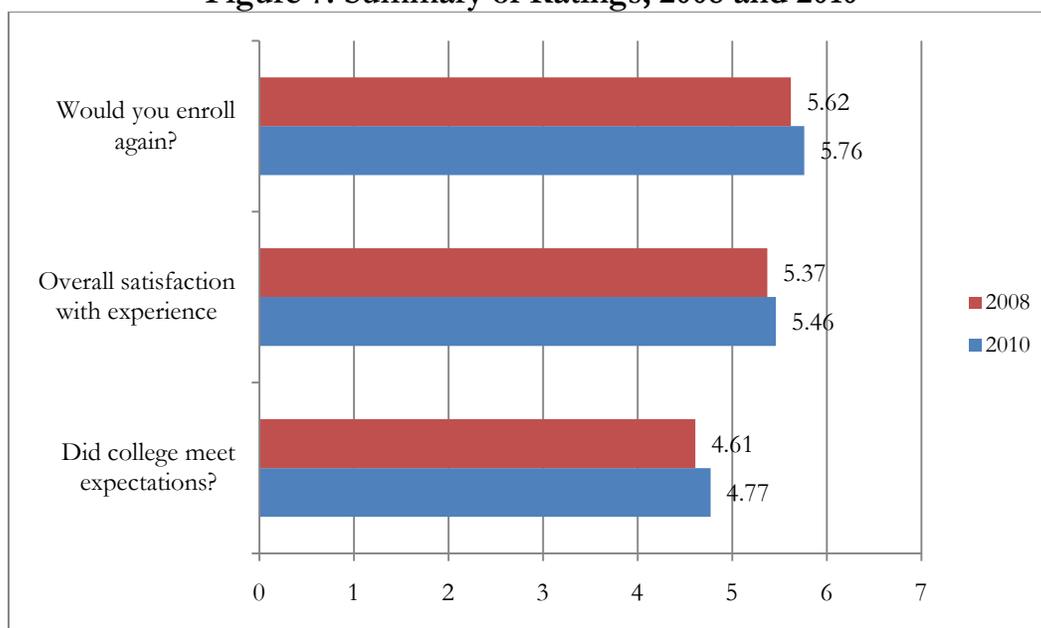
Given the improvement in summary ratings, it should come as no surprise that average benchmark ratings also improved over this period, as Figure 8 reveals. In fact, all five benchmark scores improved from 2008 to 2010, though the Instructional Services category was the only area where there was a statistically significant difference.

---

[2]Where: 1=Much worse than expected, 2=Quite a bit worse than I expected, 3=Worse than I expected, 4=About what I expected, 5=Better than I expected, 6=Quite a bit better than I expected, and 7=Much better than I expected.

Figure 8: Benchmark Ratings, 2008 and 2010
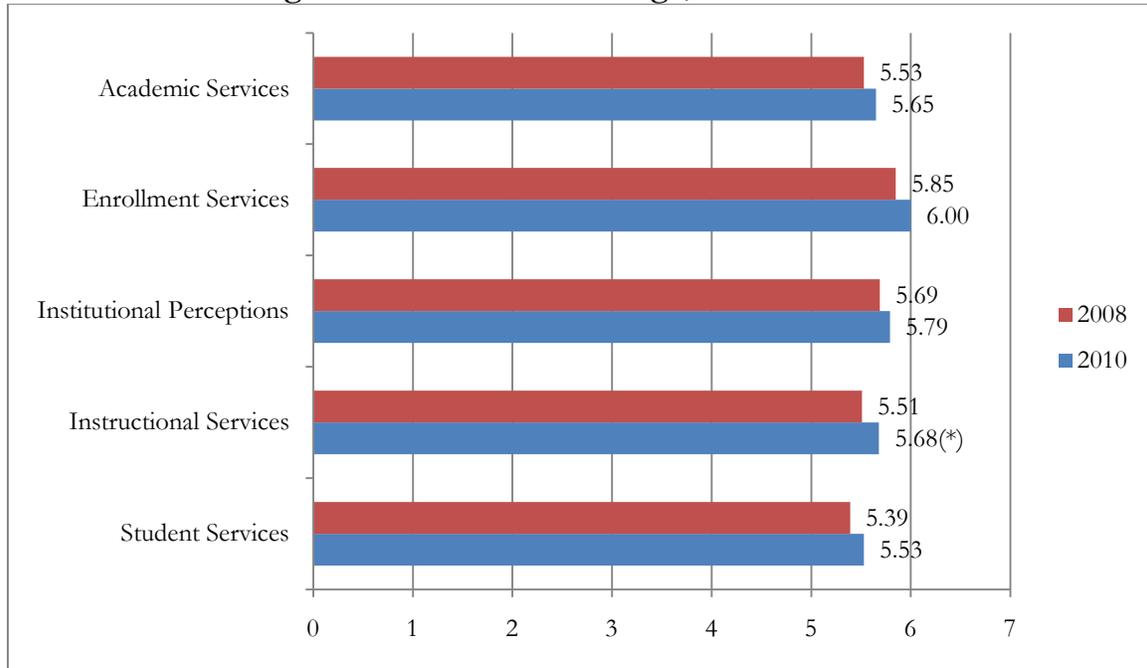
*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001

While none of the individual statements in the Academic Services category showed dramatic improvement from 2008 to 2010, the overall average in the category improved slightly during this period. Table 13 reveals that the largest difference came when students were asked to evaluate whether their program advisor was accessible by telephone and email, though this difference was not found to be statistically significant.

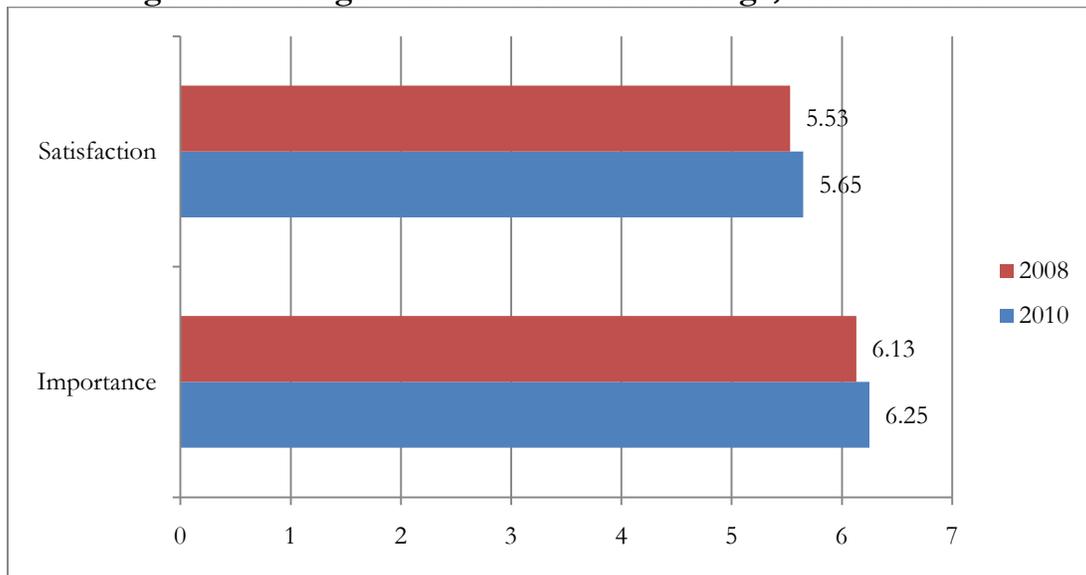**Figure 9: Average Academic Services Ratings, 2008 and 2010**

Table 13: Average Score by Individual Statement for Academic Services, 2008 and 2010

Statement	Satis/SD 2008	Satis/SD 2010	Mean Difference
2. My program advisor is accessible by telephone and e-mail.	5.57/1.46	5.80 / 1.37	0.23
5. My program advisor helps me work toward career goals.	5.26/1.53	5.26 / 1.65	0.00
7. Program requirements are clear and reasonable.	5.61/1.41	5.82 / 1.25	0.21
12. There are sufficient offerings within my program of study.	5.44/1.34	5.58 / 1.29	0.14
16. Appropriate technical assistance is readily available.	5.63/1.45	5.73 / 1.26	0.10
21. Adequate online library resources are provided.	5.71/1.30	5.88 / 1.22	0.17
24. Tutoring services are readily available for online courses.	5.39/1.53	5.41 / 1.48	0.02

Enrollment Services

The Enrollment Services benchmark average also exhibited a healthy increase since 2008, as Figure 12, below, reveals. The largest difference in the category came when students were asked to evaluate whether adequate financial aid was available, though this difference was not found to be statistically significant at the .05 level. It is also worth pointing out that the average importance rating for the category also increased substantially since 2008, indicating that students are attaching a greater level of importance to enrollment services than they have in the past.

Figure 12: Average Enrollment Services Ratings, 2008 and 2010
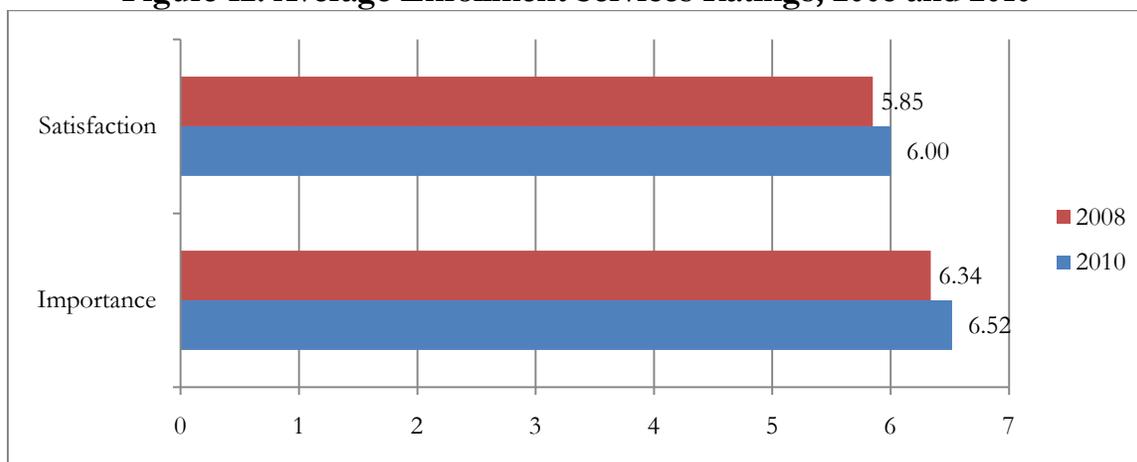
Table 16: Average Score by Individual Statement for Enrollment Services, 2008 and 2010

Statement	Satis/SD 2008	Satis/SD 2010	Mean Difference
9. Adequate financial aid is available.	5.39/1.72	5.68 / 1.60	0.29
14. I receive timely information on the availability of financial aid.	5.42/1.60	5.60 / 1.53	0.18
18. Registration for online courses is convenient.	6.36/1.10	6.47 / 0.89	0.11
23. Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me.	6.03/1.36	6.16 / 1.24	0.13

Institutional Perceptions

The benchmark average in the Institutional Perceptions category also increased slightly from 2008 to 2010. This was mostly due to more respondents indicating that tuition payments were a worthwhile investment. The other statement in the category, which pertained to the overall reputation of the institution, exhibited little change from 2008 to 2010.

Figure 10: Average Institutional Perceptions Ratings, 2008 and 2010
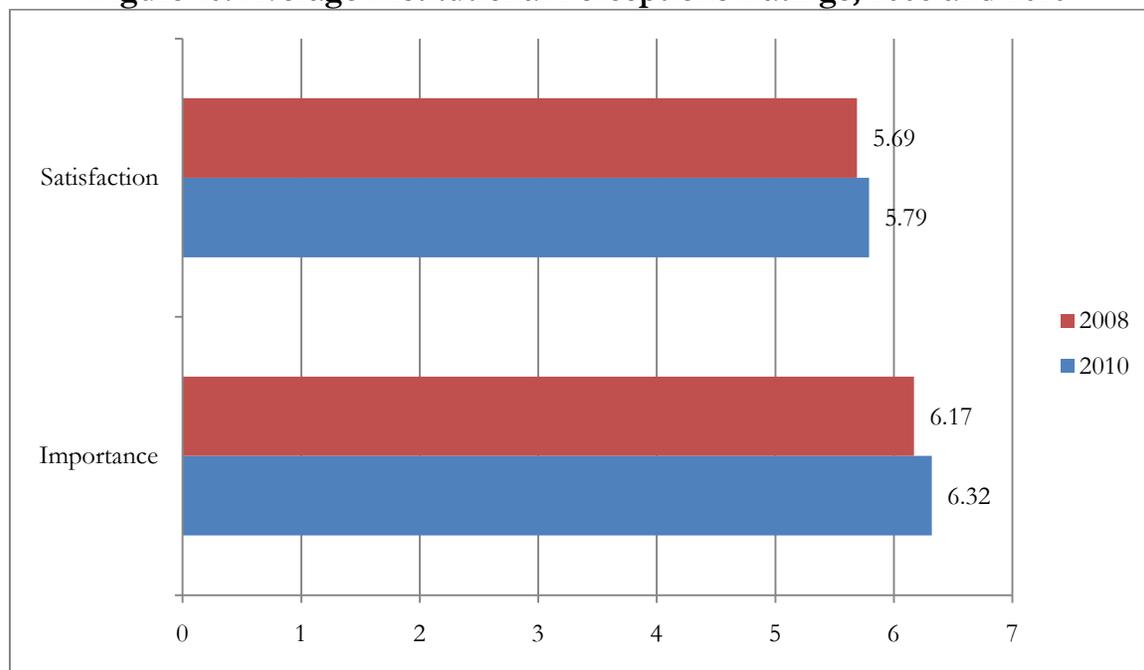
Table 14: Average Score by Individual Statement for Institutional Perceptions, 2008 and 2010

Statement	Satis/SD 2008	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff
1. This institution has a good reputation.	5.81/1.20	5.84 / 1.13	0.03
6. Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.	5.57/1.52	5.74 / 1.39	0.17

Instructional Services

The average score in the Institutional Services category increased from 2008 to 2010, with this difference found to be statistically significant at the .05 level. Areas of improvement in the category include: the timeliness of faculty feedback, the clarity of syllabus in describing student assignments, and the frequency of student/faculty interactions.

Figure 11: Average Instructional Services Ratings, 2008 and 2010

*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001

Table 15: Average Score by Individual Statement for Instructional Services, 2008 and 2010

Statement	Satis/SD 2008	Satis/SD 2010	Mean Difference
3. Instructional materials are appropriate for program content.	5.63/1.33	5.78 / 1.28	0.15
4. Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress.	5.28/1.53	5.57 / 1.36	0.29(*)
8. Student-to-student collaborations are valuable to me.	5.24/1.33	5.22 / 1.36	-0.02
11. Student assignments are clearly defined in the syllabus.	5.66/1.48	5.97 / 1.13	0.31(**)
13. The frequency of student and instructor interactions is adequate.	5.48/1.46	5.77 / 1.20	0.29(*)
17. Assessment and evaluation procedures are clear and reasonable.	5.71/1.31	5.86 / 1.13	0.15
20. The quality of online instruction is excellent.	5.39/1.58	5.52 / 1.43	0.13
25. Faculty are responsive to student needs.	5.65/1.43	5.71 / 1.28	0.06

*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001

Student Services

The average score in the Student Services category also increased in 2010, meaning that all five benchmark scores have improved since 2008. The greatest improvements in the category came when students were asked to indicate how the institution responds to requests for information and student complaints. These findings indicate that the institution is doing a better job of providing adequate communication channels for students.
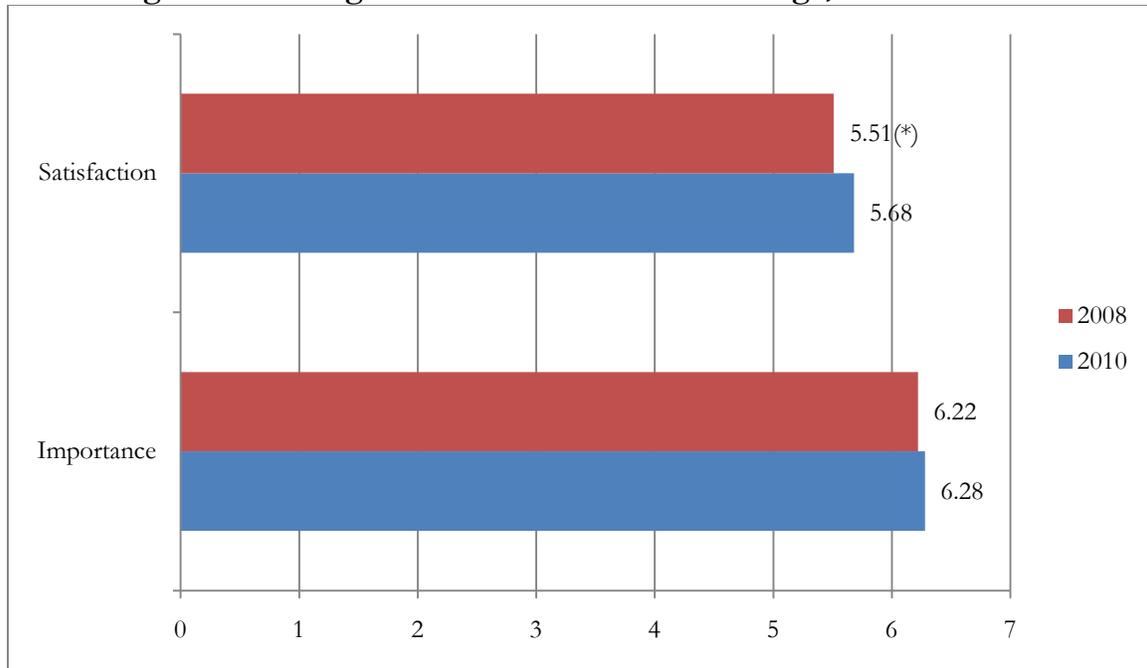
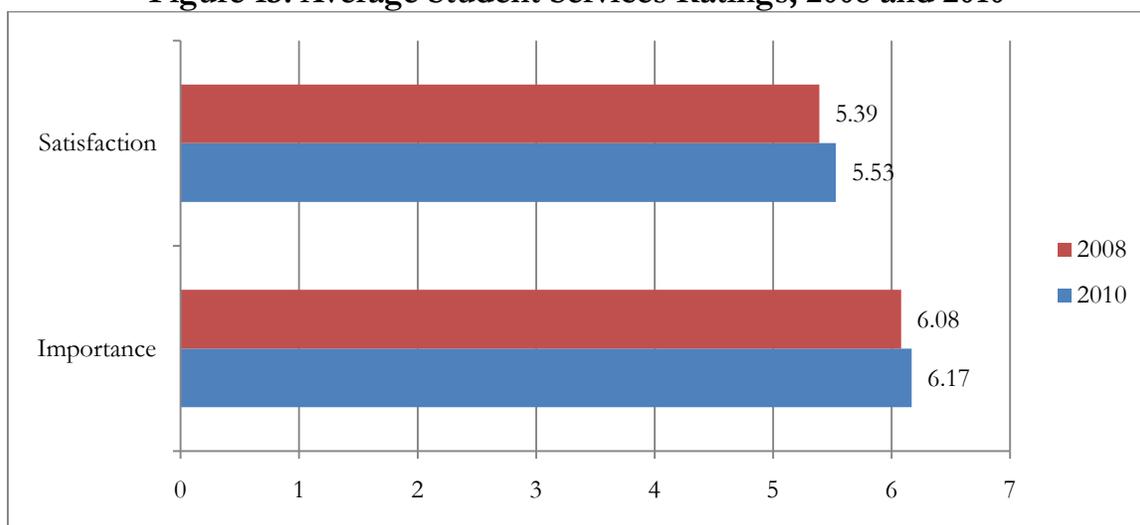**Figure 13: Average Student Services Ratings, 2008 and 2010**

Table 17: Average Score by Individual Statement for Student Services, 2008 and 2010

Statement	Satis/SD 2008	Satis/SD 2010	Mean Difference
10. This institution responds quickly when I request information.	5.57/1.44	5.82 / 1.22	0.25(*)
15. Channels are available for providing timely responses to student complaints.	4.96/1.71	5.30 / 1.49	0.34(*)
19. Online career services are available.	5.41/1.45	5.37 / 1.48	-0.04
22. I am aware of whom to contact for questions about programs and services.	5.41/1.50	5.53 / 1.46	0.12
26. The bookstore provides timely service to students.	5.52/1.48	5.54 / 1.42	0.02

*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: $*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001$

Campus Specific Statements

While ratings with respect to many of the campus specific statements did not diverge substantially from 2008 to 2010, there were several areas where the institution experienced strong improvement during the period analyzed. For instance, students in 2010 were considerably more likely to indicate that the support provided by Minnesota Online Call Center is helpful. Respondents were also more likely to be satisfied with their interactions with online instructors.

Table 18: Average Score of Campus Specific Statements, 2008 and 2010[3]

Statement	Satis/SD 2008	Satis/SD 2010	Mean Difference
27. The Minnesota Online website provides useful information about online programs and courses, including search functions.	5.63/1.30	5.63 / 1.22	0.00
28. The online course delivery platform (Desire2Learn or D2L) is reliable.	6.03/1.09	6.13 / 1.12	0.10
29. The evening, weekend, & daytime support available to me from the Minnesota Online Call Center is helpful.	5.35/1.40	5.55 / 1.21	0.20
30. Interactions I have with online instructors are useful to me in the learning process.	5.50/1.56	5.69 / 1.38	0.19
31. Taking an online course allowed me to stay on track with my educational goals.	6.14/1.23	-	-
32. Test proctoring and support services to accomplish it are adequate.	5.72/1.33	-	-
33. Layout of online courses, as designed by instructors, is easy for me to navigate and	5.44/1.60	-	-

---

[3] Comparisons to 2008 are possible in only 4 out of 10 campus specific statements, since many were changed in 2010.

Statement	Satis/SD 2008	Satis/SD 2010	Mean Difference
understand.			
34. Instructional materials used in online courses have sufficient depth in content to learn the subject.	5.46/1.62	-	-
35. Online instructors use a variety of tools and activities (ie videos, podcasts, games, discussions).	5.05/1.87	-	-
36. Inver Hills provided information regarding online courses that adequately prepared me for online courses.	5.66/1.53	-	-

*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001

Sources of Information

The average importance ratings attached to the sources of information described in Table 15 did not change much from 2008 to 2010. The largest change came in the importance attached to advertisements, though this difference was not found to be statistically significant. In fact, advertisements still remained the least important source of information analyzed in the study (and by a healthy margin).

Table 19: Average Score by Individual Statement for Sources of Information, 2008 and 2010

Statement	Import 2008	Import 2010	Mean Difference
37. Source of information: Catalog and brochures (printed)	4.97	4.86	-0.11
38. Source of information: Catalog (online)	5.97	5.85	-0.12
39. Source of information: College representatives	4.83	4.85	0.02
40. Source of information: Web site	6.12	6.02	-0.10
41. Source of information: Advertisements	3.42	3.57	0.15
42. Source of information: Recommendation from instructor or program advisor	5.31	5.21	-0.10
43. Source of information: Contact with current students and / or recent graduates of the program	4.88	4.96	0.08

Factor to Enroll

The largest increase in the Factors to Enroll category came when students were asked to evaluate the role cost plays in their decisions, a change that may be a result of the recession, as discussed earlier. The largest declines came when respondents were

asked to evaluate the importance of flexible pacing for program completion and the convenience factor.

Table 20: Average Score by Individual Statement for Factors to Enroll, 2008 and 2010

Statement	Import 2008	Import 2010	Mean Difference
44. Factor to enroll: Ability to transfer credits	6.43	6.44	0.01
45. Factor to enroll: Cost	6.41	6.55	0.14
46. Factor to enroll: Financial assistance available	5.97	6.08	0.11
47. Factor to enroll: Future employment opportunities	6.03	6.01	-0.02
48. Factor to enroll: Reputation of institution	5.83	5.91	0.08
49. Factor to enroll: Work schedule	6.44	6.47	0.03
50. Factor to enroll: Flexible pacing for completing a program	6.34	6.18	-0.16
51. Factor to enroll: Convenience	6.68	6.52	-0.16
52. Factor to enroll: Distance from campus	5.81	5.93	0.12
53. Factor to enroll: Program requirements	6.08	6.10	0.02
54. Factor to enroll: Recommendations from employer	4.53	4.39	-0.14

The list below categorizes statements in the survey based on how satisfaction levels have evolved from 2008 to 2010. Scores that increased by at least a tenth of a point since 2008 were categorized as positive trends, while those that decreased by at least a tenth of a point were listed as a negative trend. Statements that did not fall in either group were placed in the areas of consistency category. We have used bold text to denote areas where there were statistically significant differences.

It is worth noting that 19 out of the 26 statements in the survey were listed as positive trends, with all others listed as areas of consistency. This means that there was not a single statement in the survey that experienced a decline of over a tenth of a point. This demonstrates the degree to which the program has improved over the last two years.

Positive Trends:
- ❖ 2. My program advisor is accessible by telephone and e-mail.
- ❖ 3. Instructional materials are appropriate for program content.
- ❖ **4. Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress.**
- ❖ 6. Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.
- ❖ 7. Program requirements are clear and reasonable.

❖ 9. Adequate financial aid is available.
❖ **10. This institution responds quickly when I request information.**
❖ **11. Student assignments are clearly defined in the syllabus.**
❖ 12. There are sufficient offerings within my program of study.
❖ **13. The frequency of student and instructor interactions is adequate.**
❖ 14. I receive timely information on the availability of financial aid.
❖ **15. Channels are available for providing timely responses to student complaints.**
❖ 16. Appropriate technical assistance is readily available.
❖ 17. Assessment and evaluation procedures are clear and reasonable.
❖ 18. Registration for online courses is convenient.
❖ 20. The quality of online instruction is excellent.
❖ 21. Adequate online library resources are provided.
❖ 22. I am aware of whom to contact for questions about programs and services.
❖ 23. Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me.

Negative Trends:
❖ None

Areas of Consistency:
❖ 1. This institution has a good reputation.
❖ 5. My program advisor helps me work toward career goals.
❖ 8. Student-to-student collaborations are valuable to me.
❖ 19. Online career services are available.
❖ 24. Tutoring services are readily available for online courses.
❖ 25. Faculty are responsive to student needs.
❖ 26. The bookstore provides timely service to students.

The list below indicates that advertisements constituted the one source of information that grew in importance from 2008 to 2010. Advertisements were, however, still considered to be the least importance source of information analyzed by this study. The online catalog experienced the largest drop of the seven sources analyzed.

Sources of Information That Are Growing in Importance:
❖ 41. Source of information: Advertisements

Sources of Information That Are Losing Importance
❖ 37.Source of information: Catalog and brochures (printed)
❖ 38. Source of information: Catalog (online)
❖ 40. Source of information: Web site

❖ 42. Source of information: Recommendation from instructor or program advisor

Sources of Information with Little or No Movement
- ❖ 39. Source of information: College representatives
- ❖ 43. Source of information: Contact with current students and / or recent graduates of the program

Many of the ratings for the factors to enroll category were fairly stable from year to year, as the list below indicates. However, the list provided below does seem to indicate that finances play a larger role in 2010 as compared to 2008. Conversely, flexibility with respect to degree completion and overall convenience seem to have declined in importance during this period, though these differences were not especially large.

Factors to Enroll That Are Growing in Importance
- ❖ 45. Factor to enroll: Cost
- ❖ 46. Factor to enroll: Financial assistance available
- ❖ 52. Factor to enroll: Distance from campus

Factors to Enroll That Are Losing Importance
- ❖ 50. Factor to enroll: Flexible pacing for completing a program
- ❖ 51. Factor to enroll: Convenience
- ❖ 54. Factor to enroll: Recommendations from employer

Factors to Enroll Where There Was Little or No Movement
- ❖ 44. Factor to enroll: Ability to transfer credits
- ❖ 47. Factor to enroll: Future employment opportunities
- ❖ 48. Factor to enroll: Reputation of institution
- ❖ 49. Factor to enroll: Work schedule
- ❖ 53. Factor to enroll: Program requirements

Appendix

Table 21: Average Score by Individual Statement

Statement	Import 2010	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff MN	Satis Diff National	Satis Diff 2008
1. This institution has a good reputation.	6.06	5.84 / 1.13	0.14	-0.07	0.03
2. My program advisor is accessible by telephone and e-mail.	6.24	5.80 / 1.37	0.12	0.01	0.23
3. Instructional materials are appropriate for program content.	6.48	5.78 / 1.28	0.01	-0.12	0.15
4. Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress.	6.47	5.57 / 1.36	0.09	-0.05	0.29(*)
5. My program advisor helps me work toward career goals.	6.17	5.26 / 1.65	0.10	-0.05	0.00
6. Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.	6.59	5.74 / 1.39	0.11	0.10	0.17
7. Program requirements are clear and reasonable.	6.56	5.82 / 1.25	0.18	0.01	0.21
8. Student-to-student collaborations are valuable to me.	4.96	5.22 / 1.36	0.05	-0.25(**)	-0.02
9. Adequate financial aid is available.	6.55	5.68 / 1.60	0.14	0.08	0.29
10. This institution responds quickly when I request information.	6.45	5.82 / 1.22	0.25	0.07	0.25(*)
11. Student assignments are clearly defined in the syllabus.	6.71	5.97 / 1.13	0.27	0.12	0.31(**)
12. There are sufficient offerings within my program of study.	6.53	5.58 / 1.29	0.14	-0.18(*)	0.14
13. The frequency of student and instructor interactions is adequate.	6.16	5.77 / 1.20	0.18	0.08	0.29(*)
14. I receive timely information on the availability of financial aid.	6.44	5.60 / 1.53	0.12	0.02	0.18
15. Channels are available for providing timely responses to student complaints.	5.91	5.30 / 1.49	0.23	0.02	0.34(*)
16. Appropriate technical assistance is readily available.	6.27	5.73 / 1.26	0.08	-0.07	0.10
17. Assessment and evaluation procedures are clear and reasonable.	6.31	5.86 / 1.13	0.18	0.05	0.15
18. Registration for online courses is convenient.	6.55	6.47 / 0.89	0.26(***)	0.23(**)	0.11
19. Online career services are available.	5.86	5.37 / 1.48	0.04	-0.18	-0.04
20. The quality of online instruction is excellent.	6.58	5.52 / 1.43	0.12	-0.22(*)	0.13
21. Adequate online library resources are provided.	6.07	5.88 / 1.22	0.31	-0.01	0.17
22. I am aware of whom to contact for questions about programs and services.	6.29	5.53 / 1.46	0.10	-0.12	0.12
23. Billing and payment procedures are	6.54	6.16 / 1.24	0.15	0.19(*)	0.13

Statement	Import 2010	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff MN	Satis Diff National	Satis Diff 2008
convenient for me.					
24. Tutoring services are readily available for online courses.	5.80	5.41 / 1.48	0.35	0.19	0.02
25. Faculty are responsive to student needs.	6.54	5.71 / 1.28	0.06	-0.06	0.06
26. The bookstore provides timely service to students.	6.22	5.54 / 1.42	-0.06	-0.41(***)	0.02
27. The Minnesota Online website provides useful information about online programs and courses, including search functions.	5.95	5.63 / 1.22	0.03	-	0.00
28. The online course delivery platform (Desire2Learn or D2L) is reliable.	6.69	6.13 / 1.12	0.05	-	0.10
29. The evening, weekend, & daytime support available to me from the Minnesota Online Call Center is helpful.	5.93	5.55 / 1.21	0.07	-	0.20
30. Interactions I have with online instructors are useful to me in the learning process.	6.44	5.69 / 1.38	0.11	-	0.19
31. Taking an online course allowed me to stay on track with my educational goals.	6.51	6.22 / 1.13	0.14	-	0.08
32. Test proctoring and support services to accomplish it are adequate.	6.12	5.74 / 1.17	0.08	-	0.02
33. Inver Hills provided information regarding online courses that adequately prepared me for taking online courses.	6.63	5.75 / 1.35	-	-	0.31(*)
34. The Inver Hills technical support group responds with useful solutions.	6.55	5.88 / 1.25	-	-	0.42(**)
35. There is consistency in how instructors use Desire2Learn (D2L) from one online course to another.	6.19	5.61 / 1.49	-	-	0.56(***)
36. Inver Hills provided information regarding online courses that adequately prepared me for online courses.	6.36	5.63 / 1.36	-	-	-0.03
37. Source of information: Catalog and brochures (printed)	4.86	-	-	-	-
38. Source of information: Catalog (online)	5.85	-	-	-	-
39. Source of information: College representatives	4.85	-	-	-	-
40. Source of information: Web site	6.02	-	-	-	-
41. Source of information: Advertisements	3.57	-	-	-	-
42. Source of information: Recommendation from instructor or program advisor	5.21	-	-	-	-
43. Source of information: Contact with current students and / or recent graduates of the program	4.96	-	-	-	-
44. Factor to enroll: Ability to transfer credits	6.44	-	-	-	-

Statement	Import 2010	Satis/SD 2010	Satis Diff MN	Satis Diff National	Satis Diff 2008
45. Factor to enroll: Cost	6.55	-	-	-	-
46. Factor to enroll: Financial assistance available	6.08	-	-	-	-
47. Factor to enroll: Future employment opportunities	6.01	-	-	-	-
48. Factor to enroll: Reputation of institution	5.91	-	-	-	-
49. Factor to enroll: Work schedule	6.47	-	-	-	-
50. Factor to enroll: Flexible pacing for completing a program	6.18	-	-	-	-
51. Factor to enroll: Convenience	6.52	-	-	-	-
52. Factor to enroll: Distance from campus	5.93	-	-	-	-
53. Factor to enroll: Program requirements	6.10	-	-	-	-
54. Factor to enroll: Recommendations from employer	4.39	-	-	-	-

*Denotes whether the difference is statistically significant, where: *$p<.05$,**$p<.01$,***$p<.001$

Project Evaluation Form

The Hanover Research Council is committed to providing a work product that meets or exceeds member expectations. In keeping with that goal, we would like to hear your opinions regarding our reports. Feedback is critically important and serves as the strongest mechanism by which we tailor our research to your organization. When you have had a chance to evaluate this report, please take a moment to fill out the following questionnaire.

http://www.hanoverresearch.com/evaluation/index.php

Note

This brief was written to fulfill the specific request of an individual member of The Hanover Research Council. As such, it may not satisfy the needs of all members. We encourage any and all members who have additional questions about this topic – or any other – to contact us.

Caveat

The publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this brief. The publisher and authors make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this brief and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. There are no warranties which extend beyond the descriptions contained in this paragraph. No warranty may be created or extended by representatives of The Hanover Research Council or its marketing materials. The accuracy and completeness of the information provided herein and the opinions stated herein are not guaranteed or warranted to produce any particular results, and the advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for every member. Neither the publisher nor the authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages. Moreover, The Hanover Research Council is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. Members requiring such services are advised to consult an appropriate professional.