In November 1995 the President of the University of Kentucky appointed a project team composed of students, faculty, and staff to investigate the nature and source of student satisfaction and dissatisfaction with undergraduate instruction and noninstructional services in the University System. The concern for improving the University’s understanding of the level of student satisfaction within the University System evolved from previous accountability survey results suggesting that graduating seniors and undergraduate alumni were less than satisfied with the quality of undergraduate instruction and noninstructional services. Although a variety of assessment activities, including surveys and focus groups, have been employed at the sector level to obtain student satisfaction data in support of program review requirements, there had not been a concentrated, comprehensive effort at a university-wide level to review and use those findings. The purpose of the Student Satisfaction Study was to review these survey results and related literature, to pose and answer additional questions in order to understand more clearly students’ perceptions of the quality of undergraduate instruction and noninstructional services, and to make recommendations for needed improvements.

This final report summarizes and presents the information-gathering activities, findings, and conclusions of the Student Satisfaction Study, including 12 recommendations and 78 possible initiatives for improvements. The work of the project team, as reflected in this final report, was guided by the beliefs that: 1) providing a high quality of undergraduate education is a fundamental responsibility of a selective institution of higher education such as the University of Kentucky; 2) the characteristics associated with quality in undergraduate education may be changing as the needs of society and the world of work are changing; and 3) the value placed on undergraduate education and the teaching mission of the University of Kentucky should be, at the very least, equal to the value placed on the research mission of the University.

As a word of caution to the reader, project team members wish to emphasize that the focus of their study and discussion has been student satisfaction, and not student retention. Although project team members believe there is a positive relationship between student satisfaction and student retention, they have not made a systematic attempt to confirm that belief, to assess the strength of such a relationship, or to identify variables associated with it. Thus, the findings and recommendations presented here represent the efforts of project team members to understand and
address student needs and concerns that influence satisfaction levels, as a way to improve the overall quality of the University of Kentucky.

Survey Research and Related Literature

Survey Research

University of Kentucky Surveys. Each year the University of Kentucky provides survey data for the annual accountability report submitted to the Governor, the legislature, and the public. In the first two years (1993 and 1994) of accountability reporting, results of the Graduating Student Survey and the Undergraduate Alumni Survey suggested that students were less than satisfied with the quality of undergraduate instruction and noninstructional services (such as computer services, library, etc.) at the University. On a four-point scale, where one is poor and four is excellent, the 1993-94 graduating seniors rated the University as follows: 1) an average rating of 2.74 on quality of instruction by faculty; and 2) an average rating of 2.78 on quality of noninstructional services (such as computer services, library, etc.). The 1991-92 undergraduate alumni rated the overall quality of instruction by faculty an average 2.60 on a 4-point scale. Following review and discussion of these findings, the Student Satisfaction Project Team developed a strategy to obtain and study additional data available at the University and to make a conscious effort to avoid duplicating previous institutional research activities. This section summarizes the results readily available from a variety of existing institutional sources.

The Lexington Campus Office of Planning and Assessment, which routinely administers and reports results of the Graduating Student Survey and the Undergraduate Alumni Survey, provided tables of correlations for the items on both surveys, including the accountability items. Project team members reviewed the tables, not for the purpose of drawing conclusions but for the purpose of identifying topics for further inquiry and discussion. The following 1993-94 Graduating Student Survey items were positively correlated at r=.30 or higher with the quality of instruction by faculty item (a correlation of .30 or higher was arbitrarily selected as a level that seemed to limit the number of items for consideration in a meaningful way):

- Knowledge and preparation by faculty in subject matter (mean=2.94), r=.56
- Quality of instruction by teaching assistants (mean=2.28), r=.42
- Quality of instruction in laboratories and discussion sections (mean=2.49), r=.39
- Accessibility of instructors (mean=2.69), r=.35
- Individual attention from instructors (mean=2.35), r=.43
- Preparation for my first career job (mean=2.31), r=.41
- Preparation for graduate or professional school (mean=2.59), r=.44
Graduating Student Survey items positively correlated at $r=.30$ or higher with the quality of noninstructional services item were:

- Accessibility of instructors (mean=2.69), $r=.30$
- King Library services overall (mean=2.86), $r=.44$
- Computing Center services overall (mean=3.13), $r=.50$
- PC laboratories at the University (mean=3.05), $r=.52$
- King Library services – reference desk (mean=2.96), $r=.36$
- King Library services – circulation (mean=2.80), $r=.36$
- King Library services – books and journals in my major (mean=2.77), $r=.37$

Finally, the Undergraduate Alumni Survey item, overall quality of instruction by faculty, was positively correlated at $r=.30$ or higher with:

- Individual attention from instructors (mean=2.30), $r=.31$
- Quality of curriculum in preparing for further education (mean=2.64), $r=.38$
- Overall impression of UK (mean=2.80), $r=.45$

To provide the Project Team with additional information and assist in identifying topics for further inquiry and discussion, the Lexington Campus Office of Planning and Assessment shared the results of a recent Survey of Non-Returning Students, Fall 1993 to Fall 1994. Items causing concern due to levels of agreement lower than expected by project team members were as follows:

- Classes were characterized by mutual respect between students and professors – 65.8% agreed
- Faculty in my major were helpful in academic advising – 56.8% agreed
- Faculty in my major were genuinely interested in the welfare of students – 55.7% agreed
- I received helpful feedback from faculty on my academic progress – 49.6% agreed

To gain a better understanding of the goals of undergraduate students, the Student Satisfaction Project Team reviewed results of the 1990-91 University of Kentucky Self-Study Undergraduate Survey. The top four goals for undergraduate education, based on the percent of students responding very important, were:

- Obtaining training and skills for an occupation, 81%
- Developing respect for different points of view, 80%
- Getting a well-rounded general education, 79%
- Developing critical thinking ability, 79%

However, the goals of undergraduate education, as perceived by faculty in their responses to the 1990-91 University of Kentucky Self-Study Faculty Survey, seemed markedly different.

Obtaining training and skills for an occupation, ranked first by students, was ranked eleventh of twelve items by faculty; moreover, the top four goals for faculty were:

- Develop critical thinking ability, 92%
- Develop the foundation for continued intellectual development, 82%
- Develop effective writing and speaking skills, 79%
- Develop respect for different points of view, 65%
Results from other items on the Self-Study Undergraduate Survey suggested that at least 20 percent of students were dissatisfied with the following: the quality of the teaching at UK; the knowledge and skills of teaching assistants; the influence of professors on students’ academic careers; encouragement from professors to discuss feelings about important issues; trust in faculty to look out for students’ interests; feeling free to turn to professors for advice on personal matters; students being treated like numbers; too many classes taught by teaching assistants; and the English proficiency of some teachers. Similar levels of dissatisfaction were reflected in items related to the quality of academic advising, the availability of advisors, and advisors’ knowledge of University Studies requirements. Fewer than 20 percent of students expressed dissatisfaction with library and computer lab services.

Surveys at Similar Institutions. In addition to University of Kentucky survey data, the Student Satisfaction Project Team obtained and reviewed survey results of other similar institutions. Generally, finding like-items with like-response choices for comparative purposes proved to be impossible. Thus, there appeared to be a need to obtain national comparison data as part of the student satisfaction study’s data collection effort.

Special Surveys. During the process of reviewing survey data, the Student Satisfaction Project Team expressed an interest in the needs and expectations of incoming freshmen, in particular, as a group to whom future efforts would be directed. The results of two special surveys were reviewed – the UK Educational Planning Survey and the 1996 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey.

The Office of Undergraduate Studies administered a UK version of the Educational Planning Survey, developed and used by Penn State, to all incoming freshmen attending the summer 1996 advising conferences. Of particular interest was a section on expectations about college, for which the freshmen rank-ordered by importance nine reasons for attending college. Based on the total number of most important (number one) responses assigned to the activity, the top four reasons and the percent of respondents endorsing them were:

- To prepare for a vocation, learn what I need to know to enter a particular career, 50.5%
- To pursue scholarly activities for intellectual development, 17.4%
- To discover and develop my own talents, 10.4%
- To become more mature, learn how to take on responsibility, and become an adult, 7.3%

The Project Team reviewed similar data from the 1996 CIRP Freshman Survey, conducted by the American Council on Education in conjunction with the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute. On a national level, the top reasons for deciding to go to college, based on the percent of students endorsing very important, were:
• To be able to get a better job, 76.7%;
• To learn more about things that interest me, 74.3%;
• To be able to make more money, 72.4%; and
• To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas, 62.1%.

Thus, incoming UK freshmen appeared to be very much like the national group in the importance placed on obtaining a job or career. Other characteristics of the University of Kentucky incoming freshman participants (N=1,989) emerged from the Educational Planning Survey responses. Ninety-eight percent were ages 17 to 19, and 59 percent were female. Over three-fourths were Kentucky residents, and over one-third (34.3%) were first generation college students (neither parent had completed at least a bachelor’s degree). Although 82.3 percent indicated their major choice on the survey, only 42.1 percent reported that they were completely certain about that major. The three most important topics for advising sessions were: academic requirements, career plans, and choice of a major. These incoming students expected to study in college about 16 hours per week, which was more than twice the time they spent studying in high school (7.2 hours per week). Close to one-half (45.9%) of the incoming freshmen expected to work part-time.

Although a slight majority of incoming freshmen (52.2%) expressed a need for help with test preparation skills, nearly 98 percent expected to have a B- or higher grade point average after one year of college work. In regard to success in college, the incoming freshmen viewed their “drive, ambition, determination, and desire to succeed” as their greatest assets, followed by their “ability to work hard, follow through, persevere, and endure.” They perceived their greatest weakness to be poor academic skills, such as a “lack of good study habits, note-taking skills, and test-taking strategies,” followed by “fatigue and lack of sleep.” Finally, when asked how they thought college would be different from high school, the most frequent response was independence (I’ll be on my own, away from home, parents not around, no one pushing about grades, etc.), followed by different setting (bigger place, more people, bigger classes, greater diversity, etc.). Very few of the respondents (3.1%) cited workload (more work to do, work will be harder, etc.) as a difference compared to high school.

Related Literature

Throughout the study, the Project Team reviewed a number of research and theoretical articles addressing issues and questions of student satisfaction with the college experience, the quality of teaching and learning, and the need for change in higher education. Those articles that appeared to be most pertinent to the objectives of the student satisfaction study are briefly summarized below.
**Satisfaction with the College Experience.** Numerous articles related to student satisfaction with the overall college experience have been written and published. Bean and Vesper (1994) investigated gender differences in satisfaction with being a college student. They found that social/relational factors were important for women, but not for men; additionally, they found that major and occupational certainty was significantly related to satisfaction for men, but not for women. For both genders, confidence in being a student and having attractive courses were important, and the authors suggested that faculty members comprise the most influential group on campus for both of these variables. They have the ability to influence the confidence of students, and they are also responsible for making courses relevant and exciting. The authors concluded that formal contact with faculty is extremely important in the first and second years of the student’s college experience.

Patti, Tarpley, Goree, and Tice (1993) conducted a study to examine the link between student retention and college student satisfaction with student services, facilities, and programs. Their results showed a significant portion of variance in retention was predicted by three factors: 1) use of the Counseling Center; 2) use of the Career Services Center; and 3) responses to the item addressing “concern for you as an individual.” The increased use of both the Counseling Center and Career Services Center was associated with students choosing to leave the institution, even though the students expressed satisfaction with those services. The authors suggested that students are using counseling and career services as they anticipate leaving, and that stronger, innovative programs in these areas may facilitate student retention. They also found that students who perceived a personal concern for them were more likely to plan to return to the University than those who did not.

In a study designed to assess undergraduate business alumni satisfaction evaluations from a consumer satisfaction framework, Hartman and Schmidt (1995) found significant effects on satisfaction for alumni perceptions of institutional performance in providing an intellectual environment, which included the teaching ability of faculty, intellectual capacity of the student body, availability of student organizations, interaction between faculty and students, and interaction between administration and students. Additionally, they found a significant effect for alumni perceptions of career skills developed as an outcome of the educational process. The assessment of career skills as an outcome included perceptions of having an advantage over students from other schools in obtaining the first job, feeling well-prepared for the current position, and developing analytical skills. The authors concluded that alumni satisfaction evaluations are influenced by both the perceived quality of the provider’s performance and the perceived outcomes of that
performance. They further stated that satisfaction is dependent on meeting students’ needs by helping them achieve their goals, and that the lack of well-developed goals may lead a student to place a great deal of importance on the performance, or educational process, of the institution. Hartman and Schmidt suggested that universities “should help students more fully focus on the entire education process by developing expectations and goals for the education experience” (p. 214); and that universities “need to be aware of and take advantage of the opportunities for faculty interaction, which is a critical step in achieving a positive satisfaction evaluation” (p. 214).

**Quality of Teaching and Learning.** In an investigation of what’s important to students in determining teaching quality, Broder and Dorfman (1994) found that teacher and course characteristics such as enthusiasm for teaching; knowledge of the subject; ability to tie information together, stimulate thinking, and maintain interest; and the amount of new, useful and relevant knowledge gained, were important to students. They also found support for their hypothesis that “students value the human capital component of classroom instruction. That is, students place value on the course’s contribution to their human capital and future earnings capacity” (p. 246). In conclusion, the authors suggested that departments give special consideration to the interpersonal skills of prospective faculty, and that they convey to students the relevance of existing courses.

In a study by Volkwein and Carbone (1994), the relationship between the research and teaching climates of academic departments and undergraduate student outcomes was examined. They found no evidence to support the common belief that research activity improves teaching; however, they found even less evidence to support the criticism that research hinders teaching. Instead, their findings suggested that the strongest undergraduate programs occur within departments where research and teaching are equally high priorities. The authors further hypothesized that “the most powerful undergraduate learning environments may occur in research universities that also attend to the undergraduate program” (p. 163).

In a report to the Education Commission of the States, Colorado Governor Roy Romer (1995) presented three viewpoints, obtained through focus group discussions and a review of research, as to what constitutes quality in undergraduate instruction. According to political, business, and education leaders, the answer clustered around two themes: desirable student outcomes and institutional attributes. Student outcomes provided the “bottom line” of institutional quality, and they included higher-order, applied problem-solving abilities; enthusiasm for continuous learning; interpersonal skills, including communication and collaboration; a strong sense of responsibility for personal and community action; ability to bridge cultural and linguistic barriers; and a well-developed sense of professionalism. Institutional attributes to help ensure that
the conditions for quality exist included student-centeredness; commitment to specific “good practices” in instruction; quality management practices; and efficiency and integrity of operation.

For students, the assessment of quality centered around four areas of expectations for college. The first area, and the “bottom line” for students, was individual outcomes such as having a degree that will increase marketability in the workplace, anticipated salary in relation to education costs and debts incurred, and the possession of key skills that help ensure career mobility. The second area encompassed key experiences within the college environment, including the kind of access to faculty that enhances learning and active, “hands-on” learning experiences. The third area was support services such as advising, career and personal counseling, child care, and understandable, efficient administrative processes. The fourth area was costs. Actual costs incurred is a critical concern, but also costs in terms of time and effort. Students want to be sure that all types of expenditures required of them are not squandered by the institution.

Finally, a review of research resulted in the identification of 12 factors, organized under three areas, that are likely to create superior learning experiences. Quality in the area of organizational culture requires high expectations, respect for diverse talents and styles, and an emphasis on the early undergraduate years, especially the freshman year, as critical to student success. Quality in the area of curriculum requires coherence in learning, synthesizing experiences, ongoing practice of learned skills, and integrating education and experience. Quality in undergraduate instruction builds in active learning, assessment and prompt feedback, collaboration and teamwork, adequate time on task, and out-of-class contact with faculty.

**The Need for Change.** Articles related to the need for change within higher education are abundant in today’s literature. Those summarized here were selected for their particular relevance to the student satisfaction study, as they address directly issues of student expectations and the teaching and learning environment. In an editorial for an issue of Change devoted entirely to the undergraduate student population, Levine (1993) briefly described today’s students and their expectations for college. He characterized today’s students as “older than traditional undergraduates; more likely to attend part-time; more likely to have families and work; and more likely to reside off rather than on campus” (p. 4). Consequently, higher education is not necessarily the central feature in the lives of today’s undergraduates, and their expectations have changed accordingly. They want “simple procedures, good service, quality courses, and low costs” (p. 4). Levine goes on to say that if universities don’t respond to changing needs and expectations, then others will.
In an effort to describe specifically how the paradigm for undergraduate education has changed, Barr and Tagg (1995) compared the traditional instruction paradigm with the emerging learning paradigm. Under the traditional instruction paradigm, the mission of a college was to deliver instruction, primarily through 50-minute lectures; whereas, the emerging learning paradigm shifts the mission from delivering instruction to producing learning, through whatever method works best. While the dimensions and specific points that Barr and Tagg use to make comparisons are too numerous to elaborate here, the article is important as an example of how higher education institutions and educators are responding to the changing needs in the undergraduate population.

Finally, many articles today describe the need for change in higher education in response to the demands of a fast-changing global economy. A report by the Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF, 1997) in affiliation with the American Council on Education (ACE) presented the findings of a study designed to identify ways to improve the transition that students must make from college to the world of work. Contrary to frequent reports that the corporate world is not satisfied with the quality of college graduates available, corporate representatives in the study emphasized that today’s graduates are probably better prepared than those of previous generations. The problem is that corporate needs are different and their expectations are higher, and they do not believe that higher education has been able to change accordingly. On the other hand, there was a diverse response from the higher education community. Based on whether they were administrators, liberal arts faculty, professional school faculty, or career placement directors, higher education representatives had varying degrees of sympathy for the needs of the work world. The article concluded by identifying a very definite gap between the two groups and offering recommendations for improvements. The recommendations ranged from finding ways to facilitate greater understanding between the business and higher education communities, to explicitly defining the skills and knowledge desired in new employees and analyzing the learning experiences that facilitate these characteristics, to establishing more developmental work opportunities for students during their undergraduate education.

**Analysis and Summary**

After reviewing surveys and articles such as those summarized above, the Student Satisfaction Project Team identified student expectations and how they may differ from reality as an issue to be considered throughout the study. In addition, a number of other common concerns emerged as important areas for further study and analysis. First, there appeared to be a whole area of concern about meeting the needs of individual students. This is reflected in survey findings suggesting that UK students would like more individual attention, more helpful feedback from
faculty, and more respect and genuine interest in their welfare from faculty. Concurrently, the literature highlighted the need to provide a learning environment in which students felt confident, had opportunities to interact with both faculty and administrators, and experienced a feeling of concern for them as individuals. The Project Team concluded that campus climate may influence student satisfaction judgments about the quality of both instruction and services, and therefore, the team identified campus climate as an area for which they needed additional information.

A second theme emerged as a concern with the quality of teaching and the curriculum. This is reflected in survey findings suggesting that UK students, similar to students nationwide, placed academic goals such as getting a well-rounded education, developing critical thinking ability, and pursuing scholarly activities for intellectual development, high on their list of reasons for getting a college education; yet, they appeared to be less than satisfied with the quality of teaching in general at UK, the quality of instruction by teaching assistants, the quality of instruction in labs and discussion sections, and the quality of the curriculum in preparing students for further education. The literature suggests a number of variables related to satisfaction with the quality of teaching, including having attractive courses that are relevant and exciting; active, hands-on learning experiences; enthusiasm for teaching; knowledge of the subject; ability of the instructor to tie information together, stimulate thinking, and maintain interest; and the usefulness and relevance of knowledge gained. Furthermore, there was evidence that placing a high priority on both research and teaching provided the framework for the most effective learning environment. In response to this cluster of concerns and findings, the Student Satisfaction Project Team identified both teaching and the curriculum as areas for additional study and investigation.

Closely related to concerns with teaching and curriculum was the area of academic advising. Previous UK survey findings suggested some dissatisfaction among students with the helpfulness of academic advisors in the major, the availability of advisors, and advisors’ knowledge of University Studies Program (USP) requirements. While there seemed to be little in the literature tying satisfaction with advising to overall satisfaction with the college experience or undergraduate instruction, there were references to advising as a primary expectation of today’s students.

Another common theme seemed to cluster around items or issues related to career development and services. While UK students identified occupational needs as their primary reason for attending college, they indicated a lack of satisfaction with the career preparation that they received. UK faculty, on the other hand, did not view meeting student occupational needs as a primary goal for undergraduate education. This gap at the University is mirrored in the literature and on a national level. Feeling certain about major and occupational choices, feeling competitive
in the job market, and feeling well-prepared for the first job were student perceptions found to be related to student satisfaction with the college experience. Additionally, student expectations in this area included earning a degree as a credential to improve job marketability, adding value through coursework to earnings capacity, and having opportunities to practice learned skills and integrate education and experience. Although students seemed to agree on their needs in this area, there was a mix of attitudes within the higher education community. Thus, the Student Satisfaction Project Team felt a need to understand more fully the needs and expectations of UK students in this area.

In response to relatively low accountability ratings on the quality of noninstructional services, such as libraries and computers, a review of various survey items revealed some concerns with King Library services overall, circulation, and the availability of books and journals in the major. Yet, other than internal evaluations which are routinely conducted by King Library and which generally draw positive results from students, there was little information available regarding either library or computer services on campus. In this case, the lack of information and conflicting information provided the impetus for additional study and investigation.

In summary, the Student Satisfaction Project Team developed an information-gathering plan that emphasized the need for both qualitative and quantitative data in the following areas: academic advising, attitudes and expectations of students, campus climate, career development, curriculum, library and computer support services, and teaching. The plan was comprised of three basic data collection techniques: 1) interviews with, or comments from, selected individuals or groups of faculty, staff, and students; 2) student and faculty focus groups; and 3) a sample survey of student satisfaction, with national comparison data. Implementation of the plan was guided by two major principles. First, the Project Team believed that it was imperative to develop broad-based involvement of the university community in their efforts to understand the nature and source of student satisfaction and dissatisfaction on campus. Secondly, the team made a commitment to consider, whenever possible, the needs of special populations such as women, African-Americans, Appalachians, first-generation college students, and community college transfer students, throughout the data collection, analysis and reporting processes. Details of the plan and the results of the data collection and analysis efforts are presented in the next section.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews, input and involvement

After reviewing existing data and numerous articles, the Student Satisfaction Project Team asked a variety of well-informed and experienced individuals and groups on campus to provide their
insights into the nature and source of student satisfaction and dissatisfaction with undergraduate instruction and noninstructional services. These included academic advisors from the Central Advising Services and Transfer Center; library and computer services administrators; administrative and professional staff such as the Dean of Student Affairs and the Director of Career Planning and Placement; the Director of the Center for Appalachian Studies; the Directors of Undergraduate Studies; graduate teaching assistants; faculty and staff involved in special student success efforts; and all instructional faculty. The exchange of ideas took place in a variety of formats—during an all-day team meeting, during regularly scheduled monthly or bimonthly meetings, and through a letter distributed to all instructional faculty. The letter explained the purpose of the study and invited open comments and suggestions as to how student satisfaction could be improved.

From all of these various informed sources, the Project Team generated a comprehensive agenda of issues and concerns. These included, but were not limited to, the quality of academic advising; the academic preparedness and expectations of students; faculty responsibilities for both teaching and research; the need for small, interactive classes and fully-equipped, flexible classrooms; current efforts to improve library and computer services; the need to expand career development services; the influence of racial tension on campus climate; and the needs of special populations such as African-Americans, Appalachians, and first-generation college students.

The Project Team heard from the Central Advising Services and Transfer Center staff and from Directors of Undergraduate Studies that very definite improvements were needed in academic advising. Many students have three or four advisors by the time they are juniors; faculty who take on advising responsibilities and view advising as more than schedule-building often end up frustrated and over-loaded; departments that distribute advising responsibilities equitably among faculty may provide schedule-building services without fully understanding degree requirements; and advisors do not have easy, user-friendly access to accurate, up-to-date student records. Consequently, students end up without the close, consistent mentoring relationships and good advice that they expected from academic advising. Others who provide various student support services emphasized the need to encourage greater participation in UK101, expand career counseling, planning and placement services, and improve residence life.

From the library and computer services area, project team members learned about plans for the William T. Young Library and about recent progress in improving computer lab services. When the move is made from King Library to the new library, one classification system will be eliminated, and library personnel believe that this improvement will alleviate some confusion associated with locating library information. The new library facility, specifically designed for the
University’s holdings, and plans to consolidate some collections should also help in locating information resources. Recent efforts have increased the number of computers available for students; computer labs have been established in residence halls; and hours of operation have been expanded. However, the expansion of library and computer services has also brought problems with adequate staffing, especially during evening and weekend hours. During these times, the University relies heavily on student workers who may not have adequate knowledge and skills to meet the needs of students.

Directors of Undergraduate Studies, various instructional faculty, and graduate teaching assistants spoke to concerns about student academic needs and the instructional process. Students often seem unprepared for the rigor of academic work expected of them and the time they need to spend on work outside the classroom. More “peopleware” and less hardware and software were common themes as far as improving the instructional process to meet student academic needs better. The need for smaller class size was emphasized to allow for student-faculty interaction that pays attention to individual minds and facilitates intellectual exchange. Other needs identified included treating students cordially and considerately, discouraging students from holding jobs to provide ample time outside class for studying, promoting more non-athletic events across the board, and helping students improve their writing skills throughout the curriculum. The need for the University to support faculty with basic classroom equipment in good working order was accentuated. For example, faculty who make an effort to engage large lecture classes in interesting and lively discussions need ready access to good, reliable voice and visual presentation equipment, and faculty who want to use small group exercises to stimulate discussion and teamwork need flexible classroom arrangements.

The issue of rewarding teaching in merit evaluations and the promotion and tenure process was a consistent theme throughout many discussions. In spite of recent efforts of the University to improve the emphasis on teaching (i.e. adding special title series positions for teaching faculty and the teaching portfolios), the consensus appears to be that research productivity remains the driving force in performance evaluations and recommendations for tenure. In order to improve teaching and advising by faculty, a more realistic balance must be achieved between time spent on teaching and research activities and the recognition and rewards given to those activities.

Finally, the Project Team listened to discussions regarding the needs and concerns of special populations. Staff from Student Support Services spoke to the need to improve the environment on campus for African-Americans and other minorities, and this suggestion was reiterated by the Director of Appalachian Studies with respect to Appalachian and first-generation college students.
Common concerns ranged from students’ feeling prejudged about their academic abilities to feeling ridiculed because of regional accents to being made to feel different, out-of-place, and not welcome for various reasons. The consensus was that the campus climate for students of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds could be improved at the University of Kentucky.

**Student and faculty focus groups**

In response to a need felt by project team members to elicit honest, descriptive data from students and faculty about problematic issues related to the quality of both undergraduate instruction and noninstructional services, the Student Satisfaction Project Team distributed requests for proposals and subsequently contracted with Horizon Research International (HRI) to conduct a series of qualitative focus groups. The decision was made to seek the assistance of an outside agency in the hope that both students and faculty would feel free to voice their opinions frankly and honestly. HRI developed both student and faculty focus group discussion guides in accordance with information needs identified by project team members. The discussion guides were designed to collect information to increase understanding of the concerns of both students and faculty, including reasons for attending UK, strengths and weaknesses of UK, and the characteristics of excellence in both the instruction and noninstructional services domains.

The Lexington Campus Office of Planning and Assessment selected a random sample of students from which 12-14 participants were recruited for each of 14 student focus groups. The student groups were designed to represent a cross-section of the undergraduate student body, including special populations such as women, African-Americans, non-traditional students, community college transfers, and students on academic probation. Students who participated in the two-hour focus groups received a stipend for their time in addition to other incentives. Additionally, project team staff selected a random sample of instructional faculty from which 12-14 faculty members who had taught at least one undergraduate course in the last year were recruited for each of four faculty focus groups. The faculty sample was selected to be representative of the colleges comprising the University System. HRI conducted the focus groups during a two-week period in October 1996 and presented their findings in December 1996. These findings are briefly described below.

Collectively, the students reported choosing the University of Kentucky for four main reasons: programs offered, proximity to home, quality in relation to cost, and scholarships awarded. Their primary expectations for the University included providing an education as well as the opportunity to apply education to real-world situations. Additionally, they expected a
knowledgeable, interactive, caring faculty; the acquisition of oral and written communication skills; guidance in course selections and career exploration; and the development of other life skills such as independence and time management. Faculty, on the other hand, felt it was somewhat unrealistic of students to expect too much in the way of job preparation. They emphasized the importance of a well-rounded education as the foundation for developing skills necessary to meet the demands of life. However, they agreed with students that a motivated, interactive faculty was a realistic expectation for a quality educational experience. Faculty suggested that students need to have more open minds and be more willing to learn and think on their own.

The remaining topics for discussion focused on future preparation, student life, campus climate, student camaraderie, faculty and instruction, student-faculty mutual respect, computer and library services, student advising, career counseling, and UK as a research institution. Faculty discussed very similar issues, including a special emphasis on their opinions about the University Studies Program (USP). These discussions provided the rich, descriptive information for which the Project Team had hoped and to which they have referred many times; however, even a brief summary cannot be justly included in this report. Therefore, for the interested reader, a more detailed summary is presented in Appendix A.

In very broad terms, there was a tendency for both students and faculty to differ among and between themselves on many, many issues discussed in the focus groups. Nonetheless, several areas of strength for the University were identified by either students or faculty, including:

- Preparation for life in the outside world (time management skills, etc.)
- 24-hour library service
- Construction of a new library
- Up-to-date software, email and Internet access
- UK101 course
- Faculty current and knowledgeable in their field
- Hands-on research opportunities for some students

However, the weaknesses identified by either students or faculty outnumbered the strengths:

- Racial tension
- Residence hall life
- Opportunities for communication and interaction
- Space and facilities designed for interaction
- Large class sizes
- USP complexity, proliferation and unavailability of courses
- Faculty research taking time away from teaching
- Student employment taking time away from studying
- Location of faculty offices and time of office hours
- Computer availability and disrepair of equipment (one of two greatest hassles)
- Computer lab printing fees and poor staffing
- Services and ease in locating information in existing libraries
• Academic advising
• Student parking (one of two greatest hassles)
• Campus bureaucracy

Consequently, students and faculty were in agreement on several areas identified for needed improvements: class size conducive to communication and interaction; computer accessibility and printing fees; a user-friendly library; academic advising; and open-minded acceptance of others on both the student and faculty levels. Areas where there appeared to be gaps or differences between and among students and/or faculty were: opportunities to apply knowledge through internships, co-ops and labs; the value of a well-rounded education versus the desire for more classes germane to the major; the quality of instruction and classroom experiences; mutual respect between students and faculty; feedback to students on their progress; career counseling services; the University Studies Program; and faculty research activities. These areas, where there were inconsistencies in student and faculty focus group discussions, provided the basis for many survey questions designed for the final step in the data collection and analysis plan.

Another important aspect of the focus group discussions was the collection of information from students as to what constituted for them a high quality of instruction and academic advising. For instructors, the students cited the following expectations:

• **Effective communication**, including the teaching skills necessary to impart knowledge to students, make interesting class presentations, interact with students during class, use practical application of theory in class, and speak English clearly.
• **Caring and understanding**, including compassion, flexibility, concern for student progress, and genuine interest in student success.
• **Enthusiasm**, including a desire to teach, enjoyment of the subject, and enjoyment of the teaching process.
• **Knowledge**, including being well-versed in the subject, having information to answer readily students’ questions, and being up-to-date with information.

Finally, the students also cited three major traits that they expected from advisors: caring and understanding, knowledgeable about curricula, and available on a regular basis. Again, this information provided the basis for many survey questions designed to assess the extent to which the University was meeting student expectations for a high quality educational experience.

**Student Satisfaction Survey**

**Survey Instruments.** The Student Satisfaction Project Team developed a written survey process to provide national comparison data, to confirm focus group findings, and to identify other specific areas for improvement in students’ perceptions of the quality of undergraduate instruction and noninstructional services. The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (see Appendix B.3) was selected as the primary instrument because of the availability of national comparison data and
the ability to calculate performance gaps (defined below). The Noel-Levitz instrument contained 79 items covering a broad range of student concerns. On 73 items survey participants gave two responses: 1) they rated the importance of the item on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is not important at all and 7 is very important; and 2) they rated their level of satisfaction with each item on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is not satisfied at all and 7 is very satisfied. On six items, they rated satisfaction only.

Using the importance and satisfaction ratings, a performance gap can then be computed for each item by subtracting the satisfaction rating from the importance rating. The performance gap is a critical factor in the Noel-Levitz approach to satisfaction analysis, as it provides a measure as to how well the institution is meeting student expectations for a quality educational experience. According to Noel-Levitz, the larger the performance gap for a particular item or scale of items (i.e. high importance and relatively low satisfaction), the greater the concern should be for improvement as a means to increase both student satisfaction and retention.

Thirty items were constructed as supplementary satisfaction items (see Appendix B.2, B.4) primarily to confirm focus group findings and to analyze findings in relation to the accountability items under study. Therefore, the total number of satisfaction items on the instruments administered to students was 109. Furthermore, a number of multiple choice and opinion items were also included to provide demographic information, to assess student attitudes on relevant issues, and to answer other specific questions the Project Team felt were important.

The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) appears to be a very reliable instrument. Cronbach’s coefficient alpha is .97 for the set of importance scores and .98 for the set of satisfaction scores. The three-week, test-retest reliability coefficient is .85 for importance scores and .84 for satisfaction scores. Furthermore, Noel-Levitz assessed the convergent validity of the SSI by correlating satisfaction scores from the SSI with satisfaction scores from the College Student Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSSQ), another statistically reliable satisfaction instrument. The Pearson correlation between these two instruments (r=.71; p<.00001) was high enough to indicate that the SSI’s satisfaction scores measure the same satisfaction construct as the CCSQ’s scores. Reliability and validity data for the supplementary satisfaction items developed by the project team are not available.

**Survey Sample.** The Lexington Campus Office of Planning and Assessment selected a random sample of 1151 degree-seeking, undergraduate students, stratified for gender, ethnic origin, and classification, to make up the overall sample survey group. An additional random sample of 120 degree-seeking, undergraduate students, who were also community college transfers, was
selected to provide sufficient data for an analysis of transfer student concerns. The fall 1996 enrollment was used for the selection process.

**Survey Administration.** Each student received a survey packet (see Appendix B) that included: 1) a letter explaining the importance of the project and requesting the student’s help and participation; 2) a step-by-step instruction sheet that also included 10 additional items; 3) the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory; and 4) the Supplementary Inventory. Students were offered an incentive package for their time and effort, and they were able to drop the survey off in three different locations. Mail-in surveys were also accepted. The incentive package included a $5.00 cash stipend, a free drink from UK Food Services, a chance to win free printing in the computer labs, and a chance to win free books from the UK Bookstore for the fall 1997 semester.

**Survey Response.** A total of 379 usable surveys were returned by the overall sample survey group, for a response rate of 33 percent; the community college transfer sample survey group returned 35 surveys for a response rate of 29 percent. Table 1 depicts the gender, ethnic, and classification distribution of the overall survey respondents, compared to the undergraduate student population. There was a tendency for the survey respondent group to have fewer freshmen and fewer males than the overall undergraduate population; however, the percent of both the African-American and Caucasian/White ethnic groups was highly similar to the overall undergraduate population. No additional analyses concerning the representativeness of the survey respondents were conducted. Although the Project Team concluded that the response sample was sufficiently representative of the total degree-seeking, undergraduate population to be meaningful in interpreting results, the extent to which the survey respondent group may differ from the undergraduate population should be considered a limitation of the survey study.

**Nonrespondent Analysis.** As a final important step in the survey process, the UK Survey Research Center conducted a random sample telephone survey of nonrespondents. A total of 52 additional responses to 69 items were collected and analyzed to investigate the possibility of a systematic response bias for those who chose to respond to the survey versus those who chose not to respond. The performance gaps for all 69 items were computed and reviewed for the respondents and the nonrespondents. The performance gaps were: 1) higher for the respondents on 39 percent of the items; 2) higher for the nonrespondents on 28 percent of the items; and 3) about the same (within 0.1) on 33 percent of the items. Next, a Chi-Square analysis of 15 key items concerning the evaluation of the quality of undergraduate instruction and noninstructional services and instructional effectiveness was conducted. Results depicted 5 of 15 items for which there were significant differences in the frequency distribution of satisfaction ratings; however, the direction of the
differences varied. Thus, the Project Team concluded that there was not a systematic response bias evident among nonrespondents, and all subsequent analyses proceeded using the overall group of 379 respondents.

Table 1
Representativeness of survey respondents compared to the undergraduate student population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Survey Respondents (N=379)</td>
<td>Degree-seeking Undergraduates (N=16,527)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Origin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>87.6</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Results. The first step in the data analysis, which included a national comparison group analysis, was conducted by Noel-Levitz (see Appendix C.1). The national comparison group included nine Research I and II institutions representative of several regions of the United States: Auburn University, Iowa State University, Kent State University, Oklahoma State University, SUNY-Albany, Ohio State University, University of Illinois-Chicago, University of Wyoming, and Utah State University. This type of analysis was deemed necessary due to nagging questions about how the University of Kentucky might compare to similar institutions. Although the results should be viewed with caution due to varying data collection procedures, the results of this analysis were very positive for the University (see Table 2). UK survey respondents were significantly more satisfied than their peers at comparison institutions on 8 of 12 (67%) scales and on 44 of 79 (59%) items; they were significantly less satisfied on only 6 of 79 (8%) items. Furthermore, UK survey respondents were significantly more satisfied than the comparison group on every single item that made up the instructional effectiveness scale. Although Noel-Levitz did not provide statistical significance testing for performance gaps (which take into consideration both importance and satisfaction), a comparison of performance gaps revealed that UK survey respondents consistently reported smaller gaps than their peers. These results provided evidence that the University is doing a lot of things right in both the areas of instruction and student services, and the University community should be recognized for its efforts.

Although UK compared favorably with the national group, the Project Team remained committed to understanding the relationship between accountability item ratings and student satisfaction concerns and making recommendations for improvement. Therefore, the second step in the analysis -- an analysis of performance gaps -- focused only on the UK data in order to identify areas where there may be need for improvements. (To reiterate, a performance gap represents the difference between the importance rating for the item and the satisfaction rating for the item.). The average performance gap for all items was 1.24. Table 3 depicts the largest performance gaps (all those at 1.50 or above) as reported by UK survey respondents. A review of the largest performance gaps revealed two things: 1) students are concerned about a wide variety of campus issues, from parking to libraries to computer access to residence halls to the use of student fees to concerns with fairness, reasonableness, and helpfulness to the quality of instruction and availability of practical work experiences; and 2) most of those issues are related to support services, rather than instruction and coursework. However, when the items were rank-ordered by importance (see Table 4), the value that survey respondents placed on academic issues clearly emerged, especially in relation to their major program of study.
Table 2

Satisfaction means of survey respondents compared to a national group of research institutions, by scale and selected items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales/Items</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Effectiveness</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>0.31***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate.</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>-0.71***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration Effectiveness</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>0.22***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for the Individual</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>0.23***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Climate</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.19***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a strong commitment to racial harmony on this campus.</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>-0.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators are approachable to students.</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Centeredness</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Excellence</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>0.25***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and Financial Aid</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>0.31***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Support Services</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library resources and services are adequate.</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>-0.38***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer labs are adequate and accessible.</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>-0.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookstore staff are helpful.</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Life</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>0.14**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence hall regulations are reasonable.</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>-0.70***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living conditions in the residence halls are comfortable.</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are a sufficient number of weekend activities for students.</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student handbook provides helpful information about student life.</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student activity fees are put to good use.</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness to Diverse Populations</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution’s commitment to commuters</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>-0.31***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution’s commitment to students with disabilities</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Difference statistically significant at the .05 level  
**Difference statistically significant at the .01 level  
***Difference statistically significant at the .001 level
Table 3  

Rank-ordering of largest performance gaps reported by UK survey respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Gap*</th>
<th>Importance Rank**</th>
<th>Survey Item (Item #)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Amount of student parking space is adequate. (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>I can locate library materials when I need them. (S-11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Library collections are organized to ensure ease in locating them. (S-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>I seldom get the “run-around” when seeking information on campus. (49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Computer labs are adequate and accessible. (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Adequate financial aid is available for most students. (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Student activities fees are put to good use. (73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>Residence hall regulations are reasonable. (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Living conditions in residence halls are comfortable. (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>My USP courses helped prepare me for my major courses. (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>This institution shows concern for students as individuals. (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Channels for expressing complaints are readily available. (71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Library resources and services are adequate. (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>The UK Library is a good source for the information I need. (S-14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Course materials are presented in an interesting, creative manner. (S-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Computer lab staff are knowledgeable. (S-17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Billing policies are reasonable. (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Parking lots are well-lighted and secure. (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Faculty are fair and unbiased in treatment of individual students. (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Opportunities for practical work experience in my major are adequate. (81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Library collections are maintained in good condition. (S-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Computer lab staff are responsive to my requests for help. (S-19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent. (58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Financial aid counselors are helpful (5); Technology fees paid are a worthwhile investment (79); Graduate TAs are competent as classroom instructors (70); Faculty care about me as an individual (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Average performance gap for 103 survey items is 1.24.  
**Number of items ranked is 103.
Table 4
Top items according to level of importance reported by UK survey respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance Rank</th>
<th>Performance Gap</th>
<th>Survey Item (Item #)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>Instruction in my major field is excellent. (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>Content of courses within my major is valuable. (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>Academic Advisor is knowledgeable about my major requirements. (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent. (58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field. (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>Campus is safe and secure for all students. (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment. (66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>My academic advisor is approachable. (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>Faculty are fair &amp; unbiased in treatment of individual students. (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>Faculty are enthusiastic about teaching. (S1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>I am able to experience intellectual growth here. (39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>Faculty provide….feedback that helps me… improve my performance. (S4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>Computer labs are adequate and accessible. (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>The availability of up-to-date computers and software is adequate. (S2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>Opportunities for practical work experience in my major are adequate. (81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>Course materials are presented in an interesting, creative manner. (S3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>Faculty are enthusiastic about their subject or discipline. (S5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>Major requirements are clear and reasonable. (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>My academic advisor is knowledgeable about USP requirements. (75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>Most faculty on this campus are effective communicators. (S6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours. (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus. (69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>Graduate teaching assistants are competent classroom instructors. (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>There is a commitment to academic excellence on this campus. (41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, the survey data were analyzed for specific subgroups. The Project Team believed that, by addressing the concerns of the overall group in addition to the common concerns of special subgroups, the impact of suggested improvements could be maximized in meeting the needs of a diverse student body. The largest 25 performance gaps were identified for women, African-Americans, seniors, and community college transfers (see Appendix C.2). Since the University is required to survey seniors for accountability reporting, the concerns of seniors were especially relevant to the study and of particular interest to the team. By reviewing the performance gaps, the Project Team identified a group of concerns, common to the majority of subgroups, to be considered in developing recommendations (see Table 5). In general, this group of items paralleled those identified in the overall group of largest performance gaps, with the exception of two
additional items: *campus is safe and secure for all students and campus staff are caring and helpful.*

**Table 5**

**Relatively large performance gaps common to the majority of subgroups,* listed in rank order of importance to survey respondents overall**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance Rank**</th>
<th>Performance Gap***</th>
<th>Survey Items (Item #)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>Campus is safe and secure for all students. (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students. (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>Computer labs are adequate and accessible. (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>Opportunities for practical work experience in my major are adequate. (81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>Course materials are presented in an interesting, creative manner. (S-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>I can locate library materials when I need them. (S-11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate. (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>Campus staff are caring and helpful. (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>Adequate financial aid is available for most students. (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>Library collections are organized to ensure ease in locating them. (S-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>This institution shows concern for students as individuals. (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>I seldom get the “run-around” when seeking information on campus. (57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>Parking lots are well-lighted and secure. (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>Faculty care about me as an individual. (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>Living conditions in the residence halls are comfortable. (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available. (71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>Student activity fees are put to good use. (73)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*   Subgroups included females, African-Americans, seniors and community college transfers.

**   Number of items ranked is 103.

***   Average gap for 103 items is 1.24.

Based on interviews with professional staff and students who identified a need to improve the campus climate for African-Americans, project team members were particularly interested in items that seemed to be problematic for African-Americans as a group. Thus, the data were reviewed to identify those items and to ensure that they were considered in drawing conclusions and
forming recommendations. Additional items for which African-Americans reported much larger performance gaps than were reported by the overall group and other subgroups included:

- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about my major requirements.
- Major requirements are clear and reasonable.
- Classes to satisfy USP courses are readily available.
- In courses I learn to apply new knowledge to real-world situations.
- Financial aid awards are announced in time to be helpful for planning.
- Students are made to feel welcome on this campus.
- I get encouragement I need from faculty on this campus.
- Faculty take into consideration student differences as they teach
- My academic advisor helps me set goals.
- Academic support services adequately meet the needs of students.

Additional subgroup analyses were then conducted to address two specific questions: 1) how do on-campus and off-campus students differ in their responses? and 2) how does cumulative GPA influence student evaluations of the quality of undergraduate instruction? A comparison of the largest performance gaps for both on-campus and off-campus students revealed few differences – 21 of 28 items with the largest performance gaps were common to both groups. Interestingly, parking and residence hall items were among the items with the largest performance gaps for both groups. Only two items not previously identified as areas of concern emerged from the analysis of on- and off-campus responses. For on-campus students, the item -- there is an adequate selection of food available in the cafeteria – had a performance gap of 1.53; whereas, for off-campus students, the item – opportunities to learn to use computer resources...are adequate – had a performance gap of 1.62.

The question of the influence of cumulative GPA on student evaluations of instruction was addressed to investigate the common assertion that students who make good grades give good evaluations, and students who make poor grades give poor evaluations. This relationship held true for every group except those students with less than a 2.00 GPA. While there were only 10 respondents who reported a GPA less than 2.0, 90 percent of them evaluated the quality of instruction as good or excellent. Overall, 75 percent of respondents evaluated the quality of instruction as good or excellent. The group that appeared to be the most dissatisfied with the quality of instruction was the group with a GPA between 2.00 and 2.49, as only 60 percent of them evaluated the quality of instruction as good or excellent.

The final part of the performance gap analysis involved a review of performance gaps by student classification (i.e. freshman, sophomore, etc.) This analysis was undertaken because the Project Team was particularly interested in how student perceptions may change over time. The
freshman perspective is undoubtedly much different from that of the senior who is growing anxious about graduation and beyond. As students move from the freshman to senior year, accumulating an increasing number of experiences with various aspects of university life, it would be important to know in which areas performance gaps increase or decrease. In particular, academic advising and the University Studies Program (USP) seemed to be areas for which senior reflections would provide useful and insightful information. Thus, the freshman and senior performance gaps for advising and USP items are presented in Table 6. In general, all items related to USP courses showed an increasingly widening performance gap from the freshman to senior year, while the change in performance gaps for academic advising was mixed and not as strong. Seniors, who are in a position to reflect on the overall quality of the USP, seemed to be less satisfied than freshmen with the availability of USP courses, the clarity of USP requirements, the knowledge of USP requirements by advisors, the helpfulness of USP courses in preparing them for their major courses, and the effectiveness of USP courses in helping them acquire communication and problem-solving skills. Additionally, an inspection of the academic advising items suggested that seniors are less satisfied with the time advisors spend with them and with the help received in setting goals. A presentation of all items by classification can be found in Appendix C.3.

The third step in the analysis focused on explaining students’ responses to the accountability items, the primary impetus for the student satisfaction study. Survey respondents evaluated the quality of undergraduate instruction by faculty and the quality of noninstructional services (such as computer services, library, etc.) on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1=poor and 4=excellent. The means calculated for each of the items were comparable to the 1994 accountability reports, as they remained below the 3.0 accountability goal level. The mean rating for the quality of instruction item was 2.86, compared to 2.74 and 2.60 in 1994; whereas, the mean rating for the noninstructional services item was 2.60, compared to 2.78 in 1994. Furthermore, 75 percent of respondents evaluated the quality of instruction as good or excellent, while only 57 percent evaluated the quality of noninstructional services as good or excellent. These findings confirmed the need to work toward improving student perceptions of the quality of both undergraduate instruction and noninstructional services.
Table 6
Performance gaps for academic advising and USP items from the freshman to senior year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item (Item #)</th>
<th>Performance Gaps*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Advising</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic advisor is knowledgeable about my major requirements. (33)</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic advisor is approachable. (6)</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic advisor is knowledgeable about USP requirements. (75)</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic advisor is concerned about my success. (14)</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic advisor has adequate time to spend with me. (89)</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic advisor helps me set goals. (19)</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University Studies Program</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes to satisfy University Studies requirements are readily available. (78)</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Studies requirements are clear and easy to understand. (74)</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My University Studies courses helped prepare me for my major courses. (71)</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My University Studies courses have helped me acquire communication and problem-solving skills needed for future success. (76)</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, for each accountability item, students were categorized into poor-fair or good-excellent groups based on their responses to the items. A series of stepwise, logistic regression analyses were then used to identify items that differentiated significantly between students who gave poor-fair evaluations of instruction and those who gave good-excellent evaluations. Similar analyses were conducted for the evaluations of noninstructional services. Additionally, a series of simple, stepwise regression analyses were used to identify significant predictors of students’ evaluations of instruction.

For the quality of instruction item, a total of eight different stepwise regression models were tested, based on somewhat different theories as to which items to include as explanatory variables (Note: Interested readers may request additional statistical information from the Student Satisfaction Project Team, as the intent of this report is to summarize findings as briefly as
possible.) Table 7 depicts the survey items that emerged as significant explanatory variables in at least one stepwise regression model. Two items emerged consistently as strong explanatory variables: course materials are presented in an interesting, creative manner and graduate teaching assistants are competent as classroom instructors. Other items were related to major courses and requirements; academic advising; faculty characteristics such as fairness, enthusiasm and caring; opportunities for practical work experiences; and opportunities to interact with faculty.

Table 7
Summary of regression analyses results for instruction and related items with p<.05 in final stepwise models, in order of overall importance ranking (IMP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMP</th>
<th>Survey Items</th>
<th>Logistic Regression</th>
<th>Simple Regression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Top 25 in IMP</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>GAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Content of courses within my major is valuable. (8)</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Academic advisor is knowledgeable about major requirements. (33)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Academic advisor is approachable. (6)</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Faculty fair and unbiased in treatment of individual students. (25)</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Faculty enthusiastic about teaching. (S-1)</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Opportunities for practical work experiences adequate. (81)</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Course materials interesting and creative. (S-3)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Faculty enthusiastic about their subject or discipline. (S-2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Major requirements clear and reasonable. (55)</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Most faculty are effective communicators. (S-5)</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Graduate TAs competent as classroom instructors. (70)</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.0002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Opportunities to interact &amp; connect w/faculty are adequate. (82)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Faculty care about me as an individual. (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the quality of noninstructional services item, a total of four logistic regression models were tested. Table 8 depicts the survey items that emerged as significant explanatory variables in at least one logistic regression model. As expected, these items were specifically related to both library and computer lab resources and services, with the item – *computer labs are adequate and accessible* – emerging as the most consistent and significant item in explaining *poor-fair* ratings versus *good-excellent* ratings. This finding confirms what students had said in the focus group discussions – that the availability of computers is one of the greatest hassles on campus.

### Table 8

**Summary of logistic regression analyses results for noninstructional services and related items with p<.05 in final stepwise model, in order of importance ranking (IMP)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMP</th>
<th>Survey Items (Item #)</th>
<th>SAT</th>
<th>GAP</th>
<th>Selected</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Computer labs are adequate and accessible. (26)</td>
<td>.0001</td>
<td>.0001</td>
<td>.0001</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The availability of up-to-date computers and software is adequate. (S-15)</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>The UK Library is a good source for the information I need. (S-14)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.0003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Computer lab staff are responsive to my requests for help.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Library staff are helpful and approachable. (13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, in order to consider the influence of meaningful groups of items in predicting student evaluations of the quality of instruction and noninstructional services, a factor analysis was used to identify groups of items that seemed to comprise a meaningful group, or factor. The identified factors were then used as explanatory variables in a simple stepwise regression on both quality of instruction ratings and noninstructional services ratings. A factor named *faculty teaching effectiveness* emerged as the only meaningful predictor for quality of instruction; for the quality of noninstructional services, both a *library* and a *computer* factor emerged as important predictors. The primary items that made up each of these factors are presented in Table 9 (Note: The interested reader may again request additional statistical information from the Student Satisfaction Project Team.). The results of the factor analysis and the various regression analyses were consistent in identifying a pool of items particularly important to student evaluations of the quality of instruction and noninstructional services. Thus, these items were considered carefully in drawing conclusions and developing recommendations for improvements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Teaching Effectiveness</td>
<td>Faculty on campus are enthusiastic about teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Course materials are presented in an interesting, creative manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty are enthusiastic about their subject or discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most faculty on this campus are effective communicators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty frequently engage their classes in effective discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty provide the kind of feedback that helps me know what to do to improve my performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress in a course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>I can locate library materials when I need them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library collections are organized to ensure ease in locating them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The UK Library is a good source for the information I need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library collections are maintained in good condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library resources and services are adequate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunities to learn to use the library effectively and efficiently are adequate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library staff are responsive to my requests for help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>Computer lab staff are responsive to my requests for help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer lab staff are knowledgeable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer labs are adequate and accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The availability of up-to-date computers and software is adequate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunities to learn to use computer resources are adequate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fourth step in the analysis consisted of simple frequency counts for multiple choice items (see Appendix C.5) and opinion items on the supplementary inventory and a compilation of student comments (see Appendix C.6). In order to get a sense of the extent to which students felt that faculty were disrespectful or short with them, a multiple choice item that quantified such experiences was used and analyzed. Of 354 students who completed the question, 22 percent said that faculty were disrespectful or short with them 10 percent of the time or more; 48 percent said up to 10 percent of the time; and 28 percent said this never happened. Furthermore, over 40 percent of students said they sought the individual attention of faculty at least once a week or more, with nearly one-third saying that they felt a lack of individual attention. The most frequently cited reason for a lack of individual attention was that the student’s schedule did not fit with faculty office hours. The second and third most frequently cited reasons, respectively, were faculty being too busy and students feeling insecure about approaching faculty.
Over 60 percent of respondents reported having jobs. The most frequently cited reason was to pay for food and housing expenses (25%); nearly 10 percent were supporting their families. In terms of adjusting to college life, 29 percent said they had adjusted very well; 61 percent said fairly well; and 11 percent said not at all. Finally, while more than half (57%) said they had never received academic advising that led to taking an unnecessary course, 43 percent said they received such advising at least once.

Finally, Table 10 presents the extent to which survey respondents agreed or disagreed with 11 statements designed to help understand the beliefs and attitudes of UK students with respect to key issues. These items were also considered in drawing conclusions and making recommendations.

Table 10
Percent of respondents that agreed, disagreed, or were unsure on the statements presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion Items</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel prejudged on this campus because of characteristics such as my gender, race, background, accent, etc.</td>
<td>69.1 Disagree 15.7 Unsure 15.2 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I learn just as easily in a large class as I do in a small class.</td>
<td>55.7 Disagree 10.9 Unsure 33.3 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My primary goal for earning a college degree is to get a well-rounded education, not specific job skills.</td>
<td>49.7 Disagree 19.0 Unsure 31.3 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The adjustment – from high school where teachers knew me, to the University where faculty may not know me – has been difficult.</td>
<td>55.6 Disagree 13.4 Unsure 31.1 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Racial relationships on campus are conducive to a sense of community and appreciation for differences.</td>
<td>26.4 Disagree 35.7 Unsure 37.9 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. All UK graduates should be required to participate in at least one practical work experience related to their major.</td>
<td>16.3 Disagree 15.7 Unsure 68.0 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Dorm life on campus is conducive to academic success.</td>
<td>33.4 Disagree 43.4 Unsure 23.2 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel lucky to have been admitted to the University of Kentucky.</td>
<td>25.9 Disagree 16.6 Unsure 57.5 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Faculty on this campus need to try and understand student backgrounds and abilities in order to improve teaching and learning.</td>
<td>8.8 Disagree 16.0 Unsure 75.2 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Good faculty motivate students and make them want to learn.</td>
<td>1.1 Disagree 1.9 Unsure 97.1 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I am proud to be a student at the University of Kentucky.</td>
<td>4.8 Disagree 10.7 Unsure 84.5 Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Students responded to opinion items on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1=strongly disagree, 3=not sure, and 5=strongly agree.
Survey Limitations. Limitations of the survey study include the lack of reliability and validity data for the supplementary survey items; a relatively low response rate for survey returns; and over-representation of upper class students and females among the survey respondents. In spite of these limitations, the Student Satisfaction Project Team is confident that the survey findings provided an accurate assessment of the needs and concerns of undergraduate students at the University, because they served to confirm much of what we had already read and heard from various informed sources. Nonetheless, we want to emphasize at this time that the conclusions and recommendations of the study are not based solely on the survey results. Throughout our discussions and deliberations, we have considered and re-considered all our findings – from previous survey results, the related literature, interviews, focus groups, and the sample survey – in order to identify patterns and consistencies on which to draw valid, reasonable conclusions. These conclusions and accompanying recommendations are presented in the next two sections.

Conclusions

In summary, the overall findings and conclusions of the Student Satisfaction Study revealed many positive aspects about the quality of education provided to students at the University of Kentucky. First, it is essential to note that many focus group participants gave very positive responses to questions regarding the quality of both instruction and services. Secondly, according to the Noel-Levitz survey results, UK students appeared to be more satisfied than their peers at comparable institutions in critical areas such as instructional effectiveness, academic advising, registration effectiveness, concern for the individual, campus climate, service excellence, and recruitment and financial aid. Furthermore, students were highly satisfied with the reputation of the University of Kentucky in their communities across the Commonwealth. They gave high ratings to faculty being knowledgeable in their field and available after class and during office hours. They also expressed satisfaction with the variety of courses offered, and their ability to experience intellectual growth at the University. In view of these positive results, it may be difficult for some to understand the conclusions and recommendations that follow, as they may seem inconsistent with overall findings. Thus, some additional explanation is in order.

The primary purpose of the Student Satisfaction Study was to identify the factors affecting student evaluations of the quality of undergraduate instruction and noninstructional services and to make recommendations for improvements. While the majority of the Student Satisfaction Survey respondents (75%) evaluated the quality of instruction as good-excellent, resulting in a positive overall evaluation, the Project Team was interested in the responses of the remaining 25 percent.
Twenty-five percent of the undergraduate student body is a sizeable number of students, and in order to improve the quality of instruction for those students, it was essential to identify and respond to their concerns. Furthermore, it was not surprising to find that they were less satisfied in areas with which other students seemed fairly happy. The same reasoning can be applied to the evaluations of noninstructional services where the majority of students (57%) gave *good-excellent* evaluations. Therefore, the first conclusion of the Student Satisfaction Project Team is that the University of Kentucky is doing a good job providing a quality educational experience to the majority of students enrolled. Recent strategic planning initiatives to improve the quality of undergraduate education appear to be making a positive impact. However, if the University community is committed to improving the educational experience for all students, then it must address those areas that are problematic for a considerable number of students who are not satisfied.

The student satisfaction survey findings are striking in that they identify the need for improvements in a wide variety of areas; however, these findings are not surprising. From early readings and discussions, the Student Satisfaction Project Team believed that the factors underlying the University’s need to improve student satisfaction, and even retention and timely graduation, were diverse and numerous. The items with the largest performance gaps ranged from parking to library services, registering for classes, residence hall regulations and conditions, student activities, channels for expressing complaints, computer labs, financial aid, USP courses, billing policies, issues of fairness and reasonableness, getting the “run-around”, practical work experiences, quality of instruction, and issues of concern, caring, and helpfulness. Collectively, these results suggest a climate that does not communicate to all students that the University places a high value on their instruction and individual needs. The following example of one student’s comments, taken from the Student Satisfaction Survey, summarizes the concerns of such students:

“If I had it all to do over again, I would have never chosen UK for my academic career. I have many reasons….. 1) not being seen as an individual 2) faculty more concerned with their research work than student’s classwork 3) faculty members not connecting with students on a personal level 4) campus in general is too interested in sports, rather than the main purpose for UK – being higher education! 5) UK has very poor accessibility for commuters 6) poor advisors that are not knowledgeable about course work a student needs or the requirements….. I feel that UK has a positive reputation in our community. Thus, my justification for finishing my degree here.”

In response to this type of feedback from students, the Project Team concluded further that the University of Kentucky should do more to provide the supportive, student-centered climate that students expect and want from their university. In the broadest sense, the Project Team recommends that the University adopt a systematic, comprehensive approach to creating an integrated living and learning environment where student success and achievement are clearly top
university priorities. The Project Team has concluded further that the University can achieve these goals by focusing efforts in the following areas:

- Developing a service-oriented campus climate
- Creating and sustaining a community appreciative of differences
- Improving the quality of instruction by graduate teaching assistants
- Supporting an environment that facilitates effective, creative instructional practices
- Communicating to students the faculty’s respect and concern for them
- Improving access to information resources through effective library services
- Improving student access to information technology and using technology to improve advising and teaching
- Re-examining and revising the University Studies Program (USP)
- Improving academic advising for both USP and major programs
- Expanding efforts to help students make the transition to the world of work
- Improving residence hall life
- Improving campus safety and security

In the next section, the recommendations of the Student Satisfaction Project Team provide possible initiatives for improvement in each of the areas listed above. Each recommendation is accompanied by the key supporting evidence and rationale that led the Project Team to make the recommendation. Furthermore, the Project Team presents these recommendations within the context of three major concerns.

First, project team members are concerned about the costs associated with implementing the initiatives necessary to follow through with the recommendations. We are sensitive to the difficulties faced by administrators who must constantly evaluate and make decisions regarding the many critical needs of the University. We are aware of the need to maintain the affordability of a University of Kentucky education for the people of the Commonwealth, and we are aware of the historical trend toward diminishing state support. Thus, we have made a special effort to refrain from presenting a set of recommendations perceived as an unrealistic and unmanageable budget request; rather, we have put forth a variety of possible initiatives ranging from enforcing existing policies and procedures to revising or developing new ones; from training existing personnel to hiring new ones; from relocating student services units to refurbishing classrooms; from using existing computer resources to acquiring new ones; from placing a greater emphasis on good teaching practices in the classroom to revising curricula. It is our hope that administrators, directors, deans and department chairs will work with their faculty and staff to identify and address as soon as possible those recommendations and initiatives that will make the biggest difference while maximizing the use of limited resources.
Secondly, project team members are concerned about the spirit with which these findings, conclusions, and recommendations are received and addressed. Too often our response to students’ attempts to express their dissatisfaction is a counter-attempt to discount their feelings with explanations or excuses. For example, “students have difficulty registering for classes they need, because they don’t want to take 8:00 am classes.” Or, “students complain about parking because they’re too lazy to walk a short distance.” In reality, there may be many other important and valid reasons for such student complaints. Eight o’clock classes and parking difficulties can be enormous problems to commuters and married students who are juggling multiple roles to attain their educational goals. We submit to the University community that, in large part, the perceptions of students create their reality, and the collective perceptions of students create the climate for students on the campus of the University of Kentucky. Thus, we need to open our minds to the realities of being a student in today’s world and let student concerns become our concerns as well.

Finally, project team members are concerned that the recent passage of the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act and the resulting emphasis on making the University of Kentucky a top 20 public research institution will diminish the University’s focus on the needs of individual students, especially undergraduates. In the best of all worlds, the University of Kentucky can and should be an institution that excels in achieving both the teaching and research missions. Indeed, research has suggested that an institution placing a high value on both teaching and research provides the most powerful environment for a high quality undergraduate program (Volkwein & Carbone, 1994). Therefore, as plans to implement the Postsecondary Education Improvement Act begin to unfold, we encourage all members of the University community to increase their focus and efforts on improving the quality of undergraduate education in accordance with increased efforts to improve our status as a research institution.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations presented in this section fall into three categories. The first two recommendations address concerns regarding the *climate* for students at the University of Kentucky. These recommendations are necessarily broad in scope, addressing the need to intensify efforts to create a student-centered, service-oriented climate and a campus community that values and appreciates diversity.

A second set of recommendations addresses the specific issues which prompted the study of student satisfaction. That is, recommendations to improve the quality of undergraduate instruction and noninstructional services are set forth. These recommendations respond to student concerns about TA competence, fairness and concern for individuals, creative and interesting course
presentations, the effectiveness of USP and academic advising, the adequacy of computer and library resources and services, and making connections to the world of work.

The last two recommendations address areas of concern that emerged from the study but were not found to be particularly important to ratings of the quality of instruction or noninstructional services – residence hall life and campus safety and security. In these cases the University’s performance was found to be significantly lower than the group of Research I and Research II institutions to which Noel-Levitz survey responses were compared. As the University is currently attempting to understand and improve student retention, graduation, and persistence rates in addition to student satisfaction, the Project Team felt that these areas of concern could not and should not be ignored.

Finally, it should be noted that the recommendations are presented with the following structure: 1) an overall recommendation; 2) a review of findings and conclusions presented as supporting evidence and rationale; 3) a list of possible initiatives; and 4) a list of anticipated results. In each case the overall recommendation is presented to the University of Kentucky as a whole, signifying that implementing and achieving the recommendation will require the collective efforts, time, concern, and resources of many administrators, faculty, staff and students throughout the campus. The supporting evidence and rationale section uses information collected primarily from the literature review, interviews, focus groups, and survey findings to document the need for the recommendation. In many cases, there was a great deal of additional information that could have been highlighted; however, in the interest of brevity and simplicity, only the strongest and most consistent findings and conclusions are presented. The list of possible initiatives is the result of readings, interviews, discussions and brainstorming on the part of the Project Team to identify ways to implement the recommendation and improve student satisfaction on campus. These initiatives are offered with the knowledge that individuals working closely every day within their particular areas have far more expertise and awareness of the issues than we do. Thus, the possible initiatives listed are put forth to stimulate additional consideration and discussion among experienced, knowledgeable university personnel as to what will be the most meaningful, cost-effective activities to facilitate change and improvement. Finally, the anticipated results are listed to provide guidelines for measuring and evaluating efforts to implement the recommendations. In some cases, the anticipated results are very objective measures that can be monitored easily, while in other cases, they are more qualitative and subjective in nature. Nonetheless, we felt it necessary to suggest expectations for change as recommendations are implemented successfully.
**Recommendation 1.** Create throughout the university community a service-oriented climate that clearly and explicitly communicates to all students concern for their individual needs.

**Supporting Evidence and Rationale**
1. UK survey respondents were no more satisfied than the national comparison group on the *Student Centeredness* scale (see Table 2). Given the more positive responses on other scales, this appeared to represent an area for which there was room for improvement.
2. UK survey respondents reported large performance gaps for the items – *I seldom get the “run-around” when seeking information on campus; channels for expressing complaints are readily available; faculty care about me as an individual; and this institution shows concern for students as individuals* (see Table 3).
3. The majority of subgroups such as females, African-Americans, seniors, and community college transfers reported large performance gaps for all items in #3 above as well as for the item—*campus staff are caring and helpful* (see Table 5).

Taken together, the strength of performance gaps and the consistency across subgroups of the survey findings listed above suggest that the University needs to intensify efforts to achieve its strategic planning goal to “strengthen the University as a student-centered institution committed to quality undergraduate…. education.” Students seem frustrated with many aspects of being a student at the University of Kentucky, and these frustrations are expressed explicitly in many student comments collected during the survey. This recommendation recognizes the potential impact on student satisfaction, retention, and success of a campus-wide effort to create a caring and helpful climate for a diverse community of learners.

**Possible Initiatives**
Given the availability of adequate resources in relation to institutional priorities, the following initiatives represent the kinds of activities that may be most effective in implementing the recommendation:

- Develop and implement mandatory, ongoing customer service training for all “front-line” staff, including student workers, to ensure that students are consistently treated with respect, kindness, and concern for their individual needs.
- Develop and implement an ongoing reward and recognition program to honor excellent student service.
- Continue and expedite efforts to provide student services in a central location.
- Cross-train key student services personnel to ensure timely access to accurate information in response to student inquiries.
- Establish an on-going student feedback mechanism, such as a web page, to evaluate progress.

**Anticipated Results**

- increased job satisfaction for university employees
- increased student satisfaction with the University overall
- increased retention and graduation rates
- improved climate for living and learning
**Recommendation 2.** Intensify efforts to create a university community that accepts, appreciates and celebrates diversity.

**Supporting Evidence and Rationale**

1. UK survey respondents were no more satisfied than the national comparison group on the *Responsiveness to Diverse Populations* scale (see Table 2). Given the more positive responses on other scales, this appeared to represent an area for which there was room for improvement.

2. UK survey respondents were significantly less satisfied than the national comparison group on the item related to *commitment to commuters*, and they were less satisfied than the national comparison group on *commitment to students with disabilities* (see Table 2).

3. UK survey respondents were significantly less satisfied than the national comparison group on the item – *there is a strong commitment to racial harmony on this campus* (see Table 2).

4. On the opinion item – *I feel prejudged on this campus because of characteristics such as my gender, race, background, accent, etc.* – 15% agreed, 16% were unsure, and 69% disagreed; thus, nearly one-third of respondents did not disagree with the statement (see Table 10).

5. On the opinion item – *racial relationships on campus are conducive to a sense of community and appreciation for differences* – 38% agreed, 36% were unsure, and 26% disagreed; thus, nearly two-thirds of respondents did not agree with the statement (see Table 10).

6. Student focus group participants identified a need for more interaction among cultures and greater diversity unification to improve the climate at UK (Focus Group Report, Student Section, p. 45).

7. Faculty focus group participants identified a need for better programs to deal with cultural and lifestyle diversity (see Focus Group Report, Faculty Section, p. 14).

The survey findings above are particularly disturbing in light of the efforts currently under way to improve the campus climate for all students at the University of Kentucky. The problems that many students encounter in feeling accepted, included, and valued at the University were further underscored in the Focus Group sessions, and it is clear that the University still has much to do. Although individuals in the Focus Groups indicated that the University is merely reflecting the attitudes of society at large and is limited in what it can do to change social attitudes, it remains true that the University should lead the way in creating a truly equitable community. It is also true that one either makes progress in this area or slips back into patterns of the past. There is no middle ground, and for this reason there is cause for constantly renewing our efforts to improve on our current record of achievement.

**Possible Initiatives**

Given the availability of adequate resources in relation to institutional priorities, the following initiatives represent the kinds of activities that may be most effective in implementing the recommendation:

- **Develop a pilot course in social relations that addresses not only the intellectual benefits of a diverse community at the University but affective dimensions as well.**
- **Expand the content of the cross cultural component of USP to include ethnic minorities in the United States.**
- **Increase the emphasis on the value of diversity at all new student, faculty and staff orientations.**
- **Establish an incentive program to support the implementation and evaluation of innovative ideas and projects proposed by faculty and staff to improve the campus climate for diverse groups.**
- **Develop and implement a workshop series on appreciating differences, and offer incentives to students, faculty and staff for completing the series.**
• Provide support to student organizations for specific projects aimed toward improving the campus climate for diverse groups.

Anticipated Results
• greater harmony on campus among diverse groups
• increased enrollment of minority groups at the University
• increased retention and graduation of all students
• greater appreciation of the value of diversity within the University community
• richer academic experience for all students on campus
**Recommendation 3.** Strengthen and expand recent efforts to improve the quality of instruction provided by teaching assistants, given the crucial role that they play in undergraduate education.

**Supporting Evidence and Rationale**

1. UK survey respondents reported a substantial performance gap for the item – *graduate teaching assistants are competent as classroom instructors* (see Table 3).
2. *TA competence* was rated among the top items in importance to survey respondents (see Table 4).
3. The performance gap for *TA competence* became increasingly larger as students moved from the freshman to senior year (see Appendix C.3).
4. *Graduate teaching assistants are competent as classroom instructors* was a highly significant item, and the most consistent item, in differentiating between students who evaluated the quality of undergraduate instruction as *poor-fair* and those who said *good-excellent* (see Table 7).
5. Included in the focus group findings were student suggestions that inferior instruction at UK is partly due to the excessive use of teaching assistants (Focus Group Report, Student Section, p. 26).

The above findings of the survey and focus groups underscore the importance of the teaching assistant for undergraduate students, especially in lower-division courses. The teaching assistant (TA) often serves as a primary contact point between the University and the individual student, and therefore, student perceptions of TA competence influence their overall evaluations of the quality of instruction at the University. Furthermore, for many graduate students, development of teaching skills is a crucial part of their graduate experience. Thus, there appears to be a very real need to expand and intensify recent efforts to improve the quality of instruction provided by teaching assistants.

Currently, there are vast differences in the depth and breadth of departmental commitments to TA training and development. The project team applauds those departments that have taken a leading role in this regard and have built on the minimum standards articulated in AR II-1.0-7 (Policies Relative to Teaching and Research Assistants) and AR II-1.0-9 (Policies on International Teaching Assistants). This recommendation recognizes the need for all departments to follow their lead and work diligently to improve the quality of instruction by graduate teaching assistants.

**Possible Initiatives**

Given the availability of adequate resources in relation to institutional priorities, the following initiatives represent the kinds of activities that may be most effective in implementing the recommendation:

- Ensure that all teaching assistants, before assuming teaching duties, complete a formal, extensive orientation at both the university and departmental levels. This orientation is to include information regarding duties, rights and responsibilities, as well as the teaching skills appropriate to the various disciplines.
- Establish formal departmental programs for TA development utilizing both departmental resources and the opportunities available through the Teaching and Learning Center. This formal program is to include an orientation, opportunities for continuing development of teaching skills, mentoring, and periodic feedback on classroom performance. (See AR II-1.0-9.M for a parallel regulation regarding international teaching assistants."
- Ensure that all teaching assistants are evaluated by students at the end of each semester.
- As an aid to continued improvement, conduct annual departmental assessments of existing TA/ITA development programs and submit this assessment to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies for review.
• Provide the tangible resources necessary to aid departments and the Teaching and Learning Center in their efforts to improve the quality of instruction provided by teaching assistants.
• Recognize model TA development programs at the departmental level through the establishment of a substantial reward program for excellence.

Anticipated Results
• comprehensive, formal TA development programs established in all departments within a year
• annual assessments of TA development programs included in all departmental reviews
• improved quality of instruction by teaching assistants
• increased satisfaction with the competence of TAs as classroom instructors
• improved student learning
**Recommendation 4.** Involve and support faculty in a focused effort to create optimal classroom learning environments marked by enthusiasm and effective, creative instructional practices.

**Supporting Evidence and Rationale**

1. UK survey respondents overall reported substantial performance gaps for the items -- *course materials are presented in an interesting and creative manner* and *the quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent* (see Table 3).

2. The majority of subgroups such as females, African-Americans, seniors, and community college transfers also reported a substantial performance gap for the item *course materials are presented in an interesting, creative manner* (see Table 5).

3. The item – *course materials are presented in an interesting, creative manner* – was consistently and highly significant in differentiating between survey respondents who evaluated the quality of instruction as *poor-fair* and those who said *good-excellent* (see Table 7).

4. The items – *faculty are enthusiastic about teaching* and *faculty are enthusiastic about their subject or discipline* – were significant variables in predicting overall evaluations of the quality of instruction (see Table 7).

5. A group of items named *faculty teaching effectiveness* was significant as a factor in predicting overall evaluations of the quality of instruction, including the items – *most faculty on this campus are effective communicators* and *faculty frequently engage their classes in effective discussions* (see Table 9).

6. Student focus group participants identified a lack of creativity in class presentations of materials as a source of dissatisfaction (Focus Group Report, Student Section, p. 24).

7. Faculty focus group participants and others interviewed by the Project Team expressed the need for small, interactive classes; classrooms designed and equipped to support varying methods of teaching; and sufficient time and rewards to develop creative teaching presentations (Focus Group Report, Faculty Section, p. 13).

Taken together, the survey and focus group findings clearly convey that both students and faculty would like to see change and improvements in the methods for delivering courses. In keeping with findings in the literature, UK students appear to want more enthusiasm, discussion, communication, and interaction in the instructional process. Concurrently, many faculty members also expressed a desire for the time, resources, and rewards necessary to deliver such presentations. This recommendation recognizes that faculty who are currently engaged in activities aimed toward creating such optimal learning environments need support and appropriate rewards for their efforts, and it further recognizes that additional faculty need to become involved in similar efforts.

**Possible Initiatives**

Given the availability of adequate resources in relation to institutional priorities, the following initiatives represent the kinds of activities that may be most effective in implementing the recommendation:

- **Include a category on the Distribution of Effort (DOE) agreement to reflect professional development in the area of teaching, separate from professional development in the area of research.**
- **Establish and enforce university guidelines to ensure that the percentages allocated to teaching, research and service on the DOE agreement are accurately translated into merit raises and tenure and promotion decisions.**
- **Recognize departmental efforts to improve the quality of undergraduate instruction through the establishment of a substantial reward program for excellent instruction by units as a whole.**
• Increase substantially the funds available to faculty teaching undergraduate courses for teaching innovation grants and travel to teaching-oriented conferences.
• Modernize and update a significant number of classrooms to match the instructional needs of faculty.
• Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for refurbishing and re-equipping classrooms to match the instructional needs of faculty on a regular basis.

Anticipated Results
• improved balance in rewarding teaching, research and service activities
• importance of teaching incorporated into university policies, procedures, and personnel decisions
• improved quality of undergraduate instruction
• increased satisfaction of both students and faculty with the instructional process
**Recommendation 5.** Acknowledge and respond to the fact that undergraduate students surveyed perceived a lack of “fair and unbiased treatment of individual students” and “concern for students as individuals.”

**Supporting Evidence and Rationale**

1. UK survey respondents reported a substantial performance gap for the item—*faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students* (see Table 3). This item was also ranked 10th of 103 items in importance to students (see Table 4).
2. The majority of subgroups such as females, African-Americans, seniors, and community college transfers reported a substantial performance gap for the item – *faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students* (see Table 5).
3. African-American survey respondents were significantly less satisfied than respondents overall on the item -- *faculty take into consideration student differences as they teach* (see Appendix C.2).
4. The items -- *faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students* and *most faculty on this campus are effective communicators* -- were significant in differentiating between students who evaluated the quality of instruction as poor-fair and those who said good-excellent (see Table 7).
5. The items -- *opportunities to interact and connect with faculty both in and out of class are adequate* and *faculty care about me as an individual* – were significant in predicting overall evaluations of the quality of instruction (see Table 7).
6. There was a strong negative correlation between student evaluations of the quality of instruction and the frequency with which survey respondents said that faculty were disrespectful or short with them (i.e., the higher the evaluation rating, the fewer such incidents; see Appendix C.5).
7. The focus group report noted that “Most African Americans suggested that some instructors prejudged them, talked down to students, or discouraged students’ academic progress.” (Focus Group Report, p. xviii)
8. Faculty surveyed in the focus groups felt, on the contrary, that “they were respective of students, realizing that they often represented a range of diverse backgrounds, wants, and needs. Many admitted, though, that this respect may not always be readily apparent to some students.” (Focus Group Report, p. x)
9. Focus group participants connected the lack of interaction with faculty to large class sizes as well as to an emphasis on research. (Focus Group Report, pp. x, xvi)
10. One-third of survey respondents felt that individual attention received from faculty was lacking. Among the reasons given were: *My schedule doesn’t fit with faculty office hours* (35.0%); *faculty are too busy for me* (17.4%); *I feel insecure about approaching faculty* (16.5%); and *faculty are aloof and unapproachable* (4.3%). (see Appendix C.5)

From the survey and focus group findings, it is clear that some students genuinely perceive a lack of fairness, concern, and respect from faculty for their individual needs. Faculty, on the other hand, believe they are respectful of students, although they acknowledge it may not be apparent to students. Part of the explanation for this “gap” undoubtedly lies in the concerns about communication and interaction. Too few students have opportunities to interact with faculty in a setting conducive to developing trust and understanding of mutual needs, concerns, and roles within the University community. These opportunities are limited by workloads of both students and faculty, conflicting time schedules, and a lack of confidence and self-assurance on the part of many students in approaching faculty.
Additionally, many students are arriving on campus without adequate coping skills to make the social, academic, and emotional adjustments necessary for success. The University can play a more proactive, intrusive role in helping students develop into self-sufficient, self-motivated learners. While not advocating “spoon-feeding” or the lowering of standards, the Project Team believes that specific steps can be taken, especially during the freshman year, to provide additional support and opportunities for students to form meaningful connections with faculty and the University.

The perceptions of students create their reality, and their perceptions have significant impact on student satisfaction. This recommendation recognizes that faculty are the key to changing the perceptions and realities of students; however, it also recognizes that the University must work to provide a setting where opportunities for positive faculty-student interactions and effective communications characterize the campus culture.

Possible Initiatives
Given the availability of adequate resources in relation to institutional priorities, the following initiatives represent the kinds of activities that may be most effective in implementing the recommendation:

- **Recognize that large class sizes are often detrimental to individualized attention, positive interactions, and effective learning; hire additional faculty in areas where the number of large class sizes needs to be reduced; and establish a goal to keep the number of large classes, especially for first-year students, to a specific minimum.**

- **Increase the number of sections of UK101: Academic Orientation and establish a goal for the percent of freshmen who enroll in UK101.**

- **Help students with the transition from high school to university life by incorporating into courses practices that allow the individual student to participate more fully (e.g. active learning techniques, cooperative and collaborative work, etc.). These practices also help students take greater responsibility for their own learning and afford faculty more opportunities to interact with students.**

- **Create opportunities for faculty-student interaction beyond regular office hours (e.g. open help sessions, experiential learning projects, participation in student professional organizations, freshman year programs).**

- **Incorporate teaching and communication practices aimed at creating an inclusive classroom, which recognizes individual, gender, and cultural differences.**

- **Vary teaching strategies and assessment practices so that individual differences are addressed and acknowledged.**

- **Utilize mid-term course evaluations in order to gain insights into student perceptions of instructional effectiveness and classroom climate.**

- **Provide timely and adequate feedback to students about their progress.**

- **Examine and explain grading procedures and philosophies thoroughly and repeatedly.**

- **Provide resources (e.g. consultations, mid-term evaluations, workshops) that address these issues to faculty.**

- **Modify all Teacher and Course Evaluation forms to include items related to classroom climate.**

- **Reward faculty efforts to increase their interaction with students both in terms of merit raises and tenure and promotion decisions.**

Anticipated Results

- **more positive student perceptions of faculty fairness and concern for individuals**

- **expanded repertoire of teaching and assessment practices that includes consideration of individual needs and differences**
• increased student and faculty satisfaction with the instructional process
• increased student retention and graduation
**Recommendation 6.** Support improvements in all campus libraries in providing access to information resources and public service.

**Supporting Evidence and Rationale**

1. UK survey respondents were significantly less satisfied than a national comparison group for the item -- *library resources and services are adequate* (see Table 2).

2. UK survey respondents overall reported substantial performance gaps for the items -- *I can locate library materials when I need them; library collections are organized to ensure ease in locating them; the UK library is a good source for the information I need; and library collections are maintained in good condition* (see Table 3).

3. The majority of subgroups such as females, African-Americans, seniors, and community college transfers reported substantial performance gaps for the items -- *I can locate library materials when I need them and library collections are organized to ensure ease in locating them* (see Table 5).

4. The items -- *the UK library is a good source for the information I need and library staff are helpful and approachable* -- were significant items in differentiating between students who evaluated the quality of noninstructional services as *poor-fair* versus those who said *good-excellent* (see Table 8).

5. A group of items related to library resources and services was significant as a factor in predicting survey respondents’ evaluations of the quality of noninstructional services (see Table 9).

Taken together, the findings above suggest that libraries are an important factor in the satisfaction of University of Kentucky students and need to be strengthened in the areas of access to information and public service. The findings underscore the critical need for the new William T. Young Library, slated to open for the spring 1998 semester. This facility is designed specifically to improve upon the weaknesses King Library has had in the arrangement of collections and service points. In addition, the William T. Young Library will be equipped with the computer technology needed for ready access to a wide array of electronic information resources. Some of the libraries not included in the central William T. Young Library are involved in renovations that will improve their space and technology capabilities as well. It will be a challenge to upgrade all campus libraries to a level comparable with the William T. Young Library.

The libraries have traditionally utilized a diverse mix of staff in public service work. Service workers range from professional librarian information specialists to undergraduate student part-time employees. As library hours of operation have expanded over time, part-time student employees have been increasingly utilized to staff library service points. This frequently occurs during late evenings and weekends when student use of libraries is quite heavy. The William T. Young Library is expected to attract many additional users both on campus and from throughout the state. Adequate staffing for public service points will be essential. The findings suggest that a highly trained, service-oriented staff is required at all times to meet the needs of students seeking assistance in the libraries.

This recommendation recognizes that students have placed high importance on access to information to support their academic endeavor. Their satisfaction, and ultimately their success, is closely linked to the libraries’ ability to deliver effectively a broad range of high quality information services.
Possible Initiatives
Given the availability of adequate resources in relation to institutional priorities, the following initiatives represent the kinds of activities that may be most effective in implementing the recommendation:

• Improve signage in all campus libraries to facilitate way-finding.
• Improve the arrangement of collections in all campus libraries.
• Align the libraries’ catalog database with actual holdings of each library.
• Enhance access in libraries to external electronic information resources.
• Develop and implement a uniform service training program for library staff, especially student workers.
• Review staffing levels and increase as necessary to ensure optimum library service.

Anticipated Results

• improved quality of student research and scholarship
• increased use of library and information resources by students, faculty and staff
• greater awareness of and skills to use external information resources
• increased student satisfaction with libraries
Recommendation 7. Increase significantly: 1) student access to computers; 2) easy access to student information by faculty, staff and students, within the limits of confidentiality; and 3) the use of information technology by faculty for instructional purposes.

Supporting Evidence and Rationale
1. UK survey respondents were significantly less satisfied than the national comparison group with the item – computer labs are adequate and accessible (see Table 2).
2. UK survey respondents reported a substantial performance gap for the items – computer labs are adequate and accessible; computer lab staff are knowledgeable; computer lab staff are responsive to my requests for help; and technology fees paid are a worthwhile investment (see Table 3).
3. The majority of subgroups such as females, African-Americans, seniors, and community college transfers reported a substantial performance gap for the item – computer labs are adequate and accessible (see Table 5).
4. The item -- computer labs are adequate and accessible -- was consistently and highly significant in differentiating between students who evaluated the quality of noninstructional services as poor-fair versus those who said good-excellent (see Table 8).
5. A group of items related to computer services was significant as a factor in predicting survey respondents’ evaluations of the quality of noninstructional services (see Table 9).
6. Student focus group participants identified computer availability as one of two major hassles at the University (the other being parking), citing the printing charges, disrepair, and staffing as sources of dissatisfaction. (Focus Group Report, pp. vi, xii)
7. Faculty focus group participants identified concerns with computers similar to those of students. (Focus Group Report, p. xiii)

Taken together, the survey and focus group findings suggest that students want and need more from computing than they are getting at the University. While much of their dissatisfaction is focused on access to computer labs, students are also dissatisfied with the knowledge and helpfulness of computer lab staff. The general feeling of dissatisfaction with computers is reflected in their negative response to the idea that technology fees are a worthwhile investment. While the Project Team recognizes that some dissatisfaction may be a result of printing charges imposed during 1996-97, the strength and consistency of the performance gap for adequacy and accessibility suggests that students also have other valid concerns. Clearly, students (and faculty and staff as well) do not believe they are getting the computing benefits needed from the University.

Computers are an integral and increasing part of work, learning and scholarship on both the academic and administrative sides of campus. Thus, there are other areas of student dissatisfaction that can be addressed through improved access to computing resources, including responsiveness to commuter needs, getting the “run-around” when seeking information, accurate academic advising, and the quality of instruction. This recommendation recognizes that easy, off-site access to computing resources is necessary to serve commuter students who may have little time to wait in campus labs for an open slot. As more course materials and information become available electronically on the World Wide Web, and as faculty turn increasingly to email for effective communication with students, the need for such access will continue to grow. This recommendation also recognizes that improving administrative computing underpinnings will serve students indirectly by facilitating the responsiveness of staff to students seeking information and by improving the accuracy of academic advising. Finally, this recommendation recognizes the role that computer technology can play in helping faculty deliver course content in creative, interesting ways.
Important efforts that are currently underway will help increase student satisfaction with computers at the University, and the Project Team recognizes the progress already made by the University in addressing the need for better access to computers by students. The new William T. Young Library, scheduled to open in spring 1998, will be equipped with the computer technology needed for ready access to a wide array of electronic information resources. The planned wiring of the residence halls will help alleviate some problems. However, it would be a mistake to believe that these endeavors will solve problems with computer access. The need for access is growing rapidly, and over the next few years, the University may need to undertake a number of separate and substantial initiatives to meet student demand. Students’ satisfaction with the University of Kentucky and the education afforded them will depend in large part on delivering the computer access needed and on creating a computing environment designed to provide instructional support and accurate information to the faculty and staff who serve the needs of students.

Possible Initiatives
Given the availability of adequate resources in relation to institutional priorities, the following initiatives represent the kinds of activities that may be most effective in implementing the recommendation:

• Increase significantly the number of seats in student computer labs on campus.
• Complete wiring of residence halls and other facilities with easy student access as quickly as possible.
• Improve off-site access to UK computing resources.
• Develop and implement a training program for computer lab staff, especially student workers, to ensure that they are both knowledgeable and responsive to students.
• Negotiate and offer financial arrangements and incentives for students to purchase, lease, or lease-purchase computers at an affordable cost, and adopt a policy of encouraging incoming freshmen and their parents to purchase personal computer systems.
• Design and distribute a brochure to students and parents explaining the benefits derived from the technology fees.
• Re-open discussions with students leaders on the benefits of the technology fee, with the aim of reaching agreement about increasing the fee to support much-needed improvements in computer lab access and service.
• Improve access to student data by authorized faculty and staff.
• Develop for academic advisors a user-friendly degree audit information system to improve the accuracy of academic advising.
• Increase the number of classrooms equipped with the instructional technology necessary to deliver course content in interesting, creative ways.
• Establish a user feedback mechanism to evaluate continually progress in meeting user needs.
• Investigate the possibility of moving rapidly toward client-server, relational databases using open standards that can provide easy and friendly, across-the-board access to data.

Anticipated Results
• increased use of electronic information resources by students
• improved quality of student research and scholarship
• increased availability of electronic course materials
• increased use of computer technology in the delivery of course content
• increased communication between and among students, faculty and staff
• increased student satisfaction with computer access
• increased student satisfaction with academic advising and information-seeking outcomes
• improved quality of undergraduate education
Recommendation 8. *Re-examine the entire University Studies Program in order to: 1) clarify its purpose and value; 2) simplify requirements and reduce the number of USP courses; 3) strengthen basic skills of students (i.e. writing, oral communication, and problem solving); and 4) determine the advisability of continuing the cross-disciplinary requirement.*

**Supporting Evidence and Rationale**

1. UK survey respondents reported very high importance and a substantial performance gap for the item – *I am able to register for classes with few conflicts* (see Tables 3 and 4).
2. UK survey respondents overall reported a substantial performance gap for the item – *my USP courses helped prepared me for my major courses* (see Table 3).
3. The performance gap for every survey item related to USP increased substantially from the freshman to senior year (see Table 6).
4. The performance gap for the item – *my academic advisor is knowledgeable about USP requirements* – was more than twice as large for survey respondents who evaluated the quality of instruction as *poor-fair* than for those who said *good-excellent* (see Appendix C.4).
5. Faculty focus group participants suggested that for USP to work as intended, the following problems would need to be addressed: complexity, proliferation of requirements, unavailable courses, and delays in graduation due to paired courses not being taught in a meaningful sequence (Focus Group Report, Faculty Section, pp. 22-23).

Taken together, these findings suggest that it is time to examine once again the scope and purpose of University Studies with an emphasis on ensuring USP course availability. The program has been in place for a decade, and although there seems to be general agreement about the aims of University Studies, problems have surfaced over the years. Faculty, particularly when engaged in advising, find the plethora of courses confusing and seem generally to endorse the idea of reducing the number of offerings. One problem to be addressed in this area is the current lack of agreement across campus about the best means of achieving greater simplicity. Enrollments in USP courses have a very significant impact on departmental resources, and the issue of “turf battles” must be addressed and resolved. For their part, students seem to encounter frustration in not being able to enroll in communication courses on a timely basis and in not being able to fulfill the cross-disciplinary pairing as early as they would like.

Although most USP courses are designed to broaden the students’ perspective on the world and are not intended to prepare them directly for a major, it seems clear that undergraduates are not developing adequate communication (i.e. both written and oral) and problem-solving skills. The USP Committee needs to examine the ways in which students can strengthen these skills, not only in the foundation courses (e.g. ENG 101/102, COM 181, 252) but throughout their program of study.

One problem with University Studies is the perception of some that general education is a subsidiary component of the undergraduate experience and is best handled by having students “get the requirements behind them” in order to proceed to the “real” world of their major. The USP Committee should seek ways to work with the academic community to change this perception and to renew enthusiasm for the overall program.
**Possible Initiatives**

Given the availability of adequate resources in relation to institutional priorities, the following initiatives represent the kinds of activities that may be most effective in implementing the recommendation:

- **Clarify the purpose of the USP by disseminating the program objectives widely and defining the relationship between USP offerings and courses in the major.**
- **Survey academic units to confirm what areas of USP are most problematic and what consensus can be developed for introducing changes.**
- **In the absence of a full revision of the program, reduce the number of offerings in University Studies.**
- **For the immediate future increase the number of sections in COM181 and/or other USP offerings in oral communications to enable all students to satisfy this area of University Studies in the freshman year.**
- **Increase the availability of cross-disciplinary courses in University Studies by continuing in the program only those courses that are offered annually. (This initiative will apply only if it is deemed advisable to retain the requirement.)**
- **Assist students in developing their analytical and communicative skills through the following strategies:**
  - Extend the “writing across the curriculum” efforts which are currently in place.
  - Develop a similar program for oral communication across the curriculum.
  - Integrate the writing and oral communication requirements into a single USP requirement as a way of strengthening both.
- **Expand the current efforts of the departments and of the Teaching and Learning Center to promote active learning and problem solving exercises in USP courses.**
- **Develop and offer alternate routes for satisfying University Studies requirements through programs (large or small) which provide an integrated academic experience.**

**Anticipated Results**

- greater appreciation of the importance and value of University Studies and its relationship to major programs
- improved writing and oral communication skills for students
- improved quality of advising
- decreased reports of students taking unnecessary courses
- increased student satisfaction with the curriculum
Recommendation 9. Make a concerted effort to improve undergraduate advising with respect to both University Studies and to individual major programs across campus.

Supporting Evidence and Rationale
1. From the freshman to senior year, survey respondents reported an increasingly widening performance gap for the item – *my academic advisor is knowledgeable about USP requirements* (see Table 6).
2. African-American survey respondents, compared to the overall group and other ethnic groups, had relatively large performance gaps for a group of items related to advising: *My academic advisor is knowledgeable about my major requirements; my academic advisor is knowledgeable about USP requirements;* and *my academic advisor helps me set goals* (see Appendix C.2).
3. The performance gap for the item – *my advisor is knowledgeable about USP requirements* – was more than twice as large for survey respondents who evaluated the quality of undergraduate instruction as poor-fair compared to those who said good-excellent (see Appendix C.4).
4. The items -- *my academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major* and *my academic advisor is approachable* – were significant in differentiating between survey respondents who rated the quality of undergraduate instruction as poor-fair and those who said good-excellent (see Table 7).

Taken together, the findings above indicate that advisors need to be more knowledgeable about requirements in both general education and in specific majors. Additionally, African-American students seemed to indicate a desire for more guidance in setting goals, rather than just getting assistance in building a schedule. Based on the focus group findings, students and faculty alike believed that the major shortcomings in advising could be attributed to several factors -- the lack of training for advisors, the high ratio of advisees to advisors, the multiple responsibilities of faculty (e.g. teaching and research) which limit the amount of time available for advising, and the lack of adequate rewards for good service in this area. Possibly, high adviser-advisee ratios and multiple faculty responsibilities that limit time for advising are contributing to a sense among some students that advisors are not approachable.

Possible Initiatives
Given the availability of adequate resources in relation to institutional priorities, the following initiatives represent the kinds of activities that may be most effective in implementing the recommendation:

- Provide more detailed and sophisticated training for advisors through the use of personnel in Central Advising and the Counseling and Testing Center.
- Provide a user-friendly degree audit information system and training to all academic advisors.
- Distribute the responsibility for advising more equitably among departmental faculty members.
- Provide greater incentives for better advising by highlighting this responsibility in the annual or biennial evaluations of faculty and staff.
- Train and use peer advisors in a well-designed program that includes adequate supervision.
- Identify individuals among faculty and staff who are particularly adept at advising, use them effectively, and provide adequate rewards.

Anticipated Results
- Improved quality of academic advising that includes more than schedule-building
- Improved understanding by students and faculty of degree requirements
- Increased student satisfaction with individual attention received from advisors
- Increased job satisfaction for those serving as academic advisors
- Improved acceleration in students’ progress in completing the degree
Recommendation 10. Strengthen and expand efforts to help students make the connection and transition from the classroom to the world of work.

Supporting Evidence and Rationale

1. Nationally, and locally at the University of Kentucky, students consistently report that “getting a good job” is one of their primary goals for attending a college or university (see pp. 4-5).

2. Over 25% of first-time, full-time freshmen enter the University of Kentucky undecided about a college major; and approximately 16% of all undergraduates are “undecided” (Source: Lexington Campus Office of Planning and Assessment, 1997).

3. UK survey respondents overall and the majority of subgroups such as females, African-Americans, seniors, and community college transfers reported a substantial performance gap for the item -- opportunities available for practical work experiences in my major (see Tables 3, 5).

4. African-American survey respondents reported a large performance gap for the item – in my courses I learn to apply new knowledge to real-world situations (see Appendix C.2).

5. The performance gap for the item -- there are adequate services to help me decide upon a career -- was twice as large for survey respondents who evaluated the quality of undergraduate instruction as poor-fair than for those who said good-excellent (see Appendix C.4).

6. The item – opportunities for practical work experiences in my major are adequate – was significant in differentiating between survey respondents who evaluated the quality of undergraduate instruction as poor-fair and those who said good-excellent (see Table 7).

7. Nearly half of survey respondents disagreed with the statement -- my primary goal for earning a college degree is to get a well-rounded education, not specific job skills (see Table 10).

8. Over two-thirds of survey respondents agreed that participation in at least one practical work experience related to their major should be required of all UK graduates (see Table 10).

Taken together, the findings above suggest that, in order to increase student satisfaction, the University of Kentucky needs to recognize and address the importance that students place on career development and preparation goals. The findings emphasize the need to help students 1) make career decisions, 2) see the connection between classroom learning and the “real world,” and 3) gain practical work experience related to the major. Thus, this recommendation recognizes the changing needs of society and students in terms of expectations for higher education and its role in training highly technical, well-educated professionals. While business, industry, and other professional organizations demand employees with communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills obtained through the traditional, well-rounded education, they also place a premium on the value of work experience (BHEF, 1997). The Project Team believes that obtaining a well-rounded education and preparing for a career are not mutually exclusive processes. Strengthening and expanding efforts in this area will not only send a clear signal to students that the University is concerned about their individual needs and overall development, but also will help students make the connection and transition to the world of work.

Possible Initiatives

Given the availability of adequate resources in relation to institutional priorities, the following initiatives represent the kinds of activities that may be most effective in implementing the recommendation:

• Improve collaboration among existing units providing career services (Career Planning and Placement Center, Counseling and Testing Center, Office of Experiential Education, and other relevant units in various colleges).

• Locate career services units in close proximity to each other.

• Coordinate efforts among career services units and the faculty and academic units to emphasize and ensure student access to current career information and experiences.
• Place greater emphasis in the classroom on teaching students how to apply new knowledge to the world of work.
• Intensify marketing, communication and outreach efforts to students to increase their awareness of campus career services and information and to assist them in making connections between the classroom and the world of work.

Anticipated Outcomes
• increased number of students participating in career counseling and planning activities
• increased number of students participating in shadowing and other exploratory activities
• increased number of students enrolled in voluntary cooperative education, experiential education, and internship courses
• increased number of graduates placed through university placement services
• increased student satisfaction with the quality of undergraduate instruction
**Recommendation 11.** Conduct an in-depth study of campus safety aimed toward understanding and improving student satisfaction with safety and security on campus.

**Supporting Evidence and Rationale**

1. UK survey respondents were less satisfied than the national comparison group with the Safety and Security scale (See Table 2).
2. UK survey respondents were significantly less satisfied than the national comparison group with the item – the amount of student parking on campus is adequate (See Table 2).
3. Survey respondents reported a substantial performance gap for the item – parking lots are well-lighted and secure (See Table 3).
4. The majority of subgroups such as females, African-Americans, seniors, and community college transfers reported a large performance gap for the item – campus is safe and secure for all students (see Table 5).

Taken together, the findings above suggest that, in order to increase student satisfaction, the University of Kentucky needs to study carefully and improve the sense of safety and security on campus. While student complaints with adequate parking space are common throughout higher education communities, the project team was surprised by the extent to which UK students seemed to be dissatisfied compared to the national group. Other items related to safety and security appeared to be fairly large concerns for groups such as women and African-Americans; additionally, commuter students expressed concerns about long walks and waiting for buses at night and in the cold. Rather than discounting student parking complaints as “part of the territory,” the University needs to recognize that such complaints may be grounded in student experiences that threaten their sense of safety and security – not in student “laziness.” In keeping with a focus on improving the overall climate and communicating to students the value placed on undergraduate education and the needs of individual students, it appears that safety and security concerns must receive greater attention than current structures, policies, and procedures allow. The Student Satisfaction Project Team, however, did not anticipate such a strong reaction from students with regard to safety and security, and therefore, did not collect the kind of specific information needed to address their concerns effectively.

**Possible Initiatives**

- Assess student satisfaction with the adequacy of student parking, especially for commuters, in view of the opening of the new parking structure.
- Review campus bus schedules, including frequency, accessibility and adherence to time schedules.
- Investigate the feasibility of additional lighting and other safety features in parking areas, such as phones and safety patrols.

**Anticipated Results**

- Identification of specific areas for improving campus safety and security
- Development of specific recommendations and initiatives to improve
- Increased student satisfaction with their sense of safety and security
Recommendation 12. Conduct an in-depth study of residence hall life aimed toward understanding and improving student satisfaction with residence hall life.

Supporting Evidence and Rationale
1. UK survey respondents were significantly less satisfied than the national comparison group with the item – residence hall regulations are reasonable (see Table 2).
2. UK survey respondents were less satisfied than the national comparison group with the item—living conditions in residence halls are comfortable (see Table 2).
3. Although residence hall regulations and living conditions ranked relatively low in importance (88 and 61, respectively), student satisfaction ratings were so low that these items had two of the highest performance gaps (1.94 and 1.90, respectively) of all the items (see Table 3).
4. The majority of subgroups such as females, African-Americans, seniors, and community college transfers also indicated a large performance gap for the item—living conditions in the residence halls are comfortable (see Table 5).
5. Only 23 percent of survey respondents agreed with the statement – dorm life on campus is conducive to academic success (see Table 10).

Taken together, the findings above suggest that the University of Kentucky needs to study carefully and improve the quality of the residence life environment for undergraduate students. Students are obviously frustrated by residence hall regulations; however, it is unclear from the current study as to the source of that frustration. While there are some comments to indicate that visitation regulations are part of the frustration, there may be additional issues such as procedures for enforcing regulations that are problematic and could be improved. Additionally, students appear to be dissatisfied with living conditions in the residence halls, and it is unclear from the current study as to the exact nature of that dissatisfaction. Again, there are a few student comments that suggest problems with furnishings and comfort. Although residence hall facilities cannot be expected to take the place of home, the University needs to recognize that maybe it has fallen behind other similar institutions in providing the type of living space that facilitates the student’s sense of well-being, safety and security, and integration with the university community. In keeping with a focus on improving the overall climate and communicating to students the value placed on undergraduate education and the needs of individual students, it appears that residence life concerns must receive greater attention than current structures, policies, and procedures allow. The Student Satisfaction Project Team, however, did not anticipate such a strong reaction from students with regard to residence hall life, and therefore, did not collect the kind of specific information needed to address their concerns effectively.

Possible Initiatives
• Investigate the effectiveness and ability of current residence hall facilities in providing a living environment conducive to student comfort, safety and security, and well-being; student interaction and socialization; and academic and support programming.
• Review current regulations and the policies and procedures used to implement current regulations.
• Identify and adapt successful practices and model programs at similar institutions that seek to improve student satisfaction with residence life.

Anticipated Results
• identification of specific areas for improving residence hall life
• development of specific recommendations and initiatives to improve
• increased student satisfaction with residence hall life