Assessing Expectations of the First Year Student - ASAP

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ABSTRACT

Understanding student expectation within the first year is paramount for any university. The foundation of all student effort rests on balancing perception and expectation in the learning environment. Therefore, this study surveyed first year students and requested that participants tell us what had fallen short, met, or exceeded their expectations. Two hundred and ninety-five completed surveys documented over one thousand open-ended responses.

A cluster analysis found three distinct areas that defined the students first year. Cluster one represented those areas that had fallen short of expectation; key items were university rules, scheduling, and advising. As a conceptual factor, Cluster one became the Administrative practice. Cluster Two highlighted areas that had met student expectation; key items were academic achievement, religious experience, and student activities. As a conceptual factor, Cluster Two became Student life. Cluster Three exemplified those areas that had exceeded expectation; as such, accented residential life, individual attention, and environmental dynamics. As a conceptual factor, Cluster Three became Attention to Personal well-being. Hence, if one assumes expectation is related to ultimate student satisfaction, findings suggest an administrative self review -- ASAP.

Study implications suggest that student expectations could have a positive impact on administrative practice. For example, the orientation process could focus additional time delivering information on administrative procedures in order to reduce false student expectation. Likewise, student expectation could change the direction and scope of administrative custom; that is, making billing, scheduling, or financial aid more student friendly. For reality dictates that students are customers -- and satisfied customers return.