



2012

## Characteristics, Involvement and Behaviors of Academically Successful, Engaged and Satisfied Western Michigan University Undergraduates

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### WMU ScholarWorks Citation

Lundquist, Anne E., "Characteristics, Involvement and Behaviors of Academically Successful, Engaged and Satisfied Western Michigan University Undergraduates" (2012). *Assessment Fellows Grant*. 22.

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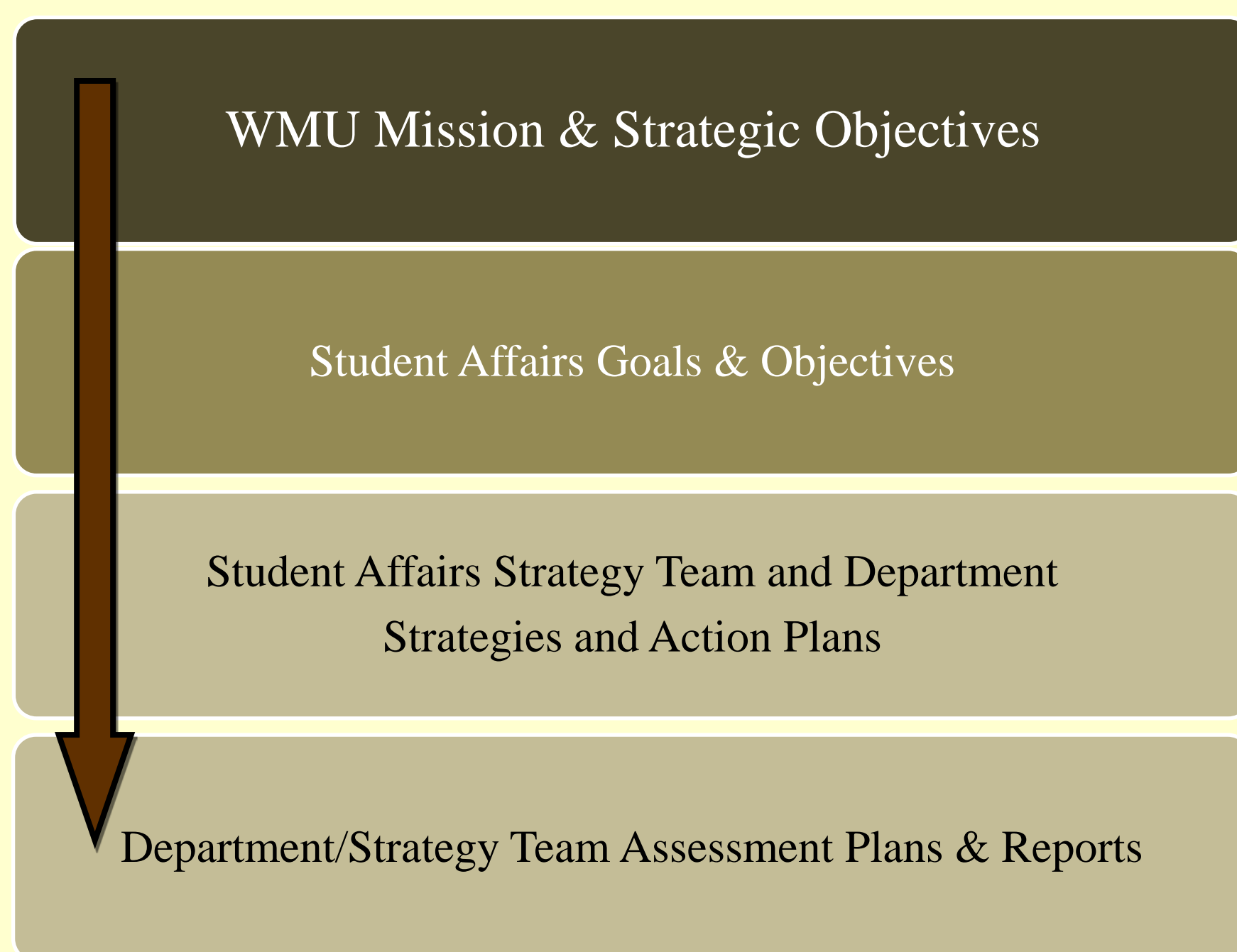
# Characteristics, Involvement and Behaviors of Academically Successful, Engaged and Satisfied Western Michigan University Undergraduates

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## PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this research project is to understand the characteristics, involvement and behaviors of academically successful, engaged and satisfied Western Michigan University undergraduate students in order to allow the Division of Student Affairs (and its various departments) to develop appropriate student learning outcomes in keeping with the mission and strategic goals of the University.



## STUDENT AFFAIRS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

WMU Goal	2: Promote innovative learning, discovery, and service.	1: Ensure a distinctive learning experience and foster success of student learners.	4: Ensure a diverse, inclusive, and healthy community.	5: Advance social, economic, and environmental sustainability practices and policies.	4: Ensure a diverse, inclusive, and healthy community.	2: Promote innovative learning, discovery and service.
Student Affairs Strategic Goal	1: Foster WMU pride.	2: Engage students in learning and personal development.	3: Promote intercultural competence.	4: Enhance internships to provide excellent learning and service delivery.	5: Encourage healthy, ethical and responsible behavior.	6: Create a culture of continuous improvement.
Strategic Objective	1A: Use the Research Center to discover and highlight student accomplishments of our students.	2A: Develop competency-based student employee professional development program.	3A: Implement campus-wide strategies and programs to focus on intercultural priority on intercultural in student affairs.	4A: Develop a comprehensive housing and dining master plan linked to university master plan.	5A: Create and sustain cutting-edge health services.	6A: Develop a comprehensive division-wide strategic plan linked to resource allocation and assessment measures.
Strategy #1	1A.1 Implement an interactive electronic display that showcases the awards and accomplishments of our students.	2A.1 Develop pilot program focused on verbal communication.	3A.1 Develop an intercultural competency rubric.	4A.1 Engage and bring master committees to develop a 30-year plan with a 5-year action plan.	5A.1 Successful integration of connecting and health services to meet the needs of students.	6A.1 Implement the Compliance Audit Planning Tool.
Strategy #2	1A.2 Create an Art/Obj/Arch/Pre event in the BC in partnership with the School of Art.	2A.2 Collaborate with OER to develop learning outcomes for Best Talk series in Spring '12.	3A.2 Collaborate with OER to develop learning outcomes for Best Talk series in Spring '12.	4A.2 Create a vision of the ideal BC by conducting student focus groups.	5A.2 Engage & enhance online services.	6A.2 Steering Committee evaluate and review Strategy Team Action Plan.
Strategy #3		2A.3 Develop an intercultural competence curriculum for new BCs (12-13) and evaluate student learning for that curriculum.				6A.3 Administer Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) and review results to improve SP.

To date, Student Affairs has concentrated assessment efforts on student satisfaction and tracking/usage, mostly at the departmental level. The goal for 2011-2012 is to enhance and clarify the division's Strategic Plan through the creation of specific strategies linked to divisional goals and objectives and to concentrate efforts on the creation of student learning outcomes as a significant part of those strategies.

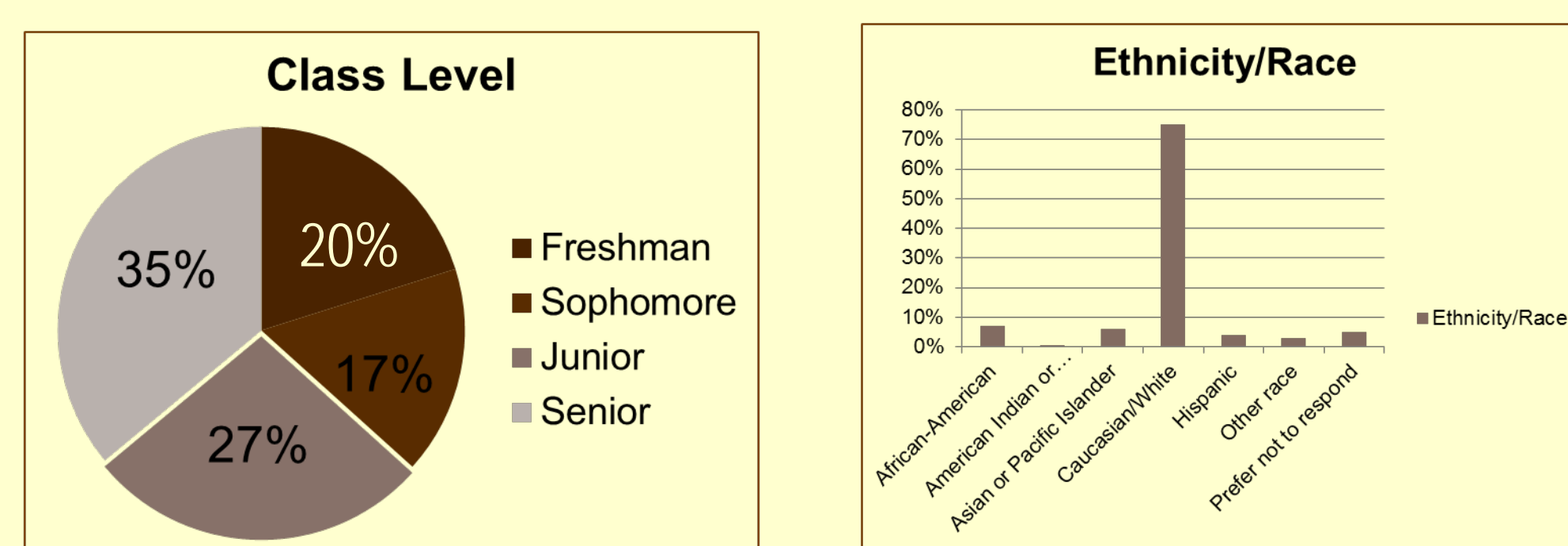
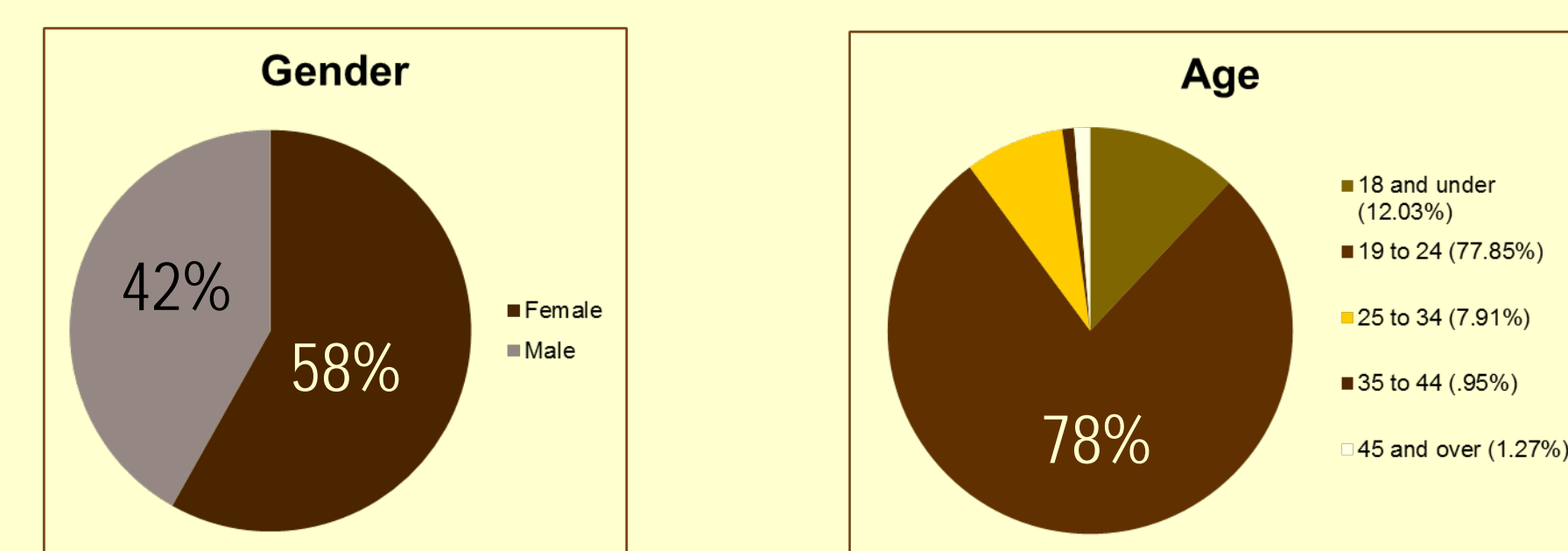
## SURVEY METHOD

The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) measures the importance students place on various services, programs and experiences in relationship to the relative degree of satisfaction that results from their interactions with them.

The SSI provides results on 12 scales and categorizes students' satisfaction as well as the relative importance they place on: Academic Advising, Campus Climate, Campus Support Services, Concern for the Individual, Instructional Effectiveness, Admissions and Financial Aid, Registration Effectiveness, Responsiveness to Diverse Populations, Safety and Security, Service Excellence, Student Centeredness and Campus Life.

The SSI survey was administered online between February 27<sup>th</sup> and March 16<sup>th</sup> to a random sample of 2000 undergraduate students currently enrolled in 12 or more credit hours. 322 (16%) students completed the survey.

## Demographics of Students Completing the Survey



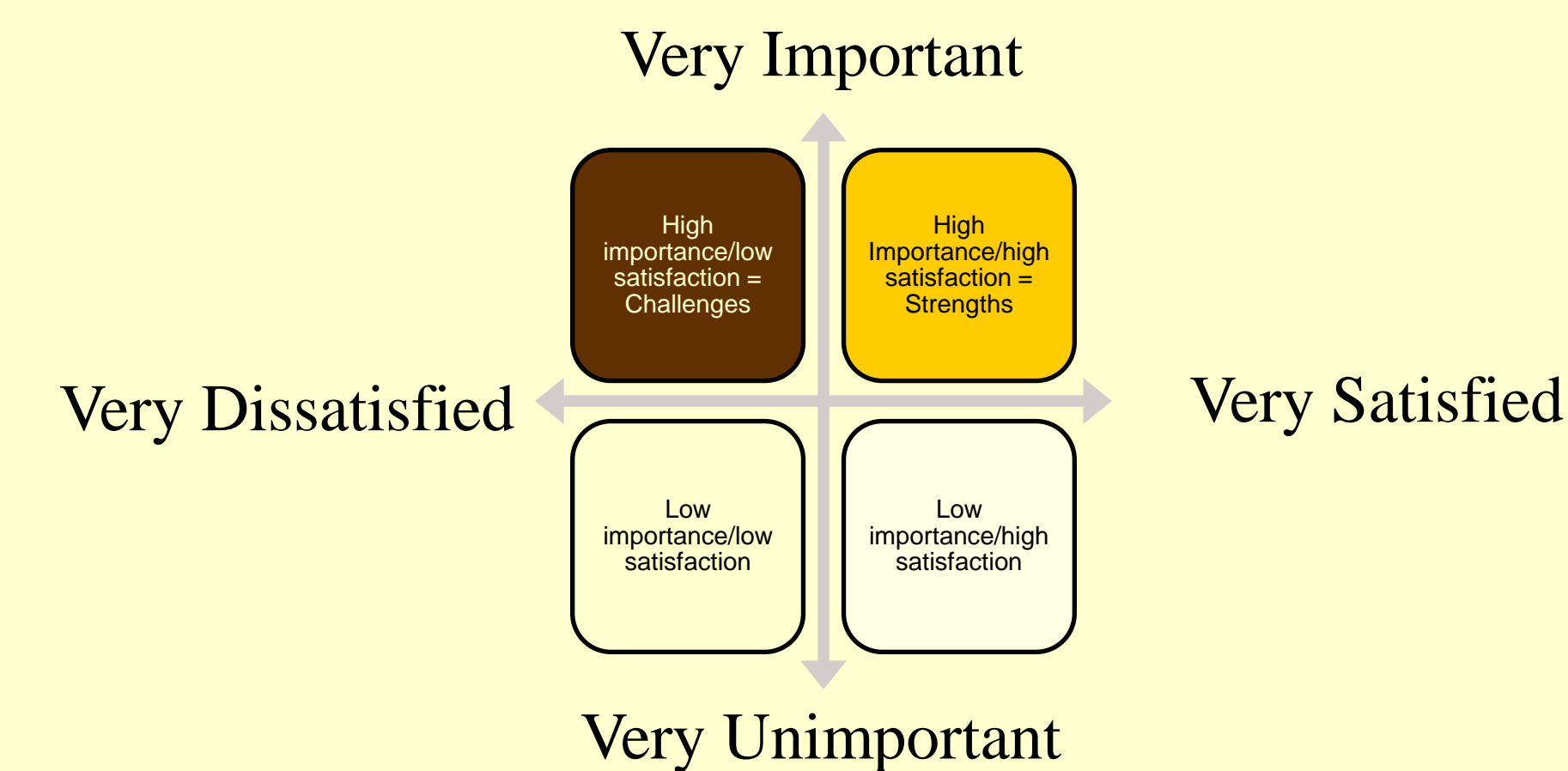
## THE SSI INSTRUMENT

The Student Satisfaction Instrument (SSI) was developed by Dr. Laurie A. Schneider and Dr. Stephanie L. Juillerat. The SSI was piloted in 1993 and implemented in 1994. As of 2011, 2,550 institutions and over 4.4 million students have completed the survey.

The instrument shows high internal reliability. Cronbach's coefficient alpha is .97 for the set of importance scores and is .98 for the set of satisfaction scores. The three-week, test-retest reliability coefficient is .85 for importance scores and .84 for satisfaction scores.

Convergent validity was assessed 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 ( $r = .71; p < .00001$ ) is high enough to indicate that the SSI's satisfaction scores measure the same satisfaction construct as the CSSQ's, yet low enough to show distinct differences between the instruments.

## RESULTS



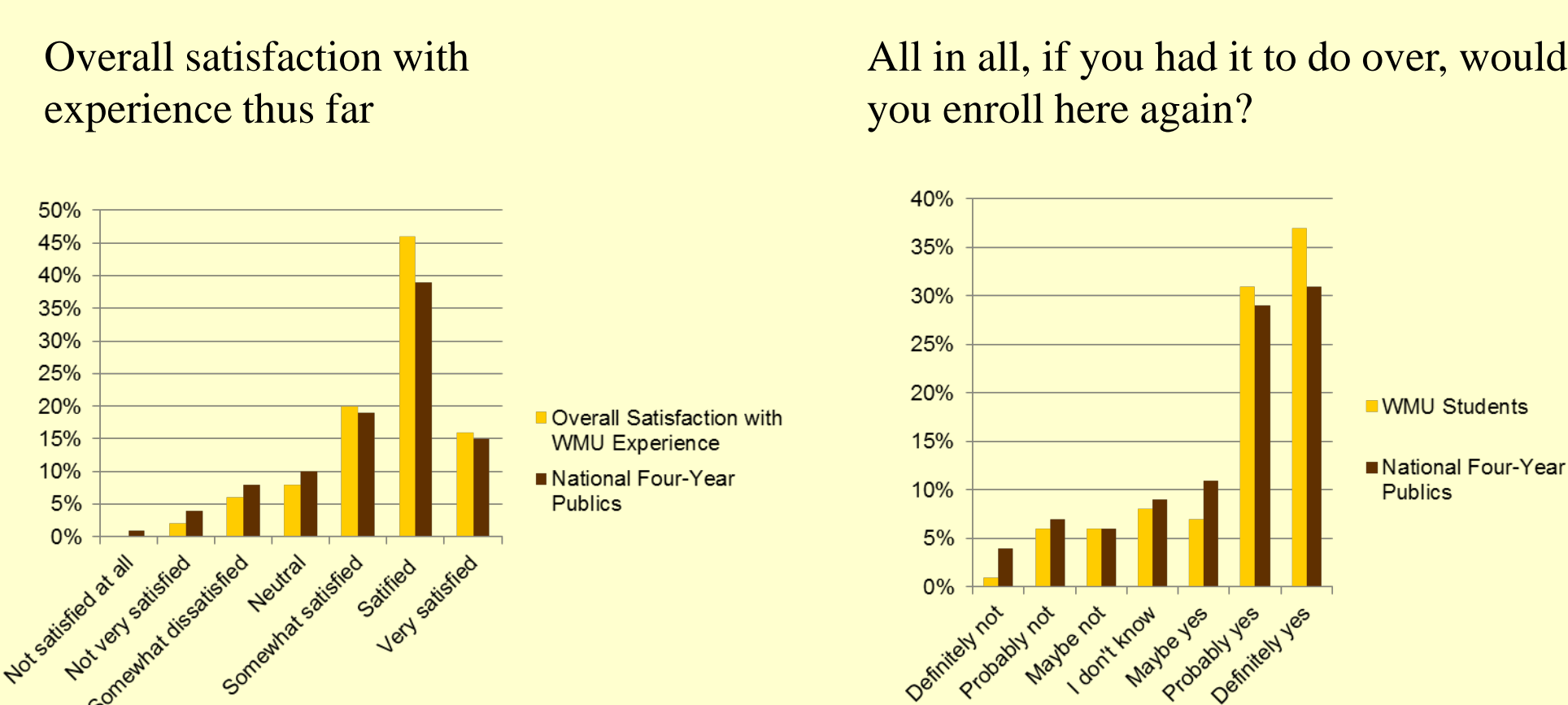
Strengths	Challenges
8. The content of the courses within my major is valuable. *	16. The instruction in my major field is excellent.
33. My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major. *	34. I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts. *
68. Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field.	58. The quality of instruction I receive in most of my courses is excellent.
7. The campus is safe and secure for all students. *	66. Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.
69. There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus. *	47. Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress in a course.
39. I am able to experience intellectual growth here.	17. Adequate financial aid is available for most students.
29. It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus. *	70. Graduate teaching assistants are competent as classroom instructors.
72. On the whole, the campus is well-maintained. *	12. Financial aid awards are announced to students in time to be helpful in college planning. *
82. Internships and other kinds of field experiences are a part of my college education plans.	14. My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.
26. Computer labs are adequate and accessible. *	59. This institution shows concern for students as individuals.
45. Students are made to feel welcome on this campus. *	57. I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information on this campus. *
65. Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours. *	3. Faculty care about me as an individual.
51. This institution has a good reputation within the community. *	5. Financial aid counselors are helpful.
	11. Billing policies are reasonable.
	23. Living conditions in the residence halls are comfortable (adequate space, lighting, heat, air, etc.)

\*Items where WMU students are more satisfied than their peers at national four-year public universities.

## Additional Items Where WMU Ranks Higher Satisfaction

Higher Satisfaction vs. National Four-Year Publics
55. Major requirements are clear and reasonable.
36. Security staff respond quickly in emergencies.
25. Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students.
2. The campus staff are caring and helpful.
49. There are adequate services to help me decide upon a career.
35. The assessment and course placement procedures are reasonable.
4. Admissions staff are knowledgeable.
44. Academic support services adequately meet the needs of students.
22. Counseling staff care about students as individuals.
27. The personnel involved in registration are helpful.

## Overall Satisfaction



## PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

- WMU students are more satisfied (at a statistically significant level on all 12 scales) with their undergraduate experience than their peers at other national four-year public institutions.
- 62% of WMU students are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their overall WMU experience vs. 54% at peer institutions.
- 68% of WMU undergraduates would "definitely" or "probably" choose WMU again vs. 60% at peer institutions.
- The WMU strengths seem to paint a picture of a caring, safe, helpful, well-maintained, welcoming campus environment with academic excellence and a good reputation.
- The challenges appear to paint a picture of an institution that could improve on certain processes and procedures for students.
- WMU has higher satisfaction than its peers in some key areas that don't necessarily show up in the strengths column (such as unbiased faculty, caring staff, resources in career services, academic support services, counseling, and reasonable assessment procedures).

## NEXT STEPS IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

1. Share data and results with other campus areas for their review and use.
2. Use raw data for further statistical analysis.
3. Discuss results with Student Affairs Leadership Team.
4. Leadership Team members will use results for further divisional strategic planning as well as to assist in setting departmental goals and priorities.
5. Conduct follow up Focus Groups (see below).
6. Use Focus Group results for further strategic planning.

## FOCUS GROUPS

### Interview Successful WMU Students About Their Experience

The sample for step two of this project will be a sample of undergraduate students who meet the following criteria:

- 3.25 (or above) GPA
- Junior (or above) academic status
- Involved in 3 or more campus activities or programs (such as a club or organization, greek life, community service or volunteerism, student employment, internship, etc.)
- No more than 1 disciplinary violation of the Student Conduct Code
- Other appropriate criteria as determined by the Student Affairs Assessment Committee.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the students in order to gain more detailed demographic information as well as understand each student's:

- self-reported identity,
- level of involvement and satisfaction with campus activities and services,
- knowledge of various support services, and
- WMU experience.

Interview questions will follow up on some of the items on the SSI and NSSE, asking students to expand on the data and results and provide explanatory information to the interviewer from their point of view.