

# THE BUSINESS STUDENT SATISFACTION INVENTORY (BSSI): DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF A GLOBAL MEASURE OF STUDENT SATISFACTION

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper describes exploratory research on Business students' satisfaction with their academic experiences. Herein, we report on the development of the Business Student Satisfaction Inventory (BSSI). Using data from 545 business students, we explore underlying factors of student satisfaction and validate the BSSI. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses yielded 17 items reflecting four factors: Quality of Business Education Outcomes, Quality of School Climate, Quality of Advising, and Quality of Computer Resources. Validation tests and implications for usage of the BSSI are discussed. This paper has relevance to ABSEL experiential educators since quality delivery of learning services and student satisfaction remain core matters of significance in experiential learning.*

## INTRODUCTION

Accountability and quality are increasingly critical and practical issues of concern to administrators and faculty members in higher education. Cleary (2001) notes that accrediting organizations have placed increasing emphasis on the measurement of organizational effectiveness in terms of learning outcomes. This is certainly true with business schools associated with AACSB. Program evaluation and outcomes assessment are topics of much discussion as business schools and programs find themselves needing to justify their effectiveness to both internal and external constituencies (Henninger, 1994; Morgan & Johnson, 1997). Many schools seem torn between a consumer/student-centered orientation to education and a product (the student) orientation. In the former, student satisfaction is of primary concern, while in the latter students' acquired learning and skills are of paramount importance. Deshields, Kara and Kaynak (2005) acknowledge that colleges and universities are "recognizing higher education as service industry" (p. 129) and in doing so are more concerned with the overall satisfaction of their student "customers."

With tighter budgets and heightened stakeholder scrutiny becoming permanent fixtures of the academic

landscape within business and management education, efforts are underway to measure service quality and stakeholder satisfaction (Linke, 1992). While student satisfaction with academic programs and/or learning is a single, among several, measure of effectiveness and quality, Pike (1993) asserts that student satisfaction is an important factor that can drive personal, career and learning outcomes. Rust and Oliver (1994) suggest that practically all organizations, including institutions of higher education, have both a product and a service orientation. This dual orientation makes measurement of customer satisfaction (i.e., student satisfaction) a problematic but necessary undertaking.

Our current research explores student satisfaction as an important element of business school quality, outcome assessment, and continuous improvement. Through the use of Confirmatory Factor Analysis, the authors have identified four factors that speak to student satisfaction with the learning environment they have experienced. Multiple regression tests of the four factors on two indices of overall student satisfaction suggest that the factors do reflect overall student satisfaction. Ultimately, the authors intend to develop a straightforward, reliable assessment instrument that can measure business student satisfaction and be used to enhance positive learning climate for students.

## BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Cooper and Leventhal (1979) note that tracking student satisfaction longitudinally can facilitate the development of educational programs and school improvement. Their view is supported by Harvey (1995), who suggests that assessment of student satisfaction in academic programs is a cornerstone of the development and enhancement of educational programs. During the 1990s, Barr and Tagg (1995) suggested that a paradigm shift was occurring in higher education with a movement away from traditional teacher-centered to a student-centered learning focus. In experiential education, we have been aware of this change for some time, and the change is reflected in our methods. Such a shift reinforces the need for experiential educators to

invest time in understanding the driving and restraining forces related to student satisfaction.

After a thorough literature review of the major business and management education literature we noted that business student satisfaction and its measurement have received scarce direct attention. A goodly amount of the cross-disciplinary dialogue on student satisfaction and perceptions of quality is rooted in the application of TQM principles to higher education. Brown and Koenig (1993), suggest, within the TQM framework, that continuous educational improvement is facilitated when customer satisfaction is measured in terms of the service experiences of customers.

Some of the more recent work on student satisfaction clearly focuses on the service dimensions of quality in higher education contexts. Deschields, Kara and Kaynak (2005) have assessed student satisfaction using the service dimensions of faculty performance, staff advising, student partial college experience, satisfaction and intentions to remain in school. Some of these dimensions are represented in our current version of the BSSI. In studying student satisfaction in a British university, Douglas, Douglas and Barnes (2006) conclude that the core arena that drives student satisfaction is the “quality of the teaching and learning experience” (p. 264). Helgesen and Nettet (2007), in studying student satisfaction in a Norwegian university, modeled student satisfaction as a direct result of service quality and institution facilities. Their results confirmed that these factors significantly contributed to student satisfaction. Of particular note is that the service quality items used in this study related directly the behavior and performance of faculty in their roles as lecturers.

SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, et al., 1985) is probably the most widely used tool for assessing general and market specific service quality. The methodology is adaptable to many venues and relies on the portrayal by consumers of their ideal versus actual experiences of quality or service (Gap Analysis). This methodology has been criticized for lacking a valid factor structure, for being difficult to administer and for relying too much on gap analysis to explicate variances between service expectations and experiences (Cronin and Taylor, 1992).

Wiklund and Wiklund (1999) indicate student satisfaction data collection and compilation is the second primary step in a prescribed four-step process for increasing institutional continuous improvement and student service quality. The authors queried their engineering students on the five needs the students felt were most important to their educational satisfaction. Their work led to the development of a discipline-specific assessment tool that is periodically distributed to students. Weller (1996) asserts that the tangible aspects of quality are easier to assess and correct than the less tangible aspects of quality. Hence satisfaction measurement should address those factors that consumers (students) have actually experienced.

Athiyaman (1997) points out that “an easier approach (to measuring student satisfaction) would be to explain perceived quality in terms of satisfaction with a manageable set of general university characteristics” (p. 530). His

research confirms that perceived quality in education is a consequence of customer (student) satisfaction. Simply put, if students are satisfied with their educational experiences, they will perceive the programs as quality programs....and vice versa. Among the general factors that he prescribed as important for inclusion in satisfaction assessment tools are: emphasis on teaching quality; availability of staff for student consultation; library services; computing facilities; class sizes; and level and difficulty of subject content.

In a study of psychology student satisfaction, Corts, et al. (2000) developed *a priori* categories similar to the ones found in our Business Student Satisfaction Index. Those satisfaction categories include course offerings, career preparation, quality of instruction, advising and class size. Aldridge and Rowley (1998), in developing and implementing a satisfaction assessment effort at an English University (using a SERVQUAL methodology), affirm that assessment focus should remain in two primary domains, addressing both the teaching/learning process and the overall educational experiences of students in studying the effects of environment and background factors on student satisfaction and performance.

There also is concern that too much emphasis can be given to addressing student satisfaction in business schools at the expense of continuous improvement efforts that facilitate the skill development of learners. Criticisms arise of the “customer-centered” approach to education from a number of sources. As far back as 1979, Fiske cautioned educators to beware of developing and managing programs and institutional initiatives solely on the demands of students. He avers that students are not necessarily in a position to determine what is best for them. This view is reflected more recently by Driscoll and Wicks (1998), who, in critiquing the “student as customer” model, acknowledge, “It is our fear that a strong customer orientation can subordinate the values and objectives of academics and other stakeholders to the perceived needs and wants of students” (p. 59). Winer (1999) takes this argument a step further suggesting that pursuing student satisfaction may actually undermine the mission of business schools. He also notes that all types of games can evolve related to class evaluations under such a governing philosophy. Finally, in comparing the customer/student-center approach to the product approach, Emery, Kramer and Tian (2001) indicate that the customer-centered orientation may advance enrollment gains and student satisfaction while learning outcomes and program quality suffer.

Student satisfaction and learning outcomes are not all-or-nothing propositions. Instead, evidence suggests they operate together to create climates advantageous to student learning. Student satisfaction is often seen as a positive driver of educational quality, it is also associated with actual enhancement of academic performance. Graham and Gisi (2000) argue that positive academic climate and responsive student services interact to yield greatest satisfaction and student performance. This perspective is supported by Kamemera, Rueben and Sillah (2003), who note that student satisfaction with the academic environment and student services is correlated with academic performance.

**TABLE 1**  
**Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Measures**

**Business School Student Satisfaction Inventory, Overall Scale Reliability:  $\alpha = .83$**

|   | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> |
|---|-------------|-----------|
| <b>Factor 1: The Quality of Business Education Outcomes (<math>\alpha = .76</math>)</b> |             |           |
| Business Core Curriculum Deepened Knowledge   | 3.87        | .77       |
| Studies Had “Real World” Application  | 3.78        | .80       |
| Professors Used Diverse Teaching Methods  | 3.59        | .84       |
| Overall Teaching Quality is Strong  | 3.78        | .79       |
| Courses in Different Disciplines Complement   | 3.97        | .75       |
| Courses Intellectually Challenging  | 3.91        | .75       |
| <b>Factor 2: Quality of School Climate (<math>\alpha = .75</math>)</b>                  |             |           |
| Professors Have a Positive Attitude   | 4.07        | .64       |
| Faculty and Students Have Mutual Respect  | 4.02        | .78       |
| Faculty Shows Interest in Helping Students  | 3.93        | .71       |
| Students are Treated Like Adults  | 3.83        | .84       |
| Student Evaluations Are Taken Seriously   | 2.98        | 1.08      |
| Faculty Are Readily Available Outside Class   | 3.86        | .77       |
| <b>Factor 3: Quality of Advising (<math>\alpha = .81</math>)</b>                        |             |           |
| Adequacy of Academic Advising   | 3.38        | 1.22      |
| My Advisor Knowledgeable  | 3.73        | 1.02      |
| Career Advising is Sufficient   | 2.89        | 1.10      |
| <b>Factor 4: Quality of Computer Resources (<math>\alpha = .68</math>)</b>              |             |           |
| Adequacy of Computer Resources  | 3.36        | 1.19      |
| Adequacy of Technical Computer Support  | 3.29        | .99       |
| <b>Validating Variables: Global Measures of Satisfaction</b>                            |             |           |
| Perceived Overall Satisfaction  | 7.19        | 1.48      |
| Perceived Value of Education for Money Spent  | 3.15        | 1.06      |

Student satisfaction remains an important assessment issue for business and management educators as we wrestle with academic quality and its continuous improvement. The current research fits in the domain of exploratory testing of core dimensions related to business student satisfaction. With some of the exceptions above, most of the business and management education satisfaction research is focused on single class evaluations and/or learning satisfaction within specific class categories versus overall experiential and academic satisfaction (i.e., Krehbiel, McClure, and Pratsini, 1997; Pool, 1996; Westerman, Nowicki and Plant, 2002, White, 1995).

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Business Student Satisfaction Inventory (BSSI) was originally developed to provide feedback to business faculty on business student satisfaction at a small, Southeastern private, AACSB accredited university with a business school enrollment of approximately 700 students and a graduate enrollment of approximately 300 students. This study focuses primarily on the satisfaction of the undergraduate population of students, although a small subsample of MBA students also completed the BSSI. The current study tests the viability of the BSSI as tool to assess student satisfaction as an indicator of overall educational

quality and effectiveness. Additionally, this study investigates the underlying factor structure of the BSSI and the relationship of that factor structure to the overall satisfaction of students and their perceptions of the value of their education.

## METHODOLOGY

### SCALE DEVELOPMENT

The BSSI was originally developed by the lead author in 1995. Business school faculty members were invited by email to suggest items for inclusion in the Inventory. The focal question of this inquiry was “What factors contribute to student satisfaction and positive learning outcomes in your classes?”. Follow-up, brief interviews were conducted with faculty members who responded to the request for input. These interviews permitted the creation of an initial set of 20 items for inclusion in the first iteration of the instrument. Additionally, three student focus groups were used to gather information on students’ perceptions of the driving and restraining forces relative to their satisfaction within the business school. A force-field analysis was used to help students formulate and frame their perspectives. Considerable overlap existed between the perspectives of faculty and students on factors that contributed to or

**TABLE 2**  
**CFA: The Dimensions of Business School Student Satisfaction**

|   | Scale Item   | Est.  | Std. | T     |       |
|---|--|-------|------|-------|-------|
| <b>Factor 1: The Quality of Business Education Outcomes (<math>\alpha = .76</math>)</b> |  |       |      |       |       |
|   | Business Core Curriculum Deepened Knowledge              | .83   | .48  | 12.70 | <.001 |
|   | Studies Had “Real World” Application                     | .88   | .50  | 12.93 | <.001 |
|   | Professors Used Diverse Teaching Methods                 | .87   | .50  | 12.43 | <.001 |
|   | Overall Teaching Quality is Strong                       | 1.00* | .58  | ---   | ---   |
|   | Courses in Different Disciplines Complemented Each Other | .62   | .36  | 9.86  | <.001 |
|   | Courses Intellectually Challenging                       | .68   | .39  | 10.85 | <.001 |
| <b>Factor 2: Quality of School Climate (<math>\alpha = .75</math>)</b>                  |  |       |      |       |       |
|   | Professors Have a Positive Attitude                      | .90   | .47  | 15.02 | <.001 |
|   | Faculty and Students Have Mutual Respect                 | .89   | .46  | 12.41 | <.001 |
|   | Faculty Shows Interest in Helping Students               | 1.00* | .52  | ---   | ---   |
|   | Students are Treated Like Adults                         | .93   | .48  | 12.04 | <.001 |
|   | Student Evaluations Are Taken Seriously                  | .86   | .45  | 8.70  | <.001 |
|   | Faculty Are Readily Available Outside Class              | .79   | .41  | 11.08 | <.001 |
| <b>Factor 3: Quality of Advising (<math>\alpha = .81</math>)</b>                        |  |       |      |       |       |
|   | Adequacy of Academic Advising                            | 1.00* | 1.04 | ---   | ---   |
|   | My Advisor Knowledgeable                                 | .71   | .74  | 15.55 | <.001 |
|   | Career Advising is Sufficient                            | .77   | .81  | 15.68 | <.001 |
| <b>Factor 4: Quality of Computer Resources <math>\alpha = .75</math></b>                |  |       |      |       |       |
|   | Adequacy of Computer Resources                           | .83   | .72  | 6.20  | <.001 |
|   | Adequacy of Technical Computer Support                   | 1.00* | .86  | ---   | ---   |

**Goodness of Fit:**  $\chi^2_{(113)} = 320.04, p < .001$   
**GFI = .93 AGFI = .91 CFI = .96 NNFI = .95**

\* Fixed at 1.00 starting value

detracted from a satisfying academic experience. The initial BSSI contained 27 satisfaction items [5-point Likert scales: “Strongly Disagree”(1) to “Strongly Agree”(5)] and an omnibus measure of overall student satisfaction [10-point Likert scale: “Little Satisfaction” (1) to “Moderate Satisfaction” (5) to “High Satisfaction”(10)].

Several times between 1995 and the present the initial BSSI instrument was administered to business student samples to gather data on student satisfaction and to test the viability of the BSSI as a useful assessment tool. The final version of the original BSSI (see Appendix A) contains 23 items (5-point Likert scales) and two global satisfaction measures for the assessment of predictive validity. The global measures included a 10-point Likert measure of Overall Satisfaction and a 5-point Likert measure assessing the degree to which students felt the education received was worth the money spent to acquire it (called Perceived Educational Value). Pretests indicated that all scale items were understandable and had content validity. Demographic data was collected on gender, number of business courses completed, majors and year in school. The newly revised BSSI, based on current study results, is found in Appendix B.

## SAMPLING AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

The BSSI was distributed to all business students in the business school. A total of 545 undergraduate students completed the instrument. There were 269 male and 239 female respondents. In terms of majors, the breakdown was: 106 general business; 98 marketing; 69 finance; 53 management; 39 MBA; 38 e-business technology; 37 accounting; 17 international business; 5 M.Acc.; and 25 undecided. 53 freshmen, 103 sophomores, 154 juniors, 155 seniors and 44 graduate-level students completed the survey. Variances in these totals from the full sample total occur because of non-existent responses to the demographic items.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

BSSI data was explored using a two-tiered approach. The data were initially examined for convergent and discriminant validity using exploratory factor analysis (principal components extraction with a varimax rotation). This stage of analysis identified several items without clean domain identification (i.e., significant cross-loading). A pool of 17 items remained (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics). Together, these factors account for 56.5% of the variance extracted.

**TABLE 3**  
**Predictive Validity Tests: Multiple Regression**

**Dependent Variable: Overall Satisfaction**

| Predictor  | b    | $\beta$ | t      | p     |
|--|------|---------|--------|-------|
| Quality of Educational and Intellectual Outcomes | .215 | .474    | 11.567 | <.001 |
| Quality of School Climate                        | .078 | .172    | 4.151  | <.001 |
| Quality of Advising                              | .041 | .081    | 2.397  | .017  |
| Quality of Computer Resources                    | .080 | .106    | 3.066  | .002  |

**Dependent Variable: Perceived Educational Value**

| Predictor  | b    | $\beta$ | t      | p     |
|--|------|---------|--------|-------|
| Quality of Educational and Intellectual Outcomes | .149 | .446    | 10.176 | <.001 |
| Quality of School Climate                        | .045 | .136    | 3.061  | .002  |
| Quality of Advising                              | .031 | .079    | 2.309  | .021  |
| Quality of Computer Resources                    | .044 | .084    | 2.126  | .034  |

The factor structure that emerged from exploratory factor analysis was tested further using confirmatory factor analysis via LISREL. Confirmatory factor analysis provides a strong test of discriminant validity and accounts for individual item error in the estimation of factor loadings and overall fit of the factor structure. Results indicate that a four-factor model fits the data very well ( $\chi^2_{(113)} = 320.04$ ,  $p < .001$ , GFI = .93, AGFI = .91, CFI = .96, NNFI = .95), with fit indices well above the .90 benchmark. We measured the reliability of both the overall scale ( $\alpha = .83$ ), and of the individual component sub-scales (see Table 2). All scales exceeded the convention of .70 for reliability.

Only the Quality of Computer Resources factor (QCR) exhibited a reliability index below the conventional .70. QCR has an alpha of .68, which is very near the benchmark. We decided to include this fourth factor because it performed well on all validity measures, including follow-up predictive validity tests. We then created summated scales for each of the four identified factors. These scales were evaluated as predictors of the two global measures of satisfaction in order to assess predictive validity of the satisfaction scale. A linear regression model was used for this analysis. In both of the regressions (see Table 3), all four factors were found to be significant predictors of both Overall Satisfaction and Perceived Educational Value. We have concluded from this analysis that the BSSI with 17 items is a valid and reliable instrument for assessing student satisfaction. Appendix B includes an adjusted instrument (problematic items removed).

## FINDINGS

Four dimensions of business school student satisfaction emerged from this research. An explanation of these factors and their measurement follows.

**Factor 1 - Quality of Business Education Outcomes:** One of the four factors to emerge was a subset of satisfaction measures that reflects the perceived quality of the educational outcomes, which we call Quality of Educational and Intellectual Outcomes (QEIO). This sub-scale is a 6-item measure reflecting students' perception of knowledge gains, diversity of pedagogy, overall teaching quality, and practical applications of course concepts. This factor includes the student's assessment of whether or not they found the experience intellectually challenging. It also includes a measure of lateral learning and overall integration of educational content – in short, whether courses in various disciplines complement each other.

**Factor 2 - Quality of School Climate:** Independent of educational gains made in the context of curricula, a student's satisfaction with the business school experience is clearly tied to the organizational climate at the school. We have identified this as Quality of School Climate (QSC). In particular, this factor reflects the extent to which the school is "student-friendly." This sub-scale includes 6 items and reflects the interpersonal dynamics among faculty and students as well as the extent to which students feel they are valued. QSC assesses students' perception that faculty members exhibit a positive attitude toward them and whether faculty and students operate in a climate of mutual

respect. This factor includes two measures of faculty benevolence: faculty availability to students outside of the classroom and whether faculty members demonstrate an interest in helping students. The scale is rounded out with two measures that reflect the extent to which students feel that they “matter” – that their comments and scores on professors’ teaching evaluations are treated seriously and whether or not they feel they are treated as adults (and by extension, having something worthy to contribute).

**Factor 3 - Quality of Advising:** A student’s academic advisor clearly plays an important role in the student’s satisfaction with the educational experience. The Inventory measures 3 issues in this sub-scale measuring Quality of Advising (QA): general effectiveness of the academic advisor, that advisor’s knowledge base of relevant information for the student, and the advisor’s assistance in career planning.

**Factor 4 – Quality of Computer Resources:** The final two-item sub-scale taps into the student’s perception of the Quality of Computer Resources (QCR). The two items measure perceptions not just of hardware and software, but also of the technical support available to them as students.

Overall, the results are quite clear and suggest the existence of four primary factors drawn from the original 23 items of the BSSI. The 17 items that make up these four factors have been reworked into a revised BSSI (Appendix B). Additionally, it appears that these four factors all are significant in terms of students’ perceptions of their Overall Satisfaction and Perceived Educational Value. Hence, these factors, whether configured with BSSI items or other related items, seem important to consider when thinking about and assessing business student satisfaction.

## CONSIDERATION OF OMITTED ITEMS

For the current analysis, six items were eliminated because they did not fit the parameters of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis. This should not imply that these are not potentially useful items. In fact, these items may represent stand-alone **threshold** factors of importance to overall student satisfaction. We will briefly discuss each omitted item below.

Q4: “I’ve had difficulty scheduling the classes I need” - Scheduling appears to be a logistics issue. Within this study, logistics did not emerge as a factor, although it may be important to student satisfaction. This item had a mean of 3.25 (on a 5-point scale) suggesting that is a neutral issue. It is possible that with satisfaction inventories, an *a priori* factor needs to be prescribed that captures such logistic issues.

Q7: “Small class size has been beneficial to my learning” - Small class size is one of the primary promotional attributes of our institution. The mean for this item was 4.40, suggesting that it may be important to student satisfaction. Surprisingly, this item did not load in these factors; it may represent a single satisfaction indicator, especially since small class size traditionally is a major selling point to our students.

Q11: “Business students have a voice in the decision making within the School” - This item had a mean of 2.69 and was the lowest rated of the items on the BSSI. Intuitively, this item would seem to be related to the School Climate factor but proved not to load significantly on that factor. It may be that students, because of traditional academic power structures, simply do not expect to have a strong voice and are not factoring that issue into their overall satisfaction.

Q12: “There are adequate internship opportunities available to students in the School”: - This item had a mean of 2.99 placing it in the neutral range (2.75 – 3.25). Given that Item 17 dealing with “real world” applications loaded well on the Quality of Business Educational Outcomes factor, it is surprising to us that this item did not also load on QBEO. We believe that the wording of the question may be problematic and may include a revised item with future versions of the BSSI.

Q15: “I am satisfied with the General Education Requirements”: - This item had a mean of 3.30, which in our force-field analysis places it in the positive driver of satisfaction category. However, it is not a strong driver. Admittedly, the current wording of the item is clumsy and could be revised, particularly as related to addressing satisfaction with actual learning experiences versus requirements.

## IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION

When originally developed, the BSSI was not based in a singular or specific theoretical orientation to measuring business student satisfaction. In this sense, the original purpose of the research was to identify and quantify “emergent” factors that our own faculty and students regarded as contributing to the quality of educational experiences, and correspondingly to student satisfaction with their learning experiences. As noted above, the business and management literature on this issue is neither exhaustive nor necessarily easy to integrate into a coherent framework. Research results suggest that this assessment instrument has proven to have solid factor structure and predictive capacity.

## INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENTS AND FACULTY IN INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

From our view and as a result of the current research, we believe that defining satisfaction and its precursors is best accomplished when there is a partnership between faculty and students. Both groups bring different frames of reference and experiences to the dialogue. The opportunity to create a collaborative dialogue upon which to develop outcomes assessment tools has potential for building cohesion and common understanding between faculty and students and improving learning services delivery throughout the school.

## CULTURE AND CLIMATE ISSUES

While AACSB-accredited business schools share many common characteristics, each school is unique via its mission, faculty and student body. In the evolution of the BSSI, the culture of our institution and our SOBA has influenced our conceptualization of and development the BSSI. It is an instrument that reflects the student-centered mission of the school and the university. One of the primary marketing tools of the institution is this “student-centered” culture at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Teaching, advising and student support are the primary mission foci for the institution and the School of Business Administration. While considerable scholarly activity is evident, our students do not regard scholarship as related to their needs within and beyond the classroom. Hence, within this cultural context, student satisfaction is of primary importance. Likewise, the original item pool, as authored in collaboration with faculty and students, is representative of the prescribed, optimal learning climate within our school.

At other universities, the BSSI may have applicability most in terms of the four factors that have emerged from the current study. Given that these factors do drive overall satisfaction and perceived educational value within this study, they provide a structure upon which to build assessment tools that are individualized to a particular institution’s mission. Any assessment tool used should reflect the unique character and culture of the unique school. At present, the BSSI serves as a prototype for further study of business student satisfaction within our SOBA. The four identified factors may serve as an exploratory framework relevant to other business school interested in “personalizing” their studies of student satisfaction. With further elaboration and testing, the instrument has the potential to become a predictor of satisfaction, value, and quality outcomes for students.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

Schools using BSSI to measure core satisfaction factors should recognize that satisfaction is a moving target and the instrument will need continuous refinement as technologies, pedagogies, and school missions change. During the spring semester 2008, in partnership with the Outcomes Assessment Committee, we will conduct another iteration of study with the BSSI. The BSSI Revised form (Appendix B) will serve as a foundation prototype for that study as we continue to gather large sample data from our student samples at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. We are currently considering adding more technology items to the survey to more fully capture the impact of a broader Technology Resources factor. The revised form will also include several additional demographic factors and a third dependent variable, Perceived Academic Quality.

To date, our findings have not been discussed at any length among the general faculty, but we can envision the possibility of satisfaction findings being a forum topic for reflection and dialogue. Clearly, if follow-up research demonstrates that the existent four factors are foundational

to reported student satisfaction, brainstorming on ways to improve elements of each of the four factors has merit. Given that our mission is focused on teaching excellence and continuous improvement, our research can be better utilized when brought into the public domain for consideration.

We maintain that student satisfaction is a valid area of scholarly and practical concern and should not be assessed solely with in-class instructor evaluations. Satisfaction is more complex than those measures capture, and the stakes are too high to ignore its valid assessment. We encourage other researchers to use BSSI core elements in their measurement of satisfaction and welcome an open dialogue on scale development for this important indicator of academic quality. We believe that this type of assessment has potential merit in terms of improving delivery of high quality educational experiences to students within a student-centered educational culture.

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## APPENDIX A

Student Satisfaction Survey  
School of Business Administration  
Stetson University

DIRECTIONS: The MGT 465 class (Organizational Development) is conducting a Student Satisfaction survey this semester to help benchmark the quality of learning experiences occurring within the School of Business.

Below you will find 30 items that address various aspects of the educational experience with the **Business School** (the School). Please circle your responses for each item following the scoring procedure identified below. All individual responses will be kept confidential and will be used in an aggregate profile of the driving and restraining forces that affect the ongoing development of educational quality in this School.

Additionally, you are asked to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses that you have encountered with a business student. We appreciate your willingness to complete this instrument.

### ITEM SCORING

SD – Strongly Disagree D – Disagree N – Neutral A – Agree SA – Strongly Agree

1. SD D N A SA The School has adequate computer resources.
2. SD D N A SA My academic advisor has effectively helped me in planning my academic program.
3. SD D N A SA The Business core and foundation curriculum deepened (or is deepening) my knowledge in the functional areas of business.
4. SD D N A SA \*\*\* I've had difficulty scheduling the classes I need.
5. SD D N A SA I've been challenged intellectually by my business professors.
6. SD D N A SA My academic advisor is knowledgeable about the academic procedures and programs in the School.
7. SD D N A SA \*\*\* Small class size has been beneficial to my learning.
8. SD D N A SA \*\*\* My interactions with faculty beyond the classroom are positive.
9. SD D N A SA Students and faculty show mutual respect for each other.
10. SD D N A SA The School has adequate computer technical support.
11. SD D N A SA \*\*\* Business students have a voice in the decision making within the School.
12. SD D N A SA \*\*\* There are adequate internship opportunities available to students in the School.
13. SD D N A SA The money I have spent on my education is worth the learning I've acquired within the School.
14. SD D N A SA My advisor does a good job of helping me with career planning.
15. SD D N A SA \*\*\* I am satisfied with the General Education requirements outside the School.
16. SD D N A SA Faculty are sincerely interested in helping students learn and grow.
17. SD D N A SA What I've learned in my business studies has direct "real world" application.
18. SD D N A SA My business professors exhibit a positive attitude toward students they teach.
19. SD D N A SA Professors use diverse teaching methods to enhance my learning.
20. SD D N A SA Overall, I'd rate the quality of teaching to be very strong in the School.
21. SD D N A SA Student class evaluations are taken seriously by the administration.
22. SD D N A SA Faculty are readily available to help students outside of class.
23. SD D N A SA Students are treated as adults within the School.
24. SD D N A SA I've found that my classes in the different business disciplines often complement each other.

\*\*\* Items that were eliminated from the Revised Version.

### GENERAL SATISFACTION ITEM

Please rate the overall level of satisfaction you currently hold relative to your learning experiences in the School. Circle the number that most applies at this time.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
Little Satisfaction Moderate Satisfaction High Satisfaction

### STRENGTH/SHORTCOMINGS ANALYSIS

As you see it, what are the STRENGTHS of the School of Business Administration. Be specific as possible and list these below.

As you see it, what are the SHORTCOMINGS of the School of Business Administration. Be as specific as possible and list these below

### DEMOGRAPHIC ITEMS

Gender: \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_ Male      Business Courses Taken Through Spring 2002 \_\_\_\_\_

Major: Accounting \_\_\_ Finance \_\_\_ Management \_\_\_ Marketing \_\_\_ GB \_\_\_ EBT \_\_\_  
MBA \_\_\_ M.Acc. \_\_\_

Year in School: Freshman \_\_\_ Sophomore \_\_\_ Junior \_\_\_ Senior \_\_\_ Grad. \_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Business Student Satisfaction Inventory: Revised Version

The educational experience you've had in the Business School is comprised of a number of different dimensions. Below is a list of questions regarding these areas and issues. Please read each question and circle the response that best matches your opinions. There are no right or wrong answers – only the degree to which you agree or disagree with a statement.

For example, if you strongly agree with a statement, you should circle “5,” while if you strongly disagree with the statement, you should circle “1.” You can choose any number between these end points to reflect your perspective.

Thank you for taking the time to give us feedback on these issues.

|  | Strongly<br>Disagree |   |   |   | Strongly<br>Agree |
|--|----------------------|---|---|---|-------------------|
| 1. My academic advisor has effectively helped me in planning my academic program.  | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 2. My business professors exhibit a positive attitude toward students they teach.  | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 3. The school has adequate computer technical support.   | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 4. Professors use diverse teaching methods that enhance my learning.   | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 5. Faculty are readily available to help students outside of class.  | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 6. My advisor does a good job of helping me with career planning.  | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 7. Student class evaluations are taken seriously by the administration.  | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 8. Students are treated as adults within the School.   | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 9. Faculty are sincerely interested in helping students learn and grow.  | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 10. I've been challenged intellectually by my business professors.   | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 11. The School has adequate computer resources.  | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 12. Overall, I'd rate the quality of teaching to be very strong in the School.   | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 13. My academic advisor is knowledgeable about the academic procedures and programs in the School.                                     | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 14. My courses in the different business disciplines often compliment one another.   | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 15. The business core curriculum or foundation curriculum deepened (or is deepening) my knowledge in the functional areas of business, | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 16. What I've learned in my business studies has direct “real world” application.  | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 17. Students and faculty show mutual respect for each other.   | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |

### Overall Assessment Items

The money I have spent on my education is worth the learning I've acquired within the School.

1      2      3      4      5

Please rate the overall level of satisfaction you currently hold relative to your experiences in the School. Circle the number which best reflects your satisfaction.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
LOW SATISFACTION      MODERATE SATISFACTION      HIGH SATISFACTION

Tell us a little bit about you.

You are:  Male       Female

What is your major? \_\_\_\_\_

If you have a minor area, what is it? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your year in school?       Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Graduate Student

Indicate the range of your overall GPA:

< 2.00

2.00-2.50

2.51-3.00

3.01-3.50

> 3.50

### EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ITEM

Please rate the quality of education you have received so far in your experiences within the School of Business Administration. Circle the number that represents your rating of that quality.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
LOW QUALITY      MODERATE QUALITY      HIGH QUALITY