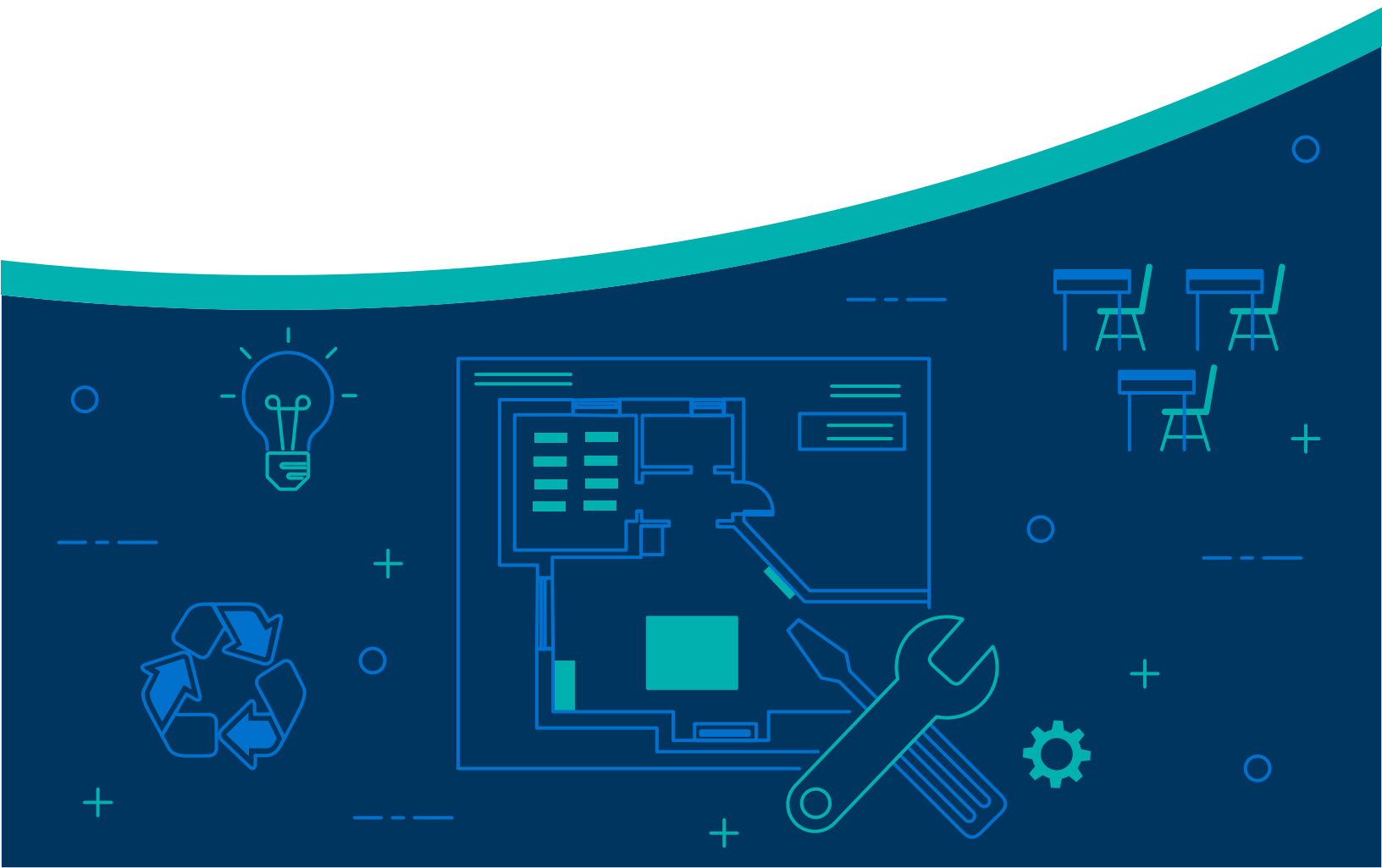# Student Customer Service Diagnostic

Assess Your Institution's Student Customer Service Practices

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Customer Service Gaps Amplify Student Stressors

A recent EAB survey of community college practitioners revealed that **85% of community college professionals believe students' customer service expectations have increased since 2020.** This diagnostic is designed to help your institution diagnose areas where your college is excelling, as well as areas for improvement, within the realm of student customer service. We've grouped the assessment by five themes that correspond to the five recommendations made in our Community College Perceptions of Customer Service insight paper. This insight paper details the responses from over 160 community college practitioners about how well their college is meeting customer service challenges and the impact gaps in service can have on enrollment and retention.

Recommendation	Diagnostic Theme(s)
Invest in customer service professional development	**Training and Professional Development:** How well do we ensure our teams are equipped with the interpersonal, professional, and tactical skills needed to best support students?
Audit your processes for both technology and workflow bottlenecks	**Providing Rapid Resolutions:** How do we make sure that students receive fast answers and support, so they don't lose momentum? Are we providing students with the information needed to make decisions, complete tasks, and meet deadlines?
Check in with students about their experiences	**Student-Centered Campus Strategy:** How are we designing systems and solutions that are built not only *for* students, but *with* students, to ensure we are meeting their expectations?
Tech-enable manual processes and embrace self-guidance tools	**Tech-Enabled Support and Self Guidance:** How do we leverage technology as a tool to provide fast, accurate, efficient and accessible service to students?
Use data insights to proactively anticipate what students need	**Continuous Improvement:** How do we continue to center customer service as a key component of our student success strategy through reviewing benchmarking data and our strategic planning process?

How to use this diagnostic:

Across the next six pages, assess and respond to the statements about each of the five themes depicted above. On page 10, tally your responses and see where your school has the most room for growth, and where to prioritize your efforts. Then, use the library of resources on page 11 to get started.

Student Customer Service Definition: helping students solve problems, teaching them how to use college resources, and answering questions.*

*Adapted from HubSpot, *What is Customer Service*

Training and Professional Development

Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Check one:		
	No	Partially	Yes
My college offers customer service professional development trainings.	☐	☐	☐
My college looks to the private sector for customer service best practices.	☐	☐	☐
Customer service is something we talk about regularly at student services staff meetings.	☐	☐	☐
Staff receives training on strategies to diffuse difficult situations for frustrated students.	☐	☐	☐
Staff receives active listening skills training to ensure students feel heard and understood.	☐	☐	☐
Front-line staff have the ability to cross-train in multiple student services areas.	☐	☐	☐
Front-line staff clearly understand what each student services area is responsible for and can make accurate referrals if needed.	☐	☐	☐
Staff are trained on how to explain college policies and procedures in plain speak, without jargon, to help alleviate student confusion.	☐	☐	☐
Staff receive regular updates regarding college changes so students receive consistent answers to common questions.	☐	☐	☐
Staff knows where common items on the website are located so they can direct students.	☐	☐	☐
Staff understand student-facing technology and know what the student interface looks like.	☐	☐	☐
Staff are incentivized for attending customer service professional development through earning badges, credentials, or certificates that showcase their learning.	☐	☐	☐
Total "No," "Partially," and "Yes" responses:			

93% Of community college educators report that customer service is very important to retention efforts

Providing Rapid Resolutions

Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Check one:		
	No	Partially	Yes
Students generally do not wait on hold for more than 10 minutes when calling the college.	☐	☐	☐
Students generally receive a response within one business day when emailing student affairs offices.	☐	☐	☐
Students rarely have to wait in line on campus to resolve questions.	☐	☐	☐
If a student is waiting in line on campus, they do not wait more than 10 minutes to be seen.	☐	☐	☐
Students who leave a voicemail for a student services office will receive a follow-up response within one business day.	☐	☐	☐
When students apply to the college, they receive their next steps within one business day.	☐	☐	☐
When students inquire to the college, they receive a response within one business day.	☐	☐	☐
When students request an advising appointment, they can generally be seen within three days.	☐	☐	☐
Students can schedule a placement testing appointment quickly, without having to wait multiple days.	☐	☐	☐
Staff can see a history of a student's interactions with the college, so the student doesn't need to repeat themselves.	☐	☐	☐
Students submitting inquiries via email receive an automated response immediately confirming that their question has been received and when they can expect an answer.	☐	☐	☐
Students can complete administrative tasks, like changing majors, within three days.	☐	☐	☐
Transfer student have their transcripts audited quickly, and any transfer credit that is awarded is rapidly added to the student's transcript.	☐	☐	☐
Students are connected quickly to a staff person via our online chat feature	☐	☐	☐
Financial aid appeals receive fast resolutions.	☐	☐	☐
Academic appeals receive a fast resolutions.	☐	☐	☐
Total "No," "Partially," and "Yes" responses			

56% ► Of community colleges take more than one day to respond to prospective student inquiries

Student-Centered Campus Strategy

Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Check one:		
	No	**Partially**	**Yes**
My college offers evening hours for student services.	☐	☐	☐
My college offers weekend hours for student services.	☐	☐	☐
My college has an on-campus "one stop" that routes questions to the appropriate person.	☐	☐	☐
On campus signage is clear and easy to read.	☐	☐	☐
Our college follows up with students to make sure their questions are fully answered.	☐	☐	☐
When students call the college, they receive a warm handoff if they need to be transferred.	☐	☐	☐
When possible, we walk students with questions to the correct office and provide a warm handoff to the appropriate staff member.	☐	☐	☐
Our waiting areas have ample seating.	☐	☐	☐
Students are seen on time for scheduled appointments.	☐	☐	☐
My college offers virtual advising appointments.	☐	☐	☐
Students receive campus wayfinding instructions and a list of items to bring ahead of scheduled on-campus appointments.	☐	☐	☐
My college offers virtual information sessions for prospective students.	☐	☐	☐
When a student arrives in a campus office, someone greets them quickly and takes note of the reason for their visit.	☐	☐	☐
Students can check in for appointments using a kiosk or mobile option.	☐	☐	☐
Students receive reminders about "to dos" in multiple modalities, such as text messages, emails, and mobile apps.	☐	☐	☐
Staff members can see students' interests and preferences in one centralized location to offer more personalized service.	☐	☐	☐
Staff are polite and courteous to students.	☐	☐	☐
Total "No," "Partially," and "Yes" responses:			

▶ **62%** Of community college educators said lapses in customer service cause students to take time away from work or family to resolve college issues

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Tech-Enabled Support

Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Check one:		
	No	Partially	Yes
Students can schedule appointments using an online scheduling tool.	☐	☐	☐
The online inquiry form is mobile friendly.	☐	☐	☐
The admissions application is mobile friendly.	☐	☐	☐
Prospective students can access their outstanding enrollment steps from a mobile-friendly online workspace or app.	☐	☐	☐
Students submitting inquiries via email receive an automated response immediately confirming their question was received and letting them know when to expect an answer.	☐	☐	☐
Students receive proactive nudges if they are missing admission materials or steps.	☐	☐	☐
Students receive proactive nudges about important deadlines and dates.	☐	☐	☐
Students receive automatic reminders about scheduled appointments, such as tutoring or advising sessions.	☐	☐	☐
Current students can access the following information from a mobile-friendly online workspace or app:			
Academic holds	☐	☐	☐
Financial holds	☐	☐	☐
Messages and emails	☐	☐	☐
Academic scheduling tools	☐	☐	☐
Appointment scheduling tools	☐	☐	☐
Payment tools	☐	☐	☐
Total "No," "Partially," and "Yes" responses:			

▶ **66%** Of community college educators think students needing to repeat their stories multiple times hurts retention

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Robust Self Guidance

Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Check one:		
	No	Partially	Yes
My college has a "request for information" form embedded on high traffic pages of our website.	☐	☐	☐
Our website has text-to-speech within the "search" area.	☐	☐	☐
Our website is mobile friendly.	☐	☐	☐
My college regularly updates self-guidance tools with timely and accurate information.	☐	☐	☐
Frequently asked questions can be answered via our website or mobile app.	☐	☐	☐
Students can use the website to easily answer common questions related to:			
Academic calendars and deadlines	☐	☐	☐
Programs and academic pathways	☐	☐	☐
Transfer pathways	☐	☐	☐
Tuition and fees	☐	☐	☐
Financial aid	☐	☐	☐
Admissions steps	☐	☐	☐
Transfer admissions	☐	☐	☐
Academic advising	☐	☐	☐
Disability services	☐	☐	☐
Student life and athletics	☐	☐	☐
Basic needs and mental health support	☐	☐	☐
Parking	☐	☐	☐
Bookstore	☐	☐	☐
Total "No," "Partially," and "Yes" responses:			

▶ **26%** Of community college educators reported tech-enabled scheduling was difficult for students or they had no digital scheduling tech

Continuous Improvement

Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Check one:		
	No	Partially	Yes
Based on student need, my college has established guidelines for how quickly student questions to student services offices should be answered (i.e., within 24 hours).	☐	☐	☐
Customer service is outlined as a priority within strategic planning goals.	☐	☐	☐
My college tracks how long students wait to schedule advising appointments.	☐	☐	☐
We track speed-to-resolution for phone calls and/or emails to understand where we may have service gaps.	☐	☐	☐
My college uses surveys or polls to collect information on how well we are meeting student customer service needs on our campus.	☐	☐	☐
We keep track of the most common questions received to identify greatest areas of need.	☐	☐	☐
Our college reviews ways to provide excellent customer service to students with disabilities, such as ensuring our website is accessible and that students can easily request and ASL interpreter for appointments.	☐	☐	☐
Students have ways to report poor customer service to campus leadership.	☐	☐	☐
Students have ways to give staff or faculty kudos for great customer service.	☐	☐	☐
We publicly recognize staff who offer excellent customer service.	☐	☐	☐
We track website search topics and high-traffic pages to identify greatest areas of need and site searchability.	☐	☐	☐
Customer service complaints and kudos are reviewed regularly to make rapid adjustments.	☐	☐	☐
We use data to predict when there might be greater demands on frontline staff so we can so we can adjust schedules and workloads appropriately (i.e., looking at historical appointment data to identify peak busy times).	☐	☐	☐
My college uses "secret shopper" initiatives to make sure processes are working correctly.	☐	☐	☐
Total "No," "Partially," and "Yes" responses			

83% Of community college professionals think staffing shortages are a barrier to improving customer service

Analyze Your Results

Total your responses from the previous pages and identify the categories where your institution has the greatest gaps. Then, browse our resources on the next page to begin making enhancements.

Assessment Categories	"No"	"Partially"	Total "No" and "Partially"
I. Training and Professional Development			
II. Rapid Resolutions			
III. Student-Centered Campus Strategy			
IV. Tech-Enabled Support			
V. Self-Guidance Tools			
VI. Continuous Improvement			
Total your "No" and Partially" responses and read the corresponding result below.			

How Does Your School Stack Up?

74-91

Ready For An Upgrade

Customer service hasn't been an explicit priority, and to integrate it into your college's philosophy you will need to inventory your tech infrastructure, strategic plan, and professional development offerings before you can execute system changes. EAB's research and consulting services can help you examine relevant private sector customer services practices as well as network with colleges who have elevated customer service as a student success priority.

57-73

Eyeing The Future

You see many of the gaps in your student customer service experience, and your leadership team has a loose plan to tackle them. But there is still a lot of confusion about which gaps to prioritize and who is responsible for which initiative. You are working on building a more strategic plan to make improvements, but it keeps getting deprioritized for other campus needs.

40-56

At The Starting Line

Your student customer service experience is in progress, but not exactly modern or efficient. Students can muddle through onboarding and locate available resources, but this still requires quite a bit of manual effort or trips to campus. You might have an occasional customer service training and staff has a baseline understanding of how to work together to support learners.

23-39

On The Path

You have customer service-related goals in your strategic plan and a solid tech infrastructure that includes an updated website, self-guidance tools, and mobile apps. These items may not work together seamlessly all the time, but with some analysis, they could. Your team has a clear understanding of what customer service is and what is expected of them.

0-22

Modern Experience, Modern Customer Service

Your student experience is so seamless, students can apply and register for classes on their phones. Your support programs, transfer pathways, and career development opportunities are structured, easy to follow and responsive to changing needs and labor demands. Your data infrastructure is solid, and your leadership team can glean insights into the enrollment funnel and student success journey with ease. We can help you stay ahead of those ever-shifting student expectations.

·········· **Explore Related Resources** ········➤

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Technology as a Customer Service Asset

Personalized and customized service is the basic expectation among today's students. At every turn, they can receive unique recommendations for products and content as well as easy, one-click access to information across every other aspect of their lives—and they expect this tailoring from colleges and universities too. Each interaction you have with students as they start their college journey should center the individual student, their interests, and the unique value that your institution can provide to them. Use the resources below to learn more about how you can leverage technology to close customer service gaps.

EAB Leads in Tech-Enabling Community College Customer Service

Customized Onboarding

Ensure your students' onboarding experience is seamless, supportive, and personalized.

- The Modern Student Experience (resource center)

- How to Optimize Your Student Communications Strategy (toolkit)

- Every Interaction Counts: Strengthening Community College Recruitment (insight paper)

- Community College Integrated Prospect Communications Toolkit (toolkit)

- How to Engage More Community College Prospects Amid the "Great Opt Out" (blog)

- Gen Z's Evolving Enrollment Journey (resource center)

Frictionless Services

Streamline your services and meet the needs of your students more intentionally.

- How to Build a Student-Centric Community College (video)

- Are Your Early Alerts Helping or Triggering? (podcast)

- The Four Stages of an Integrated Lifecycle Approach (blog)

- How to Reverse Enrollment Declines at Community Colleges (podcast)

- 72 Community College Outreach Campaign Ideas (infographic)

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Modernize Your Campus with Navigate
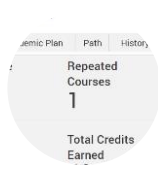
The Leading Student CRM for Community Colleges

Built on a decade of research, Navigate, higher education's leading student CRM, helps 275+ community colleges improve recruitment, onboarding, enrollment, and retention for more than 4.4 million students. Navigate unites administrators, faculty, staff, and students into a collaborative network to measurably improve student outcomes.

Workflow Solutions · Integrated Analytics · Student-Centric Campus · Student Empowerment Tools
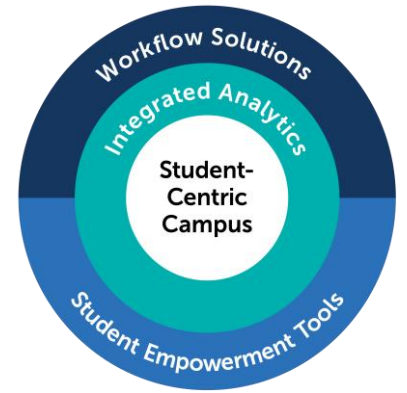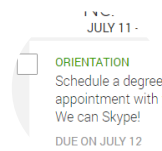
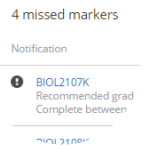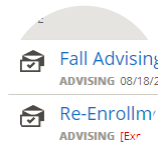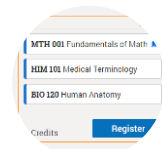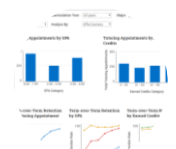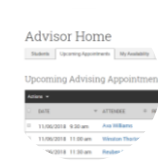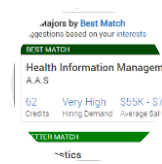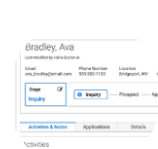| Workflow Solutions	Student Empowerment Tools	Integrated Analytics
Smart Student Profile Actionable academic, financial, and behavioral data to support holistic coordinated care	**Pivotal Moments Path** In-app onboarding and ongoing guidance organized by due date	**Predictive Analytics** Identify and prioritize student interventions based on likely need for support
Campaign Management Mass outreach and multi-modal communication at scale	**Collaborative Academic Planner** Degree maps, course catalog, requirements, and credit tracking with advisor oversight	**Effectiveness Analytics** Impact assessment of interventions across student groups
Appointment Scheduling Flexible timetable for students to schedule within the availability of faculty and staff	**Student Surveys** Interactive surveys and polls for new student intake, exploring majors, sharing needs and interests, and more	**Population Health Analytics** Key academic progress and performance indicators identify and assess interventions
NEW: Recruitment Management Reach and engage prospective students and applicants through campaigns, analytics, and list management	**Financial Planner** Help students discover likely expenses and identify funding to mitigate excess debt	**Historical Trend Analytics** Analyze historical data to support institution-level and program-level decision-making

OUR PARTNERS

275+
Community college partner institutions

4.4M+
Students served

OUR IMPACT

3.5%
Typical improvement in graduation rate

5:1
ROI based on 500 partner value stories

To learn more about Navigate for community colleges, visit **eab.com/navigate** or email **eab2yrcommunications@eab.com**.

EAB Is Your Full-Service Community College Partner

Best-in-Class Support and Expertise to Solve Challenges Across Your Institution

Our Solutions for Community Colleges	Institutional Strategy	Recruitment and Enrollment	Student Success	Data Management and Analytics
NAVIGATE — The leading student CRM for community colleges, supporting recruitment and retention		■	■	■
EDIFY — A higher ed-specific and vendor-agnostic data warehouse, infrastructure, and analytics hub	■	■	■	■
STRATEGIC ADVISORY SERVICES — Consultative access to EAB's best practice research, toolkits, diagnostics, and expert direction on community colleges' most pressing challenges	■	■	■	■
RAPID INSIGHT — Access, prepare, and explore your data in a code-free, drag-and-drop workspace	■	■	■	■
YOUVISIT — Immersive virtual tour platform creating a digital experience that generates higher inquiries and activates your recruitment team		■		
WISR — Invite-based, college-branded virtual communities for prospects and current students to enhance connection		■	■	
MOON SHOT FOR EQUITY — A comprehensive initiative to eliminate equity gaps at your institution by the year 2030	■			
CAPPEX — An expansive college search network that connects colleges with right-fit students		■		
INTERSECT — A recruitment solution powered by Naviance, the leading college and career readiness platform used by 41% of US high school students		■		

YOUR NEXT STEPS

Schedule a student experience consultation by contacting **eab2yrcommunications@eab.com** or visiting us at **eab.com**.

ABOUT EAB

At EAB, our mission is to make education smarter and our communities stronger. We work with thousands of institutions to drive transformative change through data-driven insights and best-in-class capabilities. From kindergarten to college to career, EAB partners with leaders and practitioners to accelerate progress and drive results across five major areas: enrollment, student success, institutional strategy, data analytics, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). We work with each partner differently, tailoring our portfolio of research, technology, and marketing and enrollment solutions to meet the unique needs of every leadership team, as well as the students and employees they serve. Learn more at eab.com.