



## Your voice is being heard!

In an effort to provide an excellent student experience to Ashford University students, Ashford University continues to administer the Noel- Levitz Priorities Survey of Online Learners (PSOL). The latest survey was administered to the undergraduate and graduate students at Ashford University in the spring of 2012.

The survey measured student satisfaction with Ashford University services and identified areas of excellence and areas with opportunity for improvement.

The survey serves as a vehicle to evaluate how Ashford University is supporting its students in achieving their educational goals. In addition to measuring strengths and opportunities for improvement, the student satisfaction surveys also report areas in which Ashford University students report higher (and lower) satisfaction with University services than their peers at similar institutions. Ashford University students' satisfaction was significantly higher than the national student comparison group on every scale. Further, results indicate that Ashford students are more likely to recommend Ashford programs to other adult learners than students at other universities are to recommend their programs.

Survey results indicated the following areas as strengths regarding your experience at Ashford University:

- Students are aware of whom to contact for questions about programs and services.
- Instructional materials are appropriate for program content.
- Student assignments are clearly defined in the syllabus.
- Registration for online courses is convenient.

Your positive input is sincerely appreciated!

Recognizing that an institution is only as strong as its weakest link, it is of paramount importance that we receive and respond to your input regarding ways that Ashford University can improve upon the overall student experience. The areas that were identified ,by Ashford students, as areas of high importance low satisfaction opportunity on the PSOL survey:

- Faculty are responsive to student needs
- Faculty provide timely feedback and student progress
- This institution responds quickly when I request information
- I receive timely information on the available of financial aid
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment



How does your voice matter? Here's how!

Several of the concerns that students have voiced are regarding responsiveness and resources. It is important that everyone is aware of how Ashford University is taking action. Please see the examples below:

### **NEW ROLE OF STUDENT ADVISOR**

The transition to the Student Advisor position has significantly changed the student experience at Ashford University. Prior to the Student Advisor role students had to speak with two different individuals who could only understand a small part of their file. With this new role, students only have to contact one individual, their Student Advisor. Additionally, Student Advisors don't just advise on the academic policies or the financial aid policies; we advise students from a holistic perspective because we are now able to understand how each part of a student's file impacts the student as a whole.

Being able to tell our students, "I am your Student Advisor and I will be able to help you from now on with *any* questions or concerns that you may have," is a great feeling both for students and for advisors. For the vast majority of student inquiries, Student Advisors are their one, go-to person to receive a resolution. Once it is explained to the student that moving forward from the completion of course one, they only need to reach out to one person, advisors can clearly sense the relief on the other end of the phone. Student Advisors are in sole control and responsibility over their student population.

This role has given students renewed confidence in their advisors that are here to assist them as they progress towards degree completion. Our students view us as the liaison between them and the university. Students now have the confidence that regardless of their need, their Student Advisor is able and willing to assist. The Student Advisor model gives our students confidence that we truly are their greatest resource while in school. Student Advisors are able to obtain the goal of graduation and overall success with the student via holistic advising. There is a common misconception of 'finance' and how it only pertains to negative conversations; with having the academic background and adding in the financial knowledge. Student Advisors are able to empower the student and greatly influence the student experience.

### **FINANCIAL SERVICES**

A student entering school is often eager to pursue their dreams of graduating from college but frequently lacks sufficient resources to pay. Ashford University works conscientiously to keep costs low to make school affordable for students to attend and reach their educational goals. Several payment options are available to students and are designed to accommodate a variety of needs. In an effort to provide an excellent student experience to students, Ashford University's Financial Services Department has made many changes over the past year. It is the Universities goal to help every student clearly understand each payment option available to them and how they will be impacted throughout each step of the financial process during their academic career.



The Financial Services Department at Ashford University has taken the time to review student communications both verbally and in writing to ensure that each process is explained clearly and that students develop a full understanding. Some of the developments in communication we have in place to reach and educate our students include Financial Aid TV <http://ashfordonline.financialaidtv.com/> where students can go to learn more about the financial aid programs at Ashford University in a virtual setting, and the Financial Services Webinar where potential and newly enrolled students can log into a webinar with their peers and interact with two Financial Services Advisors live to learn about all available payment options. Ashford University also provides each new student with a Financial Services Welcome Call where students are provided in-depth information in reference to their personally selected payment option(s) in a one on one setting with their assigned Financial Services Advisor, and SFAonline where students can conveniently go to upload the required documentation needed to process their financial aid.

Every student at Ashford University is assigned a team of professional advisors dedicated to ensure each of their needs is being met every step of the way. Financial Services Advisors work with Ashford University students and potential students. They ensure students understand all University payment options, tuition and fees and answer any other questions students may have about their financial needs up until the completion of their first course. They also assist them with submitting all financial aid documents required for their first academic year if applicable. Student Advisors work with Ashford University's continuing students and are their primary point of contact after their first course, keeping them well informed in respect to not only their financial requirements but also their academic progress. This combined knowledge allows students the convenience of having all of their needs met through one contact. Ashford University encourages responsible borrowing and maintaining the terms of student loan(s). The Educational Loan Specialists are available to help students manage their student loans when they enter repayment so that their loan account(s) can remain in good standing with the lender. They are always available to go over student options with students in case they are having difficulties making payments; understanding the loan process; or need help returning to school.

## **ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

The Ashford University Academic Affairs Department is committed to fostering and maintaining the highest quality classroom experience possible for our students. True to the mission of the University, the department focuses on creating and maintaining up-to-date and relevant curriculum. In addition, the department fosters the continuing involvement and development of the faculty across all colleges to assure constructive and positive learning experiences for students, as well as ongoing support and communication with faculty.

As our online enrollment continues to increase, the Academic Affairs Department has been undergoing a major expansion initiative to meet the strategic needs of the university. Many new full time faculty have been hired and this expansion will continue. Increasing the number of full time online faculty enables better communication and involvement with our entire faculty and also fosters the continuous evaluation and review of our courses – a hallmark of Ashford University's continuous quality improvement initiative. Each of our colleges is involved in on-going Program Review efforts to assess student learning, curriculum



quality, and relevancy to subject area. Paramount to this process is assuring all our degree programs meet both course and degree program outcomes.

Maintaining the consistency, quality, and relevancy of the curriculum is a top priority. We are proud of the fact that over 500 Ashford online courses have received Quality Matters™ certification -meaning that the courses have been reviewed by outside academics affiliated with other colleges. These courses have all met standards recognized by many higher education providers. We continue to increase the numbers of our courses which offer our proprietary Constellation™ multi-media electronic textbook delivery system which includes Apps for the Android, i-Phone, and i-Pad operating systems. This fosters a more dynamic classroom experience, while providing students the highest level of flexibility for their academic experience. To assure our faculty are upholding academic standards, we offer ongoing faculty development through specialized trainings and faculty forums. In addition, we maintain ongoing faculty peer review and mentoring programs to foster and assure instructional quality across all colleges.