Postsecondary Education Institutions' Satisfaction with Student Financial Assistance Programs

Higher Education Surveys

Higher Education Surveys Report
Survey Number 20
July 1996

Postsecondary Education Institutions' Satisfaction with Student Financial Assistance Programs

Sponsored by and written for:

Office of Postsecondary Education
United States Department of Education

Written by:

Bradford Chaney
Elizabeth Farris
Westat, Inc.

Higher Education Surveys Report
Survey Number 20
July 1996

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents the results of a survey of postsecondary institutions concerning their satisfaction with the delivery of federal student financial assistance programs (SFAP). The purpose of the survey was to determine both institutions' overall level of satisfaction and their satisfaction within several categories of the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) customer support services (program materials and publications, training, the application process, electronic processing, inquiry and information services, funds management, program reviews and audits, and program operations). The data will be used to examine the current quality of ED's support of institutions' financial aid processing and to provide baseline data for measuring changes in satisfaction over time. In addition, institutions were asked for their impressions of student satisfaction with the programs to provide ED with preliminary information until a student survey is conducted.

The survey is one of a series of surveys examining various aspects of ED's student financial assistance programs. Two earlier surveys focused on institutions' satisfaction with the first year of implementation of the Federal Direct Loan Program and, for comparison purposes, on institutions' satisfaction with the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP). Followups to the Direct Loan and FFELP surveys are currently being conducted. In addition, a new survey is being considered to assess *students'* satisfaction with the financial assistance programs. This survey differs from the Direct Loan and FFELP surveys in its broader focus—covering all student financial assistance programs—and in its focus on the financial aid process rather than overall program operation.

The survey questionnaire was mailed to a nationally representative sample of 971 postsecondary institutions. Of these, 136 either had closed or were not eligible for federal financial assistance programs; 774 of the remaining 835 institutions responded, for a response rate of 93 percent. The data were weighted to provide national estimates for the roughly 5,500 eligible institutions represented in the survey.

Findings

Overall Satisfaction

An estimated 73 percent of higher education institutions were pleased overall with the assistance they received from ED in managing and administering the federal student financial assistance programs (Figure 1). Another 13 percent were neutral, and 14 percent expressed some degree of dissatisfaction. Few schools (4 percent) were *very satisfied*; the remainder of the 73 percent were either *satisfied* or *slightly satisfied*.

The areas receiving the greatest overall satisfaction were program materials and publications (79 percent), the application process (76 percent), and electronic processing (74 percent). The areas receiving the least satisfaction were inquiry and information services (58 percent), assistance in program operations (55 percent), and reviews and audits (50 percent). The percentage that expressed dissatisfaction ranged from 8 percent to 19 percent across the eight areas, while the remainder were neutral.

Figure 1. Percentage of institutions agreeing they were satisfied overall with ED assistance
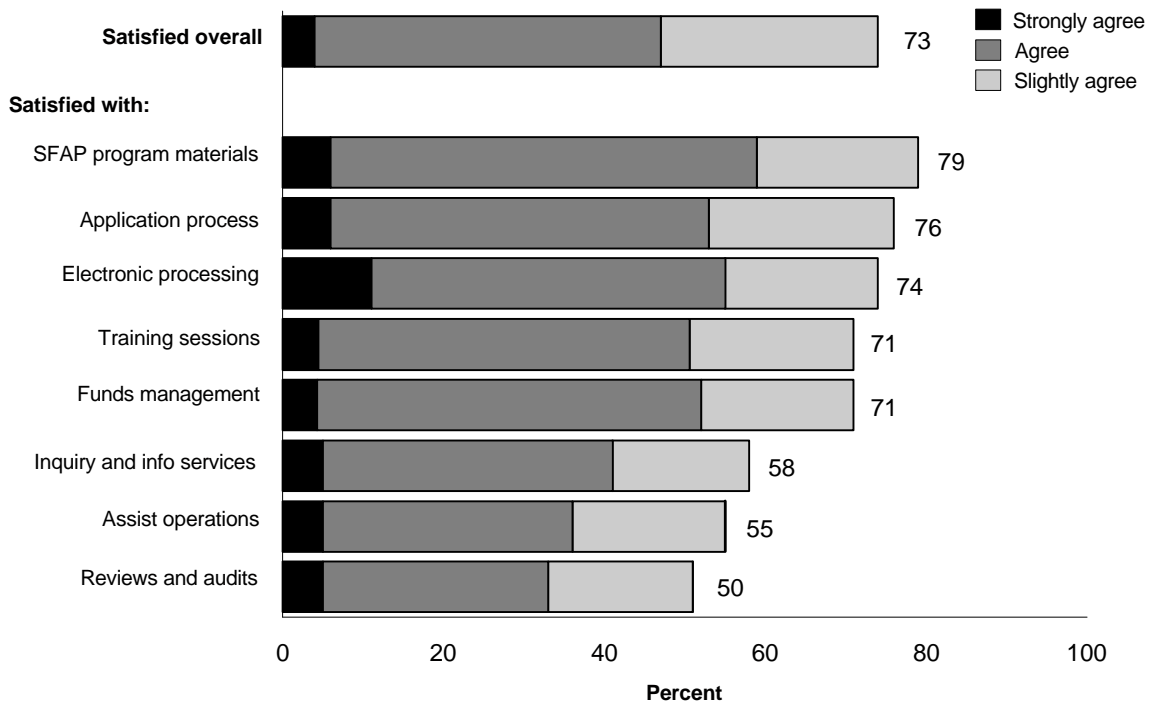
SOURCE: Higher Education Surveys, Postsecondary Education Institutions' Satisfaction with Student Financial Assistance Programs (HES 20), U.S. Department of Education, 1996 (survey conducted in 1995).

Familiarity with ED Services

Often, institutions were not familiar with or had not used many of the individual services offered by ED (Figure 2). This was especially true of the inquiry and information services—where three of the four listed items showed high levels of nonuse (74-92 percent)—and program operations—where all three items showed either high nonuse or unfamiliarity (48-67 percent). Since these same two program categories were among the lowest in overall satisfaction, the lack of use or familiarity may be a factor; respondents that were unfamiliar with the services or had not used them showed relatively low levels of satisfaction and relatively high levels of neutrality.

The ordering of items in Figure 2 partly reflects whether each questionnaire item was stated in terms of nonuse or unfamiliarity. Seven of the top eight areas (all but program systems services) were phrased in terms of nonuse.

Figure 2. Percentage of institutions not using or unfamiliar with service

Service	Percent
SFAP Electronic Bulletin Board	92
Institutional Quality Assurance Program	90
Pell Institutional Access System	82
Pell Technical Assistance Hotline	74
Printing renewal applications	74
Pell Financial Management Specialists	67
Program Systems Services	67
CPS User Services Hotline	65
Fiscal officer training	57
Electronic processing training	49
Campus-Based representatives	48
Payments Recipient Guide	42
Pell automation training	38
EDExpress software	32
FISAP software	31
EDExpress User's Guide	30
Electronic forwarding	25
Electronic funds transfer	25
Funds management process	25
Federal Student Aid Information Center	24
Blue Book	20
Delivery System Training	16
Counselor's Handbook	12
Renewal application	9
Student Financial Assistant Handbook	0
Verification Guide	0

Legend:
- ■ Did not use the service
- ▨ Not familiar with the service

Percent (x-axis: 0 to 100)

The Characteristics of Services That Were Viewed the Most Favorably

Institutions provided considerable information about their satisfaction with specific products and services. Following are some of the general patterns that appeared. In those cases where a range of percentages is provided, the statistics summarize institutions' responses across more than one questionnaire item where the dimension was examined.

- The characteristics of *program materials and publications* that were viewed most positively were their clarity (88-90 percent), organization (86-90 percent), and ease of use (83-87 percent). The characteristic that was viewed least positively was timeliness (52-61 percent).

- Respondents most often evaluated *training* positively with respect to offering helpful information (75-82 percent), providing ample opportunity to ask questions (77-80 percent), and providing information used in day-to-day operations (74-84 percent), and least often with respect to the frequency of the training (62-69 percent).

- The most positively viewed areas of *electronic processing* were understandable hardware requirements (74-88 percent) and ease of installation (72-87 percent), while the least positively viewed areas were the ease of customization (36-47 percent) and compatibility with other software (46-52 percent).

- *Program reviews and audits* received the highest satisfaction concerning institutions knowing what to expect (62 percent), and the least concerning the level of burden (31 percent said they were not burdensome, and 47 percent said they were).

- Assistance in *program operations* received the highest satisfaction on having individuals who were courteous (69-75 percent), knowledgeable (69-73 percent), and who provided helpful information (67-73 percent); the lowest satisfaction was with accessibility (48-53 percent).

Differences Among Respondents in Their Level of Satisfaction

In general, respondents at for-profit institutions were more satisfied with the support services than those at other institutions. Respondents were also more satisfied if they were in financial aid offices than in business offices, and if they had 5 years or less of experience than if they had over 10 years of experience. They were less satisfied if they were at research/doctoral institutions than if they were at other types of institutions.

Contents

LIST OF FIGURES

Background

Within the business world, customer satisfaction is a key concept in marketing. For businesses that depend on having repeat customers, keeping those customers satisfied is an important goal. Even those businesses that primarily sell one-time goods or services, and thus may not expect frequently returning customers, often depend on a reputation for good service or good products in order to win new customers. Accordingly, customer satisfaction has been a major topic within marketing research, with over 15,000 academic and trade articles published on the topic over two decades.[1]

The federal government generally does not need to market its goods and services in the way businesses do. Because the services it provides are often free, the demand for services may be greater than the ability to provide them. In fact, often the goal of a service is to make a continuation of that service unnecessary; for example, the provision of services to pursue education or to provide welfare support is intended to help the recipient to become self-sufficient.

While federal agencies may not need to compete for customers, often their purpose is to provide a set of services to a defined clientele. Public opinion concerning the government depends in part on the degree to which agencies perform that job effectively. In Executive Order 12862, President Clinton wrote,

> *Putting people first means ensuring that the Federal Government provides the highest quality service possible to the American people.*

Some of the specific actions that the Executive order called for were that agencies identify their customers, survey them to determine what they need and their level of satisfaction, and establish service standards and measure results against them.

In response to Executive Order 12862, this study was requested by the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Office of Postsecondary Education, Student Financial Assistance Programs (SFAP) in conjunction with the Planning and Evaluation Service. This office is charged with helping students and postsecondary education institutions apply for and work with the federal financial aid programs; collectively these programs each year process about 8 million applications, disburse over $30 billion, and work with about 8,000 postsecondary education institutions. There actually are two sets of customers for whom a customer satisfaction survey would be appropriate: students who receive or apply for financial aid, and

---

[1]Robert A. Peterson and William R. Wilson. "Measuring Customer Satisfaction: Fact and Artifact." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Winter 1992, p. 61.

postsecondary education institutions that administer much of the financial aid programs at the local level, and that often act as an intermediary between the students and the financial aid programs. Primarily, this study was directed at the satisfaction of postsecondary institutions with the ED student financial assistance services provided to them; a short section of the questionnaire was also devoted to ascertaining institutions' perceptions of student satisfaction, but a future student survey is being considered to obtain more accurate statistics on student satisfaction. The general topics covered in the study were program materials and publications, training, the application process, electronic processing, inquiry and information services, funds management, program reviews and audits, program operations, and impressions of student satisfaction. Within each section, questions were asked about specific services and products, including about such qualities as timeliness, comprehensiveness, accessibility, and ease of use. Detailed statistics on the survey responses are provided in the tables and graphics of this report, while the text primarily is concerned with the overall patterns.

The survey is one of a series of surveys examining various aspects of ED's student financial assistance programs. Two earlier surveys focused on institutions' satisfaction with the first year of implementation of the Federal Direct Loan Program and, for comparison purposes, on institutions' satisfaction with the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP). Followups to the Direct Loan and FFELP surveys are currently being conducted. In addition, a new survey is being considered to assess *students'* satisfaction with the financial assistance programs. This survey differs from the Direct Loan and FFELP surveys in its broader focus—covering all student financial assistance programs—and in its focus on the financial aid process rather than overall program operation.

The survey questionnaire was mailed to a nationally representative sample of 971 postsecondary education institutions, including institutions from a Higher Education Surveys (HES) panel that has participated in repeated studies related to higher education and a supplemental sample of less-than-2-year institutions that were not in the HES panel. Of the 971 institutions, 102 were considered out of scope because they were eligible for neither the federal Pell Grant program nor the Stafford loan program, and 34 institutions had closed; 774 of the remaining institutions responded, for a response rate of 93 percent. Additional information on the survey methodology is provided in Appendix B of this report.

The survey was designed so that each section of the questionnaire included both detailed questions about specific services or products and a question about overall satisfaction within that category. There also was a final question about overall satisfaction with all of the services and products provided by ED. The purpose of this design was to provide both general and specific measures of customer satisfaction and to facilitate statistical analyses to determine which specific services and characteristics were most strongly related to the respondents' level of overall satisfaction.

This report first details the overall levels of institutional satisfaction with ED's customer support services, followed by a discussion of respondents' familiarity with or use of ED's services. The next section discusses patterns of satisfaction with specific services and products, and the final section discusses patterns between types of respondents and their levels of satisfaction.

Overall Levels of Satisfaction

Roughly three-fourths (73 percent) of the responding institutions expressed overall satisfaction with the assistance they received from ED in managing and administering the federal student financial assistance programs (Figure 1). The single most common response was that they *agreed* that they were pleased with ED's assistance (43 percent), with an additional 4 percent *strongly agreeing* and 27 percent *slightly agreeing*.[2] The remainder were split between those who were neutral (13 percent) and those who disagreed that they were satisfied overall (14 percent).

Figure 1. Percentage of institutions agreeing they were satisfied overall with ED assistance
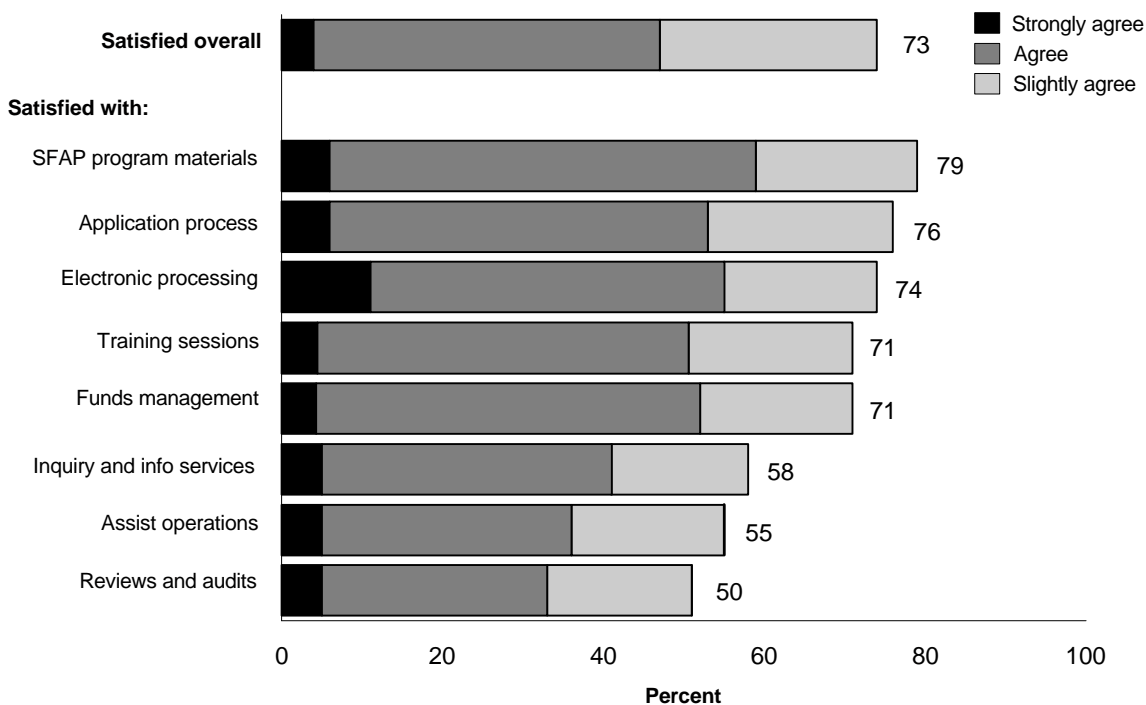
SOURCE: Higher Education Surveys, Postsecondary Education Institutions' Satisfaction with Student Financial Assistance Programs (HES 20), U.S. Department of Education, 1996 (survey conducted in 1995).

---

[2]To simplify the presentation of this report, these three response categories will generally be combined into a single percentage of institutions expressing agreement with a questionnaire item. Generally, there was little variation in the percentages that *strongly agreed*. Though all three categories are shown in Figure 1, only the sum is reported as a percentage; the detailed breakdowns can be found in Appendix C. Sometimes, as in this particular case, the more detailed statistics may not sum exactly to the total reported in the graphics because of rounding. Besides the three categories of agreement listed above, respondents could also say they were neutral, slightly disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. Sometimes a substantial percentage said they were neutral, which may reflect true neutrality, mixed feelings (i.e., satisfied with some aspects and dissatisfied with others), or being uninformed about the particular item. One should not assume that a failure to express satisfaction necessarily means that the respondents were dissatisfied.

Five categories of customer services all received levels of satisfaction between 71 percent and 79 percent. SFAP program materials and publications were at the top of this group (79 percent), with the application process (76 percent) and electronic processing (74 percent) close behind. At the other end, three categories of customer services had overall satisfaction levels between 50 percent and 58 percent: inquiry and information services (58 percent)—many of which were unfamiliar to the respondents; assistance in program operations (55 percent)—another area where the services were often unfamiliar to the respondents; and reviews and audits (50 percent)—an area more directed to meeting ED's need to prevent fraud than to fulfilling the needs of postsecondary education institutions. The relatively low satisfaction levels with the latter three areas were less an indication of dissatisfaction than of neutrality; only reviews and audits had somewhat higher dissatisfaction levels (19 percent versus 8-13 percent for the other seven areas), while all three areas received a large percentage of neutral ratings (31-34 percent versus 11-19 percent for the other five areas). The neutrality in turn was related to some respondents' lack of information about the areas; it is the respondents who had reviews or audits conducted the least recently, or who were unfamiliar with essentially all of the services in the category, who were especially likely to assign neutral ratings.[3]

Because of the large number of items on the survey questionnaire, it was not judged practical to ask respondents to state which factors were most important to them. However, it is possible to create a measure of interrater agreement that indicates which types of satisfaction are most strongly correlated with the respondents' overall level of satisfaction, thereby providing an indirect measure of what is considered the most important. By this measure, respondents' satisfaction with assistance in program operations and satisfaction with program materials and publications had the greatest correspondence with their overall satisfaction (kappa=0.48 and kappa=0.46, respectively), while satisfaction with the application process had the least (kappa=.30).[4]

---

[3]The statistics on respondents' familiarity with the various services and products are presented in the next section. Statistics on the levels of neutrality and dissatisfaction can be found in Appendix C.

[4]The purpose of kappa is not to measure the degree of satisfaction with an item (this is shown directly by the percentage who agree or disagree), but to indicate which qualities of a service or product are most likely to affect a respondent's overall satisfaction. The statistic used here is a weighted average of the individual kappa values that can be calculated for each cell. The weights are designed to account for the seriousness of the disagreement between two raters, based on the difference in the numeric scores associated with each choice. See Joseph Fleiss, "The Measurement of Interrater Agreement," *Statistical Methods for Rates and Proportions*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1981, pp. 223-224. If kappa is 1, then there is a one-to-one correspondence (i.e., everyone who strongly agreed to one item also strongly agreed to the other, or everyone who strongly *dis*agreed on one item also strongly *dis*agreed with the other); if it is 0, then there is no relationship beyond what would be found by chance.

Levels of Familiarity and Use of Services and Products

As suggested in the previous section, a respondent's level of familiarity with a service or product may affect his/her rating of ED's services. The three areas receiving the lowest levels of satisfaction were also areas where many respondents were uninformed (either not having experienced a recent audit or review or not being familiar with or not having used essentially all of the services in the category) and gave neutral evaluations rather than positive ones. In fact, one of the strongest findings from the survey was that many services or products were unfamiliar or had not been used by the respondents (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentage of institutions not using or unfamiliar with service

Service	Percent
SFAP Electronic Bulletin Board	92
Institutional Quality Assurance Program	90
Pell Institutional Access System	82
Pell Technical Assistance Hotline	74
Printing renewal applications	74
Pell Financial Management Specialists	67
Program Systems Services	67
CPS User Services Hotline	65
Fiscal officer training	57
Electronic processing training	49
Campus-Based representatives	48
Payments Recipient Guide	42
Pell automation training	38
EDExpress software	32
FISAP software	31
EDExpress User's Guide	30
Electronic forwarding	25
Electronic funds transfer	25
Funds management process	25
Federal Student Aid Information Center	24
Blue Book	20
Delivery System Training	16
Counselor's Handbook	12
Renewal application	9
Student Financial Assistant Handbook	0
Verification Guide	0

■ Did not use the service
☐ Not familiar with the service

Percent

For most items on the questionnaire, respondents could indicate either their level of satisfaction with the service or product or that they were not familiar with or did not use the item. Most often, the questions were phrased in terms of respondents' *familiarity* with the item, but some questions were phrased in terms of respondents' *use* of the item; one question (concerning the SFAP Electronic Bulletin Board) provided both alternatives. These concepts can be very different, as the responses on the SFAP Electronic Bulletin Board indicated: only 8 percent had used the Bulletin Board, but another 49 percent were familiar with it (Appendix C, question 36). More generally, one would always expect the percentage that used a service to be smaller than (or equal to) the percentage that were familiar with the service: an institution that used a service would presumably be familiar with it. On the other hand, an institution could be familiar with a service but have no reason to use it (e.g., the institution might not experience any problems that would require the help of the service, or the institution might not be involved in the particular kind of activity that would lead to use of the service) or lack the resources to use it (e.g., if use of the service requires particular computer resources).

Given the differences between familiarity and use of a service, it is not surprising that seven of the top eight areas in Figure 2 (all but Program Systems Services) were phrased in terms of lack of use. In any case, however, the overall lesson of Figure 2 seems clear: many services or products were not used by a large number of respondents, and many were not even familiar to them. Looking only at the issue of familiarity, two-thirds (67 percent) of respondents were unfamiliar with Program Systems Services, roughly half (48-57 percent) were not familiar with three other services (fiscal officer training, electronic processing training, and Campus-Based representatives), and roughly one-third or more (30-42 percent) were not familiar with five additional services. In a sense, respondents indicated a similar problem in their comments about some of the written publications; they had difficulty in finding what they were looking for and expressed the need for indexes within the publications. Thus, the major difficulty that some institutions have with ED's customer service may not be with the quality or usefulness of the materials and services, but with knowing what is available and where to find it. Possibly one of the most needed publications from ED is a regularly updated guide that lists all publications and services, how they would be used, and how they could be obtained.

The Types of Services That Were Least Used or Least Familiar

As noted earlier, two categories of services were especially likely to be either unfamiliar or unused. Among the four items examined within the inquiry and information services, three showed extremely high levels of nonuse: the SFAP Electronic Bulletin Board (92 percent), the Pell Grant Program Institutional Access System (82 percent), and the Technical Assistance Hotline for Pell Grant software (74 percent). And among the three items examined within program operations, all showed high nonuse or unfamiliarity: 67 percent had never contacted the Pell Grant Financial Management Specialists, 67 percent were unfamiliar with Program Systems Services, and 48 percent were unfamiliar with Campus-Based state representatives.

The Characteristics of Respondents with the Least Familiarity

One obvious potential explanation for institutions' lack of familiarity with a service is that if an institution is not eligible for a particular kind of aid (say, Pell Grants), the institution would have little reason to be familiar with or make use of a service that is specifically directed toward that program. However, the levels of unfamiliarity or nonuse were too great for this to be the only factor at work. Only 1 percent of the respondents were not eligible for Pell Grants, and only 12 percent were not eligible for Stafford loans (not in tables).

Another logical hypothesis is that respondents with relatively few years of experience with federal financial aid programs would be less familiar with the various services, and this is confirmed by the survey data (Appendix Table A-1). Those respondents who had 5 years or less of experience were more likely than those with over 10 years of experience to be unfamiliar with such services as Delivery System Training (30 percent versus 10 percent), electronic processing training conferences (60 percent versus 39 percent), and Campus-Based state representatives (64 percent versus 40 percent).

There also were differences based on the role of the individual completing the questionnaire. In general, most questions were completed by individuals within institutions' financial aid offices; funding questions were sometimes completed by individuals within the business office, however, and sometimes other individuals (e.g., from the institutional research office) completed all or part of the questionnaire. On funding-related questions, those in business offices were less likely to be unfamiliar with an item than either those in financial aid offices or those in other offices for items such as the Blue Book (10 percent versus 22-27 percent), electronic funds transfer (13 percent versus 27-34 percent), and ED's funds management process (8 percent versus 27-40 percent). On the remaining questions, respondents in the financial aid offices were less likely to be

unfamiliar with the items.[5] For example, 45 percent of those in financial aid offices were unfamiliar with Campus-Based state representatives, versus 69 percent of those in offices other than business or financial aid.

Finally, large differences often appeared based on institutional type and control, with less-than-2-year, and private, for-profit institutions being more likely to be unfamiliar with or not use a service than other institutions.[6] For example, private, for-profit institutions were more likely than other institutions to be unfamiliar with Delivery System Training (25 percent versus 8-12 percent), Campus-Based state representatives (67 percent versus 29-36 percent), the renewal application process (19 percent versus 2 percent), and FISAP software (56 percent versus 11-14 percent).

---

[5]Because of the small number of business offices answering such questions, the focus here is on the other offices. While the pattern was fairly consistent, relatively few institutions had personnel complete the questionnaire other than those in their financial aid offices, so that most of the differences between financial aid offices and other (nonbusiness) offices were not statistically significant.

[6]To a large degree, less-than-2-year institutions can be equated with private, for-profit institutions, since 89 percent of for-profit institutions are less-than-2-year, and 88 percent of less-than-2-year institutions are private, for-profit. For simplicity, this analysis will focus on the differences between for-profit institutions and other institutions.

Levels of Satisfaction in Specific Areas

This section discusses some of the general patterns that appeared in respondents' evaluations of specific customer support services and publications. Because of the large number of items covered by the questionnaire, no attempt is made to discuss each item individually, but summary statistics on all items are provided in the accompanying graphics and in the appendices.

Program Materials and Publications

Of the eight areas of ED's assistance to postsecondary education institutions, the area receiving the highest overall satisfaction was SFAP program materials and publications (79 percent; Figures 1 and 3). All three publications covered by the questionnaire received overwhelmingly positive evaluations of their clarity (88-90 percent), organization (86-90 percent), and ease of use (83-87 percent). The area that least often received positive evaluations was timeliness (52-61 percent), though it still received more positive evaluations than negative ones. Also, several respondents in their written comments expressed the need for indexes within the publications so they could better find the information they were looking for.

Figure 3. Evaluation of program materials and publications
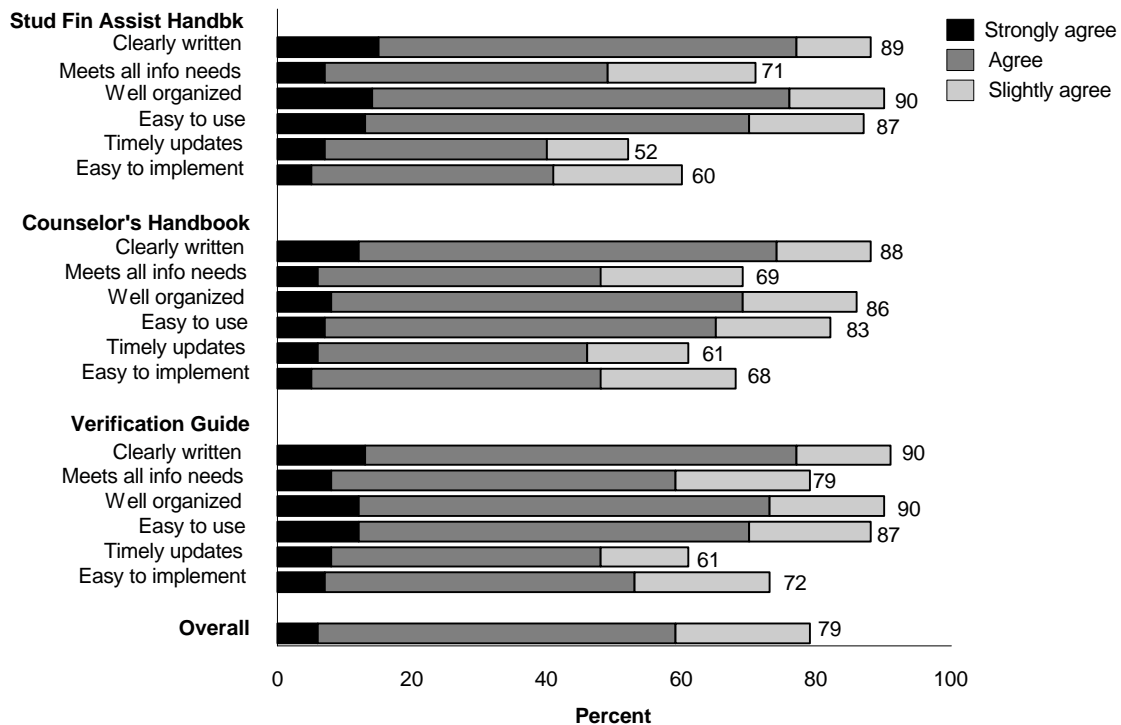
Stud Fin Assist Handbk
- Clearly written — 89
- Meets all info needs — 71
- Well organized — 90
- Easy to use — 87
- Timely updates — 52
- Easy to implement — 60

Counselor's Handbook
- Clearly written — 88
- Meets all info needs — 69
- Well organized — 86
- Easy to use — 83
- Timely updates — 61
- Easy to implement — 68

Verification Guide
- Clearly written — 90
- Meets all info needs — 79
- Well organized — 90
- Easy to use — 87
- Timely updates — 61
- Easy to implement — 72

Overall — 79

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ▨ Agree ▨ Slightly agree

X-axis: Percent (0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100)

As in the analysis of overall satisfaction above, the measure of interrater agreement shows which areas of satisfaction are most important in determining the overall level of satisfaction with the program materials and publications. Not surprisingly, given the high overall satisfaction with the publications and the significantly lower satisfaction with timeliness, timeliness was the dimension least related to overall satisfaction (kappa=.29-.39, depending on the publication). No single dimension clearly stood out as being the most strongly related to overall satisfaction, but the clarity of the publications (kappa=.47-.51) and the ease of use (kappa=.45-.49) were somewhat more consistently among the factors most related to overall satisfaction than the other dimensions.

Training

Training received positive overall evaluations from 71 percent of the respondents (Figure 4). The aspects of training that were most positively evaluated were offering information that was very helpful (75-82 percent), providing ample opportunity to ask questions (77-80 percent), providing information that institutions used in their day-to-day operations (74-84 percent), and conducting the training at convenient locations (68-78 percent). Respondents' satisfaction was lowest for the frequency of the training (62-69 percent), the clarity of Delivery System Training (64 percent), and the timeliness of fiscal officer training (64 percent).

Figure 4. Evaluation of training

The dimensions that were most strongly related to overall satisfaction with training were offering information that was very helpful (kappa=.55-57) and very clear (kappa=.52-.55), while conducting the training at convenient locations was the least related to overall satisfaction (kappa=.26-.39).

About two-thirds (68 percent) agreed that it would be helpful to reinstate automation training for Pell Grants, while only 4 percent disagreed (Appendix C, question 8).

Application Process   Respondents' overall satisfaction with the application process was the second highest of any of the eight categories (76 percent; Figures 1 and 5).   The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) received the most consistently high satisfaction, with three of the four listed dimensions showing 82 percent satisfaction or higher.   By contrast, three of the four listed dimensions for renewal applications ranged from 72 to 73 percent, and three of the five dimensions for the CPS User Services Hotline ranged from 73 to 74 percent.   The item receiving the least agreement was the statement that *the verification process is not burdensome* (51 percent).

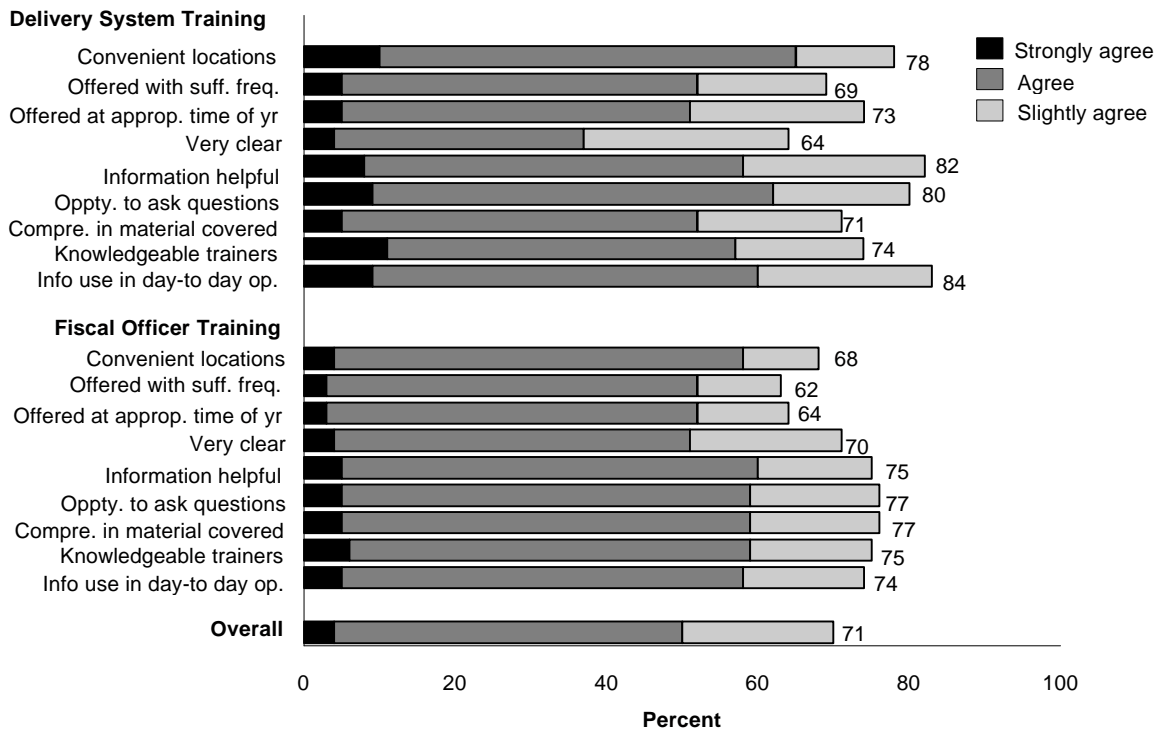**Figure 5. Evaluation of application process**
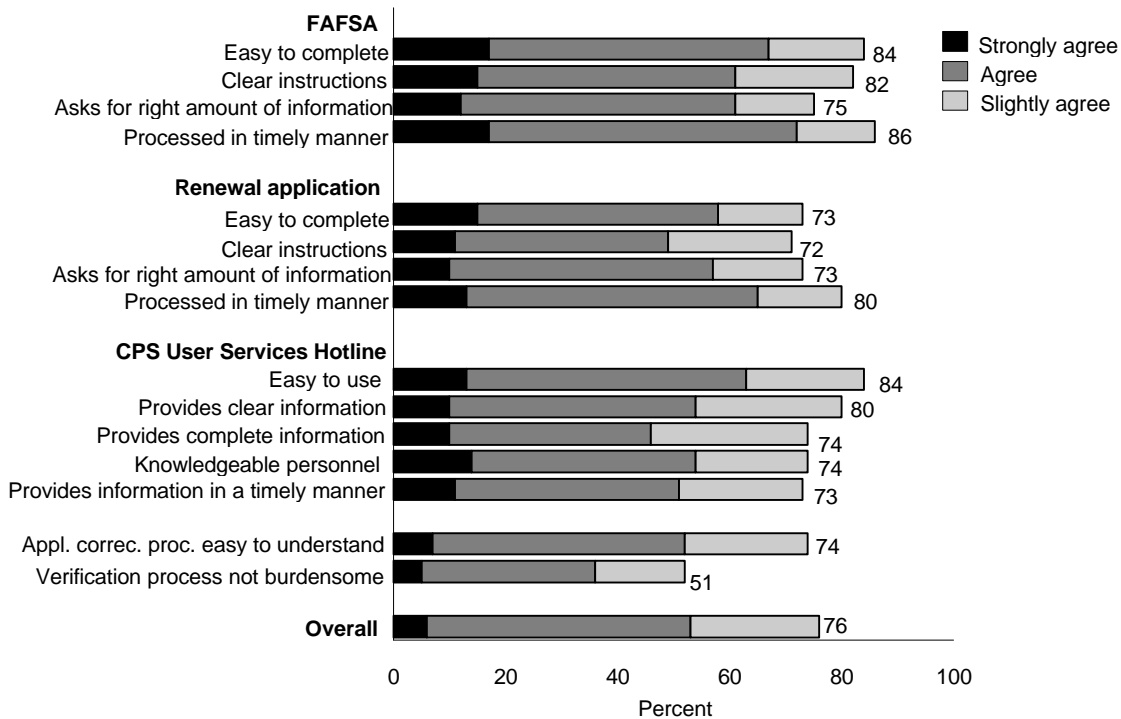
SOURCE: Higher Education Surveys, Postsecondary Education Institutions' Satisfaction with Student Financial Assistance Programs (HES 20), U.S. Department of Education, 1996 (survey conducted in 1995).

The single item showing the strongest relationship to overall satisfaction with the application process was the ease of understanding the application corrections process (kappa=0.52), while other items showing a similarly strong relationship were the statement that the FAFSA asks for the right amount of information (kappa=.51) and the ease of completing the FAFSA (kappa=.50). By contrast, items relating to the renewal application showed weaker relationships (kappa=.35-.40).

In several ways, respondents indicated a lack of experience with some aspects of the application process (Appendix C, questions 16-18). Most had no opinion on whether Delivery System Forums were a convenient forum for offering changes to the application process (61 percent), had not used the CPS User Services Hotline (65 percent), and had not used ED's new service of printing all the renewal applications for the upcoming year and forwarding them to the schools (74 percent).

Those institutions that did use ED's new service of printing all the renewal applications provided some information about how that service might be improved (Appendix C, questions 19-23). Roughly half (56 percent) considered sending the packages earlier than November and sending the packages in two mailings (e.g., in November and in January) to be of at least some help, and 26 to 31 percent said it would be a great help. A large majority of the institutions indicated that sorting the applications in alphabetical order was very helpful (83 percent), 23 to 28 percent considered sorting by graduate/undergraduate status or Social Security number to be very helpful, and 17 percent considered sorting by the number of renewal applications to be very helpful. Relatively few institutions (13-15 percent) had experienced problems with the transmissions of the student selections or with lost or damaged forms. Close to half (43 percent) made use of the electronic record of all the renewals that accompanies the application forms.

Electronic Processing

In addition to questions concerning satisfaction with ED's services and products, institutions were asked about their support of electronic processing of financial aid processing, the type of computer configuration used for processing financial aid, and their method for forwarding information electronically to the U.S. Department of Education.

Use of electronic processing. Roughly half of the institutions (55 percent) were very supportive of electronic processing, and one-fourth (27 percent) were somewhat supportive (Appendix Table A-2). For-profit institutions were more likely to be very supportive than public

and private nonprofit institutions (65 percent versus 47-49 percent), and research/doctoral institutions and less-than-2-year institutions were more likely to be very supportive than other types of institutions (61-63 percent versus 45-54 percent).

Overall, 90 percent of institutions used computers for processing financial aid. The three most common computer configurations were individual microcomputers only (32 percent), a mainframe computer with terminals and/or microcomputers (27 percent), and microcomputers connected through a local area network (24 percent). Some large differences appeared in the computer configurations depending on the institutions' control and type. For-profit institutions were much more likely to use individual microcomputers than other institutions (50 percent versus 16-22 percent), while public and nonprofit institutions often used a mainframe computer with terminals (51 percent and 35 percent, respectively, versus 6 percent at for-profit institutions). Research/doctoral institutions and comprehensive institutions were especially likely to use a mainframe with terminals (69-74 percent versus 6-39 percent at other institutions), less-than-2-year institutions were the most likely to use individual microcomputers (50 percent versus 2-37 percent), and liberal arts and specialized institutions were the most likely to use local area networks (36-39 percent versus 16-27 percent).

Electronic forwarding of information. Overall, 79 percent of the institutions forwarded information electronically to the U.S. Department of Education, while 10 percent did not use computers for financial aid processing, and 11 percent used computers but filed information by paper only (Figure 6). The most widely used method of forwarding information was through an EDExpress linkage (57 percent); other means included the Recipient Data Exchange (8 percent), the Floppy Disk Data Exchange (7 percent), using a servicer to forward the information (4 percent), and using software developed by the institution or by outside parties (3 percent).

Figure 6. Means of forwarding information electronically
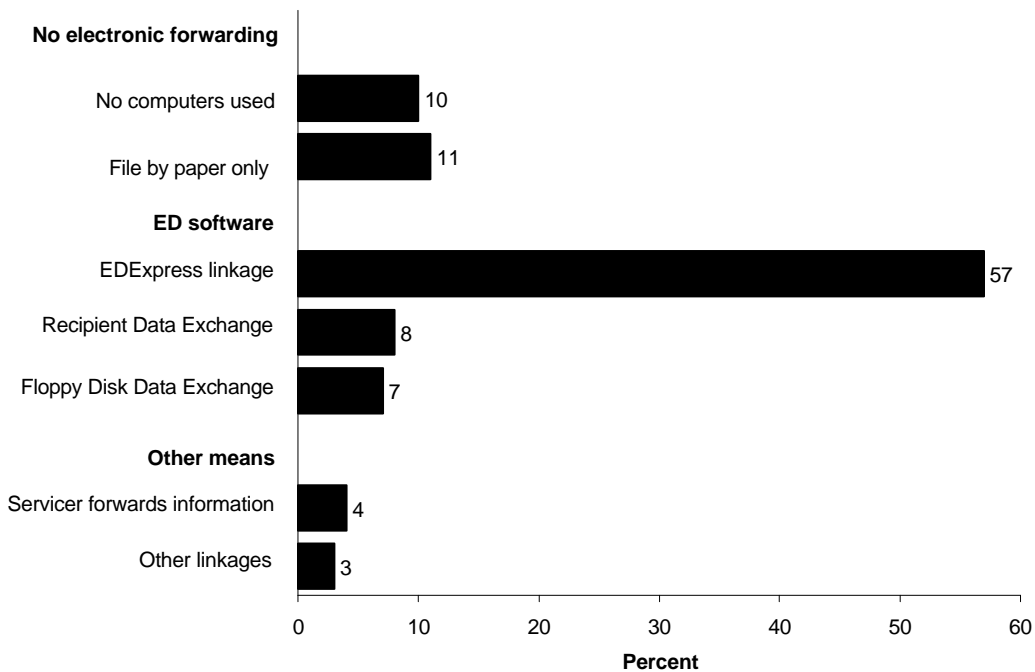
SOURCE: Higher Education Surveys, Postsecondary Education Institutions' Satisfaction with Student Financial Assistance Programs (HES 20), U.S. Department of Education, 1996 (survey conducted in 1995).

While all three of the ED linkages were viewed favorably, the Floppy Disk Data Exchange was viewed the most favorably (Figure 7). A larger percentage of respondents said it was easy to use (91 percent versus 70-75 percent), well documented (80 percent versus 62-59 percent), and along with the Recipient Data Exchange, fit well with other software (59-62 percent versus 46 percent). The greatest dissatisfaction was with customizing the software; for each of the three methods, 31-34 percent said that customization required considerable work.

Figure 7. Evaluation of ED's data management and communication software for forwarding information electronically
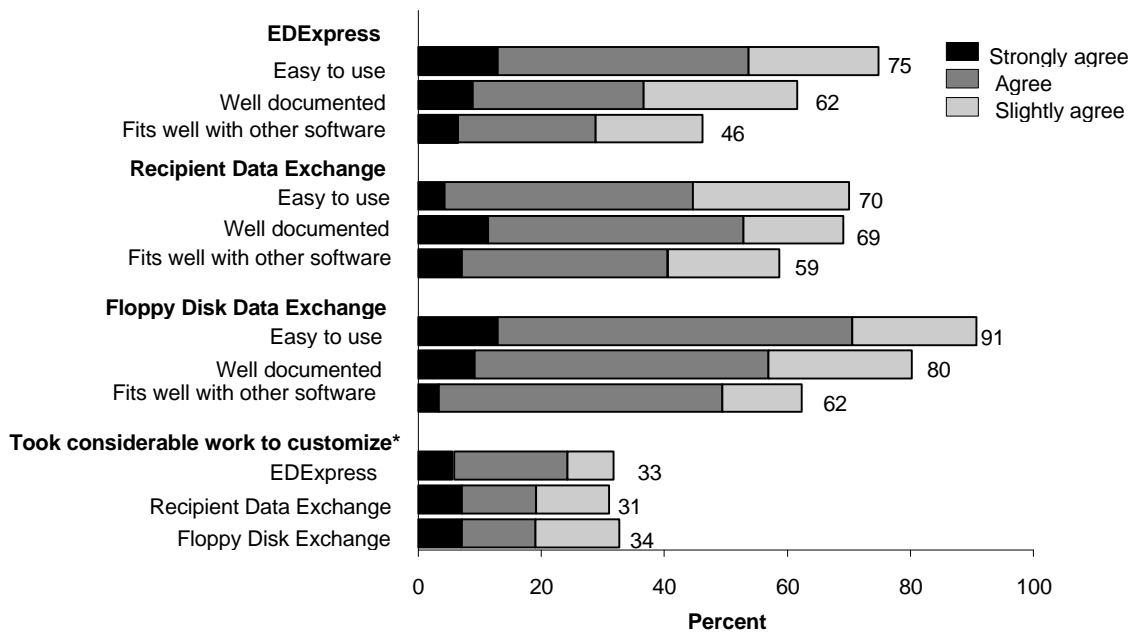
*For these items, respondents who agreed were expressing dissatisfaction rather than satisfaction. The percentages that were satisfied (i.e, that disagreed) were EdExpress, 40 percent; Recepient Data Exchange, 25 percent; and Floppy Disk Data Exchange, 47 percent.

SOURCE: Higher Education Surveys, Postsecondary Education Institutions' Satisfaction with Student Financial Assistance Programs (HES 20), U.S. Department of Education, 1996 (survey conducted in 1995).

Satisfaction with products and services. Electronic processing received the third highest level of satisfaction of the eight areas (74 percent), and was the only area where more than 10 percent *strongly* agreed that they were satisfied (11 percent; Figures 1 and 8). The areas receiving the highest satisfaction were understandable hardware requirements (74-88 percent) and the ease of installation (72-87 percent), while the weakest areas were the ease of customization (36-47 percent) and the compatibility with other software (46-52 percent).

Figure 8. Evaluation of electronic processing
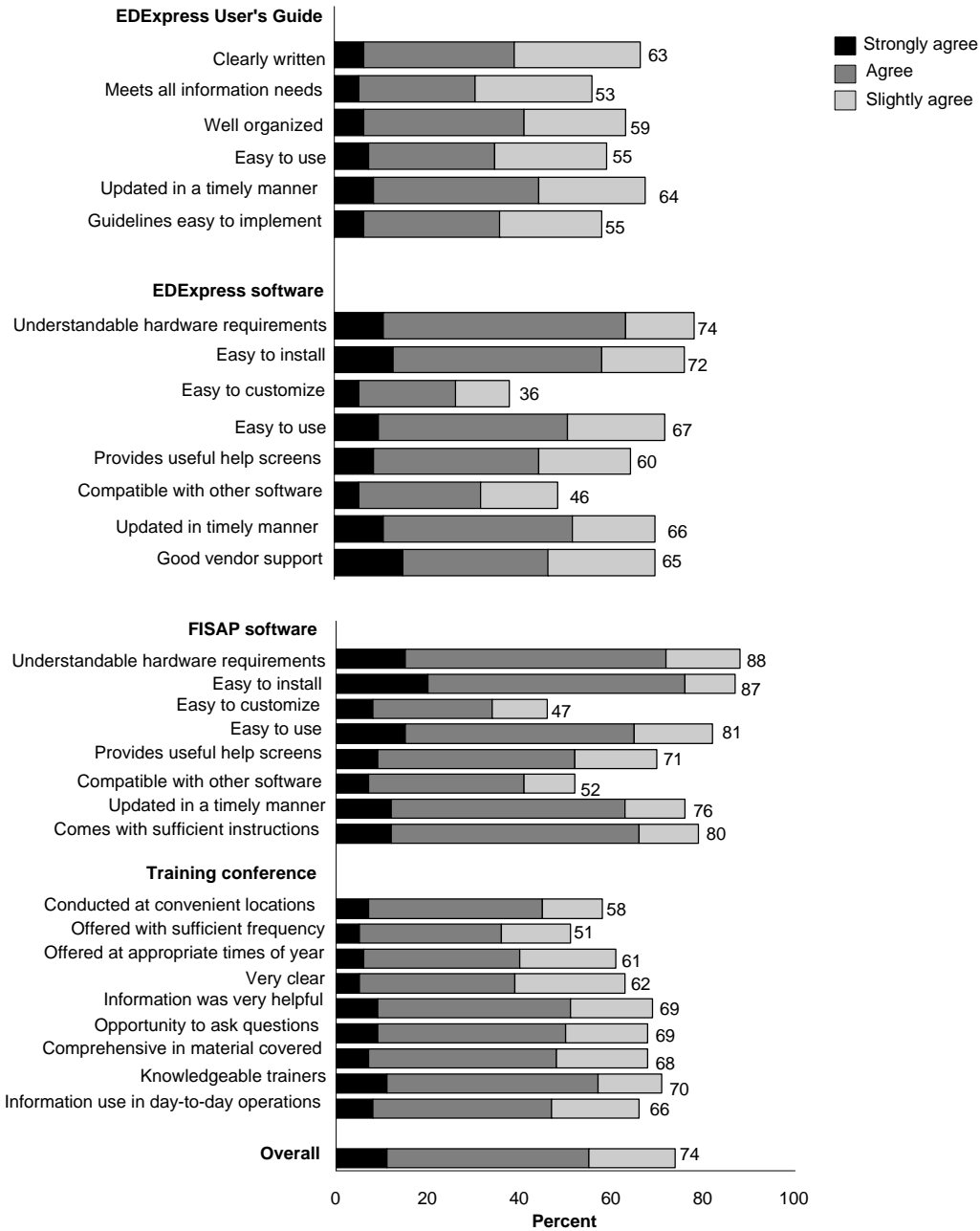
In general, respondents also showed higher satisfaction with Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP) software than with EDExpress software; for example, they were more likely to agree that the FISAP software had understandable hardware requirements (88 percent versus 74 percent), and that it was easy to install (87 percent versus 72 percent).

Other areas that were examined were the satisfaction with the EDExpress documentation and with training conferences on electronic processing. The EDExpress User's Guide received generally positive evaluations (53-64 percent); the strongest satisfaction was with the timeliness of the updates (64 percent), while the weakest was with its ability to meet all of the respondents' needs for information (53 percent). Electronic processing training conferences received the greatest satisfaction concerning their content (generally in the range from 66 to 70 percent), and the least satisfaction concerning their frequency (51 percent) and location (58 percent).

In general, the items that were most strongly related to overall satisfaction with electronic processing were those concerning the training conferences, with the single item that was most strongly related being whether the conference provided information that was used in day-to-day operations (kappa=.52; the next highest value of kappa was .45). In addition, the responses on EDExpress software were more closely related to overall satisfaction with electronic processing than the comparable responses on FISAP software.

Inquiry and Information Services

As noted earlier in this report, the inquiry and information services were one of the lowest rated of the eight categories examined (58 percent expressed overall satisfaction), possibly because the respondents often had no experience with some of the services listed, and thus may not have been aware of the assistance that was available (Figure 9). Because of the relatively small number of institutions that had experience with the services and were able to provide evaluations, the estimates for this category are not as reliable, and relatively large differences between services are required in order to achieve statistical significance.

The Technical Assistance Hotline for Pell Grant software tended to receive higher satisfaction than the other services that were listed, with a higher percentage saying that it provided clear information (78 percent versus 60-70 percent), provided complete information (75 percent versus 58-65 percent), and had knowledgeable personnel (78 percent versus 64 percent). By contrast, the SFAP Electronic Bulletin Board received lower satisfaction than the other services

(55-60 percent versus 64-78 percent), though so few institutions had used it (8 percent) that these estimates are not very reliable.

There were not very clear patterns in terms of some aspects of the various services receiving higher satisfaction than others. For example, the Student Aid Information Center and the Pell Grant Institutional Access System each received higher satisfaction on ease of access than on providing complete information, but the Technical Assistance Hotline for Pell Grant software received higher satisfaction on providing complete information (75 percent versus 69 percent).

No clear patterns emerged in terms of which aspects of the services were most related to overall satisfaction, with large variations in the kappa scores along each dimension. Also, the service that tended to receive the highest kappa scores—the SFAP Electronic Bulletin Board—was used by too few institutions to be a reliable indicator of the factors most affecting overall satisfaction.

Figure 9. Evaluation of inquiry and information services
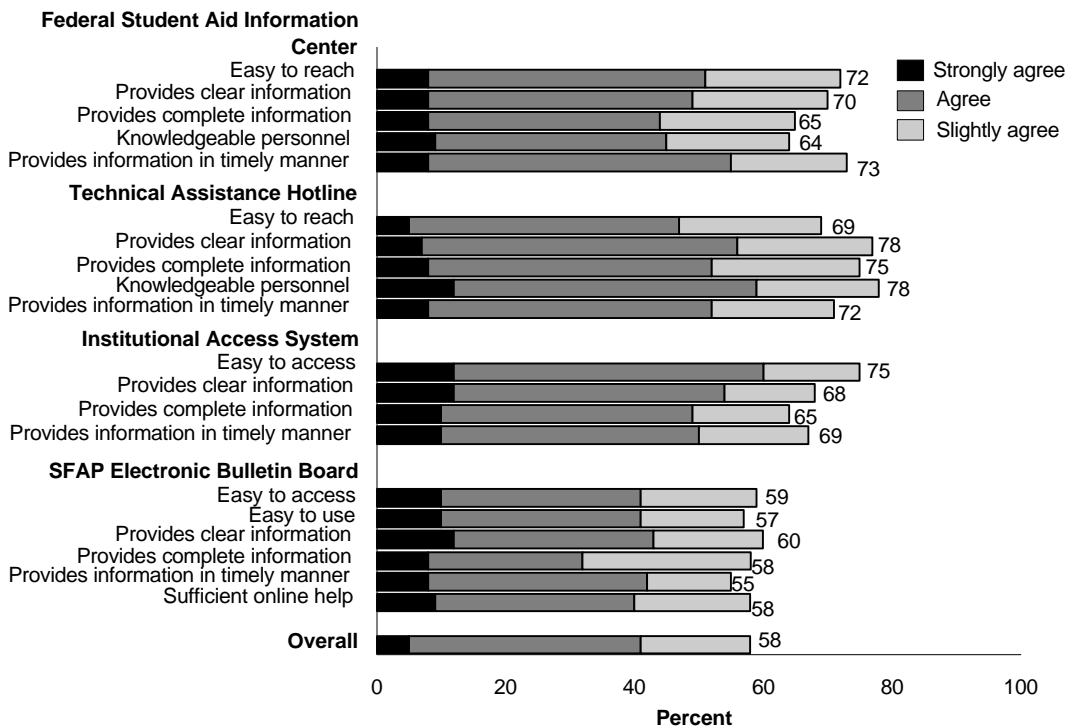
19

Funds Management

Overall, 71 percent of the respondents agreed that they were happy with the funds management process (Figure 10). The items receiving the highest agreement were that the electronic funds transfer provided funds quickly (89 percent), respondents were happy with the current electronic funds transfer process (81 percent), and ED's funds management process provides funds in a timely and efficient manner (81 percent). Some of the areas receiving the least agreement were that the Blue Book and Payments Recipient Guide were updated in a timely manner (49-60 percent), and the funds management process handles problems quickly and efficiently (57 percent). Roughly half (53 percent) agreed that they prefer Pell fund transfers to be made at the time the student accounts are credited.

The single item that showed the highest agreement with respondents' level of overall satisfaction with the funds management process was whether the funds management process fit easily with other financial aid functions (kappa=.53, with no other item showing a similar level of agreement; the next highest value was kappa=.43).

Figure 10. Evaluation of funds management
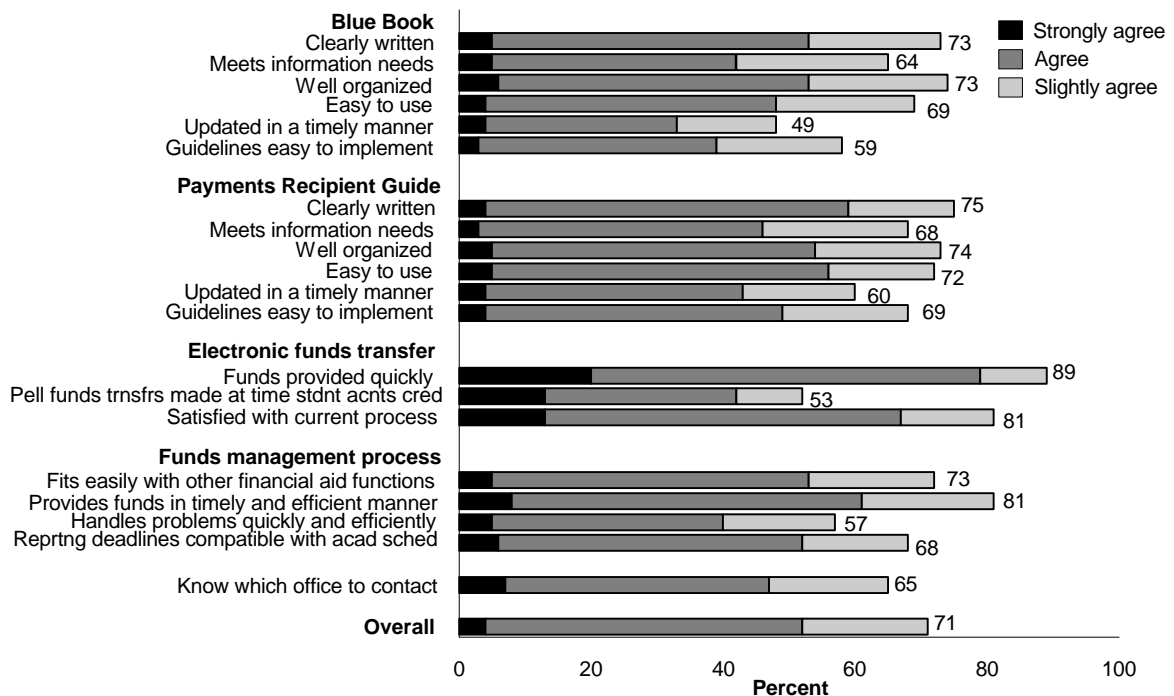
Program Reviews and Audits

Program reviews and audits are more directed to meeting ED's need to prevent fraud than to fulfilling the needs of postsecondary education institutions. Thus, it is not surprising that they received the lowest level of overall satisfaction of the eight listed categories (50 percent; Figure 11). One respondent commented in the pretest that while the reviews and audits were burdensome, they were also necessary. The greatest area of satisfaction was in knowing what to expect (62 percent), while the greatest area of dissatisfaction was the level of burden (31 percent said the reviews and audits were not burdensome, and 47 percent said they were).

The areas showing the strongest agreement with the overall level of satisfaction were whether the reviews help institutions to better administer the Title IV programs (kappa=.65) and whether the ED reviewers are helpful in explaining problems (kappa=.64).

Figure 11. Evaluation of program reviews and audits
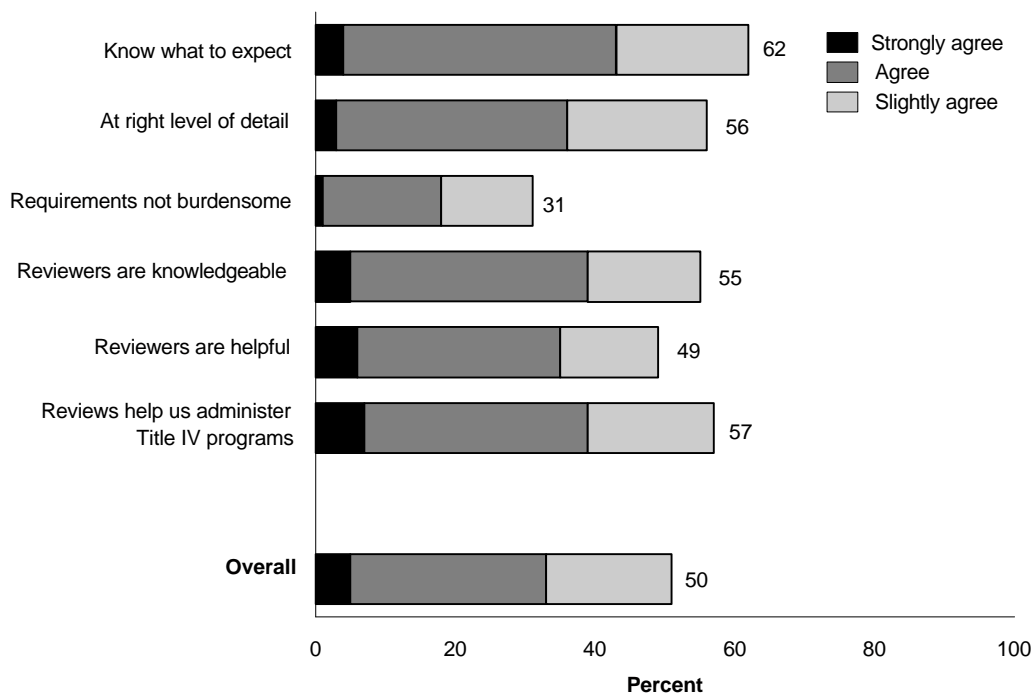
Program Operations

ED systems for providing assistance in program operations received the second lowest level of satisfaction (55 percent; Figure 12). As noted earlier, one reason may be that 48 percent were not familiar with Campus-Based state representatives, 67 percent were not familiar with Program Systems Services, and 67 percent had never contacted the Pell Grant Financial Management Specialists (Figure 2); thus, respondents did not appear to have a good understanding of the resources that were available to them.

The areas of greatest satisfaction were that the individuals providing services were courteous (69-75 percent), knowledgeable (69-73 percent), and provided helpful information (67-73 percent). The lowest levels of satisfaction were with accessibility (48-53 percent) and with Campus-Based state representatives' responsiveness in completing transactions such as reinstating or adjusting award amounts (54 percent).

Because of the low use and familiarity with the services, it is difficult to determine which factors were most strongly related to overall satisfaction. The respondents' evaluations of the Program Systems Services generally showed the highest agreement with their overall satisfaction (with kappa ranging from .53 to .70), but only one-third of the respondents were familiar with the Program Systems Services.

Figure 12. Evaluation of program operations
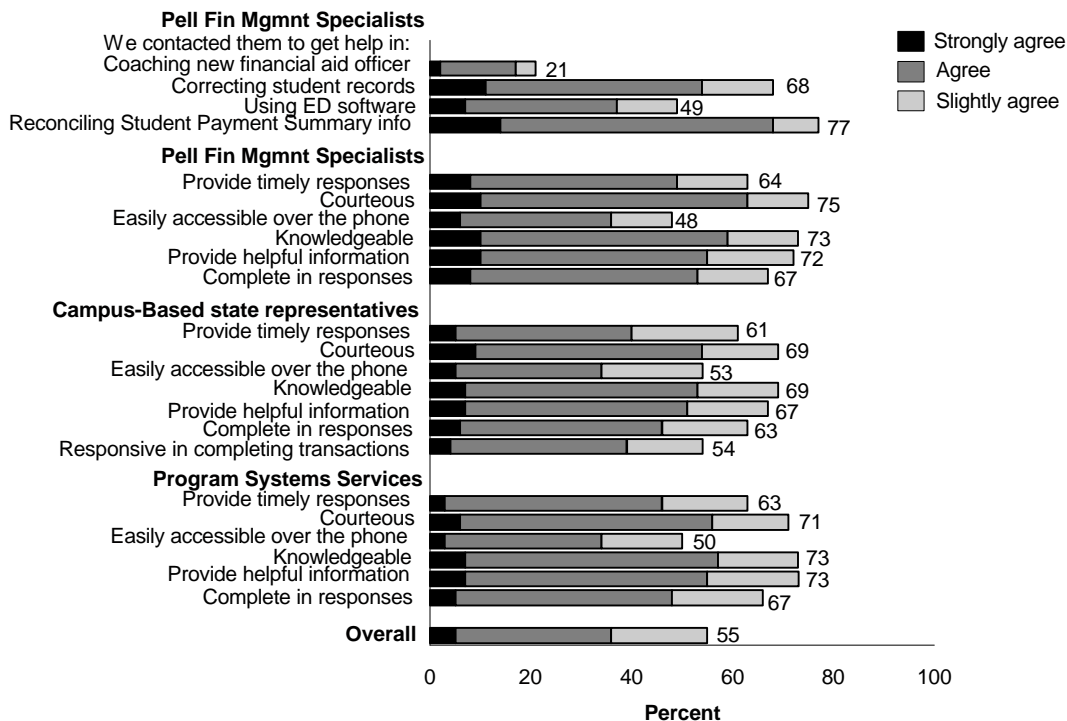
22

Impressions of Student Satisfaction

This study was not designed to provide a representative sample of students receiving financial aid, and it cannot provide accurate estimates of students' levels of satisfaction. However, the financial aid personnel at postsecondary education institutions who work with students can provide general impressions of student satisfaction based on the students' comments and requests for assistance. Thus, the respondents were asked for a few general impressions in order to provide preliminary data until a student survey can be conducted.

The institutional officials perceived students as having lower satisfaction than they typically reported for most of the areas covered by the questionnaire; roughly half of the respondents perceived the students to be satisfied in the five listed areas (Figure 13). Respondents most often perceived the students as satisfied with respect to their ability to get the needed information from the written materials (57 percent), and least often perceived them as satisfied concerning their ability to complete the forms without extensive assistance (44 percent).

Figure 13. Impressions of student satisfaction

SOURCE: Higher Education Surveys, Postsecondary Education Institutions' Satisfaction with Student Financial Assistance Programs (HES 20), U.S. Department of Education, 1996 (survey conducted in 1995).

Differences Among the Respondents in Their Evaluations

Some categories of institutions or respondents were more likely to be satisfied than others. Because of the large number of items in the questionnaire, however, it would require excessive space to discuss each item individually. Instead, this analysis will be limited to a few representative categories—two from the beginning of the questionnaire, and one from the section on funds management (in order to compare the responses of respondents in the business offices with those in financial aid offices)—and will discuss differences among the respondents on those items. An examination of additional tabulations revealed that the patterns discussed here were largely consistent throughout the questionnaire, unless the item was one that had such strong agreement among the respondents that there was insufficient variation for such differences to be important.

In general, for-profit institutions were often more positive in their evaluations than public institutions (Appendix Table A-3). For example, they were more likely to agree that the SFA Handbook guidelines were easy to implement (68 percent versus 54 percent) and the Verification Guide gets timely updates (68 percent versus 54 percent). Private, nonprofit institutions typically fell somewhere in between, usually being closer to the public institutions in their satisfaction. The relatively positive evaluations by for-profit institutions may be an indication that for-profit institutions place a greater importance on federal financial aid because it directly affects their profitability, while other institutions may have a different mixture of goals and resources.

Research/doctoral institutions often were the least positive in their evaluations, especially when compared with less-than-2-year institutions (which largely consisted of for-profit institutions), but also as compared to other institutional types. For example, they were less likely than other institutions to agree that the SFA Handbook gets timely updates (34 percent versus 46-60 percent), that the SFA Handbook guidelines are easy to implement (41 percent versus 54-67 percent), that the Verification Guide gets timely updates (33 percent versus 50-69 percent), and that the Verification Guide guidelines are easy to implement (48 percent versus 69-77 percent),

Individuals with less than 5 years of experience with federal financial assistance programs tended to be more satisfied than those with more than 10 years of experience. For example, the former were more likely to agree that the SFA Handbook gets timely updates (65 percent versus 47 percent), the SFA Handbook guidelines are easy to implement (71 percent versus 55 percent), and the Verification Guides gets timely updates (70 percent versus 53 percent). One can speculate

about the reasons for these differences. Those who are least experienced presumably might have more questions and difficulties, but their problems might also be easier to solve. On the other hand, experienced people might mainly seek help with the most difficult cases, where help might also be more difficult to provide. Experienced people also might tend to base their responses on services that were provided over a number of years, while less experienced people might use a shorter time frame; since several respondents commented that the quality of service had improved over time, the more experienced people might thus tend to be more negative.

For most questions, the attitudes of respondents in business offices cannot be compared with those in financial aid offices, because there were too few respondents in business offices to provide reliable estimates. However, on questions relating to funding, business offices provided responses for roughly one-fourth of the institutions, and comparisons are possible. On these questions, the business offices were generally less satisfied. For example, they were less likely to agree that the Blue Book meets all information needs (53 percent versus 68 percent), is easy to use (59 percent versus 72 percent), gets timely updates (38 percent versus 53 percent), and has guidelines that are easy to implement (46 percent versus 63 percent). The relatively low evaluations given by business offices were predicted by one pretest respondent, who suggested that business offices were more likely to see the financial aid process as burdensome, while financial aid offices were more likely to be satisfied because they were directly helped by SFAP programs in fulfilling their mission.

Summary

Overall, officials at postsecondary education institutions expressed a positive evaluation of the support services provided by ED. When looking at all products and services, 73 percent at least slightly agreed they were pleased with ED's assistance, with most of those saying they agreed they were pleased (43 percent). Only 14 percent said they were not pleased with ED's assistance overall, while the remaining 13 percent were neutral. The category receiving the highest overall satisfaction was SFAP program materials and publications (79 percent at least slightly agreed), while the category with the lowest satisfaction was reviews and audits (50 percent). Some commented that the support services have improved over time.

One of the strongest findings was the high percentage of institutions that had not used or were not familiar with particular services. In some cases, this lack of use or familiarity may have lowered institutions' overall evaluations: thus, two of the three categories receiving the lowest overall satisfaction were also categories in which most or all of the services were not familiar to the respondents or had not been used. The two categories for which a lack of familiarity or use were most an issue were assistance in program operations, and the inquiry and information services; respondents who were least informed about the services often gave neutral evaluations of the categories, thus lowering the percentage of positive evaluations. Similarly, for the third category receiving low evaluations—reviews and audits—it was the respondents who had experience reviews and audits the least recently who were less likely to give positive evaluations and instead give neutral evaluations.

Some of the areas in which respondents expressed the greatest satisfaction were with clarity, organization, ease of use, and offering information that was helpful. Some of the areas least likely to receive positive evaluations (though more respondents typically gave positive evaluations than negative ones) were timeliness, the ease of customization of software, and the frequency of training.

Often there were differences among institutions and respondents in their level of satisfaction. For-profit institutions, individuals in financial offices, and individuals with 5 years or less of experience with federal financial aid programs tended to be the most satisfied, while research/doctoral institutions, individuals in business offices, and individuals with more than 10 years of experience tended to be the least satisfied.

Appendix A

Detailed Tables

LIST OF TABLES

Table A-1.--Familiarity or use of selected financial aid services and products, by institution and respondent characteristics: United States

Institution/respondent characteristic	Not familiar with								Made no use of	
	Delivery System Training	Electronic processing con-ferences	Campus-Based state represen-tatives	Renewal applica-tion process	FISAP software	Blue Book	Electronic funds transfer	ED's funds manage-ment process	CPS User Services Hotline	Pell Grant Financial Manage-ment Specialists
Total...	16	49	48	9	31	20	25	25	65	67
Institution type										
Research/doctoral......................	4	38	33	1	2	10	23	16	45	58
Comprehensive...........................	6	39	20	0	13	17	21	17	45	50
Liberal arts	8	54	27	0	3	12	16	10	63	70
Two-year....................................	8	44	34	3	16	20	26	23	71	60
Specialized	14	53	36	4	8	26	39	24	57	65
Less-than-2-year........................	27	54	70	19	59	22	25	31	71	76
Control										
Public	8	40	36	2	14	20	28	24	61	56
Private, nonprofit	12	53	29	2	11	20	25	18	60	67
Private, for-profit	25	52	67	19	56	20	23	29	72	76
Office responding										
Financial aid..............................	15	50	45	7	30	22	27	27	63	66
Business	*	*	46	*	*	10	13	8	*	73
Other	28	42	69	25	44	27	34	40	77	75
Experience with federal aid										
5 years or less............................	30	60	64	9	38	27	30	30	76	76
6-10 years..................................	16	59	48	16	38	22	27	25	67	69
Over 10 years.............................	10	39	40	6	23	14	22	22	59	63

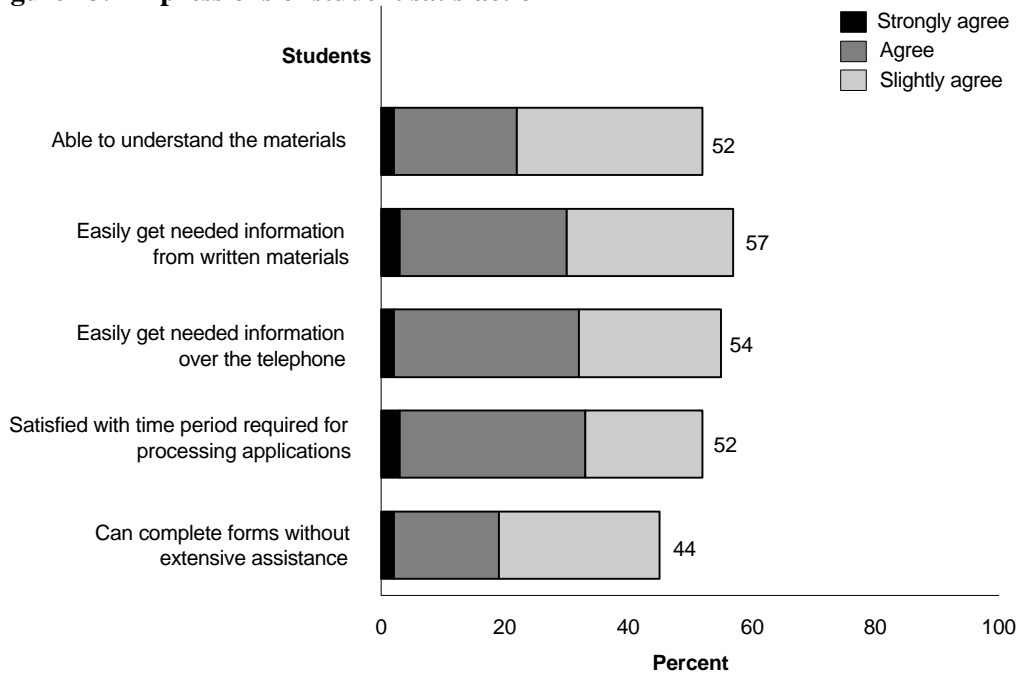*Too few cases for reliable estimates.

SOURCE: Higher Education Surveys, Postsecondary Education Institutions' Satisfaction with Student Financial Assistance Programs (HES 20), U.S. Department of Education, 1996 (survey conducted in 1995)

Table A-2.--Electronic processing of financial aid at postsecondary education institutions, by institution characteristics: United States

Institution characteristic	Institutions' support of electronic processing				Computer configuration for processing financial aid				
	Very supportive	Somewhat supportive	Only limited resources available	Not at all supportive	Individual micro-computers	Local area network	Stand-alone mainframe	Mainframe with terminals	No computers used
Total...	55	27	15	3	32	24	6	27	10
Institution type									
Research/doctoral.......................	63	27	10	0	2	16	7	74	1
Comprehensive...........................	54	33	12	1	8	18	4	69	1
Liberal arts................................	45	38	17	0	18	39	4	37	2
Two-year....................................	50	31	18	--	21	27	6	39	7
Specialized................................	49	20	24	7	37	36	2	20	6
Less-than-2-year........................	61	22	12	5	50	20	8	6	17
Control									
Public	49	31	19	1	16	22	4	51	7
Private, nonprofit	47	31	18	3	22	30	6	35	7
Private, for-profit	65	22	10	3	50	22	8	6	14

--Less than 0.5 percent.

NOTE: Percents may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: Higher Education Surveys, Postsecondary Education Institutions' Satisfaction with Student Financial Assistance Programs (HES 20), U.S. Department of Education, 1996 (survey conducted in 1995)

Table A-3.--Selected evaluations of ED's financial aid services to postsecondary education institutions, by institution and respondent characteristics: United States

Institution/respondent characteristic	SFA Handbook			Verification Guide			Blue Book					
	Meets all information needs	Gets timely updates	Guidelines easy to implement	Meets all information needs	Gets timely updates	Guidelines easy to implement	Clearly written	Meets all information needs	Well organized	Easy to use	Gets timely updates	Guidelines easy to implement
Total..	71	52	60	79	61	72	73	64	73	69	49	59
Institution type												
Research/doctoral..................	59	34	41	66	33	48	74	59	72	62	35	46
Comprehensive......................	71	46	54	74	50	69	76	61	77	72	41	53
Liberal arts...........................	74	46	57	86	53	70	64	52	66	65	44	56
Two-year	61	47	56	73	58	70	71	63	75	70	46	58
Specialized............................	78	47	60	87	59	76	82	72	85	80	56	64
Less-than-2-year	76	60	67	82	69	77	73	67	71	67	54	62
Control												
Public.....................................	65	48	54	74	54	67	71	60	72	67	45	53
Private, nonprofit..................	69	49	55	82	56	70	73	63	74	71	45	57
Private, for-profit..................	77	57	68	81	68	77	74	67	73	68	54	64
Office responding												
Financial aid	72	52	61	81	60	74	75	68	77	72	53	63
Business................................	*	*	*	*	*	*	69	53	66	59	38	46
Other......................................	68	64	66	72	67	66	66	63	65	65	49	62
Experience with federal aid												
5 years or less	79	65	71	88	70	81	74	68	73	71	56	61
6-10 years..............................	67	50	61	80	67	73	69	62	71	67	44	61
Over 10 years	69	47	55	75	53	68	74	63	74	68	48	57

*Too few cases for a reliable estimate.

SOURCE: Higher Education Surveys, Postsecondary Education Institutions' Satisfaction with Student Financial Assistance Programs (HES 20), U.S. Department of Education, 1996 (survey conducted in 1995).

Appendix B

Technical Notes

Higher Education Surveys

The Higher Education Surveys (HES) system was established to conduct brief surveys of higher education institutions on topics of interest to federal policymakers and the education community. The system is sponsored by the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

HES questionnaires typically request a limited amount of readily accessible data from a subsample of institutions in the HES panel, which is a nationally representative sample of 1,155 colleges and universities in the United States and territories. Each institution in the panel has identified a HES campus representative, who serves as survey coordinator. The campus representative facilitates data collection by identifying the appropriate respondent for each survey and distributing the questionnaire to that person.

Survey Methodology

This mail survey was conducted at the request of the U.S. Department of Education to determine the level of satisfaction of postsecondary education institutions with the services and products provided to help the institutions administer federal financial assistance programs.

The sample for this survey consisted of half of the HES panel, along with a supplementary sample of 407 less-than-2-year institutions, resulting in a mailing to 971 institutions. The inclusion of less-than-2-year institutions substantially changes the sample from typical HES surveys; about 3,100 institutions are higher education institutions, while 2,400 institutions (44 percent of the total) are less-than-2-year institutions that are eligible for federal financial aid (i.e., Pell Grants or Stafford loans). Since less-than-2-year institutions tended to be more satisfied with ED's customer assistance than other institutions, the inclusion of less-than-2-year institutions generally increased the levels of satisfaction that were found by the survey.

The questionnaire was mailed on July 31, 1995, and telephone followup for nonresponse was begun on August 28, 1995. Completed questionnaires were examined for internal inconsistencies or missing data, with telephone followup to verify the information in question. Data collection ended on October 20, 1995. Data were adjusted for questionnaire nonresponse and weighted to national totals.

The overall response rate was 93 percent, based on 774 responses from 835 eligible institutions. The response rates were 90 percent for for-profit institutions, 94 percent for private institutions, 94 percent for public institutions, and by type of institution ranged from 91 percent at comprehensive institutions to 95 percent at doctoral institutions.

Only three questionnaire items received response rates lower than 98 percent; these were questions 10 (93 percent), 21a (97 percent), and 32 (96 percent). Given these high item response rates, the response may be interpreted as accurately representing the responses of the sampled institutions.

Reliability of Survey Estimates

The findings presented in this report are estimates based on the sample from the HES panel and, consequently, are subject to sampling variability. If the questionnaire had been sent to a different sample, the responses would not have been identical; some figures might have been higher, while others might have been lower. The standard error is a measure of the variability due to sampling when estimating a statistic. It indicates how much variability there is in the population of possible estimates of a parameter for a given sample size. Standard errors can be used as a measure of the precision expected from a particular sample. If all possible samples were surveyed under similar conditions, intervals of 1.96 standard errors below to 1.96 standard errors above a particular statistic would include the true population parameter being estimated in about 95 percent of the samples. This is a 95 percent confidence interval. For example, the estimated percentage reporting that they agreed (including those who slightly agreed and those who strongly agreed) that they were pleased with ED's assistance in administering the programs is 73.0, and the estimated standard error is 2.3. The 95 percent confidence interval for this statistic extends from 73.0 - (2.3 times 1.96) to 73.0 + (2.3 times 1.96), or from 68.5 to 77.5 percent. This means one can be 95 percent confident that this interval contains the true population value. Estimates of standard errors for the estimates were computed using a replication technique known as jackknife replication. Some key statistics and their estimated standard errors are shown in Appendix Table B-1.

Table B-1.--Selected standard errors, by institution and respondent characteristics: United States

Institution/respondent characteristic	Percentage agreeing that Student Financial Assistance Handbook meets all information needs		Percentage agreeing that Verification Guide is updated in timely manner		Percentage agreeing that Blue Book is well organized		Percentage unfamiliar with EP's funds management process		Percentage agreeing they are pleased overall with ED's assistance	
	Estimate	Standard error	Estimate	Standard error	Estimate	Standard error	Estimate	Standard error	Estimate	Standard error
Total..	71.2	2.1	60.5	2.5	73.1	2.3	24.6	2.5	73.0	2.3
Institution type										
Research/doctoral...................	59.5	5.0	33.5	2.8	71.9	3.1	16.4	3.7	66.5	4.0
Comprehensive.......................	70.8	4.6	49.8	5.0	76.6	3.6	17.4	3.2	78.6	4.0
Liberal arts	73.9	5.4	53.5	5.5	66.4	4.0	9.8	3.7	76.0	4.0
Two-year................................	60.8	4.1	57.8	4.1	75.3	4.1	23.3	3.6	73.7	3.1
Specialized	78.0	6.6	58.8	7.2	84.8	7.5	24.1	7.5	76.9	7.1
Less-than-2-year.....................	76.4	4.0	68.8	5.0	70.9	5.0	31.2	4.3	70.6	4.6
Control										
Public	64.5	3.0	53.7	3.1	72.3	2.6	24.0	2.8	73.0	2.6
Private, nonprofit	68.5	3.0	56.0	3.0	74.1	2.7	17.7	2.8	75.1	2.7
Private, for-profit	77.4	4.1	68.1	4.9	72.9	5.2	29.2	4.8	71.7	4.9
Office responding										
Financial aid...........................	72.5	2.0	59.7	2.4	76.6	2.7	27.1	3.1	75.5	2.0
Business	*	*	*	*	66.2	4.7	8.2	2.7	*	*
Other	68.1	11.5	67.2	9.0	65.2	10.6	40.2	8.9	57.6	8.7
Experience with federal aid										
5 years or less.........................	79.2	4.3	69.7	5.6	73.1	5.2	29.5	5.8	76.7	4.7
6-10 years...............................	67.4	4.6	66.7	4.7	71.3	5.7	25.4	3.4	76.5	4.0
Over 10 years.........................	69.3	2.6	53.0	2.9	73.5	3.5	21.7	3.2	69.3	3.1

*Too few cases for a reliable estimate.

SOURCE: Higher Education Surveys, Postsecondary Education Institutions' Satisfaction with Student Financial Assistance Programs (HES 20), U.S. Department of Education, 1996 (survey conducted in 1995).

For categorical data, relationships between variables with two or more levels have been tested in a two-way analysis, using chi-square tests at the .05 level of significance, adjusted for average design effect. If the overall chi-square test was significant, it was followed with tests using a Bonferroni t statistic, which maintained an overall 95 percent confidence level or better. Unless noted otherwise, all comparisons made in this report were statistically significant using these tests.

In some cases, only a small number of sampled institutions responded to a particular questionnaire item. Such cases are noted in the appendix tables. All estimates provided in this report are based on more than 30 responding institutions.

Survey estimates are also subject to errors of reporting and errors made in the collection of the data. These errors, called nonsampling errors, can sometimes bias the data. While general sampling theory can be used to determine how to estimate the sampling variability of a statistic, nonsampling errors are not easy to measure and usually require that an experiment be conducted as part of the data collection procedures or the use of data external to the study.

Nonsampling errors may include such things as differences in the respondents' interpretation of the meaning of the questions, differences related to the particular time the survey was conducted, or errors in data preparation. During the design of the survey and survey pretest, an effort was made to check for consistency of interpretation of questions and to eliminate ambiguous items. The questionnaire was pretested with respondents like those who completed the survey, and the questionnaire and instructions were extensively reviewed by the Planning and Evaluation Service and the Customer Support Service offices in the U.S. Department of Education. Manual and machine editing of the questionnaires were conducted to check the data for accuracy and consistency. Cases with missing or inconsistent items were recontacted by telephone; data were keyed with 100 percent verification.

School Type Relationships

The data in this report are presented as "total" figures, which represent all kinds of schools grouped together, and for schools broken down by school control and school "type." These classifications are as follows:

- School control

    – Public

    – Private, nonprofit

    – Private, for-profit

- School type (based on the Carnegie classification of institutions of postsecondary education)

    – Research/doctoral: schools that offer a full range of baccalaureate programs, that are committed to graduate education through the doctorate degree, and that either award 20 or more Ph.D. degrees in at least one discipline or 10 or more Ph.D. degrees in three or more disciplines.

    – Comprehensive: schools that award more than half of their baccalaureate degrees in two or more occupational or professional disciplines, such as engineering or business administration, may offer graduate education through the master's degree, and enroll at least 1,500 students.

    – Liberal arts: schools that are primarily undergraduate colleges and award more than half of their degrees in liberal arts fields, or that offer less than half of their degrees in liberal arts fields but are too small to be considered comprehensive.

    – Specialized: baccalaureate or postbaccalaureate schools offering at least 50 percent of their degrees in a single specialized field. Some examples of specialized schools are medical schools, law schools, and seminaries.

    – Two-year: schools that offer certificate or degree programs through the associate of arts level and, with few exceptions, offer no baccalaureate degrees.

    – Less-than-2-year: schools than offer only programs of less-than-2-years duration.

These school characteristics are related to each other. For example:

- Among research/doctoral schools, 64 percent are public.

- Among comprehensive schools, 56 percent are public.

- Among liberal arts schools, 94 percent are private, nonprofit.

- Among 2-year institutions, 72 percent are public.

- Among specialized institutions, 83 percent are private.

- Among less-than-2-year institutions, 88 percent are private, for-profit.

- Among public schools, 64 percent are 2-year.

- Among private, nonprofit schools, 36 percent are liberal arts.

- Among private, for-profit schools, 89 percent are less-than-2-year.

Appendix C

Survey Questionnaire with Summary Statistics

SURVEY #20
SURVEY ON SATISFACTION
WITH STUDENT FINANCIAL
ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

August 1995

Dear Colleague:

Here is your opportunity to assess how well the U.S. Department of Education meets your needs as you administer Title IV Student Assistance Programs. Your responses on the enclosed Higher Education Survey will help improve the Department's services and products.

The Office of Postsecondary Education recognizes that administering the Title IV programs is no simple task, so we have pledged to make your job easier. To that end, we are asking a national sample of student aid administrators and business officers to fill out this confidential survey. Widespread participation in this survey will ensure a more accurate assessment of our work.

The information you provide will be kept confidential. We will publish a final report of summary level information from this survey; your institution will not be identified. We will send you a copy of the report upon its completion.

The officer most familiar with your institution's involvement in federal student financial assistance programs should be able to answer most questions. In some cases the financial aid office and the business office may wish to collaborate. If you feel you are not in the best position to complete this survey--which should take only an hour or so--please pass it on to the appropriate person(s).

Please return it by August 25 and mail it to:

Higher Education Surveys
Attn: Chaney, 938929
Westat, Inc.
1650 Research Blvd.
Rockville, MD 20850

A postage-paid envelope is enclosed for your convenience. We look forward to receiving your response so that we can better assist you in providing students with financial aid.

Sincerely,

Alan L. Ginsburg
Director
Planning and Evaluation Service

David Longanecker
Assistant Secretary
Office of Postsecondary Education

NOTE: It is likely that someone from your institution's financial aid office will be most qualified to answer some sections of this questionnaire, while other questions might best be answered by someone from the business office. Please answer those questions that you are informed about, and then refer this questionnaire to the appropriate alternate office for the rest of the answers. Please indicate at the end of this questionnaire which sections each of you have completed.

There may be some services or publications that your institution is not familiar with. Please be sure that *neither* the business office nor the financial aid office is familiar with the item, but if your institution does not use the item, then skip the portion asking for your opinions, and indicate at the bottom of the question that you are not familiar with the item.

Program materials and publications

The following questions refer to materials you received from the U.S. Department of Education's Student Financial Assistance Programs (SFAP). Please check the appropriate box to indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement, using the categories provided below. *Check one on each line, or use the line provided to indicate you are not familiar with the item.*

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	The Student Financial Assistance Handbook							
a)	is clearly written	1	2	3	6	11	62	15
b)	meets all of my needs for information	2	9	10	7	22	42	7
c)	is well organized	0	1	3	6	14	62	14
d)	is easy to use	0	2	4	7	17	57	13
e)	is updated in a timely manner	12	13	13	10	12	33	7
f)	guidelines are easy to implement	3	10	10	17	19	36	5

OR g)   we are not familiar with the item 0%

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
2.	The Counselor's Handbook							
a)	is clearly written	0	1	2	9	14	62	12
b)	meets all of my needs for information	1	6	8	16	21	42	6
c)	is well organized	0	1	2	11	17	61	8
d)	is easy to use	0	1	3	13	17	58	7
e)	is updated in a timely manner	4	8	10	16	15	40	6
f)	guidelines are easy to implement	1	6	7	17	20	43	5

OR g)   we are not familiar with the item   12%

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
3.	The Verification Guide							
a)	is clearly written	0	2	2	6	14	64	13
b)	meets all of my needs for information	2	6	7	7	20	51	8
c)	is well organized	0	1	2	7	17	61	12
d)	is easy to use	0	2	4	7	18	58	12
e)	is updated in a timely manner	7	12	11	10	13	40	8
f)	guidelines are easy to implement	2	7	8	10	20	46	7

OR g)   we are not familiar with the item   0%

4. What topics would you like to see given new or additional coverage in the publications?

_____

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
5.	Overall, I am pleased with all SFAP program materials and publications	0	3	6	11	20	53	6

Training

You or members of your institution may have attended training workshops or sessions, such as delivery system training, or fiscal officer training. Please evaluate the training sessions in the areas listed below by placing a checkmark over the appropriate box.

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
6.	The Delivery System Training							
a)	was conducted at convenient locations..	1	5	7	9	13	55	10
b)	is offered with sufficient frequency	2	9	11	9	17	47	5
c)	was offered at appropriate times of the year.....................................	1	4	11	11	23	46	5
d)	was very clear	2	7	14	14	27	33	4
e)	offered information that was very helpful..	1	3	5	8	24	50	8
f)	provided ample opportunity to ask questions..	1	4	5	9	18	53	9
g)	was comprehensive in the material covered	1	5	12	11	19	47	5
h)	had knowledgeable trainers.....................	2	5	6	13	17	46	11
i)	provided information that we use in our day-to-day operations	1	2	3	10	23	51	9

OR j) we are not familiar with the item   16%

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
7.	The Fiscal Officer Training							
a)	was conducted at convenient locations..	2	7	6	17	10	54	4
b)	is offered with sufficient frequency	1	8	11	17	11	49	3
c)	was offered at appropriate times of the year.....................................	2	6	7	21	12	49	3
d)	was very clear	1	2	4	23	20	47	4
e)	offered information that was very helpful..	2	2	4	17	15	55	5
f)	provided ample opportunity to ask questions..	0	2	4	18	17	54	5
g)	was comprehensive in the material covered	0	3	6	20	18	48	4
h)	had knowledgeable trainers.....................	0	3	6	17	16	53	6
i)	provided information that we use in our day-to-day operations	0	3	4	19	16	53	5

OR j) we are not familiar with the item   57%

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
8.	It would help us if ED reinstates Automation Training for Pell Grants	2	2	1	28	14	32	21

OR a) we are not familiar with the item   38%

9.   What topics would you like to see given new or additional attention?

_____

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
10.	Overall, I am pleased with the training sessions	1	3	7	19	20	46	4

Application process

This section asks for your evaluation of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and the process for handling applications, renewals, corrections, and verification.

11. The FAFSA

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) is easy to complete	1	2	8	5	17	50	17
b) has clear instructions	1	3	9	5	21	46	15
c) asks for the right amount of information	3	6	7	10	14	49	12
d) is processed in a timely manner	1	2	5	6	14	55	17

12. The renewal application

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) is easy to complete	3	5	9	11	15	43	15
b) has clear instructions	3	5	10	11	22	38	11
c) asks for the right amount of information	3	6	6	13	16	47	10
d) is processed in a timely manner	1	3	4	11	15	52	13

OR e) we are not familiar with the item   9%

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
13. The application corrections process is easy to understand	2	5	11	7	22	45	7
14. The verification process is not burdensome	9	15	15	9	16	31	5
15. Overall, I am pleased with the application process	1	3	7	13	23	47	6

16. Do the Delivery System Forums that are held regionally every three years provide a convenient forum for offering changes to the entire application process? *Check only one.*

Yes	26%
No	12%
Do not know	61%

17. Has your institution used the CPS User Services Hotline (1-800-553-2159)? *Check only one.*

Yes *(continue)*	35%
No *(skip to question 18)*	65%

The CPS User Services Hotline

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) is easy to use	1	4	4	6	21	50	13
b) provides clear information	1	3	6	10	26	44	10
c) provides complete information	1	5	9	10	28	36	10
d) has knowledgeable personnel	2	3	7	14	20	40	14
e) provides information in a timely manner	3	5	6	13	22	40	11

We also would like to know your opinions about ED's new service of printing all of the renewal applications for the upcoming year and forwarding them to the schools.

18.   If your institution has not used this service, then please check here and skip to question 25.   74%

19.   How much would it help your institution to receive the packages earlier than November? *Check only one.*

   Great help...................... 31%
   Some help...................... 25%
   Little or no help 44%

20.   How much would it help your institution to receive the packages in two mailings (*e.g.*, one in November and one in January)? *Check only one.*

   Great help...................... 26%
   Some help...................... 30%
   Little or no help 44%

21.   What types of sorting of the applications are most useful to you? *Check one on each line.*

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful
a) Graduate/undergraduate status................	23	13	64
b) Alphabetic order.....................................	83	8	9
c) Social security number	28	20	52
d) Number of renewal applications..............	17	25	59

22.   Has your institution experienced any problems with:

	Yes	No
a) Transmission of the student selections...............	15	85
b) Lost or damaged forms.....................................	13	87

23.   Does your institution make use of the electronic record of all of the renewals that accompanies the forms? *Check only one.*

   Yes....................................... 43%
   No.. 57%

24.   What additional edits by ED would help you in providing comments to the student?

   _____

Electronic processing

This section asks about ED's training and software for the electronic processing of financial aid information.

25.   How supportive is your institution of electronic processing of financial aid processing? *Check only one.*

   Very supportive in equipment and resources 55%
   Somewhat supportive... 27%
   Only limited resources available... 15%
   Not at all supportive 3%

26. What type of computer configuration is used at your institution for processing financial aid? *Check only one.*

Individual microcomputer(s)	32%
Microcomputers connected through LAN (local area network)	24%
Stand-alone mainframe computer	6%
Mainframe computer with terminals/microcomputers..	27%
No computers used for financial aid processing *(skip to question 33)*.....................	10%

27. Which of the following do you use for forwarding information electronically to the U.S. Department of Education? *Check only one.*

EDExpress linkage...	64%
Recipient Data Exchange (tape or cartridge)..	9%
Floppy Disk Data Exchange...	7%
File by paper only *(skip to question 28)*	12%
Servicer forwards information for institution	5%
Other software linkages..	4%

Please evaluate the data management and communication software for the above system.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) It is easy to use.......................................	2	5	7	11	21	42	12
b) It is well documented..............................	2	6	11	16	24	31	9
c) We performed considerable work to customize it.......................................	13	20	7	28	12	13	8
d) It fits well with our other software	5	7	8	31	17	26	6

28. The EDExpress User's Guide

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) is clearly written.....................................	4	8	12	14	26	31	6
b) meets all of my needs for information......	6	10	15	16	24	24	5
c) is well organized.....................................	5	7	13	16	21	33	6
d) is easy to use..	6	11	12	15	23	26	7
e) is updated in a timely manner..................	3	5	6	22	22	34	8
f) guidelines are easy to implement.............	6	6	10	23	21	28	6

OR g) we are not familiar with the item   30%

29. The EDExpress software

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) has understandable hardware requirements..	1	4	4	17	14	50	10
b) is easy to install.....................................	2	5	5	15	17	43	12
c) is easy to customize...............................	6	8	8	41	11	20	5
d) is easy to use...	3	6	9	15	20	39	9
e) provides useful help screens....................	4	5	10	22	19	34	8
f) is compatible with our other software......	6	6	8	33	16	25	5
g) is updated in a timely manner..................	3	4	5	22	17	39	10
h) has good vendor support.........................	2	4	6	22	22	30	14

OR i) we are not familiar with the item   32%

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
30.	The Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP) software							
a)	has understandable hardware requirements	1	1	2	8	16	57	15
b)	is easy to install	1	0	4	7	11	56	20
c)	is easy to customize	3	5	8	38	12	26	8
d)	is easy to use	1	3	6	9	17	50	15
e)	provides useful help screens	2	1	6	20	18	43	9
f)	is compatible with our other software	5	6	6	32	11	34	7
g)	is updated in a timely manner	2	2	4	16	13	51	12
h)	comes with sufficient instructions	2	3	8	8	13	54	12

OR i)we are not familiar with the item   31%

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
31.	The training conference on electronic processing							
a)	was conducted at convenient locations	7	15	7	13	13	38	7
b)	is offered with sufficient frequency	8	13	12	16	15	31	5
c)	was offered at appropriate times of the year	2	6	7	24	21	34	6
d)	was very clear	3	5	8	22	24	34	5
e)	offered information that was very helpful	0	4	9	19	18	42	9
f)	provided ample opportunity to ask questions	1	3	8	19	18	41	9
g)	was comprehensive in the material covered	4	2	6	20	20	41	7
h)	had knowledgeable trainers	1	2	5	22	14	46	11
i)	provided information that we use in our day-to-day operations	4	2	6	22	19	39	8

OR j) we are not familiar with the item   49%

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
32.	Overall, I am pleased with the electronic processing	1	2	5	18	19	44	11

Inquiry and information services

In this category we include any telephone or electronic inquiries you make to the Federal Student Aid Information Center, the Public Inquiry Center, the SFAP Electronic Bulletin Board, or the regional office.

33. Has your institution used the Federal Student Aid Information Center (1-800-4-FEDAID)? *Check only one.*

Yes *(continue)* 76%
No *(skip to question 34)* 24%

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	The Federal Student Aid Information Center							
a)	is easy to reach	3	9	9	7	21	43	8
b)	provides clear information	2	5	12	12	21	41	8
c)	provides complete information	4	7	15	9	21	36	8
d)	has knowledgeable personnel	4	7	13	13	19	36	9
e)	provides information in a timely manner	2	5	5	15	18	47	8

34. Has your institution used the Technical Assistance Hotline for Pell Grant software (202-708-9141)? *Check only one.*

Yes *(continue)* 26%
No *(skip to question 35)* 74%

The Technical Assistance Hotline	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) is easy to reach.....................................	6	7	10	9	22	42	5
b) provides clear information	1	3	9	9	21	49	7
c) provides complete information	1	6	7	11	23	44	8
d) has knowledgeable personnel	0	3	3	16	19	47	12
e) provides information in a timely manner...	4	5	8	11	19	44	8

35. Has your institution used the Pell Grant Program Institutional Access System (800-4-P-GRANT)? *Check only one.*

Yes *(continue)* 18%
No *(skip to question 36)* 82%

The Institutional Access System	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) is easy to access	2	3	5	15	15	48	12
b) provides clear information	0	2	10	20	14	42	12
c) provides complete information	0	2	8	24	15	39	10
d) provides information in a timely manner...	3	3	8	17	17	40	12

36. Is your institution aware of the SFAP Electronic Bulletin Board provided by the U.S. Department of Education's Student Financial Aid Programs? *Check only one.*

Yes, we have used it *(continue)* 8%
Yes, but we have not tried to use it *(skip to question 37)* 49%
No *(skip to question 37)* 42%

The SFAP Electronic Bulletin Board	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) is easy to access	3	3	18	17	18	31	10
b) is easy to use	4	15	4	20	16	31	10
c) provides clear information	3	9	2	26	17	31	12
d) provides complete information	2	10	1	29	26	24	9
e) provides information in a timely manner...	2	10	1	32	13	34	9
f) offers sufficient on-line help...................	5	9	8	21	18	31	9

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
37. Overall, we are pleased with the inquiry and information services...........................	0	3	5	34	17	36	5

Funding

The following questions refer to your institution's funds management, including the process for cash management and reporting, funds reconciliation, and fund draw down.

38. The Blue Book

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) is clearly written......................................	2	3	6	16	20	48	5
b) meets all of my needs for information......	3	5	9	19	23	37	5
c) is well organized...................................	1	3	5	19	21	47	6
d) is easy to use..	2	3	7	20	21	44	4
e) is updated in a timely manner..................	9	8	14	21	15	29	4
f) guidelines are easy to implement.............	3	6	8	24	19	36	3

OR g) we are not familiar with the item   20%

39. The Payments Recipient Guide

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) is clearly written......................................	1	2	6	16	16	55	4
b) meets all of my needs for information......	2	3	7	20	22	43	3
c) is well organized...................................	2	1	3	20	19	49	5
d) is easy to use..	1	2	4	21	16	51	5
e) is updated in a timely manner..................	5	2	8	25	17	39	4
f) guidelines are easy to implement.............	1	2	6	22	19	45	4

OR g) we are not familiar with the item   42%

40. Please evaluate the Electronic Funds Transfer:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) Funds are provided quickly.....................	1	2	3	6	10	59	20
b) I prefer Pell fund transfers to be made at the time the student accounts are credited.	3	8	3	33	10	29	13
c) I'm satisfied with the current process.......	2	2	4	11	14	54	13

OR d) we are not familiar with the item   25%

41. ED's funds management process

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) fits easily with our other financial aid functions...	2	3	5	17	19	48	5
b) provides funds in a timely and efficient manner.................................	1	1	4	12	20	53	8
c) handles problems quickly and appropriately	5	8	11	19	17	35	5
d) has reporting deadlines that are compatible with our academic scheduling..	1	5	9	17	16	46	6

OR e) we are not familiar with the item   25%

42. I know which ED office to contact when I have a financial management

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
question..	5	9	8	13	18	40	7

43. How could ED improve its reconciliation process?

_____

44. What methods do you use to disburse student aid funds to students? *Check one on each line.*

	Yes	No
a) Apply funds to student accounts, and issue checks or cash for the balance	88	12
b) Issue checks for the entire balance	28	72
c) Direct deposit to student/parent bank accounts...	4	96
d) Another method..	5	95

45. Does your institution have ATMs that might be used for disbursing funds through magnetic stripe or "smart cards?" *Check only one.*

Yes..	4%
No, but we plan to within 5 years	9%
No..	86%

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
46. Overall, I am happy with the funds management process	1	2	7	19	19	48	4

Program reviews and audits

This section refers to program reviews and audits that are conducted either by staff from the U.S. Department of Education, or by contractors or third parties.

47. When was the last time your institution underwent a program review? *Check only one.*

1-3 years ago	55%
4-5 years ago	19%
6-10 years ago	13%
Longer than 10 years ago	12%

48. My institution participates in the Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP). *Check only one.*

Yes..	10%
No	59%
Don't know	31%

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
49. ED clearly tells us what to expect in a program review or audit...........................	4	7	9	18	19	39	4
50. ED requirements for audits are at the right level of detail.....................................	4	6	9	24	20	33	3
51. ED requirements for audits are not burdensome	9	16	22	22	13	17	1
52. The Education Department reviewers are knowledgeable.....................................	3	2	10	31	16	34	5
53. The Education Department reviewers are helpful in explaining problems.............	4	6	7	34	14	29	6
54. ED reviews help us to better administer Title IV programs	4	5	6	27	18	32	7
55. Overall, I believe the program reviews and audit processes are well designed..............	5	5	9	31	18	28	5

Program operations

In this section, we discuss different ED systems for providing you with assistance in your program operations.

56. Has your institution contacted the Pell Grant Financial Management Specialists (202-708-9807)? *Check only one.*

Yes *(continue)*...................... 33%
No *(skip to question 57)* 67%

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
We contacted them to get help in							
a) coaching a new financial aid officer...........	16	18	3	42	4	15	2
b) correcting student records	5	7	1	18	14	43	11
c) using ED software	4	15	3	29	12	30	7
d) reconciling Student Payment Summary information..	4	3	1	15	9	54	14
They							
e) provide timely responses	11	10	10	6	14	41	8
f) are courteous	4	7	6	8	12	53	10
g) are easily accessible over the phone...........	16	14	16	5	12	30	6
h) are knowledgeable....................................	3	5	7	12	14	49	10
i) provide helpful information	2	7	6	12	17	45	10
j) are complete in their responses	6	5	11	11	14	45	8

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
57. The Campus Based state representatives							
a) provide timely responses	4	6	11	18	21	35	5
b) are courteous	2	1	6	22	15	45	9
c) are easily accessible over the phone...........	6	9	14	17	20	29	5
d) are knowledgeable....................................	1	2	6	23	16	46	7
e) provide helpful information	1	1	9	22	16	44	7
f) are complete in their responses	1	3	11	21	17	40	6
g) are responsive in completing transactions such as reinstating or adjusting award amounts......................	2	3	6	35	15	35	4

OR h) we are not familiar with the item   48%

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
58. The Program Systems Services							
a) provide timely responses	1	4	8	24	17	43	3
b) are courteous	0	3	3	23	15	50	6
c) are easily accessible over the phone...........	3	9	13	25	16	31	3
d) are knowledgeable....................................	1	2	4	20	16	50	7
e) provide helpful information	1	2	4	20	18	48	7
f) are complete in their responses	1	3	4	25	18	43	5

OR g) we are not familiar with the item   67%

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
59. Overall, we are pleased with the ED systems for assisting our program operations..........	1	3	8	33	19	31	5

Your impressions of student satisfaction

While you may not have precise information on this, your institution's work with students who are applying for aid probably gives you some impressions about students' success or frustrations with the federal process.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
60. Students							
a) are able to understand the materials	2	12	25	9	30	20	2
b) can easily get the needed information from the written materials.......................	1	9	20	12	27	27	3
c) can easily get the needed information over the telephone..................................	3	8	15	19	23	30	2
d) are satisfied with the time period required for processing the applications..	6	10	17	16	19	30	3
e) can complete the forms without extensive assistance...............................	6	14	26	10	26	17	2

Overall evaluation

Finally, we would like to know your overall evaluation of ED's assistance to you in managing and administering the federal student financial assistance programs.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
61. Overall, I am pleased with ED's assistance in administering the programs	1	5	8	13	27	43	4

Person(s) completing this form

62. All responses to this questionnaire will be kept confidential, with no personal or institutional identifiers attached. The following information will help us if we have questions about any of your individual responses, but will be not seen by the U.S. Department of Education. If it is acceptable for your name and responses to be transmitted to the U.S. Department of Education so they might seek additional comments, please check the box below.

Yes, you may transmit the information below to the Department of Education.................... 45%
No, I wish this information to be kept entirely confidential... 55%

63a. Name of first person completing this form: _____

Title   _____

Telephone   (____)_____

63b. Which sections of this questionnaire did you complete?

	Yes	No
1) Program materials and publications............................	99	1
2) Training	97	3
3) Application process	97	3
4) Electronic processing	93	7
5) Inquiry and information services	96	4
6) Funding..	75	25
7) Program reviews and audits	93	7
8) Program operations...	93	7
9) Your impressions of student satisfaction.....................	98	2
10) Overall evaluation...	98	2

63c. How many years of professional involvement have you had with the federal financial assistance programs checked above? *Check only one.*

Less than 1 year...................................... 5%
1-5 years 19%
6-10 years... 26%
Over 10 years 50%

64a. Name of second person (if any) completing this form:

Title   _____

Telephone   (____)_____

64b. Which sections of this questionnaire did you complete?

	Yes	No
1) Program materials and publications............................	14	86
2) Training	27	73
3) Application process	22	78
4) Electronic processing	38	62
5) Inquiry and information services	26	74
6) Funding..	79	21
7) Program reviews and audits	29	71
8) Program operations...	31	69
9) Your impressions of student satisfaction.....................	15	85
10) Overall evaluation...	17	83

64c. How many years of professional involvement have you had with the federal financial assistance programs checked above? *Check only one.*

Less than 1 year...................................... 3%
1-5 years 30%
6-10 years... 27%
Over 10 years 39%

Thank you for your assistance.

Please return this form by August 25 to:

Higher Education Surveys
ATTN: Chaney, 938929
WESTAT
1650 Research Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20850

Please keep a copy of this survey for your records.

If you have any questions or problems concerning this survey, please call Bradford Chaney at (800) 937-8281 (toll-free).