

A Study of Student Satisfaction with College Education at Colleges in and Around Udaipur, Rajasthan

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Abstract: This research study aims at highlighting areas that institutions of higher education need to focus on based on student's perspective for colleges in and around Udaipur, Rajasthan. It gets educational quality inputs at the point of contact with students. This study is a descriptive research using a positivistic approach of collecting (primary) data using the survey method with convenience sampling. College level students at the under graduate and post graduate level were surveyed for this research. A structured questionnaire using five point scale was developed and data collected was statistically analyzed for a level of significance (α) of 5% using a five point Likert scale. A total of 72 student responses from three institutions of higher education were received. The study identified sixteen parameters/features important to students studying in colleges. On as many as eight of the sixteen parameters, majority of students are not satisfied with college education. These include: (a) Facilities for medical emergencies; (b) Industry exposure; (c) Placement support; (d) All round development; (e) Opportunities for co-curricular activities; and (f) Facilities for sports. Besides these areas, the following areas also require attention on priority: (a) Overall experience of students; and (b) Practical knowledge of subjects taught. These represent the challenges that must be addressed by institutions of higher education to enhance student perception of education quality.

Key Words: Higher Education, Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Employability

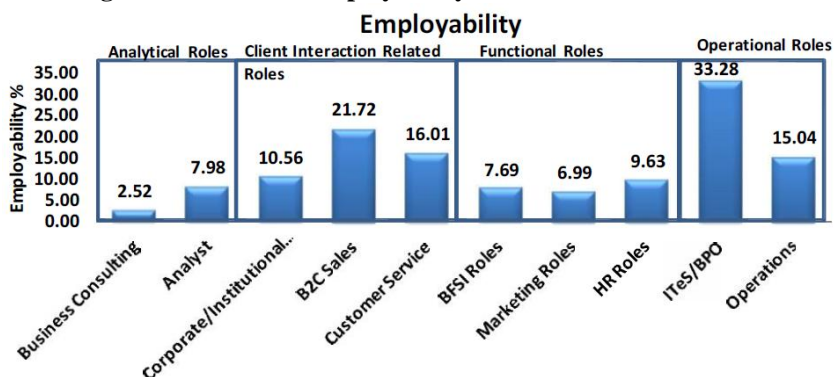
I. Introduction

FICCI's Higher Education Summit 2013 noted that while capacity enhancement has been a great achievement as regards Indian higher education, India lags behind in quality of higher education. The concern areas include, besides others, an outdated curriculum and inadequate autonomy to educational institutions due to centralized control and standardization. The higher education sector also happened to be one with great opportunities on account of large number of graduating students (could reach upto 25% of numbers graduating across the world) and large R & D spending. The PwC report of 2012 lists expansion, inclusion and rapid quality improvement through higher and technical education as core focus areas in the five year plan from 2007 to 2012 (11th five year plan). Despite allocation for higher/technical education in the 11th five year plan being close to 9 times that in the 10th plan (USD 18.8 Billion in the 11th plan against USD 2.1 Billion in the 10th plan), the estimated requirement is much higher leaving little option but to allow private sector participation in education at different levels. This is one of the factors that have led to permitting 100% FDI in higher education. However, the "not-for-profit principle" has not encouraged foreign universities to consider setting up campuses in India. Increased support in the 11th Five Year Plan may take time before its positive impact is felt due to long financial neglect of higher education. Planning Commission's draft report of the working group on higher education demonstrates that through the total of plan and non-plan budgetary support to university/higher education based on total of revenue account of the center and states in the first three years of 10th five year plan (i.e. from 2002 to 2005). Even in nominal terms the total public expenditure/student in university/higher education has shown a fall reaching upto a value of just above Rs.10,000. When measured in real terms, the fall was continuous over a much longer period, during the 1990's and extended upto 2004-05, with the result that index of real public expenditure in higher education fell to 79 points in 2003-04 with 1993-94 as the base year. Indian higher education, therefore, is in dire need for support and attention if it has to remain at acceptable quality levels.

As reported by a Indian national daily, The Hindu (2013) as many as 47% Indian graduates are not employable in any industry role. Based on a report by Aspiring Minds, The Hindu reported on 26th June 2013 a variation in percentage employability of graduates from 2.2% for roles such as corporate communications/content development, about 2.6% for accounting jobs, about 15.9% for sales functions, about 21.4% for BPOs/ITES jobs and about 36% for clerical/secretarial jobs. Further, close to 84% of graduates were lacking in cognitive abilities required for an analyst's job and 90% did not possess required proficiency for English communication. As regards students studying for an MBA, The Times of India reported on 12th January 2015 that less than 35000 management graduates out of about three lac management graduates produced every

year are employable. While The Times of India reporting was based on the opinion of experts, a press release by Aspiring Minds based on National Employability Report – MBA Graduates, Annual Report 2012. Based on a sample of over 32000 MBA students from 220+ B-Schools across several states in India, the report found MBA employability to be below 10% for functional roles in HR, Marketing or Finance with employability being as low as 2.52% in the area of business consulting. The figure below gives the employability status as regards MBAs in India:

Figure 1: Area-wise Employability of MBA Graduates in India



Source: Press Release: Employability of MBA Graduates at Dismal Low. Retrieved from http://www.aspiringminds.in/press_doc/employability_of_mba_graduates_at_dismal_low.pdf

Figures for technical graduates don't look much better. Based on a study of technical graduates numbering over 40000 and including engineering graduates and MCAs across 12 states in 2010, Aspiring Minds reported that the employability at IT product companies was as low as 4.22%, employability in IT Service companies being close to 18%, that in KPOs at about 9.5%, for BPOs at over 38% and for technical support jobs at about 25.9%. The findings clearly point to a need for educational institutions to focus more on employability.

This research study aim at highlighting areas that institutions of higher education could focus on based on a survey of students studying in colleges in and around Udaipur, Rajasthan. Much research has been done on the macro view of education and need to improve access to education as measured by Gross Enrollment Ration (GER). However, there is a relative dearth of research at the institution level as regards higher education in India at the point of contact with students. This study aims to survey the quality of higher education from student's perspective with focus upon aspects of education requiring correction at the institution level. It will add to the body of knowledge available on institution level studies and provide useful inputs for improving education offered. It involves identifying features of college education that students value and their assessment of colleges on those parameters.

II. Literature Review

Assessing quality of higher educational institutions has always been a challenge. Haug (2009) discusses limitations in evaluation of higher education institutions by external expert panel in countries from European Higher Education Area (EHEA) wherein a self-evaluation by the institution is followed by a short visit from the panel to gauge performance on pre-agreed criteria. During their short visit experts often find it difficult to see beyond the data, precise sample elements providing the data may not be truly representative of the population, critical staff members may not be permitted to interact with panel members and/or those meeting panel members may be tutored making a panel visit an inadequate activity.

Alexander (2008) examined the conception of educational quality in the class room as well as its measurement. The study points out limitations of defining quality through proxy indicators and need for increased focus on pedagogy. The list of indicators includes those that carry a subjective element that could be understood and measured differently depending upon who is doing so an example of such measure being 'The Learning Environment'. While focus on pedagogy could be a useful value addition, it is not clear if educationists have agreed upon an objective criteria for measuring education quality. Thus the problem appears to be three fold: (a) Defining objective criteria or parameters to measure education quality to reduce dependence on proxies; (b) Assessing these over an extended period of time since education impacts ones complete lifespan; and (c) Agreeing upon the appropriate weightage to subjective parameters that are an inevitable part of service quality measurement.

Materu (2007) brings out concerns relating to quality assurance in higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa faces problems similar to those in India though to differing degree with the challenges including low gross enrollment ration, rapid increasing in number of privately owned institutions of

higher education, declining budgets for higher education, change in labour markets and poor governance. The challenges to effective quality assurance include: (a) lack of quality assurance policy framework; (b) insufficient communication among institutions about external QA processes; and (c) inadequate competent teachers and qualified professionals in QA agencies.

Heslop (2014) lists four challenges faced by Indian higher education as including: (a) Huge unmet demand for higher education on account of lower enrollment in higher education in India at 18% as compared to 26% in China and 36% in Brazil. An enrollment of 30% by 2020 boils down to an increase of 14 million university places within 6 years (2014 to 2020) through 800 additional universities and 40000 colleges in an eight year period; (b) Poor quality of teaching and learning on account of a host of issues including shortage of faculty, lack of accountability and quality assurance besides other reasons; (c) Low quality of research weak ecosystem for innovation and industry association in research; and (d) Unequal enrollment across population groups and geographies. The challenge posed by the increased demand for higher educational institutions can be gauged by the table below that gives prevailing scenario in 2012.

Table 1: Higher Education Institutions in India

TYPE AND NUMBER OF INSTITUTION	CENTRAL	STATE	PRIVATE	TOTAL
University and university-level institutions	152	316	191	659
Colleges	669	13,024	19,930	33,023
Diploma-awarding institutions	0	3,207	9,541	12,748
Percentage enrolment in 2012	2.6%	38.6%	58.9%	100%

Source: 'Higher education in India: twelfth five year plan and beyond', Ernst and Young (2012) cited by Understanding India - The Future of Higher Education and Opportunities for International Cooperation at http://www.britishcouncil.in/sites/britishcouncil.in2/files/understanding_india.pdf

The five year plans have evolved their focus as regards education. Planning Commission's draft report of the working group on higher education highlights the thrust areas in the five year plans starting with the 5th plan as shown in the Table below.

Table 2: Thrust Areas of 5th to 9th Five Year Plans

Plans	Thrust Areas
Fifth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of academic buildings, library, staff quarters, teachers' hostel, students' hostel, study homes, non-resident students' center; purchase of books, journals, equipment; appointment of additional teaching staff, technical supporting staff etc;
Sixth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of standards; regulation of admission; restructuring of courses for practical orientation and greater relevance; centralization of instrumentation and repair facilities; make extension as an integral part of education; <p>(low priority was given to expansion of educational facilities by way of new universities, centers for postgraduate studies, new department and to construction/extension of buildings involving brick and mortar.)</p>
Seventh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of research and other centralized facilities at selected centers for the benefit of a group of institutions in the region/country, encouragement of academic mobility and cross-fertilization of ideas with a view to inculcating the feeling of national integration by providing special assistance for faculty housing/complex and hostels, restructuring courses at first degree level so that they become relevant to the local needs and environment and increase the area of employability of graduates; prioritisation of programs intended to achieve the national objectives; development of Centers of Excellence; Optimisation of use of the existing facilities in the universities/colleges specially physical facilities.
Eighth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening of existing postgraduate departments in terms of laboratories, workshops and library services; Opening of new specialized courses and departments, In case of developed , with an inter-disciplinary approach provided they could be sustained by existing facilities; In case of developing universities, new departments and courses only if the need is justified; Viability of courses, departments etc. so that those courses that have lost their relevance or are outdated could be dispensed with and teachers in such subjects could be retrained.
Ninth	<p>Relevance and Quality of Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career development by encouraging the relevant courses with professional focus; Modification in traditional courses to make them application oriented; Encouragement to universities to develop basic theoretical understanding of discipline to ensure that the theory and practice are blended and integrated; Focus on hands on experience; and Addressing the public concerns about downside in the quality of education by focusing on the quality of education rather than on quantitative expansion. <p>Access and Equity:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying special attention to institutions of higher education in backward areas, hill areas and border areas in order to remove regional imbalances; • Addressing the higher education needs of under-represented social groups including the SC/STs, women, handicapped and the minorities; and • Focus not only on quantitative expansion but also on qualitative development of institutions of higher education in the areas catering to the above groups. <p>University and Social Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouragement to universities to develop a greater emphasis on non-degree programs in order to meet the expectations arising out of changes that are taking place in the society; • These activities to be made the responsibility of every department; while the departments of adult and continuing education would be the focal point for social change function and • Major thrust to be given to program development for women studies and centre for women studies shall be essentially inter-disciplinary. <p>Management of Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for streamlining the university management system; • Assistance for academic, administrative and financial decentralization; • Autonomy of the Departments; • Autonomy of the affiliated colleges & institutions; • Developing in-house training facilities for non-teaching staff, rationalization of posts; increasing use of information technology in management; and • Establishment of College Development Council, workshops for college Principals, and improvement in backward and forward linkages. <p>Resource Mobilization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on planning for internal and external resource mobilization; • Differential fee structure; • Enhancement in fees for foreign studies; and • Generation of revenue through increased university-industry linkages.
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Source: Planning Commission's Draft Report of Working Group On Higher Education 11TH Five Year Plan

Zaki and Rashidi (2013) list the following factors as being instrumental in quality assurance in academia: (a) Policies and Practices; (b) Learners Profile; (c) Faculty KSA (knowledge, skills and abilities); (d) Institutional leadership; (e) Open system thinking; (f) Institutional design; (g) Curriculum; and (h) Resources.

Prasad and Stella list the seven NAAC criteria as: (a) Curricular aspects; (b) Teaching learning and evaluation; (c) Research, consultancy and extension; (d) Infrastructure and learning resources; (e) Student support and progression; (f) Organization and management; and (g) Healthy practices. Brusoni (2014) cites Brent Ruben's book on excellence in American higher education and lists the following areas to define excellence in higher education: (a) Leadership; (b) Purposes and plans; (c) Beneficiaries and constituencies; (d) Programs and services; (e) Faculty/staff and workplace; (f) Assessment and information use; and (g) Outcomes and achievements. Using a 5 point Likert scale, Ruben's checklist designed to provide an introduction and starting point to the EHE (Excellence in Higher Education) model includes the following parameters for self-assessment:

1. Leadership: Leadership is assessed based on (a) Clearly defined and shared view of mission, vision, values, plans and goals; (b) Clarify and build consensus on organizational directions and priorities; (c) Encourage and use feedback as well as performance reviews to improve leadership and leadership practices throughout the organization; and (d) Demonstrate responsiveness to public concerns and work to develop region as well as the institution.
2. Strategic Planning: Strategic planning is assessed on the basis of: (a) Having formalized planning process; (b) Having a written plan to translate organization's mission, vision and values into clearly stated and measurable priorities as well as goals further broken into steps; (c) Involving faculty as well as staff in developing/implementing organizational plans; and (d) Aligning plans of individual units (departments/colleges) with that of the organization (college/university).
3. External focus: This requires assessing: (a) Formulating a systematic approach to understanding needs and satisfaction levels of customers; (b) The systematic approach providing clear awareness of the specific needs of customers; (c) Using information collected from customers to improve programs and services offered; and (d) Demonstrating commitment to improving communication, relationships and reputation with customers of various programs and services offered.
4. Information and Analysis: The higher education institution's assessment on this includes: (a) Establishing a clear as well as shared vision on appropriate standards to assess effectiveness of the units and its offerings; (b) Evolving an effective approach for collecting relevant data on organizational outcomes and achievements as well as progress made on short/long term goals; (c) Using information collected to improve performance; and (d) Obtaining and using information from peer/leading organization to benchmark current effectiveness and progress towards goals.

5. Faculty/staff and Workplace Focus: Self assessing this requires assessing: (a) How well does the unit help faculty/staff contribute to the unit's mission besides developing to their full potential; (b) How well does the unit encourage excellence and professional development; (c) Prevalence of approach to assessing and recognizing individual and group contributions; and (d) Prevalence of approach to assessing workplace climate and faculty as well as staff satisfaction with it.
6. Process Effectiveness: Assessment of process effectiveness requires assessing: (a) Success in maintaining high standards in programs/services; (b) Developing efficient and effective work procedures; (c) Documenting and standardizing work procedures; and (d) Reviewing work procedures regularly to ensure these improve.
7. Outcomes and Achievements: Achievements and outcomes are assessed based on: (a) Existence of objective documentation on the unit's success in achieving long term goals as well as organizational mission and vision; (b) Customers are satisfied with programs and services; (c) Work atmosphere is positive; and (d) Our success in the three statements above compares favourably with other players and market leaders.

While these researchers present an overview of what an organization requires to do for assessing and improving its quality of education, these inputs are at a higher level of abstraction than the operational level. Students often have a slightly differing view of quality as they are directly impacted by point-of-contact services. There is a relative dearth of literature available on point-of-contact services and this study aims to address that gap in so far as colleges in and around Udaipur, Rajasthan are concerned.

III. Research Methodology

This study is a descriptive research using a positivistic approach of collecting (primary) data using the survey method with convenience sampling. College level students at the under graduate and post graduate level were surveyed for this research. The questionnaire was developed in stages wherein open ended questions and student interviews formed the basis of the final questionnaire. A total of sixteen quality parameters were thus determined. A structured questionnaire (Annexure 1) using five point scale was developed and data collected was statistically analyzed for a level of significance (α) of 5% using a five point Likert scale. Students approached for this survey were given the option of opting out if they felt uncomfortable giving their opinion on their college. Respondents were assured of confidentiality of their identity and that of their institution. Student responses were subjected to a basic sanity check and responses considered to be unfit for analysis were rejected. A total of 72 student responses from three institutions of higher education were accepted. The study was aimed at testing the following hypotheses:

1. Majority of students believe that their college course curriculum is well designed and contemporary;
2. Majority of students believe that their college teachers are highly qualified & competent to teach;
3. Majority of students believe that their college examination system is very fair & measures meritorious performance accurately;
4. Majority of students believe that their college has excellent infrastructure for education/development;
5. Majority of students believe that their college provides excellent practical knowledge;
6. Majority of students believe that their college provides excellent industry experience;
7. Majority of students believe that their college provides excellent global exposure;
8. Majority of students believe that their college provides excellent e-learning and library facilities;
9. Majority of students believe that their college provides excellent placement support;
10. Majority of students believe that their college provides excellent facilities for sports related activities;
11. Majority of students believe their college provides excellent opportunities for co-curricular activities;
12. Majority of students believe that their college provides excellent facilities for medical emergencies;
13. Majority of students believe that their college provides excellent support for all round development;
14. Majority of students believe that their college provides a very safe and secure environment;
15. Majority of students believe that their overall experience at the college was excellent; and
16. Majority of students said they would unhesitatingly recommend their college to friends/relations;

These represent 16 hypotheses numbered from H_{01} to H_{16} .

IV. Data Analysis And Conclusions

Data collected from respondents can be summarised as below:

	Agree or Strongly Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
Course curriculum at my college is well designed & contemporary	72.2%	16.7%	11.1%
Teachers at my college are highly qualified & competent to teach	76.4%	12.5%	11.1%
My college has an examination system that is very fair & measures meritorious performance accurately	66.2%	25.4%	08.5%
College has excellent infrastructure for education & development	62.5%	26.4%	11.1%
Course provides excellent practical knowledge of my subject	45.7%	34.3%	20.0%
Course provides excellent industry experience	26.4%	26.4%	47.2%
College provides me excellent global exposure	31.0%	25.4%	43.7%
College provides excellent e-learning & library facilities	57.7%	26.8%	15.5%
College provides excellent placement support	27.8%	37.5%	34.7%
College provides excellent facilities for sports related activities	31.9%	23.6%	44.4%
College provides excellent opportunities for co-curricular activities	31.9%	27.8%	40.3%
College provides excellent medical facilities for emergencies	23.2%	24.6%	52.2%
College provides excellent support for all round development	29.2%	47.2%	23.6%
College provides a highly safe & secure environment to students	76.1%	12.7%	11.3%
My overall experience at college is excellent	43.7%	35.2%	21.1%
Will unhesitatingly recommend my college to my relations/friends	30.0%	37.1%	32.9%

Based on the above data the following can be concluded for the different hypotheses:

Hypotheses: Majority of students at the college believe that	p value	Conclusion on the Hypotheses
H ₀₁ : Course curriculum is well designed & contemporary	>>0.05	Data not in rejection region
H ₀₂ : Teachers are highly qualified & competent to teach	>>0.05	Data not in rejection region
H ₀₃ : The examination system is very fair & measures meritorious performance accurately	>>0.05	Data not in rejection region
H ₀₄ : College has excellent infrastructure for education & development	>>0.05	Data not in rejection region
H ₀₅ : Course provides excellent practical knowledge of my subject	0.24	Cannot be rejected
H ₀₆ : Course provides excellent industry experience	~ 0	Hypothesis rejected
H ₀₇ : College provides me excellent global exposure	~ 0	Hypothesis rejected
H ₀₈ : College provides excellent e-learning & library facilities	>>0.05	Data not in rejection region
H ₀₉ : College provides excellent placement support	~ 0	Hypothesis rejected
H ₁₀ : College provides excellent facilities for sports related activities	~ 0	Hypothesis rejected
H ₁₁ : College provides excellent opportunities for co-curricular activities	~ 0	Hypothesis rejected
H ₁₂ : College provides excellent medical facilities for emergencies	~ 0	Hypothesis rejected
H ₁₃ : College provides excellent support for all round development	~ 0	Hypothesis rejected
H ₁₄ : College provides a highly safe & secure environment to students	>>0.05	Data not in rejection region
H ₁₅ : My overall experience at college is excellent	0.14	Cannot be rejected
H ₁₆ : Will unhesitatingly recommend my college to my relations/friends	~ 0	Hypothesis rejected

Course curriculum, qualification of teachers, safety and security of students on campuses, rigour in the examination system, infrastructure and library facilities emerge as relative strengths as perceived by students undergoing college education. The key concern areas for college students are: (a) Facilities to deal with medical emergencies; (b) Industry exposure; (c) Placement support; (d) All round development of students; (e) Opportunities for co-curricular activities; and (f) Facilities for sports related activities. Besides these areas, the following areas also require attention on priority: (a) Overall experience of students at the college; and (b) Practical knowledge of subjects taught. In all, eight out of sixteen hypotheses were rejected. The sample data shows that only a small percentage of students state they would unhesitatingly recommend their college to friends and relatives meaning that students who could potentially be ambassadors of the college are likely to remain either neutral (lukewarm) towards the college or even antagonistic by advising those close to them against studying at the same college.

V. Recommendations And Limitations Of The Study

The study clearly points out concern areas from the point of view of students undergoing tertiary education. It is not a study that loses itself in slogans or sloganeering relating to teacher-centric or student centric teaching. Instead it derives parameters based on interaction with students and survey of literature on quality in college education. It seeks to measure what students' value and finds that a very large fraction of students are disappointed or disillusioned with their own colleges and the education provided. The satisfaction level of students studying at colleges is low. Further colleges are not seen to focus on softer issues like – encouraging all round development, providing opportunities for co-curricular/sports related activities. Nor do colleges provide industry exposure, placement support or practical knowledge on subjects taught. The low

employability of graduates, therefore, comes as no surprise. It is recommended that higher educational institutions be prodded to focus on these areas so that graduating students can hope to build a better career for themselves.

The study received responses from just three colleges. Despite rigorous statistical analysis of data collected, a sample data from only three colleges needs further validation before it can be accepted on a larger scale. This then presents itself as the main limitation of this study and presents itself as an opportunity for further investigation for a subsequent research study.

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Annexure 1

Customer Satisfaction with College Education

Note: This is to request you to please provide your views on the attributes listed. Your identity will be treated as confidential & the information collected through this questionnaire will be used for Academic purposes only.

General Information (Optional)

1. Name :
2. Contact Number/mail id :

Specific Information (Request You To Answer All):

1. Course & College presently studying :
2. Joined college in (year) :
3. Please let us know the extent of your agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The course curriculum at our college is well designed & contemporary					
My teachers at my college are highly qualified & competent to teach					
My college has an examination system that is very fair & measures meritorious performance accurately					
My college has excellent infrastructure for education & student development					

My course provides excellent practical knowledge of my subject					
My course provides excellent industry experience					
My college provides me excellent global exposure					
My college provides excellent e-learning & library facilities					
My college provides excellent placement support					
My college provides excellent facilities for sports related activities					
My college provides excellent opportunities for co-curricular activities					
My college provides excellent medical facilities for emergencies					
My college provides excellent support for all round development					
The environment at my college is highly safe & secure with no threats to students					
My overall experience at college is excellent					
I would unhesitatingly recommend my college to my relations/friends					

4. Name areas that you think are your college/university's great strengths.
5. Name areas that you think are your college/university's areas for improvement.

THANKS FOR YOUR TIME