



Noel-Levitz®

**The College Student Inventory™
Advisor's Guide
Form A**

The Retention Management System *Plus*™



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Introduction

Welcome Advisors!

This guide is designed to facilitate your use of the College Student Inventory, one of the core components of the Retention Management System *Plus*. Use of the manual, in conjunction with the training sessions, provides you with the resources you need to help students pursue a constructive learning experience and make a smooth transition into college life.

As an advisor, you are a major catalyst in facilitating student engagement in the academic and social life of your college community, while significantly influencing educational and personal growth. Your dedication to this process will be appreciated by your students and readily evident in their satisfaction, success, and persistence.

The topics covered in this guide respond to questions you may have as you examine the College Student Inventory (CSI) including:

- What is the Retention Management System *Plus* (RMS *Plus*)?
- What is the College Student Inventory (CSI)?
- What is my role as a CSI advisor?
- Are there specific intervention strategies for the CSI?

What is the Retention Management System *Plus* (RMS *Plus*)?

The Retention Management System *Plus* (RMS *Plus*) refers to a combination of analytics, assessment tools and a data dashboard that are designed specifically to support increased completion rates through earlier, more focused student interventions. The RMS *Plus* provides a wealth of data to make interventions more meaningful, more focused, and more successful. Campuses may choose to use one or a combination of the System offerings.

The RMS *Plus* provides critical information to promote student success, at the time you need it. You'll understand the strengths and challenges of each student, as well as the student's levels of receptivity. Given this, you will be able to target your outreach and resources more strategically. More specifically, this proactive approach to comprehensive student retention planning is designed to enable institutions to:

- Assess students' needs and strengths
- Identify students who may be at risk of leaving college
- Recognize students' motivational patterns
- Use information to implement successful referrals and intervention programs.
- Help advisors to have effective and rewarding contacts with students.

The six primary components of the Retention Management System *Plus* are intended to inform a broad range of student programs, services, and interventions.

1. College Student Inventory™ - Prioritize your intervention more efficiently by assessing the strengths and challenges of each student.

2. Mid-Year Student Assessment™—Compare the strengths and challenges of your students at the mid-point of their first year and adjust your interventions accordingly with this follow-up survey. Note: This is compatible with CSI – Forms B and C only.
3. Second-Year Student Assessment™—Extend and strengthen your interventions beyond the first year using this survey for second-year students.
4. Student Retention Analytics™—Gauge the precise likelihood of each student persisting and the factors that may be putting them at risk.
5. Retention Data Center™—Manage and analyze all of your student success data more strategically through this comprehensive online portal.
6. Consulting—Understand how to interpret your results and use the data to guide your retention initiatives.

1. The College Student Inventory (CSI)

The College Student Inventory (CSI) is the foundation of the RMS *Plus*. The inventory is designed especially for incoming first-year students, and the CSI Form – A is comprised of 194 items subsumed in 19 different scales. These scales are organized under five main categories:

- Academic Motivation
- Social Motivation
- General Coping Skills
- Receptivity to Support Services
- Initial Impression

The CSI also contains a number of single items reporting such background characteristics as high school activities, admissions test scores, and family background. With information from this inventory, an advisor is in a position to initiate a meaningful conversation with a student, perhaps through an appeal to his or her openness, intellectual interests, sociability, background, or yet another area.

Students complete the CSI online or via paper/pencil before the term begins or early in the term. With the online CSI, the reports are available to the campus coordinator immediately; with the paper CSI, an e-mail with a Web link to your reports is sent to the campus coordinator within approximately two to four business days from the time the answer sheets and Scoring Request Form are received by the Noel-Levitz processing center.

2. The CSI Coordinator Report

The CSI Coordinator Report is a one-page synopsis of each student's strengths, needs, and background.

Summary Observations provides a preliminary overview of a student's levels of risk and receptivity. This sensitive information (dropout proneness, predicted academic difficulty, educational stress, and receptivity to institutional help), helps you prioritize interventions. It is never shared with students, but may be shared with advisors and counselors at the coordinator's discretion.

Motivational Assessment allows advisors to identify areas of strength and challenge for individual students at a glance. The motivational scales are reported in two ways, as a percentile rank and with a bar graph.

Student Background Information provides a context for discussing motivational patterns within the scales, such as activities in which the student participated during high school.

Specific Recommendations for each student provide action steps based on need and receptivity scores. The strength of each recommendation is indicated by its priority score. These statements are useful when encouraging students to commit to goals and as a means of facilitating referrals to support offices.

3. The CSI Advisor/Counselor Report

This report parallels the Coordinator Report with one exception; the Advisor/Counselor Report does not include the Summary Observations. Rather, its focus is on the motivational assessment, recommendations, and background information

4. The CSI Student Report

The CSI Student Report contains the same information as the CSI Advisor/Counselor Report as well as written interpretations that explain a student's score on each scale. The interpretations are written in very clear, non-technical language and are designed to provide students encouragement and guidance.

You are now able to insert a paragraph about campus-specific services into the student report narrative text, regardless of whether you administer the paper or online version of the assessment.

5. The CSI Summary and Planning Report

The CSI Summary and Planning Report is a resource tool to be used for institutional planning. The analysis includes all of the means of the students who completed the CSI, presented in three statistical summaries. The first is for the total sample, the second for males only, and the third for females only. All means are computed from percentile scores. Since these scores are based on national norms, the means provide a useful indication of how your student's overall motivational pattern compares with that of a national sample of comparable institutions, broadly defined.

The analysis then provides a separate list of students having high priority scores in the following areas:

- High dropout proneness
- High receptivity to institutional assistance
- Academic assistance needs and interests
- Personal counseling needs and interests
- Career counseling needs and interests
- Social enrichment needs

- High leadership status
- Strong institutional dissatisfactions
- Invalid reports

Priority scores are determined by a formula weighing a student's need for a particular service with their expressed interest in that service. The priority scores can be extremely useful in identifying students who will most likely benefit from a given service.

6. The CSI Summary Observations with Receptivity Report

This useful report serves as a very efficient tool for connecting students with campus services, such as academic support, drawing upon their receptivity to assistance as a springboard for intervention.

The report provides an integrated view of your students' scores across the *summary observations* scales (indicating need) and the individual *receptivity scales* (indicating desire for services). Additionally, desire to transfer is noted for students at four-year institutions only.

Students with percentile scores of 80 and above on one or more of the summary observations scales **and** scores of 65 and above on one or more of the receptivity scales are highlighted in color in the table.

Additional analyses are possible with two standard options for this report:

- o You can apply different filters to your data by defining the value (scale) and the range of scores from the drop down menu
- o You can download the Excel table with your students' scores

In combination, the six facets that comprise the College Student Inventory are used to quickly identify which students are most in need of help, and to describe the general scope of their strengths, challenges, and receptivity to assistance. The inventory and report samples can be viewed at www.noellevitz.com/CSIsamples.

The Advisor

What is your role as an advisor?

As an advisor, your dedication to student success and early intervention is integral to the successful implementation of the College Student Inventory. While the CSI reports help to inform meaningful advisor and student conversations, without the personal contact you provide through the Student-Advisor Conference – either face-to-face or via phone – the essential value of the inventory is likely compromised.

Because the CSI taps a wide range of personal information about each student, you will feel more comfortable if your role is defined. CSI training will provide the guidance you need to explain the student's report, answer questions, and facilitate referrals to other colleagues and services.

To help you prepare for your role as an advisor, here are some expectations that will give you a jump-start on delivering quality advising using the CSI:

- Read all CSI materials thoroughly.
- Review the College Student Inventory so that you are familiar with the inventory the students completed.
- Watch the short video clip of an advisor and student conference about the CSI Student Report (www.noellevitz.com/CSIVideo).
- Participate in training sessions your coordinator may schedule.
- Plan to contact your advisees on an individual basis *at least once* during the first three to six weeks of the term.
- Become thoroughly familiar with each student's report.
- Become familiar with any procedures recommended by your institution to protect privileged information like the CSI Reports.
- Become sufficiently knowledgeable to refer students to appropriate resources to meet their needs.
- Function as a liaison between the individual student and the institution.
- Establish a positive relationship with each advisee that is mutually respectful, open, friendly, and trusting.
- Help students to focus on their strengths while recognizing limitations.

What are your specific responsibilities as an advisor?

While the specific responsibilities of an advisor vary depending on the institution, there are several tasks that are specific to the College Student Inventory. The following list provides a brief overview of these tasks, explained more fully under the section entitled, "The CSI Intervention Strategy."

- Obtain your advisees' CSI reports from your RMS *Plus* coordinator or via the online link and access codes that he or she may forward to you for direct use.
- Study the student profiles thoroughly in order to understand students' strengths and needs that the scores seem to suggest.

- Set up an appointment (in person or by phone) to meet with each student during the first three to six weeks of the term to discuss his/her CSI student report.
- Discuss how the students feel about their experiences so far.
- Discuss with the student the motivational pattern demonstrated on the CSI Student Report.
- Arrange to follow up with each advisee.
- Arrange or provide guidance on how to attain any information that the student requests, if you are not able to provide it.
- Refer students to the appropriate resources as necessary, to further the process of integration.
- Follow up with personal encouragement and inquiries about progress with their goals.
- After each contact with your advisee, complete a brief retention contact report, either electronically or in paper format for your Coordinator. Sample paper retention contact reports are included in the CSI Resource Guide.

The CSI Reports

What are the features of the CSI Reports?

The College Student Inventory (CSI) Form A is a 194-item questionnaire. Students will likely have completed the inventory before or during the first few weeks of classes, and you can readily access reports about each student. If your campus uses the online CSI, these reports are available immediately upon completion of the CSI. If your campus uses the paper version of the CSI, the answer sheets, and the Scoring Request Form are shipped to Noel-Levitz, scored within two to four business days of arrival to our office, and then posted to a secure online link for your access.

The Individual CSI Reports

The Advisor/Counselor Report and the Student Report convey the student's self-reported information as concisely as possible. The Student Report includes up to three pages of narrative about the student's results which are not included in the other reports. See [Appendix A](#) for an example of the Advisor/Counselor Report and [Appendix B](#) for an example of the Student Report.

The following discussion provides a detailed explanation of the more sensitive CSI Coordinator Report. Though the Coordinator Report is comparable to the Advisor/Counselor Report, a key feature of the Coordinator Report is not included in the Advisor/Counselor Report, namely the Summary Observations (dropout proneness, predicted academic difficulty, educational stress, and receptivity to institutional help). See [Appendix C](#) for an example of a Coordinator Report.

Identifying Information (upper right-hand corner)

This section gives the student's name, educational level, gender, age, and identification number. The date of the report and the name of your institution are also provided.

Restricted Report (upper middle of page)

If the student has responded "no" to the last item of the CSI, then a boxed statement appears at the top of the report:

Restricted to Program Coordinator per Student's Request

If you receive or access a Restricted Report by mistake, you should return it promptly to the RMS *Plus* coordinator.

Instructions (near the top, stretching across the page)

This section contains a brief set of instructions to guide you in discussing the report with the student. Suggestions for follow-up measures and appropriate use of the report also appear. This section is printed on every report as a reminder of the basic conditions under which the information has been made available.

Summary Observations (top of left column)

This section only appears on the Coordinator Report. This section

presents the results from four summary scales, discussed below. All scores in this section are expressed in terms of stanines, which are normalized standard scores with a mean of 5 and a standard deviation of 1.96. The distribution of students falling into the different categories is:

Score	Distribution
9	4%
8	7%
7	12%
6	17%
5	20%
4	17%
3	12%
2	7%
1	4%

The larger the stanine is, the larger the corresponding raw score. For example, a stanine of 9 indicates that the student's raw score was in the top 4 percent of the normative sample, a stanine of 8 indicates that the student's raw score was in the next 7 percent (and the top 11 percent of the sample), and so forth.

1. The Dropout Proneness Scale

This scale measures the student's overall inclination to drop out of school before finishing a degree. The scale was developed empirically by comparing students who stayed in school after their first term with those who did not.

One should be careful not to attribute greater predictive power to the dropout scale than it actually possesses. Existing research suggests that many students with high scores on dropout proneness will not, in fact, drop out during their first term. While predictiveness should increase when dropout is studied over time, there are simply too many mediating factors in predicting this behavior with a high degree of accuracy. For this reason, *students with high scores on dropout proneness should be considered as having a pattern of intellectual and motivational traits that is loosely associated with dropping out, but which may or may not lead to actual dropout in any given case.*

2. The Predicted Academic Difficulty Scale

This scale was developed by correlating CSI questions with first-term college grade point average (GPA). It is thus designed to predict who is most likely to have low grades in college. The caution that applies to the dropout scale also applies to this scale. The scale will identify some, but not all, of the students who will encounter academic difficulty during their college careers.

Predictors of academic difficulty include such factors as: study

habits, academic confidence, desire to finish college, attitude toward educators, openness, admissions test scores, and high school GPA.

3. The Educational Stress Scale

This scale indicates the student's susceptibility to anxiety, discouragement, and feelings of inadequacy regarding the total school environment, including peer relations. *Such factors as academic confidence, attitude toward educators, self-reliance, sociability, leadership, ease of transition, family emotional support, and sense of financial security, among others, all combine to estimate the student's current level of stress.* Students with high scores can be referred to the counseling center if one is available. But avoid pressuring any student to seek counseling who does not want this service. Be especially careful with students who have a high score on educational stress and a low score on receptivity to personal counseling (see below), as they may respond quite negatively to any suggestion that they need counseling.

4. Receptivity to Institutional Help

This scale indicates how responsive the student is likely to be to intervention. The higher the score, the more receptive the student is. This scale is based on *how strongly the student expressed the desire for help in a wide variety of areas, such as career counseling, personal counseling, social enrichment, and academic assistance.*

Overall, the summary scales have been keyed in a way that simplifies their joint interpretation. Thus, high scores on the dropout proneness, academic difficulty, and educational stress scales all indicate high need. High scores on receptivity indicate a strong desire for help. *The general pattern is for high scores to imply the advisability of intervention.* In addition to giving referrals to students who score high on these scales, you may want to make a special effort to befriend them so they will feel comfortable coming to you for advice at critical times during their first year in college.

The summary scales involve sensitive global information which a student may not be able to understand or accept in a constructive fashion. Thus, a student with a high score on dropout proneness might misinterpret this score to mean that they should give up because they stand little chance of succeeding at college. In fact, the opposite conclusion might be called for: that the student **can** succeed if motivational barriers are overcome. Because of their susceptibility to misinterpretation, it is recommended that the summary scores not be discussed with students. If a student claims the Coordinator Report, which will occur very rarely, you will want

to have a special conference with that student to explain the summary scores.

Specific Recommendations (bottom of left column)

Selecting support services is a difficult task, especially for first-year students. In addition, it may be difficult for them to articulate their specific needs, even to themselves. This section facilitates referral to campus and community services by providing a set of recommendations that clarify their needs, relate their needs to specific forms of assistance, and present the issue of assistance as a set of clear alternatives that can be readily evaluated, compared, and acted upon.

1. Means of Arriving at Recommendations

To use the recommendations effectively, it is helpful to understand how they are formulated. The CSI's scoring program contains a pool of 25 potential action statements, which are listed in the following section. Each action relates to a particular form of student assistance (e.g., help with reading skills). A priority score ranging from 10.0 to 0.0 is computed for each potential action based on a comprehensive analysis of the student's needs and desires. A 10.0 indicates a very high-priority recommendation.

Needs are inferred from the student's background data (e.g., high school grades, test scores) and motivational assessment (e.g., study habits, ease of transition). The priority score for a given action will increase in direct proportion to the measured need for that action.

These initial, need-based priority scores are then adjusted in two ways.

- The first adjustment takes into account the student's general interest in the broader category to which the action belongs. For instance, the priority scores of all potential actions related to academic support are increased if the student's general receptivity to academic support is high.
- The second adjustment takes into account the student's desire for the specific assistance in question. If a student expresses a strong desire for help with reading skills, for example, then his or her priority score for this potential action is adjusted upward.

After these computations have been made, the potential actions having the highest priority scores are printed in the form of short, direct recommendations (e.g., "Get help in selecting an academic program"). Recommendations are printed in order of priority scores, with the strongest recommendations at the top. Priority scores appear at the end of the recommendations.

The CSI Coordinator Report ranks the seven strongest recommendations while the Advisor/Counselor Report and Student Report state the 10 strongest recommendations in order of importance to the student.

Most priority scores that appear on reports fall in the top end of the distribution, from 6.0 to 10.0. Approximately 70 percent of priority scores are below 7.0. However, even a priority score of 5.0 is worth consideration, since it exceeds 40 percent of all the priority scores in a normal distribution.

Only rarely will an advisor see a priority score of 10.0, since a student must have both the highest possible need and the highest possible desire in order to earn a priority of 10.0.

2. Potential Action Statements

The following list contains the 25 potential action statements that form the pool from which recommendations are made in the CSI reports. You'll notice that they cluster thematically around academics, personal, occupational, financial, and social areas.

- a. Get help with study habits.
- b. Get help with exam skills.
- c. Get help with writing skills.
- d. Get help with basic math skills
- e. Get help with reading skills.
- f. Get tutoring in selected areas.
- g. Discuss roommate problems with counselor.
- h. Discuss any unwanted habit with counselor.
- i. Discuss attitude toward school with counselor.
- j. Discuss any emotional tensions with counselor.
- k. Discuss any family problems with counselor.
- l. Discuss personal relationships and social life with counselor.
- m. Discuss the qualifications for occupations.
- n. Discuss job market for college graduates.
- o. Get help in selecting an occupation.
- p. Get help in selecting an academic program.
- q. Discuss advantages/disadvantages of occupations.
- r. Get help in finding a part-time job.
- s. Get help in obtaining a loan.
- t. Get help in obtaining a scholarship.
- u. Get help in finding a summer job.

- v. Get help in meeting new friends.
- w. Get information about student activities.
- x. Get advice from an experienced student.
- y. Get information about clubs and social organizations.

3. Priority of Recommendations

On the CSI Reports, priority scores greater than 8.0 are most noteworthy. If a student has multiple recommendations that exceed this level, you may need to focus the student's attention on those recommendations that you believe are the most critical. If the student is concerned about having so many priority recommendations, explain that the high scores are partly due to his/her high level of receptivity. You may also want to explain that 8.0 is a somewhat arbitrary number and that it does not represent a critical dividing point; rather, it is merely a rough boundary line.

Special care should be taken in making final recommendations to students. The printed recommendations should only be considered preliminary, as they are generated by an analytical model that contains a definite margin of error. The model assumes that students are most likely to accept and act upon recommendations that are consistent with their existing motivational framework. Based on this premise, it gives relatively strong weight to the student's general receptivity in the area and to their expressed desire for the specific form of assistance under consideration. While the model appears sound as a general theoretical basis for formulating recommendations, *it is not intended to be definitive*. There will be individuals who do not fit the model's assumptions.

For this reason, *one should never accept recommendations uncritically*. The recommendations should be weighed in terms of all the information you have about the student, including transcripts, placement scores, and the student's comments during your conference. After such consideration, you may well decide to place more emphasis on an intermediate recommendation (e.g., one with a priority score of 6.0) than on a strong one (e.g., one with a priority score of 9.0). Given the unique features in every individual case and the fact that printed recommendations are already a select subset from the larger pool of potential actions, such adjustments are quite appropriate.

Motivational Assessment (middle of left column)

The heart of the CSI Form A consists of the 19 independent motivational scales in this section. The student's standing on each scale is indicated in two ways: as a percentile rank and as a point on a visual profile.

If you are interested in the exact score, you can refer directly to the percentile rank. However, if you prefer a general and immediate sense of

the student's motivational pattern, the visual profile will give you an overview at a glance. A percentile rank indicates the proportion of students in the normative sample who scored below that student.

These scores are organized into five sections: academic motivation, social motivation, general coping, receptivity to support services, and two supplementary scales.

1. Academic Motivation

Study Skills. This scale measures the way students approach their studies. It assesses strategies most often associated with achieving academic success. It can therefore be used to make referrals to services that assist students in improving their study skills.

A sample item is, "I have developed a solid system of self-discipline, which helps me keep up with my school work."

Intellectual Interests. This scale measures the degree to which the student enjoys reading and discussing serious ideas. Students with high scores are likely to enjoy classroom discussions and will feel comfortable with the high level of intellectual activity that often occurs in the college classroom. Students with low scores can be encouraged to broaden and deepen their intellectual interests.

A sample item is, "Books have broadened my horizons and stimulated my imagination."

Academic Confidence. This scale measures the student's perception of their ability to perform well in school, especially in testing situations. *It is intended as an indicator of academic self-esteem and should not be used as a substitute for academic assessment.* A comparison between the student's standing on this scale and an aptitude measure can be very revealing. Some talented students underestimate their abilities and need to be strongly encouraged to recognize their talents. Students with low scores can be referred to services that will help them strengthen their confidence.

A sample item is, "I am able to grasp complicated ideas."

Desire to Finish College. This scale measures the degree to which the student values a college education, the satisfactions of college life, and the long-term benefits of graduation. *It identifies students who possess a keen interest in persisting, regardless of their prior level of achievement.* With low-scoring students, an advisor can explore their beliefs and values related to college. In some cases, additional clues about scores for this scale can be informed by low scores in parental education levels, career planning scores, or academic confidence.

A sample item is, "I am strongly dedicated to finishing college – no matter what obstacles get in my way."

Attitude Toward Educators. This scale measures the student's attitudes toward teachers and administrators in general, as acquired through their pre-college experiences. *Students with poor academic achievement often express a general hostility toward teachers and this attitude often interferes with their work.* A counselor may want to help a low-scoring student clarify how certain isolated incidents in school may have influenced their attitude toward all educators. Sometimes a low score reflects a degree of self-sufficiency that borders on arrogance when the student is a high-achiever. Other times a low score may indicate that the student has been treated poorly by one or more teachers as far back as elementary school; perhaps the student was subjected to ridicule or perhaps efforts were criticized or went unrecognized by a teacher.

A sample item is, "Most of my teachers have been very caring and dedicated."

2. Social Motivation

Self-Reliance. *The purpose of this scale is to measure the students' capacity to make their own decisions and to carry through with them.* It also assesses the degree to which an individual is able to develop opinions independently of social pressure. Students with a low score on self-reliance can be encouraged to develop greater independence. When this approach seems inadequate, the student can be referred to counseling services if available.

A sample item is, "I often rely on my own ideas when making a decisions, and I'm prepared to make an unpopular decision if necessary."

Sociability. *This scale measures the student's general inclination to join in social activities.* The relationship between sociability and academic outcomes can be complex. High sociability, for instance, can be a positive force for a person with strong study habits but a negative force for a person with poor study skills. An advisor may wish to explore the implications of an extreme score, either high or low, with the student.

A sample item is, "I spend a lot of time with other people."

Leadership. This is a measure of the student's feelings of social acceptance, especially as a leader. *This scale simply reflects the student's feelings about how others perceive his or her leadership. It does not measure leadership ability or even potential.* Students with low scores can be encouraged to participate in activities that will build up their leadership skills, whereas high-scoring students can be encouraged to assume some leadership responsibilities in student organizations.

A sample item is, "Over the years, I have frequently been selected as a spokesperson or group leader."

3. General Coping

Ease of Transition. This scale measures the student's basic feeling of security amid the changes that often accompany the start of a college career. *Its main focus is on feelings of security in the campus social environment.*

A sample item is, "I expect to make friends easily at college."

Family Emotional Support. *This scale measures the student's satisfaction with the quality of communication, understanding, and respect that they have experienced in their family.* These are factors that can influence their ability to adapt to the stresses of college life. An advisor can offer encouragement and empathy to low-scoring students, or they can refer these students for personal counseling. Low family support has repeatedly emerged in the validity studies as a strong correlate of attrition, particularly in academically successful students. Many advisors focus heavily on this scale for insights into a student's difficulties.

A sample item is, "While I was growing up, I felt that the rest of my family was firmly behind me."

Openness. *This is a measure of the student's tendency to be open to new ideas and to the sensitive and sometimes threatening aspects of the world.* Since freshmen are often exposed to strikingly new cultural events, political philosophies, customs, and interpersonal relationships, narrow or defensive reactions can interfere with their education. After gently alerting low-scoring students to the new ideas they will be studying at college, one can encourage them to make a conscious effort to broaden their cultural and personal horizons. Some advisors use the scale in academic advising, initially steering low scorers away from philosophy, religion, psychology, or other classes that may deal with sensitive, potentially threatening issues. If the course is required during the first term, the advisor may help the student by suggesting strategies for coping with diverse ideas.

A sample item is, "Our ideas about life are far from perfect and we can all benefit greatly from studying the beliefs and values of other societies."

Career Planning. This scale measures the degree of maturity the student has shown in attempting to decide on a career path. It does not assume that maturity is reflected in an early career decision. Rather, *it measures the mental activities that usually lead to effective decision-making in regard to career planning.* Low-scoring students can be referred to a career planning center for a variety of services.

A sample item is, "I have spent a lot of time thinking about how to best prepare myself for a career."

Sense of Financial Security. *This scale measures the extent to which the student feels secure about his or her financial*

situation, especially as it relates to current and future college enrollment. The scale is not intended to measure the objective level of financial resources that the student has, only their feeling of being financially secure. Some students with quite modest means may feel more secure than do students with much greater means but higher expectations. With low-scoring students, an advisor can explore their financial needs and refer them to appropriate offices for assistance.

A sample item is, “I have the financial resources that I need to finish college.”

4. Receptivity to Support Services

Academic Assistance. *This scale measures the student’s desire to receive course-specific tutoring or individual help with study habits, reading skills, examination skills, writing skills, or mathematics skills.* It can be taken into account in deciding whether to encourage the student to seek academic assistance.

A sample item is, “I would like to receive some help in improving my study habits.”

Personal Counseling. This scale measures the student’s felt need for help with personal problems. It covers attitudes toward school, instructor problems, roommate problems, family problems, general tensions, problems relating to dating and friendships, and problems in controlling an unwanted habit. *The scale is a very useful aid in deciding whether to encourage the student to seek counseling for motivational problems indicated elsewhere in the CSI.*

A sample item is, “I would like to talk with a counselor about my general attitude toward school.”

Social Enrichment. *This scale measures the student’s desire to meet other students and to participate in group activities.* Students with high scores can be directed toward the type of social activities they desire.

A sample item is, “I would like to attend an informal gathering where I could meet some new friends.”

Career Counseling. *This scale measures the student’s desire for help in selecting a major or career.* It can be used in conjunction with the career planning scale. If the student has a low score on both scales, for example, an advisor can point out that he or she seems to be avoiding the issue of career choice.

A sample item is, “I would like some help selecting an occupation that is well-suited to my interests and abilities.”

5. Supplementary Scales

Initial Impression. *This scale measures the student’s initial predisposition toward their college on a variety of dimensions.* Keep in mind that the initial impression scale is not intended to

measure the college's true characteristics, but rather the prejudgments and preconceptions that the student has acquired from friends, family, and the media. This mind-set can influence a student's success and inclination to stay in college. For this reason, the scale's usefulness is not affected by the fact that most entering first-year students have had little direct contact with the college itself. The questions on the scale describe general institutional characteristics, which are rated on level of satisfaction.

One listed in the inventory, for example, is, "The entertainment available at or near the institution."

Internal Validity. *This scale measures the student's carefulness in completing the inventory.* Each question asks the student to follow a simple instruction and it is scored in terms of whether or not the student followed the instruction. The scale is very useful in identifying any students who might have responded randomly in order to finish quickly. A sample item from this category is, "Enter a '2' for this question."

Since the overwhelming majority of students (97.1 percent) make one error or less on the validity scale, the task can be considered quite easy. For this reason, students who fall into the categories labeled "questionable" (two or three errors) or "unsatisfactory" (four or more errors) are likely to be distractible, oppositional, or uncommitted to their education. Because these traits are related to dropout, a low validity score may prove to be an indicator of dropout proneness.

In some cases, a low validity score can indicate that a student has a severe language difficulty. But because the validity task is so easy, many students with serious deficits in English will not be identified through the scale. Schools enrolling large numbers of students with significant problems with English should consider using a standard reading test to screen all first-year students. If that approach is not feasible, advisors should at least remain alert to the possibility that a foreign student may not have had an adequate understanding of the CSI to complete it properly. The indicator of native language can be useful in this regard (see below). Problems can then be handled on an individual basis.

The Notice Box (top of right column)

The statement in this box emphasizes the confidential nature of the report. It is very important to respect the student's right to claim the CSI Coordinator Report or CSI Advisor/Counselor Report at any time. If a student is uncomfortable in having his/her results shared, not only may he/she respond "no" to the last item of the CSI at the time of completing the CSI, but he or she may also reclaim the reports from the advisor or coordinator. The intent is to avoid upsetting a student who may feel uncomfortable with the process of intervention.

Student Background Information (remainder of right column)

To better understand the students' present motivational pattern, it is sometimes helpful to have an overview of their background. For this reason, *the report provides a summary of information about the student's high school academics, non-credit activities, family background, admissions test scores, initial college experience, and other indications.*

1. High School Academics

This section presents information about the student's high school education.

Senior-Year Grade Point Average. The student is asked to give the average of all their grades during their senior year in high school. The response is often quite accurate and it gives a moderately good indication of the student's first-year academic performance.

Class Size. A school's size often indicates the range of courses and activities available to the student. Research indicates that students from small high schools often have a harder time adjusting to a large campus than do students from a larger high school.

Program. This question asks the student to classify the program of courses completed in high school. This information provides an indication of the student's interests, goals, and preparation for college-level work.

Standards. In this question, the students express their perception of the academic standards maintained by their high school. The response may represent a realistic assessment of their high school education, or it may merely represent a biased view. In either case, it provides useful information about the students' interpretation of their past environment which may, in turn, influence their motivation to remain in school.

2. Non-credit Activities

The inventory has a question that gathers information about the student's involvement in non-credit activities in high school. If the student has participated in a given category of activity, a "yes" is printed to the right of that category. In addition to giving you information about the student's main interests, this section provides a basis for drawing tentative conclusions about the student's degree of social involvement and confidence in social situations.

3. Family Background

This section provides valuable information about the student's family background. Since the family often instills many key skills and attitudes, it usually has the single greatest influence on the way a student approaches college.

Primary Language. This question indicates what the student considers to be his or her primary or native language. In combination with other information about the student's level of proficiency in English, this question can be very valuable in identifying students who need special remedial work.

Racial/Ethnic Origin. This question can be very valuable in helping students find ethnic support services on campus.

Mother's and Father's Education. Information about the educational level of the student's parents is helpful in gaining insight into the student's socioeconomic perspective, especially his or her feelings about education. Students raised by well-educated parents often have a greater-than-average appreciation for the value of education and career success, but they may also feel burdened by pressures to meet high parental expectations. Other parents may strongly encourage achievement so that their child will have more opportunities than they did, or they may discourage academic achievement for cultural reasons. These patterns illustrate the kinds of issues that a counselor may wish to explore with a student whose other scores indicate a need for special help.

Status. This question asks the students to indicate whether they are married or planning to get married and whether they have any children. Because some of the implications of a college experience differ for single and married students, awareness of marital status can help an advisor be attuned to the student's special needs.

Miles from Family Home. This section specifies the distance between the student's family home and their college. It is most helpful in assessing the student's vulnerability to loneliness and the possibility of disrupted studies resulting from long trips home during the first year.

4. Admissions Test Scores

These test scores give an indication of the student's level of academic achievement. Since they are based on self-report, they are not quite as accurate as the original scores. But they present a very important segment of information in a highly accessible form.

ACT Composite. The ACT composite score ranges from a low of 1 to a high of 36 with a mean of approximately 18. The student reports this score in terms of one of seven categories (e.g., "between 19 and 22").

SAT (combined). The student is asked to report their total score on the SAT by adding their scores on the critical reading and mathematics sections. These total scores can range from 400 to 1600, with a mean of approximately 900. The student reports the score by selecting one of the seven categories given (e.g., "between 841 and 960").

5. College Experience

This section gives information about the students' housing situation, the academic degree they are seeking, and the number of hours per week they intend to study.

Housing. The student is asked to specify where he or she is planning to live while in college. In conjunction with information gained from an advisement session, this question can provide very useful insights into any exceptional pressures or sources of support that may affect the student's life while attending college. Additionally, students who live in residence halls are at somewhat lower risk to drop out than are commuters.

Degree Sought. The student is asked to specify the highest degree he or she is planning to pursue. This question should not necessarily be taken at face value. Rather, it reveals something about the public stance the student has adopted regarding personal goals. A weak student who expresses an intention of getting an advanced degree may simply be trying to appease parental expectations. On the other hand, a talented student who indicates a low goal may have had their educational goals stunted. The student's answer to this question is a valuable point of departure for further discussion.

Plans to Study. In this question, the student is asked to specify the approximate amount of time he/she expects to spend studying outside of class. A substantial number of students report more ambitious plans than they seem to carry out. There are other times when students have ambitious goals for the degree sought but plan to study very little. The question can provide a very useful starting point for a discussion aimed at inducing the student to set realistic, but firm, goals for their studies.

6. Other Indications

This section has been designed to provide additional information about special problems, some of which can be especially sensitive. In order not to distract unnecessarily from other parts of the report, it is highly selective. Three types of information are presented:

- a. Little prior familiarity with the college
- b. Desire to transfer
- c. Dissatisfaction with the college

When students have little prior familiarity with the college, the report gives an indication to that effect. This indication is relatively common (present in 38.5 percent of the normative sample). It means that the student has chosen between zero and two of the first five options or has chosen only option six. The indication can be useful in interpreting the meaning of a low score on the ease of transition scale. When examined for the first-year class as a whole, it may also be useful in assessing the

need for a summer orientation program if one is not currently offered. Institutions that draw their students from a wide geographical area can expect to have a greater-than-average number of students with this indication.

Further, when the student's results suggest a desire to transfer, the section gives an indication to that effect. The simple indication is printed when the student's percentile score on transfer is 70 or above. This means that the student's rating of the pro-trait question is matched by an identical rating on the con-trait question. This ambivalence suggests at least a moderate possibility of transfer.

Finally, the section gives specific indications about the student's dissatisfactions with the college. Only serious dissatisfactions are printed (normally, ratings of one or two) and only the most severe dissatisfactions are shown when space is limited. The cutoff point for printing dissatisfactions is adjusted downward in proportion to the degree that the overall score for the initial impression scale is below the 50th percentile. This results in the printing of more dissatisfactions for the most dissatisfied students (Stratil, 1988).

The CSI Intervention Strategy

What is the CSI Intervention Strategy?

The underlying premise of the CSI Intervention Strategy is that academic advising may be the most effective foundational infrastructure to facilitate the academic integration of students into the college community. Generally speaking, advisors are often the most accessible representatives of an institution after the student enrolls. The quality and timeliness of the contact between the advisor and student is often a vital aspect of effective retention initiatives.

What is the significance of the Student-Advisor Conference?

The most critical activity of this program is the one-on-one student and advisor conference, as it is the springboard from which all other activities originate. The purpose of the CSI Student-Advisor Conferences is to provide an opportunity for students to talk with a caring educator who is familiar with educational services and in a position to guide them toward assistance. The goals of these conferences are to:

- Discuss CSI responses that may be pertinent to the students' success during a one-on-one meeting.
- Establish a relationship with students that communicates a sincere interest.
- Discuss the student's unique pattern of strengths and needs.
- Encourage students to explore the services that will help them to succeed in their courses or program of study.
- Foster student growth and development as well as goal attainment.

Although specific intervention strategies will be designed by and for your own institution, the basic components involve:

- Assessment of the student's strengths and needs identified from the College Student Inventory.
- Identification of strengths and needs of the entire incoming class.
- Identification of potentially at-risk students.
- Individual Student-Advisor Conferences early in the term.
- Proactive referrals to campus and community resources.
- Follow-up of referrals to ensure that students' concerns are appropriately addressed.

Through these activities, the campus attempts to foster student engagement with the college through student-advisor contact, appropriate referrals, and online or in-person support groups

How do you put together a Student-Advisor Conference?

Careful planning is essential for a successful Student-Advisor Conference. Below are a few suggestions for bringing together a successful outcome:

1. Get to know your students ahead of time.

Students communicate vital information about their background and motivation through the CSI. The information is analyzed statistically and results are presented in a set of scale scores. The analysis also provides a partial synthesis of the information by identifying holistic patterns and by generating related recommendations for each student. The resulting CSI Reports capture this valuable information to help you become acquainted with incoming students.

No report by itself can have a substantial impact on your students. The reports must function in a broader framework of supportive relationships and activities that foster student engagement. As stated previously, the most critical aspect of the CSI is the Student-Advisor Conference. It is here that key elements of the CSI come together to inform greater opportunities for individual and programmatic interventions.

When you review a set of reports from the CSI, your initial task is to gain a preliminary understanding of them. You can then search for more complex patterns and intuitive insights which the computer is not able to provide. This qualitative process leads to the forming of preliminary decisions on how you can best approach the student.

2. Decide how you will manage the Student-Advisor Conference.

The Student-Advisor Conference brings together several perspectives on the student all at the same time. These perspectives include:

- Formally-structured input from the CSI
- Informed input from the advisor
- Thoughtful input from the student

Because of the opportunity for spontaneous interaction during this conference, it is also the occasion at which a broad, creative evaluation can occur. You can check on the validity of the CSI's input and, through discussion, the full story of information available to both student and advisor can be further enriched. Both individuals can then work together to produce a set of decisions about the course of action that will be most beneficial to the student in achieving his/her academic, personal, and career goals.

Advisors are responsible for leading the conference. They must be active, committed, and willing to take steps to foster rapport, engage the students in a non-threatening discussion, and share valuable insights with them.

Students also share a considerable part of the responsibility for ensuring that the conference is a success. They must be actively engaged and must

follow through on decisions and referrals to additional services that can move them in the direction of their goals.

As you decide how you will conduct your Student-Advisor Conference, you may find it helpful to brainstorm with your colleagues or go to www.noellevitz.com/RMS and review some of the client case studies for ideas on successful strategies. Even more case studies and resources are available at the RMS *Plus* client community site of www.noellevitz.com/RMSclient.

3. How do you prepare students for their conference time with you?

During their conferences with you, students are going to be asked to assimilate some very important information. To understand those results, students will need to be familiar with the purposes and the terms of the CSI used in the Student Report. Here are some options to consider as you decide what will work best for you and your advisees:

- You could provide this information on an individual basis with each student at the beginning of the conference, but such an approach would obviously be very time-consuming.
- A more efficient method is to hold an information session for all of your advisees sometime between their taking the CSI and your initial conference with them.

In approximately an hour, you can explain all of the motivational scales and the types of recommendations the report will give. If you encounter scheduling problems, give students who cannot attend your preliminary session a handout to study prior to your conference with them.

- A slight variation of this method is for the Coordinator to schedule information sessions conducted by the cadre of advisors for all first-year students. The main difference between this approach and the previous one is that sessions can be held at a variety of times, allowing students to select a time that best fits their schedules. It is not necessary to require students to attend their own advisor's session, but they can be encouraged to do so when their schedules permit.

4. Be deliberate in your preparations for each student.

It is important that you spend time studying and reflecting upon a student's report before your conference with him or her. Since each student is a complex individual, you cannot reach an adequate understanding of the forces which motivate him or her from a quick glance at the report. You need to contemplate the overall pattern in the results.

Give careful consideration to the report's recommendations, but do not assume that the top recommendation is necessarily the best path for the student. The recommendations are only places to begin in developing an individual plan.

Students may evaluate your knowledge of their profile as a sign of your concern for their welfare. An advisor who puzzles over a report at the beginning of a conference is likely to be seen as taking a superficial attitude toward the student. By contrast, a well-prepared advisor will feel comfortable engaging the student in an amicable conversation at the beginning and will be able to move confidently through the subsequent phases. The advisor's degree of preparation will be readily apparent to the student.

5. Approach the Student-Advisor Conference as a process to be completed.

A typical Student-Advisor Conference lasts approximately 30 minutes and usually proceeds through the following phases:

Phase 1: Establish Rapport

In most cases, you and your advisees begin the advisement process as strangers. You need to get to know each other in an informal way. You may want to ask a few basic questions about the student's initial reaction to the current college experience, background, career plans, hobbies and interests, family, and similar topics.

As you engage your advisees informally, it is important to be relaxed and open with them. Be attentive to the student and try to focus on the meaning and feelings behind what the student is saying. Put yourself in that student's shoes and ask open-ended questions that permit the student to do most of the talking. Be attentive to tone of voice (and body language if it's a face-to-face session) as you actively listen to the student discuss feelings about college and career, etc. Emphasize the confidentiality of everything the student reveals in the conference.

Phase 2: Discuss Educational Background and Motivation

Before you begin discussing the CSI, give your students the student report and allow them to look it over for a few moments. Here are some suggestions for deciding how to approach the discussion:

- Most advisors choose to comment on the least threatening aspects of the profile first in order to build rapport and lower defensiveness. For example, you may choose to discuss the student's non-credit activities in high school and ask what opportunities the student has found so far to engage in similar activities on campus.
- Consider starting with the student's strengths. Drawing the student's attention to the most favorable scores in the motivational assessment enables the student to focus on the positive as they address their challenges.

At the end of this guide, you will see a series of open-ended questions to facilitate your discussion with students. Be sensitive

and encouraging when discussing some of the student's motivational challenges. For example, if the student has a low score on academic confidence but a satisfactory or high score on study habits, emphasize the value of effective study skills in developing confidence in any new course. Offer strategies that can be used to achieve greater academic confidence.

When the student has many lower scores, you will need to decide beforehand which you are going to emphasize. To keep the student from feeling discouraged, downplay and defer some of these. Use the student's high scores as resources for the low ones whenever possible. Emphasize your desire to help them realize their opportunities.

Once the individual scores have been discussed, advisors often find that focusing on the student's overall pattern is very helpful. Using your experience as an educator, you will soon become adept at identifying patterns. Even when a pattern is quite common, however, never consider it a simple categorization of the student. Instead, stay sensitive to the complex individuality that lies below the surface.

At this point you may want to bring into the discussion any background factors you feel can help students gain perspective on their individual situations.

Phase 3: Discuss Specific Recommendations

Now you enter the most critical phase of the entire CSI. All previous efforts will produce very little benefit if students with self-reported needs or concerns fail to take positive action.

Your thoughtful insights regarding the list of recommendations will often prevent the student from becoming overwhelmed. Consider telling the student that he/she is not being asked to undertake all of the actions recommended. Explain that your goal is to help him/her decide which subset of recommendations is most important.

Continue by discussing the three or four recommendations with the highest priority scores to see how the student feels about them. To this list can be added any recommendations with low priority scores that you believe are especially important, including any potential recommendations that do not appear on the report.

During your discussion, it is often helpful to relate each recommendation to the pattern of needs shown in the background questions and motivational scales. In addition, you may want to explain that the priority scores are based partly on the student's expressed desire for the type of assistance indicated. This will help the student accept them. You may want to encourage students to explain their attitudes toward each recommendation. It may be helpful to ask them a number of clarifying questions. Drawing students out and getting them

emotionally involved in the process can produce beneficial results.

Usually the recommendations can be clustered. For example, recommendations to get a student loan, a part-time job, a scholarship, and/or a summer job all indicate a need within the same general area: financial aid. When clustering the recommendations, be sure to look at the students' receptivity to specific types of assistance. Set priorities among the recommendations, taking into consideration receptivity scores.

You may want to pause for reflection after you finish your exploration of the most promising options. Assuming you have previously reached a tentative decision about what recommendations to emphasize, you may want to re-examine that decision in light of the student's reactions. If the student has responded favorably to important recommendations, you can proceed with an attempt to convince the student to make a firm commitment to them. Otherwise, you may want to continue on through the remainder of the list before coming back to the critical recommendations. This would allow the student to gain some breathing room before being asked for a decision.

Always try to determine what the student has already done about a particular issue, whether it is help with study skills or the need for help with financial aid. Things may have changed since the day the student completed the CSI. Be a student advocate whenever possible, soliciting students' input and feedback about the college and asking how they would change the things with which they are dissatisfied.

Phase 4: Make Referrals and Follow up

The next steps are extremely important. If you have been able to elicit commitments from the student, it is important that you now solidify them by indicating that you expect the student to follow through. There are several ways to do this. Most commonly, campuses provide the student with a list of relevant services and online links. A few weeks after your conference with the student, review the progress with the recommendations and referrals.

The issue of recommending counseling is a sensitive one to pursue with students. Many advisors simply point out the recommendations regarding counseling and ask if the student is still interested in discussing any of these issues with a counselor. Advisors should clarify that they are not counselors, but they can refer the student to a counselor if the student desires. Students can make an appointment on their own unless they request that you do it for them.

Before you refer, become familiar with the sources and those who offer the services. Refer your students to colleagues who can help them address their challenges, and follow up as

appropriate. Consult your Coordinator if you're unsure about a specific referral.

In making a referral, the keys are timing and genuineness. Don't wait for a better opportunity! Suggest that the student seek further help after the recommendations have been discussed and priorities made among them. Many students are likely to respond with a renewed sense of enthusiasm with the resolution of the problem. Often the outcome is that they feel relieved.

Some students may question a specific referral but may agree with it when you assure them that it is in their best interest. If possible, make the appointment with the appropriate person while the student is in conference with you, or as soon as possible after you complete your call with them. Follow up with an e-mail or phone call to confirm the appointment. Be sure to file a [retention contact report](#) or note your referral in an electronic tracking system to coordinate your efforts.

In summary, when making student referrals:

- Be aware of the full range of referral sources available on your campus or through online educational services.
- Refer at the right time.
- Refer with sensitivity and genuineness.
- Follow up the referral with continued interest in the student.
- File a retention contact report with your RMS *Plus* coordinator.

6. Follow-up after the Student-Advisor Conference

Many students have difficulty sustaining their commitment to a demanding course of action. Their resolve needs to be bolstered periodically, which provides another opportunity to strengthen the student and advisor relationship.

Make a point of contacting your advisees to encourage them. Let them know you have an interest in their progress and ask how the referral turned out. When a student tells you the referral was not helpful or was a negative experience in some way, be sure to convey that information to your RMS *Plus* coordinator or else follow up on it yourself if you feel comfortable doing so.

The retention contact report is another tool that is very useful in follow-up. Your RMS *Plus* coordinator may ask you to complete and return a report each time you have a Student-Advisor Conference to permit administrative follow-up of referrals.

Whatever approach you take in your conferences with students, you need to be very sensitive to individual differences. No single method will work with every student. You may want to develop several approaches for working with different types of students. Occasionally it may be

necessary to switch from one approach to another in the middle of a conference.

As you gain experience in working with the CSI Reports, it will become easier to identify patterns, strengths, and challenges. Click here to review the [interpretation](#) of a sample CSI Report.

To help you prepare for your Student-Advisor Conference, a short video of advisor-student interaction is available for you to view at www.noellevitz.com/CSIvideo.

CSI Advising Practices

Is the CSI appropriate for use with strengths-based advising?

The CSI can be used effectively with any type of advising program. The presentation of the motivation scales on the Student Report and Advisor/Counselor Report allows the advisor to focus solely on the student's strengths if they desire to do so.

The separate versions of the CSI Student Interview Questions provide the structure for a strengths-based advising focus and a developmental advising focus.

How should patterns and themes be treated when interpreting CSI Reports?

Before discussing any patterns or themes found in the CSI profiles, it is important to emphasize the preliminary nature of the data contained in the CSI. Any inventory results should be considered preliminary; they are a sample of a person's behavior at that particular point in time. As such, no definitive conclusions about a person's attitudes or behavior should be based solely on information obtained by any one inventory, regardless of its technical merits. All data should be interpreted in light of other information available, such as information commonly found in a student's file and information obtained during an interview with the student. *It is best to view the CSI Reports as hypotheses to be tested during the Student-Advisor Conferences. Thus, recommendations are preliminary suggestions to be confirmed by the student.*

How important is it to avoid labeling when interpreting the CSI reports?

Once you become experienced in interpreting profiles, extreme care is warranted to avoid unintentionally labeling or categorizing students based on their CSI Reports. If you have access to the Summary Observations, keep in mind that these scores are only to help in prioritizing interventions. Unfortunately, labels have a way of becoming self-fulfilling prophecies, and students who are labeled may be treated in such a way as to fulfill that label. *It is important to view each student, regardless of his/her score on any segment of the CSI, as an individual in need of encouragement to fulfill his/her potential.*

Is it appropriate to use the CSI to predict student behaviors?

Every student is an individual with a unique configuration of motivational processes. To be most effective with each student, we need to understand that individuality.

The purpose of studying general patterns is to improve our understanding of the influence that key variables have on student behavior, so that we can become more sensitive to each student's needs. For instance, the dropout proneness score on the Coordinator Report is not meant to be used as a universal explanation for all instances of attrition. Rather, it is one piece of information you can use in seeking the most effective intervention to fit the needs of a particular student.

Most advisors would also suggest that broad levels of performance and qualitative descriptions stated in simple terms are preferable to specific numerical scores when discussing the student reports with students. Although the suggested group sessions would help students to understand percentile ranks, an advisor's discussion will be more productive if technical jargon and scores are kept to a minimum.

Again, the CSI should be used as a springboard for meaningful discussion that fosters student engagement.

How does the CSI promote student engagement?

Student engagement occurs when students connect with the college community in ways that advance their opportunities to become fully integrated into that community. Below are some specific ways the advisor promotes student engagement:

- Each of the CSI scales can be connected to at least one student service or support area. For example, the academic confidence scale presents a great opportunity for the advisor to connect the student to appropriate academic areas, support services, or student activities. The receptivity scales represent even more direct links with programs and services.
- The Advisor/Counselor Report features up to seven specific recommendations for each student. Again, these recommendations represent specific opportunities for students to connect with the programs and services they need to become more fully engaged in the community.
- The Summary and Planning Report provides outreach lists that allow individual program and service areas to connect with students who have indicated a need or a desire for their services.
- The Integrated Summary Observations with Receptivity Report is designed to facilitate the connection of students with the service areas that they've indicated as most beneficial upon entry to college.
- The Student Interview Questions are designed to promote student engagement with the programs, services, activities, and people who can help them become integrated into the college community.

Professional and Ethical Considerations in Using the CSI

What do we need to know?

This section outlines the major ethical considerations involved in using the CSI, as compiled by its author.

Confidentiality

The American Psychological Association's (APA) Ethical Principles state that confidentiality of information obtained from students is to be respected at all times. Information obtained and evaluative data concerning students is to be discussed only for professional purposes and only with persons clearly concerned with the case. This means that students' profiles are not released to any third party unless the student has given a written release or the third party has a legitimate need for access to the profile. Whereas the term "confidentiality" was once thought of solely as a matter of professional ethics, it is now true that case law, statutes, and licensing regulations in many states have given this standard of conduct legal status as well. For example, professionals are legally liable for breach of confidentiality. Therefore, all CSI reports should be maintained as confidential in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. In practical terms, this means that they should be handled with discretion. They should not be placed in unlocked filing cabinets where open access is available.

The online system indicates that these reports are to be handled in accordance with FERPA guidelines.

Protection of Privacy

An institution has a right to assess a student's qualifications for admission, placement, or graduation, based on reasonable indications of academic competence. But a person's attitudes are a more subjective, private matter. Forcing a student to complete the CSI would be counterproductive at best and harmful at worst, especially if the student feels that his/her right to privacy has been compromised. Moreover, since questionnaires are susceptible to faking in a favorable direction, pressuring a student to participate could invalidate the CSI's results. For these reasons, the CSI informs students that participation in any CSI related activity, including completion of the CSI, is voluntary.

Protection of a student's privacy involves two key concepts: relevance and informed consent. The information the student is asked to reveal must be relevant to the stated purposes of testing. For this reason, advisors must ensure that the results are correctly interpreted. The concept of informed consent implies that test takers are made aware, in language they can understand, of the reasons for taking the CSI, what the CSI measures, how the results will be used, and what testing information will be released and to whom.

Students are provided this information on page 1 of the CSI. However, further elaboration by the examiner is usually necessary. In addition, the last item of the CSI authorizes the results to be sent to the student's advisor and student service offices. If a student does not authorize release to the advisor, "Restricted to

program coordinator per Student's Request" will be printed at the top center of his/her CSI Advisor/Counselor Report and Coordinator Report. Special provisions will be made by your Coordinator to handle these reports.

The Right to Be Informed of the CSI Results (i.e., CSI Reports)

Students appreciate receiving and discussing their CSI Student Report. Although informing students of their results from having completed the College Student Inventory is the very foundation of the Retention Management System *Plus*, a brief mention of the ethics involved is in order.

Test takers have a right to be informed, in terms that they can understand, of the nature of the findings with respect to a test they took. Also included here is the right to know what recommendations are being made as a consequence of the test data. Conversely, if test results or findings (or recommendations made on the basis of test data) are being voided for any reason (such as irregularities found to have been in evidence), test takers have a right to know that.

Competence

The question of who is qualified to use the CSI Reports was considered in depth. The guidance provided by the APA testing standards has been very helpful (APA, 1999). The most relevant statement indicates that a test manual should provide special instructions to teachers or others who lack the formal training usually expected of those who interpret a test. It also recommends that interpretive aids be provided for tests that are to be interpreted by the test taker.

The purpose of the CSI Advisor's Guide is to provide the information an educator should have in order to use the CSI properly. In addition, interpretive aids are provided to the students in the form of a narrative report that accompanies each profile.

The author of the CSI recommends that the following guidelines be used as recommended policy for advisors who use the intervention program.

Advisors can (a) help students understand their student report at a common-sense level of interpretation; (b) discuss possible forms of assistance available to a student in light of the needs and desires indicated in the CSI; and (c) offer a student tactful encouragement to seek forms of assistance that the advisor believes are appropriate but for which the student may have little enthusiasm.

Therefore, the role of the RMS *Plus* advisor is merely an extension of the kind of role that advisors have traditionally played. Just as one might examine a student's placement scores in math and recommend a beginning or advanced course, an advisor can examine a student's score on study skills and recommend a workshop.

Advisors must (a) never pressure a student into discussing matters the student does not wish to discuss; and (b) avoid any attempt to provide psychological counseling to a student based on the CSI. An advisor who is a properly licensed or certified psychological counselor may, of course, be an exception to this restriction. But they should be very sensitive to the special problems (e.g., conflict of interest) created by the academic context in which they work and the ethical and professional considerations related to the practice of psychological counseling (APA, 2002). When a student confers with an academic advisor,

he/she does not expect to receive counseling. Therefore, counseling should not be undertaken during advisement sessions but rather scheduled for separate sessions, which the student understands and agrees will be devoted to counseling.

The restriction against engaging in psychological counseling is based on the premise that such counseling is a very sensitive undertaking that requires special training. Although quite well-meaning, we often engage our own biases when we deal with the problems of others. Professional training is designed to prepare one to recognize such influences and take steps to minimize them. In addition, training provides the technical concepts needed to predict the effects of different approaches to counseling. Your role as an advisor is simply to provide information and refer the student to appropriate resources. In many ways you are a liaison between the student and the college bureaucracy; your objective is to link the student with the resources he/she may need to succeed.

The restriction not to pressure a student follows from the general ethical considerations discussed earlier. Also, pressuring anyone to discuss private matters may evoke responses that are counterproductive.

Proper Use of Tests

Any test is simply a measure of a sample of behavior. It is an estimate, subject to confirmation by data obtained from other sources. Thus, no test should be used in isolation. Test scores must be interpreted in light of other information available, such as student records and interviews with the student. As previously stated, the CSI is best viewed as a hypothesis to be tested and confirmed in the Student-Advisor Conferences. It is thus a conduit for meaningful discussion early in the term. Consider it a means to an end, with that end being the identification and addressing of students' strengths and needs, in order to help them connect with services that will elevate their success as they strive to attain their educational and career goals.

References

Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. American Psychological Association: Washington, D.C., 2002.

<http://www2.apa.org/ethics/code2002.doc>

Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. American Psychological Association: Washington, D.C., 1999. <http://www.apa.org/science/standards.html>

Resource Guide

These resources are intended to supplement the information provided in this guide. Many of the strategies were developed by resourceful coordinators and advisors at all types of institutions. Please feel free to adapt any of these strategies to fit your advising style and the approach adopted by your institution for using the CSI to intervene with students. Go to www.noellevitz.com/RMScient to access the Resource Guide as well as other resources which will assist in the use of the CSI.

Appendices

Appendix A: Advisor/Counselor Report

College Student Inventory™ Advisor/Counselor Report		CSI Form A Sample Report		Michael Doe Male, Age 19, ID#1234567 Sample University Month DD, YYYY	
Instructions This is a report of Michael's College Student Inventory results. Please give him a thorough explanation of his Student Report. If you agree with the recommendations, gently encourage him to follow them. When possible, try to make the arrangements yourself as a way of reducing motivational barriers. Avoid attempting any psychological counseling if not professionally trained for such work. Above all, be sure to protect the confidentiality of this report. Please see the CSI Advisor's Guide™ for more details.					
Motivational Assessment			Student Background Information		
	Perc. Rank	Very Low	Very High	High School Academics	
Academic Motivation				Senior Year GPA	C Average
Study Habits	4			Class Size	500+
Intellectual Interests	4			Program	College Prep
Academic Confidence	68			Perceived Standards	Below Average
Desire to Finish College	29			Noncredit Activities	
Attitude Toward Educators	40			Athletics	Yes
Social Motivation				Fine Arts	
Self-Reliance	43			Leadership	
Sociability	41			Misc. Groups	Yes
Leadership	70			Oral Expression	
General Coping				Science	
Ease of Transition	56			Written Expression	
Family Emotional Support	17			Family Background	
Openness	26			Primary Language	English
Career Planning	69			Racial/Ethnic Origin	White/Caucasian
Sense of Financial Security	30			Mother's Education	H.S. Diploma
Receptivity to Support Services				Father's Education	H.S. Diploma
Academic Assistance	14			Marital Status	Single, No Plans
Personal Counseling	47			Miles From Family	0-9
Social Enrichment	4			Admissions Test Scores	
Career Counseling	16			ACT Composite	23-26
Initial Impression*	44			SAT (CR + M)	721-840
Internal Validity	Excellent			College Experience	
				Housing	Parents' Home
				Degree Sought	Bachelor's
				Plans to Study	6 hrs/week
				Other Indications*	
				Desires to transfer	
Specific Recommendations for Michael					
The strength of each recommendation is indicated by its priority score (0 to 3.3 = low, 3.4 to 6.6 = medium, 6.7 to 10.0 = high):					
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Notice Students may request that their report be removed from your file at anytime. *This information is not shown on the student's copy.					
Part of the Retention Management System Plus™ from Noel-Levitz					

Appendix B: Student Report

College Student Inventory™		CSI Form A Sample Report		Michael Doe Male, Age 19, ID#1234567 Sample College Month DD, YYYY																									
Michael Doe Student Report																													
Instructions Michael, this is an interpretive report of your responses to the College Student Inventory. Its purpose is to help you identify your special interests and needs. The percentile ranks show how you compare to a larger sample of college students from across the country. Specifically, they indicate the percentage of students whose scores are equal to or less than yours. Since they are based on questionnaire information alone, they may give only a rough indication of your true attitudes. Your advisor or counselor will help you understand your scores and find the services you desire.																													
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Michael Doe**Student Report - page 2**

Written Interpretation

In this section you will receive a more detailed explanation of your results. The purpose of this information is to help you develop your skills and get the most from your college experience. Take a balanced approach to reviewing and utilizing this information. Do not assume that each statement is perfectly accurate just because it is printed in a formal manner; some statements may not fit you well. However, do not dismiss a statement just because it points to a challenge.

Keep an open mind as you consider each statement. When it seems accurate, give serious thought to any suggestions that accompany the statement. If the statement is puzzling, discuss it with someone who can help you interpret it. Approaching the information in this way can be very helpful.

Academic Motivation

1. Study Habits measures the amount of time and effort that you put into your studies. Your score placed you in the 4th percentile. Weak study habits are the single greatest cause of academic problems in college, and you probably need to put much more effort into this area. As soon as possible, develop a clear daily routine in which you set aside certain periods of time to study. Learn to focus your attention and to pace yourself. Other useful techniques include previewing, underlining, note-taking, and reviewing. Academic counselors can help you develop your study habits.
2. Intellectual Interests measures the degree to which you enjoy reading and discussing serious ideas. Your score placed you in the 4th percentile. You appear to be much more comfortable with straight-forward practical problems than with abstract thinking. This is quite natural. However, some very important concepts can only be understood by expanding your knowledge base. Speak with your instructors or advisor to identify opportunities for further exploration of your areas of interest.
3. Academic Confidence measures the degree to which you feel capable of doing well in college. Your score placed you in the 68th percentile. This suggests that you are fairly confident in your ability to do well in your studies. Use this basic sense of confidence to reassure yourself during any periods of stress or disappointment. If you need additional help, an academic counselor is available to talk with you.
4. Desire to Finish College measures the strength of your commitment to completing a degree. Your score placed you in the 29th percentile. This suggests that you have some doubts about the value of a college education. It is very important that you clarify your objectives as soon as possible. A clear decision about your career goals can strengthen your commitment to college. A career counselor can be very helpful in guiding you through this process.
5. Attitude Toward Educators measures the degree to which you see teachers and administrators as competent, reasonable, and caring. Your score placed you in the 40th percentile. While you have positive perceptions of teachers in general, you have a few negative perceptions as well. Try getting to know your instructors early, and you will find that most are ready to support you. In addition, your advisor can help you move beyond any remaining negative perceptions.

Social Motivation

1. Self-Reliance measures the degree to which you trust your own judgment and make your own decisions. Your score placed you in the 43rd percentile. This suggests you have a level of independence that is typical of first-year students. You may find yourself spending too much time seeking companionship, going along with activities that violate your values, or feeling uncomfortable with studying alone. If this happens, you will want to find ways to achieve greater independence in your thoughts and way of life.
2. Sociability measures your desire for social engagement. Your score placed you in the 41st percentile. You seem to have developed a healthy interest in social activities without letting them dominate your life. This balance should serve you well in college.
3. Leadership measures the degree to which you feel accepted as a leader. Your score placed you in the 70th percentile. This suggests that you are well respected by others. If you wish to develop your skills even further, you are encouraged to assume some responsibilities in a club or organization. The staff in student services can help you identify some opportunities available to you.

Michael Doe**Student Report - page 3**

General Coping

1. Ease of Transition measures the degree to which you feel comfortable with the various changes you experience as a college student. Your score placed you in the 56th percentile. This suggests that these transitions are causing you to experience a moderate level of stress at this time. If you experience problems coping with these changes, you are encouraged to talk with a counselor.
2. Family Emotional Support measures the satisfaction you feel with the communication that occurs in your family. Your score placed you in the 17th percentile. This score suggests a high level of dissatisfaction that may have negative effects on other areas of your life. For example, it is hard to concentrate on your studies if you are always thinking about family problems. If these feelings persist, do not ignore them. Talk with someone who can help you understand and cope with your family situation.
3. Openness measures your receptivity to new ideas and beliefs that differ from your own. Your score placed you in the 26th percentile. This suggests that while you try to be open to new ideas, you often dismiss objectionable information without giving it full consideration. You may also avoid dealing with interpersonal conflict. Keep in mind that we grow by considering a variety of perspectives. Ideas that differ from our own may contain important truths, and acknowledging these differences helps us to broaden our perspective. Talk with your advisor for suggestions on ways to become more tolerant of the opinions and beliefs of others.
4. Career Planning measures the amount of serious thought you have given to your career choice. Your score placed you in the 69th percentile. This suggests that you have given a great deal of thought to the type of work you value and enjoy, to the current availability of jobs for college graduates, and to the specific training you will need. Continue to plan and explore the opportunities available to you. The career planning office can assist you.
5. Sense of Financial Security measures your satisfaction with the amount of money available to you while at college. Your score placed you in the 30th percentile. Students who worry about meeting their financial obligations are sometimes unable to fully engage in the college experience. If you want to discuss your financial situation with someone, the staff in the financial aid office can help you.

Receptivity to Support Services

1. Receptivity to Academic Assistance measures your interest in receiving help with your academic skills. Your score placed you in the 14th percentile. Given the overall pattern of your needs, you are strongly encouraged to seek academic assistance. Getting off to a good start during your first term sets the stage for ongoing success. Talk with your advisor for more information on academic services available to you.
2. Receptivity to Personal Counseling measures your interest in receiving help with personal matters. Your score placed you in the 47th percentile. Since you have indicated some concern with personal matters, you are encouraged to reconsider the value of receiving help. Resources are available to assist you.
3. Receptivity to Social Enrichment measures the degree to which you would like some help getting involved in social activities on campus. Your score placed you in the 4th percentile. This suggests that you do not have a desire for guidance in this area.
4. Receptivity to Career Counseling measures your openness to receiving assistance with occupational interests. Your score placed you in the 16th percentile. You currently do not indicate a pressing need for career services, given your responses related to defining career goals and commitment to college. If your situation changes, do not hesitate to contact the career services office for assistance.

Miscellaneous

Internal Validity measures your carefulness in following instructions on this inventory, as indicated by those items that asked you to enter a specific response. Your score was excellent. This suggests that you were very focused on following the instructions.

Note: You may request that this report be removed from your file at any time.

Appendix C: Coordinator Report

College Student Inventory [™] Coordinator Report	CSI Form A Sample Report	Michael Doe Male, Age 19, ID#1234567 Sample College Month DD, YYYY																								
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