



ADULT
LEARNING
FOCUSED
INSTITUTION

of Higher Education

Introduction to Adult Learner Focused Institutions

Reach Higher Faculty Retreat

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Judy Wertheim, Ed.D.

Vice President for Higher Education Services

CAEL

jwertheim@cael.org

CAEL's Mission:

To make lifelong learning within reach for every adult

CAEL removes barriers to lifelong learning for adults, identifies and disseminates innovative and effective practices, and delivers services that touch the lives of adults.

ALFI Project Origins

- CAEL's Benchmarking Study
- *Best Practices in Adult Learning*
- *Nine Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners*
- Workbook for Informal Assessments
- ALFI Assessment Tools
 - Adult Learner Inventory (ALI)
 - Institutional Self-Assessment Survey (ISAS)

Why Focus on Adults with the ALFI Toolkit?

- In 2008 CAEL produced a report with funding from Lumina Foundation for Higher Education and in partnership with NCHEMS:

Adult Learning in Focus: National and State-by-State Data

- The objective is to provide a comprehensive look at adult learners in America at the national and state levels and provide new data and tools for policy makers

Adult Learning in Focus: National and State-by-State Data

<http://www.cael.org>

- National report on current size and shape of adult learning, barriers to adult participation
- State measures and comparisons among 50 states
- State-by-state profiles
- Policy guide and framework for assessment and improvement
- Annotated bibliography

Adult Learning in Focus

A strong and growing argument for higher educational attainment in the United States population and workforce

- Jobs that are expected to support the economy in the coming years will depend on a skilled workforce that is able to learn and adapt quickly to new challenges
- Emerging issues of global competitiveness and demographics of the U.S. workforce have brought focus to this issue

Adult Learning in Focus

- As baby boomers ‘retire’ from current jobs, knowledge and skills gaps grow
- Pipeline of young college graduates will not be enough to meet future workforce skills demands

Adult Learning in Focus

Main sources will have to be tapped to rectify this shortfall

- Adults (25-64) who never completed high school – 21 million
- Adults with high school diplomas but no college—46 million
- Adults with some college but no degree—32 million

The ALFI Toolkit

- Data obtained with the Toolkit help institutions **recruit, retain, and graduate** adult students
- The Toolkit is based on CAEL's *Nine Essential Principles of Serving Adult Learners*

Principle 1

Outreach:

The institution conducts its outreach to adult learners by overcoming barriers in time, place, and tradition in order to create lifelong access to educational opportunities.

Principle 2

Life & Career Planning:

The institution addresses adult learners' life and career goals before or at the onset of enrollment in order to assess and align its capacities to help learners reach their goals.

Principle 3

Financing:

The institution promotes choice using an array of payment options for adult learners in order to expand equity and financial flexibility.

Principle 4

Assessment of Learning Outcomes:

The institution defines and assesses the knowledge, skills & competencies acquired by adult learners both from the curriculum and from life / work experience in order to assign credit and confer degrees with rigor.

Principle 5

Teaching/Learning Process:

The institution's faculty use multiple methods of instruction (including experiential and problem-based methods) for adult learners in order to connect curricular concepts to useful knowledge and skills.

Principle 6

Student Support Systems:

The institution assists adult learners using comprehensive academic and student support systems in order to enhance students' capacities to become self-directed, lifelong learners.

Principle 7

Technology:

The institution uses information technology to provide relevant and timely information and to enhance the learning experience.

Principle 8

Strategic Partnerships:

The institution engages in strategic relationships, partnerships, and collaborations with employers and other organizations in order to develop and improve educational opportunities for adult learners.

Principle 9

Transitions:

The institution supports guided pathways that lead into and from the its programs and services in order to ensure that students' learning will apply usefully to achieving their educational and career goals.

The Principles of Effectiveness are:

- Integrated – they work together
- Indivisible – they form a whole
- Imperative – not just “a good idea”

ALFI Tools consist of...

- *Adult Learner Inventory*
(Noel-Levitz & CAEL) adult student survey based on ALFI
- *Institutional Self-Assessment Survey*
(CAEL) for adult degree program administrators, faculty, and staff

Adult Learner Inventory (ALI)

- Survey to capture the experience of adult students in undergraduate programs
- Developed through a partnership between CAEL and Noel-Levitz
- ALI focuses on eight of the nine CAEL ALFI Principles (“Strategic Partnerships” is not covered because students are unlikely to know about this area)
- Structure of the instrument follows the Noel-Levitz model with students indicating both the level of importance and the level of satisfaction for each item
- Items rated on a 1-7 scale (1 is low; 7 is high)

Adult Learner Inventory: The Survey

- 47 items rated for importance and satisfaction
- 10 optional items defined by the institution, rated for importance and satisfaction
- Version for four-year institutions and a version for two-year community colleges; same items with text adjustments
- 2 summary items – overall satisfaction and likelihood student will recommend to other adult students
- 18 standard demographic items (gender, age, employment, class load, etc.)
- 2 optional demographic items (one major/program and one other)

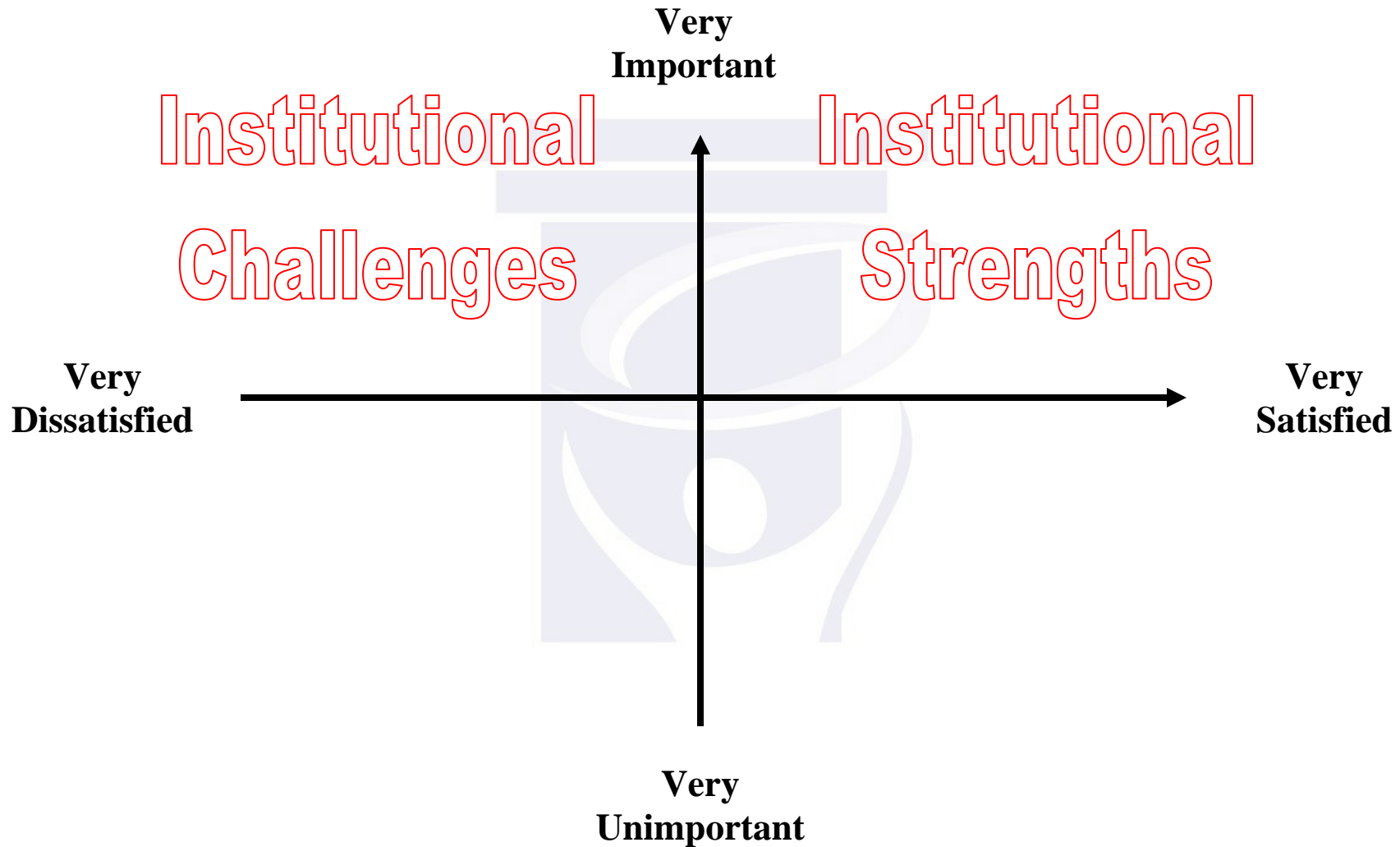
Satisfaction and expectations

- Definition of satisfaction:
 - When expectations are met or exceeded by the student's perception of the campus reality.
(Schreiner & Juillerat, 1994)
- What about expectations:
 - Expectations are critical. They serve as the point from which students make qualitative judgments of an institution.
 - If you assess satisfaction outside of the context of student expectations, you run the risk of working on areas that won't have any retention payoff.

ALI scores

- Importance scores
 - How important is it for your program to meet this expectation?
- Satisfaction scores
 - How satisfied are you that your program is meeting this expectation?
- Performance gap scores
 - The discrepancy between the expectation (importance score) and the reality (satisfaction score).

Matrix for prioritizing action



2009 National Adult Learner Satisfaction-Priorities Report

- Based on student responses to the Adult Learner Inventory™ available from Noel-Levitz and CAEL
- Includes data from fall 2006 through spring 2009
- Data specific to four-year schools separately from data specific to community colleges
- Four-year group includes 25,459 students from 52 institutions and the two-year group includes 3,983 students from 24 institutions
- Complete report can be downloaded:
www.noellevitz.com/benchmark

or

Publications on CAEL Web site: www.cael.org

Scales in order of importance with satisfaction and performance gaps scores for four-year institutions

Scale	Importance	Satisfaction	<i>Performance Gap</i>
Outreach	6.53	5.72	0.81
Life and Career Planning	6.41	5.35	1.06
Financing	6.39	5.43	0.96
Teaching-Learning Process	6.38	5.73	0.65
Transitions	6.28	5.51	0.77
Technology	6.28	5.68	0.60
Student Support Svcs.	6.26	5.48	0.78
Assessment of Learning Outcomes	6.10	5.38	0.72

Top Strengths and Challenges: Four-year colleges and universities

STRENGTHS

- My program allows me to pace my studies to fit my life and work schedules.
- This institution explains what is needed for me to complete my program here.
- I have a clear understanding of what I'm expected to learn in my courses.
- My studies are closely related to my life and work goals.
- I am able to obtain information I need by phone, fax, e-mail, or online.

CHALLENGES

- My instructors provide timely feedback about my academic progress.
- I receive timely responses to my requests for help and information.
- Sufficient course offerings within my program of study are available each term.
- I am able to choose course delivery that fits my life circumstances.
- I receive the help I need to make decisions about courses and programs that interest me.

Scales in order of importance with satisfaction and performance gaps scores for community college group

Scale	Importance	Satisfaction	<i>Performance Gap</i>
Outreach	6.56	5.63	0.93
Financing	6.45	5.46	0.99
Life and Career Planning	6.44	5.21	1.23
Teaching-Learning Process	6.39	5.67	0.72
Transitions	6.35	5.35	1.00
Technology	6.35	5.60	0.75
Student Support Services	6.33	5.41	0.92
Assessment of Learning Outcomes	6.20	5.42	0.78

Top Strengths and Challenges: Community Colleges

STRENGTHS

- I have a clear understanding of what I'm expected to learn in my courses.
- My studies are closely related to my life and work goals.
- I am able to choose the course delivery that fits my life circumstances.
- Processes and procedures for enrolling here are convenient.
- I am able to obtain information I need by phone, fax, e-mail, or online.

CHALLENGES

- My instructors provide timely feedback about my academic progress.
- Advisors are knowledgeable about requirements for courses and programs of interest to me.
- Sufficient course offerings within my program of study are available each term.
- I receive the help I need to make decisions about courses and programs that interest me.
- I receive adequate information about sources of financial assistance to me.

The Adult Learner Inventory

- Available for online administrations
- E-mail invitations typically sent to 100% of the adult learner population
- One invitation and two reminder messages are included; messages appear to be coming from someone at the institution
- Response rates average 20%
- May want to offer some type of incentive to encourage survey completion
- Option to add up to 10 campus defined items rated for importance and satisfaction plus an unlimited list of major/program codes and one demographic item

Timeline for administration of the ALI

- Appropriate to administer in either fall or spring
- Allow 4 to 6 weeks into the first term before surveying
- Avoid mid-terms and finals and too close to spring break
- Timing
 - Online accounts set up with one week's notice
 - Survey typically available online for a two or three week window
 - Survey results delivered one week after online account closes

Adult Learner Inventory Reports

- Demographic overview
- Scales to provide a big picture view of student priorities
- Comparison with external national comparison group, with identification of areas with significantly higher or lower satisfaction
- Strategic Planning Overview with identified strengths and challenges
- Summary report with percentages
- Enrollment factors in decision to enroll
- Optional target group reporting to slice the data by demographic variables
- Optional year to year reporting to benchmark satisfaction improvements over time

What do institutions do with their strengths?

- Use as positive feedback on campus
 - Share with faculty, staff, and students
- Use with admissions and recruiting materials
- Incorporate results in internal and external public relations plans. Use departments that are doing well as models
- Celebrate successes!

What do institutions do with their challenges?

- Attempt to respond to no more than 3-5 for any given academic year
 - Some challenges can be grouped together under a broader umbrella
- Determine some activities that are campuswide and those that may be specific to departments on campus
- Consider conducting focus groups to better understand the issue from the student perspective and to begin the problem-solving process
- Establish next steps and timelines for initiatives
- Inform the campus of the plan and actively work the plan
- Inform the campus when changes have been made

Ways to approach initiatives

- Areas that can be fixed with appropriate information
 - Example: Inform students of the resources available to help them selecting courses and billing options
- Short-term / quick response items
 - Examples: Encouraging faculty to provide timely feedback to students
- Areas that need to be part of a long-term strategic plan
 - Example: Adding additional course offerings

Institutional Self-Assessment Survey Categories

- Institutional Background
- Mission, Leadership and Organizational Structure
- Tuition and Financial Aid
- Teaching and Learning
- Faculty Recruitment and Development
- Student Services
- Key Constituencies

Institutional Self-Assessment Survey

- Approximately 50 items
- Completed by an institutional team

Institutional Self Assessment Survey

- There is a two-year and a four-year version of the ISAS.
- Both surveys are available for review at <http://www.cael.org/alfi/isas.htm>

Institutional Self-Assessment Survey and Adult Learner Inventory

- Comparative data:
 - Internal: The institution's perspective vs. adult learner perspective for each scale
 - External: Your team's and your students' ratings vs. students and teams at other institutions that have used the ALFI Assessment Tools

Using the Data:

The Reports

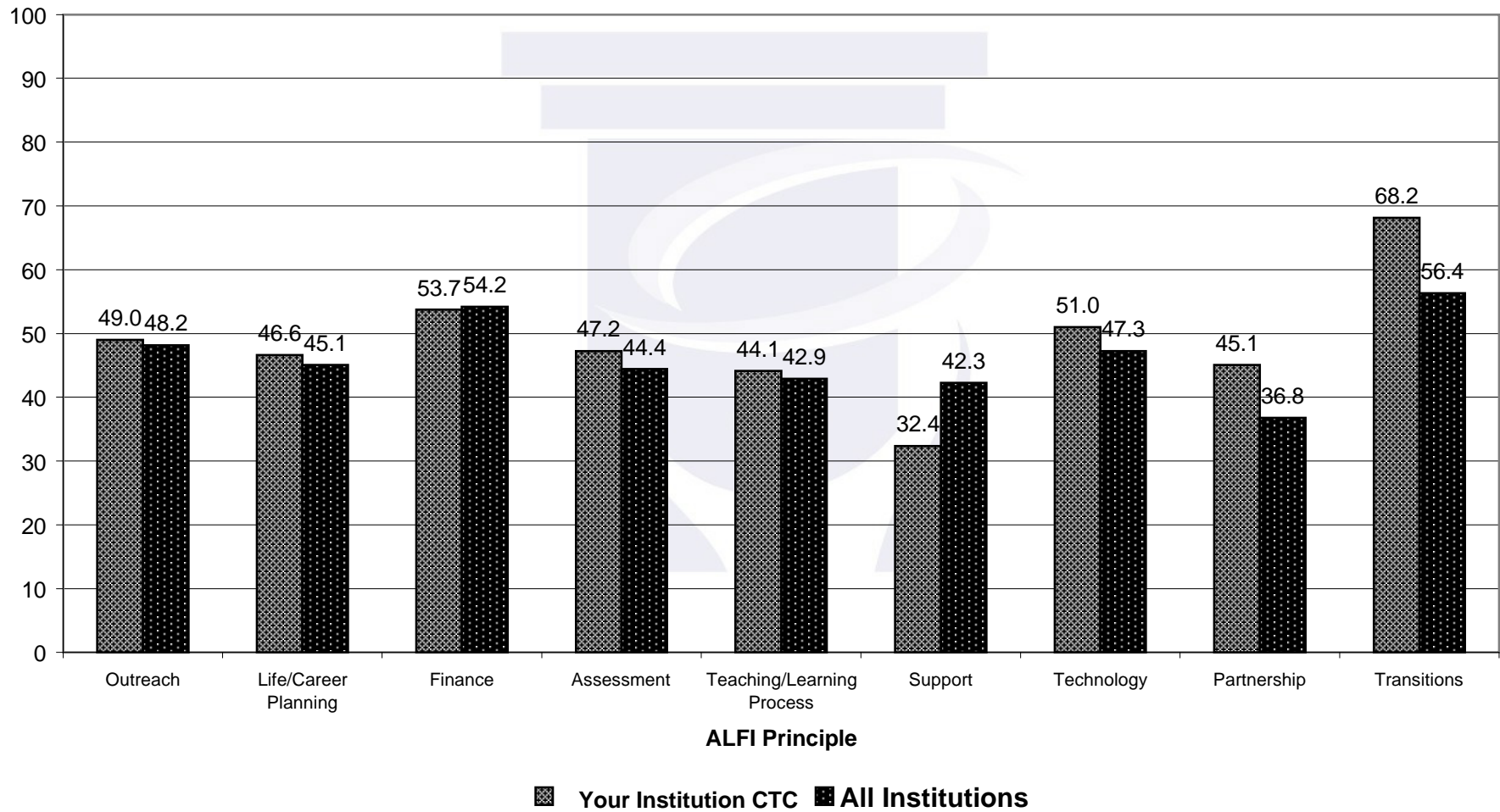
- ALI Reports
- ISAS Summary Reports
- Combined Report (Basic Report)

ISAS SUMMARY REPORT

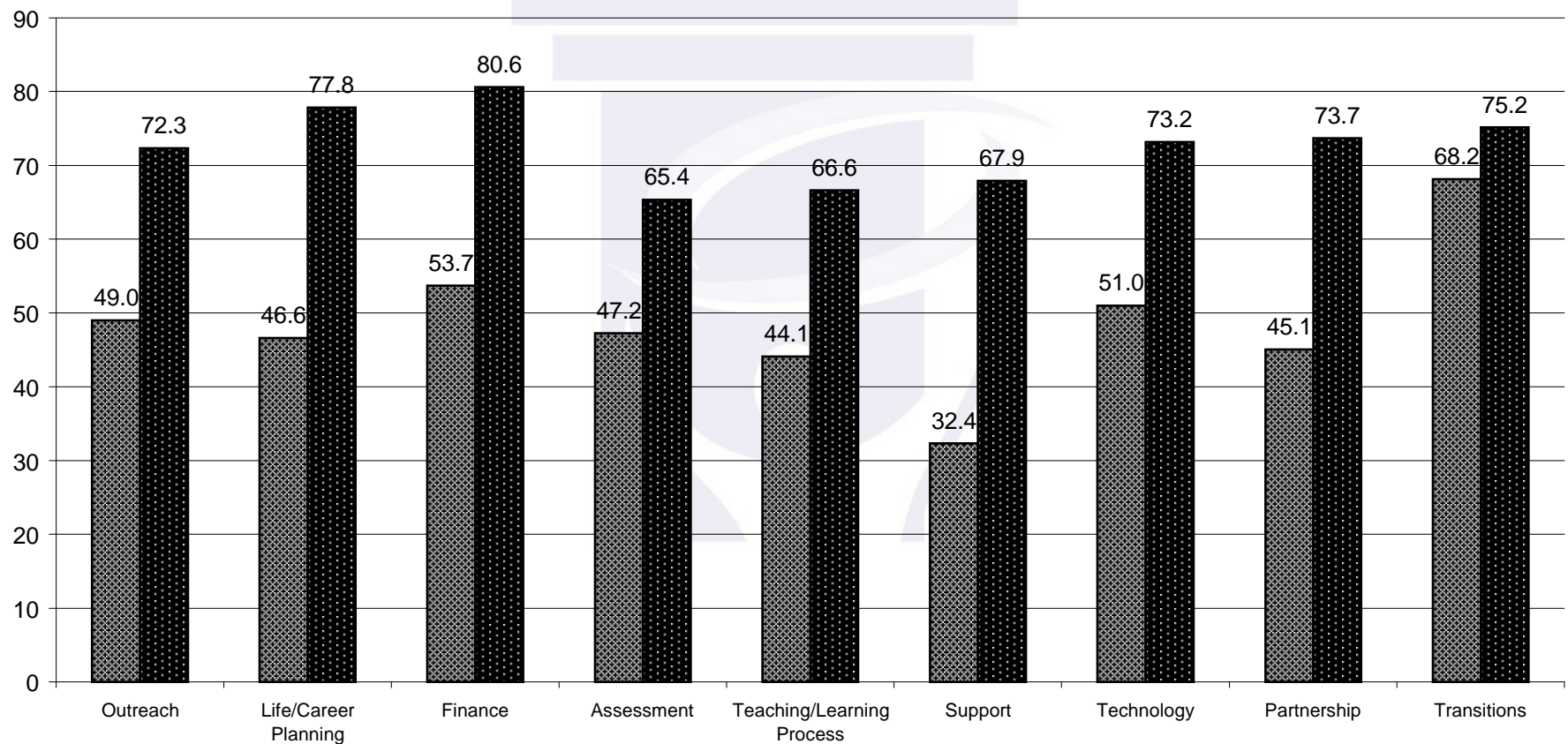
Your Institution

ALFI Principle	Your Score	Mean Score	Highest Score	Lowest Score	Rank Order	Number of Institutions
Outreach	49.0	48.2	72.3	21.6	19	42
Life/Career Planning	46.6	45.1	77.8	20.8	18	42
Finance	53.7	54.2	80.6	15.4	24	42
Assessment	47.2	44.4	65.4	15.0	15	42
Teaching and Learning Process	44.1	42.9	66.6	21.6	18	42
Support	32.4	42.3	67.9	15.4	37	42
Technology	51.0	47.3	73.2	5.4	19	42
Partnership	45.1	36.8	73.7	12.4	11	42
Transitions	68.2	56.4	75.2	19.4	8	42

ISAS Results Your Institution vs Mean Performance of All Institutions



ISAS Results Your Institution vs Best Performances in each Category

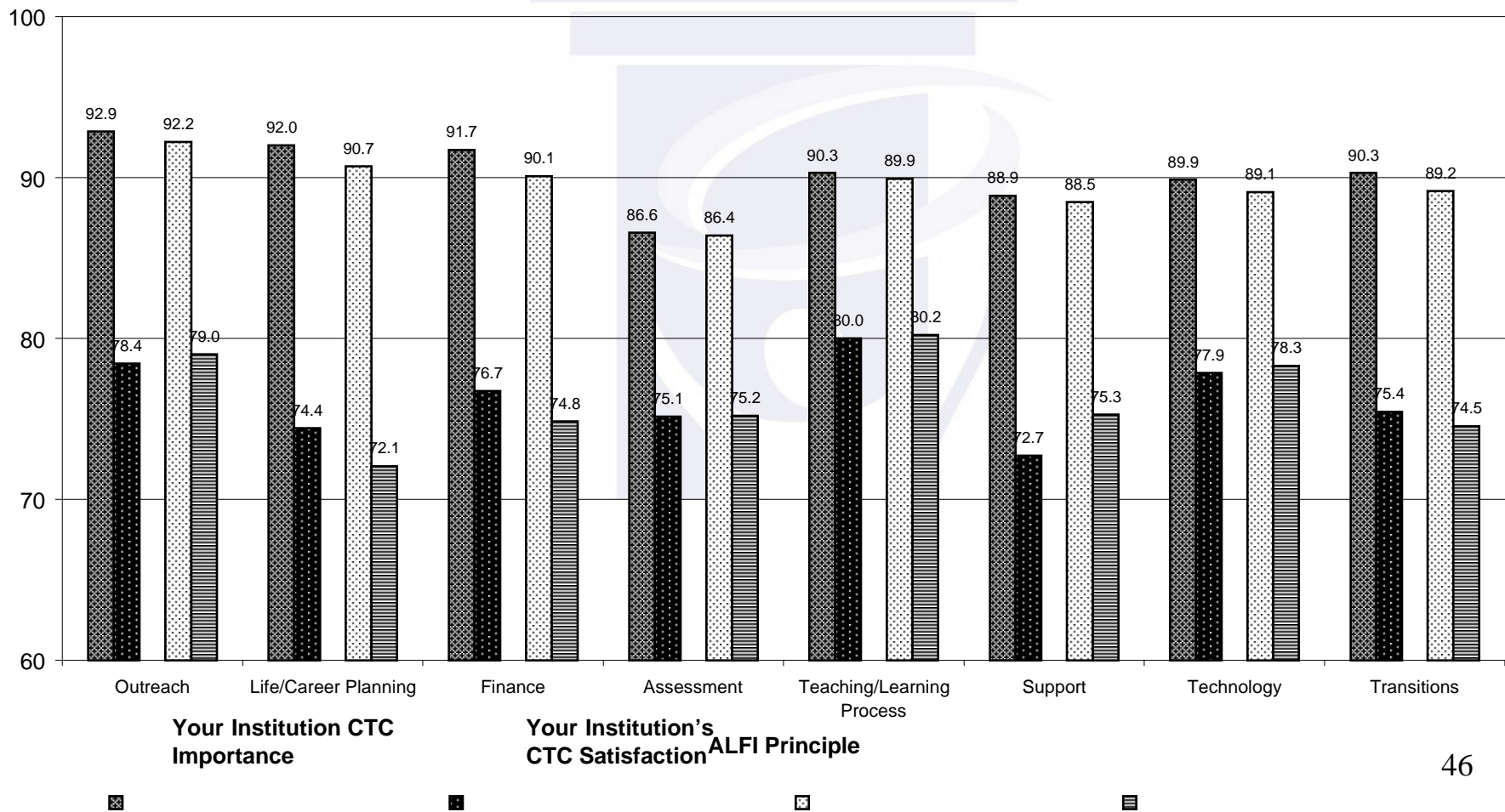


Your Institution CTC ALFI Principle



■ Best Performer in Category

ALI Results Your Institution vs Mean Performance of All Institutions

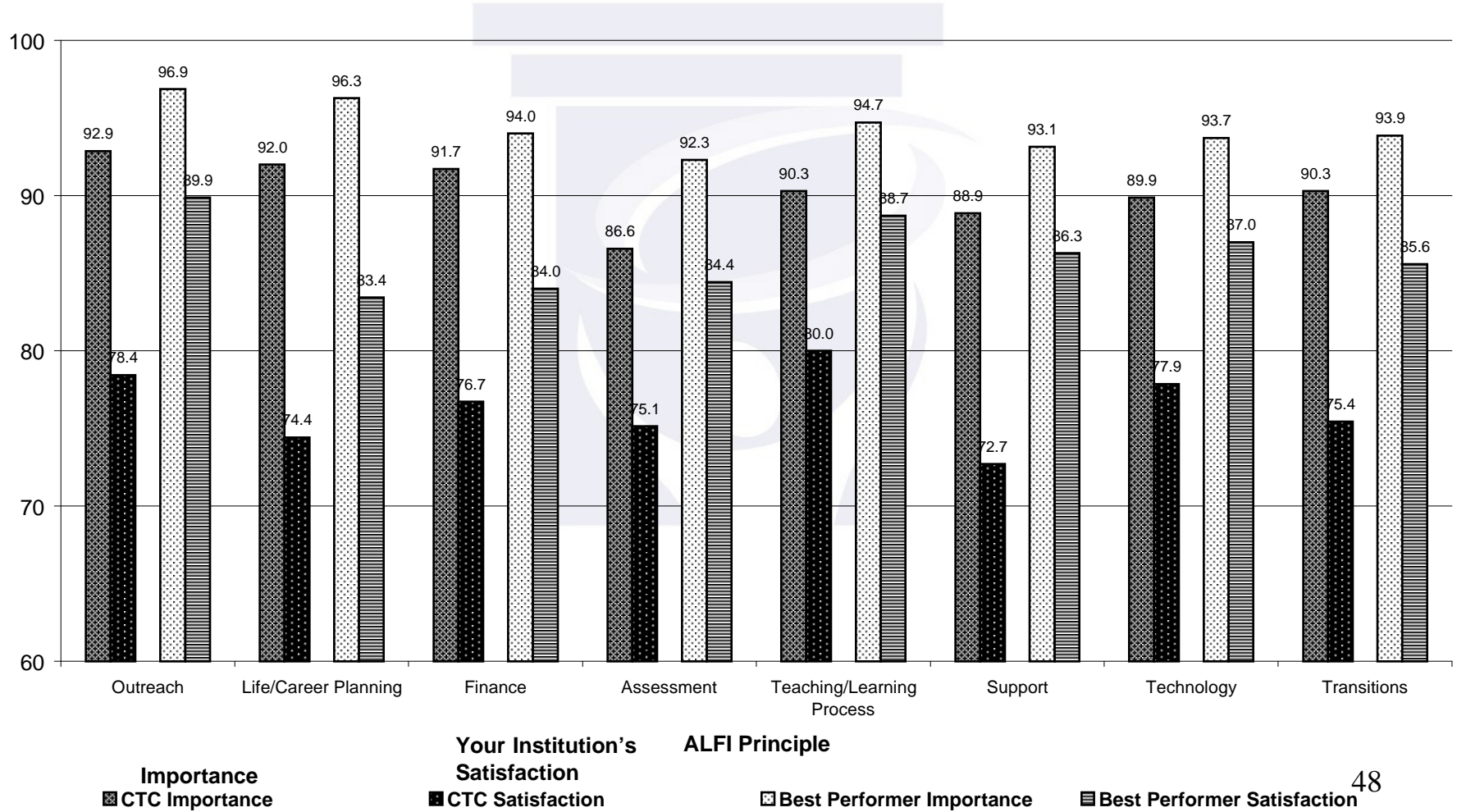


ALI SUMMARY REPORT [Performance Gaps]

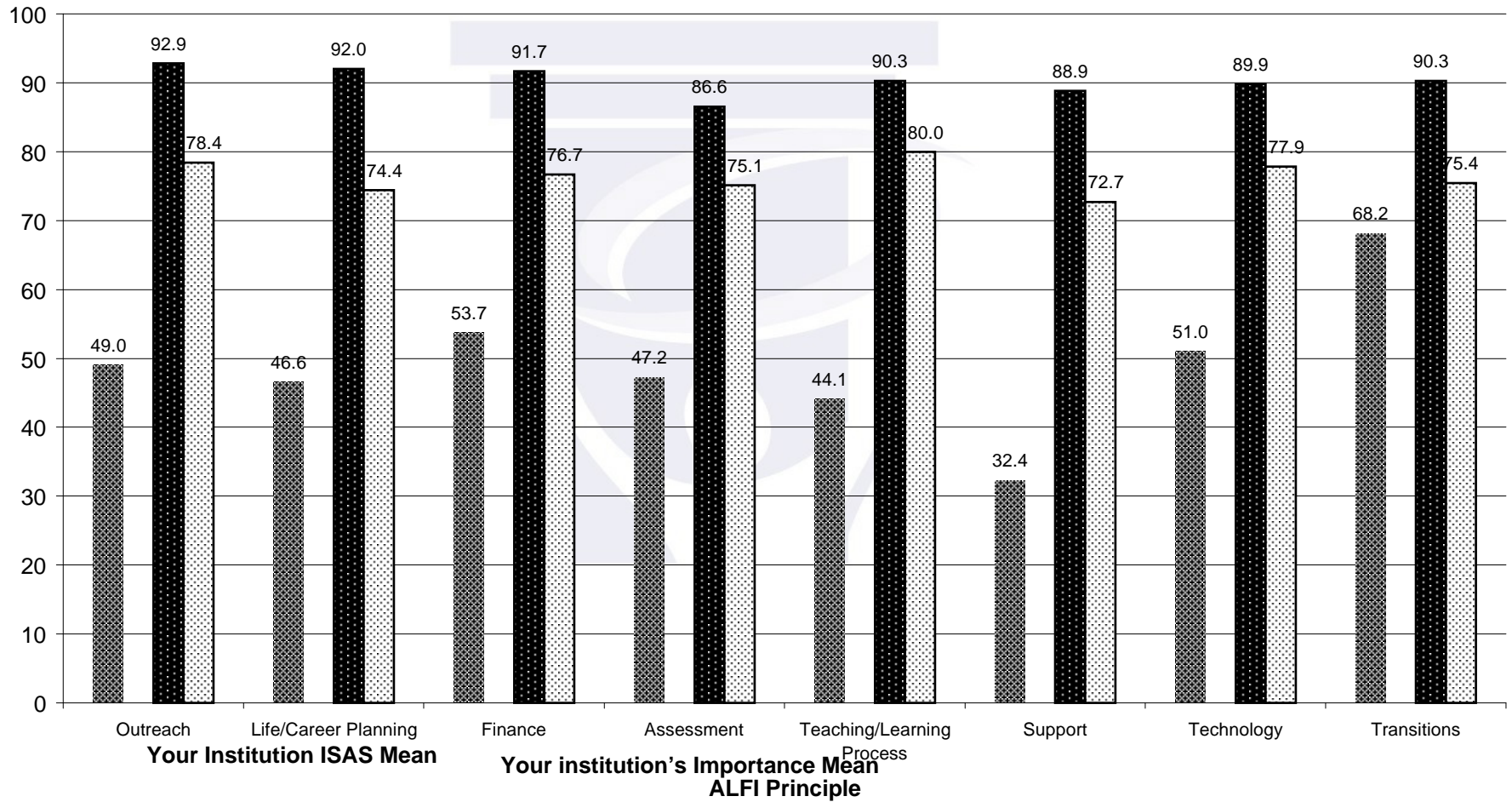
Your Institution

ALFI Principle	Your Gap	Mean Gap	Highest Gap	Lowest Gap	Rank Order	Number of Institutions
Outreach	14.4	13.2	25.6	4.9	28	42
Life/Career Planning	17.6	18.6	28.6	7.0	15	42
Finance	15.0	15.2	32.4	6.0	19	42
Assessment	11.4	11.2	18.3	5.1	24	42
Teaching and Learning Process	10.3	9.7	16.0	4.3	26	42
Support	16.1	13.2	25.4	5.6	36	42
Technology	12.0	10.8	24.0	3.4	28	42
Transitions	14.9	14.6	24.7	6.3	26	42
						47

ALI Results Your Institution vs Best Performances in each Category



Combined Results Your Institution



Using the Results -- Examples

- Marketing messages
 - External constituents
 - Internal constituents
- Recruiting campaigns

Using the Results -- Examples

Developing Strategic Plans

- Identify priorities
- Articulate short-range and long-range plans
- Align resources to best meet the needs of adult learners

Using the Results -- Examples

Cost-Free/Low-Cost Strategies

- Redesign student orientation sessions
- Create student mentor program to help new students
- Form an Adult Learner committee
- Initiate mandatory advising training for faculty

Using the Results -- Examples

Cost-Free/Low-Cost Strategies

- Explore articulation agreements
- Include data in annual report
- Facilitate discussion & debate
- Convene student focus groups
- Use data as baseline for future assessments

Using the Results – Examples

Additional Strategies

- Develop non-credit program to help adults transition to college
- Develop new and expanded course delivery options (Saturday, Sunday, Friday night, accelerated, hybrid)

Using the Results -- Examples

Additional Strategies

- Hire advising and retention staff
- Redesign Web site for adult learners, which is also used as a resource for faculty & staff
- Online tools to update information for faculty and students

Learn more about these tools

- Visit the Noel-Levitz Web site:
 - www.noellevitz.com/ALI
- Visit the CAEL Web site:
 - <http://www.cael.org/alfi/tools.html>

For More Information

Contact me:

Judy Wertheim
Vice President
Higher Education Services
CAEL
312-499-2659
jwertheim@cael.org