

First Year Learning Outcomes

April 2003

Purpose

This survey continues monitoring students who are completing their first year at the University Park campus - their progress in developing self-management skills, their reactions to their First Year Seminar, their experiences living in their residence hall, and other factors that contributed to the quality of their first year.

Implications/Highlights

Students indicated that making their own decisions, out-of-class involvement, living in the residence halls, and availability of the newspaper readership program contributed to the quality of their first year. Almost all respondents (92%) were satisfied with their decision to come to Penn State.

Participation Rate

N = 955 (60%) agreed to participate

N = 649 (40%) did not agree to participate

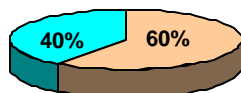


Figure 1. Participation rate

Findings

The survey asked respondents to what extent their First Year Seminar program achieved four program objectives: a) having more opportunities to interact with these instructors than instructors of other classes; b) seeing a connection to a future major; c) becoming oriented to the intellectual responsibilities and demanding workload of college academic life; and d) becoming engaged in the climate of learning at Penn State.

Goals of First Year Seminar Achieved

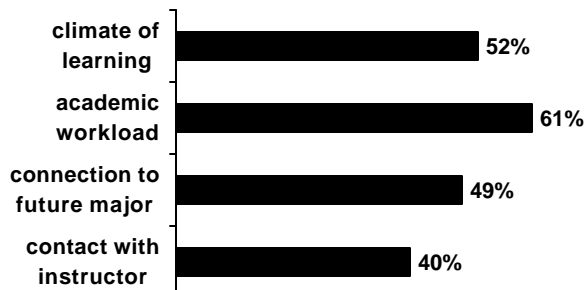


Figure 2. Students gave feedback about their First Year Seminar experiences

*Statistically significant at the .05 level

Almost all respondents were satisfied with their decision to come to Penn State and most felt they 'fit in' with the Penn State community.

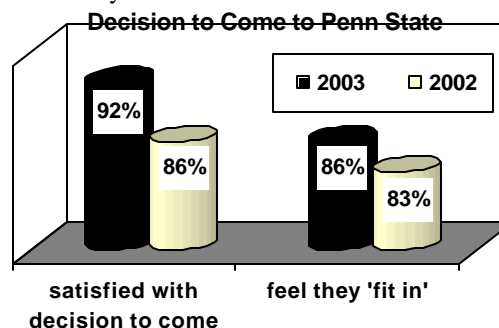


Figure 3. Most students were satisfied with their decision to come to Penn State and felt that they fit in

Students continue to feel that the experience of 'making their own decisions' enhanced their first year.

Making Your Own Decisions

2003	2002	
86%	83%	contributed a great deal
12%	13%	unsure
2%	3%	did not contribute

Four-fifths of respondents indicated that living in the residence halls contributed to the quality of their first year experiences.

Residence Hall Living Enhanced First Year

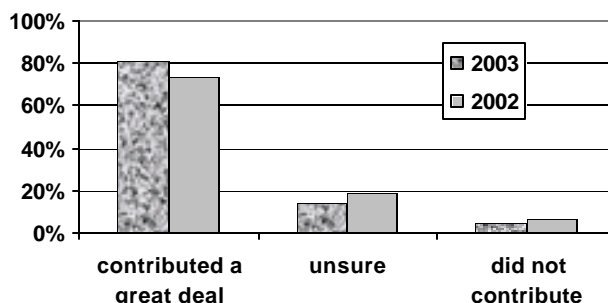


Figure 4. Living in the residence halls contributed to the quality of the first year experiences

More of the women * and more of the non-minority students * said that living in the residence halls contributed to the quality of their first year.

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More students this year than last reported that out-of-class experiences, availability of newspapers, and getting to know others whose racial background was different from their own contributed to their first year.

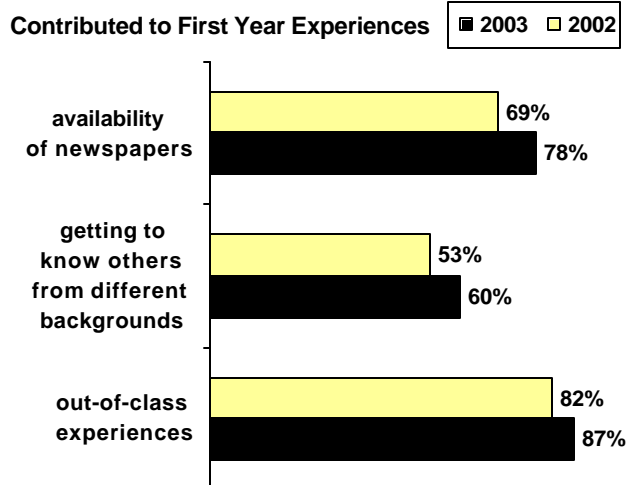


Figure 5. Out-of-class experiences, availability of newspapers, and getting to know others whose racial background differed from their own enhanced their first year

Other experiences which added to the quality of their first year included: information from ‘Stall Stories’ hung in residence hall restrooms (64%), interacting with their First Year Seminar instructors (32%), and attending programs sponsored by residence halls (24%).

For several years, first year students were asked for feedback on how the environment in their residence hall living area supported diversity-related outcomes.

Residence Hall Environment Supportive of Diversity

	2003	2002	2001
socializing with students whose backgrounds differ from yours	54%	55%	54%
expressing different ideas or controversial viewpoints	53%	52%	46%
engaging in multicultural discussions and interactions	40%	45%	36%

Students report being well informed about Penn State standards and resources. Almost all respondents indicated being knowledgeable about the University’s expectation of academic integrity.

2003	2002	
94%	95%	expectation of academic integrity
91%	90%	campus/community volunteer options
82%	79%	University Learning Centers
78%	78%	community standards and regulations
73%	73%	Penn State offices and procedures

Women were more likely to say their First Year Seminar helped them become engaged in the learning climate; * men were more likely to report seeing a connection to a future major.* Those with higher grades felt their experience oriented them to the academic workload.*

Most students felt they were doing well developing personal self-management skills.

Doing Well Developing Personal Skills

	2003	2002	2001
being on their own	92%	90%	92%
making/maintaining friendships	90%	89%	91%
making own decisions	86%	88%	86%
handling missing home	81%	78%	na
getting along with roommates	80%	80%	82%
developing support network	77%	76%	77%
getting good grades	73%	75%	72%
acquiring productive study skills	70%	68%	65%
keeping physically fit	70%	66%	64%
managing stress	62%	58%	na
managing free time	58%	58%	53%
becoming involved in campus life	58%	57%	58%
expressing opinions to leaders	28%	28%	30%

Fewer of the minority students reported doing well being on their own without their family and friends from home,* getting satisfactory grades,* becoming involved in campus life,* making and maintaining new friendships,* and knowing how to express their opinions to residence hall student government leaders.*

Students were asked how often they maintained residence hall safety guidelines. Some respondents continue to leave their residence hall room unlocked.

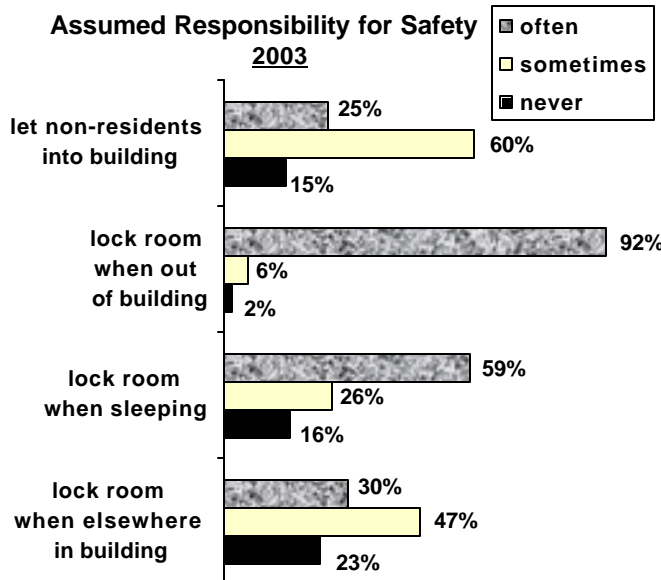


Figure 6. Not all students lock their rooms or stop non-residents from entering their living unit

Women were more likely to keep their rooms locked when sleeping* and men were more likely to let people into their residence halls when they were not sure these people lived there.*

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.