



New Students

September 2003

Purpose

The goals of this survey were to monitor the experiences of new first year students, to determine how satisfied they are with their decision to attend Penn State-University Park after a few weeks of college, and to obtain feedback from them about the effectiveness of specific orientation programs.

Implications/Highlights

A few weeks into their first year, almost all the respondents (98%) said they would choose to attend Penn State if they were starting college again. Most agreed that the PSU Statement of Principles sent to them clarified their academic and personal responsibilities. A majority felt that specific orientation programs on diversity and safe relationships were effective.

Participation Rate

On-Campus New Students (phone calls)

N = 1215 (82%) agreed to participate

N = 267 did not agree to participate

Off-Campus New Students (online survey)

N = 77 (32%) agreed to participate

N = 167 did not agree to participate

Findings

Almost all of the respondents said that they would choose to attend Penn State if they were starting college again.

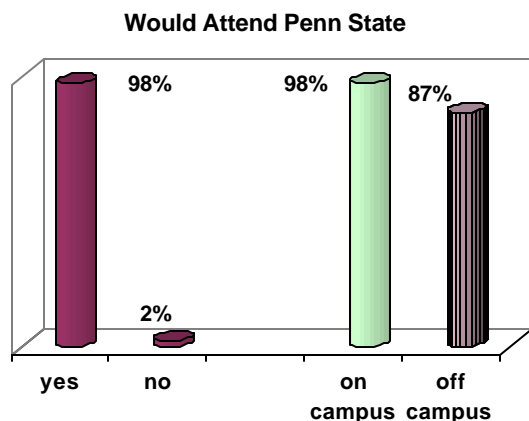


Figure 1. Most of the new students said they would attend Penn State if they were starting college again

*Statistically significant at the .05 level

More than two-thirds (68%) recalled reading the Statement of Principles sent to them. Of those who said they had read this material, more than eighty percent felt they understood their responsibilities.

Statement of Principles Clarified Responsibilities

	2003	2002	2001
respect dignity of everyone in PSU community	87%	86%	88%
assume responsibility for own academic progress	88%	87%	88%
assume personal and social responsibility	86%	84%	82%
practice academic integrity	91%	87%	91%

Two-thirds of the new students (68%) said that they had attended the President's Convocation. A majority (61%) felt the President was helpful in clarifying what is expected from students as members of the Penn State community. Many of the off-campus new students who did not attend stated they didn't know about the Convocation or where to go.

Three-fourths (75%) of the respondents thought that their transition to Penn State had gone smoothly.

Transition to Penn State Went Smoothly

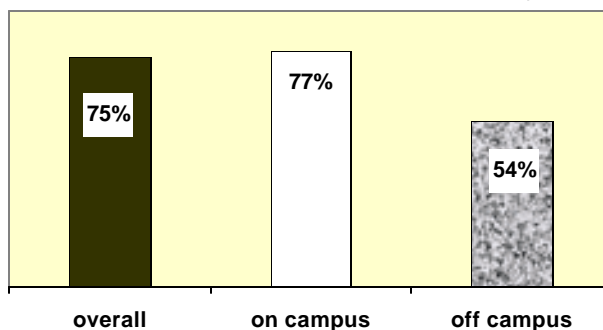


Figure 2. Students thought their transition to Penn State went smoothly

Three-fifths (64%) of the new students who live on campus indicated that their RA had been helpful in assisting their transition to Penn State.

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Several survey questions focused on two activities which were part of the Freshman Testing, Counseling, and Advising program each attended earlier in the summer.

During FTCAP, trained Student Educators led a discussion on relationships. Students felt that this discussion effectively helped them understand safe socializing (80%) and how to avoid acquaintance rape and sexual assault (90%).

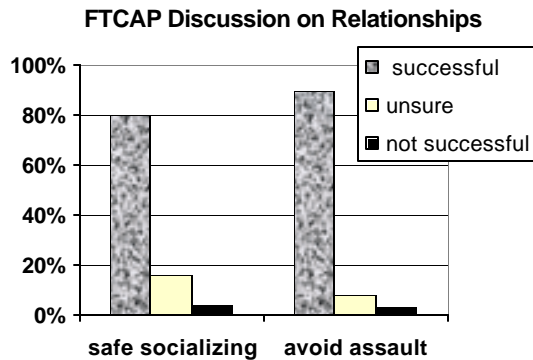


Figure 3. The discussion on safe relationships was useful

A majority (73%) thought that the FTCAP diversity video had demonstrated the importance Penn State places on a multicultural education.

- Overall, more of the women (77%) than of the men (69%) thought the video was effective. *
- For students living on campus, more of the non-minority students (77%) than of the minority students (67%) thought the video was effective. *

After a few weeks in college, 89% felt the University had successfully made students from diverse backgrounds feel welcome on campus.

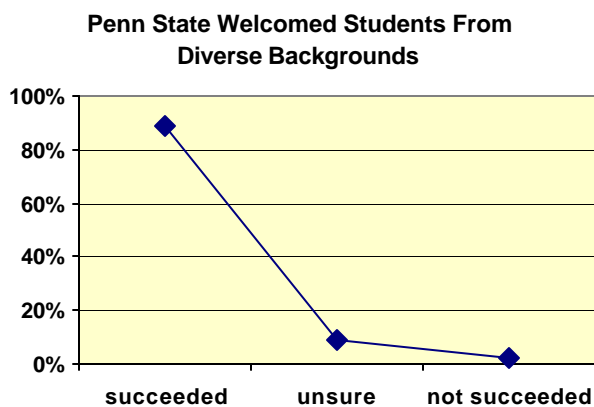


Figure 4. Most thought the University welcomed students from diverse backgrounds

New students who live off campus commented that they:

- were not informed about events
- were unsure where to go
- thought it would be good to make a special effort for off-campus students to urge them to become involved in orientation activities

Students who live on campus were asked a series of questions about their initial experience moving into their residence halls.

Helpfulness of Staff Subgroups on Move In Day

	helpful	unsure	not helpful
staff at Check-In tables	82%	13%	5%
staff who moved in belongings	58%	16%	26%
RA information about events	83%	11%	5%
ResCom computer staff	77%	12%	11%
parking staff	85%	9%	6%

Most students (85%) thought that the flyers and posters throughout the Residence Halls outlining orientation activities were helpful.

Nearly all of those living on campus (93%) said they had attended their house meetings during Orientation Week. Most felt these meetings were effective in helping them meet others on their floor and as a means of obtaining useful information about policies, resources and events.

House Meetings

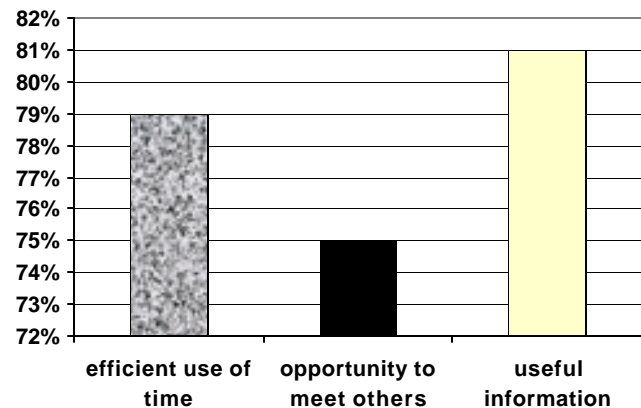


Figure 5. Students found their House meetings effective

Student attendance at orientation events varied.

Attended Specific Orientation Events

	yes
Be A Part From the Start	28%
Pasquerilla Spiritual Center Open House	4%
Fraternity/Sorority Mixer	16%
Real Life Choices ^	21%
Own Res Hall Area orientation events	46%

^ Overall, more of the men (24%) than of the women (19%) reported having attended the Real Life Choices program.

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.