

INTRODUCTION

This survey focuses on the academic and social integration of University Park students at the end of their first year and is based on Penn State's Ten First-Year Student Outcomes and Competencies. Included in the survey are questions concerning students' satisfaction with Penn State and their progress in establishing academic and career goals, adjusting to college-level academics, developing inter and intrapersonally, and navigating college.

This survey, conducted by Student Affairs Research and Assessment, was part of a longitudinal project examining the first-year experience.¹ The First-Year Experience survey was administered using a bimodal design. Students were first contacted by phone; students who were unreachable by phone were sent an e-mail invitation to participate in the Web survey.²

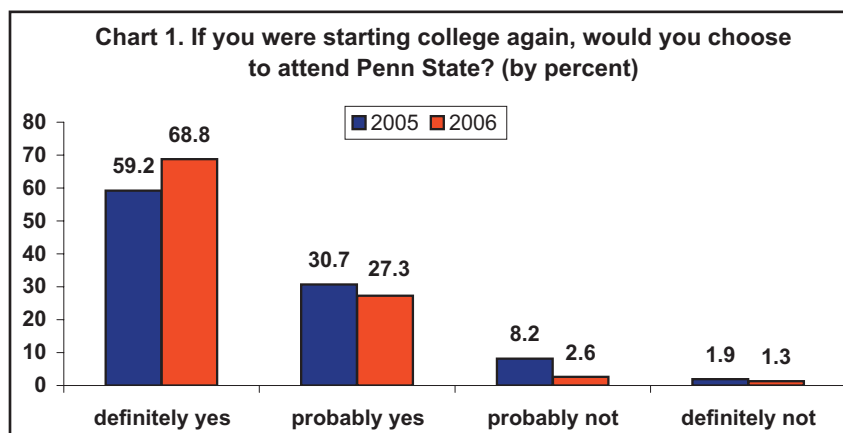
In total, 791 first-year students responded to the survey for a 58.3% response rate. The confidence interval for the sample is +/-3.28%. Of the respondents, 56.3% are female; 89.5% are white/Caucasian; 96.6% lived on campus; and 99.0% were 18 or 19 years of age.

FINDINGS³

Satisfaction with Penn State

Students were asked several questions regarding their satisfaction with their Penn State experiences and their connectedness to the college community.

- Approximately 96% of first-year students replied that, if starting college again, they would definitely or probably choose to attend Penn State, a 6% increase from the 2005 findings (see Chart 1).
- Furthermore, 94.8% reported they definitely intend to return to Penn State in the fall, and another 3.9% said they will probably return (data not shown).



For more information
please visit Student Affairs
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¹ The students participating in this survey also participated in the New Students survey at the beginning of the academic year. Subsequent reports will be provided on the longitudinal analysis.

² Of the total sample, 55.5% responded by phone and 44.5% responded by Web. The Web responses included students who were contacted by phone but preferred to take it by Web.

³ Five factors were created based on the outcomes. Factors are a data reduction tool that combines multiple questions into a larger concept based on logic and statistical analysis. The factor composition is typically found in the corresponding table, and factor names are denoted by the use of SMALL CAPS.

- When asked about their overall experience at Penn State, 92.5% responded they were satisfied (see Table 1).
- In addition, 84.8% believed the Penn State community is welcoming (see Table 1).
- White students and students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher reported higher levels of SATISFACTION WITH PENN STATE than did students of color and students with a GPA lower than 3.0, respectively (data not shown).

Table 1: Satisfaction with Penn State

Overall, how satisfied are you with your:	Percent Satisfied	Average
Overall experience at Penn State	92.5	4.44
Social life at Penn State	85.0	4.26
Academic experiences at Penn State	85.5	4.13
Out-of-class/cocurricular experiences	82.1	4.19
To what degree:	Percent ⁴	Average
Is the Penn State community welcoming	84.8	4.22
Do you personally feel a sense of belonging at PSU	81.3	4.12
SATISFACTION WITH PENN STATE (average)		4.23

Scales: 1=very dissatisfied, 3=neither, 5=very satisfied or 1=not at all, 3=moderately, 5=extremely

Navigating College

Important in the achievement of many of the other outcomes (including satisfaction) is the successful navigation of college including being familiar with and using campus resources, interacting with faculty and staff, and interacting effectively with peers in social settings and through educationally purposeful student activities.

- First-year students' social integration into college is noted by 82.3% responding they had made at least substantial progress toward developing close friendships with other students (see Table 2).
- Within this area, students were least likely to report substantial progress in getting to know faculty (34.3%) (see Table 2).

Table 2: Navigating College

To what degree have you made progress toward:	Percent ⁴	Average
Developing close friendships with other students	82.3	4.24
Understanding the importance of lifelong learning	80.5	4.12
Understanding the purpose of the general education requirements	67.9	3.84
Being aware of available campus services	65.2	3.79
Getting to know faculty	34.3	3.12
NAVIGATING COLLEGE (average)		3.82

Scale: 1=not at all, 3=moderately, 5=extremely

Also important in successfully navigating college is the use of campus resources.

- Close to 70% reported they at least sometimes used campus resources for help with course work (see Table 3).
- Almost 36% indicated they never or rarely met with an academic advisor (see Table 3).

Table 3: Utilization of Campus Resources

Percent	Never or Rarely	Sometimes	Often or Very Often
Discussed class projects or topics with other students outside of class	12.7	36.4	50.9
Used campus resources for help with course work	31.4	37.6	31.0
Met with an academic advisor	35.8	39.5	24.7
Attended a workshop, lecture, or presentation outside of class	45.3	34.8	19.9
Met with a faculty member or instructor outside of class	48.5	34.9	16.7
Used student services for personal/non-academic issues	67.2	22.2	10.5

Establishing Academic and Career Goals

Students were asked several questions related to their progress in refining their short- and long-term academic goals and establishing more specific career goals.

- Over three-quarters of students felt they had made at least substantial progress toward choosing a major/program of study (80.1%) and toward determining what classes they need to take (76.8%) (see Table 4).
- Over half (54.6%) reported making at least substantial progress in defining their career goals (see Table 4).
- Students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher reported significantly higher progress in ESTABLISHING ACADEMIC AND CAREER GOALS than did students with lower than a 3.0 (data not shown).

⁴ Percents represent those who indicated "substantially" or "extremely."

Table 4: Establishing Academic and Career Goals

To what degree have you made progress toward:	Percent ⁵	Average
Choosing a major/program of study	80.1	4.17
Determining what classes you need to take	76.8	4.02
Defining your career goals	54.6	3.57
Acquiring job-related skills	52.4	3.52
ESTABLISHING ACADEMIC AND CAREER GOALS (average)		3.82

Scale: 1=not at all, 3=moderately, 5=extremely

Adjusting to College-Level Academics

Other questions focused on students' abilities to meet academic demands and expectations.

- While 80.6% believed they had made at least substantial progress in improving their ability to successfully complete college-level work, 59.8% reported making similar progress managing their time effectively (see Table 5).
- Students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher reported significantly higher progress in ADJUSTING TO COLLEGE-LEVEL ACADEMICS than did students with lower than a 3.0 (data not shown).

Table 5: Adjusting to College-Level Academics

To what degree have you made progress toward:	Percent ⁵	Average
Improving your ability to successfully complete college-level work	80.6	4.06
Adjusting to the academic demands of college life	77.6	3.98
Balancing your academic work with your social activities	75.7	3.94
Developing effective study skills	63.0	3.71
Managing your time effectively	59.8	3.64
ADJUSTING TO COLLEGE-LEVEL ACADEMICS (average)		3.87

Scale: 1=not at all, 3=moderately, 5=extremely

When asking students about various aspects of academic engagement, they reported the following:

- 54.3% participated in class discussions often or very often (see Table 6);
- 75.6% worked on a group project at least sometimes (see Table 6);
- 69.9% never turned in course assignments late, and 25.3% rarely did (data not shown); and
- 18.1% never skipped class, and 44.1% rarely skipped class (data not shown).

Table 6: Academic Engagement

Percent	Never or Rarely	Sometimes	Often or Very Often
Participated in class discussions	12.1	33.6	54.3
Worked on a group project for class	24.4	45.6	30.0

Personal Development

Also important to students' successful transition to college is their personal development including effectively interacting with others, engaging in activities related to personal health and fitness, and contributing positively to the Penn State community.

- Almost 80% reported making at least substantial progress in developing empathy and compassion for others (see Table 7).
- Sixty-five percent responded that they made substantial progress in getting to know others different from themselves (see Table 7).
- Students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher reported significantly more progress in PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT than did students with lower than a 3.0 (data not shown).

Table 7: Personal Development (Inter & Intrapersonal)

To what degree have you made progress toward:	Percent ⁵	Average
Developing empathy and compassion for others	79.5	4.14
Making responsible decisions	76.3	3.97
Contributing positively to the Penn State community	67.3	3.84
Getting to know others different from yourself (i.e. race/ethnicity, sexual orientation)	65.2	3.80
Improving your personal health	58.1	3.59
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT (average)		3.86

Scale: 1=not at all, 3=moderately, 5=extremely

⁵ Percents represent those who indicated "substantially" or "extremely."

Corresponding to their PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT are several aspects of cocurricular engagement.

- Almost half reported attending multicultural events (49.7%) or volunteering (47.2%) at least sometimes (data not shown).
- Contradictory to these personal development goals, 47.9% reported engaging in high-risk drinking behavior (data not shown).

Time Spent

Other behaviors related to students' achieving the outcomes and competencies for first-year students - and overlapping the various areas discussed previously - included the time students spent during a typical week in various activities.

- Students, on average, spent 5.72 hours a week exercising or participating in intercollegiate, club, or intramural sports (data not shown).
- In addition to participation in sports, 83.4% indicated they spent at least one hour a week participating in other cocurricular activities, with an average of 4.75 hours a week (data not shown).
- Almost 46% reported spending 10 hours or less a week studying or preparing for class (see Chart 2).
- Only 17.3% and 8.2% reported working for pay on campus and off campus, respectively (data not shown).

