

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this survey is on first-year students' initial transition to University Park. Included in the survey are questions concerning students' first impressions of Penn State; their involvement in and the effectiveness of the First-Year Testing, Counseling and Advising Program (FTCAP), Convocation, and Orientation; and their awareness of the Penn State "ROAR" Principles. Similar surveys were conducted in 2004 and 2005; comparisons are provided.

In total, 1,625 students responded to the survey for a 46.4% response rate. The survey was first administered by phone and then those students who were not reachable by phone received an e-mail invitation to participate by Web; 719 participated by phone, and 906 participated by Web. The confidence interval for the total sample is +/-2.14%.

Of the respondents, 99.2% are between 18 and 19 years of age, 55.5% are female, 86.2% are White/Caucasian, 97.8% live on campus, and 15.6% began summer semester. For additional information on the Pulse methodology, please visit <http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara/qa.shtml>.

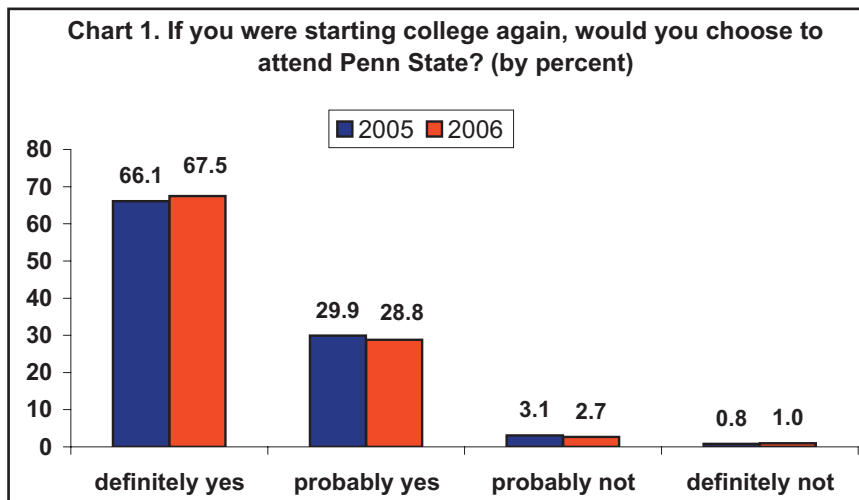
FINDINGS

Overall Impressions

In general, students responded positively to their initial experiences at Penn State, and their responses were similar in 2005 and 2006 (as well as in 2004):

- 91.4% were either "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their experiences at Penn State (compared to 91.5% in 2005 and 92.1% in 2004; data not shown), and
- 96.3% said if they were starting college again, they would "probably" or "definitely" choose to attend Penn State (compared to 96.0% in 2005 and 95.7% in 2004; see Chart 1).
- 51.7% (compared to 49.5% in 2005 and 56.6% in 2004) felt that Welcome Week/new student orientation was either "substantially" or "extremely" effective in assisting in their transition to Penn State (data not shown).

This survey focuses on first-year students' initial transition to Penn State, University Park.

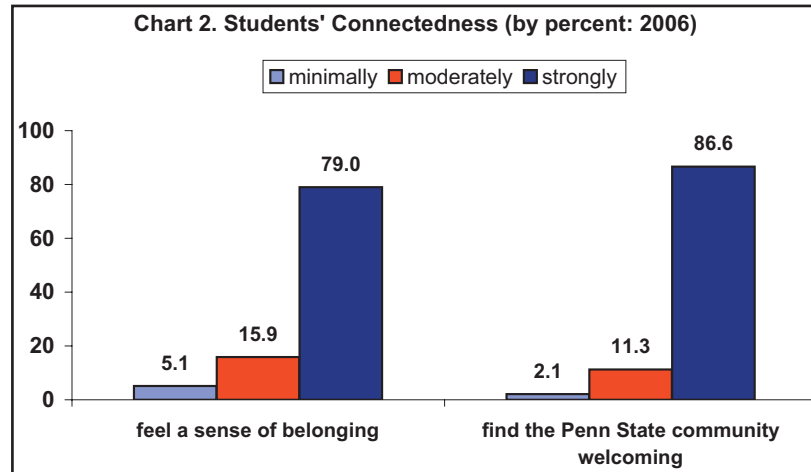


For more information please visit Student Affairs Research and Assessment at <http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara>

Interpersonal Connection and Engagement

Several questions focused on students' transition to Penn State based on their feelings of interpersonal connectedness to the University. Research (such as work by Tinto, Upcraft, and Astin) reveals that students' personal connection to other students, faculty, and staff is critical to their success at an institution.

- Within their first weeks at Penn State, 79.0% (compared to 76.3% in 2005) reported feeling a strong sense of belonging at the University, and 86.6% (compared to 87.5% in 2005) felt strongly that Penn State is a welcoming community (see Chart 2).



- In 2006, 73.1% reported they had been at least “substantially” successful¹ in establishing friendships with other students (a decline from 78.7% in 2004), and 50.7% had gotten at least “substantially” involved¹ in campus events and activities (compared to 52.9% in the two previous years; see Table 1).
- Approximately a quarter of students reported having made substantial progress in interacting personally with faculty members/instructors and with staff members (see Table 1).
- In 2006, women reported significantly higher levels of interpersonal connections when compared to men. White students and students of color responded similarly (data not shown).

Table 1: Personal Connections

| To what degree have you: ¹ | percent 2004 | percent 2005 | percent 2006 |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Established friendships with other students | 78.7 | 75.2 | 73.1 |
| Gotten involved in campus events and activities | 52.9 | 52.9 | 50.7 |
| Interacted on a personal level with faculty members and instructors | 31.8 | 30.9 | 26.2 |
| Interacted on a personal level with staff members | 24.3 | 25.3 | 24.0 |

Penn State Principles

Part of becoming a member of the Penn State community is understanding the values that are embodied in the Penn State “ROAR” Principles. Hence, a goal of new student programming is to educate first-year students on the Principles. Overall, students indicated less familiarity with the Penn State Principles than they had with each of the values espoused in the document.

- Only 35.8% (compared to 57.8% in 2005 and 53.7% in 2004) indicated they were either “substantially” or “extremely” familiar with the Penn State Principles (data not shown), whereas over 85% responded similarly to each of the espoused values (see Table 2).

Table 2: Penn State Principles

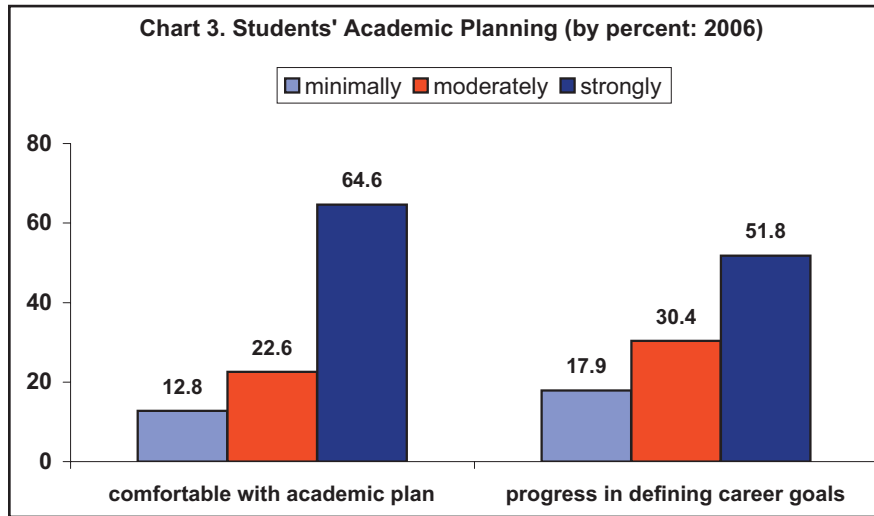
| To what degree has the University been successful in communicating the expectation of: ¹ | percent 2004 | percent 2005 | percent 2006 |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Practicing academic integrity | 92.0 | 91.5 | 92.5 |
| Maintaining individual responsibility for your academic progress | 88.4 | 90.2 | 89.8 |
| Respecting the dignity of everyone in the PSU community | 86.6 | 89.6 | 86.8 |
| Maintaining social and personal responsibility | 84.8 | 85.9 | 85.6 |

¹Percents represent those who indicated “substantially” or “extremely.”

Academic Planning

Another important aspect of students' transition to college is developing an academic plan.

- In 2006, 44.7% of first-year students reported they had not met with their academic advisor other than during FTCAP (compared to 50.0% in 2005 and 51.0% in 2004); 46.9% had met with their academic advisor between one and two times (data not shown).
- At the same time, 63.8% reported they had not determined what classes they need to take during the spring semester (compared to 65.8% in 2005 and 62.5% in 2004; data not shown).
- However, 64.6% reported being comfortable with their academic plan (including choosing a major and knowing what classes to take) (compared to 65.3% in 2005 and 68.6% in 2004), and 51.8% felt strongly that they had made progress in defining their career goals (compared to 54.0% in 2005 and 55.6% in 2004; see Chart 3).
- Men reported being more comfortable with their academic plan than did women. White students and students of color responded similarly (data not shown).



FTCAP, Convocation, and Orientation Events

Students were asked a series of questions about their participation in a variety of programs for new students (see Table 3) as well as specific questions about the effectiveness of certain events.

- In 2006, 85.4% attended President's Convocation (compared to 75.6% in 2005 and 62.1% in 2004).
- With changes in the summer Welcome Week events, there was a dramatic increase in the percentage of students who began in the summer who attended the fall President's Convocation. In 2006, 67.9% reported attending President's Convocation compared to 24.6% in 2005 (data not shown).
- Residence hall orientation events also showed an increase in attendance with 44.9% in 2006 compared to 28.8% in 2005.
- Women were more likely to attend the Dean's Meeting and the Residence Hall House Meeting (data not shown).
- White students were significantly more likely to attend FTCAP than were students of color. Students of color were more likely to attend Late Night after Convocation, Get Connected, and Build a Habitat House than were white students (data not shown).

Table 3. Attendance at Events for New Students

| Events | percent who attended 2004 | percent who attended 2005 | percent who attended 2006 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| FTCAP | 96.4 | 95.8 | 95.3 |
| President's Convocation | 62.1 | 75.6 | 85.4 |
| Dean's Meeting | 48.9 | 65.0 | 68.1 |
| Late Night (after Convocation) | 44.0 | 55.2 | 50.0 |
| Be a Part from the Start | 54.9 | 59.3 | 57.3 |
| Late Night (after pep rally) | 25.7 | 30.4 | 34.1 |
| "Get Connected" to campus resources | na | na | 18.6 |
| Residence Hall House Meeting* | 93.4 | 95.6 | 95.5 |
| Residence Hall Orientation Events* | 27.1 | 28.8 | 44.9 |
| Build a Habitat house on the HUB lawn | na | na | 6.5 |

* Students who live on campus

Of students who attended **FTCAP**:

- 79.1% agreed FTCAP assisted in clarifying Penn State's academic requirements (compared to 78.2% in 2005 and 82.8% in 2004),
- 67.7% agreed FTCAP assisted in preparing them for their first semester at Penn State (compared to 72.3% in 2005 and 77.3% in 2004),
- 69.4% agreed the video in the introductory session demonstrated the importance Penn State places on the appreciation of diversity (compared to 68.3% in 2005 and 58.3% in 2004),
- 65.7% agreed the Real Life Choices discussion helped them to develop a plan for safe socializing (compared to 64.7% in 2005 and 61.1% in 2004), and
- 74.7% agreed the Real Life Choices discussion helped them to prevent acquaintance rape and sexual assault (compared to 76.7% in 2005 and 75.2% in 2004; data not shown).

Of students who attended **President's Convocation** in the fall:

- 80.2% agreed the event welcomed them into the Penn State community (compared to 84.2% in 2005 and 73.9% in 2004), and
- 77.4% agreed the speakers clarified what is expected from students as members of the Penn State community (compared to 79.0% in 2005 and 75.9% in 2004; data not shown).

Of students who attended the **Dean's Meeting**:

- 84.5% agreed the Dean's Meeting provided them with information related to the college's programs, activities, and resources (compared to 80.8% in 2005 and 81.2% in 2004), and
- 76.8% agreed the meeting provided them with information related to academic advising (compared to 78.2% in 2005 and 79.4% in 2004; data not shown).

Of students who lived on campus and attended their **house meetings** during Orientation week:

- 76.9% felt strongly the meeting was helpful in sharing useful information about policies, resources, and upcoming events (compared to 77.0% in 2005 and 76.9% in 2004), and
 - 64.6% felt strongly the meeting was helpful in providing an opportunity to meet others on their floor (compared to 67.7% in 2005 and 73.5% in 2004; data not shown).
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