



New Students Fall 2007

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 Principles. Similar surveys were conducted in 2005 and 2006; comparisons are provided.

In total, 1,489 students responded to the survey for a 42.5% 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; 614 participated by phone, and 875 participated by Web. The confidence interval for the total sample is +/-2.23%.

Of the respondents, 94.3% are between 18 and 19 years of age, 54.1% are female, 83.2% are White/Caucasian, 93.4% live on campus, and 17.9% began summer semester. For additional information on the Pulse methodology, please visit: <http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara/qa.shtml>.

FINDINGS

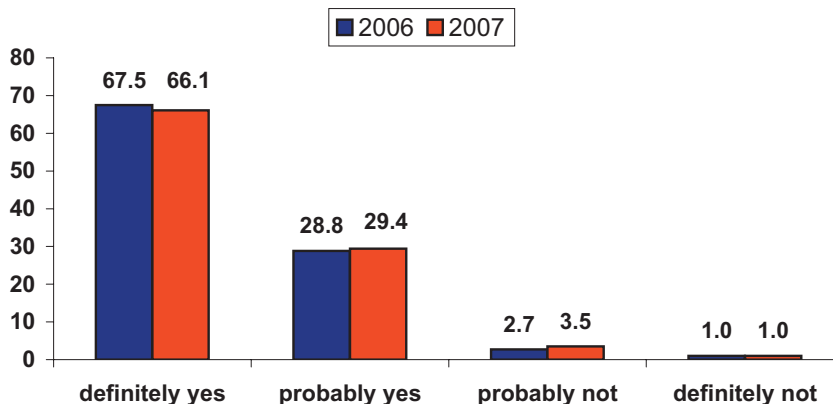
Overall Impressions

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

- 91.1% were either "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their experiences at Penn State (consistent with responses in 2005 and 2006; data not shown);
- 95.5% said if they were starting college again, they would "probably" or "definitely" choose to attend Penn State (similar to responses in previous years; see Chart 1); and
- 47.6% (compared to 51.7% in 2006 and 49.5% in 2005) 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.

Chart 1. If you were starting college again, would you choose to attend Penn State? (by percent)



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



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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, 77.0% (compared to 79.0% in 2006 and 76.3% in 2005) reported feeling a strong sense of belonging at the University, and 87.8% (compared to 86.6% in 2007 and 87.5% in 2005) felt strongly that Penn State is a welcoming community (see Chart 2).
- In 2007, 70.8% reported they had been at least "substantially" successful¹ in establishing friendships with other students. This represents a gradual decline from previous years (see Table 1). (The high was 78.7% in 2004.)
- In addition, 48.9% had gotten at least "substantially" involved¹ in campus events and activities (compared to 50.7% in 2006 and 52.9% in 2005; see Table 1).
- Approximately a quarter of students reported having made substantial progress in interacting personally with faculty members/instructors and 29% with staff members (see Table 1).
- White students reported a significantly stronger sense of belonging and were significantly more likely to find the Penn State community welcoming than did students of color (data not shown).

Chart 2. Students' Connectedness (by percent: 2007)

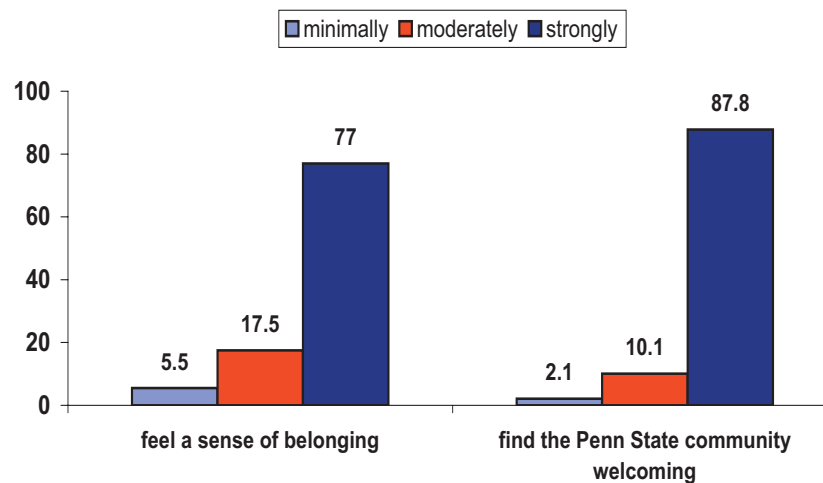


Table 1: Personal Connections

To what degree have you: ¹	percent 2005	percent 2006	percent 2007
Established friendships with other students	75.2	73.1	70.8
Gotten involved in campus events and activities	52.9	50.7	48.9
Interacted on a personal level with faculty members and instructors	30.9	26.2	26.5
Interacted on a personal level with staff members	25.3	24.0	29.0

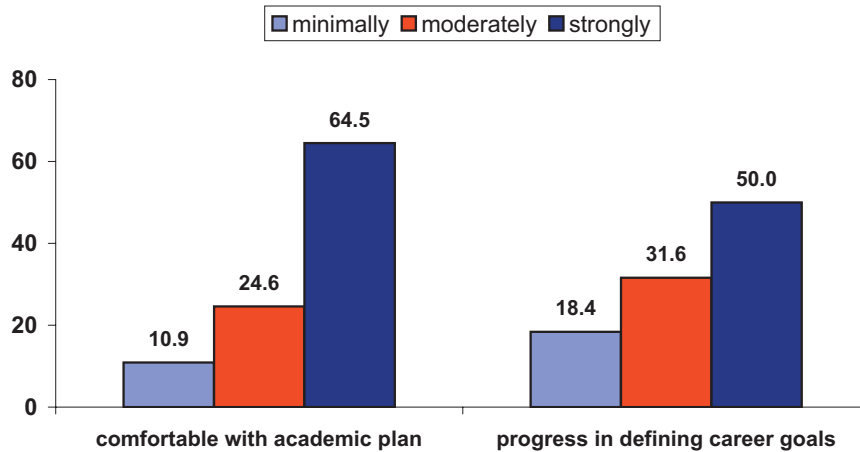
Academic Planning

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

- In 2007, 40.2% of first-year students reported they had not met with their academic advisor other than during FTCAP (compared to 44.7% in 2006, 50.0% in 2005 and 51.0% in 2004); 48.9% had met with their academic advisor between one and two times (data not shown).
- At the same time, 62.3% reported they had not determined what classes they need to take during the spring semester (compared to 63.8% in 2006, 65.8% in 2005 and 62.5% in 2004; data not shown).
- However, 64.5% reported being comfortable with their academic plan (including choosing a major and knowing what classes to take) (compared to 64.6% in 2006, 65.3% in 2005 and 68.6% in 2004), and 50.0% felt strongly that they had made progress in defining their career goals (compared to 51.8% in 2006, 54.0% in 2005, and 55.6% in 2004; see Chart 3).

¹Percents represent those who indicated "substantially" or "extremely."

Chart 3. Students' Academic Planning (by percent: 2007)



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 about the Principles. Overall, students indicated less familiarity with the Penn State Principles than they had with each of the values espoused in the document.

- In 2007, only 42.6% (compared to 35.8% in 2006, 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 84% responded that they were at least “substantially” familiar with 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: ²	percent 2005	percent 2006	percent 2007
Practicing academic integrity	91.5	92.5	92.0
Maintaining individual responsibility for your academic progress	90.2	89.8	88.4
Maintaining social and personal responsibility	85.9	85.6	85.5
Respecting the dignity of everyone in the PSU community	89.6	86.8	84.2

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 2007, 90.6% attended FTCAP (compared to 95% in 2006 and 2005).
- Evidence suggests a decline in attendance at the Late Night events following the President’s Convocation from 55.2% in 2005 to 42.5% in 2007.
- Residence hall orientation events showed an increase in attendance with 50.0% in 2007 compared to 44.9% in 2006 and 28.8% in 2005.
- Women were more likely to attend Be a Part from the Start and the Involvement Days than were men (data not shown).
- White students were significantly more likely to attend FTCAP and the Dean’s Meeting than were students of color while students of color were more likely to attend Late Night after Convocation, and the World Cultural Festival than were white students (data not shown).

Of students who attended **FTCAP**:

- 78.9% agreed FTCAP assisted in clarifying Penn State’s academic requirements (compared to 79.1% in 2006 and 78.2% in 2005);
- 69.0% agreed FTCAP assisted in preparing them for their first semester at Penn State (compared to 67.7% in 2006 and 72.3% in 2005);
- 66.4% agreed the video in the introductory session demonstrated the importance Penn State places on the appreciation of diversity (compared to 69.4% in 2006 and 68.3% in 2005);
- 69.4% agreed FTCAP increased their awareness of ways to get involved at Penn State;
- 62.6% agreed FTCAP helped them make responsible decisions (data not shown). (Note: these last two questions were based on changes made to FTCAP in 2007 and hence were not asked in previous years.)

²Percents represent those who indicated “substantially” or “extremely.”

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

- 86.2% agreed the event welcomed them into the Penn State community (compared to 80.2% in 2006 and 84.2% in 2005), and
- 81.4% agreed the speakers clarified what is expected from students as members of the Penn State community (compared to 77.4% in 2006 and 79.0% in 2005; data not shown).

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

- 82.1% agreed the Dean's Meeting provided them with information related to the college's programs, activities, and resources (compared to 84.5% in 2006 and 80.8% in 2005), and
- 77.2% agreed the meeting provided them with information related to academic advising (compared to 76.8% in 2006 and 78.2% in 2005; data not shown).

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

- 78.1% felt strongly the meeting was helpful in sharing useful information about policies, resources, and upcoming events (compared to 76.9% in 2006 and 77.0% in 2005), and
- 68.7% felt strongly the meeting was helpful in providing an opportunity to meet others on their floor (compared to 64.6% in 2006 and 67.7% in 2005; data not shown).

Table 3. Attendance at Events for New Students

Events	percent who attended 2005	percent who attended 2006	percent who attended 2007
FTCAP	95.8	95.3	90.6
President's Convocation	75.6	85.4	78.5
Dean's Meeting	65.0	68.1	68.5
Late Night (after Convocation)	55.2	50.0	42.5
Be a Part from the Start	59.3	57.3	59.8
Involvement Days	na	na	60.4
SPA Spikes Game and Comedian	na	na	8.6
World Cultural Festival	na	na	12.1
Residence Hall House Meeting*	95.6	95.5	94.9
Residence Hall Orientation Events*	28.8	44.9	50.0

* Students who live on campus