



First Year Learning Outcomes

March 2001

Purpose

This survey tracks experiences of first year students and the progress they have made towards achieving specific learning outcomes. A few of the questions focused on the newly implemented First Year seminar program.

Implications/Highlights

Most students were satisfied with their decision to come to Penn State, felt that they 'fit in' and were doing well acquiring personal learning skills. Almost half of the respondents thought important objectives of their First Year Seminar had been met.

Participation Rate

N = 662 (61%) agreed to participate

N = 428 (39%) did not agree to participate

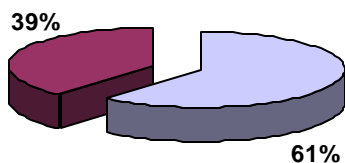


Figure 1. Participation rate

Findings

Most respondents (87%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their decision to come to Penn State. There were no differences in level of satisfaction by gender, race, or residence in special living options.

Almost the same proportion overall (85%) felt they 'fit in' as members of the Penn State community. More of the non-minority students (87%) than of the minority students (73%) felt they 'fit in'.*

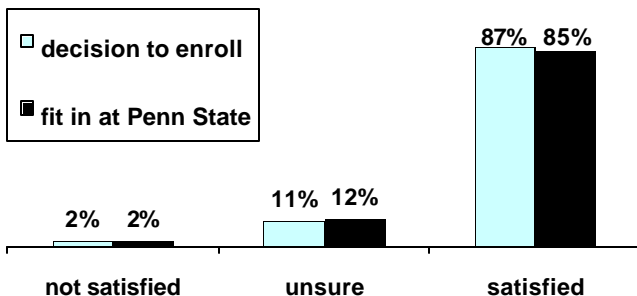


Figure 2. Most students were satisfied with their decision to come to Penn State and felt they 'fit in' as members of the PSU community

*Statistically significant at the .05 level

Almost half of the students felt that their First Year Seminar resulted in their becoming engaged in the climate of learning at Penn State, being oriented to high expectations and demanding workload of academic life, and seeing a connection between the First Year Seminar and their potential major.

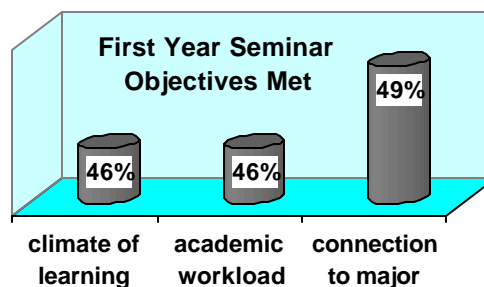


Figure 3. Half the students felt that selected objectives were met in their First Year Seminar classes

Many students felt that interacting with the instructor of their First Year Seminar (35%), the availability of the Newspaper Readership Program (78%), making their own decisions (87%), and living in the residence halls (76%) added to the quality of their first year experiences.

Contributed to Quality of First Year

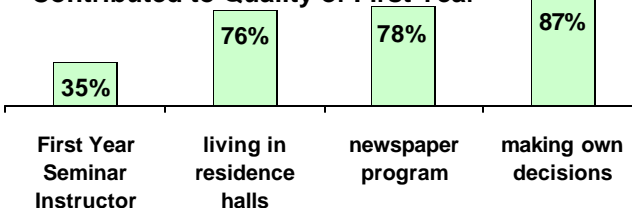


Figure 4. Most students felt that making their own decisions added to the quality of first year experiences

Two-thirds of the respondents (65%) reported that they valued getting to know students from backgrounds that differed from their own. Students were asked how well the climate in their living area supported diversity outcomes.

Residence Climate and Selected Diversity Outcomes

- 54% socializing with other students from racial backgrounds that differed from your own
- 46% residents expressing different ideas or controversial viewpoints
- 36% multicultural discussions and interactions

For further information, please contact Dr. Betty Moore at the Student Affairs Research and Assessment Office.
315 Grange, University Park, PA 16802, (814) 863-1809, blm1@psu.edu



Student Affairs

Students were asked about three safety issues for residence halls. Almost all (98%) respondents lock their rooms when they go out, half (51%) lock their rooms when they are 'in' and one-fourth (26%) never let others into their halls if they are unsure they are residents.

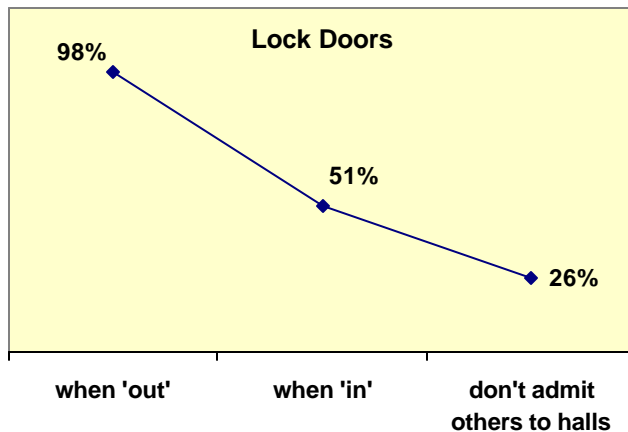


Figure 5. Most students lock their rooms when they are out although fewer lock up when they are in their rooms or hesitate to let others into their residence halls if they are unsure they are residents

Students were asked a series of questions about use of time.

Average Number of Hours/Week Spent

15.18 hr/wk	studying outside of class
14.64 hr/wk	using instant messaging
7.79 hr/wk	surfing the 'net'
4.88 hr/wk	using email
4.51 hr/wk	doing class work online
4.29 hr/wk	student organizations
1.38 hr/wk	volunteer work
.26 hr/wk	in online chat rooms

Most First Year students seemed well informed about Penn State traditions, offices, and expectations.

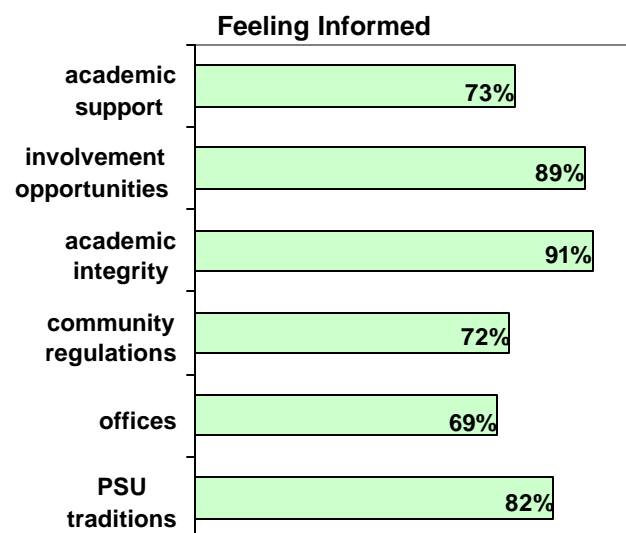


Figure 6. A majority of students stated they were aware of various Penn State traditions, offices, opportunities and expectations

Many respondents said that their out-of-class experiences enhanced their in-class learning (54%).

Out-of-Class Experiences Enhanced In-Class Learning

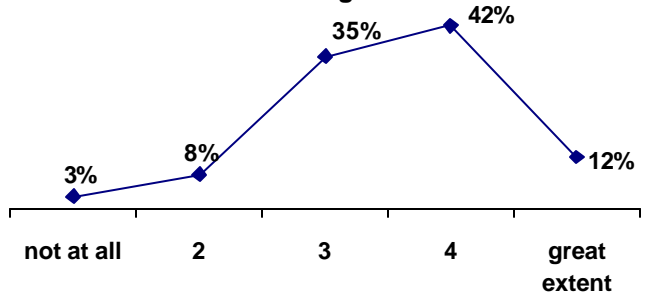


Figure 7. Students reported that their out-of-class experiences enhanced their in-class learning

Students indicated they felt they were doing well learning various personal skills during their first year in college.

Personal Learning Skills Development

doing well	personal learning skills
92%	being on your own
91%	making/maintaining new friendships
86%	making own decisions
82%	getting along with roommate
82%	understanding own strengths
77%	developing support network
76%	keeping fit emotionally
72%	getting good grades
71%	establishing personal goals
65%	acquiring productive study skills
64%	keeping fit physically
58%	being actively involved in campus life
57%	establishing career goals
53%	managing free time
52%	managing finances
30%	expressing opinions to student leaders

Fourteen percent of the respondents said they lived in special interest or honors living options. These students were more likely than other first year students to say their living area climate supported their socializing with others from racial backgrounds that differed from their own.*

On average, men spent more time in chat rooms and surfing the net and women spent more time volunteering.*

More non-minority students than minority students felt they were doing well getting satisfactory grades and keeping fit physically.*

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.