



## Orientation '01

September 2001

### Purpose

This survey focused on concerns and progress of first year students as well as their reactions to specific orientation activities implemented to clarify expectations of them as new members of the college community.

### Implications/Highlights

A large proportion of students reported reading the new Statement of Principles mailed out to them and found it helped to clarify university values and student responsibilities. About half felt that special diversity activities increased their understanding of the breadth of cultures on campus.

### Participation Rate

N = 684 (78%) agreed to participate

N = 193 (22%) did not agree to participate

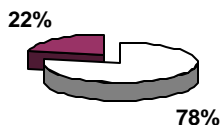


Figure 1. Participation rate

### Findings

Two-thirds of the new students (66%) said they had read the new Statement of Principles mailed to their homes.

Of these, most felt that this Statement clarified their responsibilities as new members of the community.

#### Statement of Principles Clarified University Values

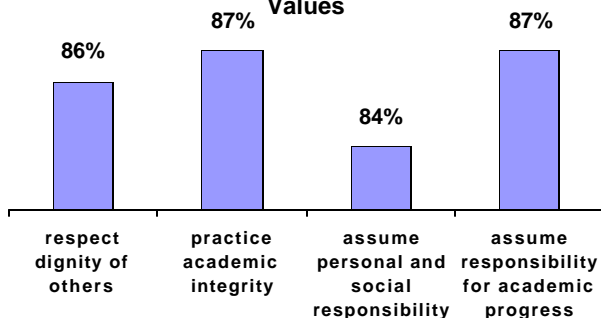


Figure 2. Most of those who read the new Statement of Principles reported that they clarified university values

Fewer students remembered reading an article included in the mailing which focused on discussing diversity issues important to the climate at the university.

#### Read "Overcoming The Culture of Silence on Race"

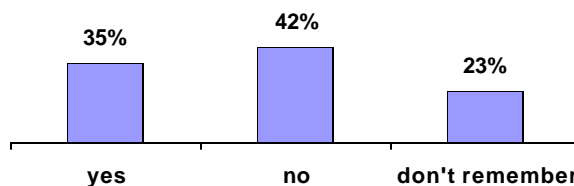


Figure 3. A third of the new students remembered reading an article mailed to them on "Overcoming the Culture of Silence on Race"

Over half of the new students (58%) said they had noticed the "No Hate at Penn State" flyers posted on campus.

Three-fourths (74%) attended a video, "The Many Worlds of Penn State" and a discussion led by their RAs on arrival day.

Half of the students reported that these activities helped them appreciate the breadth of diversity at the university (50%) and increased their interest in learning more about diversity issues (45%).

#### Impact of Diversity Activities

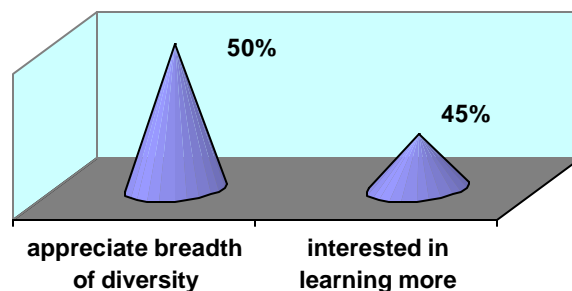


Figure 4. Students felt that the diversity activities helped them appreciate the breadth of diversity at the university and increased their interest in learning more about diversity issues

\*Statistically significant at the .05 level

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Student Affairs

Individual respondents liked the interactive nature of the diversity activities; others thought the timing was poor. About a third reported that these initial activities made them more willing to discuss racial differences.

**Impact on Willingness to Discuss Differences**

- 40% reading the article
- 37% participating in the discussion
- 34% attending the video

Two-thirds of the new students (66%) attended the President’s Convocation. Nearly half of these (48%) felt the Convocation helped explain what was expected of them as members of the university community.

Fewer new students this year than previously seemed concerned about their transition to college.

**Concerns Before Arriving at Penn State**

Concerns	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997
Being prepared for college classes	45%	51%	52%	54%	62%
Getting along with roommates	45%	49%	49%	53%	61%
Getting a start on academic skills	39%	45%	45%	47%	59%
Finding way around campus	40%	41%	43%	41%	51%
Making friends	37%	37%	37%	34%	49%
Knowing about special offices/services	27%	33%	33%	36%	50%
Learning about the social scene	39%	33%	33%	31%	44%

Three-fourths (76%) of the new students felt their arrival on campus went smoothly. Most had found their RAs to be helpful in assisting their transition to college.

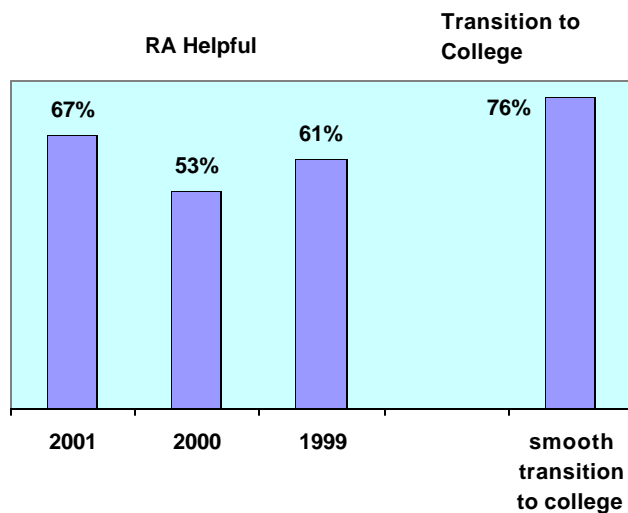


Figure 5. Two-thirds of incoming students thought their RA had been helpful in their transition to college

After three weeks of college, students reported that they were doing well developing relationship competencies.

**Relationship Competencies**

Relationship Competencies	doing well	
	2001	2000
developing and maintaining new friendships	81%	82%
meeting others from diverse backgrounds	76%	60%
feeling a sense of responsibility towards others	58%	43%
becoming involved in clubs and organizations	40%	46%
expressing opinions to student leaders	54%	31%

Students felt they were also doing well making progress with their academic competencies.

**Developing Academic Competencies**

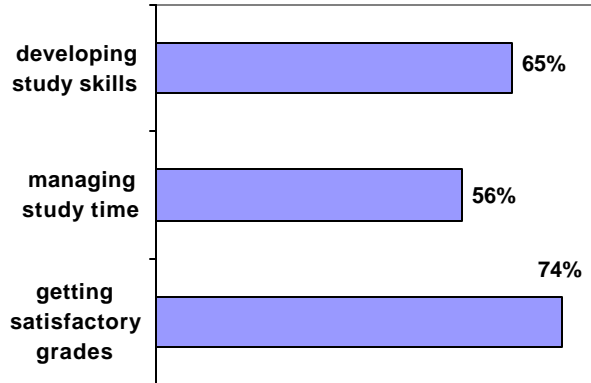


Figure 6. Students felt they were doing well developing study skills, managing study time and getting satisfactory grades

There was a significant difference in the proportion of women and men concerned about safety on campus \* and feeling comfortable with computer technology. \*

**Difference Between Men and Women**

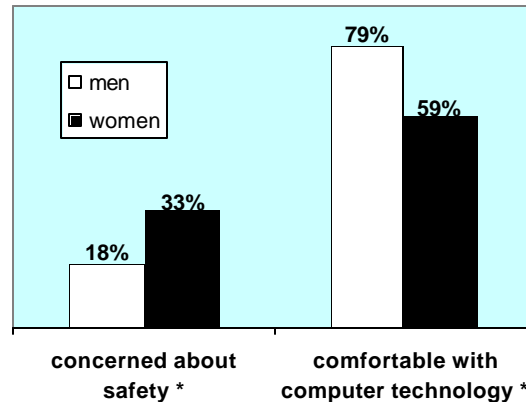


Figure 7. There were significant differences between men and women about safety issues and feeling comfortable with computers

\*Statistically significant at the .05 level.