



Post First Year Learning Outcomes

April 2002

Purpose

This survey asked students who were completing their first year in college for feedback about social norms, how well they were doing developing personal skills, and their experiences with their First Year Seminars.

Implications/Highlights

Students observed a marked increase in student drinking and a more modest increase in student smoking and drug use compared to high school. Many students reported that their residence living area supported diversity-related outcomes. Half of the students felt their First Year Seminar helped them gain a realistic expectation about the academic workload and climate of learning at the University.

Participation Rate

N = 786 (57%) agreed to participate

N = 598 (43%) did not agree to participate

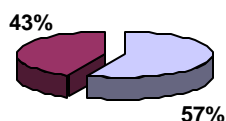


Figure 1. Participation rate

Findings

Students were asked to comment on their personal observations of student drug use, smoking, and drinking their first year at college compared to their last year in high school.

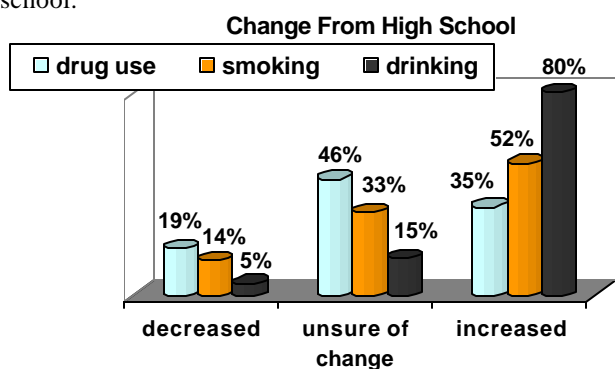


Figure 2. Students compared first year of college to last year in high school

More of the women than of the men said they observed an increase in student drinking compared to high school.*

*Statistically significant at the .05 level

Over half of the respondents (53%) said that getting to know others from backgrounds that were different from their own (race/ethnicity/sexual orientation/religion/socioeconomic status) enhanced the quality of their first year experience at Penn State.

Students, this year as well as last year, were asked if the environment in their residence hall living area supported diversity-related outcomes.

Residence Climate and Diversity Outcomes

	2002	2001
socializing with students whose backgrounds differ from yours	55%	54%
expressing different ideas or controversial viewpoints	52%	46%
engaging in multicultural discussions and interactions	45%	36%

Just under a third of the respondents (32%) reported that interacting with instructors of their First Year Seminar contributed to the quality of their initial year in college.

The survey asked, from their perspective, to what extent four objectives of the First Year Seminar program were met – 1)having more opportunities to interact with their instructor than with instructors of other classes, 2)seeing a connection to a future major, 3)being oriented to intellectual responsibilities and the academic workload, and 4)becoming engaged in the climate of learning at Penn State.

Goals of First Year Seminar Met

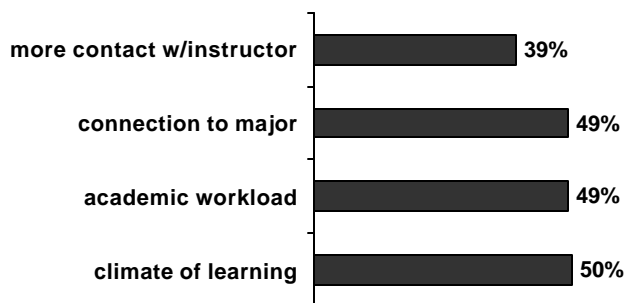


Figure 3. Students gave feedback about their First Year Seminar experiences

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Student Affairs

More than three-fourths of the students (82%) said that their out-of-class experiences had enhanced their first year of college.

Out-of-Class Experiences Enhanced First Year

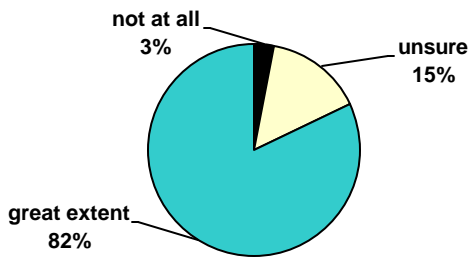


Figure 4. A majority of students felt their out-of-class experiences enhanced their first year of college

A majority of students reported they were knowledgeable about Penn State resources and standards.

- 95% expectation of academic integrity
- 90% campus and community volunteer opportunities
- 79% University Learning Centers
- 78% community standards and regulations
- 73% Penn State offices and procedures

Not all students follow Residence Hall safety guidelines.

Assume Responsibility for Safety

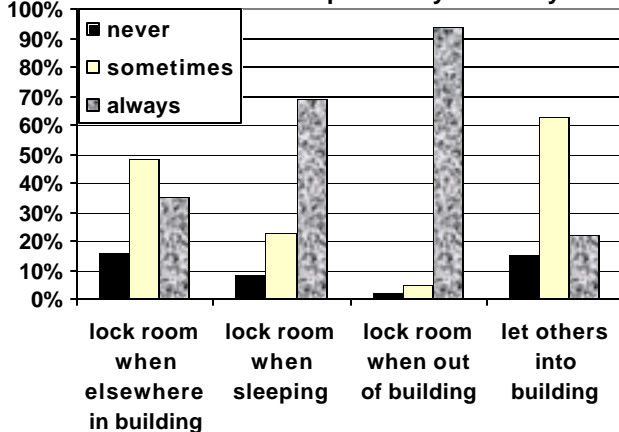


Figure 5. Not all students lock their rooms or check that they are not letting non-residents into their residence building

Women were slightly less likely than men to lock their rooms when out of the building* but more likely to lock their rooms when sleeping.*

Nearly three-fourths of respondents (74%) said that living in the residence halls added to the quality of their first year experiences.

Residence Hall Living Enhanced First Year

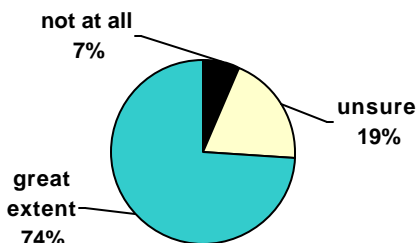


Figure 6. Living in the residence halls contributed to the quality of the first year experience

Respondents reported they thought they were doing well at the end of their first year in college.

Doing Well Developing Personal Skills

personal learning skills	2002	2001
being on their own	90%	92%
making/maintaining friendships	89%	91%
making own decisions	88%	86%
getting along with roommates	80%	82%
developing support network	76%	77%
getting good grades	75%	72%
acquiring productive study skills	68%	65%
keeping physically fit	66%	64%
managing stress	58%	na
managing free time	58%	53%
becoming involved in campus life	57%	58%
expressing opinion to student leaders	28%	30%

More of the women than of the men said they were doing well getting good grades,* making own decisions,* and keeping physically fit.*

More of the men than of the women said they were doing well being on their own * and managing stress.*

Nearing the end of their first year of college, most of the respondents were satisfied with their decision to come to Penn State (86%) and felt that they “fit in” with the Penn State community (83%).

Satisfied with Decision to Come to Penn State and Feel They Fit In

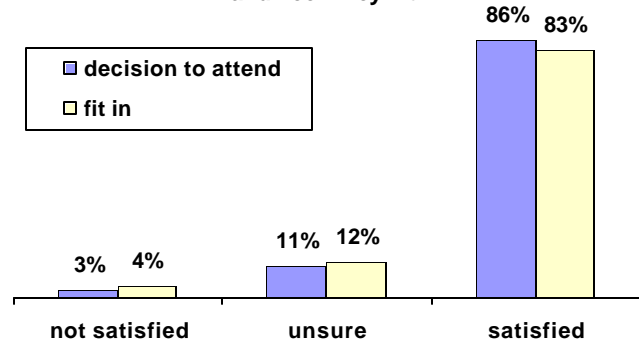


Figure 7. A majority of students were satisfied with their decision to come to Penn State and felt they fit in

Fewer of the minority students (74%) than of the non-minority students (89%) were satisfied with their decision to attend Penn State.*

Fewer of the minority students (66%) than of the non-minority students (87%) felt they fit in as a member of the Penn State community.*

As in previous years, students emphasized how much “making their own decisions” contributed to their first year experience.

Making Your Own Decision

- 83% Contributed a great deal
- 13% Unsure
- 3% Did not contribute

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.