



New Students 2002

September 2002

Purpose

The focus of this survey was to explore the experiences of new first year students.

Implications/Highlights

Most new students reported that their transition to college had gone smoothly, that they are aware of their responsibilities as new members of the community, and that they are doing well developing academic, relationship and personal coping skills.

Participation Rate

N = 807 (70%) agreed to participate

N = 351 (30%) did not agree to participate

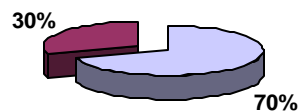


Figure 1. Participation rate

Findings

Overall, three-fourths of new students (79%) felt that their transition to Penn State was smooth and, after being on campus for a few weeks, 83% stated that they felt they belonged as a member of the Penn State Community. Although men were more likely than women to report a smooth transition,* they did not differ in their sense of “belonging.” Minority and non-minority students did not differ in their responses to either survey item.

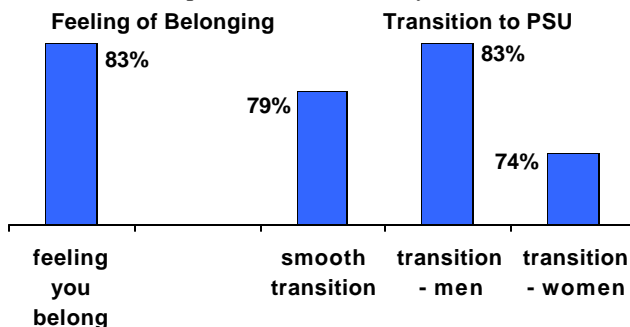


Figure 2. More than three-fourths of new students reported their transition to PSU had been smooth and that they now felt they “belonged as a member of the Penn State community”

Three-fifths of new students thought their RAs had been helpful in assisting their transition to Penn State.

*Statistically significant at the .05 level

Over half (56% compared to 66% in 2001) recalled reading the PSU **Statement of Principles** mailed to them. Of these, most felt this **Statement** had clarified their responsibilities as new members of the community.

Statement of Principles Clarified Responsibilities

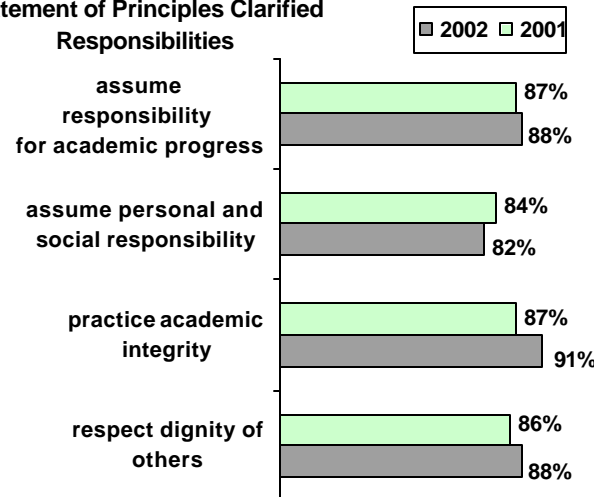


Figure 3. Most of those who recalled reading the PSU Statement of Principles reported that this Statement clarified University values

Incoming students attended a “Freshman, Testing, Counseling, and Advising” program the summer before arrival during which they saw a Diversity video and heard a discussion on safe socializing. More than half (56%) thought the video demonstrated the importance Penn State places on a multicultural education. Minority students were less likely than non-minority students to feel the video was successful.*

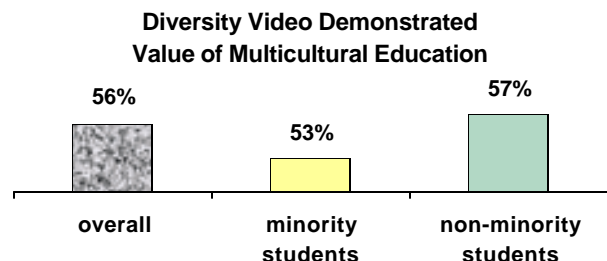


Figure 4. A majority of students felt that the Diversity video presented during FTCAP successfully demonstrated the value PSU places on a multicultural education

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Nearly two-thirds (66%) felt that the FTCAP discussion on relationships led by student educators helped them develop a plan for safe socializing while 83% reported that the discussion helped them consider how to avoid acquaintance rape and sexual assault situations.

Student Educator Discussion on Relationships

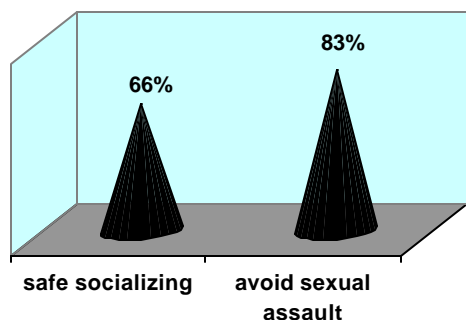


Figure 5. Students reported that the FTCAP discussion on relationships led by student educators helped them to develop a plan for safe socializing and learn how to avoid sexual assault situations

Three-fourths attended the President's Convocation for New Students (compared to two-thirds in 2001.) A majority of those who attended (56% compared to 48% in 2001) said the President's comments illustrated what was expected of them as members of the PSU community.

Incoming new students this year were concerned about being prepared for college classes and getting along with roommates.

New Student Concerns Before Arriving On Campus

Concerns	2002	2001	2000	1999
Being prepared for college classes	46%	45%	51%	52%
Getting along with roommates	46%	45%	49%	49%
Finding way around campus	43%	40%	4%	43%
Getting a start on academic skills	36%	39%	45%	45%
Learning about the social scene	33%	39%	33%	33%
Making new friends	32%	37%	37%	37%
Knowing about special offices/services	32%	27%	33%	33%
Safety	28%	26%	na	na

More of the minority students than of the non-minority students indicated being concerned about all of these issues before arriving on campus. *

More of the women than of the men were concerned about making new friends, * finding their way around campus, * getting along with roommates, * and safety on campus.*

After three weeks on campus, students reported that they were doing well developing relationship skills.

Developing Relationship Skills

Relationship Skills	2002	2001	2000
Developing/maintaining new friendships	82%	81%	82%
Meeting others from diverse backgrounds	78%	76%	60%
Feeling some responsibility towards others	55%	58%	43%
Becoming involved in clubs and organizations	49%	40%	46%
Expressing opinions to student leaders	48%	54%	31%

A majority of students felt they were doing well developing academic skills.

Developing Academic Skills

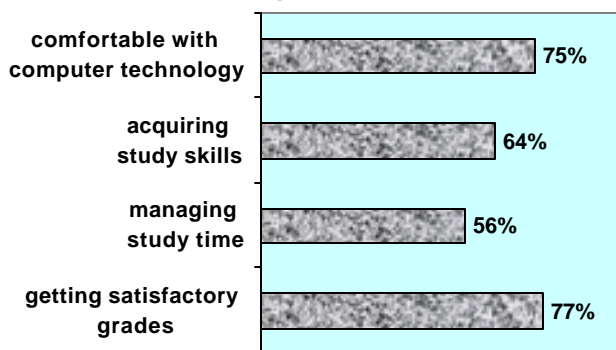


Figure 6. Students felt they were doing well developing academic skills

Gender Difference and Comfort with Computer Technology

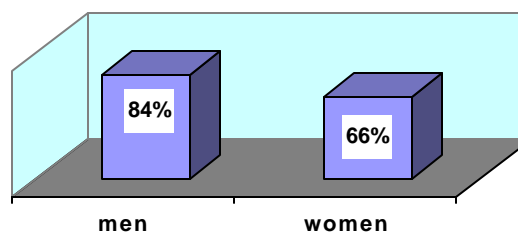


Figure 7. More men felt they were doing well with computer technology

At least half of the new students also reported they were doing well:

- 90% being on their own without family/old friends
- 81% making their own decisions
- 81% keeping fit emotionally
- 70% keeping fit physically
- 70% being aware of campus policies and rules
- 64% managing their free time
- 61% managing their finances
- 51% feeling informed about PSU offices/procedures

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.