



THE NEED TO KNOW

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 November 30, 2000

FACT SHEET#43 OCTOBER SPOTLIGHT SURVEY-1999 DEPARTMENT OF RESIDENCE LIFE- MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

On October 19, 1999, the Department of Residence Life conducted a Spotlight Survey with undergraduate residents living in residence halls. Approximately 67%, or 9086 responded. Students were asked to mark "yes" or "no" to a number of statements. Their responses were focused on the time period *"in the last two weeks"*.

In the on-going conversation around enhancing residential learning environments, the model of citizen-scholar has emerged as one guide for measuring the impact of the residential experience. As students develop the competencies inherent to citizenship and scholarship, they will be affected by academic and residential experiences. The residential experiences can be framed to maximize the opportunities for students to gain skills that will become valued elements of their higher education experience and portfolio. The specific areas of competency, which are subsumed under "citizen scholar", include academic and scholarly competence – the *student as a life-long learner*; multicultural competency – the *student as a successful navigator in a multi-national, multicultural context*; and ethical decision-making- the *student as a critical and ethical thinker*.

Students as Scholars:

Data from the October Spotlight Survey provided the Department of Residence Life with base-line measures for several behaviors critical to learning. Elements measured included: participation in collaborative learning; discussion of academically-related ideas out of the classroom; contact with faculty members outside of the classroom; utilization of academic resources; class attendance; time management; and goals for academic achievement.

As students reflected on their experiences during the time range between October 5 to October 26, 72% (fr.=74%) reported studying with other students in the one of their classes; while 59% (fr.=64%) reported studying with other students living in the same residence hall. Eighty-one percent (fr.=82%) had helped someone else with their academic work, and 90% (fr.=90%) talked to another student about something they had learned in a class.

Almost half (47%; fr.=48%) reported having a conversation with a faculty member, outside of class. Forty-seven percent (fr.=48%) had utilized some type of academic resource - most notably, the library. Fifty-three percent (fr.=58%) had sought out their RA for information. Sixty-eight percent (fr.=69%) were aware of academic support programs in their halls, and 19% (fr.=20%) of those who were aware, attended them. More than two-thirds (68%; fr.=70%) of the respondents had skipped at least one class, and the same percentage (68%; fr.=64%) had difficulty managing their time.

OCTOBER SPOTLIGHT- Academically Related Questions	Students Responding "TRUE"		
	Freshmen	Non-Freshmen	All Students
Studied with other students in one of my classes	74%	69%	72%
Studied with other students in my hall	64%	51%	59%
Helped someone else with academic work	82%	80%	81%
Talked to another student about something I learned in one of my classes	90%	92%	90%
Had an out-of-class conversation with a faculty member	44%	51%	47%
Used an academic resource	48%	44%	47%
Went to my RA for assistance or information	58%	48%	53%
Were aware of at least one program on academic skills or resources offered in the hall	69%	68%	68%
Attended the academically-related program (mentioned above)	20%	14%	19%
Skipped class	70%	65%	68%
Found they did not have enough time to do something that was important to them	64%	71%	67%

Found it too loud on the floor to study	19%	21%	20%
Expect to get a 3.0 or higher	83%	91%	85%

Almost half of the students had engaged in a self-initiated academically related activity outside of the classroom, such as connecting with a faculty member, or a peer leader, or using an academic resource.

The majority of residential students had high academic expectations of themselves, as measured by grade point average. Eighty-five percent (fr.=83%) reported expecting to get at least a 3.0 for fall semester. In a departmental Spotlight Survey conducted the first day of the 1999 fall semester, over 90% of the new freshman, expected to get a 3.0 or higher. The average freshman grade point average for fall 1999 was 2.71.

Multicultural Competency:

An essential component of citizen scholars is the understanding of culture, religion, orientation, race and other factors as they affect our individual and collective identity. Baseline competencies in this area include the recognition of "difference", the development of attitudes based on understanding and respect, and the demonstration of these attitudes and values in daily life.

In the prior two weeks, 71% of the students (fr.=74%) reported that they had made some effort to relate to a person different from themselves in the past two weeks. Five percent (fr.= 5%) of the survey respondents stated that they believed they had been treated disrespectfully because of their race, ethnicity, orientation or background.

Discriminatory behaviors were experienced by 5% of the students. Nearly three-quarters of all respondents expressed a willingness to look for opportunities to learn about others different from themselves.

Ethical Decision-Making:

Making good decisions for oneself, and balancing one's interests with the needs of the greater community are elements of citizenship. Other aspects of this competency include developing successful relationships with others, being able to assert one's interests, and making healthy personal decisions. Measures were developed to assess the level of involvement and sense of membership in the residence hall community.

Seventy-two percent (freshmen =73%) of the resident respondents believed that they were valued members of their floor communities. In the prior two weeks 64% (fr.=67%) had participated with other floor members in a social activity, and 78% (fr.=80%) had talked to at least five other residents in a conversation with greater depth than "Hi, how are you?"

Twenty three percent of the respondents (fr.=22%) had experienced a conflict with another floor resident in the prior two weeks; 57% (fr.= 59%) of those experiencing a conflict had resolved the difficulty themselves.

Nearly 75% of those responding to this survey felt attached to their floor communities and connected with other members of the floor through social activities or conversation. About 25% experienced some kind of conflict with others, and of those respondents, more than half had addressed this problem directly and resolved it.

Ten percent (fr.=10%) reported getting into difficulty because they had too much to drink; while 8% (fr.=8%) reported engaging in sexual behavior that they later regretted. Ten percent (fr.=12%) reported having a major conflict with their roommate. Eighteen percent (fr.=17%) had considered packing up and leaving MSU.

Some students experience significant problems while living in residence halls. Eighteen percent had considered leaving MSU. Interventions at these critical moments are essential. Students report having connection points with Resident Assistants (75% have contact), faculty (almost 50% have out-of-classroom contact), and peers (75% have contact socially, academically, or both.)

