

First Time Freshmen-First Night of Classes Survey

On the first night of classes for Fall Semester 2000, 18% of the first-time freshmen at MSU made projections about what they might experience during their first semester at Michigan State University.

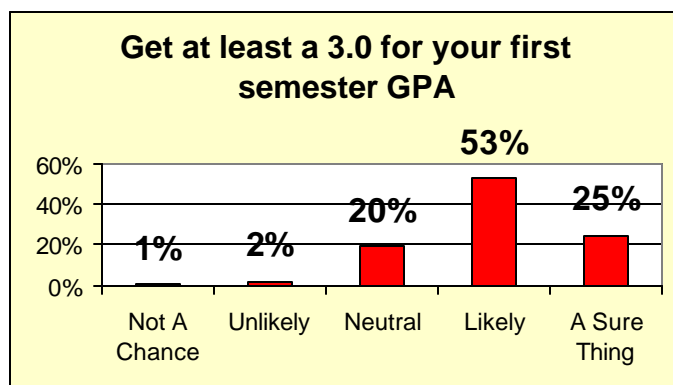
On August 28th Residence Life Staff asked first time freshmen to complete a short survey containing a set of typical college experiences. The freshmen were asked to state how likely it would be that they would have these experiences during their first semester in college.

The survey was administered by graduate and professional staff during the evening meal period in and around residence hall cafeterias on the first day of classes for Fall Semester 2000. There were 1229 usable responses, a number representing 18% of the first-time freshman. Eight hundred and sixty nine (869) of the students voluntarily provided their personal identification numbers (PIDs) so that demographic information could be linked to their responses.

Demographics of Respondents

The survey respondents who provided their PID were 82% White/Caucasian, 11% Black/African American, 1% Chicano, 1% Hispanic, 0% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 6% Asian/Pacific Islander. This racial-ethnic distribution mirrors fairly well the diversity of the general first time freshman population. Survey respondents were 64% female, and 36% male. The percentages for women and men in the overall first time freshman group are 56% women and 44% men.

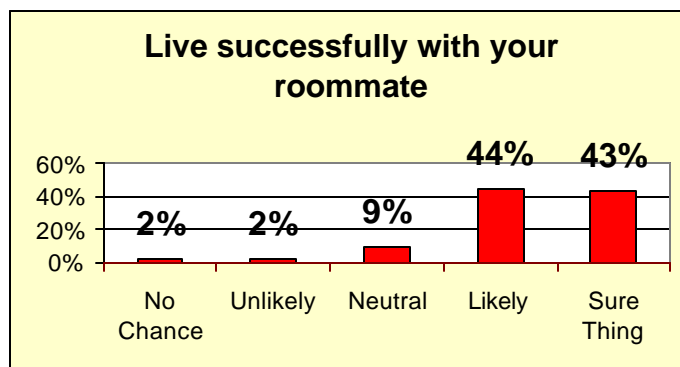
The 33 statements presented to the freshmen can be categorized into five topical areas; academic, social, ethical, multicultural and personal.



Academics

Freshmen enter their first term at MSU with confidence. Twenty-five percent are sure they will get at least a 3.0 for their first semester grade point average, while 53% say that it is likely. Seventy percent expect to have out-of-class contact with faculty and 90% believe that they will

stay “up to date” on courses and assignments. Freshmen aren’t as sure about the value of study groups as 45% say it is likely they will join one in their hall, and 38% are neutral about the idea.



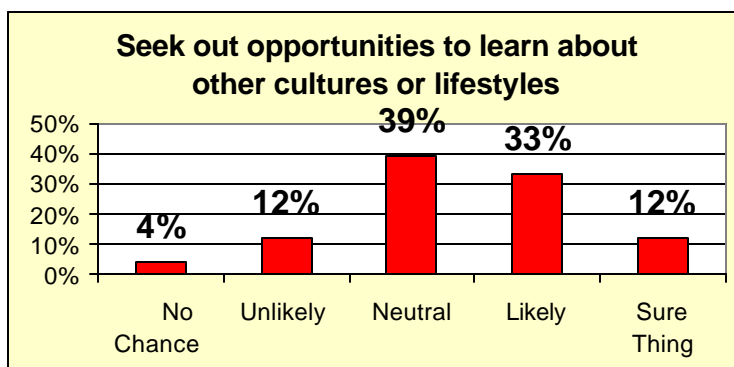
Social Development

Developing relationships is traditionally a concern of incoming freshmen, however 87% report that they will live successfully with their roommates. One quarter (26%) however anticipate that they will have conflict with their parent(s) or guardian(s). Forty-three percent think that it is likely or a sure thing that they will develop a significant romantic relationship.

Ethical Development

Almost half of the freshmen expect to have their values challenged (49%); and 41% expect that they will find themselves in situations where they feel caught between doing what is “right” and what is “wrong.” Eight percent believe that their value systems will be challenged.

Relative to the newly adopted community standards model in floor communities, it is a positive sign that 72% state that they will attend regular community meetings, and 42% believe that they will be actively involved in making and maintaining standards. Only 8% believe it is likely that they won’t attend regular community meetings.

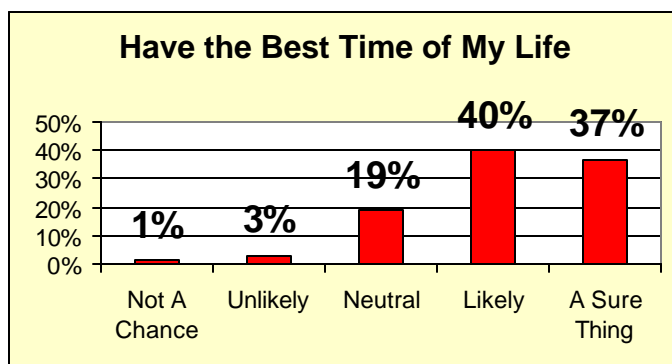


Multicultural Competence

In the area of multicultural engagement, 45% say that they will seek out opportunities to learn about other cultures or lifestyles, almost 40% are neutral, and 16% say that it unlikely. An even higher level of neutrality is expressed by freshmen when asked if they believe that their views will be influenced by conversations with others who are different from them. Nineteen percent are fairly confident that they will not change their views, while 40% are confident that they will. Forty-one percent are neutral.

Personal Development

On the first day of classes, two thirds (66%) of the students project that they will feel overwhelmed by all that they have to do and 13% report that it is likely that they will think about leaving MSU. Data from the 1999 CIRP (College Student Report) confirms that 31% of all college-bound high school seniors report being overwhelmed with all that they have to do. Less than 10% expect they will have difficulty with drinking or gambling. At the same time, 78% of the first time freshmen believe that they will learn a great deal about themselves, and 77% believe that they will have the best time of their lives.



Assuredness

Students selected **“A Sure Thing”** most frequently to the following items:

- Live successfully with your roommate (44%)*
- Keep up-to-date with classes and assignments (41%)*
- Have the best time of my life (37%)*

Students selected **“Not a Chance”** most frequently to the following items:

- Get into difficulty because of gambling (67%)*
- Use an illegal substance (59%)*
- Get into difficulty because of drinking too much (40%)*

Students selected **“Neutral”** most frequently to the following items:

- Change your views because of conversations with people different from yourself (41%)*
- Seek out opportunities to learn about different cultures or lifestyles (41%)*
- Join a study group in your residence hall (39%)*

Grade Point Average

In the 1999 First Time Freshmen-First Night of Classes Survey students were asked to respond to this question, “At the end of fall semester I expect to have a ____ grade-point-average. They were given five response choices, offering grade ranges from below a 2.0 to 3.5 to 4.0. Ninety one percent (91%) reported that they would have at least a 3.0 or higher. In the 2000 survey students were asked to state how likely it would be that they would have a at least a 3.0 for their fall semester grades. Twenty four percent (24%) stated that it was “A Sure Thing,” while 54% stated that it was “Likely.”

Comparison to 1999 Freshman Class

There were design differences in the 1999 and 2000 First Time Freshman- First Night of Classes Surveys. In 1999 survey respondents were asked to express their level of concern about 12 items, and their level of commitment to seven goals. In the 2000 survey, students expressed how likely it would be that they would have 33 different experiences. Therefore

comparisons between the two surveys must be made quite loosely. Under this “loose” rubric, it is possible to compare students in 1999 who stated that they had a commitment of “4” or “5” on a scale from 1=“No Commitment” to 5=“Strong Commitment”, with students in 2000 who expressed that it was “Likely” or “A Sure Thing” that they have these same experiences. These are not fully comparable however, as a commitment to something indicates a desired outcome, whereas a likelihood that something will happen isn’t necessary attached to a goal.

September 1999 1036 Freshmen	Committed	August 2000 1229 Freshmen	Likely
Getting involved in a student organization	42%	Join a campus, departmental or hall organization	52%
Getting to know faculty members on an “out of classroom” basis	47%	Have conversations with faculty members out of the classroom	71%
Getting involved in volunteer work	34%	Get involved in volunteer work	41%
Developing friendships with people who are different (sexual orientation, race, background) from me	48%	Seek out opportunities to learn about different cultures and lifestyles	44%
Developing my personal identity	66%	Learn a great deal about yourself	79%
Using campus resources for academic support and assistance if I need them	66%	Utilize an academic support resource such as a tutor, resource center, writing center, etc.	55%

Follow-Up

As part of the research and assessment activities of the Department of Residence Life, the freshmen who provided their PIDS for this survey will be contacted in January 2001. If they are willing, they will be asked to complete another survey focused on whether they had the experiences they expected to have. Information gained from both this First Night of Classes Survey and the follow-up survey will provide important information about the experiences and expectations of our Michigan State University freshman class.

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<http://www.reslife.msu.edu>