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DEPARTMENT OF RESIDENCE LIFE
Expectations to Realities
The First Semester at MSU for
Freshmen and Transfer Students
2004/2005



At the beginning of the 2004-2005 academic year, the annual *First-Time Freshmen, First Week of Classes Survey* was administered. This survey (*SpotLight Series*, Volume 5, Number 4), and the associated follow-up survey conducted in January, provided information about the expectations for and the realities of the first semester in college. In addition to surveying new first-year students, new transfer students were also surveyed. *SpotLight Series*, Volume 5, Number 5, features the responses of these students. In addition to learning more about the transfer students' experiences and expectations, there was interest in how these two "new student" populations were similar and different. This *SpotLight* highlights information about each group's follow-up responses, and also compares the January (spring) responses of both groups. It is important to note that only those surveys which could be matched by personal identification number (PID) were utilized for this publication. See the table below.

Survey Responses	First-Time Freshmen		Transfer Students	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Sent to	7169	1267	1572	347
Returned	1669 (23%)	524 (41%)	380 (24%)	153 (44%)
Returned with PIDs	1267	470	347	137

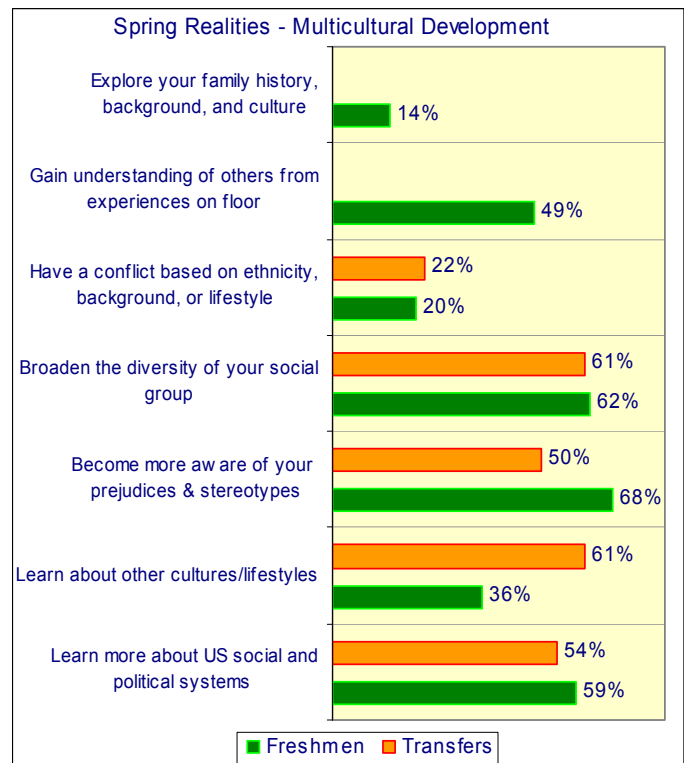
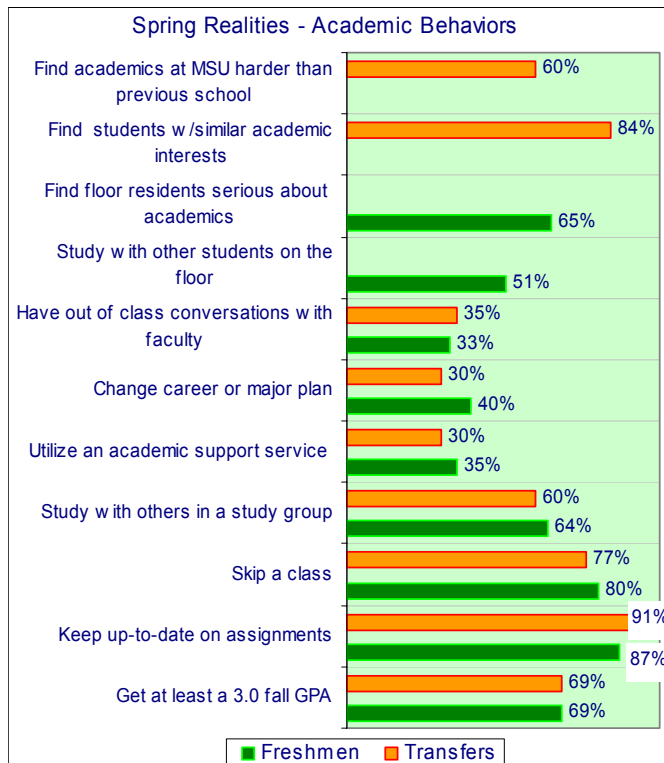
In the fall survey students were asked to respond to up to 50 possible behaviors, attitudes and experiences by choosing a response related to the likelihood that they would engage in the behavior, hold the attitude or have the experience during their

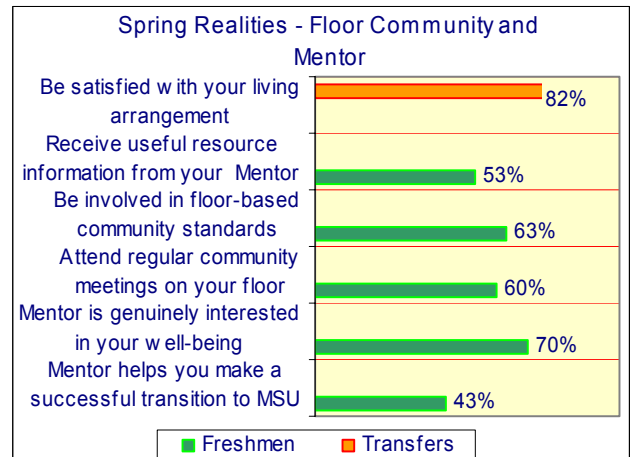
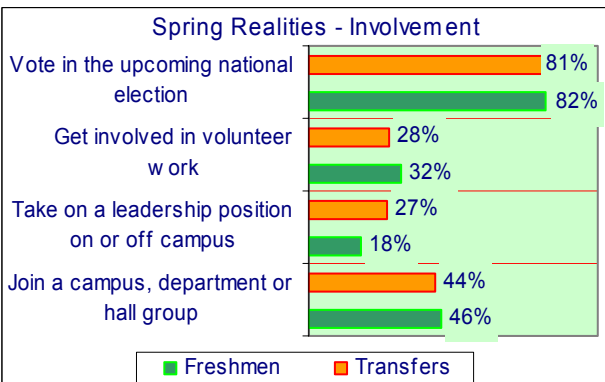
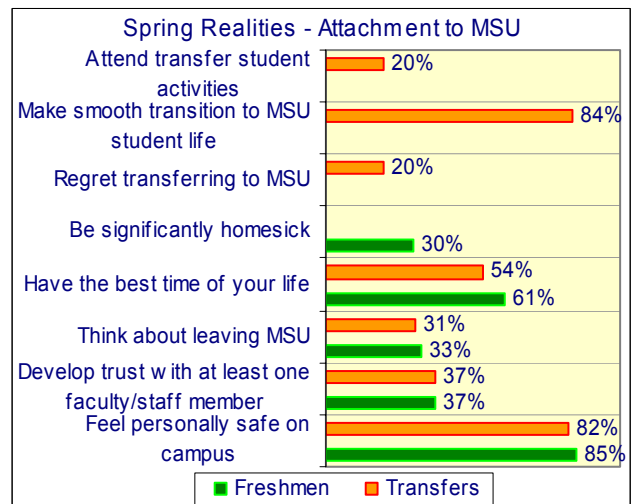
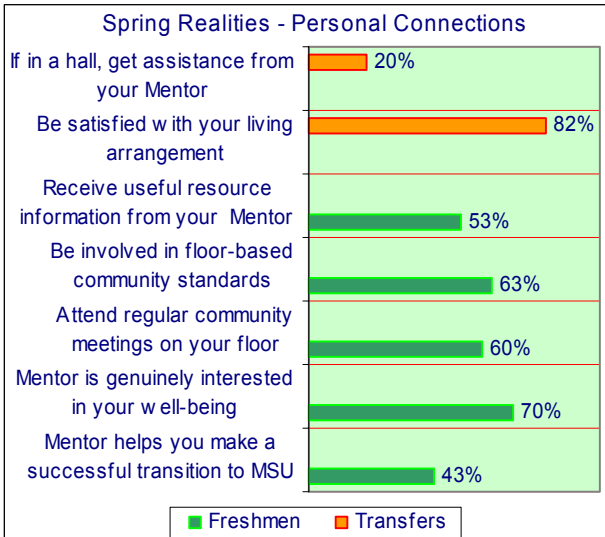
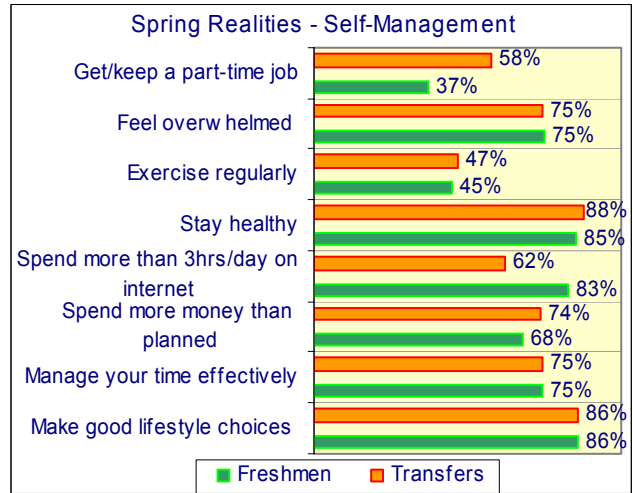
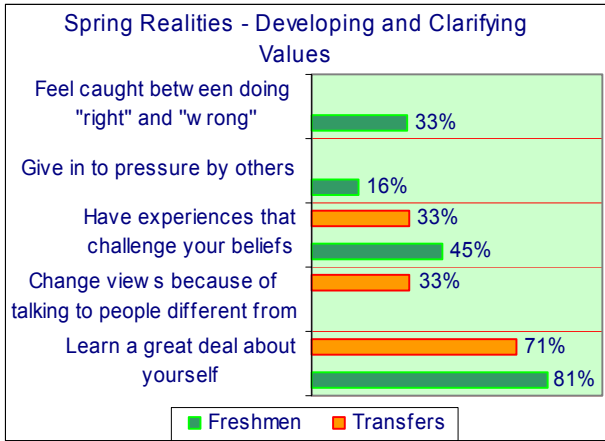
first MSU semester. A five-point scale was utilized with the following options: "Not a Chance" "Unlikely", "Neither Likely nor Unlikely", "Likely" or "A Sure Thing". In the spring, students were asked to respond to the same items provided in the fall, this time answered with either "Yes" or "No" to reflect whether they had engaged in the behavior, held the attitude, or had the experience.

To look at the difference between the fall expectations and the spring realities for each group, tables are provided. Each table contains questions related to one of the following topical areas: academic behaviors, self-management, multicultural development, involvement, attachment to MSU, personal connections, substance use, developing and clarifying values, floor community and the work of the Resident Mentor. Graphs feature the spring responses of each population. To facilitate the presentation of information both the tables and charts feature a comparison between the combined percentages of "Likely" and "A Sure Thing" for the fall responses compared to the "Yes" responses of the spring survey.

Though there were differences between freshmen and transfer students, where there were comparable items, these new populations have many more similarities.

Fall Expectations to Spring Realities for First-Time Freshmen and New Transfer Students





Spend more than 3 hours a day on the internet (for any purpose)	65%	83%	55%	62%	groups spent more money than they had planned to spend; however transfer students were less successful at anticipating their expenses than first-time freshmen. Both groups also reported exercising less than they expected to exercise.
Stay healthy (or as healthy as possible if you have a chronic condition)	81%	85%	89%	88%	
Exercise regularly	67%	45%	71%	47%	
Feel overwhelmed by all that you have to do	76%	75%	69%	75%	
Get/keep a full-time job			12%	6%	
Get/keep a part-time job	59%	37%	73%	58%	

Personal Connection	Freshmen		Transfers		PERSONAL CONNECTION
	Fall	Sp	Fall	Sp	
Feel connected to a formal or informal group of other students	71%	76%	60%	66%	Transfer students, to a large degree, expected to retain their pre-MSU friendships (77%), as well as develop meaningful new friendships with other MSU students (83%). Both freshmen and transfer students reported more connections to formal or informal groups than they had expected to develop, with three-quarters of the freshmen and 66% of the transfer students reporting such group connections. Eighty-two percent of the freshmen reported successful relationships with their roommates after one semester. Ninety percent had expected to live successfully with their roommates.
Live successfully with your roommate	90%	82%			
Have significant conflict with your parent(s)/guardian(s)	20%	17%			
Develop a significant romantic relationship	35%	20%			
Keep the same friends you had before coming to MSU			77%	86%	

Attachment to MSU	Freshmen		Transfers		ATTACHMENT TO MSU
	Fall	Sp	Fall	Sp	
Feel personally safe while on campus	74%	85%	76%	82%	Both new first-year and transfer students expected to feel safe on campus (75%). They reported feeling even safer. Almost half hoped they would make a trusting connection with a faculty or staff member; one third reported that they did. During the first semester one-third of each group thought about leaving MSU, though 13% of the first-year students and nine percent of the transfer students expected to consider leaving. More than half of both of these new student populations had the best time of their lives during their first semester at MSU, though many more expected to. Eighty-four percent of the transfer students reported that they made a smooth transition to MSU student life.
Know at least one MSU faculty or staff member you trust enough to talk to about something important to you	47%	37%	44%	37%	
Think about leaving MSU	13%	33%	9%	31%	
Have the best time of your life	81%	61%	72%	54%	
Be significantly homesick	27%	30%			
Regret transferring to MSU			8%	20%	
Make a smooth transition into MSU student life			77%	84%	
Attend activities specifically designed for transfer students			29%	20%	

Involvement	Freshmen		Transfers		INVOLVEMENT
	Fall	Sp	Fall	Sp	
Join a campus, departmental, or residence hall organization	60%	46%	52%	44%	Somewhat less than half of both groups joined a campus, department or residence hall organization. Fewer became leaders than expected to, however 27% of the transfer students reported taking on a leadership position, while 18% of the freshmen did. Almost one-third became involved in volunteer work, but this was less than each had expected. More than 80% of both groups voted in the national election.
Take on a leadership position on or off campus	33%	18%	32%	27%	
Get involved in volunteer work	51%	32%	43%	28%	
Vote in the upcoming national election	86%	82%	83%	81%	

Substance Use	Freshmen		Transfers		SUBSTANCE USE
	Fall	Sp	Fall	Sp	
Use an illegal substance (drug or marijuana, not alcohol)	7%	14%	8%	14%	Around half of the under-aged drinkers expected to drink (45% and 51%). Transfer students were accurate in their predictions, while freshmen exceeded their predictions by 20%. Both groups came into the MSU environment expecting to use an illegal substance (not alcohol). Actual reported illegal drug use for these groups was 14%.
Consume alcohol while underage (Skip if you are over 21 years of age)	43%	62%	51%	50%	
Experience some negative consequence because of your drinking	10%	19%	14%	12%	

Floor Community and Mentor	Freshmen		Transfers		FLOOR COMMUNITY AND THE MENTOR
	Fall	Sp	Fall	Sp	
Be assisted by your Resident Mentor in making a successful transition to college	48%	43%			<p>First-year students, to a large degree, were very accurate in predicting their involvement in their floor communities, and their relationship with the Resident Mentor. They did however over-estimate their attendance at regular community meetings. The transfer students living in residence halls expected to receive less assistance from their Mentors in making their transition to MSU, than did freshmen.</p>
Find that your Resident Mentor is genuinely interested in your well-being	70%	70%			
Attend regular community meetings on your floor	75%	60%			
Be involved in establishing and maintaining floor-based community standards	64%	63%			
Receive useful resource information from your Resident Mentor	67%	53%			
Be satisfied with your living arrangement			80%	82%	
If you lived in a residence hall, receive assistance from your Resident Mentor in making a transition to MSU			26%	20%	