

First-Year Students - 2007-2008

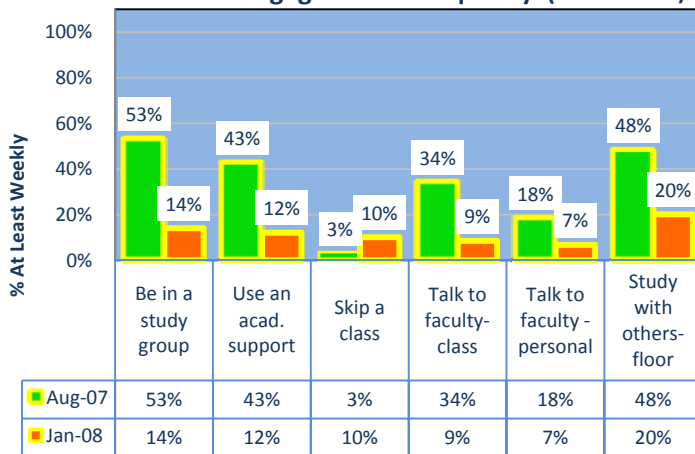
With Highlights from Eight Years of Survey

Administration

For eight years the Department of Residence Life has been surveying first-year students; first during the first-week of classes fall semester (August), and again at the beginning of the second semester (mid-January). Students are asked to share their expectations for their first semester at college. In January they tell us what actually happened. The questions are on topics related to the learning mission of the Department of Residence Life: academic success and learning, multicultural competence, character development, personal well-being, and community.

When students arrive, they have a sense of what is to come based on the information provided by the university and probably more powerfully, the stories they have heard from friends, relatives and alumni about life as a university student. They add their own dreams about who they want or think they should be. Their expectations represent the “mental set” our first year students bring to their first experiences as college students. By knowing more about these expectations, we can develop a deeper understanding of the latest first-year class.

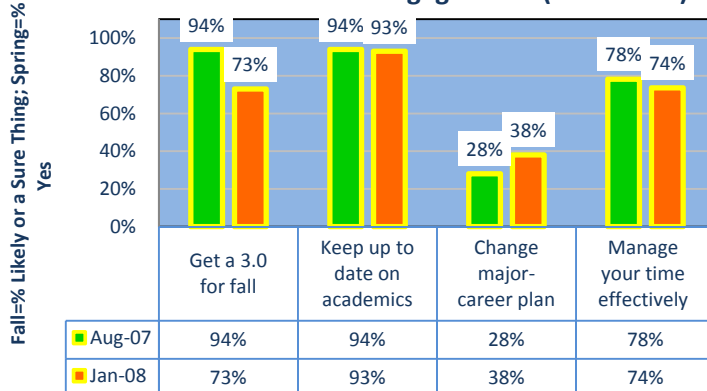
Academic Engagement - Frequency (2007-2008)



This fall 1903 students completed the First-Time- First-Year- First Week of Classes - Survey. In January, 928 students completed the follow-up survey. This academic year’s expectations and experiences are contained in a set of bar charts for August (expectations) and January (realities).

Following the charts for 2007-2008 are line graphs showing the responses on items from 2000-2001 to 2007-2008. Scales utilized for 2007-08 were frequency scales (“Never to “At least one time per week”) and likelihood scales (“Not a Chance” to “A Sure Thing”). Line charts illustrate responses to questions using a 5 point likelihood scale (“Not a Chance” to “A Sure Thing”) for the August survey, and a “Yes” or “No” scale for the January survey. Starting in 2006 some questions were converted from expectation to frequency scales.

Academic Engagement (2007-2008)

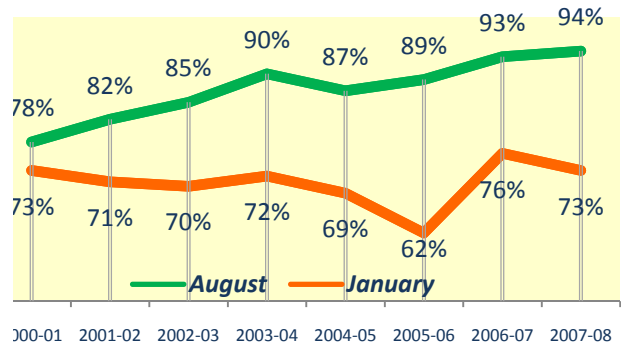


In order to compare responses over the years, any frequency (from weekly to once a semester) was recorded into “Likely” or “A Sure Thing” for August, and “Yes” for January. Exceptions are noted. Also note that the scales on the longitudinal graphs vary.

NOTES:

- First-year students have high expectations for academic success.
- Over time, first-year students have increased their expectations for getting a 3.0, though their actual achievement has remained fairly stable
- They not only intend to keep-up in classes, but do, to a very high degree (93%)
- They expect to talk to faculty outside of class, especially about class-related topics. Their expectations have risen significantly in the last few years.
- Last semester, first-year students reported having a higher frequency of out-of-class conversations with faculty than in previous years
- Conversations with faculty about personal issues versus academic issues, remain less frequent

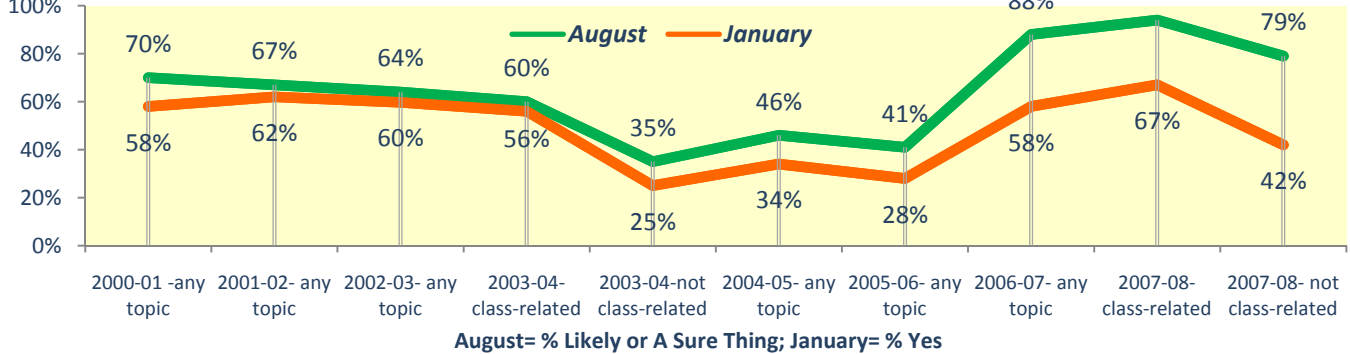
Get at Least a 3.0 for Fall Semester (2000-2008)



August= % Likely or A Sure Thing; January= % Yes

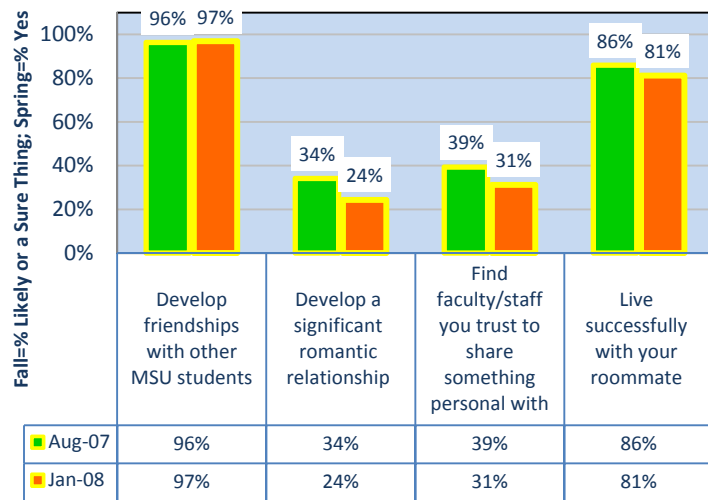
- The first-year students seem to rely less on others to help them academically, as reflected by their lower than expected use of academic support resources and participation in study groups.

Conversations with Faculty (2000-2008)



August= % Likely or A Sure Thing; January= % Yes

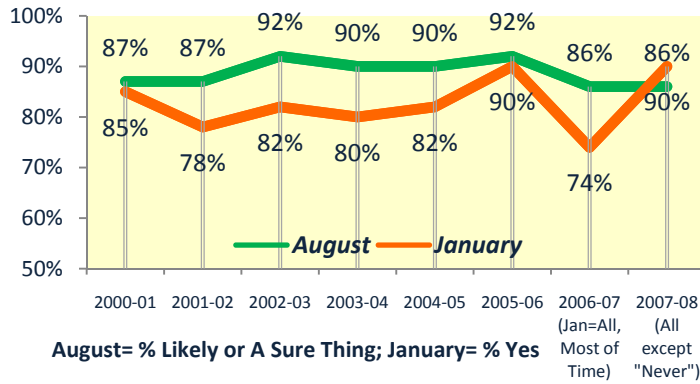
Connections (2007-2008)



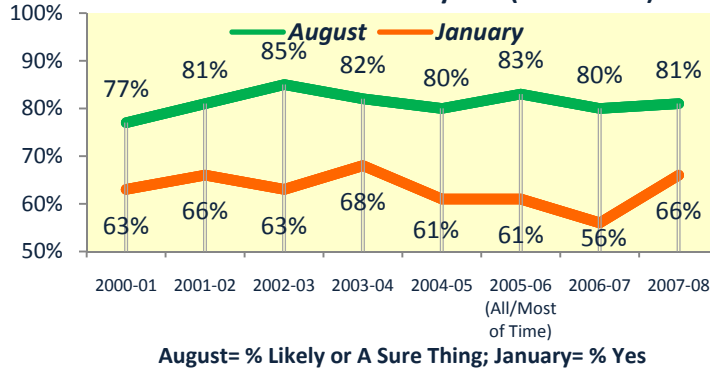
NOTES

- First-year students form friendships with other MSU students very successfully.
- They are mostly successful in developing good relationships with their roommates, though about 20% say that they do not.
- Though fewer students find romance than expect to, one in four reported that they had developed a significant romantic relationship.
- Most of the first-year students anticipate that their first semester will be a time to explore their values and become more independent.
- About 80% of our first-year students report that they learned a great deal about themselves and what is important to them.

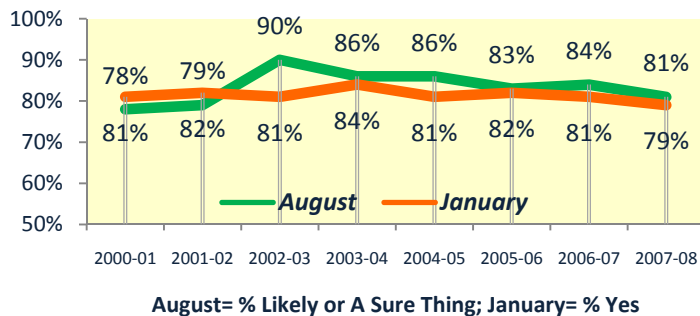
Live successfully with roommate (2007-2008)



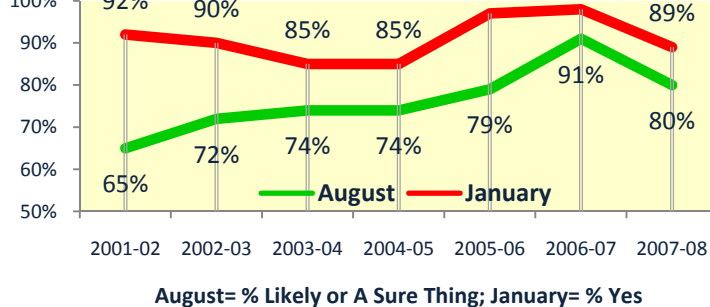
Have the Best Time of My Life (2000-2008)



Learn a great deal about self and what is important (2000-2008)



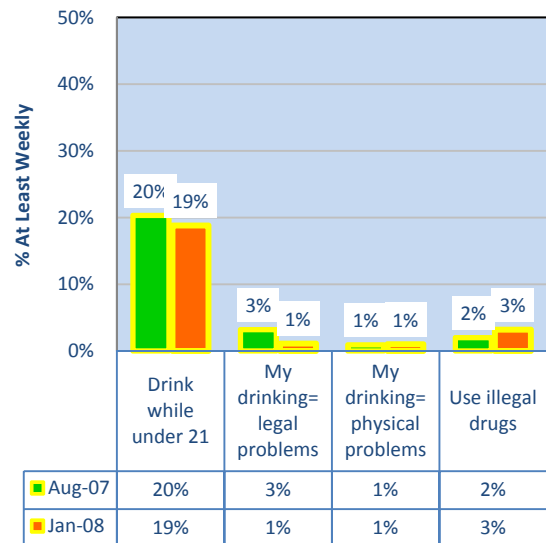
Feel personally safe while living on campus/in the hall



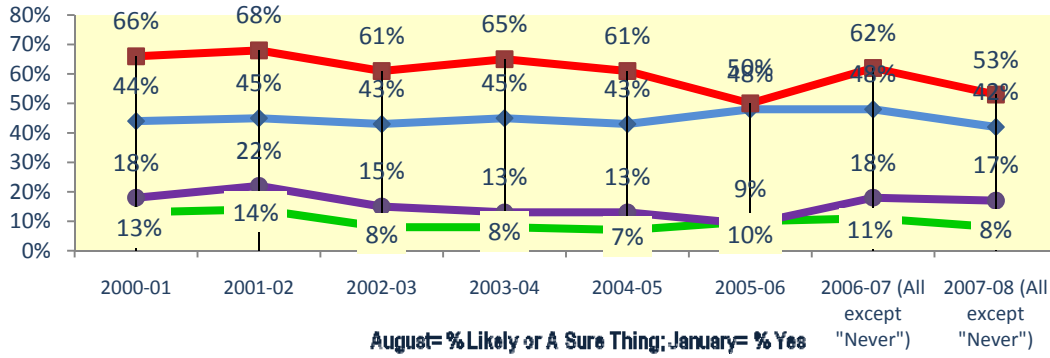
NOTES

- Not all of their dreams come true. First year students imagine their first semester at college will be almost a magical experience. For eight years, 80% thought that they would have the best time of their lives. While almost 2/3 do have that great experience, 1/3 do not.
- They see the first semester as a time for reflection and learning, and forming and testing their values. Eighty percent consistently expect to gain self understanding, and for the last six years, even more that 80% report that they do.
- Throughout this formative time, students report a very high level of personal safety.
- Challenges abound in the first semester, especially relating to students' movement towards independence.
- In the process of separating from parents and other role models, some students expect to, and do experience homesickness, stress, inadequate sleep, and alcohol use.
- Though drinking is still on students' minds, the expectation and actuality of underage drinking is at the lowest level in eight years.

Substance Use

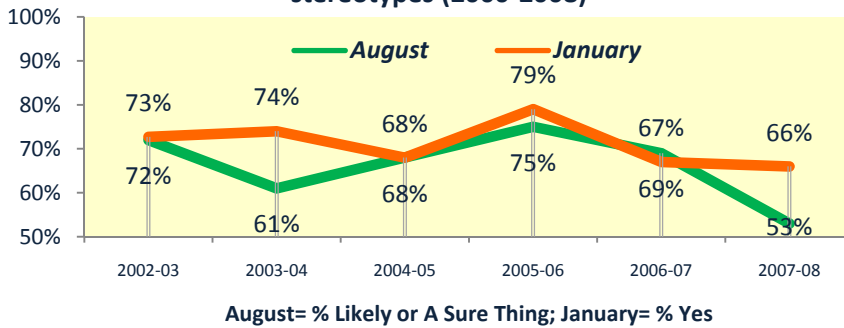


Alcohol and Illegal Drug Use



RED=Alcohol use - Jan
BLUE=Expected alcohol use - Aug
PURPLE=Illegal drug use - Jan
GREEN=Expected illegal drug use - Aug

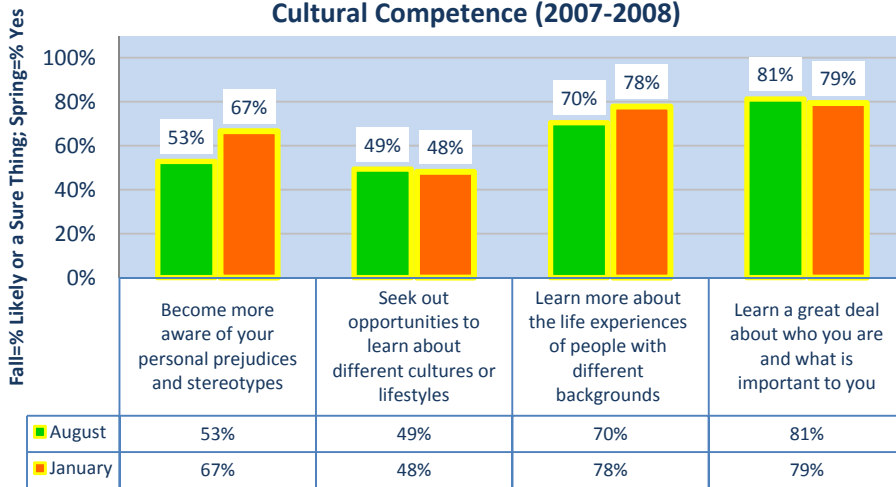
Become more aware of personal prejudices and stereotypes (2000-2008)



NOTES

- The first semester of college offers numerous opportunities to expand horizons, and have experiences with greater diversity.
- One half of the new students plan to look for opportunities to learn about others, and about that same proportion report that they do.
- 70% thought they would learn (without specifically seeking opportunities) about people with different backgrounds, and 78% reported that they did.
- Just living on campus is a cultural experience, because of the racial, ethnic, nationality, sexual orientation, ability differences in the student body.

Cultural Competence (2007-2008)



Seek out opportunities to learn about others (2000-2008)

