

The First Semester at MSU

Matching Expectations and Realities for First-Year Students

August 2008 to January 2009

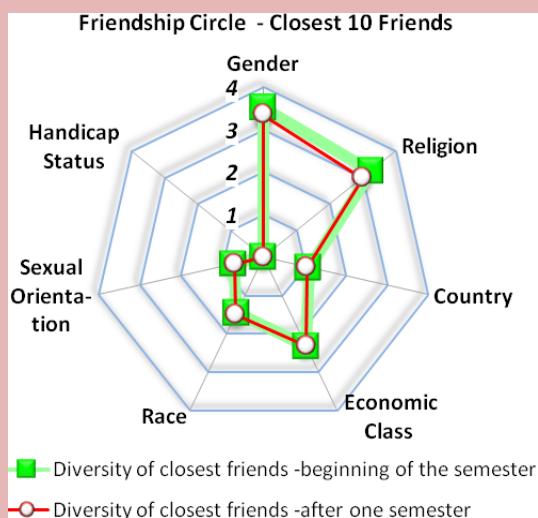
Almost 2000 first-year students completed a survey during the first week of classes last fall. In January they were invited to reflect on their experiences. More than 1000 students completed follow-up surveys. For the highlights featured in this SpotLight, responses are reported for 500 students who took both surveys. For comparison, the “Somewhat Likely”, “Very Likely” and “Yes/A Sure Thing” responses (on a 7 point likelihood scale) were combined and are reported as a single fall score. They are compared to the “Yes” responses from the follow-up survey.

Almost every first year student developed friendships at MSU during their first semester. They mostly got along with roommates and though more students talk to faculty about class-related matters than personal matters, more than half found someone on campus who they would trust enough to share something important with.

CONNECTIONS	EXPECTATIONS	REALITIES
Have significant out-of-class conversations with faculty members about class/subject-related matters	66%	42%
Have significant out-of-class conversations with faculty about non-class matters	38%	25%
Find at least one university faculty or staff member you would trust enough to share something important with	70%	52%
Live successfully with your roommate(s)	92%	85%
Develop friendships with other MSU students	99%	98%
Develop a significant romantic relationship	51%	22%

In the first week of classes, students reported high expectations for their academic success. Almost all the first-year students expected to and succeeded in keeping up on assignments. Many fewer than expected utilized academic support services, got clear about their academic major or career, or received information about academic success strategies from residence life staff. Though almost all expected to get at least a 3.0 GPA for fall semester, only 76% reported that they did.

ACADEMICS	EXPECTATIONS	REALITIES
Keep up-to-date with classes and assignments	98%	97%
Find that your floor was quiet enough for you to study	82%	79%
Study with other students in the hall	79%	71%
Find that members of your floor were serious about their academics	74%	72%
Clarify your plans for your career or major	90%	66%
Utilize an academic support service such as a tutor, Help Room, LRC, Writing Center, etc.	80%	48%
Get helpful information about academic success strategies from residence hall staff	65%	42%
Get at least a 3.0 for your first semester GPA	97%	76%



Though 84% of the first-year students developed friendships with MSU students unlike themselves their ten closest friends after one semester at MSU were as diverse as when they entered in the fall.

There was a large gap between students' expectations that they would do volunteer activities; 71% expected to; 35% did.

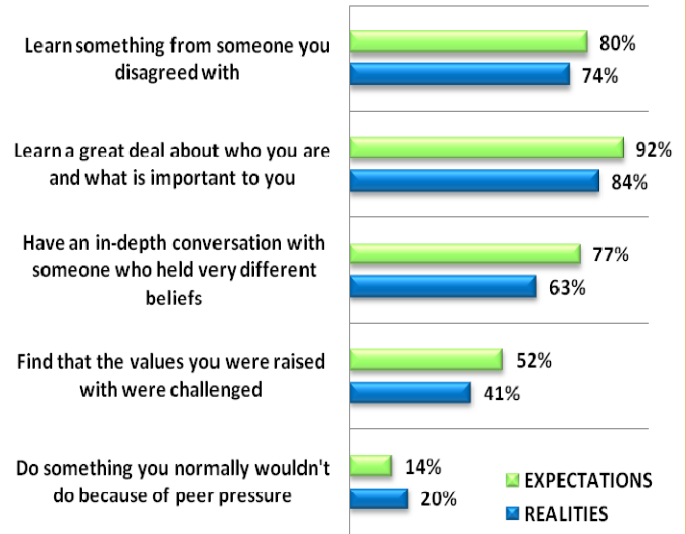
Almost all (95%) the first-year students expected to and did (97%) feel personally safe while living on campus.

Fewer first-year students experienced discrimination or saw others experiencing discrimination than expected to, however, almost one in five said they were the victim of some kind of discrimination. Many students developed friendships with other MSU students who were different from them by race, social class or sexual orientation.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE	EXPECTATIONS	REALITIES
Become more aware of your personal prejudices and stereotypes towards others	76%	74%
Develop friendships with MSU students who are unlike people from where you come from (race, class, sexual orientation, etc.)	91%	83%
Experience discrimination at MSU because of a characteristic (race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc.)	27%	17%
See others experience discrimination at MSU because of a characteristic (race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc.)	56%	32%
Take advantage of opportunities to learn something about diversity	66%	48%

Spartans were green, with 89% participating in recycling (86% expected to).

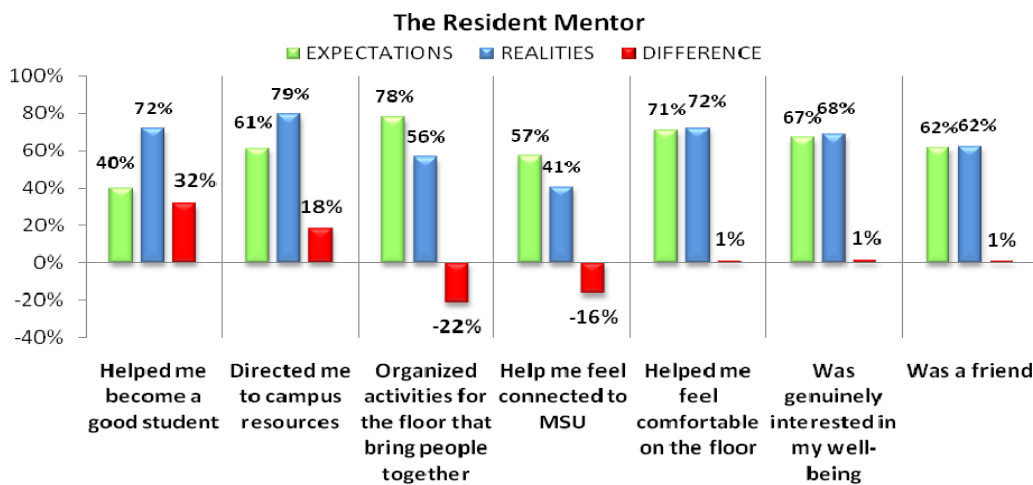
CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT



First-year students expected to have their values challenged, and to be in situations where they would expand their views. Few (less than 20%) expected that they would succumb to peer pressure, and only slightly more (21%) did.

63% reported having the best time of their lives.

88% of the first-year students felt comfortable living in their floor community



Mentors exceeded expectations for helping students become academically successful, and directing them to campus resources. They met expectations for being a friend, being genuinely interested in their well-being and helping them feel comfortable on the floor. They did not meet expectations for helping them feel comfortable at MSU and organizing activities that brought people on the floor together.

For this comparison the responses "Very Likely" and "Yes, A Sure Thing" (fall) were combined and compared to the follow-up responses of "Most of the Time" and "All of the Time". The "Somewhat Likely" option (fall) and the "Some of the Time" option (spring) were not utilized.