

All first-time, first-year students (N=7155) were invited to participate in a survey during the first week of classes fall semester 2006 and a follow-up survey in January 2007 after a semester at Michigan State University.

The intent of the surveys was to explore first-year students' expectations for their first semester of college and later to compare those expectations to the students' actual experiences. Twelve hundred and forty-four (1244) students completed the on-line survey in the fall (late August); 855 completed it in the spring (January). Survey respondents were predominately white (82% in the fall and spring) and female (69% in the fall; 72% in the spring). In the fall, 37% of the students reported living in a formal Living-Learning program. In the spring this percentage was 26%.

A comparison of the fall and spring responses is featured in sections which include; learning and academics, connections, self-management and personal well-being, multicultural competence, character development, , and community responsibility. Several responses are highlighted with an accompanying graph. Over 600 students commented on the question "In what ways do you think living in a residence hall has impacted or changed you?" These comments were coded, and a sampling of them is featured in each section.

Students manage their time well, keep up to date on class work and assignments and are confident that they will be academically successful. They do not however, engage in academic activities (e.g., participate in a study group, use an academic support service, talk with a professor out-of-class) as frequently as they'd predicted they would. As in past years, students overestimate their chances of earning a 3.0 fall semester GPA.

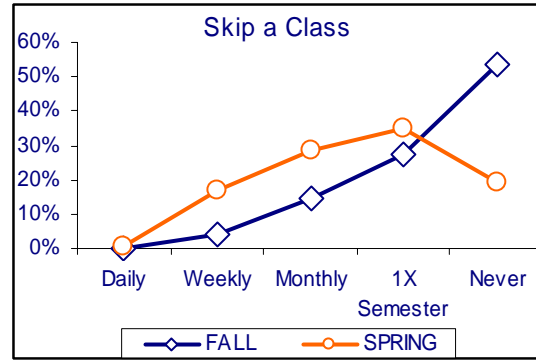
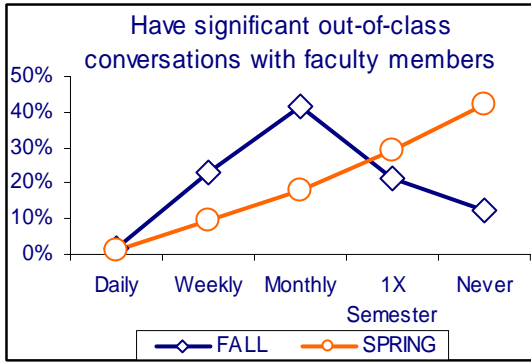
LEARNING AND ACADEMICS

Expectation for Fall Semester	<i>On at least a weekly basis...</i>	January Report on Fall Semester
65%	Participated in a study group (face to face)	31%
72%	Worked on academic projects on-line	53%
4%	Skipped class	18%
38%	Used an academic support service	15%
97%	Be on the internet for academic purposes	86%
25%	Talked to professors out of class	11%
Likely or A Sure Thing	<i>During the semester...</i>	Yes or All/Most of the Time
93%	Got at least a 3.0 for fall semester GPA	76%
97%	Kept up to date on classes and assignments	92%
29%	Changed their career or major plan	36%
59%	Felt that floor members are serious about their academics	42%
77%	Managed their time effectively	68%

STUDENT COMMENTS

- *I love the convenience of living on campus and having the living-learning atmosphere, where I can easily find help with classes from classmates, TA's, and professors.*
- *I learned that just because I now attend an institute of higher education, I will not necessarily be surrounded by more intelligent people than I was in High School. I also learned that a college student must be sure of their goals, both short and long term, and be willing to pursue those goals even if those around them are striving to be a deterrent.*
- *There are always things to do so it's hard to find time to study.*
- *It's been fun, I've learned how to survive on my own and I can appreciate and love people for their good qualities as well as their bad.*
- *I've become more independent, and remained steadfast towards my academic goals.*





Students struggle to make the transition to college life; missing home and family. They use this period of disequilibrium to learn about themselves, and to develop stronger social skills and self-confidence in this new setting.

CONNECTIONS

Expectation for Fall Semester	On at least a weekly basis...	January Report on Fall Semester
22%	Felt significantly homesick	19%
8%	Had significant conflict with parents or guardians	6%
8%	Thought about leaving MSU	12%
88%	Socialized with other floor residents	71%

Likely or A Sure Thing	During the semester...	Yes or All/Most of the Time
79%	Felt connected to a group of other students	61%
38%	Developed a significant romantic relationship	24%
51%	Found a faculty or staff member they trusted to share something important with	53%
86%	Got along with their roommate	74%

STUDENT COMMENTS



• It opens you up to meeting new people and it's a great way to make friends. It helps because the other people may have different interests and you get to experience new things.

• I think that it has shown me the things I need to change about myself and the things I don't like myself. I have also learned to live with other people whom I have never met, and to get along with them.

• I think that it is a good experience for every college student to go through, but I now have found that I would rather live on my own. I really like my alone time, and I find that I study best in the room. However, it is difficult to do when there is someone else in the room. There were also times that I wanted to be alone with my girlfriend and my roommate would not listen. Overall, though, I found that I have been able to get to know myself a little better because of this experience.

• I love having people around all the time. I like the community it has built that I can come back to at night and feel like I have plenty of people to care about me and to hang out with.

• It has made me realize how annoying it is to have to share a small room with another person who at times has no consideration.

• I think living in a residence hall has helped me to become more responsible. It has also helped me to move out of my comfort zone and conquer my slight shyness because there are so many new and interesting people around that I would like to talk to.

• I think that I have become more open and more willing to try new things. I've made wonderful friends that I'll have the rest of my life and I'm thankful for that.

• I've become more thankful and appreciative for my home and family.

• I realized that I'm not as attached to my parents and boyfriend back home (and) that I'm becoming more and more comfortable being an independent person.

• I absolutely love it. I have met so many amazing friends, and it has definitely been a contributing factor to my success at MSU this year.

• *It made me make more friends. If I didn't live in the residence hall then I would not be able to make as many friends as I have.*

• *It taught me how to live with others: put up with noise, sharing a bathroom, compromising. It's made me a stronger and more tolerant person. It also made me realize how good the food and bed is at home.*

• *I would have never talked/ socialized with the people I am living with had I not lived in the dorms. It has really shown me how great people can be.*

• *I am more involved with things going on around campus. I also think that living here has made me more outgoing and open to meeting new people.*

• *Helped me to realize that shyness can be a huge obstacle to get around in an unfamiliar place and sometimes you just need to get over it and realize that everyone here is new to each other. Some people don't have as much difficulty as others and it's important to try and look over it.*

For many first-year students, the first semester in college represents a time of great freedom, with few imposed boundaries. The management of unscheduled time, finding balance, developing a healthy life-style and setting and meeting priorities, doesn't always go smoothly. A small portion of the class enters with, and retains, their drug and alcohol problems. A large number of students enter college self-reporting that they do not get adequate sleep, and that they feel overwhelmed by all they have to do. These numbers stay high during the first semester.

SELF-MANAGEMENT AND PERSONAL WELL-BEING

Expectation for Fall Semester	<i>On at least a weekly basis...</i>	January Report on Fall Semester
86%	Exercised regularly	69%
3%	Got in trouble because of their drinking	4%
77%	Felt overwhelmed with all they had to do	74%
4%	Used illegal drugs	4%
89%	Played on the computer instead of studying	89%
25%	Drank alcohol (while underage)	31%
5%	Made a poor choice about their sexual behavior	4%
79%	Did not get adequate sleep	76%
Likely or A Sure Thing	<i>During the semester...</i>	Yes or All/Most of the Time
61%	Got a part-time job	37%
88%	Stayed healthy	80%
55%	Spent more money than they had planned to spend	41%



STUDENT COMMENTS

• *I have more freedom, but I lack the motivation to meet my responsibilities. I do the basics, but don't feel like I am completely utilizing this opportunity, or testing new grounds.*

• *I have learned to sleep with noise, and be more tolerant of others' differences.*

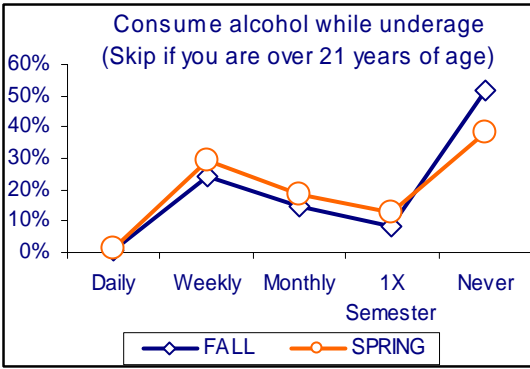
• *It has just shown me the dorm life or college lifestyle. I have to (be) more responsible, wash clothes, pick up after my self, clean dishes and manage my time. I appreciate the discipline that will help in shaping me to mature and become a more disciplined and responsible person.*

• *Living in the residence hall has taught me how to better take care of myself, and how to live with people around me that I don't always get along with. I learn more and more every day about time management and priorities.*

• *Made me truly confirm my stance against alcohol consumption.*

• *The residence hall impacted my life by being able to meet 21 year olds to buy beer for me on the weekends.*





• I've grown as a person because my living arrangements fall semester were not ideal. I've dealt with high school-type drama, and I've learned that I am more mature than I think. I've learned not to care what other people think about me, and that I can stick up for myself when need be. I also learned how to live on my own and make decisions for myself.

• I am lazier.

• I learned to be a better person as far as living with others, sharing, time management, and being independent. I also think that I have discovered that if I want something to happen than I am the only one that can truly make it happen.

Living on campus offers students the opportunity to live in an environment more populated and often more diverse than they have lived in before. Sharing a room and living within 50 yards of some 50 strangers, leads to a high-speed cultural immersion experience where there are almost daily opportunities to gain self-awareness and social competencies.

Students broaden the diversity of their social group, learn about the experience of diverse others and become more aware of their own stereotypes and prejudices.

MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE

Expectation for Fall Semester	<i>On at least a weekly basis...</i>	January Report on Fall Semester
54%	Talked with other students about the national/international news	32%
Likely or A Sure Thing	<i>During the semester...</i>	Yes or All/Most of the Time
70%	Learned more about the experience of people with different backgrounds and lifestyles	78%
58%	Broadened the diversity of their social group	69%
69%	Became more aware of their stereotypes and prejudices	67%
16%	Be treated differently because of your background	5%
60%	Kept up to date on national/international news	33%

STUDENT COMMENTS

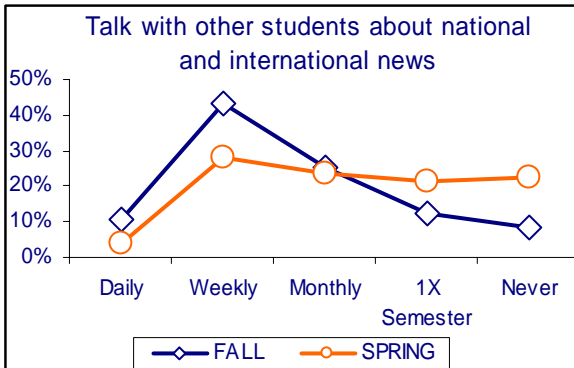
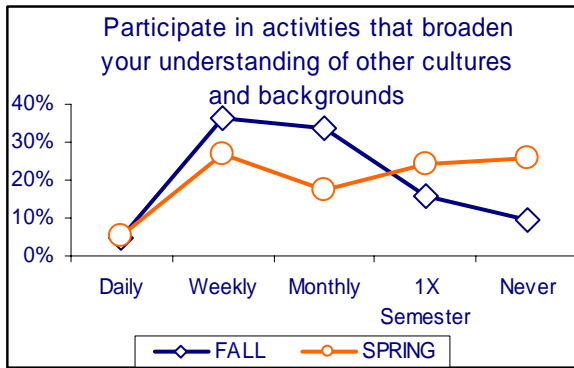


• I feel the residence halls have such a profound impact on the life of a college student. It helps you learn and develop a connection with individuals different from yourself. It helps you grow up and be independent on your own life.

• I have learned to be less anal about organization and time schedules. I also have become friends with a more economically diverse group of people. And, in doing so, have experienced a lot of discrimination/hostility due to my being from an upper-class suburb.

• Being able to get along with others of different religions, morals, and ideas of CLEANLINESS.

• I learned that just because someone doesn't look the same, doesn't mean they don't feel the same way you might.



• It has exposed me to a wide variety of people with varying personalities and backgrounds that I would not have normally met or associated with. It lets me see how different people are and I think it has broadened my view of people in general and made me more tolerant of a person.

• I hate more people now.

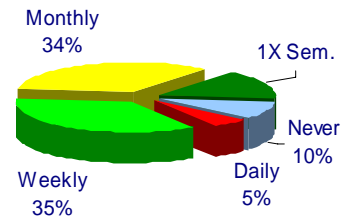
• It teaches you to live in conjunction with other people, and that helps me to connect with others and relate to different people than I otherwise would have. I have learned a lot about diversity, and that is one of my favorite aspects about this school-- I love to meet people of different backgrounds, from different states, from different countries because it helps me to broaden my understanding of other people in the world, and helps me become even more open-minded and knowledgeable about other people.



For two questions in the area of multicultural competence, the context in which the learning took place was explored. Students were asked not just how often the event occurred, but where.

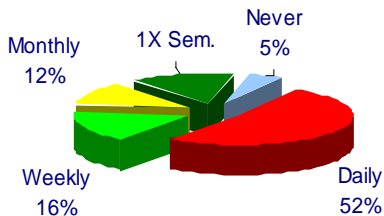
Participate in activities that broaden your understanding of other cultures and backgrounds

Through interactions with other floor (hall) residents	30%
From class topics, content, readings, or experiences	29%
Other location	14%
Through participation in a club or organization	10%
Through attendance at a campus event/program	5%
Through hall sponsored events	4%
Through interactions with a professor	4%
Through volunteer activities	2%
Through interaction with a hall staff member (i.e., Mentor, Aide, Hall Director, Manager)	1%
Through interaction with a university staff member (i.e., financial aid counselor, academic advisor, counselor)	1%



See others treated differently because of their backgrounds

Other location	47%
Through interactions with other floor (hall) residents	26%
From class topics, content, readings, or experiences	12%
Through attendance at a campus event/program	6%
Through interactions with a professor	3%
Through participation in a club or organization	3%
Through interaction with a hall staff member (i.e., Mentor, Aide, Hall Director, Manager)	1%
Through interaction with a university staff member (i.e., financial aid counselor, academic advisor, counselor)	1%
Through volunteer activities	1%
Through hall sponsored events	1%



In addition to learning how to live with others, living on campus offers first-year students the opportunity to examine their personal beliefs and values. New experiences and opportunities, and the influence of other students, whose behavior is reflective of different values, require students to make choices about their behavior, and to take responsibility for those choices. In the process of testing new behaviors and reflecting on the consequences, students learn a great deal about who they are and what is important to them.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Expectation for Fall Semester	<i>On at least a weekly basis...</i>	January Report on Fall Semester
9%	Did something they normally wouldn't do because of peer pressure	7%
Likely or A Sure Thing	<i>During the semester...</i>	Yes or All/Most of the Time
84%	Learned a great deal about themselves and what was important to them	81%

• *It made me realize that many people make very poor decisions when they do not have parental control*

• *I have learned that many people have different values and that accepting that doesn't mean we have to have the same views on everything. Also, I became aware of how easy it is for some people to make bad decisions (like drinking/partying). This only showed me how strong my values are because I never once gave going to a party any thought, even when asked by others. Being around so many other students where I live made it easy for me to find help with some subjects. I feel that I will never forget many of the friends I have made this past semester and I know that they will always be there for me if I ever needed them, as I would be there for them.*

STUDENT COMMENTS



• *It has given me the opportunity to be in close quarters with people I normally wouldn't and see how I respond. It also has truly defined who I am and what I stand for.*

• *I have learned that my morals are strong, and I am good at sticking with what I believe is true.*

• *I think that living on my own with other students who are doing the same type of thing has really changed how I see things. I see many people make choices that I would not have made, and you can see the results of their decisions.*

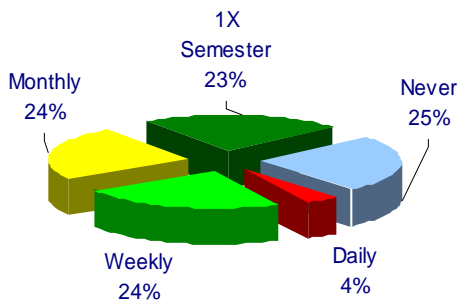
• *It has helped me to widen my horizons and meet new people. Also, overall it is a big responsibility that takes a lot of self-discipline, things many people need to learn.*

• *I think that it has shown me the things I need to change about myself and the things I don't like (about) myself. I have also learned to live with other people whom I have never met and to get along with them.*

• *It has (brazened) me. I feel somewhat run-down and more cynical now, but I also feel somewhat unstoppable.*

For one questions in the area of character development, students were asked to provide the context in which their learning took place. Students were asked not just how often they had experiences which prompted them to reconsider their views, values or beliefs, but also where they had these experiences.

Have experiences that prompt you to reconsider your views, values and beliefs



From class topics, content, readings, or experiences	31%
Through interactions with other floor (hall) residents	26%
Other location	25%
Through participation in a club or organization	6%
Through interactions with a professor	5%
Through interaction with a hall staff member (i.e., Mentor, Aide, Hall Director, Manager)	2%
Through volunteer activities	2%
Through attendance at a campus event/program	2%
Through hall sponsored events	1%
Through interaction with a university staff member (i.e., financial aid counselor, academic advisor, counselor)	1%

Living in a residence hall is a laboratory for learning community living skills. Hall and floor residents share much in common, and develop friendships that last a life-time. They also learn to negotiate with others in the process of balancing everyone's individual needs and interests with the overall need for a community which is comfortable, safe, and supportive of all students' academic lives.

COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY

Expectation for Fall Semester	<i>On at least a weekly basis...</i>	January Report on Fall Semester
25%	Did volunteer work	15%
18%	Negotiated with others on your floor about community living issues	14%
70%	Joined a campus or local group	47%
Likely or A Sure Thing	<i>During the semester...</i>	Yes or All/Most of the Time
34%	Got a leadership position	25%
78%	Attended regular community meetings on the floor	59%
91%	Felt safe in their residence hall	89%
78%	Felt personally safe on campus	86%
80%	Had the best time of their lives	56%



• I love living in a residence hall. It is easy to make friends and everyone is extremely supportive of each other. It is like living with a large family.

• Living in the dorms has been one of the best experiences in my life. I feel very safe within my dorm, especially on my floor.

• I have more respect for how I control myself inside and outside of my room because it directly impacts everyone else on the floor. I get really annoyed more often by rude people. They're quite common here at good ol' MSU.

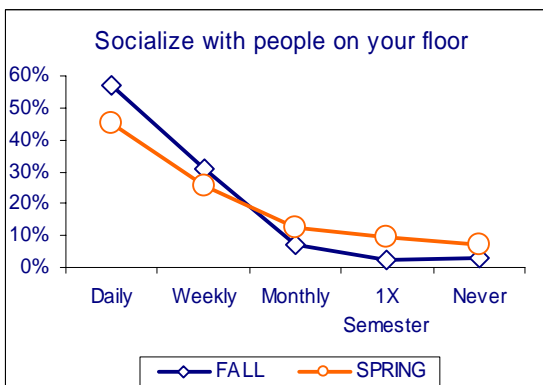
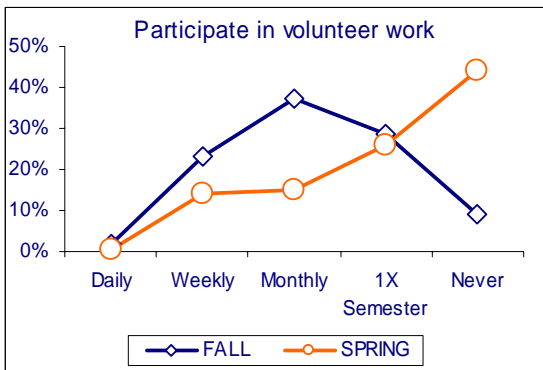
• I have never shared a room with another person for a period of time longer than two weeks, so I suppose learning to be considerate (especially when it comes to keeping the room clean) was a major change. I also have much more self esteem now that I'm living away from home. In high school I never fit in with any of the social groups and didn't have many friends. But I have managed to meet several people with similar views and hobbies similar to my own, and now have more friends and do more things socially than I ever participated in at home.

• Living in a residence hall has helped me grow a lot. I have more respect for other people's belongings and have grown to learn how to deal with little things that annoy me. Also, I believe I have matured a lot because by living with other people you learn to appreciate things more.

• It has made me understand how it is to live with someone in such close quarters and how much you have to sacrifice to get along.

• I dislike it, you have no sense of personal space, and no time to gather your thoughts and be alone.

• I don't think it has changed me. I was hoping to feel connected and to be impacted by others on my floor but I had no interaction with my floor whatsoever.



- *Sharing, negotiating, listening, understanding that not only my opinion matters.*
- *I realized that I can get along with someone easier than I thought. It also made me a little more considerate of other people.*
- *It has made me more aware of my surroundings.*

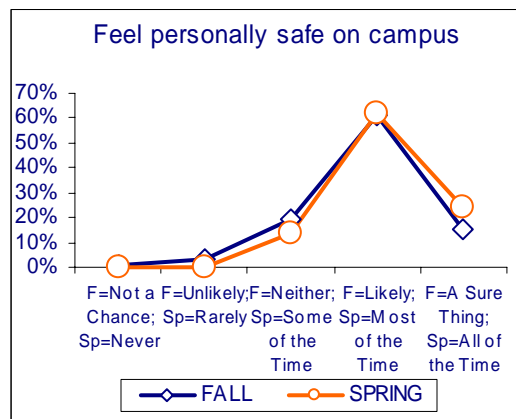
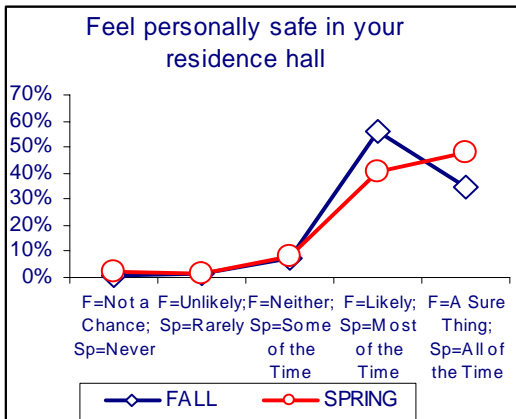
Students projected the likelihood that they would vote in the national election in November 2006. Fewer voted than expected to. One third who were eligible to vote had not registered.

What is the likelihood that you will vote in the November election?

FALL		SPRING	
Not a Chance	7%	No, I was not 18 yet	7%
Unlikely	9%	No, I was eligible but wasn't registered	34%
Neither Likely nor Unlikely	17%	No, I was registered but didn't vote	17%
Likely	32%	Yes, I voted in person in East Lansing	22%
A Sure Thing	35%	Yes, I voted in person at home	6%
		Yes, I voted with an absentee ballot	14%



The foundation for student success is a student's sense of personal safety in the learning environment. Two questions focused on personal safety, in the residence hall and on campus in general.



The Department of Residence Life hires Mentors to live with students on their floor communities. Floors vary in size from 40 to 60 residents, so Mentors have the challenge of developing relationships which support each student's development and academic success. One measure of their effectiveness is whether students perceive that the Mentors are genuinely interested in their well-being. After one semester 60% reported that they were.

