

**KSU'S COMPARATIVE HIGHLIGHTS FROM
THE 2003 YFCY NATIONAL SURVEY OF
FIRST-TIME FULL-TIME COLLEGE FRESHMEN**

An Interpretation of Survey Results

Prepared by the

Center for Institutional Effectiveness

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BACKGROUND ON THE YFCY NATIONAL SURVEY

The "Your First College Year" (YFCY) national survey was developed by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA in collaboration with the Policy Center on the First Year of College at Brevard College during the period from 1999 to 2001. In the spring of 2003, Kennesaw State University freshmen were contacted to participate in the YFCY national survey of nearly 30,000 first-time full-time freshmen who had enrolled at 114 colleges and universities throughout the nation. Survey results from 170 first-time full-time freshmen at KSU were analyzed and compared statistically to the national sample of first-time full-time freshmen at other public four-year colleges. (An additional 101 KSU freshmen who were not first-time full-time college students also responded to the survey, but their results were not interpreted for this report.)

COMPARATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

KSU freshmen generally reported satisfaction levels with their first-year experience that were equal to or greater than the satisfaction reported by freshmen from other colleges. Freshmen were most satisfied with their overall college experience, the quality of instruction and their contacts with faculty. They were least satisfied with advising and counseling services. (Although it should be noted that a large percentage of freshmen (47%) did not avail themselves of advising and counseling services during their first year in college.) The first-year experiences of KSU freshmen, who were largely nonresidential, were significantly different in many ways from the experiences of freshmen who were largely residential at other four-year colleges. For example, three-fourths of the KSU respondents were nonresidential compared to only one-fourth of the freshmen at other public colleges. The competing demands of home/family obligations, off-campus work responsibilities, and commuting underscored greater concerns about time management for KSU freshmen. Findings such as these that point to the unique challenges of KSU's first-year students provide opportunities for customizing improvements in KSU's student success programs.

In the summer of 2003, HERI provided KSU with a statistical analysis and means comparison of the responses from KSU's first-time full-time freshmen with their counterparts from other public four-year colleges. The following interpretations and highlights were constructed from those data by KSU's Center for Institutional Effectiveness.

Satisfaction with Their College of Choice

- **Overall satisfaction with the first-year college experience was very high among the first-time full-time freshmen at KSU and at other public four-year colleges who responded to the YFCY survey in the spring of 2003.**
- **Eight of every ten first-time full-time freshmen at KSU and at other public four-year colleges reported that they would make the same choice again to attend their current college.**
- **Nine of every ten first-time full-time freshmen at KSU and at other public four-year colleges planned to return to their current college in the upcoming fall of their second year.**

Satisfaction with Overall Aspects of Their First-Year Experience

- **The "Overall College Experience" and "Overall Quality of Instruction" received the most satisfactory ratings from first-time full-time freshmen at KSU and at other public four-year colleges. Seven out of every ten respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with these aspects of their first-year experience in college.**
- **Six out of every ten first-time freshmen at KSU and at other public four-year colleges were satisfied or very satisfied with the "Amount of Contact with Faculty," the "Overall Sense of Community Among Students," and the "Relevance of Coursework to Future Career Plans."**
- **Four out of every ten first-time freshmen at KSU and at other public four-year colleges were satisfied with "Relevance of Coursework to Everyday Life" and "Opportunities for Community Service."**
- **The average satisfaction ratings of KSU freshmen were not significantly different from those of freshmen at other public four-year colleges on any of the overall dimensions of the first-year experience.**

Satisfaction with Specific Aspects of Their First-Year Experience

- **Nine out of every ten first-time full-time freshmen (92%) at KSU were satisfied or very satisfied with "Computer Facilities." That was a significantly greater level of satisfaction than the 75% who were satisfied with Computer Facilities at other public four-year colleges. KSU's hiring of a CIO and use of a technology fee to make expanded and substantial upgrades of technology campus-wide in recent years are the key factors in the higher satisfaction ratings of its freshmen.**

- **Significantly more KSU freshmen than freshman at other public four-year colleges were satisfied with "Classroom Facilities" (86% at KSU compared to 73% elsewhere), "Student Housing Facilities" (70% at KSU compared to 49% elsewhere) and "Financial Aid Services" (76% at KSU compared to 48% elsewhere). KSU's relatively new and attractive classroom buildings and housing facilities and Georgia's Hope Scholarship program could be key factors in higher satisfaction ratings on these aspects at KSU. KSU freshmen were also more satisfied with "Tutoring and Other Academic Assistance" (67% at KSU compared to 59% elsewhere).**
- **Eight out of ten freshmen at KSU and at other public four-year colleges reported satisfaction with "Library Facilities and Services."**
- **Six out of ten freshmen at KSU and at other public four-year colleges reported satisfaction with "Orientation for New Students" and "Student Health Services."**
- **Slightly over half of the freshmen at KSU and elsewhere were satisfied with "Academic Advising," and four in ten were satisfied with "Psychological Counseling Services."**
- **"Recreational Facilities" were the only aspect of the first-year experience that significantly fewer KSU freshmen were satisfied with (62%) when compared to freshmen at other public four-year colleges (76%). Plans for developing attractive and expanded recreational facilities at KSU are expected to be implemented in the near future.**

Self-Reported First-Year Educational Gains

- **KSU freshmen reported significantly greater educational gains than those of freshmen at other public four-year colleges in: "Understanding of National Issues," "Understanding of Global Issues," "Library/Research Skills," "Ability of Work as a Team," and "Understanding of Local Community Problems."**
- **KSU freshmen reported educational gains that were comparable to those of freshmen at other public four-year colleges on: "General Knowledge," "Problem-solving Skills," "Critical Thinking Skills," "Knowledge of People from Different Races/Cultures," "Religious Beliefs and Convictions," and "Ability to Get Along with Others."**
- **The only area in which KSU freshmen reported less educational growth than freshmen at other colleges was in "Knowledge of a Particular Field or Discipline." In that regard, KSU's General Education program does not emphasize disciplinary specialization at the freshmen level.**

- These findings appear consistent with the design and intent of KSU's Freshman Experience and General Education programs.

Nature of Their First-Year Course Experiences

- In their first-year courses, significantly more KSU freshmen reported having frequent group discussions, research projects, multiple drafts of written work, group projects, weekly essay assignments, student evaluations of each other's work, student-selected topics, and required on-line interaction with professors and/or classmates. The predominant design of KSU's courses in its freshman learning communities, General Education, and the freshman composition sequence in particular, are reflected in these findings.
- Significantly more KSU freshmen reported having fewer formal lectures and fewer laboratory experiences than freshmen at other public four-year colleges. KSU's interdisciplinary science sequence for General Education has a relatively small laboratory component compared to traditional science courses with labs.
- The frequencies of student presentations, field experiences, and service learning reported by KSU freshmen were comparable to reports from freshmen at other public four-year colleges.
- KSU freshmen also reported spending fewer hours in classes and labs and on studying and homework each week. KSU's full-time freshmen probably registered for fewer credit hours than their counterparts elsewhere. Taking the minimum full-time load of 12 credit hours is a common practice at KSU, probably because of the competing obligations students have and their interests in maintaining academic eligibility for their HOPE scholarships.
- Nearly two-thirds (62%) of KSU's freshman respondents had completed a freshmen seminar/student success course compared to only 26% of the freshmen at other public four-year colleges in the YCYF survey.

Interaction with Faculty and Staff Outside of Class in the First-Year Experience

- There was no significant difference between the reported number of times KSU freshmen and freshmen from other public four-year colleges interacted with faculty during their office hours or outside of class and office hours. Out-of class interaction with faculty was low for the majority of freshmen everywhere. Most reported fewer than two contacts per term during office hours and fewer than two contacts per term outside of class or office ours.

- Nevertheless, because of their extensive exposure to faculty in classes, three-fourths of the freshmen at KSU and elsewhere reported being somewhat or completely successful in getting to know faculty. Almost all freshmen reported being somewhat or completely successful in understanding what their professors expected academically.
- KSU's freshmen had significantly less contact with academic advisors/counselors and other college personnel than their counterparts at other public four-year colleges. Nearly five in ten (47%) KSU freshmen reported "never" communicating with an advisor/counselor compared to two in ten (17%) elsewhere. Similarly, 44% of KSU's freshmen reported no contact with other college personnel compared to 31% elsewhere. Consequently, KSU's freshmen reported being less successful than freshmen at other colleges in utilizing campus services available to students.

Significant Differences in the Social Experience of First-time Full-time Freshmen at KSU and Freshmen at Other Public Four-Year Colleges

- Only 25% of the KSU freshman respondents in the sample lived in campus housing compared to 78% of the sample from other public four-year colleges. Fewer KSU freshmen reported participating in student clubs and organizations (77% reported no participation for KSU compared to 54% at other campuses). Fewer participated in intramural sports (16% were frequent participants at KSU compared to 27% at other colleges). Consequently, more KSU freshmen reported being isolated from campus life (40% at KSU compared to 33% at other public four-year colleges).
- Probably because of the nonresidential nature of the KSU freshmen, 79% of KSU's freshmen reported having daily contact with their family compared to 35% of the sample from other public four-year colleges which was heavily residential. KSU freshmen reported spending more hours on household/childcare duties (76% of KSU's had some compared to 44% at other campuses). They also expressed a strong need to break away from family in order to succeed in college (46% at KSU compared to 34% at other public four-year colleges). More KSU freshmen also reported that family responsibilities interfered with schoolwork (41% at KSU compared to 19% at other public four-year colleges). On the other hand, it follows that KSU freshmen were less lonely or homesick (34% at KSU compared to 45% at other public four-year colleges).
- Similarly, 48% of the KSU freshmen had daily contact with friends who were not at KSU compared to 36% of the sample from other public four-year colleges. Likewise, only 45% of the KSU sample had daily contact with close friends at KSU compared to 74% of the highly residential sample from the other public four-year colleges. Consequently, only 37% of the KSU

freshmen reported being completely successful in developing close friendships with other students compared to 58% of the freshmen from other public four-year colleges. On the other hand, KSU freshmen were less worried about meeting new people (28% at KSU compared to 38% at other public four-year colleges). More KSU freshmen also reported dating frequently (64% at KSU compared to 45% for other colleges).

- Compared to their counterparts at other public four-year colleges, KSU's first-time full-time freshmen reported spending substantially more time commuting, working for pay off campus more often (78% for KSU compared to 31% for others), and holding job responsibilities that interfered with schoolwork (49% at KSU compared to 23% at other public four-year colleges). Substantially more KSU freshmen reported spending more than 20 hours per week working for pay off campus (40% for KSU compared to 9% elsewhere). Attending college full-time as a freshman while attempting to work so many hours per week is a major challenge for many KSU students which adds to their time management stress and contributes to taking fewer credit hours.
- More of KSU's first-time full-time freshmen reported coming to class late occasionally (74% at KSU compared to 62% elsewhere); frequently turning in course assignments late (25% at KSU compared to 15% at other colleges), spending less time playing video/computer games, surfing the Internet or sending e-mail, and spending more time in prayer/meditation. (More of KSU's nonresidential students may have maintained family connections with their religious organizations.)

Other KSU First-Year Experiences of Note

- Almost one out of every four of KSU's first-time full-time freshmen (22%) reported being unsuccessful in managing their time effectively. (Four in ten freshmen worked for pay more than half-time.)
- Four in ten freshmen (40%) frequently felt overwhelmed by all they had to do (but only 11% frequently felt depressed and only 8% had sought personal counseling).
- One in five respondents (21%) were worried about his or her health.
- Very few KSU freshmen (7%) reported being unsuccessful in adjusting to the academic demands of college.
- Few freshmen (14%) reported being unsuccessful in developing effective study skills.
- Very few (6%) felt unsafe on the KSU campus.

- **Very few (5%) had joined a social fraternity or sorority.**
- **Two-thirds of the first-year freshmen (62%) occasionally or frequently drank alcohol, but only 15% frequently smoked cigarettes.**
- **Eight in ten (83%) reported partying less than five hours per week.**
- **Three-fourths (74%) reported watching television less than five hours per week.**
- **Two in ten (22%) felt intimidated by their professors.**
- **Four in ten freshmen (42%) reported frequently feeling bored in class.**
- **Seven in ten freshmen (69%) reported that their classes inspired them to think in new ways.**
- **Eight in ten (81%) reported having studied with other students.**
- **Half of the freshmen (50%) frequently socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group.**
- **Nearly half (43%) participated in volunteer or community service work.**
- **A minority of freshmen frequently discussed religion (15%) or politics (21%).**
- **During their first year, 25% had changed their career choice, 24% had decided to pursue a different major, and 41% had declared a major.**

Most Important Personal Objectives of KSU Freshmen

Compared to their counterparts from other campuses, more of KSU's freshmen attributed great importance to "Being very well off financially," "Becoming an authority," "Integrating spiritually into life," "Becoming successful in one's own business," and "Influencing social values."

Out of a list of 21 objectives which survey respondents rated for their personal importance (from a low of 1 = not important, to a high of 4 = essential), the following top ten objectives were identified for KSU's first-time full-time freshmen:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Average Rating</u>	<u>Personal Objective</u>
1	3.20	Raising a family
2	3.17	Being very well off financially
3	3.06	Helping others who are in difficulty
4	2.93	Becoming an authority in my field
5	2.74	Integrating spirituality into my life
6	2.67	Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures
7	2.63	Obtaining recognition for my contributions
8	2.59	Influencing social values
9	2.53	Becoming successful in a business of my own
10	2.51	Developing a meaningful philosophy of life

The objectives with the lowest average ratings of importance for KSU's freshmen included:

- a) Becoming an accomplished artist, performer, writer, or scientist (1.66 to 1.79);
- b) Influencing the political structure (1.96);
- c) Participating in a community action program (2.10);
- d) Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment (2.10)
- e) Becoming a community leader (2.11)

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The 2003 YFCY survey results provide interesting and informative insights about the nature of the first-year experience for first-time full-time freshmen at KSU and other public four-year colleges. The survey's findings and implications for KSU could change significantly when a more substantial segment of KSU's first-year students become residential in the future. Consequently, periodic rather than annual participation in the YFCY national survey appears advisable, especially since the 2003-2004 Foundations project will survey first-year students at KSU using a different national assessment instrument (the NSSE) in 2004.