

**REPORT ON FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE STUDENT SURVEY  
SOCIOLOGY 665 AND 660  
SPRING AND SUMMER 2007**

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**Introduction**

This report summarizes the findings of a student initiated, designed and implemented survey conducted with first year students at Skyline College during the spring and summer semesters, 2007. This survey was conducted in coordination with the Foundations of Excellence (FOE) First Year Experience Project to focus specifically on Skyline College first year students' experiences.

In the spring, 2007 four students enrolled in Sociology 665, Survey Research Practicum, a course designed to introduce students the survey research methods and to analyze the Foundations of Excellence online survey of first year students' experiences conducted with faculty, administration and staff, and in a related, but separate survey, with students at Skyline College during the fall semester, 2006. During the summer 2007, complementing the initial four students, two additional students were included in Sociology 660, a Special Projects class, which was a continuation of the Survey Research Practicum class. (See course syllabus in the appendix.)

**Methodology**

Beginning spring semester 2007, four students enrolled in Sociology 665, Survey Research Practicum. In addition to class work, these students were also included in the Foundations For Excellence First Year Experience Project as members of the Learning Dimension Committee. Students were given copies of the Foundations of Excellence materials on the First Year Experience and the results of the Faculty/Staff and Students surveys conducted in the fall 2006. In addition to reading and being quizzed on the textbook for the course, students also read and were quizzed on the results of the surveys.

As the course progressed, students and the instructor began designing the Sociology 665 First Year Experience survey, focusing specifically on first year students at Skyline College. With all students contributing, this survey went through several drafts, re-writes and pre-testing before we agreed on a final survey in late March 2007. (See First Year Experience Student Survey, Sociology 665 in appendix.) Before any surveys were

administered, the instructor trained and evaluated each of the Sociology 665 students on personal interview techniques and implementation. Prior to conducting the surveys, these students read Skyline College's Human Subjects Policy and signed an Agreement to Abide by the Human Subjects Policy. (See Human Subjects Policy and Agreement to Abide by the HSP in appendix.) The Academic Senate Institutional Research Committee approved the Sociology 665 First Year Experience survey and the research protocols before any surveys were conducted. In addition to designing the survey itself, the class also designed an Initial Screen for Educational Experiences Survey, which, with the instructors' permission, was administered to 19 classes in April 2007. (See Initial Screen for Educational Experiences Survey in appendix.) This initial screen is essentially a qualifying screener, which focused only on students who have specific educational goals designated by Skyline College's First Year Experience Project as representative of First Year Students, students who have earned 24 units or less at Skyline College, and who were willing to be interviewed for the larger First Year Experience Student Survey. As part of the instructions for the qualifying screener, students were informed that if they qualified and agreed to participate in the larger survey they had a chance to receive a 2GB iPod nano. The Initial Screen took approximately five minutes to administer in each class.

Unlike the Foundations of Excellence online survey, the Sociology 665 survey used only pre-qualified first year students in its sample, survey and analysis. The Foundations of Excellence online survey sampled and contacted 6,700 Skyline students and got an overall response rate of six percent (401 students). Of these students, 121 (31 percent) classified themselves as first year or Freshman students, 177 (46 percent) classified themselves as Sophomore, Junior or Senior students, and 88 (23 percent) did not know their academic standing. The Foundations of Excellence online survey did not question the students about their educational goals.

As mentioned above, the Sociology 665 students contacted 19 classes in April and May 2007 and administered the Initial Screen for the survey. Additionally, students used a snowball survey technique (survey students' and respondents' knowledge of friends or acquaintances who were eligible for the Initial Screen) to contact, qualify and administer the survey. Sociology 665 students contacted qualified students using either e-mail addresses or telephone numbers that the respondents wrote on their Initial Screens to schedule appointments for the personal interviews. Prior to conducting the personal interviews for the survey, each eligible respondent read and signed an Informed Consent form agreeing to participate. (See Informed Consent form in the appendix.) The students were able to complete 34 interviews with qualified first year students. The average time to complete the survey was approximately 10 minutes. We determined that this was an insufficient sample size and extended our survey to 2007 summer classes.

In June 2007, two additional waves (first 5-week classes and second 5-week classes) of Initial Screens were administered to first year students at Skyline College. During the first wave (early June), the Sociology 665 instructor contacted 23 instructors for 34 classes (some instructors taught more than one class). Of the 23 instructors, 18 responded (23 classes) and allowed the Sociology 665 students to administer the Initial Screen in

their classes. During the second wave (mid June to July), the Sociology 665 instructor contacted an additional 105 instructors in 105 classes and 32 (30.4 percent) of these instructors replied and allowed the Sociology 665 students to administer the Initial screen in their classes.

Including first and second waves, a total of 983 students completed the Initial Screen and 446 of these students were not qualified, mainly because they had too many credits (more than 24). Among those who qualified to take the larger survey (N = 531), 333 declined to participate. Of the remaining students who qualified to complete the larger survey (N = 198), 164 students did not show up for their scheduled interviews (most common), failed to respond to repeated attempts to contact, or could not be contacted because of illegible e-mail addresses or telephone numbers. In all, Sociology 665 students completed an additional first year student surveys, approximately 12.6 percent of the 198 who qualified to do so. Thus, including the spring and summer semesters 2007, a total of 59 qualified first year students completed the Sociology 665 First Year Experience Student Survey.

## **Findings**

We designed the Sociology 665 First Year Experience Survey to focus on five areas of inquiry for Skyline College's students:

- High School Preparation
- Orientation and Counseling Sessions
- College Experience and Learning
- Proposed First Year Orientation Program and
- Demographics

### **I. High School Preparation**

The majority (78 percent) of respondents reported that they primarily took regular high school courses and 20 percent primarily took advanced placement courses.

In their meetings with their high school instructors, advisors or counselors, students stated that they most commonly talked with them about their

- educational goals (64 percent), followed by their
- career plans (56 percent),
- academic challenges of college (44 percent),
- availability of financial aid (36 percent), and
- other things (31 percent), including scholarships, school performance and foreign colleges.

We asked students how well (good, fair or poor) they felt their high school prepared them for college-level work at Skyline College on eight skill areas. In rank order (from highest to lowest), students listed

- English writing (mean of 2.5 out of 3) highest, followed by a related skill,
- reading (mean of 2.4), with three other skills,
- library, computer and in-class presentation ranked at a mean of 2.3, respectively.

- At the low end, students ranked their high school preparation for college-level note taking (mean of 2.1) and
- study habits (mean of 2.0) as only fair.

While some students felt well prepared for college-level work, overall students ranked their high school preparation as slightly above fair. This finding is in keeping with the Foundations of Excellence online survey, which found that only nearly 50 percent (49.1 percent) regarded their high school preparation for college-level work as moderate or less.

## II. Orientation and Counseling Sessions

First year students have the opportunity to take a virtual online orientation before they attend classes. However, in our sample, only about a third (34 percent) reported doing so. Among those who did take the virtual orientation (N =35), 35 percent found it very helpful, 50 percent found it somewhat helpful, and 15 percent did not find the virtual orientation very helpful.

Overall, nearly 7 in 10 (69 percent) of the first year students have met with an academic counselor.

To follow up on their experiences with their counselors, we asked these students who had met with their counselors to reflect on their counseling meetings. We asked students if they agreed or disagreed with the following components in counseling sessions. In rank order (from the highest agreement to the lowest agreement) Table 2.1 summarizes students' agreement with the following counseling session components.

Table 2.1: Student Agreement with Counseling Session Components

<u>Counseling Session Component</u>	<u>Percent of Agreement</u>
Helped select your courses	76
Spent a sufficient amount of time with you	73
Discussed required courses for transfer and to receive a diploma	73
Discussed future enrollment plans	71
Explained the requirements for specific programs and majors	68
Was familiar with your specific career goals	68
Discussed the requirements for academic success	68
Was available at a convenient time	68
Suggested you meet with him or her again	61
Discussed how college can help achieve your life goals	49

Importantly, in two areas (explained the requirements for specific programs and majors and suggested that the student meet with the counselor again), more than 1 in 10 (12 percent, respectively) stated that these areas were not discussed at all.

Among the students who had met with academic counselors (N = 41), slightly over 7 in 10 (71 percent) stated that they would recommend their academic counselor to a friend, while over a quarter (27 percent) indicated that they would not.

### III. College Experience and Learning

In the third part of the questionnaire, we asked first year students about their awareness of, and if they were aware of a specific campus program or service, how well informed (well, somewhat or not well informed) they were about 27 programs or services. In rank order (most aware to least aware) the following table summarizes students' awareness of and how well informed they feel about the various programs and services. The mean scores (3 = well informed, 2 = somewhat informed, and 1 = not well informed) for each program or services are listed on the right column.

Table 3.1: Awareness and how well informed about campus programs and services

<u>81 to 100 percent Aware</u>	<u>Mean (informed scores 3-1)</u>
Bookstore	2.6
Library	2.6
Counseling services	2.2
 <u>61 to 80 percent Aware</u>	
Learning Center	2.2
Financial Aid	2.3
Career Center	2.1
Transcripts	2.4
 <u>41 to 60 percent Aware</u>	
Honors Transfer	2.0
Health Services	2.0
Student Activities	2.0
Student Clubs/Organizations	1.9
 <u>21 to 40 percent Aware</u>	
Transfer Opportunity Center	2.1
Enrollment/Degree Verification	2.2
Kababalyan Program	1.9
Phi Theta Kappa	2.3
 <u>20 percent or less Aware</u>	
Child Care	1.9
Disabled Student Program	2.1
EOPS (Extended Opportunity Program And Services)	2.3
Puente Program	1.5

Table 3.1: Awareness and how well informed about campus programs and services  
(continued)

<u>20 percent or less Aware (continued)</u>	<u>Mean (informed scores 3-1)</u>
ASTEP (African American Success Through Excellence and Persistence)	2.0
International Students Program	1.4
Calworks Program/Post Employment	1.8
Learning Communities	2.1
Veterans/Veteran's Dependents	1.6
Women in Transition	1.3
STARRS (Student Transfer, Academic Achievement And Retention Services)	2.2
CARE (Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education)	2.5

It is clear from the preceding table that even with the campus programs and services that students are most aware of (bookstore, library and counseling services, for example), many do not feel well informed. At best, most students in our sample feel only somewhat informed about the various programs and services.

First year student awareness of and information about campus programs and services was only one part of the college experience and learning dimension we used to survey students. In the second part of this dimension, we asked students if they had ever used and, if so, how satisfied they were with 11 educational skills programs and services. There is some overlap between these 11 programs and services and the previous 27 programs and services. Our purpose was to find out about actual use of and, in a sense, a consumer satisfaction rating with the 11 programs and services. In rank order, from the most highly used to the least used the following table summarizes students' use of and degree of satisfaction with the 11 programs and services. The mean scores (3 = very satisfied, 2 = somewhat satisfied, and 1 = not very satisfied) for each program and service are listed in the right column.

Table 3.2: Use of and Satisfaction with Campus Programs and Services

<u>Program/Service Percent Used</u>	<u>Mean (satisfaction scores 3-1)</u>
1. Library (84 percent)	2.6
2. Counseling Services (71 percent)	2.4
3. Instructor's office hours (48 percent)	2.8
4. Learning Center (47 percent)	2.4
5. Tutoring (31 percent)	2.4
6. Reading/Writing Lab (24 percent)	2.4
7. Out of class programs like movies, plays and concerts (22 percent)	2.8
8. Math Lab (21 percent)	2.4
9. Basic Skills Lab (3 percent)	2.0

Table 3.2: Use of and Satisfaction with Campus Programs and Services  
(continued)

<u>Program/Service Percent Used</u>	<u>Mean (satisfaction scores 3-1)</u>
10. Off campus programs (3 percent)	2.0
11. ESOL Lab (0 percent)	0.0

The table above indicates a relatively high use of four programs or services, with two of the programs or services (instructor office hours and the Library) generating high satisfaction scores. Program and service use drops significantly (31 to 0 percent) for programs ranked 5 through 11. While only slightly more than 1 in 5 (22 percent) students have ever used out of class programs like movies, plays and concerts, those who have are highly satisfied with them.

#### **IV. Proposed First Year Orientation Program**

In the fourth part of the survey, Sociology 665 student interviewers read the following description of a proposed campus orientation course to the respondents to ascertain their interest:

I'd like to read a description of a proposed campus orientation program at Skyline College and get your reactions to it. Orientation programs at colleges help promote student's success in college. Suppose Skyline College offered a required, one-unit orientation course that would give first year students an introduction to Skyline's programs, services and faculty. In this course students would tour the campus and its buildings. They would meet faculty and academic advising staff on a one-on-one basis and be encouraged to discuss a wide-variety of programs and career opportunities. They would also explore practical vocational programs as well as discover library and Internet research opportunities.

After the proposal was read, the interviewers asked the respondents how helpful 20 specific components of the proposed orientation would be, very helpful, somewhat helpful or not very helpful. In rank order, from the most helpful to the least helpful the following table summarizes the respondent's mean scores (3 = very helpful, 2 = somewhat helpful, and 1= not very helpful) for each proposed component to the orientation course.

Table 4.1: Helpfulness of Orientation Course Components

<u>Orientation Component</u>	<u>Mean (helpfulness scores 3-1)</u>
Providing Learning Center information	2.8
Listing availability of scholarships	2.8
Discussing transfer to 4-year universities	2.8
Discussing academic programs	2.7
Discussing career opportunities	2.7

Table 4.1: Helpfulness of Orientation Course Components (continued)

<u>Orientation Component</u>	<u>Mean (helpfulness scores 3-1)</u>
Providing a good campus map	2.7
Discussing access to academic counselors	2.7
Providing tutoring	2.7
Offering mentoring programs	2.7
Discussing student health clinic	2.7
Discussing low cost health plans	2.7
Discussing library hours	2.6
Discussing campus security	2.6
Discussing psychological services	2.6
Discussing Micro Computer Labs	2.5
Discussing public transportation	2.5
Providing childcare information	2.4
Listing parking regulations	2.4
Discussing food service availability	2.3
Offering detailed information on faculty	2.0

In addition to the above, the respondents also mentioned needing current classes, more parking spaces, smoking areas need to be enforced, orientation course should have one person to show the student around campus, would like inspirational speakers, and information on internships and jobs. Only one of the 59 students in the sample indicated that he or she thought the orientation course should not be required.

It is clear from the above table that the respondents are interested in and would find very helpful to at least somewhat helpful several orientation course components. By in large, the respondents thought that academic components (Learning Center, Academic programs for example) as well as pragmatic components such as scholarship availability, transfer to 4-year universities and career opportunities would be especially helpful to their college success.

## **V. Demographics**

First year students reported the following demographic information:

Gender\_group with which they most commonly identify:

<u>Gender Group</u>	<u>Percent who identify</u>
Male	54
Female	42
Transgender	2
Other	2

Racial or ethnic group with which they most commonly identify:

<u>Group</u>	<u>Percent who identify</u>
Black/African American	2
Latino/Latina	14
Asian/Pacific Islander	46
White	14
Middle Eastern	5
Multiracial/ethnic	1
Other (not specified)	12
Don't know	2

Respondents reported the following age groupings:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Percent of Cohort</u>
Under 18	5
18 to 22	61
23 to 27	24
28 to 32	3
33 to 42	3
43 to 52	2
53 to 62	0
63 or over	2

Respondents reported currently living in the following cities:

<u>City</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
South San Francisco	14
Daily City	13
Pacifica	10
San Francisco	9
San Bruno	6
Brisbane	2
San José	2
Milbrae	1
San Mateo	1
Oakland	1

Respondents reported attending high school in the following cities:

<u>City of high school</u>	<u>Number of Respondents Attending</u>
San Francisco	14
South San Francisco	14
Pacifica	9
Daily City	5
Out of area	4
Milbrae	3
Out of country	2
Out of state	2
Campbell	1

Respondents reported attending high school in the following cities (continued):

<u>City of high school</u>	<u>Number of Respondents Attending</u>
Aptos	1
Burlingame	1
San Mateo	1

Respondents reported their current living conditions:

<u>Living Condition</u>	<u>Percent of Respondents</u>
Live by yourself	7
Live with a roommate or partner	24
Live with parents or relatives	61
Live with your spouse and/or child or children	5
Live only with child or children	2
Some other arrangement	2

Respondents reported the following approximate total yearly household income before taxes:

<u>Yearly Household Income</u>	<u>Percent of Respondents</u>
\$25,000 or less	19
\$25,000 to 40,000	14
\$40,000 to 55,000	17
\$55,000 to 70,000	14
Over \$70,000	22
Don't know	15

Sixty-six percent of the respondents reported working at a paying job. Among those working individuals, 82 percent worked part-time.

**APPENDIX:**

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