

## Orientation Evaluation Summary – Summer Orientation (Part 1) 2006

### Discussion: Return Rate

In 2006, we saw an increase in the number of transfer students and transfer parents returning orientation evaluations, however a decrease in the number of first-year parents returning the evaluation. It does not appear that first-year students were evaluated in 2005. The number of first-year surveys returned in 2004 was significantly greater (n = 1794) however surveys at that time were completed in person at orientation via a paper and pencil survey. The number of evaluations returned in 2006 is outlined in **Table 1.A**.

**Table 1.A:** Number of Evaluations Returned

Population	2005	2006	% Change
First-Year Students	N/A	836	N/A
First-Year Parents	111	92	- 17%
Transfer Students	142	267	+ 88%
Transfer Parents	23	27	+ 17%

One possible reason for the change could be *populations to which surveys were distributed*. In 2005, surveys were emailed to Transfer Students, Transfer Parents/Family, and First-Year Parents/Family. First-Year students do not appear to have been surveyed in 2005. In 2006, surveys were emailed to Transfer Students, Transfer Parents/Family, ACH Students, GLS Students, ITS Students, HDV Students, LDS Students, and SSO Students. Student emails contained two links: one for the student survey and one for the parents' survey. Students were asked to forward the link to their parents or family members that attended orientations. While the orientation office had intended to survey each UG College parent group separately, the data management process for parent information took too much time to maintain during the busy summer orientation months. As a result, surveys were not able to be distributed in a timely manner. Although all of the data is still useable, it was decided not to submit surveys after opening weekend, since parents often confuse orientation part 1 and part 2 in the evaluation. The breakdown of surveys returned by population is available in **Table 1.B**.

**Table 1.B:** Return Rate by Population for 2006

Population	Students	% (of total # of students in group)	Parents
Transfers	267	18% (1440)	27
ACH	135	33% (408)	16
GLS	157	33% (482)	15
HDV	128	31% (413)	11
ITS	140	28% (493)	20
LDS	129	25% (509)	9
SSO	147	30% (497)	21

Another possible reason for the changes could be the *timeline in which surveys were distributed*. In both 2005 and 2006, surveys were distributed via an email link to Survey Monkey. In 2005, emails were sent as a group at the end of the summer orientation season. In 2006, emails were sent sporadically throughout the summer, usually within one week of attending orientation. The only exception to this distribution was that transfer students who attended orientation in June received the email link at the end of June. Future transfer student surveys were sent within one week of their orientation date. First-year students attending “combined undergraduate college days” (n = 197) were not sent evaluations, nor were students who attended the international student orientation (n = 178).

A final possible reason for these changes could be the *length and content of the survey*. The survey was shorter in 2006, than in 2005. **Table 1.C** shows the change in the number and type of questions included.

**Table 1.C:** Number and Type of Questions

Question Type	05 FY Student	06 FY Student	05 FY Parent	06 FY Parent	05 TR Student	06 TR Student	05 TR Parent	06 TR Parent
Likert-scale Questions	n/a	12	15	14	25	12	18	13
Demographic Questions	n/a	4	7	0	5	6	7	0
Yes/No Questions	n/a	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Fill-in/Open-Ended	n/a	1	3	1	4	1	3	1

Suggestions: Return Rate

Several *opportunities for improvement* exist relating to the number of evaluations returned.

1. An email system or software program that allows us to send individual emails to one student at a time from a mass distribution list would be helpful. This would allow us to personalize each email to the individual student/family member. It would also eliminate the number of returned emails due spam filters. It would also help us to identify inactive email addresses.
2. A faster, automated means of capturing parent data is necessary. In 2005, parents entered information to an Excel spreadsheet at Orientation Check-in, which greatly held up the check-in process. In 2006, we distributed paper surveys to parents, planning to enter the data manually into Excel spreadsheets for distribution. While this was feasible during transfer orientations when few parents attend, it became nearly impossible during July when the majority of freshmen orientations occur and parent involvement is heavy. A web-based data entry system that allows parents to enter their information on-line would help in this process.
3. An incentive for students and family members to complete evaluations, as well as a mechanism for tracking who has completed them, would be helpful. Previously we have provided incentives for completing paper surveys (i.e. t-shirts) but this was eliminated with the on-line implementation. Another option would be a “gift” at opening weekend for both parents and students who completed the survey.
4. A survey tool managed by Stony Brook would help those who don’t want to link to a non-university website, such as Survey Monkey. An example of a university-managed simple survey tool would be <http://www.survey.vt.edu/>.
5. A link to the Orientation Evaluations on the orientation website would help our return rate for completed surveys.
6. A staff member other than the director, such as GA or student worker, should be dedicated to managing the survey distribution and evaluation results throughout the summer.

## Discussion: Evaluation Outcomes – Student & Parent Surveys

Overall, evaluation of summer orientations was positive in 2006. It is difficult to make comparisons to 2005 data for several reasons, including (1) the lack of first-year student data, (2) the changes in survey content and questions, (3) the changes in population distribution, and (4) the Likert-scale was reversed in 2005 which makes comparison difficult (although not impossible). Based on these differences, we will focus on outcomes from the 2006 evaluations.

### First-Year Students

Overall, the majority of first-year students (76%, n = 632) agreed or strongly agreed that **Orientation helped better prepare them to attend Stony Brook University**. These results are outlined in **Chart 1.A**. Most students (58%, n = 481) agreed or strongly agreed that their **time was well utilized during orientation**. These results are outlined in **Chart 1.B**. In addition, the majority of students (72%, n = 567) agreed or strongly agreed that they were **looking forward to participating in their Undergraduate College**. These results are outlined in **Chart 1.C**. Eighty percent of students (80%, n = 667) agreed or strongly agreed that they **understand how to use SOLAR**. Regarding the orientation staff, the majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that the **orientation staff was approachable and eager to help** (86%, n = 722), as well as **knowledgeable about the institution and policies** (85%, n = 713).

Chart 1.A

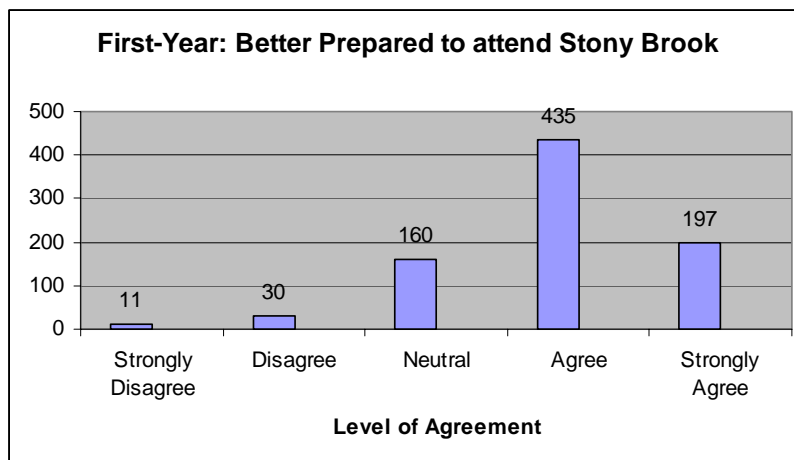


Chart 1.B

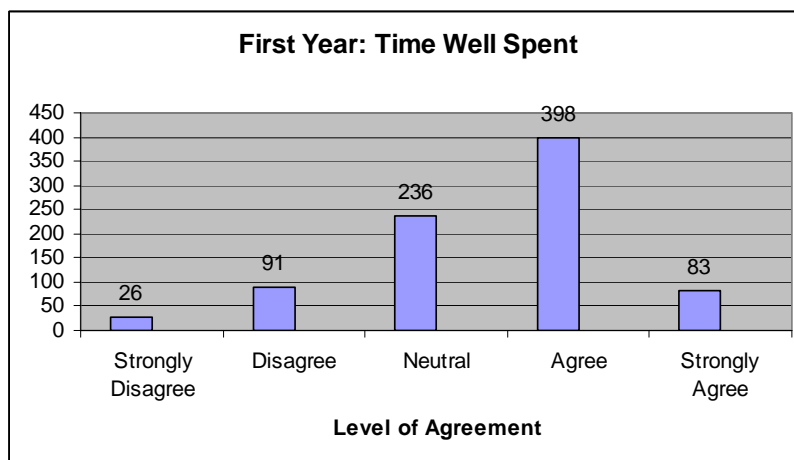
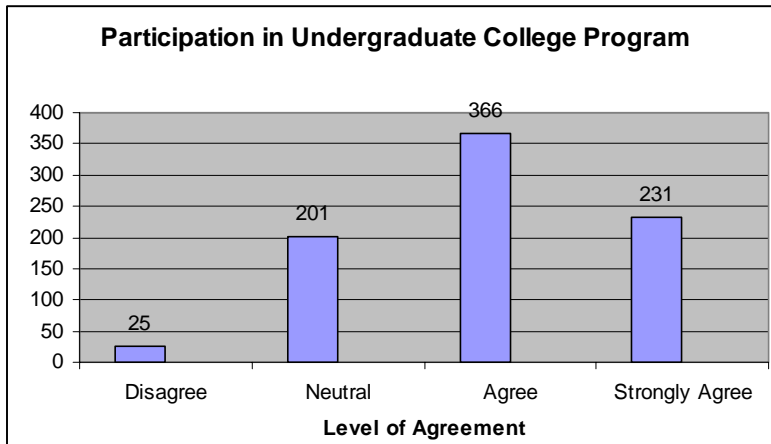


Chart 1.C



Qualitative comments varied for first-year students. A complete breakdown of transfer student evaluations is attached.

#### Transfer Students

Overall, the majority of transfer students (68%, n = 182) agreed or strongly agreed that **Orientation helped prepare them to attend** Stony Brook University. These results are outlined in **Chart 2.A**. Most students (60%, n = 160) agreed or strongly agreed that their **time was well utilized during orientation**. These results are outlined in **Chart 2.B**. Most students agreed or strongly agreed that they understood information on **DEC's, majors and minors** (64%, n = 171). These results are outlined in **Chart 2.C**. Students stated that they **understand how to use SOLAR** (86%, n = 230). Regarding the orientation staff, the majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that the **orientation staff was approachable and eager to help** (80%, n = 213), as well as **knowledgeable about the institution and policies** (83%, n = 222).

Chart 2.A

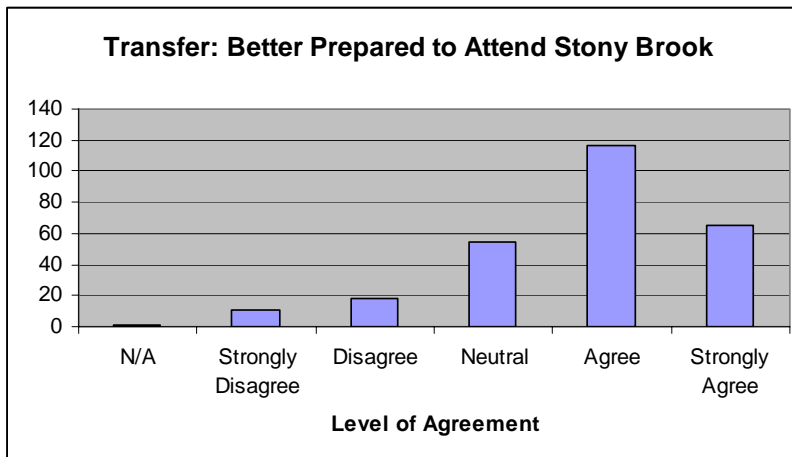


Chart 2.B

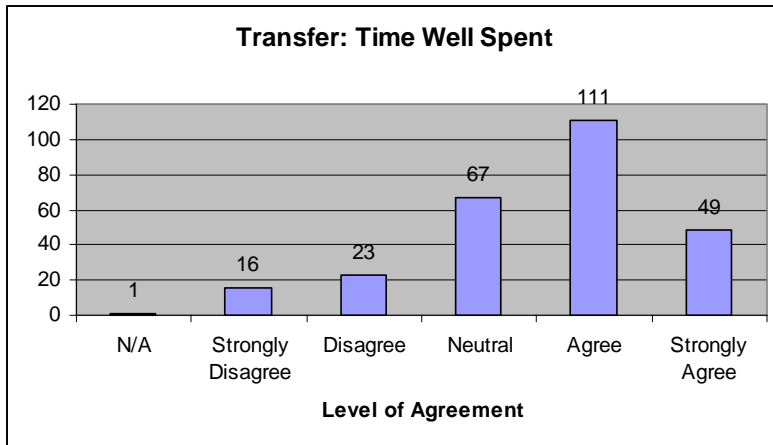
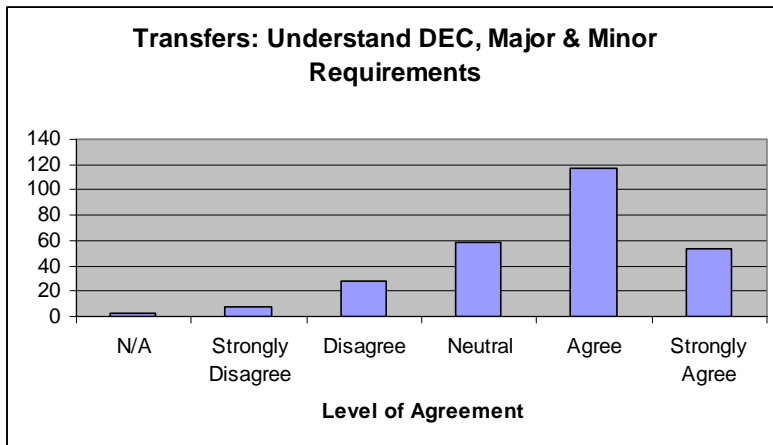


Chart 2.C



Qualitative comments varied for transfer students. A complete breakdown of transfer student evaluations is attached.

#### First-Year Parents

The majority of first-year parents surveyed agree or strongly agree that they **feel better about their child attending Stony Brook University** thanks to orientation (90%, n = 83). In addition, most first-year parents surveyed agree or strongly agree that they **know more about Stony Brook University after attending orientation** (93%, n = 86). The majority of first-year parents agreed or strongly agreed that the **orientation staff was knowledgeable about the institution and its policies** (94%, n = 87) and **approachable and eager to help** (91%, n = 84).

Qualitative comments varied for first-year parents. A complete breakdown of transfer parent evaluations is attached.

#### Transfer Parents

Due to the limited number of responses, results from the transfer parents are less significant than other populations however the outcomes are being reported. The majority of transfer parents surveyed agree or strongly agree that they **feel better about their child attending Stony Brook University** thanks to orientation (81%, n = 22). In addition, most transfer parents surveyed agree or strongly agree that they **know more about Stony Brook University after attending orientation** (74%, n = 20). The majority of

transfer parents agreed or strongly agreed that the **orientation staff was knowledgeable about the institution and its policies** (93%, n = 25) and **approachable and eager to help** (96%, n = 26).

Qualitative comments varied for transfer parents. A complete breakdown of transfer parent evaluations is attached.

#### Suggestions: Evaluation Outcomes – Student & Parent Surveys

Several opportunities exist to improve the evaluation outcomes of the Orientation Survey.

1. The current format of the orientation evaluation provides only satisfaction data. Opportunities exist to measure how orientation activities contribute to student success at the university. A starting point could be a **revised evaluation that measures objectives that are linked to student success**, for example, how well orientation prepares students for academic expectations or social expectations of the university, or how orientation helped them connect to peers, faculty or professional staff members.
2. The current outcomes of the evaluation provide very little basis for comparison, either to Stony Brook University or any other institution. A standardized evaluation, similar to the Orientation Benchmarking Study developed by Student Voice (<http://www.studentvoice.com/orientationbench06.htm>), would allow us to **consistently measure the same variables from year to year, while also providing a benchmark with other institutions**.
3. We need a measure for students to evaluate the *entire* orientation experience, including part II, Experience Stony Brook. Vital information is delivered to students during part II that impacts their successful transition and orientation to Stony Brook. The Orientation office should **revisit the timing of the orientation evaluation**. There is some information that suggests that new students can not accurately evaluate their orientation experience until 4-6 weeks into the semester. This argument poses that new students don't really know what they "needed" to get out of orientation prior to being on campus for a few weeks, and a few weeks on campus provides a more accurate perspective and evaluation.
4. **Follow-up studies, beyond student surveys**, are needed to define the connections between student orientation and student success (i.e. graduation and retention). We need to collaborate with other offices, such as Institutional Research, Registrar and Academic Advising, to determine how we can improve our orientation services to enhance student success.
5. The **parent orientation program is in need of improvement**, as with other parent programs at the university. We need to develop a program that better meets the needs of parents, as well as welcomes and includes parents in the orientation and transition experience.

Submitted:  
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