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# President's Surveys of New Students: 2008 Incoming Transfer Students Have Less Positive Experiences than Do New Freshmen

Report number: 08-13

November, 2008

Every year, new freshmen and transfer students are invited to complete a survey during the early weeks of fall semester. The two surveys (which differ slightly) include questions about adjustment to college life, academic and other concerns, and satisfaction with administrative offices and orientation events. In addition, students are asked if they would like someone to follow up with them about their concerns or questions; follow up was done by the Office of First Year Experience. Some questions were multiple choice, while others were open-ended. This report summarizes the 2008 survey results

Freshmen make up 77% of the respondents, transfer students make up 23% (see Table 1). The completed response rate for transfer students was higher than for freshmen (51% vs. 42%). Transfer students are somewhat less likely to be in the College of Arts and Sciences than are new freshmen.

## Key Findings

### Multiple choice responses

- Transfer students were somewhat more likely than freshmen to report that so far they were doing excellent in their classes (26% and 21%, respectively; see Table 2).
- More than four in ten new students reported being concerned about at least one of their courses, but only 18% of new freshmen and 29% of transfer students wanted someone to follow up with them.
- Nine out of ten new freshmen reported feeling comfortable at Loyola, compared to only 79% of transfers. Transfer students were more likely to feel lost and to want help resolving an issue or problem.
- Students gave their highest ratings to the Hub, the Campus Card Office, and the Office of Undergraduate Admission (see Table 3 and Figure 1).
- However, new freshmen were more likely to rate Admissions as good or excellent than were transfer students (93% vs. 83%; see Figure 2).

- New freshmen's lowest ratings were of Financial Aid (confusing; not enough aid), the Bursar's Office (confusing e-bills; billing errors), and academic advising (rushed; lack of information on specific courses; uninformed advisors).
- Transfer students rated lowest the offices of Residence Life (upperclassmen assigned to underclass dorms; last minute assignments; assignment to different dorms than promised; unhappiness with Coffey Hall) and Financial Aid (long response time, unexplained changes in aid), as well as Welcome Week activities.
- There were several areas in which the difference in satisfaction between new freshmen and transfer students was large: Residence Life, Welcome Week, Discover Loyola, and Admissions (in that order).
- Fifty six percent of transfer students would have preferred an abbreviated Discover Loyola orientation, while only 23% would have preferred an overnight orientation (see Table 4).
- Less than half of new freshmen (44%) had read *Lives of Moral Leadership*, 2008's One Book One University Program book.
- When faced with a problem or question, about seven in ten students said they would go to the Loyola website to get help or an answer. The Hub was the next most common resource, given by about a third of students.

### Open-ended responses

- In spite of a great deal of variation in students' experience of administrative services and orientation events, there are several areas in which there are clearly wide-spread problems. Based on student write-in responses, there are a number of things that Loyola could do to improve students' experience significantly:
  - Decrease students' time on hold when calling offices, and respond more reliably, consistently, and quickly to voicemail. Length of time on hold and lack of response to voicemail are probably the most frequent

complaints students expressed on the survey (especially with Admissions).

- Improve accuracy and consistency of information given out (within and between offices).
- Provide more information to all new students ahead of time on available courses (especially Core courses).
- Put more, and more detailed, information on Loyola's website, and organize it so that it is easier to find.
- At Discover Loyola, group students by interest or major; provide options for students to participate in social activities that are more structured or less; provide handouts to students that summarize the information they receive in sessions; give more detailed logistical information (laundry cards, dorm guest policy, etc.).
- Frustration with the process of transferring credits to Loyola is extensive, among both new freshmen and transfer students. They reported policy changes of which they were not informed, incorrect information about which credits are transferrable, and lengthy delays in the actual transfer process.
- The level of satisfaction with the Hub is fairly high, with many students reporting efficient, friendly service. The staffing level at certain times of day, however, is inadequate for attending students within a reasonable amount of time.
- Individual employees can make a significant positive contribution to the experiences of many students, and those employees are often the ones students see on a day-to-day basis, such as cafeteria workers.

## Implications

- There was quite a lot of variation in students' experiences with administrative offices. Even with those offices that received overall low ratings, many students were very satisfied. It appears,

however, that even a minor problem or a single negative interaction can cause a student to have a generally negative opinion of an office.

- It is encouraging that there are relatively small, specific areas in improvements can positively affect student perceptions of the institution, such as increasing and better organizing the information on the website and improving the process of transferring credits. These are areas in which Loyola is already making efforts to improve, and such investments are likely to make a small, but significant, difference to many prospective and incoming students.
- Given the size of incoming classes, perhaps a more difficult problem to solve is the frustration that incoming students feel with the mass registration process. Although a number of students described very positive experiences with individual advisors, there was widespread exasperation with the process; students felt rushed and like they weren't able to get the information they needed to select appropriate classes.
- Although a focus on improving the services of Loyola's administrative offices is without doubt important, interactions with those staff members who are encountered daily, such as cafeteria workers, are significant enough to students' perceptions at Loyola that they deserve attention.
- Although they share many concerns and have some very similar experiences, the results of this survey suggest that transfer students receive less attention and feel less valued than do new freshmen. This is a problem for the institution, as transfer students make up an increasing proportion of incoming classes.
- Transfer students seem to feel more confident about their classes, but are also slightly more likely to ask for follow-up when they do have concerns.
- In general, however, the transition to Loyola seems to be more difficult for transfer students than for new freshmen. A few weeks into the semester, transfer students have made less of an adjustment to life on campus, and do not feel as comfortable. They are more likely to report that they feel lost or that they have particular concerns or issues that they would like help in resolving.

Table 1 Respondents and Characteristics			
	Total	New	
		Freshmen	Transfers
Number invited	2,714	2,176	538
Number responded	1,311	1,003	308
Number completed	1,196	919	277
Response rate (% completing survey)*	44	42	51
Entering Status (%)			
Freshman	77	---	---
Transfer	23	---	---
School (%)			
CAS	66	68	58
Business School	15	14	19
Communications	8	7	10
Education	4	4	4
Nursing	5	6	2
Social Work	2	1	6

Source: President's Surveys of Freshmen and Transfer Students, 2008

\* Approximately 9% of respondents did not complete the entire survey.

Table 2 Adjustment to College (%)		
	New	
	freshmen	Transfers
Classes so far		
Poor	1	1
Fair	12	9
Good	66	65
Excellent	21	26
Concerned about course	45	41
Want follow-up on course (of those with concerns)	18	29
Current status		
Feel lost	1	6
Would like help resolving issue or two	9	14
Know way around, doing well	90	79

Source: President's Surveys of Freshmen and Transfer Students, 2008

Table 3 Ratings of Service Offices and Events (%)												
	New freshmen				Transfers				Total			
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs improve.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs improve.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs improve.
Admissions	38	54	6	1	35	48	10	7	38	53	7	2
Financial Aid	25	46	20	9	23	43	20	14	24	45	20	10
Discover Loyola	29	51	14	6	21	50	17	12	27	51	15	7
Welcome Week	34	49	14	3	19	47	20	15	31	49	15	5
Convocation	28	48	18	6	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Academic advising	11	37	17	9	38	35	15	11	37	36	17	10
Hub	52	40	7	1	52	37	8	4	52	39	7	2
Residence Life	41	45	8	5	23	35	21	21	38	44	10	8
Bursar	22	50	23	5	23	53	16	8	23	50	22	5
Campus Card Office	45	44	8	4	50	40	7	2	46	43	8	3

Source: President's Surveys of Freshmen and Transfer Students, 2008

Note: Results exclude respondents who reported not attending or no contact.

Table 4 Preferences, Preparation, Transition, and Strategies (%)		
	New Freshmen	Transfers
Transfer preferences for Discover Loyola		
Overnight orientation	---	23
Abbreviated orientation	---	56
Read "Moral Leadership"	44	---
Received help from particular Loyola employee in transition to college	27	31
Planned strategies for obtaining answers or help		
Loyola website	71	65
Hub	37	40
Specific office	30	34
Specific person	25	14
Other	4	2

Source: President's Surveys of Freshmen and Transfer Students, 2008

