

Thrive Sophomore Survey Report: Baseline and Year 1

Authors: Janice Fournier, Abigail Evans, Stephanie Cruz
Academic Experience Design & Delivery
UW Information Technology

Introduction

In Winter 2015, UW Information Technology partnered with the Office of the Provost, Undergraduate Academic Advising, First Year Programs, Residential Life, and the Career and Internship Center in their efforts to develop and promote the Thrive Initiative—an initiative designed to help first year students successfully connect to the University and transition to campus life.

The primary component of the Initiative included weekly messages to first year students delivered via MyUW. Message content included timely advice and pointers to help first year students explore opportunities, make the most of their learning experiences, and connect to important campus resources.

An additional component included sharing the messages with FIG leaders and Residential Advisers. These student leaders were encouraged to incorporate message content into lesson plans or programming for first year students around the same time the messages appeared in MyUW. To the extent that student leaders did this, first year students living in residential housing and/or participating in a FIG received reinforcement of the messages sent through MyUW.

Students receiving the Thrive messages in MyUW were also the first class to take U101, an online course developed as part of First Year Programs' new "flipped" orientation program. All incoming students were required to review this content before arriving for the on-campus portion of their orientation. The Thrive messages addressed many of the same topics covered in U101, and some Thrive messages linked to components of U101 (such as a video on how to choose a major) as sources of more information.

Together, these efforts represent a coordinated strategy to help first year students succeed. Assessment of these efforts, therefore, is important for understanding what students are doing as they embark on their career at the UW. Are they aware of the support and opportunities provided by the University? If so, are they acting upon them? What experiences do students report as critical for successfully adjusting to campus life and establishing a sense of belonging at UW? **This report provides rich information about how students are doing in setting the foundation of their Husky Experience, and how the UW can improve in its efforts to help first year students thrive.**

Assessment

UW-IT was involved in collecting data to answer two assessment questions in regard to the Thrive Initiative. The first focused solely on the messages in MyUW:

How effective were the Thrive messages in MyUW in delivering timely content that students valued and acted upon?

The results of our investigation into this question can be found in our report, *Thrive Messages in MyUW: Year 1 Report*.

This report addresses the second assessment question, which is focused on the effectiveness of the Thrive Initiative overall:

What effect, if any, did the Thrive Initiative have as a whole on first year students' experience successfully transitioning to campus life and connecting to the UW?

In order to answer this question, we needed to be able to compare the first year experience of students who had no experience with the Initiative to that of students who had exposure to the components described in the introduction.

Data Collection

UW-IT worked with other members of the Thrive team to develop an online survey that could be disseminated to students at the start of their sophomore year in 2015 (students with no exposure to Thrive) and students at the start of their sophomore year in 2016 (students exposed to the first iteration of the Thrive efforts). Survey questions asked students about their first year experience and specific elements of campus life related to the goals of the Thrive Initiative.

For example, we proposed that students who had successfully connected to the UW and transitioned to campus life would report a sense of belonging and positive feelings about their transition experience. In addition, they might report behaviors indicating that they had made use of campus resources to support their transition and to make the most of their learning experiences. Potential indicators included:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Academic achievement | <i>Student has...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• visited an adviser or other expert for advice on choosing classes• talked with faculty or TAs about his/her work• visited CLUE/participated in a regular study group• consulted a librarian and/or WRC for help with research/writing |
| Professional development | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• explored/considered multiple majors, identified "back up" major• visited career fair/ attended a professional development workshop• explored internships/jobs/volunteer/research opportunities• attended leadership workshops/sought leadership experience |

| | |
|---|--|
| Life skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developed strategies for managing time or balancing life/study/work • attended a money management workshop • established habits for health & wellness |
| Social/ Co-Curricular engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developed friendships • participated in community events (large or small) • interacted with people different from self • identified and pursued co-curricular interests/participated in student groups/activities |

We wrote questions to address these potential indicators and organized the questions under four headers: Transition to UW, UW Community, Academics, and Well-being. A fifth section addressed demographics (see Appendix).

We hypothesized that if the Thrive Initiative were successful, students who had exposure to components of Thrive would report more positive transition experiences and more of the behavioral indicators listed above than students who had no exposure.

The survey was distributed via email to 6092 sophomores in the third week of autumn quarter 2015, and 833 students (14%) responded. The same survey was distributed in the third week of autumn 2016 to 6454 sophomores (all those who received the Thrive messages in MyUW the previous year), and 795 students (12%) responded.

Analysis

We ran three statistical analyses on the survey data and examined qualitative responses from students who had exposure to Thrive. We describe these analyses below.

Analysis #1: Thrive vs. Baseline

We ran a comparison of survey responses from students who had no exposure to Thrive (“Baseline”) and those who did have exposure (“Thrive”).

Analysis #2: Transition Experience

In the first year of the survey, with only baseline data, we conducted an analysis to understand if those students who reported they had a “poor” transition to the UW differed significantly in their answers to other survey questions than those who reported a “fair,” “good,” or “great” transition. We conducted the same analysis in the second year with data collected from students who had been exposed to Thrive.

Analyses #3 & #4: Write-in Responses & Community

In addition, we analyzed write-in responses from students who had been exposed to Thrive for themes in content. Based on these results, we conducted a further analysis with this group to understand the extent to which community affected other survey responses. Question 13 asked students, “Overall, would you say you ‘found your community’ at the UW?” We compared the survey responses of students who reported “Yes, definitely” with those who reported “No, not yet.”

In each analysis, Pearson’s chi-square test was used to explore potential statistical differences between comparison groups.

Findings

By and large, there were **few significant differences in survey responses between Thrive and Baseline students** (analysis #1).

Results of analysis #2, however, showed **many significant differences in survey responses for students who reported poor vs. fair, good, or great transition experiences**, for both the Baseline and the Thrive groups.

Similarly, we found **significant differences within each group when we compared the responses of students who reported they had found vs. not found their community** (analysis #4).

The analysis of **write-in responses** (analysis #3) **provided insight into the types of experiences that might affect students’ evaluation of their first year**—their ability to find a community, adjust to campus life, figure out how to succeed academically, and take advantage of resources and opportunities the UW has to offer.

Below, we include results of analyses #2-4 because they may indicate **areas in which students still need the kinds of support the Thrive Initiative seeks to provide**. For the sake of brevity, we include results in these sections from the Thrive group only.

#1: Thrive vs. Baseline

We include here the survey questions for which there were statistically significant differences (p -value $< .05$) between Baseline and Thrive survey responses. Also included are those questions on which there were marginally significant results, defined here as a p -value between .05 and .10. Also worth noting is the **large number of questions for which there were no significant differences between the groups**. (See Appendix for a copy of the full survey.)

Q5. Which of the following, if any, were part of your first year experience? Select all that apply.

Answer options included a range of experiences that would potentially connect students to a community (living in a residence hall, registering for a FIG, participating in Early Fall Start, etc.).

- **More Thrive than Baseline participated in a Live/Learn Community** ($p < .001$).

Q6. Which of the following, if any, did you do during your first year? Select all that apply.

Answer options included a range of options that would indicate engagement with UW-related events and opportunities (e.g., attended Dawg Daze events; joined a campus or recreational sports team; sought leadership experience). Only one option was significant:

- **More Thrive than Baseline reported joining a student organization or performance ensemble** ($p = .002$).

Q7. How would you describe your degree of involvement in UW activities during your first year?

(Answer options: Too much—I got over-involved; Too little—I would have liked to get more involved; Just right)

Students who selected “Too little” were directed to Q7a. Which of the following, if any, were obstacles to getting more involved at the UW? Out of the potential options,

- **More Baseline than Thrive indicated that they didn’t know how to get involved** ($p = .061$).
- **More Baseline than Thrive indicated that they didn’t know anyone with shared interests** ($p = .074$).

Q9. After orientation, about how many times did you meet in person with an adviser or similar expert (e.g., OMA&D mentor) for academic advice during your first year at UW?

Students who selected “0” in response to Q9 were asked what their reasons were for not meeting with an advisor.

- **More Baseline than Thrive noted that they did not know how to access an adviser** ($p = .037$).

Q11. Study help: Which of the following, if any, did you do during your first year?

Differences in responses for two activities were significant:

- **More Baseline than Thrive reported that they had attended a CLUE study session or sought help with writing through CLUE** ($p = .031$).
- **More Thrive than Baseline reported that they had participated in an informal study group with classmates or friends** ($p = .092$).

Q15. Which of the following were true for you during your first year at the UW? Select all that apply.

Responses to only one statement differed significantly:

- **More Thrive than Baseline indicated that the statement “I knew about most of the resources the UW offered students, even if I didn’t use them” was true for them** ($p = .085$).

#2: Transition Experiences (Thrive group only)

Question 3 on the survey asked students, “In general, how would you describe your experience transitioning to the UW last year?” Answer options included “Poor—the transition was rough and very challenging for me,” “Fair,” “Good,” and “Great—the transition was smooth and very easy for me.”

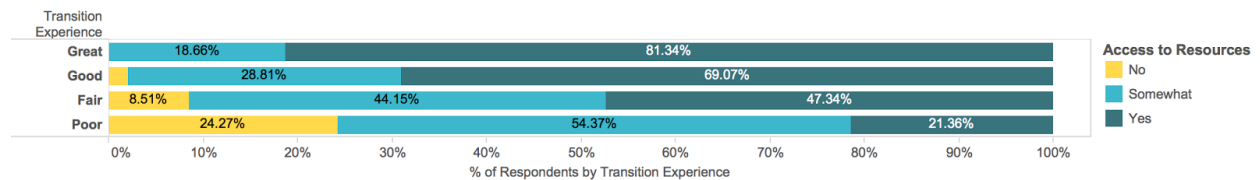
We hypothesized that students who had been exposed to the components of the Thrive Initiative would report more positive experiences transitioning to the UW than those who had not. However, there were no significant differences between the two groups on this item. Separately with the Baseline group and the Thrive group, we then **analyzed differences in survey responses between students who reported different transition experiences**. We were especially interested in how responses from students who reported a poor transition differed from their counterparts. **Results indicate a large number of significant differences on factors related to the goals of the Thrive Initiative.**

We report on the data from the Thrive group here. Among this group, 16% reported a “poor” transition, 29% “fair,” 36% “good,” and 20% “great.”

Q2. Did you feel you had access to resources—people, places, or information—that could help when needed?

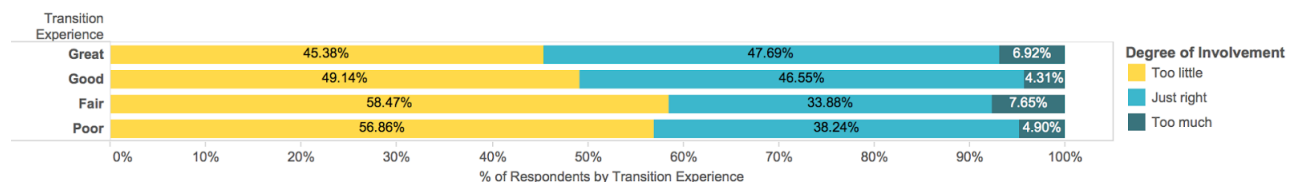
Compared to students who had a good or great transition experience, students who had a poor experience (“poor transitioners”) were:

- **Less likely to feel they had access to resources** that could help when needed ($p < .001$)

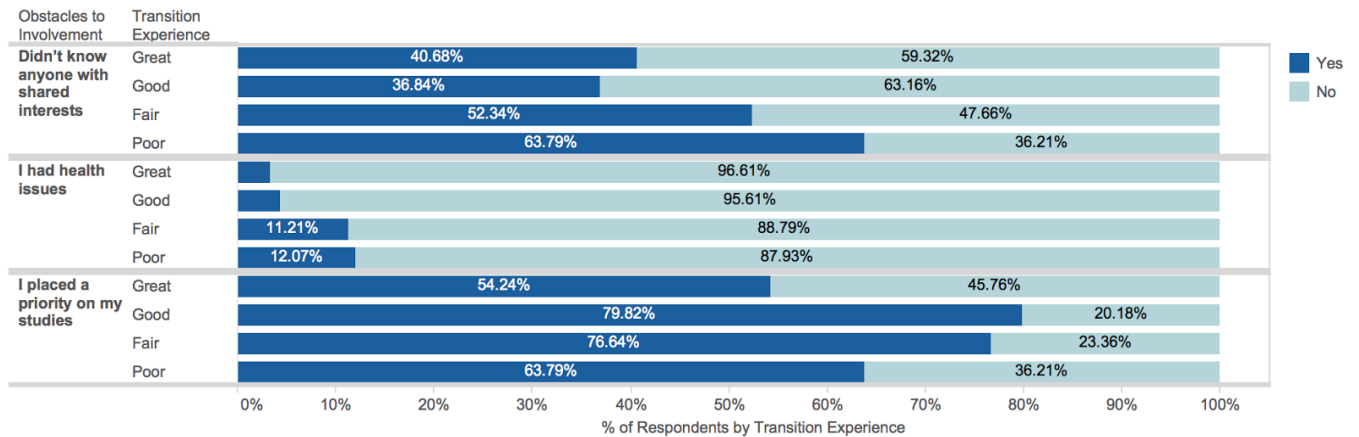


Q7. How would you describe your degree of involvement in UW activities during your first year?

- **Poor transitioners were more likely to feel they could have been more involved in their first year**, although primarily only students who reported that their transition was great felt they were involved the right amount. ($p = .085$)



- Of all students who indicated that they were involved too little and would like to have been involved more, **poor transitioners were more likely to report the following obstacles to involvement (Q7a)**:
 - Didn't know anyone with shared interests** ($p=.004$)
 - Had health issues** ($p=.081$)
- In addition, **there was a significant difference among students with different transition experiences who indicated prioritizing studies as an obstacle to involvement** ($p=.001$)

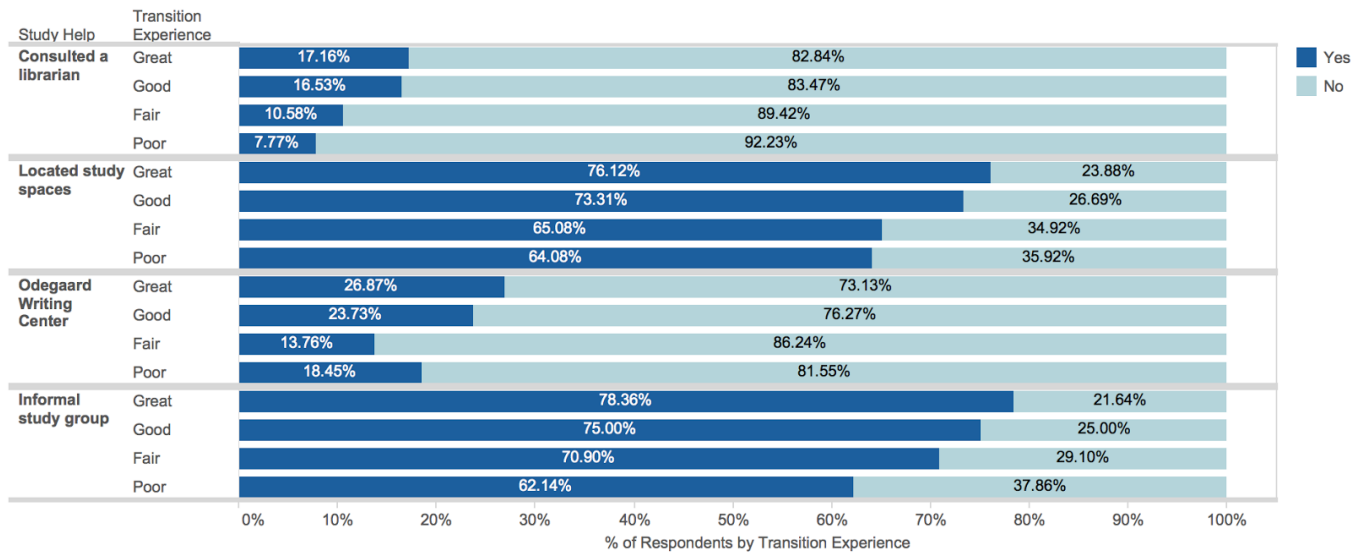


Q9. After orientation, about how many times did you meet in person with an adviser or similar expert (e.g., OMA&D mentor) for academic advice during your first year at UW?

- Poor transitioners met with an academic advisor about the same amount overall as students with different transition experiences, but they were **more likely to see their advisor for help with needed documents** ($p=.047$) and **study tips** ($p=.028$)
- Poor transitioners who did *not* meet with an advisor chose one reason—they “did not feel comfortable doing so”—significantly more often than their counterparts** ($p=.005$).

Q11. Study help: Which of the following, if any, did you do during your first year? Select all that apply. In comparison to students with other transition experiences, **poor transitioners were**

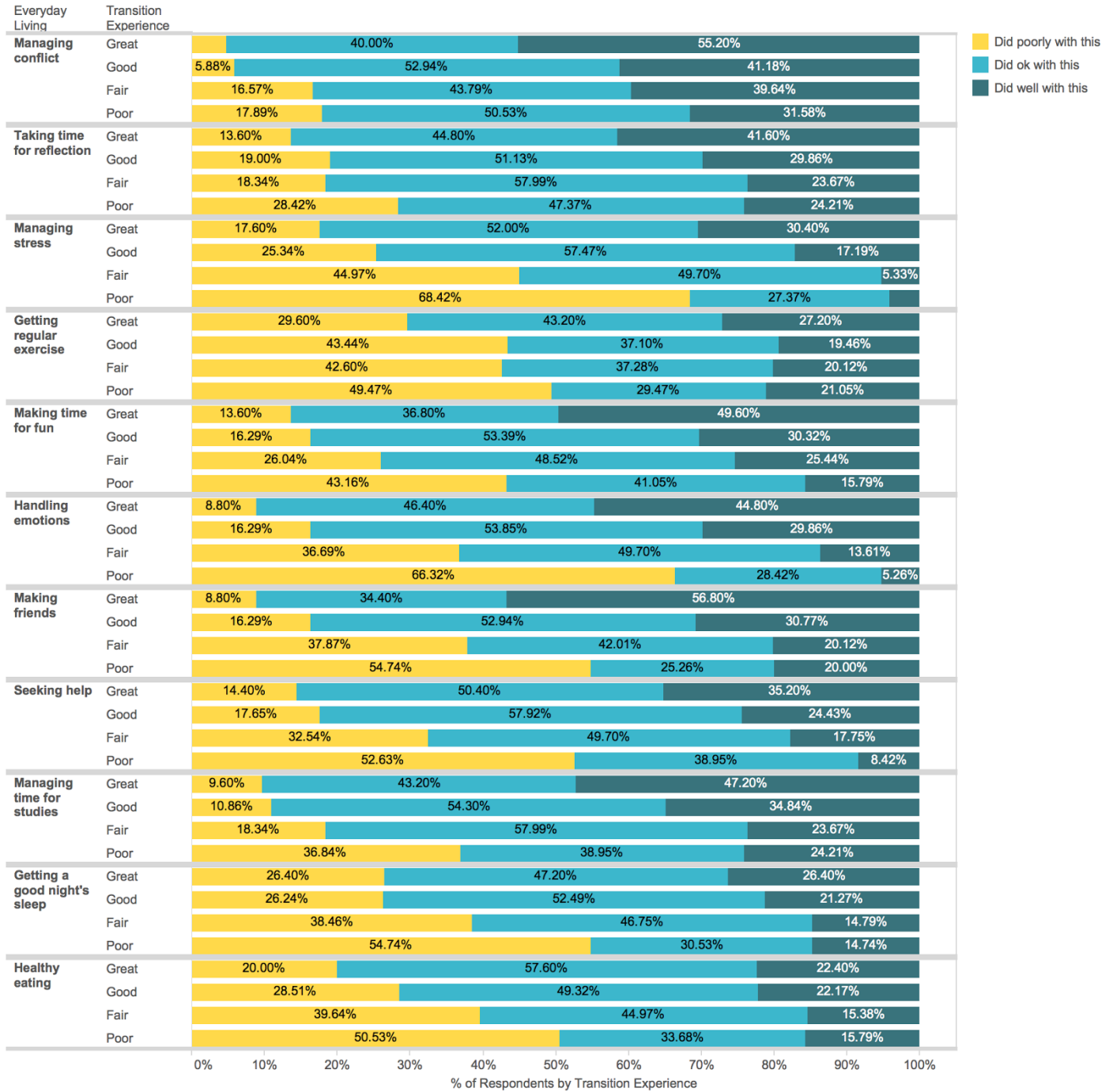
- **less likely to have met with a librarian** ($p=.055$)
- **less likely to have located a study space** ($p=.057$)
- **less likely to have visited an Odegaard writing tutor** ($p=.016$)
- **less likely to have participated in an informal study group** ($p=.031$)



Q12. Managing everyday living can often be a challenge for first year students. Looking back, how would you rate your experience with the following during your first year?

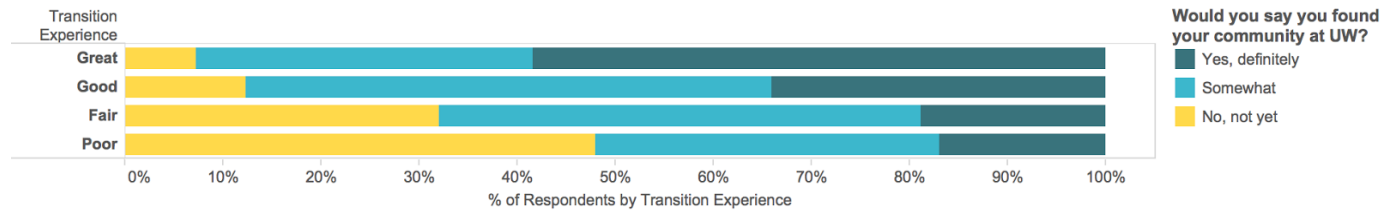
(Options: Did poorly with this; Did ok with this; Did good with this; Did great with this)

- **Students who reported a poor transition experience were much more likely to rate themselves at having done poorly at all aspects of everyday life, except managing money**
 - Managing interpersonal conflicts ($p<.001$)
 - Taking time for personal reflection ($p=.006$)
 - Managing stress and anxiety ($p<.001$)
 - Making time for play and fun ($p<.001$)
 - Handling emotions ($p<.001$)
 - Making friends ($p<.001$)
 - Seeking help from others when needed ($p<.001$)
 - Managing time for studies ($p<.001$)
 - Getting a good night's sleep ($p<.001$)
 - Following healthy eating habits ($p<.001$)
- Differences in regard to getting exercise were only marginally significant ($p=.082$)



Q13. Overall, would you say you “found your community” at the UW?

- **Poor transitioners were less likely to have “found their community”** when compared to their counterparts ($p < .001$)



Q15 Which of the following were true for you during your first year at the UW? Select all that apply. In comparison to students with other transition experiences, **poor transitioners were**

- **Less likely to know an instructor/staff member well** ($p = .003$)
- **More likely to feel overwhelmed at UW** ($p < .001$)
- **Less likely to have made a good friend** ($p = .001$)
- **More likely to have trouble focusing** ($p = .001$)
- **More likely to feel they didn’t have anyone they trusted for help** ($p < .001$)
- **Less likely to discover new interests** ($p = .054$)

Of note: there were no significant differences among students who reported different transition experiences for the statement, “I knew about most of the resources the UW offered students, even if I didn’t use them.”

Demographics:

- **International students were more likely to have a positive transition experience** ($p = .031$)
- **First generation students were less likely to have a positive transition** ($p = .079$)

#3: Write-In Responses (Thrive group only)

Students who reported feeling settled at the UW at the time of the survey (“I am just now feeling settled”) or any time prior were given the question, “Was there a specific event or situation that helped you to feel settled in at the UW?” Of the 452 responses, the **overwhelming majority related to making friends and/or participating in some type of community** where students had the opportunity to get to know others well: residence halls, Greek system, clubs, FIGs, Early Fall Start, etc.

Finally clicking with my roommate and my neighbors (mid-winter quarter) gave me a much-needed support system on campus.

Awesome RAs and great roommates. Most were also first years so we embarked on the experience together.

I met one friend at my work who helped me find a network of friends, I feel like it was just luck that helped me feel part of a community.

The next most frequent comment was about **adjusting to UW**:

With the start of classes you begin to settle into a rhythm, both academically and socially.

For me, at least, it was just a matter of having enough time to feel truly secure and in a routine. Having developed a level of comfort with new friends, and feeling less nervous about finding my way around, my abilities to be successful in class, and my sense of belonging/worth.

Those reporting not feeling settled were given the question, “Was/is there something lacking at UW that prevented you from feeling settled?” While there were far fewer responses to this question (32), the most frequent comments described a **sense of isolation and an academic culture that felt overly competitive**.

I commute which means that finding a core group of people was hard. I never had the time since right after class I had a 1-2 hour commute home. And even if I stayed at school I only had a very short amount of time there.

UW was just too big for me, and because I wasn't allowed into my major right away I couldn't join any of those groups.

There is still a very toxic environment here....You got majors, all of them, that make everything about your GPA.

As a follow-up question to Question 2, “Did you feel you had access to resources—people, places, or information—that could help when needed?” students were asked to explain their answer by describing a specific need and who or what helped or didn’t help with this need. In analyzing the 405 responses to this question, we found that the **most frequently cited were places (e.g. CLUE, Math Study Center) that helped students understand course material and improve their study skills, and people (e.g., advisers, FIG leaders) who helped students with academic advice**, such as advice about what courses to take or how to apply for a major.

The math, physics, and chemistry study centers have been the main reasons why I've passe[d] those courses. The advisors are there to answer questions about classes I should take, and the website is there to answer questions I have about anything else.

While applying to my major, my former FIG leader (who was in my hopeful major) was very helpful in helping me shape my application and telling me about her experience in the major.

Academic and career counselors are helpful with little details, but less so on the big picture.

Students who described a need that was not fulfilled often spoke of the same resources, yet described them as being unhelpful for different reasons:

My general advisor helped me a little bit, but the school is so overwhelming at first because of the sheer [sic] size of it and the student population—which made me need to have a person (professor, advisor, mentor, etc.) to help me cope with that.

Because the school is so large and a bit overextended when it comes to resources, I always had trouble making appointments to see general advisors or seeking help in writing, with CLUE, etc. Accessing resources was doable, but not always reasonable given the time spent waiting.

CLUE tutoring helped a lot when I had math trouble, but I must say that it's difficult and intimidating to go in for help in situations any less casual than CLUE, such as office hours ... when you just want to ask why you're getting one specific part of a homework assignment wrong.

Others spoke of **difficulty accessing resources**:

Lots of resources, but difficult to know when/where they were and what they were there for. I often found out about something that could have helped me after I had already found a solution on my own because I didn't know that resource existed.

There are plenty of resources on campus. Sometimes I felt overloaded by the amount of information I was given.

Students were also prompted to explain their answers to Question 13, “Overall, would you say you ‘found your community’ at UW?” Among the 369 written responses, we found that **students distinguished between “friends” and “community”**; students who had friends still noted that they had not yet found their community, or felt the need to broaden their community.

I've made friends here and there but still don't feel as if I've found my community within this large school. I think it'll take more time and more effort into finding it.

I have been lost and I'm still waiting to find my "community" and I don't know how to go about that. Since I didn't live in the dorms, I didn't even have roommates to ease the transition.

Although I have a close group of friends around me, the sheer size of UW still makes the campus seem too big and large. Finding a small community seems more difficult than it has been for me in the past as I do not have many interests in common with a lot of the people I meet.

I know what subjects/activities I'm interested in, but I'm often busy with studying/homework and don't always have time for clubs.

Although, now in my second year, I certainly have a number of friends, I don't really feel particularly close to any of them....I still feel like I haven't found my "tribe" here.

And finally, Questions 16 and 17 asked, “What, if anything, was missing for you from your first year experience?” and “How can the UW best support you during your second year?” **Community again appeared as the most frequent theme** among the 605 responses (combined), **followed by a desire for academic advice and other information.**

I was missing the feeling of belonging and was very confused if this is the path I should take in academics.

Community. I was frustrated that I had found so many groups who shared my interests, but seemingly none who shared my values.

Definitely making it easier to go to advising and get comprehensive information on my major and how to make it work for me, given registration restraints, etc.

I felt I could have used more assistance in understanding what classes I needed to take for different majors, as well as how applying for majors worked. I lacked general knowledge about anything administrative.

I wish there was an easier way for me to learn more about clubs. The RSO website does not give a whole lot of information and does not tell us how to join a club.

Tied in third place were comments about **information and a personal barrier to well-being.**

Really just helping to keep me aware of all the opportunities and resources available and helping me understand how I can take advantage of them.

I still don't completely understand how to maintain good grades. I excelled in high school academics and now feel that I may not be good enough for many of my courses.

I had a hard time finding ways to make strong connections with people

I didn't find it easy to communicate when I needed help without coming off as unprepared or foolish.

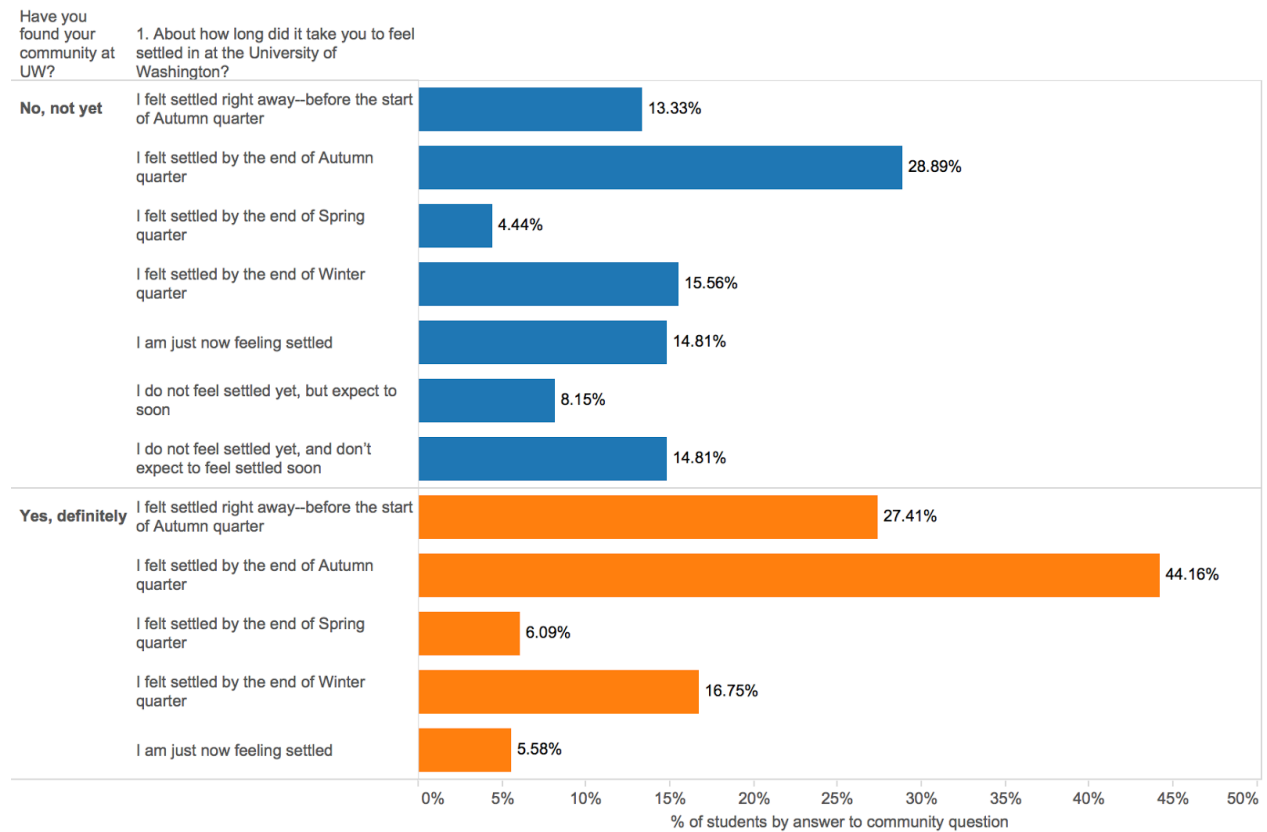
#4: Community (Thrive group only)

Findings in the qualitative data led us to inquire whether students who had or had not found a community differed significantly in their answers to other survey questions. Question 13 asked students, “Overall, would you say you ‘found your community’ at UW?” Of the survey respondents who had exposure to Thrive, 32% reported “Yes, definitely,” 46% “Somewhat,” and 22% reported “No, not yet.” **We compared the survey responses of students who reported “Yes, definitely” (“yes” students) with those who reported “No, not yet” (“no” students).** Students who indicated “Somewhat” were eliminated from the analysis.

We report results from the Thrive group here. **Results indicate that where differences exist in ties to a community, significant differences also exist on many factors related to the goals of Thrive.**

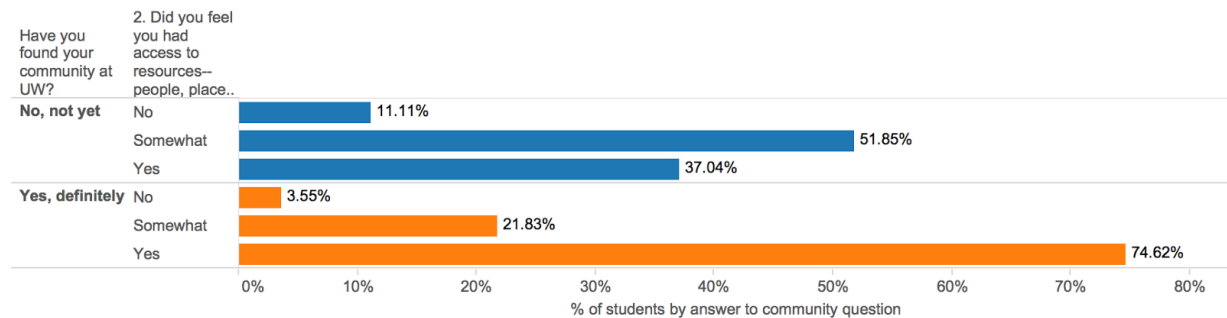
Q1. About how long did it take you to feel settled in at the University of Washington?

- Students who reported that they had not yet found their community also appeared to take longer to settle in at UW. **Nearly a quarter of “no” students (23%) reported that they still did not feel settled by the time of the survey** (three weeks into autumn quarter of their sophomore year). ($p < .001$)
- Students who reported that they’d definitely found their community settled in faster. **All “yes” students reported feeling settled by the time of the survey.**



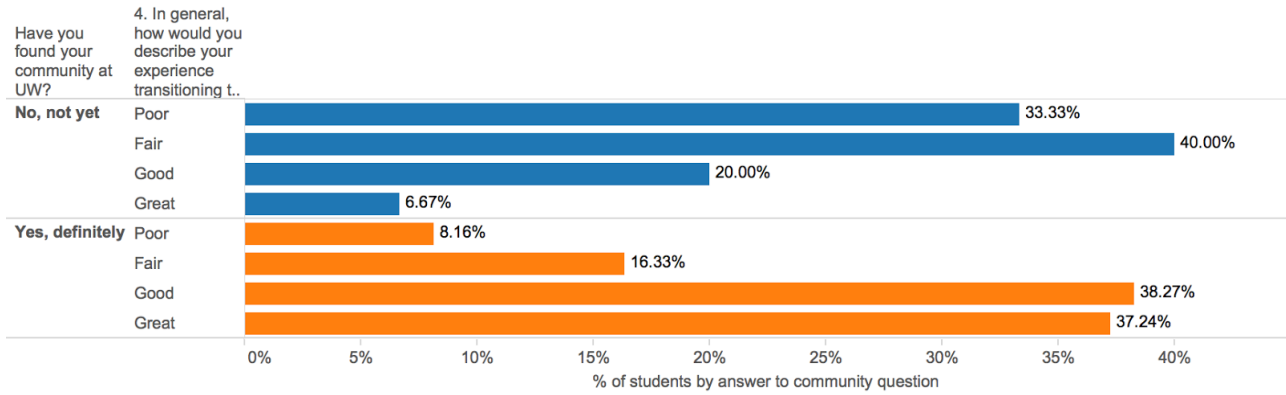
Q2. Did you feel you had access to resources—people, places, or information—that could help when needed?

- **Considerably more “yes” students than “no” students felt that they had access to resources.** ($p < .001$)



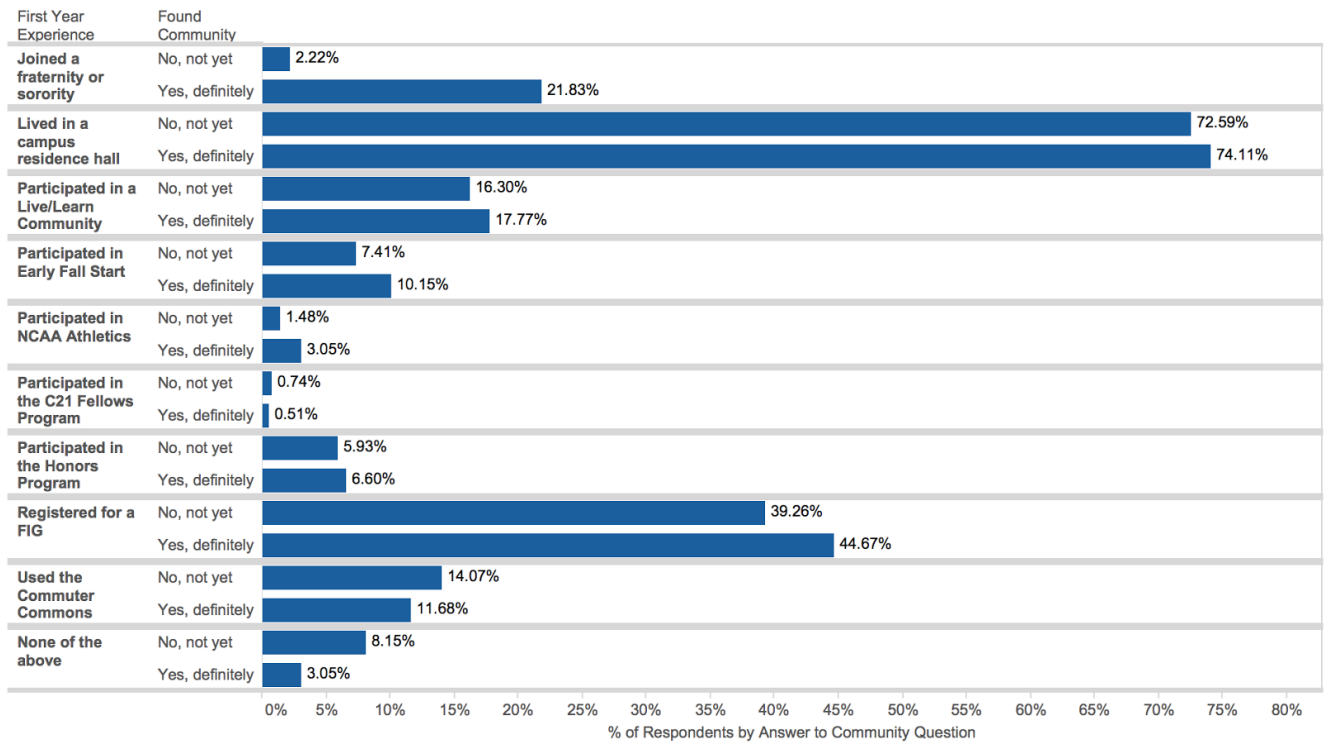
Q4. In general, how would you describe your experience transitioning to the UW last year?

- **The “yes” students’ transition experience was almost a mirror image of the “no” students. (p<.001)**



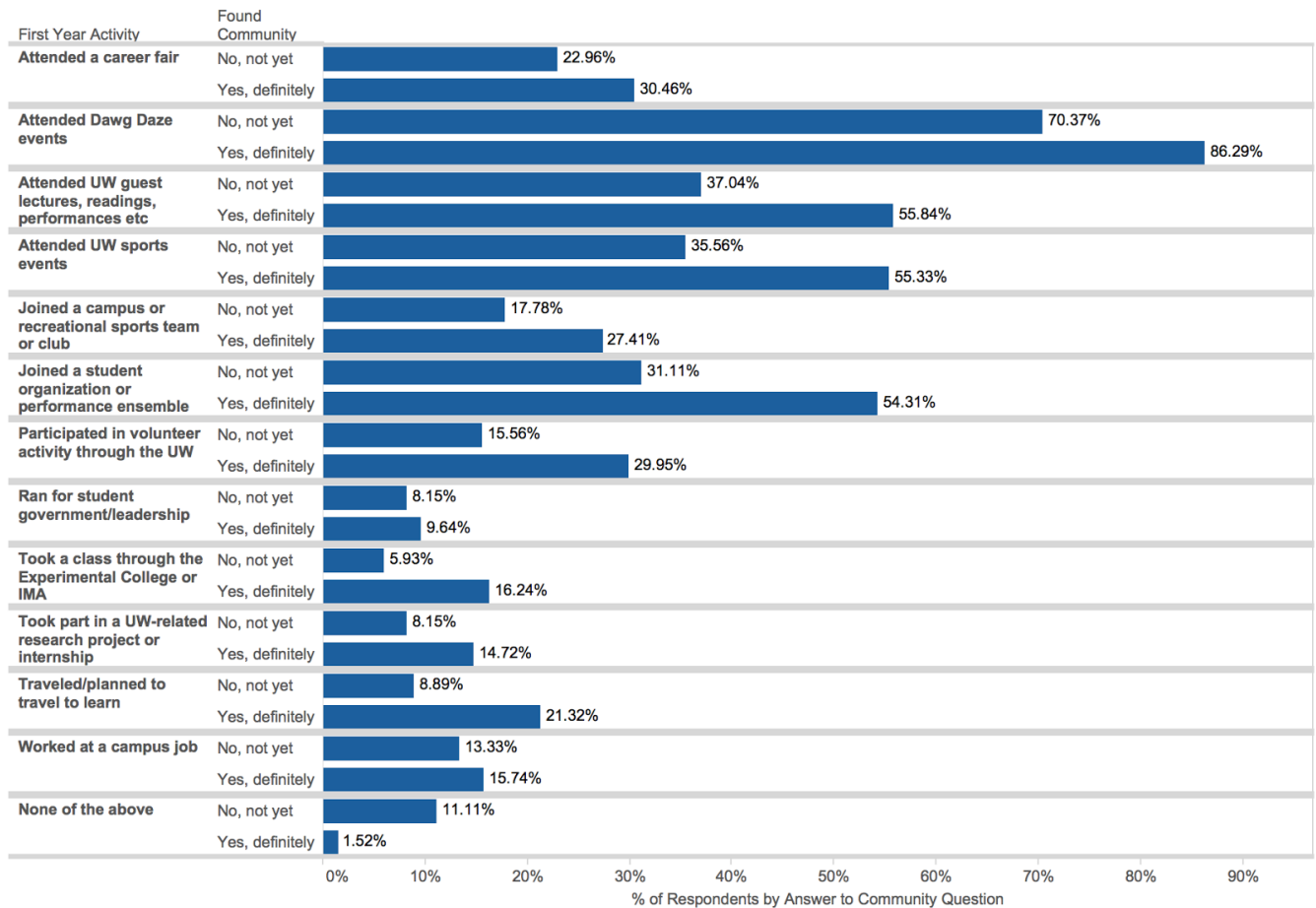
Q5. Which of the following, if any, were part of your first year experience? Select all that apply.

- The Greek system marked the greatest difference between students who reported they had found their community and those who had not: **22% of the “yes” students indicated that they had participated in a fraternity or sorority vs. 2% of the “no” students (p<.001)**
- Also of interest is **“None of the above” (8% of “no” students selected this option vs. 3% of “yes”)** (p=.038)



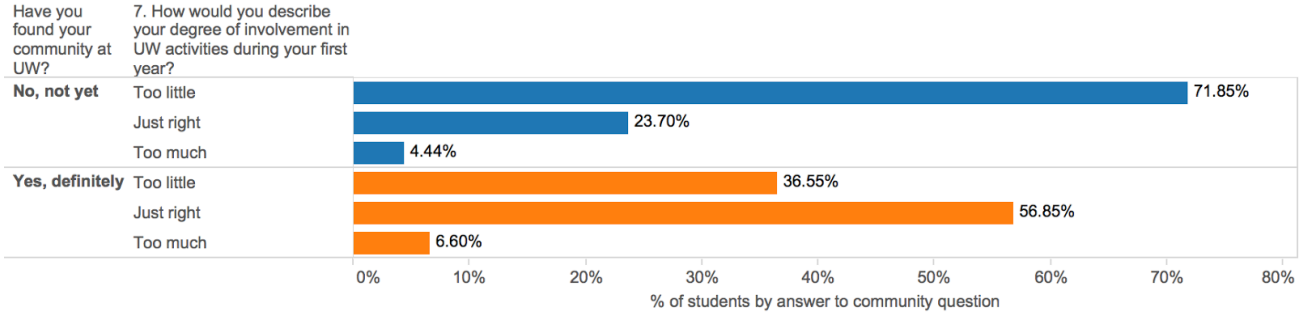
Q6. Which of the following, if any, did you do during your first year? Select all that apply.

- **Participation in almost all activities was considerably higher for “yes” students**
- **“No” students only led for “None of the above”:** 11% of “no” vs. 2% of “yes”
 - Attended Dawg Daze ($p < .001$)
 - Attended guest lectures etc. ($p = .001$)
 - Attended UW sports events ($p < .001$)
 - Joined a rec team ($p = .042$)
 - Joined a student org ($p < .001$)
 - Volunteer activity ($p = .003$)
 - Experimental College/IMA ($p = .005$)
 - Research/internship ($p = .071$)
 - Traveled to learn ($p = .003$)
 - None of the above ($p < .001$)



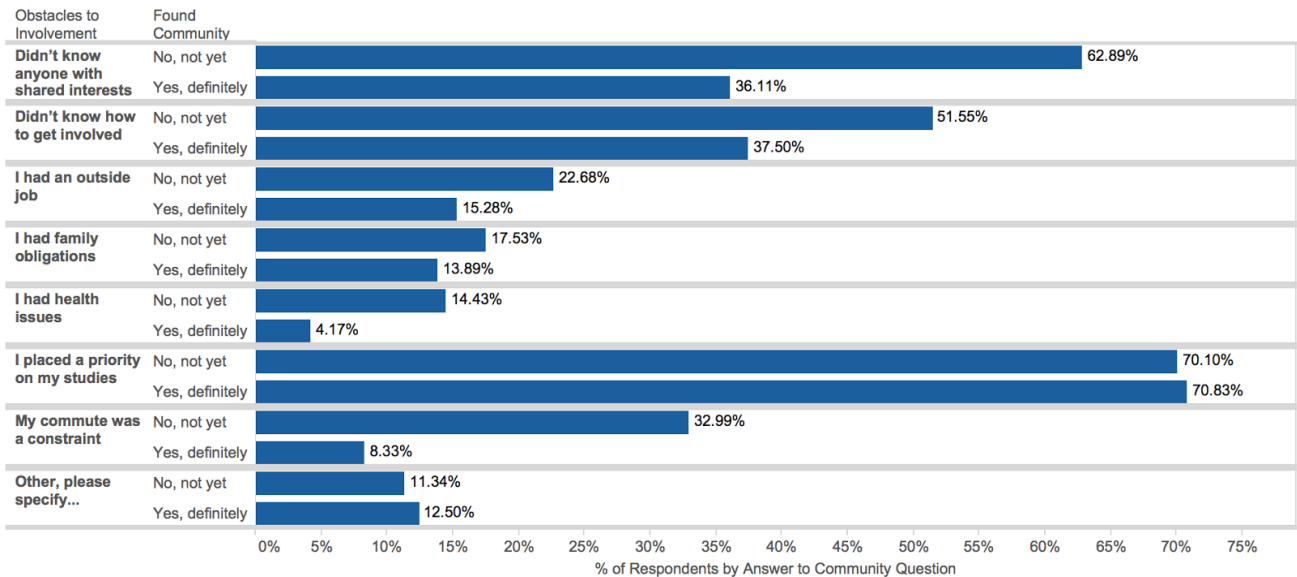
Q7. How would you describe your degree of involvement in UW activities during your first year?

- **A vast majority of “no” students indicated too little involvement**
- **A slim majority of “yes” students said their involvement was “just right” (p=.000)**



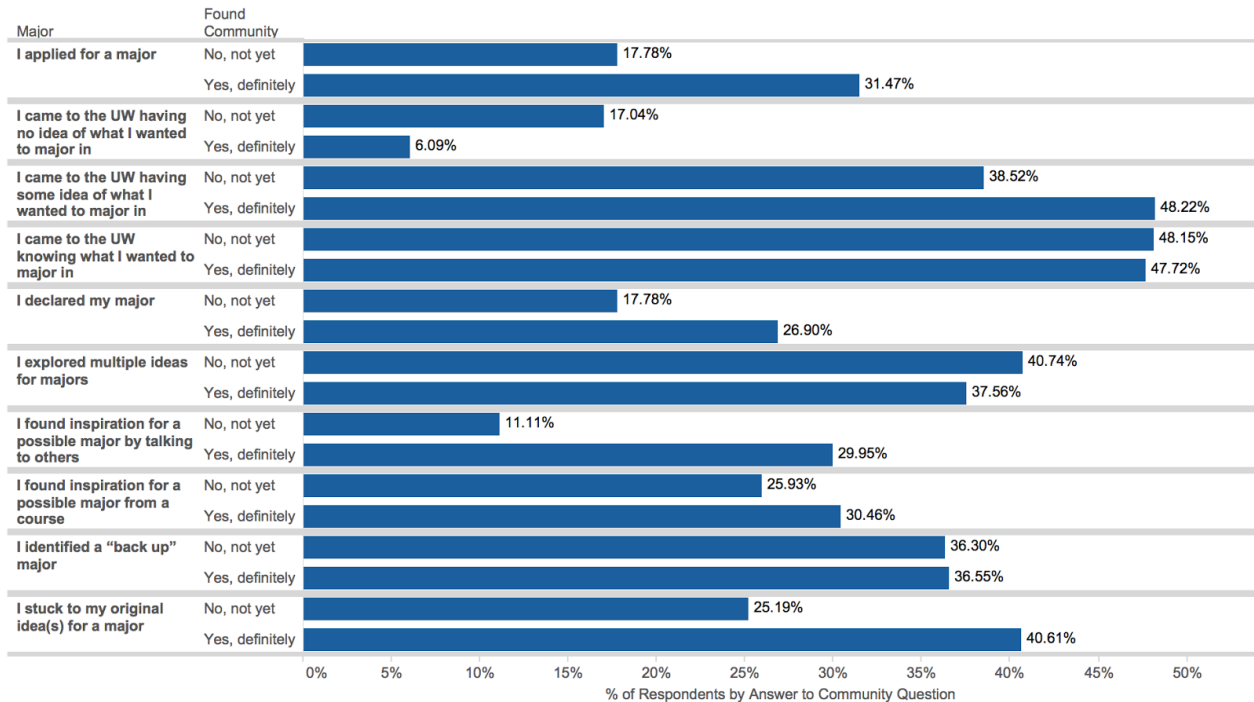
Q7a. Which of the following, if any, were obstacles to getting more involved at UW?

- **More “no” students than “yes” students selected most options**
- **The “no” students differed significantly from the “yes” students in regard to the following obstacles to participation:**
 - Didn’t know anyone with shared interests (p=.001)
 - Didn’t know how (p=.070)
 - Health issues (p=.028)
 - Commute (p<.001)



Q8. Which of the following was true for you during your first year? Select all that apply.

- More “yes” students reported that they had applied to ($p=.005$) and/or declared a major in their first year ($p=.053$), and had stuck to their original idea for a major ($p=.004$).
- In addition, more “yes” students had found inspiration for a major through talking to others ($p<.001$).
- More than twice as many “no” students arrived at UW with no idea for a major ($p=.001$).

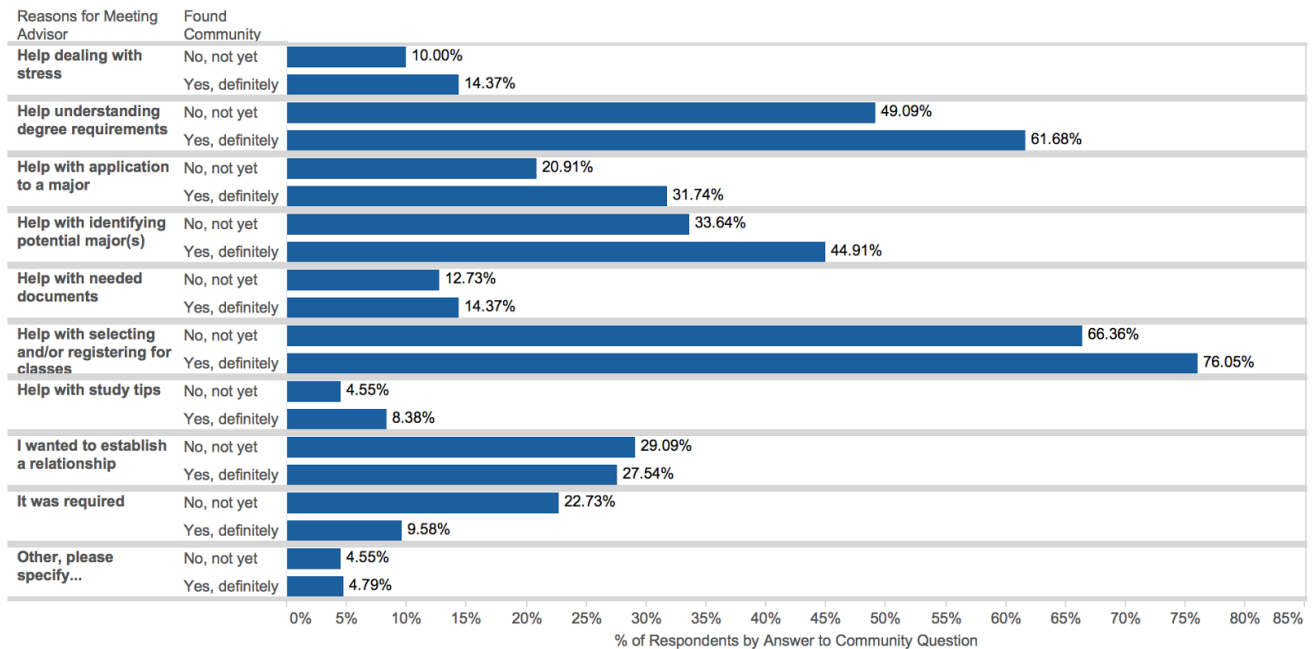


Q9. After orientation, about how many times did you meet in person with an adviser or similar expert (e.g., OMA&D mentor) for academic advice during your first year at UW?

- No significant differences in responses

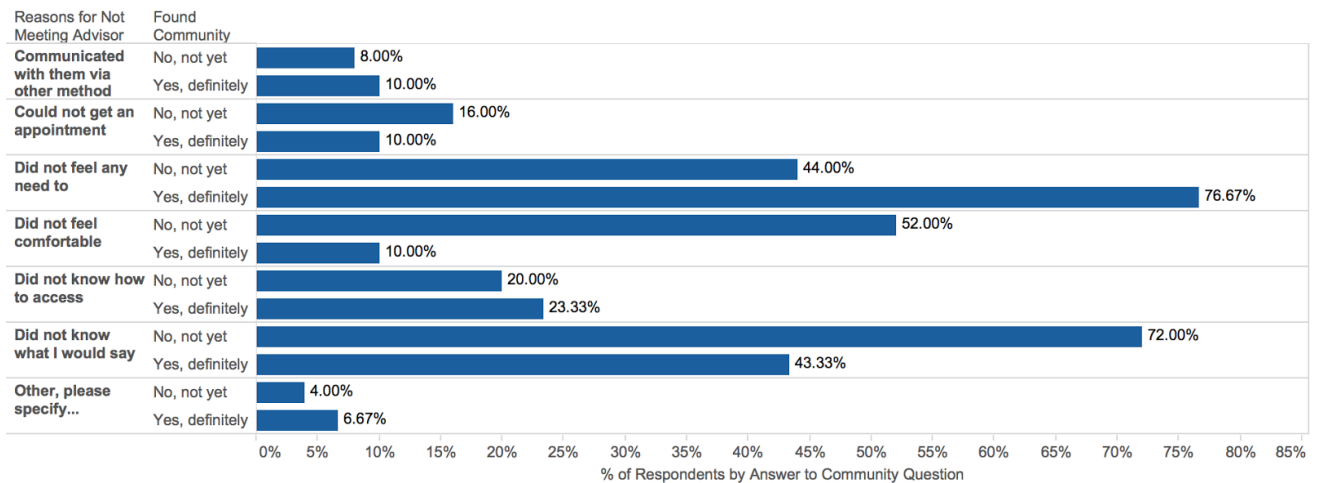
Q9a. For what reason(s) did you meet? Select all that apply.

- Among students who met with an advisor, more “yes” students met with advisor for every reason except “it was required” and “I wanted to establish a relationship”
 - Help understanding degree requirements ($p=.039$)
 - Help with application to major ($p=.048$)
 - Help with identifying potential major ($p=.061$)
 - Help with selecting/registering for classes ($p=.078$)
 - Required ($p=.003$)



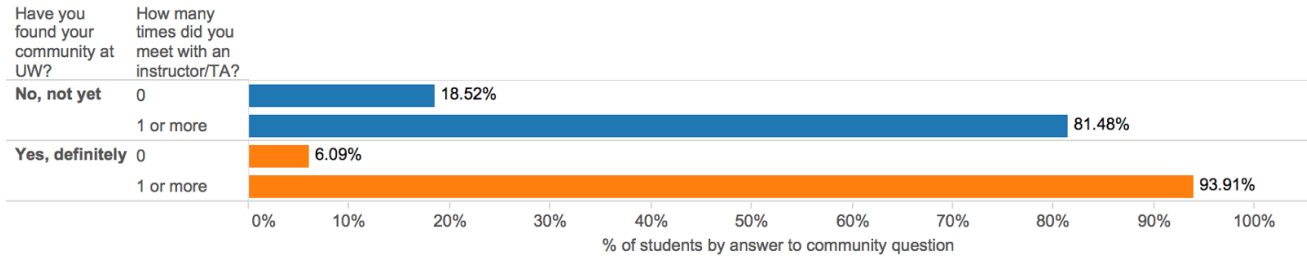
Q9a. What were your reasons for not meeting with an advisor for academic advice? Select all that apply.

- Among students who did not meet with an advisor, the majority of “yes” students indicated that they did not feel they needed to ($p=.013$)
- Many more of the “no” students indicated they did not feel comfortable ($p=.001$) or would not know what to say ($p=.033$)



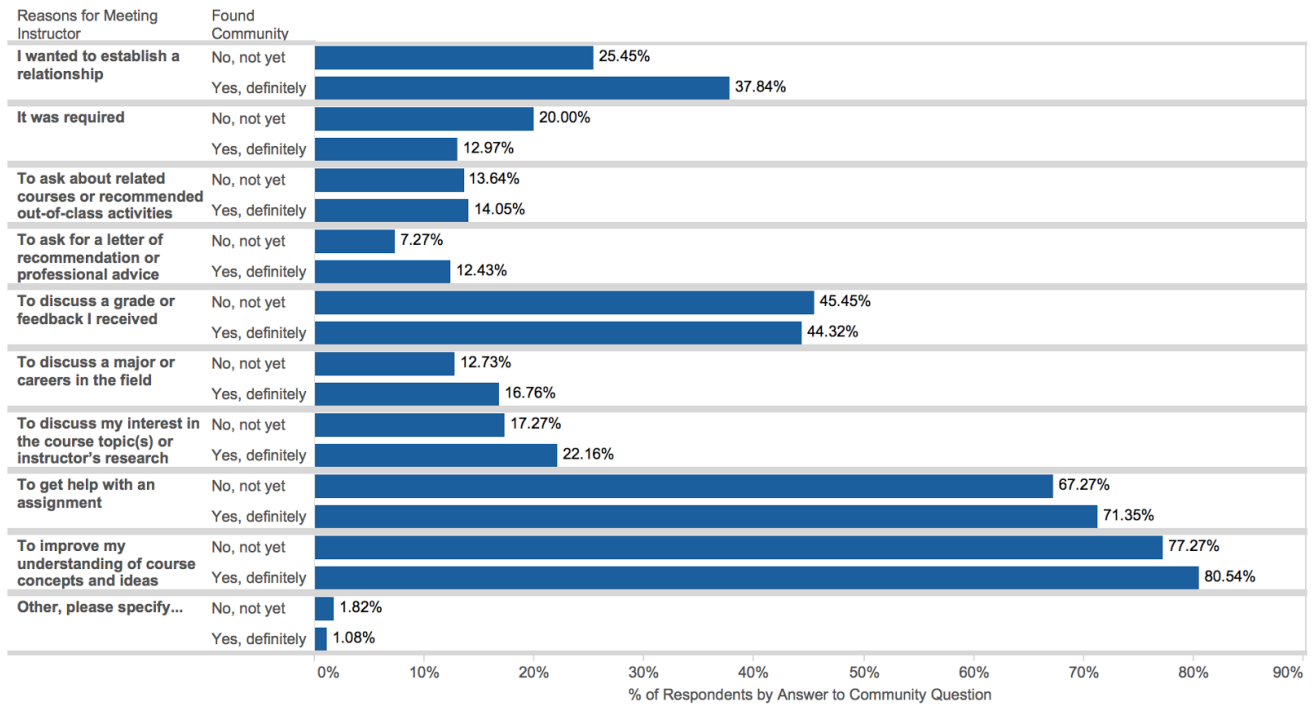
Q10. During your first year at UW, about how many times did you meet in person with an instructor or teaching assistant to discuss your work or course material?

- **Three times as many “no” students than “yes” reported that they had *not* met with an instructor or TA (p<.001)**



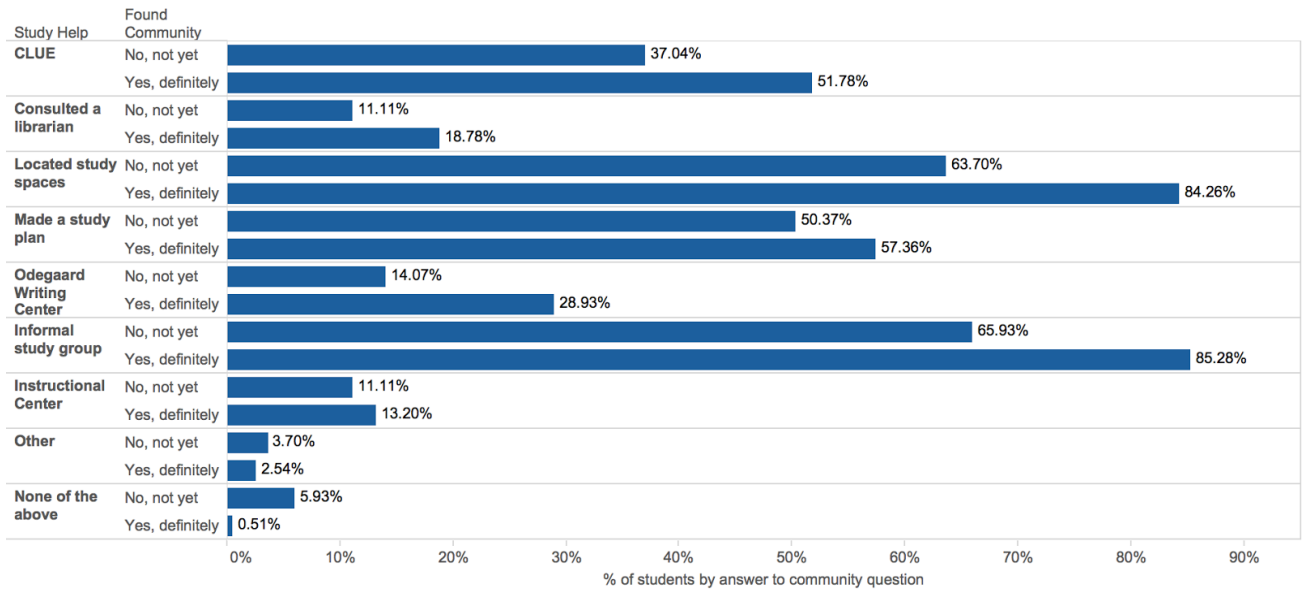
Q10a. For what reason(s) did you meet? Select all that apply.

- **For students who had met with an instructor/TA one or more times, more “yes” students than “no” students indicated that they had done so for most of the reasons given, but only one difference was significant—more “yes” students chose “I wanted to establish a relationship” (p=.029)**



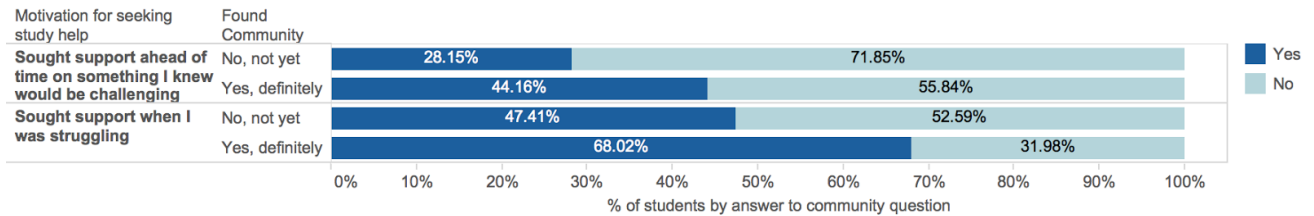
Q11. Study help: Which of the following, if any, did you do during your first year? Select all that apply.

- For each option included, fewer “no” students than “yes” students sought this type of help
 - CLUE (p=.008)
 - Consulted a librarian (p=.059)
 - Located study space (p<.001)
 - Odegaard Writing Center (p=.002)
 - Informal study group (p<.001)



Q11a. What best describes your motivation for seeking this type of help? Select all that apply.

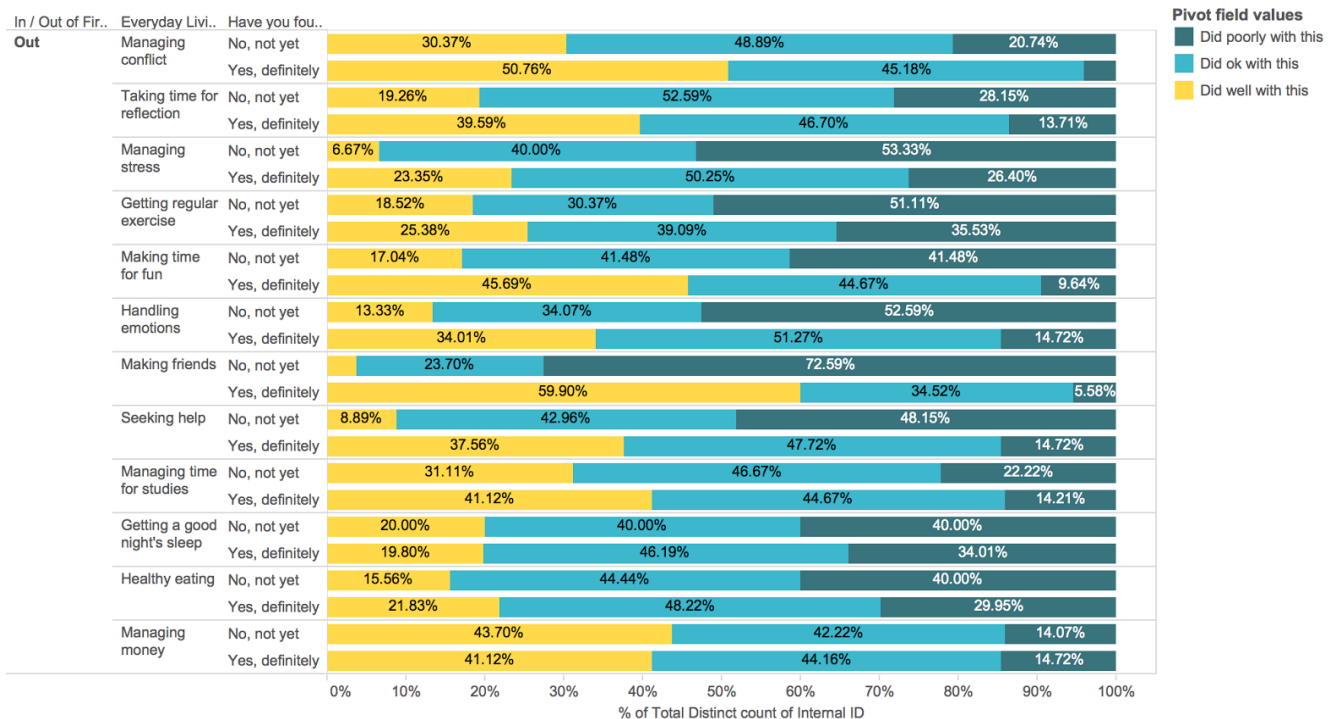
- More “yes” students than “no” students reported seeking help to get a headstart on challenging material (p=.012) as well as to get support when they were struggling (p=.002)



Q12. Managing everyday living can often be a challenge for first year students. Looking back, how would you rate your experience with the following during your first year?

(Options: Did poorly with this; Did ok with this; Did good with this; Did great with this)

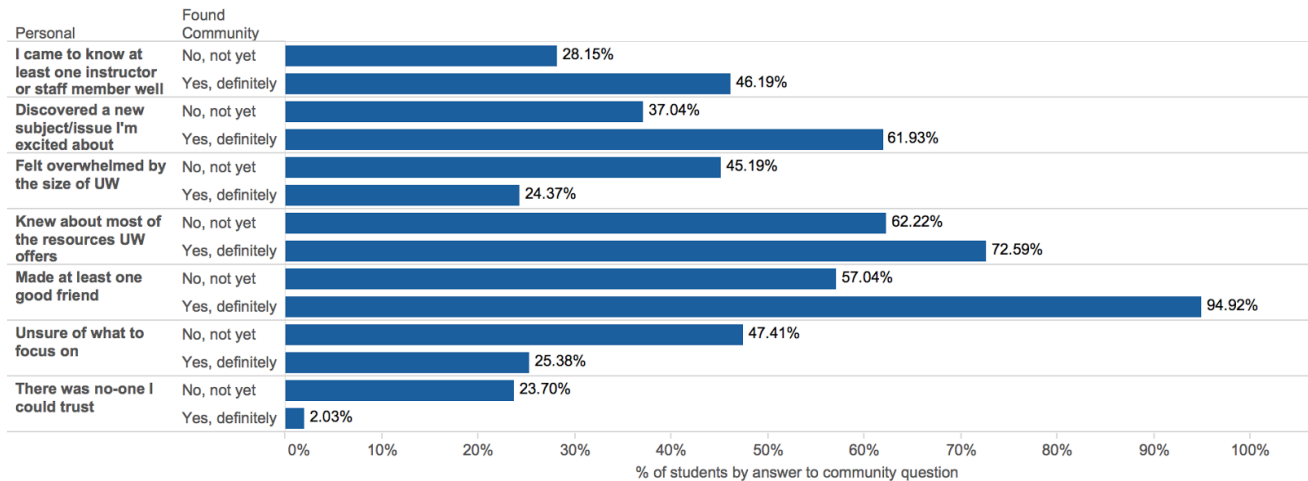
- **For all but one activity, many more “no” students than “yes” students indicated that they’d done poorly**
 - Managing conflict (p<.001)
 - Taking time for reflection (p<.001)
 - Managing stress (p<.001)
 - Getting regular exercise (p<.001)
 - Making time for fun (p<.001)
 - Handling emotions (p<.001)
 - Making friends (p<.001)
 - Seeking help (p<.001)
 - Managing time for studies (p=.075)
- **The difference is especially large for “making friends”**



Q15 Which of the following were true for you during your first year at the UW? Select all that apply.

- **More “no” students indicated that the negative statements were true for them**
 - I felt overwhelmed by the size of the campus and community. (p<.001)
 - I was often unsure of what to focus on and when. (p<.001)
 - There was no one I felt I could trust for help or advice. (p<.001)

- More “yes” students indicated that the positive statements were true for them
 - I came to know at least one instructor or staff member well. (p=.001)
 - I discovered a new subject or issue I’m excited to explore more. (p<.001)
 - I knew about most of the resources the UW offered, even if I didn’t use them. (p=.046)
 - I made at least one good friend. (p<.001)



Discussion

Unfortunately, **it is not possible to know the degree to which respondents to the sophomore survey read the Thrive messages in MyUW or had additional exposure to message topics through FIG leaders and/or RAs.** When we first created the sophomore survey, we assumed that most students responding would have read the Thrive messages and that a good portion would have had some supplemental exposure to the messages through FIG leaders and/or RAs. Because of this, we did not include a question on the sophomore survey that asked specifically about message readership. However, from the Thrive Messages in MyUW survey, we found that just over half (55%) of students responding (1078 total) reported that they had read almost all, some, or briefly skimmed the Thrive messages in MyUW; 45% of respondents reported that they had not read or had not noticed the messages in MyUW.

With these results, **the effect of the Thrive Initiative on students’ experience of their first year may be too subtle to pick up in our first sophomore survey.** Any conclusions drawn from the current results are done so with this caveat in mind.

One possible conclusion from the analysis comparing Baseline and Thrive survey responses is that **students exposed to Thrive may have been better informed than students who did not have this resource;** Thrive respondents knew more about how to get involved in UW activities, how to access an adviser, and were more likely to participate in a study group or student organization, and to agree with the statement, “I knew about most of the resources UW offered students, even if I didn’t use them.” However, **this greater knowledge did not appear to make an impact on students’ reported transition**

experience or on their sense of belonging or community at the UW—part of the aims of the Thrive Initiative. Indeed, analysis of write-in responses suggest that even if they were more informed about resources, students still had anxiety about academic performance, challenges in meeting people and making friends, and difficulty attending to their well-being.

The additional analyses, particularly of the qualitative data and the analysis of students who had or had not found their community, suggest that connection to community has a significant effect on students' experience of their first year. It may also be that **connection to community is closely correlated with students' ability to act on information**. Community members may be additional sources of information about UW resources, and may be able to relay their own experiences accessing these resources (faculty office hours, writing and research center, etc.) and thus make the experience less intimidating. Write-in responses indicated that having community helped students navigate the physical campus as well as academic pathways, and made attending events or participating in study groups, clubs, and other co-curricular opportunities easier.

Conclusions

While results of the comparison of survey responses between baseline students and those who had exposure to Thrive do not provide definitive answers about the effects of the Thrive Initiative as a whole, the **data collected from the sophomore survey provide rich information about how students are doing in regard to setting the foundation of their Husky Experience**.

Results of the survey suggest that **students continue to be in need of the kind of content and messaging at the heart of Thrive First Year**, and that they may also benefit from messaging in the years that follow.

Based on the survey results, recommended revisions to Thrive First Year messaging include the following:

Community

- Let students know that making friends and finding a community is important to feeling settled at UW, and offer strategies for how to do this, including how to stay in touch with classmates quarter to quarter, and what commuters can do to feel connected.
- Also let students know that finding a community may take time, and encourage them not to give up the effort.

Adjustment to UW

- Reassure students that it takes time to adjust to a new setting. Survey respondents reported that once they became more familiar with campus, found a routine, and modified their study habits for the challenges of college courses, they felt more confident in their new environment.

- Acknowledge the size of the campus and potentially overwhelming amount of information and resources; provide guidance to students on ways that they can make the University feel smaller or “right-sized” for their current level of comfort.

Academic life

- Directly address the difficulty and competitive nature of some courses and/or majors and how students can cope with this, including seeking study support and by considering alternate majors or pathways.
- Continue to provide advice to students on when and how to seek help from an adviser, and from what other credible sources they might gather advice on courses, majors, sequencing, etc.
- Provide guidance to students on how to carry a healthy course load that balances more challenging or required courses with courses that are more exploratory or fun for students, or that help them master self-care.
- Continue to provide advice to students on how to establish a relationship with a professor, TA, or other mentor.

Well-being

- Help students make the connection between attending to their well-being and their ability to succeed at their academic goals. Let them know that they can learn self-care skills, and provide specific information on how to build these skills. Repeatedly remind them to attend to their well-being to set the foundation for success.
- Encourage students to find at least one way to become involved at UW beyond the classroom, and have them imagine for themselves what a “just right” amount of involvement might look and feel like, with potential examples.
- Normalize mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression, and continue to support students with links to appropriate resources. Also address typical developmental challenges students are likely to encounter and how can they develop healthy resilience.
- Orient students to the information available through MyUW and other central portals, emphasizing that they can return to these organized sources at any time.

In addition, survey results suggested potential further research about how students can be supported in finding community:

- What it is that fraternities and sororities do that is so successful in helping their members feel a sense of belonging and community? Are there aspects of this that can be replicated elsewhere?
- How do students distinguish between “friends” and “community”? And what does this mean for messaging and programming?

While the issues surfaced in the results of the sophomore survey may come as no surprise to undergraduate advisers and others working with first year students, the survey itself provides one way to *measure improvement* in regard to these issues. We hope for an increased readership of the Thrive messages in MyUW for Year 2 of the Initiative, and with this, a more accurate understanding of the effects of the Initiative on students’ first year experience.

Appendix

UW First Year Student Experience

Transitioning to university life can have its challenges. **Whether your first year was good or bad, we want to know about it.** This survey will ask you questions about your experience, what types of activities you participated in and what resources you made use of during your first year.

Your responses are anonymous. Thank you for helping us improve the first year experience.

I. Transition to UW

1. About how long did it take you to feel settled in at the University of Washington?

I felt settled right away--before the start of Autumn quarter

I felt settled by the end of Autumn quarter

I felt settled by the end of Winter quarter

I felt settled by the end of Spring quarter

I am just now feeling settled

I do not feel settled yet, but expect to soon

I do not feel settled yet, and don't expect to feel settled soon

[If checked any of options 1-5 above] 1a. Was there a specific event or situation that helped you to feel settled in at the UW? Please explain.

[If checked any of options 6-8 above] 1a. Was/is there something lacking at the UW that prevented you from feeling settled? Please explain.

2. Did you feel you had access to resources--people, places, or information--that could help when needed?

Yes

No

Somewhat

3. Please explain by telling us about a specific need and who or what helped or didn't help in relation to this need.

4. In general, how would you describe your experience transitioning to the UW last year?

Poor--the transition was rough and very challenging for me

Fair

Good

Great--the transition was smooth and very easy for me

II. UW Community

5. Which of the following, if any, were part of your first year experience? Select all that apply.

- Lived in a campus residence hall
- Participated in a Live/Learn Community
- Used the Commuter Commons
- Joined a fraternity or sorority
- Registered for a FIG
- Participated in Early Fall Start
- Participated in NCAA Athletics
- Participated in the Honors Program
- Participated in the C21 Fellows Program
- None of the above

6. Which of the following, if any, did you do during your first year? Select all that apply.

- Attended Dawg Daze events
- Worked at a campus job
- Joined a student organization or performance ensemble
- Joined a campus or recreational sports team or club
- Attended UW guest lectures, readings, performances, or workshops
- Attended UW sports events
- Took a class through the Experimental College or IMA
- Ran for student government or sought other student leadership experience
- Participated in volunteer activity through the UW
- Took part in a UW-related research project or internship
- Attended a career fair
- Traveled/planned to travel to another part of the state, country, or world to learn
- Other:
- None of the above

7. How would you describe your degree of involvement in UW activities during your first year?

- Too much--I got over-involved
- Too little--I would have liked to get more involved
- Just right

[If selected option 2 above] 7a. Which of the following, if any, were obstacles to getting more involved at the UW?

- I placed a priority on my studies
- I had an outside job
- My commute was a constraint
- I had family obligations
- I had health issues
- Didn't know how to get involved
- Didn't know anyone with shared interests
- Other:

III. Academics

8. Which of the following was true for you during your first year? Select all that apply.

- I came to the UW knowing what I wanted to major in
- I came to the UW having some idea of what I wanted to major in
- I came to the UW having no idea of what I wanted to major in
- I explored multiple ideas for majors
- I stuck to my original idea(s) for a major
- I identified a “back up” major
- I found inspiration for a possible major from a course or other campus event
- I found inspiration for a possible major by talking to others
- I applied for a major
- I declared my major

9. After orientation, about how many times did you meet in person with an adviser or similar expert (e.g., OMA&D mentor) for academic advice during your first year at UW?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3 or more

[if >1] 9a. For what reason(s) did you meet? Select all that apply.

- Help with selecting and/or registering for classes
- Help with identifying potential major(s)
- Help understanding degree requirements
- Help with application to a major
- Help with study tips
- Help dealing with stress
- Help with needed documents
- It was required
- I wanted to establish a relationship
- Other:

[if =0] 9a. What were your reasons for not meeting with an adviser or similar expert for academic advice? Select all that apply.

- Did not know how to access an adviser
- Did not feel any need to
- Did not feel comfortable doing so
- Did not know what I would say
- Could not get an appointment when I needed it
- Communicated with them via email or another method
- Other:

10. During your first year at UW, about how many times did you meet in person with an instructor or teaching assistant to discuss your work or course material?

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7 or more

[if >1] 10a. For what reason(s) did you meet? Select all that apply.

- To improve my understanding of course concepts and ideas
- To get help with an assignment
- To discuss a grade or feedback I received
- To discuss my interest in the course topic(s) or instructor's research
- To ask about related courses or recommended out-of-class activities
- To discuss a major or careers in the field
- To ask for a letter of recommendation or professional advice
- It was required
- I wanted to establish a relationship
- Other:

[if =0] 10a. What were your reasons for not meeting with an instructor or TA to discuss your work or course material? Select all that apply.

- Did not know how to access the instructor or TA
- Did not feel any need to
- Did not feel comfortable doing so
- Did not know what I would say
- Hard to find a common time to meet/Office hours were not convenient
- Communicated with them via email or another method
- Other:

11. Study help: Which of the following, if any, did you do during your first year? Select all that apply.

- Attended a CLUE study session or sought help with writing through CLUE
- Participated in an informal study group with classmates or friends
- Consulted a librarian for help with research or with locating information
- Met with a tutor at the Odegaard Writing and Research Center
- Received tutoring or study help at the Instructional Center
- Located one or more study spaces where I could work effectively
- Made a study plan or schedule to stay on top of material
- Other:
- None of the above

[if selected any of options 1-5 above] 11a. What best describes your motivation for seeking this type of help? Select all that apply.

- Sought support ahead of time with something I knew would be challenging
- Sought support when I was struggling
- Sought support after receiving a poor grade or feedback
- Wanted to maximize my chances for success

It was required by the instructor
I'd heard it was a good idea
Other:

IV. Well-being

12. Managing everyday living can often be a challenge for first year students. Looking back, how would you rate your experience with the following during your first year?

Matrix ratings:

Did poorly with this

Did ok with this

Did good with this

Did great with this

Managing time for studies

Getting a good night's sleep

Following healthy eating habits

Managing stress and anxiety

Managing money (e.g. stayed within a budget)

Getting regular exercise

Making time for play and fun

Handling emotions (loneliness, anger, etc.)

Making friends

Seeking help from others when needed

Managing interpersonal conflicts (e.g., roommates, family members)

Taking time for personal reflection

13. Overall, would you say you "found your community" at the UW?

Yes, definitely

Somewhat

No, not yet

14. Please explain your answer.

15. Which of the following were true for you during your first year at the UW? Select all that apply.

I made at least one good friend.

There was no one I felt I could trust for help or advice.

I came to know at least one instructor or staff member well.

I was often unsure of what to focus on and when.

I knew about most of the resources the UW offered students, even if I didn't use them.

I felt overwhelmed by the size of the campus and community.

I discovered a new subject or issue I'm excited to explore more.

16. What, if anything, was missing for you from your first year experience?

17. How can the UW best support you during your second year?

V. About you

18. Your age:

- 18 years or younger
- 19 years
- 20 years
- 21 years or older

19. Are you the first person (in what you would consider) your immediate family to attend college?

- No
- Unsure
- Yes

20. International status

- I am an international student (J1 or F1 student visa)
- I am not an international student (U.S. citizen or permanent resident)
- Other citizenship status

21. Gender identity

- Female
- Male
- Trans
- Other:
- I choose not to respond

22. Racial/ethnic identity Select all that apply:

- Asian
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latin American
- Middle Eastern/Arab
- Native American/Alaska Native
- Pacific Islander/Hawaii Native
- White/Caucasian
- Other:
- I choose not to respond

23. What broad category or categories best describe your academic interest(s)? Select all that apply.

- Arts & Sciences – Arts
- Arts & Sciences – Humanities
- Arts & Sciences – Natural Sciences
- Arts & Sciences – Social Sciences
- Built Environments

Business
Dentistry
Education
Engineering
Environment
Information
Law
Medicine
Nursing
Pharmacy
Public Affairs
Public Health
Social Work
Undecided
Other: _____

Thank you for your feedback!

If you would like someone from the Husky Experience Team to contact you directly about your first year experience, please provide your email address, and we will be in touch.