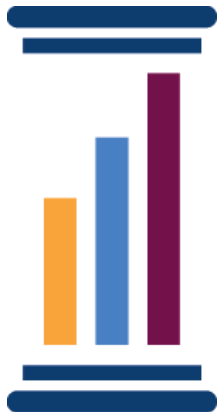


# Living Environments and Student Engagement: Research Findings and Implications



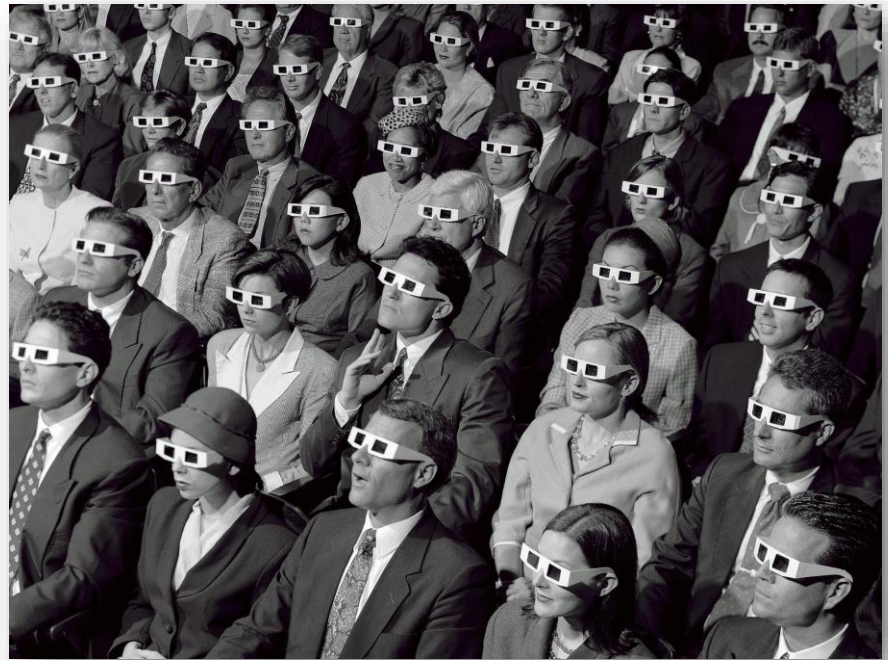
Bob Gonyea  
Sarah Hurtado  
Polly Graham

# Agenda

- Background literature/context for this session
- Brief introduction to NSSE
- Overview of survey instrument, data, and methods
- Presentation of findings
- Large-group discussion about implications
- Q & A

# Who is in the audience?

- Graduate student
- Entry-level professional
- Mid-level professional
- Senior-level professional
- Faculty
- Other?



# To start...



From your perspective, what is it about living on campus that *matters*?

**The residence hall environment is “perhaps the single most consistent within-college determinant of the impact of college.”**

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, p. 611)



# Current Research: Subdued

## When considering living on campus...

### Positive Findings

- Retention
- Graduation

### Conflicting or Inconclusive Findings

- Subject matter competence
- Cognitive outcomes
- Diversity attitudes
- Educational and occupational values
- Academic self-concept

### Negative Findings

- Psychological well-being, especially in the first year

# Potential Reasons for Subdued Findings

- **Impact of hall design**
- **Increasing engagement of commuters**
- **Students increased use of social media and technology**

**"Living on campus probably used to be a more immersive experience [1970s – 1980s], with students within a residence hall communicating frequently with one another and going home somewhat rarely"**

Mayhew et al., 2016, p. 545

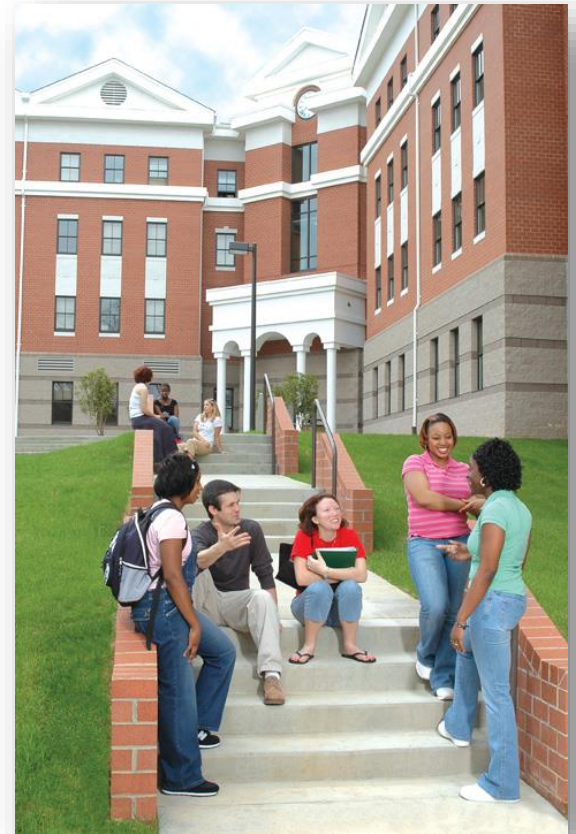
# Limitations of Previous Research

## Extant research

- General distinctions (on/off campus; commuters/residents)
- Particular programs (living-learning community, first-year seminar)
- Specific residence hall types (first-year students only)

## Lacks layered distinctions

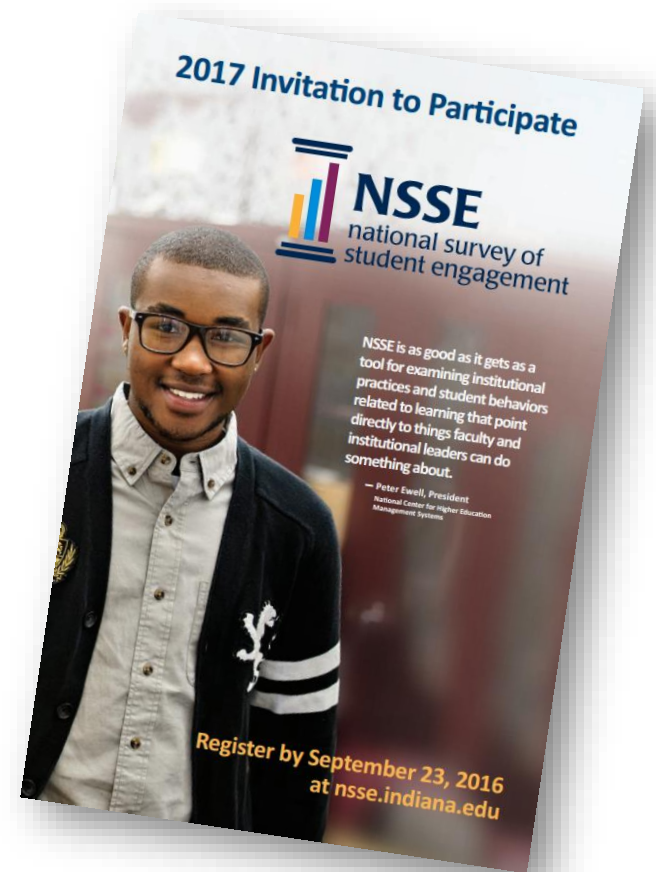
- Proximity to campus
- Roommates, housemates, single
- Programs available
- Amenities available
- Staff and personnel available





# National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

- Large-scale, multi-institutional survey administered annually to first-year and senior baccalaureate seeking students
- Asks students questions about their engagement in educationally purposeful in-class and out-of-class activities
- Focus on diagnostic & actionable information
- 10 Engagement Indicators and 6 High-Impact Practices



# Engagement Indicators

## *Themes*

## *Engagement Indicators*

**Academic Challenge**

**Higher-Order Learning**

**Reflective & Integrative Learning**

**Learning Strategies**

**Quantitative Reasoning**

**Learning with Peers**

**Collaborative Learning**

**Discussions with Diverse Others**

**Student-Faculty Interaction**

**Experiences with Faculty**

**Effective Teaching Practices**

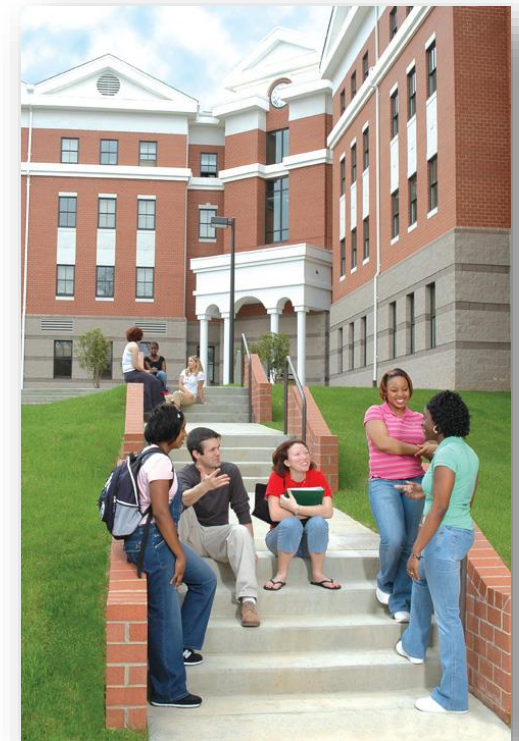
**Campus Environment**

**Quality of Interactions**

**Supportive Environment**

# Perceived Gains Scale

- **Working effectively with others**
- **Developing or clarifying a personal code of values or ethics**
- **Understanding people of other backgrounds (economic, racial/ethnic, political, religious, nationality, etc.)**
- **Solving complex real world problems**
- **Being an informed and active citizen**



# Residence Variable

**Which of the following best describes where you are living while attending college?**



- **Dormitory or other campus housing (not fraternity or sorority house)**
- **Residence (house, apartment, etc.) within walking distance to the institution**
- **Residence (house, apartment, etc.) farther than walking distance to the institution**

# Findings from Previous Study

## 576 NSSE institutions from 2013-2016

- Excluded mainly residential and mainly commuter institutions

### Focused on:

- Collaborative Learning
- Discussions with Diverse Others
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Quality of Interactions
- Supportive Environment
- Perceived co-curricular gains



# Findings from Previous Study

	On-Campus vs. Walking Distance	On-Campus vs Farther than Walk.
<b>Collaborative Learning</b>	+	++
<b>Discussions with Diverse Others</b>	+	+
<b>Student-Faculty Interactions</b>		++
<b>Other Engagement Measures</b>		

# Current Study: Living Environments Item Set

You're almost done! Earlier, we asked where you are living while attending college. We have a few more questions to explore your living situation in greater detail. These questions may take about three minutes to answer. Your continued participation is voluntary.

1. Which of the following best describes where you live while attending college?  
Response options: 1=On campus, 2=Off campus
2. Which of the following best describes the building or facility where you live while attending college?  
Response options: 1=Residence hall or dorm, 2=Fraternity or sorority house, 3=Apartment building, multi-unit complex, or multi-unit house, 4=A single-unit house, 5=Another living arrangement, please specify:
3. Which of the following best describes the people you live with?  
Response options: 1=No one; I live alone, 2=At least one other student at my institution, 3=Friends or family, none of whom are students at this institution, 4=Other, please specify:
4. Some buildings or facilities provide opportunities that are not available to all students. Which of the following, if any, do you have access to as part of your living arrangement? (Select all that apply.)  
Response options: 1=Selected, 0=Not selected
  - a. Contact with faculty outside of class
  - b. Formal or informal study groups
  - c. Formal or volunteer work
  - d. Community service or volunteer work
  - e. Social or recreational activities
  - f. Diversity related activities
  - g. Health and wellness activities
  - h. None of these
5. Which of the following types of staff or support persons, if any, are provided by the building or facility in which you live? (Select all that apply.)  
Response options: 1=Selected, 0=Not selected
  - a. Residential governing body
  - b. Student staff member(s) or leader(s) (resident advisors or assistants, community advisors, etc.)
  - c. Professional staff member(s) (resident director, hall director, community director, etc.)
  - d. Faculty member(s)
  - e. Other staff member(s) (advisors, tutors, etc.)
  - f. Security personnel
  - g. None of these

- Findings from 2013 & 2014 NSSE at 2015 ACUHO-I Annual Conference
- Based on feedback on our session we drafted an item set
- Items were reviewed by a number of survey design experts as well as ACUHO-I staff
- Items were appended to 2016 NSSE for select institutions
- Institutions had the opportunity to decline the items

# Current Study: Living Environments Item Set

## Topics include:

- Type of building or facility where students live
- Type of people with whom the student lives
- Opportunities available through the living place
- Types of staff or support persons provided by the living place
- Living-learning and thematic communities
- Perceptions of safety and community in the living place

You're almost done! Earlier, we asked where you are living while attending college. We have a few more questions to explore your living situation in greater detail. These questions may take about three minutes to answer. Your continued participation is voluntary.

1. Which of the following best describes where you live while attending college?  
Response options: 1=On campus, 2=Off campus
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  - a. Contact with faculty study groups
  - b. Formal or informal study groups
  - c. Community service or volunteer work
  - d. Social or recreational activities
  - e. Diversity related activities
  - f. Health and wellness activities
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  - a. Residential governing body
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  - c. Professional staff member(s) (resident director, hall director, community director, etc.)
  - d. Faculty member(s)
  - e. Other staff member(s) (advisors, tutors, etc.)
  - f. Security personnel
  - g. None of these



# Sample

Carnegie Classification	Number of Institutions
<b>Doctoral Universities</b>	6
<b>Master's Colleges &amp; Universities</b>	9
<b>Baccalaureate Colleges</b>	18
<b>Special Focus Four-Year</b>	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>

# Sample

Size	Number of Institutions
<b>Very Small (&lt; 1,000)</b>	5
<b>Small (1,000 – 2,500)</b>	11
<b>Medium (2,500-4,999)</b>	8
<b>Large (5,000-9,999)</b>	6
<b>Very Large (10,000 or more)</b>	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>

# Sample

		On Campus (N=2,284)	Within Walking (N=379)	Farther Than Walking (N=1,620)
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	86%	83%	84%
	Gay	1%	>1%	2%
	Lesbian	>1%	---	>1%
	Bisexual	5%	4%	2%
	Another sexual orientation	2%	2%	2%
	Questioning or unsure	2%	3%	2%
	Prefer not to respond	4%	7%	8%
Gender	Man	35%	37%	34%
	Woman	63%	60%	65%
	Another gender identity	1%	>1%	>1%
	Prefer not to respond	>1%	2%	>1%

# Sample

	On Campus (N=2,284)	Within Walking (N=379)	Farther Than Walking (N=1,620)
<b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	>1%	>1%	>1%
<b>Asian</b>	5%	5%	5%
<b>Black or African American</b>	15%	13%	5%
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	8%	26%	36%
<b>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</b>	>1%	>1%	>1%
<b>White</b>	60%	40%	42%
<b>Other</b>	>1%	2%	>1%
<b>Multiracial</b>	8%	9%	9%
<b>I prefer not to respond</b>	3%	4%	2%

# Sample

		On Campus (N=2,284)	Within Walking (N=379)	Farther Than Walking (N=1,620)
Age	19 or younger	95%	78%	75%
	20-23	5%	16%	13%
	24-29	>1%	3%	5%
	30-39	---	2%	4%
	40-55	---	2%	3%
	Over 55	---	>1%	>1%
	First-generation	43%	54%	61%
Part-time students	>1%	5%	11%	
International student	4%	12%	4%	

# Methods

## Block hierarchical regression

### First block:

- Sex, race (dummy-coded with White as reference), major (dummy-coded with business as reference), first-generation, transfer, age, grades (dummy-coded with “mostly A’s” as the reference).
- Dummy-codes for each of the institutions with one left out of the model.

### Second block:

- Residence variable (dummy-coded with on-campus as the reference)

### Third block:

- Living environments scales

# Methods

## Factor Analysis: Four scales from the living environments item set:

- **Access to Programs and Developmental Activities** (items 4a – 4f)
- **Perceptions of Safety and Support** (items 8a – 8d)
- **Student and Professional Staff** (items 5b and 5c)
- **Other Staff (Faculty, Advisors, Tutors, etc.)** (items 5d and 5e)



# Methods

## Dependent variables in regression models:

- Collaborative Learning
- Discussions with Diverse Others
- Quality of Interactions
- Supportive Environment
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Perceived Co-curricular Gains





# Summary of Findings

Key: Significance [+], Significance and Coefficient >.1 [++], Significance and Coefficient >.2 [+++]

Outcome Variable	Access to Programs	Perceptions of Safety and Support	Student and Professional Staff	Other Staff (Faculty, Advisors, Tutors, etc.)
Collaborative Learning	+	++		
Discussions with Diverse Others	+	+		
Quality of Interactions	+	+++		
Supportive Environment	+	+++	+	
Student-Faculty Interaction	+	+		+
Perceived Co-Curricular Gains	+	+++		+



**Any initial reactions to the findings?**

**Surprises or disappointments?**

# Findings

**I feel physically safe in the building or facility where I live.**

## **MORE Strongly Agree**

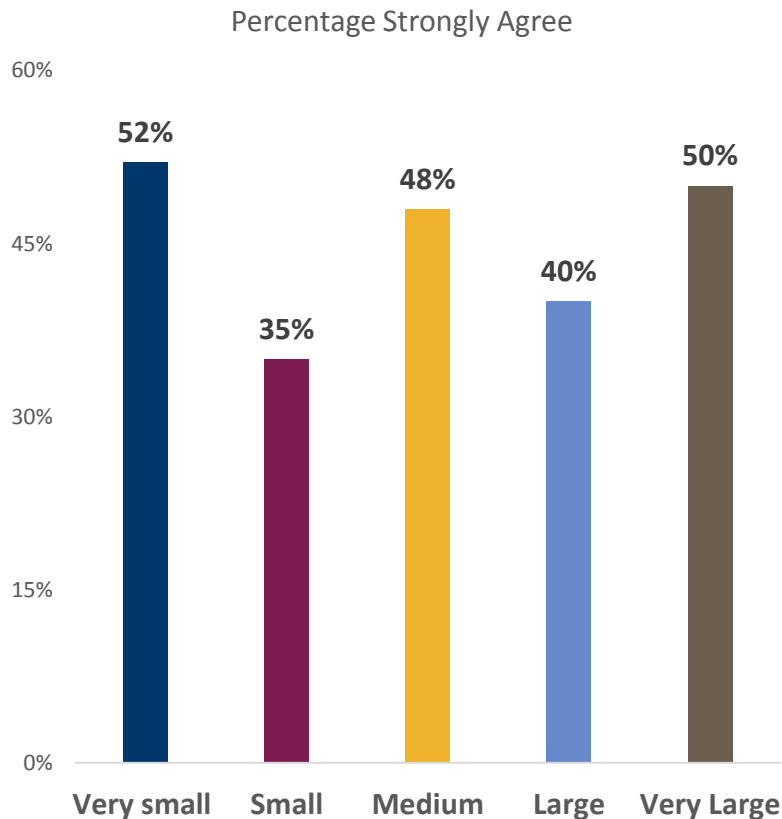
- Not traditional age students
- Asian students
- Students with mostly A's
- Men

## **LESS Strongly Agree**

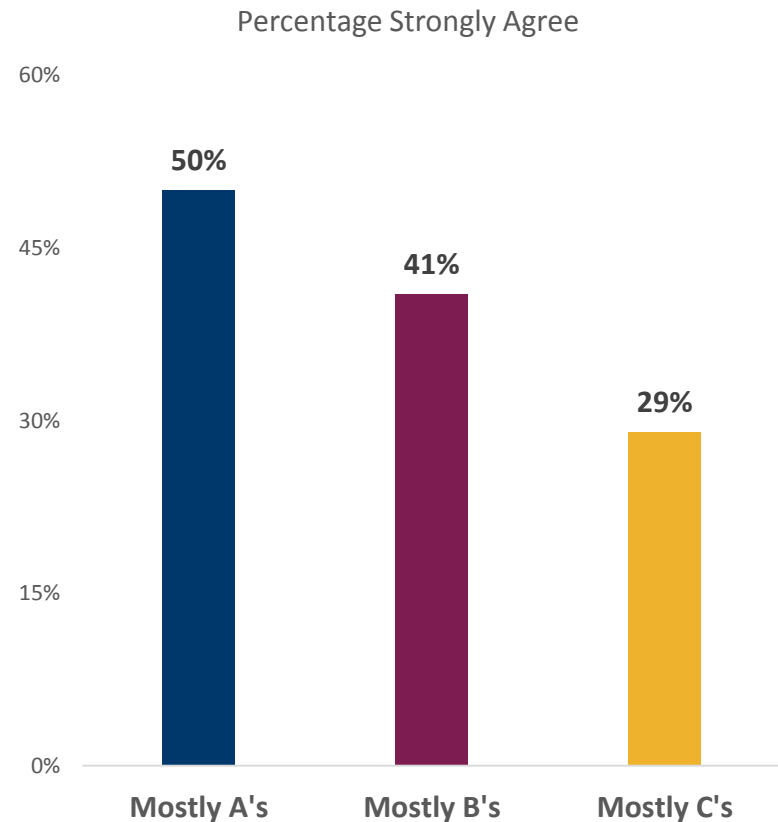
- Students at small institutions
- Traditional age
- Black or African American students
- Students with mostly C's

# I feel physically safe in the building or facility where I live.

## By enrollment size of institution



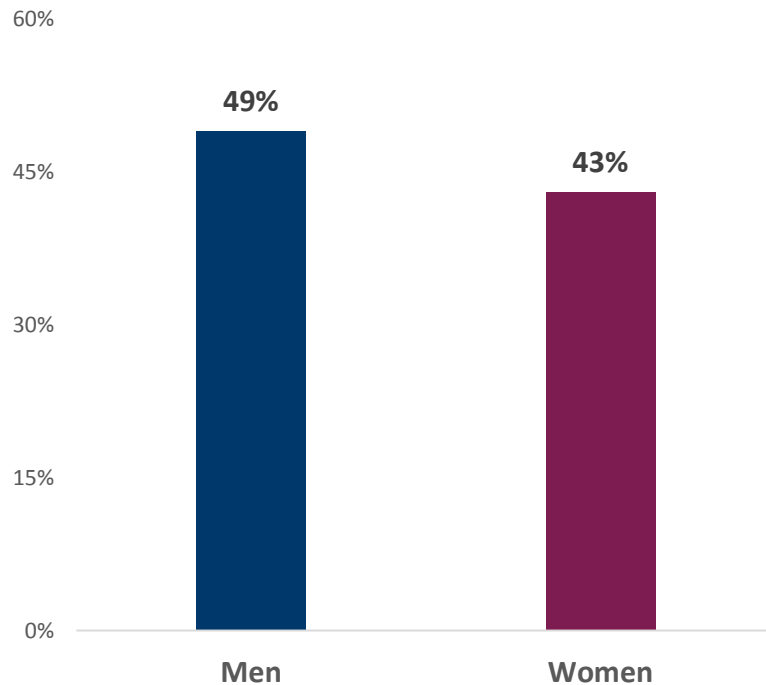
## By grades (self-reported)



# I feel physically safe in the building or facility where I live.

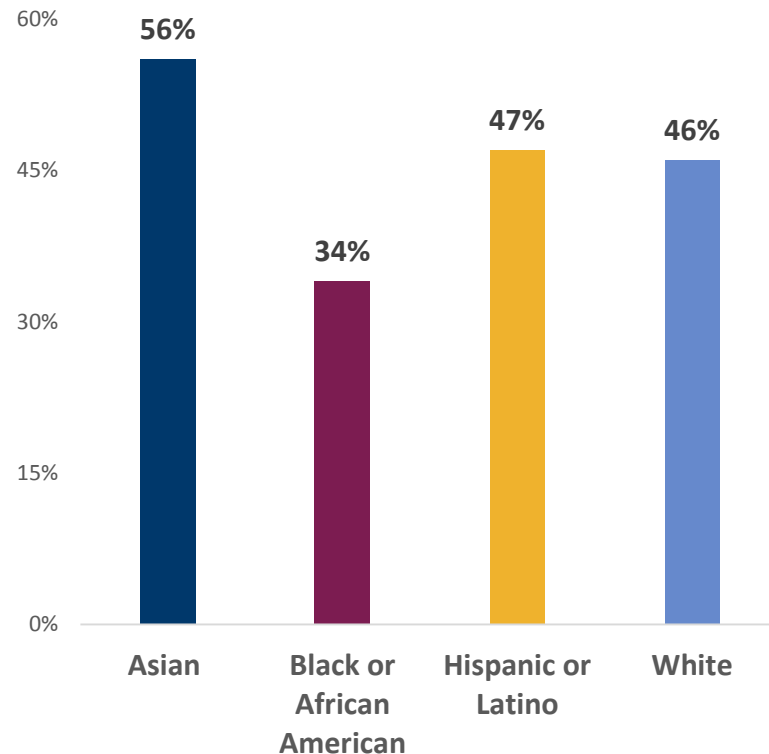
## By sex

Percentage Strongly Agree



## By race/ethnicity

Percentage Strongly Agree



# Findings

**I feel free from harassment and discrimination in the building or facility where I live.**

## **MORE Strongly Agree**

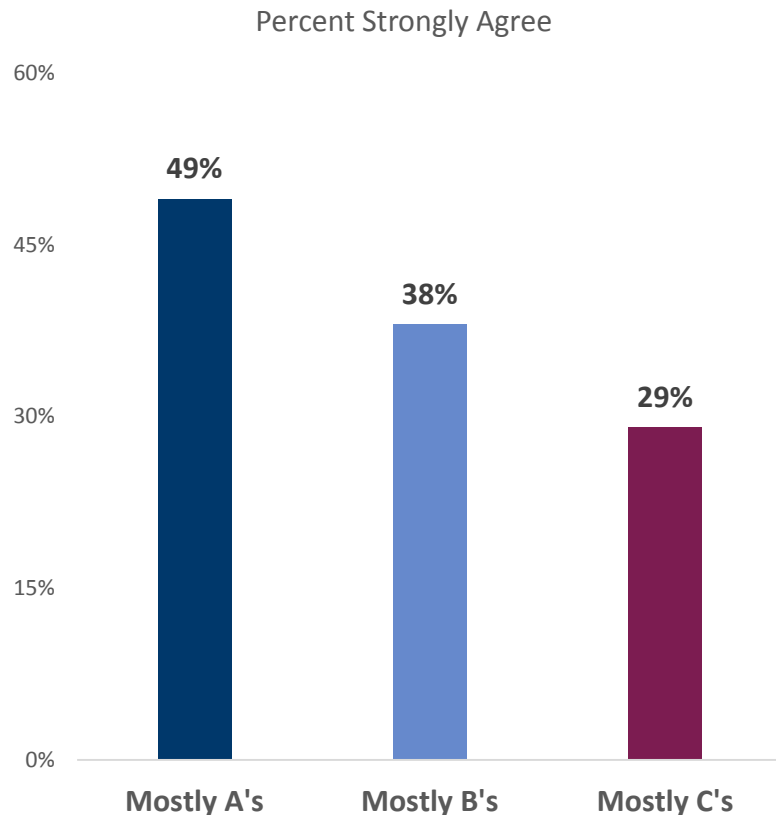
- Students at very large institutions
- Not traditional age students
- Asian students
- Students with mostly A's
- Non first-generation students

## **LESS Strongly Agree**

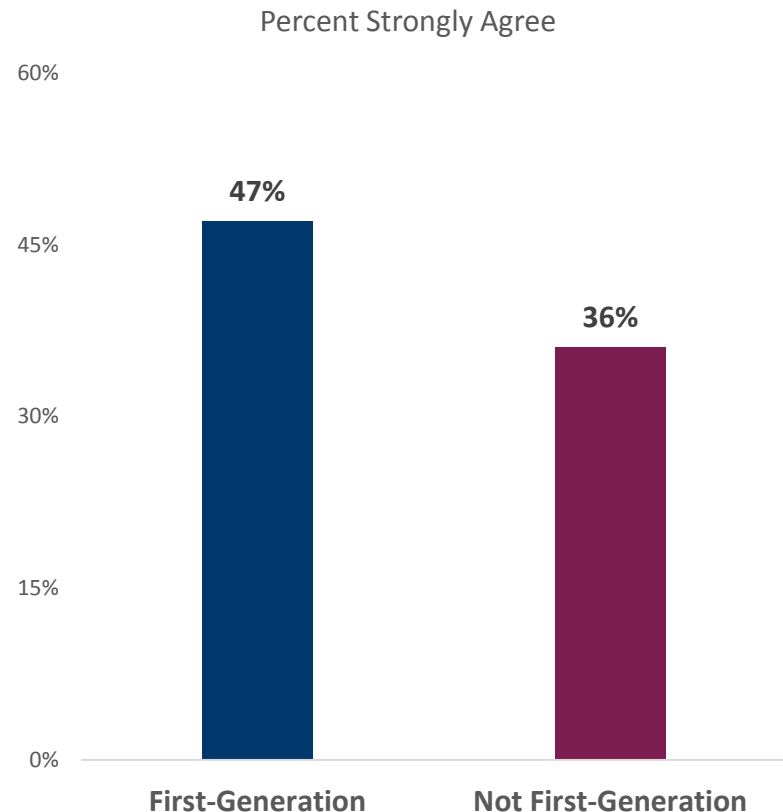
- Students at small institutions
- Traditional age students
- Black or African American students
- Students with mostly C's
- First-generation students

# I feel free from harassment and discrimination in the building or facility where I live.

## By grades (self-reported)



## By first-generation status



# Findings

**I feel a sense of community in the building or facility where I live.**

## **MORE Strongly Agree**

- Nontraditional students
- Asian students

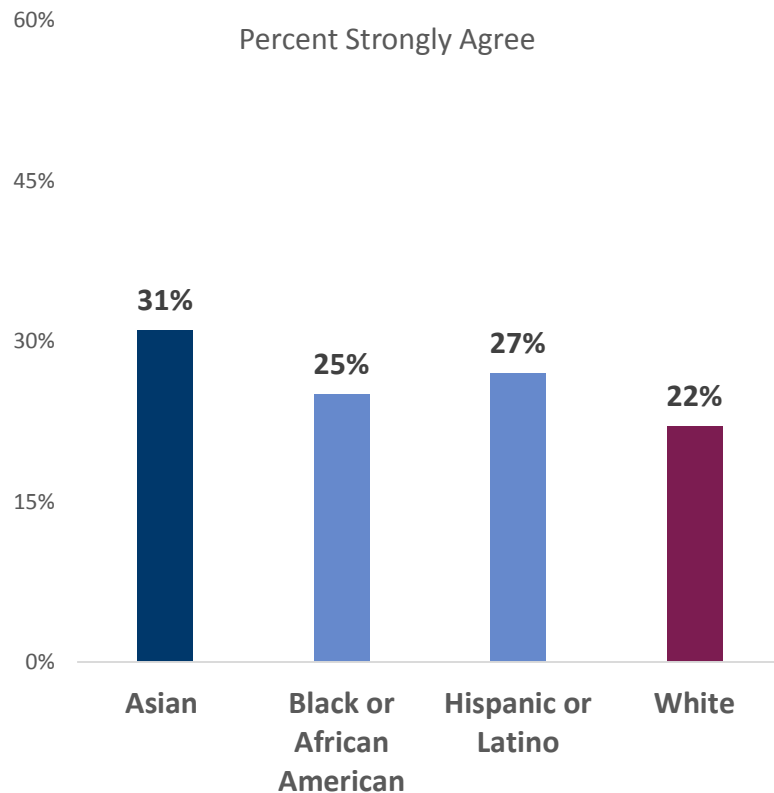
## **LESS Strongly Agree**

- Traditional age
- White students

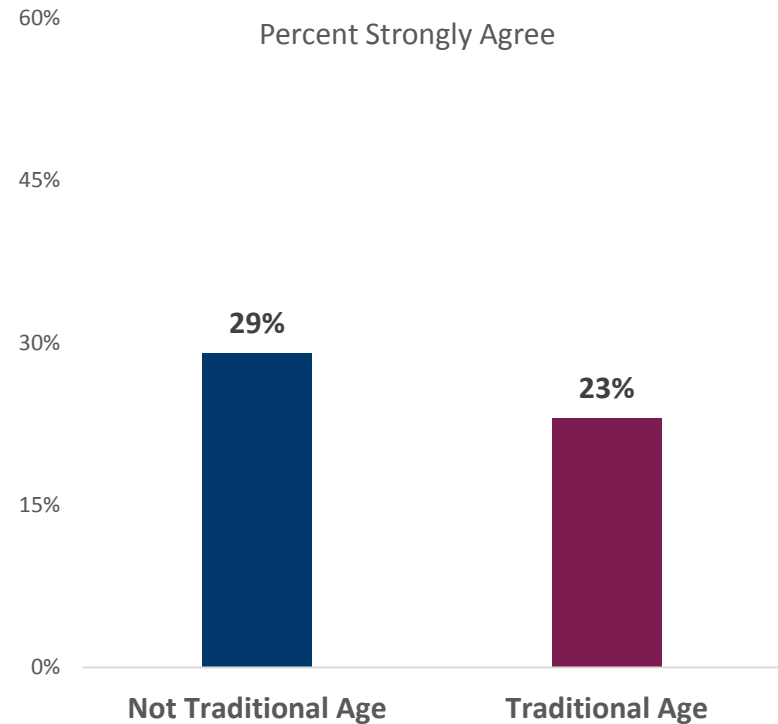


# I feel a sense of community in the building or facility where I live.

## By race/ethnicity



## By age



# Findings

**I know how to resolve conflicts that might arise within my living arrangement.**

## **MORE Strongly Agree**

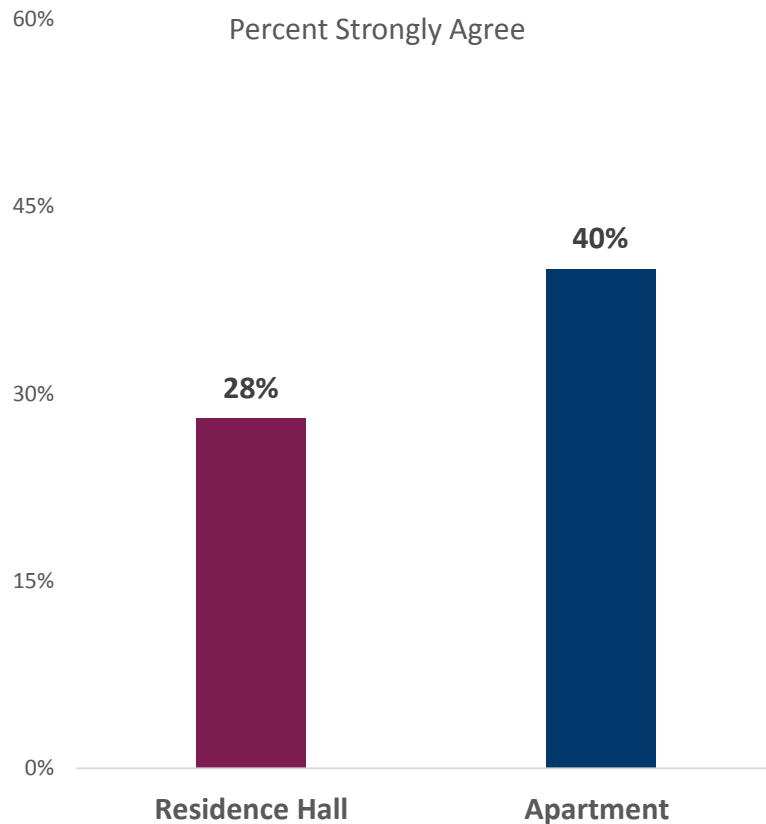
- Students at very large institutions
- Not traditional age
- International students
- Students with Mostly A's
- Men
- Students living in apartments

## **LESS Strongly Agree**

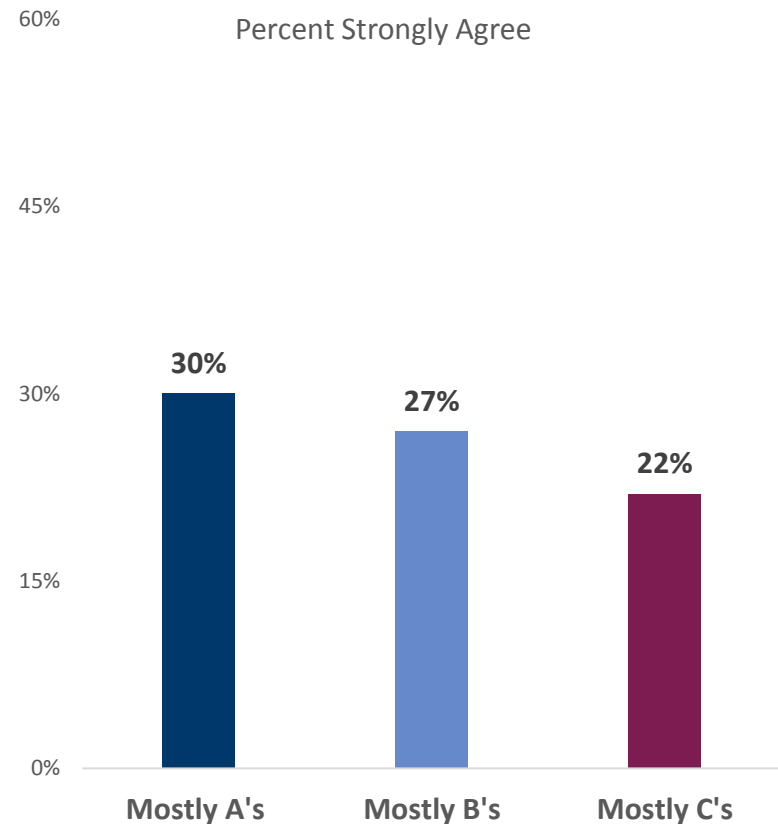
- Traditional Age
- Students with Mostly C's
- Students living in residence hall

# I know how to resolve conflicts that might arise within my living arrangement.

## By building type



## By grades (self-reported)



# Discussion and Implications

**Perceptions of safety and support seems to matter more to student engagement than access to programming or staff (professional or student).**

# Inconsistent

**Students who are Black or African American, traditional, attending small institutions, and who earn lower grades typically felt less safe.**

**However, varied depending on the individual item.**

# Discussion and Implications

**How do residence life and commuter services on your respective campuses attend to issues of safety and sense of community? Do you think your current programs are adequate?**

**What questions should be asked to be better understand our study's results?**

**What questions or comments do you have based on what we presented?**

**Takeaway: Attention to the safety and sense of community of first-year college students is important in regards to their engagement and perceived gains.**

# Final thoughts and questions?

Thank you for joining us!

Bob Gonyea

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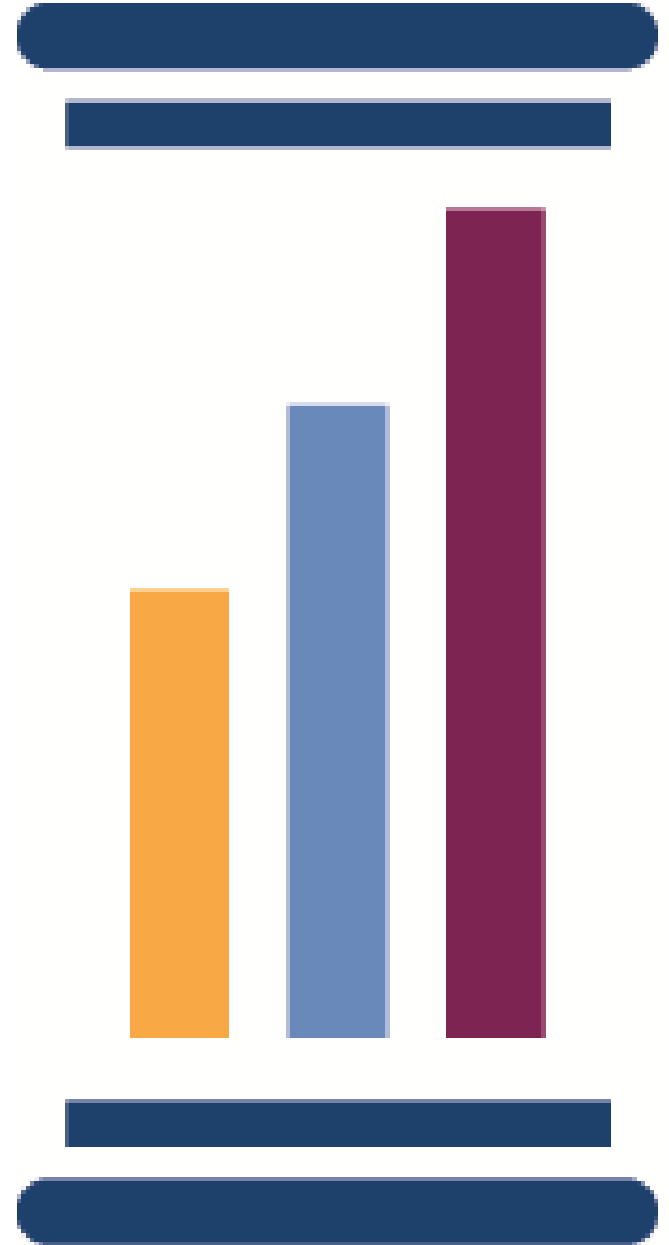
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# References

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How college affects students: Findings and insights from twenty years of research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research (Vol. 2)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mayhew, M. J., Rockenbach, A. N., Bowman, N. A., Seifert, T. A., Wolniak, G. C., Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2016). *How college affects students: 21<sup>st</sup> Century evidence that higher education works (Vol. 3)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.



# Session Evaluation

**Thank you for learning with us!**

Please provide feedback on this session by completing evaluation available online at:

<http://tinyurl.com/acpa17sessioneval>

*Your feedback is valuable to help ensure that our curriculum is meeting the needs of the attendees as well as to help presenters in their development*