

The Evergreen State College

Orientation Feedback Survey 2012

Olympia Campus – First-Time, First-Years (N=26)

Methodology

Evergreen faculty adopted a new initiative in November 2011 which defines various structures and activities to support a new graduation requirement: baccalaureate degree recipients will be required to complete a final Academic Statement that will appear in their official transcript. The new graduation requirement will take effect for the entering class next fall 2013, thus a large-scale pilot project is underway for AY 2012-13 to begin implementing the Academic Statement and assess the pilot strategies in order to inform full implementation next year.

One aspect of the Academic Statement support structures is a refined academic orientation that introduces students to Evergreen's philosophy and approach to teaching, explains the Academic Statement, asks them to draft the first iteration of their statement at entry to the college, introduces them to faculty and other students, selects a common text each year that is read by all new students and other members of campus, and includes students in an all-campus Convocation featuring a speaker connected to that common text. For this year's pilot Academic Statement Orientation Week students read *A Mighty Long Way*, and the featured speaker was the author of the book, Carlotta Walls Lanier.

A student survey was conducted to help Evergreen assess the effectiveness of the new approach to the Academic Statement orientation, and student feedback will be used by the Mentor Council and other faculty and staff to refine the academic Orientation Week activities for next year's new students.

The survey sample consisted of a random selection of 50% of the new first-year and transfer undergraduates who entered Evergreen in fall quarter 2012 that were admitted to the Olympia, Tacoma, or Grays Harbor campuses. Because the number of new students entering the Tribal/Reservation-based programs was very small, all new students to the Tribal programs were added to the initial random sample, in the hopes of getting sufficient responses to be useful to the Tribal programs. Returning Greeners and students who dropped out before October 25th were excluded from the sample selection. 1256 students were eligible to take this survey, 634 were selected for the sample, and of the sample 15% responded.

The survey only remained open for a period of three weeks from October 25th to November 14th. During that time, non-respondents (who had not formally opted out) received up to two additional reminders via email. The survey was web-only; email was the sole method of correspondence.

Survey results were analyzed for three distinct groups: Olympia first-time, first-year students (N=26), Olympia transfer students (N=62), and all off-campus Tacoma and Tribal: Reservation-based program students (N=9).

The following report provides results for the first-year participants. The response rate for this subgroup was just 10% (26 of 259). First-year students are new students who have not attended college since high school completion; this group includes high school direct students (including Running Start), those who earn a GED in lieu of high school diploma, and those who lagged more than a year after high school/GED completion before starting college.

Student Satisfaction with Academic Statement Orientation Activities

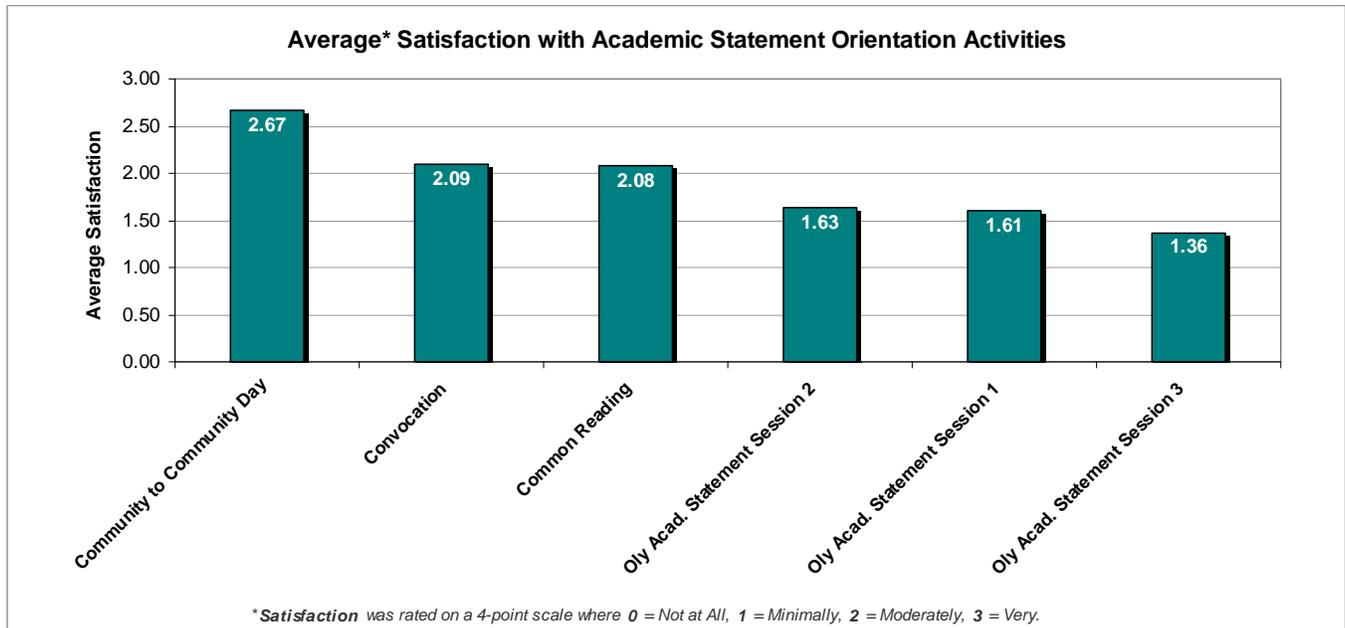
Students were asked to rate their satisfaction with the Academic Statement activities. First-Year students were most likely to partake in the Olympia campus activities. Of 26 respondents, only 4% attended the alternative Academic Statement session. On the other hand, 96% of these students stated that they read the common reading. For the activities in which most First-years participated (Common Reading, Convocation, and Academic Statement Sessions) the most common rating was *moderately satisfied*.

1. How satisfied were you with the following Academic Statement Orientation Activities? <i>For each activity, mark the box that best describes your level of satisfaction or whether you did not participate in the activity.</i>	Not at all satisfied	Minimally satisfied	Moderately satisfied	Very satisfied	Did Not Participate
Common Reading: <i>A Mighty Long Way</i> by Carlotta Walls Lanier	8%	8%	50%	31%	4%
Olympia Academic Statement Session 2: Seminar on Carlotta Walls LaNier's <i>A Mighty Long Way</i> (Tue. 3-5 PM)	15%	19%	42%	15%	8%
Convocation: Olympia campus event with speaker Carlotta Walls Lanier (Tues. Sept. 18, 10AM-Noon)	4%	12%	46%	27%	12%
Olympia Academic Statement Session 1: Learning with Faculty at Evergreen/Philosophy and Introduction (Mon. 3-5 PM or Tues. Alternate Session)	12%	19%	50%	8%	12%
Olympia Academic Statement Session 3: Writing of the Academic Statement: Entrance Essay and Introduction to Academic Statement (Thu. 3-5 PM)	23%	15%	39%	8%	15%
Community to Community: Day of Caring, National Problems - Local Solutions (Friday, Sept. 21)	0%	0%	4%	8%	89%
Learning to Learn at Evergreen: Quantitative and Symbolic Reasoning (QuaSR Orientation Week Workshop)	0%	4%	0%	4%	92%
Learning to Learn: Cultivating Your Writing Power at Evergreen (Writing Center Orientation Week Workshop)	0%	0%	0%	4%	96%
Olympia Saturday Alternative Academic Statement Workshop and Orientation Forum (Sat. Sept. 22)	0%	0%	4%	0%	96%
Tacoma Evening Event with Carlotta Walls Lanier (Tues. Sept. 18)	0%	0%	4%	0%	96%
Tacoma Orientation (Sat. Sept. 15)	0%	0%	4%	0%	96%
Tacoma Lyceum Seminar on <i>A Mighty Long Way</i>	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Tribal Reservation-based Program Orientation	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Tribal Reservation-based Program: Seminar on <i>A Mighty Long Way</i>	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Note: Percentages have been rounded and may not add up to 100%.

How satisfied were you with the following Academic Statement Orientation Activities?

Mean satisfaction ratings were calculated for activities in which five or more students participated. For First-year students the activities with the highest means of satisfaction were “*Community to Community Day*” and “*Convocation*,” while the activities with the lowest means of satisfaction were the “*Olympia Academic Statement Session 3*” and the “*Olympia Academic Statement Session 1*.”



Helpfulness of Academic Statement Orientation Activities

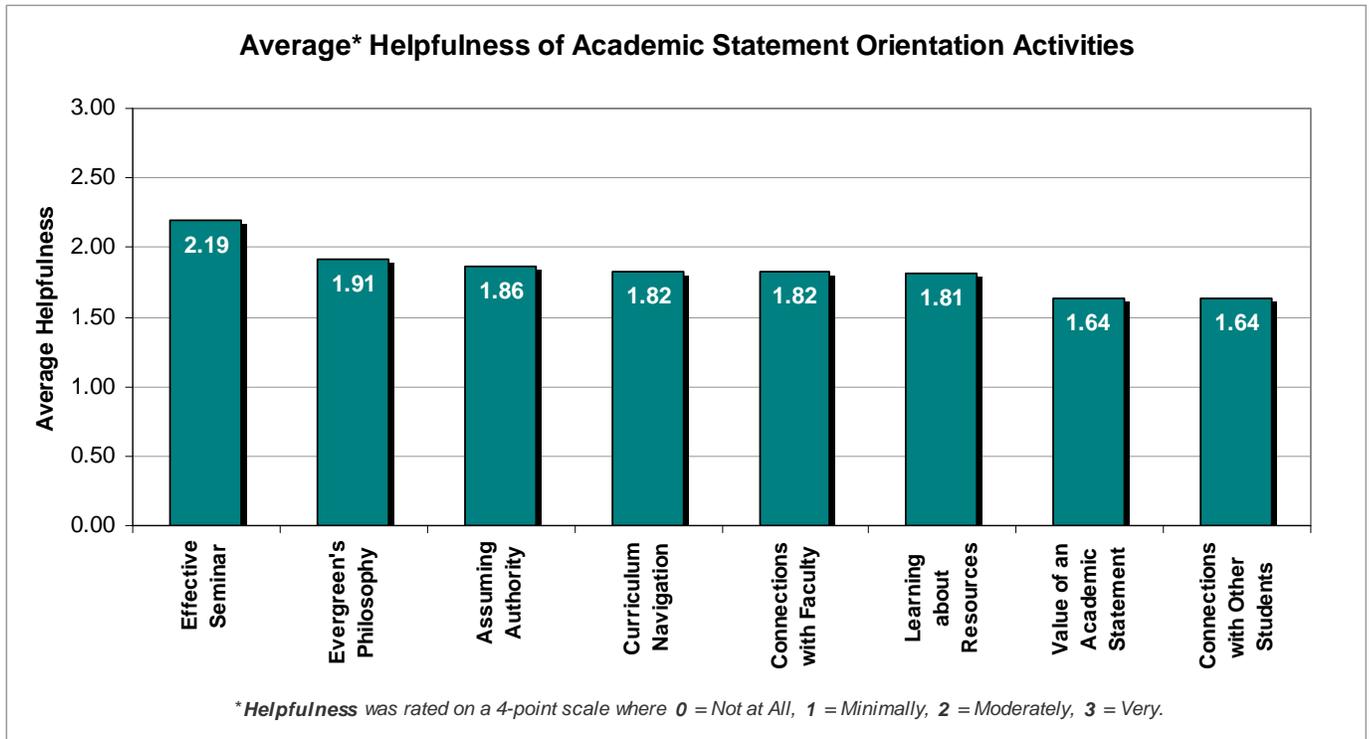
Students were asked how helpful the activities they participated in were in terms of several objectives. First-year respondents found “*Learning how to have an effective seminar*” the most helpful; 52% rated it *very helpful*. They gave varied feedback on making connections with faculty and fellow students.

2. How helpful were the activities in which you participated in terms of the following objectives?	How helpful			
	Not at all helpful	Minimally helpful	Moderately helpful	Very helpful
Understanding Evergreen’s philosophy and approach to education	9%	23%	36%	32%
Understanding the value of an Academic Statement	14%	32%	32%	23%
Learning how to navigate Evergreen’s curriculum	9%	27%	36%	27%
Assuming authority for your educational pathway	9%	27%	32%	32%
Learning how to have an effective seminar	10%	14%	24%	52%
Learning about resources to support your success as a student (e.g., tutors, student activities, or other support services)	10%	29%	33%	29%
Making connections with faculty	18%	18%	27%	36%
Making connections with other students	23%	27%	14%	36%

Note: Percentages have been rounded and may not add up to 100%.

How helpful were the activities in which you participated in terms of the following objectives?

For First-years, the objective with the highest mean of helpfulness was “*Learning how to have an effective seminar,*” while the objectives with the lowest means of helpfulness were “*Making connections with other students*” and “*Understanding the value of an Academic Statement.*”



What was the most meaningful activity for you? Why was it the most meaningful?

Of 26 First-year students, 10 provided a response. To see the full set of comments, see below.

Comments

The most meaningful activity for me was engaging with other freshmen during the academic statement sessions. The sessions allowed for me to connect and relate to other students with different opinions and ideas but also help me realize that I'm not alone in learning - that I do have support and that we're all new and all in the same boat.

The most meaningful activity for me was a group exercise in the challenge course with, Cynthia Kennedy as our faculty, where we tried to move people's bodies through a web structure without touching the "strands" of the web. It was engaging because it was tactile, necessitated cooperation, and was a simple way of starting to understand group dynamics and interpreting people's wants/needs.

Doing activities with your floor.

Community to Community Day. I appreciate the opportunity to connect with community organizations.

Convocation was the most meaningful activity for me. It was meaningful because it truly gave me a sense of community and belonging to the campus.

Evergreen's academic workshops help very well with keeping myself focused on making my degree rather than just taking random classes, providing me with a much better focus to building my degree.

The learning with faculty would be better if there was more time.

Seminar - it was good to get a picture in my head.

Nothing, I would have preferred the year simply start, not waste 10 days with pointless activities meant for persons without higher brain functions.

Nothing was the most meaningful activity, they were pretty much equal.

What would you encourage Evergreen to change about these Orientation activities related to the Academic Statement?

Of 26 First-year students, 12 provided a response. Student's comments have been placed into four broad categories: **Content** (5), **Logistics/Structure** (5), **Communication** (1), and **No Change** (1). To see the full set of comments, see below.

Broad Category	Full Comment
Content	<i>Most of us already know the basic philosophy of Evergreen. Why teach again?</i>
	<i>a) Encourage faculty to articulate the importance/relevance of the Statement in an engaging and relevant way.</i>
	<i>b) Choose a more engaging book than LaNier's. While it's a book that covers an important historical subject, and a book LaNier needed to write, it was not particularly well-written or conducive to critical thinking for me. How about The Autobiography of Malcolm X? Or The Human Condition by Hannah Arendt?</i>
	<i>Better speakers!</i>
	<i>Interesting speakers really improve things.</i>
Logistics/Structure	<i>Break the process down more, and bring more meaning to why it is important.</i>
	<i>Make sure that faculty who lead these groups are actually engaging and do not make you hate yourself and wish to never step foot on campus again as it was for me.</i>
	<i>Make an optional thing that will help challenge students that are otherwise bored by how easy things are.</i>
	<i>Get rid of them, or at least offer the ability to waive them. Seriously, everything that was told to me at any of those activities I was able to read on a website or get out of a 3rd grade English class.</i>
	<i>I would encourage more activities focused within the dorm. During orientation week it was hard for me to socialize on a broad scale (i.e. ice cream social) with so many people. During the first few nights I wish I had some more intimate less intimidating time with the people I am living with.</i>
<i>Longer breaks between the speeches.</i>	
Communication	<i>Mail a few more of them especially for the academic statement.</i>
No Change	<i>It is an essential overview of some of the complexities that make Evergreen unique and desirable!</i>

Participation Obstacles

Half of the First-year students did not participate in some or all of the Academic Statement activities. The most common participation obstacles given by those students were: “Not interested in content”, “Work/employment schedule”, and “Didn’t seem important”.

5. If you were unable to participate or chose not to participate in some or all of the Orientation activities related to the Academic Statement, which of the following were obstacles to your participation?	No	Yes
Not interested in content	62%	39%
Work/employment schedule	62%	39%
Didn't seem important	69%	31%
Didn't know it was required	77%	23%
Other	77%	23%
Didn't know where to go	92%	8%
Had not read the book	100%	0%
I was not registered for classes at the time of the events	100%	0%
Lack of childcare	100%	0%

Note: Percentages have been rounded and may not add up to 100%.

What was the most important reason that you did not participate?

Students had the chance to state the most important reason for not participating in some or all of the activities. Of 26 First-year students, 6 provided a comment. To see the full set of comments, see below.

Comments

Unavailable due to prior obligations, and did not know that all workshops were necessary until after I had made the commitments.

More pressing concerns at the time: newly forming social ties, opportunity to walk in the woods, sing, etc. But I tried to go to workshops that seemed relevant to me.

I couldn't get out of work for any of the days.

Disorientation week seemed to have more information I was interested in learning.

Not in Tacoma.

Not interested.
