

Survey Results: CARES

Information for faculty

At the beginning of the fall semester, the Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS) surveys incoming freshmen on their feelings about their first semester of college, their intended study habits, anticipated challenges, planned use of their time, etc. The purpose of the survey (called "CARES") is assess risk of academic failure and provide students with immediate feedback to head off potentially risky behavior and attitudes. Last fall about 1,400 students completed the survey.

At the end of the semester, these same students were surveyed with a shorter subset of questions inquiring into their actual behavior during their first semester of college. We were struck by the differences in responses pre- and post-semester. A large percentage of students reported that their courses were less interesting, less valuable, and easier than they had anticipated. Students had underestimated how many classes they would miss because they didn't feel like going or because attendance wasn't taken. They had greatly overestimated the time they would spend studying and were less likely to avail themselves of planned study strategies, meet with faculty, and seek help if they needed it. They faced more health challenges – both mental and physical – than they anticipated, including a drop-off in personal motivation and focus.

I've included selected results from the CARES pre- and post-survey on the attached slides. As faculty teaching freshmen in 2009, you might want to be aware that a significant number of first-time freshmen are not having the college experience that they were anticipating. You may be able to affect some of these perceptions and attitudes through interactions with your students, and help prevent disengagement and eventual dropout.

Sharron L. Ronco
Associate Provost, Institutional Effectiveness and Analysis
sronco@fau.edu









