Piloting the implementation and assessment of a new first year experience at Rowan University

Stephen A. Bonora
Rowan University

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PILOTING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT OF A
NEW FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE AT
ROWAN UNIVERSITY

by
Stephen Bonora

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration of The Graduate School at Rowan University May 8, 2006

Approved by
Dr. Burton R. Sisco

Date Approved May 8, 2006
ABSTRACT

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Dr. Burton R. Sisco
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of freshmen residents of Evergreen Hall at Rowan University during the 2005/2006 school year. The purpose of the FYI program in Evergreen Hall was to increase student retention. Half of the residents in Evergreen Hall were full participants (FP) in the program, meaning that they had a connected experience where there orientation leader for the summer before the freshmen year was also the RA the student had in the fall semester. The other half involved were non-full participants (NFP) the students had a different orientation leader and RA. This study gauged the effectiveness of the FYI program at Rowan University and the differences between the FP and NFP student populations. This study revealed that participation in the FYI program provided promise for increasing academic adjustment, building learning communities, and enhancing attachment to Rowan University.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

One of the main indicators of success of an institution of higher learning is the retention rates of students between their freshman and sophomore years. Rates can fluctuate depending on numerous variables, but one thing is certain: A higher rate of retention is considered to be one of the most important indicators of how well a college or university is viewed by the rest of the academic community, and more importantly prospective freshmen.

The task of increasing retention rates is challenging. There are a variety of initiatives and programs found on campuses today, but all require university-wide collaboration and a commitment to student learning.

According to a former president of a state university, academic institutions are not noted for innovation. Professors are resistant to change because many feel any alteration to the current educational climate may infringe upon personal intellectual pursuits. Moreover, most executive administrators in higher education come from the academic world and therefore they are sympathetic to the concerns of the professorate (personal communication, October 2004).

The professional staff in the Student Affairs division at Rowan University is actively searching for ways to help increase student retention. In the fall of 2001, Rowan created dedicated housing for freshmen. Mimosa Hall, Chestnut Hall, and Evergreen Hall were the first to become freshmen only residence halls. Rowan runs a freshmen seminar class that all new freshmen are required to take called the Rowan Seminar. In
2002, Rowan started the Visions of the Future program (VOF) which focuses on acclimating pre-majors to college (personal communication, September 2005).

Rowan has a very respectable freshman to sophomore year retention rate, 85.4% for the class of 2002 (Rowan, 2006). That rate however is still not as high as the administration feels it can be. For the 2006/2007 school year, the Rowan University master plan is seeking to obtain a 90% retention figure of the freshman class (Rowan Master Plan). In an effort to increase the student retention rate at Rowan University, George Brelsford, Dean of Students, Joanne Damminger, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Stephen Bonora, Graduate Student, created the First Year Innovators (FYI) program in Evergreen Hall.

Statement of the Problem

There is a great deal of research completed on First Year Experience (FYE) programs in the university and college environments. Rowan specifically has various FYE programs associated by major called the Visions of the Future program (Damminger, 2004). The creation of the First Year Innovators program in Evergreen Hall created a unique opportunity to study the effects of an FYE program with out an educational component.

Significance of the Problem

The purpose of the FYI program in Evergreen Hall is to increase student retention. If it is found that the FYI program has no bearing on student retention, the program will have to be reworked or abandoned.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand what impact the first year innovator (FYI) program had on the resident students of Rowan University living in Evergreen Hall. About half of the students living in Evergreen were introduced to their Resident Assistant (RA) in June 2005 at the freshman orientation program, they are Full Participants (FP) in the FYI program while the other half met the RA during moving in day on campus in September or later they are Non-Full Participants (NFP). The former group was able to bond with the RA and other future residents who would occupy their floor in the fall as full participants (FP) of the program. The students who did not meet the RA until after freshmen orientation did so at the beginning of the fall semester and as such, are not full participants (NFP) in the FYI experience.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study is limited by its small scope as only residents in Evergreen Hall were invited to participate. Out of the 170 possible freshmen about half actually went through the orientation component of the FYI program in the summer. The other half of the student population were seen as the control group for the purposes of this study. This is a limitation because the FYI experience is more than the orientation component. However, for the purposes of this study the orientation component was considered the most valuable part of the FYI program.

Concurrently the FYI program is not the only new program for the students in Evergreen Hall and to claim student satisfaction with the FYI experience alone would be a disservice to many other factors which could affect student retention. An assumption is that other aspects of the FYI program in Evergreen Hall are not as significant as the
orientation program. During November of 2005, some students in Evergreen Hall were exposed to a learning styles assessment program known as Let Me Learn (LML). The Learning Connections Inventory (LCI) was administered in an effort to expand the FYI program in the building. Less than 20 students took the LCI and around 30 individual students attended the two LML workshops run by Dr. Donald Stoll of the communications department at Rowan University.

The LCI initiative in Evergreen was seen by the residents as a boring program that they could not or did not want to connect to their own personal experiences. This caused a backlash at the residence life staff in the building because the RA staff asked residents to participate in the program they did not see the point of or enjoy.

Another limitation of the study was that participation was voluntary and, therefore, students who volunteered to participate may have had strong feelings toward the RA, the summer orientation, and/or the Evergreen community.

This study was completed before students registered for fall classes of their sophomore year. Therefore, true retention numbers were not known and the study used student self-reporting data to determine whether students would be coming back for the sophomore year.

Another assumption is that the researcher acted without bias in regards to the value of the FYI program. This is important because the researcher was one of the co-creators of the program.
Operational Definitions

Evergreen Students/Residents: Freshmen students living in Evergreen Hall at Rowan University, during the 2005/2006 academic year.

First Year Experience: Refers to any intentional programs and/or courses given by a university to enrich the students’ first year on campus in an effort to increase student retention.

First Year Innovator (FYI): The program at Rowan University designed to increase student satisfaction by giving the students more exposure to the RA which would increase student retention.

Full Participant (FP): Students who had the same PROS leader for summer orientation as their RA for the fall semester 2005.

Not Full Participant (NFP): Students whose PROS leader was a different person than the RA they had in fall semester 2005.

Peer Referral Orientation Staff (PROS): Students who lead new student orientation at Rowan University.

Resident Assistant (RA): The person who presides over a hallway as mentor, role model, authority figure, advisor, and peer mediator. The RA is the focal point of the study because the study attempts to find a relationship between the RA and student satisfaction.

Student Retention: Refers first to second year continued attendance at the same institution of higher learning unless otherwise stated.
Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What impact does participation in the FYI program have on resident attitudes of the RAs in Evergreen Hall?
2. What do the residents of Evergreen Hall say about their academic adjustment, social adjustment, and attachment to Rowan University?
3. Is there a significant difference in responses between students who completed the summer orientation piece of the program and those who did not?

Report Organization

Chapter two begins with a review of related literature dealing with various exemplar learning communities, FYE programs, and Rowan specific communities. Chapter three deals with the methodology of the study and chapter four reports the results of the study. Chapter five includes a detailed analysis of the findings, summarization of the study and presents recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed for this research project is grounded in the residential life programs of colleges and universities, past, present, and future. Learning communities, first year experience programs, and residential models all relate to FYI program in Evergreen Hall on the campus of Rowan University in Glassboro New Jersey.

Origins of Residential Colleges

The first residential college was founded in 1264 in Oxford, England. Students and faculty lived together and gained knowledge about many things. "From the common residence of faculty and students, and the joining of social, community, and intellectual life, the residential ideal was born" (Klein, 2000, p. 14).

However that 'residential ideal' began to change in the 19th century. Everything from the secularization of the western society to the sudden increase in knowledge in science and mathematics "led to an attack on common curriculum and on the living-learning symbiosis essential to the residential college" (Klein, 2000, p. 14). This knowledge boom forced faculty and students to become specialists; no longer could one person have all the knowledge of the world to command. "Prescribed study among students and faculty who lived and learned together as a family... gave way to large lecture classes... and pressures to publish" (Klein, 2000, p. 15). The pendulum is now swinging back in the direction of communal learning while still keeping the focus on specialization. This is facilitated by placing students in a learning community.
Learning Communities

The term learning community is not completely universal and there is confusion in the literature is on what constitutes a learning community. What follows is a list of the five most accepted forms of learning communities starting with the least amount of formal activities and planning through to the most intricate, according to research from the year 2000 conducted by Galbelnick, Macgregor, Matthews, and Smith.

1. Linked Courses (two courses independent of each other, but with common students)
2. Learning Clusters (courses linked by content)
3. Freshmen Interest Groups (courses linked by themes)
4. Federated Learning Communities (faculty as the linchpin)
5. Coordinated Studies Programs (where all the students’ course credits are associated with an integrated, theme-based, interdisciplinary curriculum designed through intensive faculty collaboration) (Stassen, 2003, p. 584)

As early as “the 1920’s when Alexander Meiklejohn introduced the ‘Experimental College’ at the University of Wisconsin in reaction against the increased disciplinary specialization and fragmentation of the undergraduate curriculum” (Stassen, 2003, p. 581) colleges and universities began toying again with the ideas of learning communities. The University of Wisconsin established the experimental college as a means to get professors and students to interact more and as a means to help students understand the values of democracy (Stassen).
First Year Experience Programs

The literature on the subject of freshmen tends to agree that some type of first-year experience (FYE) is necessary to increase student retention. Lenning and Ebbers (1999) explained that:

The “involvement” model [Astin] and the “student departure” model [Tinto] provide theoretical and conceptual reasons why student learning communities should impact college students positively, and much research supports both models. The models suggest that learning communities should increase students’ development, achievement, and persistence through encouraging the integration of social and academic lives within a college or university and its programs, and through quality interaction with peers, faculty members, and the campus environment. (p. 49-51)

One of the premier authors on the subject of undergraduate education is Arthur Chickering (1987) and his seven principles for good undergraduate education is an excellent example of how a first year experience can be vital to success of students at risk for leaving school between their freshmen and sophomore years (Chickering). Chickering’s seven principles are as follows:

1. Encourage contact between students and faculty;
2. Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students;
3. Encourage active learning;
4. Give prompt feedback;
5. Emphasize time on task;
6. Communicate high expectations; and,
7. Respect diverse talents and ways of learning. (Chickering).

First year experiences (FYE) are so important because they facilitate five of Chickering's seven principles. An FYE can encourage contact between students and faculty, in some instances, by giving faculty a chance to connect with students outside the classroom and in the residence halls. Cooperation among students is a focus of most FYE programs an example of this would be motivating students to form study groups. By having students with the same classes live on the same floor, active learning is encouraged because students will naturally begin to talk to each other, ask questions of each other and help each other thereby enhancing the class experience. Therefore, learning communities are important because they allow students to interact in ways they traditionally might have missed.

A major point in having many of Chickering’s seven principles tied to the learning community model is to increase retention rates. Increased student retention is good for the student who can finish his/her academic work in a timely fashion and the institution because it is less costly for the institution to keep a student rather than recruit a new one.

First year experience programs can also communicate high expectations by informing the students of how to help facilitate meeting academic goals more effectively. Finally, FYE programs respect diverse ways of learning because they offer many different types of learning opportunities in and out of the classroom (Chickering, 1987).
Model FYE Programs

One of the more interesting FYE programs is located at The College of New Jersey. It is an all-encompassing program designed to inspire the students' hearts and minds. By teaching the value of citizenship classes are not taught in traditional academic buildings but rather in residence halls. In addition, the focal course of the FYE, “Athens to New York,” has a 10-hour community service component (Anderson, Briggs, & Scarpati, 2002). The concentration of the community service extends deeper than charity; it is learned through discussion that community service can be “a vehicle for social justice, with reflection and reciprocity serving as the guiding principles” (Anderson et al., 2002, p.14).

Faculty members also participate in the Athens to New York program. They are recruited by resident assistants in an effort to enhance the community building on the floor. It is not unheard of for a faculty member to take residents to dinner at his/her home once or twice a semester (Perry, 1999).

A similar program to TCNJ’s can be found at Drury University in Springfield Missouri. The programs focus is called “the Alpha Seminar.” “Alpha Seminar is a two-semester course in which approximately 20 first-year students are assigned for the entire year to a faculty member who serves as professor of and mentor to these students” (Allen, 2004, p. 24).

Staff in student affairs see Alpha Seminar as a way of creating a learning experience for first-year students that extends beyond the classroom...Extra time spent working with individual students to improve their writing, speaking, and
thinking skills; involvement in orientation and out-of-class activities; and attendance at a variety of extra events are all involved. (Allen, 2004, p. 26)

The extra time and attention leads to excellent results. Specifically, students in Alpha Seminar bond to an almost familial unit. Alpha Seminar means many things, and security is one of the most important. Students who feel secure socially are willing to return to school for a second year. Also, Alpha Seminar teaches students how to study in groups and how to better themselves intellectually by simply emphasizing good study and work habits that stay with them for the rest of their college careers and lives (Allen, 2004).

At Mississippi State University (MSU), the retention program uses a different strategy. MSU implemented a program that focuses on counseling for students who have below average attendance. If a student misses more than two classes in the first six weeks of the semester, he/she is flagged. “Residence hall staff then contacted the students and made two points: that their instructors were concerned about their absences and were available to discuss any academic problems they might be having” (Hammer, 2003, p. 28).

**Learning Communities Make Sense**

Other literature in the area of first year experiences focus more on the theoretical, such as, good ground rules must be set if one is to craft a successful FYE. Hunter and Gahagan (2003), explain the phases of students’ first year on campus. The first stage is the transition phase when students begin to adjust to college life, make friends, and set patterns of behavior that, if unhealthy, will be hard to change later. The researchers go
on to propose that, “Students who are engaged in campus activities are less likely to drop out” (p. 31).

Hunter and Gahagan (2003) also believe that graduating seniors have a purpose to fulfill at the university to help acculturate a new generation of students. “Asking graduating seniors to talk to first-year students about the importance of career development can be a powerful encouragement to students to use career centers early in their academic experience” (p. 32).

Crissman (2003) argues that teachings skills in an FYE program are more important than a general knowledge base. She believes that “general education should focus on integration and cohesion, on learning skills and techniques rather than traditional bodies of knowledge, and on interdisciplinary connections that break down old disciplinary barriers” (p. 73). Also, Crissman notes that, “Creating learning communities may magnify the educational impact of seminars and first-year experience courses, and learning communities are described as having the potential to maximize student learning, interest, and potential” (p. 74).

Learning communities are a key factor to increasing freshman retention rates. Learning communities are best defined by Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith (1990) as, “Learning communities, as we define them, purposefully restructure the curriculum to link together courses or course work so that students find greater coherence in what they are learning as well as increased intellectual interactions with faculty and fellow students” (p. 5). This definition is important because it moves away from the traditional educational ideals that the professor dictates and the students learn. The focus is on bringing teachers and students together into a community where learning is
emphasized. Also it implies that learning can and should take place outside of the classroom (Klein).

Klein (2000) is the embodiment of the success of learning communities because he actually moved his office into a residence hall on the campus of Bowling Green State University. Klein believes the results of moving his office are profound, “I used to plead with my students to stop by for a conference or a chat; now I can’t get them out of my office without polite subterfuge” (2000, p. 12). Klein goes on to say that:

The learning community… residential variation, represents a change… systematically and structurally alters the curriculum, the temporal and spatial realities of learning and teaching… It alters the very stuff – the bone and marrow – of liberal education, for it makes clear that the primary goals of a liberal education are not inevitably, inextricably, or optimally tied to the dominant loose course-distribution model. (p.13)

It would seem that Klein is arguing that a learning community can change the focus of a liberal education from gaining knowledge for ones self, to gaining knowledge for the group, through working in the group.

The learning community concept increases student success and the increased student success will ultimately lead to increased student retention. “In two years our residential learning community has taken over a 315 bed residence hall, generated a waiting list, and produced strong results in terms of students satisfaction, achievement, and retention” (Klein, 2000, p. 15).

More recent reviews of the research on the effects of learning community participation find similarly consistent and positive results. One comprehensive review
[Lindblad, 2000] comes out of the work of the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of the Undergraduate experience. The author reviewed 63 studies conducted over 11 years (1988-1999). According to Lindblad, these studies indicate that the students in LCs show greater institutional commitment, greater intellectual development and opportunity to analyze and integrate ideas, greater tolerance for difference and appreciation for pluralism, and demonstrate higher persistence and academic performance as measured by college grade point average (GPA). (Stassen, 2003, p. 583)

Schroeder, Minor, and Tarkow (1999), focused the FYE on something called freshmen interest groups (FIG). The FIGs were created at Missouri State University and are very similar to learning communities. Groups of 15 or so students take three classes together and have a peer advisor; a successful undergraduate student nearing graduation who lives in the residence halls with the FIG. Also, the FIG has a faculty member who serves as a mentor and teacher called a co-facilitator. The co-facilitator and peer advisor actually teach the FIG in a one credit pro-seminar class (Schroeder et al., 1999).

Rowan Specific Communities

Rowan University’s FYE, while not as integrated into the entire school as some of the examples above, does make an effort to reach out to freshman students. Damminger (2004) focused her work on learning communities for undeclared freshmen at Rowan University. She instituted a program called Visions of the Future (VOF) in which she facilitated the FYE with four different groups of students in an action research study.

She found, over the course of four years, that:

VOF helped students’ social adjustment because they enjoyed a readily available group of people with whom to meet, study, and socialize, if they desired.... A
majority of students found the learning community experience most helpful
because it helped them to meet people and make friends. (Damminger, 2004, p. 212)

Damminger’s VOF program also included an educational component where
students in the program took classes together. One faculty member was very impressed
with the students in the VOF reporting “that these students truly portrayed a sense of
community and caring for one another. He elaborated how they watched out for and
helped one another” (Damminger, 2004, p. 213).

Finally, the third major component of the VOF allowed students who resided on
campus to live in the same area as the other VOF members. “Grouped housing was a
third major contributing factor to the socialization of group members. Students housed
on the same floor of the residence hall mentioned repeatedly the advantages of easy
access to one another and their enjoyment just sitting in the hallway and talking with one
another” (Damminger, 2004, p. 213).

In the 2005/2006 academic year Damminger’s VOF program was expanded to
include a separate VOF for biology majors and students in the honors program at Rowan
University as well as continue to focus on the pre-major population. The VOF program
is now being run by an administrator in the Career and Academic Planning Center.

Learning Connections Inventory & Let Me Learn

Another key issue related to the idea of student retention is focusing on student
learning. If a student is not doing well in his/her class work the student’s chance of
success diminishes considerably. In fact, if a student is not doing well in class the student
is not succeeding. The Learning Connections Inventory (LCI) is a tool that can be used
to help students identify their own personal learning patterns as well as the learning patterns of the people around them (Johnston, 1998).

“The LCI’s strength lies in its ability to identify, accurately and consistently, an individual’s hard-wired learning patterns. These patterns... are the result of cognitive, conative, and affective brain functions that are present from birth and develop over time” (Johnston, 1998, p. 40).

Traditional learning dominates the educational climate of schools on all levels. This traditional learning is intelligence centered. “The greater the intelligence, the more a child can learn... Intelligence for decades has been measured by examining a child’s cognitive processes... It is believed that these cognitive processes equal the child’s intelligence” (Johnston, 1996, p. 16). Johnston argues that intelligence is more than traditional manipulation of information. In fact intelligence in an interactive process:

The first thing to recognize is that the interactive process does not occur on a random basis. It occurs as a pattern of behaviors. These behaviors are formed from the combination of our cognitive, conative, and affective tendencies. These tendencies converge to form the basis of our thought processes, mode of action, and feelings about ourselves. This convergence also forms our patterns of learning behavior. (Johnston, 1996, pg. 38)

The learning patterns Johnston is referring to are: sequential, precise, technical, and confluent. Every person has a bit of each pattern, however, most people do not use them equally.

A sequential learner wants an assignment spelled out in a step-by-step fashion, “I process information step by step. I act according to the rules. I want time to present a
neat and complete assignment. I need time to double-check what I have done. Don't rush me please" (Johnston, 1996, p. 41).

A precise learner is looking for specifics, "I process information precisely. I read it precisely; I write it precisely; I store it precisely; and I respond to it precisely. I feel good about myself as a student when I get precise feedback and when I am able to point to specific things I’ve done that have earned me recognition" (Johnston, 1996, p. 42).

A technical learner wants to be left alone, “Let me figure this out; let me do this by myself... I see an instrument or a tool, and I know its use. More than how it operates. I especially like the physical and mental challenge of using it successfully to do whatever the situation requires” (Johnston, 1996, p. 42).

Finally a confluent learner is afraid of no learning experience because no experience is beyond the frame of reference.

“I’ve been here before. I understand this territory. This is how this fits together... Ok so you haven’t been here before. So what. Make a guess. Take the risk.’ This part of me works on intuition something works. I go with my gut. I have a sense – not a measurable sense – but an intuitive sense of how to proceed, and I move on that. I don’t mind failing” (Johnston, 1996, p. 42)

The LCI takes the four styles and maps them to the individual taking the inventory. “The LCI is a self-report instrument. It doesn’t test a quality; it doesn’t determine the capacity to learn; it doesn’t measure what the learner knows. The inventory reports what learners selected as descriptions of their learning behaviors. It inventories. It takes stock” (Johnston, 1996, p. 69).
Student Adjustment to College

Baker and Siryk (1999) produced a large body of research on student adjustment to college in the *Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ)*. They found connections between the students being able to identify an academic major and the effectiveness of the students own adjustment to college. "The effect was most pronounced on the Academic Adjustment and Attachment subscales, less pronounced for Personal-Emotional Adjustment, and not seen at all on Social Adjustment" (p. 57).

The *SACQ* was used to:

Examine the effects of a voluntary peer-support intervention program conducted at the beginning of the academic year. Students in dormitories offering this program had higher Full Scale and Social Adjustment and Attachment subscale scores on a first-semester testing than did students in dormitories not offering such a program. No such effects were found the following spring. (Baker & Siryk, pp. 60)

Summary of Literature Review

Many different types of freshman experiences exist in colleges all over the world. The best of them have a few key components. Learning communities, peer leadership, caring faculty, small class sizes that promote a familial setting, and a community service partnership are just a few examples of what the research suggest leads to a successful first year experience. The increased success garnered from the learning communities and FYE programs lead to increased retention and graduation rates.

Colleges started with professors and students living in the same spaces and now research is suggesting that colleges move back in that general direction (Klein, 2000).
Many different groups have a stake in the successful retention of students and for as many stakeholders as there are, there is at least one method of increasing retention.

The FYI program may show promise for replication in other resident halls on the Rowan campus. More research is needed to study the impact of the program in Evergreen Hall.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Context of the Study

This study was conducted on the campus of Rowan University in the freshman residence hall called Evergreen within the state of New Jersey. Rowan University has five freshman halls including Evergreen, Chestnut, Magnolia, Mimosa, and Mullica.

The campus of Rowan University is divided in half by US route 322 a road that runs east to west. The north side of campus consists of four residence halls, two apartment complexes, seven academic buildings, the student affairs administrative hub of the campus (Savitz Hall), the student center, the school bookstore, the Recreation Center, and various athletic fields. The south side of campus is much smaller, consisting of three residence halls, one townhouse complex, two academic buildings, and four administrative buildings. The south side of campus is older than the north side, has mature trees and lawns and is generally considered a more pleasant environment (Rowan, 2006).

Evergreen Hall is located on the south side of the Rowan University campus. It is the largest residence hall on this side of campus housing 208 students at full capacity. The building is divided into an A side and a B side. Each side of the building has three floors and the only connection of A side to B side can be found on the first floor of the building. Evergreen has two large lounges, the main lounge is found in the center of the building and is located off the lobby by the front doors. The second large lounge is located directly below the first.
The first floor is characterized by two adjoining rooms, connected by a bathroom. Each room holds two residents unless a single room is reserved for upperclassmen. The first floor has one small lounge that can be used as a study space or small gathering area. The second and third floors are exactly the same except they have two small lounges rather than one.

Population and Sample Selection

Evergreen has a population of 208 residents at full capacity; however, not all of the rooms were occupied at the time of the study. Approximately 170 freshmen lived in Evergreen Hall at the time of the study. The study was conducted in the Spring 2006 semester with the resident population being the 2005/2006 cohort of Evergreen students.

The students who live in Evergreen hall were chosen randomly by the Residence Life and Campus Housing office during the summer of 2005. At the beginning of the summer of 2005, students were placed in Evergreen Hall to match their orientation leader or Peer Referral Orientation Staff (PROS) leader in June. This was to be the cornerstone of the FYI program. However, there are multiple learning communities and themed housing in another freshman building on campus, specifically Mimosa hall, and due to an administrative directive, the Mimosa programs took precedent over the Evergreen community.

Also, it was decided that if a student requested to be with a roommate who was not present at the orientation session that request would be honored. Therefore, depending on students preference, some remained in Evergreen hall while others were placed elsewhere. Thus, throughout the rest of the summer, one-by-one, about 50% of the orientation group members were removed from Evergreen Hall and sent to various
locations. This created an environment whereby a control group was living the same experience as those who started the FYI program in the summer, except for the crucial summer component.

Instrumentation

Residents were given a survey on March 6, 2006. The survey asked a range of questions covering social adjustment, academic adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, attachment to Rowan, and whether or not their RA in Evergreen is the same person who was their PROS leader in the summer. The survey was modeled on the *Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ)* Manual by Baker and Siryk (1999).

“The SACQ is a 67 item, self-report questionnaire... Underlying and shaping he development of he SACQ is the assumption that adjustment to college is multifaceted—that it involves demands varying in kind and degree” (p. 1).

According to Baker and Siryk, SACQ was proven to be both valid and reliable, “The variables measured by the SACQ are not expected to be necessarily stable and enduring properties of individuals, but states that can vary with changes in the student’s environment, life events, and, possibly personality characteristics. Thus, estimates of internal consistency reliability are more appropriate than test-retest reliability” (p. 34).

The researcher’s “Evergreen Survey” makes the same claim. Validity studies of the SACQ “were conducted with four subsequent successive freshman classes at the same institution (Clark University)” (pp. 34 - 5).

The first question on the survey was related to the resident being a full participant in the FYI experience or a non-full participant and was a “yes” or “no” question. The survey was formatted on a Likert scale with items arranged according to: strongly agree,
agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The final item on the survey asked students to identify their grade point average (GPA) by placing a mark under the appropriate GPA range.

The survey was then piloted in Mimosa Hall a freshmen building on the opposite side of campus from Evergreen Hall. Based on the pilot, the final survey was developed for implementation. The first and last items were two key differences between the piloted survey and the final one. In the piloted survey the two non-Likert items were formatted differently than the Likert statements. Two of the 10 students who completed the pilot survey missed those items. The researcher asked the pilot students why they missed those items, the pilot students reported that they seemed like directions and not part of the survey. For the final survey the two non-Likert questions were formatted to look similar to the Likert statements.

Procedure of Gathering Data

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was submitted for review on January 25, 2006. The IRB approved the application on February 20, 2006 and the data collection process began. The researcher asked the Resident Assistants to distribute and collect the surveys to which they agreed. The surveys were given to the RAs in Evergreen Hall on March 6, 2006. On March 7, 2006 the RAs held floor meetings to distribute the informed consent, survey, and letter of intent then asked all in attendance to complete the survey and informed consent. The residents were then instructed by the RAs to place the two documents to be returned (Appendices C & B) in separate piles so that they could not be identified. All 120 completed surveys were procured in this way by the RA staff and returned to the researcher on March 8, 2006.
Data Analysis

All data collected by the surveys were inputted into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Once inputted the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation (SD). These data were used primarily to answer research question 2 (RQ2). Next an independent-samples t-test was run which compared the full participant (FP) and non-full participants (NFP) mean scores on every statement reported in the survey including the item on GPA.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Profile of the Sample

The subjects in this study consisted of 120 freshman residents in Evergreen Hall on the campus of Rowan University. Respondents were both male and female and all respondents carried less than 30 credits. Out of 150 surveys the researcher distributed 120 were returned for a response rate of 80%. Out of the 120 returned 103 were useable. The other 17 were not used due to missing or incomplete information; this brought the useable response rate of the survey to 69%.

Table 4.1 illustrates the GPA of the respondents after completion of one semester at Rowan University. Out of the 103 students, five had a GPA between 2.0 and 2.5 which was the least frequent, while 37 had a GPA between 3.0 and 3.5 which was the most frequent.
Table 4.1

**GPA of Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 2.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 2.0 &amp; 2.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 2.5 &amp; 3.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 3.0 &amp; 3.5</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 3.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What impact does participation in the FYI program have on resident attitudes of the RAs in Evergreen Hall?

Table 4.2 describes overall resident attitudes towards their own RA in Evergreen Hall. Overall, 92.3% of the residents in Evergreen Hall agreed that they were happy residents. Almost 80% agreed that their RA is an authority figure and 83.5% of the residents believed their RA is an advisor. Residents reported 61.1% agreement that they were comfortable going to their RA for personal or school problems that they found difficult to handle and 23.3% said they were undecided about that particular statement. Residents stated 70.9% agreement when asked if they were satisfied with the way their RA handled personal and school problems in Evergreen Hall and 22.3% were undecided in regards to that statement.
Table 4.2

*Attitudes of Residents Towards RA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am a happy resident of Evergreen Hall.</td>
<td>53 51.5</td>
<td>42 40.8</td>
<td>5 4.9</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>2 1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel as though my RA is an authority figure.</td>
<td>25 24.3</td>
<td>55 53.4</td>
<td>13 12.6</td>
<td>6 5.8</td>
<td>4 3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel as though my RA is a role model.</td>
<td>32 31.1</td>
<td>39 37.9</td>
<td>23 22.3</td>
<td>7 6.8</td>
<td>2 1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel as though my RA is an advisor.</td>
<td>28 27.2</td>
<td>58 56.3</td>
<td>8 7.8</td>
<td>5 4.9</td>
<td>4 3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel as though my RA is a peer mediator.</td>
<td>26 25.2</td>
<td>47 45.6</td>
<td>21 20.6</td>
<td>7 6.8</td>
<td>2 1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel as though I belong on my floor.</td>
<td>46 44.7</td>
<td>36 35</td>
<td>14 13.6</td>
<td>4 3.9</td>
<td>3 2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am comfortable going to my RA for personal and school problems I find difficult to handle.</td>
<td>26 25.2</td>
<td>37 35.9</td>
<td>24 23.3</td>
<td>14 13.6</td>
<td>2 1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with the way my RA handles personal and school problems in Evergreen Hall.</td>
<td>29 28.2</td>
<td>44 42.7</td>
<td>23 22.3</td>
<td>4 3.9</td>
<td>2 1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2: What do the residents of Evergreen Hall have to say about their academic adjustment, social adjustment, and attachment to Rowan University?

For the purposes of clarity, this study will divide research question two into three subcategories: Academic Adjustment, Social Adjustment, and Attachment to Rowan University.
Table 4.3 deals with the residents of Evergreen Hall academic adjustment.

Almost 90% of the residents in Evergreen Hall were keeping up to date on their academic work. Concurrently almost 75% of students surveyed knew what they are at Rowan and what they wanted out of the institution while only 10.7% of students disagreed with that statement. Of students surveyed, 24.3% said that they were finding academic work at Rowan difficult but 38.2% of Evergreen residents say that they were not working as hard as they should be at their coursework and 36.9% have not had much motivation for studying lately. Of the residents surveyed, 88.3% said that getting a degree from Rowan University specifically, is important to them.
Table 4.3

*Academic Adjustment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been keeping up to date on my academic work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know why I'm at Rowan and what I want out of it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am finding academic work at Rowan difficult.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a degree from Rowan University is very important to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I really haven't had much motivation for studying lately.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm satisfied with the number and variety of courses available at Rowan.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the things I am interested in are not related to any of my coursework at Rowan.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am very satisfied with the professors I have now in my courses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am attending class regularly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4 describes Evergreen Residents social adjustment to Rowan University. Almost 80% of students reported that they had someone to eat with in Evergreen Hall within the first week of moving in, while nearly 85% reported that they were meeting as many people and making as many friends as they would like to at Rowan University. Only 5.8% disagreed with the statement that they were satisfied with the extracurricular activities available at Rowan. Moreover, 63.7% indicated satisfaction with the extent to which they were participating in social activities at Rowan. Thirteen point six percent reported difficulty feeling at ease with other people at Rowan.

Over 90% of students reported they had made some good friends or acquaintances at Rowan with whom they could talk about any problems they might have. Exactly 88.3% of students reported having several close social ties at the University. Only 1% of Evergreen residents felt they were different from other students at Rowan University in ways they did not like while 16.5% said they were undecided about that statement. Additionally, 86.3% of Evergreen Residents indicated they were satisfied with the social life at Rowan.
Table 4.4

Social Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I had more than one person I could eat with in Evergreen within the first week of moving in.</td>
<td>46 44.7</td>
<td>36 35</td>
<td>14 13.6</td>
<td>4 3.9</td>
<td>3 2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n= 103, SD= 1.001, M= 1.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am meeting as many people and making as many friends as I would like at Rowan.</td>
<td>45 43.7</td>
<td>42 40.8</td>
<td>12 11.7</td>
<td>4 3.9</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n= 103, SD=.81, M= 1.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with the extracurricular activities available at Rowan.</td>
<td>23 22.3</td>
<td>58 56.3</td>
<td>16 15.5</td>
<td>6 5.8</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n= 103, SD=.81, M= 2.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am having difficulty feeling at ease with other people at Rowan.</td>
<td>3 2.9</td>
<td>11 10.7</td>
<td>9 8.7</td>
<td>44 42.7</td>
<td>36 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n= 103, SD= 1.066, M= 3.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with the extent to which I am participating in social activities at Rowan.</td>
<td>17 16.5</td>
<td>48 46.6</td>
<td>28 27.2</td>
<td>6 5.8</td>
<td>3 2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n= 103, SD=.923, M= 2.31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have some good friends or acquaintances at Rowan with whom I can talk about any problems I may have.</td>
<td>66 64.1</td>
<td>30 29.1</td>
<td>6 5.8</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n= 103, SD=.625, M= 1.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have several close social ties at Rowan.</td>
<td>50 48.5</td>
<td>41 39.8</td>
<td>8 7.8</td>
<td>3 2.9</td>
<td>1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n= 103, SD=.819, M= 1.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I am very different from other students at Rowan in ways that I don't like.</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>3 2.9</td>
<td>17 16.5</td>
<td>48 46.6</td>
<td>34 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n= 103, SD=.837, M= 4.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am quite satisfied with my social life at Rowan.</td>
<td>32 31.1</td>
<td>56 54.4</td>
<td>10 9.7</td>
<td>3 2.9</td>
<td>1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n= 103, SD=.779, M= 1.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5 provides data about students overall attachment to the University. Only 9.7% of students surveyed indicated they had given considerable thought to transferring to another institution and 3.9% indicated they had considered dropping out of school altogether. Also nearly 90% indicated they were happy about their decision to attend Rowan University.

Table 4.5

*Attachment to Rowan University*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lately I have been giving a lot of thought to transferring to another college. n= 103, SD= 1.048, M= 4.19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lately I have been giving a lot of thought to dropping out of college altogether. n= 103, SD= .762, M= 4.71</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am pleased now about my decision to attend Rowan in particular. n= 103, SD= .779, M= 1.87</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the balance I would rather be at home than at Rowan. n= 103, SD= 1.109, M= 3.46</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find myself giving considerable time to taking time off from Rowan and finishing later. n= 103, SD=.827, M= 4.52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in responses between students who completed the summer orientation piece of the program and those who did not?
An independent-samples $t$ test comparing the means scores of the full participants (FP) and the non-full participants (NFP) found a significant difference between the means of the two groups for five of the statements on the survey.

The mean of the FP ($m = 1.31$, $sd = .614$) was significantly higher than the NFP ($m = 1.64$, $sd = .653$) when asked if students had some good friends or acquaintances with whom the residents can talk about problems they can talk. The difference between the two means is statistically significant at the .05 level ($t = -2.409$, $df = 95$).

The mean of the FP ($m = 1.56$, $sd = .732$) was significantly higher than that of the NFP ($m = 2.09$, $sd = .947$) when asked if they were pleased about their decision to attend Rowan in particular. The difference between the two means is statistically significant at the .01 level ($t = -3.04$, $df = 95$). The mean of the FP ($m = 4.7$, $sd = .404$) was significantly different that that of the NFP ($m = 4.21$, $sd = 1.139$) when asked if the students had given considerable thought to taking time off from Rowan and finishing later. The difference between the two means is statistically significant at the .05 level ($t = 2.364$, $df = 38.319$).

The mean of the FP ($m = 1.58$, $sd = .833$) was significantly higher than that of the NFP ($m = 2.09$, $sd = .712$) when asked if getting a degree from Rowan University was very important to them. The difference between the two means is statistically significant at the .05 level ($t = -2.510$, $df = 95$).

There is a significant difference in the mean of the FP ($m = 3.21$, $sd = 1.194$) as compared to the NFP ($m = 2.67$, $sd = 1.242$) when asked if they were working as hard as they should in their coursework. The difference between the two means is statistically significant at the .05 level ($t = 2.075$, $df = 94$). Conversely, the mean of the FP ($m = 4.05$, $sd = .983$) was not significantly different from the mean of the NFP ($m = 3.59$, $sd = 1.266$),
the \( p = .057 \), when asked what their GPA's were. Therefore the difference between the two means is not statistically significant at the .05 level \( (t = 1.930, df = 94) \).
### Table 4.6

**Independent-Samples t Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Equal Variances</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have friends to talk to</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>-2.409</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>.018*</td>
<td>-.32</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>-.591 to -.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleased to attend Rowan</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>-3.04</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>.003**</td>
<td>-.53</td>
<td>.174</td>
<td>-.873 to -.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought of finishing later</td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>2.364</td>
<td>38.319</td>
<td>.023*</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>.071 to .911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working hard</td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>2.075</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>.041*</td>
<td>-.51</td>
<td>.260</td>
<td>.023 to 1.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowan degree important</td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-2.510</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>.014*</td>
<td>-.51</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td>-.918 to -.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My GPA is?</td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>1.930</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>.057***</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>-.013 to .919</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* statistically significant $p<.05$
** statistically significant $p<.01$
*** not statistically significant $p<.05$
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

On the campus of Rowan University the residence life professional staff constantly search for new ways to improve the residential experience in an effort to increase student retention. In this study, Evergreen Hall residents were surveyed to determine whether the First Year Innovator program that included the summer orientation consistent leader component was a success.

Purpose of the Study

This study grew out of the need to evaluate the FYI program created by George Brelsford, Joanne Damminger, and Stephen Bonora (author of study). Freshmen residents of Evergreen Hall were asked to identify whether their PROS leader in the summer orientation was also their RA in the fall semester of 2005. The residents responded to a range of statements regarding academic adjustment, social adjustment, attachment to Rowan University, and effectiveness of their RA. Finally, the study sought to determine if there was a significant difference in the responses to those statements between students who completed the summer orientation piece of the program and those that did not.

Methodology

The study attempted to survey the total population of Freshmen residents living in Evergreen Hall in the spring 2006 semester. This group was chosen because they are
currently participating in the FYI program or they are alongside those residents who are participating in the program having an identical experience except for the summer orientation component. In order to ensure the consent and privacy rights of the students were maintained an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was submitted on January 5, 2006 (Appendix A). The application included a survey (Appendix C) and a copy of the informed consent (Appendix B). The application was approved February 20, 2006. Subjects were asked to read and sign the consent form before completing the survey.

Residents were given a survey on March 6, 2006. The survey posed a series of statements covering social adjustment, academic adjustment, attachment to Rowan, and whether their RA in Evergreen is the same person who was the PROS leader in the summer. The survey was modeled on the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) Manual by Baker and Siryk (1999). “The SACQ is a 67 item, self-report questionnaire... Underlying and shaping the development of the SACQ is the assumption that adjustment to college is multifaceted – that it involves demands varying in kind and degree” (p. 1).

The researcher asked the Resident Assistants of Evergreen Hall to distribute and collect the surveys to which they agreed. The surveys were given to the RAs in Evergreen Hall on March 6, 2006. On March 7, 2006 the RAs held floor meetings to distribute the informed consent, survey, and letter of intent then asked all in attendance to complete the survey and informed consent. The residents were then instructed by the RAs to place the two documents to be returned (Appendices C and B) in separate piles so
that they could not be identified. All 120 completed surveys were secured in this way by
the RA staff and returned to the researcher on March 8, 2006.

Data Analysis

The survey data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social
Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were calculated including frequencies,
percentages, means, and standard deviation (SD). The data were used to primarily to
answer research question 2 (RQ2).

Next an independent-samples \( t \) test was run comparing whether residents were
full participants (FP) or non-full participants (NFP) with items on the survey. Through
comparison of the means of the FP and NFP groups the researcher was able to answer
research question 3 by finding if there were any statistically significant differences
between the FP and the NFP in the FYI program.

Discussion of the Findings

Research Question 1: What impact does participation in the FYI program have on
resident attitudes of the RAs in Evergreen Hall.

Overall, participation in the FYI program seemed to suggest positive attitude
toward the RAs in Evergreen Hall. For example, 92.3% of the residents in Evergreen
Hall agreed that they were happy residents. Almost 80% agreed that their RA is an
authority figure and 83.5% of the residents believed their RA is an advisor. Residents
reported 61.1% agreement that they are comfortable going to their RA for personal or
school problems that they found difficult to handle and 23.3% said they were undecided
about that particular statement. Residents stated 70.9% agreement when asked if they
were satisfied with the way their RA handled personal and school problems in Evergreen Hall and 22.3% were undecided in regards to that statement.

Research Question 2: What do residents of Evergreen Hall say about their academic adjustment, social adjustment, and attachment to Rowan University?

In regards to academic adjustment, residents of Evergreen reported very positive attitudes. For example, 86% of the respondents said that they agreed or strongly agreed that they had been keeping up to date on academic work and 73.8% knew why they are at Rowan and what they are seeking from the experience.

Of the residents surveyed, 40.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they are finding academic work at Rowan difficult. However, 35% were undecided as to whether Rowan was a difficult curriculum, and 24.3% agreed or strongly agreed that academic work was difficult at Rowan.

Most importantly, 88.3% of residents said that getting a degree from Rowan University is important to them. This outcome is noteworthy because it provides evidence supporting the University goal of 90% freshmen to sophomore retention than the current 85.4% (Rowan University Master Plan).

The social adjustment of students is the second factor of RQ2 and residents reported adjusting favorably across the board. The only question that Evergreen residents reported less than positive attitudes was in their satisfaction with the extent to which they were participating in social activities at Rowan. Only 8.8% of the residents said they were unhappy with the extent to which they were participating socially. Moreover, 86.3% of students surveyed reported that they are satisfied with their social life at Rowan.
Regarding attachment to the University, 93.2% of Evergreen residents reported that they have made some good friends at Rowan with whom they can talk about any issue. This is an excellent figure because any attachment is likely to increase retention of students.

Only 9.7% of residents surveyed reported that they had given a lot of thought to transferring to another college and only 3.9% reported any thought of dropping out of college altogether.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in responses between students who completed the summer orientation piece of the program and those who did not?

A significant difference in the FP and the NFP groups were noted in five of the 35 survey items. Of these items four were attachment related and two dealt with both groups sharing one statement.

With respect to the attachment items, the mean of the FP \((m = 1.56, sd = .732)\) was significantly higher than that of the NFP \((m = 2.09, sd = .947)\) when asked if they were pleased about their decision to attend Rowan in particular \((p < .01)\). The mean of the FP \((m = 4.7, sd = .404)\) was significantly different that that of the NFP \((m = 4.21, sd = 1.139)\) when asked if the students had given considerable thought to taking time off from Rowan and finishing later \((p < .05)\).

Regarding the attachment items the mean of the FP \((m = 1.58, sd = .833)\) was significantly higher than that of the NFP \((m = 2.09, sd = .712)\) when asked if getting a degree from Rowan University was very important to them \((p < .05)\). With respect to academic adjustment only, there was a significant difference in the mean of the FP \((m=\)
3.21, \(sd= 1.194\) compared to the NFP \((m= 2.67, \ sd= 1.242)\) when asked if they were working as hard as they possibly should in their coursework \((p < .05)\). Regarding the final attachment item on the survey, the mean of the FP \((m=1.31, \ sd=.614)\) was significantly higher than that of the NFP \((m=1.64, \ sd=.653)\) when asked if they have some good friends at Rowan with whom they can talk \((p<.05)\).

Conclusions

The findings revealed that participation in the FYI program did not lead to more positive attitudes towards the RA staff in Evergreen Hall by the residents. While the results yielded higher mean scores in nine of the 10 RA related questions none of those scores computed to a statistically significant difference between the FP and NFP.

Overall, the residents of Evergreen Hall seem to be fairly well adjusted socially, academically, and attached to Rowan University. In fact, the FYI program had a positive impact on attachment which should increase persistence in the same way learning communities positively impact persistence as Lenning and Ebbers (1999) explained in their research.

Full participants of the FYI program reported better socialization than the NFP twice. This is consistent with the work of Damminger (2004) who found that housing students together related to higher social satisfaction.

The findings suggest that the FP in the Evergreen Hall FYI program seemed to get more out of their first year experience at Rowan University. Statistically significant differences in the mean score can be found in five of 35 survey items. While one more statement yielded a near but not significant difference, that statement dealt with participants' GPA.
The findings suggest that a First Year Experience (FYE) program with an emphasis on social adjustment and attachment like the First Year Innovators (FYI) program in Evergreen Hall, leads to increased student attachment to the university and academic adjustment.

These findings are consistent with previous Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) results regarding peer-support intervention programs (Baker & Siryk, 1999). However, the FYE example shows strong attachment (five times) and social adjustment (two times) into the second semester of the first year. Previous SACQ research indicated that attachment and social differences between the sample population and control groups disappeared after the first semester.

After comparing the results of this study with the work of Baker and Siryk (1999), Lemming and Ebbers (1999), and Damminger (2004), the FYI program provides promise for increasing academic adjustment, building learning communities, and enhancing attachment to Rowan University. With the goal of the university to increase return rates of freshman to sophomore student status promising programs such as FYI that show positive impacts on student retention should be further developed.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations are made for further research:

1. A survey during the first week that students move into Evergreen Hall would help establish a base-line for ongoing research on the topic of academic adjustment, social adjustment, and attachment to Rowan University.

2. A longitudinal study following freshmen residents of Evergreen Hall from their first year at the university to the time they graduate or leave Rowan University.
The longitudinal study would enable groups to participate in a series of focus group sessions, one at the beginning of each semester of their academic career.

3. A residence hall of Full Participants (FP) could be compared to a residence hall of Non-Full Participants (NFP). In the future, Evergreen Hall could be FP only and Mullica Hall could be NFP creating a useful comparative study.

4. A mixed method approach to gathering data from selected undergraduate resident students would be useful. Interviews, focus groups, and a survey could yield more comprehensive data.
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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Application
Rowan University Approval
INSTRUCTIONS: Check all appropriate boxes, answer all questions completely, include attachments, and obtain appropriate signatures. Submit an original and two copies of the completed application to the Office of the Associate Provost.

NOTE: Applications must be typed. Be sure to make a copy for your files.

FOR IRB USE ONLY:
Protocol Number: IRB-

Received: Reviewed: Exemption: ___Yes ___ No
Category(ies): Approved ____________ (date)

Step 1: Is the proposed research subject to IRB review?
All research involving human participants conducted by Rowan University faculty and staff is subject to IRB review. Some, but not all, student-conducted studies that involve human participants are considered research and are subject to IRB review. Check the accompanying instructions for more information. Then check with your class instructor for guidance as to whether you must submit your research protocol for IRB review. If you determine that your research meets the above criteria and is not subject to IRB review, STOP. You do not need to apply. If you or your instructor have any doubts, apply for an IRB review.

Step 2: If you have determined that the proposed research is subject to IRB review, complete the identifying information below.

Project Title: Evergreen Project

Researcher: Stephen Bonora
Department: VP for Student Affairs
Location Rowan University: Savitz Hall
Mailing Address: Box 91 201 Mullica Hill Rd. Glassboro NJ, 08028
E-Mail: Bonora15@students.rowan.edu
Telephone: (856)256-7029

Co-Investigator/s:

Faculty Sponsor (if student)* Burton Sisco
Department Educational Leadership
Location: Rowan University: Robinson Hall
E-Mail: Sisco@rowan.edu
Telephone: (856)256-3717

Approved For Use by Rowan IRB: 7/04
Step 3: Determine whether the proposed research eligible for an exemption from a full IRB review.

Federal regulations (45 CFR 46) permit the exemption of some types of research from a full IRB review. If your research can be described by one or more of the categories listed below, check the appropriate category(ies), complete questions 1-5, and complete the Assurances on the last page of the application.

If your research cannot be described by any of these categories, your research is not exempt, and you must complete the entire "Human Research Review Application."

_____ Category 1 - Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as: (a) research on regular and special education instructional strategies; or (b) research on the effectiveness of, or the comparison among, instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

X Category 2 - Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior, unless: (a) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that the human participants can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants; and (b) any disclosure of the human participants' responses outside the research could reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participants' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

(Note: Exemption for survey and interview procedures does not apply to research involving children. Exemption for observation of public behavior does not apply to research involving children except when the investigator does not participate in the activities being observed.)

_____ Category 3 - Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under Category 2 above if: (a) the human participants are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (b) federal statute requires without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.

_____ Category 4 - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that participants cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants.

_____ Category 5 - Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (a) public benefit or service programs; (b) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (c) possible changes in or alternatives to these programs or procedures; or (d) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.

_____ Category 6 - Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies: (a) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed; or (b) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

(Note: Exemption categories cannot be applied to research involving fetuses, pregnant women, human in vitro fertilization, or prisoners.)
Please answer Questions 1-5 below

1. WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH?

To help freshmen learn about how they learn and to inform them about using their awareness of learning preferences to increase personal success in and out of the classroom, by using Let Me Learn™ (LML) strategies.

2. DESCRIBE THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH INCLUDING WHAT WILL BE REQUIRED OF SUBJECTS (ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEET IF NECESSARY):

Survey for all freshman students willing to take it.
Interview with up to six of the Resident Assistants in Evergreen Hall.

3. DESCRIBE THE SUBJECTS WHO WILL BE PARTICIPATING (NUMBER, AGE, GENDER, ETC):

0-170 male and female freshmen students residing in Evergreen Hall
0-6 Resident Assistants living/working in Evergreen Hall

4. DESCRIBE HOW SUBJECTS WILL BE RECRUITED (e.g. ADVERTISEMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS IN CLASS, E-MAIL, INTERNET)

Resident Assistants will ask their residents to complete a survey. It will be made clear that the survey is voluntary.
Researcher will ask Resident Assistants if they are will to participate in interview.

5. WHERE WILL THE RESEARCH BE CONDUCTED:

Evergreen Residence Hall.

NOTE: IF THE RESEARCH IS TO BE CONDUCTED IN ANOTHER INSTITUTION (e.g. A SCHOOL, HOSPITAL, AGENCY, etc.) A PERMISSION LETTER FROM AN ADMINISTRATOR ON THE LETTERHEAD OF THAT INSTITUTION MUST BE ATTACHED.

IF THE RESEARCH IS TO BE CONDUCTED AT ANOTHER UNIVERSITY, A SIGNED COPY OF THE IRB APPROVAL FORM FROM THAT UNIVERSITY MUST BE ATTACHED.

ATTACH THE CONSENT FORM TO THIS APPLICATION. The Consent Form must address all of the elements required for informed consent (SEE INSTRUCTIONS).

NOTE: IF THE ONLY RECORD LINKING THE SUBJECT AND THE RESEARCH WOULD BE THE CONSENT DOCUMENT, AND THE RESEARCH PRESENTS NO MORE THAN MINIMAL RISK OF HARM TO SUBJECTS, YOU MAY USE AN ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE FOR CONSENT. IF YOU WISH TO REQUEST PERMISSION FROM THE IRB TO USE AN ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE, ATTACH A COPY OF THE FIRST PAGE OF YOUR RESEARCH INSTRUMENT OR A LETTER WITH THE REQUIRED INFORMATION (see Instructions).
If you are requesting an exemption from a full IRB review, STOP. Complete the last page of this application ("Certifications"), and forward the completed (typed) application to the Office of the Associate Provost for Research, The Graduate School, Memorial Hall.

IF YOU CANNOT CLAIM ONE OF THE EXEMPTIONS LISTED ABOVE, COMPLETE ALL OF THE ABOVE AS WELL AS THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR A FULL IRB REVIEW.

Does your research involve a special population?

- Socioeconomically, educationally, or linguistically disadvantaged racial/ethnic group
- Pregnancy/fetus
- Cognitively impaired
- Elderly
- Terminally ill
- Incarcerated
- No special population

At what level of risk will the participants in the proposed research be placed?

(Note: "Minimal risk" means that the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. The concept of risk goes beyond physical risk and includes risks to the participant's dignity and self-respect as well as psychological, emotional, or behavioral risk.)

- Minimal Risk
- More than Minimal Risk
- Uncertain

1. HOW WILL SUBJECTS BE RECRUITED? IF STUDENTS, WILL THEY BE SOLICITED FROM CLASS?

2. WHAT RISKS TO SUBJECTS (PHYSIOLOGICAL AND/OR PSYCHOLOGICAL) ARE INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH?
3. IS DECEPTION INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH? IF SO, WHAT IS IT AND WHY WILL IT BE USED?

4. WHAT INFORMATION WILL BE GIVEN TO THE SUBJECTS AFTER THEIR PARTICIPATION? IF DECEPTION IS USED, IT MUST BE DISCLOSED AFTER PARTICIPATION.


6. HOW WILL THE DATA BE RECORDED AND STORED? WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THE DATA? ALL DATA MUST BE KEPT BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR FOR A MINIMUM OF THREE YEARS.
CERTIFICATIONS:
Rowan University maintains a Federalwide Assurance (FWA) with the Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. This Assurance includes a requirement for all research staff working with human participants to receive training in ethical guidelines and regulations. "Research staff" is defined as persons who have direct and substantive involvement in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research and includes students fulfilling these roles as well as their faculty advisors.

Please attach a copy of your “Completion Certificate for Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams” from the National Institutes of Health.

If you need to complete that training, go to the Web Tutorial at http://cme.nci.nih.gov/

Responsible Researcher: I certify that I am familiar with the ethical guidelines and regulations regarding the protection of human participants from research risks and will adhere to the policies and procedures of the Rowan University Institutional Review Board. I will ensure that all research staff working on the proposed project who will have direct and substantive involvement in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting this research (including students fulfilling these roles) will complete IRB approved training. I will not initiate this research project until I receive written approval from the IRB. I agree to obtain informed consent of participants in this project if required by the IRB; to report to the IRB any unanticipated effects on participants which become apparent during the course or as a result of experimentation and the actions taken as a result; to cooperate with the IRB in the continuing review of this project; to obtain prior approval from the IRB before amending or altering the scope of the project or implementing changes in the approved consent form; and to maintain documentation of consent forms and progress reports for a minimum of three years after completion of the final report or longer if required by the sponsor or the institution. I further certify that I have completed training regarding human participant research ethics within the last three years as indicated below my signature.

Signature of Responsible Researcher: _____________________________ Date: __________

Faculty Advisor (if Responsible Researcher is a student): I certify that I am familiar with the ethical guidelines and regulations regarding the protection of human participants from research risks. I further certify that I have completed training regarding human participant research ethics within the last three years as indicated below my signature (attach copy of your “Completion Certificate for Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams” from the National Institutes of Health).

Signature of Faculty Advisor: _____________________________ Date: __________
Completion Certificate

This is to certify that

Stephen Bonora

has completed the Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 10/06/2005.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

National Institutes of Health
http://www.nih.gov
This is to certify that

**Burton Sisco**

has completed the **Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams** online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 09/29/2004.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

National Institutes of Health
http://www.nih.gov
APPENDIX B

Consent Form
I agree to participate in a research project entitled 'The Evergreen First Year Experience Project', which is being conducted by Stephen Bonora as an assignment in partial fulfillment of the Master's Degree in Higher Education Administration. The purpose of this study is to explore how Residence Life and Student Affairs in general can better help a student through their first year on campus. The data collected in this study will be combined with data from previous studies and will be submitted as part of a research paper.

I understand that my responses will be anonymous and that all the data gathered will be confidential. I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used in any way thought best for publication or education provided that I am in no way identified and my name is not used.

I understand that there are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.

I understand that my participation does not imply employment with the state of New Jersey, Rowan University, the principal investigator, or any other project facilitator.

If I have any questions or problems concerning my participation in this study I may contact Stephen Bonora at (856) 256-7029 or Dr. Burt Sisco at (856) 256-3717.

(Signature of Participant) (Date)

(Signature of Investigator) (Date)
APPENDIX C

Survey
Your participation or non-participation in regards to this survey will in no way affect your academic standing or housing at Rowan University. All responses will be kept confidential. Thank you for your participation.

**Evergreen Survey**

Please mark with an “X” the response that best characterizes your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was the RA on your floor in fall semester 2005 the same person who was one of your PROS leaders for summer orientation before your freshmen year?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I am happy as a resident of Evergreen Hall.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel as though my RA is an authority figure.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel as though my RA is a role model.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel as though my RA is a advisor.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I feel as though my RA is a peer mediator.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I feel as though I belong on my floor.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I had more than one person I could eat with in Evergreen within the first week of moving in.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. I am comfortable going to my RA for personal &amp; school problems I find difficult to handle.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. I am satisfied with the way my RA handles personal &amp; school problems in Evergreen Hall.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I can handle relationship &amp; school problems myself.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I am meeting as many people, and making as many friends as I would like at Rowan.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. I am satisfied with the extracurricular activities available at Rowan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I am having difficulty feeling at ease with other people at Rowan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I am satisfied with the extent to which I am participating in social activities at Rowan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Lately I have been giving a lot of thought to transferring to another college.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Lately I have been giving a lot of thought to dropping out of college altogether.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>I have some good friends or acquaintances at Rowan with whom I can talk about any problems I may have.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I feel I fit well in the Rowan environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>I am pleased now about my decision to attend Rowan in particular.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I have several close social ties at Rowan.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>On the balance, I would rather be home than at Rowan.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>I feel I am very different from other students at Rowan in ways that I don’t like.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>I find myself giving considerable thought to taking time off from Rowan and finishing later.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>I am quite satisfied with my social life at Rowan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>I have been keeping up to date on my academic work.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>I know why I’m at Rowan and what I want out of it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>I am finding academic work at Rowan difficult.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>I’m not working as hard as I should at my course work.</td>
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<td>29.</td>
<td>Getting a degree from Rowan University is very important to me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>I really haven’t had much motivation for studying lately.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>I am satisfied with the number and variety of courses available at Rowan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Most of the things I am interested in are not related to any of my course work at Rowan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>I am very satisfied with the professors I have now in my courses.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>34.</td>
<td>I am attending class regularly.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Below 2.0</td>
<td>2.0 – 2.5</td>
<td>2.5 – 3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>My grade point average (GPA) is:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please return this survey to your RA. Thank you once again for your participation!
APPENDIX D

Letter to Participants
Dear Evergreen Resident,

I am a graduate student in the Higher Education Administration program and would like to ask for your help with a research study I am conducting as part of my thesis. The study is investigating the ways that Residence Life and Student Affairs in general can better help a student through their first year on campus.

Attached is a letter of consent and a short survey. Please fill both out completely. Once the survey is complete, you can return it to me (with the informed consent form) in one of the following ways:

- Drop it off with your RA.

or

- Drop it off with your RD.

Please return both the survey and the informed consent by March 8, 2006.

Thank you in advance for your support!

Sincerely,

Stephen Bonora
Graduate Student/ Higher Ed. Admin.
(856)256-7029