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national orientation directors association

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Opinionnaire: An Orientation Tool

An opinionnaire produces a survey of opinions. The primary purpose for utilizing this particular opinionnaire is to make evident to both students and parents that their respective views differ, often highly significantly, on a variety of topics. The goal is to demonstrate the need for open and effective communication between students and parents. There is no intent, nor attempt, to discuss values nor to make value judgments.

Sharing the results of the opinionnaire with students and parents assists in making both groups more receptive to discussing methods for enhancing their communication skills and in preparing them both for some changes which can be anticipated.

Once the subject of how students change arises, the author has found that the parents who already have had one or more children go away to college are willing to share their personal experiences with those who are having this occur for the first time. The "first time" parents appreciate this sharing and insight, learning something of what to expect and how to cope with some of the changes. The discussion frequently includes, also, how the parents change as the family leaves home.

The Northern Arizona University opinionnaire is printed on an opscan form to permit immediate machine scoring and statistical evaluation utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Program.

The opinionnaire can be structured for a specific purpose and the specific institution. Items used on the Northern Arizona University opinionnaire are in Table 1, and were selected from suggestions made by the Student Services Division staff, student service group members, and the student orientation counselors. Some revisions in the opinionnaire items will be made this year, based on suggestions from the 1981 orientation participants and additional input from the student services staff.

The opinionnaire results discussed in this article are based on useable responses from 1155 of the 1326 students and 679 of the 897 parents who participated in the 1981 summer orientation program at Northern Arizona University.

A highly significant difference was found between responses of parents and students in 28 of the 37 items. Items in which a significant difference was found, and the level of significance, are presented in Table 2.

Some of the differences were expected. For example, it was anticipated that students would be more liberal about alcohol use, residence hall options, and visitation privileges than their parents.

In Item 1, "alcohol should be allowed at social events on campus," 65.1% of the students, but only 33.6% of the parents, agreed with the

Margaret A. Cibik is Director of Admissions and New Student Program, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona.

statement. In Item 7, "the legal drinking age in Arizona should be raised from 19 to 21," only 12.9% of the students, but 51% of the parents, agreed with the statement. In Item 3, "alcohol should be sold in campus unions," 34.6% of the students, and 15.5% of the parents, agreed with that statement.

PREVIEWS 1981 Opinionnaire

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY



COMPUTER SERVICES
GENERAL PURPOSE QUESTIONNAIRE

INDICATE THE MOST APPROPRIATE RESPONSE: 1 = AGREE 2 = DISAGREE

Item	Statement	Yes	No
1	Alcohol should be allowed at social events on campus		
2	A 24-hr. visitation option should be available in residence halls		
3	Family planning, counseling and contraceptives should be available through the campus health center		
4	Grades should be sent to students only and not to parents		
5	Coed (on alternate floors) residence halls should be available as an option		
6	Students are adults; therefore, what they do in their rooms should not be supervised nor regulated		
7	The legal drinking age in Arizona should be raised from 19 to 21		
8	The use of marijuana should be legalized		
9	Marijuana is more dangerous than alcohol		
10	All students should be allowed to have cars on campus		
11	Upperclassmen should have more privileges than freshmen (parking, housing, etc.)		
12	Returning students should have priority for selection of residence hall rooms		
13	A college degree is more important today than in the past		
14	Where possible, no smoking areas should be provided in residence and dining halls		
15	It is all right for a couple to live together before, or in lieu of, marriage		
16	People should not copy news items which violate their personal news values		
17	Child care facilities should be provided on campus through student fees		
18	Colleges should require reading/writing competencies before admitting students		
19	Colleges should require reading/writing competencies before allowing a student to graduate		
20	Religious centers should be allowed to speak on campus		
21	Women should sign a consent plan to marriage and family responsibilities		
22	Class attendance should be a student's responsibility, not an administrative nor faculty policy		
23	Today's students are more concerned about world affairs than students in the late sixties		
24	Students today are more concerned about themselves than about others		
25	Students who work while attending college earn better grades than those who do not work		
26	A student's major should be his own decision, not his parents'		
27	Social activities involvement are as important as academics in college		
28	Students should work part-time to earn their own spending money		
29	Parents should withdraw financial support if dissatisfied with their son or daughter's college decisions/choices		

Item	Statement	Yes	No
30	The moral responsibility for working out roommate differences lies with the roommates, not the staff		
31	Alcohol should be sold in the campus unions		
32	"Sleeping out" (sleeping out of school for a year or so) is all right		
33	The University's minority enrollment should be in proportion to that in the state		
34	Students' receiving financial assistance from parents should be accountable to them		
35	Students, not parents, should be responsible for financing their education		
36	Job skill education is more important than salary		
37	Peers have more influence than parents on the individual student		

DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE

EXAMPLES

WRONG:

WRONG:

WRONG:

RIGHT:

IMPORTANT DIRECTIONS FOR MARKING RESPONSES

- Use black ball-point pen.
- Do not use correction fluid.
- Make heavy, dark marks that fill the circle completely.
- Do not mark the response area with a pencil.
- Make the marks inside the circle, not on the border.

Pertaining to residence hall life, in Item 2, "a 24-hour visitation option should be available in residence halls," 75.1% of the students, but only 25.3% of the parents, agreed with that statement. In Item 5, "coed (on alternate floors) residence halls should be available as an option," 89.2% of the students, and 58.7% of the parents, agreed with the statement.

In Item 5, "it is all right for a couple to live together before, or in lieu of, marriage," 64.8% of the students, but only 27.6% of the parents, agreed with that statement.

Parents agreed with requiring admittance and graduation competency testing, with 90% indicating each of these tests should be required. Only 76% and 77% of the students agreed that admission and graduation testing, respectively, should be required. Although a higher percentage of parents agreed, a majority of both groups agreed competency testing should be required.

In Item 25, "students who work while attending college earn better grades than those who do not work," only 14.1% of the students, and 34.7% of the parents agreed. Yet, national studies have indicated working students do earn better grades.

In some items, a significant difference was not anticipated and did not occur. For example, in Item 4, "where possible, no-smoking areas should be provided in residence and dining halls," 93.9% of the students and 95.0% of the parents agreed.

In some items, a significant difference was anticipated but did not occur. For example, in Item 23, "today's students are more concerned about world affairs than students in the late sixties," it was expected that today's students would disagree but that parents would agree. However, less than half of both groups, 48.7% of the students and 48.9% of the parents, agreed with the statement.

In a related item, Item 24, "students today are more concerned about themselves than about others," over half of both groups agreed. Fifty-four percent of the parents and 55.4% of the students agreed with this statement.

The students' attitudes are considerably more liberal than the parents.

TABLE 2
1981 Opinionnaire Results
Items with Significant Difference Between Students and Parents Responses

Item Number	Item Description	Level of Significance
1	Alcohol at social events on campus	.000
2	24 hour visitation option	.000
3	Family planning and Contraceptives	.000
4	Grades only sent to students	.000
5	Coed residence halls	.000
6	Students are adults	.000
7	Drinking age from 19 to 21	.000
8	Legalized marijuana	.000
9	Marijuana worse than alcohol	.000
10	Cars on campus	.000
11	Upperclassmen more privileged	.000
12	Returning student priority	.000
13	Living together is OK	.000
14	Personal values vs. laws	.001

Table 2 (Continued)

Item Number	Item Description	Level of Significance
15	Child care facilities	.000
16	Admittance competency tests	.000
17	Graduation competency tests	.000
18	Religious speakers on campus	.000
19	Class attendance	.000
20	Working students get better grades	.000
21	Student's major	.009
22	Social activities are important	.004
23	Students should work part-time	.000
24	Unhappy parents withdraw support	.000
25	Alcohol sold in unions	.000
26	Stopping out is OK	.000
27	Account to parents	.000
28	Peers more influential	.042

Again, by making both groups aware of differences in their values, emphasis is placed on the need to communicate openly with each other.

Discussing the results of the survey resulted in many laughs, some surprises, and some concern. However, in both the parents' and students' groups, the results served as an initial ice-breaker. Students had very open and candid discussions with their student orientation counselors. Parents shared their experiences and concerns readily with each other and with the student services staff session leaders. One interesting side note was the observation that students were more interested in the content of specific items but parents were interested in overall, general concepts, looking more at the broad implications of the results than did the students.

In summary, using an opinionnaire survey was found to be an extremely beneficial tool during orientation programs, for both parents' and students' sessions. Some of the results were anticipated; others were not. The primary goal to establish an awareness of the need for open communication between parents and students was easily accomplished.

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Sr. Barbara Werner, P.O.

A Peer Advising Training Program

I. Rationale:

Dominican College is a small, private liberal arts college located in Rockland County, New York. Its population is 1600 (including full-time, part-time, evening and weekend students), but it is a totally commuter college with no dormitories. In 1977, when the college was attempting to discover why its attrition rate was high, the advisement system was expanded to assure that students withdrawing from the college would be required to complete an "Exit Interview," before a transcript would be released. The exit interview is conducted by the Director of Student Development and then a questionnaire is completed by the student.

Semester by semester, statistics were gathered and analyzed. Some reasons cited for withdrawing were addressed and at least partially resolved: e.g., the parking situation (a van has been rendered for shuttle service). There are always items which cannot be resolved, such as dorms to live in. However, after studying some of these reasons, such as "couldn't find a group to belong to," "disliked snobbishness of campus social groups," and "disappointed with extracurricular activities" for examples, it seemed to the Freshman Directorate (the group of academic advisers to the Freshmen) that there was a further need to initiate a Peer Advising Program where interaction among peers would be assured and that "significant other" might be identified on campus.

Because there are no residence facilities on campus, it is harder for new students at DC to make friends (unless they come with some peers from high school). Search of the literature told us that peer-to-peer involvement had high credibility and, in some situations, can aid in retention of students. Also, the needs of the present student body were not adequately being met through the existing programs. This is why an attempt was made to establish a Peer Advising Program.

Some assumptions that were made were: since peer advisers are themselves involved in the college experience, they can better understand the pressures and problems of this situation than members of the staff. Peer advisers and students share a far more similar frame of reference. Student advisers do not represent "the establishment," authority or discipline. They do not appear guilty by association. According to research by Brown at Southwest Texas State, it was concluded that with careful selection and appropriate training, students can function effectively as advisers to their peers.

II. Purpose/Goals:

The goals of the "Peer Advising Program" are: to provide a learning ex-

Sister Barbara Werner, O.P., is chairperson of the Freshman Directorate, Dominican College of Blauvelt, Orangeburg, N.Y.