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Survey of Faculty Activities and Perceptions

Part-Time and Contract Instructors Are More Engaged with First-Year Students than Are Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research

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In late spring of 2007, the Survey of Faculty Activities and Perceptions (SFAP) was administered to all Loyola Lakeside faculty (tenured and tenure-track) and instructional staff (full-time contract and part-time instructors). The survey was part of a larger project in which Loyola is participating, the Parsing the First Year¹ (PFY). The purpose of the PFY project is to investigate the nature of and the factors that affect students' first year of college. The SFAP is intended to measure faculty activities and perceptions related to first-year students.

Twenty five percent of tenure stream faculty at Loyola responded to the survey, compared to 12% of instructional staff. The number of untenured faculty respondents was so small (11%, compared to 91% tenured), and this must be kept in mind when interpreting the survey results.² Another caveat is that it is not possible to separate part-time from full-time instructional staff,³ although the two groups are very likely to be different in level of engagement with students (this is further discussed below).

Key Findings

- The average number of years faculty members had taught at Loyola was 19 (see Table 1), reflecting the fact that the great majority were tenured. Instructional staff members averaged 8 years of teaching at Loyola.
- Compared to instructional staff, faculty were less likely to have taught either a first-year seminar (22% vs. 7%) or another course serving primarily first-year students (62% vs. 44%)
- Instructional staff were not only more likely to teach a first-year course, they also taught more of them (2.0 vs. .7). Faculty, however, reported a higher proportion of their classes as too large to allow individual engagement with students (.3 vs. .6).
- Over the past two years, instructional staff were more likely than faculty to have participated in a conference on first-year students and to have read literature

¹ The PFY is administered by the Pennsylvania State University's Center for the Study of Higher Education.

² There is some evidence in the results that untenured faculty are less engaged with first-year students and more engaged in research than are senior faculty.

³ Approximately 60% of instructional staff at Loyola is part-time.

related to first-year students. Nearly three quarters of all respondents had participated in a general teaching/learning conference.

- Faculty reported less than half the number of hours dedicated to teaching first-year students (7.5) than did instructional staff (14.3; see Table 2 and Figures 1 and 2). Other types of interactions with first-year students (advising and informal interaction) were equivalent between the two groups.
- Where there were differences between faculty and instructional staff in pedagogical approaches in their courses, instructional staff were more likely to report actively engaging students in activities such as collaborative learning, multiple drafts of written work, hands-on experience, and assignments focused on application (see Table 3 and Figure 3).
- Course activities most reported overall were frequent feedback (90%), in-class discussions (88%), lectures (83%), and open-ended tests or essays (83%).
- Fewer than half of respondents reported having their students do multiple drafts of written work (44%) or student presentations (44%).
- Both faculty and instructional staff were very likely to report giving frequent feedback to students on their progress (90%), but not as likely to give detailed feedback (only 76%).
- Instructional staff were more likely than faculty to say that they often or very often provided their students with opportunities to learn about people different from them and required them to examine ideas different than their own (see Table 3 and Figure 4).
- While only a third of faculty reported that they often or very often changed their course content or teaching in response to student feedback, 55% of instructional staff did so.
- There were few differences between faculty and instructional staff in perceptions of how well Loyola supports academically and assesses its first-year students (see Table 4a).
- Just half of faculty, compared to almost two thirds of instructional staff, agreed that Loyola helps first-year students get off to a good start academically.
- Only 43% of faculty agreed that Loyola supports them in working with first-year students who are unprepared for college (see Table 4b).

- Only 42% of faculty and 56% of instructional staff thought that first-year courses, programs, and services are at least moderately well coordinated and consistent with each other (see Table 5).
- Faculty and, to a lesser extent, instructional staff, were unlikely to agree that faculty and Student Affairs work together closely in orienting first-year students (34%) and promoting their success (31%), or that the administration provides clear leadership to faculty and instructional staff for promoting first-year success (39%).
- Both instructional staff and faculty were relatively unlikely to agree that Loyola systematically assesses students' first-year experience (40% and 46%) or uses assessment results to strengthen that experience (29% and 31%).
- Faculty were less likely than instructional staff to report that the components of the first-year experience are intentional, with stated goals and objectives (71% vs. 85%; see Table 5). Only 73% of respondents overall thought that Loyola actively pursue its first-year goals or that program components serve at least moderately well as a foundation for later years.
- Overall, faculty and instructional staff saw Loyola as putting relatively little emphasis on teaching first-year students (see Table 6). Not surprisingly, faculty were less likely to agree that at Loyola teaching is more important than research (21% vs. 51% for instructional staff) and that teaching abilities are more important than research in hiring new faculty (43% vs. 13%).
- Although percentages were low, faculty were more likely than instructional staff to report that Loyola rewards faculty for teaching first-year students (28% vs. 12%).
- Most respondents said that Loyola faculty are encouraged to use on-campus instructional support (73%) and that their faculty colleagues consider the first year as an important foundation (70%).

Implications

- There are several important limitations to this study that may skew results.
 - Because of the low numbers of junior (untenured) faculty respondents, they could not be analyzed as a separate group. There is some evidence, however, that junior faculty are less likely than senior faculty to teach first-year students and are less likely to be engaged with them in and out of the classroom. If junior faculty were excluded from the analyses, the

faculty might look more engaged than it does here.

- Second, there is no way to separate part-time from full-time instructional staff members, and it is likely that the full-time instructional staff is different than the part-time instructional staff in some key ways.
- Overall, those faculty and instructional staff members who responded to this survey on the first-year student experience are likely to be those who are most interested in first-year students, and so are more likely to be engaged with them. Thus, the results of this survey overstate the level of engagement with first-year students of both the faculty and the instructional staff.
- Given these limitations, some conclusions are still warranted, with the caveat that some of them may apply to respondents only, not to all of the faculty and the instructional staff at Loyola.
- Instructional staff are more likely to teach first-year courses and also teach more of them, on average, compared to faculty.
- Where there are differences between instructional staff and faculty in pedagogical approaches in the classroom, instructional staff are more likely to report using activities that engage students directly.
- Although most faculty and instructional staff said that first-year student success is a priority at Loyola, fewer than half thought that Loyola has a comprehensive and coherent approach to helping first-year students succeed.
- Fewer than half of respondents overall thought that Loyola systematically assesses the first-year experience, and even fewer (less than a third) said that Loyola uses results of first-year assessments to improve the first-year experience. Perhaps even more importantly, few of the faculty and instructional staff agreed that the Loyola administration provides clear leadership for them in promoting first-year success.
- The results of this survey suggest that first-year students have more contact with instructional staff than with regular faculty. This is not necessarily negative, if instructional staff engage students more in the classroom. However, to the extent that Loyola considers it important for first-year students to be exposed to regular faculty, this is a problem
- The new Office of First-Year Experience is oriented toward helping first-year students directly. However, there is clearly room for the Loyola administration to provide more support to both the faculty and the instructional staff in dealing with first-year students and improving their experience with faculty and instructional staff both in and out of the classroom.

Figure 1
Average Percentage of Faculty Time in Typical Week
(Total time=49 hours)

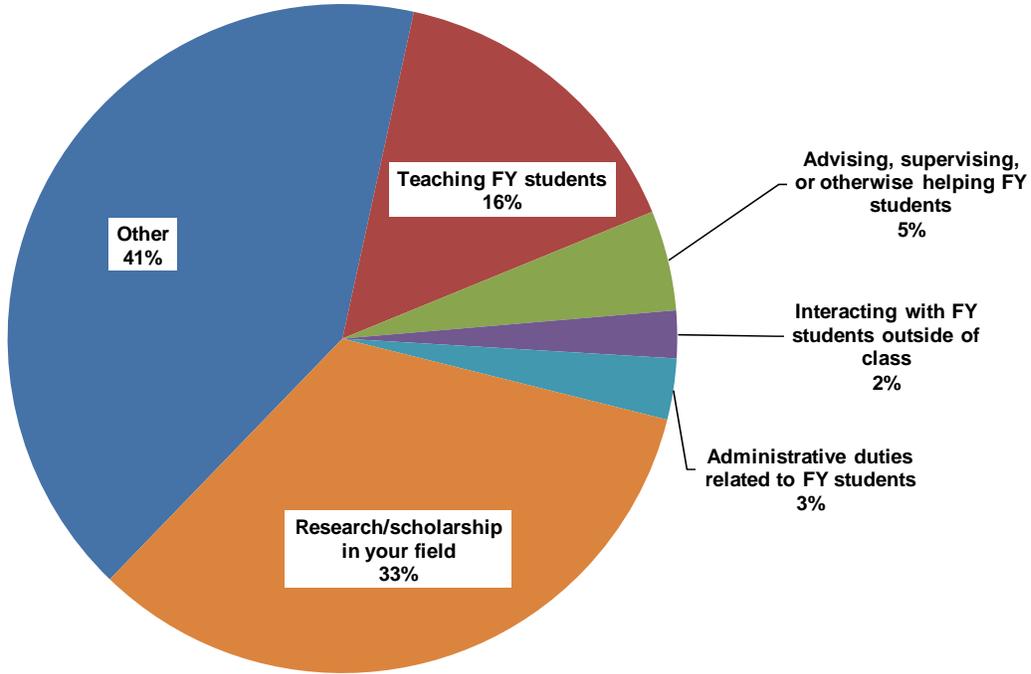


Figure 2
Average Percentage of Instructional Staff Time in Typical Week
(Total time=29 hours)

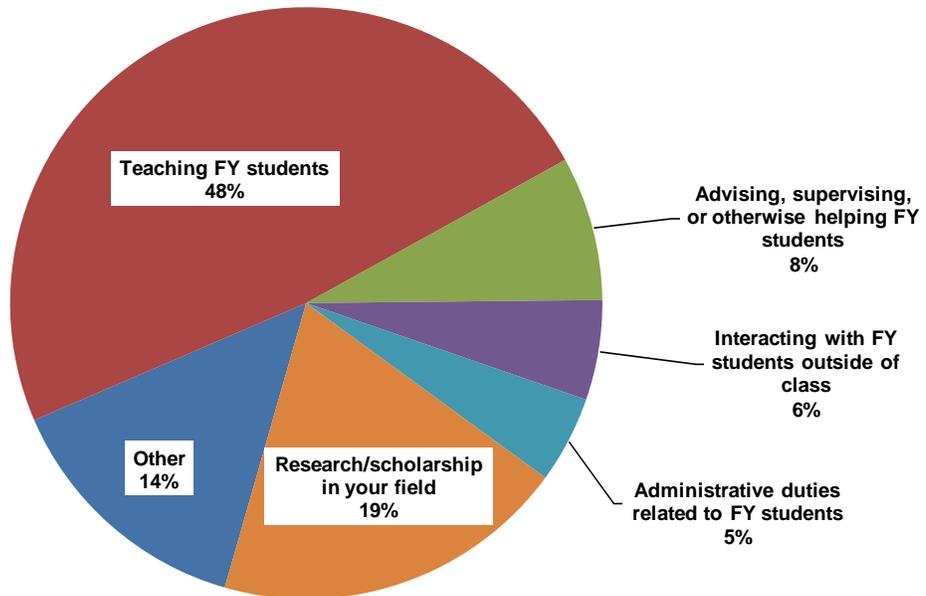


Figure 3
Frequent Use of Classroom Activities/Approaches

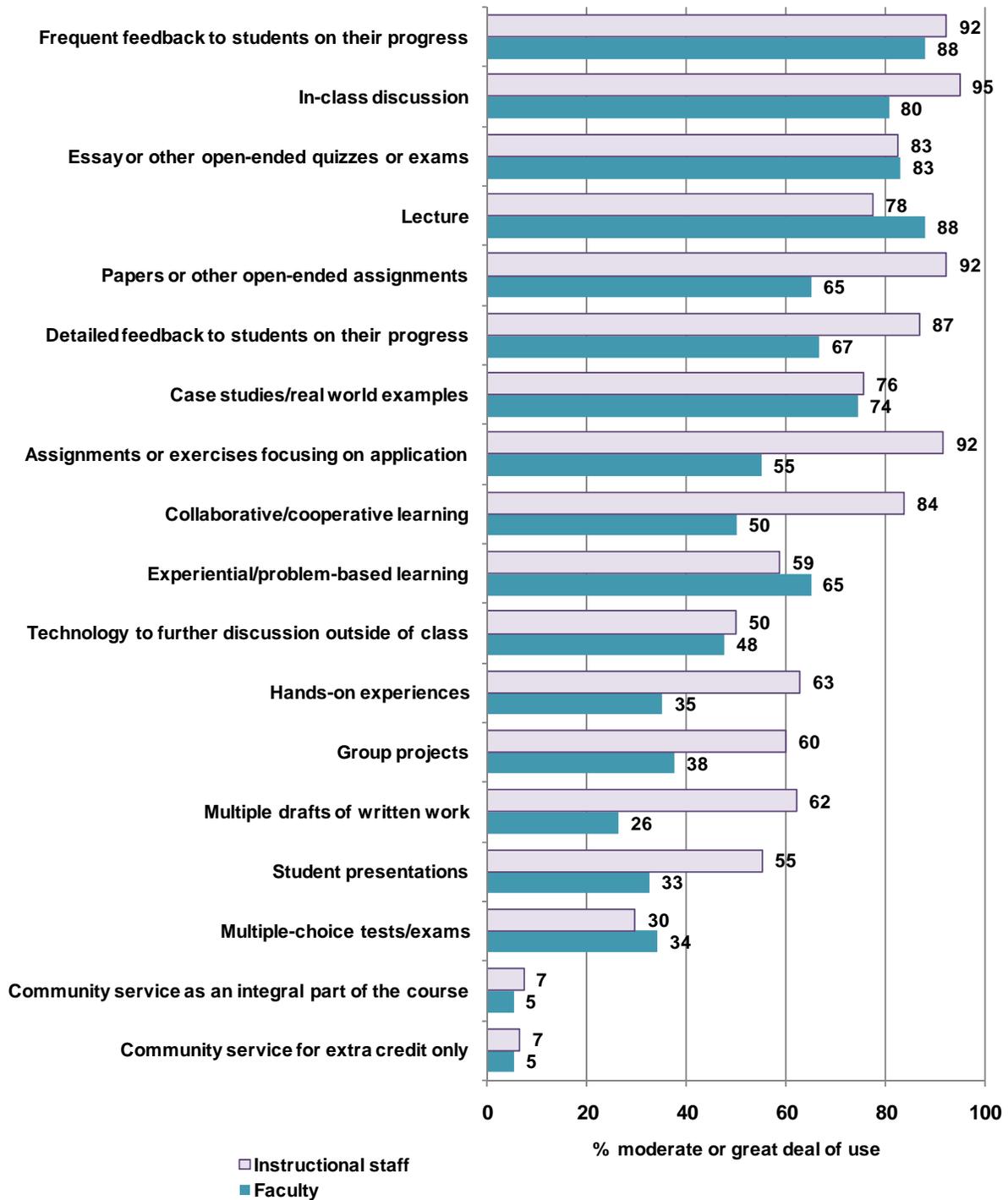


Figure 4
Frequent Use of Teaching Approaches

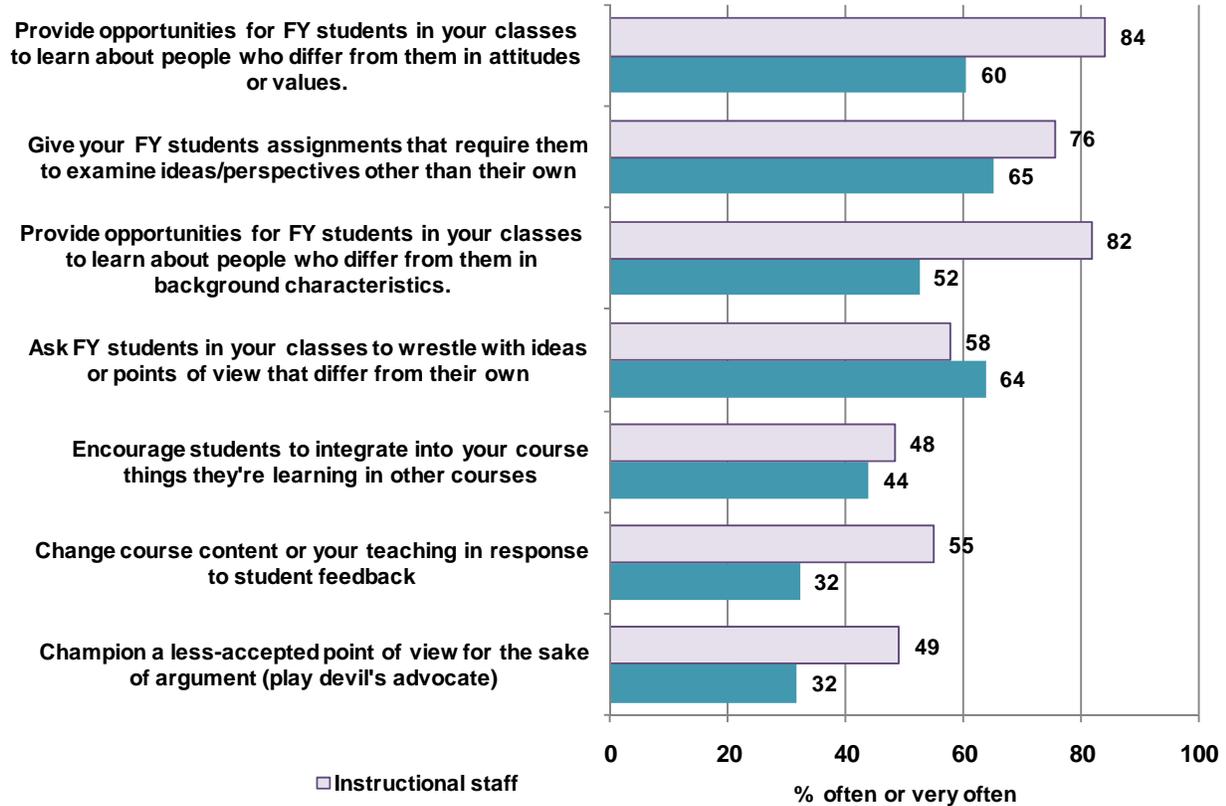


Table 1			
Teaching and Involvement with First Year Students			
	Faculty	Instructional staff	Total
Average years teaching in higher education	25	12	19
Average years teaching at Loyola	19	8	15
Typically teach a first-year seminar (%)	7	22	13
Typically teach other courses serving primarily FY students (%)	44	62	51
Average number of courses taught that primarily serve FY students	.7	2.0	1.2
Average number of those courses too large to allow you to engage students individually	.3	.6	.4
Participated in pedagogical training within in past two years (<i>% at least once</i>)			
Participated in a conference that focused on teaching and learning	72	75	73
Participated in a conference on FY students	11	23	16
Read literature related to FY students	39	49	43
N	96	65	161

Source: Parsing the First Year Project Faculty Survey, 2007

Table 2			
Time Spent on and Interaction with First Year Students in Typical Term			
	Faculty	Instructional staff	Total
Average hours per week devoted to Loyola in typical week	48.9	29.0	41.0
Average hours per week spent on specific activities			
Teaching FY students	7.5	14.3	10.3
Advising, supervising, or otherwise helping FY students	2.4	2.3	2.3
Interacting with FY students outside of class	1.1	1.6	1.3
Administrative duties related to FY students	1.4	1.4	1.4
Research/scholarship in your field	16.3	5.7	12.0
Total	28.8	24.8	27.2
Average number of interactions with FY students per week			
Exchange brief greetings	6.6	6.7	6.6
Have casual conversations	2.5	3.6	2.9
Discuss intellectual or academic-related matters	2.2	2.8	2.4
Discuss non-academic topics of mutual interest	1.3	2.6	1.8
Discuss matters related to the student's future career	1.4	1.5	1.4
Discuss a student's personal matters	.5	1.9	1.1
Work together on an institutional or professional activity	.5	.3	.5

Source: Parsing the First Year Project Faculty Survey, 2007

Table 3			
Teaching Approaches/Activities Used in Courses Serving Primarily First Year Students			
	Faculty	Instructional staff	Total
	%	%	%
<i>Activities¹ (% who used moderately or a great deal)</i>			
Frequent feedback to students on their progress	88	92	90
In-class discussion	80	95	88
Lecture	88	78	83
Essay or other open-ended quizzes or exams	83	83	83
Papers or other open-ended assignments	65	92	78
Detailed feedback to students on their progress	67	87	76
Case studies/real world examples	74	76	75
Assignments or exercises focusing on application	55	92	72
Collaborative/cooperative learning	50	84	67
Experiential/problem-based learning	65	59	62
Technology to further discussion outside of class	48	50	49
Hands-on experiences	35	63	49
Group projects	38	60	48
Multiple drafts of written work	26	62	44
Student presentations	33	55	44
Multiple-choice tests/exams	34	30	32
Community service as an integral part of the course	5	7	6
Community service for extra credit only	5	7	6
<i>Teaching approaches (% who used often or very often)</i>			
Provide opportunities for FY students in your classes to learn about people who differ from them in attitudes or values.	60	84	72
Give your FY students assignments that require them to examine ideas/perspectives other than their own	65	76	70
Provide opportunities for FY students in your classes to learn about people who differ from them in background characteristics.	52	82	67
Ask FY students in your classes to wrestle with ideas or points of view that differ from their own	64	58	61
Encourage students to integrate into your course things they're learning in other courses	44	48	46
Change course content or your teaching in response to student feedback	32	55	42
Champion a less-accepted point of view for the sake of argument (play devil's advocate)	32	49	39

Source: Parsing the First Year Project Faculty Survey, 2007

1 Excludes first year seminars; excludes "Not applicable" responses.

Table 4a			
Perceptions of Institutional Support for First Year Students			
	Faculty	Instructors	Total
	%	%	%
Institutional support ^{1,2} (% agree or strongly agree)			
Loyola does a good job			
Informing FY students about the values this institution considers important	88	92	89
Placing FY students in courses appropriate to their academic preparation	77	77	77
Communicating to FY students what it has to offer academically	79	68	75
Enrolling FY students who can benefit from what this institution has to offer	80	66	75
Conveying to FY students the sense that, if they make the effort, they can succeed here	67	72	69
Conveying to FY students the sense that they 'belong' here	69	69	69
Providing adequate support for all of the kinds of FY students admitted	70	67	68
Informing faculty about academic support services	69	66	68
Informing FY students about the institution's history and traditions	64	71	67
Helping FY students get off to a good start academically	52	64	57
Facilitating FY students' early involvement in non-academic life	41	68	52
Informing faculty about personal support services	49	54	51
Facilitating FY students' early involvement the academic life	47	55	51
FY student success is a priority for Loyola	70	69	70
Loyola has a clear curricular plan for FY students	68	72	70
FY students know academic expectations at Loyola	60	58	60
Student Affairs staff have the support of faculty	51	51	51
Loyola has a comprehensive approach to helping FY students succeed	46	51	48
Loyola has a coherent approach to helping FY students succeed	43	44	43
Loyola systematically assesses students' FY experience	46	40	43
Administration provides clear leadership to faculty and staff in promoting FY students' success	35	45	39
FY students know out-of-class expectations at Loyola	34	38	36
Faculty and Student Affairs staff work closely together in orienting FY students	33	38	34
Faculty and Student Affairs staff work closely together in ways that promote FY students' success	27	39	31
Results from FY assessments used to strengthen FY courses, programs, services	31	29	30
Loyola's admissions professionals know my department's academic options and strengths	37	20	30

Table 4b			
Perceptions of Institutional Support for First Year Students			
	Faculty	Instructional staff	Total
	%	%	%
Loyola emphasizes 'doing even better,' regardless of how good it is at educating students (<i>% moderate or great emphasis</i>)	78	88	82
Loyola supports instructors in working with students ² ... (<i>% agree or strongly agree</i>)			
who are athletes	80	85	82
with disabilities	80	79	80
who are from a variety of cultural backgrounds	71	72	71
who are gifted	60	64	61
who are older or returning	64	56	61
with family or work obligations	48	51	49
who are underprepared for college work	43	47	44

Source: Parsing the First Year Project Faculty Survey, 2007

1 Excludes "Not applicable" responses.

2 Excludes "Don't know" responses.

Table 5			
Perceptions of Loyola's First Year Courses, Programs, and Services			
	Faculty	Instructional staff	Total
	%	%	%
<i>% moderately or a great extent</i> ¹			
Integrated 'vertically' (treated as foundational year upon which later years build)	75	69	73
Coordinated 'horizontally' (all units dealing with FY students communicate and work together in organized way)	42	56	47
Intentional (stated goals and objectives)	71	85	76
Active (actively pursues goals and objectives)	70	78	73

Source: Parsing the First Year Project Faculty Survey, 2007

1 Excludes "Don't know" responses.

Table 6			
Perceptions of Loyola's Emphasis on Teaching			
	Faculty	Instructional staff	Total
	%	%	%
<i>% agree or strongly agree</i> ¹			
Faculty are encouraged to use the services of the on-campus instructional support center	71	77	73
My faculty colleagues consider the first year as an important time to help students lay the foundation for the rest of their college education	70	69	70
Faculty are encouraged to interact with FY students outside the classroom	43	48	45
Faculty are assisted to learn about FY students are how to help them succeed	29	38	33
Teaching is more important than research	21	51	32
When hiring new faculty members, candidates' teaching abilities are more important than their research abilities	13	43	24
Faculty are rewarded for teaching FY students	28	12	23

Source: Parsing the First Year Project Faculty Survey, 2007

1 Excludes "Don't know" responses.