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Appendix B

**CLASS CONNECTIONS PROGRAM**

**ELPS 885:  
ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM  
EVALUATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**FALL 2007**

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## CLASS CONNECTIONS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Class connections is a program initiative that would ideally give each graduating class a sense of identity, cohesion, and support as a means of encouraging the students to graduate within four years of their enrollment date.
- Initiatives:
  1. Class themes
  2. Natural milestones
  3. Class Liaisons

### **HISTORY**

- Texas Christian University's leadership program serves as KU's benchmark institution for the Class Connections initiative.
- TCU's leadership program mirrors KU's goal to increase graduation in four rates by utilizing yearly milestones (*Student Development Series*, 2006).

### **FOCUS**

- Chancellor Robert Hemenway stressed that students completing their academic programs in four years was "high priority" (Tuttle, August 31, 2007). The focus of this evaluation is Class Connections, a concept initiated to assist students in their program toward a degree in four years as well as assist in their holistic growth.
- There are two primary pieces that make up the Class Connections initiative:
  1. The development of milestones and comprehensive pathways
  2. Class identities and class themes
- The evaluation sought to answer four questions:
  1. Is class connections something that would work for the University of Kansas, a large, public, research university with class sizes ranging in the thousands?
  2. Do students at KU want to graduate in four years?
  3. Do students at KU plan to graduate in four years?
  4. Would a Class Connections program impact the graduate in four plan positively and effectively?

### **METHODS**

- Needs assessment
  - We held two focus groups:
    1. The Board of Class Officers (BOCO) comprised of student leaders from each class.
      - 8 students, primarily Greek and junior class status, participated in the BOCO focus group
    2. PRE 101 freshman orientation course at KU enrolled during the fall 2007 semester.
      - 16 students participated in the PRE 101 focus group
  - During the focus group, a convenience sample, we asked open ended questions to obtain qualitative results.
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- As a means of obtaining quantitative research, we established a survey by utilizing Student Voice PDA's. We stood in a heavy traffic, Wescoe Beach, for an hour and utilized a convenience sample by surveying 107 students at random.

## **FINDINGS**

- BOCO focus group results:
  - Do you feel connected to your classmates?
    - Feel connected to the students that they spent time with outside of class as opposed to direct classmates.
  - Do you want to and plan to graduate in four years?
    - Graduating in four years would be ideal, but not necessarily possible if other variables (i.e. academic requirements, finances, social life, GPA) come into play.
- PRE 101 focus group results:
  - Do you feel connected to your classmates?
    - Felt a small connection to with their classmates due to their similar experiences during the first semester of college.
  - Do you want to and plan to graduate in four years?
    - Yes, graduating in four years is more cost effective.
- Student Voice PDA's survey results:
  - Do you feel connected to your classmates?
    - 67.3% of KU students said "yes."
    - 32.3% of KU students said "no."
    - The sophomore class felt least connected (60.7%).
    - The senior class felt most connected (76.5%).
  - Do you want to and plan to graduate in four years?
    - 55.6% students stated that they anticipated graduating in four years.
    - 72.2% of freshman reported that they anticipated graduating in four years.
    - 29.4% of seniors reported that they anticipated graduating in four years.
    - 35% of students reported that they no longer anticipated graduating in four years due to academic requirements.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Further evaluative measures
  - The student opinion
  - The need of a Class Connections program
  - Graduating in four rates
- Evaluative measures to consider
  - Money
  - Time
  - Conduct further research of similar programs at similar institutions

## **CONCLUSION**

- TCU's leadership program
  - Desire to improve the number of students who graduate in four years
  - Will students buy into and benefit from a program like the Class Connections program?
  - Should Class Connections be put into effect?
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## **Introduction**

For the semester evaluative project, our group was asked to evaluate how well the students at the University of Kansas would receive the Class Connections program. Class Connections is a program initiative that would ideally give each graduating class a sense of identity, cohesion, and support as a means of encouraging the students to graduate within four years of their enrollment date. This program is based on an initiative that already exists at Texas Christian University (TCU), and would have many of the same components as TCU's initiative. A goal of Class Connections is to establish connections amongst classmates in their respective class level. Each class would have initiatives to allow them to be better connected with their fellow classmates.

The first initiative is the creation of class theme. Thematic area's that will identify what students are expected to focus on and accomplish throughout their four year collegiate career. The Board of Class Officers (BOCO), an organization comprised of leaders from each class, will act as a resource to determine class initiatives at KU, including community service, academic and social programs. Next, Class Connections will incorporate natural milestones for students. The milestones will be tasks, skills, and goals to accomplish during their freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior year of college. Finally, each class will have one or two class liaison(s), Student Success administrators, who would work with the individual class councils to develop initiatives and programs as well as serve as a visible link from the Office of Student Success to each class. There are two options: to have Student Success administrators focused on one class level, or to stay with that one class throughout the four years.

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### **Texas Christian University Program**

As aforementioned, Texas Christian University has become KU's benchmark institution for the Class Connections initiative. The Student Development Services department at TCU has implemented a leadership program for students to participate in beginning their freshman year and concludes with graduation, which is known as Class Connections. The leadership program is designed to be completed in four years, which ideally, leads to graduation on four years. This mirrors KU's goal to increase graduation in four rates by utilizing yearly milestones. There are three different aspects of the leadership program including Orientation, Frog Camp, and Connections (*Student Development Series*, 2006).

Each year at TCU, students participate in different activities to enhance their leadership skills through a Connections program. During their freshman year, students attend classes to become familiar with the university. Each class is provided with a focus such as campus resources, academic success, priority management, and learning about various ways to get involved on campus. The first year sets up the path that the freshman class is going to take over the remaining three years through the leadership programs. Over the next three years (sophomore, junior, and senior level) the students who participate in the program go on to attend classes and programs for ethical leadership, responsible citizenship, and becoming a member of the global community (*Student Development Series*, 2006).

### **Focus**

Recently the University of Kansas (KU) has undertaken a number of initiatives to increase the number of students who graduate with a degree in four years. One of these initiatives is the Four-Year Tuition Compact that was launched in the fall 2007 semester. Chancellor Robert Hemenway stressed that students completing their academic programs in four

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years was “high priority” (Tuttle, August 31, 2007). Currently, KU’s four-year graduation rate is a low 31% with a six-year graduation rate of 59% (*National Center for Education Statistics, 2007*). As stated above, the focus of this evaluation is Class Connections, a concept initiated to assist students in their progress toward a degree in four years as well as assist in their holistic growth. According to Kathryn Nemeth Tuttle, Associate Vice Provost for Student Success, Class Connections “is a means for Student Success to provide a clear pathway—a good picture of the KU puzzle—and a way to put the pieces of the KU experience together—for KU undergraduates,” ( August 31, 2007). There are two primary pieces that make up the proposed KU Class Connections initiative. First there is the development of milestones and comprehensive pathways to show students their progress toward a degree. Also, class identities and class themes will distinguish freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classes from one another. For the purpose of this project, we looked primarily at the second piece of the Class Connections initiative.

The evaluation sought to answer several questions. Because the KU Class Connections program is not in place, we had to focus on issues related to graduating in four years. First, is Class Connections something that would work for the University of Kansas, a large, public, research university with class sizes ranging in the thousands? Second, do students at KU want to graduate in four years? Third, do students at KU plan to graduate in four years? Fourth, would a Class Connections program impact the graduate in four plan positively and effectively?

We worked to find answers to these questions by establishing focus groups, and creating surveys. Ultimately, we aspired to determine whether or not Class Connections was not only needed at KU, but would be well received and lead to the goal of graduating in four years.

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## **Methods**

According to E. Jane Davidson (2005), the definition of a needs assessment is “to justify the creation or existence of all products, services, and policies.” This type of evaluation was used to help decide whether the Class Connections program would work at the University of Kansas if implemented. Since this is a needs assessment, there were several evaluative means utilized to determine whether the students at the University of Kansas would be receptive to the Class Connections program.

First, we conducted focus groups as a means of obtaining qualitative information for this assessment. We held a focus group with BOCO, which consisted of eight students, all of whom were seniors. BOCO is a group of students who are elected to represent the senior class in areas such as Hawk Week, Homecoming, and to help select the senior class gift to the university. The second focus group was conducted with sixteen students from the freshman class that were enrolled in a PRE 101 course during the fall 2007 semester at the University of Kansas. During these focus groups we asked the students questions that would help us gauge how receptive the student body would be to the Class Connections program. We asked open ended questions during the focus groups related to how well the students feel connected to both their classmates and the University of Kansas; if they felt it was possible to feel connected to classmates and the university; whether or not the students are interested in graduating in four years and in what ways could KU reward the students for reaching certain milestones throughout their academic career (APPENDIX B).

This qualitative evaluation relied on a convenience sample because we were only able to meet with the students that we had access to. One of the strengths of this type of data collection is that the students were able to express their opinions in a candid manner, which gave them

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freedom to express themselves more than a pre-made survey would have. However, the students' freedom to express themselves in their own words made it difficult to analyze the data that they gave us. Since each student did not have the same vocabulary it became difficult to code the data collected to see what aspects overlap. Another weakness of this type of data collection is that a student may feel that he or she cannot speak up in the focus group, which could result in data that is not accurately representative of those in attendance. Finally, we found it challenging to record the information that we had collected on the audio tape into a transcribed manuscript. Some of the students in the focus groups did not speak as loudly as others and the PRE classroom was large making some of the quieter students nearly impossible to hear.

As a means of obtaining quantitative data, we used the Student Voice Personal Digital Assistant system (PDA) to survey students about their interest in the Class Connections program. The Student Voice PDA's are obtained through the Vice Provost for Student Success office. We loaded our own survey onto them. The questions, this time with pre-defined answers, sought to determine how well students were connected to their classmates and if they had the desire to be connected to their classmates. Other questions were related to the Class Connections program, Freshman class t-shirts, graduating in four years, and whether the students showed an interest in having celebrations for reaching academic milestones (APPENDIX A). We stood in a heavy traffic area known as Wescoe Beach, the concrete area in front of Wescoe Hall, which is located on the main campus of the University of Kansas, in order to obtain survey responses from a wide variety of students. The data was collected during the lunch hour on Wednesday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Through this type of evaluation we utilized a convenience sample as we asked a variety of students that were available to us to participate in our survey at random. This was a positive addition to our evaluative research due to the fact that our qualitative resource allowed us to

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collect data from a larger sample of students from all classes. A benefit of this type of data collection is that we were able to obtain numerical indications of the potential success of the Class Connections program. Another benefit of utilizing this type of quantitative research is that we were able to survey a large population of students in one hour, which is a considerably short amount of time. However, a weak point in this form of evaluation was that the student's voice will not be heard due to the fact that the answers were already assigned to each question. A final weakness of our study was that we only asked a limited number of questions so to not impose on the students' time for too long. We only spent an hour during a random Wednesday collecting data. We might have spoken with a different group of students on a different day, at a different time of day.

## **Findings**

### **Focus Groups: A Qualitative Study**

As previously stated, two different focus groups were conducted to give us qualitative information regarding the student's opinion of the Class Connections program. Since the two groups that we interviewed were different in terms of age, majors, and college experiences. We were surprised that the results were more similar than anticipated. Regarding the question of do you feel connected to your classmates, the first group, BOCO, stated that they did not feel connected to their classmates that they started at KU with, but rather, feel more of a connection to those that they lived with or spent time with outside of class. In college it is more acceptable to live or be friends with someone older or younger than you, roommates and friends are not always the same ages or part of the same graduating class. Whereas the PRE focus group participants stated that they felt a small connection with their classmates. These connections were positive in that they made the first several months on campus easier. Students noted that

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most of the first year students have similar experiences and it is easier to cope when that experience is shared.

The responses to the aforementioned questions are very important to our client since one of Class Connections goals is to help students find ways to form better bonds with their classmates and help them feel connected to the university. This leads us to two important questions. One, are the students interested in graduating in four years? The second question is why or why not graduate in four years? Both the BOCO and PRE students stated that graduating in four years would be ideal, but is not necessarily a goal. Simply put, both groups of students stated that graduating in four years would be like “leaving a good party early.”

The students also vocalized that there are too many variables that come into play when attending college and working toward graduation. These variables include the following. Certain students have to worry about financial aspects of going to school; one of the Board of Class Officer students stated that “college is expensive, sometimes it is necessary to work more and go to school less, this makes graduating in four difficult.” Some students reported having had poor experiences with advisors and that they are a year or more behind and merely trying to catch up. While the students from the PRE class did not mention this as a problem, the BOCO students repeatedly stated that “advising is not what it should be.” Many of these students indicated that after one or two experiences with bad advising, they became their own advisors or talked with professors to plan their academic schedules. Students also participate in extra activities, like studying abroad, that extend the academic stay. In addition, some students mentioned that there is a strong emphasis on having a stellar grade point average (GPA) and sometimes that means taking fewer classes and staying in school for an extra year or two. We must remember to look at the social aspect of college as a reason why students do not graduate in

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four years; life after college is about working or gaining an advanced degree. To students, an additional year of being with friends and attending parties may not seem problematic if the students are already here? A PRE student stated “sometimes you have to choose between school and your social life, right now I am choosing the social life.” This is the message that quite a few of the students tried to verbalize.

### **Student Voices: A Quantitative Study**

Our group spent an hour on Wescoe Beach, on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at 12 p.m. to ask students to fill out an electronic survey via the Student Voices PDA's. We collected 107 student surveys from a convenience sample students who happened to be passing through and agreed to participate in the study. While collecting the data we did not actively seek out a specific number of students from each graduating class. Also, we did not turn any student away who was willing to participate in the study. At the end of the hour we had received a total of 107 completed surveys. From the freshman class, we received a total of eighteen surveys; ten were female, eight were male. Students who considered themselves sophomores completed twenty eight surveys; fifteen were female, thirteen were male. The junior class had the highest representation in the study with forty four surveys; twenty five were female and nineteen were male. To round out the data collection the senior class had seventeen representatives with eleven females and six males.

To analyze the data we received from the surveys, we chose to analyze the three questions that contained the information that our client was most interested in, do students feel connected to their classmates, do they anticipate graduating in four years, and why or why not (APPENDIX E)? The data obtained through the PDAs was substantially different from the focus group due to the fact that it was quantitative as opposed to qualitative.

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In looking at question four (APPENDIX C), regarding class connectedness, we received an answer from all 107 students. Overall, freshman through seniors, 67.3 percent of KU students indicated that they do, in fact, feel connected to their classmates. The remaining 32.3 percent of students stated that they did not feel connected to their classmates. When the information was broken down by class, the sophomore class felt the least connected to their classmates at 60.7 percent compared to the senior class where 76.5 percent of the students who felt connected to their fellow seniors (APPENDIX D, APPENDIX E). The freshman and junior classes were within ten percentage points of the sophomores and seniors.

Question eight, do you plan to graduate in four years, and if no, why, resulted in a wide variety of answers (APPENDIX C). 59 students, or 55.6 percent, of the polled students stated that they anticipated graduating in four years. 72.2 percent of the freshman survey indicated an intention in graduating in four years, with that number decreasing significantly with each class level, ending with the seniors at 29.4 percent (APPENDIX D, APPENDIX E).

For those who will not be graduating in four years, the main reason was based on academic requirements. Approximately 35 percent of the students polled were no longer going to graduate in four years due to their academic plans or requirements. It is interesting to note that out of the 106 students who answered this question, none of them answered that they had no desire to graduate from KU in four years. The remaining 9.4 percent of students were not going to graduate on time due to other reasons, such as financial or family needs (APPENDIX D, APPENDIX E).

To summarize, it is important to emphasize that the students are working toward graduation, even if graduating in four years is not always in the plans. Both the students from the focus groups and from the Student Voices PDAs intend to graduate from the University of

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Kansas; however, there are merely innumerable variables that make graduating in four years difficult. In terms of the students feeling connected to their classmates, the student surveys show that the students do feel connected to their classmates, whereas the focus group students say they are connected, just not always to those in their graduating year.

### **Limitations**

When looking at this data and working to formulate a workable plan, it is important to take several ideas into consideration. First, the focus groups were asked the same questions, but the students were not the same. BOCO is a group of highly involved, mainly Greek, students who have been on campus for three to four years and have a variety of experiences to pull from. The PRE students have yet to complete a full semester at the University of Kansas and only have limited experiences to base their answers upon. To continue, the older students, from the BOCO focus group, appeared to be jaded in their answers and disinterested in new collegial initiatives as they are more concerned with occurrences following their college career. As opposed to the freshman, from the PRE focus group, who were excited to be at KU and optimistic about the Class Connections initiative. Their perspectives on college are significantly different from one another.

When it comes to the quantitative data, it is necessary to take into consideration that only 107 students completed the survey out of the 26,000 students that attend KU. While this information is valuable, it needs to be used with a grain of salt. Generally, in using quantitative data, you would want to have a bigger sample because the larger the sample, the more representative it is of the population (Salkind, 2006).

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## **Recommendations**

Though our group was able to divulge numerous findings regarding Class Connections potential success amongst the University of Kansas' students, our semester-long evaluative project was not exhaustive in nature. Before proceeding with the implementation of Class Connections at KU, our client needs to research aspects of our assessment in greater detail.

These aspects include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *The student opinion.* We conducted two focus groups comprised of freshman and mainly juniors. Focus groups are extremely beneficial in hearing the student's voice. Though we obtained quantitative data from all class levels via the Student Voice PDAs, we were unable to obtain qualitative data from a substantial number of sophomores and seniors. To put it simply, half of the student population's actual wordage has yet to be heard. Sophomores and seniors are necessary groups to gain information from due to their years of collegial experience at KU and cannot be ignored when pursuing an initiative that would affect them as well.
  - *The need of a Class Connections program.* Class Connections may be a good idea, but is it the program needed at this point in time for KU students? We discovered that, for the most part, students at KU feel connected to their classmates. The distinction between who they consider classmates differs from what Student Success administrators may have originally defined as classmates. Classmates, for the purpose of this evaluation, were defined as students whom you enter college with and graduate with four years later. Freshman typically felt connected to fellow freshman and the rest of the student body – sophomores, juniors, and seniors (based on information from both the BOCO focus group as well as the PDAs) – felt connected
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to students at KU as a whole. The upperclassman did not need to feel connected to students within their particular class level to feel a part of the KU community or to feel successful in their collegiate career. They had instead established relationships with students not determined by their grade level. So, the question must be asked, if students generally feel connected to at least one group of students at KU, is a class connections program necessary? At the very least the preliminary data suggests that the university should foster Connections in general, not necessarily to each specific class.

- *Graduating in four rates.* Would Class Connections positively contribute to one of the main goals of this initiative, increasing graduate in four rates? Based on our results, students did not see a link between class connectedness and plans to graduate in four years. Rather, to the students, the two were separate in nature and purpose. Our sample population did not believe that feeling connected to their fellow classmates would encourage graduating in four years. Based on these results, our client is left to answer two questions. One, should Student Success proceed with the Class Connections initiative in an attempt to prove a linkage amongst the two variables? Or two, should Student Success develop an alternative program to encourage the ultimate goal of increasing KU's graduate in four rates?

We recommend that Student Success should investigate facets that we were unable to research in our given amount of time. These facets include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- *Money.* If Student Success were to proceed with the Class Connections program, what would the cost be? Would additional staff need to be hired to take on the initiative? Would funds need to be spent on the many aspects of Class Connections
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(i.e. freshman class t-shirts, milestone celebrations, website development)? Would the benefits outweigh the costs?

- *Time.* The question of time refers to several different components. First, if KU truly establishes Class Connections, when should it launch? Second, how much time would it take to conduct further assessment of Class Connections and its effectiveness for KU's student body population? Third, how much time would it take to truly develop this program?
- *Conduct further research of similar programs at similar institutions.* Up until this point, KU has looked to Texas Christian University as the benchmark institution in developing a class connections program. However, further research should be conducted at universities similar in size and make to KU. TCU has an enrollment of 8,000; this is remarkably smaller in comparison to KU's enrollment of 26,000 undergraduates. Additionally, TCU is associated with the Christian Church. These two characteristics are two examples of why TCU is not a sister school to KU. One could begin by utilizing another school in the Big 12 as a benchmark university.

Seeing as Class Connections does not yet exist at the University of Kansas, it is difficult to determine what exactly should be evaluated in determining whether or not this program should be implemented. It is beneficial that Class Connections has two goals: one, establish or enhance connectedness to KU and the students; two, increase graduating in four rates. Both goals are for the sole benefit of the students. A program such as Class Connections could not create negative effects on students. The program is optimistic in nature and may simply need to be established in order to see whether or not it works. After all, you do not truly know the outcome of an initiative until an initiative is launched and given time to grow and develop.

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## **Conclusion:**

The Class Connections project is being launched by taking components from TCU's leadership program, and from the University's desire to improve upon the number to students who graduate in four years. It was interesting to learn the student's perspective on this initiative and whether or not Class Connections should be put into effect at the University of Kansas. The attitude that the students in each focus group had toward this program were interesting to observe. The BOCO group, which was comprised of mostly juniors, had the opinion that this would be a "fun program but there would be no way that it would be a success or that it would affect the amount of time that it takes a student to graduate." However, the PRE 101 class, which was comprised of freshmen, thought that the program was a great idea and that it had the potential to be a huge success. Yet, it is also true that the qualitative data suggests that the percentage of students who plan to graduate in four years decreases as they progress toward sophomore, junior, and senior status.

Despite their cynicism the BOCO focus group, suggests to have class nights at sporting events throughout the year. An example of this would be a "Junior Night" at a KU football game. The concept behind this idea is to have all of the juniors wear their class shirts they received as freshmen to the football game in order to receive a free hotdog. The students believe that by holding an event such as this, it would encourage students to complete their degree on time because once their class graduates they will not be able to take advantage of these events. When this suggestion was expressed in the PRE 101 class, the students also thought that it was a wonderful idea. On the other side of the spectrum, the Student Voice surveys declared that 76 percent of the senior class respondents felt connected to their classmates, whereas only 29 percent of the respondents planned to graduate in four years. This information suggests that

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there may not be a direct connection between a student's connectivity with classmates and timely graduation.

It is hard to say whether this program will make a difference in the University of Kansas' graduation rate, but the data suggests that a trial run of the program may be a good idea. Overall, the students were receptive to the concept of this program, but there are other new initiatives in place that could produce the same outcome as the Class Connection program has in mind, namely the Four Year Tuition Compact. The University of Kansas just started the Four Year Tuition Compact, which guarantees a certain tuition rate for four years. With this initiative in place students will have to pay a substantial tuition increase if they do not complete their degree on time, which could result in better graduation rates. Again, our evaluation suggests that implementation of a Class Connections program at the University of Kansas will cause little harm. On the other hand there is little evidence that it will lead to timely graduation rates.

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**University of Kansas**  
**Student Success**  
**Four-Year Graduation Initiative Proposal**  
**Class Connections Summary**  
**August 31, 2007**

**--DRAFT--**  
**--CONFIDENTIAL--**

**Introduction**

In a recent news release announcing KU's new Four-Year Tuition Compact, Chancellor Robert Hemenway stressed the "high priority" KU gives to completing academic programs in four years. The Compact itself, noted Hemenway, gives "students a powerful incentive to finish their degrees on time." Similarly, the Graduate in Four Task Force Report, issued in 2005, listed "timely graduation" as the first guiding principle and emphasized the importance of aligning University policies and practices with this goal.

One of the biggest challenges for students in their progress toward a degree is to identify and maintain a clear and steady path toward the goal of graduation. Patricia King (1999), a professor of higher education at Bowling Green State University, has described the university experience as "completing a jigsaw puzzle" (p. 2). At KU, and other universities, we do not always do a good job of providing the box lid for this puzzle—there are no photos, no instructions, no maps—that provide the pathway to success and graduation in four years. As King states "students can get more out of college when the collegiate purposes are clear and consistently communicated across campus... [and they] have a better idea of how the pieces fit together" (p. 2).

The program proposed below is a means for Student Success to provide a clear pathway-- a good picture of the KU puzzle--and a way to put the pieces of the KU experience together—for KU undergraduates. Two primary, and interconnected, mechanisms are recommended for this effort. First, Student Success will develop comprehensive pathways, marked with milestones for students to progress to graduation, and individual Student Success units will develop specific programs, practices, and policies that support students' progress toward their degrees. Each Student Success Department will be asked to develop "class-specific" programs that will address academic and needs at each class level.

**Second, Freshman, Sophomore, Junior and Senior Classes will be given more identity, cohesion, and support. Student Success will clearly identify expectations for students and programs, resources, staff and peer support, for each class level—freshman through senior. Each class will have a Class Theme and a Class Council, \* coordinated by BOCO and one or two Student Success Liaisons, to provide leadership and support. Milestones for advancement, including the basic 30, 60, and 90 hours, but also indicating competence in leadership, peer mentoring, community service, on-campus work, career professional**

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**development, and related areas will be identified, and possibly, in some cases certified, and in other cases celebrated.** The ideas for this part of the initiative are based on the Texas Christian University (TCU) Transitions program ([http:// www.sds.tcu.edu/ transitions/ default.asp](http://www.sds.tcu.edu/transitions/default.asp)).

\*All names are suggested and subject to change based on input from the Student Success Leadership Team, the proposed Work Group, and BOCO.

**Ideas for Overall Initiative Name: - Feedback from BOCO on names would be appreciated!**

Success in Four

Grad in Four

Four-Year Student Success Compact

Four-Year Graduation Compact

Four-Year Pathway to Success

Four-Year Pathway to Graduation

Walk Down the Hill to Success

Four-Year Path to Walk Down the Hill

Walk the Path Down the Hill

Four Years to Your Walk Down the Hill

Your Walk to the Walk

Goal: Walk Down the Hill

Walkway to Graduation

- Freshman Walkway
- Sophomore Walkway
- Junior Walkway
- Senior Walkway

The Hawk Way to Success

The Hawk Way to Graduation

- Freshman Hawk Way
- Sophomore Hawk Way
- Junior Hawk Way
- Senior Hawk Way

The Hawk Way Down the Hill

The Hawk Way to the Walkway

Class Connections

Class Pathways

Map Your Way

## **Purpose**

A Student Success initiative to enhance KU undergraduate students:

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- Timely graduation, especially related to the Four-Year Tuition Compact
  - Progression along identified pathways to academic and personal success, identified by milestones that will be celebrated and in some cases certified.
  - Connections to opportunities, programs, and classmates in the same graduating class
  - Competence in academic, social, and personal realms
  - Commitment to student organizations, leadership, community service, peer mentoring, on-campus work, internships, health and wellness; international experiences, and career professional development

## Overview

- Each entering class will be identified by their year of graduation (which is also the completion of their Four-Year Tuition Compact); e.g. Class of 2011; Class of 2012; class of 2013; Class of 2014.
  - **Each class will have a Class Committee or Council, coordinated through BOCO, with leadership from Class Officers that will determine Class initiatives, including community service, academic and social programs, etc.**
  - **Each class will have one or two Class Liaison(s), Student Success Administrators, either a member of the VPSS Senior Leadership Team and/or a Student Success Director who will work with the Class Councils to develop initiatives and programs and serve as a visible link from Student Success to each class. The model could either be to have Student Success administrators focused on one class level, e.g. freshman, through a period of time, or to stay with that one class through four years.**
  - **Each class will have a distinct theme that will identify what students are expected to focus on and accomplish. They could connect to KU General Education Goals. For example:**
    - Freshmen: Becoming or Be a Jayhawk
    - Sophomores: Serving the KU Community and Beyond
    - Juniors: Leading by example
    - Seniors: Committing to Citizenship in the World.
  - **Each class will develop a distinct class community service project and effort that will benefit the KU and/or Lawrence communities.**
  - Continue use of freshman t-shirts, incorporate the theme, and consider shirts, or a less expensive option, for other class levels.
  - All Student Success units will be involved in the initiative, with examples given for student involvement and action at each level, and at different times, different units will sponsor programs, identify important policies and practices, etc.
  - Individual priorities, expectations, and milestones will be identified for each class level. For example, in a student's freshman year he/she should complete 30-32 credit hours, live in a organized living group, connect with a smaller group (PRE 101; band); utilize academic support services; etc.
  - Consider use of E-portfolios to document out of class activities, coupled with academic goals.
  - Use KU's general education goals, especially Goal 6: Practice an ethic of self-discipline, social responsibility, and citizenship on a local, national and international level.
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## Supporting Social Transition, Leadership, and Career Professional Development

- Use paraprofessional programs as a model—OAs, PAs, RAs, Writing Consultants; Career Peer Advisors (CPAs) and SUA; big student employment programs such as Student Housing, Kansas Unions, Libraries.
- Develop a peer leader’s website that incorporates these groups and link to leadership for sophomores, juniors, and seniors.
- Stress involvement in groups/activities, such as band, other music groups, theatre, UDK, KJHK, Student Senate, and SUA.
- Further develop leadership opportunities at each class level and build on Leadershape.
- Consider summer transition programs, focused on careers and leadership for students enrolled in summer session classes. (Use Edwards Campus, too.)
- Extend use of UCC Internship Course and internship exploration with a “supervised experience in an occupational area of interest.”
- Incorporate a wellness component led by Student Health Services, Student Recreation Services and CAPS.

### Assessment

- **Susan Twombly’s higher education program evaluation class will be used to assess the potential/process and do a needs assessment for this initiative. They will focus on the BOCO/Class Connections component. A small group of higher education master’s students will work with Kathryn Nemeth Tuttle to plan the evaluation project. It could include a focus group and survey with BOCO.**
- Do focus groups with rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors to see what has made a difference.
- Do online survey of each class or portal survey to identify issues.
- Do an inventory of KU programs and practices that could be incorporated for each class.

### Communication and Promotion

- **Develop a distinct website for the program and for each class. Consider making it interactive. Include progress component that students can use to track their progress.** Check on development of Advising Tool and use where appropriate.
- Have a distinct logo/phrase/vision that is shared and used across Student Success in communicating with students and parents. Explore possibility of cards/bookmarks for each class level and even for each Student Success Department that highlight their programs related to Class Connections and Graduation Pathways.
- Develop a well-designed brochure that outlines the program and the expectations and milestones for each class. It could be handed out at orientation and admitted student receptions.

Prepared by Kathryn Nemeth Tuttle, Associate Vice Provost for Student Success  
Please contact me with comments and questions: [ktuttle@ku.edu](mailto:ktuttle@ku.edu); 864-4961. My office is in 133 Strong Hall. Thank you!

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## APPENDIX B: Focus Group Questions

1. Would you like to feel connected to your fellow classmates? Classmates defined as the people that you entered college at the same point that you did.
2. Would class connectedness impact you graduating in 4 years?
3. What would help you feel more connected to KU?
4. Do you think it's possible to feel connected to students as a whole at a large institution such as KU?
5. If you could design a program to help students be unified with their incoming class, what would it look like?
6. Is having a sense of identity with your incoming class important to you?
7. Why is being a part of your class important?
8. Is graduating in 4 years important to you?
9. What types of support would help you to graduate in 4 years?

### Program Ideas:

- Celebrating degree marks
  - Mentor from Student Affairs
  - Obtaining greater knowledge of campus
  - Class t-shirts
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Appendix C: Student Voice Survey Questions

Q1. Year in school:

Freshman  
Sophomore  
Junior  
Senior

Q2. Gender:

Female  
Male

Q3. Where do you live?

Residence Hall  
Scholarship Hall  
Fraternity or Sorority  
Jayhawker Towers  
Off campus

Q4. Do you feel connected to your fellow classmates (students in your same year)?

Yes  
No

Q5. How important is being connected to your classmates?

Not important at all  
Not important  
Neutral  
Important  
Very important

Q6. How possible is it for students to feel connected to other students at a large institution such as KU?

Not possible at all  
Not possible  
Neutral  
Possible  
Very possible

Q7. Do you feel like you are a part of the KU community?

Yes  
No

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Q8. Do you plan to graduate in four years?

Yes

No, because undergraduate degree requirements exceed 4 years

No, changed major so can't finish in 4 years

No, because of personal/family reasons, for example, work or financial reasons

No, I have no desire to graduate in 4 years

No, other reasons

Q9. If you received a Freshman Class T-shirt when you first arrived on campus, did it make you want to graduate in the year stated on the shirt?

Yes

No

Q10. How likely would you be to attend a celebration hosted by KU to recognize students who have reached sophomore, junior, and senior status?

Not likely at all

Not likely

Neutral

Likely

Very likely

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APPENDIX D: Student Voice Survey Results

Milestone Data Cross tabbed

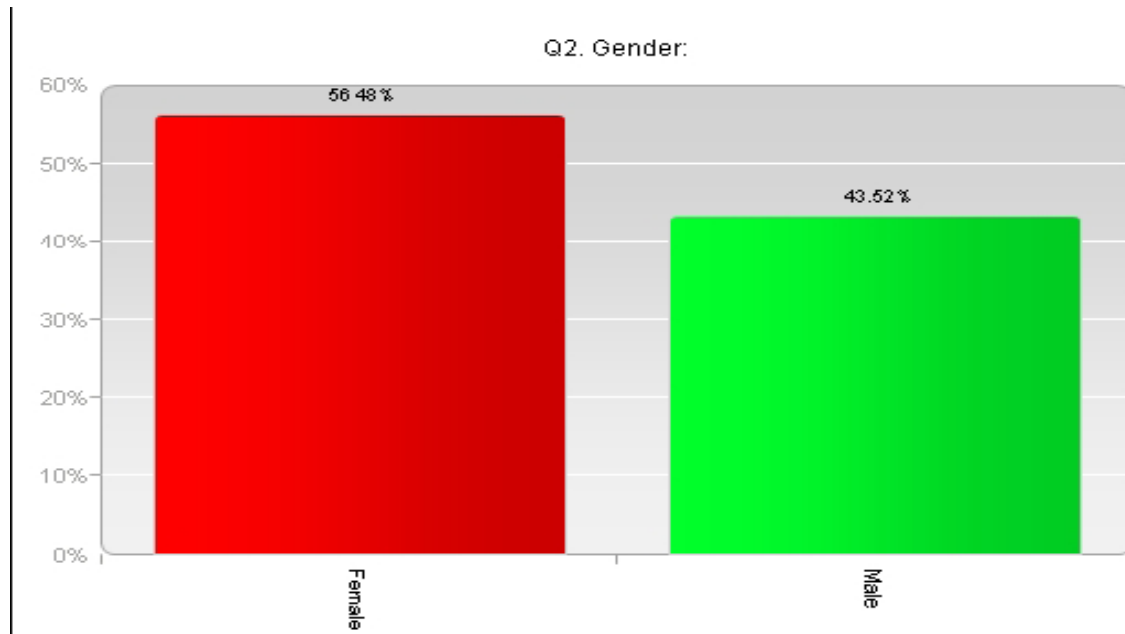
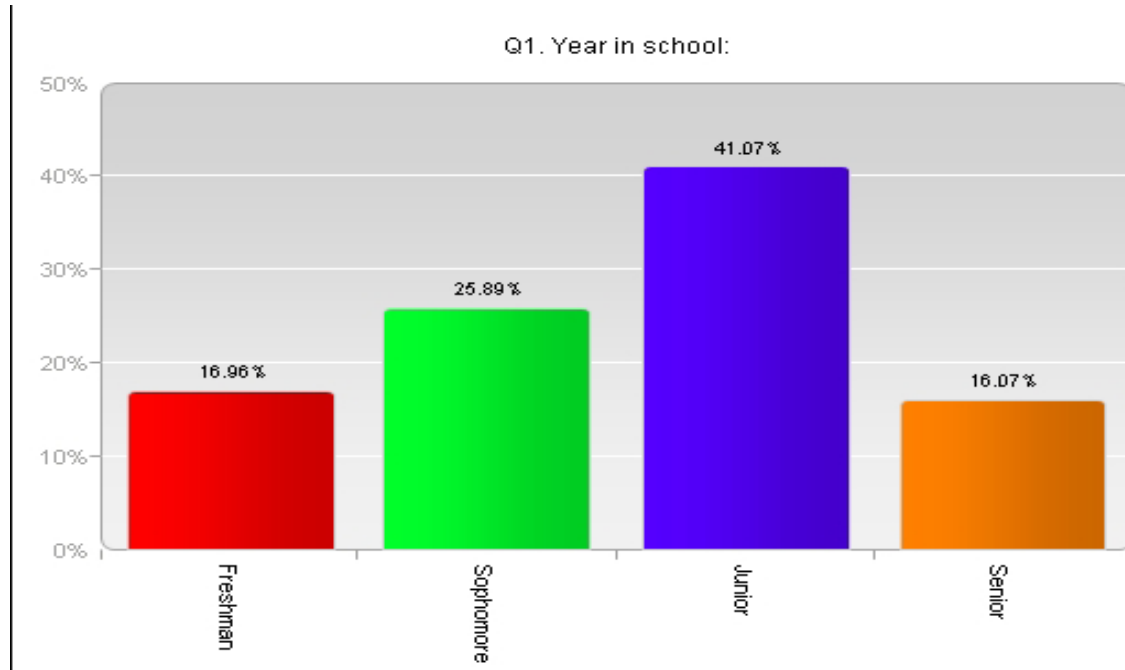
Q1. Year in school:											
		Freshman		Sophomore		Junior		Senior		Total	
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %	Count	Col %	Count	Col %	Count	Col %
Q2. Gender:	Female	10	55.56 %	15	53.57 %	25	56.82 %	11	64.71 %	61	57.01 %
	Male	8	44.44 %	13	46.43 %	19	43.18 %	6	35.29 %	46	42.99 %
	Total	18	100.00 %	28	100.00 %	44	100.00 %	17	100.00 %	107	100.00 %
Q3. Where do you live?	Residence hall	14	77.78 %	6	21.43 %	1	2.27 %	1	5.88 %	22	20.56 %
	Scholarship hall	4	22.22 %	3	10.71 %	3	6.82 %	2	11.76 %	12	11.21 %
	Fraternity or sorority	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	3	6.82 %	0	0.00 %	3	2.80 %
	Jayhawker Towers	0	0.00 %	1	3.57 %	1	2.27 %	1	5.88 %	3	2.80 %
	Off campus	0	0.00 %	18	64.29 %	36	81.82 %	13	76.47 %	67	62.62 %
	Total	18	100.00 %	28	100.00 %	44	100.00 %	17	100.00 %	107	100.00 %
Q4. Do you feel connected to your fellow classmates (students in your same year)?	Yes	13	72.22 %	17	60.71 %	29	65.91 %	13	76.47 %	72	67.29 %
	No	5	27.78 %	11	39.29 %	15	34.09 %	4	23.53 %	35	32.71 %
	Total	18	100.00 %	28	100.00 %	44	100.00 %	17	100.00 %	107	100.00 %
Q5. How important is being connected to your classmates?	Not important at all	1	5.56 %	1	3.57 %	2	4.55 %	2	11.76 %	6	5.61 %
	Not important	2	11.11 %	2	7.14 %	5	11.36 %	0	0.00 %	9	8.41 %
	Neutral	2	11.11 %	8	28.57 %	15	34.09 %	5	29.41 %	30	28.04 %
	Important	9	50.00 %	10	35.71 %	13	29.55 %	9	52.94 %	41	38.32 %
	Very important	4	22.22 %	7	25.00 %	9	20.45 %	1	5.88 %	21	19.63 %
	Total	18	100.00 %	28	100.00 %	44	100.00 %	17	100.00 %	107	100.00 %
Q6. How possible is it for students to feel connected to other students at a large institution such as KU?	Not possible at all	0	0.00 %	1	3.57 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	1	0.94 %
	Not possible	1	5.56 %	4	14.29 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	5	4.72 %
	Neutral	3	16.67 %	1	3.57 %	5	11.63 %	1	5.88 %	10	9.43 %
	Possible	10	55.56 %	17	60.71 %	26	60.47 %	7	41.18 %	60	56.60 %
	Very possible	4	22.22 %	5	17.86 %	12	27.91 %	9	52.94 %	30	28.30 %

Q1. Year in school:											
		Freshman		Sophomore		Junior		Senior		Total	
	Total	18	100.00%	28	100.00%	43	100.00%	17	100.00%	106	100.00%
Q7. Do you feel like you are a part of the KU community?	Yes	15	83.33%	24	85.71%	39	90.70%	15	88.24%	93	87.74%
	No	3	16.67%	4	14.29%	4	9.30%	2	11.76%	13	12.26%
	Total	18	100.00%	28	100.00%	43	100.00%	17	100.00%	106	100.00%
Q8. Do you plan to graduate in four years?	Yes	13	72.22%	18	64.29%	23	53.49%	5	29.41%	59	55.66%
	No, because undergraduate degree requirements exceed 4 years.	1	5.56%	5	17.86%	5	11.63%	2	11.76%	13	12.26%
	No, I changed my major so I can't finish in 4 years.	1	5.56%	3	10.71%	11	25.58%	9	52.94%	24	22.64%
	No, because of personal/family reasons (e.g., work or financial reasons).	3	16.67%	2	7.14%	3	6.98%	1	5.88%	9	8.49%
	No, I have no desire to graduate in 4 years.	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
	No, because of other reasons.	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	2.33%	0	0.00%	1	0.94%
	Total	18	100.00%	28	100.00%	43	100.00%	17	100.00%	106	100.00%
Q9. If you received a Freshman Class T-shirt when you first arrived on campus, did it make you want to graduate in the year stated on the shirt?	Yes	11	61.11%	14	50.00%	20	46.51%	5	29.41%	50	47.17%
	No	7	38.89%	14	50.00%	23	53.49%	12	70.59%	56	52.83%
	Total	18	100.00%	28	100.00%	43	100.00%	17	100.00%	106	100.00%
Q10. How likely would you be to attend a celebration hosted by KU to recognize students who have reached sophomore, junior, and senior status?	Not likely at all	2	11.11%	6	21.43%	12	27.91%	4	23.53%	24	22.64%
	Not likely	4	22.22%	6	21.43%	4	9.30%	6	35.29%	20	18.87%
	Neutral	7	38.89%	5	17.86%	15	34.88%	3	17.65%	30	28.30%
	Likely	4	22.22%	9	32.14%	12	27.91%	3	17.65%	28	26.42%
	Very likely	1	5.56%	2	7.14%	0	0.00%	1	5.88%	4	3.77%
	Total	18	100.00%	28	100.00%	43	100.00%	17	100.00%	106	100.00%

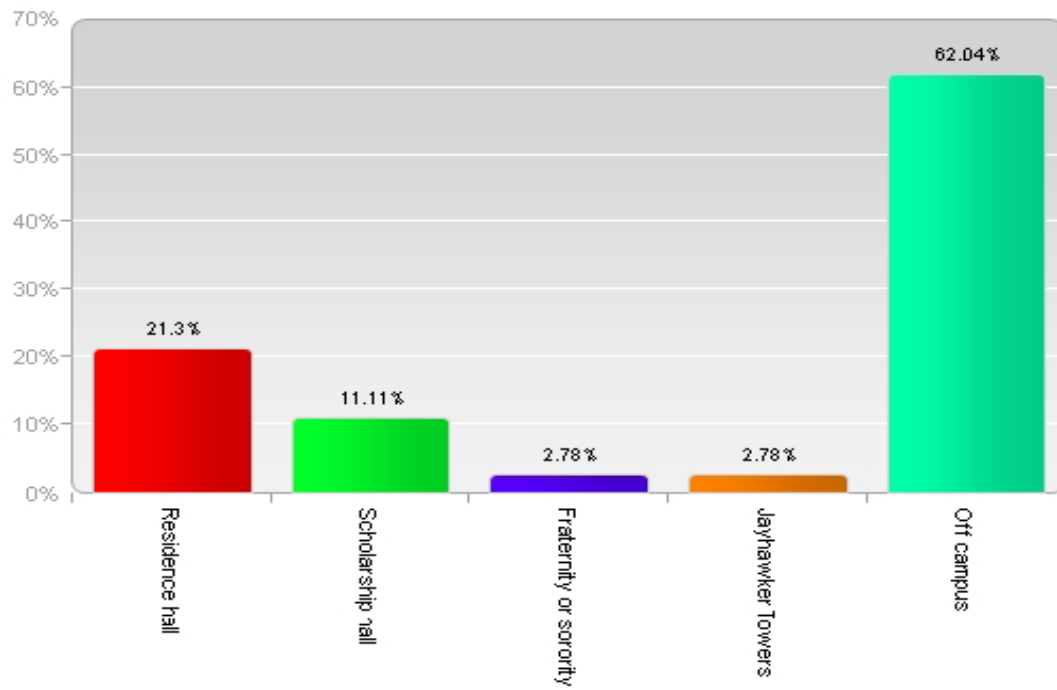
APPENDIX E: Student Voice Survey Result Charts

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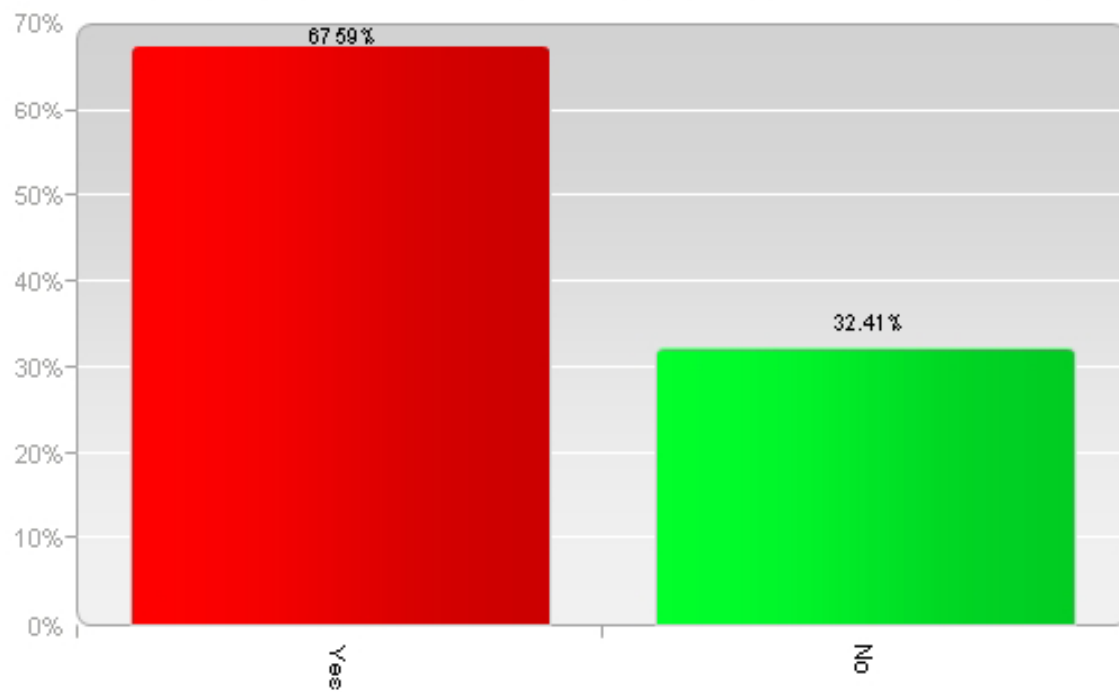
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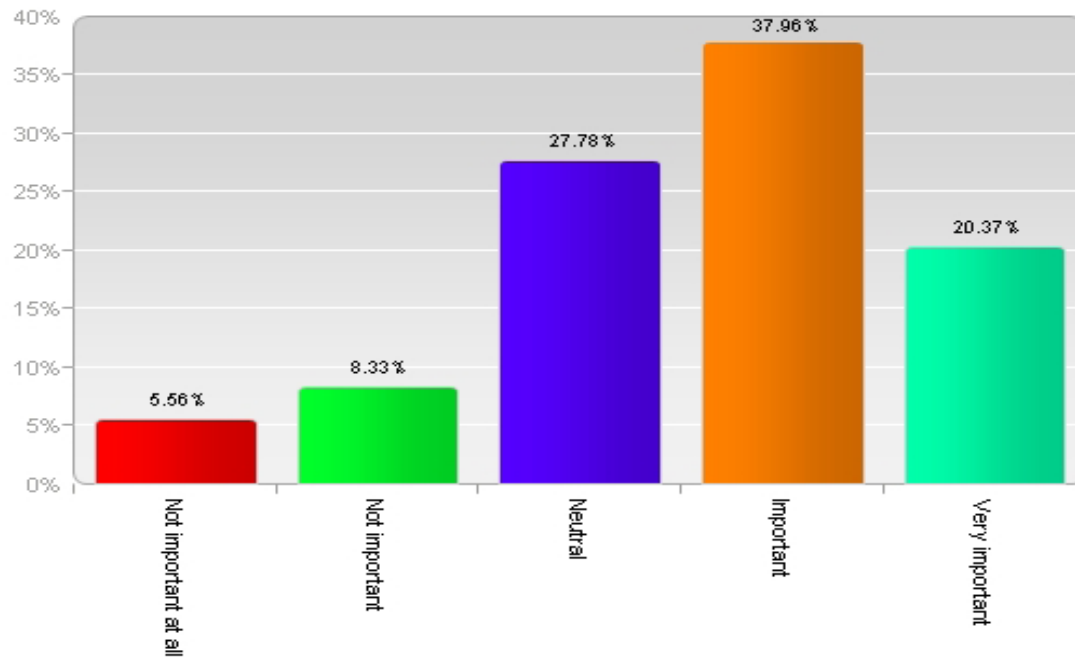
Q3. Where do you live?



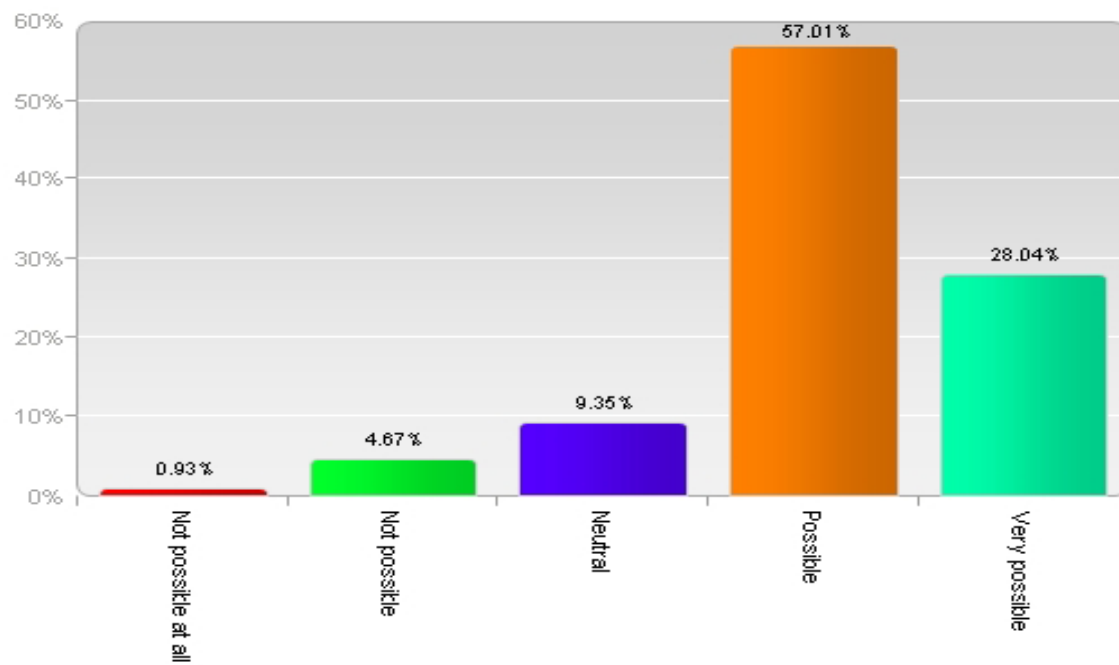
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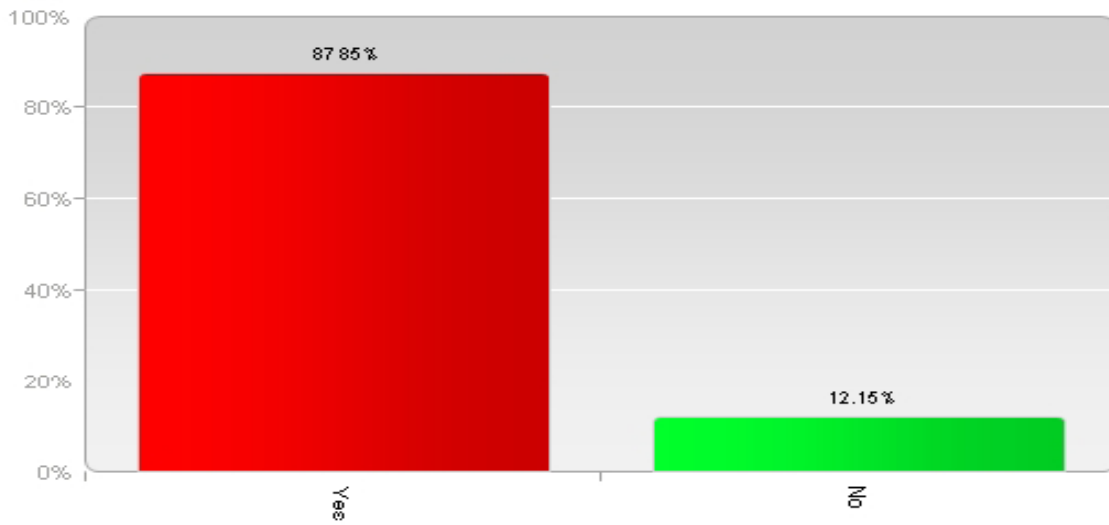
Q5. How important is being connected to your classmates?



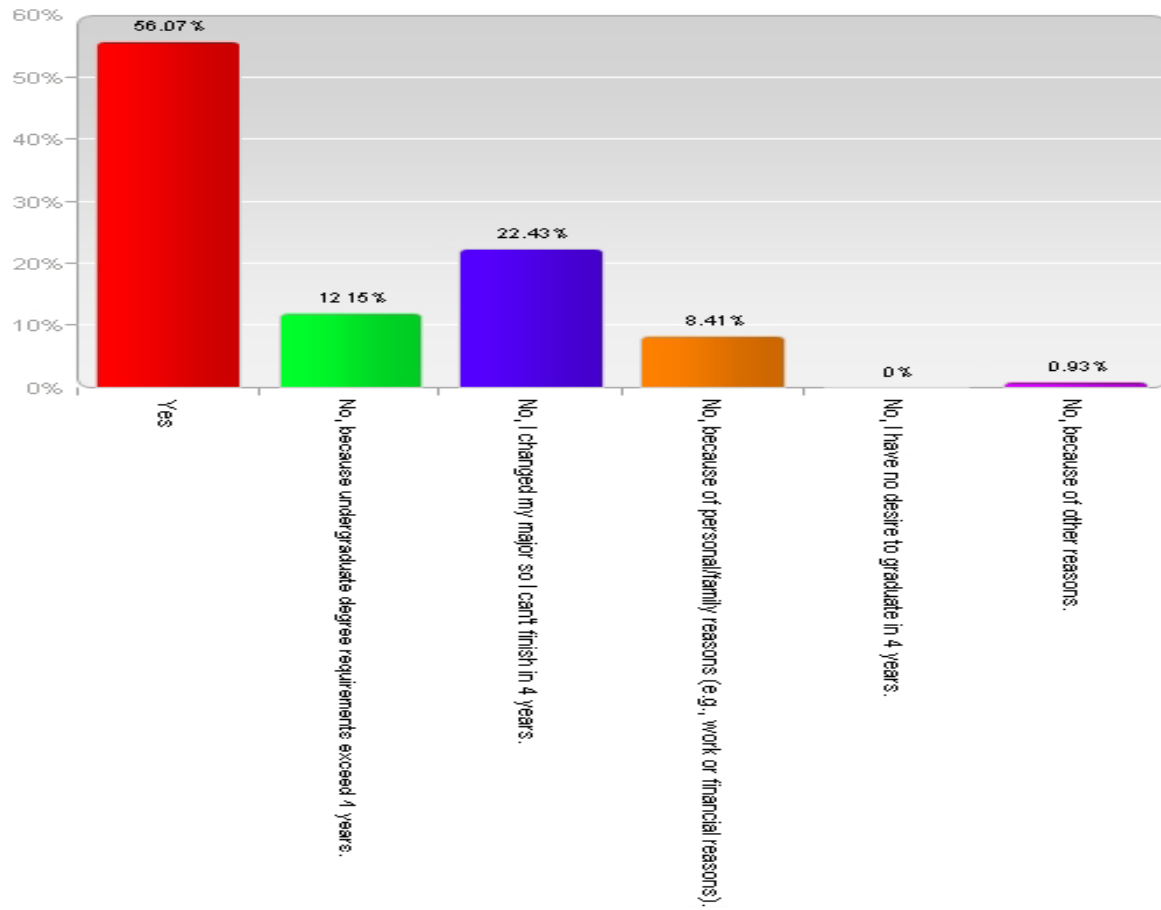
Q6. How possible is it for students to feel connected to other students at a large institution such as KU?



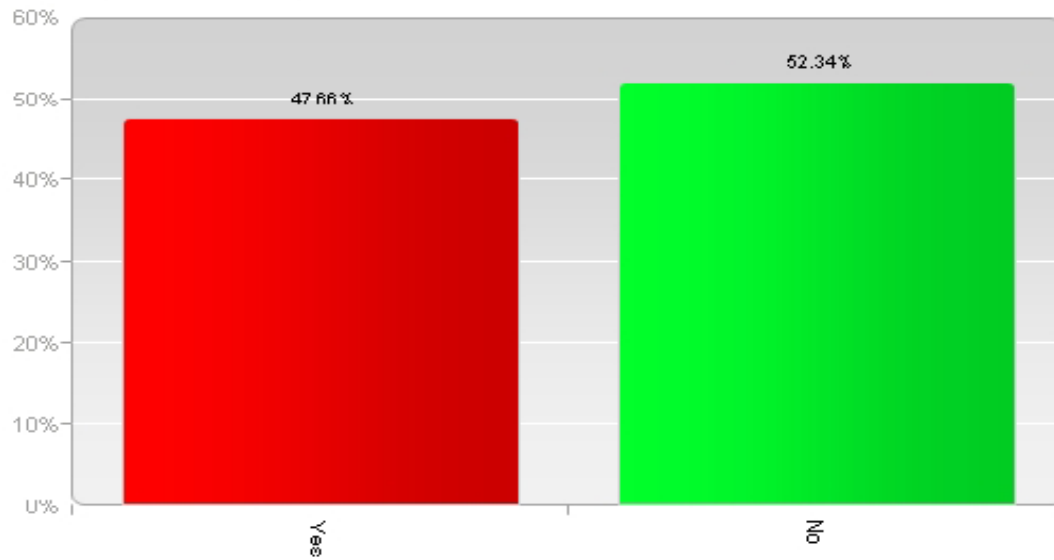
Q7. Do you feel like you are a part of the KU community?



Q8. Do you plan to graduate in four years?



Q9. If you received a Freshman Class T-shirt when you first arrived on campus, did it make you want to graduate in the year stated on the shirt?



Q10. How likely would you be to attend a celebration hosted by KU to recognize students who have reached sophomore, junior, and senior status?

