



EYP/ research

Living-Learning Research Report: Pace University-Westchester

April 2018



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Confidentiality Statement

This report concerns the impact of living-learning buildings on college campuses. The report has been developed by EYP, Inc. (EYP) at significant expense, devotion of resources, and time. As such, EYP considers the report as its proprietary information.

/ Introduction

EYP has been at the cutting edge of residence hall design, creating new residential spaces that facilitate student learning and development through the incorporation of living-learning design elements in academic and social spaces. For the past four years, EYP has been studying how these physical spaces and amenities can facilitate students' learning in their residence halls. In 2014, EYP commissioned a study at the University of Michigan to examine how students used their physical spaces in a new residence hall with living-learning design elements, in comparison to how students used a newly refurbished hall that did not incorporate the design elements. Then, in 2016, EYP partnered with Michigan State University to conduct a similar study comparing student usage in two identical residence halls, with the only exception being a renovation completed in one of the halls by EYP.

Most recently, in 2017, EYP commissioned a third study of Alumni Hall at Pace University-Westchester. The Westchester campus recently underwent a major redesign overseen by EYP to create a new sustainable master plan. The redesign included a new residence hall: Alumni Hall. However, because the new master plan is unlike anything in Pace's architectural history, there is no other residence hall on its campus that is comparable for research purposes. Yet, it is possible to compare the responses of the Pace students in the Alumni Hall living-learning environment to those of the living-learning students at the University of Michigan (U-M) and Michigan State University (MSU).

This report details comparisons of students at the three universities regarding their: interactions with peers, interactions with faculty, co- and extra-curricular involvement, and satisfaction with their residence hall environment. The findings continue with a description of the spaces in Alumni Hall that the Pace residents use the most often and why. Finally, the report concludes by summarizing the findings of survey questions that were germane only to Pace University and the Alumni Hall residents.

/ Methodology



Study Site and Sample

This study was conducted at Pace University-Westchester in Pleasantville, New York. All first-year students in Alumni Hall, approximately 500 students, were selected to participate. Alumni Hall is a 125,000 SF suite-style residence hall that features two classrooms, a coffee bar, six study rooms, and seven First-Year Interest Groups (FIGs): Body and Mind (BAM), Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO), Extreme Sports & Pace Nation (ESPN), Honors, Nursing, Pop Culture & Media, and Setters Leadership and Service House (SLH). Each FIG has its own themed lounge, which is individually designed according to its theme. For example, the Body and Mind FIG lounge is outfitted as a yoga studio, and the Extreme Sports & Pace Nation FIG features a foosball and ping-pong table, as well as a television viewing area shaped like a bowling nook. It is important to note that all first-year students living in Alumni Hall, and all seven FIGs, are housed together in the same building.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The survey instrument for this study was adapted from the questionnaire developed for the University of Michigan and Michigan State University studies. Items on the survey first query students on their use of their residence hall spaces: which spaces they used the most often, when they used the space, what activities they performed in those spaces, and why they preferred to use those spaces. In addition, in order to understand how living-learning designed residence halls facilitate student learning, the survey includes questions regarding Alumni Hall residents': relationships and interactions with students, professors, and residence hall staff; co-curricular and extra-curricular involvement; and satisfaction with their residence hall experience.

Pace University Institutional Review Board approval was granted for the study, and the survey was administered online to all students living in Alumni Hall in Spring 2017. Survey Sciences Group, a web survey firm, conducted the survey from February 28, 2017 to March 24, 2017. A total of 443 students were sent an initial email invitation to participate in the study, and non-respondents were sent up to three additional follow-up emails. The final sample was comprised of 190 respondents (a 42.9% response rate).

/ Results

Before we compare the results of the Pace study with those from the University of Michigan (U-M) and Michigan State University (MSU), it is important to compare the background characteristics of the three university samples in order to uncover any potential demographic or academic differences among the three groups of students.

While inferential statistics could not be utilized because the three samples were obtained from three separate studies, Table 1 shows that there are differences among the three samples. The Pace University-Westchester sample is overwhelmingly female (79.5%), whereas the U-M and MSU samples are a bit more balanced between men and women. The Pace sample is also more racially and ethnically diverse than the U-M and MSU samples. While the MSU sample is almost 80 percent White/Caucasian, the U-M and Pace samples are predominantly minorities. However, while over one quarter of the U-M sample is Asian/Pacific Islander (26.5%), the Pace sample is primarily composed of Hispanic/Latino students (18.9%), Black/African American (13.0%), and Asian/Pacific Islanders (9.2%). Finally, although there are minor differences, the three institutional samples are represented by high achievers, based upon their grade point averages: 84.4 to 85.2% of respondents at all three universities had GPAs of 3.00 or higher.

Figure 1: Sample characteristics at the three universities

	Pace (n=151)	U-M (n=449)	MSU (n=213)
Gender			
Male	19.9	47.4	40.9
Female	79.5	52.6	59.1
Transgender	0.7		
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.0	0.0	0.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	9.2	26.5	5.2
Black/African American	13.0	9.8	5.7
Hispanic/Latino	18.9	3.6	2.6
White/Caucasian	47.6	47.0	78.7
Multiple ethnicities	8.6	3.3	3.0
Race not indicated	2.7	9.8	4.3
College GPA			
3.50 – 4.00	55.0	42.8	56.0
3.00 – 3.49	30.2	41.6	29.1
2.50 – 2.99	12.8	10.4	12.0
2.00 – 2.49	1.3	3.5	2.6
No GPA	0.7	1.7	0.4

/ Comparisons Among the Three Universities

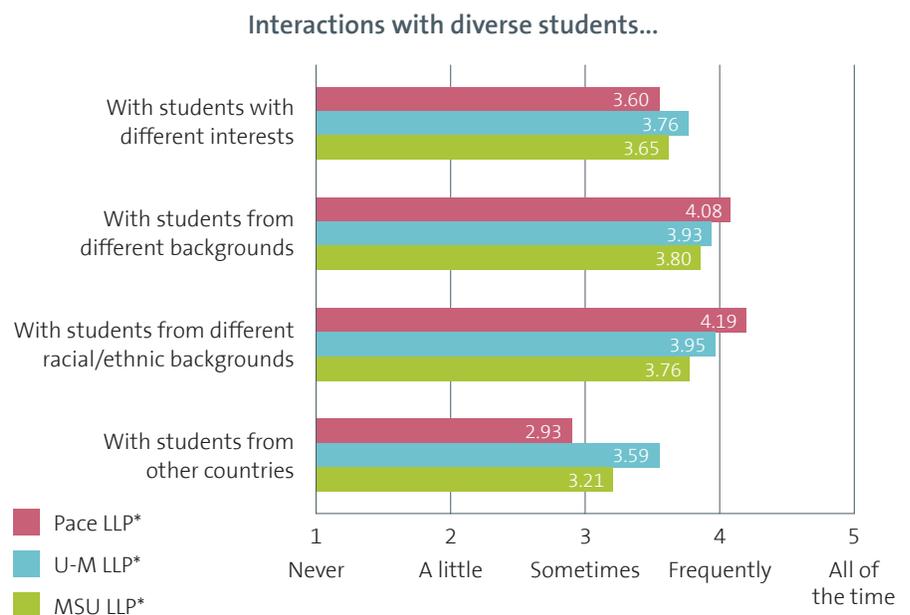
Interactions with Peers

Although the three living-learning residence halls at Pace (Alumni Hall), U-M (North Quadrangle), and MSU (Snyder-Phillips) have different architectural styles, house different students (first-year students at Pace, and mixed academic levels at U-M and MSU), and are obviously situated in different locations, students' interactions with their peers are roughly similar. For example, the Pace students appear to be as likely to interact with students with different interests, personal histories, and racial/ethnic backgrounds as U-M and MSU students. However, compared to U-M and MSU students, Pace students appear to be less likely to interact with international students, which may be due to the fact that there are likely fewer international students on the Pace-Westchester campus than at the other two universities. Pace students are on par with U-M and MSU students with regard to having serious discussions with peers with different values, political opinions, religious beliefs, racial/ethnic backgrounds, and home countries.

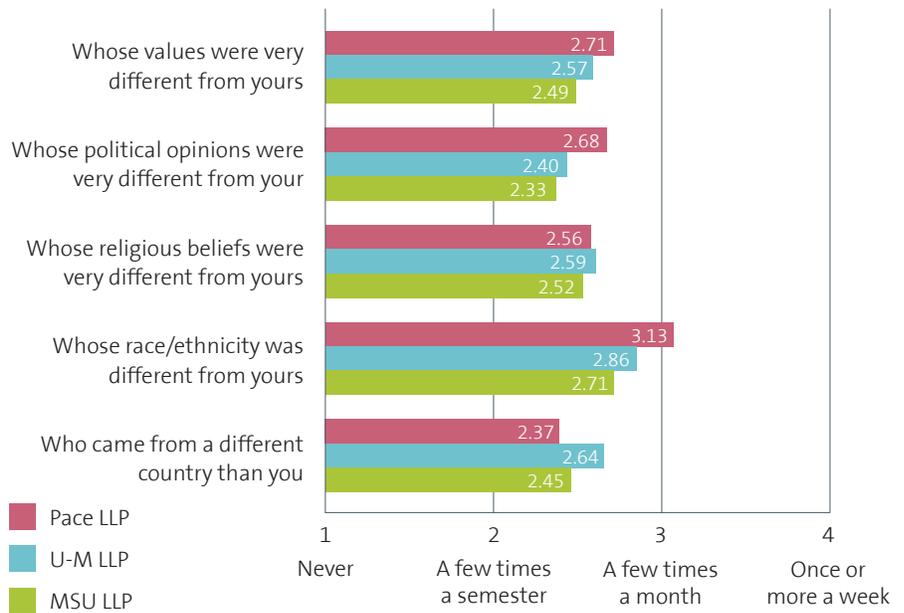
Moreover, Pace students are continuing the learning they experience in their classrooms in discussions with their peers at the same frequency as students at U-M and MSU; they are roughly equally as likely to hold intellectual conversations with their peers in:

- Referring to knowledge acquired in their classes
- Exploring different ways of thinking about a topic
- Referring to something an instructor said in class
- Reading something related to a topic in a class
- Changing their opinions based on others' persuasion
- Persuading others to change their opinions

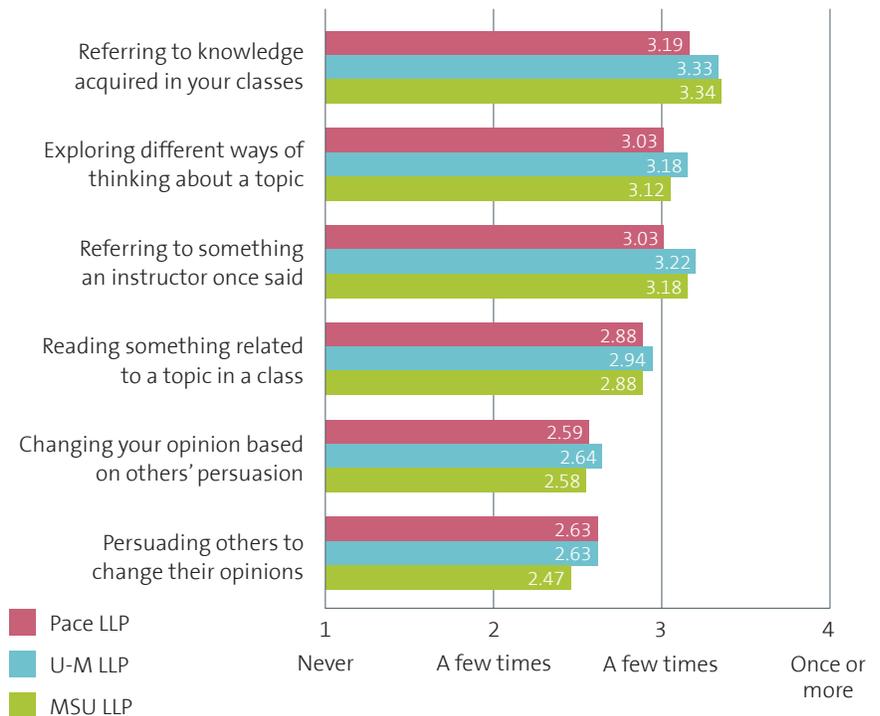
Figure 1: Interactions with peers



Had serious discussions with peers...

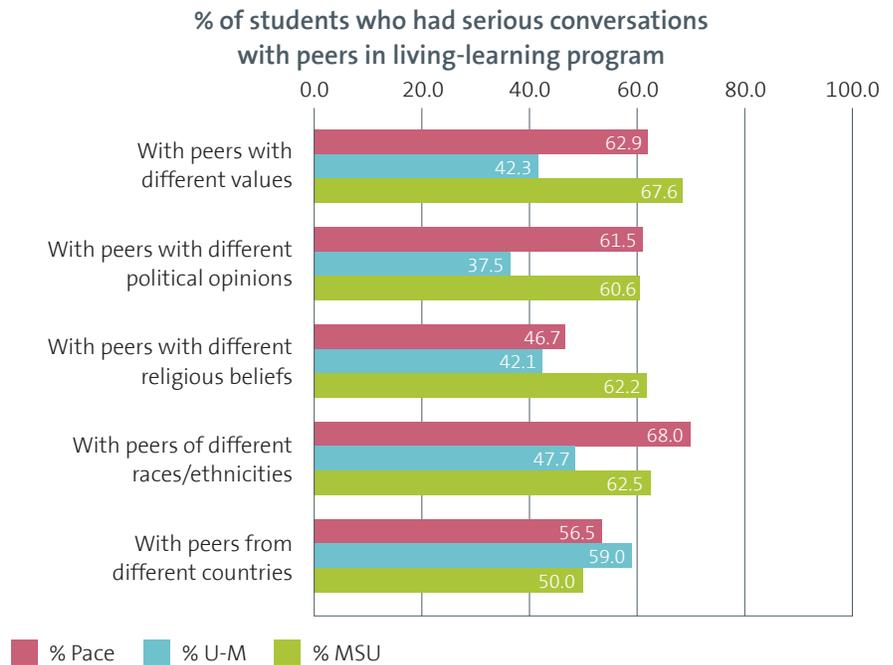
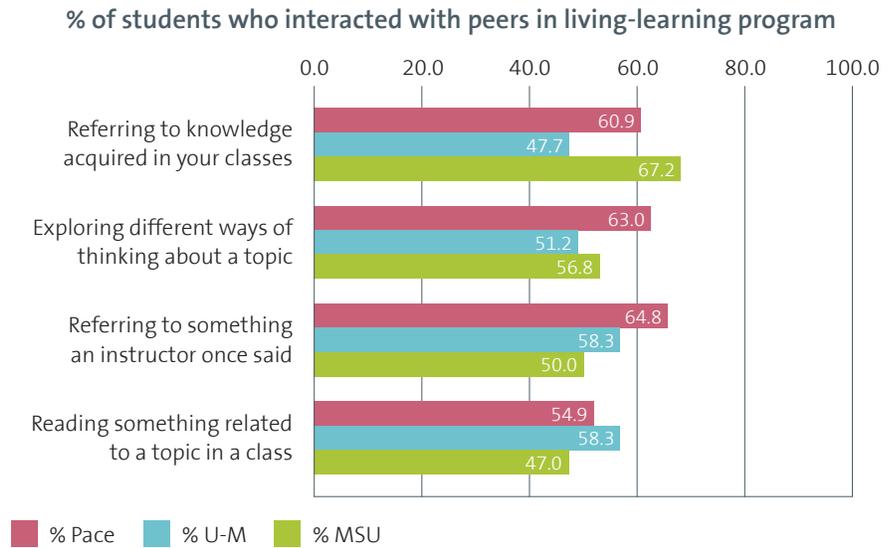


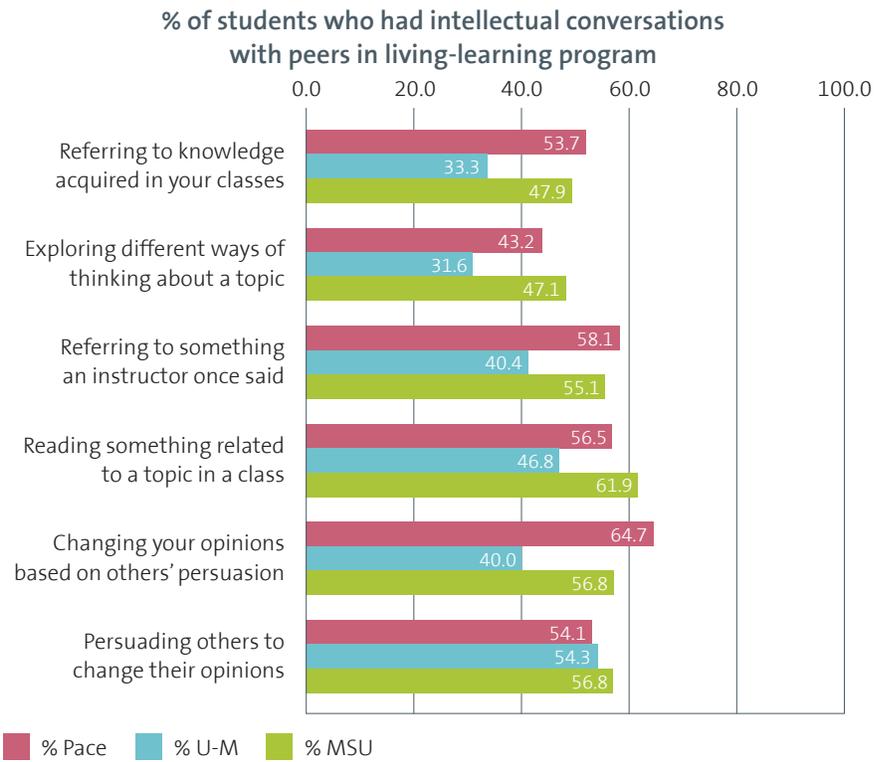
Had intellectual conversations with peers...



Further, not only are Pace students interacting and holding intellectual conversations with their peers, they are doing so in Alumni Hall. Indeed, Pace students appear to be experiencing these living-learning discussions more often than students in U-M's North Quadrangle (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Interactions with peers in living-learning residence hall





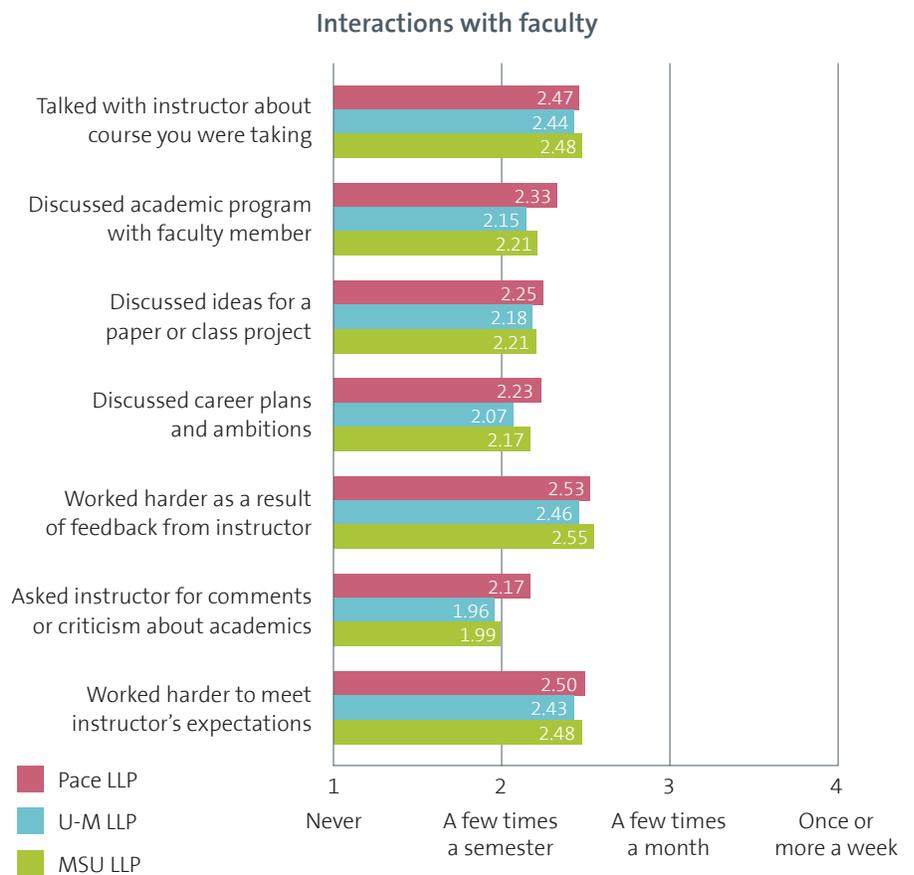
Interactions with Faculty

The charts in Figure 3 show that, typically, students on all three campuses tend to interact less frequently with faculty than they do with their peers. However, Pace students are no more or less likely to interact with faculty than students at U-M or MSU. On average, Pace students do the following with faculty a few times per semester:

- Talk about a course they are taking
- Discuss their academic program
- Discuss ideas for a paper/class project
- Discuss career plans or ambitions
- Ask for comments/criticism about academic work

Pace students also, about once per semester, work harder than students at MSU or U-M due to feedback received from an instructor, or in order to meet an instructor’s expectations.

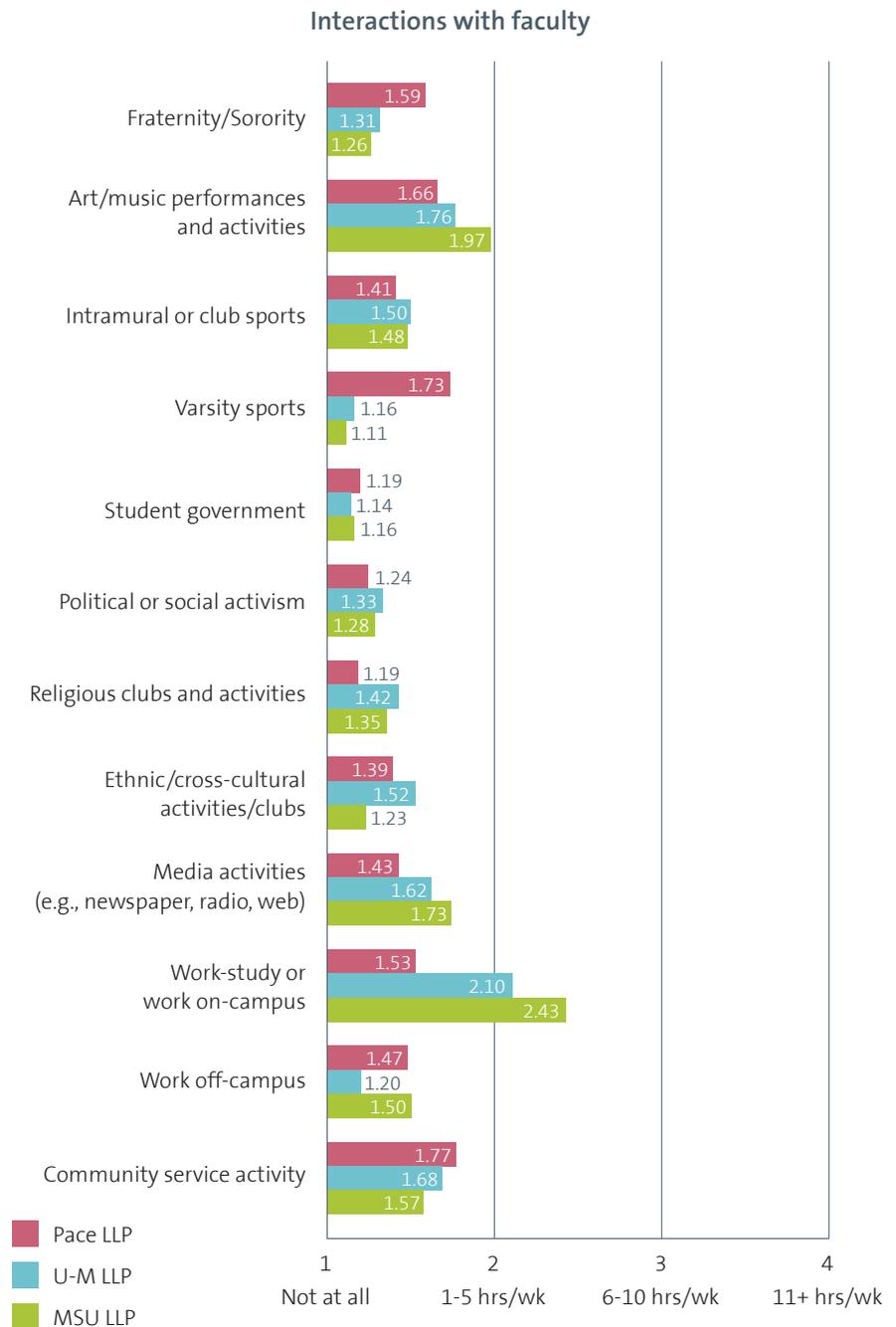
Figure 3: Interactions with faculty



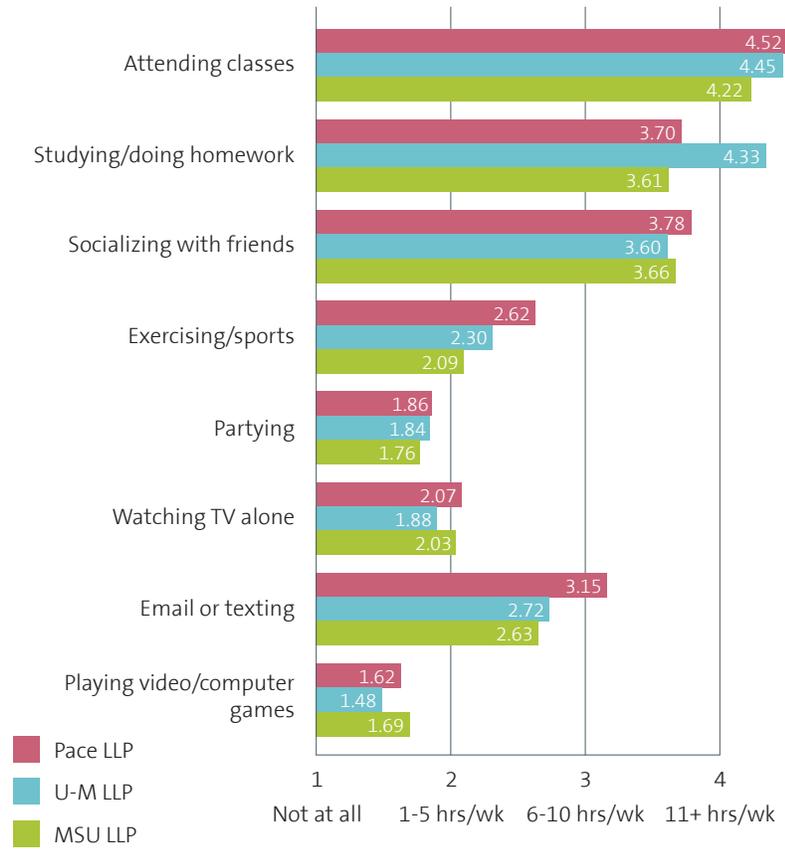
Co- and Extra-Curricular Involvement

There were some differences in the co- and extra-curricular activity involvement among students at Pace, U-M, and MSU (see Figure 4). Pace students appeared to be more likely to spend time participating in a fraternity or sorority, as well as in varsity sports, and they were less likely to work hours on campus or in a work-study position. In terms of extra-curricular activities, they appeared to spend slightly more time exercising and/or participating in sports and emailing/texting than students at U-M or MSU. Finally, U-M students appeared to study for slightly more hours per week than students at Pace or MSU.

Figure 4: Hours per week participating in co- and extra-curricular activities



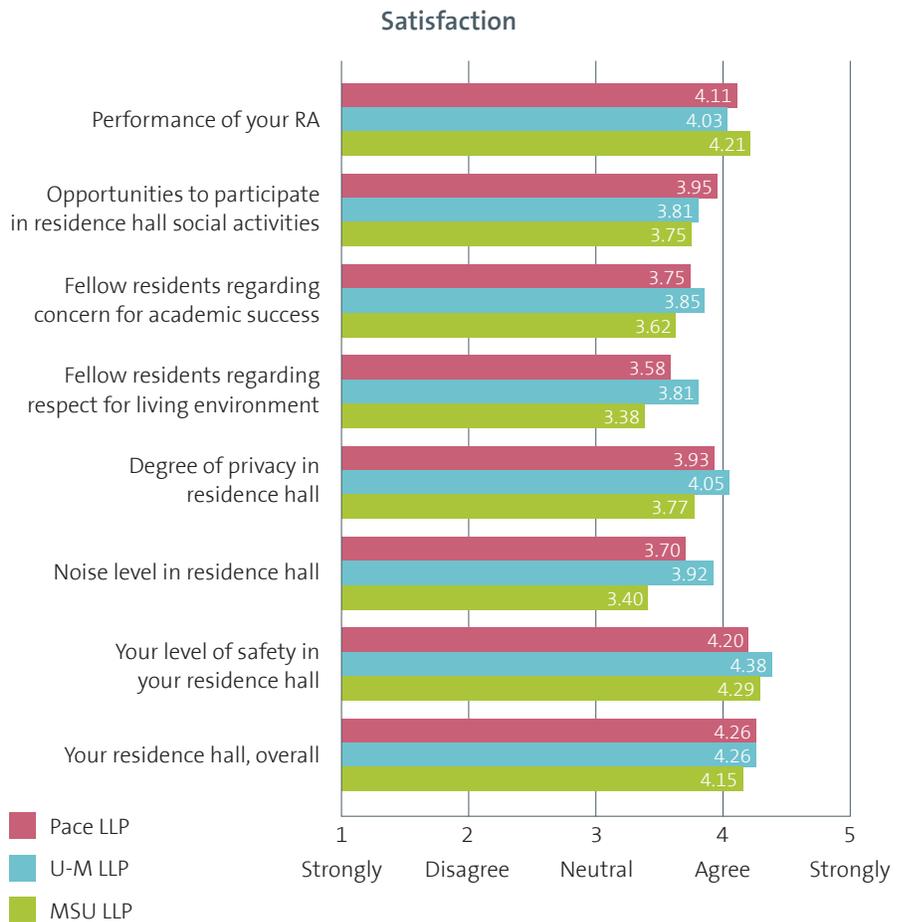
Involvement with extra-curricular activities



Satisfaction with Residence Hall Environment

In the final series of analyses comparing students' responses at Pace, U-M, and MSU, Pace students appeared to be equally as satisfied with their residence hall as students at the other two universities. Pace respondents agreed that they were satisfied with Alumni Hall along many factors, with a slightly lower mean score (3.58) for agreement that their fellow residents respected the living environment (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Satisfaction with the residence hall environment



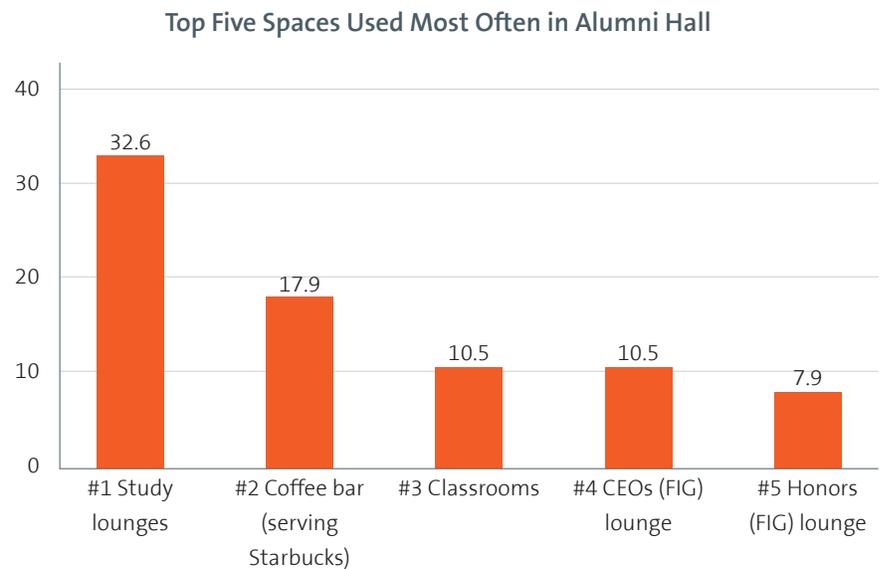
/ Pace University-Westchester Results



Alumni Hall Most Used Spaces

Pace students in Alumni Hall are the most likely to utilize one of the building’s study halls, and they prefer the lounges because they have comfortable furniture, are in a convenient location, and offer good lighting, including good natural lighting. Moreover, Pace students are most likely to be using the study lounges in the evening and late at night. Pace students’ second and third most used spaces are the coffee bar and the classrooms, and their reasons for using those spaces are similar to their reasons for using the lounges: comfortable furniture and convenient location. However, they are much more likely to use the coffee bar and classrooms in the morning – just the opposite of the study lounges. Finally, the Pace respondents tended to use two of the FIG lounges in particular: the CEO and Honors lounges. While having comfortable furniture was again cited as a reason the students preferred these FIG lounges, the spaces being large and open were also popular reasons cited as a preference. Similar to the study lounges, Pace students tended to state that they used the CEO and Honors lounges in the evening or late at night.

Figure 6: Most used Alumni Hall spaces, reasons for use, and times used



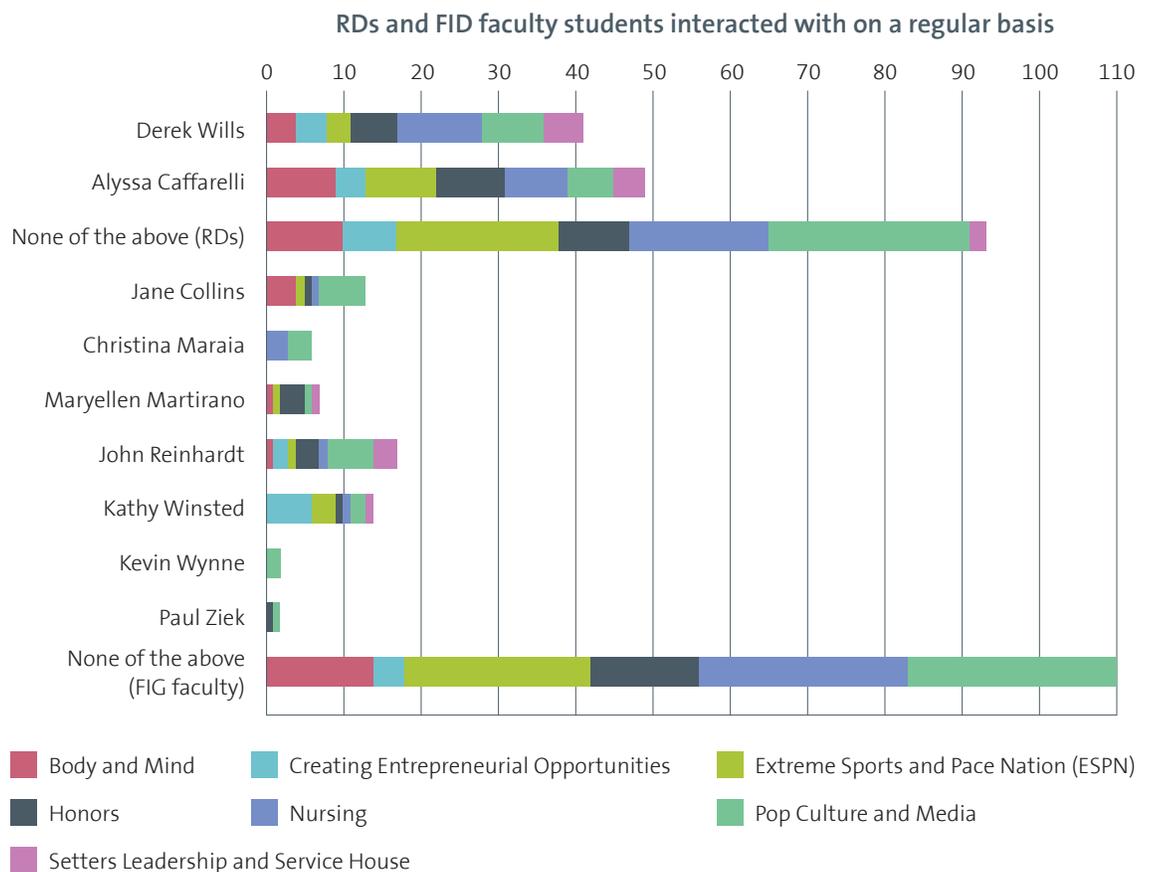
Study Lounges	Coffee Bar	Classrooms	CEOs Lounge	Honors Lounge
Comfortable furniture 53%	Comfortable furniture 59%	Comfortable furniture 65%	Convenient location 60%	Big, open space 43%
Convenient location 53%	Convenient location 59%	Convenient location 65%	Good lighting 55%	Big screen TV 36%
Good lighting 52%	Quiet/lack of noise 53%	Close to room 65%	Big, open space 55%	Comfortable furniture 36%
Natural light 37%	Good lighting 44%	Flexible space 47%	Comfortable furniture 50%	Writable wall 36%

Study Lounges	Coffee Bar	Classrooms	CEOs Lounge	Honors Lounge
Morning 18%	Morning 91%	Morning 84%	Morning 10%	Morning 27%
Afternoon 52%	Afternoon 82%	Afternoon 58%	Afternoon 45%	Afternoon 67%
Evening 82%	Evening 21%	Evening 58%	Evening 100%	Evening 73%
Late night 84%	Late night 12%	Late night 26%	Late night 80%	Late night 93%

Interactions with Resident Directors and FIG Faculty/Staff Partners

There are two Resident Directors (RDs) who supervise Alumni Hall: Derek Wills and Alyssa Caffarelli. In addition, each of the FIGs has its own faculty/staff partner. However, because all of the FIG residents live in the same building (Alumni Hall), it is possible that the Pace students in the study could interact with either RD, whether or not he or she is the student's assigned RD. Similarly, it is conceivable that FIG students could be interacting with their FIG faculty/staff partner or a faculty/staff member affiliated with a different FIG. To test this hypothesis, we asked the survey respondents which RDs and FIG faculty/staff partners they interacted with on a regular basis. Figure 7 shows the number of students who interacted with the various staff or faculty, and it is clear that not only do students interact with the two RDs and various FIG faculty/staff, students are also interacting with the RD or FIG faculty/staff member not associated with their FIG.

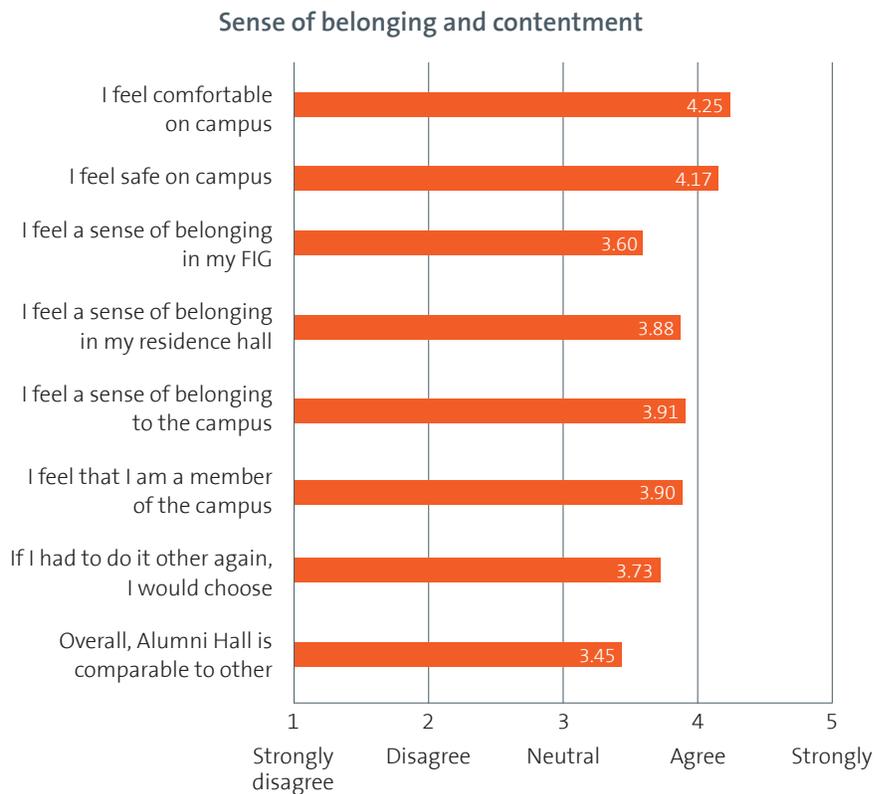
Figure 7: Interactions with resident directors and FIG faculty/staff partners



Sense of belonging and contentment

Overall, Pace students report a sense of belonging with their university (see Figure 8). However, the two areas where they are slightly less likely to agree is regarding a sense of belonging with their FIG and their perception that Alumni Hall is comparable to other residence halls on other campuses. These findings are rather surprising, given the consistently positive responses provided regarding their satisfaction with Alumni Hall and their level of interaction with peers and involvement with activities. Indeed, Pace students appear to be on par with U-M and MSU students on most measures, possibly suggesting that their slightly less enthusiastic responses regarding their FIG sense of belonging may be due to very high expectations. Nevertheless, this finding warrants further investigation.

Figure 8: Sense of belonging to Pace and FIG



Finally, respondents were allowed to leave open-ended comments about what Pace’s Office of Residential Life and Housing could do to improve their experience. Those responses were sorted and provided to the University to help inform future residence hall projects, as well as residential life policies and regulations.

/ Conclusion



The results from the Pace University-Westchester study show that no matter where and in what architectural style the living-learning design elements are utilized in residence halls, they do have an influence on how students interact with their peers and faculty members in their residential environments. The Pace findings are particularly significant because Pace University-Westchester and Alumni Hall are very different than the settings for the U-M and MSU studies, which were both conducted in Michigan with more similar student populations.

Thus, as the U-M and MSU studies also concluded, living-learning design elements, such as study lounges, classrooms, and theme-specific spaces, are important to the learning atmosphere of a residence hall, perhaps more so than the latest fads or trends. One conclusion remains unequivocally clear: EYP's living-learning architecture is having an impact on students and their residence experiences around the nation.

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