



TIRED OF
TRADITIONAL FLOOR
MEETINGS...TRY
COMMUNITY/TALKING
CIRCLES!

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SUNY Geneseo “Knights”

- Undergraduate – liberal arts college
- Located – western New York
- Total enrollment of 5,458
- On campus population is 2,894 (55%)
- Male/Female ratio: 43%/57%
- Multicultural students: 20%
- SAT mean score of 1333
- First year class: 950



Goals of this session

- Development of Community/Talking Circles
- Implementation of Community/Talking Circles
- Data
- Mistakes and accomplishments
- Plans for 2012 - 2013

Development of Community/Talking Circles

- Attended trainings with *Partners in Restorative Initiatives*
 - community circles
 - restorative conferencing
- Worked with a student intern to develop a plan of implementation
 - Presented Circles to the Dean of Residential Living and the Dean of Students
- Replaced traditional floor meetings with a Community/Talking Circle
 - 3 first year halls (Jones, Niagara and Onondaga) - Fall 2010
 - added a hall of international and honor students (Wayne Hall) – Spring 2011

Implementation

- Developed a training packet
 - the professional staff members in the Residence Life Department
 - Resident Assistants
- Held training sessions
 - hosted an overview of the history of Circles
 - need for developing stronger communities
 - increase student accountability
- Provided “suggested outlines” for each Circle
 - August/September – welcome, community values, standards of behavior
 - October – fall closing, roommate conflicts
 - November – Thanksgiving Break
 - December – celebration of the end of the semester and closing procedures
 - January/February – welcome and review of the community values
 - March – alcohol and Spring Break
 - April/May – celebration and closing procedures

Assessment Tool

Community/Talking Circles – Geneseo Student Survey

Your thoughts and feelings are needed and valued. Please take a few minutes to complete the following survey so that your voice can be heard. Please ✓ your responses. Your input is greatly appreciated!

Gender: Male _____ Female _____ Transgendered: _____

Hall:

How many semesters on campus? _____

<i>After participating in my Community/Talking Circles for the academic year of 2011-2012....</i>	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	No response
I felt welcomed on my floor/section?				
I felt physically safe on my floor/section?				
I felt emotionally safe on my floor/section?				
I felt a positive sense of community on my floor/section?				
I felt comfortable sharing myself (personal stories, experiences, identities, etc.)?				
I feel that I have had the opportunity to know the members of my community more deeply/personally?				
I have enjoyed the Community/Talking Circle experience.				
I have confronted behaviors that are inconsistent with our community values.				

Please share your thoughts and observations. It is okay to use the back of the paper too.

The things I like **best** about Community/Talking Circles is:

The things I would like to see **improved/changed** about Community/Talking Circles is:

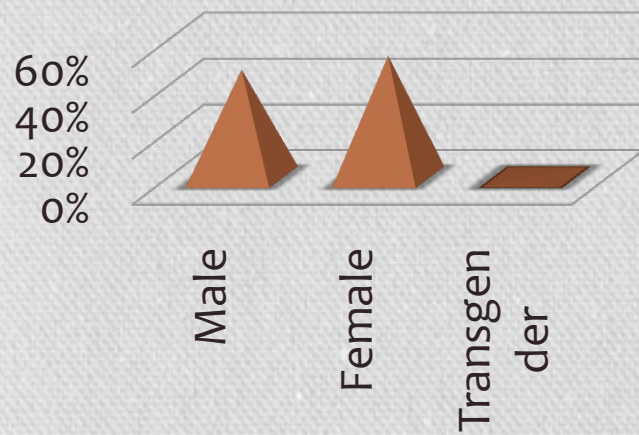
Assessment

- 2010 - 2011
 - Survey all student who participated in Circles
 - Paper and pencil survey
 - Response rate of 34%

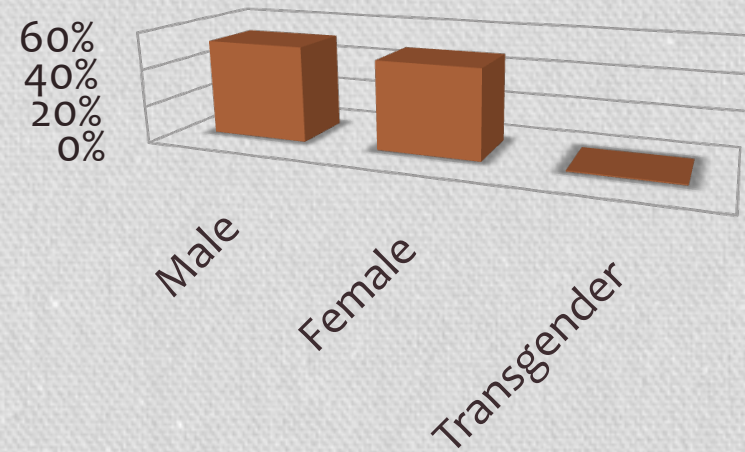
- 2011 – 2012
 - Surveyed all student who participated in Circles
 - Paper and pencil survey
 - Response rate of 46%

Response rate based on gender

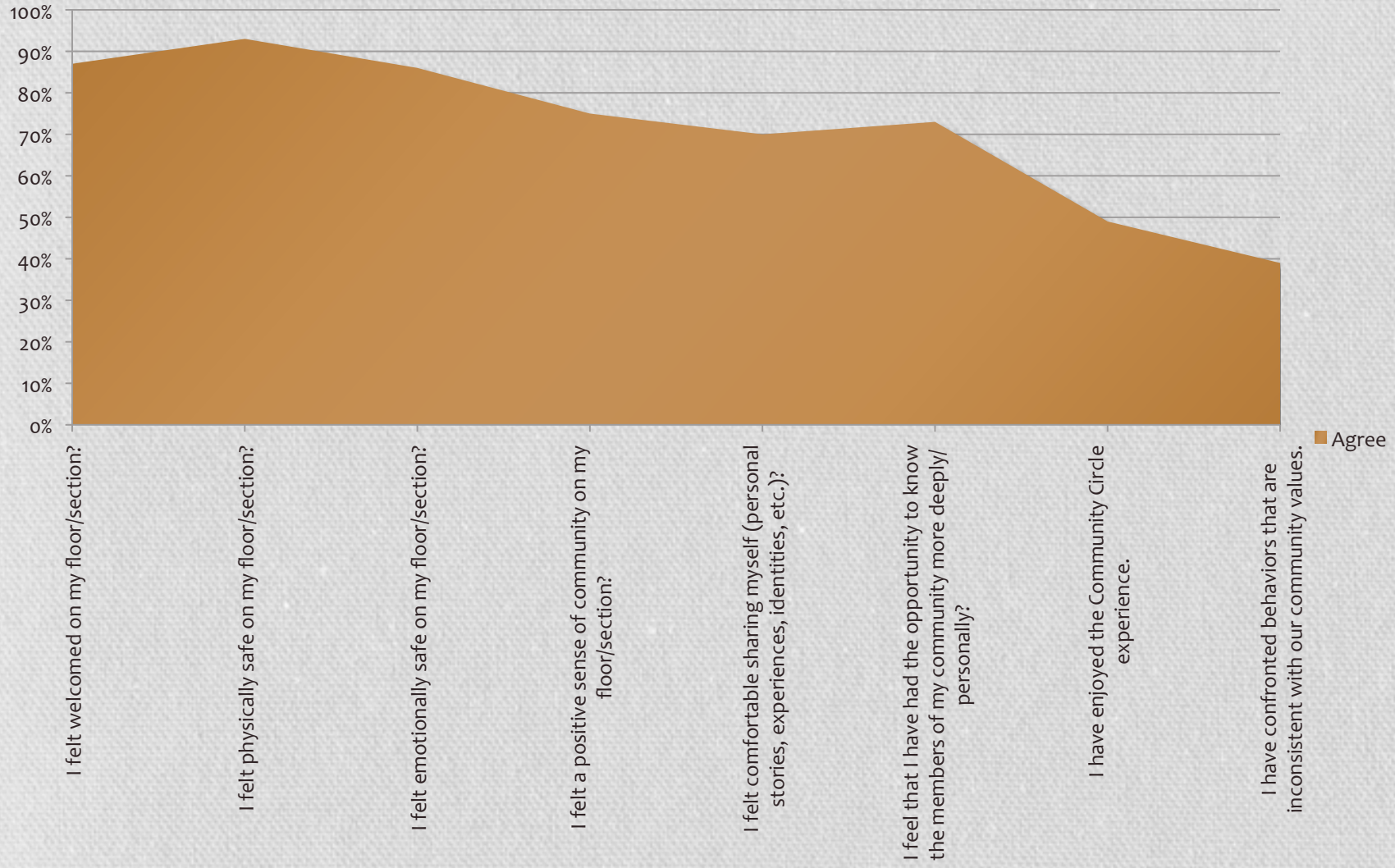
2010 – 2011



2011 - 2012



Outcome of 2011-2012 Surveys



2010 – 2011 Comments

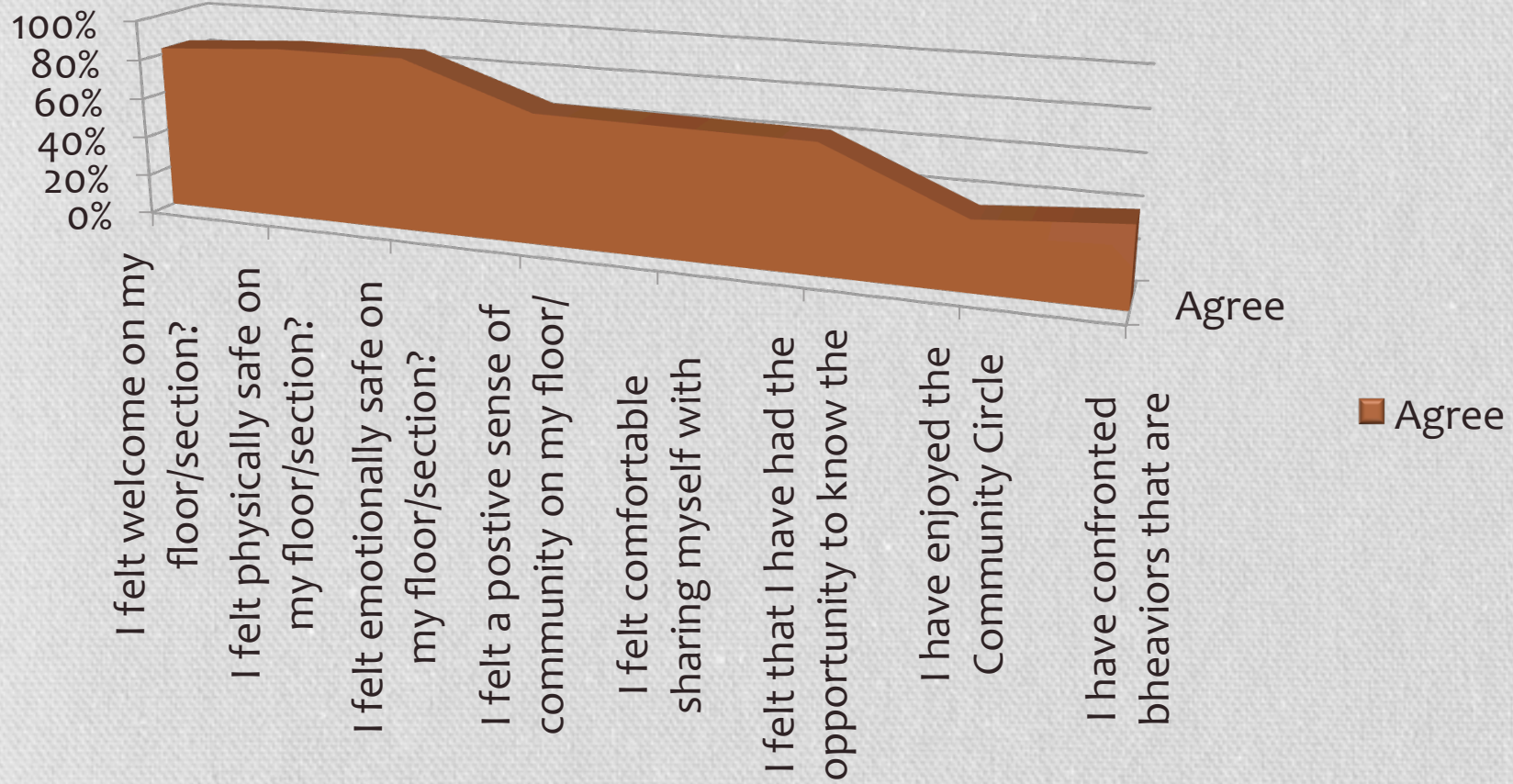
Positive comments:

- The feeling of welcome on the wall.
- Everyone is very friendly and I don't feel any source of uncertainty in terms of safety on my floor.
- I liked the first community circle where we got to know each other and did building characters/ community activities.
- The opportunity to sound-off and make myself heard.
- Getting to see everyone.
- We all come together as a floor
- It's a break from everyday routine. They are interesting.
- Getting to meet/see new faces.
- Even when everyone is stressed or tired, we all can laugh and have fun in a safe environment. The RA's make it really easy to talk them and the people on the floor are welcoming.
- Open door policy.
- Hearing people's stories.

• Not so positive comments:

- Keep it short.
- More floor-wide activities.
- More "get to know you" activities.
- Less formal/structured.
- Address issues like dorm/bathroom rules and etiquette. More enforcement from RA's.
- Help us find solutions to any problems our floor might be having-brainstorm together.
- More and earlier second semester.
- Staying focused/getting through things faster.
- Advanced warning of topics.
- Make them longer.
- Have more of them.
- Have more people show up.
- More community respect.
- More interesting topics.

Outcome of 2011 – 2012 Surveys



2011 – 2012 Comments

• Positive comments:

- getting to hang out with the fellas
- being able to share my feelings
- sharing feelings
- talking with everyone on the floor
- seeing faces I haven't seen in a while and giving my input
- I like seeing new people every time
- Getting to talk to and hear from the people on my floor that I don't always see
- everyone has a chance to get involved
- the circle removed an anxiety about living with new people
- They are fun. I get to express my feelings.
- I got to know everyone a little bit better
- Any issue on the floor were discussed and settled
- Good laughs
- Bonding
- We talked
- Easy way to voice opinions and to hear others thoughts
- Community
- Everyone seemed honesty about their opinions
- built a sense of trust among the hall mates

• Not so positive comments:

- Incorporate a physical activity so as to alleviate wide spread passing
- Have more time to share
- No pointless activities
- Nothing – abolish them
- A smaller Community Circle
- More interactive things, no silent trust games
- Allow people to open up more
- Force people into groups with people they don't know so they can get to know each other
- I wish there were more Circles
- Can be a little long at times
- More focus
- More space
- More directed at times people had nothing to say
- No complaints
- Smaller circles
- People not taking the Circle seriously
- More structure
- I hate when people interrupt or are not paying attention

Student Conduct – Jones Hall

Hall	Circles Implemented			
Year	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013
Total IRs	52	68	63	
Alcohol	63%	65%	59%	
Damage	15%	25%	2%	
Dishonesty	5%	10%	6%	
Disorderly	23%	21%	10%	

Jones Hall = 200 student – all first year students

Student Conduct – Niagara Hall

Hall	Circles Implemented			
	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012-2013
Year	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012-2013
Total IRs	63	55	70	
Alcohol	56%	62%	47%	
Damage	6%	5%	3%	
Dishonesty	12%	9%	7%	
Disorderly	10%	9%	14%	

Niagara Hall = 200 students – mix of 1st and 2nd year students/transfer

Student Conduct – Onondaga Hall

Hall	Circles Implemented			
Year	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012-2013
Total IRs	139	105	103	
Alcohol	56%	62%	47%	
Damage	6%	5%	3%	
Dishonesty	12%	9%	7%	
Disorderly	10%	9%	14%	

Onondaga Hall = 330 students – all first year students

Student Conduct – Wayne Hall

Hall	Circles Implemented (January 2011)			
Year	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013
Total IRs	16	20	11	
Alcohol	34%	36%	73%	
Damage	10%	14%	18%	
Dishonesty	25%	13%	55%	
Disorderly	8%	12%	27%	

Wayne Hall = 90 students – international and upper-class students

Successes and Failures

Successes

- Some increase in incident reports
- Use of Circles to solve conflicts
- Excitement of students and student staff members
- Good PR with the administration
- Allowed the use of restorative methods in all conduct matters
- Increased the feelings of community and belonging

Failures

- Lack of “buy in” from some staff members – professionals to student staff
- Not enough training for student staff members
- Not enough support for the student staff hosting the Circles
- No input on the monthly outline for Circles by the student staff

Plan for 2012 - 2013

- Implement Circle Advisory Board
- Training
- Outlines for monthly Circles
- Pre and post survey of participants and circle keepers
- Restorative Practices into all aspects of conduct – starting with language and questions being asked
- Begin to use Restorative Conferencing for conduct reviews

Resources

- Berkowitz, Alan. *Responsibility: A Complete Guide to Bystander Intervention* (Chicago, Illinois: Beck & CO. 2009).
- Hutchison, Katy. *Walking After Midnight: One Woman's Journey Through Murder, Justice and Forgiveness* (Oakland, California: New Harbinger Publications, 2006).
- Karp, David R, and Thom Allena. *Restorative Justice on the College Campus: Promoting Student Growth and Responsibility, and Reawakening the Spirit of Campus Community* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas Publishers, 2004).
- Lederach, John Paul. *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation* (Intercourse, Pennsylvania: Good Books, 2003).
- Nepo, Mark. *The Book of Awakening: Having the Life You Want by Being Present to the Life You Have* (York Beach, Maine: Conari Press, 2000).
- Partners in Restorative Initiatives, Rochester, New York. www.pirirochester.org
- Pranis, Kay. *The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking* (Intercourse, Pennsylvania: Good Books, 2005).
- Pranis, Kay, Barry Stuart, and Mark Wedge. *Peacemaking Circles: From Crime to Community* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Living Justice Press, 2003).
- Schirch, Lisa and David Camp. *The Little Book of Dialogue for Difficult Subjects: A Practical Hands-On Guide* (Intercourse, Pennsylvania: Good Books, 2007).
- Zehr, Howard. *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (Intercourse, Pennsylvania: Good Books, 2002).

Contact Information

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