

New Student Reflection

Fall 2024

CENTER *for* CIVIC REFLECTION

in partnership with Salisbury University & PACE

Program Overview

In 2018, with support from the Provost's Office, the Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement replaced the long-standing New Student Reader program with the New Student Reflection (NSR) program. NSR uses a humanities-based conversation model in which a shared source (e.g., a poem or short text) is used to examine pressing social issues. This reflection activity is coordinated through PACE's Center for Civic Reflection and brings several benefits to new student orientation activities, including:

- a structured discussion about a source that enables participants to think and talk about their shared world and differing values and perspectives
- no requirement that students read or prepare before participating in the activity, which may more fully engage students since all begin from the same place with the presented source. Each group has its own conversation, informed by its own experiences
- modeling the type of dialogue we seek in classrooms by exploring larger questions and ideas
- a bridge from orientation to the classroom experience, co-facilitated by an orientation leader and a faculty or staff member

Co-facilitators lead group conversations with approximately 25 students. Facilitators receive training in discussion leadership.

Approximately 1,147 students participated in New Student Reflection in 2024. Of those students, 423 participated in an exit survey immediately following the event. The results of that survey are outlined in this report.

Source

In the program's early years, source selection was determined by PACE in conjunction with the Office of the Provost. Since 2021, PACE has led a yearly series of conversations with Student Affairs staff, members of the Office of the Dean of Students, and faculty who have facilitated reflections in previous years. A group of fifteen participants met three times in the Spring of 2024 to select a theme and then a corresponding source for the fall event.

2024 Theme: Welcoming students to campus and into a conversation that encourages them to engage in curiosity and embrace a sense of wonder in learning

The committee selected Maggie Smith's poem "Future" to facilitate this conversation.

Future

Maggie Smith

What is the future?

Everything that hasn't happened yet, the future
is tomorrow and next year and when you're old
but also in a minute or two, when I'm through
answering. The future is nothing I imagined
as a child: no jet packs, no conveyor-belt sidewalks,
no bell-jarred cities at the bottom of the sea.
The trick of the future is that it's empty,
a cup before you pour the water. The future
is a waiting cup, and for all it knows, you'll fill it
with milk instead. You're thirsty. Every minute
carries you forward, conveys you, into a space
you fill. I mean the future will be full of you.
It's one step beyond the step you're taking now.
What you'll say next until you say it.

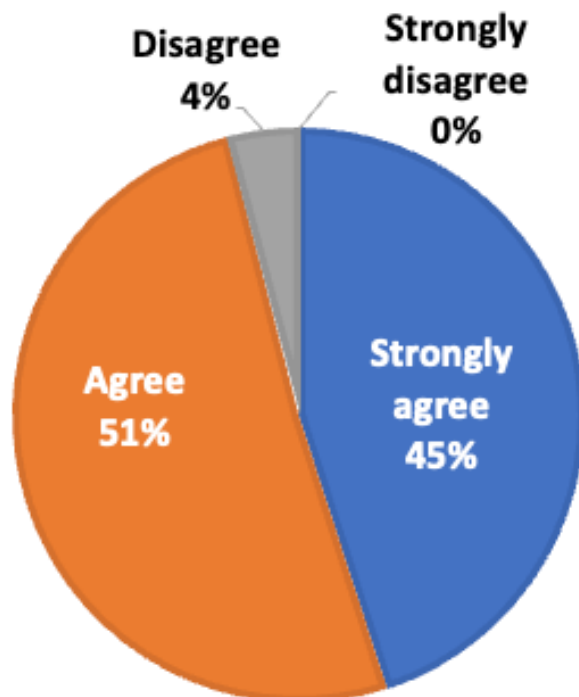
SURVEY RESULTS

Since establishing the New Student Reflection program, PACE has surveyed incoming students, asking them to express whether they felt welcomed, engaged, and respectful towards others during the reflection. Of the 1,147 participating students in 2024, 423 filled out the corresponding survey, providing the following responses.

A Welcoming Experience

For the sixth consecutive year, more than 90% of responding students reported that NSR activities contributed to their feeling welcomed at Salisbury University. Given that NSR occurs during new student orientation activities, a sense of welcoming is integral to the experience. PACE feels confident in our ability to craft a welcoming and supportive environment conducive to thoughtful conversation.

This conversation made me feel welcome at Salisbury University

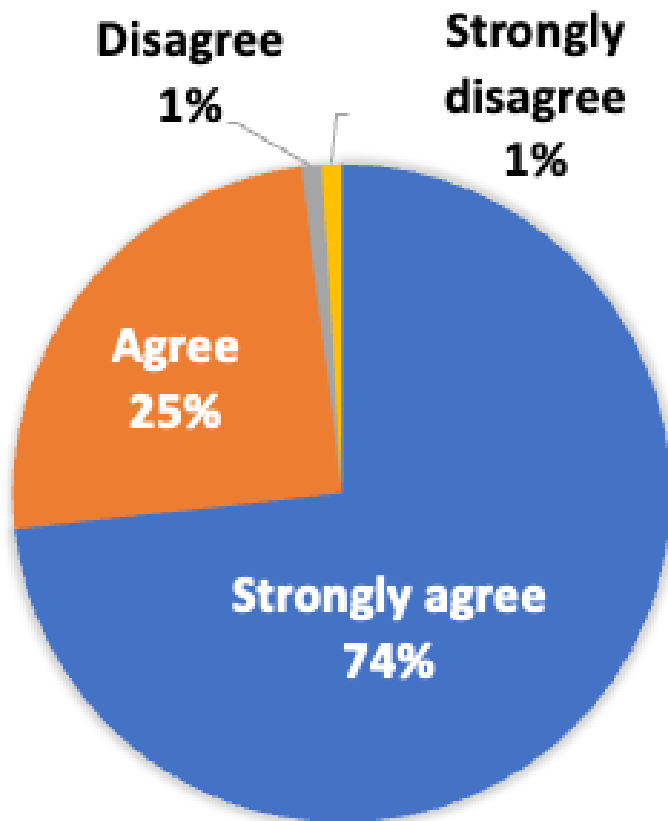


Strongly agree	192
Agree	216
Disagree	15
Strongly Disagree	1
N (total respondents)	423
Number of students participating in NSR	1147

Respectful Conversations

Almost all respondents reported that they respected others during the conversation. Modeling and encouraging civil conversations is an important aspect of PACE programming. Over the years, students have consistently reported that their participation was respectful, and while the data is self reported, feedback from faculty, staff, and orientation leaders support this finding.

I was respectful to others during the conversation

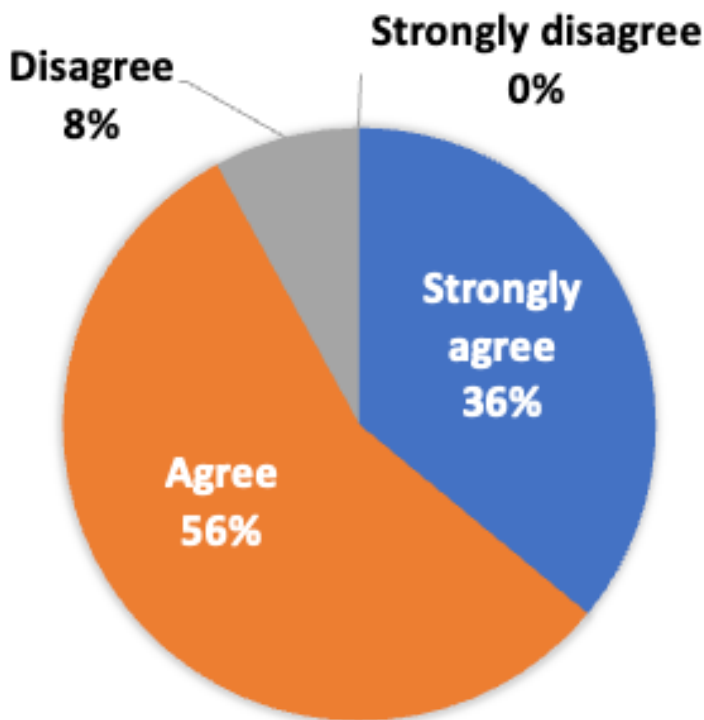


Strongly agree	316
Agree	107
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	1
N (total respondents)	423
Number of students participating in NSR	1147

Engaging Conversations

More than 90% of respondents also shared that they felt engaged during the discussion. This speaks in part to the quality of the source selected for discussion as well as how facilitators guided the conversation.

I felt engaged throughout the discussion



Strongly agree	153
Agree	235
Disagree	34
Strongly Disagree	2
N (total respondents)	423
Number of students participating in NSR	1147

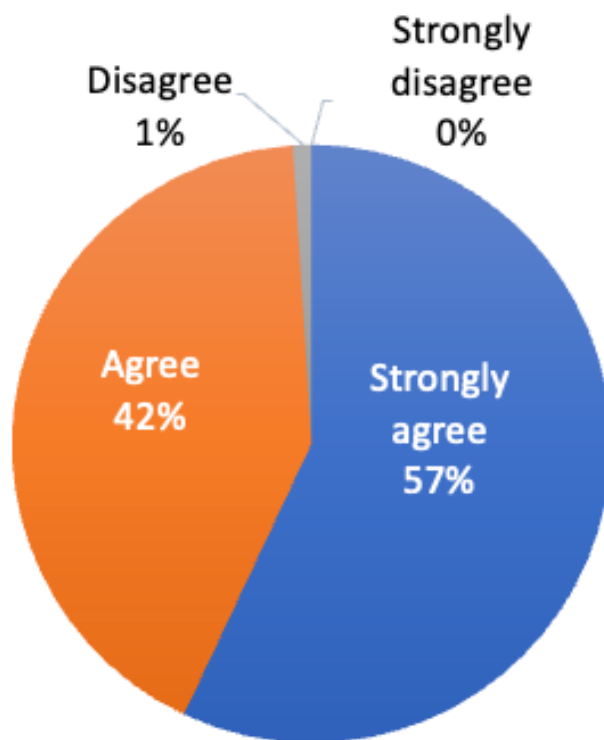
Active Listening

Civic reflection depends on a group to advance the conversation and, through that conversation, explore important or concerning issues. Particularly given the subjective nature of the sources being discussed, shared conversation lies at the heart of a successful civic reflection experience.

This year, 99% of participants again reported listening carefully to what others had to say. Although the self-reported nature of this particular data set may raise questions about student honesty—and the extent to which students share an idea of what it means to “listen carefully”—the data is consistent across data from this and prior years.

These conversations are successful because facilitators establish conditions where people listen to each other.

I listened carefully to what others had to say



Strongly agree	241
Agree	178
Disagree	3
Strongly Disagree	1
N (total respondents)	423
Number of students participating in NSR	1147

Thank you to all who support NSR!

PACE would like to thank the Office of the President, the Office of Student Affairs, the Dean of the Fulton School, and the orientation leaders, faculty, and staff facilitators who make the New Student Reflection possible.

The New Student Reflection program replaced the New Student Reader, a program that cost the university approximately \$150,000 each year. Planning and implementation for NSR averages less than \$5,000 per year. All aspects of the program are prepared and delivered within the current staffing and program bounds of the Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement and the Office of Student Affairs.