Draw a college student. That’s the question we asked new first-year students in order to assess their ideas as they start their undergraduate journey. During the Freshman Programs Town Hall, new students got into groups to draw their representation of a college student. We coded the words and images on the drawings, and then conducted focus groups in spring term to learn how the drawings matched students’ experiences and discuss how their ideas had developed and changed.

Key Findings
- New first-year students are most concerned that college students are figuratively lost and stressed/tired (n=24; n=17)
- New first-year CSUF students strongly identify as Titans (n=19)
- Based on their experiences, focus group participants would add to the drawings images of coffee; relationships with peers, faculty and staff; getting involved and proactively seeking support
- Focus group participants credited Freshman Programs with caring about them as people, not just as students, and providing connections to a community as well as to campus resources and opportunities

![Bar chart showing frequency of symbols and themes related to college student experiences.](chart.png)
We undertook this assessment project after a review of the literature revealed almost no recent research on the expectations new students have for college. Given dramatic changes in student population, we saw a significant gap. The results of our assessment project will be discussed in Freshman Programs and shared with UNIV 100 First-Year Success Teams at our August retreat. The findings will help us better understand new students, and we will use the information to intentionally plan 2014-2015 co-curricular activities and support services. We hope to expand our pilot assessment into a more developed research project that can be presented at conferences and published for the scholarly community. Our work supports the assessment and improvement of student learning goals in the CSUF Strategic Plan.

What are upper-division and graduate students doing in Freshman Programs? We serve students from the first-year through graduate studies with opportunities for innovative learning experiences. Our UNIV 397 service learning course supported 25 upper-division students’ development as peer mentors. The Peer Mentor Program is certified by the College Reading and Learning Association, and all 25 students received Advanced Mentor Certificates to recognize completion of 50 hours of training covering at least 15 content areas and mentoring experience totaling 75 or more hours. Nine graduate students satisfied fieldwork requirements through UNIV 100, residence life and assessment projects in Freshman Programs. These hands-on experiences allowed graduate students to apply theory to practice, to interact as leaders and team members in a diverse community, and to develop personally and professionally. In these programs we support CSUF Strategic Plan Goal 1 to increase the number of students participating in international, service learning, internship, community engagement and other innovative instructional experiences that prepare them for professional endeavors in a global society.

Freshman Programs Peer Ambassadors in the field. Freshman Programs recruited and trained 25 former participants to be volunteers in the PAC—Peer Ambassador Committee. These student leaders volunteered at campus and community events to represent Freshman Programs and the University. PAC members co-presented with University Outreach at 13 Titan Welcome Rallies for students accepted to CSUF. Our PAC leaders represented the University to over 1000 admitted students, as well as to their high school guidance counselors, teachers and administrators. PAC members shared their experiences with incoming students and their families at Welcome to Cal State Fullerton Day. During New Student Orientation, PAC members accompanied new Freshman Programs participants on campus tours and provided assistance navigating the online registration process. PAC participants develop communication skills, teamwork and professionalism while providing valuable service to Freshman Programs and the University.