

# New Student Reflection

Fall 2025

**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.

New in 2025, eight First Year Experiences faculty facilitated reflections with students in their courses, providing a unique way to welcome students into the classroom and begin conversations that continued on the first day of class and beyond.

Approximately 1,112 students participated in New Student Reflection in 2025. Of those students, 698 participated in an exit survey immediately following the event. The results of that survey are outlined in this report.

# Source

**2025 Theme:** Welcoming students to campus and into a conversation that encourages them to consider how they will engage with each other.

Students read and discussed “Fellowship” by Franz Kafka alongside the 2004 drawing, also entitled “Fellowship” by Elke Rehder.

## **Fellowship**

### **Franz Kafka**

We are five friends, one day we came out of a house one after the other, first one came and placed himself beside the gate, then the second came, or rather he glided through the gate like a little ball of quicksilver, and placed himself near the first one, then came the third, then the fourth, then the fifth. Finally we all stood in a row. People began to notice us, they pointed at us and said: Those five just came out of that house. Since then we have been living together, it would be a peaceful life if it weren't for a sixth one continually trying to interfere. He doesn't do us any harm, but he annoys us, and that is harm enough; why does he intrude when he is not wanted? We don't know him and don't want him to join us. There was a time, of course, when the five of us did not know one another, either, and it could be said that we still don't know one another, but what is possible and can be tolerated by the five of us is not possible and cannot be tolerated with this sixth one. In any case, we are five and don't want to be six. And what is the point of this continual being together anyhow? It is also pointless for the five of us, but here we are together and will remain together; a new combination, however, we do not want, just because of our experiences. But how is one to make all this clear to the sixth one? Long explanations would almost amount to accepting him in our circle, so we prefer not to explain and not to accept him. No matter how he pouts his lips we push him away with our elbows, but however much we push him away, back he comes.

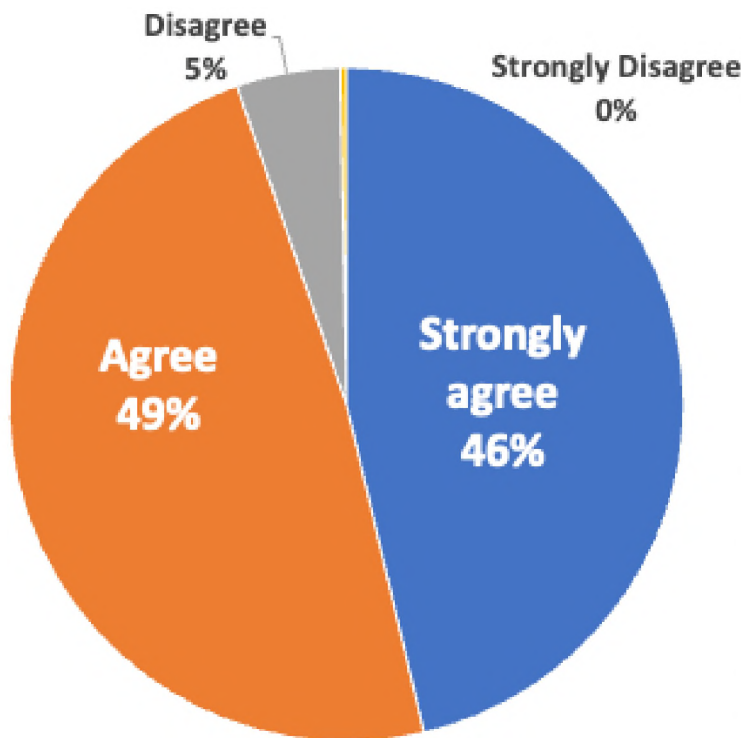
# SURVEY RESULTS

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 1,112 participating students in 2025, 663 filled out the corresponding survey, providing the following responses.

## A Welcoming Experience

For the sixth consecutive year, more than 95% 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

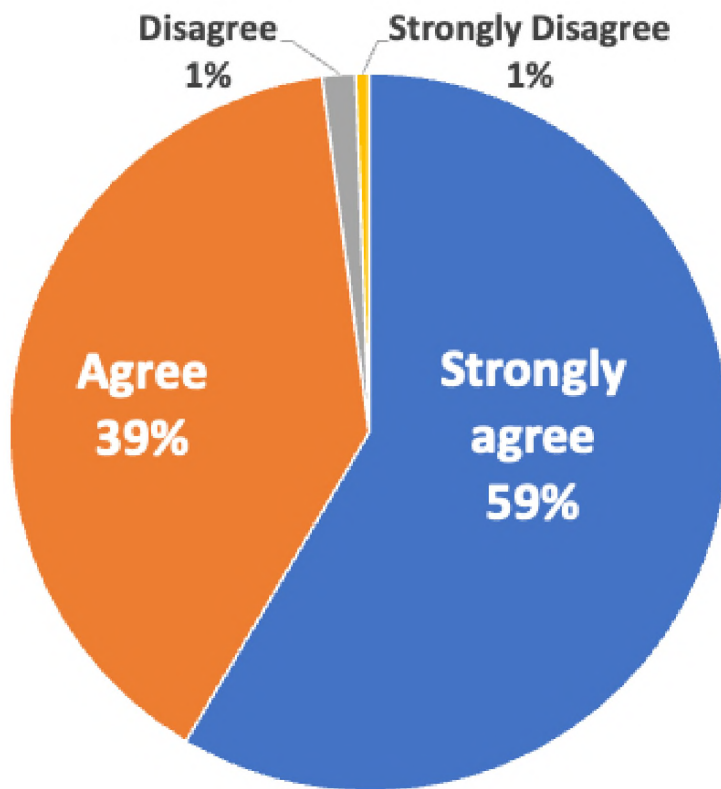


Strongly agree	307
Agree	321
Disagree	33
Strongly Disagree	2
N (total respondents)	663
Number of students participating in NSR	1112

# 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

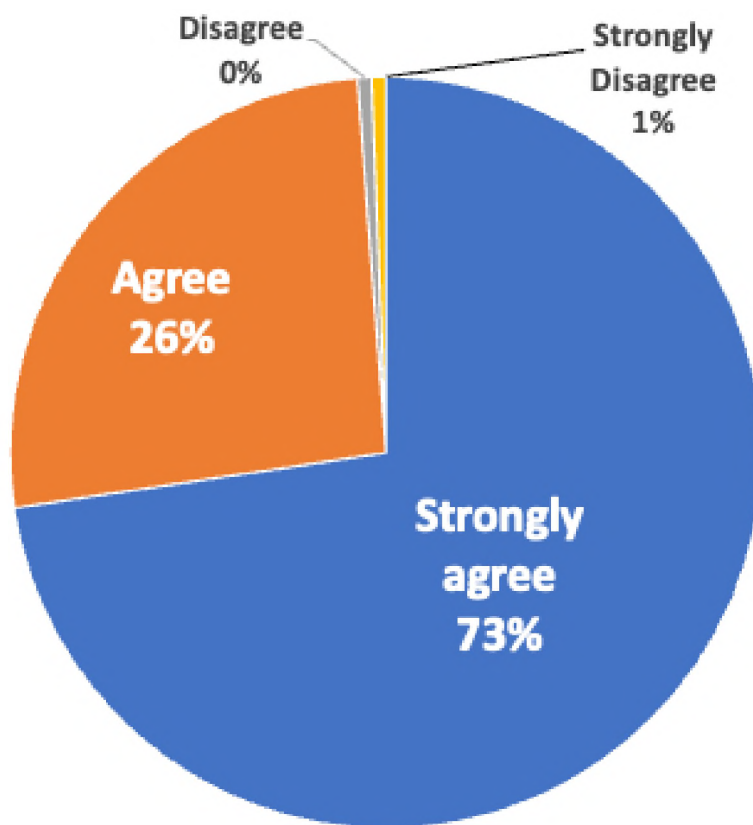


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# Engaging Conversations

Almost all 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	280
Agree	318
Disagree	53
Strongly Disagree	12
N (total respondents)	663
Number of students participating in NSR	1112

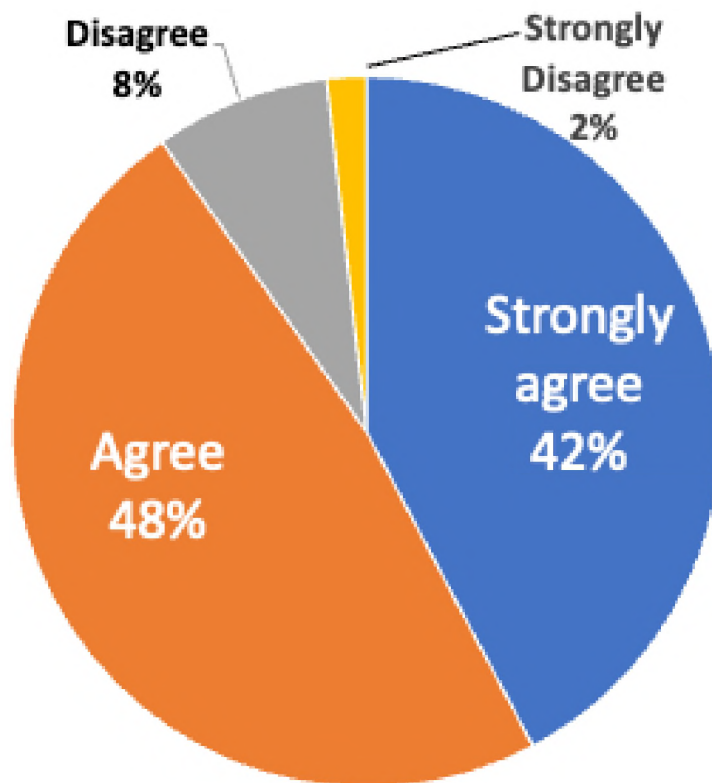
# Active Listening

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	388
Agree	261
Disagree	10
Strongly Disagree	4
N (total respondents)	663
Number of students participating in NSR	1112

# 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, the First Year Experience Coordinator, 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.