

North Carolina State University

2017 Incoming Freshmen Survey:

Executive Summary

Survey Methods

NC State conducted its annual survey of incoming freshmen students during the summer of 2017. After attending New Student Orientation, students were e-mailed an invitation to complete the survey online. At the start of the Fall semester, students who had not attended Orientation were also invited to participate. The survey closed at the end of the first full week of classes during the fall semester.

The online survey achieved a 66.7% response rate, with 3,093 of the 4,634 eligible incoming freshmen to have their responses recorded and included in analyses submitting the survey. Due to their high response rates, women are slightly overrepresented among survey respondents. In terms of race/ethnicity, white respondents are slightly overrepresented while Asian and Hispanic respondents are slightly underrepresented.

Experiences Prior to Enrolling at NC State

Incoming freshmen were asked how many colleges/universities they applied to, including NC State. Over forty percent (43.7%) reported they applied to five or more colleges/universities, including NC State, while another 19.8 percent reported they applied to four colleges/universities. Approximately five percent of respondents reported that NC State was the only school to which they applied.

Over 60 percent of incoming freshmen said that NC State was their top choice university to attend (61.2%), with 4.5 percent saying that NC State was their “only choice” and 56.7 percent saying it was their “first choice.”

Over 25 percent of incoming freshmen rated “academic reputation” (26.2%) as being the *single most influential factor in deciding to attend NC State*, followed by “availability of program” (18.6%) and “level of support for my intended major” (13.0%). “Cost” (8.2%) and “location” (7.7%) were also rated as the most influential factor by a sizable number of students.

More than 95 percent of incoming freshmen said that they were either “very” (49.9%) or “moderately satisfied” (45.7%) with the admissions process. A majority of respondents said that they *received a letter from someone other than Admissions Office* after applying for admission to NC State (63.3%). Fewer students reported that they had received a phone call from *a current NC State student* (27.7%), *an NC State faculty or staff member* (17.3%) or from *a graduate of NC State* (6.6%).

Goals

More than 95 percent of respondents said their primary/goal objective for attending NC State was to obtain a “bachelor’s degree or certificate in preparation for a career” (47.8%) or a “bachelor’s degree for graduate school preparation” (47.7%). Five percent reported it was to either “improve knowledge/skills for current profession” (2.1%), take “courses of personal interest” (0.9%), earn a “bachelor’s degree for career change preparation” (0.4%) or “other” reasons (1.2%).

Incoming students overwhelmingly said that they intended to complete their bachelor’s degree in four years (80.9%) or less than four years (11.6%).

More than two-thirds of respondents reported that they intended to earn a graduate or professional degree after completing their bachelor's degree. Nearly 40 percent anticipated earning a master's degree (38.3%), while another 30.5 percent plan to pursue a doctoral or other professional degree.

More than three-fourths of respondents reported that they were either "very certain" (31.3%) or "certain" (45.8%) in their choice of college major; levels of certainty among incoming freshmen varied by college. Students in the College of Design (88.6%), College of Textiles (87.8%), College of Engineering (86.5%) and College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (86.3%) reported the highest rates of being "very certain" or "certain" of their college major. While large numbers of students entering the College of Education reported being "very certain" in their choice of college major (44.6%), over one-fourth said they were "uncertain" (23.2%) or "very uncertain" (3.6%). Along with incoming students in the College of Education and in University College (58.9% "uncertain" and 18.2% "very uncertain"), those entering in the College of Natural Resources were also more likely than those in other colleges to report being "uncertain" (21.1%) or "very uncertain" (1.7%) about their major.

While 30 percent of incoming freshmen said that after graduation they will be seeking work "in North Carolina only" over one-third said they would seek work "anywhere in the USA" (36.0%). The remainder reported that they would see work "anywhere – location is not important" (33.2%) or "outside the USA only" (0.8%).

General Education, Personal Development and World View Goals

Incoming freshmen were asked about their current level of development and importance of 38 individual goals that the University has pertaining to general education, personal development and world views. Students consistently gave a higher average rating of importance compared to their current level of development of each goal. One-third of respondents reported that their own current level of development was "excellent" for only 11 of the 38 goals asked about, while at least half of respondents rated all but one of the goals asked about as "very important." However, goals that ranked relatively high in importance tended to also be ranked relatively high in respondents' perceived current level of development. Notable exceptions include *time management*, which despite having the lowest average rating of all 38 goals in terms of current level of development was rated by incoming freshmen as being their most important goal, on average. Other goals that rated significantly higher in importance than development include *ability to handle stress*, *gaining clarity in my future career direction*, *speaking effectively* and *working to my potential*.

General Education Goals: More than 70 percent of respondents said their current level of development was "excellent" or "good" on 15 of the 17 general education goals asked about. They were most likely to say that their current level of development was "excellent" for *ability to plan and carry out projects independently* (42.2%), *listening attentively* (40.8%) and *using technologies appropriate to my discipline* (40.0%). In contrast, more than one-third of respondents said their current level of development was either "fair" or "poor" for *speaking effectively* (41.4%) and *capacity to engage with/respond to artistic works and evaluate significance* (36.1%). Nearly 90 percent of respondents rated all but one of the general education goals as being "very important" or "moderately important." They were most likely to rate *ability to plan and carry out projects independently* (80.7%), *listening attentively* (79.5%) and *comprehending written and oral information* (78.1%) as being "very

important.” More than one-fourth of respondents reported that the *capacity to engage with/respond to creative works and evaluate significance* (25.7%) was “slightly” or “not at all important” to them.

Personal Development Goals: Two-thirds of respondents said their current level of development was “excellent” or “good” on 11 of the 13 personal development goals asked about. Respondents were most likely to say that their current level of development was “excellent” for *taking responsibility for my own behavior* (49.5%), *working effectively as part of a team* (39.4%) and *experiencing personal growth* (36.7%). Respondents were least likely to give a positive evaluation to their current level of development of *time management*, with close to half rating their development in this area as “fair” (32.4%) or “poor” (12.1%). Over 95 percent of freshmen rated all but one of the 13 personal development goals as being “very” or “moderately important.” In particular, a large majority of students said that *time management* (91.4%), *working to my potential* (88.0%) and *ability to handle stress* (85.7%) were “very important” to them. The only item which more than five percent of respondents indicated was “slightly” or “not at all” important to them was *being involved in public and community affairs* (7.5%).

World View Goals: At least three-fourths of respondents said that their current level of development was either “excellent” or “good” to all eight of the world view goals asked about. Respondents were most likely to say that their current level of development was “excellent” for their *ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds* (52.6%), *appreciating differences in sexual orientation* (39.7%), *sensitivity to issues associated with racial equity* (39.2%) and *understanding and respecting diverse cultures, values, and perspectives* (38.9%). Nearly one-fourth of respondents said their current level of development was “fair” or “poor” for *sensitivity to issues associated with gender equity* (24.7%) and *understanding issues/problems facing the world* (24.4%). At least 75 percent of respondents said that *ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds* (81.6%), *understanding issues and problems facing the world* (77.1%) and *understanding and respecting diverse cultures, values, and perspectives* (75.1%) were “very important” to them. Respondents were most likely to say that *appreciating differences in sexual orientation* (15.2%) and *sensitivity to issues associated with gender equity* (11.9%) were either “slightly” or “not at all important” to them.

Finances and Paying for College

Almost half of respondents reported that “\$10,000 or more” of their first year educational expenses would come from *family resources* (48.3%), while twenty percent reported that at least \$10,000 would come from *aid that does not need to be repaid*. About forty percent of students reported having aid that must be repaid of at least \$3,000 for their first year of school, with ten percent having \$10,000 or more in loans. Students themselves were least likely to be covering college expenses with their own money, with two-thirds saying they themselves would be contributing “less than \$1,000” (35.5%) or “none” (29.3%) to their educational expenses. Two percent reported that they would be contributing “\$10,000 or more” of their own money.

When asked if they had submitted the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), nine-in-ten incoming freshmen (87.9%) said that they had done so.

A majority of incoming freshmen (58.8%) said that they were receiving grants and scholarships, while just under half said that they received loans (49.8%). Fewer students reported that they either were receiving some other type of financial aid (13.7%). One-fourth of incoming students reported receiving no financial aid at all (25.6%).

More than half of incoming freshmen respondents reported that they would be employed during their first year of college (54.4%). Employed respondents were more likely to say that they would be working on campus only (60.5%) than off campus only (23.8%). However, 15.7 percent said they would be working both on and off campus. Respondents who said that they would be working off campus were slightly more likely than those planning on working on campus to report working more than 20 hours per week (7.9% vs. 5.6%, respectively) or 1-10 hours per week (63.0% vs 57.3%, respectively). Respondents planning on working on campus were more likely than those working off campus to say that they would be working 11-20 hours per week (37.1% vs 29.1%, respectively).

Satisfaction with NC State Services

When asked to evaluate the NC State Academic Services website, over 80 percent of respondents gave it a rating of “excellent” (25.8%) or “good” (54.4%).

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the NC State financial aid process on a scale from 1 (“very dissatisfied”) to 4 (“very satisfied”). Overall, incoming students were satisfied, with 81.8 percent of respondents saying that they were either “very” (23.4%) or “moderately satisfied” (58.4%) with the financial aid process.

New Student Orientation

Students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, College of Design, College of Sciences and College of Textiles were asked questions about their interaction with their college/department prior to New Student Orientation. Approximately 90 percent said that they either “strongly agree” or “agree” that the information/advice received from their college/department prior to Orientation helped them to plan their fall schedule, that they were satisfied with the attention they received prior to Orientation and that they were provided an opportunity to get their academic questions answered.

All incoming students were asked the same three questions about their interaction with their college/department during New Student Orientation, with similar results. Just over 90 percent agreed they were satisfied with the attention they received (92.8%), that Orientation provided an opportunity to get their academic questions answered (92.8%) and that the information/advice they received helped them to plan their fall schedule (92.5%)

Close to 100 percent of students agreed that the information they received on the *prohibition of sexual violence, relationship violence, and stalking*, and about *resources available if I need help preventing or reporting sexual violence* was useful, with over 60 percent strongly agreeing. Relative to other information provided during New Student Orientation, incoming students were most likely to disagree that Orientation provided useful information about *how to navigate NC State’s physical campus* (23.2% “disagree” and 4.1% “strongly disagree”) and *what to expect when living with a roommate on-campus or living off-campus* (20.9% “disagree” and 2.5% “strongly disagree”).

Incoming students agreed that Orientation achieved the program's goals of helping prepare students to enter and be successful at NC State. Almost all of respondents said they either "strongly agree" or "agree" that as a result of Orientation they are *excited to start my first semester at NC State* (97.8%), are able to *articulate the importance of civility and respect in an educational setting* (97.3%) and able to *identify how my behavior may impact my community* (97.3%). Just over 10 percent of respondents said they either "disagree" (9.5%) or "strongly disagree" (1.0%) that as a result of their participation in Orientation they *felt more comfortable having conversations with others around our differences*.

Demographic and Family Background Characteristics

Nearly half of respondents reported that they were "very well" prepared for college either on their own (49.5%) or by their high school (49.2%). However, respondents were twice as likely to report that they were "not very well" prepared for college by their high school as compared with their personal preparation (8.8% vs 4.0%).

A majority of respondents (63.5%) reported having come from a "moderate sized" or larger city, with 32.1 percent reporting that they came from a "moderate size city," 11.4 percent from a "large city" and 20.0 percent from an "urban area." About one-fourth reported coming from a "small town" (24.8%), while 11.7 percent said that they were from a rural area.

Eighty-five percent of incoming students had at least one of their parents/guardians earn a college degree (85.3%).

Just over half of respondents (51.9%) reported that their family's combined 2016 pre-tax income was over \$100,000, with 27.5 percent reporting that it was over \$150,000, and 15.6 percent reporting it was over \$200,000. About 20 percent of incoming students reported that their family income was \$50,000 or below (18.7%), with 7.9 percent saying it was "\$30,000 or less."

More than 80 percent of respondents (81.8%) indicated that they came from a household with three or more members financially supported by their parents/guardians, including themselves, while 5.2 percent said they were their parents/guardians only dependent.

Just under two-thirds of incoming freshmen said that they were the only dependent in their household currently enrolled in college (63.8%), while 31.3 percent said they were one of two dependents in college and 4.9 percent said they were one of three or more.

In Their Own Words: Anticipating Life at NC State

Respondents were given the opportunity to answer open-ended questions pertaining to what they are most excited about and most concerned about in coming to NC State. Students were most likely to mention being most excited about various aspects of social life at NC State (18.0%), learning (13.8%), the intellectual environment (11.5%), adapting to NC State (10.1%), campus life (8.9%) and independence (8.9%). Some of the most common categories that students mentioned in being excited about were also mentioned as being the most concerned about. Students were most likely to mention being most concerned about various aspects of academic performance (18.7%), adapting to NC State (18.1%), social life (13.7%), time management (9.3%), independence (9.0%) and health (5.3%).

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