

2018 Incoming Freshmen Survey: Executive Summary

Survey Methods

NC State conducted its annual survey of incoming freshmen students during the summer of 2018. 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 59.3% response rate, with 2,884 of the 4,485 incoming freshmen eligible 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 and Hispanic respondents are slightly overrepresented while Asian students and students whose racial/ethnic background is unknown 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-five percent (46.2%) reported they applied to five or more colleges/universities, including NC State, while 21.2 percent reported that 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 (63.4%), with 3.7 percent saying that NC State was their “only choice.” However, almost one-in-ten enrolled freshmen participating in the survey said that NC State was their third choice or below of colleges to attend.

A plurality of respondents rated “academic reputation” (23.4%) as being the *single most influential factor in deciding to attend NC State*, followed by “availability of program” (17.7%), “level of support for my intended major” (12.1%), and “future career opportunities” (10.2%). “Cost” (8.2%), and “location” (5.9%) were also rated as the most influential factor by a sizable number of students.

More than 95 percent of incoming freshmen said they were either “very” (54.4%) or “moderately satisfied” (41.8%) with the NC State admissions process. A majority of respondents said that they received some *communication from outside the Admissions Office* (60.1%). However fewer students reported that they had received a phone call from a *current NC State student* (20.8%), *an NC State faculty or staff member* (13.0%), or from a *graduate of NC State* (5.5%).

Goals

Half of respondents said their primary goal/objective for attending NC State was to obtain a “bachelor’s degree for graduate school preparation” (50.1%), and just under half said it was to earn a “bachelor’s degree or certificate in preparation for a career” (45.6%). The remaining respondents reported it was to either “improve knowledge/skills for current profession” (2.5%), earn a “bachelor’s degree for career change preparation” (0.5%), take “courses for personal interest” (0.5%), or “other” reasons (0.8%).

Incoming students overwhelmingly said that they intended to complete their bachelor’s degree in either four years (82.4%) or less than four years (11.3%).

More than 70 percent of respondents reported that they intended to continue on to earn a graduate or professional degree. Almost 40 percent anticipated earning a master's degree, while about one-third of respondents said that they plan to pursue a doctoral or other professional degree.

While more than three-fourths of respondents reported that they were either "very certain" (32.1%) or "certain" (44.4%) in their choice of college major, levels of certainty among incoming freshmen varied by college. Students in the College of Design (93.4%), the College of Engineering (85.8%), and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (85.7%) reported the highest rates of being "very certain" or "certain" in their college major. Students entering in the College of Natural Resources were most likely to express levels of uncertainty with their college major among students with a declared major, with 26.1 percent saying they were either "uncertain" (19.2%) or "very uncertain" (6.9%). Among incoming freshmen in University College, where students enter NC State without a declared major, 62.1 percent said they were either "uncertain" (43.9%) or "very uncertain" (18.2%).

The large majority of incoming freshmen reported that it is likely that they would participate in a Study Abroad program while an undergraduate at NC State, with 29.7 percent saying they "definitely will" and 26.9 percent saying they "probably will."

While nearly 30 percent of incoming freshmen said that after graduation they will be seeking work "in North Carolina only" (28.6%), almost forty percent said they would seek work "anywhere in the USA" (39.5%). The remainder reported that they would seek work "anywhere – location is not important" (30.7%) or "outside the USA only" (1.2%).

General Education, Personal Development, and World View Goals

Incoming freshmen were asked about their current level of development and importance of 45 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 current level of development was "excellent" for 18 of the 45 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 45 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 included *speaking effectively* and *ability to manage ongoing stressors*.

General Education Goals:

More than 70 percent of respondents said their current level of development was "excellent" or "good" on 17 of the 19 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* (42.5%), *listening attentively* (41.9%), and *using technologies appropriate to my discipline* (39.3%). In contrast, more than one-third said their current level of development was either "fair" or "poor" for *speaking effectively* (40.0%) and the *capacity to engage with/respond to artistic works and evaluate their significance* (39.2%).

Over 90 percent of respondents rated all but one of the general education goals asked about as being “very important” or “moderately important.” They were most likely to rate *listening attentively* (83.0%), *comprehending written and oral information* (81.4%), and *ability to plan and carry out projects independently* (80.6%) as “very important.” More than one-fourth of respondents reported that the *capacity to engage with/respond to creative works and evaluate their significance* (26.1%) 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 16 of the 18 personal development goals asked about. Respondents were most likely to say that their current level of development was “excellent” for *believing more time and effort will lead to increased learning* (48.5%), *taking responsibility for my own behavior* (47.0%), and *working effectively as part of a team* (41.7%). Respondents were least likely to give a positive evaluation to their current level of development of *time management*, with over 40 percent rating their development in this area as “fair” (31.6%) or “poor” (8.9%).

Over 95 percent of freshmen rated all but one of the 18 personal development goals as being “very” or “moderately important.” In particular, a large majority of students said that *time management* (88.3%), *taking responsibility for my own behavior* (85.2%), *ability to set and accomplish goals* (83.9%), *seeing projects through to completion* (83.6%), *working effectively as part of a team* (83.3%), and *experiencing personal growth* (83.3%) were “very important” to them. The only item more than five percent of respondents indicated was “slightly” or “not at all important” to them was *being involved in public and community affairs* (6.2%).

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* (53.7%), *appreciating differences in sexual orientation* (42.1%), and *sensitivity to issues associated with racial equity* (41.9%). However, nearly one-fourth of respondents said their current level of development was “fair” or “poor” for *understanding issues and problems facing the world* (23.0%).

At least three-fourths of respondents said that *ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds* (83.6%), *understanding issues and problems facing the world* (78.5%), *understanding and respecting diverse cultures, values, and perspectives* (78.4%), and *sensitivity to issues associated with racial equity* (75.4%) were “very important” to them. Respondents were most likely to say that *appreciating differences in sexual orientation* (12.3%) and *sensitivity to issues associated with gender equity* (9.1%) were either “slightly” or “not at all important” to them.

Finances and Paying for College

Half of respondents reported that “\$10,000 or more” of their first year educational expenses would come from *family resources* (50.0%), and over 20 percent reported that at least \$10,000 would come from *aid that does not need to be repaid* (21.6%). While over half of incoming students said they would not have any loans for their first year of school (53.1%), more than one-third reported having \$3,000 or more in loans for their first year of school that must be repaid, with 8.1 percent having \$10,000 or more in loans. Students themselves were least likely to be covering their first year college expenses at NC State with their own money, with almost two-thirds saying they themselves would be contributing “less than \$1,000” (35.2%) or “none” (27.5%).

Almost 90 percent of respondents said they had submitted the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (87.6%).

A majority of incoming freshmen (58.5%) said they were receiving grants and scholarships, and 44.3 percent said that they received loans. Fewer students reported they were receiving some other type of financial aid (14.1%). Over one-fourth reported receiving no financial aid at all (27.1%).

More than half of incoming freshmen respondents reported that they would be employed during their first year of college (56.3%). Employed respondents were more likely to say that they would be working on campus only (62.5%), than off campus only (19.8%). However, 17.7 percent said they would be working both on and off campus. Respondents who said that they would be working off campus were more likely than those planning to work on campus report working more than 20 hours per week (8.7% vs 4.5%, respectively) or 1-10 hours per week (63.4% vs 53.6%, 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 (41.9% vs 27.9%, respectively). Over 40 percent of respondents who reported that they will be working both on campus and off campus during their first year at NC State said they would be working only 1-10 hours at each location.

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” (24.8%) or “good” (57.6%), and when asked to evaluate the NC State Admissions website, over 85 percent of respondents gave it a rating of “excellent” (29.8%) or “good” (55.4%).

Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the NC State financial aid process. Overall, incoming students were satisfied, with 81.8 percent of respondents saying that they were either “very” (26.4%) or “moderately satisfied” (55.4%) with the financial aid process.

New Student Orientation

Students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the College of Design, the College of Sciences, the Wilson College of Textiles, and the Poole College of Management were asked questions about their interaction with their college/department prior to New Student Orientation. Nearly 90 percent of respondents in these colleges said that they either “strongly agree” or “agree” that they were *provided an opportunity to get academic questions answered* (89.3%), that they were *satisfied with the attention they received prior to Orientation* (88.7%), and that the *information/advice received from their college/department prior to Orientation helped them to plan their fall schedule* (86.4%).

All incoming students were asked the same three questions about their interaction with their college/department during New Student Orientation, with similar results. Over 90 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they were satisfied with the *time spent with their college/department to get answers to their academic questions* (92.4%), satisfied with the *attention they received from their college/department during Orientation* (91.0%), and that the *information/advice they received from their college/department helped them to plan their fall schedule* (90.9%).

Over 90 percent of respondents said that they either “strongly agree” or “agree” that the optional student engagement sessions during Orientation provided useful information on a number of topic areas. Respondents were most likely to say that they “strongly agree” (51.8%) that they were provided useful information about *study abroad and global experiences*.

Almost all students agreed that New Student Orientation provided useful information about a number of different policies, practices, and resources asked about. They were most likely to strongly agree they got useful information about the *prohibition of sexual violence, relationship violence, and stalking at NC State and the resources available to me if I need help preventing or reporting sexual violence*, with over 70 percent saying they “strongly agree” they got useful information.

Nearly all incoming students also agreed that New Student Orientation had achieved the program’s goals of helping prepare students to enter and be successful at NC State. They were most likely to “strongly agree” or “agree” that as a result of attending Orientation they are *excited to start my first semester at NC State* and that they are *aware it is my personal responsibility to adhere to the academic and behavioral expectations of the university*. The only item that more than five percent of respondents said they either “disagree” or “strongly disagree” was *I can better envision what my day-to-day life may be like in my first year at NC State* (9.2%).

Demographic and Family Background Characteristics

Just over half of respondents reported that they were “very well” prepared for college by their own efforts (50.6%), while 47.4 percent said they were “very well” prepared for college by their high school. However, respondents were about three times as likely to report that they were “not very well” prepared for college by their high school as compared with their own efforts (9.8% vs 3.3%).

A plurality of incoming students said they came from a “moderate size city” (32.2%). Students are more likely to come to NC State from a “small town” (25.8%) or a “rural area” (12.8%) than a “large city” (11.2%) or “urban area” (17.9%).

Over 80 percent of incoming students had at least one of their parents/guardians earn a college degree (83.2%).

Just over half of respondents (52.9%) reported that their family’s 2017 combined pre-tax income was over \$100,000, with 28.7 percent reporting that it was over \$150,000, and 16.2 percent reporting it was “more than \$200,000.” About 15 percent of incoming students reported that their family income was \$50,000 or less (15.7%), with 7.8 percent saying it was “30,000 or less.”

More than two-thirds of respondents (69.8%) indicated that they came from a household with four or more members financially supported by their parents/guardians, including themselves, while 3.2 percent said that 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 (63.6%), while 31.3 percent said they were one of two dependents in college, and 5.3 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 two 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 excited about various aspects of social life at NC State, learning, the intellectual environment, adapting to NC State, campus life, independence, and opportunities such as internships, career resources, and getting involved on campus. 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 about their academic performance, adapting to NC State, social life, independence over their daily lives, and time management.

For more information on the 2018 Incoming Freshmen Survey, contact:

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