

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

2019 Incoming Freshmen Survey: Executive Summary

Introduction

NC State conducted its annual survey of incoming first year students during the summer of 2019. 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 59.2% response rate, with 2,823 of the 4,772 incoming first year students eligible to have their responses recorded and included in analyses submitting the survey. Respondents from the Agricultural Institute have been excluded from the analyses presented in the following reports so that the data presented reflects the views and circumstances of students pursuing a four-year baccalaureate degree. Due to their higher response rates, women are slightly overrepresented among survey respondents.

Experiences Prior to Enrolling at NC State

Incoming students were first asked how many colleges/universities they applied to for admission, including NC State. Over 70 percent reported that they had applied to at least four colleges/universities, including NC State, with 15 percent saying they applied to at least eight colleges/universities. Four percent of respondents reported that NC State was the only school to which they applied.

Nearly two-thirds of incoming first year students said that NC State was their top choice university to attend (64.4%), with four percent saying that NC State was their “only choice.” However, almost one-in-ten enrolled first year students 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” (25.4%) as being the *single most influential factor in deciding to attend NC State*, followed by “availability of program” (17.6%), “level of support for my intended major” (12.3%), and “future career opportunities” (9.9%). “Cost” (6.8%) and “location” (6.1%) were also rated as the most influential factor by a sizable number of students.

More than 95 percent of incoming first year students said they were either “very” (54.0%) or “moderately satisfied” (42.6%) with the NC State admissions process. Over one-fourth of respondents said that they received some *communication from outside the Admissions Office* (26.3%) after applying for admission; fewer students reported that they had received a phone call from a *current NC State student* (14.6%), *an NC State faculty or staff member* (11.0%), or a *graduate of NC State* (5.1%).

Goals

Half 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” (50.3%), and just under half said it was to earn a “bachelor’s degree for graduate school preparation” (46.0%).

Incoming students overwhelmingly said that they intended to complete their bachelor’s degree in either four years (78.8%) or less than four years (14.3%).

Two-thirds of respondents reported that they intended to earn a degree beyond a bachelor’s degree, with 30 percent reporting they plan to pursue a doctoral or professional degree.

More than three-fourths of incoming first year students reported that they were either “very certain” (31.7%) or “certain” (45.6%) in their choice of college major; however, levels of certainty varied by college. Students in the College of Design and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences were most likely to be sure about their choice of college major, with about 90 percent in each college saying they were either “very certain” or “certain” about their choice. Students in University College, where students enter NC State without a declared major, were not surprisingly the most likely to report being uncertain, with nearly two-thirds saying they were either “very uncertain” (21.2%) or “uncertain” (41.4%). Students in the College of Education also expressed high levels of uncertainty in their choice of major, with 17.2 percent saying they were “uncertain” and a relatively high percentage saying they were “very uncertain” (6.9%).

Incoming first year students overwhelmingly reported that it was likely they would participate in a Study Abroad program while an undergraduate student at NC State, with 26.9 percent saying they “definitely will” participate, and 27 percent saying they “probably will.” Four percent said they would “definitely not” participate in a Study Abroad program.

While only 16.5 percent of incoming first year students said that after graduation they will be seeking work “in North Carolina only,” nearly half said they would seek work “anywhere in the USA” (48.0%). The remaining respondents reported that they would seek work “anywhere – location is not important” (34.4%) or “outside the USA only” (1.1%).

General Education, Personal Development, and World View Goals

Incoming first year students were asked about their current level of development and importance of 49 goals that NC State 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 or more of respondents reported that their current level of development was “excellent” for just 19 of the 49 goals asked about, while at least half of respondents rated all but three of the goals asked about as being “very important” to them. 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 49 goals in terms of current level of development, had the highest average rating of importance among all the goals asked about. Other goals that rated significantly higher in importance than development included *ability to manage ongoing stressors* and *speaking effectively*.

General Education Goals:

More than 70 percent of respondents said their current level of development was “excellent” or “good” on 19 of the 22 general education goals asked about. They were most likely to say their current level of development was “excellent” for *ability to plan and carry out projects independently* (42.8%), *listening attentively* (40.6%), *using technologies appropriate to my discipline* (39.1%), and *understanding the need for sustainability as the pursuit of balanced, ethical solutions that are economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially just* (36.9%). In contrast, more than one-third said their current level of development was “fair” or “poor” for *capacity to engage with/respond to artistic works and evaluate their significance* (40.4%) and *speaking effectively* (40.3%).

Over 90 percent of respondents rated 19 of the 22 general education goals asked about as being “very important” or “moderately important.” They were most likely to rate *listening attentively* (82.6%), *ability to plan and carry out projects independently* (80.0%), *comprehending written and oral information* (79.8%), and *considering all options when solving a problem and thinking through the implications of selecting one alternative over another* (77.7%) as being “very important.” More than one-fourth of respondents reported that the *capacity to engage with/respond to artistic works and evaluate their significance* (26.8%) was “slightly” or “not at all important” to them.

Personal Development Goals:

At least two-thirds of respondents said their current level of development was “excellent” or “good” on all but two of the 19 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* (49.1%), *believing more time and effort will lead to increased learning* (48.2%), *valuing learning as a lifelong process* (46.0%), *working effectively as part of a team* (42.6%), and *experiencing personal growth* (40.9%). Respondents were least likely to give a positive evaluation of their current level of development to *time management*, with over 40 percent rating their development in this area as “fair” (31.6%) or “poor” (9.4%).

Over 95 percent of incoming first year students rated all but one of the 19 personal development goals as being “very” or “moderately important” to them. In particular, a large majority of students said that *time management* (87.9%), *taking responsibility for my own behavior* (86.1%), *ability to set and accomplish goals* (83.9%), *experiencing personal growth* (83.8%), *ability to manage ongoing stressors* (82.8%), *working effectively as part of a team* (82.7%), and *seeing projects through to completion* (82.6%) were “very important” to them. The only item which more than five percent of respondents indicated as being “slightly” (5.5%) or “not at all important” (0.5%) was *being involved in public and community affairs*.

World View Goals:

More than three-fourths of respondents said their current level of development of each of the eight goals related to their world view was either “excellent” or “good.” Students were most likely to say that their current level of development was “excellent” for *ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds* (54.9%), *appreciating differences in sexual orientation* (43.2%), *sensitivity to issues associated with racial equity* (42.4%), and *understanding and respecting diverse cultures, values, and perspectives* (41.7%). However, more than 20 percent of respondents said their current level of development was “fair” or “poor” for *understanding issues and problems facing the world* (21.0%) and *appreciating differences in sexual orientation* (20.5%).

Over 90 percent of respondents rated seven of the eight listed world view goals as “very” or “moderately important.” A rating of “very important” was given by at least three-fourths of respondents to *ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds* (82.7%), *understanding issues and problems facing the world* (78.5%), and *understanding and respecting diverse cultures, values, and perspectives* (78.3%). Respondents were most likely to say that *appreciating differences in sexual orientation* (12.1%) and *sensitivity to issues associated with gender equity* (9.2%) 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* (48.2%), and over 20 percent reported that “\$10,000 or more” of their first year educational expenses would come from *aid that does not need to be repaid* (21.9%). While over half of incoming first year students said they would not have any loans (aid that must be repaid) for their first year of school (53.1%), more than one-third reported having \$3,000 or more in loans, with 8.8 percent having “\$10,000 or more” in loans. Students themselves were least likely to be covering college expenses with their own money, with almost two-thirds saying they themselves would be contributing “less than \$1,000” (35.1%) or “none” (26.9%) to their first year educational expenses; just 2.7 percent reported that they themselves would be contributing “\$10,000 or more.”

Almost 90 percent of respondents reported that they had submitted the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (88.2%).

A majority of incoming freshmen (56.1%) said they were receiving grants and scholarships, and 45.4 percent said that they were receiving loans. Fewer students reported they were receiving some other type of financial aid (12.2%). Over one-fourth reported receiving no financial aid at all (27.1%).

Just over half of respondents reported that they would be employed during their first year of college (53.9%). Employed respondents were much more likely to say that they would be working on campus only (61.6%) than off campus only (21.7%). However, 16.7 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 to work on campus to report working either more than 20 hours per week (7.7% vs 6.1%, respectively) or just 1-10 hours per week (60.4% vs 58.3%, respectively). Respondents planning to work on campus were more likely than those planning to work off campus to say that they would be working in the range of 11-20 hours per week (35.5% vs 31.9%, respectively). Nearly 40 percent 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 Advising Services website, 82.6 percent of respondents gave a rating of “excellent” (26.3%) or “good” (56.3%), and when asked to evaluate the NC State Admissions website, 84.2 percent gave a rating of “excellent” (29.1%) or “good” (55.1%).

Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the NC State financial aid process. Overall, incoming students were satisfied, with 81.7 percent of respondents saying that they were either “very” (25.6%) or “moderately satisfied” (56.1%) with the financial aid process.

New Student Orientation

When asked about their interactions with their college/department prior to attending New Student Orientation, at least 80 percent of respondents said that they either “strongly agree” or “agree” that they were *provided an opportunity to get answers to their academic questions* (85.0%), that they were *satisfied with the attention they received prior to Orientation* (84.3%), and that the *information/advice they received prior to Orientation helped them to plan their fall schedule* (81.9%).

When asked the same questions about their interactions with their college/department during Orientation, over 90 percent of respondents said they “strongly agree” or “agree” that they were satisfied with the *time spent with their college/department to get answers to their academic questions* (93.3%), satisfied with the *attention received from their college/department during Orientation* (92.7%), and that the *information/advice they received from their college/department helped them to plan their fall schedule* (90.9%).

Over 95 percent of respondents said that they either “strongly agree” or “agree” that the optional student engagement sessions during Orientation provided useful information about *study abroad and global experiences, undergraduate research, career development and cooperative education, and leadership and civic engagement*.

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* (72.4%) and *the resources available to me if I need help preventing or reporting sexual violence* (70.2%).

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, with over 95 percent of respondents saying they either “strongly agree” or “agree” to each area asked about. They were most likely to “strongly agree” that as a result of attending Orientation they are *excited to start my first semester at NC State* (65.7%).

Demographic and Family Background Characteristics

Just over half of respondents reported that they were “very well” prepared for college by their own efforts (51.1%), while 46.7 percent said they were “very well” prepared for college by their high school. However, respondents were more than 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 (9.1% vs 2.6%).

When asked about the hometown they came from, nearly 40 percent of incoming first year students reported they were from a “rural area” (12.1%) or a “small town” (26.3%), while just over 30 percent came from a “large city” (12.9%) or an “urban area” (18.8%).

Over 80 percent of incoming students had at least one of their parents/guardians earn a college degree (83.6%).

Over 55 percent of respondents reported that their family’s 2018 combined pre-tax income was over \$100,00, with 31.4 percent reporting it was over \$150,000, and 17.8 percent reporting it was over \$200,000. Just over 15 percent reported that their family income was \$50,000 or less (16.6%).

Seventy-one percent of incoming students from a family with a combined income of \$50,000 or less and 61.5 percent of those from a family with a combined income of \$50,001-\$100,000 said they will be working during their first year at NC State compared to just 39.8 percent of those from a family with a combined income over \$200,000.

About 80 percent of those from families with incomes of \$100,000 or below were using at least some of their own money to cover their first year expenses, compared to less than two-thirds of those from families with annual incomes over \$150,000.

Almost two-thirds of those with families earning \$100,000 or less reported having aid that must be repaid, compared to less than one-fourth of those families with incomes of over \$200,000. However, students from families earning between \$50,000 and \$150,000 reported having the largest amount of first year debt, with almost one-fourth having \$6,000 or more in aid that must be repaid.

More than two-thirds of respondents (69.1%) indicated that they came from a household with four or more members financially supported by their parents/guardians, including themselves, while four 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 (64.5%), while 31.1 percent said they were one of two dependents in college, and 4.5 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 on campus, adapting to NC State, campus life, independence of being a college student, future opportunities, and career planning. 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 adapting to NC State, their academic performance, social life, independence of being a college student, and time management.

For more information on the 2019 Incoming Freshmen Survey, contact:

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