

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

2020 Incoming First-Year Student Survey: Highlights

NC State conducted its annual survey of incoming first-year students prior to and at the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester. Eligible students included all incoming NC State first-year students at the Fall 2020 Census date. Of the 4,747 incoming first-year students in a four-year degree-seeking program eligible to complete the survey, 2,785 returned usable surveys for a response rate of 58.7%. 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.

NC State's academic reputation is very influential in students' decisions to attend. Although about three-fourths of respondents applied to four or more colleges, including NC State, a majority said that NC State was their “first” or “only choice” of colleges to attend. *Academic reputation* was most frequently reported as the single most influential factor in the decision to attend NC State, with one-fourth of incoming first-year students reporting this, followed by *availability of program* and *level of support for my intended major*.

High achievement is important to incoming students. While half of respondents said that their primary goal/objective for attending NC State was to obtain a bachelor's degree “in preparation for a career,” over 60 percent reported that they ultimately planned to pursue a master's, doctoral, or professional degree. More than 95 percent said they anticipated completing their bachelor's degree in four years or less.

Students feel well prepared for college by their high school and by their own efforts. Over 90 percent of incoming students said they were at least “somewhat well” prepared for college by both their high school and by their own efforts; nearly half said they were “very well” prepared for college by their high school, and just over half said they were “very well” prepared by their own efforts.

Incoming students report room to grow on various general education, personal development, and world view goals. Respondents consistently gave higher ratings to the importance of each of the 49 different general education, personal development, and world view goals asked about than to their current level of development of them. However, goals ranked relatively high in current level of development compared to other goals were similarly ranked high in importance relative to other goals. Goals that ranked especially high in both importance and development include *ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds; taking responsibility for my own behavior; understanding and respecting diverse cultures, values, and perspectives; ability to plan and carry out projects independently; working effectively as part of a team; and experiencing personal growth*. There were notable exceptions, however, with some goals ranking notably higher in importance than in current development, including *time management; ability to manage ongoing stressors; gaining clarity in my career direction; recovering from emotional setbacks; and speaking effectively*.

Students report using various sources, including their own money, to pay for their college expenses. Just under half of respondents said that in order to help cover their first year educational expenses they will be taking out loans that must be repaid, with about 15 percent saying they would be taking out loans of at least \$6,000. One-third of incoming students reported that they will be contributing at least \$1,000 of their own resources to their first year education expenses at NC State, with three percent contributing at least \$6,000. In addition, 36 percent reported that they intend to work either on or off campus, or both, during their first year at NC State. It is important to note that this number is notably lower than in past years – particularly for on-campus employment - - most likely due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Various NC State services given high marks by incoming freshmen. Incoming first-year students gave high ratings to the NC State admissions process, with over 95 percent saying they were at least “moderately satisfied” and 46 percent saying they were “very satisfied” with the process. Over 85 percent gave a rating of “excellent” or “good” to the NC State Admissions website, while just over three-fourths of incoming students gave a positive rating of the NC State Academic Advising Services website. More than 80 percent of respondents also said they were at least “moderately satisfied” with the NC State financial aid process.

Incoming students agreed that New Student Orientation was useful in preparing to begin college at NC State. Over 80 percent of incoming students said they were satisfied with the attention they received from their college/department, the information/advice to plan their schedule, and the time spent with their college/department during the online New Student Orientation. Over 95 percent said they either “strongly agree” or “agree” that as a result of their participation in New Student Orientation they were excited to start their first semester at NC State.

Anticipated experiences both excite and concern incoming students. In response to two questions asking them to comment in their own words – one about what they are excited about in coming to NC State, and one about what they are concerned with – students expressed similar issues in their responses to both questions. Students were most likely to say that they were most excited about things pertaining to their social life, learning, independence of being a college student, adapting to NC State, campus life, the intellectual environment on campus, and classroom instruction. Similarly, students were most likely to say that issues they were nervous about in coming to NC State included their academic performance, the COVID-19 pandemic, classroom instruction, social life, independence of being a college student, adapting to NC State, and time management.

For more information on the 2020 Incoming First-Year Student Survey, contact:

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Posted: November, 2020