

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

2021 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 2021 semester. Eligible students included all incoming NC State first-year students at the Fall 2021 Census date. Of the 4,982 incoming first-year students in a four-year degree-seeking program eligible to complete the survey, 2,850 returned usable surveys for a response rate of 57.2%.

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-fifth 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 over 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,” almost 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; over two-fifths said they were “very well” prepared for college by their high school, and almost 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 48 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 current development include *ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds; taking responsibility for my own behavior; understanding and respecting diverse cultures, values, and perspectives; 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 future career direction; and recovering from emotional setback*.

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 15 percent saying they would be taking out loans of at least \$6,000. Over 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 almost eight percent contributing at least \$6,000. In addition, 48 percent reported that they intend to work either on or off campus, or both, during their first year at NC State.

Various NC State services given high marks by incoming freshmen. Incoming first-year students gave high ratings to the NC State admissions process, with 97 percent saying they were at least “moderately satisfied.” 85 percent gave a rating of “excellent” or “good” to the NC State Admissions website, while 80 percent 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. Incoming students were nearly unanimous in agreeing that as a result of their participation in New Student Orientation they were excited to start their first semester at NC State (97%), and almost 90 percent agreed that they can better envision day-to-day life at NC State as a result of New Student Orientation. Over 80 percent of incoming students said they were satisfied with the information/advice they received to plan their course schedule during New Student Orientation. Over 90 percent said they were satisfied with the attention they received from their college/department, and that their time spent with their college/department during New Student Orientation provided the opportunity to get answers to academic questions

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 the opportunities at NC State. Similarly, students were most likely to say that issues they were nervous about in coming to NC State included their academic performance, adapting to NC State, social life, independence of being a college student, time management, and learning.

For more information on the 2021 Incoming First-Year Student Survey, contact:

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