

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

2025 Incoming First-Year Student Survey Overall Results

Introduction

This overview report presents findings from all incoming first-year students participating in the 2025 Incoming First-Year Student Survey. In the survey, students are asked about their experiences with the application process and deciding to enroll at NC State; their satisfaction with various NC State services and programs; how they are paying for their education; their preparation for college and their educational goals; what they are excited and concerned about in starting their first year of college; and for a variety of demographic information. For an overview of survey methods, a copy of the survey instrument with exact question wording, response rates, and a dashboard with breakouts by college, see [“2025 Incoming First-Year Student Survey: Table of Contents.”](#)

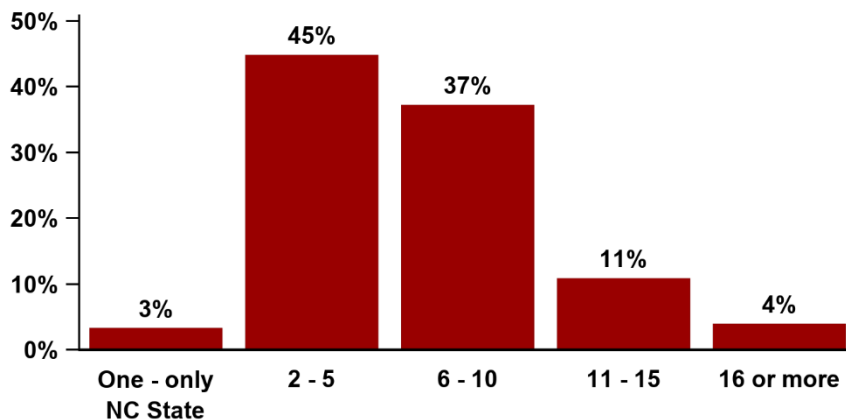
Incoming first-year students participated in New Student Orientation over the summer before their first semester at NC State. After they completed orientation, they were invited to participate in the 2025 Incoming First-Year Student Survey. The survey closed on September 3, 2025, about three weeks after classes began. A total of 5,771 incoming first-year students enrolled in a four-year degree-seeking program at the time of census were eligible to complete the survey and have their responses included in final analyses; 3,112 eligible students participated in the survey for a response rate of 54%.

Experiences Prior to Enrolling at NC State

Number of Colleges/Universities Applied to, Including NC State (Figure 1)

Incoming first-year students were asked how many colleges/universities they applied to for admission, including NC State. More than half of respondents reported that they had applied to more than five colleges/universities, including NC State (52%), with 15% applying to more than ten. A small percentage of students reported that NC State was the only school to which they applied (3%).

Figure 1 - Number of Colleges/Universities Applied to, Including NC State (N=3,111)



NC State as First Choice of Colleges to Attend (Table 1)

A majority of incoming first-year students said that NC State was their *first choice* of colleges to attend (62.2%). However, one-in-ten first-year students said that NC State was their *third choice or below* of colleges to attend (10.1%).

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (73.6%), the College of Design (73.4%), and the College of Education (70.2%) had the highest percentages of respondents saying that NC State was their *first choice* school to attend. The College of Engineering (13.5%), the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (12.5%), and the College of Sciences (12.1%) were most likely to have respondents report NC State was their *third choice or below*.

Table 1 - NC State First Choice of Colleges to Attend, by College

College	NC State first choice of colleges to attend			N
	Yes - it was my first choice	No - it was my second choice	No - it was my third choice or below	
Agriculture & Life Sciences	73.6%	21.4%	5.0%	383
Design	73.4%	19.0%	7.6%	79
Education	70.2%	24.5%	5.3%	94
Engineering	63.8%	22.8%	13.5%	958
Natural Resources	67.4%	25.9%	6.7%	135
Humanities & Social Sciences	50.3%	37.2%	12.5%	296
Sciences	49.9%	38.1%	12.1%	365
Textiles	68.7%	25.3%	6.1%	99
Management	58.6%	32.8%	8.6%	244
University College	61.9%	30.5%	7.6%	367
Total	62.2%	27.8%	10.1%	3,020

Factors That Influenced Decision to Attend NC State (Tables 2-3)

Incoming first-year students were asked to identify the single most influential factor in their decision to attend NC State, as well as the extent to which each of the potential factors influenced their decision. Most incoming first-year students focused on just a few specific factors. *Academic reputation* (16.6%) was most likely to be reported as being the *single most influential factor* in deciding to attend NC State, followed by *level of support for my intended major* (14.9%), *availability of academic program/major* (14.7%) and *future career opportunities* (11.9%). *Location* (8.0%), *cost* (7.1%), and *opportunities to engage in high-impact experiences* (6.5%) were also rated as the *single most influential factor* by a sizable number of students. A very small percentage of respondents selected any of the other factors presented.

Table 2 - Single Most Influential Factor in Deciding to Attend NC State

	%	N
Academic reputation	16.6%	502
Level of support for my intended major	14.9%	451
Availability of academic program/major	14.7%	445
Future career opportunities	11.9%	359
Location	8.0%	241
Cost	7.1%	215
Opportunities to engage in high-impact experiences	6.5%	197
Recommended by a friend, family member, teacher, counselor, etc.	4.5%	137
Scholarships available	2.8%	85
Financial aid available	2.7%	81
Facilities and resources available	2.6%	79
Campus visit/recruitment event(s)	2.4%	71
Extracurricular opportunities	1.5%	46
NC State's commitment to the environment and sustainability	0.6%	19
Wellness and Recreation facilities and programs	0.6%	19
Attendance at a college fair or high school visit	0.4%	12
Library spaces and services	0.2%	7
Other	1.7%	52
Total	100.0%	3,018

When asked to rate how much of an influence each factor had on them using a scale from 1 (“very weak influence”) to 5 (“very strong influence”), results indicate that a wide variety of factors had at least some influence on first year students’ attendance at NC State. Incoming students were most likely to say that *academic reputation* (85.2%), *availability of academic program/major* (80.4%), and *future career opportunities* (79.3%) had a “very strong” or “strong” influence on their decision to attend NC State. Incoming first-year students also reported *facilities and resources available* (76.9%), *level of support for intended major* (75.4%), and *opportunities to engage in high impact experiences* (71.1%) as having “very strong” or “strong” levels of influence on their decision.

Among the factors least likely to be influential in students’ decisions to attend NC State, with more than a third of students saying each had either a “weak” or “very weak” influence were *financial aid available* (37.4%), *scholarships available* (34.7%), and *attendance at a college fair or high school visit* (33.5%). A relatively small number of respondents (N=303) identified their own *other* factors not included on the list provided as having influenced their decision to attend NC State. Some examples of *other* factors that students mentioned included athletics programs, the campus community, staff and faculty, and campus or program size.

Table 3 - Influence of Various Factors on Decision to Attend NC State

	Mean	5: Very strong influence	4: Strong influence	3: Moderate influence	2: Weak influence	1: Very weak influence	N
Availability of academic program/major	4.27	52.0%	28.4%	14.7%	4.1%	0.9%	3,086
Academic reputation	4.18	34.2%	51.0%	13.6%	1.0%	0.3%	3,103
Future career opportunities	4.17	42.7%	36.6%	16.8%	3.2%	0.7%	3,095
Level of support for my intended major	4.05	36.1%	39.3%	19.7%	4.0%	1.0%	3,032
Facilities and resources available	4.05	32.9%	44.0%	19.2%	3.1%	0.8%	3,051
Opportunities to engage in high-impact experiences (e.g., study abroad, internships, research)	3.96	35.0%	36.1%	20.8%	5.9%	2.2%	3,019
Location	3.94	32.6%	38.3%	21.9%	5.3%	1.8%	3,089
Extracurricular opportunities	3.60	20.3%	35.5%	31.1%	10.2%	3.0%	3,007
Cost	3.50	22.9%	25.9%	34.3%	12.4%	4.5%	3,050
Library spaces and services	3.46	17.7%	31.4%	34.0%	13.3%	3.6%	3,018
Wellness and Recreation facilities and programs	3.45	20.0%	30.2%	30.2%	14.4%	5.2%	3,008
Recommended by a friend, family member, teacher, counselor, etc.	3.44	22.0%	27.1%	30.5%	13.7%	6.7%	2,902
NC State's commitment to the environment and sustainability	3.26	17.5%	25.8%	30.9%	17.1%	8.7%	2,968
Campus visit/recruitment event(s)	3.15	13.3%	25.7%	33.3%	17.2%	10.4%	2,839
Scholarships available	3.01	14.7%	17.8%	32.6%	23.3%	11.5%	2,883
Attendance at a college fair or college visit	2.99	11.0%	23.4%	32.2%	20.0%	13.5%	2,564
Financial aid available	2.98	16.3%	17.6%	28.6%	22.2%	15.2%	2,742
Other (please specify)	3.76	44.2%	19.8%	18.8%	2.3%	14.9%	303

Satisfaction with NC State Admissions Process (Tables 4-5, Figures 2-3)

Incoming first-year students were asked to reflect back to when they applied for admission to NC State and rate their *satisfaction with the NC State University admissions process*. Almost all respondents were satisfied (97.2%), with more than half of respondents reporting they were “very satisfied” (54.1%) with the admissions process.

Table 4 - Satisfaction with Admissions Process (excluding those who responded 'Don't know')

	%	N
Very satisfied	54.1%	1,621
Moderately satisfied	43.1%	1,294
Moderately dissatisfied	2.4%	71
Very dissatisfied	0.4%	13
Total	100.0%	2,999

Incoming first-year students were asked to rate the ease to which they found the *information they needed on the Admissions website*. More than three quarters of respondents said that finding the

information they needed was “very easy” (36.4%) or “somewhat easy” (40.7%). A small percentage reported that information was “somewhat difficult” (3.0%) or “very difficult” (0.6%) to find.

Table 5 - Ease of Finding Needed Information on Admissions Website

	%	N
Very easy	36.4%	1,100
Somewhat easy	40.7%	1,230
Sometimes easy, sometimes difficult	19.2%	581
Somewhat difficult	3.0%	92
Very difficult	0.6%	17
Total	100.0%	3,020

In addition to the website, incoming first-year students were asked to rate the helpfulness of the new Undergraduate Admissions ChatBot. A small percentage of respondents reported using the ChatBot (6.7%). Of those respondents who used it, almost three quarters said that it was “very helpful” (23%) or “somewhat helpful” (50%). A few respondents found the ChatBot to be “not very helpful” (7%) or “not helpful at all” (1%).

Figure 2 – Used ChatBot to Assist in Finding Needed Information on Admissions Website (N=3,112)

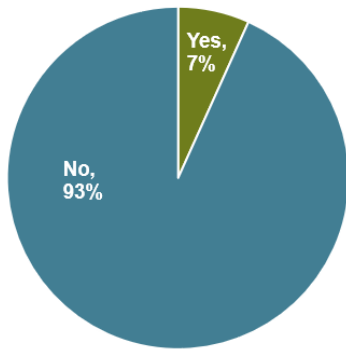
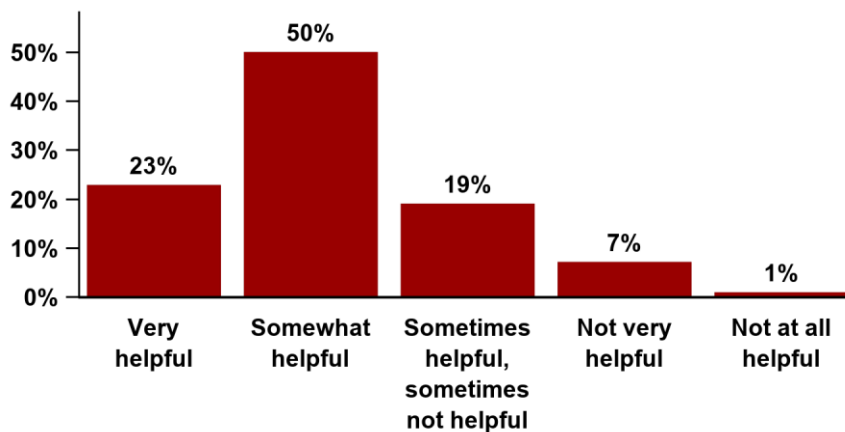


Figure 3 - Helpfulness of Admissions Website ChatBot (N=210)



Personal, Educational, and Career Goals

Primary Goal/Objective for Attending NC State (Table 6)

When asked to identify their primary goal or objective for attending NC State, more than half of respondents said it was to obtain a “*bachelor’s degree in preparation for a career*” (53.5%). Approximately two-in-five respondents said that their primary goal was to obtain a “*bachelor’s degree as preparation for graduate or professional school*” (41.6%).

Table 6 - Primary Goal/Objective for Attending NC State

	%	N
Obtain degree in preparation for career	53.5%	1,527
Obtain degree for grad school preparation	41.6%	1,187
Obtain degree for career change preparation	0.7%	20
Improve knowledge/skills for current profession	2.8%	81
Take courses for personal interest	0.6%	18
Other	0.7%	21
Total	100.0%	2,854

Time Anticipated to Complete Bachelor’s Degree (Table 7)

Incoming first-year students were asked to estimate the amount of time they intended to take to earn their bachelor’s degree at NC State. While a majority said they expect to graduate in four years (69.8%), more than a quarter indicated that they would complete their bachelor’s degree in less than four years (26.4%).

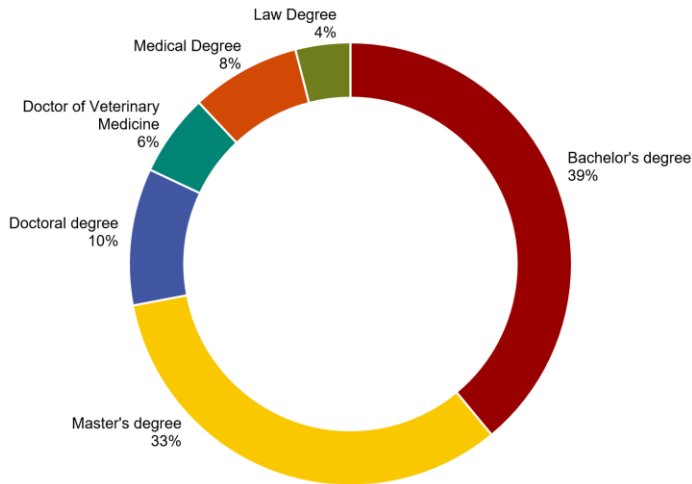
Table 7 - Time Anticipated to Complete Bachelor’s Degree

	%	N
Less than 4 years	26.4%	686
4 years	69.8%	1,816
4 1/2 years	2.1%	54
5 years	1.4%	36
6 or more years	0.1%	3
Do not intend to complete bachelor’s degree at NC State	0.2%	6
Total	100.0%	2,601

Highest Level of Education Anticipated to Complete (Figure 4)

Approximately four-in-five respondents reported that they intended to earn a degree beyond a bachelor’s degree (61%), with more than a quarter of respondents reporting they plan to pursue a doctoral or professional degree (28%).

Figure 4 - Highest Level of Education Anticipate Completing (among those intending on completing a degree) (N=2,624)



Certainty of College Major (Table 8)

More than three quarters of incoming first-year students reported that they were either “very certain” (36.0%) or “certain” (43.3%) in their choice of college major. Levels of certainty, however, varied by college. Students in the College of Design (51.3%) were most likely to report feeling “very certain” about their choice of college major. Students in University College, where students enter the Exploratory Studies program without a declared major, were the most likely to report being uncertain, with over half saying they were “very uncertain” (14.0%) or “uncertain” (43.0%) about their major. Results from the College of Education indicate a polarity not observed in other colleges. While students from the College of Education reported feeling “very certain” at the second highest level (49.4%), they also indicate being “uncertain” (18.4%) and “very uncertain” (5.7%) at the second highest level.

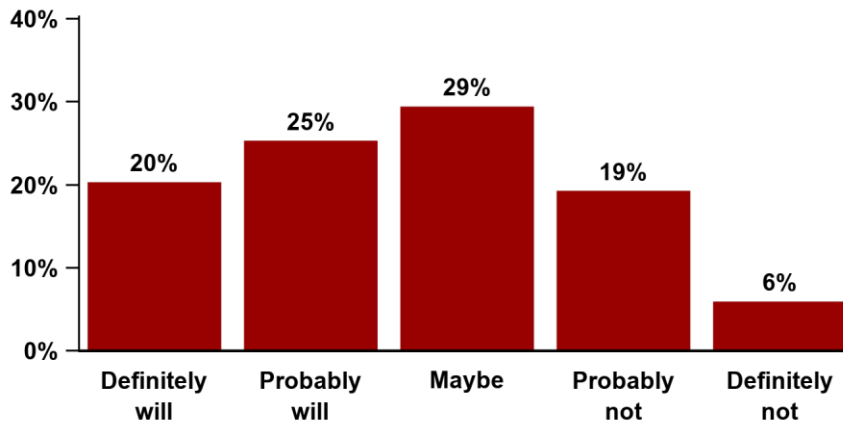
Table 8 - Certainty of Academic Major, by College

College	Certainty of college major choice				N
	Very certain	Certain	Uncertain	Very uncertain	
Agriculture & Life Sciences	45.6%	40.0%	12.3%	2.1%	375
Design	51.3%	37.2%	10.3%	1.3%	78
Education	49.4%	26.4%	18.4%	5.7%	87
Engineering	39.4%	48.0%	11.9%	0.7%	914
Natural Resources	27.0%	50.0%	19.8%	3.2%	126
Humanities & Social Sciences	33.6%	43.8%	18.0%	4.6%	283
Sciences	37.6%	47.5%	13.1%	1.7%	343
Textiles	46.0%	39.1%	12.6%	2.3%	87
Management	32.5%	49.1%	17.1%	1.3%	228
University College	12.9%	30.1%	43.0%	14.0%	342
Total	36.0%	43.3%	17.4%	3.4%	2,863

Likelihood of Participation in Abroad Program (Figure 5)

Almost half of incoming first-year students indicated it is likely that they will participate in a study abroad program while an undergraduate student at NC State, by saying that they either “definitely” (20%) or “probably will” (25%) participate. A small percentage said they would “definitely not” participate in a study abroad program while an undergraduate student at NC State (6%).

Figure 5 - Likelihood of Study Abroad Program Participation (N=2,601)



Intended Employment Location after Graduation (Table 9)

When asked to indicate the general location in which they intend to seek employment after graduation, about one-in-five incoming first-year students reported that they will be seeking work “in North Carolina only” (22.7%), close to half said that they would seek work “anywhere in the USA” (46.1%) and very small percentage said that they would seek work “outside the USA only” (1.6%). The remainder said that they would seek work “anywhere – location is not important” (29.6%).

Table 9 - Intended Employment Location After Graduation (among those planning on seeking employment)

	%	N
In North Carolina only	22.7%	499
Anywhere in USA	46.1%	1,012
Outside USA only	1.6%	35
Anywhere - location is not important	29.6%	651
Total	100.0%	2,197

Development and Importance of Goals Held by NC State (Tables 10-15)

Incoming first-year students were asked to what extent they had already acquired specific skills related to goals that NC State holds for its undergraduate students, and how important each of those goals are to them. Overall, students believe each of these specific skills to be important, and although ratings for their current level of development were consistently lower than ratings for their importance of given skills, they felt they did a good job developing many of them before starting college.

Average ratings of students’ current level of development for the 33 goals presented in the survey range from a high of 3.44 (*Ability to work with people with varied backgrounds*) to a low of 2.63 (*Time management*) (on a 4-point scale). One-third or more of respondents reported that their current level of

development was “excellent” for 8 of the 33 goals presented. Few incoming first-year students indicated that their current level of development for any of the goals was “poor.”

Average ratings for the importance of the 33 individual goals asked about range from a high of 3.86 (*Time management*) to a low of 3.00 (*Engaging with and responding to artistic works*) (on a 4-point scale). At least half of respondents rated all but 4 of the goals asked about as “very important,” and for only one of the 33 goals did more than 5% of respondents say it was “not at all important” to them.

General Education Goals

Overall, respondents reported that they felt well prepared with respect to various general education areas prior to coming to campus. The majority of incoming students rated their current level of development for each of the 14 general education goals presented as “excellent” or “good” and three-fourths or more gave themselves such a rating for six of them. They were most likely to say that their current level of development was “excellent” for:

- *Ability to plan and carry out projects independently* (40.1% “excellent”)
- *Considering options and their consequences when solving a problem or addressing an issue* (36.7%)
- *Solving real-world problems by applying imagination, creativity, and/or knowledge and skills from multiple disciplines* (30.1%)
- *Appreciating the humanities* (30.1%)
- *Effectively analyzing and evaluating evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs* (29.9%)

Conversely, more than one-third of incoming first-year students rated their current level of development on five of the 14 general education goals asked about as “fair” or “poor.”

- *Presenting effectively across genres for a wide variety of audiences* (41.8%)
- *Engaging with and responding to artistic works* (41.7%)
- *Applying social science methods to understand human behavior* (37.5%)
- *Writing effectively across genres for a wide variety of audiences* (36.2%)
- *Applying scientific methods of inquiry* (35.0%)

Table 10 - Current Level of Development of General Education Goals

	Mean	4: Excellent	3: Good	2: Fair	1: Poor	N
Development: Considering options and their consequences when solving a problem or addressing an issue	3.25	36.7%	52.1%	10.9%	0.3%	2,700
Development: Ability to plan and carry out projects independently	3.25	40.1%	45.6%	13.4%	1.0%	2,749
Development: Effectively analyzing and evaluating evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs	3.12	29.9%	53.8%	15.1%	1.1%	2,701
Development: Identifying a problem or concept and articulating its various components	3.11	27.0%	57.4%	14.9%	0.7%	2,700
Development: Solving real-world problems by applying imagination, creativity, and/or knowledge and skills from multiple disciplines	3.08	30.1%	49.6%	18.7%	1.6%	2,683
Development: Reflecting on learning in and out of the classroom	3.04	28.1%	49.6%	20.0%	2.3%	2,685
Development: Keeping my personal data and devices secure	3.01	28.9%	46.0%	21.8%	3.3%	2,659
Development: Appreciating the humanities	2.98	30.1%	43.2%	21.0%	5.7%	2,639
Development: Communicating information and knowledge using multiple forms, including text, video, graphics, etc.	2.96	23.9%	50.9%	22.8%	2.4%	2,755
Development: Applying scientific methods of inquiry	2.78	19.5%	45.4%	29.1%	5.9%	2,724
Development: Writing effectively across genres for a wide variety of audiences	2.78	18.6%	45.3%	31.2%	5.0%	2,747
Development: Applying social science methods to understand human behavior	2.75	20.5%	42.0%	30.0%	7.5%	2,593
Development: Engaging with and responding to artistic works (e.g., plays, music, movies, dance, visual arts)	2.70	25.6%	32.7%	27.7%	14.0%	2,640
Development: Presenting effectively across genres for a wide variety of audiences	2.65	16.3%	41.9%	32.1%	9.7%	2,745

Incoming first-year students on average rated their importance of the general education goals asked about higher than their current level of development on them. A majority of respondents rated each of the 14 goals as either “very” or “somewhat important,” with 90% or more giving such a rating to 10 of the goals. They were most likely to see the following goals as “very important”:

- *Considering options and their consequences when solving a problem or addressing an issue* (79.0% “very important”)
- *Solving real-world problems by applying imagination, creativity, and/or knowledge and skills from multiple disciplines* (77.2%)
- *Ability to plan and carry out projects independently* (77.1%)
- *Keeping personal data and devices secure* (76.3%)

At least one-in-ten incoming students, however, see several of the general education goals asked about as either “not very” or “not at all important.” Those goals seen by these respondents as least important are:

- *Engaging with and responding to artistic works* (26.9% “not very important” or “not at all important”)
- *Appreciating the humanities* (14.7%)
- *Applying social science methods to understand human behavior* (12.1%)
- *Applying scientific methods of inquiry* (10.7%)

Table 11 - Importance of General Education Goals

	Mean	4: Very important	3: Somewhat important	2: Not very important	1: Not at all important	N
Importance: Considering options and their consequences when solving a problem or addressing an issue	3.78	79.0%	19.7%	1.2%	0.1%	2,682
Importance: Ability to plan and carry out projects independently	3.75	77.1%	21.1%	1.7%	0.1%	2,722
Importance: Solving real-world problems by applying imagination, creativity, and/or knowledge and skills from multiple disciplines	3.75	77.2%	20.8%	1.9%	0.1%	2,682
Importance: Keeping my personal data and devices secure	3.74	76.3%	21.6%	1.9%	0.2%	2,658
Importance: Effectively analyzing and evaluating evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs	3.70	72.2%	25.9%	1.9%	0.1%	2,686
Importance: Identifying a problem or concept and articulating its various components	3.70	71.6%	27.0%	1.3%	0.1%	2,683
Importance: Presenting effectively across genres for a wide variety of audiences	3.62	67.0%	28.9%	3.6%	0.5%	2,731
Importance: Communicating information and knowledge using multiple forms, including text, video, graphics, etc.	3.62	66.0%	30.2%	3.4%	0.4%	2,729
Importance: Reflecting on learning in and out of the classroom	3.52	58.7%	35.1%	5.5%	0.7%	2,673
Importance: Applying scientific methods of inquiry	3.43	55.5%	33.7%	9.4%	1.3%	2,710
Importance: Writing effectively across genres for a wide variety of audiences	3.39	49.7%	41.2%	8.1%	1.1%	2,722
Importance: Applying social science methods to understand human behavior	3.29	42.5%	45.4%	10.7%	1.4%	2,626
Importance: Appreciating the humanities	3.24	41.3%	44.0%	12.0%	2.7%	2,629
Importance: Engaging with and responding to artistic works (e.g., plays, music, movies, dance, visual arts)	3.00	33.1%	40.0%	20.8%	6.1%	2,649

Personal Development Goals

At least half of respondents gave a rating of “excellent” or “good” to their current level of development for each of the 14 personal development goals asked about, with three-quarters or more doing so for 9 of the goals. Incoming first-year students were most likely to say that their current level of development was “excellent” for:

- *Valuing learning as a lifelong process* (47.4% “excellent”)
- *Working effectively as part of a team* (39.5%)
- *Recognizing and acting on ethical principles* (38.5%)
- *Seeing projects through to completion* (37.3%)

More than one-fourth of incoming students rated their current level of development on five of the 14 personal development goals as only “fair” or “poor.” They were most likely to give such a rating for their development of:

- *Time management* (43.0% “fair” or “poor”)

- *Ability to manage ongoing stressors* (37.1%)
- *Recovering from emotional setbacks* (32.3%)
- *Being involved in public and community affairs* (32.0%)

Table 12 - Current Level of Development of Personal Development Goals

	Mean	4: Excellent	3: Good	2: Fair	1: Poor	N
Development: Valuing learning as a lifelong process	3.38	47.4%	44.3%	7.6%	0.8%	2,638
Development: Recognizing and acting on ethical principles	3.27	38.5%	51.0%	9.7%	0.8%	2,634
Development: Working effectively as part of a team	3.27	39.5%	48.7%	10.8%	1.0%	2,637
Development: Seeing projects through to completion	3.16	37.3%	44.4%	15.1%	3.2%	2,617
Development: Ability to reflect upon academic goals and expectations and update them as needed in response to changing circumstances	3.09	28.8%	53.2%	15.7%	2.3%	2,603
Development: Identifying alternatives when faced with setbacks	3.08	28.4%	53.1%	16.5%	1.9%	2,612
Development: Ability to set and accomplish goals	3.07	27.7%	53.6%	16.5%	2.2%	2,620
Development: Developing leadership skills	3.06	34.3%	42.1%	19.2%	4.4%	2,637
Development: Developing and sustaining an active and healthy lifestyle	2.99	31.4%	41.2%	22.3%	5.1%	2,631
Development: Ability to reflect upon personal goals and expectations and update them as needed in response to changing circumstances	2.97	24.9%	50.1%	21.9%	3.2%	2,603
Development: Recovering from emotional setbacks	2.88	26.0%	41.7%	26.2%	6.1%	2,598
Development: Being involved in public and community affairs	2.86	24.6%	43.4%	25.0%	7.0%	2,628
Development: Ability to manage ongoing stressors	2.72	16.3%	46.6%	30.2%	6.9%	2,613
Development: Time management	2.63	17.1%	39.8%	32.3%	10.7%	2,615

The incoming first-year students see personal development goals as important, with a majority saying all the 14 goals asked about are “very important.” Those goals seen as most important are:

- *Time management* (87.4% “very important”)
- *Working effectively as part of a team* (82.6%)
- *Ability to manage ongoing stressors* (82.5%)
- *Developing and sustaining an active and healthy lifestyle* (80.8%)
- *Seeing projects through to completion* (79.7%)

For only one of the personal development goals asked about did more than 5% of the incoming first-year students give a rating of “not very” or “not at all important.” The goal seen as least important to these students is:

- *Being involved in public and community affairs* (6.7% “not very” or “not at all important”)

Table 13 - Importance of Personal Development Goals

	Mean	4: Very important	3: Somewhat important	2: Not very important	1: Not at all important	N
Importance: Time management	3.86	87.4%	11.3%	1.1%	0.2%	2,611
Importance: Working effectively as part of a team	3.81	82.6%	16.2%	1.0%	0.2%	2,628
Importance: Ability to manage ongoing stressors	3.81	82.5%	16.2%	0.9%	0.3%	2,613
Importance: Developing and sustaining an active and healthy lifestyle	3.79	80.8%	17.4%	1.5%	0.2%	2,624
Importance: Seeing projects through to completion	3.78	79.7%	18.9%	1.3%	0.2%	2,617
Importance: Identifying alternatives when faced with setbacks	3.77	78.4%	20.3%	1.2%	0.2%	2,616
Importance: Ability to set and accomplish goals	3.76	78.1%	20.2%	1.6%	0.1%	2,617
Importance: Ability to reflect upon academic goals and expectations and update them as needed in response to changing circumstances	3.73	75.0%	23.1%	1.8%	0.1%	2,598
Importance: Recovering from emotional setbacks	3.73	75.4%	22.4%	2.0%	0.2%	2,603
Importance: Recognizing and acting on ethical principles	3.72	75.4%	22.0%	2.3%	0.3%	2,623
Importance: Valuing learning as a lifelong process	3.71	73.7%	24.0%	2.0%	0.3%	2,631
Importance: Ability to reflect upon personal goals and expectations and update them as needed in response to changing circumstances	3.71	73.5%	24.4%	2.0%	0.2%	2,604
Importance: Developing leadership skills	3.70	72.2%	25.4%	2.2%	0.1%	2,623
Importance: Being involved in public and community affairs	3.49	56.6%	36.6%	6.1%	0.6%	2,624

World View Goals

At least three quarters of respondents gave a rating of “excellent” or “good” to their current level of development for each of the five world view goals. They were most likely to say that their current level of development was “excellent” for *Ability to work with people with varied backgrounds* (52.1%).

Almost two-in-five incoming students rated their current level of development on three of the world view goals as only “fair” or “poor.” They were most likely to give such a rating for their development of:

- *Understanding the commonality of human problems through a global perspective* (21.8% “fair” or “poor”)
- *Understanding the present as it relates to historical events and processes* (21.3%)
- *Understanding problems and issues facing the world* (20.4%)

Table 14 - Current Level of Development of World View Goals

	Mean	4: Excellent	3: Good	2: Fair	1: Poor	N
Development: Ability to work with people with varied backgrounds	3.44	52.1%	39.9%	7.3%	0.6%	2,599
Development: Understanding and respecting varied cultures, values, and perspectives	3.23	38.6%	47.4%	12.8%	1.2%	2,595
Development: Understanding the commonality of human problems through a global perspective	3.07	31.7%	46.5%	19.0%	2.8%	2,569
Development: Understanding the present as it relates to historical events and processes	3.07	31.2%	47.5%	18.1%	3.2%	2,591
Development: Understanding problems and issues facing the world	3.05	26.8%	52.8%	18.5%	1.9%	2,598

The incoming first-year students see world view goals as important, with a majority saying all five goals presented are “very important.” Those goals seen as most important are:

- *Ability to work with people with varied backgrounds* (81.6% “very important”)
- *Understanding and respecting varied cultures, values, and perspectives* (77.7%)
- *Understanding problems and issues facing the world* (76.4%)

For only one of the world view goals asked about did more than 5% of the incoming first-year students give a rating of “not very” or “not at all important.” The goal seen as least important to these students is:

- *Understanding the present as it relates to historical events and processes* (5.2% “not very” or “not at all important”)

Table 15 - Importance of World View Goals

	Mean	4: Very important	3: Somewhat important	2: Not very important	1: Not at all important	N
Importance: Ability to work with people with varied backgrounds	3.79	81.6%	16.5%	1.7%	0.2%	2,597
Importance: Understanding and respecting varied cultures, values, and perspectives	3.75	77.7%	19.7%	2.1%	0.4%	2,593
Importance: Understanding problems and issues facing the world	3.75	76.4%	21.8%	1.6%	0.2%	2,598
Importance: Understanding the commonality of human problems through a global perspective	3.61	65.0%	31.0%	3.5%	0.5%	2,572
Importance: Understanding the present as it relates to historical events and processes	3.58	63.6%	31.2%	4.7%	0.5%	2,586

Current Level of Development Compared to Importance

Students were more likely to give a higher rating to the importance of a specific goal than to their current level of development of that goal. However, goals ranked relatively high in development also ranked relatively high in importance compared to other goals presented in the survey. Table 16 provides a comparison between ratings of respondents’ importance of skills and their current level of

development of them. The goals listed in Table 16 are rank-ordered based on the perceived importance of the goal.

Goals that were rated relatively high in both importance and development (i.e. areas students have progressed well in before starting college and also feel that they are particularly important) include:

- *Working effectively as part of a team* (2nd in importance [average rating 3.81] and 4th in development [average ranking 3.27])
- *Ability to work with people with varied backgrounds* (4th [3.79] and 1st [3.44])
- *Seeing projects through to completion* (6th [3.78] and 8th [3.16])
- *Considering options and their consequences when solving a problem or addressing an issue* (7th [3.78] and 5th [3.25])

Conversely, a few goals ranked low in both importance and development. These include:

- *Engaging with and responding to artistic works* (33rd in importance [average rating 3.00] and 31st in development [average rating 2.70])
- *Applying social science methods to understand human behavior* (31st [3.29] and 29th [2.75])
- *Writing effectively across genres for a wide variety of audiences* (30th [3.39] and 28th [2.78])
- *Applying scientific methods of inquiry* (29th [3.43] and 27th [2.78])
- *Being involved in public and community affairs* (28th [3.49] and 26th [2.86])

There are a few notable exceptions to goals having similar rankings. Some goals have an average importance rating that is relatively high compared to other goals but have an average current level of development that is relatively low in comparison. The “gap” between ratings of importance and development, goals in which incoming students felt were highly important but rated their current level of development as being among the lowest of all goals asked about, was largest for:

- *Time management* (1st in importance [average rating 3.86] vs 33rd in development [average rating 2.63])
- *Ability to manage ongoing stressors* (3rd [3.81] vs 30th [2.72])
- *Developing and sustaining an active and healthy lifestyle* (5th [3.79] vs 21st [2.99])

Conversely, some goals were rated as relatively less important than others, but incoming first-year students felt they were relatively better prepared on them. These include:

- *Valuing learning as a lifelong process* (18th in importance [average rating 3.71] vs 2nd in development [average rating 3.38])
- *Recognizing and acting on ethical principles* (17th [3.72] vs 3rd [3.27])
- *Effectively analyzing and evaluating evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs* (20th [3.70] and 9th [3.12])
- *Identifying a problem or concept and articulating its various components* (21st [3.70] and 10th [3.11])
- *Understanding the commonality of human problems through a global perspective* (25th [3.61] vs 14th [3.07])

Table 16 - Relative Ranking of Current Level of Development and Importance of Goals

Goals	Importance Rank	Importance Mean	Development Rank	Development Mean
Time management	1	3.86	33	2.63
Working effectively as part of a team	2	3.81	4	3.27
Ability to manage ongoing stressors	3	3.81	30	2.72
Ability to work with people with varied backgrounds	4	3.79	1	3.44
Developing and sustaining an active and healthy lifestyle	5	3.79	21	2.99
Seeing projects through to completion	6	3.78	8	3.16
Considering options and their consequences when solving a problem or addressing an issue	7	3.78	5	3.25
Identifying alternatives when faced with setbacks	8	3.77	13	3.08
Ability to set and accomplish goals	9	3.76	15	3.07
Ability to plan and carry out projects independently	10	3.75	6	3.25
Solving real-world problems by applying imagination, creativity, and/or knowledge and skills from multiple disciplines	11	3.75	12	3.08
Understanding and respecting varied cultures, values, and perspectives	12	3.75	7	3.23
Understanding problems and issues facing the world	13	3.75	18	3.05
Keeping my personal data and devices secure	14	3.74	20	3.01
Ability to reflect upon academic goals and expectations and update them as needed in response to changing circumstances	15	3.73	11	3.09
Recovering from emotional setbacks	16	3.73	25	2.88
Recognizing and acting on ethical principles	17	3.72	3	3.27
Valuing learning as a lifelong process	18	3.71	2	3.38
Ability to reflect upon personal goals and expectations and update them as needed in response to changing circumstances	19	3.71	23	2.97
Effectively analyzing and evaluating evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs	20	3.70	9	3.12
Identifying a problem or concept and articulating its various components	21	3.70	10	3.11
Developing leadership skills	22	3.70	17	3.06
Presenting effectively across genres for a wide variety of audiences	23	3.62	32	2.65
Communicating information and knowledge using multiple forms, including text, video, graphics, etc.	24	3.62	24	2.96
Understanding the commonality of human problems through a global perspective	25	3.61	14	3.07
Understanding the present as it relates to historical events and processes	26	3.58	16	3.07
Reflecting on learning in and out of the classroom	27	3.52	19	3.04
Being involved in public and community affairs	28	3.49	26	2.86

Goals	Importance Rank	Importance Mean	Development Rank	Development Mean
Applying scientific methods of inquiry	29	3.43	27	2.78
Writing effectively across genres for a wide variety of audiences	30	3.39	28	2.78
Applying social science methods to understand human behavior	31	3.29	29	2.75
Appreciating the humanities	32	3.24	22	2.98
Engaging with and responding to artistic works (e.g., plays, music, movies, dance, visual arts)	33	3.00	31	2.70

Finances and Paying for College

This section of the report presents data on respondents' sources of funding for college and their anticipated employment during their first year at NC State.

Financial Dependence (Table 17)

More than four-in-five first-year students reported that their parents or guardians will be covering half or more of their college expenses (83.1%), with almost half reporting that their parents or guardians will cover all of their expenses (e.g. tuition, fees, food, and housing) (48.7%). Ten percent of respondents reported that their parents or guardians will be paying for less than half of their expenses (10.3%), and even fewer students indicated that they will not be receiving any financial assistance from their parents (6.6%).

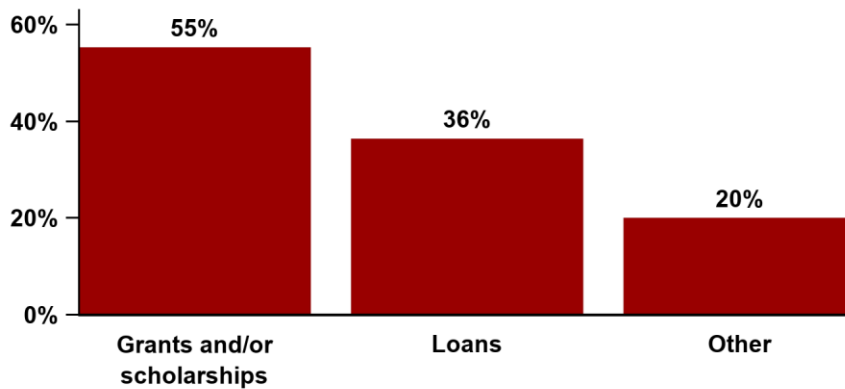
Table 17 - Financial Dependence Among Students

	%	N
Parents/guardians cover all expenses	48.7%	1,272
Parents/guardians cover half or more of expenses	34.4%	899
Parents/guardians cover less than half of expenses	10.3%	269
No financial assistance from parents/guardians	6.6%	172
Total	100.0%	2,612

Financial Aid Received (Figure 6)

When asked to identify what types of financial aid they had received, a majority of incoming first-year students said they were *receiving grants and/or scholarships* (55%), while almost two-in-five said that they received *loans* to help pay for their education (36%). One-in-five students reported they were receiving some *other* type of financial aid (20%). A small percentage of students indicated that they were receiving all three types of aid (5%). Approximately one-quarter of students said they were receiving no aid (i.e., neither grants, scholarships, loans, or other assistance) (27%) (data not reported).

Figure 6 - Financial Aid Received (N=3,003)



*Note: Respondents could select more than one response

Paying for College (Table 18)

Incoming students were asked to estimate how much of their first-year educational expenses would come from various sources.¹ Almost half of respondents reported that \$10,000 or more of their first year educational expenses would come from *family resources* (49.0%). While well 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 (67.2%), more than one quarter reported having \$3,000 or more in loans (26.4%), with almost one-in-ten saying they will have \$10,000 or more in loans (9.2%). Students themselves were least likely to contribute to their college expenses, with three-in-five students saying they would be contributing nothing at all (31.8%) or less than \$1,000 (28.4%) of their own money to their first-year educational expenses. However, almost one-in-ten students reported that they would be contributing \$6,000 or more of their own resources to pay first year expenses (8.1%). Finally, a notable number of students (52.6%) said they are receiving at least some aid that does not need to be repaid, such as grants or scholarships, with one-in-five students receiving \$10,000 or more in such aid for their first-year expenses (20.6%).

Table 18 - Sources of Education Funding

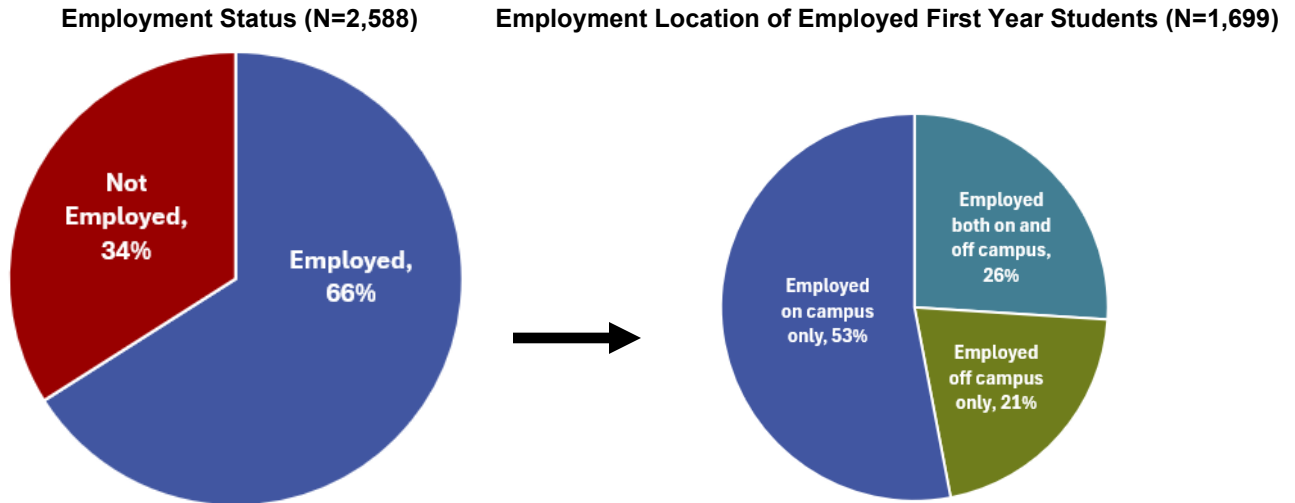
	None	Less than \$1,000	\$1,000-\$2,999	\$3,000-\$5,999	\$6,000-\$9,999	\$10,000 or more	N
Expenses covered by: Family resources (i.e., parents/guardians, spouse/partner)	13.2%	8.4%	9.6%	9.2%	10.7%	49.0%	2,873
Expenses covered by: Grants and/or scholarships (i.e., aid that you do not have to repay)	47.4%	3.8%	10.1%	10.0%	8.2%	20.6%	2,952
Expenses covered by: Your own resources (savings from work, work-study, other income)	31.8%	28.4%	21.9%	9.8%	3.3%	4.8%	2,786
Expenses covered by: Loans (i.e., aid that must be repaid)	67.2%	1.1%	5.3%	13.2%	4.0%	9.2%	2,952
Expenses covered by: Other than above (gifts from family [excluding parents/guardians and/or spouse/partner] or non-family members, VA benefits, ROTC scholarship, other forms of military funding, etc.)	89.5%	2.0%	2.3%	1.1%	1.2%	3.9%	2,880

¹ Students first identified sources of their financial aid (Figure 6) and then reported how much funding they expect to receive from each identified source (Table 18). In some instances, students' self-reported aid amounts do not align as anticipated.

Student Employment (Figures 7-8; Table 19)

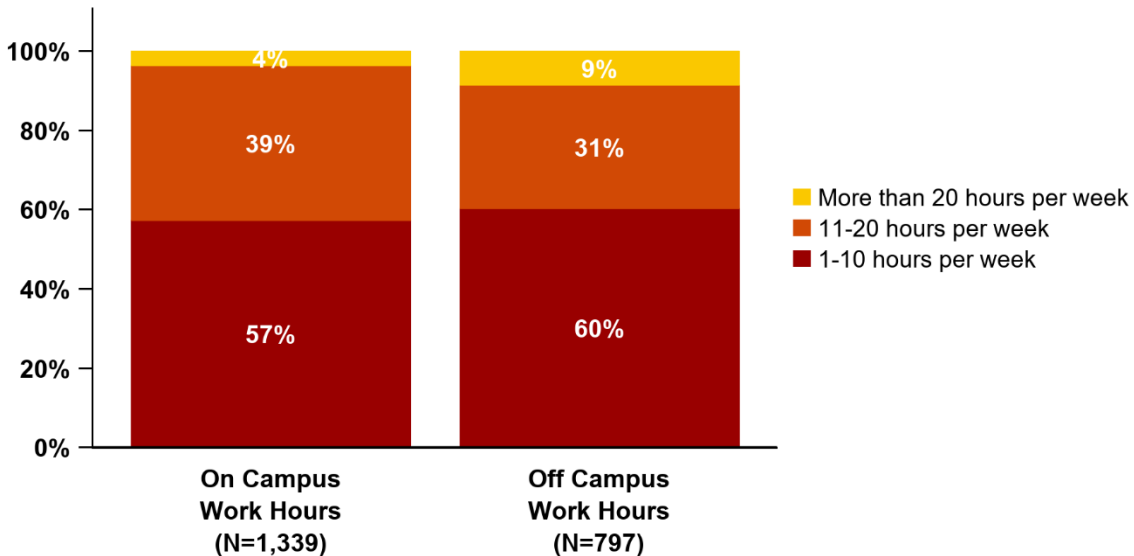
Two-thirds of respondents reported that they would be employed during their first year of college (66%). Of those, half indicated they would be employed only on campus (53%) while about one-fourth said they would either be employed only off campus (21%) or both on and off campus (26%).

Figure 7: Employment Status and Work Location during First Year at NC State



About three-in-five students planning on working during their first year at NC State said they would be working 10 hours or less per week (57% of those working on campus, and 60% of those working off campus). Approximately one-in-ten of those working off campus said they would be working 20 or more hours per week at their off-campus job (9%).

Figure 8 - On Campus vs Off Campus Work Hours (Among Employed Respondents)



The relatively few students who reported that they will be working both on campus and off campus during their first year at NC State reported that they will work a relatively smaller number of hours at each location. Nearly half of these respondents said that they will be working 1-10 hours at both their on campus and off campus jobs (45.5%), while about one-in-five said they would work 11-20 hours at each of their on and off campus jobs (17.6%). A small percentage of respondents said they would work

more than 20 hours at their on campus and their off campus jobs during their first year at NC State (2.5%).

Table 19 - Students Employed both On and Off Campus (N=237)

On-campus work hours	Off-campus work hours			Total
	1-10 hours per week	11-20 hours per week	More than 20 hours per week	
1-10 hours per week	45.5%	6.9%	1.1%	53.5%
11-20 hours per week	19.5%	17.6%	3.9%	41.0%
More than 20 hours per week	0.9%	2.1%	2.5%	5.5%
Total	65.9%	26.5%	7.6%	100.0%

Satisfaction with NC State Services

Satisfaction with NC State Financial Aid Process (Table 20)

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 more than three-fourths of respondents saying that they were either “very satisfied” (26.4%) or “moderately satisfied” (55.5%) with the financial aid process.

Table 20 - Satisfaction with NC State Financial Aid Process (excluding those who responded "Not Applicable")

	%	N
Very satisfied	26.4%	673
Moderately satisfied	55.5%	1,414
Moderately dissatisfied	13.5%	344
Very dissatisfied	4.6%	118
Total	100.0%	2,549

New Student Orientation (Tables 21-24)

Incoming first-year students were provided a series of questions that asked them to rate their experiences with their college/department before and during New Student Orientation (NSO), as well as their experiences in attending Orientation. When asked about their interactions with their college/department prior to attending NSO, well over three quarters said that they either “strongly agree” or “agree” that they were *satisfied with the attention they received prior to Orientation* (86.4%), that they were *provided opportunity to get answers to their academic questions* (85.6%), and that the *information/advice they received prior to Orientation helped them to plan their fall schedule* (84.6%).

Table 21 - Rating of Experiences with College/Department Prior to Attending New Student Orientation

	4: Strongly agree	3: Agree	2: Disagree	1: Strongly disagree	N
Satisfied with attention received from college/dept prior to orientation	27.9%	58.5%	11.1%	2.5%	2,764
Info/advice from college/dept prior to orientation helped me to plan schedule	28.3%	56.3%	12.1%	3.3%	2,767
Communication with college/dept prior to orientation provided opportunity to get answers to academic questions	26.1%	59.5%	12.1%	2.3%	2,694

When asked the same questions about their interaction with their college/department during Orientation, they were even more satisfied, as nearly nine-in-ten students also said they either “strongly agree” or “agree” that they were satisfied with the *attention received from their college/department during Orientation* (92.4%), that the *communication with their college/department during orientation provided opportunity to get answers to academic questions* (90.9%), and that the *information/advice they received from their college/department helped them to plan their fall schedule* (85.5%).

Table 22 - Rating of Experiences with College/Department During New Student Orientation

	4: Strongly agree	3: Agree	2: Disagree	1: Strongly disagree	N
Satisfied with attention received from college/dept during orientation	35.4%	57.0%	6.3%	1.2%	2,813
Communication with college/dept during orientation provided opportunity to get answers to academic questions	32.6%	58.3%	7.3%	1.8%	2,775
Info/advice from college/dept during orientation helped me to plan schedule	32.0%	53.5%	12.0%	2.4%	2,750

Incoming students indicated that New Student Orientation provided them with useful information in adapting to NC State. More than 90% said they “strongly agree” or “agree” that NSO provided useful information about *how to utilize their meal plan* (91.3%) and about *how to prepare for their fall semester* (92.9%). Large majorities also “strongly agree” or “agree” that NSO provided useful information about *how to prepare for move-in weekend* (87.0%), *how campus will communicate in emergencies* (87.5%), and about *the basics of financial aid and the bill payment process* (80.2%).

Table 23 - Agreement with New Student Orientation Providing Useful Information

	4: Strongly agree	3: Agree	2: Disagree	1: Strongly disagree	N
NSO provided useful information about: How to utilize my meal plan when I get to campus	33.9%	57.4%	7.4%	1.2%	2,782
NSO provided useful information about: How to prepare for the fall semester after attending orientation	30.7%	62.2%	5.9%	1.2%	2,801
NSO provided useful information about: How campus will communicate during emergencies	30.0%	57.5%	10.3%	2.3%	2,701
NSO provided useful information about: What students can do to prepare for Move-In weekend	28.1%	58.9%	11.4%	1.6%	2,757
NSO provided useful information about: Basics of the financial aid and bill payment processes	20.8%	59.4%	16.3%	3.5%	2,665

Almost all incoming first-year students “strongly agree” or “agree” that after participating in New Student Orientation they are *excited to start their first semester* at NC State (96.5%), and an overwhelming majority “strongly agree” or “agree” that they *feel better prepared to start their first semester* (94.6%). Majorities of students also “strongly agree” and “agree” that NSO helped them *learn more about NC State history and traditions* (90.7%).

In addition, most incoming first-year students believe that their experiences at Orientation facilitated their connection with others. Nine-in-ten students “strongly agree” or “agree” that as a result of their participation in NSO they *feel more connected to the NC State community* (90.4%). A majority of students “strongly agree” or “agree” that *small groups* (88.4%) and the *overnight stay* (74.0%) during orientation helped them *connect to other new students*. However, while the large majority of NSO attendees “strongly agree” or “agree” that *orientation was a good use of their time* (82.6%), almost one-in-five incoming students “disagree” (13.2%) or “strongly disagree” (4.2%).

Table 24 – Overall Evaluation of New Student Orientation

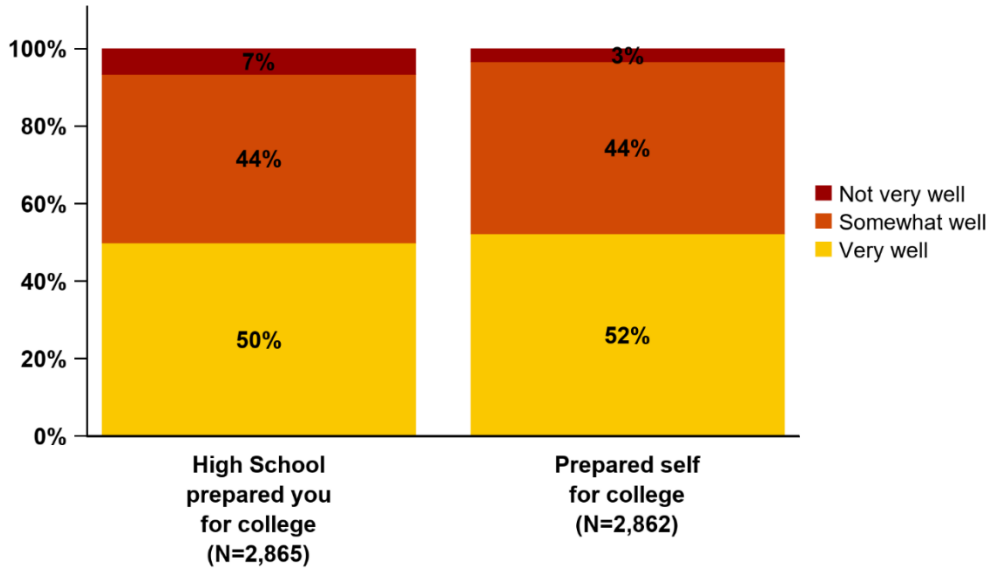
	4: Strongly agree	3: Agree	2: Disagree	1: Strongly disagree	N
I am excited to start my first semester at NC State	53.7%	42.8%	2.7%	0.8%	2,809
I feel better prepared to start my first semester at NC State	39.8%	54.8%	4.9%	0.6%	2,807
I felt my orientation small groups helped me to connect to other new students	41.8%	46.6%	9.3%	2.3%	2,809
I feel more connected to the NC State community	33.5%	56.9%	8.1%	1.5%	2,801
I can better envision what my day-to-day life may be like in my first year	30.7%	59.0%	8.9%	1.4%	2,801
Orientation helped me learn more about NC State history and traditions	26.8%	63.9%	7.6%	1.7%	2,753
I have a greater sense of community with other members of the Class of 2029	29.1%	55.5%	12.7%	2.7%	2,777
I felt the time spent at orientation was a good use of my time	30.2%	52.4%	13.2%	4.2%	2,785
The overnight stay at orientation helped me connect to other new students	28.9%	45.1%	20.8%	5.2%	2,190

Demographic and Family Background Characteristics

College Preparation (Figure 9)

About half of respondents reported that they felt they were “very well” prepared for college by their high school (50%) and by their own efforts (52%).

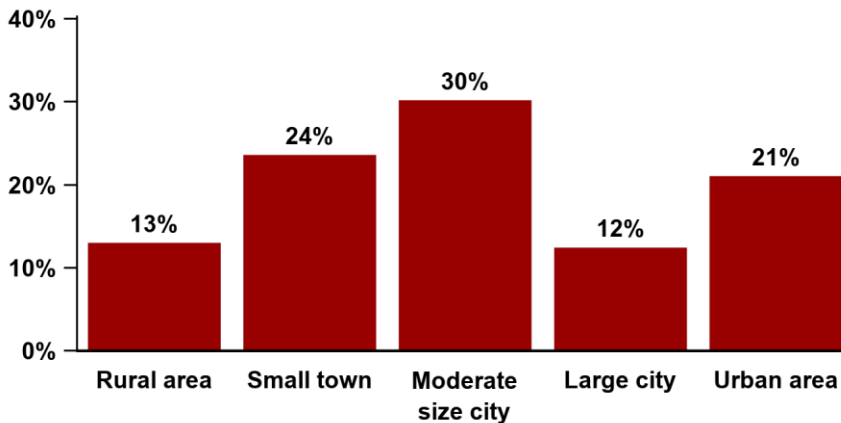
Figure 9 - College Preparation



Hometown Geographic Area (Figure 10)

About four-in-ten incoming first-year students reported that they were from a “rural area” (13%) or a “small town” (24%), while a slightly smaller percentage come from a “large city” (12%) or an “urban area” (21%).

Figure 10: Hometown Geographic Area (N=2,626)



First Generation College Students (Table 25)

Approximately one-in-five respondents are first-generation college students, meaning that no parent or guardian ever attended college (9.2%) or that their parent(s) or guardian(s) attended college, but they did not earn a four-year degree (10.3%).

Table 25 - First Generation College Students

	%	N
First generation college student	10.3%	317
At least one parent some college/no degree	9.2%	283
Not first generation	80.6%	2,485
Total	100.0%	3,085

Financial Resources (Tables 26-27; Figures 11-12)

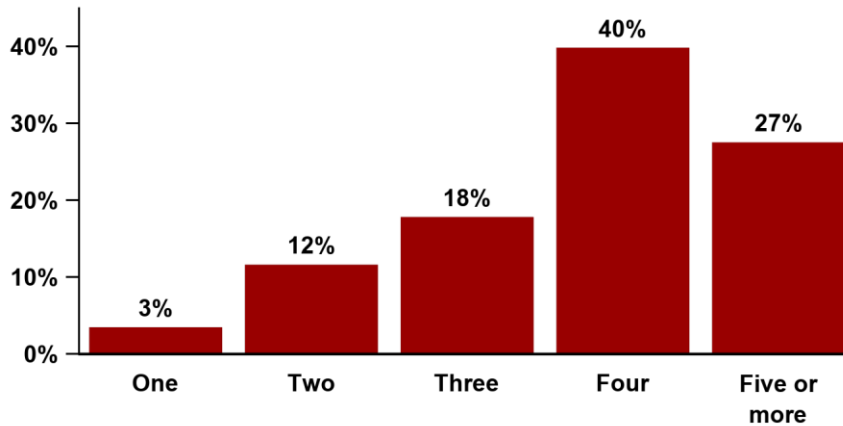
Incoming first-year students were asked a series of questions pertaining to their family’s finances and household demographics. When asked to estimate their parents’ or guardians’ combined 2024 pre-tax income, many of them selected the “don’t know” response option, and one-in-five said they “prefer not to answer” (20%). Among respondents who reported their parents’/guardians’ income, more than three-in-five indicated their family’s combined income was over \$100,000 (68.3%), with close to half reporting it was over \$150,000 (45.2%), and almost a third reporting it was over \$200,000 (31.6%). Just over one-in-ten incoming students reported that their family income was \$50,000 or less (11.7%).

Table 26 - Parents’/Guardians’ Combined Pre-Tax 2024 Income (excluding those who selected either "Don't know" or "Prefer not to Respond")

	%	N
\$30,000 or less	4.7%	62
\$30,001-\$50,000	6.9%	91
\$50,001-\$75,000	8.7%	114
\$75,001-\$100,000	11.4%	149
\$100,001-\$150,000	23.1%	303
\$150,001-\$200,000	13.6%	178
\$200,001-\$250,000	10.4%	136
More than \$250,000	21.3%	279
Total	100.0%	1,312

About two-thirds of respondents indicated that they came from a household with four or more members financially supported by their parents/guardians, including themselves and their parents/guardians (67%). Three percent reported only one person in their household was financially supported by their parents.

Figure 11: Number of People Financially Supported by Parents/Guardians (N=2,421)



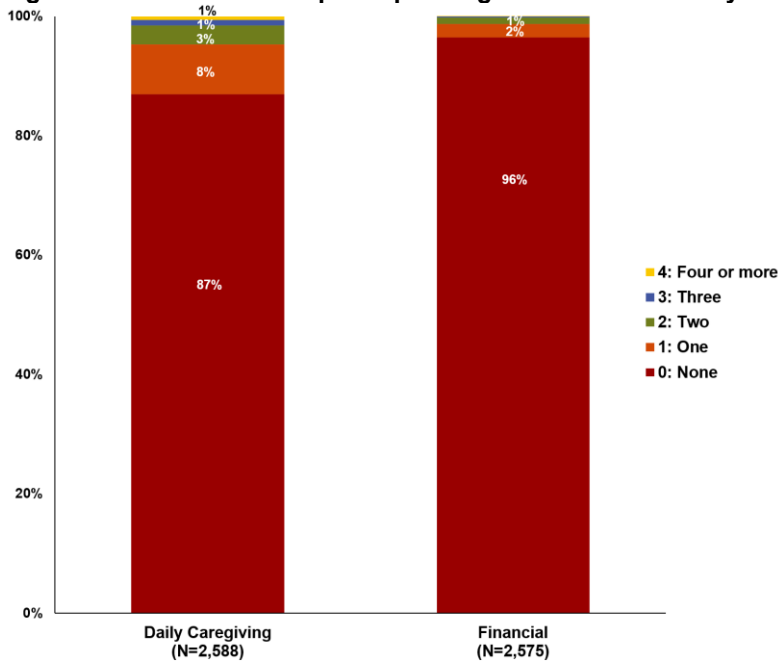
When asked about their parents'/guardians' dependents enrolled in college, two-thirds said they were the *only* dependent in their household currently enrolled (66.7%).

Table 27 - Parents'/Guardians' Dependents Enrolled in College

	%	N
Only myself	66.7%	1,620
Two	29.2%	709
Three or more	4.1%	99
Total	100.0%	2,428

While the majority of respondents do not provide day-to-day caregiving to someone, about one-in-ten first-year students report providing day-to-day caregiving for someone (e.g., children, elders) (13%). Just 4% report that they provide the majority of financial support for someone (e.g., children, elders).

Figure 12 - Number of People Depending on Student for Daily Caregiving and Financial Support



Open-End Comments

The Incoming First-Year Student Survey, administered shortly after students attend New Student Orientation prior to the start of the fall semester, includes two open-ended questions asking students 1) what they are most excited about in coming to NC State and 2) what they are most concerned or nervous about in starting their first semester of college. This document briefly describes the process for coding responses and provides a summary of key findings.

The deidentified comments are first cleaned to drop blank and nonsense responses. Each comment is then read to look for any personally identifiable information (PII), which is redacted before further analysis is conducted.

Next, comments were read again to determine if the pre-existing coding frame, created over the years of administering the survey, needed any revisions. The coding scheme was updated as appropriate, e.g., new categories were added, categories were dropped, categories were combined, “tokens” or “strings” included in each category were cleaned up. Additionally, all comments were run through Gemini (Google’s AI tool) to see what common themes it identified. These recommendations were considered before developing the final coding scheme.

Once edits to the coding scheme were finalized, the SAS code used to read through the comments and automatically code them into the various categories was updated to reflect these changes and run. A single comment could be included in any number of categories. Responses that were not included in any of the pre-identified categories were reviewed and hand coded as appropriate into a category. Finally, frequencies were run to identify how many comments were coded into each of the categories.

A copy of the final coding scheme is provided in Appendix A. Please note that example quotes in the remainder of this report are verbatim, as written by the respondents – they have not in any way been revised, other than the redacting of PII as needed.

What Students Are Excited About (Table 1)

Table 28 outlines the different categorized topics of what excites students the most about starting their first year at NC State. Students were most likely to mention being excited about things related to *community and belonging* (58.6%), *campus life and activities* (27.0%), and *adapting to college* (25.1%). Descriptions and example quotes for these categories can be found below Table 29.

Table 28: What Students are Excited About (N comments = 2,009)

	N	%
Community and belonging	1,177	58.6%
Campus life and activities	542	27.0%
Adapting to college	505	25.1%
Coursework and instruction	484	24.1%
Career planning	303	15.1%
Housing	65	3.2%
Academic performance and goals	39	1.9%
Time management	29	1.4%
Registration	27	1.3%
Spirit and pride	23	1.1%
Health	18	0.9%
Transportation	10	0.5%
Finances	6	0.3%
Technology	4	0.2%
Safety	2	0.1%

What Students are Concerned About (Table 29)

Table 29 outlines the different topics into which student comments regarding what they are most concerned about in coming to NC State were categorized. Students were most likely to mention being most concerned about things related to *adapting to college* (39.1%), *coursework and instruction* (25.7%), and *community and belonging* (25.4%). Descriptions and example quotes for these categories can be found below Table 29.

Table 29: What Students are Concerned About (N comments = 1,904)

	N	%
Adapting to college	745	39.1%
Coursework and instruction	490	25.7%
Community and belonging	484	25.4%
Academic performance and goals	442	23.2%
Time management	298	15.7%
Health	189	9.9%
Housing	123	6.5%
Campus life and activities	119	6.3%
Career planning	67	3.5%
Finances	64	3.4%
Registration	63	3.3%
Safety	36	1.9%
Transportation	35	1.8%
Technology	16	0.8%
Spirit and pride	3	0.2%

Community and belonging

The topic *community and belonging* includes responses that discuss how students think they will connect and fit in with others on campus. Some examples of words that would be picked up and identified as being in this category include “community,” “sense of belonging,” “friend,” “social,” “meeting,” and “new people.”

In responding to what they are most excited about in starting their first semester at NC State, more than half the incoming first-year students expressed excitement about connecting with others. They look forward to finding lifelong friends who share their values and interests, as well as meeting those from different backgrounds. Examples of such comments include:

- *“I am excited to meet new people and make new connections with people who have the same interests as me”*
- *“I’m excited to be in a new place where I don’t know a lot of people and be able to make friendships/connections with people whose backgrounds are different from mine.”*
- *“I’m excited to meet new people as I participate in fun activities, such as football games. I am eager to find my community that will support me in everything I do.”*

While most students express excitement about opportunities for *community and belonging* in starting their first year at NC State, in responding to their biggest concerns in starting their first year, about one-fourth describe worries related to finding their people. They mention concerns such as the quality of their social skills, their ability to make friends, and how they will fit in. Examples of such comments include:

- *“If I’ll be able to meet people I can talk to. My social skills haven’t developed as much as I think others have and I may have trouble introducing myself.”*
- *“Nervous about not only making connections with other students but also keeping them. Especially since I’m a freshman in junior level classes.”*
- *“I am most concerned about finding a community at NCSU of those with similar aspirations and interests.”*

Campus life and activities

Responses where students describe how they want to get involved on campus are included in the topic *campus life and activities*. Broad terms such as “event,” “activity,” “club,” “organization,” and “athletics” are included in this category, as well as more specific activities like “yoga,” “band,” “Greek life,” and “soccer.”

More than one-fourth of students mentioned something related to *campus life and activities* when expressing what they were most excited about in coming to NC State. These students mention being excited to get involved with activities at NC State that meet their interests, such as going to sporting events, participating in rush for a sorority or fraternity, and joining clubs related to their major. Examples of such comments include:

- *“I am most excited about the football and basketball games along with other clubs and organizations that help students find recreational activities.”*
- *“I am most excited to get involved in applying my classroom learning to real engineering projects like in the rocket club.”*
- *“I am excited about getting involved at NC State and joining organizations that allow me to explore my interests. Interests like art, color guard, dance, and writing. I also can’t wait to join affinity groups like SWE and SHPE.”*
- *“I am most excited about all the opportunities to get involved! I heard about being a mental health ambassador and I’d love to get to know more about that along with media and art club!”*

Relatively few students mentioned concerns related to *campus life and activities* when asked what they are most concerned about in starting their first year at NC State.

Adapting to college

The category *adapting to college* includes responses that mention how students think they will adapt to being a college student at NC State. Responses that mention things like “moving away from home,” “adjusting,” “transitioning,” “unfamiliarity,” and “independence” are among the many key words that were flagged for inclusion in this category.

In thinking about what they were most excited about, about one-fourth of incoming students mentioned looking forward to *adapting to college* and the upcoming changes in their life. They are excited to be in a new environment, experience new things, and be on their own. Examples of such comments include:

- *“I am excited to be more independent and figure out my own path in life.”*
- *“I am most excited about starting a new experience outside of my comfort zone.”*
- *“I am most excited to experience living on my own for the first time and getting away from the area where I have grown up.”*

However, while some students are excited about the transition to NC State, students were more likely to say *adapting to college* was something they were most concerned about, with about two-fifths expressing concern with adapting to newfound independence. Students are particularly concerned about being far from loved ones and living in an unfamiliar place. Examples of such comments include:

- *“I am most nervous about being away from home. Even though I’m not too far from home, it’ll still be a completely new and different experience.”*
- *“Interested to see how handling such independent lifestyle will go from having my parents in my life constantly.”*

- *“Coming from a rural area, while the idea of an urban environment is intriguing, I also find it a little concerning. I will be involving myself in an entirely different academic and social culture than I have previously experienced, and I fear that I might have some difficulty adjusting, even with the confidence and experience I have gained from opportunities such as orientation.”*

Coursework and instruction

The topic of *coursework and instruction* includes responses that describe how students are feeling about their classes, the rigor of their studies, and their academic program. Terms like “education,” “major,” “elective,” “department,” “course,” and “instruction,” among other similar terms, were flagged for inclusion in this category.

About one-fourth of the students mentioned something about *coursework and instruction* as what they are most excited about in coming to NC State. They talk about receiving a high-quality education and say they are ready to challenge themselves in the classroom and study topics of their own interest. Examples of such comments include:

- *“I’m most excited about my classes as they are in subjects I never had access to before.”*
- *“I am excited about the opportunities I will get with my Art and Design major to learn new media and it’s applications.”*
- *“I’m most excited about getting an education where you learn the materials not just to pass a test, but to use it later in life.”*

Roughly the same number of students express that they are most concerned about *coursework and instruction*. These students are worried about the rigor of course material, how well they will retain information, and whether they have chosen the right course of study. Examples of such comments include:

- *“I am nervous about how difficult classes will be, I’m not too concerned but I will have to get use to studying a lot more than I did at high school.”*
- *“I have heard that many professors fail to explain or break down their teachings in a way that is understandable to students. I have heard that most learning and understanding of subjects is done by students conducting their own research outside of class.”*
- *“I am most concerned about finding out I actually don’t like my major and do not want to do engineering in general at all.”*

Career planning

Responses that described a student’s ideas about planning and preparing for their future career fit are included in the *career planning* category. Comments including words such as “career,” “jobs,” “internships,” “employment,” and “service learning” were among those flagged for inclusion in this category

In response to what they are most excited about, about 15% of incoming students described how excited they are to explore different career paths and prepare for their future career. Many are seeking opportunities to learn about new career paths and apply what they learn in class to the field. Examples of such comments include:

- *“I’m most excited about learning about different careers and opportunities to help me figure out my future career. I am taking a career class and career helpers were so nice!”*
- *“I am excited to make valuable connections both on and off campus for research and internship opportunities”*

- *“I’m excited to learn how to apply learning from my classes into the real world, like taking my business classes and knowledge and turning that into a strong internship opportunity for myself”*

Very few incoming students indicated that anything related to *career planning* was something they were especially concerned about in starting their first semester at NC State.

Academic performance and goals

Responses that mentioned how students think they will do in their academic career and the progress they will make towards their academic goals were included in the topic of *academic performance and goals*. Key words included in this category include, for example, “grades,” “GPA,” “keeping up with assignments,” “failing,” “passing,” and “struggling.”

While very few students mentioned something related to academic performance and goals as something they were most excited about, almost one-fourth of respondents indicated they were concerned about their academic performance and meeting their goals, making the *academic performance and goals* category one of the most common areas of concern for incoming students. These students mentioned concerns with falling behind on their work, doing poorly in classes, and feeling unprepared for college. Examples of students who mentioned concerns with academic performance include:

- *“I am most concerned with what the course load will look like, such as how many assignments and how much studying I have to do regularly. I am nervous about getting behind early on and have to play catch-up.”*
- *“I’m nervous I will put too much on my plate and will fail.”*
- *“I am concerned that my high school might not have completely prepared me for the coursework offered at NC State, and I hope that this won’t cause me to fall behind or receive bad grades.”*

Time management

The category of *time management* includes responses that describe how students are feeling about their ability to manage their time and priorities. Comments that mentioned things like “having time,” “balancing priorities,” “procrastination,” “building good habits,” and “staying on top of deadlines” and other similar terms were flagged for inclusion in this category

Time management was not something students said they were excited about in starting at NC State. However, more than 15% of students indicated that time management was a top concern for them, particularly with managing responsibilities, making time to do things they enjoy, and taking care of their needs. Examples of such comments include:

- *“I am most nervous about time management. Although I feel pretty confident in my ability to dedicate time to academics and extracurriculars, I have struggled in the past to make time for myself and friends. During college I hope to find a better balance between free time and responsibilities.”*
- *“I’m a little nervous about being able to balance all the different things I want to do. This is solely because I am interested in so many different things, and I worry about overwhelming myself.”*
- *“I am a bit nervous about balancing my schedule to fit in extracurricular activities into my academic schedule due to the 1 to 3 credit hour rule. However, I will do my best to prioritize what I can.”*

Health

Responses that mentioned how students are feeling about their health and available health resources were included in the *health* topic. A number of key words are included in this topic, including, e.g., “food,” “exercise,” “sick,” “injury,” “stress,” “anxiety,” “depression,” “impairment,” and “clinic.”

Almost no comments in response to what they are most excited about were related to *health*. However, it was a common topic among the comments about what students are most concerned about in starting their first year at NC State, with about 1 in 10 students expressing concerns related to maintaining their overall health. Incoming students are worried about their stress levels, feeling overwhelmed, eating a nutritious diet, and getting enough exercise. Examples of such comments include:

- *“Mental health, I have struggled with it many times and I’m not sure what will happen throughout my time on campus. Stress might build up, which is something I’m not looking forward to, but I have ways to help myself if needed.”*
- *“I’m worried about getting burned out and overwhelmed.”*
- *“Not keeping track of meals and spacing them out improperly (currently working on gaining healthy weight)”*
- *“Maintaining healthy work life sleep balance”*

For all the verbatim responses for what students are most excited and concerned about their first year at NC State, see [Verbatim Responses: What students are most excited and concerned about in coming to NC State, in their own words.](#)

For more information on the 2025 Incoming First-Year Student Survey, contact:

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Appendix I

Academic performance and goals	perform	grade gpa prepar perform load succe school work amount of work keep up keeping up falling behind fail struggl\bpass\b ² doing well do well doing good do good much work do bad do poor exam test homework paper essay
Adapting to college	adapt	moving away adapt adjust transition lost size huge my way find my finding hometown large get around navigat new environment getting away get away college in general freshm high school big enormous unfamiliar change responsibl small town everything being away where to go family parent leaving home independen own decision freedom on my own mom dad moving out own life
Campus life and activities	campus	event activit involv club organization game sport athlet extracur \bart\b dance theat music honor greek frat soror soccer swim tennis golf ball fitness gym exercis intramur yoga raleigh city atmosphere location recreation society amenit volunteer campus life college life experience college experiencing college band librar student life rush ice cream
Career planning	career	career job intern interview resume placement planning employ p assion rotc co-op coop co op abroad service learning service project research say program teaching fellow wise program opportunity opportunities resource
Community and belonging	community	friend out-of-state companion social new people lone network meeting shy fit in fitting in outsider connect communicat sense of belong discover who I am introvert reserved socializ peer communit
Finances	finance	money budget bills pay tuition fees free ride financ expens loan scholarship afford cost grant work study price debt
Health	health	depress overwhelm food \beat\b weight fifteen health pharm doctor nurse infirm clinic sick stress \bill\b counsel anxiety anxious energy drain burn covid coronavirus virus vaccin pandemic testing positive cluster recover impair disab medicat diet diabet autis inj ur

² /b is a SAS word boundary used to identify where a word should begin or end. In using this word boundary, we can distinguish when a series of letters should be surrounded by only non-word characters. For example, \blab\b flags responses that have “lab” surrounded by non-word characters, excluding responses that have “collaborate” or “available” because while they have the word “lab,” the word is surrounded by word characters.

Housing	housing	moving in village sharing a room hous dorm residen roommate roomate apartment living on campus living with live with living alone living by myself room mate rooming bathroom shower living situation
Coursework and instruction	educat	education college of field department matriculate knowledge elective major academic program engineering science course start class take class subject \bstem\b chem math physics calc ch 101 stats statistics \blab\b new material studio remote virtual zoom online synch teacher professor instruct faculty lecturer rigor difficult hard challeng my classes taking class
Registration	registr	registra schedul tracs \bbsis\b getting the class getting into waitlist wait list register
Safety	safety	assault rape safe attack crime harass theft secur light dark \bnight\b phone victim danger gun discriminat bully shoot \bhate\b racis homophob
Spirit and pride	spirit	spirit tradition pride proud legacy go pack reputa rank wolfpack wolf pack dream school prestige
Technology	tech	Moodle eduroam laptop technolog computer ipad
Time management	time	manage study habit enough time have the time balanc lazy time wisely procrast distract deadline staying on top organize good habit routine juggl
Transportation	transport	wolfline wolf line park my parking deck dan allen \bbus\b traffic transp walk drive permit driving \bcar\b