

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

2020 Incoming Transfer Student Survey Executive Summary

Introduction

NC State conducted its annual survey of incoming transfer students during the summer of 2020. Typically, students are invited to participate in the survey after attending New Student Orientation. However, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, New Student Orientation was held virtually. Students were e-mailed an invitation to participate in the survey on August 5, after all virtual Orientation sessions concluded. The first day of classes was August 10, but due to the increasing number of COVID-19 positive cases among undergraduate students, all undergraduate classes were switched to online delivery on August 24. On August 31, the decision was made to have most students begin moving off campus. The survey closed on September 4, meaning that while some students completed the survey just prior to or shortly after arriving on campus, others completed it either after all classes moved online, or, for a relatively few, after they had left campus.

The online survey achieved a 47.8 percent response rate, with 691 of the 1,446 incoming transfer students eligible to have their responses recorded and included in final analyses submitting the survey. Forty-four percent of respondents took the survey on a mobile phone (44.0%).

Due to their higher response rates, women are slightly overrepresented among survey respondents. In addition, students from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the College of Sciences are slightly overrepresented when analyzing results by college. The racial/ethnic breakdown of respondents generally mirrors that of the enrolled transfer student population at the time of the University's Census.

Experiences Prior to Enrolling at NC State

Over 70 percent of incoming transfer students reported that they attended one institution before enrolling at NC State (71.8%), while 20 percent attended two (20.7%), and eight percent attended three or more (7.5%).

About 90 percent said NC State was their top choice university to transfer to, with 43 percent of all respondents saying that NC State was their "only choice" (42.5%) and 47 percent saying NC State was their "first choice" (47.1%).

A plurality of respondents rated "academic reputation" (26.7%) as being the *single most influential factor in deciding to attend NC State*, followed by "availability of program" (21.1%), and "location" (13.7%). "Future career opportunities" (9.5%), "level of support for my intended major" (7.7%) and "cost" (5.5%) were also rated as the *single most influential factor in deciding to attend NC State* by between five and ten percent of incoming transfer students. They were most likely to say that *availability of program* (89.8%), *academic reputation* (88.3%), and *future career opportunities* (87.0%) had a "very strong" or "strong influence" on their decision to attend NC State. *Participation in an Engineering 2+2 program, communications from NC State, excluding from the Admissions Office, and attendance at a College Fair or high school visit* were the factors least likely to be influential in incoming transfer students' decisions to attend NC State, as these factors had the highest reported rates of having either a "weak" or "very weak influence" (53.9%, 46.5%, and 44.9%, respectively).

Nearly 95 percent of incoming transfer students said they were either “very” (53.0%) or “moderately satisfied” (39.3%) with the NC State admissions process. About 40 percent of respondents said they received some *communication from outside the Admissions Office* (39.3%) after applying for admission; fewer students reported that they had received a phone call from *an NC State faculty or staff member* (12.2%), *a current NC State student* (6.6%), or *a graduate of NC State* (2.3%).

Goals

Similar numbers of respondents said that their primary goal/objective for attending NC State was to obtain a “bachelor’s degree for graduate school preparation” (46.9%) or to obtain a “bachelor’s degree in preparation for a career” (45.1%).

Incoming transfer students overwhelmingly said that they intended to complete their bachelor’s degree in three years or less (84.3%). Over 60 percent reported that they intend to earn a degree beyond a bachelor’s degree (62.6%), with one-fourth of all respondents reporting they plan to pursue a doctoral or professional degree (26.0%).

More than nine-in-ten incoming transfer students reported that they were either “very certain” (56.5%) or “certain” (36.2%) in their choice of college major; however, levels of certainty varied by college. Those entering in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (11.9%) and the relatively few students in the College of Natural Resources (12.5%) and the College of Education (10.6%) were slightly more likely than those from other colleges to be uncertain in their choice of college major.

About 55 percent of incoming transfer students reported it was at least “maybe” a possibility that they would participate in a Study Abroad program while an undergraduate student at NC State (55.6%). However, 30 percent said they would “probably not” participate in a Study Abroad program (29.7%), and another fifteen percent said they would “definitely not” (14.8%).

While two-in-ten incoming transfer students said that after graduation they will be seeking work “in North Carolina” only (21.3%), four-in-ten said they would seek work “anywhere in the USA” (41.1%). The remaining respondents reported that they would seek work “anywhere – location is not important” (36.3%) or “outside the USA only” (1.3%).

General Education, Personal Development, and World View Goals

Incoming transfer 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 34 of the 49 goals asked about, while at least half of respondents rated all but one of the goals asked about as being “very important.” However, goals that ranked relatively high in importance tended to also be ranked relatively high in respondents’ perceived current level of development. Notable exceptions include *time management*, which despite having the third lowest average rating in terms of current level of development, had the second highest average rating of importance. Other goals that rated significantly higher in importance than development include *ability to manage ongoing stressors* and *recovering from emotional setbacks*. Some goals, such as *appreciating differences in sexual orientation*; *believing more time and effort will lead to increased learning*; and *recognizing and acting on ethical principles* were rated as less important than others, but incoming transfer students felt they were relatively prepared in these areas compared to others.

General Education Goals

At least three-fourths of respondents said that 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 that their current level of development was “excellent” for *listening attentively* (47.9%), *ability to plan and carry out projects independently* (47.6%), and *using technologies appropriate to my discipline* (44.2%). Conversely, *speaking effectively* (35.4%), *the capacity to engage with/respond to artistic works and evaluate their significance* (32.0%), and *using mathematical skills* (28.0%) were most likely to be rated as either “fair” or “poor” by incoming transfer students.

Over 90 percent rated 18 of the 22 general education goals as being “very” or “moderately important” to themselves. They were most likely to rate *listening attentively* (85.5%), *comprehending written and oral information* (83.5%), and *ability to plan and carry out projects independently* (80.3%) as being “very important” to them. Respondents were most likely rate *the consider capacity to engage with/respond to artistic works and evaluate their significance* (21.3%), *appreciating the humanities* (14.6%), *applying social science methods to understand human behavior* (11.9%), and *using mathematical skills* (10.7%) as being “slightly” or “not at all important.”

Personal Development Goals

At least two-thirds of respondents gave a rating of “excellent” or “good” to 17 of the 19 personal development goals asked about. They were most likely to say that their current level of development was “excellent” for *taking responsibility for my own behavior* (59.0%), *valuing learning as a lifelong process* (55.4%), and *believing more time and effort will lead to increased learning* (53.9%). Conversely, at least one-third of respondents gave a rating of “fair” or “poor” to their development of *being involved in public and community affairs* (37.0%), *time management* (33.5%), and *ability to manage ongoing stressors* (33.3%).

Over 95 percent of incoming transfer students rated all but one of the 19 personal development goals asked about as being “very” or “moderately important” to them. In particular, a large majority said that *taking responsibility for my own behavior* (88.3%), *time management* (87.5%), *experiencing personal growth* (84.4%), *ability to manage ongoing stressors* (84.4%), *seeing projects through to completion* (83.1%), and *ability to set and accomplish goals* (82.9%) were “very important” to them. The only item which more than five percent of respondents indicated as being “slightly” or “not at all important” was *being involved in public and community affairs* (8.2%).

World View Goals

At least 80 percent of respondents said their current level of development was either “excellent” or “good” on each of the eight world view goals asked about. Incoming transfer students were most likely to say that their current level of development was “excellent” for *ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds* (62.3%), *understanding and respecting diverse cultures, values, and perspectives* (50.5%), and *appreciating differences in sexual orientation* (50.5%). Respondents were most likely to rate their current level of development as either “fair” or “poor” for *understanding issues and problems facing the world* (16.2%) and *sensitivity to issues associated with gender equity* (12.7%).

Over 90 percent of respondents rated all eight of the world view goals as “very” or “moderately important” to them, with over 95 percent giving these ratings to seven. A rating of “very important” was most likely to be given to *ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds* (85.9%), *understanding and respecting diverse cultures, values, and perspectives* (80.5%), *understanding issues and problems facing the world* (79.7%), and *sensitivity to issues associated with racial equity* (78.7%). The only item which more than five percent of respondents said was “slightly” (5.8%) or “not at all important” (2.1%) to them was *appreciating differences in sexual orientation*.

Finances and Paying for College

Twenty percent of incoming transfer students reported that “\$10,000 or more” of their educational expenses for their first year at NC State would come from *family resources* (19.5%). About 30 percent reported that they would be receiving at least \$6,000 in *aid that does not need to be repaid* (30.3%). Nearly half will be using *aid that must be repaid* to pay for their education expenses (46.5%), with eight percent having “\$10,000 or more” in such loans (8.0%). While nearly 80 percent of incoming transfer students reported using their own resources to help pay for their first year at NC State (78.3%), most are contributing relatively smaller amounts. About seven percent said they will be personally responsible for either “\$6,000-\$9,000” (3.3%) or “\$10,000 or more” (4.0%) of their expenses for their first year at NC State, while over one-third reported they will be contributing “less than \$1,000 (35.7%).

Over 80 percent of those from families with incomes of \$150,000 or below were using at least some of their own money to cover their expenses for their first year at NC State, compared to about 60 percent of those from families with annual incomes over \$200,000 (59.4%). Just over 15 percent of those from families with a combined income of over \$200,000 reported using financial aid that must be repaid (16.1%), while almost half of students whose family’s income was \$150,001-\$200,000 reported using such aid (45.9%). Students from families earning between \$50,000 and \$150,000 reported having the largest amount of debt for their first year at NC State, with almost one-fourth from each group having \$6,000 or more in *aid that must be repaid*.

When asked to identify what types of financial aid they had received, a majority of incoming transfer students said they were receiving grants and scholarships (54.3%), while 41 percent said that they received loans to help pay for their education costs for their first year at NC State (40.9%). Fewer students reported they were receiving some other type of financial aid (8.5%). Three-fourths reported that they had submitted the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (75.2%).

Over two-thirds of incoming transfer students reported that they would be employed during their first year at NC State (67.6%). Employed respondents were overwhelmingly likely to say they would be working only off campus (71.5%). Just 12 percent of those who reported they would be working said they would only be working on campus (11.9%), with another 17 percent working both on and off campus (16.5%). Students working off campus were more than twice as likely as those working on campus to say they would be working more than 20 hours per week (34.4% vs 15.2%, respectively). Half of students working on campus reported that they would be working just 1-10 hours per week (50.5%). Nearly one-fourth with jobs both on and off campus said they will be working 1-10 hours at each (23.0%), while 15 percent said they would work 11-20 hours at each job (14.8%). Just over 10 percent said they would work more than 20 hours at each of their on campus and off campus jobs during their first year at NC State (11.5%).

Eight-in-ten incoming transfer students from families with incomes of \$50,000 or less reported that they will be working during their first year at NC State (79.5%), compared to just under six-in-ten from families with a combined income of \$50,001-\$100,000 (58.1%) or over \$200,000 (59.4%).

Satisfaction with NC State Services

When asked to evaluate the NC State Admissions website, 86 percent of respondents gave a rating of “excellent” (34.4%) or “good” (51.6%), and when asked to evaluate the NC State Academic Advising Services website, over 80 percent gave a rating of “excellent” (35.1%) or “good” (46.7%).

Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the NC State financial aid process. Overall, incoming transfer students were satisfied, with 88 percent evenly split in reporting that they were either “very” (44.0%) or “moderately satisfied” (44.0%) with the financial aid process.

New Student Orientation

Incoming transfer students were more likely to “strongly agree” that the information/advice they received from their college/department prior to Orientation as opposed to during Orientation helped them to plan their fall course schedules (42.1% vs 31.5%, respectively). They were also more likely to “strongly agree” that they were satisfied with the attention they received from their college/department prior to Orientation as opposed to during Orientation (42.1% vs 36.3%, respectively).

Over 90 percent agreed that New Student Orientation provided useful information about a number of different policies, practices, and resources. They were most likely to “strongly agree” that they got useful information about *the prohibition of sexual violence, relationship violence, and stalking at NC State* (60.8%), *the resources available to me if I need help preventing or reporting sexual violence* (57.8%), and *the tactics I can use to be an active bystander to prevent or disrupt violence* (57.6%).

Nearly all incoming transfer students agreed that Orientation had achieved the program’s goals of helping prepare students to be successful at NC State, with over 90 percent of respondents saying they “strongly agree” or “agree” to all but one item 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* (56.9%).

Demographic and Family Background Characteristics

Over two-thirds of respondents reported that they were “very well” prepared for further study by their last institution (66.8%). While well over half of incoming transfer students said they felt “very well” prepared for college by their own efforts (56.3%), less than one-third said that they were “very well” prepared for college by their high school (30.3%); one-fourth said they were “not very well” prepared for college by their high school (24.1%).

Over 40 percent of incoming transfer students reported that they would be enrolled in fewer than 15 credit hours during their first semester at NC State (38.1% taking 12-14 credit hours, and 4.9% taking fewer than 12 credit hours). The most common reasons for incoming transfer students reported being enrolled in fewer than 15 credit hours included *want to make better grades* (54.9%) *need to work* (34.9%), *combination of credit hours would have been too much with another big course* (32.8%), and *courses not available* (25.1%).

When asked to indicate the type of geographic area they came to NC State from, forty-five percent of incoming transfer students reported that they were from a “rural area” (18.8%) or a “small town” (26.2%), while one-fourth came from a “large city” (11.6%) or an “urban area” (14.8%).

Three-fourths of incoming transfer students had at least one of their parents/guardians earn a college degree (74.6%).

Over 60 percent reported that their family’s 2019 combined pre-tax income was \$100,000 or less (61.8%), with one-third of all respondents reporting it was \$50,000 or less (32.4%). About one-in-ten incoming transfer students came from a family with a combined income of more than \$200,000 (9.1%).

Nearly half indicated that they came from a household with four or more members financially supported by their parents/guardians, including themselves and their parents/guardians (47.7%). Twelve percent reported that only one person in their household was financially supported (12.4%).

Sixty percent of incoming transfer students said that they were the only dependent in their household currently enrolled in college (60.1%), while one-third said they were one of two dependents in college (33.5%), and nearly seven percent said they were one of three or more (6.5%).

Residence and Internet Connectivity

Well over 80 percent of incoming transfer students reported that they originally intended on living off campus during the Fall 2020 semester (83.5%), with those living off campus relatively split between living in temporary housing (i.e., a rental house or apartment) (44.4%) or at their permanent residence (i.e., the residence of their parents/guardians) (39.1%). Just 17 percent reported that they originally planned to live on campus during the Fall 2020 semester (16.5%).

While 30 percent reported having a “very strong/stable” internet connection at their residence (29.4%), eight percent described it as either “weak/unstable” or “very weak/unstable” (8.5%).

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 learning, social life, campus life, classroom instruction, the intellectual environment on campus, 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 concerned about various aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, classroom instruction, their academic performance, adapting to NC State, and social life.

At the end of the survey, students were asked a separate question about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their preparations for college; however, many students also talked about the COVID-19 pandemic in their responses to what they are most concerned about. They mentioned concerns such as having to move back home after just moving in to NC State and adjusting to a fully remote learning environment for the rest of the semester.

For more information on the 2020 Incoming Transfer Student Survey, contact:

Anthony Sbarra, MPA
Institutional Research Analyst
Institutional Strategy and Analysis
300 Peele Hall
Phone: (919) 515-7520
Email: atsbarra@ncsu.edu
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