

Fall 2022 First Term Survey

Qualitative Analysis Report

June 2, 2023

Overall Summary

Prepared by: DASA Assessment

Background

The First Term Survey is part of the Division of Academic and Student Affairs' efforts to evaluate and improve the services provided to new NC State students. The survey helps us to gain an understanding of students' transition to NC State (both academically and personally), including how they are engaging with the university and their experiences with "Welcome Week" programming. The survey contains a series of open-ended qualitative questions that help us better understand student thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

DASA Assessment reviewed the qualitative data and used coding techniques to organize the major themes of each qualitative question. After all data was coded, codes were reviewed and consolidated into larger themes. This report provides a summary of the major themes by question for first-year and transfer student respondents of the fall 2022 First Term Survey. Below are a few highlights about this project.

Population and Respondent Information

The fall 2022 First Term Survey was sent to all 5,541 new first-year students and 44.4% (N=2,460) completed the survey. For transfer students, all 1,266 were invited to complete the survey and 32.7% responded (N=414). Students had the option to skip qualitative questions. As such, not every student responded to every question.

Analysis

The qualitative data was first exported from Qualtrics and organized into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. From there, the data was then de-identified and uploaded to Google Sheets. Using an inductive approach, DASA Assessment staff and a student worker read through all of the responses and assigned them a general code (i.e., theme) if applicable. After all the data had been read and coded, DASA Assessment staff conducted a final review. At that point, codes were grouped into larger categories for reporting.

Important Limitations

- Nonresponse bias – The students who chose to respond to the qualitative questions may differ from the students who chose not to respond to the qualitative questions.
- Data reduction – The goal of this analysis was to reduce a large amount of data into smaller, more digestible, and subsequently more actionable data points. In reducing the data, you lose some of the student voice (i.e., verbatim quotations).
- Interpretation – In qualitative research methods, researchers are instruments. As such, different qualitative researchers may organize codes and themes in slightly different ways.

Welcome Programming

Student Sense of Community in Wolfpack Welcome Week

Students were asked, “Please describe how the events you attended provided you with an opportunity to form a sense of community with fellow students.” 666 first-year students and 49 transfer students responded to this question. Most students who responded described the ways that they were able to meet new people and build relationships through Wolfpack Welcome Week (WWW).

- **Met new people (overall)** – The majority of students were able to build a sense of community through meeting new people at events, in classes, or around campus.
 - “It [Wolfpack Welcome Week] allowed me to meet other students that I otherwise wouldn’t have been able to. So I was better able to see myself as a part of the NC state community.”
 - “Many events gave me the ability to share my excitement of beginning my journey at NC State with other students. It was easy to meet others in groups and interact with new people.”
 - “Since it was the first week, everyone was eager to swap numbers and names, so I left wolfpack welcome week with 70 ‘friends’ and then 10 of them really stuck, and it gave me a pool of people to pick from to ask to grab lunch, hang out, etc.”
 - “There were many events that I attended during wolfpack welcome week. It was an opportunity for me to get out of my comfort zone and meet new people. I gained a sense of school spirit and embraced the community.”

- **Met new people like me** – Students specified that they met someone or a group who shared similar interests or identities to their own, including being first-year or transfer students. This shows the deeper connections between students and their peers. It is different from “Met new people (overall)” due to the students specifying their personal connections.
 - “As college freshmen, we are all experiencing similar feelings like anxiety because this is a new place for all of us. The events I went to were also events that people like me went to, so it made me feel not alone.”
 - “By seeing lots of different students at these events I was able to meet lots of new people, and better understand the community I was entering into. Everyone was super kind and eager to make friends, so having the opportunity to realize people around me were having similar experiences really helped me to build a sense of community. Additionally, seeing different potential clubs and activities helped me to meet people with similar interests and find a smaller community from there.”

- “The events I attended provided me with an opportunity to form a sense of community with fellow students by talking about shared interests, likes/dislikes, previous experiences, and similar things. This allowed to feel more welcomed into the community as well because I experienced that there are several people like me, that agree with me, or accept me as who I am.”
- “I was able to talk to people who wanted to be a part of the NC State community but NC State was no their starting point for college.” (Transfers)
- **Provided an opportunity to spend time with friends and peers** – An equal number of students whose responses were labeled “Met new people like me” also shared how Wolfpack Welcome Week provided a space to build the relationships with their new friends and peers.
 - “It really helped me get to know my roommates and start building a relationship with them.”
 - “I was able to attend these events with people I had recently met and got to know them better during these events.”
 - “The Student Involvement Fair showcased various groups that I could relate to and feel represented, which allowed me to develop a greater sense of community within State. Events that hosted more general activities, such as Talley Takeover, provided a time to get to know some of the students I have met at State.”

Impactful Experiences in Wolfpack Welcome Week

Students were asked, “What about your Wolfpack Welcome Week experience was most impactful to you and why?” 1082 first-year students and 76 transfer students answered the question. Most students discussed the impact of having opportunities to meet new people and attend fun activities. Transfer students most noted the importance of WWW informing them about NC State and campus.

- **Met new people (general)** – Most students described the importance of meeting new people during WWW.
 - “Simply just meeting new people and having things to do. During the first week I was nervous about meeting new people and finding things to do but welcome week gave me many options”
 - “The most impactful experience was the ability to meet new people and learning about traditions at NC State this meant the most because being alone at a new city is hard and this made the transition a bit easier.”
 - “Meeting new people, because I enjoy having people to go out and do things with and just have fun with. Meeting new people also makes the rest of the school year better, because even if all you do pass each other outside, just seeing someone I know makes me happy.”

- “My most important experience was meeting new people. It made me realize I am far from home but it is nothing to be afraid of and I also built the confidence to live by myself.”
- **Fun Activities** – Students expressed how WWW had great events and activities that they enjoyed. The events students reported most were Packapalooza, Convocation, RecFest, Midnight Howl and Run, Talley Takeover, Back-2-School Jam, and tabling events.
 - “To me it was the smaller activities that we did in our residence halls and villages, if you were in one. I also thought that the events were great ways to have fun and make connections with others.”
 - “The most impactful part of Wolfpack Welcome Week was seeing how NC State has such a great community, especially for being such a big school. I was able to go and do tons of fun events and it overall made my transition to college a lot easier than I thought it would be.”
 - “Simply seeing the effort put in by students, vendors, and faculty to make these events happen made me feel more at home here, and it also provided a very fun experience.”
 - “Packapalooza was again the most impactful to me because it was such a fun event, I learned a lot, and it was my first "I'm a real college student now" moment. I also just loved how much was going on. There was always something to do and I didn't once have a moment where I was sitting home alone bored. It made transitioning into college a lot easier and way more fun.”
- **Learning about NC State/Campus** – Students shared the value of being shown aspects of campus, exposure to NC State culture, and the resources available to navigate campus in Wolfpack Welcome Week. Transfer students most commonly reported learning more about NC State as the most impactful benefit of WWW.
 - “Wolfpack welcome week was a good way to integrate with the campus and learn more about the physical locations of buildings, as well as programs I might have been interested in.”
 - “Just getting to meet people and getting used to the campus. This helped just make the transition a little easier.”
 - “Just the ability to be able to get my bearings around campus, with events and locations, and just how day-to-day life goes on. It's very nice to get to know these things early, because it makes the rest of adjusting that much easier.”

- **Opportunities to engage with others** – Student survey respondents shared how they appreciate the opportunity to connect with others through Wolfpack Welcome Week.
 - “Opportunities to do things with friends and just have fun. I never thought that I would go running at midnight just for the fun of it, but I decided to go for it and got my friends to join me. We had so much fun!!”
 - “Me being able to spend time with my suitemates and bond for the first time.”
 - “The experience with my new friends and roommates. It allowed me to get to know my roommates outside of just our dorm and got us out of our shells when getting to know each other.”
 - “I think just getting a chance to go out with new people and bond over the WWW activities was really nice.”

Missing from Wolfpack Welcome Week

Students were asked, “Based upon your Wolfpack Welcome Week participation, what was missing from your Wolfpack Welcome Week experience?” 1037 first-year students and 88 transfer students responded to this question. Most of the comments were about their preference for more events around specific interests and groups. Students reported preferring more information on the time, place, and description of the events. Students also discussed how they wished for events to be smaller and their struggles attending Wolfpack Welcome Week due to scheduling.

- **More events around specific interests or groups** – The most frequent responses to this question were about wanting more events around the specific student interests or identities. This includes more events with students’ college/major or residence hall/floor. Students most frequently talked about their identities as commuters, transfer students, out of state students, international students, or their cultural identities.
 - “Looking back, I wish there was more activities spread out around campus. Being a student that goes to Centennial every other day, it would’ve been cool to see some events happening over there.”
 - “The only thing I wish that was in welcome week was events that’s were based off your major. I think it would have been cool to meet and talk to people that are doing the same major or have already started.”
 - “I think a more pronounced event for students of certain marginalized communities such as GLBT was missing (or I didn't have knowledge about it).”
 - “I would have liked to do more events with the people on my dorm floor. I feel like I missed the opportunity to get to know them because most of the activities were focused on getting involved elsewhere.”

- **More information about time or place of the events** – The second most frequent response requested WWW event details to be more accessible for new students through social media or other sources.
 - “The only thing I’d say was missing was better announcements on what was happening when. I had the guides app and still only heard about some events through other people, so for those less willing to be spontaneous, it may have been nice to have a little more information about what each event was.”
 - “It was definitely overwhelming the amount of activities happening on campus, and some activities on the Campus Guides app didn’t really have a good description of what was happening some events I remember going to were really hit or miss.”
 - “Many events overlapped each other and it was extremely difficult to get to all the ones I was interested in. Also, not all the events/clubs were listed on the guides app.”
 - “It would have been nice if the google calendar that had all of the Wolfpack Welcome Week events on it was a bit less hidden. A direct link, attached to the NC State New Student Programs emails, would have been nice. Other than that, Wolfpack Welcome Week was a lot of fun.”

- **Smaller groups or events** – Students also reported that events were too large and requested that events become smaller or provide more small group interactions during WWW.
 - “[...] The only big thing was that most of the events were very large events, and very crowded, so it was kind of difficult for conversations to initiate. [...] when going to an event the size of many of the welcome week ones, you go with your friends, rather than necessarily to make them. If you don’t already have a group, that makes it a little difficult.”
 - “I wish you could have a form that people that don’t know anyone could fill out and be put in a ‘group.’ Just like 3 or 4 people randomly assigned or even grouped by majors that you could voluntarily sign up to do and be assigned people to go hang out with. So people that don’t know anyone or have a group have some initial groups of people they can lean on.”
 - “I think that perhaps something that was missing at least for me would be actually interacting more closely with smaller groups of people. I understand that this would be very difficult to provide at such a large scale, and I may have missed some due to being busy during that week, but I haven’t really interacted much with any of the people I met because I didn’t really get to know anyone in particular. Also, perhaps some more calm events could be nice especially for people like myself for whom large crowds and loud music can be overwhelming, and to help relieve some stress before the start of the school year, such as perhaps a picnic ideally without music that is too loud to allow for normal conversation?”

- **Scheduling conflicts** – Another popular response was about not having time to attend events due to the overlap with classes and move-in. Some students who made these comments suggested scheduling changes or including more events to give additional attendance options. Students often missed events due to scheduling of classes, practice for band/sports, move-in, and other Wolfpack Welcome Week events.
 - “I didn’t realize that I would be missing out on many of these events unless I moved into my dorm earlier.”
 - “I was busy with practice and classes. I was unable to attend a lot of Wolfpack Welcome Week activities. because of that I didn’t feel like I gained much from wolfpack welcome week.”
 - “It would’ve been nice if they had WWW the week before classes started because it was overwhelming having WWW and starting classes. I also missed some events I wanted to go to because I had classes.”

Common Experience

First-year students were asked, “During what specific class, course assignment, activity, or event did you discuss CliftonStrengths for Students?” 1022 students responded to this question and provided the following responses:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1887 Scholars events & coaching meetings • ACC 210 • Advising meetings and communication with advisor • AEE 101 & 103 • African Student Union • ALS 103, 110, & 303 • ARE 201 & 290 • BCH 103 • BIO 181 • Biochemistry Club • Career Development Center Appointments • CH 101 • Chancellor's Leadership Development Program & 2022 Fall Retreat • Club & Information Fairs • COM 110 & 112 • COS 100 & 110 • CSSC 290 • E 101, 102 • EC 201 • EcoVillage Mentors and Directors • ED 100 • EI 201 • ENG 101 & 332 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENV 100 & 101 • EYE Extravaganza • Exploratory Studies Courses • Meetings with Faculty & Staff • Future Farmers of America • Freshman Seminars • General Education Program Courses • GLBT Symposium • GSP 250 • HESF 101 • HI 254 • HON 202 • HSS 120 • Impact Leadership Village • LSC 101 & 103 • M 100 • MA 131, 141, 241, & 242 • MIE 201 • Orientation • Orientation courses • Pack Bridge • Pack Promise Program, and coaching meetings • Park Scholars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSY 230 & 376 • PRT 150 • PSE 295 • SLC 101, 102, & 250 • Student Leadership and Development Program • SLE Events • Summer Start • Summer Athletic Meetings • T 101 • Transformational Scholars • TRIO application, events, tutoring, and mentoring programs • TT 105 • University Honors Program & Events • USC 100, 101, 103, 110, 116, & 202 • Wolfpack Welcome Week • Women in Science and Engineering Village • Zoology Club
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Campus Experiences

Developing Friendships

If students reported that they made friends during their time at NC State, they were asked “What is the primary way you have made friends with other students?” 146 first-year students and 35 transfer students responded to this question. Most students found their friends through connections that they had already made or events the university facilitated.

- **Through other friends** – Students met friends through connections and pre-existing relationships. Most respondents met their friend groups through their prior friends or initial friends on campus.
- **College event** – Students commented that they made friends through events including convocation, orientation, Wolfpack Welcome Week, or NC State summer programs.

Sources of Stress

Student Struggles

Students were asked, “What have been your biggest struggles at NC State so far?” 1193 first-year students and 241 transfer students responded to this question. Most students responded with comments about struggling with making friends, time management, managing the workload, and classes in general.

- **Making friends** – This was the most popular response for first year and transfer students as they commented about how they had difficulty building strong relationships. Respondents described the connections that students already had on campus and struggling to find other people who hadn't yet made friends.
 - “Making friends. I really just can't do it. I couldn't before, but that was fine because I had my best friend, and I always went home at the end of the day. Here, however, it's more challenging, owing to not having the family support. Truthfully, I kind of thought coming in that other students would be as unfamiliar with their environment as me. However, this does not seem to be the case; as mentioned before, everyone (else) has their group, or at least seems to. It was a little bit of a disappointing realization...”
 - “I would have to say my biggest struggle has been making friends on campus. I feel like this is mostly due to the fact that I commute to campus and I'm not able to stick around for the events that occur later in the day.”
 - “I guess how to navigate being on campus with people I don't know or to not have a friend group. I made friends but only 2/3 and it gets lonely sometimes being on campus all day and being by myself majority of time.”

- **Time management** – This was the second most popular response with first-year students. They discuss the challenges of staying on top of their tasks and keeping to a schedule.
 - “It feels like I have a number of things I want to do all the time and it always feels like I never get enough things done in a day or I waste too much of my time on one assignment.”
 - “Trying to find time for everything that I want to do socially, professionally, and academically.”

- **Managing the workload** – Students commented on the difficulty of meeting due dates, handling large amounts of work, or adjusting to a new amount of work. The amount of work could be more or less than they had previously experienced. This was the second most frequently commented topic for transfer students.
 - “Managing work. I am fairly confident that I have good time management skills, but the volumes of work expected of me for this semester was more than I was expecting.”
 - “My biggest struggles at NC State so far is managing class work (I tend to spend more time doing school work than going to events on campus) and making friends. I haven't been able to make a single friend at campus other than my roommate...”
 - “The work load. Not a specific class but all my classes combined create a great amount of work. While I'm used to a bigger work load, it's different when certain classes are hybrid. My pre calc class makes me struggle since it's hybrid and I have to learn how to do certain problems by myself. I retook pre calc since I took it my Junior year and I never struggled this much in high school as I do now.”

- **Classes (general)** – Students shared their difficulties with academics, the workload, and their major. This can include unspecified issues with classes.
 - “My biggest struggle has been my academics.”
 - “Having enough time to be able to get all of my work done along with everything else I need to do. This with the added on the stress of not knowing what major I want to go into yet with class registration approaching quickly.”

Sources of Support

Support needed from faculty and staff

Students were asked, “What support do you think you need from NC State faculty and staff to be successful during your first year at NC State?” 1094 first-year students and 210 transfer students responded to this question with a variety of responses.

- **Tutoring / Academic Success support** – Respondents requested more scheduling availability, individualized options, and class options.
 - “Lots of tutoring if you’re a transfer. There’s a lot of assumed previous knowledge, which is fine, but assuming half of the course material is common knowledge makes the class less worth students time and money.”
 - “Offering more tutoring sessions for higher classes”
 - “Provide more individual tutoring times. I’m currently having some problems with my math class and I wanted to get some tutoring but they were full till right before my next test. Which is not ideal. So definitely more tutoring opportunities.”
 - “More tutoring. When I realized there is no such tutoring for the zoology class I am in it kinda bummed me out since the tutoring I am using for calculus helps a lot.”
 - “Someone to give me an idea of what study methods may work for me, as well as some good note taking skills.”
- **Availability of advisor** – Respondents reported wanting to connect more with their advisors, especially before the academic year had begun. They also would like their advisors to check in on them more through email or scheduled meetings.
 - “I guess more interaction with academic advisors so we can be well prepared and knowledgeable about classes we need to take. A supportive, patient academic advisor is important.”
 - “[...] having an advisor before course enrollment started in June would have been nice instead of doing it blindly. Other than that, I’m pretty self-sufficient and can navigate my first year by myself. If I need help, I’ll ask.”
 - “I think I need more support from my advisor, to try and find what is right for me at NC State and more support from my teachers!”
 - “For there to be set times, I suppose like a check-up, where the academic advisors will meet with us and see how we’re transitioning and working towards our majors”

- **Encouragement/moral support (from advisors, faculty, peers, staff)** – Students shared how they would appreciate more general support and encouragement from their advisors, faculty, peers, and staff.
 - “I think some more insight on how to combat feelings of failure when you don't do well on the first few assignments or exams. A lot of students easily feel defeated once they do poorly academically because they are likely used to doing well in high school like I was. However, I think if professors could help them understand that it's not the end of the world, or that one bad grade doesn't define whether or not they'll succeed in their major, as well as provide tips for how to do better, it would be so very helpful.”
 - “To be successful, I need a positive environment that facilitates growth. In other words, I would appreciate it if NC State faculty and staff to continue being supportive and understanding.”
 - “Just them reaching out and me having reassurance that they are here for me.”
- **Faculty flexibility and understanding** – Respondents want faculty to better understand the many demands on students' schedules and challenges with physical and mental health.
 - “Understanding and empathy, giving students a chance or two during the semester to not be punished in their grades if they are overwhelmed or have something going on.”
 - “There needs to be more emphasis on mental health and the fact that grades aren't everything. Many people have been A students in high school and it needs to be known that this isn't normal in college.”
 - “Better absence policies, such as mental health day allowances. I personally do much better academically when I am allowed to miss certain classes and focus on myself.”

Increasing Inclusivity of Transfer Students' Needs

Students were asked, “How could Wolfpack Welcome Week be more inclusive of transfer students' needs?” 87 transfer students responded to this question. Respondents commented on their desire for more transfer student events, information from NC State, and support in Wolfpack Welcome Week.

- **More events around transfer students** – Students discuss their desire to have more intentional transfer events to connect with other transfer students and to feel more included at NC State.
 - “There was only one transfer event, and it was centered on a panel of people that we heard speak at the transfer orientation over the summer. I was more interested in meeting other transfer students in my college, but there was not a large focus on that. In addition, having something focused more on non-traditional transfer students would have been nice.”
 - “Have more transfer events! I had a class that ended at 5:20 on centennial and the event ended at 6 so even though I booked it I still couldn't make it. Or ask the department when

they have their transfer-specific classes since that was the class I was in. There was a group of 30-40 transfers who had no chance of making it when wanting to.”

- “[...] at times during Welcome Week I couldn't help but feel a bit forgotten and the odd one out being a transfer student. The inclusion of more events that are tailored to transfer students I feel would be great and bringing in other former transfer students from previous years could only help that feeling of not being weird for transferring.”
- **More information/assistance needed** – Respondents requested help finding resources, information on events or campus, and for transfer specific situations.
 - “... we need to know about the apps and the schedule for Welcome Week. I had to learn by word of mouth most of the things I had gone to or find out from overhearing someone in passing. And since we were not freshmen we didn't know about the new student convocation or even the possible free shirts we could have gotten. I had to have an email from NSP saying it was in their office and to stop by during specific times within 3 days of it being sent. Or even a Transfer specific event that is like new student convocation.”
 - “Having a social media presence solely for transfer students / transfer information would be great. I'd like to see more seminars, events, or general information for transfer students, aiding them in adjusting to a new university and even helping to overcome the unique challenges that they face.”
- **More events (general)** – Students ask for more events related to a specific interest or to meet more people like them.
 - “Events where older students may be attracted too. I would have loved to meet more people my age!”
 - “Maybe hold events for transfer students within your specific major”
 - “More events for us! And events not so late in the evening.”
 - “More stuff on Centennial”
 - “Offer events more than once. Not all of us are simply full time students, some of us are full time students, with full time jobs”
 - “Wolfpack Welcome Week could be more inclusive of transfer students' needs by offering a broader variety of events during the first week for students to connect at.”

For More Information

The summary provided in this report, as with any summary of qualitative data, does not fully capture the comments of every survey respondent. To discuss how you can learn more from this qualitative data set, please reach out to DASA Assessment (DASA-Assessment@ncsu.edu). You can also request access to the responses of a particular student population by submitting a [data request](#).