

# **Spring 2022 First Term Survey**

## **Qualitative Analysis Report**

**May 13, 2022**

**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 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 were coded, codes were reviewed and consolidated into larger themes. This report provides a summary of the major themes by question for first-year student respondents of the spring 2022 First Term Survey.

### Population and Respondent Information

The spring 2022 First Term Survey was sent to all 293 new first-year students and 97 completed the survey (33.1% response rate). For transfer students, all 317 were invited to complete the survey and 121 responded (38.2% response rate). Students had the option to skip qualitative questions. As such, not every student responded to every question.

### Analysis

The qualitative data were first exported from Qualtrics and organized into a Microsoft Office spreadsheet. From there, the data were then de-identified and uploaded to Google Sheets. Using an inductive approach, DASA Assessment staff and a student worker read through all 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 (e.g., verbatim quotations).
- Interpretation – In qualitative research methods, researchers are instruments. As such, different qualitative researchers may organize codes and themes in slightly different ways.

## Social Connections

### Sources of Social Connection

Students who indicated that they had connected with others received the follow-up question, “You noted that you have connected with other students during your time thus far at NC State. What is the primary way you have connected with other students?” Quantitative results are available for this question, but for the purposes of this report the write-in “Other” option was analyzed. 5 first-year and 2 transfer students wrote-in their response to this question. The most common response related to making friends with roommates or within residence halls.

## Struggles and Support Needs

### Self-Identified Struggles

Students were asked, “What have been your biggest struggles at NC State so far?” 54 first-year students and 77 transfer students responded to this question.

- **Social Connection** – Common struggles included making friends, connecting with other students, and finding a sense of community.
  - “Meeting people. You should never let any first year students live in a dorm that’s a 20 minute walk from any dining hall and campus that is not hall style. I’m talking about Avent Ferry specifically. It is impossible to meet people because it’s not a hall style dorm where there would naturally be interaction.”
  - “Finding my crowd. I’ve heard from almost everyone that the hardest semester is the first semester because you struggle in almost every aspect of your life as you settle into school. That, combined with the fact that I’m starting in the spring, is somewhat problematic...”
  - “Fighting feelings of loneliness; finding a sense of belonging/feeling considerably alienated.”
- **Academics** – Common struggles included time management, adjusting to academic rigor, classes in general, and managing the workload.
  - “Attending classes consistently + keeping track of online homework assignments”
  - “Managing coursework and free time, getting coursework done in a timely manner”

- “My intro classes are harder and more confusing than the 400 level major classes I am taking in that the organization and grading of the course is unclear and confusing”
- “Getting used to the classes and how they teach different than online classes”
- “Figuring out how to actively study and succeed in my classes”

### Support Needed from NC State

Students were asked, “What support do you think you need from NC State faculty and staff to be successful during your first year?” 46 first-year students and 66 transfer students responded to this question.

- **Support from faculty** – Students described wanting clearer course expectations, check-ins from faculty, empathy and flexibility, along with other general academic support.
  - “Clear communication on deadlines and when to turn work in”
  - “More leniency with due dates + attendance policies”
  - “Check in forms for mental/emotional/academic/etc status”
  - “Tech tutorials, repetition of important deadlines, consistent emails”
  - “I’m fine, as long as my professors understand that this isn’t easy.. it’s fine”
  - “My [class] had a "weekly check-in" google doc every week with simple questions about your week and an option to have the professor respond. More courses should incorporate that to make students feel more comfortable talking to their professors.”
  - “Better networking and personal relationships between students and professors. In only one of my 4 classes has the professor taken time to seem like they care about their students. Not a single other of them has bothered to even learn people's names.”
- **Advising support**
  - “More information about major exploration counseling (the one that is not specific for the department), and guidelines regarding changing majors, and adding/declaring minors.”
  - “Guidance on options available for dropping class, switching to credit only...ect.”
  - “Guidance and advice on creating a time table for my time here at NC State.”
- **Support for getting socially connected**
  - “Maybe a new transfer student mingle to get to know other transfer students and possibly make friends before classes begin. we had a zoom orientation but it was not possible to truly talk to other students. maybe a transfer guide via email could be great too, this guide

could give tips on how to get around campus, resources that we use to cope with change and stress.”

- “A way to find clubs and organizations. Also to meet with other students outside of class”
- “Where to get more involved, I think more group work would help”
- “More events to socialize.”

## 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 staff ([dasa-assessment@ncsu.edu](mailto:dasa-assessment@ncsu.edu)). You can also request access to the responses of a particular student population by submitting a [data request](#).