From the Editors:

For several years researchers in the Division of Student Affairs have surveyed the incoming freshman class at the time of their orientation. This New Student Survey (or NSS) is designed to solicit information about the new students’ educational experiences, their aspirations, their interests, and their expectations. Several items on the NSS are carried over from year to year so that we may build a time-lapse record of trends and changes in UNCG’s freshman class. However, we also reserve a small section of the NSS for single use items requested by Student Affairs departments and can sometimes accommodate items from other university researchers. At present, all NSS data are used only for UNCG-related institutional research purposes and the collection and use of these data are governed by the university’s IRB guidelines.

New to the New Student Survey 2002, or NSS 2002, is our ability to match students’ responses to BANNER database information and other institutional data. Although asking the students to identify themselves may limit our ability to address sensitive topics such as past drug and alcohol use, it does provide us with the unique opportunity to set a foundation upon which we can examine student development from matriculation to graduation and beyond.

In this issue of It’s Been Said... we present a snapshot of the freshman class that entered in the fall of 2002. We will look at their reasons for choosing UNCG, their expectations for their education here, and some of the experiences they bring to our campus. We will be looking not only at the results of the surveys that the students completed, but also some of the attributes they bring to UNCG. In future issues, we will look back and see what has happened to these students since entering the university.

All of the NSS 2002 data are matched with the students’ major as reported prior to or during orientation. We update this information in our NSS database as it becomes available. We invite inquiries from administrators, Deans, and faculty for further breakdowns of these data by College, department, and/or major. Please direct your inquiries to Mark Davenport or Julie Atwood in the Division of Student Affairs Research Office.

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Who are the 2002 freshmen?

The registered freshman class for Fall 2002 consists of 2,098 students; 68% women and 32% men. They are primarily traditional aged students; 95% are between the ages of 18 and 22; and there is racial diversity—72% White, 20% African-American, 3% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 1% American Indian, and 2% Other. They come from Guilford County (17%), Forsyth County (6%), nine other local counties (13%), other N.C. counties (52%), and out of state (11%). Of the entering freshman class, 79% reside in on-campus residence halls, while 21% commute from the surrounding area.

During the 2002 SOAR orientation program, 2,040 participants completed the NSS 2002. Of those, 1,910 eventually matriculated. The information that we present to you in the following pages represents information from 92% of the current freshman class.

Why are they here?

When asked why they are coming to college, about 80% of the fall freshmen stated that their primary reason was because they needed a degree to pursue their career. The differences between schools ranged from the School of Nursing at 95%, to the School of Music, at 70%. Another 16% of new students reported their primary reason was to enrich themselves, with 20% of the new students in the College of Arts and Sciences reporting that as their primary reason, compared to 4% of the new students in the School of Nursing. Fewer than 4% of the respondents stated that they came to college for other reasons (e.g., their parents wanted them to attend, for the social life, etc.).

Seventy-eight percent of the freshman class have never taken a credit course at another college or university. Seventeen percent have taken a credit course at a 2-year college; about 3% have taken a credit course here at UNCG prior to coming to orientation.

Will they stay at UNCG?

Most students come to UNCG planning to remain here for their entire degree program. However, many freshmen report that they plan to leave UNCG before graduation. We asked students about their current educational plans and most (about 77%) planned to be continuously enrolled at UNCG until graduation. Some plan to transfer to another institution to complete their degree, either because of their major (14%) or for other reasons (8%). Small percentages of students plan to take time off during their college career (2%) or do not expect to complete their degree at UNCG or elsewhere (less than 1%).

Figure 2 shows the breakdown of student intentions by school, with the Schools of Music and Education showing more than 90% of their freshmen intending to remain at UNCG. Almost 20% of the freshmen in the College of Arts and Sciences intend to transfer for reasons related to major and about 10% of the students in Arts and Sciences and in the School of Business and Economics intend to transfer for reasons not related to their major.

Why did they choose UNCG?

Most students apply to more than one college or university and make decisions about where to attend based on several factors, and UNCG freshmen are no exception. About 54% of the students indicated that UNCG was their first choice; 35% said we were their second choice. This is consistent with national trends shown in the most recent HERI studies (2002). About 77% of the students expect to be continuously enrolled here at UNCG; of those, about 61% reported that UNCG was their institution of first choice. Only 42% of the students chose UNCG for its academic reputation. About 51% of the students chose UNCG for its location. The remainder chose UNCG for its social life (3%), its athletics programs (3%) and its residence halls (1%). In Figure 1, we show the percent of students’ responses to the choice item by proposed major. Although the major data shown are accurate to the point of the first BANNER database purge (for unpaid tuition), it is recognized that students’ decisions as to a major at the start of their college career are tenuous.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Major</th>
<th>First choice</th>
<th>Second choice</th>
<th>Third choice</th>
<th>Fourth choice or lower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and Economics</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Environmental Sciences</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Human Performance</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We looked more closely at the students who are planning to transfer, either for a major-related reason or for other reasons. Students declaring certain majors appear to be more likely to report planning to transfer to another institution. The following majors are those that seem most likely to transfer: anthropology, biochemistry, chemistry, classical studies, communication studies, economics, human development and family studies, health education, philosophy, physics, recreation, social work, and Spanish. Each of these majors had more than 33% of the new students who chose that major report that they were planning to transfer. It is important to remember that these students have not yet completed coursework in these departments at the time they are reporting their intention to leave, so the students are not expressing dissatisfaction with the departments (32% of students reporting that they were undecided also indicated that they were planning to transfer). Student responses reflect their pre-enrollment plans. However, these plans are obviously based on the students’ perceptions of how well UNCG will meet their needs and expectations.

Students who are planning to transfer from UNCG do not typically feel that they will be inadequately challenged here. Of those who plan to transfer, either for their major or for other reasons, 88% say that they usually or always expect to be satisfied with the academic challenges at UNCG. Of those who plan to remain continually enrolled at UNCG, 94% say that they usually or always expect to be satisfied with the academic challenges.

Nor is it necessarily the case that students planning to transfer simply ‘settled for’ UNCG. Of those planning to transfer for major-related reasons, 31% reported UNCG as their first choice. Of those planning to transfer for other reasons, 22% reported UNCG as their first choice.

What will their first year be like?

We asked students several questions about what they thought their first year at UNCG would be like. In terms of their class work, 8% stated that they expect to spend fewer than 10 hours per week studying outside of the classroom. These pre-matriculation predictions are extremely interesting in light of the fact that our most recent (2001) National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE) results indicated that about 59% of UNCG freshmen report studying 10 or fewer hours per week (compare this with 44% for other doctoral/research intensives and 45% nationally).

About 33% of our freshman respondents did not plan to work during their first year at UNCG. However, our 2001 NSSE results show that more than 67% of the freshmen did not work during their first year at UNCG.

Students come to UNCG for social as well as academic reasons. Research has shown that students involved in campus activities are more likely to stay in college than those who are not (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993). The 2002 freshman report strong interest in being involved on campus; 89% prefer to be involved some or most of the time in on-campus activities, with 11% reporting that they prefer to spend most of their time alone. When asked about their weekend plans for the 15-week semester, about 35% of all freshmen reported that they planned to spend fewer than 6 of those weekends on campus; another 39% reported that they planned to spend 7 to 9 weekends on campus.

African-American and Hispanic students plan to stay on campus more than any other groups; 50% of African-American students report that they will be on campus 7 to 9 weekends during the semester, compared to 36% of White and Native American students, 35% of Asian students, and 28% of Hispanic students. In addition, 28% of Hispanic students plan to stay on campus 10 to 12 weekends, compared to percentages between 17% and 19% for all other groups.

Their expectations about the social and out-of-class opportunities at UNCG are quite positive; 88% of the freshmen reported that they usually or always expect to be satisfied with the social and out-of-class opportunities provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are your educational plans?</th>
<th>I expect to be continuously enrolled.</th>
<th>I plan to take time off.</th>
<th>I expect to transfer because of my major.</th>
<th>I expect to transfer for other reasons.</th>
<th>I do not expect to complete my degree.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and Economics</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Environmental Sciences</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Human Performance</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.
What do they bring to UNCG?

**Community Service**  The vast majority of new students (about 93%) report that they have been involved with community service in the past. In addition, they have done so voluntarily as only 11% of the high schools that these students attended require community service. They also seem to be able to find opportunities for community service through different kinds of organizations: 34% volunteered through their church, 23% through a club or other youth organization, and 29% on their own initiative. In addition, 58% of new students report that they know how to find community service opportunities on their own.

Not surprisingly, those freshmen who have done community service in the past plan to do community service while they are at UNCG (96%). Of those who have never performed community service before, 43% plan to become involved in community service at UNCG. Participating in community service is related to students’ confidence that they can make a difference in their community. More than 70% of students who had completed community service, regardless of what group they completed it with, believed that they could make a difference, compared to only 45% of those who had never participated in community service.

**Leadership**  Students plan to get involved in leadership on campus, especially those from Business and Economics (59%), Music (56%), and Health and Human Performance (51%). The students who plan to get involved in leadership feel that their public speaking skills are sufficient for the task; nearly 70% rate their public speaking skills as good or excellent compared to those who do not plan to get involved in leadership, of which only 28% list their public speaking skills as good or excellent. These future student leaders are both male and female; 50% of females plan to get involved, while 47% of males plan to do so. Racial diversity is also well-represented in future leaders, as shown in Figure 3.

The freshmen view college as an opportunity to increase their leadership skills. A majority of the freshmen (75%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they want to develop their leadership skills while they are at UNCG. Women were more likely than men to agree or strongly agree with this statement (83% and 74% respectively). Many of the students wanting to develop their leadership skills are also planning to take on leadership roles, as indicated by the large percent of freshmen answering both items positively.

**Diversity of Friendships**  Students entering UNCG report that they have had social contact with other cultures and ethnic groups. 97% of the freshman class have some level of social contact; 43% often socialize with other ethnic groups, 42% sometimes do, and 12% rarely do so. When asked if they can appreciate other people’s perspectives and traditions, 90% reported that they either agree or strongly agree with that statement.

**Smoking /Non-smoking**  We asked incoming students about their smoking habits. Overall, 78% of incoming freshmen reported that they do not smoke at all, 13% smoke occasionally, and nearly 9% smoke regularly. Those students who plan to live in residence halls indicate cigarette usage in the same percentages, but those who plan to rent off-campus housing indicate higher usage of cigarettes, with 20% smoking regularly and 22% smoking occasionally. About 59% of the occasional smokers tried to quit smoking in the last 12 months, compared to 41% of the regular smokers. We have little insight into how many students were actually able to stop smoking.

**Computer Skills**  Students bring with them not only significant computer skills but most often their own computer as well. When asked to rate their computer skills, more than 95% of the freshman class reported that their skills were average or above average for sending and receiving email and for searching and retrieving information from the World Wide Web. Only 1% of freshmen had no experience with email and less than 1% had no experience with the World Wide Web. Overall, 81% of the freshman class own their own computer for use while they are at UNCG. There is some variation, however, based on planned residence. Students living on campus or in an off-campus rental are least likely to have their own computer (80% for both groups), while students who live with their parents are slightly more likely (86%) to have their own computer.
How do they prepare for their future?

**Internships.** In general, students coming to UNCG place value on the experience provided by an internship. More than 60% of those completing the NSS 2002 report that they agree or strongly agree with the statement “I plan to pursue an internship while here at UNCG.” Only 8% of the respondents disagreed with that statement, with the remainder (31%) undecided. Women are more likely than men to plan to pursue an internship (65% and 54% respectively), and some racial groups are more likely than others to plan to pursue internships. African-American students (78%), Asian students (76%) and those who list their ethnic identity as “other” (75%) are more likely to plan to pursue internships than White students (57%), Native American students (55%), Hispanic students (54%), and those who did not respond to the ethnic identity question (58%).

Students who are currently planning to work are also planning to pursue internships during their undergraduate program, with approximately 60% of students in every employment category planning to pursue an internship.

As shown in Figure 4, students from all of the schools at UNCG plan to pursue internships, especially those in the Schools of Human Environmental Sciences (79%), Nursing (68%), Education (66%), and Health and Human Performance (66%). It is important to note that in many of those programs internships are required for graduation.

**Figure 4.**

Are you planning to complete an internship?

![Graph showing the percentage of students planning to complete an internship by school](chart.png)

What have we learned from the 2002 freshman class?

UNCG’s student body tends to be a diverse group, not simply diverse in terms of ethnicity and gender, but in terms of cultures, experiences, talents, and interests. In fact, we believe that this diversity is one of UNCG’s defining characteristics. This freshman class brings a very valuable kind of diversity to the student body as a whole. They have done extensive community service through a wide variety of organizations. They also come to UNCG having already been exposed to other cultural groups through their social contacts. This exposure to other types of people, those in need and those of different cultures, provides a strong base upon which students can learn more about themselves and others.

This makes UNCG an exciting place to learn and to work. However, it also poses challenges to faculty, staff, and students alike. Faculty and staff strive to serve the students by exposing them to new ideas, new experiences, and new people. Often students take up the challenge; occasionally they do not respond as we might hope. Knowing more about the experience and the intentions of the students we serve will help us to provide appropriate living and learning experiences and support for their continuing growth.

The primary reason students listed for coming to college was to pursue their career. Toward that end, they plan to develop their leadership skills, take on leadership roles, and complete internships in their planned field of study. All these experiences are concrete opportunities for students to learn more about themselves and others in the supportive context of the university.

Students reap the greatest benefit from their contact with the UNCG community when they remain at UNCG through their graduation. Student retention is an issue for most colleges, and UNCG is no exception. We plan to follow all of these freshmen through their UNCG collegiate career, but are particularly interested in the future of those who have indicated that they plan to leave UNCG before they graduate. We have anecdotal evidence that many students who intended to transfer do remain at UNCG for their entire degree program. It is our hope to use current and future NSS information as well as other institutional data to investigate why these students choose to stay. We further hope that such information will prove to be valuable in making UNCG every student’s first and only choice.

**References used in this publication:**


