

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 16, 2002
TO: Marilee Bresciani
FROM: Jan Donley and John Ambrose
RE: First Year College Contributions to NSSE Results

We would be very interested in examining results for this instrument for not only first year students in FYC who completed it in spring 2001, but also for seniors who were formerly in FYC. However, given that these results are not available, we speculate below how the work done by FYC may have contributed in part to these findings.

Academic, Intellectual, and Social Experiences and Quality of Advising

NC State students were significantly more likely to have used email to communicate with instructors. FYC encourages students to make contacts with faculty outside of class. Many students maintain regular email communication with their FYC adviser, and this may encourage them to do the same with other faculty they encounter throughout their college years. First year students responding to the survey reported more frequently talking about career plans with a faculty member or advisor than students at all doctoral/research extensive institutions. They also reported a higher quality of advising than other doctoral/research extensive institutions, although the difference was not significant. This task is of course a central goal for FYC programming. We were disappointed to see that these effects were not observed for seniors, although not surprised. Results from our graduating seniors' survey suggest that students are less satisfied with the quality and quantity of advising they receive once they leave FYC.

Time Usage

NC State first year students appeared to spend more time participating in co-curricular activities than students in other doctoral/research extensive institutions, although the difference was not significant. This finding is somewhat consistent with FYC's emphasis on encouraging and requiring participation in out-of-class activities. However, the effect again disappears for seniors, suggesting that they no longer desire, or have time to, spend as many hours in these types of activities.

Institutional Emphases

NC State first year students assigned slightly higher ratings than others at doctoral/research extensive institutions to the issue of the institution providing the support needed for academic success. FYC certainly strives to provide academic support for students through intensive contact with an adviser, in-class activities and strategies

designed to promote academic success, and encouragement for students to attend tutorial sessions for traditionally difficult first year student classes.

Quality of Relationships

First year students at NC State reported slightly more positive relationships with faculty members than students at all doctoral/research extensive institutions. FYC seeks to promote students' relationships with faculty through the Faculty Fellows program, in which faculty attends co-curricular events with students and in some partner with advisers to teach courses in which FYC students are enrolled. In addition, students are encouraged to seek advice and information from faculty in various colleges as they attempt to make a decision concerning a major and career.

How might these findings impact our assessment plan?

Without specific results for FYC students only, it is difficult to say that our assessment plan should change. However, it is clear that impressions of the quality of advising decline between the first and senior years; this decline was largest for NC State students. FYC should consider itself a catalyst for changes in the advising process across campus and measure whether our efforts at reform are successful.

On a related note, although NC State students and students at other doctoral/research extensive universities report similar levels of quality relationships with faculty, the perception of seniors is lower than the perception of first year students at NC State, and significantly lower than the NSSE results overall. Again FYC can perhaps impact this finding by initiating reform in the area of academic advising.