

FIRST YEAR COLLEGE:

***10-YEAR ASSESSMENT
REPORT***

**DIVISION OF UNDERGRADUATE
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
NORTH CAROLINA STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Prepared

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North Carolina State University
10-Year Assessment Report: 1995-2004**

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FIRST YEAR COLLEGE 10-YEAR ASSESSMENT REPORT 1995-2004

BACKGROUND AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The First Year College (FYC) program at North Carolina State University began serving students during the 1995-96 academic year; the program recently completed its tenth year in 2004-05. The FYC's stated mission is "to guide students through a structured process for transition to the University and selection of a major¹." The program is particularly suited to students who prefer a year of study and guidance before moving into an academic major, and to those who seek a first year experience with immersion into the academic, social, and cultural life of the university.

The primary goals of the FYC are:

- To encourage all First Year College students to collaborate with the entire NC State University community in order to enhance their own University experience;
- To encourage students to make an informed and timely decision regarding an academic major, and to explore related careers;
- To help First Year College students learn to apply higher-level thinking skills to academic and career decision-making;
- To help students become engaged members of the campus community through awareness of their own cultural values as they relate to others, and by helping students determine their strengths and weaknesses in valuing diversity;
- To positively impact academic success, self-reliance, first-year retention, and progress towards degree through one-on-one advising and structured experiential teaching and learning; and,
- To practice the use of sound advising strategies in First Year College programs and courses, as exemplified in the National Academic Advising Association's Core Values².

The creation of FYC was mandated during the 1994-95 academic year when administrators at NC State appointed a task force to create a major intervention program for first year students. The program was created to provide a comprehensive experience for students entering the university undecided about an academic major and, ultimately, to

¹ FYC mission and goals obtained from FYC web site: <http://www.ncsu.edu/fyc/info/index.html>.

² See: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/Core-Values.htm>

improve retention and graduation rates, and reduce the number of students who switch majors. The University Undesignated Program and a First Year Experience program existed prior to the creation of FYC; these programs were combined and enhanced to provide a more extensive first year program for students.

The program was designed to reflect research on first year students, and was tailored to meet the particular needs of NC State. Numerous studies point to the fact that many students are not yet developmentally ready to make important career and life decisions upon entry to college (e.g., Gordon, 1995). In addition, many colleges and universities have high numbers of students who “major hop” by switching majors several times throughout their education. Cuseo (2003) argues that:

“Students’ final decisions about majors and careers do not occur *before* entering college, but typically materialize *during* the college experience. Thus it is not accurate to assume that students who enter college with ‘declared’ majors are truly ‘decided’ majors; instead it is more accurate to conclude that 75% of all students entering college are actually undecided about their academic and career plans, and at least half of all declared majors are ‘prematurely decided’ majors, who will eventually change their minds.”

One explanation for this major hopping is that many of these students entered in degree programs without first carefully considering their interests and strengths/weaknesses, and/or building their awareness of various majors and careers. Retention research has shown that the level of student commitment to educational and career goals may be the most significant predictor of persistence to degree (Wycoff, 1999). Therefore, effective academic advising during the first year of college can positively impact student retention through its beneficial influence on students’ educational/career decision-making and planning. An academic adviser can serve as a mentor on campus to assist with first-year student transition, and with the decision-making process within the area of majors and careers. In fact, academic advising has been shown to be an important variable in predicting student retention. Research has revealed that high-quality advising (as identified by students) significantly impacts student attrition (e.g., Metzner, 1989).

Unfortunately, few institutions apparently provide high quality advising as evidenced by a recent review of findings from five national surveys of academic advising. Habley (2000), in a review of national ACT survey data, found that key components of effective advising, such as training, evaluation, and recognition and reward were missing from most institutions throughout this nation. This conclusion is supported by a variety of national reports on American higher education that have found academic advising to be one of the weakest links in the undergraduate experience. Astin (1993) found in a review of a national survey that students ranked advising 25th among 27 different types of services available to them, with only 40% reporting satisfaction with this crucial feature of the college experience. FYC programming is designed to provide a comprehensive, high quality first-year advising experience for students that promotes their development and

decision-making, as well as increases the likelihood they will be successful academically and persist at the university.

Pascarella and Terrenzini (1991) argue that in order to affect first year student persistence and development, institutions must create programs and services to help students (1) connect to the environment, (2) make the transition to college life, (3) work toward their goals in terms of a major, degree, and career, and, (4) succeed in the classroom. A five-year assessment of FYC³ completed in 2001 suggested that FYC had been largely successful in accomplishing these objectives. FYC students had similar retention and graduation rates to a comparison group of students, and performed as well as, or better on academic variables such as GPA. These findings were significant in that undecided students are typically an “at risk” population that tends to have less positive academic outcomes (see earlier discussion). Therefore, performing comparably to other students entering the university within a major degree program is significant. In addition, FYC students were much less likely than comparison students to “major hop” once they had selected a major. Career decision profile results also showed that students made significant growth in career decision-making and knowledge about majors and careers within their first year. When FYC students left NC State, there was some evidence that they were more likely to subsequently enroll in another institution than comparison students. Through the decision-making process during their first year and in consultation with their adviser, these students may have elected to pursue a major not available at NC State. This finding was consistent with the advising model and policies in place which is designed to aid the student in selecting the most appropriate major, even when this major may be at another institution.

In 2002, FYC was selected as an “Institution of Excellence in the First College Year” by the Policy Center on the First Year of College, as an institution that exemplifies best practice within the first year⁴. Clearly FYC has been largely successful at providing a high quality first year experience for students entering the university seeking assistance with the selection of a major and career. Major FYC program components⁵ are described below.

Academic Advising and FYC Curricula

³ See: <http://www.ncsu.edu/fyc/info/assessments/index.html> for a copy of the 5-Year Assessment Report.

⁴ See: <http://www.brevard.edu/fyc/instofexcellence/data.htm> for more information.

⁵ See: <http://www.ncsu.edu/fyc/> for a complete description of current programming.

Academic advising is central to the FYC program. Students who enroll in FYC are assigned an academic adviser to assist them during their first year. A full-time staff of professional advisers (Master's level and above) who have been trained in advising techniques and are knowledgeable about the variety of majors and campus resources available to students, work with approximately 90 students at a time. Students meet with their adviser weekly throughout their first year as they participate in a graded, small group seminar course designed to help them with the transition to the university as well as help them prepare for the selection of a major/career. Students also meet with their adviser individually for a one-on-one session at least twice a semester, for a minimum of four contacts outside of the seminar courses. Research has shown that first year students who can name a campus-affiliated person they can turn to with a question or concern are more than twice as likely than students without that person to return to the institution following their first year (Pascarella & Terrenzini, 1991). Thus, the adviser-advisee relationship is critical in helping the student make a connection to the university via an adult whom they see regularly.

Teaching as an Extension of Advising

The advising relationship in the First Year College is uniquely developed and extended through the dual role advisers carry as instructors for the FYC orientation courses. Through the two, 1-credit-hour, graded courses (USC 101 and USC 102), students have weekly contact with their personal adviser and a small (22 students or less) peer community throughout their first year. Enrollment in the courses is required for FYC students. Other colleges at NC State offer an orientation course particular to their environment and most accept the USC courses as a transfer equivalent for their required course.

While first year seminars / orientation courses are common features in first year programs, the First Year College is unique in extending its course over two semesters, thus insuring students a year of weekly contact with their adviser and peer group. Through an action/reflection model of experiential learning, the two semesters of USC 101/102 enable student transition to University education, encourage student responsibility for learning, and guide students through in-depth major/career exploration. A summer reading program introduces students to a topic in the USC curriculum and encourages early engagement in the rigors of college-level study and reflection. In USC 101/102 students undergo personality/career testing and interpretation. Students undertake research projects into majors and careers and prepare their university Plan of Study. Through the required capstone project, students have the opportunity to reflect on their first year and demonstrate their learning and decision-making process regarding the selection of a major and career direction.

Although FYC provides a comprehensive first year experience, it should be noted that students are only required to engage in approximately one and one-half hours of program contact per week, which constitutes just 14% of their time out of a 40-hour week. Many students far exceed this level of contact by seeking out their adviser more frequently

through appointments, calls and electronic messages. The range of student contact with an adviser can therefore well exceed the hour and a half average, and conversely, can fall under that minimum. Despite program structure, some students choose to be less engaged, miss class or advising appointments, and do not take advantage of co-curricular learning. As with any educational program, the level of engagement in the program is highly dependent on student initiative.

The FYC Village: A Living/Learning Community

Beginning during the 2001-02 academic year, FYC began offering programming in cooperation with University Housing that provides students a “living/learning” experience within FYC. Students who elect to live in Tucker or Owen residence halls (housing first-year students only) have direct access to their advisers, whose offices are within these halls, as well as to unique programs and activities designed specifically for first-year students. Students have the opportunity to take special “linked” First Year Inquiry (FYI) courses their first semester. These courses, which are designed for freshmen and fulfill a university general education requirement, are paired (“linked”) with the USC 101 course (students enrolled in one section of the USC 101 course are also enrolled together in the FYI course). FYI courses are capped at 20 students and are taught by NC State faculty dedicated to instruction of first-year students. Through small classes and active learning techniques, the FYI program seeks to enhance student-faculty connections and develop students’ critical thinking skills. In addition, highly trained Resident Mentors live on each floor of the two FYC Village residence halls. These mentors serve as leaders and role models to FYC students, and each also serves as a Teaching Assistant for the FYC USC courses as well as participating with FYC students in some of the “linked” FYI courses. Studies indicate that institutions can promote student responsibility by developing policies that stress the importance of student-faculty and student-peer relations (Davis & Murrell, 1994). As the Village, linked courses, and Resident Mentors are key programming components within FYC in recent years, this evaluation examined some program outcomes separately for students participating in the FYC Village.

Co-Curricular Learning

The First Year College program of co-curricular learning is based on research that has shown students who are involved in extracurricular activities at college are more positive about their college experience, and more satisfied with their social life, the living environment and academic major. In addition, the greater the quality and quantity of involvement, the more likely the student will succeed in college (Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991). The Living/Learning community within the FYC Village was described earlier. However, a variety of other programming components provide for enhanced integration of first-year students to the university community. Through the First Year College Forum Series, students receive class credit for their participation in campus cultural, educational and service experiences. Students select three events per semester through the extensive choices shown on the on-line Forum calendar. Forum events include campus cultural arts, faculty presentations and discussions, major / career fairs and events, service activities, wellness and diversity events. In addition to the Forum program, the First Year College annually offers three major college-wide events for its students: the FYC Convocation, fall Majors’ Fair, and spring Academic Networking Panels.

First Year College provides comprehensive services to first year students enabled through an extensive system of partnerships. In addition to the partnerships with University Housing and the FYI program described above, other partnerships are numerous:

- The First Year College works in various ways with offices within *Student Affairs* (e.g. Arts Council/Arts Outreach, Career Center, University Dining, Counseling Center).
- Through a structure of *college liaisons* – with each FYC adviser linking to an NC State college, communication about cross-curricular advising is enabled and opportunities for FYC students to explore majors within the colleges are planned.
- First Year College staff expertise with freshmen has been used in *undergraduate education reform* efforts through the Hewlett Initiative, First Year Inquiry and the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning.
- *Parents* are viewed as critical partners in student success. The First Year College seeks to educate and include parents as appropriate in the critical transition to university education. Information is shared through the Parent Newsletter and FYC web site and advisers are available to parents at summer orientation, the annual FYC reception during Parents' Weekend, and throughout the academic year.
- *Community volunteers*, many of them parents of FYC students, are part of the FYC career network. These volunteers may participate in the spring Academic Networking event or serve as resources to students as they research majors and careers.

FYC partnerships are crucial to its success, particularly because these partnerships help integrate and promote the FYC program to the rest of the campus and surrounding community.

FYC STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

For the first ten years of the program, more than 8,000 students participated in the FYC upon entering as first year students. FYC students typically constitute between 20-25% of the entering class of first year students. In addition to students participating in the FYC program described above, the First Year College also admits undecided first-year student athletes. These students are served through a separate and unique program, the Academic Support Program for Student Athletes (ASPSA). The student characteristics data in this section includes the FYC students in both programs. The ASPSA program students are not included in the analysis of FYC program effectiveness and student learning (see Assessment Methods, below).

Figure 1. Total Number of Entering FYC Students, 1995-2004

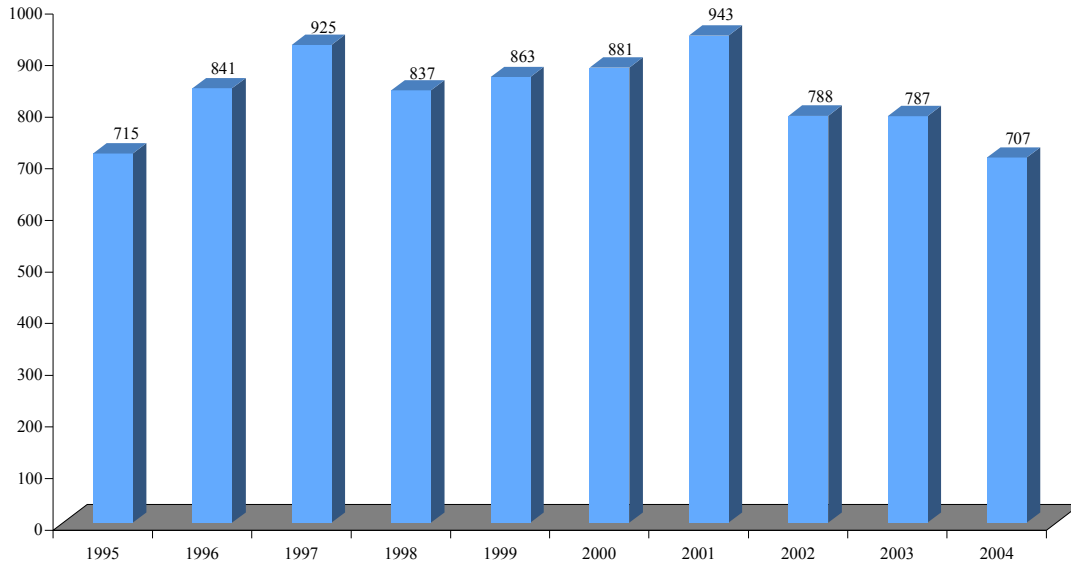
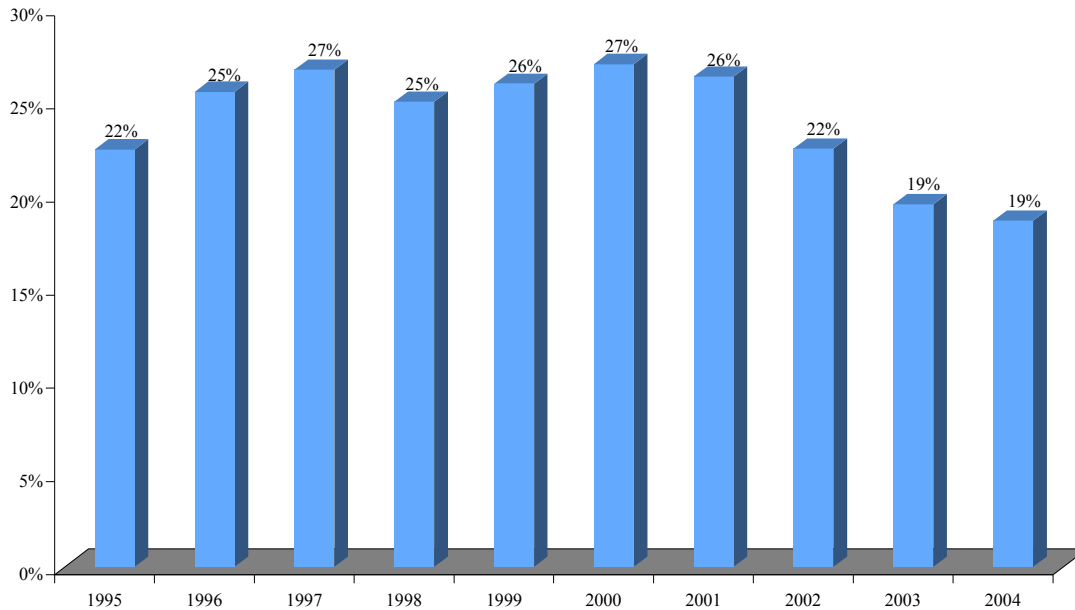


Figure 2 shows that applications to the FYC program⁶ have decreased somewhat since its inception, relative to all applications to NC State.

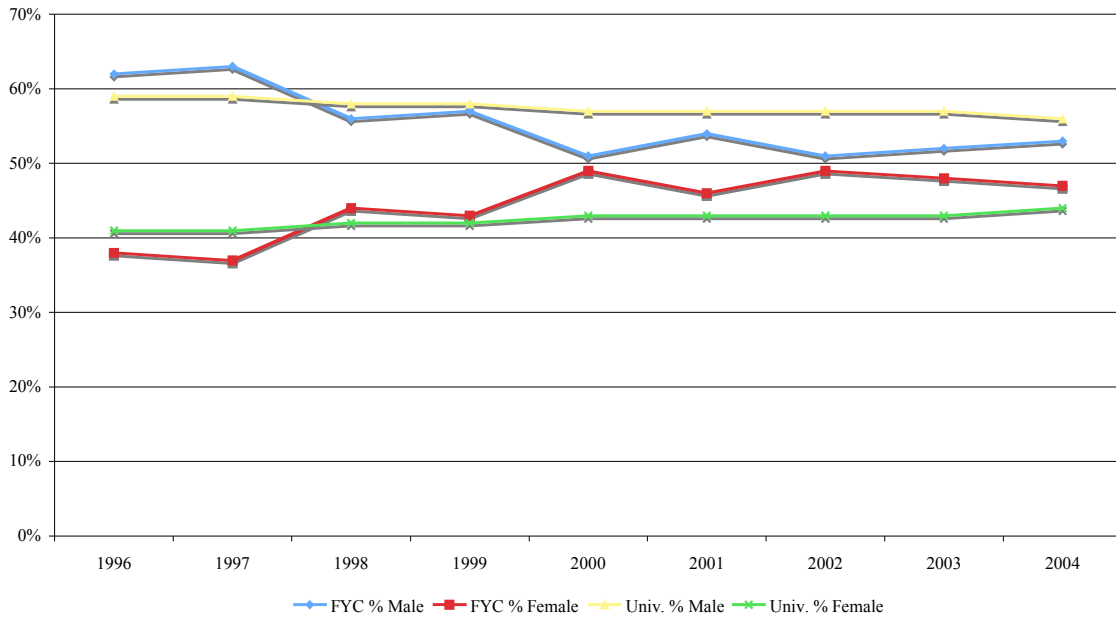
Figure 2. Percentage of All Applications to NC State That Were FYC, 1995-2004



⁶ Source: University Planning and Analysis web site:
http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/admissions/finalasr_fall/index.htm

Approximately two-thirds of FYC students were male during the first two years of the program, but beginning in 1998 slightly more females have enrolled in FYC relative to the university first-year student profile.

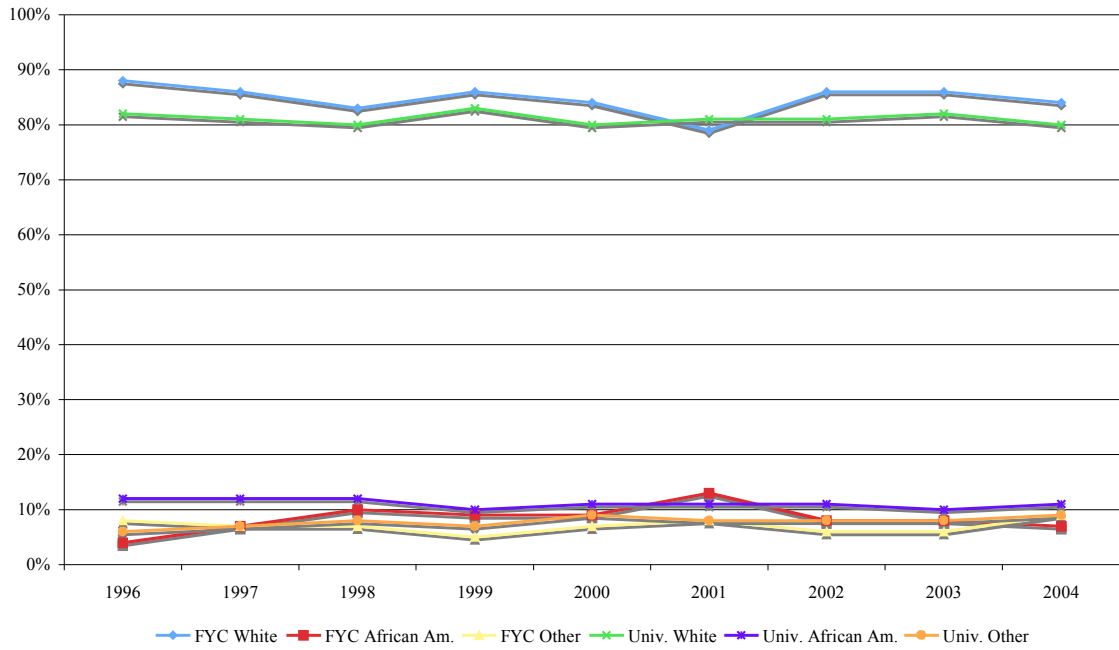
Figure 3. FYC Population by Gender, 1996-2004⁷



Similar to the university cohorts, more than 80% of FYC students were white each year; however, minority enrollment has increased slightly since the program's inception.

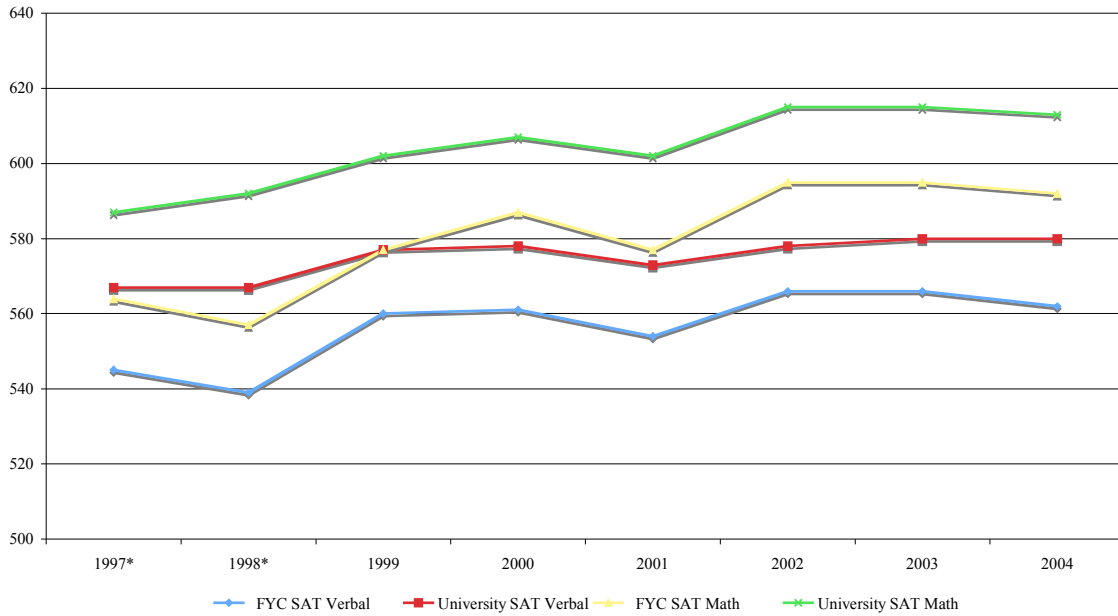
⁷ University cohort data were not available for 1995.

Figure 4. FYC Population by Race, 1996-2004



FYC students enter the University with lower verbal and mathematics SAT scores than all incoming first-year students, as the figure below shows. Since 1999, FYC students average approximately 16 points lower on verbal, and 22 points lower on mathematics SAT scores.

Figure 5. Average SAT Scores⁸ for FYC and All Entering First-Year Students, 1997-2004

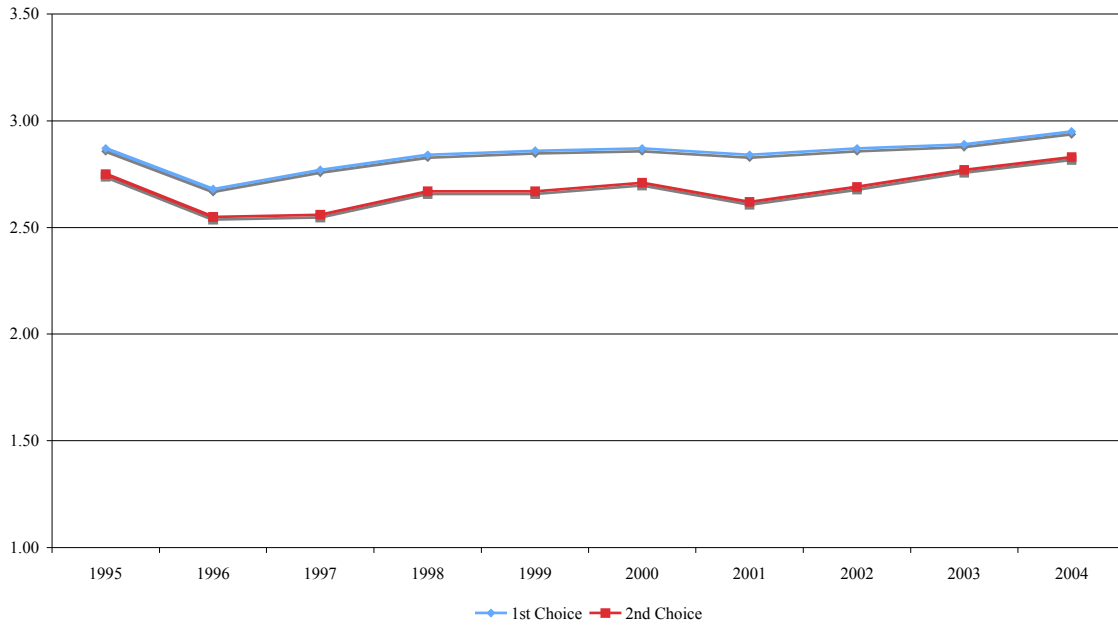


*Included Transition Program students.

Each year FYC admits “second choice” students into the program. Second choice students are defined as students who met admissions requirements for the University, but not for the particular major they desired. Many of these students had selected majors such as Engineering, Design or Business Management. Second choice students historically have lower entering academic credentials than first choice FYC students, and past program assessments have found less positive academic outcomes for these students than first choice students.

⁸ Source: University Planning and Analysis.

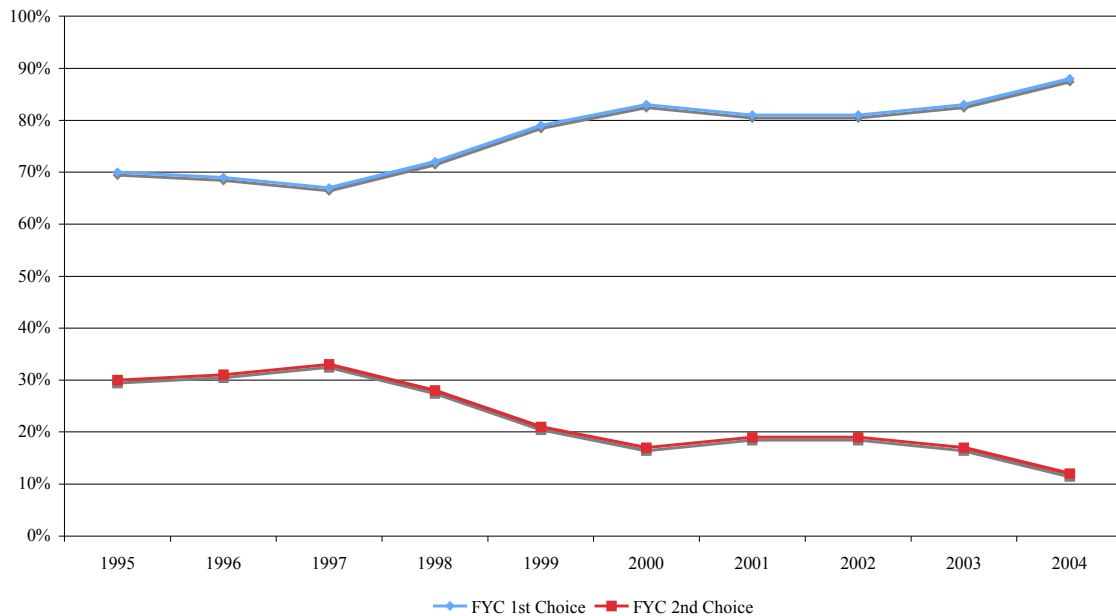
Figure 6. Mean Academic Index⁹ for FYC First Choice and Second Choice Students, 1995-2004



In addition, these students have understandably been more resistant to programming that seeks to help them decide on a major/career. The figure below shows that the percentage of second choice students within FYC has declined substantially since the program began, with nearly one-third classified as second choice in 1995, down to just 12% in 2004.

⁹ Academic Index (AI) is a predicted GPA formula for the end of the first year. Entering students' high school GPA and SAT scores are used in a regression formula to calculate this index.

Figure 7. Percentage of FYC First and Second Choice Students, 1995-2004



The FYC 10-Year Assessment Technical Report contains academic outcomes for different subgroups of FYC students. Data are provided in this separate report for FYC students by gender, ethnicity and first/second choice status.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

FYC staff develops detailed Assessment Plans annually, which address program outcomes, as well as Annual Assessment Reports to address one-year findings.¹⁰ As discussed previously, sufficient data became available regarding the long-term impact of FYC on indicators such as retention and graduation, and it was determined that a five-year report would serve to highlight these findings to the university community and other interested parties. A Five-Year Assessment Report documented key findings on program effectiveness (see earlier discussion). At the end of the tenth year of the program, university personnel determined that a ten-year report would yield more extensive data on long-term program outcomes. FYC staff and the Program Evaluator created the Ten-Year Assessment Plan to determine the types of data to be collected, methods of data collection, and data analyses. The Program Evaluator then worked with staff in University

¹⁰ See: <http://www.ncsu.edu/fyc/info/assessments/index.html> for detailed information on FYC assessment.

Planning and Analysis (UPA) to extract university-held data for each cohort of FYC students, 1995-2004. For the 10-Year Assessment Report, the Academic Support Program for Student Athletes (ASPSA) population is not included in the analysis, as it was in the 5-Year Assessment Report. Removing the ASPSA population required some additional efforts, however the results are a truer reflection of the FYC program effectiveness and impact. Additionally, UPA staff identified a comparison group of similar students for each FYC cohort, matched on gender, high school grade-point-average (GPA) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores to provide an idea of how FYC students performed relative to similar students not enrolled in FYC.

In addition to university-held data, this report also includes summaries of data collected from FYC students over the ten years of the program to provide information on major/career decision-making and student satisfaction with FYC programming.

The FYC Village program was recently developed to provide a more comprehensive first-year experience for incoming students. Since this was a relatively new feature of FYC programming, data analysis of program participants was conducted to determine whether participating in this level of programming resulted in different academic outcomes.

This report will address the degree to which FYC has accomplished its goals in key areas over the past ten years. The report will address the following questions:

1. How do FYC students compare with other similar students in terms of academic outcomes such as retention, graduation rates and GPA?
2. How does FYC impact students' decision-making regarding a major/career, timely transfer into a major and retention in that major?
3. How does participating in the FYC Village impact the academic outcomes above?
4. What are FYC students' reported levels of involvement and integration into the campus community?
5. How satisfied are FYC students with various program components such as advising, FYC courses and out-of-class programming?

FYC PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Promoting Academic Success

In order to gauge the academic success of FYC students as they progressed through NC State, the performance of each cohort of students was compared to a matched sample of similar students not in FYC. When data were available, performance was also compared with the University Cohort¹¹ of all entering students for each cohort year. Enrollment statistics after the first year that document the percentages of students retained, suspended, withdrawn or graduated were calculated for the beginning of each academic year at census point (middle of September). Students' GPA data as they progressed through the college experience provided an additional indicator of academic success.

Appendix A provides a complete summary of results for statistical analyses to illustrate areas of significant differences between FYC and Comparison Group students. Results are presented below for retention, GPA, suspensions/withdrawals, and graduation rates. These results are followed by a within-FYC analysis of academic performance data for FYC Village and non-Village students.

Academic Outcomes: Retention

The table below provides results for FYC and comparison group students on academic outcomes at census point of each academic year following their first year. Analyses that yielded statistically significant differences between FYC and the Comparison Group are noted with an asterisk.

Figure 8. Retention Results for FYC, Comparison, and University Cohorts, Percent Continuing or Graduating After...

	One Year (Retention to 2 nd Year)			Two Years (Retention to 3 rd Year)			Three Years (Retention to 4 th Year)		
	FYC	Comparison	Univ. Cohort	FYC	Comparison	Univ. Cohort	FYC	Comparison	Univ. Cohort
1995	86.6%	83.9%	86.5%	75.3%	73.0%	76.1%	70.1%*	64.9%	70.6%
1996	86.6%	86.8%	88.0%	74.9%	75.7%	78.4%	69.8%	70.7%	73.9%
1997	86.1%**	82.9%	87.6%	76.4%*	70.6%	77.7%	71.0%*	64.6%	72.1%

¹¹ University Cohort data derived from Academic Advancement Reports:
<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/studentprogress/index.htm>

	One Year (Retention to 2 nd Year)			Two Years (Retention to 3 rd Year)			Three Years (Retention to 4 th Year)		
	FYC	Comparison	Univ. Cohort	FYC	Comparison	Univ. Cohort	FYC	Comparison	Univ. Cohort
				*			*		
1998	84.5%	87.1%	87.6%	75.3%	78.1%	78.9%	70.4%	73.1%	74.6%
1999	90.7%** *	85.5%	88.7%	81.1%	78.0%	81.0%	77.7%	75.5%	77.7%
2000	86.7%	89.3%	88.5%	79.6%	81.7%	81.9%	75.4%	78.9%	78.4%
2001	88.8%	86.1%	88.9%	80.0%	78.3%	81.8%	75.7%	73.6%	77.2%
2002	88.2%	88.9%	89.9%	80.2%	81.2%	82.4%	77.2%	78.0%	78.7%
2003	90.7%	90.9%	90.9%	82.6%	84.4%	84.1%			
2004	88.9%	88.1%	89.0%						

Note: Chi Square analyses were conducted on data for FYC and Comparison Group students only; University Cohort data are provided for illustrative purposes.

*Chi square revealed a marginally significant difference.

**Chi square revealed a marginally significant difference favoring FYC students after the first year, and significant differences favoring FYC students for retention after two and three years.

***Chi square revealed significant difference.

Similar retention statistics were observed for FYC and Comparison Group students across most years of the program. *However, significantly more FYC than Comparison Group students were retained to the second year for the 1997 (marginally significant) and 1999 cohorts.* The percentages of FYC students retained to the second year mirror percentages observed for entering cohorts of all first-year students. *Data for retention to the third and fourth years showed that significantly more 1997 FYC than Comparison Group students were retained, while more 1995 FYC students were retained to the fourth year (marginally significant).*

The finding that FYC students have been retained at rates similar to the university cohorts, and similar to, or higher than the Comparison Group cohorts should be viewed as a positive finding for the program. FYC is designed to attract students possessing characteristics which research shows may place them "at risk" for attrition such as uncertainty about goals and selection of a major (Gordon, 1995). While the Comparison Group was selected to have similar demographic and academic profiles upon entry to the University, the uncertainty in the area of major/career decision-making is a feature that likely distinguished FYC students from many of their counterparts¹².

¹² Although many Comparison Group students likely were also uncertain about their major/career direction (see earlier discussion), but may not recognize or acknowledge this uncertainty.

Academic Outcomes: GPA

FYC and Comparison Group students' GPA was collected for each of the spring semesters through students' fifth year.

Figure 9. GPA Results for FYC and Comparison Group Students, 1995-2004

	Spring of 1 st Year		Spring of 2 nd Year		Spring of 3 rd Year		Spring of 4 th Year		Spring of 5 th Year	
	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.
1995	2.73	2.74	2.76	2.75	2.79	2.83	2.86	2.89	2.73	2.77
1996	2.80	2.74	2.77	2.76	2.82	2.81	2.85	2.85	2.69	2.67
1997	2.71	2.69	2.74	2.73	2.78	2.79	2.85	2.84	2.67	2.67
1998	2.78	2.75	2.82	2.80	2.86	2.86	2.95	2.91	2.74	2.71
1999	2.89*	2.78	2.93*	2.87	2.99*	2.93	3.00*	2.94	2.71*	2.60
2000	2.86	2.90	2.94	2.93	2.96	2.97	2.95	2.94	2.67	2.62
2001	2.87	2.85	2.89	2.89	2.86	2.87	2.91	2.91		
2002	3.00	2.97	3.00*	2.93	3.02	2.96				
2003	3.00*	2.88	3.01*	2.89						
2004	2.96	2.96								

*Analysis of variance procedures yielded significant difference, $p < .05$.

Once again, FYC students had academic outcomes similar to, or higher than Comparison Group students. *FYC students entering in 1999 had significantly higher GPA's across all five analysis years, 2002 FYC students had higher GPA's in the spring of their second year, and FYC 2003 students had significantly higher GPA's for both years of available data.*

Academic Outcomes: Suspensions and Withdrawals

Students at NC State whose GPA falls below 2.0 are placed on Academic Warning; students are suspended from the university at the end of the spring semester when their GPA falls below 1.8 (for students with fewer than 59 hours). FYC advisers implement an academic difficulty system for students who enter Academic Warning status at the end of the fall semester by developing an academic improvement plan with these students and closely monitoring their performance through required meetings or other forms of contact.

Census status data for each of the fall semesters beginning with students' second year was collected. Data on student suspensions over the past ten years of the program

Figure 10. Percentages of Students Suspended, 1995-2004

	Fall of 2 nd Year (Suspended after Year 1)		Fall of 3 rd Year (Suspended after Year 2)		Fall of 4 th Year (Suspended after Year 3)		Fall of 5 th Year (Suspended after Year 4)	
	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.
1995	2%	4%	6%	8%	8%	12%*	9%	12%
1996	3%	4%	5%	7%	7%	9%	8%	10%
1997	4%	4%	6%	9%*	8%	13%*	10%	13%
1998	3%	4%	4%	7%	7%	9%	8%	10%
1999	2%	3%	4%	6%	5%	6%	6%	7%
2000	3%	2%	5%	4%	6%	4%	7%	6%
2001	3%	4%	4%	6%	6%	9%	7%	11%*
2002	2%	3%	4%	6%	4%	6%		
2003	1%	2%	3%	4%				
2004	2%	3%						

*Chi square statistics indicated that significantly more Comparison Group students had been suspended.

reveal that small numbers of both FYC and Comparison Group students were suspended each year, and no group differences were observed for the first year. *However, significantly more Comparison Group students from the 1997 cohort were suspended at the end of their second and third years. In addition, more 1995 Comparison Group students were suspended after their third year, and more 2001 Comparison Group students were suspended after their fourth year.*

Students withdraw from the university for a variety of reasons. Some students may leave for personal reasons and not return to a university setting (e.g., wanting to be closer to home, not ready for college, etc.), while others may elect to attend another institution.

Figure 11. Percentages of Students Withdrawn, 1995-2004

	Fall of 2 nd Year (Withdrawn after Year 1)		Fall of 3 rd Year (Withdrawn after Year 2)		Fall of 4 th Year (Withdrawn after Year 3)		Fall of 5 th Year (Withdrawn after Year 4)	
	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.
1995	11%	12%	19%	19%	22%	23%	25%	25%
1996	11%	9%	20%	18%	23%	21%	26%	22%
1997	10%	13%	18%	20%	21%	23%	23%	24%
1998	13%*	9%	21%*	15%	23%	18%	25%	20%
1999	7%	12%**	15%	16%	17%	18%	19%	19%
2000	11%	9%	16%	15%	18%	17%	19%	19%
2001	9%	10%	16%	15%	18%	17%	21%	20%
2002	9%	9%	16%	13%	19%	16%		
2003	8%	7%	15%	11%				
2004	9%	9%						

*Chi square showed significantly more FYC students had withdrawn.

**Chi square showed significantly more Comparison Group students had withdrawn.

Census statistics suggest that while approximately one-quarter of FYC students had withdrawn by the beginning of their fifth year for earlier cohorts, more recent cohort data suggest a small decline in the percentages of students withdrawn. In addition, the percentages of students withdrawing after their first year has declined for more recent cohorts, with fewer than 10% withdrawing since 2001. ***Significantly more 1998 FYC than Comparison Group students withdrew following their first and second years, while significantly more 1999 Comparison Group students withdrew after their first year.***

Subsequent Enrollment at Other Institutions

National Student Clearinghouse¹³ (NSC) data provide information on whether students who have left the university because of suspension or withdrawal have enrolled in another postsecondary institution. Data were only available for the 1999-2004 cohorts of students; the five-year Assessment Report on the 1995-1999 cohorts showed that significantly more FYC than Comparison students had subsequently enrolled in another institution from the 1995 and 1999 cohorts after leaving NC State.

Figure 12. Percentages of Withdrawn and Suspended Students Enrolling in Another Institution, 1999-2004

	Enrolled in another institution		Returned to NC State		Did not enroll in another institution	
	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.
1999	51%	52%	10%	12%	39%	36%
2000	60%	56%	9%	12%	31%	32%
2001	54%	61%	17%	11%	29%	28%
2002	67%	56%	11%	15%	22%	28%
2003	70%	61%	9%	15%	22%	24%
2004	61%	76%	16%	9%	23%	15%

Data analyses conducted on data for the 1999-2004 cohorts revealed no significant group differences on enrollment at another institution for any cohort year. Data from both FYC and Comparison Groups suggest a slight increase for recent cohort years in the percentages of students who are electing to attend another institution after they leave NC State.

¹³ NSC data are provided on enrollment of students in 2,800 postsecondary institutions; data reflect enrollment of 91% of US college students: <http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/default.asp>

Academic Outcomes: Graduation Rates

Data on the percentages of students graduating within four, five and six years reflect the academic success of FYC students once they matriculate to a degree program relative to other similar students and to the university as a whole.

Figure 13. Graduation Results for FYC, Comparison, and University Cohorts, Percent Graduating After...

	Four Years			Five Years			Six Years		
	FYC	Comparison	Univ. Cohort	FYC	Comparison	Univ. Cohort	FYC	Comparison	Univ. Cohort
1995	19.8%	22.5%	25.7%	49.1%	50.3%	54.6%	58.2%	55.5%	61.5%
1996	19.5%	26.6%*	27.5%	50.3%	54.8%	57.4%	58.1%	60.1%	63.8%
1997	19.6%	18.8%	26.4%	52.3%**	47.2%	56.0%	60.1%**	53.85	62.9%
1998	21.0%	28.9%*	29.6%	54.3%	58.8%	60.7%	60.6%	64.9%	66.7%
1999	29.2%	33.8%	35.4%	61.6%	61.6%	64.9%	68.3%	68.2%	70.3%
2000	33.0%	36.3%	36.8%	61.3%	66.9%*	64.9%			
2001	31.8%	34.8%	36.8%						

*Chi square tests showed Comparison Group significantly higher.

**Chi square tests showed FYC significantly higher.

Very few students graduate within four years in any of the groups examined, but for the early years of the FYC program fewer FYC than Comparison Group students were graduating within four years, particularly for the 1996 and 1998 cohorts. ***However, the percentage of FYC students graduating within four years has increased substantially beginning with the 1999 cohort, and most recent statistics show that close to one-third graduated within four years.*** The percentage of students graduating within four years increased for the Comparison and University Cohort groups as well, although the increase was not as substantial as that for FYC.

Five-year graduation rate data showed that 1997 FYC students had significantly higher rates than Comparison Group students, while the reverse was true for the 2000 cohort. Again, data for all groups increased in recent years. Six-year graduation data showed that 1997 FYC students graduated at a significantly higher rate than Comparison Group students.

Impact of FYC Village Program

In order to gauge the impact of the FYC Village program on student participants, data were compared for several different subgroups of FYC students beginning with the 2001 cohort when programming began. FYC students were divided into the following subgroups:

1. **FYC Village Linked:** FYC students who lived in Village residence halls (Tucker and Owen) and who also took linked courses (e.g., FYC Course paired with general education course) during the fall of their first year;
2. **FYC Village Non-Linked:** FYC students who lived in Village residence halls but who did not participate in the linked courses; and,
3. **FYC Non-Linked, Non Village:** FYC students who lived somewhere other than Village residence halls and did not participate in linked courses.

Students' Academic Index (AI) was compared for these subgroups to determine whether there were differences in entering academic credentials amongst students participating in the varying levels of programming. The only significant difference found was for the 2002 cohort, with Village Linked and Non-Linked Non Village students having higher AI's than Non-Linked Village students; therefore data for this cohort year must be interpreted in this context.

Results for FYC subgroups show that after the initial year of the program, students living in the FYC Village were somewhat more likely to be retained than other subgroups, although a significant difference was only obtained for the 2003 cohort. For one-year and two-year retention, students living in the FYC Village had slightly higher retention rates than FYC students living elsewhere on or off campus.

Figure 14. Retention Results for FYC Village and Comparison Groups

	One Year (Retention to 2nd Year)				Two Years (Retention to 3rd Year)				Three Years (Retention to 4th Year)			
	FYC Village Linked	FYC Non-Linked Village	FYC Non-linked Non Village	Comp. Group	FYC Village Linked	FYC Non-Linked Village	FYC Non-linked Non Village	Comp. Group	FYC Village Linked	FYC Non-Linked Village	FYC Non-linked Non Village	Comp. Group
2001	89%	91%	87%	86%	83%	82%	78%	78%	78%	74%	76%	74%
2002	93%	87%	87%	89%	84%	77%	80%	81%	83%	75%	76%	78%
2003	94%*	95%*	88%	91%	87%	85%	80%	84%				
2004	92%	86%	89%	88%								

*Chi square revealed a significant difference between FYC Village and other groups.

FYC students participating in the linked courses within the FYC Village take these courses during the fall semester; GPA data for fall were not available for this report. However, data for each of the subsequent spring semesters were used to determine program impact on academic performance beyond the first semester.

Figure 15. GPA Results for FYC Village and Comparison Groups

	Spring of Year 1				Spring of Year 2				Spring of Year 3			
	FYC Village Linked	FYC Non-Linked Village	FYC Non-linked Non Village	Comp. Group	FYC Village Linked	FYC Non-Linked Village	FYC Non-linked Non Village	Comp. Group	FYC Village Linked	FYC Non-Linked Village	FYC Non-linked Non Village	Comp. Group
2001	2.91	2.86	2.87	2.85	2.95	2.86	2.89	2.89	3.01	2.80	2.86	2.87
2002	3.07	2.99	2.98	2.97	3.10*	2.93	2.99	2.93	3.08*	2.93	3.04	2.96
2003	2.97	3.12*	2.99	2.88	2.95	3.11*	3.01	2.89				
2004	2.99	2.97	2.95	2.96								

*Analysis of variance significant, $p < .05$.

Results for the 2002 cohort showed that students living in the FYC Village who took a linked course had significantly higher spring GPA's in their second and third years than students living in the FYC Village but not taking a linked course, and the Comparison Group. As students who entered in 2002 and participated in the linked courses had significantly higher AI's than other groups, these data should be interpreted with caution, however. For the 2003 cohort, FYC Village and Non-Village students outperformed the Comparison Group during spring of their first year. In addition, data from year 2 showed that FYC Village students who had not taken a linked course their first year outperformed FYC students who had taken the linked course and the Comparison Group. No significant differences were observed for the 2004 cohort.

Data on suspensions yielded no significant group difference for any analyses other than marginally significant findings that fewer 2001 students not living in the FYC Village had been suspended after their second year, and more 2002 non-linked Village students had been suspended following their first year. Small percentages of students from all groups were suspended from the University.

Figure 16. Suspension Results for FYC Village and Comparison Groups

	Fall of 2 nd Year (Suspended after Year 1)				Fall of 3 rd Year (Suspended after Year 2)				Fall of 4 th Year (Suspended after Year 3)			
	FYC Village Linked	FYC Non-Linked Village	FYC Non-linked Non Village	Comp. Group	FYC Village Linked	FYC Non-Linked Village	FYC Non-linked Non Village	Comp. Group	FYC Village Linked	FYC Non-Linked Village	FYC Non-linked Non Village	Comp. Group
2001	3%	3%	2%	4%	4%	6%	3%*	6%	4%	9%	5%	9%
2002	1%	5%*	1%	3%	4%	6%	3%	6%	4%	6%	4%	6%
2003	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	4%	4%				
2004	3%	2%	2%	3%								

Chi square test revealed marginally significant difference, $p < .08$

Data analyses for the first three cohort years on percentages of students withdrawing from the University suggested a trend towards higher withdrawal rates for students who did not live in the FYC Village, although the difference was only marginally significant. It is possible that FYC programming within the Village residence halls has enhanced the resilience of students who may be at risk for attrition by promoting close interaction with the adviser and activities encouraging integration into the campus community.

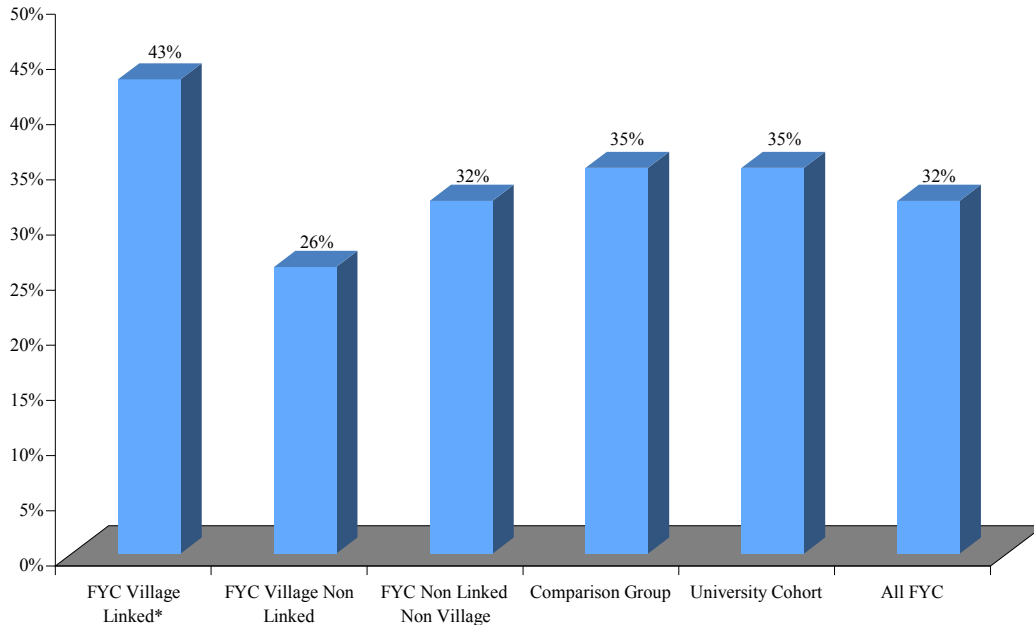
Figure 17. Withdrawal Results for FYC Village and Comparison Groups

	Fall of 2 nd Year (Withdrawn after Year 1)				Fall of 3 rd Year (Withdrawn after Year 2)				Fall of 4 th Year (Withdrawn after Year 3)			
	FYC Village Linked	FYC Non-Linked Village	FYC Non-linked Non Village	Comp. Group	FYC Village Linked	FYC Non-Linked Village	FYC Non-linked Non Village	Comp. Group	FYC Village Linked	FYC Non-Linked Village	FYC Non-linked Non Village	Comp. Group
2001	8%	6%	11%	10%	13%	12%	18%*	15%	17%	17%	19%	17%
2002	6%	8%	12%*	9%	12%	17%	17%	13%	13%	18%	21%	16%
2003	4%	4%	11%*	7%	11%	14%	17%*	11%				
2004	5%	12%	9%	9%								

Chi square test revealed marginally significant difference, $p < .08$

Available graduation rate data for the 2001 cohort of students showed that students participating in linked courses during their first semester at NC State had significantly higher graduation rates than all other groups in the analysis, including the University Cohort group.

Figure 18. Four-Year Graduation Rates for FYC Village and Comparison Groups



*Chi square showed significantly higher graduation rate, $p < .02$.

Additional graduation rate data will determine whether this positive trend will continue for future cohorts living in the FYC Village and participating in the linked courses.

Summary of Academic Outcomes

When examining results for all FYC cohorts, it becomes apparent that as a group overall, FYC students perform as well as or better than Comparison Group students in almost all analyses conducted. FYC students were retained at the same rate or higher than the Comparison Group, and in many cases earned higher GPA's. Fewer FYC students were suspended across several cohort years, and data in recent years show a slight decline in the percentages of students withdrawing after their first year. Graduation rate data showed few differences between FYC and the Comparison Group, but increases in the percentages graduating within four or five years for recent cohorts. Again, the finding that FYC students perform comparably to, or better than, comparison group students suggests that FYC programming has been largely successful in reducing the risk and challenges these students face upon entry to college without a major or career direction.

Data on the FYC Village programming show some positive trends in support of this type of programming. Trends showed that students living in the FYC Village were somewhat more likely to be retained and some groups had higher GPAs, particularly those participating in linked courses from the 2002 cohort (see earlier caution, however). There was some evidence that students not living in the FYC Village were more likely to withdraw following their first year, although only marginal significance levels were obtained. Four-year graduation rates, however, showed that significantly more FYC students living in the Village and taking a linked course during their first semester had graduated within four years. Additional data is needed to determine whether this trend will continue.

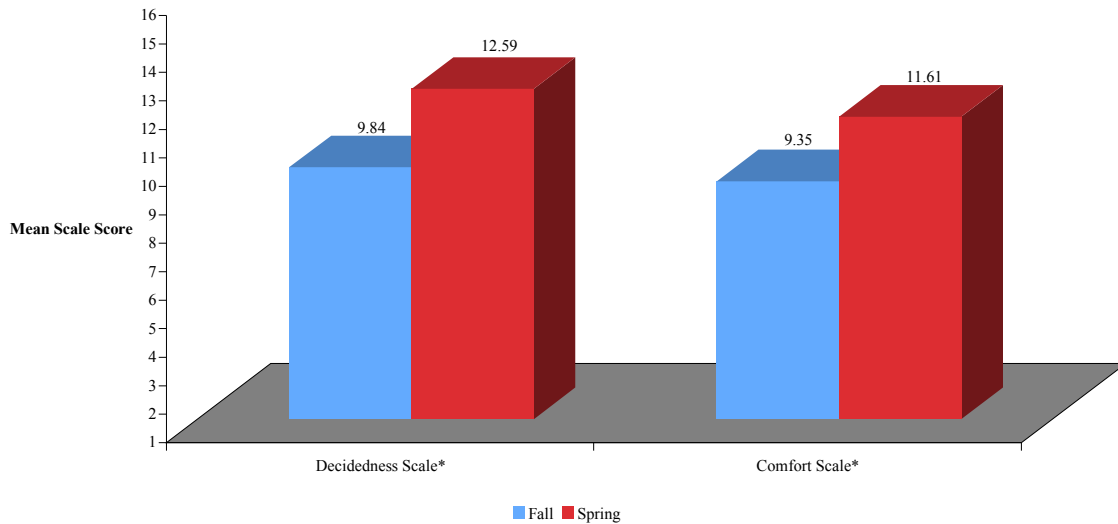
Facilitating Decision-Making about a Major/Career

FYC students' decision-making with respect to the selection of a major and career has been investigated in several ways each year. The results of the Career Decision Profile (Jones, 1988) given to students at the beginning and end of the school year are used to determine whether decision-making in the area of career/major choice changed significantly over the course of the year. In addition, transfer rates to a major have been examined midway through the third semester. Another important variable which this report addresses are the number of times FYC and comparison group students subsequently change majors; one of the desired outcomes of FYC is to reduce the percentage of students who “major hop” and possibly delay their graduation. Each of these areas is addressed below.

Career Decision Profile Results

FYC students take the Career Decision Profile (CDP) within the first two weeks of the fall semester, and again within the last two weeks of their spring semester. The instrument gauges how decided students are with respect to selecting a major/career area, their comfort level with their decision and knowledge about majors and careers, and how concerned they are about the decision. Results for the 1997-2004 cohorts combined show significant growth from the beginning to end of the year on all areas measured by the instrument.

Figure 19. FYC Students' Decidedness and Comfort with their Career Choice,

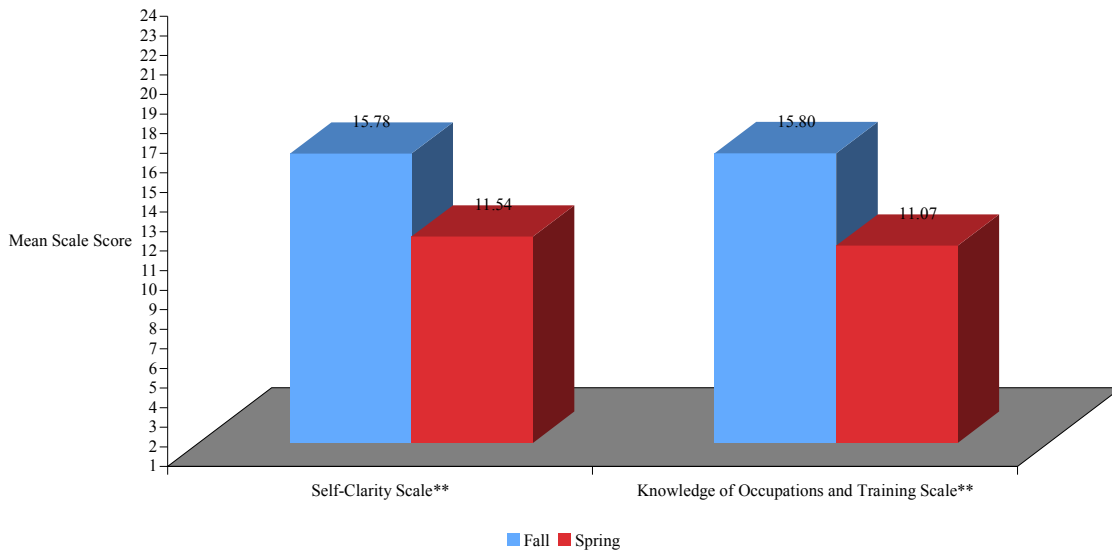


Note: Total possible score for both subscales was 16.

* $p < .0001$

T-test procedures yielded a statistically significant increase for FYC students' level of decidedness (e.g., "I have an occupational field in mind that I want to work in") and comfort with career choice decision (e.g., "I'm not so worried about my career choice"). Significant growth was also observed for students' self-clarity related to their understanding of their interests, abilities and personality and how these factors fit different occupations (e.g., "I need to have a clearer idea of what my interests are"), as well as their knowledge about those occupations and educational programs they are considering (e.g., "I do not feel I know enough about the occupations I am considering").

Figure 20. FYC Students' Self-Clarity and Knowledge About Occupations and Training*



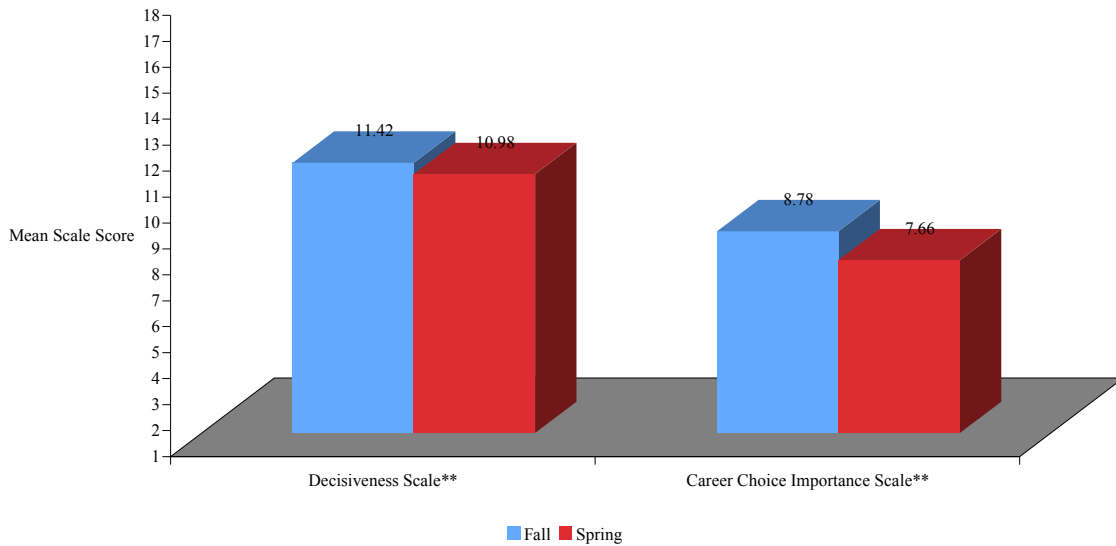
*Items on this scale are worded negatively, so positive growth is shown by lower scores.

Note: Total possible score for both subscales was 24.

** $p < .0001$

FYC students also showed less indecisiveness by the end of their first year (e.g., I frequently have difficulty making decisions), and were more concerned about making a career choice (e.g., I don't need to make a vocational choice at this time").

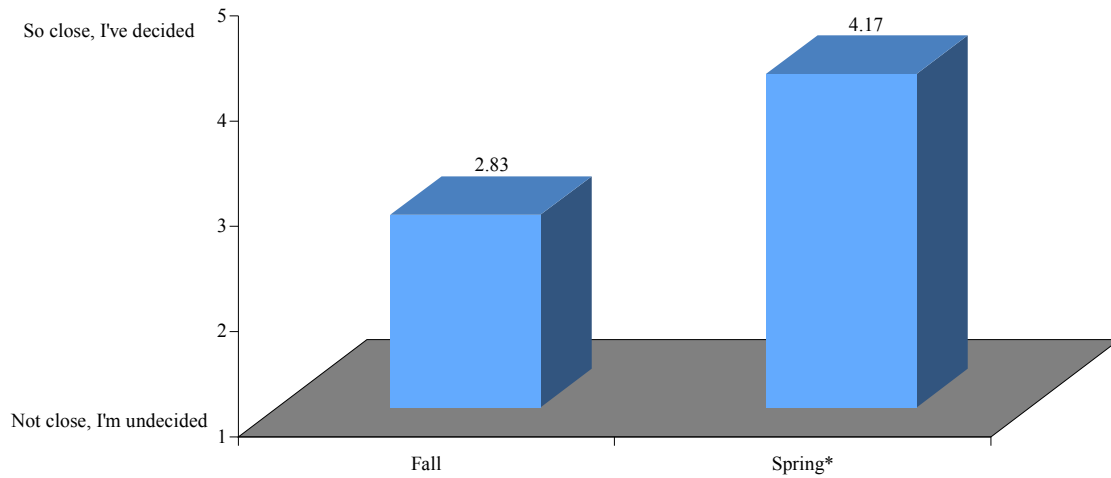
Figure 21. FYC Students' Decisiveness and Concern with Career Choice*



*Items on this scale are worded negatively, so positive growth is shown by lower scores.
Note: Total possible score for both subscales was 24.
**p< .0001

When asked to rate how decided they were on an academic major, *FYC students made significant gains in their level of decidedness from the beginning to the end of the academic year.*

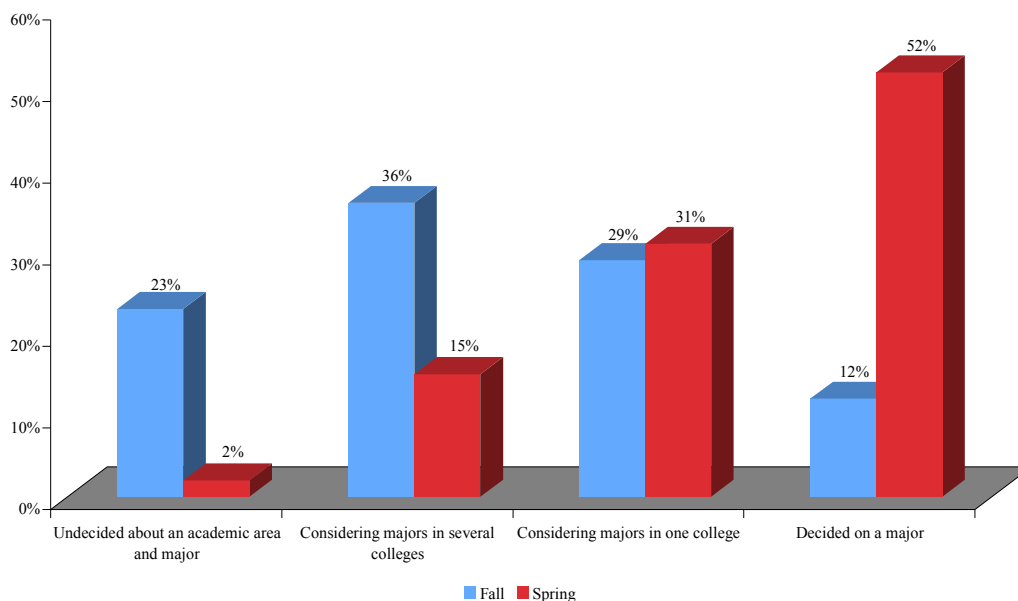
Figure 22. FYC Students Level of Decidedness on an Academic Major



*p < .0001

Further data on major decision-making showed that by the end of the spring semester slightly more than half have decided on a specific major, while another 31% have narrowed their choice down to majors within a particular college. Just 17% report that they are either considering majors in several colleges or are still completely undecided.

Figure 23. Percentages of FYC Students in each Level of Major Decision-Making Category

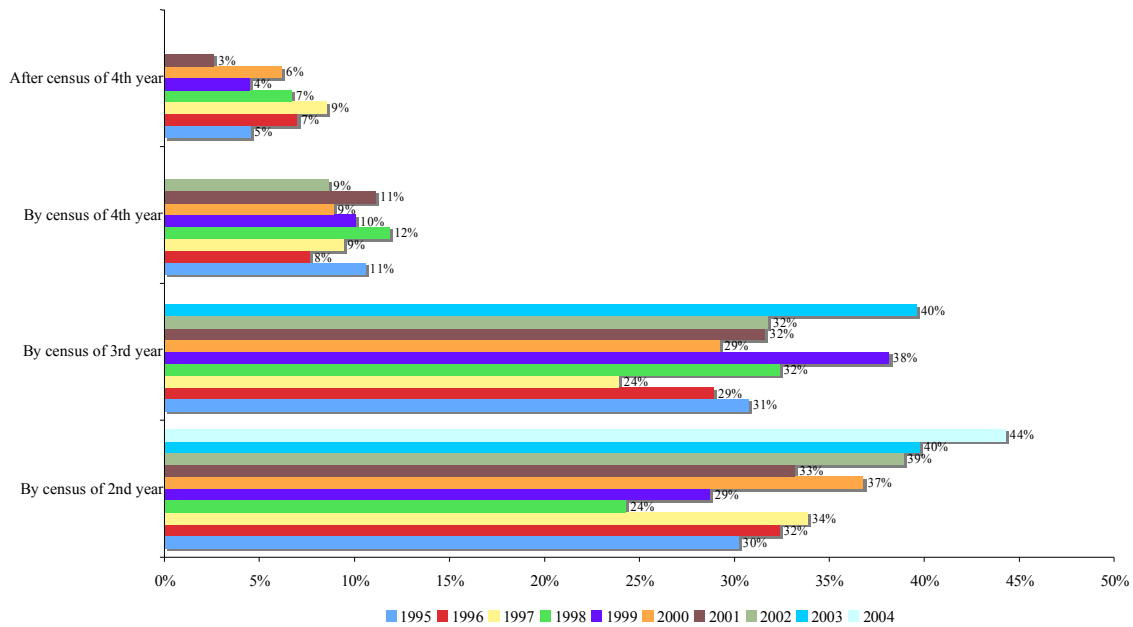


Transfer Into a Major

Although students' self-reports of their career/major decision-making are important in understanding the impact of the program, it is also important to address whether students matriculate to a degree program in a timely fashion. In order to address this question, FYC students in each cohort year were tracked to see when they actually transferred out of FYC into a major.

The figure below shows the percentages of FYC students who transferred by census point in the fall of each academic year. During the first three years of FYC, approximately one-third of students transferred by the beginning of their third semester, while percentages for the next few cohorts declined slightly. ***However, data for the three most recent FYC cohorts shows an increased percentage transferring to a major by census of their second year, with nearly half of the 2004 cohort transferring by this point.*** These findings are consistent with recent adviser efforts to ensure students matriculate in a timely manner.

Figure 24. Percentages of FYC Students Transferring* to a Major, 1995-2004



*As of census point in fall of each academic year. Results are based on all students who entered within each cohort year, regardless of whether they were retained to the next year.

Number of Times Students Change Majors

One of the reasons for the creation of FYC was to reduce students' tendency to change majors frequently. In order to gauge whether FYC was effective in this area, the number of times students changed majors after their initial selection was examined for FYC cohorts and the comparison group. This analysis looked at both within college major changes (e.g., changing from an accounting major to a business management major) as well as across college major changes (e.g., changing from an Engineering major to an English major). *It should be noted that percentages of students changing majors will, of course, be lower for more recent cohorts, as they have not had as much opportunity to make changes, given their shorter duration at the university.*

Figure 25. Number of Times Students' Made *Within* College Major Changes, 1995-2004

	Zero		One		More than One	
	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.
1995	94%	84%	6%	15%*	0%	1%
1996	92%	83%	8%	16%*	0%	1%
1997	93%	85%	7%	15%*	0%	0%
1998	96%	87%	4%	13%*	0%	0%
1999	93%	87%	7%	12%*	0%	0%
2000	93%	88%	7%	12%*	0%	0%
2001	95%	88%	5%	12%*	0%	0%
2002	94%	85%	6%	15%*	0%	0%
2003	97%	85%	3%	15%*	0%	0%
2004	99%	90%	1%	10%*	0%	0%

*Chi square revealed significant difference, $p < .0001$.

Chi square analyses showed that Comparison Group students were significantly more likely than FYC students to have made at least one within college major change. In addition, Comparison Group students were more likely than FYC students to make a major change across colleges.

Figure 26. Number of Times Students' Made *Across* College Major Changes, 1995-2004

	Zero		One		More than One	
	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.
1995	94%	85%	5%	15%*	1%	0%
1996	94%	83%	6%	17%*	0%	0%
1997	94%	83%	6%	17%*	0%	0%
1998	96%	82%	4%	18%*	0%	0%
1999	92%	82%	7%	17%*	1%	1%
2000	95%	86%	5%	14%*	0%	0%
2001	95%	88%	4%	12%*	1%	0%
2002	96%	86%	4%	13%*	0%	1%
2003	96%	90%	4%	10%*	0%	0%

	Zero		One		More than One	
	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.
2004	99%	95%	1%	5%*	0%	0%

*Chi square revealed significant difference, $p < .0001$.

Not surprisingly, significant differences were found for the total number of major changes made (combining within and across college changes), with more Comparison than FYC students making at least one major change overall. *In fact, the percentage of Comparison students with at least one major change was more than twice that, and in some cases more than three times, the percentage of FYC students with at least one change.*

Figure 27. Total Number of Times Students Changed Majors, 1995-2004

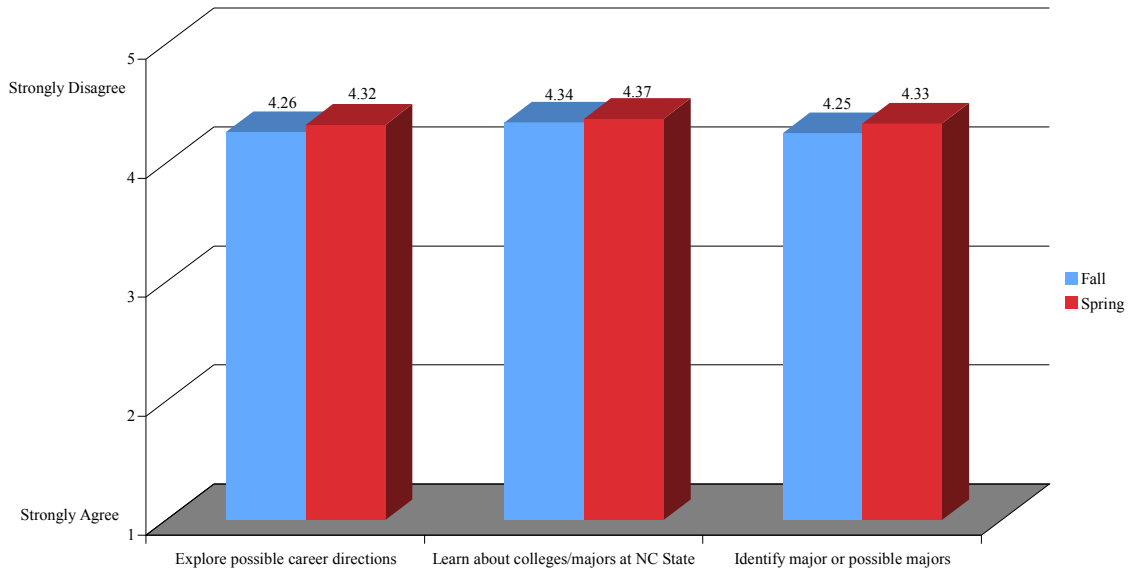
	Zero		One		More than One	
	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.	FYC	Comp.
1995	88%	70%	10%	29%*	2%	1%
1996	86%	66%	12%	33%*	1%	1%
1997	87%	68%	11%	32%*	2%	0%
1998	92%	69%	7%	30%*	1%	1%
1999	85%	70%	14%	28%*	1%	2%
2000	88%	74%	10%	26%*	2%	0%
2001	90%	76%	8%	24%*	1%	1%
2002	90%	72%	9%	27%*	1%	1%
2003	93%	75%	6%	25%*	1%	0%
2004	99%	86%	1%	14%*	0%	0%

*Chi square revealed significant difference, $p < .0001$.

Course Evaluation Results

Course evaluation data from the most recent cohort of 2004 FYC students typify the pattern of findings observed each year of the program. These data reveal that students believe that the USC courses they take during the fall and spring of their first year contribute positively to their major and career decision-making.

Figure 28. The FYC Courses Helped or Encouraged Me To...



During both semesters FYC students believed that the courses promoted their ability to examine careers and majors at NC State, and to identify a major or possible major.

Summary of Major/Career Decision-Making Outcomes

FYC has clearly been successful at helping students gain appropriate information about themselves and the options available to them in terms of making a decision about a major and career. Across all years of the program FYC students have shown significant gains on all areas within the Career Decision Profile, including decidedness on an academic major. While significant numbers of students remained in FYC beyond the first year for the first five years of the program, data from recent program years showed that increased percentages have matriculated by the beginning of their second year. In addition, significantly fewer FYC than Comparison Group students made both within college and across college major changes. It appears that the advising model and FYC curricula which emphasize self-discovery and reflection and how to connect this information to appropriate majors and careers is successful in promoting effective decision-making, and reducing the necessity of changing majors once an initial selection has been made.

Facilitating Co-Curricular Learning, Involvement and Integration Into the Campus Community

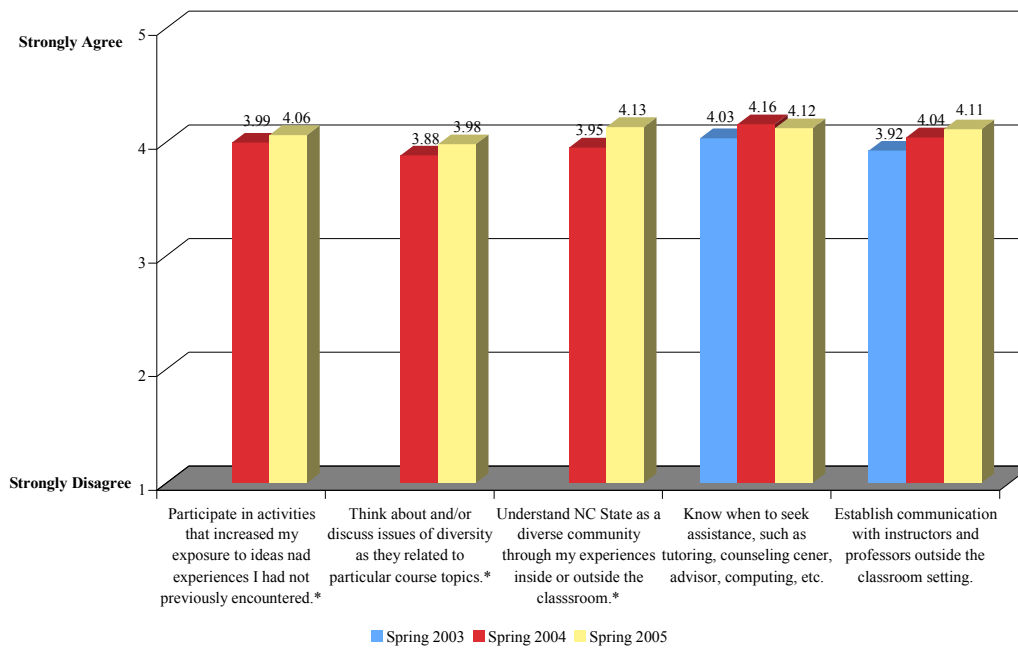
It is the philosophy of FYC that learning within the university is not limited to an "official" curriculum consisting of required coursework and assignments; rather, a variety of opportunities for learning and discovery occur outside of class. This extended learning, labeled "co-curricular" learning, is recognized in the large body of research that traces the impact of experiential and out-of-class learning on student adjustment and retention, academic excellence, and advances across the domains of human development (e.g., Kuh, 1994; Davis & Murrell, 1994). Students are made aware of the various out-of-class activities available to them, as well as the importance of being well integrated to the campus culture through taking advantage of campus resources and regular contact with professors. FYC provides a Forum Experience requirement as part of the FYC curriculum in which students participate in self-selected campus or community cultural, educational, vocational and wellness activities.

Each year students' self-reports on course evaluations of their level of satisfaction with co-curricular components, reported levels of participation in campus events, and qualitative descriptions of co-curricular activities have been used annually to assess the impact of the program and provide a broad picture of co-curricular programming. For the purposes of this report, a brief summary of students' responses to course evaluation items regarding integration into the campus community is provided for recent survey years. In addition, self-report data on participation in co-curricular campus activities from the NC State Sophomore Survey for FYC and Comparison Group students were used to provide a glimpse of participation levels beyond the first year.

Course Evaluation Results

Course evaluation data from 2003 through 2005 show that students believe that the FYC courses have helped them become involved with the campus community, and item means covering these topics have increased slightly in the past few years.

Figure 29. FYC Courses Helped Me To...



*Item not used for 2003 evaluation.

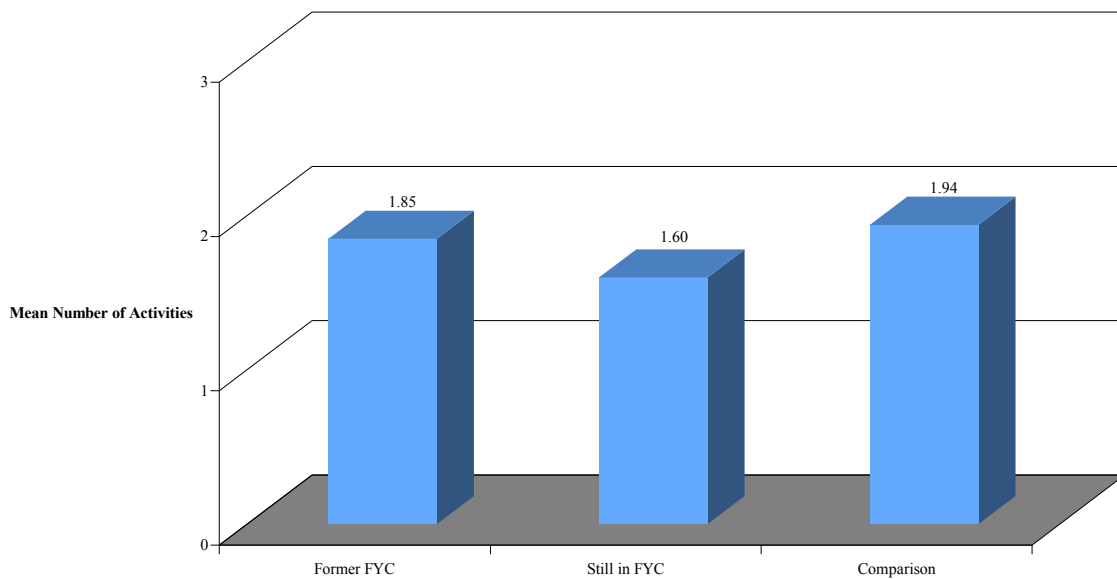
Students believe that the FYC courses encouraged them to initiate communication with faculty outside the classroom setting, as well as understand the various campus resources available to them, and when to use them. The course and the out-of-class activities fostered their understanding of the diverse campus community, and engage in reflection and discussion of diversity issues as they related to course topics. Students also reported that the required out-of-class activities encouraged them to participate in experiences they might not have previously encountered. *While the requirement of participation in out-of-class activities has historically been evaluated relatively lower than other course topics such as major/career decision-making, past and current data have shown that the majority of students believe that engaging in these activities is “good for them” in the sense that it enhances their awareness of all the university has to offer.*

FYC Students’ Subsequent Engagement in Campus Activities

The NC State Sophomore Survey addresses students’ reported level of involvement in co-curricular activities such as visual/performing arts, student government, and organizations or clubs related to students’ majors. A review of data from past cohorts revealed no significant difference in level of participation between FYC and Comparison Group students, and in fact, Comparison Group students had slightly higher rates of involvement. However, data from these surveys yielded results only for students who were still in FYC at the end of their sophomore year, and thus may not have been representative of students

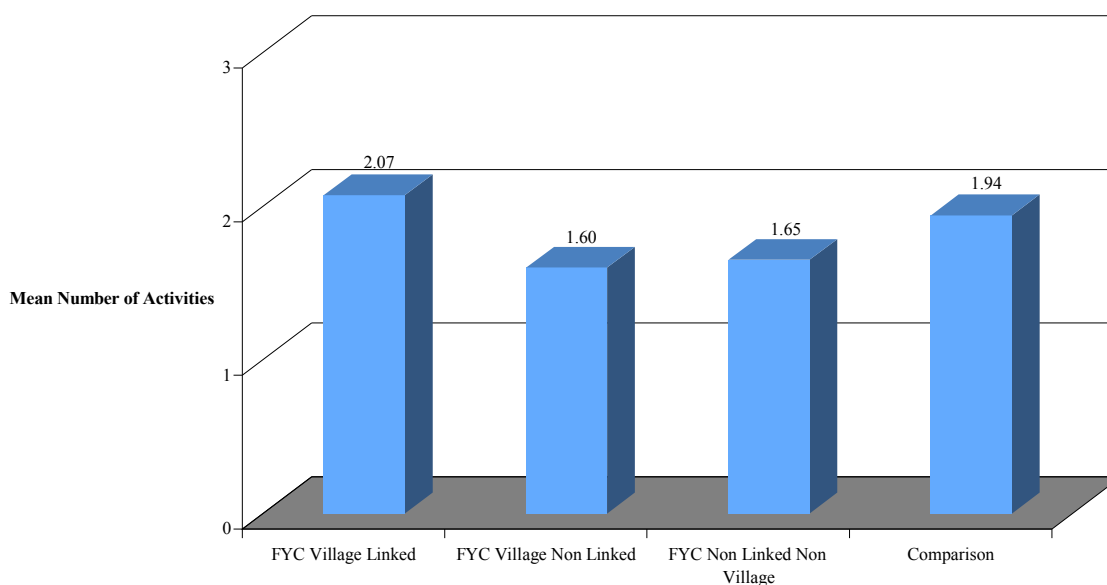
who had already matriculated. Data for the 2002 cohort (on the 2004 survey) were available by whether students taking the survey were still in FYC or had matriculated to a major. Again these data should be interpreted with caution as they represent less than one-third (30%) of FYC students.

Figure 30. Participation in Co-Curricular Activities as Reported on Sophomore Survey, 2002 FYC and Comparison Group Students



No significant group differences were observed, but Comparison Group students reported engaging in a greater number of activities than either former or current FYC students. It is noteworthy also that all groups reported engaging on average fewer than two activities. In order to ascertain participation rates as a function of FYC Village programming, data were examined separately for FYC Village groups.

Figure 31. Participation in Co-Curricular Activities as Reported on Sophomore Survey, 2002 FYC Village Groups



Not surprisingly, no significant difference was observed, but students living in the FYC Village and taking the linked course their first semester had the highest level of involvement. This finding is consistent with the pattern observed for the academic performance results for this cohort (see earlier discussion) and may in part be due to some preexisting differences between these students and their counterparts.

Summary of Co-Curricular Learning, Involvement and Integration Outcomes

FYC students were positive regarding the impact of FYC programming that promotes their participation in activities they had previously not encountered, and that these activities increased their awareness of NC State as a diverse community. They also believed that FYC helped them understand the importance of connecting with faculty outside the classroom, and understand and know when to use the variety of campus resources available to them. Conclusions from the sophomore survey data, while necessarily limited due to the relatively small sample size completing the survey, seem to indicate no significant difference between FYC and Comparison Group students on subsequent participation in campus activities after the first year. A small but non-significant positive difference was found for students living in the FYC Village and taking a linked course their first semester, but much more data is needed to determine whether this trend will continue.

FYC Student Satisfaction

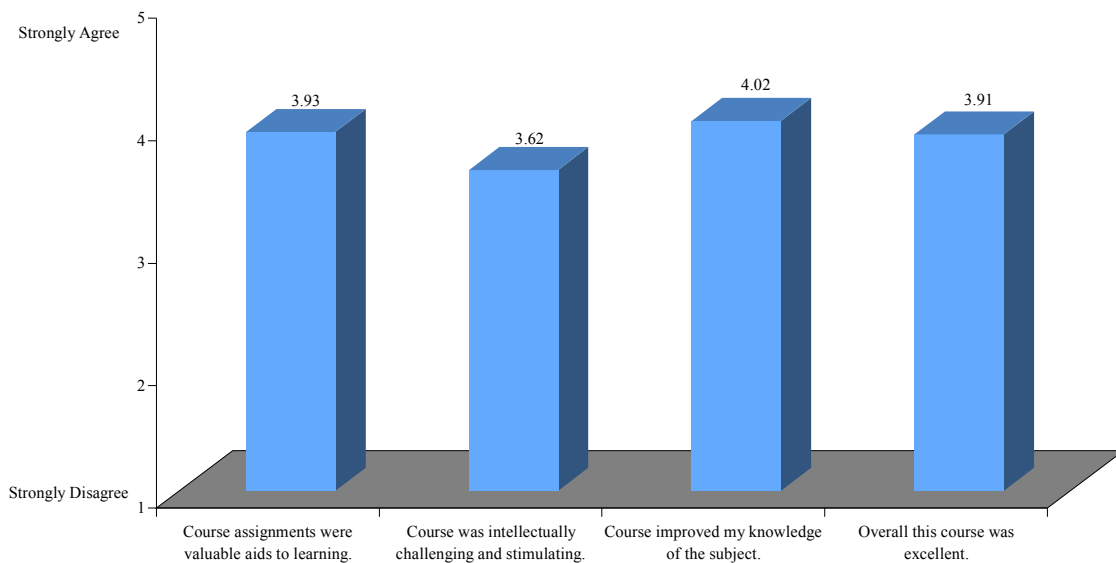
A variety of student satisfaction measures are administered each year to FYC students. FYC course evaluations provide students' perspectives on the effectiveness of the courses, and the ACT Survey of Academic Advising provides indication of how students rate the effectiveness of their advisers. Graduating students are also asked to rate the effectiveness of the advising they received in FYC on the Graduating Senior Survey. Data from these instruments is provided below.

Evaluation of FYC Curricula

FYC students are asked to rate the FYC courses at the end of each semester. Questions are asked regarding students' overall perceptions of the usefulness of the courses as well as students' impressions of the effectiveness of various course components and their rating of their instructor, who for the most part is also their adviser.

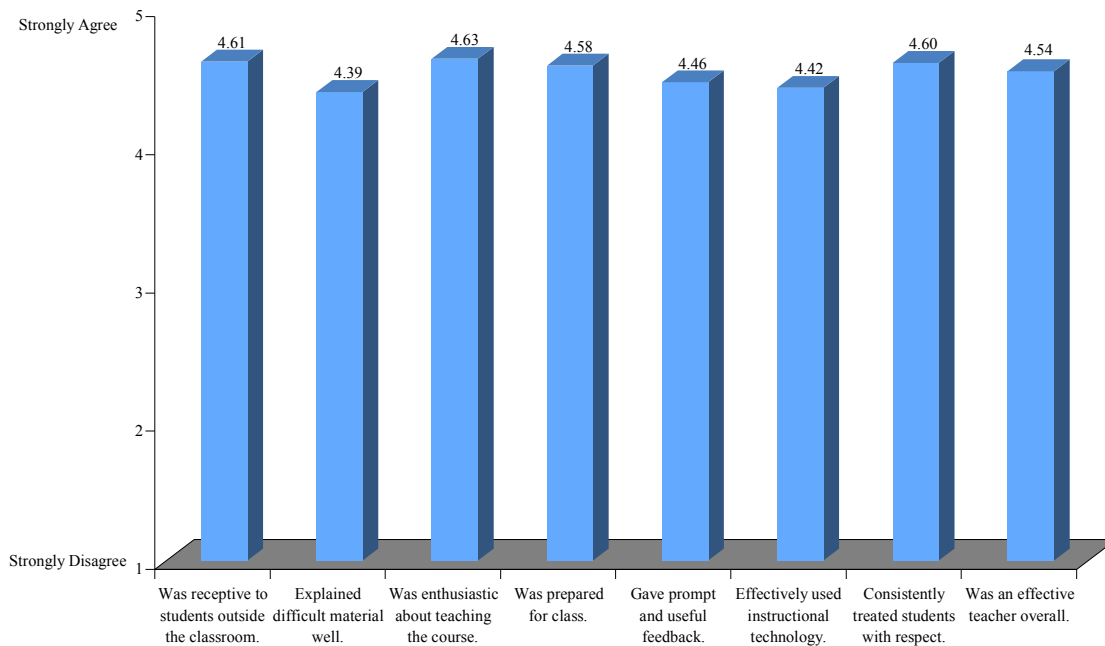
Results from the most recent spring course evaluation (spring 2005) are representative of the pattern of findings found since the program's inception. FYC students generally perceived that the FYC courses were valuable and improved their knowledge; they were somewhat less likely to agree that the courses were intellectually challenging or stimulating.

Figure 32. Students' Overall Impressions of the FYC Courses, 2005



Without exception, FYC students have been highly positive about their course instructor (who is also their adviser) and the way the FYC courses are taught. Mean ratings above four on a five-point scale have been found for all course evaluations, 1995-2005. The figure from the most recent course evaluation illustrates the pattern observed over the past ten years.

Figure 33. Students' Impression of their FYC Course Instructor, 2005



FYC students report that their instructor was an effective, enthusiastic teacher, who was receptive to students outside the classroom and treated students with respect. They also believed their instructor was well-prepared, explained the course material well, gave prompt and useful feedback and effectively used instructional technology within class. Clearly students are satisfied with their course instructor, and believe these courses are accomplishing their objectives.

Evaluation of Advising

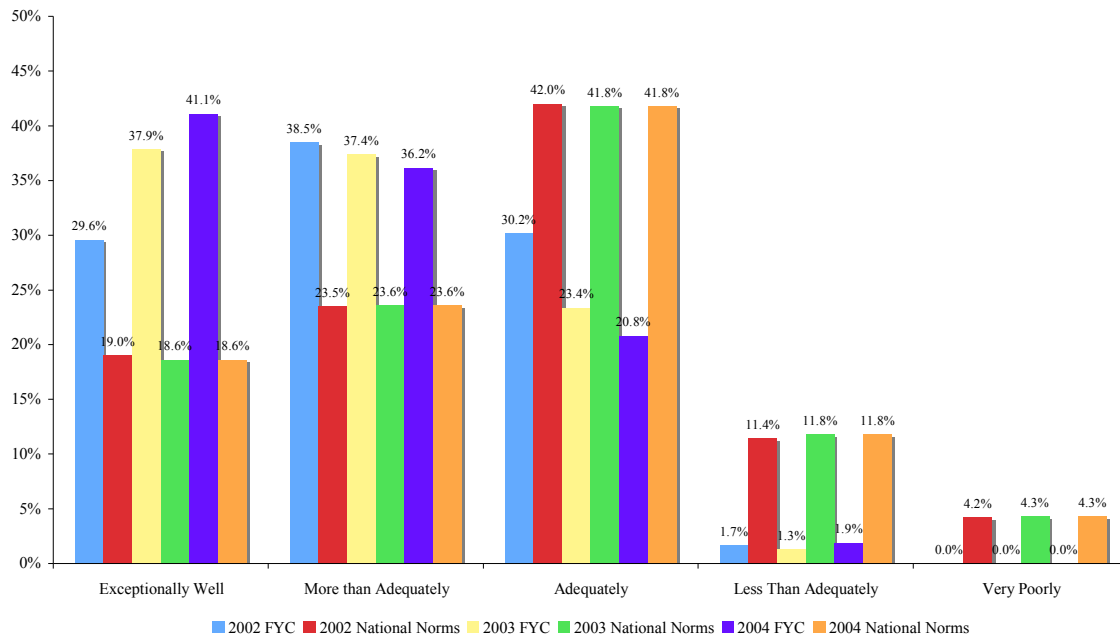
ACT Survey of Academic Advising Results

Students rate the advising they receive at the end of each spring semester on the ACT Survey of Academic Advising¹⁴. A review of results from the three most recent cohorts showed that FYC students were very positive regarding the quality of advising they

¹⁴ See: <http://www.act.org/ess/fouryear.html>

received relative to students nationally¹⁵ at public institutions who completed the instrument. As the figure below shows, *more than three-quarters of FYC students over the last two cohort years indicated that the advising system meets their needs more than adequately or exceptionally well, compared with just 42% of students nationally.* An examination of previous survey data showed that percentages of FYC students ranking the advising system as meeting their needs “exceptionally well” has increased in recent years.

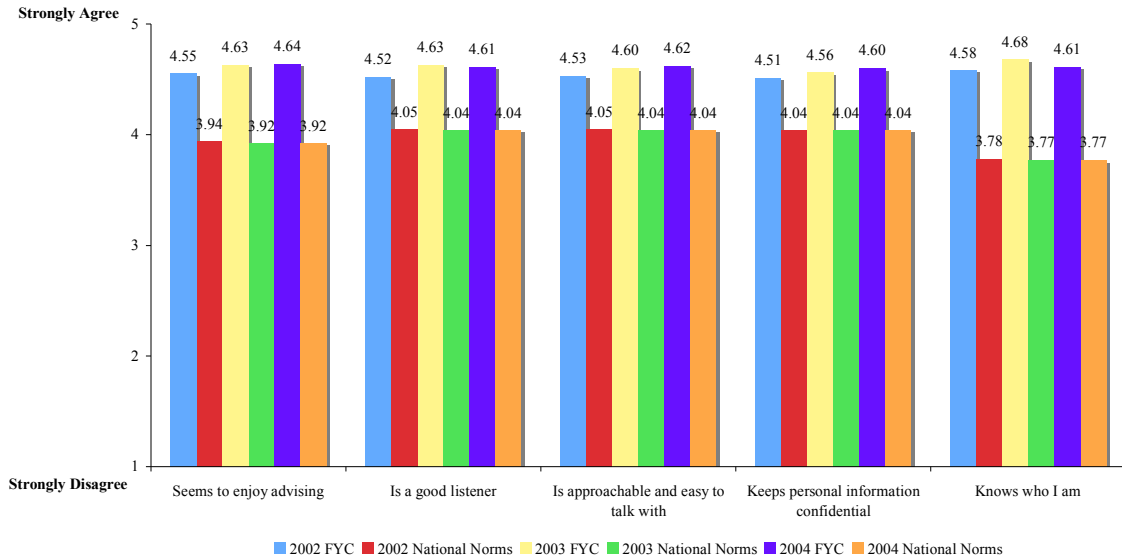
Figure 34. Academic Advising System Meeting Student Needs...



FYC students have very favorable impressions of their adviser, as the figure below shows. The top 5 most highly rated characteristics of advisers from survey results consistently have shown that *FYC students are more positive than students nationally that their adviser knows who they are, is a good listener, is approachable and easy to talk with, seems to enjoy advising, and keeps personal information confidential.* In addition, FYC student ratings from all the characteristics of advisers have consistently averaged above four on a five-point scale.

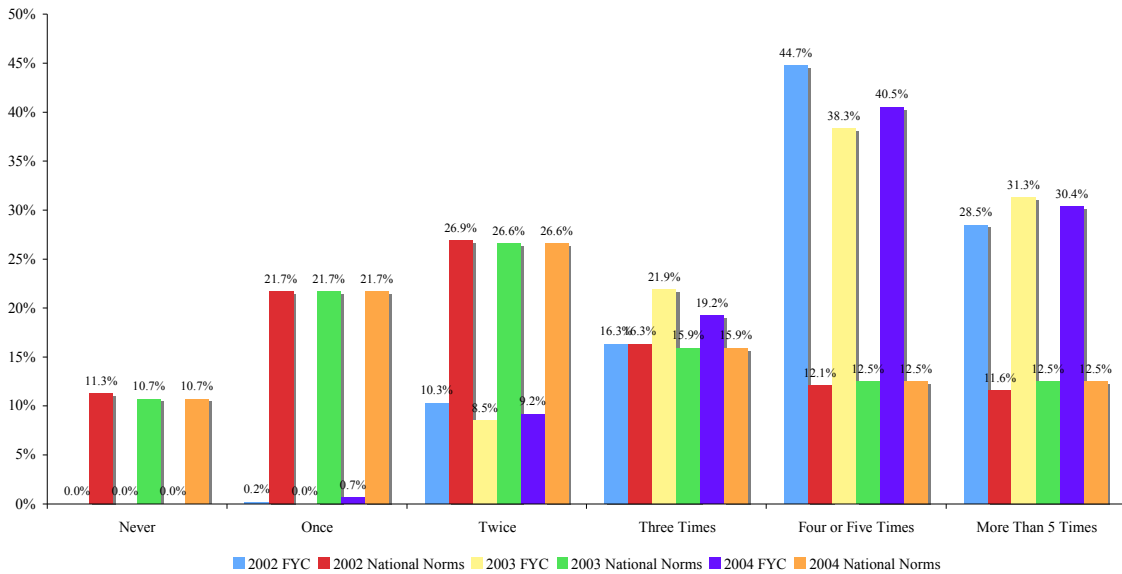
¹⁵ National norms are based on records from 47 public postsecondary institutions that administered the survey between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 2005. Normative data of this type are usually referred to as “user norms” because they simply represent a composite of the data obtained by a number of institutions that administered the survey during a particular period of time.

Figure 35. Impressions of Your Adviser: Top 5 Items



FYC students also tended to have more contacts with their adviser than students nationally. This is not surprising given the nature of the FYC model, which requires students to meet twice per semester with their adviser in addition to the weekly FYC class meetings. *Between two-thirds and three-quarters of FYC students reported meeting at least four times (outside FYC class) with their adviser during the year, in comparison with fewer than one-quarter of students nationally.*

Figure 36. Frequency of Meetings with Adviser

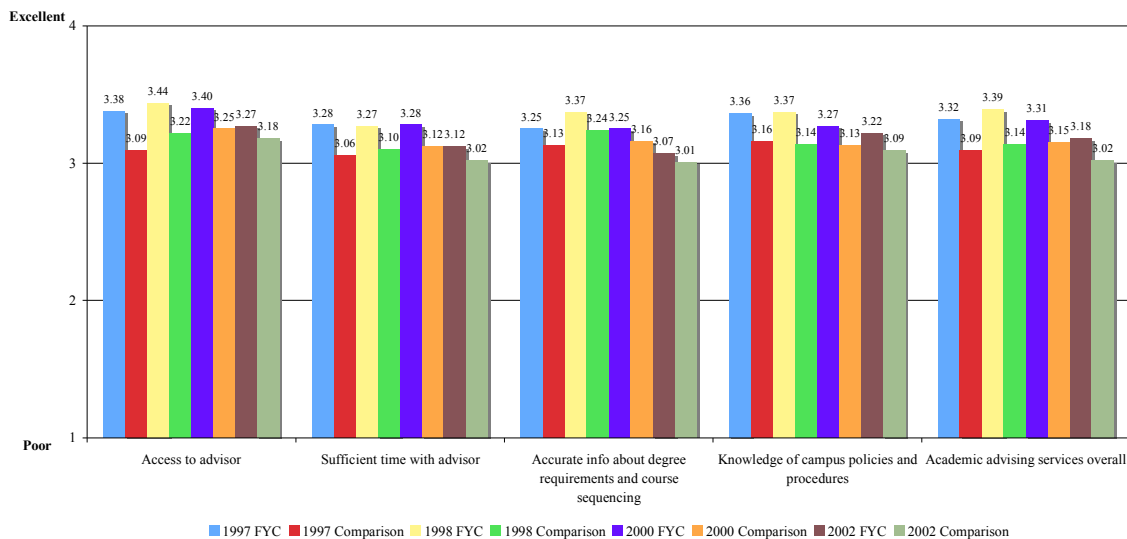


NC State Sophomore Survey Results

NC State University administers a Sophomore Survey every other year to sophomores during their spring semester. The survey addresses issues such as satisfaction with coursework, teaching and campus resources, participation in co-curricular activities, and how many hours students are employed. For purposes of this report, data were collected from these surveys for FYC and Comparison Group students on items dealing with their experiences with advising. Data were available for the 1997, 1998, 2000 and 2002 cohort years.

Data should be interpreted with caution as survey response rates for FYC students ranged from 20-37% across all cohort groups; results may not necessarily be reflective of all student groups. Results from the survey show that the 1997-2000 FYC students (group included both current and former FYC students) rated the quality of advising they received as significantly higher than Comparison Group students for most of the areas addressed. *Analyses of variance procedures showed that significantly higher ratings were given by FYC students on access to, and sufficient time with, advisers, as well as advisers' knowledge of campus policies and procedures and advising services overall (all $p < .05$).*

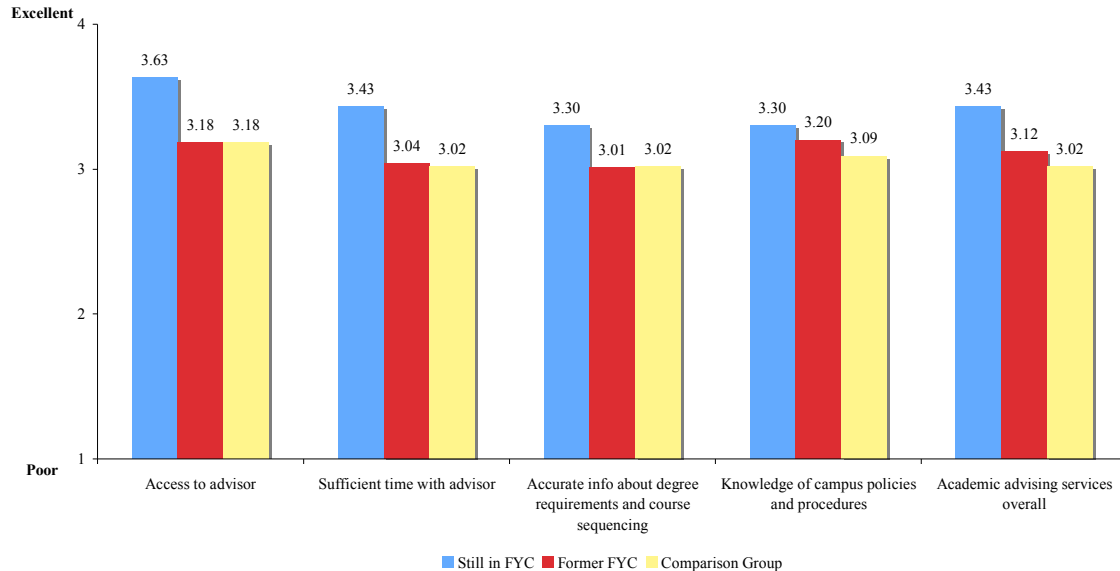
Figure 37. Sophomore Survey Results for Ratings on Academic Advising



No significant differences were found for the 2002 student cohort. However, data were available for this cohort year on whether FYC students taking the survey were still enrolled as a sophomore within FYC or whether they had matriculated to a major. *Students still in FYC in the spring of their sophomore year gave significantly ($p < .05$) higher ratings for both access to, and sufficient time with, their adviser, as well as to*

advising services overall than either former FYC or Comparison Group students. FYC students in later cohort years matriculated to a major earlier than earlier cohorts. It is likely that more FYC students in the 2002 cohort had spent an increased amount of time with their major adviser than previous cohorts, and this may explain why their ratings more closely approximate those of the Comparison Group.

Figure 38. Sophomore Survey Results for Ratings on Academic Advising by Student Enrollment in FYC, 2002 Cohort



Graduating Senior Survey Results

The Graduating Senior Survey is administered late in the spring semester to former FYC students via email. Return rates for this survey typically are around 25% (despite several attempts to encourage response), so results must be interpreted with caution. Findings from the most recent survey typify the pattern seen historically for this survey, and are overwhelmingly positive regarding students' perceptions when asked to reflect on the advising they received within FYC. Results for all items dealing with advising showed mean responses above four on a five-point agreement scale. Former FYC students reported that their adviser:

- Challenged them in appropriate ways;
- Provided an open and caring environment;
- Responded to questions/needs in a reasonable amount of time;
- Encouraged them to play active role within academic advising;
- Provided accurate information about academic policies, requirements and majors;
- Prepared them to function independently with their major adviser; and,

- Prepared them to make an informed and wise choice about a major.

A sampling of comments from former FYC students on the survey illustrate the impact that FYC advising had on their academic experience:

“At a time when there was so much uncertainty, it was extremely helpful to feel such encouragement from a teacher.”

“Had it not been for FYC teaching me how to choose and register for the correct classes I might have been a little lost.”

“This was my only advising time I have ever had at NC State. Once I moved into my major, my GPA was high enough to never be required to meet with my advisor. Without FYC, my experience here I believe would have been truly difficult. Meeting with an advisor every week during your first year at college and as an out of state student was the best experience.”

“The advising experience within First Year College was great. I feel as though I didn’t have just one advisor but I have 3 or 4. All the advisors treated me so well and helped me so much that I still stop by to say hello.”

Clearly in retrospect former FYC students appreciate the quality of advising they received and the support to function independently once they matriculated to their major.

Summary of Student Satisfaction Results

FYC students are primarily positive regarding most aspects of the FYC experience. They believe the FYC courses are generally valuable and are fulfilling the intended purposes of fostering their major/career decision-making (see discussion from earlier section). Students assign very high ratings to their instructor who is also their adviser, indicating that they enthusiastic and effective teachers. ACT Survey of Advising results reveal that, not surprisingly, FYC students had more frequent interaction with their adviser, and this likely contributed to them having more favorable impressions of their adviser than students nationally. They rated their adviser highly on traits which are described as important by NACADA Core Values, such as maintaining respect for student confidentiality and being a good listener and easy to talk to.

When sophomores were asked to evaluate their advising experience, those remaining in FYC into the sophomore year were significantly more positive than Comparison Group students for all items addressed. Graduating students also reflected on their advising experience within FYC as very positive, and that this experience both helped them make a wise decision about a major, and provided the foundation for them to function independently with their major adviser.

CONCLUSIONS

Results from a ten-year assessment of the First Year College suggest that this program continues to be very successful in achieving its goals, and clearly meets the needs of first year students who desire a year of guidance and exploration before selecting a major. While research has shown academic advising to be one of the weakest areas within the college experience, FYC is clearly providing an alternative experience designed to foster student retention, academic success and wise and reflective decision-making about a major and career.

In almost all academic areas addressed, FYC students performed similar to, or better than, a matched comparison group of students. It is important to note again that a finding of no significant difference may in fact also be a positive outcome for FYC, given that it is designed to attract students who possess characteristics that may place them at an increased risk for attrition (e.g., uncertainty about a major or goals). FYC students were as likely, or more likely to be retained, and had in many cases higher GPA's than comparison students. FYC students were frequently less likely to be suspended, and had similar rates of withdrawal from the University. FYC and comparison students who left the University enrolled at other institutions at a similar rate; results from the five-year assessment had previously suggested that FYC students had enrolled at higher rates. Reasons for the discrepancy in these findings are unclear; however, further inspection of the data revealed no difference in the enrollment rate of FYC students (ranging between 49-64% for the first five years and 51-70% for the past five years). Comparison group students who left NC State did enroll at higher rates, however (28-62% for the first five years and 52-76% for the past five years).

Results for five- and six-year graduation rate data show that FYC students have graduated at rates similar to comparison students, and these rates in recent years more closely approximate those seen for the entire university cohorts. Four-year graduation rates were lower for FYC than comparison students in the early years of the program; however these rates have increased over the past three years from fewer than 20%, to close to one-third graduating within this time frame.

The programming provided through the FYC Village model suggests some positive trends, although data were somewhat mixed. Students living in the FYC Village were slightly more likely to be retained than those in FYC living elsewhere, and were less likely to withdraw following their first year. The added benefits of participating in linked courses during the fall semester are unclear; however, recent GPA data collected by program staff suggests a positive impact of the linked courses on fall 2005 GPA (only spring GPA data were available for this report) relative to other subgroups of students. Interestingly, preliminary graduation rate data suggest that 2001 FYC students who took these courses were more likely to graduate within four years. Additional data collection in upcoming years will determine whether this trend continues.

FYC programming efforts have also been successful in helping students gain information about themselves and the university relative to the selection of a major and career, and students report high levels of satisfaction with these programming areas. Results from the Career Decision Profile showed highly significant positive changes across the first year on students' decision-making in the areas of majors and careers. FYC students also are matriculating to a major sooner than during the early years of the program, with nearly half of students from recent cohorts matriculating by census of their second year as opposed to one-third from earlier cohorts. Once FYC students select their major, they are significantly less likely than comparison students to subsequently change it. Time spent in FYC presumably helps students make a wise and informed decision, and access to FYC advisers who are trained in cross-curricular advising likely helps students take the appropriate courses for their intended majors or take courses suitable for a variety of majors if they are still undecided. Comparison students without access to this type of advising are likely at a disadvantage, and thus are more likely to "major hop" until they finally settle on a degree suitable for them.

Results pertaining to co-curricular programming and involvement with the campus community are mixed. While FYC students realize and appreciate that the co-curricular programming is beneficial to them in terms of enhancing their exposure to the diverse campus community, data collected for this report do not suggest that this results in higher participation levels once they leave FYC. Preliminary data on students taking linked courses and living in the FYC Village showed that they did participate at slightly higher levels; further data is needed to determine whether this finding will be repeated for subsequent surveys. FYC staff should perhaps review programming efforts and assessment procedures in this area to determine whether additional data collection methods are warranted. It may be, for example, that FYC students are more likely to take advantage of other campus resources such as tutoring, and data collection tools could be added to the assessment plan to expand what is known about the impact of this type of programming.

Finally, students were highly satisfied with FYC programming, and in particular were very pleased with the quality of advising they received relative to students nationally. Sophomores who remained in FYC were significantly more positive about their adviser, while those who matriculated to a major showed a decline in satisfaction once they left FYC. Students graduating acknowledged the strong advising they received in FYC as having a strong impact on their academic success.

Results from the first ten years of the FYC program clearly indicate that it is fulfilling Pascarella and Terrenzini's (1991) recommendations for effective first-year programming which include helping students connect and transition to the college environment, establish major/career goals and provide a foundation for academic success.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Summary of Statistical Analyses on Academic Performance

Located online at:

http://www.ncsu.edu/fyc/info/assessments/reports/fyc_10_yr_report_appendix_a.xls