■ First-Year Academic Program Report
Class of 2009

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LOYOLA
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First-Year Academic Program Report: Class of 2009

Introduction

Research on Loyola's first-year students is conducted in order to gain a better understanding of who the first-year students are, how they perform academically, how engaged they are in the Loyola community, and how they feel about their residential experience. This information can then be used for enhancing first-year academic programs and refining intervention efforts.

Academic first-year programs—a best practice in higher education[1]—are targeted to the unique needs of individual students. First-year students may choose to participate in the Alpha Program (cross-disciplinary seminars that weave together the liberal arts and Jesuit tradition), FE 100 Program (one-credit program based on the extended orientation model), Collegium Program (living-learning community in which students enroll in three common courses), or Honors Program (selective program through which students complete a rigorous four-year interdisciplinary humanities core curriculum). Beginning in AY2003-04, students were also given the opportunity to reside in Alpha House, where they lived together on the seventh floor of Campion Towers and were enrolled in an Alpha class. Additionally, students may choose not to enroll in a first-year academic program and, therefore, are enrolled in the general academic program. This report includes comparisons among all full-time class of 2009 students across programs.

Methodology

Data for this study were drawn from a variety of sources. Demographic data were taken from the Fall 2005 Loyola College Institutional Research files which were frozen on September 19, 2006. Admissions data were provided by the Admissions office. Data were also drawn from the Fall 2005 First-Year Questionnaire Expectations and Follow-up surveys which are homegrown surveys administered to first-year students at the beginning and at the end of their first semester. These survey were administered via Blackboard to students enrolled in first-year programs. Students who were not in a first-year program were offered a pencil and paper form of the survey. Response rates varied widely among the programs and questionnaires (from 6% to 78%)[2]. The response rates and sampling errors for the questionnaires are presented in Table 1. Because of the rather large sampling errors, especially on the Follow-up survey, no significance testing was conducted for the majority of the questionnaire items.

[1] Information about the national movement to improve first-year experiences in higher education can be found online at: first-year http://www.sc.edu/fye/index.html

[2] Response rate among the General program students to the First-Year Questionnaire was extremely low; therefore, no analyses on that group are included in this report.

Table 1. Response Rates and Sampling Errors for the First-Year Questionnaire

	Expectations		Follow-up	
	Response Rate	**Sampling Error**	**Response Rate**	**Sampling Error**
Alpha	60%	± 5%	44%	± 7%
Collegium	73%	± 7%	42%	± 14%
FE 100	71%	± 5%	48%	± 8%
Honors	78%	± 7%	52%	± 13%
General	9%	± 17%	6%	± 22%

Finally, data were taken from the Fall 2005 CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Program) survey, a national survey that is administered by HERI (the Higher Education Research Institute). The CIRP was completed by 798 of the 898 first-year students for a response rate of 89%. Based on these data the sampling error for proportions was ± 1%. The analyses on CIRP data that are broken down by first-year program are based on a smaller sample; only students for whom a first-year program was known are included in these analyses.

With regard to the comparative analyses that have been conducted in this report, all group differences reported are statistically significant at the $p \leq .05$ level unless otherwise noted.

Executive Summary

- A total of 63% of the first-time, full-time freshmen participated in one of the first-year programs.
- Students of color make up a larger percentage of the Collegium program than they do all other programs except Alpha.
- Honors students have significantly higher mean high school GPAs and SAT scores than students in the other programs.
- When comparing responses by first-year program, Honors students were most likely to indicate that preparing themselves for graduate or professional school was a "very important" reason in deciding to attend college. Collegium students were least likely to indicate this.
- At the beginning of the semester, Honors students were significantly more likely than all other groups to indicate that they had a "very good chance" of making at least a "B" average.
- There were no significant differences among the first-year programs in the percentages of students indicating they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with their first-year program.
- There was little change in the responses of students on the Follow-up versus Expectations versions of the First-Year Questionnaire. The highlights of those survey responses include:
    - Some of the items students rated as most important were achieving good grades, getting involved in campus activities, and getting to know their professors.
    - On the Follow-up, students in all programs except Honors reported that their studies were not as difficult as they had expected them to be.
    - A relatively low percentage of students in all four of the programs indicated it was "very important" or "important" to attend non-required lectures.
    - A relatively low percentage of students in all the programs indicated it was "very important" or "important" to get involved in student leadership. However, these percentages increased on the Follow-up.
    - Women rated fitting in socially, meeting new and different people, and participating in college-sponsored off-campus activities more important than men did.
    - White students rated fitting in socially and meeting new and different people more important than did students of color.
- The retention rate from first-year to sophomore year was 89%.
    - There were no differences in retention based on gender, race/ethnicity, and campus residency status.
    - Students from the five states where the majority of Loyola students come from – Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania – were retained at a higher rate than students not from these locations.

  - Students who were retained to sophomore year had a significantly higher GPA than those who were not retained (3.13 vs. 3.06).
  - There were no differences among the first-year programs in the percentages of students retained.
- Honors students had a higher Fall term mean GPA and a higher Spring term mean GPA than students in all the other programs.

Detailed Findings

Who the First-Year Students Are

There were 898 full-time, first-year students in the class of 2009. As seen in Table 2, 37% of the first-year students did not participate in a first-year program; 63% did. Analyses were conducted to determine whether there were differences in the types of students being drawn to the various first-year programs.

Table 2. First-Year Program Participation

First-Year Program	Count	Percent
Alpha	294	33%
Collegium	67	8%
FE 100	149	17%
Honors	54	6%
General	334	37%
Total	898	100%

Demographics

There were fewer male than female students in the class of 2009 (41% vs. 59%), and male and female students participated in all the first-year programs at approximately the same rates (See Table 3). For example, 43% of the students in the Collegium program were male and 57% were female.

Table 3. Participation in First-Year Programs by Gender

	Men		Women	
First-Year Program	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Alpha	121	41%	173	59%
Collegium	29	43%	38	57%
FE 100	55	37%	94	63%
Honors	21	39%	33	61%
General	146	44%	188	56%
Total	372	41%	526	59%

As seen in Table 4, 11% of those in the class of 2009 were students of color and 89% were white students. (The 47 students who were considered “other” or “unknown” are not included in Table 4.) The only program in which the percentages of students of color differed from the percentages for the total class of 2009 was the Collegium program. That program was comprised of 23% students of color and 77% white students. Students of color chose Collegium at a higher rate than they chose all of the other programs except Alpha.

Table 4. Participation in First-Year Programs by Ethnicity

	Students of Color		White Students	
First-Year Program	**Count**	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**
Alpha	36	13%[g]	244	87%[g]
Collegium	15	23%*	50	77%*
FE 100	16	11%	127	89%
Honors	3	6%	44	94%
General	24	8%	292	92%
Total	94	11%	757	89%

** Indicates a significant difference from all groups except Alpha. (Although there is a percentage difference from Alpha, the difference is not statistically significant.)*
[g] Indicates a significant difference from the General Program.

The choice of first-year program was also examined with respect to when students were accepted at Loyola. Students in three main groups were examined: students accepted early, students accepted during the second round, and students accepted from the wait list (see Table 5)[3]. Proportionally there were more Alpha students than FE 100 or General students in the early acceptance pool. In the second round, there were proportionally more FE 100 students than there were Alpha students. The students accepted from the wait list were evenly distributed over all the programs.

Table 5. Participation in First-Year Programs by Acceptance Type

First-Year Program	Early Accept	Round II Accept	Wait List Accept
Alpha	24%[fg]	60%	16%
Collegium	24%	64%	12%
FE 100	15%	72%[a]	13%
General	17%	64%	19%
Total	20%	64%	17%

[a] Indicates a significant difference from Alpha within a column.
[f] Indicates a significant difference from FE 100 within a column.
[g] Indicates a significant difference from the General Program within a column.

High school GPA was examined for differences in the records of students selecting the various first-year programs. The mean GPAs can be seen in Table 6. The mean high school GPA for the Honors students is significantly higher than the mean GPA for students in all the other programs. No other significant differences in mean GPA were found.

[3] Honors students were excluded from this analysis since most Honors students are accepted early.

Table 6. High School GPA by First-Year Program

First-Year Program	High School GPA
Alpha	3.46
Collegium	3.45
FE 100	3.41
Honors	3.81*
General	3.41
Total	3.46

** Indicates a significant difference from all other groups.*

The mean SATs scores of students in the first-year programs were examined for differences (see Table 7). Honors students had significantly higher SAT scores than students in all other programs. Alpha students had a significantly higher mean SAT score than students in FE 100.

The mean scores of the SAT subtests are also presented in Table 7. Honors students had significantly higher mean Verbal and Math scores than did students in all the other groups. Alpha students had a significantly higher mean Verbal score than did FE 100 and General students. Collegium students' Verbal mean score was significantly higher than FE 100 students' mean score.

Table 7. SAT Scores by First-Year Program

First-Year Program	Math SAT	Verbal SAT	Total SAT
Alpha	610	611[fg]	1221[f]
Collegium	605	607[f]	1212
FE 100	606	579	1185
Honors	685*	714*	1400*
General	614	592	1207
Total	615	605	1220

** Indicates a significant difference from all other groups.*
[f] Indicates a significant difference from FE 100 within a column.
[g] Indicates a significant difference from the General Program within a column.

Educational Intentionality

Items from the CIRP that related to seriousness of purpose with regard to academic and career maters were analyzed. In particular, one section asked students, "In deciding to go to college, how important to you was each of the following reasons?" Results are displayed in Table 8. "To learn more about things that interest me" was a very important reason for 78% of the first-year students. Only 55% said "to get training for a specific career" was a very important reason.

Table 8. Responses to CIRP Items by All First-Year Students

In deciding to go to college, how important to you was each of the following reasons?	Percent choosing "Very important"
To learn more about things that interest me	78%
To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas	71%
To prepare myself for graduate or professional school	69%
To be able to make more money	68%
To get training for a specific career	55%

These same items from the CIRP were also examined by first-year program. Results are displayed in Figures 1 and 2. ”To prepare myself for graduate or professional school” was more likely to be deemed a very important reason by Honors students than by students in any other program. On the other hand, Collegium students were significantly less likely than all other groups to indicate that this was a very important reason.

“To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas” was deemed very important by a significantly higher percentage of Honors students than FE 100 and General students. “To learn more about things that interest me” was considered very important by a significantly lower percentage of General students than all other students, with the exception of those in the Collegium program.

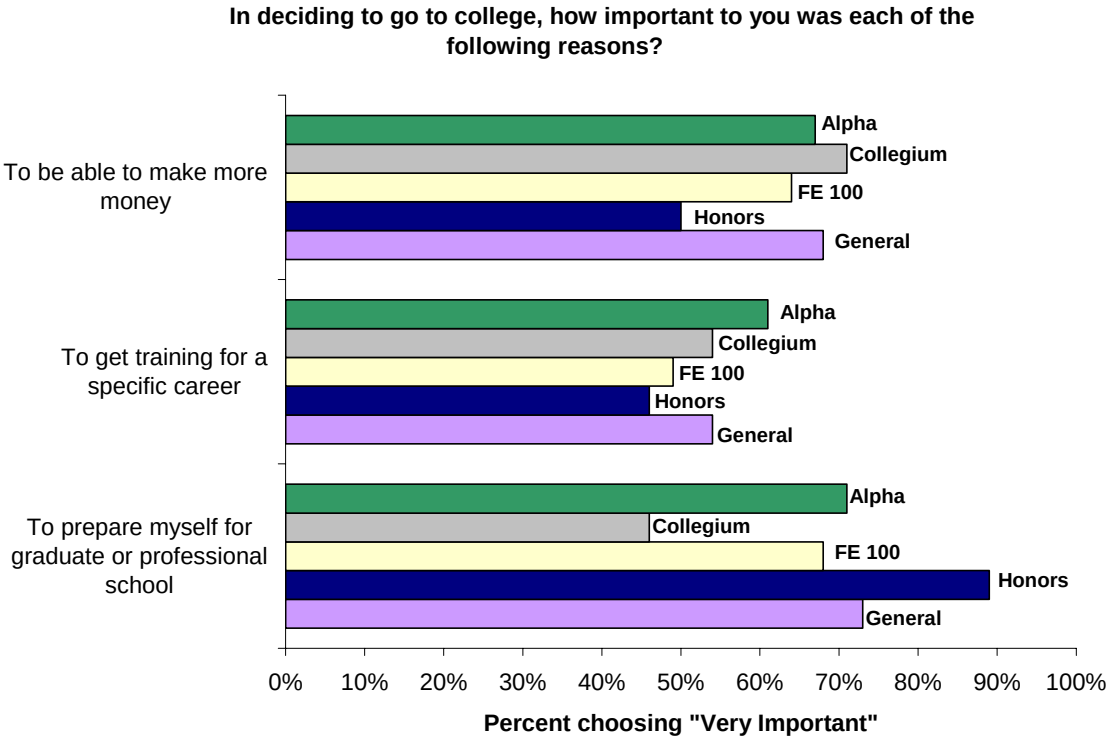


Figure 1. Reasons for deciding to go to college (career issues) by first-year program

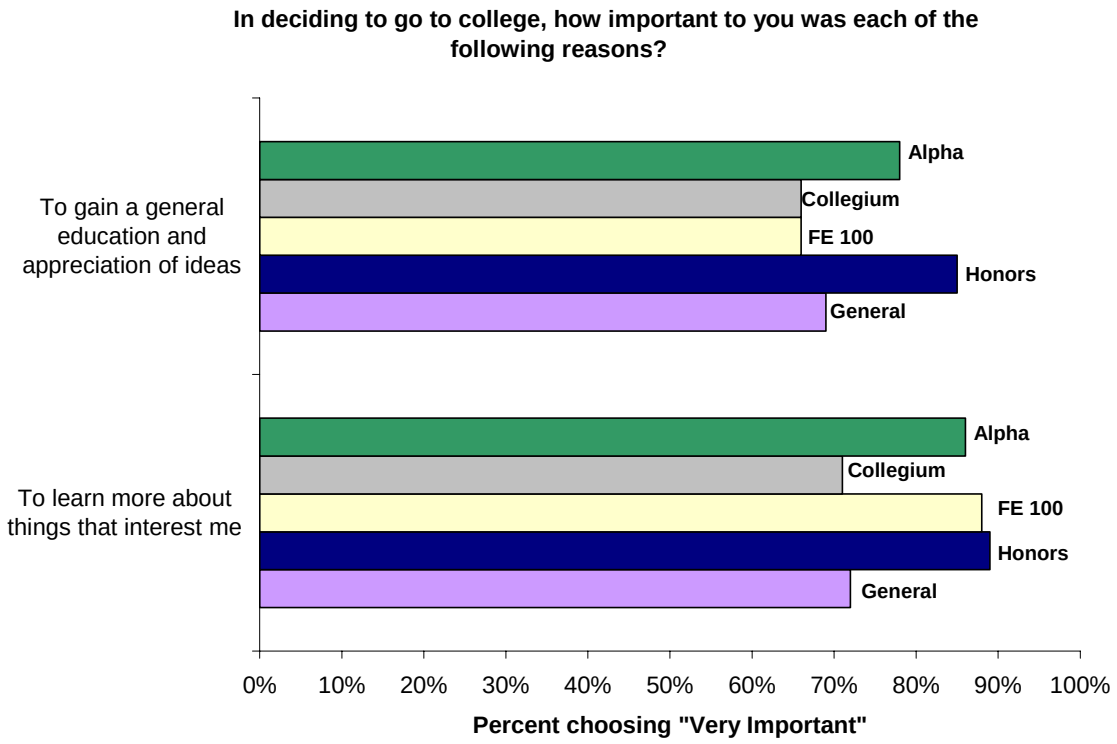


Figure 2. Reasons for deciding to go to college (academic issues) by first-year program

Another item on the CIRP that tapped into the students' seriousness about their academics was, "What is your best guess as to the chance that you will make at least a 'B' average?" Compared to students in all other programs, more Honors students indicated there was a "very good chance" they would have a B average (see Figure 3).

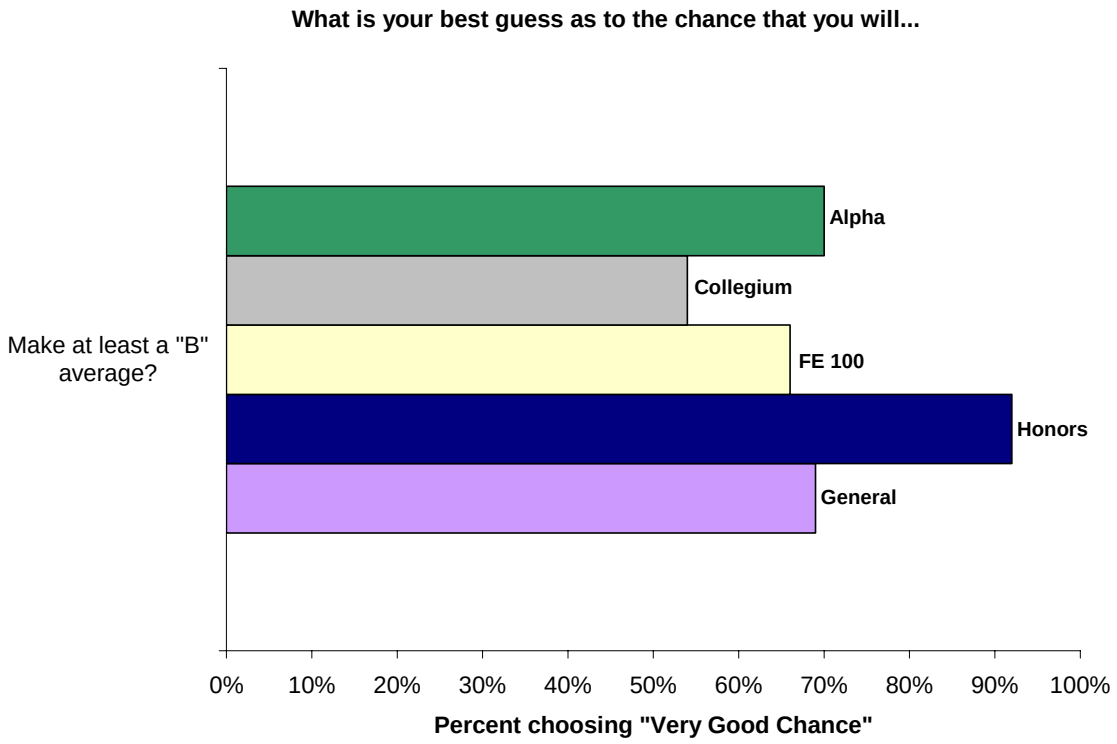


Figure 3. Students' assessment of their likelihood of making a 'B' average

A final item of interest from the CIRP was, "What is your best guess as to the chance that you will be satisfied with your college?" The percentage of students overall who selected "very good chance" was 57%; "some chance" was selected by 37% of the students. There were no significant differences among students in the various first-year programs.

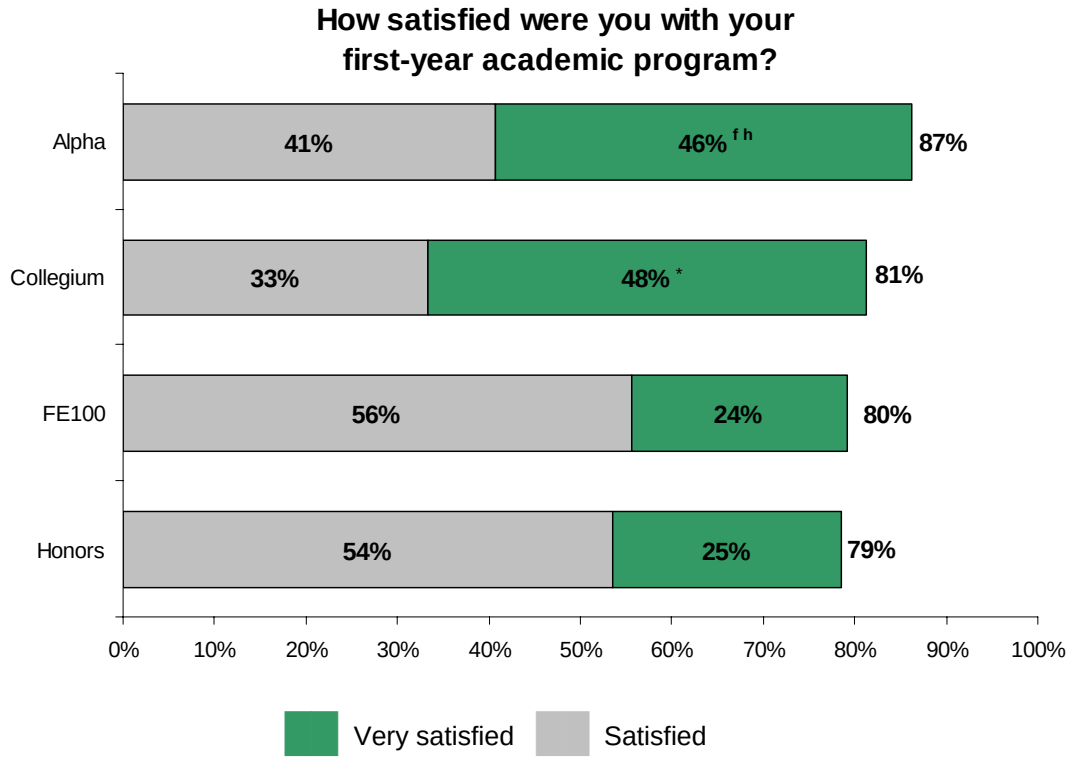
Expectations and Experiences in the First Year

Results from the First-Year Questionnaire Expectations and Follow-up Surveys were grouped into several topical areas: academic goals, co-curricular activities, faculty and classroom issues, college mission, social issues, and satisfaction with first-year program. The data are displayed by topic on the graphs that follow. Each page contains four graphs, one for each of the first-year programs. Each item on the survey is represented by two horizontal bars. The upper/dark bar represents results from the Expectations portion of the survey, while the lower/light bar represents results from the Follow-up portion of the survey. The Follow-up questions are either worded the same as the Expectations questions or worded slightly differently to reflect the past tense. With few exceptions, responses did not change very much between the Expectations and the Follow-up surveys.

Program Satisfaction

Figure 4 displays the satisfaction of students in the first-year programs. There were no significant differences found in the percentages of students who indicated that they were "satisfied"/"very satisfied" with their first-year program. Differences are seen if one looks

only at the "very satisfied" category. Alpha students were more likely to be "very satisfied" than were FE 100 or Honors students; Collegium students were "very satisfied" more often than FE 100 students.



[f] *Indicates a significant difference from FE 100.*
[h] *Indicates a significant difference from Honors.*
[*] *Due to small sample sizes, no statistically significant difference was detected between Collegium and FE 100 or between Collegium and Honors.*

Figure 4. Program satisfaction: Percent choosing very satisfied/satisfied

Academic Goals

Figure 5 displays results having to do with academic goals. On both the Expectations and the Follow-up, almost all students indicated they believed it was "important" or "very important" to achieve good grades. With the exception of the Honors program, students tended to expect their studies to be more difficult than they were.

Data for these three items were also examined for the entire group of respondents to see if there were differences based on SAT score or high school GPA. Students were placed into three groups: the 25% with the lowest SAT scores, the 50% with SAT scores in the middle, and the 25% with the highest SAT scores. The data were examined to see if students in these three groups responded to the "academic goals" items on the First-Year Questionnaire in similar or different ways. No differences were found.

The same method was used with regard to high school GPA. Students were placed into three groups: the 25% with the lowest high school GPAs, the 50% with GPA scores in the middle, and the 25% with the highest high school GPAs. Again, the data were examined for differences in the way these three groups responded to items regarding academic goals on the First-Year Questionnaire. No significant differences were found.

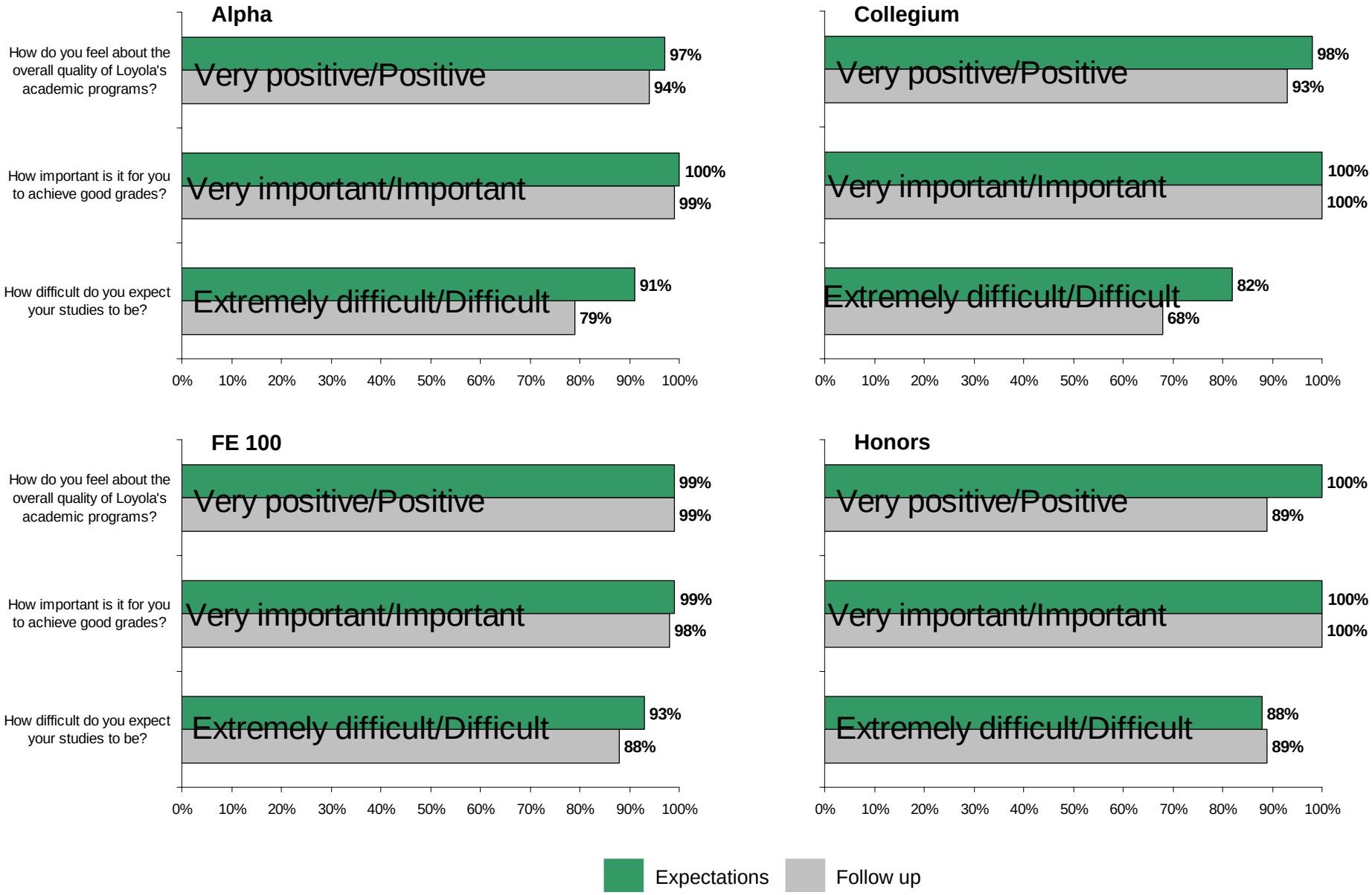


Figure 5. Academic goals: Percent choosing top two responses

Co-curricular Activities

Figure 6 includes results having to do with co-curricular activities. The focus of these items was getting involved in campus activities and students leadership and participating in cultural events. Students in all four of the first-year programs were very likely to indicate that it was “important” or ”very important” to get involved in campus activities. Getting involved in student leadership was not considered as important; however, students in all groups rated leadership higher in importance at the end of their first semester than they did in the beginning.

Faculty/Classroom Issues

In Figure 7 responses to questions about faculty and classroom issues are presented. These items dealt with such subjects as getting to know your professors, engaging in class discussions, being enrolled in small classes, and attending non-required lectures. A relatively low percentage of students in all four of the programs indicated it was “important” or “very important” to attend non-required lectures. However, almost all students found it important or very important to get to know their professors. In all groups except Honors, engaging in class discussion was considered less important at the end of the semester than it was in the beginning.

Mission

Responses to items relating to the mission of the College, are presented in Figure 8. Large percentages of students in all four of the programs agreed that it was “important” or ”very important” for them to explore new ideas and to pursue learning for its own sake. Students did not rate the importance of the Jesuit tradition to their experience at Loyola as high as they did the other items dealing with the College mission.

Social Issues

The figure dealing with social issues (Figure 9) shows that students in all four of the groups do no consider attending weekend alcohol-free events to be as important as they consider other social issues. On the other hand, almost all students agreed that meeting new and different people was important or very important.

Data on the Follow-up regarding these social issues were also examined for subgroups broken down by gender and ethnicity. Several statistically significant differences were found between the responses of males and females. Fitting in socially, meeting new and different people, and participating in college-sponsored off-campus activities were all rated as more important by women than by men (Table 9). White students rated fitting in socially and meeting new and different people as more important than did students of color (Table 10).

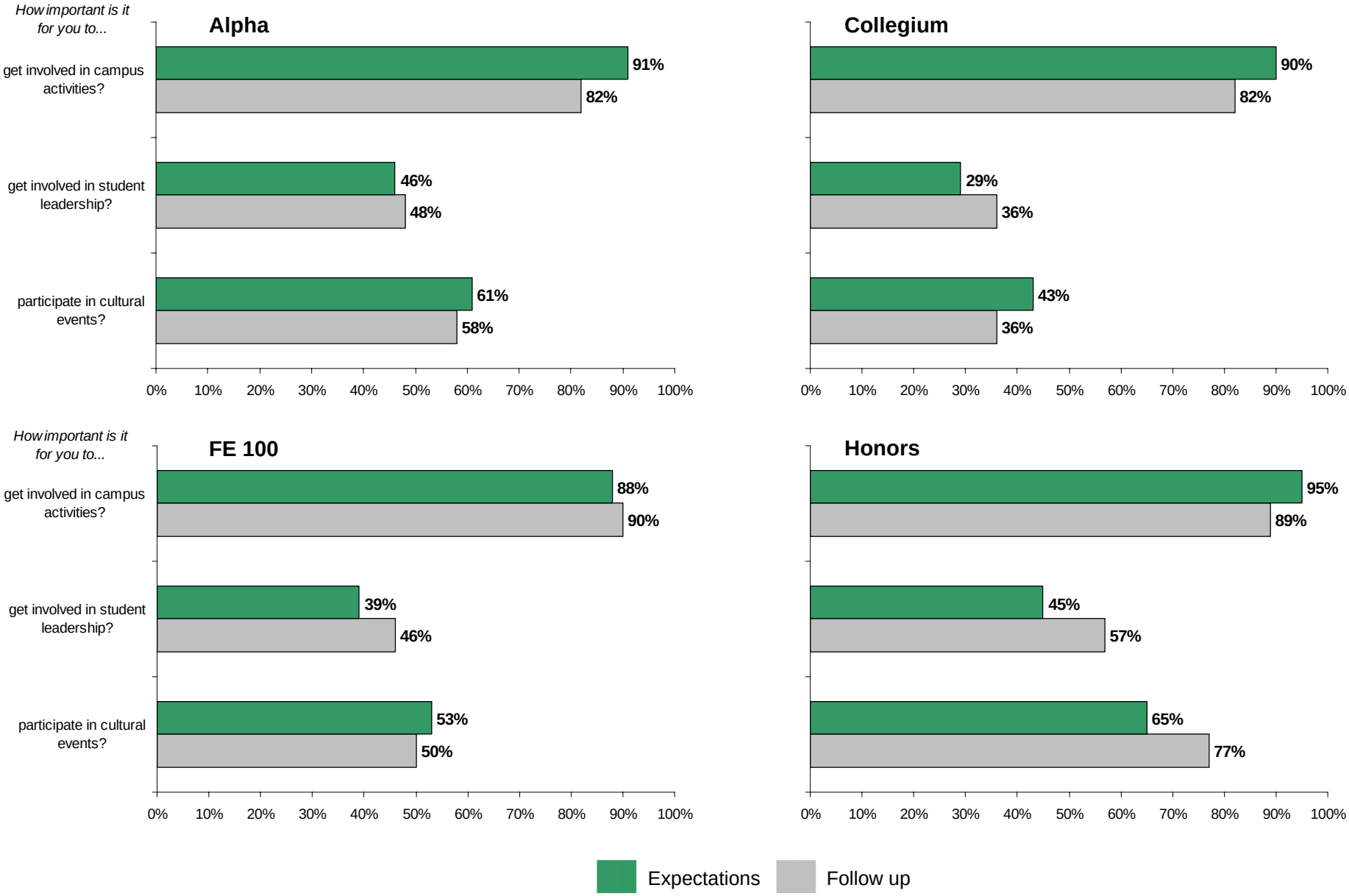


Figure 6. Co-curricular activities: Percent choosing very important/important

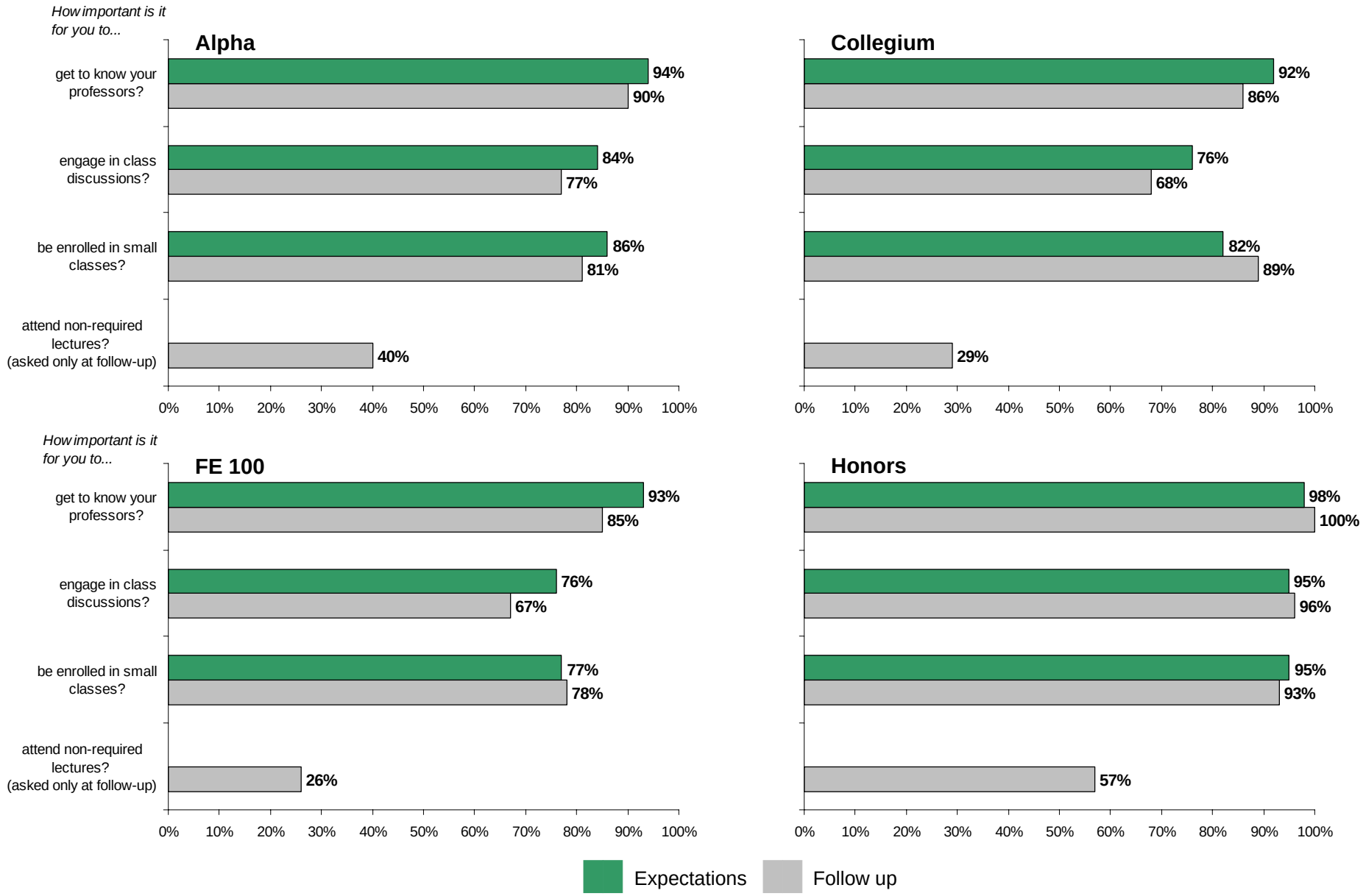


Figure 7. Faculty/classroom issues: Percent choosing very important/important

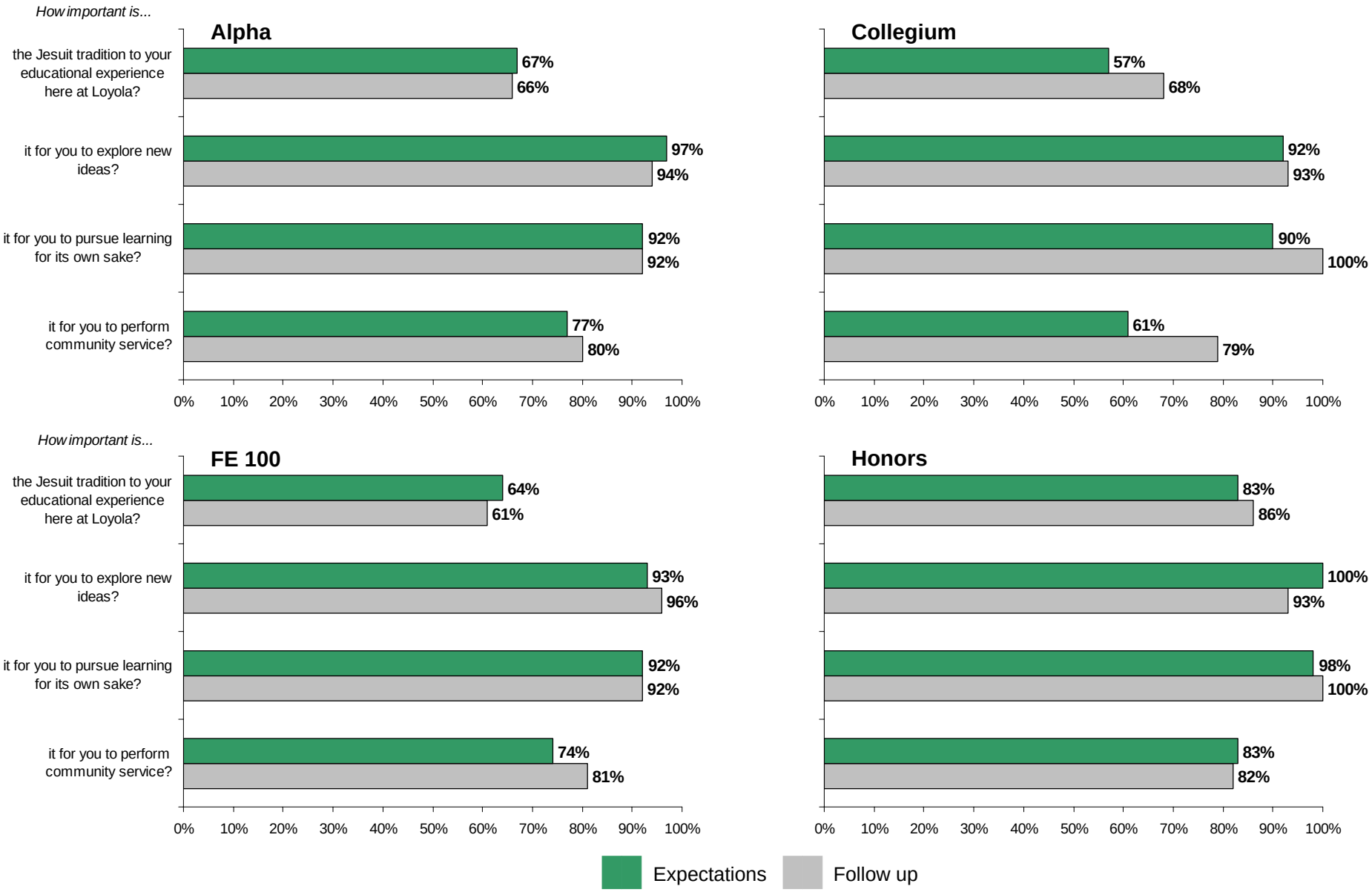


Figure 8. Mission: Percent choosing very important/important

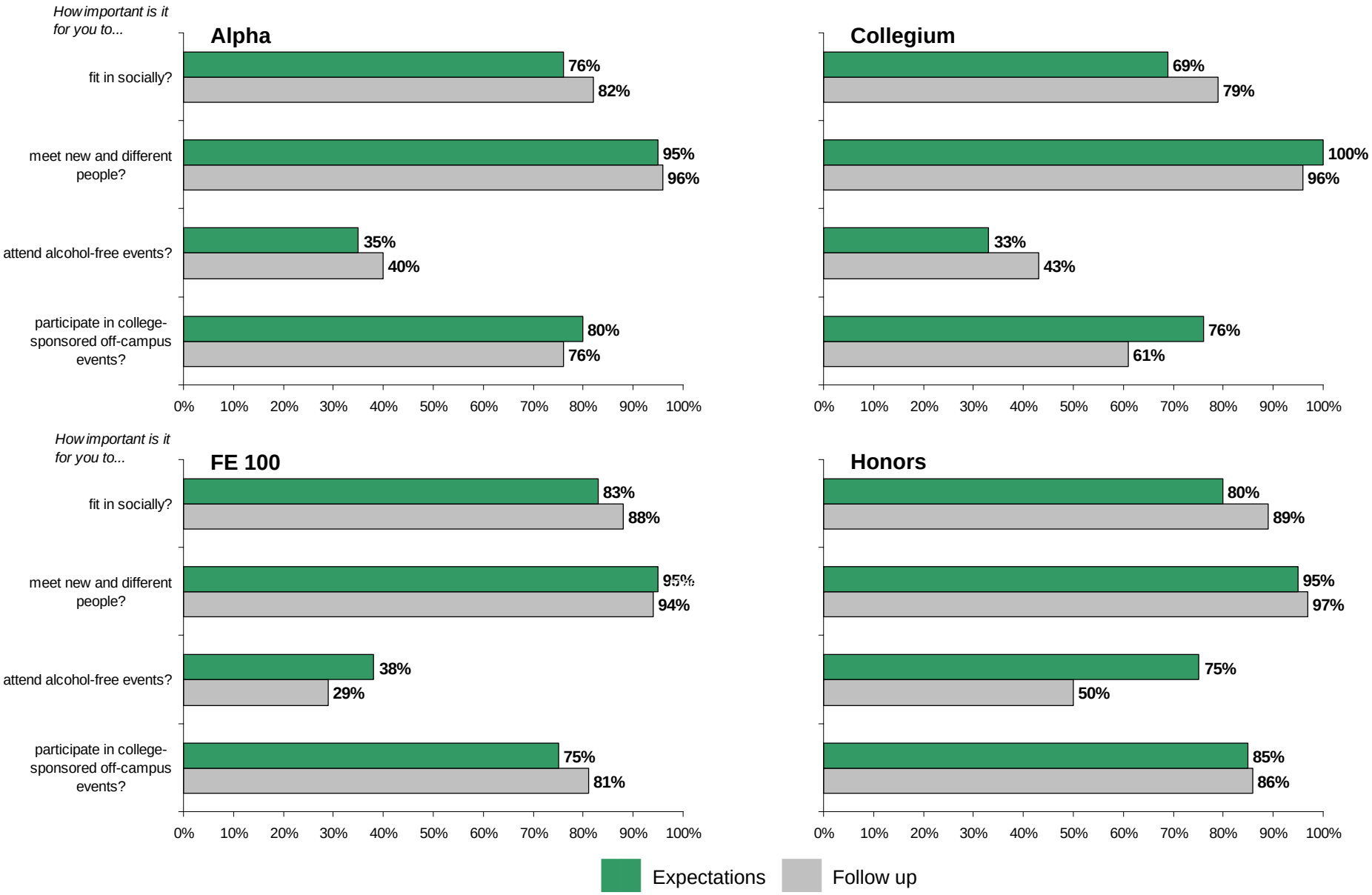


Figure 9. Social issues: Percent choosing very important/important

Table 9. Importance of Social Issues by Gender

How important is it for you to...	Women	Men
fit in socially?	1.80*	2.03
meet new and different people?	1.40*	1.62
attend weekend alcohol-free events?	2.63	2.71
participate in college-sponsored off-campus events?	1.94*	2.26

Scale is from 1 = Very important to 5 = Very unimportant
** Indicates a significant difference in a row.*

Table 10. Importance of Social Issues by Ethnicity

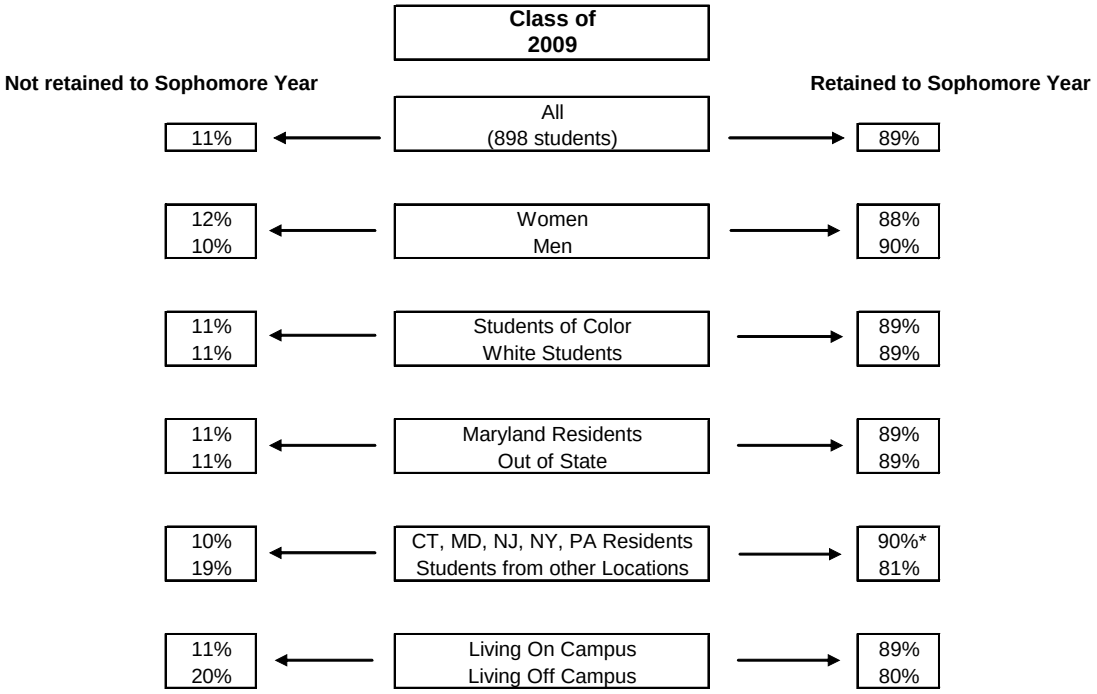
How important is it for you to...	Students of Color	White Students
fit in socially?	2.21	1.83*
meet new and different people?	1.69	1.46*
attend weekend alcohol-free events?	2.72	2.66
participate in college-sponsored off-campus events?	2.21	2.01

Scale is from 1 = Very important to 5 = Very unimportant
** Indicates a significant difference in a row.*

Outcomes

Analyses were conducted to determine whether first-year programs had a positive impact on retention and academic success of the first-year students.

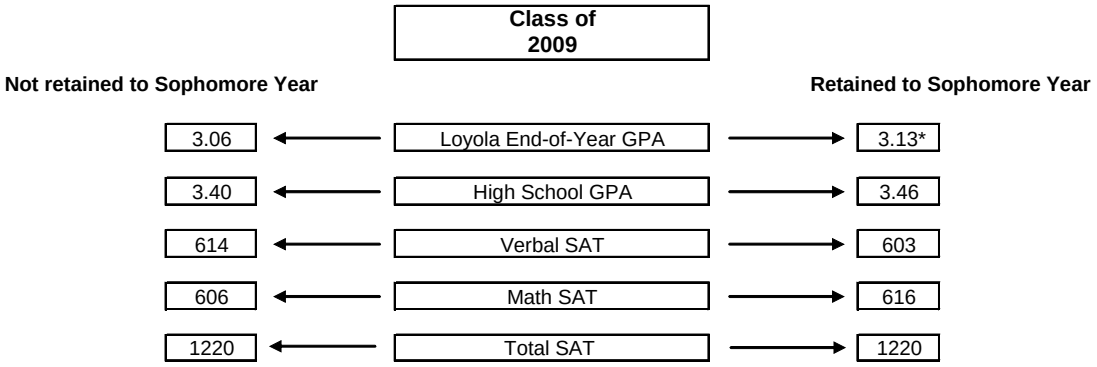
As seen in Figure 10, the overall retention rate from the first-year to sophomore year for the class of 2009 was 89%. Retention rates were disaggregated for various group characteristics and the only demographic difference in retention was between students from the College's primary recruitment area—Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania—and those from other areas. Students from the middle-states region were retained at a higher rate than were students from other areas.



** Indicates a significant difference within a category.*

Figure 10. Retention rates and demographics for the class of 2009

As seen in Figure 11, first-year students who were retained to their sophomore year had a significantly higher Loyola end-of-year mean GPA than those who were not retained (3.13 versus 3.06). Further analyses were conducted to address the question of whether students who left Loyola were more likely to have GPAs at the extreme ends of the GPA distribution. No bimodal distribution was seen. Mean high school GPAs and SAT scores did not differ between students who were retained and students who were not retained.



** Indicates a significant difference.*

Figure 11. Retention and academic qualifications for the class of 2009

First-Year Programs

The retention data were examined to determine if there were differences in the retention rates of students by first-year program. The rates can be viewed in Figure 12. It is important to note that no differences were found in the retention rates of students in the various first-year programs. That is, no program was more successful at retaining students than any of the other programs, and students in a first-year program were not retained at a higher rate than the General students. The Alpha students were further broken down into those residing in Alpha House and those not residing in Alpha House. No differences were observed between these two groups either.

Due to the relatively small size within some of the programs, the program-level data was not further disaggregated into demographic and academic qualification subgroups.

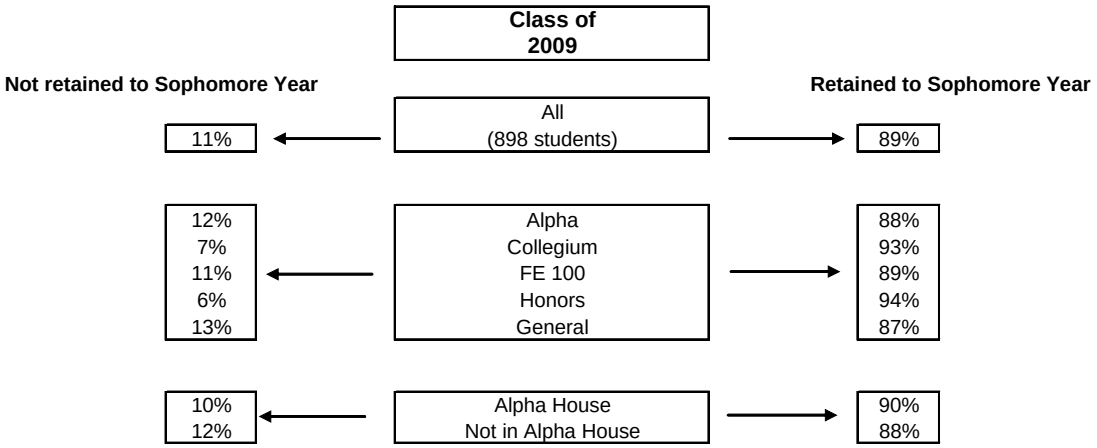


Figure 12. Retention by first-year program

The Fall 2005 term mean GPA for all full-time, first-time students was 3.11. The breakdowns by first-year academic program can be viewed in Table 11. The mean GPA for Honors students was significantly higher than GPAs for students in all the other programs. The mean GPA for Alpha students was higher than that of the Collegium students.

Table 11. Fall 2005 Term Mean GPAs by First-Year Program

First-Year Program	Fall 2005 term mean GPA
Alpha	3.12[c]
Collegium	2.93
FE 100	3.05
Honors	3.65*
General	3.08
Total	3.11

** Indicates a significant difference from all other groups.*
[c] Indicates a significant difference from Collegium.

The Spring 2006 term mean GPA for the class of 2009 was 3.13. Table 12 contains the mean GPAs by first-year program. Again, the students in the Honors program have a significantly higher mean GPA than any of the other groups. No other differences among the programs were observed.

Although the Spring GPAs were higher than the Fall GPAs for all groups except FE 100 and Honors, these differences were not significant.

Table 12. Spring 2006 Term Mean GPAs by First-Year Program

First-Year Program	Spring 2006 term mean GPA
Alpha	3.15
Collegium	3.01
FE 100	3.05
Honors	3.60*
General	3.10
Total	3.13

** Indicates a significant difference from all other groups.*

Summary

Almost two-thirds of the first-time, full-time freshmen in the class of 2009 participated in one of four first-year programs. With the exception of Honors which has an additional applications process, the lack of any clear distinction between the types of students across programs indicates that, in most cases, personal preference is probably the main factor that influences choice of first-year program. Furthermore, because there are no large attitudinal or outcomes differences among the programs, nor were there differences in student satisfaction with their programs, we can reasonably assume that students are choosing the program that best suits them.

The attitudes and opinions of students about such things as academic goals and social issues (as measured by the First-Year Questionnaire) did not change much from the beginning to the end of the first semester. While these findings might be interpreted to mean that there is little added-value provided by the programs, this conclusion is not assured because of limitations of the survey instruments. A revision of the survey instruments in future years is warranted in order to assess the extent to which programs add value to the experience of Loyola first-year students.

The overall retention rate from the first to the sophomore year was 89%. With the exception of home residence, retention was not impacted by demographic characteristics or which, if any, first-year program a student was enrolled in. This is an important finding in that it indicates that in the first year Loyola is not systematically disadvantaging any particular group of students (i.e. women or students of color). While it is encouraging to find that Loyola is not systematically failing particular demographic segments of students, the highly individual nature of attrition increases the complexity of improving student retention.