
■ **First-Year Academic Program Report:
Class of 2010**

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First-Year Academic Program Report: Class of 2010

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 campus community, and how they feel about their Loyola experience. This information can then be used for enhancing first-year academic programs and refining retention efforts.

Academic first-year programs—a best practice in higher education¹—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 2010 students across programs.

Methodology

Data for this study were drawn from a variety of sources. Demographic data were taken from the Fall 2006 and Fall 2007 Loyola College Institutional Research files which were frozen on September 19, 2006 and September 24, 2007. Data were also taken from the Fall 2006 CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Program) and the Spring 2007 YFCY (Your First College Year) surveys, national surveys that are administered by HERI (the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA).

The CIRP was completed by 859 of the 947 first-year students for a response rate of 91%.² Based on these data the sampling error for proportions is $\pm 1\%$. The YFCY was completed by 269 of the 946 first-year students for a response rate of 28%. Based on these data the sampling error for proportions is $\pm 5\%$. The analyses on CIRP and YFCY data that are broken down by first-year program are based on a self-reported program membership.

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.

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 When the institutional data was frozen on September 19, 2006 there were 946 full-time, first-time freshmen in the Class of 2010. However, one Alpha student was not coded correctly and was not included in this count. For purposes of this report, we will include that student and use 947 total full-time, first-time freshmen in the tables and analyses.

Executive Summary

- A total of 60% of the class of 2010 participated in one of the first-year programs.
- Women are overrepresented in the Honors program when compared to the gender distribution in the class as a whole.
- While waitlisted students were evenly distributed across first-year programs, more Alpha students came from the early acceptance group than did Collegium or general students.
- Honors students have significantly higher high school GPAs and SAT scores than students in the other programs. Alpha students had higher high school GPAs and critical reading (verbal) SAT scores than did students in the general program.
- Job market and economic factors were cited as very important reasons for going to college but were less important than general learning.
 - Gaining a general education was more important to Alpha students compared to all other groups except Honors.
- Nearly 9 out of 10 students were very satisfied or satisfied with their overall academic experience in the first year; there were no differences among the various first-year programs in either student expectation or level of satisfaction with their overall academic experience.
- When asked about satisfaction specific to their first-year program, Alpha students reported higher levels of satisfaction when compared to all other programs. One-third of FE100 students stated that they would not have enrolled in a first-year program if they had to do it over and nearly three-quarters of students who were not in a first-year program stated that they were happy with that decision.
- Relatively few students in any of the first-year programs found their classes to be extremely difficult, the majority of students in each program did say, however, that their courses during their first year were difficult.
- Honors students rated their academic ability higher than students in all other groups. They also rated themselves more favorably than students in other programs did on other academic abilities and traits. FE100 and general students tended to rate themselves less favorably than students in some of the other programs when asked about their academic abilities.
 - Students in all of the first-year programs rated their academic ability lower at the end of the year than they did in the beginning. Changes in other academically related traits varied across the programs with some groups reporting gains and others reporting a lower sense of ability at the end of the year.
- Over three-quarters of students in each first-year experience felt that it was easy to get to know faculty and to understand what was expected of them academically but just under one-quarter indicated that they were very satisfied with the amount of contact that they had with faculty.
- The extent to which students reported receiving advice and emotional support from faculty was modest although students generally agreed that faculty are interested in their personal and academic problems.

- When asked about their socially related traits, most students indicated that they were at least above average with regard to cooperativeness, fewer however felt as strong in their sense of self.
 - Collegium and general students rated their self-understanding at the beginning of the year higher than did students in all other programs.
 - Changes in these social traits varied across the programs with some groups reporting gains and others reporting decreases at the end of the year.
- The majority of students in all programs indicated that they were satisfied with their social life and the sense of community on campus. FE100 students were more satisfied than were Alpha students with the sense of community and they also indicated a greater feeling of belonging and seeing themselves as part of the campus community than did Alpha students.
 - Alpha students also reported greater levels of feelings of isolation than did students in the general program.
- All groups reported a higher than anticipated level of participation in volunteer or community service work, and students in each program other than Honors reported participation in student clubs/group at higher rates than they anticipated at the beginning of the year. Participation in student government, on the other hand, was lower than anticipated for all groups.
- The first to second year retention rate for the class of 2010 was 91%. There were no differences in retention based on student demographics or academic qualifications.
 - Honors student were retained at the higher rate than were students in the other programs. Honors students also ended their fall semester with a higher GPA than did students in all other programs.
 - Alpha students had higher fall term GPAs than the students who were in the general program.

Detailed Findings

Who Are the First-Year Students?

There were 947 full-time, first-year students in the class of 2010. As seen in Table 1, nearly two-thirds of new students enrolled in a first-year program. Analyses were conducted to determine whether there were differences in the types of students being drawn to the various first-year programs.

Table 1. First-Year Program Participation

First-Year Program	Count	Percent
Alpha	295	31%
Collegium	63	7%
FE 100	158	17%
Honors	54	6%
General	377	40%
Total	947	100%

Demographics

There were fewer men than women in the class of 2010 (37% vs. 63%). Women are over-represented in the Honors relative to the overall first-year student population but no other differences exist between the distribution of men and women in individual programs when compared to the overall gender distribution in the class of 2010. See Table 2.

Table 2. Participation in First-Year Programs by Gender

First-Year Program	Men		Women	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Alpha	106	36%	189	64%
Collegium	17	27%	46	73%
FE100	60	38%	98	62%
Honors	12	22%	42	78%*
General	155	41%	222	59%
Total	350	37%	597	63%

Note: Percentages are row percentages

** Indicates a significant difference from the "Total" overall distribution.*

(Although there is a percentage difference between Collegium and the "Total", the difference is not statistically significant.)

As seen in Table 3, 12% of those in the class of 2010 were students of color (the 18 students who were considered "other" or "unknown" are not included in these data.) While the percentage of students of color is greatest within the Collegium program, this difference from the ethnic distribution in other programs and the overall population is not statistically significant.

Table 3. Participation in First-Year Programs by Ethnicity

First-Year Program	Students of Color		White Students	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Alpha	34	12%	256	88%
Collegium	13	21%	49	79%
FE 100	18	12%	136	88%
Honors	3	6%	49	94%
General	43	12%	328	88%
Total	111	12%	818	88%

The choice of first-year program was also examined with respect to when students were accepted to Loyola: students accepted early, students accepted during the second round, and students accepted from the wait list (see Table 4)¹. Proportionally there were more early acceptance students in the Alpha program than there were in the Collegium or General program. There were proportionally more students accepted from the second round in the Collegium program than there were in the Alpha program or the class overall. Waitlisted students were enrolled in each first-year program.

Table 4. Participation in First-Year Programs by Acceptance Type

First-Year Program	Early Accept	Round II Accept	Wait List Accept
Alpha	23% ^{c,g}	73%	4%
Collegium	11%	87% ^a	2%
FE100	16%	81%	3%
General	16%	79%	5%
Total	18%	78%	4%

^a Indicates a significant difference from Alpha within a column.

^c Indicates a significant difference from Collegium, within a column.

^g Indicates a significant difference from the General Program within a column.

High school GPA was examined for differences in students selecting various first-year programs. The mean high school GPA for the Honors students is higher than the mean GPA for students in all the other programs. In addition, students in the Alpha program had a higher mean high school GPA than did students in the General program. See Table 5.

¹ Honors students were excluded from this analysis since most Honors students are accepted early.

Table 5. Mean High School GPA by First-Year Program

First-Year Program	High School GPA
Alpha	3.49 ^g
Collegium	3.48
FE 100	3.47
Honors	3.81*
General	3.40
Total	3.47

* Indicates a significant difference from all other groups.

^g Indicates a significant difference from the General program.

The mean SATs scores of students in the first-year programs were examined for differences (see Table 6). Honors students had higher total and subtest SAT scores than students in all other programs. Alpha students had a higher mean Critical Reading score than did FE 100 and General students.

Table 6. Mean SAT Scores by First-Year Program

First-Year Program	Math SAT	Critical Reading SAT	Total SAT
Alpha	607	599 ^{fg}	1206
Collegium	598	581	1179
FE 100	602	575	1177
Honors	683*	703*	1385*
General	607	582	1189
Total	610	593	1203

* 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 matters were analyzed in order to understand the educational intentionality of students across the first-year programs. When asked about the importance of various reasons for going to college, “learn[ing] more about things that interest [them]” was the single most important reasons-endorsed by 76% of students as *very important*. Job market and economic factors were also very important to many students but were less important than general learning. See Table 7.

Table 7. Educational Intentionality

In deciding to go to college, how important was each of the following reasons?	Percent choosing "very important"
To learn more about things that interest me	76%
To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas	69%
To be able to get a better job	68%
To be able to make more money	67%
To prepare myself for graduate or professional school	65%

These same items from the CIRP were examined by first-year program. Results are displayed in Figures 1 and 2. Learning about thing that are of interest to them was more important to Alpha students when compared to Collegium and general students. In addition, gaining a general education was more important to Alpha students compared to all other groups except Honors. To "be able to get a better job" was more important to Alpha students compared to the FE100 and general students. Earning more money was also more important to Alpha students than Collegium and Honors students. FE100 students also endorsed earning potential as *very important* in great proportion than did Honors students.¹

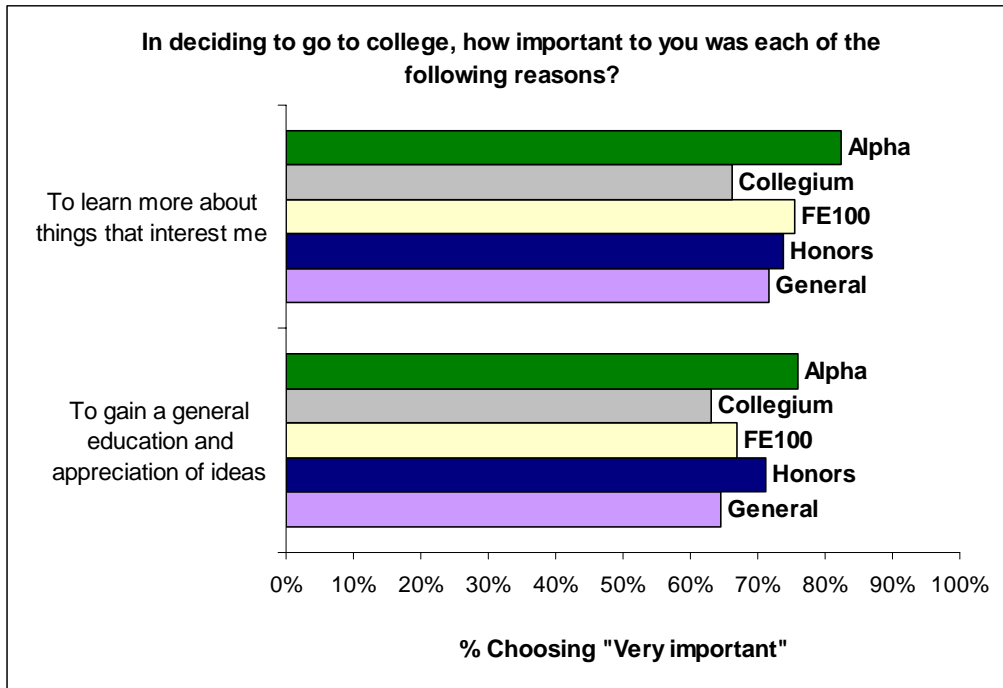


Figure 1. Reasons for deciding to go to college (academic issues) by first-year program

¹ It should be noted that although some groups appear to have large percentage differences as displayed in the charts only those difference noted in the text are statistically significant. Some large percentage differences are not statistically significant due to small sub-sample sizes.

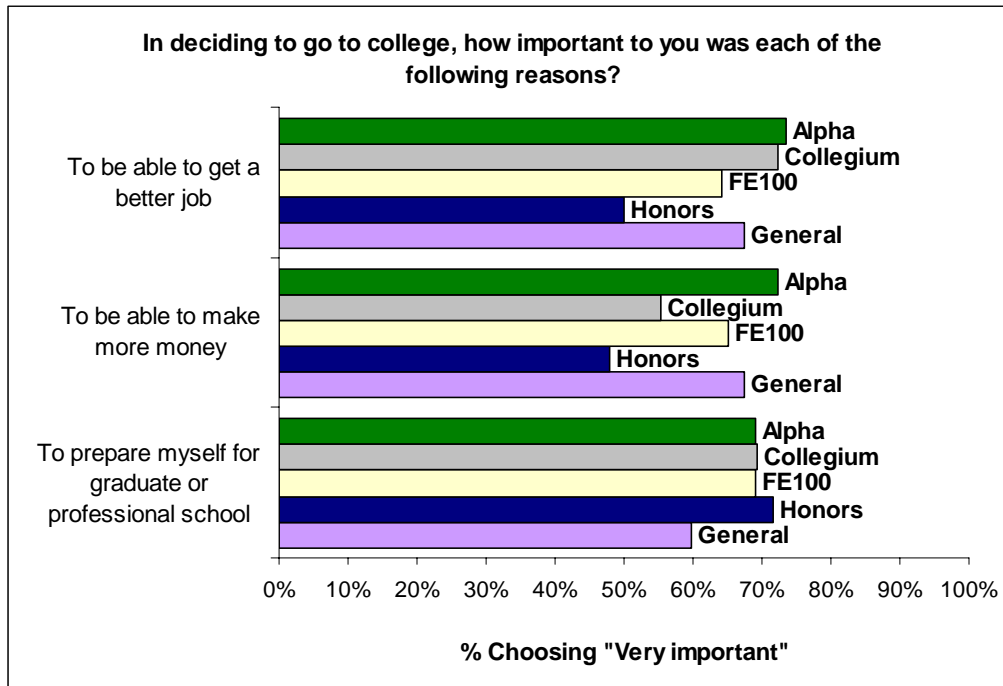


Figure 2. Reasons for deciding to go to college (career issues) by first-year program

Expectations and Experiences in the First Year

In previous years, students were given the in-house designed First-Year Questionnaire Expectations and Follow-up surveys to gather information about student expectations and experiences. Beginning with the current year, the CIRP and the Your First College Year survey (YFCY) are used in place of the in-house surveys. In subsequent years we will alternate between using national and in-house surveys. Results from these surveys will examine students' experiences by first-year program and are grouped into five topic areas: student satisfaction, academics and abilities, faculty interaction, social issues, and co-curricular activities. When appropriate, gap analyses¹ were conducted to determine if there were changes from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. The YFCY questions are either worded the same as the CIRP or worded slightly differently to reflect the past tense.

Student Satisfaction

During orientation students were asked "What is your best guess as to the chance that you will be satisfied with your college?" Sixty-one percent said there was a *very good chance* and an additional 36% said there was *some chance*. At the end of their first year, students were asked about their level of satisfaction with their overall academic

¹ Gap analyses were conducted by subtracting the percentage responding to an answer on the YFCY from the percentage responding to a similar answer on the CIRP. Because of the difference in response rates for the YFCY than they CIRP, the sample size of the YFCY survey was used in conducting significance tests in the gap analyses.

experience. Just under one-third (32%) of students stated that they were *very satisfied* and 54% stated that they were *satisfied*. There were no significant differences between students the various first-year programs in either their expectation or level of satisfaction with their overall academic experience. When asked about satisfaction with their first-year program, however, there were differences between programs.

As seen in Figure 3, satisfaction with first-year programs is the greatest among survey respondents in the Alpha program. Alpha students report higher levels of satisfaction when compared to all other programs. When asked if they would select the same program if given the chance, 90% of Alpha survey respondents stated that they would—this was higher than the FE100 group who had just 54% of students indicated that they would have selected that program if they had it to do over. Further, 33% of the FE100 students indicated that they would not have chosen any first-year program if they had it to do over. Among those students who were not in any program (n=63 on the YFCY survey) 70% stated that they were happy with their decision and 22% stated that they wished they had been in a first-year program.

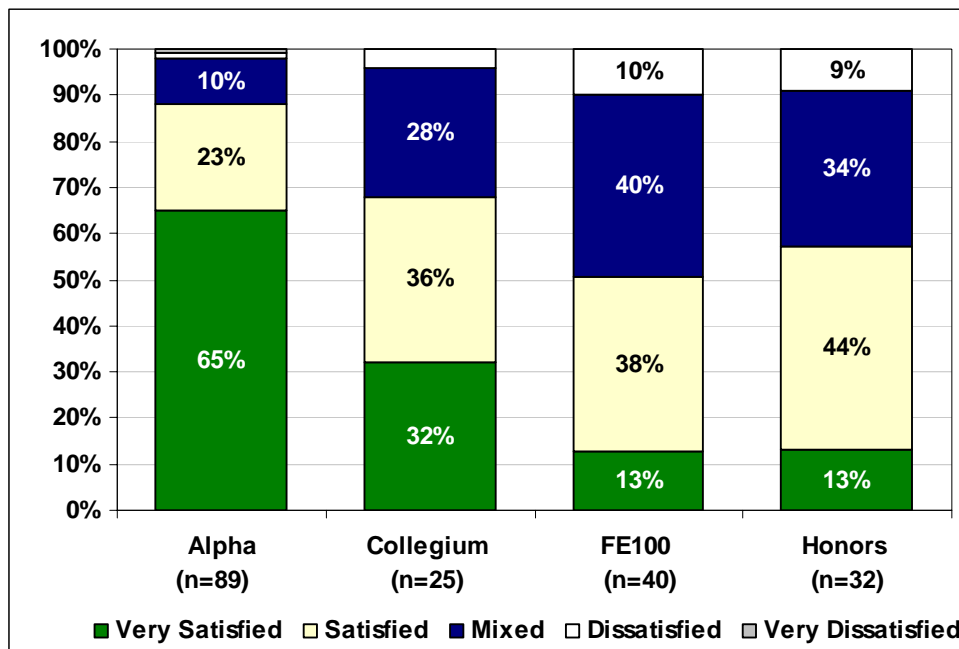


Figure 3. Satisfaction with first-year program

Academics and Abilities

At the beginning of the year, 67% of students stated that there was a *very good chance* that they will make at least a “B” average in their first year. As seen in Figure 4, there were no differences in this expectation between students in the various first-year programs. Data on the actual GPA of first-year students can be found in the “Outcomes” section of this report.

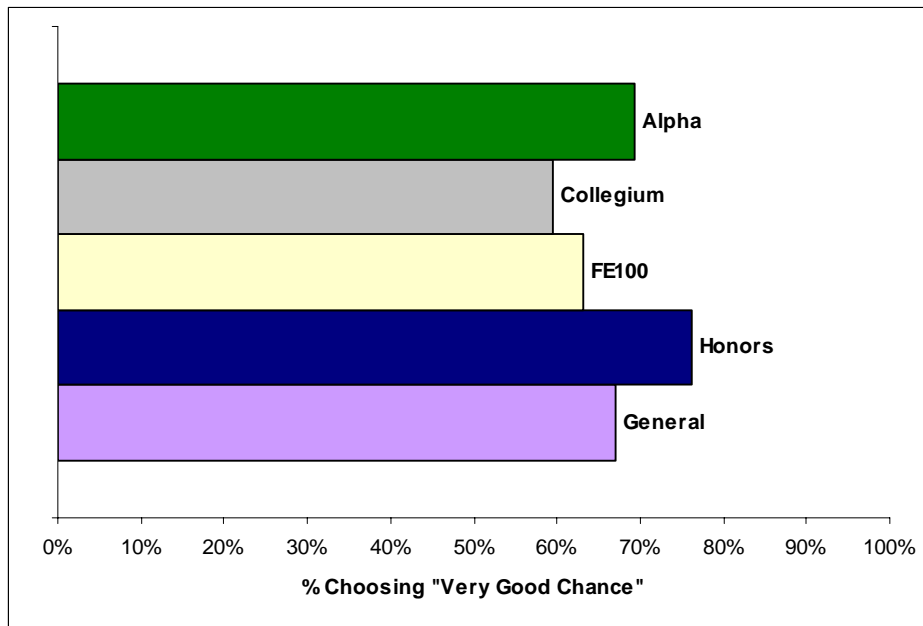


Figure 4. Students' assessment of their likelihood of making a 'B' average

When asked about the extent to which their courses were as challenging as they expected, 17% of Collegium students indicated that their courses were *somewhat less challenging* than expected—while this was higher than any other group it is not significantly different than the experience of other groups (see Figure 5). As seen in Figure 6, relatively few students in any of the first-year programs found their classes to be extremely difficult, the majority of students in each program did say, however, that their courses during their first year were at least *difficult*.

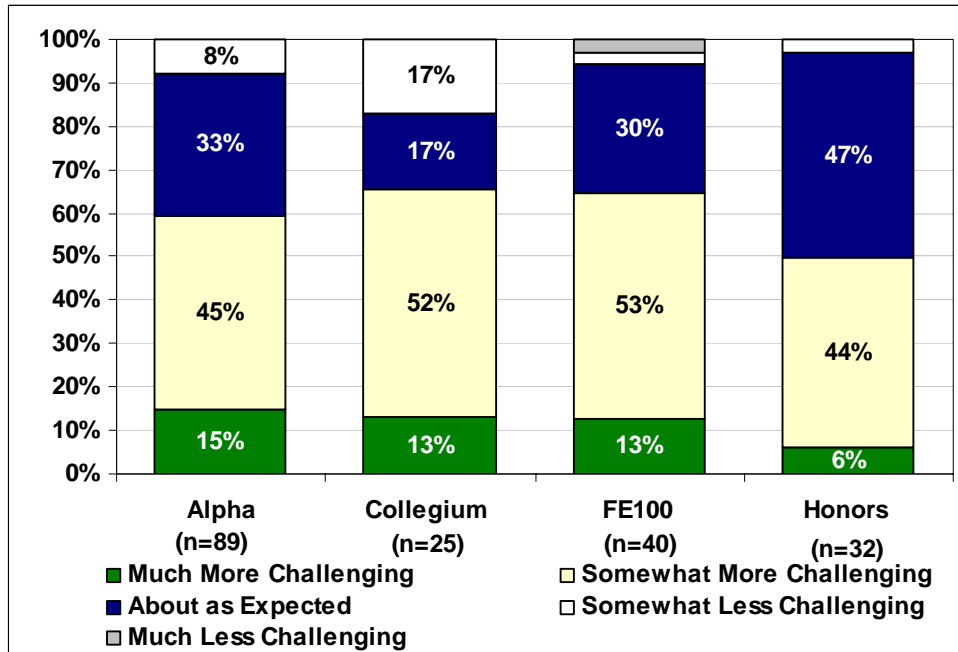


Figure 5. Students' ratings of the level of challenge in their courses versus what they expected for the first year

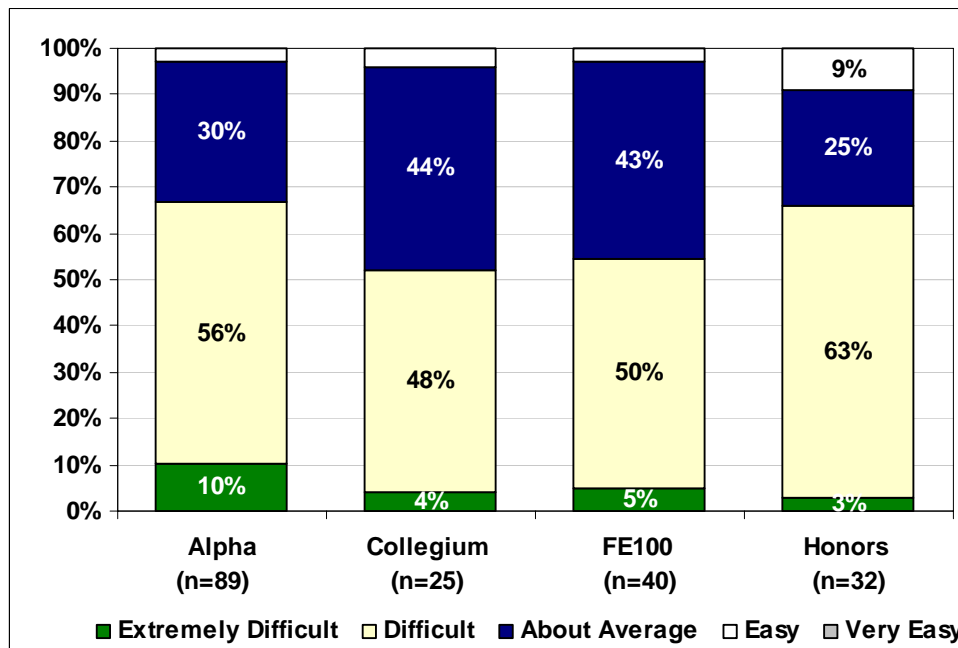


Figure 6. Students' ratings of the level of difficulty of their courses during the first year

At the beginning of their first year, students were asked to rate themselves relative to the average person their age on a number of abilities and traits. The data can be seen in Figure 7 and the findings are described below.

- Students in the Honors program rated their “academic ability” as being in the *highest 10% or above average* at a greater rate than did students in all other programs. Honors students also rated their “leadership ability” and “drive to achieve” higher than did FE100 and general students. In addition, Honors students rated themselves higher in “public speaking ability” and intellectual “self-confidence” than did students in all other programs except Collegium.
- Students in the Alpha program rated their “academic ability” higher than did general students and their “public speaking ability” higher than FE100 students; Alpha students rated their “creativity” higher than both groups.
- Collegium students rated their “leadership ability” in the *highest 10% or above average* at a greater rate than the general students and their intellectual “self-confidence” higher than FE100 students.

Students were asked to rate the same abilities and traits at the end of their first year. The difference or gap between the beginning and of year responses has been displayed in Figure 7 and the main findings are described below.¹

- Each of the first-year programs saw a decrease in the extent to which students rated their “academic ability” as in the *highest 10% or above average* for persons their age. This decrease in the perceptions of their own academic ability was greater among Alpha students as compared to the Collegium, Honors, or general students.
- While several groups viewed their “leadership ability” as improving over the year, Alpha and Collegium students saw a drop in their self-assessment in this area—the difference between Alpha and Collegium and the students in the other programs is directional only and not statistically significant.
- Alpha students and those in the general program saw significantly larger improvements than did Honors students in their assessment of their “public speaking abilities”—no change was noted for Honors students from the beginning to the end of the year with regard to this ability.
- While all other groups saw an increase in their self-assessment of “creativity,” the self-assessment among Alpha students dropped in this area. General students saw a larger improvement in this area than did Collegium and FE100 students.
- While all other groups saw an increase in “drive to achieve,” the self-assessment among Collegium students dropped in this area. FE100 students saw a larger improvement in this area than did Alpha and general students.
- Alpha and the general students saw declines in their self-assessment of intellectual self-confidence and there was no change among Honors students on this trait.

¹ It should be noted that the pre-post data are not that of a longitudinal panel, instead they represent cross-sections taken from the same universe of students at different points in time. In addition, there is a large difference in the survey sample size between the pre- and post- data. For these reasons, the changes noted from the beginning to the end of the year should be viewed with caution.

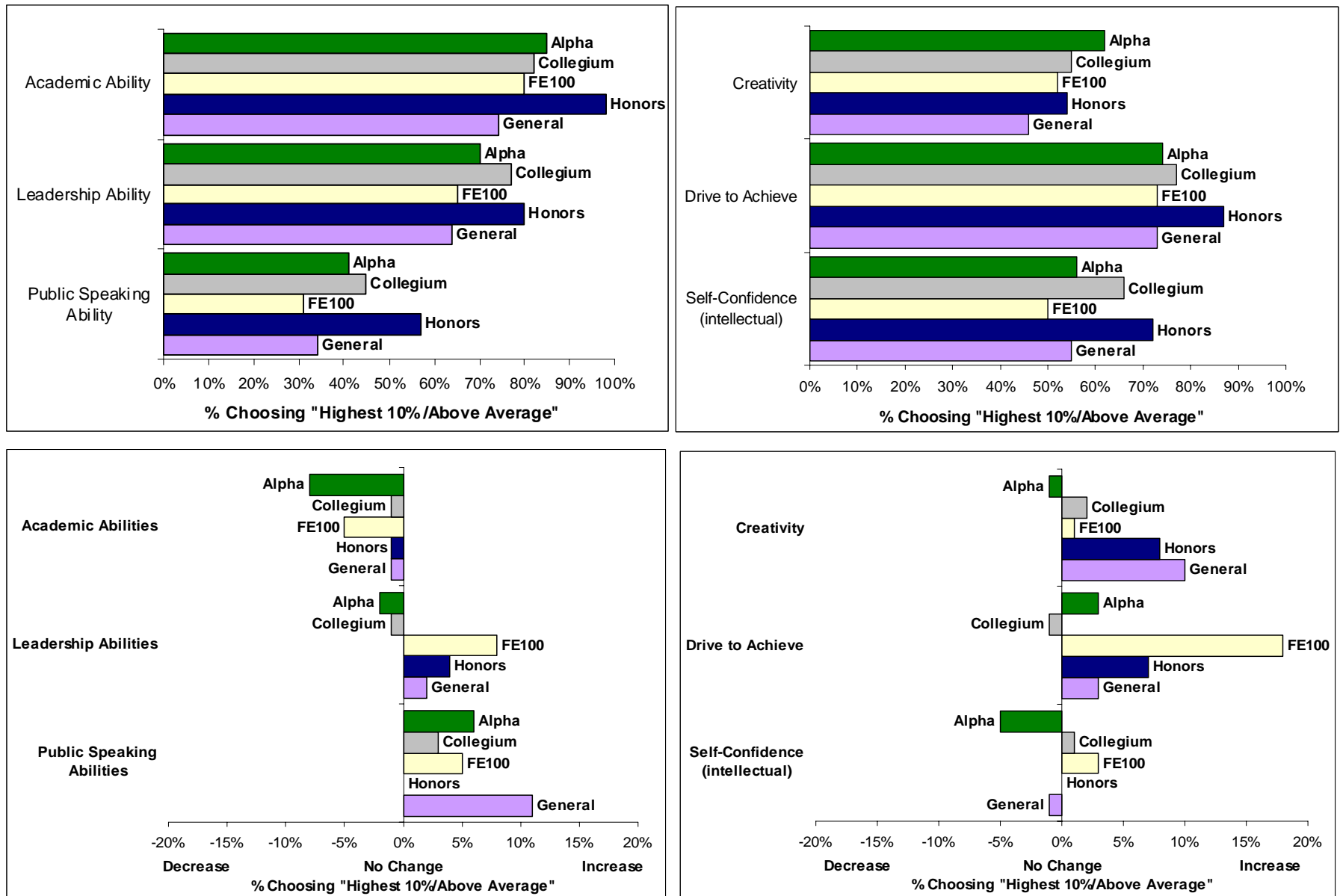


Figure 7. Students' assessment of abilities at the beginning of their first year and change in that assessment from the beginning to the end of their first year

Faculty Interaction

At the end of their first year, students were asked several questions about their perceptions of and interactions with faculty. When asked how satisfied they were with the amount of contact they had with faculty, 24% of students said that they were *very satisfied*. Within the first-year programs, satisfaction was highest among those in Collegium and lowest among Alpha students—with 32% and 24%, respectively indicating they were *very satisfied*—but the differences among first-year programs was not statistically significant. Over three-quarters of students in each first-year experience felt that it was easy to get to know faculty and to understand what was expected of them academically. See Figure 8.

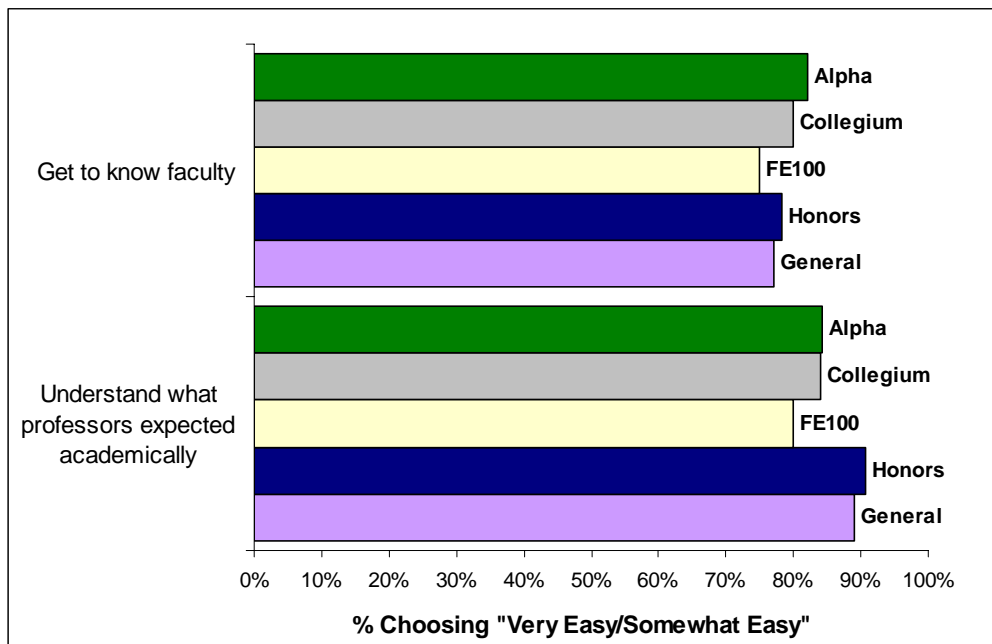


Figure 8. Students' assessment of ease of faculty interaction

As seen in Figure 9, students do not report that they are getting *frequent* “advice/guidance” from faculty about their education program. While all groups reported modest levels of this type of advice from faculty, FE100 students reported it at a lower rate than all of the other groups. “Emotional support or encouragement” and “negative feedback about academic work” were even less frequently received than general academic guidance.

Despite the low levels at which students reported receiving advice and emotional support from faculty, students generally agreed that faculty are interested in their “personal” and “academic” problems. With regard to faculty interest in “academic” problems, 100% of FE100 and Honors students reported that they *strongly agreed* or

agreed, this is a statistically higher percentage than students in Alpha or the general program.¹ See Figure 10.

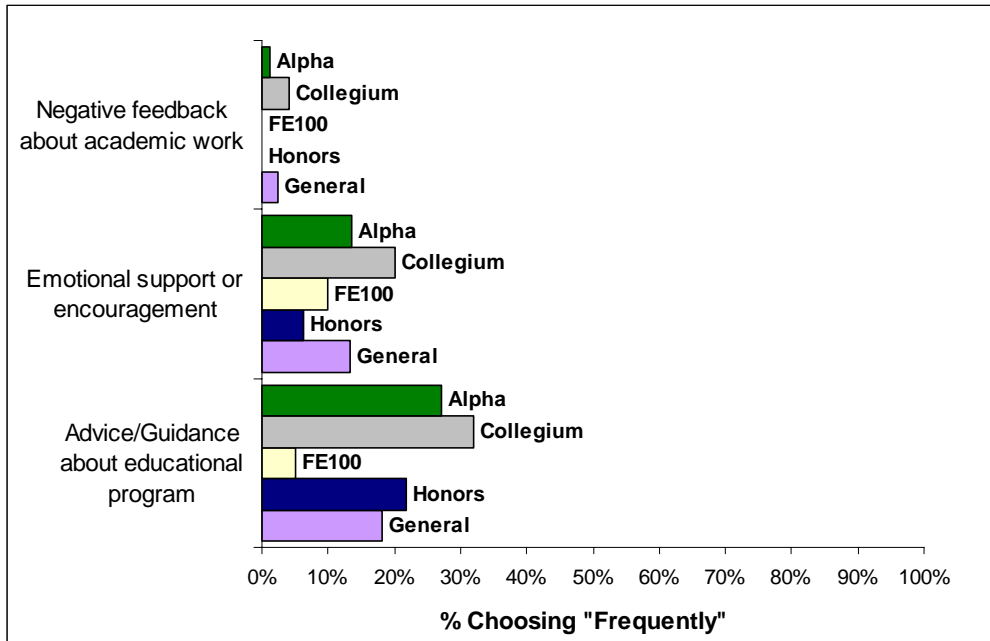


Figure 9. Students' experience getting of input from professors

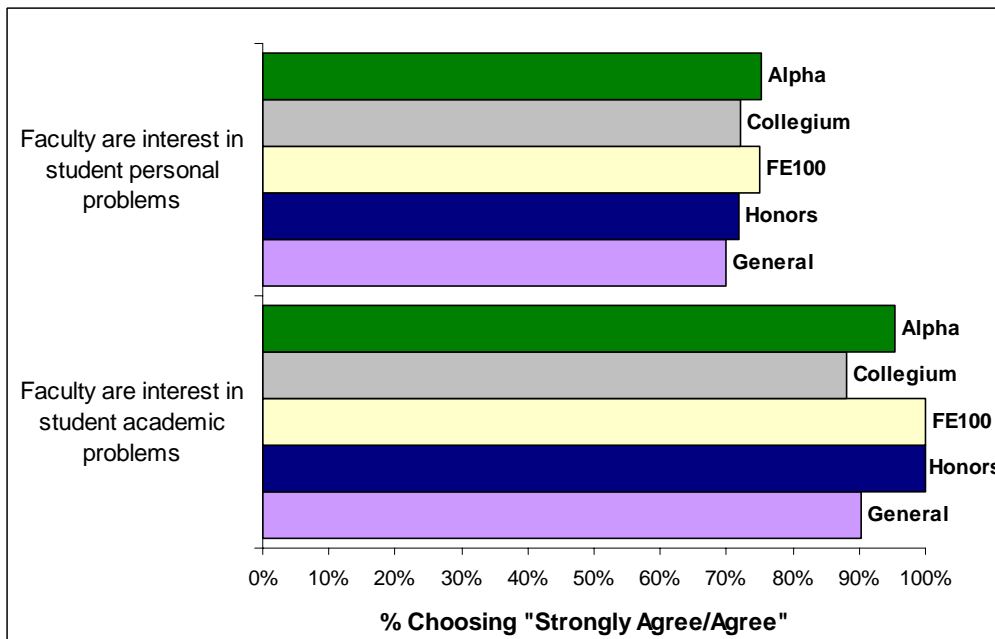


Figure 10. Students' assessment of faculty interest in their problems

¹ Although there is a greater percentage difference between FE100/Honors and Collegium than any other grouping, the small number of students in the Collegium group prevents us from reporting that difference as statistically significant.

Social Issues

At the beginning and end of the first year, students were asked to rate themselves on two socially related traits: “cooperativeness” and “self-understanding.” Most students indicated that they were at least *above average* with regard to “cooperativeness,” fewer however felt as strong in their sense of self. Collegium and general students rated their “self-understanding” at the beginning of the year higher than did students in all other programs. See Figure 11.

Although the differences are only direction and not statistically significant, there was a drop in the self-reports of “cooperativeness” among Alpha, FE100 and Honors students from beginning to end of the year while Collegium and general students increased in this area. In addition, the ratings of “self-understanding” among Alpha and general students declined from the beginning to the end of the year while all other groups saw increases in this trait. See Figure 11.

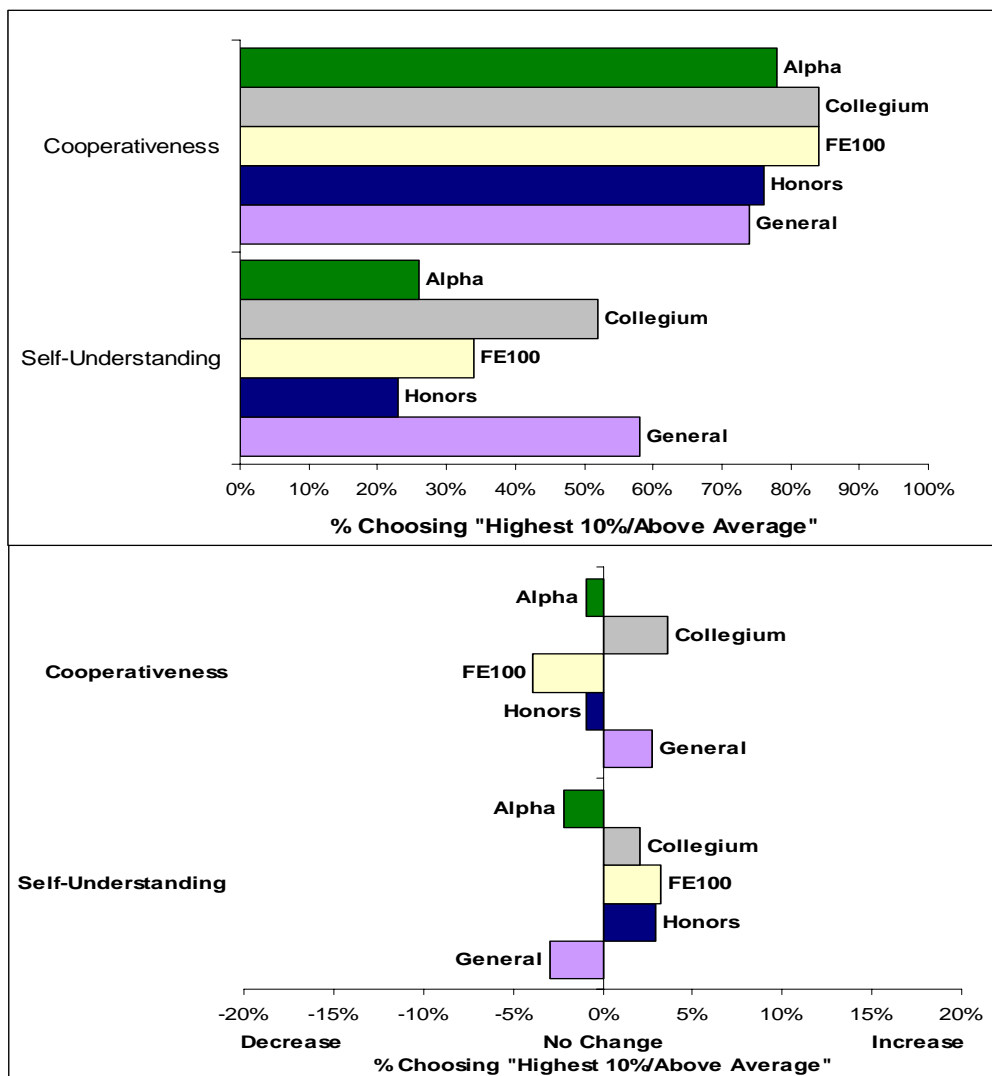


Figure 11. Students’ assessment of social traits at the beginning of their first year and change in that assessment from the beginning to the end of their first year

When asked at the end of their first-year to rate their level of satisfaction with their social life and the “sense of community” on campus, majorities of students in all programs stated that they were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied*. While there were no statistically significant difference in students’ satisfaction with their social life. FE100 students were more satisfied with the “overall sense of community” than were Alpha students. FE100 also indicated that they “feel a sense of belonging” and “see [themselves] as part of the campus community” in greater proportion than did Alpha students. FE100 were also more likely than general students to agree that they “see [themselves] as part of the campus community.” See Figure 12.

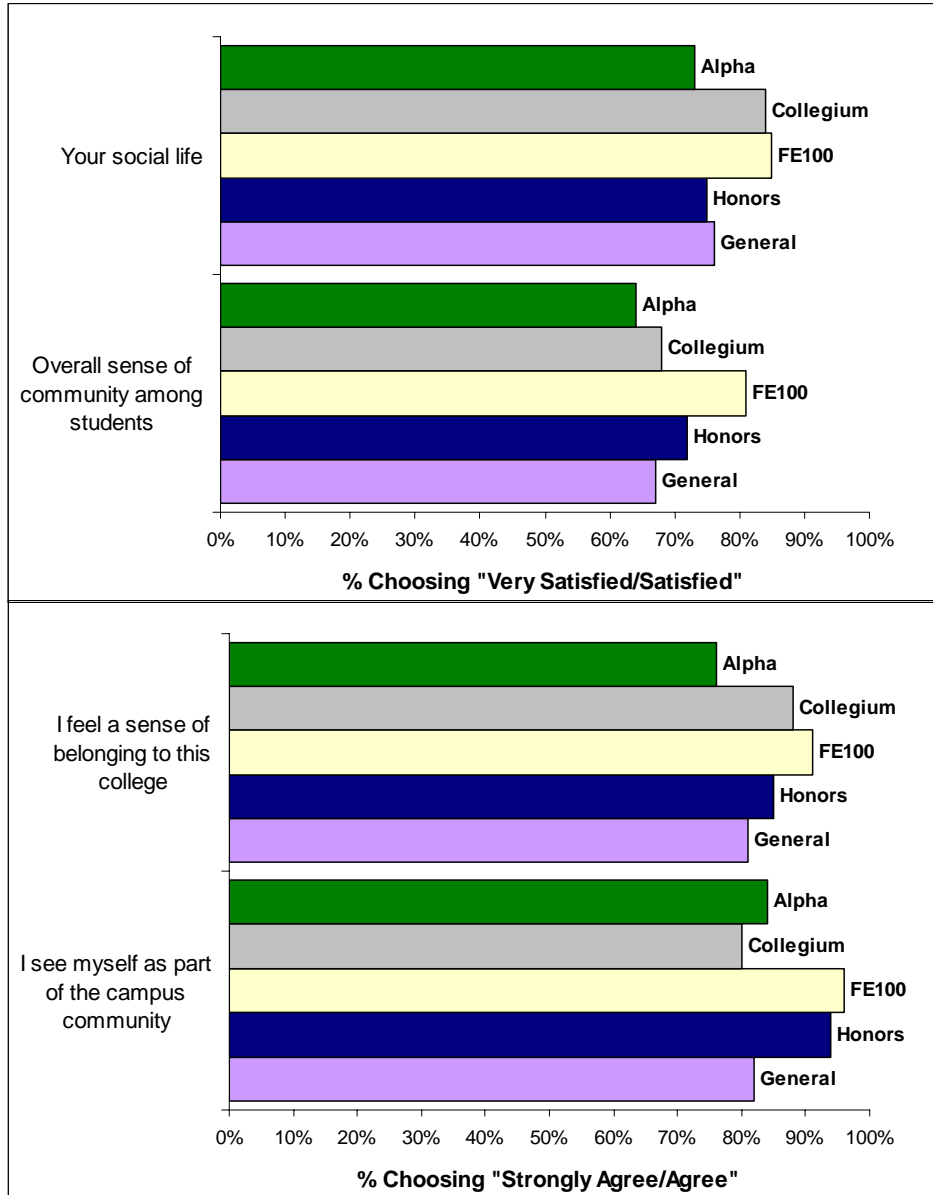


Figure 12. Students’ assessment of social life and sense of community on campus

Relatively few students (fewer than one-quarter) reported that they *frequently* felt “isolated from campus life” or “lonely or homesick” during their first year. Students in the Alpha program reported greater levels of feelings of isolation than did students in the general program.¹ See Figure 13.

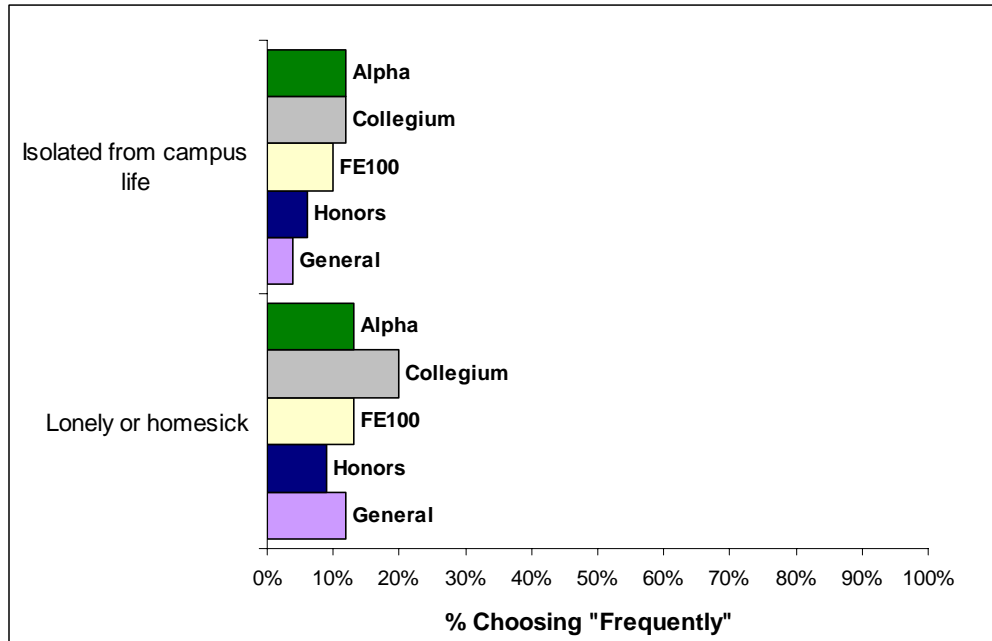


Figure 13. Student reports of isolation and homesickness

Co-curricular Activities

At the beginning of their first year, students were asked how likely they would be to participate in number of activities. The data can be seen in Figure 14 and the findings are described below.

- Students in the Honors program stated that they would participate in “student clubs/groups” and “volunteer or community service work” in greater proportion than did students in any of the other programs. They also indicated a greater desire to participate in “student government” when compared to general students.
- Alpha students indicated a larger intention to participate in “student clubs/groups,” “student government,” and “volunteer or community service” when compared to students in the general program.
- Proportionally more general students when compared to the Alpha and FE100 stated that there was a *very good chance* that they would participate in “varsity/intercollegiate athletics.”

At the end of their first year students were asked to if they did participate in these activities. The difference or gap between their actual experience and their intention at

¹ Although the percentage difference between general and Collegium students is the same as the difference between general and Alpha students, the small number of students in the Collegium group prevents us from reporting that difference as statistically significant.

the beginning and of year has been displayed in Figure 15 and the main findings are described below.¹

- All groups except for Honors reported participation in “student clubs/groups” at levels higher than was anticipated at the beginning of the year. Fewer Honors students reported that they were involved in clubs when compared to the proportion that stated that there was a *very good chance* that they would be involved at the beginning of the year.
- All groups saw lower levels of participation in “student government” than was anticipated at the beginning of the year.
- All groups saw a higher than anticipated level of participation in “volunteer or community service work,” the difference between intention and participation was lower for Honors students compared to all other groups. The difference between intention and participation for Collegium and general students was greater than that for Alpha students.
- While all other groups saw participation in “varsity/intercollegiate athletics” in excess of intention, Collegium students dropped in this area. FE100 and Honors students saw a larger difference between intention and participation rates in this activity than did Alpha students.

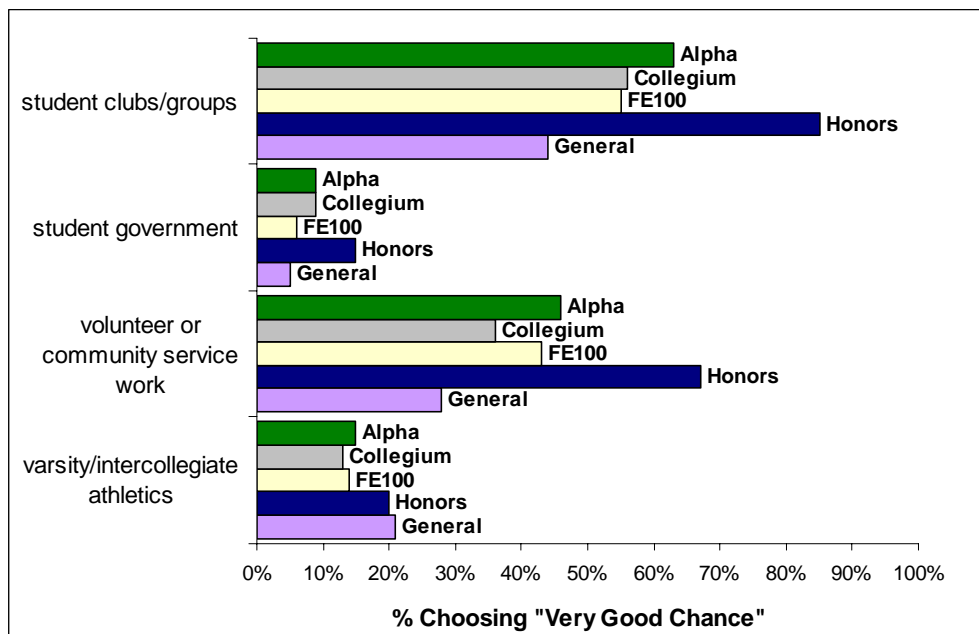


Figure 14. Students' intentions to participate in co-curricular activities at the beginning of their first year

¹ It should be noted that the pre-post data are not that of a longitudinal panel, instead they represent cross-sections taken from the same universe of students at different points in time. In addition, there is a large difference in the survey sample size between the pre- and post- data. For these reasons, the changes noted from the beginning to the end of the year should be viewed with caution.

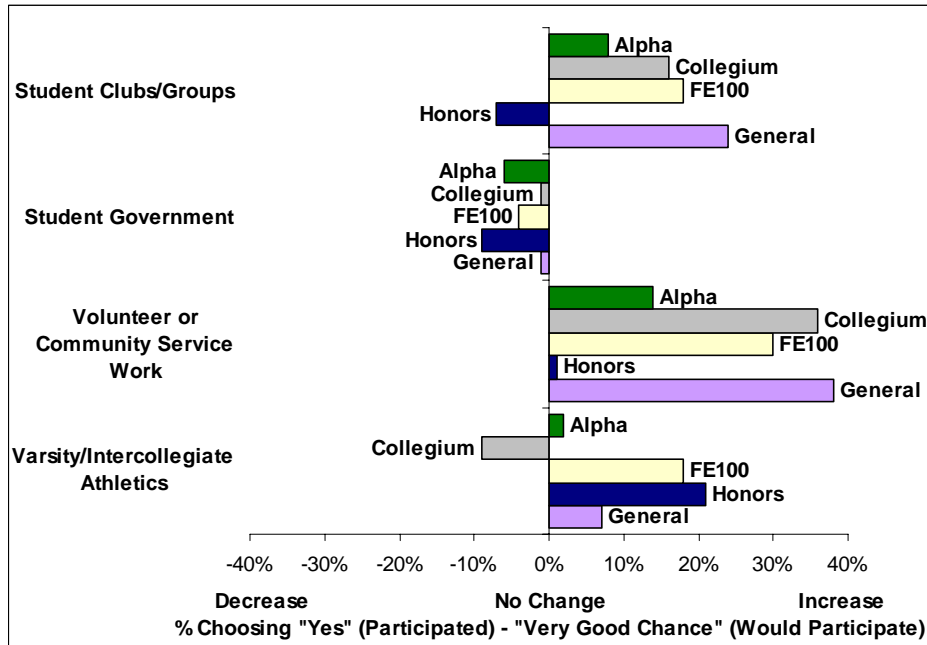


Figure 15. Difference between student participation in co-curricular activities and their intention to participate at the beginning of their first year

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 16, the overall retention rate from the first-year to sophomore year for the class of 2010 was 91%. Retention rates were disaggregated for various group characteristics but there were no significant differences in retention among various demographic groups.

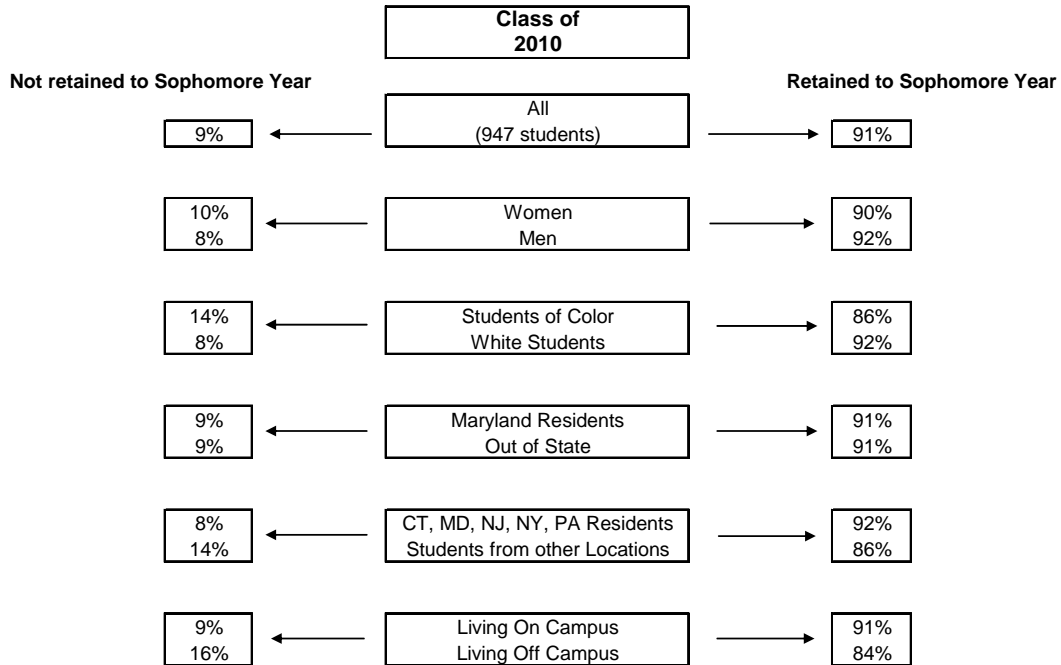
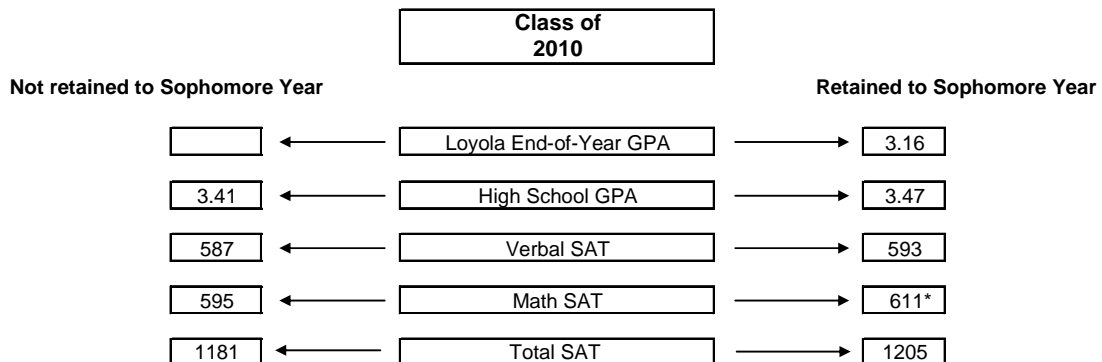


Figure 16. Retention rates and demographics for the class of 2010

As seen in Figure 17, the mean high school GPAs and verbal SAT scores did not differ between students who were retained and students who were not retained. The mean Math SAT scores were higher among students who were retained to sophomore year compared to those who were not retained. At the time of this writing the Loyola end-of-year GPA was not available. Those data will be incorporated into the analysis at a later date.



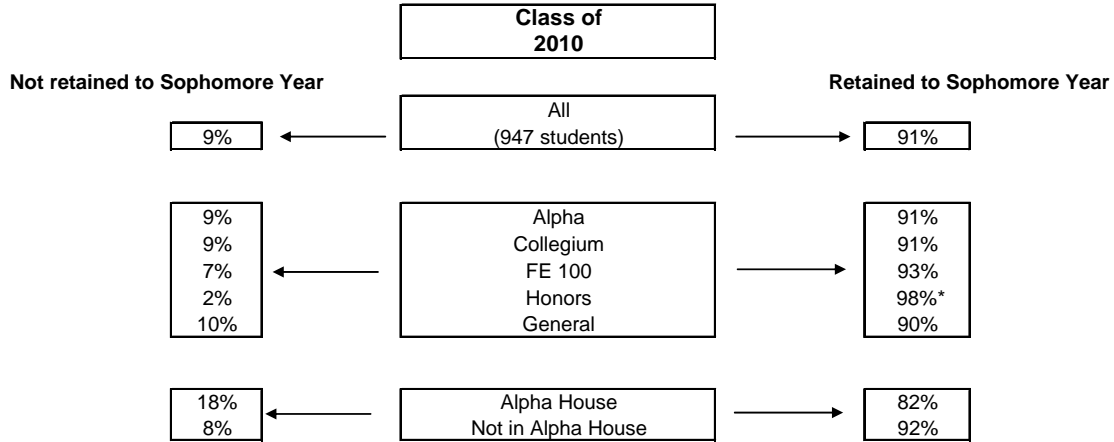
* Indicates a significant difference.

Figure 17. Retention and academic qualifications for the class of 2010

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 18. The only statistically significant difference in retention was found between the Honors students and those in Alpha, Collegium, and the general program who were retained at lower levels. There were no differences in the retention of Alpha and Alpha-house students.

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.



* Indicates a significant difference from Alpha, Collegium, and General.

Figure 18. Retention by first-year program

The mean fall 2006 GPA for all full-time, first-time students was 3.11. 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 General students. See Table 8.

Table 8. Fall 2006 Term Mean GPAs by First-Year Program

First-Year Program	Fall 2006 term mean GPA
Alpha	3.16 ^G
Collegium	3.02
FE100	3.09
Honors	3.59*
General	3.04
Total	3.11

* Indicates a significant difference from all other groups.

^G Indicates a significant difference from General.

At the time of this writing the GPA for the spring term was not available. Those data will be incorporated into the analysis at a later date in order to see if the association between first-year program and GPA continues after students have completed the program.

Summary

Almost two-thirds of the first-time, full-time freshmen in the class of 2010 participated in one of four first-year programs. As might be expected, the Honors program attracts some of the most academically gifted students. The Alpha program also tends to attract students who are more academically qualified, have a stronger sense of their academic abilities, and are more intentional about gaining a general education than students who select other first-year programs.

Students across the programs were satisfied with their Loyola experience including the social life and sense of community on campus. Alpha students were the most satisfied with their first-year program but also reported higher levels of isolation than other students. Interestingly, FE100 students were the least satisfied with their first-year program but had high rates of satisfaction with the sense of community on campus and reported a high level of belongingness.

Changes from the beginning to the end of the first year in self-reported academic and social abilities were noted but the changes were not systematic in either direction (gains in ability vs. losses) or within programs—gains as well as losses were seen in the data from students in each program. The small number of end-of-year respondents makes the comparison of pre- to post- data less strong than it would have been with a larger number of respondents. Still, the resulting data can be considered directionally correct and useful in informing discussions about the impact that the first-year programs have on various academic and social abilities. For example, declines in self-reported academic ability and intellectual self-confidence among Alpha and Honors may be linked to the difficulty of the courses that those students enrolled in; in fact, more Alpha and Honors students rated their courses as difficult or extremely difficult than did Collegium and FE100 students.

The overall retention rate from the first to the sophomore year was 91%. With the exception of enrollment in the Honors program, retention was not impacted by demographic characteristics or being enrolled in any particular first-year program. This is an important finding in that it indicates that Loyola's first-year programs are working equally well in promoting student retention. The data do not, however, support the notion that first-year programs increase retention as there is not difference in retention between students enrolled in a program and those who elected not to be in a first-year program. The lack of difference in retention based on demographic characteristics indicated 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.