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■ **First-Year Academic Program Report:  
Class of 2011**

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**LOYOLA**  
COLLEGE IN MARYLAND

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# First-Year Academic Program Report: Class of 2011

## Introduction

Assessing the first-year student experience is necessary in order to understand: who our new students are, students' expectations for college, how students have become academically and socially engaged during their first year, and the role of first-year programs in the student experience at Loyola. Taken together, findings can be used to identify areas where the College is performing well, as well where there are areas for improvement with regards to first-year programs and retention efforts.

Nationally, first-year programs vary in their format and delivery—extended orientation courses, academic first-year seminars, and living-learning communities—and are viewed as a best practice in higher education. At Loyola, first-year students elect to participate in one of three first-year programs: the Alpha Program (cross-disciplinary seminars that integrate the liberal arts and Jesuit tradition), the FE 100 Program (a one-credit program based on the extended orientation model), or the Collegium Program (a living-learning community in which students enroll in three common courses, one of which is FE 100, and reside together). Additionally, some students can apply to and, upon acceptance, participate in the Honors Program. This is a selective program through which students complete a rigorous four-year interdisciplinary humanities core curriculum. Beginning in AY2003-04, students could reside in Alpha House, where they lived together on the seventh floor of Campion Towers and were enrolled in an Alpha class. Because first-year programs are not mandatory for new students, some elect not to engage in one and are considered enrolled in the “general” academic program. This report includes comparisons among all full-time, first-time students across programs from the class of 2011.

## Methodology

Data were triangulated from three main sources for this study. Demographic, enrollment, and academic performance data were taken from the fall 2007 and fall 2008 census headcount files and from the fall 2007 and spring 2008 census grade files created by the Office of Institutional Research from Colleague. Data were also taken from home-grown surveys, namely, the New Student Expectations Survey administered during the fall 2007 orientation and the New Student Follow-up Survey administered online to students during spring 2008.

The New Student Expectations Survey was completed by 759 of the 983 full-time, first-year students for a response rate of 77%. Because of self-selection bias, the completed surveys do not comprise a random sample of first-year students. In understanding how to interpret the survey results, it can be useful to place them in context using the logic of survey sampling and sampling error. If these data represented a random sample, sampling error for proportions based on the entire sample ( $n=759$ ) would be  $\pm 2\%$  at the 95% confidence interval (

Table 1). The New Student Follow-up Survey was completed by 347 of the 983 full-time, first-year students for a response rate of 35%. Based on these data the sampling error for proportions is  $\pm 4\%$ . Analyses of the Expectations and Follow-up Surveys are disaggregated by first-year program (FYP) and are based on self-reported program affiliation.

With regard to the comparative analyses in this report, all group differences reported are statistically significant at the  $p \leq .05$  level unless otherwise noted. Superscripts are used in charts to indicate a statistically significant difference between a group and the denoted group: <sup>a</sup> Alpha, <sup>c</sup> Collegium, <sup>f</sup> FE 100, <sup>h</sup> Honors, and <sup>g</sup> General.

**Table 1. Response Rates and Sampling Errors of the First-Year Questionnaires**

	Expectations		Follow-up	
	Response Rate	Sampling Error	Response Rate	Sampling Error
Alpha	80%	± 3 %	41%	± 7 %
Collegium	83%	± 6 %	35%	± 16 %
FE100	87%	± 3 %	37%	± 11 %
Honors	96%	± 3 %	58%	± 12 %
General	68%	± 3 %	28%	± 8 %
Total	77%	± 2 %	35%	± 4 %

### Executive Summary

- Fifty-seven percent of the class of 2011 participated in one of the first-year programs.
- Women are over-represented in the Alpha and Honors programs and students of color are over-represented in the Collegium program when compared to the respective distributions of gender and race in the Class of 2011.
- Honors students have significantly higher high school GPAs and SAT scores than students in the other programs. Alpha students had higher high school GPAs, critical reading and composite SAT scores than students in the general program. FE 100 students had higher GPAs than General students, and Collegium had higher critical reading SAT scores than General students.
- Students have a strong career orientation towards pursuing a college degree. Virtually all students indicated they expected their education to *prepare them for a career* and almost nine out of ten expected that their education would *prepare them for graduate school*.
- Students indicated that they “somewhat” or “a great deal” expected their college education to contribute to their intellectual, physical, and cultural development as reflective of characteristics of a Jesuit education.
- Compared to General students, FYP participants had a stronger set of expectations for their Loyola experience.
  - Alpha, Collegium, and Honors students were more likely than General students to expect their Loyola education to include *a foundation in the liberal arts* and *include opportunities to participate in cultural activities outside of class*.
  - All first-year program participants were more likely than General students to expect their education to include *opportunities for community service* and to be exposed to a variety of diversity and ethical issues.
- Eight out of ten students indicated that *learning more about things that interest me* was “very important” when selecting courses for the first semester. Honors students were more likely than all other students to indicate this.
- Cross-sectional comparisons were made between first-year students’ responses on the Expectations and Follow-up Surveys to understand transitional issues as well as expectations for and actual experiences during the first year.
  - First-year respondents anticipated a more difficult adjustment than what they reported experiencing the first semester.
  - First-year students had higher expectations for academic and social engagement than the frequency with which they were actually engaged.

- The first-to-second year retention rate for the class of 2011 was 91%. This is consistent with the Class of 2010's first-to-second year retention figure. There were no differences in retention based on student demographics but there were some differences based on academic qualifications and program participation.
  - Students retained to the sophomore year had a significantly higher high school GPA than those students not retained to the sophomore year.
  - Honors and FE100 students were retained at a significantly higher rate than were students who took the general academic program.
    - When controlling for demographic characteristics, pre-enrollment academic qualifications, and first semester enrollment characteristics, the relationship did not hold for Honors.
    - There is some evidence that FE 100 students were retained at a higher rate than General students when controlling for other variables.
- Alpha and Honors students had significantly higher first-term and first-year GPAs than all other first-year students.
- Alpha, FE 100, and Honors students were more likely than the General group to be "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their Loyola experience. No significant differences existed among first-year students on level of satisfaction with the academic experience.
- FE 100 participants expressed greater satisfaction than other first-year students with the level of exposure to the Jesuit mission. Responses to other survey items revealed that these students (including Collegium) attributed being exposed to the *values of community service, social justice and diversity, and spiritual reflection and well-being* to their programs.
- Honors students unanimously stated that the *quality of their learning* in the Honors courses was "slightly higher" or "much higher" compared to other classes at Loyola. They were also more likely than their contemporaries to indicate that the quality of learning was higher in their FYP than other courses.
- On the Follow-up Survey students were asked to what degree their FYP contributed to their learning and development in a variety of areas.
  - Honors students were more likely than their first-year counterparts to say that their program contributed to some fundamental skills all students should possess, including the *ability to ask questions, being able to express one's viewpoints, and become a better writer*. Alpha students were more likely than FE 100 to indicate that their program contributed to their *ability to ask questions and becoming a better writer* too.
  - Honors students were more likely than certain first-year groups to credit their FYP to becoming socially integrated by *adjusting to college life, meeting new people, and participating in cultural activities outside of class*.
  - Honors students were more likely than Alpha and FE 100 students to say their program got them *excited about new ideas/topics, helped them value learning for its own sake, and helped them become a more cultured person*.

## Detailed Findings

### Who Are the First-Year Students?

There were 983 full-time, first-year students in the class of 2011. As seen in Table 2, 57% of new students enrolled in a first-year program. Analyses were conducted to determine whether there were differences in the types of students attracted to the various first-year programs.

**Table 2. First-Year Program Participation**

First-Year Program	Count	Percent
Alpha	296	30%
Collegium	69	7%
FE 100	142	14%
Honors	52	5%
General	424	43%
Total	983	100%

*Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.*

### **Demographics**

There is a relationship between being engaged in a first-year program and gender. When compared to the overall gender distribution in the class of 2011, women were over-represented in the Alpha and Honors programs (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Participation in First-Year Programs by Gender**

First-Year Program	Men		Women	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Alpha	106	36%	190	64%
Collegium	29	42%	40	58%
FE100	68	48%	74	52%
Honors	20	39%	32	62%
General	214	51%	210	50%
Total	437	45%	546	56%

*Note: Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.*

As seen in Table 4, 13% of those in the class of 2011 were students of color (the 36 students who were considered "international", "other" or "unknown" are not included in these data.) The percentage of students of color in the Collegium program (28%) was higher than the overall proportion of students of color in the first-year student population (13%).

**Table 4. Participation in First-Year Programs by Race**

First-Year Program	Students of Color		White Students	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Alpha	39	14%	246	86%
Collegium	18	28%	46	72%
FE 100	13	9%	125	91%
Honors	4	8%	47	92%
General	46	12%	363	89%
Total	120	13%	827	87%

*Note: Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.*

### **Academic Pre-qualifications**

Group differences among first-year program participants were assessed with regard to high school GPA (see Table 5). As expected, the mean high school GPA for Honors students was higher than the mean GPA for all other first-year students. Alpha and FE 100 students had higher mean high school GPAs than students who did not engage in an FYP (General).

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

First-Year Program	High School GPA
Alpha	3.53 <sup>g</sup> (.31)
Collegium	3.52 (.33)
FE 100	3.53 <sup>g</sup> (.29)
Honors	3.78 <sup>*</sup> (.22)
General	3.43 (.33)
Total	3.50 (.32)

*\* Indicates a significant difference from all other groups. Standard deviations are in parentheses.*

Group differences among FYP participants with regards to SAT scores were also examined (see Table 6). As expected, Honors students had higher average subtest and composite SAT scores than all other student groups. Collegium students had higher critical reading score averages than did General students, and Alpha students had higher average critical reading and SAT composite scores than General students.

**Table 6. Mean SAT Scores by First-Year Program**

First-Year Program	Math SAT	Critical Reading	
		SAT	Total SAT
Alpha	607 (65)	609 <sup>g</sup> (65)	1216 <sup>g</sup> (106)
Collegium	586 (78)	610 <sup>g</sup> (71)	1197 (127)
FE 100	608 (90)	591 (60)	1199 (104)
Honors	673* (50)	704* (49)	1377* (71)
General	596 (68)	580 (69)	1176 (115)
Total	604 (69)	599 (71)	1203 (119)

\* Indicates a significant difference from all other groups.  
Standard deviations are in parentheses.

### ***Educational Intentionality***

Over the past 25 years, there has been heightened interest among higher education scholars and policymakers in understanding students' intentions for pursuing a post-secondary education and what they expect to gain from pursuing a college degree.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, at Loyola, there is an interest in understanding what students expect from a Jesuit education. Thus, a number of items were included on the Expectations Survey that embody the mission and Core values of the institution. Students were asked to rate on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from "not at all" to "a great deal," to what extent they expect their experience at Loyola to contribute to their learning and development in a number of areas. Presented in Table 7 are the percentages of students responding "somewhat" or "a great deal" to each of the statements. Consistent with the literature on reasons for college attendance, students have a strong career

<sup>1</sup>National Institute on Education (1984). *Involvement in learning: Realizing the potential of American higher education*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Wingspread Group (1993). *An American imperative: Higher expectations for higher education*. The Johnson Foundation. Retrieved 8/13/2008 from <http://www.johnsonfdn.org/AmericanImperative/index.html>

Association of American Colleges and Universities (2002). *Greater expectations: A new vision for learning as a nation goes to college*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities. Retrieved May 15, 2008 from <http://greaterexpectations.org/>

Schultz, J.L. and Higbee, J.L. (2007). Reasons for attending college: The student point of view. *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education*, spring 2007. Retrieved 8/13/2008, from [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa4116/is\\_200704/ai\\_n19430914](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4116/is_200704/ai_n19430914)

Steele, K. (2008). *How prospective students for first impressions: Research insights into the decision-making process*. Presentation at the Society for College & University Planning International Conference, Montreal, Canada. Retrieved August 4, 2008 from <http://www.academicagroup.com/resources/presentations>

orientation towards pursuing a college degree.<sup>1</sup> Virtually all students indicated they expected their education to *prepare them for a career* and almost nine in ten expected that their education would *prepare them for graduate school*. Still, students anticipated that their college education would also contribute to their intellectual, physical, and cultural development. At least 75% of students noted that they expected their experience at Loyola to include: *a foundation in the liberal arts; a commitment to diversity and inclusion of all people; opportunities to participate in cultural activities outside of class; education for physical wellness; and opportunities for community service.*

**Table 7. Students' Educational Expectations**

<b>To what extent do you expect your experience at Loyola to include...</b>	<b>Percent choosing "Somewhat" or "A Great Deal"</b>
<b>Preparation for a career</b>	<b>98%</b>
<b>A foundation in the liberal arts</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>Preparation for graduate school</b>	<b>87%</b>
<b>A commitment to diversity and inclusion of all people</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>Opportunities to participate in cultural activities outside of class</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>Education for physical wellness</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>Opportunities for community service</b>	<b>77%</b>
An emphasis on ethical standards in professional disciplines	72%
An emphasis on interpersonal ethical conduct	70%
Opportunities to help your grow spiritually	63%
Learning about people who are marginalized by society	60%
Quiet time for reflection	43%

<sup>1</sup> Astin, A.W. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Schultz, J.L. and Higbee, J.L. (2007). Reasons for attending college: The student point of view. *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education*, spring 2007. Retrieved 8/13/2008, from [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa4116/is\\_200704/ai\\_n19430914](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4116/is_200704/ai_n19430914)

Additionally, students were asked to indicate what was important to them in choosing their courses the first semester. At Loyola, students do not choose a major until the end of their sophomore year, allowing them to explore the Core curriculum and fulfill liberal arts requirements while exploring majors of interest. Thus, 82% of new students indicated that *learning more about things that interest me* was “very important” to them, followed by *getting started in my major* and *gaining a general education and appreciation of ideas*. Only one-third of students indicated *becoming a more cultured person* was a salient reason when selecting courses their first semester. See Table 8 on the next page.

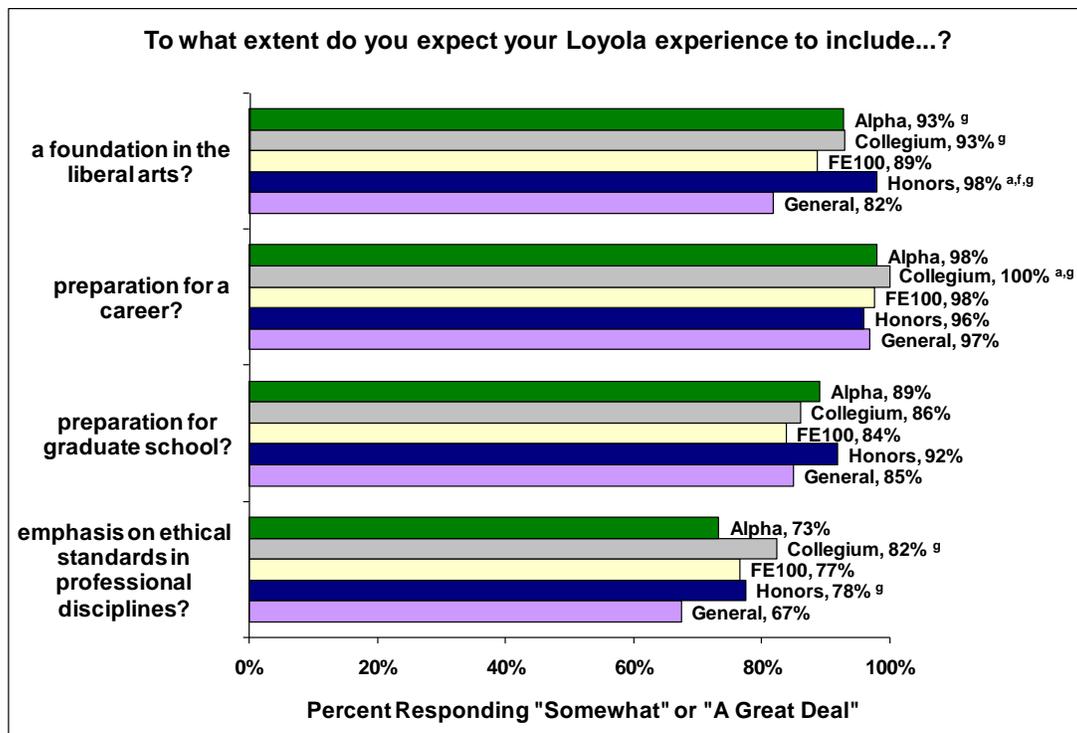
**Table 8. Factors Important in Course Selection**

<b>In choosing your courses for this semester, how important to you was each of the following?</b>	<b>Percent choosing “Very Important”</b>
To learn more about things that interest me	82%
To get started in my major	65%
To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas	64%
To become a more cultured person	34%

### ***Educational Intentionality by First-Year Academic Program***

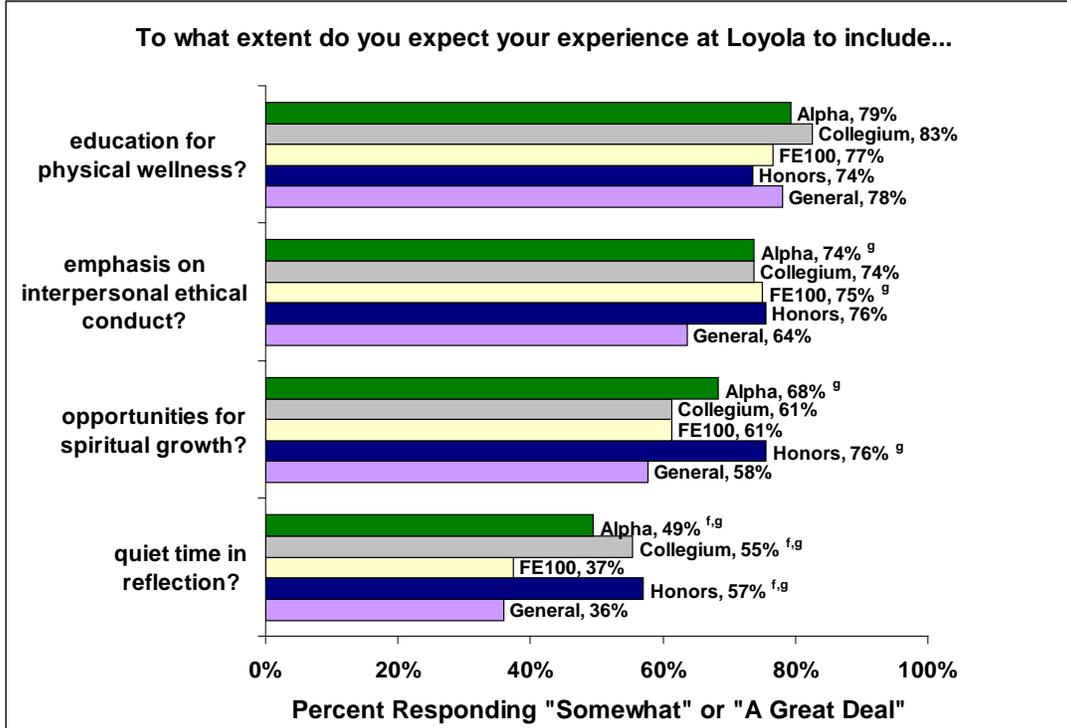
The same items related to educational intentionality were disaggregated by first-year academic program. Since each first-year program is unique from the others, it is reasonable to hypothesize that students who self-select into a particular program may have different expectations for their education than do students who do not choose the same program. Moreover, one could argue that students who enroll in a first-year program may be able to more clearly articulate what they expect out of their education than those students who do not participate in any first-year academic program.

With regards to learning objectives, Alpha, Collegium, and Honors students were more likely than General students to expect their Loyola education to include *a foundation in the liberal arts*. Among first-year program participants, Honors students were more likely than Alpha and FE 100 students to expect their Loyola education to include that as well. While all Collegium students expected that their education would *prepare them for a career*, the majority of other FYP students also espoused a careerist orientation towards their college education. FE 100 and Collegium students were more likely than General students to expect an *emphasis on ethical standards in professional disciplines*. See Figure 1.



**Figure 1. First-year students' expectations: Learning at Loyola**

With regards to well-being and spirituality-related objectives, Alpha and FE 100 were more likely than General students to expect an *emphasis on interpersonal ethical conduct*. With regard to opportunities for spiritual growth and development, both Alpha and Honors students were more likely than General students to expect that their education provide *opportunities for spiritual growth*. Alpha, Collegium, and Honors students were more likely than FE 100 and General students to expect *quiet time for reflection*.



**Figure 2. First-year students' expectations: Well-being and spirituality**

Students engaged in FYPs were more likely than students in the General academic program to expect exposure to diversity and ethical issues. Specifically, Alpha students were more likely than General students to expect their education to include a *commitment to the importance of diversity and inclusion of all people*. Alpha, Collegium, and Honors students were more likely than General students to expect that their education would include *learning about people who were marginalized by society*. All FYP participants were more likely than General students to expect their education to include *opportunities for community service* and *to participate in cultural activities outside of class*; among first-year programs, Honors students were more likely than Alpha and FE 100 to expect these experiences. See Figure 3.

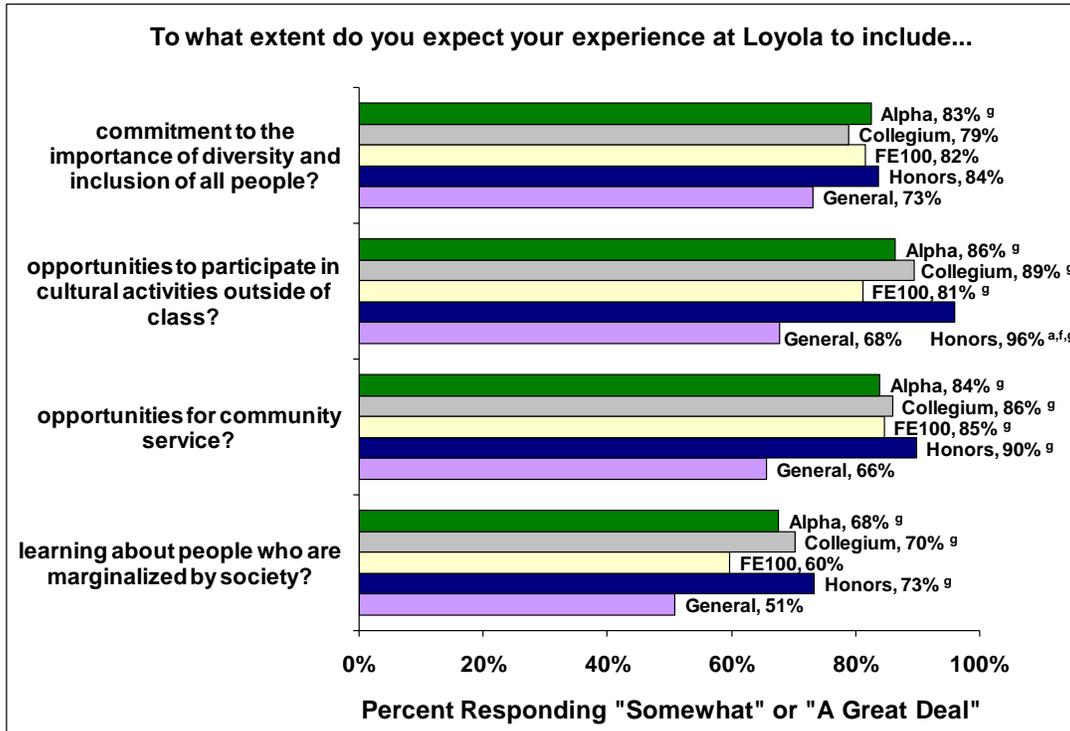
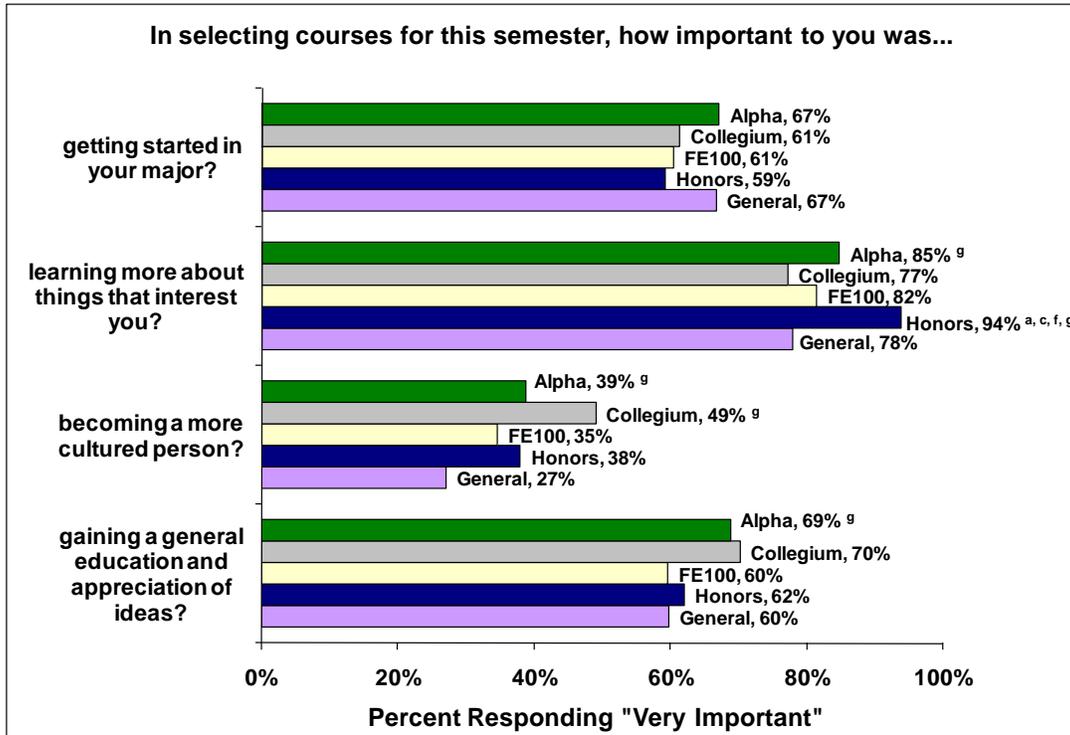


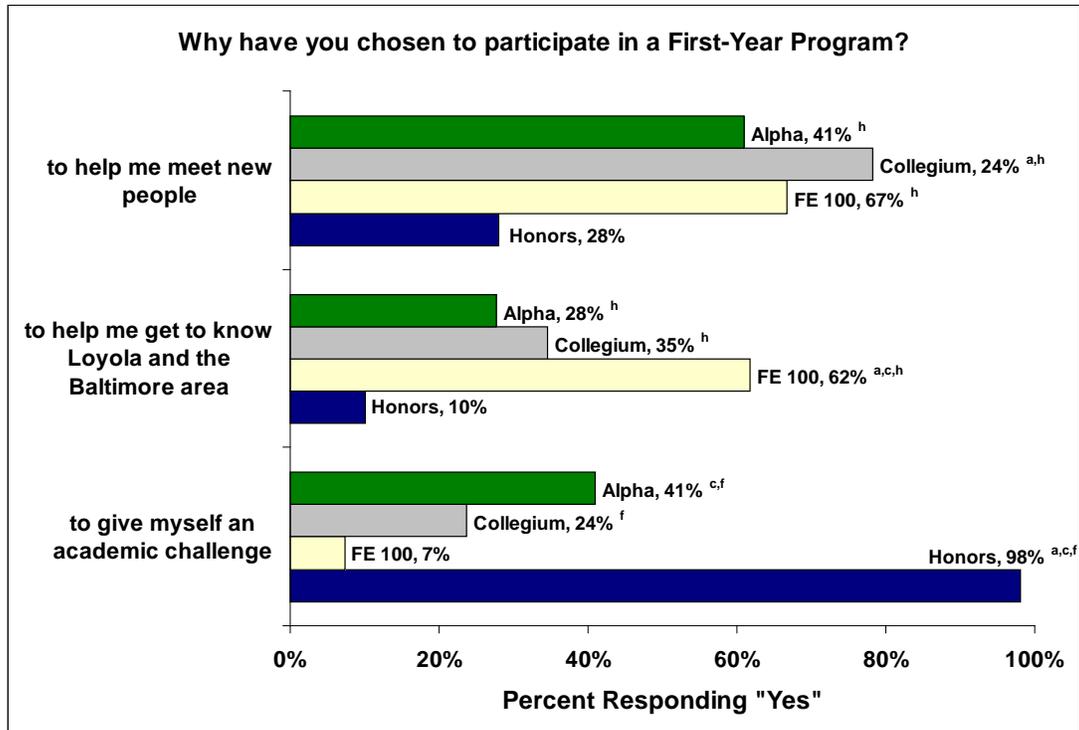
Figure 3. First-year students' expectations: Diversity and service

Items focusing on what was important to students in choosing courses for their first semester were disaggregated by first-year program. Honors students were more likely than all other students to indicate that *learning more about things that interest you* was “very important” in course selection. Alpha students were more likely than General students to say that *learning more about things that interest you, becoming a more cultured person, and gaining a general education and appreciation of ideas* was “very important” in selecting their first-semester schedule. See Figure 4.



**Figure 4. Factors important in course selection by first-year program**

Students were asked why they chose to participate in a first-year program. Students' reasons for pursuing certain programs align with some of the intended goals of the programs themselves. For example, Alpha, Collegium, and FE 100 students were more likely than Honors students to indicate they participated in a program because they wanted to meet new people and get to know Loyola and the Baltimore area. On the other hand, Honors students were focused on the academic challenge that they could receive from FYP participation. All of the FYPs with an academic focus (Alpha, Collegium, and Honors) were more likely than FE 100 to note they participated in a FYP for the academic challenge that it would provide. See Figure 5.



**Figure 5. Reasons why students participated in a first-year program**

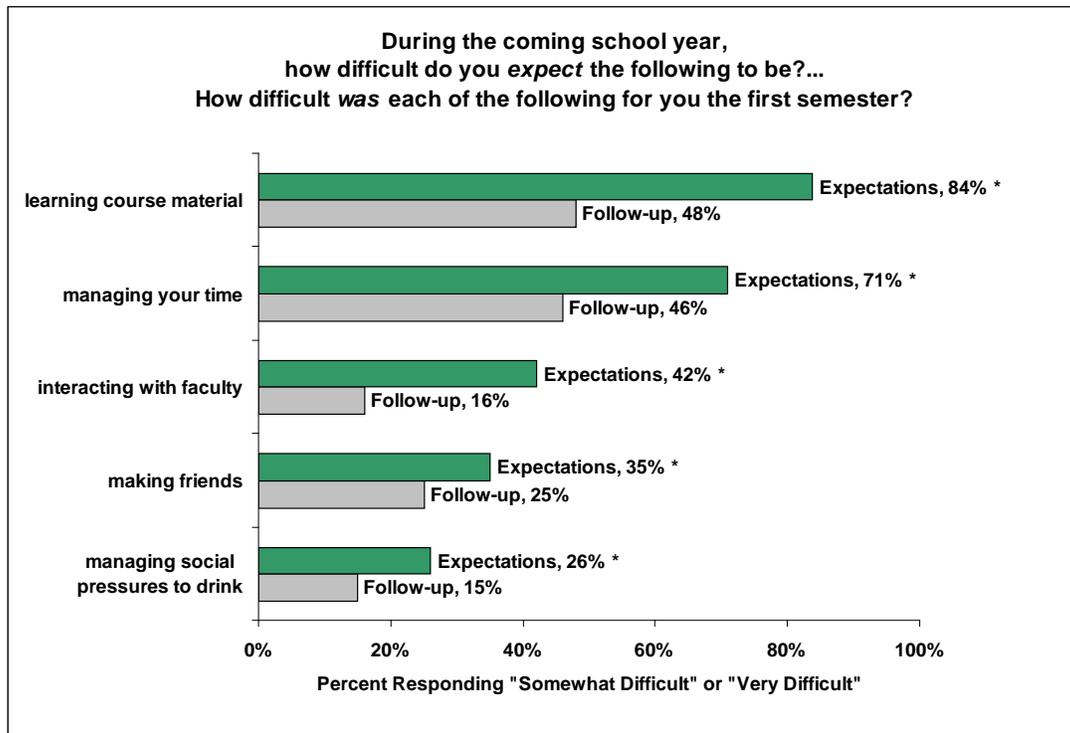
Expectations and Experiences in the First Year

On the Expectations and Follow-up Surveys students were asked similar sets of questions in order to understand expectations for and actual experiences during their first year. Specifically, students were asked what academic and social adjustments might be most challenging in the first year and then asked on the Follow-up Survey how difficult those adjustments were during their first semester. Additionally, students were asked how often they expected to be academically and socially involved their first semester and then asked how often they actually engaged in various educationally purposeful activities.

The following analysis uses cross-sections of first-year students who responded to the Expectations and Follow-up Surveys to understand differences between expectations for and actual experiences the first year. Differences are statistically significant at the  $p \leq .05$  level unless otherwise noted, and are denoted with an asterisk.

**Academic and Social Adjustments**

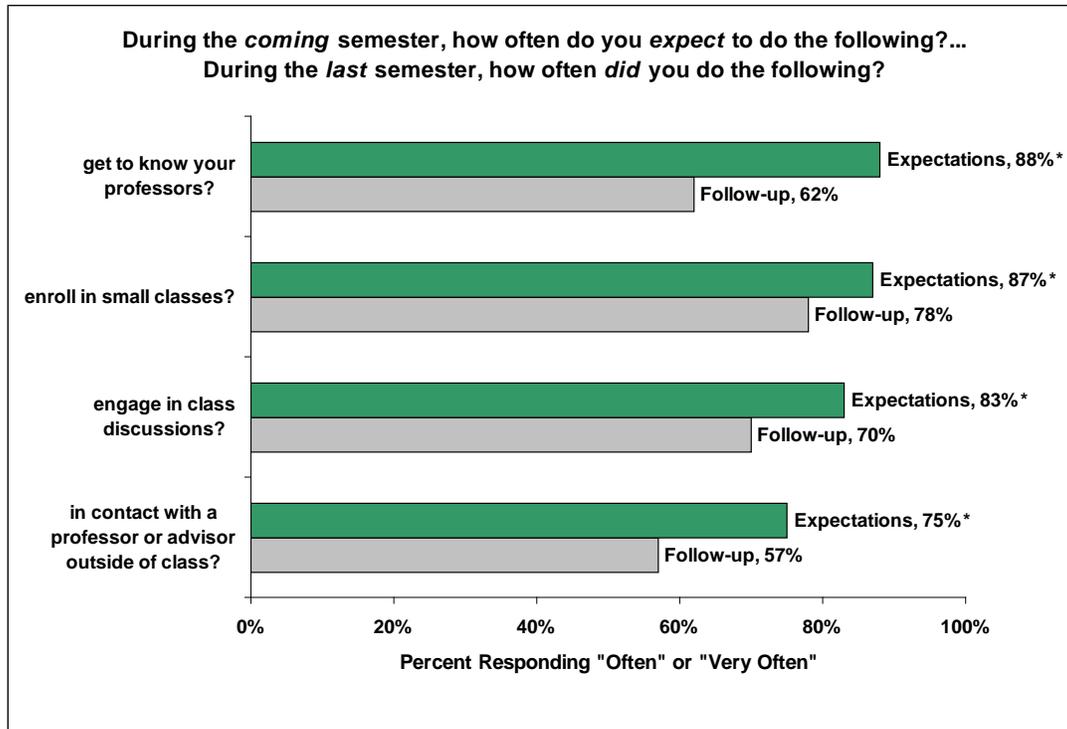
First-year students were most concerned about *learning course material* (84%) and *managing their time* (71%), followed by *interacting with faculty* (42%), *making friends* (35%), and *managing social pressures to drink* (26%). Overall, students anticipated more difficulty in adjusting to college than they actually experienced. Figure 6 displays results.



**Figure 6. Expectations and experiences: Academic and social adjustments**

### **Faculty and Classroom Engagement**

Students were asked how often they expected to be engaged in the classroom and with their professors the first semester and then asked how often they perceived they were engaged. Figure 7 displays results. Generally, first-year students had high expectations for the extent to which they would *get to know their professors*, how frequently they would be *in contact with a professor or advisor outside of class*, and how often they would be *engaged in small classes* and *actively engaged in class discussions*. Students were more likely to anticipate being more involved in class and with professors than was the case.



**Figure 7. Expectations and experiences:  
Faculty and classroom engagement**

## Social Issues

Respondents were asked how often they expected to be socially engaged in a variety of ways during their first semester and then asked how often they perceived they did so. Figure 8 displays results. New students were eager to *meet new and different people* (94%) and *participate in college sponsored off-campus events* (74%). Slightly over one-half of first-year respondents expected they would “often” or “very often” *attend weekend alcohol-free events*. Overall, first-year students expected they would be more socially engaged than they reported they were on the Follow-up Survey.

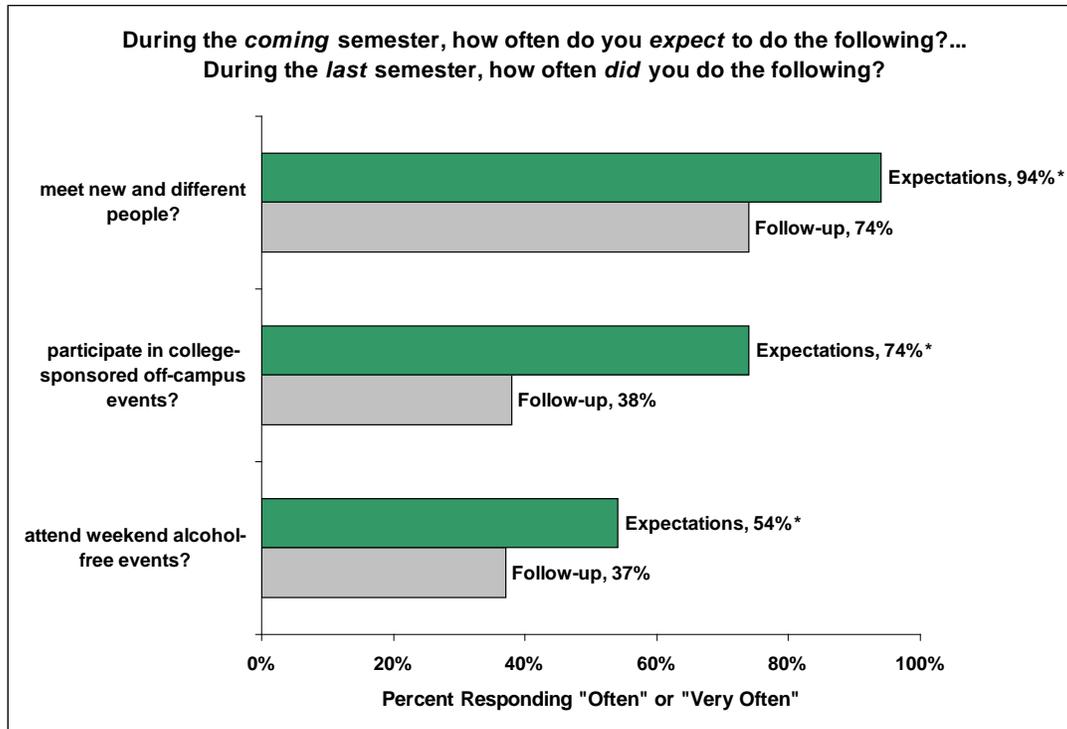


Figure 8. Expectations and experiences: Social issues

### Co-curricular Activities

Respondents were asked how often they expected to be involved in various co-curricular activities and then asked how often they were engaged in the same activities. Figure 9 displays results. New students were eager to get involved in campus activities (85%). They expected to be more involved in campus activities and student leadership than was actually the case with the exception of participation in cultural activities.

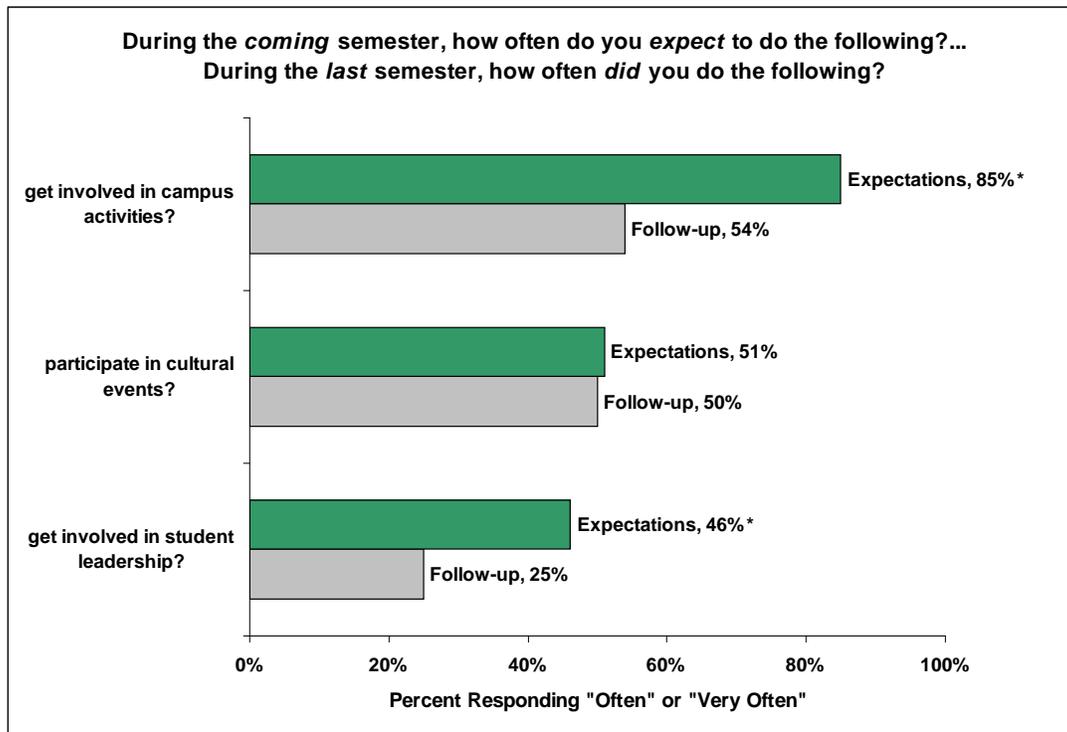


Figure 9. Expectations and experiences: Co-curricular activities

## Mission

Respondents were asked how often they expected to be involved in activities reflective of the College's mission. Figure 10 displays results. New students expected to perform community service and attend religious services more frequently than they did during their first semester with the exception of having quiet time for reflection.

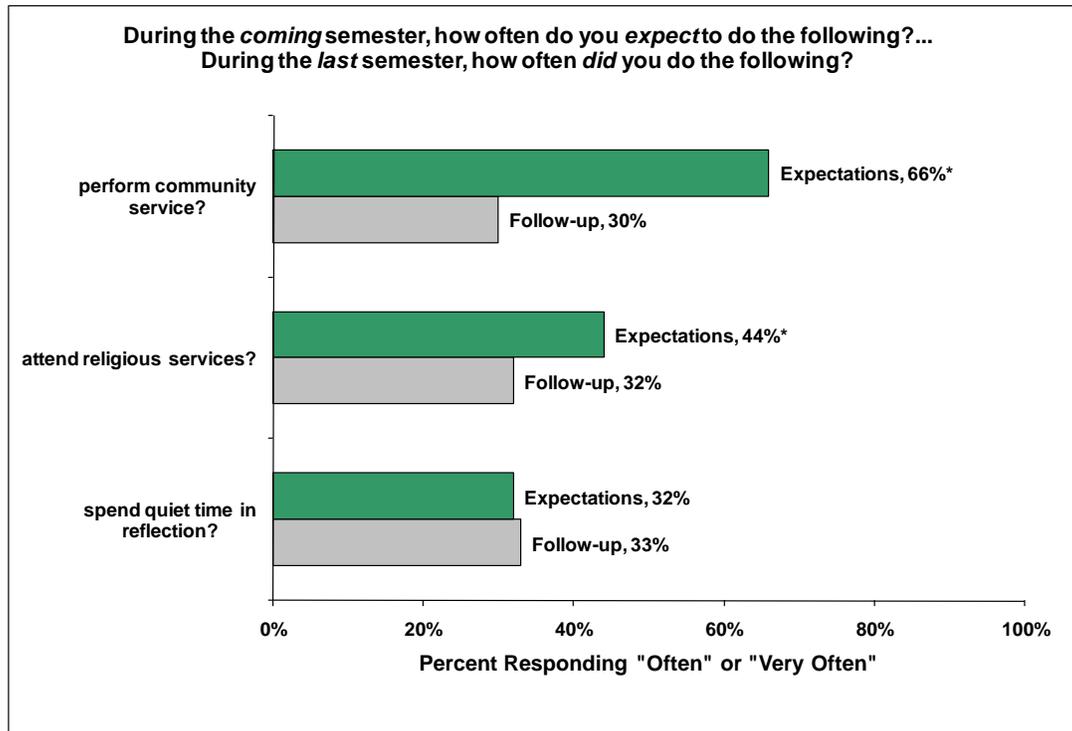
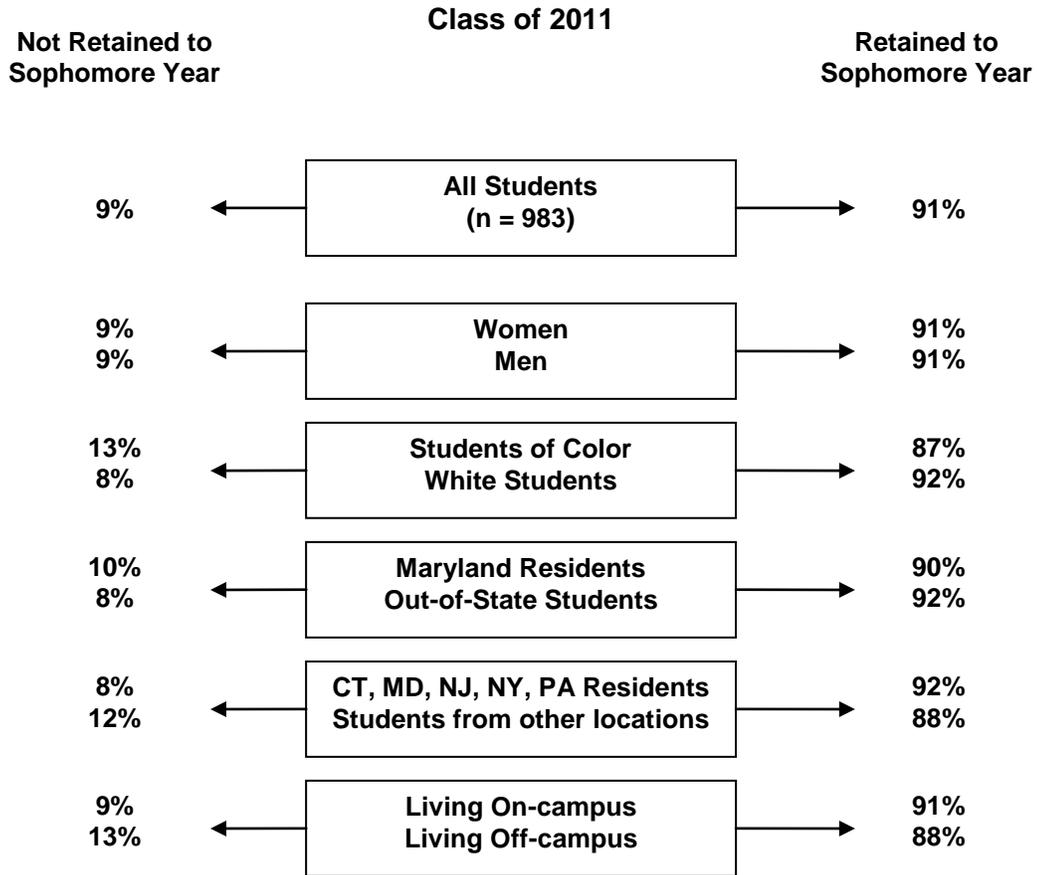


Figure 10. Expectations and experiences: Mission

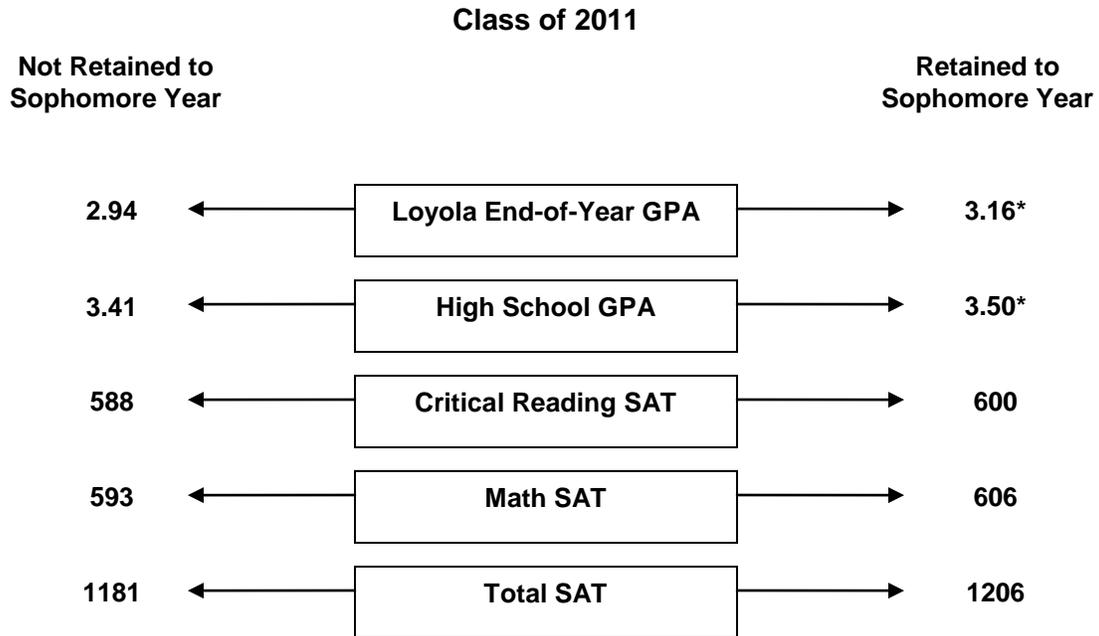
**Outcomes**

Analyses were conducted to understand if engaging in a first-year program was related to being retained at higher rates and to performing at a higher level during the first year. Differences were examined among FYPs as well as between those who engaged in an FYP and those who did not.

As seen in Figure 11, the overall retention rate from the first-to-second year for the class of 2011 was 91%. Retention rates were disaggregated by certain demographic groups based on characteristics at matriculation and there were no significant differences in retention based on demographics.



**Figure 11. Retention rates and demographics for the class of 2011**



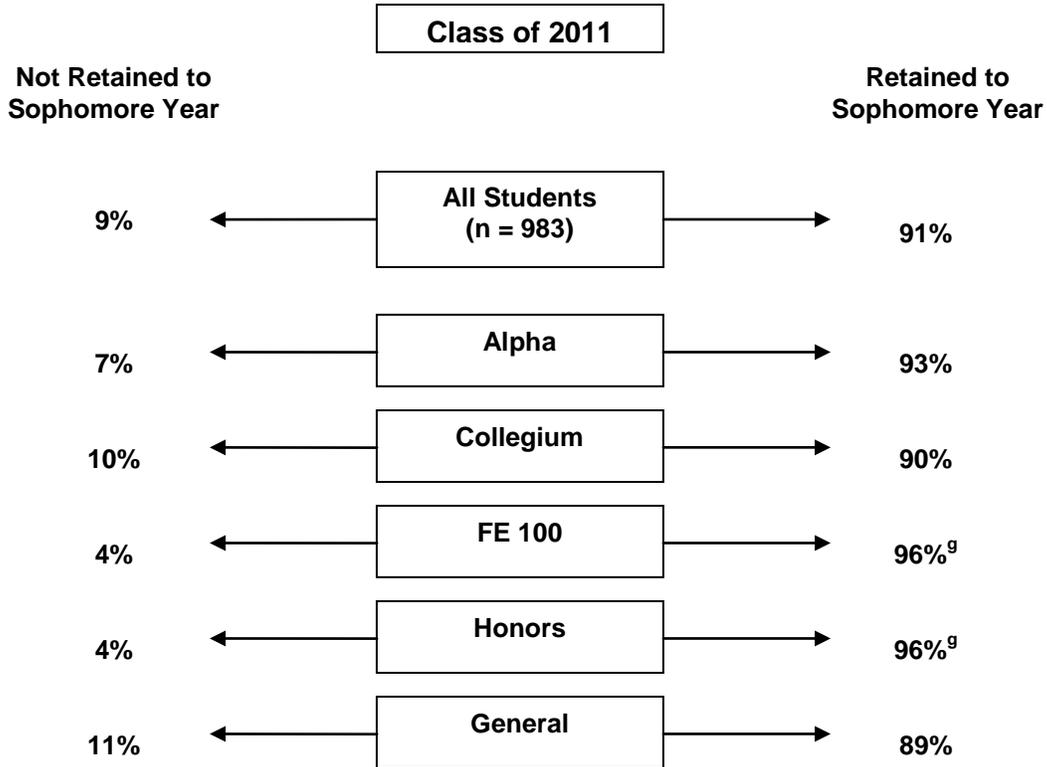
*Indicates a significant difference between retained and not retained to sophomore year.*

**Figure 12. Retention and academic qualifications for the class of 2011**

As seen in Figure 12, the mean total and subtest SAT scores did not differ significantly between students who were retained and students who were not retained. However, the mean high school GPA and the mean Loyola end-of-year GPA were higher among students who were retained to sophomore year compared to those who were not retained.

### First-Year Programs

Here, retention rates by FYP program were compared to each other and to those who did not engage in an FYP. The rates can be viewed in Figure 13. FE 100 and Honors students had higher first-year retention rates than the General group of students.



**Figure 13. Retention by first-year program for the class of 2011**

Using logistic regression, additional analysis was conducted to understand if Honors and FE 100 students were retained at a significantly higher rate than General students once additional variables were controlled for.<sup>1</sup> Using readily available data from census files, gender (man/woman), race (student of color/white), geographic origin (Middle States/non-Middle States), religion (Catholic/non-Catholic), high school GPA, SAT subtest scores, residence (dorm/commuter), and first semester attempted credit hours were entered into the model after first-year program. Honors students were not significantly more likely to be retained than General students in the multivariate case. There is limited evidence that FE 100 students are more likely than General students to be retained to the sophomore year. When controlling for gender, race, geographic origin, religion, high school GPA, SAT subtest scores, and residence, FE 100 students were significantly more likely to be retained than General students. However, when the

<sup>1</sup> Logistic regression is a statistical method that allows us to classify students into two groups using a qualitative dichotomous dependent variable—retained or not retained to the sophomore year. By entering in a series of independent variables we can understand how any one or a combination of them help us understand who is more likely to be retained or not retained.

variable first semester credit hours was added to the model, FE 100 students were not significantly more likely than students who pursued the general academic program to be retained.

Table 9 compares students' first semester and first year academic performance among first-year academic programs. Full-time, first-year students earned a B average both the first term (3.10) and for the first year at Loyola (3.15). Alpha and Honors students exhibited a higher level of academic performance those who did not engage in a FYP. In the end, Honors students outperformed all first-year students.

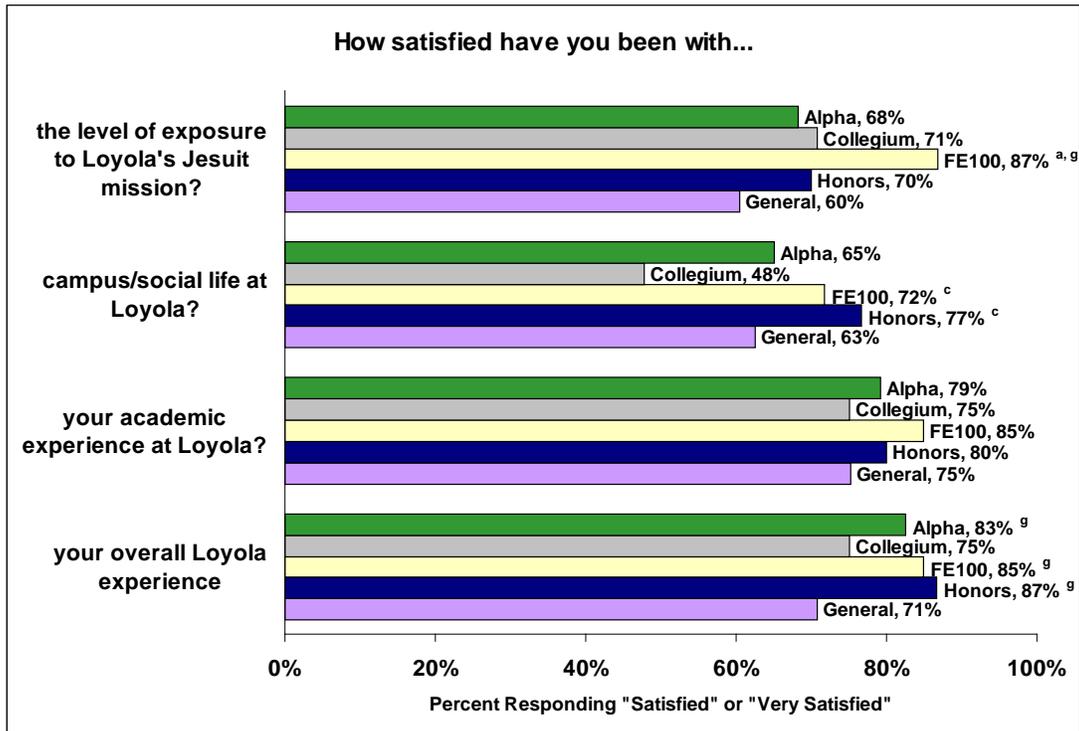
**Table 9. First-term and First-year Mean GPAs by First-Year Program**

<b>First-Year Program</b>	<b>First-term mean GPA</b>	<b>First-year mean GPA</b>
Alpha	3.17 <sup>g</sup> (.52)	3.22 <sup>g</sup> (.47)
Collegium	3.05 (.64)	3.09 (.57)
FE100	3.13 (.45)	3.14 (.41)
Honors	3.61* (.36)	3.60* (.34)
General	2.99 (.57)	3.05 (.48)
Total	3.10 (.55)	3.15 (.48)

*\* Indicates a significant difference from all other groups.  
Standard deviations are in parentheses.*

**Student Satisfaction**

On the Follow-up Survey, students were asked questions to assess their satisfaction with specific aspects of college life as well as their global satisfaction. Alpha, FE 100, and Honors students were more likely to be “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their overall Loyola experience than the General group. By the same measure, FE 100 and Honors students had higher satisfaction levels with campus/social life than Collegium students. FE 100 students were more satisfied with their level of exposure to the Jesuit mission than Alpha and General. No significant differences existed among first-year students on level of satisfaction with their academic experience. See Figure 14.

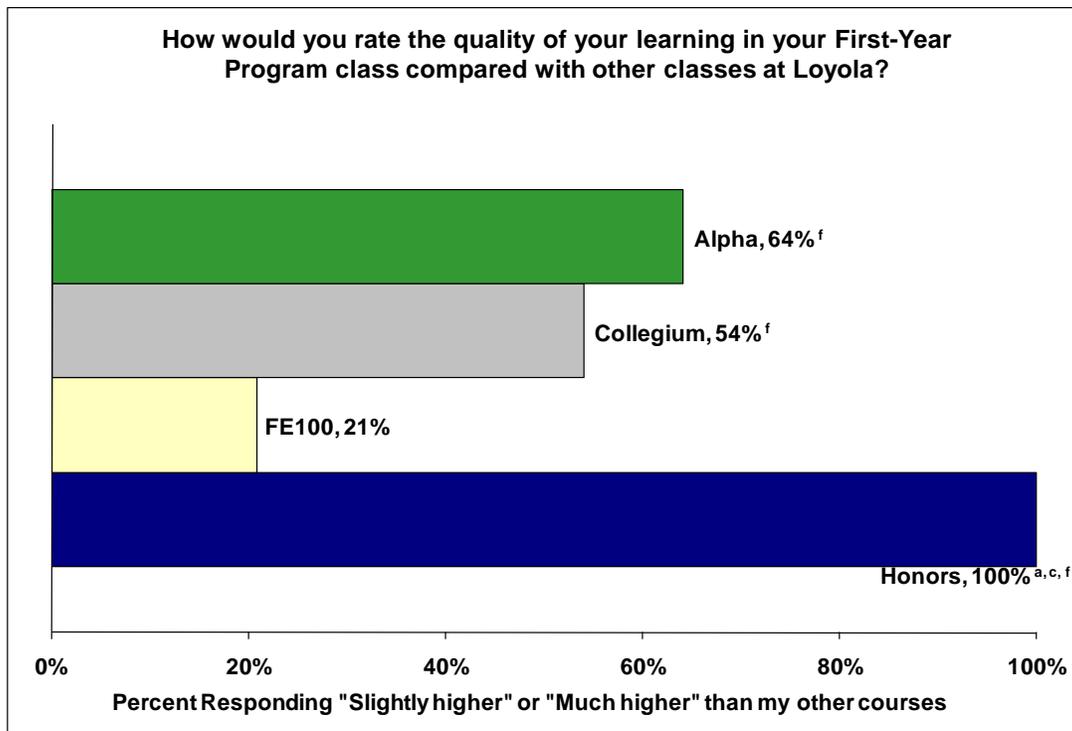


**Figure 14. Satisfaction by first-year program**

### ***Contributions of the First-Year Programs to a Jesuit Education***

On the Follow-up Survey, students were asked to rate the quality of learning in their first-year program in comparison to their other courses. Also, students were asked to indicate the extent to which their first-year program contributed to their learning and development in a number of areas that align with learning objectives embodying the mission and core values of the institution.

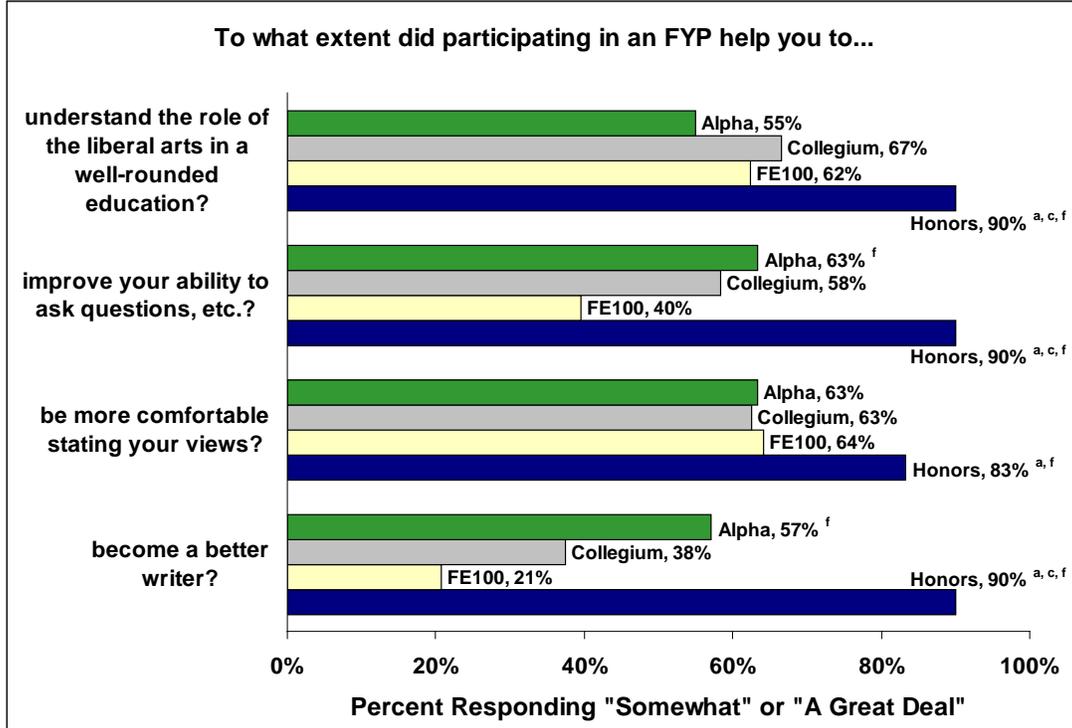
Honors students unanimously stated that the *quality of their learning* in the Honors courses was “slightly higher” or “much higher” compared to other classes at Loyola.; Honors students were more likely to note this than their FYP counterparts. Overall, FE 100 students were less likely than their FYP contemporaries to express that the *quality of learning in their FYP class* was “slightly higher” or “much higher” compared with other classes at Loyola. This must be qualified since the FE 100 course is structured differently than other academic courses at Loyola; FE 100 is a one-credit course where students are required to meet once each week for 12 weeks (constituting 20 hours) to discuss transition issues and engage in spiritual experiences, outdoor adventures, and field trips.<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 15. Quality of learning in the first-year program compared to other courses**

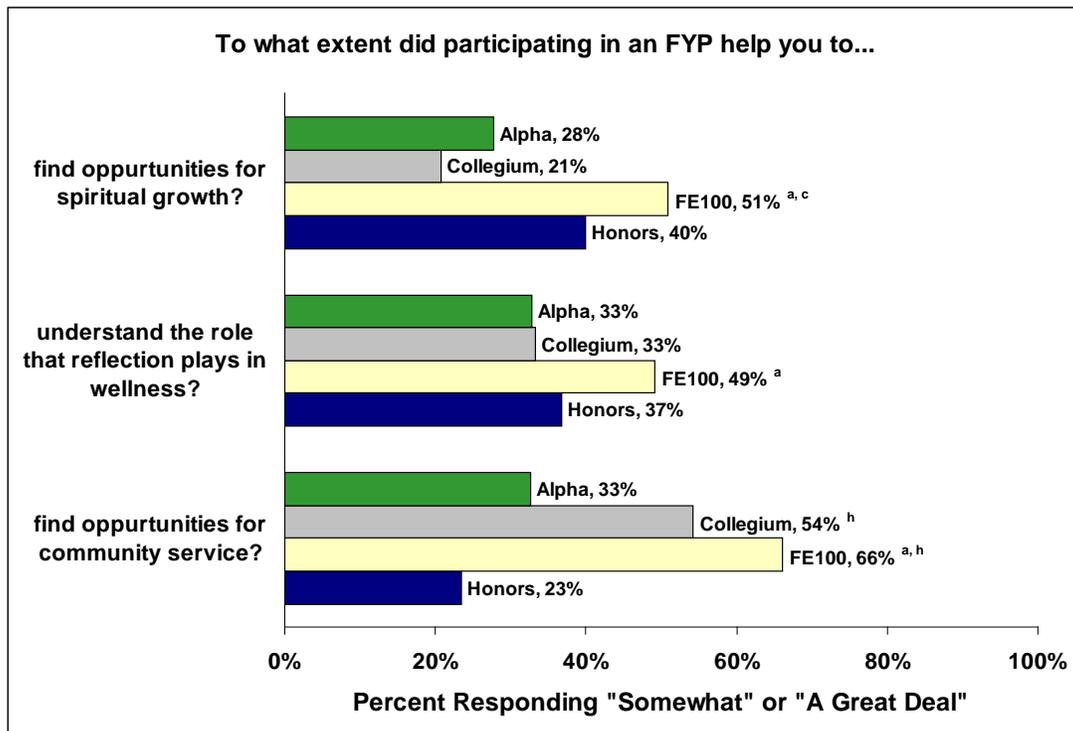
<sup>1</sup> *First-Year programs: Transforming experiences for new students (2008 – 2009)*. Loyola College in Maryland: Baltimore, Maryland.

Honors students were more likely than other FYP participants to indicate that their FYP contributed “somewhat” or “a great deal” to: *understanding the role of the liberal arts in their education, asking questions, being more comfortable stating their views, and becoming a better writer.* By the same measure, Alpha students were more likely than FE 100 students to attribute their FYP to their *ability to ask questions* and to *becoming a better writer.*

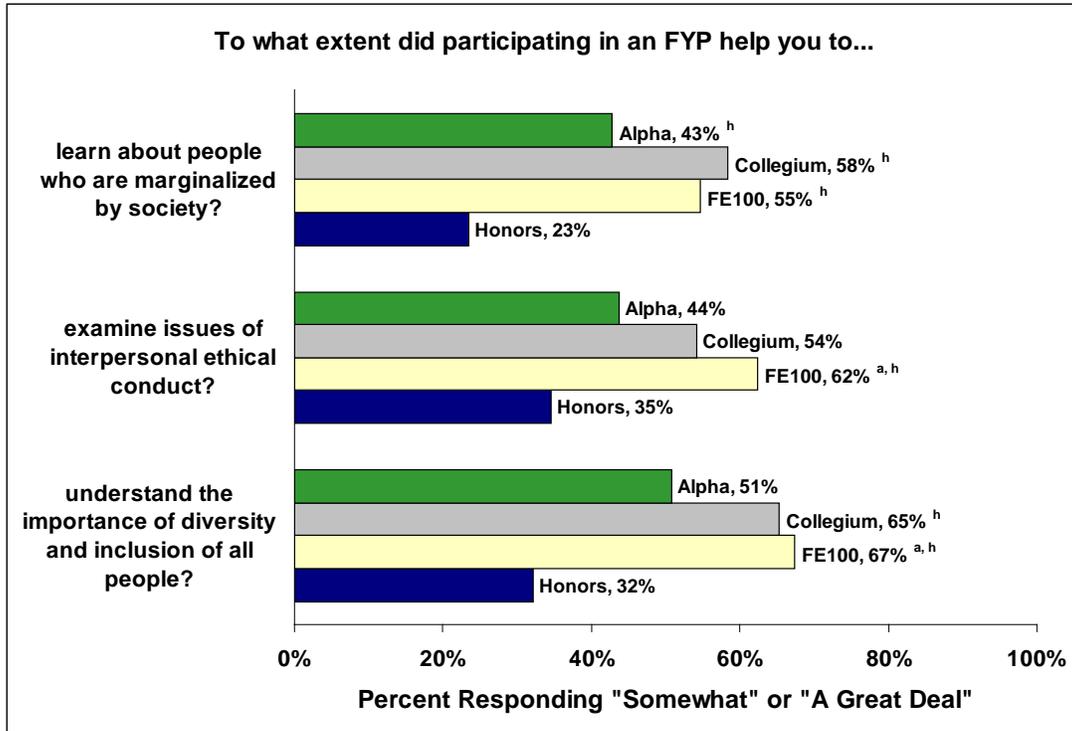


**Figure 16. Contributions to general education objectives by first-year program**

Compared to other first-year programs, the FE 100 curriculum includes discussions of community service, social justice and diversity issues, and spiritual reflection and well-being. It follows that FE 100 and Collegium students were more likely than Honors students to attribute their FYP to: *finding opportunities for community service, learning about those marginalized by society, and understanding the importance of diversity and inclusion*. FE 100 students were also more likely than Alpha students to attribute their FYP to: *finding opportunities for spiritual growth and understanding the role that reflection plays in wellness*. Finally, FE 100 students were more likely than both Alpha and Honors students to attribute to their program to helping them *examine issues of interpersonal ethical conduct*. See Figure 17 on this page and Figure 18 on the next page.

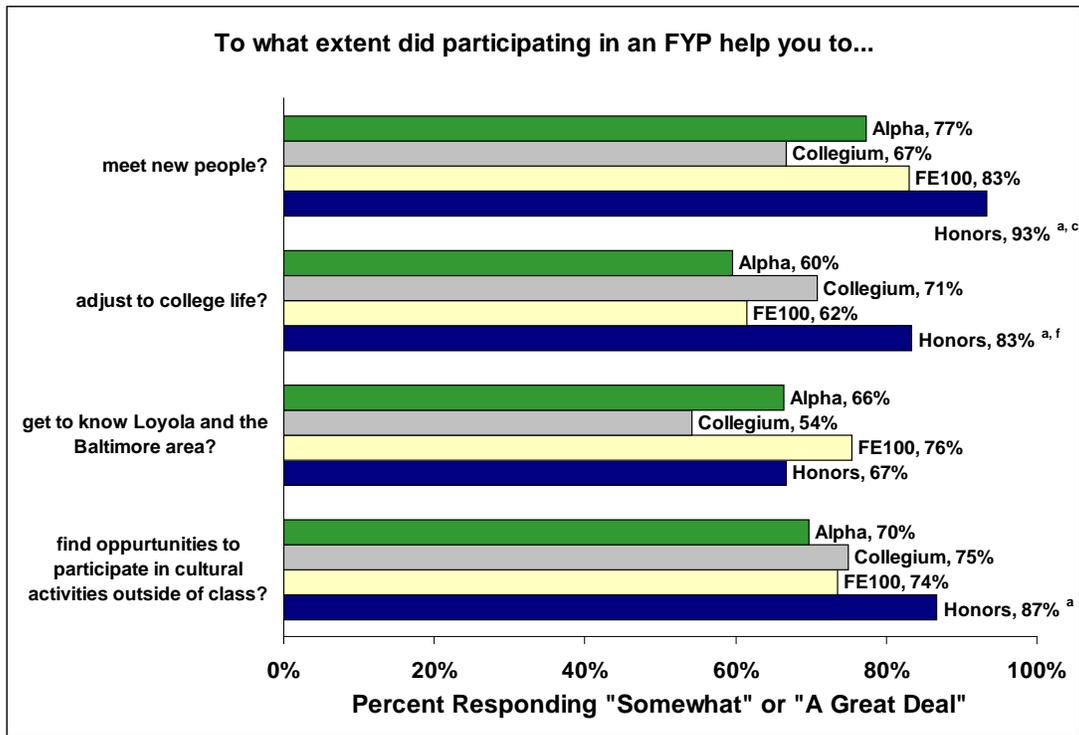


**Figure 17. Contributions to Jesuit mission-related objectives by first-year program**



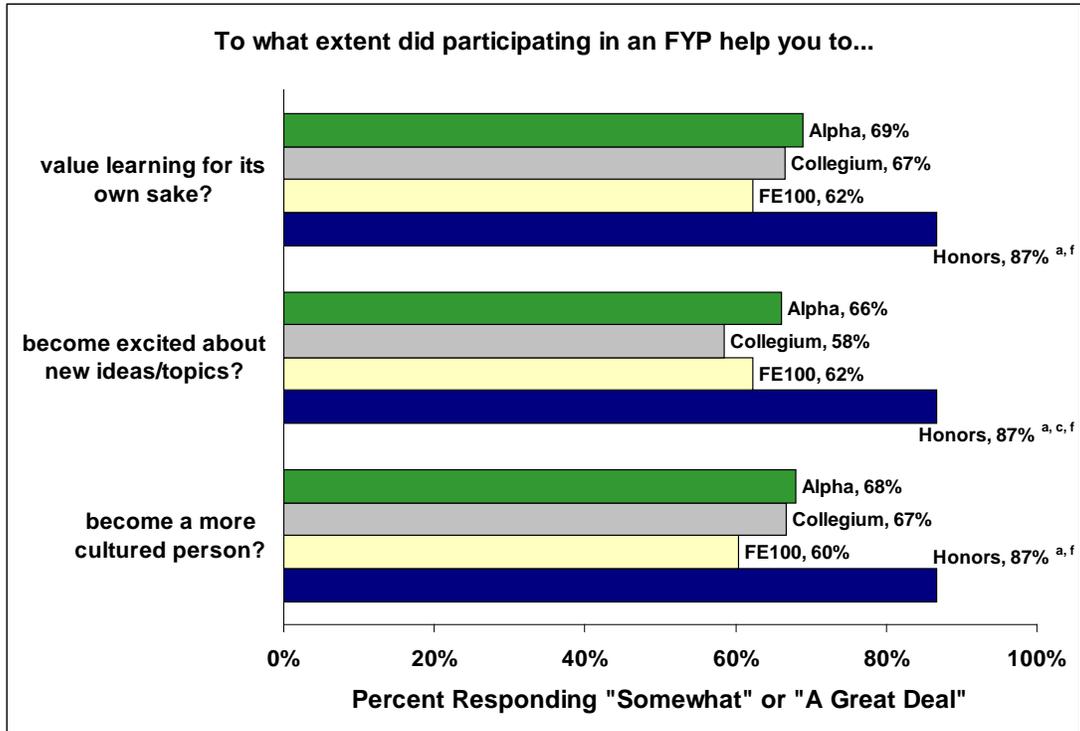
**Figure 18. Contributions to Jesuit mission-related objectives by first-year program, continued**

Honors students were more likely than Alpha students to respond that their program contributed “somewhat” or “a great deal” to becoming socially integrated by *adjusting to college life*, *meeting new people*, and *participating in cultural activities outside of class*. Honors students were more likely than Collegium students to attribute *meeting new people* as an outcome of their program. Honors students also reported that their program helped them *adjust to college life* at a greater rate than FE 100 students. No statistically significant differences existed among groups regarding *getting to know the Loyola community or Baltimore area*. See Figure 19 on the next page.



**Figure 19. Contributions to social and cultural engagement objectives by first-year program**

Consistently, Honors students were more likely than Alpha and FE 100 students to reply that their program contributed “somewhat” or “a great deal” to: *becoming excited about new ideas/topics*, *valuing learning for its own sake*, and *to becoming a more cultured person*. Also, Honors students were more likely than Collegium students to report that their program contributed to *becoming excited about new ideas/topics* (Figure 20).



**Figure 20. Contributions to intellectual growth and development objectives by first-year program**

## Summary

Over the past 25 years, there has been heightened interest in understanding students' intentionality in pursuing a post-secondary education. More specifically, there has been an interest in understanding students as intentional learners'—the degree to which, and the intensity with which, they are academically engaged, challenged, and supported.<sup>1</sup> Higher education institutions have adopted first-year programs as a way to create wrap-around programming to ease the academic and social transitions for new students, and to help integrate students within the campus community. In this report, students' first-year experiences were assessed with a focus on specific first-year academic programs.

Like most students attending college, Loyola students have a strong career orientation with regards to pursuing a higher education. Still, students who enrolled in a first-year program were able to more clearly articulate what they expected out of their education than those students who do not participate in any first-year academic program.

Generally, when considering students' expectations for and actual experiences their first year, we often found that students had higher expectations for academic and social engagement than the frequency with which this engagement occurred. Interpretative caution should be exercised since a cross-sectional comparative analysis between the two time points was conducted instead of a matched samples analysis. Still, the extant literature highlights the expectations-performance gap for first-year students, as they often have very good intentions but find their frequency of engagement is less than expected. This may occur for any variety of reasons including time management, adjustment to school-life balance, and lower than expected faculty expectations.<sup>2</sup> First-year respondents anticipated a more difficult adjustment than what they reported experiencing the first semester.

In terms of satisfaction, most FYP participants expressed greater satisfaction with their overall Loyola experience (Alpha, FE 100, and Honors) than the General group. While all FYP groups were relatively equally satisfied with the academic experience, Honors and Alpha students were more likely than others to attribute their FYP to knowledge and skill acquisition fundamental to a liberal arts education. While Alpha and Honors students hailed their respective programs on the academic front, FE 100 participants expressed greater satisfaction than other first-year students with the level of exposure to the Jesuit mission. FE 100 curriculum has an intentional focus on community service, social justice and diversity issues, and spiritual reflection and well-being. Responses to other survey

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<sup>1</sup> National Institute on Education (1984). *Involvement in learning: Realizing the potential of American higher education*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Wingspread Group (1993). An American imperative: Higher expectations for higher education. The Johnson Foundation. Retrieved 8/13/2008 from <http://www.johnsonfdn.org/AmericanImperative/index.html>

Association of American Colleges and Universities (2002). *Greater expectations: A new vision for learning as a nation goes to college*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities. Retrieved May 15, 2008 from <http://greaterexpectations.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Kuh, George D. (2005). Student engagement in the first year of college. In M.L. Upcraft, J.N. Gardner, B.O. Barefoot and Associates (Eds.), *Challenging and supporting the first-year student: A handbook for improving the first year of college* (pp. 86 – 107). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

items revealed that these students (including Collegium) attributed being exposed to these aspects of the curriculum to their programs.

With regards to retention, the overall first-to-second year retention rate is 91% for the Class of 2011. This is consistent with the first-to-second year retention rate for the Class of 2010, and has increased in recent years. Students who performed at a higher level in high school and, now, at Loyola were retained at higher rates from the first-to-second year than those who did not. In terms of retention by first-year program, Honors and FE 100 students had significantly higher first-to-second year retention rates than students who pursued the general academic program. Using readily available data from census files, additional analysis was conducted to understand if these relationships held once various demographic characteristics, pre-enrollment academic qualifications, and first semester enrollment characteristics were accounted for using logistic regression. Generally, the relationship did not hold for Honors in the multivariate case. There was some evidence that FE 100 students were more likely than General students to be retained to the sophomore year after controlling for a variety of student characteristics. Looking forward, it would be useful to comprehensively explore the relationship between engagement in first-year programs and persistence (retention and graduation) using multiple years of data and a multivariate method to control for confounding variables.