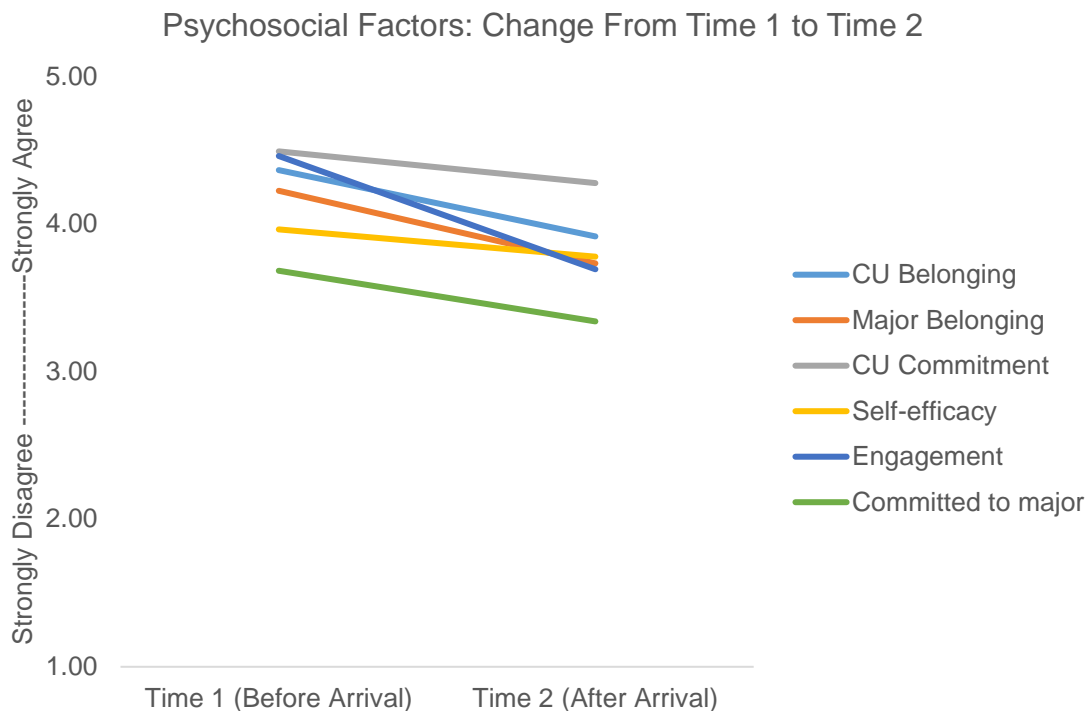


Highlights from the Annual New Student Survey: Wave 2, Fall 2018 Cohort

Expectations (Time 1) vs. Experiences (Time 2)

- 8,325 University of Colorado Boulder freshmen and transfers were asked to complete a new student survey in October 2018. 46% (3,799) answered at least the first question. Of these, 45% (1,742) had completed the New Student Survey (for freshmen) or the Transfer Student Survey (for transfers) prior to arriving on campus.
- This report examines the 1,742 students who took both surveys, comparing their expectations before arriving on campus to their realities after 1-2 months at CU Boulder.

Six psychosocial factors were measured at both Time 1 and Time 2, each on a 5 point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree). Although students were still positive at Time 2, scores on each factor dropped from Time 1 to Time 2.



Factor	Example Items (Time 1 / Time 2)	Average		Diff.	Sd		% Agree	
		T1	T2		T1	T2	T1	T2
CU Belonging	I expect to feel that I belong at CU Boulder / I feel that I belong at CU Boulder	4.36	3.91	.45	.66	.81	84%	60%
Major Belonging	I expect to feel accepted by others in my major / I feel accepted by others in my major.	4.22	3.73	.49	.63	.75	84%	61%
Self-efficacy	I believe that I can achieve good grades at CU Boulder. / [Same at both time points]	3.96	3.78	.18	.67	.75	60%	39%
Engagement	I look forward to getting involved in activities at CU Boulder / I've started getting involved...	4.46	3.69	.77	.73	1.11	93%	67%
Commitment to CU	I expect to graduate from CU Boulder. / [Same at both time points]	4.49	4.28	.21	.55	.73	88%	78%
Commitment to Major	I am certain I will stick with my current academic major. / How certain are you that you will stick with your academic major?	3.68	3.34	.34	1.01	1.24	55%	49%

Note. T1 = Time 1, T2 = Time 2. Sd = standard deviation. Diff = Time 1 – Time 2. % Agree was defined as the being 4 or above, which corresponded to “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” on the 5-point response scale.

Seven questions asked about students' expectations of CU Boulder:

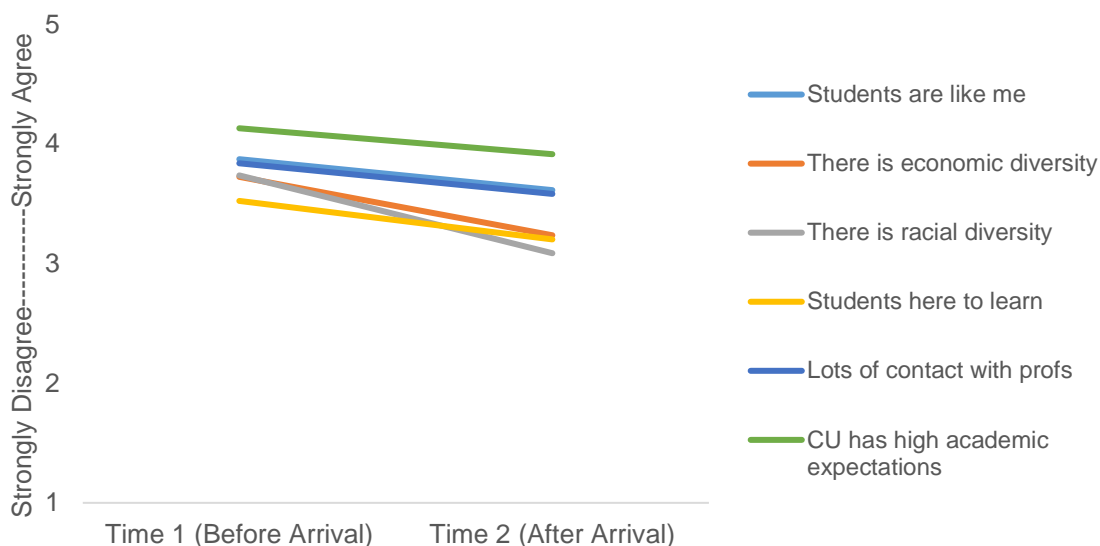
Highlights from the Annual New Student Survey: Wave 2, Fall 2018 Cohort

Expectations (Time 1) vs. Experiences (Time 2)

Time 1 Items	Time 2 Items
I expect that there will be many other students who are like me	There are many other students who are like me at CU Boulder.
I expect that there will be economic diversity--students from families with both higher and lower incomes	There is economic diversity at CU Boulder--students from families with both higher and lower incomes.
I expect that there will be racial diversity among students	There is racial diversity among students.
I believe most students at CU Boulder are more interested in learning than partying	Most students at CU Boulder are more interested in learning than partying.
I believe most students come to CU Boulder in order to learn [combined with above item]	Most students come to CU Boulder in order to learn. [combined with above item]
I expect that students have a lot of contact with professors at CU Boulder	Students have a lot of contact with professors at CU Boulder.
I believe CU Boulder has high academic expectations for its students.	CU Boulder has high academic expectations for its students.

As can be seen in the following graph, students generally agreed with positive statements about CU Boulder at both Time 1 and Time 2. As with the psychosocial factors, however, expectations at Time 1 were more optimistic than reality at Time 2. This was especially true for the expected versus actual degree of economic and racial diversity at CU Boulder.

Expectations of CU: Change from Time 1 to Time 2



A potential pitfall of high expectations: What happens if a student's actual belonging falls short of what he or she hoped for? How might this relate to confidence that CU Boulder was the right choice? To answer this question, we examined the relationship between Time 2 commitment to CU Boulder (e.g., *I am confident I made the right choice in attending CU Boulder*), CU commitment at Time 1 (as a baseline), and expected as well as actual CU belonging.

Students with higher expectations of belonging (at Time 1) were actually *less* committed to CU Boulder after arriving on campus (after adjusting for a student's actual belonging on campus at Time 2). The same pattern emerged when we examined a different outcome variable—students' self-evaluated "Start at CU Boulder" (ranging from "A great start" to "Not a good start"). That is, after accounting for actual belonging on campus, higher belonging expectations in the summer corresponded to viewing one's start at CU Boulder more negatively.

It may be worth engaging in "Expectations management" for new students. CU Boulder could explore the possibility of creating a [campaign](#) that exposes admitted students to the idea that college may be [different](#) or more challenging than they expect, and that it takes [time to adjust](#).