

From Data to Information to Campus-wide Dialogue

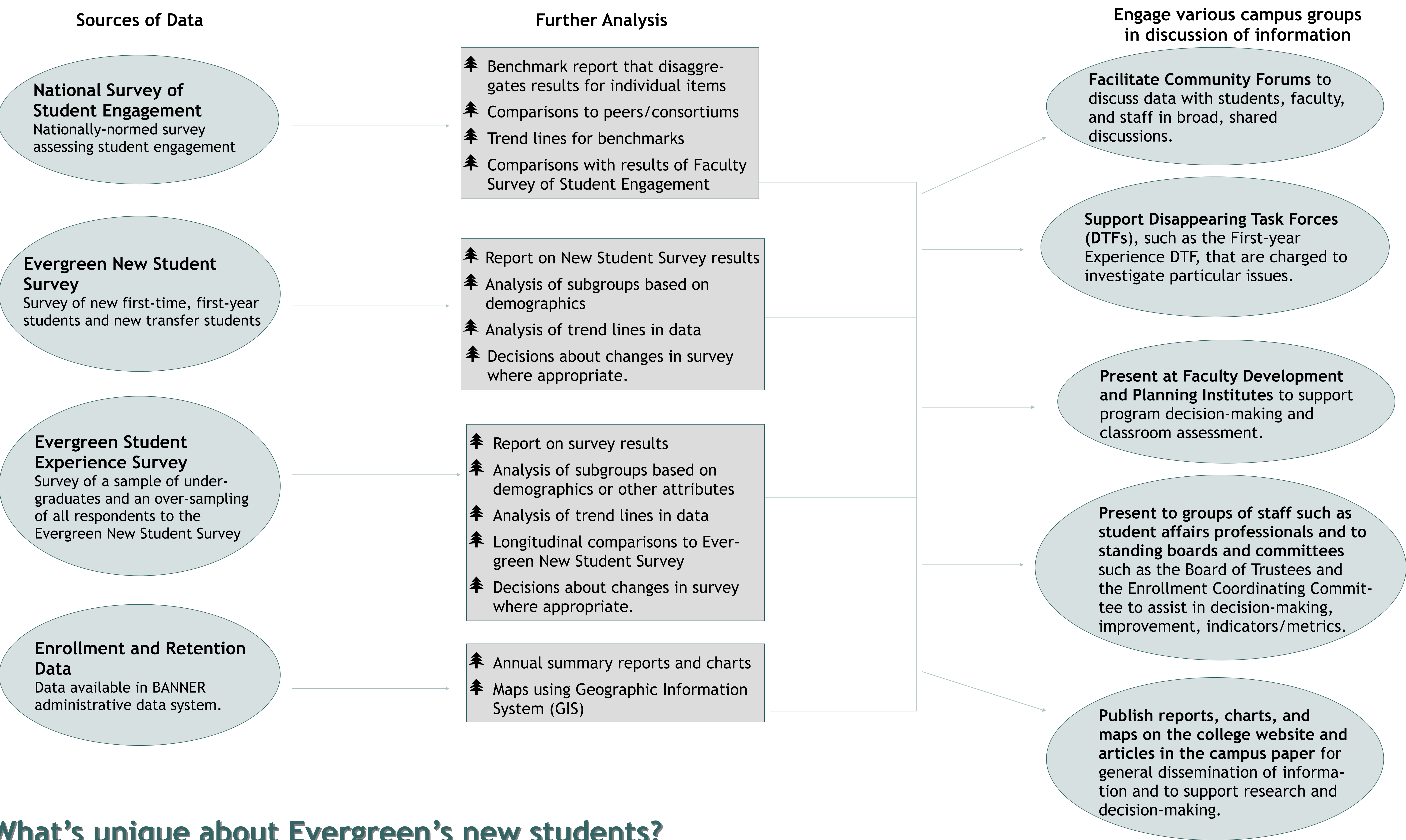
Getting to Know New Students at The Evergreen State College



Students and faculty in the program *Introduction to Environmental Studies*.

Institutional Research and Assessment at The Evergreen State College gathers information from surveys, administrative data, focus groups, and other forms of research to support efforts to improve the college experience for students.

This poster shows some of the methods that Institutional Research uses to understand the population of new students and how it shares this information campus-wide.



What's unique about Evergreen's new students? (And what's so unique about Evergreen?)

- New students enter a college where there are no majors, no academic departments, and no grades.
- Most students participate in full-time, interdisciplinary programs that are theme-based rather than taking multiple classes in a given quarter. Programs can be one to three quarters long.
- Students are expected to participate in seminars and group projects that are collaborative in nature and to be independent, self-directed learners.
- Evergreen's unique pedagogy and structure can be a significant change for students coming from high school or for transfer students who are used to a more traditional college structure.
- Evergreen's cohort of new first-time, first-year students is a smaller percentage of the incoming class than among other public, liberal arts colleges.

Demographics of New First-time, First-year Students
Fall 2005

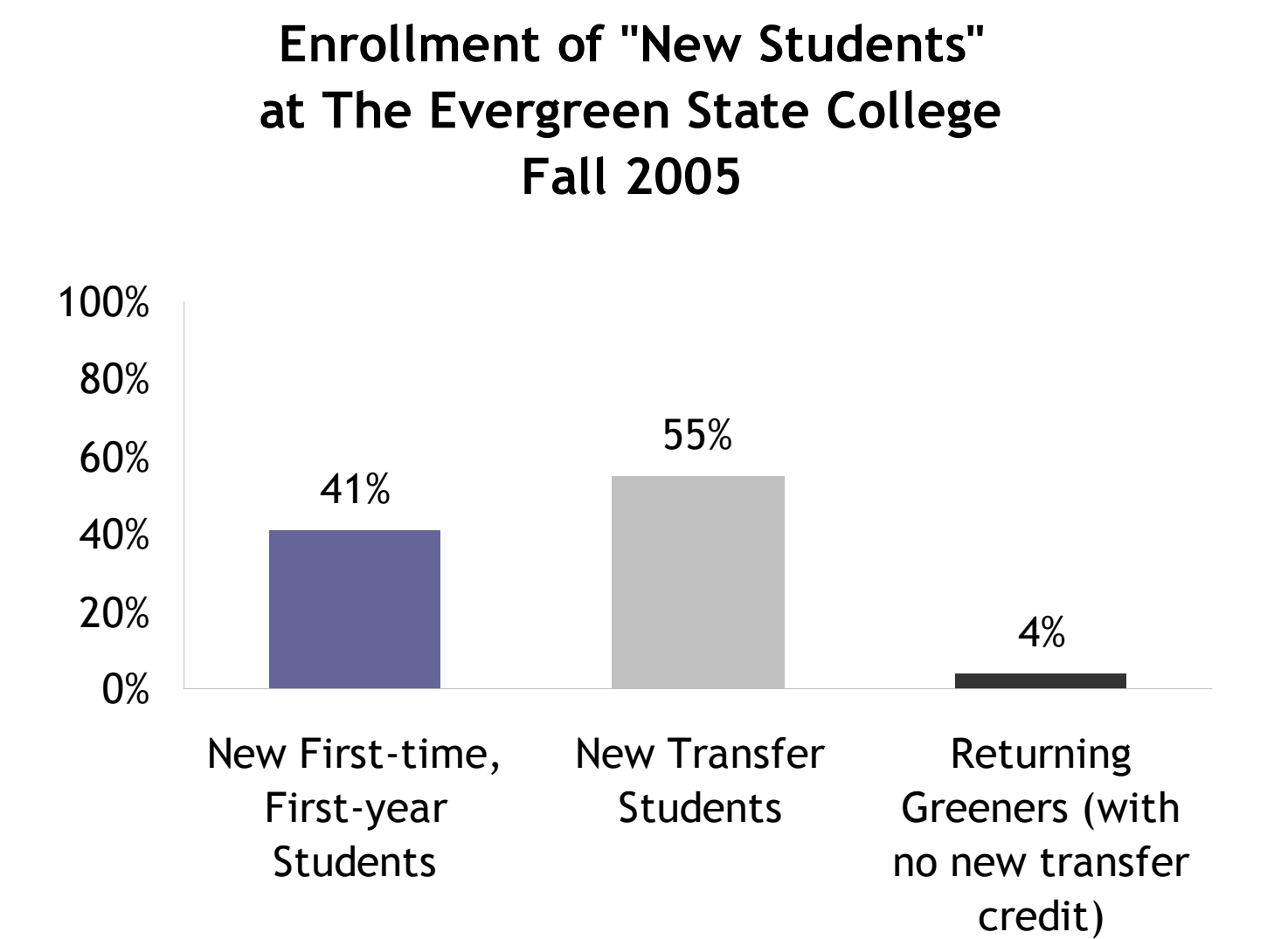
605 Degree-seeking first-time, first-year students
50% Female/50% Male
39.5% From out-of-state
86% High school direct
14% More than one year since High School or GED
17% Students of color
22% First generation

Demographics of New Transfer Students
Fall 2005

807 Degree-seeking transfer students
61% Female/39% Male
17% From out-of-state
71% Transferred from a 2-year college
25% Transferred from a 4-year college
4% "Returning Greeners" with transfer credits
18% Students of color



Students at Freshmen Advising Day workshop.



Prospective students at Evergreen Preview Day.

Example 1: Using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to understand the First-year Experience

NSSE 2005: Selected Individual Items from Enriching Educational Experiences Benchmark	Evergreen	COPLAC	All Liberal Arts	All NSSE Institutions
Evergreen significantly <u>higher</u> than all three peer groups (p<.01) in first-year students who participated in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together.	31%	8%	10%	15%
Evergreen significantly <u>lower</u> than all three peer groups (p<.01) in first-year students who have done foreign language coursework.	13%	32%	44%	25%

- Questions these data raised:
- ✦ A much greater proportion (98.5%) of first-year students participate in at least one interdisciplinary, integrative program during their first year at Evergreen than the 31% who reported participation in a learning community in the NSSE survey. Programs are structured as learning communities. Do students not recognize them as learning communities? What do students consider to be a learning community?
 - ✦ Evergreen does not have general distribution requirements. How will the opening of a new Community Language Lab in 2006 affect the study of foreign language? What other ways can the college support additional foreign language opportunities?



Students “seminaring.” These are students engaged in seminar, a place for dialogue about program themes.

The Evergreen State College was in the top 10th percentile for the Academic Challenge benchmark in the 2005 NSSE survey. “Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.” - NSSE Institutional Benchmark Report

- Compared to first-time, first-year students at participating NSSE institutions, Evergreen first-year students reported:
- ✦ More time spent preparing for class;
 - ✦ More coursework emphasizing synthesis, analysis, and making judgments about the value of information;
 - ✦ Reading more assigned texts;
 - ✦ Writing more papers under 5 pages and those of 20 pages or more.

Example 2: Using the Evergreen New Student Survey and Evergreen Student Experience Survey to Analyze Skills, Goals, and Confidence

Skills

How would you rate your level of skill in the following?	Mean	No Skill (0)	Low (1)	Moderate (2)	High (3)	Very High (4)
Evergreen New Student Survey 2005—First-time, First-Year Respondents — Items with <u>Lowest Means</u>						
Giving effective presentations	2.48	0.5%	11.4%	39.9%	36.0%	12.2%
Readiness for a career	2.08	2.9%	24.3%	42.0%	22.9%	7.9%
Understanding and applying scientific principles and methods	2.08	2.0%	24.9%	42.8%	23.5%	6.8%
Managing your time effectively	2.00	5.6%	25.1%	41.2%	19.5%	8.5%
Understanding and applying quantitative principles and methods (e.g. mathematics, statistics)	1.78	6.1%	34.8%	38.7%	15.8%	4.6%

Goals

How important are the following goals for you in earning your college degree?	Mean	Not Important (0)	Slightly Important (1)	Important (2)	Very Important (3)
Evergreen New Student Survey 2005—First-time, First-Year Respondents —Selected Items					
Achieving personal success or satisfaction	2.83	0.0%	2.4%	12.1%	85.4%
Getting a job of your choice or making a career change	2.40	2.2%	10.5%	32.1%	55.2%
Developing artistic abilities using one or more media (e.g. sculpture, painting, film, video, photography)	2.09	6.6%	22.9%	25.5%	45.0%
Influencing or changing the political system	1.74	10.5%	30.9%	32.6%	26.0%
Having computer technology skills	1.54	14.2%	35.0%	33.3%	17.6%

Confidence

How confident are you that you...?	Mean	Not at All (0)	A Little (1)	Somewhat (2)	Quite (3)	Very (4)
Evergreen New Student Survey 2005—First-time, First-Year Respondents — Selected Items						
Will obtain a well-rounded interdisciplinary education	3.39	0.0%	0.7%	8.4%	42.3%	48.6%
Have the skills and abilities to succeed at Evergreen	3.27	0.0%	1.2%	13.0%	43.3%	42.5%
Will fit in at Evergreen socially	2.91	1.7%	7.3%	23.7%	32.3%	35.0%
Will be able to manage any debt that you incur in completing your education	2.70	1.2%	11.3%	28.7%	33.8%	25.0%
Have the funding to complete your studies at Evergreen	2.68	2.9%	11.7%	28.1%	29.1%	28.1%



Students doing field work in Introduction to Environmental Studies.



Student in Introduction to Environmental Studies.

The Evergreen Student Experience Survey is administered during Spring Quarter to all respondents to the New Student Survey plus a sample of the total undergraduate population.

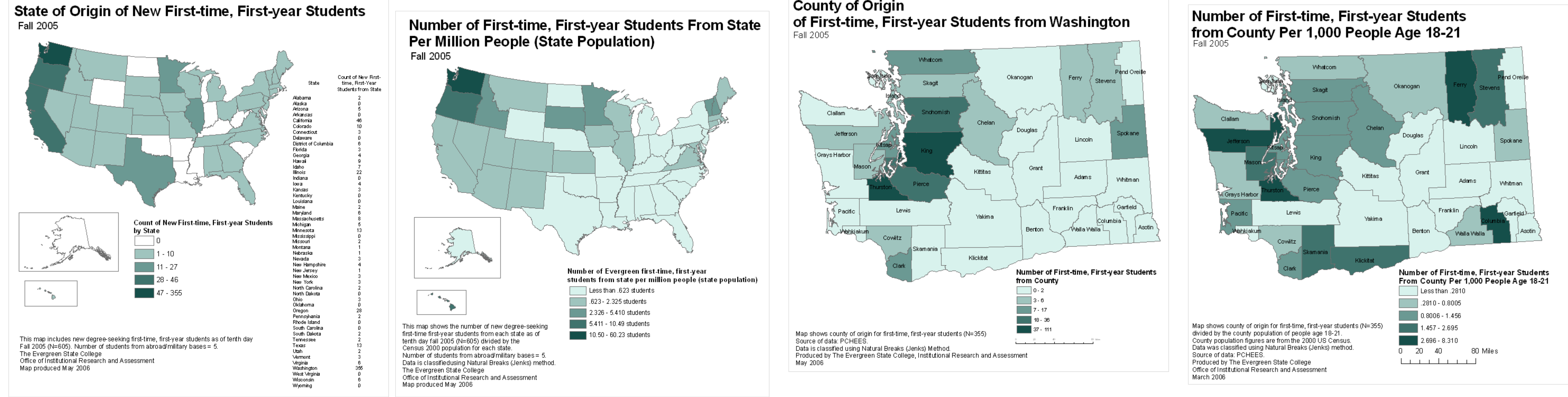
Data sets from the Evergreen New Student Survey and the Evergreen Student Experience Survey can be used in building retention models.

Self-reported skill upon entry can be compared to Evergreen’s contribution to growth in the same skill areas using the Evergreen Student Experience Survey.

Goals upon entry give the college a sense of what students envision from their college education. These can be compared to the same items on the Evergreen Student Experience Survey.

Confidence upon entry can show areas where students are more or less confident in factors that are related to retention. Confidence items can be compared to the same items on the Evergreen Student Experience Survey.

Example 3: Using a Geographic Information System (GIS) to display and analyze geographic information about the origin of new students



Institutional Research and Assessment produces maps to support institutional planning efforts. Originally, the office provided only headcount maps. However, normalized maps were added that present numbers relative to the population of each geographic unit, such as the total population of each state or the population of college age students in each county.