

# University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

## Study of the Impact of Enrollment Growth on the Application and Matriculation Decisions of Prospective Students

Second Interim Report: Research with Inquirers

July 24, 2008

**ART & SCIENCE**  
GROUP L.L.C.

# Recap: Major questions addressed in the project

- **What is the likely impact of enrollment growth on the application and matriculation decisions of students considering UNC-Chapel Hill?**
  - **Study tests growth to two total enrollment levels: 33,000 and 36,000**
  - **Study focuses particularly on the impact of growth on top North Carolinians**
- **What strategies might UNC-Chapel Hill employ to manage the challenges and opportunities presented by enrollment growth?**

# Inquirers: Perceptions of size

- Inquirers consider a “large” university as one having more than 21,000 undergraduates or 30,000 total enrollment
- Nearly half of inquirers perceive UNC–Chapel Hill to be larger than it actually is
  - 52 percent of non-applicants and 43 percent of applicants think total enrollment at UNC-Chapel Hill is 33,000 or more
- Inquirers associate several major disadvantages with large universities; chief among them are:
  - Lack of personal attention
  - Large classes
  - Less access to faculty

# Inquirers: Size, quality, and the competition

- **Inquirers tend to favor universities smaller than UNC-Chapel Hill**
  - ▶ **70 percent of the competitors that top North Carolinians prefer to UNC-Chapel Hill have fewer than 15,000 undergraduates**
  - ▶ **UNC-Chapel Hill is now much more likely to be competing with schools with enrollments below 10,000 than it was four years ago**
  - ▶ **In-state students are most likely to cite “too big” as the primary reason for not applying to UNC-Chapel Hill**

# Inquirers: Size, quality, and the competition

- Inquirers' decisions about whether or not to apply are driven by their perceptions of quality at UNC-Chapel Hill
- These perceptions are often favorable enough to overcome the negatives that inquirers associate with size
  - The most often-cited reasons for applying are high-value education, prestigious reputation, strong program in the inquirer's field of interest, and good academics / highly ranked
  - Inquirers perceive the current student body to be highly qualified—in fact, 44 percent believe UNC-Chapel Hill has a higher percentage of its students graduating in the top 10 percent of their HS class than is actually the case

# Size, quality, and the competition

- **Confirming the University's own data, our research shows that UNC-Chapel Hill is attracting inquiries and applications from increasingly highly qualified students. While there are many measures of academic ability, some key measures include:**
  - ▶ **For Fall 2007, 73% of NC high-school seniors with SAT's of 1300+ and 86% with 1400+ applied**
  - ▶ **Only 191 students with 1400+ SAT's did not apply to UNC-Chapel Hill in 2007**
  - ▶ **UNC-Chapel Hill has increased its market share of applications from North Carolinians in the top 5 percent of their high school class by 13 percent in the past five years.**
  - ▶ **50.2 percent of NC students in the top 10 percent of their high school classes and 62.6 percent in the top 5 percent apply to UNC-Chapel Hill**

# Size, quality, and the competition

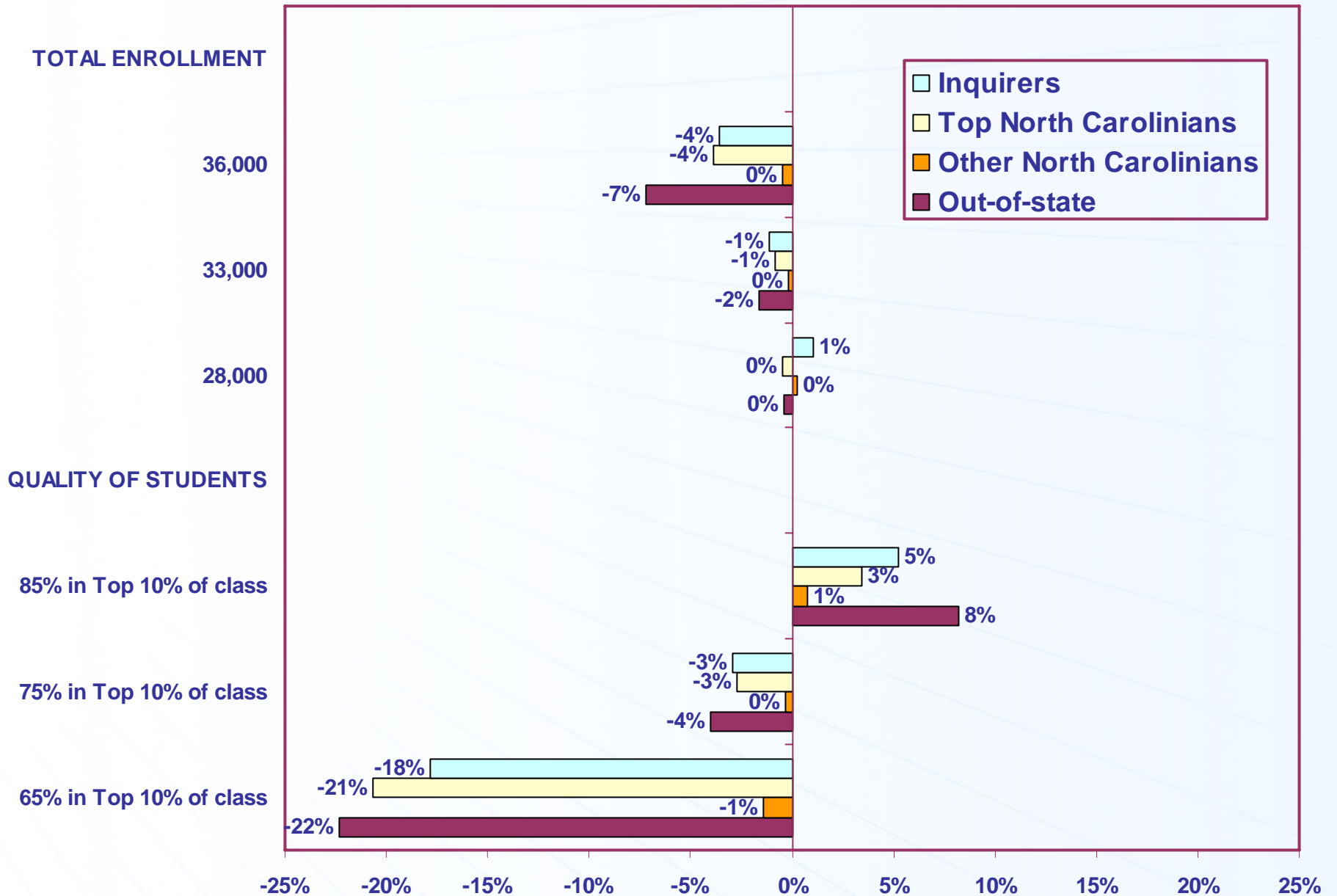
- In our study:
  - Average SAT scores of applicants have risen 22 points from study of four years ago – 1352 vs. 1374
  - Applicants' SAT scores are 29 points higher than non-applicants' – 1374 vs. 1345
- Competition with top schools has increased
  - Highly selective private schools such as Boston College, Georgetown, Yale, and Princeton are now more significant competitors than four years ago

# Inquirers: Effects of growth and perceived quality

- When tested simply as a number, growth to 33,000 projects to have a negligible impact on applications; growth to 36,000 projects to have a modest unfavorable impact on applications
- Growth that does not maintain the current quality of the UNC-Chapel Hill student body (as measured by percentage of students in top ten percent of high school class) would result in substantial decreases in applications from top North Carolinians and out-of-state students
  - Applications from each group would fall by slightly more than 20 percent



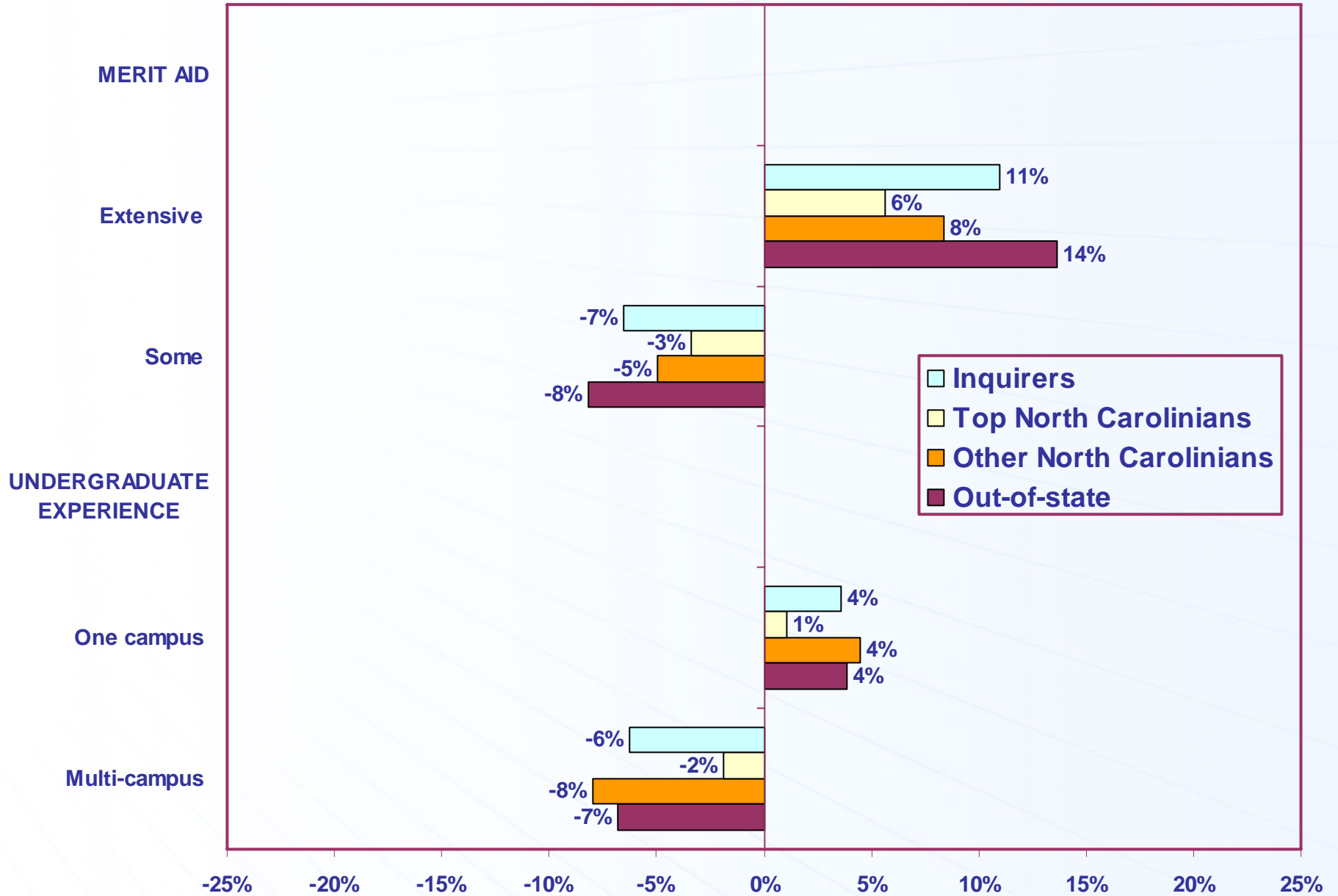
# Inquirers: Effect of enrollment and student quality on number of applications



# Inquirers: Strategies to manage the impact of growth

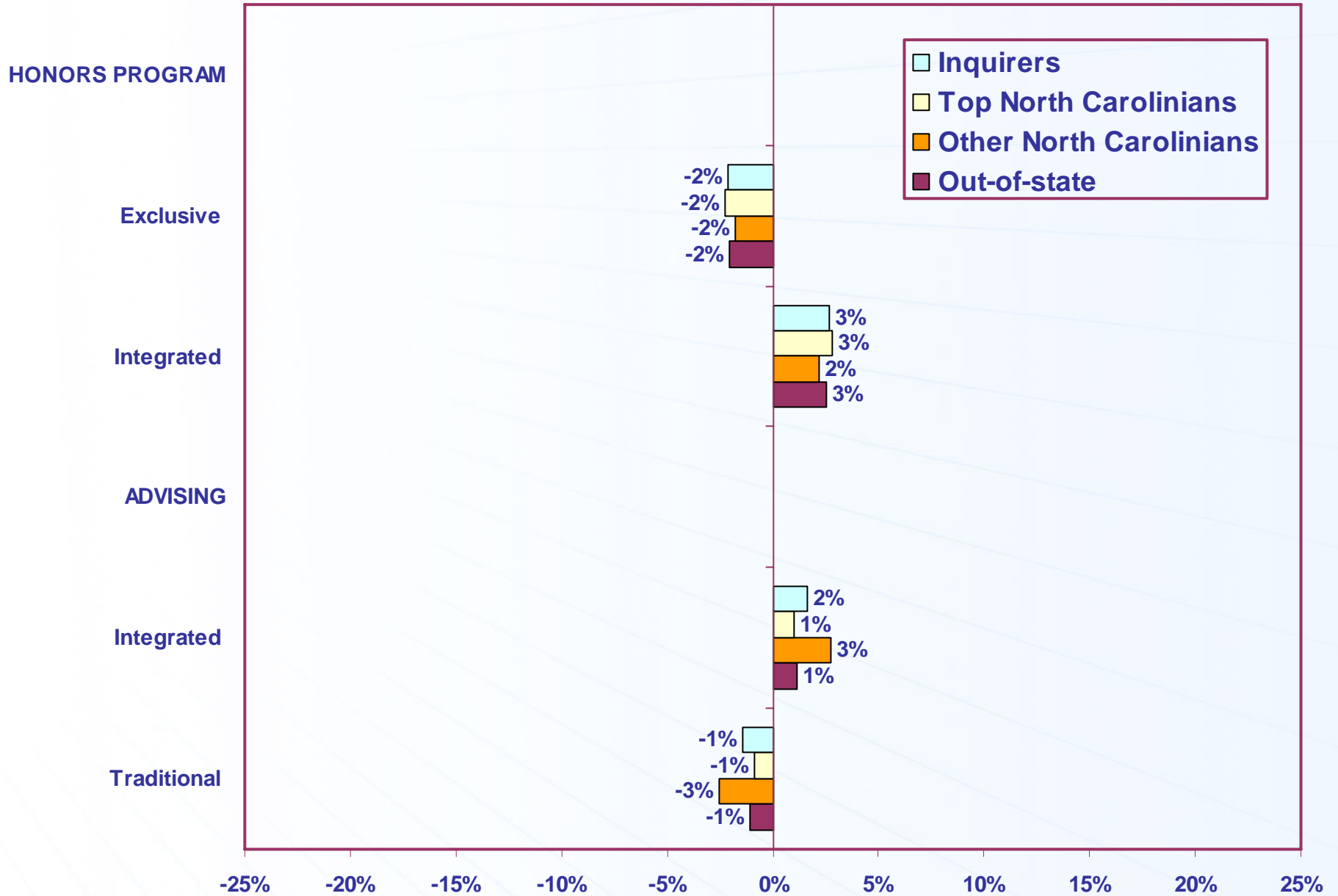
- The single largest positive effect on applications could be realized if the University was perceived to be generous with merit awards – about a 6 percent increase in applications from top North Carolina students
- Making students aware that the University has only one campus (with all undergraduate students' residential, academic, research, and co-curricular experiences taking place on one campus) would also generate gains, but not from top North Carolinians
- Nearly one-third of all inquirers, and two-fifths of those inquirers who did not apply, perceive UNC–Chapel Hill to have multiple campuses (with all undergraduate students experiencing a central campus and most also having experiences on satellite campuses devoted to particular academic, research, and co-curricular activities)
- Other initiatives involving honors, advising, and residential colleges would have smaller positive impacts

# Inquirers: Effect of initiatives on number of applications

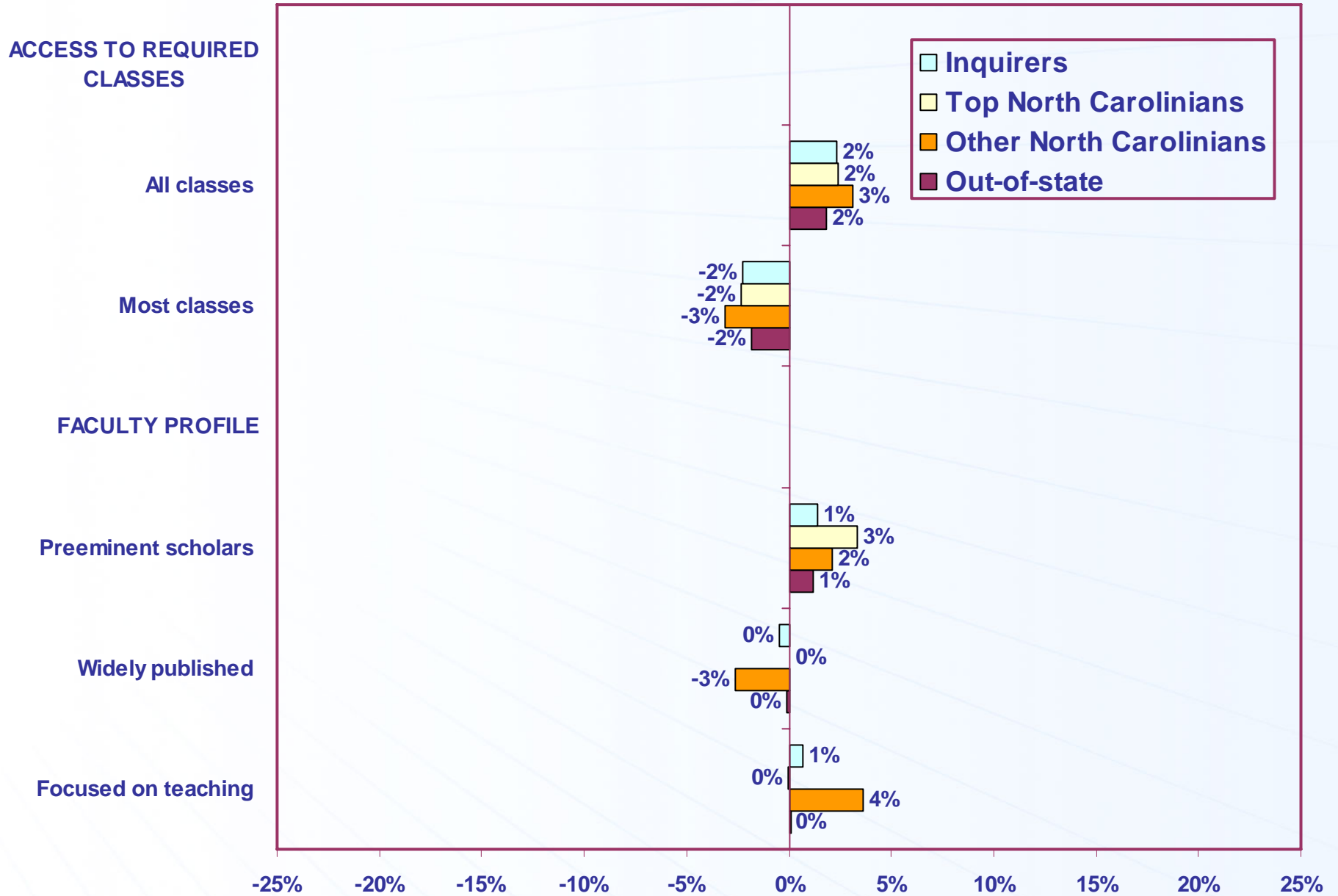


Base Conversion Rate (N) Inquirers = 45.5% (392), Top NC = 51.8% (125), Other NC = 46.9% (142), and Out-of-state = 44.0% (125)

# Inquirers: Effect of initiatives on number of applications



# Inquirers: Effect of initiatives on number of applications



# Inquirers: A challenge for top North Carolinians

- **UNC-Chapel Hill has improved its market share of top North Carolinians—students whose achievements at the application stage are measured by many factors, including grades, courses, testing, recommendations, and extracurricular achievements**
- **Because these students comprise the core of the entering class and the cornerstone of the recruitment strategy, the University must hold or maintain its market share in order to maintain quality as it grows**
- **This will be a significant challenge**
  - **On the one hand, as high school enrollment in North Carolina grows over the next several decades, the number of students in the top ten percent of their high school classes will also grow**
  - **On the other hand, the number of top SAT scorers in NC has shown little change in the past ten years and is not likely to grow substantially in the years ahead**

# Inquirers: A challenge for North Carolina

- **If UNC-Chapel Hill does not attract top North Carolinians, they are likely to go out of state for college**
  - **61 percent of top in-state UNC-Chapel Hill inquirers have out-of-state institutions as their first or second choice**

# Inquirers: Summary of key findings

- **Growth by itself will not have major adverse effects on applications from top North Carolinians**
- **An increasing share of top North Carolinians has been applying to UNC-Chapel Hill**
- **If the quality of enrolling students slips as enrollment grows, applications from top North Carolinians and out-of-state students would fall by more than 20 percent**
- **Emphasis on merit aid can offset about half of the negative effects of slippage in applications from top North Carolina students**
- **Declines in student quality at UNC-Chapel Hill would likely result in the exodus of many top students from North Carolina to leading out-of-state public and private competitors**