

# NPS GRADUATING STUDENTS SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT AY 2008

## INTRODUCTION

The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) has identified its vision and guiding principles as: *to prepare the intellectual leaders of tomorrow's forces, and to be the world leader in naval and defense-related graduate education and supporting research.* Feedback from students has been integral in helping to monitor and to evaluate the School's effectiveness in manifesting its vision; therefore, since 1993, the NPS Graduating Students Survey has been administered at the end of each quarter to all students who are graduating.

The results of the first compilation of surveys can be found in the document titled *Naval Postgraduate School Exit Survey: 1993-2004: A Twelve Year Trend Study.* In 2006, the NPS Exit Survey was redesigned to be more responsive to accreditation collections needs, and the new version was administered to all students who were scheduled to graduate in the fourth quarter, or September AY 2006. Since that time, the survey has been called the Graduating Students Survey.

## METHODOLOGY

Students who were graduating at the end of each quarter of Academic Year (AY) 2008 (December 2007, March, June, and September 2008) were notified via email and through subsequent reminders that the Graduating Students Survey was posted, and awaiting their completion. The total number of students surveyed was 987, distributed as follows:

Of 987 surveys distributed, there were 631 total respondents (64% response rate). The third column of Chart 1 shows the response rate for each group. The first two columns of the chart show the demographic breakdown of the surveyed population and respondent population. The respondents are thus generally representative of the population of students graduating in AY 2008.

**Chart 1**  
**Demographics of Surveyed and Respondent Students**  
**and Response Rates by Group**

	Surveyed	Respondent	Response Rate
Total (Resident)	987	631	64.0%
Female	11.5%	9.5%	39.5%

	Surveyed	Respondent	Response Rate
GSBPP	27.6%	21.4%	37.0%
GSEAS	21.4%	19.2%	42.8%
GSOIS	26.2%	31.1%	56.7%
SIGS	20.3%	25.0%	59.0%
SEACC	2.0%	3.3%	77.78%
Navy	37.2%	38.4%	49.2%
Air Force	14.1%	18.5%	63.0%
Army	10.6%	11.9%	53.6%
Coast Guard	0.2%	0.3%	33.3%
Marine Corps	7.7%	8.6%	53.0%
International	11.9%	15.2%	61.1%
Civilian	18.2%	7.1%	18.8%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	4.7%	5.9%	59.7%
Black/African American	5.2%	5.6%	50.7%
Hispanic/Latinos	3.9%	4.4%	53.8%
White	50.8%	61.0%	57.4%
Indian/Alaskan	0.5%	0.32%	33.3%
International	11.9%	15.2%	61.1%
Unknown	23.1%	7.6%	15.7%

In addition to survey responses, comments were requested. All comments were separated into the following categories:

- Classrooms and Laboratories
- Curriculum
- Facilities
- Faculty
- Housing
- Library
- Medical
- Miscellaneous
- Naval Postgraduate School
- Parking
- Support Services
- Thesis

## RESULTS

The results of the survey were separated into areas related to the three major themes outlined in the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) submitted by NPS to WASC on December 17, 2008.

### **For Theme I: *Strategic Planning for the Next NPS Centennial:***

**90%** of all respondents agreed that the university supports teaching and research to enhance the combat effectiveness of all forces, and it is successful in achieving that goal

**92.5%** of the total respondents would recommend NPS to other military officers or defense civilians for their graduate education

---

**For Theme II: *Integrating a Campus-wide Program of Continuous Improvement,*** issues related to **Curriculum, Faculty** and **Relevancy** were reflected in the total number of responses in the following ways:

#### **Curriculum:**

- **15%** did not think their coursework and research were closely related
- **8%** either disagreed or did not know that NPS is always working to improve instruction and research
- **27%** did not think NPS provided opportunities to learn outside of the regular curricular program
- **11%** did not think a thesis or capstone project was a valuable component of their education
- **31%** did not think NPS provided them with sufficient electives to pursue special military career interests
- **7%** did not take, or think that refresher courses helped to prepare them for subsequent work

**92%** of the total respondents agreed that they understood the body of knowledge and skills they were expected to have as a student at NPS, and **91%** of respondents felt they were prepared to successfully complete their education at NPS.

#### **Faculty:**

**92%-96%:** Agreed that faculty were dedicated to teaching, involved students in active and participative learning experiences, were well-qualified, dedicated to student success, delivered fair and relevant grades and tests, and were available outside the classroom for additional assistance

- **7%** did not receive faculty advice and guidance needed to successfully complete their thesis or capstone project
- **14%** did not think that faculty utilized student feedback to improve the educational program

**Relevancy:**

- **12%** did not think that their education at NPS was relevant to their current or future assignments and responsibilities
  - **9%** did not think their curriculum was national-security or defense-related
  - **13%** did not think that the defense-related orientation at NPS made their education more relevant than if they were at a civilian institution.
  - **15%** did not agree or did not know if their thesis or capstone project made a useful contribution to combat effectiveness or national security
- 

**For Theme III: *Supporting an Evolving Academic Enterprise***, issues related to **Facilities**, and **Parking** were reflected in the total number of responses in the following ways:

**Classroom and Non-Laboratory Facilities:**

- **9%:** not responsive to course needs
- **10%:** inadequate number
- **12%:** not equipped with current technologies
- **13%:** poor working condition
- **13%:** overall appearance and quality left a negative impression of NPS
- **19%:** poorly maintained

**Laboratory Facilities:**

- **6%:** not responsive to course needs
- **5%:** not in good working condition
- **9%:** not equipped with current technologies
- **7%:** overall appearance and quality left a negative impression of NPS
- **14%:** not focused on combat capabilities
- **10%:** not well maintained

**Parking:**

- **70%:** Parking and commuting are problems at NPS

**Comments on Classrooms included:**

Antiquated, cramped, poor heating/ventilation, not equipped with current technologies.

**Comments on Facilities (General) included:**

Lack of cleanliness; inadequate janitorial services, poor standards of maintenance

---

**For Theme III: *Supporting an Evolving Academic Enterprise***, issues related to the **Administration, Diversity, and Supportive Services** were reflected in the total number of responses in the following ways:

**5%** did not agree that university administration is committed to supporting teaching and research for the purpose of enhancing the combat effectiveness of US and allied armed forces.

When asked if diversity in service, culture ethnicity and gender enriched their education, **5%** did not agree or did not know if diversity in service, **8%** did not agree or know if diversity in culture, **11%** did not agree or know if diversity in ethnicity, and **17%** did not agree or know if diversity in gender enriched their education at NPS.

In response to questions asked about computer and IT services, **90%** of the total respondents answered positively when asked if these services met all their coursework and research needs.

In response to questions asked about services provided by the Dudley Knox Library, between **90% - 93%** of the total respondents answered positively when asked if books, databases, journals and Reference Assistance and Instruction met their coursework and research needs.

When asked if certain aspects of **Supportive Services** provided students with sufficient support to enable students to meet their educational goals

- **5% - 6%** did not think or know if the Program Officer and the Program Office staff provided them with sufficient support
  - **7%** did not think or know if Student Services provided sufficient support
  - **6%** did not think or know if the Registrar office provided them with sufficient support
  - **15%** did not think or know if the Scheduling office provided them with sufficient support
  - **16%** disagreed or did not know if NPS personnel facilitated students' transition to life at NPS
  - **38%** did not know NPS had an appeals process for student academic complaints
-

## SUMMARY

The following 2 charts highlight the top 10 positive and negative responses for all residents from the surveys administered in AY 2008:

**Chart I**  
**Top 10 Positive Responses for All Residents**

<b>Survey Question</b>	<b>% All Resident Respondents</b>
48. The CLASSROOM and other NON-LABORATORY facilities for my program had the following characteristics: Accessible	97%
25. NPS faculty in my program were dedicated to my success as a student.	96%
26. NPS faculty in my program were generally available to provide additional assistance outside the classroom when I needed it.	96%
23. NPS faculty in my program were dedicated to teaching	95%
24. NPS faculty members involved me in active and participative learning experiences	95%
44. Services (circulation, interlibrary loan, course reserve, printing, etc): NPS library resources met all my course work and research needs	94%
28. My faculty appeared to be well qualified for the defense-related teaching and research done in my curriculum or program.	93%
42. Reference Assistance & Instruction: NPS library resources met all my course work and research needs	93%
46. I would recommend NPS to other military officers or defense civilians for their graduate education	93%
17. Diversity in Service enriched my NPS education	92%

**Chart 2**  
**Top 10 Negative Responses for All Residents**

<b>Survey Question</b>	<b>% All Resident Respondents</b>
47. Commuting and parking were not a problem at NPS	70%
22. I was aware that NPS had an appeals process for student academic complaints.	38%
16. My NPS program provided me with sufficient electives to pursue my special military career interests	31%
15. NPS provided opportunities for learning outside the regular curricular program.	28%
62. Adequate health services were available for my family and me while at NPS.	18%
52. The CLASSROOM and other NON-LABORATORY facilities for my program had the following characteristics: Well Maintained	18%
20. Diversity in gender enriched my NPS education	17%
30. NPS personnel facilitated my transition to student life	16%
8. My coursework and research at NPS were closely integrated	15%
7. My thesis or capstone research project at NPS made a useful contribution to combat effectiveness or another national security need.	15%

**Theme I: *Strategic Planning for the Next NPS Centennial:***

Very high numbers of respondents agree that NPS supports teaching and research to enhance the combat effectiveness of all forces, and is successful in achieving that goal. High numbers of students graduating from NPS also affirmed that they would recommend the university to other military officers or defense civilians.

**Theme II: *Integrating a Campus-wide Program of Continuous Improvement***

A large majority of respondents (93-95%) agreed that the faculty at NPS is a highly-qualified group, dedicated both to teaching and to student success, involved students in participatory learning experiences, and were available outside the classroom for additional assistance.

Nearly one-third (31%) of the respondents would have liked — but were unable — to choose electives that align with their special military or career-related interests and many students (27%) would have liked to have been provided opportunities to learn outside of their regular curricular program. Additionally, 15% of respondents did not think their coursework and research were closely related, and did not agree or did not know if their thesis or capstone project made a useful contribution to combat effectiveness or national security.

Over 13% of the graduating students did not think that the defense-related orientation at NPS made their education more relevant than if they were at a civilian institution. Improvements in transfer of knowledge and application to the real world were noted, as well as faculty industry experience is not always positively correlated with effective teaching skills.

**Theme III: *Supporting an Evolving Academic Enterprise***

Supportive Services, such as registrar, scheduling, student services, program officer and the program office staff received positive responses for providing sufficient support to enable students to meet their educational goals, but the numbers of respondents who did not agree with those statements are worth noting, particularly regarding scheduling and student services. Responses about the services provided about the Dudley Knox Library continue to be very favorable.

Better communications — whether it relates to assisting students in the transition to student life, from the NPS administration, and/or as ongoing support — was suggested. Communication about procedures and processes need great improvement: 38% of the total respondents did not know NPS had an appeals process for student academic complaints.

Poor marks were given to NPS in the areas of facilities. Significant numbers of comments acknowledged a lack of basic janitorial services throughout the campus, and its antiquated and poorly-maintained state. Classrooms were noted as lacking in electrical outlets and current technologies.

Several comments were made regarding the inadequacy of medical and health services in staffing, scheduling, and the availability of specialized services.

Parking and commuting were acknowledged as woeful situations at NPS, generating not only 70% disapproval by respondents, but also a flurry of negative comments.

Overall, the value of a graduate education at NPS was acknowledged by the respondents; however, the state of parking and facilities contributed to negative impressions of the institution. Limited course selections and the relevancy of coursework were brought to the forefront. Feedback mechanisms for faculty can be improved, and thesis support can be increased. Supportive services can improve, especially in the area of communications, most notably in explaining policies and procedures that are available to all students.