
NPS Graduating Students Survey

Summary Report
2009

Office Of Institutional Research

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NPS GRADUATING STUDENT SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT 2009

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 Student 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 2006. Since that time, the survey has been called the Graduating Student Survey.

METHODOLOGY

The NPS Graduating Student Survey consisted of 37 items rated on a five-point Likert scale, extending from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, as well as a non-choice option (Appendix A). The last item asks for (open-ended) comments on any experience at NPS. Current standards from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) helped to guide the development of the survey items. The relationship between the survey items and the WASC standards can be referenced from the document "Crosswalk of NPS Graduating Student Survey Items with WASC Criteria for Review" (Appendix B).

Students who were about to graduate at the end of each quarter (December 2008, March, June, and September 2009) of Academic Year (AY) 2009 were notified via email and through subsequent reminders that the Graduating Students Survey was posted, and awaiting their completion.

Of 980 surveys distributed, there were 554 total respondents (57% 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 2009.

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

	Surveyed	Respondent	Response Rate
Total (Resident)	980	554	57.0%

Female	10.7%	11.0%	58.1%
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	Surveyed	Respondent	Response Rate
GSBPP	15.0%	17.0%	63.9%
GSEAS	22.0%	22.9%	58.8%
GSOIS	36.8%	35.4%	54.3%
SIGS	24.1%	22.6%	53.0%
Provost	2.0%	2.2%	60.0%

Navy	37.7%	43%	64.5%
Air Force	14.0%	15%	61.3%
Army	11.1%	10%	53.2%
Coast Guard	0.9%	0.7%	44.4%
Marine Corps	9.3%	9%	55.0%
International	16.2%	18%	61.0%
Civilian	10.8%	4%	21.7%

Asian American/Pacific Islander	4.7%	6%	67.4%
Black/African American	5.2%	5%	49.0%
Hispanic/Latinos	4.6%	5%	57.8%
White	59.6%	64%	60.3%
Am. Indian/Alaskan	0.5%	0.2%	20.0%
International	16.2%	18%	61.0%
Unknown	9.2%	4%	24.4%

In addition to survey responses (Appendix C), comments were requested (Appendix D). All comments were separated into the following categories for a simple content analysis:

Classrooms/ Laboratories	Medical
Curriculum	Miscellaneous
Facilities	Naval Postgraduate School
Faculty	Parking
Housing	Support Services
Library	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) Report* submitted by NPS to WASC on December 17, 2008.

Theme I: Strategic Planning for the Next NPS Centennial

92% 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% of the total respondents would recommend NPS to other military officers or defense civilians for their graduate education

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:

- **16%** did not think their coursework and research were closely related
- **10%** did not think that NPS is always working to improve instruction and research
- **21%** did not think NPS provided opportunities to learn outside of the regular curricular program
- **10%** 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
- **6%** did not think that refresher courses helped to prepare them for subsequent work; 54% did not take refresher courses.

91% 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 **89%** of respondents felt they were prepared to successfully complete their education at NPS.

Faculty:

91%-95% 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
- **13%** did not think that faculty utilized student feedback to improve the educational program

Relevancy:

- **10%** 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

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:

- **7%:** not responsive to course needs
- **8%:** inadequate number
- **11%:** not equipped with current technologies
- **13%:** poor working condition
- **12%:** overall appearance and quality left a negative impression of NPS
- **16%:** poorly maintained

Laboratory Facilities:

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

Parking:

- **46%:** Parking and commuting are problems at NPS

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 if diversity in service, **9%** did not agree if diversity in culture, **14%** did not agree if diversity in ethnicity, and **20%** did not agree 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% - 9%** *did not think* the Program Officer and the Program Office staff provided them with sufficient support
- **5%** *did not think* Student Services provided sufficient support
- **4%** *did not think* the Registrar office provided them with sufficient support
- **11%** *did not think* the Scheduling office provided them with sufficient support
- **13%** *disagreed* NPS personnel facilitated students' transition to life at NPS
- **30%** *did not know* NPS had an appeals process for student academic complaints

RESULTS SUMMARY

The following 2 charts highlight the top 10 positive and negative responses for all residents from the surveys administered in AY 2009:

Chart 2
Top 10 Positive Responses for All Residents

Survey Question	2009 % All Resident Respondents	2008 Data
48. The CLASSROOM and other NON-LABORATORY facilities for my program had the following characteristics: Accessible	96%	97%
*39. Databases: NPS library resources met all my course work and research needs.	95%	
26. NPS faculty in my program was generally available to provide additional assistance outside the classroom when I needed it.	95%	96%
24. NPS faculty members involved me in active and participative learning experiences.	94%	95%
*40. Journals: NPS library resources met all my course work and research needs.	94%	
42. Reference Assistance & Instruction: NPS library resources met all my course work and research.	93%	93%
44. Services (circulation, interlibrary loan, course reserve, printing, etc): NPS library resources met all my course work and research needs.	92%	94%
*13. The tests that I took at NPS were fair and relevant.	92%	
*12. The grades I received at NPS accurately reflected the level of my performance.	92%	
Note: 10 items tied for 10th place.		

*New Item for '09 (Library; Testing; Grading)

'08 Top 10 dropped out in '09		
Item#		%
22:	Faculty in programs dedicated to success as student	96
20:	Faculty dedicated to teaching	95
25:	Faculty well qualified for defense teaching	93
31:	Recommend NPS to other military officers or civ.	93
17:	Diversity in service enriched my education	92

Chart 3
Top 10 Negative Responses for All Residents

Survey Question	2009 % All Resident Respondents	2008 Data
47. Commuting and parking were not a problem at NPS	46%	70%
16. My NPS program provided me with sufficient electives to pursue my special military career interests	31%	31%
22. I was aware that NPS had an appeals process for student academic complaints	30%	38%
15. NPS provided opportunities for learning outside the regular curricular program.	21%	28%
20. Diversity in gender enriched my NPS education	20%	17%
52. The CLASSROOM and other NON-LABORATORY facilities for my program had the following characteristics: Well Maintained	16%	18%
8. My coursework and research at NPS were closely integrated	16%	15%
62. Adequate health services were available for my family and me while at NPS.	15%	18%
7. My thesis or capstone research project at NPS made a useful contribution to combat effectiveness or another national security need.	15%	15%
19. Diversity in ethnicity enriched my NPS education	14%	

DISCUSSION

Theme I: Strategic Planning for the Next NPS Centennial:

While consistently 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, several comments reflected a lack of military relevance (within their program). Although comments were made, these same students also affirmed that they would recommend the university to other military officers or defense civilians, as did the majority of NPS graduates.

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

A large majority of respondents (91-95%) 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. However, a moderate percentage of respondents (13%) did not think that faculty utilized student feedback to improve the educational program. This issue was further reinforced from comments expressing that a Student Opinion Form (SOF) rating had no immediate impact on corrective measures for faculty instructors.

Similar to last year, a high percentage (31%) of respondents would have liked — but were unable — to choose electives that align with their special military or career-related interests and many (21%) would have liked to have been provided opportunities to learn outside of their regular curricular program. Additionally, 16% of respondents did not think their coursework and research were closely related, and 15% did not agree that 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. While 92% of respondents views regarding testing were fair and relevant and grading was reflective of the level of student performance. However, it is noteworthy that few comments reflected the perception that grades are inflated.

Several student comments addressed the heavy course load requirements at NPS, expressing they could have gained greater in-depth knowledge if more time was allowed to reflect on what is being learned as well as more time for research.

Theme III: Supporting an Evolving Academic Enterprise:

Supportive Services, such as registrar, scheduling, student services, program officer and the program office staff mostly received positive responses for providing sufficient support to enable students to meet their educational goals. The number of respondents who did not agree with those statements is worth noting, specifically regarding class scheduling (11%). 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: nearly one third 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 with regard to class size and condition. Several comments were made regarding class size as having a high student-to-faculty ratio, creating over-crowded and cramped conditions in some classes. Significant numbers of comments stressed a lack of basic janitorial services throughout the campus, and its antiquated and poorly-maintained state. Classrooms were noted as lacking current technologies as well as electrical outlets for computer laptop use.

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

While a great majority responded positively regarding computer and IT services, it is noteworthy that many comments expressed a need for efficient/high-speed computer support within some labs.

Although parking and commuting continue to be an issue for many there was a dramatic decline from last year, as NPS has recently constructed additional parking areas.

SUMMARY

Overall, the value of a graduate education at NPS was acknowledged by the respondents. Although student comments highlighted several important issues as seen required to enhancing student experience and effectiveness while at NPS, the majority of these students also affirmed that their overall experience was valuable in gaining an outstanding education and would recommend the university to other military officers or defense civilians.

Even though the state of parking and facilities continue to yield fairly high dissatisfied responses, there was a significant reduction from last year due to the administration’s action to help remedy the parking shortage. 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.

Highlight of Most Satisfied Responses:

Faculty	Dedicated to student success, available for assistance, involved students in active and participative learning.
Library	Databases, journals, and reference assistance & instruction, and services helped meet course work and research needs.
Curriculum	Testing considered fair & relevant; Grading reflected level of performance.

Highlight of Most Dissatisfied Responses:

Parking	Insufficient space availability.
Facilities	Classroom and Non-Laboratory – cramped, over-crowded classes; poor heating/ventilation; not equipped with current technologies; lack of basic janitorial maintenance – greater satisfaction from last year, but still impacts on quality of education.
Communications	Unaware of appeals process.
Curriculum	Course work and research not closely related; No learning opportunities outside of regular curricular program; Insufficient electives.
Health Services	Inadequate staffing, scheduling, and specialized services.

APPENDICES

The following appendices can be accessed on the SharePoint site:

<http://infores/ir/default.aspx>

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Appendix B: Crosswalk of NPS Graduating Student Survey Items with WASC Criteria for Review

Appendix C: Survey Item Frequency Responses

Appendix D: Respondent Survey Comments