



NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

2005 Graduate Student Alumni Report:

Graduate Student Assessment of Their Degree Program and Subsequent Education / Employment Experiences Post Graduation

Introduction

For the first time, in the fall 2005, Northern Arizona University (NAU) designed and administered a survey of graduate alumni students. This survey asks alumni to evaluate their satisfaction with their graduate degree program, preparation received in their degree program, and their education and employment experiences post graduation. This graduate alumni survey allows NAU to shape program to help the University better meet the academic and personal needs of future graduate students.

Methods¹

The Graduate Student Alumni Survey was administered by the Social Research Laboratory to 303² students graduating in the fall 2001 or spring, summer 2002. This sample size yields an error rate below ± 5.1 percent³ for all respondents. When classifying respondents by mountain campus and statewide respondents, the error rate increases to $\pm 11\%$ for mountain campus respondents and $\pm 6\%$ for the statewide respondents. The survey sample was similar to the overall population of alumni on all characteristics examined. Table A (in Appendix A) shows the background characteristics of the survey sample compared to the overall graduate student alumni population at NAU. For each question, frequencies for each response category was compiled and recorded as a percentage. The survey instrument is included in Appendix B.

Summary of Results

Overall Satisfaction: Ninety-nine percent of all graduate alumni respondents indicated that their experience at NAU was “good” or “excellent” and 98 percent would recommend their graduate program. If starting over, 95 percent responded that they would start over again at NAU. Satisfaction was equally high for the mountain campus and the statewide respondents.

Satisfaction and Relationships with Faculty: Ninety-four percent of alumni were satisfied with the quality of faculty instruction. They reported that their program fostered a sense of

¹ Refer to Appendix A for a more complete methodology

² Respondents were classified as either Mountain Campus or Statewide respondent based upon self-report. Three students indicated that they did not know whether they were a statewide or mountain campus student and as such are not included in this report.

³ The sampling error describes the probable difference between interviewing everyone in the population versus interviewing a sample drawn from this population. For example, if 80% of the alumni sampled indicated satisfaction in a specific content area, the actual population parameter falls in the range of 75% - 85% (80% +/- 5%) satisfaction.

intellectual community (94 percent), they were treated with respect (99 percent), the faculty was supportive of their academic interests (97 percent), and that faculty held high expectations for their performance (95 percent). They were less likely to indicate that their professors encouraged them to participate in professional organizations (75 percent) and they had the opportunity to engage in collaborative work with faculty (63 percent). Ninety-one percent of the mountain campus respondents indicated that they had the opportunity to develop one or more mentoring relationships with faculty in comparison to 67 percent of the statewide respondents that reported in kind.

Preparation in Graduate Program: Ninety-three percent of alumni were satisfied with the preparation they received from their graduate program to help in preparing them for their current position. The graduate alumni students strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that their program prepared them in their area of study (95 percent), provided them with a strong knowledge base (95 percent), and that the courses were relevant for their intended profession (94 percent).

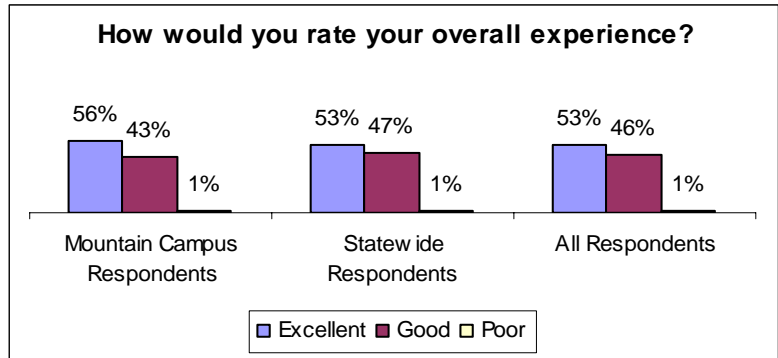
Advising: Sixty-two percent (57 mountain campus alumni and 127 statewide alumni) of the respondents reported having received graduate advising while at NAU. Of those respondents that reportedly received advising, overall satisfaction with several aspects of advising services was high and there were no notable differences in satisfaction between the mountain campus and statewide respondents. Ninety percent of respondents were satisfied with the advising received in their graduate program and 89 percent of respondents were satisfied with the advising received for future career goals. Eighty-two percent of the alumni that had received advising indicated that an academic advisor was always available or available most of the time.

Post Graduation: Education and Employment: Alumni were asked about additional education and employment experiences after graduating from their graduate degree program. Twenty-nine percent of all respondents have pursued an additional graduate degree since leaving NAU. Ninety-three percent of respondents have been regularly employed since finishing their degree and the majority of respondents (77 percent) who were employed indicated that their current employment was directly related to their degree program of study while at NAU, though a graduate degree was not required in order to be hired for their current position.

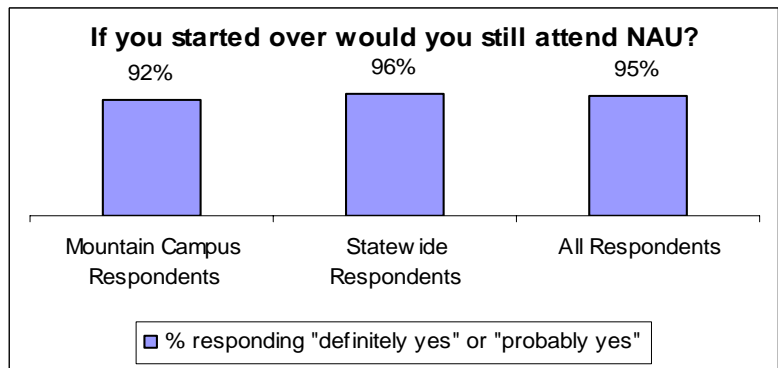
I. Overall Satisfaction

Alumni rated several indicators of their overall satisfaction with their graduate experiences at NAU very high.

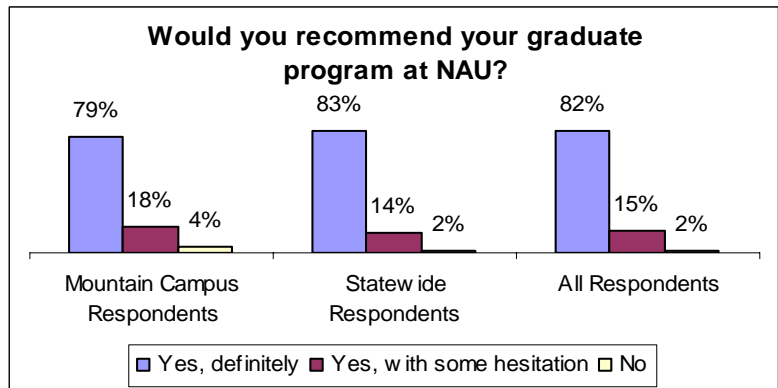
When asked to rate their overall experience at the University, 99 percent of all graduate alumni respondents indicated that their experience was “good” or “excellent.” Only one percent of the mountain campus respondents and one percent of the statewide respondents reported their overall experience as “fair” or “poor.”



Given the opportunity to start over, 95 percent of all respondents indicated that they definitely or probably would start over at NAU. Ninety-six percent of the statewide campus and 92 percent of the mountain campus students indicated they would start over at NAU given the opportunity.



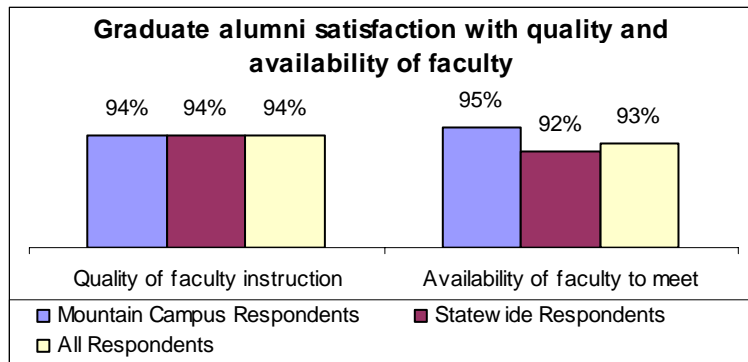
Overall, 98 percent of NAU’s graduate alumni students would recommend their graduate program. Only two percent of respondents would not recommend their graduate program.



II. Satisfaction and Relationships with Faculty

Graduate alumni students were very satisfied when asked about a variety of experiences in their graduate program. Alumni were asked specifically about the relationships with faculty and the support they received within their program.

Ninety-four percent of alumni were satisfied with the quality of faculty instruction. Ninety-three percent of respondents were satisfied with the availability of faculty to meet.



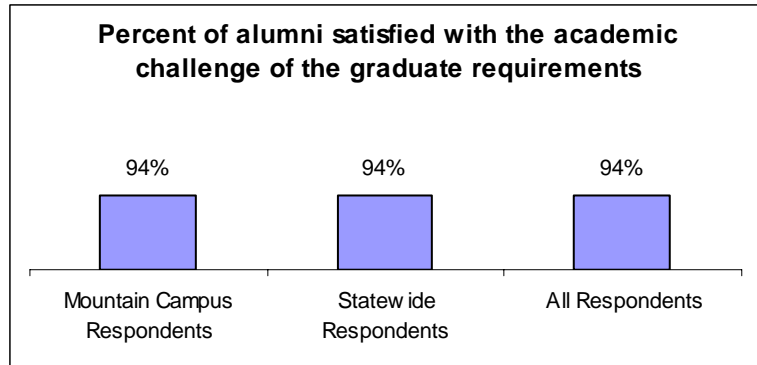
The alumni were very positive about their relationships with faculty. They reported that their program fostered a sense of intellectual community (94 percent) and that they were treated with respect (99 percent), that the faculty was supportive of their academic interests (97 percent), and that faculty held high expectations for their performance (95 percent).

Graduate Program Satisfaction			
<i>% of alumni who answered "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree"</i>	Mountain Campus Respondents	Statewide Respondents	All respondents
	N=79	N=221	N=300
As a graduate student, I was treated with respect in my program	96%	100%	99%
Faculty in my program were supportive of my academic interests	97%	97%	97%
Faculty in my program held high expectations for my performance	96%	94%	95%
My program fostered a sense of intellectual community	94%	95%	94%
My professors encouraged me to participate in professional organizations	79%	73%	75%
I had the opportunity to develop one or more mentoring relationships with faculty	91%	67%	73%
I had the opportunity to engage in collaborative work with faculty in my program	65%	62%	63%

The mountain campus alumni were more likely to report that their professors encouraged them to participate in professional organizations (79 vs. 73 percent) and that they had the opportunity to develop at least one mentoring relationship with faculty (91 vs. 67 percent). Sixty-three percent of the alumni strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that they had the opportunity to engage in collaborative work with faculty in their program.

III. Preparation in Graduate Program

Overall, alumni were satisfied with the academic challenge of the graduate requirements. Ninety-four percent of respondents, both mountain campus and statewide respondents, were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of challenge.



The graduate alumni students strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that their program prepared them in their area of study (95 percent), provided them with a strong knowledge base (95 percent), and that the courses were relevant for their intended profession (94 percent).

Graduate Program Satisfaction			
<i>% of alumni who answered "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree"</i>	Mountain Campus Respondents	Statewide Respondents	All respondents
	N=79	N=221	N=300
My program prepared me in my area of study	94%	95%	95%
I acquired a strong knowledge base in my area of study	98%	94%	95%
The courses were relevant for my intended profession	94%	94%	94%

Respondents were asked to rate how satisfied they were with their graduate program's ability to facilitate development in a variety of skill areas. The table below presents the results from these questions.

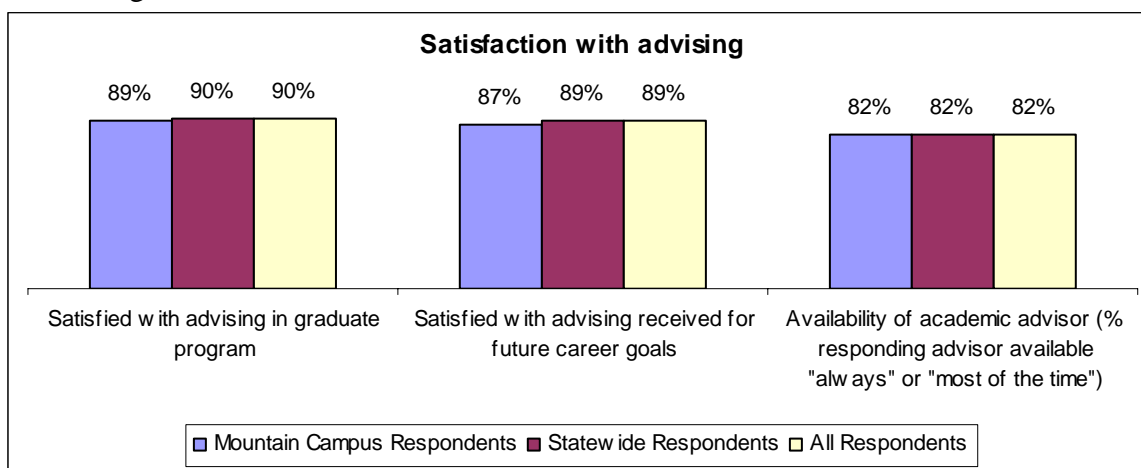
The statewide respondents were more satisfied with their skills developed in public speaking and presentations (94 vs. 86 percent), research skills and research methodology (92 vs. 84 percent), and networking with professional colleagues (86 vs. 79 percent). The mountain campus respondents were more satisfied with their skills in computer applications needed in their field (87 vs. 78 percent).

Satisfaction of Preparation			
<i>% of alumni who answered "very satisfied" or "satisfied"</i>	Mountain Campus Respondents	Statewide Respondents	All respondents
	N=79	N=221	N=300
General knowledge of your field	99%	98%	98%
Ability to acquire new skills and knowledge	96%	97%	97%

Satisfaction of Preparation			
<i>% of alumni who answered "very satisfied" or "satisfied"</i>	Mountain Campus Respondents	Statewide Respondents	All respondents
	N=79	N=221	N=300
Critical thinking skills	96%	95%	96%
Writing skills	94%	96%	96%
Acting upon ethical principles	98%	96%	96%
Ability to solve professional problems	93%	96%	96%
Public speaking and presentations	86%	94%	92%
Research skills and research methodology	84%	92%	90%
Introduction to a professional network of colleagues	79%	86%	84%
Knowledge of computer applications needed in your field	87%	78%	81%
Ability/support/funding to attend professional conferences	61%	60%	60%

IV. Advising

Sixty-two percent (57 mountain campus alumni and 127 statewide alumni) of the respondents reported having received graduate advising while at NAU. Of those respondents that reportedly received advising, overall satisfaction with several aspects of advising services were high and there were no notable differences in satisfaction between the mountain campus and statewide respondents. Ninety percent of respondents were satisfied with the advising received in their graduate program and 89 percent of respondents were satisfied with the advising received for future career goals.

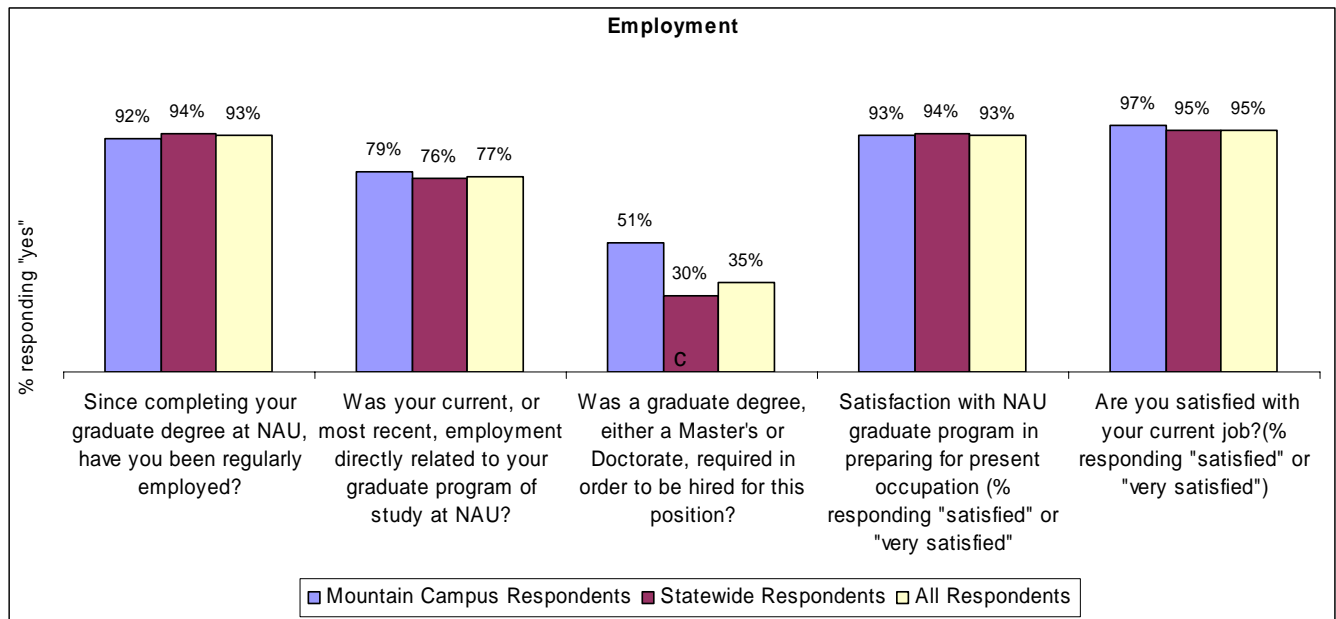


Eighty-two percent of the alumni that had received advising indicated that an academic advisor was always available or available most of the time.

V. Post Graduation: Education and Employment

Alumni were asked about additional education and employment experiences after graduating from their graduate degree program. Twenty-nine percent of all respondents have pursued an additional graduate degree since leaving NAU (28 percent of the mountain campus respondents and 30 percent of the statewide respondents). Ninety-three percent of respondents have been regularly employed since finishing their degree and the majority of respondents (77 percent) who were employed indicated that their current employment was directly related to their degree program of study while at NAU though a graduate degree was not required in order to be hired for their current position (35 percent indicated a graduate degree was required to be hired for their position).

Ninety-five percent of the graduate alumni were satisfied with their current job and 93 percent of alumni were satisfied with the preparation they received from their graduate program to help in preparing them for their current position.



The Office of Planning, Budget, and Institutional Research welcomes feedback concerning this and other studies and how they can continue to be improved.

Appendix A: Methodology

This report summarizes the results from the administration of the 2005 Graduate Alumni Survey. This survey asks alumni to evaluate their satisfaction with their graduate degree program, preparation received in their degree program, and their education and employment experiences post graduation. This graduate alumni survey allows NAU to shape program to help the University better meet the academic and personal needs of future graduate students.

The survey consisted of 22 multiple-choice and open-ended questions asked by trained survey administrators from the Social Research Laboratory at NAU. Questions addressed overall satisfaction, relationships with faculty, the development of specific skills and preparation received in their graduate program, and additional education and employment experiences since graduating with their graduate degree from NAU. See Appendix B for a copy of the survey instrument.

It is important to note that response categories are dichotomized to represent satisfaction versus dissatisfaction. For example, students were asked “How satisfied have you been with the quality of faculty instruction in general – very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, satisfied, or very satisfied?” For the purpose of this analysis, these possible response categories were subsequently recoded as dissatisfied, which includes the original categories of “very dissatisfied” and “dissatisfied”, and satisfied, which includes the original categories of “satisfied” and “very satisfied”.

The Graduate Student Alumni Survey was administered by the Social Research Laboratory to 303⁴ students graduating in the fall 2001 or spring, summer 2002. This sample size yields an error rate below ± 5.1 percent⁵ for all respondents. When classifying respondents by mountain campus and statewide respondents, the error rate increases to $\pm 11\%$ for mountain campus respondents and $\pm 6\%$ for the statewide respondents. The survey sample was similar to the overall population of alumni on most characteristics examined. Table A shows the background characteristics of the survey sample compared to the overall graduate alumni population at NAU.

Table A. Demographic characteristics of respondents compared to all graduate alumni

	Survey Respondents	All Graduate Alumni
Gender		
Female	70%	71%
Male	30%	29%
Ethnicity*		
African American	2%	2%
Asian American	1%	1%

⁴ Respondents were classified as either Mountain Campus or Statewide respondent based upon self-report. Three students indicated that they did not know whether they were a statewide or mountain campus student and as such as not included in this report.

⁵ The sampling error describes the probable difference between interviewing everyone in the population versus interviewing a sample drawn from this population. For example, if 80% of the alumni sampled indicated satisfaction in a specific content area, the actual population parameter falls in the range of 75% - 85% (80% +/- 5%) satisfaction.

	Survey Respondents	All Graduate Alumni
Caucasian	78%	75%
Hispanic	12%	14%
Native American	6%	8%
Campus		
Flagstaff	21%	22%
Statewide	79%	78%
AZ Resident	93%	93%
Group Size	303	1,686

*Column % does not add to 100 due to rounding

Appendix B. Survey Instrument

Hello, may I speak to (*state first and last name of person on the screen*)? My name is (*state your first and last name*), and I am calling from the Social Research Laboratory at Northern Arizona University. We are not asking for donations of any kind. We are conducting a short survey of NAU alumni with a graduate degree, and we would like to ask you a few questions about your experiences while at NAU. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. All of your answers are voluntary and confidential. Is now a good time to ask you some questions?

Int: "graduate degree" = either a Master's degree or a doctorate degree (Ph.D)

Note: All "don't know" and "refused" responses are silent, interviewers do NOT read these to the respondent or let the respondent know that they exist. They are there as a default for interviewers to continue the survey.

1. First, **in what year** did you complete your graduate work at NAU?

1. 2001
2. 2002
3. Different year → Thank you but we are only interviewing graduate students that graduated from NAU in 2001 or 2002.

4. Did not graduate from NAU or will be graduating in the future. → Thank you but we are only interviewing graduate students that graduated from NAU in 2001 or 2002.

2. Did you attend NAU on the Mountain campus, in Flagstaff, or did you attend on a satellite campus in a distance learning program?

1. On the Mountain campus (in Flagstaff)
2. Satellite campus in a distance learning program
3. Don't know
4. Refused

3. When thinking about your graduate years at NAU, how would you rate your overall experience?

Was it... Int: Read list

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Poor or
4. Very Poor
5. Don't know
6. Refused

Program Satisfaction

4. In thinking about your experience as a graduate student at NAU, that is the degree you earned in [fill in year from Q1], please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements. Int: Repeat response as necessary

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree
5. Don't know
6. Refused

- a. Faculty in my program held high expectations for my performance.
- b. My professors encouraged me to participate in professional organizations.
- c. Faculty in my program were supportive of my academic interests.
- d. I had the opportunity to develop one or more mentoring relationships with faculty.
Int, If needed: "Mentoring Relationship" a relationship with a faculty member characterized by advice and instruction regarding the course or process to be followed.
- e. I had the opportunity to engage in collaborative work with faculty in my program.
Int, If needed: "Collaborative Work" worked jointly with faculty in program on intellectual / academic work. Examples could include research and other creative endeavors.
- f. As a graduate student, I was treated with respect in my program.
Int: If needed: By everyone affiliated with the program: faculty, staff, students. Repeat responses as necessary.
- g. My program fostered a sense of intellectual community.
Int. If Needed: An "Intellectual Community" is a group of individuals who spend significant time engaging with each other to expand their knowledge and understanding of a particular subject and promoting their mutual intellectual growth and creativity through the open exchange of ideas.
- h. My program prepared me in my area of study.
- i. The courses were relevant for my intended profession.
- j. I acquired a strong knowledge base in my area of study.

Preparation in Graduate Program

5. In thinking about your experience as a graduate student at NAU, that is the degree you earned in [fill in year from Q1], please tell me if you were very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the preparation of the graduate program in the following areas: (Int: Repeat responses as necessary)

1. Very satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Dissatisfied
4. Very dissatisfied

5. Don't know/Not applicable
6. Refused

- a. General knowledge of your field
- b. Research skills and research methodology
- c. Public speaking and presentations
- d. Knowledge of computer applications needed in your field
- e. Critical thinking skills
- f. Writing skills
- g. Acting upon ethical principles
- h. Ability to solve professional problems
- h. Introduction to a professional network of colleagues
- i. Ability to acquire new skills and knowledge
- j. Quality of faculty instruction
- k. Availability of faculty to meet during office hours, before or after class.
- l. The academic challenge of the graduate requirements.
- m. Ability/support/funding to attend professional conferences

6. Did you take any **web** courses for your graduate degree while at NAU?

1. Yes → Continue with Q6a
2. No → Skip to Q7
3. Don't know → Skip to Q7
4. Refused → Skip to Q7

6a. How **satisfied** were you with the web course? Were you...

Int: Read if necessary

1. Very satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Dissatisfied or
4. Very dissatisfied
5. Don't know
6. Refused

7. How **successfully** did NAU integrate technology into the learning process?
Would you rate that as very successfully, successfully, unsuccessfully, or very unsuccessfully?

Int: If needed: "technology" – assignments requiring use of computers, web research, use of common software packages, use of technological equipment in laboratory courses.

1. Very successfully
2. Successfully
3. Unsuccessfully

4. Very unsuccessfully
5. Don't know
6. Refused

8. Did you seek formal graduate advising while at NAU for classes or career opportunities?

Int: This is formal advising through the department, college or graduate college, it does NOT include student organizations.

1. Yes → Continue with Q8a
2. No → Skip to Q9
3. Don't know → Skip to Q9
4. Refused → Skip to Q9

8a. How satisfied were you with the academic advising you received in your graduate program? Would you say you were...Int. Read list.

1. Very satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Dissatisfied or
4. Very dissatisfied
5. Don't know
6. Refused

8b. Using the same scale, how **satisfied** were you with the **advising you received so that you could meet your future career goals**? Were you...

Int: Read if necessary

1. Very satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Dissatisfied
4. Very dissatisfied
5. Don't know/Not Applicable
6. Refused

8c. How often was your academic advisor **available when you needed advising**? Would you say...

Int: Read categories

1. Always
2. Most of the time
3. Some of the time or
4. Never
5. Don't know

6. Refused

9. Would you recommend your graduate program at NAU to a friend considering graduate school?

Int: If yes → clarify definitely or with some hesitation

1. Yes, definitely
2. Yes, with some hesitation
3. No
4. Don't know
5. Refused

Education History After Graduation

10. Since completing your graduate degree at NAU in [fill I year from Q1], did you **pursue, or are you currently pursuing, another graduate, professional degree or a certificate?**

1. Yes, graduate/professional degree/certificate → Continue with 10a
2. No → Skip to Q11
3. Don't know → Skip to Q11
4. Refused → Skip to Q11

10a. If yes, what type of degree/certificate program have you been enrolled in?

Int: Read if necessary.

If Masters degree, probe for degree-seeking or non-degree seeking.

Non-degree - student has not applied to a particular department and they have not been accepted into a program.

1. Masters (degree seeking-enrolled in a specific program)
2. Masters (non-degree program-NOT enrolled in a specific program)
3. Doctoral (Ph.D)
4. J.D. (Juris Doctor-Law Degree)
5. M.D. (Medical Doctor)
6. Other _____ (Specify)
7. Don't know
8. Refused → Skip Q11

10b. What is the field of study for the current degree that you are seeking?

Int Note: if they say they have not decided, record as undeclared

10c. What is the name of the school and the city where you are pursuing this degree?

Employment History

11. Since completing your graduate degree at NAU, have you been regularly employed?

1. Yes → Continue with Q12
2. No → Skip to Q16
3. Don't know / No answer → Skip to Q16
4. Refused → Skip to Q16

12. Was your current, or most recent, employment directly related, indirectly related, or not related **to your graduate program of study at NAU?**

1. Directly related
2. Indirectly related
3. Not related
4. Don't know
5. Refused

13. Was a graduate degree, either a Master's or Doctorate, required in order to be hired for this position?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know
4. Refused

14. How satisfied are you with the NAU graduate program in preparing you for your present occupation? Would you say you are... Int: Read list

1. Very satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Dissatisfied
4. Very dissatisfied
5. I am not using my degree in my current position (don't read)
6. Don't know/Not applicable
7. Refused

15. In general, how satisfied are you with your current job ? Would you say you are...
Int: Read if necessary.

1. Very satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Dissatisfied
4. Very dissatisfied
5. Don't know
6. Refused

16. What are the **two most recent types of employment** you have had since completing the graduate degree that you received in [fill in year from Q1] at NAU? Could you please tell me the name of the employer and your position or title.

(PROBE FOR LAST 2 POSITIONS, IF ONLY ONE, RECORD POSITION/EMPLOYER AND THEN STATE AS "ONLY ONE POSITION". IF NONE, RECORD AS "NONE")

Int: Record response verbatim.

17. Are you currently working in Arizona?

1. Yes → Skip to Q18
2. If no → Go to 17a
3. Don't know → Go to 17a
4. Refused → Skip to Q19

17a. At any time after receiving your post-graduate degree, have you looked for a job in Arizona?

1. Yes → Skip to Q18
2. If no → Go to 17b
3. Don't know → Go to Q17b
4. Refused → Skip to Q19

17b. Are you familiar with the job market in Arizona?

1. Yes → Go to Q18
2. If no → Skip to Q19
3. Don't know → Skip to Q19
4. Refused → Skip to Q19

18. Do you think there are job opportunities in Arizona in your graduate area of study?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know/Not sure
4. Refused

19. Assuming there are job opportunities in your graduate area of study in Arizona, would you be willing to work in Arizona?

[Skip if they are currently working in AZ]

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know/Not sure
4. Refused

20. Reflecting on your graduate experience at NAU, if you **started over**, would you still choose to attend NAU? Please select from the following categories.

Int: Read entire list.

Int: Read categories

1. Definitely yes
2. Probably yes
3. Probably no or
4. Definitely no
5. Don't know
6. Refused

21. What was your primary reason for attending graduate school at NAU?

22. Lastly, would you like to add any other comments, criticism or praise about your graduate experience at NAU?

Int: RECORD RESPONDENT'S OWN WORDS VERBATIM. REPEAT RESPONSE BACK TO RESPONDENT.

These are all of the questions I have for you. Thank you very much for your time!