



NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

2007 Graduating Senior Survey Report:

Student Assessment of Their Experiences (Academic and Non-Academic) at Northern Arizona University by Campus and College

Introduction

For the past ten years, a survey of graduating seniors has been conducted at Northern Arizona University (NAU). This survey assesses student satisfaction and opinions about their experience at the university, while also addressing specific questions that are asked by the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) for the Undergraduate Consolidated Accountability Report (UCAR) each year. Student satisfaction is measured in several areas: general academics, major department, faculty, skills development, advising, and experiences outside the classroom.

Methods¹

In 2007 the Graduating Senior Survey was administered via a web survey. The office of Planning and Institutional Research sent the survey via an email invitation to all students who had applied for graduation with the Registrar's Office during fiscal year 2007 (July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007). Prior to FY2005, the Graduating Senior Survey was a phone survey that was administered by Northern Arizona University's Social Research Laboratory to approximately 400 students expecting to graduate in the fall, spring, or summer of the survey administration's academic year. For the 2007 administration, 1150 students participated; 939 students that actually graduated. This sample size of 939 yields an error rate below ± 3 percent². It should be noted that results reported in prior graduating senior survey reports were based upon a population of students that were expected to graduate. Due to the survey becoming a web administration, it is now possible to exclude students that applied for graduation, but did not actually graduate. As such, the 2007 graduating senior survey is the first to report results based upon an actual sample of students that graduated in comparison to all students that graduated³. The survey sample was similar to the overall population of seniors on most characteristics examined. Table A (in Appendix A) shows the background characteristics of the survey sample compared to all students that graduated in FY2007.

Summary of Results

Changing the administration of the Graduating Senior Survey from a phone to a web survey has provided a significantly larger sample size for the FY2007 administration. Similar to the 2006

¹ Refer to Appendix A for a more complete methodology

² 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 graduating seniors sampled indicated satisfaction in a specific content area, the actual population parameter falls in the range of 77% - 83% (80% +/- 3%) satisfaction.

³ Preliminary analysis revealed no significant difference in responses between the sample of students that applied for graduation versus the sample of students that actually did graduate. Therefore, it is not anticipated that this change in the sample will have an impact when comparing 2007 results to previous results.

report, due to the larger sample size, additional analyses are provided in this report than in previous reports. Specifically, this year's results are provided by campus and by college.

I. Overall Indicators of Satisfaction

Ninety-six percent (96%) of all respondents reported their overall experience at Northern Arizona University was either "excellent" or "very good." There was no variation in satisfaction across the four campuses. When asked if they were given the opportunity to begin over, would they still chose NAU, 89 percent of the respondents replied "definitely yes" or "probably yes." Flagstaff students were the least likely to reply yes (87%).

II. Satisfaction for the Six Content Areas Evaluated by Campus

Across the six content areas evaluated (general academics, major field of study, faculty, skill development, advising, and experiences outside the classroom), satisfaction was highest in the area of faculty with 93 percent of all respondents indicating that they were satisfied with faculty (quality and availability).

A. General Academics

There was little difference in satisfaction across the four campuses for satisfaction with the challenge of coursework and the variety of courses offered outside the major. Statewide students were more satisfied with course registration outside their major than the other three campuses, noticeably more satisfied than respondents from the Yuma campus. The Flagstaff students were significant less satisfied with the academic advising at the lower division level when compared with respondents from the other three campuses.

B. Major Field of Study

Overall satisfaction was high with 88 percent of respondents satisfied with the overall quality of their major department. Satisfaction of 80 percent or more was reported for: the challenge of coursework (93%), ability to register for major courses (88%), and preparation for a career (84%). There was variation in satisfaction across the four campuses for several of the categories. The Yuma respondents were the least satisfied with their ability to register for courses, the Flagstaff respondents were significantly less satisfied with their career prep, academic advising, advising for future career goals, and the variety of courses offered.

C. Faculty

Satisfaction was high with 92 percent of the students satisfied with the quality of faculty instruction and 93 percent of the students satisfied with the availability of faculty. While satisfaction was high for the Flagstaff respondents (90% and 92%), overall satisfaction was higher at the other three campuses.

D. Skill Development

Respondents were asked to rate how effective NAU was in facilitating their development in a variety of skills areas. There were quite a few differences in the evaluation of impact NAU had in facilitating the development skills across the campuses. Generally, the Flagstaff respondents reported the least help in skill development when compared to the other three campuses. The online respondents, in general, reported the most help in the development of the various skills.

E. Advising

Overall, satisfaction was the highest in academic advising for the major (75%) and lower-division academic advising (72%). Only sixty-five (65) percent of respondents were satisfied with advising for future career goals. The Flagstaff respondents were the least satisfied on all three dimensions of advising (lower division, major, and future career goals) compared to respondents from the other campuses

F. Experiences Outside the Classroom

Students overall were satisfied (80 percent or more) on a variety of dimensions of experiences outside the classroom (availability of computer labs, town social life, campus social life, diversity on campus, and extracurricular activities). Yuma respondents were the most satisfied with the availability of computer labs and statewide students were the most satisfied with the campus social life at NAU.

III. Evaluation of Major Department and Skill Development by College

A. Major Department

There is quite a bit of variation between the six colleges on all seven measures of the major department. The highest rated area across all schools was the level of academic challenge of coursework. This varied from a high of 99 percent satisfied in Engineering and Natural Sciences to a low of 89 percent in the Consortium of Professional Schools. The overall quality of the major department was rated the highest in Education (94%) and Engineering and Natural Sciences (92%) and the lowest in the Consortium (79%). The variety of courses offered (94%), ability to register for courses (94%), academic advising (84%), advising with future career goals (78%), career preparation (94%), and the overall quality of the major department (94%) were all rated the highest in Education.

B. Faculty

The quality and availability of faculty is rated high across all six colleges with little variation in satisfaction.

C. Skill Development

There is significant variation between the six colleges on student evaluation of the level of help their NAU education provided them in developing key skills. While variation is certainly expected given the different skills required for various degrees, it should also be noted that many of the skills evaluated are drawn from the liberal studies skill objectives.

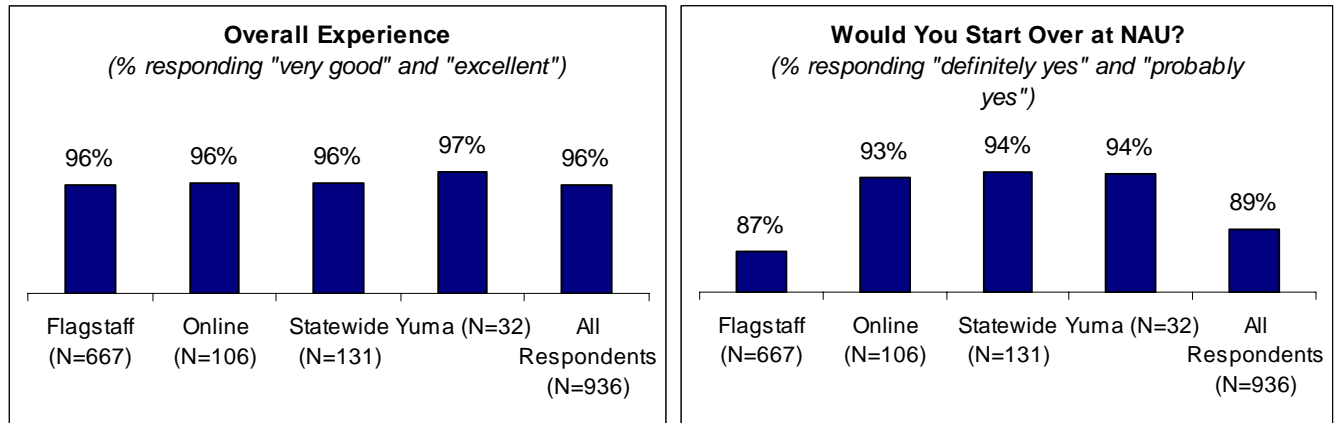
Plans After Graduation

Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported their plans after graduation as a job opportunity related to their major, 14 percent reported a job opportunity not related to their major, 15 percent of graduating seniors plan on traveling upon graduation, and 42 percent reported graduate school as their plan after graduation. Eleven percent of respondents didn't know what their plans were for after graduation. (Students were given the option of choosing multiple plans, therefore, the above percentages would not add to 100).

Summary of Responses on the Graduating Senior Survey

I. Overall Indicators of Satisfaction

Ninety-six percent (96%) of all respondents reported their overall experience at Northern Arizona University was either “excellent” or “very good.” There was no significant variation in satisfaction across the four campuses.



When asked if they were given the opportunity to begin over, would they still chose NAU, 89 percent of the respondents replied “definitely yes” or “probably yes.” Statewide and Yuma students were the most likely to reply yes (94%).

II. Satisfaction for the Six Content Areas Evaluated by Campus

While the sample error for the entire sample is +/-3 percent, once the data is analyzed by campus the sample error changes to +/- 3 percent for Flagstaff, +/-7 percent for statewide and online, and +/-15 percent for Yuma (please see footnote #2 on page 1 for an explanation of sampling error).

The average satisfaction for the six areas measured on the survey were computed and compared. The table below summarizes the results of this comparison. Across the six content areas evaluated (general academics, major field of study, faculty, skill development, advising, and experiences outside the classroom), satisfaction was highest in the area of faculty with 93 percent of all respondents indicating that they were satisfied with faculty (quality and availability). Each of these six areas is subsequently examined in greater detail below.

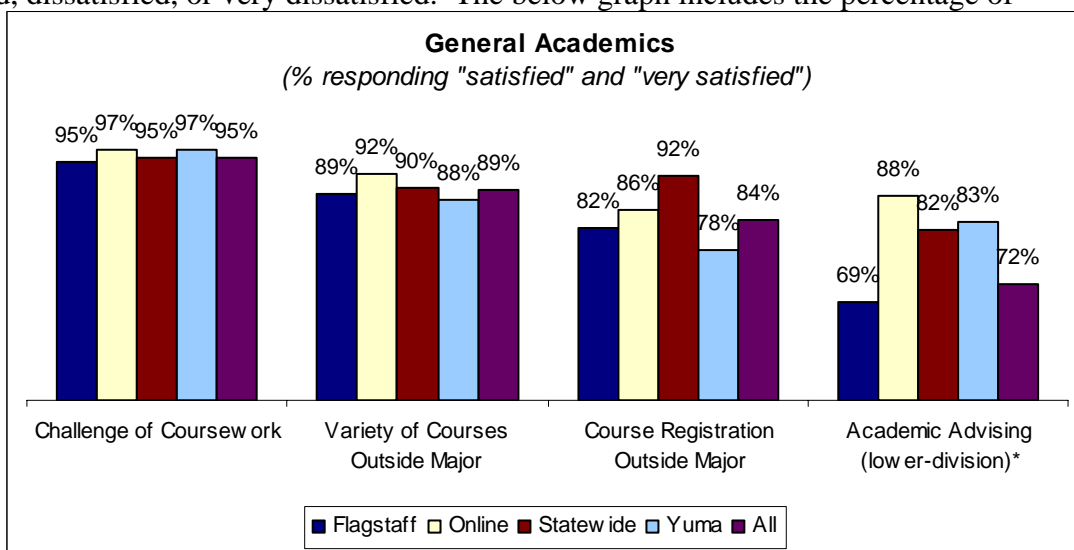
Area	# of Questions Measuring Content Area	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
		Faculty	93%	95%	92%	93%
Outside Classroom	Five	83%	70%	84%	85%	87%
General Academic	Four	83%	88%	82%	84%	85%
Major	Seven	86%	87%	79%	81%	82%
Advising	Three	71%	78%	69%	70%	71%
Skill Development*	Thirteen	64%	65%	58%	67%	69%

* For skill development, response choices were “Quite a Bit” and “Very Much,” not “Satisfied” and “Very Satisfied” as in the other content areas.

A. General Academics

The below graph summarizes the results from the questions addressing satisfaction in the area of general academics. Respondents had the option of rating the following academic areas by: very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied. The below graph includes the percentage of

students that answered “very satisfied” and “satisfied.” There was little difference in satisfaction across the four campuses for satisfaction with the challenge of coursework and the variety



of courses offered outside the major. Statewide students were more satisfied with course registration outside their major than the other three campuses, noticeably more satisfied than respondents from the Yuma campus. The Flagstaff students were significantly less satisfied with the academic advising at the lower division level when compared with respondents from the other three campuses.

* Thirty-nine percent of all respondents indicated that they had received lower-division academic advising prior to declaring a major. These satisfaction ratings are based upon the 361 respondents that had received LD advising.

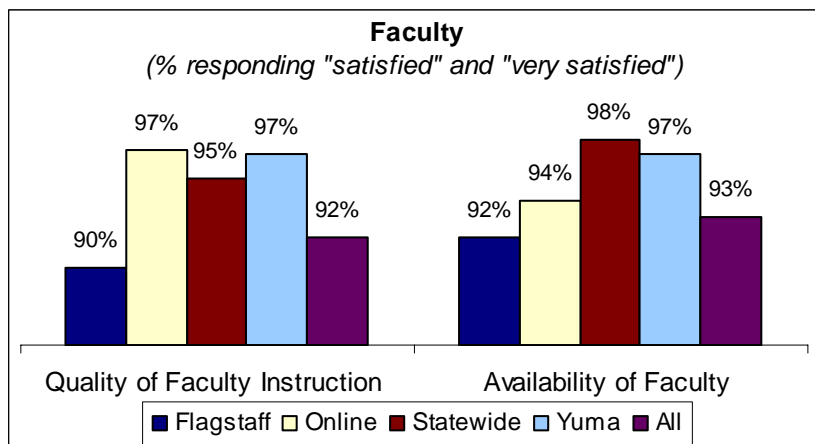
B. Major Field of Study

Respondents were asked to evaluate their major field of study at the time of graduation. Overall satisfaction was high with 88 percent of respondents satisfied with the overall quality of their major department. Satisfaction of 80 percent or more was reported for: the challenge of coursework (93%), ability to register for major courses (88%), and preparation for a career (84%). There was variation in satisfaction across the four campuses for several of the categories. The Yuma respondents were the least satisfied with their ability to register for courses, the Flagstaff respondents were significantly less satisfied with their career prep, academic advising, advising for future career goals, and the variety of courses offered.

Major Field of Study	Flagstaff	Online	Statewide	Yuma	All
Challenge of Coursework	93%	96%	93%	94%	93%
Ability to Register for Courses	88%	87%	96%	78%	88%
Overall Quality of Major Department	87%	93%	91%	100%	88%
Preparation for a Career	79%	97%	90%	100%	84%
Academic Advising	72%	81%	82%	81%	75%
Advising with Future Career Goals	61%	80%	74%	81%	65%
Variety of Courses Offered	61%	80%	74%	81%	65%
Number of respondents	667	106	131	32	936

C. Faculty

There are two questions on the survey that ask students specifically about their satisfaction with the quality of faculty instruction and the availability of faculty. Satisfaction was high with 92 percent of the students satisfied with the quality of faculty instruction and 93 percent of the students satisfied with the availability of faculty. While satisfaction was high for the Flagstaff respondents (90% and 92%), overall satisfaction was higher at the other three campuses.



D. Skill Development

Respondents were asked to rate how effective NAU was in facilitating their development in a variety of skills areas. The below percentages represent the proportion of students by campus that indicated NAU helped them “quite a bit” or “very much” in the stated skill. Several of these questions are also asked on the National Survey of Student Engagement – a national survey that NAU participated in during FY2005. The results from all participating doctoral intensive institutions are included in the below table as a point of reference.

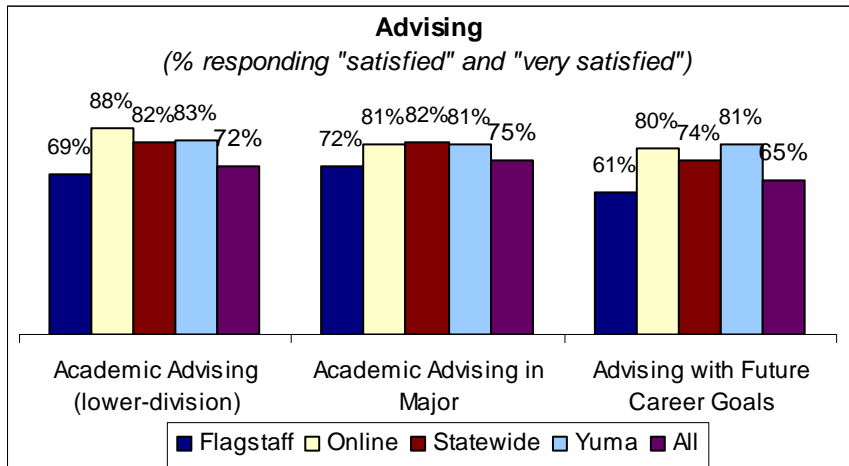
There were quite a few differences in the evaluation of impact NAU had in facilitating the development of the below skills across the campuses. Generally, the Flagstaff respondents reported the least help in skill development when compared to the other four campuses. The online respondents, in general, reported the most help in the development of the various skills.

Skill Category (% responding “quite a bit” and “very much”)	Flagstaff	Online	Statewide	Yuma	All	2005 NSSE ⁴
Thinking critically & analytically	80%	90%	87%	74%	82%	85%
Working effectively with others	75%	81%	75%	81%	76%	77%
Learning effectively on own	72%	79%	76%	78%	74%	72%
Developing a tolerance for diversity	67%	86%	77%	75%	71%	
Understanding relationship b/w people & environment	67%	89%	75%	84%	71%	
Reading critically	65%	82%	79%	63%	69%	
Writing clearly & effectively	63%	82%	76%	81%	68%	75%
Acting upon ethical principles	64%	82%	75%	75%	68%	
Using computer/info technology	64%	79%	72%	72%	67%	69%
Understanding impact of technology	62%	81%	74%	78%	66%	
Analyzing quantitative problems	63%	73%	64%	66%	65%	72%
Speaking clearly & effectively	61%	66%	73%	72%	63%	68%
Understanding principles of scientific inquiry	60%	65%	65%	72%	62%	
Number of respondents	667	106	131	32	936	

⁴ These results are for all participating doctoral intensive institutions in the FY2005 NSSE administration.

E. Advising

Overall, satisfaction was the highest in academic advising for the major (75%) and lower-division academic advising (72%). Only sixty-five (65) percent of respondents were satisfied with advising for future career goals. The Flagstaff respondents were the least satisfied on all three dimensions of advising (lower division, major, and future career goals) compared to respondents from the other campuses.



F. Experiences Outside the Classroom

Students overall were satisfied (80 percent or more) on a variety of dimensions of experiences outside the classroom. Yuma respondents were the most satisfied with the availability of computer labs and statewide students were the most satisfied with the campus social life at NAU.

As some of these experiences outside of the classroom are arguably less relevant to some respondents depending upon their location, respondents were given the option of choosing “not applicable.” The below percentages are based only upon the proportion of respondents that evaluated the factors and excludes those that said the experience was not relevant.

% responding “satisfied” and “very satisfied”	Flagstaff	Online	Statewide	Yuma	All
Availability of Computer Labs	88%	91%	86%	100%	88%
Town Social Life	88%	85%	95%	74%	88%
Diversity on Campus	88%	88%	98%	79%	88%
Extracurricular Activities	90%	89%	77%	50%	87%
Campus Social Life at NAU	82%	78%	93%	65%	82%

III. Evaluation of Major Department and Skill Development by College

A main objective for changing the method of data collection for the graduating senior survey from a phone survey to a web based survey was to allow for analyses at the college level. In the past, the total sample size was approximately 400 students which did not allow for a valid analysis at the college level. Due to the significantly larger sample size this year, the sampling error, which describes the probable difference between interviewing everyone in the population versus interviewing a sample drawn from this population, for the college level analyses fluctuates from 5% to 7% depending upon the college (refer to the below table for the specific error rate for each college) and allows for college level analyses.

A. Major Department

There is quite a bit of variation between the six colleges on all seven measures of the major department. The highest rated area across all schools was the level of academic challenge of coursework. This varied from a high of 99 percent satisfied in Engineering and Natural Sciences to a low of 89 percent in the Consortium of Professional Schools. The overall quality of the major department was rated the highest in Education (94%) and Engineering and Natural Sciences (92%) and the lowest in the Consortium (79%). The variety of courses offered (94%), ability to register for courses (94%), academic advising (84%), advising with future career goals (78%), career preparation (94%), and the overall quality of the major department (94%) were all rated the highest in Education.

% responding “satisfied” and “very satisfied”	Arts & Letters	Bus Admin	Prof Schools	Educ	Engin & NS	SBS	All
Challenge of Coursework	92%	91%	89%	96%	99%	92%	93%
Variety of Courses Offered	70%	78%	86%	94%	77%	75%	80%
Ability to Register for Courses	88%	91%	92%	94%	84%	84%	88%
Academic Advising	71%	60%	79%	84%	74%	75%	75%
Advising with Future Career Goals	61%	48%	74%	78%	61%	66%	65%
Preparation for a Career	79%	83%	85%	94%	80%	80%	84%
Overall Quality of Major Department	83%	91%	79%	94%	92%	88%	88%
Sampling Error	+/-7%	+/-7%	+/-8%	+/-6%	+/-7%	+/-5%	+/-3%
Number of Respondents:	119	123	111	186	132	267	938

B. Faculty

The quality and availability of faculty is rated high across all six colleges with little variation in satisfaction.

% responding “satisfied” And “very satisfied”	Arts & Letters	Bus Admin	Prof Schools	Educ	Engin & NS	SBS	All
The availability of faculty	90%	94%	90%	96%	94%	94%	93%
The quality of faculty instruction	89%	95%	84%	95%	95%	92%	92%
Sampling Error	+/-7%	+/-7%	+/-8%	+/-6%	+/-7%	+/-5%	+/-3%
Number of Respondents:	119	123	111	186	132	267	938

C. Skill Development

There is significant variation between the six colleges on student evaluation of the level of help their NAU education provided them in developing the below skills. While variation is certainly expected given the different skills required for various degrees, it should also be noted that many of the below skills are drawn from the liberal studies skill objectives.

Skill Category (% responding “quite a bit” and “very much”)	Arts & Letters	Bus Admin	Prof Schools	Educ	Engin & NS	SBS	All
Thinking critically and analytically	80%	83%	83%	79%	83%	84%	82%
Working effectively with others	73%	87%	76%	77%	80%	70%	76%
Learning effectively with others	68%	83%	75%	77%	75%	69%	74%
Developing a tolerance for diversity	64%	78%	70%	70%	61%	76%	71%

Skill Category (% responding “quite a bit” and “very much”)	Arts & Letters	Bus Admin	Prof Schools	Educ	Engin & NS	SBS	All
Understanding relationship btw people & environment	61%	77%	69%	70%	67%	76%	71%
Reading critically	69%	64%	73%	72%	65%	69%	69%
Writing clearly and effectively	61%	75%	68%	66%	64%	70%	68%
Acting upon ethical principles	50%	78%	72%	72%	59%	71%	68%
Ability to use computer and information technology	47%	79%	72%	72%	74%	61%	67%
Understanding impact of technology	45%	83%	60%	75%	69%	63%	66%
Analyzing quantitative problems	46%	76%	66%	58%	84%	62%	65%
Speaking clearly and effectively	62%	80%	61%	62%	53%	63%	63%
Understanding principles of scientific inquiry	39%	58%	67%	64%	89%	55%	62%
Sampling Error	+/-7%	+/-7%	+/-8%	+/-6%	+/-7%	+/-5%	+/-3%
Number of Respondents:	119	123	111	186	132	267	938

IV. Trend Study from 1998 – 2007

With the completion of the 2007 survey administration, the Graduating Senior Survey has been completed at NAU for ten consecutive years. Due to changes in the survey questions during this ten year period, only six content areas are available for a historical comparison⁵. These six areas are: (1) faculty/quality of instruction, (2) lower-division academic advising, (3) major academic advising, (4) career goals advising, (5) preparation for a career in the chosen field, and (6) overall experience rating. The below table presents the satisfaction levels, by year, for the six areas.

Content Area	Percentage of Satisfied Respondents									
	1998 N=353	1999 N=353	2000 N=350	2001 N=358	2002 N=471	2003 N=404	2004 N=404	2005⁶ N=629	2006 N=1361	2007⁷ N=939
NAU Faculty/Quality of Instruction	89%	90%	87%	85%	92%	95%	97%	91%	92%	92%
Academic Advising: Lower-Division⁸	52%	51%	78%	73%	59%	64%	80%*	73%	75%	72%
Academic Advising: Major	78%	77%	80%	74%	69%	78%	80%	72%	72%	75%
Advising: Career Goals	49%	60%	78%	75%	69%	72%	75%	62%	64%	66%

⁵ It should be noted that this is a rather rough trend comparison, since the wording and response choices for some questions have changed over the years. The four that have remained stable over the seven years are the three advising areas and the overall experience rating. The other two questions, however, have response categories that shifted from stating the level of satisfaction (“Poor” to “Excellent”) to rating a student’s satisfaction (“Very Dissatisfied” to “Very Satisfied”). In addition, the question from previous years assessing satisfaction with “NAU faculty” has been changed to satisfaction with “the quality of faculty instruction.” These changes to the questions began with the 2002 administration.

⁶ 2005 was the first year that the Graduating Senior Survey was administered via the web. It is not known how the change in administration may have affected the results.

⁷ In regards to the advising questions, it should be noted that beginning with the 2004 administration, students were first asked if they received lower division academic advising prior to declaring a major. Only those students that answered in the affirmative were asked to evaluate their level of satisfaction with lower-division advising.

⁸ 2007 is the first year that the results are based upon a sample of students that actually graduated in the FY. Years previous the analysis was based upon a sample of students that anticipated graduating.

Percentage of Satisfied Respondents

Content Area	1998 N=353	1999 N=353	2000 N=350	2001 N=358	2002 N=471	2003 N=404	2004 N=404	2005⁶ N=629	2006 N=1361	2007⁷ N=939
Preparation For a Career	80%	82%	79%	77%	84%	86%	89%	82%	85%	85%
Overall Experience	98%	97%	97%	96%	96%	97%	98%	95%	96%	96%

V. Plans Following Graduation

Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported their plans after graduation as a job opportunity related to their major, 14 percent reported a job opportunity not related to their major, 15 percent of graduating seniors plan on traveling upon graduation, and 42 percent reported graduate school as their plan after graduation. Eleven percent of respondents didn't know what their plans were for after graduation. (Students were given the option of choosing multiple plans, therefore, the above percentages would not add to 100).

The Office of Planning 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 most recent administration of the Graduating Senior Survey. The survey assesses the satisfaction and opinions of NAU's graduating seniors and provides data that is reported to ABOR for their annual accountability report.

The survey consisted of 47 multiple-choice and open-ended questions administered via a web survey. Questions addressed satisfaction in key areas, development of certain essential skills, and opinions about the university environment. The survey instrument is available by request to Eva.Hatchner@nau.edu. The survey was administered via a web survey designed by the Office of Planning and Institutional Research to all students that had applied for registration during fiscal year 2007 (July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007).

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 survey sample was similar to the overall population of graduating seniors on most characteristics examined. Table A shows the background characteristics of the survey sample compared to the overall graduating senior population at NAU. As is common in survey research, females tended to be overrepresented as survey respondents, whereas males tend to be underrepresented. It is unclear how, if at all, these discrepancies in the sample population affect the overall results of this study.

Table A. Demographic characteristics of survey respondents compared to all students that applied for graduation

	Survey Respondents	All Students that Graduated in FY2007
College		
Arts and Letters	13%	12%
Business Administration	13%	13%
Consortium of Professional Schools	12%	16%
Education	20%	19%
Engineering & Natural Sciences	14%	14%
Social and Behavioral Sciences	29%	27%
Campus		
Flagstaff	71%	72%
Online	11%	9%
Statewide	14%	14%
Yuma	3%	5%
AZ Resident	85%	85%
Female	70%	64%

**All Students that
Survey Respondents Graduated in FY2007**

Ethnicity*		
African American	2%	2%
Native American	6%	7%
Asian American	1%	2%
Hispanic / Latino	10%	12%
International	1%	1%
Caucasian	79%	75%
Unknown	2%	3%
CUM NAU GPA	3.41	3.32
	Group Size	
	939	2,664

*Column % does not add to 100 due to rounding