



## Northern Arizona University 2003 Graduating Senior Survey Report:

### Trends in Graduating Senior Satisfaction

---

#### Introduction

- A survey of graduating seniors has been conducted at Northern Arizona University (NAU) for the past six years. It attempts to assess 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. Questions that have been on the survey from past years are examined in a historical context in order to study trends in satisfaction over the six years this study has been completed.

#### Methods<sup>1</sup>

- A phone survey was administered by the Social Research Laboratory to 404 students graduating in the Fall 2002 or Spring, Summer 2003. This sample size yields an error rate below  $\pm 5$  percent. 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 the overall graduating senior population at NAU.

#### Summary of Results

- Results from the 2003 administration of the Graduating Senior Survey indicate that student satisfaction continues to increase. While there is some variation in the satisfaction within various content areas over the six years of study, one positive trend is the consistent increase in satisfaction across all content areas.
- Past respondents have indicated advising as an area deserving of greater attention. A promising result from the 2003 administration of this survey is that all three measurements of satisfaction with academic advising, lower-division, major, and career goals, increased in the one-year period from 2002 – 2003.
- Overall satisfaction with NAU continues to be the highest rated and most consistently rated content area. For the 2003 administration, 97% of respondents indicated satisfaction with their overall experience at NAU.

---

<sup>1</sup> Refer to Appendix A for complete methodology

## Trend Study from 1998 - 2003

- With the completion of the 2003 survey administration, the Graduating Senior Survey has been completed now for six consecutive years. Due to changes in the survey questions during this six year period, only six content areas are available for a historical comparison<sup>2</sup>. 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. (Refer to Appendix B for a copy of survey instrument). Table 1 presents the satisfaction levels by year for all six areas, while Figures 1-6 provide a visual depiction of the trends for each area.

**Table 1.** Satisfaction by year for each content area (1998-2003).

Content Area	Percentage of Satisfied Respondents					
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>NAU Faculty/Quality of Instruction</b>	89%	90%	87%	85%	92%	95%
<b>Academic Advising: Lower-Division</b>	52%	51%	78%	73%	59%	64%
<b>Academic Advising: Major</b>	78%	77%	80%	74%	69%	78%
<b>Advising: Career Goals</b>	49%	60%	78%	75%	69%	72%
<b>Preparation For a Career</b>	80%	82%	79%	77%	84%	86%
<b>Overall Experience</b>	98%	97%	97%	96%	96%	97%

<sup>2</sup> 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 five 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 (“Very Dissatisfied” to “Very Satisfied”) to rating a student’s satisfaction (“Poor” to “Excellent”). In addition, the question from previous year assessing satisfaction with “NAU faculty” has been changed to satisfaction with “the quality of faculty instruction.”

Figure 1. Percent of Satisfied Respondents: Trends in satisfaction for the content area of NAU faculty/quality of instruction (1998-2003)

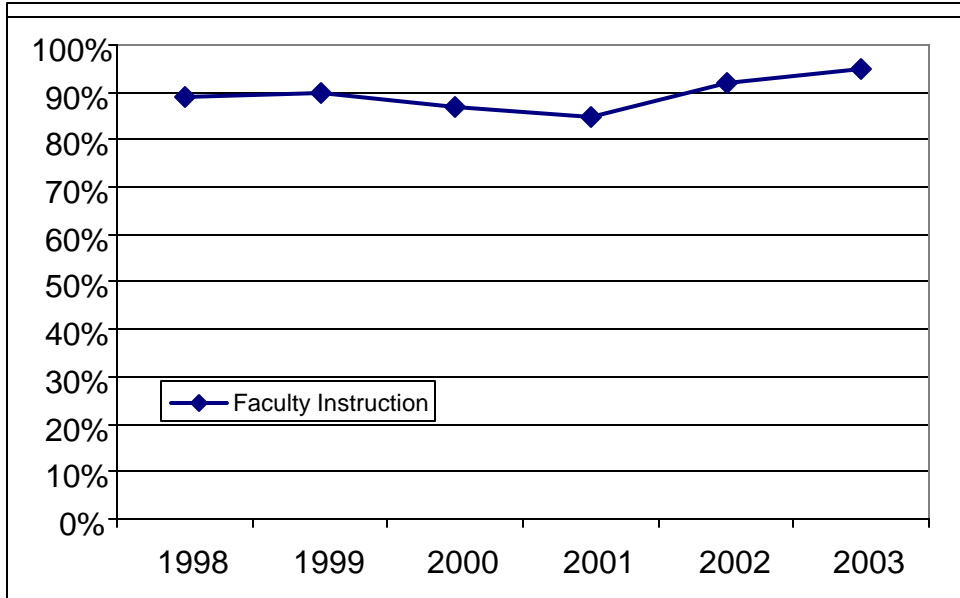


Figure 2. Percent of Satisfied Respondents: Trends in satisfaction for the question addressing lower-division academic advising (1998-2003)

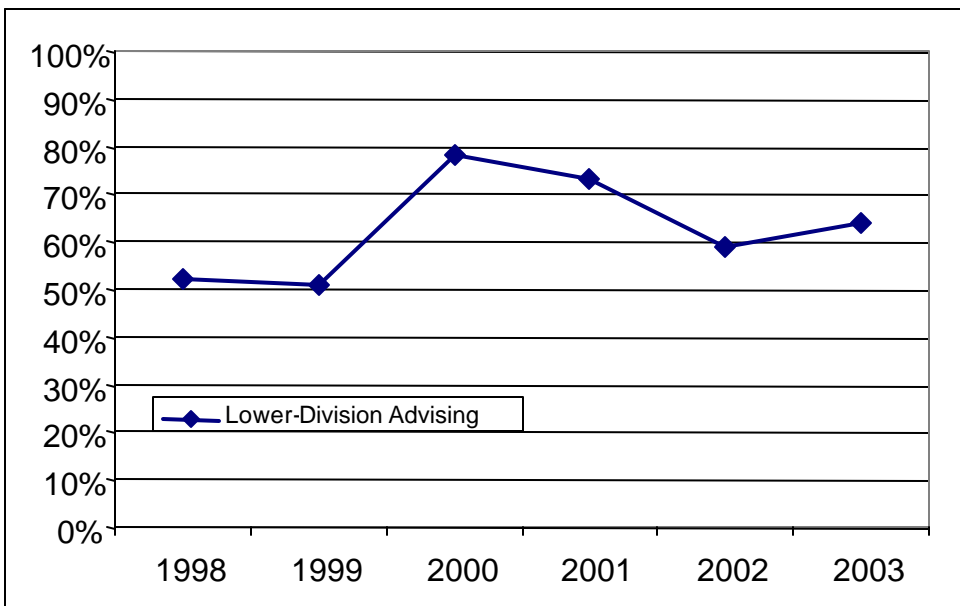


Figure 3. Percent of Satisfied Respondents: Trends in satisfaction for the question addressing major academic advising (1998-2003)

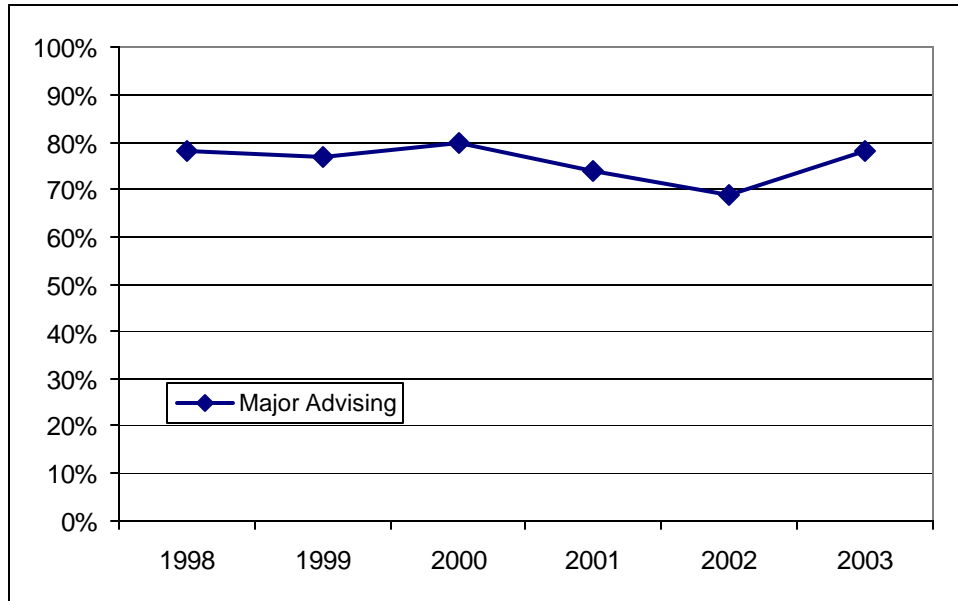


Figure 4. Percent of Satisfied Respondents: Trends in satisfaction for the question addressing career goals advising (1998-2003)

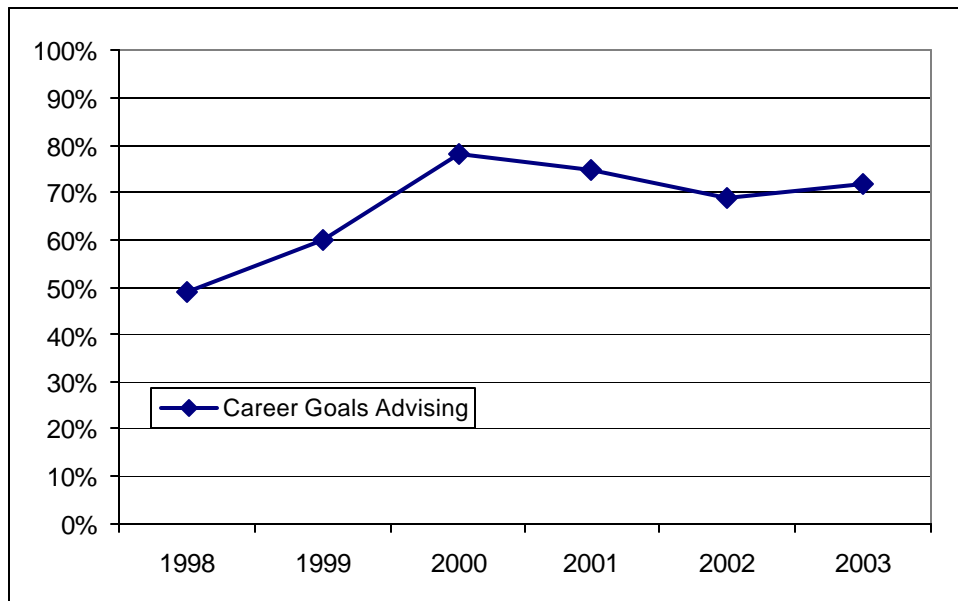


Figure 5. Percent of Satisfied Respondents: Trends in satisfaction for the question addressing preparation for a career in the chosen field (1998-2003)

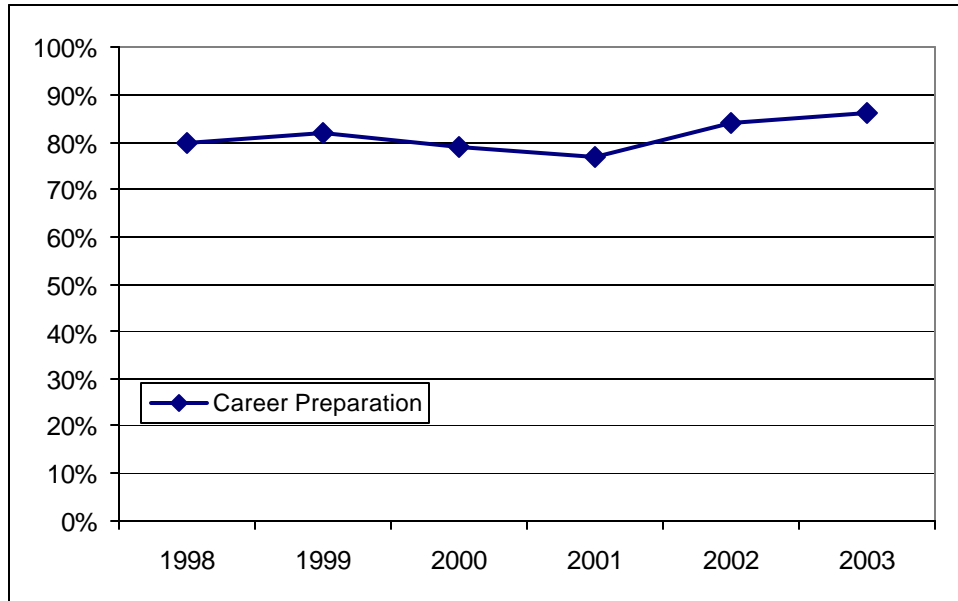
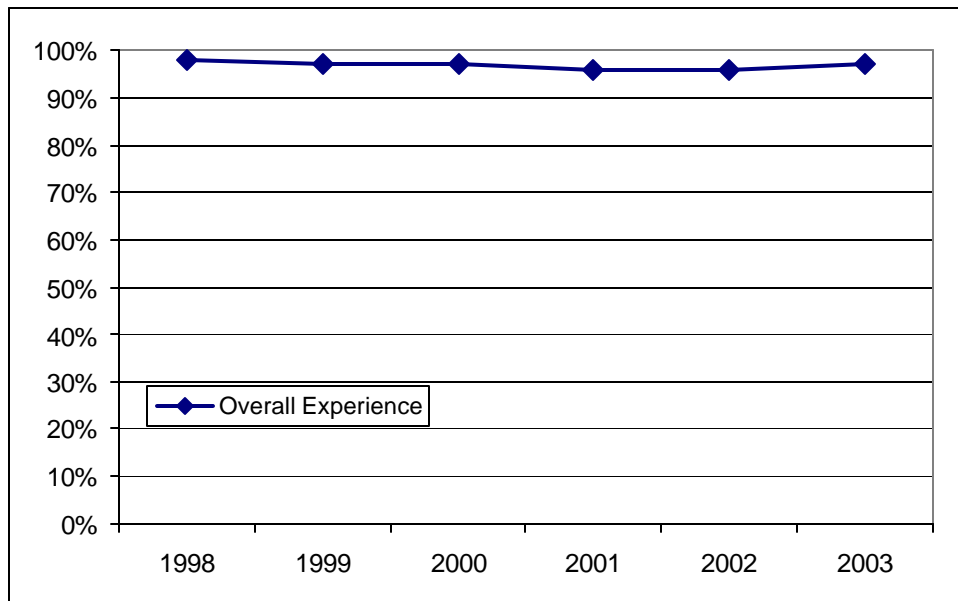


Figure 6. Percent of Satisfied Respondents: Trends in ratings of overall experience at NAU (1998-2003).



## Appendix A: Methodology

This report summarizes the most recent administration of the Graduating Senior Survey. The survey attempts to assess the satisfaction and opinions of the 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 asked by a trained survey administrator from the Social Research Laboratory at NAU. Questions addressed satisfaction in key areas, development of certain essential skills, opinions about the university environment, and various other opinions. See Appendix B for a list of the questions.
  - It is important to note that response categories were 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?” 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, for the purposes of analysis.
- The survey was administered by phone by the Social Research Laboratory to 404 students graduating in the Fall 2002 or Spring, Summer 2003. The survey sample was similar to the overall population of 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 and Whites tend to be overrepresented as survey respondents, while minorities, specifically Native Americans in this case, 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 respondents compared to all graduating seniors

	Survey Respondents	All Graduating Seniors
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	65%	59%
Male	35%	41%
<b>Ethnicity*</b>		
Black	1%	2%
Native American	3%	10%
Asian	2%	2%
Hispanic	12%	10%
White	80%	75%
<b>AZ Resident</b>	84%	86%
<b>FT Student</b>	85%	80%
<b>Median GPA</b>	3.27	3.08
<b>Group Size</b>	404	3556

\*Column % does not add to 100 due to rounding