



## Northern Arizona University 2003 Graduating Senior Survey Report:

### Graduating Senior Satisfaction and Perceptions of Skill Development by College

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#### 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. Respondents from NAU's ten colleges<sup>1</sup> were compared on selected questions from the 2003 survey. These selected questions measure graduating seniors' satisfaction with their major, faculty, major advising, and development of skills.

#### Methods<sup>2</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. Table 1 shows the distribution of survey respondents by the college of their major field of study. No significant discrepancies exist between the survey respondents and all graduating seniors by college.

#### Summary of Results

##### Graduating Senior Satisfaction

- Graduating senior respondents report consistently high levels of satisfaction with the overall quality of their major department. Nine out of the ten schools had satisfaction ratings over 90% when students were asked about the overall quality of their major department.

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<sup>1</sup> Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Fine Arts, Education, Ecosystem Science and Management, Engineering and Technology, Health Professions, Hotel and Restaurant Management, Communication, and Social and Behavioral Sciences

<sup>2</sup> Refer to Appendix A for complete methodology

- On average, the colleges with the highest level of overall reported student satisfaction are Hotel and Restaurant Management and Engineering and Technology (94%). One hundred percent of the student respondents in these two colleges rated the overall quality of their major department as satisfactory.
  - Satisfaction with faculty, both quality of instruction and availability, coursework, and course registration were all rated highly in both colleges. Generally, the lowest levels of satisfaction in these colleges were in the areas of academic advising in the major and the variety of courses offered.
- The College of Communication had the lowest overall satisfaction rating. This satisfaction rating (77%) is largely due to dissatisfaction with course offerings, registration in major, advising with career goals, and preparation for a career. The highest rated areas were the quality and availability of faculty, and the challenge of the coursework.
- A strong relationship exists between the quality of faculty and the students overall quality rating of the department<sup>3</sup>. Even schools that had low ratings for other areas of satisfaction such as advising, had high overall quality ratings if the faculty quality were rated high.

### **Graduating Seniors' Perceptions of Skill Development**

- Student perceptions of their skill development were lower across the board than their satisfaction with the overall quality of their major department. Student perceptions of their overall skill development were rated the lowest in the College of Fine and Performing Arts. This may be expected as some skills arguably are not as relevant in this college as in others, i.e. principles of scientific inquiry or analyzing quantitative problems. Similarly, the fact that the College of Engineering and Technology scored highest overall in perceived skills development (80%) is likely related to the relevance of the skills that are measured, i.e. analyzing quantitative problems, understanding the impact of technology, etc.
- Due to significant variations in perceived skill development both within a college and across colleges, it is essential that administrators examine and subsequently evaluate an individual college in relation to that college's stated emphases and goals in relation to skill development.

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<sup>3</sup> A logistic regression analysis indicates that students who were satisfied with the quality of faculty instruction were approximately 40 times more likely to be satisfied with the overall quality of their major department when compared to those respondents who were not satisfied with the quality of faculty instruction.

## Comparison by NAU College on Selected Questions Measuring Student Satisfaction and Skill Development

- Table 1 shows the distribution of survey respondents by the college of their major field of study. No significant discrepancies exist between the survey respondents and all graduating seniors by college.

*Table 1.* Distribution of survey respondents by NAU college compared to the distribution for all graduating NAU seniors

College	Survey Respondents		All Graduating Seniors	
	N	%	N	%
Arts & Sciences(A&S)	53	13	593	17
Business Administration (BA)	52	13	482	14
Communication (SC)	42	10	281	8
Ecosystem Science & Management (ESM)	13	3	148	4
Education (CEE)	74	18	567	16
Engineering & Technology (ET)	19	5	254	7
Fine Arts (FA)	22	5	208	6
Health Professions (HP)	35	9	315	9
Hotel & Restaurant Management (HRM)	31	8	138	4
Social & Behavioral Sciences (SBS)	62	15	541	15
<b>Group Size</b>	403	100	3555	101*

\* % does not add to 100 due to rounding

- These ten NAU colleges were compared on a selection of questions from the 2003 survey. These selected questions measure the graduating seniors' satisfaction with their major, faculty, advising, and skill development. Because some colleges, such as Ecosystem Science and Management, have few respondents it is necessary that caution be used when comparing across schools as one respondent's highly negative or highly positive evaluation can severely affect the overall rating of the College.

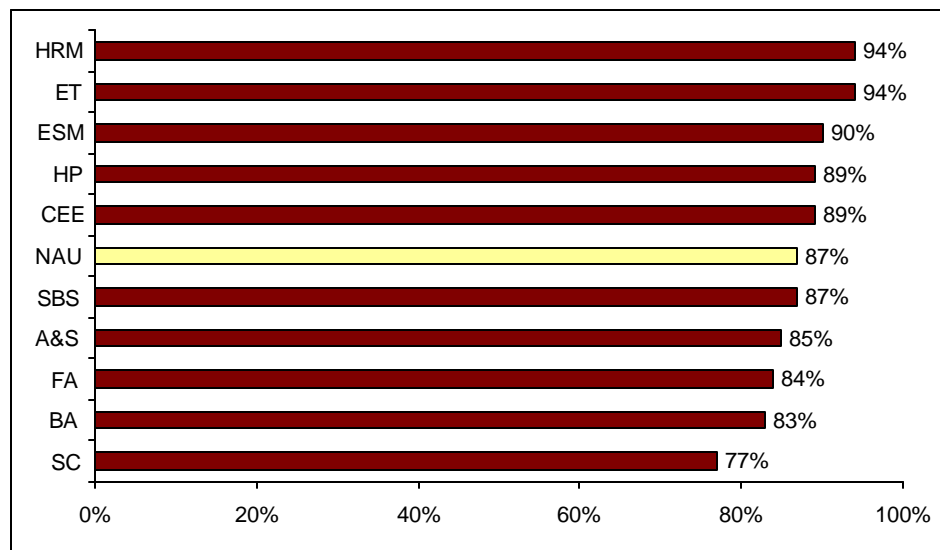
## Graduating Senior Satisfaction

- Table 2 shows the data for each college on the nine satisfaction questions related to their major, faculty, and major advising, as well as a computed mean satisfaction score for each college and a mean value for each area of satisfaction. Figure 1 provides a visual depiction of respondents overall mean satisfaction by college.

Table 2. Satisfaction levels for NAU colleges for questions addressing major, major advising, and faculty

Area	Percentage of Satisfied Respondents										
	A&S (n=53)	BA (n=52)	SC (n=42)	ESM (n=13)	CEE (n=74)	ET (n=19)	FA (n=22)	HP (n=35)	HRM (n=31)	SBS (n=62)	Univ. Avg
Quality of Faculty Instruction	98%	92%	85%	100%	96%	100%	82%	97%	100%	95%	95%
Availability of Faculty	96%	86%	85%	92%	90%	90%	96%	88%	90%	95%	91%
Challenge of Coursework in Major	92%	92%	85%	92%	96%	100%	86%	94%	94%	92%	92%
Variety of Courses Offered in Major	80%	87%	71%	92%	91%	90%	82%	80%	87%	82%	84%
Course Registration in Major	88%	92%	71%	85%	96%	100%	86%	94%	97%	94%	91%
Academic Advising in Major	76%	71%	83%	77%	70%	79%	82%	85%	87%	77%	78%
Advising with Career Goals	60%	59%	61%	92%	72%	89%	81%	75%	90%	70%	72%
Preparation for a Career	75%	80%	71%	92%	96%	100%	76%	89%	100%	88%	86%
Overall Quality of Major Dept	96%	92%	78%	92%	97%	100%	82%	97%	100%	94%	93%
<b>Overall Mean Satisfaction</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>87%</b>

Figure 1. Overall mean satisfaction for major, faculty, and major advising by college



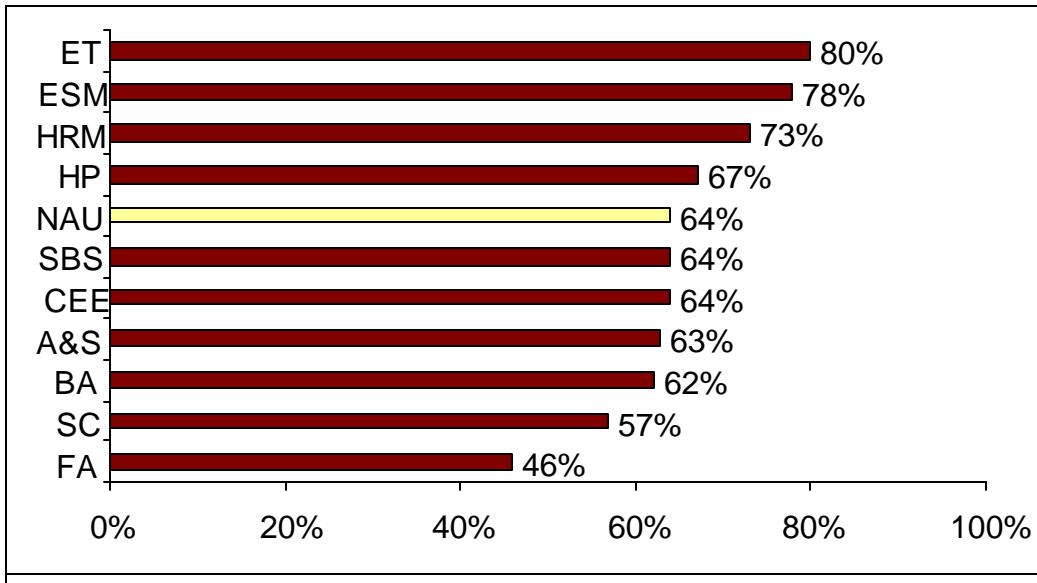
## Graduating Senior Perceptions of Skill Development

- The colleges were also compared on the students' perceptions of skill development. Table 3 presents the data for these questions along with a computed overall mean for perceived skill development for each college. Figure 2 provides a visual depiction of the respondents overall mean perception of skill development within each school.

Table 3. Perceptions of development in the skill areas assessed by college

Skill	Percentage of Satisfied Respondents										
	A&S (n=53)	BA (n=52)	SC (n=42)	ESM (n=13)	CEE (n=74)	ET (n=19)	FA (n=22)	HP (n=35)	HRM (n=31)	SBS (n=62)	Univ. Avg.
Writing Clearly & Effectively	75%	58%	68%	69%	66%	79%	55%	63%	68%	68%	66%
Speaking Clearly & Effectively	63%	73%	73%	77%	73%	90%	55%	60%	68%	55%	67%
Thinking Critically & Analytically	82%	73%	61%	82%	73%	90%	50%	80%	77%	81%	75%
Reading Critically	71%	52%	54%	85%	65%	68%	36%	69%	61%	74%	64%
Analyzing Quantitative Problems	52%	65%	37%	85%	49%	95%	23%	60%	65%	52%	54%
Principles of Scientific Inquiry	57%	44%	15%	85%	43%	90%	18%	77%	33%	48%	48%
Acting Upon Ethical Principles	50%	60%	54%	85%	66%	74%	36%	69%	84%	65%	63%
Working Effectively with Others	67%	79%	81%	92%	85%	79%	68%	80%	90%	67%	78%
Learning Effectively on Own	82%	73%	68%	85%	80%	84%	73%	83%	87%	74%	78%
Using Computer / Info & Technology	57%	65%	66%	69%	55%	90%	54%	60%	74%	48%	61%
Developing a Tolerance for Diversity	59%	52%	44%	54%	69%	47%	50%	60%	77%	74%	61%
Understand Impact of Technology	53%	67%	54%	64%	53%	90%	41%	51%	84%	52%	58%
Understanding Relation b/w People & Env't	49%	44%	66%	77%	61%	63%	36%	63%	81%	71%	60%
<b>Overall Mean Skill Development</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>64%</b>

Figure 2. Reported overall mean perception of skill development by NAU College



## Appendix A: Methodology

- 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. 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 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>		
<b>Female</b>	65%	59%
<b>Male</b>	35%	41%
<b>Ethnicity*</b>		
<b>Black</b>	1%	2%
<b>Native American</b>	3%	10%
<b>Asian</b>	2%	2%
<b>Hispanic</b>	12%	10%
<b>White</b>	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.