

North Carolina State University

2015-2016 Graduating Senior Survey:

Executive Summary

Survey Methods

NC State conducted its triennial survey of graduating seniors during the 2015-2016 academic year (AY15-16). Eligible students were those who were graduating in either December 2015 or May 2016.

The online survey achieved a 54.1 percent response rate, with 2,579 of the 4,765 eligible seniors submitting the survey. There were no significant gender or racial/ethnic differences between survey respondents and the AY15-16 graduating senior class. Seniors from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences are slightly overrepresented among survey respondents, and those from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the College of Sciences are slightly underrepresented.

Student Goals and Intentions

Respondents were most likely to have said that their primary goal for attending NC State was to *prepare for a new career or profession* (64.9%) or to *prepare for graduate/professional school* (30.1%). More than three-fourths of respondents (78.5%) said they "fully accomplished" their primary goal.

Over 40 percent of respondents reported that as of the time they completed the survey, they were still *actively seeking* or were *planning on seeking employment* (42.6%). One-fifth of respondents said that they had already *accepted a full-time job*: 17.8 percent indicated that the position they had accepted was *related to their field of study* and three percent said the position they had accepted was not *related to their field of study*. An additional six percent of respondents indicated that they would be *continuing in their current paid job* (3.9%), had *accepted a part-time job* (1.0%), or would be *servicing in the military* (0.9%). Over 20 percent of respondents said that they *planned to go on to graduate or professional school* either *full-time* (19.3%) or *part-time* (2.6%).

Students who completed the survey less than two months before commencement were more likely than those who completed the survey more than four months before commencement to have secured post-graduation employment (30.1% vs. 11.7%). However, students who completed the survey closer to commencement were less likely to indicate plans to attend graduate school than those who completed the survey earlier in the year (19.5% vs. 24.2%).

Forty percent of respondents said it took them longer than four years to graduate (40.4%). The most commonly reported reason for taking longer than four years to graduate was *changed majors* (56.6%), with nearly one-third of respondents listing it as the “most important” reason (31.7%). Half of respondents who took over four years to graduate selected *taking a lighter course load* as a reason (49.9%), with 12.6 percent indicating it as “most important.” *Not getting classes needed* and *hours spent working* were also each reasons for over 40 percent of respondents who did not graduate in four years (45.6% and 42.1%, respectively). While having a *co-op/internship/practicum or student teaching* was only a reason for 27 percent of those taking longer than four years to graduate, it was the “most important” reason for 13.8 percent.

About ten percent of the graduating seniors said they had “seriously considered” withdrawing or transferring from NC State (9.1%), or that they had actually withdrawn and then returned (2.6%). The most commonly reported reasons for considering or actually leaving NC State related to *personal reasons* (e.g., health, family, or friends) and *curriculum/program* (e.g., program or major offered), with more than one-third giving such reasons. Over ten percent of those who had considered leaving or who had left and returned said they did so as a result of *campus life* (14.9%) or *financial concerns* (11.6%).

Academic Environment and Faculty Contributions

More than 90 percent of respondents (92.9%) said they *would recommend NC State to a friend*, and 85.1% said they *would choose NC State again if they could start over*. Graduating seniors were less likely, however, to say they *would choose the same major again* (66.4%).

Half of respondents rated the learning environment on campus as “very strong” (53.4%), and another 43 percent rated it as “strong.” Although opinions for each item were overwhelmingly positive, respondents were much more likely to give a rating of “excellent” to the *quality of instruction in their major* (63.4%) and to the *overall education they received* (62.2%) than to the *quality of instruction overall* (36.0%).

Large majorities of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with instruction in their major, with 40.7% saying they were “very satisfied” with overall instruction. In looking at specific aspects of teaching, graduating seniors were most likely to be “very satisfied” with *how carefully instructors explain performance expectations* (36.9%), *extent to which instructors encourage class discussion* (36.6%), instructors’ *ability to motivate me to do my best* (35.5%), and instructors’ *effective use of instructional technology in teaching/learning activities* (34.8%).

About half of the graduating seniors said they had regularly met with faculty to get *academic guidance* (50.1%) or *professional guidance/support* (44.9%). A substantial number of students also reported working with faculty on *campus activities* (27.0%), on a *research/scholarly/creative project* (25.1%), or an *independent study project* (19.7%). Regardless of the type of mentoring experience, majorities of respondents said it contributed "a great deal" to their personal and/or professional growth.

Services for Students

Academic Services

When asked to evaluate four areas of academic services: academic advising, library services, information technology, and career services, the majority of students gave satisfactory ratings to all services asked about. In general, respondents gave the highest mean ratings to library services and the lowest ratings to academic advising.

Academic Advising: One-quarter or more of graduating seniors were "very satisfied" with each area of academic advising asked about, with respondents most likely to be "very satisfied" with *advisors' helping me understand degree requirements and course sequencing* (37.7%) and *spending sufficient time with advisor* (34.7%). While the majority of seniors indicated satisfaction with academic advising, students were more likely to be "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with the various academic advising services than with any other services asked about. Responses with the lowest satisfaction ratings were *advisors helping me think about career-related experiences* (19.3% "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied") and *helping me think about post-grad educational options* (19.0%).

When asked about access to academic advising during their time at NC State, over 80 percent of respondents said they "strongly agree" (39.5%) or "agree" (44.4%) that they had access to academic advising services that enabled them to make progress towards degree completion.

Library Services: Overall, respondents reported being highly satisfied with the library services during their last two years on campus, with 92.8 percent reporting satisfaction with library services overall. Respondents were most likely to be "very satisfied" with *access to online library resources* (45.4%), and *access to databases and resources* (44.1%). While students were most likely to be "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with *space for group work* (7.9%) and *space for individual work* (7.1%), the rate of dissatisfaction on these measure declined since the last survey in AY12-13 (14.8% and 11.2%, respectively).

Information Technology: Close to one-fourth or more of graduating seniors said they were “very satisfied” with each specific aspect of information technology services asked about. Students were most likely to be “very satisfied” with *wireless access on campus* (37.5%), and least likely to be “very satisfied” with *training for technology I need to use* (22.3%). Overall satisfaction with information technology services was high, only five percent or fewer students indicated dissatisfaction with any of the areas of information technology asked about.

Career Services: Graduating seniors were less likely to express an opinion about career services than they were for the other services asked about, indicating less direct experience with career services. Respondents were most likely to be “very satisfied” with *access to employment opportunities* (33.2%), followed by *assistance with resume preparation, interviewing skills, networking, salary negotiations, etc.* (31.6%). Conversely, respondents were most likely to be “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with *information on labor market data and knowledge specifically related to career interests* (7.6%).

In addition to the four services described above, respondents were asked when in their time at NC State they first received career-related information or advice from an academic advisor, career advisor, or faculty member on campus. Almost one-in-five respondents reported first receiving career information or advice either before or during New Student Orientation. While just five percent said it was during their *senior year* that they first received career-related information or advice at NC State, seven percent said they *never* got such guidance.

Non-Academic Services

Ratings for non-academic service areas varied greatly, with anywhere from 14 percent to over 40 percent of respondents saying they were “very satisfied” with a particular service. More than three-fourths of graduating seniors were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with *campus recreation* (88.8%), the *bookstore* (84.4%), *on-campus shuttle/transportation services* (81.8%), the *registrar’s office* (79.6%), *health services* (79.5%), *campus police* (78.6%), *cashier/student accounts/billing* (77.2%), the *financial aid application/award process* (76.3%), *housing and residence life* (76.3%), and the *financial aid disbursement process* (75.9%). Alternatively, respondents were most likely to be “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with *parking* (33.4%) and *dining services* (10.6%).

Ratings for quality of staff associated with a particular service were generally similar to or slightly higher than those for the service itself. Notable exceptions were that respondents were much more likely to be “very satisfied” with the staff associated with *dining services* and with *parking* than they were with services in general (34.8% vs. 23.1%, and 20.0% vs. 14.0%, respectively).

Nearly 70 percent of graduating seniors reported receiving some sort of financial aid (68.7%). Almost half of those who received aid (46.5%) were "very satisfied" with their aid package, and another 44 percent were "moderately satisfied." Over 40 percent rated *financial aid reception staff, phone staff, and advising staff*, as "excellent" (47.1%, 46.6%, and 43.0%, respectively).

Knowledge, Skills and Personal Development

Three-fourths of respondents (73.4%) said NC State met their *intellectual growth* needs "very well." Respondents were less likely to report that their *personal growth* needs were "very well" met (62.1%) and even less likely to say that their *career training* needs were "very well" met (48.1%).

Respondents were asked to rate NC State's contribution to 41 specific goals for undergraduate education. Eighty percent or more of the graduating seniors said that NC State contributed "very much" or "somewhat" to their development of all but five of the specific areas asked about. Overall, higher ratings were given to the University's contribution to goals related to general education and personal development than to world view goals.

General Education Goals: Graduating seniors were most likely to say their education at NC State contributed "very much" to *using critical thinking skills* (70.9%), *gathering relevant information or evidence* (69.6%), *applying analytic skills* (68.5%), *identifying a problem/concept and articulating its components* (68.4%), and *ability to plan and carry out projects independently* (68.3%). More than 20 percent indicated that NC State had contributed "very little" or "not at all" to their development of the *capacity to engage with and respond to creative works and evaluate their significance* (28.0%), *appreciating the humanities* (22.7%), and *applying social science methods to understand human behavior* (21.5%).

Personal Development Goals: Respondents gave the highest ratings to the extent to which NC State contributed to their development of *taking responsibility for my own behavior* (65.7%), *experiencing personal growth (e.g., self-discipline, responsibility, self-awareness, etc.)* (65.2%), *working effectively as part of a team* (65.1%), *valuing learning as a lifelong process* (64.3%), and *working to my potential* (62.4%). More than 20 percent indicated that NC State had contributed "very little" or "not at all" to their *developing and sustaining an active and healthy lifestyle* (24.7%) and *being involved in public and community affairs* (23.4%).

World View Goals: Graduating seniors were most likely to say their education contributed "very much" to their *ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds* (60.5%) and *understanding and respecting diverse cultures, values, and perspectives* (57.3%).

Campus Climate and Campus Safety

A vast majority of respondents agreed either “strongly” (59.7%) or “somewhat” (35.9%) that *NC State is committed to helping minority students succeed*. Respondents were somewhat less likely to agree, however, that *NC State has visible leadership from the Chancellor and other administrators to foster diversity on campus* (55.0% “agree strongly” and 34.5% “agree somewhat”).

Three-fourths or more of respondents felt the campus climate was at least “mildly supportive” toward each of the various groups asked about (e.g., women, African Americans, those with disabilities, etc.), with the exception of *transgender students* (67.5%). Groups that respondents felt that the campus climate was “strongly nonsupportive” or “mildly nonsupportive” towards were *transgender students* (8.3%), *gay, lesbian, and bisexual students* (4.9%), *other racial minorities* (4.9%), and *African Americans* (4.8%). Respondents felt that the campus climate was most “strongly supportive” towards *men* (68.5%).

Nearly 90 percent of respondents said they “never” (46.7%) or “seldom” (41.1%) were concerned with their personal safety on campus.

Work-Related Activities, Employment, and Extracurricular Involvement

Internships were the most common career or work-related experience reported by respondents; nearly half (47.0%) of graduating seniors had a paid internship and 28.6 percent had an unpaid internship. Paid internships were the most likely career-related experience to receive course credit. Three-fourths of the students who completed any work or career-related experience (co-op, internship, practicum, student teaching, service learning, or clinicals) said it contributed “very much” to their *personal and professional growth* (78%). Further, 40.3 percent reported *receiving a job offer* from their work-related experience.

Three-fourths of respondents (74.7%) indicated that they were employed during their senior year. Over half of the employed students (56.5%) worked only off campus, 27.3 percent worked on campus only, and the remaining 16.9 percent worked both on and off campus. Students working off campus were much more likely than those working on campus to work more than 20 hours per week (32.7% vs. 9.7% respectively). Students who were employed on campus were more likely than those employed off campus to report *working in jobs directly related to their major* (40.2% vs. 33.4%).

From a list of extracurricular activities, respondents were most likely to report participation in *organizations/clubs related to their major* (42.3%), followed by *intramural/recreational sports/club teams* (32.2%). Among the specific concerts, performances, and exhibits that respondents mentioned attending while a student at NC State, *University Theatre performances* (21.8%) and *Music Department concerts* (21.0%) were the most frequently attended.

Over half of the graduating seniors participating in the survey indicated that that had participated in a community service project organized by a department or group affiliated with NC State within the past two years (56%). Students were most likely to have participated in such an activity organized by the University (e.g., Blood Drive) or by an NC State club (43% and 41% respectively). Of those who had a community service experience, almost half said the experience contributed “very much” to their personal and professional growth (36.5%), and another 44.6 percent said it contributed “somewhat.”

For more information on the 2015-2016 Graduating Senior Survey contact:
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