NPS ALUMNI SURVEY REPORT 2009

INTRODUCTION

In August 2009, NPS added to its series of student surveys — which includes new, mid-term and graduating student surveys — by issuing the second online Alumni Survey for 1999, 2004, and 2007 graduates who have valid email addresses. 3,100 alumni were invited to take the survey. Out of the three alumni cohorts asked to partake in the survey, 2,857 alumni were actual potential respondents (due to 243 survey invitations bouncing). From that group, 313 alumni responded, and 15 decided to “opt out”- marking an 11% response rate. Analyses done on the survey results showed that out of the 313 responses, 51 had to be excluded from the result rates. This is because, either the respondents could not be positively identified as NPS alumni and/or the survey responses were prematurely submitted and thus did not meet necessary depth and completeness requirements. Given this, the actual response rate is 9%.

In Table 1, respondents are ranked according to graduating year and the School each attended.

NPS Schools are noted as follows:

- Graduate School of Business and Public Policy (GSBPP)
- Graduate School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (GSEAS)
- Graduate School of Operational and Information Sciences (GSOIS)
- School of International Graduate Studies (SIGS)

PROFILE OF STUDENT RESPONDENTS

The first survey question asked for the student’s branch of service while enrolled at NPS. (Table 2)

Responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch of Service</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States Navy</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Marine Corps</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Army</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Air Force</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Coast Guard &amp; Other Non-Military Service</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non U.S. Service</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages varied by School:

- 73.2% of respondents in GSEAS were in the United States Navy
- 55.1% of respondents in GSBPP were in the United States Navy
- 41.1% of respondents in GSOIS were in the United States Navy
- 36.7% of respondents in SIGS were in the United States Marine Corps
- 9.2% of respondents were in the United States Air Force
Retired and Active Duty officers were asked their current or highest rank. (Table 3)

The retired officers’ alumni of 1999 had the highest percentage in Rank 06 (10.5%) and Rank 05 (31.6%) throughout all of the Schools. The 2004 retired officers’ alumni had the highest percentage of Rank 04 (31.6%).

Analyses of the 2007 respondent’s results show that out of the retired officers’ alumni, only 1 individual reported any rank (that of Rank 04), and that the Active Duty alumni had the highest rate of Rank 04 officers (28.6%).

Of the 19 retired alumni respondents, 47.4% retired from Rank 04, 42.1% from Rank 05 and 10.5% retired from Rank 06.

A large majority (80.9%) of respondents indicated that they did not have a post-baccalaureate degree prior to attending NPS. When asked what their average grade was in their undergraduate college compared to their NPS average, 74.8% had an A or A- average at NPS, compared to 30.5% in their undergraduate education.

When asked if students were in-resident or part of a Distributed Learning (DL) program, 77.5% of the respondents were resident students, 16.0% were Distributed Learning students, and 5.7% of respondents were a combination of both. (Table 4)

NPS did not track the number of Distributed Learning (DL) students until 2006, even though the institution educated DL students dating back to 1998. Thus, for the 1999 alumni, analyses show that none of the survey respondents were DL students. However, of the 2004 respondents, 8 were DL students- half of whom were in GSOIS. For the 2007 alumni, a total of 34 indicated that they were DL students. In 2004 and 2007, neither SIGS nor SEACC hosted any DL students.

In 1999, the GSOIS alumni had the highest response rate for the aforementioned question; with a total of 17 (32.1%) responses (all positive for Residency). In 2004, GSBPP had the highest amount of combined Resident and DL students, with 24 (34.3%) responses. And for the 2007 alumni, again, GSOIS, had the highest amount of respondents; 47 (40.9%).

A detailed representation of how the demographics of the respondents mirror the overall gender and ethnicity of the enrollment is shown in Table 5.

Alumni were asked to choose their primary curricula/degree. (Table 6)

- GSEAS: In 1999 and 2004, MS in Electronic Systems Engineering
- GSEAS: In 2007, MS in Systems Engineering (DL)

The top degree across all 3 year time spans, from the other three Schools remained the same:

- GSBPP: MBA
• GSOIS: MS in Operation’s Analysis
• SIGS: MA in National Security Affairs (with an emphasis on Europe and Eurasia)

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Survey findings are organized into six sections by School and/or year where appropriate, supported by referenced Tables in the Appendix.

1. Adjustments to NPS and professional interactions.
2. The time graduates spent on their studies and other activities (Table 7a) plus frequency of use of services and facilities. (Table 7b)
3. Thesis-related questions. (Table 8)
4. Quality and importance of instruction, service and advising. (Table 9)
5. NPS effect on abilities and skills. (Table 10)
6. NPS value to the graduate. (Table 11a,11b)
7. Influence of NPS, post-graduation

ADJUSTMENT TO NPS AND PROFESSIONAL INTERACTION

Ratings of transition and professional relationships were mostly overwhelmingly positive across all four Schools.

• 96.6% said that it was relatively easy to transition “socially” to NPS.
• 76.0% said that it was relatively easy to transition “academically” to NPS.
• 95.0% said that the amount of coursework was appropriate to their degree.
• 47.3% judged their coursework to have a high or moderate relevance to their military career.
• 89.3% rated faculty-to-student relationships as warm.
• 95.4% had a satisfactory relationship with their Program Officer.
• 66.7% of the all the Ph.D. students found their advisors to be helpful or very helpful.

TIME SPENT

Graduates were asked the number of hours spent on selected activities as well as the frequencies of use. When asked how many hours in a typical week of about 100 active hours student spent on outside employment, 86.3% cited 10 or less hours; however, 93.5% of respondents spent the same number on community service. (Table 7a)

The graduates were asked with what frequency they had used facilities and services on campus. (Table 7b)

GSBPP

• 46.2% used the library at least once a day
• 37.2% used a computer lab at least once a day
• 60.3% never used laboratories

GSEAS
• 8.9% used the library at least once a day
• 50.0% used a computer lab at least once a day
• 44.6% never used academic counseling

GSOIS
• 30.0% used the library at least once a day
• 50.0% used a computer lab at least once a day
• 40.0% never used academic counseling

SIGS
• 63.3% used the library at least once a day
• 20.0% used a computer lab at least once a day
• 83.3% never used laboratories

THESIS
Graduates were asked four questions about their thesis or dissertation. (Table 8)

The majority of respondents across all four Schools said that their thesis/dissertation had a “moderate” relevance to their future careers; 43.5% of alumni rated it as such. In comparison, less that 20% of the respondents rated the relevance of their thesis/dissertation as “low.”

More than half (56.5%) of the doctoral candidate alumni rated the helpfulness of their thesis advisors to be “excellent.” Of the 25 alumni recipients of a NPS doctorate, 88.0% rated their advisors as helpful.

When asked about whether the respondents had attended a thesis-related workshop:

• GSBPP: 65.4% did not
• GSEAS: 67.9% did not
• GSOIS: 51.1% did not
• SIGS: 70.0% did

QUALITY AND IMPORTANCE OF INSTRUCTION, SERVICE, AND ADVISING

Alumni were asked to rank the quality of the NPS facilities/services and content/instruction on a scale of "Adequate", "Less than adequate", and "More than adequate". (Table 9)
• The results showed that all the **faculty, content and instruction categories** were rated with an overwhelmingly positive perception, with a combined “adequate” to “more than adequate” rating of **98.0%**
• SIGS alumni gave the highest ratings for general content and instruction categories, as well as almost all the other fields.
• Computer Services, Computer Access and Academic Counseling Services were ranked the highest by GSBPP alumni. The bookstore was ranked the highest by GSEAS alumni.
• Of the facilities, Registration received the highest ratings from all four Schools.
• All four Schools rated their “Overall experience” the highest.

**NPS Influence on Abilities and Skills**

Alumni were asked to rank the “importance” of 7 skills or abilities and then rank how NPS had “enhanced” those skills and abilities. (Table 10)

It is noteworthy to mention that a strong correlation was observed between the **importance of a skill/ability**, and a perceived **lack of enhancement to**, that skill/ability. For instance, **Leadership** had a high importance rate of 82.8%, yet only 19.8% of alumni deemed it has “highly enhanced.” Similarly, **Ethics** yielded a “high importance” rate of 80.2%, but only 21.4% of alumni thought it was “highly enhanced.” And **Teamwork**, was rated as “highly important” with a 81.3% rate, yet only 38.5% of alumni thought it was “highly enhanced.”

Thus, it can be seen that those skills/abilities which were valued the highest, also elicited the highest amount of expectations for improvement (and therefore, fewer ratings on large improvement). This may be why the results show a miscorrelation between the importance of, and enhancement to, certain fields.

Exceptions to this observation were seen in **Analytical Skill** and **Writing**. Both of these categories yielded proximate value ratings. **Research**, actually, yielded conflicting results. The high importance rating for **Research** was relatively low (38.2%), yet it was deemed one of the most highly enhanced skills.

**NPS Value to Alumni**

Alumni were asked if they would recommend NPS to their peers, and 100% said that they would. (Table 11)

Alumni were also given the opportunity to tell what they valued most and least about NPS, as well as changes they would recommend.

Almost all of the respondents — 261 (99%) answered the least/most value question. A significant amount of alumni from all three graduation years valued faculty. Alumni remarks across all three years included valuing “access to” and their “relationships with faculty.” Other topics which gained much attention in the survey were the academic/educational quality of NPS, the flexibility of scheduling, and research opportunities the curriculum provided. Another theme mentioned often was the amount of “family time” alumni were able to enjoy, as students at NPS.

Guest speaker seminars, mandatory lecture attendance and Thesis issues were things alumni least valued about NPS. Issues with Distance Learning programs were also mentioned often, as things alumni least valued at NPS.
Specific reasons as to why, ranged from students not “being in class enough” to not having enough interaction with professors. The high cost of living was another issue mentioned often in alumni remarks.

Over one half (137) of the respondents recommended changes to NPS, primarily from the 2007 graduates. (Table 11b) It is interesting to note that the majority of the recommendations came from the cohort which has most recently graduated. The need to advocate change may be due to the fact that the 2007 alumni remember certain details of curriculum and their overall experience better. Generally, recommendations for curriculum/instruction (with the desire to be able to individually choose curricula) and advice on how to improve DL programs were most noted.

RELEVANCE OF NPS EDUCATION TO D.O.D CAREER

Military alumni were asked to rate the extent to which they felt their course work at NPS was relevant to their military career. Over half of the respondents (53.9%) felt that their coursework had a “high relevance” to their military career. This perception is correlated in two other areas of the survey.

For instance, when Military alumni were asked to what extent their NPS education has been useful in subsequent Operational assignments, 95.4% rated their education as “useful” to “more than useful.”

And, again, when alumni were asked to indicate if they had served in a position which was or is appropriate to their NPS certificate or degree, 83.6% affirmed that they had. Thus, it can be seen that a high majority of alumni deem the education and training they received at NPS as relevant and helpful to their careers.

CONCLUSION

The second online Alumni Survey for 1999, 2004, and 2007 graduates who have valid email addresses was issued; 2,587 alumni were successfully contacted to take the survey; 9% or 262 alumni responded.

The largest number of respondents represented the United States Navy, followed by the Marine Corps, Army, Air Force and then Coast Guard. Rank 04 was the highest rank for the 2004 retired officers and the 2007 active duty alumni. Rank 05 was the highest rank of the 1999 retired officer respondents, and Rank 06 was the highest rank reached for the 2006 retired officer respondents.

For the graduates from GSEAS, a MS in Electronic Systems Engineering (1999 and 2004) and a MS in Systems Engineering (2007) were the degrees earned most. Further analyses showed that the other three schools remained consistent in the type of degree most earned, across all three years. For instance, Operation’s Analysis was the degree most earned in GSOIS. Similarly, SIGS graduates mostly earned degrees in National Security Affairs, and GSBPP alumni graduated mostly with MBAs.

Respondents gave the ease of transition to NPS on a “social” and “academic” level a 96.6% and 76.0% satisfaction rate, respectively. Professional relationships between students and faculty were ranked at an 89.3% - 95.4% satisfaction rate. With an “adequate” average rating of 84.3%, Registration was the highest ranked facility – across all four schools. A large majority of the alumni reported using Registration services at least once a quarter.
Of the 25 alumni whom received doctorates from NPS, 88.0% ranked advisors as being helpful. In fact, relationships with and access to faculty were among those things most often mentioned as valued components of NPS. The Secretary of the Navy Guest Lectures, other mandated lectures, some aspects of curriculum, and issues with Distance Learning were valued least.

With a “high importance” ranking rate of 90.1%, across all four Schools, Decision Making was ranked as the most important ability. When alumni from all three cohorts were asked to indicate the extent to which the skill of decision making was enhanced at NPS, 40.8% of them valued it as “highly enhanced.”

Conversely, the ability ranked to be the “least enhanced” by NPS alumni was Leadership. Leadership had a “high importance” rate of 82.8%, but was valued as the ability “least enhanced” at NPS with a 36.3% rate. Analytical Skill was ranked as the ability most “highly enhanced” at NPS (75.6%). Analyses trends show that there was a strong correlation between how important an ability was to students and the high expectation of having that skill/ability enhanced (as reflected in the overall low enhancement rates for those skills valued at high levels).

Despite these findings, all of the alumni respondents (100%) would recommend NPS to their peers, reflecting an overall consensus that NPS provided a valuable service to its 1999, 2004 and 2007 alumni.