University of Northern Iowa

Graduate Student Senior Survey Report:

Students' Reflections of the UNI Graduate Program

2012-2013 Academic

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Abstract

The University of Northern Iowa Graduate Program Survey was used by the University of Northern Iowa for constructive feedback from students, allowing the university to see what the students found positive and negative throughout their experience in the graduate program. This survey also allowed the university to see where their students are proceeding after commencement and the next steps they were taking toward their future career goals. This survey focused on two main areas in the students' lives, academic and social activity. Questions in this survey ranged from the preparation of the program for future goals to the overall satisfaction of the graduate program.

This survey was given a few weeks prior to graduation, allowing the students to look back upon their time at the university before the commencement ceremony. For the 2012-2013 academic year, 222 graduate students completed the survey out of the 554 students who graduated. 54 graduate students concluded the survey before fall graduation, and 168 graduate students concluded the survey before spring graduation, receiving a 40% response rate overall. The overall purpose of this study was to allow the university to see the social and academic importance graduate students were wanting and achieving in their experience at the graduate level.

This report looks at all four of the graduate colleges. At UNI, those colleges include: the College of Business Administration, the College of Education, the College of Humanities, Arts, and Sciences, and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Demographics

- 222 graduate students throughout all four colleges completed and returned the UNI Graduate Program Survey.

- Out of the 222 students who completed the survey, 12 students were from the CBA, 85 students were from the COE, 56 students were from the CSBS, and 69 students were from the CHAS.

- 80% of the students who completed this survey were white, 3% were Black or African American, 2.1% were Latino or Hispanic, 1.6% were Asian, and the remaining 13.3% of students were from an unknown ethnicity.

- 62% of the graduate students who responded to this survey were of the female gender, 25% were of the male gender, and 13% were unreported genders.

- The ages of the students in this survey ranged from 22 to 64 years old, with the average age being 30.2 years old.

Presented below are a breakdown of the results.

Principal Activity after Graduation

The students were first asked what their primary activity was most likely to be proceeding graduation. There were 222 students who could respond to this question.

The choices being:
(1) full-time, paid employment
(2) part-time, paid employment
(3) full-time graduate or professional school
(4) part-time graduate or professional school
(5) additional undergraduate coursework
(6) military service
(7) volunteer activity
(8) starting or raising a family
(9) other, please specify

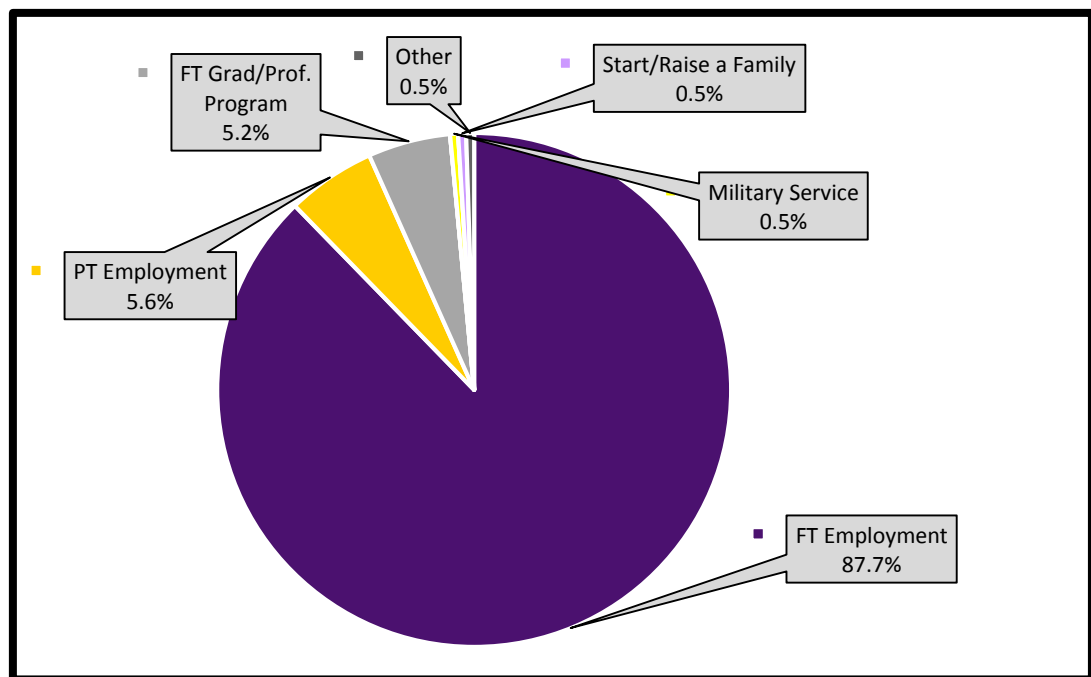**Figure 1 - Primary Activity Following Graduation**

- **After graduation the majority of students (87.7%) were looking at pursuing full-time, paid employment.**

- **Last years' responses were very similar, with a very high percentage (82%) going into full-time, paid employment.**

- **Very few people (0.5%) were looking to continue into the military or to start or raise a family after graduation.**

Location

Next, the students, who reported they were most likely to have either full-time or part-time employment, were then asked about their probable location. In this question, researchers were wanting to see if the students were looking at remaining in Iowa. 199 students who took this survey were able to respond to this question.

	N	Percentage
Yes	125	86.8%
No	19	13.2%

Figure 2.1 - Student who will remain in Iowa

- **A large majority (86.8%) of the graduating students were looking at staying in Iowa for their employment following graduation.**

Out of the students who had not taken an employed position in the state of Iowa and those students who did not report their primary activity in the first question, those students were then asked if they would return to Iowa in the future, given the chance. 74 students were able to respond to this question.

	N	Percentage
Yes	31	86.1%
No	5	13.9%

Figure 2.2 - Students who will return to Iowa, given the chance

- **Many of the students (86.1%) reported they would return to the state of Iowa given the chance in the future.**

- **Students who reported that they were not living in Iowa had reported they were still living in the Midwest, many reporting Minnesota & Wisconsin.**

- **This data showed no one moving out of the United States for employment.**

Educational Plans

The next portion asked students about their academic plans following graduation. Again, all 222 students were able to respond to this question.
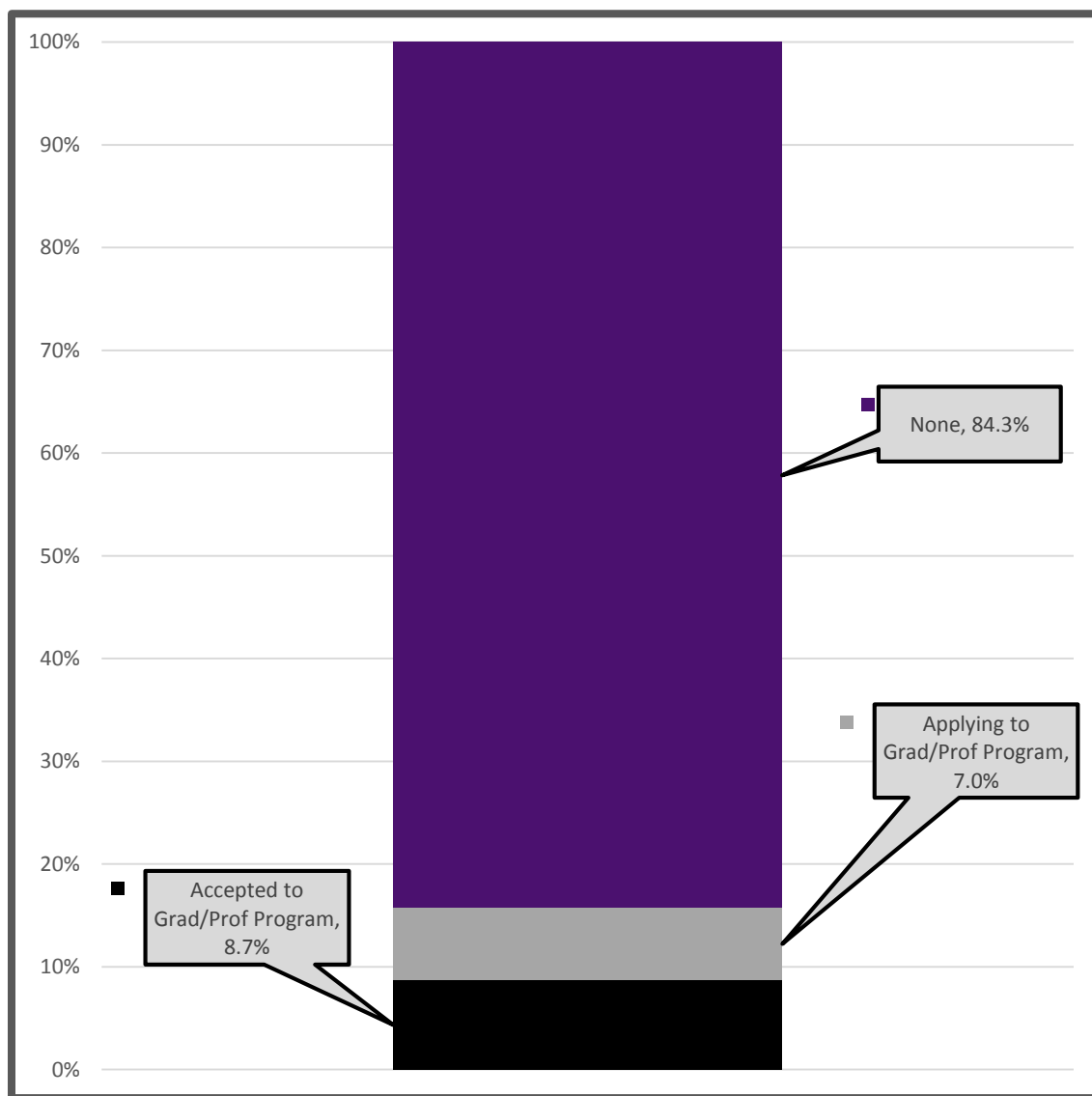

Figure 3 – Students' Future Education Plans

- **A large trend (84.3%) showed students had no further education plans.**

- **Only 15 students were currently accepted or applying to a graduate/professional program to further their education after graduation.**

Participation of Scholarly & Academic Activities

Next, the students were asked to record the academic and scholarly activities they were involved in during their time at UNI. 222 students were able to select all activities that applied to them.
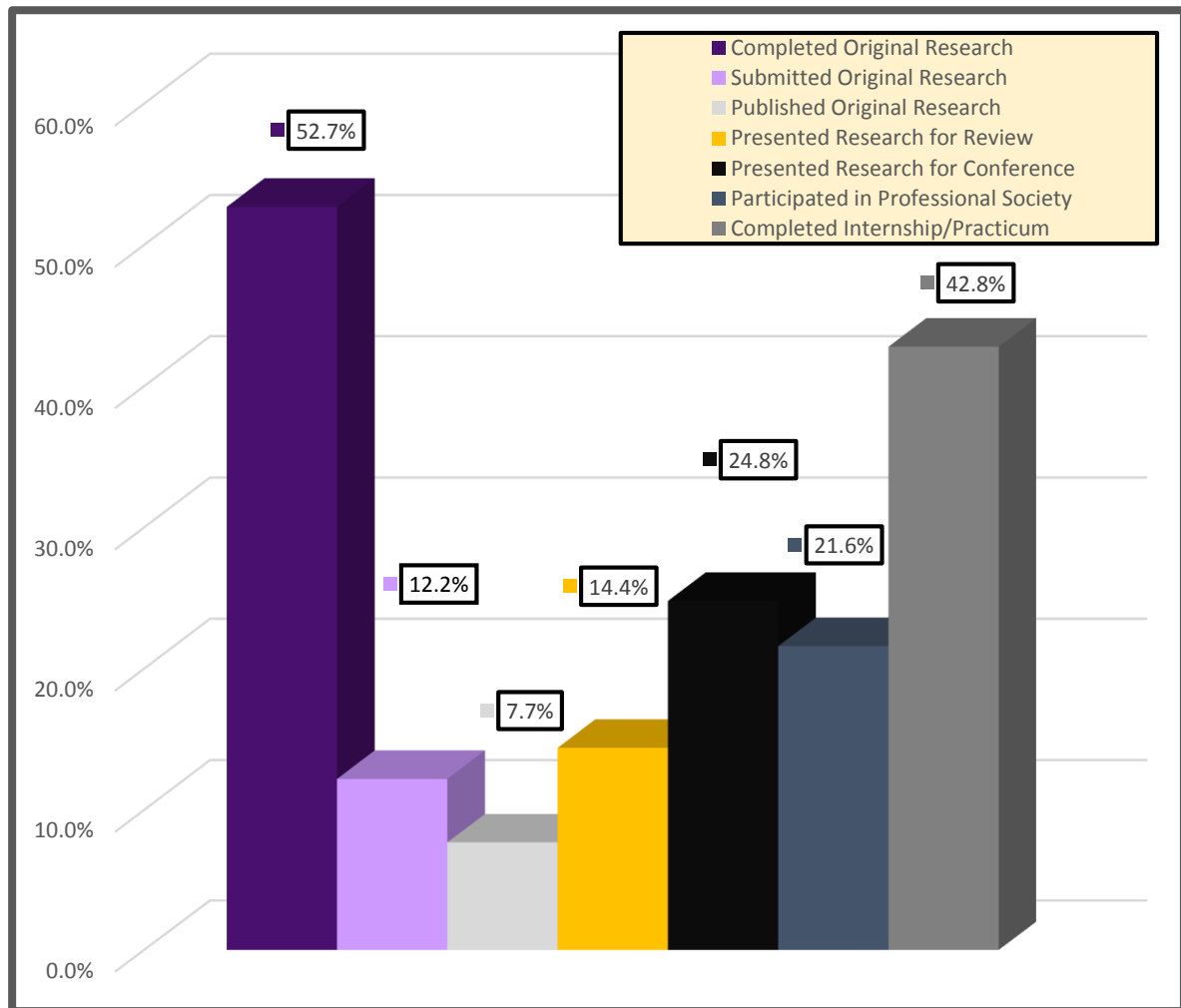
Figure 4 - Activity Involvement

- **Over half (52.7%) of the students completed original research while in their program of study.**

- **Out of the students who did research, 12.2% submitted their work for publication and 7.7% were granted publication.**

- **Almost 43% of graduate students went out into the job market with at least a professional practicum or internship, allowing them to implement the skills and strategies learned in the classroom.**

Importance of Program

This section asked students their reasoning for attending graduate school and to rank it based on how important it was to them. Responses were from low(1) to high(4).
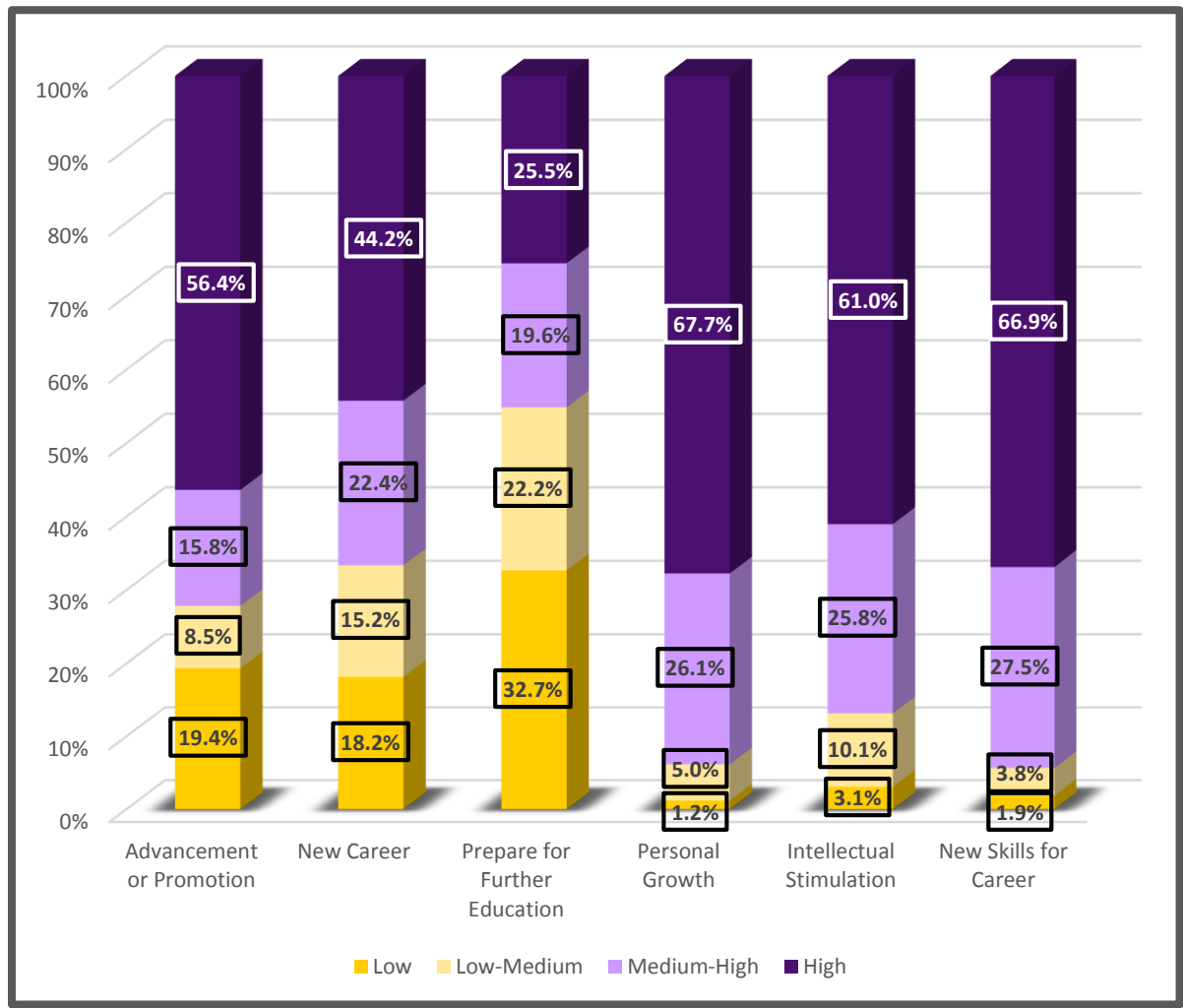
Figure 5 - Reasons of Importance

- **The two most important reasons students attended graduate school in the 2012-2013 academic school year was: (1) to improve their personal growth & (2) to learn new skills for their careers.**

- **The students' least important reason for attending graduate school was to prepare them for further education.**

- **As results have shown across the data, very few students who completed this survey chose to further their education with graduate or professional schooling nor was it important to them.**

Satisfaction of Program

After being asked to rank the importance of the reason for attending graduate school, students were asked their satisfaction rate for achieving those same purposes of attending. The statements were assessed using the same measure as the previous question, including N/A for Not Applicable.
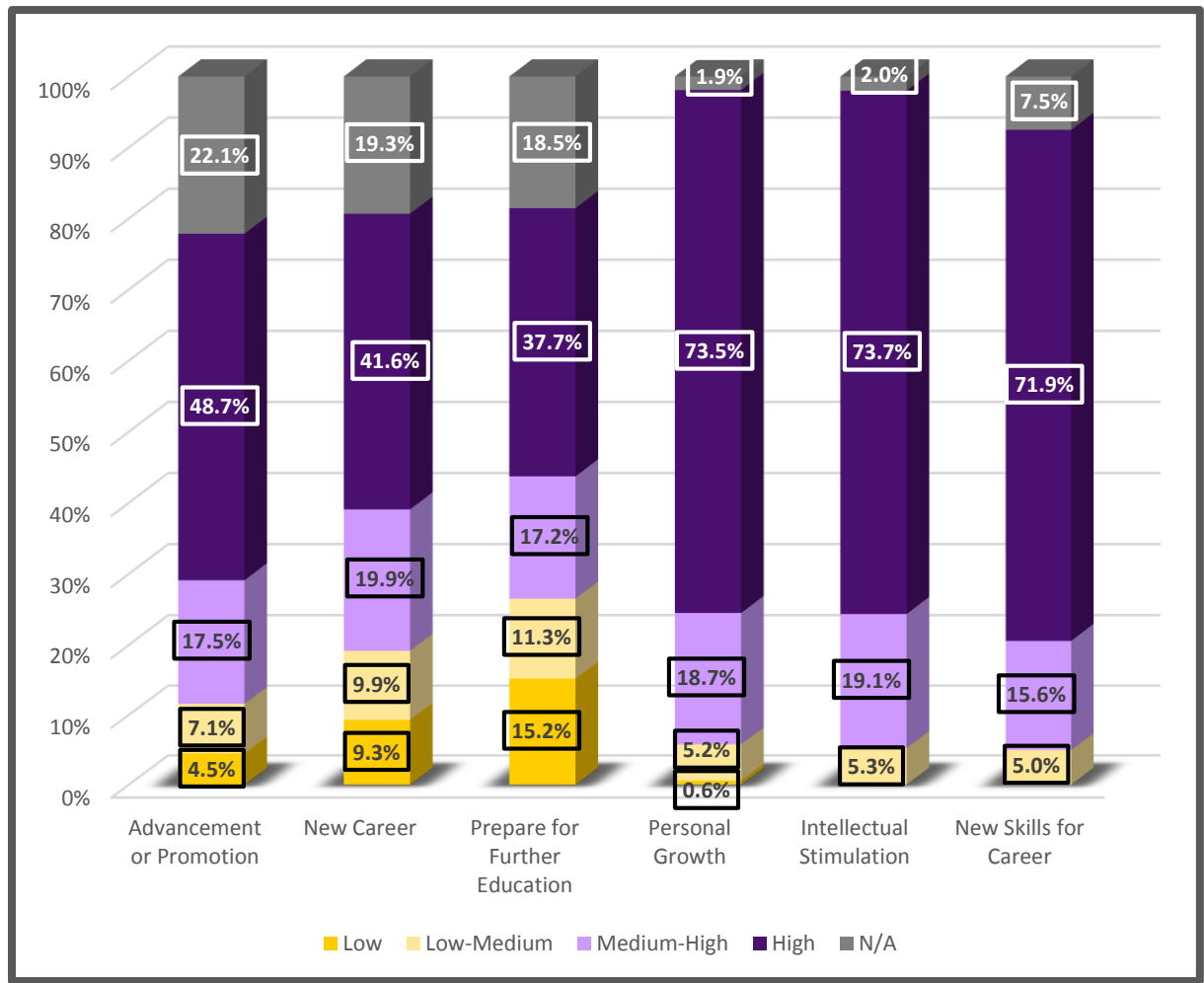
Figure 6 - Satisfaction Rating of the Importance for the Program

- **Overall, student felt satisfied in: (1) achieving new skills for their career, (2) achieving personal growth or fulfillment, & (3) being intellectually stimulated by their program.**

- **The top three responses coincided with the top three most important reasons students attended graduate school.**

- **Students were least satisfied on the preparation they had to pursue further education past commencement but were also not looking for that as a reason for attending.**

Preparation of Future Career Skills

This portion of the survey asked students how prepared they felt regarding certain skills. These are skills they may want to be proficient in for future employment or academic achievement. The scale was from Cannot Evaluate(0) to Excellent(5).

	N	Cannot Evaluate (0)	Poor (1)	Fair (2)	Average (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)
Planning Projects	159	0.6%	0.0%	1.3%	9.4%	42.8%	45.9%
Defining Problems	158	0.6%	0.0%	0.6%	11.4%	40.5%	46.8%
Solving Problems	158	1.3%	0.0%	0.6%	10.1%	39.2%	48.7%
Learning New Things	156	1.3%	0.0%	1.3%	7.1%	35.3%	55.1%
Thinking Creatively	151	0.7%	0.0%	2.6%	9.3%	33.1%	54.3%
Bringing together ideas of information	157	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	11.5%	27.4%	59.2%
Using Research Skills	159	0.6%	3.1%	1.9%	10.7%	30.2%	53.5%
Conducting Self Professionally	158	0.6%	1.3%	2.5%	7.6%	26.6%	61.4%
Upholding Ethical Standards	158	1.9%	0.6%	1.9%	10.1%	24.7%	60.8%
Adapting to Change	158	1.3%	0.0%	1.9%	8.9%	28.5%	59.5%
Working Under Pressure	156	1.3%	0.0%	1.3%	5.1%	28.2%	64.1%
Making Decisions	157	0.6%	0.0%	1.9%	6.4%	36.3%	54.8%
Working Independently	157	1.3%	0.0%	1.3%	8.3%	20.4%	68.8%
Working with Diverse Backgrounds	157	4.5%	0.0%	3.8%	10.8%	29.3%	51.6%
Working as a Team	157	5.1%	0.0%	2.5%	10.8%	29.9%	51.6%

Figure 7 - Skill Development

- **Students felt most prepared in the skills of:**
(1) working independently, (2) working under pressure, & (3) conducting self professionally.

- **Students seemed to feel least prepared in:**
(1) planning project, (2) defining problems, & (3) solving problems.

- **In all skills listed, students felt more prepared overall.**

Academic & Social Environment

The last section focused on the academic and social environments of the graduate students. Students were asked to rank if they strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, strongly agreed, or were not sure on any of the statements.

	N	Not Sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Courses were Intellectually Demanding	162	1.9%	0.0%	6.2%	46.9%	45.1%
Courses were Intellectually Stimulating	162	1.9%	0.0%	2.5%	40.7%	54.9%
Cumulative Learning Experience across Courses	160	1.9%	0.6%	4.4%	36.3%	56.9%
Excellent Quality of Teaching	161	3.7%	1.2%	3.7%	37.3%	54.0%
Faculty Committed to Advancing Learning	157	3.2%	0.6%	0.6%	32.5%	63.1%
Faculty Interested in Student's Academic Goals	158	1.9%	0.0%	2.5%	13.3%	82.3%
Courses were Readily Available	158	1.9%	1.9%	7.6%	28.5%	60.1%
Community Encourages Diverse and Controversial Ideas	159	5.7%	0.6%	5.0%	38.4%	50.3%
High Quality Education was Received	158	2.5%	0.0%	7.0%	34.8%	55.7%
Recommend the Graduate Program to Students	157	3.8%	0.6%	7.0%	32.5%	56.1%

Figure 8 - Students' Academic & Social Environment

- **A majority of students (58.6%) strongly felt that faculty were truly interested in their goals while in their academic environment.**

- **The students felt the faculty really did have the best interest of the students, wanting them to succeed in their program and future career goals.**

- **Students felt least strongly about their courses being intellectually demanding.**

Survey Highlights

- 88% of students were going into full-time, paid employment proceeding graduation.

- 87% of students were looking at staying in Iowa and more in the Midwest.

- 84% of graduate students had no interest in looking into higher education past UNI.

- Over half of the graduate students completed original research while on campus.

- 43% of students completed at least one internship or practicum, allowing them to be more marketable when obtaining a job.

- Personal growth and fulfillment were found across all colleges as one of the top reasons for going into the graduate program.

- Students seemed to be very satisfied with all the skills they learned throughout their experience in the graduate program.

- Students felt prepared for their future career and the skills they will need to possess.

- Academically & socially, students felt that the faculty always had great interest in their academic goals and helped them to succeed.

- Overall, students felt the graduate program had allowed them to have a strong academic and social environment during their time as a student, wanting them to recommend it to others.

Appendix A

CONGRATULATIONS on your graduation! Your responses to this survey will be used for program improvement and will not be linked in any way to your records. Individual responses to this survey will be confidential. Survey findings will be reported in aggregate only. Please complete all six sections.

Please fill in the response circle completely. Use only black or blue ink or dark pencil to complete the survey.

Section 1: Background Information

Student ID Number

⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪
①	①	①	①	①	①
②	②	②	②	②	②
③	③	③	③	③	③
④	④	④	④	④	④
⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤
⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥
⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦
⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧
⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨

Section 2: Plans Following Graduation

What is MOST LIKELY to be your PRINCIPAL activity upon graduation?

①	Employment, full-time paid
②	Employment, part-time paid
③	Graduate or professional school, full-time
④	Graduate or professional school, part-time
⑤	Additional undergraduate coursework
⑥	Military service
⑦	Volunteer activity (e.g., Peace Corps)
⑧	Starting or raising a family
⑨	Other, please specify:

If employed, please provide the following details: (individual responses will be kept confidential)

Job Title	
Name of Employing Organization	
City	
State	
Annual Salary ($)	
Start Date	

Is this job in the state of Iowa?	If not, would you return to Iowa in the future if given the chance?
① Yes	① Yes
② No	② No

Section 3: Plans for Further Education

What are your continuing education plans?

①	Accepted to another graduate/professional program
②	Currently applying to programs, not yet accepted
③	Accepted to an undergraduate program
④	None

Will you be attending:

①	Full-time
②	Part-time

If pursing further education, please provide the following details:

Institution Name	
City	
State	
Area of study	
Intended Degree	
Start Date	

Section 4: Scholarly and Academic Activities at UNI

Please mark each of the following activities that you experienced or participated in during your graduate education at UNI.

①	Completed original research
②	Submitted original research for publication
③	Published original research
④	Creative work presented/performed for professional review
⑤	Presented research at a professional conference
⑥	Participated in other ways in regional or national professional society
⑦	Completed a practicum or internship in a professional setting

① ② ③ ④

Below are some reasons for going to graduate school. Shade in the appropriate circle for **how important** that reason was to you.

Low			High	
①	②	③	④	Advancement or promotion in a career you had already begun
①	②	③	④	Entry into a new career
①	②	③	④	Preparation for further graduate education
①	②	③	④	Personal growth/fulfillment
①	②	③	④	Intellectual stimulation
①	②	③	④	To learn new intellectual/technical skills relevant to my career

Using the same reasons, shade in the appropriate circle for **how satisfied you feel** about achieving that goal through your graduate experience at UNI.

Low			High	NA	
①	②	③	④	⓪	Advancement or promotion in a career you had already begun
①	②	③	④	⓪	Entry into a new career
①	②	③	④	⓪	Preparation for further graduate education
①	②	③	④	⓪	Personal growth/fulfillment
①	②	③	④	⓪	Intellectual stimulation
①	②	③	④	⓪	To learn new intellectual/technical skills relevant to my career

Section 5: Educational Experiences and Skills

Think about your future/career goals. Using the scale on the left, please rate how well UNI has prepared you for….	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	Cannot Evaluate
Planning projects	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Defining problems	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Solving problems	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Learning new things	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Thinking creatively	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Bringing information/ideas together from different areas	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Using research skills	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Conducting yourself in a professional manner	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Upholding ethical standards	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Adapting to change	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Working under pressure	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Making decisions	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Working independently	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Working with people of diverse backgrounds	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Working as a team	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪
Identifying opportunities for volunteering and community service	①	②	③	④	⑤	⓪

Section 6: Academic and Social Environment

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
Most of the graduate courses I took at UNI were intellectually demanding.	①	②	③	④	⓪
Most of my graduate instructors were intellectually stimulating.	①	②	③	④	⓪
My graduate learning experience was cumulative over a series of courses in my program.	①	②	③	④	⓪
The overall quality of graduate teaching at UNI is excellent.	①	②	③	④	⓪
The graduate faculty I had contact with were committed to advancing student learning.	①	②	③	④	⓪
At least one graduate faculty member showed an active interest in my educational/career goals.	①	②	③	④	⓪
Most of the courses in my graduate program were readily available when I wanted to take them.	①	②	③	④	⓪
The UNI community encourages the examination of diverse and controversial ideas in its graduate programs.	①	②	③	④	⓪
I believe I have received a high quality graduate education from UNI.	①	②	③	④	⓪
I would recommend my graduate program to a prospective graduate student.	①	②	③	④	⓪
Because of my experiences at UNI, I intend to be involved in volunteer service after graduation.	①	②	③	④	⓪

Section 7: Faculty and Staff Recognition

Please list the name(s) of any faculty who have had a positive influence on your development as a student at UNI.
Faculty Name(s)
Please list the name(s) of any staff members who have had a positive influence on your development as a student at UNI.
Staff name(s)