



2018 HOLY NAMES UNIVERSITY GRADUATE EXPERIENCE SURVEY: SUMMARY & HIGHLIGHTS

Study Overview

The purpose of the *Holy Names University Graduate Experience Survey* was to support the institution's need to collect and examine data on a broad range of graduate student outcomes. Assessment of graduate student experiences have not been emphasized in recent years, and this survey initially explores the ways that HNU can enhance student learning in and out of the classroom. Administered online to all members of the HNU Graduate community (N = 339) in spring 2018, the survey generated responses from 105 students, a 30% response rate. Representation across a variety of student demographics (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) was mostly reflective of HNU's overall population of graduate students (See Appendix A for further information). Black/African American respondents were slightly under-represented (19% in the sample versus 32% in the student population). Graduate students in their first year at HNU (43%) had the highest response rates in the sample. This report highlights a condensed summary of key findings.

Survey Highlights %'s next to items indicate the percentage of respondents who selected that item on the survey.

ADMISSION TO GRADUATE PROGRAM

Respondents were prompted to give feedback regarding why they chose HNU for their graduate studies. **28%** of respondents indicated that they enrolled at HNU because an advanced degree/certificate was necessary for their current/future job. **27%** of respondents stated they required an advanced degree/certificate to advance their career, and **21%** of the respondents indicated that they enrolled at HNU for intellectual enrichment.

Given these reasons for attending HNU, respondents were also asked to indicate the most important factors in their decision to enroll at HNU. The top five items that were identified as "very" or "extremely important" factors in graduate students' decisions to enroll at HNU included:

- Communications from program faculty (78%)
- Reputation of the academic program (68%)
- HNU's proximity to my home (62%)
- Affordability of tuition (58%)
- Diversity of student body (57%)

The four items that followed the top 5 included:

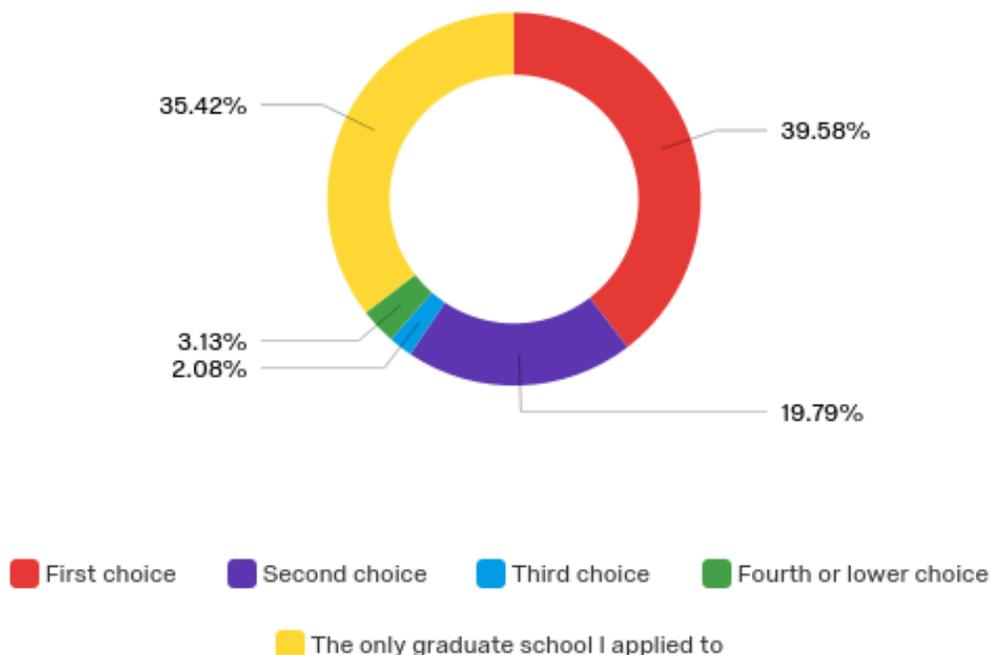
- Sense of community in program (52%)
- HNU's proximity to an urban setting (49%)
- Opportunity to work with particular faculty (34%)
- Recommendation of alumni from program (33%)

Students were then asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements relating to their pre-admission experiences, and the extent they would recommend their graduate program to others. The results below indicate the cumulative percentage of students who indicated they agreed (on a scale of somewhat agree -> strongly agree) with the following statements:

- I received prompt communication regarding my application to campus (79%)
- I was able to easily find the information I needed about my HNU graduate program before applying (76%)
- I would recommend my graduate program to prospective students (69%)
- If I was to go back and make the decision again, I would still choose to attend HNU (66%)
- The value of HNU’s graduate program was clearly conveyed to me before applying (61%)

When asked to characterize HNU among the graduate schools that respondents applied to, **40%** of respondents indicated HNU was their first choice. **35%** of respondents indicated HNU was the only school they applied to for admission. **20%** of respondents indicated HNU was their second choice, and a total of **5%** of respondents indicated HNU was the 3rd choice, or lower. A graphic depiction of the breakdown of this question is reported below:

Among the graduate schools that you applied to, HNU was your:



CAREER & JOB PREPARATION

Students were asked questions related to their career and job preparation at HNU, such as to characterize the type of employer they hoped to work for after graduation. The top five responses included (note, respondents were able to indicate more than one type of employer):

- Elementary, secondary, or special focus school (39%)
- Non-profit or foundation (28%)
- Self-employed/private practice (25%)
- Hospital or clinic (24%)
- Higher education (20%)

Responses varied regarding the adequacy of resources for the job search process and career placement. While **84%** of respondents indicated they were confident in their prospects for employment after graduation, only **59%** reported there were adequate career advising resources on campus. A summary of the student responses follows:

- I am confident in my prospects for employment after graduation:
 - 84% Somewhat Agree -> Strongly Agree
 - 9% Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - 7% Somewhat Disagree -> Strongly Disagree
- My graduate program is adequately preparing me for a job in my future professional field:
 - 81% Somewhat Agree -> Strongly Agree
 - 5% Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - 14% Somewhat Disagree -> Strongly Disagree
- There are adequate campus resources for my job search process:
 - 60% Somewhat Agree -> Strongly Agree
 - 22% Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - 18% Somewhat Disagree -> Strongly Disagree
- There are adequate career advising resources that prepare me for employment:
 - 59% Somewhat Agree -> Strongly Agree
 - 28% Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - 13% Somewhat Disagree -> Strongly Disagree
- There are adequate campus resources for CV and cover letter prep:
 - 56% Somewhat Agree -> Strongly Agree
 - 34% Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - 10% Somewhat Disagree -> Strongly Disagree

GRADUATE PROGRAM CONNECTIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

A number of questions were asked about the type of community connections graduate students have made at HNU. The objectives of these questions were to identify the extent to which graduate students were connecting to one another, to faculty, and to identify how HNU could enhance the social experience for these respondents. The results of these findings are as follows:

- 90% of respondents have made at least one meaningful connection with a peer in their academic program.
- 87% of respondents have made at least one meaningful connection with a professor in their academic program.
- 67% of respondents stated that there exist opportunities to interact with other HNU graduate students who have ideas that are different than their own.
- 62% of respondents stated that their program faculty have made an effort to establish a mentoring relationship with them as students.
- 52% of respondents have made at least one meaningful connection with a peer in another HNU graduate program.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the extent they felt like they were a part of the HNU community. Results indicate that approximately half (**52%**) of graduate students feel they are valued by the campus community, and less than half (**43%**) of graduate students say they feel connected to the social life of campus.

When asked to indicate what social activities respondents thought would enhance their campus experience, students most commonly suggested the five events/programs that are listed below, and noted they were most likely to attend these events either on weekends, or weekdays after 6pm:

- Career focused events
- Alumni networking
- Socializing with other graduate students
- Socials with faculty and staff
- Physical wellness events

By in large, email (cited by **92%** of respondents) was the most common way that graduate students were informed of opportunities for campus involvement. Faculty (cited by **54%** of respondents) and peers (cited by **53%** of respondents) followed as the most common ways campus involvement was communicated to respondents. Social media (cited by **27%** of respondents) was the least mentioned communication channel that respondents identified as a way they were informed about opportunities for involvement at HNU.

STUDENT RETENTION

A critical component of this student experience survey was to identify how HNU could better support graduate student retention, and enhance student success on campus. The following findings identify areas that impact the retention and academic success of graduate students, and deserve the attention of the institution.

37% of respondents (38 total students) indicated that they have considered leaving HNU during this previous academic year, but it is unclear at the time of this summary if any of these respondents have or plan to follow through with leaving the institution. The most pressing reason why students have thought about leaving HNU in the current academic year was being mistreated by someone on campus (cited 6 times). Tuition/expenses (cited 5 times), and feeling overwhelmed by the work in their academic program (cited 4 times) followed as the other common reasons graduate students have thought about leaving HNU.

Participants were also asked to indicate what they felt were the biggest obstacles to their academic success, and students responded with the five items below as the most pressing barriers:

What are the biggest obstacles to your academic success?	% of Respondents who cited this obstacle	# of Respondents who cited this obstacle
Financing my education	45%	46
Work commitments	34%	37
A lack of course availability	32%	33
Cost of living	27%	28
Time management	19%	19

Respondents were also solicited in an open response question to indicate what suggestions they had to improve the graduate student experience at HNU. Common themes emerged that indicate a need to consistently and clearly communicate academic expectations (i.e. course requirements, academic advising, grading), and to increase use of technology in the classroom. Individual qualitative responses were aggregated, and are summarized below (listed in descending order from the number of times they were cited) as broad themes:

- Clearer/more consistent communication to graduate students
- Improve course scheduling
- Create consistency in academic grading
- Increase use of Blackboard in courses and to post grades as a means to track progress
- Convey clearer expectations for graduation requirements
- The need for consistency in academic advising
- Increase use of technology in classroom instruction

A number of trends as they relate to student concerns about their HNU experience, and unfair treatment on campus were also quantitatively captured in this experience survey. In summary (note: N may differ for each of the reported percentages below):

- 34% of respondents (30 students) indicated that registering for their courses was not easy.
- 32% of respondents (28 students) indicated classes were not offered at times that were conducive to their schedule.
- 15% of respondents (13 students) indicated they had been treated unfairly at HNU in the past year because of their racial/ethnic identity.
- 11% of respondents (9 students) indicated they had been treated unfairly at HNU in the past year because of their gender identity.

Student satisfaction of various resources and services were also gathered as part of this survey, and graduate students reported they were satisfied with services such as Library study space, Library resources, general lounge space, and the ease of viewing grades online, but had higher levels of dissatisfaction with the following:

- Condition of classrooms
- Availability of campus dining
- Ease of paying their HNU bill
- Campus parking

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHS

Finally, responses to the open-ended question “*What do you consider to be the greatest strength(s) of your academic program?*” were heavily geared toward the faculty, and the learning environment. Respondents most frequently indicated faculty (cited 23 times) were the greatest strength of their graduate program, followed by the diversity/social justice focus in their academic program (cited 8 times), and their peers (cited 7 times). A strong focus on classroom interactions (cited 6 times), and a sense of community (4 times cited) were other commonly identified areas that students indicated were noteworthy strengths.

Given HNU’s mission is rooted in values such as “inclusion,” to “promote the common good,” and “employing various modes of knowledge,” it is not surprising that participants indicated that the greatest strengths of HNU can be traced back to the purpose and identity of the institution. Sample comments that support these findings include:

The professors make class seem like a discussion rather than just another lesson. It’s great!

The best part of my program are the connections I have made with my peers and faculty, as well as having content being immediately applicable to my job, while also giving me great information for the future.

My program’s strength is that it emphasizes the human connection using compassion and understanding.

There is a great flexibility in meeting the needs of students from a variety of backgrounds in my program.

My academic program has prepared me for my future career. The program doesn’t turn out a worker, but it turns out a person who will change the world.

Appendix A: Institutional and Respondent Demographics

Demographic Item	Institution/Population %	Survey Respondent %
Gender		
Female	77%	84%
Male	23%	15%
Prefer not to state	0%	1%
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian or Indigenous	0%	2%
Asian	16%	11%
Black or African American	32%	19%
Hispanic/Latino	15%	20%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pac Islander	2%	1%
White	30%	37%
Other	1%	2%
Did not report	3%	8%
Years Completed at HNU		
Less than one	*	43%
One	*	19%
Two	*	26%
Three	*	8%
Four	*	3%
Five or more	*	1%
Age		
Under 21	*	0%
21-23	*	14%
24-26	*	21%
27-29	*	17%
30-32	*	9%
33-35	*	5%
36-38	*	9%
42-44	*	1%
45-47	*	11%
51+	*	13%

**Denotes misalignment between the way the institutional % is calculated and how the respondent % in the survey sample is calculated. Due to this inconsistency, the institutional % is not reported to avoid invalid comparison to respondent %.*