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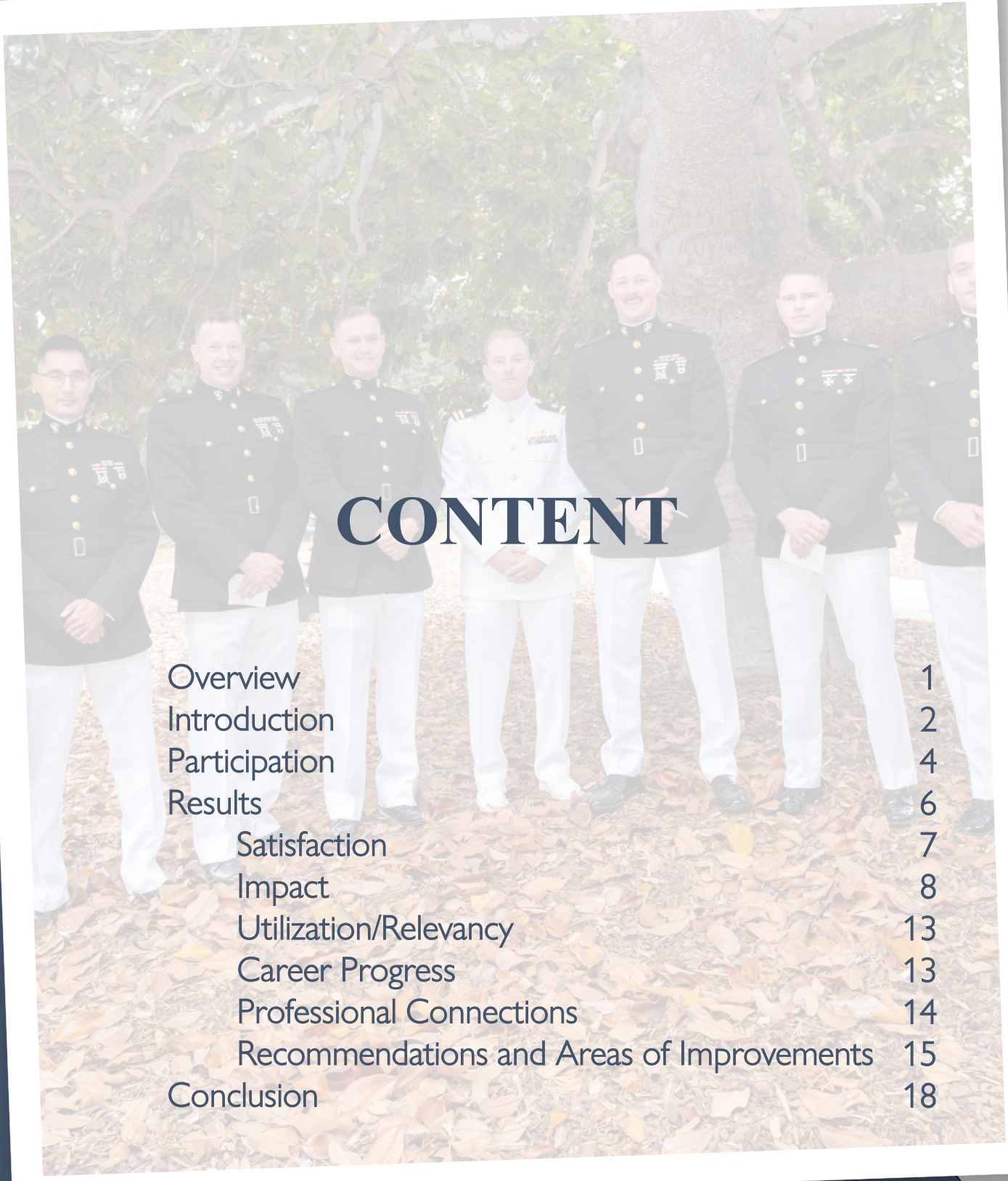


OFFICE OF
INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS
NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

ALUMNI SURVEY REPORT



2024



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Overview

The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) Alumni Survey was designed to obtain feedback from alumni to assess the benefit of an NPS education. The Alumni Survey consists of questions which evaluate the impact of an NPS education, including utilization, career progress, and connection with peers and faculty. The survey is also aimed to measure student satisfaction and collect recommendations to improve education and academic life at NPS.

Summary

Participation: The participation rate of the survey is 22%.

Satisfaction: 97% of the alumni are satisfied with their NPS experience.

Impact: 92% of the respondents agree that their experience at NPS improved the quality of their contributions to their service, agency, or department. An analysis of these responses led to the following categories: increasing professional knowledge, gaining and enhancing soft skills, networking, utilization/payback tours, providing new opportunities, utilization of thesis projects, and promotion.

Utilization/Relevancy: 75% of respondents completed their utilization/payback tour. 87% of respondents who met their utilization/payback tour agree that the knowledge and skills gained from an NPS education are/were relevant to their assignments.

Career Progress: 60% of the US military respondents were promoted after graduation. Moreover, of the 44% of the respondents who indicated that they are eligible for command, 53% have been selected for command.

Professional Connections: 71% of the respondents have networked with peers and faculty and 67% benefitted from these connections.

Recommendations and Areas of Improvements: Alumni were asked for suggestions to help make an NPS education more valuable to themselves, their service, agency, or department. Responses were grouped into the following categories: talent management, thesis process, advancement, faculty quality, DL experience, alumni benefits, work-life balance and networking.

Introduction

Methodology

The Alumni Survey was launched on July 10, 2024, and closed on September 6, 2024. Survey invitations were emailed to resident and distance learning (DL) students who graduated in 2018, 2020, and 2022. Alumni Survey participation is voluntary. The survey includes multiple choice, Likert-scale, Yes/No, and open-ended questions. Table I shows the survey questions with their type and response rates. The last eight questions were only asked to students who were awarded one of the following engineering degrees: Master of Science in Astronautical Engineering, Master of Science in Electrical Engineering, Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering, Master of Science in Systems Engineering.

Table I Survey Questions with their response rates

Questions	Question Type	Response Type	Dependency	Response Rate
<i>What is your current status?</i>	Multiple choice	Select all apply		99%
<i>Please select your current employer.</i>	Multiple choice	Select one option		99%
<i>What is your current pay grade?</i>	Multiple choice	Select one option		98%
<i>Please select your previous employer before retiring or separating from military or government service.</i>	Multiple choice	Select one option	First Question	5%
<i>What was your highest pay grade before retiring or separating from military or government service?</i>	Multiple choice	Select one option	First Question	5%
<i>Looking back at your time at NPS, how satisfied are you with overall quality of instruction?</i>	Likert Scale	Satisfied/Not Satisfied		99%
<i>Looking back at your time at NPS, how satisfied are you with overall quality of faculty?</i>	Likert Scale	Satisfied/Not Satisfied		99%
<i>Looking back at your time at NPS, how satisfied are you with overall workload?</i>	Likert Scale	Satisfied/Not Satisfied		99%
<i>Looking back at your time at NPS, how satisfied are you with operational relevance of course content?</i>	Likert Scale	Satisfied/Not Satisfied		99%
<i>Looking back at your time at NPS, how satisfied are you with relevance of education to your career?</i>	Likert Scale	Satisfied/Not Satisfied		99%
<i>Looking back at your time at NPS, how satisfied are you with overall experience?</i>	Likert Scale	Satisfied/Not Satisfied		99%
<i>Have you contacted or networked with any of the following since your graduation from NPS?</i>	Multiple choice	Select all apply		81%
<i>Connections I made through NPS have been beneficial to my career.</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		96%
<i>My education at NPS helped to enhance my oral communication.</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		99%
<i>My education at NPS helped to enhance my written communication.</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		99%
<i>My education at NPS helped to enhance my research skills.</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		98%
<i>My education at NPS helped to enhance my awareness of emerging technologies.</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		99%
<i>My education at NPS helped to enhance my analytical skills.</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		99%

<i>My education at NPS helped to enhance my problem solving.</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		99%
<i>NPS provided me with defense-oriented, graduate-level education.</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		99%
<i>My experience at NPS improved the quality of my contributions to my service, agency or department.</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		99%
<i>Please elaborate how your experience at NPS improved the quality of your contributions to your service, agency or department.</i>	Open-ended	Text		49%
<i>While attending NPS, I helped develop solutions to operational problems.</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		99%
<i>I would recommend NPS to other military service members or defense civilians for their graduate education.</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		99%
<i>NPS accomplished its mission “to advance the operational effectiveness, technological leadership and warfighting advantage of the Naval service.”</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		99%
<i>Are you currently in, or have you completed, a utilization or payback tour?</i>	Yes/No	Yes/No		75%
<i>Do you feel the knowledge and skills gained from your NPS studies are/were relevant to your utilization/payback tour?</i>	Yes/No	Yes/No	Previous Question	56%
<i>Have you been eligible for command, or service/community equivalent, since graduation?</i>	Yes/No	Yes/No		71%
<i>Have you been selected for command, or service/community equivalent, since graduation?</i>	Yes/No	Yes/No	Previous Question	31%
<i>Are there gaps in knowledge or skills that NPS could address in its educational programs? If so, what are they?</i>	Open-ended	Text		40%
<i>What changes would help make an NPS education more valuable to you, your service, agency, or department?</i>	Open-ended	Text		43%
<i>My NPS education enhanced my ability to effectively communicate advanced technical information through oral presentations</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		9%
<i>My NPS education enhanced my ability to effectively convey advanced technical information through written communications</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		9%
<i>My NPS education enhanced my ability to solve significant engineering challenges associated with military engineered systems</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		2%
<i>My NPS education enhanced my ability to utilize modern engineering practices and tools including experimentation, modeling and simulation</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		9%
<i>My NPS education facilitated my leadership role in specifying requirement for military engineered systems</i>	Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		9%

My NPS education facilitated my leadership role in research, design, testing, procurement, and life-cycle management of military engineered systems

Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		9%
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My NPS education facilitated my leadership role in the operation of advanced military engineered systems

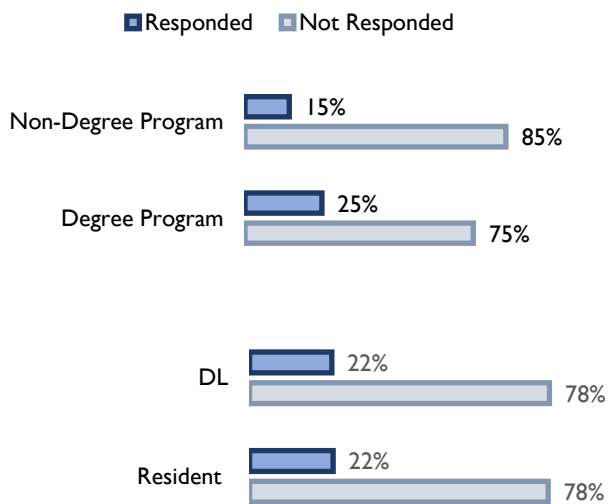
Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		9%
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My NPS education facilitated my leadership role in fostering collaboration with diverse stakeholders

Likert Scale	Agree/Disagree		9%
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Participation

Survey invitations were emailed to 4052 alumni, among which 879 (22%) alumni participated. Figure 1 shows the participation rates by the program types.



As can be seen in Figure 1, the participation rate of the residents and DL is the same (22%). Similarly, the participation rate of non-degree students is slightly higher than that of degree students. While calculating the participation rates, if a student completed a degree, it was counted under a degree program; otherwise, it was counted under non-degree programs.

Figure 1 Participation rates by program type and degree level

Figure 2 shows the rate of respondents when counted with all the programs completed at NPS. Around 60% of alumni who responded to the survey completed a degree or a certificate.

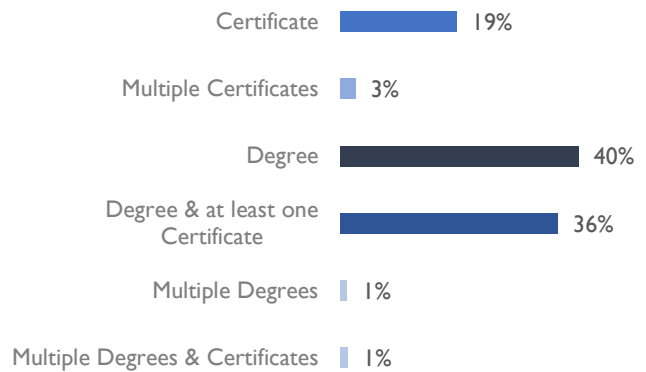
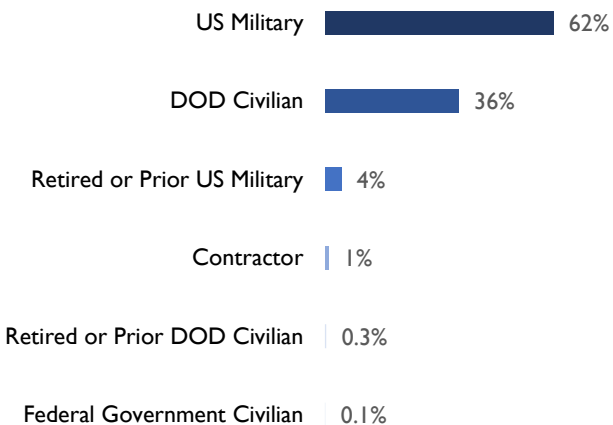


Figure 2 Participation rates by the programs they completed



The results of the survey provide a summary of demographics of the respondent student population; for example, Figure 3 shows the current employment status of respondents. Around 3% of the respondents fall into more than one category.

Figure 3 Participation rates by current employment status

In total, 98% of the respondents work either in the US military or a Department of Defense (DOD) agency. Figure 4 shows the number of US military respondents by service. The highest three participation rates belong to the Navy, Marine Corps, and Army. The Navy also has the highest participation rate, 57%, among DOD civilian respondents (Figure 5).

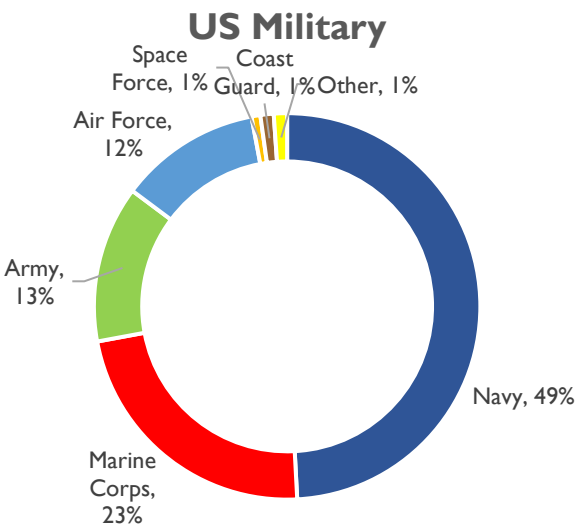


Figure 4 US Military participation rate by service

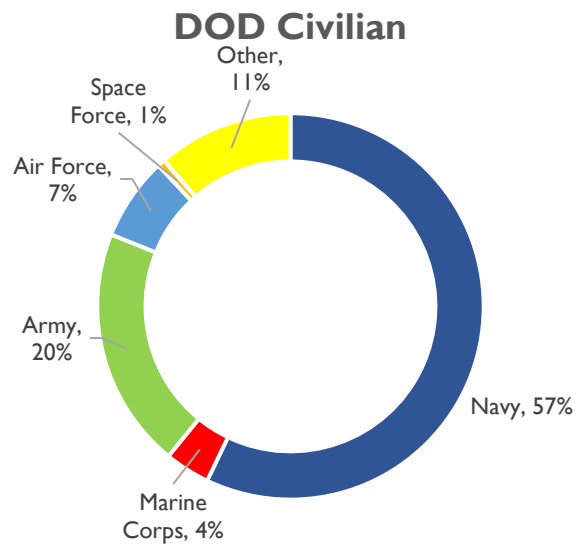


Figure 5 DOD Civilian participation rate by agencies

The US military respondents are also specified by current pay grade. The distribution of US military respondents by pay grade is shown in Figure 6. Almost half of US military respondents are officers at the rank of O-4, equivalent to Lieutenant Commander for the Navy and Coast Guard, and Major for Marine Corps, Army, and Air Force.

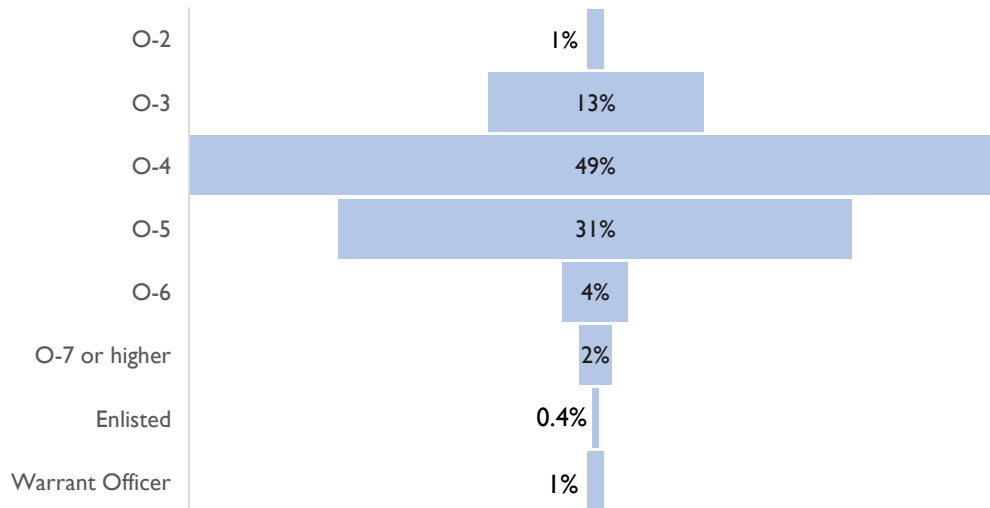


Figure 6 US military participation rates by agencies

Results

Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with each of the following statements on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree or 1=Very Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very Satisfied). Table 2 shows the average scores for the Likert Scale questions. The top three scores are color-coded with dark blue, and the bottom three are color-coded with light blue. The highest scores show the level of satisfaction with their NPS experience and education.

Table 2 Average of Likert Scale question responses

Survey Questions	Average Mean
<i>Looking back at your time at NPS, how satisfied are you with the overall quality of instruction?</i>	4.60
<i>Looking back at your time at NPS, how satisfied are you with the overall quality of faculty?</i>	4.58
<i>Looking back at your time at NPS, how satisfied are you with the overall workload?</i>	4.35
<i>Looking back at your time at NPS, how satisfied are you with the operational relevance of course content?</i>	4.40
<i>Looking back at your time at NPS, how satisfied are you with the relevance of education to your career?</i>	4.41
<i>Looking back at your time at NPS, how satisfied are you with the overall experience?</i>	4.62
<i>Connections I made through NPS have been beneficial to my career.</i>	3.90
<i>My education at NPS helped to enhance my oral communication.</i>	3.96
<i>My education at NPS helped to enhance my written communication.</i>	4.23
<i>My education at NPS helped to enhance my research skills.</i>	4.42

<i>My education at NPS helped to enhance my awareness of emerging technologies.</i>	4.07
<i>My education at NPS helped to enhance my analytical skills.</i>	4.45
<i>My education at NPS helped to enhance my problem solving.</i>	4.35
<i>NPS provided me with defense-oriented, graduate-level education.</i>	4.54
<i>My experience at NPS improved the quality of my contributions to my service, agency or department.</i>	4.42
<i>While attending NPS, I helped develop solutions to operational problems.</i>	3.83
<i>I would recommend NPS to other military service members or defense civilians for their graduate education.</i>	4.63
<i>NPS accomplished its mission “to advance the operational effectiveness, technological leadership and warfighting advantage of the Naval service.”</i>	4.41
<i>My NPS education facilitated my leadership role in specifying requirement for military engineered systems.</i>	4.06
<i>My NPS education facilitated my leadership role in research, design, testing, procurement, and life-cycle management of military engineered systems.</i>	4.07
<i>My NPS education facilitated my leadership role in the operation of advanced military engineered systems.</i>	3.80
<i>My NPS education facilitated my leadership role in fostering collaboration with diverse stakeholders.</i>	4.33
<i>My NPS education enhanced my ability to effectively communicate advanced technical information through oral presentations</i>	4.11
<i>My NPS education enhanced my ability to effectively convey advanced technical information through written communications</i>	4.28
<i>My NPS education enhanced my ability to solve significant engineering challenges associated with military engineered systems</i>	4.00
<i>My NPS education enhanced my ability to utilize modern engineering practices and tools including experimentation, modeling and simulation</i>	4.11

The following pages describe the overall responses to each survey question within the following areas: satisfaction, impact, utilization and relevancy, career progress, professional connections, and areas of improvement.

Satisfaction

This group of questions asks alumni to evaluate their NPS experience in several categories. Figure 7 shows response rates for each category. In almost all categories, 90% of the alumni are satisfied with their NPS experience.

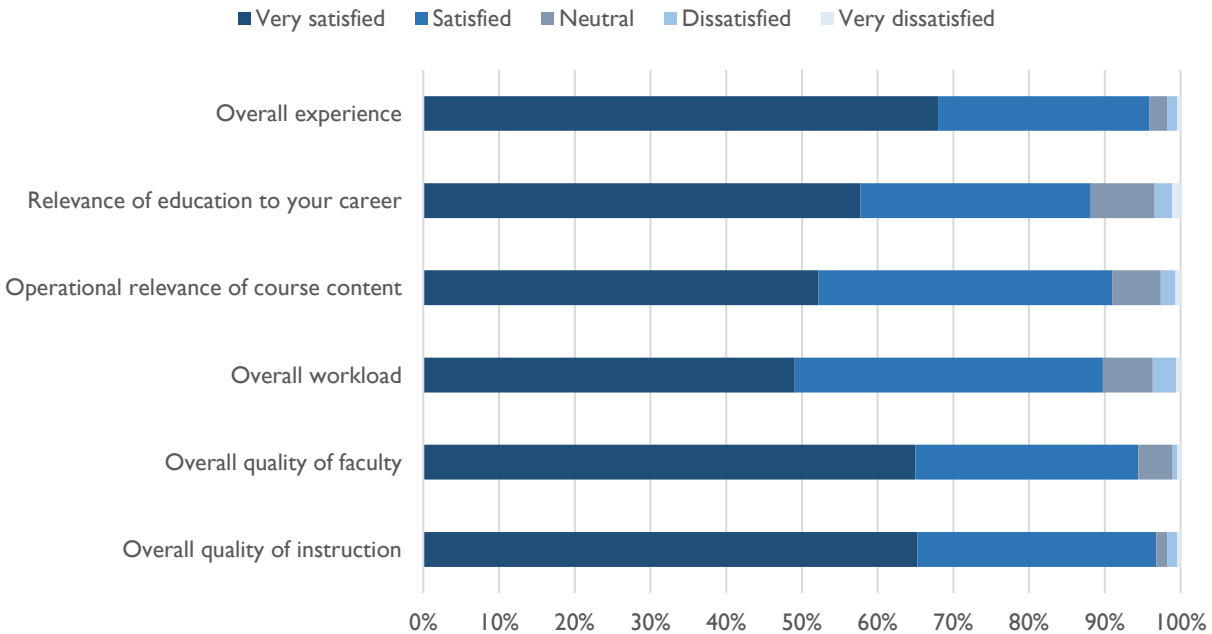


Figure 7 Response rates for assessment of NPS experience

The last question in this section asks whether alumni would recommend NPS to their peers. 94% of the alumni would recommend NPS to other military service members or defense civilians for their graduate education (Figure 8).

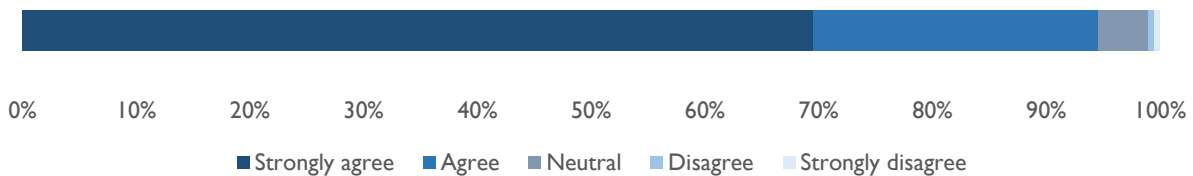


Figure 8 Response rates for recommending NPS to one's peers

Impact

The questions in this section were designed to evaluate the benefits of an NPS education for both the students and sponsors. NPS mission is providing defense-focused graduate education, including classified studies and interdisciplinary research, to advance the operational effectiveness, technological leadership and warfighting advantage of the Naval service. 91% of respondents agree that NPS achieved its' mission.

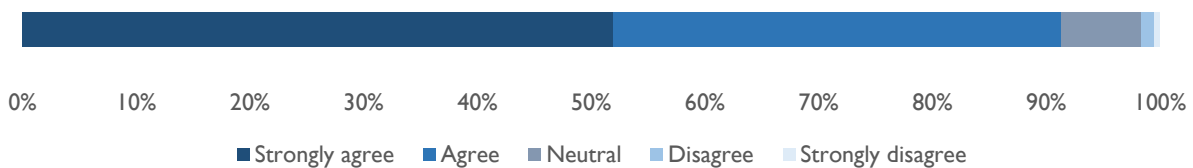


Figure 9 Response rates for accomplishing of NPS mission

The survey found that analytical skills, problem solving, and research skills were ranked most positively among skills that were improved through an NPS education, while oral communication and emerging technology skills were rated lowest, with 25% of respondents indicating that they did not see an improvement in those two areas.

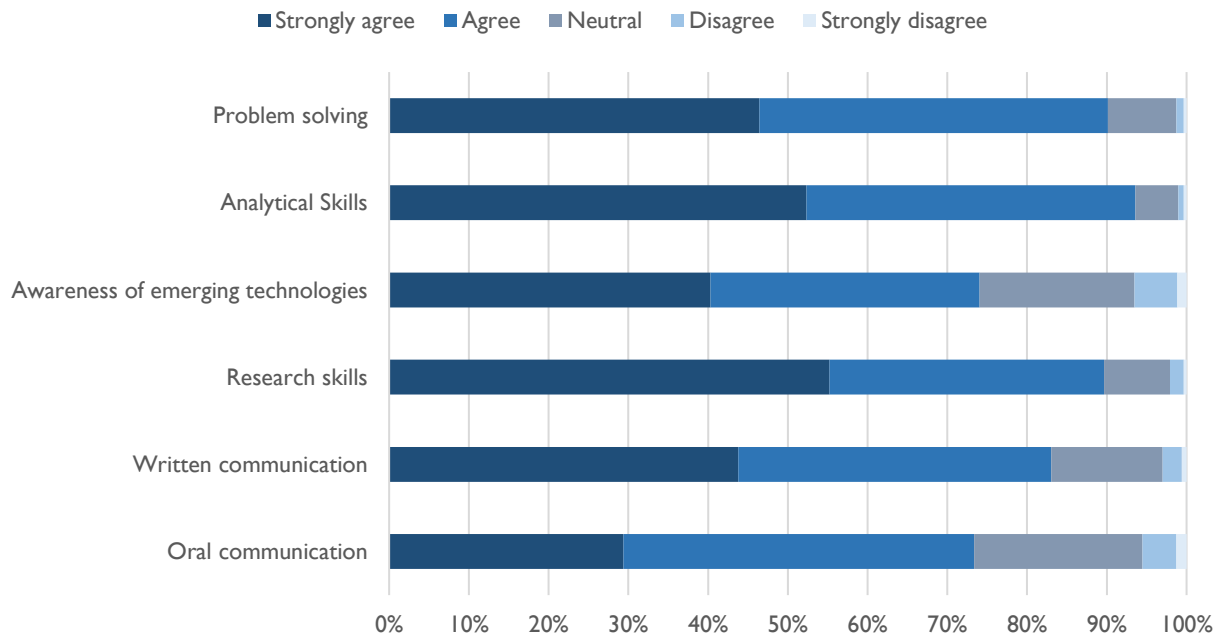


Figure 10 Response rates for skills alumni enhanced with their NPS education

NPS is a Naval command and a defense graduate university with a unique mission. As seen in Figure 11, 95% of the alumni agree that NPS provides defense-oriented graduate-level education.

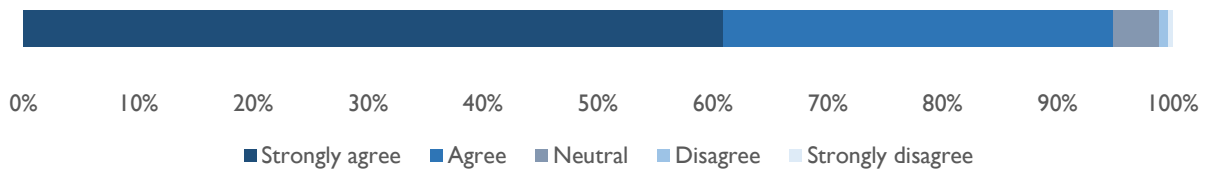


Figure 11 Response rates for whether NPS provide defense-oriented graduate-level education

One expected outcome of an NPS education is that a student’s quality of contribution to their service, agency, or department will improve. Alumni are also asked whether their ability to contribute changed after graduation. Figure 12 shows that 92% of the alumni agree that their experience at NPS improved the quality of their contributions to their service, agency, or department.

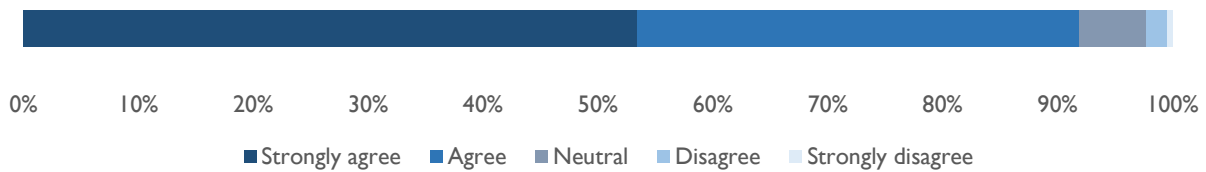


Figure 12 Response rates for whether NPS improved the quality of respondents' contributions to their service, agency, or department

43% of the respondents provided comments about how their education improved their ability to contribute, while 6% of them commented about other subjects. Many respondents identified multiple reasons their ability to contribute improved because of their NPS education. These contributions were grouped into seven categories: increased professional knowledge, gaining and enhancing soft skills, benefits of networking, payback tours, new opportunities, utilizing the thesis project, and promotion.

Increased professional knowledge: 78% of alumni noted that their NPS education significantly enhanced their professional and technical knowledge. Key contributions include:

- Broader understanding of defense-related issues
- Increased awareness of myths, common problems, and critical analysis
- Learning practical applications and use cases
- Recognition as subject matter experts
- Building trust from others
- Ability to mentor and train others
- Awareness of innovation and emerging technologies
- Implementation of innovative solutions
- Relevance in their field
- Learning new resources, tools, and metrics
- Improved ability to interpret and assess work
- Formulation of actionable plans
- Competence in solving complex problems
- Improvement of existing systems
- Increased competitiveness, motivation, and confidence
- Enhanced decision-making abilities
- Increased role efficiency and effectiveness
- Intelligent professional communication
- Effective work in interagency/joint/foreign environments
- Refined approach to problem-solving
- Preparation for further knowledge exploration
- Contextual understanding of warfare domains
- Bridging operational and strategic thinking
- Advancement ahead of peers
- Foundation for future success

Gaining and enhancing soft skills: 21% of alumni commented about soft skills learned or enhanced through their NPS education. Frequently mentioned soft skills are critical and analytical thinking, time management, problem-solving, oral and written communication, leadership, and research.

- **Critical and Analytical Thinking:** Alumni frequently highlight how their time at NPS sharpened their ability to assess situations from multiple perspectives and make well-reasoned decisions. This skill is particularly important in dynamic and complex scenarios where the ability to evaluate information critically can lead to more effective and innovative solutions. The rigorous coursework and research opportunities provided at NPS challenge students to question assumptions, justify their knowledge, and reason through problems methodically.
- **Time Management and Problem-Solving:** Time management is another critical soft skill honed through the NPS experience. Alumni report that the demands of balancing coursework, research, and personal commitments necessitated the development of efficient time management strategies. These skills are directly transferable to professional settings, where managing multiple projects and deadlines is a common requirement. Problem-solving skills are equally emphasized, with NPS education encouraging a holistic approach to addressing challenges. This includes breaking down complex problems into manageable components and devising practical, actionable solutions.
- **Enhancing Communication Skills:** Effective communication, both oral and written, is a pivotal skill enhanced through NPS education. Alumni have noted significant improvements in their ability to articulate ideas clearly and persuasively. The diverse array of assignments, presentations, and collaborative projects at NPS provides ample opportunities to practice and refine these skills. Enhanced communication abilities enable graduates to engage more effectively with leadership, stakeholders, and peers, facilitating better teamwork and collaboration.
- **Leadership and Research:** Leadership skills are another area where NPS education makes a profound impact. The program's emphasis on strategic thinking and decision-making prepares graduates to take on leadership roles with confidence and competence. Alumni report that they are better equipped to mentor colleagues, advocate for change, and inspire teams towards achieving common goals. Moreover, the research-intensive environment at NPS fosters a deep appreciation for inquiry and innovation. Graduates leave with the skills necessary to conduct independent research, drive projects forward, and contribute valuable insights to their fields.

An often-cited benefit of NPS education is the exposure to diverse worldviews and perspectives. This exposure is invaluable in fostering a more inclusive and empathetic approach to professional and personal interactions. Alumni have expressed that this broadened vision helps them better understand and appreciate different backgrounds and viewpoints, enhancing their ability to work collaboratively in diverse teams. The holistic development fostered by an NPS education translates into significant professional and personal growth. Alumni report feeling more successful, organized, proactive, and confident in their work. The education they received at NPS not only provided them with technical knowledge but also instilled a rigorous and methodological approach to problem-solving. This comprehensive skill set allows them to frame, approach, plan, and solve problems more effectively, contributing to their overall success and advancement in their careers. The ability to mentor, advocate for change, and engage with diverse perspectives further solidifies the transformative nature of the NPS experience. As alumni testify, the education and skills acquired at NPS not only broaden their professional capabilities but also enrich their personal lives, making them well-rounded, effective, and insightful individuals.

Payback/Utilization Tours: Of the 15% of alumni who commented about payback tours, two dominant views emerged.

- **Positive Perspectives:** Some alumni expressed that their education at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) was invaluable during their payback tour. They noted that the knowledge and skills

acquired were directly applicable to their assignments, allowing them to leverage the resources and expertise gained during their education. These alumni felt that their NPS education significantly enhanced their ability to contribute effectively to their service.

- **Critical Perspectives:** A significant portion of alumni voiced concerns about the talent management within their services. These alumni felt that they were unable to utilize the knowledge and skills learned at NPS because they were assigned to billets unrelated to their education. This misalignment led to feelings of being undervalued and concerns about losing proficiency in their field due to the lack of opportunities to apply or expand upon their education. Moreover, some alumni believe that having only one tour related to their education is detrimental both to their service and to their professional growth. They argue that the experience gained during the first utilization tour is crucial and that better career management beyond the payback tour could lead to more significant contributions to their service.

Beyond the 15% of alumni who specifically commented on payback tours, a significant number of alumni expressed that their NPS education improved their overall performance. They highlighted that they use the knowledge and skills gained in their daily job functions. However, some alumni noted that the payback/utilization tour should not hinder the completion of key billet assignments, as this restriction could eliminate opportunities for future command billets. The feedback on payback/utilization tours reveals a dichotomy in alumni experiences. While some find their NPS education highly beneficial and applicable, others feel constrained by the assignment processes within their services.

Networking: 4% of the alumni noted significant benefits from their interactions with faculty, international students, and peers from various services. This communication fostered a network of bright officers, creating an invaluable resource for sharing insights, seeking advice, and fostering partnerships. The diverse environment at NPS exposed alumni to many different agencies and groups across the Department of Defense (DOD). This exposure has fundamentally changed their views on execution with other agencies, emphasizing the need to collaborate and work towards common goals. NPS gave alumni a holistic view of the power that cross-agency collaboration can have. This institution is not just about academic excellence; it is about preparing leaders who can navigate and leverage the complexities of inter-agency cooperation. The relationships built at NPS are not just professional; they are often personal, creating a sense of camaraderie and mutual support that endures over time.

New opportunities: 3% of alumni mentioned their NPS education provided them with new opportunities such as eligibility for further education and advancements in military and joint positions, successful transitions to civilian careers, achievements in academic and professional publishing, and ability to secure research project funds.

Utilizing the thesis project: Some alumni reflected on how their capstone and thesis projects have enabled them to make meaningful contributions to their communities and fields of service.

Promotion: NPS education helped some alumni get selected for promotion, and to achieve success in supervisory, managerial roles.

The last question in this section concerns contributions to developing solutions for operational problems while attending NPS. 68% of the respondents helped develop solutions to operational problems (Figure 13).

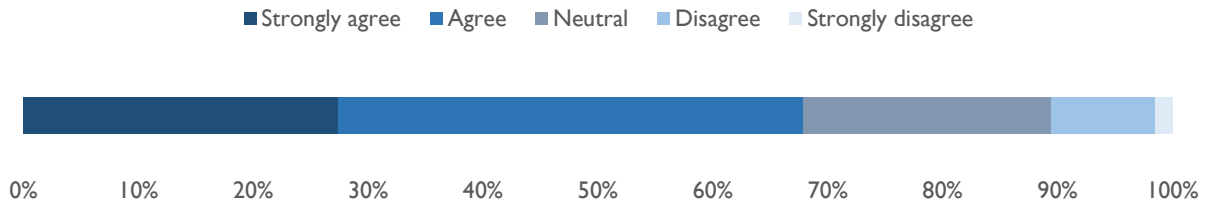


Figure 13 Response rates for whether respondents contributed to develop solutions to operational problems while attending NPS

Utilization/Relevancy

Alumni were asked whether they are currently in or have completed a utilization or payback tour. As seen in Figure 14, 75% of respondents met their utilization/payback tour requirement. Respondents who

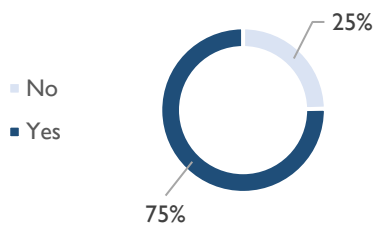


Figure 14 Utilization/Payback tour completion rate

responded to this question with “Yes” were asked whether the knowledge and skills they gained from NPS studies are/were relevant to their tour. 87% of the students think that their education was relevant to their job assignments in the utilization/payback tour (Figure 15).



Figure 15 Response rate for relevancy of NPS education to utilization/payback tour

Career Progress

Promotion is a significant achievement for a service member and a recognition of that person's contribution to the service. It is evidence of leadership capability and mastery of skills and duties. According to alumni survey results, 60% of the US military officers were promoted after graduation. Figure 16 shows the promotion rates of US military officers who responded to the survey.

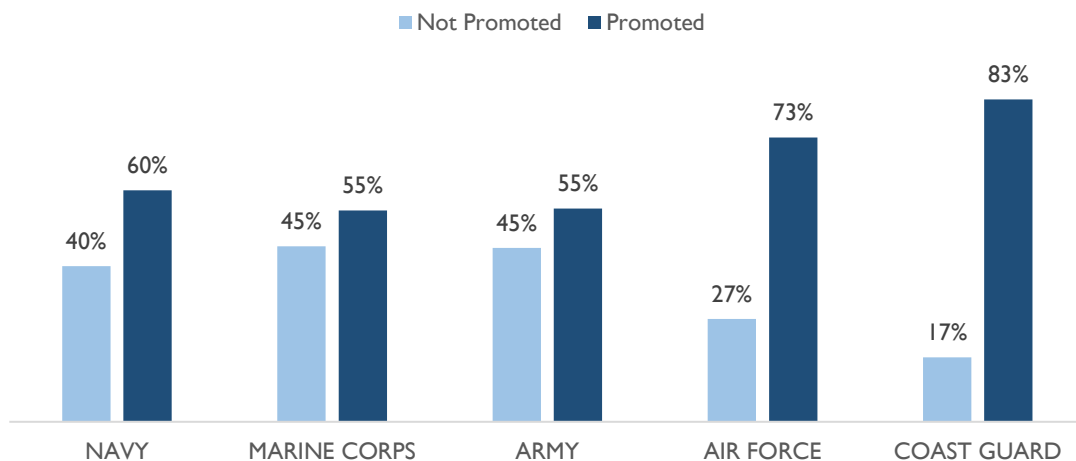
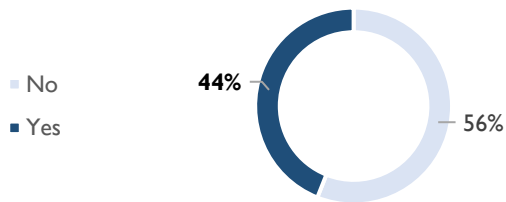


Figure 16 Promotion rate of US military respondents by service

Selection for command is competitive because the number of positions is limited. The eligibility for



command may differ depending on service and community. Of the 44% indicated they were eligible for command (Figure 17), 53% were selected for command (Figure 18).



Figure 17 Response rate for being eligible for command position

Figure 18 Response rate for being selected for command position

Professional Connections

NPS is a defense focused graduate university offering various levels of education to US military, DoD civilians, and international partners. The unique academic environment allows students to engage with their peers in a joint setting. This section analyzes responses related to the connections alumni made during their education program. Alumni were asked about contact with peers and faculty after graduation. 81% of the respondents have networked with peers and faculty. Figure 19 shows networking rates. Most respondents reconnect with students from the same service/agency (71%). 38% of the respondents have stayed in contact with faculty.

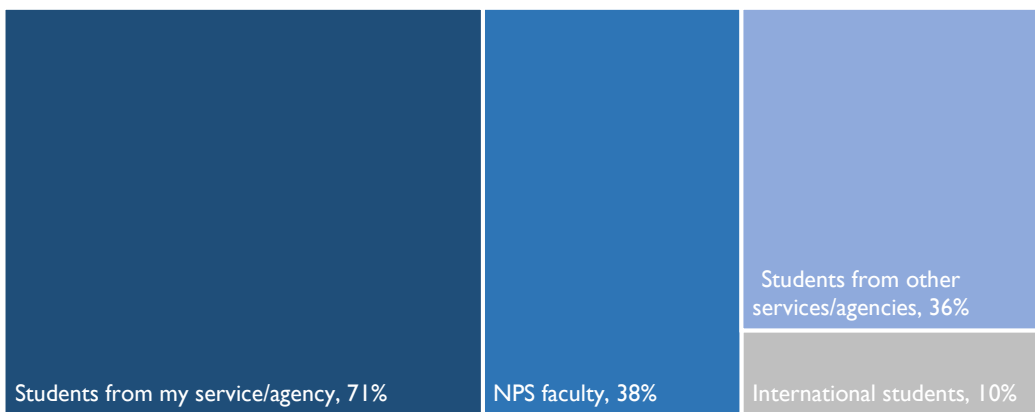


Figure 19 Response rate for networking

Alumni were also asked whether the connections made have been beneficial to their career. 67% of the respondents agree that they benefitted from these connections (Figure 20).

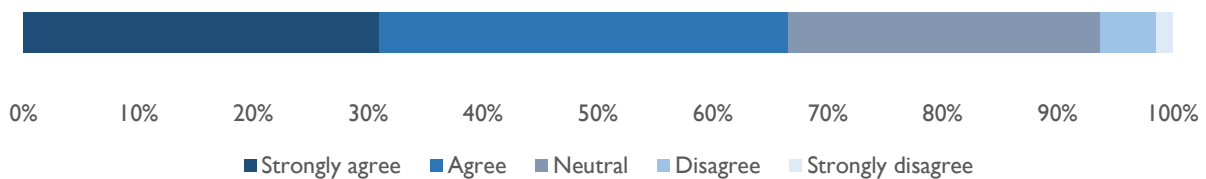


Figure 20 Response rates for whether respondents contributed to develop solutions to operational problems while attending NPS

Recommendations and Areas of Improvements

This section analyzes two open ended questions. The first asks about the gaps in knowledge or skills that NPS could address in its educational programs. Most of the responses provide suggestions on improving and maintaining the quality of education. These items are suggestions not specific to a program or department.

- Address more applications of real-world scenarios and examples to bridge the gap between theory and practice.
- Sustain a balance between theory/concept and the operationalization of material in the conduct of courses.
- Engage with senior leadership and sponsors to inform them about the capabilities that will enable change. It is essential to ensure that the workplace is receptive to new knowledge and techniques acquired by students.
- Increase DAU/DAWIA/eDACM course equivalency and certification opportunities to boost professional qualifications.
- Provide more information on emerging technologies and their application to modern warfare.
- Address new capabilities and emerging technologies such as AI through possible application and use cases in courses.
- Improve the learning management system (SAKAI).
- Incorporate labs that supplement all courses associated with Gen AI, AI, or machine learning.
- Move education from theory to tangible by providing relevant knowledge at the tactical level.
- Expose students to new Microsoft tools such as Power BI, Power Query, etc.
- Offer more leadership courses.
- Increase the relevancy of courses, especially in technological areas.
- Increase exposure to modern and commonly utilized tools (especially in DOD).
- Organize events with speakers from the Fleet to discuss current issues with students.
- Maintain or increase high-quality professors and dynamic course offerings.
- Provide math support/tutoring outside of refreshers to assist students in overcoming challenging concepts.
- Offer opportunities for students to hear from military leaders about the value of the education they receive.
- Improve advertising to better inform students of the educational opportunities available at NPS.
- Make JPME optional in resident programs.
- Invest in improvements to labs and equipment to enhance practical learning experiences.
- Organize thesis briefings from different services and communities regarding demanding topics, relevant subjects, etc.
- Enhance the technical capabilities of hybrid classes to ensure that online students receive the same quality of education as their in-person counterparts.
- Increase interservice/joint focus in the approach to solving problems.
- Allow more enlisted graduate students to have opportunities at NPS.
- Increase classified offerings and capabilities.
- Provide more electives and co-curricular activities and advertise better the existing ones.
- Develop partnerships with defense related industries and provide opportunities for students to learn and engage with them.

The second question asks what changes would make an NPS education more valuable to alumni, and their sponsoring service, agency, or department. Some of the responses highlight the suggestions made

in previous questions. Their responses were grouped in eight categories: talent management, thesis process, advancement, faculty quality, DL experience, alumni benefits, work-life balance and networking.

Talent Management: A group of alumni expressed concerns regarding the perceived value of their education from the NPS within their communities. They believe that there is a lack of awareness about what NPS graduates are capable of and that their follow-up assignments should better align with the knowledge and skills gained during their education. Alumni recommend that the communities and services should improve talent management by aligning education with follow-up assignments immediately post-graduation. Providing more opportunities for utilization immediately after graduation would help alumni apply their knowledge and improve efficiency and effectiveness within their communities. Alumni claim that the relevancy of the information learned diminishes each year it goes unused, making it less meaningful over time. Assigning officers to a billet three or four years after their education might be less valuable in certain fields, as refreshing knowledge or maintaining relevance requires time and effort.

According to alumni, despite the high-quality education at NPS, many senior leaders view the time invested at NPS and subsequent utilization tours as not career-enhancing or equivalent to time spent in key billets. Therefore, NPS should effectively communicate the capabilities that NPS-trained students bring to the table to ensure that communities understand the value of the education provided. This perception prevents the completion of key billet assignments and almost entirely removes the opportunity for future command billets. NPS should build stronger relationships with operational commands to tailor the education to their needs. The alumni believe that the knowledge gained through an NPS education can significantly contribute to and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their communities. Thus, earlier identification of utilization tours would help pinpoint the most important skills from the curriculum.

Thesis Process: There are several recommendations alumni provided regarding thesis/capstone process.

- In many instances, certain individuals tend to contribute less yet receive the same credit as their more industrious peers. Introducing peer evaluation mechanisms can help ensure that every team member is held accountable for their contributions. This approach can promote fairness and motivate all members to actively participate.
- The size of the group significantly impacts the dynamics and efficiency of collaborative projects. Limiting the size of groups can enhance coordination and communication, leading to more effective teamwork. Smaller groups can also facilitate a more equitable distribution of tasks and responsibilities.
- Alumni emphasize the need for a balanced approach that leverages teamwork while maintaining rigorous academic standards. Providing additional oversight and mentorship for group projects can help maintain academic standards and ensure that projects achieve the desired depth and quality.
- Many alumni express a desire to conduct research in coordination with their utilization tour billet. Establishing stronger connections with operational units and communities can help identify relevant research topics and align them with academic theses. This collaboration can enhance the practical impact of research and support professional development.
- There is also a growing interest in interdisciplinary research among alumni. Creating more opportunities for interdisciplinary research can foster innovation and comprehensive problem-solving. Academic units should encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration and support projects that integrate multiple fields of study.

Advancement: Alumni argue that increasing awareness about the opportunities and programs available at NPS is essential for expanding its reach and broadening its impact. By targeting diverse services and

civilians, emphasizing defense-related education, offering professional development opportunities, organizing educational briefs, and advertising post-graduation benefits, NPS can attract a wider audience and enhance its relevance in today's dynamic environment. By emphasizing these aspects, NPS can attract individuals seeking specialized knowledge and skills in a joint environment.

Faculty Quality: Alumni request an increase in the recruitment of highly qualified faculty members who have the appropriate background and knowledge pertinent to their fields. Professors with substantial expertise and practical experience can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and its application in real-world scenarios. Alumni indicates that faculty members can contextualize their teaching and research by visiting ships, observing weapons tests, and engaging with various operational activities. Additionally, some alumni emphasized the importance of instructional training for instructors such as teaching techniques and building better assignments.

DL Experience: Several suggestions can improve the DL experience. The below items are specific to DL education.

- In-person, on-site opportunities might enable networking and build a sense of belonging or community.
- Grade each student on their own performance in group and capstone projects to ensure fair assessment.
- Allow students to complete Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) simultaneously, similar to in-residence students.
- Reinstate MBA programs to provide more diverse educational opportunities.
- Increase the availability of stackable degree programs to offer more flexible learning paths.
- Ensure DL program offerings align with relevant subspecialty codes.
- Provide options for students to pursue PhD programs through distance learning.
- Increase the availability of asynchronous courses to accommodate various schedules.
- Offer more fully asynchronous program opportunities and enhance their visibility through better advertising.
- Improve access to the various networks required for course participation and resources.
- Provide remote access to lab equipment such as signal generators and spectrum analyzers for hands-on learning.
- Establish "satellite" Naval Postgraduate School sites in Fleet Concentration areas to support local students.
- Introduce remote classroom training options for both faculty and students to enhance teaching and learning experiences.
- Improve the relevancy and quality of recorded video lectures to ensure they meet current educational standards and student needs.
- Provide more support for distance learning students in developing soft skills such as oral/written communication and research.

Benefits of being NPS Alumni: Alumni expressed a desire for several benefits aimed at strengthening the connection with the institution and advancing continuous professional growth. The following outlines their recommendations.

- A more robust alumni organization would provide former students with a network to engage with after returning to the fleet. This network would facilitate professional connections, mentorship opportunities, and collaboration among alumni.
- Continuing lifelong learning is essential for alumni to remain relevant in their fields. Educational opportunities such as webinars, short courses, workshops and guest lectures would not only keep alumni informed but also encourage ongoing engagement with NPS.

- To support continuous learning and research, alumni should have access to library resources, software access, and class materials.
- There is a need for a structured pathway for alumni to pose operational research questions to NPS, beyond personal relationships, to foster academic and professional collaboration.
- Effective communication is crucial for maintaining an active and informed alumni community. This includes providing timely updates about meetings, conferences, and events to expand knowledge and networking opportunities.

Work-Life Balance: Some alumni have voiced concerns regarding the balance between the extensive workload required by degree programs. The intensive nature of these programs often leads to difficulties in balancing academic responsibilities with work and family commitments. Several alumni believe that a longer program culminating in a graduate degree is inherently more beneficial due to the depth of knowledge and research experience it provides. Another suggestion is to provide degree programs that do not require a thesis.

Networking: Alumni feedback highlights the importance of enhancing networking opportunities within the NPS community and leveraging the unique advantages of Silicon Valley connections. By encouraging cross-service and international engagement, NPS can foster a more cohesive and globally aware student body. Simultaneously, leveraging Silicon Valley's technological and leadership resources can provide students with unparalleled opportunities for growth and development.

Conclusion

Results from the alumni survey show that 97% of respondents were satisfied with their NPS experience, and NPS education positively impacted their contribution to their service/community. However, improvements in specific areas could potentially enhance the quality of alumni contributions. For example, of the 13% of respondents who completed a utilization/payback tour, 75%, did not use the skills and knowledge gained at NPS. More effective talent management by employers and increased awareness of the capabilities of NPS graduates might allow alumni to better use their education during payback tours.

One notable result of the survey was that 71% of alumni respondents made valuable connections with fellow students and faculty members, which ultimately benefited their careers. The joint environment of NPS promoted an understanding of the bigger picture. For some alumni, the connections made at NPS transformed into opportunities to collaborate, consult, and maintain long-lasting friendships. Alumni want to continue collaborating and take advantage of opportunities to learn from peers and faculty.

NPS stands out as a unique graduate school due to its mission, student profile, and focus on defense-related research and education. This distinctiveness influences alumni career paths and fosters networking opportunities. NPS equips students with a solid foundation for new opportunities and career success. Alumni are eager to continue their learning journey with NPS through various educational and networking opportunities such as webinars, seminars, short courses, workshops, guest lectures, and other enriching experiences.