



# Graduate Student Exit Survey Fall 2011

UNIVERSITY of  
**NORTHERN COLORADO**  
Graduate School and  
International Admissions

Bringing  
education  
to life.

# Overview

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The Graduate Student Exit Survey was completed by UNC's master's, specialist, and doctoral students who graduated in Fall 2011. The survey was developed to assess students' opinions about their experiences at the University. The results will guide improvements in Graduate School services in order

to provide the best graduate education possible. This executive summary provides 1) students' satisfaction and knowledge, 2) employment expectations, and 3) areas for improvement. An action plan is included.

"I had a wonderful educational experience. Every instructor was very knowledgeable in their area and very accommodating to their students."

## Methods

### Collection and Analysis

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The Exit Survey was developed by the Graduate School and International Admissions Office. While most data contained in this report were based on student responses to the survey, some data such as degree obtained, GPA, and program were obtained from our institutional data system (Banner). Graduates received an invitation to participate 2 weeks after graduation along with the Qualtrics

survey. Two reminder e-mails were sent to increase the response rate. Of the 183 individuals receiving a graduate degree in Fall 2011, 79 graduate students completed the survey for a response rate of 43%.

**April 2012**

**Linda L. Black, Ed.D**

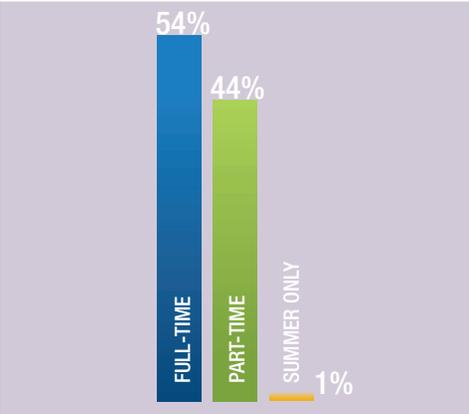
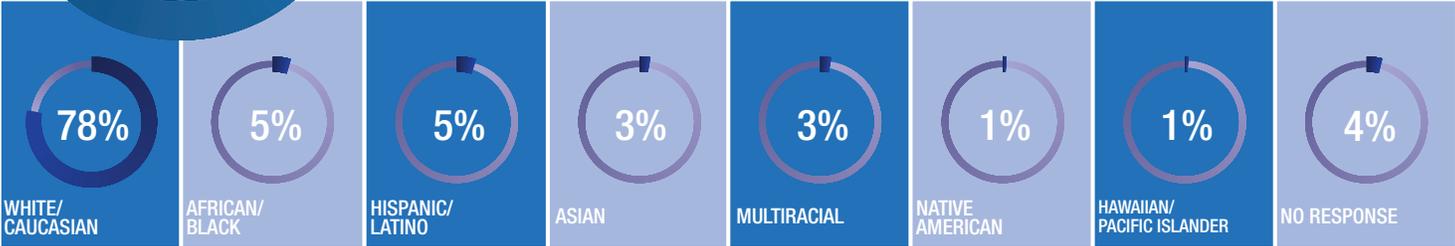
**Sonja Rizzolo, Ph.D**

**Stephanie M. Burchett, M.A.**

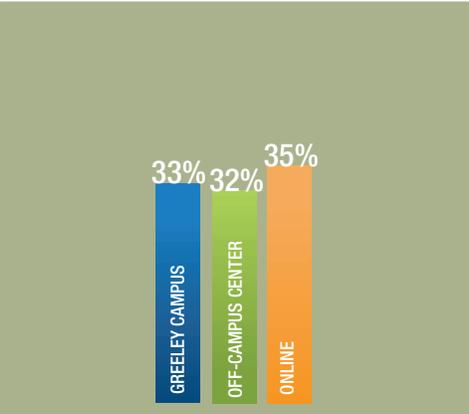
# SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS



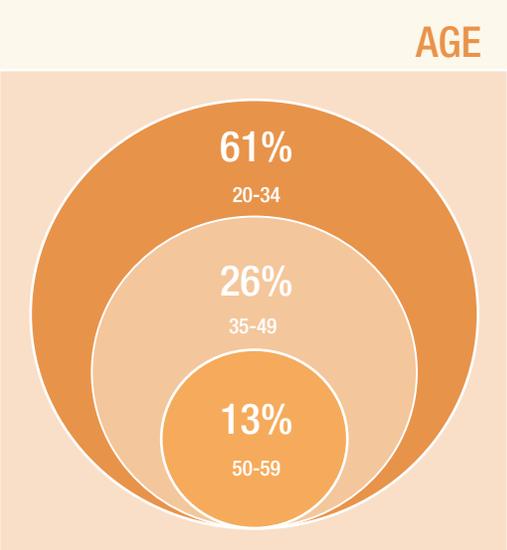
78% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS WERE FEMALE



STATUS



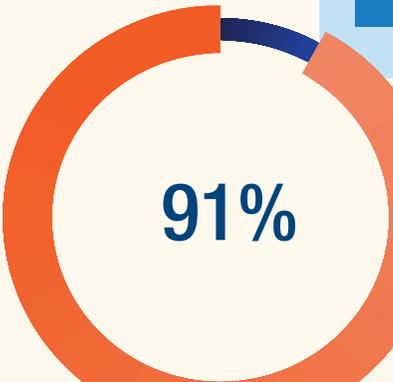
PLACE OF STUDY



AGE



MARITAL STATUS



91% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS HAD EARNED A MASTER'S DEGREE

OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS GRADUATED WITH AT LEAST A 3.5 GPA

## COLLEGE

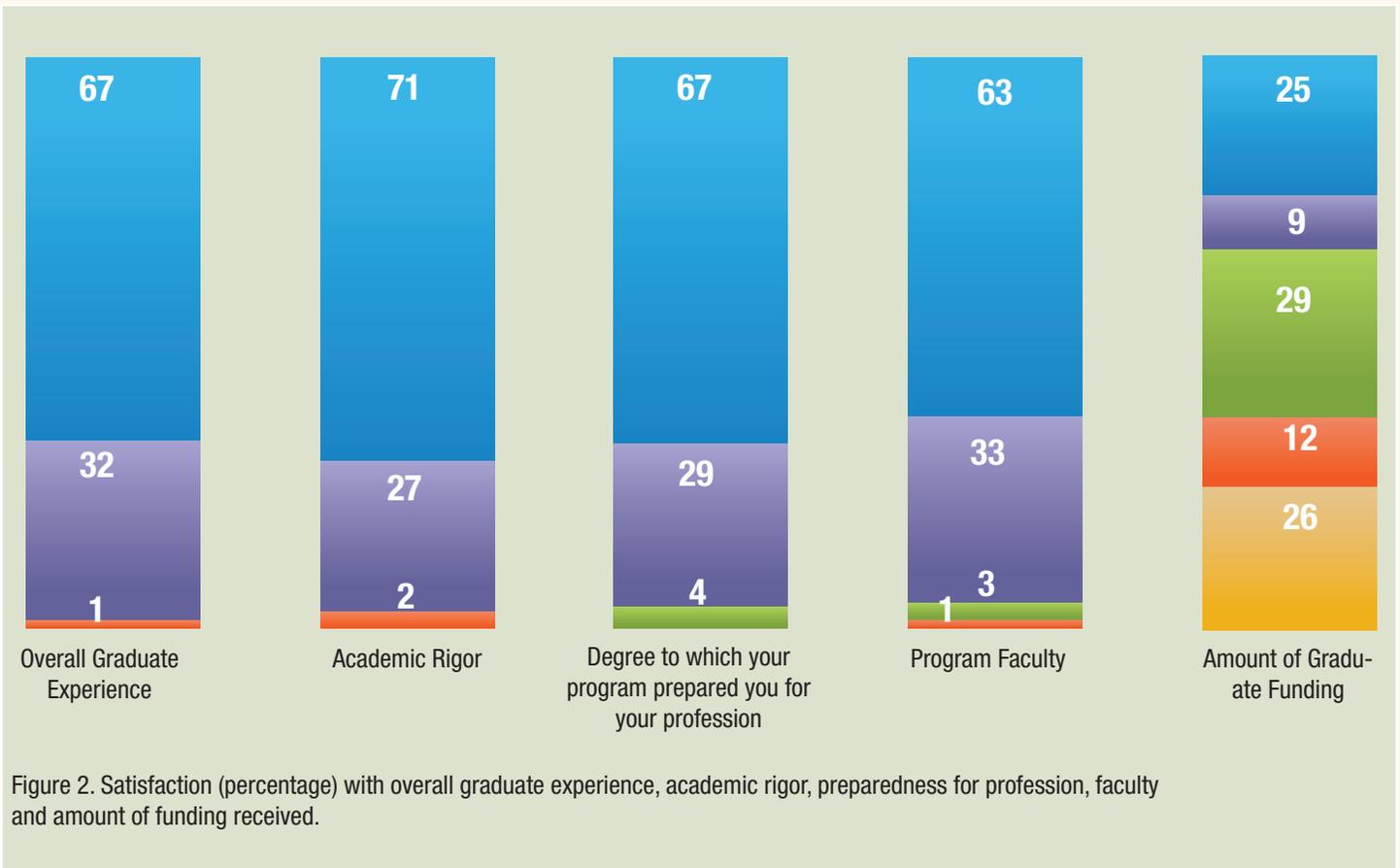
- 72% COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
- 4% COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
- 18% COLLEGE OF NATURAL & HEALTH SCIENCES
- 6% COLLEGE OF PERFORMING & VISUAL ARTS

# RESULTS

## Satisfaction & Knowledge

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction on 5 questions. Respondents could choose from five possible options: Dissatisfied, Somewhat Dissatisfied, Neutral, Somewhat Satisfied, or Satisfied. Ninety-nine percent of respondents indicated that they were satisfied at some level with their overall graduate experience at UNC, 98% reported they were satisfied at some level with the academic rigor of their graduate program (see Figure 2). About 96% of graduates were satisfied at some level with the

degree to which their program prepared them for their profession, 96% of the respondents stated that they were satisfied at some level with their program faculty. Approximately one third of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied at some level with the amount of graduate funding (assistantships and scholarships) they received during their attendance at UNC.



*“I really enjoyed my time at UNC; I developed friendships with my classmates and learned more than I ever could have imagined. I am so happy that I decided to go back to grad school it was the best decision that I ever made!”*



# Relationships between Satisfaction and Gender, Location, and Student Type

Male respondents (50%) seem to be more satisfied at some level with the amount of funding received than females (29%). In addition, students who took the majority of their classes on UNC's main campus (36%) or online (41%) seem to be more satisfied with the amount of graduate funding than respondents who took the majority of their classes on an off-campus Center (23%). More than one third of the

full-time respondents (38%) indicated to be satisfied during their attendance at UNC, compared to 24% of the part-time respondents (See Figure 3, 4 & 5). There seem to be no other differences between the satisfaction questions and gender, site, and student type.

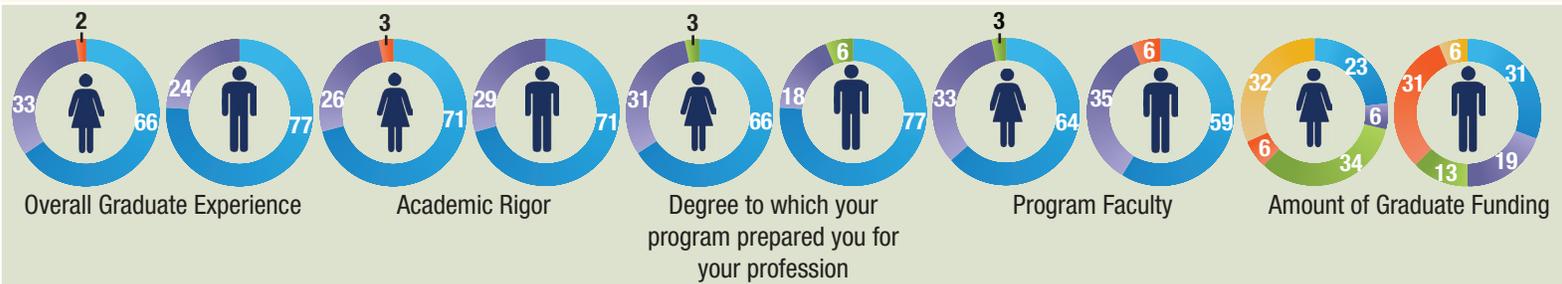


Figure 3. Satisfaction (percentage) with overall graduate experience, academic rigor, preparedness for profession, faculty and amount of funding received by gender.

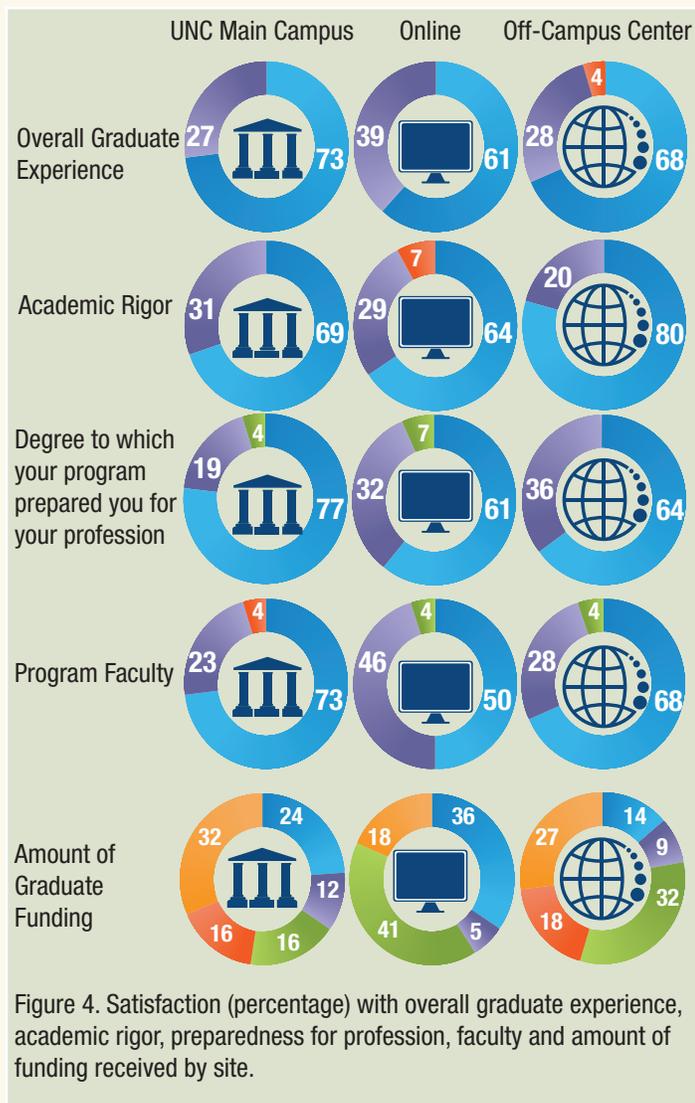


Figure 4. Satisfaction (percentage) with overall graduate experience, academic rigor, preparedness for profession, faculty and amount of funding received by site.

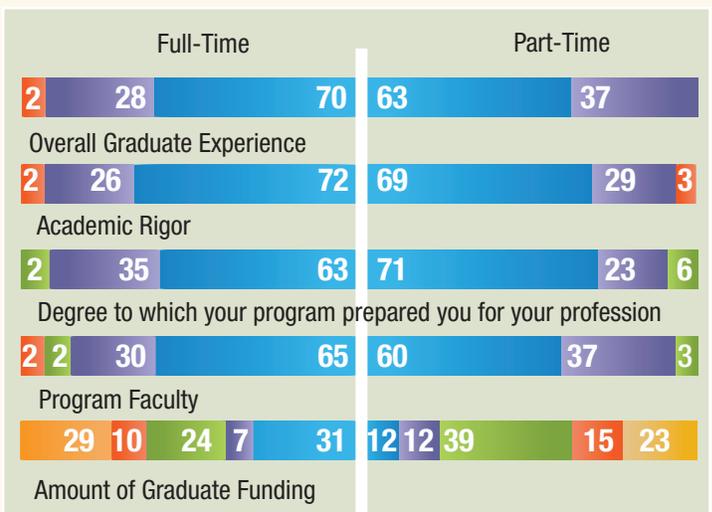


Figure 5. Satisfaction (percentage) with overall graduate experience, academic rigor, preparedness for profession, faculty and amount of funding received by student type.



# Knowledge about Funding Opportunities

## Assistantships & Scholarships

Graduates were asked about their knowledge of graduate funding opportunities. As shown in Figure 6, almost one third of the respondents were not knowledgeable at all about the funding opportunities. Female respondents seem to be less knowledgeable than male respondents. In addition, more than one third of the extended studies graduates were not knowledgeable at all about graduate funding opportunities compared to 19%

of the graduates who took their classes UNC Main Campus. Of the respondents who were a part-time student, 37% were not knowledgeable at all about Graduate Funding opportunities compared to 26% of the full-time student respondents.

- Extremely Knowledgeable
- Very Knowledgeable
- Moderately Knowledgeable
- Somewhat Knowledgeable
- Not at all Knowledgeable



Figure 6. Knowledge of Funding Opportunities.

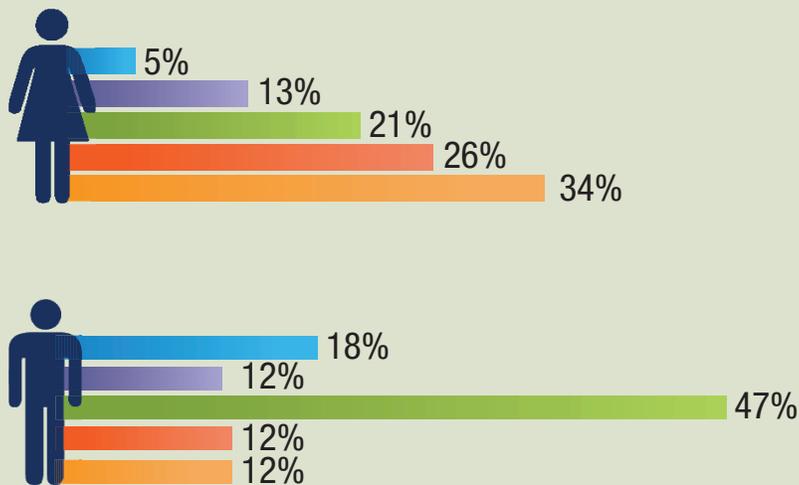


Figure 7. Knowledge of Funding Opportunities by Gender.

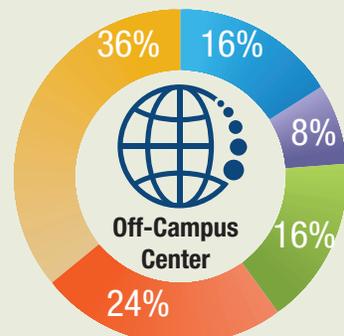
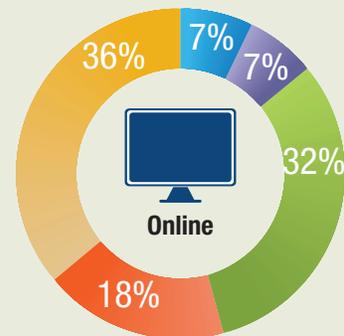
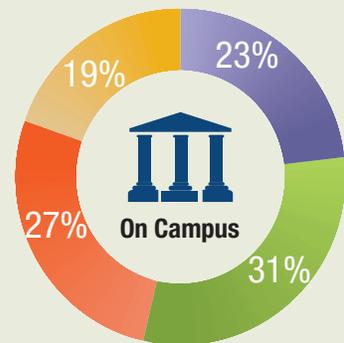


Figure 8: Knowledge of Funding Opportunities by Site.

Figure 9: Knowledge of Funding Opportunities by Status.

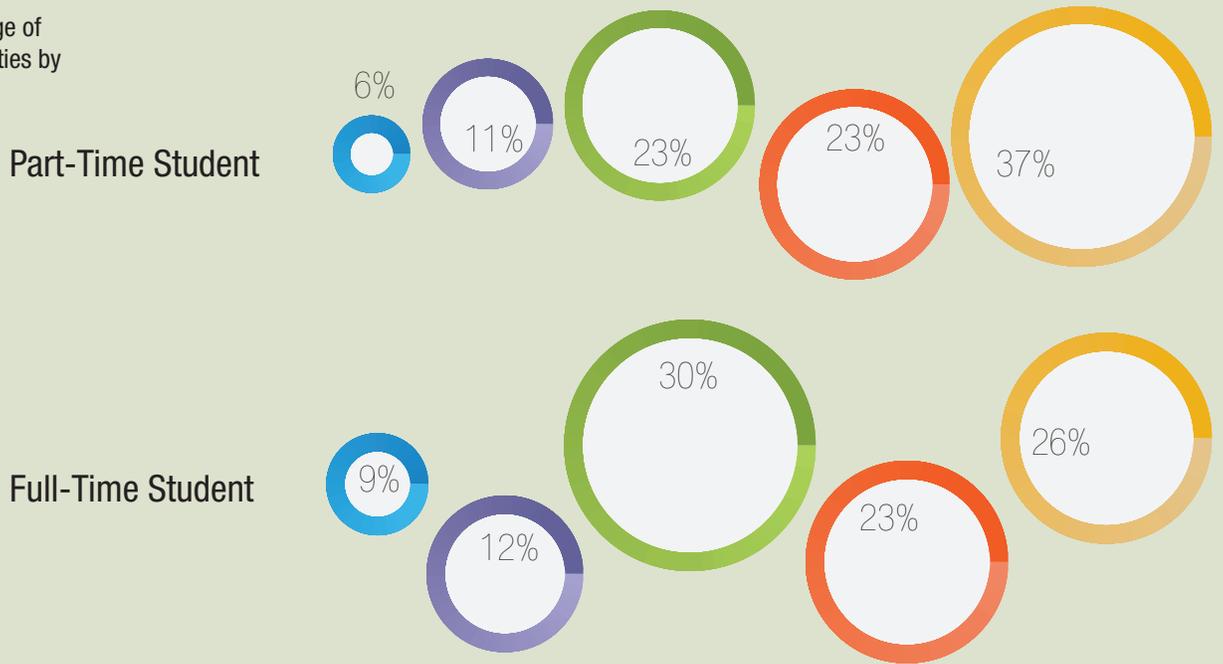
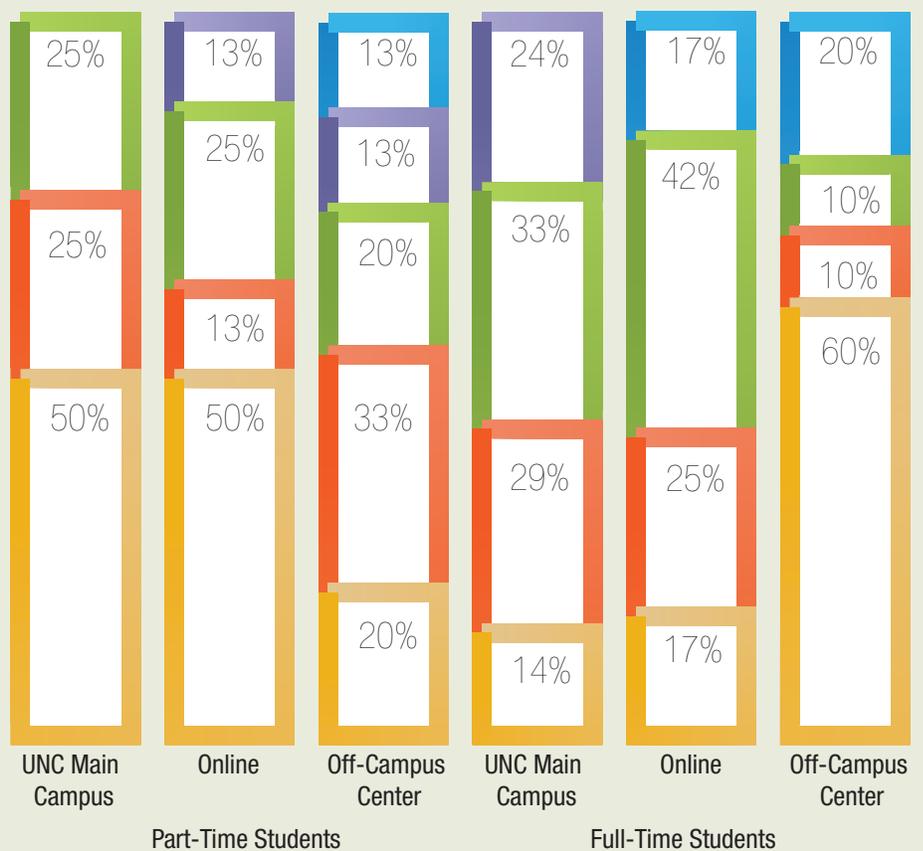


Figure 10: Knowledge of Funding Opportunities by status and location.

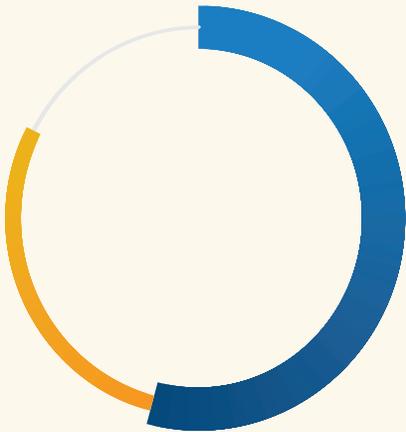
Figure 10 displays the relationship between knowledge about funding opportunities, student status (part-time, full-time), and site (UNC main campus, off-campus center, online). Part-time off-campus graduates seemed to be more knowledgeable than part-time UNC main campus and Online graduates. Full-time UNC main campus and online respondents seem to be more knowledgeable than full-time off-campus center respondents.



# Employment Expectations

More than two thirds of the respondents were employed; forty-eight percent were continuing with their current employment and 20% accepted a job offer. Another 3% of the respondents were considering several job offers. Twenty nine percent of the respondents were seeking a position but did not have specific job prospects or they did not

have any employment plans. Since the survey was administered about two weeks after graduation, respondents may not have had ample opportunity to pursue their career. There were some differences about expectations for employment by gender, site, and student type.

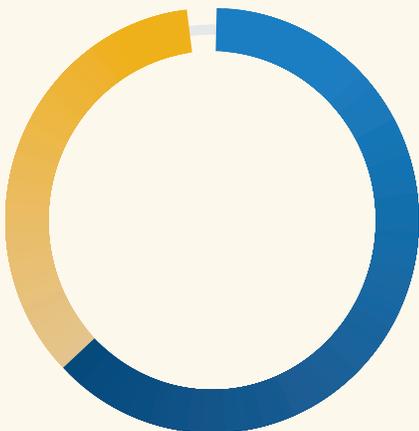


**54% of the females were continuing in their current employment compared to 29% of the males**

**75% of the online respondents were continuing in their current employment compared to 19% of the UNC Main Campus and 48% of the off-campus respondents.**



Respondents Continuing in their current employment



**63% of the part-time student respondents were continuing in their current employment versus 35% of the full-time respondents.**

# AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

The qualitative comments suggested that respondents were satisfied with their experience at UNC, especially with the faculty. Specifically, respondents valued how knowledgeable, accommodating, professional, and approachable the faculty were. Graduates were asked to provide

information about areas for improvement. The top four suggestions were: 1) Improve thesis and dissertation process, 2) More communication and graduate student engagement, 3) Funding information and more opportunities, and 4) Career Help. Details can be found in Table 2.



## THESIS/DISSERTATION PROCESS

- Provide more information about the thesis and dissertation process (transparency of process)
- Be clear about thesis/dissertation deadlines
- Be clear about formatting expectations



## COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

- Involve graduate students more around campus
- Stronger contact with the graduate school especially for students who are completing degrees using off-campus Centers
- Encouraged networking with other graduates who have completed the program



## FUNDING

- Provide more funding to graduate students
- Make clear which scholarships/assistantships students can apply for and how
- More funding information (through e-mails, advisors, Center visit, seminar) for all students including non-traditional and off-campus students
- Provide funding information at time of enrollment



## CAREER HELP

- Assistance with job placement/internship
- Provide access to job fair information

# ACTION PLAN

## Actionable Data

Exit Survey data suggest there are four areas for improvement. The Graduate School and International Admissions Office will develop an action plan with measurable outcomes.

### THESIS/DISSERTATION PROCESS

Develop communication plan for the thesis and dissertation process. Although the Graduate School and International Admissions Office has increased the resources for students who are working on their thesis and dissertation, there still seems to be some room for improvement. The Graduate School will be working on a communication campaign that will target students who sign up for proposal and dissertation credit hours. There will be multiple e-mails that will provide students with resources available to them such as the writing center, Graduate School style manuals, Institutional Review Board (IRB) application process, forms to complete, deadlines, Dissertation Workshop Series, etc. In addition, the Graduate School will work with graduate coordinators to disseminate thesis/capstone/dissertation materials and serve as a consultant for any faculty with questions. The Graduate School will provide education related to the thesis/capstone/dissertation process to all new graduate faculty no later than the 4th week of the fall term of hire.



### COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

The Quality of Life Survey was launched in March, 2012. This survey included several questions about engagement opportunities for Graduate students. Based on data from the Quality of Life Survey and Dean's Town Hall meetings, the Graduate School will in collaboration with other departments on campus develop opportunities for graduate students such as research day, wellness day, and Graduate School Movie night.



### FUNDING

The Graduate School will be educating the graduate student population about various funding opportunities such as assistantships and scholarships by using various means such as e-mail blasts, flyers, Facebook, Twitter, listserv, and webinars. Information will be sent to students who are inquiring about a program, completing their application, are just admitted into the program as well as enrolled students. Tailored communication will be developed in collaboration with the Office of Extended Studies and used to reach extended studies students who take online classes or take classes on any of the off-campus Centers. In addition, resources will be available for program faculty and coordinators.



### CAREER HELP

The Graduate School will work with Career Services to develop a plan for students prior to graduation. Services may include: professional job fairs, resume/cover letter workshops, job search help, and interviewing preparation.

## Survey Changes

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The scale will be reformulated to Very Dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Neutral, Satisfied and Very Satisfied to provide a distinct demarcation between degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction

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Pilot questions with group of graduate students.

- New questions will be added to the instrument.
- Examples of questions that will be included in the Spring 2012 Exit Survey are:

The following best describes my satisfaction with the thesis/capstone/dissertation manual posted on the Graduate School Website.

Please rate the helpfulness of the Career Center.

The following would have helped me to improve my level of satisfaction with my mentor(s) (check all that apply).

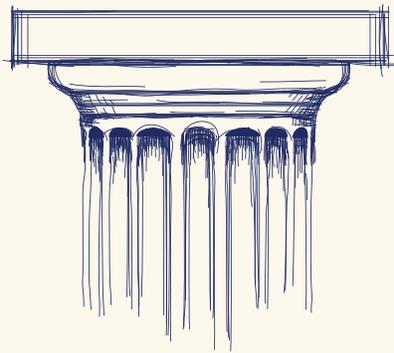
## SUMMARY

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We are pleased to report that overall the majority of fall 2011 graduates were satisfied with the rigor of their graduate program, the degree of professional preparation, the program faculty, and their graduate experience overall at UNC. These initial findings reflect the efforts of the graduate faculty, staff and the Graduate School. We noted specific areas of improvement and anticipate continued improvements based on feedback from graduates in subsequent semesters. Go Bears!

Please contact Sonja Rizzolo if you have any further questions about these data.

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL



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