

2024 Northwestern Senior Survey

The 2024 Northwestern Senior Survey was administered to all graduating Evanston undergraduate students. The biennial survey was scheduled to launch on April 30th, 2024, but was delayed due to the protests on Deering Meadow. The invitation email was sent on May 7th, a week after the agreement to end the protests was made. Four reminder emails were sent before the survey closed on May 29th. In past administrations emails were sent from various University leaders (President, Vice President for Student Affairs, Dean of Students, school Associate Deans), but this year all emails were sent from the Office of Institutional Research. Students were also able to access the survey via a generic link that was promoted by Student Affairs in their communications.

The survey received 422 responses for an overall response rate of 20%. This was an eleven percentage point decrease from the 2022 survey. Female students had a higher response rate (23%), which is typical for surveys. The response rate was highest for White students (24%) and lowest for Black/African American students (15%). By school, Communication had the highest response rate (22%) while Education & Social Policy (SESP) had the lowest response rate (13%). For the last Senior Survey, in 2022, SESP had the highest response rate by school.

This year's survey instrument asked students about their perceptions of Northwestern, academic support, campus life, services and facilities, skills, activities, paying for college, and background. Below are overall results for selected questions with sub-group results identified where notable.

It is important to keep in mind that the pandemic response had a significant impact on the experiences of this graduating class. This was the incoming class of Fall 2020. Most of them did not come to campus during their first quarter and they attended classes online for most of their first year. Extracurricular opportunities like study abroad and internships were mostly cancelled for 2020 and 2021.

Additional information about the survey, including instruments, reports, and the complete results from this year and past years are available to be viewed [here](#).

Evaluate Northwestern

This year 85% of Northwestern seniors indicated some level of satisfaction (27% 'Very satisfied' and 58% 'Generally satisfied') on a five-point scale in response to the first question asking, 'Overall, how satisfied are you with your undergraduate education?' This is an increase in overall satisfaction from the 2022 survey, when 80% indicated they were either very or generally satisfied.

Students were then asked to rate their level of satisfaction on a four-point scale with five overall aspects of their experience at Northwestern. Four of the items received at least 88% responses of very or generally satisfied: 'Level of intellectual excitement on campus' (92% very or generally satisfied), 'Overall quality of instruction' (90%), 'Opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities' (89%), and 'Opportunities for personal growth and development' (88%). The last item, 'Social life on campus,' received 73% responses of very or generally satisfied.

The last question of this block asked students if they, 'Would encourage a high school senior who resembles you to attend Northwestern?' From a five-point scale, 78% of responses were affirmative with 47% responding 'Definitely would' and 31% responding 'Probably would.' This was also an improvement from the 2022 survey when 70% responded definitely or probably would.

Undergraduate Experience

Most students indicated they were satisfied with the five aspects of their academic experience asked about on the survey using a four-point scale. The two highest rated items were 'Out of class availability of faculty' (89% very or generally satisfied) and 'Availability of academic support and assistance' (82% very or generally satisfied). The item with the largest share of dissatisfaction was 'Academic advising before declaring a major' with 29% very or generally dissatisfied.

Satisfaction with experiential programming was also very high across the board. The three experiences with the highest level of satisfaction, as rated by participants, were 'Volunteer service abroad' (100% very or generally satisfied), 'Internship abroad' (98%), and 'Published or presented a paper off-campus' (96%). The experience with the highest level of dissatisfaction was 'Research with a faculty member,' with 13% very or generally dissatisfied.

Campus Life

On a four-point scale most students were either 'Very satisfied' (44%) or 'Satisfied' (46%) with 'Feeling of security on campus.' Women had a smaller percentage that responded 'Very satisfied' than men (38% to 52%). By race/ethnicity, the lowest shares of 'Very satisfied' students were Asian/Pacific Islander (33%) and International (38%) while the highest share was for Hispanic students (55%).

While 90% of respondents indicated some level of satisfaction for feeling secure on campus, only 70% of respondents were satisfied with the 'sense of community on campus.' The greatest disparity was for Hispanic students, with 91% responding they were either very or generally satisfied with security on campus, but only 63% responding they were either very or generally satisfied with sense of community on campus. The difference was less for Black students, with 87% were very or generally satisfied with security on campus while 75% were very or generally satisfied with sense of community on campus.

Most respondents indicated some level of agreement on a four-point scale with the statement, 'I have been able to find a balance between my academic work and extracurricular activities,' with 83% responding strongly agree or agree. This was lower for Black students (69% strongly agree or agree) and International students (66% strongly agree or agree and 15% strongly disagree, the highest share by race/ethnicity).

Campus Services and Facilities

There were varying levels of satisfaction with campus services and facilities. The three items with the highest levels of satisfaction were: 'Library facilities and resources' (94% very or generally satisfied), 'Classrooms' (90% very or generally satisfied), and 'Athletic and recreational facilities' (81% very or generally satisfied). The three items with the highest level of dissatisfaction were: 'Administration's responsiveness to student concerns' (60% very or generally dissatisfied), 'Food services' (37% very or generally dissatisfied), and 'Psychological counselling services' (31% very or generally dissatisfied).

Advice for Next Year

Most students say faculty members got to know them well enough to be able to provide a professional recommendation. The largest share of responses (24%) indicated two faculty members could provide a recommendation for them. There were 13% of respondents who said five or more faculty could provide a recommendation and only 12% of respondents said no faculty member would be able to do so.

Beyond being able to provide a recommendation many students made meaningful connections with faculty members while they were at Northwestern. Two-thirds of respondents said they expect to stay in touch with at least one Northwestern faculty member after graduation.

Long Term Goals

Students indicated a wide variety of goals for the future. The most popular one was 'Being well off financially' with 80% rating it as essential or very important. The next most highly rated goals were 'Getting to know people from diverse backgrounds' (74%) and 'Learning about other cultures and nations' (66%).

For the question asking about 'plans to pursue a graduate or professional degree in the future,' there were 57% responding yes, 31% responding uncertain, and only 12% said no.

Paying for College

Most students (83%) indicated they worked for pay at some point during their time at Northwestern. Only 34% say they worked during their first year, but it increased to 62% for second year, 72% for third year, and 72% for fourth year. Women were much more likely than men to have worked during their first year (39% to 27%) and second year (67% to 53%) with minimal differences during third and fourth years. Black (87%) and Asian (86%) students had the highest work percentages by race/ethnicity while international students had the lowest percentage (71%).

Most respondents strongly disagreed (58%) with the statement, 'I will be seriously burdened by loan payments when I graduate.' Another 25% disagreed with the statement and only 4% strongly agreed with it. Hispanic students had the highest share of strongly agreed responses (10%). By school, Communication had the highest share of strongly agreed responses (16%).

Free speech

There were high levels of agreement from students with statements about feeling free to express their views, that Northwestern values diverse views, and that students are respected regardless of their demographics. Following the campus protests 62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'I feel free to express my religious or spiritual beliefs on campus' and only 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed (22% didn't know). The level of agreement was lower for 'Northwestern has a culture that values religious and spiritual expression' with 48% agreed or strongly agreed and 27% disagreed or strongly disagreed (25% didn't know). Most students (64%) agreed or strongly agreed that 'I feel free to express my political beliefs on campus' while 29% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

More About You

The share of students identifying as a gender other than male or female increased to 4% this year. It was 3% in 2022 and 1% or less before that. Also, the share of students indicating a sexual orientation other than 'Heterosexual' has decreased from 93% in 2012 to 73% in 2022 to 70% this year. This includes 'Bisexual' (12% in 2024), 'Queer' (8%), 'Gay/Lesbian' (6%), and 'Unsure' (3%).