TRENDS IN ALUMNI SATISFACTION WITH THEIR NIU UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM:

A COMPARISON OF ON-CAMPUS AND OFF-CAMPUS STUDENTS

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TRENDS IN ALUMNI SATISFACTION WITH THEIR NIU UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM:
A COMPARISON OF ON-CAMPUS AND OFF-CAMPUS STUDENTS

Executive Summary

Data from the NIU Baccalaureate Follow-up Survey were analyzed to identify trends in eleven items on the survey. Analysis was conducted separately for alumni who took their courses primarily off-campus and alumni who took their courses on campus. The percentage of positive responses was analyzed for the following survey items: whether or not alumni would recommend NIU to friends and family, availability of faculty outside of class, faculty’s thoroughness with course material, faculty’s expectations of high-quality work, timely feedback from faculty, faculty’s use of appropriate teaching activities, adequacy of facilities and equipment, availability and appropriateness of academic advising, availability of required courses, present attitude toward degree major, and present attitude toward NIU.

Percentage of positive responses was defined as the aggregate of positive responses on the Likert-type scale for each item. The data generally show that alumni who took their classes off-campus were more satisfied with their baccalaureate experience than alumni who took their classes on-campus. This was evidenced by: the percentage of alumni who would recommend NIU to family and friends, the percentage of alumni who reported faculty as having high expectations of the quality of coursework, the percentage of alumni who responded positively about timely feedback from faculty, about the use of appropriate teaching activities by faculty, the availability of required courses and about their current attitude at the time of the survey toward both their undergraduate degree major and toward NIU in general.

There were a number of items in which the percentage of positive responses was higher for off-campus alumni in 2005, lower for off-campus alumni in 2006, but higher for the remaining years when compared to on-campus alumni. This was true for the percentage of positive responses toward the adequacy of facilities and equipment, the availability of faculty outside of class, and the thoroughness of faculty with the course material. The latter of these two items showed a plummet in the percentage of positive responses for alumni who were off-campus students and surveyed in 2006. Although not as severe, the percentage of positive responses from off-campus alumni surveyed in 2006 dropped for many of the items in this analysis.

The remaining items show more erratic trends, where the greater percentage of positive responses fluctuated from on-campus alumni to off-campus alumni from year to year. Consideration should be given to the cause of such fluctuation as well as to those items in which a negative trend was observed over the five year period such as the adequacy of facilities and equipment and the availability of required courses for those who took their classes primarily at off-campus locations. Figures and tables are included for each item that show five-year trends separately for on-campus and off-campus alumni.
Introduction

The purposes of this report are to (1) examine the trends in alumni satisfaction, as measured by the Northern Illinois University (NIU) annual Baccalaureate Follow-Up Survey one year post graduation, and (2) compare and contrast satisfaction-related responses for alumni who were enrolled as on- or off-campus students. The responses to eleven items on the NIU Baccalaureate Follow-Up Survey were analyzed for five of the most recent consecutive graduating classes.

NIU participates in the Baccalaureate Follow-Up Survey as part of a statewide initiative of the Illinois Board of Higher Education. A common set of questions is sent to each graduating cohort one year after graduation and on a rotating cycle of five and nine years post graduation. This report focuses on responses from each of the five graduating classes, one year after their graduation from NIU.

The set of questions analyzed for this report generally represents alumni satisfaction as it pertains to their experience at NIU. Responses are measured on Likert-type scales of five or six response choices. The data used for trend analysis were aggregated such that for a particular survey question, the percentage of positive responses was analyzed for each of the five alumni cohorts. These percentages were calculated separately for alumni whose classes were taken primarily off-campus, and those whose classes were taken on campus for a set of eleven survey questions. The first of these questions asks whether alumni would recommend NIU to family and friends and is presented here as the frequency of those who responded they would recommend NIU. Two of the eleven questions are measured on a six-point attitudinal scale ranging from strongly negative to strongly positive (1 = strongly negative, 2 = negative, 3 = somewhat negative, 4 = somewhat positive, 5 = positive, 6 = strongly positive). In these cases, a positive response was considered to be the aggregate of the strongly positive, positive, and somewhat positive responses. The remaining eight survey questions are measured on a five-point frequency scale ranging from never to very often (1 = never, 2 = infrequently, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often). For these questions, the percentage of positive responses was considered to be the aggregate of the often and very often responses. The five-year trends for each of the items analyzed were plotted and summaries of the trends for alumni who enrolled as on-campus or off-campus students follow. In addition, the mean survey response for each item was compared for on-campus and off-campus groups using independent samples t-tests for ten of the eleven items analyzed in this paper.
Demographic Information

The demographic profile of respondents is presented in Tables 1 and 2 below. The majority of both on- and off-campus respondents for each year were women (53% - 65%) and more than 75 percent of the respondents in both groups were Caucasian. The majority of off-campus respondents were nursing majors. This was true for all five years. Table 3 shows the degree programs most represented by off-campus students in each of the five years.

Table 1
Frequency (Percent) of Respondents by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Off</th>
<th>On</th>
<th>Off</th>
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<th>Off</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>507</td>
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<td>(35.2)</td>
<td>(44.3)</td>
<td>(42.6)</td>
<td>(42.9)</td>
<td>(32.7)</td>
<td>(44.8)</td>
<td>(35.9)</td>
<td>(44.4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>636</td>
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<td>(4.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>823</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>887</td>
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<td>(100)</td>
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</table>

Note. Location refers to whether students took their classes primarily off-campus or on-campus

Table 2
Frequency (Percent) of Respondents by Ethnicity

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<th>Class of</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
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<td>668</td>
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<td>1069</td>
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<td>(85.1)</td>
<td>(81.2)</td>
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<td>(80.5)</td>
<td>(83.7)</td>
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<td>(79.5)</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>887</td>
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<td>1002</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Location refers to whether students took their classes primarily off-campus or on-campus
Table 3  
*Frequency (Percent) of Undergraduate Degree Programs Represented by Off-Campus Students*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountancy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Emphasis (LAS)</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Technology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical Engineering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>

Note. Only the top four or five most frequent programs for off-campus students in each year are shown.
Alumni Recommend NIU

Alumni were asked to respond to a yes/no question asking whether they would recommend NIU to their friends and family. Figure 1 shows the five year trend of “yes” responses for alumni who graduated between 2005 and 2009 and were surveyed the following year. The trend is shown separately for alumni who completed the majority of their classes at an off-campus location and those who completed their classes on-campus. For convenience, a table displaying the results depicted in the graph is built into each figure.

The percentage of alumni who responded “yes” to whether or not they would recommend NIU to their friends and family was high across the board. Over the course of five years, the positive responses remained above 90 percent for both groups. The discrepancies between on- and off-campus groups were small, with only one (2009) being larger than five percent. Alumni who were off-campus students and graduated in 2005 reported less frequently than those enrolled as on-campus students that they would recommend NIU to friends and family. For the four years following, that relationship was reversed, with alumni enrolled at off-campus sites reporting a higher frequency of positive responses than those enrolled on campus. Because this survey item was dichotomous in nature, independent samples t-tests comparing mean responses would not have been informative and were therefore not conducted. The responses of the remaining items, measured on Likert-type scales, were analyzed with independent samples t-tests.

Figure 1
Percentage of Alumni Who Would Recommend NIU to Friends and Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would Recommend NIU to Friends and Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-campus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Professors Accessible Outside of Class

Alumni were asked to rate how frequently their professors were available outside of class. Figure 2 shows the five-year trend in the percentage of alumni who considered their professors to be available outside of class often or very often. For those who were on-campus students, the percentage of positive responses increased from 80 percent in 2005 to about 87 percent in 2006, and remained rather consistent through 2009. Students who were enrolled off campus showed a higher percentage of positive responses than on-campus students in 2005, but a drop of over 20 percentage points (from 86 percent to 64 percent) occurred between 2005 and 2006. After 2006, those who were enrolled off campus showed consistent increase in their rating of professors’ availability outside of class, but the percent of positive responses remained less than that of those who were on-campus students until the class of 2009. For the class of 2009 the percentage of those who were off-campus students thought faculty were available to them outside of class often or very often once again exceeded that of those who were on-campus students.

A significant difference was found in the mean response rating of how frequently professors were available outside of class for those who were on-campus versus off-campus students in 2006, $t(935) = -2.214, p = .03$. The mean response was 3.92 for those who enrolled as off-campus students versus 4.16 for those who enrolled on campus.

Figure 2
Percentage of Alumni Who Were Positive About Faculty Availability Outside of Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>On-campus</th>
<th>Off-campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>86.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>85.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>89.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The percentages represent the aggregate of “often” and “very often” responses.
Faculty Thoroughness with Course Material

Alumni were asked to rate how frequently their professors were thorough in their treatment of course material. Those alumni who studied on-campus responded positively to this survey question about 80 percent of the time in 2005. The overall trend for on-campus alumni peaked in 2007 at about 89 percent, but remained at 80 or above over the course of all five years. Alumni who studied off-campus responded very positively to this question in 2005, more than 10 percentage points higher than on-campus alumni. The mean survey responses for those alumni who studied on- versus off-campus in 2005 were significantly different, \( t(861) = 2.72, p = .007 \). The mean response was 4.03 for the on-campus alumni and 4.34 for off-campus alumni, indicating those who studied off-campus considered professors to be thorough in their treatment of course material more often than those who studied on-campus.

In 2006, the percentage of positive responses for off-campus alumni dropped nearly 25 percentage points (from 91.5 percent to 66.7 percent), more than 13 percentage points lower than that of on-campus alumni. The mean response for that year was 4.07 for on-campus and 3.87 for off-campus, indicating those who studied on-campus reported faculty thoroughness with course material more frequently than those who studied off-campus. This is particularly noteworthy because the relationship was inverted compared to the prior year and although there was a substantial gap in the percentage of positive responses for on- and off-campus alumni, the difference in mean response values for this survey question only approached statistical significance, \( t(936) = -1.91, p = .056 \). After 2006, there was a consistent increase in the percentage of positive responses about faculty’s thoroughness with course material for the off-campus group, again rising above that of the on-campus group.

Figure 3 shows the trends in positive responses for on- and off-campus alumni.

Figure 3
Percentage of Alumni Who Were Positive About Faculty Thoroughness with Course Material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>On-campus</th>
<th>Off-campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005 Alumni</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 Alumni</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 Alumni</td>
<td>89.2</td>
<td>80.0</td>
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<td>2008 Alumni</td>
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<td>87.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 Alumni</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>89.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The percentages represent the aggregate of “often” and “very often” responses.
Faculty Expectations of High Quality Work

Alumni were asked to rate how frequently their professors’ expectations for the quality of student work were high. As indicated in Figure 4, the five-year trends for this item were similar for on- and off-campus alumni with the percentage of positive responses climbing slightly for both groups between 2005 and 2009 and with off-campus alumni showing slightly higher percentages than on-campus in each of the five years. There was a significant difference between the mean response of on-campus and off-campus alumni in 2007, \( t(1045) = 2.32, p = .021 \). The mean response on a five-point scale was 4.21 for on-campus alumni and 4.47 for off-campus alumni, indicating that in 2007, those who studied off-campus reported more frequent expectations of high-quality work from faculty than those who studied on-campus.

Figure 4
Percentage of Alumni Who Were Positive About Faculty Expectations of High-Quality Work

![Faculty's Expectations of High-Quality Work](image)

Note: The percentages represent the aggregate of “often” and “very often” responses.
Timely Feedback from Faculty

Alumni were asked to rate how frequently professors gave timely feedback on their performance. The five-year trends for on- and off-campus alumni reporting the frequency of which they received timely feedback look very similar and are depicted in Figure 5. The percentage of positive responses to this item was moderate at the beginning of the five-year period for both groups (77.7 percent for on-campus and 80.8 for off-campus in the 2005 alumni cohort). There was a slight drop in this number for both on- and off-campus alumni in the 2006 alumni cohort. After 2006, both on-campus and off-campus alumni reported increased frequency of timely responses from their professors. While the trend lines for each group look very similar in shape, the off-campus group had a higher percentage of positive responses at each of the five years analyzed in this study. The mean response to this survey question was examined at each time point separately for on- and off-campus alumni. Independent samples t-tests showed no significant differences in mean responses between the two groups at any of the five time points.

Figure 5
Percentage of Alumni Who Were Positive About Timely Feedback from Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>On-campus</th>
<th>Off-campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>77.7</td>
<td>80.8</td>
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<td>74.2</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>85.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The percentages represent the aggregate of “often” and “very often” responses.
Faculty Use of Appropriate Teaching Activities

For this survey question, alumni were asked to rate how frequently they felt their professors used appropriate teaching activities to help them learn. The five-year trends for this survey item are depicted in Figure 6. The actual percentages for on- and off-campus alumni were within one-and-a-half points of each other in every year except 2008, where off-campus alumni responded more positively to the survey question by a margin of about six percentage points. Still, both groups reported improvement over the five-year period, ending in 2009 at about five points higher than the 2005 baseline. Independent samples t-tests, comparing the mean response of off-campus alumni with on-campus alumni at each of the five points in time showed no significant differences.

Figure 6
Percentage of Alumni Who Were Positive About Faculty Use of Appropriate Teaching Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>On-campus</th>
<th>Off-campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>79.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>85.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>84.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The percentages represent the aggregate of “often” and “very often” responses.
Adequacy of Facilities and Equipment

Alumni were asked to rate how frequently they felt the facilities and equipment available to them were adequate to support their degree program. Out of the eleven alumni survey questions analyzed in this study, this was the only one in which the trends for on- and off-campus alumni had slopes of opposite signs. In Figure 7 below, a slow, steadily-increasing trend is clearly depicted for alumni who were on-campus students, showing a one to two percent increase each year in the percentage who responded positively to this survey question.

The trajectory for alumni who were off-campus students is more erratic, but it is clear that the overall trend over the five-year period goes down. In 2005, off-campus had a twelve-point lead over on-campus in the percentage of alumni who responded positively about the adequacy of facilities and equipment. In the two years following, the percentage for the off-campus group dropped below that of on-campus group and then returned back to the level at which it began in 2005. From 2007 on, the percentage of off-campus alumni who were positive about facilities and equipment decreased by a greater margin each year such that in 2009, the percentage of off-campus alumni who responded positively was about ten points lower than it was in 2005, and about six points lower than that of on-campus alumni. When the mean survey responses of the on- and off-campus groups were compared for each of the five years, no significant differences between the two groups were found.

**Figure 7**
*Percentage of Alumni Who Were Positive About the Adequacy of Facilities and Equipment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-campus</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-campus</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The percentages represent the aggregate of “often” and “very often” responses.*
Availability of Academic Advising

Alumni were asked to rate how frequently academic advising was available and appropriate. Figure 8 shows the five-year trend in the positive responses of “often” and “very often” about academic advising for on- and off-campus alumni. The trend for alumni who studied on campus was positive with an increase from 75 percent in 2005 to 79 percent in 2009. The trend for alumni who studied off-campus showed more variance and a slight downward trend from 80 percent in 2005 to 79 percent in 2009. No significant differences between off-campus and on-campus alumni were present.

Figure 8
Percentage of Alumni Who Were Positive About Academic Advising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>On-campus</th>
<th>Off-campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>80.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>84.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>74.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The percentages represent the aggregate of “often” and “very often” responses.
Availability of Required Courses

Alumni were asked to rate the frequency of the availability of the courses required for their degree program. Figure 9 shows the trends in positive responses for both on- and off-campus alumni over a three year period. Data were not available on this item for alumni who graduated prior to 2007. Those who studied on-campus showed a slight upward trend in positive responses that began around 77 percent, about 15 percentage points lower than the off-campus group, and ended in 2009 at about 82 percent. There was a downward trend in positive responses for the off-campus group beginning at about 92 percent in 2007 and ending in 2009 at about 86 percent. Positive responses about course availability over the three-year period for off-campus alumni were consistently higher than that of on-campus alumni. There was a significant difference between mean response values for on-campus and off-campus alumni in 2007, \( t(1044) = 2.48, p = .013 \). The mean response was 4.08 for on-campus and 4.40 for off-campus, indicating those who studied off-campus reported their required courses being available more frequently than those who were on-campus students.

Figure 9

Percentage of Alumni Who Were Positive About the Availability of Required Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>On-campus</th>
<th>Off-campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>87.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>85.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The percentages represent the aggregate of “often” and “very often” responses.
Present Attitude Toward Major

As shown in Figure 10, the trends in positive responses to this survey item were similar for on- and off-campus alumni and the discrepancies between the two groups were small for each of the five years. The percentage of alumni in either group with a positive attitude about their major one year after graduation remained at or above 92 percent. Despite these slight discrepancies between on-campus and off-campus in terms of the percentage of positive responses, there was one statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of their mean response values. Alumni surveyed in 2007 who took their classes primarily off-campus had a significantly higher mean response rating of their present attitude toward their bachelor’s degree major than alumni who took their classes on-campus, \( t(1046) = 2.73, p = .01 \).

Figure 10

Percentage of Alumni Who Were Positive About Their Degree Major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>On-campus</th>
<th>Off-campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>97.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>97.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>93.9</td>
<td>97.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The percentages represent the aggregate of “somewhat positive”, “positive”, and “very positive”.

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Present Attitude Toward Northern Illinois University

As indicated in Figure 11, the trends in the percentage of alumni who were positive about NIU one year post-graduation remained consistent. Neither on-campus alumni nor off-campus alumni showed much change over time. The difference in percentages between 2005 alumni and 2009 alumni was less than one percent for both groups. However, off-campus alumni were slightly more positive about NIU than were on-campus alumni.

It should be noted that the lack of change over time is favorable in this case, as the percentage of positive responses remained above 94 for on-campus alumni and above 96 for off-campus alumni for each of the five years.

When the mean response for the off-campus group was compared with that of the on-campus group, a significant difference was found in 2007, t(1045) = 1.97, p = .049. The mean response was 5.22 for on-campus and 5.47 for off-campus.

Because these final two items were measured on a six-point scale, they should not be directly compared to any of the items measured on a five-point scale. However, it is acceptable to compare the trends in attitude toward degree major with the trends in attitude toward NIU. The percentage of positive responses to both of these items remained very high through each of the five years. Closer scrutiny of the percentage of positive responses showed that both on-campus and off-campus alumni were slightly more positive about NIU one year after graduation than they were about their degree major one year after graduation. However, the percentages for both items were very high and the discrepancies between the two were very slight.

Figure 11
Percentage of Alumni Who Were Positive Toward NIU

Note: The percentages represent the aggregate of “somewhat positive”, “positive”, and “very positive”.
Conclusion

The focus for this paper was to compare and contrast the trends in alumni satisfaction for those who completed their coursework primarily at off-campus locations with those who completed their coursework on-campus. The graduating class of 2005 (surveyed in 2006) served as a baseline to the four subsequent years in the analysis. A variety of trends were observed as a result.

Provided they were at or above a desirable level at the baseline, zero-slope or flat trend lines highlight the areas in which NIU is meeting the expectations of its graduates. There were several items in which the trend was rather consistent for both on-campus and off-campus alumni. The best example of this is depicted in Figure 11, the percentage of alumni who felt positive about NIU after graduation. Other items that showed little change over time included: Figure 10, positive attitudes from alumni about their degree major; Figure 4, positive ratings of faculty expectations of high-quality work; and Figure 1, whether alumni would recommend NIU to their friends and family. Also positive are trends that show a monotone increasing slope over time. The only example of this was seen in the positive responses from on-campus alumni about the adequacy of facilities and equipment (Figure 7). These findings should be celebrated as areas in which alumni satisfaction remains consistently positive, or continues to increase over time.

The more erratic trends observed in this analysis and those that consistently decrease over time illustrate the potential need to address specific concerns in order to drive the trends toward continuous improvement. Overall, off-campus alumni were more positive than on-campus alumni about their satisfaction with the items selected for this study. A striking exception to this observation was apparent for the off-campus alumni of 2006. Particularly, off-campus satisfaction with the availability of faculty outside of class (Figure 2) and with faculty thoroughness of course material (Figure 3) fell drastically lower than that of on-campus alumni.

Lastly, it is important to pay particular attention to trends in which the overall slope of the trend line is increasing for one group and decreasing for another. This was apparent in Figure 9, satisfaction with the availability of required courses. Alumni who took their classes on-campus became more positive over time about the availability of required courses while those who took their classes off-campus became less positive.

Trend analysis was a useful tool in this case to generate a broad, robust view of alumni satisfaction with the undergraduate experience at NIU and to compare and contrast the responses of on- and off-campus alumni. The information gathered from this study should be used to inform the campus community and, where necessary, serve as a catalyst for discussion about improving the value of the undergraduate experience and move toward closing the continuous loop of assessment generated from the Baccalaureate Follow-Up Survey.