

Riding the NxtWave to Library Leadership: Two Participants Reflect on their Experiences

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Abstract:

The NxtWave program, begun in 2014, was designed to create the next generation of school library leaders. Sixteen doctoral students from four universities participated in the program which included four school library specific cognate courses offered online. This paper uses a phenomenological approach to evaluate the program and the experiences of the participants. Additionally, the findings are used to provide suggestions for improvement of future iterations of the NxtWave program. These suggestions would also be beneficial to similar online doctoral programs.

Keywords: NxtWave | higher education | library science | distance learning

Article:

Introduction

In 2010, four university professors from four different universities, concerned with the aging of library educators, came together to write a \$353,760 Institute of Museum and Library Services grant to create a doctoral degree which would be granted at three of the participating universities. The four university professors were Dr. Rebecca Pasco from the University of Nebraska, Omaha; Dr. Audrey Church from Longwood University; Dr. Gail Dickinson from Old Dominion University; and Dr. Jodie Howard from Long Island University. The granting institutions were the University of Nebraska, Omaha with an EdD; Old Dominion University with a PhD; and Long Island University with a PhD. Seventeen students were originally enrolled but by the time classes began in the spring semester of 2014, sixteen students remained.

The purpose of the grant was to develop new library leaders that possessed a doctorate in library science and would be able to take over the teaching and training at the university level of new librarians; the leadership and management of committees at local, regional, and national levels; and the writing and implementation of curricula and policy governing the training and activities of the profession. At the time of their enrollment, all students were practicing school librarians.

At the end of their first year as assistant professors, [Author 1] and [Author 2] began an examination of their own experiences as members of the first NxtWave cohort. Initially, the plan was to complete an objective analysis of the effectiveness of the program in preparing the future leaders of the school library world. To that end, [Author 1] created a survey and gathered some initial data (Appendix). Because of the limited response to the survey (8 of 16 participants, including [Author 1] and [Author 2], responded), we chose to lead with a personal reflection on our experiences with the program and then incorporate the experiences of the other six respondents.

Since being members of the NxtWave cohort allowed us to achieve our dreams of completing a PhD, we decided we needed to make this research personal as well as scholarly. As researchers, we are cognizant that we are emotionally involved with the topic and must take care to examine the data objectively. We decided to explain the phenomenon from our personal perspectives because of the detail and depth we could add to the data. As DuBois (1979) states, Whereas scholars in some disciplines may deride this as ‘me-search,’ implying that good research cannot be personal, those in other disciplines...value the richness, the deep desire to understand a phenomenon, and the passion that a personal connection with one’s research brings (p. 115).

For these reasons, we believed it was important to bracket ourselves within the research as both researchers and participants in the study, thereby blurring the lines between the two. As Yost and Chmielewski (2013) note,

When...researchers are amenable to the idea that knowledge is constructed rather than objectively discovered, perhaps blurring the line between researcher and participant would actually enrich the empirical literature. Rather than bias data, acknowledging researchers’ own experiences by explicitly including their perspectives in the research process may serve to further ground...research in lived experience (p. 249).

This study reflects our lived experiences as full-time students in the NxtWave cohort and programs. We bring to the study an awareness that we have differences that we believe will enhance the data analysis: we are approximately twenty years apart in age, one of us is married and one is single, and we experienced the program at different universities. We each finished the program in three and a half years. Additionally, our perspectives differed from the other members of our cohort who participated in the study. We believe this data will create a more in-depth picture of the program than any single data instrument, such as a survey, could relate. As Tufford and Newman (2010) argue, “The opportunity for sustained in-depth reflection may enhance the acuity of the research and facilitate more profound and multifaceted analysis and results” (p. 2).

Review of the Literature

Research Base for the NxtWave Curriculum and Skills

The NxtWave curriculum was originally intended to create leaders for the school library field in multiple roles. Four foundational courses were developed and implemented; these served as cognate courses for the doctoral students. These courses were: Concepts and Context: Leadership in School Libraries, taught by Dr. Rebecca Pasco; Frameworks for Best Practice in School Libraries, taught by Dr. Audrey Church; Strategic Leadership in School Libraries, taught by Dr. Gail Dickinson; and Instruction and Research in School Libraries, taught by Dr. Jody Howard.

The most important skills developed in the NxtWave curriculum were not necessarily skills that were taught in a single course, but were included in each of the courses as dispositions to be developed through coursework, research, and, finally, dissertations. These skills included the ability to embrace change, the ability to sell ideas and the library, the professionalism and pride needed to continue to exhibit enthusiasm for learning and for the job, and the courage to be a leader.

The courses were designed to foster these dispositions because much is expected of librarians in the changing world of the twenty-first century. Parkes (2013) states in his article delineating the future skills of twenty-first century librarians that:

They [librarians] must support scholarship and be scholars themselves, they must support students and be learners themselves, they must grasp and deploy new technologies, they need to understand the legal and ethical dimensions of their roles, they must be curators and teachers, possess outstanding interpersonal skills, be skilled classroom and online practitioners, be able to articulate and simplify the complex information landscape for their community, they must be advocates, ambassadors and evangelists for their profession and their service. We need thinkers, communicators, the curious, the resilient and the bold. We need builders and listeners, activists, designers, drivers, coaches and teachers who understand theory and can apply it in practice. (p. 37).

Despite the many jobs that twenty-first century librarians complete in a given day, school districts across the U.S. have cut school library budgets in recent years, often eliminating certified librarians and instead hiring part-time aides or volunteers (Lance, 2018). However, dozens of library impact studies since the mid-1990s have shown that effective school libraries increase student achievement in a variety of ways, such as in reading and on state standardized tests (Dow, Lakin, and Court, 2012; Farmer, 2003; Francis, Lance, & Lietzau, 2010, November; Gavigan & Lance, 2016, March 14; Jones & Zambone, 2008; Lance, Welborn, & Hamilton-Pennell, 1997; Lance, Rodney, Hamilton-Pennell, 2000; New York State Education Department, 2011; Scholastic Research and Results, 2008; Ullah & Farooq, 2008). These studies are further supported by the Baltimore Library Project of 2013, which states that: “Universal findings from more than 60 impact studies conducted in 22 states conclude that schools with a well-equipped library staffed by a full-time, certified librarian and appropriate support staff contribute significantly to gains in student learning” (Baltimore Library Project, 2013).

The crux of the debate in library schools concerning the basis of the LIS curriculum is between the roles of theory and practice as the foundation for LIS programs (Creel & Pollicino, 2012). Although graduates find value in hands-on courses, university faculty are concerned that, without a focus on the theory of librarianship, students will not be able to transfer their skills to the everchanging environment present in the library of the twenty-first century (Moran, 2012). According to American Association of School Librarians (AASL) past President Ann M. Martin (2016), “Honing in on skills needed to be an exemplary librarian requires continuous effort” (p. 59). Networking among colleagues helps alleviate the feeling of isolation many new librarians feel when they first enter practice, when they often find themselves as a department of one. Karabush and Pleviak (2011) contend that “It’s crucial to have someone who can ‘talk you off the ledge’ when you feel overwhelmed” (p. 51). Becoming actively involved in the profession by attending conferences, serving on committees, and assuming leadership roles in national professional associations provides librarians with forums for “discussion of and action on problems that exist in school libraries” (Martin, 2016, p. 56). Conferences allow school librarians to establish relationships within their profession and receive “...just-in-time information and assistance, enabling school librarians to lead their learning communities through sometimes difficult situations with confidence” (Martin, 2016, p. 56).

Leadership and Advocacy

Kachel (2015, July 13) states that, “From coast to coast, elementary and high school libraries are being neglected, defunded, repurposed, abandoned, and closed” (par. 1). Despite numerous studies that demonstrate a relationship between attending a school with a certified librarian and achievement on reading and writing tests (Coker, 2015, Lamos, 2013; Lance, & Hofschire, 2012), the numbers reveal that too many schools have eliminated librarian positions:

- The number of school libraries in New York City has dropped from nearly 1,500 in 2005 to around 700 in 2014.
- Over a recent five-year period, 43 percent of school librarian positions in the Houston Independent School District evaporated.
- Ohio has lost more than 700 school library positions over a decade.
- California has hemorrhaged school librarians to the point where it now has the worst ratio—1-to-7,000 librarians-to-students—of any state in the nation.
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, provides a dramatic story. In 1991, there were 176 certified librarians in Philadelphia public schools. Today there are 10. It appears that 206 out of 218 classroom buildings in the school district of Philadelphia have no librarian. Two hundred Philadelphia schools do not have a functional library book collection. A majority lack the technology to access necessary e-resources. And 85 percent of these children come from homes in poverty (par.4-7).

A goal of the NxtWave program was to prepare a cohort to become school library leaders. To prevent the continued decimation of school libraries nation-wide, school library leaders need to be prepared to undertake leadership roles at the local, state, and national levels. These leaders must have the ability to communicate effectively and explain the value of school librarians to the community of learners, to actively listen to what the community wants and needs, and to implement innovative solutions to broad educational inequities define the leader who will ask the

hard questions about the school library profession, listen to the answers being given, and then move forward to do something about the issues confronting the field of library science today and in the future.

Methodology

Research Questions

This study was guided by two research questions:

1. How do members of the inaugural NxtWave cohort perceive their experiences with the program in preparing them for leadership in the field of library and information sciences?
2. What could be done to improve NxtWave for the next cohort of doctoral students?

Phenomenology

Because of a limited sample size, it was our decision to reframe the study from the perspective of our two personal experiences and then correlate the gathered data from those who responded to the survey.

The methodology chosen for this program evaluation was a qualitative approach using a phenomenological perspective, based on the data collected from interviews and surveys. The more we studied the data the more we came to agree with Hammersley's (2000) approach to phenomenology that began with the belief that the researcher cannot divorce himself from his research and should not even pretend to do so in his study. Since our intention was to "describe the full structure of an experience lived, or what that experience meant to those who lived it" (Sadala, & Adorno, 2002, February 01), we decided to first report and analyze our experiences in the NxtWave program and then consider the data obtained from the surveys. The purpose of the survey instrument was to gather data to better understand the efficacy and the limitations of the NxtWave cohort as originally designed and to build in improvements for the next iteration of this program.

An online survey (Appendix) was administered to all members of the cohort (n=16) and was answered by eight participants. Although this was not the number hoped for, the eight who did answer were very conscientious in answering the open-ended questions.

Findings

Four themes developed as the data was collected, the survey analyzed, and the comments and reflections coded. These themes included the expectations each of the cohort members had of the classes, the professors, and the program; the opportunities, both expected and unexpected, that arose from this program and this cohort; the challenges and issues that needed to be overcome to complete the program and fulfill the major expectation of completing a doctorate; and suggestions to make the cohort, classes, and program better for the next group of students who embark on this journey.

Expectations

For both of us, [Author 1] and [Author 2], having a PhD was both a strong desire and a next step in achieving our goal of working to influence both education and library science in a different and bigger arena than our single schools or local professional organizations had allowed. The implementation of NxtWave was done at a fortuitous time for both. [Author 1] was actively looking for a new challenge since retiring from public school education, while [Author 2] had just started her PhD program at the University of South Carolina and was hoping to get a degree in library science. Both knew some of the faculty who would be teaching the courses within the NxtWave cognate and wanted to study under their guidance. We also expected to be working with other students who would have similar plans for the future and would be willing to maintain similar levels of engagement within the cohort, classes, and the program. Although to say [Author 1] was naive at this juncture in her journey would be an understatement. She had no idea that the journey from doctoral student to doctoral recipient could be financially debilitating, physically tiring, emotionally draining, and intellectually challenging. Yet the thought of spending time with some of the best minds in her field and an opportunity to do in-depth research and writing led her to join the cohort. [Author 2], on the other hand, being the only member of the cohort at her university, hoped that joining this program would create relationships with others in the cohort that would carry over into her professional life after graduation. Neither had those expectations fully fulfilled by this program. Yet the program did provide [Author 1] with a rigorous look at how to do educational research and provided both of them with tenure track positions at universities after graduation. Having a tenure track position was not one of [Author 1]'s original goals when she began the program. She thought she might work in advocacy, perhaps in Washington for the American Library Association or in Chicago for the Office of Intellectual Freedom. Yet, as she became more involved in the program, she realized that she loved teaching and working with students, and a faculty job was what she wanted to pursue. [Author 2] was much clearer about her goals from the onset of the program; she wanted to obtain a tenure-track position at a university. Both realized these expectations and are now professors in tenure-track positions.

When examining the surveys, the biggest issue noted in terms of expectations was that everyone had different expectations and no one was clear as to what their expectations should be upon entering the cohort. Most of the respondents felt that not only were their expectations not clearly defined, but the expectations of the program were not clearly defined in multiple areas such as assignments, conference attendance, and funding. The area of final outcomes in terms of career paths was noted by several respondents as an area of misconception. Although the IMLS grant proposal identified the outcome as school library leaders, the respondents felt as if they had been prepared to become leaders in only one way: academic professors. It was easy to see that the final goals of some of the cohort and the professors were not in alignment and some members felt that this was due to a lack of application process/screening of applicants to determine successful completion of the program. Each member of the NxtWave cohort was recruited by a faculty member and did not undergo an application process to be admitted as a member of the NxtWave program. Additionally, some members of the program were admitted to doctoral programs without a formal application process. [Author 1] did have to go through an interview process to get a graduate teaching assistantship with the College of Education and she was quizzed on her skills, goals, and ability to successfully complete the program of study. Both

[Author 2] and [Author 1] had to go through graduate teaching assistantship training despite their many years as teachers in the public (K-12) schools.

Opportunities for Personal/Professional Growth

One of the benefits of being a member of the initial NxtWave cohort was that each member received an iPad. Although this was a nice addition to the arsenal of research tools, the potential of this technology was never fully realized and exploited as a particular tool to facilitate distance learning. Required conference attendance provided opportunities to network with other members of the cohort and other librarians in the United States; allowed both [Author 2] and [Author 1] to participate in committees on the national level; and, eventually, to have positions of leadership on those committees, providing opportunities to present researched scholarship. Because of the reputations and leadership roles the professors played on the national stage (one former and one current AASL president), opportunities to become leaders in library professional organizations were enhanced. Tangential opportunities also arose from membership in the NxtWave program. We received a taste of academia in the form of service (on search committees and accreditation committees, for example), research and publication requirements (working with and under the mentorship of faculty to write and publish within field of librarianship), and teaching responsibilities (becoming the instructor of record in both undergraduate and, at times, graduate level courses). Both [Author 1] and [Author 2] developed friendships that have extended beyond the cohort experience, but not all these friendships were a result of the cohort. [Author 1] made friends with several people who were receiving doctorates in another field of education but had similar goals and expectations to her. One of those friends has graduated and is currently searching for a full-time job as a tenure-track professor. [Author 2] has also made friends with her own PhD cohort from South Carolina and developed friendships through her networking at national conferences. Both also felt that the opportunity to step outside their comfort zones and work within a new and more challenging arena was also an opportunity to further develop the dispositions of perseverance and risk-taking.

Results of the survey revealed that only one respondent took advantage of the opportunity to serve on a departmental committee. The rest of the respondents revealed that they were either not asked or were unaware of the opportunity to serve. Finally, one respondent indicated that she felt unprepared to serve on a departmental committee at this time in her journey. All the respondents gave a favorable rating to opportunities to attend conferences. Many respondents also acknowledged that the program enhanced their skills in research, writing, leadership, critical thinking, and knowledge of the field of library science. Survey respondents indicated that they enjoyed being a part of a cohort at their local universities because it improved their morale and increased their motivation.

Challenges and Barriers for Successful Completion of the Program/Courses

Both [Author 1] and [Author 2] cited the feeling of loneliness and isolation involved in working on a doctorate, especially once their formal classwork was completed. Additionally, both [Author 1] and [Author 2] relocated to be closer to the universities where they were completing their programs. [Author 1] moved to Norfolk to have easier access to professors, classes, and resources. [Author 2] sold her house and moved to Columbia to embed herself in the academic

life of the university. [Author 2] did not have any NxtWave cohort members at her university so she did not experience the beneficial aspects of being part of a local NxtWave cohort. She also did not benefit from attending a university where one of the NxtWave professors was on the teaching staff; she had to access all professors through email rather than a face-to-face conference. [Author 1] was the oldest member of the cohort and felt pressure, both internally and externally, to complete her program and move on to employment. Since both [Author 1] and [Author 2] were used to a particular level of living that was reflective of their former salaries, both experienced the constraints of living under reduced finances and felt an urgency to complete the program as soon as possible.

Finding time to work with a cohort that was spread from New York to Virginia, to South Carolina, and to Nebraska made collaboration difficult. Since everyone had individual responsibilities, as well as professional and personal commitments, meeting and planning projects was, at times, a gargantuan process that involved an inordinate amount of time to email, set up, and accomplish the stated goals of specific assignments. This brought about disparities in the time and involvement that some group members could devote to a project at any given time during the week. [Author 2] transitioned from working full-time to becoming a full-time student after being away from being a student for 14 years, which involved a shift in her mind-set, physical location, and financial stability.

The respondents to the survey revealed that they were all in agreement about the issues of working with a cohort that was situated in such far-flung places from where they were located. Additionally, there were similar responses about financial hardships, work/life/school balance, and collaborative logistics for project completion. Several respondents mentioned that they not only had commitments to overcome and rearrange but also had a time difference to negotiate. While [Author 1] and [Author 2] were full-time students while working on the degree, five of the respondents indicated that they were part-time. Because they were part-time, they indicated some additional barriers. One barrier was an inability to effectively sequence their coursework for maximum effectiveness. They also indicated that they felt they lacked access to additional opportunities for collaboration with faculty, service on departmental committees, and mentoring guidance from other faculty members more readily received on campus. Although there were four NxtWave faculty members, one respondent indicated she was unsure of the overall program leader which sometimes caused confusion. Another concern voiced by several respondents was conference attendance and funding. The initial program information was unclear about conference attendance requirements and the level of funding available for each conference. Eventually, the prescribed conferences were American Library Association (ALA) annual, ALA mid-winter, and the biennial AASL. Many in the program wondered if the money might also be allotted for other conferences to enhance professional growth and scholarship in related fields of study, such as Association for Library Science and Information Science Educators (ALISE) American Educational Research Association, (AERA), International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), and the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T).

Suggestions for Improvement

Our first suggestion would be to resolve the application/screening process for admittance to the program. For example, an application should include a statement of commitment and an

interview (can be virtual in nature) to ascertain an applicant's readiness for the program by looking for a desire to complete the assigned courses, an interest in becoming a leader in the field of library science, and the perseverance to complete a doctoral dissertation. During this application/screening process the purpose of the NxtWave program should be clearly explained and all requirements laid out for consideration. In addition to attendance at conferences and completion of required courses, participants need to know about expectations to present at conferences, to submit articles to school library publications, to participate in professional organizations and become involved with service opportunities at their universities.

Once accepted into the program, an initial retreat to build relationships among the members of the cohort and among the cohort and the faculty should be held. This retreat could be an extension of an annual conference to maximize finances and relieve time constraints.

Curriculum sequencing in the cognate and placement of core classes in research and foundations should be studied and revised. During the first iteration of NxtWave, four courses served as cognate classes. [Author 1] and [Author 2] found that much of the material covered in the four courses was repetitive. These four courses could be condensed to a minimum of two courses exploring history and research in school librarianship and strategic leadership. Only offering these two courses would allow members of the cohort to choose other courses that are custom-designed to meet their individual academic and career goals. To maximize the effectiveness of these two cognate courses, members of the NxtWave program should be required to complete foundational educational courses, as well as a minimum of one research course to prepare candidates for the rigors of research, writing, and dissertation completion, prior to taking cognate courses.

In addition to the mentors available through the professors who teach the cognate courses, recruit additional representatives outside academia to serve as mentors. This could include library advocacy groups, leaders from professional school library and education organizations, and supervisory personnel within local school districts or state departments of education. The survey respondents agreed with the suggestions to improve the application process, clearly define expectations for travel and participation, and schedule an initial and then annual opportunity for the members of the NxtWave cohort to meet face-to-face with each other and their professors. Survey respondents also stressed a need to clarify expectations for travel funding and for participation in committees, conferences, publication, and presentations. Some respondents found the ALA mid-winter conference to be of less benefit to their goals for the program than other conferences. Perhaps this conference could be substituted with a conference of choice which is approved by the professors. The same suggestion was made for technology choices. Not everyone needed an iPad, so perhaps a technology stipend could be used to allow students to purchase the technology that would be most beneficial. Curriculum changes were also recommended by the survey respondents and correlated with the changes proposed by [Author 1] and [Author 2]. The last thought provided by the survey respondents involved a desire to explore a variety of employment activities outside of academia. Because of family considerations and the work commitments of their partners, moving to another area of the country was not an option for most of the survey respondents. Therefore, exploring additional career opportunities would have been beneficial to them. Perhaps clarifying the job prospects and the limited employment

prospects in a variety of library science related fields should be explored so that the need to relocate is not unexpected or left undiscussed.

Conclusion

From this data and the findings gleaned from our own experiences and those of the survey respondents, our primary conclusion is that leadership in any field grows from the belief that one must constantly be learning despite time and distraction obstacles. Both [Author 2] and [Author 1] finished the program in three and a half years because they were willing to put their personal lives on hold and concentrate almost solely on their professional development. Yet both realize that this was not possible for all members of the NxtWave cohort.

The suggestions for improvement from [Author 1], [Author 2], and the survey respondents provide insights for not only future iterations of NxtWave but also similar online doctoral programs. These insights include clear expectations, stronger relationships within the cohort, and improved content and sequencing of the curriculum. Clear expectations must be developed from the beginning of the application/screening process and include requirements, financial support, and consistent and coherent expectations. Stronger relationships within the cohort will create networking opportunities, research and publication partnerships, and a community of support while working toward the goal of a doctoral degree. Better content and sequencing of the curriculum will allow students to personalize their academic choices for their specific career goals and be better prepared to tackle the rigor of a doctoral degree with more research and foundational information as they enter the cognate courses.

On a personal note, we, [Author 1] and [Author 2], have maintained a strong relationship post NxtWave participation, despite the distance between our respective universities. We have both relocated to different states than where we studied and both have a full complement of teaching and research responsibilities. Yet, we take the time to reach out to ask questions of each other, to be a sounding board for frustrations, and to encourage each other to get back up and persevere. Included in the limitations of this study are a small sample size (8 of 16) and that several of the sixteen participants have not yet defended their dissertations. Although the first iteration of the NxtWave program has been completed, it will be beneficial to revisit their experiences once they have finished their degrees and have the time to further evaluate the benefits and challenges of this program and of this process.

Both [Author 2] and [Author 1] agree that the barriers encountered were outweighed by the knowledge learned, the relationships developed, and the ability to recognize and seize an opportunity to grow and learn within our chosen field. John Dewey said it best when he said, "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself."

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Author Notes

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Appendix

NXTWAVE SCHOLAR PROGRAM EVALUATION

1. Where are you currently in your doctoral program course of study?
 - a. Still in coursework
 - b. Beginning Dissertation
 - c. Defended Comprehensive Exams
 - d. Defended proposal
 - e. Completed All but Dissertation (ABD)
 - f. Completed and passed all requirements.

2. How did you find out about the NxtWave program?
 - a. Friends
 - b. Email
 - c. Website
 - d. Professor
 - e. Other (Please specify in box below)

3. What was your age when you began this degree program?
 - a. 31-35
 - b. 36-40
 - c. 41-45
 - d. Over 45

4. What was your primary activity immediately prior to entering this degree program?
 - a. Volunteer/Community Service
 - b. Caring for a family
 - c. Employed in a field directly related to that of current study
 - d. Employed in a field unrelated to that of current study

5. What is your current official enrollment status?
 - a. Full-time
 - b. Part-time
 - c. Graduated
 - d. Left Program

6. What is your current year of study?
 - a. 3rd year
 - b. 4th year
 - c. 5th year

7. How many years total do you expect it will take to obtain your degree, from the time you started your current program until you complete it?
 - a. 3 years
 - b. 4 years
 - c. 5 years
 - d. More than 5 years

8. Rate the following dimensions of your program.

	Excellent (1)	Very Good (2)	Good (3)	Fair (4)	Poor (5)
Intellectual quality of faculty					
Intellectual quality of fellow graduate students					
Relationship between faculty and graduate students					
Overall quality of graduate level teaching					
Amount of financial support					
Quality of academic advising and guidance					
Assistance in finding employment					
Opportunity to interact across disciplines					
Academic standards in my program					

9. If you wish to elaborate on any of the categories listed in the previous question, please do so below. If any category was rated FAIR or POOR, please explain why you gave this rating.

10. Indicate your general satisfaction with the University you attended and your program.

Definitely	Probably	Maybe	Probably	Definitely
(1)	(2)	(3)	Not (4)	Not (5)

If you were to start your doctoral degree, would you choose this degree?

If you were to start your doctoral program today, would you choose this program?

Would you recommend this university? to others for this degree?

Would you recommend this university? to others for graduate school?

11. If you wish to elaborate on the previous question, please do so in the box below. If any category was rated PROBABLY NOT or DEFINITELY NOT, please explain why you gave this rating.

12. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Ambivalent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Students in my field are treated with respect by faculty

Faculty members are willing to work closely with students to help students meet their academic goals.

My own relationships and interactions with faculty have been positive.

Program activities foster a sense of interest in the field of study

Program content supports my research agenda.

Program structure encourages students to collaborate

Program structure provides opportunities for growth

Amount of coursework seems appropriate

13. If you wish to elaborate on any of the categories in the previous question, please do so in the box below. If any category was rate DISAGREE or STRONGLY DISAGREE, please explain why you gave this rating.

14. Which university did you attend?

- a. Long Island University
- b. Old Dominion University
- c. University of Nebraska/Omaha
- d. University of South Carolina

15. Please rate the following university resources based on FREQUENCY OF USE (if relevant).

Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	N/A
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)

Library

Registration ease

Financial Aid

ODURF (Research Foundation)
University Bookstore
Accessibility of Advisor

16. Please rate the following university resources based on Quality of Experience if used.

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	N/A
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Library						
Registration ease						
Financial Aid						
ODURF (Research Foundation)						
University Bookstore						
Accessibility of Advisor						

17. How would you rate the quality of the following:

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Academic experiences at The university					
Academic experiences in the NxtWave program					

18. Rate the extent to which the following factors are an obstacle to your academic progress.

	Not an Obstacle	A Minor Obstacle	A Major Obstacle	N/A
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Work/Financial commitments				
Family obligation				
Availability of faculty				
Program structure and requirements				
Course scheduling				
Other				

19. If OTHER was chosen in the previous question, please specify the obstacles to your academic progress.

20. Gender

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Other

21. Age

- a. 31-35
- b. 36-40
- c. 41-45
- d. Over 45

22. What is your marital status?
- a. Married/living with partner
 - b. Not married