

NC State University 2015 Alumni Survey Executive Summary

Survey Methods

Alumni who received a bachelor's degree from NC State between Summer 2009 and Spring 2012 were surveyed during the Spring semester of 2015 (N=14,019). Contact information (either mailing address or e-mail) was obtained for all but 22 alumni.¹ Alumni were sent a personalized letter inviting them to complete the online survey, followed by up to five reminders to nonrespondents, including a personalized letter, a postcard, and e-mails. Incentives consisted of random drawings from among respondents to win various cash prizes.

A total of 2,589 surveys were completed, resulting in a response rate of 18.5 percent.

Overall Satisfaction

Overall, respondents were very satisfied with the quality of the undergraduate education provided by NC State. Over 90 percent of respondents say the undergraduate education they received from NC State was either "very strong" (54%) or "strong" (39%). The vast majority of respondents say they would still choose NC State if they were starting again (91%), and that they would recommend NC State to a friend (94%).

Although still a majority, notably fewer respondents say they would still choose the same field of study (67%). However, that figure increases to 81 percent of those whose first full-time job was directly related to their major.

Connection to NC State

Four-in-five alumni "strongly agree" that they are proud to have graduated from NC State (79%), and over two-thirds say it is at least "moderately important" to them to stay connected to the university (70%). However, there is room for improvement in helping our alumni to actually stay connected to NC State. For example, less than one-third of those saying it is "very important" for them to feel connected to NC State say they actually feel "very connected" (30%), while another 38 percent say they feel "moderately connected." Thus, about one-third of those seeing such a connection as "very important" feel only somewhat connected at best.

Alumni are most likely to report feeling connected to NC State as a whole, to athletics teams, or to their degree program rather than to their college, an individual faculty member, or an organization on campus to which they belonged. The NC State website, social media, emails, and GoPack.com were the most common ways that alumni mentioned as helping them stay connected.

Post-Graduation Activities

Two-thirds of respondents (64%) say their primary activity during the year after completion of their undergraduate degree was "working full-time." One-in-four alumni reported attending graduate/professional school either "full-time" (22%) or "part-time" (2%) the year after they graduated. College of Education (84%) respondents were most likely and Physical and Mathematical Sciences respondents (48%) least likely to say their primary activity after graduation was "working full-time." More than one-third of respondents in the Colleges of Physical and Mathematical Sciences (37%) and Agriculture and Life Sciences (35%) say their primary activity following graduation was attending graduate/professional school either full-time or part-time.

Post-Graduation Employment

First Full-Time Permanent Position

Over two-thirds of alumni seeking employment found a permanent full-time position within six months of graduating. Ten percent continued in a position they had prior to graduation, 32 percent accepted a new position prior to or upon graduation, and the remaining 27 percent found a position within six months. The most common resources used in locating and acquiring a position were an internship (24%),

family/friends/classmates/co-workers (22%), personal connections within the company (21%), or previous/current experience with the company (18%).

Half of the alumni (48%) say their first full-time permanent position was "directly related" to their major, and another 28 percent say their job was "somewhat related". Alumni felt well-prepared for their first post-graduation position, with 35 percent saying they had "excellent" preparation by NC State for their job, and another 43 percent rating their preparation as "good".

The overall average starting salary for alumni's first permanent full-time position was about \$43,000, with the median starting salary at \$37,500. About one-fourth reported earning a starting salary of under \$30,000 (24%), while 17 percent earned over \$60,000. Starting salaries varied widely by college, with College of Engineering graduates most likely to have earned over \$60,000 (36%), and College of Humanities and Social Sciences (41%), College of Natural Resources (39%), and College of Sciences (37%) alumni most likely to have earned less than \$30,000 in their first full-time job after graduating from NC State.

Current Position

The majority of respondents are currently employed full-time, with 80 percent working at least 35 hours per week. Another 6 percent are working part-time, and 3 percent are self-employed. At the time they completed the survey 4 percent of alumni said they were unemployed and looking for work. The remaining 7 percent were not employed and not looking for work. Full-time employment is related to graduate/professional school status, with almost 90 percent of those not currently enrolled in graduate/professional school (88%) working full-time, compared to less than half (47%) of those who are currently in school. About 30 percent of the alumni who are currently in graduate/professional school say they are not employed and not looking for a job.

Seventy percent of currently employed alumni are working in North Carolina, with 47 percent working in the Triangle area. The majority of are working in the private sector (63%), while 14 percent work in academia, 12 percent for the federal, state, or local government, and 7 percent for a private non-profit. Relatively few alumni (3%) say they are self-employed.

Three-fourths of currently employed alumni report working in jobs either "directly" (46%) or "somewhat" related (30%) to their academic major at NC State. Regardless of how connected their work is to their academic major, the majority feel that NC State gave them "excellent" (32%) or "good" preparation (44%) for their current position.

The average annual salary of those currently working in full-time position is just over \$52,000, with a median salary of \$47,500. Less than 20 percent of alumni earn under \$30,000 in their current full-time job (16%), and 35 percent earn \$60,000 or more.

Further Education

Since receiving their undergraduate degree from NC State almost 40 percent of respondents have enrolled in graduate/professional school. Eighteen percent have already completed a degree, 2 percent have completed one degree and are currently seeking a second degree, and 16 percent are currently enrolled seeking their first degree. Three percent reported that they were enrolled in graduate/professional school but left without completing a degree. Among those who have never enrolled, two-thirds have either a "high" (29%) or "moderate" (38%) interest in continuing their education through graduate or professional school.

Over 90 percent of those having already completed an advanced degree, and just under 90 percent of those currently seeking an advance degree, say their undergraduate education at NC State provided "excellent" (52% and 46%, respectively) or "good" (39% and 43%, respectively) preparation for graduate/professional school.

The majority of those going on for a graduate/professional degree are attending/attended an institution in North Carolina, with close to 40 percent earning or seeking an advanced degree from NC State (39%). While the vast majority of those earning or seeking a Masters degree received/are seeking either an MA or MS, notable numbers are/were enrolled in an MBA program, with relatively few alumni in a wide range of other Masters' programs. The vast majority of those seeking or earning a Doctoral degree are/were in a Ph.D. program, with a small number in an Ed.D. program. Among those attending professional school, the most common degree being earned/sought is a JD, followed by a DVM, then PharmD and MD.

Over half of those attending graduate/professional school received one or more types of funding (56%), including scholarships (27%), Research Assistantships (21%), and Teaching Assistantships (15%).

About one-third of the alumni respondents have taken a continuing education class (34%), with more than a fourth of them saying the course(s) had a "very significant" impact on their professional (27%) or personal goals (30%). Participation in such courses is likely to continue, with 16 percent of all respondents saying it is "very likely" and another 38 percent saying it is "somewhat likely" that they would enroll in a continuing education course in the future.

Undergraduate Education Goals

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of 48 undergraduate education goals to their current professional and personal lives, and their satisfaction with the extent to which their undergraduate education prepared them to achieve each goal.

Goal Importance

At least half the respondents rate all but 12 of the items as "very important," and for only 4 items do more than 10 percent of respondents say the skill is "not at all important." Most likely to be seen as "very important" by alumni are:

- Problem solving skills overall (90%)
- Communication skills overall (90%)
- Understanding written and oral information (88%)
- Professional skills overall (83%)
- Conducting work activities in an ethical manner (83%)
- Defining problems (80%)
- Adapting to changing circumstances (80%)
- Working under pressure (80%)

Most likely to be considered by alumni as "not at all important" to them currently are:

- Appreciating the arts (19%)
- Appreciating the humanities (16%)
- Appreciating differences in sexual orientation (12%)
- Applying social science methods to understand human behavior (12%)

Goal Preparation

While few alumni indicate that NC State had "not at all" contributed to their development of a skill, for only nine of the 48 items do half or more of the respondents say that NC State contributed "very much" to their development of it. Skills for which NC State is most likely to have contributed "very much" are:

- An overall general education (68%)
- Working independently (56%)
- Working in teams (55%)
- Working under pressure (54%)
- Problem solving skills overall (54%)
- Valuing learning as a lifelong process (53%)
- Understanding the basic concepts in a broad range of disciplines (53%)
- Understanding written and oral information (52%)
- Critically analyzing and evaluating ideas/information (50%)

Alumni are most likely to say that NC State contributed "not at all" to their development of:

- Appreciating differences in sexual orientation (12%)
- Appreciating the arts (11%)
- Understanding issues associated with gender equity (9%)
- Being involved in public and community affairs (7%)
- Understanding issues associated with racial equity (7%)
- Developing and maintaining a healthy lifestyle (7%)
- Applying social science methods to understand human behavior (6%)

Importance vs Preparation

Alumni ratings of the importance of each goal was typically higher than their rating of how well they were prepared on that goal. Differences were especially large for:

- Communication skills overall (*average importance rating of 3.9 versus average preparation rating of 3.3*)
- Adapting to changing circumstances (3.8 vs 3.2)
- Keeping current with skills/knowledge in my field (3.7 vs 3.2)
- Professional skills overall (3.8 vs 3.3)
- Effectively leading and guiding others (3.6 vs 3.1)

Undergraduate Experiences

About half of the alumni survey respondents indicated they had some international experience while an undergraduate at NC State, either through NC State or for some other reason. One-in-five participated in an NC State Study Abroad program either for a summer or short-term session (13%) and/or for a semester or longer (6%). Five percent participated in an international service trip organized by NC State, and four percent went on a non-NC State service trip. One-fourth of the alumni said they had gotten some international experience locally by attending an activity on campus. Altogether, one-third of alumni indicate having some international experience (either a participating in a local campus activity or something outside of the US) specifically sponsored or organized by NC State, with the majority of them having multiple types of experiences.

Three-fourths of alumni with any such NC State sponsored international experience (either local or abroad) say that it contributed "a great deal" to helping them appreciate diverse perspective/different cultures (74%) and close to two-thirds say it contributed "a great deal" to helping them better understand world problems/issues (64%). Alumni were slightly less likely to say their international experience did "a great deal" to positively impact their work attitudes and skills (54%), and were least likely to believe their international experience did "a great deal" to improve their problem solving skills (46%). Those participating in a study abroad were more likely than those participating in an international service trip or having only participating in an on-campus international activity, however, to say their experience contributed "a great deal" to their growth in each of these areas.

One-fourth of those not participating in a Study Abroad and/or service learning trip said they reason they did not do so was lack of interest in available programs. However, 57 percent said that financial constraints prohibited them from participating, and one-fourth said that personal, family, or employment obligations kept them from doing so.

Just under half of alumni say their undergraduate experience included an internship (45%). Work-related experience was also obtained by notable numbers of alumni through summer employment or a part-time job in a field related to their academic major (22%), student teaching (11%), or through the Cooperative Education Program (8%). Twenty percent indicated that they had participated in a research project with an NC State faculty member.

Four-in-five alumni had participated in at least one of numerous different types of clubs or organizations on campus while an undergraduate, most commonly organizations/clubs related to their major (33%), intramural/recreational sports or club teams (26%), and honor/professional fraternities/sororities (16%).

Half of those participating in any of the different types of clubs or organizations asked about say they had had a leadership role in it.

Current Behaviors

Alumni were asked a number of questions about their current behaviors with respect to community service, physical exercise, participation in the arts, keeping up with current events and pleasure reading. Overall, one-third of alumni report that they volunteer their time about once per month or more, and 85 percent say they exercise at least once per week. One-fourth say they typically attend an arts/cultural event about once per month or more. Finally, while the majority of alumni say they keep up with current events on a regular basis, they are less likely to regularly read for pleasure.

For more information on the 2015 Alumni Survey contact:
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ⁱ It is important to note that NC State University no longer disables a student's email address after he/she graduates, i.e., students are able to retain their NC State email address indefinitely. In providing contact information for alumni, the Alumni Association includes the alumni's NC State email address for all graduates for whom no other email address is available. The 13,924 alumni for whom an email address was available included 6,790 NC State email addresses. In addition, 1,173 of those for whom we were using an NC State email address had no physical mail address. Although all of the emails to these addresses were successfully delivered, it is likely that many alumni are not checking or auto-forwarding emails going to their NC State email address.