

## **December 2012 Future Plans Survey Introduction, Research Methods, and Response Rates**

This series of reports presents findings from the December 2012 Future Plans Survey conducted at NC State University. The survey is designed to collect specific information on students' plans following graduation, including detailed information on employment, graduate/professional school attendance, and participation in career-preparation activities while at NC State. This introductory report provides a background on the project, which was administered for the first time in December 2010, and an overview of the research methods. Additional reports on the overall survey results, college reports, departmental summaries, as well as a copy of the questionnaire, can be found at <http://upa.ncsu.edu/srvy/stdnt/future-plans/dec12>.

### **Survey Background**

The Future Plans Survey is a collaborative effort between NC State's University Planning and Analysis office (UPA) and the Career Development Center (CDC, formerly the University Career Center). Career service offices in various colleges, specifically the Poole College of Management, and the Colleges of Textiles, Design, and Agriculture and Life Sciences, also provided critical support for the project.

Historically the CDC and the college career service offices used various means to collect information from NC State's seniors on their 'future plans' at the time of their graduation. While these diverse strategies provided useful information for some units, without a systematic, centralized process for collecting information it was difficult to get a good picture of the future plans for NC State graduates as a whole. In addition, rather than having individual units using their resources to collect information from their respective students, centralizing the project in UPA provided a more efficient and cost-effective mechanism for both administering the survey and providing reports on the results. To accomplish these objectives UPA developed and administered the pilot Future Plans Survey in December 2010. Based on experiences with and feedback on the pilot survey, the survey was revised for the May 2011 administration, and again slightly revised for the December 2012 administration.

### **Research Design**

Throughout the 2010 fall semester UPA worked with CDC and the college career service offices to develop an overall research design and questionnaire that would meet the individual needs of the CDC and colleges as well as that of the University as a whole. The Future Plans Survey is intended to be administered semiannually, coinciding with December and May graduation. In addition, UPA also administers a modified version of the survey in early fall as a follow-up to the December and May surveys for the previous academic year. Specifically, the "Survey of Recent Graduates" is geared towards December/May survey respondents who said they were intending on finding full-time employment but had not done so by the time they completed the survey, as well as to those who had said they were uncertain of their plans. Those who did not participate in the December/May Future Plans Survey are also invited to participate in the follow-up Survey of Recent Graduates.

UPA is solely responsible for preparing the survey for online administration, identifying the survey population and sending email invitations and reminders about the survey to students as appropriate, collecting and analyzing the data, and preparing and distributing reports on results.

The population for the December and May Future Plans Surveys are identified using NC State's Application for Degree file. All undergraduate students who have applied to graduate as of about five

days prior to graduation day are included in the population. The online survey goes live about two weeks prior to graduation day, and is scheduled to close two to six weeks after graduation. (Given the winter holidays, the December survey has a longer post-graduation field time.) The December 2012 Future Plans Survey was in the field from December 6, 2012 through January 18, 2013, with commencement being held on December 15.

On December 6 all students who as of that day had applied to graduate were sent an email invitation from their college Dean. The first follow-up reminder email was sent to non-respondents from the executive director of the Career Development Center on December 12. The second reminder came from college Associate Deans on December 19. The third and fourth reminders both came from the Associate Director for Survey Research on January 9 and January 14. Drafts of the invitation and four follow-up emails are available in Appendix A. In addition to the emails sent by UPA, UPA also encouraged various administrators in the colleges and departments (e.g., Associate Deans for Undergraduate Programs, College and Department Coordinators for Advising) to contact their students directly. Some students, therefore, might have received additional requests to participate in the survey.

## Response Rates

As of December 14, 1,548 students had submitted the online Application for Degree and appeared on target to graduate on December 15, 2012. A total of 726 of them participated in the Future Plans Survey, for an overall response rate of 47 percent. Participation in the survey, however, varied by college, ranging from a high of 55 percent in the College of Engineering to a low of 36 percent in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. As a result, the College of Agriculture and Life Science is underrepresented in the overall results, as their December graduates make up about 22 percent of all December 2012 graduates and only 17 percent of the survey respondents. The College of Engineering is overrepresented in the overall results, with their students making up 22 percent of the December 2012 population but 26 percent of the survey respondents.

**Table 1: Response Rate, Overall and by College**

College/School	December 2012 Graduating Class	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
<b>College of Agriculture &amp; Life Sciences</b>	343	22.2%	123	16.9%	35.9%
<b>College of Design</b>	20	1.3%	9	1.2%	45.0%
<b>College of Education</b>	36	2.3%	17	2.3%	47.2%
<b>College of Engineering</b>	345	22.3%	190	26.2%	55.1%
<b>College of Natural Resources</b>	122	7.9%	54	7.4%	44.3%
<b>College of Humanities &amp; Social Sciences</b>	418	27.0%	200	27.5%	47.8%
<b>College of Physical &amp; Mathematical Sciences</b>	38	2.5%	19	2.6%	50.0%
<b>College of Textiles</b>	55	3.6%	24	3.3%	43.6%
<b>Poole College of Management</b>	167	10.8%	86	11.8%	51.5%
<b>Division of Academic &amp; Student Affairs</b>	4	0.3%	4	0.6%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	1,548	100.0%	726	100.0%	46.9%

*\*The number of students who had applied to graduate in December 2012 as of December 14, 2012.*

## December 2012 Future Plans Survey Email Invitation and Follow-Up Reminders

### Email Invitation (Dec 6, 2012)

To: All December 2012 students submitting the online application for degree form  
From: "College Dean" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>

Congratulations on your upcoming graduation from NC State! As [dean title] of the [college name], I am interested in knowing what is next in store for you. Perhaps you have already accepted a job, are still looking, or haven't yet started. Maybe you are going on to graduate or professional school. Or maybe you are following other dreams, or simply don't know yet. Whatever your plans may be, we at the [college name] as well as NC State's Career Development Center would like to hear about them.

Please take less than 10 minutes of your time to complete the Future Plans Survey, available online at: [http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/future\\_plans.htm](http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/future_plans.htm)  
(If the link does not work, please copy and paste it into your browser.)

You will need to enter your NC State Unity ID [**tunity**] to access the survey.

As a show of our appreciation for your time, 8 alumni who complete the survey by midnight on graduation day (December 15, 2012) will be randomly selected to each win a \$25 Amazon.com gift card. In addition, all respondents who submit the survey by the January 16, 2013 deadline will be entered into a drawing in which one person will be randomly selected to win a \$100 Amazon.com gift card.

Your participation is voluntary, but we sincerely hope to hear from you. Collecting this information is the best way we have of learning where our students go after graduation. The aggregate-level information from the survey is helpful to share with prospective NC State students and their parents, with current students who are planning their future path, and even with employers when making salary offers to students. *Your responses are confidential - - it will not be possible to identify any individual respondent in the information we provide to these groups.*

Remember, as an NC State alumnus/ alumna, the Career Development Center will continue to provide services to you for one year after graduation. Please visit <http://careers.ncsu.edu/> for more information.

Thank you again for your help with this important effort to learn more about the activities of our recent graduates. If you have any questions about this survey, please call University Planning and Analysis at (919) 515-6438 or email [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu).

Sincerely,  
[dean name, [dean title]  
[college name]  
NC State University

## First Follow-Up Email (Dec 12, 2012)

To: All December 2012 students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey

From: "CDC Director" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>

About a week ago your college dean e-mailed to ask you to take just a few minutes of your time to let us know about your plans following graduation. As of about 9 A.M. today, we have not yet heard from you. We value your feedback as it will better enable us to help current and future graduates, and will give us the opportunity to showcase the myriad of activities in which our graduates engage.

Please take less than 10 minutes of your time to complete The Future Plans Survey available at:

[http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/future\\_plans.htm](http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/future_plans.htm)

(If the link does not work, please copy and paste it into your browser.)

You will need to enter your Unity ID [**tunity**] to access the survey.

Eight (8) students who complete the survey by midnight on graduation day will be randomly selected to each receive a \$25 Amazon.com gift card. All respondents will also be entered into a drawing in which one person will be randomly selected to win a \$100 Amazon.com gift card.

Your participation is voluntary, but we sincerely hope to hear from you. Collecting this information is the best way we have of learning where our students go after graduation. The aggregate-level information from the survey is helpful to share with prospective NC State students and their parents, with current students who are planning their future path, even with employers when making salary offers to students. *Your responses are confidential - it will not be possible to identify any individual respondent in the information we provide to these groups.* In addition, we will share the information we gather in this survey with colleges and departments so that they also know how their respective students are doing.

Remember, as an NC State alumnus/ alumna, the Career Development Center will continue to provide services to you for one year after graduation.

Thank you again for your help with this important effort to learn more about the future plans of our undergraduate students. If you have any questions about this survey, please call University Planning and Analysis at (919) 515-6438 or email [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu).

Sincerely,  
Dr. Arnold Bell, Executive Director  
Career Development Center  
NC State University

## Second Follow-Up Email (Dec 19, 2012)

To: All December 2012 students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey

From: "College Associate Dean" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>

Congratulations on your recent graduation from NC State! I'm emailing to remind you that you have not yet completed the Future Plans Survey. We at the [college name] are very interested in knowing what your plans are following graduation. Whether you have already accepted a job, are looking for a job, or are planning to attend graduate school, travel the globe, or raise a family, you can tell us about it in the Future Plans Survey.

The survey is available online at:

[http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/future\\_plans.htm](http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/future_plans.htm).

(If the link does not work, please copy and paste it into your browser.)

You will need to enter your Unity ID [**tunity**] to access the survey.

Knowing what our students are doing following graduation is an essential measure of how well the University is preparing you to meet your goals. In addition, the aggregate-level information from the survey is helpful to share with prospective NC State students and their parents, with current students who are planning their future path, and even with employers when making salary offers to students.

Eight of your fellow graduates who submitted the survey by graduation have already been randomly selected to each receive a \$25 Amazon.com gift card. As an added incentive, one more person who submits the survey by the January 16 deadline will be randomly selected to win a \$100 Amazon.com gift card.

Your participation is voluntary, but we sincerely hope to hear from you. Collecting this information is the best way we have of learning where our students go after graduation. The aggregate-level information from the survey is helpful to share with prospective NC State students and their parents, with current students who are planning their future path, and even with employers when making salary offers to students. *Your responses are confidential - - it will not be possible to identify any individual respondent in the information we provide to these groups.*

Remember, as an NC State alumnus/ alumna, the Career Development Center will continue to provide services to you for one year after graduation. Please visit <http://careers.ncsu.edu/> for more information.

Thank you again for your help with this important effort to learn more about the future plans of our undergraduate students. If you have any questions about this survey, please call University Planning and Analysis at (919) 515-6438 or email [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu).

Sincerely,

[associate dean name]

[associate dean title]

[college name]

NC State University

**Final Follow-Up Email (Jan 14, 2013)**

Note: Due to a low response rate, the survey deadline was extended and this additional reminder was sent out.

To: All December 2012 students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey

From: "Nancy Whelchel" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>

Congratulations on your recent graduation from NC State! Please take just 10 minutes of your time to let us know about your post-graduation plans. Go to the Future Plans Survey online at [http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/future\\_plans.htm](http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/future_plans.htm)  
(If the link does not work, please copy and paste it into your browser.)

You will need to enter your Unity ID [**tunity**] to access the survey.

The deadline for completing the survey has been extended to Friday, January 18. We will randomly select one person who submits the survey by the deadline to win a \$100 Amazon.com gift card.

Your participation is very important! Leaders across NC State rely on results from this survey for their reporting and decision making. The summarized results are also helpful to share with prospective NC State students and their parents, with current students, and with prospective employers. You can see results from last year's Future Plans Survey on our website at [http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/reports/fps\\_ay11\\_12/index.htm](http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/reports/fps_ay11_12/index.htm)

Please don't miss this opportunity to share your experiences and help NC State, your college, and department not only celebrate the successes of their students but, very importantly, learn where NC State needs to make improvements to better prepare current and future students.

Thank you again for your help with this important effort to learn more about the future plans of our undergraduate students. If you have any questions about this survey, please call University Planning and Analysis at (919) 515-6438 or email [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu).

Sincerely,  
Nancy Whelchel, Ph.D.  
Associate Director for Survey Research  
University Planning and Analysis  
NC State University

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Sincerely,  
Nancy Whelchel, Ph.D.  
Associate Director for Survey Research  
University Planning and Analysis  
NC State University



For more information about the December 2012 Future Plans Survey contact:  
Dr. Nancy Whelchel, Associate Director for Survey Research  
University Planning and Analysis  
Box 7002  
NC State University  
Phone: (919) 515-4184  
Email: [nancy\\_whelchel@ncsu.edu](mailto:nancy_whelchel@ncsu.edu)

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