

## **December 2013 Future Plans Survey Introduction, Research Methods, and Response Rates**

This series of reports presents findings from the December 2013 Future Plans Survey (FPS), 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, as well as on 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://OIRP.ncsu.edu/srvy/stdnt/future-plans/dec13>.

### **Survey Background**

The Future Plans Survey is a collaborative effort between NC State's Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP, formerly University Planning and Analysis) and the Career Development Center (CDC). 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 OIRP provided a more efficient and cost-effective mechanism for both administering the survey and providing reports on the results. To accomplish these objectives OIRP 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 2013 administration.

### **Research Design**

Throughout the 2010 fall semester OIRP 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, OIRP 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.

OIRP 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.

All undergraduate students who have applied to graduate as of about five days prior to graduation day are asked to participate in the FPS. The online survey goes live about one week 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 2013 Future Plans Survey was in the field from December 10, 2013 through January 27, 2014, with commencement being held on December 18.

On December 10 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 16. The second reminder came from college Associate Deans on December 20. The third and fourth reminders both came from the Associate Director for Survey Research on January 6 and January 14. Drafts of the invitation and four follow-up emails are available in Appendix A. In addition to the emails sent by OIRP,

OIRP 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.

To encourage participation in the survey, incentives were offered. Eight respondents who completed the survey by midnight on graduation day (December 18) were randomly selected to each receive a \$25 Amazon.com gift card. In addition, one respondent who submitted the survey by the final deadline was randomly selected to receive a \$100 Amazon.com gift card.

## Response Rates

In December 2013, 1,559 undergraduate students graduated from NC State University. Of these graduates, 797 participated in the Future Plans Survey, for an overall response rate of 51 percent. Participation in the survey however, varied by college, ranging from a high of 77 percent in the College of Design to a low of 44 percent in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The College of Engineering is slightly overrepresented in the overall results, with their graduates making up 22 percent of the December 2013 population and 24.5 percent of the survey respondents. Conversely, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences is slightly underrepresented in the overall results, with their graduates making up 25 percent of the population but only 23 percent of the survey respondents.

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

College/School	Dec 2013 Graduating Class	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	186	11.9%	82	10.3%	44.1%
College of Design	30	1.9%	23	2.9%	76.7%
College of Education	26	1.7%	13	1.6%	50.0%
College of Engineering	340	21.8%	195	24.5%	57.4%
College of Natural Resources	129	8.3%	62	7.8%	48.1%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	393	25.2%	184	23.1%	46.8%
College of Sciences	181	11.6%	94	11.8%	51.9%
College of Textiles	67	4.3%	32	4.0%	47.8%
Poole College of Management	193	12.4%	104	13.0%	53.9%
Division of Academic & Student Affairs	14	0.9%	8	1.0%	57.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,559</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>797</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>51.1%</b>

## December 2013 Future Plans Survey Appendix A: Email Invitation and Follow-Up Reminders

### Email Invitation (December 10, 2013)

To: All December 2013 students submitting the online application for degree form  
From: "College Dean" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>

Congratulations on your upcoming graduation from NC State! As dean of the [college] 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] 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. You can access it through your platform of choice (e.g., mobile device, tablet, laptop) at:

<http://go.ncsu.edu/future.plans>

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

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

As a show of our appreciation for your time, 8 respondents who complete the survey by midnight on graduation day (December 18, 2013) will be randomly selected to each win a \$25 Amazon.com gift card. In addition, all respondents who submit the survey by the January 17, 2014 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 (December 16, 2013)

To: All December 2013 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://go.ncsu.edu/future.plans>

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

You will need to enter your Unity ID [**unity id**] 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 who complete the survey by the January 17 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, 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 (December 20, 2013)

To: All December 2013 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] 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.

Please take just five minutes to complete the online survey at:

<http://go.ncsu.edu/future.plans>

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

You will need to enter your Unity ID [**unity id**] 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 17 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.*

Please note that you might also be contacted about completing the Graduating Senior Survey, which is different from the Future Plans Survey. Both surveys are very important to us, and quick and easy to do. I appreciate your doing both.

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

### Third Follow-Up Email (January 6, 2014)

To: All December 2013 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! On behalf of your department, college and the university I'm emailing you this reminder about the Future Plans Survey, and asking you to take just 10 minutes to let us know what you're doing now as an NC State alumni. The survey closes on Friday, January 17 -- please don't miss this opportunity to share your experiences with us!

Whether you have already started a job, are still looking, have applied to graduate school, or have absolutely no idea what lies ahead, please give us an update in our online survey at:

<http://go.ncsu.edu/future.plans>

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

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

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, we will randomly select one more person who submits the survey by the January 17 deadline to win a \$100 Amazon.com gift card. For just 10 minutes of your time, that could be you!

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.

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.*

Please note that you might also be contacted about completing the Graduating Senior Survey, which is different from the Future Plans Survey. Both surveys are very important to us, and quick and easy to do. I appreciate your doing both.

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

## Final Follow-Up Email (January 14, 2014)

To: All December 2013 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://go.ncsu.edu/future.plans>

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

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

The deadline for completing the survey is Monday, January 27. 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 semester's Future Plans Survey on our website at <http://OIRP.ncsu.edu/srvy/stdnt/future-plans/dec12>.

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.

Please note that you might also be contacted about completing the Graduating Senior Survey, which is different from the Future Plans Survey. Both surveys are very important to us, and quick and easy to do. I appreciate your doing both.

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

For more information about the December 2013 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\\_wchelchel@ncsu.edu](mailto:nancy_wchelchel@ncsu.edu)

Posted: March, 2014