

May 2020 Undergraduate Future Plans Survey Introduction, Research Methods, and Response Rates

This series of reports presents findings from the May 2020 Undergraduate Future Plans Survey (UFPS) 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 brief history of the project and an overview of the research methods. Additional reports can be found on the [ISA](#) website.

Survey Background

Historically, the Career Development Center (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, centralizing the project in the Institutional Strategy and Analysis (ISA) office provided a more efficient and cost-effective mechanism for both administering the survey and providing reports on the results. To accomplish these objectives, ISA developed and administered the pilot Undergraduate Future Plans Survey in December 2010, working with the CDC and the college career service offices to develop an overall research design and questionnaire that would meet the needs of individual units on campus as well as that of the university as a whole. The survey has been administered by ISA since then.

Research Design

The Undergraduate Future Plans Survey is administered semiannually, coinciding with December and May graduation. In addition, ISA administers a modified version of the survey early in the fall semester 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 and/or who said they were planning to attend graduate/professional school but not had yet confirmed whether or not or where they would be attending, as well as to those who had said they were uncertain of their plans. Those who did not participate in the December/May Undergraduate Future Plans Survey, or who graduated in the summer, are also invited to participate in the follow-up Survey of Recent Graduates.

ISA 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.

Historically, all undergraduate students who have applied to graduate as of the day prior to graduation day are asked to participate in the UFPS. The online survey goes live about two

weeks prior to graduation day, and is scheduled to close two to four weeks after graduation. However, there was no May graduation ceremony in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, the survey was in the field from April 28, 2020, through May 27, 2020. This month-long time span mimics the traditional timing of the survey, but the language in the invitation and follow-up emails was altered to remove references to “graduation day” and “commencement day” and to refer more generally to the end of finals (see Appendix A).

On April 28, which was the second day of the final exam period, all students who as of that day had applied to graduate in May were sent an email from their college Dean inviting them to participate in the survey. The first follow-up reminder email was sent to non-respondents from their college Associate Dean on May 4. On May 7, the second reminder email came from the Executive Director of the Career Development Center for students in a college without its own career services office, and from the director of the student’s college career services office (or equivalent) if their college did have such an office. The final three reminders came from the Director for Survey Research on May 18, May 21, and May 27. On each of the days that reminders were sent to non-respondents, invitations were emailed to those who had applied to graduate during the intervening period. Drafts of the invitation and five follow-up emails are available in Appendix A. In addition to the emails sent by ISA, ISA 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.

Incentives were offered to encourage participation in the survey. Eight respondents who completed the survey by May 9, which was the Saturday after the last day of finals, were randomly selected to each receive a \$25 Amazon eGift Card. In addition, one respondent who submitted the survey by the final deadline of May 27 was randomly selected to receive a \$100 Amazon eGift Card.

Response Rates

The final May 2020 UFPS population consists of the 3,756 undergraduate students who had applied to graduate and were conferred degrees as of May 27. Of these students, 2,111 participated in the Undergraduate Future Plans Survey for an overall response rate of 56.2 percent. Participation in the survey however, varied by college, ranging from a high of 72.8 percent in the College of Education to a low of 49.6 percent in the Poole College of Management. Students from the College of Education, the College of Design, and the College of Engineering are slightly overrepresented in the final survey results.

Table 1: Response Rate, Overall and by College

College/School	May 2020 Graduating Class	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	429	11.4%	224	10.6%	52.2%
College of Design	132	3.5%	88	4.2%	66.7%
College of Education	103	2.7%	75	3.6%	72.8%
College of Engineering	1,056	28.1%	643	30.5%	60.9%
College of Natural Resources	212	5.6%	110	5.2%	51.9%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	649	17.3%	339	16.1%	52.2%
College of Sciences	457	12.2%	264	12.5%	57.8%
Wilson College of Textiles	158	4.2%	90	4.3%	57.0%
Poole College of Management	560	14.9%	278	13.2%	49.6%
Total	3,756	100.0%	2,111	100.0%	56.2%

Prepared by: Hannah McQueen

For more information about the Undergraduate Future Plans Survey, contact:

Institutional Strategy and Analysis

Box 7002

NC State University

Phone: (919) 515-6438

Email: studentsurveys@ncsu.edu

May 2020 Undergraduate Future Plans Survey Appendix A: Email Invitation and Follow-Up Reminders

Email Invitation (April 28, 2020)

To: All May 2020 students submitting the online application for degree form
From: "NCSU [College]" studentsurveys@ncsu.edu
Subject: Future Plans Survey – What's next?

Dear [preferred title] [last name]:

I recognize that this semester's graduates face unprecedented challenges due the disruptions and difficulties caused by COVID-19. Based on the application for degree process, however, you are still on track to finish your degree requirements in May. Congratulations!

I understand that this semester has been like no other, perhaps particularly in making concrete plans for what you will be doing after your complete your degree. However, as I have done with graduates in past semesters, as Dean of the [college name], I am reaching out to learn what is next in store for you. Perhaps you have already accepted a job, are currently searching, or haven't yet started your search. 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 would like to hear about them. Note that there will be a question at the end of the survey where you can share your experiences and tell us how your future plans may have been impacted by circumstances related to COVID-19.

Please 10-15 minutes of your time to complete the Future Plans Survey. You can access it online at:

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

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

As a show of our appreciation for your time, eight respondents who complete the survey by midnight on May 9, 2020 will be randomly selected to each win a \$25 Amazon gift card, sent via email. In addition, all respondents who submit the survey by the May 27, 2020 deadline will be entered into a drawing in which one person will be randomly selected to win a \$100 Amazon 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 about 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 paths, and even with employers when making salary offers to students. Be assured that your responses are confidential - - it will not be possible to identify any individual respondent in reports of results.

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 <https://careers.dasa.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 the Institutional Strategy and Analysis office at (919) 515-6438 or email studentsurveys@ncsu.edu.

Sincerely,
[College Dean]
[College]
NC State University

First Follow-Up Email (May 4, 2020)

To: All May 2020 students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey
From: "NCSU [College]" studentsurveys@ncsu.edu
Subject line: "Future Plans Survey – Share your experiences!"

Dear [preferred title] [last name]:

About a week ago, the Dean e-mailed to ask you to take just a few minutes of your time to let us know about your plans following the completion of your degree. As [associate dean title] of the [college name], I am interested in knowing what is next in store for you. Your feedback enables us to help current and future graduates and gives us the opportunity to showcase the myriad of activities in which our graduates engage.

I know that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented changes and challenges for this year's graduates. There will be a question at the end of the survey where you can share your experiences and tell us how your future plans may have been impacted by circumstances related to COVID-19.

As of 9:00 A.M. today, we have not yet heard from you. We ask that you please take 10-15 minutes of your time now to complete the Future Plans Survey, available at:

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

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

Eight (8) students who complete the survey by midnight on May 9, 2020 will be randomly selected to each receive a \$25 Amazon gift card. All respondents who complete the survey by the May 27, 2020 deadline will be entered into a drawing in which one person will be randomly selected to win a \$100 Amazon 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 about what our students are doing after graduation. The information from the survey is helpful to share with prospective NC State students and their parents, current students who are planning their future paths, employers when making salary offers to students, and with colleges and departments so that they know how their new graduates are doing. *Be assured that your responses are confidential - - it will not be possible to identify any individual respondent in reports of results.*

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 the Institutional Strategy and Analysis office at (919) 515-6438 or email studentsurveys@ncsu.edu.

Sincerely,
[Associate Dean]
[College]
NC State University

Second Follow-Up Email (May 7, 2020)

To: All May 2020 students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey
From: "NC State Career Development Center" studentsurveys@ncsu.edu
OR if student is in college with its own career services office:
"[College Career Center Director Name], [College Career Center]"
Subject line: "Please complete the Future Plans Survey"

Dear [preferred title] [last name]:

Given the unprecedented challenges faced by students this semester due to the coronavirus, I want to take a moment to congratulate you in advance for successfully finishing up your degree requirements. You've shown incredible perseverance, and I applaud you.

According to our latest information, you have not yet completed the Future Plans Survey. Whether you have already accepted a job, are looking for a job, are planning to attend graduate school, raise a family, or don't yet know, we would like you to tell us about it in the Future Plans Survey.

Please take just 10-15 minutes to complete the survey, available online at:

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

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

As a show of our appreciation for your time, eight (8) students who complete the survey by May 9 will be randomly selected to each receive a \$25 Amazon gift card. As an added incentive, one more person who submits the survey before it closes on May 27, 2020 will be randomly selected to win a \$100 Amazon gift card.

Your participation is voluntary, but we sincerely hope to hear from you. Knowing what our students are doing following your degree completion 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 paths, and even with employers when making salary offers to students. *Be assured that your responses are confidential - - it will not be possible to identify any individual respondent in reports of results.*

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.

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 <https://careers.dasa.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 the

Institutional Strategy and Analysis office at (919) 515-6438 or email studentsurveys@ncsu.edu.

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

OR if student is in college with its own career services office:

[College Career Center Director Name], [Title]
[College Career Center]
NC State University

Third Follow-Up Email (May 18, 2020)

To: All May 2020 students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey
From: "Dr. Nancy Whelchel" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>
Subject line: "Please complete the Future Plans Survey"

Dear [preferred title] [last name]:

Congratulations on recently earning your degree from NC State! On behalf of your department, college, and the University, I, as the Director for Survey Research at NC State, am emailing you this reminder about the Future Plans Survey and asking you to take just 10-15 minutes to let us know what you're doing now as a new NC State alumni. The survey closes on Wednesday, May 27 - - please don't miss this opportunity to share your experiences with us!

I understand that the COVID-19 pandemic might very well have impacted your plans for the future. However, whether you have already started a job, are still looking, have applied to graduate school, have put plans on hold for now, 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.)

Eight of your fellow graduates who submitted the survey 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 May 27 deadline to win a \$100 Amazon.com gift card, sent via email.

Your participation is voluntary, but we sincerely hope to hear from 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 paths, and even with employers when making salary offers to students and alumni. *Your responses are confidential - - it will not be possible to identify any individual respondent in the information we provide to these groups.*

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 the Institutional Strategy and Analysis office at (919) 515-6438 or email studentsurveys@ncsu.edu.

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

Fourth Follow-Up Email (May 21, 2020)

To: All May 2020 students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey
From: "Dr. Nancy Whelchel" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>
Subject Line: "Please complete the Future Plans Survey"

Dear [preferred title] [last name]:

Congratulations on recently earning your degree from NC State! Please take just 10-15 minutes of your time to let us know what you will be doing next. You can access 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.)

The deadline for completing the survey is Wednesday, May 27. We will randomly select one person who submits the survey by the deadline to win a \$100 Amazon gift card, sent via email.

Your participation is very important! Leaders across NC State rely on results from this survey for making decisions about the programs and services offered at NC State. Summarized results are shared with departments across campus, with NC State students and their parents, and with prospective employers. You can see latest results from the Future Plans Survey on our website at <https://oirp.ncsu.edu/ufps-may19/>.

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 contact the Institutional Strategy and Analysis office at (919) 515-6438 or email studentsurveys@ncsu.edu.

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

Final Follow-Up Email (May 27, 2020)

To: All May 2020 students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey
From: "Dr. Nancy Whelchel" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>
Subject line: "Please complete the Future Plans Survey"

Dear [preferred title] [last name]:

Our records indicate that as of about 8:00 AM this morning, you have not yet completed the Future Plans Survey, an annual survey administered to all students completing an undergraduate degree at NC State. This email is a final reminder that the survey **closes at 11:59 PM tonight**.

Click the link below to begin the brief survey or continue where you left off:

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

Remember, by completing the survey today, **you will also be entered into a random drawing for a chance to win a \$100 Amazon gift-card!**

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 also learn where NC State needs to make improvements to better prepare current and future students and its new alumni.

Thank you for your participation in this project. If you have questions about this survey, please contact the Institutional Strategy and Analysis office at 919-515-6438 or email studentsurveys@ncsu.edu.

Sincerely,
Dr. Nancy Whelchel
Director for Survey Research
Institutional Strategy and Analysis
NC State University