

## **May 2021 Undergraduate Future Plans Survey Introduction, Research Methods, and Response Rates**

This report provides an overview of the research methods and response rates for the Undergraduate Future Plans Survey (UFPS) at NC State University. The UFPS 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. Results from the survey 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, this follow-up survey, the Survey of Recent Graduates (SRG), is geared toward 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 had not yet confirmed whether or not or where they would be attending, as well as to those who said they were uncertain of their post-graduation 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 SRG.

ISA is solely responsible for preparing the surveys 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 the day prior to commencement are asked to participate in the UFPS. The online survey goes live about two weeks prior to commencement day and is scheduled to close two to four weeks after

graduation. The May 2021 UFPS was in the field from May 4, 2021, through June 2, 2021, with commencement being held on May 15.

On May 4, 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 10. On May 13, 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 24, May 27, and June 2. 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 invitation and follow-up emails, ISA engaged in other promotional activities to boost response rates. Various administrators in the colleges and departments (e.g., Associate Deans for Undergraduate Programs, College and Department Coordinators for Advising) were encouraged to contact their students directly. A flyer and QR code were distributed to survey contacts in each department, who were encouraged to incorporate them into communications with their graduating seniors. Some students, therefore, might have received additional requests to participate in the survey via email, flyer, and/or QR code in graduation-related communications.

Students were offered incentives in order to encourage participation in the survey. Eight respondents who completed the survey by midnight on commencement day (May 15) were randomly selected to each receive a \$25 Amazon eGift Card. In addition, one respondent who submitted the survey by the final deadline of June 2 was randomly selected to receive a \$100 Amazon eGift Card.

### *May 2021 "Branded Email" Experiment*

The May 2021 UFPS included an experiment designed to test whether "NC State brand" emails led to higher response rates. The standard invitations are plain-text and are devoid of logos or images. "NC State brand" invitations included a border, logo, graduation-themed image, a title, and an added "take the survey now" button on the bottom of the page. The actual text and wording in the body of the email remained the same. Students were randomly assigned into two groups using a random number generator and sent either the standard or branded survey invitation.

The final response rate of the students who received the branded email was 47.72 percent, and the response rate of the students who received the standard email was 47.11 percent<sup>1</sup>. While the branded email did lead to statistically significant increase in response rates, the total difference between the two was less than 15 participants.

Both invitation emails can be found in Appendix A.

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<sup>1</sup> The response rates for the initial invitations are lower than the final response rate because some respondents did not end up in the final population of degree earners and because some people applied to graduate and completed the survey after the initial invitations were sent.

## Response Rates

The final May 2021 UFPS population consists of the 3,978 undergraduate students who had applied to graduate and were conferred degrees as of June 11. Of these students, 1,937 participated in the Undergraduate Future Plans Survey for an overall response rate of 48.7 percent. Participation rates for the survey varied by college, ranging from a high of 62.2 percent in the College of Education to a low of 40.9 percent in the College of Natural Resources. 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 2021 Graduating Class		May 2021 Survey Respondents		Response Rate
	N	% of Population	N	% of Survey Respondents	
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	432	10.9%	195	10.1%	45.1%
College of Design	96	2.4%	51	2.6%	53.1%
College of Education	119	3.0%	74	3.8%	62.2%
College of Engineering	1,024	25.7%	603	31.1%	58.9%
College of Natural Resources	215	5.4%	88	4.5%	40.9%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	749	18.8%	307	15.8%	41.0%
College of Sciences	516	13.0%	251	13.0%	48.6%
Wilson College of Textiles	166	4.2%	75	3.9%	45.2%
Poole College of Management	661	16.6%	293	15.1%	44.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,978</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1,937</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>48.7%</b>

**Prepared by:** Hannah McQueen, Assistant Director for Survey Research

**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](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu)

## May 2021 Undergraduate Future Plans Survey Appendix A: Email Invitation and Follow-Up Reminders

### Email Invitation (May 4, 2021)

#### Regular Version

To: All May 2021 students who have submitted the online application for degree form  
From: "NC State [College]" studentsurveys@ncsu.edu  
Subject: Future Plans Survey – What's next?

Dear [Title, Last Name],

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 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.

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

[go.ncsu.edu/future.plans](http://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 15, 2021 (commencement day) will be randomly selected to each win a \$25 Amazon eGift card, sent via email. In addition, all respondents who submit the survey by the June 2 deadline will be entered into a drawing in which one person will be randomly selected to win a \$100 Amazon eGift 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.

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 email Institutional Strategy and Analysis at [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu) or call (919)-515-6438.

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

May 2021

**Future Plans Survey – What's next?**



Dear [Title, Last Name],

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 new 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.

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

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

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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 email Institutional Strategy and Analysis at [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu) or call (919) 515-6438.

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

[Take the Survey Now »](#)

## First Follow-Up Email (May 10, 2021)

To: All May 2021 students who have submitted the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey  
From: "NC State [College]" studentsurveys@ncsu.edu  
Subject line: "Future Plans Survey – Share your experiences!"

Dear [First Name],

Last week, the Dean emailed 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.

As of 9:30 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:  
[go.ncsu.edu/future.plans](http://go.ncsu.edu/future.plans)  
*(If the link does not work, please copy and paste it into your browser.)*

Eight students who complete the survey by midnight on May 15 (commencement day) will be randomly selected to each win a \$25 Amazon eGift card, sent via email. In addition, all respondents who submit the survey by the June 2 deadline will be entered into a drawing in which one person will be randomly selected to win a \$100 Amazon eGift 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.*

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

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

## Second Follow-Up Email (May 13, 2021)

To: All May 2021 students who have submitted 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 [First Name],

Congratulations on your upcoming graduation from NC State! According to our records, 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 ten minutes to complete the survey, available online at:  
[go.ncsu.edu/future.plans](http://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 midnight on May 15 (commencement day) will be randomly selected to each receive a \$25 Amazon eGift card. As an added incentive, one more person who submits the survey before it closes on June 2 will be randomly selected to win a \$100 Amazon eGift card.

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. 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.

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 email Institutional Strategy and Analysis at [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu) or call (919) 515-6438.

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 24, 2021)

To: All May 2021 students who have submitted 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 [First 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 are doing now as a new NC State alumni. The survey closes on Wednesday, June 2 - 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, 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:

[go.ncsu.edu/future.plans](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 eGift card. As an added incentive, we will randomly select one more person who submits the survey by the June 2 deadline to win a \$100 Amazon eGift 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](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu).

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

## Fourth Follow-Up Email (May 27, 2021)

To: All May 2021 students who have submitted 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 [First Name],

Congratulations on recently earning your degree from NC State! Our records show that, as of 9AM, you have not yet completed the Future Plans Survey. 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:  
[go.ncsu.edu/future.plans](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 this Wednesday, June 2. We will randomly select one person who submits the survey by the deadline to win a \$100 Amazon eGift 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.

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 Institutional Strategy and Analysis at (919) 515-6438 or email [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu).

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

## Final Follow-Up Email (June 2, 2021)

To: All May 2021 students who have submitted 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 [First Name],

Our records indicate that as of about 9:00 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:

[go.ncsu.edu/future.plans](http://go.ncsu.edu/future.plans)

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

Remember, by completing the survey today, you will also be entered into a random drawing for a chance to win a \$100 Amazon eGift 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 Institutional Strategy and Analysis at 919-515-6438 or email [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu).

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