

Combined Future Plans Surveys and Survey of Recent Graduates: Academic Year 2020-2021 Graduates Introduction, Research Methods, and Response Rates

The 2020-2021 Academic Year (AY20-21) reports present combined results from the December 2020 and May 2021 Future Plans Surveys and the September 2021 Survey of Recent Graduates. The Future Plans Surveys (FPS) and Survey of Recent Graduates (SRG) are 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 an overview of the research methods and response rates. Additional results, including a 'fast facts' sheet, interactive dashboards, and copies of the questionnaires, can be found on the Institutional Strategy and Analysis (ISA) [website](#).

Research Methods

The Future Plans Survey population includes all seniors who have submitted an "application for degree" and been approved by their academic department to graduate at the end of the current semester. The survey is administered in the weeks surrounding fall and spring commencement exercises. In Fall 2020, there was no commencement ceremony due to COVID-19 precautions. However, the FPS was in the field from November 19 through December 17. In Spring 2021, commencement was held on May 15, and the FPS was in the field from May 4 to June 2.

The Survey of Recent Graduates, administered in September, is a follow-up survey to the FPS. Students who did not participate in the FPS when they graduated in either December or May, along with those who received their degree after either the Summer I or Summer II sessions (and therefore were not invited to participate in the FPS that academic year), are invited to participate in the SRG. In order to get updated information from them, SRG invitations are also sent to all graduates from the past year who indicated that, at the time they completed either the December or May FPS, they had not yet found full-time employment, had not yet decided on or been accepted into graduate school, or were still undecided on their plans. The September 2021 Survey of Recent Graduates was in the field from August 31 to September 29.

The final survey population for the combined FPS and SRG surveys is all those who received a baccalaureate degree during the academic year, i.e., December 2020, May 2021, and 2021 Summer I and II. For respondents who completed both the FPS and the follow-up SRG, only their data from the SRG are retained. For respondents who graduated in multiple semesters during the academic year (e.g., were double majors), and submitted the FPS in both December and May, or who submitted an FPS and an SRG, only their data from the most recent survey is retained. More detailed information on the SRG population can be found in Appendix A.

Response Rates

A total of 5,843 undergraduate students received baccalaureate degrees from NC State in the 2020-2021 academic year (Table 1). This includes 1,386 students who graduated in Fall 2020, 4,135 who graduated in Spring 2021, and 322 who graduated in the Summer I (n=168) or Summer II (n=154) sessions of 2021. After retaining their most recent survey record, a total of 3,119 graduates are included in the AY20-21 FPS/SRG results (53.4%).

Due to their low participation rates, with about one fourth of summer graduates responding to the invitation to participate in the SRG (24.5%), Summer I and II graduates are underrepresented in the AY FPS/SRG results. Fall 2020 graduates had the highest participation rates and are slightly overrepresented, as about three-fifths of December graduates completed their FPS or SRG (59.0%). Over half of Spring 2021 graduates also completed their survey, for a participation rate of about 54 percent (53.7%).

Table 1: AY20-21 FPS/SRG Response Rate, Overall and by Semester Graduated

Semester Graduated	AY20-21 Population		FPS/SRG Respondents		Response Rate
	N	% of population	N	% of respondents	%
Fall 2020	1,386	23.7%	818	26.2%	59.0%
Spring 2021	4,135	70.8%	2,222	71.2%	53.7%
Summer I 2021	168	2.9%	37	1.2%	22.0%
Summer II 2021	154	2.6%	42	1.3%	27.3%
Total	5,843	100.0%	3,119	100.0%	53.4%

Participation in the FPS/SRG in the 2020-2021 academic year did vary by college. The College of Engineering had the highest response rate, with 63 percent of their graduates participating in the survey (62.8%; Table 2). Other colleges with higher-than-average response rates include the College of Education (60.1%) and the College of Sciences (54.9%).

Graduates from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the College of Natural Resources, and the Wilson College of Textiles had relatively lower participation rates (46.9%, 47.5%, and 49.3%, respectively) and are therefore slightly underrepresented in the results.

Table 2: AY20-21 FPS/SRG Response Rate, Overall and by College

College/School	AY20-21 Population		FPS/SRG Respondents		Response Rate
	N	% of population	N	% of respondents	%
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences	641	11.0%	321	10.3%	50.1%
College of Design	125	2.1%	65	2.1%	52.0%
College of Education	138	2.4%	83	2.7%	60.1%
College of Engineering	1,472	25.2%	925	29.7%	62.8%
College of Natural Resources	379	6.5%	180	5.8%	47.5%
College of Humanities and Social Sciences	1,129	19.3%	529	17.0%	46.9%
College of Sciences	770	13.2%	423	13.6%	54.9%
Wilson College of Textiles	211	3.6%	104	3.3%	49.3%
Poole College of Management	978	16.7%	489	15.7%	50.0%
Total	5,843	100.0%	3,119	100.0%	53.4%

Overview of Responses Included in Final Results

Table 3 provides an overview of from which specific survey the responses included in this report are drawn. Among those respondents who graduated in Fall 2020, the December FPS record was used for three fourths of respondents (75.4%), the May FPS record was used for six respondents (0.7%), and the September SRG record was used for the remaining 24 percent (23.8%). Among Spring 2021 graduate respondents, the May FPS record was used for 77 percent (77.3%), while the September SRG record was used for 23 percent (22.7%). All responses of Summer I and II graduates come from the September SRG.

Table 3: Survey Results Included, by Semester Graduated

Survey Results Included in Report	Graduated December 2020		Graduated Spring 2021		Graduated Summer I 2021		Graduated Summer II 2021		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
December FPS	617	75.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	617	19.8%
May FPS	6	0.7%	1718	77.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1,724	55.3%
September SRG	195	23.8%	504	22.7%	37	100.0%	42	100.0%	778	24.9%
Total	818	99.9%	2,222	100%	37	100%	42	100%	3,119	100%

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Appendix A: Survey of Recent Graduates Population and Response Rate

The Survey of Recent Graduates enables us to provide a more complete picture of the employment and further education of NC State's graduates from the previous academic year, taking into consideration those who might have taken a few months beyond graduation to obtain employment or enroll in graduate/professional school. This appendix further breaks down the composition of the population for the September 2021 SRG and the survey responses included in the AY reports.

Of the 5,843 graduates receiving baccalaureate degrees in AY20-21, 4,077 were invited to complete the September 2021 Survey of Recent Graduates (Table 4). Sixty-nine percent of those invited had not completed the Future Plans Survey when asked to do so when they graduated in either December or May (68.6%), and eight percent were Summer I or II graduates who had not been invited to participate in the FPS (7.7%). The remaining 24 percent of those who were invited to participate in the SRG had submitted their FPS when they graduated in either December or May (9.4% and 14.3% respectively, for a total of 23.7%), but had indicated at that time that they did not have confirmed plans for after graduation. Altogether, 25 percent of the SRG population had graduated in Fall 2020, 67 percent in Spring 2021, and 8 percent in either Summer I or II, 2021 (*not shown*).

Seven hundred and seventy-eight of the 4,077 AY20-21 graduates invited to participate in the SRG submitted their survey, for an overall response rate of 19 percent (19.1%). Graduates who had previously submitted their FPS but who had unconfirmed plans at the time, were most likely to submit the SRG and update their information, with 336 of the 966 in this group participating in the SRG (34.8%). (As a reminder, the responses from surveys submitted at graduation in December or May are included in the combined FPS/SRG academic year results for those who did not participate in the SRG when asked to do so.) About one in four students who graduated in Summer I or II – who had not been invited to participate in the FPS – submitted the SRG. Those who had not submitted their FPS when they graduated in either the fall or spring semester were least likely to participate in the SRG, with just 13 percent submitting their SRG.

Table 4: Survey of Recent Graduates Response Rate, by type of respondent

Group	Population		Respondents		Response Rate
	N	% of population	N	% of respondents	
FPS respondent (<i>with unconfirmed plans</i>)	966	23.7%	336	43.2%	34.8%
FPS nonrespondent	2,797	68.6%	363	46.7%	13.0%
Summer I or II graduate	314	7.7%	79	10.2%	25.2%
Total	4,077	100.0%	778	100.1%	19.1%