

## **December 2018 Graduate Future Plans Survey Introduction, Research Methods, and Response Rates**

This series of reports presents findings from the December 2018 Graduate Future Plans Survey (GFPS). This survey is designed to collect specific information on the plans of master's and doctoral students at NC State University following graduation, including detailed information on employment, participation in career-preparation activities while at NC State, and further graduate/professional school being pursued. This introductory report provides a background of the Graduate Future Plans Survey and an overview of the research design. Additional reports can be found on the [OIRP website](#).

### **Survey Background**

Historically, the Career Development Center (CDC) and the college career service offices independently collected information from NC State's students on their 'future plans' at the time of their graduation. While these diverse strategies provided useful information for some units, centralizing the project in the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) presented a more efficient and cost-effective mechanism for systematically collecting information from NC State graduates as a whole and providing reports on the results.

To accomplish these objectives, OIRP developed and administered the pilot Undergraduate Future Plans Survey (UFPS) to graduating seniors in December 2010, working with the CDC and the college career service offices to develop an overall research design and questionnaire. The UFPS has been administered semiannually to graduating seniors since then, and the results have been used by senior leadership, academic departments, career service offices, and other units across campus to support accreditation, assessment, and planning activities, as well as to provide information to employers and students on the job search process and employment details of NC State graduates.

Out of a growing need to collect information on the future plans of NC State's master's and doctoral graduates, with input from graduate students, the CDC, college career service offices, directors of graduate programs, and associate deans for graduate programs, OIRP developed and administered the pilot Graduate Future Plans Survey in May 2018. Revisions were made to the December 2018 questionnaire following analysis of the May 2018 administration.

### **Research Design**

Beginning in the academic year 2018 – 2019, the Graduate Future Plans Survey will be administered semiannually, coinciding with December and May graduation. In addition, December/May survey respondents who said at the time they completed the survey they were seeking or planning to seek full-time employment and/or were planning to pursue another graduate/professional degree but had not yet confirmed whether or not they would be enrolled or the school they would be attending will be invited to take a follow-up survey in September 2019. December and May graduate students who did not participate in the Graduate Future Plans Survey when first invited to do so, or who graduated in the summer of 2019, will also be invited to take this survey.

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 graduate students as appropriate, collecting and analyzing the data, and preparing and distributing reports on results.

All graduate students who have applied to graduate as of the day prior to graduation day are asked to participate in the GFPS. The online survey goes live about two weeks prior to graduation day, and is scheduled to close two to four weeks after graduation. The December 2018 Graduate Future Plans Survey was in the field from December 11, 2018, through January 16, 2019, with commencement being held on December 19.

On December 11, all doctoral and master’s students who as of that day had applied to graduate 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 December 13 and the second reminder email came from the Executive Director of the Career Development Center on December 18. The final three reminders came from the Director for Survey Research on January 7, January 10, and January 16. 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 OIRP, OIRP encouraged various administrators in the colleges and departments (e.g., Associate Deans, 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. Two respondents who completed the survey by the January 16 deadline were randomly selected to each receive a \$50 Amazon eGift Card.

## Response Rates

The final December 2018 GFPS population consists of the 958 master’s students (n=782) and doctoral students (n=176) who had applied to graduate and were conferred degrees as of December 19. Of these students, 615 participated in the Graduate Future Plans Survey for an overall response rate of 64.2 percent. Participation in the survey was slightly lower among master’s students (61.9%) compared to doctoral students (64.7%).

**Table 1: Response Rate, by Degree Received**

Degree	December 2018 Graduating Class	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
Doctoral	176	18.4%	109	17.7%	61.9%
Master’s	782	81.6%	506	82.3%	64.7%
Total	958	100.0%	615	100.0%	64.2%

Participation in the survey varied widely by college/school, ranging from a high of 82.5 percent in the College of Natural Resources to a low of 47.6 percent in the Poole College of Management. The College of Engineering is slightly overrepresented in the overall results, with their graduates making up 45.1 percent of the December 2018 population and 47.2 percent of the survey respondents. Conversely, the Poole College of Management is slightly underrepresented, with their graduates making up 11 percent of the population but only 8.1 percent of the survey respondents.

**Table 2: Response Rate, by College (All respondents)**

College/School	December 2018 Graduating Class	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	97	10.1%	57	9.3%	58.8%
College of Design	22	2.3%	11	1.8%	50.0%
College of Education	103	10.8%	76	12.4%	73.8%
College of Engineering	432	45.1%	290	47.2%	67.1%
College of Natural Resources	40	4.2%	33	5.4%	82.5%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	35	3.7%	24	3.9%	68.6%
College of Sciences	101	10.5%	58	9.4%	57.4%
College of Textiles	23	2.4%	16	2.6%	69.6%
Poole College of Management	105	11.0%	50	8.1%	47.6%
Total	958	100.0%	615	100.0%	64.2%

**Table 3: Response Rate, by College (Doctoral Degree Recipients)**

College/School	December 2018 Graduating Doctoral Students	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	28	15.9%	15	13.8%	53.6%
College of Design	3	1.7%	1	0.9%	33.3%
College of Education	22	12.5%	15	13.8%	68.2%
College of Engineering	64	36.4%	46	42.2%	71.9%
College of Natural Resources	6	3.4%	5	4.6%	83.3%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	8	4.5%	5	4.6%	62.5%
College of Sciences	37	21.0%	19	17.4%	51.4%
College of Textiles	8	4.5%	3	2.8%	37.5%
Total	176	100.0%	109	100.0%	61.9%

**Table 4: Response Rate, by College (Master's Degree Recipients)**

College/School	December 2018 Graduating Master's Students	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	69	8.8%	42	8.3%	60.9%
College of Design	19	2.4%	10	2.0%	52.6%
College of Education	81	10.4%	61	12.1%	75.3%
College of Engineering	368	47.1%	244	48.2%	66.3%
College of Natural Resources	34	4.3%	28	5.5%	82.4%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	27	3.5%	19	3.8%	70.4%
College of Sciences	64	8.2%	39	7.7%	60.9%
College of Textiles	15	1.9%	13	2.6%	86.7%
Poole College of Management	105	13.4%	50	9.9%	47.6%
Total	782	100.0%	506	100.0%	64.7%

**For more information about the Graduate Future Plans Survey contact:**

Suzanne Crockett, Assistant Director for Survey Research  
Office of Institutional Research and Planning  
Box 7002  
NC State University  
Phone: (919) 515-6438  
Email: sacrocke@ncsu.edu

Posted: March, 2019

gfps.dec18.methods.pdf

March, 2019

Page 4 of 10

## December 2018 Graduate Future Plans Survey Appendix A: Email Invitation and Follow-Up Reminders

### Email Invitation (December 11, 2018)

To: All December 2018 graduate students submitting the online application for degree form  
From: "NCSU [College]" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>  
Subject line: "Future Plans Survey – What's next?"

Dear [title] [last name]:

Congratulations on your upcoming graduation from NC State! As [TITLE] of the [COLLEGE], I am interested in knowing what is next in store for you. Perhaps you have accepted a new job, already have one, or are currently searching. Maybe you are continuing in graduate or professional school to pursue another degree, or maybe you are following other dreams. Whatever your plans may be, we would like to hear about them.

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

**<https://go.ncsu.edu/grad.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, two respondents who complete the survey by January 16, 2019 will be randomly selected to each win a \$50 Amazon gift card.

Your participation is voluntary, but we sincerely hope to hear from you. Systematically collecting this information through this brief survey is the best way we have to learn what our students will be doing after earning their degree. The aggregate-level information from the survey is helpful to share with prospective NC State graduate students, with current graduate students who are planning their future paths, and even with employers when making salary offers to our graduate students. *Be assured that your responses are confidential - - it will not be possible to identify any individual respondent in reports of results.*

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.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 Office of Institutional Research and Planning at (919) 515-6438 or email [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu).

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

## First Follow-Up Email (December 13, 2018)

To: All December 2018 graduate 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 [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 graduation. As [TITLE] of the [COLLEGE], I am interested in knowing what is next in store for you. Your feedback enables us to help current and future graduate students and gives us the opportunity to showcase the myriad of activities in which our graduates engage.

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

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

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

As an incentive, two students who complete the survey by Wednesday, January 16, will be randomly selected to each receive a \$50 Amazon gift card.

Your participation is voluntary, but we sincerely hope to hear from you. Asking you to participate in this brief survey and provide the requested information is the best way we have of learning what NC State graduate students are doing after earning their degree. The information from the survey is helpful to share with prospective NC State graduate students, current graduate students who are planning their future paths, employers when making salary offers, and of course with others in our department and college so that they know how our 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 graduate students. If you have any questions about this survey, please call the Office of Institutional Research and Planning at (919) 515-6438 or email [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu).

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

## Second Follow-Up Email (December 18, 2018)

To: All December 2018 graduate students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey  
From: "Dr. Arnold Bell, Career Development Center" <studenttsurveys@ncsu.edu>  
Subject line: "Please complete the Graduate Future Plans Survey"

Dear [title] [last name]:

Congratulations on your upcoming graduation from NC State! According to our records, you have not yet completed the Graduate Future Plans Survey. Whether you have already accepted a job, are searching for employment, pursuing another degree, traveling the globe, raising a family, or don't yet know, we would like you to tell us about it in the Graduate Future Plans Survey.

Please take just five minutes to complete the survey, available online at:  
**<https://go.ncsu.edu/grad.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, two students who complete the survey by January 16 will be randomly selected to each receive a \$50 Amazon gift card.

Your participation is voluntary, but we sincerely hope to hear from you. Knowing what our students are doing after earning their degree 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 graduate students, with current graduate students who are planning their future paths, and even with employers. Be assured that your responses are confidential - - it will not be possible to identify any individual respondent in reports of results.

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.ncsu.edu/> for more information.

Thank you again for your help with this important effort to learn more about the future plans of our graduate students. If you have any questions about this survey, please call the Office of Institutional Research and Planning 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

### Third Follow-Up Email (January 7, 2019)

To: All December 2018 graduate students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey  
From: "Office of Institutional Research and Planning" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>  
Subject line: "Please take the Graduate Future Plans Survey"

Dear [title] [last name]:

Congratulations on your recent graduation 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 Graduate Future Plans Survey and asking you to take just 10 minutes to let us know what you're doing now as a new NC State alumni. The survey closes on Wednesday, January 16 - - please don't miss this opportunity to share your experiences with us!

Whether you have accepted a new job or are continuing your career, are seeking a job or pursuing another degree, please give us an update in our online survey at:

**<http://go.ncsu.edu/grad.future.plans>**  
**(If the link does not work, please copy and paste it into your browser.)**

As an added incentive, two respondents who complete the survey by January 16, 2019 will be randomly selected to each win a \$50 Amazon gift card.

Your participation is voluntary, but we sincerely hope to hear from you. Systematically collecting this information through this brief survey is the best way we have to learn what our students will be doing after earning their degree. In addition, the aggregate-level information from the survey is helpful to share with prospective NC State graduate students, with current students who are planning their future paths, and even with employers when making salary offers to our graduate students. 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 graduate students. If you have any questions about this survey, please call the Office of Institutional Research and Planning at (919) 515-6438 or email [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu).

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

#### **Fourth Follow-Up Email (January 10, 2019)**

To: All December 2018 graduate students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey  
From: "Dr. Nancy Whelchel" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>  
Subject Line: "Future Plans Survey – What's next?"

Dear [title] [last name]:

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. You can access the Graduate Future Plans Survey online at:

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

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

The deadline for completing the survey has been extended to this Wednesday, January 16, to give our new alumni a little bit more time to respond.

Your participation is very important! Leaders across NC State will rely on results from this survey for making decisions about the programs and services offered at NC State. Summarized results will be shared with departments across campus, with NC State graduate students, 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 graduate 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 graduate students. If you have any questions about this survey, please call the Office of Institutional Research and Planning at (919) 515-6438 or email [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu).

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

**Final Follow-Up Email (January 16, 2019)**

To: All December 2018 graduate students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey  
From: "Dr. Nancy Whelchel" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>  
Subject line: "Reminder: Future Plans Survey closing today"

Dear [title] [last name]:

Our records indicate that as of about 9:00 AM this morning, you have not yet completed the Graduate Future Plans Survey, an NC State survey administered to all our new graduate alumni of their plans after graduation. 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/grad.future.plans>**

Remember, by completing the survey today, you will also be entered into a random drawing for a chance to win a \$50 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 graduate 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 Office of Institutional Research and Planning at 919-515-6438 or email [studentsurveys@ncsu.edu](mailto:studentsurveys@ncsu.edu).

Sincerely,

Dr. Nancy Whelchel  
Director for Survey Research  
Institutional Research and Planning  
NC State University