

May 2018 Graduate Future Plans Survey Introduction, Research Methods, and Response Rates

This series of reports presents findings from the pilot Graduate Future Plans Survey (GFPS), first administered in May 2018. 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 pilot Graduate Future Plans Survey and an overview of the research design. Additional reports on the overall survey results, college-level results for master's and doctoral students, and departmental summaries, as well as a copy of the questionnaire, 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 Future Plans Survey (FPS) 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 FPS 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, OIRP developed and administered the pilot Graduate Future Plans Survey in May 2018.

Research Design

In spring 2018, OIRP developed a revised version of the FPS questionnaire to more appropriately capture the experiences of NC State master's and doctoral students, with input from graduate students, the CDC, college career service offices, directors of graduate programs, and associate deans for graduate programs.

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 May 2018 Graduate Future Plans Survey was in the field from May 1, 2018, through June 6, 2018, with commencement being held on May 12.

On May 1, all masters and doctoral 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 May 7 and the second reminder email came from the Executive Director of the Career Development Center on May 10. The final three reminders came from the Director for Survey Research on May 22, June 4, and June 6. 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 June 6 deadline were randomly selected to each receive a \$50 Amazon eGift Card.

Response Rates

The final May 2018 GFPS population consists of the 1,758 master’s students (n=1,565) and doctoral students (n=193) who had applied to graduate and were conferred degrees as of May 12. Of these students, 1,218 participated in the Graduate Future Plans Survey for an overall response rate of 69.3 percent. Participation in the survey was slightly lower among master’s students (68.7%) compared to doctoral students (74.1%).

Table 1: Response Rate, by Degree Received

Degree	May 2018 Graduating Class	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
Doctoral	193	11.0%	143	11.7%	74.1%
Master's	1,565	89.0%	1,075	88.3%	68.7%
Total	1,758	100.0%	1,218	100.0%	69.3%

Participation in the survey varied widely by college/school, ranging from a high of 99.1 percent in the Institute for Advanced Analytics to a low of 56.3 percent in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and 57.8 percent in the Poole College of Management. The Institute for Advanced Analytics is slightly overrepresented in the overall results, with their graduates making up 6.3 percent of the May 2018 population and 9.0 percent of the survey respondents. Conversely, the Poole College of Management is slightly underrepresented, with their graduates making up 12.8 percent of the population but only 10.7 percent of the survey respondents.

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

College/School	May 2018 Graduating Class	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	158	9.0%	89	7.3%	56.3%
College of Design	51	2.9%	32	2.6%	62.7%
College of Education	241	13.7%	177	14.5%	73.4%
College of Engineering	549	31.2%	394	32.3%	71.8%
College of Natural Resources	60	3.4%	46	3.8%	76.7%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	212	12.1%	138	11.3%	65.1%
College of Sciences	117	6.7%	76	6.2%	65.0%
College of Textiles	34	1.9%	26	2.1%	76.5%
Poole College of Management	225	12.8%	130	10.7%	57.8%
Institute for Advanced Analytics	111	6.3%	110	9.0%	99.1%
Total	1,758	100.0%	1,218	100.0%	69.3%

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

College/School	May 2018 Graduating Doctoral Students	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	25	13.0%	18	12.6%	72.0%
College of Design	1	0.5%	.	.	.
College of Education	36	18.7%	29	20.3%	80.6%
College of Engineering	63	32.6%	44	30.8%	69.8%
College of Natural Resources	6	3.1%	5	3.5%	83.3%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	12	6.2%	7	4.9%	58.3%
College of Sciences	37	19.2%	30	21.0%	81.1%
College of Textiles	10	5.2%	8	5.6%	80.0%
Poole College of Management	3	1.6%	2	1.4%	66.7%
Total	193	100.0%	143	100.0%	74.1%

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

College/School	May 2018 Graduating Master's Students	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	132	8.4%	70	6.5%	53.0%
College of Design	50	3.2%	32	3.0%	64.0%
College of Education	205	13.1%	148	13.8%	72.2%
College of Engineering	486	31.1%	350	32.6%	72.0%
College of Natural Resources	54	3.5%	41	3.8%	75.9%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	200	12.8%	131	12.2%	65.5%
College of Sciences	81	5.2%	47	4.4%	58.0%
College of Textiles	24	1.5%	18	1.7%	75.0%
Poole College of Management	222	14.2%	128	11.9%	57.7%
Institute for Advanced Analytics	111	7.1%	110	10.2%	99.1%
Total	1,565	100.0%	1,075	100.0%	68.7%

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: August, 2018

May 2018 Graduate Future Plans Survey

Appendix A: Email Invitation and Follow-Up Reminders

Email Invitation (May 1, 2018)

To: All May 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 on 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 May 28, 2018 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.

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

First Follow-Up Email (May 7, 2018)

To: All May 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 11:00 AM 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 Monday, May 28, 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.

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

Second Follow-Up Email (May 10, 2018)

To: All May 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 May 28 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.

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

Third Follow-Up Email (May 22, 2018)

To: All May 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 Monday, May 28 - - 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 May 28, 2018 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.

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

Fourth Follow-Up Email (June 4, 2018)

To: All May 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, June 6, 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.

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

Final Follow-Up Email (June 6, 2018)

To: All May 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 10:00 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.

Sincerely,

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