

December 2019 Graduate Future Plans Survey Introduction, Research Methods, and Response Rates

This series of reports presents findings from the December 2019 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 [ISA 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 Institutional Strategy and Analysis office (ISA, formerly Office of Institutional Research and Planning) 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, ISA 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, the Graduate School, directors of graduate programs, and associate deans for graduate programs, ISA developed and administered the pilot Graduate Future Plans Survey in May 2018. Small revisions were made to the December 2019 questionnaire following analyses of the May 2018 and May 2019 survey 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 that 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 2020. 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 2020, will also be invited to take this survey.

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 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 GFPS¹. 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 2019 Graduate Future Plans Survey was in the field from December 10, 2019, through January 15, 2020, with commencement being held on December 19.

On December 10, 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 12. On December 17, the second reminder email for graduate students in a college without its own career services office came from the Executive Director of the Career Development Center. If their college did have such an office, the second reminder came from the director of the student's college career services office. The final two reminders came on January 7 and January 9 from the Director for Survey Research. 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 four follow-up emails are available in Appendix A. In addition to the emails sent by ISA, ISA encouraged 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 15 deadline were randomly selected to each receive a \$50 Amazon eGift Card.

Response Rates

The final December 2019 GFPS population consists of the 990 master's students (n=795) and doctoral students (n=195) who had applied to graduate and were conferred degrees as of December 19. Of these students, 587 participated in the Graduate Future Plans Survey for an overall response rate of 59.3 percent. Participation in the survey was slightly lower among master's students (58.9%) compared to doctoral students (61.0%).

¹ Doctoral and master's degree recipients only. DVM students are not included in the GFPS survey population.

Table 1: Response Rate, by Degree Received

Degree	Dec 2019 Graduating Class	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
Doctoral	195	19.7%	119	20.3%	61.0%
Masters	795	80.3%	468	79.7%	58.9%
Total	990	100.0%	587	100.0%	59.3%

Participation in the survey varied widely by college/school, ranging from a high of 73 percent in both the College of Natural Resources and the Wilson College of Textiles to a low of 27.3 percent in the College of Design (three out of the 11 graduates). Overall, however, no college is over- or underrepresented compared to their portion of the graduate population by more than 2.5 percentage points.

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

College/School	Dec 2019 Graduating Class	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	100	10.1%	58	9.9%	58.0%
College of Design	11	1.1%	3	0.5%	27.3%
College of Education	102	10.3%	72	12.3%	70.6%
College of Engineering	438	44.2%	264	45.0%	60.3%
College of Natural Resources	55	5.6%	40	6.8%	72.7%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	48	4.8%	27	4.6%	56.3%
College of Sciences	97	9.8%	43	7.3%	44.3%
Wilson College of Textiles	22	2.2%	16	2.7%	72.7%
College of Veterinary Medicine	7	0.7%	5	0.9%	71.4%
Poole College of Management	110	11.1%	59	10.1%	53.6%
Total	990	100.0%	587	100.0%	59.3%

*Doctoral and master's degree recipients only. DVM students are not included in the GFPS survey population.

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

College/School	Dec 2019 Graduating Class	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	78	9.8%	43	9.2%	55.1%
College of Design	10	1.3%	3	0.6%	30.0%
College of Education	84	10.6%	61	13.0%	72.6%
College of Engineering	347	43.6%	209	44.7%	60.2%
College of Natural Resources	46	5.8%	33	7.1%	71.7%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	37	4.7%	19	4.1%	51.4%
College of Sciences	64	8.1%	28	6.0%	43.8%
Wilson College of Textiles	16	2.0%	11	2.4%	68.8%
College of Veterinary Medicine	3	0.4%	2	0.4%	66.7%
Poole College of Management	110	13.8%	59	12.6%	53.6%
Total	795	100.0%	468	100.0%	58.9%

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

College/School	Dec 2019 Graduating Class	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	22	11.3%	15	12.6%	68.2%
College of Design	1	0.5%	.	.	.
College of Education	18	9.2%	11	9.2%	61.1%
College of Engineering	91	46.7%	55	46.2%	60.4%
College of Natural Resources	9	4.6%	7	5.9%	77.8%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	11	5.6%	8	6.7%	72.7%
College of Sciences	33	16.9%	15	12.6%	45.5%
Wilson College of Textiles	6	3.1%	5	4.2%	83.3%
College of Veterinary Medicine	4	2.1%	3	2.5%	75.0%
Total	195	100.0%	119	100.0%	61.0%

For more information about the Graduate Future Plans Survey contact:

Hannah McQueen, Assistant Director for Survey Research
 Institutional Strategy and Analysis
 Box 7002
 NC State University
 Phone: (919) 515-6438
 Email: hmmcquee@ncsu.edu

Posted: August, 2020

December 2019 Graduate Future Plans Survey Appendix A: Email Invitation and Follow-Up Reminders

Email Invitation (December 10, 2019)

To: All December 2019 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:

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 15, 2020 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 graduate 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) 515-7520 or email studentsurveys@ncsu.edu.

Sincerely,
[TITLE] [COLLEGE]

First Follow-Up Email (December 12, 2019)

To: All December 2019 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],

Earlier this week, 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 many activities in which our graduates engage.

As of about 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:

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 15, 2020 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) 515-7520 or email studentsurveys@ncsu.edu.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE]

Second Follow-Up Email (December 17, 2019)

To: All December 2019 graduate students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey

From: "Dr. Arnold Bell, Career Development Center" (or corresponding career center director)

<studentsurveys@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:

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 Wednesday, January 15, 2020 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) 515-7520 or email studentsurveys@ncsu.edu.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE]

Third Follow-Up Email (January 7, 2020)

To: All December 2019 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 15 - - 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:

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 15, 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) 515-7520 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 (January 9, 2020)

To: All December 2019 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:

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 is Wednesday, January 15. We will randomly select two respondents who submit the survey by this deadline to win a \$50 Amazon gift card, sent via email.

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) 515-7520 or email studentsurveys@ncsu.edu.

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