

December 2016 Future Plans Survey Introduction, Research Methods, and Response Rates

This series of reports presents findings from the December 2016 Future Plans Survey (FPS) conducted at NC State University. The survey 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. This introductory report provides the history of the project and an overview of the research methods. Additional reports on the overall survey results, college-level results, and departmental summaries, as well as a copy of the questionnaire, can be found [online](#).

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 Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) provided a more efficient and cost-effective mechanism for both administering the survey and providing reports on the results. To accomplish these objectives, OIRP developed and administered the pilot 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.

Research Design

The Future Plans Survey is administered semiannually, coinciding with December and May graduation. In addition, OIRP administers a modified version of the survey in early fall as a follow-up to the December and May surveys for the previous academic year. Specifically, the "Survey of Recent Graduates" is geared towards 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, as well as to those who had said they were uncertain of their plans. Those who did not participate in the December/May Future Plans Survey, or who graduated in the first summer session, are also invited to participate in the follow-up Survey of Recent Graduates.

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 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 graduation day are asked to participate in the FPS. The online survey goes live about two weeks prior to graduation day, and is scheduled to close two to six weeks after graduation. The December 2016 Future Plans Survey was in the field from December 6, 2016, through January 13, 2017, with commencement being held on December 16.

On December 6, all students who as of that day had applied to graduate were sent an email invitation from their college Dean. The first follow-up reminder email was sent to non-respondents from their college Associate Dean on December 12 and the second reminder came from the Executive Director of the Career Development Center on December 15. The final three reminders came from the Director for Survey Research on January 3, January 5, and January 13. 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 OIRP, OIRP encouraged various administrators in the colleges and departments (e.g., Associate Deans for Undergraduate Programs, 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. Eight respondents who completed the survey by midnight on graduation day (December 16) were randomly selected to each receive a \$25 Amazon.com gift card.

In addition, one respondent who submitted the survey by the final deadline of January 13 was randomly selected to receive a \$100 Amazon.com gift card.

Response Rates

The final December 2016 FPS population consists of the 1,303 undergraduate students who were conferred degrees as of December 16. Of these students, 680 participated in the Future Plans Survey for an overall response rate of 52.2 percent. Participation in the survey however, varied by college, ranging from a high of 59.1 percent in the College of Engineering to a low of 46.4 percent in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The College of Engineering is slightly overrepresented in the overall results, with their graduates making up 22.9 percent of the December 2016 population and 25.9 percent of the survey respondents. Conversely, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences is slightly underrepresented, with their graduates making up 21.2 percent of the population but only 18.8 percent of the survey respondents.

Table 1: Response Rate, Overall and by College

	December 2016 Graduating Class	Percent of Population	Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Response Rate
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	177	13.6%	86	12.6%	48.6%
College of Design	15	1.2%	7	1.0%	46.7%
College of Education	17	1.3%	9	1.3%	52.9%
College of Engineering	298	22.9%	176	25.9%	59.1%
College of Natural Resources	136	10.4%	76	11.2%	55.9%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	276	21.2%	128	18.8%	46.4%
College of Sciences	149	11.4%	81	11.9%	54.4%
College of Textiles	41	3.1%	21	3.1%	51.2%
Poole College of Management	194	14.9%	96	14.1%	49.5%
Total	1,303	100.0%	680	100.0%	52.2%

For more information about the 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, 2017

December 2016 Future Plans Survey Appendix A: Email Invitation and Follow-Up Reminders

Email Invitation (December 6, 2016)

To: All December 2016 students submitting the online application for degree form
From: "NCSU [College]" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>
Subject line: "Future Plans Survey - How's it going?"

Dear [title] [last name]:

Congratulations on your upcoming graduation from NC State! As [dean title] of the [college name] I am interested in knowing what is next in store for you. Perhaps you have already accepted a job, are still looking, or haven't yet started. 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 less than 10 minutes of your time to complete the Future Plans Survey. You can access it online at:

<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, 8 respondents who complete the survey by midnight on graduation day (December 16, 2016) will be randomly selected to each win a \$25 Amazon.com gift card code, sent via email. In addition, all respondents who submit the survey by the January 6, 2017 deadline will be entered into a drawing in which one person will be randomly selected to win a \$100 Amazon.com gift card code, sent via email.

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 path, 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.

Remember, as an NC State alumnus/alumna, the Career Development Center will continue to provide services to you for one year after graduation.

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 (December 12, 2016)

To: All December 2016 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. [associate dean title] for 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 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 Future Plans Survey, available at:

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

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

Eight (8) students who complete the survey by midnight on graduation day will be randomly selected to each receive a \$25 Amazon.com gift card. All respondents who complete the survey by the January 6, 2017 deadline will be entered into a drawing in which one person will be randomly selected to win a \$100 Amazon.com gift 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 what our students are doing after graduation. The information from the survey is helpful to share with prospective NC State students and their parents, current students who are planning their future path, employers when making salary offers to students, and with colleges and departments so that they know how their 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 undergraduate 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 (December 15, 2016)

To: All December 2016 students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey
From: "NC State Career Development Center" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>
Subject line: "Please take the Future Plans Survey" or
"Please complete the Future Plans Survey" or
"Please complete your 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 Future Plans Survey. Whether you have already accepted a job, are looking for a job, or are planning to attend graduate school, travel the globe, or raise a family, we would like you to tell us about it in the Future Plans Survey.

Please take just five minutes to complete the survey, available online at:
<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 11:59 PM tomorrow will be randomly selected to each receive a \$25 Amazon.com gift card. As an added incentive, one more person who submits the survey before it closes on January 6 will be randomly selected to win a \$100 Amazon.com gift 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 path, 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.

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 <http://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 undergraduate 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 (January 3, 2017)

To: All December 2016 students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey
From: "Institutional Research and Planning" or "Dr. Nancy Whelchel" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>
Subject line: "Reminder: Please complete the 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 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 Friday, January 6 - - 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, or have absolutely no idea what lies ahead, please give us an update in our online survey at:

<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 by graduation have already been randomly selected to each receive a \$25 Amazon.com gift card. As an added incentive, we will randomly select one more person who submits the survey by the January 6 deadline to win a \$100 Amazon.com gift card code, 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.

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 future plans of our undergraduate 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 (January 5, 2017)

To: All December 2016 students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey
From: "Institutional Research and Planning" Or "Dr. Nancy Whelchel" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>
Subject Line: "Future Plans Survey: Let us know what you're doing!"

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, whatever they may be. Go to the Future Plans Survey online at:

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

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

Given the significance of this project to the institution, and the importance of hearing from as many of our recently graduated seniors as possible, we are extending the deadline to give you additional time to complete the survey. The survey will close next Friday (the 13th!). As a show of our appreciation for your time, all recently graduated seniors who submit the survey by the deadline will be entered into a drawing to receive a \$100 Amazon.com gift card.

Your participation is of great importance – 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 NC State students and their parents and with prospective employers. You can see results from last semester's Future Plans Survey on our website at <https://oirp.ncsu.edu/fps-may16>.

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 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 (January 13, 2017)

To: All December 2016 students submitting the online application for degree form not yet responding to the survey
From: "Dr. Nancy Whelchel" <studentsurveys@ncsu.edu>
Subject line: "Reminder: Please take the Future Plans Survey"

Dear [title] [last name]:

Our records indicate that as of about 9:00 AM this morning, you have not yet completed the Future Plans Survey, an NC State survey administered to all our recent graduating seniors of their plans after graduation. This email is a final reminder that the survey closes at 11:59 PM tonight.

Click link below to begin the survey or continue where you left off:
<http://go.ncsu.edu/future.plans>

Remember, by completing the survey today, you will also be entered into a random drawing for a chance to win a \$100 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 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,

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