

May 2020 Graduate Future Plans Survey Executive Summary Doctoral Graduates

This report summarizes the results for doctoral degree recipients participating in the May 2020 Graduate Future Plans Survey. A separate document summarizing the results for master's degree recipients is located on the [ISA website](#).

Survey Methods

Doctoral and master's students who applied to graduate in Spring 2020 were invited to participate in the semiannual administration of the Graduate Future Plans Survey. Because of COVID-19, there was no formal commencement ceremony; instead, the final population used in analysis consists of those graduate students who had completed the application to graduate by May 7 and who were conferred degrees. The online survey had an overall response rate of 69.1 percent, with 1,228 of the 1,776 graduates responding; 146 of the 192 doctoral students who were conferred a degree submitted the survey for a response rate of 76 percent.

Plans Following Graduation

Just under three-fourths of doctoral degree recipients said at the time they completed the survey they had confirmed plans for employment in the year after graduation. Twenty-five percent of all doctoral graduates said their primary plan was to seek new employment in the year after graduation, and thirty-four percent of those who had confirmed employment indicated they were also planning to seek new employment opportunities. About two percent of doctoral graduates reported that they had "other" plans (e.g., pursuing another degree, traveling, spending time with family).

Post-Graduation Employment among Those Accepting a Full-Time Position

Ninety-eight percent of doctoral graduates with confirmed plans for employment reported that they will be working full-time. Fifty-four percent of doctoral graduates who will be working full-time said that they will be starting a new position at a new place of employment. Thirty percent indicated they will be continuing to work at a place of employment they obtained during their graduate program and 16 percent said they will be continuing at a place of employment they had prior to the start of their graduate program.

Among the doctoral graduates who said they will be working full-time in a position they accepted at the time of graduation or for which they began working during the course of their graduate program:

- Sixty-seven percent said they began looking for employment six or more months prior to graduation
- Fifty-three percent reported going on interviews for three or more different positions during their job search
- Forty-eight percent said they had received more than one job offer from which to choose

- Fifty-eight percent indicated receiving the offer for the position they finally accepted three or more months prior to graduation
- Over one-third said that an *NC State faculty member* and/or a *research assistantship* had been helpful in their job search

Sixty percent of doctoral graduates who said they will be continuing to work full-time at a place of employment they had obtained prior to or during their graduate program indicated they would receive a salary increase and/or a promotion/title change contingent upon receiving their degree. Twenty-six percent indicated they would be getting both a salary increase and a promotion/title change and an additional 23 percent said they would be getting only a salary increase. An additional 11 percent said they would be getting only a promotion/title change and would not receive an increase in their salary.

Among all doctoral graduates who said they will be working full-time in the coming year, 32 percent indicated they will be working at either a *U.S. four-year college or university* (28.8%) or at a *U.S. medical school* (2.9%). Four percent said they will be working for a *U.S. university-affiliated research institute* and another four percent will be working at a *U.S. community or two-year college*. Thirty-nine percent of doctoral graduates reported that they will be working for a *private, for profit business or organization*. Eighty-five percent of doctoral graduates indicated the position in which they will be working is “directly related” to their field of study.

Just under half of doctoral graduates who will be working full-time said they will be staying in North Carolina, with 34 percent working in the Research Triangle area (e.g., Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill). The top employer of doctoral degree recipients was NC State University, employing twelve of the doctoral graduates who had secured full-time employment.

NC State doctoral graduates securing full-time employment reported an average salary in the coming year of \$83,196 (median = \$77,500). Seventeen percent said they had received a signing bonus upon accepting their position, and of those indicating the amount, 54 percent said it was for \$10,000 or more. In addition, 11 percent of doctoral graduates reported receiving company shares as part of their job offer. Three of the five respondents providing an estimated value said the value of the shares was for \$100,000 or more at the time they accepted the position. Fifty-seven percent of those who said they will be working outside North Carolina reported that they had received an offer for a relocation package.

Graduates Seeking Employment

As noted above, 25 percent of doctoral degree recipients (n=36) said their primary post-graduation plan was to seek employment. Another 16 graduates reported being employed full-time and still planning to pursue new employment in the year following graduation.

Two-thirds of doctoral graduates who at the time of the survey said they were actively seeking employment or a change of employment reported beginning their search less than six months prior to graduation. Two-thirds also indicated they had gone on an interview for at least one position during their most recent job search; 24 percent said they had interviewed for three or more positions. Twenty percent of doctoral graduates looking for a position said they had received at least one job offer.

NC State Professional Development Experiences and Resources

Sixty-nine percent of all doctoral graduates submitting the May 2020 Graduate Future Plans Survey indicated they had had a *research assistantship* during the course of their graduate program and 58 percent said they had had a *teaching assistantship*. Forty-eight percent of doctoral graduates said they had participated in *research outside of an assistantship that was not published or presented* and 36 percent had had an *internship*. Sixty-four percent of the doctoral graduates who participated in *research outside of an assistantship that was not published or presented* said that the experience was “very helpful” in securing a job offer. Similarly, having a *job in the field of study* (61.5%), a *co-op* (58.3%), a *research assistantship* (55.9%) or an *internship* (56.0%) were more likely than other types of work-related experiences to be viewed by those who had such experiences as “very helpful” in securing their job offer.

Sixty percent of doctoral graduates reported *publishing at least one article or creative work in a peer-reviewed journal* while pursuing their degree and 14 percent said they had produced five or more publications over the course of their graduate program. In addition, three-fourths of doctoral graduates reported presenting *at least one research paper, poster, or creative work at a conference in their field*, and 35 percent said they had presented five or more times.

Of the doctoral graduates who visited any of NC State’s career services offices, the majority reported going to the Career Development Center (25.7% of doctoral graduates). Most of those who had gone to a campus or college career services office gave “excellent” or “good” ratings of the services they were provided.

Over one-third of doctoral graduates said they attended *presentations of resume writing, interviewing skills, etc.* during their studies at NC State. In addition, thirty-one percent of doctoral graduates indicated *attending a career fair*, either on-campus or off-campus.

When asked about their overall satisfaction with the career guidance they received from their academic department/college, 92 percent of doctoral graduates said they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the career guidance they had received.

Feelings about the Future

When asked which statement comes closest to how they were feeling about their future plans, about two-thirds of doctoral graduates said they were “very excited” about what they will be doing, and another one-third said they were “fairly excited.” Almost all doctoral graduates indicated they feel “very prepared” (52.8%) or “somewhat prepared” (40.8%) for their future career paths.

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