



The College Portrait: Post-Graduation Plans

December 2008 Baccalaureate Degree Recipients

Introduction

In early 2008, Indiana State University became the first institution in the state to complete the College Portrait, a reporting template created by the Voluntary System of Accountability. One section of the Portrait looks at the post-graduation plans of baccalaureate degree recipients. A short survey was designed to collect this information, as well as a few additional data points, to allow researchers the ability to match graduation plans back to pre-graduation demographics such as major, time to degree, academic preparation, etc. Students were also asked to provide the email address they would be using after graduation in the hopes that it would provide Alumni Affairs and Enrollment Services with a more up-to-date contact address for future use.

In December 2008, 464 degrees were conferred to undergraduate students. Of those 464 students, 288 (62%) participated in commencement ceremonies. Students were asked to complete the survey on their immediate post-graduation plans. The sample consists of 232 students (81% of those who attended commencement) who completed the survey. This brief summarizes those results.

The College Portrait was designed to improve the public's understanding of how colleges and universities operate.

More information is available at

www.collegeportraits.org

www.voluntarysystem.org

Background

The College Portrait was designed to improve the public's understanding of how colleges and universities operate. The data elements are organized into three sections: consumer information; student experiences and perceptions; and student learning outcomes. It provides consistent, comparable and transparent information on the characteristics of institutions and students, cost of attendance, student engagement with the learning process, and core educational outcomes. The information is intended for students, families, policy makers, campus faculty and staff, the general public, and other higher education stakeholders.

The Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) is a collaborative effort between the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), and the public higher education community. More information on the VSA and the College Portrait is available at <http://www.collegeportraits.org> and <http://www.voluntarysystem.org>.

Results

Those reporting full-time employment provided information that is best presented in one of two categories:

Employment Planned – recorded if student reported no specific place of anticipated employment or noted that they had not yet found a position. Some students may have found full-time work, but they did not provide sufficient information to either know or infer that they had obtained a position.

Employment Confirmed – recorded if student provided a specific job name or situation to which they were moving after graduation.

¹ **Note:** 53 (23%) students reported plans in multiple categories, such as full-time employment along with graduate school and/or raising a family, thus accounting for a total N responses equaling more than the sample size of 232.

Bachelor Degree Recipients	Total ¹	Planned	Confirmed
Full-time Employment	174 75%	86 37%	88 38%
Part-time Employment	32 14%	0 0%	32 14%
Full-time Graduate or Professional School	28 12%	13 6%	15 6%
Part-time Graduate or Professional School	12 5%	3 1%	9 4%
Additional Undergraduate Coursework	7 3%	0 0%	7 3%
Military Service	3 1%	1 0%	2 1%
Volunteer Service (i.e., Peace Corps)	3 1%	0 0%	3 1%
Starting or Raising a Family	17 7%	11 5%	6 3%
Other	21 9%	21 9%	0 0%

Analysis

The survey sample size (N=232) roughly represents the total baccalaureate degree recipients who graduated in December 2008, in terms of pre-graduation demographics. Transfer students, females, and African American students were oversampled and Caucasian students were undersampled. The average final GPA was 3.24.

Highlights of the survey results include:

50% had secured employment

- Half of all respondents indicated they had post-graduation employment secured prior to graduation (73% full-time, 27% part-time); another 34% planned on seeking employment. The remaining 16% reported they did not plan to seek employment right away, but were pursuing other interests.

18% were continuing their education

- Slightly more than half of the 38 students (16% of total sample population) who indicated their intention to pursue additional education planned on full-time attendance (as opposed to part-time), while an additional 10 students (2% of total sample) would be seeking additional undergraduate coursework.

13% planned to pursue service, family, other

- Just under 13% reported that they planned something in addition to or other than employment or additional schooling (military service, volunteer service, starting or raising a family, or “other”).

23% reported multiple future plans

- 53 students planned on pursuing multiple interests, but there were no clear trends in the various combinations.

Transfer students lagged in confirmed employment, but had higher GPAs

- 10% fewer of the transfer student population had confirmed employment than did the non-transfer student population, but reported corresponding figures to non-transfers in terms of part-time employment.
- Transfer students graduated with an average GPA of 3.34, compared to an average GPA of 3.18 for non-transfer students.

According to the National Association of Colleges and employers (NACE, 2008), 51% of college graduates had secured a full-time position before college graduation. On average, it takes between 2-6 months for college graduates to find full-time (Office of Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology: University of Washington, 2009). **As such, ISU baccalaureate degree recipients fall within the average range of college students finding full-time employment prior to graduation.**

Conclusion and Recommendations

While this administration was a good first effort, more data need to be collected to provide actionable information. Suggestions for raising the response rate and allowing for richer data collection include:

- “package” the survey differently (this cycle, paper and pencil were distributed as students checked in for commencement)
- make survey scannable for increased efficiency and accuracy
- consider administering the survey prior to commencement, possibly as part of graduation checklist
- revise questions to decrease ambiguity (i.e., influence students to provide employer/job title when employment is confirmed)
- utilize students (i.e., Student Alumni Association, fraternity/sorority members) to assist the Registrar’s Office in administering and collecting the survey

It is our hope that, as more institutions participate in the VSA and begin reporting the future plans of baccalaureate degree recipients, we will be able to provide analysis of data across various peer groupings. The third iteration of the College Portrait has just been released and is due April 1, 2009; however, institutions have one year after they join the VSA to complete this portion of the Portrait.

For More Information

For more information about this brief, contact [Patricia McClintock](#) in the office of [Institutional Research and Assessment](#) at 237-2305. IRA is indebted to [Mark Frederick](#) in the office of Student Affairs for his assistance in the production of this brief, as well as the staff of the Registrar’s Office for their help with survey administration.