

A partnership among Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Keystone College, King's College, Lackawanna College, Luzerne County Community College, Marywood University, Misericordia University, Penn State Scranton, Penn State Wilkes-Barre, The Wright Center, University of Scranton, and Wilkes University

The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development (The Institute) launched a polling program in 2014. The Institute regularly polls students at its partnering higher education institutions. These polling and survey research services are part of The Institute's menu of services offered to all types of clients.

The purpose of this poll was to ascertain the views and experiences of the college students of Northeastern Pennsylvania. The Institute worked with each of its partner institutions to deploy the survey. Topics covered in the survey included class year, major, graduate school plans, internship experience, views toward finding a job after graduation, and views toward staying in Northeastern Pennsylvania after graduation.

The sample for this poll includes a significant portion of Northeastern Pennsylvania's college and university students. Students from all class years, a variety of majors, and part-time and graduate students are well-represented in the data.

Students generally feel that their college education has prepared them well for their future careers, but they are split over how well their high school educated and prepared them for college and their career.

Over 91 percent of students believe that their education has prepared them adequately, somewhat well, or very well for their intended career. Only six percent of students feel somewhat or very poorly prepared by their education. Those in healthcare (78 percent) and education majors (76 percent) were the most likely to say that they felt their education prepared them either "very well" or "somewhat well" for their career. Those in technology/trades programs were the students most to say that they felt their education prepared them "somewhat poorly" or "very poorly" for their future career. Over 50 percent of students felt that their high school education prepared them for success in college, and almost 21 percent of students felt that they were "somewhat poorly" or "very poorly" prepared for college success by their high school educations.

A majority of students believe that a graduate school education is very important in today's economy, and most plan to attend graduate or professional school; the percentage of students who plan to go to graduate or professional school is highest among science/mathematics, healthcare, and humanities majors.

About 58 percent of students polled said that they plan to attend graduate school, and an additional 26 percent said that they were not sure whether or not they would attend graduate school. Moreover, less than five percent of respondents believe that a graduate degree is not important in today's economy. This demonstrates the importance of developing graduate programs in the region, as well as that many students believe that in society today, a graduate degree is a necessary and worthwhile investment of time and money. Those in science/mathematics, healthcare, and humanities majors were most likely to be planning on attending graduate school, while those in engineering or technology/trades programs were most likely to be not planning on or unsure of whether they will be attending graduate school.



"This report provides us with incredible insight to provide opportunities with students. Over half of the students plan to attend graduate school. This is an incredible opportunity to expand the local higher education infrastructure to meet that demand and retain those educated students to strengthen our local workforce."

Patrick F. Leahy, Ed.D., President, Wilkes University



This report points to the need for us to reach out to our local school districts in an effort to help high school students identify potential careers and fields of study. Whatever we can do to make the educational process seamless and comprehensive is a boon for NEPA."

Sr. Mary Persico, IHM, Ed.D., President Marywood University

POST GRADUATION PLANS — WHAT'S NEXT?

In general, students have moderate levels of job search anxiety, and job search anxiety has not changed substantially since 2015.

Students report a moderate level of job-search related anxiety. The largest share of students answered that they are “somewhat anxious” or “a little anxious” about finding a job after graduation or graduate school. The percentage of students who are extremely anxious about finding a job dropped between the 2015 and 2017 polls.

Perceived difficulty of finding a job in the student’s chosen field has also fluctuated from 2015 to 2017. The percentage of students who believe finding a job will be at least somewhat easy increased from 47 percent in 2015 to 53 percent in 2016, and then fell slightly to 48 percent in 2017. These shifts may indicate a slightly improved perception of the job market compared with 2015. The percentage of students who believe it will be very difficult to find a job in their field after graduation fell to seven percent, the lowest of all three years that the survey has been conducted.

How difficult do you think it will be to find a job in your chosen field after graduation?	2015	2016	2017
very easy	11%	15%	13%
somewhat easy	36%	38%	35%
somewhat difficult	36%	34%	39%
Very difficult	10%	8%	7%
Not Sure	6%	6%	6%

Among majors, those in healthcare and engineering were least anxious about finding a job, and the most likely to believe that finding a job in their major will be difficult. Over half of all students in STEM majors (science/mathematics, healthcare, and engineering categories) responded that they believe that finding a job related to their major will be somewhat easy or very easy. On the other hand, those in fine arts, humanities, and education are the most likely to believe that finding a job in their major will be somewhat difficult or very difficult.

Students remain highly interested in internships; a majority of respondents stated that they have either already completed an internship or plan to before graduation.

Of all survey respondents, about four-fifths either have completed an internship (30 percent) or plan to complete an internship sometime before they graduate (49 percent). For the students who have already completed an internship, 57 percent took part in unpaid internship positions. This suggests that students place a significant value on the skills, experience, and networking opportunities that they gain from internships. About 60 percent of these completed internships took place in Northeastern Pennsylvania. In addition, an overwhelming majority of students across all majors and class years who completed an internship indicated that the work they took part in was related somehow to their major. Although many students completed unpaid internships, nearly two-thirds of completed internships were for academic credit. There was wide variation between majors of whether or not internships were paid or for academic credit. Education majors were the most likely to receive academic credit for their internships, and least likely to be paid for their internships; the inverse is true for engineering majors.



“As the new chancellor at Penn State Wilkes-Barre, I read with great interest the ‘Post-Graduation—What’s Next? 2017’ report. The survey results provide numerous insights related to questions I had about students at our many regional colleges and universities. I now have a foundation for understanding students’ views about Northeastern Pennsylvania and their post-graduation employment opportunities.”

“The report highlights the value of internships for students. What struck me was the nexus among the availability of internships by local organizations, student internship attitudes and experiences, and the potential for employment in the region after graduation. The survey’s findings are beneficial to all sectors of the Northeastern Pennsylvania region.”

“For me, a major take-away from the report is the reinforcement that professors at Penn State Wilkes-Barre—and at other local colleges and universities—have a highly influential role in preparing students for their careers and decisions they will make about their communities and workplaces. I am optimistic about the future of our region, especially when educators and employers work together to create post-graduation opportunities for graduates.”

**Dale Jones, Ph.D., Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer,
Penn State Wilkes-Barre**

POST GRADUATION PLANS — WHAT'S NEXT?

About 28 percent of students intend to seek work in Northeastern Pennsylvania, while another quarter of the respondents are not sure if they will seek employment in the region.

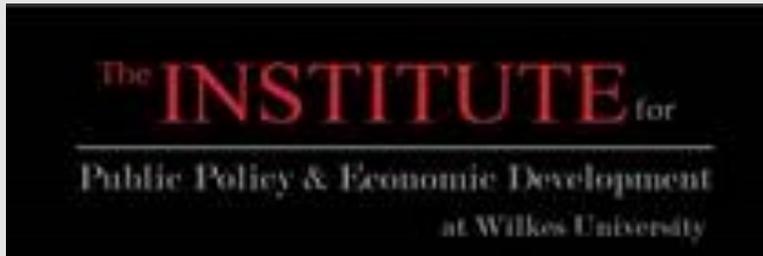
About 28 percent of students plan to seek work in the Northeastern Pennsylvania region after graduation, while 46 percent do not plan seek work locally, and 26 percent are not sure if they will do so. However, about half of students with home ZIP codes in either Lackawanna or Luzerne counties are either planning to not stay in the region after graduation or are not sure if they will stay. Considering the quarter of respondents who were unsure of whether or not they would be seeking employment in the region after graduation, it is important to try and make Northeastern Pennsylvania into an area that educated young adults want to live and work in. Students' reasons for planning to leave the region were often related to their career and the economy. Many stated that job opportunities and salary prospects for their fields were stronger elsewhere in the country, while others cited wanting to live in a larger urban area with more amenities. Many also stated a preference to return to their hometowns after graduation. The percentage who responded that they do plan to seek employment in NEPA is nearly double among those with home ZIP codes in Lackawanna or Luzerne County.

There is a relationship between respondents' perceptions of the economy and quality of life in Northeastern Pennsylvania and their plans to seek employment in the region after graduation.

About 46 percent of students ranked the region's economy as somewhat worse or much worse than other places in the United States, while only about six percent believed the local economy was doing better than the rest of the country. Likewise about 39 percent of students believed that the standard of living in the region was below the national average with just over 16 percent believing the standard of living in the region was above the national average.

Of those with a negative outlook on the region's quality of life and economy, nearly two-thirds have no plans to look for work in the region after graduation. However, even among those who view the quality of life and economy in NEPA as better than the United States as a whole, less than 50 percent plan to seek employment in the region.

Do you plan to seek Employment in NEPA?				
All Zip Codes				
Perception in NEPA versus U.S. as a whole	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Better quality of life/economy in NEPA	46%	30%	23%	56
Similar quality of life/economy in NEPA	34%	33%	33%	209
Worse quality of life/economy in NEPA	17%	65%	18%	422
Not Sure	21%	48%	31%	157
Better quality of life, but not economy, in NEPA	48%	20%	32%	175
Better economy, but not quality of life, in NEPA	26%	42%	32%	31
TOTAL	28%	46%	26%	1050



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What We Believe

At The Institute, we believe that empowering leaders with the research-based strategies and solutions they need to make informed decisions will lead to a stronger economy and a better quality of life for residents. For over a decade, The Institute has worked behind the scenes to support initiatives that advance regional competitiveness and revitalize communities.

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