



*A partnership among King's College, Keystone College, Lackawanna College, Luzerne County Community College, Marywood University, Misericordia University, Penn State/Wilkes-Barre, The Commonwealth Medical College, 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 have a high level of interest in internships; the majority of undergraduate seniors had already completed an internship related to their chosen field.**

A large majority of students have an interest in completing an internship; more than three out of four students either had already interned or planned to pursue an internship. The high percentage of students completing internships, particularly unpaid internships, suggests that students place a high value on the experience, skills, and connections gained while interning. About 64 percent of students completed their internships at organizations in Northeastern Pennsylvania (up 4 percentage points from the prior year). Across class years and majors, the vast majority of students who have completed internships indicated that they were related to their major or field of study.

The majority of students reported that their internships were unpaid, but about 61 percent of students that completed internships received academic credit for them (up three percent from the prior year). Engineering students were most likely to be paid for internships and least likely to receive academic credit; the inverse is true for education majors.

**Graduate degrees are extremely important to students, especially to students in Science, Mathematics, and Health Care.**

Many students have plans to attend graduate school. Over half of undergraduate respondents planned on attending graduate school, and another quarter responded that they were not sure. It should be noted that less students indicated they will attend graduate school in this year's poll as compared to last year's poll. Nonetheless, there is still a significant portion of the student population that want to attend graduate school. This shows the importance of providing graduate programs locally, as well as that many young people perceive graduate degrees to be a worthwhile investment of time and money. Similarly, over 93 percent of students responded that a graduate degree was somewhat important or very important in today's economy. Conversely, less than five percent indicated that they believe a graduate degree is not at all or not very important. The decision to attend graduate school is quite dependent on major. Over two-thirds of undergraduates majoring in science/mathematics and health care plan to continue their studies beyond a bachelor's degree. Engineering students, on the other hand, are less likely to plan on attending graduate school place a relatively low importance on graduate degrees for their careers.



*"It is exceptional to note that there is an increase in the number of students wanting to remain in Northeastern Pennsylvania upon graduation as compared to the 2015 poll results. All of our participating schools are focused on community engagement. We will continue our efforts to strengthen the region in order to create new opportunities for our region's graduates."*

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

*The findings from the 2016 Post-Graduation Plans Poll are*



*consistent with what we hear from current and prospective students at The University of Scranton. Experiential learning opportunities are in high demand. In the past two years alone, Scranton students completed internships for credit at 439 organizations in 12 different states, plus the District of Columbia. We see similar interest in graduate education with four in 10 Scranton students choosing grad school."*

**Kevin P. Quinn, S.J., Ph.D., President, The University of Scranton.**

## POST GRADUATION PLANS — WHAT'S NEXT?

**In general, students have moderate levels of job search anxiety; compared with last year's findings, students in 2016 are more confident about finding a job after graduation.**

Students report a moderate level of job-search related anxiety. The largest shares of students reported being "somewhat anxious" or "a little anxious" about finding a job after graduation. The percentage of students who are extremely anxious about finding a job dropped between the 2015 and 2016 polls. Perceived difficulty of finding a job in the student's chosen field has also declined from 2015 to 2016. The percentage of students who believe finding a job will be at least somewhat easy increased from 47 percent in 2015 to 52 percent in 2016. These shifts are likely due to improving perceptions about the job market.

Graduate students are somewhat more confident than undergraduate students about finding a job after graduation. Graduate students were more likely than undergraduates to believe that finding a job in their field will be at least somewhat easy: nearly 60 percent of Master's and professional degree students, and over two thirds of doctoral students, responded this way, compared with 46 percent of undergraduate seniors.

Major or field of study, however, is an even bigger factor in level of anxiety students have about finding a job. Healthcare majors have the lowest level anxiety related to finding a job. Over half of students in STEM majors (Science/Mathematics, Health Care, and Engineering categories) indicate that they believe finding a job in their field will be somewhat easy or very easy. On the other hand, non-STEM majors, especially education, fine arts, and humanities, are less confident.

### **Respondents generally feel prepared for their careers by their education.**

A large majority of students, about 92 percent, felt that their education has prepared them at least somewhat well for their intended career. Only five percent of students felt somewhat poorly or very poorly prepared by their studies. All of this represents an improvement over the 2015 poll results. Over 78 percent of healthcare and education majors responded that their education has prepared them very well or somewhat well for their careers. Large proportions of humanities and business majors also felt at least somewhat well prepared.

### **Some students did not feel prepared for college .**

Almost 50 percent of students felt that their high school education prepared them for success in college, but almost 23 percent of students felt that they were "somewhat poorly" or "very poorly" prepared for college success by their high school educations.

**Students received little or no career readiness education in high school.**

Students were also asked how much education they received in high school in regards to varieties of career choices. Nearly 51 percent indicated that they received either "very little" or "none at all."

**Nearly one-third of all students plan to stay in Northeastern Pennsylvania to seek employment after graduation. Another third are not sure if they will do so. This represents a five percent improvement from 2015.**

More respondents in the 2016 survey, 32.1 percent, indicated that they were planning on seeking employment in the Northeastern Pennsylvania region after they complete their education than the 27 percent who responded the same in 2015. Another 32 percent are not sure. This presents a great opportunity to work that students that are unsure whether or not they will stay. The two programs of study that have students with the most interest in staying in Northeastern Pennsylvania to seek employment are technology/trades and education (both just over 40 percent). Business and humanities students were most likely to state that they were not going to be seeking job opportunities in the region after graduation, perhaps due to strength of job opportunities elsewhere outside Northeastern Pennsylvania.

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. Additionally, a number of respondents stated that they wanted to live near a larger urban area with more activity. Others plan to leave to return to their hometowns.



"These results further echo the need for robust internship opportunities for our students across all disciplines," says Thomas J. Botzman, Ph.D., president of Misericordia University. "For many students, internships are the first time they apply the classroom concepts they learn from talented faculty. Internships generate those 'ah-ha' moments when excellent classroom teaching is applied in practical settings and students see a path to professional achievement through what they have learned. I hope the employers in Northeast Pennsylvania can continue to develop internships in conjunction with regional higher education that inspire caring, motivated students to remain here and build successful careers."

**Thomas J. Botzman, Ph.D., President, Misericordia University**

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