

**Office of Institutional Research & Analysis**

# **FIRST DESTINATION – CAREER SERVICES**



*Survey & Evaluation Office*

## INTRODUCTION

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The First Destination Survey conducted by North Carolina Central University (NCCU) gathered valuable insights from graduating seniors regarding their plans following graduation for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 academic years. The survey, covering Fall 2022 to Spring 2023 and Fall 2023 to Spring 2024, focused on key aspects of the graduates' future endeavors, including their primary post-graduation plans, employment status, and work authorization. With over 1,011 respondents in 2022-2023 and 1,207 respondents in the 2023-2024 period, the survey aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the seniors' transition into the workforce or further educational pursuits. The survey data also provide an opportunity for the university to use the findings to help strengthen the areas that you or concerns to the students as well as develop strategies to enhance the program offerings at NCCU.

Key questions explored in the survey included:

- The best description of the graduates' primary plans following graduation
- Authorization to work permanently in the U.S.
- The primary status of graduates after leaving NCCU.
- The nature of their employment, if employed full-time or part-time
- The relevance of their employment to their major or degree

The findings offer an important understanding of the graduating seniors' career paths. The findings can also be used to help to inform future decisions related to career services, academic programs, and post-graduation support at the university.

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### PLEASE INDICATE THE BEST DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PRIMARY PLANS FOLLOWING GRADUATION.

Responses	2022 - 2023		2023 - 2024	
	#	%	#	%
No response	0	0.0%	4	0.3%
I have accepted a full-time paid job related to my field of study	155	15.3%	174	14.4%
I have accepted a full-time paid job, not related to my field of study	44	4.4%	32	2.6%
I have accepted a part-time paid job	12	1.2%	11	0.9%
I will continue in my current paid job	87	8.6%	105	8.7%
I am currently seeking, or plan to seek, paid employment	305	30.2%	432	35.7%
I will be going to graduate or professional school full-time next year	166	16.4%	196	16.2%
I will be going to graduate or professional school part-time and working part-time next year	94	9.3%	88	7.3%
I will take more undergraduate courses next year	7	0.7%	8	0.7%
I am neither seeking employment nor planning on attending school next year	6	0.6%	1	0.1%
I will be entering or continuing military	4	0.4%	9	0.7%
I will be engaged in volunteer activity (e.g., Peace Corps)	4	0.4%	0	0.0%
I will be starting or raising a family	7	0.7%	6	0.5%
I don't know yet	61	6.0%	76	6.3%
Other	59	5.8%	68	5.6%
Total	1011	100.0%	1210	100.0%

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The First Destination Survey results from North Carolina Central University for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 academic years reveal notable trends regarding graduating seniors' plans following graduation.

## **Employment**

In both years, a significant portion of respondents reported actively seeking employment. For 2022-2023, 30.2% were seeking or planning to seek paid employment, which increased to 35.7% in 2023-2024. Among those who secured full-time employment, 15.3% (2022-2023) and 14.4% (2023-2024) accepted jobs related to their field of study, while a smaller percentage accepted full-time jobs not related to their field, with 4.4% in 2022-2023 and 2.6% in 2023-2024.

## **Graduate/Professional School**

A significant percentage of graduates planned to pursue further education. In 2022-2023, 16.4% intended to attend graduate or professional school full-time, with a slightly smaller percentage (16.2%) in 2023-2024. A smaller portion (9.3% in 2022-2023 and 7.3% in 2023-2024) planned to balance part-time school with part-time work.

## **Current Jobs**

The number of respondents continuing in their current paid jobs remained consistent, at 8.6% (2022-2023) and 8.7% (2023-2024).

## **Uncertainty & Other Plans**

Those uncertain about their plans slightly increased from 6.0% in 2022-2023 to 6.3% in 2023-2024. There were also small percentages of graduates who indicated plans to start families, engage in volunteer activities, or enter the military.

The data suggests that while many graduates are seeking employment or continuing in their current roles, a significant portion also plan to pursue advanced education. The slight increase in those seeking jobs and the consistency in educational aspirations highlight the diverse pathways taken by NCCU graduates.

## ARE YOU AUTHORIZED TO PERMANENTLY WORK IN THE U.S?

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Responses	2022 - 2023		2023 - 2024	
	#	%	#	%
No response	0	0.0%	4	0.3%
Yes	983	97.2%	1179	97.4%
No	28	2.8%	27	2.2%
Total	1011	100.0%	1210	100.0%

The survey results from NCCU graduating senior survey for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 academic years show a significant number of persons indicated that they have authorization for permanent work in the U.S. In 2022-2023, 97.2% of respondents indicated they were authorized to work permanently in the U.S., and this percentage slightly increased to 97.4% in 2023-2024. The percentage of those not authorized to work remained low, with 2.8% in 2022-2023 and 2.2% in 2023-2024. Notably, there was a small number of non-respondents in 2023-2024 (0.3%), while there were no non-responses in 2022-2023.

The vast majority of NCCU graduates in both years reported being authorized to work in the U.S., which reflects a strong readiness for entering the workforce.

## WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR PRIMARY STATUS AFTER GRADUATION?

Responses	2022 - 2023		2023 - 2024	
	#	%	#	%
No response	0	0.0%	4	0.3%
Employed full time (on average 30 hours or more per week)	474	46.9%	538	44.5%
Employed part time (on average less than 30 hours per week)	81	8.0%	107	8.8%
Participating in a volunteer or service program (e.g., Peace Corps)	7	0.7%	8	0.7%
Serving in the U.S. military	7	0.7%	11	0.9%
Enrolled in a program of continuing education	86	8.5%	85	7.0%
Seeking employment	203	20.1%	295	24.4%
Planning to continue education but not yet enrolled	139	13.7%	147	12.1%
Not seeking employment or continuing education at this time	14	1.4%	15	1.2%
Total	1011	100.0%	1210	100.0%

The survey results of the graduating seniors at NCCU for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 academic years reveal key trends in the primary status after graduation.

### Employment

In 2022-2023, 46.9% of respondents reported being employed full-time, which slightly decreased to 44.5% in 2023-2024. Part-time employment saw a small increase from 8.0% to 8.8% over the two-year period.

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## Continuing Education

The percentage of graduates enrolled in continuing education programs slightly decreased from 8.5% in 2022-2023 to 7.0% in 2023-2024. Those planning to continue their education but not yet enrolled also decreased from 13.7% to 12.1%.

## Seeking Employment

A notable rise was observed in the percentage of graduates seeking employment, increasing from 20.1% in 2022-2023 to 24.4% in 2023-2024, suggesting a growing demand for job opportunities among graduates.

## Other Activities

The percentage of graduates participating in volunteer programs (0.7%) or serving in the U.S. military (0.7% in 2022-2023 and 0.9% in 2023-2024) remained consistent. A small percentage (1.4% in 2022-2023 and 1.2% in 2023-2024) were neither seeking employment nor continuing their education.

The data highlights a steady trend of full-time employment among graduates, along with a growing portion of graduates actively seeking jobs, while fewer are enrolled in continuing education.

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### IF YOUR PRIMARY STATUS IS EMPLOYED FULL TIME OR EMPLOYED PART TIME.

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Responses	2022 - 2023		2023 - 2024	
	#	%	#	%
No response	302	29.9%	439	36.4%
Employed as an entrepreneur	73	7.2%	61	5.1%
Employed in a temporary/contract work assignment	108	10.7%	112	9.3%
Employed freelance	28	2.8%	32	2.7%
Employed in a postgraduate internship or fellowship	56	5.5%	79	6.6%
Employed in all other work categories	444	43.9%	483	40.0%
Total	1011	100.0%	1206	100.0%

For the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 academic years, the NCCU Graduating Senior Survey data provides awareness into the employment categories of graduates who secured work after graduation. A significant number of graduates did not provide a response to this question. The amount of no response increased from 29.9% in 2022-2023 to 36.4% in 2023-2024.

#### Entrepreneurship

The percentage of graduates employed as entrepreneurs slightly decreased from 7.2% in 2022-2023 to 5.1% in 2023-2024.

## **Temporary/Contract Work**

Employment in temporary or contract work remained relatively stable, with 10.7% in 2022-2023 and 9.3% in 2023-2024.

## **Freelance Work**

The percentage of graduates employed as freelancers saw a small increase, from 2.8% in 2022-2023 to 2.7% in 2023-2024.

## **Postgraduate Internships/Fellowships**

There was a notable increase in graduates employed in postgraduate internships or fellowships, rising from 5.5% in 2022-2023 to 6.6% in 2023-2024.

## **Other Employment Categories**

Most of the respondents who were employed fell under "all other work categories," though this group slightly declined from 43.9% in 2022-2023 to 40.0% in 2023-2024.

The findings show that while a large portion of graduates remain employed in diverse work categories, there has been a notable rise in non-responses, coupled with small shifts in the number of graduates pursuing entrepreneurship, freelance work, and postgraduate internships.

### HOW RELATED IS THIS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY TO YOUR MAJOR OR DEGREE?

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Responses	2022 - 2023		2023 - 2024	
	#	%	#	%
No response	294	29.1%	430	35.6%
Unrelated	162	16.0%	174	14.4%
Job requires a college degree	26	2.6%	29	2.4%
Job does not require a college degree	121	12.0%	99	8.2%
Marginally related (General skills developed in my major is required on my job)	151	14.9%	162	13.4%
Very related (Specific knowledge from my major is required on my job)	257	25.4%	313	25.9%
Total	1011	100.0%	1207	100.0%

The survey results from the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 academic years shed light on the graduating seniors' relationship between employment opportunity and their major or degree. The findings provide insights into how closely graduates' jobs align with their field of study. A significant number of people had no response to this question. In addition, there was a notable increase in non-responses, rising from 29.1% in 2022-2023 to 35.6% in 2023-2024.

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- Job Relevance
- The percentage of graduates in jobs very related to their major remained stable, with 25.4% in 2022-2023 and a slight increase to 25.9% in 2023-2024.
- Those in jobs marginally related to their major (where general skills from their degree were required) saw a slight decrease, from 14.9% in 2022-2023 to 13.4% in 2023-2024.
- The proportion of graduates in unrelated jobs decreased from 16.0% in 2022-2023 to 14.4% in 2023-2024.

### Degree Requirements

- Jobs that specifically require a college degree saw little change, with 2.6% in 2022-2023 and 2.4% in 2023-2024.
- The percentage of respondents in jobs that do not require a college degree decreased from 12.0% in 2022-2023 to 8.2% in 2023-2024.

A consistent portion of graduates reported working in jobs very related to their field of study, while fewer were in positions that did not require a degree. However, the increase in non-responses makes it more difficult to assess overall job relevance for a portion of the graduates in 2023-2024.

## SUMMARY

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The survey results from North Carolina Central University - First Destination (Career Services) for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 academic years offer valuable insights into the post-graduation plans and employment experiences of graduating seniors. Key findings across multiple data points reveal trends in employment status, job relevance to their field of study, and the relationship between their degrees and employment.

- Post-Graduation Plans
  - A consistent portion of graduates reported being employed full-time, with 46.9% in 2022-2023 and 44.5% in 2023-2024. However, the percentage of graduates seeking employment rose notably from 20.1% to 24.4%, indicating a growing demand for job opportunities.
  - Graduate school enrollment remained stable, with 8.5% continuing education in 2022-2023 and 7.0% in 2023-2024, while the number of graduates planning to continue their education but not yet enrolled slightly declined.
  - Small percentages of graduates pursued other activities, such as military service or volunteer programs, while only 1.2% were not seeking employment or education in 2023-2024.
- Employment Categories
  - A significant portion of graduates found employment in various work categories, including freelance, entrepreneurship, and temporary contract work. In 2023-2024, 40% were employed in "all other work categories," while 5.1% were employed as entrepreneurs, down from 7.2% in 2022-2023.

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- Postgraduate internships and fellowships increased from 5.5% in 2022-2023 to 6.6% in 2023-2024, reflecting growing interest in such opportunities.
- Job Relevance and Degree Utilization
  - A steady portion of graduates found jobs very related to their field of study, with 25.9% in 2023-2024, up slightly from 25.4% in 2022-2023. Marginally related jobs saw a slight decline, while the percentage of graduates in unrelated jobs also decreased.
  - The number of respondents in jobs that did not require a degree dropped from 12.0% in 2022-2023 to 8.2% in 2023-2024, indicating a shift towards degree-requiring employment.
- Work Authorization
  - An overwhelming majority of respondents, 97.4% in 2023-2024 and 97.2% in 2022-2023, were authorized to work permanently in the U.S., showing a strong readiness for entering the workforce.
- Response Rates
  - Non-response rates increased across many categories, with a particularly notable rise in 2023-2024, making it more challenging to draw definitive conclusions about a portion of the graduates' employment status and job relevance.

Overall, NCCU graduates largely pursued full-time employment or continued education, with a growing number actively seeking jobs. While many graduates secured positions related to their field of study, the data also indicates increased participation in diverse work categories, including freelance and postgraduate internships. The trends reflect a workforce that is adaptable and increasingly engaged in opportunities that align with their educational background.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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To better prepare graduates for success in the workforce and ensure they are well-equipped for their future endeavors, North Carolina Central University could consider the following recommendations:

1. Strengthen Career Readiness Programs

- a. Expand internship and fellowship opportunities by increase partnerships with companies and organizations to offer more internships, fellowships, and practical learning experiences directly related to students' fields of study.
- b. Develop more robust career readiness workshops focusing on resume building, interview techniques, and job search strategies. These can be integrated into the curriculum or offered as part of a career readiness program.
- c. Create a structured industry mentorship program that connect students with industry professionals who can provide guidance, share insights, and offer networking opportunities, enhancing the transition from education to employment.

2. Enhance Entrepreneurship Support

- a. With a steady number of graduates pursuing entrepreneurship (7.2% in 2022-2023 and 5.1% in 2023-2024), the university could offer more targeted support, such as entrepreneurial boot camps, startup incubators, and mentorship programs for students interested in starting their own businesses (Babson College, 2024).
- b. Provide grants, funding opportunities, or access to finding resources like legal and financial consulting for graduates seeking to start or grow their own businesses.

### 3. Align Academic Programs with Industry Needs

- a. Consistently reviewing and updating academic programs to ensure alignment with evolving industry standards and job market demands (Yadav et al., 2024). It possible, involve employers in curriculum development to ensure students acquire skills that are in high demand.
- b. Integrate soft skills training such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and critical thinking into the curriculum. This will ensure students are equipped and prepared for the interpersonal and problem-solving demands of the workplace.

### 4. Expand Graduate and Professional School Preparation

- a. Offer personalized advising for students planning to attend graduate or professional schools.
- b. With 16.4% in 2022-2023 and 16.2% in 2023-2024 indicated that they would pursue graduate studies, the university could offer personalized advising for students planning to attend graduate or professional schools. This could include assistance with applications, entrance exam preparation, and scholarship opportunities.

### 5. Improve Job Placement Services

- a. NCCU could foster stronger relationships with local, regional, and national employers to create more direct pipelines for students into full-time employment. This can be done through job fairs, on-campus recruitment events, and employer-sponsored projects throughout the year.
- b. The university could increase or leverage the alumni network to connect recent graduates with job opportunities and mentorship. The career services at NCCU could create a

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platform where alumni can offer internships, job placements, and career advice to current students.

These initiatives will not only enhance student preparedness but also improve employment outcomes, creating a stronger link between education and the evolving job market. The university can seek feedback from employers who hire NCCU graduates to understand strengths and weaknesses of the graduates and identify areas for improvement.

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### Reference

Babson College. (2024). An entrepreneur bootcamp to launch and grow your business. Babson College.

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Yadav, M., Chaturvedi, S., & Lewis, C. D. (2024, Jun 13). Here's how you can align higher education curriculum with industry needs. LindedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/advice/3/heres-how-you-can-align-higher-education-curriculum-nbauf>

## **APPENDIX**

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### **Seeking employment**