

The Institute

Turning Information into Insight

A partnership among Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Johnson College, 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 for Graduate Medical Education, 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.

This 2020 poll assesses students' opinions about the region and their post graduation plans. A total of 1,576 students participated in this poll. Students from all class years, a variety of majors, and part-time and graduate students are well-represented in the data.



Differing values and priorities affect students' likelihood to remain in NEPA after graduation.

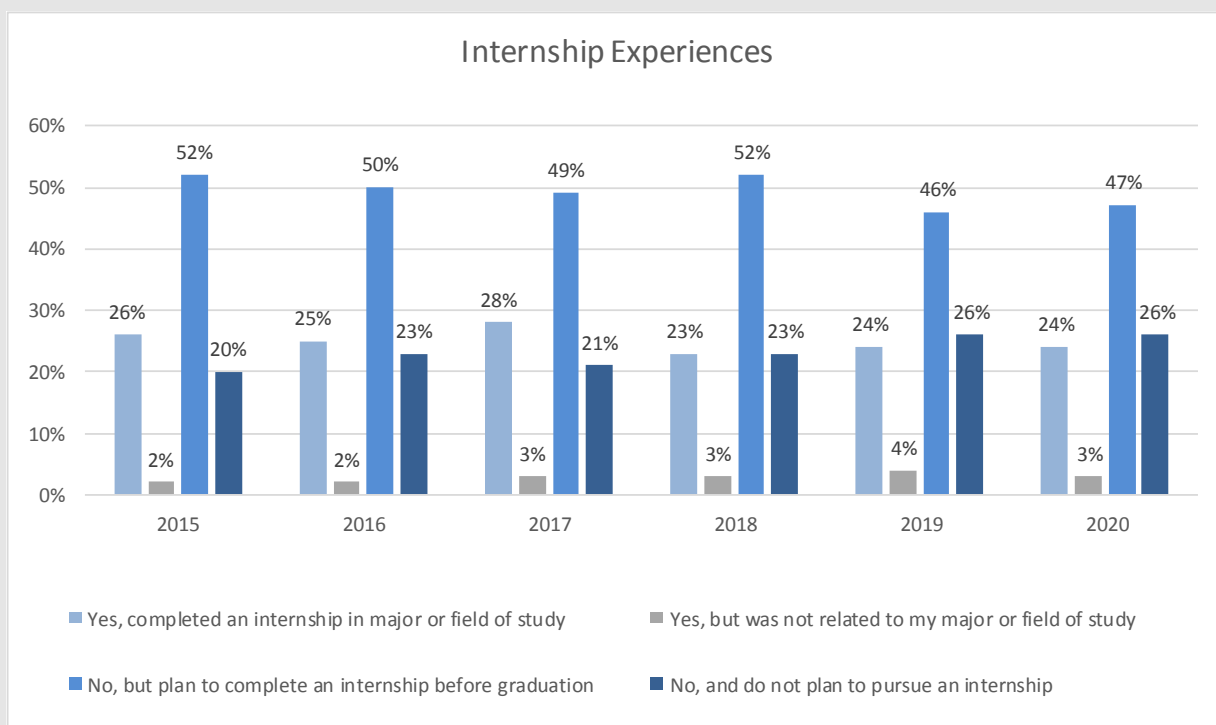
Students who intend to remain in the region after graduation are likelier than average to assign higher value to a location's proximity to family and its suitability to raise a family, but are less likely to value entertainment, recreation, or dining options—or its diversity or inclusiveness. Conversely, students who plan to depart the area after graduation are likelier to value diversity, inclusiveness, and those entertainment, recreation, and dining options—while downplaying proximity to family and friends, along with suitability for raising families.

When evaluating job opportunities, students want to apply what they've learned. They also want to make a positive impact. When asked to rank six possible factors to consider when evaluating job opportunities, students placed opportunities *in their desired fields* higher than any other option, with 62.0 percent placing the category first or second on their lists. The *ability to make a positive difference* was second on the rating scale. Nearly 39.0 percent of the respondents afforded it a high level of importance.

"The more I learn about this region— my new home—and as I settle into its community of higher education providers, I am struck by all sorts of possibilities yet to be unlocked. This poll tells us what our future leaders need and desire, what they plan to achieve, and what we must do to cultivate an environment of success for them in Northeastern Pennsylvania. With this valuable insight at our fingertips, I am eager to collaborate with other educators and professionals. Together we can inspire students to invest their vibrancy and talent into the area, and yield transformative results."

Greg Cant, Ph.D., President, Wilkes University

Internships continue to be highly valued by students. In the 2020 year poll, nearly 74 percent of respondents had either completed or planned to complete an internship before graduation. This percentage remains in line with the results in the 2019 poll. Although it is a significant portion of respondents, it has decreased from previous polling years. In the 2015 to 2018 polls, over 75 percent of students responded either completed or planned to complete internships before graduation.



Although the majority of students who completed internships received academic credit for doing so, fewer than half received payment for their work.

Did you receive academic credit for your internship?	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Yes	225	57.7%
No	165	42.3%

Did you get paid for your internship?	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Yes, was paid hourly wage/salary	164	41.7%
Yes, received stipend, reimbursement, or other one-time payment	29	7.4%
No	200	50.9%

Completion of a regional internship may induce students to remain in the region after graduation. More than 76.0 percent of students who intend to remain in Northeastern Pennsylvania after graduation have completed internships in the region, compared to 46.6 percent who are likely to depart after receiving their degrees. On the other hand, individuals who did not complete local internships comprise over half the respondents who are unlikely to remain in NEPA. While no formal causal connection between these two variables can be inferred, a strong connection exists between them.



“One thing that always strikes me about this poll is how it underscores the significance of internships—particularly those taking place in Northeastern Pennsylvania. If we wish to continue enhancing the vibrancy of the region, we must engage young professionals through such opportunities. My colleagues and I are committed to maintaining strong partnerships with local employers to do just that.”

Dr. Katie Leanard, President & CEO, Johnson College

NEPA Internship by Likelihood of Post-Graduation Relocation	Likely to Stay in NEPA	Unlikely to Stay in NEPA
Yes (completed internship in NEPA)	122 (76.3%)	88 (46.6%)
No (did not complete internship in NEPA)	38 (23.8%)	101 (53.4%)
TOTAL	160	189

Students feel their education has prepared them for their careers. The majority of respondents to the most recent poll felt prepared for their intended careers. In 2020, 75.4 percent of students felt that their college education prepared them either very well or somewhat well for their intended career paths. This finding has been consistent in all post-graduate polls; the rate of these two responses has never dropped below 70 percent.

How well do you think that your college or graduate school education has prepared you for the career you intend to pursue?

	Frequency	Percent
Very well	547	39%
Somewhat well	505	36%
Adequately	244	17%
Somewhat poorly	48	3%
Very poorly	19	1%
Not sure	33	2%
Total	1396	

Students remain anxious about finding employment after graduation. In each poll, students are asked to indicate their level of anxiety about finding a job after graduation. Every year a majority of students have selected either *extremely* or *somewhat anxious*. Although the total percentage of students who were at least somewhat anxious about the post-graduation job search had continuously dropped over the years studied, it rose to 53.2 percent in 2020—up from 50.8 percent in 2019. In 2019, however, just under 80.0 percent of student felt at least a *little* anxious about the impending job search (an approximate five-percentage point drop from 2015), the percentage dropped to 78.6 in 2020.

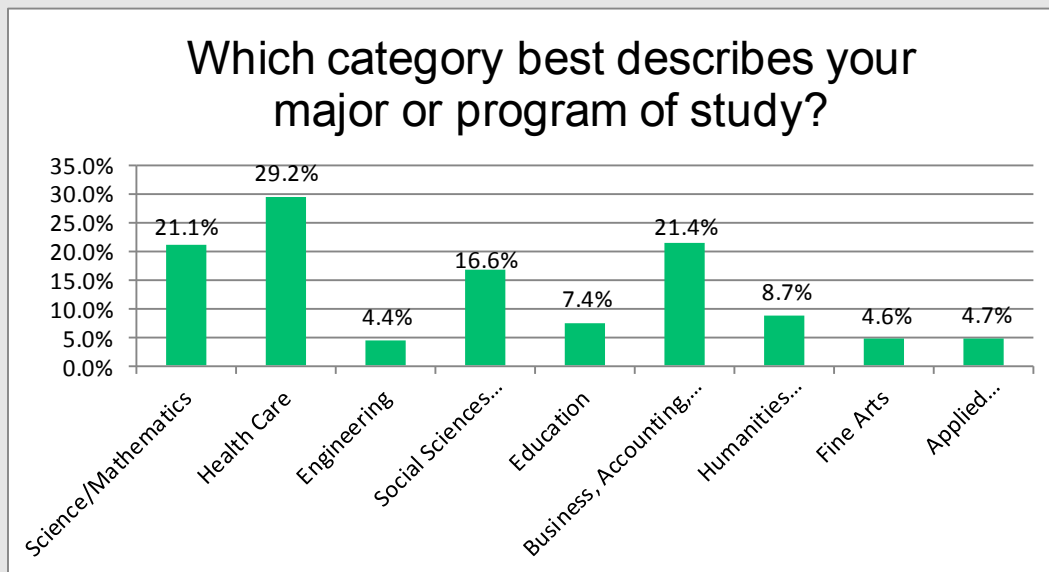
Attending graduate school remains important to students. Over half of all respondents (53.9 percent) in 2020 responded either *yes*, they plan on attending graduate school or that they are *already in a graduate or professional school*. This has remained consisted over each year of post-graduation polling (2015-2019). The percent of *yes* responses has decreased; however, this is probably due to the addition of the *already in a graduate or professional school* option. This new option still highlights that students find graduate school to be an important next step.



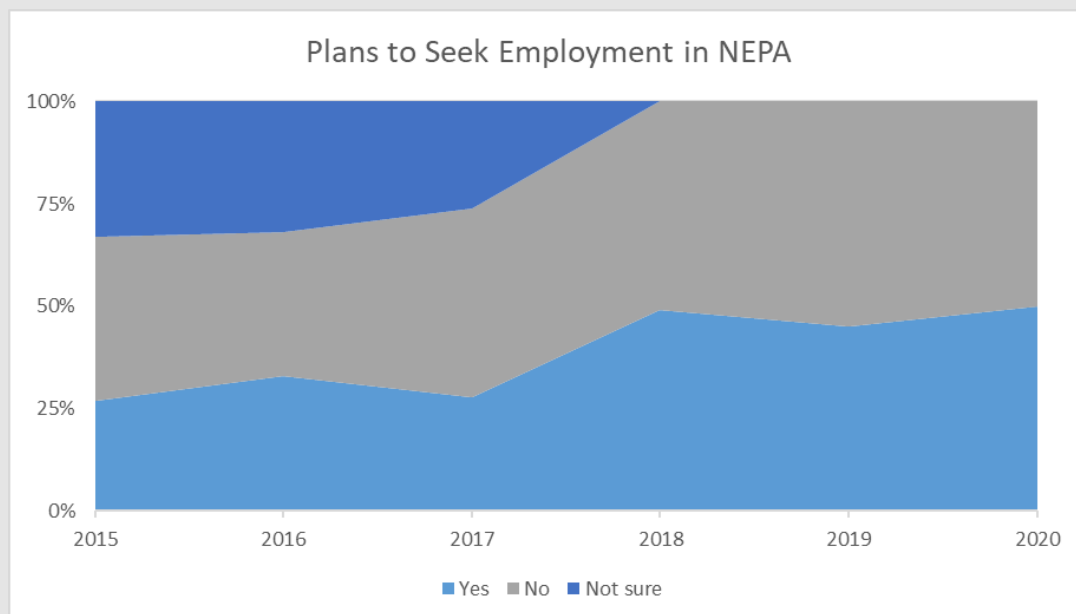
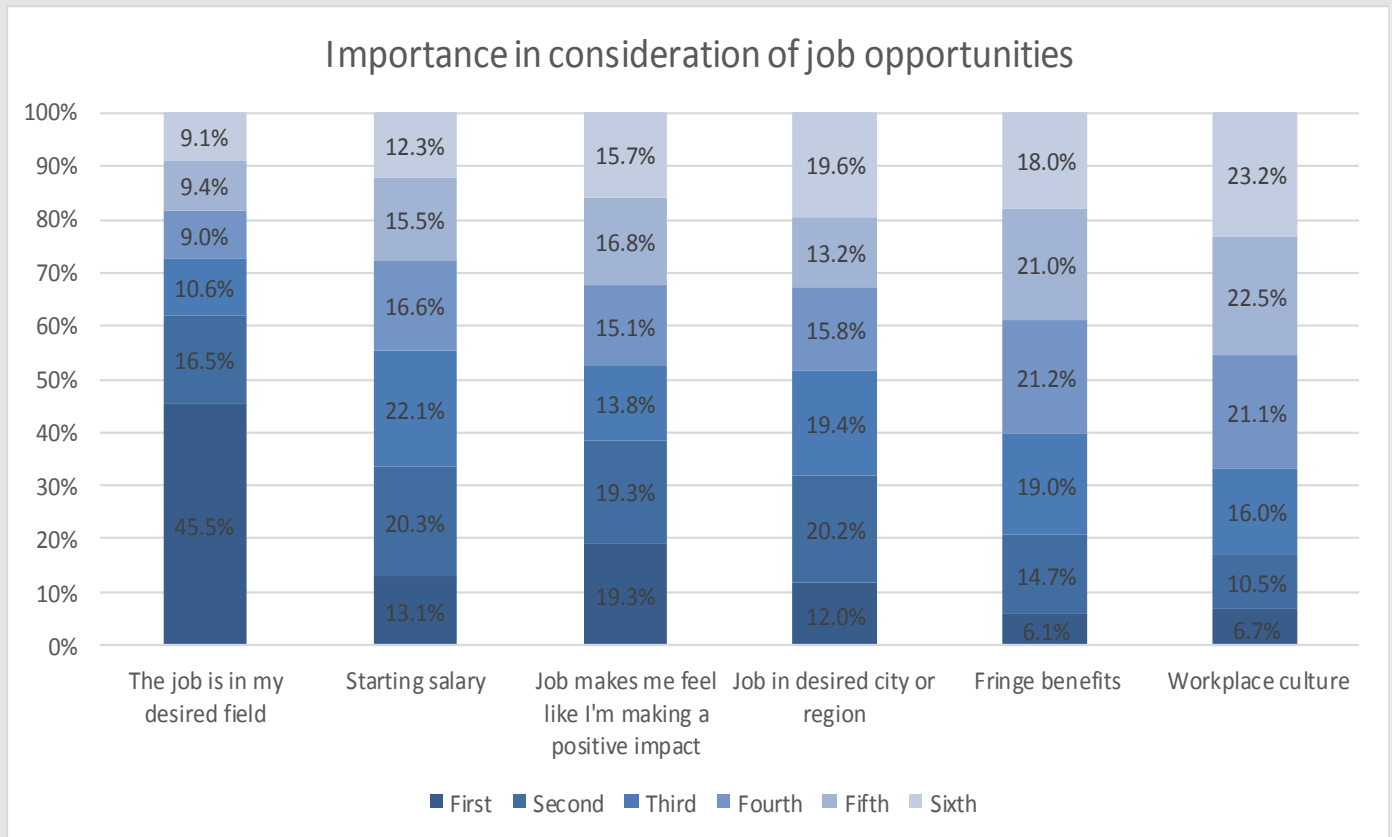
“I am eager to continue monitoring the trends revealed in this annual poll—particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The data will serve as a meaningful tool to help leaders in education meet the needs and address the concerns of current and prospective students.”

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

Major Areas of Study



Considerations in Job Opportunities. Respondents were asked to rank six factors they may consider when evaluating a job opportunity. The assigned rankings were 1 through 6, one indicating the *most important*, and six, the *least important*. The factors, with their weighted averages, include *the job being in their desired field* (4.5), *starting salary* (3.6), *feeling as though they are making a positive impact* (3.6), *location in a desired region* (3.4), *fringe benefits* (3.1), and *workplace culture* (2.9). The full distribution of these rankings are shown below, where the bars show the within-category distribution of ranks, and the darker shades correspond with higher rank.



Perspectives on the Region—Economy

Respondents were asked to endorse one of a series of statements regarding Northeastern Pennsylvania's economy in relation to the United States as a whole. Over 28.0 percent of respondents suggested feeling that the condition of Northeast Pennsylvania was *about the same as the United States* as a whole, while 43.3 percent endorsed some level of belief that the economy of Northeast Pennsylvania was in *worse* condition than the United States as a whole.

Which of the following best describes your perception of the economy of Northeastern Pennsylvania compared with the economy of the United States as a whole?	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Northeastern Pennsylvania's economy is much better than that of the United States.	9	0.7%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's economy is somewhat better than that of the United States.	89	7.2%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's economy is about the same as that of the United States.	348	28.2%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's economy is somewhat worse than that of the United States.	435	35.3%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's economy is much worse than that of the United States.	98	8.0%
Not sure	254	20.6%

Perspectives on the Region—Quality of Life

Respondents were also asked to endorse one of a series of statements related to the quality of life in Northeastern Pennsylvania compared to the United States as a whole. More than 36.0 percent of respondents indicated feeling that the quality of life in Northeastern Pennsylvania is either *somewhat* or *much worse* than the United States as a whole. However, nearly 49.0 percent of respondents suggested feeling that NEPA quality of life was about the same as or somewhat better than that of the United States.

Which of the following best describes your perception of the overall quality of life in Northeastern Pennsylvania compared with the quality of life in the United States as a whole?	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Northeastern Pennsylvania's quality of life is much better than that of the United States.	34	2.8%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's quality of life is somewhat better than that of the United States.	168	13.6%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's quality of life is about the same as that of the United States.	427	34.6%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's quality of life is somewhat worse than that of the United States.	376	30.5%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's quality of life is much worse than that of the United States.	80	6.5%
Not sure	148	12.0%



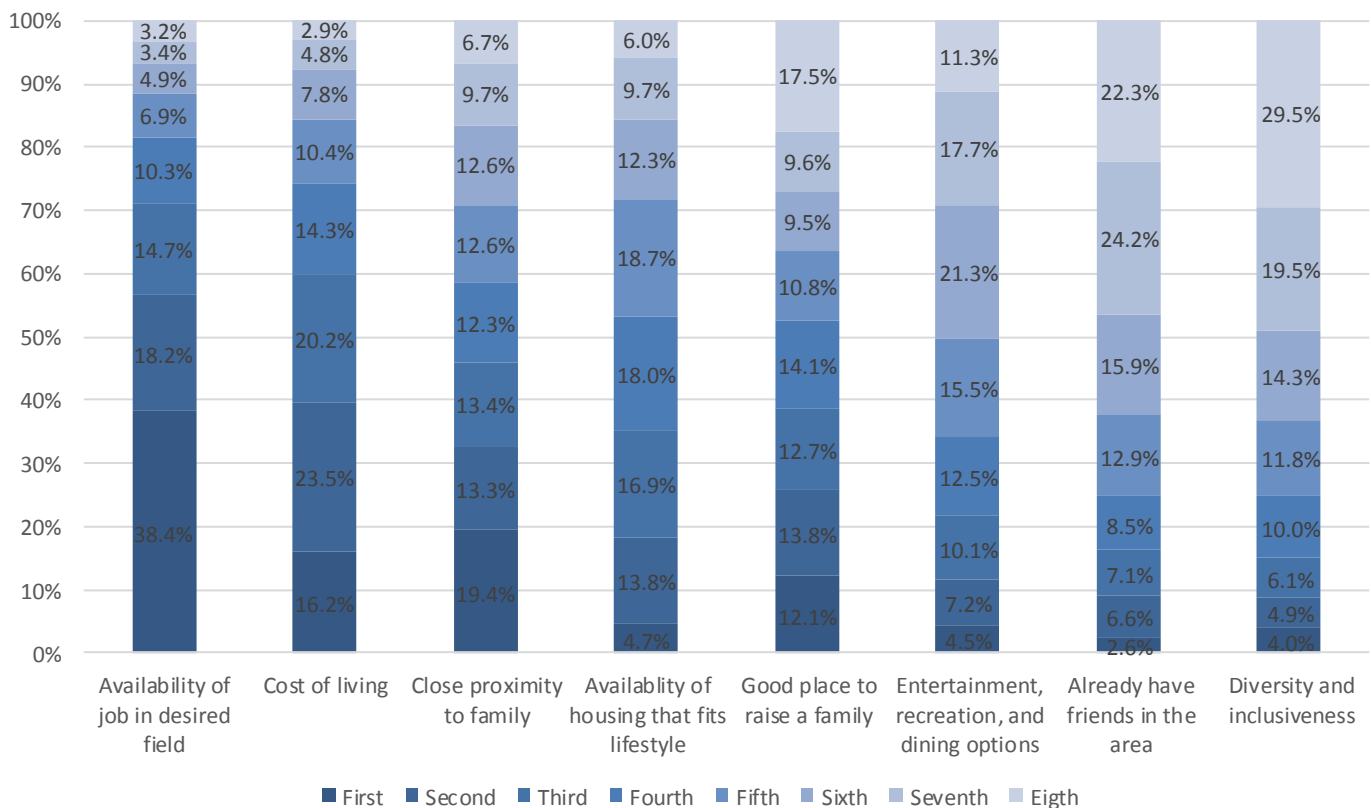
"It is vitally important that we value the insights and opinions of college students in our area. Their views, experiences, and ambitions fuel the innovative thinking we need as we continue to energize our economy and enhance the quality of life in Northeastern Pennsylvania."

Dr. Tracy Brundage, President, Keystone College



Considerations in Locating and Job Seeking. Participants were then asked to rank a list of characteristics and features they would consider when deciding where to locate or seek employment after graduation. Items were ranked from first (most important) to eighth (least important). The factors, with their weighted averages, include *availability of jobs in desired field* (6.3); *cost of living* (5.6); *proximity to family* (5.1); *suitable housing options* (4.6); *environment appropriate for raising a family* (4.5); *entertainment, recreation, and dining options* (3.8); *proximity to friends* (3.2); and *diversity and inclusiveness* (3.1). The full distribution of these rankings are shown below, where the bars show the within-category distribution of ranks, and the darker shades correspond with higher rank.

Importance in consideration of where to locate or seek job



The Institute

Turning Information into Insight

A collaboration among Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Johnson College, 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 for Graduate Medical Education, University of Scranton, and Wilkes University

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 regional residents. For over a decade, The Institute has worked behind the scenes to support initiatives that advance regional competitiveness and revitalize communities.

2020 Institute Underwriters

Signature Underwriters

Andrew J. Sordoni Foundation
Luzerne County
PPL Electric Utilities
Sordoni Family Foundation

Contributing Underwriters

Borton-Lawson
Geisinger Health System

Supporting Underwriters

Berkshire Asset Management
BlackOut Design
Commission on Economic Opportunity
FNCB
Greater Hazleton CANDO
Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield
M&T Bank
McCarthy Tire
Mohegan Sun Pocono
Navient
NET Credit Union
PNC
Prudential Retirement Services
Rosenn Jenkins Greenwald, LLC
The Luzerne Foundation
The Wright Center for Community Health
UGI Utilities

Academic Partners

Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine
Johnson College
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 for Graduate Medical Education
University of Scranton
Wilkes University

Follow us on social media

<http://www.facebook.com/institutepa>

<https://twitter.com/institutePA>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-institute-for-public-policy-economic-development>

www.institutepa.org



The Institute – Turning Information into Insight