

Post-Graduation What's Next? 2023

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, Maywood University, Misericordia University, Penn State Scranton, Penn State Wilkes-Barre, The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education, University of Scranton, Wilkes University, and the business community

Student Polling Project

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 2022 poll assesses students' opinions about the region and their post graduation plans. A total of 570 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. The poll is distributed online through our academic partners, and the data was collected during March and April 2023.

The Institute is an applied research and economic consulting organization that fulfills two related priorities:

- (1) customized client solutions and strategies to facilitate decision-making
- (2) planning that enhances growth, impact, and sustainability for organizations.

The Institute also serves a public mission to provide data, analytics, and research to the community at large. This empirical, objective information is intended to drive discussion and innovative solutions that enhance regional quality of life and standard of living.

The Institute was formed as a unique collaborative of regional higher education institutions and the business community, and founded on the belief that good decisions are driven by good data.

When deciding where to launch their careers, students prioritize availability of jobs in their desired fields, and cost of living.

Additionally, those planning to stay in Northeastern Pennsylvania after graduation assign high value to a location's proximity to family, as well as housing options and suitability for raising a family. They are less likely to value the area's diversity and inclusiveness, proximity to friends, or its entertainment, recreation, and dining options. Conversely, students who plan to depart the area after graduation are likelier to value entertainment, recreation, and dining options – while downplaying proximity to family and friends.

When evaluating job opportunities, students also prioritize starting salary.

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 57.4 percent placing the category first or second on their lists.

"The higher education community in NEPA works tirelessly to provide our graduates with the professional skills and competencies to meet both the demands of the marketplace and civic engagement and responsibility. Every effort to enhance the quality of life and employment opportunities in our community will encourage more and more of our graduates to live here and to pay forward the great educations that they have received by investing in our community.

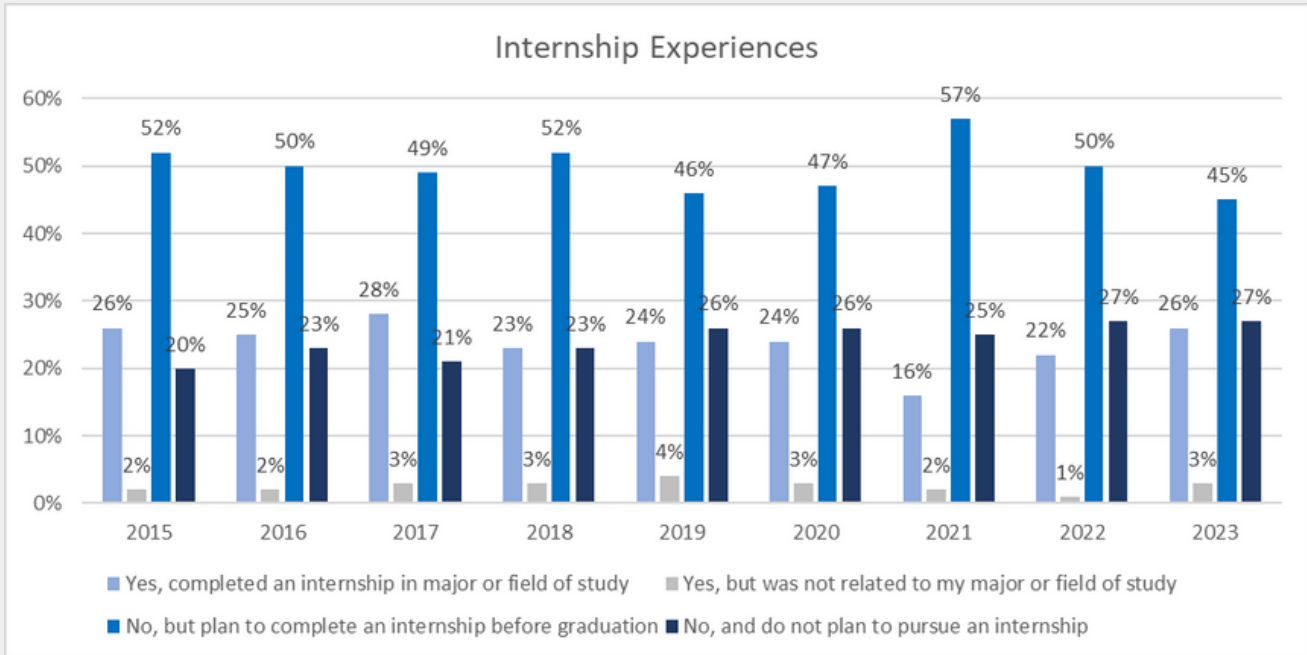


Rev. Thomas P. Looney, C.S.C., Ph.D.
President,
King's College

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Internships continue to be highly valued by students.

In the 2023 poll, 73.4 percent of respondents had either completed or planned to complete an internship before graduation. This is a significant and promising portion of respondents, though it is the lowest rate recording since polling began in 2015. Otherwise, it only dropped below 75.0 percent in two other years – 2019 and 2020.



Completion of a regional internship may induce students to remain in the region after graduation.

Over 91.0 percent of students who intend to remain in Northeastern Pennsylvania after graduation have completed an internship in the region, compared to 60.7 percent of students who are likely to depart after receiving their degrees. Though no formal causal connection between these variables can be inferred, there is a strong connection.

NEPA Internship by Likelihood of Post-Graduation Relocation	Likely to Stay in NEPA	Unlikely to Stay in NEPA
Yes (completed internship in NEPA)	73 (91.3%)	34 (60.7%)
No (did not complete internship in NEPA)	7 (8.8%)	22 (39.3%)
TOTAL	80	56

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The majority of students who completed internships received academic credit for doing so, and approximately 41 percent received payment for their work.

Did you receive academic credit for your internship?	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Yes	110	73.8%
No	39	26.2%

Did you get paid for your internship?	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Yes, was paid hourly wage/salary	57	38.5%
Yes, received stipend, reimbursement, or other one-time payment	3	2.0%
No	88	59.5%



“Even as the national debate regarding the value of higher education continues, students report that colleges and universities in Northeastern Pennsylvania offer valuable career preparation and the structure to develop broad-based thinking skills. I hope those of us working in the regional higher education space can continue to find effective ways of partnering with economic development agencies as well as those focused on cultural and recreational enrichment opportunities to build on the strong community culture of NEPA.”

Daniel J. Myers, Ph.D.
President
Misericordia University

Student anxiety about finding employment after graduation may be returning to pre-pandemic levels.

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—falling to 50.8 percent in 2019—it rose to 53.2 percent in 2020 and then to 61.4 percent in 2021. It also fell to 51.4 percent in 2022, though it rose again to 52.9 percent in 2023.

Prior to the onset of the pandemic in 2019, just under 80.0 percent of responding students felt at least a little anxious about the impending job search (an approximate five-percentage point drop from 2015). This proportion shrunk to 78.6 in 2020 but then jumped to 84.0 in 2021 before dropping to 76.3 percent by 2022.

It has since risen to 77.1 percent, however.

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Interest in graduate school has changed.

Student interest in attending graduate school has steadily declined since dropping from 59 percent in 2015 to 51 percent in 2018 and 2019. It then declined to 40 percent by 2022 before rising to 44 percent in 2023.

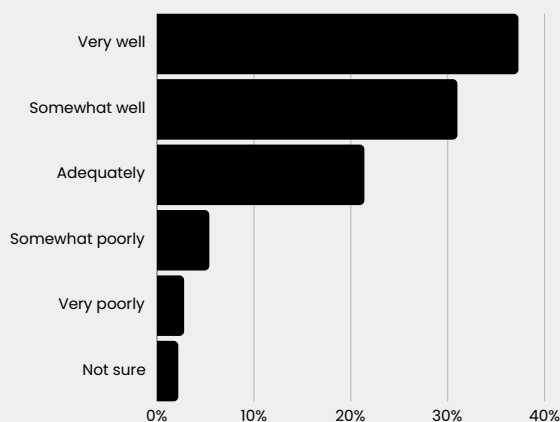
Students have expressed growing degrees of uncertainty regarding graduate school. In 2015, one-quarter of respondents were unsure of their plans. By 2023, 32 percent expressed their uncertainty.

Furthermore—and among 2023 graduates in particular, 47.7 percent plan to attend graduate school. Conversely, the percentage of students uninterested in pursuing graduate degrees in the 2023 cohort is about eight percentage points above average (27.0 percent to 19.2 percent, respectively).

However...

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, although in 2021 this proportion has dropped below 70.0 percent for the first time in all the polling years. Approximately 69.0 percent of students felt that their college education prepared them either very well or somewhat well for their intended career paths. By 2022, that percentage dropped to 68.1. It reach 68.3 in 2023.



"For nearly a decade, this poll has told us that graduates prioritize careers in their desired fields, as well as competitive salaries, above a variety of other factors. These young professionals have been clear and consistent. Greater collaboration with employers may catalyze the creation of lucrative career opportunities and entice graduates to establish themselves in the region, thereby diversifying the local economy and enhancing regional vibrancy."

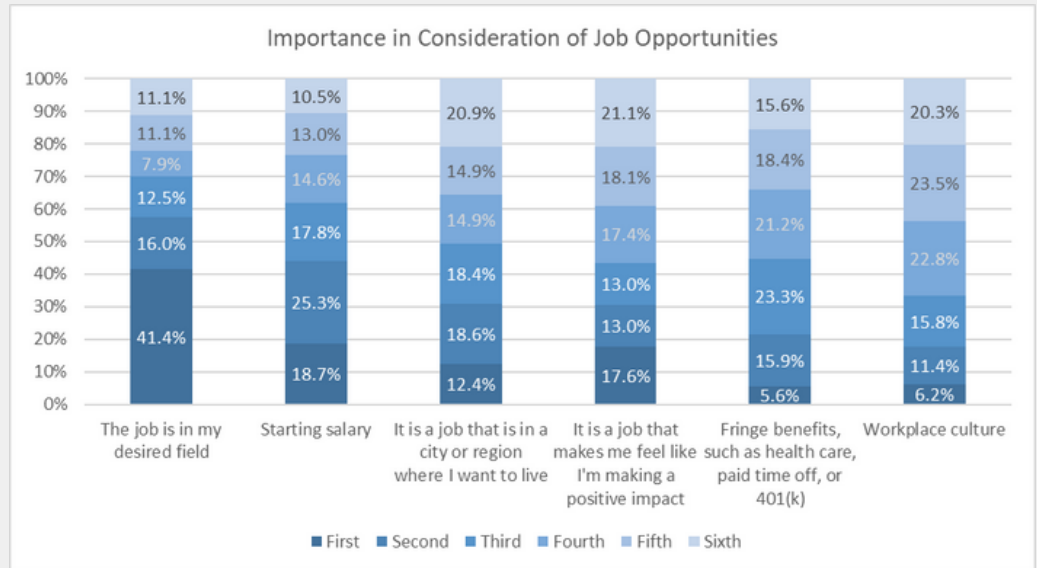
Lynda Goldstein, Ph.D.
Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer
Penn State Wilkes-Barre



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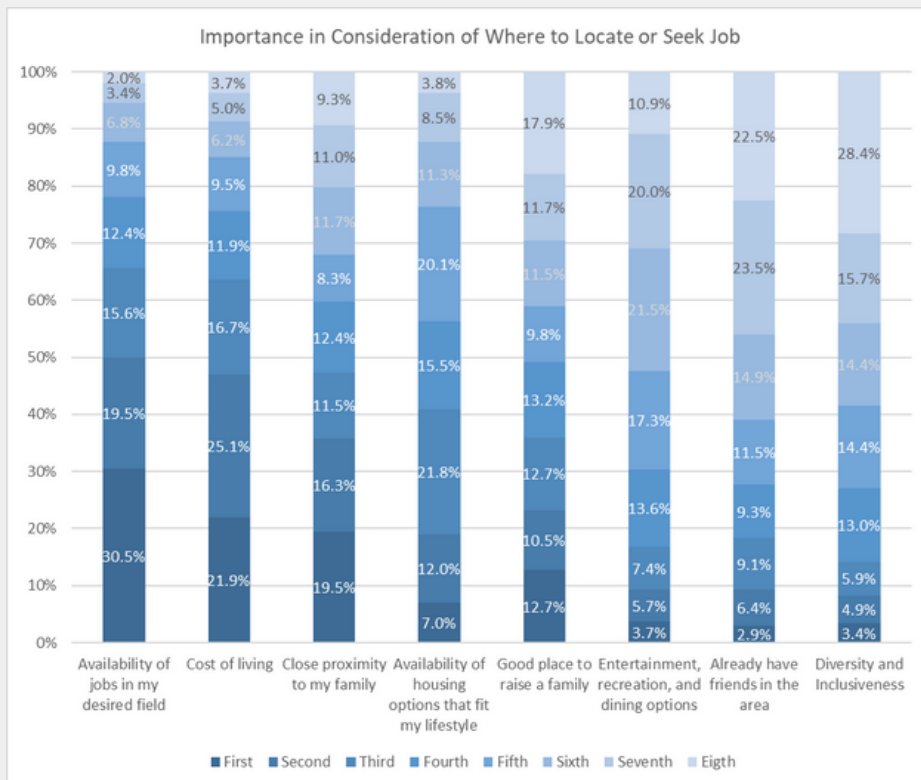
Considerations in Job Opportunities

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 (4.4), starting salary (3.9), location in a desired region (3.4), feeling as though they are making a positive impact (3.3), fringe benefits (3.2), 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.



Considerations When Locating and Job Seeking

Participants were 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 (6.1); cost of living (5.8); proximity to family (5.0); suitable housing options (4.8); environment appropriate for raising a family (4.3); entertainment, recreation, and dining options (3.7); proximity to friends and inclusiveness (3.2). 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.



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“As the world evolves, as technology advances, and as new and unique skills are demanded of our graduates when they embark upon their careers, it is incumbent upon us – as leaders in education – to ensure that they are poised to rise to every new challenge. The learning that takes place in Northeastern Pennsylvania’s must continue to reflect this incredible ecosystem of academic institutions.”

Katie Leonard, Ed.D.
President & CEO
Johnson College



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. Nearly 34.0 percent of respondents suggested feeling that the condition of Northeast Pennsylvania was about the same as the United States as a whole, while 31.3 percent reported 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.	2	0.5%
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s economy is somewhat better than that of the United States.	42	9.5%
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s economy is about the same as that of the United States.	149	33.7%
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s economy is somewhat worse than that of the United States.	117	26.5%
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s economy is much worse than that of the United States.	21	4.8%
Not sure	111	25.1%

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. Almost 31.0 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, 52.3 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 economy of Northeastern Pennsylvania compared with the economy of the United States as a whole?	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
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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 regional 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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