

## Post-Graduation What's Next? 2024

# 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 Hazleton, 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 2024 poll assesses students' opinions about the region and their post graduation plans. A total of 919 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 2024.

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, along with cost of living.**

Among eight options to consider when deciding where they will seek employment after graduation, 48.7 percent ranked availability of jobs in their desired fields either first or second. Nearly 49.0 percent placed cost of living either first or second on their lists.

### **Students also prioritize opportunities in their desired fields (along with starting salary) when evaluating job options.**

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 58 percent placing the category first or second on their lists. A plurality nearing 38 percent placed starting salary first or second on their lists.

"I have heard from students, first-hand, how much they value their internships and clinical experiences. I continue to encourage our business and health care leaders in Northeastern Pennsylvania to collaborate with us in higher education to expand these opportunities and create a system of experiential learning that helps our students and our organizations prosper."



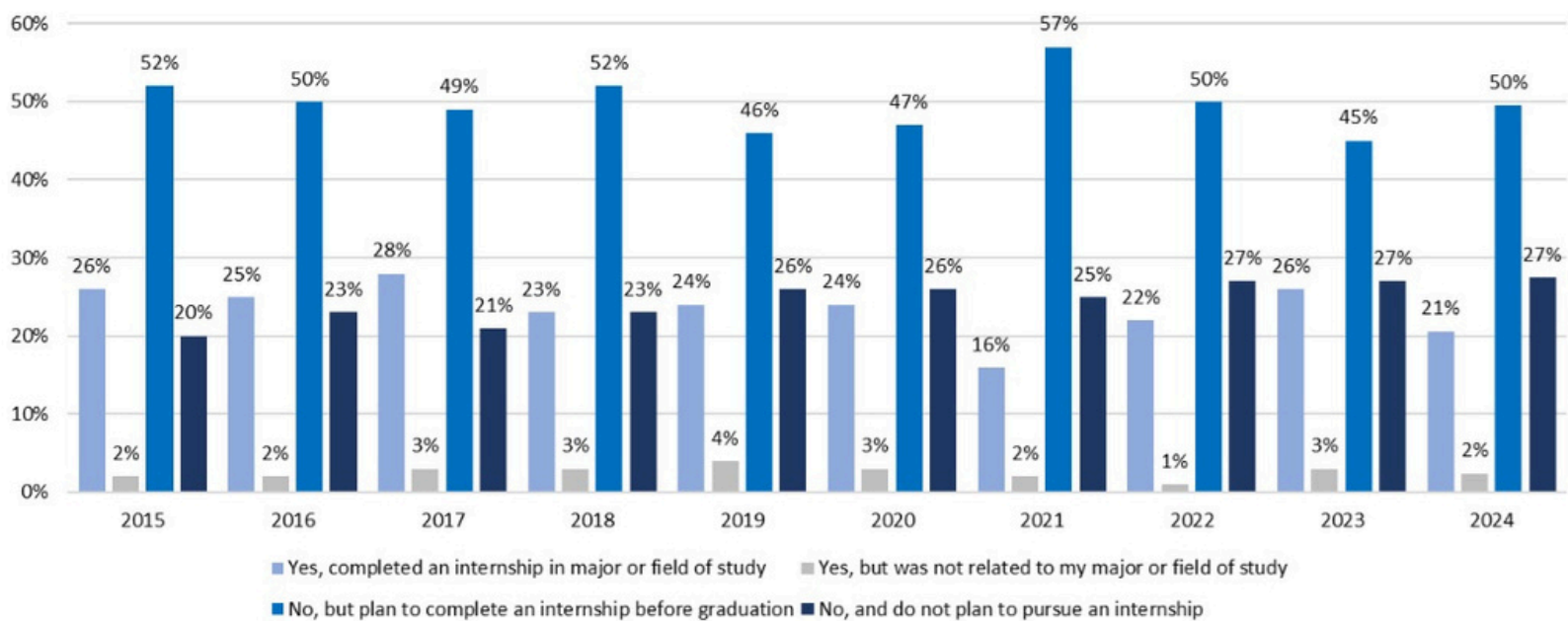
Daniel J. Myers, Ph.D.  
President  
Misericordia University

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## Internships continue to be highly valued by students.

In the 2024 poll, 72.5 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 among the lowest rates recorded since polling began in 2015. Otherwise, it dropped below 75.0 percent in four other years – 2019, 2020, 2022, and 2023.

Internship Experiences



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

Over 89.0 percent of students who intend to remain in Northeastern Pennsylvania after graduation have completed an internship in the region, compared to 46.7 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)	89.4% 76	46.7% 28
No (did not complete internship in NEPA)	10.6% 9	53.3% 32
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>60</b>

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*The majority of students who completed internships received academic credit for doing so, and approximately 45 percent received payment for their work.*

Did you receive academic credit for your internship?	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Yes	115	61.2%
No	73	38.8%

Did you get paid for your internship?	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Yes, was paid hourly wage/salary	84	44.9%
Yes, received stipend, reimbursement, or other one-time payment	12	6.4%
No	91	48.7%



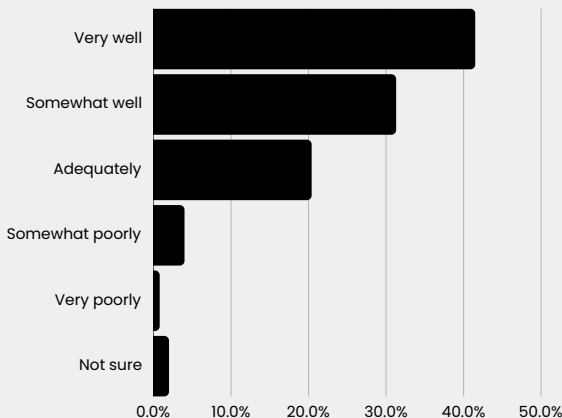
"The latest poll underscores the vital role experiential learning plays in inspiring and retaining talent in Northeastern Pennsylvania, and it reinforces our shared responsibility to continue cultivating robust opportunities for internships, skills development, and careers within our community. By aligning educational experiences with community workforce needs and focusing on what matters most to students — opportunities in their desired fields, competitive salaries, and a strong quality of life — we can honor and strengthen our communities in Northeastern Pennsylvania and retain the talent that will lead us to a hopeful, bright future."

Linda Thomas-Hemak, M.D., FACP, FAAP  
President & CEO

The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education

### Students face some degree of uncertainty when considering graduate school.

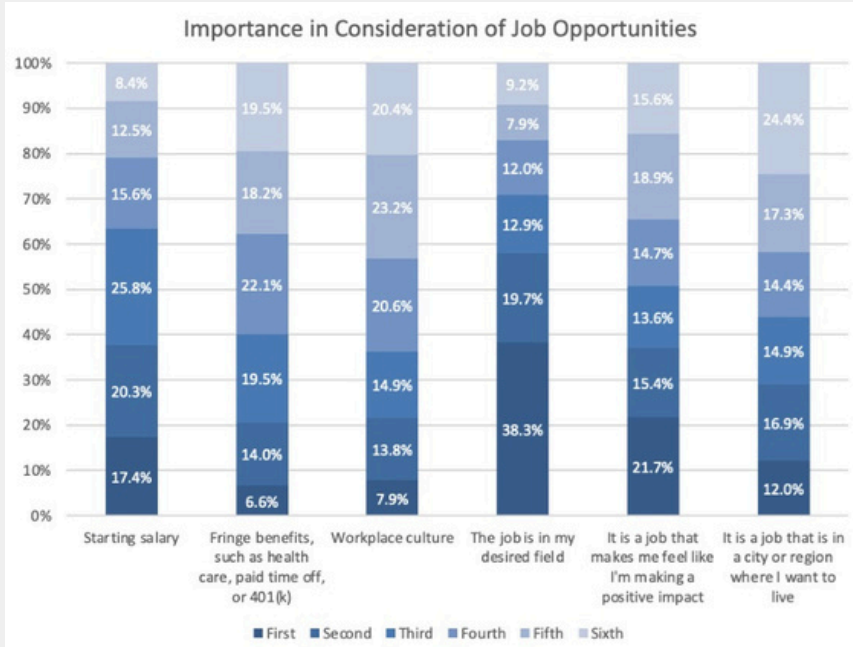
Over half of all respondents in every polling year from 2015 to 2021 responded either yes, they plan on attending graduate school or they are already in a graduate or professional school. These percentages decreased to 44.3 percent in 2022, before rising to 49.0 percent in 2023 and dropping down to 43.7 percent in 2024, when those who were unsure about attending graduate school comprised 33.8 percent of all respondents.



### Students feel their education has prepared them for their careers.

The most recent poll showed that the majority of respondents feel prepared for their intended careers. In 2024, 72.8 percent of students felt that their college education prepared them either very well or somewhat well for their intended career paths. Another 20.4 percent reported that they felt adequately prepared.

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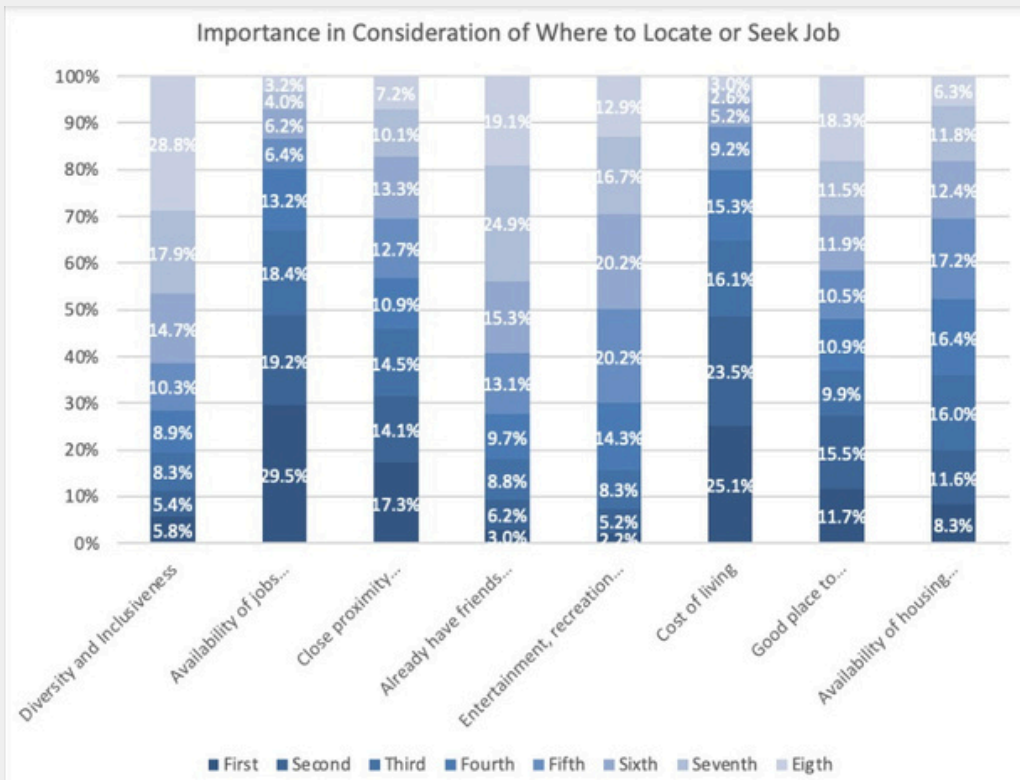


## Considerations in Job Opportunities

Availability of a job in a student's desired field is a chief priority for respondents when considering job opportunities. Compared to other options, this factor received the highest weighted average (at 4.4). Other significant factors include starting salary and the opportunity to make a positive impact. Workplace culture had the lowest weighted average (at three).

## Considerations When Relocating and Job Seeking

Students were asked to rank a list of characteristics and features they would consider when deciding where to locate or seek employment after graduation from eight options: (1) Diversity and Inclusiveness; (2) Availability of Jobs in My Desired Field; (3) Close Proximity to My Family; (4) Already Have Friends in the Area; (5) Entertainment, Recreation, and Dining Options; (6) Cost of Living; (7) Good Place to Raise a Family; and (8) Availability of Housing Options That Fit My Lifestyle.



On average, the availability of jobs in students' desired fields and the cost of living were their most important consideration, with the highest weighted averages. Conversely, students seemed least concerned about diversity and inclusiveness.

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### Perspectives on the Region—Economy

Respondents were asked about Northeastern Pennsylvania's economy in relation to the United States as a whole.

The majority of student perceptions of Northeastern Pennsylvania's economy ranged from apathy to negativity. Overall, 11.4 percent of students believed the region's economy to be somewhat better than that of the United States; only 2.5 percent rated it as much better. Approximately 32.0 percent believed it to be worse, however, and another 34.6 percent thought the region's economy is about the same as that of the United States. Over 19.0 percent of the students were unsure about the current state of the regional economy.

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.	14	2.5%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's economy is somewhat better than that of the United States.	65	11.4%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's economy is about the same as that of the United States.	198	34.6%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's economy is somewhat worse than that of the United States.	150	26.2%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's economy is much worse than that of the United States.	35	6.1%
Not sure	110	19.2%

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.	29	5.1%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's quality of life is somewhat better than that of the United States.	130	22.9%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's quality of life is about the same as that of the United States.	195	34.3%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's quality of life is somewhat worse than that of the United States.	121	21.3%
Northeastern Pennsylvania's quality of life is much worse than that of the United States.	20	3.5%
Not sure	74	13.0%

### Perspectives on the Region—Quality of Life

Respondents were also asked the quality of life in Northeastern Pennsylvania compared to the United States as a whole. Their feedback was largely neutral. The share of respondents who believe the quality of life to be better than that of the United States (28.0 percent) and the share of respondents who believe it is worse (24.8 percent) are comparable. A plurality of students (34.3 percent) believed the region's quality of life to be about the same as that of the United States, and 13.0 percent were unsure.

"There is an abundance of career opportunities for graduates in all disciplines – from healthcare and education to architecture and business, as well as so many other creative, innovative, and professional pursuits. Graduates do not have to travel far to embrace the possibilities, because they are right here in Northeastern Pennsylvania. I consider it a privilege to see so many of our students flourish as esteemed, in-demand professionals and local leaders, knowing that Marywood University prepared them well from Day One."

Lisa A. Lori, J.D.  
President  
Marywood University



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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.

## 2024 Institute Underwriters

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