



First Destination Alumni Survey: Class of 2017

Introduction: The First Destination Alumni Survey is designed to help Paul Smith’s College (PSC) track the initial career placement of recent graduates. The First Destination Alumni Survey results are used by the College to gauge the career success of PSC graduates within the first six months’ post-graduation and to adjust academic programming as needed.

Methodology: After careful review of the prior survey administration, data collection and reporting process, a recommendation was made by the Associate Provost to make some necessary adjustments to our methodology. We expected that these adjustments would impact our outcome numbers which have been fairly consistent in the past; however, we believe that the new approach will actually provide a more accurate look at our students’ career success and will provide guidance on areas where we can grow and improve our career development efforts.

The 2017 First Destination Alumni Survey was administered to all August 2016, December 2016, and May 2017 graduates in three different modes. First, the survey was administered to associate seeking sophomores and baccalaureate seeking seniors participating in the December and May graduation ceremonies. Second, a paper survey was distributed by mail to all August 16, December 16 and May 17 graduates four months after the May graduation ceremony. Lastly, an email was sent to all non-responders with an online survey link six months after the May graduation ceremony.

The methodology changes from prior survey administrations included streamlining all versions of the survey. In the past the survey format varied between the cap’n’gown, paper, and online surveys which led to discrepancies in interpretation of results. Additionally, we eliminated follow-up phone calls at one year out and social media searches that had been conducted in past years. We also relied on the administrators to determine if employment was related to field of study vs. graduate’s interpretation.

A total of 217 graduates were administered the survey with 185 responses collected providing an eighty-five percent (85.25%) response rate. As seen below, Baccalaureate degree graduates have a higher response rate than associate degree graduates. This is consistent with previous semesters. Overall our response rate increased slightly from eighty-three percent in 2016 to eighty-five percent in 2017.

	Class of 2017	Baccalaureate Degree Graduates	Associate Degree Graduates
Total graduates surveyed	217	153	64
Respondents to survey	185	139	46
Response rate	85.25%	90.85%	71.88%

Results:

Employment and Further Education. As demonstrated by the following chart, the 2017 First Destination Alumni Survey respondents were less likely to be employed or furthering education than in the prior graduating classes. We believe this year to be a truer reflection of where our students are in terms of career obtainment within 6 months of graduation. Prior survey administrators collected responses beyond the 6-month window so we suspect that some of the employment data reported on in prior survey results was not truly first destination data.

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5 – Year Response Rates	Class of 2017	Class of 2016	Class of 2015	Class of 2014	Class of 2013
Total Employed	75%	91%	90%	86%	85%
Total Further Education	8%	7%	9%	13%	14%
Overall Employed or Further Education	83%	98%	99%	99%	99%

By Degree Level	Baccalaureate Degree Graduates	Associate Degree Graduates	Total
Total Employed	73%	78%	75%
Total Further Ed	7%	11%	8%
Overall Employed or Further Education	81%	89%	83%

Salary. 36% of respondents reported salary or wage information. The details of the reported salary are outline in the chart below with the average salary of 2017 graduates being \$35,155.00. Baccalaureate degree graduates had a slightly higher median at \$34,320.00 and average at \$35,549.00 than Associate degree graduates with a median at \$31,200.00 and average at \$34,270.00.

Reported Salary All Respondents	
Median	\$ 31,200.00
Average	\$ 35,155.80
Low	\$ 19,240.00
High	\$ 80,000.00

Satisfaction with PSC. Graduates were also asked about how satisfied they were with their PSC education. Approximately 57.3% of respondents completed the satisfaction portion of the survey. Percentages below are based on the number of responses submitted for each question. Additional comments were collected to support some of the responses.

	Yes	Unsure	No
Satisfied with PSC (yes, no, unsure)	80%	15%	5%
Satisfied with Major (yes, no, unsure)	79%	16%	5%

Summary: Outcomes from the 2017 First Destination Alumni Survey are markedly different compared to previous years. The primary reason for this change is believed to be our methodology for survey administration and interpretation. It was felt that the prior survey results did not align with anecdotal feedback received from students, alumni and employers. Documented student usage of career services has been low for some time and employers have expressed concerns with the lack of student candidates in attendance at our annual career fairs. The changes in methodology were a response to tighten up our collection of data on our student's first destination careers. The 2017 results suggest that much work is required to improve student career development. The following recommendations aim to better align career support with the academic curriculum thus insuring that more students are taking advantage of services that will help them to launch their careers.



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Recommendations:

- Continue to administer and interpret First Destination Survey according to new methodology to determine if 2017 is an outlier year or a more accurate portrayal of our how our students are doing in the job market immediately after graduation.
- Work with Academic Affairs to identify key points in program curriculum where career support can be embedded within course requirements.
- Develop a career pathway model that better guides students through a holistic career development process starting in freshmen year and carrying through to graduation.
- Develop a means of collecting career data on graduates 3-4 years after graduation to determine the longer-term success of PSC graduates.
- Compare satisfaction data collected on First Destination Survey with data from the NSSE and SSI.