

2017 PHD Career Pathways Alumni Survey

The 2017-19 PhD Career Pathways Survey is a partnership between the University of California and the Council of Graduate Schools. The purpose of the survey is to better understand the career preparation and pathways of current PhD students and alumni. While the Council of Graduate Schools is specifically focused on humanities and STEM PhDs, the University of California is collecting data from doctoral students and alumni in all disciplines.

The first phase of the survey was conducted between October and December (of 2017), and was sent to all UC PhD alumni who graduated during the 2001-02, 2008-09, or 2013-14 academic years. In total, over 7,000 alumni were invited to participate in the survey. The final response rate was 33 percent, with 86 percent of respondents completing the survey, which translates into a 28 percent completion rate. The second phase of the alumni survey will be conducted during the fall 2018 term, and will be administered to all UC PhD alumni who graduated during the 2002-03, 2009-10 and 2014-15 academic years.

Current students will be surveyed in spring 2018 and 2019.

About this analysis

The main data file is still being created; as such, information regarding sample representativeness will not be included. Preliminary findings will not be presented by cohort. All analyses presented are preliminary, and subject to change.

Demographics

Eighty-three percent of respondents identified as U.S. citizens, six percent as permanent U.S. residents and 10 percent as temporary residents. By gender, 50 percent of valid respondents identified as male, while 49 percent identified as female.

Forty-six percent of respondents identified as White, 21 percent as international, 12 percent as Asian, six percent as Chicano/Latino(a), three percent as African American and 12 percent of respondents had missing race/ethnicity information.

As it relates to income, 44 percent of respondents stated that their income, including salary and investments, was at least \$100,000.

The top majors of respondents were engineering (9 percent), chemistry (5 percent) and education (3 percent).

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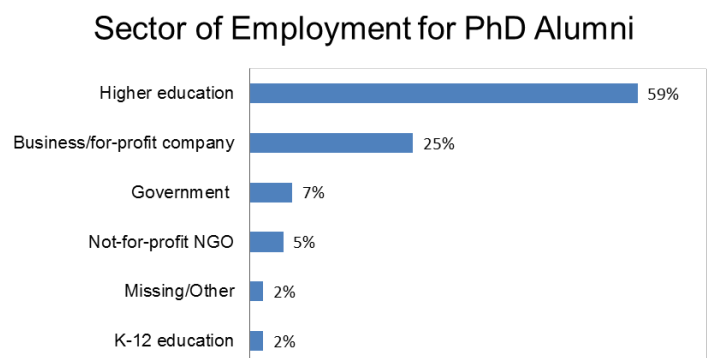
Lastly, 44 percent of respondents received their PhD degree during the 2013-14 academic year. Thirty-two percent of respondents received their PhD degree during the 2008-09 academic year and 17 percent received their PhD degree during the 2001-02 academic year (7 percent of respondents had missing data for this item).

Key Findings: CGS Portion of the Alumni Survey

Ninety-six percent of respondents were working a job for pay as of October 1, 2017. Seventy-six percent of respondents indicated that they were working in a field closely related to their degree. Nearly 60 percent of respondents were employed at a higher education institution (see figure 1), while 25 percent were working at a business or for-profit company. Seventy-four percent of respondents stated that their PhD training prepared them for their current job either “extremely well” or “very well”.

Seventy-eight percent of respondents stated that they either “would” or “probably would” pursue a PhD in the same field. Likewise, 80 percent of respondents stated that they either “definitely would” or “probably would” choose the same institution for their PhD education.

Figure 1:



Overall, respondents felt that their UC education prepared them well for their current position (see figure 2). Over 80 percent of respondents felt that UC’s education was either “excellent” or “good” in regard to preparation in the areas of research, communication of ideas and critically analyzing findings. Of concern, only 34 percent of respondents felt the UC did an “excellent” or “good” job in regard to grant writing.

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Figure 2:

How well did your graduate program prepare you in the following knowledge, attributes, and behaviors? Percent of respondents selecting either "Excellent" or "Good"



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Key Findings: UC Portion of the Alumni Survey

The UC portion of the survey included both quantitative and qualitative elements. One of the key open-ended questions asked respondents how UC could have better prepared them for their current position. While many respondents stated that they were well prepared for their current position, others indicated some areas for improvement. Some alumni felt that UC could improve its training of “soft skills” and provide better assistance with finding non-academic jobs. Among the aspects of their graduate training that alumni felt UC did well, open-ended responses reveal that 1) research methods, 2) statistical methods, and 3) critical thinking skills were most helpful to their current position.

While students were mostly satisfied with the training that they received while at UC, gaps exist between skillsets that are important to their work and UC’s PhD training. Nearly 70 percent of respondents stated that project management was either “extremely important” or “very important” to their profession, yet only half or respondents felt that either “very much” or “some” of their project management skills were developed while at UC.

Of interest to those working in graduate student engagement, preliminary findings suggest that during their time in graduate school, alumni were not involved with extracurricular activities in the arts (80 percent not involved), culture (74 percent not involved), politics (90 percent not involved) or sports (75 percent not involved). In contrast, 61 percent of respondents stated that they were “very involved” with academic related campus- based activities.