



**First Destination Alumni Survey: Class of 2018**

**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:** Over the past two years and after careful review of the prior survey administration, data collection and reporting process, a recommendation was made by the Provost’s Office 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 2018 First Destination Alumni Survey was administered to all August 2017, December 2017, and May 2018 graduates in four 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 17, December 17 and May 18 graduates four months after the May graduation ceremony. Third, an email was sent to all non-responders with an online survey link six months after the May graduation ceremony. Lastly, student workers in the Center for Academic & Career Success placed calls or engaged in social media communications to track down as many non-responders as possible before closing out the results.

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. We also relied on the administrators to determine if employment was related to field of study vs. graduate’s interpretation.

A total of 210 graduates were administered the survey with 172 responses collected providing an eighty-two percent (81.90%) 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 decreased slightly from eighty-five percent in 2017 to eighty-two percent in 2018.

	<b>Class of 2018</b>	<b>Baccalaureate Degree Graduates</b>	<b>Associate Degree Graduates</b>
<b>Total graduates surveyed</b>	210	155	55
<b>Respondents to survey</b>	172	133	39
<b>Response rate</b>	81.90%	85.81%	70.91%

**Results:**

Employment and Further Education. As demonstrated by the following chart, the 2018 First Destination Alumni Survey respondents were more likely to be employed or furthering education than in the prior graduating class of 2017. We were happy to see the success rate increase especially after changing our distribution methods. Another interesting shift appears to be that the associate graduates slightly outperformed our baccalaureate graduates in career obtainment. This could be due to the shrinking size of our associate cohorts but may also follow some national employment trends.

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5 – Year Response Rates	Class of 2018	Class of 2017	Class of 2016	Class of 2015	Class of 2014
<b>Total Employed</b>	84%	75%	91%	90%	86%
<b>Total Further Education</b>	6%	8%	7%	9%	13%
<b>Overall Employed or Further Education</b>	90%	83%	98%	99%	99%

By Degree Level	Baccalaureate Degree Graduates	Associate Degree Graduates	Total
<b>Total Employed</b>	83%	85%	84%
<b>Total Further Ed</b>	6%	8%	6%
<b>Overall Employed or Further Education</b>	89%	92%	90%

Salary. Only 34% of respondents reported salary or wage information. The details of the reported salary are outline in the chart below with the average salary of 2018 graduates being \$36,951.74. Baccalaureate degree graduates had a slightly higher median at \$35,680.00 and average at \$37,118.63 than Associate degree graduates with a median at \$34,320.00 and average at \$34,802.47.

<b>Reported Salary All Respondents</b>	
<b>Median</b>	\$ 35,680.00
<b>Average</b>	\$ 36,951.74
<b>Low</b>	\$ 16,900.00
<b>High</b>	\$ 75,000.00

Satisfaction with PSC. Graduates were also asked about how satisfied they were with their PSC education. Approximately 83% of respondents completed the satisfaction portion of the survey, a significant increase from past years. Percentages below are based on the number of responses submitted for each question. We a big jump in student satisfaction ratings for this class compare to the prior class. The follows trends we are seeing in our NSSE results for graduating seniors. Additional comments were collected to support some of the responses.

	Yes	Unsure	No
<b>Satisfied with PSC (yes, no, unsure)</b>	96%	5%	1%
<b>Satisfied with Major (yes, no, unsure)</b>	88%	8%	4%

**Summary:** Outcomes from the 2018 First Destination Alumni Survey continue to be different compared to previous years under old administration practices. We continue to believe this is related to our methodology changes for survey administration, but now realize that changes in distribution may not explain the full picture, especially considering the differences between the 2016 and 2017 graduating class outcomes and the 2018 class outcomes. We have gone through tremendous changes in how we provide career support. Documented student usage of career services had historically been low for some time and employers had expressed concerns with the lack of student candidates in attendance at our annual



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career fairs. Starting in 2015 we began to shift from a one-person, isolated office that catered mostly to employer satisfaction, to a much more integrated and student center approach. The 2018 class would be the first graduating cohort to be impacted by these changes. More data on student usage and engagement is needed to confirm a correlation between our structural changes and our improved career outcomes. The following recommendations aim to identify a means for accomplishing this, along with better alignment of career support with the academic curriculum, and finally continued assessment of effectiveness with regards to our systems, services, and events.

### **Recommendations:**

- Continue to administer and interpret First Destination Survey according to new methodology and begin better data review of student usage to determine if 2018 outcomes are a result of our efforts for improved departmental operations.
- Continue to work with Academic Department Heads 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.