

March 2015

Career Outcomes of Mason Graduates: 2014 Career Plans Survey

The Career Plans Survey has been administered since 2007 to Mason students (undergraduate and graduate) at the time of graduation. The survey collects data about student employment status, career related experiences, and plans for further education. This survey is locally developed, and is administered online at the end of every academic term using the Campus Labs online survey software. This report presents findings from the 2013-2014 Career Plans Survey for undergraduate and graduate levels. Additional analyses were conducted at the undergraduate level to examine the relationship between career outcomes and other educational experiences reported in the 2013-2014 Graduating Senior Survey.

Highlights

Undergraduate Students

- About one-half of undergraduate respondents reported being employed full-time or part-time at graduation.
- Nearly three-quarters of employed (full-time or part-time) undergraduate respondents reported that their jobs were related to their career goals.
- More than two out of five respondents with full-time employment reported earning \$30,001-\$50,000.
- Upon graduation, 15% of undergraduates reported that they plan to attend graduate school full-time or part-time, with respondents being most likely to choose education and social sciences.
- Having a career outcome (employment, graduate/professional school, military service, volunteer work) or employment related to career goals was associated with significantly higher levels of satisfaction with the overall Mason experience.

Graduate Students

- Over three-quarters of graduate respondents reported being employed at graduation, with most having full-time employment.
- Overwhelmingly, employed respondents reported working in a position related to their career goals.
- Employed respondents (38%) were most likely to report earning a salary in the \$50,001-\$70,000 range.
- The top three industries that employed graduate students reported working in were education (35%), government (19%), and technology (10%).

Important Notes

- Percentages in tables may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
- Students who earned dual degrees are counted once at the university level.
- Undergraduates, students, and respondents are terms used interchangeably within the Undergraduate Student Findings section of the report.
- Graduate students, students, and respondents are terms used interchangeably within the Graduate Student Findings section of the report.
- Significant changes were made to 2014 Career Plans Survey items in order to comply with reporting guidelines from the National Association of Careers and Employers, rendering some item results not comparable to those from previous survey years.
- Detailed and customizable results are available at <https://assessment.gmu.edu>.

Response Rates

At the undergraduate level, 4,883 students were invited to take the Career Plans Survey. A total of 1,770 students completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 36%. Among the 3,238 students at the graduate level, 1,351 responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 42%. Response rates at both degree levels have fluctuated over time, peaking during the 2013 survey year.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT FINDINGS

Primary Status at Time of Graduation

Over half of all respondents (51%) reported being employed (full-time, part-time, or military service), while nearly one-third (32%) were still seeking employment at the time of graduation. Among the respondents, 15% reported their primary status upon graduation as full-time or part-time graduate or professional school.

Table 1. Undergraduate Primary Post-Graduation Status

Full-time employment	39%
Part-time employment	11%
Graduate or professional school, full-time	13%
Graduate or professional school, part-time	2%
Military service	1%
Volunteer work	2%
Seeking employment	32%
Not seeking employment	1%

Notes: Total n=1,770; respondents could only select one primary status; "full-time employment" was considered working 35 or more hours per week on a continuous basis.

Employment: Career Goals, Industry, Location and Salary

Employment and Career Goals

Half of all respondents reported being employed full-time or part-time at the time of graduation. Among the employed, nearly three-quarters (73%) indicated that they were employed in positions that related to their career goals. Respondents who reported full-time employment as their primary post-graduation status were significantly more likely to report being employed in a position related to their career goals than their counterparts who were employed part-time. (See Table 2.)

Table 2. Employment Type by Relation to Career Goals

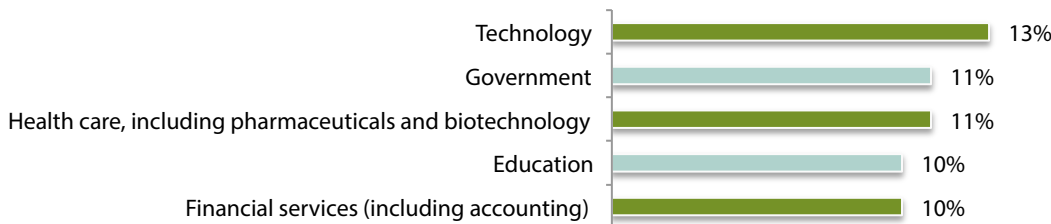
Employment Related to Career Goals	EMPLOYMENT TYPE	
	Full-time (n=644)	Part-time (n=166)
Yes	80% ***	47%
No	20%	53%

**** p < .01, proportion test (two-tailed)*

Industry

Respondents were asked to select the industry that best characterized their company (see Figure 1). Among the 21 industry options, employed graduates were most likely to report working at a company related to technology (13%), followed by government and health care (11% for each), and education and financial services (10% for each).

Figure 1. Top Company Industries of Employed Undergraduate Respondents



Note: Based on the responses from 799 undergraduates whose primary status at the time of graduation was employed full-time or part-time.

Location

Respondents were asked to indicate the state in which their job at the time of graduation was located. Employed graduates were most likely to report working in Virginia (82%), followed by the District of Columbia (9%), and Maryland (3%).

Salary

Salary percentages were calculated using data reported by respondents whose primary status was full-time or part-time employment (see Table 3). Full-time employed graduates reported earning \$30,001-\$50,000 at a rate of 45%, and one-third reported earning \$50,001-\$70,000. Among students who reported working part-time at the time of graduation, 83% reported earning a salary below \$30,000.

Table 3. Undergraduate Salaries

Salary Range	Part-time (n=129)	Full-time (n=562)
Below \$30,000	83%	13%
\$30,001-\$50,000	14%	45%
\$50,001-\$70,000	3%	33%
\$70,001-\$90,000	0%	7%
\$90,001-\$125,000	0%	2%
Above \$125,000	0%	<1%

Note: Results exclude "I prefer not to respond," "unpaid/stipend," and "commission only" only responses.

Career Related Experiential Learning

Students were asked about career-related experiences they had while in college. Of the options, more than 40% reported having completed an internship or practicum (see Table 4). Students employed at graduation were more likely to have held a full- or part-time job related to their career goals while in college than those who were seeking employment at the time of the survey. Respondents who were seeking employment were less likely than the employed to have participated in any career-related experiential learning (30% versus 21%, respectively).

Table 4. Undergraduate Career Related Experiential Learning

Experience	Employed (n=885)	Seeking Employment (n=569)
Internship/practicum/field experience/or field studies	41%	45%
Part-time job related to my career goals	30%	26%
Leadership position in a student organization	20%	18%
On-campus job	21%	20%
Full-time job related to my career goals	16%	3%
Study abroad	9%	13%
Research position	6%	8%
Cooperative education (Co-op)	2%	2%
Did not have any of the above experiences	21%	30%

Note: Percentages are based on total number of undergraduate respondents (n=1,770).

Career Resources and Services

Respondents were asked to report on the career resources and services they used while at Mason. The selection of resources and services included on-campus and off-campus options; respondents could select all responses that applied to them. Over one-half of undergraduate respondents noted using the HireMason listings, followed by networking with personal contacts (44%) and Mason Career Fairs (37%). About one-third of students reported visiting company, organization, or government agency websites. Respondents were least likely to report participating in the On-Campus Interview Program (10%), career courses (11%) and career workshops and events (13%).

Table 5. Career Resources and Services Used by Undergraduates

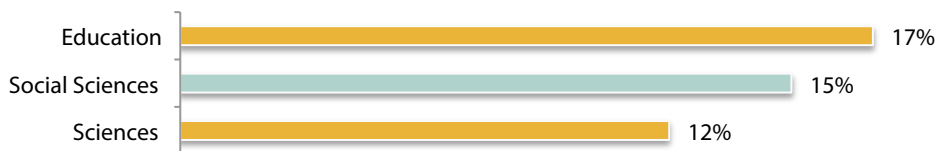
Resources and Services	
HireMason listings	51%
Networking with personal contacts (e.g. friends, family)	44%
Mason Career Fairs	37%
Company, organization, or government agency websites	32%
Networking with faculty and/or staff	29%
Job postings distributed by my academic department	24%
Career counseling/advising appointments	23%
Industry-specific or non-Mason related job boards	20%
Networking with Mason alumni	15%
Career workshops and events	13%
Career course(s)	11%
On-Campus Interview Program	10%
Other	9%

Note: Percentages are based on total number of undergraduate respondents (n=1,770).

Further Education

Of the 15% of respondents who reported having been accepted or enrolled in advanced degree programs, 95% were pursuing graduate or professional degrees. The top fields of study were education (17%), social sciences (15%), and sciences (12%). The remaining 5% were enrolled in graduate certificate or other educational programs.

Figure 2. Top Fields of Study



Note: Percentages are based on undergraduate students whose primary status at the time of graduation was attending a graduate or professional degree program.

Career Outcomes and Educational Experiences

Undergraduate students in the class of 2014 were also asked to complete the Graduating Senior Survey (GSS) upon applying for graduation. Nearly 1,100 graduates completed both the Career Plans Survey and the GSS. In order to examine career outcomes more closely, career survey respondent data were matched with responses on the GSS related to education in the major, satisfaction, and attending Mason again. Education in the major comprised eight items related to competencies on a scale ranging from 4 (*a great deal*) to 1 (*not at all*). Satisfaction items consisted of respondents' opinions about sense of belonging, their overall Mason experience, education received in their major, and level of involvement in campus activities. Response choices were on a scale ranging from 4 (*very satisfied*) to 1 (*very dissatisfied*). The survey also included an item asking if students would attend Mason if they had to start college over again with the response scale ranging from 4 (*definitely*

yes) to 1 (*definitely not*). A complete listing of GSS items is available at <https://assessment.gmu.edu>. Analyses included mean group comparisons related to career outcomes and employment in a field related to career goals.

Using the information students reported regarding their primary status, respondents were grouped according to a career outcome status: has a career outcome or seeking employment. A career outcome was defined as having a primary post-graduation status of full-time or part-time employment, full-time or part-time graduate or professional school, military service, or volunteer work. Table 6 includes results on educational outcomes by career outcome. Respondents who reported having a career outcome were significantly more likely to rate themselves higher in their ability to apply the ideas of their field/major outside of the classroom. They also reported a greater sense of belonging, were more satisfied with their level of involvement in campus activities, and were happier with their overall Mason experience. Students with a career outcome were more likely than others to say that they would choose Mason if they could start college over again.

Table 6. Differences in Educational Outcomes by Career Outcome Status

<i>Item</i>	Career Outcome		Effect Size
	Has a career outcome (n=703)	Seeking employment (n=352)	
Competency Contributions by Major Courses ¹			
Critical thinking and analysis	91%	93%	
Connecting concepts across disciplines	86%	86%	
Conducting research within your field/major	80%	85%	
Writing within your field/major	84%	87%	
Identifying, locating, evaluating and managing information resources within your field/major	86%	86%	
Applying the ideas of your field/major outside of the classroom	83% *	79%	0.16
Applying ethics within your field/major	81%	78%	
Identifying and assessing the validity of assumptions within your field/major	87%	87%	
Satisfaction ²			
Sense of belonging at Mason	80% *	76%	0.15
Overall Mason experience	91% *	87%	0.15
Education you received in your major	93%	92%	
Your level of involvement in campus activities	68% **	63%	0.19
Attending Mason ³			
If you were to do it all over again, would you attend Mason?	85% *	82%	0.14

¹ Percentages are for “a great deal” and “a fair amount” responses combined.

² Percentages are for “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses combined.

³ Percentages are for “definitely yes” and “probably yes” responses combined.

* $p < .05$, t-test (two-tailed), small effect size (criteria for t-test effect size, small=0.20, medium=0.50, large=0.80, Cohen, 1988)

On the Career Plans Survey, respondents were also asked whether they were employed in a position related to their career goals. The results in Table 7 show that students employed in positions related to their career goals were significantly more satisfied with their overall Mason experience than those who were not in positions related to their career goals. Furthermore, respondents working in positions related to their career goals were significantly more likely to say they would attend Mason if they had to start college all over again.

Table 7. Differences in Educational Outcomes by Employment Related to Career Goals

<i>Item</i>	Career Goals		Effect Size
	Position related to career goals (n=346)	Position not related to career goals (n=129)	
Satisfaction ¹			
Sense of belonging at Mason	81%	77%	
Overall Mason experience	92% *	87%	0.22
Education you received in your major	92%	92%	
Your level of involvement in campus activities	67%	63%	
Attending Mason ²			
If you were to do it all over again, would you attend Mason?	88% *	80%	0.22

¹ Percentages are for “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses combined.

² Percentages are for “definitely yes” and “probably yes” responses combined.

* $p < .05$, t-test (two-tailed), small effect size (criteria for t-test effect size, small=0.20, medium=0.50, large=0.80, Cohen, 1988)

GRADUATE STUDENT FINDINGS

Primary Status at Time of Graduation

Among the 1,351 graduate student respondents, 72% reported being employed full-time (35 or more hours per week) as their primary post-graduation status. Meanwhile, 17% of respondents reported that they were seeking employment at the time of graduation (see Table 8).

Table 8. Graduate Primary Post-Graduation Status

Full-time employment	72%
Part-time employment	5%
Graduate or professional school, full-time	2%
Graduate or professional school, part-time	<1%
Military service	1%
Volunteer work	<1%
Seeking employment	17%
Not seeking employment	1%

Notes: Total $n = 1,351$; respondents could only select one primary status; “full-time employment” was considered working 35 or more hours per week on a continuous basis.

Employment: Career Goals, Location, Industry and Salary

Career Goals

Out of the 1,044 graduate respondents employed in full-time or part-time positions, 87% were working in jobs related to their career goals. When considering employment status in relation to career goals, respondents whose primary post-graduation status was full-time employment were more likely to report being employed in a position related to their career goals (89%) than those working part-time (59%). (See Table 9.)

Table 9. Graduate Employment Type by Relation to Career Goals

Employed in Position Related to Career Goals	EMPLOYMENT TYPE	
	Full-time (n=929)	Part-time (n=63)
Yes	89% ***	59%
No	11%	41%

*** $p < .01$, proportion test (two-tailed)

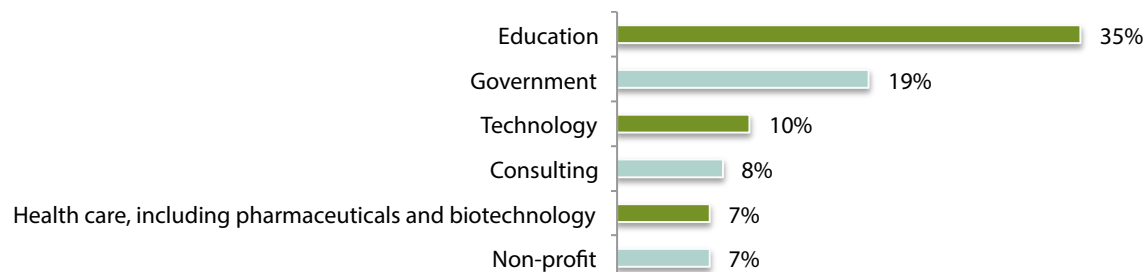
Location

Of the respondents whose primary status was full-time or part-time employment, two-thirds reported that they were employed in Virginia, 19% in the District of Columbia, and 6% in Maryland.

Industry

Employed graduate students were asked to identify the industry that best describes their place of employment. The most common fields were education (35%), government (19%), and technology (10%). (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3. Top Company Industries of Employed Graduate Respondents



Note: Based on the responses of 987 graduate respondents whose primary status at the time of graduation was employed full- or part-time.

Salary

Of those who reported being employed at graduation, 94% had full-time employment (35+ hours per week). Nearly 40% of full-time employed students reported a salary in the \$50,001-\$70,000 range, followed by the \$30,001-\$50,000 range at 22%. Students with part-time employment were more likely to report earning below \$30,000 per year, at a rate of 66%.

Table 10. Full-Time and Part-Time Employed Graduate Salaries

Salary Range	Part-time (n = 50)	Full-time (n = 837)
Below \$30,000	66%	3%
\$30,001 - \$50,000	10%	22%
\$50,001 - \$70,000	18%	38%
\$70,001 - \$90,000	6%	18%
\$90,001 - \$125,000	0%	13%
Above \$125,000	0%	7%

Note: Results exclude "I prefer not to respond," "unpaid/stipend," and "commission only" only responses.

Career Related Experiential Learning

Graduate students were most likely to report engaging in an internship or practicum (36%), followed by a full-time job related to their career goals (31%). They were least likely to report engaging in cooperative education (3%) and leadership

positions in student organizations (6%). Furthermore, 22% of respondents reported not engaging in any of the experiences offered on the survey (see Table 11).

Table 11. Graduate Career Related Experiential Learning

<i>Experience</i>	
Internship/practicum/field experience/or field studies	36%
Full-time job related to my career goals	31%
Part-time job related to my career goals	14%
Research position	13%
On-campus job	12%
Study abroad	10%
Leadership position in student organization	6%
Cooperative education (Co-op)	3%
Did not have any of the above experiences	22%

Note: Percentages are based on total number of graduate respondents (n=1,351).

Career Resources and Services

Graduate respondents were asked to select the career resources and services they used while at Mason (see Table 12). The most commonly used resources for graduate respondents included networking with personal contacts (37%) and networking with faculty and/or staff (36%). Graduate students were least likely to report participating in career courses (5%) and the On-Campus Interview Program (6%).

Table 12. Career Resources and Services Used by Graduate Students

<i>Resources and Services</i>	
Networking with personal contacts (e.g., friends, family)	37%
Networking with faculty and/or staff	36%
Company, organization, or government agency websites	27%
Job postings distributed by my academic department	22%
HireMason listings	20%
Other	19%
Industry-specific or non-Mason related job boards	18%
Mason Career Fairs	17%
Networking with Mason alumni	15%
Career counseling/advising appointments	13%
Career workshops and events	10%
On-Campus Interview Program	6%
Career course(s)	5%

Note: Percentages are based on total number of graduate respondents (n=1,351).

Office of Institutional Assessment • George Mason University • 703.993.8834 • assessment@gmu.edu • <https://assessment.gmu.edu>

Stephanie Hazel	Acting Director, Institutional Assessment	shazel@gmu.edu	703.993.5106
Sarah Pérez-Kriz	Associate Director, Institutional Assessment	skriz@gmu.edu	703.993.8616
Zhicheng Zhang	Associate Director, Institutional Assessment	zzhang11@gmu.edu	703.993.5104
Nicole Long	Assessment Analyst	nlong3@gmu.edu	703.993.4267
Rawa Jassem	Applications Analyst & Web Developer	rjassem1@gmu.edu	703.993.8876
Karen Manley	Administrative & Communications Coordinator	kmanley@gmu.edu	703.993.8834