

## The University of Washington Survey of Bachelor Degree Recipients: Summary of Last Four Surveys

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In 1978, the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) of the University of Washington (UW) began annual surveys of its graduates at all degree levels. The optically scannable survey form was initially composed of items relating primarily to post-graduate activities of UW degree recipients (e.g., job title). After an agreement with the other baccalaureate degree granting public institutions in the State of Washington, additional questions relating to general educational outcomes were added. The 1989-90 graduating class was the first to receive the revised instrument. At the same time, a follow up letter was added to the mailing procedure, and OEA began conducting surveys on alternate years. All surveys have been conducted from nine months to one year after graduation.

An analysis of response rates, employment rates, job-characteristics, educational programs, and unemployment patterns of bachelor degree recipients from 1978 to 1993 was reported by Basson and Taggart.<sup>1</sup> They found that professional school students were more likely to be employed than Arts and Sciences students, who, in turn, were more likely to continue their education. Further, while the unemployment percentages decreased dramatically after 1987-88 to below 6%, they reported a trend toward fewer students employed in their career fields and more students reporting that they were underemployed.

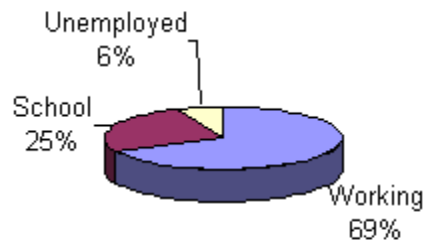
Gillmore reviewed bachelor degree recipient results from three survey years, the 1989-90 academic year and the 1991, and 1993 calendar years, to determine differences in outcomes and evaluative ratings by year, major and sex.<sup>2</sup> He found a significant increase over these years in how favorably ten of the fourteen learning outcomes items and four of the five evaluative items were rated. Significant differences in ratings on both types of items were found when comparing departments of majors. Differences between males and females were found for many of the items, but most of these differences disappeared when department of major was controlled by equating the number of male and female respondents from each.

The purpose of this report is to highlight bachelor degree recipient results from surveys covering the graduating classes of the 1989-90 academic year and the 1991, 1993, and 1995 calendar years. The response rates for these four groups were 53.6%, 48.3%, 46.7%, and 48.8%, and the total number of respondents was 2,737, 2,478, 2,606, and 2,975, respectively. About 60% of the respondents were graduates of the College of Arts and Sciences and about 40% were graduates of a professional school. Surveys were undeliverable to approximately 4% of the graduates each year.

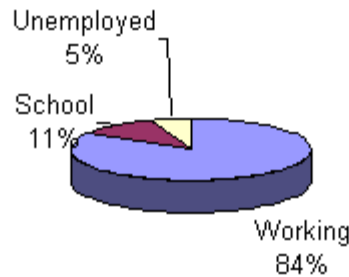
## Primary Activity

Former students were asked to choose one of three categories representing their current activity: *Working and not planning to attend school full time, Going to or awaiting going to school, or Unemployed*. The percentages for all four years exhibit remarkable stability. The percentage working is higher for Professional School graduates than for Arts and Sciences graduates, whereas the percentage continuing in school is higher for Arts and Sciences graduates.

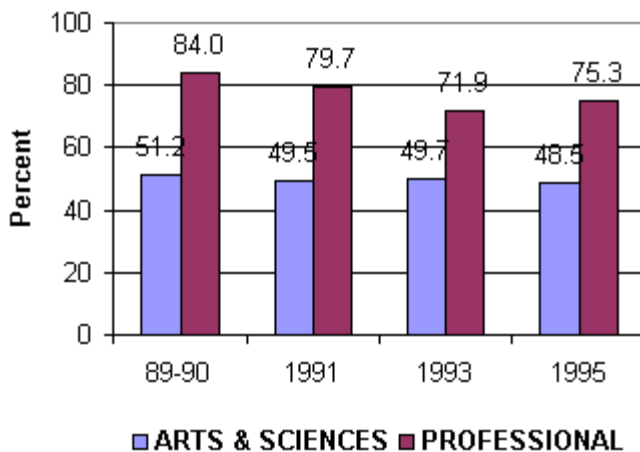
### ARTS & SCIENCES



### PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS



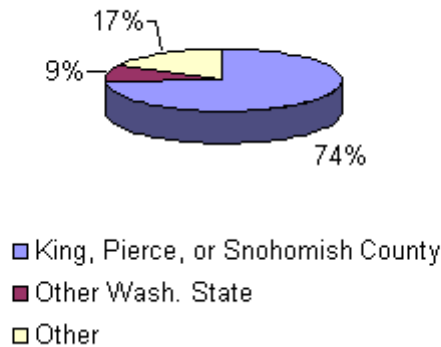
## Full-time, Career Area Jobs



Respondents who were primarily working were asked to choose one of five categories to characterize their job. Considering the percentage of graduates who chose full-time, career area (*Permanent* or *Will change*), one can see that about three-fourths of the Professional School graduates and one-half of the Arts and Sciences graduates land first jobs in their career areas. One can also see a trend downward in this percentage over the years of the surveys.

## Job Appropriate to Level of Training

Over the four surveys, 43.6% of the Arts and Sciences rated the demands of their job as at their level of preparation, while 67.2% of the professional students gave the same rating. There were only small differences among the years.

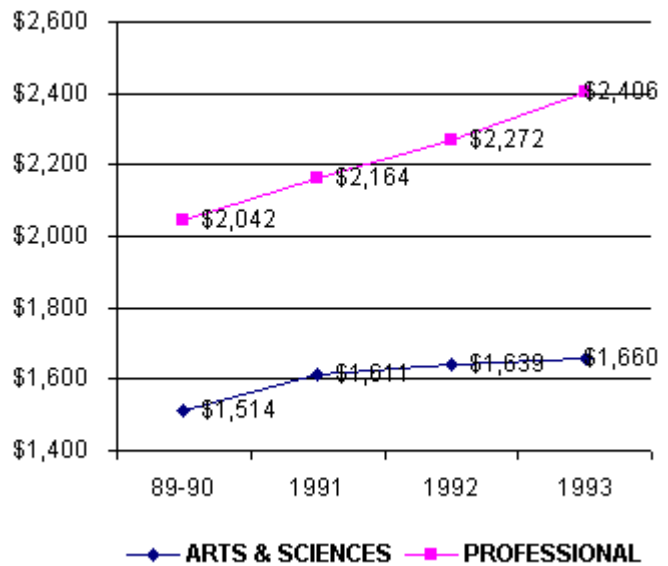


## Job Location

Both Professional School and Arts and Sciences graduates are predominantly employed in King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties. Fewer than 20% of the graduates left the State of Washington.

## Median Monthly Income (full-time workers only)

Former students were asked to specify their monthly income within ranges. Professional School graduates tend to earn higher salaries than do Arts and Sciences graduates, and, while the medians for both groups rose over the years of the survey, the discrepancy also increased.



Looking for work?	A&S	Prof.
Yes, career field only	18.3%	33.0%
Yes, any field	9.4%	10.7%
Yes, may be temporary	26.5%	20.3%
No, traveling, etc.	26.2%	21.3%
No, deciding what to do	10.7%	6.1%
No, not at present	8.9%	8.6%

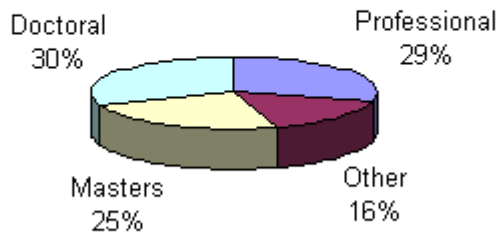
## Unemployment

Even though the unemployment rate is low (below 6%), it is interesting to see how those who were unemployed responded when asked if they were looking for work. Summed over the four years, a substantial percentage of those unemployed are not looking for work for various reasons. Thus, the true unemployment rate can be considered as even lower.

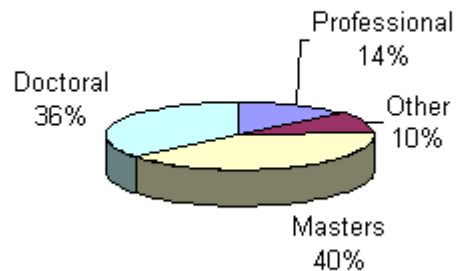
## Educational Program

Earlier we showed that a greater percentage of Arts and Sciences graduates than Professional School graduates continue their education. One can note that a higher percentage of Arts and Sciences graduates enroll in programs leading to professional degrees, while a higher percentage of professional school graduates enroll in terminal masters and doctoral programs.

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## General Education Outcomes and Evaluation Items

The back of the survey form contains nineteen items asking students to rate various aspects of their educational experience. The mean ratings of these items for each survey year are found in [Table 2](#).

The first set of items relates to learning outcomes. Graduates were asked to rate these fourteen items on the following basis:

*How satisfied are you with the University of Washington's contribution to your academic and/or personal growth in each of the following areas?*

The second set evaluates components of the UW educational program. Graduates were asked to rate these five items on the following basis:

*In general, how satisfied are you with your U. W. education with regard to each of the following:*

The response scale associated with both sets of items, and the associated numerical scale values used for calculating means, is as follows:

*Very (5); Mostly (4); Somewhat (3); Little (2); Not at all (1)*

In [Table 2](#), one can see variability across items and across years for both the outcome and the evaluative items. For the former, *Learning independently* is consistently rated highest and *Readiness for a career* is consistently rated lowest. (Professional school graduates give this item considerably higher ratings than Arts and Sciences graduates.) For the evaluative items, *Quality of instruction in your major field* is given the highest average ratings and *Assistance by faculty in pursuing your career* is given the lowest.

In the Table, the averages for the items that show increases over the four survey are highlighted. One can note evidence of improvement across a wide variety of areas, as ten of the fourteen general education outcomes items and all of the evaluative items are highlighted. Particularly gratifying is the steady rise in *Understanding differing philosophies and cultures*, which rose a full third of a scale point for 89-90 to '95, and the average of over 4.0 in 1995 survey for *Quality of instruction in your major field*. Areas showing essentially no improvement were in *Understanding scientific and quantitative principles and methods*, *Defining and solving problems* and *Readiness for a career*.

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<sup>1</sup> Basson, L. and Taggart, T. Graduate Survey 1978-93: Education, Employment, and Unemployment. **OEA Reports**, 95-3, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Gillmore, G. Expectations and Realities: A Comparison of Entering and Senior Student Responses to Parallel Items. **OEA Reports**, 96-4, 1996.