

Tracking Graduate Student Outcomes

Council of Graduate Schools
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Annual follow-up survey of new degree recipients

PhD +10 Project

Follow-up Survey

The methodology has evolved over time

Established infrastructure

- Have our own servers

- HTML and Perl programmers

- Email software

- Valuable resources

Each target population gets a survey customized to their degree level and broad field.

Survey instruments utilize question response branching or “build a survey”

There are no paper versions of the questionnaire

Promise:

Confidentiality (not anonymous)

No identifiable information

Secure data

To both the department and the degree recipient

FERPA (The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)

Directory information

Send formal letter outlining intent and
confidentially statement.

Send a FERPA law link

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

Population survey

Class of 2009

Physics Master's 838

Physics PhDs 1,554

~280 Departments

Astronomy Master's 29

Astronomy PhDs 141

Degree granting physics and astronomy departments

Long standing departmental relationships

The physics and astronomy community is our largest data user.

The information is used extensively

Career information

- Field of employment
- Salaries
- Postdoc issues
- Subfield mobility
- Skills

Other issues

- Time to degree
- Country of origin – leave US
- Satisfaction questions
- Many others

Time line

October : Request name and contact information
from the departments

February/March: Start contacting degree recipients

Pre-notice (email)

3 email invitations

Postal invitation

April: Start contacting Advisors

2 advisor email contacts

Advisor phone contact

Late May: Final email invitation

Dear <First Name> <Last Name> ,
<Institution Name>

Each year the American Institute of Physics conducts a follow-up study of recent PhD recipients. Our project goal is to accurately reflect the initial employment outcomes of physics and astronomy PhDs from the class of 2009-10 and to track changes in these initial outcomes over time.

Please take a few minutes to complete the form at the link below. The information we collect will serve as an important resource for current students, degree recipients, employers and faculty.

<https://aipsurveys.aip.org/cgi-bin/phdsurvey.pl?id=1212121212>

Your response will be kept confidential, and will only be published in aggregate form. If you have any questions or comments about the study, I would be happy to talk with you.

Thank you very much for your help with this important project. The link above will also lead you to our website where you can see the findings from previous follow-up studies.

Sincerely,
Patrick Mulvey
Lead Research Associate
American Institute of Physics
301-209-3076

PS. If you were not a recent PhD recipient in the class of 2009-10, please go to the link and check the appropriate box. We will update our records.

Advisor Contact

6 Quick questions they can answer

Subfield

Type of employment

Sector of employment and name of employer

Residing in or out of the US

Citizenship

Sex

Request for current contact information

Response rates

VS

Coverage rates

PhD +10 Project
Career Development Survey

Physics PhD Classes of:
1996, 1997, 2000, 2001

Currently in the field

2 huge challenges

Developing a Comprehensive Questionnaire

Finding Contact Information

Started with existing lists gathered for the follow-up survey.
Updated contact information from respondents.

Member Society membership lists

- Fast and inexpensive
- Skewed toward academe

Advisors

Not all advisors maintained contact with their advisee.

Update Postal Addresses

- Need an initial address
- Degree recipient needs to have filed a forwarding order with the post office.
- Time sensitive
- Inexpensive

Web Searches

- Very time consuming
 - 5-6 names per hour
 - Numerous resources
- False matches
- Skewed toward academe

Utilization of Classmates

- Very labor intensive, “hints”
- Left the country
- Deceased
- Name change

Results

- Different approaches yielded different gains
- Currently ~35% coverage rate
- Efforts are ongoing

Going forward we will conduct an annual address update.

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