

Research Reports

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What Happens to BSU Graduates? A Survey of 1992-93 and 1993-94 Completers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to report on the findings of a survey of 1992-93 and 1993-94 BSU graduates on what these students were doing following graduation and how well prepared they were to do it. Taken as a whole, these results indicate that BSU graduates have found value for the time and effort they spent on an education. Most were gainfully employed and had been since shortly after graduation. A large majority were using the skills they gained at BSU in their work. Those who had continued their education agreed they were adequately prepared to do so. Highlights of the report include:

- Most graduates were working. Only 3% reported they were unemployed and seeking employment.
- Over half of graduates had a job at the point of graduation, and 78% were employed within three months of graduation.
- Most (87%) of graduates reported using skills acquired at BSU either frequently or occasionally in their work.
- Almost half of graduates were earning salaries over \$25,000.
- Most (80%) graduates plan to continue their education.
- Of those continuing their education, 94% felt they were adequately, more than adequately, or exceptionally well prepared.
- About 95% of those who have taken licensure examinations report passing.

People go to college for many reasons. In the 1980s, however, and on into the 1990s, many students invested their time and money in college because they believed it would pay off in terms of better jobs and more money. A national survey of Fall 1994 freshmen, for example, found that the most frequently stated reason for attending college was to be able to get a better job (chosen by 77%), followed by being able to

learn more about things that interested them (chosen by 73%) and being able to make more money (chosen by 72%). There have been increasing numbers of anecdotal reports, however, that college graduates can't find jobs... that college graduates are paid so little they can't afford to pay off their student loans.. that college graduates

are ill-prepared for the workplace or for graduate study. Decision makers have begun to ask, “If these things are true, what is the value of a college education?”

The purpose of this study is to report on the findings of a survey of 1992-93 and 1993-94 BSU graduates on what these students were doing following graduation and how well prepared they were to do it. Results can be used to respond to some of the current criticisms of higher education, when unjustified, and to consider changes, when appropriate. The results are based on the responses of about 43% of the graduates in these two years. Details of the study, including a copy of the full survey, can be found in Appendix A. Note that College of Technology graduates have been divided into two categories: Applied Technology and Engineering Technology (consisting of all bachelors’ and masters’ degree recipients).

What Are Graduates Currently Doing?

The largest group of graduates (49%) were working full-time and not continuing their education. A sizeable percentage (25%), however, were both working and continuing their education. Very few (3%) were unemployed and seeking employment.

There were strong differences depending on the college from which the student graduated. For example, 69% of business graduates were employed full-time and not continuing their education and 15% were pursuing further education. By comparison, 25% of Arts and Sciences graduates were employed full-time without continuing their education while 40% were continuing their education. Education graduates were most likely to be working and continuing their education with 43% falling into this category. See Table 1 for more details. (All tables found here)

How Long Did Graduates Need To Find Their First Job?

As shown by Table 2, a majority (51%) of graduates were already employed (24%) or obtained their first full-time job prior to graduation (27%). An additional 27% had a job within three months of graduating. College of Technology bachelors’ and masters’ graduates were especially likely to be working in a job they kept after graduating; half fit this category. Health Sciences and Applied Technology graduates were most likely to have a new job before they graduated. Education graduates seemed to take the longest time to find employment, perhaps because of the annual hiring cycle.

Have Graduates Found Their Education To be Helpful On The Job?

Over half (57%) of graduates reported that they frequently used the skills they had acquired at BSU on the job, while 87% used them either frequently or occasionally. Only 7% reported they did not use their BSU skills at all. By college, Health Science graduates were most likely to report that they used their skills frequently (76%) and Social Sciences and Public Affairs graduates were least likely (43% used their skills frequently). These findings are undoubtedly due to the specificity of training received (i.e., most Health Science graduates have trained for a very specific job). See Table 3 for full results.

Of those who indicated they had received special certification or training, 85% were using it in

their jobs. Again, Health Sciences graduates were most likely to be using the special training. (See Table 4.)

Graduates who already had jobs at graduation were asked if their work responsibilities had changed; 62% indicated that they had received promotions or additional responsibilities as a result of the training they had received at BSU. This was especially true of Health Sciences and College of Technology (bachelors' and masters') graduates. See Table 5.

What Salaries Do Graduates Make?

Two to three years after graduation, slightly less than half (48%) had salaries over \$25,000. It was not surprising to find that the average salary varied greatly depending upon the college from which the student graduated. The modal salary range was highest for College of Technology graduates (\$50,000 and above) and lowest for Arts and Sciences graduates (under \$15,000). These findings are at least partially due to the amount of time that has elapsed since graduation; economic studies have shown that salaries for Arts and Sciences graduates will climb after additional years in the job market. In addition, many Arts and Science graduates were continuing their education. See Table 6 for further details.

Do Graduates Plan To Continue Their Education?

As shown by Table 7, fewer than 20% of graduates indicated that their current degree was the highest one they planned to obtain. Only in Applied Technology (which consists of diploma, certificate, and associate degree programs) did the largest group of graduates indicate that they expected to remain at their current educational level. In every other college, the modal group indicated that they planned to obtain master's degrees. Overall, almost half of graduates planned to get a master's degree.

In fact, 20% of graduates indicated that they had already applied for admission to another program (see Table 8) and 36% had already taken additional course work since graduation (see Table 9). Arts and Sciences graduates and Education graduates were particularly likely to be continuing their education. At least half of each group had taken more courses.

Graduates who indicated that they had taken additional courses since graduation were asked if they felt they were prepared to continue their education. Half of the graduates felt they were more than adequately prepared to continue, and only 6% felt they were less than adequately prepared. The remainder (44%) felt they were adequately prepared. Graduates from Arts and Sciences and from Social Sciences and Public Affairs were more likely to feel unprepared, but in each case only about 10% felt that way. See Table 10 for full details.

Do Graduates Pass Required Licensure Or Certification Examinations?

Slightly over 20% of graduates indicated they had received special certification or training in an endorsement area at BSU (see Table 11). This was particularly true for College of Education graduates (52%) and Applied Technology (40%). About 95% of this special group indicated that they had passed the examination. The only college with less than a 90% pass rate was Business where 67% indicated they had tested and passed to date. This is probably due to the extended

period needed to become a CPA (certified public accountant). See Table 12 for full details.

CONCLUSIONS

Taken as a whole, these results indicate that BSU graduates have found value for the time and effort they spent on an education. Most were gainfully employed and had been since shortly after graduation. A large majority were using the skills they gained at BSU in their work. Those who had continued their education agreed they were adequately prepared to do so.

In addition, a majority of graduates planned to continue their education beyond their current degree. It was unclear whether this further education was motivated by love of learning, an upward mobility, job requirements or some complex combination of factors. Clearly, however, learning did not stop for BSU graduates upon receipt of the diploma, and BSU administrators and staff should assume that they may be seeing their graduates again since most have remained in the local area.

Future reports will explore how satisfied graduates were with the services and education they received at BSU, what skills they thought were particularly important to develop and BSU's impact on their development, their perception of their major department, and their advice to improve the educational experience at the University.

APPENDIX A SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The follow-up of graduates is a process implemented this year to provide information to departments, colleges, and university administrators on the success of BSU graduates and their perceptions of their BSU experience.

The process will take place every other year and will include all graduates from the prior two years. This year, graduates from 1992-93 and 1993-94 were surveyed.

The process began in April with a review of several surveys that were already available (including the BSU survey administered in 1992). These were presented at the Deans' Council in May along with the request to notify the Coordinator of any particular data needs. A draft survey was then developed and distributed to Deans and Associate Deans for review. By mid-June, a finalized survey was ready for printing and mailing.

The survey was mailed the last of June along with a cover letter from BSU President, Charles Ruch, using addresses from an alumni file maintained by the Office of University Relations. In early August, a follow-up letter from the Coordinator of Institutional Assessment was sent. This was followed with a reminder postcard several weeks later.

As shown below, based on the number of correct addresses, the response rate was 43%.

<i>Number of Surveys Mailed:</i>	3,358
<i>Number returned due to Incorrect Information</i>	7
<i>Number of Surveys Returned:</i>	1,146
<i>Percentage of Delivered Surveys Returned-</i>	43%

The response rate differed depending on the College and program from which students received their degree. Only 29% of students in Applied Technology programs responded.

The response rate for the other colleges ranged from 42% to 49%. See Table 13 for details.

This pattern of return indicates that some colleges and programs are over-represented in the general results. No attempt was made, however, to weight the responses, and findings are reported in simple percentages of the total number of responses.