



A partnership among Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Johnson College, Keystone College, King's College, Lackawanna College, Luzerne County Community College, Marywood University, Misericordia University, Penn State Scranton, Penn State Wilkes-Barre, The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education, University of Scranton, and Wilkes University

The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development (The Institute) launched a polling program in 2014. The Institute regularly polls students at its partnering higher education institutions. These polling and survey research services are part of The Institute's menu of services offered to all types of clients.

This 2019 poll assesses students' opinions about the region and their post graduation plans. A total of 1,512 students participated in this poll. Students from all class years, a variety of majors, and part-time and graduate students are well-represented in the data. The poll is distributed online through our academic partners. The data was collected during the month of February 2019.

Students from NEPA are likely to stay in NEPA, others may not be. Students who intend to remain in the region after graduation are likelier than average to assign higher value to a location's proximity to family and its suitability to raise a family, but are less likely to value the availability of housing options, close proximity of friends, and diversity or inclusiveness. Conversely, students who plan to depart the area after graduation are likelier than average to value the availability of housing options and both diversity and inclusiveness, while downplaying proximity to family, suitability for raising families, and the proximity to friends.

When evaluating job opportunities and where to seek employment, students want to apply what they've learned. In every post-graduation

poll conducted since 2015, students have been asked about their intention to seek employment in Northeastern Pennsylvania after graduation. From 2015 to 2017, students' answer choices were limited to three options: Yes, No, and Not Sure. Since 2018, students have been asked how likely they are to "locate or seek employment in Northeastern Pennsylvania," the response set was altered to include a four-pronged Likert scale of likelihood: Very Likely, Somewhat Likely, Not Very Likely, and Not at All Likely.

If Yes from 2015 to 2017 polls is interpreted to be equivalent to "Likely" from 2018, and No from 2015 to 2017 polls to be equivalent to "Not Likely," responses to the question over the last five years can be analyzed, with the proviso that, as recent iterations of the question lack a *not sure* option, likelihood and decisions may measure separate constructs. Despite that inconsistency, a trend analysis of student polls without the "Not Sure" option of earlier polls has also been included below.



"The responses to this poll indicate that many of the students (local and non-local) don't have the information needed to show incredible job and economic opportunity in the region. This is an opportunity for the community at-large to engage with higher education and share information with these students.

Patrick F. Leahy, Ed.D., President, Wilkes University

Completion of a regional internship may induce students to remain in the region after graduation.

Approximately 82 percent of students who intend to remain in Northeastern Pennsylvania after graduation have completed an internship in the region, compared to 45 percent of students who are likely to depart after receiving their degrees. While no formal causal connection between these two variables can be inferred, a strong connection exists between them.

| NEPA Internship by Likelihood of Post-Graduation Relocation | Likely to Stay in NEPA | Unlikely to Stay in NEPA |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Yes (completed internship in NEPA) | 123 (81.5%) | 89 (45.4%) |
| No (did not complete internship in NEPA) | 28 (18.5%) | 107 (54.6%) |
| TOTAL | 151 | 196 |



“The Northeastern Pennsylvania College Student Poll continues to be an important channel of information vital to our region’s leaders and employers. Graduates of our local colleges and universities are essential for the region’s economic growth. The report from The Institute for Public Policy and Economic Development is a valuable reference document for Penn State Wilkes-Barre.”

“Dale Jones, Ph.D., Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer, Penn State Wilkes-Barre

Students feel their education has prepared them for their careers.

The majority of respondents to the most recent poll felt prepared for their intended careers. In 2019, the percentage of students who felt that their college education prepared them either very well or somewhat well for their intended career paths was just above 70 percent. This finding has been consistent in all post-graduate polls; the rate of these two responses has never dropped below 70 percent.

How well do you think that your college or graduate school education has prepared you for the career you intend to pursue?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|
| Very well | 525 | 38% |
| Somewhat well | 454 | 33% |
| Adequately | 295 | 21% |
| Somewhat poorly | 44 | 3% |
| Very poorly | 17 | 1% |
| Not sure | 40 | 3% |
| Total | 1375 | |

Internships continue to be highly valued by students. In the 2019 year poll, over 70 percent of respondents had either *completed* or *planned to complete an internship before graduation*. Although this is a significant portion of respondents, it has decreased from previous polling years. In the 2015 to 2018 polls, over 75 percent of students responded with either *completed* or *plan to complete an internship before graduation*.



“ We appreciate the good work of The Institute which helps us hear the voice of our students and shed light on their expectations. Jobs are key to our graduates. Having our fine colleges and universities align our academic programs with regional market needs, and train our students to meet employers’ needs are key to help our students stay in the region while meeting employers expectations.”
Marwan A. Wafa, Chancellor, Penn State Scranton

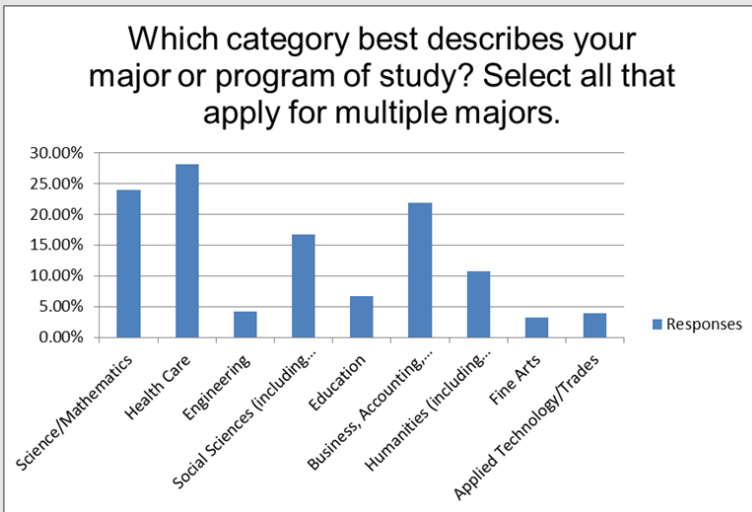


“The results of this study should have a twofold impact on the institutions of higher education in Northeast Pennsylvania. In spite of the challenges we all face every day, the responses are generally positive and point to progress in providing intelligent, young employees who are more than adequately prepared to enter the workforce in the region and beyond. This encouragement must be coupled with a compelling desire to continue working together to maximize the potential of our students in order to influence the development of a flourishing regional culture that models hard work, strong moral citizenship, and responsibility in all areas and sectors of our society. We do well individually; collectively we will affect the change we need in business, industry, health care, education, the environment, and the humanities.”
Sister Mary Persico, IHM, Ed.D., President
Marywood University

Students may be less anxious about finding a job now than they were in 2015. In each poll, students have been asked to indicate their level of anxiety about finding a job after graduation. Every year a majority of students have selected either *extremely* or *somewhat anxious*. This majority has declined slightly each year, however, with just under 51 percent selecting one of the top two levels of anxiety in 2019.

Attending graduate school remains important to students. Over half of all respondents in 2019 responded either *yes*, they plan on attending graduate school or that they are *already in a graduate or professional school*. This has remained consistent over each year of post-graduation polling (2015-2018). The percent of *yes* responses has decreased; however, this is probably due to the addition of the *already in a graduate or professional school* option. This new option still highlights that students find graduate school to be an important next step.

Major Area of Study of the Poll Respondents



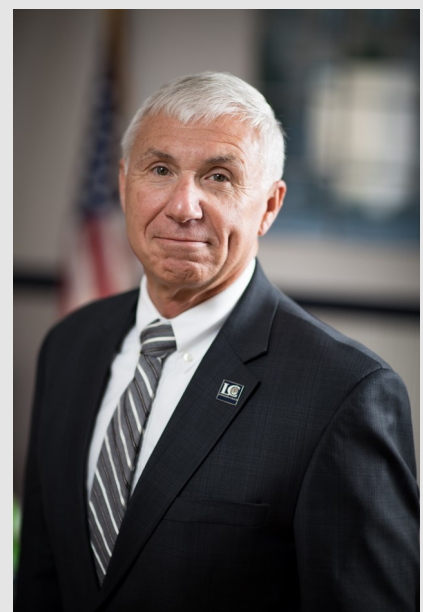
“The information provided by The Institute of Public Policy and Economic Development through polls like this gives tremendous insight into the plans, aspirations and goals of our students and graduates. That information is essential to ensure we remain focused on our students’ needs as well as the needs of the regional businesses and communities we serve.”

Mark Volk Ed.D., President, Lackawanna College

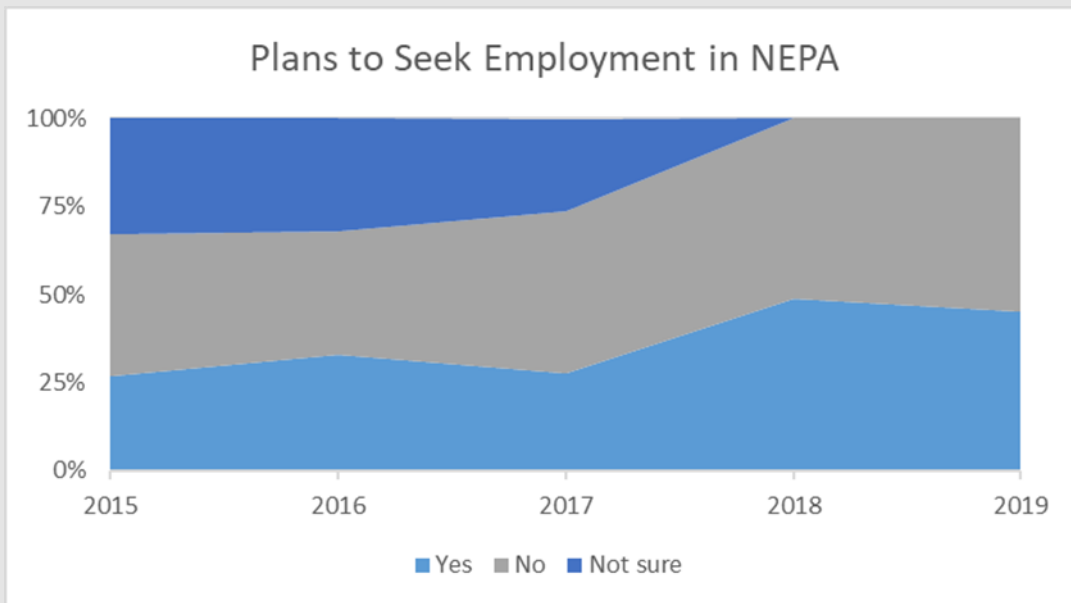
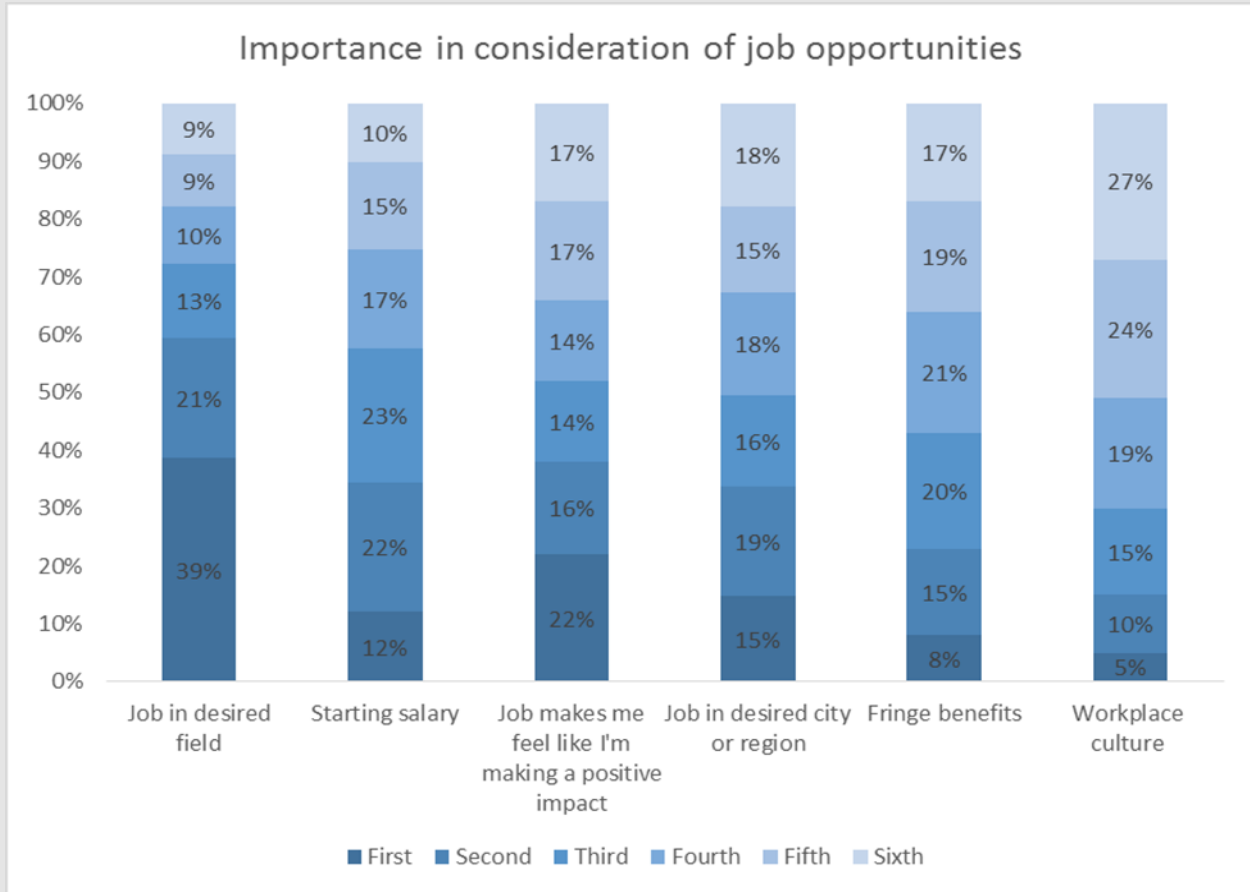


“Although the connection isn’t definitive, the report suggests that there is a link between offering relevant, engaging internships in our region and a student’s desire to remain in our region after graduation. I encourage both established and emerging businesses in Northeast Pennsylvania to continue to think creatively about the internship opportunities offered to area college students. Faculty and career professionals, such as those in Misericordia’s Insalaco Center for Career Development, are available to help match your internship needs with the amazing and developing talents of our students.”

Thomas J. Botzman, Ph.D., President, Misericordia University



Considerations in Job Opportunities. Respondents were asked to rank six factors they may consider when evaluating a job opportunity. The assigned rankings were 1 through 6, one indicating the *most important*, and six, the *least important*. The factors, with their weighted averages, include *the job being in their desired field* (4.5), *starting salary* (3.7) *feeling as though they are making a positive impact* (3.6), *location in a desired region* (3.5), *fringe benefits* (3.2), and *workplace culture* (2.7). The full distribution of these rankings are shown below, where the bars show the within-category distribution of



Perspectives on the Region—Economy

Respondents were asked to endorse one of a series of statements regarding Northeastern Pennsylvania’s economy in relation to the United States as a whole. Nearly 25 percent of respondents suggested feeling that the condition of Northeast Pennsylvania was *about the same as the United States* as a whole, while 47 percent endorsed some level of belief that the economy of Northeast Pennsylvania was in *worse* condition than the United States as a whole.

Perspectives on the Region—Quality of Life

Respondents were also asked to endorse one of a series of statements related to the quality of life in Northeastern Pennsylvania compared to the United States as a whole. Just over 41 percent of respondents indicated feeling that the quality of life in Northeastern Pennsylvania is either *somewhat* or *much worse* than the United States as a whole. However, 47 percent of respondents suggested feeling that one of the three middle categories were most accurate (*somewhat better, about the*

Which of the following best describes your perception of the economy of Northeastern Pennsylvania compared with the economy of the United States as a whole

| | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|
| Much better than that of the United States | 7 | 60% |
| Somewhat better than that of the United States | 911 | 8% |
| About the same as that of the United States | 291 | 25% |
| Somewhat worse than that of the United States | 442 | 37% |
| Much worse than that of the United States | 112 | 9% |
| Not sure | 243 | 21% |

Which of the following best describes your perception of the overall quality of life in northeastern Pennsylvania compared with the quality of life in the United States as a whole

| | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|
| Much better than that of the United States | 25 | 2% |
| Somewhat better than that of the United States | 175 | 15% |
| About the same as that of the United States | 355 | 30% |
| Somewhat worse than that of the United States | 376 | 32% |
| Much worse than that of the United States | 115 | 10% |
| Not sure | 138 | 12% |



“The Institute’s surveys of college and university students in Northeastern Pennsylvania provide important information to the region’s stakeholders. I was pleased to see in the 2019 survey of college students’ post-graduation plans, that the vast majority felt their education prepared them for their chosen careers and that more than half planned to continue their education in graduate school. I was also pleased to see jobs where graduates feel they are ‘making a positive impact’ was the third-highest weighted consideration for employment. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, Scranton provides a values-based education that includes the Magis, or the restless desire to do more grounded in gratitude and the formation of “men and women for others.”
Rev. Scott Pillarz, S.J. President, The University of Scranton

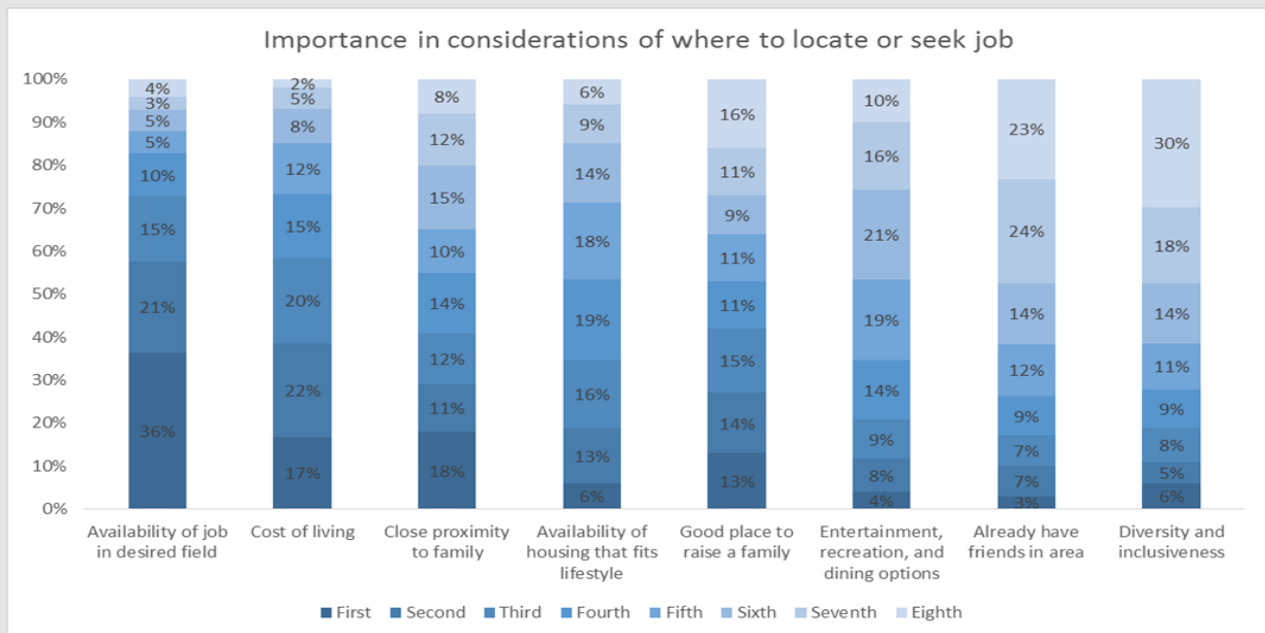
Considerations in Locating and Job Seeking. Participants were then asked to rank a list of characteristics and features they would consider when deciding where to locate or seek employment after graduation. A total of 1,096 individuals responded (73 percent), and 405 individuals (27 percent) did not. Students were presented with eight options: (1) Diversity and Inclusiveness; (2) Availability of Jobs in My Desired Field; (3) Close Proximity to My Family; (4) Already Have Friends in the Area; (5) Entertainment, Recreation, and Dining Options; (6) Cost of Living; (7) Good Place to Raise a Family; and (8) Availability of Housing Options That Fit My Lifestyle. Items were ranked from first (most important) to eighth (least important). On average, the availability of jobs in students' desired fields was their most important consideration, with the highest weighted average (6.23), and the highest number of respondents ranking it first in priority (377 students, or 35.6 percent). Conversely, students seemed least concerned by diversity and inclusiveness, which earned the lowest weighted average (3.24), as well as the highest number of students ranking it last



“As NEPA collectively strives to generate a strategic plan to become a thriving career and living destination, The Institute’s Spring Student Poll is an undeniable resource tool. Clearly, students of our region’s academic institutions are thoughtful about and 'in touch' with mainstream determinants of career and living location choices. It’s great to see their inclusive commitment to healthcare workforce renewal. As a healthcare services and workforce development organization, The Wright Center for Community Health and its affiliated entity, The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education, responsively strive to become an optimal employer that generates opportunities for meaningful contributions and career ad-

vancement for all team members. Inspiring internships in partnership with our regional academic institutions and our new 'Hometown Scholars' Program in partnership with A.T. Still University School of Osteopathic Medicine in Arizona are testimonials of our commitment to emerging healthcare workforce engagement and retention.”

Dr. Linda Thomas-Hemak, President & CEO, The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education





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The Institute – *Turning Information into Insight*

What We Believe

At The Institute, we believe that empowering leaders with the research-based strategies and solutions they need to make informed decisions will lead to a stronger economy and a better quality of life for residents. For over a decade, The Institute has worked behind the scenes to support initiatives that advance regional competitiveness and revitalize communities.

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