

RESEARCH BRIEF



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TRENDS IN GRADUATE EDUCATION FOR UNCG BACCALAUREATE DEGREE HOLDERS PART TWO: WHAT ARE THEY STUDYING?

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SUMMARY

Building on our prior brief *Trends In Graduate Education For UNCG Baccalaureate Degree Holders Part One: Where Are They Studying*, we re-examined the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data for the cohort of baccalaureate degree recipients from the 2006-07 academic year to 2015-16 to see what programs our graduates enrolled in when they entered graduate school. Looking only at the ten most populous UNCG majors over the past ten years, we found that 90.6% of Nursing graduates and 55.6% of Public Health graduates, who pursued a graduate program within six years of completing their undergraduate studies at UNCG, opted for programs within the Health Professions field. Additionally, 64% of Business Administration graduates and 75.2% of Elementary Education graduates enrolled in graduate programs related to their undergraduate degree. However, a larger proportion of graduate program enrollees from Communication Studies, English, and Sociology enrolled in programs unrelated to their undergraduate degree than enrolled in related programs.

DATA

For this study we started with the same dataset as described in [Brief 1](#): “The master population for this study contained 27,280 bachelor’s graduates (one degree per student) from the 2006-07 academic year to 2015-16. From this population we chose only those graduates from the ten most populous bachelor’s degree majors at UNCG: Business Administration (BADM), Nursing (NURS), Psychology (PSYC), Elementary Education (ELED), Biology (BIOL), Communication Studies (CMST), Human Development/Family Studies (HDFS), English (ENGL), Public Health Education (PHTH), and Sociology (SOC). This cohort of 12,347 graduates was submitted to the NSC. Of these, 2,785 records were returned from the NSC indicating post-graduate enrollment in a master’s/doctoral program, had enough data to identify if the student enrolled in a graduate program within six years of graduation, where that graduate’s enrollment was, and into what program the student enrolled. The majors used in this study are those as recorded in BANNER and reflect the undergraduate major.”

METHODOLOGY

To create subsequent enrollment records, we used the NSC Detail Report showing the earliest term that a student was enrolled in what would be their first reported master’s or doctoral program. We were only interested in degrees, not certificates or specialist programs so those were eliminated. Due to the non-standard nature of the major names provided by the NSC, we standardized the majors as best we could into 2-digit CIP code categories. For a small number of records, there was a major provided, but the meaning was unclear. Those are marked as ‘undefined’ in the table below. To simplify the analysis, we present only the five most reported enrolled CIP areas for each of the ten bachelor’s degree groups. We do not report on CIP areas with no graduates in the target majors. Although we reported statistics on only the top five enrollment CIP areas, we still accounted for 83.1% of all graduates in the sample.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the distribution of subsequent enrollment records within the set of CIP areas that represent the enrollment major. Row and column summary counts and percents are shown at the bottom and on the right of the table. The ten bachelor’s degree majors that are the focus of this brief are shown as columns, while the CIP areas that contain the enrolled post-bachelor’s majors are shown as rows. Reading the BADM (Business Management bachelor’s degree holders) column of Table 1, the very bottom of the table shows that there were a total of 300 bachelor’s graduates in the BADM group. The next row up shows that 262 of those 300 degree holders enrolled in the five most

popular CIP areas for that degree: Business Management, etc., Undefined, Education (tied with Legal Professions), and Health Professions. The green cell in this column indicates the CIP area with the largest enrollment for that column. For example, the 192 degree holders that enrolled in a Business Management, etc. CIP area program represent 64% of the BADM degree holders.

Table 1: Distribution of Enrollments into CIP areas for UNCG Bachelor's Graduates from Our Top Ten Majors over the Past 10 Years

CIP Area of Graduate Enrollment	BADM (% of BADM Grads in All CIP Areas)	BIOL (% of BIOL Grads in All CIP Areas)	CMST (% of CMST Grads in All CIP Areas)	ELED (% of ELED Grads in All CIP Areas)	ENGL (% of ENGL Grads in All CIP Areas)	HDFS (% of HDFS Grads in All CIP Areas)	NURS (% of NURS Grads in All CIP Areas)	PHTH (% of PHTH Grads in All CIP Areas)	PSYC (% of PSYC Grads in All CIP Areas)	SOCI (% of SOCI Grads in All CIP Areas)		CIP Area Count for Top Ten Majors	CIP Area Row Total for All Majors
BIOLOGICAL AND BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES		53 (20.7%)										53 (82.8%)	64
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, MARKETING, AND RELATED SUPPORT SERVICES	192 (64.0%)	16 (6.3%)	29 (18.0%)	7 (4.1%)			4 (1.0%)	19 (6.8%)				267 (75.4%)	341
COMMUNICATION, JOURNALISM AND RELATED PROGRAMS			31 (19.3%)									31 (60.8%)	51
EDUCATION	17 (5.7%)	11 (4.3%)	27 (16.8%)	127 (75.2%)	59 (22.3%)	91 (33.7%)		16 (5.7%)	39 (9.2%)	29 (12.7%)		416 (99.8%)	417
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE/LETTERS					64 (24.1%)							64 (95.5%)	67
FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES/HUMAN SCIENCES						25 (9.1%)						25 (50.0%)	50
HEALTH PROFESSIONS AND RELATED PROGRAMS	15 (5.0%)	123 (48.0%)	13 (8.1%)			30 (11.0%)	392 (90.6%)	155 (55.6%)	47 (11.1%)	22 (9.6%)		797 (98.5%)	809
HOMELAND SECURITY, LAW ENFORCEMENT, FIREFIGHTING AND RELATED PROTECTIVE SERVICES										23 (10.0%)		23 (65.7%)	35
LEGAL PROFESSIONS AND STUDIES	17 (5.7%)				17 (6.4%)							34 (53.1%)	64
LIBRARY SCIENCE				9 (5.3%)	30 (11.3%)							39 (72.2%)	54
PSYCHOLOGY				5 (3.0%)		43 (15.8%)	1 (0.2%)		133 (31.4%)			182 (78.4%)	232
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES PROFESSIONS						31 (11.4%)		18 (6.5%)	69 (16.3%)	26 (11.4%)		144 (84.7%)	170
SOCIAL SCIENCES										38 (16.6%)		38 (70.4%)	54
THEOLOGY							1 (0.2%)					1 (3.8%)	26
UNDEFINED	21 (7.0%)	32 (12.5%)	15 (9.3%)	10 (5.9%)	20 (7.6%)		28 (6.5%)	32 (11.5%)	41 (9.7%)			199 (83.6%)	238
GRADS NOT IN THE TOP FIVE CIP COUNTS	38 (12.7%)	21 (8.2%)	46 (28.6%)	11 (6.5%)	75 (28.3%)	52 (19.1%)	5 (0.0%)	39 (13.9%)	94 (22.2%)	91 (39.7%)	SubTotal	2,313	2,672
											Grads in majors/CIP areas not included in counts	472	113
# (%) of Bach grads enrolled in top 5 CIP areas within six years	262 (87.3%)	235 (91.8%)	115 (71.4%)	158 (93.5%)	190 (71.7%)	220 (80.9%)	426 (98.8%)	240 (86.0%)	329 (77.8%)	138 (60.3%)	2,313 (83.1%)	2,785	2,785
# (%) of Bach grads enrolled in any graduate program within six years	300 (12.7%)	256 (24.5%)	161 (16.1%)	169 (14.1%)	265 (27.1%)	272 (27.3%)	431 (27.8%)	279 (30.0%)	423 (30.3%)	229 (25.5%)	2,785 (22.6%)		

Cells in green indicate the major with the most common major within each CIP area.

Includes only degrees. Certificates and Specialist credentials are not included. However, post-docs are included in case the Clearinghouse missed the terminal degree.

All graduates shown enrolled in a Masters/Doctoral program within 6 years of graduating from UNCG with a bachelor's degree. The last bachelor's cohort for which this is possible is the 2015-2016 cohort.

DISCUSSION

Nursing degree holders exhibit the highest congruence in enrollment, with approximately 91% opting for a Health-Related CIP area program. This trend is followed by Elementary Education (75.2%), BADM (64.0%), Public Health (55.6%), Biology (48.0%), Human Development (33.7%), English (24.1%), Communication Studies (19.3%), and Sociology (16.6%). It is not surprising that holders of degrees in Business, Biology, Education, and Nursing tend to enroll in related graduate programs. However, it is noteworthy that only about 31% of Psychology degree holders pursue Psychology graduate programs categorized under the Psychology CIP code 42.00 to 42.99. Many of these students instead opt for psychology-related health programs within the CIP for Health Professions and Related Programs. Examples include Mental and Social Health Services (CIP 51.15; 47 students) and Public Administration and Social Service, which includes social work and related areas (CIP 44.07; 69 students). Given the breadth in which we were forced to report CIP area groupings, many of the major areas we report here may appear to place graduates in different, but reasonably-related CIP areas. For example, only about 21% of Biology graduates enrolled in Biological Sciences CIP programs, while 48% enrolled in Health Professions and Related Programs. These biology graduates likely entered a medical-related program in this CIP family, a reasonable choice for a biology graduate.

However, other graduates in major areas such as Sociology, English, and Communication Studies tended not to enroll in areas associated with their degree CIP code. For instance, roughly 50% of English graduates enrolled in either an Education program or a program that was not a member of the English, Education, or Library Science CIP categories. This would suggest that either these degree programs support a diversity of interest in graduate programming or, undergraduates with these degrees had difficulty translating their undergraduate degree into satisfying employment and sought to retool within a different program area.

We hope this study will provide new ideas for the use of Clearinghouse data. We do not believe that UNCG has ever utilized NCS data to this degree when analyzing graduate program trends. It is noted that NSC data are imperfect records of such data. However, continued scrutiny of these data can lead us to develop processes that can make the data easier to deal so that regular reporting can be provided. One possible outcome would be a dashboard that allows a user to breakout graduate enrollment patterns both within and outside of UNCG. In the past, if departments had been curious about the further academic careers of their graduates, the only other option for data collection was an alumni survey. Our experience with such exercises tells us that the return on the investment is not worth the effort. The Clearinghouse, as imperfect as it is, offers a tremendous advantage over any university-sponsored data collection effort.

If you have questions or comments about this brief, please contact: Mark Davenport at M_Davenport@uncg.edu

REFERENCES

National Student Clearinghouse (2023) <https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/about/>