



Wisdom to make a difference.

*Office of Institutional Research and Assessment*

## **Class of 2015 Survey**

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In April-August, 2016, Keene State College surveyed alumni who received bachelor's degrees in fiscal year 2015. The primary purposes of the survey were to determine how many recent graduates are employed or pursuing further education, and whether their employment or further education is related to their undergraduate studies at KSC. In April, alumni received an initial e-mail invitation to complete an online version of the survey followed by four weekly follow-up reminders sent to non-responders. A \$100 check awarded to a randomly selected participant served as the incentive for participation in the online survey. During August, remaining non-responders were contacted by phone and asked to complete an abbreviated version of the survey.

There were 1067 unduplicated bachelor's degree recipients in fiscal year 2015, and the College had valid contact information with permission for email contacts on 651 of these (61% of the class). Email survey invitations were sent to these 651 alumni, and usable responses were received from 236 respondents, for an initial overall response rate of 36%. An additional 112 alumni responded to the follow-up phone survey. Altogether, 348 alumni participated in the survey, for an overall response rate of 53%, which is an exceptionally high rate for an alumni survey.

Alumni surveys about employment and further education tend to draw a disproportionate number of responses from those who are employed or accepted to graduate school. To combat this problem, each of the messages about the survey indicated that KSC was interested in hearing how things are going for these alumni, even if life after college was not going as planned. Then in data analysis, characteristics and responses of those reached by phone in the second phase of the study (the original non-responders) were compared to the earlier online responses. The percentage of students in each sample employed or in graduate school, and those employed in their field, were statistically indistinguishable.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

- Overall, findings were similar to previous years. One year post graduation, respondents were typically either employed or in graduate study, and most said that their KSC education had prepared them well for what they are doing now. These findings have been consistent since KSC began conducting this survey.
- Alumni continue to view their KSC education positively; 87% of respondents indicated that they would recommend KSC to friends and siblings, and 87% reported that they were satisfied with their KSC Education.
- One year after graduation, 95% of the respondents are either employed or engaged in graduate education.
- Eighty-nine percent of the respondents reported that they are employed; 7% indicated that they are

not employed by choice (for example, to care for family members or enroll in graduate study), and the remaining 4% reported that they are unemployed and seeking work. This unemployment level is somewhat higher than the 2.8% rate obtained for the Class of 2014, and the current unemployment rates for New Hampshire (2.8%), Vermont (3.2%), and Maine (3.7%), but is comparable to the rates of Massachusetts (4.2%), and New York (4.7%).

- Among the employed respondents, 76% reported that their current position is closely related or somewhat related to their studies at KSC; of these, 82% reported that KSC had prepared them well or very well for their current work.
- Twenty-four percent of the respondents reported that they had enrolled in one or more graduate education programs at some point after graduating from Keene State College. Of these, 96% were master's degree programs, and 4% were doctoral programs.
- Among those who have engaged in graduate education, 89% reported that their programs were closely related or somewhat related to their studies at KSC, of these, 88% judged that KSC had prepared them well or very well for this next step in their education.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### Overall Satisfaction with KSC Education

Two measures of alumni global satisfaction with their KSC education were included in the current Alumni Survey. Each asked alumni to rate their agreement with statements expressing a type of overall satisfaction.

- *I would recommend KSC to friends or siblings as a good place to go to college:* 87% “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.”
- *Overall, I am satisfied with my KSC education:* 87% selected “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.”

### Employment

The great majority of the respondents (91%) indicated that they were employed in some capacity at the time of the survey. The employment category breakdown is as follows (total = 99% because of rounding error):

- 67% full-time regular employment
- 14% part-time regular employment
- 2% paid internship
- 2% unpaid internship
- 3% year of service (AmeriCorps, City Year, etc.)
- 7% not employed by choice (e.g., in school, travelling, or caring for family)
- 4% not employed and looking for work

Among employed students, 76% reported that their current position is closely related or somewhat related to their studies at KSC; of these, 82% reported that KSC had prepared them well or very well for their current work.

Comparisons with prior-year findings obtained from the Class of 2014 revealed that the current class had comparable levels of employment.

## Graduate Education

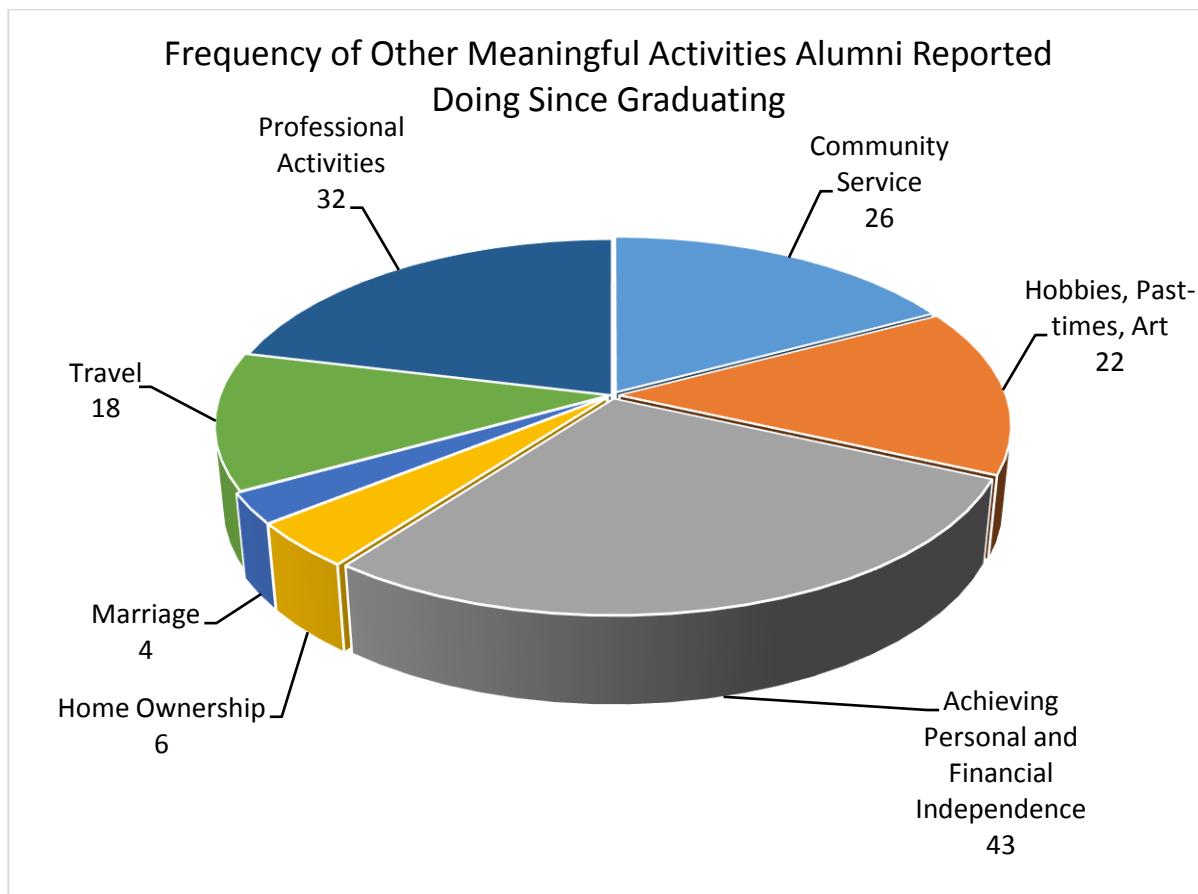
A sizable minority of the respondents (24%) reported that they had enrolled in graduate education since graduating from Keene State College, with most of these seeking master's degrees (92%). The most commonly reported general field of study for advanced degrees was education (38%). Most enrolled in institutions in New Hampshire or surrounding states in New England or the Northeast. However, some enrolled farther away, including one who studied in Flagstaff, Arizona. Consistent with findings obtained from prior years, a preponderance of those enrolled in graduate education reported that their program was closely related (71%) or somewhat related (18%) to their studies at KSC; of these, 88% judged that KSC had prepared them well or very well for this next step in their education.

The percentage who had enrolled in graduate education increased from 19% for the Class of 2014 to 38% for the current class. Comparable proportions of students from each class enrolled in programs related to KSC majors.

## What Else Are Alumni Doing?

The survey asked respondents, "Besides employment and further education, what else are you doing that is meaningful to you five years after graduation?" Figure 1 summarizes the frequency of common themes in response to this question. Listed below are the themes and example comments. Key themes were achieving personal and financial independence, professional activities, and travel.

Figure 1



*Achieving Personal and Financial Independence (43 comments)*

Moved four hours away. Living 100% on my own.

I moved across the country and relocated myself to Washington. I left my house with three suitcases and only knew one person in the entire state. I now have a car, apartment, friends, and a good job.

Learning how to manage money with bills and other expenses that I did not experience during my undergrad. Managing money is leading to saving up to find an apartment, but I am currently living at home to save money while in grad school.

*Professional Activities (32 comments)*

Staying in communication with professors. Submitted a senior year project to the National Athletic Training Association and will be presenting at their national conference end of June.

I have decided to pursue B2B sales and my degree in management has helped me connect with a lot of customers I deal with on a daily basis.

I am also a cheerleading coach to my old high school and also am a certified MSSAA cheerleading judge!

*Community Service (26 comments)*

I spent a month after graduation living in New Orleans Louisiana to work with The United Saints Recovery Project to do a month of service work. I continue to do volunteer work in my community here and there (I try for once a month if time permits).

I have spent a lot of my time working on bringing awareness and prevention to topics like sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking. I have also been doing a lot of work around social justice and bringing awareness to many more topics.

I have joined two different associations that work with connecting high school students to colleges. I am working as a mentor with the program to insure that students are getting into college, are being engaged, and being retained.

*Hobbies/Pastimes/ Art (22 comments)*

I have started my own blog and hope to inspire other recent graduates to follow their dreams.

Auditioning for theatre productions in my regional area.

Adjusting to life after school, finding new hobbies and activities that continue to help me grow as a person.

*Travel (18 comments)*

I took a 5-week road trip all across the country directly after graduation. It was an amazing experience and helped me take some time off before diving into my new career.

Hiked El Camino de Santiago, 540 Miles across Northern Spain.

I backpacked for 2 months on my own in Europe. ...soon after I got a job as a tour promoter in Florence, Italy.

*Home Ownership (6 comments)*

Continuing construction on my home, which I bought during the undergraduate program at KSC when I was also working full time! I remodeled a bunch while in school, and am finishing up the rest while continuing to work full time.

I purchased a home in Connecticut on my own.

*Marriage (6 comments)*

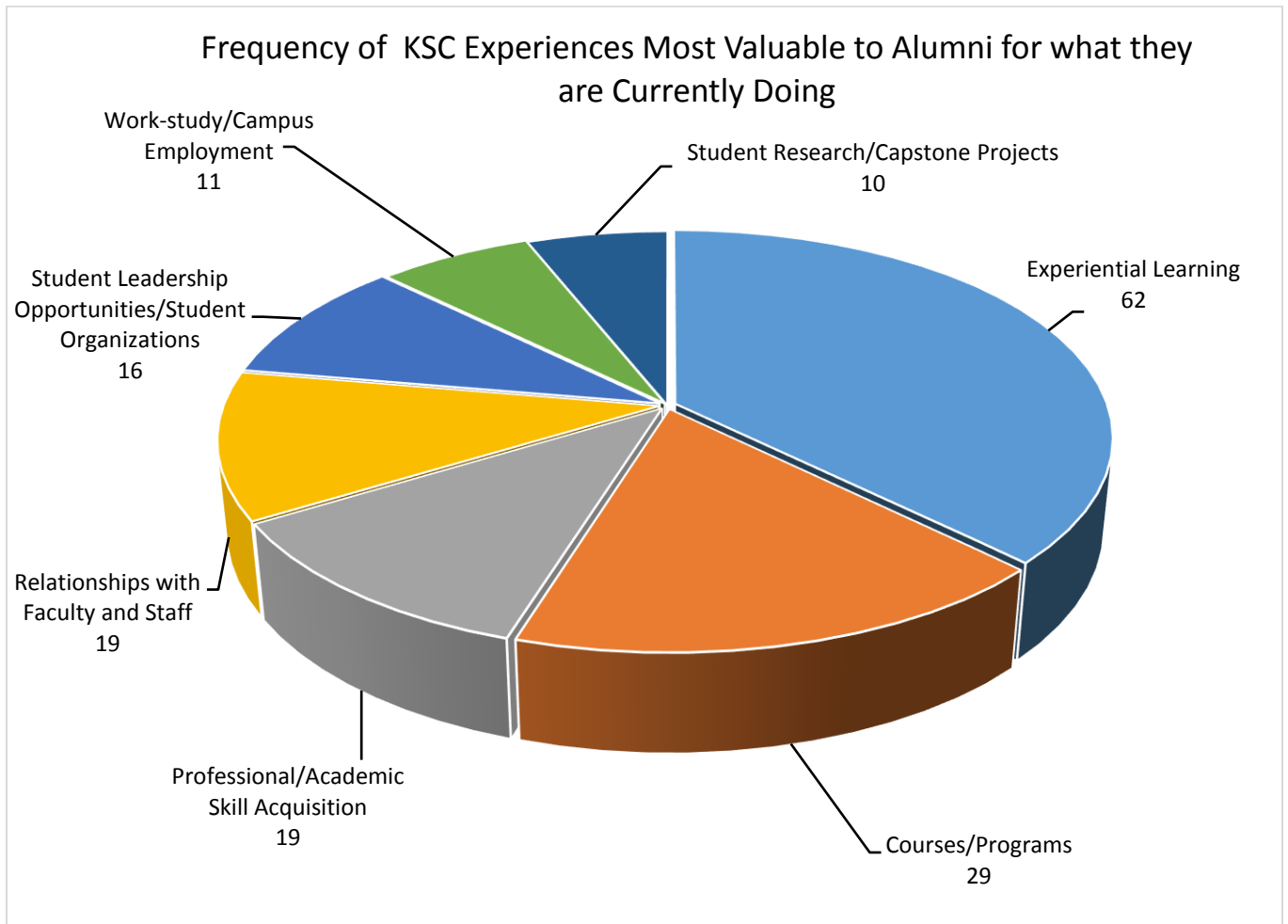
I married my boyfriend whom I met while studying abroad through KSC, special thanks to Skye Stephenson!

I am getting married this August!

## KSC Experiences Most Valuable to Alumni

The survey asked, “What experience did you have at KSC - inside or outside the classroom - that has proved most valuable for whatever you are doing now in your life?” Figure 2 summarizes the frequency of common themes in response to this question. Provided below are example comments for each theme. Internships, student teaching, and other related forms of experiential learning were by far the most common response to this question. Sixty-two of the 166 responses (37%) to this question mentioned an experience of this nature. Other key themes included courses and programs, relationships with faculty and staff, and acquisition of professional or academic skills.

Figure 2



*Experiential Learning (62 comments)*

The student teaching experience that I experienced through Keene State has really prepared me for the field of elementary education. I am currently enrolled in a master's program for elementary education and I am noticeably ahead of others who have not been able to have past experiences. I will be able to finish my masters months earlier than my classmates because I have already fulfilled the student teaching requirement for certification that their undergraduate universities did not supply them with.

Working in the Cheshire County Jail running a discussion group on gender. This practicum experience exposed me to the criminal justice system that I currently work very closely to.

I did a partial internship with cirque du Soleil before my senior year of college which was working with onsite customer service directors and customers from all over and commuting to Boston. It was an experience like no other and I had an amazing staff team.

*Courses/Programs (29 comments)*

I also cannot stress enough that the music department prepared me for pursuing a Master's Degree at a prestigious conservatory; the program produces professional musicians who know the value of and are committed to the pursuit of excellence!

My broadcast Journalism class was the most valuable. It's where I learned to shoot, edit, roll playback, and even appear in some newscasts! My editing skills I learned there have transferred over to the work I do at WMUR.

My junior/senior seminar allowed me to gain practice at working in a team setting, much like I am doing in AmeriCorps NCCC

*Professional/Academic Skill Acquisition (19 comments)*

Learning how to successfully meet deadlines and balance time with multiple projects, athletics, and jobs.

I feel as though my years at KSC taught me that thinking outside the box should be encouraged. When an issue arises, I am confident I can find a solution that works for everyone using innovation and problem solving.

Frequent writing and research for academic assignments was invaluable preparation for my current position.

*Relationships with Faculty and Staff (19 comments)*

My most valuable experience was with the individual professors. They actually care about the students, and I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for their help and guidance.

The most valuable were the professors and advisors. They really provided what I needed to do well in my internship and prepared me to become a professional in my field.

Having incredible connections and relationships with my professors and other faculty members has been a great resource for me as well.

*Student Leadership Opportunities/Student Organizations (16 comments)*

Being President of the Fair Trade Club has helped a lot. I learned leadership experience, how to interact in a business environment, and have gained numerous contacts from it as well.

My experience in my sorority was the best decision I have ever made. Not only did I gain friendships that will last a lifetime, but I learned how to be a better leader, a better friend, have an open mind to others' ideas, and overall it just made me a better person.

Getting involved with Upsilon Pi Epsilon (computer science honor society)! As a transfer student who joined in my second and final year at KSC, UPE was ultimately what made me feel like I belonged at Keene. I made great connections with bright and motivated people, and now I work with two of the executive board members.

*Work-study/Campus Employment (11 comments)*

I spent 4 years as a tour guide, which helped with my interpersonal communication skills for my job as a collegiate Admissions Counselor

Working at the IT Helpdesk. It prepared me for the career path I've decided to pursue. Instead of going into teaching, I utilized my technology skills to get into the field of Education Tech. I am working now as a technology support tech for the Keene school district, navigating a handful of schools' unique cultures to solve the technology-related issues that impair the implementation of curriculum.

Tutoring for 3 years. That was really enriching, boosting my self-confidence, and people skills.

*Student Research/Capstone Projects (10 comments)*

I worked in a Biology lab for three years that proved invaluable for securing a job post-graduation. This experience gave me hands-on experience that I could have never gotten in a classroom.

The capstone project gave great insights to the work environment and challenges you will face in the real world.

*Community Service/Volunteer Opportunities (7 comments)*

The experience that proved most valuable to what I am doing now is volunteering at Hundred Nights Cold Weather Shelter for a sociology class. I would do overnights, intakes and serve dinner to the individuals staying at the shelter, which was very beneficial to me as someone who works directly with people on a daily basis.

Alternative Spring Break! It completely changed my perspective on life and allowed me to see things in a different way. It definitely changed my life for the better. It is an incredible program that I always recommend to current college students.

*Study Abroad (3 comments)*

Studying abroad has given me the most beneficial experience in learning how to communicate with every type of person.

When I studied abroad in Sweden, I was terrified of talking to other students. However, through the help of my professors, I slowly started to come out of my shell and in the spring of 2013, I gave a presentation on Elfish linguistics at the Academic Excellence conference. Upon returning from Sweden, I decided to become a global ambassador for GEO.

*Athletics (3 comments).*

Playing lacrosse 4 years and being named captain my senior year made me feel more confident in leading large groups. Playing lacrosse has turned me into a better person and made me a leader.