



Wisdom to make a difference.

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

Findings from the Class of 2017 One-Year-Out Alumni Survey

Each year, Keene State College administers a one-year-out survey to alumni who graduated during the previous year. In October 2018, Keene State College surveyed alumni who received bachelor’s degrees in fiscal year 2017. The primary purposes of this annual survey were to assess rates of employment, enrollment in graduate education, and to assess alumni satisfaction with how well their KSC degree prepared them for what they are currently doing. This report summarizes the findings obtained from the Class of 2017 and compares them to findings from prior graduating classes.

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KEY FINDINGS

- The findings were largely consistent with prior year findings. Within a year following graduation, nearly all respondents (98%) were employed or in graduate study, and most (95%) said that their KSC education had prepared them well for what they are doing now.
- Although alumni continue to view their KSC education positively, satisfaction levels declined a small degree from previous years. The percentage reporting being satisfied with their KSC Education dropped from 87% in 2015 and 2016 to 84%, and the percentage who would recommend KSC to friends or siblings dropped from 87% in 2015 to 78% in 2017.
- The percent employed or enrolled in graduate school is a six-year high, and the percentage unemployed who are seeking employment (1%) is a six-year low. The drop in unemployment from the 5% rate obtained in 2016 reversed a four-year trend in the opposite direction. Further, the current level of unemployment is considerably lower than the national 5.6% unemployment rate for college graduates under age 25 (<https://www.epi.org/publication/the-class-of-2017/>).
- Ninety percent of the respondents reported that they are employed—up from 88% in 2016; 9% indicated that they are not employed by choice (for example, to care for family members or enroll in graduate study), and the remaining 1% reported that they are unemployed and seeking work.
- Among employed respondents, 95% reported that their KSC education as a whole prepared them well or very well for their current work, 89% did so for their major or majors, 75% selected one of those options for extra and co-curricular activities, and 42% for the ISP. Preparation satisfaction increased for both KSC education as a whole and for extra-curricular activities, remained constant for courses in major, and declined for ISP courses.
- Alumni reported that experiential learning activities were the KSC experiences that best prepared alumni for what they currently do (19%), followed by courses/programs (13%) and work-study (11%).
- Twenty-two 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, 89% were master's degree programs.
- Forty-four percent of respondents indicated they were likely or very likely to stay engaged with KSC through attending College events held near where they live, 33% through attending on-campus events, and 30% indicated they would volunteer through Alumni Association. Twenty percent indicated a likelihood of donating to KSC.

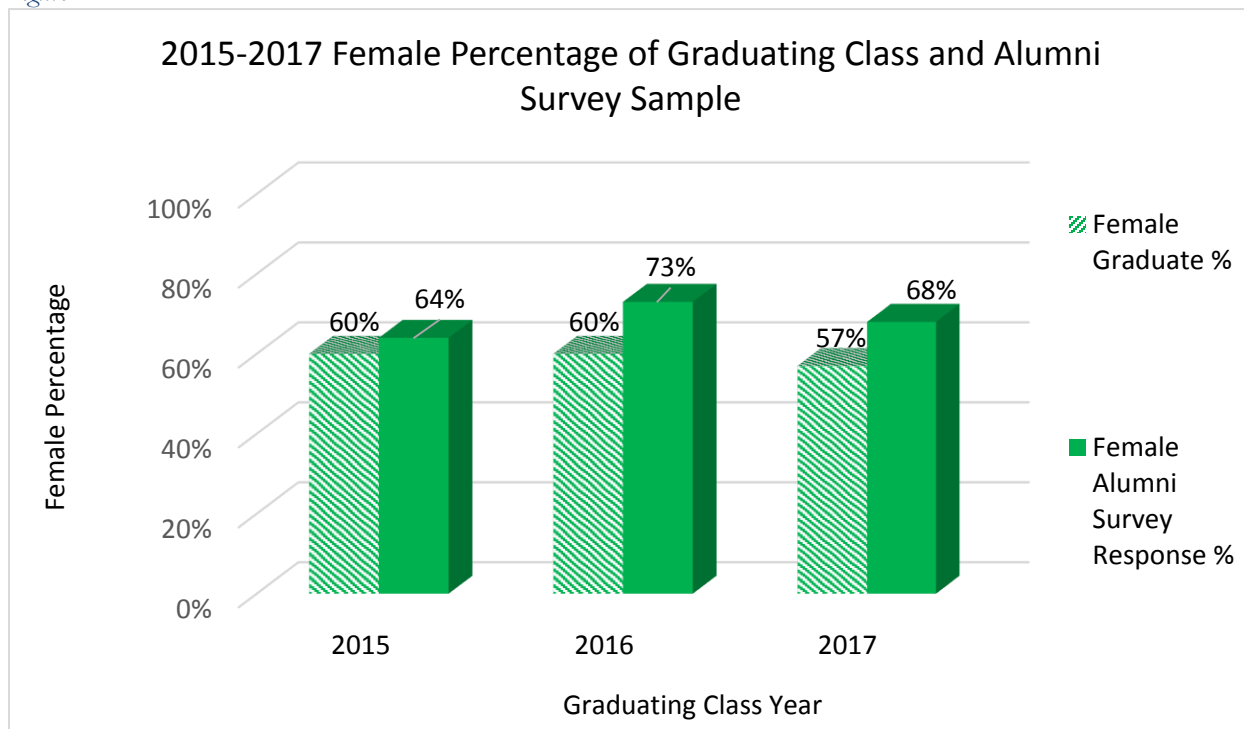
DETAILED FINDINGS

Potential Impact of Sample Bias on Findings

There were 1,052 unduplicated bachelor's degree recipients in fiscal year 2017, and the College had valid contact information with permission for email for 685 of these (65% of the class). The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment sent email survey invitations to these alumni, and 148 provided usable responses for an overall response rate of 22%. Given this rate, it is possible that the sample bias influenced the survey's findings. For example, because women are more likely than men are to complete online surveys, the findings may be more representative of female alumni than of the population as a whole.

Consistent with this general pattern, the Class of 2017 was 58% female, but the sample was 68% female. Nevertheless, this pattern of female overrepresentation occurred in each of the past three Alumni Surveys, so this type of sample bias does not impede prior year comparisons (Figure 1). Further, across the full set of alumni surveyed in the past three years, men and women did not significantly differ in their employment status or being either employed or enrolled in graduate school.

Figure 1



Another possible means by which the response rate could bias the findings of the study would be if employed students were more likely to complete the survey than unemployed students were. Pride in one's post-graduate employment may motivate alumni to complete the survey. Nevertheless, phone survey data from members of the Class of 2015 who did not complete the initial online 2015 Alumni Survey yielded the same employment percentage as that obtained in the online survey. Based on this finding, it is not likely that response rate effects employment percentage.

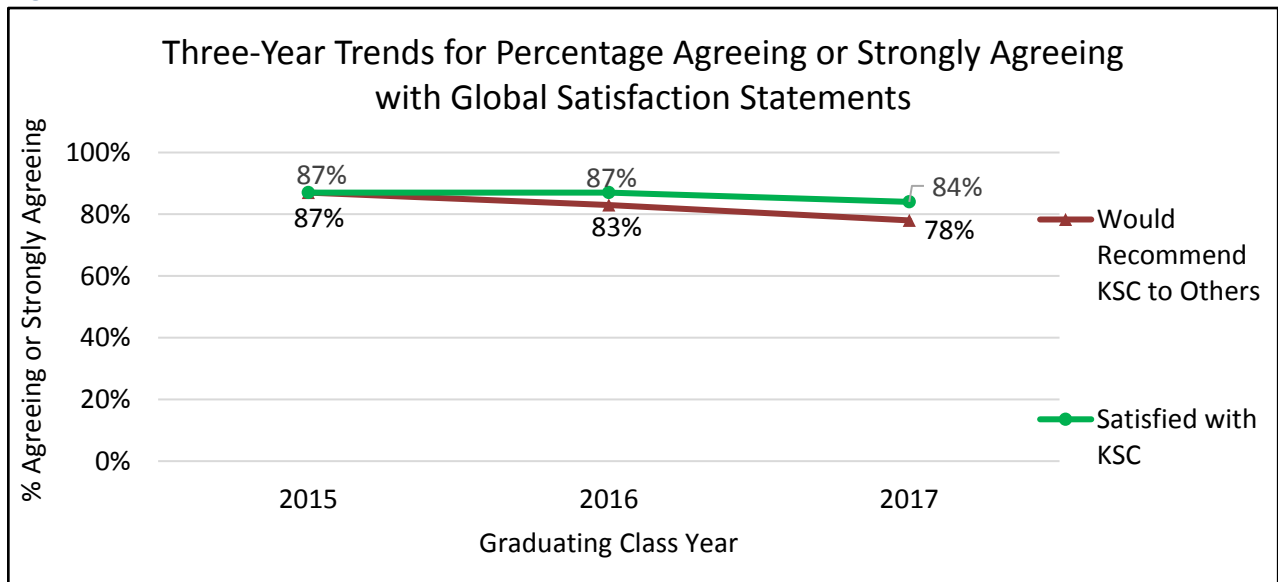
Satisfaction with KSC Education

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:* 84% “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.”
- *Overall, I am satisfied with my KSC education:* 78% selected “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.”

Findings from the two measures indicate that global satisfaction with one’s KSC Education has declined since 2015 (Figure 2). This is particularly true for the recommend-to-others measure for which the agree/strongly agree percentage has slipped by 9 percentage points in the three years that this item was asked.

Figure 2

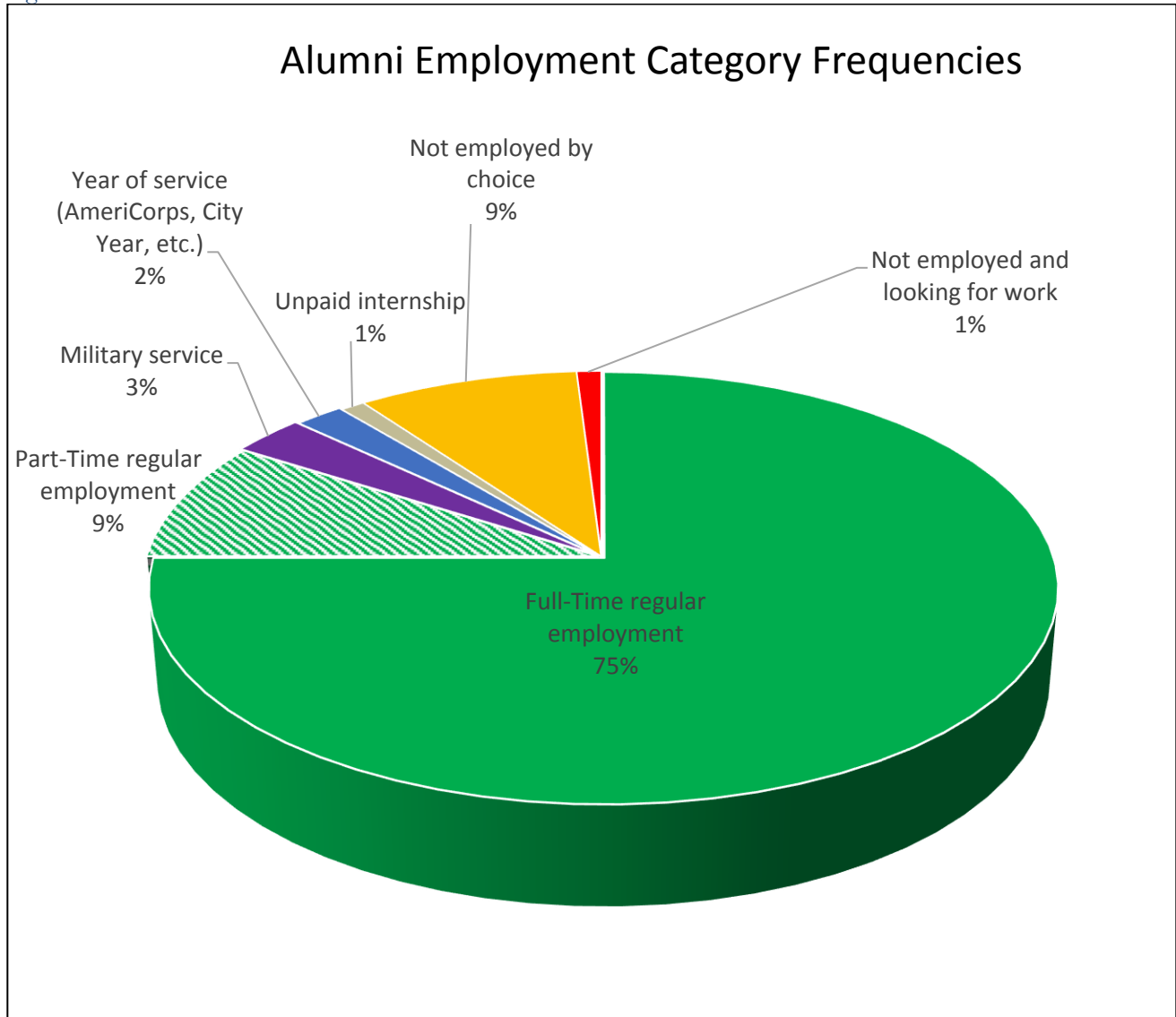


Employment Findings

Level of Alumni Employment

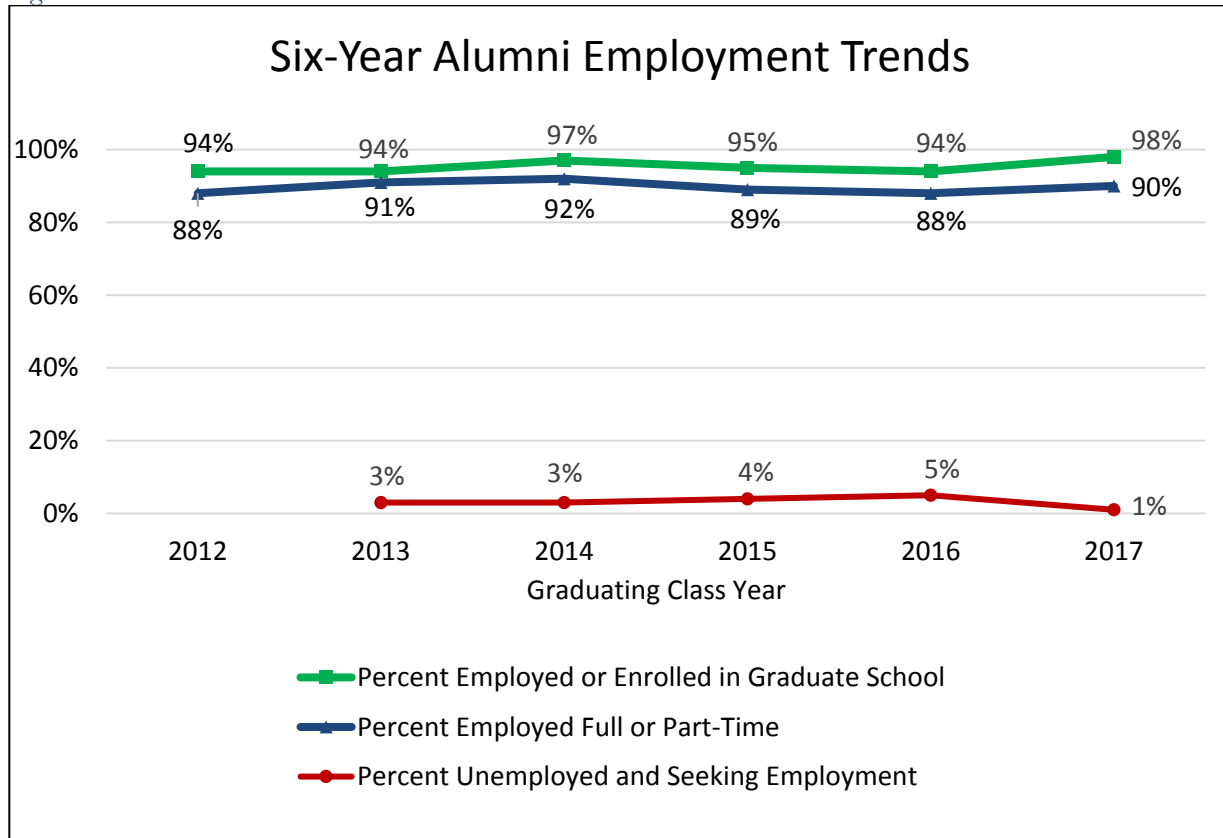
The great majority of the respondents (90%) reported some form of employment. Figure 3 summarizes the full employment category breakdown. Three-quarters of respondents reported full-time employment, 9% part-time employment, 2% a year of service, and 1% an unpaid internship. Most of those unemployed were so by choice (9% of sample). Only 1% of the sample were unemployed and seeking employment.

Figure 3



The percentage employed or in graduate school (98%) is a six-year high (Figure 4). The percentage employed either full- or part-time (90%) exceeded the percentages from the prior two years. The 1% selecting the “Unemployed and seeking employment” employment category choice was substantially lower than the 5% rate obtained last year, and is the lowest unemployment rate obtained since the inclusion of this measure in 2013. It remains much lower than the national 5.6% unemployment rate for college graduates under age 25 (<https://www.epi.org/publication/the-class-of-2017/>).

Figure 4

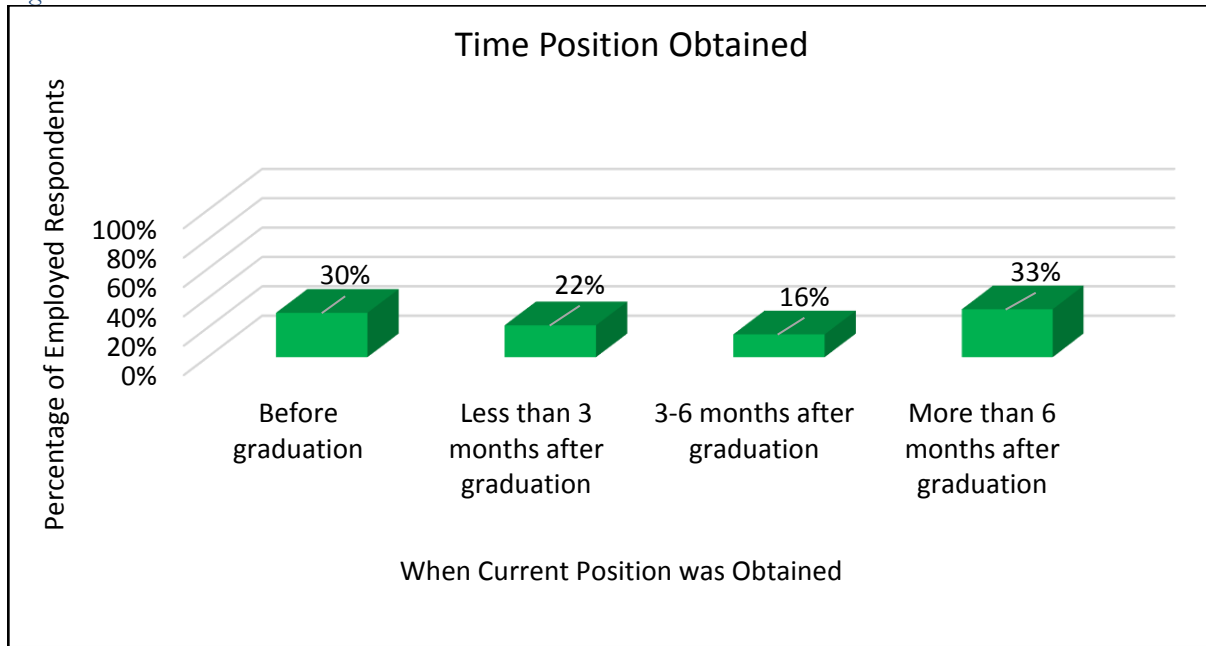


Note: the employment item in the 2012 Alumni Survey did not include an “Unemployed and seeking employment” choice.

Time Required to Obtain Employment

Among those employed, the two most common responses to the question asking when they obtained the position were before graduation (30%) and more than six months after graduation (33%). This indicates that many of those who did not obtain employment while still a KSC student experienced a prolonged period of unemployment before finally landing a position (Figure 5).

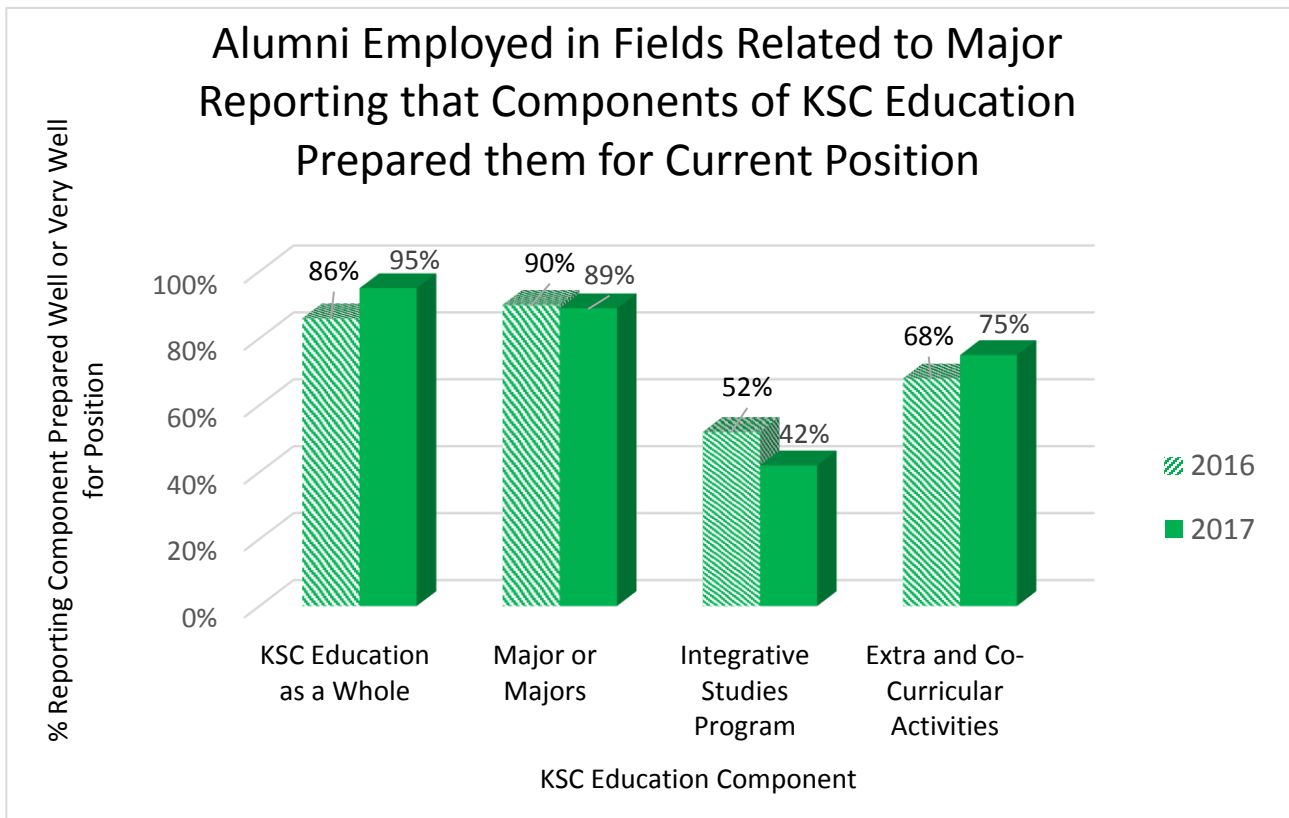
Figure 5



Satisfaction with KSC's Preparation for Employment

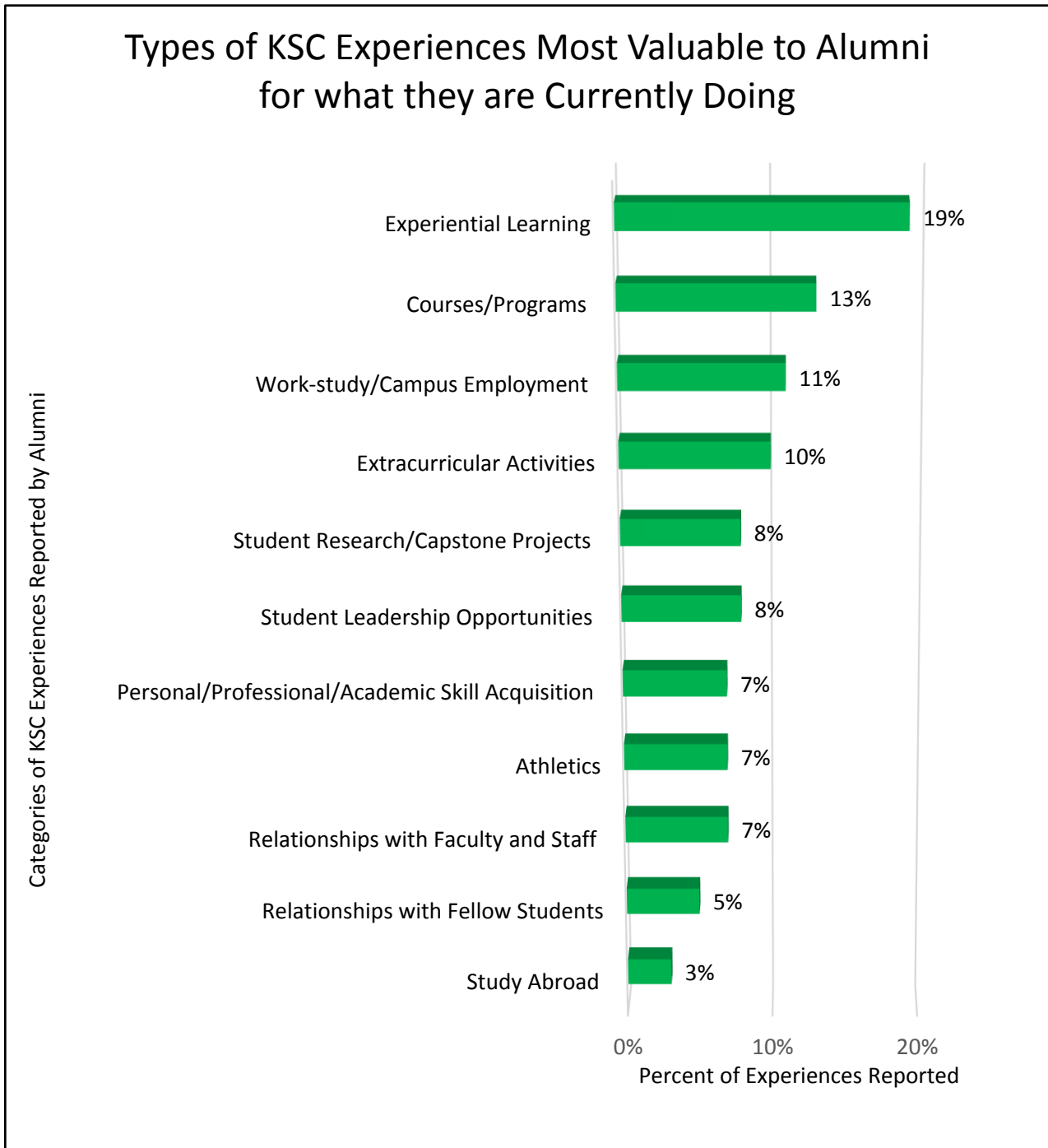
Preparation from coursework and extra/co-curricular activities. Among employed students, 85% reported that their current position is closely related or somewhat related to their studies at KSC. Of these, 95% reported that their KSC education as a whole prepared them well or very well for their current work (Figure 6). When asked to assess how well key components of their education prepared them for their current position, 89% selected “Well” or “Very Well” for their major or majors, but 75% selected one of those options for extra and co-curricular activities, and 42% did so for the ISP. This full set of items first appeared in the 2016 survey. Preparation satisfaction increased for both KSC education as a whole and for extra-curricular activities, but it remained constant for courses in major, and declined for ISP courses.

Figure 6



Specific KSC experiences most valuable for current work. 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 7 summarizes the frequency of common themes in response to this question. Provided below are example comments for each theme. Alumni most frequently provided examples of experiential learning such as internships and student teaching (19%). Other key themes included courses/programs, work-study, and extracurricular activities.

Figure 7



Representative examples of each of the categories of responses presented in Figure 7 above include the following:

- *Experiential Learning (20 comments)*

I received funding and awards throughout my time at Keene State College that allowed me to go to the Bates Dance Festival during the summer before my senior year. I had an extremely valuable conversation with a professional choreographer (Kate Weare) and she helped me synthesize my thoughts on what directions to go in after Keene. After that festival, I applied to grad school and now I'm here at UNCG working towards my MFA in Dance. I owe it all to Keene State.

Created a project with Whelen Engineering for my internship.

- *Courses/Programs (14 comments)*

The safety program has set me up for success. If you put in the effort, the staff will match that effort and help you reach your goals.

My [film] production classes have given me the majority of the skills I've applied in the professional field.

- *Work-study/Campus Employment (12 comments)*

Being an RA. It taught me how to manage difficult and complex interpersonal situations. Always a relevant skill in the professional work environment.

Working closely with the community service office as the events and advocacy coordinator.

- *Extracurricular Activities (11 comments)*

A proud Phi Mu Delta alumni. My fraternal experience taught me valuable skills that have helped fuel my desire for success. Learning how to speak in public with confidence, network with other professionals, deal with adversity and controversy, and obtain an intense work ethic are all skills I attribute to my time spent in executive positions in IFC and Phi Mu Delta.

KSC- TV boosted my speaking skills and confidence immensely

- *Student Research/Capstone Projects (9 comments)*

My senior year capstone, Health Promotion Practice left a huge mark on me and will impact my future efforts. I attended the Global Health and Innovation Conference at Yale University with Dr. Margaret Henning and two of my peers.

I had the opportunity to present my research at the National Undergraduate Conference for Women in Mathematics at the University of Nebraska Lincoln.

- *Student Leadership Opportunities (9 comments)*

Running the radio station gave me practical confidence and professionalism.

Founding the Pre-Med Club.

- *Professional/Academic Skill Acquisition (8 comments)*

Being taught professionalism was the biggest part.

Keene State College really helped me to think outside the box.

- *Relationships with Faculty and Staff (8 comments)*

The long lasting and deep connections that were made with certain professors and their wiliness to continue to aid their students even after they have graduated.

Working with ROCKS and collaborating with the department of sustainability with coworkers, eco reps, and staff has proved to be the most valuable to me.

- *Athletics (7 comments).*

Was on the KSC field hockey for 4 years. I have made friendships from that team that will last a lifetime.

Participating on the women's Field Hockey team

- *Relationships with other Students (5 comments)*

Making friends within my major has proved to be a major tool that I can use in the workforce. We can share information and knowledge and ask each other questions that we can't get answered anywhere else.

The best thing I got from KSC is the lifelong friendships and connections. The friends that I made are still my best friends today and I have multiple classmates where I live/work now and it's a great resource to have while navigating and adjusting to post-grad life.

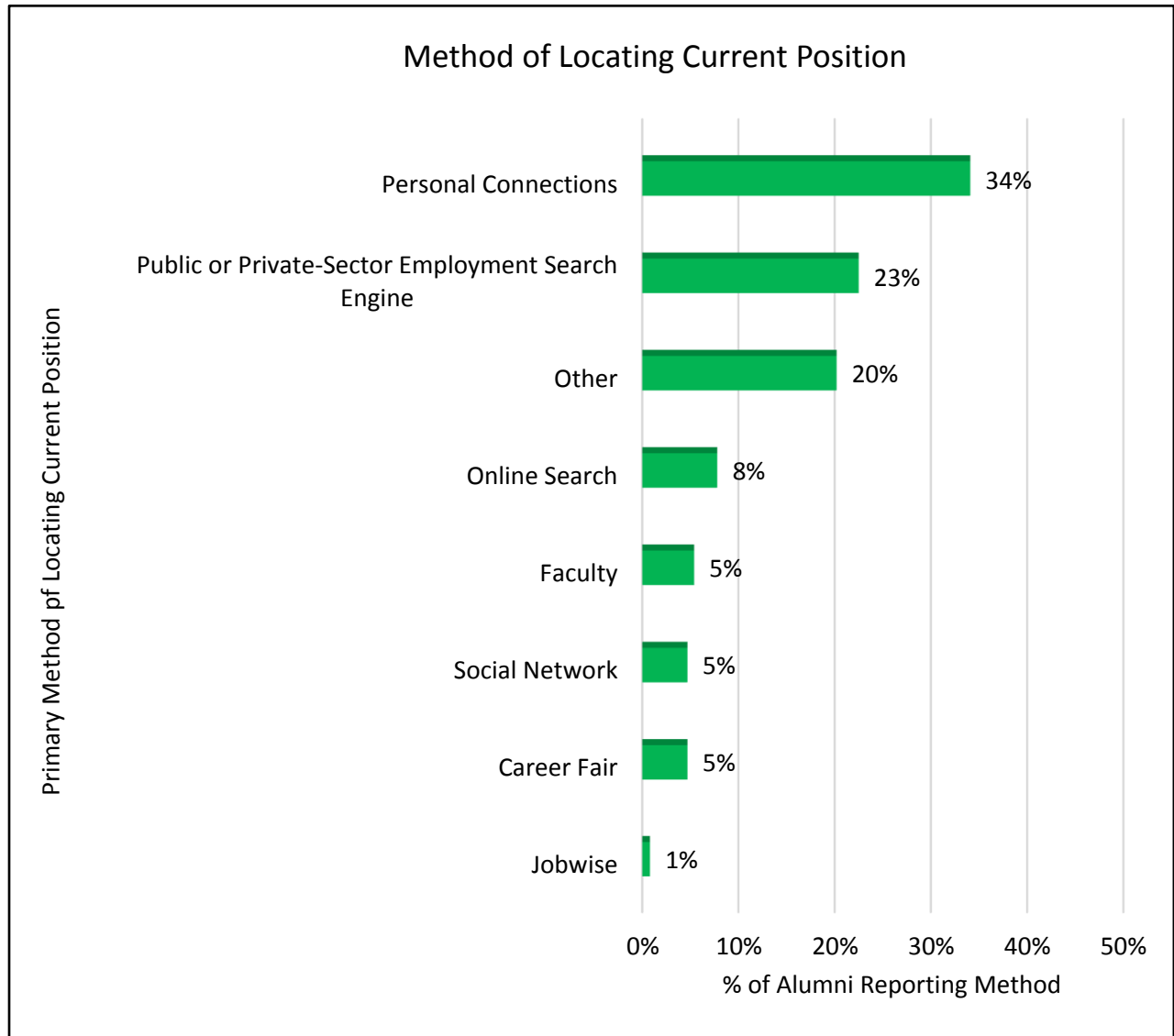
- *Study Abroad (3 comments)*

Study abroad was probably the most valuable experience I had while at KSC - I'm better at being confident by myself, about meeting new people, and just enjoying life. I cannot say enough good things about my time abroad, and they would take up too much room here.

Job Search Methods

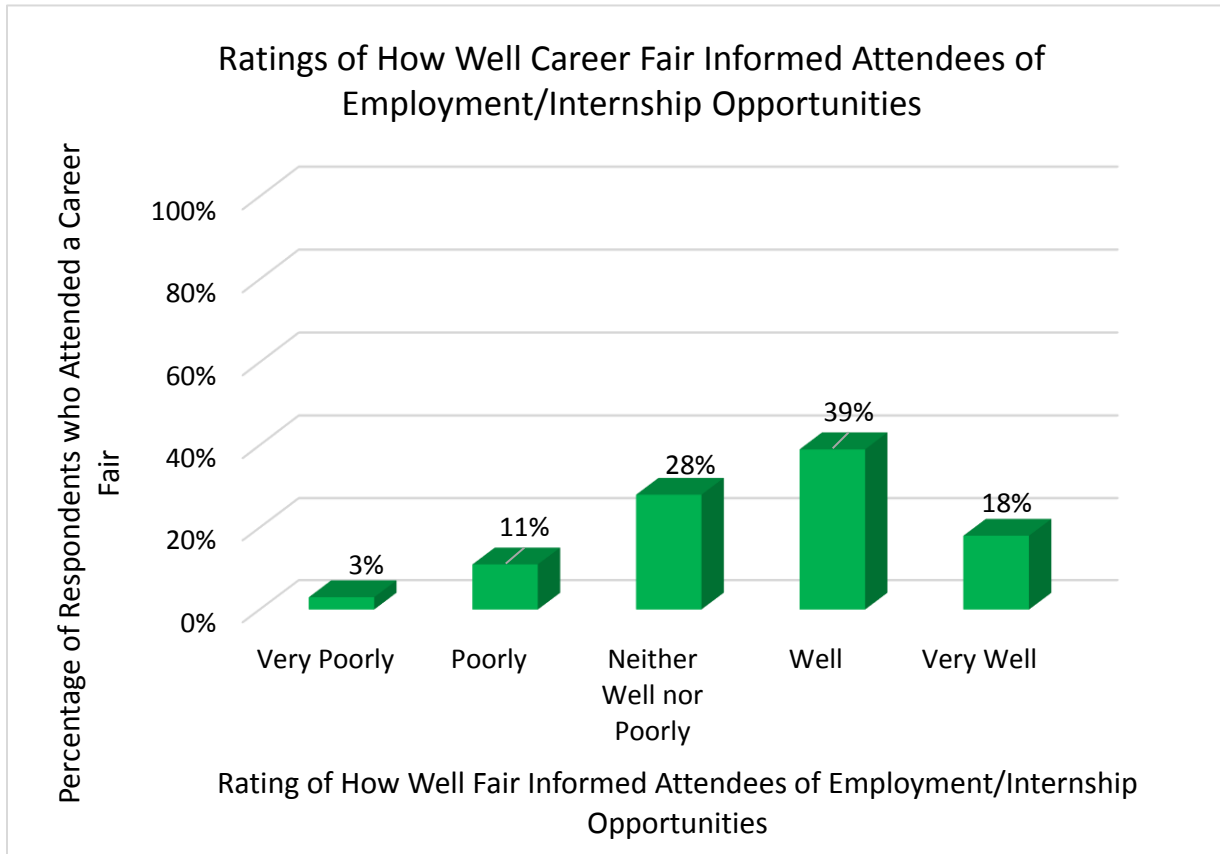
Primary methods of locating current position. Employed alumni reported using personal connections (34%) and public-/private-sector web-based employment search engines (23%). Five percent used career fairs and one percent used KSC's JobWISE site (Figure 8).

Figure 8



Career Fairs. In the spring and fall of each academic year, KSC hosts the Future Fair during which students and alumni may meet potential employers and internship sponsors. To assess the perceived value of these fairs, the survey asked alumni who attended one to rate how well it informed them of internship and career opportunities. Over half (57%) selected “Well” or “Very Well,” and only 14% selected “Poorly” or “Very Poorly.” (Figure 9).

Figure 9

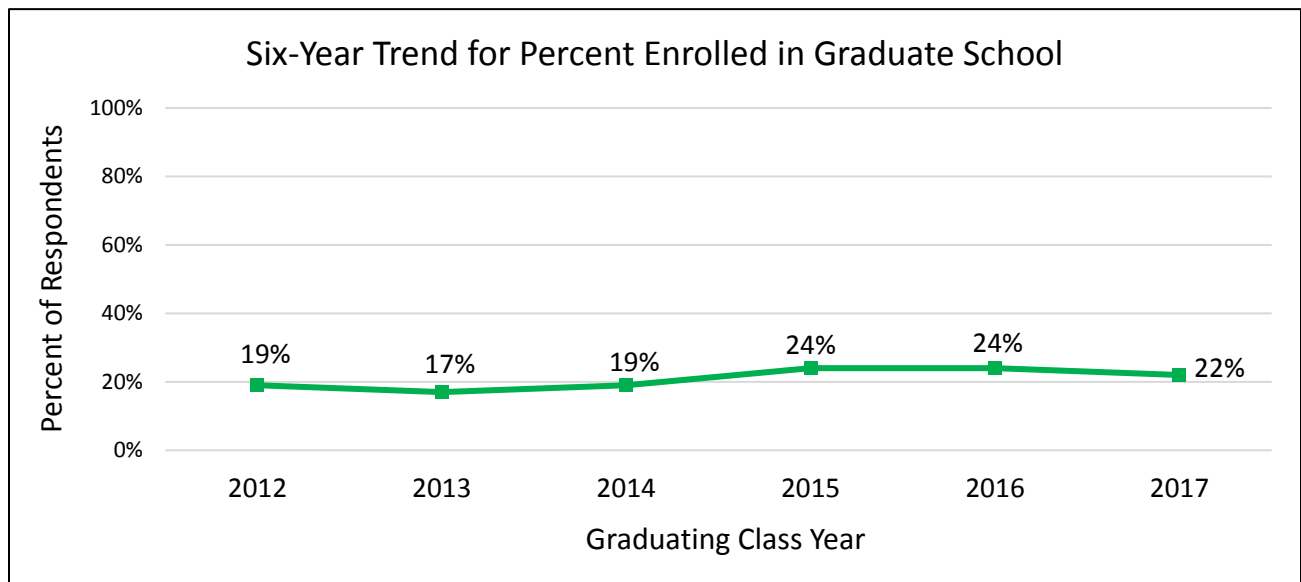


Graduate Education

A sizable minority of the respondents (22%) reported that they had enrolled in graduate education since graduating from Keene State College. This percentage is slightly lower than the 24% rate obtained in 2015 and 2016, which is likely due to the lower unemployment rate obtained for this graduating class (Figure 10). Most of this group of alumni enrolled in master's degree programs (89%). The most commonly reported general field of study for advanced degrees was education (29%). Most enrolled in institutions in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and other surrounding states in New England and the Northeast. However, some enrolled in programs as far away as North Carolina, Texas, and Tennessee.

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, 87% judged that KSC had prepared them well or very well for this next step in their education.

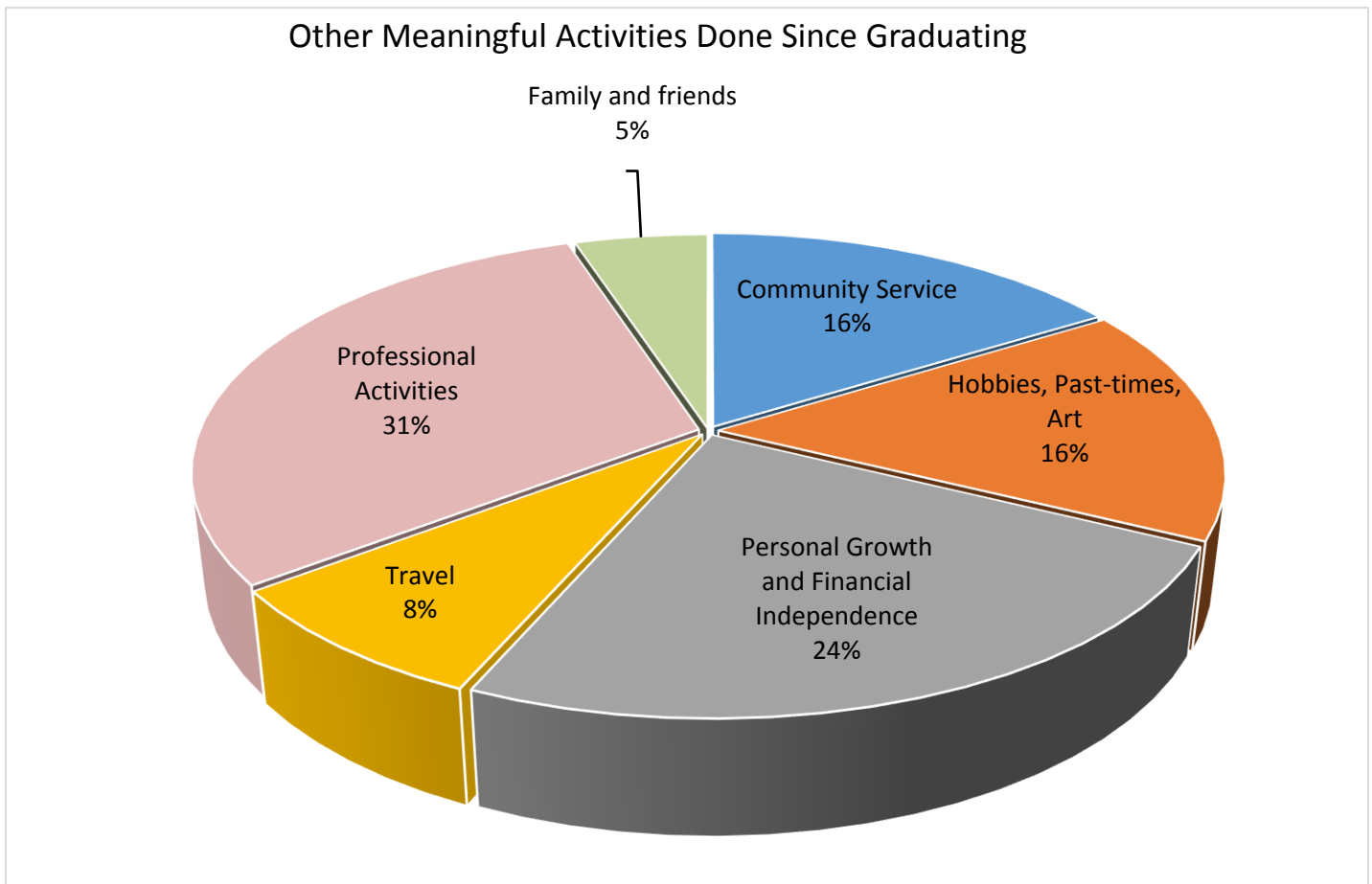
Figure 10



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 11 summarizes the frequency of common themes in response to this question. Listed below are the themes and example comments. Key themes were professional activities, professional growth and financial independence, community service, hobbies/past-times/art, travel, and family/friends.

Figure 11



- *Professional Activities (41 comments)*

I have been able to adapt to life after college, which Keene State College has given me the perfect skills for within the four years I was there. Focusing all the information that I learned, and determining the exact jobs to apply for and being prepared for interviews, cover letter writing, and resume organizing. Keene State College gave me the right tools for the future but it was my job to use them on my own.

Working on one of the first deep underground tunnel project in the state of CT. It is also a 300-million-dollar project, the biggest project in CT right now.

- *Personal Growth and Financial Independence (23 comments)*

Getting settled as a new homeowner, getting to know my new city (Jacksonville FL) as well as adjusting to adult life.

I am living completely on my own and supporting myself. I found a great city to live in, and I'm really enjoying where I'm at.

- *Community Service (15 comments)*

Mentoring for high schoolers involved in STEM programs.

Taught elementary school students about architecture as a volunteer at a makerspace wood shop for personal projects.

- *Hobbies/Pastimes/Art (15 comments)*

After graduating Keene State, I began writing a fantasy / adventure novel (titled The Forgotten Sorcerer) in my spare time. Last March I completed it and self-published it

Besides employment, I started to make up-cycled skateboard earrings!

- *Travel (8 comments)*

Since graduating a year ago, I have been lucky enough to travel for three and a half months in Oregon and for four months in Patagonia, Chile. Both times, I was technically working as a river guide but for two companies that both do environmental conservation work. One on a river that has threats from nickel mining in Oregon and in Chile the river has threats from hydroelectric. In August, I will go to northern Quebec, Canada to work a seven-day wilderness trip on a river that also has a hydroelectric threat. This is what is meaningful to me. I hope it can stay that way.

I am able to create my own schedule and travel the beautifully scenic State of Maine helping individual Town's/Municipalities improve their Safety Efforts and Culture. I have always wanted to help people in whatever line of work I ended up in and this one has allowed me to fulfill my aspirations.

- *Friends and Family (6 comments)*

Staying in touch with college friends

I help out my friends who are currently enrolled at KSC find jobs and better their experience through sharing insights I learned through the employment and graduation process.

Future Engagement with College

Alumni were asked to rate their likelihood of using each of four approaches to staying engaged with KSC. Shown in Figure 12 are the percent selecting “Likely” or “Extremely Likely” for each approach. Attending Keene State College events occurring near where alumni live received the highest percentage of likely responses (44%) followed by attending KSC events on campus (33%), and volunteering through the Alumni Association (30%), and other means (24%). Other means reported included a desire to promote the college to high school students and supporting current KSC students.

Figure 12

