

**Salem State School of Graduate Studies**  
**2019 Post-Graduation Exit Survey**  
**Executive Summary**

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**Submitted on May 4, 2020**

This report contains the overall trends that emerged in the spring 2019 graduate exit survey. For program specific information please contact Associate Dean, Kathleen Neville.

Below are the number of respondents, by academic department, that completed the 2019 School of Graduate Studies Exit Survey.

<b>Program</b>	<i>Number of respondents (n)</i>	<b>Program</b>	<i>Number of respondents (n)</i>
MSW (Master of Social Work)	101	MS Counseling & Psychological Services	20
MSN Nursing	15	MS Industrial/Organizational Psychology	13
M.Ed. Higher Education in Student Affairs	18	MA History	7
M.Ed. Special Education	15	MA English	11
M.Ed. Early Childhood Education	20	MS Criminal Justice	11
MBA (Masters of Business Administration)	13	MS Math	2
M.Ed. School Counseling	20	M.Ed. Elementary Education	17
BS/MS Occupational Therapy Program	8	M.Ed. Physical Education	4
CAGS in Education	6	Library Media Studies	6
Middle School Education	1	M. Ed. Reading	5
M.Ed. Secondary Education	5	MA/MAT English	2
MAT Art	1	MAT ESOL	10
MAT Spanish	2	MS GEO Info Science	6

### **Introduction to Survey**

The 2019 survey was emailed in April 2019 to the 555 students who were approved by the Registrar's office to graduate in May 2019. There were 358 responses from those students who declared their intention to graduate. Therefore 64% of those graduating completed the exit survey compared to; 342 students (59%) in 2018, 246 students (47%) in 2017, 338 students (62%) in 2016, 66% in 2013, 65% in 2012, and 67% in 2011.

The survey contains 41 questions which target the experience of the graduate student throughout his/her course of study (e.g. what factors led to the choice to attend SSU, evaluation of the effectiveness of particular school services, what types of events would be of interest as an alumnus) as well as 8 questions

to collect demographic data. The format of the questions varies. Some questions permitted students to select only one answer, others allowed students to select as many answer options as applicable. Several questions asked students to rate services on a Likert scale. An N/A option was also given. Space for written comments was provided for several questions.

### **Demographic Information**

- **Program of Study (n=338):** Students from 26 different graduate programs responded to the survey. The Masters in Social Work program had the highest percent of survey respondents (n=101), the MS Counseling, MED Early Childhood, and MED in School Counseling programs each had 20 students respond.
- **Age (n=326):** The most common age range reported continues to be between 26-30 years (34.97% of respondents), followed by 20-25 years (23.01% of respondents).
- **Gender (n=328):** The majority of respondents identified as female (75.61). 23.78% of respondents identified as male and .61% identified as other.
- **Ethnicity/Race (n=325):** Respondents reported their race/ethnicity as White (80.62%), Hispanic (9.23%), Black or African American (8%), Asian (4%), Multi-racial (1.54%), American Indian or Alaska Native (0%), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (0%), or Race and Ethnicity unknown (0.62%) In 2011 Whites represented 92% of the respondents – therefore we are seeing a higher percentage of students of color sharing their perceptions and experiences in this exit survey.
- **Marital Status (n=327):** Most respondents reported being single (61.77%) or married (31.19%). Some respondents reported living in a domestic partnership (3.36%), divorced, (3.06%), or widowed (0.61%).
- **Number of Children/Minor Dependents (n=325):** The majority of respondents reported no children or minor dependents (73.85%). The remainder reported having one (11.69%), two (10.15%), three (2.46%), four (1.85%), five or more (0 %) children or minor dependents.
- **Number of Adult Dependents (Excluding Self and Spouse) (n=299):** Most respondents reported having no adult dependents (91.64%).
- **Place of Current Residence (n=329):** Most respondents report living in the Boston area; North Shore (55%), Greater Boston (23%), Greater Merrimack Valley (5%), Central Massachusetts (5%) and South Boston (6%). Just over 1% of the students lived in New Hampshire/Maine and Western Massachusetts.

## Summary of Data

The majority of respondents came to SSU already employed in a field related to their program of study (59%). Some respondents came from a field unrelated to their program of study (15%) and decided to pursue the master's degree to change careers. Relatively few respondents pursued a master's degree at Salem State directly after completing their undergraduate degree (19%).

Motivations for pursuing a graduate degree varied among the respondents; however, personal development (63%), intellectual development (50%), and salary increase (55%) were key motivations for many. The majority of students found out about Salem State through friends/colleagues (26%), by living locally (25%), via a web search (27%), or they were an SSU undergraduate (27%). After deciding to pursue a degree, respondents overwhelmingly indicated cost (77%) and location (57%) as factors that led them to choose Salem State. Most respondents (77%) only applied to SSU for their graduate studies.

Respondents indicated they enrolled as a full-time student (48%), part-time student (35%), or a combination of the two (17%). The majority of students (64%) used financial aid/loans as a source of funding. In addition, 50% of the students surveyed reported up to \$25,000 in graduate educational debt upon completion of their course work.

### Perceptions

Question 13 asked "Please rate the following based on your experiences" and a 7-point Likert Scale was used to determine students' attitude about different elements of their graduate experience. The scale is as follows:

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7

Very Positive   Positive   Somewhat Positive   Neutral   Somewhat Negative   Negative   Very Negative

Results presented in this document contains the percentage of respondents that indicated very positive, positive, or not applicable for each element.

Item	Very Positive	Positive	N/A
Admissions requirements	32%	50%	.9%
Admissions process	30%	47%	.6%
Advising Process	24%	31%	2%
Courses-applicable to career	25%	45%	.3%
Courses – availability	21%	32%	.3%
Courses – content	21%	47%	.3%
Field placement	26%	28%	16%
Financial aid – services	15%	23%	31%
Graduate school – customer service	15%	39%	18%
Library	32%	36%	13%
Professional development opportunities	13%	24%	23%
Professional development support	14%	23%	23%
Program - comprehensiveness	19%	43%	.6%
Program – length of time to complete	28%	43%	0%

Program – level of academic challenge	22%	48%	0%
Registration - process	23%	46%	.9%
Research - opportunities	14%	30%	17%
Technology - resources	16%	33%	13%
Technology - support	15%	32%	17%
Overall graduate experience	22%	47%	0%

Question 15 asked, “Please answer your satisfaction level according to each of the following:

The Likert scale for this question is:

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A  
 Not Satisfied    Somewhat Satisfied    Satisfied    Very Satisfied    Extremely Satisfied

Results presented in this document contains the percentage of respondents that indicated extremely and very satisfied. Not applicable is also presented.

Item	Extremely Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A
Quality of instruction in your major field	25%	30%	.6%
Quality of instruction outside your field	9%	13%	42%
Interaction with faculty outside the classroom	25%	25%	8%
Assistance by faculty in pursuing your career	21%	25%	11%
Assistance in finding employment	6%	6%	43%
Academic Advising	15%	18%	8%
Your readiness for a career	24%	26%	4%
Your readiness for advanced education	19%	27%	10%

While rating a service as not applicable could simply indicate that the respondent did not need to use the service, it could also indicate that the respondent was unaware the service existed or did not feel these services were developed and available.

### Completion and Obstacles

The majority of respondents expected to complete their degree in two years (48%) and 43% succeeded in completing in that amount of time. A significant number of students expected to earn their degree in 3 years (33%), and 29% succeeded in completing in three years.

Work, financial commitments, and family obligations were considered the main obstacles to students in achieving their degrees.

Half of the respondents indicated they accumulated up to \$25,000 in graduate school debt. In addition, another 29% reported more than \$25,000 in graduate education debt. At the time the survey was conducted, the most common personal gross annual salary for respondents was between \$50,000 - \$59,000, with 17% reporting a salary in this range, however reported salaries were relatively even across income brackets. Most students expected (32%) or already received an increase (27%) due to the completion of their graduate degree. In addition, 85% of the respondents believe their degree will help me get a better job.

Salem State University strives to prepare graduate students to work in a global society. The vast majority of students (87%) agreed that Salem State had indeed prepared them to do so. Additionally, 54% of respondents would highly recommend their academic program to others.