

About.com Graduate School



Doctoral Education Mismatch?

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According to a recently released survey, sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts, there is a mismatch between the goals of doctoral education, the expectations of doctoral students, and the reality of the job market. The training that most doctoral students receive and what they want and need to prepare themselves for the jobs they'll eventually take. Regardless, nearly all were satisfied with their decision to attend graduate school.

The survey was conducted in the summer of 1999 and included more than 4,000 graduate students at 27 universities. Questions surveyed graduate student preparation, expectations, and career aspirations.

What careers do graduate students want?

- **48% University professor**
- **15% Research in private sector**
- **13% Work independently (consultant, writer, etc.)**
- **12% Research in nonprofit or government**
- **10% Research in a university**
- **6% Manager in private sector**
- **6% Start own business**
- **5% Manager in nonprofit or government**
- **5% Non-college teaching**
- **3% college administrator**

Are students prepared for academia?

Although 2/3 of students reported the desire to work in an academic setting, most felt unprepared to take on the responsibilities of the typical academic or faculty position. For example, 1/3 were unclear about customary practices regarding determining and ordering the authorship of papers, the appropriate use of research funds, when and how to publish papers, and refereeing academic papers fairly. Two-thirds reported feeling unclear about how to avoid conflicts of interest.

With regard to teaching, less than 1/3 of respondents felt that their graduate program prepared them to teach lecture courses, create an inclusive classroom climate, advise students, develop a teaching philosophy, and incorporate technology into the classroom.

Related Resources

- [Preparing for your Academic Career](#)
- [About the Academic Job Market](#)
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Elsewhere on the Web

- [View the full report from phd-survey.org](#)

How about nonacademic careers?

Another major finding was that students are less able to learn about nonacademic careers and often are not encouraged to do so. Academic is often presented as the only option. Alternatively, some educators argue that career placement is not the responsibility of faculty or a PhD program.

Grad School is Mysterious

Perhaps one of the most surprising findings was that most students viewed graduate school as a bit mysterious. All respondents were in at least their third year of graduate school but less than one half reported that the criteria for earning their degree were very clear to them. Students often don't realize their responsibility to take control over their education and careers. The moral: ask questions, clarify answers, and in short, demand clear expectations.

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