

# CAL POLY GRADUATE STATUS REPORT:

## Background, Context and Considerations of Data Usage

*Updated January 2026*

### Background and Context

The Graduate Status Report, sometimes referred to as the First Destination Survey, is conducted annually by Cal Poly Career Services on behalf of the University. This survey collects information regarding the activities of students who have recently graduated. Data collected from this survey is used for a variety of reasons, including departmental accreditation, tracking of employers who hire Cal Poly graduates, tracking of entry level salary rates, and tracking of graduate and professional schools applied and accepted to.

### Data Collection

Collection of data begins approximately two months before a student's graduation date and continues for approximately six months after.

Results are gathered from several sources, including direct self-reported survey responses from students; reported results from employers, faculty, and student supporters; and publicly available data from sources such as LinkedIn.

When completing the survey, students are able to submit one response from several options, including: exam preparation, fellowship, graduate school, job, military service, other intentions, own venture, postponing job search, research, seeking employment, service organization, still seeking education, taking time off, and volunteering. These responses are considered the reported outcome. Students are then asked a number of follow up questions, including but not limited to employer, salary, living location, employer industry, advanced degree type. All questions, with the exception of reported outcome, are voluntary to answer.

### The NACE Formula

In an effort to be aligned with national standards, starting with results from the 2022-2023 Academic Year, the Graduate Status Report (GSR) team transitioned to using the [National Association of Colleges and Employers](#) (NACE) Career Readiness formula to calculate the "Positive Engagement Rate," which is the percentage of students who are employed, continuing their education, or entering military service after graduation from Cal Poly. Given the number of internal and external stakeholders who use the data presented in the GSR, utilizing the NACE industry standard formula ensures continuity of survey development and delivery. Additional information about this decision can be [read here](#).

The NACE formula used to calculate the Positive Engagement Rate is:

$$\frac{\text{(Number of respondents employed + service + military + continuing education)}}{\text{(Number respondents employed + service + military + continuing education + still seeking employment \& still seeking continuing education)}}$$

## The NACE Formula (cont.)

For calculation purposes, responses are categorized as follows:

Employed	Service	Military	Continuing Education	Still Seeking	All Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Job (PT and FT)</li><li>• Own Venture</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Service Organization</li><li>• Volunteering</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Military Service</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Graduate School</li><li>• Fellowship</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seeking Employment</li><li>• Still Seeking Education</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exam prep</li><li>• Other Intentions</li><li>• Postponing Job Search</li><li>• Research</li><li>• Taking Time Off</li></ul>

## Considerations of Data Usage

Career goals for individual students are varied and personal, and numbers alone do not tell the singular stories of Cal Poly graduates.

There are many considerations that impact a student's post-graduation decisions, including where they choose to work, whether they decide to continue their education, or if they are able to find immediate employment. Factors such as [changes in hiring](#) and recruitment practices, the closing of [graduate programs](#), the [impact of AI](#) on entry-level jobs in certain industries, overall local and national economic trends, and familial and personal obligations all directly and indirectly influence these decisions.

Career Services makes no value judgment of majors or career choices or education decisions based on first destination data. This data set does not reveal [long term value](#) of an undergraduate education as it is a snapshot in time of a graduate's first year.

It is the mission of Career Services to empower students to achieve a lifetime of meaningful career success by engaging with Cal Poly's vibrant network.

The Graduate Status Report team is made up of one full time Career Services employee and two part-time student assistants. All good faith efforts are made to review, assess and confirm data.

Questions may be directed to [gsr@calpoly.edu](mailto:gsr@calpoly.edu).

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