

# Career Development Center

2024-2025 Annual Report



ADVISING & CAREER  
DEVELOPMENT CENTER



It's all about the  
students

-Mr. Wayne E. Simpson

## Letter from the Director



Mr. Wayne E. Simpson

At WKU, we believe career readiness is not just a destination, it's a journey of growth, self-discovery, and opportunity. This past year, our team at the Advising & Career Development Center (ACDC) has remained dedicated to walking alongside our students as they explore their futures, define their goals, and take meaningful steps toward fulfilling careers.

Through one-on-one coaching, career education programs, and expanded employer connections, we've worked to ensure every student has access to the tools, resources, and encouragement needed to thrive beyond the Hill. We are proud to share that this year saw record-breaking participation at our signature events, including Employer Spotlights and academic-specific career fairs. We also continued to strengthen our "career studio" model, empowering trained student peer coaches to meet students where they are, whether in the classroom, residence halls, or campus workshops.

One of our most impactful tools, the Handshake platform, continues to connect students with thousands of part-time, full-time, and internship opportunities across the country and here on campus. In fact, Handshake is now the required system for on-campus student employment, ensuring students have streamlined access to jobs and real-world experience.

Our work would not be possible without the collaboration and support of faculty, staff, alumni, and employer partners who champion career readiness every day. Together, we are building a culture where career development is embedded into the student experience, from their first year through graduation and beyond.

As you read through this annual report, we hope you see the story of progress, purpose, and partnership. Thank you for joining us in preparing Hilltoppers to lead, serve, and make their mark on the world.



# Our Commitment

At WKU, the Career Development Center, we're all about turning career confusion into career confidence. Whether it's a student's first résumé, their dream internship, or a big interview, we're here to cheer them on, coach them up, and celebrate every step forward.

We believe every Hilltopper deserves access to meaningful opportunities, empowering guidance, and the chance to discover what truly lights them up. That's why we offer personalized support, innovative resources, and a whole lot of encouragement along the way.

From the first career fair to their first job offer, we're in their corner. Because when Hilltoppers rise, we rise with them.

# Our Team



From left to right: Mr. Wayne E. Simpson, Ms. Jolee Campbell, Mr. Brian Ahern, Mr. Tijuan Neal II



# Our Services

## Resume, Cover Letter, Handshake

Coach students to effectively tailor career document development to specific jobs, and teach strategies to personalize Handshake accounts.

## Picking a Major or Career

Help students to align future careers based on their interests, values, and abilities. We also provide useful resources to help narrow down options.

## Internship and Job Search Tips

Provide helpful tips of how to effectively search for opportunities, and coach students to connect their skills to employers needs.

## Career Fair Preparation

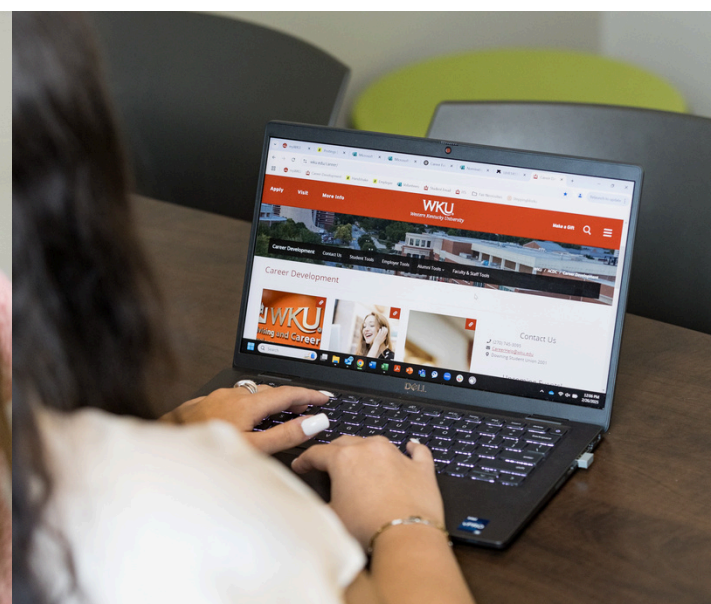
Answer questions and calm any feelings of anxiety. Explain the expectations of employers including professional dress, resumes, & personal interactions.

## Interview Skills

Coach students to effectively prepare for interviews, and offer tips and strategies to strengthen their skills. We also conduct mock interviews to help students practice.

## Additional Services

Career coaches are available to discuss post-graduation plans, and help assist students in creating a personal brand that will assist them in their internship or job searches.



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# Career Coaching

At WKU, the Advising and Career Development Center is dedicated to helping students explore their career interests, develop professional skills, and confidently pursue their goals. Our Career Development Team provides personalized coaching tailored to each student's unique academic background, career path, and ambitions. Whether students need help identifying career options, preparing for interviews, building a standout résumé, or navigating the internship and job search process, our team is here to support them every step of the way.

To ensure easy access to services, we offer in-person coaching and virtual appointments to meet students where they are. This flexible, student-first approach allows us to reach more Hilltoppers and help them prepare for successful futures, wherever their paths may lead.

## Appointment Topics

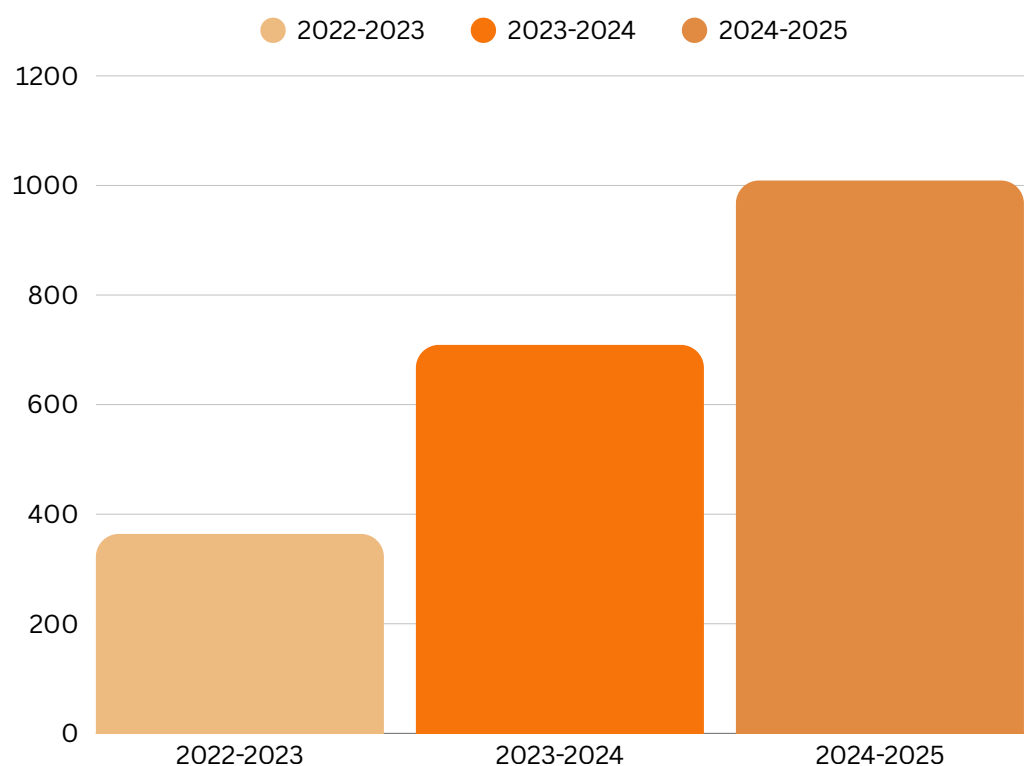
- Professional Document Review
- Job/Internship Search Tips
- Uncertain Major/Career
- Interview Preparation
- General Career Help
- Personal Branding
- Graduate School Planning



1009 total student appointments

07 Career Success Professionals

42.3% increase in appointments



“I was unsure about my career path and graduate programs, and Career Services helped me explore my options. It really helped me not only get a better idea of specific jobs I could apply for, but also see things from a different perspective when thinking about my career path.”

— Nayla M., Junior, Psych Sciences Major



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# Classes/Workshops

## Presentation Topics

- Resume/Cover Letter Development
- Career Development Services
- Elevator Pitch
- AI in Career Development
- Job/Internship Search Strategies
- Selecting a Major/Career
- Career Exploration

**58**  
workshops &  
presentations  
with  
**1200**  
students

## Classroom Collaborations

Incorporating career-focused assignments into the classroom is a powerful way to equip students for their professional futures. This year, we collaborated with faculty across campus to support and enhance career-related coursework, including:

- Resume Reviews
- Mock Interviews
- Handshake/LinkedIn Profile Reviews
- Career Exploration Appointments
- Class Presentations
- Cover Letter Reviews





# Career Student Ambassador's



**Jessye Denney**

Our student staff completed

**284**

appointment and email resume reviews.

**29.18%**

of all appointments & resume reviews completed by our office was with peer level staff.



**Shania Wood**

## Appointment Topics

- Resume/CV Review
- Cover Letter Review
- Job Search Assistance

## Referral Methods

- ACDC Website
- ACDC Emails
- Social Media Posts
- From a Friend
- Class Assignments



**Ziah Anderson**

Working in career services has been a great experience that allows me to guide students like me as they prepare for their future careers. It has motivated me to take greater initiative in my own career pursuits while also strengthening my leadership and communication skills - **Ziah Anderson**





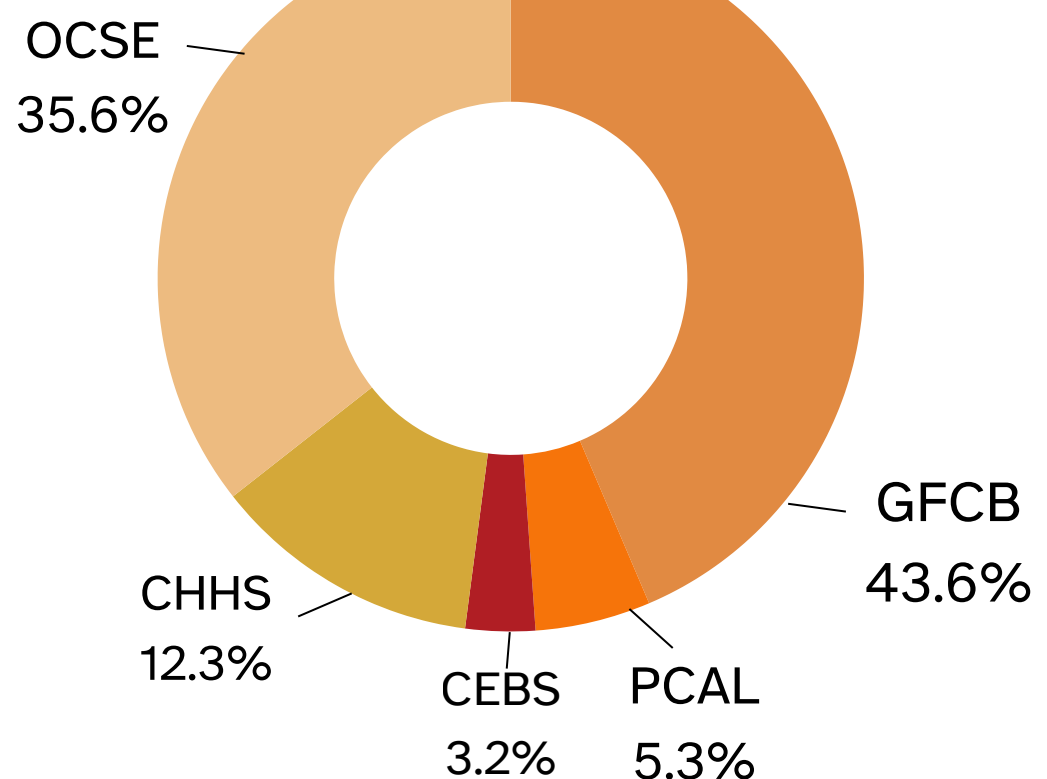
# Career Events

We hosted **12** Career Fairs and **2** Internship Events

**1,825** & **346**  
Students Employers

## Attended our Career Events

Students by College



## Career Events

- Business Internship/Career Fair
- SEAS Construction Career Fair
- SEAS Mechatronics Career Fair
- Student-Athlete NIL and Career Fair
- WKU On-Campus Job Fair
- Nursing Recruitment Fair
- Physical Therapy Career Fair
- Counseling Internship Fair
- Disney College Program Internship Fair
- National Corvette Museum Internship Fair

## Top Employers based on Engagement



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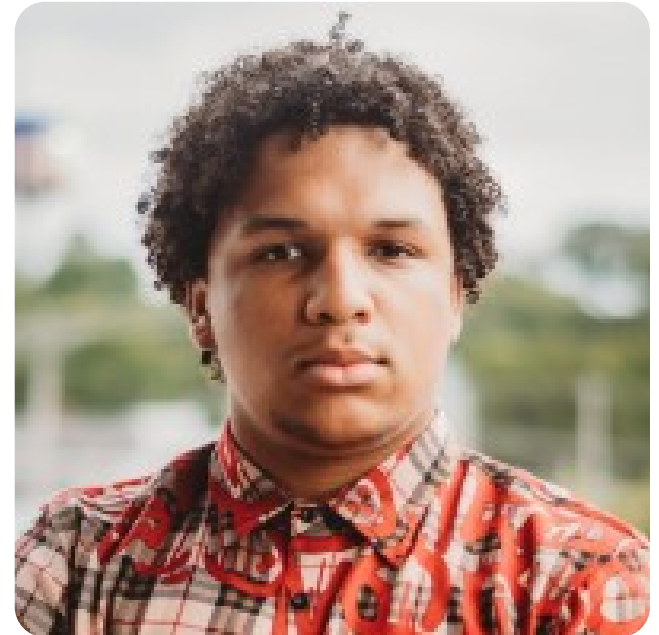
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# Quotes from Our Community

"When I attended the SEAS Construction Fair, I was looking for a business where I could complete the internship required for graduation. Instead, I received an even greater opportunity, a full-time position, which I accepted. The fair was thoughtfully organized with employers who were actively seeking to hire and invest in WKU students. Thanks to the Advising and Career Development Center, I now have a job in my field that I genuinely enjoy. I encourage all students to attend career fairs they are a valuable resource for making meaningful connections and discovering career opportunities."

-Carrigan Watson, Class of 2025



"Our collaboration with ACDC has been a vital driver in the development and success of WKU's first-generation student community. Of those student success cohort programs partnered with CDC, 30 students participated in the First Gen Advocate Mentorship Program, and 20 completed the Career Launch experience. Overall through our co-curricular tracking in Suitable, we engaged 16.8% of WKU's 4,800 first-gen students, with 1,177 Suitable activity completions 307 of which were in the Career and Professional Development competency, representing more than 26% of all tracked engagement. These outcomes reflect the power of intentional collaboration to connect first-gen students with the skills, networks, and confidence they need to thrive."

-Cierra Waller,

Associate Director of The Center for Innovative Learning and Teaching

"Participating in WKU's career events has been an incredibly rewarding experience for our team. We consistently meet well-prepared, motivated students who are eager to learn and grow. Thanks to these events, we've built a strong pipeline of talent and hired some exceptional Hilltoppers who continue to thrive within our company."

-Samantha Eckman,  
Enterprise Mobility, Recruiter



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# Employer Engagement

22,547

jobs were posted by  
employers for WKU  
students within  
Handshake



## Top Employers who Hired WKU Students



## Average Salaries

\$65,470

Overall Mean Full-  
Time Salary

\$80,920

Business Careers

\$53,180

Creative Careers

\$57,530

Public Service Careers

\$52,000

Education & Human Services  
Careers

\$100,103

STEM Careers



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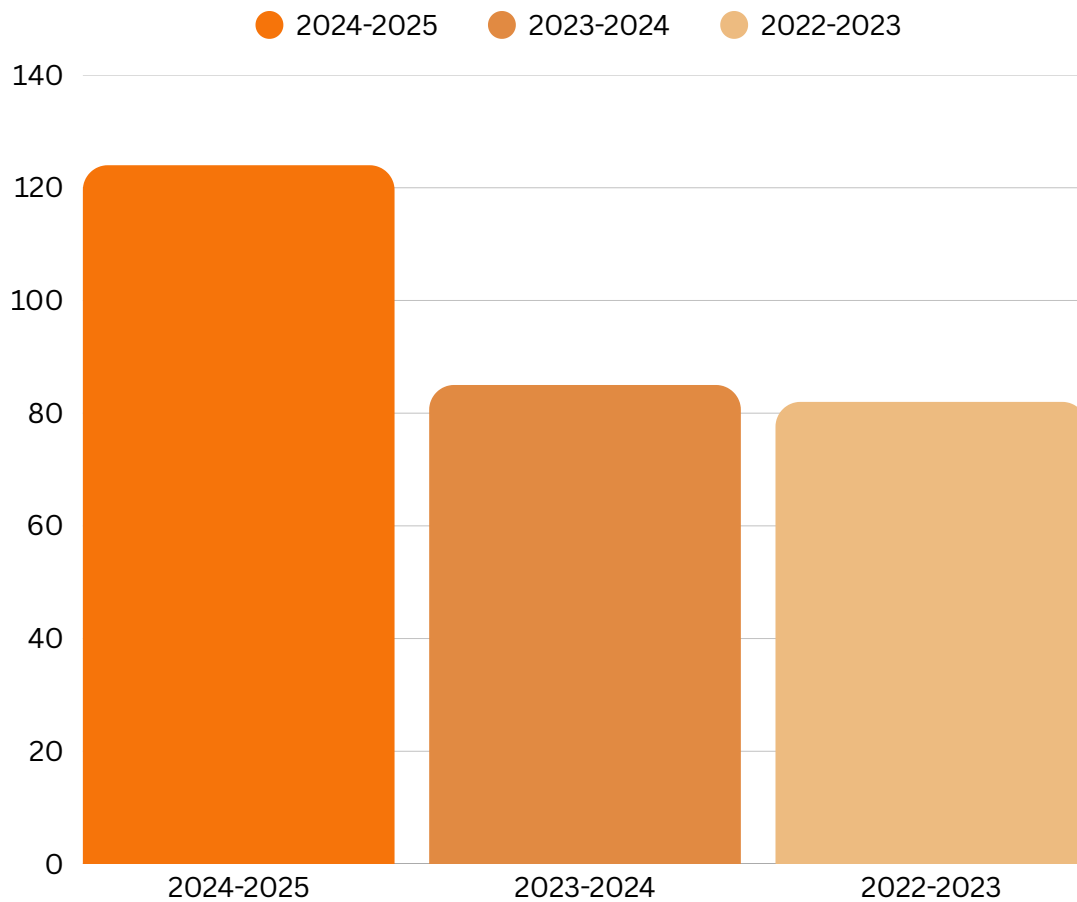
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# Internships

124

Students reported  
completing a Co-op/  
Internship in Handshake  
in 2024-2025



Total 3-Year : **291 students**

Total since the start of reporting: **817 students**

## Top Internship Employers



Average Salary:

**\$29/hour**

Average Hours Worked:

**112**



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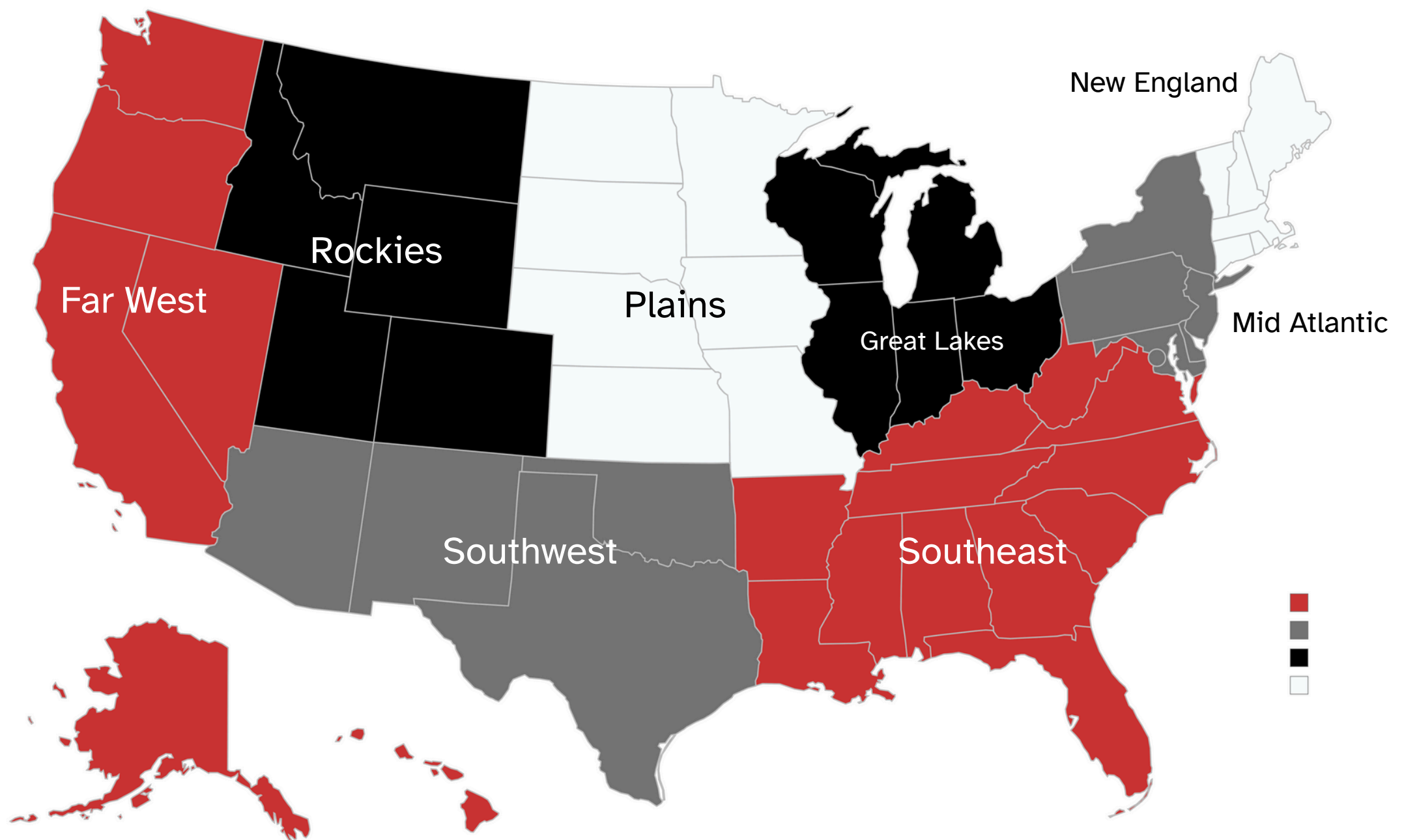
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# Where Hilltoppers Work



**Far West**

5.33%

**Rockies**

3.37%

**Great Lakes**

24.16%

**Plains**

4.26%

**Mid Atlantic**

6.57%

**New England**

2.13%

**Southeast**

47.42%

**Southwest**

6.75%



# Partnerships

## Connecting with First Year Students



### Career Launch

Emphasizes the importance of networking and relationship-building in today's competitive job landscape. Through hands-on exercises and connection to the WKU Alumni Association's Career Consultants program, students gained the confidence and skills necessary to navigate professional interactions successfully and develop relationships with professionals they previously were not connected with.



### First Gen Advocate Mentoring

Designed to support first-generation college students through structured mentorship, goal setting, and reflective journaling. The program included a mentor match event, five structured mentor meetings, and guided reflections submitted via Blackboard. Our goals were to build connections between students and WKU faculty/staff, enhance self-advocacy, and improve retention through relational and academic support.

### ISEC

Promotes a culturally inclusive campus environment, cultural awareness and competence, inter-group dialogue, engagement and intercultural interaction, and supports lifelong learning about self and others. A hands-on recruitment and retention resource for the many cultural, religious/spiritual, and identity groups reflected within the WKU community. The center provides student support services to foster academic success and sponsors culturally based celebratory events.

### TRIO-SSS

Group of federally funded college opportunity programs that motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds in their pursuit of a college degree. TRIO programs provide academic tutoring and advising, counseling, mentoring, financial guidance, and other assistance necessary for educational access and success.





# Partnerships

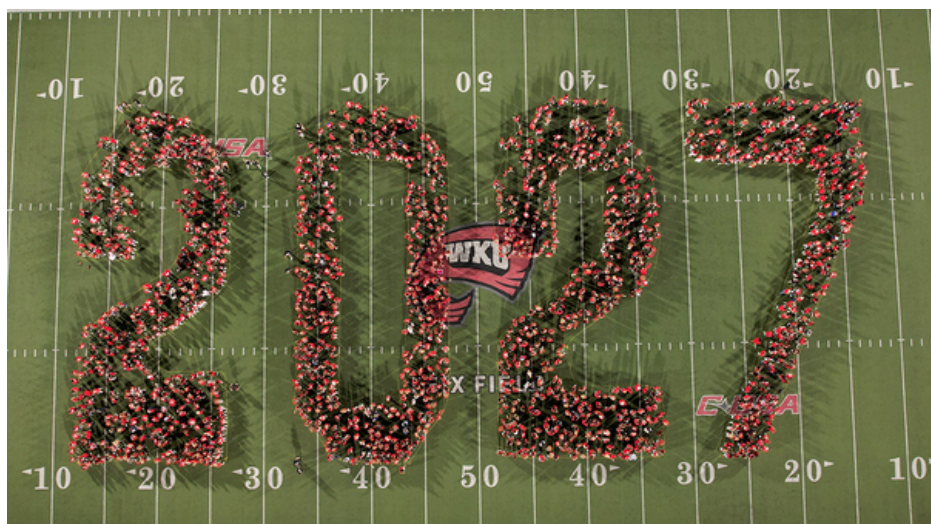
## Connecting with First Year Students

### Why Knot Us

The purpose of the program is to increase the sense of belonging of Black males through intentional programmatic needs. Through this, we will improve retention, impact, and quality of life through professional and personal development opportunities.

### Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE)

The Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) is Kentucky's coordinating body for higher education. WKU partners with CPE to align with statewide goals and support student achievement. This group improves collaboration by sharing innovative ideas, policies, best practices, and strategies that enhance student success across institutions.



We reached a total of

**291 students**

through various events/organizations.

### Ohanami

WKU's Ohanami Day celebrates the Japanese tradition of cherry blossom viewing, bringing students, faculty, and community members together to experience Japanese culture through performances, food, and hands-on activities. This annual spring event promotes cultural appreciation and community engagement on campus.

### M.A.S.T.E.R Plan

The WKU Master Plan serves as a long-term vision for the university's physical campus, guiding future development to support academic excellence, student engagement, and community connection. It outlines strategic priorities for campus spaces, facilities, and infrastructure. Through thoughtful planning and stakeholder input, the Master Plan ensures WKU continues to evolve in alignment with its mission and the needs of future generations.



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# Professional Resources

## Premium Career Resources

**Handshake:** Job Management

**Job Scan:** Resume Optimization

**Steppingblocks:** Career Exploration

**Career Launch:** Career Readiness Coaching

## Number of opportunities posted by type:

18,930 full & part-time jobs

2,119 internships

230 fellowships

34 cooperative education

73 volunteer jobs

50 experiential learning jobs

73 on-campus employment

21,590 total opportunities

**Handshake**  
[wku.joinhandshake.com](https://wku.joinhandshake.com)



## Handshake

Handshake is our #1 student and alumni career resource. The Handshake platform serves as the central hub for all WKU students to access Career Center resources, events, appointments and networking. Initially launched in 2018, WKU was one of the first universities in the country to utilize Handshake. We're proud to maintain one of the highest student engagement rates nationwide which helps our students maintain a strong competitive edge.

Handshake's mission is to help every college student find the right job for them no matter where they go to school, what they're majoring in or who they know. Handshake does this by connecting college students and young alumni to a comprehensive national network, all built on a fast, scalable mobile infrastructure. We work directly with Handshake to continually improve the efficacy of the tool for our students.



# Social Media Presence

<https://linktr.ee/wkuacdc>



Instagram: **↑21.03%**

Total: 3,717  
Increase: 782



Threads: **↑69.12%**

Total: 434  
Increase: 300



Facebook: **↑22.66%**

Total: 984  
Increase: 223



X: **↑7.14%**

Total: 616  
Increase: 44

In an average month, we typically receive around 332 views and 262 clicks on our LinkTree page.

## Career Tip Tuesdays

Career Tip Tuesdays is a weekly initiative led by the Career Development team to share quick, practical advice with students on topics like resume writing, interview prep, networking, and job searching. The purpose of these posts is to provide accessible, timely career guidance that helps students build confidence and stay engaged in their professional development throughout the semester.

[Branding: Your Personal Brand](#)

[Elevator Pitch](#)

[Career Conversations](#)

[The Importance of Mentorship](#)

[Resumes](#)

[Job Search Strategies](#)

[Email Etiquette](#)

[Internships](#)

[What is Handshake?](#)

[Self-Motivation](#)

[Men's Professional Clothing](#)

[Soft Skills vs Hard Skills](#)

[Women's Professional Attire](#)

[Job vs Career](#)

[Best Practices for Interviewing](#)

[Mr. Wayne's Five Keys to Success](#)

[Career Foundations: Part 1](#)

[Career Foundations: Part 2](#)

[Career Foundations: Part 3](#)



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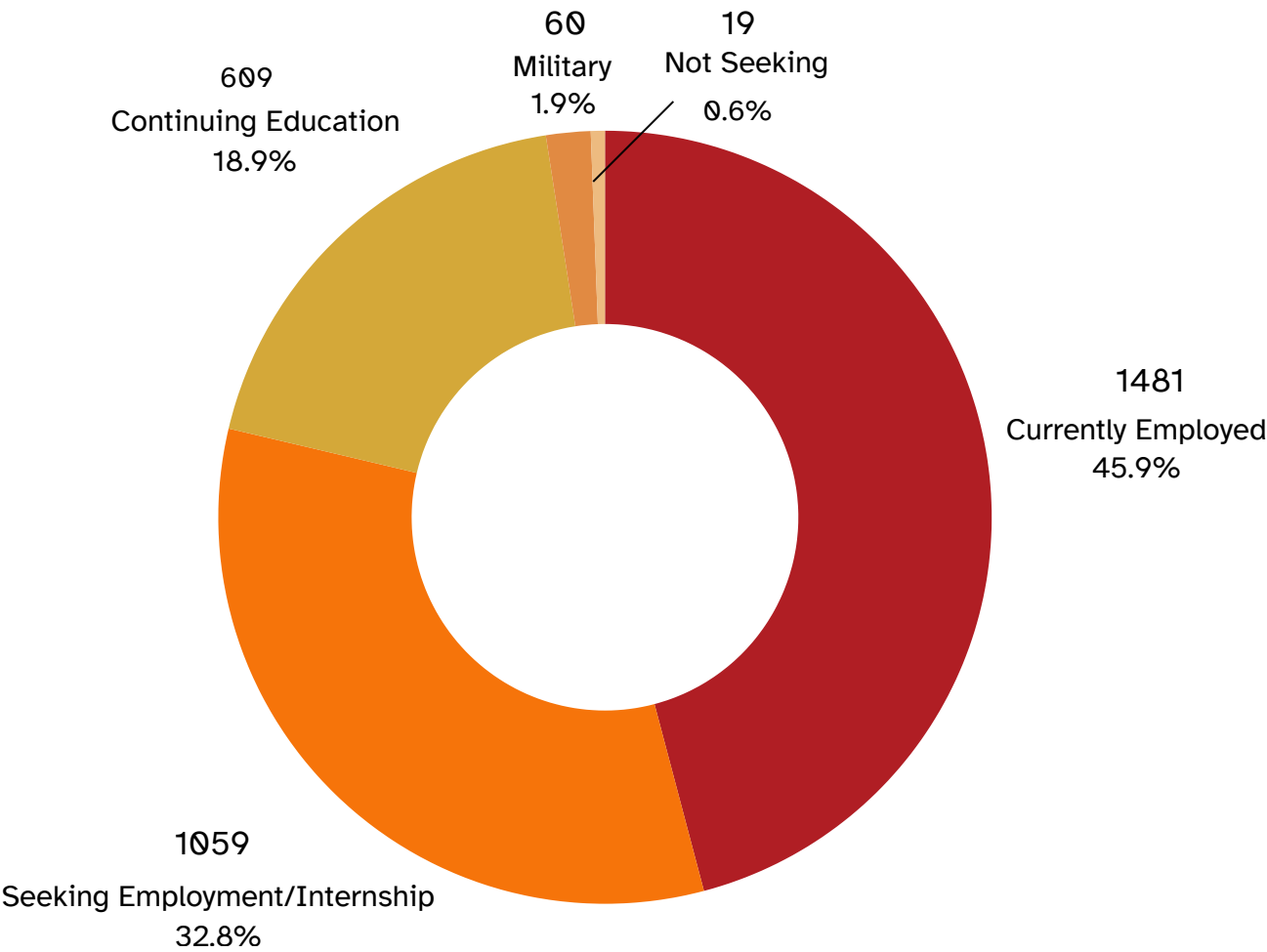
# First Destination Survey

Western Kentucky University administers the First Destination Survey to recent graduates including both undergraduate and graduate students to gain insight into their career outcomes and future plans. The data collected plays a key role in measuring the effectiveness of a WKU education and allows for comparison with national benchmarks. This survey follows the standards set by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) and the MBA Career Services & Employer Alliance (MBACSEA), ensuring our methodology remains consistent and nationally recognized.

We also know that some students may complete the survey prior to graduation, and may subsequently find a job, gain admittance to graduate school, or otherwise finalize their post-college plans without updating their survey response. We know that employment numbers continue to rise in the months following graduation. Due to these limitations, **this data does not reflect a complete picture of all outcomes for 2023 - 2024 WKU Graduates.**

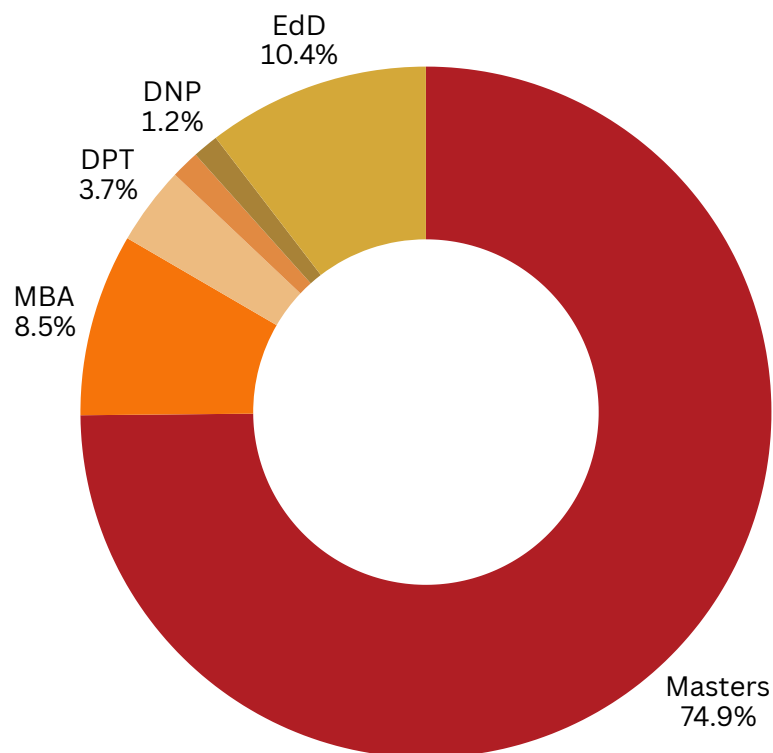
By consistently tracking and analyzing this data, WKU is committed to supporting student success beyond graduation and strengthening our career development resources year after year.

	Currently Employed	Seeking Employment	Continuing Education	Military	Not Seeking Employment	Total Reported
AA AS AAS	73	13	4	-	1	91
BA BS BFA BBA	962	837	572	22	14	2,407
MA MS MBA MFA	396	181	28	35	2	642
Doctor	32	25	1	-	2	60
Cert.	17	3	4	3	-	27
Total	1,480	1,059	609	60	19	3,227

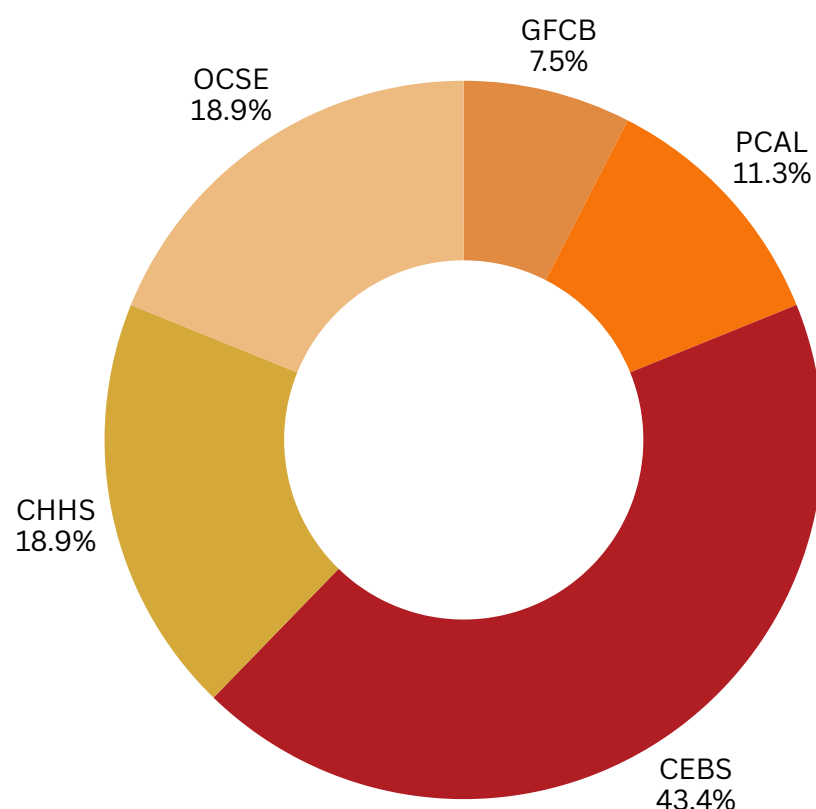




# Graduate School Destinations



## Furthering Degree Programs



## Programs by College

Many WKU students choose to pursue graduate or professional school following the completion of their undergraduate degrees. To support these students, the WKU Career Development Team offers personalized guidance throughout the graduate school planning process.

Our Career Team helps students explore graduate programs that align with their long-term career goals, determine optimal timelines for applying, and stay on track with key milestones. From initial research to final decision-making, WKU students receive comprehensive support every step of the way.

### Career Development provides assistance with:

- Researching graduate and professional school programs
- Writing and refining résumés and CVs
- Developing compelling personal statements
- Preparing for graduate school interviews
- Identifying relevant internships and research opportunities
- Exploring gap year programs and experiences that enhance future applications

Whether a student is just beginning to explore advanced study or ready to submit applications, WKU's Career Development team is here to provide expert support and guidance.



"The WKU Career Team played such a meaningful role in my journey to graduate school. They helped me research programs that matched my goals, gave thoughtful feedback on my personal statement, and even helped me prepare for interviews. Their encouragement and guidance made the process feel a lot less overwhelming. I'm incredibly grateful for the support I received. WKU truly sets students up for success beyond graduation."

— **Alexis Shaffer, WKU Class of 2022**





# Career Center Staff

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## It's all about the Students



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