

Why Geoscience Students Enroll in a Master's Program

The American Geosciences Institute (AGI) and the Association of American Geographers (AAG) received funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to investigate non-doctoral preparatory Master's programs in Geology and physical Geography. The graph below depicts eight commonly identified reasons why students decide to enroll in a Master's program. The majority of students in both Geology and Geography programs, 90% and 80% respectively, indicate that enrolling in a graduate program is "Important" or "Very Important" to prepare for a better job, and in turn, increase salary potential, 81% and 67% respectively. The majority of Geology and Geography students (81% and 56% respectively) also indicate that the opportunities to conduct research are "Important" or "Very Important." Interestingly, the opportunities to teach during a graduate program seem less important, to geography students in particular (62%), with the majority indicating this being "Not Important" or "Somewhat Important."

Data were collected through a study titled Geoscience Career Master's Preparation Survey (Geo Career MaPS), which sought to understand what skills and competencies faculty teach students in Master's programs, how prepared students feel they are in each of these skills, and compare these to what practicing, non-academic geoscience professionals indicate as most important in their fields. The survey also inquired about other items including reasons students enrolled in a graduate program, career choices and influences, and satisfaction with Master's programs. Data were collected from over 20 different Geology departments and over 20 different Geography departments.

This is the first in a series of seven Currents disseminating results from the AGI and AAG Geoscience Career Master's Preparation Survey. For more information about this research, its outcomes and resources available to departments, please visit AGI's website: <http://www.americangeosciences.org/workforce/workforce-readiness>.

