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# Factors Influencing Employment Choices of Graduates from the Department of Agricultural Economics

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# Cornhusker Economics

## Factors Influencing Employment Choices of Graduates from the Department of Agricultural Economics

| Market Report  | Year Ago | 4 Wks Ago | 6/23/17 |
|--|----------|-----------|---------|
| <b>Livestock and Products,</b>   |          |           |         |
| <b>Weekly Average</b>  |          |           |         |
| Nebraska Slaughter Steers,<br>35-65percent Choice, Live Weight. . . .                            | 116.11   | *         | *       |
| Nebraska Feeder Steers,<br>Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb. . . . .                               | 177.63   | 180.95    | 201.17  |
| Nebraska Feeder Steers,<br>Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb. . . . .                                | 152.51   | 158.50    | NA      |
| Choice Boxed Beef,<br>600-750 lb. Carcass. . . . .   | 216.82   | 248.36    | 244.90  |
| Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price<br>Carcass, Negotiated . . . . .                                | 81.88    | 70.85     | 87.05   |
| Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass<br>51-52percent Lean. . . . .                               | 88.00    | 86.27     | 99.56   |
| Slaughter Lambs, woolled and shorn,<br>135-165 lb. National. . . . .                             | 149.07   | 159.83    | 186.54  |
| National Carcass Lamb Cutout<br>FOB. . . . .   | 338.48   | 410.38    | 429.92  |
| <b>Crops,</b>  |          |           |         |
| <b>Daily Spot Prices</b>   |          |           |         |
| Wheat, No. 1, H.W.   |          |           |         |
| Imperial, bu. . . . .  | 3.34     | 3.12      | 3.63    |
| Corn, No. 2, Yellow<br><b>Columbus</b> , bu. . . . .   | 3.47     | 3.42      | 3.30    |
| Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow<br><b>Columbus</b> , bu. . . . .   | 10.31    | 8.73      | 8.31    |
| Grain Sorghum, No.2, Yellow<br>Dorchester, cwt. . . . .  | 5.62     | 5.77      | 5.52    |
| Oats, No. 2, Heavy<br>Minneapolis, Mn, bu. . . . .   | 2.57     | 2.95      | 2.86    |
| <b>Feed</b>  |          |           |         |
| Alfalfa, Large Square Bales,<br>Good to Premium, RFV 160-185<br>Northeast Nebraska, ton. . . . . | 165.00   | 128.75    | 135.00  |
| Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good<br>Platte Valley, ton. . . . .                                       | 75.00    | 65.00     | 77.50   |
| Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good<br>Nebraska, ton. . . . .  | 80.00    | 65.00     | *       |
| Dried Distillers Grains, 10percent<br>Moisture<br>Nebraska Average. . . . .                      | 159.00   | 103.50    | 98.50   |
| Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70percent<br>Moisture<br>Nebraska Average. . . . .                     | 51.00    | 40.00     | 40.00   |
| <b>* No Market</b>   |          |           |         |

During the Spring of 2012, we sent a survey to alumni of our department for the purpose of collecting information to assist students and aid in student recruitment. We surveyed 2,899 alumni and had 789 responses. For this article, I focused on the 406 respondents who have graduated since 1980. The average respondent's age was 40, with a range of 22 to 65. Twenty-six percent were female and 74 percent were male.

The ultimate goal of most students is to graduate and obtain meaningful employment. Many students experience anxiety when trying to choose which job to take, especially given the diverse advantages offered and the internal pressure the student feels to choose the right job.

The majority of our graduates do not remain in their first job. The typical respondent changes jobs twice while entertaining four job offers after their first job. Of alumni graduating since 1980, 33 percent have not changed jobs, 56 percent have changed jobs one to four times, and 11 percent have changed jobs more than four times. In contrast, the average number of jobs occupied by the 108 alumni in our total survey who had already retired averaged 2.8 jobs per respondent.

When asked how closely their current job is to their first job out of college, 43 percent stated the two were closely related, 31 percent felt they were somewhat related and 26 percent stated they were not related. The change in jobs appeared beneficial as 38 percent of respondents stated they were very satisfied with their current job and 53 percent

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were satisfied, contrasted to 28 percent being very satisfied and 45 percent being satisfied with their first job. Almost 77 percent of respondents stated *no*, 18 percent stated *somewhat*, and 5 percent stated *yes* when asked if they felt underemployed in their current job.

To determine the importance of various factors in contributing to our alumni choosing their first and current job, respondents were asked to indicate if certain considerations were a *major factor*, *somewhat of a factor*, or *not a factor* in choosing their first and current (if they have changed jobs) occupation. The considerations examined were salary, benefits, advancement prospects, type of work, working conditions, location, being near family, and accommodating your spouse's employment. Responses are presented in Figures 1-8.

Type of work, location and working conditions appear to have played a larger role in the respondent's job choice than did the other factors. Fifty-eight percent of respondents stated the type of work was a major factor in choosing their first job and 68 percent considered it a major consideration in choosing their current job. Location and working conditions exhibited similar tendencies, with 43 percent and 39 percent, respectively, considering them as major factors in choosing their first job, and 58 percent and 50 percent considering them as major factors in selecting their current job.

Advancement prospects were an important consideration for many of our graduates as 36 percent considered this a major factor and 35 percent considered it somewhat a factor in choosing their first job. The

prospect for advancement played a similar role for respondents in selecting both their current occupation and their first employment.

Somewhat interesting was that salary and benefits tended to be considered more as *somewhat of a factor* than a *major factor* for both the first and current job. Both were more of a factor in choosing their current job than their first job. Curiously, 34 percent of respondents indicated salary was not a factor in choosing their first job. Perhaps beginning salaries were quite comparable amongst employers and thus was not much of a factor for many.

Proximity to family and spousal employment considerations were not as important concerns as other factors, particularly in choosing their first job. Being near family played a more important role in changing jobs with 63 percent considering proximity to family either a somewhat or a major factor in their current position compared to 48 percent when considering their first employment. Perhaps one of the reasons 84 percent of respondents did not consider spousal employment accommodations a factor in the choice of their first job was that 80 percent were not married at that point in their lives.

While choosing the first job out of college can be a stressful experience, students need to remember that the type of work, location, working conditions and advancement prospects have been choice factors that have guided previous decision makers. Opportunities for changing jobs frequently appear and the majority of department alumni are satisfied with their current jobs and do not feel underemployed. The future of our current students is indeed bright.

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Figure 1. How much did the type of work contribute in choosing your job?

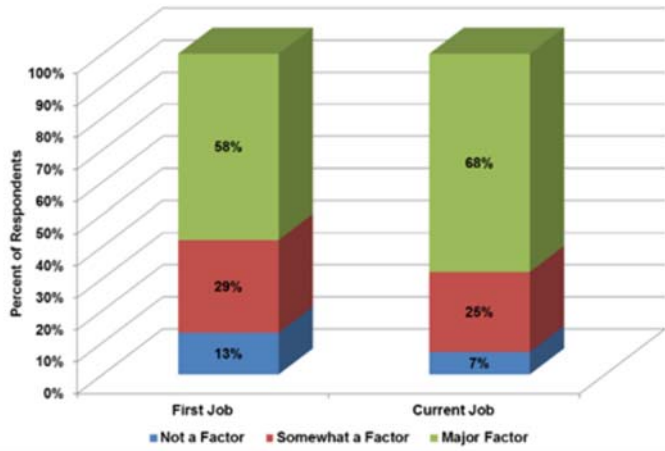


Figure 2. How much did location contribute in choosing your job?

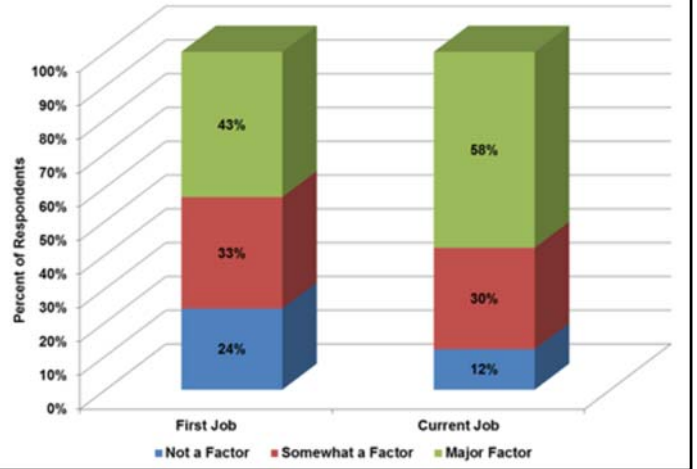


Figure 3. How much did working conditions contribute in choosing your job?

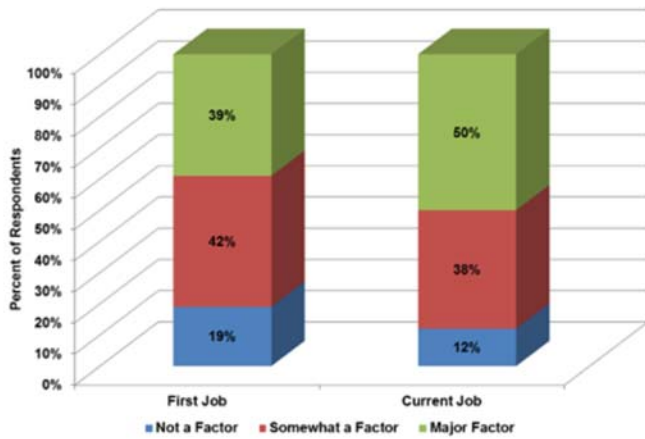


Figure 4. How much did advancement prospects contribute in choosing your job?

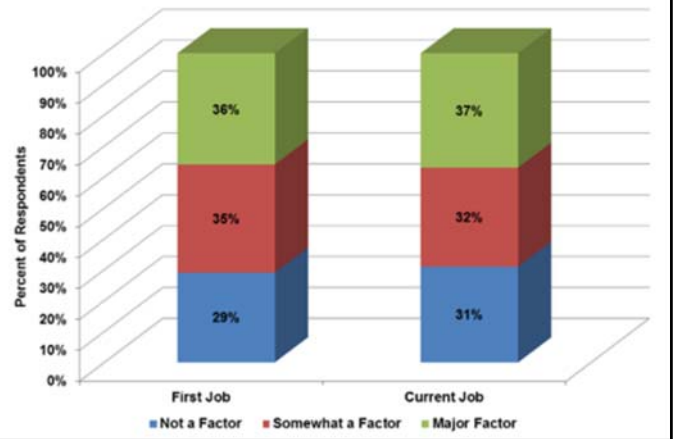


Figure 5. How much did salary contribute in choosing your job?

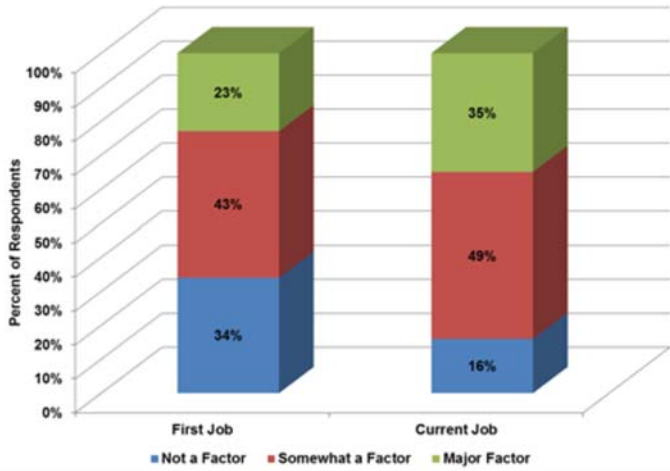


Figure 6. How much did benefits contribute in choosing your job?

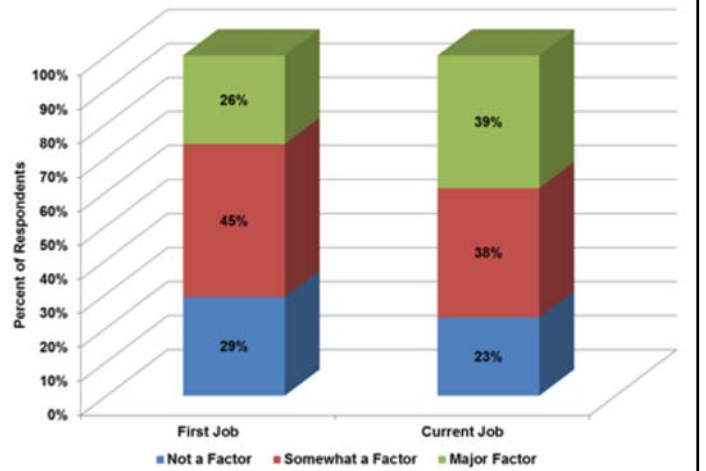


Figure 7. How much did being near family contribute in choosing your job?

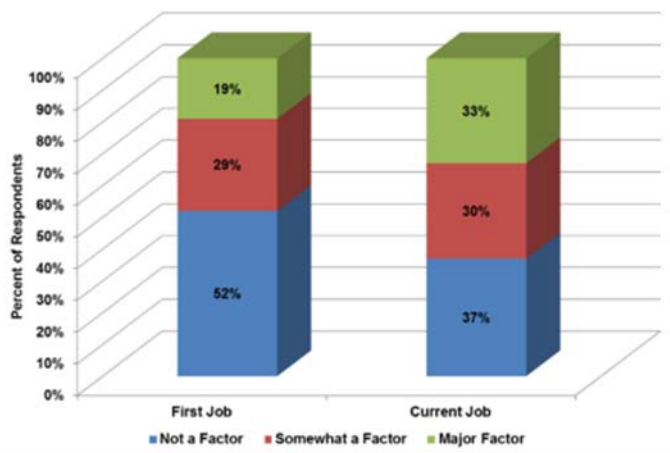


Figure 8. How much did accommodating your spouse's employment contribute in choosing your job?

