# PathTech LISTEN

## Mixed Methods Longitudinal Investigations of Students in Technician EducatioN

## Research Brief Series                                    Volume 2, No. 1

## Developing Strategies for Tracking Community College Alumni
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The PathTech LISTEN team conducted a Discussion Session titled, "Life after School: Career Pathways for Technician Students" at the October 2019 National Science Foundation (NSF) Advanced Technological Education (ATE) Principal Investigators Conference. In this session, approximately 30 community college faculty and administrators described strategies their programs and colleges use to track their former students. Most attendees described informal processes such as word of mouth or through social media. Few described a formal process led by their program or institution. College programs expressed interest in developing or learning best practices for tracking alumni, taking into account privacy concerns and noting that some approaches may work better for different groups (i.e. post-traditional students).

The LISTEN team followed up on this effort with an online pilot survey of two-year college faculty and administrators for the purpose of identifying existing alumni tracking practices. In May 2020, we sent a brief survey to 133 two-year community colleges and received 31 responses.

Only 32% of respondents (10 of 31) said their program or institution attempted to track students. Among those 10, only one respondent said their program tracks all students. Mostly programs just informally keep in touch with students who choose to stay in touch with the
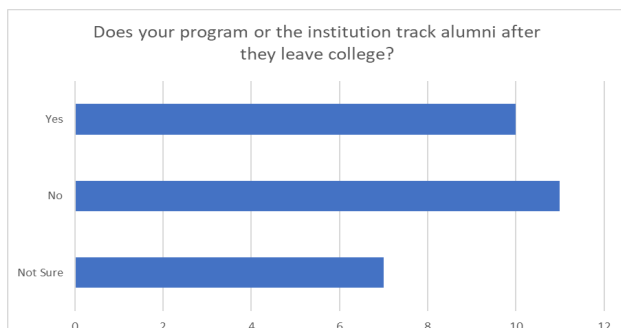
program. Of the remaining programs, 11 said they would like to track alumni, but did not have the ability to do so. Others had not considered it or where not sure why they do not track alumni. One respondent indicated that resources were not available to support tracking the process.

*I am uncertain why the institution as a whole does not do a better job of tracking alumni. It has been a topic of discussion, but never seems to gain any traction. Our department does not have the resources available to track alumni.*

The 36% that attempt to track former students use the following strategies: graduate surveys, social media, texts, email, phone calls, as well as institutional research involvement. Most programs are aware of job placements only when students stay in touch with them and share this information.

Colleges also indicated that they are most interested in learning about the alumni student's employment information including their employer, job and salary. A few were also interested in whether students continued with any educational pathways.
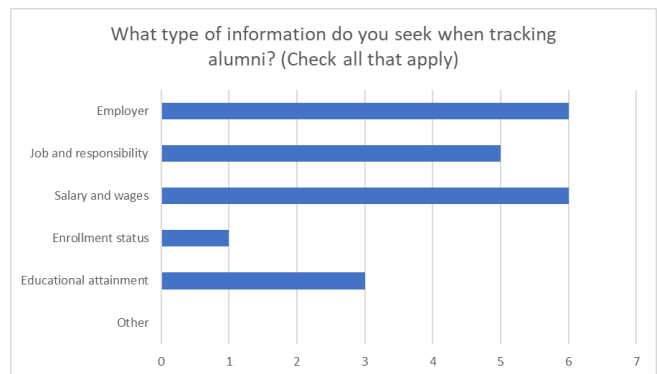




PathTech LISTEN continues to work with ATE Evaluate to develop strategies for tracking students. An ATE survey of ATE Principal Investigators (PIs) received a 91% response rate. The analysis of this data is in process.