

APA Report on Diversity Institute Alumni Outcomes

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Introduction

As part of a diversity grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the APA committed to researching the career outcomes of alumni of summer diversity institutes in philosophy. One of the goals of the Mellon grant and of diversity institutes in general is to increase the numbers of underrepresented individuals in philosophy who pursue further study and who eventually join the philosophy professoriate. Diversity institutes pursue this goal by supporting students from underrepresented groups in philosophy—including women, students of color, LGBTQ+ students, first generation college students, students with disabilities, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds—as they hone their philosophical interests and gain insight into the graduate admissions process. Students build confidence in their academic abilities and leave their programs with a network of mentors and peers who support their pursuit of philosophy for years after the program is over.

Through research and surveys, the APA tracked the career paths of alumni of each diversity institute. These institutes include the Rutgers Summer Institute for Diversity in Philosophy (SIDP), both Philosophy in an Inclusive Key Summer Institutes (PIKSI-Rock and PIKSI-Boston), the Summer Immersion Program in Philosophy at Brown (SIPP@Brown), the University of California San Diego Summer Program for Women in Philosophy (SPWP), the COMPASS program at the University of Michigan, and the University of Pittsburgh Summer Program in Philosophy of Science. The APA maintains a contact list of each student who attended an institute via rosters provided by the institute organizers every year. In 2018, the contact list included 480 unique names. Some individuals attended more than one institute, and so the total number of diversity institute attendances is slightly higher.

In both 2017 and 2018, the APA sent out a survey to all diversity institute alumni contacts on record at the time. This report includes data from the 2018 survey, as well as data collected from online research of each diversity institute alumni contact from 2004-2017, whether they completed the survey or not. APA program assistant Lucy Pawliczek analyzed the survey results, conducted the outcomes research, and compiled this report.

2018 Survey of 2004-2017 Diversity Institute Alumni

In 2018, 138 individuals from the APA contact list of diversity institute alumni completed a survey about their experiences during and after attending a diversity institute. This survey asked questions about identity, questions about graduate school and career choice, as well as questions about the diversity institute experience. The survey included both selected-response questions and space for narrative text responses. This report will focus on just a few of the questions and responses from the 2018 survey.

Survey Respondent Demographics

Figures 1 through 3 depict survey data covering the years of respondent attendance, the self-reported race/ethnicity of respondents, and the number of respondents in other self-reported identity categories. The survey also asked respondents their gender identity; 71 percent of survey respondents identified as “female,” 22 percent identified as “male,” and 6 percent identified as “other” in regards to gender. Figure 1 reflects that as more diversity institutes appear, and as existing institutes increase their capacity to host students, the total number of individuals who attend diversity institutes each year generally increases over time. This also means that survey data is skewed towards younger individuals who recently graduated college, or who had not yet graduated college at the time that they completed the survey.

Figure 1: Number of Diversity Institute Attendances Per Year

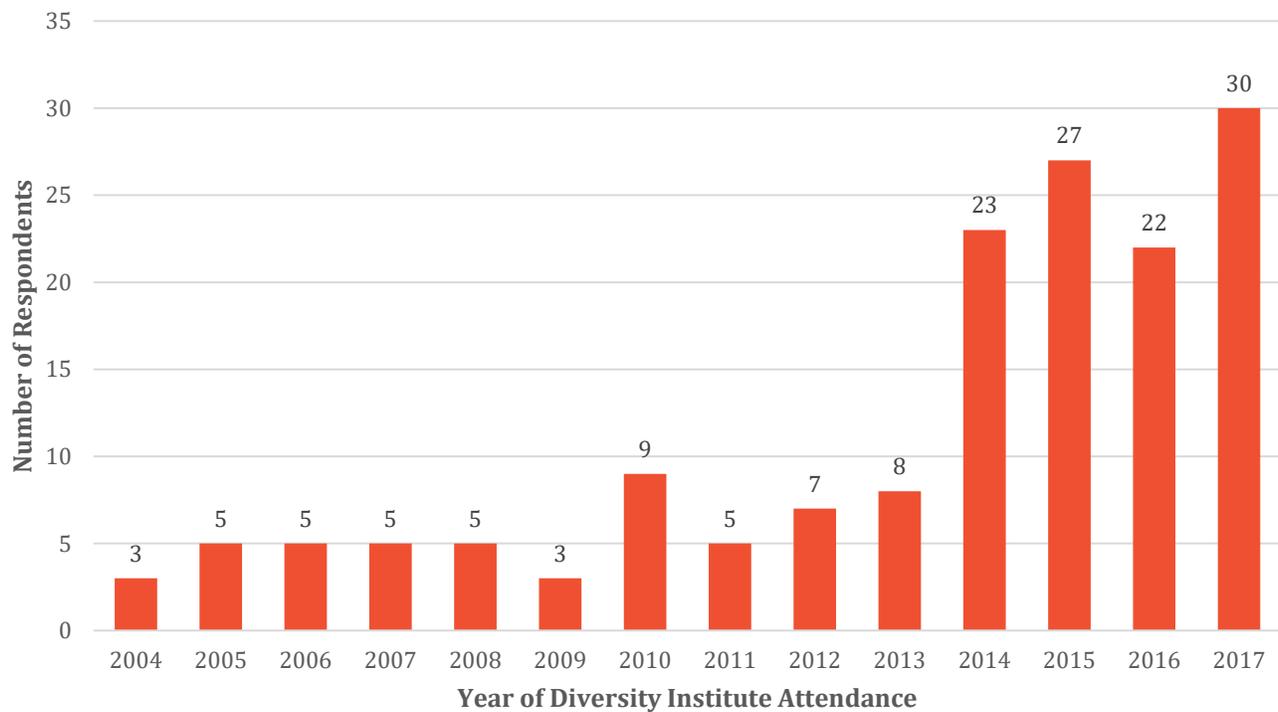


Figure 2 reflects the number of yearly attendances at diversity institutes for each self-identified race/ethnicity category. As nearly all diversity institutes emphasize supporting students of color in their pursuit of philosophy, this is important information to consider when assessing the success of diversity institutes at sending students into careers in philosophy. An institute may be successful if they send many of their students on to graduate school in philosophy—but do the institutes reflect a set of diverse identities? Figure 2 demonstrates the challenge, perhaps, of maintaining a higher proportion of students of color when additional institutes are founded and when cohort sizes grow.

When diversity institutes that focus on female-identifying participants are founded, for example, do they admit mostly white women? If the increased proportion of students identifying as white in the mid-2010s is a reflection of this, do these students reflect other diverse identities?

In order to be as broadly inclusive as possible, diversity institutes may host fewer students from each type of identity but allow more types of identities to qualify for attendance. This flux in identity-representation is even more prominent when one considers that some diversity institute cohorts are as small as ten students. As the broadly inclusive institutes note that any one underrepresented identity is not more important than another, the diverse set of identities reflected in Figure 3 might explain why there is not just a focus on students of color but on students from other underrepresented identities in philosophy.

Figure 2: Number of Diversity Institute Attendances Per Year for Each Self-identified Race/Ethnicity Category

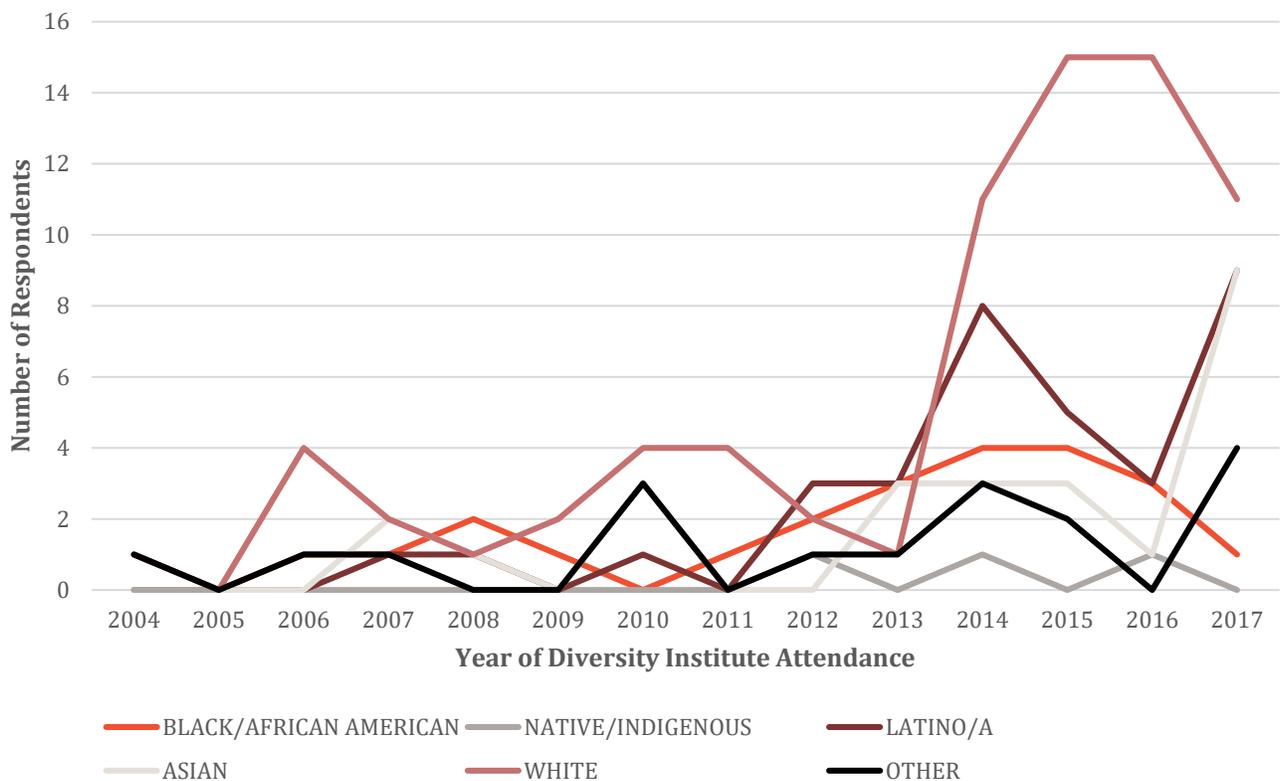
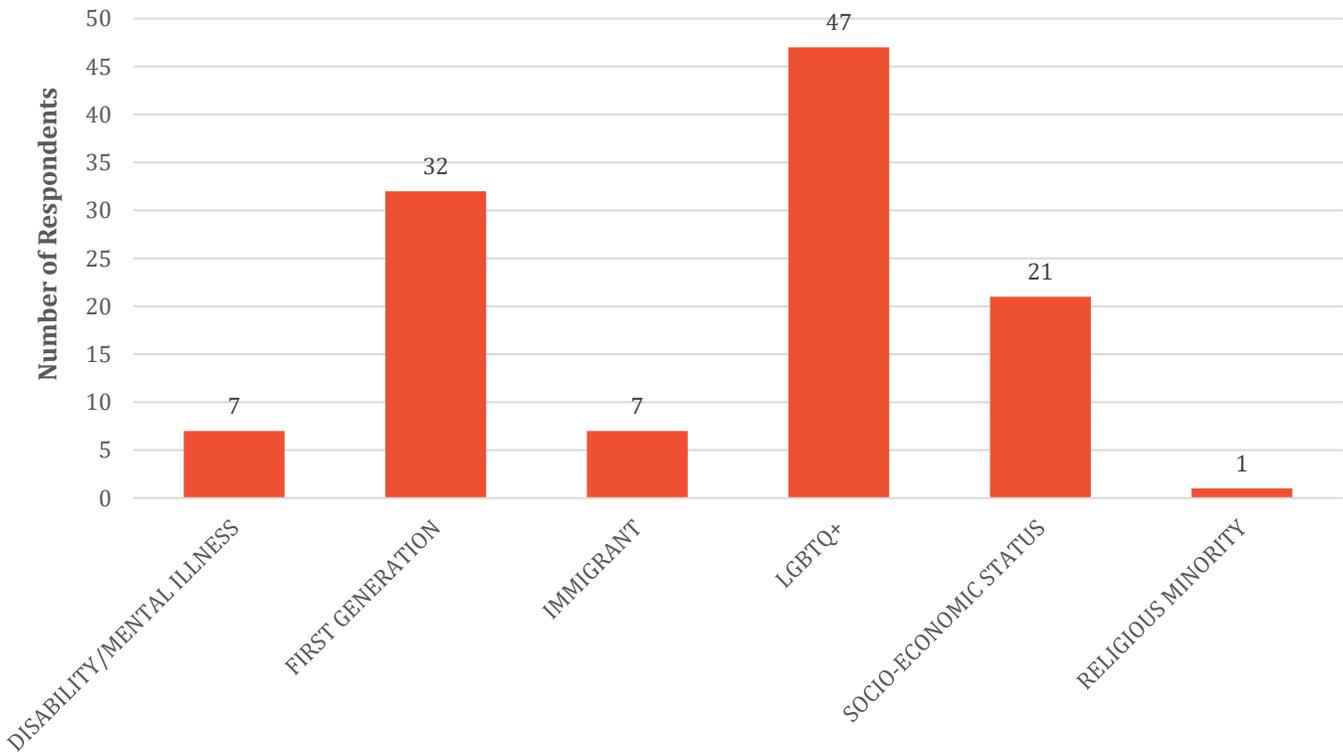


Figure 3: Number of Survey Respondents in Each Self-reported Identity Category

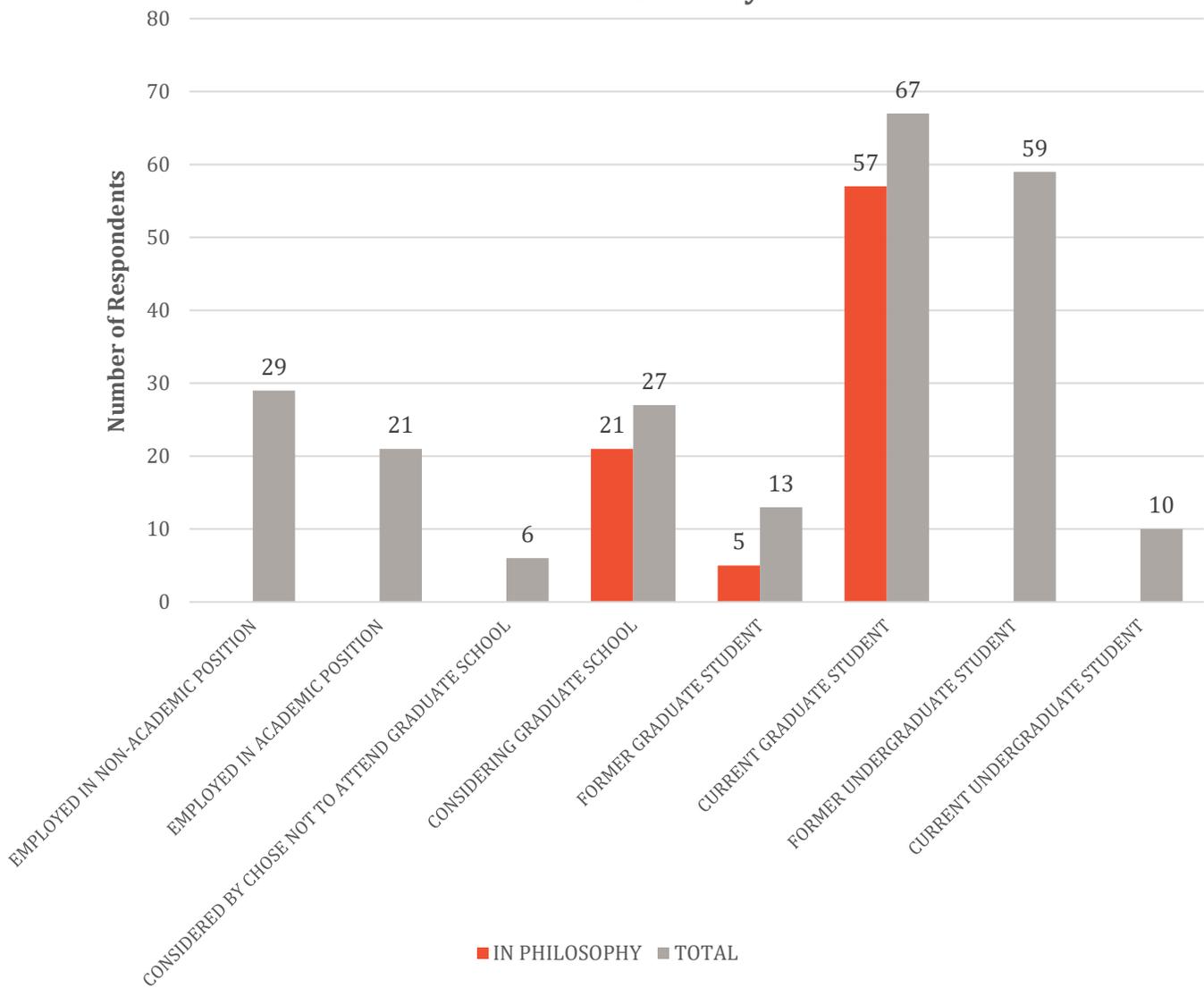


It is important to note that this survey data includes the identities of the 138 respondents only, and not the identities of all 480 individuals who attended an institute from 2004-2017. The trends do not necessarily reflect the complete picture of identities of diversity institute attendees. The identities in figure 3, for example, were sorted based on narrative responses that ranged from any of the identities under the umbrella term “LGBTQ+” to “first generation college student.”

Survey Respondent Outcomes

Figure 4 displays the complete selected response data from the 2018 survey question asking about outcomes. The selected-response questions on the survey offered specific outcomes, including, “current undergraduate student,” “former undergraduate student,” “current graduate student,” “former graduate student,” “considering graduate school,” “considered but chose not to attend graduate school,” “employed in academic position,” and “employed in non-academic position.” The survey also asked whether current, past or potential graduate students studied philosophy.

Figure 4: Diversity Institute Alumni Outcomes from 2018 Survey



There may be some individuals who selected more than one of these options, such as both “former undergraduate student” and “current graduate student,” or “former graduate student,” and “employed in academic position.” This data is helpful to visualize how far into their careers survey respondents are. Even though the number of respondents is skewed towards younger undergraduate or graduate students, 21 of the respondents, or 15 percent, are currently employed in academia. The combination of current and former graduate students is also worth noting. There are 80 total respondents who have started or even finished graduate school, which is 58 percent of respondents. There was an option on the 2018 survey for individuals who “started but did not complete graduate school,” and though not one survey respondent selected this option, it is possible that there are diversity institute alumni who did not complete their graduate programs.

Research on 2004-2017 Diversity Institute Alumni Outcomes

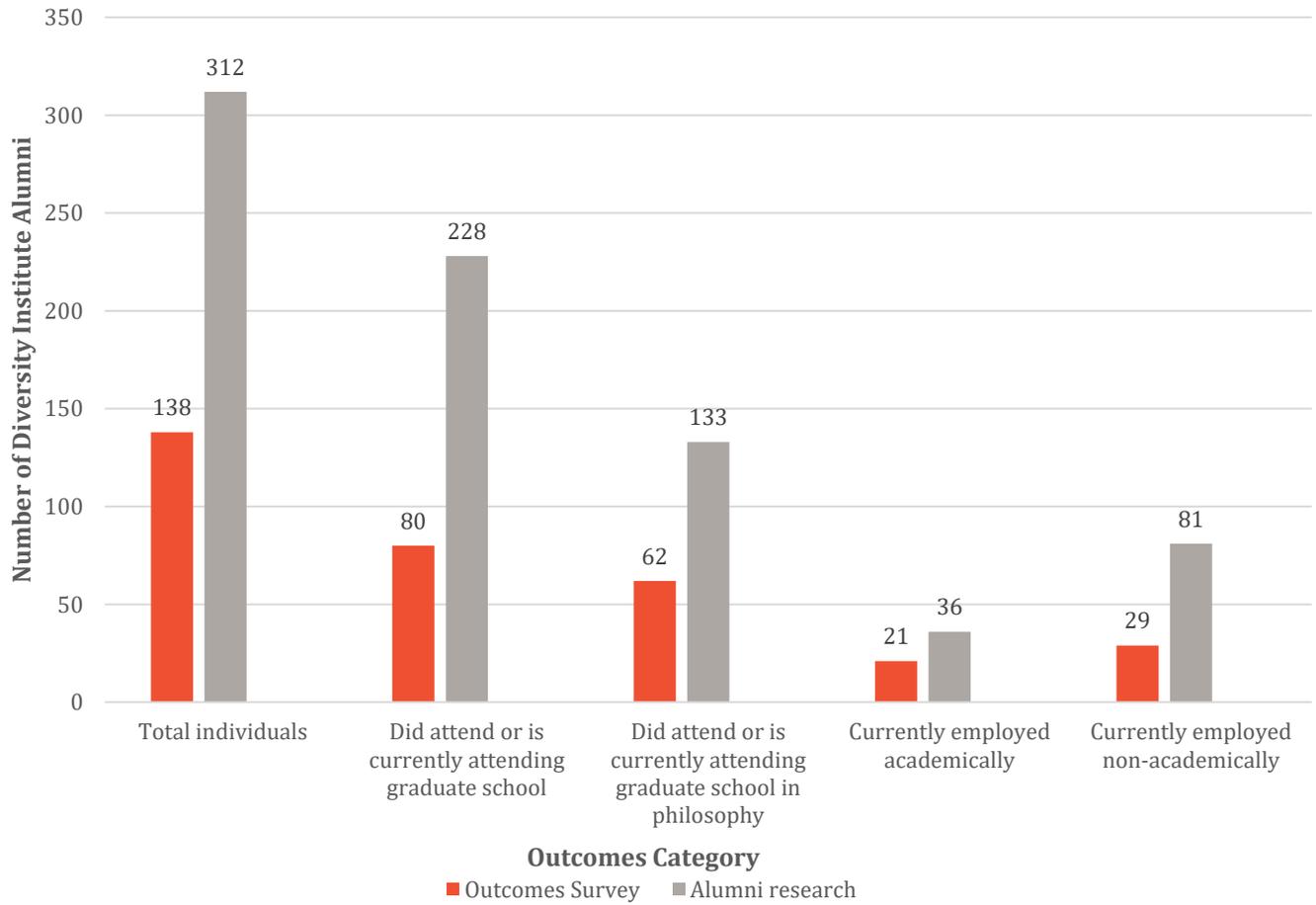
The APA researched the career path of all 480 alumni of summer diversity institutes in philosophy from 2004 to 2017. Attendees of the 2018 and 2019 institutes were typically not far enough into their careers for their outcomes to be visible online, and so for consistency, the survey and research data only reflect 2004-2017 alumni. The bulk of the career-related information for alumni was found on LinkedIn and on academic directory web pages. Of the total 480 unique contacts researched, 312 individuals were visible online and their educational and career paths were recorded and sorted into outcomes categories.

Outcomes categories include “did attend or is currently attending graduate school in philosophy,” “did attend or is currently attending graduate school, not in philosophy,” “currently employed in academic philosophy,” and “currently employed, not in academic philosophy.” The fourth category listed includes individuals in academic employment not in philosophy, such as professors in a different discipline. Individuals may be sorted into more than one category, for example, in both the “did attend graduate school in philosophy” and the “currently employed, not in academic philosophy” categories—which reflects whether or not individuals committed to a career in philosophy after attending graduate school. Later sections of this report will delve into why diversity institute alumni chose to pursue or leave the field of philosophy.

Of the 312 alumni from 2004-2017 found online, 133, or 43 percent, went on to study philosophy in graduate school. Many of those individuals are still in graduate school, while 36, or 12 percent, graduated and pursued a career in philosophy in a variety of academic roles. Another 18, or six percent, pursued career paths not directly related to philosophy after studying philosophy in graduate school, such as law, business or healthcare.

Of the 312 individuals, 95, or 30 percent, went on to study something other than philosophy in graduate school. Finally, 81, or 26 percent, of the 312 individuals found online never pursued graduate school but are currently employed non-academically. This number is likely higher for the total 480 alumni, as the current career or education status of 168 of the alumni is not publicly available. Figure 5 reflects this research data, along with the data we received in the 2018 survey for comparison.

Figure 5: Diversity Institute Alumni Outcomes from Research and 2018 Survey



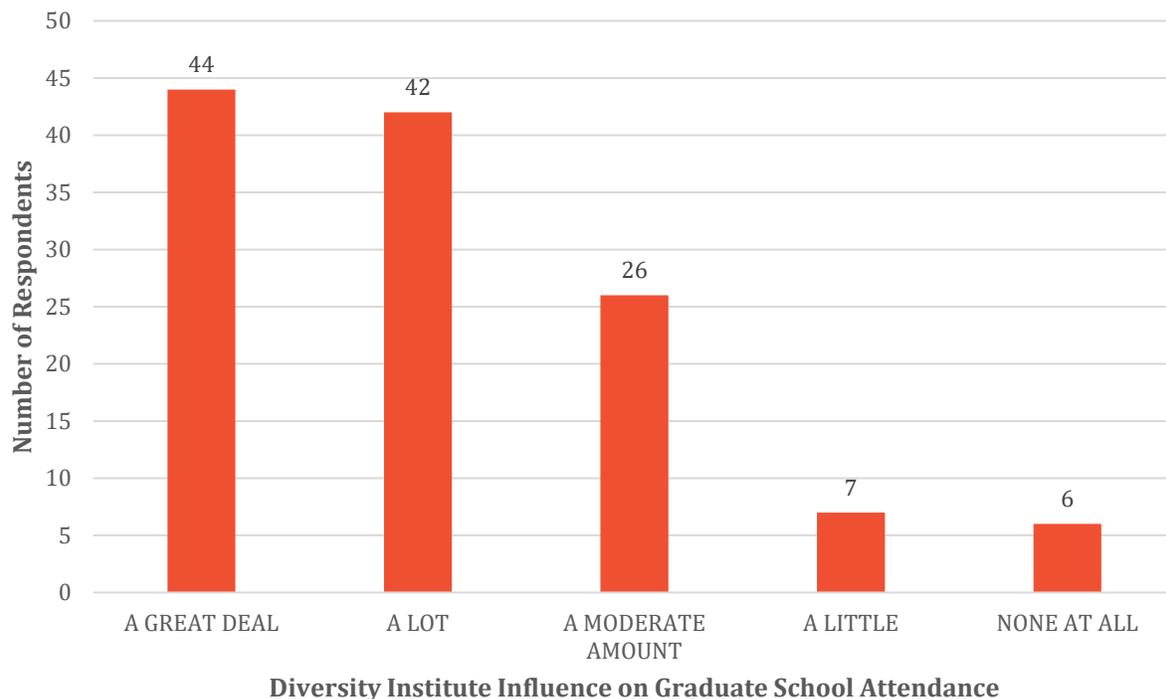
Diversity Institute Alumni Feedback

The following sections include analysis of narrative text responses to questions from the 2018 Diversity Institute Alumni Survey. Select responses are included at the end of each section.

Survey Question: To what extent did your experience at a diversity institute in philosophy inform your decision to attend graduate school (or not)?

Out of 125 responses to this question, 86 responded that attending a diversity institute informed their decision to attend graduate school “a great deal” or “a lot.” There were 26 who responded “a moderate amount.” That means almost 90 percent of individuals attributed a moderate to great amount of their decision to attend graduate school to attending a diversity institute. Only 14 individuals responded “none at all” or “a little,” and several of these respondents claimed that they had already decided to attend graduate school, and that the diversity institute they attended helped in other ways. Figure 6 reflects this data.

Figure 6: How much did attending a Diversity Institute influence your decision to attend graduate school?



There were 75 respondents who chose to share a narrative of how their experience at a diversity institute in philosophy impacted their decision to attend graduate school (or not).

The largest common response shared by 28 percent of respondents was an explicitly stated boost in confidence directly linked to attendance of a diversity institute. Increased confidence and a feeling of

support seem to be some of the most important intangible benefits of the diversity institutes. There were 13 respondents who noted support from other individuals, whether personal or academic, as another boost in their decision to attend graduate school. Many mentioned the joy of doing philosophy with other enthusiastic peers and scholars, and gaining new philosophical ideas in general, as a driving force in their decision to attend graduate school. The diversity institutes gave at least four respondents new hope in the increasing diversity of the field. Ten respondents explained that during the institute they had a key decision-making moment that led them to apply to graduate school in philosophy; these moments were often conversations with an institute organizer or visiting scholar.

There were many more benefits to the diversity institutes, including this common shared response: diversity institutes give attendees an invaluable glimpse of what graduate school will be like. This manifested for the respondents in other ways as well; many determined how to apply for graduate school and how to narrow down their personal research interests. Over one quarter of respondents stated these practical benefits of the diversity institute they attended. Three respondents even claimed that the diversity institute was an incredible experience but demonstrated that graduate school in philosophy would not be a good fit. Unfortunately, out of the 75 respondents, four claimed a confirmation of the homogeneity of the field as a reason for choosing not to apply to graduate school. Another two stated that they still felt unprepared to apply to graduate school after the institute. Selected responses are shared below.

“I had great experiences at both programs and really enjoyed meeting and connecting with my peers from other institutions. I felt like the programs tried to shed light on what it is like being a grad student in philosophy, and how to make it to the graduate level. I felt bolstered by our discussions on diversity within philosophy, and was given great advice on how to navigate the professional field.”

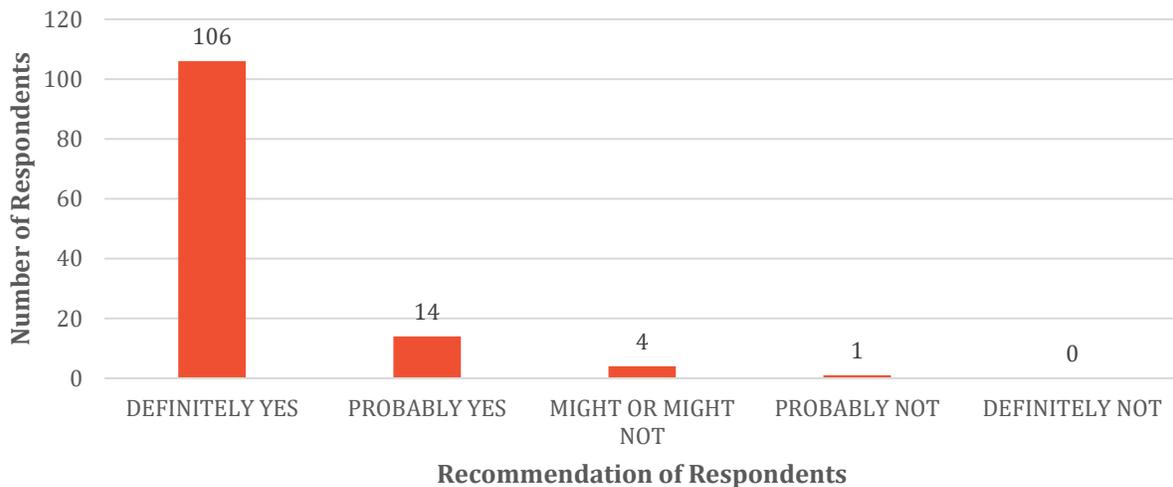
“Attending PIKSI Rock 2017 made me seriously consider graduate school in philosophy again (I was very wary of it before attending). It gave me hope and inspired me that philosophy could be a place for activists and people whom are working towards social justice in our society.”

“It helped re-ignite my love for philosophy, find a community, know that my research interests matter, and more.”

Survey Question: Would you recommend attending a diversity institute in philosophy to other students?

Respondents were asked if they would recommend a diversity institute in philosophy to other students. Results were nearly completely positive—96 percent of respondents to this question said “yes” in some way, three percent said “might or might not,” and less than one percent said “probably not.” Figure 7 displays the selected responses to this question.

Figure 7: Would you recommend attending a Diversity Institute in philosophy to other students?



Respondents were offered the opportunity to share a narrative response about whether or not they would recommend a diversity institute in philosophy and why. There were 49 text responses to this question. The most common response, which appeared 14 times, indicated that the perspective on graduate school is one of the greatest benefits of attendance. Respondents also emphasized the networking benefits of the diversity institutes, and nearly as many highlighted the supportive environment as a strong benefit of attendance. Responses ranged from touting the financial support and accessibility of the diversity institutes to emphasizing the eye-opening diversity of the institutes themselves. These factors are what make diversity institutes unique among academic programs, in addition to being platforms for sharing new philosophical ideas and a providing space for students to discern their place in the field. Selected responses are shared below.

“It was truly an amazing experience! It was SO great to see the intersection of philosophy and social justice/ activism. I also LOVED meeting the other students and found that we had so much in common! I am forever grateful for the experience.”

“These programs provide students from diversity backgrounds with information they may not have had access to otherwise. I found this to be true of myself. After having attended the program, I had more realistic expectations about graduate school in philosophy and academic philosophy more generally.”

“PIKSI made me see that there are many people actively working on improving the state of the profession, and that I was not alone in recognizing that there are huge problems that need to be addressed. PIKSI also helped me foster relationships with successful people in the field (both graduate students and faculty), which has helped me several times throughout my own application and graduate school experiences.”

Only four respondents indicated that the institutes made them hesitate about their place in philosophy. Two responded that they believed they would not fit in and only one responded that they felt financially unsupported by the institute that they attended.

Survey Question: Additional feedback

Respondents were also offered the opportunity to share a narrative response about positive experiences they had at a diversity institute in philosophy. There were 68 responses to the question, “Did you have any particularly positive experiences at your diversity institute that you would like to share? Are there things that went especially well that diversity institutes should keep doing?”

Over one quarter of respondents shared the same praise of the lasting friendships they made at the institutes. This feedback came from respondents of nearly all years of diversity institute attendance, proving the durability of the connections made at these programs. The second largest area of feedback highlighted the institutes’ tendency to provide space for engaging philosophical conversation and time for bonding. These memorable conversations occurred between participants and with their faculty and graduate student assistants. Individuals in these mentorship roles were another aspect of the institutes that the respondents noted were particularly positive. Many emphasized the need to keep or even increase this successful system of support. Most respondents explained that the institute that they attended was very well-structured and educational. A specifically helpful aspect of the institutes were the speaker presentations and graduate school panels. There was a call for more speaker presentations by two separate survey respondents. Many respondents cited the refreshing diversity of the institutes as a positive aspect of their experience; four respondents described the experience as immersive and seven described it as confidence boosting. Selected responses are shared below.

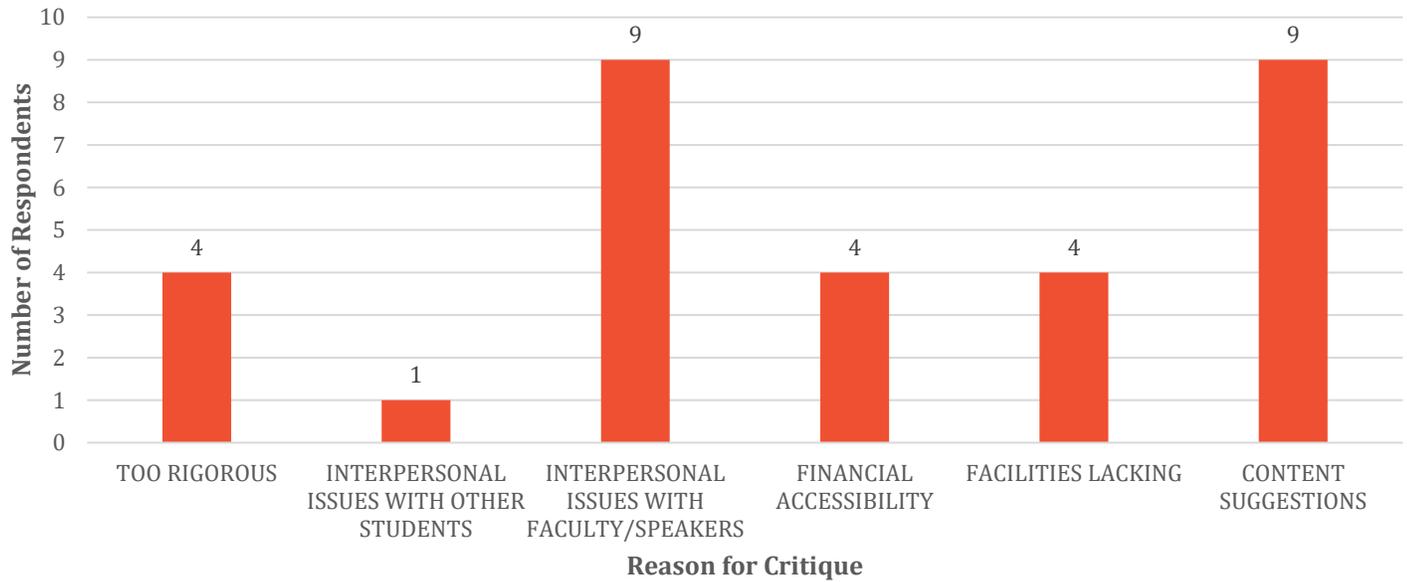
“Long-term mentorship is a very valuable resource. After attending PIKSI, I have a community of faculty members who support my development and who I have been able to rely on as resources in different ways.”

“I really enjoyed getting to know each person in my program, and talking with them over meals after or between formal talks. There are so few opportunities for philosophically minded folks to engage with one another in this capacity.”

“I learned that other students of minority backgrounds also have the same struggles I do. I learned about the imposter syndrome for the first time at PIKSI and that was an eye opening experience. Learning about the work of current graduate students is very helpful.”

Respondents were also offered an opportunity to share narrative responses about any negative experiences they had at a diversity institute in philosophy. Out of 47 respondents who offered a response, 21 respondents simply said they had no negative experiences. Most of the other respondents offered constructive criticism, rather than reports of a negative experience.

Figure 8: Program Criticism



Finally, respondents were offered the opportunity to share any further feedback they wished about diversity institutes in philosophy. Of the 18 substantive responses to this question, most contained statements of gratitude directed to the institutes themselves, to the organizers for their hard work, to the APA for its support, and to the other participants for the opportunity to learn from each other. Several respondents commented on the great networking opportunity offered by the institutes, and one highlighted a hope that the presence of social justice issues and discussions would increase.

Several respondents divulged their concern over the leadership of the institutes, claiming that organizers and speakers were either not diverse enough or not realistic enough about the realities of studying philosophy. Two respondents pointed out that the survey is very important, but that the results should be made public to future diversity institute attendees so that they know what to expect.

Selected responses are shared below.

“Please ensure that the seminars are diverse in their content. In particular, feminist philosophy and philosophy of race especially must be included!”

“These institutes are real treasures. I wouldn't be in graduate school if it wasn't for them, and I wouldn't be as successful as I have been in graduate school if it wasn't for them.”

Conclusion

This report on satisfaction and outcomes of diversity institute alumni from 2004-2017 provides data that suggests that diversity institutes increase the presence of diverse identities in the field of philosophy. This is the hope of diversity institutes, and one of the stated goals of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant to the APA. Based on the 2018 Diversity Institute Alumni Survey and alumni research, it is safe to say that most students who do attend a diversity institute have a positive experience and that if they choose to attend graduate school in philosophy, they attribute part or most of their decision to attending a diversity institute in philosophy. The data shows that a sizeable proportion of diversity institute alumni choose to attend graduate school in philosophy—43 percent and 45 percent of alumni from the research and the survey, respectively. When the bulk of diversity institute alumni reach the age of graduate school completion, it is likely that the percent of diversity institute alumni who become philosophers will be higher and the proportion of diversity institute alumni in the philosophy professoriate will be higher. If this does occur, it will be further evidence that undergraduate diversity institutes achieve their goal of increasing the representation of diverse identities in academic philosophy.