

Life in College Matters for Life After College

 gallup.com/poll/168848/life-college-matters-life-college.aspx

May 6, 2014

New Gallup-Purdue study looks at links among college, work, and well-being

by Julie Ray and Stephanie Kafka

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- When it comes to being engaged at work and experiencing high well-being after graduation, a new Gallup-Purdue University study of college graduates shows that the type of institution they attended matters less than what they experienced there. Yet, just 3% of all the graduates studied had the types of experiences in college that Gallup finds strongly relate to great jobs and great lives afterward.

The Undergraduate Experience: Support and Experiential and Deep Learning

	% Strongly agree
Support	
I had at least one professor at [College] who made me excited about learning.	63%
My professors at [College] cared about me as a person.	27%
I had a mentor who encouraged me to pursue my goals and dreams.	22%
Strongly agree with all three support statements	14%
Experiential	
I worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete.	32%
I had an internship or job that allowed me to apply what I was learning in the classroom.	29%
I was extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations while attending [College].	20%
Strongly agree with all three experiential statements	6%
Strongly agree with all six statements	3%

Based on Web surveys of nearly 30,000 college graduates with Internet access from Feb. 4-March 7, 2014.

Gallup-Purdue Index

GALLUP

These results are based on the [inaugural Gallup-Purdue Index](#), a joint-research effort with Purdue University and Lumina Foundation to study the relationship between the college experience and college graduates' lives. The Gallup-Purdue Index is a comprehensive, nationally representative study of U.S. college graduates with Internet access. According to a 2013 Census Bureau report, 90% of college graduates in the U.S. have access to the Internet. Gallup conducted the Web study Feb. 4-

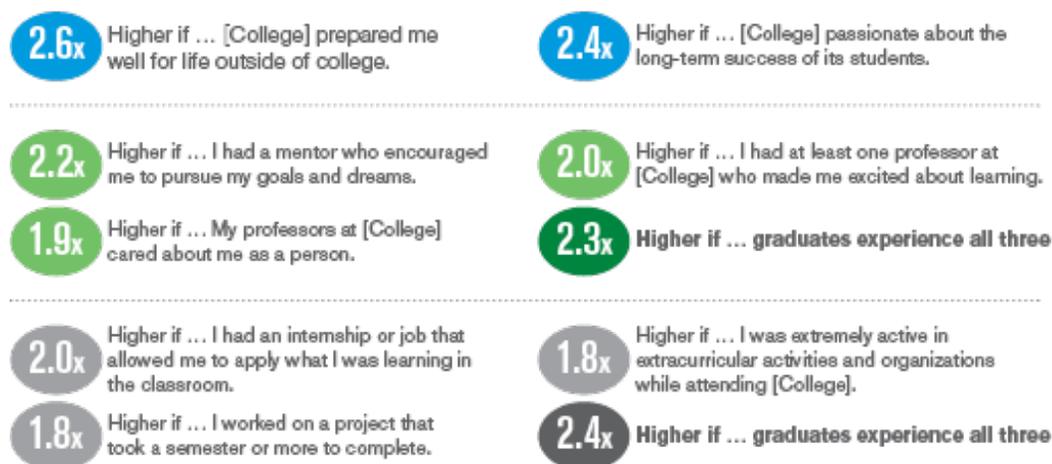
March 7, 2014, with nearly 30,000 U.S. adults who had completed at least a bachelor's degree.

Support in College, Experiences Tied to Workplace Engagement, Well-Being

The study found that the type of schools these college graduates attended -- public or private, small or large, very selective or less selective -- hardly matters at all to their workplace engagement and current well-being. Just as many graduates of public colleges as graduates of not-for-profit private colleges are engaged at work -- meaning they are deeply involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to their work. And just as many graduates of public as not-for-profit private institutions are thriving -- which Gallup defines as strong, consistent, and progressing -- in all areas of their well-being.

Instead, the study found that support and experiences in college had more of a relationship to long-term outcomes for these college graduates. For example, if graduates recalled having a professor who cared about them as a person, made them excited about learning, and encouraged them to pursue their dreams, their odds of being engaged at work more than doubled, as did their odds of thriving in all aspects of their well-being. And if graduates had an internship or job in college where they were able to apply what they were learning in the classroom, were actively involved in extracurricular activities and organizations, and worked on projects that took a semester or more to complete, their odds of being engaged at work doubled as well.

The odds of being engaged at work are:



The odds of thriving in all areas of well-being are:



Yet few college graduates that Gallup studied achieve the winning combination. Only 14% of graduates strongly agree they were supported by professors who cared, who made them excited about learning, and who encouraged their dreams. Further, just 6% of graduates strongly agree they had an internship or job that allowed them to apply what they were learning, worked on a long-term project, and were actively involved in extra-curricular activities. Those who strongly agree to having had all six of these experiences during their time in college are the rarest of all (3%).

Bottom Line

When a student is trying to decide between an elite Ivy League school, a large public university, or a small private college, what should he or she consider to help make the decision? When an employer is evaluating two recent graduates from different backgrounds and institutions, which educational background should distinguish one applicant over the other, and why? When colleges and universities are setting internal strategies, designing new programs and curricula, deciding what performance measures faculty should be compensated for, and working to attract future students, what are they to do?

The data in this study suggest that, as far as future worker engagement and well-being are concerned, the answers could lie as much in thinking about aspects that last longer than the selectivity of an institution or any of the traditional measures of college. Instead, the answers may lie in *what* students are doing in college and *how* they are experiencing it. Those elements -- more than many others measured -- have a profound relationship to a graduate's life and career. Yet too few are experiencing them.

[Read the full Gallup-Purdue Index report.](#)

Survey Methods

Results for the Gallup-Purdue Index are based on Web surveys ... conducted Feb. 4-March 7, 2014, with a random sample of 29,560 respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher, aged 18 and older, with Internet access, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

The Gallup-Purdue Index sample was compiled from two sources; the Gallup Panel and the Gallup Daily Tracking survey.

The Gallup Panel is a proprietary, probability-based longitudinal panel of U.S. adults that are selected using random-digit-dial (RDD) and address-based sampling methods. The Gallup Panel is not an opt-in panel. The Gallup Panel includes 60,000 individuals, Panel members can be surveyed by phone, mail, or Web. Gallup Panel members with a college degree, with access to the Internet were invited to take the Gallup-Purdue Index survey online.

The Gallup Daily tracking survey sample includes national adults with a minimum quota of 50% cellphone respondents and 50% landline respondents, with additional minimum quotas by time zone within region. Landline and cellular telephone numbers are selected using RDD methods. Landline respondents are chosen at random within each household on the basis of which member had the most recent birthday. Gallup Daily tracking respondents with a college degree, who agreed to future recontact, were invited to take the Gallup-Purdue Index survey online.

Gallup-Purdue Index interviews are conducted via the Web, in English only. Samples are weighted to correct for unequal selection probability and nonresponse. The data are weighted to match national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, and region. Demographic weighting targets are based on the most recent Current Population Survey figures for the aged 18 and older U.S. bachelor's degree or higher population.

All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting.

For results based on the total sample of bachelor's degree or higher respondents, the margin of sampling error is ± 0.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on employee engagement of bachelor's degree or higher respondents, the margin of sampling error is ± 1.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.