

Note on a Gallup-Purdue University Study and Related Articles: Useful Internships Improve University Graduates Chances of Full-Time Work

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SEVERAL ARTICLES BY SEAN SEYMOUR AND JULIE RAY summarize a Gallup-Purdue University (Gallup, Inc., 2014) study reported 20 November 2014, based upon the Gallup-Purdue Index, a joint-research effort with Purdue University and Lumina Foundation, to study the relationship between the university experience and graduates' lives. The Gallup-Purdue Index is a comprehensive, nationally representative study of U.S. college graduates with Internet access, conducted February 4–March 7, 2014. According to a 2013 Census Bureau report, 90% of university graduates in the U.S. have access to the Internet.

Graduates' Odds of Being Employed Higher with Internships

Authors Seymour and Ray (2014c) find that internships increase odds of full-time employment, and internships increase odds of engagement at work. Work and internship opportunities in university that allow students to apply what they learn improve the chances that graduates will find work after college. A Gallup-Purdue University study of college graduates finds 71% of the most recent graduates who strongly agreed that they had these types of jobs or internship opportunities as undergrads are working full time now for an employer, compared with 56% of those who strongly disagreed.

This relationship between applied internships and graduate employment should cause some currently enrolled college students to consider how they spend their time between now and graduation day. Seymour and Ray (2014b) report while the number of students taking advantage of internships has been rising across campuses, still relatively few of all university graduates report participating in these internship or job opportunities.

Table 1. Internships Increase Odds of Full-Time Employment for Graduates

	Percent employed full time for an employer	
	Graduates 2010-2014	Graduates prior to 2010
Students selecting strongly agree they took part in applied internships/jobs	71%	60%
Strongly disagree they took part in applied internships/jobs	56%	52%

4 February – 7 March 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index, from: Seymour & Ray (2014c)

The “employment benefit” for graduates who strongly agreed they had applied internships or jobs in college exists for all those who have earned their degrees in the past four years—regardless of gender, race, type of institution they graduated from, or whether they are the first in their families to attend university. Ray and Kafka (2014a) report from the Gallup-Purdue Index that what students do while in university, influenced by the opportunities their institutions afford them, can be more important than a number of other popularly proposed influential factors, including the type of school they attend.

Graduates' Odds of Being Engaged at Work Higher with Internships

Recent graduates who strongly agree they had an internship or job where they could apply what they were learning in college are not only more likely to have full-time employment, they are also more likely to be satisfactorily engaged at work. Fifty-six percent of employed recent graduates who took part in applied internships are engaged at work—meaning they are involved in and enthusiastic about their work—compared with 33% of those who did not. This higher likelihood of engagement is good for these graduates, because engaged employees feel emotionally connected to the mission and purpose of their work, but it is also good for their employers. Engaged workers are the lifeblood of their organizations. Previous Gallup workplace engagement studies (e.g., Harter, Schmidt, Agrawal & Plowman, 2014) show that business units scoring in the top half of their organization in employee engagement have nearly twice the odds of success, compared with those in the bottom half.

Bottom Line

The potential benefits of applied internships are numerous. These graduates are more likely to feel prepared for life, they are more likely to be employed full time for an employer, and they are more likely to be engaged at work. The higher percentage of recent graduates who report taking part in these programs may be a positive sign that more students, universities, and employers are beginning to realize the value of these experiences.

Survey Methods

Results for this Gallup-Purdue Index study are based on Web interviews conducted February 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.

References

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