

Fulfilling the American Dream: Liberal Education and the Future of Work

Selected Findings from Online Surveys
of Business Executives and Hiring Managers

Conducted on Behalf of



with support from



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Methodology

From May 17 to June 1, 2018, Hart Research Associates conducted an online survey on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities among employers at companies that have at least 25 employees and report that 25% or more of their new hires hold either an associate degree from a two-year college or a four-year college.

The research includes two parallel surveys:

- f One among 501 business executives at private sector and nonprofit organizations, including owners, CEOs, presidents, C-level executives, vicepresidents, and directors
- f One among 500 hiring managers, or executives (directors, managers, supervisors, and office administrators) whose current job responsibilities include recruiting, interviewing, and/or hiring new employees.

Company/Organization Profile of Executives			
Private company	86%	25 to 99 employees	33%
Nonprofit	13%	100 to 499 employees	33%
		500/more employees	34%
Local	23%	Northeast	25%
Regional	26%	South	28%
National	27%		

Company/Organization Profile of Hiring Managers		
Private company	85%	25 to 99 employees 33%
Nonprofit		

All interviews were completed online using optpanels in which business executives and professionals were recruited through partnerships with leading global brands, publishers, and more professional communities. Potential respondents were targeted for invitations to participate in the survey based on their employment profile including job title, size of company/employer, and type of company/organization. Potential respondents received email or mobile app invitation to answer basic questions to ensure they qualified and were then directed through to the survey if they met the screening criteria.

Results were analyzed by key subgroups including company size, type, and region. Significant differences are noted where applicable. While regional findings are highlighted in this report, most are not statistically significant.

The objective of the survey was to gauge the degree to which business executives and hiring managers believe that a college education is important and worthwhile, the learning outcomes they believe are most important for success in

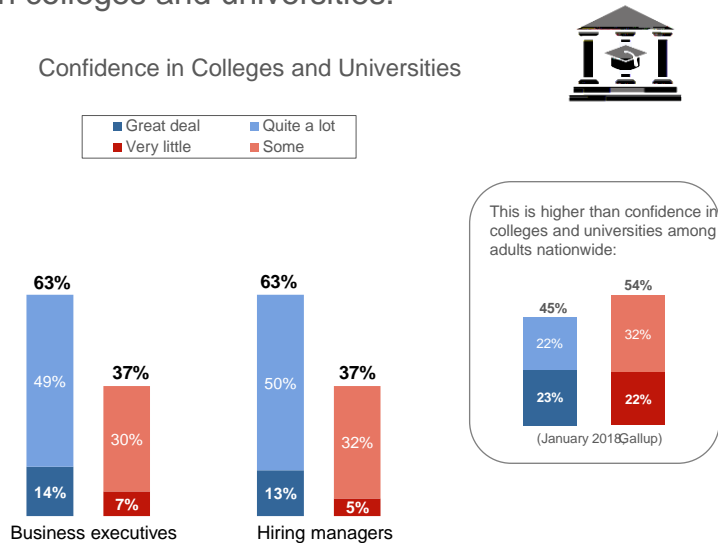
Key Findings

The Value of a College Degree

1. Business executives and hiring managers express a higher degree of confidence in colleges and universities than does the American public.

Among both executives and hiring managers, 63% express quite a great deal of confidence in colleges and universities, a notably higher proportion than among the general public. In a January 2018 Gallup poll, 45% of adults nationwide expressed a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in colleges and universities.

More than six in 10 executives and hiring managers express confidence in colleges and universities.



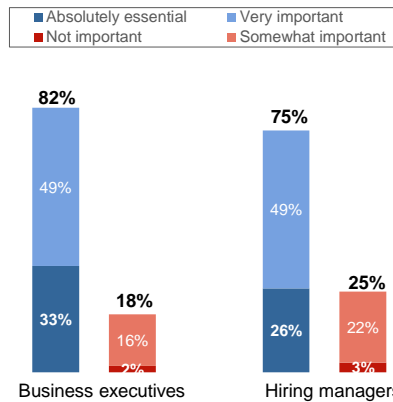
- f Business executives located in the West are significantly less likely than those in other regions to have quite a lot or a great deal of confidence in colleges and universities (53%)

Proportions who have a great deal/quite a lot of confidence in colleges and universities*		
	Business executives	Hiring managers
Northeast	65%	60%
South	67%	63%
Midwest	69%	71%
West	53%	59%

*The difference between business executives in the West (53%) and busin

Executives and hiring managers alike agree on the value of college

Importance of Completing a College Education



Evaluation of Whether a College Degree Is Worth the Time and Money Involved



f Hiring managers in the South are slightly more likely than hiring managers in other regions of the country to say that completing college is important, while executives in the Midwest are slightly more likely to say so than executives in other regions

Proportions who say completing college is very important/absolutely essential		
	Business executives	Hiring managers
Northeast	82%	74%
South	79%	79%
Midwest	84%	73%
West	82%	73%

*Differences by region are not statistically significant

Proportions who say recent graduates have the skills and knowledge to advance or be promoted*		
	Business executives	Hiring managers
Northeast	30%	23%
South	35%	28%
Midwest	35%	26%
West	34%	26%

*Differences by region are not statistically significant

Majorities of executives (56%) and hiring managers (53%) believe that colleges need to make improvements to ensure that graduates gain the skills and knowledge needed for advancement, especially for advancement. Even larger proportions (65% of executives and 65% of hiring managers) feel that improvements are needed to ensure that graduates have the skills and knowledge needed to advance within their company.

Majorities believe that colleges need to make improvements to ensure that graduates gain the skills and knowledge needed for success, especially for advancement

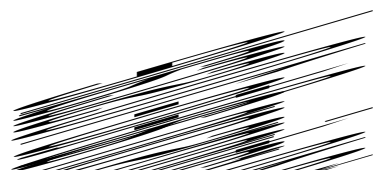
Assessment of Job Colleges/Universities Are Doing in Ensuring College Graduates Have Full Set of Skills/Knowledge Needed for Entry-Level Positions/Advancement



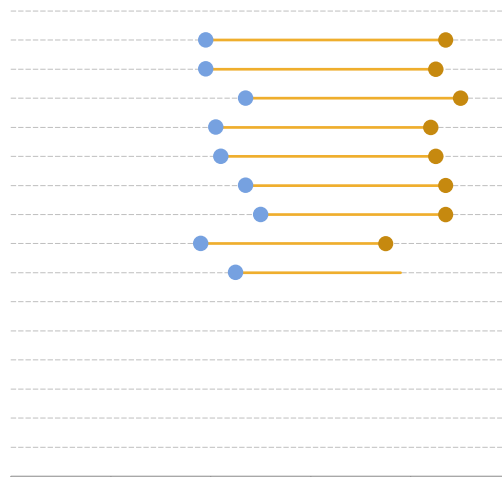
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4. When hiring recent graduates business executives and hiring managers place a high priority on demonstrated proficiency in a variety of skills (2 657.34 7iw9.86)

While encouraging improvement has occurred, there is still a notable room for improvement across learning outcomes, particularly in many of the very skills employers deem most important for workplace success.



preparedness on key learning outcomes



* 8-10 ratings on a 10-point scale

- f Both executives and hiring managers perceive a gap of at least 40 points in importance versus preparedness for oral communication skills, analytical reasoning skills, ability to apply knowledge and skills to the real world, oral communication skills, and self-motivation.
- f Only 40% of executives rate recent college graduates as well prepared in oral communication, the quality that they prioritize most highly (80%) among the 15 tested (a 40-point gap in importance versus preparedness). This gap is 43 points among hiring managers.
- f 76% of executives and 87% of hiring managers rate it very important that recent graduates demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings, yet only 33% of executives (43-point gap) and 39% of hiring managers (48-point gap) think that recent graduates are very well prepared in this area.
- f A moderate improvement has occurred in business perceptions of preparedness across learning outcomes since 2014 (most notably, a 15-point increase in ability to analyze and solve problems with people from different backgrounds and cultures and a 15-point increase in their staying current on changing technologies). Nonetheless, fewer than half of executives and hiring managers see recent graduates as well prepared in most areas.
- f These perceived gaps in oral communication skills, analytical reasoning skills, ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings, oral communication skills, and self-motivation are significantly larger for executives who see bigger gaps in oral communication skills and ability to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world settings predict lower rates of satisfaction with recent college graduates. Among hiring managers, gaps in oral communication skills and ability to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world settings predict lower rates of satisfaction with recent college graduates.

6. Business executives and hiring managers indicate that participation in applied and project-based learning experiences, particularly internships or apprenticeships, gives recent college graduates an edge.

Internships and apprenticeships stand out as the applied learning experiences most highly valued by employers: 93% of executives and 94% of hiring managers say that they would be more likely to hire a recent graduate who has held an internship or apprenticeship with a company or organization, including 52% of executives and 60% of hiring managers who would be much more likely to do so. Notably, this is a learning outcome for which the gap in importance versus preparedness is among the highest for both executives (43 point gap) and hiring managers (48 point gap).

Applied and project-based learning experiences, particularly internships or apprentice experiences, give recent college graduates an edge with both employer audiences



When considering a job candidate, large majorities of business executives and hiring managers say that completion of other types of applied and project-based learning experiences would give a recent graduate an advantage in the hiring process, though notably fewer (less than 30%) say that this would make them much more likely to hire someone.

Employers at nonprofits say that they would be more likely to hire recent graduates who have community-based or service learning

Employers Providing Professional Development

8. Most business executives and hiring managers report that their companies provide a broad variety of professional development opportunities, and most say that these opportunities include training in more advanced skills that will allow employees to take on more responsibility.

The vast majority of both executives (79%) and hiring managers (79%) say that their companies provide professional development opportunities to their employees. Those at larger companies (with 500 or more employees) are significantly more likely to say that their companies offer professional development, but large majorities of those at smaller companies with 25 to 99 employees do as well.

Executives in the Northeast are slightly more likely to say their employers offer professional development opportunities, and hiring managers in the Midwest are also slightly more likely to say so.



f The most common types of professional development that executives and hiring managers offer include inhouse training programs, training on the

Majorities of executives (59%) and hiring managers (53%) say that their companies partner with colleges and universities in some way, most commonly to offer service learning opportunities, internships, and/or apprenticeships, underscoring the weight that employers place on applied experience and real-world skills when evaluating college graduates.