

# COLLEGE TO CAREER: SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH



*Prepared for The Jed Foundation*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

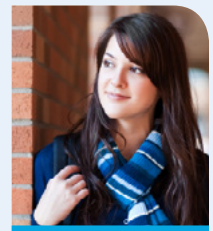
College graduates take on many new responsibilities and obligations in the “real world” upon graduation, which offer many opportunities for change and growth in terms of career development and emotional wellness. Activities and choices made during this time can set the trajectory for the remainder of a college graduate’s adult life (“Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults,” 2015, p. 59). For many, this time period includes significant stress and anxiety as young adults feel the pressure of burgeoning careers, financial obligations, changes in support networks, and all the other adjustments that come with stepping away from college and into the workforce. Limited attention has been paid in the literature or at the practice level (i.e., colleges and employers) to the emotional wellness of college graduates as they transition from college to career. This report was undertaken to better understand the challenges to emotional wellbeing faced by young adults during the college-to-career transition. We address the following questions:

1. What emotional challenges do college seniors face as they prepare to leave college?
2. What can colleges do to address these challenges?
3. What emotional challenges exist for recent college graduates entering the workforce?
4. How can employers support the emotional wellbeing of young adult hires?

Investigators from The Jed Foundation (JED) and the University of Massachusetts Medical School examined the literature in education, business, psychology and sociology regarding the college-to-career transition. Knowledge gained informed a national survey of 1,929 college seniors, recent graduates and employers exploring specific challenges to the transition, as well as existing strategies to support young adults and their emotional health. Data from the literature review and the survey informed the following recommendations targeting college settings and employers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COLLEGES:

- › **Create opportunities for students to learn skills that simultaneously are protective of emotional wellbeing and help prepare students to have successful work and careers** - We recommend that schools adopt career counseling and student affairs models that facilitate identifying appropriate career pathways in conjunction with gaining life skills and emotional awareness that will support workplace success.
- › **Create expectation of student commitment to college-to-career transition preparation** - We recommend that career services’ activities focused on the college-to-career transition are integrated into students’ day to day activities and are a requirement of graduation for all students.



*“This report was undertaken to better understand the challenges to emotional wellbeing faced by young adults during the college-to-career transition.”*

- › ***Seek and incorporate student voice to create college-to-career transition support activities*** – We recommend that colleges engage student liaisons to partner in developing, launching and implementing college-to-career transition initiatives.
- › ***Plan early for the college-to-career transition (don't wait until senior year)*** – We recommend supports for the college-to-career transition start in the first year, and are systematically integrated across all years of college life.
- › ***Emphasize emotional health and wellness, not only mental health*** – We recommend framing supports as “emotional health and wellness,” to reinforce emotional health as part of overall health and to address possible concerns re: stigma and mental health.
- › ***Expand the range of campus offices engaged in educating students about the college to career transition*** – We recommend that schools increase the capacity of their core workforce (e.g., faculty, residential advisors, campus security) through specialized education and training to understand and respond to issues and concerns specific to the college to career transition.
- › ***Develop targeted supports to address the unique concerns of identified student populations*** – We recommend that targeted supports are developed to meet the needs of unique student populations (e.g., female students, students with parents born outside the U.S., international students, students of color, first generation college students) that have identified increased emotional stress and concerns specific to the college to career transition.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS:

- › ***Expand/refocus employee orientation to be an ongoing process*** – We recommend frequent onboarding activities, over the course of a year or more, to ensure young adults integrate socially and professionally in their new work environment.
- › ***Rethink and formalize the format of on-the-job mentoring*** – We recommend that time and attention is given to improving the quality and quantity of mentorship provided.
- › ***Promote a culture of wellness in the workplace*** – We recommend that employers adjust their health policies and promotion activities to portray emotional health as central to one's overall wellness. This will encourage more dialogue about emotional wellness and help to remove its taboo from the workplace.
- › ***Ensure goodness of fit among new hires*** – We recommend that employers' recruitment efforts include a focus on accurately representing the offered work culture to attract applicants who are truly good fits for available positions.
- › ***Create policies to support the emotional health of all employees*** – We recommend that employers have mental health and wellness policies applicable to all employees. Policies should be outlined to support the emotional wellbeing of employees with clinical-level conditions as well as those with non-clinical level concerns.
- › ***Identify a wellness champion in the workplace*** – We recommend that employers identify a workplace ‘wellness champion’ and provide this champion with the resources needed to effectively promote emotional wellbeing in the workplace. Consideration should be given to how this may interface with existing structures around employee support (e.g., Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and Human Resources).

# INTRODUCTION

The college-to-career transition is a crucial developmental period; however, despite its significance, there is limited literature or data available on the emotional wellbeing of college seniors and recent college graduates. As De Rodriguez observes:

*Not unlike the freshman year, the senior year is a stressful one of transition, but unlike the former, the problems and needs associated with the transition out of the college setting have received little attention from college and university personnel, let alone researchers... (2007, p. 8).*

We hope this report serves as a first step to explore this important time period and to increase our consciousness about how to support young adults during the college-to-career transition.

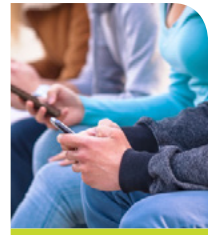
## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO FOCUS ON EMOTIONAL WELLNESS?

### ■ For young adults

Early and emerging adulthood is a specific developmental period that has become more nuanced and difficult in recent years. Today's college graduates generally take longer to reach traditional life milestones such as leaving home, finishing their education, entering the workforce, gaining financial independence, committing to significant others, and becoming parents compared to earlier generations (Arnett, 2007). Young adults today face a set of challenges, burdens and barriers that are unique to their cohort, all of which can negatively impact and undermine emotional health and wellness.

As the Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults (2015, p. 2-3) wrote:

*Today's young adults live in a more global and networked world, marked by increased knowledge and information transfer, heightened risks, fairly low social mobility, and greater inequality. Economic restructuring, advances in information and communication technologies, and changes in the labor market have radically altered the landscape of risk and opportunity in young adulthood. Demands are higher and there is little latitude for failure. Much of the burden of a restructured economy has been borne by the current cohort of America's young adults. Developmentally speaking, young people are resilient and adaptable, but many young adults are struggling to find a path to employment, economic security, and well-being.*



*Young adults today face challenges, burdens and barriers that are unique to their cohort.*

It is important that we acknowledge the effects of the Great Recession. Although the Great Recession concluded almost a decade ago, life circumstances of young adults are still greatly influenced by this period of economic hardship (Schoon & Mortimer, 2017). The Great Recession increased pre-existing trends towards more “prolonged and precarious transitions to independence,” which for many have resulted in “long-term scarring with respect to health and well-being” (Schoon & Mortimer, 2017). The Great Recession has been linked to increased depressed mood. The lasting effects of the Great Recession include decreased confidence, self-perceptions, and outlooks toward the future (Schoon & Mortimer, 2017).

The term “quarterlife crisis” is a term coined by the popular press to acknowledge the challenges of young adulthood in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While many young adults may transition seamlessly from college to career, for others this “quarterlife crisis” is a very bleak reality. As Hill writes, “Bearing all the hallmarks of the midlife crisis, this phenomenon – characterized by insecurities, disappointments, loneliness and depression – is hitting twenty- and thirty-somethings shortly after they enter the ‘real world,’ with educated professionals most likely to suffer” (2011). The “quarterlife crisis” is a response to the change, instability, and seemingly endless options of where to head in life in young adulthood and can result in quitting jobs, avoiding decisions, dependence on substances, and other unhealthy behaviors (Thorspecken, 2005). Perhaps most concerning, many who experience the depression, isolation, and anxiety of a “quarterlife crisis” do not seek out counseling or support because of concerns about stigma (Robbins & Wilner, 2001).

#### ■ **For colleges**

Colleges have a vested interest in equipping students with the hard and soft skills needed to thrive in the work environment as their reputations and ability to continually attract students depend on producing successful graduates.

A recent informal sampling (n=8) of representatives from JED Campus Schools suggested that targeted programs or services that directly address emotional and mental health concerns specifically as they relate to entry into the workforce are quite rare, and that emotional preparation for workforce entry is not identified as a priority by college counselors. One respondent noted, “this is not even on our radar.” Another respondent described a past attempt to develop this type of program, which failed because of lack of interest. This same respondent, however, felt that many students could benefit from this type of program. In fact, despite the lack of targeted supports, most counseling center directors felt there was a need for campuses to bring more attention to the emotional and mental health aspect of the transition from college to the workforce.

It is important for colleges to reinvigorate interest in this issue because promoting emotional health during a young adult’s college years can greatly increase their chances of maintaining emotional wellbeing during the college-to-career transition. Their emotional wellbeing, and often corresponding professional success, will in turn reflect positively on the abilities of a college or university to prepare young people for success in their adult lives.



*Colleges’ reputations and ability to continually attract students depend on producing successful graduates.*



## ■ **For employers**

Employers have a lot to lose by not addressing the emotional wellbeing of the recent college graduates that they employ. In general, organizations that have invested in promoting the mental and emotional health of employees have experienced consistent, positive return on investment (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017). As Nigel Carrington of the University of Arts London states:

*Everyone is somewhere on the mental health spectrum, so this is a business productivity issue which should be dealt with alongside other health and safety considerations. Creating a positive environment for mental health demonstrably costs less than failing to do so. (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017, p. 15)*

This is particularly relevant because there are more people at work with mental health conditions than ever before; it is believed that approximately 15% of people in workplace settings have symptoms of an existing mental health condition (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017). In particular, there has been a rise in the rates of anxiety and depression. Individuals often do not have a formal mental health diagnosis or choose not to disclose a diagnosis for fear of discrimination (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017).

There are concrete consequences for employers who do not attend to the mental and emotional health of their employees. Specific workplace elements on which emotional wellbeing has ill effects include:

1. **Sickness Absence:** employees taking days away from work due to emotional ill health;
2. **Presentee-ism:** employees attending work when one is not feeling emotionally well, resulting in a lack of productivity, and sometimes worsening a person's conditions;
3. **Limiting progression:** people feel as though they will not be able to progress professionally if they reveal struggles with emotional health;
4. **Impact on wider workforce:** other team members can suffer from coworkers' emotional ill health (e.g., an employee who is emotionally unwell may not be doing their work so their coworker has to take on their tasks); and,
5. **Impact on employee turnover:** an emotionally unwell person may leave a position if they do not feel capable of maintaining it, leading to costs to employers in recruiting and training new employees. (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017, p. 20).

Initiatives to increase employers' capacities to support their young adult workforce across all aspects of the college-to-career transition are winning propositions for all stakeholders. A more emotionally supported and engaged workforce can result in increased employee retention, better workplace performance, and a satisfied employee base, all of which are beneficial to employers and their organizations.

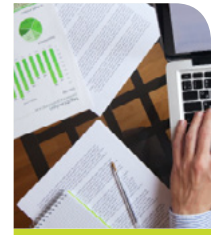
# LITERATURE REVIEW

## METHODS

This literature review highlights the experiences of college students and college graduates and the challenges they face during the college-to-career transition, as well as what is known from developmental theory, model programs, and best-practices in college and employment settings that can help support young adults and facilitate positive emotional wellbeing.

The available literature addressing the college-to-career transition exists across a number of disciplines including education, business, psychology and sociology. Materials relevant to our questions were identified through both traditional academic sources such as peer-reviewed literature (using indexed databases) as well as more popular sources such as organization websites, blogs and newspapers (using non-indexed sources). Indexed searching relies on sets of journal and book citations taken from reviewed and carefully defined sources that are indexed using searchable terms derived from specific data dictionaries. Searching via indexed databases provides high sensitivity and relevance while searching across a narrow spectrum of sources. Non-indexed searching includes keyword searching on the Internet, using a search tool like Google. In a non-indexed search, a wide array of sources is searched, and search results are much larger and have a lower sensitivity. Given the breadth of our questions of inquiry, we used both methods to ensure a more robust and rounded set of resources.

The authors developed an initial list of keywords, which were modified and enhanced by our partners at JED who have unique expertise in the field of college student emotional health. Literature searches were conducted across a number of academic databases including PubMed/MEDLINE, PsycINFO, ERIC, Scopus, ABI Inform and a number of full-text databases focused on education, psychology and sociology literature. PubMed/MEDLINE is the largest, most comprehensive biomedical citation database in the world. Maintained by the U.S. National Library of Medicine, it contains over 26 million citations from national and international biomedical serials. PsycINFO is a similar database that focuses on psychology information and is produced by the American Psychological Association. The Education Resources and Information Center (ERIC) is a database of educational scholarship produced by the U.S. Department of Education. Scopus is another comprehensive citation database like PubMed and includes a deeper focus of literature of the social sciences. Lastly, ABI/Inform, which stands for Abstracted Business Information, is a comprehensive citation database focusing on business, trade and marketing.



### *This literature review highlights:*

- *experiences of college students and graduates*
- *developmental theory*
- *model programs*
- *best practices in college and employment settings*



For the database searches, search terms were developed using index terms specific to each source (e.g., MeSH – Medical Subject Headings for PubMed/MEDLINE and the Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms for PsycINFO). A sample of index-based search terms include “colleges,” “emotional adjustment,” “resilience, psychological,” “transitions,” “employment potential,” “employment patterns,” “school to work transition,” “personal development,” and “adaption, psychological.” Examples of phrases used to search the non-indexed sources included “emotional support from college to the workplace,” “transferring from college,” “hiring new college graduates,” “preparing college graduates for the workforce” and “emotional and mental health.” All search results were added to an EndNote Bibliographic Citation Management database. Authors reviewed all citations and, when available, abstracts. Full text sources were collected for sources deemed appropriate.

## DEFINITIONS

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Within this report, we define emotional wellbeing as “a state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (World Health Organization, 2014). This report is focused on the emotional health of all young people undergoing the college-to-career transition; it is not limited to the emotional health of young people diagnosed with mental health conditions.

For the purpose of this report, college seniors are defined as those in the final two semesters of an undergraduate degree program. Defining a college senior as someone finishing their fourth year in an undergraduate degree program can be misleading – a growing number of students take more than four years to complete their undergraduate degree and some undergraduate programs require more than four years of study (Henscheid, 2008). One possible way to think of the senior year of college is the time period when students are preparing to transition from their current college setting into the next phase of life, be it employment or a graduate degree program.

Additionally, this report considers the college-to-career transition as the point when one has finished their undergraduate degree and is ready to formally embark upon their career in a full-time capacity. We recognize that the sequencing of education and employment often is not as tidy as earning a college degree and starting one’s first full-time job. Due to the financial realities of funding a college education in today’s society, many college graduates have either participated in the labor market while simultaneously pursuing their college degree or have moved back and forth between working and pursuing their education (Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults, 2015). And for many, it may take several years after graduation before they are settled into a clear career path.

# EXPERIENCES OF SENIORS PREPARING TO TRANSITION FROM COLLEGE

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Before exploring the specific experiences and challenges of senior year, it is helpful to consider the literature on young adult development, as a way to anchor our understanding of the college-to-career transition in a young person's life.

### ■ *Theory of identity development*

In 1969, Arthur Chickering published his seminal Theory of Identity Development, which examines the process of identity development specifically in college students (Chickering, 1969). Chickering proposes what he calls the Seven Vectors, which include “tasks” that college students must go through as part of developing their identity. These seven vectors include:

1. **Developing competence.** College students develop three types of competence – intellectual, manual, and interpersonal.
  - a. Intellectual competencies include the ability to understand, analyze, and synthesize information.
  - b. Manual competencies are the ability to physically accomplish tasks.
  - c. Interpersonal competencies focus on relationships, and entail listening, cooperating, effectively communicating, as well as the ability to respond appropriately in group situations and support relationship development.

Students' overall competence increases as they learn to trust their own abilities and receive and integrate feedback from others.

2. **Managing emotions.** The emphasis here is on students becoming aware of and identifying their emotions, both negative and positive, and taking the steps to appropriately manage them. Attention to managing emotions can support a balance for college students between self-awareness and self-control.
3. **Moving through autonomy towards interdependence.** A key developmental step, students must learn to function with relative self-sufficiency, take responsibility for themselves and their actions, and be less constrained by the opinions of others. An individual develops the ability to have an independent outlook on life while understanding that successful relationships are based upon interdependence with others.
4. **Developing mature interpersonal relationships.** Part of the college experience is meeting a wide variety of people, with beliefs, values and backgrounds that are different from your own. This task requires students to both tolerate and appreciate differences, and have the capacity for intimacy, i.e., establish relationships that are close and meaningful.

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*The Seven Vectors include “tasks” that college students must go through as part of developing their identity.*

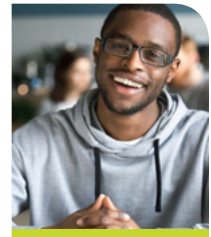
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**5. Establishing identity.** Chickering states that identity development establishes how the student is perceived by others. Identity development involves:

- a. Comfort with body and appearance;
- b. Comfort with gender and sexual orientation;
- c. Sense of self in various contexts including social, historical, and cultural;
- d. Clarification of self-concept through roles and life-style;
- e. Sense of self as informed by feedback from others;
- f. Self-acceptance and self-esteem; and
- g. Personal stability and integration.

Identity formation leads to a sense of contentment with one's self and how one is perceived by others.

**6. Developing purpose.** This is where students begin to make the connection between who they are and where they come from with what they want to be. College students begin to identify with why they are earning a college degree. The “why” extends beyond getting a job, and includes a broader calling to discover what gives students energy and what they find most fulfilling. Developing purpose is marked by an increasing ability to be intentional, to review options, to clarify goals, and move forward even when barriers arise.



*The “why” extends beyond getting a job, and includes a broader calling to discover what gives students energy and what they find most fulfilling.*

**7. Developing integrity.** College can often challenge students’ values; as integrity is developed, students have an increased ability to collate and practice the values that are consistent with their own beliefs.

■ **McCoy’s assertions related to college-to-career transition stages**

Inherent in senior year is the notion of transition. McCoy (2003) asserts that the process of college-to-career transition occurs in three stages:

- 1. Stage 1 – detachment** - individuals recognize that there will be a separation from current experiences, surroundings or persons.
- 2. Stage 2 –liminality** - individuals evaluate the positives and negatives of the transition, and strategize about how to adapt to the new situation.
- 3. Stage 3 - new beginnings** - individuals actually enter the new situation, and sometimes experience feelings of loss or uncertainty or unawareness of how they’ve transitioned to this new stage of life.

■ **Career adaptability according to career construction theory**

Within Career Construction Theory, career adaptability resources refer to psychological strengths that can influence self-regulation during life transitions, especially during the transition from school to work (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2017). These resources include the 4 C’s:

1. **Concern** – planning for the future and thinking ahead
2. **Control** – taking responsibility for one’s life course
3. **Curiosity** – exploring one’s environment
4. **Confidence** – belief in one’s ability to overcome challenges (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2017, p. 58)

Career adaptability resources have been found to have a positive effect on self-evaluations on career planning, and occupational self-efficacy during the college-to-career transition (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2017).

## EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO THE PREPARATION FOR THE COLLEGE-TO CAREER TRANSITION

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Senior year of college typically includes frequently changing and sometimes simultaneous emotions that are quite varied. Some students may feel an overwhelming sense of joy about their impending graduation, while others may feel incredible sadness about college ending, and still some may feel both of these emotions at the same time (Meyers, La Voy, Shipley, & Mainella, 2000). Seniors may feel pressured to only externalize the enthusiastic, optimistic side of how they are feeling, and keep their anxiety, fear, sadness and other negative emotions to themselves (Seniors’ Concerns, n.d.).

Meanwhile, college seniors may have a hard time focusing on academics, and may experience a decrease in motivation and effort, evidenced by tardiness, absences, and lower grades - a phenomenon colloquially known as “senioritis.” “Senioritis” can occur when a student focuses their energy on non-academic priorities or a student may engage in periods of “non-activity” as a result of being overwhelmed with the uncertainty of transitioning out of college and a desire to avoid decision-making (Overton-Healy, 2010). Any combination of stress, anxiety, and/or depression can lead to “senioritis” and a sense of “burn out” (Hunt, Boyd, Gast, Mitchell, & Wilson, 2010).

Nostalgia can also be powerful for seniors, as many campus events for college seniors are a part of a countdown to “last” experiences, such as the last football game or the last spring break of a student’s college career (Kane, 2014). The emphasis on “the end” can heighten the emotion of an already challenging transition. One college senior noted, “So everything is your last and like, ‘Oh my God...like this is my last everything.’ It always pops into your head, and you get a bit of sadness then ...” (McCoy, 2003). It is clear that some of the biggest concerns of college seniors involve the experiences of change and loss (Pistilli, Taub, & Bennett, 2003).

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*A student may engage in periods of “non-activity” as a result of being overwhelmed with the uncertainty of transitioning out of college.*

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## FEAR OF UNCERTAINTY AHEAD

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Many college seniors report that being expected to suddenly take on all the responsibilities of being an adult after graduation, such as being independent and self-sufficient is extremely anxiety provoking and overwhelming. In particular, the ambiguity of what life will look like post-graduation can be a huge stressor in the lives of college seniors. Students often describe their responses to the dreaded question, “So, what are your plans for after graduation?” One recent graduate of the University of Virginia wrote in *The Atlantic*, “I entertain the thought of maxing out my credit card on a plane so I can write looping letters across the sky: I DON’T KNOW, AND DON’T ASK” (Burke, 2015).

In particular, many students face anxiety about their ability to land a job and begin their career after college. A majority of college seniors do not expect to locate a job before their graduation, and as such see a looming gap when they envision life post-graduation (Henscheid, 2008). There is common concern about landing a job that is a good fit. As one senior noted, “I’m very anxious of not only finding a job, but finding a job that I am actually going to enjoy and not dread going to every day” (Hedman, 2013).

Worsening these anxieties, graduating seniors can be prone to problematic ‘all-or-nothing’ thinking, including thoughts like “what if I never find a job?” or “what if no one will hire me?” The anxiety students feel related to finding a job is compounded by the pressure, imposed by themselves and others, to outline their career ladder into the foreseeable future (Yazedjian, Kielaszek, & Toews, 2010).

The anxieties related to the unknowns of the real world outside of college were clearly communicated by a University Visitors Network blog writer reflecting on her senior-year worries:

*This was my final lap before the real world, and I still had no clue what I wanted to do once I graduated. I drowned in anxious questions – What kind of job do I apply for? Will I get a job? Should I move away or stay in Boulder? What about my boyfriend and friends, where will they go? (5 things I learned my senior year of college, n.d., para. 3)*

## COMPARISONS WITH PEERS

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For many college seniors, the seemingly constant exposure to the successes and accomplishments of peers, especially through social media, can foster a sense of inadequacy (Kane, 2014; Sheehan, 2016). In the age of social media, sharing details of one’s life has become commonplace and almost expected. As one young adult noted, “You’ll hear about one or two people having a handsomely paid consulting position waiting for them after graduation, and suddenly you’ll feel like the only loser who doesn’t have it together” (Pugachevsky, 2014). Getting caught up in the successes of others can easily lead a college senior to question their own choices, and can be damaging to their self-esteem (Sheehan, 2016). Conversely, students who do achieve some of the benchmarks idealized during the

senior year of college report a lack of support from their peers. As one college senior at a private college noted:

*It's frustrating. You know, and when they don't understand, like how exciting it is to you know, I got a job, and I was excited, and they were like 'Oh.' The only ones that were excited were the ones who we have our jobs together... (McCoy, 2003, p. 158).*

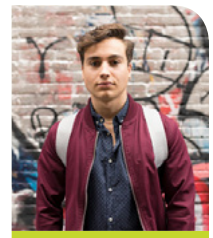
College seniors with pre-existing mental health conditions who are symptomatic may feel negative emotions about any additional challenges they face in order to follow the same trajectory as their peers. The ability of students with mental health concerns to complete courses on time or maintain a high GPA may be negatively impacted by symptoms (Eisenberg, Golberstein, & Hunt, 2009). Depression in particular is often associated with lower GPA and higher drop-out rates among college students (Eisenberg et al., 2009). The frustration of not being able to graduate with friends can cause guilt and negative self-talk. As one University of Wisconsin senior living with clinical depression wrote: "I will not be graduating in May. For me, it's been hard to focus on long-term goals when your mind and body decide what you can and cannot do today" (Letter to the editor: Senior year as a student with mental illness, 2014).

## CHANGING SUPPORT NETWORKS

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A college campus can be an incredibly social environment, one which has been compared to "...one giant slumber party, where your friends are never too far away," (Hedman, 2013). As the 'giant slumber party' ends, seniors often report their social circles growing smaller during their final year, and many college seniors feel much older than the underclassmen on campus (Kane, 2014; Ortile, 2013; Weil, 2016). Seniors also lack time to focus on socialization, resulting in further decrease in the size of social circles, often to only include core friends (McCoy, 2003; Pugachevsky, 2014).

College seniors may do well to solidify core relationships while still in college, in order to ensure a post-graduation support system (Kane, 2014). Graduating seniors identify that relationships with significant people in their lives, such as friends and family, are critical to feeling supported during the transition out of college (Pistilli et al., 2003; Yazedjian et al., 2010). As one senior noted in U.S. News and World Report, "You're really trying to solidify your friends in your last year of college because you want people that you're going to be able to stay in contact with after you finish your studies" (McMullen, 2011). For international students, having important family and friends geographically far away may cause difficult emotional hardships because these loved ones are not as accessible for support (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007).



*Many college seniors feel much older than the underclassmen on campus.*

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## STRESS OF PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: BEGINNING THE JOB OR GRADUATE SCHOOL SEARCH

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### ■ **Career goal setting**

Many factors contribute to the formulation and solidification of career goals among college seniors. Any negative feedback received is often influential. In many instances, young adults have adverse reactions to negative feedback regarding their career goals and this can lead young adults to stop pursuing current goals to pursue less ambitious goals or give up goal pursuit entirely (Hu, Creed, & Hood, 2017). Understandably, this goal instability leads to stress, anxiety, and uncertainty. Young adults who are already stressed during the college-to-career transition can have increasingly poor reactions to negative feedback over time, often leading to a downward emotional spiral (Hu et al., 2017).

Feeling like an outsider may dissuade international and minority students from aspiring to certain career goals. Greater degrees of acculturative stress for international students correspond with lower career ambitions, as emotional turmoil may leave these students with little energy to devote to career development (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). Lack of English proficiency, if present, may cause a graduating international student to avoid environments that would require frequent communication with peers (Olivas & Li, 2006; Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). Instead, international students may gravitate towards careers in mathematics, science, and engineering due to their linguistic worries (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). Meanwhile, racial representation can limit the perceived career opportunities of students from minority populations. For example, a student may initially be considering a particular career, but upon realizing that people of their racial and/or ethnic group are poorly represented in the field, reorient themselves in another direction (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007).

### ■ **Hesitancy to utilize on-campus services**

A plethora of on-campus services, such as career counseling or mental health counseling, exist to aid students as they prepare for entry into the workforce. These services, however, are often not accessed by students on campus, with certain cohorts of students being particularly unlikely to access them. For example, first generation college students are less likely than other groups on campus to seek help, relying more on an independent, “figure it out” mentality (Overton-Healy, 2010). Meanwhile, international and minority students are less likely than other students to pursue campus-based emotional support (e.g., counseling centers), instead they often present to career services to seek assistance in coping with their emotional difficulties related to their impending college-to-career transition (Constantine & Flores, 2006). For both international and minority students, lack of mental health service utilization may be due to cultural mistrust towards mental health providers or cultural stigmas about mental health conditions (Constantine & Flores, 2006).

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*In many instances, young adults have adverse reactions to negative feedback regarding their career goals.*

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### ■ **Job search process**

The final year of college is often filled with competing demands; during senior year, students have to balance coursework and job search or graduate school application activities, with a desire to socialize with friends and participate in extracurricular activities, all while savoring the final days of college. Students prioritize these demands in different orders with few managing to satisfactorily balance them all. One college senior summarized her fall semester of senior year:

*“The semester was stressful. Extremely stressful. Um, it was like, most stressful, only because I was looking for a job so early, and, you know, deciding what I want to do with a job and, you know, trying to balance school work and sports and my friends, and you know, my family, all at once...” (McCoy, 2003, p. 154).*

For college seniors embarking on their job search, looking for employment while still fulfilling the academic demands of college can be particularly time-consuming and overwhelming. The job search process involves polishing one’s resume, writing individualized cover letters, interviewing, and networking. One blog post reads, “the most important papers you will write all semester are cover letters” (Kane, 2014). Another student noted she was spending more time going to job interviews than in class her senior year (Farnsworth, 2012).

Today’s job market is more competitive than it has been in the past - job interviews have become multi-step processes, and employers are doing a lot more screening (Farnsworth, 2012). A director of Career Services on a college campus noted the toll this rigorous application process can take, “It bruises the psyche of your graduating class... [it’s] really important that we teach students to be resilient in these times. I fear that a lot of seniors withdraw after they get roughed up a bit with the rejection” (Farnsworth, 2012).

### ■ **Pursuing graduate school admission**

Some students will choose to continue their education beyond an undergraduate degree. This path also presents a unique set of challenges. Graduate programs can be quite competitive – it is important that students put together a strong application, get faculty to compose favorable letters of recommendation, and achieve high scores on required standardized tests, all of which is time-consuming (Gordon-Seapker, 2016; Palacios, 2013). The process can also be quite expensive and financially draining with application fees being much higher than those at the undergraduate level (Palacios, 2013). In the end, many graduates, particularly first generation college graduates, succumb to the need to earn money and do not pursue the long-term investment of a graduate-level education (Schoon & Mortimer, 2017). It is apparent that pursuing graduate school over entering the workforce also presents challenges to maintaining emotional health.

### ■ **Harsh financial realities**

A growing body of research indicates a connection between the financial challenges faced by college students and their emotional wellbeing (Guo, Wang, Johnson, & Diaz, 2011; Hall, 2015; Stein et al., 2013; Walsemann, Gee, & Gentile, 2015). The majority of college

students (64%) use loans to pay for college; of these, seven out of ten students report feeling stressed about their personal finances (McDaniel, Montalto, Ashton, Duckett, & Croft, 2015). College seniors face particular financial stress as they are obligated to start loan repayment in the near future (Guo et al., 2011; Walsemann et al., 2015). One college senior at Champlain College in Burlington, Vermont explained, “I did my exit counseling last night, and realized I’m almost going to be paying another rent every month in order to pay off my loans” (Hedman, 2013). Perhaps most striking about this student, he was unaware of the size and scope of his debt and the required payback schedule until his exit counseling. The magnitude of the financial commitment, combined with the sudden realization of his repayment obligations, simply compound the stress and anxiety many feel at the end of their college career.

The high prevalence of loans among college seniors can be associated with the skyrocketing cost of a college degree. The price of higher education, adjusted for inflation, has increased 250% over the last 3 decades (Hall, 2015). As Blake wrote “In 2012, student loan debt totaled over 1 trillion dollars in the United States, making this type of loan second only to home mortgage debt” (2015). Understandably, many end up having difficulty making ends meet as a result. In 2015, 11.3% of students defaulted on their loans, bringing the total number of borrowers in default to 8.1 million (Institute for College Access & Success, 2016a).

The typical college senior graduating from a public or nonprofit college in 2015 was found to have student loan debt averaging \$30,100 (Institute for College Access & Success, 2016b). \$25,000 is the amount at which debt burden is believed to play a more serious role in young adults’ lives (Gallup-Purdue Index, 2015). It is important to note that African American and first generation college graduates students incur disproportionate financial burdens related to college loan repayments (Gallup-Purdue Index, 2015). Fifty-percent (50%) of African American students and 42% of first generation college graduates have more than \$25,000 in student loan debt (Gallup-Purdue Index, 2015).

Walsemann and colleagues (2015) analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, which tracked a nationally representative sample of young adults in the U.S. from 1997 to present-day and found indications that student loans are often associated with lower psychological functioning, even when accounting for other economic and demographic factors. They speculate that significant financial debt likely spills over to affect life decisions around career choices, marriage, and having children. One perhaps surprising finding, for students from lower income families, emotional wellbeing actually improved with higher loans. This may be explained by the fact that loans likely supported the student moving to a higher social standing, which in turn increased the student’s overall happiness (Walsemann et al., 2015).

### ■ **Dropping out**

Dropping out of college is a fairly common phenomenon and can be a part of a college senior’s experiences; the majority of young people in the United States have some college education but only about a quarter of 25 to 29-year-olds have received 4-year degrees (Mortimer, Zimmer-Gembeck, Holmes, & Shanahan, 2002). When students abandon college



*The typical college senior graduating from a public or nonprofit college in 2015 was found to have student loan debt averaging \$30,100.*

studies before earning a diploma, this can have severe financial consequences, and can negatively impact emotional wellbeing. The earnings gap between college graduates and those who do not possess a college degree has never been larger (Rugaber, 2017). Young adults without a bachelor's degree appear to be particularly susceptible to floundering during their young adult years, and have a difficult time establishing a career and instead, tend to move from one job to the next in rapid succession (Kerckhoff, 2002). Many of the opportunities available to non-college graduates are low-paying in fields such as retail and food services, leaving many non-college graduates feeling “stuck” (Rugaber, 2017).

## COLLEGE-BASED STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS AND THEIR EMOTIONAL WELLNESS IN PREPARATION FOR THE TRANSITION TO THE WORKPLACE

While the college-to-career transition is a known period of stress, anxiety, and uncertainty, there are opportunities to nurture resilience and enhance emotional wellbeing among college seniors.

### COLLEGE COURSES

#### ■ **Identity formation**

Identity formation involves defining who one is to oneself as well as to others. Aiding students in identity formation is helpful as many college seniors struggle with the basic notions of who they are, and what they are doing with their lives. Many colleges have begun to offer courses related to identity formation, and these courses have proven to be popular (Nash & Jang, 2013; Wood, 2004). Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina offers a growing selection of elective courses on identity formation including one course simply exploring “Who Am I?” (Young, 2016). One student who took the “Who Am I?” course commented, “There are not a lot of classes where you get to just focus on yourself and what you want to do and your strengths and weaknesses” (Young, 2016). Students report that these classes are effective, that they become invested in identity formation activities, and that they appreciate that course expectations keep them accountable (Wood, 2004). The end result of these classes is often an increased ability for graduating seniors to cope with the emotions that come along with the uncertainty of graduating college and entering the “real world” (Nash & Jang, 2013).

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*Many college seniors struggle with the basic notions of who they are, and what they are doing with their lives.*

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#### ■ **Meaning Making**

Meaning making courses are designed to help students find their centering values and identify what they want most out of life, as well as to answer other existential questions common during young adulthood (Nash & Jang, 2013). Students are encouraged to ask themselves ‘meaning questions’ such as, “What is the source of my joy?” and “What is my responsibility to others?” Tasks are assigned to aid in answering these questions such as

conducting mutually respectful conversations with peers and writing personal narratives. There is growing support for Meaning Making Centers to become a standard on college campuses (Nash & Jang, 2013). These centers would have a multidisciplinary approach to meaning making, where students can slow down and evaluate their motivations, activities and processes in order to encourage identity, career, social, and emotional development.

### ■ **Capstone coursework**

Capstone courses provide college seniors with the opportunity to holistically reflect on their academic and personal growth over the course of their college career. Capstone courses can vary between colleges, but typically include final projects, theses, or recitals, which serve as summative pieces of the learning accomplished throughout undergraduate careers (Gardner, 1999). In this way, these courses can provide closure to the college experience and help students emotionally prepare for their next life phase. Capstone curriculum advocates at the University of South Carolina recommend that capstone coursework is incorporated into all academic majors and is mandatory for all graduating students. They suggest the following goals for capstone coursework (Gardner, 1999, p. 8):

1. Study transition during the senior year;
2. Prepare students for transition during and after senior year;
3. Have students engage in analysis, self-assessment, and reflection about the meaning of their total undergraduate experience;
4. Have students demonstrate what they have learned from their liberal arts and general education courses and demonstrate the inter-relationship between at least two disciplines;
5. Have students demonstrate what they have learned in a career planning process that will be provided in this course;
6. Have students prepare a portfolio which documents and portrays what they have learned and how they have developed in college, academically and personally;
7. Allow students to participate in an academic support group of fellow students in which they receive instruction, support, and feedback from their instructors and classmates and in which they provide the same to them;
8. Encourage students to consider holistically a variety of issues to be faced in the process of leaving college. These issues will be in the following possible domains: personal, social, vocational, spiritual, political, civic, financial, practical, philosophical, psychological, and physical.

### ■ **Working collaboratively with employers**

Additionally, colleges can better prepare students for the workforce by seeking employer input on course design. A dataset analysis of university program characteristics that included information about 2,600 recent graduates from 14 European nations concluded that:

*Universities should support students' preparation for entering the workforce by focusing on the relevance to labor market needs of their graduate education programs (study programs should be demanding, academically prestigious and vocationally oriented) through close interaction with employers. Employers should be invited to participate in reviewing and developing curricula and to provide proper internships for students. (Garcia-Aracil, 2015, p. 23).*

### ■ **General course characteristics**

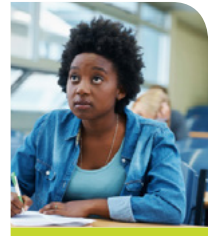
Certain activities and expectations within a college classroom can support career planning and preparedness. A survey of graduates of Boise State University's Department of Psychology, ranging in age from 21 to 70, identified the top 10 skills needed in order to succeed in the workplace. Identified abilities/capacities included:

1. Self-discipline;
2. Punctual attendance and dependability;
3. Acting responsibly and conscientiously;
4. Working well with others;
5. Meeting the needs of others, such as clients or customers;
6. Setting priorities and allocate time efficiently to meet deadlines;
7. Identifying, prioritizing and solving problems;
8. Making defensible and appropriate decisions;
9. Working independently; and
10. Managing several tasks at once. (Landrum, Hettich, & Wilner, 2010, p. 99-100)

When asked to cite the activities that would have helped them become competent in all these areas by the time they graduated college, most referred to higher expectations in the classroom such as being on time for class, professors not accepting late work, students conforming to due dates, student consequences for low attendance and absenteeism, and encouragement for students to do more than the bare minimum (Landrum et al., 2010). These are all elements colleges should keep in mind when developing career preparedness initiatives for graduating seniors.

## **CAREER COUNSELING**

Colleges often offer career counseling opportunities that address needed life skills (e.g., financial literacy), work skills, social skills, and expectation setting skills (Yeadon, 2010). It is important to recognize that career support does not need to be constrained to only senior year, and can occur throughout a student's undergraduate years and continue past a student's commencement. Skills career services can assist young adults in attaining include:



*Higher expectations in the classroom can help develop career preparedness in graduating seniors.*



1. **Job search assistance/coaching** - Students can benefit from training related to the job search process such as resume writing and interviewing best practices (e.g., coaching related to how to relate academic and co-curricular activities to qualities and skills desirable to employers (Hettich, 2010). This can help alleviate unemployment or underemployment.
2. **Expectation setting** - The instability of employment opportunities in today's society necessitates young adults are flexible in the ways they achieve their goals (Vuolo, Staff, & Mortimer, 2012). Understanding this, recent graduates might be able to sidestep or anticipate difficulties (Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, & Platt, 2010).
3. **Money management** - Financial literacy and debt management skill-building opportunities are beneficial to graduating seniors with student loan debt. Financial information should be made easily accessible (e.g. through online modules, embedded into pre-existing capstone courses) (Yazedjian et al., 2010).
4. **Career goal setting** - Colleges students would benefit from assistance in creating aspirational but at the same time attainable career goals (Vuolo et al., 2012). Research has shown that college seniors who question their career goals achieve a lower level of success in the workplace, combined with lower rates of job satisfaction and career establishment (Vuolo et al., 2012). Career services should help students learn how to effectively absorb feedback on their career goals, particularly negative feedback. This will enable them to develop appropriate strategies in response to negative feedback rather than abandoning a goal altogether (Hu et al., 2017).

■ ***The intersection of career services and mental health counseling***

Colleges can further support seniors in making a successful, emotionally-fulfilling transition to their working lives by providing holistic counseling services. Personal, mental health counseling and career counseling should work in tandem. Personal issues such as anxiety, mood, identity, attachment, and psychological separation are not detached from career issues; career counseling should not only focus on vocational outcomes, but the emotional state of college students (Hinkelman & Luzzo, 2007). As such, it is important for all staff in mental health and career counseling centers to have comprehensive training in a number of areas, including supervision, psychological development of college-aged young adults, career psychology, life span development, and psychotherapy (Bishop, 2006).

Career counselors can work with college seniors to develop individuals' emotional intelligence, which is the capacity to identify and manage emotions in themselves as well as others, thus intermingling emotional and career counseling. Goleman (1995) describes emotional intelligence as a set of key skills that are innate but also can be learned, which include being able to motivate oneself, persistence in the face of obstacles and goal achievement, controlling impulses and mood, thinking rationally, and empathizing with others. Male students in particular can experience many benefits in career decision making by increasing their emotional intelligence and becoming aware of their emotions (Puffer, 2011). A performance-based measure of emotional intelligence in addition to other career



*Career counseling should not only focus on vocational outcomes, but the emotional state of college students.*

assessments upon intake to career services can increase all students' self-awareness and aid in career exploration (Puffer, 2011).

What is known as 'confluence counseling' also encourages college-based career counselors to support the integration of personal and career counseling (Liptak, 2005). Confluence counseling allows college seniors to explore their own emotional intelligence, and examine motivations for engaging in both effective and ineffective behaviors, and to apply this knowledge in both their daily lives as well as in the workplace. Liptak (2005) proposes five steps that career counselors can follow to help college seniors' skill development in the areas of career, personal and social competence. These steps include: (1) understanding why emotional intelligence skills are important; (2) identifying Emotional Intelligence skills capacities and deficits; (3) assessing impact of Emotional Intelligence skills capacities and deficits on potential career development; (4) strategizing on how to use Emotional Intelligence skills more effectively; and (5) practicing Emotional Intelligence skills.

While international students may be less likely to use traditional counseling services in times of distress, they can still receive emotional support when they access other service offerings, such as career services. Specifically for international students:

*...it is vital that counseling center psychologists and career counselors develop effective outreach programs to address their career concerns. For example, career counselors forming liaison relationships with campus offices for international students is an ideal way to increase these students' familiarity with available career development services, heighten their awareness of potential career development issues, and increase their overall sense of career self-efficacy and vocational competence (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007, p. 347).*

The effectiveness of joint career/emotional health counseling can be diminished if staff are not culturally competent in their interactions with international students as well as students of racial and/or ethnic minorities. Lack of cultural awareness can dissuade these students from utilizing on-campus counseling services. Culturally competent counseling includes awareness of staff's cultural biases, pursuing knowledge about a client's culture, and actively seeking out skills and techniques that are culturally sensitive (Sue & Sue, 2003). Counselors can convey cultural competency in various ways. For example, when working with female African American students, validating and using components of Afrocentric worldviews, counseling in group settings to increase students' sense of safety, and addressing how gender-role and being a member of a minority affect career decisions have been found to increase rapport and engagement (Constantine & Greer, 2003).

### ■ Internships

There are few structured connections between colleges and employers to help students find their first jobs out of college (Mortimer et al., 2002). Colleges and employers are trying to change this trend. One obvious strategy is internship programs. Internship programs give students the advantage of experience applying what they have learned in the

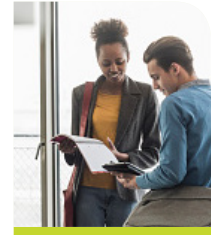
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#### Culturally competent counseling includes

- awareness of staff's cultural biases
  - pursuing knowledge about a client's culture
  - actively seeking out skills and techniques that are culturally sensitive
-

classroom into a workplace setting prior to graduation (Gallup-Purdue Index, 2014). Selingo (2015) observes that students who have internship placements on their resumes tend to fare better in the job market, while those who have not gathered much work experience by the end of college are at risk of being less focused career-wise and meandering through their twenties. Internships are seen as so valuable that it has been suggested that internships or work placements should become a graduation requirement in undergraduate programs (Yazedjian et al., 2010).

A focus group of University of Maryland college seniors described the benefits of internships during one's college career (Meyers et al., 2000). One senior said, "Internships look really good on your application [for professional positions]. They raise the level of the application." Another student mentioned, "Internships are better than another class because you learn and make connections versus just taking another class from the University". One student mentioned how her internship helped with her career decision - "I interned at the Smithsonian which helped with grad schools. Working at a renowned organization showed that I have serious skills, and it helped me to know what I want to do and don't want to do in my field." Students with internship experience are better able to develop realistic expectations for what the workplace will be like (Long, 2014). In this way, internships prevent college graduates from experiencing "reality shock" when starting their first job and can shield them against potential coinciding negative effects on their emotional wellbeing. Two exemplary college internship programs include:



*Internships help prevent college graduates from experiencing "reality shock" when starting their first job.*

### **1. The Praxis Program at Smith College**

Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts has an endowed program called Praxis, which guarantees participating students a stipend of up to \$3,500 to work for one summer at an unpaid internship, relieving economic burden from both the student and employer (Citrin, 2015). For the past 15 years, approximately 400 students annually have received Praxis stipends to work at unpaid summer internships in such fields as health care, government, education, communications, research, social welfare, technology, law, science, and the arts. These opportunities have helped students build on their studies, make decisions about their careers, and acquire the experiences sought out by employers and graduate schools. A survey of recent Praxis recipients showed that 99% of the respondents believed that participating in the internship would make them more marketable in the future (Citrin, 2015).

### **2. The Collaborative Health and Human Services (CHHS) Program at California State University Monterey Bay**

This program works diligently to prepare its students for the workforce through internship placements in the community (Tweed, Judson, & Simmons, 2010). CHHS has five unique components:

1. 13 learning objectives focused on career preparedness that students must complete prior to graduation;

2. 2 required year-long internships for students consisting of 400 or more hours of field experience during the junior and senior years complemented by seminar classes to reflect on competencies gained and challenges faced;
3. Student establishes mentoring relationships with at least 2 field mentors over the 2 years of internship work, exposing students to different supervision styles and role models for professional behavior;
4. Confidential self-assessment completed by every student before their first internship placement to help increase self-awareness of skills and weaknesses and match students with complementary field internship sites; and,
5. An intensive professional writing component in both its field work and classroom settings (Tweed et al., 2010).

Having internship opportunities readily available in campus settings can help graduating seniors solidify their goals for the future and create a sense of purpose leading to benefits in terms of emotional health.

#### ■ **Other exposure to the workplace**

Career boot camps are another approach to help college students gain experience being in the workplace. Institutions such as Dartmouth College, Middlebury College, and the University of California at Berkeley as well as private businesses have created short-term boot camp programs to provide students with real world work experiences while still enrolled in college (Selingo, 2015). These programs expose students to business skills, tight deadlines, career coaches, and opportunities to connect with hiring managers, receive feedback, and learn how to effectively deliver content during presentations. Colleges and businesses charge a fee for enrollment in these programs in addition to a student's tuition (Selingo, 2015).

Koru, a start-up company in Seattle, Washington, runs one such boot camp. Koru hosts a 3½ week program that puts college students and recent graduates through a real world project sponsored by a local employer (Selingo, 2015). Koru's assigned projects focus on the development of business skills that are often not taught in college, including interviewing customers, developing product ideas, and presenting to executives. Participants have access to career coaching, and classes on business communication and networking. Boot camps can help prepare students for the workforce and develop skills that are not usually emphasized in college coursework, thus promoting a less emotionally challenging transition to the workplace. Boot camps can give students real-world experiences in a short amount of time, while also providing the confidence and context necessary for today's job market (Selingo, 2015).

A more radical strategy to incorporating real life work experience into college involves integrating full-time employment into the college experience and rethinking the basic concept of the bachelor's degree (Selingo, 2013). Colleges could have 2-3 years of coursework followed by a year or years of postgraduate work experience. Under such a scenario,



*Boot camps can help prepare students for the workforce and develop skills that are not usually emphasized in college coursework.*

students might pay less in tuition for their undergraduate education, but then pay annual subscription fees to the college through their 20s, spreading out the cost of the program (Selingo 2013). Northeastern University has a co-op program in place that embodies some elements of this approach.

### ■ **Faculty mentors**

Faculty mentorship can make a huge difference in a student's career trajectory. The Gallup-Purdue Index (2014) found, "if an employed graduate recalls a professor who cared about them as a person, one who made them excited about learning, and who encouraged them to pursue their dreams, the graduate's odds of being engaged at work more than doubled." The power faculty have to make a difference in a graduating senior's life may be particularly salient among international students. Strong faculty-international student relationships have been found to serve as a protective function to the emotional wellbeing of international students under stress (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992).

Colleges and universities should consider giving faculty members opportunities to hone teaching techniques and rapport-building skills applicable to mentoring students (Gallup-Purdue Index, 2015). When faculty buy-in to the value of career mentorship, it can greatly improve outcomes for a college. This is exemplified by practices at Colby College in Waterville, Maine:

*At Colby College, as in many elite colleges and universities, professors are typically the most influential members of the community, and the effectiveness of the career programs took off when career planning [was integrated] with what transpired in the classroom. Getting faculty to understand the importance of career development was the key to building traction. The more faculty support and participate in career development mentoring, the more effective it will be for students – and for the career development office. (Citrin, 2015)*

### ■ **Alumni mentors**

Colleges can connect graduating seniors with alumni to promote social connectedness and networking possibilities, in the hopes of promoting a smooth college-to-career transition. These networking opportunities can be intensive such as those at Carleton College in Minnesota, and Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts:

- ▶ *Carleton College recently began an immersion program where students are matched with alumni with whom they live and go to work with for one to four weeks. The goal is to give students a taste of a particular industry while developing strong personal connections with their hosts (Kolowich, 2009).*
- ▶ *Bridgewater State College holds an annual senior exposition that allows students the opportunity to network with alumni in a "speed dating" approach, to encourage relationships with established professionals (Henscheid, 2008).*

Alumni mentoring can also be less intensive in nature. Recent graduates can keep in touch with alumni by simply subscribing to an alumni newsletter or alumni email list-servs

(Jusoh et al., 2011). In a similar vein, colleges can create directories of alumni in specific fields who would be willing to mentor seniors, which students can tap into as desired (Long 2014). Mentoring can take place through email, phone calls, or face-to-face interactions.

### ■ **Family support**

Relationships with family members can be a catalyst for success in the college-to-career transition. Strong relationships with family members reduce anxiety and increase confidence, sense of self-worth, and the ability to trust others during the difficult college-to-work transition (Kenny & Sirin, 2006). As Lane (2014) notes, “Attachment appears to be a major factor in the ability of college students to develop psychologically healthy, satisfying lives.”

Receiving adequate familial support can be more difficult for students from minority populations. It is common that students from many minority populations have tight-knit family units, and as such experience an increased likelihood of pressure from family to meet expectations. For students from racial or ethnic minorities, Constantine and Flores (2006) write, “Counselors...may consider working with a student of color on how to communicate effectively their career dilemmas with family members and to seek help and support from them with regard to career decisions.”

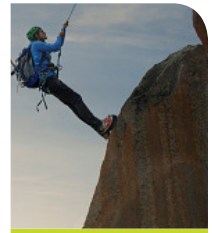
## EXPERIENCES OF RECENT GRADUATES AS THEY TRANSITION TO THE WORKPLACE

A young person’s poor emotional wellbeing can lead to lower job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, as well as higher turnover rates (Larson, 2013). It is important to consider and attempt to mitigate the challenges to emotional wellbeing faced by many recent college graduates as they enter the workforce.

A contributing factor to the challenging nature of the college-to-career transition is that young people are adjusting to the work environment while simultaneously experiencing multiple other life transitions (Reichert & Pihet, 2000). In addition to adjusting to working full-time, a recent college graduate may be adjusting to living independently, managing their personal finances, changing social circles, and sustaining a serious romantic relationship for the first time. One recent graduate described the competing challenges of starting a new job while becoming more independent from her family:

*The biggest thing is that I’ve been homesick since I went to a college close to my family’s house, so it was definitely hard to move far from family as I was starting a new job because starting a new job is stressful. There are a lot of new people to meet...and a lot of new things to learn and it’s hard when you don’t have a lot of close family nearby. (Murphy et al., 2010, p. 177)*

It is important to remember that all the work challenges faced by recent college graduates only pertain to one domain of their lives. Recent college graduates are concurrently experiencing drastic changes in expectations and pressures to succeed in other aspects of their lives.



*Young people are adjusting to the work environment while simultaneously experiencing multiple other life transitions.*



## UNEMPLOYMENT AND LIMITED PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOR MARKET

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The current economic climate has affected the opportunities presented to young adults as they enter the labor market. At the bottom of the labor market, where most college graduates enter, there are many low-wage and poorly-benefited jobs which offer limited job security (Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults, 2015). A college degree does not necessarily promise the prosperity it did in the past. As we have transitioned to an information economy, most positions now require postsecondary education, meaning a college diploma is not a resume-booster that will truly set one apart in the labor market, but a mandatory qualifier to be considered for many jobs (Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults, 2015).

A key concern for young people is unemployment; as of 2013, the unemployment rate for the under-25 population was almost double that of the general population (Dennett & Modestino, 2013). A disparity in employment between younger and older adults is typical for any generation, but the existing gap in employment rates between these cohorts is widening over time (Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults, 2015). Since 2010, the portion of young adults currently employed (54 percent) is the lowest in the U.S. since these data were first collected in 1948 (Brack, 2012). In this way, unemployment during young adulthood increases the risk of anxiety, depression, social marginalization, and overall decreased wellbeing, as well as long-lasting socioeconomic consequences (Mortimer, Kim, Staff, & Vuolo, 2016).

## UNDEREMPLOYMENT

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In today's competitive job market, college seniors and recent college graduates have become used to rejection and setbacks along the way to career success. Citrin (n.d.) writes, "the career marketplace for new graduates has never been more competitive, unstructured, and difficult to navigate. For every appealing entry-level position in a given industry, there are dozens, often hundreds, and sometimes thousands of candidates." This leads many young adults to accept jobs for which they are over-educated and about which they are not interested. The extent of this over-education phenomenon was recently described:

*Of the more than three million college graduates who entered the U.S. workforce in 2013, nearly half accepted jobs for which they believed they were overqualified. In 2012, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, 44 percent of recent graduates were working in positions that typically don't require a college degree, up from 34 percent in 2001. (Citrin, n.d., p. 7-8)*

Being over-educated for a job is a powerful contributing factor in job dissatisfaction among young graduates (Garcia-Aracil, 2015). Job dissatisfaction has been found to increase stress, anxiety, and other markers of poor emotional health (Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005; Heslop, Smith, Metcalfe, Macleod & Hart, 2002), and failure to meet occupational goals

and achieve occupational success is linked to job dissatisfaction and depression in young adulthood (Hardie, 2014).

Many college students are over-educated for their jobs, and their jobs are also often neither related to their field of study nor career interests. Thirty-five percent of college graduates report having a job that is not closely or not at all related to their degree (Stone, Van Horn, & Zukin, 2012). This is exemplified by one recent college graduate's description of her current position, "When I first started working here as a legal secretary, people told me I would be good at working this particular department...I never really thought 'this is exactly where I want to be.' It just kind of happened" (Mortimer et al., 2002).

## LIMITED INCOME AND BENEFITS

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Recent college graduates are earning lower incomes than they expected. It has been noted that "many graduates are disappointed with their starting salary; over half reported that it was less than they had expected it to be" (Stone et al., 2012). Additionally, the majority of recent graduates are paid by the hour as opposed to salaried positions (Stone et al., 2012). During the recent recession, a PEW survey found that 49 percent of young adults had taken a job they didn't want just to pay the bills, and nearly a quarter had taken an unpaid job to gain some work experience" (Brack, 2012).

At times, many parents try to support their young adult children during periods of unemployment or under-employment by providing financial assistance. Although well-intentioned (and at times necessary), financial assistance from parents during these times can also have negative effects on a young adult's confidence, sense of self-efficacy, and development of a positive work identity (Mortimer et al., 2016). Interestingly, this lack of self-efficacy has been found to be more pervasive for young adults receiving financial assistance from parents to cover the expenses of living independently rather than for young adults cohabitating with parents (Mortimer et al., 2016). This could be because the young person receiving financial assistance is unlikely to be able to reimburse their parents in the near future while a young adult who is residing with parents oftentimes contributes financially or otherwise to maintaining the household.

In terms of workplace benefits, acquiring and maintaining health insurance is a concern. Graduating seniors lose the health care resources on their university's campus after graduation (Park, Mulye, Adams, Brindis, & Irwin, 2006). Some young adults may be able to join or remain on their parents' health insurance, and some may be able to acquire jobs with health insurance coverage quickly, but others will not be so fortunate. While some progress on the healthcare front has been made with the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act as well as state-level policies (Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults, 2015), these recently enacted federal programs are in jeopardy with the 2017 presidential administration changes. This is worrisome because as the Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults (2015) has

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*A PEW survey found that 49 percent of young adults had taken a job they didn't want just to pay the bills.*

*+*  
*Nearly a quarter had taken an unpaid job to gain some work experience.*

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noted, “young adults without health insurance or with gaps in insurance coverage are less likely to access health services than young adults who are continuously insured.”

Students with preexisting mental health conditions often worry about having health care coverage that will enable them to continue receiving mental health care after graduation (Singh, 2014). Medication management and therapy appointments may have to be put on hold or paid for out of pocket, which is a worrisome prospect. As Hettich (2006) notes, “individuals who have experienced mental health disorders as adolescents may be vulnerable to facing them again as young adults at a time when services are less available.”

## FRUSTRATION WITH THE INABILITY TO HAVE IT ALL RIGHT AWAY

Recent college graduates often have to come to the tough realization that they can't ‘have it all’ – at least, not right away. As Citrin (n.d., p. 17) writes:

*Job satisfaction, money, and lifestyle are almost always at odds with one another, and this is especially true as a graduate starts his or her career. Sometimes, she'll need to work long hours to be successful in a job that pays well. And one danger is that he may reach a point where he feels he had to “sell out” in terms of living the life he wants in order to make more money and climb the corporate ladder. Or perhaps she found a job that pays well and gives her a broad level of control over her schedule, but the job itself involved debilitating stress, or perhaps, even worse, drudgery.*

Once a recent college graduate concedes that there must be some trade-offs, choosing an appealing job in a less prestigious organization, rather than taking a so-so job in a well-regarded organization, has led to unhappiness. Citrin (2015, p. 117) notes:

*More than half of the young professionals who chose the company over the job indicated that they were ‘happy’ or ‘extremely happy.’ By contrast, only one-third of the young professionals who said that getting the right job was most important reported that they were either happy or extremely happy.*



*More than half of the young professionals who chose the company over the job indicated that they were ‘happy’ or ‘extremely happy.’*

## BECOMING A FRESHMAN AGAIN - THE WORKPLACE IS DIFFERENT FROM COLLEGE

In order to meet their career goals over time, a young person will likely have to expand their skill set - a skill set that enabled a young person to excel on a college campus may not translate to success in the professional world. As Holton and Naquin (2001, p. 7) write:

*College and work are fundamentally different. The knowledge you acquired in college will be critical to your success, but the process of succeeding in school is very different from the process of succeeding at work. Certain aspects of your education may have prepared you to be a professional, but evidence from the workplace indicates that this is not enough for professional success.*

College graduates face a steep learning curve and unfortunately, on-the-job training to

support recent graduates is not as commonplace today as it was for previous generations. Citrin (2015, p. 212) offered an explanation for this shift in policy:

*In times past, you got a college education and would then go to a job where a company would invest in training you. Since organizations themselves have had to restructure and reduce costs to compete, they have in many cases eliminated entry-level training and rotational programs.*

A recent college graduate made the negative consequences of limited on-the-job training apparent in her description of adjusting to her job at an insurance company:

*I was like, 'Are you guys going to explain this stuff to me?' It was all this life insurance... and I had to take all that I knew from my finance class, some of my business classes, and just try to apply them and ask people questions because they weren't telling me anything; I was just thrown in there. (Murphy et al., 2010).*

This young adult's experience is representative of how many recent college graduates feel as they dive into the workplace with limited guidance on how to fulfill their tasks: overwhelmed, stressed, and unsure of oneself.

## DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK

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While trying hard to adjust to a new work environment, social support from coworkers can be crucial for a recent college graduate to maintain emotional wellbeing (Murphy et al., 2010). Recent graduates note that it can be difficult to develop workplace relationships in office environments because people tend to remain in their cubicles for most of the day and do not socialize (Polach, 2001). However, if at all possible, putting the extra effort into relationship building is worth it; extensive research suggests that the number one factor leading to workplace happiness is the quality of one's workplace relationships (Citrin, n.d.). As noted by one recent college graduate working as an administrative assistant:

*The people I've met at work – that's probably the most important. The money is just money and it's just going to help pay the bills...whatever you're doing, where you are. But the people at work – that's why I go in. (Murphy et al., 2010, p. 177)*

A hurdle many recent college graduates must overcome to develop strong relationships at work is communicating effectively with coworkers from older generations. Today's recent college graduates have a set of workplace values that is all their own and drastically different from those of previous generations (Brack, 2012; Meier & Crocker, 2010). Coworkers from older generations tend to look to managers as authority figures and prefer to work independently, which sometimes clashes with young people's perceptions of supervisors as being peer-like and their preference for teamwork and a social work environment (Brack, 2012). One recent college graduate lamented about the difficult social environment at his first job out of college:

*The social aspect was horrendous. I was working with people who could be my parents, even my grandparents. It was really very straining, because I was 22 and the next person close to me was 31. I was used to being a college kid, just acting immature, not as mature as the people out in the real world, and that was a tough transition. (Murphy et al., 2010, p. 177)*

In terms of their relationships with supervisors, recent college graduates appreciate regular feedback on their work and praise for their accomplishments in order to feel confident and secure in the workplace (Meier & Crocker, 2010). Those currently in their 20's are sometimes referred to as the 'trophy generation' because they grew up receiving large amounts of praise and participating in highly scheduled activities throughout childhood (Brack, 2012). As a result, as young people enter the workforce, they are often surprised by lower levels of structure, feedback, and acknowledgement of accomplishments in their work environments (Meier & Crocker, 2010; Brack, 2012). In this way, if a strong recent college graduate-supervisor relationship is lacking, graduates often feel self-conscious and confused about the quality of their work.

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*Graduates often feel self-conscious and confused about the quality of their work if a strong recent college graduate-supervisor relationship is lacking.*

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## NEED TO DEVELOP SELF-CARE SKILLS

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Recent college graduates need to identify coping and self-care skills to keep them well during the stressful college-to-career transition. It is especially important for recent graduates to eat well, get enough sleep, and exercise. Young adults should develop healthy work habits such as taking breaks throughout the day and leaving work at work (Jones, 2016). If a recent graduate is living with a preexisting mental health condition, these self-care coping strategies can be even more crucial. Taking time outside work to do things a young person enjoys is a good idea. As Citrin (2015) notes, "having all your energy eggs in one basket – your career – doesn't allow for replenishment and perspective. This can potentially lead to an unhealthy and sometimes fatal overreaction to the inherent ups and downs of the work world."

## HOW EMPLOYERS SUPPORT THE EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF YOUNG ADULT EMPLOYEES

There is some movement among organizations including some national governments, in recognizing the importance of emotional and mental health in the workplace, and efforts are being made to work with employers to address this issue. For example, there is a new national initiative in the United Kingdom to improve emotional wellness in workplaces. Stevenson and Farmer (2017) outline a set of mental health standards proposed for businesses in the United Kingdom that "can and should" be undertaken by all employers to promote emotional wellbeing. These include:

1. Produce, implement, and communicate a mental health at work plan that promotes good mental health of all employees and outlines the support available for those who may need it;

2. Develop mental health awareness among employees by making information, tools and support accessible;
3. Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling, during the recruitment process and regular intervals throughout employment, offer appropriate workplace adjustments to employees who require them;
4. Provide your employees with good working conditions and ensure they have a healthy work life balance and opportunities for development;
5. Promote effective people management to ensure all employees have a regular conversation about their health and well-being with their...manager, supervisor, or organizational leader and train and support line managers and supervisors in effective management practices; and
6. Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing by understanding available data, talking to employees, and understanding risk factors.

Stevenson and Farmer (2017) also present a series of 'enhanced' standards for employers of large companies (more than 500 employees) who can "do more to lead the way." These include:

1. Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting of an organization's emotional wellbeing to include a leadership commitment and outline of the organization's approach to mental health;
2. Demonstrate accountability by nominating a health and wellbeing lead at Board or Senior Leadership level, with clear reporting duties and responsibilities;
3. Improve the disclosure process to encourage openness during recruitment and throughout, ensuring employees are aware of why the information is needed and make sure the right support is in place to facilitate a good employer response following disclosure; and
4. Ensure provision of tailored in-house mental health support and signposting to clinical help, including digital support, employer-purchased Occupational Health or Employee Assistance Programs...amongst other sources of support.



## DILIGENCE IN THE HIRING PROCESS TO ENSURE “GOOD FIT”

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Employers should pay particular attention to ensuring new employees are able to adjust appropriately to the work environment (Saks & Ashforth, 2000). When recent graduates are hired into positions but do not possess the appropriate skills or disposition, this can lead to high stress, negative mood changes, loss of motivation, loss of confidence, and decreases in emotional wellbeing (Klemme Larson & Bell, 2013). Conversely, when an employer hires a recent graduate who is a good fit for an open position, this encourages a smoother college-to-career transition (Nagele & Neuenschwander, 2014).

## ORIENTATION AND ONBOARDING

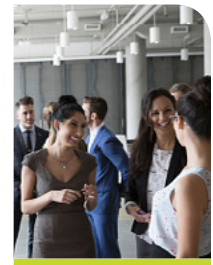
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Orientation serves as a recent graduate’s introduction to a work environment and can have a large impact on how well a young person adjusts emotionally to the workplace (Polach, 2001). A study of the lived experiences of recent college graduates during their first year of employment found that employers should place more emphasis on the socialization process of new hires, and incorporate this into an extended orientation approach that could happen over months or even years (Polach, 2004). This slow and consistent approach to orientation to new work environments can help recent graduates transition to their new social network and alleviate a sense of loss and isolation (Jusoh et al., 2011). Jusoh and colleagues (2011, p. 526) write:

*New hires need social networks that supply information as well as the feeling that they are an important part of the organization...graduates can fully utilize the orientation program to reduce the impact of reality shocks or surprises and thus expedite the necessary learning to quickly contribute to the organization.*

Rotational training is one strategy to aid recent college graduates in becoming comfortable in their new work environment. Cisco, a large IT company, has adopted a rotational training program called Cisco Choice. This program allows new hires to explore which department within the company would be their best fit, get acquainted with all departments in preparation for collaborative work, and meet various potential supervisors and then identify their top choices of supervisors (most new hires then get placed under their top choice) (Gerdes, 2009). As a result of this program, Cisco has documented an astonishing 98% 2-year retention rate among its 2,500+ young employees and has documented engagement levels that “are off the charts” (Gerdes, 2009). While rotational training certainly has its benefits, it is also important to remember that rotational training can be stressful for some, as workers are required to regularly switch work settings and adapt to new work environments (Wahab, Mordiffi, Ang, & Lopez, 2017).

Stahno and Yang (2014) also mention rotational training in a set of best practices they developed for employers to use in onboarding recent college graduates and equipping them with the necessary skills to develop into successful professionals. These include:



*Employers should place more emphasis on the socialization process of new hires.*

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1. Develop on-the-job training through rotational and mentoring programs, where senior executives act as mentors and coaches for younger employees, helping them to develop the skills needed in their organizations;
2. Support new employees in the creation of strong developmental relationships with teaching managers, career advisors, organizational supports, and mentors; and
3. Provide short, one or two day training programs that focus on:
  - a. Becoming mature professionals
  - b. Establishing profitable relationships in the organization
  - c. Exploring talents and how they intersect with the organization
  - d. Mastering communication and time management skills
  - e. Identifying career goals and long-term career plans

## **SOCIAL INTEGRATION TO THE WORKPLACE**

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As previously mentioned, recent college graduates have different workplace preferences and values than their coworkers from older generations, which can sometimes cause tension and disrupt social integration in the workplace. To handle any differences of opinions leading to tension among employees, employers can undertake several strategies (Brack, 2012):

1. **Trainings on effective interpersonal communication** – recent college graduates can benefit from soft-skills and social competencies trainings on topics including:
  - a. How to assimilate into a new workplace culture
  - b. How to work with team members assertively and diplomatically
  - c. How to process feedback
2. **Create an open dialogue about different employee perspectives** – employers can foster an appreciation for diversity and encourage roundtable discussions to encourage thinking across generations.
  - a. Johnson & Johnson, a multinational company that produces medications and first aid supplies, has created a group to help raise understanding about young adult coworkers and to encourage inclusion across generations. The group is an educational resource and awareness advocate about today’s young adult culture and characteristics. The group is open to employees of all ages and encourages intergenerational relationships.
3. **Reverse mentoring programs** - some organizations have instated reverse mentoring programs that allow recent college graduates to share their expertise, especially with technology, with older colleagues. This can aid in confidence-building and relationship development of recent graduates in their new workplaces (Brack, 2012).

## SUPERVISING RECENT COLLEGE GRADUATES – PREFERABLE WORK CONDITIONS

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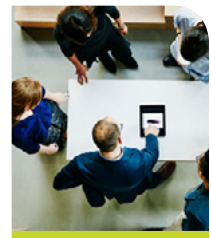
Supervisors should be aware that today’s recent college graduates (as do most people) feel passionately that their work should be meaningful, fulfilling and challenging (Meier & Crocker, 2010). Graduate cohorts of recent years have been described as confident, independent, and goal-oriented. As such, young professionals are looking for consistent opportunities for professional growth:

*[Recent college graduates] don’t want to be stuck at one level for a long time. They want to learn how to grow within a company and to develop into a well-rounded individual, which is no different from their predecessors. The difference...is that they not only expect to move up through a company quickly, they demand it. (Meier & Crocker, 2010, p. 75)*

To aid in the pursuit of these intense ambitions, recent college graduates can benefit from trainings about how to work effectively with their supervisors in mentoring or coaching relationships and long-term career goal-setting activities.

If work tasks are not meaningful but rather are excessively repetitive or boring, this can contribute to lower employee satisfaction and recent college graduates may seek out new challenges, opportunities, and professional development offerings within or outside of the organization (Jusoh et al., 2011). To combat this concern, supervisors can assign differing tasks to employees, and allow them to work on various projects, while having conversations with an employee about how they can bring new and motivating ideas to the company (Meier & Crocker, 2010).

It is helpful if supervisors are flexible in their management styles. Supervisors can convert the ways in which tasks are completed to accommodate different work styles and work-life balance (Jusoh et al, 2011; Meier & Crocker, 2010). For example, if one assignment was traditionally completed independently in the past, perhaps it can be transformed into a group effort according to young adults’ preference for teamwork. Also, perks such as work-from-home options and a casual work environment are appreciated by young professionals (Meier & Crocker, 2010). In terms of supervisor feedback, it is helpful if supervisors provide performance reviews more than once a year (Long, 2014). More regular feedback on performance can set young employees at ease about their standing, as many of today’s young people are accustomed to consistent direction and acknowledgement of achievements.



*...work should be meaningful, fulfilling and challenging.*

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## RECOGNITION OF MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH WORKPLACE TRAININGS AND PROGRAMMING

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Employers and their employees should receive training to build skills and confidence in maintaining emotional wellbeing. Stevenson & Farmer (2017) point out that this training is not currently common, but could greatly help de-medicalize mental health issues and make discussions regarding emotional health more normalized. As one person Stevenson & Farmer spoke to eloquently stated:

*Mental health is still the elephant in the room in most workplaces – employees are reluctant to raise the subject for fear of discrimination, while managers often shy away from the subject for fear of making matters worse or provoking legal consequences. This culture of silence means that opportunities to support someone in the workplace are being missed, resulting in staff being off sick or failing out of the workplace altogether. (2017, p. 29)*

Stevenson & Farmer (2017) suggest support for all employees to thrive, and more targeted and tailored support for those who may need it. Some approaches to this include:

- **Buy-in for trainings and programming from a high level**

University of Michigan Ross School of Business researchers examined how various organizations support mental health in the workplace. They found that buy-in from high-level executives corresponded to a decrease in stigma around mental health while also encouraging open conversations on the topic at work (Abraham, 2016). Byron Boston, president, CEO, and co-CIO of Dynex Capital Inc., noted:

*As a CEO, I understand that the success of my company depends on the performance of employees, and work performance is inextricably linked to mental and physical health. This is about being a good leader, and it's also why we invest in our employees and their mental health. (Levin, 2016, para. 10)*

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*“...work performance is inextricably linked to mental and physical health.”*

*– Byron Boston, Dynex Capital Inc.*

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Having this buy-in from leadership and high levels of the organization around the value of basic emotional health and wellness is critical to supporting the emotional wellbeing of recently hired college graduates.

- **Preventative emotional health trainings and programming**

Many employers are beginning to recognize the value of trainings on preventative emotional health issues:

1. **The United States Air Force** - The U.S. Air Force has implemented a mandatory suicide prevention training program that has resulted in decreased stigma around emotional help seeking and improved emotional health and well-being among Air Force personnel (Knox, Litts, Talcott, Feig, & Caine, 2003). The prevention program was implemented with a focus on early prevention, intervening at the first signs of dysfunction or distress before the risk of suicide was imminent. Behaviors that signaled a need for early prevention included lost workdays, reduced productivity, personal suffering, and significant family distress. Community-wide trainings on risk factors and available resources were held and there was strong support for the program's aims from high ranks. Over its first six years of implementation - 1996-2002 – there was a 33% decrease in completed suicides (Knox et al., 2003).
2. **Aviva Insurance Company in the United Kingdom** - Another organization pursuing preventive emotional health measures, this time in a more general sense, is Aviva, an insurance provider in the United Kingdom. Aviva provides all employees with health

check-ins, nutritional advice, a wellbeing app, mental health support, and income protection provided free to all staff in case they fall ill (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017). Creating an online information portal, such as Aviva’s wellbeing app, can lead to positive change while being a low cost, scalable intervention. Additionally, Aviva has appointed a senior executive as mental health champion, and has trained line managers to make employees feel comfortable to open up and seek support (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017).

**3. A Fire and Rescue Service in Australia** – Mental health training for managers was implemented with an Australian fire and rescue service (Greden, 2017). The intention is to “diminish adverse consequences of mental illnesses among their employees” through reducing “employee sickness absence and alter managers’ knowledge, attitudes, confidence, and behavior toward employees with depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and other mental health problems” (Greden, 2017). The training consisted of a low cost, in-person, half-day training with straightforward teaching for supervisors about how to recognize symptoms of mental health and substance abuse issues in employees. The training encouraged supervisors to utilize the acronym RESPECT:

- a.** Regular contact is essential; the
- b.** Earlier the better;
- c.** Supportive and empathetic communication;
- d.** Practical help, not psychotherapy;
- e.** Encourage help-seeking;
- f.** Consider return to work options; and,
- g.** Tell them the door is always open and arrange next contact (Greden, 2017, p. 822).

There was a strong return on investment for this low-cost, short timeframe intervention; work-related sick leave significantly decreased (Greden, 2017, p. 822).

## **ADJUSTMENTS TO THE WORK ENVIRONMENT TO SUPPORT EMOTIONAL HEALTH**

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Adjustments to the work environment can be made on an individual basis to support the emotional health needs of employees. Emotional health issues are experienced differently by different people, and as a result, any workplace adjustments should be in consultation with the individual concerned (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017). Additionally, “some people may not know what might be helpful to them so exploring their options in a safe, constructive, and supportive environment is recommended” (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017). Employers should be creative and flexible in the adjustments they offer. It’s also a good idea to set a trial period for adjustments after which the employer and employee can review together how effective the adjustments have been, and whether any additional changes are needed (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017).

Some suggestions for workplace environment adjustments include:

1. Offering flexible hours or change to start or finish times
2. Altering of workspace, e.g., quieter, more or fewer people around, dividing screens
3. Working from home at certain times or on certain days in a given period
4. Changing break times
5. Providing quiet rooms to be alone or 'safe spaces' to have open conversations
6. Supplying a light-box or seat with more natural light
7. Agreeing to give an employee time off for appointments related to their mental health, such as therapy and counseling (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017)

Some suggestions for workplace role adjustments (can be temporary or permanent) include:

1. Temporarily changing duties, for example changing the balance of desk work and customer facing work, reducing caseloads, changing shift patterns
2. Reallocating some tasks or amendments to the employee's job description or duties
3. Redeploying an employee to a more suitable role
4. Increasing supervision or support from manager, buddy or mentor. Extra help with managing and negotiating workload (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017, p. 73)

Some suggestions for adjustments to workplace supports:

1. Debriefing sessions after difficult calls, customers or tasks
2. Mediating if there are difficulties between colleagues
3. Creating access to a mental health support group or disability network group
4. Providing information to promote self-care
5. Encouraging employees to work on building up their resilience and doing things that support good mental health such as exercise, meditation, or eating healthily
6. Providing regular opportunities to discuss, review and reflect on people's positive achievements – this can help people to build up positive self-esteem and develop skills to manage better their triggers for poor mental health (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017, p. 74)



## COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

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Many young adults are stressed over staggering amounts of student loans; sufficient compensation helps recent graduates be able to make loan repayments and can alleviate financial stress. For employers of recent college graduates, offering adequate compensation attracts high quality young adult applicants and gives employers an edge in terms of recruitment (Brack, 2012). Thus, competitive compensation benefits both young adult employees and their employers.

*Competitive compensation benefits both young adult employees and their employers.*

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There are other initiatives employers can undertake in addition to providing adequate compensation that can alleviate recent graduates' financial stress. According to the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute, "Offering support or providing access to specialist help with issues like debt or money worries can have a huge impact on mental health – without necessarily having the stigma attached" (Stevenson & Farmer, 2017). There are also benefit offerings that can assuage young adults' worries, such as 401k retirement plans (most young people do not think they will receive Social Security and will have to pay for their retirement) and tuition reimbursement (a young person may be wishing to continue their education while lacking the financial resources to do so) (Brack, 2012).

Additionally, employers should ensure that mental health services are included in employer-sponsored health care plans and employers will be especially appreciated if they take the additional step of having dedicated case managers to help employees navigate complicated mental health care (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). This case management approach has benefits for employers as well as employees:

*...depressed employees whose companies provided a case manager who helped them navigate treatment options worked two more weeks per year than those who were simply told they might want to see a clinician. The program...cost \$100 to \$400 per worker, but saved about \$1,800 in work hours. The workers who received the intervention were also more likely to be employed by the company a year later (93 percent vs 88 percent), thus saving the companies the cost of recruiting and training a new worker (Twenge & Campbell, 2008, p. 871).*

# SURVEY OF COLLEGE SENIORS, RECENT GRADUATES, AND EMPLOYERS

## METHODS

JED commissioned Harris Poll to conduct an online survey to better understand the emotional wellness challenges of the college-to-career transition for young adults. Current college seniors, recent graduates, and employers were participants in this research. The goal of this survey was to:

- › Understand current seniors' experiences in their final semester
- › Uncover stressors of seniors as they look past graduation
- › Gauge seniors' and recent graduates' preparedness for the workforce, and the roles universities play in this transition
- › Understand recent graduates' career experiences since graduation, and gauge current seniors' expectations for these new roles
- › Uncover employer attitudes and perceptions of recent graduates in the workforce, particularly as it relates to management and hiring decisions
- › Uncover details of employee support programs, particularly related to physical and mental health

Individuals were surveyed between April and July 2017; telephone surveys averaged 20 minutes in length. A total of 1,929 interviews were conducted with college seniors, recent college graduates, and employers who met the following criteria:

- › College seniors (n=421): U.S. resident, age 20-26, currently in their final year at a 2 or 4 year college in the U.S., and attends all/most classes in person.
- › Recent college graduates (n=1,008): U.S. resident, age 19-27, graduated from a 2 or 4 year college between 2013 and 2016, are currently employed or have been employed since graduation
- › Employers (n=500): U.S. resident, age 18+, employed full or part time, and manage at least one employee who graduated from a 2 or 4 year college and has been working for 0-4 years

Data were weighted where necessary to bring each audience in line with their actual proportions in the population. Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Poll surveys. Because the sample is based on those who were invited to participate in the Harris Poll online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

- ▶ **College seniors (n=421).** The majority of college seniors surveyed were full-time students enrolled in a public, four-year college or university. Participants were slightly more likely to be male (55%). The majority of participants were of traditional college age (20-22 years old), while approximately one-third were older, between 23-26 years old. Participants identified as White (54%), Black/African American (13%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (8%), with 19% identifying as Hispanic. Approximately one third came from families where both parents had attended college, while 28% had only one parent with college experience and 33% came from homes where neither parent had attended college. Most seniors (56%) were preparing to enter the workforce after graduation, 37% planned on attending graduate school first. While the vast majority of seniors surveyed were born in the U.S., 31% were first generation immigrants with at least one parent born outside of the U.S.
- ▶ **Recent college graduates (n=1,008).** The majority of college graduates surveyed were female, aged 22-25 years old, and working full time. College graduates identified as White (69%), Black/African American (8%) or Asian/Pacific Islander (7%), with 11% identifying as Hispanic. Participants were fairly equally distributed across the U.S., with most living in a suburban (45%) or urban (36%) areas, with 37% living with parents or other family members. Similar to college seniors, almost a third (30%) came from families where neither parent attended college. While most graduates were born in the U.S. (91%), nearly one quarter (24%) had at least one parent born outside the U.S.
- ▶ **Employers (n=500).** Employers were mostly likely to be men, employed full-time, with a mean age of 42 years old. Employers identified as White (75%), Black/African American (6%), or Asian/Pacific Islander (4%), and Hispanic (12%). Employers represented a range of industries including finance/legal/engineering (21%), retail trade/hospitality/administration (19%), manufacturing (13%), healthcare (10%), transportation/communications/utilities (7%), education (7%) and agriculture/mining/construction (6%). The majority of respondents were managers or directors (55%), working in traditional office settings (82%) of for-profit companies (75%). Employers were fairly evenly distributed across the U.S., with 32% in the South, 30% in the East, 22% in the West, and 17% in the Midwest.

Complete details of participants' demographics can be found in the Appendix.

## FINDINGS

### SENIOR YEAR EXPERIENCES

Worry about the future is a common theme among college seniors. Young adults most commonly describe senior year of college as “stressful,” with nearly 4 in 10 college seniors describing their senior year as “very stressful.” Seventy-three percent (73%) of college seniors note “how much is unknown for the next few years” as a source of stress; and 23% of seniors identify this as the most stressful part of senior year. Other than completing requirements to graduate, the highest priority for college seniors is finding a job that pays a good salary. A slight majority of college seniors (56%) feel like their future-focused mindset is causing them

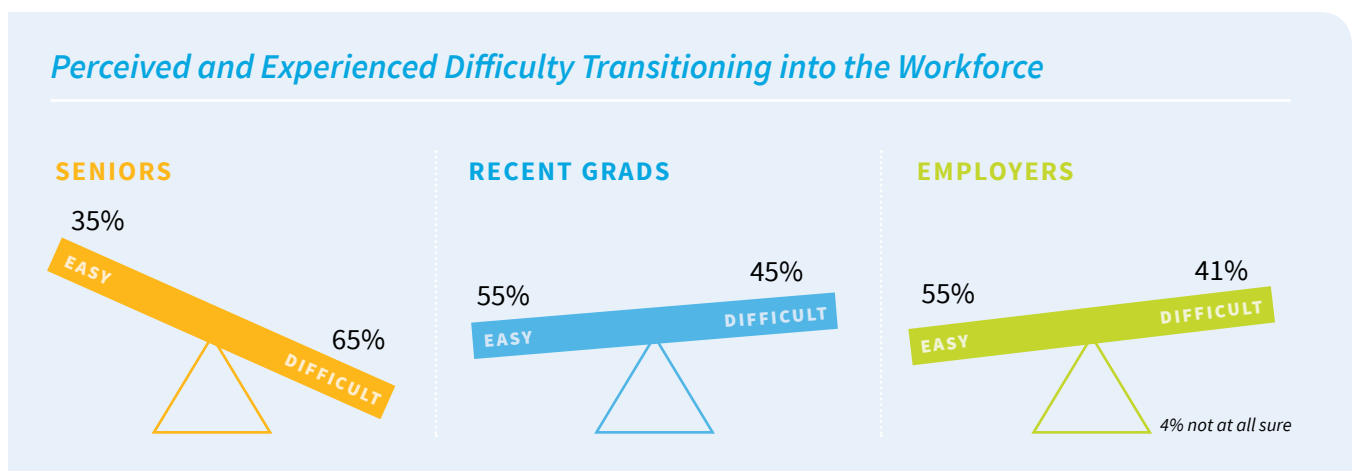


73%  
of college  
seniors note  
“how much is  
unknown for  
the next few  
years” as a  
source of stress.

to miss out on their college experience. This feeling was more common among students whose parents were born outside the United States (68%).

## LOOKING AHEAD TO THE REAL WORLD

Students are often negatively impacted by pressure to succeed and fear of the future. Eighty-five (85%) of college seniors, including 92% of female college seniors, feel pressure to succeed in the professional world. Relatedly, nearly 90% of recent graduates feel pressure to be financially secure. Amongst all these pressures, the majority of college seniors note they are scared to enter the “real world” (60%), are jealous when they hear their peers’ post-graduation plans (57%), and have difficulty making decisions for their future when it seems there are so many different options (63%).



For many, the anticipation of the college-to-career transition is more difficult than the actual transition itself. Nearly two-thirds of seniors think the post-graduation transition will be difficult, while only 45% of recent graduates reported the transition was indeed difficult. Interestingly, employers seem to have an accurate read on the percentage of young adults who struggle during the college-to-career transition with 41% of employers reporting that young people have difficulty. College seniors with parents born outside of the United States and female college seniors are more likely to perceive the impending transition to the workforce as stressful. Nearly half of college seniors expect for their first 3 years in the workforce to be more stressful than their final year in college. This corresponds with the realities faced by recent graduates; nearly half of recent graduates report their first 3 years in the workforce being more difficult than their senior year of college.

Although experiencing worries about the future, the vast majority (91%) of young adults reported looking forward to the next chapter in their lives. One young adult said they were looking forward to “gaining more confidence in my career and making my professional dreams come true.” Another noted they were looking forward to “being able to work full-time and to use my extra time to leisure, do my hobbies, workout and to travel, rather than using my extra time to study, study, and study some more.” This optimistic outlook on post-

grad life is also exemplified by 76% of college seniors agreeing that they are confident in their ability to succeed after graduation, and 67% of college seniors stating that they know what they want to do after graduation. This self-trust appears to only keep building after graduation, with recent grads being more likely to trust themselves to make big decisions about their career than college seniors (85% vs. 79%).

## SENIOR YEAR REFLECTIONS

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Young adults seem to treasure the carefree days of college; a third of college seniors say they never want college to end, and nearly half of recent graduates say they miss the lack of responsibility they experienced while in college. When reflecting upon senior year, 54% of graduates agree that they wish they did not worry as much during their final years of college, with a majority of college graduates commenting that the “real world” is less scary than they thought it would be. But, they are not out of the woods yet - nearly three-quarters of young adult recent graduates feel like they are still transitioning to the real world. This is especially true for young people who are still living with family, did not have a job lined up for after college, and those who are currently facing financial stress.

When asked to offer one piece of advice that they would give a college senior preparing to graduate about life after college, a sampling of responses from recent graduates reveals a theme about being empowered to seek assistance when needed. One recent graduate wrote, “Take the time to prepare to exit college, and if you don’t know how to do something like create a resume or manage your finances then ask for help.” Another responded, “Utilize every course, support classes, seminars, etc. that’s available. Take your time, ask for help whenever you need it.”

## PREPARING FOR THE WORKFORCE

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Only 60% of employers believe that college graduates are prepared for post-graduation life and 77% of employers report regularly seeing recent college graduates struggle to adjust to the workplace. Employers who tend to have difficulties communicating with recent graduates (88%), employers who put a lot of effort into assimilation (84%), and male employers (82%) are especially likely to witness young hires struggling to adjust to the workplace. It is important to note that this difficulty does not seem to be skills-based; 64% of employers believe the majority of recent graduates come to them with all the skills they need to succeed in the workplace.



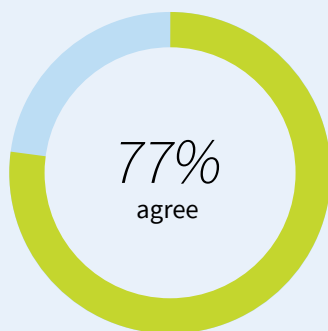
**77%**  
*of employers  
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college grads  
struggle to  
adjust to the  
workforce.*

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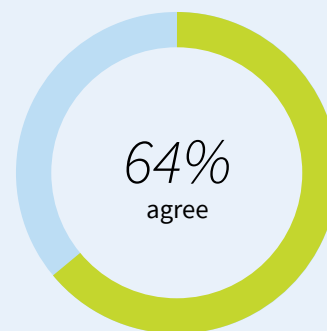
## Agreement with Statements (%Strongly/Somewhat Agree)



I regularly see recent college graduates struggle to adjust to the workplace”



The majority of our employees who are recent graduates come to us with all of the skills they need to succeed in the workplace”



At the same time, a vast majority (72%) of college seniors report feeling prepared for post-graduation life. Half or more of college seniors felt confident about the following specific skills and knowledge required of post-graduation life:

- 78% - Soft skills required in the professional world
- 71% - Knowledge of the industry I plan to work in
- 67% - Maintaining and establishing new friendships
- 66% - Managing my own finances
- 64% - Finding a good enough job
- 62% - Living on my own without facilities provided in college/parent’s home
- 57% - Finding a place to live
- 50% - Finding my dream job

Approximately two-thirds of young adults wish they had more help preparing to transition to the workforce after college. Three in ten recent grads did not feel well supported while transitioning out of college. This was most likely to be true among young adults who are living with family (40%). One college senior noted they wished their college would “basically force you to use the resource, or emphasize more that they are beneficial to everyone, not just those that think they need help.” This seems to be something recent graduates believe in hindsight, as few report utilizing services themselves.

Services to prepare for the college-to-career transition are common on college campuses; 8 in 10 young adults say their college offered career counseling, internships or resume help, but less than half of the young adults surveyed took advantage of these supports. Lack of time was the most commonly reported reason for not taking advantage of career resources as reported by over half of young adults. Two-fifths of young adults also cited a belief that they do not need help with their career. Among those who had used career counseling resources, resume help and career counseling were utilized most often, by about 6 in 10, and researching different careers and applying for internships and jobs were done by about half of the young adults who utilized career services. Far fewer young adults took advantage of alumni contacts or networking opportunities provided by their college. Lack of

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*Resume help and career counseling were utilized most often among those who had used career counseling resources.*

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service utilization continues even after graduation, with a little over half of the young adults surveyed stating that they have access to alumni resources but only a quarter or less of these young adults taking advantage.

So how do young adults prepare for the transition to the workplace without utilizing campus services? The most common actions taken by young adults to prepare for the transition out of college included talking with family members (66%), talking with peers and/or friends (63%), and talking with professors and/or professional mentors (48%). Activities including participating in an internship connected to one’s professional aspirations (37%), visiting one’s college career center (31%), or attending a campus event targeting transition from college to the workplace (22%) were much less common. It is noteworthy that employers pinpoint participating in an internship as the most highly recommended action for young adults who are transitioning out of college in supporting preparedness for the workplace.

*Most common actions taken by young adults to prepare for the transition out of college:*

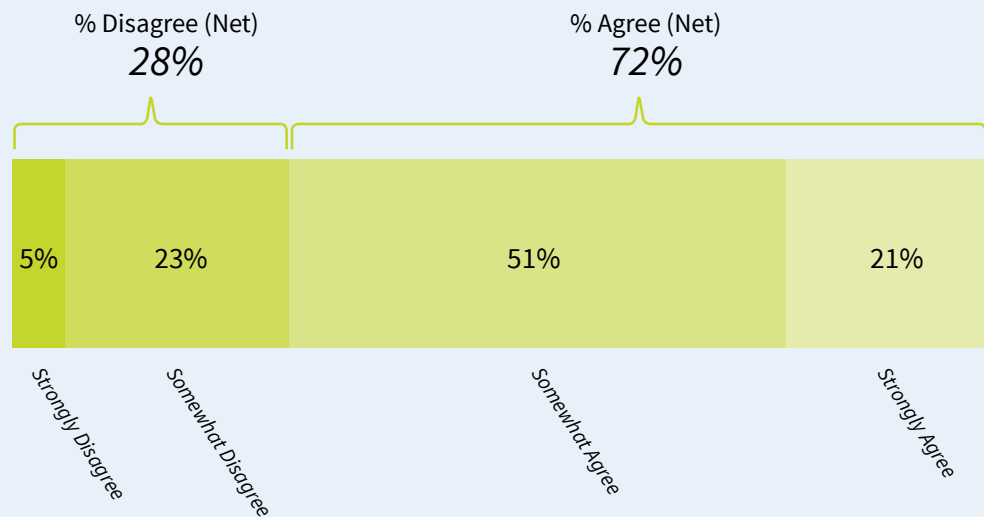
- 66% Talking with family members
- 63% Talking with peers/friends
- 48% Talking with professors or mentors

## FINDING WORK

### Agreement with Statement



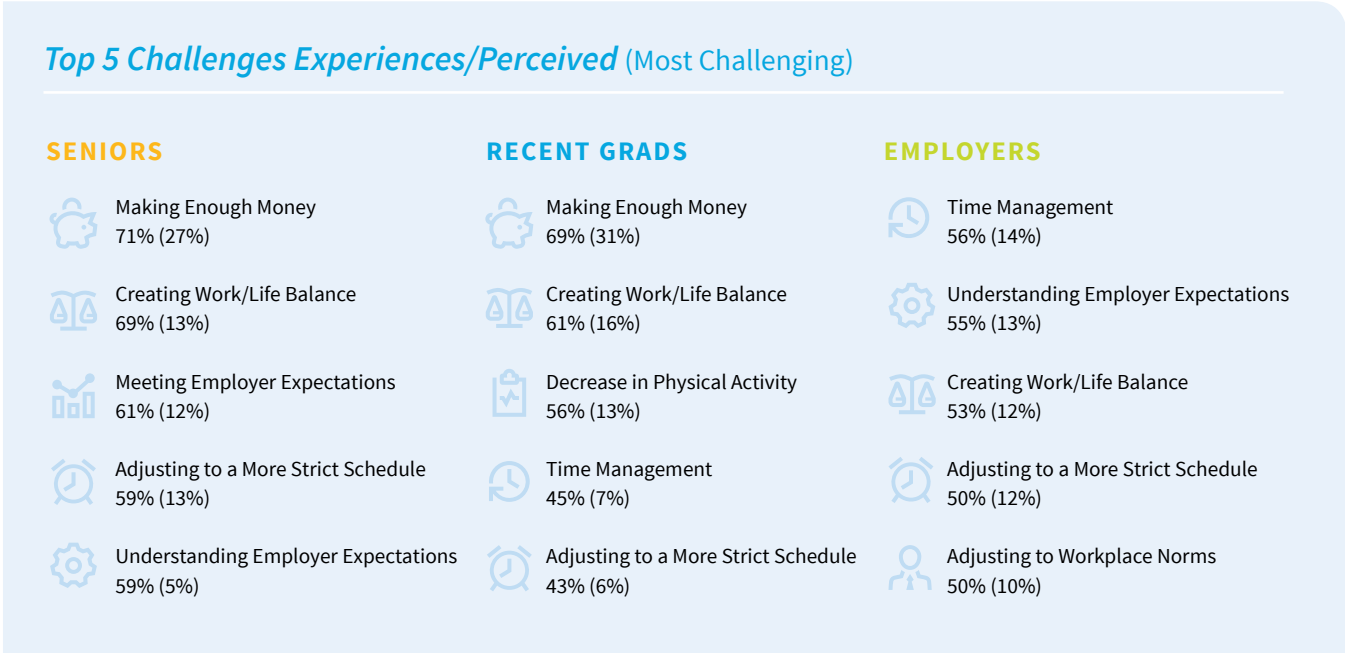
Many recent graduates settle for a job that is “good enough” rather than pursuing their dream job”



Slightly over half of young adults surveyed said finding their first job out of college was easy. Almost 4 out of 10 young adults surveyed have or had a job lined up prior to graduation. If a student lined up a job before graduation, it was usually full-time with benefits, and in their field of interest. Having a job lined up before graduating was more common for recent graduates from private colleges than those who attended public universities. Overall, approximately two-thirds of young adults worked full-time in their first job out of college and were benefits eligible, while about one-third worked in part-time positions. A very small percentage reported holding a volunteer position as their first job out of college.

Young adults tend to know what they want out of their first jobs. About 70% of young adults report their first job out of college was in their field of interest. Interestingly, despite the high level of jobs in young people’s fields of interest, the majority of employers (72%) believe young adults settle for jobs that are “good enough” rather than pursuing their dream job. In these first jobs, salary and location are top considerations for young adults. Approximately 80% of young adults identified salary as a top consideration during the job hunt while two-thirds cited location. About half of young adults listed potential for career growth, available benefits, and flexibility as top considerations as well.

Employers do not seem to have a strong understanding of the challenges experienced by their young adult workforce. Young adults ranked making enough money and creating work/life balance as their top two challenges as they transition to the workplace. Making enough money was considered a challenge by 70% of young adults with approximately 30% listing this as their top concern. When employers were asked to rank what they perceived to be the top five challenges of young adult employees, earning enough money did not make the list while creating work/balance came in third after time management and understanding employer expectations. One point of agreeance was that both employers and young adults identified adjusting to a stricter schedule as a top concern.

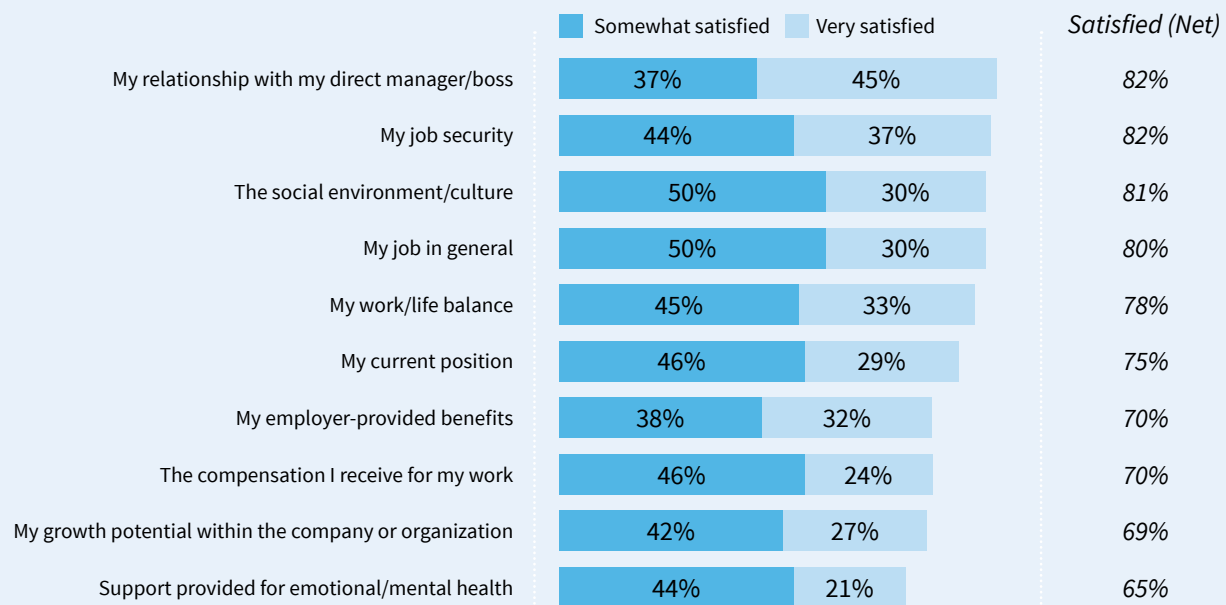


College seniors were divided on whether moving home was an option after graduation when they are starting their careers; 40% say moving back in with their parents is not an option for them after they graduate, while 33% express that they feel pressure to move back home after graduation. A less divisive topic was whether students felt pressure to contribute financially to their families after graduation; a majority of college seniors (60%) feel this pressure. Seniors with parents born outside of the United States were more likely to feel the pressure to contribute financially their families (68%).

## EXPERIENCE WITH FIRST JOBS

Most recent graduates are at least somewhat satisfied with their current job. Approximately 80% of young adults say they are satisfied with their relationship with their direct manager/boss, job security, social environment/culture, their job in general, their work/life balance, and their current position. A strong majority of recent graduates feel they are learning valuable skills in the workplace. Over three quarters of young adults agree that they are proud to tell people what they do for a living. Meanwhile, 83% of recent graduates agree that they are learning skills that will be helpful in future jobs, with just 4% stating they strongly disagree.

### Current Job Satisfaction (Among Recent Grads Who Are Currently Employed)

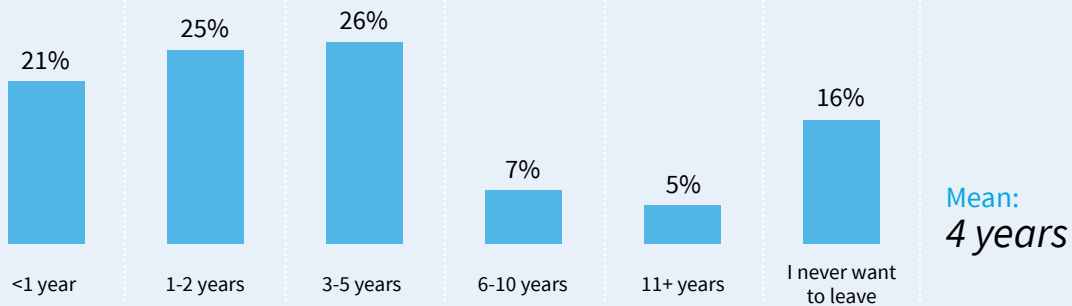


At the same time, 6 out of 10 recent graduates say their current job is not what they expected it to be. Nearly half of recent graduates agree with the statement, “I have been frustrated by the lack of advancement in my first few years in the workplace,” and more than half of recent graduates say their job right now does not match their long-term goals. Unmet expectations are more common among young adults who did not feel prepared for post-graduation life, those living with family, those currently stressed about finances, and those who attended a public university.

Many young adults aspire to change jobs in the foreseeable future; employed young adults, on average, would like to stay at their current employer for 4 more years and then transition to a new company or organization, with 1 in 5 young adults planning to leave their current position in less than a year. Employers seem to sense this lack of long-term commitment; seven out of ten employers feel that young employees don’t see their current

position as an important part of their career trajectory and almost 50% of employers mentioned “job hopping” by recent graduates as problematic for their company.

### Ideal Years Would Like to Stay with Current Employer (Among Recent Grads Who Are Currently Employed)



## EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES ON RECENT GRADS

Employers pick up on the high expectations of young adults early in their careers, but not all employers feel young employees deserve rapid growth. The top four words employers use to describe young adult employees are competitive (39% of employers), ambitious (38%), impatient (36%), and entitled (35%). Twenty-six percent (26%) of employers stated that they see a greater desire for career growth among young employees as opposed to older employees. Simultaneously, 37% of employers identify young adult employees as having a weaker work ethic than their older peers.

At the same time, recent graduates are generally viewed in a positive light compared to their older peers, with nearly all employers acknowledging recent graduates work differently than older employees. About half of employees note that young adult hires are more technology-savvy and over a third noted enjoying the opportunity to learn about new technologies from their young adult hires. More than 2 out of every 5 employers say they have fun learning to work with different personalities and gaining a new perspective on the workplace (e.g., on operations, strategy, etc.) through young adult employees. A third of employers identify young employers as differing from older peers by their more casual nature.

Employers view overseeing young adult employees as a rewarding challenge. Forty percent (40%) of employers report that managing young hires and training them on specific job tasks is particularly challenging. Although it is challenging to train new hires on specific job tasks, 48% of employers report they are pleased at young adults’ eagerness to learn and 49% of employers say that the opportunity to mentor young employees is enjoyable. Just less than 40% of employers report managing the expectations of young adults hires as a challenge, but 46% of employers enjoy training young people to be successful in their workplace role.

**26%**  
of employers stated that they see a greater desire for career growth among young employees compared to older employees,

**37%**  
of employers say young adult employees have a weaker work ethic.

There are some additional interpersonal challenges reported by employers. Seven in ten (7 in 10) employers agree that generations often have difficulty communicating with each other in the workplace. Half of employers report having personal difficulty communicating across generations, with male employers being more likely to cite this as an issue (60%). Employers also noted the challenge of managing their time to give all employees enough attention and support.



*7 in 10  
employers agree  
that generations  
often have  
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with each other  
in the workplace.*

## MAKING HIRING DECISIONS

There was a mixed response from employers on the difficulty of finding the right recent graduate hires; 47% of employers said finding the right new hires was “somewhat easy” or “very easy,” while 53% of employers referred to finding the right new hires as “somewhat difficult” or “very difficult.” Employers who spend little to no effort helping recent grads assimilate to their company are more likely to express difficulties. Concerns employers have when considering hiring young adult employees include work ethic and their willingness to learn, while lack of knowledge is much less often mentioned as a concern.

### Concerns When Considering Hiring Recent Grads

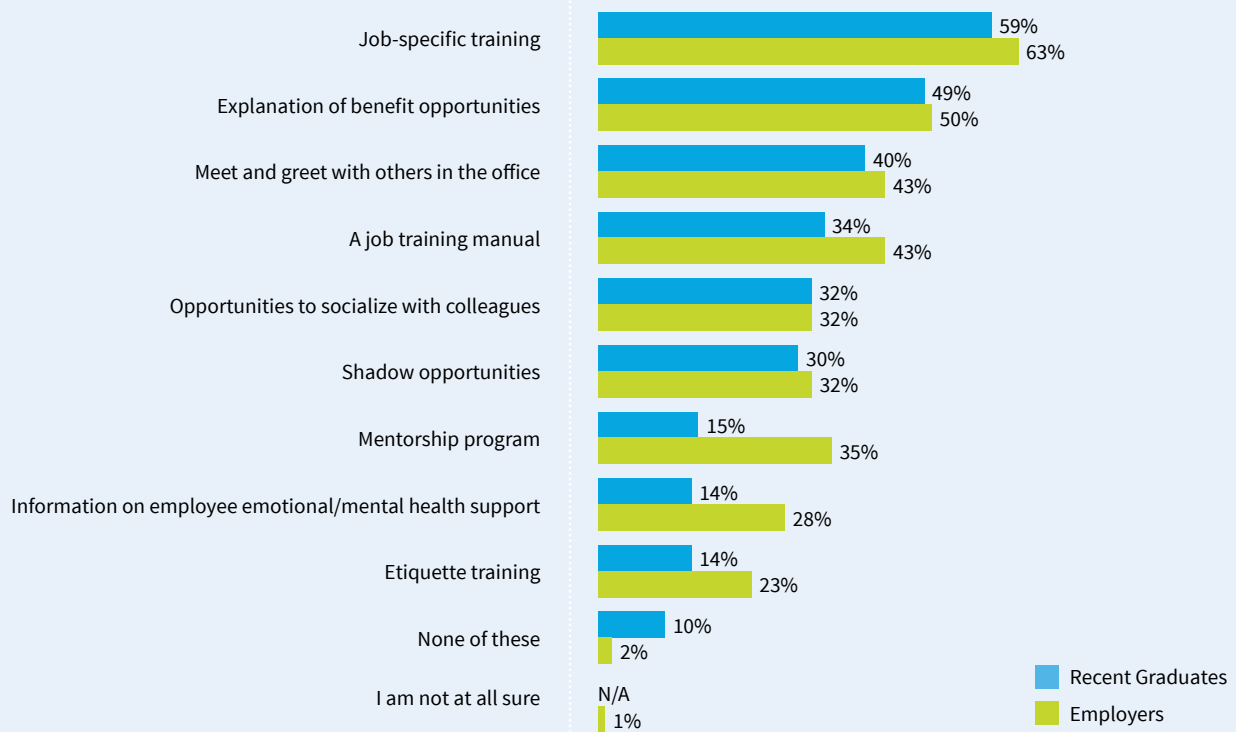


Twenty-five percent (25%) of employers list previous job experience as the *most* important young adult hiring consideration and 76% of employers include previous job experience among their top considerations when hiring. Another 25% of employers identify

relevant technical skills as the *most* important consideration, with 72% of employers identifying these skills as one of their top considerations when hiring. It is intriguing to note that college-specific information such as the college or university the applicant attended, college GPA, and extra-curricular activities participated in are far less often cited as important hiring considerations.

In general, employers tend to think they do an adequate job of training young adult hires. Half of employers feel they train recent graduate hires “somewhat well,” and an additional third feel they train recent graduate hires “very well.” These rates are comparable to how well employers feel they train all new hires. Overwhelmingly, job specific training is perceived by both employers and new employees as the most commonly offered benefit, followed by an explanation of benefits opportunities.

### Benefits Offered to New Hires

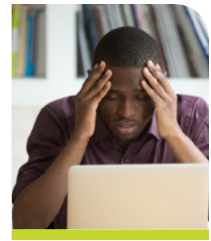


Employers tend to report benefits being given to employees at a higher rate than employees identify receiving these benefits. The most striking example of this disparity relates to mentoring programs. Employers are more than twice as likely to say they offer mentorship programs as recent graduates are to say they were offered to them; 35% of employers report offering mentoring programs to recent graduate hires while only 15% of recent graduate hires reported this opportunity.

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of employers identified taking opportunities to mentor or provide guidance to new hires who have recently graduated college. Twenty-eight percent



(28%) of employers identify as providing information on employee emotional/mental health support, but only 14% of recent hires agree that they have received this information. Lack of attention given to this issue corresponds with the fact that only 2% of employers view “information on employee emotional/mental health support” as the most beneficial offering to recent graduates.



*Only 2% of employers view “information on employee emotional/mental health support” as the most beneficial offering to recent graduates.*

The vast majority (over 90%) of employers report putting effort into helping recent graduate hires assimilate to their new workplace, and 86% offer specific supports to help them transition. Two in five (2 in 5) employers say they put more effort into helping recent graduate hires compared to other new hires. More than a third of employers report scheduling regular check-in meetings to discuss the young hire’s work progress, providing the latest technology, offering mentorships with more senior employees, providing more frequent encouragement, and allowing for greater flexibility. Also, the majority of employers (including almost all of employers who have greater management experience and employers who identify as putting more effort into the assimilation process), report actively trying to help young adult hires by learning their concerns or understanding the challenges they are facing.

Ninety-two percent (92%) of employers collect employee feedback. Most often this is through personal conversation and meetings. Larger companies are more likely to take advantage of broader methods of feedback collection via surveys and town halls. More than half of employers mentioned offering anonymous feedback options.

## RETENTION

Young adults in the workplace are not necessarily committed to their first jobs after college. Young adults who graduated between 2013 and 2016 averaged one job change since graduation; nearly half of young adults have never left a job since graduation, about a third had left 1 job, and approximately a quarter had left 2 or more jobs. Eight in ten (8 in 10) who have had a job change since college graduation left a job voluntarily, while almost 3 in 10 had quit a job without having another job lined up. At the time of surveying, nearly half of young adults reported they were currently looking for a new job. Graduates who did not feel prepared for post-grad life, are living with family, have had difficulty transitioning, and those who currently have stressful finances were more likely to state they are currently looking for a new job.

### Number of Times Left Any Job Since Graduation

47%

0 times

29%

1 time

13%

2 times

11%

3+ times

Mean:  
1.2 times

*Groups more likely to have left more jobs post-grad on average:*

- Born outside the U.S. (2.6)

Employers are aware of this phenomenon. Forty-five percent (45%) of employers say young adult employees' job hopping is problematic for their company. This is especially true among employers who put little to no effort into assimilation and employers who say it is difficult to find the right people to hire. Nine of ten (9 of 10) employers agree that "it is extremely important for my company or organization to retain young workers," but yet three-quarters say their company could do more to make retention happen. Employers' ideas for how to encourage retention are in-line with the job features that help retain young adult employees. Employers and young adult employees agree on the importance of the following:

- Fair compensation
- Potential for career growth
- Proper training for new hires
- Available benefits
- Opportunities to learn
- Positive social environment/culture
- Mental/emotional well-being
- Work/life balance
- Ability to make a difference
- Flexible hours
- Physical health resources

The majority of employers feel positive about the quality of their management of young adult hires. Employers feel they have the resources necessary to be strong managers and that they personally put a lot of effort into the management of young adult hires. At the same time, over three quarters of employers wish they could still do more for the employees they manage.

#### *Employer Agreement with Statements:*

- 89% - "I do all I can to help my new hires strive towards their long-term career goals."
- 89% - "I adjust my management style based on the specific needs of my employees."
- 86% - "I feel I have the tools to help out new hires thrive in the workplace."
- 83% - "I have ample trainings available to me to be a successful manager."
- 77% - "I wish I could do more to support the employees I manage."

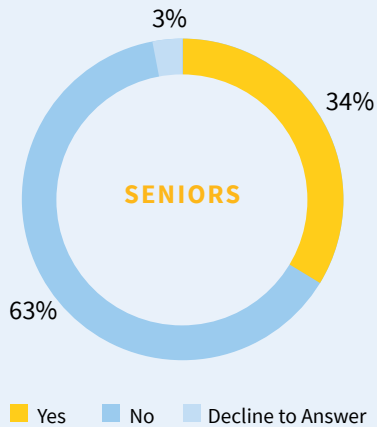
## **EMOTIONAL/MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**

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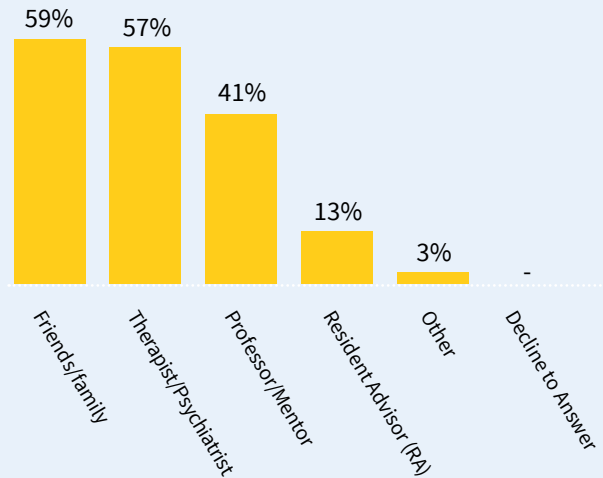
A third of college seniors have sought out emotional support during their final year of college, while only one quarter of recent graduates have sought emotional support since college graduation. All young adults, regardless of whether they are still in college or have entered the workplace, tend to turn primarily to friends and family for emotional support, with a therapist or psychiatrist being the second most popular source of support. About 6 in

10 young adults who sought emotional support reached out to a therapist or psychiatrist. For college seniors who sought emotional support, contacting a therapist or psychiatrist was almost as common as turning to family or friends (59% vs. 57%), but for recent graduates reaching out to family or friends was significantly more common than seeking the support of a therapist or psychiatrist (69% vs. 57%).

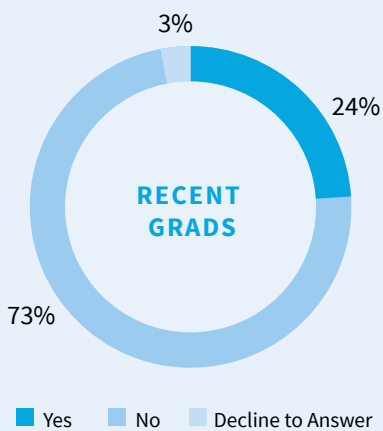
### Sought Out Support for Emotional/Mental Well-Being During Senior Year of College



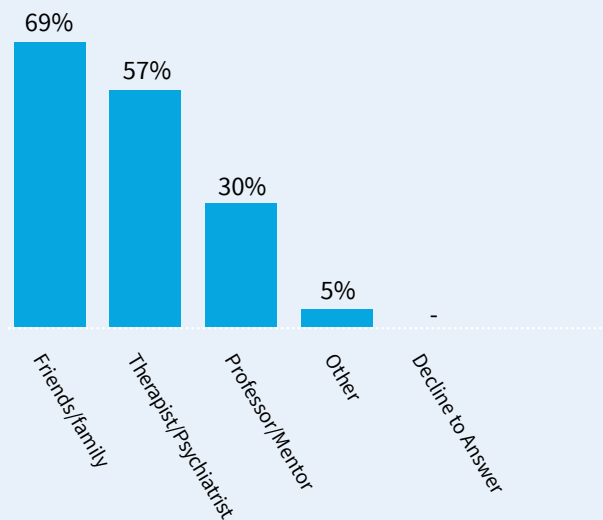
### College Seniors Sought Support From (Among Those Who Have Sought Out Support)



### Sought Out Support for Emotional/Mental Well-Being Since College



### College Graduates Sought Support From (Among Those Who Have Sought Out Support)



For those young adults who identify as having a diagnosed mental health condition, anxiety and depression were most common. Anxiety was a diagnosed condition for about 3 of 10 young adults, while 2 of 10 had diagnoses of depression. About 30% of young adults with diagnosed mental health conditions had set up plans for continuing mental health

care prior to graduation, and about 2 in 10 college seniors with diagnosed mental health conditions had plan for managing their mental health through finding a work environment, living arrangements, and/or career path conducive to their health needs.

Maintaining and creating social connections is a challenge for young adults after college graduation, and this can undoubtedly have an effect on emotional wellbeing. Three quarters of graduated young adults note that they have to work harder to maintain friendships than they did in college. Meanwhile, two thirds of young adult college graduates agree that making friends and dating outside of college is harder than they thought it would be. This difficulty was even more common among young adults who attended private colleges and male graduates.

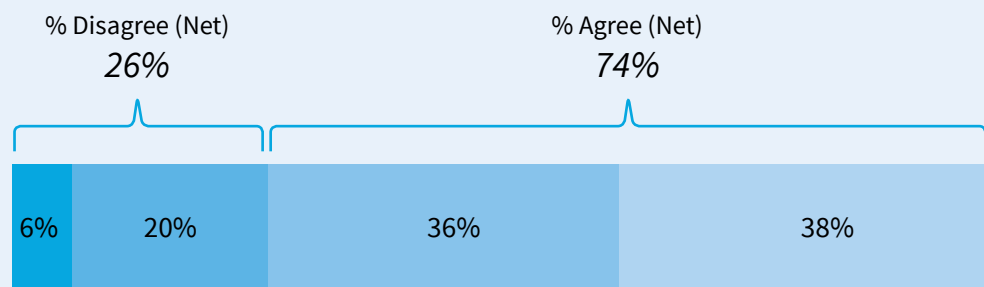
### Recent Graduate Agreement with Statements



I have to work harder to maintain friendships than I did in college.”

Groups more likely to agree:

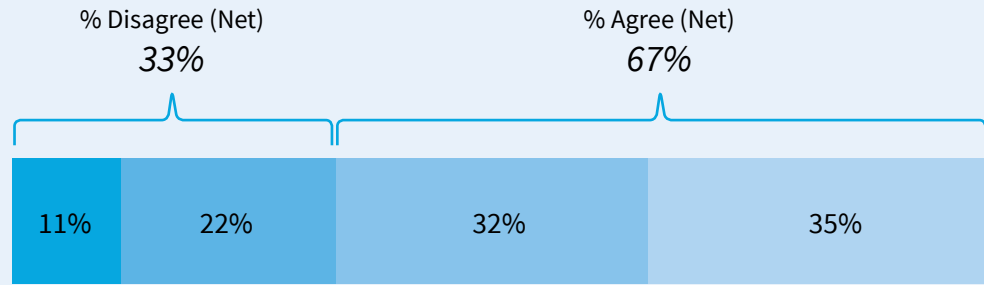
- White (78%)



Making friends and dating outside of college is harder than I thought it would be.”

Groups more likely to agree:

- Private School (78%)
- Males (72%)



■ Strongly Disagree ■ Somewhat Disagree ■ Somewhat Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Employers feel confident in their abilities to identify and handle mental health issues. More than 8 in 10 employers say it is acceptable for new hires to share mental health struggles and more than 8 in 10 say their company makes an effort to create a safe environment. Meanwhile, 87% of employers feel they adjust their management style as needed if they suspect an employee is struggling with a mental/emotional health issue, 81% express confidence in their abilities to identify behaviors that are signs of mental/emotional health issues, and 77% have a clear idea of what to do if they suspect an employee is struggling with their mental/emotional health.

A slight majority of employers report that their organization has formal guidelines regarding mental health issues. Only 55% of employers say their company has formal

guidelines regarding mental health issues, and 84% of these employers say they are familiar with them. Guidelines are most often shared through in-person training seminars, formal documents distributed in paper, and formal documents sent online. Sixteen percent (16%) of employers report they are not sure whether their company or organization has formal mental health guidelines.

There were some common themes among emotional support services offered to employees. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), one-on-one conversations, and/or counseling are offered by over one-third of employers to help employees with their emotional health. Additionally, about a quarter of employers offer emotional health seminars, in-person programs to support emotional wellbeing, and/or online programs to support emotional wellbeing.

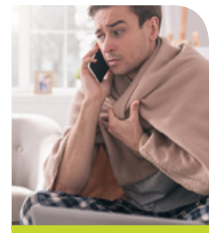
## PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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Employers have roughly equal comfort addressing physical health issues as they do in addressing emotional health issues: more than 8 in 10 employers say it is acceptable to share with one's manager struggles experienced with physical health and 8 in 10 feel their company makes an effort to create a safe space to share such struggles. Over 4 in 5 employers adjust their management style as needed if an employee is struggling with a physical health issue, and over 4 in 5 report having a clear idea of what to do if they suspect an employee is struggling with a physical health issue. Ease with these issues is more common for employers who put a great deal of effort into new employee assimilation.

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of employers offer some sort of physical health program to their employees. About 3 in 10 employers offer substance abuse resources, tobacco cessation programs, exercise programs, or healthy snacks. Less common offerings included discounted health insurance based on biometric screenings, engaging employees with incentives for maintaining healthy behaviors, healthy eating trainings in the office, and reimbursement for fitness clubs or weight management programs. Twenty percent (20%) of employers report offering no physical health benefits while 3% were unsure whether their organization did or did not.

Only 50% of employers have formal guidelines for physical health issues, making physical health formal guidelines even less common than formal guidelines for mental health issues. Employers who put a great deal of effort into assimilation and larger companies with more than 500 employees were more likely to have formal physical health guidelines. Employers who do have formal guidelines for physical health issues most often shared these guidelines through in-person training seminars, formal documents distributed in paper, and formal documents sent online.



*> 8 in 10  
employers say  
it is acceptable  
to share with  
one's manager  
struggles  
experienced with  
physical health*

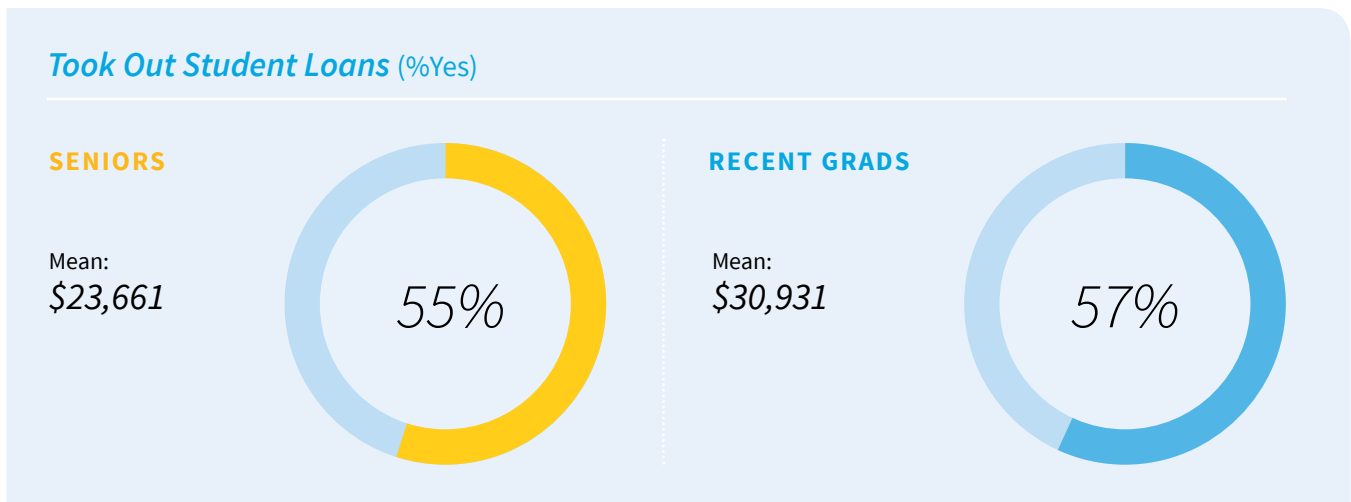


*> 8 in 10  
feel their  
company makes  
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## FINANCES AND STUDENT LOANS

Interestingly, almost three-quarters of college seniors agree that their current finances are stressful, compared to two-thirds of recent graduates. Despite their higher levels of financial stress, college seniors report lower mean student loan totals than recent graduates; the mean student loan debt of recent graduates (\$30,931) is \$7,270 higher than the mean student loan debt of college seniors (\$23,661). The percentage of all young adults surveyed who took out loans to pay for college is 56%.



Many young adults mention a lack of financial literacy in terms of student loan repayment plans. Approximately half of young adults agree with the statement, “I feel like I do not know anything about my student loans, I just pay them,” and over a quarter of young adults agree with the statement, “I have no idea how to budget.” Young adults who are members of racial minorities and young adults with parents born outside of the United States were even more likely to agree they are unaware of how to budget.

Student loans can dictate life decisions. Four out of ten (4 out of 10) young adults note that their student loan debt limits their range of career options. Looking into the future, 7 in 10 young adults with student loans say they have a plan about how they’re going to pay them off and 7 out of 10 are also confident in their ability to pay off their student loans. In the meantime, 74% of young adults say they are not going to make any big life decisions before their repayments are complete.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The college to career transition is about more than just leaving school. It marks a number of significant milestones that include beginning a career path, leaving behind close social support networks, beginning financial independence, and becoming more self-sufficient, to name a few. The decisions made during this period are important, and become part of the foundation upon which young adults build their careers and lives.

Not surprisingly, coping with this high volume of life changes can present challenges to emotional wellbeing. Young adults may feel a variety of negative emotions, with many identifying as feeling stressed, isolated, or lost. The percentage of adults having serious thoughts about suicide has been found to be highest (7.4%) during the traditional years one undergoes the college-to-career transition - ages 18 to 25 (Center for Disease Control, 2015). In comparison, serious suicidal thoughts are experienced by 4.6% among those 25-49 years old and 2.7% for those 50 years old or older (Center for Disease Control, 2015). Young people from certain populations can be particularly vulnerable to emotional ill-health during this transition, including first generation college students, young adults from ethnic and racial minorities, international students, and young adults with preexisting mental health conditions, due to unique challenges they face.

Colleges and employers have made efforts to support young adults during the college-to-career transition, but we believe there is more that can be done. College campuses offer career services, but they are not utilized at a sufficiently high rate. Employers are invested in their recent graduate hires, but there are opportunities to do better to support young adult employees to ensure a productive workforce that can be sustained and retained.

Below we outline a set of recommendations for college campuses as well as employers. These recommendations are grounded in the current literature and knowledge about the college-to-career transition, informed by survey findings, and shaped by project investigators.

*The percentage of adults having serious thoughts about suicide has been found to be highest (7.4%) during the traditional years one undergoes the college-to-career transition - ages 18 to 25 (Center for Disease Control, 2015)*

## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COLLEGES

### **CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN SKILLS THAT SIMULTANEOUSLY ARE PROTECTIVE OF EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND HELP PREPARE STUDENTS TO HAVE SUCCESSFUL WORK AND CAREERS**

There will always be challenges and high stakes specific to the transition from college and campus life to work and beginning one's career. While campuses can't control external stressors, they can help students learn and practice skills to help them prepare for and manage



stressors strongly associated with this life change. Schools should embrace the notion that any preparation for entering (and succeeding in) the workforce must include a focus on the role of emotion, and awareness of how emotions affect job performance and satisfaction. This type of preparation can be particularly beneficial to student populations that report higher than average levels of stress regarding entering the real world (e.g., students with parents born outside the U.S. and students of color, as identified in our survey). One strategy is confluence counseling, where college career counselors are trained to integrate both personal and career counseling into their meetings with students. Through this integration, students can develop skills specific to career and job search, personal competence, and social competence. **We recommend that schools adopt career counseling models that support identifying appropriate career pathways in conjunction with gaining emotional awareness that will support workplace success.**

### CREATE EXPECTATIONS ABOUT COMMITMENT TO PREPARING FOR THE COLLEGE TO CAREER TRANSITION

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While most students are aware of a wide range of career support services on campus (e.g., career counseling, time management workshops), the majority of students do not access these supports due to lack of time. When career preparation is framed as an additional activity, it is not surprising that young people may opt out and not take advantage of opportunities at hand. Also, students might not anticipate the challenges they will soon face during the college-to-career transition and thus not make the effort to access services. In an effort to increase engagement, students can be met where they are by career services, and become more integrated into student life. Career services activities could be offered during class time when possible and appropriate or in common spaces in dorms, libraries, and student centers. This makes accessing career services less of a burden by integrating it into settings a student would visit on a daily basis. Just as students are expected to attend classes and fulfill other requirements before graduation, participation in career services could be a requirement. **We recommend that basic career services activities that focus on the college to career transition and career readiness skills are integrated into students' day to day activities and are a requirement of graduation for all students.**



*Students can be met where they are by career services, integrating services into student life.*

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### SEEK AND INCORPORATE STUDENT VOICE TO CREATE COLLEGE TO CAREER TRANSITION SUPPORT ACTIVITIES THAT ARE RELEVANT AND SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS

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Any efforts to address students' emotional preparation for and transition from college to the workplace must be inclusive of student voice. It is critical both to create supports and services that target graduating seniors' emotional support needs as identified by students themselves and ensure that developed supports and services are appealing and accessible to college students. Incorporating the voices of student populations that have been found to be harder to engage in on-campus services (e.g., international students, first generation

college students) would be beneficial in order to hear their suggestions for how to effectively engage students with similar backgrounds. College students should work in partnership with relevant campus administrators and faculty to learn about transition concerns perhaps holding open forums or creating opportunities for brainstorming via social media. Students should be engaged every step of the way in developing supports, and specifically in marketing them, again to ensure relevance to and engagement with the student population.

**We recommend that colleges utilize student liaisons to partner in developing, launching and implementing college to career transition initiatives.**

## **PLAN EARLY FOR THE COLLEGE TO CAREER TRANSITION (DON'T WAIT UNTIL SENIOR YEAR)**

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Focus on the transition out of college often peaks in senior year, which is logical given the proximity to graduation and launching into the workplace. However, given the enormity of the college-to-career transition, as well as the many facets of transition that are occurring all at once, it is perhaps more prudent to spread out preparedness activities throughout the course of a student's college years. Engage students early and often to think about and prepare for what lies ahead upon leaving campus life. Examples could include building college to career workshops and supports for first year students through senior year, ensuring that the transition, and preparedness for it, is part of an ongoing conversation on campus.

**We recommend supports for the college to career transition start in a student's first year, and are systematically integrated across all years of college life.**

## **EMPHASIZE EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS, NOT ONLY MENTAL HEALTH**

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Emotional wellness and mental health is a continuum. At any given point individuals may feel more or less stressed, more or less anxious, or more or less depressed. Oftentimes, these experiences get categorized strictly as “mental health” concerns, and are addressed by specialty services such as offices of disability, health services, or counseling. These services often require medical intakes or defined diagnoses, which while relevant for some, may not be appropriate or fitting for students who do not meet criteria for diagnosis. Additionally, students struggling with emotional issues may not identify their issues (e.g., inability to sleep) as related to their mental health, and may have concerns about the stigma associated with the notion of “mental illness.” Members of certain cohorts have been found to be particularly likely to not pursue emotional/mental health services. For example, our survey found that students of color are less likely than the general student population to seek emotional support during their senior year. By emphasizing emotional health and wellness, and not simply mental health, it may be possible to both reach students before emotional challenges become more intense and disruptive, as well as engage students who may avoid traditional mental health or disability focused services because of concerns about stigma and the perceptions of their peers. At the same time, students with diagnosed mental health

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*By emphasizing emotional health and wellness, and not simply mental health, it may be possible to reach students before emotional challenges become more intense and disruptive.*

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conditions will likely feel less isolation and “other-ness” when emotional health becomes a part of a dialogue in which everyone participates. **We recommend framing supports as “emotional health and wellness,” to reinforce that emotional health is part of overall health.**

## **EXPAND THE RANGE OF CAMPUS OFFICES ENGAGED IN EDUCATING STUDENTS ABOUT THE COLLEGE TO CAREER TRANSITION**

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Like many organizations, campuses are often silo-ed into areas of expertise and capacity (e.g., disability services, counseling, and career services). The challenge with this approach is there is great potential to miss students who are struggling with the college-to-career transition – emotionally or otherwise - but not accessing these services. One strategy to break down these silos is to increase everyone’s capacity – teaching faculty, student services staff, residential life staff, athletic coaches, and others - to be mindful of and acknowledge the stressors and anxiety that are present for so many students as they approach this transition. **We recommend that schools increase the capacity of their core workforce (e.g., faculty, residential advisors, campus security) through specialized education and training to understand and respond to issues and concerns specific to the college to career transition.**

## **DEVELOP TARGETED SUPPORTS TO ADDRESS THE UNIQUE CONCERNS OF IDENTIFIED STUDENT POPULATIONS**

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Our survey findings suggest that female students, students with parents born outside the U.S., international students, students of color, and first generation college students are more likely than other cohorts to experience stress and concern around particular components of the college to workplace transition. As such, it is prudent to create campus-based supports that are specialized both in terms of content as well as intended audience. For example, the survey data reflect that students with parents born outside the U.S. are significantly more likely than their peers with U.S. born parents to feel pressure about contributing financially to their family post-graduation. Support efforts hoping to be useful to these students must address this issue, as well as other transition-based concerns of young adults with similar circumstances and backgrounds. **We recommend that targeted supports are developed to meet the needs of unique student populations that have identified increased emotional stress and concerns specific to the college to career transition.**



*It is prudent to create campus-based supports that are specialized both in terms of content and intended audience.*

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## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

### CREATE AND IMPLEMENT EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION PROCESSES THAT ARE ONGOING

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Recent college graduates need continued support throughout their first few years on the job to integrate successfully into the workplace. A one-time orientation session is not sufficient for recent college graduates to get to know the many ins and outs of an organization, including its social climate, work culture, employee expectations, and policies and procedures. Team-building activities, professional training series, and presentations on company history are some examples of potential offerings. **We recommend that there be ongoing onboarding activities, over the course of a year or more, to support young adult employees to integrate socially and professionally in their new work environment.**

### RETHINK AND FORMALIZE THE FORMAT OF ON-THE-JOB MENTORING

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To increase the benefits of mentoring, mentorship programs should become more formalized. Currently, there is a gap between how much mentoring recent college graduates report receiving and how much employers report offering; survey data suggest that 35% of employers offer mentorship programs to new hires while only 15% of new hires identify this as a benefit. Employers should create criteria regarding what a mentoring relationship entails, and mentors should be held accountable to these standards. There should be a broad notion of who are appropriate mentors. While mentors are often supervisors or senior employees, they can also be fellow employees who are relatively close in age to the graduate and can dedicate the appropriate amount of time to supporting the new hire. **We recommend that time and attention is given to improving the quality and quantity of mentorship provided.**

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*There is a gap between how much mentoring recent college graduates report receiving and how much employers report offering.*

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### PROMOTE A CULTURE OF WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

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An employer can create a culture of wellness through ongoing marketing of overall wellness, including emphasis on the importance of health of both the body and mind. In this way, considerations related to emotional health can be integrated into conversations regarding general health, thus eliminating some of the taboo around discussing emotional health issues and feelings of stigma experienced by individuals with diagnosed mental health conditions. Employer support for overall wellness can be shown by promoting work-life balance and encouraging employees to leave work at work, allowing employees to be free of the obligation to be accessible by email at all times, or to take work home to complete during off hours. Wellness activities can also be offered within the workplace (e.g., mindfulness workshops, yoga classes, wellness coaches). **We recommend that employers adjust their health policies and health promotion activities to portray emotional health**

**as central to one’s overall wellness. This will encourage more dialogue about emotional wellness and help to remove its taboo from the workplace.**

## **ENSURE GOODNESS OF FIT AMONG NEW HIRES**

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To ensure a young adult’s first job post-college is a good fit, employers should work hard to transparently communicate what their work culture is like before hiring. Being clear about aspects of the job such as supervision structure, expected task assignments, and the level of formality of the work environment can eliminate candidates who would not be the right fit. Employers should also communicate what support services they can offer recent graduates as they transition to their working lives. Communicating about these aspects of work culture can leave an employer with a pool of applicants who are more likely to thrive within one’s organization and be retained by the organization as long-term employees. Survey data suggest that recent graduates born outside of the United States are particularly likely to shift jobs quickly if they are dissatisfied, averaging 2.6 job changes since graduation, which strikingly higher than the average 1.2 job changes among all recent graduates. This may suggest targeted communication strategies with this cohort. Ensuring goodness of fit through open dialogue can help alleviate the expectation gaps and level of disappointment today’s ambitious recent college graduates often face when their first job is not as they imagined it. **We recommend that employers’ recruitment efforts include a focus on accurately representing the offered work culture to attract applicants who are truly good fits for available positions.**

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*Employers should work hard to transparently communicate what their work culture is like before hiring.*

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## **CREATE POLICIES TO SUPPORT THE EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF ALL EMPLOYEES**

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Every employee should be supported by their employer in maintaining their emotional wellbeing. While employers may focus their mental health policies on employees who have mental health conditions diagnosed by a medical professional, policies to support all employees’ emotional wellbeing are imperative. Promoting mental health for all employees can help prevent an employee experiencing mild emotional distress from seeing their symptoms escalate to a clinical-level condition. This supports employee emotional wellbeing while also avoiding potential costs to the employer, such as sick leave or the cost of recruiting a replacement if the employee becomes too sick to continue working. **We recommend that employers have mental health policies applicable to all employees. Policies should be outlined to support the emotional wellbeing of employees with clinical-level conditions as well as those with non-clinical level concerns.**

## **IDENTIFY A WELLNESS CHAMPION WITHIN THE WORKPLACE**

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An employer can identify a wellness champion within their organization. It can be particularly effective if the wellness champion is a member of an organization’s leadership,

as that conveys a high-level of buy-in by the organization. A wellness champion can identify and advocate for removal of barriers to wellness in the workplace. The wellness champion can also coordinate activities that support employee wellness. This role should be incorporated into the wellness champion's job description and formally identified as a part of their role within an organization. The wellness champion should be given time within their workweek to perform their wellness champion duties, and not have these activities be an add-on that is not covered in their day-to-day work expectations. **We recommend that employers identify an employee as a 'wellness champion' and provide this champion with the resources needed to effectively promote emotional wellbeing in the workplace. Consideration should be given to how this may interface with existing structures around employee support (e.g., Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and Human Resources).**

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# APPENDIX A

**TABLE 1: COLLEGE SENIORS DEMOGRAPHICS**

*College seniors (n=421)*

<b>SCHOOL TYPE</b>	
4-year college or university	73%
2-year or junior college or community college	27%
<b>FULL/PART TIME STATUS</b>	
Full-time student	85%
Part-time student	15%
<b>SCHOOL STATUS (AMONG THOSE AT 4 YEAR SCHOOL)</b>	
Third year student	15%
Fourth year student	68%
Fifth year or higher student	17%
<b>CLASS STRUCTURE</b>	
All of my classes are in-person with other students in a classroom or lecture hall. I attend no classes online.	57%
Most of the classes I attend are in-person with a small amount conducted online	43%
<b>EXPERIENCES IN COLLEGE</b>	
I played a college varsity/junior varsity sport while in college/university	16%
I pledged a fraternity or sorority while in college/university	14%
I have been diagnosed with a learning disability	11%
<b>SCHOOL TYPE</b>	
A public college or university	76%
A private college or university	23%
Not Sure	1%
<b>SEX</b>	
Male	55%
Female	45%
<b>GENDER</b>	
Male	55%
Female	45%
Transgender	1%
Another gender not listed	*



**Seniors (n=421)**

<b>INTENTIONS AFTER GRADUATION</b>	
Enter the workforce	56%
Attend graduate school	37%
Attend 4-year college	18%
Other	6%
I am not at all sure	6%
<b>SCHOOL LOCATION</b>	
In an urban or city area	42%
In a suburban area next to a city	40%
In a small town or rural area	18%
<b>FINANCIAL HELP AND EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOL</b>	
My parents are helping to support me financially while I'm in college	72%
I have had a part-time job while in college/ university	61%
I have had an internship while in college/ university	41%
My parents are helping me pay for my college tuition	39%
My parents are fully paying for my college tuition	26%
I have a full-time or nearly full-time job while in college/university	18%
<b>AGE</b>	
20	16%
21	28%
22	23%
23-24	25%
25-26	8%
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>22 years old</b>

**Seniors (n=421)**

<b>PARENTS' COLLEGE EXPERIENCE</b>	
<b>Yes (NET)</b>	<b>64%</b>
Yes, both parents	36%
Yes, just one parent	28%
No	33%
Not sure	3%
<b>BORN EX-US</b>	
I was born outside of the U.S	6%
I was born in the U.S	93%
Decline to answer	1%

<b>PARENTS BORN EX-US</b>	
<b>Outside of U.S (NET)</b>	<b>31%</b>
One of my parents was born outside of the U.S	6%
Both of my parents were born outside of the U.S	26%
Both of my parents were born in the U.S	67%
Decline to answer	2%
<b>PROGRAM INTERESTED IN PURSUING FOR GRAD SCHOOL (AMONG THOSE INTEND TO ATTEND GRAD SCHOOL AFTER GRADUATION)</b>	
Health and Medicine	26%
Business	19%
Math, Science and Engineering	13%
Public Affairs and Social Sciences	7%
Education	7%
Criminal Justice	6%
Liberal Arts and Humanities	4%
Fine Arts and Design	3%
Technology	3%
Religious Studies	*
Other	10%
I am not at all sure	2%
<b>REGION</b>	
East	25%
Midwest	18%
South	27%
West	30%
<b>Seniors (n=421)</b>	
<b>PARENTS'/GUARDIANS' 2016 HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b>	
Less than \$15,000	6%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	6%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	11%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	12%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	15%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	9%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	6%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	4%
\$200,000 to \$249,999	1%
\$250,000 or more	4%
Not sure	9%
Decline to answer	8%

<b>EDUCATION</b>	
Completed High School	11%
<b>Attended college or college degree (NET)</b>	<b>85%</b>
Some college but no degree	40%
Associate Degree	16%
College	28%
<b>Attended graduate school or graduate degree (NET)</b>	<b>4%</b>
Some graduate school but no degree	2%
Graduate Degree	1%
Job specific training program(s) after high school	*
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>	
White	54%
Hispanic	19%
Black/African American	13%
Asian/Pacific Islander	8%
Native American or Alaskan Native	1%
Some Other Race	2%
Decline to Answer	3%

## TABLE 2: RECENT COLLEGE GRADUATES DEMOGRAPHICS

Recent Graduates (n=1008)	
<b>GRADUATION YEAR</b>	
2013	25%
2014	21%
2015	24%
2016	29%
<b>EXPERIENCES IN COLLEGE</b>	
I pledged a fraternity or sorority while in college/university	14%
I played a college varsity/junior varsity sport while in college/university	14%
I took a year or more between college/university and getting a job	12%
I have been diagnosed with a learning disability	6%
<b>MILES FROM IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBER</b>	
0	32%
1-29	38%
30-59	7%
60-99	4%
100-499	11%
500-999	4%
1000+	5%
<b>PARENTS' COLLEGE EXPERIENCE</b>	
<b>Yes (NET)</b>	<b>69%</b>
Yes, both parents	40%
Yes, just one parent	30%
No	30%
Not sure	1%
<b>SCHOOL TYPE</b>	
A public college or university	72%
A private college or university	28%
Not Sure	1%
<b>FINANCIAL HELP AND EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOL</b>	
My parents helped to support me financially while I was in college	69%
I had a part-time job while in college/university	67%
I had an internship while in college/university	49%
My parents helped me pay for my college tuition	38%
I had a full-time or nearly full-time job while in college/university	30%
Now that I have graduated, I am helping my family financially	29%
My parents fully paid for my college tuition	23%

<b>BORN EX-US</b>	
I was born outside of the U.S	9%
I was born in the U.S	91%
Decline to answer	*
<b>PARENTS BORN EX-US</b>	
<b>Outside of US (NET)</b>	<b>24%</b>
One of my parents was born outside of the U.S	8%
Both of my parents were born outside of the U.S	16%
Both of my parents were born in the U.S	76%
Decline to answer	*
<b>Recent Graduates (n=1008)</b>	
<b>AGE</b>	
19-21	5%
22-23	26%
24-25	45%
26-27	23%
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>24.2 years old</b>
<b>SEX</b>	
Male	43%
Female	57%
<b>GENDER</b>	
Male	43%
Female	57%
Transgender	1%
Another gender not listed	1%
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>	
Employed full time	72%
Employed part time	19%
Self-employed full time	4%
Self-employed part time	2%
Not employed but looking for work	2%
<b>EDUCATION</b>	
Associate Degree	25%
College	75%
<b>ROTATIONAL PROGRAM EXPERIENCE</b>	
<b>Yes (NET)</b>	<b>24%</b>
Yes, my current position is a rotational program	13%
Yes, a previous job was a rotational program	12%
No	76%

## Recent Graduates(n=1008)

<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>	
White	69%
Hispanic	11%
Black/African American	8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7%
Native American or Alaskan Native	1%
Mixed Race	1%
Some Other Race	1%
Decline to Answer	2%
<b>REGION</b>	
East	25%
Midwest	21%
South	31%
West	23%
<b>URBANICITY</b>	
In an urban or city area	36%
In a suburban area next to a city	45%
In a small town or rural area	18%
<b>CURRENT LIVING SITUATION</b>	
<b>Apartment (NET)</b>	<b>43%</b>
In an apartment with someone else	27%
In an apartment by myself	16%
With my parents/other family members	37%
In a home I own	16%
Somewhere else	3%
I don't have stable housing	*

### TABLE 3: EMPLOYERS DEMOGRAPHICS

<b>Employers (n=500)</b>	
<b>EMPLOYEES MANAGED</b>	
0	-
1 - 5	27%
6 - 10	17%
11 - 20	17%
21 - 30	8%
31 - 40	4%
41 - 50	8%
51+	19%
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>102.6</b>
<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>AVERAGE EXPERIENCE OF EMPLOYEES MANAGED</b>	
Recent high school or trade school graduates (working for 0-4 years)	24.8%
Recent 2 year degree graduates (working for 0-4 years)	18.3%
Recent 4 year degree graduates (working for 0-4 years)	21.9%
Recent master's or other post graduate degree graduates (working for 0-4 years)	14.9%
5+ years workforce experience (regardless of degree)	22.6%
<b>PROPORTION OF EMPLOYEES IN SAME PHYSICAL LOCATION</b>	
0%	3%
1 - 24%	14%
25 - 49%	11%
50 - 74%	18%
75 - 100%	54%
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>67.2</b>
<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>AVERAGE AGE AT COMPANY</b>	
Under age 18	4.9%
Age 18-34	38.4%
Age 35-49	36.1%
Age 50+	20.6%



**Employers (n=500)**

<b>LENGTH OF TIME MANAGING OTHERS</b>	
0	5%
1 - 5	47%
6 - 10	25%
11 - 15	10%
16 - 20	9%
21 - 25	2%
26+	3%
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>8.1</b>
<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>INVOLVEMENT IN HIRING DECISIONS</b>	
<b>INVOLVED (NET)</b>	<b>92%</b>
<b>PRIMARY / SIGNIFICANT INVOLVEMENT (SUBNET)</b>	<b>83%</b>
Primary decision-maker	49%
Significant involvement in the decision-making	34%
Minimal involvement in the decision-making	8%
Not actively involved in hiring decisions at my company or organization	8%
<b>COMPANY TYPE</b>	
For-Profit	75%
Non-Profit	13%
Government	12%
<b>AVERAGE EXPERIENCE OF NEW HIRES AT COMPANY</b>	
Recent high school or trade school graduates (working for 0-4 years)	19.0%
Recent 2 year degree graduates (working for 0-4 years)	17.0%
Recent 4 year degree graduates (working for 0-4 years)	24.5%
Recent master's or other post graduate degree graduates (working for 0-4 years)	13.5%
5+ years workforce experience (regardless of degree)	26%

**Employers (n=500)**

<b>COMPANY INDUSTRY</b>	
Professional services, including finance, legal, or engineering	21%
Service industries such as retail trade, hospitality, or administration	19%
Manufacturing	13%
Healthcare	10%
Transportation, communications, or utilities	7%

Education	7%
Agriculture, mining or construction	6%
Some other type of business	16%

#### TITLE

Manager	39%
Director	16%
Assistant Manger	7%
CEO/Chairman	6%
Owner	6%
Junior/support staff	5%
Associate manager	5%
President	2%
Other	13%

#### OFFICE SETTING

##### TRADITIONAL OFFICE (NET)

**82%**

Traditional office at company headquarters	58%
Traditional office not at company headquarters (i.e., executive/ shared/satellite office)	24%
I don't work in an office (e.g., at a construction site, in retail, laboratory, etc.)	9%
Virtual office (e.g., home office, etc.)	5%
Someplace else	4%

#### Employers (n=500)

#### STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM

Yes	36%
No	58%
I am not at all sure	6%

#### Q1580

2 to 24	18%
25 to 49	6%
50 to 99	7%
100 to 249	7%
250 to 499	6%
500 to 999	10%
1,000 to 2,499	8%
2,500 to 4,999	6%
5,000 to 9,999	7%
10,000 to 14,999	3%
15,000 to 19,999	2%
20,000+	20%

<b>Q1585</b>	
Less than \$200,000	4%
\$200,000 to \$499,999	5%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	7%
\$1 million to \$2.49 million	7%
\$2.5 million to \$4.99 million	7%
\$5 million to \$9.99 million	6%
\$10 million to \$24.9 million	6%
\$25 million to \$49.9 million	4%
\$50 million to \$99.9 million	3%
\$100 million to \$249.9 million	3%
\$250 million to \$499.9 million	4%
\$500 million to \$749.9 million	2%
\$750 million to \$999.9 million	4%
\$1 billion to \$1.49 billion	5%
\$1.5 billion to \$1.99 billion	2%
\$2 billion or more	14%
I work for a nonprofit or governmental agency.	9%
Decline to answer	9%

**Employers (n=500)**

<b>GENDER</b>	
Male	56%
Female	44%
<b>AGE</b>	
18 - 34	37%
35 - 44	26%
45 - 54	14%
55+	24%
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>42 years old</b>
<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	
Employed full time	85%
Employed part time	6%
Self-employed full time	7%
Self-employed part time	2%
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>	
White	75%
Hispanic	12%

Black/African American	6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4%
Native American or Alaskan Native	2%
Some other race	1%
Decline to Answer	*

**Employers (n=500)**

<b>EDUCATION</b>	
<b>HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS (NET)</b>	<b>8%</b>
Less than high school	*
Completed some high school	1%
Completed high school	7%
<b>ATTENDED COLLEGE OR COLLEGE DEGREE (NET)</b>	<b>57%</b>
Some college, but no degree	12%
Associate Degree	12%
College (such as B.A., B.S.)	32%
<b>ATTENDED GRADUATE SCHOOL OR GRADUATE DEGREE (NET)</b>	<b>33%</b>
Some graduate school, but no degree	3%
Graduate degree (such as MBA, MS, M.D., and Ph.D.)	29%
Job-specific training program(s) after high school	2%
<b>REGION</b>	
East	30%
Midwest	17%
South	32%
West	22%



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