

Summary of Key Findings

In fall of 2018, Bates College and Gallup embarked on a study to measure the extent to which college graduates seek purpose in their work, determine the proportion of graduates who find it and identify the college experiences that align with finding purpose in work after graduation. The study also explored the degree to which employers and college parents support such experiences.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE STUDY INCLUDE:

80% Four Out of Five College Graduates Affirm the Importance of Finding Purpose in Their Work

Four out of five college graduates say it is very important (**37%**) or extremely important (**43%**) to derive a sense of purpose from their work.

<50% However, Less Than Half of College Graduates Succeed in Finding Purposeful Work

Despite its importance to college graduates, less than half strongly agree to any of the items that indicate high levels of purpose in work.



Four Key Undergraduate Experiences Align With Graduates Finding Purpose in Work

High levels of graduates' purpose in work are strongly and significantly related to four key college experiences (controlling for all other factors):

- + Having an applied internship or job
- + Having someone who encourages students' goals and dreams
- + Being given realistic expectations for post-graduation employment prospects
- + Participating in a class/program that helps students think about pursuing meaning in work

3x Reflection and Understanding Interests, Values and Strengths Are Central to Finding Purpose in Work

- + Graduates who align their work with their interests, values and strengths are roughly three times more likely to experience high purpose in work.
 - + Graduates who are highly reflective are **67%** more likely to have high purpose in work.
-



Purposeful Work Is Particularly Important to the Younger Workforce

Compared to older graduates:

- + Millennials are more likely to derive purpose from their work than from other sources.
 - + Millennials are more likely to regret not having had real-life work experiences in college, like internships and job shadowing.
-

10x Graduates With High Purpose in Work Are Almost 10x More Likely to Have High Overall Wellbeing

Whereas only **6%** of those who have low levels of purpose in their work have high levels of overall wellbeing, fully **59%** of those with high purpose in work have high wellbeing.

- + Hiring managers widely endorse the attributes of job candidates who find purpose in their work when evaluating their employability.
-



Employers Endorse the Fundamental Pillars of a Liberal Arts Education and Find These Skills and Habits of Mind Desirable

In response to open-ended questions, hiring managers place a high value on the hallmarks of a liberal arts education. Managers cite the following as qualities they look for when evaluating a job candidate's readiness for the workforce, and feel these should be priorities for colleges to focus on developing in their students:

- + Critical thinking
- + Effective communication
- + Collaboration and working effectively on a team
- + Curiosity and interest in work that is meaningful to them