

New college grads: Who employers want to hire

Date published - JANUARY 20, 2015

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Original source - cbsnews.com

In recent years, many Americans have dissed the liberal arts, as many parents, teenagers and the state and federal legislators, who provide much of the nation's higher-ed funding, have clamored for practical degrees that focus on preparing college students for specific jobs.

A new report commissioned by the Association of American Colleges & Universities, however, is seriously questioning the drive to turn schools into institutions where the primary mission is offering career and vocational training.

The report, which was released today, concludes that employers "overwhelmingly" endorse broad learning as the best preparation for long-term career success. Employers who were surveyed for the study said that this broad learning should be an expected part of the course work for all students, regardless of their chosen major or field of study.

More than three out of four employers agreed that every college student should be exposed to the liberal arts and sciences, and employers were nearly unanimous (96 percent) in agreeing that all students should gain knowledge of our democratic institutions, which is done through liberal arts courses.

Only 15 percent of employers, who were surveyed, believed that it was most important for new college graduates to have knowledge and skills that apply to a specific field or position.

Employers wanting it all

While the liberal arts endorsement was strong, employers in the survey also expressed a desire for students to develop practical skills while in college. Sixty percent of employers said they would be interested in young job applicants who had both field-specific and a broad range of knowledge and skills.

Ninety-four percent of employers, for instance, said they are more likely to consider hiring recent grads who had an internship or apprenticeship with a company or organization. Nearly as many employers said they would also be more inclined to hire a new grad if he/she had completed a senior project that demonstrated research, problem solving and communication skills. And 81 percent said they'd be more receptive to hiring applicants who had taken multiple courses involving significant writing.

When hiring recent college grads, employers say they place their greatest priority on skills and knowledge that cut across majors. Of the 17 skills and knowledge that employers were asked about, these rose to the top in importance:

- Ability to effectively communicate orally 85 percent
- Ability to work effectively with others in teams 83 percent
- Ability to effectively communicate in writing 82 percent
- Ethical judgment and decision-making 81 percent
- Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills 81 percent
- Ability to apply knowledge/skills to real world settings 80 percent

The survey also revealed employers' low opinion of the preparedness of recent college graduates. Only 14 percent of employers believed that most new grads are prepared for the workplace. Fifty-three percent of employers think about half of these grads are prepared.

Full website reference:

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/new-college-grads-who-employers-want-to-hire/>