

THE COLLEGE STUDENT
MINDSET

FOR
CAREER
PREPARATION
& SUCCESS

BARNES & NOBLE
COLLEGE

BRINGING YOU WHAT'S NEXT

WHY IT MATTERS

Already the core of the U.S. student population, Millennials – those born between 1980 and 2000 – are becoming the predominant force entering the workplace. They are expected to comprise 50 percent of the workforce by 2020 and 75 percent of the global workforce by 2025.

As this generation prepares for their future, many studies have shown that one of the most important factors in choosing a college or university is a school's reputation for job placement after graduation. For this reason, it's important for colleges and universities to understand more about their current and future students' perceptions and motivators as they relate to career influencers and career preparation so they can:

- 1) provide their students with the tools and resources they need to be successful in the workforce, and
- 2) differentiate their college/university to help reach their recruitment and retention goals.



“It’s time for colleges and universities to rethink the traditional roadmap for career preparation to accelerate their students’ long-term career success.”

Joan Kuhl | President & Founder | Why Millennials Matter

ABOUT THE SURVEY

As a trusted partner to more than 725 college campuses nationwide, our mission at Barnes & Noble College is to work closely with our campus partners to enhance the academic and social experience for those we serve – students, faculty, staff, alumni and local communities. Given that student career readiness is a core goal for colleges/universities and their students, we partnered with consulting company Why Millennials Matter to conduct this initial nationwide study. Our goal is to gather insights, share strategies and build programs to help the students we serve succeed in and out of the classroom, and to help our campus partners achieve their retention, recruitment and career placement outcomes.

Our Work

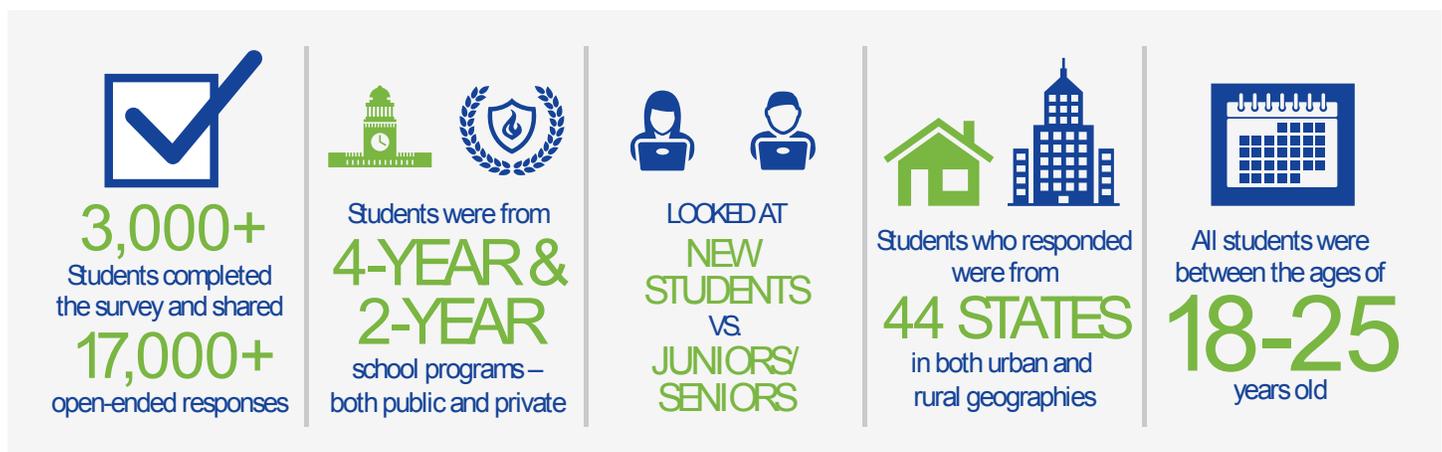
More than 3,000 students served by Barnes & Noble College at two- and four-year colleges in 44 states completed “The College Student Mindset for Career Preparation & Success” survey. The survey’s two key objectives were:

- to gauge the state of today’s college students’ level of career preparation and their perception of what skills and experiences are desired by companies, and
- to uncover what they are looking for in work experiences, training and benefits.

Among the areas explored were what ultimately influences students’ career choice decisions, their early work and internship experiences, and the anxieties and pressures they face related to achieving their goals post-college.

Top of Mind

The students who responded shared more than 17,000 open-ended comments about their influences, experiences, anxieties and motivators related to achieving their goals after college. This overwhelming response demonstrates the importance of this topic among college students and the need for colleges and universities to help their students bridge the gap between what their current and future students want as employees and what companies need in terms of talent and brand loyalty.



Students from all across the country responded to “The College Student Mindset for Career Preparation & Success” survey, emphasizing that this topic is of great importance and interest to them.

DISPELLING THE MYTHS

Among the insights collected, two in particular contradict what you may typically hear and see about the Millennial generation. Dispelling these myths gives colleges and universities a stronger outlook on the current state of their students, and understanding this reality – and what it means – is essential to help guide and shape their strategies for accelerating student success.

MYTH #1: Millennials lack focus as it relates to their future career.

REALITY: Students DO have a clear vision for their future aspirations.

Almost all students (more than 92 percent of each group) have identified the field of their desired career, including freshmen. For all students, health/medical services is the top field of choice, followed by business management for two-year students, engineering for freshmen respondents and education for juniors/seniors. And while some may be led to believe that Millennials are deferring their job search to take time off to travel or volunteer after graduation – i.e. “gap years” – the vast majority of students from the survey still indicated that they plan to enter the workforce immediately after graduation in addition to these activities.

“I’ve always wanted to be a psychiatrist. I love helping people and making them feel and live better. I would want to make a difference in the world.”

– Student, University of Central Oklahoma, Freshman

MORE THAN
96%

of students planning on traveling or volunteering also plan on beginning a job, internship or grad school.

What it Means

Knowing students have a clear focus on their career choice, even as early as their freshmen year, provides colleges and universities the opportunity to help their students become better prepared and gain experience well before their junior/senior years. The earlier colleges and universities can support their students on the path to gaining professional skills and experience, the better the outcome will be for employment opportunities and impact on the job.

Faculty Matter

Professors are the #2 source for juniors and seniors to get advice and counsel related to their career options. More than half of juniors and seniors have spoken to their professors about potential pathways.



DISPELLING THE MYTHS

MYTH #2: Millennials expect to be CEO tomorrow and are driven by money, power and fame.

REALITY: Students indicated that personal fulfillment trumps recognition nearly three to one.

Today's students have different ambitions than the generations before them when it comes to their careers. Students today want to feel personally fulfilled with their work – more than 92 percent of each group ranked fulfillment as the top indicator of how they define their success. Additionally, personal fulfillment ranked as the second most common source of concern and anxiety for them as it relates to finding their career, just behind actually finding a job in their desired field. Specifically, they want a career where they can make a difference and have an impact on society and their community.

“I would love to be a social worker and excel in helping children in unfortunate situations. I would be willing to give up my time (such as weekends off), my social life, and money; meaning making less money to do what I really want to do.”

– Student, Gloucester County College,
2nd year student

HOW STUDENTS DEFINE SUCCESS

HIGHEST-RANKED



“Feeling personally fulfilled with my work”

LOWEST-RANKED



“Public recognition”



“Achieving my desired title”



“Meeting my financial goals”

What it Means

This globally connected generation feels responsible for making a difference in the world and wants to work for organizations that stand by their brand promise externally (to customers) and internally (to employees). Colleges have an opportunity to amplify their voice and innovative thinking by encouraging student-company partnerships and business competitions. Providing students with connections to companies that are open to new thinking, as well as focused on building globally minded and service-oriented practices into their business model, is a win-win for students, employers and your school's impact on innovative business.

“I want to be a helpful presence in a child's high school years, which can be their most difficult years. I want to at least change one life by being a teacher that students turn to in their time of need.”

– Student, Virginia Commonwealth University, Senior

WHAT MATTERS

While our research shows that students have specific goals for themselves, we also uncovered a huge obstacle: students are too casual about their career prep strategy. And, those who are taking action appear to be much more focused on the job search, as opposed to acquiring the skills needed to succeed in the actual job.

“I’ve learned that what was taught in college isn’t going to solely get me into the workforce and help me succeed. I need practical skills and that work experience is just as important as my academic experience.”

– Student, George Mason University, Senior

Preparing for the Future

While students have a clear vision for what they want, relatively few are taking the necessary actions or maximizing all available resources to be successful in their job search and career preparation. For instance, very few juniors/seniors are actively on the job hunt – less than 10 percent of them consider themselves actively searching, and slightly more than half haven’t even begun casually searching for jobs. As it relates to internships – one of the most important ways students can gain experience and help prepare for their future – a full 42.5 percent have not even applied for one. And, while more than three-quarters of juniors/seniors have taken the first step of creating their resumes, a very small percentage of them are taking other important steps to prepare for their job search.



What it Means

Making sure that students are aware – early on – of the resources a college career center offers is critical to accelerating their career readiness and getting them started on the pathway to success. And while the traditional career roadmap emphasizes exploration and research during the first two years of college, this often puts students at a disadvantage when it comes to gaining the experience valued by today’s employers – many of whom are passing over recent grads because they feel they aren’t prepared for the demands of the real-world workplace. Getting experience with paid or unpaid internships as early as possible in the college career is invaluable. Colleges have the opportunity – via partnerships with campus career centers, academic departments, faculty members, etc. – to get more involved in the career preparation process earlier on in order to ensure student success and positive post-graduation job placement rankings for the school.

WHAT MATTERS

Bridging the Skills Gap

Another important area of focus for the study was to understand what students perceive as critical skills for success. Clear communication and critical thinking were ranked as the two most important skills for success by all students. However, critical thinking was not often listed as a greatest strength, and clear communication was designated as “needs improvement” by many students.

The good news is that the majority of students identify the same skills that employers value in new hires as a means to success in their career. Global employers consistently value communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills. The challenge is that the students feel least confident about their own skills related to communication, leadership, critical thinking and initiative, therefore putting them at a disadvantage when positioning themselves for opportunities.

What it Means

With so much focus on applying for and securing a job, many students aren't taking the time to build the skills needed to be successful in that job, resulting in a lack of confidence. While they understand the skills that are important and valued, they don't necessarily know how to get there. This presents colleges with an opportunity to help students develop these skills, preparing them for the competitive job market while making their educational experience relevant to real-world experiences. The first step is increasing awareness across your student population, administration and faculty about the expectations of recruiters and employers who have specific job ready skills in mind. Colleges could consider integrating job readiness skills into the curriculum more often and creating more programs and events that will help students become more knowledgeable about these skills and how to develop them.

“What I hope to gain from my internship is being able to build better communication skills as well as help prepare myself for my professional job in the future.”

– Student, Benedictine University, Freshman

90% 66%

of students consider communication skills as the most important, but many also recognize it as an area for improvement.

of students are concerned about having the necessary skills to perform their jobs well.

“The area I have the greatest concern in is my interpersonal communication skills. In any career, you will need to communicate to someone. I fear that I might have problems conveying important information on something I would be working on and that misinterpreted information could end up causing a disaster.”

– Student, Bradley University, Senior

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Accelerating the Career Prep Roadmap

What does all of this mean? Simply put, there's tremendous opportunity to rethink the traditional career preparation roadmap. Creating partnerships and programs that provide students with resources and experiences to help them succeed in a competitive job market will not only help your students become more successful, it also will help a school's reputation and, in turn, recruitment and retention.

The world of work has dramatically changed, yet the methods used to prepare students to enter it have remained static. It's important for colleges/universities and the students they serve to showcase the unique and innovative qualities of this new generation who will dramatically change the workplace. Career prep support and services must move the emphasis from securing the interview to job readiness. Employers are focused on real experiences in real businesses, and there are ways to begin this partnership earlier through student engagement programs. Our call to action is an effort to join colleges in accelerating this connection between students and employers from day one. The key is making students aware, early and often, of the available resources, helping them bridge the skills gap for the competitive job market and emphasizing the need to gain earlier experiences and job readiness skills training.



TAKING ACTION

At Barnes & Noble College, we are committing our resources in-store and online to serving students in their path to their dream career and their contributions as future leaders in the workforce. These top-line findings serve as a precursor to our Student Career Prep initiative, which will be piloted during the 2014 academic year on several campuses. With our partner – Why Millennials Matter – we have designed an interactive program that will deliver live campus and online workshops to prep and arm students with the tools, resources and skills they need to position themselves for early career success. Our mission is to educate students about our campus partners' career service resources, share insights and inspire students throughout their career prep journey.

About Barnes & Noble College

As the trusted partner and manager of more than 725 campus bookstores nationwide, Barnes & Noble College works with its college and university partners to deliver an unmatched retail and digital learning experience for students, faculty, administrators and alumni. Deeply committed to building relationships with and understanding the needs of more than 5.2 million students and faculty, Barnes & Noble College conducts ongoing local and national research that allows us to tailor the campus bookstore experience to each school's unique brand, culture and academic mission. From our locally empowered store management philosophy to our customer-first culture, our innovative drive and our singular focus on campus retail, Barnes & Noble College is much more than a vendor, but a trusted campus partner. For more information, visit www.bncollege.com/whatsnext.

About Why Millennials Matter

Why Millennials Matter is a consulting agency focused on helping companies understand the next generation of global workers and consumers – the Millennials – and the value of investing in their future workforce. As a company that stays on the pulse of this generation's needs and preferences, Why Millennials Matter helps its clients become Millennial preferred employers and brands. Through research partnerships, branding initiatives and leadership development, clients are provided individualized programs geared towards attracting, retaining and promoting young talent.

Why Millennials Matter was founded by Joan Kuhl, a campus, conference and corporate speaker, who provides clients with engaging workshops and keynotes. As a global talent and consumer trends leader, Joan provides innovative Millennial marketing strategies based on key trends, research and forecasts related to Millennials. For more information, visit www.whymillennialsmatter.com.

For questions about the Barnes & Noble College “College Student Mindset for Career Preparation & Success” study, please contact Cynthia Zimmer at 908.991.2620 or czimmer@bncollege.com.