



73% of 2021 College Graduates Seeking Employment Are Optimistic They Will Secure a Job Within a Year

Nationwide, 43% of College Graduates Plan to Work and 39% Plan to Continue their Education

June 3, 2021 (Seattle, WA) - According to a new survey from BestColleges.com, 73% of college graduates who plan to enter the workforce upon completion of their program in 2021 are optimistic about securing a job within 12 months of graduation. When asked about their immediate plans after graduation, 43% of this year's graduates said they intend to find a new job, and 39% will continue their education beyond their completed undergraduate degree.

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The circumstances of the past year have impacted undergraduates' post-graduation plans, with 45% of students believing their plans may have been different if not for the economic recession. Just over half of students (51%) feel prepared to enter the workforce as college graduates. While 58% of graduates reported having an optimistic outlook about their future employment, 52% reported feeling apprehension about entering the job market as it stands now.

The pandemic affected graduates' post-degree intentions as well, with 42% of students believing circumstances caused by COVID-19 may have altered their plans. As for their feelings on entering a virtual workforce, 59% of graduates feel they're prepared to work remotely post-graduation.

"This year's college graduates face challenging circumstances as they plan for their futures," said Melissa Venable, Ph.D., Education Advisor for BestColleges.com. "However, learning remotely over the past year has likely given these students opportunities to develop the skills they'll need — such as communication, technology, and collaboration skills — to successfully work remotely in their field."

Over a third of graduates (34%) would have participated in an internship over the past year but felt they were unable to do so due to circumstances caused by the pandemic. Still, fewer students feel COVID-19 will have a lasting impact on their long-term career goals (41%) than those who feel the pandemic impacted their immediate employment goals (56%).

Graduates who participated in networking activities and developed relationships with mentors over the past year mostly did so through connections made by their family and friends (44%), professors (38%), employers (34%), and individual outreach efforts (34%). Students of color were nearly twice as likely as white students (30% vs. 17%) to utilize memberships with professional associations and organizations to network and develop mentorships.

To achieve their professional goals, 70% of students plan to utilize their institution's career services after graduation. Students of color (79%) are particularly likely to have plans to take advantage of their college's career resources. However, there is some uncertainty around these services, as nearly a quarter (22%) of graduates were unsure if their school offered post-graduate job assistance. Nonetheless, more than half of students (57%) feel their school provides adequate support for employment-seeking graduates.

“College career centers are increasingly partnering with alumni groups to provide assistance even after graduation. But it is never too soon for college students to begin preparing for life after graduation, including employment,” said Dr. Venable. “Career centers and services are a great place to learn more about the possibilities with the guidance of professional counselors and coaches.”

Methodology

The survey was conducted from April 30 through May 7 of 2021. Student respondents were fielded by Lucid LLC. Survey participants included 500 college students who have graduated or will graduate with an undergraduate degree in 2021. Respondents were 18-25 years of age, currently or recently enrolled at a community college, college or university, and currently or recently pursuing an associate or bachelor's degree. The respondents for the survey were screened by various quality checks, including systems like Relevant ID, and responses were manually reviewed to ensure consistency and accuracy.

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