



61% of Americans With Work Experience Would Go Back and Change Their Educational or Training Path if They Could

Nearly 1 in 5 Would Choose to Participate in a Technical or Vocational Program

Nov. 9, 2021 (Seattle, WA) - BestColleges.com's 2021 Alternate Education Pathways Report, released today, explores the varied perceptions of job training and career development among business leaders and the general American public. While most Americans with work experience agreed that their path to prepare for work was valuable (66%) and that it helped them develop useful skills for employment (63%), 61% still say they would change their educational or training path in their field if they could go back and do so. Click below for more information:

<https://www.bestcolleges.com/research/alternative-education-pathways/>

The report includes insights from 2,410 adults in the U.S. When asked what path they would take if they could go back and choose another, 19% would choose a technical or vocational program and 16% would pursue a four-year college degree. Over one third of Americans would advise someone pursuing a career in their field to earn a four year degree (38%), pursue a technical or vocational training (38%), and rely on their employer for skill development (38%).

"With college costs rising and enrollments declining, conversations are happening around other options for job-related training and education," said Melissa Venable, Ph.D., the report's author and online education advisor for BestColleges.com. "Awareness and acceptance of technical and vocational training as pathways to successful employment and career development may be increasing among those making career decisions."

While 51% of adults nationwide agree that alternative education pathways have a good return on investment, only 33% agree that the overall perception of these pathways is favorable. More than half (55%) of U.S. adults agree that alternative education pathways — employment-related skill development opportunities that do not result in a college degree,

such as certificate programs, technical training, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training — will play a pivotal role in meeting workforce training needs in the future.

Perceptions of college education are split among the 1,000 business leaders surveyed, with 40% agreeing and 37% disagreeing that graduates are prepared to succeed in their first job. However, 60% agree that earning a college degree is important for achieving long-term career success.

An overwhelming majority (85%) of business leaders say there are workforce skills gaps that can be resolved through alternative education pathways, and 81% predict these pathways will be important in training the future workforce. Most acknowledge that an increasing number of jobs do not need bachelor's degree-level preparation (68%) and feel employers should consider removing college degree requirements for many job vacancies (64%).

Nearly 1 in 4 (24%) Americans report their primary source of skill development for their current or most recent job is training provided by their employer, while another 25% point to their four-year or advanced degree. Less than half (43%) of business leaders say their company or organization provides on-the-job training for employees who are new to the work.

"Job seekers would do well to consider a variety of skill development opportunities, including employer-provided training, particularly for those who are new to their field," said Venable.

Methodology

BestColleges commissioned YouGov PLC to conduct two online surveys. The first survey was conducted Sept. 1-3, 2021, and included 2,410 adult respondents 18 years of age and older from among the general U.S. public. The second survey gathered input from 1,000 business leaders (i.e., heads of teams, groups, or small organizations and above) in the U.S. from Sept. 2-7, 2021. All participants in the business leader survey represented private, for-profit companies. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov PLC. Both datasets have been weighted and are representative of their respective populations.

About BestColleges.com

BestColleges.com empowers students to make smarter educational decisions and find schools that best fit their needs through proprietary research, user-friendly guides, and hundreds of unique college rankings. As a trusted education advisor, they also provide a wide array of college planning, financial aid, and career resources to help students realize life goals and overcome educational challenges as they prepare for careers after college.