



HIGHER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL IMPACT:
Which Colleges and Universities Develop the Next Generation of Leaders
for Nonprofits and Government?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Impact Careers Initiative (ICI) report highlights the colleges and universities that are developing social sector leaders and supporting impact careers. This report was made possible by LinkedIn, which shared data identifying colleges and universities that successfully launch graduates to careers in the nonprofit and government sectors. This report will be followed by an analysis of the best practices of colleges and universities producing public servants.

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The colleges and universities listed below are leading institutions that have demonstrated a commitment to developing students in service of a better world. Each one has been recognized as a top school, falling within a top fifty position on the *U.S. News and World Report* university rankings. Today, we recognize them for a measure that has largely been omitted from the discussion of higher education or school rankings. These are the colleges and universities that provide their students with opportunities to serve as well as clear pathways to continue that service in the context of their careers. They have responded to student interest and actively encouraged students to pursue their passion for impact. In this report, we recognize the institutions in higher education that have succeeded in spurring graduates to pursue careers in nonprofit organizations and government.

NATIONAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

1. The College of William & Mary
2. The George Washington University
3. The University of Chicago
4. Brandeis University
5. Brown University

LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

1. Grinnell College
2. Swarthmore College
3. Smith College
4. Carleton College
5. Haverford College

INTRODUCTION

Efforts to solve the world's most pressing challenges come in many forms. Social enterprises view impact and intervention through a distinct lens, leveraging their unique assets, networks and resources to affect positive social change. No two organizations are identical. However, almost all effective organizations rely on top-talent to guide, shape and implement their work. Although many effective social enterprises are known for their capacity to “do more with less,” many will be unable to sustain top-level performance without a consistent pipeline of exceptional change-agents from the Millennial generation.

Despite the growth of the U.S. social sector, there remains a growing leadership and talent deficit in the nonprofit sub-sector and in government, aggravated, in part, by a narrow pipeline of talent from higher education.¹ This trend cannot be attributed to disinterest in service or ennui on the part of Millennials. On the contrary, levels of in-school student engagement and volunteerism are at record levels: in 2012, 87% of first-year students frequently or occasionally volunteered.² Throughout the same year, more than three million college students performed 118 million hours of service across the country — a contribution valued at \$2.5 billion.³

Colleges and universities have engaged student interest in social impact by providing a diversity of opportunities to serve, and students have responded by rising to the occasion in greater and greater numbers. Still, much of the momentum generated by student enthusiasm and commitment to service is lost after graduation. Margot Locker, a researcher with the Good Project under the Harvard Graduate School of Education, affirmed that “There is a noticeable disconnect in students’ proclaimed interests and the careers they end up pursuing. While not the case with all students in our study, many students we interviewed expressed passion for various fields and topics but the jobs they were pursuing did not align with their passion.” Colleges, universities and students themselves must come together to harness this energy and enthusiasm for impact before it is lost.

DEFINITIONS

We define “top talent” inclusively; the term refers to individuals who have the extraordinary skills and capabilities to affect positive social change. For the purposes of this report, we focus on “campus talent” from the Millennial generation—high-performers from top undergraduate institutions. Top talent is also inclusive of “community talent,” remarkable young people who have all of the skills and experiences necessary to affect positive social change but may not have attended, or completed a degree from, an undergraduate institution. Storied organizations such as Public Allies, and countless change-agents throughout history, have demonstrated time and again that a college degree is not necessary to achieve extraordinary impact. However, to best leverage the data made available by LinkedIn, this report will concentrate its analysis on “campus talent.” In forthcoming reports, the Impact Careers Team will turn its attention to “community talent.” We define an “impact organization” as one striving to achieve an explicit social mission; these organizations range from community-based nonprofits to B-corporations to large government departments or private businesses. Finally, we define an “impact career” as any role served within an impact organization. In this report, we focus on nonprofit organizations and government.

DEFINING THE NEED:

WHY IS A SOCIAL SECTOR “CAMPUS-TO-CAREER” PIPELINE IMPORTANT?

Striking a balanced talent portfolio is one of the primary reasons companies invest millions of dollars into college and university recruitment. Entry-level talent enables companies and organizations to maneuver quickly and efficiently in response to the strategic vision of senior leadership, while also providing a continuous pipeline for internal leadership development. As outlined in *The Leadership Pipeline*, successful organizations require an uninterrupted distribution of talent as well as an internal architecture for growing and developing that talent beginning at the entry-level:

The Pipeline Demands a Continuous Flow. As a result, you can't just do succession planning for one leadership level. All levels must be included. In fact, we've found that it's difficult to find and develop a CEO internally unless there's a good supply of leaders developed from the bottom to the top. Although not everyone aspires to be the CEO, some people do, and a solid group of candidates should be developing and moving up the pipeline so that when it's time to find a CEO there will be a number of internal candidate who have not skipped levels.⁴

Institutions of higher education cannot fortify the talent pipeline alone, especially if the social sector is not poised to recruit, develop, compensate and effectively engage top-talent (for more on the issue, please see our companion report, “Winning the War on Talent, For Good”). Even so, colleges and universities can accomplish a great deal to forge connections to impact careers.

MEASURING THE SOCIAL VALUE OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY

Colleges and universities are continually called upon to demonstrate their value, often in terms adopting the policies and language of the market, namely “What is higher education's return on investment?” Too many colleges and universities struggle to answer that call in a way that recognizes their many social and economic contributions to the public good. In a time when state cuts to higher education have been “severe and almost universal,” and as prominent individuals from many quarters question the basic utility of a degree, it is in the interest of colleges and universities to make that connection as clear as possible.⁵ Unsurprisingly, the conversation about the return on investment (ROI) of a college or university degree largely revolves around the expected economic returns to graduates. The topic is at the center of former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett's recent book, *Is College Worth It?*, as well as popular rankings such as PayScale's “College Education ROI Rankings,” an annual list featured in publications such as *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* and *The Wall Street Journal*.⁶ Moving forward, colleges, universities and Millennials should endeavor to shift the conversation towards the social value generated for the community, nation and world. As Anthony Marx, President of Amherst, asserts, “We're in the business of graduating people who will make the world better in some way. That's what justifies the expense of the education.”⁷

The popular question “Is college worth it?” should not be avoided; instead, this question should be answered by higher education and the students themselves, to acknowledge the tremendous value of developing talent that endeavors to make the world a better place. However, discussions surrounding the value of and return on education, have largely omitted measures of social good on both the individual and institutional level. To broaden the conversation to include social impact metrics, and to identify possible uses of career data and networks, the Impact Careers Initiative conducted a study examining data from LinkedIn to identify the career choices of graduates. To be clear, the data provided by LinkedIn is not comprehensive, nor is it definitive. However, the data does demonstrate that information about Millennial career decisions from higher education is within reach, and with adjustments, colleges and universities can take steps to strengthen the pipeline of talent into the social and public sector. For example, colleges and universities could leverage existing networks to connect with social sector alumni while also enhancing the evaluation process of their programming and curricula so that its intended impact of motivating students to serve the public interest is better achieved.

A highly-functioning sector is robust as well as self-sufficient, capable of recruiting talent and exceptional enough to retain it. In order to better understand social sector career paths, effective data also incorporates measures of continuation effect by evaluating graduates’ first and second jobs. The Impact Careers Initiative looks forward to continued collaboration with institutions of higher education to develop an effective, accurate and empowering data source.

METHODOLOGY

In an article in *The Washington Post*, Gene Block, chancellor of the University of California at Los Angeles, wrote “While it is hard to correlate the benefits of a college education to societal well-being, never in my 35 years in higher education have I seen a more pronounced and sustained effort by young people to choose careers that serve society.”⁸ This study marks a first step in the long but critical process of establishing that correlation and enabling students to choose impact careers in greater numbers.

WHAT IT MEASURES

THE DATA:

In this first iteration, the data is based on the percentage of bachelor's degree graduates from 2000 to 2010 who have LinkedIn profiles in which they list full-time work in the government or nonprofit organizations. As highlighted in the research of The Partnership for Public Service and the Bridgespan Group, these subsectors face tremendous difficulties attracting top-talent despite their unique positions to affect social change.

THE SCHOOLS:

The analysis draws from the top 50 Universities and top 25 Liberal Arts Colleges according to the *US News & World Report's* 2012 college rankings, including only those within the top five positions (excluding The United States Naval Academy and West Point). Top talent—those with the greatest potential to change the world for the better—are by no means confined to this list of schools. Further, many of the next generation's leaders and change-makers will never pass through the higher education system at all. This initiative uses this list only as a starting point, which will grow to encompass both "community talent" and a much wider, more encompassing list of colleges and universities.

NATIONAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES	FIRST JOB	SECOND JOB	CONTINUATION EFFECT
1. The College of William and Mary	32.1%	31.1%	-1.0%
2. The George Washington University	31.1%	30.4%	-0.7%
3. University of Chicago	30.1%	30.0%	-0.1%
4. Brandeis University	28.2%	29.7%	1.5%
5. Brown University	27.3%	28.4%	1.0%
			<u>0.1%</u>
LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES	FIRST JOB	SECOND JOB	CONTINUATION EFFECT
1. Grinnell College	41.2%	41.5%	0.3%
2. Swarthmore College	37.8%	37.4%	-0.5%
3. Smith College	37.1%	38.6%	1.5%
4. Carleton	35.6%	36.1%	0.5%
5. Haverford College	35.4%	38.3%	3.0%
			<u>1.0%</u>

As shown above, these schools have succeeded in driving commitment that extends beyond graduates first career choice. In an analysis of graduates' second jobs, the percentage employed in nonprofits or in government remained consistently high.

CONCLUSION

The LinkedIn data and ranking metrics indicate a level of institutional success in supporting impact careers. To identify the causal mechanisms driving students to connect to impact careers, the Impact Careers Team turned to institutions of higher learning, identifying commonalities and evaluating programs through the lens of both their administrators and participants. The companion report, entitled “Developing the Impact Pipeline,” aggregates interviews from leading schools, providing a platform for top institutions to share their opinions regarding best practices while also initiating a conversation around the career data and social networks that can collectively support and substantiate those practices.

We hope that recognizing these leading colleges and universities will help ignite a national conversation about and renew the focus on our colleges and universities as an effective training ground for leaders committed to building a better world.

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ENDNOTES

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