

Bridging the Gap Between Higher Education and the Workplace:

A Profile of College Graduates in Colorado

GALLUP®



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Two-thirds of
Colorado college
graduates say
college prepared
them well for life.

About the Transforming Higher Education Partnership

THE U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION and education experts from American Institutes for Research (AIR) and Gallup are collaborating on the “Transforming Higher Education: Achieving Better Return on Investment and Employee Engagement” project supported by USA Funds. The partners aim to close the gaps in communication, skills and accountability between the U.S. higher education system and the country’s employers through a focus on the outcomes that matter to everyone. In 2016, Colorado’s consumer information Web tool, www.co.edpays.org, is scheduled to receive an upgrade to include new information on return on investment and employee engagement using both AIR’s College Measures project and the Gallup-Purdue Index. This tool aims to help inform students and their families as they consider higher education options.

Introduction

FOR MANY STUDENTS, THE DECISION TO GO to college is driven by the belief that earning a degree will help them build a life that is both personally and professionally rewarding. Increasingly, through organizations such as College Measures, information is available that helps students better understand the financial return on their investments in postsecondary education. Less is known, however, about the overall quality of college graduates' lives and how their undergraduate experiences affected them.

Together, Gallup and Purdue University created an index that examines the long-term success of graduates as they pursue a good job and a better life. The Gallup-Purdue Index provides insight into the relationship between the college experience and long-term outcomes in various areas. The Gallup-Purdue Index study includes responses from 55,748 college graduates surveyed nationwide in 2014 and 2015, including 1,045 respondents who received a bachelor's degree from a Colorado college or university between 1948 and 2015.

This report focuses on Colorado graduates' experiences and long-term outcomes in three key measures of life — work, well-being and the evaluation of their college experience — to illustrate the link between undergraduate experiences and success in the workforce and in life after college.

Colorado graduates' perceptions of and experiences with undergraduate education are generally similar to those of college graduates nationally on several of these key measures; however, Colorado graduates are less likely than college graduates nationally to agree they are deeply interested in the work that they do. Further, less than four in 10 (39%) are fully engaged in their jobs, revealing an opportunity for Colorado businesses to more fully engage their employees and reap additional benefits from these efforts.

Great Jobs: Workplace Engagement

WORKPLACE ENGAGEMENT IS MORE THAN job satisfaction. It involves employees being intellectually and emotionally connected to their organizations and work teams because they are able to do what they do best, they like what they do and they have someone who cares about their development at work.

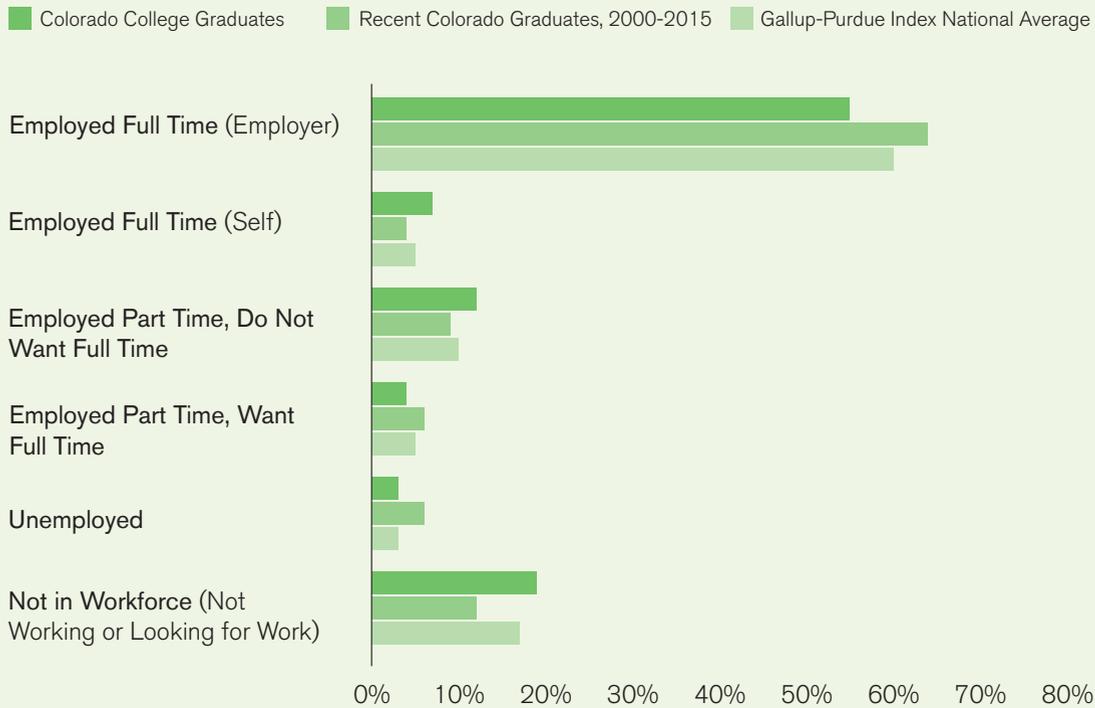
Gallup's expertise on engagement in the workplace is rooted in more than 30 years of research on the 12 elements that best predict employee and workgroup performance. Based on responses to items that measure the 12 elements, Gallup categorizes workers as engaged, not engaged or actively disengaged. People who are engaged with the work they do are more likely to be loyal and productive, resulting in tangible financial savings for businesses seeking to retain talented and productive employees.

Those who are not engaged may be productive and satisfied with their workplaces, but they are not intellectually and emotionally connected to them. Workers who are actively disengaged are physically present but intellectually and emotionally disconnected. They are unhappy with their work, share their unhappiness with their colleagues and are likely to jeopardize the performance of their teams.

If higher education does not lead graduates to an engaging job, then it has failed to deliver on a central expectation of students and their families who support them through college.

Just over half of Colorado college graduates (55%) who graduated in 1965 or later are working full time for an employer, which is slightly lower than the national average of 60%. This increases to 64% among recent Colorado graduates who graduated between 2000 and 2015. Seven percent of all Colorado college graduates who graduated in 1965 or later are self-employed full time, and 3% of graduates report being unemployed.

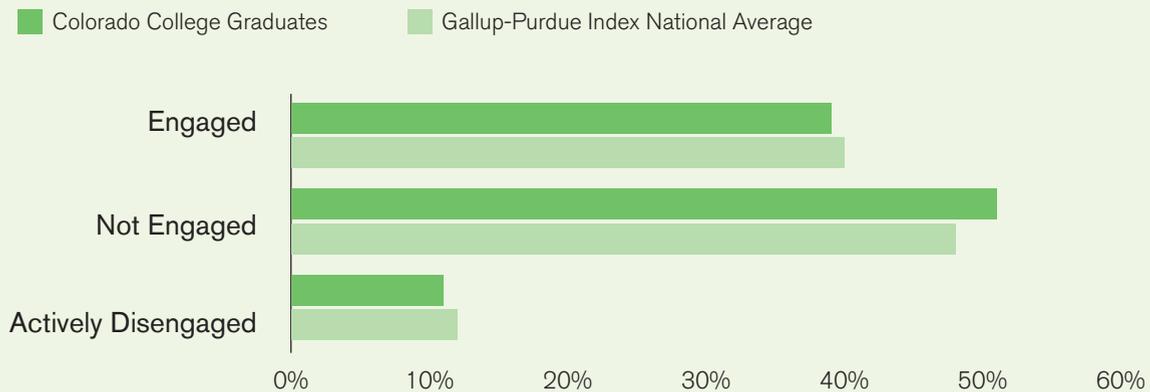
Employment Status of College Graduates



More than a third of employed Colorado college graduates are engaged at work.

RECENT GALLUP RESEARCH SHOWS THAT only 30% of employed U.S. adults are engaged in their jobs, meaning U.S. workplaces are missing vital opportunities to increase their employees' productivity and well-being and receive economic benefits from doing so. The Gallup-Purdue Index shows that college graduates in the U.S. are more likely, at 40%, to be engaged at work than employed Americans overall. A similar percentage of Colorado graduates (39%) are both employed and engaged at work. Slightly more than one in 10 Colorado graduates (11%) are actively disengaged at work.

College Graduates' Employee Engagement



This level of engagement among Colorado college graduates is important for their employers because engaged workers are vital to their organizations. Gallup workplace engagement studies show that business or work units scoring in the top half of their organization in employee engagement have nearly double the odds of success (based on a composite of financial, customer, retention, safety, quality, shrinkage and absenteeism metrics) compared with those in the bottom half.

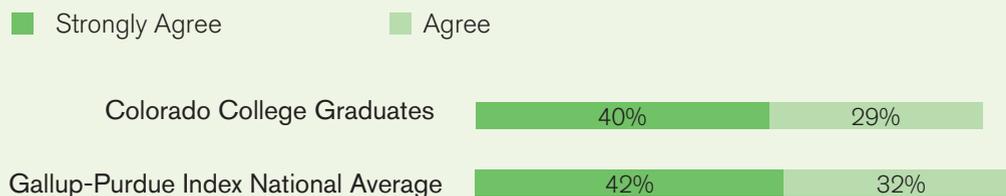
Companies with highly engaged workforces outperform their peers by 147% in earnings per share and realize:

- 41% fewer quality defects
- 48% fewer safety incidents
- 28% less shrinkage (an allowance made for reduction in the earnings of a business due to waste or theft)
- 65% less turnover (low-turnover organizations)
- 25% less turnover (high-turnover organizations)
- 37% less absenteeism

A HIGHLY ENGAGED WORKFORCE CAN mean the difference between a company that thrives and one that struggles.

Colorado graduates seem to be at a slight deficit compared with college graduates nationally when it comes to having a job that allows them to do work that interests them. Gallup asked graduates how strongly they agree with the statement, “My job gives me the opportunity to do work that interests me,” on a 5-point scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Forty percent of Colorado graduates “strongly agree” with this statement, and 29% express some agreement by selecting the “4” response.

“My job gives me the opportunity to do work that interests me.”



Most Colorado graduates report experiencing at least some undergraduate support.

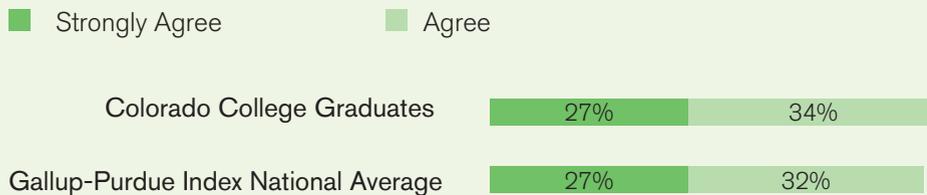
PRIOR TO ENTERING THE WORKFORCE, undergraduates often rely on their university’s support to guide their learning and development in a meaningful way. Gallup measures the support a university provides its undergraduate students by asking whether graduates strongly agree they had a professor who cared about them as a person, had at least one professor who made them excited about learning and had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams.

Two-thirds of Colorado graduates (66%) strongly agree they had at least one professor who made them excited about learning, which is on par with the 64% of national graduates who strongly agree with this statement. Colorado college graduates are also just as likely as national graduates to strongly agree professors at their college cared about them as a person (27%).

Colorado graduates are more likely than graduates nationally to strongly agree (25%) and agree (23%) that they had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams while they attended college.

Fewer than one in five Colorado graduates (17%) strongly agree with all three statements about undergraduate support, compared with 14% of college graduates nationwide.

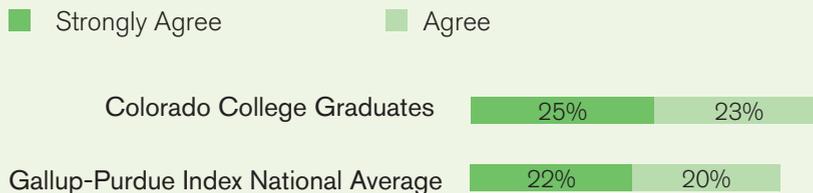
“My professors at (College/University name) cared about me as a person.”



“I had at least one professor at (College/University name) who made me excited about learning.”



“While attending (College/University name), I had a mentor who encouraged me to pursue my goals and dreams.”



About half of Colorado graduates participated in at least one experiential learning opportunity.

IN ADDITION TO SUPPORT FROM professors and mentors, hands-on learning outside of traditional class time contributes to the value of the overall undergraduate experience. Gallup measures “experiential learning” opportunities available during college by asking if graduates strongly agree they had an internship or job that allowed them to apply what they were learning in the classroom, were extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations and worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete.

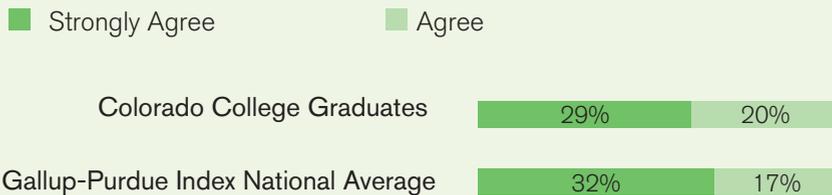
Nationally, if graduates strongly agree they participated in all three experiential learning activities, their odds of being engaged at work double, suggesting these experiential learning opportunities might assist in preparing students for good jobs later in life.

About half of Colorado college graduates agree they had at least one of these three learning experiences. Half of Colorado college graduates strongly agree (27%) or agree (23%) they had an internship or job that allowed them to apply their classroom learning during college. Nearly half strongly agree (29%) or agree

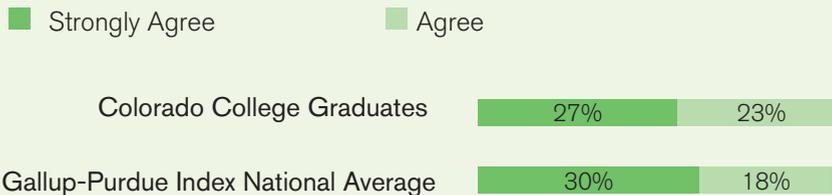
(20%) they worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete. Colorado college graduates are least likely to strongly agree (18%) or agree (17%) they were extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations. These figures are all on par with the national average for college graduates.

Only 5% of Colorado college graduates strongly agree they had all three of these experiences while pursuing their undergraduate degree. That compares with 6% of college graduates nationwide who strongly agree they had the same.

“While attending (College/University name), I worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete.”



“While attending (College/University name), I had an internship or job that allowed me to apply what I was learning in the classroom.”



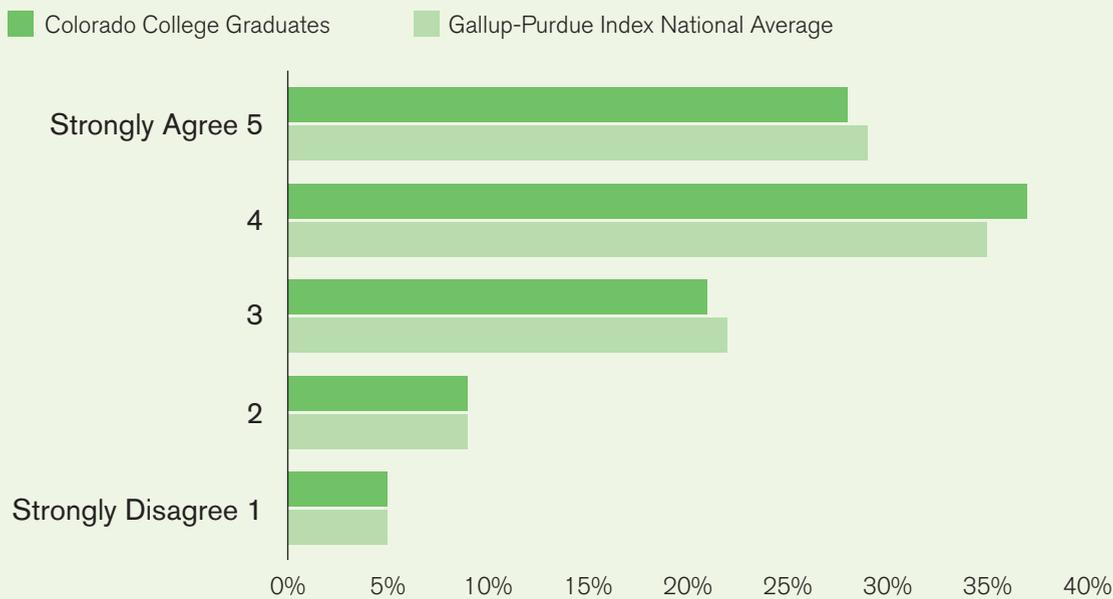
“I was extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations while attending (College/University name).”



Most Colorado graduates agree college prepared them well for life.

WHILE SUPPORT AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING help shape students' overall undergraduate experience, the real test of the value of their degree comes with how well-prepared they are for life outside of college. Overall, about two-thirds of Colorado college graduates either strongly agree (28%) or agree (37%) their college or university prepared them well for life outside of college — similar to graduates in the national sample. Relatively few Colorado graduates disagree their college or university prepared them well for life outside of college.

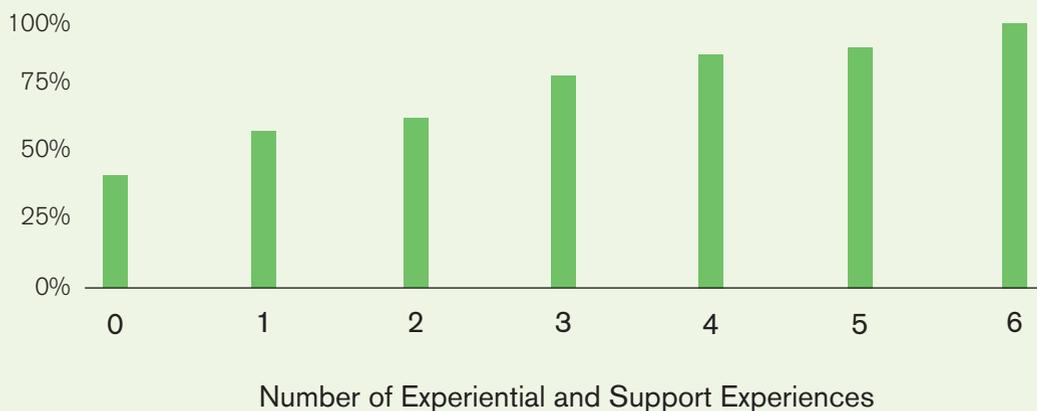
“(College/University name) prepared me well for life outside of college.”



Colorado college graduates are much more likely to agree their college or university prepared them well for life outside of college if they also report having experienced three or more of the support and experiential learning experiences described previously. This finding underscores the importance of these undergraduate experiences in preparing students for the future.

“(College/University name) prepared me well for life outside of college.”

■ Percentage of Colorado College Graduates Who Strongly Agree/Agree



Great Lives: Well-Being

THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE HELPS SHAPE a graduate's workplace experience later in life and his or her individual well-being. Well-being is not only about being happy or wealthy, nor is it only synonymous with physical health. Rather, it is about the interaction and interdependency between many aspects of life such as finding fulfillment in daily work and interactions, having strong social relationships and access to the resources people need, feeling financially secure, being physically healthy and taking part in a community.

Gallup and Healthways developed the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being 5 View to measure these important aspects. This survey, based on findings from the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index and years of joint research, asks 10 questions that gauge well-being in five elements:

Purpose Well-Being: Liking what you do each day and being motivated to achieve your goals

Social Well-Being: Having strong and supportive relationships and love in your life

Financial Well-Being: Effectively managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security

Community Well-Being: The sense of engagement you have with the areas where you live, liking where you live and feeling safe and having pride in your community

Physical Well-Being: Having good health and enough energy to get things done on a daily basis

Based on their responses, Gallup categorizes people's well-being in each of the elements as "thriving," "struggling" and "suffering." Individuals who are thriving have developed a competency and skillfulness in a particular element, resulting in increased quality of life and a proficiency at overcoming obstacles within that element. Individuals who are struggling are not able to maximize the full benefit of an element, experiencing chronic challenges and/or room to reach greater fulfillment and potential. Individuals suffering in a particular element experience consistent, often accumulating, problems which are difficult to overcome. Individuals who are suffering are at high risk of realizing significant consequences within the element.

Understanding how people think about and experience their lives is one of the first steps in determining the appropriate interventions organizations, communities and higher education institutions need to take to solve their biggest challenges. This research can provide colleges and universities with insight into how to improve the lives of current undergraduates in these key areas that are within their control.

A majority of Colorado college graduates are thriving in one or more of the five interrelated elements of well-being. Of the five elements, the highest percentage of Colorado college graduates are thriving in social well-being (55%). This means a majority of Colorado graduates have strong and supportive relationships and love in their lives. Fifty-four percent of Colorado graduates are thriving in purpose well-being, slightly higher than the 53% of graduates who say this nationally, which means a majority like what they do every day and get to learn or do something interesting on a daily basis.

Colorado College Graduates' Well-Being

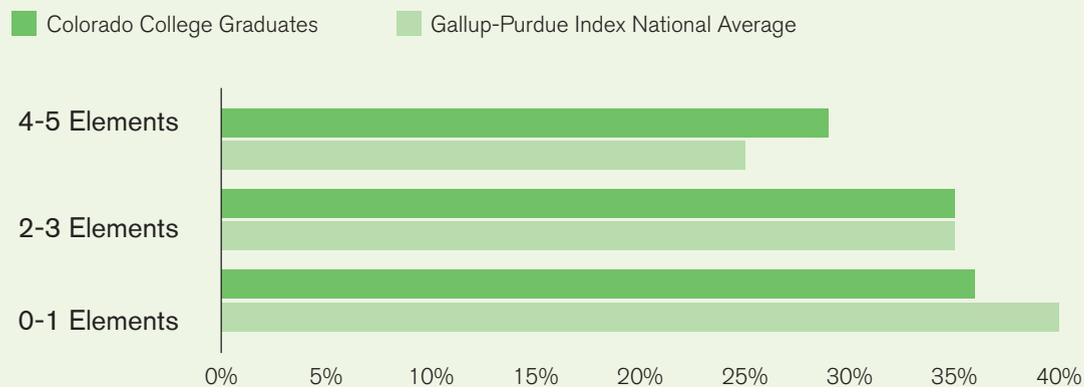
	Thriving	Struggling	Suffering
Purpose Well-Being	54%	37%	8%
Social Well-Being	55%	34%	11%
Financial Well-Being	46%	34%	20%
Community Well-Being	51%	37%	12%
Physical Well-Being	36%	57%	7%

Similar to their national counterparts, Colorado college alumni are least likely to be thriving in physical well-being. Slightly more than a third of Colorado college graduates (36%) are thriving in physical well-being. About half (51%) are thriving in community well-being, which is slightly higher than the 46% of graduates who say this nationally. These graduates enjoy living in their communities and work to improve them. Likewise, about 46% of Colorado college graduates are thriving in financial well-being. These graduates have less financial stress and feel their finances allow them to do the things they want to do. These figures are statistically on par with graduates in the national Gallup-Purdue Index.

Colorado college graduates are most likely to be suffering in financial well-being than in any other element — one in five are categorized as suffering in this element of well-being.

Colorado college graduates are just as likely as graduates nationally to have achieved the difficult-to-reach goal of thriving in four or more well-being elements. Nearly three in 10 Colorado graduates (29%) are thriving in four or more areas of well-being, which is on par with alumni in the national Gallup-Purdue Index.

Thriving in Well-Being Elements



Great Experiences: Alumni Attachment

GALLUP'S RESEARCH ACROSS HUNDREDS OF organizations in many industries shows that fully engaged customers buy more, stay with brands longer and are more profitable than average customers, both in good economic times and in bad.

The Gallup-Purdue Index measures graduates' current emotional attachment to their alma mater by adapting Gallup's research on customer engagement to assess graduates' perceptions of their colleges both in retrospect to their undergraduate experiences and their views as current alumni.

Because students spend significant resources preparing for life outside of college, it is crucial to gauge whether the experiences they had in college promoted a well-lived life. This includes whether they perceive the college was a great fit for them, they had professors who cared and made learning exciting and, most importantly, their school prepared them well for what they do after college.

Gallup explores the connection between "customers of higher education" and their alma maters by looking at their level of agreement with two questions: "I can't imagine a world without [College/University name]" and "[College/University name] was the perfect school for people like me." Graduates who strongly agree with both items are considered "emotionally attached" to their alma mater.

About seven in 10 Colorado college graduates either strongly agree (35%) or agree (34%) their college or university was the perfect school for them. About four in 10 either strongly agree (22%) or agree (21%) they couldn't imagine a world without their college or university. Combining the results of these two items, nearly one in five Colorado college graduates (18%) can be considered emotionally attached to their alma mater, which is comparable to the national average (19%).

“(College/University name) was the perfect school for people like me.”

■ Strongly Agree

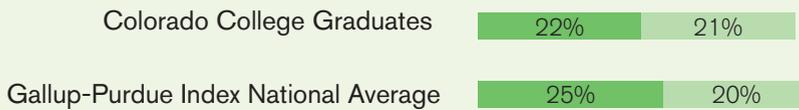
■ Agree



“I can't imagine a world without (College/University name).”

■ Strongly Agree

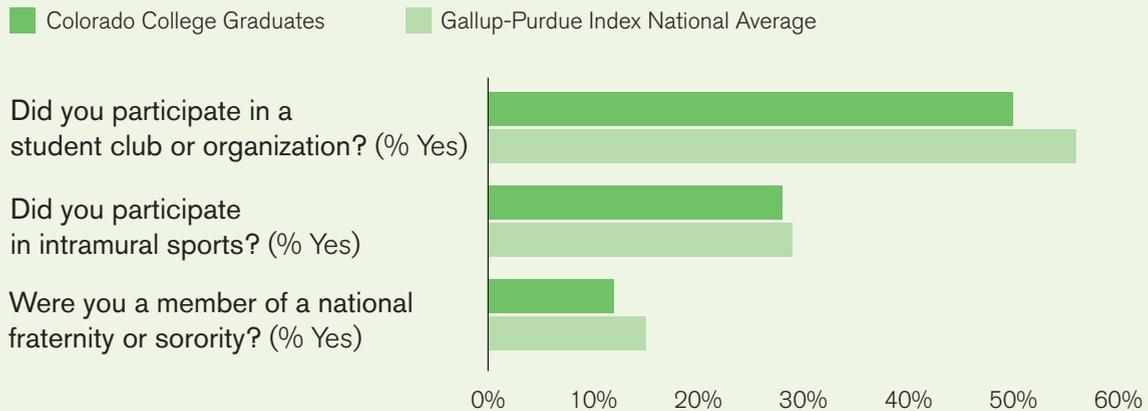
■ Agree



Colorado graduates are just as likely as graduates nationally to have participated in intramural sports, but less likely to say they were a member of a national fraternity or sorority or participated in a student club or organization while attending college. These experiences measure the depth of the college experience for alumni and demonstrate the extent to which they participated in aspects of college life outside of the classroom during their undergraduate years.

Half of Colorado graduates say they participated in a student club or organization while in college, compared with 56% of college graduates nationwide. Less than three in 10 Colorado college graduates (28%) participated in intramural sports, and 12% say they were a member of a national fraternity or sorority, similar to the percentage who say this nationally.

“While attending (College/University name) ...”



Final Thoughts

HIGHER EDUCATION SHOULD PREPARE STUDENTS for success both in the workforce and in life. The Gallup-Purdue Index data create the opportunity to bridge the gap for higher education institutions, employers and students by exploring the relationships between postsecondary experiences, such as internships and relationships with mentors, and key performance measures vital to graduates and businesses.

Colorado graduates' perceptions of and experiences with undergraduate education are generally similar to those of college graduates nationally on several of these key measures. However, Colorado graduates are less likely than college graduates nationally to agree they are deeply interested in the work that they do, and less than four in 10 (39%) are engaged in their jobs, revealing an opportunity for Colorado businesses to more fully engage their employees and reap additional benefits from these efforts.

Methodology

RESULTS REPRESENT DATA COLLECTED OVER the course of two years as part of the national Gallup-Purdue Index.

Year one of the study was conducted Feb. 4-March 7, 2014, with a random sample of 27,385 respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher, aged 18 and older, with Internet access, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. The sample was compiled from two sources: the Gallup Panel and the Gallup Daily tracking survey.

The Gallup Panel is a proprietary, probability-based longitudinal panel of U.S. adults who are selected using random-digit-dial (RDD) and address-based sampling methods. The Gallup Panel is not an opt-in panel. The Gallup Panel includes 60,000 individuals. Gallup Panel members with a college degree and access to the Internet were invited to take the Gallup-Purdue Index survey online. The Gallup Daily tracking survey sample includes national adults with a minimum quota of 50% cellphone respondents and 50% landline respondents, with additional minimum quotas by time zone within region. Landline and cellular telephone numbers are selected using RDD methods. Landline respondents are chosen at random within each household on the basis of which member had the most recent birthday. Gallup Daily tracking respondents with a college degree, who agreed to future contact, were invited to take the Gallup-Purdue Index survey online.

Year two of the study was conducted Dec. 16, 2014-June 29, 2015, with a random sample of 28,363 respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher, aged 18 and older, with Internet access, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. The sample was recruited using the Gallup Daily tracking survey.

Gallup-Purdue Index interviews are conducted via the Web, in English only. Samples are weighted to correct for unequal selection probability and nonresponse. The data are weighted to match national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education and region. Demographic weighting targets are based on the most recent Current Population Survey figures for the aged 18 and older population with a U.S. bachelor's degree or higher.

All reported margins of sampling error for the Gallup-Purdue Index of all college graduates include the computed design effects for weighting.

For results based on the total sample of 55,748 respondents who earned a bachelor's degree or higher from a U.S. college or university from 1948 or later, the margin of sampling error is ± 0.61 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the total sample of 49,528 respondents who earned a bachelor's degree or higher from a U.S. college or university from 1965 or later, the margin of sampling error is ± 0.64 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the 1,045 respondents who earned a bachelor's degree or higher from a Colorado college or university from 1948 or later, the margin of sampling error is ± 4.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For employment status results based on the 939 respondents who earned a bachelor's degree or higher from a Colorado college or university in 1965 or later, the margin of sampling error is ± 4.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on employee engagement results of 604 respondents who earned a bachelor's degree or higher from a Colorado college or university, the margin of sampling error is ± 5.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

National Comparisons

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS report, data from the Colorado college graduate cohort (those who received a bachelor's degree from a Colorado college or university between 1948 and 2015) are compared with data collected from respondents in the national Gallup-Purdue Index study, all of whom obtained a bachelor's degree during the same period. Some differences may exist between the national comparison points included in this report and national estimates that Gallup has previously released because this report focuses on graduates who received their undergraduate degree from 1948 to 2015 (or in the case of the employment figures, 1965 or later).

National college graduates compared with Colorado graduates in this report include those who received their bachelor's degrees from Title IV degree-granting four-year public, private, for-profit or not-for-profit institutions in the U.S. as defined by the U.S. Department of Education. Demographically, the sample of Colorado graduates is older than the sample of graduates interviewed in the Gallup-Purdue Index national survey. The median age for Colorado college graduates is 56, compared with 45 for the national sample.

About Gallup

GALLUP DELIVERS ANALYTICS AND ADVICE to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.

About Healthways

HEALTHWAYS IS AN INDEPENDENT, GLOBAL well-being company that provides comprehensive improvement solutions to increase performance and lower healthcare costs in its client populations. Dedicated to creating a healthier world one person at a time, Healthways uses the science of well-being and behavior change to produce and measure well-being improvement for its customers. Healthways provides personalized support to individuals to optimize each participant's health and productivity and to reduce health-related costs, and also advises leaders on how to maximize well-being across an organization.

About USA Funds

USA FUNDS IS A NONPROFIT corporation that supports Completion With a Purpose, building a more purposeful path for America's students to and through college, and on to rewarding careers and successful lives. USA Funds pursues its nonprofit mission through philanthropic activities and partnerships, policy research and programs and services that enhance preparation for, access to and success in higher education. Learn more about USA Funds at www.usafunds.org, and learn about USA Funds' college value performance measurement initiative at www.collegevalue.net.

About the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

THE U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION is dedicated to strengthening America's long-term competitiveness and educating the public on how our free enterprise system improves society and the economy. The Foundation conducts research and produces events on issues facing business now and in the future. Through its initiatives, the Foundation builds skills, drives innovation and encourages growth.

About American Institutes for Research

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH (AIR) is one of the world's largest behavioral and social science research and evaluation organizations. The overriding goal is to use the best science available to bring the most effective ideas and approaches to enhancing everyday life. For AIR, making the world a better place is not wishful thinking. It is the goal that drives them. Founded in 1946 as a not-for-profit organization, they conduct their work with strict independence, objectivity and nonpartisanship.

About College Measures

A UNIT OF AIR, COLLEGE MEASURES works with U.S. states to identify the labor market success of postsecondary students after they complete their degrees or other credentials. By measuring student economic success, College Measures helps students and taxpayers identify the return on the investment for students, families and governments in postsecondary education, and helps them make better informed decisions about borrowing and choice of majors.

If you would like to learn more

about Gallup's work with institutions of higher education, please contact education@gallup.com.

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