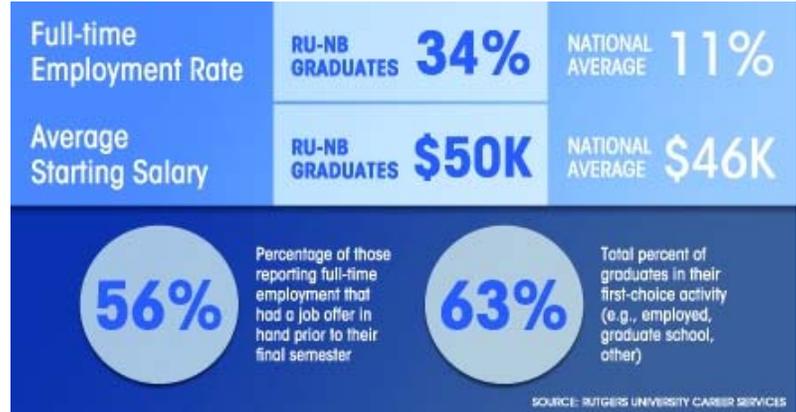


The transition from college to adulthood: Are Rutgers students prepared?

By Erin Walsh | 09/14/14

Photo by Adam Ismail |

Career Services at Rutgers conducted a survey during the time of graduation, between May 1 and July 1, to evaluate the success of Rutgers graduates.



In the book “Aspiring Adults Adrift: Tentative Transitions of College Graduates,” authors Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa discuss the lives of college graduates and how the promise of success after college is not an unbreakable vow.

The authors argue that college graduates are “adrift.” Based on the results of their studies, they found that colleges around the country might be ill-preparing students for the “real world.”

Their research proved that after four years of living away from home, nearly one-third of graduates returned to live at home one year after college. Almost one-quarter of graduates did so after two years, and more than 70 percent of these graduates received financial help from their parents.

The authors also found that nearly 53 percent of graduates earned less than \$30,000 per year at their jobs, if they had jobs at all.

“Aspiring Adults Adrift” is the sequel to their first book where, in 2009, they followed 1,600 college seniors hailing from 25 different four-year institutions.

The authors continued to follow 918 of the 1,600 students studied in the first book, having them fill out surveys in 2011, two years after graduation.

Eighty of these respondents were interviewed in depth.

Although these results were gathered from a variety of students from all over the nation, results from surveys taken by Rutgers students show different results.

According to a survey conducted by University Career Services, 34 percent of Rutgers graduates were employed full time upon graduation. Another 30 percent of Rutgers graduates are unemployed and actively seeking employment.

This survey was conducted at the time of graduation, between May 1 and July 1.

William Jones, director of Operations & Strategic Initiatives for University Career Services, said in an email that these were impressive results in comparison to a national survey taken by students at the time of graduation.

This national survey, the Accenture 2014 College Graduate Employment Survey, reports that 11 percent of the class of 2014 had full-time employment upon graduation. Jones said this proves that Rutgers students are doing extremely well, also earning higher starting salaries than the national average.

Other than discovering many graduates living at home and relying on their parents for financial support, authors Arum and Roksa found that the majority of these graduates hardly spoke of current events or politics among their families or peers.

According to an article written about their book in “The Chronicle,” these results were appalling, Arum said.

“Most institutions never conveyed to students that keeping up with the news is an essential part of democratic citizenship,” Arum said in the article.

Administrators at Rutgers, such as Ruth Mandel, director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics, share this feeling of disappointment in youth's involvement in current events.

"You [students] are the future leaders, decision makers and citizens that will keep us a free, open and growing society responsive to change," she said. "There are many areas that are in need of bright, educated and committed citizens who help this society stay alive."

Mandel believes that students are not as interested in politics because they do not feel a connection to current events and that life simply gets in the way.

"Unless they feel it's something close to them, these issues seem remote," she said.

Although Mandel does feel that college students could be more involved in current issues in our society, she does not believe that higher education deserved all the blame.

All levels of education, from elementary school to higher education, have a duty to inform students on how to be active democratic citizens. She believes the educational system might not be putting enough emphasis on the importance and responsibility of being a democratic citizen.

"You don't have to be a political junkie, you don't have to know everything," she said. "But in my opinion we need a citizenry that has a broad understanding of our system, how it works and the place of the citizen in the system."

Arum and Roksa expressed the idea that American society's consumer culture has played a role in tainting this country's institutions of higher education.

Roksa said in an interview that students no longer have to work very hard to get good grades, and that higher education institutions have embraced this attitude.

Maxwell Freedman, a School of Engineering senior, has witnessed these attitudes not only from his Rutgers peers, but also from friends at other universities.

"They'll do the least work to get the best grade," he said. "In my opinion, this is a trend that is not limited to a certain major or university, but to higher education everywhere at this day and age."