



High-Impact Undergraduate Experiences and How They Matter Now

August – October 2025 Survey of Recent U.S. College Graduates

Topline Results Report by Jessie L. Moore

The Elon University Center for Engaged Learning conducted an online survey of U.S. residents who were 18-34 years old and graduated with their first degree from a two- or four-year higher education institution in 2018 to 2025 (n=810). The survey explored recent graduates' experiences during college with the [key practices for fostering engaged learning](#), [high-impact practices](#) (e.g., internships, undergraduate research, study away), and [mentoring](#), with attention to graduates' perceptions of their work-readiness. The online survey was conducted August – October 2025, using an opt-in sample via [Prolific](#). Participants were pre-screened for location (USA), highest education level completed (Associates degree or higher), and age (18-34), and they received a small compensation for their participation.

Key Practices for Fostering Engaged Learning

During your college/university experience, to what extent did you encounter the following?

	Never	Once	Multiple Times
<i>Faculty who asked you to draw on prior experiences when you learned new things</i>	10.0% (81)	20.4% (165)	69.6% (564)
<i>Meaningful relationships with faculty or staff</i>	19.9% (161)	30.6% (248)	49.5% (401)
<i>Meaningful relationships with other students</i>	10.6% (86)	15.8% (128)	73.6% (596)
<i>Feedback from faculty/staff on a submitted, final project</i>	4.2% (34)	11.4% (92)	84.4% (684)
<i>Feedback from faculty/staff to guide your work before you submitted a final version</i>	7.2% (58)	18.1% (147)	74.7% (605)
<i>Feedback from peers to guide your work before you submitted a final version</i>	10.7% (87)	22.1% (179)	67.2% (544)
<i>Opportunities to reflect on how the different parts of your college experience fit together</i>	18.1% (147)	22.1% (179)	59.8% (484)
<i>Opportunities to reflect on how what you were learning would apply to your future</i>	7.9% (64)	18.5% (150)	73.6% (596)
<i>Practice with real-world applications of what you were learning</i>	9.0% (73)	21.5% (174)	69.5% (563)

[Learn more about the Key Practices \(Moore 2023\)](#)

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High-Impact Educational Practices

Did you take part in any of the following during college? (Select all that apply)

	Yes	No
<i>Capstone project or experience</i>	41.5% (336)	58.5% (474)
<i>ePortfolio</i>	15.3% (124)	84.7% (686)
<i>Internship</i>	53.1% (430)	46.9% (380)
<i>Service-learning or community-engaged learning course</i>	32.5% (263)	67.5% (547)
<i>Study away experience</i>	12.7% (103)	87.3% (707)
<i>Undergraduate research project</i>	45.8% (371)	54.2% (439)

Study Away

Among participants who took part in a study away experience during college...

- 48.5% (50) participated in domestic study away
- 54.4% (56) participated in international study abroad
- 42.7% (44) participated in short-term study away (less than 1 month)
- 65.0% (67) participated in long-term study away (longer than 1 month)

Undergraduate Research

Among participants who took part in an undergraduate research project during college...

- 85.7% (318) participated in a course-based undergraduate research experience
- 76.8% (285) participated in a mentored undergraduate research experience
- 67.4% (250) believed they made an original contribution to their field of study

Internship

Among participants who took part in an internship during college...

- 55.6% (239) participated in a paid internship
- 66.5% (286) received academic credit for an internship
- 90.4% (388) participated in their internship in person
- 9.6% (41) completed their internship online

Mentoring relationships

Mentoring relationships: promote learning and development; evolve over time, becoming more mutually beneficial; and are individualized, attending to your strengths, needs, and identities.

Based on this definition, how many mentors did you have during your time at college?

0	24.8% (199)
1	43.6% (349)
2 or more	31.6% (253)

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Skills Developed in College

How important are these skills to your day-to-day life, and which of these skills did you develop, at least somewhat, while in college?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not particularly important		Developed in college	Did not develop in college
<i>Applying your existing skills to a new problem</i>	67.1% (538)	30.4% (244)	2.5% (20)		80.3% (643)	19.7% (158)
<i>Assessing your strengths and weaknesses</i>	66.2% (531)	29.8% (239)	4.0% (32)		74.7% (598)	25.3% (203)
<i>Connecting with people from different cultural backgrounds</i>	54.9% (440)	33.8% (271)	11.3% (91)		70.5% (565)	29.5% (236)
<i>Engaging in anti-racist practices</i>	48.3% (387)	29.1% (233)	22.7% (182)		45.2% (362)	54.8% (439)
<i>Giving feedback to others</i>	45.6% (366)	43.6% (350)	10.7% (86)		69.2% (554)	30.8% (247)
<i>Keeping up with the news</i>	35.9% (288)	46.6% (374)	17.5% (140)		38.1% (305)	61.9% (496)
<i>Making decisions on behalf of a team or organization</i>	38.9% (312)	45.3% (363)	15.8% (127)		59.6% (477)	40.4% (324)
<i>Making ethical choices</i>	75.4% (605)	19.8% (159)	4.7% (38)		61.4% (492)	38.6% (309)
<i>Managing time</i>	87.3% (700)	10.3% (83)	2.4% (19)		83.6% (670)	16.4% (131)
<i>Meeting deadlines</i>	82.0% (658)	14.6% (117)	3.4% (27)		84.5% (677)	15.5% (124)
<i>Networking to build relationships with others</i>	54.6% (438)	37.5% (301)	7.9% (63)		74.4% (596)	25.6% (205)
<i>Persisting in the face of setbacks</i>	71.7% (575)	24.6% (197)	3.7% (30)		72.8% (583)	27.2% (218)
<i>Researching and understanding the answers to complex questions</i>	64.0% (513)	30.4% (244)	5.6% (45)		84.9% (680)	15.1% (121)

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	Very important	Somewhat important	Not particularly important		Developed in college	Did not develop in college
<i>Responding to needs based upon on understanding of situational context</i>	69.5% (557)	27.3% (219)	3.2% (26)		76.9% (616)	23.1% (185)
<i>Speaking persuasively</i>	43.1% (346)	44.5% (357)	12.3% (99)		65.2% (522)	34.8% (279)
<i>Using and/or interpreting data</i>	66.1% (530)	28.7% (230)	5.2% (42)		81.9% (656)	18.1% (145)
<i>Using generative AI effectively</i>	23.6% (189)	32.9% (264)	43.5% (349)		31.0% (248)	69.0% (553)
<i>Using other technology effectively</i>	58.9% (472)	35.9% (288)	5.2% (42)		71.5% (573)	28.5% (228)
<i>Working with a team to accomplish goals</i>	69.3% (556)	24.6% (197)	6.1% (49)		80.3% (643)	19.7% (158)
<i>Writing effectively</i>	66.2% (531)	29.4% (236)	4.4% (35)		85.3% (683)	14.7% (118)

Prepared for Work

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement? My college experience prepared me well for the work I have done since graduating.

Strongly agree	14.1% (112)
Agree	32.5% (259)
Somewhat agree	27.0% (215)
Neither agree nor disagree	8.5% (68)
Somewhat disagree	7.2% (57)
Disagree	6.4% (51)
Strongly disagree	4.3% (34)

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Satisfaction with College Experience

Overall, how would you rate your college experience?

Very rewarding	43.0% (342)
Somewhat rewarding	38.8% (309)
Slightly rewarding	14.6% (116)
Not at all rewarding	3.6% (29)

Considering both the costs and benefits of your college experience, would you say attending college was "worth it" for you personally?

Definitely yes	50.5% (402)
Probably yes	34.9% (278)
Probably not	10.9% (87)
Definitely not	3.6% (29)

Demographics

Highest Degree Earned	
Associate's degree (e.g., AA, AS)	23.2% (188)
Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)	62.6% (507)
Master's degree (e.g., MA, MS, MEd)	11.1% (90)
Professional degree (e.g., MD, DDS, DVM)	1.4% (11)
Doctorate degree (e.g., PhD, EdD)	1.7% (14)

Graduation Year for First Degree	
2025	7.8% (63)
2024	11.2% (91)
2023	13.2% (107)
2022	14.4% (117)
2021	12.6% (102)
2020	11.5% (93)
2019	13.7% (111)
2018	15.6% (126)

Did you attend more than one college/university before graduating?

- Yes – 25.9% (206)
- No – 74.1% (590)

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In terms of the number of undergraduate students, was the college you earned your first college degree from small, medium, or large?

Small (Fewer than 4,000 undergraduate students)	16.8% (134)
Medium (4,000 - 15,000 undergraduate students)	44.8% (357)
Large (More than 15,000 undergraduate students)	38.3% (305)

Thinking about the college you earned your first college degree from, was it a private college/university or a public college/university?

Public college/university	77.8% (619)
Private college/university	21.9% (174)
Not sure	0.4% (3)

In which of these broad areas did you major in college? (Select all that apply)

Business	20.0% (162)
Physical Sciences, Mathematics, and Computer Science	17.3% (140)
Arts and Humanities	15.6% (126)
Social Sciences	14.6% (118)
Health Professions	11.9% (96)
Biological Sciences, Agriculture, and Natural Resources	10.4% (84)
Engineering	7.9% (64)
Communications, Media, and Public Relations	7.0% (57)
Education	3.3% (27)
Social Service Professions	3.3% (27)
Other	6.9% (56)

Did you take most of your undergraduate classes online or in-person?

Online	18.0% (143)
In-person	82.0% (653)

Did most students at your degree-granting college live on campus (or in student housing near campus) or did most commute to campus?

Most lived on or near campus	57.8% (460)
Most commuted to campus	42.2% (336)

Did you live on campus for at least a year while in college?

Yes	54.8% (436)
No	45.2% (360)

Did at least one of your parents or legal guardians complete college before you?

Yes	62.4% (497)
No	37.6% (299)

Did you participate in intercollegiate athletics as a student-athlete?

Yes	13.6% (108)
No	86.4% (688)

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Did you work while you were pursuing your degree?

Yes - Only on-campus	14.3% (114)
Yes - Only off-campus	44.7% (356)
Yes - both on-campus and off-campus	18.5% (147)
No	22.5% (179)

Did you participate in an academic cohort program (e.g., Honors program, fellows program) for at least one academic year during college?

Yes	34.3% (273)
No	65.7% (523)

Did you participate in a social cohort program (e.g., Greek Life) for at least one academic year during college?

Yes	22.9% (182)
No	77.1% (614)

About how much did you take out in student loans to finance your undergraduate education?

None	36.3% (289)
Less than \$10,000	11.1% (88)
\$10,000 - \$19,999	16.5% (131)
\$20,000 - \$29,999	14.7% (117)
\$30,000 - \$40,000	9.8% (78)
More than \$40,000	11.7% (93)

In total, about how much did you receive in scholarships?

None	24.0% (191)
Less than \$5,000	15.3% (122)
\$5,000-\$9,999	15.2% (121)
\$10,000-\$19,999	14.4% (115)
\$20,000-\$29,999	11.3% (90)
\$30,000-\$40,000	7.4% (59)
More than \$40,000	12.3% (98)

Gender

Man	42.8% (340)
Woman	54.8% (436)
Non-binary	1.9% (15)
Prefer not to disclose	0.3% (2)
Prefer to self-disclose	0.3% (2)

Hispanic

- Yes – 16.2% (129)
- No – 83.8% (666)

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How would you describe yourself? (Select all that apply)

White	62.0% (493)
Black or African American	17.2% (137)
Middle Eastern or North African	0.4% (3)
South Asian	2.6% (21)
East Asian	8.1% (64)
Native American	1.5% (12)
Native Hawaiian	0.1% (1)
Pacific Islander	0.3% (2)
Other or prefer to self-identify	7.8% (62)

Region

Northeast	21.0% (167)
Midwest	19.6% (156)
South	41.6% (331)
West	17.7% (141)

Employment Status

Employed full time (40 or more hours per week)	63.8% (507)
Employed part time (up to 39 hours per week)	19.0% (151)
Unemployed and currently looking for work	11.1% (88)
Unemployed and not currently looking for work	3.3% (26)
Other	2.9% (23)

We will showcase additional results and analysis on the Center for Engaged Learning’s survey site when they are available: <https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/surveys/>. The Center’s prior surveys also are available on the site.

Related surveys conducted in partnership with the Elon Poll in 2019 and 2021 are available from the Elon Poll Archive: <https://www.elon.edu/u/elon-poll/archive/>. This survey did not attempt to replicate the weighting strategies used in those prior surveys. Special thanks to Kaye Usry and Jason Husser for their collaboration on the 2019 and 2021 surveys.

About the Report Author

Jessie L. Moore, PhD, is director of the Center for Engaged Learning and professor of Professional Writing & Rhetoric at Elon University. She leads planning, implementation, and assessment of the Center’s international, multi-institutional, and multi-disciplinary research seminars. She is the author of *Key Practices for Fostering Engaged Learning: A Guide for Faculty and Staff* (Stylus Publishing, 2023) and co-editor of five collections on engaged learning topics. She also produces the Center’s multimedia resources, including concise online guides on research-informed practices for engaged learning, videos, and podcasts.

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