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The Good Project

Newsletter: April 2014

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Dear Friend of The Good Project,

We hope that this newsletter finds you well! In this issue, we feature different research and practice initiatives across our focus area of "Good Work". In a story on our recent study of the career choices of Harvard undergraduates, we discuss how peer pressure, recruiting timelines, lack of guidance, and risk-aversion essentially "narrow" the perceived options of job opportunities for students. For our "Good Idea of the Month", we look at the importance of collaboration. Further, we also include links to interesting links and blog/news items from the Good Project's website. If you have ideas for future newsletters or would like your work to be highlighted, please email Paromita De at paromita_de@harvard.edu. Thank you and we hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter!

Sincerely,
The Good Team

Harvard Undergraduates' Career Choices Narrowed by "The Funnel Effect"



When we think about what getting a college degree from an elite institution like Harvard College means, we might see it as a door to

countless opportunities and also a launching pad to become a leader and changemaker in society. According to new research from The Good Project, however, for many students at Harvard, factors of perceived expectations and competition limit what they see as acceptable job opportunities to pursue post-graduation. Often, jobs in finance or consulting are given greater weight than jobs in public service or

social impact.

In a Good Project paper titled "[The Funnel Effect: How Elite College Culture Narrows Students' Perceptions of Post-Collegiate Career Opportunities](#)", Margot Locker, Lynn Barendsen, and Wendy Fischman share the reflections of forty Harvard seniors, mainly liberal arts majors, on the job search process. From the student interviews, our researchers observed the presence of a "Funnel Effect", defined by Locker, et. al: "Though students enter college with a diverse set of interests, by senior year, most of them seem to focus on a narrow set of jobs. The culture at Harvard seems to be dominated by the pursuit of high earning, prestigious jobs, especially in the finance and consulting industries." Students commonly cited a combination of an emphasis on campus recruiting in these fields by the university in the Fall semester along with peer pressure to receive a job offer in the Fall semester as factors which drive students to focus on getting jobs in finance or consulting, even if that is not where their interests lie. Other factors which impact students' decisions to pursue jobs in finance and consulting include feeling as if one needs to achieve "quick success" with a Harvard degree, a "lack of guidance" from the university about career opportunities outside the fields of finance and consulting, such as public service, and risk aversion. The study also found that "...more than half of the participants mention that either they themselves or a peer entered recruiting without any previous interest or particular goals in mind."

For students who were interested in pursuing careers outside of finance and consulting, like journalism or teaching, the influence of factors that were present in their lives before college (such as family members), extracurriculars/internships, and study abroad experiences encouraged them to go beyond the mold of expectations of elite college culture. To encourage the "widening of the funnel", researchers recommend expanding the presence of these factors to expose students to more fields and opportunities. Further, campus initiatives, such as mentoring programs, which encourage students to reflect on their goals and also deride the influence of social pressure to pursue certain careers are also

recommended.

Good Idea of the Month: Collaboration

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From Little League Baseball to the board room, collaboration is an important aspect of many kinds of work. Combining each other's skills, knowledge, and perceptions to work

towards a common goal can be a rewarding process that makes achieving the goal easier than if done alone. However, this process is not always straightforward and not always simple; The Good Project website notes under its "[Good Collaboration](#)" page that "Although many collaborative ventures are successful, many apparently promising partnerships fail despite the good intentions, skills, effort, and commitment of those involved." The differences in opinions and expectations for what results should look like and how they should be achieved can greatly impact the product of a collaboration, and even whether or not that product comes to fruition.

The [Good Collaboration Toolkit](#), developed by The Good Project, seeks to "help individuals who are considering a collaboration and also help sustain productive collaborations." The Toolkit divides its activities for collaborative partnerships into several stages:

- Identify and Evaluate: Taking time to understand each other's "style of communication, modes and approaches to work, and understandings of overall mission and role in society."
- Engage with Potential Collaborators: "Setting aside time during the formation process to discuss the collaboration and its central mission, delineate responsibilities, and develop a timeline for work..."

- Nurture Relationships with Active Collaborators: "...tending to the relationships among individuals, maintain open and honest communication about obstacles inherent in collaboration, and consider supports and strategies that may play a helpful role in the collaboration."
- Debrief and Reflect: "...think about ways the process could have been improved or how the product met or did not meet intended goals."

By learning how to collaborate with others - through sharing one's thoughts, actively taking responsibility in the work, listening to others thoughts, and finding ways to make compromises on differing opinions - we can learn how to make groups and partnerships function well and grow.

Recent Blogs

[Re-inventing the Wheel in the Study of Human Character](#)

(April 2, 2014)

Howard Gardner of The Good Project shares the views of peers on the research on character development.

[Do Students Really Remember What They Learn in School? Life and Career after Exposure to the Good Work Course](#)

(April 24, 2014)

Daniel Mucinskas and Victoria Nichols, Faculty Assistants at Harvard Graduate School of Education, discuss the process of assessing long-term impact of the school's course in Good Work.

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