

Education, Employment, and Coastal Carolina University: What Are CCU Students' Plans After Graduation?

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ABSTRACT

The Bureau of Labor Statistics has shown that while unemployment amongst young college graduates is high, joblessness decreases as students pursue post-baccalaureate degrees. With national unemployment near eight percent, it is important for college students to consider what obstacles they may face when entering the workforce. Challenges may include sociohistorical factors like parental educational attainment, socioeconomic factors, and obstacles surrounding various forms of human capital. This study predicts the decisions Coastal Carolina University (CCU) students will make post-graduation based upon four elements: parental education, academic achievement, paid work, and faculty-student interaction. I surveyed a random sample of CCU students to assess future occupational and/or educational plans post-baccalaureate graduation. The results show that the four selected elements accurately predict whether CCU students plan to enter a graduate program or the workforce after graduation. Considering, then, that unemployment risks decrease as education beyond a bachelor's degree increases, CCU faculty have a unique opportunity to shape the economy by encouraging students to pursue schooling post-baccalaureate graduation.

Introduction

With national unemployment remaining near eight percent, new college graduates wonder if they will obtain a job before they have to start paying back their student loans. Considering this, what challenges do new college graduates face when entering the workforce? Furthermore, what are the obstacles to obtaining a higher education? These questions are important for students deciding their futures during and after college because statistics tell a more specific story than the standard national average. The national average of unemployment for adults with an education less than a high school diploma is higher than the overall national average, sitting at an astounding 12.6 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 2012). For those with a high school diploma or greater, unemployment decreases respectively. High school graduates meet the national unemployment average near eight percent, while those with some college or at least a two-year degree fall to 7.5 percent. The largest difference is for adults holding a bachelor's degree or higher. For these adults, unemployment drops to only 4.2 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2012). Given these nationwide statistics, it is obvious that educational attainment directly affects employment status, even in today's volatile economy.

Because of this, it is important to examine both employment and education and the different challenges youth may potentially face in each. Often, unemployment is not the only obstacle to occupational attainment. Other difficulties such as underemployment, habits of delinquency, and self-authorship—how an individual defines him/herself—may also hinder the employment options of youth and college graduates. The first section of this thesis discusses each of these challenges.

Educational attainment in itself poses especially challenging obstacles to occupational attainment. However, factors influencing educational attainment are also numerous, and the barriers affecting progress exhibit similar challenges to occupational attainment. Some exclusive determinants include, but are not limited to, student socioeconomic status, parental educational attainment, paid work during school, and the self-rated preparedness of students. This paper reviews these challenges; it examines statistical data, explores the correlation between occupational and educational attainment, and discusses how one affects the other.

After considering obstacles shared by occupational and educational attainment, my hypotheses focus on the decisions students will make post-baccalaureate graduation. The hypotheses target the student population of Coastal Carolina University (CCU) in an attempt to apply previous studies to the local student body. By administering a survey to upper-level undergraduate students at CCU, the goal was to uncover what their intentions are after graduation and whether they believe an education higher than a bachelor's degree will improve their chances of employment. This study contributes to the university's discussion about what steps can be taken by faculty and administrators to help curb future unemployment risks students may face.

Literature Review

Employment and Education

Numerous studies have shown that education and occupational salary are closely connected. According to 2011 data, citizens with at least a bachelor's degree make almost \$300 more than the national weekly earning average of \$797 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2012). As educational attainment increases, incomes rise and unemployment rates decrease respectively. Still, underlying challenges to both occupational and educational attainment remain. Obstacles are especially prevalent in the lives of young college students making the important transition from education to employment. With national unemployment near eight percent, it is important to understand these challenges and how students themselves connect education to employment.

Employment and Obstacles to Gaining a Job

In his exploration of the concept of work, Gibbs (2008) stated that "Work is the central feature of human existence" (p. 429). For many, employment represents confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth. It is also a crucial part of the American dream; if someone is willing to work hard, she will do well. For some, working hard to get ahead means hard physical labor for endless hours each week while others participate in specific activities—like higher education—to realize occupational success. No matter what path is taken towards occupational success, often there are barriers that make attainment especially challenging.

Schoon and Parsons (2002) have linked teenage aspirations and educational attainment to future occupational success. Even when considering education, they still argue that aspiration is the more important of the two. Although Schoon and Parsons connect personal aspiration to future occupational success, they still contend that socioeconomic status and parental background also play considerable roles in youth goals.

As Schoon and Parsons argue, personal aspiration is often influenced by parents. They declare that even low-income parents can still maintain high educational and occupational aspirations for their children. Consequently, youth with low-income parents who set high achievement standards for them can overcome the obstacles associated with their low-income status. Schoon and Parsons's (2002) study finds "that the 'desire to excel' is an important source of achievement that can counterbalance educational limitations among individuals from more disadvantaged backgrounds" (p. 279). Thus, a parent's confidence, or a lack thereof, appears to contribute to the future occupational attainment of young people.

Expanding upon youth aspiration, Caspi, Entner Wright, Moffitt, and Silva (1998) show how different types of capital—human, social, and personal—effect the future occupational and educational attainment of youth. Human capital, or the resources, qualifications, skills, and knowledge acquired by young people, provides for youth the tools necessary to get ahead in both occupation and education. Social capital, or the relationships youth have with parents and/or school faculty, actually provides access to sources that build

human capital. And finally, personal capital, or the behavioral characteristics that affect both the motivation and capacity to work, stimulates the human-drive to succeed.

Consequently, all forms of capital are sufficient predictors of whether youth will ultimately decide not only to complete high school, but also to go on to college and possibly into a graduate program. Those who develop high amounts of capital at an early age will find themselves prepared in their aspirations. However, a lack of capital acts as a barrier to new graduates as they find themselves unable to form a sense of identity and develop mature relations with others (Baxter Magolda, 2008).

An obstacle to capital development and overall future educational and occupational attainment frequently includes teenage delinquency. Tanner, Davies, and O’Grady (1999) show that youth delinquency exerts a penalty on both educational and occupational attainment. Delinquency early in life—skipping school, drug use, property crime, violence, and contact with the criminal justice system—often influences a youth’s decision to stop education, which influences employment opportunities down the road. And just as delinquency extracts penalties on future attainment, it also contributes to decreased human capital (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Caspi et al., 1998).

Human capital, however, is also influenced by socioeconomic variables unrelated to delinquency such as parental income status. Schoon and Parsons (2002) have shown that “individuals from more privileged homes have more educational opportunities, greater access to financial resources when they are needed, role models, occupational knowledge, and informal/kinship networks” (p. 264). In a time when higher education has become the clear path to occupational and economic success, the costs of attending college have become a barrier (Hacker, Mettler, & Pinderhughes, 2005). And though socioeconomic barriers may be overcome through aspiration, as noted by Schoon and Parsons (2002), income status still plays a vital role in predicting future success. Hacker et al. (2005) notes that though higher education is clearly the path to economic prosperity, people from low-income backgrounds are discovering significantly fewer opportunities to attend college than their wealthy peers.

When socioeconomic status is a barrier, most often a lack of education and the basic skills necessary to gain a rewarding job are the unfortunate result. Lundetrae, Gabrielson, and Mykletun (2010) discovered that basic skills are increasingly important when pursuing occupational goals, especially in youth. Caspi et al.’s (1998) conclusions about human, social, and personal capital support Lundetrae et al.’s basic skills debate. However, Schoon and Parsons do make a valid argument regarding outside influences on youth aspirations.

A young person’s sense of identity is important, but maturity alone cannot overcome a lack of skills. It has been shown that employers are seeking at least basic skills in their new hires (Lundetrae et al., 2010; Saar, 2005; Aud, KewalRamani, & Frohlich, 2011; Rosenbaum & Binder, 1997). Lundetrae et al. (2010) argue that unemployment among youth is greatly influenced by education and basic working/life skills. Saar (2005) found that youth, while controlling for educational attainment, are disadvantaged in obtaining work when compared to experienced workers competing for the same jobs. However, she shows that youth with lower levels of educations are more likely to remain unemployed, while youth with higher levels of education are less likely to feel the effects of competition from their experienced peers.

Rosenbaum and Binder (1997) specifically outlined a number of employers who “stated that basic academic skills in mathematics and English are needed for the entry-level jobs they are seeking to fill” (p. 72). And while some employers did note that most entry-level jobs did not require basic academic skills, managerial positions definitely required them, thus illustrating the vital connection between education and employment. However, while Rosenbaum and Binder’s study considered basic arithmetic and English skills, they failed to mention the need for technical skills.

Employers continue to echo the same sentiments as Rosenbaum and Binder did in the late 1990s, yet employers have now added information technology skills, such as confidence in a Microsoft Windows environment or working knowledge of Microsoft Office applications, to their desired requirements (Fleming 2012, Nguyen et al. 2012, Pratt 2012, USA Today 2012). Even for a bright graduating college student, sometimes a thorough understanding of various information technologies can be the deciding factor in receiving a job offer (Johnson 2007).

Challenges to Gaining Higher Education

In a discussion about inequality and public policy, Hacker et al. (2005) stated that, “The idea that education . . . is the key to fostering opportunity and equality is a touchstone of American thinking” (p. 170). However, Hacker et al. point to the fact that education is not equally available to everyone who seeks it, citing socioeconomic factors that are often correlated with seeking higher education. Hacker et al. noted the numerous federal programs that are available to help lower income students go to college. Unfortunately, the cost of education continues to rise “precisely at a time when its economic value has become more pronounced” (p. 171). Education plays a larger role in occupational attainment and salary outcomes today than it did in the last century (Brooks, 2006). There is evidence that the market is increasing its demand for highly-skilled labor, and youth must follow suit by increasing their educational attainment in like fashion (Livingstone, 1999; Modestino, 2010; Rothwell & Berube, 2011).

However, the market itself might be keeping students from attaining the skills necessary to fill the jobs being made available. Studying the effects that early adolescent work patterns have on obtaining a bachelor’s degree, Staff and Mortimer (2007) showed that the competition for youths’ time and energies by school and employers results in major opportunity costs like fewer hours of homework, lower test scores, and decreased college attendance. Consequently, these opportunity costs often have the effect of “drawing young people from school and promoting behaviors that interfere with achievement” (p. 1170). Though early work habits tend to build the type of human capital that allows youth to achieve goals in short-term employment, the long-term effects are detrimental as educational pursuits suffer. Staff and Mortimer (2007) conclude that when youth spend more years in full-time work, the likelihood of gaining a college degree is decreased.

The amount of time youth spend in paid work while in school is often a reflection of the local economy in which they reside. Studying market influences on young students, Bozick (2009) tested four hypotheses predicting youths’ decisions to enter the workforce rather than pursuing a postsecondary education immediately after high school. He showed how local occupational requirements, unemployment rates, and socioeconomic status each influenced the decision making process. He also discovered that in areas with high unemployment, youth were more likely to seek higher education, while their peers living in areas with low unemployment were more willing to enter the workforce. Additionally, areas with jobs that demanded higher educational attainment comparably influenced youth to also seek higher educations. He concluded that “opportunity structures have real consequences for educational and occupational attainment—differences that bear most heavily on those with the fewest resources” (p. 508).

While socioeconomic status, work behaviors, and employment opportunities pose challenges to educational attainment, human capital also poses similar barriers to education. Self-rated preparedness, or how well a student believes she is prepared for college or a graduate program, affects entrance into higher education. Rosenbaum (1997) asserts that schools are harming youth by not penalizing them for poor work performance. Furthermore, young students are harmed by faculty encouraging them to seek higher education without preparing them for the work higher education actually demands. Rosenbaum (1997) stated that when teachers protect students’ high expectations rather than penalizing poor work, young students’ perceptions on the demands of a higher education are in fact harmed. It is not a “kindness” he

claims; rather, “it is a deception” (p. 74). This can lead to the belief that education is a credentialing process, which may indeed lead to the degree but overall affects the skills needed for employment.

Rosenbaum illustrates the important role school faculty play in student preparedness for education. Sheltering students from penalty in hopes of building self-esteem acts as a detriment. When young people are protected from the penalties of poor performance, Boswell (2012) says that privileged youth form behaviors of academic entitlement, attitudes, which “include expectations that one should receive special privileges and good grades with minimal effort invested into coursework” (p. 8). This behavior serves as an inhibitor when young students who have not worked hard due to academic entitlement soon discover that their undeserved grades have damaged their chances for higher educational attainment.

The Education and Employment Relationship: Gaps as Obstacles

Comparing occupational attainment during the mid-twentieth century to today, Hacker et al. (2005) pointed to the fact that educational attainment “proved much less of a predictor of earnings in the mid-century than it is currently” (p. 196). More than ever, employers are demanding higher educational attainment than they have previously. Rothwell and Berube (2011) note that even during the height of the recent recession in 2009, “the average U.S. job required 13.54 years of education, up slightly but significantly from 13.37 years in 2005” (p. 5). Despite the increase of demand for education by employers, workers’ educational attainment remained stagnant during the same period (Livingstone, 1999; Modestino, 2010; Rothwell & Berube, 2011). The resulting discrepancy is the education-jobs gap; the demand for educated workers is outpacing the rate at which workers obtain the required education.

Expounding on the market’s increased demand for educated workers, Modestino (2010) believes the real concern is that there is a lack of available skilled workers to fill the jobs requiring more education. She writes that employers are demanding more workers with formal education, training, college degrees, or technical certificates. Furthermore, the demand for workers with technical proficiency has greatly increased. She argues that as information technology advances into the workplace, the market will continue to increase its demand for more educated and skilled workers while replacing low-skill jobs through automation. Furthermore, as globalization expands, the market has likewise increased the demand for goods and services produced by educated workers. As a consequence, “the delicate balance between the supply and demand for skilled labor has been characterized as a race between education and technology” (p. 8). In the end, Modestino (2010) does not believe that the supply of skilled workers will be able to keep pace with the markets’ increased demand of higher education.

In addition to the education-jobs gap as outlined by Rothwell and Berube (2011) and Modestino (2010), D.W. Livingstone (1999) magnified the gap even further by examining the underemployment gap. When college graduates finally gain jobs, sometimes these new workers are victims of what Livingstone calls “involuntary reduced employment” (p. 69). In other words, they are employed in an industry that does not match their degree or by a job for which they are overqualified. When Livingstone wrote in 1999, “involuntary part-time employees [constituted] about... four percent of the U.S. labor force” (p. 70). In October 2012, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (October 2012) reported that unemployment, plus “all persons marginally attached to the labor force,” is 14.7 percent. As this is much higher than the national average of unemployment, Livingstone’s estimation of underemployment in 1999 appears to have increased. Citing the education-jobs gap as an obstacle to actually gaining a job, Livingstone (1999) concludes that “A growing majority believe that unemployment is basically caused by the economy itself rather than attributable to either the school system or people’s lack of motivation” (p. 269).

Hypotheses

Educational and occupational obstacles are numerous, and this study evaluates four of them as they apply to Coastal Carolina University (CCU). Founded in 1954, CCU is home to over 9,000 students participating in a variety of educational disciplines. Each student has unique aspirations and is attending college for various reasons. Within CCU's four colleges (Education, Business, Humanities and Fine Arts, and Science), 55 areas of study are available for students to gain a bachelor's degree in addition to seven master's degree programs (Coastal Carolina University, 2013). The lives of thousands of students have and continue to be enriched by CCU's influence. However, considering today's volatile job market, students face many challenges post-graduation. Consequently, I hypothesize that the decisions CCU students will make are contingent upon four elements: parental education, academic achievement, paid work, and faculty-student interactions.

Parental Education as a Predictor

Social background, specifically parental education, holds a powerful sway over decisions to enter a graduate program or higher or enter the workforce. Iannelli and Smyth (2008) believe that parental education has become an important resource in predicting educational and occupational outcomes for youth. Studying the effects that gender and social background have upon youth educational and occupational attainment, Iannelli and Smyth (2008) illustrated how those "with highly educated parents have better chances of obtaining employment, and tend to obtain higher status jobs, than those with less educated parents" (p. 227). Applied at the college level and more specifically to CCU, I assess whether the educational attainment of CCU students' parents effects student direction post-graduation. Specifically, I test my first hypothesis (H1): As the reported level of parental education increases, so will students' intent to continue education.

Academic Predictors

As displayed by academic entitlement, some students do not believe hard work is necessary to graduate with a four-year degree. When comparing students who plan to enter graduate programs to students who plan to enter the workforce, academic achievement is often a good indicator as to whether these groups can be differentiated. In other words, an examination of grade point averages (GPAs) may predict student decisions post-graduation. According to Landrum (2010), graduate school admissions committees "continue to desire high [GPAs], strong General Record Exam (GRE) scores, good letters of recommendation, and a personal desire to excel" (p. 244). Furthermore, committees are also demanding that applicants exhibit academic interest through study behavior, attendance records, class participation, and even the personal "motivation to learn."

It is important to discover whether CCU students understand the demand by graduate admissions committees and if their awareness is displayed in their GPAs. When Scepanisky and Bjornsen (2003) compared students with plans to enter graduate school to students entering the workforce, they discovered that the "GPAs of students who were and were not planning to attend graduate school were not significantly different" (p. 3). However, they also found that students planning to enter a graduate program were more motivated by learning than by their grades. It is very telling, then, that students with plans to enter a graduate program do not suffer from academic entitlement.

If students that do not suffer from academic entitlement yearn for knowledge more than just a letter grade, then GPA should be an accurate predictor of students' post-graduation plans. In the second portion of the study, considering students with plans to enter a graduate program yearn for knowledge more than a letter grade, I assess whether CCU student's GPAs are a good predictor of post-baccalaureate plans by testing

the my second hypothesis (H2): As the reported level of student GPAs increase, so will students' intent to enter a post-baccalaureate program rather than enter the workforce immediately.

Paid Work Predictors

Paid work often imposes opportunity costs on the students seeking to attain a higher education (Staff & Mortimer, 2007). Staff and Mortimer (2007) found that “youth who work more than 20 hours per week during the school year do report fewer hours of homework and lower test scores than youth who do not work or who limit their hours” (p. 1171). If this is true, undergraduate students who work a higher amount of paid work hours each week should exhibit lower GPAs. Similarly, these students may suffer from academic entitlement or they are simply placing a greater importance on *work now* as opposed to *work later* after a college degree.

Roksa (2010) illustrated in her evaluation of degree attainment inequality that “low intensity employment facilitates degree completion, while high intensity employment hinders it” (p. 300). In view of these statements, I test my third hypothesis (H3) that as CCU students' paid weekly work hours increase, post-graduation plans can be predicted: As the reported level of students' paid weekly work hours increase, so will students' intent to enter the workforce.

Faculty-Student Interaction

According to Lunceford (2011), academic departments do not have strong tools for advising. He claims that “students are left to their own devices, armed only with a course catalogue and an online registration system” (p. 14). Whether this blanket indictment of academic departments' advising capacities is accurate at Coastal Carolina University is questionable, especially when it comes to helping students consider and finally prepare for a post-graduate program. The rigorous work of a graduate program varies greatly from the demands of an undergraduate degree. And no one understands these rigors more than academic faculty, who themselves have often waded through years of higher education obtaining doctorates in their respective fields (Landrum, 2010; Lunceford, 2011). They have the real work experience necessary to reach the standards they have achieved, and they have great opportunities to impart this knowledge to their pupils.

For CCU students, the greatest influence guiding their post-baccalaureate decisions can come from their interactions with CCU faculty. Investigating whether graduate students felt they were prepared for graduate studies, Huss, Randall, Patry, Davis, and Hansen (2002) observed “the single largest contributor to self-rated preparedness was students' interactions with faculty members at their undergraduate institution” (p. 279). They found that students who felt better prepared for their graduate program reported positive faculty-student interaction with a mentor during their undergraduate studies. The amount and intensity of CCU faculty-student interaction is outside of the scope of this study. However, examining student satisfaction with CCU faculty members is a necessary step to discover how well faculty-student interaction predicts post-baccalaureate plans.

Huss et al. (2002) found that there are a sufficient number of undergraduate students who do not feel prepared for graduate studies as well as “groups of students [currently] in graduate programs who do not believe that they are well prepared” (p. 280). To prepare students, Landrum (2010) states that educators should provide opportunities for students outside of normal class activities such as research assistantships, internships, conference presentations, and symposium appearances. Outside-of-class activities serve to increase student self-rated preparedness, magnify self-confidence, and may even help students decide whether to enter a graduate program after undergraduate studies conclude. As Lunceford (2011) argued, “this is the beginning of the transition from an undergraduate mentality to that of a graduate student where one becomes not only a consumer of knowledge, but also a producer” (p. 18).

The importance of educators' role in the self-rated preparedness of an undergraduate student is an important one. Their influence reaches far beyond the classroom or grade submissions to the department and registrar's office. Considering this, I test my final hypothesis (H4) on student satisfaction in CCU faculty and whether it is a sufficient predictor for student outcome post-graduation: As the reported level of student satisfaction in a CCU faculty member increase, so will students' intent to enter a post-baccalaureate program.

Methods

I tested these hypotheses using data taken from an electronic survey distributed via email. A total of 357 juniors and seniors at CCU enrolled in various majors in the College of Business, College of Education, College of Humanities and Fine Arts, and the College of Science took part in the survey. Participation in the survey was voluntary. Students received the link to the survey after receiving an invitation by email from their course instructor, program director, academic advisor, department chair, or college dean.

The survey was implemented using the Snap WebHost survey management and analysis system. The questionnaire assessed future occupational and/or educational plans post-baccalaureate graduation. The survey itself is available in Appendix A. Survey questions were patterned after questions from comparable research. For the purposes of consistency, items were converted and simplified into multiple choice response questions (yes, no, and not sure). Participants were directed to a different set of questions based upon their answer to the first question: "What are your plans following graduation from Coastal Carolina University?" Answers indicating a graduate program directed students to four items assessing acceptance, self-rated preparedness, faculty relationships, and academic influence. Answers indicating work post-graduation directed participants to five questions assessing employment chances, on-campus Career Services assistance, self-rated preparedness, faculty relationships, and academic influence. Finally, all respondents answered one to two items regarding faculty relationships (two queries depended upon response to the first).

A single-item measured the highest level of parental educational attainment. Inquiries measuring parental education were influenced by research performed by Iannelli and Smyth (2008) using data from the European Union Labour Force Survey 2000 exploring the influence of gender and social background (in terms of parental education) on youth educational attainment. Furthermore, Schoon and Parsons's (2002) use of the 1958 National Child Development Study (NCDS) and the 1970 British Cohort Study data illustrating family background factors was also considered.

Measuring academic predictors, specifically GPA, as an indicator of students' post-baccalaureate intentions, five items were influenced by Landrum (2010) and Scepanky and Bjornsen (2003). Landrum's (2010) survey of 348 senior psychology majors asked 28 questions assessing student Locus of Control (LOC), or the extent students believe they can control events that influence them, and an additional 58 independent questions answered on a Likert-type agreement scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Landrum's questions measured student intent to enter post-baccalaureate education while comparing responses to the importance students placed in academic success. Scepanky and Bjornsen (2003) similarly surveyed 336 students at a small state college in Virginia measuring students' attitudes and behaviors towards their education. Scepanky and Bjornsen utilized the LOGO-II questionnaire (Learning-Oriented Grade-Oriented) to measure responses. The two prior studies used a variety of item-types (e.g., Likert-type agreement statements, open-ended response, etc.).

Three items were used to measure paid work predictors. The items were taken from Staff and Mortimer (2007), who conducted a longitudinal study of 1,010 teenagers in the St. Paul Public School District in Minnesota. Questionnaires gauged early experiences in work as related to school performance and

educational plans for the future. Consequently, survey questions sent to CCU students were strongly influenced by labor influences on educational attainment illustrated in each of these studies.

Five items were used to measure student satisfaction with CCU faculty members which were adapted from Huss et al.'s (2002), Lunceford's (2011), and Rosenbaum's (1997) studies. As with other prior items, questions were converted to multiple-choice responses to maintain consistency.

After answering their respective series of questions, participants provided demographic information (five items). Furthermore, answers to two political queries, four general student loan/tuition questions, and three items of extracurricular activities were collected to allow for potential post-hoc analysis of probable confounding variables; however, no responses were reported in the current discussion.

Participants completed the Snap WebHost survey during the last week of September and first two weeks of October of the Fall 2012 semester. The survey introduction described that the questionnaire was being conducted by a CCU student as part of his senior Honors thesis and that it would focus on issues concerning their future career plans. After participants completed the questionnaire, they were thanked and provided with contact information for the CCU Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Analysis if they had any questions or concerns.

Results

The results were first tabulated by student response to the survey's first question and differentiated by gender. Data reveals that CCU students are evenly divided in their post-baccalaureate plans to enter a graduate program or the workforce, with 154 respondents choosing to enter a graduate program and 156 entering the workforce. It is noteworthy that women composed two-thirds of those students entering an advanced degree program; this matches with recent trends in higher education (Aud et al., 2011).

In order to address each hypothesis, respondents were separated into four respective groups differentiated by their plans after graduation. Within each group, I then looked at the four issues highlighted in the hypotheses: parental education, academic achievement (GPA), paid work, and faculty-student interaction. In the instance of parental education predicting post-baccalaureate plans, Table 1 illustrates how respondents' parental education related to student plans after graduation.

Highest Education Parent Received	Graduate Program	Workforce	Military	Not sure
Some high school but did not finish (N=6)	50%	17%		33%
High School (N=56)	34%	57%	2%	7%
Some college but did not finish (N=57)	39%	44%	5%	12%
Two-year degree (N=56)	54%	30%	2%	14%
Four-year degree (N=98)	41%	49%		10%
Some graduate work (N=4)	100%			
Masters or other professional degree (N=70)	44%	42%	3%	11%
Ph.D., terminal, or advanced degree (N=9)	45%	44%		11%

Table 1 shows that there is a slight trend in student choice to enter a graduate program in comparison to entering the workforce post-undergraduate when controlling for parental education. The largest notable increase (not counting for small N groups) occurs between "some college" and "two-year degree." Also worthy of mention is the fact that two-thirds of respondents' parents have a college degree of some

fashion while the remaining one-third did not finish high school, has a high school diploma, or attended some college. When adding respondents' parents who have at least attended college but did not obtain a degree, less than 20 percent of all respondents' parents have never attended college.

Predicting student choice after college graduation by academic attainment was similarly filtered, first by GPA and then by corresponding student plans. This is displayed in Table 2. It shows an increase in student intention to enter a graduate program as GPA increases. The largest growth occurs between GPAs 3.50 to 3.74 and 3.75 to 4.00, with a 19 percentage point increase. Another significant element worth noting is the decrease in respondent uncertainty as GPA increases.

Student GPA	Graduate Program	Workforce	Military	Not sure
Under 2.50 (N=6)	17%	50%		33%
2.50 – 2.99 (N=67)	24%	63%	3%	10%
3.00 – 3.49 (N=107)	36%	50%		14%
3.50 – 3.74 (N=76)	44%	33%	5%	18%
3.75 – 4.00 (N=98)	63%	30%	1%	6%

With regard to student post-baccalaureate plans as predicted by the amount of paid hours they worked each week, the results were first separated by respondents who answered that they had a job. These were then adjusted for paid weekly hours compared to post-graduation plans (Table 3). The data illustrates that as paid weekly hours increased, student plans to enter a graduate program decreased. On the other hand, while paid weekly hours increased, student plans to enter the workforce also increased. Interestingly, as paid weekly hours increase, fewer respondents exhibited uncertainty in post-baccalaureate plans.

Paid Weekly Hours	Graduate Program	Workforce	Military	Not sure
No Job (N=120)	49%	40%	2%	9%
1 – 5 (N=9)	45%	22%		33%
6 – 10 (N=33)	52%	33%		15%
11 – 15 (N=47)	45%	45%	2%	8%
16 – 20 (N=52)	37%	48%		15%
21 – 25 (N=39)	35%	54%	6%	5%
26 or more (N=55)	34%	53%	4%	9%

Finally, in order to gauge faculty-student interactions, respondents were separated into two groups: those entering a graduate program, law school, or medical school and those entering the workforce. Afterwards, I gauged whether respondents had worked or planned to work with faculty to prepare them for a graduate program or to enter the workforce. Of respondents, 75 percent entering graduate programs worked with, or planned on working with, a faculty member to prepare them for post-baccalaureate education. In comparison, only 25 percent of respondents planning on entering the workforce received help from a faculty member to prepare them for a career and/or the job market.

It should be noted that nearly 90 percent of all respondents feel comfortable enough with a CCU faculty member to discuss academic and/or personal issues. Furthermore, nearly 100 percent of all respondents sense that a CCU faculty member has their best interests in mind when advising them. (Additional data showing respondent college major, opinion of the effect a post-baccalaureate degree has on employment

status, job opportunities under Barack Obama or Mitt Romney, and honors society/fraternity membership is included within the appendix.)

Discussion

Hypothesis One: Parental Education

The limitation of most research on the influences upon youth to enter a higher education is that the researchers generally only measure young persons' decisions to enter a two- and four-year institution. There is little discussion, however, on the influences upon college students entering a post-graduate program. Do the same elements that either promote or inhibit high school students to enter college also apply to college students' decisions to continue education post-baccalaureate? When Iannelli and Smyth (2008) examined the weight that social background like parental education had on youth educational attainment, their study was similarly limited to higher education in a four-year institution. In casual conversation I have had with CCU students, I discovered that Iannelli and Smyth's (2008) research was replicated in responses to personal questions of parental education. But I wanted to know if these same responses could be reproduced in an official survey targeting plans for a post-baccalaureate education. Considering this question, I hypothesized that as the education of parents increased, CCU students will be more likely to continue their own educations into a graduate program rather than entering the workforce immediately.

Survey data revealed that it appears that as parental education increases, CCU students' plans to enter a post-baccalaureate program grow concurrently. The significant jump from "some college but did not finish" to "two-year degree" and then back down to the level at "four-year degree" is particularly noteworthy. Also interesting is the high level students' plans to enter a graduate program with parents who have "some high school but did not finish" (50 percent). What about this level of parental educational attainment motivated students to plan to continue their education beyond a four-year degree? Further research into students with plans to enter a graduate program who have parents without a high school diploma may discover interesting elements. A larger sample of this group, however, may only reveal a trend correction.

Data as compared to Iannelli and Smyth (2008) does appear to corroborate that students with higher educated parents will also obtain a higher education. Data illustrated that over 80 percent of all respondents have parents who have at least attended college with two-thirds of parents holding a college degree (two-year degree or higher). Expansion upon this survey in the form of socioeconomic status would be helpful to better illustrate those elements influencing CCU students to attend a four-year degree granting institution. However, the fact still remains that data does provide an apparent trend that these same factors also predict students' plans to pursue a post-baccalaureate program.

Hypothesis Two: Academic Achievement

Fortunately, when Landrum (2010) and Scepanky and Bjornsen (2003) discussed the academic predictors of college students' post-graduation plans, they also addressed the influences which guided these same students to post-baccalaureate education. I agree with the summation that undergraduate students that enjoy learning will likely continue their education. Likewise, I concur that students intent on applying to graduate school are also motivated more by learning and less by their grades. But where I differ from Scepanky and Bjornsen's findings is that the GPAs of students intent on entering a graduate program were not considerably different from those of students with plans to enter the workforce immediately. Even Scepanky and Bjornsen's (2003) data support their own hypothesis that "students planning to attend graduate school set themselves apart to a degree from students who are planning to enter the work force" (p. 6).

Thus, I applied this same test to students at CCU. I hypothesized that when CCU students' GPAs increase, they will be more likely to enter a post-baccalaureate program rather than enter the workforce immediately. Findings amongst the CCU sample show that this is indeed the case. Table 2 illustrates that an increase in student GPA steadily corresponds with respondents' voiced intentions to enter a graduate program after college. What is interesting, however, is the large increase of respondent's choosing to enter a graduate program within the 3.75 to 4.00 GPA group when compared to the next level down: 3.50 to 3.74. Similarly, student uncertainty is at its lowest level at the highest point of the GPA field.

In reverse, Table 2 can also be utilized to predict student choice to enter the workforce: as student GPAs decrease, they will be more likely to enter the workforce rather than enter a graduate program. And just as student uncertainty is at its lowest level at the highest point of the GPA spectrum, indecision is also at its highest level at the lowest point of the GPA scale. These data, then, reveal that student plans post-baccalaureate can indeed be predicted by academic achievement as measured by student grade point average.

Hypothesis Three: Paid Work

Staff and Mortimer (2007) found that a certain amount of paid work hours each week resulted in opportunity costs upon youth in the form of fewer hours of homework, lower test scores, and decreased college attendance. In my own undergraduate experience, I witnessed the same opportunity costs upon my test scores and assignment grades as my paid work hours increased past a certain threshold. For Staff and Mortimer (2007), that threshold is 20 hours of paid work per week when academic costs are revealed. Roksa (2010) showed the same penalties wherein "low intensity (up to 20 h per week), moderate intensity (21–35 h per week), and high intensity (over 35 h per week)" work levied differing consequences (p. 298).

Unfortunately, Staff and Mortimer's study focused on the opportunity costs placed on high school-aged students' decisions to enter a four-year degree institution. Roksa's (2010) research focused only on degree completion inequality comparing two- and four-year institutions. Despite these limitations, however, I was led to question whether these paid work penalties could also apply to college-aged students' decisions after graduation. In other words, would an increase in weekly paid work hours also impose opportunity-costs on undergraduate students in the form of post-graduation plans? I hypothesized that as CCU students' paid weekly work hours increased, they will be more likely to enter the workforce as opposed to continue on to a graduate program.

Opportunity costs in the form of academic penalties, or GPA, are shown in detail in Appendix B. However, opportunity costs in the form of post-graduation plans are very telling as displayed in Table 3. Reviewing the workforce column, it is immediately apparent that as paid weekly hours increase, student decision to enter the workforce after college also steadily rises. At the lowest level of the paid weekly hours range, 1 – 5 hours worked, only a quarter of respondents plan to enter the workforce. However, a 12 percentage point jump occurs from 6 to 10 hours and 11 to 15 hours. In Table 3, the 20-hour threshold finally reaches near or over 50 percent of respondents' indicating plans to enter the workforce.

Examining Appendix B, opportunity cost in the form of academia (or GPA) is questionable as there is no real noticeable pattern of increase or decrease. Nevertheless, when controlling for post-baccalaureate plans, costs in the form of future educational attainment beyond a four-year degree are obvious. And though data in Appendix B does not agree with academic costs of paid weekly hours, data in Table 3 does. In conclusion, data suggests that paid weekly hours can indeed be used to predict college students' decisions after graduation.

Hypothesis Four: Faculty Interaction

Huss et al. (2002), Landrum (2010), and Lunceford (2011) each stressed the important role that advisers possess in undergraduate students' post-baccalaureate decisions. Surveying randomly selected psychology graduate students, Huss et al. discovered that faculty-student interaction was the largest contributor to students feeling prepared for graduate school. The second largest contributor was undergraduate research activity while working with an advisor. Huss et al. (2002) concluded that "undergraduate faculty can have a profound impact on their students' sense of being well prepared for graduate school" (p. 279).

Landrum (2010) believed that educators' work with students was also an important step to preparing undergraduates for higher education. Lunceford (2011) stated that there were no reasons why students could not begin research projects in their undergraduate studies and that some schools actually encourage their faculty to include undergraduates in their research projects. While I do not disagree with the importance these three studies place on faculty-student interaction, Huss et al. (2002) and Landrum (2010) concentrated on psychology majors. Lunceford (2011), on the other hand, targeted first-generation graduate students, or students who were the first in their family to go to college.

Considering these data, but also their limitations, I questioned whether CCU students in more majors than just psychology or first-generation graduate students would exhibit the same behaviors in regards to faculty-student interaction. Specifically, I hypothesized that as the confidence in a faculty member increased, CCU students would be more likely to enter a post-baccalaureate program. Data is largely inconclusive, probably due to the limitations of the survey accurately gauging faculty-student interaction (see Appendix A). However, what is very interesting is the fact that 75 percent of respondents who expressed intentions to enter a graduate program stated that they had worked or were planning to work with a CCU faculty member to prepare them. On the other hand, only 25 percent of respondents indicating plans to enter the workforce specified the same when it came to preparation for the job market. Finally, in an almost unanimous vote of confidence, just under 90 percent of all respondents indicated confidence in sharing academic and/or personal concerns with a CCU faculty member, and nearly 100 percent of those respondents even felt that the faculty member had their best interests in mind.

If this is the case, then why are so few students with plans to enter the workforce willing to work with a faculty member to prepare them for a job? Moreover, of the 156 respondents indicating plans to enter the workforce after college, only 15 percent designated that they have or they will be using CCU's Career Services to help with job location. When considering Huss et al.'s (2002) findings that a number of undergraduate students were unprepared for graduate studies, data in this survey does not suggest the same. Respondents with plans to enter a post-baccalaureate program strongly indicated their intentions to work with a CCU faculty member to help them prepare, if they have not already. Respondents also indicated high confidence in a faculty member and felt that they did indeed have their best interests in mind.

Including students in outside-of-class activities is just one step to preparing young people for educations beyond a four-year college. And perhaps these data illustrates that this is taking place at CCU. In disagreement, then, with Lunceford's (2011) claim that departments do not have strong advising tools, survey data indicates that CCU does have a strong faculty-student interaction capacity to the point that respondents unanimously praised faculty members.

Whether data affirmatively answers that faculty-student interaction can accurately predict student choice to enter a post-baccalaureate program is debatable. However, one cannot argue the fact that CCU students with plans to continue their education after college graduation echo by 75 percent their willingness to work with a faculty member to prepare them.

Conclusions

Overall, the results show that parental educational attainment accurately predicts student choice after graduation. Future tests, however, may measure the parental education of students within CCU's graduate programs. Provided with graduate students as respondents, data may reveal a more accurate prediction of undergraduate student choice.

Noted in the analysis of survey data was the fact that 80 percent of all respondents have parents who have at least attended college. This may indicate that a significant amount of CCU students have sufficient human capital, or in other words, enough resources to foster college attendance. On the same note, student social capital, or parent-student relationships, may also be sufficiently high enough to nurture college attendance in youth. Indeed, parental aspiration and encouragement for their children to gain a higher education is important. However, parental influence does not always have the positive impact as intended by moms and dads.

Mothers and fathers who feel the necessity to embed themselves in every facet of their child's progress and transition into adulthood often find their children suffering from a deficient amount of personal capital. This is problematic as it later translates into unemployment risks beyond educational attainment (Caspi et al., 1998). Parents who exhibit hand-holding behaviors, commonly referred to as "helicopter parents" by Manos (2009), are hurting their children's chances to build an inner-voice. She stated that some parents try to supervise their children's college education, apply to internships for them, and even attend job fairs and interviews with and for them. Manos interjected that "because of this dysfunctional interdependence, another aptly unsettling term has come about, this one a developmental oxymoron: the adult child" (p. 21).

As young students begin their transition into adulthood, it is important that they build their own internal voices (self-authorship and personal capital) while still in their educational pursuits. Baxter Magolda (2008) has noted that self-authorship "has emerged in the past 15 years as a developmental capacity that helps meet the challenges of adult life" (p. 269). When a student leaves his/her parents' home for several years of college, for example, is often a growing up experience which builds self-identify. Additionally, low-intensity work during the school semester and high-intensity work during the summer break also offers opportunities for self-authorship (Roksa, 2010). These types of experiences provide opportunities to build a sense of identity in the maturing college student. And as they develop, they later translate into personal capital—or confidence, motivation, and perseverance—when searching for employment after graduation. Employers seeking to invest an annual salary in new college graduates almost always witness the confidence in a matured young adult. Maturity alone cannot overcome all obstacles to potential unemployment. However, as employers increase their "premium...on the possession of 'identity capital'" many obstacles to gaining that first job can be defeated (Bynner & Parsons, 2002, p. 291).

Unfortunately, data also reveals that the workforce itself acts as a barrier to obtaining a post-baccalaureate education. Table 2 shows that as students increase their weekly paid hours, they will be less likely to continue to graduate programs. Of course, this study is not advocating students to remain unemployed during school. Many students find the need to work throughout the year to supplement whatever forms of income they have during their education. However, some students working moderate- to high-intensity hours may not be aware of the opportunity costs on their future plans as they increase the amount of hours they work each week. On the other hand, perhaps these same CCU students who engage in moderate- to high-intensity work during the semester are placing their goals in different areas than students who participate in low-intensity work. Evidence would suggest that they are, which would validate Scepansky and Bjornsen's (2003) claim that students with plans to enter a graduate program set themselves apart from those who do not have similar goals.

Interestingly enough, 61 percent of CCU students with plans to enter the workforce who also work over 20 hours each week agreed that an advanced degree (graduate school and higher) would improve their chances of employment (see Appendix C). This is noteworthy as even those CCU students who have indicated plans to enter the workforce after undergraduate school, admit that they would benefit from continuing their education. Perhaps, then, that reveals another limitation of this study as it relates to paid work hours. The survey failed to gauge whether students were full- or part-time enrolled. Future studies would greatly benefit this data by asking this important question to determine whether students involved in high-intensity work were indeed full-time students.

Despite this limitation, data still reveals that the amount of paid weekly hours accurately predicts the future plans of CCU students. Suggested future studies may wish to evaluate this element closer by 1) comparing part- and full-time enrollees, 2) examining the type of work, 3) researching how much time students who participate in moderate- to high-intensity work spend on school assignments each week, and 4) examining why CCU students working moderate- to high-intensity hours are doing so.

Finally, as students mature in their college experiences and cultivate their own identities, academic performance is frequently a positive consequence. Educators have unique opportunities in these development stages to help students prepare for the choices they will make beyond graduation. Out-of-class activities such as presenting a research paper at a conference or symposium contributes greatly to a student's self-rated preparedness (Landrum, 2010). And Huss et al. (2002) note that "self-efficacy feelings are influential throughout an individual's career" (p. 280). Why did Scepansky and Bjornsen (2003) find that GPAs amongst students with plans to enter a graduate program were not markedly different from students entering the workforce? While Scepansky found that the mean GPA of students with plans to enter a graduate program was just below 3.00, this data reveals quite the opposite, with the mean GPA above 3.00. Furthermore, data illustrate that student GPA is an accurate predictor of what CCU students will do post-graduation. Unfortunately, this study is limited in that only student intentions, not actual enrollment or application acceptance, are gauged. A future study would be able to expand upon this by seeking out similar data from students within CCU's graduate programs.

When considering respondents with high GPAs, perhaps they are the same students that are participating in out-of-class activities. Instructors at Coastal Carolina University and nationwide have a unique opportunity to shape the national economy. As educational attainment greatly affects employment post-graduation, I contend that educators have the chance to shape future national employment status by encouraging students to continue their educations beyond a four-year degree. The best way to do this is to involve students in out-of-class activities such as conferences, symposiums, and research assistantships. Professors should assign more research papers and expose their students to the vast resources available in the library. Perhaps even the colleges within CCU can have their own research competitions in addition to the university wide Undergraduate Research Competition each spring.

Class discussions about the positive and negative consequences that educational attainment has on employment should be expanded. Open discussions on college majors and/or class subjects should be fostered in each and every class, not just within upper-level or capstone courses. Data shows that 75 percent of all students with plans to enter the workforce will not work with faculty to prepare them for the job market. How do instructors reach these students after they are identified? If they are determined to enter the workforce despite faculty-student relationships, can they still be influenced to improve their employment chances when they actually begin their search for work? These are important questions to consider not only for future studies, but also for current CCU colleges, departments, and faculty.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reveals that as education increases, unemployment decreases and salary increases respectively. If this is the case, and if the workforce is demanding more education than before, the obvious response is for students to follow suit. However, when college graduates are unable to find

work, it does not mean that the market is broken. It simply means that “the meritocracy is working almost too well . . . Higher education pays off because it provides technical knowledge and because it screens out people who are not organized, self-motivated and socially adept” (Brooks, 2006). I contend, then, that the best route to following the move by the market’s demand for more education is for college students to seek post-baccalaureate education.

According to the 2008-09 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study performed by the National Center for Education Statistics, 15.9 percent of first-time bachelor’s degree recipients were either unemployed or out of the labor force while another 13.5 percent had more than one job. Only 56.9 percent of graduates held one full-time job. Statistics continuously show that as education increases, unemployment decreases. Considering such a high percentage of first-time bachelor’s degree unemployment or labor force nonparticipation, college students should seriously consider seeking a graduate program of some type to increase both their chances at post-graduate employment and a higher salary outcome in the future.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

Respondents were provided with this short description of the survey: This brief survey is part of a senior honors thesis. Survey questions will focus on your post-graduate plans: do you plan on entering a post-baccalaureate program or entering the workforce after graduation? Click here to begin.

1. What are your plans following graduation from Coastal Carolina University?
 - a. Enter a graduate program, law school, or medical school
 - b. Enter the work force
 - c. Enter the military
 - d. Not sure

Respondents who selected option A from question 1 were prompted to answer questions 2 through 5. Respondents who selected option B from question 1 were prompted to answer questions 6 through 10. Respondents who selected Option C from question 1 were directed to question 11.

2. What do you feel are your chances of being accepted into a post-secondary degree program such as a graduate program, law school, or medical school?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Good
 - c. Average
 - d. Fair
 - e. Poor
 - f. Not sure
 - g. I have already been accepted into a program
3. Do you feel sufficiently prepared for your post-secondary education?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe/Depends
 - d. Not Sure
4. Did you, or do you plan to, work with a CCU faculty member when applying to a post-secondary degree program?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. Do you believe your grade point average (GPA) will influence, or did influence, your chances of being accepted?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure

6. What do you feel are your chances of obtaining a job after graduation?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Good
 - c. Average
 - d. Fair
 - e. Poor
 - f. Not sure
 - g. I have already obtained a job for after graduation

7. Will you be using, or did you use, on-campus Career Services to help you locate a job?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe/Depends
 - d. Not Sure

8. Do you feel sufficiently prepared for professional work?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe/Depends
 - d. Not Sure

9. Have you worked with a CCU faculty member or other advisor in assisting your preparation for your new career and/or the job market?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

10. Do you believe your grade point average (GPA) will influence, or did influence, your chances of obtaining a job?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure

All respondents answered the following question:

11. Is there a CCU faculty member that you feel comfortable enough to speak with regarding academic and/or personal issues?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Answering yes to question 11 directed respondents to question 12. A no answer directed respondents to question 13.

12. Do you feel that he/she has your best interests in mind when advising you?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure.

All respondents answered the following set of questions. They were provided with the instructions to answer a series of questions regarding their college work habits. They indicated their level of agreement with the following choices: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree.

13. I just do enough to pass my classes
14. I try to do my best in school.
15. I only work in school if I'm worried about failing.

All respondents answered the following series of questions:

16. Do you believe that an advanced degree (graduate school and higher) improves your chances of employment?
- Yes
 - No
 - Maybe/Depends
 - Not sure
17. What is your grade point average (GPA)?
- 3.75 - 4.00
 - 3.50 - 3.74
 - 3.00 - 3.49
 - 2.50 - 2.99
 - Under 2.50
18. Are you an in-state or out-of-state student?
- In-state
 - Out-of-state
19. What is your major? (CCU academic majors were listed for students to select)
20. Are you a member of the CCU Honors Program?
- Yes
 - No

21. Are you a member of an Honors Society or Fraternity for your major?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
22. How many hours do you spend on-campus each week for extracurricular activities?
- a. 0
 - b. 1 - 5
 - c. 6 - 10
 - d. 11 - 15
 - e. 16 - 20
 - f. 21 - 25
 - g. 26 or more
23. Do you currently have a job?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

Respondents who answered yes to question 23 were directed to questions 24 and 25 while a no answer directed respondents to question 26.

24. Is the job on or off campus?
- a. On campus
 - b. Off campus
25. How many paid hours do you work a week?
- a. 0
 - b. 1 - 5
 - c. 6 - 10
 - d. 11 - 15
 - e. 16 - 20
 - f. 21 - 25
 - g. 26 or more

All respondents answered the following demographic questions:

26. What is your gender?
- a. Female
 - b. Male
27. Are you Hispanic or Latino? (Please mark one.)
- a. Yes
 - b. No

28. What is your race? Regardless of your answer to the question above, please mark one or more races to indicate what you consider yourself to be.
- American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Black or African American
 - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 - White
29. What is the highest level of education either of your parents has completed?
- Some high school, but did not finish
 - Completed high school
 - Some college, but did not finish
 - Two-year college degree (AA/AS)
 - Four-year college degree (BA/BS)
 - Some graduate work
 - Completed Masters or professional degree
 - Completed Ph.D., other terminal degree or advanced graduate work

All respondents were directed to answer the following series of questions related to American politics and tuition:

30. When it comes to politics, do you usually identify yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?
- Republican
 - Democrat
 - Independent
 - Other
 - Not sure
31. When it comes to employment, do you think more job opportunities will be available for graduating college students if Barack Obama or Mitt Romney wins the presidential election?
- Barack Obama
 - Mitt Romney
 - Neither
 - Not sure
32. Do you believe the federal government has an obligation to help you find a job?
- Yes
 - No
 - Maybe/Depends
 - Not sure
33. How much time do you believe students should be allowed to find a job before they are obligated to start paying back federal student loans?
- 6 months
 - 12 months
 - 18 months
 - 2 years or more
 - Not sure

34. If you cannot find a job within 6 months of graduating college, do you believe some of your federal student loans should be forgiven?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe/Depends
 - d. Not sure
35. If tuition costs remain the same, do you believe federal student aid should be increased?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe/Depends
 - d. Not sure

Appendix B: Paid Weekly Hours Opportunity Cost on Student GPA

Student GPA	Paid Weekly Hours					
	1 – 5	6 – 10	11 – 15	16 – 20	21 – 25	26 or more
Under 2.50 (N= 4)	25 %		25%		25%	25%
2.50 – 2.99 (N=45)		2%	18%	38%	2%	22%
3.00 – 3.49 (N=75)	3%	19%	15%	21%	13%	29%
3.50 – 3.74 (N=49)	2%	12%	31%	12%	25%	18%
3.75 – 4.00 (N=62)	8%	2%	2%	21%	11%	2%

Appendix C: Belief that an Advanced Degree (Masters or Higher) Will Improve Employment Chances by Working Students with Plans to Enter the Workforce*

Paid Weekly Hours	Advanced degree?		
	Yes	No	Maybe/Depends
1 – 5 (N=2)	50%		50%
6 – 10 (N=11)	73%	9%	18%
11 – 15 (N=21)	52%	5%	38%
16 – 20 (N=25)	54%	8%	38%
21 – 25 (N=20)	65%	15%	20%
26 or more (N=29)	59%	7%	34%
Hours Worked by Intensity			
Low (N=59)	57%	7%	34%
Medium to High (N=49)	61%	10%	29%

* Answers indicating “not sure” have been excluded but are tabulated into the percentage total.

Appendix D. Percentages of Students Going to Graduate Programs, Entering the Workforce, or Military by College Major

Major	Graduate Program	Workforce	Military	Not Sure
Accounting (N=21)	43%	43%		14%
Art Studio (N=15)	40%	33%		27%
Biochemistry (N=5)	80%			20%
Biology (N=24)	88%		4%	8%
Chemistry (N=8)	37%	25%	13%	25%
Communication (N=12)	8%	67%		25%
Computer Science (N=20)	45%	45%		10%
Early Childhood Education (N=1)		100%		
Economics (N=6)	33%	67%		
Elementary Education (N=2)		100%		
English (N=4)	50%	50%		
Exercise & Sport Science (N=20)	70%	15%	5%	10%
Finance (N=12)	17%	67%	8%	8%
Graphic Design (N=7)		86%		14%
Health Promotion (N=3)	34%	33%		33%
History (N=3)	100%			
Information Systems (N=11)		82%		18%
Intelligence & Natl. Sec. (N=2)	100%			
Interdisciplinary Studies (N=3)	67%	33%		
Management (N=45)	18%	82%		

Marine Science (N=37)	73%	13%		14%
Marketing (N=35)	28%	66%		6%
Mathematics (N=6)	67%	16%		17%
Middle Level Education (N=11)	27%	55%		18%
Music (N=1)	100%			
Musical Theatre (N=2)		100%		
Philosophy (N=1)	100%			
Physical Education (N=1)		100%		
Physics (N=6)	67%	16%		17%
Political Science (N=22)	68%	9%	9%	14%
Psychology (N=5)	80%	20%		
Rec. & Sport Mgmt. (N=4)	50%	50%		
Resort Tourism Mgmt. (N=13)	16%	69%		15%
Sociology (N=2)	100%			
Spanish (N=5)	20%	40%	20%	20%
Special Education (N=1)	100%			
Undeclared (N=6)	34%	33%		33%
CCU College Aggregates				
College of Business (N=132)	24%	70%	1%	5%
College of Education (N=16)	27%	60%		13%
College of Hum. & Fine Arts (N=84)	48%	34%	4%	14%
College of Science (N=144)	53%	30%	3%	14%

Appendix E: Student Belief that an Advanced Degree Improves Employment Chances by Post-Baccalaureate Plans*

Post-Baccalaureate Plans	Yes	No	Maybe/Depends
Graduate Program (N=154)	92%	1%	7%
Workforce (N=156)	58%	6%	36%
Military (N=7)	80%		14%

* Answers indicating “not sure” have been excluded.

Appendix F: Percentages of Students Who Believe There Will Be More Job Opportunities under Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, or Neither by Post-Baccalaureate Plans*

Post-Baccalaureate Plans	Barack Obama	Mitt Romney	Neither
Graduate Program (N=154)	23%	19%	18%
Workforce (N=156)	27%	23%	18%
Military (N=7)	57%	15%	14%

* Answers indicating “not sure” have been excluded but are tabulated into the percentage total.

Appendix G. Percentages of Students Who Believe There Will Be More Job Opportunities under Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, or Neither by Political Affiliation*

Political Affiliation	Barack Obama	Mitt Romney	Neither
Democrat (N=79)	72%	1%	9%
Republican (N=113)	5%	48%	19%
Independent (N=68)	26%	9%	21%

* Answers indicating “not sure” have been excluded but are tabulated into the percentage total.

Appendix H: Percentages of Students Who Are Members of CCU Honors Program and/or Honors Society/Fraternity for a College Major by Post-Baccalaureate Plans

Post-Baccalaureate Plans	CCU Honor's Program		Honor's Society/Fraternity	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Graduate Program (<i>N</i> =154)	39%	61%	16%	84%
Workforce (<i>N</i> =156)	18%	82%	14%	86%
Military (<i>N</i> =7)		100%	29%	71%

Author



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