

Transcript

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Why should I hire you?

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It's a question that every college graduate will have to answer in some way after they

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graduate. It may not always be asked this way, but it will be implied in every question

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they're asked at the interview.

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Why should I hire you?

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For some students the question may cause a sense of panic. Many falsely assume that a

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diploma is all they need to get a great job. They've heard people say, "all you need is

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a college degree, it doesn't really matter what your degree is in." That is false. The

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truth is a little more complicated.

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If you use college as an opportunity to grow and develop, you are more likely to become

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the kind of person that employers want to hire after college. Simply put, your most

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important project in college is you.

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So what skills do employers want? The National Association of Colleges and Employers asks

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them every year. Here is what they found out.

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Verbal Communication, Teamwork, Problem Solving, Setting Priorities, Finding and Evaluating

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Information, Quantitative Reasoning Skills, Computer Skills, Writing and Editing, and

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Influencing Others.

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Now where can you gain these skills? Stephen F. Austin State University and CampusLabs

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conducted a national study on this issue called Project CEO: Cocurricular Experience Outcomes.

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This study looked at how students developed the skills employers want and some of the

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results may surprise you.

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We asked more than 17 thousand students at 40 institutions where they could

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learn these skills. Without exception, "their classes," was the

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most common answer. This makes a lot of sense. Classes are supposed to prepare you for success

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in life and every student takes classes. But, not every student will participate in a student

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organization or an internship.

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We investigated these experiences outside of classes that may contribute: These were

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Internships, On-campus Jobs, Off-campus Jobs, and Cocurricular Experiences. (Cocurricular

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Experiences meaning optional experiences outside of the classroom in which learning can occur,

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like student organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternities, sororities,

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intercollegiate or intermural sports, or academic groups and honors societies.

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When we asked which experiences outside the classroom helped students to develop employment

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skills Cocurricular Experiences were the most common answer more than half of the time.

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Students developed Teamwork, Decision Making, Obtaining and Processing Information, Problem

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Solving, Verbal Communication; Planning, organizing and Prioritizing.

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In three skills internships got the most responses: Career Knowledge, Computer Proficiency, and

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Writing and Editing

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In two skills Off-Campus Jobs got the most response: Sales and Influence and Analyzing

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Quantitative Data.

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To see the impact that cocurricular programs make let's look at how three hypothetical

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students developed the six skills that cocurricular experiences impact most.

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This first student doesn't participate in cocurricular experiences at all, they just

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go to class, and go back to their room. The second student has been involved on campus

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for two years, they spend at least an hour a week involved on campus.

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The third student has been a leader on campus for two years. They run meetings, they help

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their organization set goals and accomplish them.

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We asked each of them to rate their skills in each of these areas.

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Verbal communication, teamwork, problem solving, setting priorities, finding and evaluating

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information, and decision making.

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What does this mean? The more involved students were, the more likely they were to say that

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they were gaining these skills. This leads us to an interesting question, how involved

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do you have to be to get the benefits of participation in a cocurricular experience?

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Let's look at four more students.

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This one is somewhat involved in a single organization. This one is somewhat involved

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in multiple organizations. This one is very involved in a single organization.

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And this one is very involved in multiple organizations.

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We asked them to rate themselves on each of the six skills that cocurricular experiences

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impact most.

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Verbal communication, teamwork, problem solving, setting priorities, finding and evaluating

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information, and decision making.

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So what does this mean?

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Well this seems to suggest that what really matters is your level of involvement. The

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learning benefits of being very involved in one organization are essentially the same

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as those gained from being somewhat involved in multiple organizations.

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Students who were very involved in multiple organizations perceived the greatest benefit,

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much more than students who were only somewhat involved. This also supports the claim that

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it is the depth of your involvement that matters.

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A word of Caution: Although involvement in multiple organizations is beneficial, it's

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also important for students to find a balance and not over extend themselves.

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So what can we take away from this?

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First, we need to help employers understand the benefits of hiring involved students,

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since they tend to have many of the skills employers are looking for.

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Second, Internships are great, but not every student can get an internship, but any student

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can participate in at least one cocurricular experience.

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Third, Students work more hours than ever before, and this presents many challenges,

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but it may also present opportunitites for students to develop career skills from their jobs on

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an off campus.

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So if students want a great job after college, they'll need the skills that employers want.

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Involvement outside of the classroom can be an engaging and fun way to develop these skills.