National C-Suite Executive Survey on College Graduates in the Workforce

A poll of 500 C-Suite executives representing companies with 5,000 to 25,000 employees

With an executive summary from HPU President

Nido R. Qubein

Conducted by the High Point University Survey Research Center
Dear Student,

When you enrolled at High Point University, we committed to partnering with you and your family to pursue a life of success and significance. One of the distinctive elements HPU promised was the development of Life Skills along your journey.

In one of your first classes with me, The President’s Seminar on Life Skills, we talked about creating value in this world. We discussed your relevance in the marketplace, and I encouraged you to build bridges of understanding with others.

HPU student data is in for the Class of 2018. 97 percent of graduates were employed or continuing their education within six months. This data is in accordance with the National Association of Colleges and Employers first destination reporting protocols (the standard for higher education). You and your HPU classmates should be proud.

The importance of HPU’s focus on Life Skills is further reflected in the enclosed survey that HPU conducted with 500 C-Suite executives from across the nation at organizations ranging from 5,000 to 25,000 employees.

We wanted insights from these leaders on the traits, characteristics and attitudes of their successful employees.

We wanted to have a deeper understanding of the challenges they face with employees who don’t succeed. And we wanted to discover their impressions of your generation entering the workforce.

This report details their responses and underscores the value of your Life Skills preparation here at HPU. I’ve jotted notes for you throughout the document.
There are so many takeaways for you to extract and apply as you transform both personally and professionally!

And while I’m encouraged that this study confirms HPU’s educational model is highly relevant to your future employers, I’m not surprised. You won’t be either. It’s what I shared with you when you were a freshman. Employers want employees who can instantly add value to their organization by showing up on day one with Life Skills – the ability to communicate, translate, figure it out, collaborate and adapt to achieve organizational goals.

High Point University is focused on ensuring graduates will thrive in the competitive global environment.

**With 97 percent of graduates employed or continuing their education within six months of graduation, you are a member of a special family at HPU.** I believe in you.

Choose to be extraordinary,

Nido R. Qubein
President
nqubein@highpoint.edu

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**About HPU’s Executive Life Skills Survey:** The questions in this survey were fielded by the High Point University Survey Research Center. Five hundred executives representing companies with 5,000 to 25,000 employees responded. To discover more about HPU’s approach to Life Skills, visit [www.highpoint.edu/lifeskills](http://www.highpoint.edu/lifeskills).

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**Notes from HPU President Nido Qubein:**

You’ll find special “NQ Notes” in the margins of the following pages. HPU President Nido Qubein wrote these notes to students to provide further context on the relevance of the results. Look for this helpful commentary throughout!
Of these two sets of skills, which would you rather colleges instill in recent college graduates?

Technical 35%
Life skills 65%

Of these two sets of skills, which do you think colleges and universities are best instilling in recent college graduates?

Technical 67%
Life skills 33%

Of these two sets of skills, which do you think colleges and universities are teaching least effectively?

Life Skills 69%
Technical Skills 31%

Yet the results below reveal that employers don’t think colleges are doing a good job at instilling life skills in graduates. This is why you must excel in your discipline and be equipped with Life Skills.
When you hire recent college graduates, what are the reasons they fail?

Of these areas, where do you spend the greatest amount of time training and educating recent college graduates?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Company Culture</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporating a New Employee into a Team Environment</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining Work Ethic Expectations</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Systems</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wow! 89% of the results are related to Life Skills!
When you’re interviewing recent college graduates, do you think about how comfortable you would be with the candidate representing your company with clients?

Yes 90%
No 10%

Of these accomplishments, which is most important to you on a recent college graduate’s resume?

High GPA 10%
Degree of Study 13%
Volunteerism 7%
Studying Abroad 2%
Internships/Work experience 53%
Supervisory/leadership roles 15%

Do you think that taking a candidate out to eat reveals important aspects of their personality which could provide a sense of how they might handle themselves on the job?

Yes 66%
No 34%
Which trait is easiest to develop in an employee?

- Personal initiative: 18%
- Team player: 12%
- Technical: 69%

Which trait is the hardest to develop in an employee?

- Personal initiative: 59%
- Team player: 24%
- Technical: 17%

Of these characteristics, which are the hardest to develop in recent college graduates you hire?

- They Have High Technical Competence: 5%
- They Work Well With Others: 21%
- They Are Coachable: 28%
- They Are Motivated: 46%

NQ Notes:

Note that executives are asking for college graduates with Life Skills. Yet, they say colleges aren’t doing a lot about this. At HPU, you have a distinct advantage.

NQ Notes:

Motivation matters! It’s why we challenge you on this campus to choose to be extraordinary!

This is another reason Freshman Success Coaches are so important to your development, as well as your faculty mentors, career advisors, peer mentors and others who mentor you daily.
Regardless of job title, do you think all members of your team are responsible for sales or the company’s bottom line?

Yes 79%
No 21%

NQ Notes:
Sales education is not exclusive to sales majors at HPU. Any student can, and should, take these available classes. You should join the Professional Selling Club to build your competence in this critical area.

Are you likely to say this phrase to a recent college graduate you hire? “I need you to figure this problem out.”

Yes 71%
No 29%

NQ Notes:
In Fast Company’s Generation Flux series, executives noted that the most important jobs are Figure-It-Out (FIO) jobs. The world is changing at such a rapid pace that employers don’t always know what specific instructions they need to give their employees. They need you to figure it out and know which questions to ask - without being prompted.
When it comes to work ethic in new college graduates, which of these statements best align with your beliefs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Generation Has a Stronger Work Ethic than New Grads</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Generation and New Grads Have the Same Work Ethic</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New College Grads Have a Stronger Work Ethic than My Generation</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NQ Notes: If perception is reality, you’ve got to overcome this stereotype! You must demonstrate your work ethic.

Which of these reasons would make you most hesitant about hiring a new college graduate?

- Lack of emotional intelligence and people skills: 68%
- Lack of experience in a corporate setting: 21%
- Lack of technical skills: 11%

NQ Notes: Take note - employers will train you on the technical aspects of a position IF they are sure you are grounded by Life Skills development.
When you’re interviewing a recent college graduate for a position, are they:

More Focused on How They Can Contribute to Your Business: 30%

More Focused on What You Will Provide Them: 70%

NQ Notes: You must render value instantly!

## C-SUITE EXECUTIVE POLL DEMOGRAPHICS

**Company Size (number of employees)**
- 5,000 to 9,999: 37%
- 10,000 to 24,999: 24%
- 25,000 or more: 39%

**Gender**
- Male: 64%
- Female: 35%
- Another gender: *less than 1%

**Age**
- 18 - 24: 4%
- 25 - 34: 19%
- 35 - 44: 24%
- 45 - 54: 24%
- 55 - 64: 21%
- 65 and older: 8%

**Number of Survey Respondents = 506**

**Education Level**
- 1-11th grade: *less than 1%
- High school graduate: 5%
- Some college: 10%
- College graduate: 37%
- Graduate school: 48%

**Race**
- African-American or Black: 6%
- White or Caucasian: 83%
- Native American: 2%
- Asian: 6%
- Multiple races or other: 2%
- Don’t know: 1%
HPU LIFE SKILLS RESOURCES

Success Coach Program
(336) 841-9574 | studentsuccess@highpoint.edu

Career and Professional Development
(336) 841-9677 | careerservices@highpoint.edu

Global Education
(336) 841-9280 | studyabroad@highpoint.edu

Undergraduate Research & Creative Works
(336)-841-9613 | urcw@highpoint.edu

Internship Opportunities
(336) 841-9677 | careerservices@highpoint.edu

Student Employment Program
(336)-841-9679 | sep@highpoint.edu

Access to Innovators (extraordinary interviews with practical advice)
www.highpoint.edu/accessstoinnovators/

Belk Entrepreneurship Center
(336) 841-9422 | kelliot@highpoint.edu

Professional Selling Program and Sales Club
(336) 841-9530 | lquinn@highpoint.edu

Alumni Relations Office
(336) 841-9548 | hharris@highpoint.edu

Service Learning
(336) 841-9337 | jblosser@highpoint.edu