

JED AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SCHOOL FIND UNMET MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS AMONG COLLEGE GRADUATES ENTERING THE WORKFORCE

New research and recommendations on “real life” stresses and concerns during crucial transition from college to career

NEW YORK – August 22, 2018 – In partnership with the University of Massachusetts Medical School Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research (Transitions ACR), The Jed Foundation (JED), a leading nonprofit organization that exists to protect emotional health and prevent suicide for teens and young adults, today released a white paper, “College to Career: Supporting Mental Health”, analyzing the challenges to emotional wellbeing faced by young adults during the college-to-career transition. The paper also offers strategic recommendations for colleges and employers looking to support young adults and improve outcomes during this critical transition.

Activities and choices made during the move from college to the “real world” can set the trajectory for the remainder of a college graduate’s adult life, yet limited attention has been paid to the emotional wellness of these young adults. After conducting a thorough literature review regarding the college-to-career transition, the Transitions ACR and JED teams (conducted online by The Harris Poll) surveyed 421 college seniors, 1,008 recent graduates and 500 employers¹ from across the nation exploring specific challenges during the college-to-career transition, as well as suggested strategies to support young adults and their emotional health.

“The study results illuminate the concerns and needs of young adults transitioning to ‘real life,’ including disconnects with available resources and their employers,” said John MacPhee, Executive Director/CEO, JED. “For example, among college seniors who feel any stress, 73% cited ‘how much is unknown for the next few years’ as a source of stress, yet only a third of college seniors (34%) and one-quarter of recent graduates (24%) have sought emotional support during this transition time. The findings and recommendations of this white paper highlight the opportunities that colleges, universities and employers have to better support students in this transition.”

Other significant survey findings include:

- 89% of college seniors and 93% of recent graduates reported looking forward to the next chapter in their lives
- 85% of college seniors (92% of college seniors who are women) feel pressure to succeed in the professional world
- Three-fourths (77%) of employers regularly see recent college graduates struggle to adjust to the workplace; yet the difficulty does not appear to be skills-based as 64% of employers believe the majority of recent graduates come to work with all of the skills they need to succeed in the workplace.
- 67% of college seniors and 62% of recent graduates wish they had more help preparing to transition to the workforce after college, yet less than half of college seniors (35%) surveyed have taken advantage of career counseling available on their campuses.
- Among employers, 72% agree young adults settle for jobs that are “good enough,” rather than pursuing their dream job.
- About 2 in 10 young adults with diagnosed mental health conditions had post- graduation plans for managing their mental health through finding a work environment (23% of college seniors, 21% of recent graduates), living arrangements (21% of college seniors, 20% of recent graduates), and/or career path (20% of college seniors, 18% of recent graduates) conducive to their health needs.

In addition to offering a comprehensive overview of available data, the white paper provides recommendations for colleges and employers, addressing these questions:

- What emotional challenges do college seniors face as they prepare to leave college?
- What can colleges do to address these challenges?

¹ Seniors: ages 20-26, currently in their final year at a 2 or 4 year college in the US

Recent grads: ages 19-27, graduated from a 2 or 4 year college between 2013 and 2016, are currently employed or have been employed since graduation

Employers: age 18+, employed full or part time, and manage at least one employee who is a recent grad

- What emotional challenges exist for recent college graduates entering the workforce?
- How can employers support the emotional wellbeing of young adult hires?

Examples of recommendations include:

- College example: Expand the range of campus offices engaged in educating students about the college-to-career transition
- Work example: Rethink and formalize the format of on-the-job mentoring

“The college-to-career transition is a crucial, nuanced and difficult developmental period, and today’s young adults face a set of unique challenges, burdens and barriers,” said Laura Golden, Research Coordinator II at the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and lead author of the white paper. “We hope this report deepens understanding of this cohort’s needs and offers concrete first steps on how colleges and employers can better support young adults during this critical time.”

To view the “College to Career: Supporting Mental Health” white paper and its recommendations, please visit: jedfoundation.org/college-to-career.

The Jed Foundation thanks Takeda Pharmaceuticals North America, Inc. and the Bruce Abrams Family Foundation for funding to support this effort.

ABOUT THE JED FOUNDATION

JED is a national nonprofit that exists to protect emotional health and prevent suicide for our nation’s teens and young adults. We’re partnering with high schools and colleges to strengthen their mental health, substance abuse and suicide prevention programming and systems. We’re equipping teens and young adults with the skills and support to grow into healthy, thriving adults; and we’re encouraging community awareness, understanding and action for young adult mental health. Learn more at jedfoundation.org.

Check out JED’s programs including: JED Campus (jedcampus.org), Set to Go (settogo.org), ULifeline (ulifeline.org), Half of Us (halfofus.com) and Love is Louder (loveislouder.com).

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ABOUT THE TRANSITIONS ACR at THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SCHOOL

The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research (Transitions ACR) is housed within the Systems and Psychosocial Advances Research Center (SPARC), in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Its mission is to promote the full participation in socially valued roles of transition-age youth and young adults (ages 14-30) with serious mental health conditions. The tools of research and knowledge translation are used in partnership with this at-risk population to achieve this mission. The Transitions ACR provides extensive resources on supports and interventions through our website and social media. Learn more at <http://www.umassmed.edu/TransitionsACR>.

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ABOUT THE SURVEY

The survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Poll between April and July 2017. Averaging 20 minutes in length, a total of 1,929 interviews were conducted among college seniors, recent college graduates, and employers who met the following criteria:

- Seniors (421): US resident, age 20-26, currently in their final year at a 2 or 4-year college in the US, and attends all/most classes in person
- Recent grads (1008): US resident, age 19-27, graduated from a 2 or 4-year college between 2013 and 2016, are currently employed or have been employed since graduation
- Employers (500): US resident, age 18+, employed full or part time, and manage at least one employee who graduated from a 2 or 4-year college and has been working for 0-4 years

Data are weighted where necessary to bring each audience in line with their actual proportions in the population.

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