

Equipping Students for Life After College:

A Case for Why it Matters

We need to continually to remind ourselves why this work is crucial. We also need to be able to winsomely explain to others why it matters. As we're building a case for stakeholders, volunteers, or even ourselves (on days when we're tempted to doubt the importance of our work) here are some helpful talking points:

It's the measure of the effectiveness of our work.

As old saying goes, "the proof is in pudding;" if we want to know if a recipe works, the test is the eating of it. Often, we look for "proof" of the effectiveness of our work in certain metrics related to growth and change in undergraduate students (faith commitments, event attendance, number of student leaders, etc.) While these are important measures, I'd argue that one of best ways to know if our "recipe" works is to **look to the lives of our alumni**. If our goal is to raise up students who pursue life-wide, life-long faithfulness, then our graduates gives us a gauge on our goals.

I worked for the CCO, an organization who's mission is "Transforming College Students To Transform the World." While I was on staff we did a lot to measure transformation during the college years, but really, that's only half of our mission. If students don't go on to transform the world (through Jesus' power alone, of course), we've missed our mission!

Students will more likely engage in work, thrive in life, and emotionally attach to their alma mater.

See findings below from the *Gallup-Perdue Index Report, "Great Jobs, Great Lives"* © 2014.

"If employed graduates feel their college prepared them well for life outside of it, the odds that they are engaged at work increase nearly three times."

"If college graduates are engaged at work, the odds are nearly five times higher that they will be thriving in all five elements of well-being. The odds of thriving in all areas of well-being more than double for college graduates when they feel their college prepared them well for life outside of it."

"Graduates who felt "supported" during college (that professors cared, professors made them excited about learning, and had a mentor) are nearly three times as likely to be thriving than those who didn't feel supported."

"Graduates who felt "supported" during their time in college are six times more likely to be emotionally attached to their alma mater."

It's timely, relevant, and necessary if we want to position ourselves well in this current cultural moment.

Incoming students and *especially their parents* are no longer looking for a great college experience for themselves/their children. They want to know how the college experience will prepare them for what comes after it. Also, employers expect more than ever. They want recent graduates to be ready and experienced for both job and life.

We have an opportunity to step into this cultural moment and offer something through our institutions and organizations that will not only attract students and parents, but also elevate our campuses and catch the eyes of prospective employers.

See the book: *There is Life After College: What Parents and Students Should know about Navigating School to Prepare for the Jobs of Tomorrow* by Jeff Selingo

We are ethically and morally responsible.

If students are coming through the doors of our institutions or organizations, we have a responsibility to send them out well. “[W]e can and must do better.”

See these quotes from an article by John Seel: “Who is Responsible for College Seniors?” © April 15, 2013

<https://www.convivium.ca/articles/who-is-responsible-for-college-seniors>

“It strikes me as remarkable that there is so much support for students to get into college, but comparably minimal support to help students flourish in their callings after graduation—to identify and be accepted in a career that is shaped by a kingdom vision for being an agent of shalom within the wider world. Colleges and universities, particularly faith-based institutions, could do far more to equip students in their post-college life trajectory.”

“If high schools are judged by their college acceptances, why are colleges not judged and ranked by their ability to launch their graduates into meaningful careers within their callings?”

“If we care about the coming generation, we need to mentor and hold their hands through this increasingly uncertain transition...For the kingdom’s sake we can and must do better.”

It’s fun, and it works!

I can think of few greater joys than walking alongside students in this transition. What an honor and privilege to be in the lives of students at such a unique part of their journey. I love the “ah-ha” moments during the undergraduate years when students “get” something for the first time. Even more delightful are the comments from recent graduates who are thriving because someone cared enough *during the college years* to offer them the perspective and practical tools to do so. This stuff works!