Research By
HARDWICK DAY

Commissioned By
THE ANNAPOLIS GROUP

Do alumni consider a liberal arts education to be a good value?

Does a liberal arts degree really make a difference for those seeking jobs in a bleak economy?

With online and commuter learning opportunities so widely available, does residential learning still matter?
According to a new report, the answer to these questions is a resounding “yes” — especially among alumni of smaller, private, residential liberal arts colleges.

The report, commissioned by the Annapolis Group, a consortium of 130 leading liberal arts colleges, reveals that alumni of private liberal arts colleges believe their education has dramatically benefited their lives and careers. Conducted by the higher education consulting firm Hardwick Day, the findings are based on 21- to 24-minute telephone interviews conducted in 2002 and in 2011 with 2,700 alumni of top private, public and liberal arts institutions.
Compared to graduates of top public universities and top private research universities, liberal arts alumni rated their colleges most highly in preparing them for first jobs, career changes and advancement, and overall preparation for life after college. They were more likely than any other group to have graduated in four years and to credit their undergraduate experience for helping them solve problems, make effective decisions, think analytically, write and speak effectively and work as part of a team.

Annapolis Group colleges are rated as more effective in developing broad skills that are often deemed important in careers and life.

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According to the report, liberal arts college graduates are more likely to say they experienced a sense of community, participated in smaller classes and had professors challenge them, work with them on independent study or research projects, talk with them outside of class and become their mentors. These activities, collectively termed student engagement, have been identified by scholars as essential components of an effective education.
From Jim Day, Hardwick Day:

“The study findings ultimately address three of the big questions in the current discussion about higher education: Is it worth the cost? Does residential learning matter now that the Internet seems to be making online courses and for-profit education viable models for college learning? And, with the economy a mess, does a college degree really make a difference in the job hunt? This study shows that alumni generally, but especially alumni of smaller, private, residential liberal arts colleges, offer a strong and demonstrable yes.”
PERCENTAGE OF ALUMNI who GRADUATED in FOUR YEARS OR LESS?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annnapolis Group of Liberal Arts Colleges</td>
<td>87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private Universities</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Top 50 Public Universities</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Flagship Publics</td>
<td>51%</td>
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For more information, see WWW.LIBERALARTSEDUCATION.ORG