



Purpose in Higher Education

The Emergence of the Generation Z
Workforce

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Generation Z is the most Purpose- Oriented group to enter the workforce.

Key Takeaway

47% percent of college students are Purpose-Oriented and they are raising the bar for higher education and the workplace. Employers and colleges that are able to adjust to meet these needs will likely thrive over the next few decades.

About the Purpose in Higher Education Study

Imperative conducted the Purpose in Higher Education study in collaboration with the University of Michigan, Grinnell College and Seattle Pacific University, which represent public, private, faith-based, non-faith based, large and small institutions. The study surveyed a representative sample of undergraduate students at all three, with 1,586 completing the survey between the fall of 2015 and spring of 2016.

ABOUT THE WORKFORCE PURPOSE INDEX

The Purpose in Higher Education Study is built off of Imperative's Workforce Purpose Index, the first study on the state of purpose across the U.S. workforce. We designed it in partnership with NYU to be an annual barometer of the workforce. It was developed to serve as a resource for employers, educators, academics and policymakers to advance our collective efforts to realize the potential of work. Our findings provide a clear business case for purpose as the way to align our priorities and objectives.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE WORKFORCE PURPOSE INDEX

- 28% of the workforce is Purpose-Oriented
- Purpose-Oriented Workers are consistently the most valuable workers
- Some industries and roles are much more effective at attracting this talent

Research has shown that we are wired to see work in one of two ways – being primarily about personal fulfillment and serving others or about status, advancement, and income.

People consistently identify one of these work orientations as their predominant view of work.

Work Orientation Is Stable

Work orientation cannot be explained by demographic factors like socio-economic status, age, gender or race, nor by environmental factors such as income, job-level or role. Two people in the same role in the same company with the same demographic profile can have distinctly different work orientations.

Work orientation is a consistent variable in a person's career. If they begin their career Purpose-Oriented, they will likely remain so through retirement. It is a trait, not a state.

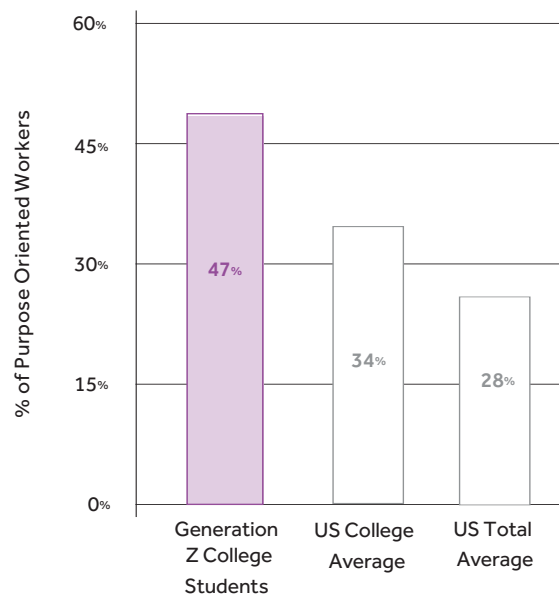
This means that someone is Purpose-Oriented, not just in a moment in time or in a specific situation. It isn't dependent on their job, manager or company. It is core to who they are.

Unlike measures such as employee engagement, work orientation is a predictor of future behavior and performance, since it is stable and less dependent on external variables. Because of this stability, work orientation is a valuable measure for individuals, organizations and the entire workforce.

For Colleges and Universities

Existing Students are More Purpose-Oriented Compared to Other Generations

47% of college students are Purpose-Oriented which is significantly higher than college educated members of the American workforce, which is only 34%. It is substantially higher than the full American workforce which is 28% purpose-oriented. This is likely an indicator that Generation Z is more likely to be Purpose-Oriented than Millennials, Generation X or Baby Boomers



Purpose-Oriented students won't wait until retirement to make a difference.

A New Vision for Higher Education is Emerging

31% of all students expressed interest in replacing declaring a “major” with declaring a “purpose” and select courses based on obtaining knowledge that would help me move in that direction.

Nearly a third of students would rather declare a "purpose" than a major.

Purpose-Oriented Students Make Schools Better

Purpose-Oriented students are more likely to go the extra mile to make an impact at their school by offering support (academic and compassion) to other students, participating fully in classroom settings, and serving others in the area community.

IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES

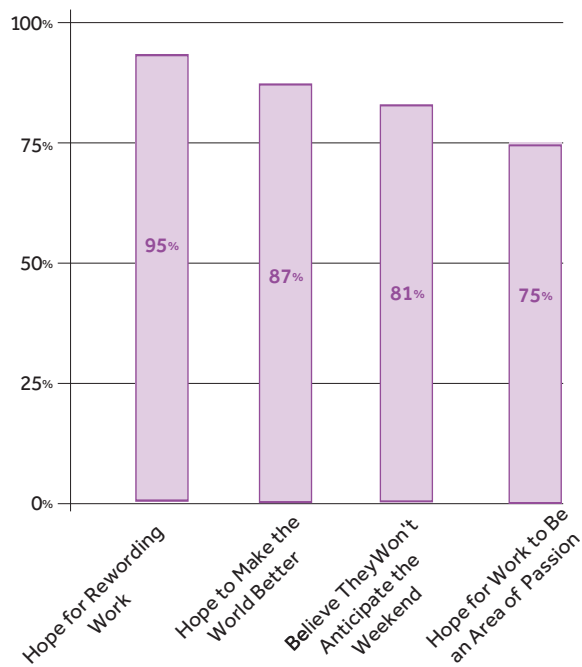
To be attractive to employers of alumni in the future, schools should make it a priority to recruit purpose-oriented students. Furthermore, they could better tailor the students' campus experience based on their needs, including the addition of pathways of learning that are defined by purpose, rather than just an academic or functional major.

For Employers

Purpose-Oriented Students Expect a Lot from Their Future Careers

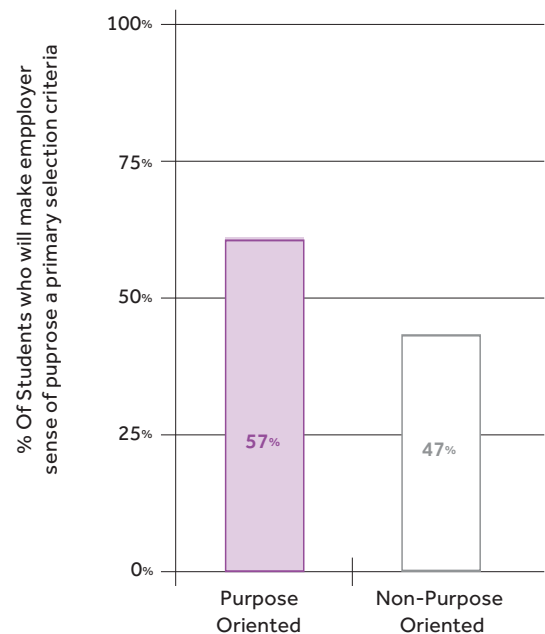
Purpose-Oriented students demonstrated clear differences in their approach and expectations for their careers.

- 95% hope to find work that is rewarding
- 87% hope to make the world a better place through their professional contributions
- 81% believe that as a professional they won't consciously anticipate the weekend
- 75% hope that work to be one of the things they are most passionate about in their lives



Employers Need Purpose to Recruit the Best Students

57% of Purpose-Oriented students will make a potential employer's sense of purpose a primary selection criteria. Even among those who aren't purpose oriented, the sense of purpose of employers matters, with 47 percent of this group so indicating.



IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

The next generation of leaders is likely more Purpose-Oriented than the last, and creating opportunities for them to thrive will allow organizations that put purpose first to attract and retain that top talent.

Ongoing Research

There is some evidence about what creates someone's orientation to work. We also know that given the change in the orientation of people later in their lives, it is possible to change, even if not common. Further research on both topics would reveal critical strategies for the field. It is imperative that we come to deeply understand this process so we can begin to optimize our systems and society to boost the wellbeing of people and the performance of our workforce. It will also allow people the potential to fundamentally alter their work orientation towards meaning and fulfillment.

In further research we will continue to track our collective progress in transforming the workforce and workplace and also look to further understand the path of Purpose-Oriented Workers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Imperative is a B Corp advocating for Purpose-Oriented Workers and supporting organizations that embrace them. We believe they together have the power to transform the economy and society. Learn more at [Imperative.com](https://www.imperative.com).

Thank you.

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