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ACICS Releases Underemployed Generation Research Findings

Survey Highlights Education- and Employment-Related Issues Confronting Many Young Americans

(Washington, D.C.) May 21, 2013 – Many young Americans have education-related regrets and lack enthusiasm for their current – and often “mismatched” – jobs, according to a survey released today by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) of underemployed Americans ages 21 to 35. Conducted by FTI Consulting, the ACICS-commissioned survey also examines today’s competitive job market, which favors those with practical skills and experience.

“This research informs ACICS’ accreditation program by clarifying how educational institutions can better produce graduates who ultimately secure professional, technical and occupational positions in the workplace,” Dr. Al Gray, executive director of ACICS, said. “ACICS evaluates these outcomes as part of the accreditation process; helping our member institutions more effectively meet ACICS standards is a win for colleges and schools, their students, and employers throughout the United States.”

The survey is second in a series of original studies commissioned by ACICS to better define the expectations and needs of students and employers on post-secondary education. Among the key findings:

Many young Americans have education-related regrets

- 51% of respondents say they would have chosen a different educational path in retrospect.
- 60% of those with only a high school degree would have chosen a different path, as would have 53% of those with a two-year degree and 48% of those with a four-year degree.

Many young Americans lack enthusiasm for – and are mismatched with – their current jobs

- Only 27% of employed respondents say they’re very satisfied with their current job.
- An overwhelming 81% of employed respondents say they’re interested in changing jobs in the near future – and 66% say they’re willing to relocate to a different part of the country to do so.
- 51% of employed respondents say they’re not in their preferred field of work, and 41% say their current job is “for the time being with no real future.”

Today’s job market favors those with practical skills and experience

- Only 32% of those with a liberal arts degree say the job market is “easy,” compared to 58% of those with a health-related degree that is potentially more applicable to a specific field of work.
- 59% of those who completed a paid internship or apprenticeship describe the job market as easy – while 61% of those who did not describe it as difficult.

“While ACICS is dedicated to advancing educational excellence at career colleges and schools, this research also demonstrates our ongoing commitment to member institutions and the broader policy community by serving as a knowledge resource,” Dr. Gray said. “As part of this effort, we have and will continue to focus on the two primary stakeholders at the front and back ends of the post-secondary education enterprise: students and employers.”

For more information about the survey, visit www.acics.org.

Survey Methodology

The ACICS underemployment survey was conducted February 15-21, 2013 among 1,279 underemployed Americans ages 21 to 35.

About the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools

Founded in 1912, the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) is one of the most respected and longest established national accreditors of academic institutions in the United States. It is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). ACICS accredits more than 980 private post-secondary institutions offering certificates or diplomas, as well as institutions offering associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees in programs designed to educate students for professional, technical, or occupational degrees. For more information, please visit www.acics.org.