

Study: Too Many Jobs are Demanding Unnecessary College Degrees

We've probably all known some young person who has gone to college, successfully earned his degree... and then ended up with an entry-level position in an office. It's a bit disappointing, particularly if that same student racked up thousands of dollars in debt in order to do so.

Unfortunately, this scenario appears to be a fact of life for the world we live in. If you want a job that pays a decent wage, you have to pay to play.

But according to a new study released by the Harvard Business School, that doesn't have to be the case. Recognizing that many of today's apprenticeship positions are clustered in a few manual labor trades, researchers Joseph Fuller and Matthew Sigelman decided to examine whether this model of higher education can be extended to other, more lucrative and career-expansive jobs. Their findings show that many of today's job listings are demanding an unnecessary 4-year college degree.

Fuller and Sigelman label such jobs as "Boosters," listing them in the chart below. These jobs are in growing occupational fields and offer a median wage of \$55,000 per year.

But while many of the skills these positions require can be learned on the job, roughly 60 percent of them ask for a college degree. This suggests that the degree requirement is used as a way to weed through applicants and ensure that they are effective in "communications and teamwork."



Although the presence of a college degree is attractive to employers early on, those *without* a degree often turn out to be a better investment for a company. Fuller and Sigelman note that workers without a degree are more likely to be invested in the company and continue with it, while those who have attended college seem to grow restless and discontent with their positions and salaries. This would make sense, particularly since many degree holders want to maximize the money they spent on college, and thus are continually looking for ways to climb the career ladder.

What many don't realize, however, is that non-degree employees often have great opportunity for career advancement, too. In fact, Fuller and Sigelman find that "Booster occupations tend to be the entry-level rungs on career ladders that lead to more responsibility and better compensation."

Considering these findings, it would appear that a college degree is unnecessary for many of the basic, entry-level jobs which today's recent graduates acquire. Is it time we recognized that college for all is hindering the advancement and growth of many capable young people?

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