

# Dayton Daily News

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## Colleges tracking graduates, their jobs

College students invest years and potentially thousands of dollars into their education, so more of them are asking an important question: Will this degree lead to a job?

Amid horror stories of unemployed or underemployed recent college graduates and crushing student loan debt, colleges and universities have turned more attention to answering that question with hard data to prove their alumni are finding work.

"What's most important is that we can answer the questions — with documented data — that are always top of mind for parents and students, and increasing government," said Mike Goldman, director of career services at Miami University. "When I graduate, will I get a job? Will I get into graduate school or professional school? Will I be able to pay off my student loans, if I have any?"

Miami went further this year than ever to track down its recent graduates, and found 91 percent of them were employed or in graduate school, and nearly one-third had a starting salary between \$50,000 and \$60,000.

The University of Dayton and Wittenberg University are even more candid: They share graduates' job titles and employers — whether a student used their political science major to become a campaign manager or ended up a barista with an international studies degree.

"We believe in transparency," said Jason Eckert, director of career services at the University of Dayton.

### 'More accountable'

For now, colleges are not required to report the types of jobs or salaries of new alumni, but the federal government is asking for more information.

The average earning of graduates who borrowed federal student loans will soon be added to the College Scorecard.

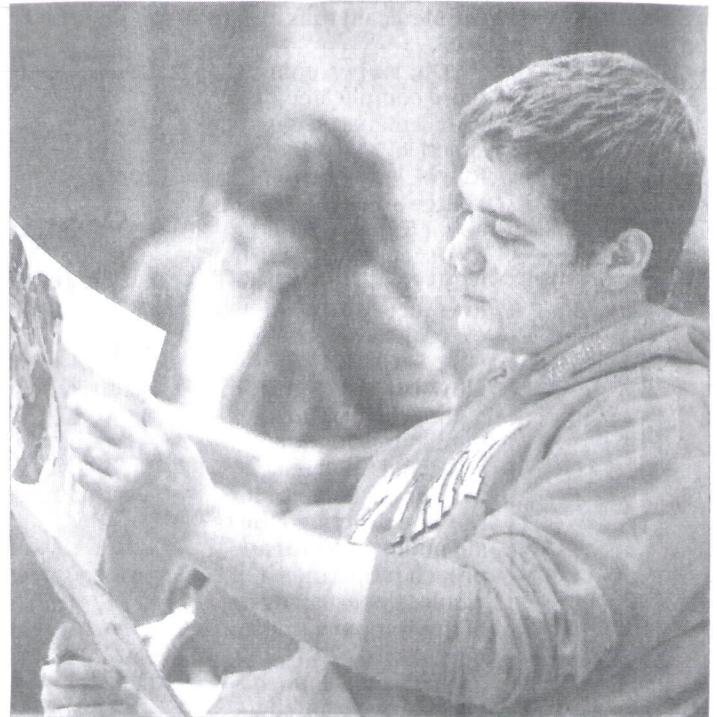
"There is a push nationally for colleges to become more and more accountable for the outcomes of graduates," Eckert said.

Americans owe more than \$1 trillion in student loans, and Ohio's graduates in 2012 who borrowed took out an average \$29,000, according to the Project on Student Debt.

Samantha Luebbbers, who graduates from Miami in May with a double major in biomedical and mechanical engineering, already accepted a job offer. She said Miami's 91 percent success rate is reassuring to students.

"It's really important because you go to school to get a job," the Cincinnati native said. "A lot of undergraduates are worried about the market right now, so when you see something like that, it's really comforting because you think you have a shot."

Miami found 3.4 percent of recent graduates were unemployed by fall 2013 if they graduated between August 2012 and May 2013.



Miami University students, including political science major Logan McGovern, learn about creating resumes and cover letters during a workshop. TY GREENLEES / STAFF

Miami this year called 2,000 graduates, and used information from LinkedIn profiles, a pre-graduation survey, Miami's own data system and the National Student Clearinghouse to compile a much clearer picture of where graduates landed.

"We can clearly demonstrate to parents and students, and the government, that there's a return on investment in a Miami education," Goldman said.

### 'Helps to sell'

It can be difficult to track students after they leave campus, the colleges say.

Only 40 percent of University of Dayton graduates had responded to a survey when the school started making phone calls about it, Eckert said. Eventually, they found 96 percent of students were either working, in graduate school or in a service program within six months of graduating in spring or summer 2013.

The national average was 87 percent for the class of 2011, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

Eckert said those graduates who do not have a job when contacted can receive help from the university.

It's difficult to compare the success rates of different schools because some, such as UD, survey students six months after graduation while others, such as Wittenberg, do so after one year.

Nearly 98 percent of Wittenberg graduates from the class of 2012 were working full time, enrolled in graduate school or were "voluntarily unemployed."

"It helps to sell the academic programs," said Wendy Smiseck, director of career services at Wittenberg.

Cedarville University plans to join Wittenberg and UD to post the job titles and employers of graduates, said Jeff Reep, director of career services. He noted that many schools just "have brochures with their five or six super stars."

He said Cedarville also points to other measures to show prospective students its value, including its 0.8 percent student loan default rate.

Wright State University plans to put more resources toward tracking graduates. The university currently surveys students at graduation – before some even begin their job search, said Joe Slater, interim associate vice president for career and workforce development.

They found that 75 percent of responding students either have jobs or are accepted to graduate school at the time of graduation.

Clark State Community College surveys graduates three to nine months after they leave school, and one of questions asked is if they feel they were prepared to work in their field. The college also contacts employers to ask whether the students were ready for work, said Kathy Wilcox, dean of Health, Human and Public Service.

Sinclair Community College pulls data from multiple sources to determine whether its graduates are finding work, said college spokesman Adam Murka. About 78 percent of Sinclair students were employed after graduating in summer or fall 2012 or spring 2013.