



PART OF

AMERICAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

What Employers Need To Know

Workforce Insights From Generation Z

Generation Z has entered the work chat—and they're the future of your company.

American Public University and American Military University part of American Public University System, surveyed 2,001 Gen Z adults ages 18-25 online between October 31 and November 6, 2025 to better understand their attitudes and behaviors surrounding career, higher education, and related topics. The findings contain new insights to guide talent development strategies for this important new segment of the workforce.

INSIGHT #1:

Gen Z Evaluates Education Through Return-On-Investment And Job Outcomes

Gen Z is pragmatic and risk aware. They judge education primarily by affordability and whether it leads to strong job opportunities and financial stability.

What that means for employers:

Employer-provided higher education benefits are a crucial component of your benefits package. These programs are not merely a perk—they're a talent-investment strategy—and may incentivize employees who want to further their education, but need an affordable and accessible pathway to do so.

These programs have also been shown to improve retention, promotion rates, and internal mobility.



Gen Z Fast Facts



54%

of those surveyed said **cost/affordability** is the biggest factor in decisions about education after high school.



44%

of those surveyed said **job opportunities** after finishing is the second most important factor.

INSIGHT #2:

Gen Z Prioritizes Financial Stability Now And Is Weighing College Against Immediate Work

Many Gen Z prospects are actively balancing higher education against the need to earn income. College is often seen as a financial risk, especially when job and salary outcomes feel uncertain.

The good news is they don't have to choose. With employer tuition programs, employees can *earn while they learn*.

What that means for employers:

Gen Z workers are more likely to choose a company that enables them to further their education while they work.

74%

of those surveyed are already working.

40%

of those surveyed are already working and are **full time**.

TOP CAREER FIELDS & JOBS FOR GEN Z:

Healthcare:

Nursing

Technology:

Information Technology

(Tech Support, Tech Repair, Database Administrator)

Education:

Teaching

(more early childhood and elementary than middle school and high school)

Creative Industries:

Graphic Design, Game Design

Business Administration:

Entrepreneurship, Management

INSIGHT #3:

Online Learning Is Widely Accepted, But Structure And Hands-On Value Remain Concerns

Gen Z experienced unprecedented changes to in-person and online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, which defined many of their high school and college experiences. As a result, they respect and value online learning, but still worry about motivation challenges and whether online education provides enough practical, real-world preparation.

What that means for employers:

These concerns are valid, but higher education organizations, such as American Military University and American Public University, that specialize in high-quality online education are designed to maximize the flexibility and affordability of online learning while ensuring the curriculum prepares students to apply what they've learned in the real world.

73%

prefer at least **some online availability** of college courses.

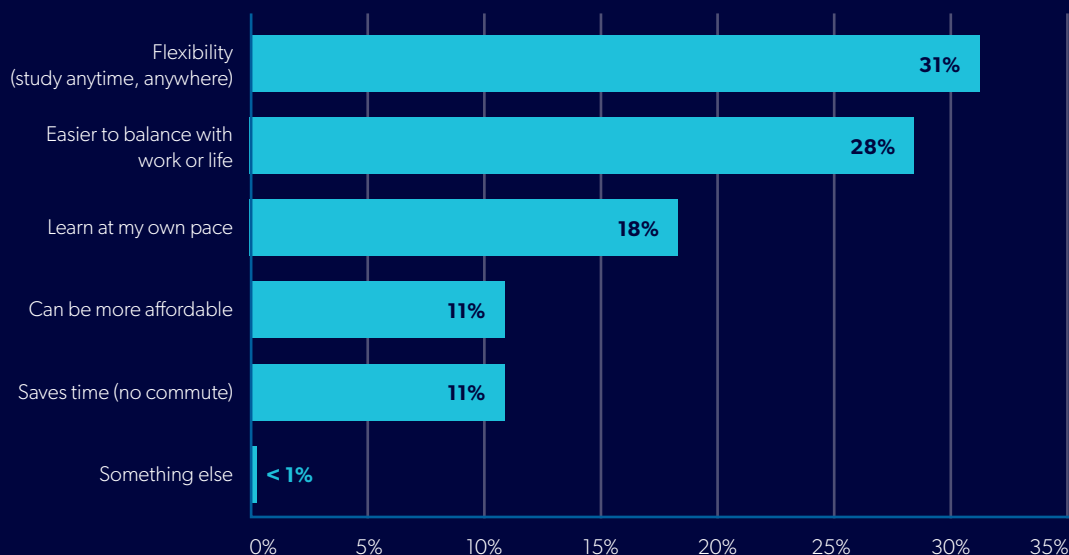
45%

would prefer online or **mostly online** courses.

12%

have definite preference for **in-person** courses.

Gen Z Advantages of Online Learning



*What do you think is the biggest advantage of online college classes?
Asked of respondents who prefer online or mostly online courses (n=895).*

INSIGHT #4:

Gen Z Defines Career Readiness By Skills And Experience, Not Credentials

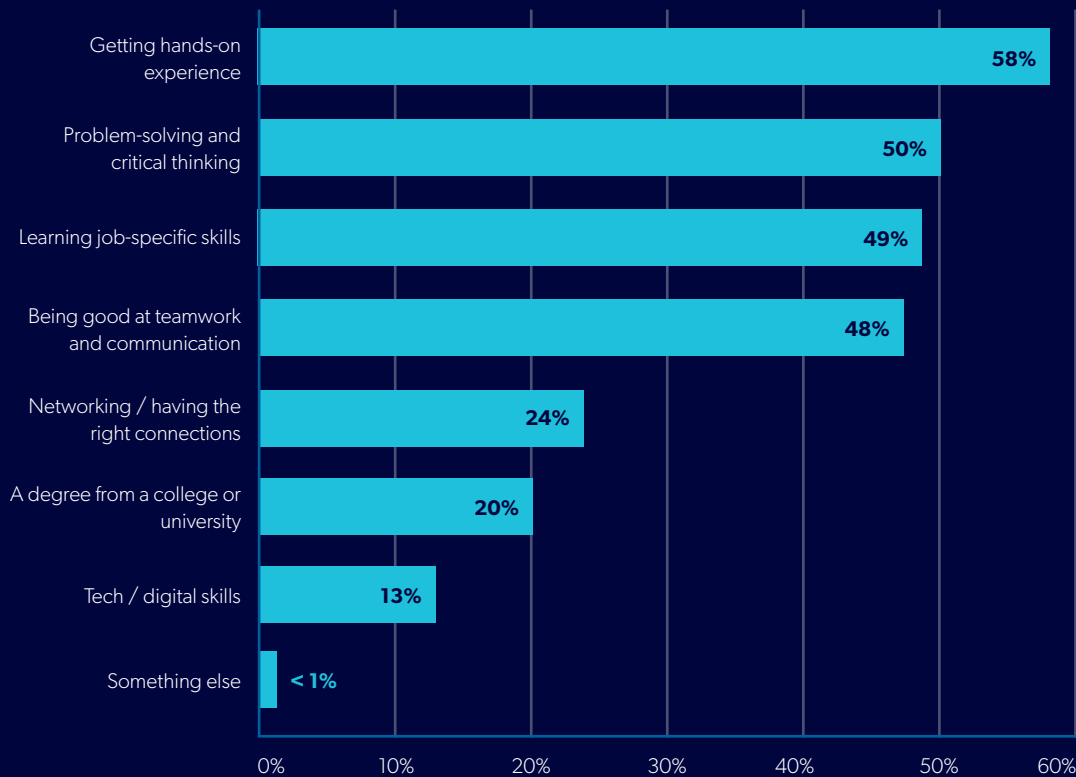
Gen Z believes career readiness comes from hands-on experience and job-relevant skills, not just a degree. We couldn't agree more.

What that means for employers:

It's important that higher education partnerships are with organizations that value both faculty and student experience.

Gen Z wants to learn from people who aren't just scholars, but expert practitioners in their fields. Whether it's a former NASA scientist or an executive from a Fortune 500 company, this generation values street cred over academic qualifications alone.

How Gen Z Defines Career-Readiness



What do you think actually makes someone "career-ready"? (pick up to 3)

Total (n=2001)

INSIGHT #5:

Gen Z Wants Colleges To Lower Cost And Deliver Stronger Real-World Value

Gen Z's strongest message is that degrees must feel more worthwhile. They want affordability, financial support, and more direct career preparation through hands-on experience and practical skills.

You can offer employees easily accessible, affordable education benefits — such as reduced tuition rates and tuition-reimbursement programs — at low cost by partnering with an education provider like American Military University and American Public University, helping your organization build a culture of continuous learning and innovation.

Gen Z Top Suggestions for Colleges



33%

suggest lowering the cost /offering more financial aid



18%

suggest offering more hands-on job experience



10%

suggest teaching more practical/real-world skills



PART OF
AMERICAN PUBLIC
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Learn how to become an official partner at
APUSPartners.com