



# Unlocking the Value of Education

The Sujeeth Foundation White Paper.

The Sujeeth Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping students network into their first job in industry. We empower students by providing essential resources and interactive Career Program Circles that foster hands-on learning.

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## Executive Summary

The Sujeeth Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to bridging the gap between higher education and meaningful employment for college juniors. This white paper, "Unlocking the Value of Education," details our mission to empower students through essential resources and our interactive Career Program Circles, which foster hands-on learning and practical career skills.

Higher education is a transformative journey that offers unparalleled opportunities for personal growth, career advancement, and a fulfilling life. However, students face significant challenges, including rising tuition costs, increasing student loan debt, and the risk of underemployment post-graduation. With college tuition averaging \$27,940 annually for public in-state colleges and student loan debt averaging \$37,338 per borrower, financial pressures are a critical concern for many students. Additionally, nearly half of college graduates find themselves in roles that do not require a college degree, leading to widespread underemployment and professional dissatisfaction.

The Sujeeth Foundation recognizes these challenges and aims to equip students with the tools and mindset needed to overcome them. Central to our mission is the concept of agency—the belief in one's capacity to influence life outcomes through actions and decisions. By acknowledging and embracing their agency, students can actively shape their college experiences and future careers. The Sujeeth Foundation's Career Circle Program embodies this philosophy by providing structured mentorship and practical guidance throughout the job application process. This eight-week program covers self-assessment, research and exploration, resume building, networking, job applications, interviews, follow-up, and negotiations.

The Sujeeth Foundation is dedicated to helping students unlock the full value of their education, empowering them to network effectively and secure their first industry jobs. While outcomes are never guaranteed, we believe that by embracing the journey and learning from every experience, students can lay the foundations for a rewarding and fulfilling career. For more information, visit <https://portal.sujeeth.org>.

## By the Numbers

One of the most compelling reasons to pursue higher education is its potential to transform your life. The numbers speak volumes:

### 1. Earnings Boost

A college degree is a powerful asset. On average, individuals with a Bachelor's degree earn a staggering 80% more than those with just a high school diploma.<sup>1</sup> This significant income disparity underscores the potential for personal and financial growth through education.

### 2. Enrollment Surge

The pursuit of higher education is more popular than ever. As per the US Census, an astounding twelve million students are currently enrolled in colleges across the nation.<sup>2</sup> This surge in enrollment, however, comes with some important implications.

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<sup>1</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics Education pays, 2022 report

<sup>2</sup> US Census Figure A-6. Number of Persons Enrolled in College by Sex and Age

### 3. Rising Tuition Costs

The cost of tuition and fees has experienced a noteworthy increase over the past decade, with a collective rise of 10%.<sup>3</sup> Today, the average cost for public, in-state college stands at a substantial \$27,940 annually. These escalating expenses have prompted many students to turn to student loans for assistance.

### 4. Student Loan Debt

Consequently, the burden of student loan debt has grown significantly. The typical borrower now carries a staggering \$37,338 in student loan debt, translating into a monthly payment of around \$300.<sup>4</sup> It is crucial to approach this financial responsibility with careful planning and consideration.

### 5. Underemployment Challenge

Another challenge faced by college graduates is underemployment. Astonishingly, nearly half of college students find themselves working in roles that do not necessarily require a college degree.<sup>5</sup> This discrepancy can lead to frustration in the professional world.

### 6. Workplace Enthusiasm

Gallup reports a sobering statistic - only a third of employees express genuine enthusiasm about their work and workplace. This statistic serves as a stark reminder of the common challenges people face in finding deep satisfaction and fulfillment in their careers.<sup>6</sup> However, it's important to note that if some individuals can discover this level of enthusiasm in their work, it suggests that the potential for workplace fulfillment is real and attainable.

### 7. The Challenge

Many students embark on their college journey without a clear plan in mind. They graduate from high school, enroll in college, but grapple with translating their academic experiences into a profession they are truly passionate about. This is a common dilemma but one that can be overcome with the right approach.

### 8. Unlocking the Value of Education

Successful students make the most of their time in college. They leverage university resources to experiment and gain experience in a wide range of interests. By connecting these experiences to potential career paths, they enhance their prospects for a fulfilling and successful transition to the workforce.

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<sup>3</sup> Forbes Advisor College Tuition Inflation

<sup>4</sup> USA Today Average Student Loan Debt Statistics

<sup>5</sup> Pew Research 10 facts about today's college graduates

<sup>6</sup> Gallup Employee Engagement Needs a Rebound in 2023

## Embracing Agency

At the Sujeeth Foundation, we believe that students are the solution. We want to help them network to their first job by embracing their own agency. Agency is the driving force behind personal growth and

achievement. It's the belief in your capacity to influence the outcomes of your life through your actions and decisions. By acknowledging your agency, you can actively shape your college experience and future career.

### THE SUJEETH FOUNDATION SPOTLIGHT

The Sujeeth Foundation Spotlight highlights the stories of individuals to inspire and educate.

[Read Now](#)

## Embracing Agency in College

1. **Set Clear Goals:** Define your academic and personal goals. Whether it's excelling in your major, engaging in extracurricular activities, or building a strong network, clarity about your objectives is the first step toward achieving them.
2. **Develop a Growth Mindset:** Embrace the principles of a growth mindset, as emphasized in "Mindset" by Carol Dweck. Understand that challenges and setbacks are opportunities for growth. Effort and resilience are the keys to mastering new skills and overcoming obstacles.
3. **Cultivate Grit:** "Grit" by Angela Duckworth highlights the power of passion and perseverance. Apply the concept of grit to your college journey. When faced with challenges, stay committed to your long-term goals and keep pushing forward.
4. **Take Initiative:** As advocated in "Work Out Loud" by John Stepper, don't wait for opportunities to come to you. Seek out internships, research projects, and leadership roles that align with your interests and goals. Be proactive in your pursuit of experiences that will enrich your college journey.
5. **Build a Support Network:** Surround yourself with mentors, professors, and peers who inspire and support your aspirations. Seek guidance and feedback from those who have walked a similar path.
6. **Adapt and Learn:** Embrace challenges and setbacks as opportunities for growth, a concept reinforced by "Grit" and "Mindset." Learn from your experiences, adjust your strategies when necessary, and persist in the face of adversity.
7. **Leverage Resources:** Utilize the resources available to you, such as career services, academic advisors, and networking events. These resources can provide valuable insights and opportunities.

## Exerting Agency Beyond College

Your journey doesn't end with college; it's a steppingstone to a fulfilling career and life. Here's how you can continue to exert agency as you transition into the professional world:

1. **Craft a Career Path:** Define your career goals and aspirations. Take deliberate steps to build the skills and experiences necessary to achieve them.
2. **Network Strategically:** Build and maintain a professional network that can support your career growth. Seek out mentors and peers who can provide guidance and opportunities.
3. **Continual Learning:** Embrace a mindset of lifelong learning. Stay curious, adapt to changes in your field, and seek out opportunities for professional development.

4. **Embrace Challenges:** Approach challenges in your career with the same resilience you've shown in college. See them as opportunities to learn, grow, and excel.
5. **Give Back:** As you achieve success in your career, consider how you can give back to your community and support the growth of others.

In conclusion, agency is the driving force behind personal and professional success. By recognizing your capacity to make choices and take action, you can shape your college experience and build a fulfilling career. The Sujeeth Foundation helps students embrace agency through the Career Circle Program. Learn more at <https://portal.sujeeth.org>.

## Career Circle Program

At the Sujeeth Foundation, we believe that students are the solution. We want to help them network to their first job by embracing their own agency. Agency is the driving force behind personal growth and achievement. It's the belief in your capacity to influence the outcomes of your life through your actions and decisions. By acknowledging your agency, you can actively shape your college experience and future career.

Partnering with schools, we match students with career mentors through the career circle program. Career mentors guide students through the job application life cycle via the Career Circle program. By providing practical guidance they help students control their destiny. An eight-week program each week focuses on helping students refine how they approach their job search.

## Syllabus

- **Week 1: Self-Assessment** - A job applicant has a unique hiring proposition when they can articulate how an opportunity reflects their past experiences, current interests, and future goals.
- **Week 2: Research and Exploration** - We focus on identifying target companies and jobs. We also talk about how to network with hiring managers.
- **Week 3: Resume and Preparation** - We explore how to use the Golden Circle to communicate to hiring managers via your resume and LinkedIn profile.
- **Week 4: Networking** - Our focus is on networking. The best networkers focus on establishing genuine relationships based mutual contribution.
- **Week 5: Job Applications** - We explore different ways to approach job applications. We discuss the importance of having a system to monitor progress.
- **Week 6: Interviews** - We discuss the importance of story telling during an interview. We also explore how to learn about market signal in each interview.
- **Week 7: Follow-up** - We discuss the importance of follow-up. We explore how to use follow-up to continue to build genuine relationships.
- **Week 8: Negotiations** – We explore how to pick from multiple offers.

## Concepts

Throughout the program, we embed concepts from best selling business books:

- **The Power of Vulnerability** - Explore how embracing vulnerability fosters deeper connections, creativity, and a more fulfilling, authentic life.

- **Grit: The power of passion and perseverance** - Passion and perseverance are key predictors of success, often more important than talent or intelligence.
- **Start With Why How Great Leaders inspire** - Great leaders inspire others by starting with "why"—clarifying their purpose and beliefs before addressing the "how" and "what" of their actions.
- **Work Out Loud** - A method of personal and professional development that encourages individuals to share their goals, progress and reflections openly.
- **The Lean Startup** - Startups can achieve rapid and sustainable success by continuously testing and iterating on their products based on real customer feedback and data.
- **The Power of Appreciation** - Expressing genuine appreciation enhances relationships, boosts morale, and fosters a positive and productive environment.
- **The Power of Regret** - Acknowledging and learning from our regrets can provide valuable insights and drive personal growth and better decision-making.

While outcomes are never guaranteed, success can be found through the journey. By embracing journey – seeing challenges for what they are, adjusting, and trying again – students can develop the foundations for a rewarding career. We are here for it. Learn more at <https://portal.sujeeth.org>.