

Many colleges fail to prepare students for work

By Jeffrey J. Selingo, New York Times

It's the middle of October, and many college campuses nationwide are observing their traditional fall break with a few days off from classes. Even as the 21st Century economy demands more from college graduates and the price of a higher education skyrockets, today's college students are spending less of their time on academic pursuits.

Various surveys of students show that they dedicate just a fraction of their time in college studying and going to classes. One study of UC undergraduates found that students spend 13 hours a week studying, some three times fewer hours than they devoted to socializing with friends, watching television, and exercising.

By the time students graduate from college, their brains are hard-wired to the cadence of the daily life laid out by the nine-month academic calendar. They tend to think about their work in terms of 50-minute classes and five courses during 15-week semesters, with plenty of lengthy breaks in between.

But the working world is unstructured, with competing priorities and decisions that need to be made on the fly. College is very task-based: take an exam, finish a paper, attend a club meeting, go to practice. The workplace is more of a mash-up of activities with no scheduled end.

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