

Building Student *Readiness* for Work & Career

Success Beyond Retention



Today's Presenters



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Our Session

Higher education knows how students develop career readiness, but many experience it unevenly or not at all. We will share how one campus embeds proven practices into every student's experience, prompting you to consider how cross-campus collaboration can make career readiness unavoidable and visible at your institution.

Today's Outcomes

- Articulate how high-quality high-impact practices align with career readiness
- Examine how cross-campus collaboration makes career readiness visible and unavoidable.
- Inspire you to reexamine your institution's promises make to your students
- Model the intersection of institutional strategy, enrollment, the student experience, and marketing

Today's Agenda

What is the problem?

Our current solutions

A new way forward

A. Curated High-Impact Student Experiences

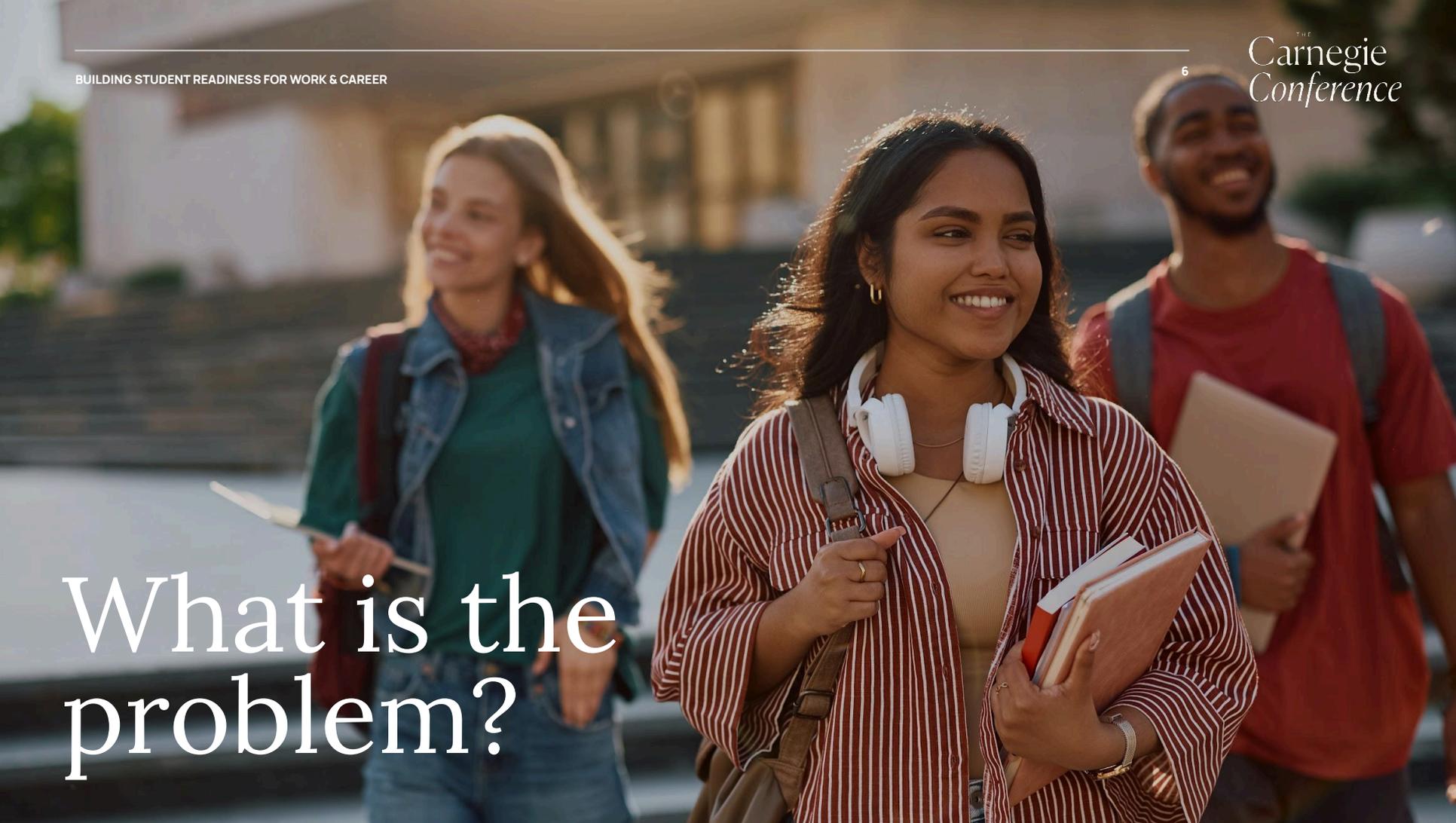
B. Curriculum-Embedded Experience

C. Student Learning Story & Artifacts

Introductions

- + Name Institution, Role, & Years of service
- + What drew you to this session and what is one thing you hope to take away today?



A photograph of three diverse students walking on a campus. In the foreground, a young woman with dark hair, wearing a red and white striped shirt and white headphones, smiles broadly while holding several books. Behind her, a young woman with long blonde hair in a denim jacket and a young man in a red shirt are also smiling. The background shows a blurred campus building.

What is the
problem?

“Our alumni are “well prepared for professional careers or graduate programs.”
4-year private

“...preparing students for a variety of careers by connecting curriculum to outcomes...”
Land Grant Institution

“Our mission is to prepare students for careers in the organizations of tomorrow.”
4-year private

“...help students meet challenges in their careers...enable adult learners to maximize personal and professional potential.”
Online University

““...prepare students for success beyond campus, including equitable career readiness...”
R1 University

What We
Promise

“Our mission commits to preparing students...to succeed in an ever-changing and increasingly technological global environment...”
Regional Public

Disconnect Between What is Needed and What is Happening

Traditional Degrees Hinder Graduates at Work, (Erin Brown, 2025)

Colleges aren't providing what companies need

■ HR leaders say it's important for colleges to provide ■ Recent graduates say their undergraduate education provided



70%

Of employers expect graduates to have had **internships or similar experiential learning.**

2x

Employees are 2x more likely to be engaged at work if they had a mentor who encouraged their goals.

40%

Of employers **don't think** graduates are career-ready.

96%

Of HR leaders say colleges need to **take more responsibility** for training people for the workplace.

77%

Of recent grads say they **learned more** in six months **on the job** than during their entire undergraduate experience

What employers & students say

“Higher education needs to stop thinking of the student as the customer and start thinking of employers as the customer.”

Jeff Selingo, Future U Podcast, January 2026

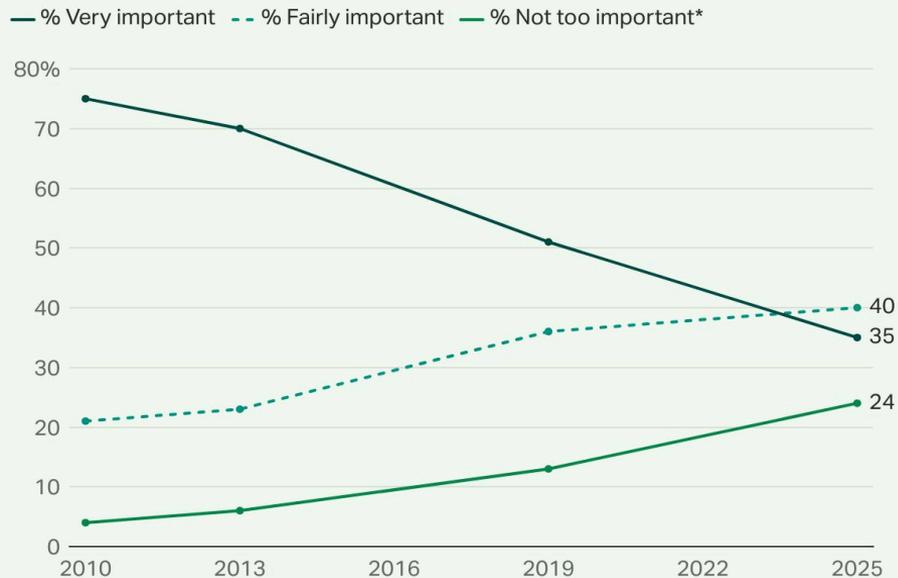
Declining Importance on a College Education

“Perceived Importance of College Hits New Low” (2025)

[GALLUP](#)

Value Americans Place on College Education

How important is a college education today — very important, fairly important or not too important?



* 2010 result includes 1% who volunteered "not at all important"

GALLUP

What They Say They Want

Employer Feedback



Critical Thinking

Capacity to interpret situations, evaluate options, and construct solutions that balance short- and long-term impacts on goals and outcomes.



Technical Competence

Open to exploring new technologies; managing technology to incorporate information that supports effective and timely decision making;



Initiative & Work Ethic

Proactive drive to take responsibility, act without being asked, and persist through challenges to complete quality work.



Communication Skills

Ability to express ideas clearly and effectively in both written and oral form and to tailor messages for diverse audiences.



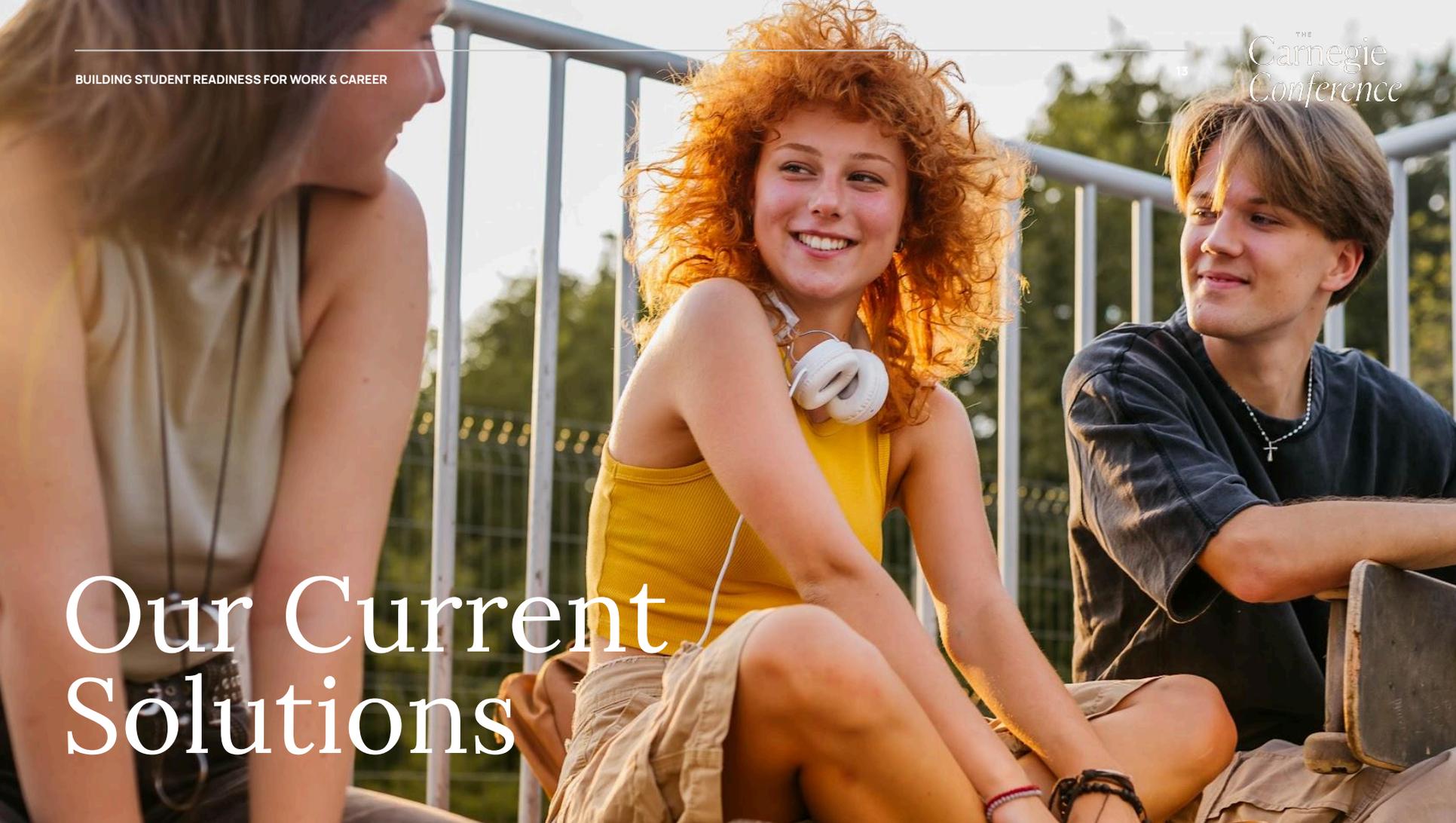
Teamwork & Collaboration

Capacity to work cooperatively with others, contribute to shared goals, and navigate interpersonal dynamics constructively.

If employers evaluated your graduates based on just one of these five characteristics, which would you feel most confident defending—and why?

Pair & Share

Our Current Solutions



How we solve for that

We call them “High Impact Practices”



Experiential Education

Graduates analyze complex information, evaluate alternatives, and make sound judgments, applying critical thinking to solve unfamiliar problems in real workplace contexts.



Internships

Graduates translate learning into action through internships, projects, research, and hands-on experiences that demonstrate readiness to contribute meaningfully from day one.



Self Discovery

Graduates demonstrate professionalism, reliability, and self-direction, taking initiative, following through on commitments, and approaching work with accountability and purpose.



1:1 Advising & Coaching

Graduates communicate clearly and effectively in writing, speaking, and listening, adapting messages for diverse audiences, contexts, and professional settings.



Career Ecosystem

Graduates work productively with others, contributing skills, resolving conflict, and advancing shared goals within diverse, interdisciplinary teams.

Promises made...promises kept?

We call them “High Impact Practices”



Problem-based learning

Graduates apply critical thinking to real problems in real settings.



Internships

Graduates translate learning into action through hands on experience.



Leadership & Service

Graduates build professionalism, accountability, and direction.



Advising & Coaching

Graduates communicate clearly and adapt across contexts.



Career Ecosystem

Graduates have shaped readiness through multiple channels including reflection



Do these
work?

High-impact practices are not separate from career readiness— they are the delivery mechanism.

Experiential learning structures are linked to reported gains in teamwork and working with diverse perspectives.

Internship participation is consistently associated with development of written and verbal communication skills.

Students in experiential learning settings report perceived **gains in critical thinking/problem solving** and professional skills..

Mentorship benefits include developing communication skills and **strengthening self-efficacy**.

Peer mentoring finds recurring benefits related to **motivation, resilience**, self-confidence, engagement, and social integration.

Problem-based learning approach reports improvements in team working skills, communication skills.

Study abroad experiences are correlated with building perspectives for the global environment.

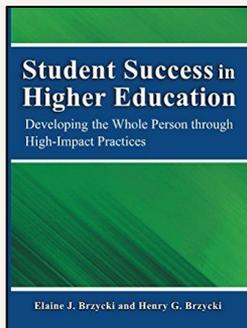
Workforce partnerships and employer advisory engagement help institutions tailor curricula to **real-world competencies**.

The Problem: Research = Practice

“There is **no shortage of empirical studies** and conceptual examinations related to student success...

Yet, institutions do not faithfully and effectively **implement** the kinds of promising **policies and practices that seem to work elsewhere and in ways that are appropriate** for their campus context and students.”

Jillian Kinzie & George Kuh, Center for Postsecondary Research and National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Institute at Indiana University, (2017)



A New Way Forward



Emerging Solutions

These emerging solutions align academic and co-curricular experiences into a unified pathway, ensure they are part of every student's education—not optional—and make learning visible in ways that demonstrate readiness beyond graduation.

Curated High-Quality Student Experiences

The institution intentionally designs and sequences selected campus-appropriate experiences built as distinctives, with excellence, and for all students.

Curriculum-Embedded Experience

High-impact learning experiences are built directly into the curriculum so every student participates, not just those who know how to opt in.

Student Learning Story & Artifacts

Students are guided to reflect on their experiences, translate learning into skills and capabilities, and articulate their growth over time. They are provided a technology driven update on their journey, the results, the next steps, all while building their portfolio.



Mount St. Mary's University Los Angeles

About MSMU (LA)

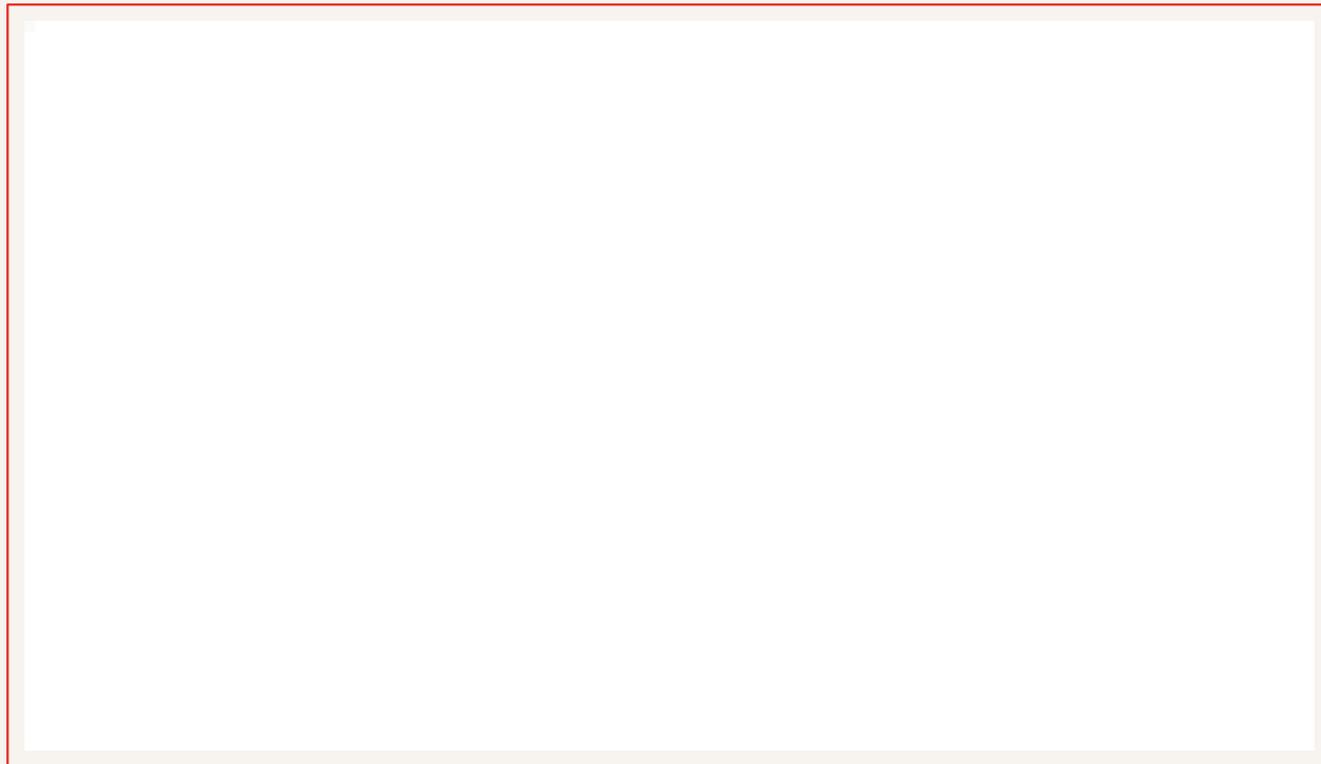
- 100 years of serving women
- #6 in Student Social Mobility
- #3 “Most Transformative Colleges”
- 70% First Generation
- First HSI in California

About MSMU & Carnegie's “Moving the Needle”

- Cultural & Campus-wide readiness for student success
- Improving Student Success Systems
- Elevating High Impact Practices

Mount Saint
Mary's
University
Los Angeles

mPower



Presidential Insights

Dr. Ann McElaney Johnson



Recognizing
the problem



Rallying the
campus
toward
solution



Getting Started

How you can get started

Make your case



Build a collaborative team

On-campus internal consulting team representing the entire student experience,.



Secure executive support

Make your case utilizing data, research, and updated solutions.



“... what a student experiences in college—especially meaningful engagement, mentoring, and opportunities to apply learning—predicts whether they will be engaged at work and thrive in life after graduation, regardless of the type of institution they attended.”

Voices of Gen Z | GALLUP & WALTON FOUNDATION (2026)

Thriving in
college means
thriving in life
after graduation

Resources

[Gen Z Students More Engaged](#)

[State of the Global Workplace 2025](#)

[Why Don't More Colleges Run Co-Op Programs?](#)

[National Association of Colleges & Employers](#)

[The Skills Employers Demand](#)

[The Integration of Career Readiness into Experiential Learning and High-Impact Practices](#)

[Traditional Degrees Hinder Graduates at Work](#)

Thank you.

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