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Media Release

Entitled students likely to become entitled workers, says study

Researcher says spelling out expectations about employment is the best way to deal with the issue

ST CATHARINES, Ontario — May 25, 2014 — Students who feel entitled at university are likely to feel entitled when they enter the workforce, says a study by a University of Windsor sociology student.

And because those feelings of entitlement can have all sorts of negative effects on employment, the study suggests universities and employers work together to help students come up with realistic expectations about what their working life will be like.

Amy Peirone, who is a PhD student, will be presenting the results of her study at the 2014 Congress of the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Peirone defines academic entitlement as “the expectation that students have that they deserve special treatment and rewards, independent of their actual input.” In other words, they expect good grades even if they didn’t study. (Sometimes, she says, they also expect good grades because they’ve paid good money to go to university – which is what Peirone calls a ‘consumerist’ approach to education.)

She says that when those feelings of entitlement transfer to the workplace, they create all sorts of problems. People who have a strong sense of employment entitlement generally have lower levels of job satisfaction, job status and life status. They are less satisfied with their pay, have less commitment to their organization, have more missed work days and more conflicts with their supervisors.

Peirone says the best way to address employment entitlement is to educate students about the realities of the workplace – while they are still in school.

For example, she says that students enrolled in education and law had significantly lower levels of entitlement with regard to their future jobs than students in other areas of study. She attributes that to the fact that students in those two areas were much more likely to spend time researching and





exploring their future careers. In other words, they developed, as students, more realistic expectations of what their working life would be like.

Peirone says that in addition to research, co-op programs are good at giving students a reality check.

“Co-op programs provide students with experience that gives them realistic expectations of employment opportunities,” she said.

She recommends employers and educators work together to make sure students enter into the job market with clear expectations.

“With academic entitlement, the research shows there is a lack of communication, or disconnect, between what the students think their role is, and what the students expect.

“So when you are looking at workplace entitlement, you want to make sure that clear expectations of employers and employees are laid out to help reduce the effects of workplace entitlement.”

Good communication, she said, is critical.

“It’s important that we encourage dialogue and communication between the students and potential employers. We go through the motions at school, and we don’t have contact with the outside world. And when you get out there to go to work, it can be an absolute shock.”

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About the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences

Organized by the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Congress is the largest interdisciplinary conference in Canada, and one of the largest in the world. Congress brings together 75 academic associations that represent a rich spectrum of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, including literature, history, theatre, film studies, education, music, sociology, geography, social work and many others. For more information, go to www.congress2014.ca

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