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The Class of 2012 Strides to the Market, Ready or Not

Bret Stephens's "To the Class of 2012" (Global View, May 8) criticizes students for their lack of preparedness for the workplace. And he's right. But even more blameworthy are the adults on campus, who have failed to point students to what they need to know and be able to do. The American Council of Trustees and Alumni's research shows that only 5% of colleges require their students to take even a basic economics class. Just 20% require a single foundational course in American history or government. Meanwhile, studies show that academic standards and expectations—in terms of assigned reading and writing—continue to decline. It's no wonder that many graduates are having trouble finding that first job, and that our country is faced with a generation of students buried in debt and without the college-level skills to climb out of it. It's time parents, policy makers and the public held college and university trustees accountable, demanding that they ensure a quality education at an affordable cost.

Anne D. Neal
President
ACTA
Washington

Perhaps Mr. Stephens is looking in the wrong places for well-educated college graduates. There are remarkable students graduating from colleges less well-known than the Ivy League. Most engineering graduates have persevered through years of study without supplementary grade inflation often resulting in less than stellar GPAs and massive humility. These remarkably intelligent engineering graduates exhibit extremely restrained egos. It is excruciatingly distressful to sell oneself with a GPA that is not "above average."

The current system of screening possible job candidates certainly limits who enters the job market. If employers are only seeking graduates "above average," then what happens to all the others? No wonder there is grade inflation at "top schools."

Debra Newman
Eagan, Minn.