

# Recent Business Students Define Success

By Patrick Abouchalache

As the Class of 2025 graduates into an uncertain and fast-changing working world, they face a crucial question: What does it mean to be successful?

Is it better to take a job that pays more, or one that's more prestigious? Should you prioritize advancement, relationship building, community impact, or even the opportunity to live somewhere new? Sorting through these questions can feel overwhelming.

I am a business school professor who spends a lot of time mentoring students and alumni in Generation Z—those born between 1997 and 2012. As part of this effort, I've surveyed about three hundred former undergraduate students and spoken at length with about fifty of them.

Through these conversations, I've watched them wrestle with the classic conflicts of young adulthood—such as having to balance external rewards like wanting internal motivations like wanting to be of service.

I recently revisited their stories and reflections, and I compiled the most enduring insights to offer to the next generation of graduates.

Here's their collective advice to the Class of 2025:

## 1. Define what matters most to you

Success starts with self-reflection. It means setting aside society's noise and defining your own values.

When people are driven by internal rewards like curiosity, purpose, or pleasure in an activity itself—rather than outside benefits such as money—psychologists say they have "intrinsic motivation."

Research shows that people driven by intrinsic motivation tend to display higher levels of performance, persistence, and satisfaction. Harvard Business School professor Teresa Amabile's componential theory further suggests that creativity flourishes when people's skills align with their strongest intrinsic interests.

The alternative is to "get caught up in society's expectations of success," as one consulting alum



put it. She described struggling to choose between a job offer at a Fortune 500 company or one at a lesser-known independent firm. In the end, she chose to go with the smaller business. It was, she stressed, "the right choice for me." This is crucial

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PUBLIC NOTICE  
OF  
PROPOSED OVERALL DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISE  
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The New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA), in accordance with requirements of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), 49 CFR Part 26, as amended, hereby notifies the public that it is recommending an overall 34% DBE goal for participation in Federal Transit Administration (FTA) – assisted contracts during Fiscal Years 2026 – 2028.

The proposed methodology and its rationale used to determine the level of DBE participation will be available for public review for 30 calendar days from the date of this notice from 8:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., CST, Monday – Friday, Regional Transit Authority Administrative Facility located at 2817 Canal Street, New Orleans, La. 70119. Written comments on this goal will be accepted for 45 days from the date of this notice and may be sent to Adonis C. Expose', Principal DBE/SBE Liaison Officer, at the above address or submitted to [aexpose@rttaforward.org](mailto:aexpose@rttaforward.org)

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**Federal Contracting: Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Certification Program Webinar**  
**Tuesday, June 17, 2025, 1:00 pm–3:00 pm CDT Online**  
**Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration**  
**Contact: Patrice Dozier, [patrice.dozier@sba.gov](mailto:patrice.dozier@sba.gov)**  
**Fee: Free; registration required**  
SBA is creating a space for Woman-Owned Small Businesses, via WOSB certification! Are you a woman owner of a small business? The federal government's goal is to award at least five percent of all federal contracting dollars to woman-owned small businesses each year. Join us for training on how to register for SBA's Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) program, which helps eligible small businesses to qualify for federal contracting opportunities. The monthly sessions include an overview of the self-certification process, and a discussion of the NAICS codes that qualify as WOSB or EDWOSB. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/woman-owned-small-business-wosb-certification-program-tickets-1123663631169>

**Selling to the Federal Government Webinar**  
**Thursday, May 22, 2025, 12:00 pm–3:00 pm CDT Online**  
**Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration**  
**Contact: George Tapia, 610-382-3086, [george.tapia@sba.gov](mailto:george.tapia@sba.gov)**  
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