

Session Title:	The Network Advantage: Is access to university inherited?
Speaker(s):	Tom Haywood-Pope, Chief Operating Officer at Zero Gravity Tom Cockbain, Undergraduate Talent Lead at Zero Gravity
Chair:	Law Amankwah, City, University of London
Reporter:	Alex Whitham, Manchester Metropolitan University

Speaker/Institution Bio/Information:	Zero Gravity was formed by Joe Seddon, a first-generation student who came from a low-income background in West Yorkshire. He defied the odds to attend Oxford University, and set up Zero Gravity to help other students, aiming to level the playing field and scale opportunity across the UK.
Overview/Aim of session:	<p>Topics to be covered within the session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the network advantage? - Gap Zero Report '22 - Membership over interventions - Leveraging technology for 'Whole Provider Approaches'
Workshop Content	<p>What is the network advantage?</p> <p>The network advantage is where socially mobile talent loses out in the journey to their dream university and graduate career due to their 'lack' of network.</p> <p>The network is there to provide confidence and access to opportunities – students without this don't know what they don't know/have access to.</p> <p>This has a compound effect as these students move through university and on to graduate careers.</p> <p>Gap Zero Report '22</p> <p>Students from the most advantaged areas of the UK are currently over six times more likely to secure a place at a highly-selective university than those from the most disadvantaged areas. While the government, universities, and employers all have a stake in eliminating this gap, at current rates of progress, it will remain for another 332 years.</p> <p>The Gap Zero Report is pulled together annually by Zero</p>

Gravity which aims to better understand the underlying causes of this gap and to make recommendations for how the government, universities, and employers can reduce the gap to zero.

Some key statistics from the report can be found below.

Whilst at school/college:

- ONS figures show 185% difference in earnings at 30 in top 1% privately educated students vs 1% free school meals pupils.
- Imposter syndrome is high in state educated students, with 24% saying they wouldn't apply to university thinking they won't get an offer – for private students this is 0%.
- 58% of working-class students don't know a single person who has studied at Oxbridge, compared to only 11% of private school students.
- Students at private schools are three times as likely to report receiving more than 15 hours of individual support with their university application compared to state school students.

Whilst at university:

- Compared to state school students, private school students are: 7 times more likely to know a lawyer, 4 times more likely to know a lawyer and 2 times more likely to know a doctor or an accountant.
- State-educated students are almost four times more likely to consider giving up a place at university because of the cost of living than privately educated students (21% v 6%).
- 59% of all students now work alongside their degree to fund their studies. This disproportionately impacts state school students, with money worries making them 31% more likely to have a part-time job at university.

In their careers:

- Elite graduate careers are dominated by graduates from Russell Group institutions, with 81% legal trainees coming from RG institutions.
- Securing a place at a Russell Group university

	<p>increases the lifetime earnings of graduates by an average of £200,000.</p> <p>The full report can be viewed online with more figures: https://www.zerogravity.co.uk/assets/GapZeroReport.pdf</p> <p>Membership over interventions</p> <p>There are many benefits to having a mentor throughout your life, someone giving you knowledge and boosting confidence. Examples given that aren't work specific – riding a bike etc.</p> <p>ZG trying to build a place of mentorship and where socially mobile talent can break down barriers using their platform.</p> <p>They aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify socially mobile talent early - Power talent into top unis - Allow them to obtain the best careers <p>Why opportunity doesn't reach talent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not making it into the funnel - Geography - Limited outreach - Lack of identity <p>They advocate for ambition and mentorship from their members.</p>
<p>Case Studies/Examples:</p>	<p>Bingo game done in the room to show the most likely students to be impacted by the network advantage. An example bingo card accompanies these notes.</p> <p>E.g. first group to sit down in more rural area vs second group – also state educated but potentially live in a larger town. Third group are students who attended a high achieving school but they are first generation students. Group who were last standing represent the group within the UK who have family who have attended university, with clear networks in place for support.</p> <p>Everyone in the room had the card saying achieve top GCSE's – yet only 1/3 of them attend 'top' universities. Started on same level playing field yet end up in very different positions, due to their network advantage.</p>
<p>Scenarios/Roundtable discussions:</p>	<p>A question was asked of the room: 'have you ever benefited from mentorship from someone in your broader network?'</p>

	<p>Some examples of answers given below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Example of institutional mentoring scheme that allowed opportunity to develop a skill that was prevented you from achieving a promotion. - Attended a social mobility programme before going to university. - Doesn't always need to be as formal – asking people for help can go a long way – but you have to have the confidence to ask. - Example given of student messaging 1000 people on Linked In to get 1 person reply and get an internship from this. - Making friends with older people in the workplace – moving to new places and helping you remove the ceiling you have placed there for yourself. <p>Another question asked of the room: 'would you identify as low opportunity?'</p> <p>The consensus was that many of us wouldn't, despite factors in our life that might mean we are. The same applies to students, they don't always know what they are missing out on and what they could be able to access.</p>
<p>Questions and Answers:</p>	<p>Confidence from students who have these private backgrounds – sometimes gaining a network later in life makes the gap feel larger. What can we do to unlock that ambition with students?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing our stories can be helpful here, empowering students who have similar backgrounds. Trying to create a modern equivalent to something like a 'boys club' where they have a membership and a community. <p>Is there any opportunity for students to be encouraged to undertake PG study as part of the ZG platform?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Something that conversations have been had about but isn't currently an option for students. ZG would be keen to hear feedback from institutions on this. <p>How do they make sure they are targeting the right students?</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ZG work with over 700 state schools/colleges. The Head of Sixth will upload the students. They also use marketing methods such as TikTok to catch students who wouldn't hear about the programme otherwise. Roughly 70% of students come to them through their school/college. <p>COL really putting students off HE – what is the scholarship?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Currently 1 scholarship offered by ZG. £1,000 a year for students who meet their contextual requirements. <p>We are a specialist provider who struggle to recruit from state schools, due to the fact the subjects that are required for our courses are hard to come by in state schools. Is there anything in place that could help with this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is an area ZG are trying to focus on, creating a clear network. As part of this they have just partnered with Christie's in London with a focus on Art History. <p>Creative jobs paid at barely living wage or expectation that students will take unpaid work experience or volunteering. Is there any support for students in those areas as this would likely affect state school students much more?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This isn't something ZG offer currently but feeds into the above conversation about how networks can be created across the creative industries to support these students more. <p>Where are the 700 state school partners based, is this across the country or more London focused?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The partners are based all over the country – 79% are outside of Greater London.
<p>Summary/Key takeaways:</p>	<p>There is lots we can learn about the network advantage and how ZG can support students in this position. Lots of resources available on the website to understand more: https://www.zerogravity.co.uk/</p> <p>How can we as HELOA members unlock students ambition?</p> <p>Consider working with your old school or college as alumni and show them what's possible, particularly if you were a student affected by the network advantage.</p>

	<p>Understand what involvement your institution has with ZG and if there is something you can be doing to support this work.</p>
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