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## Can You Get a Job with That?

By Elizabeth LaScala



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the right academic direction, and college career centers that offer opportunities to test that direction through extracurricular activities, internships and capstone research projects. A good career development center interacts with students as early as the freshman year and collaborates with others both on and off campus to help students test a chosen career path or discover different career options (e.g. clinical assignments in health fields, student teaching for education, internships for business).

As you search for schools that fit your goals, remember that the best colleges for you are the ones that can support your learning style as well as your need for assistance with difficult subjects. For example, many students are interested in business but have difficulty in math. Instead of giving up your interest in business for fear of doing poorly in statistics or calculus, your college search should include an honest appraisal of the learning support network available to you at the various colleges on your list. If you learn best by talking to your instructors in high school, access to professors will be critical. If you experience success in difficult coursework by systematic use of peer tutors (those students who have taken the course you are struggling with and gotten an 'A'), a similar program at the college should work well for you.

Once you identify a preliminary list of colleges that meets your goals and interests, it is important to consider costs. Some experts believe you should start your college search with cost as

In his presentation "Can You Get a Job with That?" Stuart Nachbar, noted education writer and college counselor states, "A good school does good by its students." And, Stuart and I agree, if a school does a good job of what it is in the business of doing - educating and preparing students for life beyond college - you will get a job with a degree from the college. A good school is not necessarily the one that is most highly ranked or the one with the most recognizable name, but one which is honest and direct in its dealings with students and families. College representatives from these schools, whether in admissions, financial aid, enrollment management, student activities or career planning, are well-informed and can help a student and family reach sound decisions about everything from managing student debt to identifying faculty members in different academic departments who can help set a student on a secure academic path.

One of the most important questions to consider as you begin your college search is, "If you could get paid to do anything you wanted to do, what would that be?" "Good" colleges will be the ones that support that path and help you decide on an academic direction that is focused enough to support your present interests and broad enough to let you change course if needed. Those schools may be smaller liberal arts and science colleges or larger research universities. Both settings can work as long as the school provides supportive advising teams to help students move in

the primary factor. Regardless of when you take it into consideration, cost should be a consideration as you develop your college application list. Be sure to consider costs beyond the freshman year, especially indirect costs that happen once the student is further into a degree program - for example, a car, study abroad, or housing during an internship or co-op assignment. Housing costs can be significant and are more common in schools with cooperative learning environments that intermix coursework with applications in real work environments - and those employment opportunities may be located far from campus.

As you refine your college search, it is smart to go well beyond majors, campus size, location and climate to assess the factors that will ultimately make the biggest difference in the value of your undergraduate degree. I encourage students and their families to obtain 'straight' answers to their questions before entry to a college. You should expect a college to address your questions about affordability, academic advising, career center activities, housing and any other areas that deserve careful consideration. You generally have little time between when you learn about acceptance to a college and the enrollment deadline. Most of the important research should precede the college's decision on your application. In fact, I would maintain students should only apply to colleges that have demonstrated that their representatives are knowledgeable, honest and direct in their dealings with families. A "good" school does, indeed, do well by its students. And it does well by its applicants too.

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