

Choosing a Career and College Major is a Life Shaping Decision!

It really is that important!

Choosing a career and college major is one of life's great challenges for students of high school and college age and their parents. Choosing a career that is not a good fit for an individual could have life-long negative results. Too often it is left to chance and is a decision that is made without careful planning or consideration through no fault of the student or the parents. For example,

did you know that?

1. Many students postpone decisions regarding their future because they have no idea of their interests and aspirations.
2. Guidance counselors spend on average only 38 minutes per year with each student discussing college and career choices.
3. The American School Counselor Association recommends one counselor per 100 students. In actuality, the average is higher, and closer to a **315:1** ratio in public schools. The average ratio for private schools is 214:1!!
4. Many students choose a major because a parent may be employed in a particular career, or a major was chosen for them.

Choosing a career that is a good fit for any person is something that should not be taken lightly, remembering that this is a decision that will have a life-long effect.

Consequences of a poor career choice can be:

1. Poor grades.
2. Low self-esteem.
3. Less earning power.
4. Depression.
5. Long term career dissatisfaction, which can potentially be life long.
6. Changing majors (thus taking longer to graduate and resulting in higher costs, lost time and lost wages).

What can you do to avoid the negative consequences?

1. Because of budget restraints, don't rely on your school to provide comprehensive career counseling.
2. Ask your child how much counseling they actually do receive at school.
3. As a parent, did you receive proper counseling as a student?
4. Try to determine if you and your family feel that you are, or were in your ideal career.
5. If not, do you want to repeat this with your child?
6. This time, take a proactive approach to career planning - get professional help.

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines career as: *“a field for or pursuit of consecutive progressive achievement, especially in public, professional, or business life”* and *“a profession for which one trains and which is undertaken as a permanent calling”*.

Benefits of proper career planning include:

1. Truly understand one’s strengths, interests, and needs and how they affect our lives.
2. The ability to explore new possible career paths that are a good match.
3. Realize increased motivation, interest and attitude toward choosing a career and college.
4. Avoid transfers and delays that can substantially increase college costs.
5. Minimize guesswork in developing a career and college plan.
6. Develop a structured plan that will minimize everyone’s anxiety over deciding this important step in life.

We all know the benefits of proper planning, be it at home, on the job, or at school. Things just seem to go better, are more logical and help to create the desired outcome. Many times though, planning seems to fall through the cracks. Important decisions are made on the fly because we don’t have the time, and we assume we know enough of the answers. However, career planning is too important to be left to chance. Choosing a career and college major is a cross-road in the pathway of life, one that will have major implications.

Most students can benefit from additional professional guidance in making this important decision. As parents we want our children to be happy and successful, and we should take the steps, to insure that the probability is excellent that these outcomes will be realized. Practically speaking, most folks don’t have enough of the answers for an effective college and career plan.

