

## CONSIDER YOUR LIKES WHEN PICKING A CAREER PATH

**Summary:** Do you feel lost about your college trajectory? Follow the advice in this article.



**Question:** I am completely lost about what I want to do and what I need to take in college. Can you please supply information about career opportunities?

**Answer:** The pressure on undecided students to establish a specific career goal and decide on a major can feel unbearable. Such decisions, however, shouldn't be dictated solely by current opportunities. Although it is wise to attend to existing market forces, the demand may flip-flop by the time you graduate. In addition, a truly satisfying career path will result from leveraging your own interests, strengths, and motivations in the labor market.

Rather than throwing a dart at a host of potential career targets, first consider your own skills. Look at what you are good at or what you would like to become good at. Consider your leisure pursuits and the types of people you like to be around. Also take into account your values and the principles and conditions you are truly committed to (such as diversity, autonomy and helping others). Finally, describe the type of work environment that would be most stimulating and compatible with your style and personality. For help in this process, meet with a school career counselor or do your own assessment by working through the exercises in a book like *What Color Is Your Parachute?* by Richard Nelson Bolles.

At the same time that you are working on yourself, get really curious about other people's careers. Students generally don't realize it but, given the opportunity to be helpful, most people really love to talk about themselves. So, the next time you are at a social gathering, family reunion, or sporting event, ask people about their jobs. Combine these stories with what you learn from your library and Internet research. While one specific job title may not emerge, you should be able to eliminate certain fields and settle on a handful for serious consideration.

If you are still uncertain, consider a liberal-arts program that provides a strong foundation and prepares you more broadly to work and lead in the world. To that end, Howard Figler's *Keys to Liberal Arts Success* is a useful guide. It will be important to supplement classroom experience with work exposure through internships or co-ops. This will give you the opportunity to try on careers and work environments while making you more marketable upon graduation.

- See **Deciding on a Career Path** for more information.