

## Myth #1: Paying for a Liberal Arts Education is a Lousy Investment

Many recent graduates lament that their first professional jobs have no intellectual content, aren't challenging, and require little more than an eighth-grade education. You would expect then that some of these graduates would question the value of a liberal arts education. In our experience that rarely happens.

But ask the same question of many members of the general public—including parents—and you'll find a great deal of ambivalence about the value of a liberal arts education. The difference has to do with how liberal arts graduates and non-graduates perceive the purpose of such an education. While liberal arts graduates see value in the breadth and depth of their education, those without such an education—often eying more tangible results—see wasted time and energy. Indeed the most often cited reason for a college education, according to a recent survey of readers by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, was the ability to get good jobs—the kind that pay well. Education, then, becomes part of a money-in, money-out equation, and a diploma is akin to a stock certificate that should produce dividends as quickly as possible.

The cost of higher education in the 21st century epitomizes the expression “sticker shock.” Attend a highly selective liberal arts college today, and you're looking at a tuition bill that's equal to a hefty down payment on a very nice house. And the cost is skyrocketing. According to the College Board, from 1995 to 2005, average tuition and fees, after being adjusted for inflation, grew by 36% in private four-year institutions and by a whopping 51% in public four-year institutions. Even in-state tuition at public universities may set you back close to \$40,000. So, is a liberal arts education really a good [or worthwhile] investment?

It's clear that for most people there's an economic advantage to a college degree. As Katherine Haley Will, President of Gettysburg College, stated in a 2005 interview with National Public Radio “Tuition remains a significant investment, but there are few better investments. Twenty years ago, the average college graduate earned 1.5 times more than those who did not graduate; today the average college graduate earns almost twice as much as non-graduates.”

The economic advantage, however, may not be apparent at the beginning of a liberal arts graduate's career. And if you believe the only acceptable investment result is a high salary, you may be disappointed. What your investment buys you is opportunity: opportunity for prosperity, and--something much more important--opportunity to follow your passion, wherever it may lead.

Excerpted from *Smart Moves for Liberal Arts Grads: Finding a Path to Your Perfect Career*, by Sheila J. Curran (Executive Director, Duke University Career Center – Sheila. smartmoves@gmail.com and Suzanne Greenwald; Ten Speed Press, May, 2006



### Life After Graduation, LLC

PO Box 11205, Bainbridge Island WA 98110

Toll Free: 877-569-9816 • Email: [info@LifeAfterGraduation.com](mailto:info@LifeAfterGraduation.com)

[www.LifeAfterGraduation.com](http://www.LifeAfterGraduation.com)

# To Get Ahead . . . Get Involved

by Connan Campbell

Decades of research supports the idea that students involved in campus activities (fraternities, residence halls, student government, community service) are more likely to graduate and are more likely to develop leadership skills that prepare them for “life after graduation”.

Research also asserts that student involved in co-curricular activities do better academically. Whether this is because they have readily-accessible mentors in their advisors and supervisors, are forced to improve their time management skills or their involvement is directly related to coursework, the results are positive.

Certainly, if you’re involved, you are probably having more fun than those who are not active!

## 1. Get connected in your career field.

Join a student group focused on your career field or field of study. Most organizations are affiliated with a national association that produces a newsletter or publications, a listserv, and hosts a regional or national conference; all opportunities that offer insight into issues and a connection to practicing professionals.

## 2. Join a student organization.

Become involved in a non-academic focused student organization that forces you to improve your interpersonal relationship and communication skills.

## 3. Participate in community service activities.

Companies of all sizes build connections to customers by connecting to their communities. Participating in service activities or raising funds for charities can demonstrate your ability to build relationships and your interest in the community.

## 4. Take on leadership roles in all that you do.

Being an active and responsible member is not enough. Companies have a lot of employees who fulfill their basic responsibilities. They need individuals – like student organization officers – who are willing to take responsibility for the success of the organization and the development of others. With this in mind, do not attempt to take on so many leadership responsibilities that you are unable to show successes in your efforts.

A research study involving human resource professionals, CEOs, and senior recruiters for the Top 1000 companies in the US asserted that 60% of candidates’ success could be attributed to exposure and visibility, above the 30% for image/manners and 10% for talent.

Getting involved can help you gain the necessary skills to be successful after graduation, but getting involved to get connected can be even more beneficial.

**To get ahead . . . get involved!**

Connan Campbell works with the Washington State University Campus Involvement Program and is also the Head Coach/Founder of Coaching Champions. Please contact Connan with your thoughts and/or comments at [champions@pullman.com](mailto:champions@pullman.com)



**Life After Graduation, LLC**

PO Box 11205, Bainbridge Island WA 98110

Toll Free: 877-569-9816 • Email: [info@LifeAfterGraduation.com](mailto:info@LifeAfterGraduation.com)

**[www.LifeAfterGraduation.com](http://www.LifeAfterGraduation.com)**