**A Liberal Arts Foundation**

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There are no guarantees for young people now when it comes to using college to prepare for a job. The world is changing too quickly to make reliable predictions. Assume that you will have many careers, and that you will need to find ways to adapt your talents to the world’s needs.

I believe the best place to do that is a liberal arts college.

But they are not all the same. You should look for ones with distinctive missions that support your beliefs and aspirations. Whatever your field, consider colleges that offer programs of faculty-student collaborative research and that encourage experiential education in the workplace. Such programs allow students to become actively engaged in their own learning and prepare them to become functioning professionals — with a portfolio of real accomplishments — before they graduate.

When it comes to choosing a major, you should engage with things that you care about, that interest you and that will produce your strongest efforts. Your major must not be the path of least resistance or an excuse for narrowness. Don’t be the English major who says, “I’m scared of math and computers.” Don’t be a chemistry major who says, “I never read books.”

Become the kind of person who is interested in everything and can do anything.

I keep hearing the same thing from potential employers: “We love students with liberal-arts degrees. They are curious; they know how to ask good questions. They know how to conduct research. They are effective writers and speakers. And they learn quickly.“

All good news, so far, for those of us who support traditional liberal-arts education. But there’s more:

“So I’d love to hire your students,” they say, “provided they can also help us fix this Web site, handle our social media, help us with fund-raising, and maybe even cultivate some new clients. Do you have anyone like that? We can only hire one person.”

For a growing number of liberal arts colleges, the answer is an emphatic “Yes, we do.” We have students who have been doing those things all along, and they can prove it. Liberal-arts colleges are now engaging with the “digital humanities.” Simply put, that means we are producing history and music majors who are as good at working with technology as they are at developing research projects and performing on stage. They are prepared for graduate school, but they are equally prepared for the workplace, and they think like entrepreneurs who are used to bootstrapping.

In a period of rapid, unpredictable change, a combination of traditional liberal-arts education, collaborative research, workplace experiences, and a “can-do” attitude is the safest bet for future employment, as well as the foundation for good citizenship and a life that’s engaged with culture and thought.

* **Comments:**
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This is a great article. I am an employer and agree with this philosophy. The only caveat I would put on it, is that a liberal arts degree that shows *real intellectual and academic engagement* is far better than one that looks like it was just four years of blah blah blah in a cocooned environment. Demonstrating this means *striving to achieve in challenging courses* and/or some interesting work experience during college.