

Alumni Blog - January 2023

Finding Your Passion and Purpose

In a perfect world, everyone would start school knowing exactly what they would love to do for a living. Students would already have a plan the day they begin high school. They would intuitively know how to use college as a stepping stone to a career that makes them a productive individual, as well as financially and emotionally fulfilled.

Whether you have known what you have wanted to do since you were 5 years old or you are still figuring it out, college is the perfect place to discover how to find your passion.

Explore Your Past

If you have known what you wanted to be since the first time you picked up a basketball, paintbrush, spatula, pen, or calculator, congratulations! This is an amazing feeling to be sure of your path and destiny. Most people, however, are still looking for their driving force when they get to college. If this is you, ask yourself these questions:

- What are the things that have stuck with you that bring you happiness?
- What are the material things with which you most strongly identify with?
- What non-material things, primarily habits and personal pursuits, that define you?
- What opinions would you form about yourself if all you had to base them on was a look around your bedroom (furniture, knickknacks, belongings)?

Where do you find your passion in clues around you? Let's say you have a softball trophy on your bedroom dresser. What was it you liked most about earning that trophy? Was it the pleasure of using the physical and mental skills you had? The strategy of the game? The teamwork? Inspiring teammates? Leading? Following?

Somewhere in those questions lies your passion...or at least a piece of your passion.

Your Skills and Interests

There are countless tools to help you find your passion and inventory your skill set. Aptitude and assessment tests often affirm what you already know but the result can sometimes surprise you. They can prove, for instance, that the reason you cherish that softball trophy on your dresser is the role you played as a team leader, not the sport itself or your batting average.

For some, making sense of self-assessments that focus on likes and dislikes is a starting point in the hunt for a career built on passion and purpose. This can include things like:

- **Career counseling.** A career counselor can help you learn more about yourself, gain educational and occupational information, learn about decision-making and career planning, conduct a job search, apply to graduate or professional schools, join other training programs, and cope with career challenges and transition issues.
- **Self-assessment tools** that help you explore your values, interests, and personality can help, including these [free career aptitude and assessment tests](#).



Explore Your Gifts

Everyone has unique talents. Some people may be really good at math while others excel at debating. Take time to evaluate yourself from an objective point of view and reflect on what your gifts may be. Look at your achievements, however small, and consider if there could be a career in doing what you are good at. This could be anything from being a fantastic cupcake baker to being an excellent communicator.

If you are still unsure, turn to your classmates, friends, and family for advice. Often, the people around you see more clearly than you see yourself. This applies especially when it comes to soft skills such as empathy and creativity. These soft skills are just as

important in crafting your career. A strength in these skills can lead you towards a career in the fields of management, social work, and even psychology.

Explore Interests and Options in College

The ultimate career tool is college, which can train you for a traditional job that has always been your dream or even prepare you to create based on your unique skill set. Even an undeclared student taking basic courses will encounter more career ideas than they have time to explore.

Students can explore through employment opportunities in college. Volunteer work on campus and in the community also can help you develop skills and connect with issues and people who inspire you and evoke passion in a new cause.

Find What Moves You

We've all heard the quote that says, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." While this is not entirely true- especially in today's economy- the general idea is that pursuing your passion will give you more fulfillment than simply working to collect paychecks. You may not have a passion that moves mountains (yet), but everyone has interests, no matter how trivial they may seem. Use them to find your passion.

For example, you may love your pets. Due to your interest in animals, you may learn more about biology, volunteer at a shelter, watch cat videos all day, or make cute little snuggle blankets. In time, these activities may set you on a path of passion towards animal medicine, non-profit work, social media content creation, or even fashion.

By putting your finger on your interests, you can give yourself the chance to be one of the few who end up with a job that they love. The important thing here is to know what truly moves you. There is a difference between a casual pastime and an active interest that fills your cup. Think about what gets you out of bed in the morning and the activities that make you feel alive.

Finding Purpose

There are those who advocate that finding a 'purpose in life' rather than a 'passion in life' will lead to a more fulfilling career and higher job satisfaction. The question to reflect on is, "What do I care deeply about?" By focusing on finding your purpose, you align your career goals with your deepest values.

Of course, self-reflection at this level can be difficult. So, here are some questions that you can begin with:

- Reflect on high school courses. What courses did you enjoy the most? Why? List those courses. Do you see a pattern? Are they primarily in one academic area? Did the teachers display something unique in their teaching style?
- What careers do you think you are interested in? What do you care most deeply about? What changes in this world do you want to be a part of? What do those careers have in common with the academic subjects you enjoy? Do you primarily like working with your hands or learning about subjects in books?
- Is there someone in your family, friends, or acquaintances who has a career that you are interested in? A career that you might like to explore further?

College is a wonderful time for you to expand your horizons. There are a vast variety of courses to help you discover new interests and uncover hidden passions. Even if you already know what you want from your career, take a few random courses that are a little out of your usual sphere. The knowledge that you gain from these classes will give you fresh insight into your capabilities and how they could be applied to the world.

Don't be afraid to evolve. Many college students are hesitant to change their major but four years is a long time to spend on something that does not feed your ambition. It is more common to switch majors than you think, and some students even change colleges. If your current college does not offer the education that the new you demands, seek out the best colleges that provide a better shot at the career of your dreams.

College is the time to define who you are as an adult and put a plan in place for pursuing your passion. There is no single job that will please everyone. Therefore, you must consider your talents, what brings you joy and motivation, and who you want to work with. Learn more about yourself and what you can achieve while you are in college and be prepared to grow.