



Tips from an Expert Career Counselor

Anne Shields of Lighthouse Career Coaching and former director of career counseling services at Bowdoin, Davidson, Carnegie Mellon University and Carleton College, spoke recently with a group of independent college counselors. Below are key points she made about the future today's young people will confront and how they should go about preparing for it.

- The world of work is changing dramatically, and nobody can predict exactly where it is headed.
- The gig economy, which has already been with us for about seven years, will most likely endure.
- Very few people in the future will stay at a single job or even on a single career path throughout their working lives.
- The Department of Labor predicts that young people currently entering the workforce may change jobs seven or eight times by the time they are in their thirties.
- Young people should be relieved to know that they need not have their entire future figured out because the process of seeking job satisfaction is just that – a process.
- In their book *Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life*, Stanford Professors Bill Burnett and Dave Evans advocate thinking of your career path as a jungle gym rather than a ladder because it's sometimes necessary to take a step sideways or even backward in order to move in another direction.
- The first step is to know yourself, your values, interests, strengths, traits, and ambitions. Consider questions like: Do you really want more school? How important is money? How important is meaning? Recognize that as a sophomore in college you are not the same person you were as a sophomore in high school.
- Keep an open mind, recognizing that there is no one perfect job, and there will always be multiple jobs that can provide a good fit. For instance, even if you've wanted to be a doctor for as long as you can remember, it's worth exploring other related fields.

- With some few exceptions (like engineering and accounting), college majors don't matter. Skills are what do matter, and these can be acquired via work experiences like internships during school breaks as well as via academic study in any number of different disciplines.
- Elective courses are not a waste of time – sometimes they lead to discovery of an interest that will take you in an entirely new direction.
- Learn as much as you can about jobs by talking to people. If you don't feel comfortable talking to the people your parents are urging you to contact, seek out people closer to your own age. If you don't know anyone personally, look for them on your college's alumni group on LinkedIn.
- Don't worry if you don't have a passion! You are not alone. In fact, in the Stanford study, only about 20% of the respondents said they had one.