

# Marketing Your Liberal Arts Degree

## Benefits of a Liberal Arts Degree

Do you ever ask yourself what you are going to do with your liberal arts degree? You may have more options than you've ever imagined. In fact, many top employers value liberal arts graduates because they gain education and experiences that help them develop various competencies, including...

- Critical thinking
- Adaptability to change
- Decision making
- Interpersonal
- Leadership
- Analytical
- Problem solving
- Communication
- Flexibility
- Global perspective
- Research

Perhaps the greatest skill these students develop is the capability to become lifelong learners. Employers who hire liberal arts graduates are confident that these employees will seek new information and apply that information to the workplace.

## Promoting Your Liberal Arts Degree

Employers value your skill set, but you will still have to sell yourself. Once you have identified the proficiencies you gained from your liberal arts education, you need to determine how to promote them to employers. You can do this using two important steps: 1) match your skills to those that employers value and 2) communicate your skills to employers.

Matching Your Skills with Employer Values: How can you match your skills to those that employers value? First, you must find out what employers are seeking in their employees. This is where your research skills will come into play. To discover this,

- Review job descriptions/announcements
- Read newspaper and magazine articles
- Examine print and electronic resources about jobs and employers (see "How to Research Employers" available in Job Hunting folder of the Campanile Connections resource library.)
- Talk with your professors or with individuals who work in positions in your field
- Conduct information interviews with potential employers

Next, you must identify ways in which you have used those skills. This may include your work with a class project, in a club or organization, or on an athletic team. Completing an internship is a great way to develop skills necessary to your future job. Your experience as an intern will also provide several examples that you can use when relaying information about your abilities to employers.

## Communicating Your Skills to Employers

After you have matched your skills with what the employer is seeking, you will need to communicate those talents to the employer. Be prepared to share specific examples of activities you participated in that helped you develop job-specific skills. For example,

- Instead of saying, "I have good communication skills," say, "I have experience in explaining information clearly and concisely. My supervisor recognized this by putting me in charge of training new cashiers."
- Instead of saying, "My leadership skills are strong," add, "I started the Young Historians Club and recruited 20 members in the first year."

Additional ideas for ways you can communicate your competencies to employers are included below.

- **Critical/Analytical Thinking and Problem Solving:** Describe instances in which you needed to research problems, identify possible solutions, and evaluate outcomes. Consider how you determined which information was important to the task at hand and which information was irrelevant. Activities conducted in a "problems" course or steps taken to solve a problem faced by a club or organization would be great examples to share with a potential employer.
- **Adaptability to Change/Flexibility:** Describe a class, project, or experience through which you learned how changes take place, the challenges that arise in a changing environment, and how to overcome those challenges. If you coordinated an event that required you to make last minute changes (the featured speaker cancelled with little notice, the caterer prepared the wrong food, the room was set up incorrectly, etc.) explain how you were able to salvage the event.

## Communicating Your Skills to Employers (cont.)

- **Interpersonal:** Give examples of how you developed interpersonal skills through class discussions, group projects, involvement in campus activities, or by working with others at a job or on a volunteer project. Discuss ways that you engaged people, worked in cooperative relationships, motivated others, and managed conflict.
- **Communication:** Share how, through your education, you have read technical material, written various papers, conducted presentations, and participated in class discussions. Be sure to address listening as well as written and oral communication skills.

## Accomplished Liberal Arts Graduates

If you are having doubts about how well your liberal arts education has prepared you for a successful career, think again! According to a recent report in *Fortune* magazine, 38% of today's CEOs majored in such programs. Below is a partial list of world and business leaders that obtained liberal arts degrees.

World/Business Leader	Job Title	Major
John F. Kennedy	35 <sup>th</sup> President of the United States	History
Steve Forbes	CEO of Forbes, Inc. and Former Presidential Candidate	American History
Martha Stewart	Lifestyle Entrepreneur	Art, European History, and Architectural History
Michael Eisner	Former CEO of The Walt Disney Company	English Literature
Sally Ride	Astronaut and First Woman in Space	English
Jill Barad	Former CEO of Mattell, Inc.	English and Psychology

**Non-profit Organizations:** Many liberal arts graduates pursue careers with non-profit organizations. Check out the resources below for information about careers in the non-profit sector.

**College of General Studies-Campanile Connections career management system:** <http://careercenter.sdstate.edu>

**SD Business Directory:** Briggs Library Information Desk, Reference #HF5065.S8 D34

**SD Executive Internships:** [www.state.sd.us/jobs/](http://www.state.sd.us/jobs/)

**Action without Borders:** [www.idealists.org/](http://www.idealists.org/)

**National Human Services Assembly:** [www.nassembly.org/nassembly/](http://www.nassembly.org/nassembly/)

**Opportunity Knocks:** [www.opportunityknocks.org/](http://www.opportunityknocks.org/)

**Resource Central:** <http://resourcehelp.com/qsernonprofit.htm>

**Guide Star:** [www.guidestar.org/](http://www.guidestar.org/)

**College Grad:** [www.collegegrad.com/](http://www.collegegrad.com/)

**Job Web:** [www.jobweb.com/](http://www.jobweb.com/)

**Resources:** For more information about promoting your liberal arts degree, research the following resources.

**College of General Studies, SDSU, Medary Commons:**

<http://careercenter.sdstate.edu>

**Selling Your Liberal Arts Degree to Employers, Indiana University:**

[http://www.indiana.edu/~career/students/apply/selling\\_liberal\\_arts.pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~career/students/apply/selling_liberal_arts.pdf)

**Liberal Arts Job Search Guide, Rice University:**

<http://cohesion.rice.edu/administration/careerservices/emplibrary/liberalart.pdf>

**Placement Manuals Online, National Edition:**

<http://www.placementmanual.com/jobsearch/jobsearch-20.html>

**JobWeb Career Library:**

[http://www.jobweb.com/resources/library/careers\\_in/selling\\_your\\_liberal\\_83\\_01.htm](http://www.jobweb.com/resources/library/careers_in/selling_your_liberal_83_01.htm)

**Hilton M. Briggs Library, SDSU:**

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