



HOW TO HELP STUDENTS AVOID CAREER & COLLEGE MISFIRES

A SPECIAL REPORT TO HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND COUNSELORS

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INTRODUCTION

School administrators, counselors, teachers, and parents share a worthy aspiration: developing students in ways that lead to responsible, productive, fulfilling, and financially secure lives. However, despite their hard work and admirable intentions, significant changes in the high school environment, in post-secondary education and in the work environment have made achieving this aspiration significantly more complicated and uncertain. Looking at statistics on college graduation rates and employment outcomes, there is real cause for concern. This report examines the current environment and causes of the problem, identifies the attributes for a solution, describes the expected benefits that could be achieved, and provides a case illustration.

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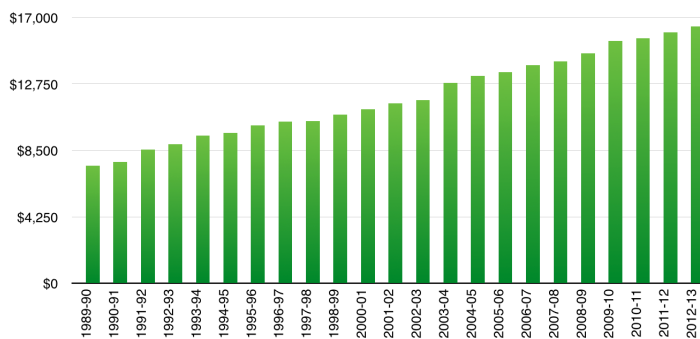
ABOUT SPONSOR, YOUSCIENCE, LLC.

YouScience was founded in 2012 with a big idea — to help every student in the country identify and achieve a career uniquely aligned to his or her own strengths, talents and passion. In 2014, YouScience introduced the Pinnacle Program for schools, an uncomplicated process that engages students and gives parents confidence in the school's commitment to their child's college and career success. The program includes the YouScience Profile, a scientifically-based, revolutionary way for students to discover their aptitudes, plus a proprietary process that matches careers to their unique natural born abilities. With this powerful information school counselors are more efficient in helping students direct their academic work and their career path.

A NATIONAL DILEMMA: MOUNTING DEBT FROM COLLEGE AND CAREER MISFIRES

The public is increasingly alarmed as more high school graduates are either dropping out of college or taking too long to complete their degrees. Students are not acquiring the skills they need to succeed in the workplace, college degrees do not lead to desirable employment, and college is too expensive and resulting in too much debt. Unfortunately, these problems are widespread, avoided only by a handful of students attending the most exclusive colleges. (Selingo, 2013).

The Soaring Cost of College Tuition



Cost of a college education has doubled since 1990, adjusted for inflation. Soaring cost and student career indecision is causing widespread concern.

Taking extra years to complete college due to career uncertainty and changing majors was not nearly as costly for previous generations. Today, it could mean additional cost of \$50,000 or more. Although the United States has historically been admired for its success in enabling the completion of postsecondary degrees, its performance has dropped relative to other developed countries. In 1995, the United States ranked first among the seventeen countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in the percentage of the population (25-34 years of age) with postsecondary degrees (Selingo, 2013). Today, the U.S. ranks twelfth—below the average. This situation has a sweeping impact and is affecting everyone who is involved in preparing students for college and career, especially our high school principals and counselors.

Career & College Misfires

1. Cost and Debt

(Bennett & Wilezon, 2013)

- Even when taking into account tuition discounting, the cost of college has increased 400 percent since 1986.
- Debt of the average college graduate is \$33,000.
- Today's college educated young adults are less likely to own a house or car than previously.
- Consumer education debt is over a trillion dollars, eclipsing credit card debt.

2. Number of Years to Graduate

- For those who do complete college, the average time is six years (Selingo, 2013).

3. Unfavorable Career Outcomes

- Unemployment of recent college graduates remains high and those employed are often underemployed (DeSilver, 2014).
 - 44 percent were working in jobs that did not require a college degree
 - 23% were only working part-time
 - 20% were working in low-wage jobs (below \$25,000)
- 45 percent of college graduates move in with their parents (a 61 percent increase from 2001 to 2011), and 25 percent report that this has harmed their relationship with their parents (Parker, 2012).

4. Dropout Rate

- Roughly 50 percent of those who attend college dropout without completing a degree and often with burdensome debt.

Despite these troubling statistics, obtaining a college degree remains a primary predictor of income. However, even for those who successfully complete a college degree, the outcomes are highly variable. The importance of making intelligent and timely decisions is greater than ever. Secondary schools that effectively address this issue can distinguish themselves as uniquely valuable by not only educating students better, but also by giving them resources to help them have more successful lives. Thus, the crucial question becomes: What distinguishes the successful from the less successful? A key question for secondary school leaders is what (and how) to offer an experience that is uniquely beneficial in increasing the prospects for student academic and career success.

STUDENTS LACK A SENSE OF DIRECTION TO GUIDE ACADEMIC AND CAREER DECISIONS

The most problematic missing element is that most high school students lack a compelling sense of direction that gives them clarity for many decisions they need to make. This is not just a matter of maturity. To the contrary, decades of academic research shows that having a clear compelling direction or vision is crucial to the success of all individuals, teams, and organizations (Daft, 2015). Direction establishes a foundation for setting goals and provides focus while motivating and concentrating effort toward productive action.

Recent studies and analysis about this issue indicate that clarity and confidence for all of us, and especially young adults, must be built upon (Feller, 2014) three pillars. Students need to understand their aptitudes (natural abilities), know their related interests (what they enjoy doing), and find a career that optimizes the market opportunity, their interests and their aptitudes.

KNOWLEDGE OF OUR APTITUDES AND STRENGTHS IS ESSENTIAL, BUT OFTEN UNKNOWN

Don't people know their aptitudes and strengths? World-renowned management expert Peter Drucker has answered with a resounding "No." After several decades of study, he concluded, "Most people think they know what they are good at. They are usually wrong" (Drucker, 2005). He notes that throughout most of history, people had little need for knowledge about their distinctive aptitudes, but in today's increasingly complex work world, knowing your aptitudes is essential. Do high school students know?

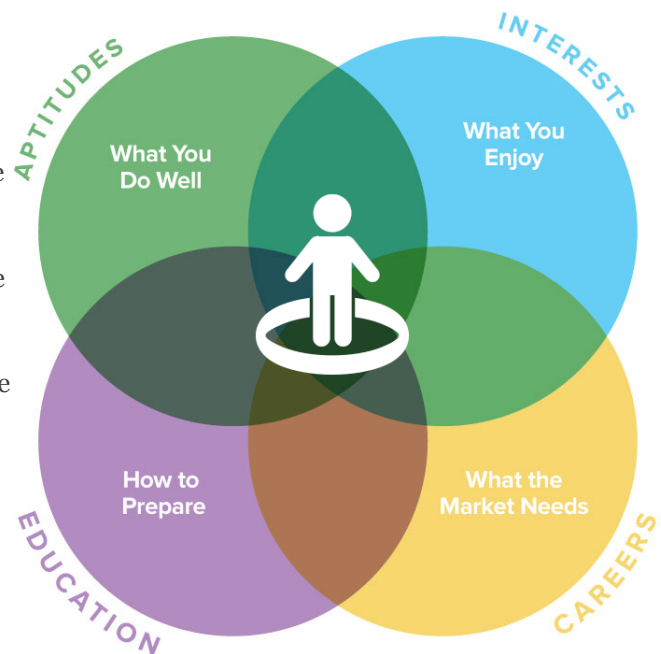
We have good reason to doubt that students know their aptitudes. Researchers who study the current generation of students have concluded that the problem of not knowing ones aptitudes is actually growing worse. (Levine & Dean, 2012). An environment that has become highly structured and programmed, compared to previous generations, shapes students' expectations and knowledge. Thus, they have fewer opportunities to learn from varied experience about their aptitudes. They arrive at college and the work place with little sense of what they are good at and with an assumption that work will be neatly packaged for them. This has led to a great deal of criticism from employers about millennials and an education system that is supposed to prepare students for success in college and productive, satisfying work.

Reid Hoffman, Cofounder and Chairman of the popular networking site LinkedIn, has expressed alarm about the increasingly complicated work environment and the career prospects for this generation. Based on his research and experience, Hoffman (2012) concluded that the career world has changed forever, and there is a growing gap between students who know how to navigate the new environment and those who do not. He implores young people to be more proactive about their self-knowledge and career management in order not to be left behind.

In sum, few of us have been good at knowing our strengths, interests, and career options. However, the current generation struggles even more than past generations in this regard. Their short-term orientation and increasingly diverse learning styles make solving this problem complicated and persistent. At the same time, the college and work environments are becoming less forgiving of those who do not have sufficient clarity and direction. The need to provide a better solution to the problem has never been greater.

ATTRIBUTES OF THE DIRECTION-SETTING SOLUTION: APTITUDE + INTERESTS + DIGITAL DELIVERY

Solving the problem requires an integrated approach that addresses the need for students to better understand their aptitudes and interests, and with that knowledge, to connect to careers. The solution has to be provided in a way that is engaging for digital natives and making it much easier for school administrators and counselors to implement. The conundrum for those who are interested in developing student direction based on understanding of aptitudes, interests, and careers has been that the tools we've had for decades are often used discretely, in a siloed fashion or they are complicated to deliver. What's more, the tests we've used to assess personality and interest are found in books or in printed forms that were developed decades ago. Some have been digitized, but they don't take full advantage of the ubiquity of the Internet, sophisticated computer modeling, or deliver an engaging user experience. Today's screen-centric students are engaged by and prefer to learn very differently than previous generations when the most popular personality and interest profilers were developed.



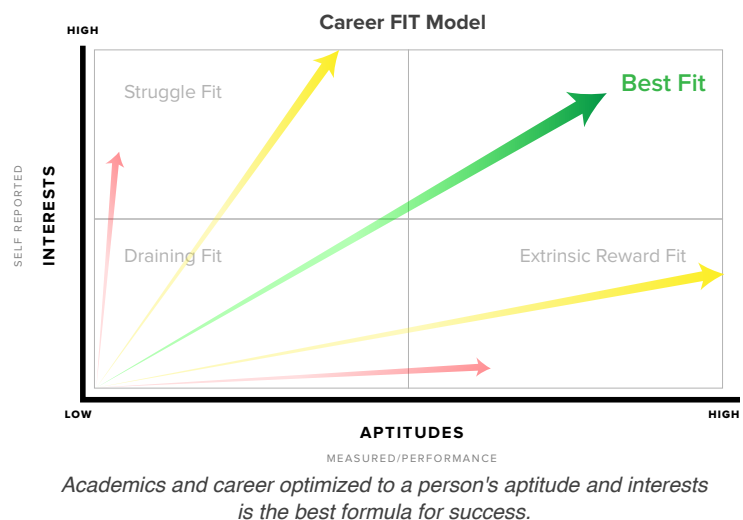
Personality and interest profilers are effective only when combined with aptitude, career connected and digitally delivered.

5 Essentials to Deliver Today's College and Career Decision

1. **Digital Technology** – Fully available with 24/7 data access, all accessible from the "cloud" on any device.
2. **Ownership and Self-Directed Learning** – To feel in command of their learning experience. To be able to make their own choices and to work with technology designed to be flexible enough to enable this.
3. **Flexibility** – To be able to find out what they want when they want it, over time, with the ability to quickly pick up where they left off.
4. **Engaging** – The current generation has been characterized as having a shorter attention span and an unwillingness to retain focus without stimulation. For example, in a biometric study left to their own devices, they switched platforms 27 times per hour on average (Time, Inc., 2013). This is significantly more frequent compared to participants 30 and older.
5. **Short-Term Impact** – The ability to apply personal insights to academic and social contexts quickly.

THE POWERFUL BENEFITS OF COMBINING APTITUDE AND INTEREST ASSESSMENTS

Research demonstrates that understanding aptitudes is more beneficial than understanding interests, but understanding both together is most powerful (Feller, et. al, 2015). Many high schools provide tests that address one part of the problem—the assessment of interests or personality. These high school students complete a combination of a multitude of self-report measures such as Strong Interest Inventory, Myers-Briggs, Strengths Finder, etc. Numerous providers (i.e. Naviance, CPP, XAP, Focus 2, ACT, and SAT/College Board) are assisting high school students and counselors with these offerings and sometimes in making loose linkages between interests and careers or with college selection. For example, many high schools administer the Myers-Briggs personality instrument giving students a generic list of occupations that might be good matches with their “type.” We find that when we ask those who take this well-known assessment to recall what was suggested to them, they often have something comical to report that does not reflect their combined interests and aptitudes. Instruments like Myers-Briggs have the potential to be useful, but often miss the mark when used in isolation.



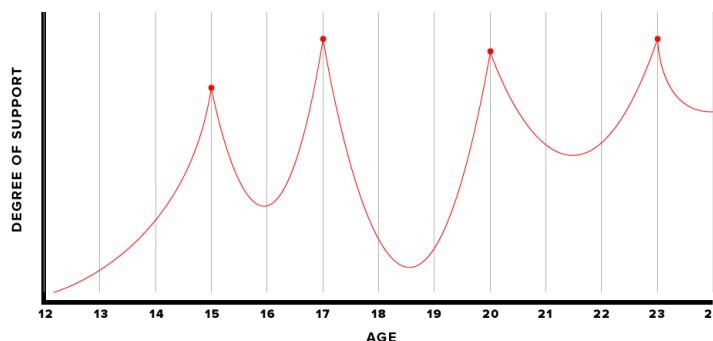
Most often, the issue of identifying aptitudes has not been addressed. Aptitude assessments are different from self-reported personality tests and interest inventories in that they objectively assess the innate potential to learn the skills required for particular types of study and work. The value of knowing one's aptitudes has been documented by academic research and has been recognized for decades (Feller, et. al. 2015). The diagram above depicts how knowledge of both aptitudes and interests leads to career choices that are both more satisfying and more successful.

A critical element and often missing piece of the way traditional personality and interest profilers are being used in our high schools is making the connection to careers. Students need to be able to apply these new insights to expand their vision of career options that optimize their aptitudes and interests. The ideal delivery system should present a breadth of best-fit career recommendations, incorporate current career and job data, and present related educational paths. Thus, the solution should not only put all these together but do so in such a manner that is synergistic and mutually reinforces understanding of their interrelationships. By using the system over time, students become more knowledgeable and make more informed decisions, not just about what courses in which to enroll or college majors to pursue, but how to be satisfied and rewarded by their work.

THE CONTINUOUS CAREER SUPPORT SERVICE: DIRECTION "ON-DEMAND"

For the important reasons cited in this report the system should be available by the 11th grade and easy for parents and school counselors to use during that important milestone. But the value of the information persists beyond high school, so the information should continue to be made available to the student as a bridge to college and beyond. The system has to be “on demand” and has to be highly flexible to meet student needs and accessible to people who are supporting the student. This requirement is consistent with the research on psychological

readiness (Norcross, 2012). Psychologists have learned that people are far more effective in following through on intentions when they are in the right state of psychological readiness. The challenge is that it is often unpredictable when an individual will be in a state of readiness. For example, a person might have no interest in careers, but hear a visiting speaker at school or watch a documentary and suddenly have the motivation or readiness to explore. Likewise, a career discussion at school with a counselor, or at home with parents or grandparents might be the spark. The need to tap into this resource spikes during the transition from high school to college and later on as important decisions face students about finding a job. There is an ongoing need for students, especially between the ages of 17 and 22, to be able to get access to the system to guide their academic work, to steer their career decisions, to bolster their confidence, and give them access to tools to identify careers that match their unique aptitudes and interests. The advantage of a flexible, cloud-based service is that it enables students to take advantage of their readiness whenever it emerges, and that need for academic and career direction has its first peak in high school.



Students need ongoing and timely access to career resources as they transition from school to work. This need spikes at critical times in high school, college and on the job.

EXAMPLE: FELLOWSHIP CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, *ROSWELL, GEORGIA*

Fellowship Christian School (FCS), an Atlanta-area college preparatory school, is one example of how a head of school and a counselor implemented a program that combines both aptitudes and interests while achieving the usability objectives. The experience thus far at FCS provides evidence that this approach works to fill the gaps.

Fellowship Christian has always used a variety of tools to gauge their student's personality and interests. Headmaster Kathy Teston, was looking for a solution more in line with the school's mission. Beth Buchweitz, the school counselor, found that the tools they used did not go far enough in providing personal feedback or in helping students confidently chart their academic and career path. Early in 2014, she and the FCS leadership team began looking for a more comprehensive service that would not only help their students, but would also set FCS apart from competing schools. While attending a conference, they discovered a new research-based program from YouScience. It was the only service they could find that combines aptitudes and interests, is engaging for their digital-age students, and accessible for long-term use.

Based on initial positive feedback and after further investigation of the science, the people, and intense development effort behind the YouScience program, Fellowship Christian expanded use of the YouScience Pinnacle Program and the YouScience Profile. All juniors now participate in the YouScience program as part of their comprehensive counseling efforts. Important to FCS is the range of implementation resources that make it easy for educators who manage the program to engage any number of high school students. It also assists in making important course selections and helps students decide on college majors. Ms. Buchweitz is convinced that the insight her students get from the YouScience Profile will help them graduate from college on time and improve career readiness.

Helping students understand their unique talents and providing them with resources to help them achieve college and career success has always been a priority for the administration and staff at FCS. However, they were somewhat surprised to see an immediate payoff to the YouScience program. The self-knowledge and aptitude language students learn from the YouScience Profile is giving them a competitive advantage. They are securing better internships than ever before and the college application and admissions process has been much less stressful for everyone involved. According to Ms. Buchweitz, because students better know who they are and can speak about themselves in an intelligent way, they are much more comfortable selling themselves when applying for college or a job. Finally, parents are delighted that FCS has been so proactive in helping bridge the gap between education and career. For Kathy Teston, that value means referrals and continued enrollments for FCS.

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