

Liberal Arts Job Search Guide



How Many of These Have You Heard?

Academs...

- Are failed SEs.
- Don't work as hard.
- Will never make more than \$25,000 a year.
- Can't even get jobs in the first place.
- Must go to grad school, med school, or law school to succeed.
- Can only work as consultants or investment bankers.

Fact or fiction? The sad truth is that many students, both academs and SEs, buy into these myths. Regardless of what the Rice culture dictates, they are simply not true. If you're feeling like a cop-out for majoring in English, don't. If your parents are freaking out because you've declared Philosophy, stay calm. The pessimism toward liberal arts majors is unfounded. Here's a reality check from the Rice Career Services Center (CSC).

Knowing What You're Worth

Students choose pre-professional degrees because they are "practical," "valuable," and "challenging." Sure, but who says liberal arts majors aren't any of those things? Your major may not have prepared you to work within a specific field, but it will teach you widely applicable skills that are transferable to the workplace. Employers want to hire you for these skills and because they also see you as creative, open-minded, and masterful researchers. Businesses like you because you're able to think critically, work well with people, make quick decisions, and possess excellent analytical and communication skills. "More than any other curriculum, the liberal arts train people to think critically about concepts and society, look at the big picture, and analyze cause and effect relationships, break an idea or situation into component parts and put it back together again," writes Robert Goodward, director of Publications for Liberty Mutual Insurance, Co. in his article "Why Hire Humanities Graduates?"

Your Selling Points

- Oral and written communication skills
- Analytical problem solving
- Ability to relate effectively to people
- Well-rounded background
- Tolerance of different points of view and lifestyles
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Budget management
- Supervising
- Public relations
- Coping with deadline pressures
- Negotiating/arbitrating
- Public speaking
- Writing
- Organizing/managing/coordinating
- Interviewing
- Teaching/instructing

Jobs and Academs: Myths and Realities

Despite what you've been led to believe, jobs for academs are plentiful and diverse. There are actually more jobs available to liberal arts majors than to technical majors, especially in the business world. Not only are there more jobs, but there is also a greater flexibility in career choice because of the versatility of the liberal arts degree.

So where are all these jobs, you ask? You don't want to be a consultant or investment banker, but it seems like those are the only companies Career Services caters to. Another myth? Well, to a certain extent this is true – the nature of the job market and selected industries prevents the participation of many companies from our most visible job search service, On-Campus Recruiting (OCR). Liberal arts recruiters don't visit campus as much as technical recruiters because most liberal arts jobs are often with small companies that don't have the resources for campus recruiting. They are also unable to project hiring figures and workforce needs as most larger companies can and, therefore, do not run on the regular hiring cycle On-Campus Recruiting provides. The jobs, however, are still available. Career Services offers a number of resources other than OCR for locating jobs. While there may not be as much structure (read: less of the "hand-holding" that goes along with OCR), you will find many more opportunities that are

often much more satisfying. The bottom line is that while a job won't just drop into your lap, there are plenty of them out there for the asking. It just takes a bit of work to find them.

Know Thyself

Liberal arts majors have the option of working in almost any field, from writing to politics to banking. With such a wide array of choices, it's extremely important to know exactly what you want from a job. If you're not really sure what you're looking for, it can be awfully hard to find it. But don't worry if you don't have a clear idea of the job you want yet. Take a moment to focus on the one thing you know the most about...yourself!

- Personality
- Interests
- Desires
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Skills
- Values
- Likes and dislikes
- Motivations

Thinking about these factors will help you pinpoint fields that fit your preferences. The more you know about what you want and what you can offer, the easier it will be for you to recognize suitable options. If this sounds like too much to tackle on your own, there are several books about the job search in the Career Services library containing worksheets and exercises that will produce the same results. You can also speak with one of the career counselors and arrange to take tests and inventories designed specifically for this purpose. Career tests focus on your interests, personality, strengths, abilities, and values, and they can reveal personal strengths that impact career satisfaction. They can be interpreted in relation to your individual needs and concerns through discussion with a counselor regarding recommendations and goals. See the section on Career Testing for more information. Whatever method you select, keep your test findings in mind when you enter the research process.

I've Got a Major. Now What?

“My goal is to have like...a career.”
From the film *Reality Bites*

Before you can even begin your job search, you have to know what fields interest you. Your self-assessment should

Famous Liberal Arts Majors

- Jill Barad, former CEO of Mattel, Inc.—English and Psychology
- Ellen Bravo, co-director of National Association of Working Women—Greek and Latin Literature
- Willie Brown, mayor of San Francisco—Liberal Studies
- Carol Browner, former director of Environmental Protection Agency—English
- Bruce W. Dunlevie, co-founder of venture capital firm, Benchmark—English
- Carly Fiorina, CEO of Hewlett-Packard—Medieval History and Philosophy
- John F. Kennedy, 35th president of the United States—History
- Brian Lamb, CEO of C-Span—Speech and Communication
- Cynthia Miller, United States diplomat—History
- Sally Ride, astronaut and first woman in space—English
- Harold Varmus, Nobel laureate in medicine and president and CEO of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center—English

have helped you get a clear picture of the type of job that would best fit your interests and needs. Remember that your major and future job title don't necessarily have to match. (Check out the list of Famous Liberal Arts Majors.) Liberal arts majors can work almost anywhere. The quest for a career may seem very daunting, but don't let the idea of it overwhelm you. While it is an important decision, it is far from permanent, and there is certainly room for change and adjustment. Did you know that the average college graduate changes jobs once every three years and changes career fields two or three times in a lifetime? (United States Department of Labor) If you haven't already tried it, career testing is another valuable option for exploring careers. See the section on Career Testing for more details.

It's easy to find information on careers, whether you look in career guide books, trade and professional journals, the Internet, or want ads. The Career Services library offers an extensive collection of books and publications about careers in a wide range of fields. These resources usually focus on general career descriptions and can give important information that will help in the career choice, such as requirements for the job, expected trends in the

field, etc. Some of the publications available include the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* and the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (in-depth descriptions of many occupations), VGM's *Careers For You* series (profiles of career options according to personality type rather than major or skill), and *What Can I Do With a Major In...* and *Major Options* (occupations listed according to majors).

The Internet is another excellent resource for researching careers. All kinds of information are available at your fingertips online, including sites devoted to the job search and career choices. You can get quick access to industry descriptions, career search advice, and links to helpful resources. Here are a few sites containing general career information:

- America's Career InfoNet — www.acinet.org/acinet — provides occupational and economic information about various careers, an employer database searchable by industry, and state profiles.
- Dictionary of Occupational Titles — www.oalj.dol.gov/libdot.htm — offers the same information as the published version.
- Occupational Outlook Handbook — stats.bls.gov/ocohome.htm — contains the same information as the published version.
- WetFeet.com — www.wetfeet.com — includes links for comprehensive industry search, company search, city research, and general job search advice.
- Monster.com — campus.monster.com — offers resources for the job search including articles, recommended books, links, featured interviews, tools, and advice.
- Vault Reports — www.vault.com — well-known site features company profiles and industry guides.

Career Testing

If you're still less than sure about what you want to do, Career Services offers career testing for more in-depth self-assessment and direction in your search. These tests focus on your personality and can help determine which fields are compatible with your strengths and interests. Here are three primary tests:

- **Strong Interest Inventory** compares a person's interests with the interests of people employed in a wide variety of occupations. It is used chiefly as an aid in making academic and career decisions and continues to be one of the most researched and highly respected counseling tools in use.
- **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**, based on Carl Jung's theory of perception and judgment, is a widely accepted measure of personality dispositions and preferences. Used in career counseling, it helps to identify

compatible work settings, relate career opportunities and demands to preferences in perception and judgment, gain insight into personality dimensions that provides the opportunity for greater decision-making ability.

- **16 Personality Factor Questionnaire** measures 32 traits of a normal adult personality along 16 dimensions. Used frequently in counseling, the computerized print-out and narrative report show how personality traits may fit into various career fields.

Counselors discuss the tests with you and help to interpret the results in terms of career options. You can charge these to your student account or pay cash or check. To be tested, call Career Services to set up an appointment with a counselor.

The Informational Interview

Possibly the best way to get the dirt on what a job is really like is to talk to someone already employed in that field – a process known as informational interviewing. It's usually best to begin by using referrals from people you already know, but it's also acceptable to contact a complete stranger. Try looking for names in annual reports, articles, textbooks, or the Alumni Contact Service. Aim for the busy and powerful. Don't interview people from the personnel department; unless that's where you want to work, they can't give you the information you need. Admittedly, it can be a little intimidating calling up someone you've never met and asking a favor from him or her. To ease the process, first send a letter asking if you can arrange an appointment and tell exactly when you will call to do so. That way, when your target answers the phone you can say that you have contacted him or her previously. Be sure to stress that you are looking for information, not a job, and mention that you are a college student. If they agree to meet with you, be sure to be on time, dressed nicely, and have a list of questions prepared. Remember that you are the interviewer here, and you're gathering information, not asking for employment. Request referrals to other people who might take the time to talk to you, and be sure to send your contact a thank-you note within 24 hours of the interview.

During your interview, be sure to cover the following issues:

- **Job description.** What are the typical responsibilities and duties of this job? What would a typical day be like? What do you most like about what you do? Least?
- **Qualifications.** What skills, education, training, attitude, or experience are necessary? What type of personality does it take to perform this job well? How well suited is my background for this type of work?

- *Work environment and conditions:* What is the psychological environment like? Will you have your own office? In what part of the country are you most likely to be located? Is frequent travel required?
- *Organizational structure:* What would your place be in the company hierarchy? Who would your boss be?
- *Entering the field:* Is there a training program, or do you have to work your way up from the mailroom? Is there a professional association for this field that you would recommend I join? Do you know the entry-level salary ranges for this type of work?
- *Earnings and outlook:* What are the typical long- and short-term earnings? Will opportunities in this field continue to grow? What are the toughest problems facing the industry?
- *Preparation:* If you were a college graduate today, how would you approach the career search in this field? What publications or periodicals do you suggest I read in order to learn current trends in this field? What kind of work experiences, paid or unpaid, do you recommend?
- *Contacts:* Who are some of the employers who hire entry-level graduates in this area? Where are they located? Do you know of employers who offer internships to college students interested in this work? How did you learn about this job? Is that the way others have learned of job openings in this field? Based on our conversation today, what other people would you recommend I speak with? May I have your permission to use your name as a referral in contacting them?

Alumni Contact Service

An extremely useful resource, the Alumni Contact Service (ACS) offers an electronic database of alumni who are willing to help students and recent graduates in the job search. It is located in the Career Services library. The ACS can be searched by city, major, or profession and provides all pertinent contact information about the alumnus/na, including office and home phone numbers and addresses.

These alumni are happy to hear from current students and are impressed by a good resume and initiative. They enjoy talking to students about Rice and are anxious to give advice about their career fields. You should send a letter, explaining that you received his or her name from the Alumni Office and would like some information about their job/career. Send along a resume, then follow up with a phone call one to two weeks later to set up an informational interview.

Intern! And that's a verb.

Interning is one of the greatest steps a liberal arts major can take to become attractive to future employers. The importance can hardly be overstated. It gives you the experience you need and the skills and knowledge employers want.

For one thing, any doubts about whether this occupation is for you will be quickly resolved. After spending several months immersed in a business, you'll definitely know whether you hate it or love it. The right match can get you on the path to landing a job that has just about everything you're looking for. (This is especially true for those who want to get into media communications. An incredibly competitive field, serving an internship is probably your best bet for getting your foot in the door.)

According to the Princeton Review, internships are "the most bankable credential you can put on a resume." Employers often look favorably upon applicants with internship experience, seeing it as a sign of maturity and competence. Employers are also aware of the high level of competitiveness of the internship application process, so they know a candidate with internship experience may well be the cream of the crop. Without an internship, you could

Top 21 Careers for Liberal Arts Majors

- Advertising/Public Relations
- Consulting
- Environment
- Film and Television
- Government
- Human Resources
- Human Services/Non-profit Management
- International Business
- Investment Banking
- Journalism
- Legal/Paralegal
- Library and Information Science
- Marketing and Sales
- Museums
- Physical Sciences
- Public Policy
- Publishing
- Research/Health Care
- Sports Management and Recreation
- Teaching
- Technical Writing

easily find yourself at the bottom of the applicant pool.

Internships can serve as a direct gateway to lucrative job offers, not just as a resume pad. Many companies who sponsor an internship program end up hiring their interns into full-time positions. For these companies, the internship program acts as a “bullpen” where they can check out prospective employees.

When deciding on an internship, you might want to ask yourself: What can be gained from this experience? What are the realistic, personal goals for you, the intern? What can an internship employer expect of you? What can you expect in return for time spent interning? Research during the selection process is essential for obtaining a quality internship. What is your ideal job? How well do your most valuable characteristics, talents, and interests meet that job’s criteria? Approach internship selection as you would a job. Begin to investigate different companies three to six months before you hope to intern. If possible, talk to someone who has interned there before you.

Once you have an idea of what is worth looking for in an internship site, you should begin to look for a supportive mentor at your preferred site. The key to making an internship work is choosing a mentor who will be a learning partner, providing practical training while having an understanding of your goals. This is an important element of interning. Don’t forget that you have something of value to offer this company or establishment – time and energy. Remember to show this dedicated and hardworking attitude to potential supervisors.

Career Services Resources

Your internship search should begin in the Career Services office. Career Services has a variety of services to assist you in landing an internship, as well as resource materials for internships outside our programs.

Joint Venture Liberal Arts Internship Program

Career Services coordinates an internship program, Joint Venture, which is specifically for liberal arts majors. Joint Venture offers internships in areas such as business, social services, publications and media, arts organizations, law, and events planning. Internships take place during the school year and involve a time commitment of 10 to 15 hours a week. Students have the option of earning three credit hours while they intern by enrolling in HUMA 295: Current Issues in the Workplace. New internships are often created for students with unique or unusual interests or needs. Some Joint Venture internship sites have included:

- Alley Theatre
- Anti-Defamation League
- Baylor College of Medicine
- Compaq Computer Corporation
- Dominion Films
- Fidelity Investments
- Houston Area Women’s Center
- Jeffrey Communications
- Merrill Lynch
- Salomon Smith Barney
- Style Publications
- 3D/International

RiceJobs/MonsterTRAK

Students also have access to a huge database of job postings, including internships, on the Web. RiceJobs/MonsterTRAK lists thousands of opportunities in every industry across the country at www.monster.com.

Other Ways to Gain Experience

While it is valuable, the internship is not the only gateway into the job market for liberal arts majors. If you haven’t decided what field you’re interested in and aren’t comfortable with your lack of direction, go out and actually work in different fields to see what you would like. The key is to get experience while you’re still at Rice, collecting those marketable skills that will make you a desirable candidate. If you’re interested in going into business, for example, work for a firm during the summer and take some accounting and management classes. Get involved in student government and community service to sharpen leadership skills. The same can be applied to writing, advertising, teaching, social service, publishing, or any other field you may want to enter. If you’re interested in writing, work for the school paper or a city newspaper. You can prepare for a teaching job through literacy programs and summer camps. Whatever your interest, if you prepare yourself and conduct an effective job search, you’ll be more likely to find yourself in the right place at the right time.

Getting the Job You Want

Now that you know what type of job you want, it’s time to find it. The liberal arts job search requires a little more initiative, but you will find there are several alternatives for job searching that will provide a great number of opportunities.

Evaluating the Organization

The same amount of time and detail you spent assessing yourself should go into evaluating the companies you are considering. The information you obtain will help in an interview as well as help you make informed decisions in your job search. You should gather as much information as you can about the organization and position, including:

- **Ownership** Public or private? Subsidiary or division of another company? Foreign owned?
- **Size and scope** How many employees? Small regional, national, or international in scope? Does it have offices or branches in a geographical location that interests you? New products coming out or new directions planned for the company?
- **Reputation** How long has it been in business? Any lawsuits or management problems recently? How well is the name known in the field?
- **Corporate culture** Each organization has a different corporate culture. What is comfortable for one person won't work for another, and being comfortable in a particular culture goes a long way in career satisfaction.
- **Your needs** Can the organization offer what you need? How many qualities do the organization and the position have in common with your dream job? What about training programs, commitment to continued education, advancement opportunities, and predictions for the future growth of the organization?

As you search, take notes and thoroughly research each company to which you plan to finally apply. There are plenty of Internet resources for this purpose. Look at

Factors That Help Liberal Arts Majors Get Jobs

- Know what you want to do...or at least sound like it.
- Get involved in the career development process early.
- Gain work experience!
- Identify your transferable skills and relate them to the world of work.
- Set career and personal goals.
- Be able to explain to employers the value of a liberal arts degree.
- Develop job-search and self-marketing skills.
- Take initiative to drive your own job search.
- Have realistic expectations.

company websites, government agency sites, trading and market sites, news and media sites, and professional association sites. You can also check out directories and trade journals, and don't forget the huge number of pamphlets, videos, and annual reports that the CSC houses. The information you gain will be helpful when writing cover letters and resumes, as well as during the interview process.

Job Searching Strategies

Advertised Vacancies

The Internet is an excellent place for liberal arts majors to search for jobs. Small businesses that otherwise wouldn't be able to advertise now post job listings here because it is less expensive. RiceJobs/MonsterTRAK is the place to find companies who participate in Off-Campus Recruiting, and most of these jobs are perfect for liberal arts majors. Like the OwlTrak program for On-Campus Recruiting, students may submit their resumes directly online through RiceJobs.

Several publications available in the CSC library also contain a number of job postings, sometimes targeting specific groups of students or listing jobs in specific fields. Some of these include:

- *Current Jobs for Liberal Arts Grads*
- *Environmental Opportunity News*
- *International Opportunity News*
- *Job Bank* – CSC's own collection of postings for part-time, full-time, and temporary positions

Advertised vacancies usually require that you submit a resume and cover letter. The company will then contact you for an interview. When applying to these jobs, make sure to take notes on the position, company, and important dates, such as when you submitted your resume and when your interview is.

Direct Mailing Campaign

If you have a definite idea of where you want to work, in what field, or particular area of that field, a more direct method may be the better option. In this case, you will be focusing on a specific location or company rather than a position. Most likely you will be making the initial contact.

If you have geographic preferences, target areas you might like to live in and find out which companies are located there. Good places to start looking are the *How to Get a Job in* (city name) series of books or the geographical index of the *Directory of Corporate Affiliations*. Most employment websites are searchable by state as well.

Research the companies and compile a list of about 10-15 companies that fit your preferences. Employer directories can give you information about a variety of enterprises, from foundations to corporations. They list an employer's name and address, product, geographic loca-

Job Hunting on the 'Net

- America's Job Bank – www.ajb.org/seeker
- Careerbuilder.com – www.careerbuilder.com
- College Grad Job Hunter – www.collegegrad.com
- Dice.com – www.dice.com
- FlipDog.com – www.flipdog.com
- Headhunter.net – www.headhunter.net
- Hot Jobs – www.hotjobs.com
- JobDirect – www.jobdirect.com
- JobOptions – ww1.joboptions.com/jo_main/index.jsp
- JobTrak – www.jobtrak.com
- Monster.com – www.monster.com
- Myjobsearch.com – www.myjobsearch.com
- NationJob Network – www.nationjob.com

tion, and other information, including size in terms of volume of sales, number of employees, and names of top-level executives. Some of the better directories are: *Dun and Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory* (lists names and addresses of thousands of companies earning more than \$1 million annually); *Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors, and Executives* (gives names and addresses of 260,000 leading executives by company and product); and *World Trade Academy Press* (lists U.S. firms in 85 countries). Company websites, Vault Reports at www.vault.com, Wetfeet.com at www.wetfeet.com, news publications, and career fairs are other good ways to get information about a company.

Once you've narrowed down your list of companies, write a targeted letter to each one requesting an interview. Make sure to tailor your letter to each company, and demonstrate your knowledge and interest in the organization. Follow up on the letter. By being persistent and taking the initiative in making contact, you can make yourself a more memorable candidate. Showing genuine interest in a company, even when it may not have an advertised vacancy, proves that you are serious about seeking a position. Employers will look favorably upon your research efforts and determination. Be patient. And don't give up!

Networking

Networking is especially important in today's world, where only 15 to 20 percent of job openings are advertised. Getting in touch with someone already in the business can be your best shot at getting a job. There are several places to start networking:

- Your friends, relatives, former supervisors, and professors. A good lead may only be a phone call away.
- CSC-sponsored trips to New York, California, and Washington, D.C., which offer the opportunity to network with alumni and contact companies in these areas.
- Career fairs where you can speak to company representatives and find out about positions. Ask about contacts in other departments you are interested in such as Marketing or Technical Writing. Make sure to collect business cards and follow up.
- Liberal Arts Career Day, which brings in people from a variety of fields to share information about their professions.
- The Alumni Contact Service. CSC's searchable database of Rice alumni from all over the world that have agreed to help Rice students with their job searches.

Once you've made these initial contacts, ask if they have any friends or associates who might be able to help you. Contact the people you've been referred to and ask the same questions. Your network can grow incrementally; somewhere in there, you're bound to find a few leads. Be sure to write down all information you get from a contact, and always send the person a thank-you note.

Five Rules for Networking

1. Be persistent. Call at the start or end of the day and don't give up if you don't get a response from someone after a few tries.
2. Send your contact a letter and resume before you meet. Be sure to thank him or her in advance.
3. Be flexible about meeting times. Remember that you're the one asking for help.
4. Be prepared. Come with a list of questions to ask.
5. Keep in touch afterward. Be sure to send a thank-you note and let them know if their information gets you any results.

Tips for Applying

- Develop an effective resume that clearly states your job objective and a cover letter that explains your interest in the company.
- Customize your cover letter and resume for each company to which you apply.
- Try a functional resume, focusing on skills, aptitude, and accomplishments.
- Always follow up until you are granted an interview or told in no uncertain terms that the company is not interested.
- If you use direct mailing, call to make sure the company received your resume.
- If you don't hear back within a couple of weeks, call to check on the status of your application.
- Be persistent AND polite!

Starving Artists?

Salary offers, class of 2000

Major	Average Offer Made	Average Offer Accepted
Anthropology	\$36,667	\$40,000
Art and Art History	\$32,833	\$33,250
Asian Studies	\$40,333	\$33,000
Cognitive Sciences	\$35,000	\$35,000
Economics	\$49,370	\$45,562
English	\$54,000	\$53,000
French	\$33,177	\$33,069
Linguistics	\$33,375	\$33,333
Managerial Studies	\$52,622	\$49,316
Philosophy	\$48,800	\$47,200
Policy Studies	\$38,044	\$36,684
Political Science	\$37,895	\$39,400
Psychology	\$37,900	\$40,333
Religious Studies	\$40,000	\$40,000
Sociology	\$43,813	\$46,720
Spanish	\$38,000	\$38,000

*Please be aware that many students carry a dual degree, which may explain higher averages in some majors.

From *Salary Report 2000*

Resources in the Career Services Center

Books

100 Best Non-profits to Work For
150 Best Companies for Liberal Arts Graduates
The Adams Job Almanac
Alternative Careers in Science
Federal Jobs for College Graduates
How to Get a Job in (city name)
Peterson's Job Opportunities for Business and Liberal Arts Graduates
Peterson's Job Opportunities for the Environment

Periodicals

Affirmative Action Register
The Chronicle of Higher Education
Current Jobs for Graduates
Earth Work
Environmental Career Opportunities
Houston Business Journal
International Career Employment Weekly
National Business Employment Weekly

Telephone Books and Directories

Directory of Corporate Affiliations
Dun and Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory
International Jobs Directory
Standard and Poor's Register
World Trade Academy Press

Other Resources

Alumni Contact Service
Job Bank

Rice University Career Services Center
2nd Floor Student Center
6100 S. Main Street-MS 521
Houston, TX 77005
Phone: 713-348-4055
Fax: 713-348-5270
<http://riceinfo.rice.edu/projects/careers>
