

Educational Options

Horizons in Hemophilia, Spring 2008

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High school seniors run into significant life crossroads each spring. The question echoing down locker-lined halls is the same for every graduate: What next? Some begin preparing as soon as possible for college or university options. Others may not be as interested in spending another four years in school. If you fall into this category, you may feel that your only choice is to head straight into the workforce after graduation. But if a traditional four-year college doesn't interest you, don't head off to work at the Chicken Hut too quickly. There are plenty of technical school options available to you.

The notion of focusing on a technical, industrial or vocational trade is a new concept for students whose high school strongly promotes a college prep track of study. This is especially true for students with special needs such as an inherited bleeding disorder. These students are often concerned with obtaining the necessary education that will give them the greatest potential for high-wage jobs with medical insurance.

But the truth is, university study is not the only way to get there, and the Georgia Department of Education knows this. That's why many Georgia public high schools are comprehensive, meaning that they also provide classes in such trades as cosmetology, drafting and design, video production, medical assistance and information systems.

Alternatives like these are perfect for preparing seniors with hopes of beginning a career as soon as possible. Most post-high school technical programs offering associate's degrees can be completed in two years or less. They are also cheaper. Technical schools usually require less cash to apply and charge less per credit hour. Beyond these perks, most students attending technical schools take classes within driving distance from their homes so they save mucho dinero just by living off-campus.

Technical schools are also a good choice for those who want to further their education but who may not be as academically competitive. Technical colleges only occasionally require test scores like the SAT or the ACT. And unlike the first couple of years at a university, technical school students begin immediate hands-on training. Emphasis is placed more on practice rather than theory. This means that you'll spend more time doing the job and less time reading about it.

While technical college is a great choice for many, there are others who would argue otherwise. Be aware that there are a lot of misconceptions about pursuing a vocational or technical degree. The most popular is that college is the best bet for the big bucks. But as university graduates learn, a college education does not guarantee a high income. In fact, one of the greatest contributing factors to one's post graduation financial success is the simple rule of supply and demand. The good news is that there are dozens of in-demand jobs that only require a technical degree.

Now for the question of the year: What's your real earning potential? According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006 average earnings for individuals with associate's degrees were above \$36,000 annually or about \$18 an hour. That's not a bad bunch to be a part of. However, for a person with special medical

needs, salary is not the only consideration. Choosing a job that offers a nice salary along with group health insurance is essential. You will need to ensure that your medical insurance will cover your annual clinic visits, medications, and emergencies.

Remember that your health will have to be a top priority even when choosing the career of your dreams. You should definitely avoid the occupations that, by nature, will put a strain on your joints or cause bleeds to become more frequent or severe. Like any job search, find out what the expectations are. Know your limits, but let them be the sky.

Look out for your copy of *The After School Special* which will provide key insight for making your after graduation decisions. If you have any questions, please call LaTroya at the HoG Office.