Distance Education: An Alternative to Traditional College

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"The mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be kindled." – Plutarch

The method of earning an accredited college degree by self-study through the mail or over the Internet, commonly called *distance education*, is becoming more popular as an alternative to traditional college. This unconventional approach to learning has many benefits, including:

- Greater control over course content
- Flexible scheduling, allowing more involvement in family, church, and community
- Avoiding immersion in a morally toxic campus
- Less financial burden, increasing the opportunity to save for the future
- Study methods patterned after "real world" work
- Course credit can often be earned through portfolio review and CLEP
- Actual work experience can be gained while studying
- Optional apprenticeship possible, leading to richer employment opportunities later on

Until recently, distance education was targeted mainly at adults who wanted to continue their education. Now many high school graduates are discovering that it is an excellent way to earn a degree as well. I was one of those high schoolers, starting a distance education program in 2001 and graduating last year with a four-year degree in computer science. By graduation, I had no student debt whatsoever and had gained over three years of job experience in my field while maintaining a strong relationship with my family.

I believe that home schoolers should seriously consider distance education for their high school students who desire to earn a college degree. My goal in this talk today is to equip you to make an informed decision about which distance education option is best for your student, and to take the next steps in choosing a college, adapting to the distance education paradigm, and so on.

Where to Find Distance Education Programs

Most state universities and local community colleges now offer distance education courses. These are often referred to as "continuing education courses." For example, colleges like N.C. State and Liberty University both offer courses which can be taken by mail or online. Even if a college does not offer a complete distance education degree program, you can take individual courses from that college and apply them towards a complete degree program at another college. In addition, there are many fully accredited colleges that offer degrees entirely by distance education such as:

- University of Phoenix (www.universityofphoenix.com)
- Thomas Edison State College (www.tesc.edu)
- Walden University (www.waldenu.edu)
- Capella University (www.capella.edu)
- City University (www.cityu.edu)

Books & Web Sites

Baker's Guide to Christian Distance Education **by Jason D. Baker**

An invaluable guide! The first half presents an introduction to distance education. The second half contains a list of colleges, books, web sites, and other references.

***Accelerated Distance Learning* by Brad Voeller**

Brad focuses on speed reading and other techniques for earning a college degree quickly. This wasn't the method I used, but the book still provides a wealth of information about distance education, including comprehensive indices of distance education web sites and accrediting agencies and a set of degree-planning worksheets.

***Distance Degrees* (see www.collegeathome.com)**

Index of colleges and law schools offering degrees online and by correspondence. An online edition of the book is also available at www.distancedegrees.com/online

***Brainwashed: How Universities Indoctrinate America's Youth* by Ben Shapiro**

Reasons why America's current college system should be avoided due to the corrupt moral climate. Written by a college student who has been through it.

www.uwex.edu/disted/ – Distance Education Clearinghouse

Course catalogs, lists of journals and organizations, details on course delivery methods, and a wealth of other information from the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

www.aacc.nche.edu – American Association of Community Colleges

Search for community colleges in your area of the state.

www.internshipprograms.com – Internship Programs

Search for internship positions throughout the United States.

News Stories

- **How Ohio State University is Marketing Evil**
  http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=49958

- **College Dorms Ban Bible Studies**
  http://www.newsmax.com/archives/ic/2005/11/2/142240.shtml

- **1 out of 5 college women will be a victim of rape**
  http://www.buffalostate.edu/bengalnews/feb2704/womenrape.htm

- **Graduated but Not Literate**
  http://insidehighered.com/news/2005/12/16/literacy

- **Colleges find drinking deeply rooted**
  http://www.newsobserver.com/689/story/436959.html

Distance Education Blog & Message Board

www.matthewbass.com/distance-education

I've set up a distance education blog with a companion message board. I plan to make periodic posts about distance education, apprenticeship, and other alternative learning techniques. If you have any additional questions or comments about distance education, I invite you to stop by!

Food for Thought

“As a student, once you've spent a few months watching dissenting Christians portrayed as maniacal skinheads or drooling extra-X-chromosome fundamentalists, after you've been assailed with in-your-face appeals to ‘fairness’ and ‘tolerance’ toward behavior you once knew was wrong, and upon realizing that you too will be reviled and persecuted – and made to fail in class, and thus in life – if you dare utter the moral convictions you once held, you change. You could call it adaptation for the purpose of survival, and it's usually unconscious, because you rationalize your conversion as ‘the right thing to do.’” – David Kupelian

“All men who have turned out worth anything have had the chief hand in their own education.” – Sir Walter Scott

“Colleges these days produce pieces of paper, not educated individuals. Unless you wish to work for a government or in a government-regulated profession … there is no longer any point to wasting four to seven years in a university system, and going into debt to do so.” – Vox Day

“A lot of fellows nowadays have a B.A., M.D. or Ph.D. Unfortunately, they don't have a J.O.B.” – Fats Domino

“It takes more than a college degree to make one a person of education. Any person who is educated is one who has learned to get whatever he wants in life without violating the rights of others. Education consists, not so much of knowledge, but of knowledge effectively and persistently applied. Men are paid, not merely for what they know, but more particularly for what they do with that which they know.” – Napoleon Hill

“…we have come to realize that for most men the right to learn is curtailed by the obligation to attend school.” – Ivan Illich

“I believe that school makes complete fools of our young men, because they see and hear nothing of ordinary life there.” – Petronius

“If you're going to blow $100k, you'd do better to buy your 18 year-old a Ferrari and let him drive that to his next job interview. Chances are, he'll get a better job armed with an automotive marker of success than with a degree.” – Vox Day

"Universities are one of the most hostile places for Christians and conservatives in America.” – ADF Senior Legal Counsel David French

“It’s great to have a son or daughter go to Harvard or Stanford. But in the big scheme of things, what you do with your life and how you treat others is much more important than where you go to school. Parents need to consider whether they’re looking out for the best interest of their kids or simply looking for bragging rights.” – Clark Howard

"College has been the default button on our child-raising menu for too long. It is almost a mantra in our society…We have reached the point where most families automatically push their children to attend college regardless of their sons' and daughters' interests, talents, and occupational goals." – Cafi Cohen