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, 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 in 2005 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 and Web Sites

***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.

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

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

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

Search for community colleges in your area of the state.

Internship Programs − www.InternshipPrograms.com

Search for internship positions throughout the United States.

The Distance Learner − www.TheDistanceLearner.com

This is a blog on which I make periodic posts about distance education, apprenticeship, and other alternative learning techniques.

Food for Thought

"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