



86% of College Students Say It's Important to Love What You Do

Yet Only 40% Are Currently Pursuing Their Passion as Their Chosen Field of Study

Oct. 28, 2021 (Seattle, WA) - According to a new survey from BestColleges.com, an overwhelming majority of college students agree that it is important to love what you do for a living (86%) and what you are studying (83%). However, only 40% of undergraduates are currently pursuing their passions, and only a third (34%) say they are studying their chosen field with a dream job in mind.

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<https://www.bestcolleges.com/research/students-believe-in-studying-what-you-love/>

When asked about the most important reasons for pursuing their current field of study, the most popular choice among students was career interest (42%). Less popular reasons include feeling called to the work (26%) and income potential within a particular field (26%). Men are more likely than women to say their chosen field's income potential is important (34% vs. 20%).

Most undergraduates are satisfied with their current field of study (85%). While 74% of college students report their chosen path will help make their dreams a reality, 68% say their chosen field is more realistic than idealistic.

"The fact that satisfaction is high is encouraging," said Melissa Venable, Ph.D., education advisor for BestColleges.com. "For many students, making their dreams a reality may involve more 'realistic' aspirations such as job security and financial success. Pursuing a passion may seem important, but it doesn't always provide the same benefits or align with an individual's work values."

Just 10% of students say they're not satisfied with their current field of study, with 4% considering switching to another field and 6% who don't feel switching is an option. More

than half (58%) of those who feel as though they cannot switch report that doing so would require them to lengthen their time in college, something they are unable to do for financial reasons.

Most students (62%) entered college having chosen the field of study they are currently pursuing, and 64% say their desired field of study impacted their college choice. About a quarter (23%) of college students say they were originally pursuing a different field of study upon entering college but have since switched to their current field. Popular reasons for leaving their former field include that it was not their passion (39%) and that it was too academically challenging (36%).

Among those who have switched their area of study while in college, students of color are more than twice as likely as white students to report leaving their former field because it was too financially challenging (21% vs. 10%). White students were more likely than students of color to switch because their former field did not academically interest them (31% vs. 23%) or because they discovered a completely new interest while in college (31% vs. 22%).

"Students should think of their chosen field of study as a place to start a career, not as a life sentence," said Dr. Venable. "They can expect their interests, passions, and strengths to change over time as they continue working and learning along the way."

Methodology

The survey was conducted from September 9-22, 2021. Student respondents were fielded by Lucid LLC. Survey participants included 1,000 currently enrolled undergraduate students nationwide. Respondents were 18-26 years of age, enrolled at a college or university, and pursuing a bachelor's degree. The respondents for the survey were screened by various quality checks, including systems like Relevant ID, and responses were manually reviewed to ensure consistency and accuracy.

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wide array of college planning, financial aid, and career resources to help students realize life goals and overcome educational challenges as they prepare for careers after college.