

THE MONEY CHAMP

FINDING YOUR STRENGTHS AND PURPOSE:

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Every person on this Earth has a purpose for their existence.

If you do not know your purpose in life, how will you know what to major in? How will you know what career field suits you best? How will you get through college without spending a fortune?

According to CollegeAtlas, 70 percent of Americans will study at a four-year college, but less than two-thirds will graduate. Regrettably, 30 percent of college and university students drop out after their first year. There are many reasons for this, but a major factor is that many of these students who left college were not in the correct field of study.

A student who does not feel fulfilled or motivated is just going through the motions and will have a harder time putting in the effort to succeed.

For example, reading is not high on my list of favorite activities, but I really enjoy reading books, articles, and blogs about things I am passionate about or that interest me because there is a purpose for the reading. While I am reading that kind of material, without even realizing it, I quit focusing on the fact that I am reading.

Another case in point— I absolutely hate to run just for the sake of running, but I love going outside and playing basketball, soccer, and football because there is a purpose behind the running.

When I am playing sports, again, I completely forget about the fact that I also am doing something that isn't my favorite activity; I am just out there having fun.

I firmly believe that a lot of student loan debt stems from people not knowing their “why.” Knowing your “why” is essentially knowing what makes you tick - your purpose and passion. As the old saying goes, “what do you want to be when you grow up?”

By knowing your “why,” you discover your purpose. Once you know and understand your purpose, the passion for operating in your purpose will erupt and consume you! It is also very important to surround yourself with activities, things, and people that will plant the seeds of empowerment and guidance, which will help cultivate your skills and talents to assist you in pursuing your goals in life based on your purpose and passion.

Discovering, cultivating, and operating within your purpose leads to fulfillment, which has enhanced the quality of life for millions of individuals.

Discovering your “why” will motivate you and give you a “new lease on life” mentality!

As I was growing up, my dad worked for Tennessee Valley Authority, so he always used to dress up and wear a tie to work every day. I knew that I wanted to wear a tie to work and I wanted to dress up, and I knew that I did not want to work in a factory. There is absolutely nothing wrong with working in a factory, but I knew from an early age it wasn't for me.

My inner core, dreams, and goals did not align with a factory position. It just was not in my DNA. I knew that I had a different calling on my life but, outside of that, I had no earthly idea what I wanted to do. My parents grew up in a time where education was preached and taught as the way to achieve your dreams and to have a good, pleasing, and comfortable lifestyle.

Both of my parents have degrees, so not going to college was not really an option. I do remember them telling me that college was not for everybody and if I did not go to college, then I would have to find a trade. Manual labor has never been appealing to me, so from that conversation on, I knew I was going to college! They always supported me in whatever I wanted to do, but I just knew that in order to have a good lifestyle and to be well-off like my parents, I needed to go to college, but I didn't know what to do.

As a child, I loved sports, and I did whatever it took to be the best, no matter the cost, time, or effort required.

There was no shortcut, easy way, or waving of a magic wand to be the best. I knew I had to make a sacrifice to put in the time and effort to be the best I could be—not always the best player, but that was my goal. In sports, I had the passion or love for it, with the purpose of being the best player out there.

I had a vision, clear direction, motivation, and perseverance because I knew exactly what I wanted. Unfortunately, I did not choose to put forth the same effort in searching and applying for college scholarships. I had no clear direction because I had no clue what I wanted to do with the rest of my life.

Without recognizing the purpose for the rest of my life, I was not passionate about much in college (other than meeting girls), so I had no clear direction or vision for my life.

No vision or clear direction resulted in no motivation or perseverance. I did not care, and it was much easier just to apply for a loan that would not be declined. All I had to do to receive a student loan was to wave the magic wand!

Jennifer Bouley, of Bouley-Mak Consulting and Coaching, shares her philosophy that “life is not what happens to you, it is about how you can prepare and make change happen.”

She and her firm are committed to helping people (particularly pre-college and recent graduates) find their passions and their best career. Numerous times, she has seen situations where a person has a natural skill set in one area—cooking, for example—to the point that they could have a career as a chef. Instead, the parents or the family (or even the student) are pushing that person to do something else - like business or going into a trade because that’s where the job prospects are.

Ms. Bouley reminds us that we are never truly guaranteed success in any line of work and, at the end of the day, you are the one living in your skin, and you have to deal with it. It’s not just about how much money you could make and whether or not you will get a job. No matter what you

study, you can always find a job in it...it is in how you go about finding it.

Also, if you are not currently studying or working in your passion, it does not mean that you can't pursue your passion on the side. You can have a career you love or a job you like or that meets your needs in other ways, and you can also have things outside of work (that you could also make into a career) that you pursue as well.

She gives some valuable insight into the process her company uses to help clients find their passion:

The first step is really getting down to the base values, the basic core: What are you interested in? What do you want out of your career? What do you see yourself doing in the next so-many years? We start to work to build a vision.

Our clients go through two or three different career tests, which results in a grouping of suggested careers and institutions. The tests chiefly give them an overview of potential pitfalls in their career and the best environment for their individual needs and desires.

Not every career is perfect, but it is good to know whatever the pitfalls are, and to think about whether they can work with that. Taking more than one test allows us to see what the similarities are between all of the test results, which may point to career possibilities that could be worth pursuing. Throughout the coaching process, our clients might have to go out and meet somebody, or they may have to go out and volunteer to see if they are going to like working in a particular sector. Especially when people are just starting into college, their minds are going at a million miles per minute.

They are just learning about all of the opportunities out there. So what they want to do is see what it is going to be like after they are done with college. I advise people to get started on LinkedIn as early as grade 12. Get on there and create your profile, even with just your "starter" jobs, then contact people! It looks really impressive when a young person wants to contact somebody in a more-professional field.

For example, if you are interested in going into accounting, contact some people who are in accounting in college, and even that are already mid-level in their accounting careers. Ask them if you can have a phone conversation with them—it's as simple as that. It is just typing an email and thanking them for taking the time to read it. You can tell them, 'This is who I am. This is what I am looking for, and I was wondering if I could have 15 minutes of your time to find out your career story, and what's it like to be in your job on a daily basis. This process will give you more of an idea if that is a job you would want to do or one you could not see yourself doing. This may feel uncomfortable at first, but it helps to remember it is your future you are investing in. Get started early. That is one thing I encourage young people to do—get started early. Get on LinkedIn. Don't wait until you're done with college. Get networking early.

You can learn more about Jennifer Bouley and the coaching her firm provides to college students at Bouley-Mak.com. The entire Money Champ interview with Ms. Bouley is available in the Bonus Material provided at the end of this book.

Career/Job Fairs and Job Shadowing

Once you begin to realize your interests and passions and have begun to discover your purpose, I highly recommend attending a career or job fair or doing some job shadowing.

College is much too expensive to go there and spend years “finding yourself” while racking up debt. You need to discover your “why,” and then pursue the knowledge and wisdom to determine how you can spend the rest of your life living out your purpose and getting a paycheck.

Attend career and job fairs to obtain the basic knowledge, and also in hopes of landing a job-shadowing “internship” or “apprenticeship.” By doing this, you will gain invaluable knowledge, wisdom, and experience and, most of all, you will be able to determine if the job or position is really for you. If not, don't sweat it.

Go back to the drawing board and take more time to really think about what your objectives are. Remember that this is your future, and there is no rush in completing the analysis. You want to make sure you take the time to get it right!

Purpose Leads to Productivity

In another recent podcast, I interviewed college graduate Sean Carney. In the following excerpt, Sean shares how he was able to find his purpose and finish school without any delays. Additional selections from this interview are found in later chapters, and the interview (in its entirety) is included in the Bonus Material at the end of this book.

TMC: At what point in your college career did you tap into your purpose and passion and figure out what you wanted to do after college?

Sean: When I came into college, I was dead-set on wanting to be a broadcast journalist. I was enrolled in Journalism for a year, but then I began to experience something that people told me might happen. They had said, “Sean, you might change. Don’t be afraid to change your purpose and explore your passion because when you go to college, you find out a lot about yourself and everyone around you and your interests.”

After the first year, I realized I did not really enjoy journalism that much and I did not really have a passion for it. I did some soul-searching and thought more about it, and I realized I had always been interested in marketing. So that’s when I changed my direction. From that point on, my sophomore year, I’ve really enjoyed marketing, and I really enjoy radio as well. I’ve stuck with radio throughout all of my four years here. The experience I have gained from putting radio and marketing together has been absolutely phenomenal.

Honestly, college now is just too expensive to be switching majors four and five times. Maybe once, but you definitely need to find your purpose and passion as quickly as possible, so you aren’t forking out a lot of extra money. Most people do not have the freedom to really take their time and figure things out because the more time they take, the more money they have to spend.

TMC: Regarding your purpose and passion, how did that fuel you to graduate in only four years? I don’t know a lot of people that graduate in four years anymore. A lot of people hang out for five or six or seven...or even ten years.

Sean: It can be difficult to graduate on time. I see that happening with a lot of people here. It is difficult to graduate in four years, but worse—how easy it is to just stop going to college! It is really easy to just withdraw. So in order to stay motivated, you have to have the right mindset about what a college education can do.

A few years ago, someone told me, “Sean, just get a degree. It doesn’t matter what it’s in. Just get a degree from college. It shows that you can do higher education, you can do higher learning and you are experienced enough to get through a part of life that not many people finish. You can actually finish a college education.” Those words really motivated me to not worry about figuring everything out in life, because every college student wants to just know everything about life as soon as they can. When you don’t worry about that stuff, when you just think about getting an education and about furthering your own self, that will get you through within four years.

That’s really what has kept me going. Even if you graduate college at the end of four years and don’t know if you are completely happy with the major you chose, it’s okay. You did a college education and you have a college degree now. That one achievement puts you ahead of a huge crowd of people that never even got to that point.

Excellent thoughts! We can see how finding your passion in life and having a goal to work towards can help you to stay focused....and hopefully save you a large amount of money in the process.

Selecting a School

Clarifying why you are going to college and the outcome that you hope for, can definitely help to narrow the list of suitable schools to consider. Other important things to keep in mind when choosing a school are the total costs, any financial aid offered by the school, and the overall value that going to that school will provide (i.e., the likelihood of graduation, employability data, etc.). Many services offer college rankings comparing this type of information, including Money Magazine and U.S. News and World Report.

Often, students (and their parents) just assume that they need to begin college in a four-year degree program without thoroughly considering the

implications or other possibilities. Many times, a four-year program will require students to accumulate much more debt than is truly necessary.

Pursuing a two-year program first, and then moving on to a four-year school would likely save these smart students much stress...and money.

One of the biggest factors in the cost of college is the school (or schools) attended. In general, enormous cost savings can be had by choosing to go to a community or “junior” college for the first two years, followed by a transfer to a four-year college, as community college tuition and fees are significantly lower. Each state subsidizes its community colleges to keep the cost affordable for as many people as possible.

Wealth adviser Joseph Carbone of Focus Planning Group notes, “If you start with a good two-year program, and then transfer to the school of your choice, you could save tens of thousands of dollars.”

Two-year community colleges generally offer the following advantages (compared to taking all of your classes at four year universities):

- Lower tuition (in-state tuition, subsidized by state or other programs)
- Lower cost per credit for individual classes
- Open admission policy
- Convenience and flexibility in class scheduling
- Earned Associate’s degree enables better employment if needing to work while later finishing at university
- Cost of student housing, meals, and transportation reduced by living at home
- Time for exploring options and choosing/changing majors at lowest cost
- Opportunity to increase GPA, if necessary
- Smaller class sizes for required general education classes
- Additional opportunities/sources for scholarships

For anyone concerned about a perceived loss of “prestige” by attending a community college for the first two years versus a private (or public) university for all four years, consider this: after that four years, your college degree will provide exactly the same amount of earning power, status, and “respect,” except that you will not have burdened yourself with two additional years of heavy student debt - a wise choice, indeed!

When choosing a college path, an essential consideration must be the actual cost of attending a particular school.

Unless there is a vastly compelling reason for choosing a more expensive school (or the luxury of help paying for it), the best choice is obvious—the least-expensive college (or combination of colleges) that will get the job done.

Choosing a Major

Another Money Champ podcast features Nick Angelis, nurse anesthetist and author. In the following excerpt, Nick shares how he was able to find his purpose and make it through both undergraduate and graduate school without taking on a dime of student loan debt.

Additional selections from this interview are found in later chapters, and the interview in its entirety is featured in the Bonus Material at the end of this book.

In my very first semester, I stayed undecided/undeclared just to make sure what I wanted to do. I really wanted to be an entomologist or a bug scientist, and then I realized that, in general, very few companies want to hire them. I was also into theatre and things of that nature, but that is not really something that you can make a living from very easily.

When I thought of nursing, I was thinking about the nurse stereotypes, and that really wasn't my style; but at the same time, I knew that I liked theatre and communication and science, and that nursing was sort of a blend of all of them. Then, in anesthesia, we do a lot of pharmacology and chemistry; there's a lot more to it than just nursing. Also, I saw that nursing was definitely growing as a profession, and I decided I want to be in a field that was starting a boom cycle.

So, I was undecided for the first semester, but eventually I decided to go for a bachelor's degree in nursing from

Youngstown State University. I ultimately got my master's degree in anesthesia from the University of Akron to become a nurse anesthetist, which is what I am employed doing now. I had gone to a private high school that was really challenging, so then by going on to a public college, the GPA really worked out in my favor.

That is one thing that, many times, people don't think about—when they go to a more expensive school, there is a lot more competition. You're not really going to stand out as much, especially in college where it really matters about the curve and who else is smart in your class.

One of the books I have written is called *How to Succeed in Anesthesia School (and RN, PA, or Med School)*, and that is one of my basic premises—that we're so hung up on education in our culture and going to the "best school" and getting the most out of it that a lot of times, we're not looking at the real practical side of it.

We need to ask ourselves, "What is the value of the education I'm getting? Is it really worth the money I'm spending to get this degree?"

As mentioned previously, this type of knowledge can go a long way toward helping a student determine his or her purpose and motivation for pursuing a college degree.

There is a smart way to approach the financial decision that is such a big part of college - by evaluating any intended major in light of its earning potential. Pursuing a degree that has a more limited earnings outlook is perfectly fine and in many cases desirable, if it closely aligns with a student's passion and interests. However, the "prudent student" will also tell himself this:

"If I know (or even suspect) up front that I am limiting my potential earnings by my career choice, I also need to limit my potential debt." To do otherwise is to invite financial disaster.

EDUsquared

In response to some of the difficulties prospective and current students face while determining which degree(s) to attain and which field to pursue—and as a result of his own college experiences—entrepreneur Daniel Haitz founded an organization, EDUsquared, dedicated to helping educate prospective students on how to go to college. It is an online video course that guides parents and students through that daunting process.

He notes, “When you are 18 years old in high school and thinking you might want to pursue physics or accounting or engineering as a career, nobody sits down with you and says, ‘Here’s what a physicist or an accountant or an engineer does.

Here are the top three jobs they go into. Here is how much they earn. Here’s what the unemployment rate is. Here’s what a day in their life looks like.” In response to this fact, Haitz affirms, “I think you need to teach kids how to go to college or at least - at the very least - what each degree does and how much they could earn with each one.

Up until now, there has not been a course specifically helping students evaluate college in terms of professional outcomes, effectively giving them the awareness of ‘here’s how I figured out why I should study the course I chose’.”

To illustrate how critical it is to learn this information and to make an informed decision, he likens choosing a major and a college to buying a car. “When you head to a car dealership to buy a car, you know you are going to spend the money to purchase a car. But suppose the car dealer wants \$20,000 from you before you even step onto the lot.

You don’t get to test drive the car. You don’t get to know what color it is. You don’t know how fast it goes. You don’t know how much it will cost to maintain that car, or anything else that would help you choose. But the dealer still wants \$20,000 from you.”

In this comparison, a student is already committed to pursuing a college degree, yet is asked to devote huge sums of money and time to the

cause, with limited real-world information to help them decide. A college education is one of the biggest purchases we make in our lives—the biggest investment we make in ourselves—yet we have been purchasing irresponsibly, without all of the facts.

EDUsquared is a fabulous resource for anyone looking at furthering their education. There certainly is a need for a central location that an eighteen-year-old (or anyone, for that matter) can visit to find out all the ins and outs of a particular job, helping them to decide if they want to pursue it. EDUsquared is the central location to find loads of information (on finding what the student's personal strengths are) and great strategies on how to minimize college costs.

The proprietary program of EDUsquared is divided into two parts - the College Solutions Course and the College Savings Course. College Solutions helps prospective students learn what is actually involved within particular careers and majors of interest, and it helps them to evaluate and match their individual strong points with the most-likely degrees or other educational choices (such as trade schools) for their strengths. It examines the general curriculum for the courses and classes the students might be required to take, the types of people that do well in that major, and the average salary and current unemployment rate for earners of that degree.

The program assesses the top three jobs for that particular field of study, post-school options, and what a typical person with that degree does on a daily basis. Students are also educated in the basics of student loans, the differences between types of educational institutions, the labor market outlook, and how cost of living interplays with salary in different geographic areas and markets.

Once a future student has individualized his or her options and set a likely course, the second module of the EDUsquared program, College Savings, is focused on how to drive down the cost of the individual options that the student has an interest in.

As part of this process, EDUsquared demonstrates to their clients how to fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form. This is a form that current and prospective college students generally submit to the government for each school year to determine their eligibility for

student financial aid, as well as their family's expected financial contribution for their education.

The FAFSA is a complicated form. EDUsquared gives a full explanation and guidance about each line item on this complex form and recommendations on ways to maximize the amount of financial aid received.

According to Daniel Hartz, a critical part of cutting the cost of college is school-targeting - identifying and focusing on the right school. Simply put, the general rule is that those students most likely to receive a scholarship from a particular school are in the top 25 percent of students that apply to that school in a given year. This is determined by a student's average GPA in relation to the prior year's class (top 25th percentile), average ACT and/or SAT scores, and any extracurricular activities. Further, once financial aid from a school has been secured, extra negotiations can increase the amount of savings.

Additional strategies to cut college costs are shared within the College Savings program, as well.

For more resources relating to determining your strengths and purpose for attending college, as well as excellent money-saving recommendations, the EDUsquared program is accessible at <http://www.TheMoneyChamp.com/edusquaredcourse>.

Future Earnings

A study of American graduates done by two researchers, Alan B. Krueger and Stacy Dale, replicated the findings of a similar study conducted earlier in Australia. Begun in 1999, the findings were released in 2011, and the study covered approximately 20,000 college graduates.

Krueger and Dale reached the conclusion that, from a future earnings perspective, it did not matter if college graduates had gone to Harvard or to Penn State, Princeton or Miami University at Ohio—the difference in earnings outcome was negligible. Effectively, a degree from the most prestigious university, compared to both “midlevel” and “high-level” universities only saw a three percent difference in earnings.

This begs the question, “If a student could get into Miami of Ohio or Penn State, which provide generous aid packages along with much lower tuition and a ‘negligible’ difference in ultimate earnings, why would anyone choose to take out \$50,000 per year in loans to get through Harvard?” In sum, determining your purpose and reason for attending college can help you choose the right college, potentially reducing the time actually spent in college and the money spent to do so, and ensuring that your degree will be as beneficial to you—and your future—as possible.

Much helpful information about discovering your passion and purpose, setting goals, and time management is available outside the scope of this book. I highly recommend availing yourself of resources to develop these important life areas.

Wisdom from...DEBT-FREE HERO Carrie Paetow

Growing up, I saw my family’s struggles about money, and I knew that I didn’t want that struggle. At the time, I didn’t really understand that what people need to do is create a budget but, ultimately, that is what I ended up doing. I knew that I could not spend more money than I had in the bank, and I knew that when I received a bill, I needed to pay it.

When I saw the number owed, I knew that if I didn’t pay it, there would be interest and I would end up paying more... and I did not want to give anyone more than I needed to. I knew that I needed to be focused on getting through school as soon as possible, but I went into my freshman year undecided and unsure, thinking I might like political science.

A friend of mine hosted a radio show on the campus radio station. Another friend of mine and I listened to the show, and we realized we wanted to do that too. We went to the radio station the next day and applied for a show—we had a wonderful time doing our weekly show. Then I

discovered that there was a campus TV show, and that also appealed to me. Truly, I had no idea why these things appealed to me because they really hadn't until I got to college.

I was involved in the campus TV show and, over time, I tried every single position: the teleprompter, writing, editing, and shooting. We hosted a mini-segment. Then I eventually worked my way up and became the host of the show. I worked on both the radio and television shows for five years.

During my years at college, I worked four or five jobs, studied, participated in track, field, and collegiate 4-H, and I hosted the campus TV and radio show. I essentially worked around the clock to save money, but it definitely paid off because I did not have to take out student loans. I have grown up a lot recently. I think, before, I was just a clueless kid and had no idea what I was doing. I feel like people going to college now know a lot more than I did and understand things a lot more than I did.

Regardless, there is a lot of trial and error, and I'm learning as I go. Honestly, I still don't really know what I want to be when I grow up! I'm still searching out and discovering some of my passions and interests. I believe some things are very important for students during their time spent in college: finding a mentor, envisioning their future, doing their research and having fun!

Cultivating relationships is so important. Every single job or opportunity I have had is because I knew someone and fostered and nurtured that relationship. The saying, 'It's not what you know.

It's who you know,' is so true. Surrounding yourself with motivated and goal-driven individuals—the people that are inventing new things and on the cutting edge, the people that are driven—those are the people to surround

yourself with and partake in their energy; they will help you be successful.

Envision what type of lifestyle you want. I just did not think about this. For example, after ten years in television, I have realized I don't want to wake up anymore at 2:00 in the morning. My family and my lifestyle and my health are much more important than my job. Maybe that is not for everyone, but it's what I have discovered for myself.

Those odd hours during the weekend are just not for me. Research all kinds of careers, and figure out the basics. Aside from the money aspects, when does that job require a person to work, and what types of things will they be called upon to do? I believe in job shadowing. Internships are very important, but job shadowing can have benefits for research—on a much shorter schedule.

Asking someone whose job you are interested in if you can “shadow” them for the day can yield a great experience, and it only requires a day or two of that person's time versus a many weeks-long internship.

Another critical aspect of research is college costs and financial aid. For me, it worked best to attend a less-expensive school; I saved \$9,000 per year over going to a state school, which was huge. However, that is not for everyone. If you have your heart set on a certain university, you will figure out a way.

Finally, have fun. You can invest in your future and be goal-driven, while still having fun and traveling and doing the things that you want to do.

College is a great time to meet people and have fun, study abroad, and experience all the opportunities that you can.