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## Finding Student Pathways to their Future

### *Identifying abilities and aptitudes to help students map their future*

Do you know a student bound for college who cannot select a major and hasn't settled on a career? We all know someone in this situation, perhaps including ourselves as students. It is not uncommon for students to face the dilemma of planning to attend a four-year college but having no idea what they want to do with their lives. How then does one make a decision on where to spend the next 4 to 6 years preparing for an undefined life?

The ever-rising cost of higher education makes it critical to focus attention to this question. Obviously, it would be best to make an informed major and career choice before selecting and attending college, but how? Many rely on guidance counselors that assess interests, academic standings and personality. Others rely on their parents own limited experience to guide the decision. All too often this narrows the scope of the possibilities, leading to missed opportunities that could lead to a rich, fulfilling life.

With over 3,400 U.S. colleges and universities offering over 230 majors, the choices can seem overwhelming to even the best informed student. How can the students – and their parents – meet this daunting challenge?

Many students are counseled to pursue majors in which they have interest. But interests are often fleeting, particularly in the information age in which we live. Interests are often influenced by those around us and can change as one gains knowledge and experience. Is this the best criteria for young students to make the most important decision of their life?

An alternative approach is to rely on individual aptitudes rather than interests. Aptitudes are natural talents - special abilities for doing or learning to do certain kinds of things quickly and easily. Unlike changing attributes such as knowledge, interests or education, aptitudes are hereditary. Such inherent roots help them remain stable or unchanged throughout life.

Aptitudes can be tested, and there are organizations that provide families with such a service for their college-bound children. Aptitude testing provides an objective assessment of abilities, independent of one's work, educational history, interests, or self-estimates. This helps people focus on personal strengths, guiding them into related directions more suited to natural abilities.

By providing our children with a sense of direction, it becomes easier to narrow down the many alternatives for majors, colleges and careers. This can only improve the chances to find a satisfying niche in life.

The Campus Pathway team has identified an organization in the San Francisco Bay Area that provides aptitude testing designed to help students select the



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best path to college and beyond. Johnson O'Connor Research Foundation is a nonprofit scientific research and education organization with 11 offices nationwide. Their commitment is to study human abilities and to provide people with awareness of their aptitudes that will help them make decisions about school and work.

Johnson O'Connor has been testing hundreds of thousands of people since 1922. Their aptitude test is performed in two sessions, each about three and one-half hours long. The testing consists of doing a wide variety of timed tasks such as assembling blocks, remembering numbers, solving puzzles and listening to simple tunes. Paper and pencil tests are kept to a minimum. A third appointment lasting approximately an hour and a half is required to review the results with a counselor. The fee for the test is \$600, surely a bargain when books for one college semester can cost the same amount.

This set of revealing tests can help identify a direction a student should explore for their major or career. We have sent dozens of students and never had a parent or student disappointed with the experience. It is important to remember that this service identifies strengths and weaknesses and suggests jobs that will most likely be fulfilling. It is not a career-counseling center. They do not identify an exact job to pursue but rather give suggestions of fulfilling career paths. They do identify careers from which to steer away.

Students armed with the knowledge of their abilities and awareness of their aptitudes make better decisions for themselves as they choose their initial life paths. The information will instill the confidence to wisely select their majors, colleges and careers. Chances soar that they will love the subjects they take in school and the jobs they pursue in life. And when someone loves what they do, they often do it well, leading to a more successful, happy and fulfilling life. What a priceless gift!

### **Johnson O'Connor Research Foundation**

Website: <http://jocrf.org>

#### ***Additional articles written on the foundation:***

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB118660771017492142.html>

<http://www.jets.org/latestnews/JOCRF-article.cfm>

<http://discovermagazine.com/2007/may/blinded-by-science>

<http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/01/goodat.html>

[http://www.ccsf.edu/Events\\_Pubs/Guardsman/s980515/cps01.htm](http://www.ccsf.edu/Events_Pubs/Guardsman/s980515/cps01.htm)



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[http://www.investorsinsight.com/forecasts\\_va.aspx?EditionID=547](http://www.investorsinsight.com/forecasts_va.aspx?EditionID=547)

<http://www.timeout.com/newyork/DetailsAr.do?file=/chillout/440/440.chill.feet.html>

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