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Liberal Arts or Home Economics?

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Which Do You Want - -

by Helen Hays

Liberal Arts Senior
University of Iowa

Helen Hays, a senior student in speech pathology at the University of Iowa, tells us why she chose a liberal arts school. She is a member of Mortar Board and was recently chosen honorary colonel to reign over the University of Iowa's Military Ball. After she is graduated this spring, Helen is planning to work in the East.

CHOOSING WHETHER to go to a liberal arts or a more specialized school is mostly a matter of personal opinion, and each individual must weigh the advantages and disadvantages according to her own needs. I have attended a liberal arts university for three and a half years and am convinced that much is to be gained from a varied curriculum as is offered in the liberal arts school.

Undecided on majors

"It is estimated that approximately one third of the students who enter college are undecided as to which major they wish to take. Others have a tentative major selected, but discover new fields and change their majors during the first two years of college. If these students are given a general background in their first two years, it is possible for them to investigate many fields and make a choice which is founded on knowledge and experience.

"Also, since each student usually has more than one interest, a system which allows many electives enables him to expand his knowledge in fields which run a close second to his major field in interest.

Recent trends show that many employers are looking for persons with a broad general background. Many firms have set up specialized training programs for employees, giving them concentrated vocational instruction following their employment. The people they want are those having broad backgrounds since they feel these people will be better equipped to handle a variety of problems. In this way, we can think of liberal arts training as a type of vocational training, also.

"Since our lives are greatly influenced by our ability to work and live with others, understanding other people becomes important. Even though a complete knowledge of a field can't be obtained through one or two courses, it can enable us to understand the problems faced by those in that field, as well as the methods used to solve them.

Responsibilities as citizens

"Citizens of a democracy have many responsibilities. The person who has broad interests may be able to take a more active part in community functions. Since interest groups in a community are usually made up of people with very different backgrounds, the person who is able to discuss a variety of subjects has a distinct advantage in such a group.

"A final advantage should be considered by college students who someday hope to become parents. In order to provide a rich heritage of knowledge and well-developed principles of guidance for your children, it is necessary to have a broad educational background. Shaping a child's personality is a grave responsibility and the parent who can encourage interests in a variety of areas is well qualified to enrich his child's life immensely."
Or Home Economics?

The specialized home economics school is more desirable to Nancy Voss, and here she tells us why. Nancy is a junior in the Department of Technical Journalism at Iowa State College and is taking her minor in Foods and Nutrition. She plans to combine writing with homemaking after she is graduated a year from June.

"Since the majority of young women plan someday to be housewives and raise a family, I feel it is more important to train for this job in life than for the often more temporary jobs such as the social worker's, teacher's or the commercial job.

"Most women spend from five to ten years at the most working before they begin to raise a family. They are a wife and mother for many many more years than this...a job that takes more common sense and training than any other job because it is so important and so much depends on it. If we aren't good homemakers, we are not only failing ourselves but our families as well.

"Our grandmother claimed it was "second nature" for a woman to be a good homemaker and raise a family well. She got what training she had from her mother. But judging from the general world conditions today and the preponderance of juvenile delinquency and unsettled families, our grandmother's "second nature" could have used some help.

More than good homemakers

"The specialized school like Iowa State trains women to be more than just good homemakers. In its core curriculum, it includes courses in foods and nutrition, household equipment, clothing construction and textile purchasing and in child development. But it also recognizes the fact that these fields alone can't develop a well educated woman and that a broader knowledge is necessary. For this reason, the core curriculum also includes courses in economics, history, the sciences, sociology, psychology and others. Still wider opportunities are offered in the specialized school through electives such as religion, music and art courses. Thus, the home economics graduate has a concentrated knowledge in her major field plus a general knowledge of many other fields.

Career opportunities

"Some women don't marry and prefer to continue in their careers. Home economics provides many opportunities for interesting and well-paid jobs for these women, too. When you graduate with a home economics degree, you are ready to take a job in your major field without any further training. True, the concentrated training programs offered by many firms after employment are helpful, but such fields as dietetics, household equipment and other technical fields require years of study and training which cannot be crammed into a short orientation course. Such courses should merely adapt these years of training and study to the immediate situation.

"As citizens, we do have many responsibilities, and it is up to us to meet these responsibilities. But where is a better place to begin than training and learning to provide better homes and more stable families for future generations? A rich heritage of knowledge and well developed principles of guidance are necessary, but they are useless unless we know how to apply these principles.

"It is, of course, a matter of personal choice as to which type of school you choose... liberal arts or specialized. But if you're looking for a field which trains you both for a career and for homemaking, one that is satisfying to you and yet serves others, then home economics is the field for you."