On a bench at the heart of campus sits a statue of Penn’s founder, Benjamin Franklin, journalist, entrepreneur, scientist, and statesman. In this familiar pose, he appears dignified, accomplished, and wise.

But he wasn’t always the venerable figure we have come to know.

On 33rd Street stands a lesser-known image, Young Franklin. With his future still undetermined, he appears eager and curious, caught in mid-step as he moves toward the unknown. Like young Franklin, you are on the move, learning new things, participating in new activities, meeting new friends. Your future, too, is unwritten.

Franklin’s passion for what we today call “liberal learning”—that is, intellectual curiosity applied to a wide field of intellectual inquiry—lasted throughout his life and sustained his success in a variety of fields. A broad education in the arts and sciences will be your strongest tool in preparing for the career twists and turns that await you. Although some may caution you that a liberal education is too “impractical,” building this wide base of knowledge is actually the most practical way to prepare for the countless and unexpected opportunities that lie ahead. This broad perspective, paired with the critical skills you develop here, will assure your success wherever your education or career aspirations may lead.
A world of success

What careers come to mind when you think of an arts and sciences graduate? Teacher? Scientist? Writer? Yes, alumni of the College at Penn do go on to all those careers. But what about financial analyst, foreign correspondent, entrepreneur, head of a foundation, White House staffer, and actress? Our alumni have done all that and more. And they are paid well for their work. As depicted in these charts, a 2001 survey of the class of 1986 and 1987 15 years after graduation showed that their median salary was $112,000 and their mean salary was $164,000. Of course, financial success is not the primary benchmark of either a successful education or a successful life, and many of our graduates choose careers that are less lucrative but offer rewards such as personal fulfillment, public service, or the pursuit of a dream. The survey also showed that 85 percent had subsequently earned a graduate degree, proving that these four years are not likely to be your last chance to prepare for your careers.

As you begin to think about your own career, we have gathered for you the stories of several College alumni. They share a common grounding in the arts and sciences, but they went on to success in widely divergent careers.

Fields of graduate study

Employment by industry

COLLEGE ALUMNI IN THE CLASSES OF 1986 AND 1987 HAVE COMPLETED GRADUATE STUDY IN A WIDE RANGE OF FIELDS. EIGHTY-FIVE PERCENT OF THOSE WHO RESPONDED TO A 2001 SURVEY HELD GRADUATE DEGREES.

All data furnished by Penn’s Career Services
When Katherine auditioned to study drama at the Juilliard School nearly a decade ago, her lack of stage experience surprised the head of the school. “He couldn’t figure out why I was good,” she recalls, because “nothing [on my résumé] would indicate that ... studying this in a chair in a classroom,” she told her interviewer, “and I want to get up and bring these words to life.”

“I had an understanding of the history of the drama, the style of the piece, the writer’s life—a whole world of knowledge that other people walking into audition rooms don’t have,” she says.

Now a successful actress, Katherine, whose stage name is Kate Jennings Grant, has had roles on Broadway, off-Broadway, and on television programs including JAG, Law and Order, As the World Turns, and Sex and the City. Her most recent role was in an off-Broadway production of Summer of ’42. She remembers that as a student she felt less secure about her options. She felt pressure to focus on something considered more “productive” in a field that did not interest her. She’s glad she studied with English and a minor in music-composition theory, both of which she says she uses every day in her professional life.

“We live in a world that [exerts] so much pressure to make money,” she says. If you focus on that to the exclusion of everything else, Katherine warns, you could miss what you really want. “You will be most successful following your passion. Get the best education in a subject that excites you, and you will never have to worry about making a living.”

The best way to prepare for all that lies ahead is to take a wide variety of courses. Study what you love. Study what arouses your curiosity. Be adventurous: learn about new sciences, foreign languages, and ancient cultures. Learning is never wasted; it is an investment in your future.
According to Mitchell, one’s career is like a marathon without a predetermined course. Mitchell’s own winding course began with what he calls “a rudimentary interest in psychiatry” and eventually led to the medical profession and then the venture-capital industry. He is now executive partner at J.P. Morgan Partners, the investment arm of one of the world’s largest private-equity firms. How did he get there from Locust Walk?

While a student in the College, Mitchell created his own course of study, which was the precursor to today’s biological basis of behavior major. He studied what he considers “an incredibly rewarding mix of disciplines, from anthropology and sociology to philosophy and statistics.” Once he got to medical school, he became more interested in internal medicine than psychiatry. During his residency, he discovered that his arts and sciences courses had made him particularly well balanced in his interactions with patients.

As he finished his residency, he became drawn to the financial side of health care and went to the Wharton School to obtain an MBA as part of a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Fellowship. He says that his liberal arts background gave him unique experiences that were not available to his Wall Street colleagues who had pursued a core business-school education. He has often applied the scientific method to challenges in business and feels that the ability to think broadly creates an incredible advantage in the business world.

“My advice is not to be too rigid about a plan for a career endpoint early in one’s educational experience,” Mitchell suggests. “There’s plenty of time for the gaps to be filled in later. There may not be another good opportunity to study Greek literature or philosophy.”

Is an education in the liberal arts and sciences truly a practical preparation for your future? Yes! You’re likely to change career paths six times during your life. That means not only a change from one employer to another, but also a shift from one industry to another and from one skill set to another.

A broad foundation in the arts and sciences is your best preparation for these wide-ranging opportunities. A narrowly focused education, no matter how good, is no longer adequate in today’s ever-changing job market.

Be open to possibilities

"Where you are at mile 3 may be very different from where you find yourself at mile 8 and so forth, all the way to 26.2.”
When Sharon was a freshman, she had a work-study job in an organic chemistry lab. With her love for science and math, she says, “I was in seventh heaven! I was immediately immersed in the type of intellectual work community that I had only dreamed of.”

And yet, those dreams were constantly challenged. Sharon says that employment prospects in the chemical industry were bleak in her college days. Several friends warned her against enrolling in a chemistry major, saying, “Do the ‘safe’ thing.” She says, “As daunting as it was to face considerable peer pressure to do the ‘safe’ thing, I knew enough of myself and my passion to resist the lure. I have not had a single regret.”

Sharon went on to earn a doctorate in chemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She worked at Bell Laboratories for three years then moved to Dupont, where she has been a researcher ever since.

Do what you love

As you build your career, you are determining your way of life. A good salary is one important consideration because it will make your life easier, more comfortable. But your career can enhance your life in other ways as well, by providing a sense of purpose, intellectual challenges, and a feeling of achievement and satisfaction.

“Should you find yourself out of love with your current work, then take the risk and JUMP! FLY!—whatever it takes to pursue the things that really feed and nurture you.”

“Thankfully,” she says, “I’m very stubborn and I knew enough of myself and my passion to resist the lure. I have not had a single regret.” Sharon went on to earn a doctorate in chemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She worked at Bell Laboratories for three years then moved to Dupont, where she has been a researcher ever since.
When Rebecca was expecting her first child, she went shopping for a navy-blue business suit, but she couldn’t find anything appropriate for a computer executive to wear to work. This experience inspired her to start her own maternity-clothing company, Mothers Work, which began as a mail-order catalog operating out of her apartment and now has 750 retail stores across the country.

In her book, *Mothers Work: How a Young Mother Started a Business on a Shoestring and Built It Into a Multi-million Dollar Company*, Rebecca describes her multifaceted responsibilities as a small-business owner. She drew on everything she had gleaned from her liberal arts education to keep her fledgling business afloat. She had to think creatively, she had to conduct research, she had to make projections, and she had to communicate effectively with her customers and her suppliers. And she did all of it without specialized training.

“I had a very eclectic, try-everything approach when I was at Penn,” Rebecca says. “I had no idea that I would do what I’m doing now. I was going to be an architect, but I think the process of trying things and being willing to experiment is what being an entrepreneur is all about.”

“Don’t lock yourself into anything,” advises Rebecca, who was a construction engineer in her first job. She says you should never think, “Oh my gosh, I’ve invested a whole year in studying math so I have to be a mathematician. That just isn’t true.”

Rebecca Matthias

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Founder and President, Mothers Work, Inc.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Graduation Date</td>
<td>1975</td>
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<td>Major</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
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<td>Favorite Class</td>
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<td>Student Activities</td>
<td>Squash, duplicate bridge</td>
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<td>Current Activities</td>
<td>Sit on the Board of Overseers of Penn’s School of Arts and Sciences and on the Board of Trustees of Drexel University</td>
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Weigh a course not by its value for your first job, but by its value for a lifetime of learning and change. A wide variety of courses will not just prepare you for a variety of career opportunities. They will also enrich your life with an appreciation for art, music, literature, and cultures other than your own.
In his first teaching job through Teach for America at one of Houston’s poorest public schools, Michael was discouraged by his students’ slow academic progress. He felt compelled to change this. Armed with just a small amount of teaching experience, a few ideas for improving teaching and learning, and a lot of enthusiasm, he and another young teacher decided to address the problem.

They created a public school called the KIPP Academy. The Knowledge Is Power Program is a rigorous middle-school program for students who are at risk for academic failure. They enter the program in the sixth grade, attend a full day of classes, and in the evenings, do homework and check their homework each night. There are now two KIPP schools, one in Houston and one in the Bronx. Despite their locations in severely disadvantaged school districts, their students consistently place highly in statewide testing and receive scholarships to elite high schools. Because of this success, Michael’s ideas are being replicated in several cities, and he now leads a foundation to help make this happen.

The former international relations major began this quest knowing very little about educational reform. But his ability to think critically allowed him to go from new teacher, to school director, to the head of a foundation. “Sure, I knew a little bit about a diverse group of subjects with my international relations major,” he says. “But more important, I learned how to learn, I learned skills that allowed me to learn business skills, as well as life skills and management skills. All that can be attributed to having a well-rounded base of education.”
Ron Allen is NBC News’ London-based correspondent, covering major news stories from Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. He has been a journalist for more than 20 years, holding high-profile positions at CBS, ABC, and NBC and earning many awards, including four Emmys.

Ron says journalism was not a lifelong dream. As a student, he had no idea what he wanted to pursue. His father, a businessman, assured him the road to success required studying something “practical” and finding a position as a management trainee at a big company. However, Ron’s curiosity about the political system, civil rights, and foreign affairs eventually drew him to major in political science. He thought he might one day become an analyst for a government official. However, as a result of a job fair shortly after graduation, he was offered a job as a desk assistant at CBS News. And that’s how he discovered journalism.

Ron says that being a journalist never crossed his mind as a student. He never took a communications class. He never worked at The Daily Pennsylvanian or WXPN. However, he feels that his political science background prepared him well for his eventual career as a correspondent. He says, “Good journalism is basically good social science research and analysis.”

Ron says he reports on many of the same sociological and economic issues he studied as a student. He says preparing a news report is similar to preparing a paper for a professor. “The process is basically the same,” he says. “Confront a complex issue. Break it down. Explain it to someone.”

As you begin to envision your career, it’s useful to seek advice from others. In the end, however, the choice is yours alone. A career path that gave someone else great fulfillment may not offer the same for you, so don’t be afraid to explore other alternatives. Who knows what unique experience might lie in store for you?

Make your own choices

As you begin to envision your career, it’s useful to seek advice from others. In the end, however, the choice is yours alone. A career path that gave someone else great fulfillment may not offer the same for you, so don’t be afraid to explore other alternatives. Who knows what unique experience might lie in store for you?

“I didn’t want to do something traditional. I always felt that there was something else out there, and I think that my education helped me discover that.”

Ron Allen
Correspondent, NBC News
1979
Political science
Political and economic development of Eastern and Western Africa
Freshman basketball team, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, president of Onyx Honor Society
Travel, tennis, photography, and physical fitness

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Correspondent, NBC News
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Freshman basketball team, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, president of Onyx Honor Society
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From her first communications job at a Washington political advocacy organization, Melissa went on to become press secretary of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Democratic National Committee. She then became deputy director of communications for Vice President Al Gore at the White House and is now director of communications for the Broad Foundation, an educational philanthropy in California. What gives her the flexibility and confidence to offer communications advice to such varied and distinguished groups? She attributes it to the broad knowledge and critical skills she acquired in the College.

“Penn gave me the confidence to walk into a room and advise a vice president of the United States or a Fortune 500 tycoon.”

Of particular help in Washington, Melissa says, were her psychology courses, including an independent study on learned helplessness with Professor Martin Seligman. Melissa says that psychology “gives you an understanding of how people think, their motivations, and their thought processes, so you can communicate your point of view more effectively.” During college she says she “read books that expanded my mind and view of the world,” learned to write well, “I think is probably one of the most important skills you can take into the work world,” and learned to think creatively.

Enhance your skills

Your arts and sciences courses are an opportunity to hone the critical skills you will need every day in your professional life. Your course work will improve your writing, enhance your public speaking, teach you a new language, develop your ability to analyze data, and expand your use of information technology. These are the top skills sought by employers in every field. Success in these areas means success in life.

Melissa Bonney Ratcliff

Occupation: Director of Communications, Broad Foundation
Graduation Date: 1991
Major: Psychology
Favorite Class: Kathleen Hall Jamieson’s political communications class
Student Activities: Worked at WHYY, a National Public Radio affiliate
Current Activities: Travel writing
Use Penn’s resources

The College at Penn’s 2,000 classes in 24 academic departments offer a multitude of subjects. But while the arts and sciences will form the backbone of your education, that’s not all that Penn has to offer. Feel free to explore classes in the Nursing School, the School of Engineering and Applied Science, and the Wharton School to complement your liberal arts courses. Choose from hundreds of student organizations. Use Philadelphia as your laboratory. A huge array of research topics, internships, and public service opportunities awaits you here. All of these will help you explore possible careers.

“Pursue fields of study you would find challenging. Find tough, rigorous, and demanding professors. Don’t look for classes that seem closest to experiences you’ve already had.”

Although George runs a hedge fund business at the investment-banking firm Goldman Sachs, his most vivid college memory is the mind-stretching history courses on the French Enlightenment, political disillusionment, and libertarianism he took with Professor Alan Kors. “He was tough. He brought out the best in folks in terms of how they thought, wrote, and discussed challenging subject matters.” George says. “He took us all to a different level. Few things in life have that sort of impact.”

Professor Kors fondly remembers George from his student days, and the two remain friends. They got to know each other in history seminars, but their friendship deepened outside the classroom through informal intellectual discussions about history, the world, and life. Professor Kors believes that through these informal intellectual discussions, faculty can awaken in students interests they might not even know existed. He feels these interactions can help students broaden their perspectives and heighten their expectations of themselves as they begin to explore careers.

A double major in the College and Wharton, George says that history was his passion but that business and finance fascinated him too. He says he took Wharton classes because he enjoyed finance, not necessarily to get a job on Wall Street. He says his Wharton coursework taught him to understand markets in powerful ways, while his College courses taught him how to think broadly about ideas and the world in which we live.

Occurrence

George H. Walker

Partner, Goldman Sachs & Co.; Co-president, Commodities Corporation

1991

Major

European history and finance

Favorite Class

Alan Kors’ history classes

Student Activities

Reading; working on a political campaign; Frick, Wharton Dean’s Advisory Board; working for The Palmer Group; on private equity investments; and occasional work (and play) at Smokey Joe’s

Current Activities

Spending time with friends from Penn and work, volunteering for a New York City children’s charity, playing golf, and cheering on his wife, actress Kate Jennings Grant (stage name: Kate Jennings Grant)
Farah says she came to Penn “absolutely certain” she wanted a job in the medical profession. She says, “There were issues at the time about homelessness on campus, so I started volunteering with one of the advocacy groups and discovered that’s what I loved—helping transform people’s lives and improving communities.” She then complemented her studies with internships focused on homelessness and housing issues. As graduation approached, “even though the Arthur Andersons of the world were beckoning with great salaries,” Farah says she held out for a job more aligned with her ideals.

“A liberal arts degree lets you explore all different subjects because the requirements are so broad,” Farah says. “I took chemistry and foreign languages and anthropology courses. You come out with a great degree of flexibility in terms of being able to write and think and do math and understand science … the world’s open to you, because you had a chance to learn what you are passionate about.”

Penn’s Career Services helped Farah hunt down a dream job working for the homeless in Washington, D.C. “Now I’m running a nonprofit community development corporation, and I’m doing what I love.”

Seek advice

While all these possibilities are exciting, they can be overwhelming, too. But you are not alone. A number of people and resources are available to assist you: your academic advisor, your College House dean, the Career Services staff, your freshman seminar instructor, professors in the classes you like best, and the staff of the Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships.

“I used the skills I learned at Career Services to hunt down my dream job. Now I’m running a non-profit community development corporation, and I’m doing what I love.”

Farah also participated in an academically based community service course. Dr. Ira Harkavy, who directs that program, feels these courses can help students to develop a deeper understanding of their own values, as well as the skills they need to put those values into practice. He says, “Benjamin Franklin got it right. The purpose of a Penn education is to develop an inclination joined with an ability to serve.”

Penn’s Career Services helped Farah hunt down a dream job working for the homeless in Washington, D.C. “Now I’m running a nonprofit community development corporation, and I’m doing what I love.” Her advice—particularly for those in fields with fewer on-campus interviewing opportunities—is to take advantage of Career Services’ many resources for finding internships and honing interview skills.

“You can really develop the presence and skills necessary for the rest of your life,” she says.
After graduation, Rachael had no job and no idea of what she wanted to do next. She had several impressive job offers, but none sparked her interest. Despite her family’s apprehension about her unemployment, she decided to move to Washington, D.C. While on a tour of the White House, she asked her guide to give her regards to a Penn alumnus who worked there as a speechwriter. Her guide did that, but he also told the speechwriter that she was looking for a job. Within days Rachael was interviewing for jobs in the White House.

Her first position was with the National Economic Council, where she assisted those who directed President Clinton’s economic policy. Her boss there was a former columnist for The Daily Pennsylvanian.

Still unsure about her future, Rachael later decided to try something new. While she was considering a job with CNN’s Crossfire program, she learned about a position in the office of John Podesta, the White House chief of staff.

During her interview, his first question was, “What do you want to do with your life?” She thought, “Oh no, he’ll never hire me now.” But when she told him she didn’t know, he said he didn’t know either. She thought, “That’s great! I can’t wait to tell my parents that the chief of staff of the president of the United States doesn’t know what he wants to do either.” The tension was broken, they had a great conversation, and Rachael got the job, where she managed the chief of staff’s appointment calendar and tracked media coverage.

At the end of the Clinton administration, Rachael moved on to become the special assistant to the chairwoman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. The chairwoman, history Professor Mary Frances Berry, was her thesis adviser at Penn. In this job, Rachael does legal research, drafts communications strategy, and studies immigration issues. She loves politics and policy, but she’s still unsure where this path will lead. However, she is confident in her education. She urges students to “do what you love and enjoy it.”
Like these alumni, you will be faced with many
interesting and challenging choices as you
progress in your career. You may not start a
school, report on international conflicts, or
advise heads of state. Or maybe you will. And your
liberal arts education will take you there. Now is
the time to prepare by making your studies as
broad as possible, by honing critical skills, and by
taking advantage of the opportunities and support
that are available to you here.

Where will your education take you?