Christian Education

The Foundation for Your Dreams

Remember when you were a kid and you imagined what you would be when you grew up? Life was full of endless possibilities. As a starry-eyed five-year-old, the sky wasn't even the limit to all the amazing things you could do. But now, looking ahead to college, things become more stressful. What do you want to do? What college should you attend? You may not know what you want to do with your life at all, or you do have a goal, but you aren't sure of the best path to reach it.

As you factor your faith into your college choice, perhaps you're struggling with what kind of college is best – private or public, big or small, Christian or secular. Does a Christian college offer the type of degree you need? Can it offer the flexibility you need to explore how to best use your talents and passions?

About two million people have graduated from Christian colleges and universities across the continent, with many achieving remarkable success. They may have chosen a faith-based college because it offered a strong program in their desired academic major. Many used college as a time to discover their calling. Others built on their college experiences to go in unexpected directions after graduation.

For instance, Peggy Fowler graduated from Oregon's George Fox University in 1973, planning on a career in chemistry. A year later, she began doing just that, working for Portland General Electric. Over time, however, she worked her way up the management ladder, eventually becoming PGE's president and later its Chief

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Executive Officer (CEO). Fowler was named Oregon's most admired CEO by Portland Business Journal in 2005. By 2007, she was the highest paid female CEO in the state and she had been appointed to the board of the Portland branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.

By contrast, Megan Hitz stayed with her original plan after majoring in apparel design at Seattle Pacific University. She graduated in 2004 and headed all the way across the United States for a job at Ralph Lauren in New York. Within two years, she had been promoted to associate children's wear designer. "Moving to New York City was definitely one of the biggest risks I have ever taken," she told *etc.* magazine, "I really can't explain how I made it here, but I know that God has been leading me every step of this crazy adventure."

Before earning his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan, Shawn Blanton graduated from Calvin College with a degree in engineering in 1987. He now teaches in Carnegie Mellon University's Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, is the associate director of the Center for Silicon System Implementation—which designs computer chips and develops new manufacturing technologies—and is the founder of TestWorks.

Blanton explained one aspect of his work by saying, "When you manufacture a million chips a day, there is a fraction that just don't work, and it is not obvious why. I develop techniques to discover if they work or do not work in an efficient manner and you have to be able to do that quickly, since they are moving a million chips a day. Delphi makes chips that control air bag deployment in cars, for example. You want to make sure that every one of those systems is working and that you are not shipping bad products to the end user."

One thing that many Christian colleges take seriously is the concept that work is a form of worship and any career can be used as a ministry in some fashion. Nonetheless, a number of colleges were founded with the primary purpose of preparing people for careers in churches and foreign missions. Keith and Kathy Ham illustrate how a Christian college education can help you become a successful missionary.

A recommendation from the Hams' pastor sent them to Hope International University in Fullerton, California in the 1980s. Following graduation, they traveled to the deserts of northern Kenya, where they ministered to the Turkana people. Later, they moved to Nairobi in order to help the poor in Mathare, a collection of slums housing about one million people without sanitation, running water, electricity or trash collection. Here the Hams established a Christian school—the Mathare Family Hope Center—providing impoverished children with education, clothing, and adequate nutrition.

A native of North Korea, Dr. Tom Kim, has been purposeful in using his medical career as a ministry. Kim graduated from Milligan College in 1969. He went on to practice internal medicine in Knoxville, Tennessee. As his practice grew, so did his awareness of the number of uninsured people in his city. In 1993, Kim began opening his office four nights a week after regular office hours to provide free care to patients who would otherwise go untreated.

"This free medical clinic was not about preaching but rather simply serving people," Kim says, "It's a simple mission to provide medical treatment to the working poor who do not have funds." He inspired well over a hundred physicians, nurses and office staff to volunteer to provide free care in his Free Medical Clinic of America in Knoxville and the coal mining town of Briceville. Kim has been honored with a Special Congressional Recognition but says his theme in life has been "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

In 2004, Jena Lee Nardella graduated from Whitworth University in Spokane and was hired as the Executive Director of Blood:Water Mission at just 22 years of age. The organization, founded by the GRAMMY award winning band Jars of Clay, has helped meet health needs for well over half a million people in 800 communities in 11 African countries. Much of the Blood:Water Mission's efforts center on providing clean water, sanitation, health education and three AIDS clinics, which have provided testing to more than 17,000 people.

Nardella says her Christian college education "integrated excellence in academics as well as in issues of faith to help me confidently and competently achieve what is required of me in the work that I'm doing."

Dr. Arthur Ammann's career has been called "one of the most storied in modern science." In the early '70s, he was part of a team that developed the first pneumococcal vaccine, which has saved millions of lives by battling the leading cause of bacterial death in children.

Ammann, a 1958 Wheaton College alumnus, also discovered the first case of AIDS contracted through a blood transfusion and the first known case of pediatric AIDS. He was director of research at the Pediatric AIDS Foundation from 1992-1996. In 1998, he founded Global Strategies, a nonprofit foundation dedicated to preventing HIV and responding to the needs of infected women and children worldwide. Global Strategies, with just two paid employees, has raised more than $22 million toward HIV prevention, trained 5,000 health care workers and provided over 85,000 women with HIV drugs or testing kits.

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Another Wheaton graduate, Dan Norbeck, helped develop the best selling AIDS/HIV suppressive drug in the world, Kaletra. The 1980 alumnus received the 1997 National Inventor of the Year Award and was named a "Hero of Chemistry" in 2003 by the National Chemical Society.

Many Christian college alumni have held prominent positions in professional sports as coaches, general managers and more. Recently, one became the second most powerful man in the National Football League, behind only NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

In 2009, at the age of 45, DeMaurice "De" Smith was elected as the executive director of the National Football League Players' Association, the labor union for NFL players. An All-American sprinter who graduated from Cedarville University in Ohio in 1985, Smith was a trial lawyer and litigation partner at Patton Boggs, an international law firm based in Washington, D.C., before being elected to head the NFLPA.

When she graduated from Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester, New York, in 2004 as the school's leading scorer in women's basketball history, Jenn Stuczynski didn't realize that the best was yet to come, but in another sport.

Her accomplishments include the 2008 Olympic Games silver medal; 2008 World Indoor silver medal; three USA Outdoor championships ('06-'08); and three USA Indoor championships ('05, '07, '08). Stuczynski is one of only three women ever to clear sixteen feet in the pole vault. She was named the American Athlete of the Year for the 2009 indoor track and field season by Track and Field News after she broke her own US pole vault record.

When he reflects back on his Christian college education, 1989 Biola University alumnus Scott Derrickson says, "I was exposed to a universe of ideas. I think I got a better education than many of the Ivy League students I went to grad school with at USC."

Derrickson co-wrote and directed the 2005 movie *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*, based loosely on the true story of a Catholic priest charged with negligence when his exorcism attempts allegedly led to a woman's death. Among his other projects, Derrickson directed *The Day the Earth Stood Still* starring Keanu Reeves, which was released in 2008 and grossed over $230 million worldwide.

Tim Simonec is one of the busiest orchestrators in Hollywood. He began doing orchestra arrangements while a student at Trinity International University—he graduated in 1973—and since then has composed, orchestrated or conducted music for more than 100 films and 20 television series. His movie projects include *Mission Impossible III, The Negotiator, The Incredibles, Ratatouille, Star Trek, The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* and *UP*—for which he was nominated for a Grammy—and he has worked on TV series such as *Happy Days, Alias, LOST,* and *Fringe*. Simonec has also contributed to video game projects, including *Medal of Honor* and *Call of Duty*.

When Kathy Nimmer was in the second grade, she was diagnosed with a rare retinal degenerative disease, causing her vision to slowly deteriorate. She went on to study English Education at Trinity Christian College, graduating in 1991. Nimmer earned an M.A. in English at Purdue University and began her career at Harrison High in West Lafayette, Indiana, where she continues to teach today. In November 2003, Nimmer became the first blind schoolteacher teaching in a regular high school classroom to earn national board certification, the highest rank that teachers can achieve.

She has won numerous honors including the Golden Apple, the Butler-Cooley Excellence in Teaching Award, and the Eli Lilly Teacher Creativity Fellowship. A motivational speaker and acclaimed writer, Nimmer is the author of *Minutes in the Dark, Eternity in the Light*, a collection of 140 highly personal poems about losing her sight.

Charlene Thornton, a 1976 graduate of Indiana Wesleyan University, joined the Federal Bureau of Investigation after earning her law degree from Indiana University. Her first responsibilities with the Bureau included conducting counter-intelligence and counterterrorism investigations. She has worked in a number of FBI offices across the USA, eventually becoming one of only seven women to head FBI divisions nationwide, directing Alabama's northern district.

Thornton was awarded the Presidential Rank of Meritorious Executive in 2005 because of her achievements in running challenging, wide ranging FBI operations. Since August 2006, she has managed investigations and operations for the northern and central coast regions of California as Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's San Francisco field office.

Everyone has heard of Air Force One, the jet assigned to President Obama. Air Force Two is the modified Boeing 757 used by the Vice President of the United States. You may not know, however, that a Christian college alumnus pilots Air Force Two.

Lt. Col. Todd DeGroot is a special air mission pilot with the U.S. Air Force. He has flown the first lady, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and congressional delegations in Air Force Two. The 1986 LeTourneau University grad credits his Christian college education with giving him excellent aviation skills and "instilling in me the integrity needed for success as an officer and aviator. I've enjoyed flying all over the world, being introduced to many new cultures and getting to work with some top-notch people."

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Christian college alumni have played key roles in local, state and national politics as mayors, governors, presidential speech writers, legislators and ambassadors. One such leader is Roy Blunt, a graduate of Southwest Baptist University, representing Missouri's 7th congressional district in the US House of Representatives.

Blunt was first elected to Congress in 1997 after serving as Missouri's Secretary of State. He has been reelected six times, often by wide margins, and now is running for the US Senate. Blunt became Majority Whip, the third highest job in the House of Representatives, earlier in his career than any Member of Congress in the last seven decades.

Paul Bellino, a 1961 graduate of Nyack College in New York, spent 27 years as a civil rights investigator and conciliator with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Office for Civil Rights. In 1992, he went on to start Atlanta's Church for All Nations (ACAN), a small multicultural ministry—white, Korean, African-American—in Stone Mountain, Georgia. ACAN has worked to break down racial barriers between the black community and the Sons of Confederate Veterans. It also has been active in efforts to free modern day slaves in Africa from the oppression of Sudanese warlords.

Naturally, a lot of other Christian college alumni have also had productive careers in ministry. Three of the better known are Francis Chan, Rick Warren and Billy Graham, a 1943 graduate of Wheaton College.

Rick Warren graduated from California Baptist University in 1977, started a Bible study in 1980 and saw it grow into Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, with an average attendance of nearly 20,000 attendees. He wrote the best-selling hardback in American history, *The Purpose Driven Life*.

Francis Chan, author of *Crazy Love*, graduated in 1989 from The Master's College with a youth ministry degree. With his wife, he established Cornerstone Community Church in Simi Valley, California, in 1994 with just 30 people. It now averages about 5,000 attendees.

Whatever your dreams and plans, there probably is a college where you can prepare for that career in a Christ-centered environment. Not every Christian college has every major, of course—some specialized programs are offered only a few places—but the vast majority of academic fields are offered by one college or another. If it would happen to be that no Christian colleges offer the field of study you are interested in, still consider attending a Christian college for your prerequisites because many, if not all, of those credits will transfer.

Henry David Thoreau said, "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them." You have aspirations. If you also want to grow in your faith, there's no better place to put a foundation under those dreams than at a Christian college or university.

Writers:
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