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Do Not Accept Dead-End Academic Degrees

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The least talked about topic in college classes is “getting employment after graduation.” Yet, the most likely reason parents send their children to college is to improve their chances of employment. Hence, the question is: “If statistics show that a college diploma can help students get a job, keep a job, and make more money, is it true for all academic majors?”

Also, is it true that “getting a job” is the same as getting a great job? Obviously, the answer is “no” to both questions. Anyone who has taken the time to think about the lack of credible jobs for exercise science majors get this point all too well. For example, working as a personal trainer after spending thousands of dollars on college tuition is not a credible job with a great salary. This is true because there are too many useless (if not dangerous) personal trainer certifications of which some do not even require academic courses (e.g., applied anatomy, exercise physiology, and exercise prescription) to prepare them for their work.

Parents were asked to identify the most important reason for their child to go to college and the top answer by far (at 38 percent) was "to get a good job." The third most common answer (at 12 percent) was "to make money."

-- Scott Jaschik (1)

While the cost of a college education is 50% more expensive today than it was 30 years ago (2), not much has changed. As an example, the dead-end entry level positions that result from majoring in exercise science or human performance still exist. This is a problem with our education system as a whole, and the idea that the academic setting exists for college teachers more so than for the college students exacerbates this issue.

...entire generation of Millennials have already been screwed and there may not be much many of the them can do to undo the damage they've done with 6-figure student loan debt and worthless degrees that only lead to dead-end entry level positions, if any at all.

-- Michael Price (3)

Yes, research is important and, yes, it helps to move society's thinking forward. But, when the emphasis is all about doing research with little to no

concern as to whether the academic major is helping college graduates to be successful in locating a credible job, then it is a worthless degree regardless of the credentials of the teachers.

In case you think I am making a big deal about nothing, look at the dozens of exercise science-related degree programs. Thousands of exercise science students graduate every year in the United States from colleges, yet the majority of them cannot find a suitable job. Also, when you think about it, what is a suitable job in exercise science? Is it personal training? How about a fitness instructor? If so, what is the point of going to college? Talk about disappointment if not depression when you realize that America now holds \$1 Trillion in student loan debt.

That's right Mr. Academic Person. It's not about you, it's about the students. The lectures you prepare for your classes, including the labs, and the way you present yourself as a professional will improve markedly if you remember the difference between "what is a discipline" and "what is a profession"?

So, why can't college grads find jobs? Is it because the exercise science degree is a generic non-professional degree? Is it because the degree is obsolete and a total scam that continues to exist as a basic means to creating a back log of students with some science courses that might do well in physical therapy? The truth is that a small percent of these students are accepted into physical therapy while the majority is out of luck without the chance of getting a credible job or the opportunity to pursue a credible degree.

The exercise science faculty is completely aware of this academic scam, yet they play along because the administrative dynamics reward those who publish and promote the college/university's name. The teachers are paid off by a reduced academic course load per semester, a reduced number of students that they would otherwise have been responsible for advising, and money provided to attend regional and national meetings.

This situation has created a social and economic boom for the faculty and university. The number of published papers per year continues to rise with the emphasis on research

What we're really talking about here is a profession-specific academic major with students who are equal to other students who worked and studied hard to achieve their goal of being successful.

and academic rank and tenure. However, both the faculty and administrators have pushed the research efforts and campaigns to increase enrollment too far and now the students are suffering from huge financial debt from skyrocketing tuition costs. See for yourself: Refer to the College Board, the average cost of college tuition and fees per year

ranges from ~\$9,000 to \$30,000. When you take into account the student's room and board that ranges from \$10,000 per year, the cost for a 4-year college education is ~\$80,000 and \$160,000.

Now you know why the exercise science and related non-profession-specific degrees are a waste of time, which becomes even more obvious when you take into account the students' loan that requires a payment of ~\$1000 to ~\$2,000 per month for 10 years. Ask

yourself this question: Is it likely that a personal trainer working at Bob's Gym is going to be financially sufficient to pay this debt per month along with the obvious expenses? The answer is "no" and that is so many recent college graduates are living with their parents after college. Their monthly student loan payments exceed the cost of housing and utilities if they were to live on their own.

Exercise science, kinesiology, human performance, and sports science do not teach profession-specific thinking and skills consistent with other academic majors such as law, medicine, accounting, computer science, physical therapy, athletic training, nursing, and exercise physiology. Please bear in mind that profession-specific thinking means that, although exercise science students may take courses in exercise physiology, muscle metabolism, and applied anatomy, unless they are professionally-linked to practical "exercise medicine" outcomes that can be applied in the real world, the course content misses the point. As a result, too many college graduates are unprepared to find credible work in the public sector.

In 1995 I reached the conclusion that the exercise science degree was going to fail students by improperly preparing them for the real world and credible careers. I also realized the failure of the departments and the exercise physiology faculty to plan for the students' careers was problematic.

Yes, I understand that exercise physiologists (as part of the college exercise science faculty) are not likely to think as entrepreneurs do. I understand they are interested in

Imagine the power exercise physiologists have to change the world for the better. Exercise can prevent and treat osteoporosis, help manage diabetes, reduce the risk of addiction relapse, slow premature aging of the skin, promote healthier digestion, reduce aches and pains, and contribute to optimism and a positive mindset.

-- Bill Phillips

primarily doing research and publishing their papers. They are capable of thinking as physical therapy doctorates think, but they are presently not interested in thinking as a healthcare professional. Obviously, this disposition has slowed promoting professionalism in exercise physiology. It has also resulted in a major failure of the need to update the discipline of exercise science to the profession of exercise physiology. However, if the students are going to have a chance of success after college,

then, the academic exercise physiologists need to pursue the ASEP 21st century thinking now -- not later!

Once they embrace ASEP, the next step is to help their undergraduate students understand that building a healthcare business is what they should be doing. The barriers to entry are low, and Board Certified Exercise Physiologists are prepared to be successful. With a few organizational guidelines, personal commitment, and a several months of planning, recent college graduates can become healthcare entrepreneurs. It will not be completely easy by any stretch of the imagination. It will require hard work and months of planning, but it is possible to build an "Exercise Medicine Clinic" and experience livable wages.

Naturally, the question is: “Where am I going to get the money to start the business?” Well, if you are reading this article as a junior or senior in college, why not start saving money well before you graduate that you can use expressly for the realization of your dream job. This means working and “saving your money” from low-pay jobs to start your business. The issue is that you can wake up to the real world of healthcare opportunities, and you can create the work you desire as an Board Certified Exercise Physiologists who is the #1 healthcare professional responsible for prescribing exercise medicine. That, my friend, is money in the bank!

However obvious it may sound, thinking outside the box is critical to a fresh start in life after college. But, understandably, this means getting rid of your past ways of doing things and becoming the professional you were meant (or want) to be. It is a dream, yes, but it is also your reality when you stop and put aside the misplaced thinking of non-thinkers and begin to live your dream of something better.

Thus, in summary, after some reflection on the ideas presented in this article, think about taking the time to enjoy the ASEP perspective (i.e., the ASEP vision, mission, code of ethics, board certification, accreditation, and standards of practice) that embraces the expectation of something truly helpful for exercise physiologists, society, and yourself. This is after all the purpose of a professional organization.

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