

ASK FARID

The topic for Farid in this issue of *Learning Curves* is how to pick a career college.

Student: How can I find out what career college and what program would be best for me? I have multiple talents, a very diverse background, I can adapt easily and I want to make good money. I have a pretty good idea what I want to do, but I am not sure what to study or where to study. I want to go to a career college, but I don't know which one. What should I do?

Farid: First of all, identify your job target. Then conduct labour market research by speaking directly to employers and collecting job postings about career areas you are interested in to determine qualifications, job titles, physical demands of a job, starting salary, future anticipated salary, market conditions, job availability and other factors such as shift work.

This task will enable you to determine what program will fit you for your job target within a reasonable time frame. Remember, though, without a target you are just shooting in the dark.

Student: How do I get information about a career college and its programs and how would I choose? How do I know if it is a good school? What should I ask?

Farid: Request an appointment with an admissions representative. Know exactly which of the programs you want and be prepared to ask questions at the initial consultation.

Don't be an interviewee—be an interviewer—when meeting with the admissions representatives. Ask about the their backgrounds in both business and education. Know who is giving you advice! Ensure that sufficient time is allotted for you to ask questions regarding the school and to find out what program is best for you and why.

Keep in mind that they will do their best to get you enrolled into their school. Are they able to provide the course you want or are they selling the course they have?

Avoid discussions about admission tests and procedures, which will take time away from your opportunity to ask questions regarding the school or program.

***Student:* What factors should I consider or be cautious about?**

***Farid:* You should consider whether the training institution is easily accessible and conveniently located. Take parking or TTC routes into consideration.**

Make sure the institution is recognized by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and will issue receipts for a tuition tax credit (T2202A).

Find out about the school's reputation in the industry and how long the school has been offering the program you are interested in. Is it recognized and/or does it offer standard international certification programs (for example, VUE, Microsoft, CompTIA etc.)?

Find out how long the program is. How many hours are spent in training per day? How much is the tuition? Are books and materials included? Is it a published text or an in-house package? Check the course materials in detail. Is it current information?

How often does the course start? Is it a fixed program or can a program be customized to meet your career needs?

Ask how the staff decides on what content to teach? What kind of labour market research do they use to ensure that students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills? Find out what the maximum and minimum numbers are of students per class per instructor.

Ask if the course is instructor-led or self-directed (Independent study also means self-directed.) Will the instructor be present through the duration of class time? How many hours are you likely to spend completing lab assignments?

***Student:* What more should I find out about instructors?**

***Farid:* Ask about their qualifications. What is their educational background? How many years of industry experience do they have?**

You should also check to see if you have to share equipment, or if you require the use of a computer. Ask if you can use the facilities after classroom hours. Is there a quiet study area?

Student: What else can I do to make sure I am choosing the right college?

Farid: Ask if you can speak to current students enrolled in your program of study and ask their opinion of the quality of the training.

You can also ask if you can observe a class in progress. Properly-run training facilities will be delighted to accommodate you in this manner.

Student: Many of these colleges promise jobs at the end of the program. Can I believe them?

Farid: Find out about the employment rate of graduates. Ask who some of the companies that hire their graduates are. Call these companies and ask them for a reference if possible. Also find out from the college if there is job search assistance.

Student: I have a minor learning disability. Should I tell the interviewer?

Farid: If you require special accommodations, definitely find out if the school is able to accommodate you.

Be sure to find out about the payment and refund policy so there are no surprises regarding financial obligations.

Student: What else do you suggest?

Farid: Research and visit at least three schools to gather information to compare the similarities and differences in course content, delivery, teaching methodology and tuition costs before making a final decision.

Never make a decision if you are under pressure. It is best to leave and take some additional time to weigh the pros and cons.

Choosing a career college that best suits your needs is crucial to your academic success, so be a wise consumer and take the time to ask questions that will help you to make an informed decision. If the staff is not willing to accommodate you by spending extra time to answer questions before you register, imagine the quality of service you will receive after you enroll! Take your time in making the right decision for your future.

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under the subject: General Info Request.***

July-August 2006