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# Opportunity knocks

## Hattie Damon Story

By Kristin Doubler, MEOC Student Counselor Aide

## What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?

By Mike Farr, The JIST of IT, April 2000

When we were kids, people would often ask “What do you want to be when you grow up?” If you think about it, this was our first experience in career self-assessment and planning. My response was “a doctor” since that seemed like a good job to me as a kid.

Oddly enough I never actually became a doctor of the medical variety – though I did waste 2.5 years of perfectly good college time in pre-Med. You see, no one made it clear to me that to become a doctor, you had to devote yourself totally to that pursuit for many years, 60 to 80 hours a week. I just didn’t want to be a doctor badly enough, it turned out.

In retrospect, the question that SHOULD have been asked of me as a child was, “What do you want to do NEXT, careerwise?” At one point my answer was “doctor,” but at another, it was “something else.” Both answers were equally valid. The first kept me in college for a few years and the second allowed me to explore the unknown.

Admittedly, the “What do you want to do next?” question is shorter term. But it leads to a more concrete response that is easier to act on. It also has important advantages over the more traditional “...rest of you life” career decision-making question.

Asking what you want to do next allows you to be more creative and less rigid, more likely to follow your heart. If you know you can change your mind, it frees you up to try things. You know you can always get practical later, can quit or fail, and get back up to try again.

It’s more likely to get you started in a good direction. Too many people put off things like going to college because the long-term goal seems so unachievable. Instead, take a course just for the heck of it, and see where it goes. You may find yourself a doctor before you know it!

P.S. As a practical matter, you can ask the “next” question to yourself or anyone exploring career, education, and training of life options. Try it. Doing so will often unleash creative thinking and unblock the many reasons for not doing what we really want to do with our careers and our lives.

Making the step back into education can be a difficult venture, but Hattie Damon, an MEOC client who is currently obtaining her associates degree in nursing, thinks anyone can do it with determination.

“All my life I have had a hunger for learning and was unable to go on with my education up until the last six years. This was because I was a mother and working two jobs. I had to start from scratch and I’ve made it so far,” Damon said. “I have had many obstacles to overcome to get to this point in my education, but it can be done if you apply yourself.”

Damon was inspired to go back to school after watching her best friend die. She was extremely upset by the impersonal way medical staff treated her friend and patients around her and she wanted to change that.

While working at a nursing home, Damon saw people being treated the same way. “They forget these people are human beings,” she said.

When she first started out, Damon realized she couldn’t qualify for financial aid. Although she knew she couldn’t afford to pay for college on her own, Damon still remained determined. She refused to give up her dream and she constantly looked for alternatives to help her achieve it.

With the help of her MEOC counselor, Damon applied for eight scholarships and received five. She was also given an additional scholarship by an organization to which she belonged.

Damon wasn’t sure what to expect when she started school again, but she was ready to dedicate as much as it took. She credits the support of her family and local community for encouraging her to work hard.

“People want to see you succeed. They’re tickled right to death when you do well.”

Although she finds some of her classes difficult, Damon refuses to give up. She works with tutors at her college every week on subjects she finds difficult and tutors other people on subjects she excels in.

Once she receives her associates degree, Damon hopes to obtain a Bachelor of Nursing. “That’s my dream and I’m taking it one step at a time,” she said.

### Helpful Hints from Hattie:

- ◆ Look for scholarships in local newspapers.
- ◆ Use your local high school’s guidance counseling office as a resource for scholarships.
- ◆ Ask organizations in your area if they offer scholarships.
- ◆ Use online scholarship resources.
- ◆ Put a little bit of yourself in every application.
- ◆ Be honest.

The Maine Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC) is one of 74 EOC’s located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. Operating in the State of Maine since December 1991, the MEOC will serve approximately 2,500 individuals in their educational and career-planning endeavors during 2000.

Educational Opportunity Centers are funded through the U.S. Department of Education. The grant award for 1999-00 is \$521,339. The Department of Education is also the funding source for Upward Bound, Student Support Services, Talent Search and McNair Scholars Programs. These TRIO programs all target low-income, first-generation college youth and adults.

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## FastWEB's Scholarship Strategies

by Mark Rothschild, Ph.D., Director of Scholarship Services

### Timing is Everything

Deadlines come and deadlines go, and so do scholarships – to those who act fast! Not only must you be on time, but many scholarships are awarded on a first-come first-served basis. Don't wait for the deadline – it's not your taxes – apply as soon as possible.

### Don't Pay To Play

Don't pay anyone to find a scholarship. Whether you rely on the local library, the Internet ([www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)), high school counselors, college financial aid administrators, MEOC counselors, or whatever, there are enough opportunities out there for FREE. You don't need to pay to win, but you do have to apply.

### Play to Win, but Enjoy the Game

It's important that you take the time to apply for any and all scholarships. (But please apply only for those awards for which you are qualified – scholarship providers are inundated with unqualified applicants).

You must understand that the odds are stacked against you in your quest for outside scholarship dollars. However: (1) You can't win unless you play; and (2) Applying for scholarships can actually be fun. When else can you write to strangers and tell them all about yourself and maybe make some money in the process? My advice: Go for it!

## Maine's No-Fee Stafford Loan

Are you going to college in August? If your answer is yes, then you will probably be taking out a loan for some of your education. The Maine Education Services (MES) SuperLoan Stafford Loan has eliminated the 3% origination fee for the 200-2001 school year. Last year the 1% guarantee fee was eliminated.

MES will pay the 3% fee for students taking out SuperLoan Stafford Loans by forgiving 3% of the principal balance for Stafford loans disbursed between July 1, 2000 and June 30, 2001.

For more information or an application call 1-800-922-6352.

## What To Do With The College Literature You Asked For

Adapted with permission from [A Guide to the College Admission Process](#), National Association for College Admission Counseling

You have decided to look at colleges. How do you keep all the information straight? The first step is obtaining information about the college(s) you are interested in attending. As materials arrive read them thoroughly. The key to sorting out college options is to be organized! Look for specific information in the literature:

**Admission requirements** – Check the courses and tests required for admission; check deadlines and be certain to file applications well in advance of the dealines.

**Degree Requirements** – Once you get in, what are the requirements to get out?

**Academic Programs** – Check the course offerings. Watch for required courses within department.

**Costs and Financial Aid** – The section of a catalog dealing with costs is usually the first page consulted. Don't let the cost become the determining factor until you have explored all financial aid resources.

The golden rule of the college admission process is don't file an application for admission to a college which you would not gladly attend if offered the chance. If you follow this rule, you will not make any bad decisions about colleges.

**Your MEOC counselor needs to hear from you, please call and let them know what you are doing! You may leave a message for your counselor at 1-800-281-3736.**

## Classroom Listening Skills

Adapted with permission from the Team Memory Jogger

You may think you are listening, but are you really? Use the following lists to identify areas you may need to work on.

### Signs you are listening effectively:

- ✓ I restate what I think I heard other people say as a way to check for understanding.
- ✓ I give my individual attention to the instructor or speaker.
- ✓ I listen with an open mind.
- ✓ I ask people to slow down if they are speaking too fast.
- ✓ I ask people to explain words or terms that I don't understand.

### Signs you are not listening:

- ✓ I think about what to say next instead of listening.
- ✓ I bring up ideas already suggested.
- ✓ I ask questions that have already been asked.
- ✓ I lose track of the discussion or decisions the class made.
- ✓ I'm sure I know what people are going to say before they say it.
- ✓ I interrupt other speakers.

### Getting Your Message Across Clearly, Why it's important

As a student, you have a responsibility to share your knowledge and experience with the rest of the class when appropriate. To make sure the class understands your point of view, it's important for you to get your message across clearly.

### What you can do

- ✓ Be clear about the message or points you want to make.
- ✓ Before you speak, try to be clear in your own mind how your points relate to the topic under discussion.
- ✓ Speak in ways that help people understand what you want to say.

This publication is dedicated to Rebecca Salsbury, The Traveler. Rebecca's two year tenure at MEOC was a delightful experience for all her coworkers. She made us stretch and grow at every encounter. To quote Oliver Wendell Holmes "A mind, once stretched by an idea, never regains it's original dimension." Rebecca, we will never be the same. Thank you for the database and everything else you brought to the program. Good luck on your journey!

## Must See Web Sites!

Karen Hadley Keim, MEOC Coordinator

If you don't have a computer, check your local library or work force center for free Internet access. Then check out these sites for useful information.

### Financial Aid

[www.finaid.org/](http://www.finaid.org/)

The best place to start your search for financial aid whether it be information on types of aid or scholarships. Best place for links to other good financial sites.

### Budget and Money Management

[www.stretcher.com](http://www.stretcher.com)

Can't figure out how to go to school and still have money to live on? This site gives dollar saving ideas on everything. Live better for less!

### Consumer Protection

[www.ftc.gov/ftc/consumer.htm](http://www.ftc.gov/ftc/consumer.htm)

Having trouble with collections, debt management or other credit related issues? This site gives all the ins and outs of how to cope.

### Employment Projections

<http://stats.bls.gov/emphome.htm>

This site allows you to see what is hot and what is not in the employment field by state. A must see for anyone considering a job change.

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[www.ume.maine.edu/~meoc/](http://www.ume.maine.edu/~meoc/)

This site is currently under construction, but check here frequently for workshop information, links to agencies and publications.