

## Life-Long Learning Options

**Purpose:** To provide an overview of the different options for engaging in life-long learning in today’s world and a comparison / contrast of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Source of Learning	Examples	Types of Information Provided	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Traditional Forms of Education:</b> <i>(Formal Learning – Leads Towards College Credit)</i> <i>See Document: “Understanding Educational Systems” for more detailed information</i>				
<b>Community Colleges</b>	Cypress College, Mt. SAC, Los Angeles City Colleges ( <i>California community colleges</i> )	Formal training which can lead to an Associate’s degree, or equivalent level of certificates in various vocational (skills-based) training; and/or first-two years of general education classes which will lead to a bachelor’s degree.	Open access, technically means anyone can attend college regardless of their background. Students have more flexibility of courses of study than many other options. State schools are more likely ( <i>but not guaranteed</i> ) to possess minimum levels of accreditation since it is expected. Accredited schools and programs usually offer financial aid programs for eligible students.	Formal learning is usually structured and individuals need to adapt to commitment requirements. State institutions are often affected by political, economic and legal trends. Because state institutions are so bureaucratic and highly regulated, they are often slower to change.
<b>State Supported Colleges/Universities.</b>	California State Universities (CSU) University of California (UC)	Formal academic degrees: Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctorate. ( <i>Most schools also have a “continuing education/non-credit” division as</i>	Less expensive than private schools. Makes higher education more accessible to the general public. State schools are more likely ( <i>but not</i>	Formal learning is usually structured and individuals need to adapt to commitment requirements. State institutions are often

## Lifelong Learning Options

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		<i>well that offer Bachelor's level or higher non-credit learning options.)</i>	<i>guaranteed</i> ) to possess minimum levels of accreditation since it is expected. Accredited schools and programs usually offer financial aid programs for eligible students.	affected by political, economic and legal trends. Because state institutions are so bureaucratic and highly regulated, they are often slower to change.
<b>Private Schools</b>	Claremont Colleges, Chapman University, University of La Verne, University of Redlands, Whittier College, USC	Training in programs that are consistent with the mission and values of the school. Private colleges and universities are more likely to emphasize a “liberal arts” education (i.e. general education) over skills-based education programs. These schools will vary in what levels of degrees they offer from Associates through Doctorate degrees.	Private schools are not regulated by state laws to the same extent as public schools, so they often have the freedom and flexibility to respond and adapt as needed to trends. May not be as affected by political, economic, governmental and legal issues as state-sponsored schools. Accredited schools and programs will likely offer financial aid programs for eligible students.	Usually more expensive than state-supported equivalents. Accreditation should not be assumed since they are not regulated by the state government. Appropriate accreditations should be verified. Admissions is NOT open-access and requirements are established by the school
<b>Faith-Based Schools</b> Faith-based (religious) schools are always private since the government cannot endorse any form of	Azusa Pacific University, Biola University, Brigham Young University, Hope International, Loyola Marymount,	Training in their religious views, and often offer specific professional career preparation programs such as psychology,	Good for individuals who want to incorporate their faith and religious values in to their education. May not be as affected by political,	Usually more expensive than state-supported equivalents. Accreditation is not as automatically likely to exist since they are not

Lifelong Learning Options

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religion ( <i>i.e. separation of church and state</i> ).	Mt. St. Mary's, Pepperdine University, Vanguard University, Fuller Theological Seminary	nursing and business, as well as traditional liberal arts degrees. These schools will vary in what levels of degrees they offer from Associates through Doctorate degrees.	economic, governmental and legal issues. Accredited schools and programs may offer financial aid programs for eligible students.	regulated by the state government. Individuals who don't embrace the religious teachings of the particular school may not be well suited to the school's culture or mission.
<b>Vocational Schools / Career Technical Education (CTE) Schools/ 'Career' Schools</b>	Bryman Institute, DeVry University, HR Block, Universal Technical Institute	Training for specific skills-based careers, such as medical assistant, dental assistant, computer technician, automotive repair, cosmetology (hair stylists and manicurists), truck-driving schools, tax preparer, etc. These can also include police and fire academies. Schools may be for-profit, or not-for profit. Vary greatly in size, structure, offerings, and reputations.	Good for individuals who want job-preparation, skills-based training only, and don't want to spend much time or energy on general education type classes. Also good for individuals who already possess degrees but need specific job skills. Students often finish programs in a shorter amount of time. May offer easier admissions criteria. Accredited schools and programs may offer financial aid programs for eligible students.	Technical skills-based education is usually not transferable to other careers or to four-year colleges and universities, or other degree-based schools. Lowered admissions criteria may lead to higher dropout rates since students may not be ready for the academic challenges. Accreditation status of different schools varies.
<b>Non-Traditional Forms of Education:</b> <i>(Non-College Credit Learning)</i>				
<b>Mass Media</b>	New York Times, LA	General, introductory,	Learning about trends	Information is basic,

## Lifelong Learning Options

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<i>(General, Introductory Information)</i>	Times, USA Today, CNN, Nightly News, Local News	basic information of interest to the general public.	and keeping up on current events.	generally not helpful for experts and other “opinion leaders” or very knowledgeable individuals.
<b>Online Search Engines and databases</b>	Google, Wikipedia, etc.	General, introductory, basic information of interest to the general public.	May give introductory or background information on a particular topic.	Cannot guarantee accuracy, objectivity, currency, or credibility of author. Searches may yield either too much or too little information through which to sort.
<b>Continuing Education</b> <i>(Short-term structured classes)</i> Local Adult Schools/ Non-credit divisions of colleges and universities	North Orange County School of Continuing Education, Cal Poly Pomona College of the Extended University -- Licensing and test preparation programs; One-day seminars on “personal growth” issues; workshops or training classes on learning the “latest and greatest” software brand; and taking just a few classes to learn about a new subject.	Varies widely by institution offering it. Best to check with those institutions which offer degrees in the subject area of interest.	Keeping skills current, needing only a few classes, and professions which require life-long learning credits. Often do not need to meet standard admissions criteria normally set by colleges and universities. Some continuing education programs at public schools are offered free of charge.	May or may not provide academic credit should you later decide to pursue a degree in the subject. Usually not eligible or financial aid or for meeting F.A. enrollment requirements.
<b>Scholarly Journals</b> <i>(Research findings within a specific</i>	Communication Journal, National Association of Academic Advisors, and	Usually reports on theoretical and research developments within a	Gaining specialized, in-depth information on a topic. Discovering what	Written for academic scholars (those people who possess doctorate

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<i>academic area)</i>	American Medical Association Journal	specific field.	the latest research findings offer on a specific topic. Information provided is usually credible since it has likely been subjected to a rigorous screening and editing process.	degrees), therefore the writing style may be difficult for some people to read. Usually contains a lot of statistical data, graphics and vocabulary.
<b>Professional Associations</b> <i>(Keeps you posted on latest developments within a profession)</i>	American Psychological Association, American Bar Association, Public Relations Society of America, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators	Through conventions, trade shows, journals, list serves, websites, blogs, webinars, continuing education opportunities, etc., practitioners in the industry provide examples of best practices, trends, research and new laws which affect that profession.	Keeping industry or professional knowledge current. Information provided is usually considered credible since advancing professionalism in the industry is often a mission of such organizations. Information provided is usually digested, which will likely minimize how much time your time needed to spend keeping up with changes.	Usually does not provide academic credit leading to a degree. <i>(But may offer “Continuing Education Credit” for some professions.)</i>
<b>Online Blogs</b> <i>(Subscribing to blogs and social media feeds such as Twitter and LinkedIn from industry experts, special interest</i>	Most celebrities, public figures, journalists, and industry leaders now have blogs.	Gives the author’s insight and perspectives on current events affecting his/her world. Some blogs may have multiple authors who are	Blogs are often not regulated by governing bodies, and therefore are often not censored. Individuals may give perspectives based on	Very time-consuming since information often is not digested for end users <i>(Information Overload)</i> . Information provided may or may

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<i>media, or opinion leaders)</i>		considered to be experts in their fields.	their own experiences. Responses can be immediate to current events.	not be researched. Need critical thinking skills and training to discern difference between fact and opinions provided. Credibility of source often not verified.
<b>Internet Webinars</b> (video-based seminars offered over the Internet)	Product updates from a vendor, seminars offered online, video-supplemented blogs, etc.	Varies widely by institution offering it.	Can learn information from the comfort of your computer. Don't need to travel to attend a seminar. Helpful for people who prefer to see and hear information presented simultaneously.	Limited by access to technology for both the seminar provider as well as the attendee. Offers limited opportunities to network due to limited face-to-face interaction.
<b>Special Interest Media</b> ( <i>Designed by experts and opinion leaders who share a common interest in a particular topic</i> )	Newsletters from political parties, environmental activists, and political action committees, etc. ( <i>i.e. MADD: Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, etc.</i> ) Corporate newsletters, annual reports and corporate training programs.	Organizational newsletters, promotional materials, corporate sponsored training.	People who want to advance their knowledge or perspective on a particular situation or issue.	Information is often biased since it is usually given by people who have an agenda.
<b>On-The-Job Training</b> ( <i>or Employer-provided, Employer-sponsored</i> )	Management training programs, formal mentoring programs,	Information and training that furthers the employer's mission or	Employees who are willing and able to take advantage of what their	Information may be biased if it is often given by people who have an

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<i>training), Internships and apprenticeships</i>	professional organizational development workshops. Workshops on the latest skills, trends, and products. Tuition-reimbursement programs.	agenda. Professional and/or “technical” skills development. Some employers will sponsor employees to develop their basic skills and/or computer skills, Training programs designed to keep employees’ knowledge and skills current in a changing world. Many will support formal academic degree pursuits through tuition-reimbursement programs.	employers offer. Employees are usually limited to employer-sponsored programs. Usually training provided by an employer is free since employer-sponsored training is usually paid for by the employer. Sometimes employees are paid for their time and expense for participating in some training programs. Employees who take advantage of training programs to keep skills up-to-date are less likely to face job loss due to skills and/or knowledge obsolescence.	agenda. Usually will not count towards an academic degree. Offerings are often limited to subjects of the employer’s interests, priorities, and budgets.
<b>Distance Education</b> <i>(Alternative Education: Correspondence Schools, Online learning, and non-traditional learning)</i>	“Degree by mail” programs, on-line degrees or classes, continuing education programs offered through the mail or through online programs. Available for both traditional and non-traditional education	Topics covered in traditional education, but delivered through alternative methods such as through the mail, TV or via the Internet.	People who have limited mobility or access to traditional educational options ( <i>disabled, incarcerated, or too far to commute for in-person classes, etc.</i> ), and individuals wanting flexibility of learning hours ( <i>want to learn at</i>	Lacks direct teacher-to-student and student-to-student “rapport” offered by traditional classrooms. Lack of face-to-face rapport minimizes opportunities for networking. Requires individual to be self-motivated, self-

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	Internet <b>Webinars</b> (video-based seminars offered over the Internet)		<i>3:00am, or around sleeping babies).</i> Opportunity to learn from the comfort of home or computer instead of traveling.	disciplined, self-directed, and have good learning and reading skills. Online learning also requires good computer skills. Some programs lack accreditation and/or reputation.
<b>Informational Interviews/Job Shadowing, etc.</b>	Interviewing (or following around) a doctor or other professional to find out what a typical day on the job is like.	Real-world exposure to the profession.	Real-world perspective from someone who actually does the job for pay.	Typically, only receiving one person's opinion which may be biased.
<b>Volunteering / Unpaid Internships</b>	Building houses for the poor through Habitat for Humanity, participating in a political campaign, teaching/tutoring children/adults at a community center, offering bookkeeping or construction skills for a favorite non-profit charity. Medical personnel for causes such as Doctors Without Borders.	Potential to gain real-world work experience depending on the activity and institution. Volunteer opportunities can expose individuals to interests, industries, and opportunities not otherwise known.	Volunteer experience can be listed on resumes and applications as work experience as long as it is clear that it is volunteer). Can gain knowledge, experience, skills practice, reputation, networking options, and references.	Volunteering is unpaid, and no guarantee of leading to future employment.