

Broad education helps liberal arts graduates

■ There are more options for students in non-technical programs than just graduate school, advisers say.

By JOSH NICHOLS
Staff writer

Students who pursue a bachelor's degree in liberal arts should feel confident they will graduate prepared for graduate study, college career advisers said.

But advisers said students also have a range of professional choices, including careers in a variety of other fields.

Students' key decisions are how they plan to use their undergraduate degrees and, if they plan to pursue graduate study, what professional options they will desire past the graduate school horizon.

According to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln undergraduate bulletin, liberal arts degrees serve as excellent preparation for study in law, business, medicine and other fields, so many choose to further their education with graduate school.

While graduate school often is a good option, students must focus on what they want to do after graduate school, said Geri Cotter, the UNL Career Services Center acting director.

"If you are bright and talented, it could appear to be the path of least resistance, but you need to have an idea of what you are trying to get in the end," Cotter said.

If that idea is vague, a liberal arts degree or a field of graduate study with a wide application could be the best route.

Kendra Waltke, a junior English major, said she will attend graduate school after she receives her bachelor's degree, and she is considering law school.

Waltke chose English as a major because she likes to write and always has enjoyed English classes.

"Learning to read and think critically will be very helpful in whatever I decide to do," she said.

When students come to Cotter's office unsure about what career field to enter or study, she said she encourages them to assess themselves. They must think about what their interests are, what they are skilled in and what interests fit their personality.

"I encourage them to look at their major as a window of reference," Cotter said.

She finds students often have overlooked the skills they could learn or have learned by pursuing liberal arts degrees.

"When we define skills, we think only of technical skills and not the broader skills we develop through education, such as research and communications skills," she said.

Jessica Coop, chief student adviser for the history department, said history majors graduate from college well-rounded students.

"Graduates in the history department take away good writing and research skills along with the ability to work independently," Coop said.

She also said the history major is often used as a pre-professional

major. She said prestigious graduate programs such as those at Harvard University look fondly upon history majors because they usually are well-rounded.

Students in the history field also pursue careers in government, museums, library sciences and teaching.

Erin Hollingsworth, who graduated last year with a bachelor's degree in English, originally planned to teach English in another country. Then she married and decided to find a job in Nebraska.

Through the UNL Career Advisory Service, Hollingsworth found a job at the Social Security claims administrative office in Omaha, where she is a bilingual claims representative who works with Spanish-speaking people.

She said her degree in English, along with her study in Spanish, helped her land the job.

Bryan Foster, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said students in his college "take away an education that teaches them how to approach complex situations and understand why they happened."

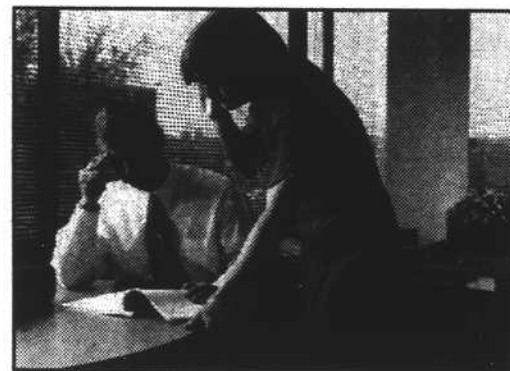
The world is changing faster than it ever has, Foster said. Liberal arts students will more easily adjust to work force changes than students enrolled in a focused area of study.

So, he said, students deciding between majors should ask themselves, "How do I educate myself to be adaptable in a world that doesn't exist yet but will 10 years from

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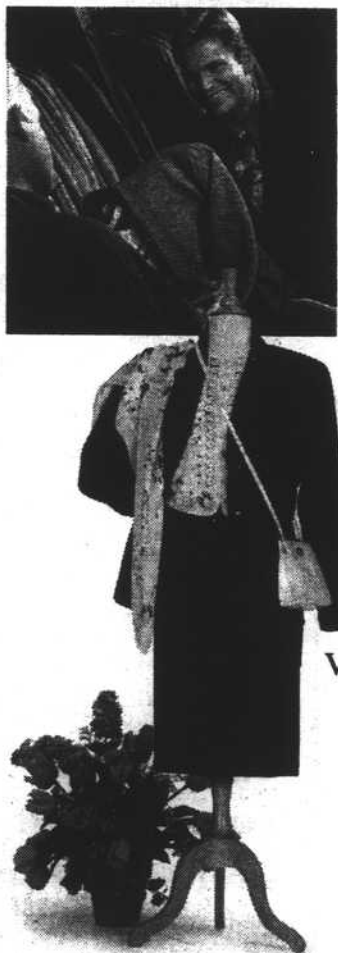
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