

Why go to College for Agriculture



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In a random sampling of the 18,000 registered at the University of Georgia, 1490 students were asked questions as to their own motivations and the incentives they attributed to others for going into higher education. It was found that the sample contained 143, all males, who were agriculture majors. This report will summarize the responses made by all the males (699) surveyed in general and these students in particular. Also, a comparison will be made with the results of a similar survey, recently completed by researchers at John Hopkins University, covering 7,948 students at 48 colleges and universities around the nation.

The questionnaire, employed to determine the motivational factors playing a part in the reasons why these University of Georgia students had come to the university, asked the randomly selected student population to list the five most important considerations (in order of importance) which applied to themselves, and to others, of both sexes. The list of possible motives offered for them to choose from included the following:

1. To learn a specific occupation
2. To improve the mind
3. To please parents
4. To make the right contacts
5. To become a better world citizen
6. To be with friends
7. To have fun
8. To surpass their parents
9. To postpone military service
10. To judge better between right and wrong
11. To appreciate the better things of life
12. To, perhaps, help improve society
13. To rear your children better
14. To become more intelligent
15. To become more discriminating
16. To know more about life
17. To find a suitable mate
18. To make use of an earned scholarship
19. To join a fraternity or sorority
20. To succeed in athletics

The questionnaire revealed that a third of the sample had already changed their majors at least once and that 18% were, at present, contemplating another change. Most (83%) were confident that their present choice would be directly connected with a future occupation. Only 4% saw any correlation

between it and life in the home. Another 10% were uncertain of its usefulness in any fashion. A few (1%) optimistic souls thought their majors might even be helpful in military areas. In addition, 27% admitted having felt, at one time or another, that college was a waste, and 12% were of this conviction at present.

Why did our agriculture majors come to the university? Their choices, in order of importance, from the list of twenty suggested reasons were as follows:

1. To learn a specific occupation
2. To improve the mind
3. To, perhaps, help improve society
4. To know more about life
5. To rear your children better

For the general male student population sampled in this survey, the choices were as follows:

1. To learn a specific occupation
2. To improve the mind
3. To become more intelligent
4. To know more about life
5. To have fun.

When asked why other boys go to college, the agriculture majors listed:

1. To learn a specific occupation
2. To postpone military service
3. To have fun
4. To make the right contacts
5. To please parents

These selections compare with the motives attributed to most boys by the general male population as follows:

1. To learn a specific occupation
2. To postpone military service
3. To have fun
4. To please parents
5. To join a fraternity

It is obvious that agriculture majors and the general male student body sampled in this survey feel very similarly about the reasons others go to college. The similarity of views is further evident when they were asked why girls enter college. The future farmers thought they came: (1) to find a husband, (2) to have fun, (3) to please parents, (4) to be with friends, (5) to join a sorority. The males in general

listed the same reasons, in slightly different order of importance, as follows: (1) to find a husband. (2) to join a sorority. (3) to please parents. (4) to have fun. (5) to learn a specific occupation. Neither set of male students credited their female classmates with any serious intentions or expectations from their presence at an institution of higher learning.

The data gathered by the social scientists at Johns Hopkins University revealed very similar reactions when the responses of almost 8,000 freshmen and juniors scattered in 48 colleges over the nation, were tabulated. First among their reasons for attending college was to learn skills for jobs. Next they wanted to know what to do with their lives (also job involved), and to get a "liberal" education. Unlike the Georgia males who did not admit the avoidance of military service as a personal motive (only for other males), 9% of the national male sample did mention this factor. Missing from the consideration of the Georgia group was the possibility of helping to improve society. It did appear third highest in the national survey among the ideas deemed "very important" to them, preceded by preparation for a career: and, at the top, the realization of a purpose and meaning to life. The national sample was also asked what would be most important to them 10 years in the future. In this instance, family life was ahead of the career. But in choosing their life's work they, again, came out for usefulness to society. Only 16% would confess their primary goal was to become very affluent.

What, then, have the respondents to this survey of college motivation told us about themselves and the beliefs about others? Agriculture majors at the

University of Georgia appear to be similar and different from the sample of general male students on the campus and in the nation's colleges at large. Paramount in the thinking of most of them is a future job. In a world of increasingly rapid technological changes, they wanted stability and certainty. Abstractions like purpose, meaning, improvement of society are secondary to the overriding goal. Draft-avoidance, being unmanly, is ignored among their personal motives but are not forgotten as attributes for other males safe on campus. It was noted that college males, nationally, also refuse to acknowledge this matter in regard to their own motivation. Perhaps the implication of unmanliness in their presence in a haven of escape and safety may contribute to the unrest on many campuses.

Another source of unease among college males must be their strong belief that college women are all hunters of husbands. The feeling of being a victim of a huntress adds little to the male's serenity. Hunting and having fun is the life of a college girl: and a male who is so seriously (they claim) in pursuit of a career cannot but have doubts concerning their need to be on the college scene. Agriculture majors, also, appear to take a dim view of the seriousness of males not in the same curricular major. The secondary motives of those not in agriculture (having fun, making the right contacts, and parent pleasing) are suspect as well. It can be hoped that their own motives, if honestly presented, will be fulfilled. We need people who want a good job, to improve their minds, to improve society, to know more about life, and to rear a better crop of children. Lots of luck to them.