



“Students and parents have a pretty good idea of what majors pay the most, but they have a poor sense of the magnitude of the differences within the major,” said Douglas A. Webber, an associate professor of economics at Temple University who studies earnings by academic field. He points to one example: The top quarter of earners who majored in English make more over their lifetimes than the bottom quarter of chemical engineers.

But what if you never make it to the top of the pay scale? Even English or history graduates who make just above the median lifetime earnings for their major do pretty well when compared to typical graduates in business or a STEM field.

As for why the "impractical" majors are not such dead ends in the job department, they usually, and often more thoroughly than the "practical" majors, equip students with the soft skills that employers are so desperately looking for these days. Communication (written and oral), problem solving, teamwork, and leadership skills are all very important, even essential, to be considered for most professional jobs today.

Interpretive dance may not be in demand, but the competencies that liberal arts majors emphasize — writing, synthesis, problem solving — are sought after by employers. A 2017 study by David J. Deming, an associate professor of education and economics at Harvard, found jobs requiring both the so-called soft skills and thinking skills have seen the largest growth in employment and pay in the last three decades.

One knock on the liberal arts is that it's difficult to find a first job. But a study by Burning Glass Technologies, a Boston-based company that analyzes job-market trends, concluded that if liberal arts graduates gain proficiency in one of eight technical skills, such as social media or data analysis, their prospects of landing entry-level jobs increase substantially.

Which is not to say that you should trash that hard-earned chemical engineering or econ degree; those two majors will still, on average, pay the most for the highest performers.

But the thing to remember is that, if you're still choosing a major, advising students and children on their majors (incidentally, studies show that students should not listen to their parents when deciding on a major), or believe your college major is somehow holding back your career, high performing English majors can very easily outperform, when it comes to comp, average engineering students.

For further Thanksgiving Table ammunition, consider that Alibaba CEO Jack Ma majored in English (and taught English early on his career), Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein majored in history, and YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki majored in history and literature. Note that Blankfein and Wojcicki both did their undergraduate work at Harvard, which points to another statistical finding when it comes to the correlation between major and compensation: school choice likely matters more than major choice.

Source: [http://www.vault.com/blog/admit-one-vaults-mba-law-school-and-college-blog/english-and-history-majors-do-not-fear-you-might-make-more-than-math-and-econ-students-over-your-career/?utm\\_source=UndergradNewsletter&utm\\_medium=Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=11\\_13\\_2017\\_UG&referer\\_ID=7778](http://www.vault.com/blog/admit-one-vaults-mba-law-school-and-college-blog/english-and-history-majors-do-not-fear-you-might-make-more-than-math-and-econ-students-over-your-career/?utm_source=UndergradNewsletter&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_campaign=11_13_2017_UG&referer_ID=7778)