



## Career portfolios: Jobseekers show their competencies

“Don’t tell me—show me,” say some employers. Employers want evidence of jobseekers’ abilities. And for many jobseekers, the proof is in the portfolio.

A career portfolio highlights a person’s major achievements and can include awards, letters of recommendation, and examples of work. Jobseekers present such materials to prospective employers, usually during a job interview.

Teachers, writers, and photographers are some of the workers who have long promoted themselves with concrete examples of their products. But according to employment counselors, career portfolios can be useful to almost any jobseeker.

Part of a typical career portfolio includes standard jobseeker documents—such as a resume, transcripts, and letters of recommendation. What makes a portfolio different are work samples, such as reports, plans, photographs, and in-depth descriptions of the jobseeker’s skills and experience.

Making a portfolio is simply a matter of organizing everything and presenting it in an interesting way; for example, using graphs or headings to focus attention on particular items.

For more information, visit your local library or career counselor. State employment offices may also have

## Analyzing degree completion

When discussing higher education, families and researchers often talk about access to schooling. But the real issue is completion of academic credentials, according to a February 2006 report released by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics.

The report, “The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion from High School Through College,” follows students to examine postsecondary attendance patterns. Among the findings:

- The longer students wait to enter postsecondary education, the less likely they are to finish a degree.
- Taking high school mathematics classes beyond Algebra II significantly increases the chances of earning a degree, as does taking college-level math before the third year of college.
- Having fewer than 20 credits by the end of the first calendar year of enrollment is a serious threat to

information; see, for example, the career portfolio information for Florida students online at [facts023.facts.usf.edu/portfolio](http://facts023.facts.usf.edu/portfolio).



## Scholarships for student newshounds

Hot off the press: You can win money for college by working for your high school newspaper.

Each year, the Quill and Scroll Society, an international honorary society for high school journalists, recognizes exemplary journalistic efforts with its International Writing and Photo contest. Any high school student can enter, and winners receive a Gold Key award. Winning seniors are also eligible to apply for \$500 and \$1,500

Edward J. Nell Memorial Scholarships in Journalism.

To qualify, entries must have been recently published in a school or professional newspaper. The contest consists of 12 divisions, including news stories, in-depth reports, sports coverage, and editorial cartoons. Each school is limited to four entries per division. The fee is \$2 per entry, and applications are due in early February.

For more information, write to the Quill and Scroll Society, University of Iowa, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, 100 Adler Journalism Building, Room E346, Iowa City, Iowa 52242; call (319) 335-3457; or visit online at [www.uiowa.edu/~quill-sc/Contests/2001InterWritPhoto.html](http://www.uiowa.edu/~quill-sc/Contests/2001InterWritPhoto.html).



## Data show geographic pay differences

degree completion.

- Formal transfer to a 4-year college or university, either from another 4-year school or a community college, is positively associated with degree completion; wandering from one school to another (a behavior called "swirling") is not.

- Changing majors does not affect degree completion rates.

To order copies of the report, write to ED Pubs, Education Publications Center, U.S. Department of Education, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, Maryland, 20794-1398; call toll-free, 1 (877) 4-ED-PUBS (433-7827), 1 (800) USA-LEARN (872-5327), or TDD toll-free, 1 (877) 576-7734; or visit online, [www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html). The report is also available on the Education Department's Web site at [www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/toolboxrevisit/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/toolboxrevisit/index.html).

Location matters when it comes to occupational earnings. Consider sales workers, for example: Compared with the national average, a sales worker makes about 30 percent more in the Phoenix area and about 18 percent less in the Indianapolis area, according to the most recent data available from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

This type of data used to be available only sporadically. But now, earnings comparisons like these are avail-



able each year for many metropolitan statistical areas. Earnings comparisons by area, called pay relatives, are developed from the BLS National Compensation Survey. These pay relatives account for wages, salaries, commissions, and production bonuses.

But you might want to think twice before heading for that sales job in Arizona. Higher pay in large metropolitan areas is often linked to a higher overall cost of living, so workers may have to spend more in those areas to get the things that they need.

More information on pay relatives is available by writing to the BLS National Compensation Survey, Office of Compensation and Working Conditions, 2 Massachusetts Avenue NE., Suite 4175, Washington, D.C. 20212-0001; by calling (202) 691-6199; or by reviewing the news release online at

[www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ncspay.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ncspay.pdf).

## Lifetime "career" changes

How many times does the average worker change careers? Statistically speaking, no one knows.

One idea that is commonly—but incorrectly—attributed to the U.S. Department of Labor is that people change careers about seven times in a lifetime. But the Labor Department does not gather that kind of data.

The major problem in collecting such data is the difficulty in defining what a "career change" is. Is it a switch in occupations or career fields? Maybe it's a promotion. What about workers who change employers but stay in the same occupation? Because there is no clear definition, accurate counting of career changers is difficult, if not impossible.

However, the Labor Department's U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) does collect data on *job* change: the switch from one employer to another

or a switch from one occupation to another while working for the same employer. What's the number of job changes? The average is about 10 jobs for workers between ages 18 and 38, according to current data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979.



Whatever the average number of jobs or careers, one fact is certain: Most people make many changes during their working lives. To help, the Department of Labor provides job-market information and job-search advice. For more information, write to the U.S. Department of Labor, Frances Perkins Building, 200 Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20210; call toll-free, 1 (866) 4-USA-DOL (487-2365), TTY toll-free, 1 (877) 889-5627; or visit online, [www.dol.gov/dol/audience/aud-unemployed.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/audience/aud-unemployed.htm).

--Contributed by David Terkalian, BLS economist