

“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do.

Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”

- Aristotle, Philosopher

The Maine Center for Career Preparation is a private, non-profit committed to improving the economic prospects of Maine citizens by improving the linkages between education and workforce development.

Maine Center for Career Preparation  
643D Lewiston Road  
Topsham, ME 04086  
207-373-0488/0479 fax  
working@careerprospects.com

# Education Works!

## Driven to Learn

By Tom Broussard

There have been a number of initiatives launched in Maine recently regarding education and in particular, higher education.

The so-called “brain drain” has been much mentioned in this pursuit. The statistics tell us that

the college bound students are leaving the state in droves.

Alternatively, those who do stay in Maine are not going to college, at least not in the numbers that “we” need them to.

Much of the response to this situation has been to focus on how to “get more people to go on to higher education.”

### Driving in Maine

What kind of car do you drive? (And what does my

car have to do with education you may ask?) I will explain. What kinds of cars do you see on the road? All kinds of trucks, SUV's, sedans, old cars and new cars and even a few luxury cars.



If higher education were a car, it would be a BMW or a Mercedes.

No one will buy a luxury car if they are still debating the merits of driving at all. No one will buy ANY car until they decide for themselves that they are ready to give up their current form of transportation. Particularly if it still meets their needs.

### Drive to Learn

So, the first real step towards moving people into higher education is to help them decide that education is a good thing in the first place.

There is probably almost 100% agreement, at least at some theoretical level, that more education is good for everyone.

But the discussion about going back to school or continuing on to higher education is real, not theory.

In the real world, the need to continue ones' education does not exist in a vacuum. Continuing education is in direct competition with all of the other pressures on time, money, energy, family, work, and so on. And it must trump them all.

In order to pursue or return to higher education, people must be absolutely committed. They must believe that the benefits far outweigh the costs of what they know will be a very difficult journey.

No one is going to make a leap of that magnitude without making lots of smaller leaps first.

In many, many ways education is an act of faith. One must have an enormous amount of faith that the

effort put forth today will bear fruit tomorrow.

Given today's extremely challenging employment circumstances, choosing more education is probably as much an act of courage as of faith. It can be daunting to say the least.

### **Baby Steps**

Education has always been a sequence of experiences, each one building on the last while preparing a person for the next.

One reason that tracking in schools can be so damaging is that once on a particular track, it is exceedingly difficult to change. Not because the distance over to the next track is physically too far but the incremental steps that enabled others to progress in that track have been missed along the way.

To embark voluntarily on a journey of huge expense requiring courage, faith and commitment over a protracted period of time for uncertain benefits is no small order.

No journey of any distance starts without the first, small steps.

That is why the current push for more adults to return to higher education cannot succeed without an additional push on the need, the nature and the benefit of education generally.

This is one trip that no one else can make for you. In the world of education, particularly higher education, you have to be driven to learn.