

The Most Meaningful College Majors



Kathryn Dill, Forbes Staff The workforce, the workplace, and the future of both.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathryndill/2015/09/02/the-most-meaningful-college-majors/#5e20222d61fa>

Careers closely linked with the word “meaningful” also tend to be categorized as poorly compensated. But many of the degrees on this list provide the professionals that hold them with careers that combine a healthy financial life with a powerful sense of purpose.

As part of their [2015 - 2016 College Salary Report](#), [Payscale.com](#) asked survey respondents if they feel that their job “makes the world a better place,” using the percentage of respondents in each field who said they derived a “high” level of meaning from their work to rank the associated 319 college majors accordingly.



A breadth of fields and careers are represented throughout the ranking, but once again majors in health care, [science](#), engineering, athletics, and [education](#) perform particularly well.

At the top of the list this year is [Medical Laboratory Science](#). A staggering 97% of respondents found their work in fields associated with this major to be meaningful, and those occupations offered a mid-career salary of \$61,500.

Taking second place, down one rung from last year, is Pastoral Ministry. The mid-career wage for careers associated with this major is a modest \$49,600, but 91% of those who hold these positions find them meaningful.

In fact there is strong variation between the salaries offered to the holders of the degrees at the top of this list. Among those with Counseling and Early Childhood Education degrees, 81% find their work meaningful, though roles associated with both degrees pay in the low \$40,000 range.

Petroleum Engineering is the degree on this list whose recipients are the highest paid, earning mid-career wages of \$168,000. A substantial 71% find their work meaningful.

At the other end of the spectrum, a few surprising careers earn low marks for the levels of fulfillment they provide. A little less than a third of those with Fashion Design, Illustration, Creative Writing, and Statistics degrees found their work meaningful. Only about a quarter of those with Graphic Communication and Film Production degrees found their work meaningful.

Communication Design ranks lowest for fulfillment on this list: With mid-career wages of \$67,200, just 21% of those with this degree found high levels of meaning in their work.