



LaunchMyCareer

A Conversation
Guide for
Counselors,
Advisors, and
Tennessee
Promise Mentors

LaunchMyCareerTN: Helping Prospective Students Discover Credentials of Value

Many students wonder if college is “worth it” – the answer to that question is generally yes, but it depends on what they study and where they go. Making a good choice can lead to a better career, higher wages, and greater personal and professional satisfaction. Making a bad choice can lead to high debt and difficulty landing a well-paying job that makes launching an adult life difficult. To support better choices, prospective students need to know the value of different programs.

LaunchMyCareerTN.org is an interactive website that helps people find college programs of value to them by letting them see the expected financial return on their choice of college and major as well as the personal and professional satisfaction that accompanies different courses of study.

[LaunchMyCareerTN](https://LaunchMyCareerTN.org) does this by providing information on:

- **Hot Jobs:** well-paying jobs that are in-demand in their state and communities;
- **Hot Skills:** the skills those jobs require; and
- **Credentials of Value:** programs that help graduates meet their life-style goals and quickly break even on their investment in a college education.

[LaunchMyCareerTN](https://LaunchMyCareerTN.org) provides information on certificates and degree programs at public colleges in Tennessee, including how much graduates of each program earn and how much those graduates spent on their education. [LaunchMyCareerTN](https://LaunchMyCareerTN.org) is *not* an aptitude test, interest inventory, or credit transfer resource, but it can help prospective students find the right program and college based on their goals.

This guide helps guidance counselors, advisors, and mentors facilitate conversations with middle or high school students about how to use [LaunchMyCareerTN](https://LaunchMyCareerTN.org) as part of their college decision process.

How to Use LaunchMyCareerTN

What program and what college your students choose can dramatically affect their career and life outcomes. [LaunchMyCareerTN](#) helps prospective students find programs with high returns on their investment (ROI) of time, money, and energy. ROI encompasses both earnings and the personal and professional satisfaction and fulfillment that may result from their choices.

There are four different paths through [LaunchMyCareerTN](#):

1. **Occupation/Job search:** users who know what job they want can browse the majors that often lead to that job and then select an institution offering that major;
2. **Institution search:** users who already selected an institution can browse majors offered there;
3. **Major search:** users who already selected a major can browse institutions that offer it;
4. **Industry search:** users who know what industry they want to work in can browse the jobs available in that industry and then select a related major and institution.

Students can explore programs at all undergraduate levels, from certificates to associate's and through bachelor's degrees, to help them understand the different investment of time and money each level requires, as well as the different benefits that flow from those choices. This should help students judge which program makes the most sense for them.

Students can save combinations of majors and institutions by clicking on "Add to Favorites" to create a customized [Comparison Report](#) of different options that appeal to them. To do so, students can save different combinations of programs and institutions, and choose "Compare Your Favorites" at the top of the page.

The [Comparison Report](#) presents relevant information about the expected gain in earnings associated with each program tagged as "favorites," the years it will take for them to "launch", and information that can help the student judge the likelihood of being admitted. Displaying these outcomes side-by-side allows prospective students to consider their options easily and inform their decisions about which program aligns best with their goals.

The next pages include some questions they might ask, along with some information that can support your answers.



[LaunchMyCareerTN](#) helps students calculate their return on investment (ROI) for specific programs, understanding both future earnings and personal satisfaction that may result from their choices.

Is college worth it?

Many students want to know whether college is “worth it.” On average, yes, college graduates more than break even on their investment financially, and they often live longer, healthier, and happier lives. But, whether college is worth it for an individual depends on what they study and where they study. [LaunchMyCareerTN](#) helps students explore that question for themselves by showing them the earnings and satisfaction of graduates with different majors or from different schools.

What jobs and skills are in high demand where I live?

If a student has no idea what kind of job they might want, the **Hot Jobs** and **Hot Skills** toolbars (based on information provided by the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development) can be a good place to start. **Hot Jobs** are those that have been projected to have many openings in the near future, and that pay middle-class or higher wages. **Hot Skills** are in high-demand across hot jobs in the state.

- *Reviewing both of these toolbars presents an opportunity for you to help students consider what kinds of jobs might match their interests and aptitudes—and which are ones that are most likely to lead to employment.*

How much can I expect to earn in a particular job?

An **Occupation Profile** shows wage information such as the average first year wages, median wages of Tennesseans in that job, and early and late career earnings so students can understand the possible trajectory of earnings over time. It also presents data on expected openings and demand. These results can be narrowed by region to better understand earnings in the local labor market.

- *This is an opportunity to discuss the demand and potential earnings in the local labor market.*

Which schools offer the credential or major I want?

Once the student selects a particular major, they can browse through colleges that offer that program and tag multiple options as “favorites” to compare the ROI across different institutions. They can add different combinations of programs and institutions to their **Comparison Report**.

- *This is an opportunity to help students consider what tradeoffs they are willing to make and to discover factors such as convenience or interests that affect their choice.*



Is college “worth it?”
Usually, yes. But it depends on what you study, and where.

LaunchMyCareerTN shows the earnings and satisfaction of graduates with different majors or from different schools.

What are the application requirements for this program, and where can I apply?

Institution Profiles display information about costs, financial aid, and admissions processes. The admissions and deadlines tab includes a link to a school's application.

- *This is an opportunity to talk about next steps in the financial aid and application processes.*

How long will it take to finish different programs?

The **Major at Institution ROI** page shows the average number of years students take to complete.

- *This is an opportunity to help students consider how many classes they might take at a given time, how that might affect their costs, and how they plan to balance their other commitments.*

How much can I expect to make after graduating, and how long will it take to launch?

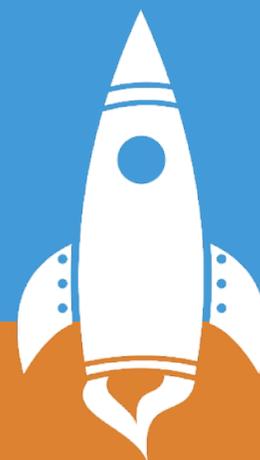
The **Major at Institution ROI** page displays the additional earnings graduates of that program might make over the next 20 years (over and above what a high school graduate earns) and subtracts the costs of earning that degree. The **Years to Launch** calculator allows students to estimate how long, on average, it would take them to reach their lifestyle goal and to “launch” their lives. To get a personalized estimate, students can alter their lifestyle goal by changing where they want to live as well as their preferences for a home, transportation method, and family size.

- *This is an opportunity to engage in discussions about their lifestyle goals and whether their selected path is likely to support that lifestyle. If they are deeply committed to credentials and pathways with low earnings, they can consider what that might mean for the lifestyle they hope to attain or the necessity of furthering their education or gaining other skills.*

What do people who earned this kind of degree say about their satisfaction with their personal and professional lives?

Wages are not the only factor when choosing a program. On a **Major at Institution ROI** page, students can view the Gallup-Purdue Index data that summarize graduates' satisfaction and fulfillment.

- *This is an opportunity to help them consider potential tradeoffs between wages and personal and professional satisfaction, including what factors are most important to them.*



The Tennessee Higher Education Commission worked with College Measures, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Gallup, Inc., and USA Funds to create LaunchMyCareerTN.

