For the very same reason that a Liberal Arts education is valued, namely for its breadth of scope, many liberal arts students report that it is a difficult degree to translate into employment opportunities.

Many counselors who work with students in liberal arts degree programs repeatedly hear questions like, “Yes, but what kinds of jobs can I get with this degree?” or, “My skills are so broad, how do I choose a given field or industry?” The answers can seem overwhelming without a better understanding of the intention of liberal arts curricula. The majority of majors offered at Sac State are considered to be within the realm of Liberal Arts, including Communications, Arts and Design, and Social Sciences. Your peers, who majored in applied programs; e.g., Engineering, Computer Science, Nursing, Accounting, and Teacher Education, may seem to have an edge in the job market. However, many employers, including the federal government, would argue that a liberal arts education better prepares you to apply critical thinking, analysis, and communication skills to a wide array of areas. Adding a minor to your degree program only enhances your marketability.

According to the book, Keys to Liberal Arts Success¹ (2002), some of the primary benefits of a liberal arts education include (but are not limited to): learning how to learn, learning how to write, and discovering the interconnectedness of all knowledge. In other words, you become more adept in the art of learning. These are the very skills employers are seeking when they emphasize the importance of “soft” skills.

Liberal arts graduates are gainfully employed in every area of the world of work! And because liberal arts programs include both science courses and arts courses, those who graduate from these programs gain knowledge that will help them succeed along every step of their career path. Take a look at the titles of the four categories under which General Education (GE) requirements at Sac State are categorized: the Physical Universe and Life Forms, the Arts and Humanities, the Individual and Society, and, Basic Subjects (the ones that place emphasis on your oral and written communication skills and your critical thinking skills). Now include additional coursework that enhances your understanding of each of these areas and you have a good description of a typical liberal arts degree program.

To more effectively narrow your job focus, and simultaneously make it a little less overwhelming, you can use the following delimiters. Start with where you want to work. Let’s say that you are sure that you want to stay in the Sacramento region. You have already narrowed your job search by choosing a geographical area in which to focus your job search. Next think about identifying fields or industries that particularly interest you. It may help to think about what classes within your degree program particularly piqued your interest. Choose one or two fields or industries that utilize the skills you used in those classes AND that have a good representation of companies within the Sacramento region.

Finally, make sure that you have identified enough positions within those companies so that you are likely to find a healthy number of openings in the next 3-6 months (the average amount of time for a targeted job search to yield a position that interests you). When your resume does its job and gets you an interview, go in and sell yourself as the well rounded, well versed, and well-read individual that you are!

¹Figler, Carter, Bishop, & Kravits, Keys to Liberal Arts Success, 2002