Opinion

Veering off our predetermined paths

* Mar 25, 2010

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

I have become a strong proponent of the "gap year" as I near the end of my undergrad work and arrive at the crossroads of graduate school or trying to find decent employment.

How about some time off from all that to do something a little more enthralling? A few months roaming the slopes of Lake Tahoe might be nice.

When, and if, I graduate this spring, my mother expects me to come back to San Diego as some sort of transformed 20-something who's ready to be a working man.

As a first-generation college student in my family of five, it pains me to tell her just because I might have a degree (which is becoming more and more of an absolute necessity), doesn't mean I can land a livable wage out of school.

But my mother's incessant howling perturbs me to no end. All this chatter about either having to go after an advanced degree or find a job that offers benefits such as a matched 401k - it's starting to drive me nuts.

Can't a guy get a chance to catch his breath and take a break from midterms and finals?

In this case, I'm asking for at least a few months to do something just for myself, like snowboarding at Lake Tahoe every day during my - sorry, Mom - inevitable gap year.

That's all I'm asking for before working my way through internships and part-time work to something hopefully more career-orientated. Either that or I regroup, take the Graduate Record Examination and apply for a graduate program as the opportunity to do so for this fall has passed.

The sketchy part may be that I still refer to myself as a "guy" rather than a "man." My hectic senior year is flashing before my eyes, and I still believe there's some kid left in my 22-year-old self.

I feel like I should apologize for that being the case. I've learned a ton here and deeply value my education. It's not that I want to peace-out and have a kick-ass time, but can't I also feel that I need a tad more time to grow?

I know undergraduate work in the California State University system isn't exactly the most rigorous schoolwork, but that doesn't mean my back isn't aching after 17 straight years of sitting in a classroom. I think I'll burn out if I keep my rear end planted in these stiff seats.

I've got other ideas, such as taking a six-month to a yearlong break from academia and cubicles to live the mountain experience at Lake Tahoe. My 26-year-old brother runs a small video game repair business there when he's not working as a ski instructor for the resorts and he's perfectly content. Isn't that what we're all after - happiness?

I see Tahoe as a once-in-a-lifetime chance to live and snowboard for free while I use the quiet hills to help me write as much fictional or nonfictional material as my fingers can possibly pump out.

Besides writing, I hope to save up some money since I won't be driving much or paying for rent. I want to do things like play my drums more often, something I don't have the time or space for in college.

I am committed to taking no more than one year off and within that year I will at least prepare to pursue an advanced degree, so please, chill out concerned parents.

Windows of opportunity for experiences like the aforementioned only stay open for so long.

Baby-boomer parents in this economy seem to have issues - valid ones - with letting their kids veer down roads other than the inherently predetermined paths set for us.

But if you truly believe college is some sort of transformative phase when a kid becomes an adult and starts contributing to society, then at least trust us to know we'll make some good decisions here and there.

It might just take a year or two, that's all.

<http://www.sjsunews.com/spartan_daily/opinion/article_1a591efe-265c-56a6-9e42-2a8bf1bc8805.html>

Strangely, there was no name to the original article.