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11-11-2013

## The case for residential liberal arts, Part III: Adaptability

Michael Hemesath

*College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University*, [mhemesath@csbsju.edu](mailto:mhemesath@csbsju.edu)

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### Recommended Citation

Hemesath M. 2013 Nov 11. The case for residential liberal arts, Part III: Adaptability [blog]. Quad 136. [Accessed 2017 Feb 10]. <http://blogs.csbsju.edu/mhemesath/2013/11/11/the-case-for-residential-liberal-arts-part-iii-adaptability/>.

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## Quad 136

### The Case for Residential Liberal Arts, Part III: Adaptability

▫ [Previous](#) [Next](#) ▫

## The Case for Residential Liberal Arts, Part III: Adaptability



Marine Capt. Garrett Litfin, SJU '03. Photo: Denise Gagner

Students and their families are rightly concerned with the economic returns of higher education and especially how their education will prepare them for the job market.

We do have plenty of evidence that students from the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University do well in the job market. (See our highly praised [data base](#) of recent graduates.)

There can, however, be a tendency to focus on entry into the job market and that first job. As important as that job can be, I would argue that the real strength of a broad, holistic liberal arts education is that it prepares one for a career, not just a job. As our students enter a dynamic world, they have very little ability to know what they will be doing in a decade, to say nothing about thirty or forty years from now. Consider that

almost none of the jobs in high tech even existed a couple decades ago.

What a liberal arts education does, at its best, is provide the ability to learn and adapt by emphasizing timeless skills like critical thinking, the ability to communicate clearly, being comfortable with ambiguity and the ability to work with others. I was reminded of these attributes of a great liberal arts education when reading about alum Garrett Litfin '03. He is a Marine Captain who is responsible for flying Marine Helicopter Squadron One, which flies President Obama to and from the White House. He emphasized how well his education prepared him for the changes he has seen in his career. [Litfin said](#), "I feel my educational experience at SJU gave me a well-rounded educational background that allowed me to adapt to the new experiences and challenges I've faced as a Marine officer."

We strive to do the same for all our students, regardless of where they land!

November 11th, 2013 | Categories: [Alumni](#), [Economics](#), [Higher Education](#) | Tags: [Case for Residential Liberal Arts](#)

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About the  
Author:  
Michael  
Hemesath

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Michael Hemesath is the 13th president of Saint John's University. A 1981 SJU graduate, Hemesath is the first layperson appointed to a full presidential term at SJU. You can find him on Twitter [at] [PrezHemesath](#).