
Subject: A Programmer's Education

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Tue, 05 Dec 2006 16:58:11 GMT

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> Braedley writes:

>> Why don't I ever see these simple solutions?

> You are probably University-educated. Not your fault. :-)

While we are on this topic (and while I wait for SOLARSOFT to finish downloading), what is the most useful class you ever took in school?

For me, two come immediately to mind. The typing class I took as a sophomore in high school because I was a shy boy and the girl/boy ratio was 15:1. I use that knowledge every single day of my life. (In, uh, more ways than one.)

And the freshman English Composition class I took in my first semester of college from a hippie instructor who gently taught a good evangelical Christian boy to question everything.

Two great classes that changed my life! :-)

Cheers,

David

P.S. And for Braedley, it is possible to overcome a University education, but it takes more time than you might expect. :-)

--

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Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

Seppure ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

Subject: Re: A Programmer's Education

Posted by [James Kuyper](#) on Tue, 05 Dec 2006 21:53:19 GMT

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David Fanning wrote:

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>

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I flunked out of Caltech after my first year of study there. Flunking out of school is NOT a good thing to have as the last item on your resume. After wasting a year looking for a job with no results, I enrolled in the Computer Programming and Operations course at Control Data Institute. I already knew Fortran, APL, Basic, and C. I learned almost nothing new in that class. I added Cobol and RPG II to my list of languages, but I've never made any use of those two languages. However, I did get a 97% score on my exams, and finished the 6-month self-paced course in 12 weeks, and got a piece of paper that said (incorrectly) that CDI had actually taught me how to program computers. Because of the self-confidence that came from actually having succeeded at something, and from being able to cite that success on my resume, I was able to get a job within a couple of weeks of completing the course.

I've always been a very stubborn person, so six years later I returned to Caltech and finished my BS in Physics, with an average GPA during that time period of 3.7. I learned a lot of very interesting things at Caltech, and later at Cambridge University. However, the single most useful course I ever took was one that taught me almost nothing.
