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Alternative Careers for Physicists

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It is well known that roughly 50% of the students who earn a bachelor's in physics go directly to graduate school and that the other half goes directly into the work force. Of those who go to graduate school, roughly half enter physics or astronomy departments and the rest enter other science, engineering or other fields. Of those who persist to the PhD in physics, less than half are employed in academic or other traditional physics positions. Hence, the majority of those who earn a bachelors degree in physics are employed in non-physics related fields. How should the undergraduate physics curriculum reflect this reality? Should the undergraduate experience do a better job of highlighting what we like to call alternative pathways but which is in fact, the dominant pathway? While the undergraduate physics education provides a solid background for a wide range of careers, too often students do not know it. More importantly, too often physics faculty is unable to provide career advice on other than academic careers. This paper will provide the author's view of possible approaches to this dilemma.