

THE ISSUE:

A *New York Times* article published on January 22, 2012 made the following observation: "The last time analysts wrung their hands about prolonged American unemployment, for instance, in the early 1980s, the Internet hardly existed. Few at the time would have guessed that a degree in graphic design was rapidly becoming a smart bet, while studying telephone repair a dead end." The article could have added other considerations as well. For example, the international mobility of production and the extent of employment of workers in other countries by United States firms might also have been a surprise.

THE PROBLEM:

Current United States high school students need to prepare for jobs in the future. What jobs might exist in the future for current United States high school students?

YOUR TEAM'S TASK:

You are a peer counseling team who is meeting today to discuss and decide what information to provide your fellow students about the state of the job market in the future. Your team has been chosen to advise other students because of your expertise in economic issues and in the economic way of thinking.

Your fellow students have come to you for advice because they are at a point in their lives where they are making decisions about pursuing higher education and developing skills that will serve them in the future. While there are no definitive answers, it would be helpful for them to have some ideas about which jobs and industries might be readily available to them, and which might be less available. Given your knowledge about the economy (the trends in labor markets, growth or decline of output demand and supply in particular markets, the potential directions of technology, international demand and supply, United States firms' use of workers all over the world), what kinds of jobs should the students prepare for? What skills might be important, and what educational subjects and levels might best serve them in the future?