

# Alexis Blais

Part-time Sales Associate, 16  
Full-time Student, University of Connecticut  
Estimated income for 2006: \$5,000

## What is money to you?

Money is a way of gaining things, not only material things, but everything. I feel like money is everything. It's a means of survival, it helps you get by. Money is used to survive now.

## Does the amount of money that you want motivate your studies?

Whole heartedly. I've always wanted to make a lot of money.

## Why do you want to make a lot of money?

Because I want a good life. I want to provide my kids with whatever they want. To live comfortably.

## What is comfortable?

Comfortable... I want to live in a suburb, in a big house in a good neighborhood, by the water. Probably somewhere where I grew up, Rowayton, New Canaan... Darien if I have to, some parts of Norwalk. Basically being able to provide for my kids with whatever they want, to provide for my parents when they can't work anymore. I've always, always, had big goals, pretty much big by money. Whether it was being a famous actress and making a lot of money or being a magazine editor and making a lot of money. But if I am financially stable at 32, I would want to get out of the city and take care of my family while my husband made money. That would be my ultimate goal, to not have to work. I've seen too many people grow up with moms that work way too much.

## Would it be important that your kids have jobs?

I mean I want to be able to basically give them what they want but I learned a lot by always working, and I would be a completely different person if I hadn't been trying to get a job since when I was 13. I was making money when I was 12. Because I wouldn't know—I don't have enough money as it is, if I wasn't taking care of my own money when I was 12 I wouldn't know what money was.

## What are your biggest expenses right now?

It's hard to say because I'm here at school, but if I was home it would probably be clothes.

## Since you're in college you don't have to worry about living expenses as much.

No, but I'm constantly thinking about money because if I'm not happy here where else can I go? The only reason I couldn't go anywhere else if I wanted to, is because of money. If I had money, I could go to what-



ever school I wanted. Harvard, Yale—I mean come on, as long as you have money it's like you can do whatever you want. Honestly, there's a lot of differences between a state school and an ivy league school other than academics. Yeah, you can graduate from Harvard with a law degree and probably get a job quicker than you can from UConn, and you can probably by a later point in life be making the same amount of money. Here everyone has the same or less money—that I've met so far. My friend who goes to GW, one of his friends, his dad is the owner of the Nicks. Another one is the C.E.O. of Good Will. You graduate from Harvard and you've got connections, you know people who matter.

## So when you are paying for an ivy league college you aren't just paying for an education.

No, you're paying to get more out of life.

## What else do you think ivy league college students are getting for their tuition besides education?

Credibility, you graduate right away, not having to prove yourself as much as someone from a state school does—or any other school that is not as credible as a better school. A friend of mine is at Providence right now. His mom probably makes less than 30,000, but he's willing to pay 38,000 a year because he truly believes that he's going to come out of school looking better than me.

## You don't think people look at GPA as much as the school you graduated from?

Well, I don't know because I haven't gotten into that world yet, but I don't think they really look at your GPA. Where's your degree from? What's it in? Then, the interview definitely matters. More than anything, if you can interview well then it doesn't matter where you went to school but as far as getting your resume noticed... I just feel that labels mean so much. Labels get you into college, as far as what category you fit in, as far as what race or income you are. Once you get into college, it's what college you went to instead of who you are. If that wasn't the truth then things would have happened differently for a lot of people. I mean UConn is not a bad school. A lot of employers are impressed by it, but when you've got me from UConn and someone from NYU, Columbia, Providence, then there's a different amount of work that I will have to do to convince this guy that I am better.

## Are you happy with the amount of money you have?

No, no. I don't have enough money at all, I don't have any money. I have less than money. I owe money, I probably owe 500 dollars but I won't look.

## You won't look at your bank statement?

I haven't, I do this every time. I have my mom look. Last time I did this I thought I had money and then I didn't want to know how little I had, so I had negative 500 dollars, paid that back, then I had 600 for school, and not only is that gone, but 500 more is probably gone.

# David Hamilton

Unemployed

Homeless, 43

Expected income for 2006: \$16,000

## What is money?

Money is capital, money basically gives the foundation to do trading and bartering. According to society it's power, but money is only as powerful as you make it, with the emphasis that you put around it.

## Tell me about how the program here helps you financially.

As far as your wants, you have to go out and obtain employment and get those things yourself, like clothes. You really don't have to pay rent, you basically get paid to stay here, like 5 dollars a day, or you can do a chore. When you do obtain employment, whatever money that you make you can save that money, you know what I mean, and bank it. This is not really a permanent residency for me, I just fell on hard times and this is where I come, I've only been here 2 weeks.

## When you do get money, what do you spend it on?

Clothes. I'm a clothes person. One thing my grandma used to tell me is, 'If you don't have a million dollars, at least look like you have a million dollars.'

## What do you hate spending your money on?

Taxes, I hate taxes. I don't mind paying a certain amount but when you look at how much they've taken out and then when you look at January and see what they've given back to you... I just don't like seeing people getting took advantage of; that's not cool. And for the certain purposes in life that the government uses the tax money for like stuff that's in space, I mean come on; there's so many problems down here, what is the significant focus up there, you know what I'm saying? And you have this war, that's definitely a terrible thing.

## Do you feel some people even have a choice to join the military, given that they have no money to invest into education?

No not really, because there are grants, and college is not for everyone. So I would suggest that if you don't have money to go to college, go get a trade.

## When you were working, would you sacrifice less money to have more time off?

Oh no, I mean, I wouldn't do that because the cost of living wouldn't allow me to do that. Time off doesn't really look like an option.

## What would you buy if money weren't an issue?

I would defiantly get, you know what I'm saying, a house of my choice. Nothing really extravagant, big— no mansion or nothing, but something that's, you know what I mean, that's good and that's content for me. Maybe a one or two bedroom house. Get me a car, you know what I'm saying, put some of the money in the bank, and then anything that was left over I would pretty much donate it.

## You're not materialistic?

I'm more of a compassionate person. If I won a million dollars today, to me my outlook on life would not be that the world is alright because I have a million dollars. You know why? Because you don't have a million dollars, and the next man don't have a million dollars, so the world is still messed up. So I would do what I could do the help someone that really needs the help.

## What was the worst job you ever worked?

I think it was at this rubber factory, it was so hot. I mean when I say it was hot, I mean even in the winter time it was like 90-100 degrees in there. So in the summer time it was almost double that. I'm the type of person that when I get a job I'm going to stick it out, whatever the wages is. What's more important to me is the employee-employer relationship. There's got to be respect. And you've always got to give someone a reason to want to come back to work the next day. If I

ever was a boss, I would bring doughnuts and coffee. So if I were the head of the company and I could see that we're getting ahead financially, then I would be able to say that if it wasn't for these employees, I wouldn't be where I'm at, so it's important to give back.

## How has money motivated your career choices?.

I'm the type that if you pay me the right pay I'm supposed to be getting, and you ask me to knock a building down and build it back up, I'll do it. But when it comes to them paying me I don't want to hear no excuses. I want to get paid for the work that I do. The pay has to be good enough for me to stay in that career field. I picked construction because I know most construction jobs pay you well.

## What advice would you give me about money?

Never chase the Jones'. Don't want to have a Lex because Mr. Jones next door has a Lex, because a lot of time we don't see that Mr. Jones is leasing that Lex and that Lex is probably killing Mr. Jones to have. You ever see the movie American Beauty? Did you see the whole concept of that movie? It was more dysfunctional on the inside but if you look at the outside of the house, the house was so beautiful that you think that these people had everything together. I was working for an oil company and we went to this guy's house in New Canaan, and I mean this guy had a beautiful house, I think he had 4 or 5 bedrooms, but when we went inside, the guy had the whole house full of candles. So I ask him, "What's the significance of the candles? Is it spiritual?" and he said, "No, we don't have electricity." He couldn't afford the electricity, but the people that he was used to dealing with, his social structure, this was their guidelines. Its like he's chasing the Jones'. He's thinking, "If I don't have this, then they are going to talk about me." So it's more of a social status. Don't get involved with that.

# David Flewellyn

Truck Driver, 24

Estimated income for 2006: \$55,000

## What is money?

Money doesn't have any definition in and of itself, it is a placeholder, it's purely representational. Money is a representation of the stuff you can buy with it. It has no intrinsic value of its own.

## Has money motivated your career choices?

Yes it has because I never wanted tons and tons of money to be rich or extremely wealthy, but I wanted to have enough money to be able to live on my own, take care of myself, not have roommates, own my own apartment, own my own car... I wanted that stuff so in a way, yes.

## Does it motivate your studies?

No not at all. In fact I tend to keep my job and my studies very separate. The job is the thing that makes money so that I can spend my free time studying things that I want to study, and guarantees that my intellectual pursuits are free from the bonds of having to be something that will make me money.

## Would you sacrifice less money for more time off?

Yes, but only to a point where I could still support myself.

## You haven't gone to college, but has that hindered your career choices?

In a certain career choice yes, but in other ways no. I mean, I did go to some college. If you say, "I want to be a doctor," of course you'd have to go and get educated. So in a way it's hindered me. But if you want to talk about why I think a lot of people go to college, which is that, "this is a means to an end so that I can have a good job," and then they pick some arbitrary major that they think will make them money once they graduate; and then they get out of school and they can only find a job paying \$30,000 or whatever it might be and they don't know what to do. I do physical work and I make more money than someone my age with a college degree might in another line of work. So has it hindered me in certain career choices? Of course, because I don't have that piece of paper, I don't have that education. But does it hinder me in making money? No.

## What about in the future, when you are too old to do manual labor?

I think so, but I think that's more of a personal choice rather than anything else. Some people have to take the long way around. I like my life. I've had jobs where I've sat at a desk all day and stared out the window at the world outside. And I don't think, personally, that people were meant to sit inside at desks. I don't think it's in our nature, I think it's very contrary to who we are. A lot of people work and are so miserable, and I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that their jobs are unsatisfying. They sit in a cage all day. Look at what happens to a dog when you put him in a cage for 8 hours. The thing starts freaking out. That's what we're doing to ourselves voluntarily. I have chosen something different, and if it's harder when I'm older, then that's the sacrifice that I'm making now.

## Are you happy with the amount of money that you have right now?

Absolutely. I'd probably be happier with less. In order to support myself, I have to put in a certain amount of hours to support myself, and I end up making more money than I need.

## What are your biggest expenses?

My rent.

## What do you enjoy spending your money on?

My girlfriend, books, music, instruments. But I only have one guitar. That's about it. Those are my pleasures.

## What do you hate spending your money on?

I know it sounds bad, but I hate spending money on things that don't yield any real physical thing that you can touch. Things that are arbitrary, like insurance. Somewhere in my mind I see it as money flying out into the ether

## What was your worst job ever?

Working behind the counter in a butcher shop. I wasn't a butcher yet, but I worked behind the counter and just stood there all day, inside, and it just wasn't fun.

## Would you do it again if you were being paid more?

They'd have to pay me a whole lot more, as much as I'm making now, which would never happen.

## If you could have anything, what would you buy?

To be completely honest with you, I don't mean to sound pretentious, but there isn't really too much I want. I'd probably buy an antique car or two. I would sure as hell stop working so hard. Some more books, and I would give as much as I could to people that I cared about and people that I loved. You know what I mean? Like if you're the only one drunk at the party, it's not fun.

## What advice could you give me about money?

Make sure that money is a tool that you use, and you are not a tool that money uses.

# Richard Kochanek

Professor of Accounting, 65

Estimated income for 2006: \$200,000

## What is money?

Well, it's a medium of exchange. Generally that's the most common definition. People use it to buy things. Nothing more than that really.

## How do you measure worth and value?

That's a hard question, almost impossible for me to answer. But I will say this: I think you need to amass enough money to live comfortably and to get things you really want out of life. I think as you get older you realize that you don't need as many things that you thought you needed, and actually getting more and more things, doesn't make you that much happier. So I've always wondered why people need to amass huge amounts of money, millions and millions of dollars, beyond what anyone could need. I have found myself buying less things as I get older. There are certain things that I have that I treasure. Just looking around, I guess now I treasure the pieces of art that I do. When I create something it means a lot. But there's almost nothing on this desk here that is really that important to me. I end up finding a lot of pleasure in older things that are relatively inexpensive. Like this record player here is a record player that was made 50 years ago—I used to have one in college—and I found one in a tag sale for 25 dollars, so now I play records here. It's really quite lovely. It hardly cost anything, and yet it functions quite well.

## How much did money motivate your career path?

Well, probably when I first started off I wanted to be an artist, at first, and did not feel good enough to do that. The role of an artist is a hard one. Any artist, poet or painter—because you're wondering if you really have the talent to be extraordinary. So I ended up choosing a safer path, which is business, but even then I don't think I could have been a business person. I ended up teaching, which is more artistic. And it's worked out fine.

## What are your biggest expenses now?

Right now we don't have too many anymore because our homes are mostly paid for. We don't have newer cars, we have older cars. We don't have a lot of expenses right now. The biggest thing we have is a house in Tolland and a house in the Cape. We drive up there every weekend, which is lovely, the whole winter and everything.

## Do you find that saving or spending is stressful?

Fortunately, we have accumulated as much as we need so that we are very comfortable, so we don't worry about it. I worked as hard as I could, and we ended up with enough money. It's more important to think about how you spend money than how you make money. If you spend money carefully and live within your means or slightly below your means, you'll always have enough. If you are not extravagant and spend beyond what you're capable of spending then you're always going to be alright.

## What would you buy if money were not an issue?

I really can't think of anything to tell you the truth. I thought I needed

a fancier car, so I bought this used BMW convertible and I had it for a year, and I found out that it wasn't as important as I thought it was. So, I sold it, and that was a real surprise to me, that something I thought I wanted turned out that it was actually something that I didn't want. When I sold it, it actually freaked me out. I felt fear. So actually, I'm trying to reduce the number of things I have now. And the other thing I just want to point out is that the thing that makes me happiest is when I'm just creating something. It's not as much about buying something. It's about creating something that I didn't have before.

## Would you sacrifice less money to have more time off?

Yes, I think that is true for most people, I would say yes.

## Do you feel that most people work too much?

I think in my lifetime, of course I'm retired now, I definitely did work too hard. We have a lot because of it, but I did definitely.

## What advice can you give me about money?

Definitely to get your first job out of college at an amount that is worthy of you, not to sell your self too short. To make sure that whatever talent you have is rewarded. And then, to work hard and to show people you're worth that and maybe more. And then to take that money you earned, and try to be careful with it, and use it for things that you really want, or build value for the future. To save a lot of it, to invest it in something that will grow in value, like a house, or an investment in a company. Not for something frivolous that will quickly diminish in value, like a car. That's been the secret of what we've done. And we've amassed quite a bit by just being careful with what we buy. We had three children and everything, so we had a lot of different expenses and everything but it still worked out okay. Do what you want to do. We had three daughters, one is a mother mostly, she's a lawyer, but she never really practiced that much. She loves being a mother, she has three children. One is a physical therapist and one is a poet. So they've all gone different ways, but they all seem to enjoy what they are doing.