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TYING THE KNOT MEANS FORGING A FINANCIAL BOND

By: Linda Tucci, Globe Correspondent
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They met in May through a dating service and in a matter of months were planning a wedding.
Despite the whirlwind courtship, Jason Glass, 32, and Sarah Geisler, 27, realized they needed a Boston Globe Money Makeover to figure out their financial compatibility before they tie the knot in July. Glass, a Web designer for a medical records company, gave up his $60,000 job in May to earn a master's degree in nursing. When he graduates in 2007, his new career will give him greater earning power with a starting salary of $65,000 and the potential to exceed $125,000, he said.

For now, however, Glass is borrowing about $50,000 a year from government and private lenders to cover expenses, which include $24,000 in tuition and monthly mortgage payments of $1,585 on the $260,000 Allston condo he bought in 2002.

Geisler earns $52,500 a year as a researcher at a small pharmaceuticals company in Cambridge, and she doesn't like to spend. "Playthings don't interest me much," she says.

The frugal bride comes to the marriage with no house but about $7,000 in investments and $40,000 cash in the bank, which could come in handy given the groom's student status.

"I don't want him accruing so much debt when he doesn't have to," Geisler says, adding that she is "very protective" of what she makes, "but the goals we have are things I want."

The couple would like to buy a house when Glass graduates, preferably in Brookline. As their parents did for them, they want to pay for their children's college educations. They also want to save for retirement.
Theodore "**Ted**" **Yoos**, a fee-only financial planner with Back Bay Financial Group who advised the couple, said the first step is to decide between two economic philosophies: traditional or contemporary.
In the traditional model, "you're one economic unit and working together in marriage toward a common goal," he said. "The second model says `what's mine is mine and what's yours is yours and maybe we'll put some things together in the middle, but we'll negotiate that.' "

That decision is the couple's alone. "It won't do any good for me to express my bias," says **Yoos**. "They need to talk through that."

Yoos does have a strong opinion on the best way for them to work toward a house and comfortable retirement. For the next two years, he recommends the couple take advantage of their lower income tax bracket by contributing the maximum allowed to their Roth IRA accounts: $3,000 apiece for 2004 (deadline April 15) and $4,000 apiece for 2005 and 2006. Generally a married couple filing jointly qualify for a Roth IRA if their adjusted gross income is $150,000 or less.

Yoos explained that should the couple want to take money in the near term to buy a house, Roth IRA contributions can be withdrawn without paying income tax or a penalty tax, because Roths are funded with after-tax dollars. Earnings left in for at le

Yoos also recommended that each keep a credit card in their own names and obtain credit ratings from the big reporting firms. "If there are problems or errors, you want to get those cleaned up as soon as possible," he said.

After the session the couple still wasn't sure about which model to follow. They plan to keep their own accounts and establish a joint account for shared expenses, with Geisler contributing up to 70 percent while Glass is still in school. "His future is my future," she says.

"Careful note" will be taken of who pays for what, added Glass. "The plan will be when I start working to give this money back."