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PART I

Career Planning

As a college student, you are faced with a number of important decisions. You must decide what classes to take, which major to choose, and how to balance your academic life with your social activities. In the process, you must also plan for graduation and a career.

Career planning will help ensure that your decisions and actions in college will put you on the right path - a path that will lead to a lifetime of career success and personal fulfillment.

“Without goals and plans to reach them, you are like a ship that has set sail with no destination.” Fitzhough Dodson



Visit Career Services

Visiting your college’s Career Services should be your first step in planning for a career.

Career counselors can help with decision-making

- ▶ If you are undecided about your major and/or career plans, a career counselor can help you match your interests, skills, and values with appropriate majors and career fields.
- ▶ If you need information about a career field, a career counselor will direct you to printed materials, online resources, and professionals working in the field.
- ▶ If you are considering graduate or professional school, a career counselor can assist with the process of identifying and applying to appropriate programs.

Even if you have definite career plans and are confident in your ability to succeed in all your pursuits, you should still meet with a career counselor to plot out your four-year plan. A career counselor may offer additional suggestions or know of activities and resources that will facilitate your career preparation.

Improve your job search and career skills

College career counselors can teach you skills that will help you do the following:

- ▶ locate and apply for internships and jobs
- ▶ develop networking strategies
- ▶ write winning resumes and cover letters
- ▶ interview effectively
- ▶ understand salaries and job benefits



What to expect when you visit Career Services

What happens on your visit depends on your needs. You can make a quick visit to pick up career information, or have a more in-depth discussion about your major and career options. On a typical visit to Career Services, you will most likely do one or more of the following:

- ▶ complete an interest or personality inventory
- ▶ discuss past courses, activities, and jobs
- ▶ address any family, financial, or personal issues that may influence your decision-making
- ▶ be shown online or printed occupational information and job/internship websites
- ▶ be referred to experts in your area of interest - faculty members, alumni, or professionals in the community

Don't be shy and don't be reluctant. Visit during walk-in hours or schedule an appointment. Attend a workshop or explore the Career Services website. But whatever you do - take full advantage of one of your college's most valuable services!

*"I was clueless my freshman year. The best advice I ever got was to go to Career Services. Now I have a plan and I know what I'm doing."
Coby, junior political science major*

PART III

Career Preparation

Choosing a major and a career are only the first two steps in your career journey. To assure gainful employment upon graduation, you must also prepare and embark on a career “action plan.”

Career action plans will differ according to a student’s major or field of interest. For example, prospective teachers will likely participate in different activities than mechanical engineering or computer science students. The basic tenets of career preparation, however, remain the same. You need to decide where to place your energies during your college career.

Recruiters’ preferences vary by industry, so the more you know about your field of interest, the easier it will be for you to use the tasks outlined in this section to formulate a reasonable career preparation strategy – while also enjoying your college years.



Participate in Student Organizations

All colleges provide students with a variety of opportunities for involvement in student organizations and clubs.

Colleges offer many on-campus activities

Clubs and organizations may be academic, social, athletic, political, spiritual, international, or cultural. Some clubs are specifically designed to familiarize students with a career field. Examples include Pre-Med and Pre-Law Clubs, the Accounting Society, and the Student Nurses Association. Most clubs are not directly related to a major or career; students simply join because they share common interests.

Reasons to participate in student organizations

Whether your interest is Tae Kwon Do, global warming, reggae music, or sign language, student organizations are a great way to learn more about a topic, meet students with similar interests, and get involved in activities that you enjoy.

Student organizations also may offer valuable networking opportunities. Your organization may invite guest speakers, arrange visits to companies, or complete projects in collaboration with local organizations. You may interact with faculty advisors, university staff members, local business people, and community leaders.

Perhaps the most important consideration when contemplating membership and involvement in a student organization is enjoying the topic, the members, and the projects. In other words, participation in campus organizations should, first and foremost, be fun.

Participation impresses employers

Why does participation in student organizations make a positive impression on employers?



- ▶ Active involvement suggests that you are the kind of student who takes initiative, manages time effectively, and has a wide range of interests and concerns.
- ▶ Many of the activities and tasks involve the same skills employers seek in new hires: planning, organizing, and publicizing events; engaging in fundraising activities; and recruiting new members.
- ▶ Student organizations require teamwork to generate ideas, solve problems, and accomplish goals. Participating in a student organization indicates that you are able to work as a team member.

Recruiters value participation in student organizations because they represent microcosms of “real world” work situations.

Never “pad your resume” with a long list of organizational memberships. Anyone can join a dozen clubs. Recruiters will only be impressed if you can cite significant activities and tangible accomplishments.

Participate in professional associations

There are professional associations in every academic and career field. While student membership alone is unlikely to impress recruiters, active participation by a student is quite impressive. Below are some ways that you can participate in professional associations.

- ▶ Determine which faculty members at your college are active in professional associations and inquire about getting involved.
- ▶ Attend regional and national conferences and volunteer for student panels or presentations.
- ▶ Read the association's newsletter, journal, and website to keep abreast of trends in your chosen profession.

"I got involved in student organizations because I thought it would be a nice break from studying. But I'm actually finding that all the meetings, planning, marketing, and programming will apply to my career more than I realized." David, junior finance major

Outside interests and hobbies often reveal many desirable qualities about a person.

- ▶ *Completing marathons or triathlons indicates perseverance and self-discipline.*
- ▶ *Performing in local theater productions reflects strong communication skills.*
- ▶ *Musical and artistic endeavors demonstrate creativity.*
- ▶ *Trouble shooting computer software or hardware problems reflects strong technical skills.*



If activities associated with outside interests demonstrate the skills and qualities the employer seeks, include them on your resume.

"One of the best things I did in college was joining clubs. I always felt like I was accomplishing something important - or just having a few laughs. And there was always pizza." Katie, senior English major



Provide Community Service

Nothing says more about the content of one's character than involvement in community service.

There is a growing trend among businesses and organizations toward corporate social responsibility and ethical business practices. One obvious factor that influences an employer's hiring decision is the perception of the type of person you are and the kind of employee you will become. In other words, employers are concerned about your moral fiber, ethical values, and concern for others.

Get involved in community service

All communities encourage college students to provide volunteer services. Some colleges have Community Service programs, and many fraternities, sororities, and other student organizations offer their time and energy to local causes and philanthropies. Here are just a few ways you can get involved.



- ▶ Help build or restore low-income homes.
- ▶ Provide tutoring to children or visit nursing home residents.
- ▶ Help a non-profit organization with their public awareness and fundraising activities, or get involved in a political campaign.
- ▶ Work with the poor and/or homeless, the developmentally disabled, or persons who are physically challenged.

Every student wants to “do well” in college - but also consider the importance of “doing good.” Select activities that speak to your heart. Volunteers typically derive as much value from their service as those they are helping.

“A strong indicator of a student's potential work ethic is to look at their passion and commitment towards community service.”

Tom Touzinsky, District Manager, Pfizer



Obtain Relevant Work Experience

There is no better way to prepare for your career than by engaging in relevant work experience while still enrolled in college.

Review job postings and you'll see that they often state "1 - 2 years of work experience preferred." Even when experience isn't preferred or required, college seniors and recent graduates often find themselves competing with experienced candidates. The solution, of course, is to obtain relevant work experience *while you are still enrolled in college.*

Obtain an internship

An internship allows you to "test drive" a career. Let's say, for example, that you have a strong interest in working in the field of hospitality. You obtain a position working 10 hours a week during the school year at a resort near your college, followed by a second internship working during the summer at a large hotel in your hometown. Just imagine how much you will learn working in two different hospitality settings!

Career centers help students find part-time internships during the academic year, and part-time or full-time internships during the summer. Many internships are paid, and some offer college credit. Because both students and employers benefit, an internship is a "win-win" situation.

The benefits of an internship

Many organizations use their internship programs as a means of screening and preparing students for full-time positions upon graduation. In fact, it is common for organizations to offer full-time positions to their most successful interns. Imagine the comfort and relief of knowing that you have a full-time position lined up when you graduate!

What if you are contemplating a career in a certain field and complete an internship, only to learn that the career is not well-suited to your interests or talents? Was that a waste of time? *Absolutely not.* That was the best possible way for you to avoid a profession that may have

been a poor fit for you. And the experience will still be an impressive component of your resume.

“One third of our internship participants convert to full-time positions within our company after graduation. Our internship program is the first place our recruiting specialists look to fill full-time positions.”

*Beth Ostendorf, Director of Recruitment
Northwestern Mutual Financial Network*

Be selective with internships

Unfortunately, some organizations offer what they loosely call “internships” as a way to get mundane tasks completed for low pay or no pay. In order to obtain a *valuable* work experience, you need to be a wise consumer when searching, applying, and interviewing for internships. For information about reputable internships in your area of interest, go to your Career Services office.



Other ways to obtain work experience

Some students believe that their part-time or summer work experience must be an internship to be worthwhile. This is not necessarily true. There are many very valuable and relevant non-internship positions. A prospective social worker might volunteer at a local social service agency. A budding web designer could develop a freelance web development business. Anyone considering a career in sales needs experience in (you guessed it) sales. These may not be formal “internships,” but they are very valuable work experiences.

Additionally, most colleges offer paid, on-campus positions that may be of value in your career preparation. Typical student employment or “work study” positions are available at the college bookstore, food service, computer help desk, library, or athletic department. Positions may also be available in other departments, including Admissions, Alumni Services, Bursar, and Financial Aid. Look for a campus job that utilizes your talents and provides relevant work experience.

“Students who have had internship or real world experience gain the edge above other candidates when seeking jobs with Disney.”

*Katie Mock, Recruiter
Disney College & CareerStart Programs*