

The Career Planning Process: Developing Your Career Goals

When students hear about Career Services, they often think of activities related only to the job search process. Career decision making involves increasing self-awareness, exploring career options, and acquiring the knowledge, skills, and experiences that will help you implement your career choices. This process is unique to each individual student and the Career Services staff is here to assist you in developing your career goals and planning steps to reach those goals.

The first step in career decision making is developing self-awareness. Your career decision is yours and is rooted in your own identity consisting of your interests, values, skills, experiences, and goals. You may be certain about all or only a few of these aspects. To increase your self-awareness, career counseling offers an opportunity to discuss your life and career goals. Counseling may include assessment, which is available to help you identify and organize your interests, abilities, and values as they relate to career fields. Career counseling will increase your awareness of career options, reinforcing those options you've already considered and expose you to ones you haven't yet considered. Discussing connections between your self-knowledge, experiences, and your vision for your future can lead to identifying career areas to explore.

Exploration can take many forms, all of which require you to be active in gathering information and applying this information to your self-awareness. Reading about careers through printed and online resources in the Career Information Center will help you to expand your knowledge base. While reading provides general information about career fields, talking with a professional who works in a field of interest to you (informational interviewing) can provide more details about the work and the setting, offer additional insight into careers, and answer your specific questions. Career Services can help you identify professionals in fields of interest who may offer information about their work and career. Your classes will also offer a forum for learning about careers through discussions with faculty, guest lecturers, and alumni.

Beyond gathering information, begin to consider ways to gain exposure and involvement within your identified career options. Career Services can help you learn more about student activities, volunteer opportunities, job shadowing, part-time work, research opportunities, and internships related to your interest areas.

As you move closer to selecting your career field of interest, you will learn about the knowledge base, personal qualities, and experiences which are valued by employers. These frequently include: communication skills, honesty/integrity, teamwork, interpersonal skills, motivation, leadership skills, ability to work with diverse people, work experience, and a strong work ethic. Career Services can help you plan to acquire these qualities and experiences. Active involvement in these areas will make you a more appealing candidate for available opportunities.

As you solidify your plans for employment or graduate school, remember to record your accomplishments and achievements for inclusion in your resume and/or portfolio. Your resume, cover letter, and application materials are the first impression you will give to an employer/graduate school. Take the time to represent yourself well in writing so that you get the opportunity to meet face to face. As you move into the interviewing process, prepare to present yourself in person in a way that highlights the skills, experiences, and qualities the employer/grad school is seeking in candidates. Remember to use a variety of resources and strategies in your search, evaluation, and acceptance of offers.

Each student brings individual experiences, interests, and goals to the job search. Career Services can assist you as you reflect on your unique qualities and apply them to your job search or graduate school goals.



Career Planning Steps

Increase Self Awareness

- Meet with a Career Counselor to identify interests, values, personality, abilities and clarify career goals.
- Reflect on past experiences in high school and college to help determine what you liked (interests), what you did well (skills), and what you felt was important (values).
- Explore interests through courses, volunteer work, student activities, and job shadowing.
- Consider taking a career decision-making course.

Explore Career Options

- Research career options of interest using the Career Information Center and online career exploration sites.
- Investigate career alternatives related to various fields of study.
- Conduct an informational interview or job shadow with friends, family, alumni, professors, and/or others in the community.
- Begin sampling careers by pursuing summer jobs and internships related to your interests.
- Attend career fairs, industry panels, and company information sessions.
- Research graduate programs through faculty, graduate and professional school fairs, and online.

Acquire Knowledge, Skills, and Experience

- Become active in extracurricular activities and volunteer work to develop teamwork, interpersonal, and leadership skills.
- Obtain relevant work experience by pursuing internships, co-ops, part-time work, and summer jobs.
- Develop a broader appreciation of diversity through study abroad, foreign languages, community service, multicultural courses and cultural activities on campus.
- Record your activities, accomplishments, and achievements.

Develop Self-Marketing Skills to Help Implement Your Career Goals

- Participate in resume writing, interviewing, and job search strategies workshops.
- Meet with a counselor to help design a job search or graduate school plan.
- Participate in a mock interview to practice interviewing.
- Consider taking an internship preparation or job search course such as LA 401, CNED 303, AG 100/SCI 101, or B A 420 as available (offerings vary by campus and semester).
- Take advantage of On-Campus Interviewing and career and graduate school fairs.
- Network with alumni through LionLink and gather valuable career advice.



Photo by Andy Colwell