

# **How to Prepare for Your Career And Get a Great Job**



# Step 1: Career Planning



- Career planning will help ensure that the decisions you make and actions you take in college will put you on the right path – a path that will lead to a lifetime of career satisfaction.
- Visiting the Career Development Center should be your first step in planning for a career.
- What happens on your visit depends on your needs. It may be a quick visit during walk-in hours to obtain career information, or an appointment where you have a more in-depth discussion about your choice of major and career options.

# Career Planning



- If you are undecided about your major and/or career plans, career counselors will help you match your interests, skills, and values with appropriate majors and occupations.
- If you need information about a career field, career counselors can help you learn about careers in your areas of interest by directing you to resources and professionals working in those fields.
- If you are considering graduate or professional schools, career counselors can assist with the process of identifying and applying to programs.

# Career Planning



- Career counselors can help you to improve your job search skills which include:
  - Locating and applying for internships and jobs
  - Developing networking strategies
  - Writing winning resumes and cover letters
  - Interviewing effectively
  - Understanding salaries and job benefits



## Step 2: Academic Preparation



- College success requires lots of academic planning.
  - Carefully review all the majors offered at your college.
  - Speak to a career counselor to determine which majors correspond with your career plans.
  - Then meet with your academic advisor to select courses that interest you and are required in your program of study.

# Academic Preparation



- Your college grades are an indication of your academic abilities, work ethic, and level of motivation.
- Many employers place more emphasis on majors, recommendations, work experience, and other factors than they do grades. BUT that doesn't mean that you shouldn't be concerned about getting good grades.
- Organizations and companies that receive a large number of applications often set a GPA cut-off as a means of managing the number of applications they review.

# Academic Preparation



- Positions that require strong technical and quantitative skills typically place significant emphasis on grades.
- A high GPA indicates a strong work ethic, good problem solving skills, and an ability to effectively manage multiple tasks and responsibilities.
- Students who are considering graduate school need to have as high a GPA as possible upon graduation. A high GPA, especially in one's major courses, provides students many more graduate school options.

# Step 3: Career Preparation



- Researching and choosing a major and career are only the first 2 steps in your career journey. To assure gainful employment upon graduation, you must also prepare and embark on a “Career Action Plan.”
- College student’s career action plans will differ according to their field of interest. You just 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 to formulate a reasonable career preparation strategy.



# Career Preparation



- **Participate in Student Organizations**
  - 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.
  - Student organizations also offer valuable networking opportunities. Your organization may invite guest speakers to campus, arrange visits to companies, or complete projects in collaboration with local organizations.



# Career Preparation



- To employers, active involvement suggest 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 organizational tasks involve the same skills employers seek in new hires: planning, organizing, engaging in fundraising activities, scheduling and publicizing events, recruiting new members, creating a mission statement and business plans, teamwork, problem-solving, and accomplishing goals.



# Career Preparation



- **Participate in Professional Associations**
  - There are professional associations in every academic and career field.
  - 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.

# Career Preparation



- **Get involved in Community Service**

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



- There is a growing trend among businesses 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.

# Career Preparation



- Obtain Relevant Work Experience
  - 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 in college. The best way to obtain this work experience is through an internship.

# Career Preparation



- An internship allows you to “test drive” an occupation. What if you are contemplating an occupation and complete an internship, only to learn that the occupation is not well suited to your interest or talents? Was it a waste of time? Absolutely not! That was the best 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.
- Many organizations use their internship programs as a means of screening and preparing students for full-time positions upon graduation.

# Career Preparation



- In order to obtain a valuable work experience, you need to be wise when searching, applying, and interviewing for an internship.
- Your Career Services office can provide information about reputable internships in your area of interest.
- Other ways to obtain work experience are:
  - ✦ Part-time or summer work
  - ✦ An on-campus position like “work-study”
  - ✦ Volunteer



# Career Preparation



- **Develop Leadership Skills**

- As you become involved in a variety of on and off campus activities, it's important that you take the next step – assume leadership roles.
- Recruiters actively seek students with leadership skills, and will be impressed by the skills you demonstrate in leadership positions – skills such as problem-solving, interpersonal communication, and conflict resolution.
- Leadership activities also demonstrate initiative, self-confidence, and a willingness to take risks.





# Career Preparation



- **Improve Your Computer Skills**

- While your career may not involve programming or coding, you will almost certainly be using computer applications in your work.
- It is important that you gain as much experience as possible in the computer applications used in your career field.
- It is also important to demonstrate proficiency in the most common and popular programs, specifically word processing, web design, databases, and desktop publishing.



# Career Preparation



- **Strengthen Your Communication Skills**
  - Recruiters place a premium on college graduates who can communicate their thoughts and ideas in a clear and concise manner.
  - All jobs require communication skills, and those employees who excel at listening, speaking, writing, negotiating, and customer service are typically those who advance through the ranks.



# Career Preparation



- Ways you can develop excellent communication skills:
  - ✦ Visit the writing lab for help with essays and written assignments. If you are a strong writer, get a job at the lab.
  - ✦ Enroll in a public speaking class.
  - ✦ Get a job in your school's Development or Fundraising Office. As a telephone solicitor, you will hone your phone skills while requesting contributions from alumni.
  - ✦ If you are a leader in a student organization, lead meetings and conduct presentations.
  - ✦ Work for the Admissions Office leading tours of prospective college students and their families.
  - ✦ Write for the school newspaper or literary magazine.

# Career Preparation



- We live in an increasingly diverse society, and you are at an advantage when you can demonstrate your knowledge of sensitivity to diverse peoples, cultures, and values.
- In the competitive 21<sup>st</sup> century marketplace, many organizations are becoming internationalized through expansion into new worldwide marketplaces. Having knowledge of other cultures and speaking a foreign language are great advantages.
- Speaking a foreign language is valued in foreign service, tourism and hospitality, military and defense, criminal justice and security, and the medical and social services.

# Step 4: Getting a Job



- If you have prepared well and made the most of your college experience, the job search will be the rewarding culmination of all your hard work.
- Finalize Your Resume
  - Before you're ready to begin your job search, complete your resume. As you review positions of interest, tailor your resume to the job for which you are applying. As always the Career Development Center can help you create a winning resume.

# Getting a Job



- **Expand Your Network**

- Approximately 50% of all job offers are a direct result of networking. People are your most valuable resource in preparing for a career, obtaining information about occupations, and ultimately getting a job.
- Your contacts can provide information about a career or organization you are considering or actively pursuing. They may work at or be familiar with companies that you can approach. They may have contacts in graduate or professional schools you're considering. And they may offer valuable suggestions and advice regarding your career options and job search.

# Getting a Job



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- **Learn How to Job Search**

- Organizations and industries take very different approaches to recruiting and hiring.
- There are also many facets to the job search, and many mechanisms for locating and applying for employment.
- Each job search is unique. This is why it is crucial for you to meet with a career counselor to develop a thorough and effective job search strategy. The more you know and the better you prepare, the more likely you will be to find the job, apply effectively, and nail the interview.

# Getting a Job



- Apply and Interview Well
  - How you locate, submit applications to, and interview for jobs will vary greatly according to the industry and position you are pursuing.
  - Applying and interviewing well are the final steps to getting a great job.





# Summary



- You now possess the tools you need to prepare for a rewarding and fulfilling career after college.
- While you are in college, surround yourself with people who have your best interests in mind.
- Constantly ask questions and seek help.
- The Career Development Center is here to help you take advantage of your college experience and enjoy the journey!

# References



- Adapted from:

Farber, Alan, Ph.D. 2009. *How to Prepare For a Career and Get a Great Job*. Woodburn Press