

College students' guide to CAREER PLANNING

HEGI FAMILY CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Career Planning

is learning about yourself and the world of work—and then making choices based on what you've learned. Knowing what you know about yourself, how do various occupations match up with your interests, skills, personality, and values?

Career Planning helps you to:

- ◆ *Decide what type of job you want.*
- ◆ *Determine the skills you need.*
- ◆ *Discover how to obtain those skills.*
- ◆ *Develop ways to implement your plan.*

An effective 21st century career planner is someone who...

- ◆ *...Views plan as subject to change.*
- ◆ *...Equates career success with personal satisfaction.*
- ◆ *...Believes goals are independent of age.*
- ◆ *...Assumes responsibility for his or her own career direction.*

—Robert Barner
The Futurist

THE CAREER PLANNING PROCESS

Studies show people who are working in a career that supports their interests are happier, more successful, and more fulfilled. Career planning is ideal for selecting a field of study or major, beginning a new career, or even changing careers. You can acquire a competitive advantage over people who allow random chance to direct their career choice.

To begin the process, ask yourself... **What are my goals for the future?**

KEEP IN MIND THAT...

- ◆ The working world is changing rapidly;
- ◆ You need goals and strategies to make your dreams come true;
- ◆ You are in charge of your career;
- ◆ You will need to be proactive in your career search; and,
- ◆ Employers are looking for employees who will enjoy their work.

STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL CAREER PLAN

1. **Ask Yourself: Who am I?** - You need to understand who you are and your strengths and weaknesses before you can make an effective career decision.
2. **Career Exploration (Discover Your Options)** - Identify your career options. Seek a career that connects who you are and what you want in work.
3. **Gather Information** - Identify information you need to make a decision. The more you know, the more you can make an educated decision.
4. **Narrow the Field (Evaluate Your Options)** - Compare all your career options.
5. **Make a Decision** - Decision-making time! Evaluate the options and choose. Your goal should be the most appropriate career, not the "correct" one.
6. **Plan for the Future** - Develop and implement a plan of action. Seek to gain experience in the field and plan for your future needs.

WHO AM I?

What do I really like to do? Find your interests—they will lead you to interesting careers.

What is important to me? Your values will also impact on the careers you find fulfilling.

What lifestyle do I want? Determine your priorities and how you want to lead your life.

What do I do well? Interests and values are part of the exploration. You also need to know what you are good at. Skills can be transferable or specific to careers.

What personal traits do I possess? Skills reflect what you do well. It is also necessary to understand how you do what you do.

CAREER TESTING

There are self-assessment tests available to you at SMU Career Services, including DISCOVER, Strong Interest Inventory, and MBTI personality assessment. Career assessments can help you gather information regarding your values, interests, traits, personality, skills, work style, and aptitudes. If you are interested in an assessment, contact SMU Career Services at 214-768-2266. There are counselors on site who can help you along the way.

CAREER EXPLORATION

Fortunately, you do not have to go through all the career options in the world to find a suitable occupation. In order to start your career exploration, you need to create a list of different occupations that might match your interests and skills. Before you begin narrowing down your possibilities, do some brainstorming to broaden your options.

Brainstorm on your own:

Remember when everyone used to ask you what you wanted to be when you grew up (or maybe they still do...)? What were your answers? Write them down. What did you enjoy doing as a child **before** you grew up? Write them down. Look back at your list of interests, skills, values, and traits that you possess. Can you think of any occupations that might match well with these characteristics?

Brainstorm with others:

Talk with friends, parents, teachers, neighbors, relatives, co-workers, etc. Tell them you are trying to figure out what to do with your life. They will probably jump at the chance to throw in their two cents. Keep in mind you are trying to come up with a master list of possibilities. Do not dismiss any suggestions. However, do not make any commitments either.

GATHER INFORMATION

The following list describes various methods of research that you can use. The list begins with the least time-consuming method, but as you narrow down your options, use those that require more time.

The Internet

There are plenty of internet resources that hold useful occupational information for you. You can even research individual occupations through search sites. Many such useful websites can be found linked off our homepage at www.smu.edu/career. Two suggestions are:

The Occupational Outlook Handbook www.bls.gov/oco/

Provides essential information about prospective changes in the work world, qualifications needed for jobs, the nature of the work, working conditions, employment levels, and outlooks for a wide variety of jobs and careers.

America's College Board Online www.collegeboard.com/apps/careers/index

Lists career descriptions organized by type of career.

Libraries (Fondren, BIC, etc.)

The advantage of these resources over the internet is that they have knowledgeable staff that can help you find the information you need.

SMU Libraries do have a terrific internet resource, **E-books**, available through the SMU Career Services website. For more information, visit <http://www.smu.edu/career/internet.html>.

Information Interviewing

This is a chance for you to reverse roles and become the interviewer while the company or occupation that you are interested in becomes the interviewee. The goal of this process is to gather information about a particular job or career directly from an employee to help you find out if it is the kind of job you would be interested in pursuing further.

Volunteering

There are a number of advantages involved with volunteering. It gives you a firsthand look at a possible occupation, provides a great way to network, enhances your resume, and you may even find out that the job is not all that you thought it was cracked up to be.

Working Part-time

Like volunteering, working part-time can give you a chance to get a first-hand glimpse at the job you are interested in while also making contacts. And, of course, unlike volunteering, it allows you to earn some money.

Interning

An internship can be a paid or unpaid position. The advantage of an internship is that the position gives you the best chance to learn what the career is all about. This hands-on learning can help you make an educated decision to either pursue your career interest or investigate an alternate field. Also, an internship allows you to gain relevant experience in a field that requires experience before entering the field.

NARROW THE FIELD

Now it is time to evaluate each of the options that you have identified and narrow your possible career options to a few. In order to evaluate your choices you should:

Check the fine print

Visit the SMU library, your academic advisor or department, or SMU Career Services. There are a wide variety of resources available to help you process your career options.

(Once again) Surf the 'Net

Now that you have a list of interesting occupations, the internet can help explain those professions in even more detail. Some sites recommended to help narrow your scope are:

America's Career InfoNet www.acinet.org/acinet/

Provides a wealth of information on most careers, including salary and industry trends, job outlook, and links to career information.

Job Profiles www.jobprofiles.org/index.htm

Covers the more personal side of work. Interviews professionals in a variety of fields.

Get That Gig www.getthatgig.com/

Contains interesting interviews with professionals and profiles of people in different careers. Geared for college students and presented in a fun way.

MAKE A DECISION

You have now come to the point where you need to make some choices. This may be more painful than the research. Follow these next steps to help you through the process of making a decision.

1. **Name the Decision** - Stating precisely what it is that you need to decide may help give you some perspective on the situation. What exactly is it that you need to know? What does a career mean to you in the first place?
2. **List the Alternatives** - Write down at least two occupations that stood out during your search.
3. **Evaluate the Alternatives and Decide** - Write down the potential outcomes of each alternative (both positive and negative) for you and for others who are close to you.
4. **Test Your Choice** - Think of ways to test the alternatives you have chosen. Options include summer jobs, taking a related course, volunteering, job shadowing, interning, etc.
5. **Evaluate your Decision** - How well did your choice work? If you need to, you can begin the process again.

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Having chosen one of the career options, you can now begin developing and implementing a plan of action through internships, cooperative education, relevant summer employment, volunteer work, and campus activities. Some additional steps that you will need to take are:

Investigate any additional education or training needed - Does the career path require additional courses and are you willing to complete these?

Develop a job search strategy - Plan how you will find a job once you meet the requirements. Networking and gaining experience can help get your foot in the door.

Write your resume and compose a cover letter - Visit the Career Center and have a counselor critique your resume, or attend one of our workshops to learn resume and cover letter writing skills. There are also numerous resources in the Career Services library.

Prepare for a job interview - Draft answers to difficult questions that you could be asked. Career Services is also available for mock interviews throughout the school year.

Gather company information - Investigate a potential employer to prepare for the interview, as well as

Hegi Family Career Development Center

Hughes-Trigg Student Center

214-768-2266 (phone)

214-768-4292 (fax)

Visit us anytime at www.smu.edu/career