

Career Planning Tip Sheet



What am I going to do when I graduate?

It is never too early to start asking that question, because you never know when the answer will come. Not everyone knows precisely what they want to do; in fact, most people cannot articulate their long-term career goals early in their college career.

Not knowing what you want to do when you graduate is okay; doing nothing about it until you are about to graduate is not! Effective career planning is a process that begins when you enter as a first year student and continues long after you graduate - it is a lifelong process.

Start each semester by jotting down your answers to the following questions:

- What do I think I want to do when I graduate? What career fields interest me the most right now? What do I really know about these occupations at this point?
- What classes can I take to learn more about these jobs?
- Who can I talk with to learn more about these careers?
- What extracurricular activities (student organizations, clubs, campus media, etc.) will help me learn more about these occupations and how should I be involved?
- What internships, part-time jobs, or volunteer activities might help me gain experience in these fields?

Near the end of each semester, look at these questions again to assess what you have learned and how that information can help you select classes for the next semester, decide what clubs or student organizations you wish to join and how you want to be involved in these organizations, and identify part-time jobs, volunteer opportunities or internships that will help you gain experience in the professions you are considering.

You do not need to know what you are going to do with the rest of your life; you just need to know what you want to do next semester or over the summer. If you follow this strategy, you will discover a world of possible opportunities and be able to determine which career paths match best with your interests, skills, talents and priorities.

There are also some very tangible things you can do each year you are in school to make sure you are making the most out of your time in college and developing your skills (and habits) for the future.

Career Planning Tip Sheet, cont.



Freshman Year

Guiding Questions: *What do I think I want to do when I graduate and how are my classes, extracurricular activities and other experiences helping me confirm or challenge what I think I know?*

Strategies for Success:

1. **Get good grades.** Now is not the time to slack off. Many employers consider grade point averages, and good grades can give you an edge. If you are having problems achieving good grades, seek tutorial help or join a study group.
2. **Develop strong written and oral communication skills.** Employers will expect you to be able to write meaningful documents and carry on intelligent conversations.
3. **Learn how to manage your time effectively.** Develop good study habits while still being involved with extracurricular activities. Good time management skills will be key to your success in college and in your career.
4. **Join student clubs and organizations.** Employers are eager to hire recent graduates that have the leadership and teamwork experience you gain by getting involved in student clubs and organizations.
5. **Prepare your resume.** Resumes created in high school need to be reformatted and updated. It was great for helping you get into college, but resume standards are different at the college level.
6. **Develop your computer skills.** Computer skills are REQUIRED and expected. Develop the software skills you will need to succeed professionally.
7. **Get to know faculty and staff.** Get extra help when needed; find a mentor; get advice.
8. **Set personal goals and evaluate them periodically.** Do not just assume everything will figure itself out - it will not. You have to be actively involved in your career exploration and planning. You have to drive the process.
9. **Review job descriptions, resource books, and online research tools** in order to match your interests with your career goals.
10. **Conduct information-gathering interviews** with professionals who are doing what you think you want to do. These interviews will help you explore career options, research potential leads, develop strong interpersonal skills, and build your network of contacts.
11. **Attend ASU Beebe Career Expos** to explore your options down the road.
12. **Get some experience!** Whether you do an internship, volunteer for a non-profit organization, take on a part-time job, or take a leadership role in a student organization, **it is never too early to start getting experience, developing your skills and exploring your career options directly.**
13. **Meet with a Student Success Center career counselor** to review your career exploration options, plans and strategies.

Career Planning Tip Sheet, cont.



Sophomore Year

Guiding Questions: *Where and how can I get experience to explore my career interests and develop my skills? What do I want to do when I graduate? What is my plan for doing this? How much time can I invest in my job search each week? Should I be thinking about transferring to a four-year school?*

Strategies for Success:

1. **Update your resume.** You need to update your resume every semester while you are in college so that it always presents your most current collection of education, experience, skills and qualities.
2. **Get internship experience.** Participate in internships to develop skills, gain work experience in your field, and to help you determine whether a particular career path is right for you. Begin early in the fall to explore spring and/or summer internship opportunities. **You cannot do too many internships.**
3. **Continue to be active in student clubs and organizations and/or join a professional association** related to your career interests. Take on a leadership role; be more than just a member - get involved, chair a committee, make contacts.
4. **Develop your job search skills,** including your interviewing skills, cover letter writing skills, and networking skills. Consult a SSC Career Counselor - we can help.
5. **Begin to develop your list of references.** Consider faculty, staff, former supervisors, family friends, etc. and remember to ask for their permission to list them as a reference. Provide those listed as references with a copy of your resume.
6. **Conduct more information-gathering interviews** with professionals who are doing what you think you want to do now. These interviews will help you further explore career options, research potential leads, develop strong interpersonal skills, and build your network of contacts.
7. **Attend ASU Beebe Career Fairs** to connect with employers regarding internships and job opportunities.
8. **Meet with a SSC Career Counselor** to review your career exploration options, plans and strategies. Use the Student Success Center as a resource to polish your resume, practice your interview skills and conduct an effective job search.

The Final Word

Under no circumstances should you wait until the second semester of your sophomore year (or until after graduation) to address the "What am I going to do when I graduate?" question. The earlier you start, the better prepared, informed and successful you will be in your search for a job/career path you will enjoy. It is your choice!