

How To
Prepare

FOR A

CAREER

and Get a Great Job

by Alan Farber, Ph.D.



Dear Students,

While you may spend four or more years in college, your career will span four or five decades. Sound decision-making and good planning during your college years will help put you on the path to a satisfying and productive career.

The purpose of this booklet is to show you how you can have it all—a great college experience and a rewarding career after you graduate.

Alan Farber, Ph.D.

Table of Contents

Part I – Career Planning	2
Visit Career Services	2
Gather Career Information	4
Choose a Major	5
Create a Resume	6
Part II – Academic Preparation	9
Succeed in Your Classes	9
Consider Graduate School	11
Part III – Career Preparation	13
Participate in Student Organizations.....	13
Provide Community Service	16
Obtain Relevant Work Experience.....	17
Develop Leadership Skills	19
Improve Computer Skills	20
Demonstrate Cultural Competence	21
Strengthen Communication Skills.....	22
Part IV – Getting a Job	23
Finalize Your Resume	23
Expand Your Network	24
Learn How to Job Search.....	27
Apply and Interview Well	28
Summary	29



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PART I

Career Planning

As a college student, you're 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." Fitzhugh Dodson

Visit Career Services



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

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 a career interest 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

Career counselors can help with decision-making

- ▶ If you're 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're 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 and recommend activities and resources that will facilitate your career preparation.

Career counselors can also improve your job search and career skills—skills that will help you:

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

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 first year here. 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, accounting major

Gather Career Information



In order to make wise career choices, you must have accurate, up-to-date career information.

We all know something about the careers we've had personal experience with. For example, you undoubtedly have some knowledge of what teachers and doctors do. You may be familiar with the work of your family members, and you may have had a few part-time jobs that provided exposure to careers in those fields. Beyond that, most college students have had little direct experience with the majority of careers.

For example, even if you know something about the following careers, you are probably unfamiliar with what these professionals do on a daily basis: Actuary, Technical Writer, Occupational Therapist, Market Research Analyst, Hydrologist, Archivist. *There may be dozens of careers that you're unfamiliar with that you would enjoy!*



Learn about the careers in your areas of interest

▶ Take advantage of your college's resources

Career Services provides a website containing information on hundreds of careers. They may also have printed career information.

▶ Conduct "information interviews"

Talk to working professionals to learn about the education, preparation, job responsibilities, benefits, and trends in their field.

▶ Take a Career Development course

Many colleges offer an elective Career Development course, and some academic departments offer courses in specific areas, such as engineering or business. These courses provide an overview of the opportunities in these fields. Consider enrolling in one of these courses.

Choose a Major



An academic major is an in-depth study of one discipline or subject. A major at a four-year college is comprised of approximately eighteen three-hour courses. Students typically need to declare a major by their sophomore year.

Perhaps the most important decision a college student makes is choosing a major. A major will dictate many of the classes a student takes, and to some extent, the career path a student will travel.

How to choose a major

Many students select a major that sounds interesting and then ask, “What can I do with this major?” This approach may work out, but a better strategy is to identify a career of interest, and then select a program of studies that lends itself to entry into that career.

To choose a major, first meet with a counselor at Career Services to explore your interests, values, and skills, and to learn about potentially interesting and fulfilling careers. Once you have identified and narrowed your career preferences, you can select a course of studies that will help prepare you for your chosen career.

Most 4-year college majors do not lead to a specific career

One reason selecting a major can be so confusing is that most college majors are not designed to prepare students for a single career. It is true that some majors *do* prepare students for a specific field, such as Mechanical Engineering, Nursing, Architecture, or Education.

The majority of majors, however, provide students with a well-rounded education designed to develop skills in problem solving, creative and analytical thinking, written and verbal communication, and research methods. This is particularly true of majors in the humanities and social sciences, majors such as Political Science, History, English, Foreign Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies.

Create a Resume



A resume is a document that summarizes and highlights your education, work experience, activities, and accomplishments.

Your resume is often the first contact you will make with a prospective employer. A clear, concise, professional resume will make a good first impression.

There are a variety of opinions regarding the appearance, length, and content of a resume. The availability of resume templates, books, and online samples often confuses the issue. Fortunately, your college's Career Services staff can assist you in creating a well-written resume.

You may think that you don't need a resume until you apply for an internship or job. Not true. In addition to being a job search document aimed at getting you an interview, a resume is also a means of keeping track of all your activities, and a reminder of what else you need to accomplish prior to graduation.

Get your resume started

Early in your college career, visit Career Services for assistance with creating a resume. Include all jobs, activities, and community service from your high school years. As your experiences grow over time, you'll replace your high school activities with the experiences you have during your college years.

By recording everything you've accomplished over the years, you will eliminate the need to rely on your memory when you finalize your resume late in your college career.

Use your resume as a career planning reminder

An updated resume is a valuable reminder of what you need to do in your career preparation. Examine your resume periodically, and ask yourself if it looks like the representation of a well-rounded, highly

prepared student. If not, identify and undertake new activities and skills to supplement your resume.

References

It is not necessary to list references on a resume. However, some prospective employers, and all graduate programs, will either require letters of recommendation or they will request the names of people who are familiar with the quality of your work and/or academic achievements. When requested, provide job recruiters with professional references (e.g., professors, employers, program directors) who can speak to your work habits, initiative, integrity, and reliability.

“A well organized, well-written resume capturing one’s educational qualifications, experiences, and abilities provides employers with a good snapshot as to the candidate’s potential to be successful in the organization.”

*Keith Rogenski, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources
Benica Unified School District*

While it is important to have an impressive resume, it is much more important for students to make wise choices and decisions in their personal lives.

An impressive resume will seldom offset a criminal record, a failed drug test, a poor credit record, or inappropriate entries on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter.

Avoid anything that can tarnish your good name.

On the following page is a sample resume of a well-prepared graduating senior.



CHRIS SMITH

Anytown, USA • (555) 555-1234 • chrissmith@email.com

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Business Administration

Terrific University

GPA: 3.6/4.0

Minor in Information Technology

Above average GPA

Well rounded education

WORK EXPERIENCE

Finance Intern, ABC Financial Planners, Big City, USA Summer 2019

- Organized, attended, and participated in meetings between advisors and clients
- Conducted cold calls to prospective and current clients
- Gathered financial information and arranged appointments with brokers
- Created PowerPoint presentations describing new financial products

Impressive relevant work experience

Evidence of strong verbal skills

Human Resource Intern, XYZ Corporation, Mytown, USA Summer 2018

- Provided human resources support to operating department
- Worked on a team that developed a wage incentive planning tool for plant managers
- Conducted a benefit analysis of temporary labor usages

Teamwork experience

Server, ABC Restaurant, Hometown, USA Summer 2017

- Worked 50 hrs/wk serving customers in an upscale restaurant

Strong work ethic and customer service skills

CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

Treasurer: Delta Kappa Alpha Fraternity Sept 2018 - May 2019

- Prepared annual budget reports and reviewed financial statements
- Prepared executive committee, membership, and alumni reports
- Maintained financial records and statements
- Made oral presentations at chapter and Panhellenic meetings

Detail oriented

Public speaking experience

Sensitivity to and knowledge of diversity issues

Member, University Diversity Committee Aug 2016 - May 2017

- One of three student members of a campus-wide committee designed to ensure a campus climate that celebrates and promotes respect for the variety of human experience
- Participated in college-wide policy decisions concerning extra-curricular life, non-discrimination practices, and freedom of speech issues

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Hotline Volunteer, Anytown Community Crisis Center Oct 2018 - April 2019

- Participated in 20-hour crisis intervention training program
- Provided support and referral information to individuals experiencing personal problems

Impressive volunteer experience

Tutor, Lincoln Middle School, Anytown, USA Jan 2017 - May 2018

- Tutored low-income middle school students in algebra and geometry

Communication and math skills

COMPUTER/LANGUAGE SKILLS

- Proficient in written and spoken Spanish, basic French skills
- Extensive experience with Microsoft Office Suite, QuickBooks, HTML, and Front Page

Technical and foreign language skills

HONORS / AWARDS

- Terrific University Merit Scholarship
- Delta Kappa Alpha Fraternity Spirit Award

Positive attitude and loyalty

PART II

Academic Preparation

College success requires careful academic planning. In addition to speaking to a career counselor about your major and career path, meet with your academic advisor to select the courses that are required for your program of studies.

Meet with your academic advisor regularly to make sure that you are taking the correct courses and on track for graduation.

Succeed in Your Classes



Your grades are an indication of your academic abilities, work ethic, and level of motivation. Having good grades can open doors and provide you with greater career options.

Grades are one factor in getting a job

Many employers place more emphasis on majors, recommendations, work experience, and other factors than they do on grades. But that doesn't mean that you shouldn't be concerned about getting good grades. Grades may not be the most important factor in some hiring decisions, but they are certainly considered along with your other credentials and accomplishments.

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. Positions that require strong technical and quantitative skills typically place significant emphasis on grades, especially in courses that relate directly to one's major.

Grades are less important in some fields

Employers in the creative and communication fields, including art, photography, music, theater, advertising, and journalism, are primarily concerned with a candidate's portfolio of relevant work. If you are a writer who can write like Hemingway, an artist who can draw like Rembrandt, or a musician who can compose like Mozart, your creative accomplishments will carry far more weight than your grades.

Other professions that tend to focus less on grades are those involving customer service and sales skills. While it is always important to get the best grades possible, for these positions, proven business skills may trump grades in the selection process.

A high GPA may make the difference

It is reasonable to assume that if two students with absolutely equal credentials in all other respects apply for a position, the one with the higher GPA will get the nod. Whether or not it is entirely accurate or fair, a high GPA implies a strong work ethic, good problem-solving skills, and an ability to effectively manage multiple tasks and responsibilities.

The only way to know the importance of grades with any degree of certainty is to review the requirements listed in job postings. Check to see if grades or strict GPA cut-offs are included.

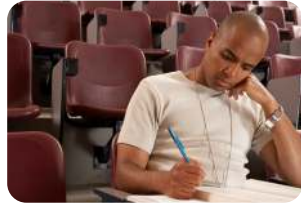
Once you get that first job, your college grades lose their importance. Your worth will then be measured by your on-the-job performance. But good grades are likely to help you get your first job.

The obvious conclusion is to do your best in your academic pursuits. Seek extra help, enlist the assistance of a tutor, and retake courses when necessary. But if you struggle academically, despite doing everything possible to get good grades, try to compensate by dazzling employers with impressive accomplishments in your other endeavors.

Students who are considering graduate school need to have as high a GPA as possible. An excellent GPA, especially in one's major and upper division courses, provides students with many more graduate school options.



Consider Graduate School



Graduate or professional school is an option for students who want to continue their education beyond the bachelor's degree. The amount of time required to earn an advanced degree typically ranges from two to five years.

Why graduate school

Some people pursue graduate studies for the pure joy and intellectual challenge of learning a subject of great interest to them. Typically, however, students pursue graduate school because it is required of their chosen profession and/or it will enhance their professional credentials.

Graduate school is required in some fields

Graduate school is required in some professions, an option for others, and unnecessary in many fields. As you finalize your choice of major and identify career paths, talk to your career counselor about the necessity or advisability of graduate school.

Admissions requirements vary

If you learn that graduate school is desirable or necessary, the next step is to determine the minimum admission requirements.

Most graduate programs have GPA standards or impose strict GPA cut-offs. Grades are important, but are only one factor that go into graduate school admission decisions.

Many graduate programs have prerequisite courses that must be completed in order to apply. Be certain that your undergraduate program of studies includes these courses. Some graduate programs also specify courses that are not required, but that are recommended for admission.



You also need to determine if any standardized tests are required for admission. These tests, which are advanced versions of the ACT or SAT, typically cover a range of topics. Examples include the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), Graduate Record Examination (GRE), and the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT). It is critical that you take these tests during the summer after your junior year or early in your senior year—well in advance of the graduate school’s application deadline.

Once you have identified the minimum requirements (GPA, prerequisite courses, and standardized tests), you should inquire about any other admission requirements or recommendations. For example, a masters program in social work (MSW) may require community service.

If you are applying to graduate school, make sure that you give yourself enough time to complete the application materials. You may be asked to write essays, submit letters of recommendation, participate in an interview, and/or take an examination. The earlier and more thoroughly you prepare, the better your chances of admission.

Consider working before applying to graduate school

It is common for college graduates to work for a period of time prior to entering graduate school. Here are some possible advantages of doing so.

- ▶ You have more time to determine if graduate school is a worthwhile endeavor.
- ▶ You gain “real world” experience that will enhance your prospects for admission.
- ▶ You get a well-deserved break from college studies.
- ▶ You have more time to study for admissions exams.
- ▶ You can earn money in order to repay student loans and/or finance graduate school.

Some college students mistakenly believe that the more letters after one’s name (i.e., advanced degrees), the better the job prospects and the higher the salary. This is not necessarily true. Thoroughly research your field to determine the optimal amount of education required.

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, art students and mechanical engineering students will likely participate in very different activities. 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, however, 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 whether you will enjoy 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 and search committees 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, business major

Develop your interests

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.*
- ▶ *Troubleshooting 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, 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 that you can get involved.



- ▶ 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.

Job postings often state “1-2 years of work experience preferred.” Even when experience isn’t preferred or required, college students 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.

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. Visit Career Services for information about reputable internships in your area of interest.



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. While these may not be formal internships, they are very valuable work experiences.

Additionally, most colleges offer paid, on-campus positions that may be of value in 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, Athletics, 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*

Develop Leadership Skills



Recruiters actively seek students with leadership skills.

As you become increasingly involved in a variety of on- and off-campus activities, it is important that you take the next step—assume leadership roles. For example, after a semester participating in a student organization, run for an office or volunteer to chair a committee. If you play intramural sports, be the one to recruit team members, schedule the practices, or collect the fees. If you're in a sorority or fraternity, assume a position as Rush Chair, Director of Publicity, or Treasurer.

Recruiters 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.

If you are reluctant to run for office or seek a leadership position, try “testing the waters” by volunteering to assist those in management positions. For example, if you are a college dining hall cashier, ask the manager if you can help train the new cashiers. If you perform with a student band, chorus, or theater group, volunteer to assist the director with scheduling, marketing, travel arrangements, and fundraisers. As you become more comfortable with these tasks, you will gain confidence and be more likely to assume even greater responsibilities in the future.

One very common four-year college leadership position is Resident Assistant. RAs typically live on a residence floor and supervise the activities of 15 or more younger residents. They plan, schedule, and conduct social and educational activities while serving as mentors and positive role models to fellow students. Recruiters are impressed with the level of responsibility and maturity required to be an effective RA.

“My leadership positions have made my collegiate experience unique and special. Now I feel confident in my ability to manage an operation and supervise others.” Breyn, psychology major

Improve Computer Skills



Regardless of your career field, you will use computers.

While your career may not involve programming or coding, you will almost certainly be using computer applications in your work. It is, therefore, important that you gain as much experience as possible in the computer applications used in your career field. For example, artists work in Photoshop and Corel Painter, finance professionals often use Excel and QuickBooks, social scientists crunch data with SPSS and SAS, and so forth.

As you gain experience and talk to professionals in your field, inquire about the software applications used in that industry. Then gain experience with those programs in an internship or part-time job, at your school's computer lab, or while completing class projects. You may want to enroll in a computer or IT course offered at your college or continuing education program. There are also plenty of online tutorials and certification courses available.

It is also important to demonstrate proficiency in the most common and popular programs, specifically word processing, web design, databases, and desktop publishing. Even if these programs are not commonly used in your field of interest, proficiency demonstrates your comfort level with computers—which will be a plus for you in the hiring process.

Maintain an appropriate online presence

According to a recent survey by Reppler social media monitoring service, more than 90% of recruiters check candidates on social media sites, with 69% rejecting a candidate based on something they saw. Use privacy settings and be very, very careful about how you portray yourself online.

Demonstrate Cultural Competence



It is important that you demonstrate “cultural competence” and experience with diverse populations.

We live in an increasingly diverse society, and you are at a distinct advantage when you can demonstrate your knowledge of and sensitivity to diverse peoples, cultures, and values. You will also personally benefit from your exposure to new traditions, ideas, belief systems, and perspectives.

An increasing number of organizations and industries are becoming internationalized through expansion into new worldwide marketplaces. In the competitive 21st century marketplace, having knowledge of other cultures and speaking a foreign language are great advantages.

Learn a foreign language

American workers are increasingly being called upon to communicate with customers, co-workers, and clients in languages other than English. Speaking a foreign language is particularly valued in the following fields: tourism and hospitality, foreign service, military and defense, medical and social services, criminal justice, and security.

All college students should seriously consider the potential value of minor in, or independently learning, a foreign language. Students should examine their career aspirations and then identify the most relevant foreign language(s).

If you enjoy traveling, exploring new cultures, meeting new people, and wish to expand your career options in the process, learn a foreign language.

“In an increasingly global workplace, large international companies like Qualcomm not only value students who are learning new languages, but also those who are sensitive to the differing styles of working and living across the globe.” Erik Miller, Campus Recruiter, Qualcomm

Strengthen Communication Skills



Recruiters place a premium on college graduates who can communicate their thoughts and ideas in a clear and concise manner.

When recruiters are surveyed about the qualities they seek in graduating college students, the results are always the same. Communication skills tops the list.

We live in an information age, and it is crucial to demonstrate your ability to convey verbal and written information effectively. This is especially true if you are pursuing a “communication career” such as teaching, journalism, public relations, sales, or marketing.

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.

Improve your communication skills

You can develop excellent communication skills and demonstrate those skills to prospective employers by doing the following:

- ▶ Enroll in a public speaking course.
- ▶ Visit the writing lab for assistance with essays and written assignments.
- ▶ Pursue any job or activity in which you speak extensively to groups or individuals. For example, work for the Admissions Office and lead tours of prospective college students and their families.
- ▶ Compile examples of your best written work.

In a recent survey of corporate recruiters, the top complaint about candidates was inferior communication skills.

PART IV

Getting a Job

It is often said that getting a job is itself a job. To get a job, you need to prepare in advance, develop a strategy, gather information, and undertake the job search in an organized and professional manner.

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. As always, Career Services can help you every step of the way.

Finalize Your Resume



Before you're ready to begin your job search, complete your resume. If you've been revising and fine-tuning your resume over the course of your college career, finalizing your resume should be fairly easy.

As you review positions of interest, tailor your resume to the job for which you are applying. Focus on accomplishments that are pertinent to your career field and highlight your relevant skills and experiences.

"Don't underestimate your experience. At Enterprise Rent-A-Car, like most companies, we look for well-rounded applicants who are team players, sales or customer service oriented, competitive, and have great work ethic and leadership skills. Find a way to articulate these skills in your resume by way of your work experience, campus involvement, athletics, and volunteer activities."

*Kim Martin, Regional Recruiting Manager
Enterprise Rent-A-Car*

Expand Your Network



Most job offers are a direct result of networking.

Networking is undoubtedly one of the most important, yet most neglected aspects of career planning by college students. You've probably heard the expression, "It's not what you know, it's who you know." In reality, what and who you know are *both* very important aspects of your career preparation. People are your most valuable resource in obtaining information about occupations, and in ultimately getting an interview and a job.

Let's consider your current and future network.

Your current network

Whether you are aware of it or not, you already have a network. You have friends, family, and acquaintances. You're likely spending time on social networking sites, and you know supervisors, teachers, and other working professionals. You have a network—all you need to do is identify, expand, and put this network to good use.



Would you believe that your current network consists of hundreds of people? Don't think so? Okay, let's consider a typical college sophomore and keep track of her contacts.

Jill is a Communication Studies major at Terrific University. She has three close friends from high school (3) and two close friends at college (5). Jill knows three of her neighbors from home quite well (8). She still keeps in touch with one of her high school teachers (9), her pastor from church (10), and her former boss from a coffee shop she worked at during high school (11). Jill's brother (12) is a senior in college, her uncle is a marketing director (13), one of her cousins writes for a newspaper (14), and she knows the insurance agent who handles her car insurance (15).

There are many other people in Jill's life, but let's stop at 15. Each of these 15 people also has a network of 15 (or more) people. Do the math and you'll see that Jill's network now totals 225+ people. Will all 225+ possess experience or information of value to Jill? No. But what is the likelihood that 5, 10, or 15 of these individuals can assist Jill? Or that some of these 225+ people know someone else who can assist Jill? *Very, very likely.*

The people in your current network include

- ▶ Your family members and their friends
- ▶ Your friends and their family members
- ▶ College classmates, neighbors, current and former bosses, coaches, co-workers, high school teachers and counselors, college professors and advisors
- ▶ Acquaintances from places of worship, YMCAs, sports teams, and health/country clubs
- ▶ Anyone you or your family have had dealings with—doctors, religious leaders, accountants, insurance agents, lawyers

Your future network

After identifying every possible person in your network, your next task is to generate a *new* network. Many colleges offer networking or mentor-protégé programs for their students. If such a program exists at your school, participate in it. You can also seek out new contacts by participating in professional organizations and by contacting working professionals on your own.

How your network can help

- 1) They can provide information about a career or organization you're considering or actively pursuing.
- 2) They may work at or be familiar with companies or organizations that you can approach regarding a summer job, internship, or full-time position.
- 3) They may have contacts in graduate or professional schools you're considering.
- 4) They may be able to offer suggestions and advice regarding your career options and job search.

Online professional networking

Professional networking sites such as LinkedIn allow you to list your skills and experiences, and reach out to professionals in your area of interest. Many academic departments have Facebook and LinkedIn groups for students and alumni.

How to reach out

Create a list of the people in your network and let them know your situation. Perhaps you need information about an occupation, or are seeking an internship or full-time position.

Provide those in your network with your resume and ask for assistance, recommendations, or referrals. Resumes emailed as attachments are ideal because your contacts can easily forward them to others.

Remember: You are not asking for a hand out; you are asking for a hand. You are seeking counsel and advice. You're not imposing; you are appealing to their good nature.

Most people enjoy providing advice and assistance to those they like, and most people have benefited from the expertise and generosity of others in their professional lives. Don't be shy about reaching out to others.

"Networking is by far the most important aspect of career preparation and the job search. The key is to consider every person you come into contact with as a potential source for leads. It's such a small world, you never know who may guide you to that perfect opportunity!"



*Diana M. Sanchez, M. Ed., Career Counselor
California State University San Marcos*

Learn How to Job Search



The best grades and most impressive credentials will not necessarily result in a desirable job. You also need to conduct an effective job search.

Organizations and industries take very different approaches to recruiting and hiring. For example, future high school teachers will job search very differently than prospective accountants, public relations specialists, or graphic designers.

There are also many facets to the job search, and many mechanisms for locating and applying for employment. Here are some examples of the variations you may find in your job search.

- ▶ Jobs may be posted on Career Services' job portal, company websites, or on job sites such as Indeed and Simply Hired.
- ▶ You may learn about positions through acquaintances, networking, or by attending job fairs.
- ▶ You may apply online, in person, or via email.
- ▶ You may interview by phone, videoconferencing, and/or in person.
- ▶ You may be interviewed once or numerous times, individually or by several people. You may be invited to lunch or dinner. You may interview on campus or on-site, locally or thousands of miles from college. Your interview may last 30 minutes or a full day.
- ▶ You may be asked for references, work samples, or a college transcript.
- ▶ You may be required to take a drug test or to complete a personality or aptitude test.

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 a job posting, apply effectively, and nail the interview.

Apply and Interview Well



You have worked hard to get a good education and your resume is impressive. Applying and interviewing well are the final steps to getting a great job.

How you locate, submit applications to, and interview for jobs will vary greatly according to the industry and position you are pursuing. Of course, there are some tried-and-true guidelines that apply to all job searches. Here are a few of them.

- ▶ All contact, whether written or in person, should be done in a professional manner. Resumes, cover letters, and application materials need to be well-written, well-organized, and error-free.
- ▶ Tailor your application materials to each position. Describe your skills and experiences that correspond with the position. This may require modifying your resume and cover letter for different positions.
- ▶ Exude enthusiasm every step of the way. Recruiters seek candidates who have a passion for school, work, and life in general.
- ▶ Prepare for interviews by researching the organization and conducting practice (“mock”) interviews at Career Services. Athletic teams play scrimmages before the start of the season; you should conduct practice interviews before the start of your “interview season.”
- ▶ Dress professionally. It may seem ridiculous that a scuffy pair of shoes or a wrinkled blouse or shirt can sabotage four years of hard work. *But this happens all the time.* Otherwise qualified candidates are rejected because of inappropriate attire at an interview or job fair. Visit a clothing or department store and ask for assistance in the selection and fitting of apparel appropriate for an interview.

- ▶ Salespeople know that they must have a brief and effective “elevator pitch.” This is a 60-90 second summary of their product and its benefits. You need to do the same. Create a brief summary of who you are, what you have accomplished, and what benefit or value you will provide an organization.
- ▶ Smile. Be friendly, polite, and pleasant to everyone you come into contact with during the course of applying and interviewing. If hired, you will spend thousands of hours in the company of co-workers and supervisors. Prospective employers are thinking to themselves, “Do I want to spend the next 2, 5, or 10 years with this person?”
- ▶ Follow up all contacts with a brief thank-you note or email. A simple gesture of appreciation can make the difference between an offer and a rejection.



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. Take full advantage of the college experience and enjoy the journey!

“The future belongs to those who believe in their dreams.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

How To
Prepare
FOR A
CAREER
and Get a Great Job

by Alan Farber, Ph.D.

An excellent resource for any college
student who hopes to find rewarding
employment upon graduation



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