Career Development and Employment Services

Career Action Plan
CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The office of Career Development and Employment Services is available to help you develop an effective Career Plan. We offer many resources and services designed to help you explore career options and make good decisions. The services available include individualized career counseling, interest and personality testing, computer programs, internet access, co-op/internship opportunities, part-time, full-time and summer job listings, job search assistance, graduate school information, career/employment fairs, job search strategies, and interviewing techniques. We have the resources you need to build a successful career.

“To love what you do and feel that it matters… how can anything be more fun?”
~anonymous~

Use this Career Action Plan to discover a rewarding, fun, and fulfilling career.
THE COLLEGE YEARS AND BEYOND

Begin in your freshman year to learn about yourself and the world of work. In your sophomore and junior years, continue to explore career information and get involved in a co-op or internship opportunity. The senior year can be devoted to fine-tuning your career choice and preparing for the world after college. The process does not stop at graduation. You will be challenged to explore new career opportunities, develop new skills/abilities, and be faced with career choices that will impact your future. You can begin to develop a Career Action Plan at any time. We encourage you to start now – today. By doing so, you will enhance your college experience, career choice, and eventually your life.

CREATING A CAREER PLAN

What can I do with a degree in Humanities, Business, Education, Science, Engineering, or Health Science? Is the major I’ve chosen the right program for me? What kind of experience will I need to pursue career opportunities in my field? These and similar questions are often asked by college students. This manual will help to answer some of these questions by guiding you through the general steps of Career Planning. It will suggest steps you can take to increase knowledge of yourself and the world of work, refer you to career resources, and provide you with access to career assessment tools that can help you design and shape your future. Completing the activities in this manual will bring greater meaning to your college major, your career and your life.

The Career Action Plan encourages students to explore and gather information about themselves and the world of work. This information can be used to make informed decisions that will lead to a rewarding career. Individuals will work through the career process at different paces depending on their needs, interests, motivation and academic/life demands. Some progress quickly, while others need to take more time to explore their options. The important choice to make is to begin now to explore who you are and what you want out of your chosen career.
STEPS TO CAREER SUCCESS

What follows is an outline for your Career Plan. It is divided into the following sections: Self-Assessment, Exploration, Experience, Decision-Making, and the College Years Checklist. Complete the activities in each section to confirm your decision to pursue a career in your chosen major or to explore other options before you narrow your college major/career choice.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

“Know thyself,” said Socrates. Effective career planning begins with self-knowledge. **SELF-ASSESSMENT** involves learning about your values, abilities/aptitudes, personal traits and interests. The process helps you to explore your strengths and identify which areas you need to work on to be successful in your chosen field. The following are activities designed to help you learn more about yourself:

- Meet with a career counselor to talk about career planning.
- Complete an interest, aptitude, or personality inventory.
- Complete the Myers Briggs Type Indicator.
- Identify what you want out of a job or career – independence, creativity, leadership, high earning power, travel, adventure, structure, security, advancement potential, responsibility, teamwork or other factors.
- Make a list of your skills, abilities and values.
- Ask friends and family to tell you about your strengths, talents and areas of interest.
- Make a list of your “dream” jobs.
- Work part-time in an office, business or community organization to develop new skills and gain experience in the “real world.”
- Volunteer at school or in the community.
- Make a list of your accomplishments from school, work, sports or activities.
- Earn good grades – students who achieve in the classroom create more opportunities for themselves in the world of work; there is no substitute for working up to and beyond your academic potential.
EXPLORATION

The EXPLORATION step involves investigating the world of work and discovering how the career information gathered matches the results from your SELF-ASSESSMENT. The task is to move from general areas of interest to specific occupational titles. Utilize the Career Library in the Career Development and Employment Services Office for access to these important resources: Occupational Outlook Handbook, Dictionary of Occupational Titles. The following activities can help in providing the career information needed to narrow your field of interest:

- Follow up on results from interest testing by checking out the Occupational Outlook Handbook and other resources. Keep a log of the career information gathered.
- Learn about educational requirements, job descriptions, salary levels and related occupations of those fields that interest you the most.
- Investigate different majors by looking through the catalog and reading the course descriptions.
- Talk with faculty, upperclassmen or a career counselor about courses, programs and majors.
- Interview individuals working in a specific career or occupational area.
- Take courses or workshops where transferable skills can be learned (i.e. computer skills, writing and speaking skills, foreign languages or leadership skills).
- Attend career fairs.
- Work or volunteer in a career area that interests you.
- Take on a leadership role in a group, club or organization.
- Discuss with advisor/career counselor the option of graduate school or specialized training programs.
- Develop a five or ten year plan for each of the career options you are considering.
- Access the following sites for useful career/employment information:

JobWeb – www.jobweb.com/
College Grad – www.collegegrad.com/careers
CareerInfoNet – www.acinet.org/acinet
College.monster – http://college.monster.com
Career Development and Employment Services – www.gannon.edu/depts/cdes
EXPERIENCE

The EXPERIENCE step involves evaluating career/occupational choices through direct involvement in your field of interest. Participation in cooperative education, internship programs, volunteer work, campus activities, part-time jobs or summer employment provides the opportunity to gain practical experience in one’s desired career area. It is important to begin gaining experience early in your college career and continue to build progressively responsible experience until the time you graduate. Activities to consider are:

- Explore internship programs within your academic discipline.
- Meet with a counselor in the Center for Experiential Education to discuss possible opportunities.
- Research summer employment opportunities in your career field early in the spring semester.
- Check out volunteer experiences through the Social Concerns Office.
- Join organizations within areas of career interest.
- Attend job or career fairs.
- Choose elective courses which strengthen your major and help to develop transferable skills.
- Compare the knowledge gained from Self-Assessment and the information gained from Career Exploration to develop a priority list of possible career choices; identify ways to get experience in those fields.

DECISION-MAKING

This step involves matching the personal knowledge gained through the SELF-ASSESSMENT step with the career information gathered in the EXPLORATION AND EXPERIENCE steps. This matching process will lead to a list of career/occupational possibilities from which you may choose to direct your career. This step requires risk taking and a willingness to commit to a two, five or ten year plan. It is important to understand there is more than one career for each person and that many people do not establish themselves in a career until after they have three to seven years of work experience. Points to consider in your decision-making include:

- Know your strengths and weaknesses and how they fit into a particular career field.
- Understand how effective decision-making will benefit you personally and professionally. Learn how to improve your decision-making skills. Include others in the decision-making process. Consult with professors, counselors, family and classmates.
- Learn as much as you can about career opportunities. Knowledge is power and it can help to minimize the fear in the decision-making process.
- Work with a faculty member or counselor to examine the decision-making process.
- Realize that making this choice does not lock you into a career for the rest of your life. If it does not work out, you have the ability to change paths.
CAREER OUTCOMES – THE COLLEGE YEARS

The following career development activities serve as a guide for students and faculty working together as the student progresses through his/her academic major.

Freshman Year - Awareness

- Meet with faculty to discuss how current courses relate to future opportunities.
- Learn the course requirements within selected major.
- Get involved. Join a group, club or organization.
- Participate in intramurals, voluntary service or community projects.
- Become familiar with campus resources.
- Complete an interest inventory and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.
- Dream about future possibilities.
- Earn good grades. Academic success leads to greater opportunity.
- Seek a part time/summer job to help develop communication, leadership and teamwork skills.
- Conduct career informational interviews with professionals in chosen field.

Sophomore Year - Exploration

- Evaluate chosen major; explore new career options if necessary.
- Use elective courses to explore interest areas; earn credit toward an academic minor; develop language, computer or specialized skills.
- Explore resources in the Career Development Library to learn about chosen field.
- Seek leadership roles in the classroom, organizations or discussion groups.
- Initiate conversation with faculty about career trends, opportunities and requirements in your field.
- Establish a strong work ethic and team attitude in the classroom, during activities, or while at work.
- Examine internship/co-op opportunities.
- Use the internet to learn more about chosen field.
- Attend a career fair.

Junior Year - Experience

- Develop a two, five or ten year career plan.
- Explore employment opportunities.
- Gain career related experience through internship/co-op, volunteer or part-time work.
- Create a professional style resume.
- Investigate graduate school programs, application process and testing requirements.
- Begin an academic/career related work experience or plan for one over the summer.
- Serve in leadership roles or get involved in career related community projects/programs.
- Attend career and graduate school fairs.

Senior Year - Deciding on Action

- Register with Career Development and Employment Services and participate in On Campus Recruiting.
- Finalize resume and begin to learn about job search and interviewing techniques.
- Seek career/employment information from faculty, counselors and classmates.
- Attend The Graduate and Professional School Fair and/or career/employment fairs.
- Complete graduate school application process.
- Review and update career plan with faculty or counselor.
- Develop a career network with professionals, family, friends, classmates and faculty who are in a position to assist with employment or graduate school search.
- Access career/employment/graduate school information on the internet.
- Learn about the transition from college to career and how to avoid the pitfalls (business etiquette, finances, relocation, office politics).