

# 2009 Penn State Career Guide 2010

## THE CAREER PLANNING PROCESS

### Developing Your Career Goals

When students hear about Career Services, they often think of activities related only to the job search process. Before conducting your search, there are many things you can do to explore and plan for your future. Whether you are new to campus or completing your last semester at Penn State, whether your career goals are clear or unclear,

coming to Career Services can help you. The process of career decision making is one you will continue during your time at Penn State and throughout your life.

Career decision making involves increasing your self awareness, exploring career options, and acquiring the knowledge, skills, and experiences

that will help you implement your career choices. This process is unique to each individual student based on your own experiences, skills, interests, and values. The Career Services staff is here to assist you with the process of developing your career goals and planning steps to reach those goals.

### Career Planning Steps

#### Increase Self Awareness

- Meet with a counselor to identify interests, values, personality, abilities and clarify career goals
- Reflect on past experiences in high school and college to help determine what you liked (interests), what you did well (skills), and what you felt was important (values)
- Explore interests through courses, volunteer work, student activities, and job shadowing
- Consider taking a career decision-making course

The first step in career decision making is developing self awareness. Your career decision is yours and is rooted in your own identity consisting of your interests, values, skills, experiences, and goals. You may be certain about all or only a few of these aspects. Students come to Career Services with varying levels of self awareness. To increase your self awareness, career counseling offers an opportunity to discuss your life and career goals. Counseling may include assessment, which is available to help you identify

and organize your interests, abilities, and values as they relate to career fields. Career counseling will increase your awareness of career options, reinforcing those options you've already considered and expose you to ones you haven't yet considered. Discussing connections between your self knowledge, experiences, and your vision for your future can lead to identifying career areas to explore.

#### Explore Career Options

- Research career options of interest using the Career Library and on-line career-exploration sites
- Investigate career alternatives related to various fields of study
- Learn about various careers from friends, family, alumni, professors, and other people in the community
- Explore the variety of opportunities available at Penn State in and out of the classroom
- Begin to develop plans to obtain your goals
- Prepare to pursue summer jobs and internships related to your interests

Exploration can take many forms, all of which require you to be active in gathering information and applying this information to your self awareness. Reading about careers through printed resources in the Career Library and through career information websites helps you to expand your knowledge base. While reading provides general information about career fields, talking with a professional who works in a field of interest to you (informational interviewing) can provide more details about the work and the setting, offer additional insight into careers, and answer your specific questions. Career Services can help you identify professionals in fields of interest who may offer information about their work and career. Your classes will also offer a forum for learning about careers through discussions with faculty, guest lecturers, and alumni.

Beyond gathering information, begin to consider ways to gain exposure and involvement within your identified career options. Career Services can help you learn more about student activities, volunteer opportunities, job shadowing, part-time

work, research opportunities, and internships related to your interest areas.

### Acquire Knowledge, Skills, and Experience

- Become active in extracurricular activities and volunteer work to develop teamwork, interpersonal, and leadership skills
- Obtain relevant work experience by pursuing part-time work, summer jobs, and internships
- Develop a broader appreciation of diversity through study abroad, foreign languages, community service, multicultural courses and cultural activities on campus
- Record your activities, accomplishments, and achievements

As you move closer to selecting your career field of interest, you will learn about the knowledge base, personal qualities, and experiences which are valued by employers. These frequently include: communication skills, honesty/integrity, teamwork, interpersonal skills, motivation, leadership skills, ability to work with diverse people, work experience, and a strong work ethic. Career Services can help you plan to acquire these qualities and experiences. Active involvement in these areas will make you a more appealing candidate for

available opportunities. Remember to record your accomplishments and achievements for inclusion in your resume and electronic portfolio.

### Develop Self-Marketing Skills to Help Implement Your Career Goals

- Participate in resume writing, interviewing, and job search strategies workshops
- Meet with a counselor to help design a job search or graduate school plan
- Participate in a videotaped “mock interview” to practice interviewing
- Consider taking a job search course (LA 401, CNED 303, AG 100)
- Take advantage of On-Campus Interviewing and career and grad school fairs
- Network with alumni through LionLink and gather valuable career advice

It is now time to put all of your hard work together as you solidify your plans for employment or graduate school. Your resume, cover letter, and application materials are the first impression you will give to an employer/graduate school. Take the time to represent yourself well in writing so that you get the opportunity to meet face to face. As you move into the interviewing process, prepare to present yourself in person in a way that highlights the skills, experiences, and qualities the employer/grad school is seeking in candidates. Remember to use a variety of resources and strategies in your search, evaluation, and acceptance of offers.

Each individual brings experiences, interests, and goals to the job search. Career Services can assist you as you reflect on your unique qualities and apply them to your job search or graduate school goals.

### COME TO CAREER SERVICES EARLY AND OFTEN

Career Services offers a wide range of services and programs to assist you in every stage of your career planning. Stop into Career Services to learn more about the topics discussed here as well as additional resources, career planning workshops, and events. Drop-in counselors are available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays and until 7:00 p.m. Tuesdays in the Bank of America Career Services Center.

## Meeting With a Career Counselor

Meeting with a Career Services counselor can be helpful in organizing and planning your future. A counselor can stimulate your thinking, ask important career planning questions to help clarify goals, provide encouragement, teach you strategies for making meaningful career decisions and help you plan your job search.

You may wish to meet with a career counselor to:

- Begin to look at your interests, skills, and values through discussion, assessments and related activities.
- Learn about the tools and resources essential in gaining information about majors and careers.
- Discuss different opportunities, projects, activities and ideas that can assist you in making your college

education satisfying, fun, and marketable.

- Engage in exercises that can help you to identify the career skills that your academic, extracurricular, internships and part-time job experiences have developed.
- Talk about how to make informed decisions about college major, careers, job offers and graduate schools.
- Recognize personal strengths and limitations and how they affect career planning. Develop ways to use and/or improve them.
- Learn to research employers and industries. Explore strategies to explore your professional network.
- Create and implement a strategic job search or graduate school plan.
- Develop your resume, cover letter, and interview skills.

Career counselors and students work together in developing career plans. Counselors can help you to learn more about yourself, understand the decision-making process, and begin to gather information about career opportunities. However, career counselors cannot make your decision for you or tell you what to do in planning your career. The responsibility for making career decisions rests with you. While students may seek a specific connection between their major and a specific career, each major can be connected to multiple career paths and possibilities. Through your work with a career counselor, you will develop a set of skills and knowledge which can help you define and reach your career goals.