Teaching Chapter 11

**Finding a Path to Your Future Profession:**

**Career Exploration, Preparation, and Development**

Key Instructional *Goal* of this Chapter

 The primary goal of this chapter is to promote student awareness that their career development begins by doing college strategically, beginning in the first term of their first year.

*Motivating* Students for this Chapter

 Today’s students tend to be very “career-minded,” so it is reasonable to expect that they be motivated to learn about this topic. However, some students may perceive career development to be far removed in time and a much lower priority than other adjustment issues they’re currently experiencing in their first term. Thus, it may be necessary to intentionally build a case for the relevance of this chapter. Here are some points that might be made proactively to ignite student interest:

\* Point out that the vast majority of new students are unsure about the career they want to pursue, and even those who have made a definite choice still need to learn how to best prepare for, gain entry to, and eventually succeed at their intended career.

\* Inform your students that there are many careers available to them that they have never heard of, and the number of new careers that never existed before is growing rapidly due to the rapid growth of information technology and economic globalization.

\* Remind students that the skills they acquire in “lower division” coursework and their involvement in co-curricular experiences are as important to their future career success as coursework and co-curricular involvement completed during their junior and senior year. Reinforce the point that the skills new students develop in their general education courses are not merely “academic” skills but are career-preparation and career-success skills. Furthermore, remind them the co-curricular experiences, service to the community, and leadership activities engaged in during the first year of college are to be entered on their résumé now and will remain there forever.

Key Points to *Emphasize* in this Chapter

\* Underscore the fact that the *first* step in the process of effective career exploration and decision-making is *self-awareness*. Point out that self-awareness precedes and provides the foundation for prudent selection of a career, particularly awareness of:

(a) personal *interests*—what you like to do,

(b) personal *abilities, skills, or talents—*what you do well or could do well, and

(c) personal *values*—what is important to you and makes you feel good about yourself.

\* Remind students that the usual relationship between majors and careers is *not* *linear,* i.e., they don’t ride a monorail straight from their college major to a career that’s a direct extension of their major. Instead, their major will typically lead to a family or cluster of careers that can be quite diverse. Point out to your students that when they graduate from college, they will not only have a college major (academic specialization), they will also have a liberal arts experience (general education), which will prepare them for a variety of career-related tasks that go well beyond their narrow area of academic specialization.

 An effective way to illustrate this point is to arrange for some alumni to visit your class. Have these college graduates describe their career position and have your students attempt to guess what their major was in college. Although there may be some cases where the alum’s current career can be predicted from their major, it is likely the majority of the alums will be occupying career positions that cannot be readily predicted on the basis of their college major.

\* Remind students that their *first* career position is *not* what they will be doing for the remainder of their working life. Research indicates that college graduates change careers three-to-five times before retiring—and this does not simply mean changing jobs, but changing professions. Reinforce the fact that a key advantage of general education (the liberal arts) is its capacity to equip college graduates with transferable work skills that promote career versatility and mobility.

\* Highlight the differences between career *entry*, career *compatibility* and career *advancement*.

 Careers that are currently “in demand” may allow for easier entry into employment immediately after college graduation, but ease of career entry should not override the importance of career compatibility with one’s personal interests, talents and values, and the importance of career advancement—opportunity to “move up” at later stages of one’s career. Thus, choosing a career that’s currently “Hot’ (in demand) may be a good short-term (and short-sighted) career decision, but not necessarily an effective long-term decision.

\* Point out that probably the single most important thing your students can do while in college to increase their employment prospects after college graduation is to get“real-life” work experience *during* their college experience, such as internships and service-learning (volunteerism).

 Rather than simply piling up course credits toward a college diploma, then waiting and hoping their diploma will automatically open the doors to career success, students should be reminded that they can exert more direct and proactive control over their future career success right now—in the first year of college—by engaging in out-of-class work experiences that will enable them to:

(1) find out what the nature of work is really like in certain fields,

(2) “test” their interests and skills for certain types of work,

(3) strengthen their resume by adding experiential learning to their academic learning,

(4) obtain work-related letters of reference, and

(5) network with employers who may recommend them or hire them after college

 graduation.

Inform your students that a college diploma does not provide serve a foolproof passport to a prosperous and fulfilling career. Instead of focusing on the *product* of a college education (the diploma), encourage your students to focus on the *process* of a college education—on the things they do while in college, documenting their career-development skills, and package those skills in a compelling and persuasive manner. Remind students that career success after college depends more on what they actually do in college than the name of the major, or the name of the college, that happens to appear on their diploma.

***Exercises* for Chapter 11**

***“Dream Career” Fantasy***

 Instructions to students:

 1. Take the next couple of minutes to imagine your “dream job.” Don’t focus on any

 specific occupation (e.g., doctor or lawyer); instead, let your imagination run wild and

 fantasize about doing that you really love doing, even if you were not being paid for doing

 it.

 2. As thoughts and images come to your mind, record them in words or in pictures.

 3. Use the following five questions to help guide your career fantasy:

 (a) *What* are you doing—what *tasks* are you performing?

 (b) *How* are you doing it—what *skills* are you using?

 (c) *Where* are you doing it—what does the *geographical area* and *physical*

 *environment* look like?

 (d) *Who* are you working with (if anybody)?

 (e) *When* are you working—what is your *work schedule*?

4. Lastly, think about what emotions you’re experiencing when (a) you’re *getting ready* to go to

 work and (b) when you’ve *finished* your work at the end of the day.

***Seeking Career Feedback from a Friend***

Instructions to Students:

1. Identify two or more people who know you well.

2. Ask these people to suggest what career(s) they think would be most compatible with your

 interests, talents, values, and personality traits.

***Career-Interview Role Play***

Steps:

1. Have each student in class pair-up with another student. (If you have an uneven

 number of students in your class, you can serve as a partner for one of your students.)

2. One member of the pair plays the role of being an interviewee for a career position and

 the other member assumes the role of interviewer—who poses the common kickoff

 question for an interview: “Tell me about yourself?”

3. In response to this interview question, the interviewee provides a 1- or 2-minute

 answer that includes information about:

 (a) what personal interests, talents (abilities), and values, s/he would bring to the

 position,

 (b) what liberal arts (general education) skills or perspective s/he would bring to the

 position.

4. Partners reverse roles, with the interviewer becoming the interviewee and vice

 versa.

***Thinking Reflectively about Results of Career-Interest Inventories***

The following questions may be used to prompt students to think deeply about the results of any career-interest inventory they take.

1. What were the highest career-interest area(s) that appeared in your profile?

2. If norms are available, how did your highest career-interest score compare with the scores of

 others in that area? In other words, what is your percentile score—i.e., the percentage of

 people scoring below you in your highest area

 of career interest?

3. Check the description of the career area(s) in which you scored the highest. Does this

 description tend to confirm what you already thought your career interests were, or

 were you surprised by the results? Why?

4. What college majors or minors relate to your highest career-interest area? Do you see

 yourself majoring (or minoring) in any of these subject areas? Why?

4. Check the occupations that relate to your highest career-interest area, and list any that

 you find appealing.

5. What skills, talents, or abilities do you think are needed for the occupations relating to

 your highest career-interest area? Do you think that they tend to match your strongest

 skills and abilities? For example, do they tend to match the ones you reported on the

 first day of class—(e.g., on the “Student Information Card” that you completed).

Additional Exercises & Assignments in Response to Career-Interest Test Results

\* Have students develop an educational plan for majoring or minoring in one of the

 fields of study relating to their highest area of career interest.

\* Ask students interview someone in an academic or career field relating to their

 highest career-interest score. (The “Information Interview” exercise at the end of

 Chapter 11 may be used for this purpose.)

\* Have students investigate volunteer (service-learning) opportunities available through

 your college or local community agencies that relate to their highest career-interest

 area. To facilitate this process, you could provide students with a list of service-

 learning opportunities offered under the auspices of your college, or provide your class

 with a list of local community agencies that welcome student volunteers.

\* Require students to participate in a service-learning experience relating to their highest career-

 interest area, or offer it as an extra-credit opportunity. (For a sample “Service-Learning

 Reflection Paper,” see the Exhibit Section of this Manual.)

***Career-Related Reflection Exercises Related to the MBTI Inventory***

Note: A free online version of the MBTI, and a listing of personality traits associated with each of its types, is available at: <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp>

Steps:

1. Note if you have a higher score one or the other letter in each of the following pairs:

 **E** or **I** = \_\_\_\_\_

 **S** or **N** = \_\_\_\_\_

 **T** or **F** = \_\_\_\_\_

 **J** or **P** = \_\_\_\_\_

2. Review the personality traits associated with each one of your four highest

 letters/types.

 (a) In general, do the characteristics listed under your highest types seem to be true for

 you?

 (b) List two characteristics associated with each of your four highest types that you

 think best reflect your personality.

 (c) Depending on whether your higher score was E or I, go to one side of the room or

 the other (e.g., E = left side, I = right side).

 (d) Form 3- or 4-member groups with other students on your side of the room who

 share the same letter, and brainstorm careers that would be compatible or

 consistent with the personality characteristics associated with your letter.

 (e) Repeat steps (c) and (d) three more times for each of the other three pairs of letters.

3. Take your higher score for each one of the four pairs and join them to form a four-

 letter sequence (for example, ESTJ). Review the personality traits associated with

 your four-letter sequence.

 \* In general, would you say that the personality traits associated with your 4-letter

 sequence *accurately* describe you?

 \* What particular personality traits associated with your 4-letter sequence do you

 think *best* describe you?

 \* Are your results on this personality test consistent with the results of your career

 interest test?

\* If you may have taken other personality or career-interest tests, are the results consistent or

 contradictory? In what way(s)?

***Team Project & Presentation***

Instructions to Students:

1. You have been assigned to a 3-4 member team of students who share career interests

 similar to you.

2. Your team will make **a** *15-20 minute presentation*, with *each person* speaking for

 approximately *five minutes* about their career interest.

3. Information used in your presentation should be drawn fromthe following *three*

 *sources****:***

 (a) *Online:* Internet

 (b) In *Print*: Published material (e.g., books or articles*)*

 (c) In *Person*: Interviewing or “shadowing”a person in the field.

4. Relate the information you discover about the career with the *results of your self-assessment*

 *test(s)*. (For example: Are the career qualifications and expectations consistent with your

 personality traits?)

5. Submit a *one-page outline*of the major points and sub-points you will cover during

 your part of the team presentation *on the class session before your team’s presentation*

 *is due*. (Your teammates and the due date for your team presentation are listed on the

 following page.)

*After each major section* on your outline, briefly indicate the *research source(s****)*** you

 used to obtain information that was included in that particular section.

*At the end of your outline*, *list all the sources you used*. (This list should contain *at*

 *least* one source from each of the three types of sources listed above, i.e., online, in-

 print, and in-person sources.)

#  Topics That Could Be Covered During Your Team Presentation

- Nature/Description of work in the career

- Different career branches/specializations

- College majors relating/leading to the career

- Colleges/universities with graduate programs leading to the career

- Employment outlook for the career

- Qualifications (level of education/work experiences) needed for career entry

- Volunteer experiences and internships related to the career

- Skills/abilities needed for career success

- Opportunities for career advancement

- Impact of the career on mental and physical health

- Ethical dilemmas likely to be encountered in the career

\* Note: These are merely samples or examples of what could be covered during your

 presentation. You are free to discuss other points or issues relating to the career.

*Recommended Resources* for Your Team Presentation

- Career Resource Section of the Campus Library

**-** Computer-Assisted Career Guidance System (Career Center)

- *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (Library or Career Center)

- *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (Library or Career Center)

- Websites:

 <http://www.collegeboard.org/career/bin/career.pl>

 <http://www.collegeview.com/careers/>

 <http://www.mapping-your-future.org/>

 <http://www.internshipprograms.com/>

 <http://www.jobweb.org/cfairsr.htm>

*Career* Teams *& Team-Presentation* Dates

Note to Instructors:

\* The career categories listed below were created based on the interests of one particular class of students. Student in your class may have different career-interest areas, thus resulting in different career groupings.

\* To see criteria for evaluating and grading team presentations, see Exhibit #8.

Team #**1.** *FINE ARTISTS* & *PSYCHOSOCIAL SERVICE* SPECIALISTS

# *Teammates:*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Team #**2.** *ENGINEERS, BIOLOGISTS, & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS*

# *Teammates:*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# *Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

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Team #**3.**  *CAPITALISTS & CORPORATE ATTORNEYS*

# *Teammates:*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# *Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

## -----------------------------------------------------------

Team **#4.** *TEACHERS* & *SPEECH THERAPISTS*

# *Teammates:*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# *Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

## -----------------------------------------------------------

Team #**5.** *JOURNALISTS* & *CAREER EXPLORERS*

# *Teammates:*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# *Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

Additional Material Excised from the *First* Edition of the Text May be Used in Lectures or as Reading Assignments

MYTHS ABOUT CAREER CHOICE & DECISION-MAKING

Myth #1. Once you’ve decided on a career, you have decided on what you’ll be doing for the rest of your life.

This is simply and totally false. The term "career" derives from the same root word as "race- course." Like a racecourse, a career involves movement that typically takes different turns and twists, and like any race, it’s not how fast you start, but how strong you finish that matters most. This ability to move and change direction is what distinguishes a professional career from a dead-end job. Americans average four different careers in a lifetime; it’s also estimated that today’s college graduates will change jobs 12-15 times, which will span 3-5 different career fields (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). These statistics may be surprising because you’re probably going to college with the idea that you’re preparing for a particular career. However, these results become less surprising when you consider that don’t forget that the general education component of your college experience provides you with versatile, transferable skills that can qualify you for different positions in a variety of career fields.

**Remember:** **It’s highly unlikely that your first career choice after college is what you will be doing for the remainder of your working life. Instead, your first career choice is likely to be a temporary choice, not a permanent one that will determine how you’ll make a living until the day you retire (or die).**

Myth #2. You need to pick a career that’s in demand, and that will get you a job with a good starting salary right after graduation.

Looking only at careers that are “hot” now and have high starting salaries can distract you from also looking at yourself and cause you to overlook a more important question: Are these careers truly compatible with mu personal abilities, interests, needs, and values?

“There is perhaps nothing worse than reaching the top of the ladder and discovering that you’re on the wrong wall.”

 --Joseph Campbell, American professor and writer

Starting salaries and available job openings are factors external to us that can be easily seen and counted; thus, they may get more attention and receive more weight in the decision-making process than qualities that are harder to see and put a number on--such as our inner characteristics. In the case of career decision-making, this can result in college students choosing careers based exclusively on external factors (salaries and openings) without giving equal (or any) attention to such internal factors as personal abilities, interests, and values. This can lead some college graduates to enter careers that eventually leave them bored, frustrated, or dissatisfied. Career development researchers have coined the term “age 30 crisis” to capture the tendency for a significant number of college graduates who reach this age and ask themselves: “Is this (career) what I really want to be being with my life? Your risk of experiencing this age-30 crisis can be reduced or eliminated if you take time now to give careful thought to who you are and what you want to be (Levinson, 1978).

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

 “I would rather make little money doing something I love than be rich doing something that makes me miserable.”

 --First-year student

The number of job offers you receive immediately after graduation and the number of dollars you earn as a starting salary in your first position are short-term (and short-sighted) standards for judging whether you’ve made a good career choice. Remember that there’s a critical difference between career *entry* and career *advancement*. Some college graduates may not bolt out of the starting gate and begin their career path with a well-paying first position, but they will steadily work their way up the career ladder and be promoted to a more advanced position than graduates who start out with higher salaries. So, beware of advice from others who may tell you that you need to pick a career that’s in demand. All this means is that you may be able to enter the field immediately and easily after graduation; it doesn’t necessarily mean you’ll advance in that field just as quickly and easily. In other words, what is good in the short run (career entry) may not necessarily be good in the long run (career advancement).

**Criteria to Consider When EvaluatingCareer Options**

Effective decision-making requires identification of all important factors that should be considered when evaluating your options, and determining how much weight (influence) each of these factors should carry. As we’ve emphasized throughout this chapter, the factor that should carry the greatest weight in career decision-making is the match between your choice and your personal abilities, interests, needs, and values.

Suppose you discover more than one career option that’s compatible with these four key dimensions of yourself, what other aspects of a career should be considered to help you reach a decision and make a selection? Many people would probably say salary, but as the length of the following list suggests, there are other important aspects or characteristics of careers that should be factored into your decision-making process.

Student Perspective

“A big paycheck is a plus but it is not necessary. I would rather be inspired.”

—First-year student

WorkConditions

These would include such considerations as:

l the nature of the work environment (e.g., physical and social environment);

l geographical location of the work (e.g., urban, suburban, rural);

l work schedule (e.g., number of hours per week, flexibility of hours); and

l work-related travel (opportunities to travel, frequency of travel, locations traveled to).

CareerEntry

Can you enter into the career without much difficulty, or does the supply of people pursuing the career far exceed the demand (e.g., professional acting)? If a career is highly competitive and difficulty gain entry to, it doesn’t mean you should automatically give up on it; however, it does mean you should have an alternative career as a back it up to fall back on--until you can (or in case you can't) catch a break that will allow you to break into your ideal career.

CareerAdvancement (Promotion)

An ideal first job educates and prepares you to advance to an even better one. Will the career you’re considering provide you with opportunities for promotion to more advanced positions?

CareerMobility

Is it easy to move out of the career and into a different career path? This may be an important factor to consider because careers may rise or fall in demand; furthermore, your career interests or values may change as you gain more work and life experience.

Financial Benefits

This includes salary--including both starting salary and expected salary increases with greater work experience or advancement to higher positions. However, it also includes fringe benefits--such as: health insurance, paid vacation time, paid sick-leave time, paid maternity- or paternity-leave time, paid tuition for seeking advanced education, and retirement benefits.

Impact of the Career on Your Personal Life

How would the career affect your family life, your physical and mental health, and your self-concept or self-esteem? Remember that your life should not be built around your career; your career should be built around your life. Your means of making a living and other important aspects of your self need to be considered simultaneously when making career choices, because the nature of your work will affect the nature (and quality) of your life.

 “The French work to live, but the Swiss live to work.”

—French proverb

**Remember:** **A good career decision should involve much more than salary and should take into consideration how the career will affect all dimensions of your "self" (social, emotional, physical, etc.) throughout all stages of your adult life: young adulthood, middle age, and late adulthood. It’s almost inevitable that your career will affect your identity, the type of person you become, how you will balance the demands of work and family, and how well you will serve others beyond yourself. An effective career-decision making process requires you to make tough and thoughtful decisions about what matters most to you.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Please answer the following questions about a career that you’re considering, or have chosen:

1. Why are you considering this career? (What led or caused you to become interested in it?)

2. Would you say that your interest in this career is motivated primarily by intrinsic factors--that is to

say, factors “inside” of you, such as your personal abilities, interests, needs, and values? Or,

would you say that your interest in the career is influenced more heavily by extrinsic factors-that

is to say, factors “outside” of you, such as starting salary, pleasing parents, meeting family

expectations, or meeting an expected role for your gender (male role or female role)?

3. If money were not an issue and you could earn a comfortable living in any career, would you choose the same career?

Your College Transcript

A college transcript is a listing of all the courses you enrolled in, and the grades you received in those courses. There are two key pieces of information included on your college transcript that can influence employers’ hiring decisions, or admissions committee decisions about your acceptance to a four-year college, graduate or professional school: (1) thegrades you earned in your courses, and (2) the types of courses you completed.

Simply stated, the better your grades are in college, the better are your employment prospects after college. Research on college graduates indicates that the higher their grades are, the higher:

l the prestige of their first job,

l their totalearnings, and

l their job mobility.

This relationship between college grades and career success exists for students at all types of colleges and universities, regardless of the reputation or prestige of the institution they attend (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; 2005).

The particular types of courses listed on your college transcript can also influence employment and acceptance decisions. Listed below are the types of courses that should strengthen your college transcript.

l**HonorsCourses**

If you achieve excellent grades during your first year, you may apply or be recommended for the honors program at your campus and take more academically challenging courses. If you qualify for the honors program, we recommend that you accept the challenge. Even though ÒAÓ grades may be more difficult to achieve in honors courses, the presence of these courses on your college transcript clearly shows that you were admitted to the honors program and were willing to accept this academic challenge.

l **Leadership Courses**

Many employers hire college graduates with the hope or expectation that they will advance and eventually assume important leadership positions in their company or organization. Although a leadership course is not likely to be required for general education, or for your major, it is an elective course you could take thaw will develop your leadership skills and the impressiveness of your college transcript.

l **Interdisciplinary Courses**

An interdisciplinary course is one that combines two or more disciplines (academic fields). Most career challenges cannot be fully understood or solved by a single field of study. For instance, to meet the challenge of effective management and leadership requires a combination of skills acquired in different fields of study, including psychology (e.g., understanding human motivation), sociology (e.g., promoting harmonious group relationships), business (e.g., managing employees effectively), and philosophy (e.g., social ethics).

If your college offers interdisciplinary courses, strongly consider taking them. The presence of interdisciplinary courses on your college transcript will differentiate your transcript from those of most other college graduates. Studies show that executives value new employees who have interdisciplinary experiences and who take an interdisciplinary approach to solving work-related problems (Daly, 1992).

l **International and Cross-Cultural Courses**

Courses whose content crosses national and cultural boundaries are often referred to as International and cross-cultural courses. These courses are particularly pertinent to success in today’s world, in which there is more international travel, more interaction among citizens from different countries, and more economic interdependence among nations than at any other time in world history (Office of Research, 1994). As a result of these developments, employers now place higher value on employees with international knowledge and foreign language skills (Fixman, 1990; Office of Research, 1994). Taking courses that have an international focus, or which focus on cross-cultural comparisons, helps you develop a global perspective that can improve the quality of your college degree and increase the attractiveness of your college transcript to potential employers.

In addition to gaining a global perspective by taking courses emphasizing international knowledge and foreign language skills, also consider participating in a study-abroad program, which may be available to you during the regular academic year or during the summer.

Pause for Reflection

Are you aware of the study-abroad opportunities that are available at your college
or university?

Are you seriously considering a study-abroad experience? If not, why not?

**Diversity (Multicultural) Courses**

America’s workforce is more ethnically and racially diverse today than at any other time in the nation’s history, and it will grow even more so in the years ahead (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). Successful career performance in today’s diverse workforce requires sensitivity to human differences and the ability to relate to people from different cultural backgrounds (National Association of Colleges & Employers, 2003; Smith, 1997). Participation in college courses relating to diversity awareness and appreciation, or involvement in courses emphasizing multicultural interaction and communication, can be valuable additions to your college transcript that should strengthen your career preparation, placement and advancement.

**Senior Seminars or Senior Capstone Courses**

These courses are designed to put a “cap” on or final touch to your college experience, helping you tie it all together and make a smooth transition from college to life after college. These courses include such topics as resume building, portfolio preparation, job-interview strategies, job-location strategies, developing a college-to-career plan, and preparing for and applying to graduate or professional school. Some capstone courses may also allow you to complete a senior thesis or research project in your major field, which can provide a powerful finishing touch to your major as well as a final product for your portfolio that can help you gain entry into graduate school, professional school, or the professional workforce.

Networking Strategies

Would it surprise you to learn that 80 percent of jobs are never advertised? This means that the jobs you see listed in a classified section of the newspaper and posted in a career development office or employment center represent only 20 percent of available openings at any given time. Almost one-half of all job hunters find employment through people they know or have met, such as friends, family members, and casual acquaintances. When it comes to locating positions, *who* you know can be as important as *what* you know or how good your resume looks. Consequently, it’s important to continually expand the circle of people who are aware of your career interests and abilities, because they can be a valuable source of information about employment opportunities.

You can start expanding your circle of contacts by visiting the Career Development Center on your campus to find out what employers come to campus to interview graduating seniors. See if it’s possible to obtain the names of representatives from those companies who have come to your college. Some of this information may also be available on your Career Center’s online job listings. Also, ask if it’s possible to receive the names of college alumni who may be working in fields related to your career interests. Some career centers have an online database that allows you to network with alumni who are working in careers that relate to your interests. Once you have selected a major, you may begin networking with seniors who will be graduating in your major by joining a club or organization that involves students majoring in the same field as you (e.g., philosophy club, business club). Lastly, be sure to share copies of your resume with friends and family members, just in case they may come in contact with employers who are looking for somebody with your career interests and qualifications.

Personal Interviews

A personal interview is your opportunity to make a positive *in-person* impression. You can make a positive first impression during any interview by showing that you’ve done your homework and have come prepared. In particular, you should come to the interview prepared with knowledge about yourself and your audience.

 You can demonstrate knowledge about yourself by bringing a mental list of your strongest selling points to the interview and being ready to speak about them when the opportunity arises. You can demonstrate knowledge of your audience by doing some homework on the organization you are applying to, the people who are likely to be interviewing you, and the questions they are likely to ask you. Try to acquire as much information about the organization and its key employees that’s available to you online and in print. When you know your audience (who they’re likely to be and what they’re likely to ask), and when you know yourself well and what about yourself you’re going to say), you should then be ready to answer what probably is the most important interview question of all: "What can *you* do for *us*?"

To prepare for interviews, visit your Career Development Center and inquire about questions that are commonly asked during personal interviews. You might also try to speak with seniors who have interviewed with recruiters and ask them if certain questions tended to be frequently asked. Once you begin to participate in actual interviews, make note of the questions you are asked. Although you may be able to anticipate some of the more general questions that are asked in almost any interview, it’s likely there will be unique questions asked of you that relate specifically to your personal qualifications and experiences. If these questions are asked in one of your interviews, there’s a good chance they’ll be asked again in a future interview. As soon as you complete an interview, mentally review it and attempt to recall the major questions you were asked before they slip your mind. Consider developing an index-card catalog of questions that you’ve been asked during interviews--with the question on one side and your prepared response on the reverse side. By being better prepared for personal interviews, you’ll increase the quality of your answers and decrease your level of anxiety.

Lastly, remember to send a thank-you note to the person who interviewed you. This is not only the courteous thing to do; it’s also the smart thing to do because it demonstrates your interpersonal sensitivity and reinforces the person’s memory of you.

When it comes to converting a college degree or certificate into successful career entry, studies show that students who make this conversion most successfully have two characteristics in common: a *positive attitude* and *personal initiative* (Pope, 1990). They don’t take a passive approach and assume a good position will just fall into their lap, nor do they believe they are owed a position simply because they have a college degree or certificate. Instead, they become actively engaged in the job-hunting process and use different job-search strategies (Brown & Krane, 2000).

One study tracked a large number of college students after graduation to determine how successful they were in finding jobs. The results of this study indicated that those students who were most successful in gaining entry to career positions after graduation had two characteristics in common:

1. They engaged in career preparation and career development activities while in college, and

2. They took personal initiative during the job-hunting process.

These successful graduates were later interviewed and asked what advice they would give new college students. The advice they gave is nicely summarized in the following statement issued by a nationally known college advisor:

A big reason for their success, which shines through their answers and the advice they give, is initiative. They tell students to get involved in campus activities, but for substance, not for show; to take some career-related courses; to get internships and to have summer work experiences; and finally, to use initiative in investigating career possibilities and in looking for an actual job. Eighty-six percent of them said their own personal initiative was crucial to their being hired for their first job (Pope, 1990, p. 57).

The advice of these successful graduates reinforces the key points made in this chapter:

Your career success *after* college depends on what you do *during* college. Touching all the bases that lead to *college* success will also lead to *career* success, namely:

1. **Get actively involved in the college experience--**get good grades in your classes and get work-related experiences outside the classroom.

2. **Use your campus resource--**capitalize on the career preparation and development 3pportunities that your Career Development Center has to offer.

3. **Interact and collaborate with others--**network with students in your major, college alumni, and career professionals.

4. **Take time for personal reflection--**deepen your self-awareness, so you choose a career path that’s true to you; and maintain awareness of your developing skills and personal qualities, so that you can successfully sell yourself to future employers.



**Remember:** **When you make the most of your college experience, you maximize the impact of your college degree on your future career.**