

# A Parents' Guide to Career Development

The most valuable things parents can do to help a student with career planning are:

- Listen
- Be open to ideas
- Help your student find information

Here are eight more things you can do to help:

## **1. Encourage your student to visit the career center!**

Next time you visit campus, drop into the career services office and pick up a business card from one of the career coaches. When your son or daughter is feeling anxious about his/her future, offer the card and say, "Please call this person. He (or she) can help you."

Many students use their first semester to "settle into" college life, and so the spring semester of the freshman year is the optimal time to start using career services. Ask your student (in an off-handed way), "Have you visited the Office of Career Services?" If you hear, "You only go there when you are a senior," then it's time to reassure him/her that meeting with a career coach can take place at any point—and should take place frequently—throughout a college career.

Many centers offer a full range of career development and job-search help, including:

- Individual advising
- Career assessments
- Occupational information
- Job shadows and Informational interviews
- Mock interviews
- A network of alumni willing to talk about their jobs and careers
- Assistance with writing resumes and cover letters

## **2. Advise your student to write a resume**

Writing a resume can be a "reality test" and can help a student identify weak areas that require improvement. Suggest that your student get sample resumes from the career center. Follow up with an appointment to review resume drafts for grammar, spelling, format and content. Students should think about their resume as early as freshman year.

## **3. Challenge your student to become "occupationally literate."**

Ask: "Do you have any ideas about what you might want to do when you graduate?"

If your student seems unsure, you can talk about personal qualities you see as talents and strengths. You can also recommend:

- Taking a "self-assessment inventory," such as PathwayU
- Talking to favorite faculty members
- Researching a variety of interesting career fields and employers on "What Can I Do With This Major" or "ONET."

A career decision should be a process and not a one-time, last-minute event.

#### **4. Emphasize the importance of internships**

The Career Services Office will not "place" your student in a job at graduation. Colleges grant degrees, but not job guarantees, so having relevant experience in this competitive job market is critical.

Your son or daughter can sample career options by completing internships and experimenting with summer employment opportunities or volunteer work.

Why an internship?

- Employers are interested in communication, problem-solving, and teamwork skills, which can be developed through internships.
- Employers look for experience on a student's resume and often hire from within their own internship programs.
- Having a high GPA is not enough.
- A strong letter of recommendation from an internship supervisor may tip the scale of an important interview in their favor.

#### **5. Encourage extracurricular involvement**

Part of experiencing college life is to be involved and active outside the classroom. Interpersonal and leadership skills—qualities valued by future employers—are often developed in extracurricular activities. Leadership experiences specifically have been identified by employers as being very valuable. (See our Leadership USCA Certificate Program

<https://www.usca.edu/leadership-usc-aiken/index.dot>)

#### **6. Help your student to stay up-to-date with current events**

Employers will expect students to know what is happening around them. Buy your student a subscription to *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*.

#### **7. Teach the value of networking**

Introduce your student to people who have the careers/jobs that are of interest. Suggest your son or daughter contact people in your personal and professional networks for information on summer jobs. Encourage your student to "shadow" someone in the workplace to increase awareness of interesting career fields.

#### **8. Help the career center**

Call Career Services when you have a summer, part-time, or full-time job opening. The staff will help you find a hard-working student. If your company hires interns, have the internships listed on the Career Service's job board, Purple Briefcase. Your knowledge of the world of work is also valuable. Mentor someone in our leadership certificate program or sit on a career panel to talk about your particular career. Information and experiences about the "real world" are very valuable to our students.

*Adapted from an article by Thomas J. Denham. Courtesy of the [National Association of Colleges and Employers](#).*