

Career Planning Overview For Parents

One day, your student says she wants to be a dancer when she grows up. The next day, she's considering a law degree, or maybe she's going into politics. Then just when you think everything has been decided, your student says she's joining the Peace Corps.

This kind of on-again, off-again career planning can drive a parent to distraction. A typical parent can't help but think, "If she would just stick with one plan, we could start making some progress."

Part of the way young people choose their path in life is to envision the wide range of possibilities open to them. Maybe your student's ideas for a future career sound far-fetched at best, but listening with an open mind is often the best response for parents. Being a good listener is a good first step towards guiding your student through the career selection process.

"But all these crazy ideas are just unrealistic! How can my daughter possibly make a career out of professional juggling?"

Exposing your student to some of the realities of the workplace may open your student's eyes to the challenges of a career in today's world. It may even encourage your student to consider job options she never knew were possible. Below are some simple steps you can take to guide your student's career exploration.

- **Allow your student to make the decision**

As parents, we have a lot of experience in the workplace that we want to share with our children. Maybe with a little guidance, we could help ease our student's entry into the real world. But the truth is, for students to find the right career for them, they need to be the one making the decision. The goal is to give students a chance to explore on their own without taking over the career search process.

It's okay to make suggestions about majors and career fields, but let your student be the ultimate judge of what's best. Career development can be stressful. Maybe this is the first really big decision that your son or daughter has had to make on their own. Be patient, sympathetic and understanding, even if you don't agree with your student's decisions.

- **Advise your student to write a resume**

Writing a resume can be a "reality test." Students quickly discover what experience they have to list on their resume—and what they wish they had. As an exercise, writing a resume also shows your student how to translate volunteer or part-time work experience into marketable job skills. For instance, a summer job spent babysitting demonstrates reliability, promptness, and attention to detail.

To make drafting a resume easier, suggest your student find sample resumes from books at the public library or online. The ICC Career Center is also available to provide resume writing tips.

- **Encourage your student to browse the employment ads in the newspaper**

Many an English major has been surprised to realize that there are not a lot of job advertisements that read, "Wanted: Liberal Arts Major." Have your student read through the

help wanted pages, circling jobs that look interesting, and discuss what kind training or experience would be needed to qualify for the openings that sound promising.

- **Consider the Liberal Arts**

It's worth noting there that many a liberal arts major has found a satisfying careers after college graduation. While some careers are tailor made for some college degrees, there are plenty of career options open to the liberal arts student. Graduates with a degree in history may find work in the tourism industry. English majors can try their hand at grant writing or non-profit management. Sociology majors may take a chance with free-lance web design. Options are available for liberal arts students, though it may take a little more creativity and enthusiasm to turn these options into solid job offers.

- **Emphasize the Importance of Internships**

A college degree can open doors for your student. A college degree AND relevant job experience can keep those doors open.

Through internships, your student will have a chance to sample career options. Summer jobs or volunteer positions can open up new worlds of interest for your student, plus it gives students valuable insight into whether the career field they are considering is right for them.

Not only will they learn how their college studies relate to the workplace, they'll learn valuable workplace skills like the importance of being on time, how to communicate with a supervisor, and how to work out disagreements with coworkers.

- **Encourage your child to visit the ICC Career Center (and come along yourself!)**

The ICC Career Center offers a full range of career development and job-search help including:

- workshops on writing resumes and cover letters
- individual career advising
- self-assessment inventories, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
- online research tools

The ICC Career Center can show your student the "hot fields" for the future. They can talk about the local job market, and they can explain how college majors lead to jobs. While you are visiting the ICC Career Center with your student, take a look around yourself. You may discover a new career possibility just for you!

To make an appointment with a Career Advisor, call the ICC Career Center at (309) 694-5272.