

Intentional Career Planning

This handout describes the “steps” associated with intentional career planning. No matter what career you plan to pursue after earning your graduate degree, being proactive in the career development process and using your time in graduate school strategically will enhance your career success.

ORIENTATION (BEGINNING OF YOUR PROGRAM)

Orient yourself to the career and professional development resources offered by:

- Your department
- Graduate School (various programs & offices)
- UW Career Center
- Counseling Center
- Alumni Association
- Library system
- Many other centers, offices, and programs

SELF ASSESSMENT (BEGINNING OF YOUR PROGRAM & BEYOND)

Learn more about who you are and what you want out of life. It’s important to know:

- Strengths
- Work & life values
- Personality preferences
- Interests
- Decision-making style
- Geographic preferences
- Other influential factors

CAREER EXPLORATION (BEGINNING & MIDDLE OF YOUR PROGRAM)

Learn more about the career paths you are considering. Be sure to explore:

- Different sectors (academia, corporate, non-profit, government, self-employment, etc)
- A variety of job titles and responsibilities
- Salary and job outlook information

Try exploring careers using three methods:

- Reading about careers
- Talking to people in careers (informational interviews)
- Experiencing careers (volunteering, internships, etc)

FOCUS (MIDDLE OF YOUR PROGRAM)

Get serious about making yourself marketable for career paths of interest. Secure the necessary:

- Coursework
- Skills
- Experiences
- Contacts

PREPARATION (MIDDLE & END OF YOUR PROGRAM)

Start preparing yourself for the job market. Do what it takes to feel confident about your:

- Job search plan
- Resume or CV
- Cover letter
- Portfolio
- Interviewing skills
- Negotiating skills

APPLICATION (9-12 MONTHS PRIOR TO DEGREE COMPLETION)

Look for positions using a variety of strategies such as:

- Asking professors, classmates, alumni, colleagues, and contacts for referrals
- Connecting with professional organizations
- Applying to campus, general, and niche job boards
- Attending career fairs and similar events

TRANSITION (END OF YOUR PROGRAM)

Prepare to exit school and start another adventure.

- Tie up loose ends at the UW and thank those who helped you in your job search
- Read books, attend workshops, and participate in groups related to the transition process
- Start your new job
- Reflect on your feelings about your job responsibilities, work environment, standard of living, relationships, mental and physical health, and leisure activities

REFERENCES

- <http://web.mit.edu/career/www/graduate/timelines.html>
- http://www.career.uci.edu/Graduate/graduate_GetStartedEarly.aspx
- <http://cardinalcareers.stanford.edu/communities/graduate/guides.html>