Module 7: Career Preparation – Becoming Employable
Transcript

Introduction (video clip 1)

If you completed the Career Planning Process Overview module, you’ll recognize this as Step 3 of the Career Planning Process, otherwise known as “How will I get there?” Remember that before you can really start planning for your career, you’ll need to have assessed yourself and what you want in a career, identified the career options available, researched them, obtained job market information, and selected a career path to pursue.

In this module, we’ll talk in more detail about how to become employable by having a plan and making college count.

(Activity slides 1-3)

(Audio) How much do you know about the role a college degree plays in your employability these days? Answer the questions to find out.

A Degree Alone is Not Enough (video clip 2)

Remember that in this job market, a degree alone will not get you a job. A degree doesn’t guarantee you a job; rather, it’s a license to hunt for a job. Having a degree will open doors and allow you the opportunity to compete for the jobs you want. So if all you graduated from college with was your degree, how would you compete with everyone else with a degree? Your career preparation plan should focus on how you will set yourself apart from your competition.

Additionally, employers’ expectations have changed. Due to the economic challenges companies have faced, as well as the fact that college grads are only staying in their first position out of college for 1-2 years, most companies are no longer able to provide any significant on-the-job training. You’ll be expected to hit the ground running on day 1, and in order to do that, you’ll need to have already gained some experience, as well as honed the skills required for your career.

Your employability will be determined by 4 things, shown here in the employability equation. Employability consists of obtaining a degree that’s appropriate for the career you plan to pursue, the right skills, the right experiences, and the right contacts. The employability equation provides an outline for your career preparation plan.

Personal Responsibility in Career Planning (video clip 3)

It’s important to understand that what you are required to do to obtain your degree is probably NOT going to be everything that is required for the career you plan to pursue. Remember, your degree is only one piece of the employability equation. Don’t rely on your degree requirements to fully prepare you for your career, and don’t rely on any one person to tell you what all you need to do to prepare either.

Finding out exactly what you’re going to need to do to prepare for your career, as well as seeking out the appropriate opportunities to gain the skills, experiences, and contacts you need is your responsibility, and yours alone, but Boise State is here to help. In this module, we’ll help you get started by sharing current research on employer expectations, and discussing the opportunities available to you while you’re here at Boise State to prepare for your career.

(Activity slide 4)
What have you already found out you need for the career you want to pursue? List a couple things you think are going to be most important under each section. If you haven’t started researching what you’ll need for your career yet, use these spaces to brainstorm what you think employers in your career field might want. If you haven’t chosen a career path yet, pick one you’re interested in or considering.

Finding out What Employers Want (video clip 4)

Remember, finding out what kinds of qualifications employers in your intended career field are going to want is up to you, but when it comes to what ALL employers want, we can share that information with you right now!

Debbie Kaylor, Career Center Director: “Boise State brought in Dr. Phil Gardner out of Michigan State University: the Collegiate Employment Research Institute, to conduct research with OUR employers on what skills they thought were critical for success in the workforce.

The skills we found that are critical to success are not necessary different from the national skills. I think the really exciting thing about this research is that Boise State is dedicated to making sure our graduates are employable upon graduation, so we went out to our employers to find out what skills they were looking for, and we are dedicated to making sure our students have opportunities to gain those skills both in and out of the classroom at Boise State University.”

What All Employers Want (video clip 5)

While technical careers and careers requiring a license or professional credential will usually require a specific major, the most commonly requested major by employers is actually “all majors.” Overall, employers are expressing that they are less concerned with your exact major and more concerned with your skills.

There are two types of skills – technical skills, which are the skills specific to your particular career, and professional skills, also called transferable skills, which are needed for any career. Our research has revealed 9 professional skills that are critical for employability regardless of your exact major or career field, and we’ll show you those momentarily.

While you will have opportunities to work on developing these skills in the classroom, keep in mind that employers also want to see how you’ve demonstrated the use of these skills outside the classroom. Boise State provides many opportunities outside the classroom for you to build and demonstrate these critical skills, which we’ll discuss in this module, but it’s up to you to take advantage of them!

(Activity slides 5-13)

(Texture) Now, let’s take a look at the 9 professional skills critical for employability. Hover over the skill icon to find out why that skill is so important to employers. Then, think about whether you’ve done anything yet to demonstrate that skill to future employers, and answer the questions at the bottom. If you haven’t, remember to make that part of your career preparation plan!

Experience Employers Expect (video clip 6)

In addition to skills, remember, regardless of the career field you’re going into, employers want hands-on experience. While all experience outside the classroom that allows you to build and demonstrate critical skills is valuable, keep in mind that employers also need you to graduate with experience doing the type of work you plan to do after graduation.
Debbie Kaylor, Career Center Director: “Out of our research, we found out that 92% of employers expected college graduates to have some sort of internship experience upon graduation, so take advantage of the opportunities here at Boise State. If you can’t participate in more than one, at least participate in one internship while you’re here. It is the new entry-level job for a college graduate.”

What YOUR Employers Want (video clip 7)
You now know that obtaining internship-type experience and honing the critical professional skills is going to be expected by ANY employer, but what additional things are the employers in YOUR field that YOU want to work for going to expect? Remember, it is ultimately up to you to find out.
Here are two ways to go about getting the information you need:

- Use the web resources for Step 2 of the Career Planning Process to research the typical requirements for your career. You can find these resources in the Identifying and Researching Career Options module, or in the Career Planning handout available on the Career Center website.

- Conduct informational interviews with people already working in the career or industry you plan to pursue. An informational interview is just an informational meeting with someone during which you ask them for information and advice about the career you are pursuing. Talking with professionals already working in your career field is THE best way to obtain the most accurate information about exactly what you’ll need to do to become employed, and what will make you competitive. (It’s also one of the best ways to build your network!) Most professionals are very receptive to informational interview requests from students! For more information, see the module on Informational Interviewing, or visit the Career Center website.

Opportunities to Gain Skills, Experience, and Contacts (video clip 8)
There are many opportunities available at Boise State and in the community to gain the skills, experiences, and contacts required to be employable in your chosen career field. Let’s take a look at the types of opportunities available now.

Opportunity 1: Internships (video clip 9)
The term “internship” can encompass a variety of experiences, but the common theme is that an internship is an experience outside the classroom that is directly relevant to the career field you are pursuing. An internship can be something you do for academic credit through Boise State, or it can be something you do on your own. It can be a paid or unpaid position. Some majors require you to complete an internship for academic credit, although some of those majors may use different names for the experience, like practicum, fieldwork, clinical, or student teaching.

For more information about internships and the internship process at Boise State, as well as how to find internships, see the Internship section of the Career Center website, and our internship handout. Contact the Career Center or your academic department with any questions you may have.

Opportunity 2: Volunteering (video clip 10)
There are two types of volunteering, both of which can be valuable as you prepare for your career. There is community service-type volunteering, which is great way to gain professional skills, and there is internship-type volunteering, which is volunteer experience that is directly relevant to your career, and that is a great way to gain relevant experience, sometimes with more flexibility or fewer hours than a traditional internship might require.

The Student Involvement and Leadership Center at Boise State can help you connect with volunteer opportunities. Visit the Volunteer section of getinvolved.boisestate.edu for more information.
Charlie Varland, Student Involvement and Leadership Center Senior Associate Director: “We feel that when students get involved on campus they also have the potential to make the world a better place. We truly believe that every student at Boise State University can change the world. This can be by getting involved with a service opportunity that happens here on campus, or even a service opportunity that happens elsewhere. We have alternative service trips that happen during breaks that take students beyond the university, such as Partnership Jamaica, where students travel around to a couple rural communities in Jamaica to work on classroom space at schools and really make a difference in those communities. So you can get engaged in a service opportunity like that, or you can get engaged in service that happens in your own backyard, right here in Boise, and right here in the Treasure Valley. There are many service opportunities that are created by student organizations, that happen through departments like the Student Involvement and Leadership Center, and even service that is provided by agencies around here in the Treasure Valley. They look for volunteers from students to come and make a difference.”

For internship-type volunteer opportunities, find a non-profit organization that appears to have a need you could help meet that would give you relevant experience, contact someone at the organization directly, and pitch them your idea. Remember that non-profits rely on volunteers and are often very receptive to these offers. The Service-Learning program website, servicelearning.boisestate.edu, provides a list of non-profit organizations eager to work with Boise State students, which you can use to help find either community service or internship-type opportunities.

Opportunity 3: Service-Learning (video clip 11)

There are many classes at Boise State in a given semester that have a service learning component, meaning that you learn about the topic of the class by doing it. As part of the class, you do a project out in the community, usually for a non-profit organization, that pertains to what you’re learning in the class. It’s like getting to do a mini-internship within a class you’re already taking, and this is experience that you can list on your resume, so seek out service learning classes! You can get a list of classes that currently have a service learning component on the Service Learning Program website, servicelearning.boisestate.edu.

Kara Brascia, Service-Learning Director: “Service-Learning brings books to life, and life to books. There are many reasons to take a Service-Learning class. Here are a few. A lot of students like hands-on experience, and in Service-Learning classes you take what you’re learning in class and apply it in the community. That might be skills, or knowledge, or theories, and you get a change to try them out. While you’re there, you get to make some professional contacts, build you career network, and often times you have an experience that can lead to a job. Through service work or projects or some creative idea that you come up with, you get to work in the community and apply what you care about and what you’re learning to make a difference.”

Opportunity 4: Student Clubs and Organizations (video clip 12)

Getting involved in a student club or organization is also a great way to develop skills, gain relevant experience, and expand your network. There are many different types of organizations available, including academic and professional groups for students in a certain major or pursuing a certain career, student government, sororities and fraternities, interest-based organizations, and club sports.

Joining organizations related to your major or career field can help you connect with professionals in your field. Taking on a leadership role in any type of organization will allow you to develop skills, and if you take on a position related to your career goal, it can provide internship-type experience as well.

Information about all student clubs and organizations and how to get involved can be found on the Student Involvement and Leadership website, getinvolved.boisestate.edu.
Charlie Varland, Student Involvement and Leadership Center Senior Associate Director: “Here in the Student Involvement and Leadership Center, we feel that being involved on campus is as important as going to class. We feel that because we know that when students get involved, they are gaining many different skills that will carry with them past their time here at Boise State University. For example, when students get involved with a student organization or a club on campus, they learn many different skills — things like critical thinking, communication, how to work well in teams, how to innovate and think outside of the box, and these are the kinds of things we know employers are going to be looking for after their time here at the university.”

Opportunity 5: Research (video clip 13)

Research experience can be very valuable, especially if you’re planning on going to grad school, or pursuing a career in science or technology, or a career involving research or working with data. Faculty in every department are conducting research and there are plenty of opportunities for undergraduate students to get involved in those research projects. To find out about opportunities, talk with faculty members in your department.

Liljana Babinkostova, Student Research Initiative Director: “Undergraduate research is crucial for your professional and personal development and career preparation. Doing research will help you develop skills — communication skills and problem solving skills, something that’s important and that employers are looking for. You will also develop persistence to complete your project, develop skills to defend your research ideas, and to communicate your research results. Employers want and sometimes complain that college graduates do not have these skills, and therefore your application will be more competitive in the job market having research experience.”

Opportunity 6: International Learning Opportunities (video clip 14)

International Learning Opportunities at Boise State provides international opportunities for students, including Study Abroad, which can provide you with international experience and help you develop cultural competencies. More information can be found on the International Learning Opportunities website, international.boisestate.edu.

Sara Dart, Education Abroad Advisor: “Study Abroad is great opportunity for students not only to see the world and get an idea of the larger picture out there, but also to gain skills and experiences that are going to make them more appealing and marketable as a future job candidate or as a graduate school applicant. Our students who study abroad not only take classes and travel and those sorts of things, but they also have the opportunity to have some very intentional experiences, to do internships in the community, to be a student teacher, to volunteer with NGO’s. There’s a lot of interesting opportunities out there that are really going to look very good on your resume and are really going to make you a more marketable job candidate. We really encourage students to take advantage of this while they have the opportunity, and it’s really a way to make yourself stand apart from other candidates.”

Opportunity 7: On and Off-Campus Jobs (video clip 15)

Even the jobs that you have while in school can give you relevant skills and experiences to help you prepare for your career. Try to use jobs you have as a student strategically — as a way to demonstrate any of the critical professional skills that you can’t yet demonstrate on your resume, or to get experience in the type of company, industry, or environment you want to work in after graduation. View the “Getting a Part-Time Job” handout on the Career Center website, log into your BroncoJobs account to search for jobs, and visit the Career Center if you need assistance with searching for a job.

Anne Evans, Career Center Assistant Director of Student Employment and Internships: “Obviously, one of the benefits of working part-time while you’re going to college is to earn a paycheck, but there are other really important benefits as well. One of them is to gain time management and organization skills. Having to balance your studies while working is a great way to gain those skills, and studies have shown that students who work part time while attending college are more successful academically and end up being more successful in finishing and completing college. Another important
Benefit is the networking opportunities you’ll have. These can be helpful for references for future full-time career opportunities, as well as potential internships while you’re going to college. And lastly, the most important thing about working part-time while you’re going to school is to gain those necessary professional skills that will be needed in order for you to become employable upon graduation.

Opportunity 8: Class Projects (video clip 16)

While not all employers consider class projects “outside the classroom” experience, they are still a valuable way to gain relevant experience and skills, and they CAN be described on your resume. Make sure to take an active role in group projects and maximize those opportunities. Also look for any elective classes you can sign up for that will allow you to participate in significant projects, like projects that take part or all of a semester, or projects that will allow you to complete real work for local businesses.

Opportunity 9: Professional Organizations (video clip 17)

Professional organizations, as opposed to student organizations, are groups of professionals who work in a specific career field and communicate with each other about their profession, share resources, and set standards for the industry. Though these organizations are primarily for professionals, the vast majority welcome student members and encourage students pursuing that career to get involved with the organization. Getting involved with your applicable professional organizations is one of the BEST possible ways to build your professional network while in school. Check for state or local chapters of national organizations and attend all of their conferences and events you are able to. Volunteering for a leadership position in a professional organization is even better, and is a type of experience many employers say is highly valuable to them.

(Activity slide 14)

(Audio) Think about this list of opportunities like a menu. You certainly do not have to participate in every one of these activities in order to be employable. It is important to be aware of everything that is available, so that you can select the opportunities that are the best fit for your career goals.

Now that you’ve learned a little about each of these opportunities to gain skills, experiences, and contacts, consider what you wrote down earlier in this module about what you thought was going to be most important to employers in your career field, and using that information, rank order how important you think each of these opportunities could be for you in preparing for your intended career. Drag each opportunity to the appropriate spot.

Networking as a Student (video clip 18)

Remember, there is more to being employable than education, skills, and experiences. Even with all of those things, you could still have difficulty becoming employed without the right contacts in your career field who will tell you about openings and refer you for available positions. Building a professional network when you’re a job seeker is difficult. Building a professional network when you’re a student is easy. Conduct strategic informational interviews, take advantage of the opportunities at Boise State we discussed, and get involved with the professional organizations for your field. Make building your network a priority in your career preparation plan.

Your Career Preparation Plan (video clip 19)
Once you have discovered exactly what you’ll need to do to be employable and competitive in the career field you want to go into, and explored all the opportunities available to gain the skills, experiences, and contacts you’ll need, it’s time to develop your actual career preparation plan, which is basically an action plan that will specify exactly how you will get from wherever you are now to your future career. For help creating a career preparation plan that will set you up for success, see the Creating a Career Preparation Plan module, or visit us at the Career Center.

Resources Recap (video clip 20)

We talked about a lot of different career preparation resources in this module, so let’s quickly recap them.

For web resources to help you get an overview of the typical education, skills, and experiences required for your chosen career, see the Step 2 section of the Career Planning Process handout. This can be found by going to career.boisestate.edu, then to the Students section of the main menu. You can access the handout from the Career Planning page.

For information about internships, visit career.boisestate.edu, then the Internship page, which is also under the Students section of the main menu. You may also contact your academic department for more information about how internships for academic credit work in that department.

To connect with volunteer opportunities, visit getinvolved.boisestate.edu and check out the Volunteer section of the main menu. Also visit the “Approved Agency Partners” page of servicelearning.boisestate.edu for a list of organizations you can contact about volunteer opportunities.

To learn more about Service-Learning and to get a list of service learning classes, visit servicelearning.boisestate.edu.

To find out about all of the student clubs and organizations available at Boise State, visit getinvolved.boisestate.edu.

To find out more about student research opportunities, you can visit academics.boisestate.edu/undergraduate/undergraduateresearch. Talk to faculty in your department to find out about specific research opportunities. Clicking on the “Why do research?” page will give you more information about this.

For more information about the international learning opportunities offered through Boise State, visit international.boisestate.edu.

For information about looking for jobs, visit the Job Search section of career.boisestate.edu, under the Students main menu. Log into your BroncoJobs account, which can be accessed from the Career Center homepage, to look for jobs in addition to the other methods described.

If you’re still not sure what career you want to pursue, or you need additional assistance finding information about your career, or creating your career preparation plan, make an appointment to meet with a Career Counselor at the Career Center by calling 426-1747.

Closing (video clip 21)

Remember that the Career Center is here to help you! To maximize your future employability, connect with us early in your time here at Boise State. Come see us, connect with us on social media, visit our website, and let us help you Make College Count!