Module 1: The Career Planning Process: An Overview

Transcript

Introduction (video clip 1)

Hello, everyone. I’m Jennifer from the Boise State University Career Center, and you’re completing the first in our series of Make College Count modules. But what do we mean when we say “make college count?” Making College Count is about taking control of your future. It’s about maximizing this investment you’re making in your education. It’s about ensuring you achieve the goals that brought you here to college in the first place. For many of you, that’s going to mean making sure you’re employable, and these Make College Count modules are going to help you do just that.

Reality Check (video clip 2)

Let’s talk about a few realities you’ll have to deal with.

1. The job market is still competitive.
2. In a competitive job market, a degree alone is not enough to get you a job. A degree does not guarantee you a job; it is simply a “license to hunt” for a job. In a competitive job market, you have to make sure you are doing things that will set you apart from your competition. In most cases, your degree alone will also not fully prepare you for a career. Which brings us to the next reality...
3. Employers’ expectations of college graduates have changed. Partly due to the economic challenges companies have faced, and the fact that college grads only stay in their first position out of college for an average of one to two years, most companies don’t provide any significant on-the-job training anymore. This means employers will expect you to know how to do the job on day one... which means that you’ll have to have already done that job before. Therefore...
4. Internships are the new entry-level jobs. You’ll need to get hands-on experience in the career field you want to go into before you graduate. But...
5. In most academic programs, you won’t be forced to get a certain type of experience as part of your graduation requirements. This is because most majors are broad and allow students to pursue any number of different career fields, each of which would require different types of experiences. So...
6. YOU are the one responsible for making sure you are fully prepared for the career you choose to pursue. Don’t just rely on your graduation requirements to prepare you for your career. So, if it’s up to you to make sure you’re prepared for your career...
7. Making college count, and Becoming employable requires having a career preparation plan. Where are you going, and exactly how are you going to get there? In this module, you’ll get an overview of the career planning process.

The Career Planning Process (video clip 3)

Career Planning is a 3-step process, which can be summarized as “Who,” “What,” and “How.”

Or, to be more specific:

Step 1: WHO are you and what do you want in a career?
Step 2: WHAT career options are available?
Step 3: HOW will you get there?

(Activity slide 1)
Before we talk about Step 1, which deals with gathering information that will help you make a choice about a career, let’s talk about the different ways in which people go about making their decision. Different people have different beliefs about how you SHOULD choose a career. On this page, you’ll see some of the things people often consider when deciding on a career. Read each yellow sticky note, decide whether you personally feel like this is something you should consider when choosing a career, and move that sticky note underneath either the “should consider” or “should not consider” columns. There are no right or wrong answers, but this will help you assess your personal beliefs about career choice, which will come into play as you start working through the career planning process.

Career Choice Equation (video clip 4)

Again, there were no right or wrong answers, and each of the items on the previous page COULD be considered a valid factor to consider when making a career choice. Going into your own career decision, it’s important to know what matters to you.

Here’s a simplified version of how we RECOMMEND choosing a career, which can be represented by an equation: Self-knowledge + knowledge of the job market = a good career choice. Balancing those two things – knowledge of yourself and knowledge of the job market – is key. It’s important to know what you want, but it’s also important to know what needs employers have, and what real jobs best fit what you want in a career. So, the best “factor” to base your decision on is actually a combination of factors!

Step 1: Who Are You and What Do You Want in a Career? (video clip 5)

It’s hard to prepare for something if you don’t know what it is you’re preparing for. Step 1 of the career planning process involves learning about yourself and establishing criteria for your ideal career, which you’ll later use to evaluate the real career options out there.

Your ideal career is often said to result from a combination of three major factors – your interests, abilities, and work values. Your ideal career will balance what you enjoy doing, what you’re good at, and what’s important to you in a job. In Step 1, you should always thoroughly assess all three of these factors.

We can also look at your personality type and how your type aligns with different kinds of work environments. For example, in John Holland’s theory of career choice, your personality type is represented by a 3 letter code which can be matched to the codes representing the work environment of different careers.

Step 1 Resources (video clip 6)

While you might already feel like you know yourself well, it’s still important to thoroughly assess all of these things in the context of your career choice. There are a lot of tools and resources that can help you with this. Here are some the Career Center has available for you:
The next module will focus just on Step 1 and help you begin to assess yourself.

Set up an appointment to meet with a career counselor. Your career counselor is an expert in the career planning process and highly skilled in helping you uncover your interests, abilities, and values.

Your career counselor might recommend a career assessment to help you further evaluate yourself. The Career Center currently offers 3 different formal assessments.

If you know you want to take an assessment, sign up for one of our career assessment workshops, which will give you access to Sigi3 and provide you with all the information you need to get started on it. You might also have the opportunity to take Sigi in one of your classes if your instructor arranges for the whole class to take it.

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**Step 2: What Career Options are Available? (video clip 7)**

So, let’s say you’ve thoroughly assessed yourself and you now have a pretty good idea of what you want in a career. You’ve established a list of criteria for your ideal career. But all of that still won’t do you any good if you don’t know exactly what your career options are! That’s why Step 2 involves finding out what options exist, researching careers of interest, obtaining job market information, and evaluating how well each career option fits the criteria you’ve established.

There are many different ways to go about using what you came up with in Step 1 to identify potential career options, including using Sigi, a career information database like O*NET, or the Career Center’s web resource titled “What Can I do With This Major?” Access information on how to generate lists of potential careers in a later module.

This is also the step in which you’ll obtain job market information. Remember, to make a good career decision, you need to balance knowledge of yourself with knowledge of the job market. You can’t make a good career choice only using one of those factors. For example, if you choose a career without researching the job market, you might find it very difficult to become employed, or you might find that it conflicts with one of your values, such as being able to choose where you live. On the other hand, if you choose a career based on job market research alone, such as if you decided to just choose the most in-demand job, you’re very likely to either not enjoy it, or not succeed at it. Plus, career trends are never totally predictable, and so what’s in demand today may not be in demand when you graduate. Ultimately, you need to choose a career path that fits YOU, but it’s important to make that choice well-informed about the likelihood of that career meeting your employment needs.

Some of the best sources of job market information include career information databases like the Occupational Outlook Handbook, which is the US Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics site for national employment data, Career OneStop, which provides state data from state departments of labor, Idaho Career Information System, which provides Idaho-specific employment data and a database of Idaho businesses, and information and resources available on the job market research section of the Career Center’s website. In addition, informational interviewing, which is when you talk to professionals already working in your career field, is one of the best ways to really get a sense of what’s happening in the job market. All of these resources and methods of obtaining job market information will be discussed in more detail in a later module.

Finally, armed with all of this information about the careers available and the job market, you’ll use the criteria you established in Step 1 to evaluate each of your options and make a decision about which career path is the overall best fit for you.

(Activity slide 3)

(Audio) Before we move on to Step 3, you’ll get a chance to think about your own values and what that might tell you about the kind of job market information you’ll be the most interested in obtaining when you’re evaluating your career
Step 3: How Will You Get There? (video clip 8)

Just knowing what you want to do won’t get you there, but having a plan will. Remember, YOU are personally responsible for your career preparation, no one else. It’s up to you to find out what employers in your career field are going to want in terms of education, skills, and experience, and then make a plan that will ensure that you meet all of those expectations. In Step 2, you researched what your employers will expect, and in Step 3, you’ll explore opportunities to get those things, and make a career preparation plan.

The Employability Equation (video clip 9)

To get an idea of what you’ll need to include in your plan, let’s take a look at the “employability equation.”

Employability has 4 components – an appropriate degree for what you want to do, the right skills, the right experiences, and the right contacts. Just like the equation indicates, you’ll need to have ALL of these things in order to be employable, so your career preparation plan should focus on all four of these areas.

An Appropriate Degree

What’s considered an appropriate degree will depend on what your career goal is. Some careers require one specific major, some allow you to choose from a few options, and some only require a specific degree level, but you can choose any major. For example, a specific major is almost always required for careers where a license or certification must be obtained, as well as for highly technical careers, but many other careers are open to all majors. The important thing is to make sure your degree will meet the requirements for the career you want.

(The Activity slides 5 and 6)

(Audio) Do you know what different careers require? Let’s find out!

The Right Skills (video clip 10)

There are a couple skills sets to be aware of. One is referred to as technical skills, which are skills specific to one type of job or career. The other is referred to as professional skills, also sometimes called “transferable skills.” These are skills that are applicable to many different careers, and are necessary for professional success in any job.

While you will need to find out which technical skills employers in your field expect, when it comes to the professional skills you’ll need, Boise State has already uncovered these for you. We’ve have been conducting extensive research on what Treasure Valley employers look for in college graduates, so that we can make sure the education and experiences available to you at Boise State will prepare you for the workforce.

Nine skills emerged as critical for initial success in the workplace regardless of your major or what the job is... Perform with integrity, Solve problems, Manage time and priorities, Take the initiative, Think critically, Analyze, evaluate, and interpret information, Contribute to a team, Effectively communicate orally, and Build and sustain working professional relationships. We’ll talk about these skills more in a later module.
While you will be developing these skills through your courses at Boise State, keep in mind that employers also want you to demonstrate that you can use these skills outside of the classroom as well, as they sometimes look different in the workplace than they do in the classroom.

The Right Experiences

Employers expect you to graduate with hands-on experience in your field. You may have heard the phrase, “The internship is the new entry-level job.” This is true— to get most jobs that are considered entry-level for college graduates, you’ll need to gain internship-type experience while in school. While internships are the most common way of getting this experience, there are plenty of other opportunities as well, including volunteering, Service Learning, relevant part-time jobs, involvement in student clubs and organizations, research, study abroad, and taking courses that allow you to complete major projects. We’ll talk about these in more detail in a later module.

Some majors may require you to obtain internship-type experience as part of your degree requirements, and this experience might have a different name depending on your program, like practicum, fieldwork, clinical, or student teaching. If your degree does NOT require you to gain experience outside the classroom, that does NOT mean you don’t need it to get a job! Make sure to find out what kinds of experiences are expected and desired for the career you want to go into, so that you can plan accordingly.

(Activity slide 7)

(Audio) Here are the different types of opportunities available to gain experience. While we haven’t talked in detail about these yet, knowing what you know now, which do you think you’re the most likely to want to participate in? Select as many as you’d like.

The Right Contacts (video clip 11)

When it comes to your future employability, building a strong professional network while you’re in school is one of the most important things you can do. Why do you need to have the right contacts in order to be employable? Because the way employers hire has changed.

These days, anytime a company posts a job, they get flooded with resumes. Imagine having to review hundreds or even thousands of resumes and figure out how to narrow them down to only a small handful of the most qualified, best-fitting candidates to interview. Trying to hire that way has become very difficult for companies, and they’ve found that it’s faster, easier, and more effective to hire based on referrals. This means the employer is networking to find you, just as you will be networking to find him. The employer may use referrals from their staff, colleagues, and trusted friends to decide which of the resumes deserve a closer look, or they may skip posting their job entirely, ask for referrals, and have those individuals contact the company directly. In fact, it’s estimated that up to 85% of jobs today are never advertised, so the only way you’ll even find out about them is by having the right contacts in your network when you’re ready to look for a job.

The good news? Building a strong professional network is easy if you do it while you’re in school. (And if you make building your network a priority while you’re in school, you’re likely to find your actual job search process at the end to be pretty easy, since you will have already done the hard part!)

Remember to make strategic networking part of your career preparation plan. The experiences you gain outside the classroom will help you to build your network, as will getting to know your faculty, but also seek out professionals in your field and in the companies you’ll later want to work for by joining and getting involved in the professional organizations in your field, and by conducting informational interviews. These methods will be discussed further in a later module.
Closing (video clip 12)

Remember, your employability will be determined by how well you plan for your career! Figure out what you want to do, know what employers are going to want from you, and put together a plan to obtain what you need. The Career Center is here to help, so make us a part of your entire college experience! And don't forget, preparing for a career is going to take a lot of time, so Start Now and Make College Count!