Module 2: How to Make a Career Decision
Transcript

Introduction (video clip 1)

This module will focus on the first step of the Career Planning Process. Before we get started, though, let’s find out what you think, or what you may have been told about deciding on a major and a career in college. Answer the questions that appear when you click “next.”

Why Career Planning Matters (video clip 2)

Many years ago, it used to be true that you could wait until the very end of college to choose a career path. This is no longer the case, due to the fact that employers’ expectations have changed so dramatically. Due to the economic challenges companies have faced, and the fact that college grads are only staying in their first positions out of college for an average of one to two years, most companies are no longer able to provide any significant on-the-job training, meaning that they now need college grads who are not just educated, but who have a specific set of skills, as well as hands-on experience working in their career field. In addition, because most people these days get their jobs through word of mouth, you’ll also need to have a network of professional contacts in your field when you graduate.

What this means for you is that you’ll need to purposely plan for your career while in college, starting early in college so you’ll have plenty of time to accomplish everything. It’s hard to plan for a career if you have no idea what that career might be, because how would you know what kind of internship experience you need to get, what technical skills you need to develop, or what contacts you’ll need to get a job?

It’s also important to understand that your major doesn’t lock you into a particular career path, but it also doesn’t fully prepare you for any one career either. While you don’t necessarily have to choose a career path before choosing your major, doing so can be very helpful, because while many careers are open to any major, some careers do require or prefer a certain major. When you wait until later in college to figure out what kind of career fits you best, it’s possible you could find out that you need a different major than the one you’ve already invested so much in. Having an idea of what kind of career fits you will allow you to make a well-informed decision about your major.

The good news is that you don’t necessarily have to choose a career as soon as you get to college, or even be very specific in your career choice. What you DO need to do early in college is start the process of thinking about your career options, which involves assessing what you want in a career and researching career options, with the goal of finding a general direction that’s going to be a good fit for you. This module will help you figure out how to get started.

The Career Planning Process (video clip 3)

Career planning involves figuring out what you want to do and how you’re going to get there. The Career Planning Process has 3 steps, which can summarized by who, what, and how. Step 1, which is what we’re going to focus on in this module, is about assessing WHO you are and what you want in a career. Step 2 involves figuring out WHAT career options exist and researching options of interest, and Step 3 involves determining HOW you will actually achieve the career goal you’ve established.

(Activity slides 4-7)
While growing up, or as an adult, you may have heard different types of messages about how you should choose a career from family, teachers, mentors, or the media. Answer the following questions about the types of messages you’ve received.

Choosing a Career (video clip 4)

The debate between those two ideas – pursuing your passion or going after something practical – has been going on for a long time. With the current state of our economy, there has been an even greater push for choosing practicality over passion, especially as many types of jobs have been nearly eliminated, and there is concern over having enough qualified workers to fill the anticipated jobs of the future, such as in areas like STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math).

Of course, there are dangers to choosing a career EITHER of these ways. If you decide to pursue a passion with no regard for job market demand, you might find that for the work you want to do, no one is hiring. Or, you might find that the career doesn’t provide other things than might be important to you, which we call your work values.

If you decide to choose a career just based on job market demand, you might find yourself unhappy in a job you don’t enjoy, even though it offers some of the practical rewards that are important to you. Beyond that, you might also find that your natural abilities don’t align with the career you’ve chosen and that your work is a daily struggle, or you may fail to succeed in the career altogether.

Therefore, the best approach to choosing a career is to actually balance both things – passion and practicality. To put it simply, self-knowledge plus knowledge of the job market equals a good career choice. Start with figuring out who you are and what you want in a career – what your interests, abilities, and values are, then research the available career options that might align with who you are and what you want, and gather job market data, so that you can make a well-informed choice about which career is going to best meet ALL of your needs.

This module is going to focus on that first part – figuring out who you are and what you want in a career, while later modules will focus on researching career options and obtaining job market information.

Who You Are and What You Want in a Career (video clip 5)

You might already feel like you know yourself well, and can therefore skip the “who are you” part of this process. Step 1 of the Career Planning Process is about more than just discovering your identity, though; it’s about discovering your work identity. While your work identity is certainly a big part of your overall identity, trying to make a career decision by just focusing on your overall identity can be very difficult and can lead you down the wrong track.

Julie Walsh, Boise State student: “So I had been going to college for three years, and I had decided I wanted to be an Elementary Ed major for those three years, and towards my third year, I just had such a feeling that maybe teaching wasn’t going to be a good idea for me. It was very scary and very stressful. I’ve always had a plan for my life, and so not having a plan... I was constantly thinking ‘What am I going to do? Should I drop out of school? Should I stay in the program and graduate and not be happy with that degree?’ I didn’t know what to do. It was very nerve-wracking.”

To define your work identity, there are three main things about yourself that you’ll want to assess – your interests, abilities, and values. Of course, not every interest or ability you have is something you’re going to want to incorporate into a career, so it’ll be important to assess these in a career context. Additionally, you probably won’t find a career that fits every one of your values, so it’ll be important to figure out how you prioritize these. The end goal of this step of the Career Planning Process is to establish your criteria for an ideal career, which you’ll use in Step 2 to evaluate your career options and determine which one is the best fit.

So now, let’s talk about your interests, abilities, and values, and how you can assess those things.
Interests (video clip 6)

Becca Dickinson, Career Counselor, Boise State Career Center: “Assessing and understanding your interests, skills, and values is an important first step and a foundation in making a satisfying career choice for your future. Research shows us that the more we understand about ourselves in relation to the world of work, the more likely we are to have a satisfying career choice in addition to career success.

Our interests are those activities that we enjoy doing most. They are the things that we love to do. If we won the lottery, what would we decide to do with our time? What classes do we enjoy taking? What are some of our favorite books, and our favorite movies that we enjoy watching? These are all factors in considering what a satisfying career choice would be.”

You can start thinking about your interests by asking yourself certain questions and spending some time thinking about the answers. Consider writing down your answers, as it’ll be a lot easier to later come up with your criteria for an ideal career if you have everything written down.

Some of the questions you might ask yourself to assess what your interests are include:

1. **What classes have you enjoyed most? (Consider both high school and college classes.)**
   Besides telling you what you like to learn about, what classes you like (and don’t like) can tell you a lot about what kinds of tasks you’re likely to naturally gravitate to.

2. **What are your hobbies and personal interests – the things you do even though no one is making you?**
   Since your hobbies are things you do voluntarily during your free time, they can sometimes represent the things that you enjoy the most. You may not want to make a career entirely out of one of your hobbies, but are there aspects of your hobby interests that you could incorporate into a career?

3. **What have you liked about jobs you’ve had?**
   If you’ve had a job before, that could tell you a lot about what you like and don’t like. Even if it was a job you didn’t like as a whole, what aspects of it DID you enjoy?

4. **What have you liked about extracurricular activities you’ve been involved in, like clubs, sports, or volunteer experiences?**
   Just like jobs, figuring out what you enjoyed about those activities will help you identify things to look for in a future career. Look for the clues these experiences have given you. For example, if you enjoyed playing basketball in high school, that doesn’t necessarily mean you want basketball to be your career, but consider what aspects of the experience you liked, such as competition or teamwork, that could translate into a career.

5. **When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up, and what about that kind of work made it sound fun?**

6. **What’s your current dream job, and what about it makes it sound fun?**
   Things like what you wanted to be when you were little, and your “dream job,” while maybe not totally realistic, can give you clues about what you might like in a real job. What were the major themes in what you wanted to be when you were little, and what do those themes say about your personality and interests? What characteristics of your dream job that appeal to you could be incorporated into a real job?

7. **If you were going to voluntarily read a non-fiction book on any topic you wanted to learn about, what would the book be about?**
   When you’re in school, you’re forced to learn about a whole lot of things, some of which you may be more interested in than others, but a good way of gauging your interests is to consider what you’d want to learn about if no was forcing you
what you’d go out of your way to learn about. This doesn’t have to be an academic subject, but just anything at all you want to learn about.

**Resources – Assessing Your Interests**

While you certainly can (and should!) start working on assessing your interests on your own, the Career Center has resources to help you. A career counselor can help you not only figure out what your interests are, but sort out what your *career* interests are. A career counselor can be your guide through this whole process, or just someone to bounce your ideas off of. The Career Center also offers career assessments that will provide you with a more formal assessment of your interests and how those interests align with careers. Specifically, the assessments SigI3 and the Strong Interest Inventory will both help you assess your interests.

*Julia Walsh, Boise State student:* “So, I ended up meeting with one of the career counselors, and I was so impressed with her. She was so friendly and so nice and so personable; when we were talking I could see that she took a genuine interest in me, which was so nice because when you’re that scared it’s just nice to be reassured that it’s going to be ok. So we met and she helped me take a test on the computer that analyzed my interests, and my skills or abilities, and my work values, so I incorporated all three of those, which was wonderful, and it showed me so many different careers that I had never even considered, but seemed like they would be a good match for me. So, a few interested me, like dental hygiene, or medical assistant, and so she helped me research those, and after I decided on radiology, she actually helped me apply for the program, and just went above and beyond what I was expecting from the Career Center.”

And of course, experience is often the best resource. If you’re having a hard time assessing your interests, it might be that you haven’t been exposed to enough different things yet to know what you like and don’t like. The more you experience, the easier time you’ll have making a good career choice, plus you’ll be gaining skills, experiences, and contacts that will contribute to your employability. Get a job – something different than what you’ve done before, get involved in student clubs or organizations, volunteer, take Service-Learning classes, and take classes in subjects you’ve never studied before.

(Activity slide 8)

(Audio) Start thinking about your interests now by answering one of the questions we just discussed: If you were going to voluntarily read a non-fiction book on any topic you wanted to learn about, what would the book be about?

(Abilities video clip 7)

*Becca Dickinson, Career Counselor, Boise State Career Center:* “Our skills are those factors that we are good at, or those activities that we are good at. It’s our strengths. It’s what we identify as the things that provide us with the most satisfaction and the things we’re proud of, but it’s also factors that other people say ‘Wow, that was really great. I wish I could do that too.’ Some of those skills might be in organization, or communication, or interpersonal skills. You might be really great at researching, or delegating tasks, or public speaking. These are just a few of the factors in deciding on what is a satisfying career choice.”

While your education will help you develop skills, when deciding on career path, you really want to consider your NATURAL ABILITIES in choosing a fitting career. Choosing something that comes more naturally to you will not only help you succeed in school and in your career, but also make your work more enjoyable. Here are some questions to ask yourself to gather clues about your abilities.

1. *What classes have come the easiest to you, and/or in what classes have you outperformed your classmates?* Again, consider the classes you’ve taken, but this time, think specifically about what subjects have come the easiest to you. Also consider how you have performed in classes compared to your classmates. (Even if a class was difficult, if you
were more successful in it than your classmates, that might be an area you have natural ability in.) Consider the classes you’ve done poorly in as well, which can tell you about what to avoid in a career.

2. What have family and friends said you are good at?
What have other people told you you’re good at? What things do your friends and family point out to you? Sometimes the people who know you well are better at noticing what you’re good at than you are, because to you, your natural abilities just feel, well, normal!

3. What do other people ask you for help with?
What are you the “go to” person for? When people ask you for help, what do they usually want help with? This can give you some really good clues about what you’re good at.

4. What parts of jobs you’ve had have come easily to you?

5. What parts of extracurricular activities have come easily to you?
Consider your jobs, volunteering, or extracurricular activities again, but this time, think about what in each of those experiences came easily to you. Sometimes you don’t know you’re good at something until you were in a situation where you had to do it!

6. What are your greatest accomplishments, and what skills did you use to achieve those things?
What have you accomplished in your life? Consider HOW you accomplished those things. What skills did you need to use to accomplish them? This can give you clues not only about what skills you have, but what abilities give you great satisfaction.

7. What skill do you feel the most proud of having?
Abilities are more than just things you are able to do... they are a core part of how you see yourself, and the identity you develop. What’s the ability that most defines who you are? Another way of looking at this question is “What’s the one thing you’d want to be known for?” This is likely to be something you’ll want to incorporate in some way into a career.

Resources – Assessing Your Abilities

A career counselor at the Career Center can help you identify your abilities and which you want to incorporate into a career. The career assessment, Sigi, can help you explore how your abilities related to careers, and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator can help you identify the natural strengths you likely have as the result of your personality type. Again, getting involved in new experiences will help you learn about what you excel at and what you want to avoid.

(Activity slide 9)

(Audio) Start thinking about your abilities now by answering one of the questions we just discussed: What have family and friends said you are good at?

Work Values (video clip 8)

Becca Dickinson, Career Counselor, Boise State Career Center: “Your values are your core beliefs and ideals that are important to you. You’ll most likely feel comfortable in a work environment and thrive in a work environment that is compatible with your values. Some of those values might be independence, stability, contribution to society and helping others, integrity, work-life balance, flexibility and variety. It’s important to identify those values that are important to YOU.”

Here are some questions you might ask yourself to assess what your work values are:

1. In previous jobs, what has given you satisfaction?
2. What has given you satisfaction in extracurricular activities you’ve participated in?
You’ve probably figured out by now that any jobs you’ve had, activities you’ve been involved in, or volunteering that you’ve done can give you clues about your ideal career, but this time, think about what things gave you the most SATISFACTION in each of those experiences. This could be anything about the experience, not just what you did. For example, maybe you played a sport and what gave you the most satisfaction was being part of a team working towards a common goal. Or maybe you had a job in food service and while you didn’t necessarily like serving food, you got satisfaction from being able to meet and talk to new people every day.

3. In previous jobs, extracurricular activities, or volunteer experiences, what did you especially dislike?
The things you have learned that you dislike will also tell you what kinds of things are important to you in a future career. For example, if you had a job doing something you like that SHOULD have been a great job but you were miserable because of a specific aspect of the job, such as not being allowed to make any of your own decisions, that would tell you that having autonomy in your work is a critical value for you.

4. What motivates you most to pursue a career – what do you want to get out of it?
Consider what motivates you to pursue a career. This will tell you a lot about what’s important to you. Are you driven by the desire for a particular kind of lifestyle? The desire to help people or your community? The desire for excitement and adventure? The desire to do something you love? You can identify both a primary motivation and secondary motivators. These are probably going to be some of your top work values you’ll want to look for in a career.

5. Thinking about your greatest accomplishments, what about accomplishing those things made them satisfying to you?
Think about your accomplishments again. What about each of those accomplishments makes you so proud of it? This can tell you a lot about the things that are most important and satisfying to you.

Resources – Assessing your Work Values
A career counselor can help you determine not only what’s important to you in a future career, but how to prioritize those values as well. The career assessment, Sigi, will have you complete an activity that will then tell you how important different values are to you in a career. Of course, getting involved in new experiences is important for determining your values as well. The more work-type experiences you have, the more you’ll learn about what really makes or breaks your job satisfaction.

(Activity slide 10)

(Audio) Start thinking about your work values now by answering part of one of the questions we just discussed: What has given you satisfaction in previous jobs you’ve had?

Personality (video clip 9)
While your personality is certainly not a totally separate thing from your interests, abilities, and values (in fact, your interests, abilities, and values are part of your personality), we can also use personality types as a way of matching you with careers. For example, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is an assessment that identifies things you’re likely to enjoy, be good at, and care about based on your personality type.

Another personality type theory, the one that is most commonly used by career assessments, is Holland’s Theory of Career Choice. It says that there are six core personality types, but that everyone is a combination of parts of several of these. You can use these personality types, which are usually assigned by answering questions about your interests, to match yourself to careers that would appeal to someone with your interests. The US Department of Labor website, O*NET, provides personality codes for every type of career, so once you know your Holland personality type, you’ll be able to find out what careers what fit you. The career assessment, Sigi, offered through the Boise State Career Center
will also assess your Holland personality type and use it to match you with potential careers. If you’d like to learn more about these personality types, check out the next module, Personality and Career Choice.

(Activity slide 11)

(Audio) If you completed Module 1, the Career Planning Process overview, this will look familiar. Hover over the name of each of the six core Holland personality types on the hexagon to read a very brief summary of each type. Then, guess what you think your personality type might be choosing the three types that sound the most like you. If you’ve guessed your type before, do you still agree with what you chose the last time after thinking about the questions presented earlier in this module?

Using Self-Knowledge to Establish Criteria for Your Ideal Career (video clip 10)

Remember, identifying your interests, abilities, and values is only the first part of Step 1 of the Career Planning Process, which is “who are you” AND “what do you want in a career?” Once you’ve assessed yourself, it’s time to take all that information, figure out what applies to your future career and what doesn’t, what’s more important and less important, and turn it into criteria for your ideal career. Having clearly identified criteria is important because it will let you evaluate how well each potential career option will meet your needs and wants, and therefore choose the career that suits you best. When students try to make a career decision without having established these criteria, they often get stuck and have a hard time choosing, or they end up choosing a career that didn’t make sense for them!

There are many ways you can go about turning the results of your self-assessment into criteria for your ideal career, but here is an easy way you might want to try. First, compile your self-assessment results. Make three lists, one for interests, one for abilities, and one for values. List everything you came up with for each one of those from the questions we discussed in this module, from the results of a career assessment, or that you worked on identifying with your career counselor.

The next step will involve thinking about the interests you want to be able to use in a career, the abilities you want to be able to use in a career, and the characteristics of a job you want based on your values. Create 3 columns on a sheet of paper to reorganize those items into. The first column will be titled “Essential” – this is where you will put the things that you think you will NEED TO have in a career in order to be happy with it. The next column will be titled “Wish List” – this is where you will put the things that you’d like to have in a career, but that you’d be willing or able to give up if you needed to in order to get something more important. The third column will be titled “Not Important” – this is where you will put the things that you don’t wish to incorporate into a career, such as something you know is strictly a hobby interest, or an ability you have but don’t enjoy using, as well as the things that simply aren’t important to you to look for in a career. The “Essential” and “Wish List” columns will become your criteria and allow you to evaluate potential career options.

(Activity slide 12)

(Audio) To get an idea of how you would do this, let’s do a quick practice. Type in three things you know you enjoy, three things you know you are good at, and 3 characteristics of a job you think you’ll want in your future career.

(Activity slide 13)

(Audio) Now, think about each of these items you entered and decide whether each is something you MUST have or make use of in a career in order to be happy with it, something you’d like to have or make use of but don’t absolutely have to, or something that isn’t important to you to in a career. Move each item to the appropriate column.
What’s Next? (video clip 11)

Once you’ve assessed yourself and established your criteria for an ideal career, you’re ready to move on to Step 2 of the Career Planning Process, known as “What career options are available?” This is the step in which you’ll actually decide upon a career. You’ll discover what career options exist by using your interests, abilities, and values to generate lists of potential career options. You’ll then use the criteria you established to evaluate each potential option and determine which one is the best fit. If you used the method you just learned about and divided your criteria up into “Essential” and “Wish List” items, you’ll evaluate each career by finding out if it will include each of your essential items, narrowing your options to only those that do, and then adding up how many of your wish list items each of the remaining careers will include.

Completing the module on Step 2 of the Career Planning Process, Identifying and Researching Career Options, you’ll learn more about the process of identifying and evaluating career options in order to make a good career choice! You can also find out more about Step 2 and the web resources available for identifying and researching careers by viewing the Career Planning Process handout on the Career Center website, on the Career Planning page under the Students section of the website.

Closing (video clip 12)

Julia Walsh, Boise State student: “I know as young students – as freshmen/sophomores, it can be really, really intimidating if you don’t know what you want to do with your life, so what I would say is don’t be afraid to use the Career Center. They are there to help you and they are so friendly and so nice, and they’ll get you started. Be proactive, about it. Go seek out different careers. Research them. Job shadow. Do interviews with different departments and just see what would be a good fit for you.”

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!