

STEPS TO YOUR PERSONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT



You will have to do homework every step of the way

The first step to developing your career interests and subsequent pathway is to conduct a **self-assessment**.

- Do I know myself? What motivates me? What do I like about work or school? What do I not like about work or school? What have been my major accomplishments? What would others say about me and my work ethic or academic background? What are my strengths and weaknesses?
- What are my interests, my abilities, my values and how do these relate to my work interests?
- Have I taken a Career Assessment or Inventory to help guide my decisions?

The next step in developing your career plan is to **examine your assessment results** and speak with a career counselor.

- What broad career categories am I best suited to? Why? Are any of these of interest? Which ones surprise you? Which ones did you expect to show up?

- Examine career pathways in your fields by investigating various jobs within your cluster. What careers exist in your cluster? Explore your options and generate a list of options that seem to suit your interests, values, and skills.
- Have you reviewed labor market information to see where jobs are projected to be? Will employment be in demand in your areas of interest or do you need to look at other options?

The third step is **to focus on your preliminary career plan** by analyzing various factors that will affect your career pathway such as:

- How much time do I plan to attend school or training? Will I work while in school or will I be a full time student?
- When are programs offered and where are they available?
- What are deadlines and application requirements?
- Am I interested in day, evening, or online programs?
- What is the cost of training and can I afford it? What are my financial options for aid including scholarships, special grants, federal financial aid, loans, family assistance, etc?
- What are my short term goals? What are my long term goals? Think 3-5 years from now.
- Will my education/training provide me with entry level skills and enable me to be competitive?
- Will my training lead to a sound career ladder? Where can I go with this training and education? Am I able to move around within my cluster or am I limited to only one job?

The fourth step is **to look at specific career fields** for which you have identified an interest and available training that appears to meet your short term goals and for which you are able to commit to the length of training, cost, and related factors. Now you want to investigate which of these fields meet your requirements for work conditions, values, schedule, family plans, financial goals, and similar factors.

- Analyze each career field to determine specific jobs that meet your interests, abilities, and values specifically which ones meet your expectations in terms of work conditions, hours, knowledge required, salary, benefits, challenges, and opportunities for advancement?
- Investigate job projections for your top choices by looking at labor market conditions, rates of pay, and job creation statistics-how do your choices measure up?
- Investigate existing employment options with different employers. What do they require and will your training provide you with the minimum requirements?
- How much risk are you willing to take in choosing a pathway?
- What is your next career step if you choose a particular path over another? Will you need additional training and what time frame are you going to have to commit to?
- Examine all of your options and discuss your options with your family, friends, colleagues, and your career counselor

- Make an appointment to meet with an academic counselor who can talk to you about specific training programs and requirements to help narrow your choices or expand your options as necessary

The final step in creating a career development plan is to **create an Action plan and timeline**. Up until this step, you have been doing your 'homework' so to speak. Much of your time should have been invested in doing research and talking with supportive people who help you look at your options from a variety of perspectives. By this point, your interest should be piqued in one or more possibilities so that you are ready to finalize your initial plan. This does not mean that your plans are set in stone or that you cannot change your mind! Until you start your schooling to train for a career, whether it is at a 2 year college or 4 year university, you may still be somewhat undecided and this is normal. Typically a student takes several courses and decides which ones are of interest before deciding to pursue a line of training and work. It is recommended that you conquer your fears about training or being undecided by exploring courses that interest you as you embark on your journey to discovering your career pathway.

- Create a working timeline for your desired entry into a program
- Will you want to start in the fall or the spring or even in summer? Examine deadlines for applying to specific schools and academic programs. Some programs have waiting lists and you should know when to apply and what courses are expected at the time of application. Consult with your academic counselor for specific deadlines when creating your timeline
- Order your transcripts for all previous schools and have them sent to your training institution according to admissions requirements.
- Set goals for reaching each stage of the admissions/application process to the school/s you have chosen
- Plan to take any entrance tests that are required and allow time to prepare for them
- Identify your short term career goals and where you want to be in 5 years
- Organize your financial aid documents
- Keep a portfolio of your documents for your records
- Meet with a counselor to determine your course outline
- Identify any hurdles or barriers that could pose a problem for your completion and discuss your options with your family, counselors, and others who can help you formulate a plan for overcoming those obstacles (fear of certain courses, passing tests, paying for school, returning to school after being out a long time, having deficiencies, etc.) Having a plan B is always a good thing so you are prepared if things do not work out like you originally planned!

It is important to evaluate your progress in reaching your short term goals while keeping the 'bigger' picture plainly in sight. Successful people are those who never stop learning. While you may be focused on just getting through school at this point in your life and career, you should always be thinking ahead of ways to learn and grow both personally and professionally. Especially in today's economy, students must seek opportunities to engage in service learning opportunities, part-time employment, volunteer work, professional organizations and networking opportunities during their training experience in order

to be fully competitive in the job market of the 21st century. Extracurricular involvement is often underestimated by students. Not only are opportunities to develop employable skills available while in school, but opportunities for developing professional and personal relationships for networking in a highly competitive job market are as well. Take full advantage and keep a written record of your contributions for when you are finished with your training you will need to create a resume and a portfolio of your personal and professional attributes to help land you a great job to start your career pathway.

Personal career development should be a process over time and should include input from a variety of sources.

Consult with a career counselor or academic counselor for guidance or assistance in the planning process. For additional help, contact Career Services at 910-938-6761 or by email at careerservices@coastalcarolina.edu.