

Getting Started: Finding Career Decision Making Resources

Are you unsure about what you want to do with the rest of your life? Where do you even begin? By breaking the process down into small manageable pieces, the task can be less overwhelming and more productive.

Basically, the career development process has three components:

- 1. Understanding yourself.** Through your courses, activities, work experiences, and personal relationships you define values and become aware of your skills, interests, preferences and strengths. This self-awareness can then be translated into career terms, so that you can have insight into what you can and choose to do with your life.
- 2. Expanding your knowledge about the world of work.** The occupational choices available today are enormous, and there are any number of career fields that you might find appealing. Exploring

careers and job functions, then determining the degree of fit with your interests, abilities, and values is the task of this stage.

- 3. Learning how to obtain employment.** This is actually the component many students think of first! Knowing how to write a resume, develop a job search strategy, and interview well are critical in your quest for a job.

Your effectiveness as a job seeker is directly related to how well you understand yourself and the world of work. The more effort you can put into self-assessment and research, the better prepared you'll be for the job hunt.

Resources

The Career Resource Library
The library is set up to assist you with the three basic phases of the career development process: self-awareness, career exploration, and obtaining employment. Self-awareness tools include books shelved

under the light-blue "Career/Life Planning" sign.

For learning about career possibilities, we maintain an extensive collection of books, pamphlets, and periodicals. These career exploration resources are divided into nine categories: General career descriptions, Arts, Business (including travel and sports), Communications, Education, Health/Medicine, Law/Government, Public/Social Service, and Science/Technology (including Environmental Careers). The books in each category are color coded, and pamphlets and periodicals are kept in boxes in the appropriate sections.

We also have color-coded sections of directories, graduate & professional school information, job search resources, and geographic information (domestic and international).

Alumnae/i Advisors
Another method of learning about careers is talking with alumnae/i. Our Career Advisory Program (CAP)

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database provides job notes and educational data for nearly 8000 Vassar alumnae/i who can provide career assistance to students and graduates.

On-line Resources

Help online can be found through our web site (<http://careers.vassar.edu>). The "Spotlight on Careers" link is particularly useful for exploring a variety of career areas. We also have links to a number of other great informational sites.

Employment Resources

An extensive collection of employment links is available through our web page (<http://careers.vassar.edu>). Additionally, an extensive list of jobs and internships geared toward liberal arts students is maintained in E-recruiting.com. You may access these databases in the Career Library or elsewhere on campus. In the library, one entire bookcase is devoted to actual job and internship postings. File cabinets and directories in the library house additional information on employing organizations, including applications for some employers, although many applications are now done online.

Career interns are available during posted hours to help you in the library.

Counselors

A career counselor can help you to clarify your goals, assess

your interests, values, and skills, help you figure out what career areas might be good places for you to explore, help you develop a job search plan and answer technical questions you may have about the job search process, and help you find the resources you need. They are also good people to talk to if you are feeling overwhelmed or frustrated, and often can help you come up with some strategies to make the process more manageable. To meet with a counselor, just schedule an appointment in the office.

Timeline: What to do when

There is no strict schedule, because everyone's individual needs are different. However, the earlier you begin focusing energy on career questions, the more comfortable you will be looking forward to life after Vassar.

The following four year plan is a loose guide which may give you ideas on when to begin certain career activities.

Freshman Year

- Attend the Career Kickoff in the fall to learn about CDO services
- Participate in the Previews Program over winter break
- Learn how to locate summer jobs and internships by attending an E-recruiting Orientation and visiting the office.

Sophomore Year

- Attend alumnae/i career programs both on and off campus
- Meet with your Faculty Advisor and a CDO staff member to discuss the relationship between your major and possible careers
- Participate in field work for experience beyond the classroom
- Consider the College Venture program for work during a summer or semester away
- Ask to take a pencil-and-paper interest inventory or personality style indicator (More about these in *Career Brief 2: What Do You Want to Do?*)

Junior Year

- Request references from professors and summer employers

Junior Year, cont.

- Explore post graduate possibilities in the U.S. and abroad
- Use the Career Advisory Program (CAP) database to contact alumnae/i for informational interviews
- Look for internships and apply early for summer positions
- Discuss post--graduate options with faculty and CDO staff

Senior Year

- Take graduate and professional school entrance exams

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- Attend a senior recruiting meeting and other special workshops for seniors
- Develop a job search strategy appropriate to your career interests
- Hone skills such as cover letter writing and interviewing
- Attend an E-recruiting Orientation; use this and other resources to search for job postings
- Learn about SLAC and other recruiting events
- Use CareerSearch, Vault and similar tools to investigate companies or organizations of interest
- Participate in employer info sessions and recruiting events
- Set up a reference file

After Vassar

- Come in for individual consultations
- Use reference letter mailing service
- Complete follow-up surveys
- Volunteer as a CAP advisor