



Planning Your Four Years

Vassar College has an array of opportunities to support you in achieving a well-rounded education. The following suggestions are designed to assist you in maximizing your college experience to insure career satisfaction.

Below you will find a brief overview of the suggested timeline for your Vassar College experience.

First Year: Transition, Exploration and Discovery

- Get involved in campus activities and organizations
- Familiarize yourself with the resources of the various offices and departments on campus
- Set up contact with the Career Development Office
- Begin to identify your interests, skills, and values
- Begin/update your resume
- Plan for the summer

Second Year: Academic Decisions, Hands-On Exploration, and Involvement

- Continue to explore the wealth of information the many offices and departments on campus offer
- Declare your major
- Consider Study Away options
- Network with family, friends, and colleagues
- Plan for internships, jobs, and other opportunities
- Become a leader – step up in the organizations and clubs you are a part of

Third Year: Research, Experience, and Strategizing

- Pursue an internship in your field of interest
- Consider graduate school and the related testing
- Solidify relationships with faculty, supervisors, and others who have influenced you
- Attend workshops and presentations that might further your goals
- Seek out employers who are attractive to you and scout opportunities
- Request references from professors and employers

Senior Year: Planning, Graduating, and Transitioning

- Keep exploring your options
- Learn about SLAC and other recruiting events
- Continue to attend workshops (some are senior specific!) and other development opportunities
- Prepare and take tests for graduate work (i.e., GRE, LSAT, MCAT)
- Polish your resume – assure that it is up-to-date and accurate
- Never stop networking

The pages that follow explain each year in more detail and can be useful as you move through the timeline.

First Year: Transition, Exploration, and Discovery

Get involved in campus activities and organizations

Join clubs and organizations to explore your interests, meet great people, and develop skills that can help you with the job/internship search.

Familiarize yourself with the resources of the various offices/departments on campus

Browse information and resources provided by every office on campus (i.e., Athletics, Campus Activities, Campus Life: ALANA Center, LGBTQ Center, Women's Center, Religious and Spiritual Life, Student Employment, Vassar Student Association (VSA))

Set up contact with the Career Development Office

Make an appointment with a career counselor in the CDO to understand the services, browse the CDO library, and discuss your interests.

Identify your interests, skills, and values, as they are all important in life and in your career

The CDO offers a comprehensive assessment to help you with this, FOCUS2. Speak with professors, advisors, family, and other students about your interests and ideas; this is the perfect time to get feedback of others' experiences in your proposed field of interest. This can also be helpful in deciding on a major!

Begin your resume

The CDO offers resume and cover letter assistance. Draft a resume early so you'll be ready when it's needed!

Plan for the summer

Make the most of your summer by planning ahead. Review the Summer Experiences Pamphlet and think about your goals. Do you need a break, or do you look forward to returning to the job you had in previous years? What about enhancing your resume with a great internship experience? The CDO can help!

Second Year: Academic Decisions, Hands-On Exploration and Involvement

Explore the resources that many of the offices have to offer

Vassar College offices have a wealth of information and invaluable resources to help you gain a more in-depth understanding of your interests and ideas. Review campus happenings on the calendar so that you can attend workshops, lectures and events of interest.

Declare your major

While daunting, your choice should be based on research you've done within the field you are declaring. Speak with students (and alumnae/i) in the majors you are considering. Talk with your advisor and other faculty about your specific interests and ideas.

Consider study away opportunities

Early in your second year, it is important to consider whether you wish to study abroad or domestically at another institution in your third year. The Office of International Programs holds informational sessions to inform students about available opportunities.

Network with family, friends, and colleagues

This step is important throughout your entire time at Vassar, as well as for the rest of your life to enhance yourself academically and professionally. Use resources such as the Alumnae/i Directory, networking workshops, and even family and friends to get started.

Plan for internships, jobs, and other experiential opportunities

During your second year it is also important to start considering your options – both immediately and in the long-term. Consider the idea of fieldwork, an internship, a campus job or even job shadowing; this can help you really see how your career ideas might pan out into day-to-day activities.

Thinking about graduate, law, or medical school?

Generate a list of possible institutions, gather contact information, and check application criteria to ensure you are well prepared when the time comes.

Become a leader – step up in organizations

Take a step forward in the clubs, organizations, and teams you are a part of to really challenge yourself and show your hard work and commitment to your cause.

Third Year: Research, Experience and Strategize

Pursue an internship in your field of interest

If you have not done so already, your third year is a great time to pursue an internship in your field of interest. If you have already, try to continue building your resume in this way. Watch for early deadlines!

Consider graduate school and the related tests

If you plan to attend graduate school immediately upon graduation, this is the time to begin test-preparation. With standardized testing like the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), or the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), it is important to begin planning and practicing to ensure you score well. Carefully research your list of programs; if you plan to spend the next part of your academic life at the graduate level, you have to make sure the institution fits your needs. Talk to a counselor in the CDO or visit the Office for Fellowships and Pre-Health Advising.

Solidify relationships with faculty, supervisors, and others that have influenced your experiences

It's a great time to really forge strong academic and professional relationships. By working with people in your field of interest or closely related to it, you can better your chances of having a solid recommendation when the time comes. Other supervisors, colleagues, and advisors can be important to support your endeavors based on characteristics they have seen across the spectrum – not just in a particular area. Make sure you build your contact base, strengthen your contacts, and stay in touch with those people about your future.

Attend workshops and presentations that might further your goals

Make sure to attend campus workshops presented by many of the clubs and organizations that can enhance your developing skill set (financial management, career planning, job talks, networking events), which can help prepare you for pre- and post-graduation.

Seek out employers that are attractive to you and scout positions

If you plan to seek employment directly after graduation, start compiling a list of potential employers of interest to you. If you are unsure as to where to begin your search just ask. Faculty, staff, friends, family, and colleagues might have interesting places to look. Also, the resources that are available through the various offices on campus can be invaluable.

Request references from professors and summer employers

You will most likely be asked to provide three to five references for summer and post-graduate employment, as well as for graduate and professional school. Ask early and get those letters to the CDO in a credential file – your professors and supervisors will thank you!

Senior Year: Planning, Graduating, and Transitioning

Keep exploring your options

Your final year at Vassar College is one that is to be celebrated! At this point, the concern becomes “What will I do after Vassar?” Keep in mind that you are not alone. During your final year, continue to explore your options. If you have a path chosen, make sure to explore the variety of different ways to approach it.

Learn about SLAC and other recruiting events

The CDO is a member of the Selective Liberal Arts Consortium that plan recruiting days online and in various cities throughout the U.S. Along with this, the CDO brings many employers on campus throughout the year to interview students and graduating seniors for internships and full-time jobs.

Never stop networking

While you might have some prospects lined up after graduation, it is still important to keep your name out there: keep talking to people you know about what you are looking for and your experiences. And see whom those people can connect you with.

Continue to attend workshops (some are senior specific!) and other development opportunities

Attend workshops, career panels, and visit the CDO to hone your job search and interviewing skills. Mock interviews can be a great preparation for the tough questions employers ask. Also, alumnae/i career panels can help you assure yourself of your chosen path.

Prepare and take tests for graduate work (i.e., GRE, LSAT, MCAT)

The first semester of your last year at Vassar may entail taking graduate school exams, writing personal statements and filing applications. Make sure you have a clear plan, scheduled test dates, and are prepared!

Polish your resume by making sure it is up-to-date and accurate

Make sure all of your past experiences, education, skills, etc., are up-to-date, accurate, and fully reflective of what you can offer to each place of interest.

Keep up the hard work to continue your successes

Work as hard-as-ever to maintain your hard-earned successes throughout your Vassar College experience. Continue to do internships and other work to gain useful skills and experience in your field of interest.