A Parent's Guide to Career Development

One of the most valuable things that parents can do to help a student with career planning is to listen, be open to ideas, help your student locate information, and be nonjudgmental.

Here are ways you can help:

1. **Understand that major or career uncertainty is common.** Many times students believe that they are the only ones who are unsure about their major. In reality, they are not alone. More than half of students change their major before they graduate.

2. **Encourage self-exploration.** Even if your student has already selected a major, encourage this process to confirm the decision. Career decision-making begins by learning more about your interests, personality, values, and skills. The Academic and Career Planning Center has a free, online assessments available through their Kuder Journey system. Support your child's exploration of new areas of study and interests. After all, this is what education is all about!

3. **Refute career planning misconceptions.** Many students put undue pressure on themselves because they think that there is one "right" or "perfect" career and that when they find it they will be 100% certain of their decision. In reality, there are several different majors and careers that they would find fulfilling because each would express different gifts and interests. People are far too complex to have all their needs met in a single occupation or major. Any decision involves competing choices, each of which has its own advantages and disadvantages. There is rarely 100% certainty. Plus, with all the movement in today's workplace, they are by no means committed to a single career choice for the rest of their life.

4. **Share your own career development history.** Discuss the reasons you decided to enter your own line of work. Explain to your son or daughter what you do for a living. Talk openly and honestly about your own job, including both its advantages and disadvantages.

5. **Understand the value of a liberal education.** Employers value a liberal education because students obtain broad knowledge, transferrable skills, and a strong sense of ethics—all of which relate to any field. Your son or daughter will probably change careers later in life. The labor market also changes. Consequently, the current emphasis at the undergraduate level is on the development of general skills that employers want and that graduates will need to adjust to a rapidly changing complex world.

6. **Locate occupational information.** Federal resources include the Occupational Outlook Handbook www.bls.gov/oco/ and O*Net http://online.onetcenter.org/find/. Students can learn about the career areas of each major through their myU portal. Encourage them to review the university's catalog to identify the course requirements of a potential major. Ask if these courses match the assessment of their interests, abilities, and motivation.

7. **Emphasize the importance of experience.** The Academic and Career Planning Center will not "place" your child in a job at graduation. Colleges grant degrees, but not job guarantees, so having relevant experience in this competitive job market is critical. Experience is valuable because it helps students gain exposure to their career field, allowing them to confirm their decision. They also gain valuable experience that strengthens their candidacy in future job searches or graduate school applications. Encourage internships, summer employment, a part-time job, or volunteer work that is related to their field. Students should also participate in co-curricular activities such as student organizations, study abroad, research, and service-learning to acquire the skills that employers value.

8. **Advise your student to develop their resume.** Writing a resume can be a "reality test" and can help a student identify weak areas that require improvement. Your student can obtain information and samples of resumes from the Academic and Career Planning Center, and should have an Advisor in the Center professionally critique their resume.

9. **Teach the value of networking.** Introduce your student to people who have careers/jobs that are of interest. Suggest your son or daughter contact people in your personal and professional networks for information.Encourage your student to "shadow" someone in the workplace**.** This allows them to project themselves into the work environment, learn more about their field, and ultimately confirm or disconfirm their decision. At a minimum they should conduct an "informational interview" to learn more about the field. The Academic and Career Planning Center can assist students with this process.

10. **Allow your student to make the decision.** It is okay to make suggestions about majors and career fields, but students themselves should be the ultimate judge of their advantages and disadvantages. Career development can be stressful, especially if this is the first big decision they have to make. Be patient, sympathetic and understanding, even if you do not agree with their decision.

11. **Encourage your student to utilize the Academic and Career Planning Center on a regular basis.** Career decision-making is a process, not a one-time event. The Academic and Career Planning Center is here to help. Students should plan to use our services starting as freshmen. Competition for good jobs is stiff, and the Center's staff can advise students on the experience they should be seeking to become a strong candidate for their field of interest. We are located in the Academic Commons, one the first floor of the I.D. Weeks Library. The Center can assist students with:

- Self-exploration
- Establishing career goals
- Internship/job search process
- Resume/cover letter development
- Career fairs
- On-campus interviews
- Graduate or professional school application process
- Individual career counseling

12. **Help the Academic and Career Planning Center.** Call the Academic and Career Planning Center when your business has summer, part-time, or full-time opening. The staff will help you find a hard-working student or recent graduate. If your company hires interns, have the internship listed on the Center's job database. Volunteer to mentor a college student and use your "real world" experience to advise students of their career options.

Best of luck to you as you navigate the challenging waters of parenting a college student!

The University of South Dakota

ACADEMIC & CAREER
PLANNING CENTER

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