

You and Work/Career: Who are You?

It's likely that you'll spend a good portion of your life doing some kind of professional work, so obviously you want to choose a career you'll enjoy. Also, you know you will need enough income to pay your rent/mortgage, bills, etc. and this realization can be pretty stressful, especially if graduation seems a long way away and you're not sure about your direction and qualifications. Sometimes it can be hard to see how you're going to get from where you're standing now to a post-college job that's secure and satisfying, but remember that *you have control over the way you choose to see this challenge*. Instead of thinking of it as one giant step, try to think of it as a series of smaller steps that take you where you want to go. Take a deep breath, and take action:

- If you have a job now, whether part-time or full-time, think about what you like about it and the kinds of skills you're learning. If you've had other jobs, do the same for them. It wouldn't hurt to keep a little notebook to jot down these kinds of observations as you become aware of them. It will get you in the habit of thinking about what you're doing, seeing how your experiences connect, and what you might want to say during a job interview.
- Keep an up-to-date resume. Add to it as you perform new tasks and are given more responsibilities.
- When you meet people on the job or outside of work who are in a profession that looks really exciting, talk with them about it, ask questions (what do they actually *do* and what do they like or dislike about it?), get a sense of whether it would be a possible career for you and what kinds of qualifications you would need to pursue it.
- There are many ways to research careers, and starting with the [Center for Career and Professional Development](#) as early as possible is an excellent idea. They even have a [Four Year Career Development Plan](#) that lets you know what you can be doing for career prep from freshman year to senior year. Get on their listserve so you can receive notification of workshops and panels, job fairs, on-campus interviews, etc. Their counselors are happy to talk with you and their website has a LOT of helpful resources, including internship information, resume guidance, and cover letter essentials.

- **If you're interested in a certain career, get some experience in that field. Otherwise it's just an idea you have that isn't based on anything *real*. If you think you want a certain career, find out what it actually involves, then ask yourself if you're still excited about it. Sometimes putting yourself in a particular work environment will confirm your interest; it can also make you realize you're definitely *not* interested. Either way, it's time well spent!**
- **Remember that taking action—talking with advisors/counselors, taking the time to think about the connection between your academic work and the rest of your life, actively working to polish your skills, researching potential career directions and job possibilities-- will give you a clear idea of what's out there, what appeals to you, and what strategies will be the most productive for you. It will also build your confidence and polish all the ways in which you present yourself, whether in person or on job applications. Intelligent people who take initiative and adequately prepare themselves are much more likely to find employment, whatever their field of interest may be.**