

Choosing a Career

Career development revolves around the world of work and its relationship to an individual's life. It can be both challenging and exciting. Think of your career as something that evolves over your lifetime and includes paid and unpaid work, education and training, as well as various personal and professional activities. Career planning usually involves three main steps: doing a self-assessment, exploring career options and taking steps into the world of work.

1. Do a self-assessment

Most often, choosing a career starts with an assessment of yourself: Most of us hope to find work that exercises our abilities, stimulates our interests, suits our personalities, and reflects our values. It helps to be very realistic when evaluating your values, skills and personality. Career testing can provide objective data. You can obtain career testing and counseling by making an appointment with a Career Counselor in the Manor College Counseling Department.

Identify your values to determine what is important to you.

- Your values shape your attitudes about yourself, other people, situations, and life.
- Your values reflect your beliefs and preferences.
- In relation to work, values are what give purpose and meaning to the job.
- Values determine job rewards that are important to you such as:
 - status and respect
 - salary
 - personal achievement
 - helping others
 - travel or the excitement of variety
 - creating something
 - job security
 - distance - commute time (this is time away from your "living" time!)

Identify your skills and talents (Think about your skills with things, information, and people)

- Identify your interests
- What activities do you most enjoy and why do you find them interesting?
- On what do you now spend most of your time?
- Are there any interests you would like to develop?

Examine your personality

- What are your dreams? (Dreams are a springboard for many of our goals.)
- What are your unique traits, key strengths, and personal work and communication styles?
- Are you patient, orderly, outgoing, careful, creative, shy, energetic, systematic, sensitive, persistent and/or adaptable? Do you like to work by yourself or with others?
- Personality may dictate your ideal work environment. Set priorities. Ask yourself:
- If creativity is important to you, is it a place where you can be creative?
- Can you work under pressure?
- Do you want to make decisions, set your own schedule and deadlines?
- Do you like varied tasks? Do you want to go to the same place everyday or travel between different locations?
- Would you like to work with the public? As part of a team or more on your own?
- Would you rather work indoors or outside? Amidst "hustle and bustle" or quiet?

2. Investigate Career Options

Once you have completed your self-assessment, the next stage is to gather information on what kinds of careers are a good fit for you. Specific skills are often useful in more than one job. Don't limit your search. Learn as much as possible about the kinds of careers that are available.

- Consider what you can do with your major.
- Consider careers which seek graduates with any major.
- Use people as a resource (Talk to professors, co-workers, career counselors, relatives, people presently in the field, and even previous employers)
- Use publications, professional journals and literature on specific careers.
- There are numerous resources available on-line such as the Dictionary of Occupational Titles and the Occupational Outlook Handbook. Also check out www.CollegeCentral.com, and the various job web-sites listed on the Manor webpage "Career Exploration and Counseling"
- Experiment. There is no substitute for experience, the more the better. Volunteer, take a part-time job, job-shadow, or do an internship in the field in which you have interest and see for yourself if it's really all you thought it would be.

3. Take Action

Find out about which employers offer the types of jobs you are seeking. Sources of vacancies can include:

- Job fairs
- Newspaper and magazine ads
- Job search web-sites (many can be found on the Career Exploration and Counseling webpage)
- Company websites, including Federal and state agencies
- Word-of-mouth (networking) - tell everyone you know, including relatives, neighbors and your parents' friends and coworkers that you are job hunting and the kinds of job in which you are interested.

Once you have some prospects, you will need to move decisively.

- Send out your resume with a focused cover letter (specific to the job you are applying for). Your resume and cover letter should be proofread and polished. The Manor College Career Exploration and Counseling webpage has resume-writing suggestions that might be useful. You can also email a request to review your resume, or come in to the Counseling Office for help.
- Be prepared to respond to a telephone screening interview.
- If you get an interview, be sure to dress appropriately for a business setting and be well-prepared for the questions you may be asked. Read over the tips on the Manor College Career webpage. The Counseling Center can also help prepare you for interviews.
- Follow up all interviews with a hand-written thank-you letter. It is best to send one the same day as your interview.