Four-Year Career Planning Checklist
Adapted from the Monster Career Advice Article, “Try This 4-Year Career Checklist”
by MonsterTRAK Career Coach Peter Vogt

Being a successful student and preparing for a future career takes some planning and requires making some decisions. This can be very stressful, especially if you leave everything until the last minute - the last minute being the point at which you’re required to declare a major or hit the big one - getting a job!

Here are some questions that you need to answer to make good decisions when choosing a major and a career:

What makes me tick? What major will fit me best? How will I find a good career?
And how can I keep from going crazy trying to sort through this maze of career-related questions?

As a college student, you may feel confused and overwhelmed by all of the career decisions you must make. Fortunately, there's a strategy you can use to make the whole process a little easier on your nerves, and your brain: Pursue tangible career goals each year you're in school.

The following checklist will help you make better sense of the career development process and give you a reasonably easy way to move through it.

Freshman Year: Know Thyself (Self-Exploration)

You have enough to worry about during your first year of school without trying to choose your life's work on top of it all. So just start from the beginning: Get to know yourself first.

What does that mean? In essence, it means learning what you enjoy doing (your interests); what you're good at doing (your skills); what's important to you in a future career (your work values); and what makes you the person you are (your personality).

Here are some of the supportive ways you can get help on campus with your exploration:

_____ Visit one-on-one with a career counselor at Career Services in the Coors Life Directions Center.
_____ Spend some time exploring the resource library in Career Services.
_____ Explore the Career Services web site (www.regis.edu/careerservices).
_____ Take the PC 220 career planning course, Career Options and Your Future.
_____ Ask other people in your life (e.g., family and friends) to help you identify your pertinent career-related traits.
_____ Sign up for academic courses that interest you, get involved in one or more student organizations or clubs, or start reading about various majors and careers -- all so you can explore potential new interests and learn new skills.

Summer

Secure an internship, summer employment, or a volunteer position to gain valuable experience.

Sophomore Year: Explore What's Out There (Career Exploration)

Once you reach your sophomore year, you can start investigating major and career possibilities. How?

_____ Visit one-on-one with a career counselor at the Career Services office.
_____ Register in CareerLink (www.regis.edu/careerservices) to access internship and job information.
You can also complete assessments of your interests, values, and abilities using the Sigi3 link in CareerLink.

Read the academic bulletin and learn about Regis majors by talking to faculty in programs that sound interesting. Talk to people who are working in careers that intrigue you. How did they prepare -- both academically and experientially -- for their jobs? What advice do they have for you?

Take courses that interests you.

Work with a campus career counselor to develop a basic job-search resume.

Gain practical experience and exposure to career fields through volunteer work or part-time, summer or full-time jobs on or off campus.

Remember: You will need to choose a major by the end of the second semester of your sophomore year. If you’re uncertain about your choice, enroll in the PC 220 class, Career Options and Your Future.

**Junior Year: Time to Get Experience**

As you move through your junior year, focus primarily on gaining experience in your fields of interest.

Meet with a campus career counselor to discuss your career plans and options.

Consider doing an internship - employers prefer more than one (contact the Academic Internship Program office in the Coors Life Directions Center).

Identify two to three careers that fit your interests, skills, values, and goals. If you’re unsure about any of these, talk with a campus career counselor about completing some career assessments.

If you haven’t already done so, register in CareerLink (www.regis.edu/careerservices).

Continue employment or volunteer work to gain experience directly related to your career choice.

Gather specific information about potential employers and careers.

Work with a career counselor to focus your resume to specific internships.

Learn how to conduct an informational interview.

Schedule a mock interview with a career counselor to prepare for internship interviews.

Explore a professional association connected to your chosen career field and join a student chapter, if available.

Attend our career fairs, employer panels, and other events posted in CareerLink.

If you’re considering graduate school, visit with a campus career counselor for assistance with researching graduate programs and schools.

Pick up information booklets for graduate school admissions tests (GRE, MCAT, GMAT, LSAT, etc.) at Career Services.

Develop alternate career options in case your initial major/career choice doesn't work out.

**Senior Year: Search and Transition - Time to Get a Job!**

You’ll spend most of your senior year focusing on your job hunt and the upcoming transition to the world after graduation. What to do?

Continue getting experience related to your career choices through an internship, volunteer program, or employment.

Practice interviewing with a campus career counselor to become comfortable answering and asking employment-related questions.

Put the finishing touches on your resume and cover letters and have them critiqued.

Use the Career Services web site, CareerLink, and your network to find job openings.

Research companies and organizations you'll be interviewing with, prepare thoroughly for those interviews, and land yourself a job!

Checklist or not, you're bound to feel overwhelmed during the process. But try to keep things in perspective. You may have to modify the checklist to suit your unique needs. However, remember that it can be a useful tool to help you successfully identify, prepare for, and pursue the career of your dreams.

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