

# A Parent's Guide to Career Development

The most valuable things parents can do to help a student with career planning are:

- Listen
- Be open to ideas
- Help your student find information

Here are ten more things you can do to help:

**1. Encourage your student to visit the career center early and often throughout their college career and follow the “4 Year Career Development Plan”.**

When your son or daughter is feeling anxious about his/her future, ask if they have you visited the Academic and Career Advising Center (ACAC) for some career assistance? We offer a full range of career development and job-search help, including:

- Workshops on resumes, interviewing, job search techniques...
- Informational Interviews and mock interviews
- Online resources including Candid Career videos, BigInterview, Handshake, What Can I do With This Major?...
- Individual career advising appointments

**2. Remind your student to complete their Handshake profile at <https://uwsp.joinhandshake.com/> and update it each semester.**

Handshake is our jobs platform at UWSP which allows current students and alumni to network and connect with employers across the country to find summer jobs, internships and fulltime career positions.

Handshake will only work if students complete their student profile and update it throughout their college career. Handshake is also available for FREE to UWSP alumni to use as a valuable job search tool.

3. **Advise your student to write a resume.** Writing a resume can be a "reality test" and can help a student identify weak areas that require improvement. Suggest that your student attend a resume writing workshop, write a draft resume and meet with a career specialist. You can review resume drafts for grammar, spelling, and content, but recommend that the final product be critiqued by a Career Specialist or Academic Adviser in the ACAC.
  
4. **Challenge your student to become "occupationally literate".** Ask: "Do you have any ideas about what you might want to do when you graduate?" If your student seems unsure, you can talk about personal qualities you see as talents and strengths. You can also recommend:
  - Talking to a faculty or staff member
  - Researching a variety of interesting majors, career fields and employers
  - Participate in an "Informational Interview" of professionals doing interesting work.
  - Visit the ACAC to take a "self-assessment inventory" to help define their skills, interests and abilities
  
5. **Emphasize the importance of in-field work experience.** The career 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. Your son or daughter can sample career options by completing internships and experimenting with summer employment opportunities or volunteer work. Unless they can obtain in-field experience in their hometown, students need to be encouraged to explore and seek out summer employment experiences

across the country and beyond. This will allow them to try out their career field before they graduate and expand their professional network. It also allows students to fill their resume with a rich and diverse employment background and show a potential employer that they are willing to relocate – geographic mobility is important to maximize employment options and promotional opportunities.

6. **Encourage extracurricular involvement.** Part of experiencing college life is to be involved and active outside the classroom. Going to class and going home is not enough anymore. Join a student organization (over 200 at UWSP), participate in undergraduate research (and present at a symposium), volunteer on campus and in the community. These things will prove to an employer that you are dedicated, hardworking and a leader—qualities valued by future employers! Remember – Quality vs. Quantity. Encourage involvement in one or two organizations deeply by growing into leadership roles verses joining multiple organizations and just attending meetings.
  
7. **Encourage your student to obtain marketable skills.** Employers are searching for students who not only have good grades or specific majors but have developed skills that prove they can be a great employee who can contribute to the overall success of the company or agency. Marketable skills include: Communication Skills (oral and written), Scientific Knowledge, Foreign Language Fluency, Leadership Ability, Teamwork, Computer Proficiency, and Quantative Skills,. These marketable and transferrable skills are developed through a combination of coursework, campus/community involvement, employment and research experience.

8. **Graduate/Professional School Considerations.** If your student is pursuing a career path that may require the completion of a graduate degree (MS, JD, PhD) or professional school (RN, PT. OT, MD, DDS...) do they fully understand the admission requirements (GPA, coursework, employment and research experience), locations of the schools, timing of the admissions process...? If not, please encourage them to seek out the expertise of their faculty or the Career Specialists in the ACAC.
  
9. **Support the Academic and Career Advising Center through your professional experiences.** Do you post jobs and hire college students or recent graduates? If you said YES, then join the Handshake network for employers at <https://uwsp.joinhandshake.com/> and post notices of internships, summer, part-time and career-level job openings at UWSP and at universities across the nation.
  
10. **Be Patient.** Recognize that most college students are apprehensive about making career decisions when faced with a multitude of choices. Encourage your student but let them assume responsibility for their own academic success and career direction.

*The first position upon graduation is a stepping-stone in the career path, not the destination.*

Resources and Articles:

- “A Parent’s Guide to Career Development”
- “A Career Planning Course for Parents”
- “What Parents of Prospective College Students Should Know”

Courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers