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HELPING YOUR STUDENT WITH THEIR CAREER PLANS

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U OF A CAREER CENTERS
Whether your student has just left for college, or has been at the University of Arkansas for a few semesters now, they may still be undecided in a major, let alone a career path. While some of you may find this situation cause to be alarmed, don’t worry—this is not unusual.

Choosing a career is a process students need to go through—and they go through the stages of this process at different rates of speed. The steps include:

1. Assessing skills, interests, and abilities
2. Exploring majors and career options
3. Experimenting with possible career options
4. Organizing and conducting a job or graduate school search

The UA Career Development Center (CDC) is available to assist your student through this process. They provide many vital services that help students make major/career based decisions without the normal stress that comes with planning for the future. CDC Services provided include: individual and group career counseling, online resources through http://career.uark.edu, and career events in which your student gets the opportunity to network with employers, graduate schools, and other students who have similar interests as they do.

Your student might also consider joining the Professional Development Institute through the UA Career Development Center, which will connect them with a career coach and walk them through the entire career development process as well.

Another huge resource for students is you, the parent. You have helped them all throughout their lives, so why stop now?

The question is, what can—or should—you do as a parent to help your student throughout this pressure filled time?

Keep reading, and we’ll help you figure it out!
Career 101: 
FOR PARENTS OF 1ST YEAR STUDENTS

During their first year or so of college, students will be involved both formally and informally in the process of assessing their skills, interests, and abilities. They will do this through finding success (or failure) in courses they take, involvement in on and off campus activities, discussions with their friends and faculty, and by being exposed to and trying out different ideas and experiences.

Most students enter college with a very limited knowledge of the vast array of courses and majors available to them or even how those courses can eventually translate into a career. This is an exciting time for students as they learn, explore and grow.

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

1. Support your student’s exploration of new areas of study and interests. This, after all, is what education is all about. Encourage them to take the CDC’s Focus 2 Career Assessment. This assessment is offered free of charge and gives valuable insight into their chosen career path or leads them in the correct direction by categorizing and explaining job fields that best fit their individualized needs and skills.

2. Affirm what you know to be areas of skill and ability he or she has consistently demonstrated. Sometimes students may overlook these and need to be reminded of the things they’re good at.

3. Talk with your son or daughter about the courses and activities they’re enjoying as each semester progresses. Students discover new things about themselves throughout the college experience and your willingness to listen and process things they’re dealing with will keep you in the loop.

4. If your student is excited about majoring in something like English, history, or art, remain calm and try not to worry. These can be excellent choices, particularly if they are a good match for a their interests and skills. Help your student research the kinds of occupations that they can do with a degree of this kind. For instance, an English degree is a great starting place for someone interested in Law School.

5. Support your son or daughter’s involvement in campus activities but urge them to balance their time between involvement and achievement in the classroom. Different skills are developed in different environments and situations, so both involvement and academic achievement should be cultivated.

6. Urge your student to use on campus resources available to them, including one of the three Career Centers at the U of A.
Generally, during the second year of college, a student begins to explore majors and career options more seriously. As your student begins to make plans for their future, whether it’s picking a major or deciding on a concentration, your support is critical. Encourage and support them throughout this process and remember that sometimes a listening ear is exactly what they need to succeed.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO...**

1. **Allow your student time to make a decision concerning their major or possible career choice.** If you sense that their indecision is a barrier to positive progress, urge them to look for assistance from the Career Development Center. Students often have difficulty making a “final” choice because they fear they may make a wrong choice, miss a better opportunity or disappoint someone.

2. **Suggest that your son or daughter talk with professors, academic advisors and career advisors about potential majors and career paths.** Faculty and staff members often have good advice and insight into the fields in which they work.

3. **Encourage your student to conduct some “informational interviewing” with friends, family and colleagues in areas that they are interested in.** Asking questions about day to day activities, job benefits and requirements and work loads can provide a better understanding of the job and ultimately help your student evaluate their interest.

4. **Steer your student toward a source of information.** The Career Development Center has a variety of events throughout the year which provide opportunities for students to network with alumni and individuals employed in various career fields. These people are willing to share information with students about their careers. These resources are invaluable both in this exploratory stage and later as students who are seeking internships and jobs.
Career 301:
FOR PARENTS OF “MID-CAREER” STUDENTS

Now that your student has likely picked a major, it’s time that they begin experimenting with possible career options. If your student is looking at going into the field of medicine, have they put thought into what their concentration will be? If they’re considering graduate school, have they decided what program they want to enroll in? They can do this in a variety of ways: internships, cooperative education programs, summer jobs, campus jobs, and volunteer opportunities both on campus and in the local community. This will also help them cultivate and build upon their resume, as well as hone skills like networking and interviewing that are key in the job search process.

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

1. Encourage your student to use the resources available at the Career Development Center. Experts there can assist them in preparing a good resume and finding opportunities to test their potential career choices. The Career Development Center’s staff is in direct contact with employers, so they know how to help your student stand out on interviews and in networking situations.

2. Remind your student of the importance of gaining knowledge and exposure in his or her field of career interest. Broadening experiences through involvement outside the classroom is a valuable use of time. They can take advantage of involvement opportunities by reaching out to areas like the Office of Student Activities, the Center for Community Engagement, and New Student & Family Programs to see what leadership positions are available.

3. Talk to your student about financial expectations as they begin looking for internship opportunities and summer jobs. Sometimes experiences like this may not be paid positions or it’s possible that their pay may not be enough to support their cost of living needs. Also, encourage your student to pay attention to the location of the jobs and internships they are applying for. That could have financial implications as well.

4. Encourage your student to take action in planning their internship or summer job search. Don’t do it for them. It’s a great help to provide networking contacts or names of people who may be helpful; however, making the contact and speaking for your student deprives him or her of an important learning experience—and may make a poor impression on the future employer. Encourage your student to use Razorback CareerLink to find these kinds of opportunities, as well.
Career 401: For Parents of Seniors

The senior year is when organizing and conducting a job search or graduate school search begins in earnest. It is also a time when students are heavily involved in more advanced courses and often have more responsibility in the organizations they are involved with. Balancing these important pursuits, navigating the ins and outs of a job/school search, and setting priorities are all common challenges for seniors. Factor in their upcoming graduation and your student may find themselves lacking motivation to finish their assignments, because of all the exciting things to come.

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

1. Suggest the use of the Career Development Center throughout their senior year. They can help your student stay focused on their job search and navigate this new territory. They also offer key services that will help them prepare. Offerings include:
   - Workshops and individual advising
   - Resume and cover letter writing
   - Mock interviews
   - Job negotiation
   - Job search resources
   - On-campus interviewing/networking opportunities
   - Career Fairs

2. If your student doesn’t have a job yet, try not to worry. Stress often is noticeable and could have a negative effect on them, as well as yourself. Use positive reinforcement if possible and try to remind them of the support that they have at home.

3. Assist your student by sending potential jobs of interest to them. Be careful not to get carried away. Remember to listen to your student and let them tell you if they need help. If they ask you to take a step back, be respectful of their wishes and try to remain supportive.

4. Avoid calling potential employers or graduate school admission offices to intervene on your student’s behalf. Contact with potential employers and schools is the candidate’s responsibility. If you contact your student’s potential employers and/or schools of interest, you could adversely impact their search.

5. Be prepared to support your student through the ups and downs of the job and graduate school search. It can be a bumpy road—not every desired job or graduate school acceptance will come through. Your student will need reassurance that for every door that closes, another opens.
The college years are a time of exploration, experimentation, and learning on many levels for students and their parents! Some student challenges may seem more positive than others, but all contribute to the educational outcomes of the college experience.

Throughout these years, students are developing a "record of achievement" that will be evaluated by employers and graduate schools as they move beyond college. There are several pieces of this record:

**ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

The grade point average (GPA) is one factor considered by competitive employers and graduate schools. It is one of the few tangible indications of a student’s ability to learn and perform effectively, at least in the academic environment. Therefore, students need to do as well as possible in the classroom, especially in courses in their majors.

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

In today’s competitive employment market, many employers seek students who have related internship, cooperative education, summer or part-time job, or volunteer experiences. In fact, employers often look to their own such programs as primary sources for their new hires. These experiences are particularly critical for liberal arts students whose majors may not appear to be directly related to their areas of career interest.

**INVOLVEMENT OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM**

Extracurricular activities provide the opportunity for students to gain many valuable and career-related skills, such as the ability to work effectively with others in a team environment; leadership; planning and organizational skills; and priority-setting and time management. These are part of the package of skills employers seek in their new hires.
## Upcoming Career Events:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 14</td>
<td>UA Career Fair for All Majors/Veterans</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 25 &amp; 26</td>
<td>STEM Fair Resume Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 26</td>
<td>Business Career Fair</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 27</td>
<td>STEM Career Fair</td>
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## CDC Services

- Mock Interviews
- Resume Critiques
- Professional Development Institute
- “What Can I Do With This Major?”
- Career Classes for credit
- Career Advising
- Online Videos and Tips
- Assessments
- Career Fairs
- Job Postings

For more information, visit [career.uark.edu](https://career.uark.edu) or call (479) 575-2805.

Find CDC on Facebook and Twitter!

- [Career Development Center](https://www.facebook.com/UARK_CDC)
- [@UARK_CDC](https://twitter.com/UARK_CDC)