



Guide to Choosing a Major or Career Path

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Additional activities and resources are available upon request

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Introduction

The process of making a decision about what to major in and what career pathway you want to follow is naturally a very big deal in the lives of most individuals. However, for most of us it has not been an easy or straight line. Research shows that 80% of college freshman will change their majors several times before they graduate with a degree. The average person entering the workforce for the first time will likely go through at least 10 occupational changes during their work life due to changes in the world of work and changes in personal situations. Thus, learning about the process, about yourself and possible majors/occupations can help you reach the best choice.

It is important to understand as much as we can about ourselves: our decision making style, interests, personality preferences, abilities and skills. In order to find training and occupations that will be rewarding and engaging for us we need to also research occupations and educational components of our choices.

The following packet is an attempt to provide you with an independent, self-paced process of choosing a major and planning a career path. The SVC Career Center (in the Gary Knutzen Campus Center Building) is a great place to get help and to get started with the process. This packet may serve you as well. For a private career counseling appointment, please call 360-416-7743 or 7630.

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Education and Career Decision Making

You walk into the grocery store looking for chocolate. What do you find? A variety to choose from. You have tried each kind at least a dozen times. Do you want the one with the least calories or the most sugar? Which one would your mother recommend? Your friend walks up to you and asks, “Have you made a decision yet? I’m ready to go!”

So many factors can influence a person’s decision-making style. While some people will choose to evaluate their interests, abilities, skills, and values and then begin planning a career, other people may choose to follow the advice of family, friends, or other important persons in choosing a major. Still others may choose to *not* choose, making a decision as they go along. Once a student enters college, he or she may begin to gain experiences in various areas through coursework, volunteering, part-time jobs, and internships. Professors and advisors may become additional influences on a student’s decision. The pressure builds....

By identifying the factors influencing your ability or inability to make a decision, as well as your natural decision-making style, you will be better able to focus on your development as a future employee. “What does an employer look for in an employee?” “How can you gain experience and complete meaningful coursework?”

TYPES OF DECISION MAKING

Which of the following types best describes the way you are approaching your choice?

- ❖ **Impulsive** – Do you tend to put little thought or examination into your decision? Do you choose the first option without considering alternatives?
- ❖ **Fatalistic** – Do you allow your environment or situation determine your decision? Do you leave decisions up to fate?
- ❖ **Compliant** – Do you allow someone else to decide? Do you follow someone else’s idea of the best alternative for your future?
- ❖ **Delaying** – Do you tend to declare a moratorium, postponing all thought and action, until you decide to implement your decision?
- ❖ **Agonizing** – Do you get lost in the factual information and get overwhelmed with analyzing alternatives?
- ❖ **Intuitive** – Do you make a choice based on a “gut” feeling about the best alternative?
- ❖ **Paralysis** – Do you accept a need to choose but cannot seem to approach your decision?
- ❖ **Planning** – Do you weight the facts and choose the result that will be the most satisfying? Do you embark on a rational process, balancing cognitive and emotional needs?

As you embark on your decision-making process, you should be aware of what type of decision-maker you are to aid in narrowing your search. As you read through the list of decision-makers, remember that a decision-making strategy is not good or bad, right or wrong, in itself. You may utilize different strategies for different situations, in different times, and with different people, during your life.

MY DECISION LOG

We recommend that you keep track of what you do and what you want to do in your search for career or major decidedness. Use this as a starting point and refer back. You may want to use pencil or make copies to make changes as you progress toward your decision!

LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF

Your last action: _____

Date: _____

Who you met with: _____

Outcome: _____

Your last action: _____

Date: _____

Who you met with: _____

Outcome: _____

What will be your next action? Indicate what you anticipate doing in the next quarter.

Action: _____

Action: _____

RESEARCH OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

Your last action: _____

Date: _____

Who you met with: _____

Outcome: _____

Your last action: _____

Date: _____

Who you met with: _____

Outcome: _____

What will be your next action? Indicate what you anticipate doing in the next quarter.

Action: _____

Action: _____

INVESTIGATE ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAMS

Your last action: _____

Date: _____

Who you met with: _____

Outcome: _____

Your last action: _____

Date: _____

Who you met with: _____

Outcome: _____

What will be your next action? Indicate what you anticipate doing in the next quarter.

Action: _____

Action: _____

GAIN EXPERIENCE

Your last action: _____

Date: _____

Who you met with: _____

Outcome: _____

Your last action: _____

Date: _____

Who you met with: _____

Outcome: _____

What will be your next action? Indicate what you anticipate doing in the next quarter.

Action: _____

Action: _____

Major Choosing & Career Planning

Many students assume that, when choosing a major, they are choosing a career for the rest of their life. While this is true for some, it is certainly not universal. In fact, most people have not only many jobs, but also many occupations, over the course of their working lives. As mentioned before, many people embark on careers that are now directly related to their major. For example, this author studied drama as an undergraduate, but is now preparing for a career as a career counselor, after having worked in higher education for a number of years!

DEFINING TERMS

Before moving further, it is important to distinguish between similar terms, like *occupations*, *careers*, and *jobs*, or *degrees* and *majors*. Often, we use these terms interchangeably, but in reality they are quite different from one another.

Occupation: You can think of an occupation as a set of task that employees are paid to perform, such as a librarian or a news editor. Employees that perform essentially the same tasks are in the same occupation.

Job: A job is a specific set of duties with a particular employer that an employee performs, such as the business librarian for Ellis Library. The concept of a job is much more narrow than an occupation.

Career: A career can comprise both jobs and occupations. Careers are essentially a series of work-related activities that we perform over the course of our lives. Peoples' careers today are typically comprised of many jobs, and even multiple occupations.

Degree: May be liberal arts (B.A. or B.S.) or professional (B.S.E.E., B.S.B.A., B.S.W.) in focus. Liberal arts degrees are typically more broad, preparing you for a wide array of careers. Professional degrees are more narrow in focus, as they are preparing you to enter a specific career upon graduation. All degrees have some component of general education coursework, as well as more specific coursework that is focused on the major area of study. Professional degrees typically have less general education courses.

Major: A primary area of study within a degree (B.A. in English or B.S. in Biology).

Dual Degree: Two separate degrees, usually from different academic divisions or colleges (B.A. English and B.S. J. in Broadcast).

Double Major: Two majors with the same degree within the same division (B.A. English and B.A. In Theater – both are in the College of Arts & Science).

Minor: A secondary area of study that may be a compliment to a major are (B.A. in English and Minor in Political Science). Not all departments offer minors. Requires a minimum of 15 credits (some more).

Choosing a major means choosing an academic program of study for the next one to four years.

Also, there are many different potential combinations of majors, minors, and degrees that present additional options, marketability, and education. In the end, though, there are a finite number of majors to choose from. You are advised to meet regularly with your advisor to decide what options/combination is best for you.

Even after selecting a major, you may not be sure about what occupation you would like to pursue. You might not even be sure if that is the “right” major for you. That’s okay! When selecting a major, think about your interests, what you would enjoy studying until graduation, and what would give you the employment options you would like to have after graduation. Use the first two years of your college experience to help you decide what you want to get out of your major and your career. **All majors** provide the opportunity to learn the transferable skills that employers are looking for, such as analysis, communication, team work, and time management.

Planning a career is an ongoing process for which there is no real deadline. Most likely, these decisions will be somewhat tentative, as you may change your path once you begin working. You can increase your chances of choosing a career that’s the best fit for you by “testing the waters” before graduation. By gaining targeted experience through part-time jobs, volunteering, or internships during college, you can experience first-hand what a career and its working environment is like. If you know that you are interested in pursuing a profession that requires specific preparation or additional graduate education, such as law, dentistry, or physical therapy, choosing a major will likely be closely linked to choosing a career. However, if you are one of the many students who is pursuing a liberal arts education, choosing a major is a small part of planning your career because you will have many career options. In fact, unlike the finite number of majors available, there are almost an infinite number of job opportunities.

Education and Career Exploration Activities

Making choices about your major or career path will come easier to some than others and will be easier at certain points of your life than others. When you are having difficulty moving forward with your decision, try spending some time and effort on the following activities. These activities are separated into four major categories of ways you can best spend your time in this process: learn about yourself, investigate Skagit Valley College academic degree programs, research occupational information, and gain experience.

LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF

Chances are, you are looking for a career path or major that will capture your interests; utilize your strengths, abilities and skills; and match with your values. It makes sense, then, that to do so, you have to have a good idea about your interests, strengths, abilities, skills and values. Below are some activities that will help you learn more about yourself.

Talk with someone. Many people who surround you can be great resources for you, including but not limited to your family, friends, faculty members, academic advisors, and professionals in fields you are drawn to. At the SVC Career Center, you can talk with a Career Specialist at any time we are open without an appointment or with Pam Church, a Career Counselor, by appointment. Talking with someone at the Career Center can also help you further explore any of the following activities.

Take a self-assessment. MBTI, Strong, WOIS Assessments –(WOIS’s *Interest Profiler* is a good one). Also free is the Career Interests Game at <http://career.missouri.edu>, though it isn’t as well researched. Take a look at the other activities in this packet as well.

ACTIVITY : Career Lifeline. Sometimes, in order to look forward, we need to first look back. The following exercise is designed to help you do just that. On a separate page, draw a line like the one below that represents your “Career Lifeline.” Think of the line as your life, extending from birth until the end of your life-career. Place an “X” on where you are right now in your life. To the left of the “X,” list all of the factors and influences that have shaped your career decisions up until this point: activities, events, experiences, influential people... no matter how big or how small. Then, to the right of the “X,” list all of the things you would like to have happen, or that you think are likely to happen, in your life-career. After you are done, reflect on the experience. What factors were most influential; how? Who has helped you in the past and how? What does the future look like?



ACTIVITY: “Imagining your Ideal Job” (When you are alone in a quiet place for 20-30 minutes, close your eyes. Relax. Imagine in your mind your ideal job by thinking of the following:

- Where are you working? (Imagine the details of the workplace.)
- What do you do on your job?

- What are other workers around you doing?
- What are you responsible for?
- What skills are you using?
- What is your day like? Your week? Your month and year?
- How much money do you earn?

Explore your interests: Naturally, you'll want to choose a field that interests and excites you.

However, even though it seems like it should be easy enough to come up with things that you like to do, it can actually be kind of overwhelming to list them out. Try to think about the kinds of things you enjoy doing and talking about on a day-to-day basis. Do you love being outdoors? Are you the most passionate about politics among your friends? Do the *Interest Profiler* (free) or *Strong Interest and Skills Inventory* (\$16 through the Career Center).

Use these questions to start brainstorming:

- What organizations are you involved in? What role do you play in each one?
- What sort of classes do you enjoy taking? In which subjects do the reading or assignments seem enlightening and worthwhile rather than time-consuming?
- Which subjects have you continued exploring beyond the requirements of a class?
- What do you start conversations about?
- What kind of books do you read for pleasure?
- What TV stations, movies, internet sites, hobbies or pastimes do you enjoy?
- What do you like to do in your spare time?
- What subjects come to mind when you daydream?
- What job would you do for free?

Interests, like skills, can easily be expanded by introducing yourself to new subjects, activities and people. Luckily, college is an ideal environment for doing all three. You won't like everything you try, but with the right attitude you'll hopefully like having tried it.

Explore your strengths, abilities, and skills. You will also want to choose a field that you will be good at, whether it is due to naturally occurring abilities or skills you've learned.

Many skills, like communication and computer skills, are developed through day-to-day activities and can be transferred to other activities. Think about the ways in which the skills that you already have can be used more generally. (Transferable Skills).

Also think about new skills you can develop that are related to the ones you already have. Skills can always be improved or acquired if you discover something new that you're interested in. Before you give up on the career of your dreams because you feel like you don't have the skills, put in the time and effort to improve them! The time you spend preparing is short compared to the years you'll spend in a challenging, rewarding career.

Ask yourself these questions to get started:

- Are there any subjects in school that you've always breezed through?
- What do your friends come to you for help with? Math? Papers? Science? Personal problems?
- What do you contribute in group work? Creative brainstorming? Organizational skills? Leadership?
- In which areas are you comfortable and confident competing?
- What do you like best about yourself? What do your friends like the best about you? What do you or your friends see as your limitations?

PERSONAL REVIEW OF SKILLS

A. SKILLS OF THE HEART	Enjoy and willing to continue using	Do well based on prior experience
COMMUNICATING		
Talking to individuals		
Talking to groups		
Writing correspondence		
Writing business materials		
Writing creatively		
TEACHING/TRAINING		
Designing educational/training materials		
Motivating people		
Leading groups		
Creating an effective learning environment		
Demonstrating ideas through example and illustration		
Evaluating program effectiveness		
MANAGING/SUPERVISING		
Setting goals and objectives		
Organizing people		
Engendering trust		
Building a team		
Designing a project		
Delegating authority		
INFLUENCING/PERSUADING		
Negotiating		
Managing conflict		
Compromising		
Collaborating		
Competing		
Bargaining		

COUNSELING/CONSULTING		
Caring for others		
Giving feedback		
Mentoring		
Inspiring others		
Solving people problems		
Giving advice		
B. SKILLS OF THE HEAD	Enjoy and willing to continue using	Do well based on prior experience
PROBLEM SOLVING/DECISION MAKING		
Clarifying problems		
Evaluation alternatives		
Generating solutions		
Assessing feasibility		
Testing ideas		
Determining Outcomes		
ORGANIZING		
Designing systems		
Classifying information		
Coordinating resources		
Monitoring progress		
Synthesizing ideas		
Streamlining procedures		
PLANNING		
Setting policies		
Developing alternatives		
Choosing direction		
Outlining procedures		
Researching alternatives		
Assessing and adjusting priorities		
CREATING		
Imagining/visualize concepts		
Creating new ideas		
Creating new images		
Inventing new products		
Using intuition		
Conceiving new interpretations		
COMPUTING		
Accounting		
Keeping records		
Managing budgets		

Interpreting data		
Word processing		
Monitoring inventory flow		
C. SKILLS OF THE HANDS	Enjoy and willing to continue using	Do well based on prior experience
MECHANICAL		
Operating equipment		
Repairing equipment		
Assembling equipment		
Monitoring equipment performance		
Maintaining equipment		
ATHLETIC		
Building and maintaining endurance		
Using eye-hand coordination		
Excelling in a sport		
Demonstrating agility		
Demonstrating physical strength		
PHYSICAL		
Maintain good health		
Maintaining physical fitness		
Demonstrating fine motor coordination		
Using tools		
Doing precision work		
Assembling structures		
TECHNICAL		
Reading blueprints		
Managing energy systems		
Navigating direction		
Analyzing potential dysfunction		
Understanding specifications		
Regulating controls		
NATURAL		
Tending animals		
Tending plants		
Monitoring environmental conditions		
Testing natural resources		
Monitoring growth		
Resolving organic problems		
Manipulating the physical world		

continued

ACTIVITY:

Now, from the fifteen areas, identify your five strongest skills. Do this by reviewing the categories and considering the ones with the most checks first (this would include the skills you both use well and enjoy using).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Explore your Values. As you think about your future career, take your work-related values into consideration. Many new workers only consider the job title and job description when looking for a job. However, your values play a crucial role in your career satisfaction. See the list below for some example. **Try ranking your top 5-10 to the left side.**

Advancement	Moving up, making more money, having increased responsibility
Benefits	Health, medical, dental, retirement, vacation, paid sick leave, maternity leave
Challenge	Using your creativity, training, intelligence and other talents
Choice of Environment	Having the choice of indoor/outdoor, smoke free, organized geographic mobility
Compatible Co-worker	Having good friends at work, working with people who have similar interests
Competition	Striving for success, doing your best, competing with others
Contribution to Society	Being a useful member of the groups with which you identify, knowing you have accomplished things that will benefit others, making a lasting contribution
Creativity	Expressing yourself, achieving fulfillment from creating something yourself
Diversity	Having different tasks, using a variety of skills, working with a diverse group of people
Easy Commute	Driving a short distance to work
Excitement	Having fun at work, enjoying what you do, having a stimulating environment
Family Life	Having time to devote to personal relationships, having time with your family
Flexible Hours	Being able to work at your convenience
High Earnings	Significantly improving your financial position, obtaining those things money can buy
Independence	Having freedom to "do your own thing," either on or off the job, having time flexibility, controlling your own actions, having autonomy

	Moral Fulfillment	Maintaining your moral, ethical, and/or religious standards without conflict
	Leisure Time	Enjoying the company of others, making new friends, having time for hobbies
	Leadership	Being in charge, having responsibility, leading others in a group
	On the Job Training	Receiving training while at work to improve your skills, going to conferences
	Power and Influence	Having the ability to influence or control others
	Prestige and Status	Getting approval or attention from those whose opinions you respect, achieving status in line with your talents and achievements
	Rewards	Having job satisfaction, receiving verbal praise, trips, new cars, raises, certificates
	Security	Feeling safe, free of continual concern about dangers or unexpected and/or unpleasant changes, having the essentials you need, steady income.
	Travel	Going places, seeing the world, enjoying cultural experiences
	Variety	Having many different job tasks, facing challenges rather than routines

Work and Lifestyles Values

WORK VALUES

WORK TASKS	Very Important	Quite Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Produce a product I can see at the end of the day				
Work on a project that requires long-term effort				
Complete tasks by the end of the day				
Perform different tasks every day				
Perform similar tasks routinely				
Engage in adventuresome/risky tasks				
Work with hands or hand tools				
Work with numbers				
Help people who have needs				
Influence the opinions or decisions of others				
Engage in physical tasks				
Engage in intellectually stimulating tasks				
Engage in creative tasks				
Engage in research				
WORK SETTING				
Indoors, in my own office				
Indoors, in a large office with many colleagues				
Indoors, other than an office				
Outdoors				
Combination of indoors and outdoors				

Work in an urban/suburban setting				
Work in a rural setting				
Home-based work setting				
WORK HOURS				
Regular shift of 8 hours per day with no overtime or work to take home				
Irregular length day, sometimes working overtime or taking work home				
PRESSURE				
Little or no pressure				
Fast-paced environment				
Competitive environment				
Pressure due to responsibility for physical /emotional well-being of others				
TRAVEL				
Little or no travel required				
Significant local travel is required				
Significant long-distance travel is required				
INTERPERSONAL ASPECTS				
Work independently with no supervision (own boss)				
Work independently with some supervision				
Work with one or more colleagues as a team				
Plan work for and supervise others				
Be supervised by a supervisor/boss who I like				
Work with supportive co-workers				
Meet new people regularly				
Do not have to meet new people often				
PAY, BENEFITS, REWARDS				
Good benefits package				
Work for a high base salary				
Work on a commission basis				
Job security				
Starting salary upon graduation over \$35,000				
Opportunity to obtain large salary increases				
Receive immediate public attention for accomplishments				
Social prestige/respect /recognition				
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT				

Opportunity to advance within the same organization				
Opportunity to advance by changing organizations				
Opportunity to participate in professional organizations				
EDUCATION				
Degree(s) can be obtained at SVC				
No more than bachelors degree required				
Graduate study required				
LIFESTYLE VALUES*	Very Important	Quite Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
LIFESTYLE VALUES*				
Live in a rural setting				
Live close to work				
Be able to walk to work				
Own your own home				
Have a big house				
Live in a moderate climate				
Be active in your community				
Live in a suburban setting				
Live in an apartment				
Live close to cultural and entertainment opportunities				
Live in a city				
Travel frequently				
Live in a warm climate				
Live where children can walk to school				
Live where your spouse can have a good job				
Go out to eat often				
Live near relatives				
Live where the weather changes from season to season				
Live in a constant climate				
Have time to pursue your interests				
Have friends near by				
Have a garden				
Have a house and yard to work on				
Live near a college				
Have a second home				
Live near the water				
Live close to stores				
Live in a wooded setting				
Be involved with sports of your choice				
Participate in family-oriented activities				
Live where you don't have to spend time with neighbors				
Have time for yourself				

Spend time with your neighbors				
Work on projects around your house				
Do volunteer work				
Be active in church work				
Do things often with friends				
Go to movies, plays, and concerts often				
Do things alone or with your spouse				
Live in a stable neighborhood				
Spend time doing arts or crafts				
Go places on weekends				
Stay at home on weekends				
Be very involved in social activities				
* Adapted from Fred Hecklinger & Bernadette Curtin, <i>Training for Life</i> . pp 38-39.				

Select 5 to 10 work and lifestyle values that are essential and write them below:

Work Values (in priority order)	Lifestyles Values (in priority order)
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9
10	10

Compare your work values and lifestyle values to identify conflicts and compatibility. For example, do you want to earn a high salary but also have a lot of time for leisure pursuits? (Sometimes these can be at odds).

Are there values that are not listed above that should be included?

Questions to Ask Regarding Majors...

Majors I am interested in:

Contact university admissions advisors to learn about procedures and requirements.

Preliminary questions for admissions advisors...

What prerequisites are needed to declare?

Foundation courses:

GUR (Distribution) courses required for degree:

GPA requirements:

Other: (e.g. an application, written statement, résumé, work samples, etc.)

Are any concentrations or specializations available?

What degree options exist for this major? (BA, BS, BAEd, BFA, BMus)

Is a minor available, required, or recommended for this major?

Are there students within your program I may contact?

Declaring the major...

How do I declare?

When can I declare?

How are transfer credits calculated or evaluated?

What is your ratio of applicants per those accepted?

What do you look for in evaluating applicants to your program(s)?

Pursuing the major...

What would a plan of courses look like?

Who would be my advisor?

What do your students typically value and find important? (e.g. prestige, money, success, social justice, helping others, etc.)

Are internships possible? When?

What will complement this major for my career/job prospects?

Elective courses:

Minors:

Extracurricular activities:

Are there academic-based student clubs and what are their activities?

- **Applying majors to careers... *What can I do with this Major?***

<http://career.utk.edu/wcidwtm/wcidwtm.php> click on the majors of interest to you

What marketable/transferable skills will I develop while pursuing this major?

Where have graduates from your major obtained jobs?

What areas of graduate studies have been pursued?

RESEARCH OCCUPATIONAL & MAJOR INFORMATION

It is likely that you are only really familiar with a few occupations. Most people have some idea of what people do in occupations they have experienced some direct contact with, such as what your parents or siblings do or what teachers do, but we generally don't know much about other occupations. The representation of occupations we see in the movies or TV may or may not be very accurate. It can be devastating to find out, after pursuing one occupation throughout college, that it wasn't what you thought it was. Take the time to research an occupation now to see what it really is like!

Read print resources. There are many great print resources available that can tell you about the typical work environment, work tasks, salary, job outlook, training needed, and much more. The Career Information library in the Career Center is a great place to start, but also look at the Library, the public library, and local bookstores for more information. At the Career Center, look for books and other resources.

View internet resources. The internet offers great access to free information about occupations that is up-to-date. In addition to the sites listed below, do a simple research using your favorite search engine for information on occupations you are interested in. In addition, a Career Specialist at the Career Center can explain how to get access to:

- **What can I do with this Major?** <http://career.utk.edu/wcidwtm/wcidwtm.php>
- Washington Occupational Information System (WOIS) www.wois.org (**contact linda.broadgate@skagit.edu for the site key for off-campus use**)
- The Occupational Outlook Handbook Online. <http://www.bls.gov/oco>
- O*Net. <http://online.onetcenter.org>
- America's Career InfoNet. <http://www.acinet.org>
- The Career Center web site. www.skagit.edu/careerservices

Talk to human resources ("field research") A variety of people can help you find information about occupations. In addition to the staff at the Career Center, look for assistance from academic advisors, faculty members, librarians, and professionals in the field. More information follows about informational interviewing and job shadowing, two great ways to find out more information about an occupation.

Try informational Interviewing. By talking with individuals in the work force, you can gain a better idea of how your skills and experience fit into specific industries and career fields, find out first-hand what type of work environment different jobs offer, target your future job searches, market your skills more effectively to employers, and build your confidence in approaching others.

ACTIVITY: Do two to three Informational Interviews of people doing what you are considering for possible careers or interview instructors or advanced university students on possible majors. Get help from the Career Center staff or Career Counselor if you have trouble finding appropriate people to interview.

Guidelines for Informational Interviewing

1. The purpose of informational interviewing is to help you decide what you want to do and where you want to do it. It is not a way to get a job interview.
2. Talk to the everyday people who are doing the type of work that you might like to do. At some point you may be referred to “the person in charge,” but do not start at that level.
3. Be sure you have located and read what is available in print about a particular career field, company, organization or business before you begin interviewing others for information. Libraries, the Yellow pages, personnel directors, Chambers of Commerce, the Internet and occupational organizations and associations are sources that provide information.
4. Always ask for an appointment ahead of time. State specifically that you are interested in learning more about a particular job, career field, industry, and business. Ask for 20 minutes of the person’s time, and be sure to keep the meeting within that time frame. BE PREPARED WITH YOUR QUESTIONS WRITTEN OUT. It is okay to take notes during the interview.
5. If the person to whom you speak recommends someone else as a source of further information, always ask if you may refer to him or her when contacting the recommended individual.
6. Write down the information you received, the name of the person with whom you spoke, and date of your conversation for your records. Later, you can compare information received from different sources.
7. Send a thank-you note after the informational interview.

Possible Informational Interview Questions:

The questions you ask during an informational interview will depend upon what type of information is most important to you. Look back over your values while developing your questions. The following are possible questions to ask.

- Describe a typical day
- What do you like least about your job?
- What do you like most about your job?
- What types of changes are occurring in your field?
- How did you get into this type of work?
- What is your background?
- What type of training/education is needed for his/her job?
- What type of advancement opportunities does this company offer?
- How do salaries in this field compare with other fields?
- What suggestions do you have for anyone interested in obtaining this type of position?
- Who do you suggest I talk to for further information?

(See reflection questions below next section)

Try job shadowing. Many times, you can follow a professional around work for a few hours or a day by simply asking. There may be special circumstances with some professions where you will not be able to shadow a professional because of confidentiality issues, but most people like to share what they are working on with others interested in their field.

If you do ask to shadow someone, be sure to be specific about your intentions (to find out more information about the occupation, not to get a job with that organization), when you would like to shadow them, how long, and what you hope to gain. Be sure to get from the person you are shadowing specifics about when and where you are to meet them, what you should wear, if it is okay to take notes or pictures while you are there, and any other details that will be important for you to know.

Activity: Reflect on the information you gathered at the interview and consider issues such as the following to include in a final summary/analysis of your research.

1. What is your reaction to the number of hours and type of schedule (set/flexible) described?
2. What do you need to do to make a competitive candidate?
3. Do you think you would be satisfied with the situation your contact described?
4. Do you think you would be dissatisfied with the same thing(s) your contact described as dissatisfying?
5. What is your reaction to the conditions (stress/anxieties) of this occupation?
6. Have any changes taken place in your opinion of the occupation as a result of your interview?
7. What are the most important new facts and understandings that you have acquired?
8. What misconceptions did you correct?

GAIN EXPERIENCE

One of the best ways to explore majors and careers is to try them out. There are a variety of different ways to gain experience in a particular field, some of which are listed below.

Academic and Course Activities

Exploratory courses – Taking courses in a field to test it out. This is an unpaid, credit bearing experience that generally lasts one quarter. Talk with your academic advisor.

Service learning – Service-learning connects students with the community in partnerships that provide effective and far-reaching assistance to those in need, as well as create valuable learning environments. In service learning opportunities, there is a strategic effort to discuss and learn

from these experiences, particularly through course-related projects. This is an unpaid, credit-bearing experience that can start off as a part of a course but can extend long after the course ends if desired. Visit the Career Center.

Employment Activities

Part-time jobs and work-study jobs - Both are paid, non-credit bearing employment opportunities available to undergraduate students. They can be related to a student's career path, in which case they will be a much more beneficial experience as well as a source of income. Visit the Career Center's web site at www.skagit.edu/careerservices.

Internships and Cooperative Education – An internship is hands-on experience in your major or field working over a summer or quarter in a professional position. Cooperative education experiences (co-ops) are a unique plan of education that combines in-class experiences with supervised and planned work experiences. Class and work experiences can be at the same time or can alternate. Internships (LIA) and co-ops can be paid or unpaid, credit-bearing or not.

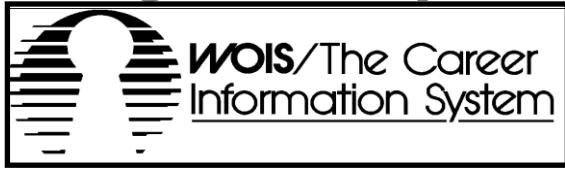
Volunteer Activities

Clubs & organizations - At Skagit Valley College, there are many opportunities to get involved in clubs and organizations. These are unpaid, non-credit bearing activities that can be very career related.

Volunteering and community service - There are many chances to volunteer in a community. There are unpaid, generally non-credit bearing activities. Check with Career Center for ideas.

Continued---

Washington Occupational Information System



WOIS/The Career Information System is a private, non-profit organization that researches and distributes information about Washington careers, schools and training programs.

WOIS provides:

ASSESSMENTS – Short exams that help you learn more about yourself and what kind of work might appeal to your strengths and interests.

Interest Profiler – Discover your interests and how they relate to the world of work. After completing the inventory, click on “careers” in your highest one to three areas. Click on the drop-down menu and find occupations listed for your two to three highest interest areas from the Profiler.

Career Interest Areas – Matches your personal interests with types of careers

Skills Assessment – Helps ID occupations that match your skills

Work Importance Locator – Learn work values and find out what’s important to you in a job

For **Personality Preferences**, Click “Other” and then, ***Jung Myers-Briggs Inventory***

OCCUPATIONS – Key information on over 500 up-to-date career descriptions, arranged in clusters and career paths, to help you learn the tasks, activities, skills and training required, wages you can earn.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS – Over 400 educational program descriptions

SCHOOLS – Over 280 postsecondary school descriptions

How to access WOIS: You can take advantage of WOIS software via any computer on any SVC campus. Or, you can access the features of WOIS from your own computer by entering a site key **On your home computer:** Go to www.wois.org; Enter Site Key: (contact linda.broadgate@skagit.edu or pam.church@skagit.edu for the site key.

OTHER USEFUL CAREER PLANNING SITES:

What can I do with this major? <http://career.utk.edu/wcidwtm/wcidwtm.php>

ONET www.online.onetcenter.org ; 1400 occupations; lots of info

Career One Stop <http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Bureau of Labor www.careervoyages.gov

Career E-Manual from U. of Waterloo <http://www.cdm.uwaterloo.ca/index.asp>

