A Parents' Guide to Career Development
by Thomas J. Denham (edited slightly by the CMC staff)

Most parents agree that a college education can be an important ingredient leading to later success. However, some students sometimes lose focus on why they attend college. One of the big reasons, of course, is to find a good job after graduation. Your role as the parent of a college student is very important. And, one of the most valuable things parents can do to help a student with career planning is listen: be open to ideas, try to help your student find information, and be nonjudgmental.

Here are 10 ways you can help:

1. Encourage your student to visit the SE Career Management Center (Parents are invited, too!)
   Next time you visit campus, drop into the Career Management Center (CMC) office and pick up a business card from one of the staff members. When your son or daughter is feeling anxious about his/her future, offer the card and say, "Please call this person. He (or she) can help you."
   Many students use their first semester to "settle into" college life, and so perhaps the spring semester of the freshman year is the optimal time to start using CMC services. And, it’s a good time for you to prompt that first visit.
   Ask your student (in an off-handed way), "Have you visited the career center?" If you hear, "You only go there when you are a senior," then it’s time to reassure them that the CMC is not just for seniors. Preparing for graduation and meeting with a career counselor can take place at any point (and should take place frequently) in their college career. The sooner a student becomes familiar with the staff, resources, and workshops, the better prepared he or she will be to make wise career decisions.

The SE CMC offers a full range of career development and job-search help including:

- Assessment Testing: help deciding on a major;
- One-on-one Career advising based on assessments and other factors;
- Workshops on developing resumes and cover letters, how to dress for a first interview and developing interviewing skills. A workshop is presented at least once each semester on the SE campus (except summer);
• **Student/Alumni online Recruiting System**: offers a Job Board, post your resume online for employers to view, view workshop schedules, info on on-campus interviews, career fairs and other related information;
• **Job Search Assistance** for both current students and SE alumni;

2. **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 get sample resumes from the Internet, from books at the public library or on the CMC website: {www.SE.edu/careers; click on Information for Students and Alumni; then click on Career Info}. Carefully review your resume for grammar, spelling, and content, but I recommend a CMC staff member to critique the final draft.

3. **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 any of their personal qualities you see as talents and strengths. You can also recommend:

• Taking a "self-assessment inventory," such as the ACT Profile Career Guidance or the Kuder Journey system at the CMC,
• Talking to favorite faculty members and
• Researching a variety of interesting career fields and employers.

A career decision should be a process and not a one-time, last minute event. A decision on a major should be settled by the end of either the Sophomore or beginning of the Junior year. The Freshman year may be too early for most; the Junior year may be too late for some. This decision takes work/research and communication with people who are in the field of interest. Discourage putting this decision off until the senior year.

4. **Allow your student to make the decision**
Even though it is helpful to ask about career plans, too much prodding can backfire.

*Myth*: A student must major in something "practical" or marketable.

*Truth*: Students should follow their own interests and passions.

*Myth*: Picking your major means picking the career you will have forever.

*Truth*: That's not true anymore. "Major" does not necessarily mean "career" and it is not unusual for a student to change majors.

Many students change majors after gaining more information about specific fields of study and career fields of interest. Many students end up doing something very different than originally planned, so don't freak out when they come up with an outrageous or impractical career idea. Chances are plans will develop and change. It's okay to change majors—and careers.

It’s okay, as a parent, to make suggestions about majors and career fields, but let your student be the ultimate judge of what's best for her/him.
Career development can be stressful. Maybe this is the first really big decision that your son or daughter has had to make. Be patient, sympathetic and understanding, even if you don’t agree with your student’s decisions.

5. Emphasize the importance of internships
The SE Career Management Center will not "place" your student 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. The ‘Major’ department coordinates the majority of SE internships. So please, have your student check with their ‘major’ advisor first to see what internships, if any, are available. If that doesn’t work out, the student will need to check with the CMC.

Why an internship?
• Employers are interested in communication, problem-solving, and administrative skills, which can be developed through internships.
• Employers look for experience on a student’s resume and often hire from within their own internship programs.
• Having a high GPA is VERY important, but it is not enough. There are a lot of average students who later become very successful. Skills developed in the classroom and during practical experiences and internships may help your student stand out, even if the grades aren’t as high as you’d like.
• A strong letter of recommendation from an internship supervisor can often tip the scale of an important interview in their favor.
• Internships should be researched and applied for starting at the end of the Sophomore year and into the Junior and/or Senior year.

6. Encourage extracurricular involvement
Part of experiencing college life is to be involved and active outside the classroom. Interpersonal and leadership skills—qualities valued by future employers—are often developed in extracurricular activities.

7. Persuade your student to stay up-to-date with current events
Employers will expect students to know what is happening around them. Buy your student a subscription to the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal or at the very least, watch the news on TV. When he or she is home on break, discuss important world and business issues.

8. Expose your student to the World of Work
Most students have a stereotypical view of the workplace. Take your student to your workplace. Explain to your son or daughter what you do for a living. Show him or her how to network by interacting with your own colleagues. Help your student identify potential employers.
9. **Teach the value of networking**
Introduce your student to people who have the careers/jobs that are of interest. Suggest your son or daughter contact people in your personal and professional networks for information on summer jobs. Encourage your student to "shadow" someone in the workplace to increase awareness of interesting career fields. The best way to find a job is through networking. The old saying, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know,” still applies.

10. **Parents: Help the SE Career Management Center (CMC), help you!**
If you are a local business owner, contact the CMC when you have a summer, part-time job, internship or full-time job opening. We can post your jobs/internships, setup on-campus recruiting visits and informational sessions for your company. If your company hires interns, have the internships listed with the career center.

Your participation on our campus can add to the "real world" experience to advise students of their career options, participate in a career panel or career related workshop. Or become a Mentor. Your involvement as a professional and/or business owner can help many of our current and future students.

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