

Career Planning Advice

CLARION resources

The following offices are mentioned in this publication. Visit them for additional information.

Academic Support Center
B-12 Campbell
www.clarion.edu/admin/academicsupport/academic/academicsupport.html

Career Services
114 Egbert Hall
www.clarion.edu/career

Carlson Library
www.clarion.edu/library

Community Service Learning
Gemmell Student Complex
www.clarion.edu/student/studentaffairs/csl

Counseling Services
148 Egbert Hall
www.clarion.edu/student/counseling/counshome.htm

Student Activities Office
Gemmell Student Complex
www.clarion.edu/student/studentaffairs/gemmell.htm

University Advising Services Center (U-ASC)
6 Becht Hall
www.clarion.edu/advising

Writing Center
101 Davis
www.artsci.clarion.edu/English/wc/

Achieving your career goals requires more than just having a degree. Your degree will open many doors, but you need additional qualifications if you want to obtain a position in your field of interest.

Clarion alumni and employers who hire Clarion graduates are good resources when planning for your career. They offer the following recommendations to help you focus on a career direction, learn about your future profession, and prepare for it.

Begin your career planning now!

A satisfying and rewarding career doesn't happen overnight. It is the result of a conscious and planned effort to gain knowledge, acquire skills, and obtain experience. It involves making decisions and taking action.

Don't waste your college years "just biding your time until graduation." Use your entire university experience to discover your talents and interests, explore your educational and career options, set goals, and progress toward them.

Use Clarion's resources.

Familiarize yourself with campus resources, such as the University Advising Services Center (U-ASC), Career Services, Carlson Library, and Counseling Services.

If you are undecided about a major, visit the University Advising Services Center (U-ASC) where academic advisors can guide you through the course selection process, or the Department of Counseling Services where counselors can help you with the decision-making process.

Get to know some faculty or administrators, and discuss your educational and career plans with them. Many have worked outside the college environment and can provide

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information and insight into your field.

Seek assistance from Career Services if you don't know where to start. By learning about the career planning process and acting on the recommendations in this publication, you stand a good chance of making career and educational decisions that will lead to a satisfying and rewarding professional life.

Explore your career options.

The key to career planning is locating the specific occupations that would best utilize your particular combination of interests, values, abilities, and ambitions. You have to know what's available before you'll know where you "fit."

Take an inventory of your skills, values, and interests; then develop a list of prospects based on your assessment. Investigate the careers thoroughly (through library research, the Internet, campus professional organizations, and discussions with people in the field) before making a career decision. Continue to clarify your choices through activities and work situations.

Perform well academically.

Doing well in your courses will pay later. Academic performance is important to employers, and QPA's are often used as selection criteria when narrowing a list of candidates for a position.

If you're having academic problems, seek help from faculty, advisors, the Writing Center, or the Academic Support Center, which offers tutoring services and helps you to develop skills in test taking, reading and studying, and time management.

Choose your electives carefully.

When you begin a job search, your choice of electives can make a difference in your marketability. Use your electives to develop an area of

interest or concentration in your major, or select courses which will enhance your understanding of a particular career field.

For example, a liberal arts major who wants to work in business would be wise to use electives for business or computer courses. A business major who is weak in verbal or written communication skills would be wise to take elective courses to develop those skills.

Join the team.

Activities outside the classroom can have a significant impact on developing the qualifications which employers require. At Clarion there are over 150 academic, athletic, cultural, fraternal, recreational, and social organizations in which you can participate. In addition, there are many community service or volunteer organizations that provide excellent opportunities for students.

Campus and community activities can expose you to career options, help you develop skills needed for the future, and provide experience that serves as evidence of your capabilities to employers. The following are just some of the benefits:

- **Career information.** Some organizations focus on career issues and sponsor career-related activities. For instance, campus professional organizations often invite Clarion alumni and other professionals to speak at meetings. They also arrange field trips or visits to employers. By participating in these activities, you have numerous opportunities to learn about career options, stay current regarding career trends and issues, develop professional skills, and network with professionals at seminars, conferences, and other gatherings.
- **Skills development.** The following list includes a few of the skills that can be developed through campus and community involvement.

Social skills	Interpersonal skills
Planning skills	Communication skills
Organizing skills	Problem solving skills
Leadership skills	Decision-making skills
Teamwork skills	Conflict resolution skills

- **Experience.** Employers want graduates who have learned by doing and by being involved in hands-on, practical experiences. They look for achievement (the ability to get things done) and leadership (the ability to get others to get things done). Employers value graduates who can plan ahead, motivate others, make decisions, initiate projects, and work productively in a team.

Make a difference.

The Florida State University conducted a study to determine the qualities and experiences that employers value most in graduating students who are seeking entry-level employment. A significant number of respondents (86 percent) rated *leadership roles in student organizations* as very important or above average in importance. It was second on the list of eight activities (first was *work experience that is job-related*).

Choose an organization where you have the opportunity to make a contribution. Learn about its activities, and determine where your time and talents are needed. Volunteer to chair a committee, organize an event, or coordinate a program. If you take an active part, the benefits to you will equal your contributions to the organization.

Develop good work habits.

Work experience helps you develop good work habits, qualities sought by every employer regardless of the job. Employers want graduates who are responsible, reliable, flexible, dependable, self-motivated, and productive. They also value employees who can adapt to change and various work environments.

Through summer or part-time work you can get a good work orientation, and at the end of your

assignment, you will have your supervisor's reference to use for future employment.

Learn by doing.

Employers view career-related experience as an important prerequisite for employment. An internship, co-op, or field training will be a great asset when you are job hunting. Career-related experiences help you to clarify your career choice as well as prepare you for the reality of employment: responsibilities... pressures... paper work...demands...frustrations...rewards.

Practical experiences allow you to apply what you learned in the classroom and to strengthen your skills. As you work with other professionals, you will learn the little things that make big differences in the work place. With each responsibility, you take another step toward becoming a professional.

Develop your communication skills.

Employers rate communication skills as the foremost quality new hires can possess. Effective written communication skills (e.g., memos, letters, reports) and verbal communication skills (e.g., presentations, meetings, discussions) are crucial in the world of work. Don't avoid courses that can help you strengthen these skills. Include courses such as Business and Professional Speaking or Business Writing in your curriculum.

Upgrade your computer skills.

The need to be technologically literate is no longer limited to scientists and programmers. Technology will continue to transform virtually every working environment, affecting how work gets done. No one expects you to be an expert if you are seeking a non-technical position, but you should have a basic familiarity with application programs used by your field. Learn at least one word processing, one spreadsheet, and one database program. Know how to conduct research on the Internet.

Keep “up to date” in your field.

In today’s world of work, information is fundamental to getting a job and staying afloat in a career field after you get the job. Become familiar with the hot topics, key issues, and current trends and practices in your occupation. Read professional publications, join Internet discussion groups, and become a member of a professional organization.

Ask the experts.

Refer to others who are knowledgeable about the careers in which you have an interest. Identify individuals who do the work that you want to do, and talk to them about how they got there. If possible, meet them in person; if not, interview them by phone.

Professional contacts can offer the perspective and wisdom of someone “who has been there.” Initially, they can provide information that will help you define your career direction or determine that you need to investigate other options. They can offer advice about the qualifications and experiences you need to obtain a position in the field. Later, they may be able to help when you are looking for a job.