The Linfield Parents’ Action Plan to Career Development

One of the most valuable things that parents can do to help their student with career planning is listen: be open to ideas, help your student find information, and be nonjudgmental. We also encourage you to review the Cats to Careers Action Plan and upcoming career programs, and talk about these resources and activities with your student. Here are ten other ways you can help:

1. Encourage your student to visit The Office for Career Development
Meeting with a career counselor can take place at any point during your student’s college career. The sooner students become familiar with our resources, the better prepared they will be to make wise career decisions.

Career Development empowers students through four stages of pursuing their career paths:
- **Explore:** assess skills, interests, and abilities (an important first step to choosing an appropriate career)
- **Connect:** make the connections among majors, career options, interests, and professional contacts
- **Experience:** experiment with possible career options and gain professional experience
- **Succeed:** conduct a job or graduate school search to gain skills and connections for life-long career success

Here is a sample of how we guide students through the four stages:
- Career Counseling Appointments
- Career Events, Workshops and Fairs
- Professional Connections
- Mock Interviews
- Internship for Credit
- Graduate Program Guidance
- JanTerm Career Exploration Courses
- Job Search Guidance for Summer Jobs, Internships and Career Positions

2. Advise your student to create a resume
Writing a resume can be a "reality test" and can help a student identify strengths and weak areas that require improvement. Suggest your student get sample resumes from Career Development or www.linfield.edu/career. Review your student’s resume drafts for grammar, spelling, and content, but recommend that the final product be critiqued by trained Student Assistants in Career Development.

3. Challenge your student to become "Occupationally Literate"
Ask: "Do you have any ideas about what you might want to do after you graduate?" If your student seems unsure, talk about personal qualities you see as talents and strengths. A career decision should be a process and not a one-time, last-minute event: Discourage putting this decision off until the senior year. Aside from encouraging your student to meet with Career Development, also recommend students talk to favorite faculty members about opportunities and researching a variety of interesting career fields and employers.

4. Expose your student to the world of work
Most students have a stereotypical view of the workplace. Engage your student in conversations about the world of work. Explain to him/her what you do for a living. Take your child to your workplace. Additionally, show the value of connecting with other professionals by interacting with your own colleagues. Help your student identify potential employers and internship sites.

Cats to Careers: Pursue YOUR Path!
5. **Allow your student to make the decision**

Even though it is helpful to occasionally ask about career plans or choice of major, too much prodding can backfire. It is okay to make suggestions about majors and career fields, but let your student be the ultimate judge of what seems right. 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.

- **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 no longer true. "Major" does not mean "career," and it is common for students to change majors.

Many students change majors after gaining more information about specific fields of study and careers, and end up doing something different than originally planned, so don’t worry when they come up with an “outrageous” or “impractical” idea. Chances are, plans will develop and change – and that is okay.

6. **Emphasize the importance of internships**

Colleges grant degrees, not job guarantees, so having relevant experience in this competitive job market is critical. Employers are interested in communication, problem-solving, and administrative skills, which are developed through internships. They also look for experience on a student’s resume and often hire from within their own internship programs. These days a high GPA is not enough.

Students can pursue internships for academic credit. Upper-class students can earn credit through their academic department. All students can get internship credit through Career Development to explore interests while earning elective credit and getting guidance through meaningful work experience.

7. **Encourage extracurricular involvement**

Part of experiencing college life is being involved and active outside the classroom. Interpersonal and leadership skills—qualities highly valued by future employers—are often developed in extracurricular activities, and through on-campus employment and community service.

8. **Persuade your student to stay up-to-date with current events**

Employers will expect students to know what is happening around them. Encourage your student to read the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* or other publications. When they are home, discuss major world and business issues together. There are also presentations on campus - [www.linfield.edu/calendar](http://www.linfield.edu/calendar).

9. **Teach the value of professional connections**

Introduce your student to people who have careers/jobs that may be of interest. Suggest he/she contact people in your personal and professional networks for information on summer jobs, internships, or for an informational interview. Encourage your child to "shadow" someone in the workplace to increase awareness of interesting career fields. Both JanTerm and summer can be opportunities to pursue such activities.

10. **Help the Office for Career Development**

As a Linfield Parent, you have the power to enhance the education and career experiences of all Linfield students. Here are some ways in which you can help Career Development as we strive to empower students pursue their paths. Contact us to learn more about any of these activities.

- Post Job and Internship Opportunities on CatConnect - [www.linfield.edu/career/catconnect](http://www.linfield.edu/career/catconnect)
- Serve as a Guest Evaluator for Presentations or be an Interviewer for Mock Interviews
- Do Informational Interviews with students, or host a Job Shadow or Company Tour
- Support Career Development programing with a financial donation

*Adapted from an article by Thomas J. Denham, courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers*