

A Career Planning Course for Parents — *by Sally Kearsley, www.naceweb.org*

Your son or daughter just left for (or returned to) college but doesn't seem to have a clue as to what he or she wants to major in, let alone choose as a career. Don't worry, this is not unusual, although you might wish your child had a little more sense of direction.

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:

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What you can do to help

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Suggest that he or she use the campus career center throughout the senior year. These offices provide assistance in preparation for the job search. Offerings may include:

- Workshops and individual help with resume and cover letter writing, interviewing, and other
- job-search skills,
- Individual and group career advising,
- Job-search resources,
- On-campus interviewing opportunities, and,
- Alumni career consultant or mentor programs.

Don't nag your child about not having a job yet. This will often have the reverse effect. Use positive reinforcement.

Offer to assist by sending information you may have found about your child's target career field and/or job listings that may be of interest. Listen for indications from your child that you are getting carried away—and back off.

Don't call potential employers to intervene for your child. Contact with potential employers is the candidate's responsibility.

Be prepared to support your child 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.

Final Thoughts

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 or university 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.

Responsible work experience. In today's competitive employment market, many employers seek students who have related internship, summer, cooperative education, 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.