

Career Exploration



Successful career planning requires a systematic process of self-assessment, career exploration and job search campaigns.

Self-Assessment answers the question “Who are you?” and is the foundation for satisfying career choices.

Career Exploration identifies “What’s out there?” in terms of which career options best fit you as a total person.

Job Search Campaign outlines, “How do you get from here to there?” As today’s working world is constantly changing, this is an on-going process.

Adapted from Trait & Factor Theory, Frank Parsons

Career Exploration

In order to make informed decisions about career options, you need comprehensive and accurate information about required work activities and responsibilities; typical workplace descriptions; difficulties, challenges and rewards; required education and/or training; preferred skills and personality traits; employment outlook projections and salary ranges. There are many resources to help with this research. It's best to get career information from as several sources.

Written Materials

Thousands of specialized books are available to investigate specific career fields from acting to zoology. In addition, most professional organizations publish trade journals, magazines and brochures that can help you discover more about occupations in their industries. Many employers, professional societies, academic institutions and government agencies maintain on-line Internet resources.

The Internet

There are many sources of career information available on the internet. The office of career development maintains a list of recommended sites at www.fontbonne.edu/career.

Experiential Learning

Credit-bearing cooperative education programs, internships, practicums, or clinicals provide opportunities to test your career interests through theoretical application, skill development, and work world realities. Volunteer experiences and community service projects can also help you define and focus your career plans, develop and strengthen your skill base, and make professional contacts for on-going information and advice.

Informational Interviews

An informational interview is a conversation with someone who is knowledgeable about an occupation or career field that is of interest to you. The purpose of this discussion is to gain information about:

- Preparation and qualifications needed to enter and succeed in the field.
- Job responsibilities, rewards, challenges and outlook.
- Advice and suggestions.
- Names of other professional contacts and resources.

It is important to speak with a number of people to get a reliable consensus of information. Opinions and experiences may differ and the information and advice you receive may be confusing and even contradictory. Sort through everything for this is the most dependable method to get up-to-date information about careers.

While an informational interview is not a job interview and you are not asking for employment, you may be making a contact for future internship or employment opportunities. It is important that you make a good impression with your preparation, presentation and follow-up.

1. Research the field and company prior to the interview and make a list of relevant questions.
2. Identify people to interview. Start with lists of people you already know: teachers, friends, relatives, fellow students, present or former co-workers, supervisors. Even if these people are not directly in your field they can suggest people to meet. College alumni, professional organizations, and the yellow pages are also good resources.
3. Make arrangements to meet your resource people, preferably at their work locations, for a 20-30 minute interview.
4. Dress appropriately, as you would for a hiring interview.
5. Prepare a list of interview questions. Choose your questions wisely as you will have only 20-30 minutes.
6. Ask the person to refer you to other professionals in the field who might have additional information, advice and suggestions to share with you.
7. When the interview is complete, demonstrate your appreciation and professionalism by sending a thank-you note. You may also want to update each person on your progress as you meet other professionals.

Sample Informational Interview Questions

Describe a typical workweek. What do you do on a day-to-day basis?

Describe your primary responsibilities.

Describe your working environment. Is it competitive, fast-paced, conservative, routine, etc.?

What do you like most about your work? Least?

Describe the rewards of your job as well as the problems/obstacles.

What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?

From your perspective, what are the problems you see working in this field, now and in the future?

What qualifications, skills, academic background, and personal qualities are required for this position?

How did you get started in this career/field? What factors played a role in your success? Would you do anything differently if you could start over?

What opportunities for advancement are there in this field?

What entry-level jobs are best for learning as much as possible?

What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field?

What are the current issues in the field?

How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?

What is the outlook for this industry/field? What areas have the most potential for expansion?

What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field?

Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?

Do you know of anyone who works at company XYZ?

What specific advice would you give a person entering this field?

Can you refer me to other professionals in the field who might have additional information, advice, and suggestions? May I say you recommended them?

INTERNSHIP PLANNING GUIDELINES

1. Know the academic policies and procedures regarding internships for your major.
 - ❑ Read the university catalog in effect at the time of your registration and first term at Fontbonne.
 - ❑ Talk with your academic advisor and/or internship instructor. International students need to speak with the Director of International Affairs regarding internship eligibility.

2. Determine the type of internship most suitable for you.

Exploration: suitable for students with limited work experience and/or unclear career focus.

Objectives:

- ❑ Gain practical work experience related to your academic major and tentative career goals.
- ❑ Test career options.
- ❑ Get hands-on understanding of the realities of today's work world.
- ❑ Develop networking contacts.

Pre-Employment: suitable for students with related work experience and clear career focus.

Objectives:

- ❑ Gain in-depth knowledge, experience and expertise related to your career goals.
- ❑ Expand networking contacts.

Conversion of Existing Part-Time Jobs Into Internships for Academic Credit: Job tasks, duties, or responsibilities MUST include developmental learning which is relevant to your academic studies and career goals:

- ❑ Special assignments or projects.
- ❑ Job rotations.
- ❑ In-service trainings or certification programs.

3. Prioritize industries or fields of interest. Realize that you can have an Accounting internship with a Public Relations firm or a Public Relations internship in an Accounting firm.
4. Establish geographic (local, regional, national, international) and time (fall or spring semester or summer term) preferences.

5. Identify employer eligibility requirements:

- Application deadline(s)
- Class level(s)
- Grades/GPA
- Academic major
- Work experience/Related experience
- Extra-curricular activities
- Transferable skills (communications, human relations, organization and planning, administration and management, research and investigation)
- Length and time
- Needs specific to individual employer
- Accepts/does not accept international applicants

6. Research employer benefits: (Remember that experience is the most important benefit!)

- Salary/stipends
- Reimbursements (meals, parking, transportation, housing)
- Training
- Professional development opportunities (seminars, workshops, in-services)
- Possible future employment

7. Make an appointment with Fontbonne's career development staff for help with:

- Employer research
- Cover letters
- Resumes
- Networking
- Interviewing
- "On-the-job" strategies for successful interning