A Parents’ Guide to Career Development
Career Development Center
California State University, Los Angeles
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The most valuable things parents can do to help a student with career planning are:

- Listen
- Be open to ideas
- Help your student find information

Here are eight more things you can do to help:

1. **Encourage your child to visit the Career Center (and you go too!)**
   Next time you visit campus, drop into the Career Development Center and pick up a business card of one of the career counselors. When your son or daughter is feeling anxious about his/her future, offer the card and say, “Please call this person. She (or he) can help you.”

Many students use their first semester to settle into college life, and so the Fall Semester of the freshman year is the optimal time to start using Career Center services. 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 him/her that meeting with a career counselor can take place at any point – and should take place frequently – throughout a college career.

The Cal State L.A. Career Center offers a full range of career development and job search help, including:

- Individual advising
- Workshops on writing resumes, interviewing, job search, and other topics
- Career events, including fairs and information sessions
- Mock interviews
- A library of books and an online library of information on a wide range of careers
- On-campus interview program

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 need improvement. Suggest that your student get sample resumes from the Career Center.

   You can review resume drafts for grammar, spelling and content, but recommend that the final product be critiqued by a Career Center professional.

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 personal qualities you see as talents and strengths. You can also recommend:
• Taking an assessment test, such as FOCUS 2, which is available through the Career Center website
• Talking to favorite faculty members
• Researching a variety of interesting career fields and employers

A career decision should be a **process** and not a one-time, last-minute event.

4. **Emphasize the importance of internships.**
The Career Center will not “place” your child in a job at graduation. Colleges grant degrees, but not job guarantees, so having relevant experience in this competitive job market is critical.

Your daughter or son can sample career options by completing internships and experimenting with summer employment opportunities and volunteer work.

**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 not enough.
- A strong recommendation from an internship supervisor may tip the scale of an important interview in the student’s favor.

5. **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.

6. **Help your student 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 *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, or a publication (print or online) that is related to their field of interest.

7. **Teach the value of networking.**
Introduce your student to people who have careers/jobs that are of interest. Suggest your son or daughter contact people in your own 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.

8. **Help the Career Center.**
Call the Cal State LA Career Center when you have a summer, part-time, or full-time job opening at your place of business. The staff will help you post the position on Golden Eagle CareerLink, the campus job search website. If your organization hires interns, have the internships listed as well. Join the Career Center’s mentor network and use your own real world experience to advise students of their career options.

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