

Helping Your Student Map A Career Path

One reason students attend college is to gain the knowledge necessary to establish a successful career after graduation. Parents often have questions about the career development process and the services available at Western to help their students make effective career decisions. They're also interested in knowing what they can do to support their student's career development.

McDaniel College's Career Services will work with your student on career-related concerns in a variety of ways during the course of their college years. There are also a number of things you can do to support your student.

Career Planning/Choosing a Major (freshman/sophomore year)

Choosing a major is a cause of anxiety for many first and second year students. (Not to mention their parents!) Some enter college with no clear academic or career goals. Others arrive with identified areas of interest. All students benefit from taking the opportunity to explore and learn more about themselves, the university and the world of work before they commit to specific fields of study. Many change majors and career goals several times before they graduate. While this is generally a normal developmental process, students who haven't clarified their goals by the end of their sophomore year are likely to take longer to graduate.

Career Services offers two assessments - - the Self Directed Search (SDS) and e-Discover which help students evaluate interests, values and abilities. The Center's Career Resource Library provides books, magazines, DVDs and videotapes to explore occupations and counselors are available for individual assistance.

As a parent, here are some ways you can support your student in the career planning process:

- Encourage your student to use the general education requirements for exploration, to learn from their mistakes and to seek assistance, information and advice from a variety of sources.
- Once they are comfortably settled at McDaniel, urge them to visit Career Services to take advantage of the services available to help them. (National research indicates that only 5% of entering freshmen think they need career assistance so we need your help to get them to connect with us!)
- Offer feedback on what you see to be your student's special strengths and talents.
- The earlier your student learns to network the better. This is such an important life skill. Use your acquaintances and contacts to help your student connect with people working in fields that interest them. Encourage them to meet these people to discuss working conditions, training requirements and future prospects. (Sometimes these contacts lead to wonderful opportunities for internships and summer jobs!)

Internships (sophomore, junior, early senior year)

Once students have committed to a field of study it will be important for them to consider ways to supplement their "book learning" with hands-on experience. This will allow them to "test drive" their career choice. Internship experience on their resume will make them more marketable when they hit the job market. Some majors at McDaniel require an internship or field experience. For those that don't, students must take the initiative to seek out opportunities. Career Services is committed to helping students gain career-related experience before they graduate. Internship opportunities with regional employers are posted on the Center's website. Our Career Resource Library contains internship resources and directories and counselors are available to coach students on how to develop internship opportunities. Many of the employers participating in the Center's On-Campus Recruiting Program recruit for interns as well as career hires.

How can you help your student gain internship experience?

Once again, use your acquaintances and professional networks to help them make connections in fields of interest.

- Help expand internship listings in Career Services by encouraging your employer and professional contacts to recruit interns from McDaniel.

Job Search (senior year – starting 3 quarters before graduation)

Finally, your student is approaching graduation! Now it's time to help them find "career employment." Career Services has a variety of programs and services to help students with the job search process. Career opportunities with regional employers are posted in our *GT Job Connection* database and on the Center's website. Resources in the Center's Career Resource Library help students identify and research prospective employers. The On-Campus Recruiting Program and Job Fairs all offer opportunities to connect with employers who are hiring. Workshops are offered regularly on topics such as resume writing, cover letters and interview techniques and as with earlier stages counselors are available to offer individual assistance.

How can you help?

- Encourage your student to connect with Career Services at the beginning of senior year to get an early start on their job search. Hiring in some fields (accounting and education for example) is cyclical. Students need to be ready to connect with employers at the appropriate time. Many employers who recruit through the Center hire on "anticipated graduation" so students can and should start interviewing at the start of their senior year.
- Once again, use your professional contacts to help your student network.
- For birthdays and holidays, cash contributions or gift certificates will help your student purchase professional attire necessary for interviews and the workplace.
- Help us identify jobs for McDaniel grads by encouraging your employer, colleagues, everyone you know to recruit at McDaniel!

Graduate School? (late junior, senior year)

Uh-oh! More tuition to pay. Your student wants to go on to graduate school! Well, the Career Center can help with this too. Each September we dedicate the entire month to informing students about graduate and professional School opportunities. We host a Graduate School Fair, a Graduate School 101 Symposium, workshops and practice test sessions for students interested in pursuing further study. The Peterson Guides, available in our Career Resource Library, help students identify schools with graduate and professional programs in their field of interest, as well as prepare for tests and create personal statements and essays for the application process.

Ways you can support your student:

- Encourage your student to make early inquiries with programs and schools about assistantships, fellowships and scholarships.
- Use celebrations to provide gifts of money to help with application fees and other expenses.
- Consider taking out a second mortgage!