

CHOOSING AN ACADEMIC AND CAREER FOCUS

Academic/career planning is an important step toward shaping your future. Next to personal relationships, academic and career choices are probably the most important choices you will make, and they will affect every aspect of your life. So, whether you're planning for your first job or looking toward a career change, you want to avoid "falling into" a job because of lack of planning.

The following are steps that you can take toward effective career planning. Resources are also listed. Finally, once you've completed the initial steps, you can begin your *Career Plan*.

Step 1 - Self Assessment and Self Awareness

The first step toward moving forward in academic and career planning is to develop an understanding that there is a connection between self and career choice. Your interests, skills, values, personality traits, and preferences, are all components of your unique personality. As you gain more self awareness, you will be able to more readily identify academic and career interests that compliment who you are.

Some Steps toward Self-Assessment

- Take a basic career assessment/inventory like CHOICES or the Holland Self-Directed Search
- Consider more in depth personality assessments like the MBTI and/or the Strong Interest Inventory
- Make a list of your interests, values, and skills
- Identify specific work values like being able to be creative, or working with others, working indoors or out, and so on.
- Take an exploratory class
- Be honest with yourself and identify your strengths and areas for growth – academically, socially, and emotionally

Step 2 – Understanding Academic and Career Options

This step involves taking what you've learned about yourself and matching it up with academic and career options. Many interest inventories, like the CHOICES or Self-Directed Search, will help you to match careers and academic paths with your personality. Look for a fit in terms of your interests, life values, personality traits and work values.

Some Steps toward Researching Career Options:

- Use the CHOICES or the Holland Self-Directed Search outcomes as a starting point toward learning more about areas of study and careers
- To narrow down your career interests, investigate three or four jobs that you think might be a fit for you
- Research the skills, training, and education required
- Learn about the job market (future trends, income, and so on)
- Interview people in the field
- Get practical experiences to learn what each job is all about by shadowing for a day, work-study or internship experiences, volunteering, or taking on a part-time or temporary/summer job

Some Steps toward Researching Academic Options:

- Look through the NMSU and NMSU-A catalogs to match areas of study/majors to the career interests you find most appealing
- Discuss your interests with an advisor and ask for a list of programs/majors with corresponding personality types
- Look at the course work involved in the area of study – do most of the courses sound interesting to you?
- If your specific interest area is not available, consider areas of study that are closely related, or consider other schools (if you're willing to relocate)
- Take a few courses in the area of study to determine if they are truly for you
- Interview students already in the area of study
- Discuss the program with faculty to learn more about it

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

Choices Planner

<http://www.bridges.com>

Site ID: 0109231

Password: H9q2r5N8

Occupational Outlook Handbook

<http://www.bls.gov/oco>

America's Career InfoNet

<http://www.acinet.org>

JobWeb.com – Career development and job-search advice for new college students

<http://www.jobWeb.com>

O*net

<http://online.onetcenter.org/>

HELPFUL TIPS:

Combine the information from Choices with other information. Really assess who you are and what you want.

Ask family members and people who know you well about the strengths they see in you, and what “type” of person you are in their eyes.

Take academic/career planning serious, it will affect the rest of your life.

Take responsibility for planning your future, or you might end up somewhere you don't want to be.

Follow up with your advisor from time to time and see if you're on the right track.