

# A Parents' Guide to Career Development at Flagler College

One of the most valuable things parents can do to help a student with career planning is listen: be open to ideas, try to help your student find information, and be nonjudgmental. Here are 10 ways you can help:

## 1. Encourage your child to visit the Office of Career Services (and you go too!)

Next time you visit campus, drop into the Flagler College Career Services office in the Ringhaver Student Center (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor) and pick up a business card from 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 can help you."

Many students use their first semester to "settle into" college life, and so perhaps the spring semester of the freshman year is the optimal time to start using career center services. And, it's a good time for you to prompt that first visit!

Ask your student (in an off-handed way), "Have you visited Career Services?" If you hear, "You only go there when you are a senior," then it's time to reassure them of two important facts:

- 1) Career Services is not just for seniors, and meeting with a career counselor can take place at any point -and should take place frequently- in their college career. The sooner a student becomes familiar with the staff, resources, and programs, the better prepared he or she will be to make wise career decisions; and
- 2) Flagler College has a specific Four-Year Plan for Career Services that all students must participate in as a graduation requirement. The plan insures that all Flagler College students receive basic education in career planning and including information on developing goals, communication, research, and mechanics of effective job search. Freshmen and sophomores work through recommendations for activities related to self-assessment, exploration, and career research. Juniors complete an online course providing

specific career education tailored to the individual student and seniors focus on career actions.

Flagler College's Office of Career Services offers a full range of career development and job-search help including:

- A recruiting program including CareerSPOT, NACElink, and Career*Shift* job postings to name just a few,
- Graduate school advising and application assistance
- Individual career counseling
- A library of books on a variety of careers
- Workshops on many career topics including writing resumes, cover letters, understanding your personality and your career choices, business etiquette, and networking
- A network of experienced professionals willing to talk about their jobs and careers

## 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 require improvement. Suggest that your student get sample resumes from the Resource Library inside their own account in **CareerSPOT**, **Career Services' student** career management system. CareerSPOT can be accessed from the Student page of the Career Services website at <http://careerservices.flagler.edu>.

As a parent, we recommend you offer to review resume drafts for grammar, spelling, and content; but suggest that one of our Career Services staff critique the final product as we are continuously researching what employers are looking for and expecting to see in a resume.

## 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 a "self-assessment inventory," such as FOCUS, which is available at no charge and

accessed through the Career Services website at <http://careerservices.flagler.edu>

- Talking to favorite faculty members, and
- Researching a variety of interesting career fields and employers using the Occupational Outlook Handbook ([www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco))

A career decision should be a process and not a one-time, last-minute event: Discourage putting this decision off until the senior year.

#### **4. Allow your student to make the decision**

Even though it is helpful to ask occasionally about career plans, too much prodding can backfire.

**Myth:** A student must major in something "practical" or marketable.

**Truth:** Students should follow their own interests and passions.

**Myth:** Picking your major means picking the career you will have forever.

**Truth:** That's not true anymore. "Major" does not necessarily mean "career," and it is not unusual for a student to change majors. Many students change majors after gaining more information about specific fields of study and career fields of interest. Many students end up doing something very different than originally planned, so don't freak out when they come up with an outrageous or impractical career idea. Chances are plans will develop and change. It's okay to change majors—and careers.

It's okay to make suggestions about majors and career fields, but let your student be the ultimate judge of what's best. Career development can be stressful. Maybe this is the first really big decision that your son or daughter has had to make. Be patient, sympathetic and understanding, even if you don't agree with your child's decisions.

#### **5. Emphasize the importance of internships**

Flagler College's Career Services office 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 son or daughter can sample career options by completing internships and experimenting with summer employment opportunities or 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 letter of recommendation from an internship supervisor can often tip the scale of an important interview in their favor.

#### **6. 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.

#### **7. Persuade your student to 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 *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*. During school breaks, discuss major world and business issues with him or her.

#### **8. Expose your student to the world of work**

Most students have a stereotypical view of the workplace. Take your child to your workplace. Explain to your son or daughter what you do for a living but encourage him or her to talk with other professionals besides you as well. Parents often present a slightly different perspective on a job to their own child than another co-worker will. Show how to network by interacting with and introducing him or her to your own colleagues. Help your student identify potential employers.

#### **9. Teach the value of networking**

Introduce your student to people who have the careers/jobs that are of interest to him or her. Suggest your son or daughter contact people in your personal and professional networks for information on summer jobs. It will be more productive and a better learning experience if your student does the reaching out, rather than you doing it for them. Encourage your child to

"shadow" someone in the workplace to increase awareness of interesting career fields. This is a great way for your student to find out the positives and negatives about a particular occupation.

#### **10. Help Flagler College's Office of Career Services through your professional experiences**

Join the CareerSPOT network for employers and post notices about opportunities for summer, part-time or full-time employment, and internships. Join the Career Advising Team [CAT Program] located on the Career Services website at <http://careerservices.flagler.edu> and use your "real world" experience to advise students of their career options, participate in a career panel or career related workshop.

Adapted from the article, "A Parent's Guide to Career Development" by Thomas J. Denham (<http://www.jobweb.org/parents.aspx?id=44>)