

A Parent's Guide to Career Development

One of the most valuable things that parents can do to help a student with career planning is to listen, be open to ideas, help your student locate information, and be nonjudgmental.

Here are ways you can help:

1. **Acknowledge that uncertainty about majors and careers is normal.** Many students feel isolated in their indecision about choosing a major, but they are far from alone. In fact, over half of all students change their major before graduation.
2. **Promote self-exploration.** Even if your student has chosen a major, encourage them to engage in self-exploration to confirm their decision. Career choices begin by understanding one's interests, values, personality, and skills. The Academic and Career Planning Center offers free, online assessments through their Kuder Journey system. Support your child's exploration of new subjects and interests—this is a vital part of their educational journey!
3. **Challenge misconceptions about career planning.** Many students feel pressured to find the “perfect” career, believing that once they do, they will be certain. In reality, there are numerous majors and careers that can be fulfilling, each reflecting different strengths and passions. Career choices rarely come with 100% certainty, and the nature of today's workforce means students are unlikely to stick with just one career for life.
4. **Share your own career development story.** Talk to your student about why you chose your career path and share what your work entails. Be open about both the positive and negative aspects of your job.
5. **Value a liberal education.** Employers appreciate a liberal arts education because it provides broad knowledge, transferable skills, and ethical grounding—qualities that apply across fields. Since your child is likely to change careers throughout their life, the focus at the undergraduate level is on developing versatile skills that will help them adapt in a dynamic, ever-changing world.
6. **Encourage exploration of occupational resources.** Resources like the Occupational Outlook Handbook (www.bls.gov/ooh/) and Steppingblocks (<https://wku.stepsblocks.com/app/dashboard>) can help students learn about different career fields. Encourage your student to review their university's catalog and match potential majors with their interests, skills, and motivations.
7. **Emphasize the importance of experience.** The Career Development Center does not guarantee job placements after graduation. In today's competitive job market, gaining relevant experience is crucial. Encourage internships, part-time jobs, or volunteer work related to their field, as well as co-curricular activities like student organizations, research, and study abroad programs.

8. **Encourage your student to develop their resume.** Writing a resume is a practical exercise that helps students assess their strengths and areas for improvement. The Career Development Center offers resume samples and critiques, and students should take advantage of these services.
9. **Teach the value of networking.** Help your student connect with professionals in their fields of interest. Encourage them to conduct informational interviews or job shadow to gain firsthand knowledge of different careers. The Career Development Center can support students in building their networking skills.
10. **Let your student make their own decisions.** While it's okay to offer guidance on majors or career paths, the final decision should be up to your student. Career choices can be stressful, so be patient, understanding, and supportive, even if their decision differs from your own.
11. **Encourage regular use of the Academic and Career Planning Center.** Career decision-making is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Encourage your student to utilize the center's services throughout their college years, starting in their first semester. The job market is highly competitive, and the Center's staff can guide students on the types of experiences they should pursue to become strong candidates in their chosen field. We are located in the Downing Student Union (DSU), on the second floor, suite 2001. We are also available by phone, (270) 745-3095, and email, careerhelp@wku.edu.

The center can help them in many ways including, but not limited to:

- Internship/Job Search Process
- Resume/Cover Letter Development
- Career and Internship Fairs
- Establishing Career Goals
- Mock Interviews
- Graduate/Professional School Application Process
- Individual Career Coaching

12. **Support the Academic and Career Planning Center.** If your company has job openings or internships, consider listing them with the center. You can also help by volunteering to mentor students and offering career advice based on your real-world experience.

Wishing you the best of luck as you navigate the rewarding yet challenging journey of supporting and guiding your college student through this important chapter of their life! Your encouragement and understanding will make all the difference as they find their way!