

# Parent FAQ

Stephen F. Austin State University | Center for Career and Professional Development

## What is career exploration?

Career exploration is a continuous, evolving process of searching and discovering a rewarding career path. It is based on the idea that people are constantly developing and learning about themselves and the world of work, identifying and exploring potentially satisfying occupations, and developing an effective strategy to realize their goals. As individuals progress through their careers it is important for them to reevaluate and re-assess their goals and set new ones as they achieve them and their career interests change.

## How can I help my student in the career exploration process?

1. Encourage your student to take the time to learn about themselves. Exploring one's skills, abilities, and interests is an important first step in choosing a complimentary career path.
2. Motivate your student to learn about the different opportunities that are out there! Many students enter college with little understanding of the sheer volume of courses and majors that are available to them.
3. Help your son or daughter realize all the different academic majors at their fingertips as well as possible corresponding career paths that follow.
4. Support your student's experimentation of possible career options, whether it is through a class, internship, volunteering, part-time job, organization, or club. Their involvement in these activities is a great way for your son or daughter to help "rule-in" or "rule-out" careers of interest.
5. Encourage your student to use the resources at SFA CCPD. No matter what stage they are at in the career development process, CCPD can help! We can assist with every aspect of career planning, beginning from what they can do with a particular major to advice on networking and conducting a job search.
6. Motivate your student to begin job searching early! Urge your student to attend SFA career and job fairs and on-campus interviewing. Advise your son or daughter to begin networking and developing a list of contacts! Two of the most helpful groups your son or daughter can network with are alumni of the university and friends of the family.
7. Support your student throughout the interview process. Be there for your student through the ups and downs as we all know this can be a stressful time! Reassure your son or daughter that for every door that closes, a window opens. And remember to help them celebrate when they land that first job!

## When should my student begin using SFA CCPD?

Our services are available to your student as soon as they are admitted to the university and extend to your son or daughter as alumni. For students seeking guidance on choosing a major or career path, we highly recommend they come into CCPD their first year. For students seeking an internship, they typically visit our office in their second or third year of school. We do not recommend for any student to wait until their final year of college to visit CCPD. We want SFA students to get the maximum use of our resources; they are welcome to visit our office at any phase of their college career!

## What resources can my student utilize through SFA CCPD?

Our office has a wide variety of resources and services to assist all students with the career exploration process. Some of our resources include: career counseling, career assessments, Vault Career Insider, workshops, job search strategies, mock interviews, Interview Stream, professional document critiques, job fairs, employer information sessions, on-campus interviewing, and Handshake (our online job database).

## **Is it better to go straight into graduate school, or to gain work experience first?**

The answer varies for each person. Generally, taking off a year or two from school to gain working-world experience allows time for a student to mature, make a more educated choice, and command more respect as a professional. The student might even find that his or her employer will financially assist them with furthering their education. On the other hand, some students prefer to pursue their undergraduate and graduate degrees back to back. Also, many professional programs recommend, or even require, that a student immediately begin their graduate studies once completing their undergraduate degree, such as law or medical school.

## **What is a helicopter parent? Am I one?!**

Parents have enormous influence over their sons and daughters- especially during the college years. Parents offer their advice, encouragement, and support, but what happens when a parent goes too far and over-manages their student's life? A helicopter parent hovers over their student, so that every time a problem occurs the parent is overhead 'swooping' in to solve the problem. How does a student learn basic social and survival skills if their parent is doing everything for them? Part of teaching your student how to fend on their own is giving them the space to learn how to do things for themselves.

## **Is it important for students to complete an internship while in college?**

We think so! These days, employers are looking to hire graduates who have career-related experience. Even though students are fresh from college, employers are still looking for some type of experience, which could be an internship or a part-time job in a related field. An internship gives your student a leg up on the competition, helping them to develop job-related skills and accruing professional experience. Don't let them leave college without one!

## **When is the best time to look for a summer internship?**

Although it depends on the specifics of each internship, we recommend searching for those prized internships or summer jobs in January or February. While it is ideal for students to start their search for intern opportunities early, CCPD will work with students to help them strategize to find an internship throughout the school year.

## **Can CCPD find my son or daughter a job?**

Possibly. We want you to know that SFA CCPD is not a placement center. There are too many variables during the recruiting process to guarantee finding a job for a student. However, our office will work alongside your student to help them open as many doors as possible. It is imperative that your son or daughter take responsibility when searching for their job. Employers that recruit on our campus post numerous job descriptions on our on-line job database, Handshake. Your student has access to this database by going to our website and registering at Handshake. In addition to the various job postings, your student is also able to see what companies are coming to campus to recruit, hold on-campus interviews, facilitate informational sessions, and participate in career fairs.

## **What is Handshake and how can my student register?**

Handshake is an online database where your student can view employers who are looking to recruit and hire SFA students and graduates. This is the site your student needs to join when searching for a job, whether it be a part-time off-campus job or their first 'real' job upon graduation. When your student is logged on to the Handshake site they can view upcoming events such as career or job fairs, have access to employer job postings, employer contact information, and schedule themselves for an on-campus interview or an employer info session.

## How can I help my student become a more marketable candidate?

1. Provide your student with support in their major. If your student has a genuine interest in their career field then their passion for the job will be visible to potential employers. Employers want to know that the person they hire and invest time and money into is motivated to do well because he or she thoroughly enjoys their work.
2. Recommend to your son or daughter to take several basic courses to assist in developing transferrable skills and qualifications, such as a speech, business communication, marketing or computer science class. These courses will give your student additional marketable abilities. All employers are looking for people that can communicate clearly within their organization, can market themselves effectively and are proficient in basic computer programs.
3. Urge your student to get experience in their field of study! Even though employers are hiring candidates fresh out of school, they are still looking to hire graduates with experience! Suggest your student get experience by applying for an internship, part-time job, volunteer position, or become involved in a specialized organization or club.
4. Help your student to become confident and marketable in the job search and interview process. Suggest your son or daughter make an appointment with CCPD for a mock interview or a résumé critique. Students can take advantage of these services and return as many times as they like. We want them to feel comfortable and confident when they go for the real thing. The better prepared they are the more successful they will be!

## What are employers looking for in a candidate?

According to National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), the top 5 traits employers look for in a candidate are:

1. Communication skills
2. Analytical skills
3. Teamwork skills
4. Technical skills
5. Strong work ethic

## How important is my student's GPA to employers?

Most recruiters say they look for a well-rounded candidate with a good background, transferable skills and some experience. But GPA does play an important role when trying to obtain that first interview. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Job Outlook 2010 survey found that 74% of employers screen candidates by GPA, and stated that in such a competitive job market for students, it is clearly important for graduates to have a desirable GPA. Bottom line, a high GPA may help your student get their foot in the door for the interview; but your student will still need to possess the social and leadership skills to make a memorable impression on the employer.