

GUIDE TO CAREER PLANNING

Becker Career Center

UNION

COLLEGE

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Guide to Career Planning

Career planning is a lifelong process. The three phases of this process – *know yourself*, *explore options*, and *decide and go for it* – will be repeated many times in your lifetime. By effectively engaging in each phase you will discover fulfilling career options that evoke your passions. This guide is intended to give you an overview of the Career Planning Process so you are equipped to manage your career for a lifetime in a dynamic, diverse, and global environment.

Career Planning Process

On the preceding page, you'll find a visual representation of the Career Planning Process which will help you **Pursue Your Passion**. By **Pursue Your Passion** we mean pursuing opportunities you're genuinely interested in and enthusiastic about. We believe that if you're genuinely interested in your work, your natural curiosity will cause you to ask the tougher questions, your motivation will help you find the answers to these questions, and the resulting rewards, both intrinsic and extrinsic, will take of themselves. Pursue Your Passion is in the center of the model to illustrate the intended goal of the Career Planning Process.

Effective career planning starts with **Knowing Yourself**. Having a strong awareness of your interests, skills, abilities, and values will assist you in making career decisions consistent with who you are, thereby increasing your likelihood of success, however you define it. The next phase is to **Explore Options**. By learning more about options, you'll be better prepared to assess and make career decisions that align with your sense of self. After you **Know Yourself** and have **Explored Options**, the next phase is to **Decide and Go For It**. To successfully navigate each phase of the Career Planning Process you will need to **Reflect, Think, Plan, and Execute** your Plan.

Making a decision to work in a particular career field is a decision that you are likely to make many times. In fact, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the average working person changes jobs 11 times. So, make your decision and as long as you're passionate about what you're doing, keep doing it. If you discover that you are no longer passionate about what you're doing, take what you have learned about yourself and revisit the Career Planning Process.

Career Planning Phases

Phase I – Know Yourself

Fulfilling career options start with learning who you are and making decisions consistent with your interests, skills, abilities, and values. Becoming more self-aware (or “Knowing Yourself”) means reflecting on your past experiences and using the information you’ve learned about yourself to help guide future decisions. As you continue to build upon your experiences your sense of self will evolve, thus allowing you to make intentional career decisions aligned with who you are.

Reflect & Think

- What are your favorite courses? What, specifically, do you like about them?
- What activities do you find interesting, motivating, and enjoyable (e.g., sports, clubs, reading, community service, etc.)?
- What unique skills, abilities, and characteristics do you possess? What do others say are your unique skills, abilities, and characteristics?
- What do you value most when considering potential career options (e.g., using creativity, helping others, leading others, financial rewards, etc.)?
- What did you like and dislike most about past work and volunteer experiences?

Plan & Execute

- Set-up an appointment with a Career Advisor to discuss career fields consistent with your interests, personality, and skill sets, and consider taking a self assessment.
- Research courses and majors of interest in the Union College course catalog, speak with your Academic Advisor and other faculty about potential classes, and enroll in classes of interest.
- Speak with faculty members about research projects and terms abroad in academic areas of interest.
- Attend Club Expo and visit the Student Activities homepage to identify clubs and organizations of interest and get involved.
- Participate in volunteer opportunities. Volunteering is a great way to facilitate your awareness of your relevant skills and abilities while building marketable experiences.

Have the courage to get out of your comfort zone. This will help you get to know yourself better.

Recommended Resources

- Career Assessments (available by appointment in the Career Center)
- Academic Advisors and Faculty Members in Potential Majors
- Union Academic Areas of Study Website
- [Union College Course Catalog](#)
- Student Clubs and Activities
- [Kenney Community Center](#)

Phase II – Explore Options

Once you have a clear sense of self, the next step in effective career planning is exploring options that utilize your interests, skills, abilities, and values. Exploring options means gathering information about potential options, assessing if or how these options align with your sense of self, and using that information to make decisions.

Reflect & Think

- What information do you need to get about career fields of interest to make informed decisions?
- What career fields align with your interests?
- Given your skills and abilities, in what jobs or internship settings would these be applicable?

Plan & Execute

- Research career fields of interest using Facts on File, Vault, What Can I Do With a Major in and the Becker Career Center library. Note primary work activities, required training and education, and necessary skills and abilities on the Career Center's "Career Exploration Worksheet".
- Identify Union alumni in career fields of interest via the Union Career Advisory Network (UCAN) and conduct informational interviews to learn more about potential career options.
- Speak with family members, professors, friends' parents, and personal contacts in career fields of interest to find out about potential internship and shadowing experiences.
- Check HireU and the Liberal Arts Career Network (LACN) for potential internship opportunities specifically for Union students.
- Schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor to identify additional internship and job search resources.
- Check the HireU Calendar weekly and note upcoming events to attend (e.g., Career Fair, Employer Information Sessions, Workshops, etc.).
- Seek out Union sponsored events such as guest speakers, alumni events, and Minerva programs to network and learn more about career fields of interest.

Recommended Resources

- Becker Career Center Career Exploration Resources – "Facts on File", "Vault", "Spotlight on Careers", "Going Global" and "What Can I Do With a Major In..."
- Guide to Networking
- Union Career Advisory Network (UCAN) – Attend UCAN Orientation or meet with Career Advisor to gain access.
- HireU
- Liberal Arts Career Network (LACN)
- Campus Events Calendar

Phase III – Decide & Go for It

Once you have identified a career field that aligns with your interests and abilities, the next step is to decide and go for it. During this phase, a specific goal is set (e.g., getting an internship in public relations) and a plan for achieving it is developed and executed. Once you have secured an opportunity in your career field of interest, use the information gained from your experience to remain in the career field or start the career planning process over again.

Reflect & Think

- What are the action steps you need to take to secure an opportunity in your career field of interest?
- With whom can you speak to get information about internships in this field?
- What career field should you focus on for internships? Are there other opportunities you should be open to? If so, what are they?
- What experiences from your academic, extracurricular, and employment background qualify you for these career fields? How can you highlight their relevancy in your resume, cover letter, and interview?
- How will these opportunities assist you in your long-term career goals?
- Who can you ask to serve as a professional reference?

Plan & Execute

- Update your resume and have it reviewed by a Career Advisor.
- Meet with a Career Advisor to establish your job/internship search strategy.
- Search the HireU and Liberal Arts Career Network (LACN) job/internship databases for potential opportunities of interest.
- Attend Career Fairs, speak to employers regarding potential job/internship opportunities, provide your resume to employers of interest, and send thank you e-mails.
- Search the Union Career Advisory Network(UCAN) for professionals working in career fields of interest and e-mail them to request informational interviews (see “Guide to Networking”).
- Speak with others who can provide additional information about career fields of interest and opportunities.
- Write a cover letter for a specific opportunity on HireU or the Liberal Arts Career Network (LACN) using the Career Center’s “Guide to Cover Letter Writing” and have it reviewed by a Career Advisor.
- Meet with a Career Advisor to discuss effective interviewing techniques and schedule a mock interview.
- Secure three professional references by asking faculty members, supervisors, coaches, etc. to speak on your behalf to potential employers (see “Guide to Resume Writing” for a sample references page).

Recommended Resources

- HireU, Liberal Arts Career Network (LACN) and other job/internship search databases
- Guide to Resume Writing
- Guide to Cover Letter Writing
- Guide to Networking
- Guide to Interviewing