# CAREER PLANNING

*Finding a career you’ll be happy and successful in requires balancing self-knowledge with knowledge of the job market.*

*Making yourself employable requires choosing a fitting career path and creating a career preparation plan.*

## Step 1: WHO am I?

***Your goals in this step:*** *Assess yourself, establish your criteria for an ideal career*

Begin by assessing yourself so you know how to screen the options available to you. Who are you – What do you enjoy doing? What are you good at? What do you value in a job? What characteristics describe you? To be happy in a career, it needs to align with your interests, abilities, values, and personality.

While only a tool in the process, taking a career assessment under the guidance of a career counselor can help provide you with a concrete, organized picture of who you are and what you’re looking for in a career.

Career Services offers a career assessment called **PathwayU** ([boisestate.edu/career/pathwayu/](https://www.boisestate.edu/career/pathwayu/)) free of charge.PathwayU begins by gathering data about your interests, personality, values, and workplace preferences, and then shows you how well those things align with different types of occupations. Your career counselor will help you interpret your results.

Using this information about who you are and what you want and need in a career, list your criteria for an ideal career – things you would ideally get to do, skills you would use, characteristics of the work environment, and other factors. Consider grouping these into “must have” and “wish list” items, and further ranking or prioritizing them to paint a clear picture of what an ideal career for you would look like, and to help you evaluate your options in Step 2. Your career counselor can help!

## Step 2: WHAT are my options?

***Your goals in this step:*** *Identify career options, research them, evaluate how well they match your criteria, decide on a path*

Now it’s time to explore what career options exist, research careers of interest, obtain job market information, and evaluate how well each option aligns with the criteria you’ve established. Use **Pathway U** and the resources below to get started.

**Access all web resources in our Virtual Career Center:** [boisestate.edu/career/virtual-career-center](https://www.boisestate.edu/career/virtual-career-center/)

* ***Open Career Information Databases***: Career informational databases can give you information about any type of occupation. They all have different features, so check them out, or ask your career counselor where to start.
	+ The Occupational Outlook Handbook: [bls.gov/ooh](http://www.bls.gov/ooh)
	+ Career OneStop: [careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)
	+ O\*NET: [onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org)
* ***Idaho Career Information System*** [boisestate.edu/career/idaho-career-information-system](https://www.boisestate.edu/career/idaho-career-information-system/): Want to work in Idaho? This career information database has Idaho region-specific data – job projections, salaries, and lists of companies.
* ***Vault*** [boisestate.edu/career/vault](https://www.boisestate.edu/career/vault/): Industry guides, employer profiles, internship program reviews, and more.
* ***What Can I do With This Major?*** [boisestate.edu/career/what-can-i-do-with-this-major](https://www.boisestate.edu/career/what-can-i-do-with-this-major/): This brainstorming tool identifies fields those studying a particular major tend to pursue, what kinds of companies they work for, roles within those companies, how to prepare for those jobs, and links to relevant resources.
* ***Career and Job Market Research*** [boisestate.edu/career/career-job-market-research](https://www.boisestate.edu/career/career-job-market-research/): Access job market information, employment projections, trends, and Boise State graduates’ employment plans.
* ***Professional organizations’ websites***: Use the above resources to identify professional organizations relevant to your career fields of interest, and review their websites for more in-depth information about the career.

Don’t choose a career path just based on what you find online! It’s very important to also:

* Review the Boise State Course Catalog to determine what majors and other academic programs are available (see the Summary of Programs section), and discuss your options with your career counselor. Next, talk with an advisor in the major you’re considering. Look at the classes you’d take and admissions requirements.
* **Conduct informational interviews** with professionals to gain in-depth information and the perspective of people working in the field(s) you’re considering. See our Informational Interviewing handout for instructions.
* If possible, **job shadow** some of the professionals you interviewed to help solidify your choice.

## Step 3: HOW will I get there?

***Your goal in this step:*** *Create your career preparation plan*

Though having a degree is a minimum requirement for most professional jobs, employability takes more than a degree alone.

Take a look at the employability equation:

 **Employability = an appropriate degree + the right skills + the right experiences + the right professional contacts**

Remember that your graduation requirements only tell you what you have to do to get your degree… NOT what you have to do to get a job. In this competitive job market, being employable means making sure you stand out from the competition.

**The Skills Employers Expect**

Employers care about the skills and competencies you have, not just your major. This includes technical, or job-specific skills, as well as professional skills needed for all positions requiring a degree. Learn more about some of the major skills or competencies employers are looking for here: [boisestate.edu/career/career-readiness-competencies](https://www.boisestate.edu/career/career-readiness-competencies/).

The catch is you can’t just claim you have skills. Employers want to see how you’ve *demonstrated* the skills they’re looking for, both in the classroom and through experiences outside the classroom.

**The Experience Employers Expect**

Employers *expect* you to graduate with hands-on experience in the career field you plan to work in! Your future employer will expect you to basically know how to do the job already and begin contributing your first day, so seek out experiences that help you feel prepared to do that.

There are many opportunities available to you at Boise State to gain experience that employers value, but you have to take the initiative to seek them out! The types of opportunities include:

* ***Internships*** (for academic credit or not for credit)
* ***Volunteering*** (pursue opportunities to do work in your field, or volunteer for an organization you want to work for)
* ***Service Learning*** (sign up for classes with a Service Learning component to get hands-on experience)
* ***Part-time Jobs*** (look for jobs that will let you develop skills you currently lack)
* ***Student Clubs and Organizations*** (take on leadership roles and roles related to your career goals)
* ***Study Abroad*** (develop global understanding and cultural awareness important to employers)
* ***Research*** (get involved with the research a faculty member in your department is working on)
* ***Class projects*** (sign up for courses that will allow you to complete large projects related to your career goals)
* ***Professional Organizations*** (get involved with local chapters of professional organizations for your field)

**Building Your Professional Network**

Your plan should also include meeting and building relationships with people in your field *while you’re in school*. Having professionals who can tell you about openings and make sure you are considered for positions will likely be critical to your job search. Here are some considerations for your career preparation plan:

* The experiences listed above are all good opportunities to build your network, but also build it strategically by conducting informational interviews, and by getting involved with professional organizations in your field – join as a student member, attend meetings and events, network with the group online, and even take on a volunteer position.
* Building relationships takes time. Start early in your college experience. Don’t wait till you’re graduating!
* Want to move to a specific place after graduation? Your plan should include distance networking strategies to connect with professionals where you want to work. Career Services can help you identify these strategies.

**What will employers in YOUR career field expect?**

What technical skills will your employers expect? What kinds of experience will you need to have? What will make you stand out from your competition? Conduct informational interviews to learn about the specific expectations in your field.

**Creating Your Career Preparation Plan**

A career preparation plan is just a focused, detailed action plan. There are multiple ways you could put one together, so do what works to keep you organized and on track. Consider identifying what qualifications you want to have when you graduate, and then outlining specific goals for each semester. Meet with a career counselor for help constructing your plan, and then check in periodically to get support, feedback, and guidance to help you achieve your goals.

***YOUR EMPLOYABILITY WILL BE DETERMINED BY HOW WELL YOU PLAN FOR YOUR CAREER!***

Need help? Make an in-person or online appointment at [boisestate.edu/career/appointments](https://www.boisestate.edu/career/appointments/) or call (208) 426-1747