**A Guide to Career Development for Parents and Families**

Adapted from an article by Thomas J. Denham, Copyright © National Association of Colleges and Employers

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

**1. Encourage your student to seek advice from appropriate resources on campus**

Many students use their first term to "settle into" college life, so often the optimal time to start meeting with career development professionals is in the spring term. Freshman students interested in exploring career-related topics are welcome to begin meeting with career advisors at the Gateway Student Success Center!

Beyond the first year, students may continue to work with a career advisor located at the Gateway, or may use staff or faculty as resources in the academic unit housing their major. It is important to remember that thinking about career is not just for seniors, and meeting with a career advisor or exploring the online resources available at nau.edu/careerservices can take place at any point during a student’s college career. The sooner a student becomes familiar with the resources and programs available, the better prepared he or she will be to make wise career decisions.

The network of NAU career development professionals supports students through resources that:

* Enhance self-awareness of interests, values and strengths
* Encourage exploration of future paths
* Provide opportunities to acquire knowledge and experience while still a student
* Develop skills for effective job search strategies

**2. Advise your student to create a resume**

Writing a resume can help a student identify his or her strengths and begin to articulate what he/she has to offer an employer. Visit our website to view sample resumes http://nau.edu/Career-Services/Professional-Development-Guide/Job-Search/Resumes/. You can help by reviewing your student’s resume drafts for grammar, spelling, and content, but recommend that your student seek feedback from his or her network on campus, including career advisors, staff, or faculty mentors.

**3. Challenge your student to become "occupationally aware"**

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 interests and strengths. A career decision should be a process and not a one-time event; discourage putting this reflection off until senior year. You can also recommend:

* Meeting with career development professionals on campus
* Talking to favorite faculty members about options
* Job shadowing a professional or completing an internship in an interest area
* Researching a variety of interesting career fields and employers

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

Even though it is helpful to occasionally ask about career plans or choice of major, too much prodding can backfire. It's okay to make suggestions about majors and career fields, but let your student be the ultimate judge of what's best for him or her. This may be the first really big decision that he or she has had to make. Be patient, sympathetic and understanding, even if you don't agree with his or her decisions. Students who follow their own interests and passions are generally the happiest in their careers.

**5. Emphasize the importance of internships or other practical work experience**

NAU will not "place" your student in a job at graduation. Colleges grant degrees, but not job guarantees, so having relevant experience in this competitive job market is critical. Your student can sample career options by completing internships and learning from summer jobs, on campus employment opportunities, volunteer positions or other related experience.

**6. Encourage extracurricular involvement**

Part of experiencing college life is to be involved and active outside the classroom. Interpersonal and leadership skills are qualities highly valued by future employers. These skills are often developed in extracurricular activities and through on campus employment and community service.

**7. Persuade your student to stay up-to-date with current events**

Employers will expect students to know what is happening around them. Encourage your student to follow global, national, and local events. When they are home on break, discuss what they have learned.

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

Engage your student in conversations about the world of work. Explain to your son or daughter what you do for a living. Encourage them to develop “real world skills” including fiscal knowledge such as applying for loans and paying them back after graduation, managing bills, and how to budget and save wisely. Talk with your student about potential employers, internships, or volunteer opportunities to help them prepare to start their career.

**9. Teach the value of networking**

Encourage your student to conduct Informational Interviews, talking to people who have careers/jobs that may be of interest. Connect your student to people in your personal and professional networks that may serve as a resource for information on summer jobs or internships. Encourage your student to "shadow" someone in the workplace to increase awareness of interesting career fields.

**10. Help Career Services**

There are many ways you can partner with NAU’s career development network. If your organization is hiring entry level employees or interns, list the position on Jobs for Jacks, NAU’s job search engine (http://nau.edu/Career-Services/Jobs-for-Jacks/). Consider joining our NAU Career Services LinkedIn group, or even recruiting on campus. NAU is continually exploring additional ways for parents and families to help…stay tuned!