FOUR YEAR PLAN

First Year – Awareness

- This is a time to identify possible majors of interest.
- Explore your professional options via the various majors offered. There are brochures “What Can I Do With A Major In...” available in the CDC as well as online.
- Visit the CDC to learn about our services and check out books from the Career Resource Library.
- Consider making an appointment with a counselor to learn about decision-making and goal setting.
- Learn about career assessments that assist you in identifying interests, values, skills, and personal preferences.
- Get to know faculty, counselors, and administrators. Start building relationships.
- Become active in the campus community by joining clubs and organizations. It is a good idea to meet upperclassmen from majors that you are curious about studying.
- If you are working on campus, try to find a job you are interested in having for all four years to build a strong work ethic and relevant experience.
- Attend various CDC programs and events. Watch for those events where alumni participate, i.e., Industry Panels and Career Speaker Series. It is never too early to start building your network.
- Investigate part-time and summer jobs in your area of interest. Internships are usually more difficult to get during your first year.
- Prepare a resume and learn how to write a cover letter.
- Get tips on interviewing if needed.

Suggestions for Your First Summer

- Gain work experience through a job, volunteer position, or possibly an internship. Be mindful of gaining as much insight from this experience as well as building your skills and developing good work habits. Use the time to reflect on what you have learned.
- Take a computer course.
- Study a language.
• Discuss with everyone you know what you are interested in doing.

Some Points to Consider

• If you think you know what major you will declare, or even have a reasonable idea, you might want to select an advisor in that major.
• You will choose your classes for your sophomore year in the spring semester. Although you might still be identifying your interests, remember that some majors have specific requirements that may not fill all core requirements.
• If a major of interest allows you a number of electives, you might consider a minor or double major. Electives are a good way to strengthen your skills.

This is your first year, so find some balance between your academic and co-curricular life.

Sophomore Year – Exploration

• If you have decided on a major, consider getting a part-time job or internship that relates to your field of interest or that will help you develop essential skills. Try to find a job that you might want to keep for the duration of three years that offers increasing responsibilities. This will demonstrate commitment, stability and responsibility to future employers.
• Register on TIGERlink and NIC, the CDC’s online database featuring job and internship opportunities.
• If you have not yet decided on a major, visit the Career Development Center. Learn about our services, check out books from the Career Resource Library. Seek career counseling to begin the process of exploring career paths and selecting a major.
• Visit faculty during office hours in various majors of interest during fall semester.
• If you decide to minor or double major, visit with your academic advisor to help you select courses that will compliment your goals.
• Contemplate studying abroad or spending a semester in Washington, D.C. or at the United Nations.
• Continue to get to know the faculty, counselors and administrators. Building relationships is important.
• Familiarize yourself with the resources in the Office of Undergraduate Research and National Awards if you’re considering graduate studies. These departments offer competitive local and abroad opportunities that are time-intensive to apply for.
You should have joined at least one club or organization your freshman year. During your sophomore year, you should add a second! Being involved demonstrates to employers that you have well-developed social skills and can work collaboratively and cooperatively.

Consider engaging with departments such as the Center for Community-Based Learning and Civic Engagement to demonstrate your commitment to your community.

Connect assignments, papers, speeches and projects to your field of interest—start exploring these areas and developing expertise. Use your assignments from different classes to explore your interests from different angles.

Attend various Career Development Center programs and events. Watch for those events where alumni participate, including Walk In My Shoes, Industry Panels, Career Speaker Series, and mock interviews.

Gather insight and advice from successful people in field(s) you want to enter as well as those you had never before considered. Learn what your future employers are looking for. Learn how to successfully package yourself and market your degree.

Visit the Career Development Center for training in resume writing and job interviewing. Design a resume if you do not have one. Update it at the end of every semester. Do not wait until your senior year to write your resume; you may forget some of your important achievements and experiences.

Check out the online alumni directory through Alumni Relations to find people to act as mentors.

Continue to meet with career counselors to arrange a short-term and long term career plans.

Suggestions for Your Summer

Try to find a job or internship in the field you would like to enter after graduation or that will give you general experience applicable to a variety of possible careers. Employers will be looking for relevant work experience and skill development on your resume.

If you are considering graduate school, begin researching the schools that specialize in your areas of interest now. Ask your professors for suggestions. Visit the websites of these colleges and universities to learn about their requirements.

Take classes to enhance your skills.

This is your second year, so start to focus, but keep an open mind. Begin to strategically build your resume, while keeping your academics a priority.
Junior Year – Decision-Making

- You should have already declared your major. Review the courses you’ve taken outside of your major to determine if you have enough units to establish a second major and/or minor.

- Hopefully you have already secured a variety of part-time employment that relates to your field of interest and have helped you develop essential skills. If you haven’t focused on employment, meet with a career counselor to see how it would benefit you to gain professional experience.

- It is highly recommended that you complete at least one internship in your field of interest your junior year. Internships show employers that you understand the importance of preparation and its relationship to professional success as well as the ability to make the transition from the world of school to the world of work.

- Stretch your abilities in a leadership position by getting involved in student government, holding an office in a club, becoming a project director, or tutoring in the Center for Academic Excellence. Being involved demonstrates to employers that you have well-developed social skills, can multi-task and work collaboratively and cooperatively. Develop strong relationships with the sponsor, faculty and staff surrounding the organization. These people can write recommendations for jobs and graduate school.

- Gain student memberships in the professional associations related to your major and/or minor.

- Check out the online alumni directory for people to act as mentors and advisors in your field of interest.

- Connect assignments, papers and projects to your field(s) of interest. Explore these areas and start developing expertise.

- Attend career-related workshops, programs, and panels as well as career and graduate fairs.

- Continue to meet with career counselors and research your career options in more detail. Talk to professionals already in the field. Develop some alternate plans.

- Write or update your resume; learn how to write a powerful cover letter. Practice interviewing.

- If you are considering graduate or professional school, begin researching the schools that specialize in your areas of interest now. Ask your professors for suggestions. Learn about requirements for entrance into Master’s and Ph.D. degree programs.
Suggestions for Your Summer

- Try to find a job or internship in the field you would like to enter after graduation or that will give you general experience applicable to a variety of possible careers. Employers will be looking for relevant work experience on your resume.
- If you are planning to go to graduate school, find out what admissions tests are necessary. Take them in summer or fall of the senior year. Start studying well in advance. The Career Development Center has practice GRE and LSAT tests on computers. Be aware of application deadlines. Work closely with your academic advisor to choose classes and co-curricular activities that will help make you a competitive applicant! Find out what research or special projects are going on in your department and join in.
- Take classes to enhance your skills.

This is your third year, so focus your direction. Keep balance between your academic and co-curricular life, while intentionally gaining professional experience.

Senior Year – Implementation

- Complete requirements for graduation.
- Clearly identify interests, values and skills. Learn the skills required for a career in your field of interest.
- Begin determining a short-term, post-undergraduate plan in the context of your long-term aspirations. Set goals and develop an action plan to accomplish them.
- Meet with faculty, career counselors, and administrators who know you best and discuss your plans. These individuals can be references for jobs and graduate school.
- This is your last chance to stretch your abilities in a leadership position in student government, clubs, or other campus organizations. Try a different role within these groups.
- If you are working on campus, build a strong work ethic and develop relevant skills. It is highly recommended that you complete at least one internship in your field of interest in either the fall or spring semester.
- Gain student memberships in the professional association related to your interests. Ask professors for suggestions.
- Check out the online alumni directory for people to contact about their careers and their organizations.
- Attend career-related workshops, programs, and industry panels as well as career and graduate fairs. Gather insight and advice from successful people in
fields you want to enter or have not yet considered. Learn what employers are looking for in new hires. Find out how to package yourself and market your degree.

- Continue to meet with career counselors and research your career options in more detail.
- Develop different job search strategies and keep your resume updated. Consider having a videotaped mock interview with a counselor. Develop a portfolio of your relevant projects and assignments.
- MAKE TIME to do an intentional job search. It takes time and effort to find a good position – allow three to six months. Have a plan of action and some kind of chart to keep careful records.
- If you are planning on attending graduate or professional school, turn in your applications on time. Take your tests no later than fall semester.
- Research applicable fellowship or other post-graduate awards if you are considering a gap-year experience.
- Develop a timetable for career development after graduation.
- Join the Alumni Association.

**Timeline for Your Final Year**

**September**

- Apply for Walk in My Shoes (externship)
- Write a resume
- Learn how to write a powerful cover letter
- Check TIGERlink regularly for job announcements
- Consider taking on one last internship

**October/November**

- Research occupations and organizations
- Focus on decision-making and goal setting
- Develop an action plan
- Conduct informational interviews and build a network
- Attend all career programs, especially industry panels and speaker series
- Start sending out resumes and don’t stop
- Check out the online alumni directory for contacts
- Attend career fairs
- If applicable, take appropriate graduate school tests
- Check out deadlines for graduate applications
December/January

- Continue researching occupations and organization
- Continue informational interviews
- Continue building your professional network
- Buy an interview suit if needed
- Organize a portfolio of relevant projects and assignments

February

- Participate in Industry Night to meet recruiters
- Keep building contacts in the field(s) of interest
- Develop your job search plan and spend several hours a week on strategies
- If applicable, go on job interviews

March/April

- Have a job search system in place
- Try varied strategies for finding employment
- Dedicate additional hours a week to an organized plan
- Start plans to transition from Occidental College

This is your final year. You have a lot on your mind. Remain focused and keep balance between your academic, co-curricular, and burgeoning professional life.