

COLLEGE TO

COLLEGE COSTS TIME AND MONEY.
THESE TIPS WILL HELP YOU SPEND BOTH WISELY.

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My work frequently takes me from a higher-education setting to a corporate setting as I meet with organizations, businesses, and government entities to coordinate internship and entry-level employment opportunities for Brigham Young University—Idaho students and alumni. In the course of my assignments, I have learned many things about education and the subsequent transition to the workplace. The following information may be helpful to new high school graduates, college students, and their parents—as well as those who are looking to return to school to enhance their job skills.

Before You Select a College, University, or Trade School

Try to identify subjects you would be interested in studying. Seriously consider what major you might select. Of course, you're not locked into that decision, but having some idea of your preferences and abilities will ultimately help you select the right major. In some parts of the world, secondary schools are designed to help you choose a career path. Even if this isn't the case in your area, choosing a major ahead of time will in turn help you determine which

CAREER PLANNING FOR SUCCESS



schools have strong programs in your chosen area of study.

Take advantage of career guidance services at your high school, and where possible, the counsel of other career experts. Ask to take personality and career tests. (Many such tests are also available free online.)

They may not always be completely accurate, but the process of taking them might help you identify areas in which you excel or that you enjoy. Talk to parents, teachers, Church leaders, and friends who might be able to point out abilities they have noticed in you—things you might not have considered. Additionally, visit with people who work in the professions you are considering. Their insights may prove invaluable as you look to develop the right career path.


Decide what your priorities are. The field you choose can affect where you live, how long you will be in school, your income, the work schedule you will keep, your ability to serve in Church callings, and many other important aspects of your life. Consider these in light of your values and priorities as you zone in on career possibilities. Think about the future and commit to the necessary education. Be willing to sacrifice early in order to succeed later.

During College

Select a major. If you're still uncertain about potential areas of study, consider enrolling in a career-exploration class early in your college experience. These courses orient you with a variety of possibilities. Most universities have an advising office for students looking for career guidance. Take advantage of this free advice, and don't wait until you are about to graduate.

Meet with your faculty adviser. Most colleges, universities, and trade schools assign students to a faculty adviser or mentor, and some schools require that students meet with this person on a regular basis. These meetings provide students with a great opportunity to discuss their major, ask questions, and receive feedback about their plans. They can also help you avoid losing time in taking classes that you don't need. Some faculty members may have worked in the very industry that interests you. Faculty members are some of the most influential and knowledgeable people to counsel with on these matters.

Consider additional skills outside of your major. Even if choosing a minor is not required for graduation, think seriously about taking classes concentrated in another discipline. This may be essential once you begin working in your field. For instance, I know of students who majored in construction management and entered the workforce as residential building was booming. But when that industry slowed a few years later, they were able to easily transition into commercial building, in part because they had minors in business management that proved to be an applicable and valuable skill set in their new work opportunities. The nature of your work will likely change—several times—over the course of your career. Having additional skills helps you be flexible and qualifies you to meet new and unexpected challenges.



Move into the world without becoming part of it. Giving your work your best effort and being an example of what you believe will help you meet with success.

A NOTE FOR PARENTS AND LEADERS

One of the most important things you can do as a parent or leader is talk about education early and often. If a young person is exposed to people who encourage and promote education, even if those people did not have the opportunity for education themselves, that exposure often translates into the student seeking educational opportunities. Create that expectation as early as you can.

Leaders of youth might consider asking ward and stake members who work in different fields to give presentations, perhaps at Mutual or other Church and social settings, about what they do for a living and what has helped them be successful in their chosen fields. You might also ask people who work in higher education to speak to the youth about the value of education. Even when parents are already encouraging college, it helps youth to hear it from others as well.

Complete an internship in your field of study or obtain other work-related opportunities. Nothing compares to experience. An internship is beneficial because it lets you find out what you really want to do. For most students, an internship confirms that the field they've been studying is, in fact, one in which they would like to work. It can also tell them specifics about what kind of organization they'd like to work for. An accounting major, for example, may realize that she likes accounting, but after interning at a large public firm, she may discover that she prefers to use her accounting skills working for a small, private business instead. Internships can also be a beneficial experience because in many cases, new graduates are offered full-time, permanent positions with the company with which they interned.

Approaching Graduation

Become familiar with standard business etiquette. Many colleges and universities offer services that allow you to participate in a mock interview or get feedback on a cover letter or résumé. Take advantage of these. If your school doesn't offer such services, have a parent or friend who has been through the interviewing process in a field similar to yours conduct a mock interview. The Internet is also a great resource for career-etiquette information. Knowing how to dress appropriately, what to say, and even little things like how to properly eat a meal in a business setting can bring you confidence and reflect well on you and your alma mater.

Prepare thoroughly for interviews. Do your homework before going to an interview. One of the worst things you can say at an interview is, "So, tell me a little bit about your company." It's much better to go into an interview already knowing about the organization—its industry, its mission, its size, its locations, its opportunities, and so forth. In this electronic age, there is no reason for not obtaining extensive background information,

which can often make a huge difference in the interviewing process.

It is also likely that the person conducting the interview will ask if you have any questions. It is unwise to respond, "No, I don't think so," or "No, you answered all of my questions." The research you did before your interview will help you frame thoughtful, informed, challenging questions. Not only will this provide you with answers in determining whether the company is a good fit, but it is also likely to impress your interviewer. There is always room for a carefully crafted, well-structured question.

Adhere to your values. The nature of my work requires that I spend time with different corporations in a variety of settings, usually with the intent to establish internship and career opportunities. Whether the person I'm meeting with represents a government entity, a multinational business, or a homegrown local enterprise, one of the things I frequently hear is the importance of personal character. Hiring directors are intently interested in finding someone who is honest, someone who is dependable, and someone who will demonstrate a consistent

work ethic. Companies can often teach particular skill sets much more easily than they can wholesome, innate character traits.

Move into the world without becoming part of it. Not everyone in the workplace will share your standards. Of course, you don't need to buckle to peer pressure, but you also don't need—and cannot afford—to be self-righteous. Be warm and friendly, professional and productive, understanding yet unwavering. Giving your work your best effort and being an example of what you believe without seeming self-righteous or condescending will help you meet with success in more than one way. Living gospel principles and adhering to your beliefs will help you recognize your professional niche in the workforce early in your career. ■

OTHER RESOURCES

Many career-preparation and career opportunities are available through LDS Employment Resource Services. Nearly 300 LDS employment resource centers are found in more than 50 countries throughout the world. Employment Resource Services' Career Workshop can be helpful whether you're unemployed, wanting to upgrade from one job level to another, seeking education or training opportunities, wanting to start your own business, or simply looking to refine your skills. Staff members and volunteers can teach you to

- "sell yourself" in 30 seconds;
- network;
- create a powerful résumé and cover letter;
- negotiate and interview;
- search for a better position;
- discover other helpful resources.

For more information about LDS Employment Resource Services or to find a center near you, please visit LDSJobs.org.