

# Top Ten Tips for Parents

by Thomas J. Denham

One of the most valuable things parents can do to help a student with career planning is listen: be open to ideas, try to help your student find information, and be nonjudgmental.

## Here are 10 ways you can help:

### 1. Encourage your child to visit the career center (and you go too!)

Next time you visit campus, drop into the career services office and pick up a business card from one of the career counselors. When your son or daughter is feeling anxious about his/her future, offer the card and say, "Please call this person. He (or she) can help you."

Many students use their first semester to "settle into" college life, and so perhaps the spring semester of the freshman year is the optimal time to start using career center services. And, it's a good time for you to prompt that first visit.

Ask your student (in an off-handed way), "Have you visited the career center?" If you hear, "You only go there when you are a senior," then it's time to reassure them that career services is not just for seniors, and meeting with a career counselor can take place at any point (and should take place frequently) in their college career. The sooner a student becomes familiar with the staff, resources, and programs, the better prepared he or she will be to make wise career decisions.

Many centers offer a full range of career development and job-search help including:

- mock interviews
- a network of alumni willing to talk about their jobs and careers
- workshops on writing resumes and cover letters
- a recruiting program
- individual advising

### 2. Advise your student to write a [resume](#)

Writing a resume can be a "reality test" and can help a student identify weak areas that require improvement. Suggest that your student get sample resumes from the career center, from books at the public library, or online.

You can review resume drafts for grammar, spelling, and content, but recommend that the final product be critiqued by a career center professional.

### 3. Challenge your student to become "occupationally literate"

Ask: "Do you have any ideas about what you might want to do when you graduate?"

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## **Why an internship?**

Employers are interested in communication, problem-solving, and administrative skills, which can be developed through internships.

Employers look for experience on a student's resume and often hire from within their own internship programs.

Having a high GPA is not enough.

A strong letter of recommendation from an internship supervisor can often tip the scale of an important interview in their favor.

## **6. Encourage extracurricular involvement**

Part of experiencing college life is to be involved and active outside the classroom.

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