



# MAKE A CAREER PLAN

Do you know what your life's work will be? If not, you're not alone. It's worth taking the time to develop an informed viewpoint on the career you want, so you can focus on getting there. This handout provides a strong start.

A career plan establishes your short-term and long-term goals, then defines the actions you need to take to achieve them. Having a clear plan can guide your decisions on classes, internships and other activities to prepare you for entry and success in your field of choice.



## 1 Start with a self-assessment

Let's start with a self-assessment, which will guide creation of your career plan. What are your VIPS (Values, Interests, Personality and Skills)? See our "Self-Assessment and Career Exploration" handout for help. Think about career directions that fit, and gather information—go online to research careers and companies, and speak with DePaul Career Advisors and faculty for input.

## 2 Sharpen your VIPS

It's useful to rank and prioritize. Look at your VIPS list. Which are your strongest skills and most passionate interests? What's most important in life? What matters in your career—challenging work? High pay? Location? Benefits? Are there deal breakers? An honest look at these things and sharpening your VIPS will help develop a clearer view of your career options.

## 3 Narrow down your options

Take your sharpened VIPS list and match it up with the career options you've identified. Are some potential winners emerging? You can narrow them down with activities like job shadowing (our "Job Shadowing" handout can help) and informational interviews (we have a handout to help with this, too).

## 4 Careers: take a closer look

It makes sense to expand your career evaluation beyond your VIPS. What does the employment landscape look like in each of the options? What's the demand in the field? If there's low demand or high barriers to entry, are you comfortable with the challenge?

## 5 Choose your path (or paths)

Based on the information you've gathered, choose the option or options that feel best. Many choose more than one potential career destination to maximize opportunities and flexibility along the way. Others feel more comfortable narrowing their options to one or two maximum, to better focus their plan.

## 7 Make your action plan

You've decided your career destination or destinations. You've put milestones in place to guide you. Now it's time to plan your path forward—the action steps—to achieve your goals and arrive at the career of your choice. Action steps include taking specific courses that help you build skills, joining relevant student or professional organizations, networking, and other activities.

## 6 Set your goals

Successful plans have specific goals and timeframes. Divide your goals into short-term (achieved in one year or less) and long-term (1–5 year) goals. Make sure they're "SMART!"

**Specific** Clear and specific, so you'll know when you get there!

**Measurable** Defined criteria for measuring progress and achievement

**Achievable** a reasonable chance of success

**Relevant** Goals that tie closely to what's important to you

**Time defined** Specific but realistic time-based milestones defined

**ONE STEP WE'D RECOMMEND AT ANY STAGE, MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH AN ADVISOR AT THE DEPAUL CAREER CENTER TO REVIEW YOUR PLAN.**

*Plans change!*

As you pursue your chosen path, remember that it's not a bad thing to make changes along the way. You may make new discoveries about yourself, your strengths, or your interests that uncover new possibilities. It's all part of your life's exciting journey!