

## Smart Career Moves: How Parents Can Help

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Tough economic times and the rising cost of tuition have heightened many parents' concerns about career opportunities for their students. But as in a good economy, students who approach career planning in a persistent, strategic and positive way are the ones who will be marketable in a competitive job market.

The Fleishman Career Center educates students on career options and how their majors connect with the world of work; coaches them through the internship and job search process; helps develop professional work-place skills; and provides direction and support through the graduate/professional school application process. Student are urged to begin using the Career Center EARLY in their academic career.

### How You Can Help Your Student Make Good Career Decisions

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As a parent or guardian of a Binghamton University student, it is important to understand your role within the career decision-making process. There are three key factors to remember when helping your student.

**Support** – Support your student's responsible involvement in campus activities and exploration of new areas of study and interests. Help him/her to feel empowered to make decisions, follow passions and develop independence and confidence.

**Listen** – Students discover new things about themselves throughout the college experience and will likely want to bounce ideas off of you. Try to keep an open mind and demonstrate a willingness to listen. Doing so will maintain a clear line of communication and encourage your student to talk to you more openly.

**Encourage** – Encourage your student to take risks, move beyond his/her comfort zone, actively engage in the University experiences, and talk to new people. Also encourage early use of the Fleishman Career Center.

### How You Can Help Your Student Make Smart Career Moves

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#### Choosing a Major

Because many employers today put **more emphasis on skills** than on academic majors, students should focus on majors they enjoy and in which they excel.

- What about a double major? A majority of employers do not necessarily place a premium on a double major. It usually requires an extra one or two semesters to obtain a second major and does not automatically enhance a student's marketability. Exceptions would be a second major or a minor chosen for a specific career, such as English and chemistry for technical writing, or a health policy major and business minor for hospital administration. Of course, some students may choose to double major primarily for academic/intellectual purposes.
- Encourage your student to explore different classes, majors, internships, and career fields to help determine the best fit for his/her skills, values, and personality.
- Keep in mind that "major" does not equate to "career," and it is not unusual for a student to change majors. Many students change majors after gaining more information about different disciplines and/or career fields of interest. Frequently, students end up doing something very different than they originally planned, so don't be overly concerned when they come up with what seems to be an outrageous or impractical career idea. First, it may not be as impractical as you initially believe. Second, chances are, their plans will develop and change. It's okay to change majors—and careers. (*Source: National Association of Colleges and Employers*)

What's important is to develop—and be able to articulate—transferable skills. A student who develops strengths in at least two or three of the following areas will be positioning him/herself well to be flexible in our ever-changing economic times:

1. Computer skills
2. Quantitative skills
3. Communication skills (written and oral)
4. Marketing/selling skills
5. Scientific skills
6. Foreign language skills
7. Leadership skills

## Encourage Participation

Future employers and graduate programs will seek candidates with relevant, “real-world” work experience. Of course good grades are important, but what will help a student be competitive in the job market and graduate school is a track record of involvement on and off campus. This includes:

1. Active engagement in **clubs and organizations** on and off campus.
2. **Leadership** roles.
3. **Global awareness** and competency, developed through actual study and experience abroad and/or through campus- and community-based activities.
4. **Positive relationships** with faculty, staff, alumni and other professionals on and off campus (network). These will be necessary for references and letters of recommendations for graduate study or employment.
5. **Utilizing job shadowing experiences.** These short-term experiences allow a student to try out careers for a day or several days. It can help them in the career decision-making process by giving them first-hand about an occupation. For students in **Harpur College, the Liberal Arts to Careers Externship program (LACE)** is an excellent opportunity to gain this type of experience.
6. A professional social media presence through **LinkedIn**, which has become a critical component of the job and internship search.

## Encourage Your Student to Gain Internship or Research Experience

Some employers use their internship programs as recruitment tools for full-time hires. Participating in an internship (paid, for academic credit, or unpaid) with an organization of interest is not only a way for a student to gain real-world experience, but it can frequently be an entry point for full-time employment.

Depending on your student’s career goals, research experience may be more important than an internship. Many students conduct research on campus, while others seek opportunities in outside facilities. Regardless of the location, the skills, knowledge and relationships gained from such experiences can greatly enhance application credentials.

The Career Center provides many resources and services to assist students with their search to gain relevant experience. This includes Job & Internship Fairs, the CDCI Academic Internship Program, our online system for position postings, career-related programming, and informational resources about local and national opportunities.

## Decisions about Graduate School

The decision to invest more time and money into one's education should be carefully considered based on one's goals, intended career path, and level of commitment to the field. We encourage students to think critically about their reasons to pursue graduate studies to ensure that they are inspired to go for the right reasons (and not because they are afraid of a bad economy or want to postpone entering the workforce). Contrary to what you may have heard, the Master’s is not the new Bachelor’s in all fields. While some careers require a Master’s degree, many well-paying jobs require only a Bachelor’s degree. **In some instances, an advanced degree will increase marketability while in other instances, additional work experience will be more relevant.** Most programs are highly competitive and in a poor economy competition will be even more so, as experienced workers who have been laid off are looking at graduate school as a way to retool for their next career. If your student is a junior or senior and graduate school is his/her next logical step, there are a number of steps to begin taking now. The Career Center can help your student structure an appropriate plan for approaching his/her individual graduate school process.

## How to Find a Job

While today’s economy has raised anxiety levels with regard to employment of college graduates, employers *are* still hiring. The Career Center features a robust on-campus interviewing program and online job search tool, and provides assistance to students from all majors. The best strategy for a student’s job search success is to be proactive in understanding the job search process and to be actively engaged in seeking opportunities, networking with professionals, and tailoring documents to individual employers. We’ll help them every step of the way.

### Hire a Binghamton University Student!

With your student at Binghamton University, you personally understand the quality of our students. Encourage your employer to use the Fleishman Career Center’s online job posting service to post internships, summer jobs, and permanent opportunities and to consider attending our job fairs. More information is on the [Employer](#) section of the Career Center website: [www.binghamton.edu/ccpd](http://www.binghamton.edu/ccpd)