

"I want to make a well-planned decision on a satisfying career. Where do I start? When do I start?"

Making career decisions starts with self-assessment of your interests, abilities, skills, values and lifestyle preferences. This handout has a number of suggestions that may help you with that self-assessment process and with exploring your career options. The suggestions in this handout fall under the categories of media, people and experiences. Allow yourself time to make a well-planned career decision. Since your personal career development is a "process" rather than an event, begin your self-assessment and career research to-day. You may want to refer to the handout "Career Planning Timeline for USCA Students" for a planning guide delineated by academic year.

"I have to declare a major. How do I go about making an appropriate decision on my college major?"

The suggestions in this handout are focused on career decision-making but may also be of help to you as you consider the career implications of any college major you choose.

Media

One way to explore is through printed information and other media. Through these materials, you can start to make an initial determination about your level of interest in careers and/or college majors. From your reading, make a list of occupations, types of positions, specializations, or academic majors that interest you. The following are suggestions for career sources:

USCA Career Reference Library

(located in the USCA Career Services Office)

- ♦ Career reference books
- ♦ Career-related videos
- ♦ Career magazines
- ♦ Employer literature and job listings

USCA's Gregg-Graniteville Library

(and/or other libraries)

- ♦ Books about occupations
- ♦ Newspaper and magazine articles on occupations and business trends
- ♦ Professional journals and business directories

USCA Academic Materials

(for research of college majors)

- ♦ USCA course descriptions. Read through the USCA Bulletin for course descriptions of the majors that interest you and the requirements of the departments.
- ♦ Books required for college majors. Why not flip through the pages of required course textbooks to determine if the information looks interesting to you? You can scan these books at the campus bookstore, or perhaps you might ask to see a friend's textbook who attends a USCA class of interest to you.

Computer Resources

- ♦ Computer-assisted career guidance system (in the Career Services Office and on the USCA LAN)
- ♦ Computer Internet resources

People

People can be valuable sources of information about occupations. These personal contacts can be made through a variety of approaches — both formal and informal — and may lead to suggestions of other people that you can talk with.

Family and Friends

Talk with family and friends for information on careers. Perhaps they can assist you with ways to research careers. But, remember, your career decision is still yours — and one which should be appropriate and comfortable for you.

Fellow Students

Network with other students to learn about college majors, internships or jobs they've had, or talk with members of their families who may have information about careers. You might be surprised at how much career information you can obtain through other students on our campus and at other campuses.

USCA Career Services Office

Services offered through the Career Services Office are not just for finding a job when you graduate! Take advantage of our services to help you make career and college major decisions.

- ♦ We are available to talk with you individually about your specific career issues.
- ♦ Upon request, our staff is available for presentations on specific career issues to classes and to student organizations.
- ♦ Throughout the year, we offer career workshops.
- ♦ We offer annual career day events at which you can meet and talk one-on-one with employers and other professionals — for the purposes of career research and career planning, in addition to job search.

USCA Cooperative Education Program

The Cooperative Education program, sponsored by the Office of Career Services, strives to provide eligible USCA students with experiential learning that is relevant to their academic pursuits. The Office works closely with employers to develop co-op positions and fill them with highly motivated, qualified and competent students. To be eligible for the USCA Cooperative Education Program, students must be academically qualified, referred by their faculty, and registered through the Cooperative Education Office. For more information, contact the Cooperative Education Office, Penland Administration Building, Room 108-E, 641-3541.

USCA Academic Advisement Office

People to talk with about college majors include, of course, the staff of the Academic Advisement Office and department-specific academic advisors. The Academic Advisement Office is located in Penland Administration Building, Room 108-E, 641-3297.

Other USCA Departmental Faculty and Staff

Talk with professors and administrators about careers and college majors. Also, each academic department may sponsor various career seminars and workshops. Watch and listen for these opportunities, as they may not always be well advertised.

Professionals

Many professionals are very willing to talk with you while you are involved in personal "career research." You might first research the career field and prepare a list of questions before contacting the professional. Talk with professionals who are currently working in an occupation of interest to you and who like their jobs. This type of research is sometimes referred to as an "information interview." In conjunction with an information interview, you might also request to "job shadow" (or observe) for a day or a partial day.

Contacts at Career Events, Conferences, Workshops, Fairs/Expositions

Look for events related to your career fields of interest both on and off campus. Utilize these as opportunities to listen to presenters and to meet and talk with people who have similar career interests.



Experiences

Gaining relevant experience is an excellent way to reality-test careers that you are considering and to gain skills that increase your marketability when you graduate.

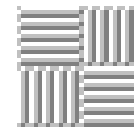
Academic Classes: Classes can help you to explore, reality-test, and gain skills.

Extracurricular Activities: These activities can include membership in student organizations (whether career-related, academic, or other), membership in professional organizations (student membership), hobbies, volunteer activities, and involvement in campus or community events.

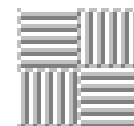
Career-Related Work Experiences: Also called "experiential learning," career-related work experiences can include on-campus student employment, summer jobs, internships, cooperative education, part- and full-time employment, and volunteer positions. Check with the Career Services Office for possible listings of these opportunities -- in both on- and off-campus locations.

The above are only suggestions. Be creative in looking for opportunities for yourself to explore careers and college majors. Watch and listen for opportunities throughout the year.

USC Aiken provides affirmative action and adheres to the principle of equal educational and employment opportunity without regard to race, color, religion, sex, creed, national origin, age, disability or veteran status. This policy extends to all programs and activities supported by the university. Any person who feels they qualify for special accommodations due to a physical, learning, or psychological disability should contact the Office of Disability Services at (803) 641-3626 for a free confidential interview. If you need this form in an alternative format, please contact Kay Durden (or whoever your contact person is at the phone and email address of that person).



USCA CAREER SERVICES



EXPLORING CAREERS and COLLEGE MAJORS



**Penland Administration
Building
Room 107
803/641-3440**

<http://www.usca.sc.edu/careers>