Top Ten Career Strategies for First-Year Students

Planning for life after Carleton starts with your first day on campus! Don’t worry—there are plenty of people to help you on your journey. Academic advisers, faculty and staff mentors, Career Center staff, and even Carleton alums are all great resources. Don’t procrastinate! Get a start with your career planning now, and you’ll be poised for success when you graduate.

1. Get to know your academic adviser. Stop by your adviser’s office hours periodically to discuss your ideas about majors and careers. The better your adviser knows you, the better he/she will be able to help you.

2. Participate in co-curricular activities. Join clubs and organizations that interest you, and play an active role in them. This will help you build skills that employers value, and will help you build a network of people who share your interests.

3. Complete your Student Profile, and keep it updated. Your Profile is a place for you to build a professional online presence. It will give you a starting point for conversations with faculty and staff advisers. And it will help you connect with other students and alumni who share your academic and career-related interests. You can access your Profile through Carleton’s online directory. For help, visit the Career Center.

4. Sign up to participate in 30-Minutes. The Career Center sponsors on-campus informational interviews that give you a chance to meet individually with alumni who work in a variety of career fields. Want to learn more about a field you think you might like? This is your chance to get personalized information. Don’t be shy – alums love to talk to students about their career paths. You don’t need to have definite career plans to participate; you just need to be curious and interested. Check the Career Center website for details.

5. Register in the “Tunnel.” The Tunnel is the Career Center’s central job and internship database. It’s also a tool that helps the Career Center communicate with you about upcoming opportunities in career areas that interest you. The more complete your Tunnel registration, the more you’ll get targeted information related to your interests.

6. Identify your interests, skills, and values. It’s important to know yourself well, so that you can begin to evaluate career areas that might be a fit for you. For help with this, schedule a meeting with a counselor in the Career Center (call x4293 or stop by the office in the lower level of Sayles-Hill). If you want to get a start on this on your own, check out some of the self-assessment activities on CareerBeam (accessible through the Tunnel).

7. Become active in the community. Service is a way to share your talents, learn new skills, and explore a passion. Volunteer experience can lead to internship opportunities, and can help you identify career options. Service experience is also great to include in your resume. Visit the ACT (Acting in the Community Together) office in Sayles-Hill 150 to find a service opportunity.

8. Perfect your communication skills. One of the top skills employers seek in new hires is the ability to communicate effectively – both in writing and orally. Make use of resources on campus, including Speakeasy and the Writing Center, both located in Scoville, to ensure that you’re building these skills.

9. Be academically adventurous. Take advantage of the opportunity to explore classes that appeal to you. Think broadly when considering possible majors. Consider selecting a major that allows you to study areas you love; don’t think narrowly about how your major might correlate with a particular career. The beauty of a liberal arts education is that it will prepare you for a wide variety of careers, no matter what your major. Log into the Carleton Alumni Directory (accessible through the alumni relations website) to see where alums who majored in different fields are working now. Explore Carleton’s Pathways website to read about the varied career paths of our alumni.

10. Schedule an individual meeting with one of the professional career counselors in the Career Center. We can help you create a personalized four-year plan so that you feel confident about your career goals. You don’t have to know what you want to do before you come in – we’re here to help you figure that out!

The Career Center

Open Monday–Friday 8:30 am–5:00 pm
Career Advisor Walk-ins: Monday–Friday, Career Center, 11:00 am–5:00 pm
Sunday–Thursday, Libe 1st Floor, 8:00 pm–10:00 pm

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