

Career Center

Experience Buffet

Picture a delicious buffet with your favorite dishes as well as delicacies that you have heard of but never had the opportunity to try. Food and drink from around the globe, each prepared to perfection. How do you approach this buffet?

Would you start at the beginning piling on everything that looks delicious as it passes before you? But then you would be too full to enjoy your favorite dessert at the end. You could take only a tiny taste of a few things to keep your options open, only to find yourself still hungry in the end. Perhaps you are already imagining another, more strategic approach as you read.

When it comes to the vast and tantalizing smorgasbord of experiences accessible to Duke students, it is not difficult to understand why Dukies tend to behave like hungry diners piling their plates as high as possible. We know that one of the reasons you were admitted to Duke was because of your diverse experiences, which demonstrated that you were an intellectually curious and interesting person.

You may deftly balance your overloaded plate, but are you getting the most enjoyment and benefit from your meal? Or is your palate overrun by all of the flavors and textures, unable to distinguish savory from sweet, crisp from creamy? Do you conclude your meal feeling satiated or stuffed? Well nourished or just full?

Let's go back to the buffet. What's your best strategy?

Scan your options.

Based on what you know about your tastes and preferences, what must you have? Do you see anything that hadn't previously piqued your curiosity but does now? What dishes are available that you have not seen or heard of before now?

Make your selections and enjoy.

Choose a balance of nutritious and indulgent options, old favorites and something new. Not too many selections on one plate—you can always go back for more! Taste each item on its own, then see how the flavors blend or complement each other. Enjoy slowly and savor.



Assess your satisfaction.

Are you still hungry? Was your anticipated favorite less tasty than you had hoped? Leave it on the plate to save room to eat something else.

Go back for more.

You are even more prepared this time around. You know what you like and what you have yet to try. You have gotten feedback about the things that others have enjoyed. Your preferences are more specific and you are scanning for particular items that will satisfy you.

Talk about the meal.

After leaving the meal you are still talking about it. What did you like and why? Did you skip anything appealing because you were no longer hungry? Would something else have helped round out the meal for you? Would you go back for more? If so, what would you have? What would you pass over?

Your career development process is like a buffet.

It entails tasting and trying, learning what you like and what you find unappealing, and even experiencing moments of hunger and excess. You are also learning how to satiate an appetite that changes with time, and how to get more out of your experience by discussing and reflecting with others.

Bon appétit!