

## Discover Opportunities

Embrace a variety of sources and exploration methods to gain deeper insight into new possibilities. Like your academic coursework, you must continuously assess the reliability, validity, and bias of your sources. As your perspective widens, so do your choices.

Be sure to take stock of your impressions as you make new career discoveries.

- What are you motivated to explore further and why?
- Are you learning things that are different than you expected, and how do you feel about this new picture?
- Did you discover something that interested you in some ways but not in others?
- What aspects of the experience were you drawn to, and what aspects were unappealing, and why?
- What else do you want and need to know?
- Are there obvious things to learn next that will help you understand other components?

Here are some suggested strategies with increasing levels of risk and reward. Words of warning—be sure to employ all three categories to be comprehensive.

## READ Look through a professional lens.

You can learn a lot about your areas of interest from your computer screen or a print publication.

Some key patterns you'll want to narrow in on include:

- Where do people in this field go for professional news and updates? For jobs and internships?
- What memberships, affiliations, or certifications are common or relevant?
- What qualities or experiences are (in)consistent in the histories or profiles of the people who impress you?

Some ideas for information sources:

- Websites
- Blogs
- Discussion Boards
- Trade Journals
- Reference Books
- Memoirs and Biographies

## TALK Learn through others' experiences.

Explore fields of interest through conversations with people whose work intrigues you. No need to wait for the perfect situation or a formal career-related event. A waiting room, grocery store line, or a family gathering are all great places to gain insight from others about their careers. Use **informational interviewing** to gain a personal and practical perspective on your career interests and to build relationships with individuals in fields you may choose to pursue.

**Here are the basics:**

**Identify individuals** whose personal career path, organization, or broader field of work interests you. Feel free to start with people close to you. After all, do you really know what your uncle does at his cool sounding job everyday or why your favorite professor chose her field of research?

**Introduce yourself** or ask a mutual acquaintance to make an introduction. Email is one way to do this. Consider friends' parents, Duke alums, or professionals in your community. Briefly explain your curiosity about their work.

**Ask for 30 minutes** to speak with them about it at a time and location convenient for them (a phone call is an option, but an online conversation is not).

Be punctual, prepared, and professional in your dress and demeanor for the meeting. Keep reading for suggested questions.

**Take notes** while being sure to focus on building rapport and making eye contact.

**Request referrals** to others who would be willing to share information.

**Keep the conversation on schedule** to acknowledge that their time is valuable.

**Express your gratitude** at the conclusion of the conversation and through a thoughtful thank-you note afterwards.

### Great Questions for Any Career Conversation:

- How did you get started in this field? Are there other entry points as well?
- Will I need more formal training to apply for positions in this field? What organizations provide training on the job?
- What do you like most/least about your work?
- What qualities and skills are needed?
- What are the possibilities for advancement?
- What new developments are expected in the field in the next three to five years?
- What do you read to keep informed of events, issues, and openings in your field?
- What does a typical day look like for you?

# DO!

## You define experience.

Your opportunity to reality-test some of the things you have learned from others is now! Think broadly and creatively about what defines experience and you will discover ways that you can dabble in new realms or continue to build your expertise. For example, many writers build and maintain a topical blog to develop their craft, as well as display passion and knowledge on a defined topic.

Here are some other ideas:

- Ask to shadow and observe someone during a normal workday.
- Volunteer for an organization, an event, or a person to develop specific abilities.
- Develop your experience in a club to showcase your strengths.
- Invent a project and offer to do it for someone, or do it for you.
- Create ways you can contribute to research or work that intrigues you.
- Secure an internship during the school year.

## "I don't need to explore... I already know what I want!"

Are you sure? Bet you're not finished yet—exploration builds upon itself, so this might be your opportunity to become more refined in your professional and personal knowledge.

**You may use these questions to guide your learning in order to become the most competitive candidate possible:**

### Who

- Create a detailed profile of the person who would thrive in the role(s) to which you aspire? Can you do this yet?
- Are there areas for your own improvement?

### What

- What sources of information and relationships do the professionals in this field use to keep up with news, trends, and colleagues? Are you paying attention to these, regularly?
- What are the strategies used in this field to identify and bring on new talent? What are their motivators, timelines, resources, strategies, or techniques that you need to be aware of?

### How

- How did you decide that this was your best option?
- How have you challenged or tested this choice?

### When

- When are important events that I should make myself aware of, e.g., a conference?
- When is the typical hiring cycle? Are there things that I should prepare for?

### Where

- Where are the areas of change and excitement? Where do experts predict the field will be in the next five years, 10 years, 20 years?
- How do I position myself to be part of this?

### Why

- Why do people go into this field, initially? Does it remain the same or change over time?
- Why do people leave or come back? Are there patterns to notice here?

# The Graduate School Option

You may be considering graduate school because you are passionate about a particular intellectual endeavor or because you know you need a certain set of credentials to move forward in your career development. Depending on your goals and interests, an advanced degree may be an option to consider. Before taking this step for granted, take time to think about the reasons you would pursue graduate school, what you would expect to gain, whether it is the best way to achieve your goals, and when you would be ready to make the commitment of time and financial resources.

The following are some important factors to account for when considering this weighty decision:

- The clarity of your short- and long-term career goals
- Your expectations around how a graduate education would help you advance some of your goals
- Whether graduate education is the best way to achieve your desired outcomes and whether there are strong alternatives, e.g., licensures
- Your ability and willingness to take on associated financial burdens
- Your comfort with putting other interests and goals on hold to meet the demands of your program
- Kinds of programs that would best meet your goals

Whether you seek to practice a profession that requires a specific advanced degree or are interested in a path where there is a less definitive need for such, the issues above are critical. While the majority of Duke undergraduates eventually go on to pursue advanced degrees, such a decision should be based on individual circumstances, interests, and goals.

If you have decided that an advanced degree is right for you, the next step is to contact the appropriate resource at Duke to assist you:

<http://trinity.duke.edu/advising/preprofessional>

- Office of Health Professions Advising
- Prelaw Advising Office
- PreBusiness Advising Office
- Pregraduate Advising

# Next Steps and Selected Resources: Investigate Options—Discover Opportunities

- Map out the influences on your decision to come to Duke. Know that your decision-making style impacts how you should plan to explore careers.
- Use a career counseling appointment to devise a research game plan. **Work with an adviser** to identify the best resources to use first (<http://goo.gl/q72KX>).
- Participate in **The Fannie Mitchell Expert-in-Residence Program and other events** to learn from Duke alums and experts visiting campus.
- Use the **Occupational Network** ([online.onetcenter.org](http://online.onetcenter.org)), especially the “skills search” to match job titles to your interests.
- Identify and reach out to a variety of professionals using the **Duke Alumni Directory** (<https://alumni.duke.edu>) and by joining the LinkedIn group, **Duke University Alumni Network** ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)).
- Learn about a job or company while building your network, **Informational Interviewing Guide** (<http://goo.gl/Di0rS>)
- See a thorough overview of the best career research tools available across Duke, **Job & Career Research LibGuide** (<http://guides.library.duke.edu/careerresearch>)
- Use the company search tools in **CareerBeam** to find companies, people, business information resources, and industry reports (<https://goo.gl/BnS13g>).
- Get essential insights and resources for exploring by location, domestically or abroad, **GoInGlobal** (<http://goo.gl/o008L>)
- Use **CareerConnections** (<http://careerconnections.duke.edu>) to see what employers are recruiting for in our jobs and internship databases. Also, read Career News and sign up to try email lists that match your industry interests.
- Set up accounts in **iNet** and **UCAN** internship databases to learn more about what is out there (<https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/online-tools-resources>).

