Career Development Cycle

The mission of Career Management is to empower students with lifelong career search strategies. We are here to help you develop the skills needed to actively manage your career and meet your professional goals.

As a college student, you have probably already engaged in some aspect of the Career Development Cycle. Before you made the decision to apply to the McCombs School of Business, you assessed your skills and interests and explored schools that align with those strengths. Once you decided to apply to McCombs, you followed a plan to distinguish yourself as a candidate and sent in your application. Now that you have begun your college career, it is time to think more seriously about what you would like to do after graduation and how to get there. Focus on where you want to land with the skills and experience you will gain during your time at McCombs.

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Review the Career Development Cycle to determine where you are in the process and what steps you should take next. It is important to note that the Career Development Cycle is just that: a cycle that everyone is continually going through! It is not a linear progression, and you may move between the four phases or be engaged in multiple phases as a student and throughout your life. For example, it is important to continually assess and re-evaluate your interests and goals while on an internship. For some students, an internship experience can solidify an interest in an employer or an industry, and for others, it is a revelation that they need to keep searching for a position or industry that is a more appropriate fit. Stay aware of this cycle and where you are, what your skills are, and how you plan to achieve your goals.

This guide will go into more depth on each phase of the Career Development Cycle and give you tips on selecting a major, exploring career paths, and planning your next steps.
Career Development Cycle (Cont’d.)

This section describes the different phases of the Career Development Cycle. Determine where you are in your personal career development journey and start planning your next steps.

Assess Yourself

Understanding yourself is the first step in effective career planning—it is difficult to determine WHAT you would like to do or be until you know WHO you are!

⇒ Identify your personal traits, interests, skills, values, and motivations
⇒ Meet with your Career Coach and Academic Advisor to discuss career options and degree programs that match your interests
⇒ Consider taking career assessments, which provide insight into personalities. Some offer a list of careers best suited to each personality type; the Texas Career Engagement office offers the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and Strong Interest Inventory: [careerengagement.utexas.edu/career-counseling/](http://careerengagement.utexas.edu/career-counseling/) along with guidance to interpret the results
⇒ Look at the U.S. Department of Labor’s O*NET tool “My Next Move” for online career and personality assessments: [www.mynextmove.org/](http://www.mynextmove.org/)

Explore Your Options

Based on what you now know about yourself, start exploring majors, careers, industries, and employers.

⇒ Consult with your Career Coach to learn more about career paths, employers, and industries you are interested in
⇒ Attend Career Management events to gain information and build understanding of a career, employer, or industry; check the events list on the Career Management website or RecruitMcCombs for a schedule of events
⇒ Conduct informational interviews with upperclassmen, professors, and industry professionals
⇒ Join student organizations related to your potential major or field of interest
⇒ Visit the Career Management website to access information related to majors and employers

Create Your Plan

Now that you have narrowed down your potential career interests, set goals and create an action plan to develop skills and gain experience.

⇒ Develop short-term and long-term recruiting and career goals
⇒ Evaluate industries and specific positions for which you plan to interview
⇒ Speak to your Career Coach to polish your resume, cover letter, thank you emails, and other recruiting documents

Take Action

Act on the plans that you have made. Gain experience, develop skills, and plan for the future.

⇒ Meet with a Career Coach to develop a job search strategy in addition to utilizing campus resources and job search tools
⇒ Connect with employers to take your career to the next level
⇒ Attend virtual career fairs, workshops, and company-sponsored information sessions
⇒ Gain relevant experience to increase your skills and verify your area of interest (e.g., LinkedIn Learning courses, leadership development programs, etc.)
⇒ Re-evaluate your career goals, re-adjust as needed, and plan for the future

Remember, you can be anywhere in the Career Development Cycle at any given time, including in multiple phases at the same time. Just keep in mind where you are and what you would like to accomplish so that your actions align with your goals. This cycle is also a useful framework for other important decisions, such as which major is right for you.
The “Major” Dilemma

Choosing a major can be one of the most difficult decisions you make while in college. Many students worry that they will make the “wrong” choice and end up in a job or career path that does not make them happy. In reality, very few majors lead to only one specific career path. The skills you gain through coursework, leadership roles, extracurricular activities, and work experiences will often play a larger role in shaping your future career opportunities than your major.

Selecting a major requires a considerable amount of self-reflection and research, just like any important decision. Career Management is available to work with you and help you feel confident in your potential career path. Below, you will find some helpful tips when making decisions about your major and eventual career path. We encourage you to meet with a Career Coach to discuss career goals and industry opportunities. Unfortunately, there is no single framework that, when applied, will lead you to your perfect major. Don’t feel that you need to decide right away. Choosing a major is a different process for everyone and typically takes time. Here are some suggestions for each step along the way.

You Just Aren’t Sure…Yet

If you are not sure what you are passionate about or what you want to study, then the business school is a good place to be. Every career incorporates aspects of business, so the skills you learn during your time at McCombs are valuable regardless of your major. Start by engaging in self-assessment to determine your personal traits, interests, skills, and values. Once you have identified those, it will be much easier to find a way to translate them into a major. To determine what it is you want to pursue, start by asking yourself the following questions:

- What am I good at? What makes me happy?
- What careers sound most interesting to me?
- Which core courses have I particularly enjoyed?
- Is there a certain task that friends or family are constantly asking for my help with?
- What are the subjects I am most excited to work on? For example, do I do my math first because it comes easily to me, or do I use my reading from English courses as a fun break between studying other subjects?
- Is there an industry that I find interesting or gravitate to?

Another option to help you identify your strengths is to take a personality test. Career assessments, like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and Strong Interest Inventory, can prove helpful. The Texas Career Engagement office offers these assessments. careerengagement.utexas.edu/career-counseling/

You Know What You Like, But You’re Not Sure How It Translates Into a Major

Learn about the career journey others have taken to determine what is compatible with your strengths and interests. Try the following:

- Join organizations that appeal to you
- Meet with your professors during office hours
- Read course descriptions and sit in on classes that seem interesting
- Network with professionals from a variety of industries and conduct informational interviews to discover which skills employers in that field are seeking
- Attend lectures given by guest speakers who intrigue you and ask questions about their career trajectories
- Browse RecruitMcCombs, the on-campus recruiting system, and read job descriptions from a variety of companies, then identify which positions are appealing to you and see which majors are recruited for those jobs
- Take internships or part-time jobs in different fields to find out what you like and what you don’t

You Already Know What You Want to Major In

If you know which major is for you, do the following to deepen your education and experience in that field:

- Join clubs related to your major, ask professionals about career trajectories, and attend lectures and recruiting events
- Browse RecruitMcCombs postings and note the qualifications that companies recruiting your major are looking for
- Use your electives well and look for summer jobs and internships that will help you with the path you have chosen
- Consider courses or organizations outside of your major that may be interesting or may complement your degree
Exploring Career Paths

Exploring career paths is an essential aspect of translating your major into a job that is a good fit for you. The more work you put into exploring career paths, the better your chances are of selecting a job that suits your interests, abilities, and long-term goals. No matter how sure or unsure you are of what career to pursue, everyone should invest time and effort into exploring career paths. For some, it means looking into a number of career fields, while for others it may simply mean learning more about differences between options in the same field, such as different accounting firms or medical schools. Below are a few tips on how to begin exploring career paths.

Volunteering in the Community
Volunteering can be a fun and simple way to explore different career paths, gain experience in the career path of your choice, and develop your network. Not only can volunteering help you decide what you are interested in, but it can also provide valuable work experience that will set you apart when you apply for internships and jobs.

There are many ways to get involved in volunteer work. You can join an organization that supports a philanthropy of interest to you. There are a wide variety of philanthropic organizations on campus and chances are one will pique your interest. Another way to find relevant volunteer work is to search online for volunteer work in your field of interest. Whether it is a center for teaching creative writing to children or an organization that provides low-income Austinites with help on their taxes, there are charities, volunteer groups, and sometimes even internships to match almost any interest.

Building a Network*
For some, networking is second nature, but for others, the mere mention of the word creates anxiety and dread. Rest assured, networking does not need to be difficult or scary. Especially in the age of social media, almost everyone has some experience with networking. You know all that time you spend on Facebook or Twitter? That is networking. All you need to do now is target a network that can help you in your job search.

Begin by building upon your immediate network: talk to your parents, friends’ parents, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, and professors. Take advantage of the McCombs Alumni Network, Texas Exes, and alumni networks from organizations that you are a part of. Social media sites like Twitter and LinkedIn can be a great way to stay up-to-date on job openings and to connect with professionals working for companies that interest you.

Keep in mind that each person you talk to may be able to put you in contact with other people in their network. Even if you know you want to work for consulting firm X, for example, it may be worth your while to talk to someone from consulting firm Y; you never know where their friends or former colleagues might work.

Conducting Informational Interviews*
One of the best ways to learn more about a career path is through conducting informational interviews. This is where your networking comes in handy. When you find someone who you think could provide helpful information or advice, contact them in person or via phone or email and ask if there is a time when the two of you could speak. These informational interviews can be conducted effectively in person or over phone or video.

Informational interviews are opportunities to learn more about the career trajectories of people in careers that interest you and chances to ask questions that you may not be able to ask during a job interview. For example, you can ask about the best and worst parts of a job, average number of hours worked each week, etc. Come prepared with specific questions, but make sure that some of them are open-ended. You may be surprised by what you can learn when you just let the other person talk. Questions like “Could you tell me about your career trajectory?” or “What made you want to work in supply chain?” can be great conversation starters.

*See the Networking Strategies guide for more networking tips and an example of an informational interview request.

Remember:
- Most people are more than happy to talk about their experiences
- Most people want to help
- It does not matter if you are the CEO or a student looking for your first full-time job, everyone is trying to meet with, talk to, or impress someone
Resources for Exploring Careers

Learn about careers and industries that may interest you by utilizing the online resources below:

- **Career Management site**: The BBA Career Management site has gathered many resources that are helpful for exploring careers. You will also find information about the skills and interests relevant to specific majors. Log in using your UT EID and password.
  
  my.mccombs.utexas.edu/My/BBA/Career-Services/Explore

- **Occupational Outlook Handbook**: The profiles featured on this site cover hundreds of occupations and describe typical duties, work environment, education and skills required, salary, and more. Each profile also includes Bureau of Labor Statistics employment projections for the 2014–24 decade.
  
  www.bls.gov/ooh/

- **O*NET Online**: The O*NET program database is the nation’s primary source of occupational information. The database contains information on hundreds of occupations and is continually updated through surveys of a broad range of workers in each occupation. Use the “Occupation Search” to search for any occupation.
  
  www.onetonline.org/find/

- **Reference USA**: This site allows students to create and download company lists customized to certain areas and industries that students are interested in. Great for job seekers who would like to organize potential employers by locations. Accessible through the Resources page on the BBA Career Management website (underneath Career Exploration & Company Research sites).
  
  my.mccombs.utexas.edu/My/BBA/Career-Services/Resources

- **Vault Career Insider**: Vault has many guides on industries, companies, professions, interview preparation, and more that should be very helpful as you research career options for any major. Accessible through the Resources page on the BBA Career Management website (underneath Career Exploration & Company Research sites).
  
  my.mccombs.utexas.edu/My/BBA/Career-Services/Resources

- **Wayfinder**: Explore careers and majors using Wayfinder, a tool provided by the School of Undergraduate Studies.
  
  wayfinder.utexas.edu

Engage in the following activities to increase your knowledge of how majors connect to careers and to explore industries you are interested in:

- Join student organizations related to careers or industries that you are considering. You will meet students with relevant internships and many student organizations invite employers to speak about career paths and opportunities. For a list of McCombs Affiliated Student Organizations (MASOs) visit: my.mccombs.utexas.edu/BBA/Student-Life/Student-O rganizations.

- Conduct **informational interviews** to learn about the realities of working within a particular company, industry, or position.

- Join LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) and use the alumni pages for the McCombs School of Business and The University of Texas at Austin to connect with Longhorns in industries and job functions of interest to you. To find McCombs alumni and other Longhorns, search for “McCombs School of Business” or “The University of Texas at Austin” and click the “See Alumni” button.

- Secure **work experience** that gives you experience in a particular field of interest.

- Explore **Hookedin** to find mentors and chat with alumni: uthookedin.com.
Below are some goals that will aid in planning your career. Each section has a checklist of recommended action items that will help you work towards accomplishing your career goals.

**Goal: Explore & Discover**
- Consult with both your Career Coach and Academic Advisor to discuss career paths and degree programs
- Consider student organizations related to your area of interest
- Visit Career Management and the McCombs websites to access materials related to majors and companies
- Attend career fairs and workshops to become acquainted with various industries and the positions available
- Conduct informational interviews with professors, upperclassmen, and professionals in industry
- Consider studying abroad; transferrable skills can be developed by experiencing different cultures
- Begin investigating summer programs and internships early in the fall semester

**Goal: Research & Focus**
- Develop short-term and long-term career goals
- Join student organizations related to your intended major or field of interest
- Identify employers within your area of interest
- Attend career fairs, workshops, and company sponsored information sessions
- Read the Wall Street Journal, Biz Journals, and other business periodicals to stay up-to-date on current business news and industry trends
- Build your professional network: focus on previous employers, professors, and professionals in industry
- Sign up for a Corporate Mock Interview to enhance your interviewing skills
- Focus on finding an internship to gain additional experience
- Find opportunities on RecruitMcCombs and other job boards

**Goal: Start Your Recruiting Journey**
- Participate actively in organizations and commit to involvement throughout your time at UT
- Seek out volunteer opportunities with different organizations and companies of interest
- Meet with your Career Coach to devise your recruiting strategy
- Prepare your McCombs resume and update it as you gain experience and assume leadership roles
- Update your RecruitMcCombs profile with your most recent McCombs resume
- Learn how to compose effective cover letters, thank you emails, and other important recruiting documents
- Begin assembling a professional wardrobe

**Goal: Solidify Post-Grad Plans**
- Finalize post-graduation career goals
- Meet with a Career Coach to develop your job search strategy in addition to utilizing campus resources
- Evaluate industries and specific positions for which you plan to interview
- Cultivate your network: be proactive in your conversations and follow through on leads
- Secure references and letters of recommendation
- Evaluate job offers and consult with a Career Coach prior to negotiating with employers
- Report your post-graduation plans to Career Management
- Join the McCombs Alumni Network and update your information in the alumni directory (located in MOR)
- Join the BBA Career Management LinkedIn group to connect with alumni and employer mentors