WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY

Career Services

Information for Parents

WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY
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A College Degree Pays Off

Research continues to show that college graduates have more opportunities, earn more, and are happier with their careers than non-graduates. A Willamette degree is a smart investment in the future.

How can you help your student?*

Patience: Students are learning to be independent and make their own choices. You can stand on the sidelines and cheer, but they will ultimately need to make their own decisions. It’s what you learned to do at their age as well. Respect your student’s choices even if you disagree. Don’t be tempted to push them in a specific direction. Encourage them to explore and ask them to tell you how they came to their decisions. Thoughtful questions are more effective than demands or “shoulds.”

Cheer them on: Every year our alumni tell us that parents had the most influence on their career decisions. Sometimes it’s hard to believe, but it’s true. Your job is to help motivate them to get involved with academics, work, and community. Involvement cannot be overstated. They shouldn’t do everything, but they need to do something each term outside academics.

Help them get organized: Talk your student through steps they need to take to stay on top of the tasks they face. Help them with “to do” lists and create strategies. Virtually all students talk about being scared and overwhelmed. But we know that taking small incremental steps is all it takes sometimes to make a problem bite sized. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. Students might “catastrophize” a situation and get frozen. Your encouragement to take small steps in a good direction often nudges them into taking appropriate action.


Students are developing a "record of achievement" which will be evaluated by employers and graduate schools as they move beyond college. There are several pieces of this record:

- **Academic achievement.** Your student’s grade point average (GPA) is one factor considered by competitive employers and graduate schools. It is one of the few tangible indications of a student's ability to learn and perform effectively, at least in the academic environment. Therefore, students need to do as well as possible in the classroom, especially in courses in their majors. If they struggle with GPA be sure they access tutoring and possibly change
their major to one that suits them better.

- **Work experience.** Employers seek students who have related internships, part-time jobs, or volunteer experiences. In fact, employers often hire their own interns for full time jobs. Work experience is particularly critical for liberal arts students whose majors may not appear to be directly related to their areas of career interest. Minimum wage or campus jobs are fine, but also help your student think about volunteering or job shadowing to gain desired experience.

- **Responsible involvement outside the classroom.** Extracurricular activities provide the opportunity for students to gain many valuable and career-related skills such as the ability to work effectively with others in a team environment; leadership; planning and organizational skills; and priority-setting and time management. These are part of the package of skills employers seek in their new hires.

**Employers tell us that two internships are better than one**

You may want your son or daughter to work in your hometown every summer. However, the experience gained from an internship (paid or unpaid) in the career field that he or she aspires to enter is invaluable. Future employers will seek graduates with relevant, real-world work experience. Some students have little to write about on a resume if their summers were only spent in school, traveling, or working at low-level jobs. We strongly suggest that students seek career-related experience for their sophomore and junior summers even if they must live away from home or accept an unpaid internship. Students needing financial support can combine an unpaid internship with a paid job such as waiter/waitress, etc.

**How Career Services can help**

**One-on-one advisement and career counseling.** There is nothing better that a good heart-to-heart talk with a qualified career counselor, and we have the best. Encourage your son or daughter to schedule an appointment. We are friendly and supportive.

**The Virtual Career Center (VCC)** is a unique program at Willamette University. The VCC offers some of the nation’s best online resources available to students 24-7. These include: *Optimal Resume* - a tutorial for resume writing and interviewing; *CareerBeam* – a career testing/assessment program matching student interests with possible careers and a tool for employer and industry search; and *What can I do with this Major?* – a web page for career exploration.

**Networking**

Students should create a robust LinkedIn profile and start connecting. There is a Willamette University group to join. We have over 800 alumni mentors ready to talk with students about careers through the Alumni Association.
Willamette University Offers Opportunity -

- On Campus Employment, work study and non work study
- Community network for part-time and summer jobs
- Alumni and community network resources
- Internship opportunities
- Study Abroad information

When should students start using the Willamette Career Center?

It is never too early to start thinking about career development. The earlier students start addressing career issues, the more successful they will be. We encourage students to start using our services as soon as they can. We offer programs and services which they can take advantage of all four years.

What can you do to help the Willamette Career Center?

Help us develop internships, part-time, full-time and summer job opportunities. Provide us with contact information for decision-makers where you work.

Encourage your student to visit the Willamette Career Center early to take advantage of all we have to offer. We want to be an integral part of their life while they are at Willamette.

Best of luck to you in navigating the challenging waters of parenting a university student.