

## **Career Exploration**

Career Lab  
Lucina Hall Room 235

### **The Importance of Research**

As you begin to consider various career options, you will need to do some research to learn more about specific types of work and employers. Why? There are many reasons.

First, research can help you choose which careers to pursue.

Second, employers expect you to know what you want to do and what you have to offer. If you can't express your goals clearly, your chances of persuading an employer to hire you are reduced.

Third, employers believe that if you are interested in working for them, you will have learned something about their organizations before they interview you. If you can't demonstrate this knowledge, the employers will assume your lack of preparation indicates a lack of interest in their companies. They will hire other candidates instead of you.

You may be wondering, "So what's in it for me?" A job, for one thing. By doing appropriate research, you can write your résumé in a way that clearly shows how your background matches the position for which you are applying, improving your chances of getting an interview. In addition, your research will help you prepare for the interview itself.

Finally, you'll also have a sense of whether the job you are considering is one that will take advantage of your skills, values, and interests. If it isn't then you're not likely to be comfortable and happy.

### **Occupational Research**

Visit the Career Lab in Lucina Hall 235 to use our extensive collection of career exploration materials (including salary surveys). A few titles are listed on the back of this handout. Explore Ball State majors in Quest at [www.bsu.edu/careers/quest](http://www.bsu.edu/careers/quest). You should also talk with people working in careers that interest you. You should ask questions like these:

- What does your work involve?
- What is a typical day on the job like?
- What do you like most about your job?

- What do you dislike about it?
- What is the work environment like?
- What is the style of supervision in your organization?
- What are the entry-level qualifications for this line of work? What are the educational requirements?
- What skills does one need? Are any special licenses or certifications required?
- What are the opportunities for advancement for someone in your position?
- What is the outlook for your industry and for your position?
- What are the trends in your industry? In what new directions is the industry heading?
- What would you recommend for someone with my background who is interested in pursuing a career similar to yours?

Be sure to keep good records of your research and your conversations, and don't forget to send thank-you notes to each of the people you interview.

### **KEY Careers**

The KEY (Knowledge+Experience+You) Careers program helps you make informed decisions about majors and careers early on during your time at Ball State. This program starts during orientation and features events designed specifically for first-year students. By participating in the program you can reduce the risk of multiple major changes and extended time in college. For more information, check out <http://www.bsu.edu/keycareers>.

If you are no longer a freshman, you can still use the KEY Careers resources located on the KEY Careers web page. On the KEY Careers page click Resources. The KEY Careers workbook is a self-paced guide to help you use resources to assess your personality and interests, as well as explore majors and careers.

## Employer Research

In gathering information about employers, you'll want to learn about each organization's mission, size, locations, and competitors, as well as new initiatives, educational opportunities for employees, and the staff turnover rate. Do employees move up in the organization, or do they leave to work for other employers? Use the materials in the Career Center and informational interviews to help you gather this data. You can also request copies of brochures and reports directly from the employers.

Use the Vault Career Insider (<http://www.bsu.edu/careercenter/secure/careerlibrary>) to find information about careers with employers in Vault's employer database.

For more information, pick up a copy of Employer Research, another tip sheet available in the Career Lab in Lucina Hall 235.

## Resources

For more information about the topics covered here, be sure to visit the Career Lab. These are a few of the items available:

- *200 Best Jobs for College Graduates*
- *250 Best-Paying Jobs*
- *America's Top 300 Jobs*
- *Best Jobs for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century for College Graduates*
- *Career Opportunities in... Series*
- *The College Majors Handbook*
- *Encyclopedia of Careers and Vocational Guidance*
- *Great Jobs for... Majors*
- *Guide to America's Federal Jobs*
- *Guide to Occupational Exploration*
- *Occupational Outlook Handbook*
- *O-NET: The Occupational Information Network*
- *Opportunities in... Series*
- *Top Careers for... Graduates*

## Websites

- Quest: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/quest>
- KEY Careers: <http://www.bsu.edu/keycareers>
- Career Management Action Plan: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/cmap>
- Vault Career Insider : <http://www.bsu.edu/careercenter/secure/careerlibrary/> (Click Professions to explore careers. Click Industries to explore industries. Click Companies to research employers.)
- What Can I Do With a Major in...? <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/publications> (The link appears in the recommended links section.)
- Links to career exploration sites on the World Wide Web: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/links> (Click Career Exploration or College Majors and Careers.)
- Career Center Publications: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/publications>

If you need adaptations or accommodations for any of our educational programs or publications because of a disability, please contact  
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