


• STUDENT GUIDE •



Introduction



This Book Is for You—the College Student!

As one of millions of college students today—or as someone who will soon join that bunch—you're under unprecedented pressure to succeed. After all, college is an enormous investment of not only your money, but your time and energy as well.

And then, of course, everyone around you expects you to have a *plan*! Ugh.

Creating and implementing a sensible yet exciting plan for college and future career success is a daunting task ... at best. What should you include in *your* plan? What are the most critical activities you need to pursue, and how do you prioritize them in a way that won't simply paralyze you?

The College to Career Road Map answers these questions and many more.

We wrote this book to make your college experience and your career development process an exciting, practical educational journey rather an overwhelming, boring chore. We want you to succeed and to feel good

about the choices you make during your four (or more) years in college—not to mention your initial years in The Real World.

This book makes your journey from college to work more focused, intentional, and purposeful so that you find a rewarding, fulfilling career that fits *your* unique passions and innate talents—and that meets *your* definition of success, whatever success looks like for you.

In these pages, you'll discover specific academic and experiential activities you can pursue—during each of your years in school—to give yourself the best chance of landing a great job after you graduate. By completing these activities and, as importantly, reflecting upon them (with a little help from us ... more on that in a minute), you'll develop a “road map” of sorts for your future career, uncover opportunities and possibilities you've never thought about before, and even reduce your stress.

A Directive Guide to Finding Your Path

This book is a *directive guide* ... one that offers *specific expert advice* on how to identify—and eventually pursue—the career path that fits you best at this time in your life. By making this book a part of your daily life in college, you'll learn a process of introspection, exploration, and action that you'll be able to use the rest of your professional life. (Important note: Don't even bother thinking in overwhelming terms like “What am I going to do with the rest of my life?!” Chances are you won't do any one thing for the rest of your life.)

By the time you've finished reading this book, you'll see the connections among continuous learning, personal reflection, and experience—and how those connections give you insight into what really matters to *you* so that *you* can make *your own* decisions with *your own* direction. Think of this book as a helpful (though not perfect ... nothing is) recipe for college and career success and satisfaction.

Why Bother with All of This?

“Isn't this all just a little bit of overkill?” you might reasonably ask.

Not really. Obviously, we can't plan for *everything* in our lives—nor would we want to. But if you're like the typical college student, you'll be invest-

ing at least four years of your life ... and four years of your energy ... and four years of your hard-earned (or hard-borrowed!) cash in college, in hopes of recouping a substantial return on that investment over the course of your working life.

So doesn't it make sense to have at least a general idea of which career development activities you should be pursuing during college, and when? Of course it does—especially when you think about the specific rewards you'll reap:

- You'll be one of the comparatively few students who actually *graduates* from college instead of merely taking a few courses.
- You'll find a great career that aligns well with your passions, innate talents, and what matters most to you (i.e., your values).
- You won't have to move back home with Mom and Dad because you'll be well prepared, confident, and excited about your future.

All of this from a straightforward plan of action you can follow every semester of your college career.

How to Use This Book Effectively

Our four-year guide features specific action items for you to complete during your freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years. Be sure to prioritize these tasks in order of their importance to *you* and then complete the ones that make the most sense to *you*. (It's beneficial if you do them all, but it's not required.)

As you go along, you'll notice that we ask lots of questions, which will then prompt you to jot down your *learning discoveries*—the important lessons you're learning about yourself and the world of work by engaging in each of the activities. (You'll be prompted with questions following each suggested activity.)

If you haven't noticed already, you'll soon discover that the book is broken down in a way you can readily understand—into your freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years of college. Each of these sections then highlights the specific activities you can complete, academically and experientially, to explore your many career options and develop the skills you'll need for future success in the world of work.

Any career book you read will give you information and ideas. This book goes well beyond that to help you *act* on what you're learning. For only through taking action will you gain career direction.

We also tell you—specifically and plainly—*why* each activity is important and *how* to actually go about completing the activity. This isn't another book that simply tells you *what* to do and then cuts you loose.

We have a combined forty-plus years of experience working with college students and recent college graduates and helping them with their career-related struggles, in both the public and private sectors, in organizations large and small, and now in our own organization, College to Career, Inc. (www.collegetocareer.net). As importantly, we've all walked in your shoes ourselves. So we understand the challenges, the confusion, the excitement, and the frustration you face—all at once!—while you're trying to finish college and pursue your career ambitions.

We want to teach you what we've learned along the way and (hopefully!) help you avoid the mistakes we've made where our own respective careers are concerned. The first step—committing to reading and then completing the career-related activities that follow—is entirely up to you. But we absolutely, positively *know* you'll thank yourself later—many times over—for making that commitment right now and in the college years that are unfolding before you.

Let's begin.