NYU | WAGNER

CAREER PLANNING & ASSESSMENT GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION: CAREER PLANNING

Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions you'll have to make. You'll spend at least eight hours a day at work; therefore it is essential that you make a well-informed decision. Career planning is a **lifelong process** that can include identifying an issue area in which you are interested, choosing a role or function you want to perform, getting the knowledge and skills necessary for your career, preparing for and conducting a job search, getting a job, growing in your job, and even possibly reassessing your career choice.

This booklet, along with Wagner's *Composing Your Career* framework, will help you with career planning by exploring and identifying your skills and values, as well as your interests related to issue areas and job functions.

CAREER PLANNING OUTLINE

1. SELF-ASSESSMENT
"He who knows others is wise; He who knows himself is enlightened." Lao-Tzu

2. ORGANIZATIONAL & OCCUPATIONAL RESEARCH
"Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose." Zora Neale Hurston

3. SETTING GOALS
"First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do." Epictetus

4. RESUME & COVER LETTER WRITING
"Vigorous writing is precise. A sentence should have no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts." E.B. White

5. JOB/INTERNSHIP HUNTING
"Unless you call out, who will open the door?" African Proverb

8. REASSESSING
"The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action." John Dewey

6. INTERVIEWING
"Just know your lines and don't bump into the furniture." Spencer Tracy

7. EVALUATING OFFERS & NEGOTIATING
"If a man…asks for something without having first established a proper relationship, it will not be given to him." I Ching

GUIDING QUESTIONS & RESOURCES FOR CAREER PLANNING

1. SELF-ASSESSMENT: The public service fields that attract you, the skills you have, and the values to which you subscribe provide the basis from which you will make career choices.

- What are my fields of interest? (e.g. children, hospital administration, housing, international development)
- What work values are important to me? (e.g. advancement, creativity, independence, recognition, stability)
- What skills do I have that I like to use? (e.g. analyzing, budgeting, motivating, researching, writing)
- How might my personality type and preferences affect my search? (e.g. extraversion v introversion)

Resources: Office of Career Services (OCS) career counseling appointment, Skills and Values Identification guide and exercises, Composing Your Career (CYC) Tracks exercise.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL RESEARCH: Research can unlock hidden markets that could be a good fit for you based on your self-assessment.

- What kinds of organizations are out there doing the kinds of work I'm interested in?
- What kinds of jobs exist in those organizations?

Resources: OCS career counseling appointment, NYU Wagner Career Directory, CYC Tracks exercise, employer info sessions, OCS Resource Room Library, links from the OCS website "Career Resources" page, career panels, specialization sessions, faculty, classmates, Networking and Informational Interviews guide, conferences, networking events

3. SETTING GOALS: Think through the steps needed to get the job you want.

- Based on my self-assessment and organizational/occupational research, what are my possible career goals?
- What might a typical career track in this field look like?
- What will I do while at Wagner to help me get there?

Resources: OCS career counseling appointment, faculty, relevant coursework, group projects, student organizations, internships, professional association.

4. RESUME AND COVER LETTER WRITING: Resumes and cover letters should develop enough interest on the part of an employer to warrant an interview with you.

- How do my skill sets, work history, and academics meet the needs of a potential employer?
- How can I, in writing, convince an employer that I can do the job, will do the job, and fit into their world?

Resources: OCS Resume Writing and Cover Letter guides/workshops, OCS walk in hours and/or career counseling appointment.

5. JOB/INTERNSHIP HUNTING: The job search is an *active*, not a reactive, process.

- How do I find out who is hiring?
- How can I create my own opportunities?

Resources: NYU Wagner Career Directory, OCS listserv, "Jobs of the Day" email, website links, employer info/recruitment sessions, OCS Resource Room Library, career fairs, NYU Wasserman Center, WSA listserv, networking events, professional associations, classmates, and faculty.

6. <u>INTERVIEWING</u>: How you manage the interview process will determine whether or not you get an offer.

- How can I articulate that I can meet the employer's specific needs?
- What and how should I prepare for an interview?

Resources: OCS Interviewing Guide, Interviewing Workshop, OCS mock interview via career counseling appointment

7. <u>EVALUATING OFFERS AND NEGOTIATING</u>: Once you have proven your value to an employer, it is appropriate to evaluate whether the offer is a good fit for you.
- How do I decide if this is the right offer?
- What is negotiable?

Resources: OCS Salary Negotiation Guide, Salary Negotiation Workshop (typically held in spring semester), OCS career counseling appointment or walk-in hours, salary websites

8. <u>REASSESSING</u>: It's appropriate to periodically evaluate the worth and value of your choices.
- Am I still committed to my earlier goals?
- How can I take my career to the next level?

Resources: OCS career counseling appointment, internship or work supervisors, faculty, professional development workshops

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Self-assessment is the process of gathering information about yourself in order to make an informed career decision. It is the first step of the career planning process. A self-assessment includes a look at your **interests, values, and skills.** It can reveal your strengths and help you to recognize your challenges.

In addition to determining what you are good at and value, an assessment helps you to find out what kind of activities and environments you enjoy. You can also use the results of a skills assessment to identify which skills you may need to develop for a particular career.

Finding a match between your values, skills, interests and personality and the work you are considering is at the essence of career planning. It not only increases the likelihood of job satisfaction, but it is one of the most important steps you can take before writing a resume or beginning your job search.

In this section you will find information to help you:
* identify potential career tracks
* identify your skills and values

CAREER TRACKS

Many people know that they are committed to a career in public service, but figuring out what that means can be difficult. This exercise (adapted from the non-credit workshop "Composing Your Career" taught at Wagner each semester) is great for people who are looking for a bit of focus. The exercise comes in three phases: Brainstorming, Analyzing, and Synthesizing.

I. Brainstorm
Download, print, or photocopy any job posting that appeals to you on one of two levels:
    A. *You are drawn to this kind of an organization*. You like its mission. You would like your work to have an impact on this issue, population or area. You like the agency's approach to the work. And you could see yourself, someday, working for an organization like this. Do not worry about where it is located or whether you like the job description that is attached to the organization. Just focus on the agency's overall purpose. Circle the part you like and put it in a folder.
    B. *You are drawn to this kind of job description*. You like the way the responsibilities are bundled. You like the skills needed to perform the function of the position, and you could see yourself, someday, doing something like this in your day-to-day. Do not worry about the agency the description is associated with or whether you have the skills to perform the job. Just focus on the actual job description. Circle the part you like and put it in your folder.

Do this until you have a bare minimum of 50 selected items. The more you collect the better. Remember, when brainstorming, don't evaluate along the way, just collect ideas. Once you have at least 50, continue to the next phase.

II. Analysis
Take the selected items out of your folder and see if you can find any patterns or common themes. Some things to look for might include: issue, population to be served, approach to the work, geography, kind of organization, unit or department within an agency, and role.

III. Synthesis
Using the data gathered from your brainstorming and analysis phases create at least one and no more than five potential job tracks for yourself. A job track is a way to put parameters around and frame your potential career interests, and can include any of the following that have meaning for you: issue or field of interest; subcomponents of the issue that are of interest; approach to the work; kinds of organizations that do this work; where these organizations are located; size of the organizations; potential departments within organizations; roles that you aspire to play; and the requirement of skills, education, experience, and knowledge to fulfill those roles.

Take stock of your qualifications and experiences as they relate to your potential tracks. Your tracks should help you in composing your career and lead to a plan of action to maximize your time at Wagner. Your track should inform which courses you should take, the professors you should get to know, how you use your assignments, the events you go to, the groups you join, the people you seek out, the internship/job experiences you look for, and how you present yourself in a resume, cover letter, and an interview. Remember to reflect along the way to determine if this track feels like a good fit for you. If it does, continue on this path. If not, seek out additional tracks.

The OCS Staff would be happy to talk with you about the tracks you have developed, so that you can further refine your ideas, and determine additional ways to collect more information.

VALUES AND SKILLS IDENTIFICATION

The values to which you subscribe and the skills you have provide the basis from which you will make career choices. Skills and values are also important criteria for employee selection. They convey a great deal about how well you fit into and fulfill the needs of various employers and their organizations.

Everyone has a set of values and skills. These have been acquired through experiences at work, school, and through living. In these exercises, you will identify your skills and values and their meaning for the career decisions you will make. The goal is to assist you in becoming "skilled" in understanding your own abilities and how to further develop them in order to better compete in the job market.

VALUES IDENTIFICATION

Why is it important to understand your values?

Values indicate a strong personal preference for what is important to you. Values provide answers to important questions such as: What do I really care about? What kinds of activities, people, and environments do I most want in my work life? Understanding your values will help you to focus on career objectives that are important to both you and your employer, making for greater productivity and job satisfaction. Values are significant motivators that provide the drive to accomplish the important goals in your life. ***Conflict between the work we actually do and the work we value are often at the root of decisions to change careers.*** Knowing your values firsthand will ensure that your career is starting with the right focus.

Values and skills are intimately related.

If we value what we do, we engage more enthusiastically in developing the skills needed to establish meaningful and productive careers. For example, if you value working with people, you will want to develop the communication, leadership, and relationship building skills that will facilitate your professional growth in that kind of work.

Organizations also have values.

Organizations express their values in the type of businesses in which they are involved, the products or services they offer, and their work ethic. The term "organizational culture" presumes a body of values which drive an organization. The more you know about your own values, the better you will be at determining which work environment best fits your personal and professional needs and the skills you want to use and develop there.

Identifying your values will help you to:

- Identify the kinds of activities, people, and environments that you most desire in your work.
- Determine which work environments best fit your personal and professional needs and the skills you would like to develop there.
- Focus on career objectives that are important to both you and potential employers.
- Identify the motivators that provide the drive to accomplish the important goals in your life.

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The Work Values Inventory
The Work Values Inventory is a list of 42 work values and lifestyle considerations that have been found to be important in work environments. To complete the inventory you should:

1. Read the list of values quickly but carefully.
2. Rank each of the 42 values in terms of how important they are to you. Use the following scale:

1................... 2................... 3................. 4................. 5
no importance   average importance   very important

For example, if "Advancement" is "very important" to you, then you would write a 5 in front of that value; if it is of "no importance" then write a 1 in front of the value, etc.

When you finish, you will fill these in on page 10.

1.___Advancement   The opportunity to take on additional responsibilities.

2.___Aesthetics   Be involved in studying or appreciating the beauty of objects or ideas.

3.___Achievement   Desire to produce results that are considered significant.

4.___Assertiveness/   Demonstrate forceful energy and initiative;
      Aggressiveness   bold self-confidence.

5.___Belonging   Have a sense of being a contributing part of an agency or group; a sense of affiliation.

6.___Change/Variety   Ability to adjust to frequent changes in work content and setting; seldom do routine or predictable work.

7.___Competition   Able to engage in activities where you must compete in order to excel or achieve a goal.

8.___Creativity   Create new ideas, programs or structures departing from those ideas already in existence.

9.___Excitement   Demonstrate a high degree of (or frequent) enthusiasm in the course of your work.

10.___Fast Pace   Show you can work in circumstances where there is a high pace of activity, and show you can do work rapidly.

11.___Flexibility   Can adapt readily to new and changing work requirements.

12.___Friendships   Can develop close personal relationships
                                     with people as a result of your work
                                     relationships.

13.___Help Others   Desire to help other people in a direct way,
                                     either individually or in small groups.

14.___Help Society   Work toward the betterment of the world
                                     you live in.

15.___High Motivation   Show you have a strong desire to succeed.

16.___Independence   Be able to determine the nature of your
                                     work without significant direction from others;
                                     comfortable working alone.

17.___Influence People   Enjoy being in a position to influence the
                                     attitudes and opinions of people.

18.___Intellectual Status   Be regarded as a person of high intellectual
                                     prowess or as one who is an acknowledged
                                     expert in a given field.

19.___Knowledge   Your work environment values always
                                     learning more and increasing your
                                     knowledge base.

20.___Leisure   Work allows for significant time off to
                                     pursue non-work related activities.

21.___Location   Work in a place that provides excellent
                                     physical environment.

22.___Make Decisions   Have the power to decide courses of action,
                                     policies, etc.

23.___Mental Challenge   Show you can constantly face and resolve
                                     complex problems.

24.___Perseverance   Can persist in an undertaking despite opposition
                                     or discouragement.

25.___Physical Challenge   Ability to engage in physical demands of the job.

26.___Power and Authority   Demonstrate you can effectively control the
                                     work activities or the destinies of other people
                                     if required.

27.___Precision Work   Show you can work in situations where there
                                     is very little tolerance for error.

28.___Profit/Gain   Show you have a strong desire to accumulate
                                     a large amount of money or other material gain.

29.___Public Contact   Show you are comfortable with lots of
                                            day-to-day contact with people.

30.___Recognition   Want to be recognized for the quality
                                            of your work in some visible or public way.

31.___Risk Taker   Show you can assume duties that involve
                                            risk taking of some sort.

32.___Security   Show you want job security and you want
                                            reasonable financial rewards.

33.___Stability   Have work routines and job duties that are
                                            largely predictable and not likely to change
                                            over a long period to time.

34. ___Status   Enjoy the respect and admiration of others
                                            because of the kind of work you do, and
                                            like having an important title or position
                                            within the agency.

35.___Strong Interest   The activities of the agency must be
                                            deeply engaging and intrinsically interesting.

36.___Supervision   Have a job in which you are directly
                                            responsible for the work done by others.

37.___Team Orientation   You work well with other people on
                                            shared tasks or projects.

38.___Tenacity   You show diligence to finish goals or tasks
                                            even in the face of obstacles.

39.___Time Freedom   Have work responsibilities where you can
                                            work according to your own time schedule;
                                            no specific working hours required.

40.___Willing to Travel   When necessary, you are willing to travel
     Extensively   and live on the road.

41.___Work Under Pressure   Can work well under time pressures and in
                                            circumstances where the quality of your
                                            work may be judged critically by
                                            supervisors, customers or others.

42.___Work with Others   Can have close working relationships
                                            with a group, and work as a team member
                                            toward common goals.

List the top 10 values you have selected in the space provided below on the left.

To the right, please rank, in order of importance (1 = most important, 2 = next important, etc.) those 5 values most important to you in your work.

<u>Summary of Values</u>

1._____

2._____

3._____

4._____

5._____

6._____

7._____

8._____

9._____

10._____

<u>Important Work Values</u>

1._____

2._____

3._____

4._____

5._____

SKILLS IDENTIFICATION

Why is it important to understand your skills?

People vary in the types of skills they possess. Employers also differ in the kinds of skills they require. While people have many different kinds of skills, they usually take them for granted, and as a result have difficulty identifying and communicating them to others. This makes targeting a career more difficult than it really has to be and can negatively impact your ability to sell yourself in the job market because employers are interested in matching your skills with those required in the functional areas of their agencies.

Getting your career off the ground or changing the focus of your career will be greatly enhanced by understanding your skills. Knowing your skills will allow you to identify those you possess and those you will have to work toward developing in order to actualize your career goals and meet the needs of employers.

Identifying your skills will help you to:

- Create a sharper <u>career</u> <u>focus</u> through comparing your existing skills with those required in various areas of employment.
- Understand which skills need further <u>development</u> in order to successfully compete in the job market.
- Write a <u>resume</u> that advertises your skills.
- Articulate in an <u>interview</u> the skills that match those required by potential employers.

Skills Identification Exercise

There are 52 skills listed in the Skills Survey. The survey does not include technical skills such as computer or language skills.

How to complete the survey:

1. Read each skill quickly but carefully.

2. Enter a check next to the top 12 skills that you have developed through your work, education, etc. Check those skills which you feel you are competent in, whether you like using them or not.

3. Next, go through the list again and circle 5 additional skills that interest you and that you would like to develop at school and through work. These skills should not be in your first list of 12 skills.

4. On the last page of the skills identification survey (pg. 15), list the 12 "checked" skills under the heading "Existing Skills." Do not rank them.

5. List the 5 skills you have "circled" under "Skills to Develop."

6. From the "Existing Skills" list select up to 7 skills with which you feel you are competent and that you would like to continue to use in your work. List these 7 skills under the column "Work Skills." Rank your "Work Skills" in order of importance (1 = most important, 7 = least important).

After finishing this exercise you will have a profile of your skills. This includes those skills with which you already demonstrate competence and those you would like to develop. You can use this knowledge to determine how well you fit with the skill requirements of different functional areas and potential employers, or you can use this knowledge to further develop your interest in an area. You are now prepared to compare your Work Skills with those skills required by employers. If there is considerable overlap between your Work Skills and those listed by potential employment, it would be a good idea to incorporate them in your resume and be able to discuss them in an interview. If there is little overlap between your skills and a potential employer, you will need to take advantage of the opportunities to develop those skills while at Wagner, through other avenues, or through expressing a willingness to learn new skills.

1. ____ Advocate — Represent and support goals of an organization or cause.

2. ____ Analyze — Examine in detail; or separate data, an idea or an object into its parts.

3. ____ Brainstorm — Generation of ideas or possibilities without value or judgment.

4. ____ Budget — Plan or schedule expenses or operating costs.

5. ____ Build Consensus — Express ideas or information in a way that appeals to the interests of others.

6. ____ Calculate/Compute — Execute quantitative/mathematical operations.

7. ____ Caretaking — Care about and take specific action to improve the well-being of others.

8. ____ Categorize — Organize information or objects into groups or classifications.

9. ____ Coach — Explain, guide, and encourage individuals to achieve goals.

10. ____ Conceptualize — Form new or creative ideas, theories, or processes.

11. ____ Consult — Provide a high level of expertise in the evaluation of needs and problems to recommend solutions and a plan of action.

12. ____ Coordinate — Arrange the proper sequence of logistics of events or activities.

13. ____ Counsel — Capacity to listen with objectivity: to facilitate client awareness of issues and provide guidance and advice in making decisions.

14. ____ Decision Making — Identify and choose an option among alternatives.

15. ____ Delegate — Assign tasks to others in order to achieve desired objectives.

16. ____ Design — Present ideas and products in an aesthetically pleasing form or public display.

17. ____ Determine Policy — Develop guidelines and strategies to carry out courses of action.

18. ___ Edit   Revise and improve written material for final use.

19. ___ Evaluate and Assess   Determine the needs of a situation and/or determine value or quality of concepts or materials and propose solutions.

20. ___ Explain   Express or communicate a message, information, or an idea in a clear and understandable manner.

21. ___ Facilitate Groups   Support or ease interaction for purpose of reaching an agreement or common goals.

22. ___ Forecast   Ability to perceive and anticipate future trends or possibilities.

23. ___ Implement and   Take necessary action to ensure the completion of
        Follow Up   a project.

24. ___ Improvise   Act and prepare on the spur of the moment, using information or materials at hand to fill an immediate need.

25. ___ Influence/Persuade   Convince others to adopt a belief, change an attitude, or take action.

26. ___ Initiate   Put an idea, plan, or task into action without direction from others.

27. ___ Interview   Elicit views or probe for information through verbal questioning.

28. ___ Invent   Originate or devise a new service or process through experimentation.

29. ___ Listen   Focus carefully on a speaker's verbal and behavioral communication to determine an authentic meaning.

30. ___ Manage Records   Collect, classify, and process data using records or a computerized information system.

31. ___ Mediate   Resolve or settle differences by acting as an intermediary between two or more conflicting parties.

32. ___ Monitor   Oversee and regulate flow of work assignments or projects.

33. ___ Motivate   Stimulate individuals or groups to take action for optimal results.

34. ___ Negotiate   Bring about a settlement or agreement by bargaining.

35. ___ Observe   Watch closely or be acutely aware of behavior, information, or objects.

36. ___ Organize   Pull together elements into an orderly, functional and structured whole.

37. ___ Outreach   Represent an employer to the public; receive or greet others; demonstrate a product or service to the public.

38. ___ Plan   Formulate a series of steps to meet goals and objectives.

39. ___ Problem Solve   Trace and identify the sources of a problem in a given situation.

40. ___ Produce Events   Plan, arrange, and carry out a project or event.

41. ___ Promote   Use of creative concepts to persuade through media, special events or personal involvement.

42. ___ Provide Hospitality   Welcome strangers or guests with warmth and generosity.

43. ___ Public Speaking   Deliver a message or point of view to an audience with the intent of informing or motivating.

44. ___ Research/Investigate   A systematic search using observation, comprehension of written resources, or interviewing key sources for discovery or application.

45. ___ Sell   Convince prospect to use services by describing features and benefits of a service or product to match the needs of a potential client.

46. ___ Serve as a Liaison   Act as a catalyst or connection between people or organizations to enhance communication.

47. ___ Strategize   Form a scheme or plan in the mind and carry it out into a written form, outline, service, or invention.

48. ___ Supervise   Direct the performance of workers and monitor work projects.

49. ___ Synthesize   Combine separate parts or elements to form a new whole, as in a concept or theory.

50. ___ Train/Instruct   Teach or explain specialized information to others by demonstration, explanation, or practice.

51. ___ Use of Memory   The power or process of recalling to mind facts, faces, or patterns from the past.

52. ___ Write   Compose written forms of communication demonstrating skill in the use of language, grammar, and punctuation.

List the 12 skills you have checked in the column EXISTING SKILLS below on the left. To the right, please list the 5 skills you have <u>circled</u> under SKILLS TO DEVELOP. Next, from the "Existing Skills" column, select the 7 skills you like to use and want to use in your work. List these 7 skills in order of importance (1 = most important, 2 = next most important, etc.) under the column "Work Skills."

EXISTING SKILLS

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

SKILLS TO DEVELOP

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

WORK SKILLS

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

How To Use the Results

First, remember to keep the lists of skills and values in these exercises for future reference. The skills listed here will help you identify some of the skills you may want to list when writing your resume or to articulate in the interview. The values list will assist you in keeping your most important goals in mind.

If you have a high degree of overlap with a work area of interest, you should be prepared to include mention of these skills and values in your letters, resumes, and informational interviews with potential employers. If you did not find much overlap you will want to take advantage of the many opportunities available to develop your skills while at Wagner. These include coursework, group projects, internships and part-time employment. If you are not yet sure of an area of interest and the relevant skills and values, there are other sources for further exploration. You can start by attending career related seminars at Wagner. Attending panel presentations and conducting informational interviews will help define the skills and "corporate culture" specific to many different functional areas of business. Take advantage of the opportunities at Wagner to build and acquire relevant work skills.

The OCS Staff would be happy to discuss your results with you during a career counseling appointment. Please bring your completed exercise with you, as well as any notes or questions you may have.