

Introduction

Are you feeling uncertain about the direction of your life and career? Maybe you have not yet decided on a major in college or maybe you are changing your mind about your current major or career. If so, you are not alone. The typical American worker will likely change careers four or more times in his or her lifetime, and will have even more different jobs. Because of all of these potential changes, planning your life and career is more important than ever. Since you will spend a large part of your life working, planning your career means planning your life. Your career decisions affect your lifestyle, your health, and the happiness of yourself and others around you. It is imperative that you learn to make informed choices and expand your career development skills. This handbook, along with other resources available at Minnesota State University, Mankato, will help you to develop these skills and assist you in your path through life and career planning.

First, let's get an overview of the career and life planning process. This process consists of three stages.

1. Self-Assessment _____

The foundation for career and life planning is self-awareness. To be self-aware and make career decisions, you need to learn about yourself, your values, your skills, your interests, personality preferences, and motivations. Self-assessment is a way to look at your past experiences and your current self. This step is vital to making decisions and setting goals.

2. Career Exploration _____

The next step in this process is to brainstorm and find specific information on majors and careers so you can determine your career possibilities. Gathering information on majors and careers will help you to determine which options match your self-assessment criteria from the previous step. It is essential to do some work in this area to ensure a good fit with your career choice.

3. Setting and achieving goals _____

When you get to this step, you are in the home stretch! You will learn to make decisions, set goals, and develop a plan of action. It is also important to periodically review your progress toward your goals and evaluate your plan.

If you work through this handbook, you can use the tools and exercises provided to progress through your career and life planning process and make a decision on your major or career. **The more time and effort you put in to this process, the more rewarding it will be.** Remember, you are learning about the most interesting subject in the world, YOURSELF, and you are embarking on a journey that will take you through the rest of your working life.

Now is a good time to take a few minutes to page through this book. On your own, or with a friend, family member, mentor, or career counselor, set a goal for when you would like to have your career decision made. Then set mini goals for working through the sections. **You can write your goal dates on the blanks beside the three steps above.**

Now, let's get started! Turn to the next page to get started on Step 1, Self-Assessment.