

Western Kentucky University

4-Year Career Plan

PLAN IT - FRESHMAN YEAR (~0-30 HOURS)

Career Development

- Begin exploring your interests, strengths, and values to gain a better understanding of potential career paths that align with your skills and passions.
- Familiarize yourself with WKU's career partner, [Steppingblocks](#). Take a personality assessment and explore a wide variety of career paths.
- Talk with faculty, mentors, family, and friends about majors and occupations.
- If unsure or an exploratory major, meet with a college [Career Coach](#) to discuss career options and potential majors.
- Activate and become familiar with [Handshake](#), the WKU online job portal for internships, part-time on-campus jobs, and full-time job opportunities.
- Activate and become familiar with [LinkedIn](#) and all the different resources it offers.
- Create a preliminary resume and cover letter. If needed, seek assistance from the [Career Studio](#) or a [Career Coach](#).
- Start creating your professional network by attending at least 1 career fair or employer event – connect with others through student organizations, LinkedIn, and personal meetings with faculty members.
- Become familiar with the 8 [career-ready competencies](#) identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.
- Begin to consider activities, student organizations, or part-time jobs that will facilitate the development of key transferable skills for future internship or job opportunities.
- Follow [social media accounts](#) for Advising and Career Development to gain career advice and to learn about important events and deadlines on campus.

Academic Development

- Meet with your Academic Advisor to plan your course of study.
- Get to know faculty, staff, and advisors.
- Become aware of support services on campus such as the [WKU Learning Center](#) (free academic tutoring) and the [WKU Counseling Center](#) (free personal counseling).
- Identify classes that you like and find interesting, as well as those that are less interesting.
- Create good study habits that will help you establish a strong GPA.
- Define your academic goals for each semester and create a plan to achieve them.
- Develop good time management skills, creating schedules, setting priorities, and avoiding procrastination.
- Experiment with different note-taking methods and find one that works best for you.

Personal/Social Development

- Attend campus orientations and meet new students.
- Be intentional about your college years. Write down short-term and long-range goals.
- Join a campus club or organization that aligns with your interests.
- Explore campus resources for social engagement, such as athletic or social events.
- Assess your changing relationship with your parents and family.
- Allow time for friends and leisure activities.
- Take care of your physical and mental health by eating nutritious meals, exercising regularly, getting adequate sleep, and seeking support when needed.
- Document your experiences, skills, and accomplishments.

BUILD IT - SOPHOMORE YEAR (~31-60 HOURS)

Career Development

- If unsure or undecided about a major, meet with a college [Career Coach](#) to discuss options and to select one before the start of the second semester.
- Dive deeper into exploring potential career paths by conducting informational interviews and/or job shadowing to gain practical insights into different industries.
- Seek professional advice from a college [Career Coach](#) about your resume, cover letter, [Linkedin](#) account, and/or the basics of interviewing.
- Keep your resume and profile updated on [Handshake](#).
- Attend networking events such as career fairs and other professional development events throughout the year.
- Continue to develop a professional network by building relationships with faculty members, employers, family, friends, and LinkedIn connections.
- Seek out a professional mentor.
- Become more familiar with [Handshake](#), [Linkedin](#), and other online portals to research internship/job opportunities.
- Consider your social media presence from the perspective of an employer. Take the necessary steps to ensure your brand is professional.
- Develop key transferable competencies by seeking opportunities that complement your major – volunteer, student organizations, part-time jobs, and/or a relevant internship.
- Start building your professional wardrobe.

Academic Development

- Meet with your Academic Advisor to review core and major requirements.
- Continue involvement in campus and community activities.
- Target course electives that will enhance your marketability to employers.
- Make a special effort to get to know your professors.
- Reflect on your academic progress and adjust your goals if necessary.
- Strengthen your ability to work effectively in group settings, including team projects and discussions.
- Proactively seek academic assistance as needed.
- Strive for a healthy work-life balance by scheduling time for studying, socializing, self-care, and leisure activities.

Personal/Social Development

- Join at least 1 student organization to develop leadership and networking skills.
- Attend campus events and workshops that align with your personal and professional development goals.
- Take advantage of mental health resources and seek support if needed.
- Volunteer or work a part-time job.
- Document your experiences, skills, and accomplishments.
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WORK IT - JUNIOR YEAR (~61-90 HOURS)

Career Development

- Update and fine tune your resume and cover letter. Translate your strengths into marketable skills.
- Research the application timeline and general processes if you are thinking about graduate school or a pre-health field (i.e., pre-med, pre-PT, etc.).
- Gain career-related experience through an internship, research, or volunteer opportunity.
- Actively develop career goals and plan next steps towards achieving your goals.
- Continue to build your professional wardrobe – attend the local JC Penny Suit-Up event.
- Evaluate and make any necessary changes to your online presence.
- Attend all career-related events to network, seek, and acquire an internship position.
- Expand the use of LinkedIn to build a professional network; contribute to discussions in fields of interest and become active in online groups.
- Seek and acquire an internship through online job portals ([Handshake](#), etc.), direct contact, professional networks, and/or through other sources.
- Expand your research and networking skills by conducting informational interviews with key contacts from career events and/or targeted companies.
- Schedule a meeting with a college [Career Coach](#) to discuss job/internship search strategies, interviewing, and/or to update your resume or cover letter.
- Articulate the 8 [career-ready competencies](#) while networking or in interviews to demonstrate the key transferable skills employers are seeking.
- Identify 10-15 companies or organizations that interest you; follow on social media and identify key people to network with for future opportunities.
- Continue to build your professional wardrobe.

Academic Development

- Talk to professors about graduate school options and requirements.
- Contact alumni in your field of interest.
- Begin to develop a list of professional and academic references.
- Consider earning a certificate to expand your career options.

Personal/Social Development

- Prioritize self-care and stress management as you balance academic and career preparations.
- Take on leadership roles in clubs or organizations to enhance your leadership skills.
- Collaborate with classmates on group projects or research initiatives.
- Continue to document your experiences, skills, and accomplishments.

LIVE IT - SENIOR YEAR (~91-120 HOURS)

Career Development

- Continue to add to your network through career and networking events, as well as through [LinkedIn](#) connections and online groups.
- Contact faculty, previous employers, and/or other professionals to use as professional references.
- Identify your key values in the job search process, including target locations and target companies.
- Purchase professional attire and portfolio for interviews. Plan to attend the local JC Penny Suit-Up event.
- Have all professional documents (resume, cover letter, references, online portfolio, etc.) prepared, up-to-date, and reviewed by a [Career Coach](#) or other professional. Ensure these documents are updated on all job portals.
- Starting at least 6 months in advance, create a plan of action to search for jobs and to actively track and monitor your applications and progress.
- Communicate with your network the transition from student to active job seeker – be brief, specific, and positive in asking for leads and/or assistance in the process.
- Effectively articulate your diverse experiences and career-ready competencies, leveraging them in interviews and/or networking events.
- Start applying to full-time positions at least 4 months in advance of your graduation.
- Secure a full-time position and update professional references and key people in your network of your new status.

Academic Development

- Identify top strengths, skills, and interests from past academic and work experiences.
- Enroll in electives that will further your career and personal goals.
- Finalize course selections to ensure you meet graduation requirements.

Personal/Social Development

- Network with friends, family, alumni, faculty, and acquaintances to enhance job prospects.
- Take on leadership roles in organizations to leave a lasting impact before graduating.
- Celebrate your college journey by attending senior events and graduation-related activities.
- Develop a budget and evaluate financial responsibilities.
- Reflect on your college experience and prepare for the transition to post-graduate life.