

## 6. Encourage extracurricular involvement and Leadership

Part of experiencing college life is to be involved and active outside the classroom. Interpersonal and leadership skills—qualities valued by future employers—are often developed in extracurricular activities. USA offers hundreds of clubs and organizations where students can gain leadership and transferable skills employers seek when hiring candidates.

## 7. Persuade your student to stay up-to-date with current events

Employers will expect students to know what is happening around them. Encourage your student to read professional literature, follow news and events, and utilize social media for networking and information.

## 8. Expose your student to the world of work and the value of Networking

Most students have a stereotypical view of the workplace. Encourage your student to conduct informational interviews and to "shadow" someone to increase awareness of interesting career fields. Suggest your student contact people in your personal and professional networks for information on summer jobs and identifying potential employers.

## 9. Help us help your student

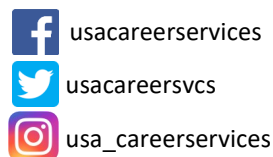
Call Career Services when you have a summer, part-time or full-time job opening. If your company hires co-op or intern students, have them post those in our career management platform:



Adapted from: *A Parents' Guide to Career Development* by Thomas J. Denham, offered by the National Association of Colleges & Employers (NACE). The University of South Alabama Career Services is a member of NACE.



390 Alumni Circle: MH 2100  
Mobile, AL 36688-0002  
☎ (251) 460-6188  
📠 (251) 460-6091  
✉ [careerservices@southalabama.edu](mailto:careerservices@southalabama.edu)  
🌐 [www.southalabama.edu/careerservices](http://www.southalabama.edu/careerservices)



# The Essential Parent & Family Guide: Career Development



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA  
CAREER SERVICES

Career planning is typically not a one person, isolated adventure. Connecting with others about the whole process can enhance the experience and success for most students.

Parents especially can be valuable in helping students succeed in career development and planning if they are able to listen, be open to ideas, help students find information, and be nonjudgmental.

Here are ways you can help:

### **1. Encourage your student to visit the Career Services office in Meisler Hall, Suite 2100**

Encourage your student to visit Career Services early to check out the services available.

When your student is ready to start thinking about, or is expressing anxiety about their future, you can let them know who is available on campus to help. Pay attention to your student's timing and act accordingly.

At the beginning of the spring term, ask your student: "Have you had a chance to check out the Career Services office?" By spring term students have settled into college life and are ready to start utilizing the resources available to them.

Point out that Career Services works with students at any point in their education, but the sooner a student becomes familiar with our staff, resources, and programs, the better prepared they will be to make wise career decisions.

Career Services offers a wide range of career development and job-search help, including:

- Individual career advising
- Online resources and a library of books on a wide range of careers
- Workshops on exploring majors and careers
- Job fairs, career events, and on-campus interviews
- Practice interviews, resume writing and cover letter assistance

### **2. Advise your student to write a resume**

Writing a resume can be a "reality test" and can help a student identify weak areas that require improvement. Suggest your student pick up our resume packet containing tips on writing resumes.

You can review resume drafts for grammar, spelling, and content, but recommend that the final product be critiqued by a Career Services staff. Our office offers resume critiques in person, online or by phone appointment.

### **3. Challenge your student to become "occupationally literate"**

Ask: "Do you have any ideas about what you might want to do when you graduate?"

If your student seems unsure, you can talk about personal qualities you see as talents and strengths. You can also recommend:

- Taking the Focus2 assessment [<http://bit.ly/USoALFocus2>]
- Talking to favorite faculty members
- Researching a variety of interesting career fields and employers

A career decision should be a process and not a one-time, last-minute event: Discourage putting this decision off until the senior year.

### **4. Allow your student to make the decision**

Even though it is helpful to occasionally ask about career plans, too much prodding can backfire.

**Myth:** A student must major in something "practical" or marketable.

**Truth:** Students should follow their own interests and passions.

**Myth:** Picking your major means picking the career you will have forever.

**Truth:** That's not true anymore. "Major" does not necessarily mean "career", and it is not unusual for a student to change majors. Many students change majors after gaining more information about specific fields of study and career fields of interest. Many students end up doing something very different than originally planned, so don't panic when they come up with an outrageous or impractical career idea. Chances are plans will develop and change. It's okay to change majors—and careers.

Career development can be stressful. Maybe this is the first really big decision that your student has had to make. Be patient, sympathetic and understanding, even if you don't agree with your student's decision.

### **5. Emphasize the importance of Co-op and Internships**

Career Services will not "place" your child in a job at graduation. Colleges grant degrees, but not job guarantees, so having relevant experience in this competitive job market is critical. Your student can sample career options by experimenting with summer employment or study abroad opportunities, volunteer work, service learning, or by completing a co-op or internship.

*Why a co-op or internship?*

Employers are interested in communication, problem-solving, and administrative skills, which can be developed through co-ops or internships. They look for experience on a student's resume and often hire from within their own co-op or internship programs.

A high GPA is not enough; employers seek students with career-related experience. Having that experience can impact future earning potential. Recent surveys show that co-ops and paid interns earn higher starting salaries than their peers with unpaid internships or no work experience. Career Services offers Co-op/Intern program orientations throughout the year. Orientations cover program requirements and available resources to assist in obtaining employment. Please encourage your student to attend.