

A Warrior's Guide to Career Development: the Role of Career Counselling in your Journey

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Quote by Abraham Lincoln: "The best way to predict the future is to create it".

The year 2020 has been unpredictable for life in general, and especially for students as you navigate your path through new ways of learning. You have encountered challenges, but also made great strides in achieving the goals you set out for yourself at the start of the year. Congratulations on reaching this point! Your courage, perseverance and resilience are acknowledged and celebrated.

As the year draws to an end, this may be a conflicting time filled with mixed emotions, uncertainty and sometimes even regrets. It is understandable for students to feel this way, and question various aspects of their career, irrespective of the year or level of studies you are at currently.

- **First-year undergraduate students:** You have most probably been adjusting to university life, as you transitioned from high school. You may be asking yourself: Which academic direction do I want to take? When can I start networking? How can I develop my soft skills such as interpersonal (people) skills, communication skills, listening skills, time-management, and empathy?
- **Students who are mid-way with their degrees:** You have been adjusting to the demanding next level of your course. Some of the questions you may have, include: Which career options are related to my major? Where can I find internship opportunities? How can I work on my hard skills, such as interviewing and compiling a CV?
- **Final year and postgraduate students:** You have been preparing to graduate and need to decide whether to continue studying or enter the workplace. You may have questions such as: Where can I gain relevant experience? How can I perfect my CV and become more comfortable with interviews? Which advanced degrees can I pursue to further my education?

No matter which group you may fall into, you may be feeling under pressure to make critical decisions about your course, career and future. Perhaps you are even wondering if you chose the right course; wondering about when you will complete your degree, and questioning how to start searching for a job. Undoubtedly, it is essential that you reflect on this year and start preparing for 2021. View this period as the best opportunity to give in-depth consideration to your career journey and map out your next move.

How exactly should I go about determining my next step in developing my career?

You have amazingly enough, long embarked on your career development journey. Whether you are aware of it or not, your career journey started way back in your younger years. It goes as far back as when you started telling everyone what you wanted to be when you grow up. For many, the answer to this vital life-altering question constantly changed throughout your life, as you advanced through schooling and the different stages of your development. For others, the answer remained consistent all along. The ultimate career choice that you embarked on when beginning your first year of university has in many ways been influenced over time by your learning, experiences, family, educators, media and role models, to name a few. The process of developing your career is an ongoing and critical one, as your career is a crucial aspect of life; having a profound impact on your lifestyle, happiness and wellbeing. It is therefore only fitting that you carefully think through all your decisions. Developing your

career must be a priority, and there are various tools to assist you in further mapping out your career journey.

Quote by Confucius: "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life."

The role and importance of career counselling

One way of effectively developing your career is through career counselling. It is especially helpful if you realise that you may not have chosen the course best suited to you and want to explore your options further. This process is a more formal route of gaining a clearer understanding of yourself and making an informed career decision. As many of you have experienced, making any career-related decision can at times be overwhelming. You may be trying to juggle the conflicting views of your loved ones (parents in particular), financial circumstances, family conditions, your dreams and goals while factoring in your current academic performance. Career counselling allows you to engage with a professional (psychologist or counsellor) in conversation and assessments that can assist you in making more informed decisions. Career counselling is a comprehensive process which includes the following:

- **Intake interview:** the professional will ask you questions about your personal, family and academic history, as well as your goals. Furthermore, you will be given the opportunity to express what you are most passionate about and what motivates you.
- **A complete psychometric evaluation:** you will be assessed in terms of your interests, aptitude (abilities) and personality and evaluated for university potential and readiness.
- **Information** on a wide variety of careers and university degrees is discussed and provided.
- **Intensive decision-making process:** the process concludes with a discussion about what you are choosing for yourself, in consideration of all the information at hand.

Quote by Katherine Whitehorn: "Find out what you like doing best and get someone to pay you for doing it."

Career counselling is an invaluable part of your career development journey, helping you make sense of the present and better plan for your future. Furthermore, this process provides you with some **benefits**:

- **Self-discovery:** you will enhance your knowledge of your values, strengths, weaknesses, interests, skills, abilities and personality attributes.
- **Goal-setting:** when you know the requirements of your career options, you can plan the specifics of your goals.
- **Career choices:** you will be exposed to a variety of career options and opportunities.
- **Direction-** you will be able to determine whether you are on the right path or need to make some readjustments.
- **Decision-making:** It is essential to know that although career counselling is a collaborative process between you and the professional, ultimately, the final decision lies with you.
- **Self-branding:** with a better understanding of yourself in all career-related aspects, you will be in a position to brand and market yourself and also explore starting your own business.

It is essential to know that there are other ways of effectively developing your career. These alternative ways may seem less formal but can lead to significant insights about your career journey. Developing your career on your own requires you to be curious about your future career and the world of work. The following are the essentials you will need in your **career development toolbox**:

1. **Goal-setting:** divide your goals into short-term and long-term; this will guide the decisions you make along the way to achieving your goals.
2. **Flexibility:** Timelines change, be flexible and realistic about when you will achieve your career goals. What matters most is going at your pace, knowing that you will get to the finish line.
3. **Live Out of the Box:** take a gap year, job shadow, and explore different routes to achieving your career goals. If you are looking for a job, let everyone know to keep a lookout for you, they may come across an opportunity related to what you want.
4. **Believe in yourself and never give up:** trust that you know what is best for you. Be your own biggest fan and cheerleader and encourage yourself every step of the way. Harriet Beecher Stowe said, "Never give up, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn".
5. **Be open to change:** your career journey is unique and specific to you. You do not have to do things like everyone else.
6. **Reflective attitude:** make it mandatory for yourself to regularly take time to reflect on your goals. When you take time for yourself, you will better be able to hear your inner voice and what you desire.
7. **Be intentional:** relentlessly pursue your goals. It will take some sacrifices, but know that every step you take moves you closer to achieving your goals.
8. **Be realistic:** take into consideration all aspects of yourself (strengths, weaknesses, interests, skills, abilities and personality attributes) as you map out your career aspirations.
9. **Embrace failure:** allow moments of failure to deepen your desire for your goals, help you re-evaluate your plans and remind you of your strengths.
10. **Be resourceful:** access information; it is literally at your fingertips. You can gain insight, understanding and resources from researching the various careers within your study field. Be brave enough to ask for help and make effective use of technology.

The pursuit of your goals and the development of your career must be your priority. Therefore, ensure that you seek out all that you need to be empowered to make the choices that best suit you as you move through the various stages of your career journey.

Quote by Rob Liano: "No one can discover you until you do. Exploit your talents, skills and strengths and make the world sit up and take notice".

Some additional resources:

- **[Student Counselling and Development \(SCD\)](#)**: 0514012853 or SCD@ufs.ac.za (Bloemfontein campus); 0587185033 or SCDQQ@ufs.ac.za (QwaQwa campus); and 0515051298 SCDSouth@ufs.ac.za (South campus).
- **[Go Study South Africa](#)**
- You can also attend career exhibitions, volunteer at your dream company, sign up for short courses, speak to final year students and lecturers in your department and get a mentor.
- **[The UFS Career Services Office](#)**