"So, what are your plans AFTER graduation?"
Every college student, not just a graduating senior, is subject to this inquiry. It can be a daunting question at any stage of an academic career.
The Career Services department at St. John’s University is devoted to helping all students, undergraduate and graduate, through the various stages of the career development process. Career Services staff work to provide students with career-related information and guidance.

FAQs ~ Frequently Asked Questions

Q. When should my son or daughter start visiting Career Services?
A. Career Services welcomes students from their first days on campus. However, the beginning months of a student’s college career can be quite busy and overwhelming. We suggest that students take time to get acclimated to college life and then visit Career Services. At this point, counselors can discuss potential majors/careers, given the student’s interests and course schedule.

Q. What is Career Development?
A. Career Development is a process that individuals go through the career plan and decision. This process includes identifying interests, skills and values (self-assessment); exploring the world of careers; generating career options; deciding on a "career fit"; and implementing a career plan.
Career Services assists students with all of these steps and their related issues and concerns including choosing a major, finding internship opportunities, writing a resume, preparing for interviews, researching employers, attending job fairs and much more!

Q. How important are extra and/or co-curricular activities?
A. According to the NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers), many employers rate leadership activities as important on a list of qualities they are looking for in candidates. However, it is more valuable for a student to be involved in a few meaningful leadership roles than to be on a "laundry list" of memberships in many campus organizations.

Q. Is a summer internship like a summer job and how important is it?
A. Employers may use the terms summer job and internship interchangeably. However, summer jobs and internships do vary in some ways. Summer jobs typically include positions such as camp counselors, wait staff, administrative help and retail sales. Internships tend to include more training and supervision and are designed specifically for college students. The structured, professional environment of most internships helps students to evaluate if the experience is something they want to pursue long term. Both summer jobs and internships are means by which students gather work experience, although an internship might offer an experience that is more closely related to a student’s chosen field.

Q. When is the best time to look for a summer internship or job?
A. Students are encouraged to begin their search for internships relatively early, depending on the internship that interests them. Some highly selective internships have deadlines as early as November 1 for the following summer, but most freshmen and sophomores are able to find an internship or summer job if they begin the search in January or February. While it is ideal for students to start their search for summer opportunities early, career counselors will work with students to help them strategize for a search throughout the academic year and during the summer.

Q. Do you have resources for locating internships?
A. Career Services lists internships through St. John’s CareerLink, an online management system which allows student access to a database of internships, part-time and full-time jobs. In addition, Career Services’ Web site and library provide a variety of links and resources including tips on every stage of the internship experience. Finally, throughout the year, students are strongly encouraged to attend the wide variety of events sponsored by Career Services to interact with employers and alumni, including fairs, panels and networking events. They offer students an opportunity to generate possible internship opportunities.
Q. What do employers look for in a candidate?
A. In general, employers look for students who are highly motivated, able to communicate their ideas clearly and concisely and can demonstrate skills in leadership and teamwork. Employers also consider a candidate's academic background, appearance, comfort level with the interview process and the initiative taken throughout the entire job search process. Students are encouraged to work with a career advisor to create a job search strategy as well as practice the skills that will help them succeed in the process.

Q. What areas do employers note could be improved in candidates?
A. According to the NACE Job Outlook, employers specifically attribute students' poor writing skills to the abundant use of text-messaging and emails, and the abbreviations used in those methods of communication. Additionally, employers note students are lacking presentation, teamwork and overall interpersonal skills.

Q. My son/daughter keeps changing his/her major. Is this normal?
A. Most estimates say 80% of college students will change their major at least once. This exploration time and process is very normal and positive (although at times stress producing for students AND parents). Your student will be looking at all of their options and making more informed decisions as they become more aware of themselves and the world around them. During the first year, it is actually quite healthy to remain undecided while exploring options.

"Here are some “conversation starters” you can use to communicate with and encourage your son or daughter.

Step 1: Self-Assessment
	Conversation starters:
	• What do you consider your biggest accomplishment?
	• How would you describe the ideal job for you?
	• What are you good at doing?
	• What did you like best/least about your past jobs or volunteer experiences?

Step 2: Research and Exploration (including choosing a major)
	Conversation starters:
	• Let’s think about people we know in the fields that interest you (such as neighbors or relatives) so you can set up informational interviews with them.
	• How would some of your career options affect other aspects of your life such as family, hobbies and volunteer work?
	• What are some of the advantages of career choices you have considered? Disadvantages?
	• Have you talked with your academic advisor and a Career Services counselor about choosing a major/career? What was their advice?

How parents can help with choosing a major:
	• Listen to your son or daughter.
	• Encourage open discussion about what he or she hopes to accomplish by choosing a particular major, but try not to be judgmental.
	• Assure your son/daughter the decision is not irrevocable. The key is not to procrastinate about exploring the issues and gathering information to make an informed decision.
	• Ask which courses your son/daughter have enjoyed the most.

Step 3: Gaining Experience/Developing Marketable Skills
	Conversation starters:
	• Do you have a resume?
	• Which campus activities do you think would interest you? Have you looked into joining them?
	• Which summer jobs or internships do you think might be available to someone with your interests or major?
	• Have you checked with University Career Services about how to obtain them?

Step 4: Learning Job Seeking Skills/Applying to Graduate School
	Conversation starters:
	• Are you planning to attend workshops and recruitment programs offered on campus by Career Services? (If not, why not?) Have you worked on a detailed job search plan?
	• Do you have proper interviewing attire?
	• Which of your faculty and administrators do you think might be able to serve as references for full-time jobs or graduate school? How will you develop a relationship with them?
	• What preparation do you think you will need to do your best on graduate admissions tests?
	• Have you considered a back-up plan to graduate school?

Portions of this information were taken from The Parent's Crash Course in Career Planning, Marcia B. Harris and Sharon L. Jones, NTC Publishing Group, 1996.