



## Parent and Family Guide - Career & Self-Discovery Center

Some of the most valuable things parents and family members can do to help a student with career planning are to listen, to be open to ideas, and to help your student find information. The Career & Self-Discovery Center offers services and programs throughout your students' time at Russell Sage College and we are able to work with them from the first day of college or graduate school through their time after college as an alumna/alumnus.

Here are some things that you can do to help:

### **1. Encourage your student to visit the Career Center.**

Check out our website at [www.sage.edu/career](http://www.sage.edu/career) and learn about the resources that our office has to offer students and alums. When your student is feeling anxious about their future, show them our website and tell them to reach out to us by phone or email.

The aim of the Career Center is not to create pressure for your student, but to reduce confusion by providing information and having informed conversations with them. In dealing with first year students, we are aware that they need time to adjust to their new surroundings. The major objective of any program or service for first-year students is to introduce them to the process of career planning and to our office so that they know where to find help when they want it.

Many students use their first year to settle into the college experience, and part of that is exploring the resources they have available to them. All new first year students will hear about the Career & Self-Discovery Center in their first year seminar course, RSC 101, and will learn about the services that our office has to offer. If you feel that your student could benefit from meeting with us, encourage them to drop in to our offices or to email us/call us. All students can schedule an appointment via our Handshake application. If you suggest a visit, and your student says "You only go there when you are a senior," then reassure them that students can visit the Career Center any time throughout their time at Russell Sage- the earlier the better! If a student comes to visit us early in their time here, we can help them make plans to gain experience and be a strong candidate for job opportunities.

We offer a full range of services around career development, including:

- Resume and cover letter creation, development, and revision
- Career exploration and assessments
- Internship exploration
- Job Shadow Opportunities
- Mock interviews and interview preparation
- Workshops on many topics including resume writing, professionalism, interviewing, and more
- [Handshake](#), our job and internship platform, that is also a one-stop shop to view upcoming events and make appointments
- Networking and LinkedIn assistance
- Graduate School search and statement of purpose/interest aide
- Walk ins welcome, or one on one scheduled appointments

### **2. Have a conversation about your student's goals and career plans.**

Having a conversation with your student about what they potentially may major in or are thinking about for a career is a good way to get them to start planning or thinking of their potential paths (especially if they have not yet started to do

so!). Even though it is helpful to talk about intended career plans, too much prodding can backfire and students may start to feel pressured.

College majors have changed a bit over the years and sometimes it is less of a linear path than 20 to 30 years ago. We encourage students to follow what they are interested in and their passions, which does not always leave a clear and precise career path. The Career Center is here to help your student think about their goals and how to get to that point.

In addition, the major your student chooses does not necessarily provide a clear and direct career path. About one third of all college students change their major at least once during the first three years of college, so don't be discouraged if your student doesn't have a major declared upon entering Russell Sage. We want students to explore and take a variety of classes in subject areas and choose a major that they are passionate about. Sometimes students know exactly what they want to do after college, others spend their time at Russell Sage figuring that out. While we encourage you to have conversations with your student about their major and career paths, we ask that you let your student make the decision that is best for them.

Choosing a career path and major is a big decision and this may be the first really big decision that your student will make. Be patient with them and encourage them to use their resources at Russell Sage to help with decision making and planning!

### **3. Suggest that your student start to write or update their resume.**

Writing a resume can be challenging for college students, but it is a helpful way for students to identify gaps and areas in which they can improve upon, as well as what skills they already have. The Career Center has resume writing guides available on our website and in the office for students and you to access (<https://www.sage.edu/student-life/career-planning/career-resources-for-students/>). The resume writing guides have information on what to include on a resume, as well as sample resumes for your student to review and use as a starting point. The expectations of a college student/graduate's resume varies greatly from that of a high school graduate.

We recommend that the final product be reviewed by a staff member in the Career Center. The format and the content of resumes change every few years- and the Career Center is in contact with employers on a regular basis about what they are looking for in a resume. The samples that we have in our guides have been seen and approved by employers, so we want students to use our sample resumes as a guide.

### **4. Encourage your student to become occupationally literate.**

If you ask your student: "Do you have any ideas about what you might want to do when you graduate?" and they don't have a general idea for a potential path, that's okay! You can brainstorm your student's strengths, talents and skills, but you can also recommend that they do the following:

- Meet with a Career Center staff member to discuss Focus 2, the career exploration tool that our office uses (which most students may have already utilized in their first year seminar course)
- Talk to a faculty member that they get along with to discuss potential career paths with their major
- Use Focus 2/O\*Net Online to explore different career opportunities and industries, as well as research what they can do with their major or potential major
- Use [Candid Career](#) to explore majors and careers via videos and advice from hundreds of real professionals

Planning their career should not start the week before your student graduates... Encourage them to come to our office early and often!

### **5. Emphasize the importance of internships, shadowing, volunteering, work study positions, micro-internships, and relevant job experiences.**

The Career & Self-Discovery Center does not "place" your student in a job when they graduate. Your student will earn their degree from Russell Sage College, and our office will help your student be prepared to enter the workforce if they seek our support. We will help your student with all of the required parts of getting a job (resume, cover letter, interview

skills, etc.), but it is up to them to apply for jobs and get an offer. Therefore, having relevant experience in this competitive job market is very important. Employers are no longer looking for just a high GPA, but they are looking for experiences that make them more marketable and desirable.

Your student can get a taste of possible career options by completing internships, shadowing, and experimenting with summer employment opportunities/relevant job experience, or volunteer work.

We also ask you to encourage your student should become familiar with [Handshake](#) in their first semester to start reviewing and applying for opportunities that are available to them such as those listed below:

**Internships:** Employers want potential candidates to have internship experiences on their resume. Many employers think of internships as an extension of the interview and gives them insight into the capabilities of the intern in a real office environment. By having an internship, your student will be gaining professional skills that will demonstrate to an employer that they can be successful working in a traditional setting. Internships can vary in duration and type. Internships can be for academic credit or non-credit, and paid or unpaid, depending on the employer. They can vary in time duration depending on various factors. For an internship that is for academic credit, students should work with a faculty member in their major department to ensure that the internship is a good fit and qualifies for academic credit. Otherwise, students can utilize the Career Center for assistance in finding internships to help build their resumes and gain relevant experience! Many employers seek to hire great interns after they graduate, so students should view an internship as a long interview and audition process.

**Micro-Internships:** Employers are looking to hire students for small-term, paid, professional assignments that are similar to those given to new hires or interns. These micro-internships enable students to demonstrate skills, explore career paths, and build their networks as they seek the right full-time role. Unlike traditional internships, they are not for credit and can take place year-round, typically range from 5 to 40 hours of work. Micro-Internships are used by companies ranging from those in the Fortune 100 to emerging start-ups, and go across departments including sales, marketing, technology, HR, and finance. Students can search through micro-internship opportunities here: <http://info.parkerdewey.com/sage>. We also provide students with access to Forage, an additional virtual learning platform.

**Job Shadowing:** Job shadowing is a way for your student to really see what a profession does on a daily basis. Students that choose to shadow someone or are required to for some programs, gain real insight into what really happens on a day to day basis by following/shadowing a professional in the field. Many students see Grey's Anatomy and think they know what a medical worker does, but shadowing a doctor or nurse would provide insight into what the real work of a nurse or doctor is! We have students that have been set on being a teacher in the past, but then change their mind when they shadow a teacher and see just how much work goes into lesson planning and teaching itself. We encourage students to shadow professionals in fields that they may be interested in- it can either reassure them that the profession is a good fit, or could help shift them in the right direction. We suggest that students who are interested in shadowing professionals spend between 10 to 40 hours doing so.

**Volunteering:** The vast majority of employers think of volunteer experience as a chance to build leadership skills and showcase strong character, and employers value seeing service experiences on college students' resumes. There are plenty of local nonprofits and organizations for which your student could volunteer at in the Capital Region depending on their area of interest! Our locations in Troy and Albany provide excellent access to government agencies, non profits, advocacy groups, and more that your student could get involved with. Students can also volunteer through Russell Sage College's Annual Day of Service- Sage Engaged! Sage Engaged is a day-long event in the fall semester in which students can volunteer with local nonprofits and local businesses in the Capital Region and get engaged in our great communities.

**Work Study and Community Based Student Positions:** Russell Sage College offers a few different types of work study positions, some of which are awarded as part of a students financial aid package. If you are unsure if your student was awarded federal work study, check with financial aid.

**Federal Work Study:** Federal work study positions are generally limited to \$2,000 a semester and are given out to qualifying students as determined by the Office of Financial Aid. These work study positions can be found across both campuses and in many offices and departments on campus. Sample positions include working in the library, serving as a peer tutor, Offices of Academic Support, Disability Resources, and Career & Self-Discovery Center, food service, and in

the fitness center. Generally students commit to 7 to 10 hours per week in their work study position and can gain great customer service and teamwork skills through these positions, as well as many other desirable skills that employers are looking for.

**Community Based Student Employment:** These are limited positions in which students work with a community partner in Troy or Albany, mostly non-profit agencies. To apply for these positions, students must have been granted federal work study funds.

**Sage Work Study:** These positions are available for all students and don't require a federal work study award,, but students must seek these positions out. These positions tend to be in offices such as Admissions, Institutional Advancement, and Alumnae/Alumni Relations.

**Part Time Employment:** Any part time employment is a great way for students to gain skills that employers are looking for and get some experience under their belt. Many of the common positions that students hold (babysitter, cashier, waitress/waiter/server, retail associate, etc) are ways in which students can gain transferable skills such as communication and customer service skills, multitasking in a fast paced environment, and teamwork and collaboration skills. Students often seek to find employment that is relevant to their intended field of study. For example, it is common for students that intend to pursue a career in the healthcare industry to get a position in a hospital setting, such as a Patient Care Associate, or students intending to pursue a career in education commonly work at schools as teaching assistants.

## **6. Encourage on-campus club and organization involvement.**

Part of the college experience at Russell Sage College is getting involved and being active outside of the classroom. Interpersonal and leadership skills, qualities valued by employers, are often developed in these on campus clubs and organizations. Your student can get involved with many different clubs depending on their area of interest. Students can gain leadership experience through many clubs and organizations, as well as professional development.

## **7. Encourage your student to embrace the value of networking.**

More than 85 percent of jobs and internships are found through networking, so this is an important skill for students to embrace. Students often think that they have a small network and that is not necessarily true- they are part of your network of friends, co-workers, family, and more. Students also have their own network at Russell Sage College, including their friends, classmates, faculty, staff, and alumni that they work with or encounter on a regular basis. Encourage your student to talk to the people in their network to see if anyone knows of possible opportunities that may be of interest and expand their network, especially in their field of interest.

Students can also contact the Career & Self-Discovery Center to learn more about networking and utilizing LinkedIn, a free online professional social network. Our office can provide your students with free professional headshots to post to their LinkedIn profile and we can also assist with the development of their LinkedIn profile as well. LinkedIn is a great way for students to network with alums of Russell Sage College, as well as make new connections at companies or organizations they may be interested in working at one day.

By encouraging your student to job shadow, intern, volunteer, work, and get involved on campus, you are also encouraging them to expand their network, so be sure to encourage your student to use their network to help them achieve their career goals!

In summary, the Career & Self-Discovery Center is excited to work with your student! If they are looking for any career assistance or need to explore their options, please send them our way! Also, Handshake is a great tool for them to get started with applying for opportunities, becoming knowledgeable about events, and making appointments online.

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### **Career & Self Discovery Center Contact Information:**

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Adapted from <https://careerservices.wvu.edu/parents/a-parents-guide-to-career-development>