EXPLORE WORKBOOK

ASSESSING YOUR INTERESTS, SKILLS, STRENGTHS, AND VALUES

CAREER CENTER

NEBRASKA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

Student Center, Lower Level | 402.465.2224 | career@nebrwesleyan.edu | career.nebrwesleyan.edu

Self-Assessment for Career Planning

Deciding what type of work you want to pursue after your education at Nebraska Wesleyan University can be difficult. You are not alone! Many NWU students need help discovering and considering their career options. The Career Center is here to help you with this exploration!

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- You do NOT need to have your career totally figured out before you leave NWU. Most people change jobs and even careers many times over the course of their lives. You may change your mind about what you want to do several times – don't worry, it's normal!
- Beware of choosing a certain career path simply because it's clearer (i.e. there are always job opportunities available). Sometimes the best ideas and opportunities arise out of uncertainty and chaos. Certainty about a career path does not correlate with long-term job satisfaction.
- Most career paths are winding with unexpected turns that are impossible to predict. Many, if not all, career paths are also impacted by external factors such as relationships, family, new passions, health/illness, etc.

HOW SELF-ASSESSMENT CAN HELP

Career decisions affect your lifestyle, health, and overall sense of satisfaction and happiness, and it is important to make informed choices based on who you are, what you value, and what you have to offer the world. The Career Center encourages all students to reflect on their interests, skills, values, personality, and family and cultural influences. This reflection often yields important clues that can help you find meaningful opportunities that are a good fit.

The Career Center also offers a variety of resources and 1:1 appointments to help guide you through the self-assessment process.

1:1 APPOINTMENTS

At any point in your reflection process, you can schedule a 1:1 appointment with a career coach at the Career Center. They can help you get started with some self-assessment or help you reflect on the information you've gathered about yourself through these exercises.

The Career Center also has a variety of assessment tools. Talk to a career counselor first to determine which assessment is best for your needs. After taking the assessment, an *interpretation appointment is required*.

Strong Interest Inventory (SII): As the leading career planning tool for those seeking direction in their career path, the SII assesses your interests against six broad categories of work. The assessment then breaks down these categories of work into specific areas of interest that can be directly related to an individual's area of study (major) or future career. This assessment takes approximately 30 minutes.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI): The MBTI assesses an individual's personality type, assigning one of sixteen four-letter types to each respondent. Each letter in an individual's type represents a different element of personality. Through understanding your preferences and type you can learn more about how you take in information, make decisions, direct and receive energy, and approach the outside world. This information can then help inform who you are, why you want to work (what motivates you), what you want to do, and where you want to work.

Clifton Strengths for Students: The Clifton Strengths assessment can help individuals better understand their natural talents. The Strengths assessment will give students their top 5 signature themes or strengths, and help students understand how they apply their strengths in leadership, life, academics, and the workplace.

SELF-ASSESSMENT CAN BE AN EXCITING, EYE-OPENING EXPERIENCE. Enjoy the process!

Your Interests

Finding a job that allows you to explore or utilize your interests in some way is more likely to keep you engaged, motivated, and inspired in your work. Although not all interests lend themselves well to making a living, with a little creativity most people find ways to do what they enjoy in some part of their job. You may already have a strong sense of your interests or you may feel that you don't have very many interests at all.

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Answer any of the questions below and pay attention to your responses. You may even answer them with someone else so they can help you recognize themes. Comparing your answers may also give you some new insight.

1. What makes you happiest in your life? What excites you?
2. What do you do that makes you feel invincible?
3. What do people thank you for?
4. What do people think you're good at? If you don't know, go ask them.
5. Who do you look up to? Who are your mentors? Who inspires you? Why?
6. What has been your favorite class in high school or at NWU? Why did you like it?
7. What are some of your non-academic interests/hobbies? What do you do for fun?
8. Consider your previous jobs, internships, and volunteer or extracurricular activities. What did you like? What didn't you like? Were these a good fit for you? Why or why not?
9. What do you dislike doing or do out of obligation?
10. What social, political, environmental or other issues are important to you? How do you participate in or engage with these issues?
11. When was the last time you over-delivered on something? What was it and why did you work so hard on it?
12. When was the last time you were "in the zone" and totally lost track of time? What were you doing?
13. What are you doing when you feel most like yourself?
14. Imagine you won $158 million in the lottery. It's now three months later. What will you be doing tomorrow?
15. What would you do if you knew you could not fail?
16. What topics do you find yourself continuously arguing about or defending with others? What beliefs or values do these topics represent?
17. What do you love helping people with? How do you most commonly help others?
18. What's your favorite section in the bookstore? What's the first magazine you'd pick up at the store?
19. Thinking about your past and present work experiences, what would you gladly do for free?
20. If you were able to be a member of the audience at your own funeral how would you want to be remembered?
21. What are you naturally curious about?
22. Think back to when you were 5 or 10 years old. What did you want to be when you grew up? What were your influences?
23. What did you like to spend your time doing as a child? Do you still enjoy doing this activity?
24. What careers do you find yourself dreaming of? What jobs do others have that you wish were yours?
25. What is something you want to make sure to do in your lifetime?

DISCOVERY QUESTION Responses/Notes:

Reflect

1. What did you learn or remember about your own interests? Were there any surprises or something you hadn't thought about for a while?

2. Did you notice any themes or threads that connected your various interests?

3. Which, if any, of these interests do you feel are integral to personal fulfillment?

4. Do you foresee any barriers to exploring certain interests as a career option?

Your Skills and Strengths

Knowing what skills you have to offer can help you identify specific industries or organizations where these skills might be a good match for the employer's needs. How you feel when using these skills is also important. If you enjoy work that requires certain skills, then look for opportunities to use them, even if you have to develop those skills over time. If you have high proficiency in a skill that you do not enjoy using, try to limit how much you'll need to perform these types of tasks. When you excel at a skill but don't enjoy using it, we call it a **"burnout skill."** You don't have to avoid burnout skills altogether, but you shouldn't choose a career just because you will be good at your job.

SKILLS INVENTORY

Rate yourself in the following skill categories using the scale below and then circle or highlight the skills that you enjoy using and put an X through any "burnout" skills (skills you use a lot and excel at but do not enjoy using).

1= Strong ability in this area
2= Some ability
3= Enough ability to get by with help from others
4= No ability at all

SOCIAL

__ **Social ease:** Feel comfortable in situations which are primarily social in nature.

__ **Dealing with public:** Relate effectively with a variety of people who come to an establishment for information, service or help.

__**Appearance/Dress:** Dress presentably and appropriately for a variety of interpersonal situations or group occasions.

__ **Accepting negative feedback:** Able to cope with criticism.

INVESTIGATIVE

__ **Scientific curiosity:** Learn about scientific phenomena and investigate events which may lead to such knowledge.

__ **Research:** Gather information in a systematic way for a particular field of knowledge to establish certain facts or principles, identify themes, or generate new ideas.

__ **Technical work:** Work easily with practical, mechanical or industrial aspects of a particular science, profession or craft.

CREATIVE

__ **Artistic**: Keenly sensitive to aesthetic values; able to create works of art.

__ **Imaginative with things**: Create new ideas and forms with various physical objects.

__ **Imaginative with ideas**: Create new ideas and programs through conceptualizing existing elements in new ways; able to merge abstract ideas.

NUMERICAL

__ **Working with numerical data:** Comfortable with large amounts of quantitative data and compiling, interpreting, and presenting data.

__ **Solving quantitative problems:** Reason quantitatively so that problems having numerical solutions can be solved without the aid of a computer or other mechanical device.

__ **Computer use:** Use computers to solve quantitative problems, have knowledge of programming, computer capabilities, etc.

VERBAL-PERSUASIVE

__ **Writing:** Express myself in written forms of communication.

__ **Talking:** Relate easily to people in ordinary conversational settings.

__ **Speaking:** Deliver a talk or address an audience.

__ **Persuading:** Able to convince others to believe something I hold to be true.

__ **Selling:** Convince others to buy a product/service/idea I am selling.

__ **Dramatics:** Portray ideas or stories in a dramatic format.

__ **Negotiations:** Bargain/discuss with goal of reaching agreement.

MANUAL-PHYSICAL

__ **Mechanical reasoning:** Understand the way that machinery or tools operate and the relationship between mechanical operations.

__ **Manual dexterity:** Skilled in using your hands.

__ **Spatial perception:** Judge the relationship of objects in space; manipulate them mentally and visualize the effects of putting them together or of turning them over or around.

__ **Physical stamina:** Physically resistant to fatigue and illness.

__ **Outdoor work:** Familiar with the outdoors; able to work outdoors without encountering a great many obstacles.

MANAGERIAL

__ **Organization and planning**: Develop a program, project or set of ideas through systematic preparation and arrangement of tasks, coordinating the people and resources necessary to put a plan into effect.

__ **Orderliness**: Arrange items in a systematic fashion so that such items or information can be readily used or retrieved.

__ **Handling details**: Able to work efficiently with a great variety and/or volume of information.

__ **Making decisions**: Comfortable making judgments or reaching conclusions about matters which require specific action; able to accept responsibility for the consequences of such action

WORKING WITH OTHERS

__ **Supervising**: Oversee, manage or direct work of others.

__ **Teaching**: Help others learn how to do or understand something; able to provide knowledge or insight.

__ **Coaching**: Instruct or train an individual to improve performance in a specific area.

__ **Counseling**: Engage in a direct helping relationship with another in situations where the person's concern is not solvable through information-giving or advice.

REFLECT

1. Did you discover any new skills that you hadn't recognized before?

2. Can you identify any additional skills that weren't listed above?

3. How do your skills line up with your interests? (e.g., if you have artistic abilities and also enjoy art)

4. List the top 10 skills that you rated most highly. What do you notice? Do you recognize any themes or spot any potential career fields these skills are associated with?

5. Identify skills you really enjoy using and/or would like to develop further.

6. Identify any burnout skills. How have you used these skills throughout your life and how might you limit how much you use them in the future?

7. Are there skills you feel you need to develop to be competitive but that you don't like much? How does this feel? Is it still worth developing them?

FAMILY & FRIENDS FEEDBACK EXERCISE

Use the knowledge and insights of the people who know you best to help you get to know your strengths better. Pick 3-4 people and ask them for 20 minutes of their time to answer the following questions about you:

- **What do you appreciate about me?**
- **What am I good at? What are my strengths?**
- **What kind of job/career do you think would be a good fit for me?**

In this exercise, they talk and you write. As much as possible, write exactly what they say. Don't editorialize or comment; just write it down like a court reporter.

REFLECT

1. What did you learn from their comments?

2. Were any of their comments a surprise? Why?

3. Were there any similarities between the responses from different people? If there were major differences, why do you think this was the case?

4. Did you have any noticeable emotional reactions to the information they shared with you? (i.e., disbelief, anger, pride, joy, etc.) Where do you think these feelings are coming from?

Your Values

Whether you realize it or not, every time you make a choice about doing one thing as opposed to another, you make a value decision. When you have a decision that involves two or more conflicting values that are of major importance to you, the decision can be extremely difficult to make (e.g., career values may conflict with family and friendship values). You can, however, make these decisions more effectively if you have some idea of what your most important values are and the priority that you give to each. If you can bring your actions into harmony with your values, you will feel more satisfied with the decisions you make, including career decisions. Many people find that the most satisfying and meaningful work is highly compatible with their values.

VALUES ASSESSMENT

The following exercises will help you to understand which work and personal values are important to you, and what priorities you give to them. Because some of our influences change throughout our lives, our values are bound to change as well. What you highly value now may become less of a priority later, so reflect on your values frequently.

Part I: Work Values

Rate each work value using the following scale:

1 = very important to have in my work
2 = somewhat important to have in my work
3 = unimportant to have in my work

I want work **conditions** that permit or require the following:

___**Independence/Autonomy:** Doing what you want to do without much direction from others.

___**Time flexibility:** Arranging your own hours, working according to your own time schedule.

___**Change/Variety:** Performing varying tasks in a number of different settings.

___**Change/Risk:** Performing new tasks or leading new programs that challenge the established order and may be initially resisted.

___**Stability/Security:** Working in a secure job that pays you reasonably well.

___**Physical challenge:** Performing dangerous tasks that challenge your physical capabilities.

___**Physical demands:** Performing physically strenuous but relatively safe activities.

___**Mental challenge:** Performing demanding tasks that challenge your intelligence and creativity.

___**Pressure:** Performing in a highly critical environment with constant deadlines.

___**Precise work:** Performing prescribed tasks that leave little room for error.

___**Decision making:** Making choices about what to do and how to do it.

I want to work for the following **purposes**:

__ To pursue truth/knowledge.

__ To acquire expertise/authority.

__ To use creativity/innovativeness.

__ To foster aesthetic appreciation.

__ To make social contributions.

__ To acquire material gain.

__ To seek recognition.

__ To promote ethics/morality.

__ To seek spiritual/transpersonal gain.

I want my **relationships** at work to involve the following:

___Working alone doing assignments by myself, with minimal contact with other people.

___Public contact interacting in predictable ways with a continuous flow of people.

___Developing close friendships with coworkers.

___Group membership, belonging to a group with a common purpose and/or interest.

___Helping others

___Influencing others

___Supervising others

List your three most important work values in each of the three categories.

Work Conditions	Work Purposes	Work Relationships
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

Part II: Personal Values

Rank your top five values, with #1 being the most important to you. Then put an "X" next to the five values that are least important to you.

__ Good health

__ Many close friendships

__ A large family

__ A fulfilling career

__ A stable life

__ A financially comfortable life

__ Independence

__ Creativity

__ Participating in an organized religion

__ Having children

__ A variety of interests and activities

__ Freedom to create my own lifestyle

__ Owning a house

__ A healthy romantic relationship

__ A fulfilling career

__ Contributing to my community

__ Abundance of leisure time

__ Ability to move from place to place

__ A life without stress

__ A chance to make social change

__ To be remembered for my accomplishments

__ Helping those in distress

__ Freedom to live where I wish

__ Time to myself

__ Enjoyment of arts, entertainment, and cultural activities

__ A life with many challenges

__ A life with many changes

__ Opportunity to be a leader

__ To make a major discovery that would save lives

__ A good physical appearance

__ Opportunity to establish roots in one place

__ Opportunity for physical activities

__ An exciting life

__ A chance to get into politics

__ To live according to strong moral values

__ Opportunity to teach others

__ To write something memorable

__ A chance to become famous

__ To help others solve problems

__ To make lots of money

List five of your most important personal values.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

REFLECT

1. What was the process of deciding like for you? Was this easy or difficult?

2. Our values change throughout our lifetime, but what observations can you make about your values right now?

3. How important is it to you to live out your personal values in your work life?

4. How have your most important personal values impacted your life choices thus far?

5. How do you think your most important work and personal values will affect your career choice(s)?

YOUR FAMILY & CULTURE

The choices you make every day are influenced by a variety of external factors, and choosing a job or career field is no different. For better or worse, your family and cultural upbringing can impact the type of career or work that you decide to pursue. External influences also tend to shape the personal values that can serve as an important reference point when weighing your career options. Your awareness of these influences will help you make more informed, thoughtful decisions as you consider your career options.

1. Do any career fields or specific occupations show up repeatedly in your family? If so, which ones? Are you interested in continuing these work traditions? What will happen if you do or don't follow the tradition?
2. Do your parent(s)/guardian(s) work outside of the home? If they both worked outside of the home, how did that influence you? If only one works outside of the home, how did/does that influence you?
3. What levels of socioeconomic status are apparent or reflected in your family's work? (examples: blue collar, professional) How does this impact your own thoughts about a job or career?
4. Did your family members choose their careers or did external circumstances affect their choices?
5. What are the work values in your family? (examples: stability, high salaries, helping others)
6. What do your family members say about their work? Is it positive? Negative?
7. Do any family members want you to pursue a specific career? Are you interested in pursuing this career?
8. What other advice does your family give you about your future work or career path?
9. What assumptions or decisions about work might you have made based on what you have heard from or observed in your family?

REFLECT

Part 2: Culture Assessment

1. Recall your earliest career ambition. How old were you when you developed this goal? What important people in your life encouraged/discouraged you in this pursuit?
2. Do you have role models in your community who are doing the kind of work you think you would like to do? If not, where can you find mentors or opportunities to connect with people in the fields that interest you?
3. How does the Nebraska Wesleyan University culture impact your career aspirations or thoughts about work?
4. What messages have you received based on your gender about your career considerations or work in general? How have these messages influenced your thoughts about future career choices?
5. What messages have you received from your ethnic group or other identity groups that are important to you about your career considerations or work in general? How have these messages influenced your thoughts about future career choices?
6. How important are the desires and opinions of others in your life as you make career decisions? Do you feel comfortable with their level of influence?

Part III: Questionnaire for Family

Consider asking your family members the questions you just completed in parts 1 & 2. Their responses to these questions could provide you with even more insight into the history of work and careers in your family and how that history has impacted career choices for several generations.

Summing it up

Now that you've done all this meaningful reflection and self-assessment, take some time to pull together all the pieces of information you've discovered.

Top 5 interests you would like to continue, or begin to explore:

Top 5 work values:

Top 5 personal values:

List 10 skills that you have and/or want to continue to develop:

Identify any major family or cultural influences on your career planning process:

Considering the information you've gathered, list 5-10 career fields or occupations/job titles that interest you:

REFLECT

For this final reflection, look at your summary, consider the discoveries you've made throughout this workbook, and take a moment to reflect on all this information as a whole. Then decide what your next steps will be as you move forward in your career exploration process.

1. What connections do you see between your interests, skills, values, and potential career fields? Are there any occupational themes that are becoming clear to you?

2. Can you make any conclusions about the information that will help you narrow down or expand your career options?

3. What new questions have these exercises sparked and how will you begin to answer them?

4. What are your next steps as you consider your career options? If you want to explore some of the occupations or career fields, visit the Career Center office or website for handouts and resources about different industries and career fields.