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the student newspaper (even though I couldn't draw very well). The variety of these experiences was all the more important because my major wasn't in education, or social services, or art — it was in computer science.

Of course, I also sought out experiences relating to my CS major. In the summers after my freshman and sophomore years, I was hired for paid internships with hometown technology firms (which I found through family social connections). In the summers after my junior and senior years, I was chosen for a paid research assistantship with a civilian engineering organization affiliated with the US military (which I found through friendship social connections). And while I went on half-a-dozen interviews with major technology firms that I found through my campus career services office, the job I ended up taking was one I found through an outside job-placement company (thanks to one of my classmates who worked there). So even before I graduated from college, I owed my success in securing paid employment that was connected to my major largely to informal social networks.

Oh, and I should mention, this was in 1989, and there was really no such thing as emailed résumés, laptop computers, cell phones, or the World Wide Web.

My first full-time job in computer programming after college taught me a lot — not just about coding and data, but about writing a proper business memo, dealing with an unreasonable supervisor, working with people from backgrounds different from mine, and other such “soft skills” in addition to the technical skills I had been hired for. However, like many of my peers, I only stayed at this first organization (a global advertising firm in the for-profit sector) for about two-and-a-half years before I moved on to my second computer programming job at a new organization (a global research university in the non-profit sector). I found that second job, again, through a combination of scouring formal job listings and hearing about opportunities from friends who I had kept in contact with after college.

Oh, and while that second job was not a step up in salary, as it turned out it was a clear step closer to what I realized I wanted to do with my life.

Finally, after another two-and-a-half years in that second job, my career story took its most surprising turn. While taking evening classes towards a part-time Master's degree — and doing part-time volunteer service with a local community development organization — I decided I wanted to go back to graduate school full-time and pursue a Ph.D. in order to become a college professor. In some ways this makes my story unusual — I literally had an “aha!” moment while bicycling home from the very last class of my Master's program — but actually, it turned out I was addressing an interest (and a strength) that dated all the way back to when I was an undergraduate. You see, while finishing my college degree in computer science, I could have pursued a second major in a humanities or social science field, but I decided to load up on technical courses instead. It wasn't a bad decision at the time; it helped me to get those first two programming jobs, and all the experience that

came with them. But as it turned out, that other side of my interests and strengths eventually drew me back.

So in phase two of my career story, I applied and was accepted to a graduate program where I could apply my technological training to the liberal arts and sciences — eventually writing an interdisciplinary dissertation in both history and geography. Once again I was a student, and once again I was filling my summers with internships and service work (this time unpaid). My income took a steep drop while I pursued my studies, but I was allowed access to a new social network of scholars (my professors and fellow graduate students) from whom I could learn amazing things. And eventually, that same combination of interdisciplinary education, plus a wide variety of for-profit and non-profit work experience, helped me to land a professor job here at UW-Madison, where I remain today.

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career narrative

A cohesive and ever-changing story of how your previous accomplishments, your strongest skills, and your future goals work together to illuminate your most productive next career options.
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Why relate this very personal and admittedly idiosyncratic story at the start of this student guide? Because understanding your own educational and work history as an unfolding **career narrative** over time and space — a story of education, work, and accomplishment that you keep revising and reinterpreting as your skills, experiences, and goals grow and change over the course of your life — is not only the best way to understand your own career trajectory, but








also the best way to communicate the value that you can bring to an organization when seeking your next career challenge. Management consultant Todd Putman, in his 2015 book *Be More*, argued that such stories are crucial to career success: “It’s your story—to own and to tell. [...] It happens every minute of every day. People size you up. They see you in a context that defines you. If you don’t create that context, if you don’t tell your story, someone else will.” And as education journalist Jeffrey Selingo (2015) puts it, “People with good stories show employers they can transfer their learning from one environment to another, typically from the classroom to the workplace.”

This student guide will help you to create your own career narrative: interpreting your story as you reflect on your strengths and experiences; setting your story in context of the broad changes happening to the global economy; writing the current chapter of your story through your university education here at UW-Madison; and finally, retelling your story to colleagues, teachers, and hiring decision-makers who can help you on the next step of your career path.

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L&S SuccessWorks

Here at UW-Madison, the College of Letters and Science (L&S) has created the **SuccessWorks** center to help you sift through the wide array of options in front of you — from classes and clubs to majors and certificates — as you write the first chapter in your own career narrative. Located on the 3rd floor above the University Bookstore on the Library Mall, SuccessWorks is your one-stop shop to learn to use your diverse skill set to contribute to today's rapidly-changing economy — in Wisconsin and beyond.

ONLINE RESOURCE

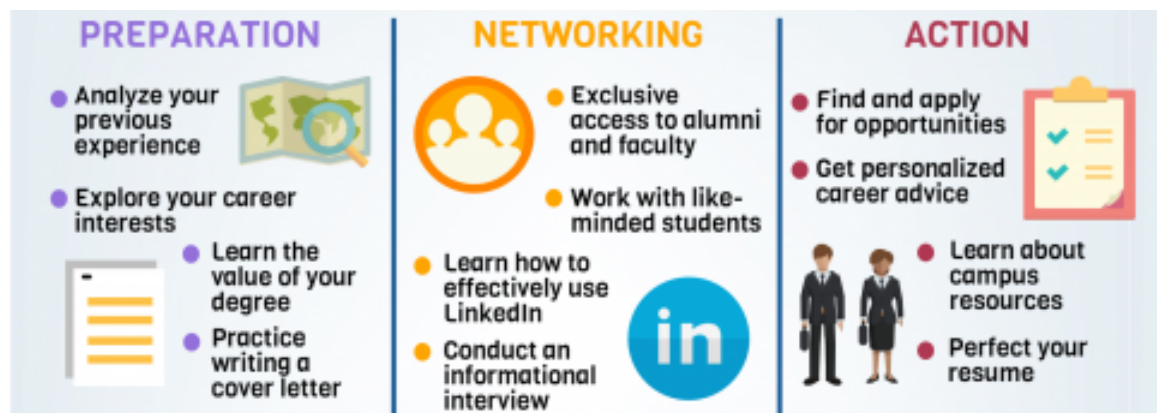
L&S SuccessWorks

<https://careers.ls.wisc.edu>

As UW-Madison's largest college, L&S offers 65 undergraduate majors and 39 certificates, providing students with plenty of possibilities. Choosing the best fit, though — and tying it to a future career — can be challenging. Even the most popular majors in L&S (and on campus as a whole) — biology, economics, computer science, and psychology — don't necessarily lend themselves to obvious, ready-made career paths.

The staff at SuccessWorks can help you to assess and reflect on your strengths, experiences, and interests, connecting them to classes, to a major, and eventually, to a career. SuccessWorks is your gateway to the more than 200,000 UW alumni who can help you find new career opportunities throughout your life. And SuccessWorks counts a growing list of employer partners who can provide even more support for your job search, including regional, national, and global firms like American Family Insurance, Epic, Altria, Covance, Milwaukee Tool, Cintas, Enterprise and Citi.

Benefits of visiting SuccessWorks



UW-Madison (2016)

At SuccessWorks — and in this student guide — you’ll find expert advice from UW-Madison career advisers, tips on creating an online professional profile, and guidelines for composing a résumé targeted to a specific opportunity. But you’ll also learn to find connections between your classes and your extracurricular activities. You’ll discover how to draw both abstract, conceptual knowledge and concrete, pragmatic skills out of your liberal arts and sciences experiences. Every service is designed to help you build your career narrative.

Here’s an example of just some of the things that SuccessWorks did for students during a recent year:

- Helped bring 325 employers to meet students at UW-Madison career fairs and evening events
- Signed up more than 6,000 employers to post jobs and internships through UW’s new online platform, Handshake
- Ran “mock interviews” with 182 students who got to practice their communication skills with two dozen real employers
- Hosted two dozen employers who held formal on-campus job or internship interviews with 262 students

UW-Madison Chancellor Rebecca Blank at SuccessWorks grand opening



UW-Madison (2018)

Comparable services on the private market are out of reach for many; as reported in the *New York Times* recently, “some companies charge \$300 an hour for services that might involve deciphering strengths, arranging job shadowing and working on résumés, interview techniques and job search strategies. Walking a student through an extended exploration can run \$5,000.” (Pappano 2016) But we offer SuccessWorks services to all L&S students at no additional cost.

Your career journey

The services offered by SuccessWorks are structured around a simple idea: the **career journey**. This is an iterative (repeating) process of exploring your strengths and interests, refining your plans and experiences, and developing effective communication and networking skills, not only for your first job, but for a lifetime of rewarding work.

Components of the L&S career journey



UW-Madison (2018)

The career journey has six steps:

Discover. Think about and identify your strengths, interests, skills and values. For example, you might:

- Reflect on courses, activities and experiences you've had in the past, what they've taught you about yourself, and how they might connect to major and career options.
- Meet with a career advisor to discuss major and career exploration based on your personality, skills, interests and values.

Explore. Research and explore career or grad school options that match your skills and interests. For example:

- Participate in events and connect with alumni, employers, and advisors to learn about careers of interest.
- Check out the SuccessWorks website and different career communities.

Engage. Pick a few of your ideas to test out and see if you're on the right path. For example:

- Join a student organization, participate in an internship, seek meaningful employment, volunteer, conduct research, and consider study abroad opportunities to gain marketable experience.
- Continually reflect on these experiences to confirm likes, dislikes, strengths, interests and passions.

Plan. Set goals and figure out next steps, such as:

- Work with alumni, employers and advisors to assess and fill any gaps in experience or skill.
- Find experiences to develop skills such as oral and written communication, quantitative, leadership and technological skills.
- If considering graduate school, determine target schools, admissions requirements, and application materials.

Articulate. Practice communicating why you're the right person for a particular job or graduate program:

- Talk to an advisor to learn how to better describe the connection between your major and career pursuits.
- Define what makes you unique and develop strategies to market yourself to a potential employer or graduate school program through things like interviewing, professional communication, and targeting your resume.

Launch. Finally, put what you have learned to work as you graduate to your next adventure — apply to internships, jobs, or grad schools, and make your plan into reality:

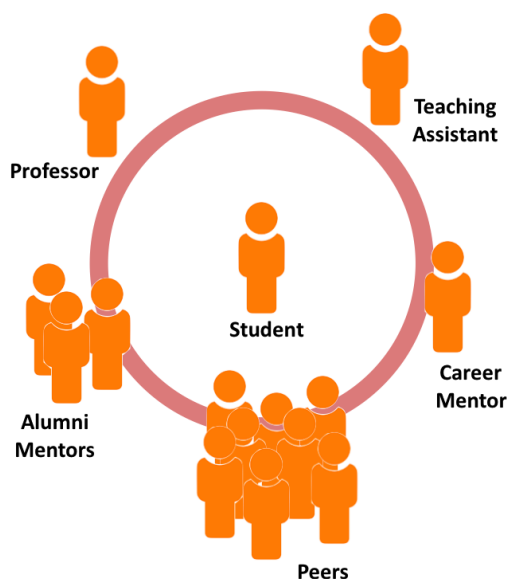
- Connect with your existing professional network for support, advice, to learn about available positions, and develop new contacts.
- Meet with a career and internship specialist to get job search support, coaching on evaluating job offers, salary negotiations, benefits packages, and graduate school acceptance decisions.

This student guide has been designed to help you get a head start on all six of these phases of your career journey.

Your circle of support

As you might expect, SuccessWorks is staffed by professional **career mentors** who are able to advise and counsel students through any phase of their major search, job hunt, or career journey. And dozens of successful former UW-Madison students — our **alumni mentors** — return each year to interact in person or via Skype with our students in classroom visits and special events as well. Together with your peers, professors, and graduate teaching assistants, these experts and volunteers provide a broad **circle of support** for you in the SuccessWorks community that is unmatched.

The circle of support through SuccessWorks



UW-Madison (2016)

Learning goals for this student guide

As a faculty member who is part of your circle of support, I've written this student guide with six broad learning goals. After reading this guide, you should have a better idea of how to:

1. Effectively **mobilize conceptual knowledge** about the meaning of a “liberal education,” the college labor market, and tools for career development.
2. Analytically **evaluate diverse information sources** in exploring opportunities for education, extra-curricular experiences, and work.
3. Efficiently **practice instrumental skills** of career research, professional networking, and personal branding, through persuasive oral, written, and online communication.
4. Confidently **access and use resources** including career advising experts and alumni networking opportunities.
5. Regularly **engage in critical reflection** on your strengths and experiences, your curricular path and extra-curricular explorations, and your career goals throughout your time at UW-Madison.
6. Creatively **synthesize your accomplishments** into a coherent and evolving narrative representing your career path and life goals to date.

These learning goals are designed to support your L&S career journey and to fit into the UW-Madison **Essential Learning Outcomes** for a liberal arts and sciences education (more about that in chapter 2).

Different students will put greater emphasis on different goals according to their own particular needs and experiences with career development. For example, here are some recent student reflections from the INTER-LS 210 one-credit career course sponsored by SuccessWorks:

I came into this semester as a Pre-Kinesiology major thinking I wanted to be a Physical Therapist. I struggled through the required classes I had to take, such as chemistry and biology. One day in Starbucks [...] my actual feelings of my life and my course of action came out. I hated science. There was no way I could do a job my whole life that involved science. That day I changed my major to English because I knew in my heart that I wanted to be a teacher. I realized through Inter-LS through my wanderings diagrams and other assignments that this is what all of my life experiences were pointing towards.

I believe that the most important thing I learned from this course is being more comfortable talking with professionals. Between the professional interview, finding an alumni mentor, and the personal branding speech I feel more confident talking with potential employers and industry professionals.

I think one of the most important lessons that I took away from this course was how to brand myself. Starting out, I felt like my theater and creative background was a detriment to my engineering, and I hadn't pursued enough technical skills to be proficient in an engineering career. However, through all of the wanderings diagrams, the car statements, and especially the personal brand speech, I have figured out my hook. I am the atypical engineer. I exhibit all of the hard-working, motivated, and problem-solving qualities that an engineer has, but I can also bring the creativity to a situation.

I came into this course extremely confused and overwhelmed. I am twenty-one years old and I still am not sure what career path I want to pursue. I have yet to declare a major, and for a long time I felt that this was a horrible indication for myself. If I am unable to commit to a major how will I ever pinpoint and commit to a career? After completing this course I have learned that it is okay to be confused. Lots of students are confused and many people declare one major but then go into a field that is completely different than what they studied at school. My biggest takeaway from this course is to know that it's okay to not have all the answers.

Our rigorous quantitative assessment measures reinforce these personal reflections. For example, after taking INTER-LS 210 in a recent year:

- 93% of students felt confident that they could “describe your personal brand to a potential employer today”
- 91% of students agreed that they “understand the skills the liberal arts degree can provide”
- 90% of students reported that having a professional UW Career Mentor available in their class was valuable
- 86% of students reported that having Alumni Mentors visit their class was valuable
- 82% of students reported that the class changed the way they viewed their college education

These direct reports from our students signal that SuccessWorks is a valuable tool for them as they build their career narratives. We hope you'll agree.

A liberal education = career training

In the end, our learning goals point to the fact that SuccessWorks isn't really just about careers; it's about life as a student in and out of the classroom, at UW-Madison and beyond, pursuing something called a **liberal education** which turns out to be the best career training of them all.

That term "liberal education" can cause some confusion; the "liberal" in this case doesn't at all refer to the political partisan divide between, say, "liberals" and "conservatives."

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liberal education

A broad and deep education across the arts, sciences, and humanities which trains students to understand the nature of the world around them, to appreciate the diversity and universality of the human condition, to develop the transferrable cognitive skills of expert thinking and complex communication, and to engage with people and technologies in ways that produce both economic value and positive social change.

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Instead, "liberal" here means something closer to its Latin root: "a 'liberal' education was to be liberating, requiring freedom to study and aiming at freedom through understanding." (Roth 2014) As CNN journalist Fareed Zakaria (2015) put it, "A liberal education gives us a greater capacity to be good workers, but it will also give us the capacity to be good partners, friends, parents, and citizens."

UW-Madison history and geography professor William Cronon (1998) explains the concept this way: "liberally educated people have been liberated by their education to explore and fulfill the promise of their own highest talents." Such people share some important qualities, according to Cronon: "They listen and they

hear. They read and they understand. They can talk with anyone. They can write clearly and persuasively and movingly. They can solve a wide variety of puzzles and problems. They respect rigor not so much for its own sake but as a way of seeking truth. They practice humility, tolerance, and self-criticism. They understand how to get things done in the world." And "They nurture and empower the people around them." In other words, students who follow the path of a liberal education never stop learning, even after they leave college.

So in much of what follows, we're not going to talk about internships, or jobs, or even careers at all. We're going to talk about your time here at university, why you're here, and what we at UW-Madison have to offer you over these few intensive years. It's a crucial chapter in your career narrative.

You might think that some of the things you do here (like visiting SuccessWorks, or completing your major classes) are indeed relevant to the the future world of work you will enter after college, but that many of the other things you do here (like your general education requirements, your electives, or your extracurricular activities) are not all that relevant to your eventual career.

However, I believe that way of thinking is exactly backward. Everything you do that you think is “career oriented” is actually also helping you build a sense of deep knowledge, specific accomplishment, and professional ethics that will allow you to be an engaged and empathetic friend, consumer, citizen, and community member outside of the workplace. And everything you do that you think is “unrelated” to careers is actually helping you build the critical thinking skills, complex communication ability, and breadth of understanding that will help you stand out in hiring, promotion, entrepreneurship, and leadership all through your working life.

Using this guide

This student guide is intended to be used as part of a SuccessWorks career course to complement the lecture, discussions, assignments, web site, and readings. But you may also use this guide as a stand-alone resource for helping you think through your individual career development process.

The rest of this guide is broken into nine main sections which speak to the learning goals above:

- **Chapter 2: Recognizing the workplace value of a liberal education.** At a public research university like UW-Madison, especially within our College of Letters and Science, the kind of education you receive combines a broad exposure to a diversity of disciplines with a deep understanding of one specific “way of knowing the world” through your major. This chapter demonstrates that such a “liberal education” is the best preparation for the ever-changing, global world of work that you will enter after college.
- **Chapter 3: Understanding career theories and concepts.** The techniques and advice for career building described in this guide are based on over a century of social science research on career counseling, human resources management, and positive psychology. This chapter introduces the basic ideas from this research.
- **Chapter 4: Making time for critical reflection.** This chapter covers the process of critical reflection — intentionally and systematically exploring your past experiences, your current strengths, and your future goals — which you’ll find yourself returning to again and again as your career develops in unexpected ways after college.
- **Chapter 5: Going beyond your major.** This chapter suggests ways of understanding your chosen major department or discipline — and ways of complementing that major with other high-impact learning activities that are part of what we call the “Wisconsin Experience” at UW-Madison.
- **Chapter 6: Developing your social network.** In an environment of ubiquitous digital communications, we often assume that social networking

is equivalent to using online media technologies and services. But as this chapter describes, social networking is about building community, branding yourself, and building a positive and trustworthy reputation by giving to others as much as you receive back.

- **Chapter 7: Researching workplaces and career communities.** Digital social networking tools are essential to any basic research you might do on possible work opportunities or career paths. But successful job-seekers and career-builders also engage in personal social networking, like attending career fairs, conducting informational interviewing or taking short-term service, research, or internship experiences.
- **Chapter 8: Communicating your value.** Eventually it all comes down to communication: curating a visible and intriguing online presence, developing a readable and compelling résumé, articulating your enthusiasm in a succinct cover letter, and conveying your value in person in a ninety-second spoken introduction. This chapter covers best practices for communicating your experiences, strengths, and goals as you conduct job searches again and again throughout your career.
- **Chapter 9: Supporting diversity, inclusion, and creativity.** While we all live in an exciting global, multicultural, and pluralistic world, we unfortunately don't live in a perfect society. But we know that increasing and embracing diversity, when done with care, generates more creativity and greater success. How do we realize this goal? This chapter takes an honest and direct look at some of the stereotypes and exclusionary practices that may affect your career, especially in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. By learning how to identify and address issues like implicit bias and occupational segregation, you can help make the workplace into a better place.
- **Chapter 10: Planning for happenstance.** We conclude with a chapter that pulls the course together to remind you that your career story — which is only now just beginning — will no doubt be more surprising than you can ever imagine. (Just like your college education will continue to be.)

Ready to start writing your career narrative? Let's go!

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the L&S SuccessWorks center and where is it located?
2. What is a “career narrative” and why is it useful to develop one?
3. What are the six phases of the L&S “career journey” and why are they important?
4. Why might it be good to have a broad “circle of support” as you build your career narrative?
5. What is a “liberal education” and how does it connect to career preparation?

READ MORE ABOUT IT

Katherine Brooks, *You Majored in What? Mapping Your Path from Chaos to Career* (New York: Plume, 2009). This contemporary job-hunting guide is targeted to liberal education college students to help them translate their academic experiences into lifelong career goals.

William Cronon, “‘Only Connect...’: The Goals of a Liberal Education,” *The American Scholar* 67:4 (1998). A brief but now-classic essay by a UW-Madison professor of history, geography, and environmental studies.

Louis Menand, "Live and learn: Why we have college," *The New Yorker* (June 06, 2011). A good, rather brief essay on the history and purposes of higher education in America.

Michael S. Roth, *Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2014). An interesting history of the various definitions, critiques, and defenses of liberal university education over the last 100 years.

Jeffrey J. Selingo, *There Is Life After College: What Parents and Students Should Know About Navigating School to Prepare for the Jobs of Tomorrow* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015). A recent book by a longtime education reporter on the latest issues affecting college education and workplace success.

Fareed Zakaria, *In Defense of a Liberal Education* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015). A prominent broadcast journalist articulates the value of a liberal education in his own biography and as a democratizing force in a global, multicultural, technological society.