

have rocked the job market are going to continue and job seekers must adjust accordingly.

Since publishing the original edition, I have continued to develop visual thinking exercises that help students further explore and expand their knowledge of themselves and their desired careers. I have added new exercises and Wisdom Builders, and organized this fully updated edition using a basic four-stage process of "Discover Your Strengths, Develop Your Vision, Design Your Path, and Deliver Your Talents." This is a model that you can use throughout your life and career, even into retirement.

I hope you continue to develop your Network of Possible Wanderings by staying curious, always learning and growing, and exploring unique courses and experiences that will provide meaning to your life. I hope you will craft a fulfilling life that works for you, that gives you energy, and that always allows room for the butterfly effect. And I hope you wander. Wisely.

KATHARINE S. BROOKS  
NASHVILLE, TN



## CHAPTER I

# MOVING FROM COLLEGE TO CAREER

## MAKING SENSE OF THE CHAOS

You need chaos in your soul to give birth to a dancing star.

—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *THUS SPAKE ZARATHUSTRA*

**H**as it happened yet? Have you been asked **THE QUESTION?**

You know the one: it's the question that cuts to the core of your existence, the question that haunts you pretty much from the time you decide to be a college student to months, even years, after you graduate. It starts so innocently. Someone asks you what your major is, so you tell them.

There's a slight pause. Then comes **THE QUESTION:**

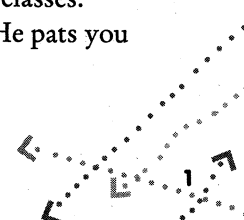
*"What are you going to do with that?"*

OK, think fast.

"I'm going to law school," you say, because it sounds good, even though you aren't really sure you want to. Or "I'm thinking about med school," even though you have no interest in science classes.

The questioner's face relaxes; maybe he even smiles. He pats you on the shoulder. "Wow, that's great!"

And that's how the lie begins . . .



Do you feel sometimes there's a cosmic joke at work? That you chose this really interesting major but now you're wondering, was it worth it? Or perhaps you're just starting college and the pressure of **THE QUESTION** is already making you nervous. Do I have to choose a career when I choose my major? And will I make a terrible mistake if I choose the wrong major?

## THE PRESSURE OF THE LINEAR PATH

The problem behind **THE QUESTION** is that it assumes a linear path between your major and your career. Your major must somehow equal your career. The lure of the linear path is powerful. It's embedded in our thinking. From the time you played with fire trucks and people asked you if you wanted to be a firefighter, linear paths to careers have been assumed to be the natural state of things. So it seems only logical that you would pursue a major that would become your ultimate career. Business majors go into business. Engineering majors become engineers. Philosophy majors become . . . ? Hmm . . .

Your parents would probably be thrilled if you had a glitch-free linear path from school to work all worked out. You know, "I'm studying accounting so I can be an accountant," or "I'm going to be an English major so I can teach English." You might be secretly relieved as well.

But that's early twentieth-century thinking—1909 to be exact, when the trait-and-factor approach was designed to determine the best career choices for people. As America shifted from an agricultural to an industrial society, vocational researchers sought ways to determine the best fit between individuals and their jobs. Career tests were designed to match people's interests and skills with potential vocations. Society placed additional restraints on employment, with women and minorities relegated to narrow fields. Most people pursued education to learn a specific trade, and a college education was reserved for the elite few who would likely go on to teaching, medicine, law, or the ministry.

In the twenty-first century, a college education is wide open to many more individuals regardless of gender, race, or career goal. Many

students now choose a college education because of the interesting subjects they can study, not necessarily because of a specific career plan.

Whatever your reason for pursuing your major, you, like many others, are probably struggling with **THE QUESTION**: What do I *do* with this degree? Where is *my* linear path?

To help you envision such a path, here's a list of the careers of some recent graduates, drawn from alumni surveys from three institutions. Note the relatively direct relationship between their majors and their careers.

MAJOR	JOB
Art	Cartoonist
Asian American Studies	Teaching English as a second language in Korea
Chemistry	Veterinarian
Classics/Archaeology	Latin teacher
Dramatic Arts	MTV program developer
Economics	Bond trader on Wall Street
English	Editor, major publishing house
French and Spanish	Foreign Service officer
Geography	High school geography teacher
Government	Special prosecutor, district attorney's office
Government	Republican National Committee PR staff
Psychology	Psychotherapist
Religion	Minister, single adults program

Can you see the linear relationship that exists between a major and a career? The symmetry between the job titles and the use of the graduates' skills? The English major is using her writing skills. The psychology major is helping people. The economics major is working on Wall Street. Helpful and reassuring, isn't it? Not only can you get a job, your job can be directly related to your major.

There's only one problem with the list: *it's all wrong*. These are the actual careers of the alumni with those majors:

MAJOR	JOB
Art	Special prosecutor, district attorney's office
Asian American Studies	Bond trader on Wall Street
Chemistry	Teaching English as a second language in Korea
Classics/Archaeology	Foreign Service officer
Dramatic Arts	Republican National Committee PR staff
Economics	Veterinarian
English	Psychotherapist
French and Spanish	Latin teacher
Geography	Editor, major publishing house
Government	Minister, single adults program
Government	High school geography teacher
Psychology	Cartoonist
Religion	MTV program developer

Oops.

Is something wrong here? No, something's actually right. Clearly, reality doesn't always match up to that traditional linear career path. These graduates, whether by design or by accident, have channeled the real, deep value of their academic and life experiences, and taken them beyond traditional thinking.

The linear career path hasn't disappeared. Some psychology majors do become psychologists and some English majors become English professors. But linear thinking can keep you from thinking broadly about your options and being open-minded to new opportunities, and ready to respond to the constantly shifting nature of the job market. So let's start thinking about YOUR career path.

## Wandering Off

### MY DEGREE EQUALS MY EARNING POWER

Want to know the number one most requested piece of information from college career centers? The employment figures from first destination and alumni surveys. Everyone, from students to parents to government agencies, wants to know what percentage of students found jobs by graduation. And how much they were earning. And their major. There seems to be a theory that if sociology majors found jobs in X field, making X dollars, then I, a sociology major, can find a job in X field making X dollars. While there's some truth to that theory, there's less truth than you might imagine.

Study after study shows poor correlations between students' undergraduate majors and their income. Get that? Weak correlation. You're working off a common myth that your degree equals your earning power.

Your earning power is much more affected by where you live, your field of work, and your job title. An accounting major working for a small nonprofit organization in the Midwest will likely earn less than an English major working as an investment banker in New York City. Get the point?

Is it true that engineers generally make higher salaries than liberal arts majors? Yes. But—hello—they're engineers. Do you want to be an engineer? Then go to engineering school and be one. Problem solved. Just remember, engineering is a great career field, but it isn't right for everyone.

So take a minute to think about what you've said and heard about career planning. You can catch yourself (or your parents) thinking linearly about careers if you're harboring any of these thoughts:

"My major equals my career."

"I can't do much with a liberal arts degree."

"I guess I should go to grad school or law school."

"Career tests will tell me what to do."

"Career counselors can tell me what to do."

"I should know what I want to do before starting my job search."

"I should wait until I graduate to start my job search."

So if this linear approach doesn't really work all that well in the twenty-first century, what model do you turn to?

## HOW COLLEGE STUDENTS REALLY FIND JOBS

It's ridiculous to ask liberal arts students what they plan to do in five years. They don't even know what they plan to have for dinner.

—ANONYMOUS COLLEGE CAREER COUNSELOR

As we've noted, if you listen to most people and read most career books or websites, you might assume that the job search is a linear logical process: you set a specific career goal, follow clearly outlined steps, and arrive at the perfect job. But try asking graduates how they actually arrived at their current jobs. You'll get replies like this one from Christine, a psychology major:

*I don't know exactly. I majored in psychology and thought I'd pursue a PhD and maybe become a professor. But I also liked my anthropology classes, and a professor told me about a summer internship in a museum. I helped create an exhibit on Native American art and I really enjoyed the work. Then an alumna spoke at a career program on her work at the Smithsonian Institution. It sounded interesting so I went up and introduced myself to her. We kept in touch and she called me during my senior year to see if I would be interested in a fund-raising position for the Smithsonian's new Native American exhibit. So here I am using my*

*psychology skills to ask important business and community leaders to fund our research and exhibits. And I love it. And now that I know how museums work and how to raise money, my goal is to open an art gallery/museum on a Native American reservation.*

Notice how this story starts out in a linear way: The student was studying psychology so she could become a psychology professor. But then a totally unpredictable event occurred: Her internship at a museum caused her to start thinking about other choices. And then a chance meeting with an alumna resulted in a job opportunity. If you had asked her at age eighteen, "What are you going to do with that psychology major?" do you think she would have said, "I'm going to open an art gallery/museum in New Mexico"?

Unplanned events and emerging conditions changed this individual's circumstances. We need a theory that fits this more typical situation, and a system that recognizes that just like the life of the psychology major above, yours isn't unfolding in a straight line either, and the job search seems chaotic and messy at best. Enter chaos theory and the Wise Wanderings system—a nonlinear and much more relevant approach to finding your career. Once you learn the key elements of chaos theory and the Wise Wanderings system in this book, you'll find you can relax and go with the flow of your job search instead of wanting to force and control everything.

In fact, Christine's story illustrates a key element of chaos theory: the butterfly effect. The butterfly effect states that a small incident at the beginning of a process (such as a butterfly flapping its wings or an alumna speaking at a career event) can produce a large variation in the long-term outcome (ultimately causing a tornado or a new career). A chaos-based career system allows for change and the unexpected. It takes into account your diverse interests and broad scope of knowledge, and takes advantage of how the job search really works today. In their book, *Luck Is No Accident*, Dr. Krumboltz and Dr. Levin reported that almost 70 percent of university graduates said their careers were significantly influenced by unplanned events—in other words, the butterfly effect. Giving yourself permission to explore and let events unfold is a wise and practical approach indeed. After all, employers are more interested in your competencies—what you do well—than in your major.

## WISDOM BUILDER #1


**LITERATURE@WORK:  
CHARLES DICKENS EXPLAINS  
THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT**

In Charles Dickens's book *Great Expectations*, the lead character Pip makes the following observation:

*That was a memorable day to me, for it made great changes in me. But, it is the same with any life. Imagine one selected day struck out of it, and think how different its course would have been. Pause you who read this, and think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of the first link on one memorable day.*

Sounds a lot like the butterfly effect, doesn't it? With a twist, though: instead of thinking about an event that happened, Dickens is asking you to think about something that didn't happen. How would your life be different if a particular event had not occurred?

What if you could actually harness the power of the butterfly? You can. Let's start by learning more about chaos theory.

## CHAOS THEORY

The Wise Wanderings system you're going to use to create your career plan is based on an understanding of chaos theory. People usually smile when you tell them that careers follow chaos theory rather than linear theory. Chaos theory conjures up thoughts of disruption and being out of control: the notion that there is no rhyme or reason to one's career path. But despite its name, chaos theory is anything but chaotic. It's just complex—like you and your career can be. The order is there, but it's not clearly visible on the surface. Chaos theory has the power to transform how you conduct your job search.

Chaos theory is based on mathematical formulas originally designed to develop a better weather-prediction model. Think about it: how successful are we at predicting the weather? Sometimes we're pretty good. When the conditions are foreseen, when nothing changes, and when we know certain physical laws are being followed, we can predict the weather. If we see a front moving across the map, we know a storm is coming. But what happens when something interrupts the pattern? What if the front coming from the west suddenly encounters another storm coming up the East Coast? When and where will they meet? How well can we predict a tornado's path? Not too well generally. We know it's coming (sometimes) but we can't tell where it's going. Chaos theory helps us understand that too many variables in a complex system make it hard to predict the outcome.

We also know from chaos theory that the greater the distance between now and the future, the weaker our prediction will be. For instance, we're pretty good at predicting the weather today. Maybe even tomorrow or within the next week. But after that, our predictions get shaky. We may notice trends, or make logical inferences such as if it's August, it will be hot (at least in most of the United States), but chaos theory helps us understand we can't predict the future in greater detail.



## CHAOS THEORY AND YOUR CAREER

Just as complex factors influence the weather, the path to a career can be complex with all sorts of intervening variables, including family origin, level of education, individual skills and talents, the job market, and so on. And just like weather forecasting, career planning is a form of prediction, right? Aren't you trying to guess the career path you'll pursue in the future based on the degree you're pursuing, the experiences you've had, or what you like or dislike? And isn't it easier to predict what you'll do this evening (or even this semester) than what you'll be doing in two years?

Traditional chaos theory is a mathematical model that serves as an excellent basis and metaphor for the Wise Wanderings system. To see how this works, let's consider five basic tenets of chaos theory and how they apply to career planning:

### Five Basic Tenets of Chaos Theory Applied to Your Career

CHAOS THEORY TENET	CAREER APPLICATION
Assess what you know, cannot know, and can learn.	By assessing what you know about yourself, the job market, and the opportunities you have, you can make better decisions. It's also important to identify what you don't know and what you need to learn to fulfill the requirements of possible fields.
Decisions are complex: don't base them on one single factor.	A successful career choice is based on several factors, including the job market, your interests, your skills, your family, your education, and what is meaningful to you. It's not just "my major determines my career."
Change is constant. Allow for the butterfly effect.	Unexpected and unpredictable elements will emerge. Your career is more improvisational than scripted. Be ready to handle the changes that come along. And say "yes!" You never know when one small interaction, event, or experience will propel you in a whole new direction.

CHAOS THEORY TENET	CAREER APPLICATION
Situations may appear chaotic, but an order will appear.	The job search process seems chaotic and stressful but patterns do emerge, and when you look back you will see the order to everything. You can't predict what experiences will be valuable or lead to a career.
Attractors will help to focus your attention.	Notice what grabs your attention in the process. What makes your energy level increase? What excites you about your future? When considering two options, which one do you feel pulled to? Why? Look for clues in your energy and interests.

On the surface, chaos theory seems more complicated than linear theory. And perhaps it is. Life is more complicated now than in 1909. But you're smart, and as you've already discovered, applying linear theory to your future is a joke—and a bad one at that. The chaos theory tenets behind the Wise Wanderings system give you the confidence to welcome the seeming chaos of your future as you learn that what appears chaotic is actually well organized and ordered.

Linear approaches get thrown off by change; chaos theory harnesses the power of change. Linear approaches can make you nervous: Are you limited by your choice of major? Do you have to have a career goal? And what do you do if you don't have one? Chaos theory says, "Relax." A world of possibilities is within your grasp and you don't need a specific goal. And you don't need to answer **THE QUESTION**. Chaos theory says, "Let's get going—a butterfly awaits."

## WISDOM BUILDER #2

### THE CLASSICS AT WORK: CAREERS, CHAOS, AND THE ANCIENT GREEKS

Did you know the ancient Greeks had a word—*metos*—for your career path?

In her book, *Learning to Think Strategically*, Julia Sloan defines *metos* as “the ability to oscillate or steer a course between the world of order (cosmos), of forms and laws, and to deal with the world of chaos, which includes the multiple, the unstable, and the unlimited nature of affairs.”

The Greeks didn’t strive for certain knowledge. They knew that there would always be tension between order and chaos. Their goal was to take into account the conflicting information and be willing to bend the course of action to take advantage of opportunities and avoid problems. Odysseus was highly respected for his ability to use forethought and planning to chart courses in chaotic environments. To see a modern adaptation of the *Odyssey*, watch the classic film *O Brother, Where Art Thou* and study how the character of Ulysses (played by George Clooney) manages the many chaotic events in his journey back to his wife.

### STARTING ON THE WISE WANDERINGS CAREER PATH

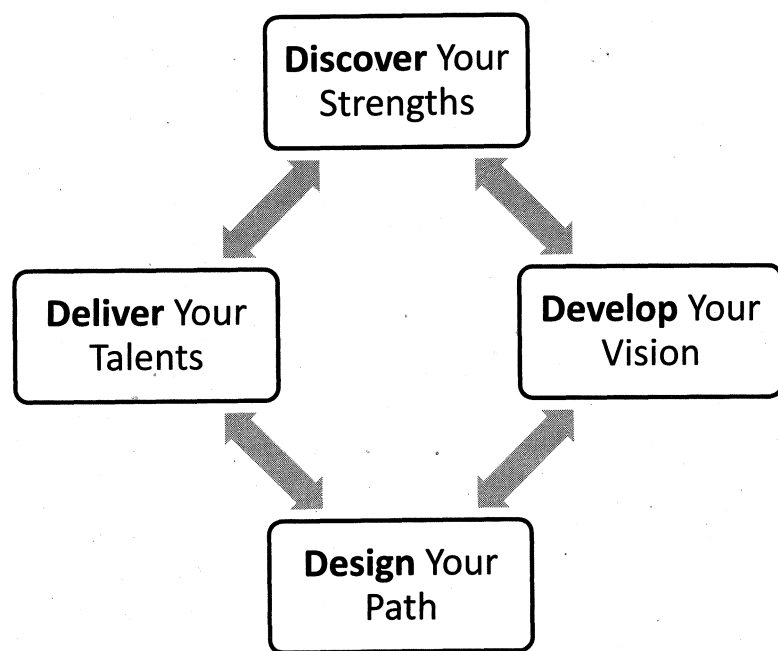
So what do you think about this new approach? Is it helping you relax a little? Are you less worried about where your degree might lead? Are you psyched about the “butterfly” that might be just around the corner? Maybe you’ve even started to think the career that seemed unrealistic just a day or so ago might actually be a possibility.

Or do you have some concerns? Are you worried that this chaos theory approach seems a little complex and directionless? Perhaps it makes career planning appear random, the simple result of trial and error. After all, if you can’t predict the future, and you’re waiting for a butterfly effect, isn’t that a rather passive approach?

Not at all. Trial and error implies a thoughtless and random experimental process. Throughout this book you will weigh evidence, take note of what works and what doesn’t, and draw mindful conclusions. Everything is potentially revealing—you just have to focus your thinking to start drawing helpful information from your experiences. And there’s nothing passive about what you will be asked to do in your job search. You will be taking lots of positive action—constructing powerful stories, résumés, and letters; wandering into new opportunities; and trying out new ideas—but you will be doing so in a directed, mindful manner. That’s why the system is called Wise Wanderings and not simply Wanderings. Thanks to this new approach, you will:

- use your knowledge of chaos theory to create a resilient career strategy that will serve you throughout your life;
- adapt to change and not be defeated by it;
- be open to possibilities, without simply going any way the wind blows;
- know you are in charge and can create each and every day of your life;
- create a vision and have a direction, even though you’re not arrogant or mindless enough to think that life will be served up in one neat linear package; and
- embrace the chaos of your life and take it as a source of pride.

The Wise Wanderings system utilizes a four-stage path to help structure your search from beginning to end. And, even better, this is a system you can use for the rest of your life. You will always be in one of the four stages and you can use your knowledge of the system to focus your vision and develop your plans, no matter what career you are in or what vision you are pursuing. It won't matter if the economy is strong or weak, whether you are pursuing a business career or an artistic one: the system will work for you. Here's what it looks like:



This 4-D system of Discover, Develop, Design, and Deliver is inspired by "Appreciative Inquiry," a positive, strengths-based approach to organizational change conceptualized by Dr. David Cooperrider. The four basic stages are:

**Discover:** Learn about yourself and the skills, interests, knowledge, and values you bring to a potential employer;

**Develop:** Create your vision of where you would like to go. What type of work would you like to do? What are your future plans? Do you want to go to graduate school? Do you want to take a gap year? Knowing yourself and knowing what you want to do (and the demands of that profession or choice) will then lead you to the next stage;

**Design:** Create the necessary tools and actions to forge your path; and

**Deliver:** Take action and move into your chosen dream—perhaps an internship, your first job, or a new field.

In the next chapter, you will start putting chaos theory to work by using the Wise Wanderings system and creating a Wandering Map that will help you organize all the experiences, skills, and knowledge you have developed.

At this point, keep in mind that your career path is likely to be more improvisation than plan. And that's good because you don't know what might be out there just waiting for you. Or what you might want to design.

There is a wonderful Spanish saying, "La vida es corta pero es ancha," which means "Life is short, but it is wide." You have a breadth and depth of worlds to discover, thanks to your education, so let's start wandering into it. Wisely.



## WISDOM BUILDER #3

### BUTTERFLY MOMENTS IN YOUR LIFE SO FAR

As you look back on your life, can you identify what Dickens called “memorable days” or occurrences in your life that started you on a new and unexpected direction?

Maybe it was the day you decided which college to attend.

Maybe it was the day someone gave you a valuable piece of advice.

Maybe it was a day you learned a new skill.

Maybe it was a decision your parents made.

How does this new knowledge about your life affect your job search or career plans? Take a few minutes to write down those experiences and what changed in your life as a result.

Unexpected event: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Result: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Unexpected event: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Result: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

You will have more days like this in the future. The trick is to be aware of them when they happen and take advantage of the opportunity offered to you at that time.

### ARE YOU ON A LINEAR PATH?

Have you already decided the career you plan to pursue? Describe the connections between the courses you’re taking and your experiences so far that connect you to this career.

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Jot down some ideas for future classes and experiences.

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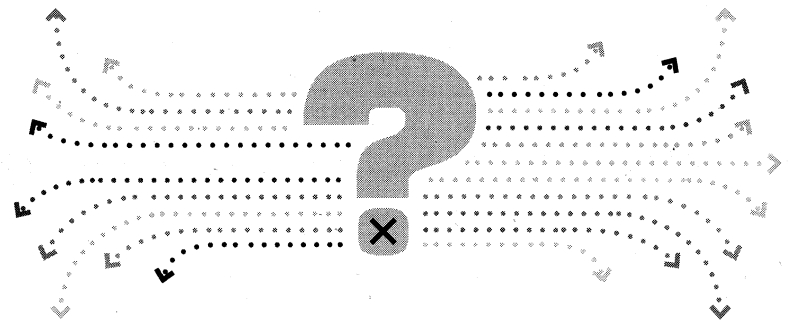
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# YOU MAJOURED IN WHAT



DESIGNING YOUR PATH  
*from* COLLEGE *to* CAREER

KATHARINE BROOKS, Ed.D.

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*To my parents and teachers,  
on whose shoulders I stand:*

*infinite gratitude for shaping and guiding  
my work and my life.*

*And*

*to singer, songwriter, friend, and Daydream Believer  
John Stewart (1939–2008):*

*thanks for providing the soundtrack.*