

## LIFE CAREER DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FOR DEAF COLLEGE STUDENTS

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"I fell in love with my career I hope you do too"  
—George Burns, 1981

In 1909 Frank Parsons (1909) introduced the 3 step method of career planning. Essentially, this process consisted of matching "talents and tasks". The trait-factor approach was based on the stability of an individual's interests and attitudes. This problem solving orientation to career planning has in part led to its popularity among career counselors. The expediency of short-term rational planning often fails to address the client's needs of lifetime career adjustments. Most Americans have been indoctrinated with the belief that says a career decision should be made quickly, during young adulthood, along with plans to achieve it. Though this dictum has the implication of right-wrong morality, the reality of recessive-inflationary economics, job obsolescence, and chronic unemployment remains. Hoppock (1967) points out "one-life one-career imperative" is inaccurate and today's adults can look forward to changing jobs every three years including at least five major career changes during their lifetime. This incongruity of beliefs and reality have led many young men and women to a prolonged stage of educational exploration and non-commitment. As it is the job of the mason to point the stone correctly in order for the building to stand, the career counselor's responsibility is to aid an individual in acquiring tools necessary for a lifetime of career adjustment. Counselors can help clients identify and explore the questions that are the source of individual-environment predicaments and the basis of career growth.

The Career Counseling Unit of the Counseling and Placement Center at Gallaudet

College is designed to provide the most recent and accurate career information to the largest number of students possible.

This unit ascribes to the concept of Life Career Development, encompassing a variety of possible patterns of personal choice related to each individual's total life style. This implies the acquisitional skills in learning how to learn, social responsibility, education, personal, occupation, and leisure time activities. Life career development basically is the integration of roles, settings, and events of a person's life. It provides a personal framework of self-development. This process is an on-going educational/experiential component of human development. The stages of particular importance to students at Gallaudet are delineated below. A small representation of innovative programs developed for use by Gallaudet students will further describe the stages of career growth here outlined.

### I. Vocational Expectation

Special consideration is given to the development or expectations concerning students' career aspirations particularly for women and multiply-handicapped students. A unique film, "Gallaudet and Beyond", portrays alumni answering frequently asked questions about their college experiences. Primarily used as a method of communicating work related data, this original film provides a secondary benefit of exposing students to positive successful role models. Frequently this is only provided by teachers whom students have known in previous educational settings (perhaps an excellent rationale for numerous students expressing a future goal of entering educational professions). Individual career counseling often

helps answer questions such as: "What do deaf people do?" Summer orientation programs further emphasize an integrated approach to education. The Peer Advisor Program employing upperclass students provides exposure to new experience careers and activities which are often new to Gallaudet students. Cultural exposure and numerous accessible programs in the Washington area also heighten students' awareness and further broaden their vocational expectations.

### II. Introspection and Assessment

Career Development is closely related to the development of self-concept. Students participating in the preparatory program begin this process of self-awareness, personal values, and a general heightened awareness of one's environment and choices. The "Orientation for Preparatory Students" is a formal way in which young men and women begin to think of themselves in relation to their world. As freshmen, students utilize the career development course, "Freshmen Orientation", to better examine their career-related values, beliefs, interests, aptitudes, and characteristics. Traditionally, liberal arts colleges have not offered formal courses dealing with the school-job relationship (Noretzky, Beach, 1980). For specific information concerning the course itself, please refer to "A Mediated Course in Career Development" in the September 1980 issue of the *American Annals of the Deaf*.

Reviewing their own life career patterns, students gain an understanding of self-determination and choices in their everyday lives. Often, discussing their interests and aspirations with a career counselor enables them to learn a process of linking similar characteristics and skills. Numerous interests inventories and exercises are used to initiate this process for some students stating few or no interests.

### III. Exploration

Assessment and exploration are closely linked developmental stages. As a student uncovers information about himself, he is eager to examine this knowledge others in light of the world at large. The considera-

tion of several alternate paths exposes students to a wider world of vocational goals.

In a liberal arts curriculum students are required to have a varied background in sciences, humanities, and social studies, to mention only a few. These are nicely integrated into the exploration process, often opening new fields and possibilities otherwise undiscovered.

An essential link in this stage is utilizing the myriad of one's own experiences, acquaintances, and reference materials as resources for learning. Alumni files have been recently developed to aid students in gaining first hand answers about specific careers. The Career Resource Center is the foundation of this stage, compiling current and in-depth information, reference data, and referral resources on thousands of career options. The primary goal of this developmental stage is learning the tools and research skills enabling students to transfer these techniques into any vocational field.

### IV. Formation of Vocational Goals

Students equipped with accurate data concerning themselves and the world of work often are stymied by an inability to select from various alternatives. Again, the focus in this stage is to develop the skill of knowing how to make decisions rather than resolving an immediate conflicting situation. The "Orientation for Preparatory Students", previously discussed, provides some background in decision making skills. This is argued with individual career counseling and an interactive computer guidance system (Warnath, 1969). This System of Interactive Guidance and Information, designed by the Educational Testing Service in 1977 provides a staged program of information and decisions to be made. The 5 stages, values, locate, compare, planning, and strategy, continually ask a student about their preferences and proceeds to "test out" the accuracy of those decisions. The fifth stage teaches a methodology for decision making which has been practiced throughout the student's involvement with the computer system: the ability to demonstrate how a student currently makes decisions and if he finds that pro-

cess to be satisfactory. Occasionally this leads a student to transfer to a different college or type of training.

### V. Reality Testing

In preparation for the career goals which students have declared, they begin coursework in their major area of study. This provides more contact with professionals in the specific disciplines. Courses are one method of "testing out" career goals. Equally important is discussing future plans and projects with academic advisors, continuing in-depth career counseling about alternatives for specific majors, and utilizing resources coordinated in career counseling. Two other programs available to Gallaudet students are a cooperative education program and "Experiential Learning Programs Off-Campus" providing students direct job experience related to their academic goals. "Career Videotapes" of deaf professionals and alumni discussing their careers and backgrounds give students an insightful range of personal perceptions about several professional fields. Some students directly observe a career they are interested in pursuing. This "job shadowing" enables students to question and learn many things which are not always apparent in the classroom. "Part-time and Summer Jobs" further enrich a student's knowledge of his chosen field. "Career Exploration Lunches" was also offered to students bringing together deaf professionals and students interested in similar career paths. This informal format encourages good interaction and stimulates further exploration, preparing students for the transition from school to employment.

### VI. Accessing the World of Work

The entire process of how to enter the working force is the joint responsibility of career and placement counseling. Frequently the transition from student to worker also indicates other concurrent transitions in an individual's life. Preparation for some of these changes is fundamental to a smooth adjustment. Often, skills in decision making are again utilized to review alternatives and potential paths. The placement changes at this

time. Special senior-phobia workshops address these issues directly.

### VII. Life/Career Survival

This final phase in the career process can also include job-keeping skills and co-worker relationships. However, individual career counseling and workshops also address the issues of burn-out, professional development on the job, and numerous other "surviving skills". Again, career and placement services team their talents in this area. A frequent request is how to juggle a profession, a family, and personal needs in 24 hour days. Leisure, learning, and productivity are integral components of human development and these are on-going processes at work throughout an individual's life. Career counseling recognizes the integration of numerous factors in this development and employs methodology to address this on-going lifelong development as well as immediate concerns of specific situations confronting an individual.

Career development is an active, ever changing process that encounters many obstacles and disappointments along the way. Attitude is the germinating seed of adjustment in career education. Teachers, administrators, parents, and others can facilitate career attitudes. Student awareness of themselves as "workers" performing tasks at home, school, and in the community is a priority of career development. The congruity of self-concept is an occupational role leading to the establishment of one's vocational road and well-being. An individual's ability to adjust to career obstructions is the basis for success.

Career involvement does not exist in a vacuum. Gallaudet's career counselors aid the students in discovering for themselves the fundamental questions, issues, and motivations of selecting a career field. The obsolete concepts of one lifetime career and the tendency to isolate job factors from a holistic concept of the person are slowly changing. It is important that a dynamic, integrated model of life career counseling emphasizes the individual's obligation to self-determination.

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