

Political Science Four-Year Career Planning Guide

UW-Madison

Students who delay thinking about (and taking action on) their professional development and potential early career paths until their senior year are at a serious disadvantage when it comes to competing with their fellow graduates for good job opportunities. Instead, we strongly urge students to take directed steps toward their professional development starting in their freshman year. This guide serves as one way to begin and continue this path. It is intended to assist students in charting their own unique academic and professional course, which will vary from student to student.

Freshman Year: Career Exploration and Early Planning

--To explore potential careers, but also second majors, certificates, etc. visit the UW-Madison CAREER EXPLORATION CENTER at <http://www.ccas.wisc.edu/careerexplorationcenter/>. You can also take standardized work values inventories at the center and meet with a career development counselor.

--If you've declared your Political Science major, visit with the CAREER AND INTERNSHIP INSTRUCTOR located in North Hall. This early meeting can help you map out steps to consider throughout your four-year degree plan. Also, the meeting can inform you about pacing out and tentatively scheduling semesters where you may want to study or intern abroad, or do study/work-away programs such as completing the Wisconsin in Washington, DC program.

--Visit your ACADEMIC ADVISOR, AND PROFESSORS AND TEACHING ASSISTANTS during their office hours to introduce yourself and to begin conversations about possible fields of study within which you might specialize, potential future applied research opportunities, and tips for how to expand on your current interests through coursework, clubs, and event opportunities.

Sophomore Year: Testing Your Early Interests and Assumptions

--To test your early career ideas and begin talking strategy, meet with a career consultant at LETTERS AND SCIENCES CAREER SERVICES at <http://careers.ls.wisc.edu/>.

--Consider taking LS 210 SECOND YEAR CAREER DEVELOPMENT COURSE: TAKING INITIATIVE. This 1 credit course connects liberal arts and sciences to career preparation, practical internship application skills, goal-setting, and reflection.

--Attend a career and internship fair --Attend departmental and college-wide CAREER AND INTERNSHIP FAIRS, WORKSHOPS, EVENTS. to experience the process first-hand, even if you are not quite ready to apply for a position. These are good ways to see what's out there but also to find out from employers what you can do to position yourself for future internships/jobs. Examples include the Kohl Center Career Fair and Internshipalooza held each fall and spring respectively.

--Attend campus ACADEMIC TALKS, CONFERENCES, PANELS to see first-hand what academics do and to consider whether graduate or law school is something you want to seriously consider in the future.

--Continue to meet periodically with your department academic and career/internship advisor, and be sure to visit all your professors and TAs in their office hours at least once a semester.

--It's not too early to plan for your first internship. In addition to meeting with your advisors, etc. update your resume and work to polish what you have by meeting with your career/internship advisor and visit L & S Career Services to have your resume reviewed. Be sure to include on your resume any part or full-time jobs you are (or have been doing), even if they are in retail or food services. Employers confirm that they value such experiences and credit them on a student's application.

--Consider applying for a summer internship, or look to the fall of your Junior year as a good time to complete your first part-time internship or other volunteer or job-related experience.

--Join and begin reviewing BUCKYNET to begin exploring internship and future job opportunities, at <http://careers.ls.wisc.edu/buckynet--students.htm>, and LINKEDIN to start your professional profile and to peruse the UW-related professional groups you can begin to access in the months ahead, at www.linkedin.com.

--Join one or more clubs, organizations, and issue-advocacy networks or campaigns to meet fellow students and to gain applied organizational and other skills that employers later will credit. Examples include Pi Sigma Alpha, John Hamilton Society, College Democrats or Republicans, etc. A good place to start is the campus CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP AND INVOLVEMENT at <https://cfli.wisc.edu/>. And the MORGRIDGE CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE at <http://morgridge.wisc.edu/>.

Junior Year: Next Steps in Implementing Your Professional Development Plans

--Junior year is the usual time when many students complete a STUDY ABROAD program. There are many programs to choose from through International Academic Programs, at

<https://www.studyabroad.wisc.edu/>. You might also consider an INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIP experience. To find out more about international internship options visit International Internship Programs at <http://internships.international.wisc.edu/>.

--Continue to cultivate contacts and relationships with your professors, TAs, and academic, career and club/organization advisers. This is a good way to stay current with new opportunities, but also when you need letters of recommendation it will be easier for you to gain good letters from the people who know you well.

--Considering graduate or law school after you graduate, attend the GRADUATE SCHOOL FAIR held each fall. Also consider taking a GRE or LSAT prep test class to gauge your strengths and work on areas in need of improvement.

--Continue to pursue internships. Sometimes it's better to do more than one internship versus staying in the same internship for two or more semesters. Regularly visit UW STUDENT JOBS CENTER at <https://jobcenter.wisc.edu/> to explore paid internships or part-time jobs that can bring in funds but also continue to build your applied work experiences.

--If you are a political science major studying in Madison, then an internship in the WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY OR SENATE is almost a MUST. Students can start with their local representative from their home-town area first. Also, check out the department website's North Hall blog for other specific opportunities. State legislative interns typically work 10-15 hours a week. This a user-friendly way to gain great legislative internship experience and make valuable professional contacts. NOTE: having interned in the State Legislature is usually considered a pre-requisite to gain internships in lobbying or governmental affairs in Madison, and such internships can be quite valuable to make you a stronger candidate for internships elsewhere, such as Washington, DC.

--Consider applying for the WISCONSIN IN WASHINGTON, DC at https://www.studyabroad.wisc.edu/programs/program.asp?program_id=626, and find out more about how the program fits into your Political Science program, at <https://undergrad.polisci.wisc.edu/blog/winw/>. Options include the full DC academic internship program for either fall or spring of your Junior Year, or the shorter DC program during the summer. Students who complete this program in their junior year often seek to build their DC program experience to enhance their academics and professional development path for their Senior year back on campus.

--Continue to attend career events at the university, college and departmental level. Sign up through Letters & Science to do MOCK INTERNSHIP/JOB INTERVIEWS, and/or arrange with them or your department to complete one or more CAREER INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS with participating alumni.

--Take the POLITICAL SCIENCE COURSE: CAREERS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE. (Pol. Sci. 400.) This 1-credit course builds on your work to-date and provides an advanced overview of labor trends affecting Political Science majors. Work with your student peers to polish resumes, cover letters, writing samples, elevator statements. Complete a required informational interview and compile a professional portfolio. The course also helps you sharpen your individual professional 'brand' that encompasses your work to date and your specific interests and goals, and that synchronizes your professional online persona to include e-portfolio and LinkedIn profile.

--Instead of applying to WISCONSIN IN WASHINGTON, DC for your Junior year, consider applying to complete the DC program in your senior year. Students who complete the program in senior year (especially their last spring, or in summer after they 'walk' in spring graduation), are best poised to position themselves for DC job opportunities (and often job offers) once they graduate.

--Is your hometown in Milwaukee, Chicago or the Twin Cities? Do you return to home during the summer? Consider applying for the BADGER REACH summer 'impactful internships' program. Students work with the Career/Internship instructor during the spring to facilitate your internship placement. You receive a \$1500. Scholarship upon completion of an 8-week, half-time internship. Program themes include education, social welfare, law, civic participation and urban design. Find out more at <https://undergrad.polisci.wisc.edu/blog/badger-reach/>.

--Are you interested in PURSUING GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT (state or federal), make an appointment with the government advisor in L & S Career Services, found at: <http://careers.ls.wisc.edu/government-job-search--students.htm>.

Senior Year: Building On Your Progress, Increasing Your Employment Prospects

--Continue to build your professional networks by attending career events, workshops and panels. Be prepared by bringing copies of your resume, dressing professionally, and with specific goals/ strategies for making the most of each event. Consider creating your own 'business card' to hand out to the contacts you make at these events.

--Join the UW Badgers Facebook and LinkedIn groups if you haven't done so already. If you have already joined LinkedIn, be sure to update/freshen your profile. Also consider adding 'artifacts' to your profile such as a link to your 'e-portfolio', to presentations or other examples of your work and achievements.

--Continue to seek feedback on your resumes, cover letters, etc. as you can never have too many people review your application materials.

--Continue to update and refresh your professional networks. Email people periodically with updates. Visit faculty and advisors' offices. TELL PEOPLE WHAT YOU ARE SEEKING. The more you do the more they might be able to help in some way.

--Start your JOB SEARCH NOW by looking for actual jobs that you want to pursue. (See the section on 'Additional Resources' on this site for websites and other resources to seek out jobs.)

--START APPLYING FOR JOBS NOW. While you may be graduating in May or summer it's not too early to start canvassing what's out there and even applying to some openings that specify they are looking for upcoming graduates. For government applications you should start the application process 6-8 months ahead of graduation.

--Seek out traineeships or management recruiting efforts among government agencies, nonprofits and corporate entities. Deadlines for these opportunities are often in mid to late fall.

--Consider applying for 'gap year' or 'year-of-service' programs like AMERICORPS, TEACH FOR AMERICA, PEACE CORPS or CITY YEAR.

--Join the UW MADISON ALUMNI ORGANIZATION and begin reaching out to alumni on Facebook and LinkedIn and through the new networking tool, Badger Bridge where you can meet alumni who want to help you explore careers, polish your application materials, provide other alumni contacts, and point you to opportunities that may not be regularly advertised. Ask for advice such as strategies for finding job listings in particular cities or work sectors.