

# QUICKSTART GUIDE TO...CAREER SELF-AWARENESS

## WHAT IS CAREER SELF-AWARENESS?

- Exploring your own strengths, skills, interests, and goals as they relate to your career.
- Includes exploring different career paths and deciding if they are a good fit for you.
- It is important not only to develop self-awareness, but also to be able to express your strengths, skills, interests, and goals to others.
- Use the back of this handout to develop some of your career skill stories using the STAR technique.
- You may also find the worksheet on the back of the *QuickStart Guide to Starting a Job Search* helpful in becoming aware of how your skills and interests match various career paths.
- Everyone's path looks different, but here are some steps to take during your years at Macalester.

## FIRST YEAR

- Get involved on- and off-campus to build work experience and explore career interest areas.
- Complete a Career Assessment at the CDC.
- Attend events including the CDC Majors Fair (November), Internship Info Sessions, and department-sponsored events including panel discussions.
- Schedule an individual Career Counseling Appointment to talk about your interests and learn about resources and services offered at the CDC.

## SOPHOMORE YEAR

- Pursue experiences to clarify interests including internships, student employment, volunteering, research, and employment during breaks.
- Attend the *MN Private College Job & Internship Fair* (Feb.) to get familiar with the event, and learn how to take full advantage of it in junior/senior year.
- Consider signing up for a *MacExplore* experience (held once per semester) to visit workplaces of interest, paying attention to how you feel about the workplace and career pathway.

## JUNIOR YEAR

- Continue to pursue experiences to clarify interests including internships, student employment, volunteering, research, and employment during breaks.
- Demonstrate an ability to articulate potential career areas of interest and the value of a liberal arts education to a variety of audiences (e.g. family, friends, faculty, previous and potential supervisors).
- Attend on-campus skill development workshops, along with specific job fair/info sessions like the *Health Careers Fair* (Oct.), *MN Government/Non-Profit Fair* (Oct.), and the *MN Private College Job Fair* (Feb.).
- Consider applying for *MacConnect* trips offered by the CDC, aimed at connecting students with alumni in various fields and cities across the country.

## SENIOR YEAR

- Work towards a primary, secondary, and tertiary plan for the next year that matches your goals and parameters.
- Consider any geographic, financial, and work authorization constraints.
- Reflect on your goals for your time following graduation:
  - What skills do you want to use?
  - What areas do you want to grow in?
  - What are needs vs. wants following graduation?
- Reflect on transferrable skills, values, and lessons of academic and experiential learning experiences thus far.

## Career Skills Stories Worksheet

As important as it is to be aware of your own strengths, skills, interests, and goals, it is equally important to be able to articulate them to potential employers. Use this worksheet to brainstorm examples of your career skills by telling the story with the STAR technique.

In the STAR technique, start by concisely explaining the...

- **SITUATION:** Give essential background information to explain the situation, like where you were working etc.
- **TASK:** Concisely explain what your role was/task you completed. What were the expectations and/or challenge?
- **ACTION:** What skills and knowledge did you use? Include the steps/process you took to complete the task
- **RESULT:** This is the positive outcome of the task and action, stated in quantifiable terms if possible

Write a STAR story about an example of where you demonstrated strong:

- Writing skills
- Verbal communication skills
- Quantitative skills
- Leadership skills
- Problem solving skills
- Teamwork skills
- Work ethic skills and the ability to take initiative
- Attention to detail
- Ability to be flexible
- Technical skills desired in the field

Note: These are just a sample of several of the most desired skills from a broad survey of U.S. employers.

Use and adapt this model for additional skills and especially those highlighted in a job description.