**Understanding the Career Development Process**

Sometimes deciding on a major or career direction can feel overwhelming because we don’t clearly understand the process or know the individual steps that make up the process. Although different versions exist, the following four steps are the basic foundation for the career development process:

1. Understand yourself
2. Explore options
3. Make decisions
4. Take action

All four steps should be completed, but any of these steps may be re-visited more than once. For example, if I’ve decided which career field I want to pursue (step #3), my action may be to gain experience in that field with an internship (step #4). But if that experience leads me to discover the career may not be the best fit for me, then I may need to explore other options (step #2) or even re-evaluate myself more (step #1).

The career development process is ongoing. Even professionals who have worked in their careers for many years periodically assess themselves, explore options, make career decisions, and act on those decisions.

The Career Center assists students and alumni with all steps of the career development process, but this month’s article will focus on the first step and the resources the Career Center has available.

**Understand Yourself**

Sometimes people assume they don’t need to do self-assessments because of course they know themselves. But do we really? How well are we able to articulate this information and see the connection between ourselves and career options? Following are some ways that the Career Center can help you with this first step in the career development process.

1. **Make an appointment with a career counselor:**
   
   http://careercenter.missouristate.edu/CareerCounseling.htm

   During appointments with career counselors, students take self-assessments that enable them to identify their interests, values, skills, and personality traits. It’s
important to assess all of these elements:
http://careercenter.missouristate.edu/Assessments.htm

One mistake that people sometimes make when they’re selecting a career direction is to consider only one of these elements. For example, people may select a major because they would be good at it, but after they get more exposure to it, they may realize that—while they have the skills—they really aren’t that interested in it.

2. **Enroll in the career class, IDS 120: Exploring Majors and Careers.** This semester-long, two-credit-hour course, which is available either online or seated, covers all the stages of the career development process. The course enables students to explore the process in more depth and detail.

Future articles on the career development will present information on the other steps within the process.