

A PARENTS' GUIDE TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Parents have been supporting their Olin student since before they even arrived on campus. It's common for parents and families to consider how they might help their child when it comes to career development and searching for internships or jobs. This question is often asked of our Post-Graduate Planning (PGP) staff during Candidates Weekend, Family Weekend, or other community events on campus. PGP places tremendous value in the family support offered to students, which contributes to overall student success. Therefore, we would like to share a few ideas for parents who wish to aid their child when it comes to gaining experience and plans for after graduation. The most valuable things parents can do to help a student with career planning are very basic, but extremely valuable:

- Listen
- Be open to ideas
- Help your student find information

Olin College, and specifically the office of Post-Graduate Planning, offers a whole host of workshops, career events, and resources available to students from their very first week on campus. We continue to work with students each year in their time at Olin, providing support appropriate to their stage of career development. We also recognize that it can take a village to contribute to student success! Here are seven more things you can do to help:

1.) **Encourage your student to visit the office of [Post-Graduate Planning](#), Olin's career center.**

When your child is feeling anxious about his/her/their future, suggest they reach out to PGP, and say, "PGP staff can help you at any point in your time at Olin."

Many students use their first semester to "settle into" college life, and so winter break and spring semester of the first year is the optimal time to start thinking about internships, summer research, and more. Ask your student, "Have you visited the career center?" If you hear, "You only go there when you are a senior," then it's time to reassure him/her that meeting with a career counselor can take place at any point—and should take place frequently—throughout a college career.

PGP offers a full range of career development and job-search help, including:

- Mock Career Fair – for practice navigating a career fair
- Peer Career Advisors – older students who have gotten internships or worked in summer research positions and have lots of great advice
- A network of alumni willing to talk about their jobs and careers

- A library of books (including an online library of information) on a wide range of careers
- Workshops on writing resumes and cover letters
- A recruiting program, which hosts info sessions, tech talks and several career fairs per year
- Group advising for clubs and project team members on campus
- Individual advising

2.) **Advise your student to write a resume**

PGP hosts 4 resume workshops every fall for first-year students. In addition, all students can stop by open office hours and ask a Peer Career Advisor (PCA) for a resume review. Suggest that your student get sample resumes from PGP's resource portal, or have a PCA look at their resume when they make updates (which should be at least once a year). A resume is never 'done,' it's always an evolving document!

You can review resume drafts if you wish, but recommend that the final product also be critiqued by a career center professional.

3.) **Challenge your student to become "occupationally aware."**

Ask: "Do you have any ideas about what you might want to do when you graduate?"

If your child seems unsure, you can talk about personal qualities you see as talents and strengths. You can also recommend:

- Talking to favorite faculty members
- Exploring where Olin alumni have landed careers
- Researching a variety of interesting career fields and employers

A career exploration should be a process, and not a one-time, last-minute event. In PGP, we often emphasize the diversity of career paths for any major offered at Olin. For instance, common career paths include expected areas such as software, robotics, mechanical design, hardware, biomedical engineering, etc. But we see many graduates utilizing their engineering skills in engineering-adjacent areas such as design, project management, policy, social justice, community development, education, entrepreneurship, law, healthcare, finance, and consulting. There is no one right way to be an engineer, and we want students not to feel pressure to choose one career path over another until they fully explore opportunities, interests and skills.

4.) **Emphasize the importance of internships**

The career center will not "place" your child in a job at graduation. Colleges grant degrees, but not job guarantees, so having relevant experience in this competitive job market is critical.

Perhaps your student doesn't know what they want to do after Olin; that's OK! Maybe they want to do a whole bunch of different things; that's OK too! Internships can be a great way to try different career paths and organizations, to help decide what they want (or don't want).

Why an internship?

Internship experience is a strong factor in a graduate's candidacy for a full-time job. Professional industry experience on a student's resume makes them more competitive amongst applicants for entry-level jobs. In addition to technical skills, employers are interested in communication, problem-solving, and administrative skills, which can be developed through internships.

In addition, internships can help a student figure out what they want to do after Olin!

5.) **Encourage extracurricular involvement**

Part of experiencing college life is to be involved and active outside the classroom. Interpersonal and leadership skills—qualities valued by future employers—are often developed in extracurricular activities.

Olin College has many opportunities to get involved in extracurriculars: student government, student clubs and organizations, and project teams are all great ways to develop soft skills while making friends.

6.) **Teach the value of networking**

We like to think is both what you know and who you know. Introduce your child to people who have the careers/jobs that are of interest. Suggest your student contact people in your personal and professional networks for information on summer jobs.

Encourage your student to attend Olin events where alumni or recruiters will be present, to build connections in STEM organizations as well as learn about career paths.

7.) **Help PGP help students**

Email Olin's office of Post-Graduate Planning when your organization has an internship or full-time job opening that might be of interest to engineering students. Join the campus career center's career advisory network and use your "real world" experience to advise students of their career options.

Adapted from original article by Thomas J. Denham. Courtesy of the [National Association of Colleges and Employers](#).