

Career Services

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How Career Counseling Assists with Deciding on a Career, Major or Program

As a child, you probably had dreams about what you wanted to be when you grew up. Now, you might not be so sure. There is good news – Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) offers career counseling.

Completing career assessments can be an insightful process that allows you to determine the right career, program or major for you. Students have the opportunity to meet individually with a career counselor to discuss their career paths, and learn more about themselves in the process. According to Chad Gensel, CPCC Career Counselor, “Career Counseling ultimately helps students choose a career path; however, the process helps them learn about themselves and their interconnectedness with the world of work as well as the people around them.”

Connie Johnston, Career Counselor for CPCC, points out that the assessment process can save students a lot of time and money in the long run too. Ms. Johnston says, “Academic programs vary in their admission processes and prerequisites. A student who knows their career field is less likely to spend time taking classes they do not want or need. Career counseling also helps students make sure they are picking a good career field for them early in the process, so they will be less likely to switch career plans later.” Students interested in transferring to a university to attain a four-year degree also benefit from career counseling. Career counselors are well-versed in what types of jobs you can do with certain majors, whether or not those majors are offered at CPCC.

Career counseling involves career assessments and career research tools. Due to the current recession, students are understandably concerned about the salary and outlook for their fields of interest. Your career counselor will refer you to career research tools to assist with your information gathering.

Chad Gensel relates a story about how career counseling assisted one student with making a career decision. He says, “I had a student who loved her student worker job at the library. However, she was very unsure about her ultimate career path. It just so happened that after two assessments and four counseling sessions she decided to pursue a career as a librarian. To quote ‘...now I’m more confident about the future and it’s not so dark and scary anymore.’”

In addition, talking with someone already employed in your field of interest can be informative. Career Services offers a mentor program that matches students to CPCC alumni in particular fields, who often can share tips about local employment trends.

Career Services offers several career assessments. During your initial meeting, your career counselor will work with you to select the career assessment that is right for you. Assessments offered at CPCC include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Strong Interest Inventory and Choices Planner. Each assessment has unique advantages.

The **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator** (MBTI) assists you with finding out your preference on four facets of your personality:

- What energizes you (introversion or extraversion)
- How you gather information (through your senses or intuition)
- How you make decisions (using the facts or your feelings)
- How you organize your world (structured or casual approach)

Sixteen potential personality types exist. The MBTI will identify your particular personality type and provide a list of career fields that people with your personality pursue. Students receive a customized ten page report upon completion of the MBTI. Chad Gensel mentions, “The MBTI is a great assessment that not only allows students to explore and understand their own personalities, but it gives them an opportunity to understand human diversity.”

Another assessment available through Career Services is the **Strong Interest Inventory**. By asking questions about academic subjects and activities you enjoy, the assessment compares your responses to the responses of people employed in a variety of career fields to see how much you have in common. Connie Johnston explains, “The Strong Interest Inventory is particularly helpful, because it gives students a way to compare their interests. For example, if you know you like the education and legal fields, which interest is the strongest? How much do you have in common with people who are happily employed in those fields?”

After completing the Strong Interest Inventory, students receive a personalized 14 page report. The assessment identifies your top two or three interest areas among six potential categories:

- Realistic (hands-on, outdoors, and mechanical interests)
- Investigative (research and scientific interests)
- Artistic (creative interests, including culinary arts and writing)
- Social (education, counseling and healthcare interests)
- Enterprising (business and management interests)
- Conventional (data processing and organizing interests)

Each student has a unique pattern of interests. If students are unaware of their interests or need help identifying the ones that are the strongest, then the Strong Interest Inventory is especially insightful.

The Choices Planner by Bridges is an interactive and self-paced computer program accessible on the Internet. A key feature that differentiates the Choices Planner from other assessments is that it incorporates career information with career assessments. After completing career assessments online, students receive a customized list of careers for further exploration. The program gives the following information about each career:

- Job tasks
- Required education
- Salary and outlook information for the state and major geographic regions, such as the City of Charlotte
- Brief one-minute video of real employees doing the job

Career counselors recommend the Choices Planner for students who are in the research stage of their career exploration. Connie Johnston says, “Students really like the detailed salary and outlook information available in Bridges. The database is very detailed and features a comprehensive list of occupations.”

Career counseling benefits students long after the process is completed. In addition to determining your career path, assessments also help students with:

- Articulating their strengths and weaknesses to employers, such as during an interview or on a résumé
- Feeling more confident about their career choices
- Identifying necessary skills for employment early in their career preparation
- Finding out about the variety of career opportunities in a selected field of study

In order to get started with career counseling, please contact the Career Services office nearest you. We have career counselors at each CPCC campus.

- Central Campus – 704-330-6551
- Harper Campus – 704-330-4623
- Levine Campus – 704-330-4247
- Cato Campus – 704-330-4836
- Harris Campus – 704-330-4623
- North Campus – 704-330-4135

Additionally, you may contact Career Services by emailing career.services@cpcc.edu to request a career counselor to contact you.