

Spring 2009

Dear Parent,

Freshman year at college is an exciting time for students and parents. It is a time of moving out and moving on. It is a time filled with opportunities and possibilities. It is also a time to begin thinking about career development. The freshman year is the first step toward reaching the professional goals that you have been dreaming and speaking about. In a limited amount of space, here are some suggestions of how to get the most out of the freshman year in regard to careers.

One employer recently suggested that the most important thing is for freshman and parents to keep an open mind. An open mind is a key to exploring options and gathering information critical to making informed career choices. The freshman year is a time to observe and begin to participate in new activities that expand, rather than limit, horizons.

As students observe and begin to participate in new activities, they will start to “learn the language of careers.” This refers to the skills needed to succeed in school and in work. Encourage students to speak with faculty and seek out a mentor who can help them navigate and understand what is needed to achieve their goals. A mentor could be a faculty member, an administrator, a coach, an upper class student, or a graduate of Rensselaer. A parent or other relative can also be a mentor.

Freshman can also begin to attend employer information sessions sponsored by the Career Development Center. Attending these sessions is a good way to begin to understand what can be done “with a major in...” and a way to know what skills are important to succeed at work outside of the classroom.

There are many other suggestions for freshman, but the last one I want to mention is the importance of writing a professional resume. The Career Development Center can help students begin to write a resume. In many respects, the resume may help form an employer’s first impression of the student. It is critical, especially in a tight economy, that the resume is focused and that freshman pay attention to detail...one example being the correct spelling of Rensselaer. Attention to detail is one of the many skills that employers look for.

This is the first in a series of short articles dealing with career issues that parents may be interested in.

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