

What happens when one finds they are meandering down a job path with unexpected twists and turns and many stops along the way? You morph your way into a career and find your own pathway!

How do you stay relevant, involved, and on a career path when you can't find a job or internship in the profession you have been studying? Or, maybe you just aren't sure this is what you really want to do. Through your studies in the field, you have been planning for the expected. How can you plan for the unexpected career, or for the other possibilities you have yet to imagine?

A lot of people start out planning to do one thing, and then they do something entirely different. They are not starting over from scratch, but building upon what they know and what they have experienced to find other possibilities for their career.

Gather a large piece of paper and a few colored pens and try these exercises to discover your possibilities:

**PART 1:** (To be mostly completed in class, approximately 20-30 minutes)

### **What is the expected career path I am on?**

In the center of a large piece of paper, write down your expected career path. What have you been studying to do? What job options are there in the field? What are the specific steps up the career ladder you are expected to take?

Fill in the paper around your career path with answers to the following questions:

### **What do I like to do now?**

On a large piece of paper, think about these questions and write down your answers. What do I like about the work I do at the specific job(s) I have now or jobs I have done before? What do I like to do most during the time I spend in classrooms and while learning? What kinds of social situations are the ones I like and why? What else do I like to do?

### **What am I good at?**

On this paper, in another color of pen, write down your many competencies. You can do this by looking through your résumé to find your skills or explore other career exercises you have completed. Think about specific work, classroom and social situations in which you have excelled and write those down too. Basically look at EVERYTHING you do and do well, and write it down. Now put that aside and go out and interview at least three people who know you well.

## **Who am I in your eyes?** (To be completed outside of class)

Talk to three people who know you well, and using a different color pen, write down their answers on your paper to the following - What are the top three words that you would use to describe me? What things have you noticed that I do well? If you were to encounter me at my perfect job, what would I actually be doing? Go ahead and ask

## **PART 2:** (To be completed outside of class)

Now that you have gathered this information, reflect on ways to meander off the expected career path and combine what you like to do, what you are good at, and who you are, in unexpected ways that may lead to a completely new career path, or just provide a little trip off the beaten path for you to do some exploring.

## **What are the possibilities available to me?**

Armed with this reflection begin to explore new possibilities. Research available jobs, not by the specific types of jobs available, but instead by other filters such as location, a descriptive word used to describe you (example: friendly), a specific skill you have (example: tap dancing) or a broad description of the field you are interested in (example: sociology). To get a broad search, use only one filter at a time. This will likely surface jobs and careers you may not have considered or found before. Read through the listings to see what kinds of possibilities and opportunities are currently available. Bring in three "unexpected" career opportunities you found to share with the class. (Allow approximately 20-30 minutes for students to share with the class.)

## **How can I take my skill set in a new direction?**

Based on your reflection, explore learning something new - taking a class in the community or on-line, finding a book or doing research to learn to do something new on your own, joining a club centered around a specific activity, volunteering someplace new, or asking a mentor or expert to teach you something you are interested in learning more about. These learning experiences also provide an opportunity to expand your networking in a new direction too. For the class, research what is available in your community and how you might go about learning something new. Share what you have found with the class. (Allow approximately 20-30 minutes for students to share with the class.)

## **Where are we going and how do we get there?**

After reflecting upon your many interests, the expected career paths, and ways to meander, form a study group with like-minded peers outside of class or school. Focus on ways to bring the group together to explore ideas, interests and challenges in traveling on and off the career path. To demonstrate this idea, have the class self-sort themselves into small groups based on their expected career path to discuss what they have discovered in doing the exercises, career challenges they face and ideas they have to overcome them. (Allow approximately 20-30 minutes for students to participate.)