

Top 10 List: On Track for Success!

No matter what year your student may be in the college process, a parent's involvement is important. Here are the Top Ten Ways to help your student be successful for an increasingly more difficult job market. Even if your student is a freshman, there are things they should be doing already to put them on the track for success after graduation!

10. **Encourage good grades** – a 3.0 (B average) is the typical cut off to be competitive for internship and job applications. According to the 2009 National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) *Job Outlook* study, nearly 70 percent of participating employers said they screen candidates by GPA (grade point average).

9. **Encourage your student to be a part of projects and activities that require communication skills.** Strong communication skills are continuously cited by employers as a quality that will set a candidate apart from others. Ways to strengthen communication skills include encouraging your student to take a public speaking class, participate in debates, or take on a role with a club/organization that requires public speaking on a regular basis.

8. **Encourage your student to take on leadership roles.** According to the 2009 NACE Job Outlook study, employers choose candidates who have held a leadership position over candidates who are only involved in extracurricular activities.

7. **Encourage your student to gain relevant work experience while in college.** Over 75 percent of participating employers in the 2009 NACE *Job Outlook* study indicated they preferred to hire candidates with relevant work experience – this means new college graduates who have completed internships or cooperative education assignments.

6. **Encourage your student to volunteer.** Serving as a volunteer is a great way to gain experience, meet new people, and give back to the community. Not only does it build strong work ethic, but it's a great resume builder, too!

5. **Encourage your students to work on written communication skills.** This will not only improve grades (see #10 on this list), but it will also help make initiating contacts with employers via email or in a written letter less stressful. In the long run, written communication skills are becoming hard to find – encourage your student to take additional writing classes to get more practice in this area or to join the campus newspaper staff, a creative writing group, etc.

4. **Encourage your student to focus on both team work and their individual work ethic.** Most jobs have a need for candidates who are equally capable of team work and individual projects. Encourage your student to be involved in group activities such as intramural sports or a research team for a class project. Make sure they are giving 100% when the project requires individual effort, too! They need to be able to pull their own weight in the real world.

3. **Encourage your student to take advantage of on campus resources.** Many resources are available to Winthrop students every day; make sure your student is utilizing them! The Career & Civic Engagement office provides free assistance with volunteerism placement, community service projects, part time, full time and internship assistance, resume and cover letter writing, interview practice, career exploration ...and the list could go on. All departments on campus offer a huge array of services for students – make sure your student is not letting this opportunity go to waste. Most often, emails are sent to your students Winthrop address that outline upcoming events –encourage your students to read these before deleting them!

2. **Encourage everyday professionalism.** This includes discussions about how to dress for professional events such as a career fair or interview. Helping your student purchase a professional suit is a great gift idea for a birthday or another holiday. When a student looks professional – it will automatically make them feel more confident in an interview.

1. Encourage the use of time management. Encourage your student to be involved, but not be so involved that it takes away from their academic studies. Also encourage the idea of students being on time for class, on campus appointments, or organization meetings. This creates good habits that employers will see quickly during the interview process and first year of work.

Overall, be sure to encourage your student to start early with their career development process. It starts with choosing the right major and continues for the rest of their life as they continue up the career ladder. Make sure your student starts thinking about getting involved, finding relevant experience through an internship or volunteer project, and keeping grades up right away. After all, today is the first day of the rest of their life!