

Three Professional Development Tips to Maximize Your Summer

Spring 2017



SUMMER BEGINS IN 25 DAYS.

If we convert this to student metrics, summer is about 10 assignments, three group projects and five final exams away. Yikes! After these academic hurdles, sunnier days will greet us. Many students, from freshmen to seniors, trade our college schedules for full-time careers, internships, summer jobs, vacations and, most importantly, relaxation!

The Career Development Office is here to give three pro-fresh-ional summer tips. When August arrives, you can have a great answer to the inevitable question: "What did you do over summer break?"

I sat down with three of our career coaches—Nichole Arbino, Beth Zink and April Robles—to discuss career

development strategies during the holidays.

1. Set goals

Spend a few quiet moments reflecting on personal goals before summer begins. April Robles mentions this can drive our immediate work and help us visualize a successful future.

Autumn Heisler, the creative director for Cincinnati's Dooley Media, recently presented a system to set goals in less than 30 minutes.

- **Establish an achievable long-term goal.** What motivates you? Don't fret when others offer their thoughts on where you *ought* to go in four years. Instead, focus on where you *want* to go. An example of a long-term goal is graduating with a degree that highlights your interests.

Another is landing a job that exercises your favorite skills.

- **Break the goal into short-term strategies.** Make a list of creative ways to accomplish your desired long-term goal. Some examples might include volunteering at a relevant organization, meeting three people who work in your career interest, applying for degree-related internships or updating your resume.
- **Have a step-by-step plan and evaluate your progress at the end of each week.** Use a calendar to record completion target dates for your short-term strategies. Also, write down important dates, which may include local career events or work-related deadlines.

Once you've created your plan, April suggests printing a physical copy of your

goals. Pin these someplace where you can glance at them from time-to-time.

[Discover more tips and examples.](#)

2. Request informational interviews and job shadows

Nichole Arbino says many professionals love to share their stories and offer advice. Informational interviews and job shadows are great alternatives to attending networking events, because you can engage in casual, one-on-one conversations with people who can provide insights about a specific career.

Where can you find these amazing mentors during the summer?

Nichole recommends starting within the social networks of your family and friends. Ask others if they can introduce you to someone who shares a similar career path or interest. If you already admire an organization, reach out to the recruiters and see if they can connect you with a professional.

Beth Zink also recommends following the Xavier University Alumni LinkedIn group that contains more than 8,400 people in our community. Scroll through the members list, and send messages to alumni who work in your desired industry. If you are unsure about how to ask a stranger for advice, have a quick chat with one of our career coaches.

Pro Tip: *“If you’d like to physically meet potential mentors, ask if you can buy them a cup of coffee sometime. This is a clever way to show sincere interest.”*

—Rachel Schilling, Talent Specialist for POSSIBLE

3. Develop technical skills

Nichole, Beth and April agree that summer is an important time to strengthen or learn technical skills. For instance, many job descriptions list proficiency in Microsoft Excel as a requirement, but how many of us actually

know the functions and best practices for managing high volumes of data?

Luckily, the Internet is a great place for accessible learning. If you’d like to learn something new for a job or internship, there’s bound to be related podcasts or step-by-step video tutorials.

Nichole recommends scoping YouTube or [Atomic Learning](#), a program available to Xavier students and faculty. Log into Atomic Learning using your Xavier email address and password, and you’ll have access to more than 44,000 tutorials. We recommend matching new skillsets with buzzwords found in job openings related to your desired role or career path.

Takeaway

This summer, increase your qualifications by setting career goals, requesting informational interviews or job shadows, and developing technical skillsets.

[Xavier Career Development](#) is open throughout the summer. When you come across any career challenges or have questions, we are an appointment, phone call, email or Skype session away. Have a wonderful summer break, Muskies!