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*By Dr. Denita Hedgeman  
Director of Career Services  
LeMoyne-Owen College*

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## FINDING YOUR PURPOSE AND APPLYING IT TO YOUR CAREER SEARCH

*By: Dr. Denita Hedgeman  
Director of Career Services  
LeMoyne-Owen College*



When some students come into a career service office, they don't have a clue to what they want to do with their degree. They just know that when they graduate, they want a great job paying a lot of money in their field. For example, a business management major wants to get a job in management, but when asked which industry he or she wants to manage, he or she might answer saying "Oh anything. It doesn't matter". By that answer one can tell that the student has not researched the industry to know the many areas that are available in their field and what would be the best fit for them based on their skills. There are management opportunities in retail, banking, food service, corporate, insurance, academia, entertainment, sales, sports, social services, etc. A student also needs to know if he or she is interested in working for a nonprofit or a for profit organization. An interviewer might ask that student if he or she has experience in management or supervision. The student might say no because they don't understand about transferring their leadership skills they had in student organizations, community service or church. Experience is experience whether it is paid or nonpaid. A company wants to know if a student is trainable, what impact they had in their activities or past employment and if they will be an asset in assisting them meet their company goals, stability and growth in the industry. Here are some key ways that will ensure students' success in understanding purpose and finding that dream job:

### **Self Assessment**

In general as a student, you need to know what you are good at doing; what you like to do; if you want to work in an urban, rural or suburban area; whether you are willing to relocate; if you want to work for a large or small organization; if you like to work with your hands, people, data, new projects or numbers; if you want a long or short commute to work; how to understand your skills, abilities, values, goals and personal qualities; and if your reward is money, security or creative authority.

### **Knowing Your Purpose**

Do you know your purpose? Do you know what you were created to do uniquely different than anyone else with your own signature? Everyone has a purpose or specific assignment on earth where he or she will make a difference in their career, home, activities or in other people's lives. My purpose is training, developing, motivating and exposing people to things, ideas and opportunities that they did not know existed. I have many talents and strengths but one purpose umbrella where these areas fall. I can utilize my purpose in career development, as an author, writer, director, minister, choreographer, singer, actress, dancer, owner of a performing arts school, motivational speaker or a workshop facilitator. Many talents – one purpose – same goal. All of these skills can be transferred to a career objective for a specific company such as creativity, event planning, HR, management, placement, training, platform and written and verbal communication

skills and flexibility. Please understand that every big or small thing you do is a part of your big purpose picture. There are six ways to recognize your purpose:

1. It is something you are naturally good and find yourself always doing.
2. Other people recognize your gifts and are encouraging you to pursue them.
3. It is something that you would do even if you didn't get paid.
4. It is your passion.
5. It is something that you can't stand to see – (Ex. Abused Children-You need to work at an organization that stands up for that topic)
6. An area that you are attacked that might slow down your growth process– athlete (injury), singer (hoarse), typist (carpel tunnel)

Sometimes your purpose or passion might not bring in a lot of money but you are truly satisfied with doing it because you feel that it is important and you are making a difference in someone's life. So really analyze and research your major and interests so you won't be unfulfilled because you are doing something other people want you to do but not what you are supposed to do.

### Setting Goals

Once you have found your purpose, make reasonable goals. Most employers will ask where do you see yourself in the next 5 or 10 years. If you don't know, set goals for the next 2 years in every area of your life such as work, school, family, personal, spiritual, household duties, location desired to live, salary, etc. Rank these and work on the most important ones first. Next, make a short term and long term strategic plan for your life. For example, in order to work for the CIA, some positions require that you speak Chinese fluently. Your college might not offer that language. So you set a goal to make that happen. You should create a strategic plan on yourself which will include an objective, initiative/recommendation, performance indicator, completion date and cost/human support.

OBJECTIVE	INITIATIVE /RECOMMENDATION	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	COMPLETION DATE	COST/ HUMAN SUPPORT
Take Chinese	Look at different classes, scheduling, schools, and on-line courses.	Enrolled in class	Fall 2008	\$1000.00

You can use this model in any area of your life to make you more marketable and to prepare you for the next level of your life and career.

### Making Your Self More Marketable with Preparation

Make yourself more marketable to potential employers by taking elective courses that are related to or will enhance your major and other skills. Remember, there are a lot of people

you will be competing against for an internship or job, so you want to make sure you stand out among all the other candidates. Get involved in extra curricular activities, community service or a professional association; volunteer; shadow an executive; and participate in community service.

Remember your purpose will always make room for your gifts. While you are waiting for your dream job, start a small business on the side to purchase books or interview clothes by selling lemonade; braiding or cutting hair; typing papers, resumes, invitations or graphic design; baking cakes; creating logos; and performing at events.

Visit your career center to work on resume and letter writing, interviewing, networking, computer, dining and business etiquette skills. Also, work on maintaining a good GPA. Most internships and graduate schools require a 3.0 or above. Be sure to participate in career related events such as a Career and Graduate School Fair, Black Executive Exchange Program (BEEP), On-Campus Recruitment, Mock Interviews, Leadership Conferences and Preparatory Workshops.

Make sure you go on-line to search for related careers to your purpose, strengths and interests. The Occupational Outlook Handbook and Dictionary of Occupational Titles are good reference books that you can find on-line as well. At the end of your freshman year, secure three letters of recommendations and get professors or career services to assist you with writing your essays and personal statements for graduate schools and internships so you won't wait until the last minute. You can always have these in your files and change it up to fit each opportunity. Finally, keep up with current trends and trade, news and business magazines; newspapers; salaries on salary.com; and have three professional contacts in your field of interests such as faculty, alumni, church, etc.

Now that you have found your purpose, self assessed what is important to you, set goals, marketed yourself with career development preparation, met contacts and researched information, you are on your way to finding your dream job that is taylor made for you and making a difference in this world!