

Sophomore Career Development Guide

You've taken your first steps—now it's time to find your direction.

Your first year was all about exploring possibilities, building connections, and discovering your values. Now that you've had some time to settle in, sophomore year is your chance to start clarifying your path—academically, professionally, and personally.

You don't need to have it all figured out, but now is the time to ask deeper questions:

- What's starting to feel like a "fit"?
- What experiences do you want to try before you graduate?
- What strengths or interests are emerging?

At PLU, we're here to help you connect your growing self-awareness to real-world opportunities. This guide will help you take intentional steps forward—building durable skills, deepening your community, and trying out experiences that help you understand what's next.

Whether you're exploring options or narrowing your focus, this year is about clarifying who you are and what you want—and gaining the confidence to move toward it.

CONNECT

- ☐ **Build your professional network** by joining one of [PLU's Mentoring Programs](#).
Available for students in the College of Natural Sciences, College of Liberal Studies, and Department of Kinesiology— for students outside of these areas, come talk to a career coach about finding a mentor.
 - ☐ **Connect with alumni on [LuteLink](#) or LinkedIn.** Ask how they got from PLU to where they are now.
 - ☐ **Conduct at least one [informational interview](#)** with someone in a field you're curious about.
- ☐ **Continue developing and maintaining relationships** with faculty, staff, & alumni
 - ☐ **Follow up with professors, supervisors, or mentors**—ask for feedback, guidance, or recommendations.
- ☐ **Attend a career fair or networking [event](#)**, even if you're just exploring.

REFLECT

- ☐ **Revisit [PathwayU](#) results or retake it.** Has anything shifted in your interests or values?
- ☐ **Journal or talk with a [coach](#)** about what's emerging as a potential direction.
 - ☐ What makes you unique? How will you tell your story on an application or in an interview?
 - ☐ What difference do you hope to make in your work?
- ☐ **Declare (or reconsider) your major. Students are encouraged to declare a major in March their Sophomore year.**
 - ☐ Ask: How does this major connect to the kind of life or work you [imagine](#)?
 - ☐ Meet with a faculty advisor or career coach to explore real-world applications.
- ☐ **Use tools like [“What Can I Do With This Major?”](#) and [O*NET](#)** to research potential fields, salaries, job outlooks, and graduate school options.

ENGAGE

- ☐ **Join a [club](#) or organization**, or take on a leadership role in something you're already involved in.
 - ☐ This could be an on campus club or athletics
 - ☐ Consider external volunteering opportunities
- ☐ **Apply for a part-time job, internship, or research opportunity.**
 - ☐ Don't worry if it's not your “forever career”—this is a year to try things.
- ☐ **Complete a reflection [worksheet](#) or resume tracker** to log new skills and accomplishments.
 - [More than your GPA](#), employers are concerned about your [durable skills](#).

UPDATE YOUR TOOLKIT

- ☐ **Update your [resume](#)** with any new experience from the year.
- ☐ **Build your LinkedIn profile** and request at least one recommendation (different from an endorsement, this is like a public referral note from someone who has worked with you).
- ☐ **Meet with a career coach** to review your documents or discuss summer plans.
 - ☐ You can meet with a [PLU Career Coach](#) or on [TimelyCare](#)
- ☐ **Check in on your Handshake profile**—add new experience and look at summer jobs/internships.
- ☐ Check out the PLU [guide on using AI](#) to help your Career Development

REMEMBER

This year is about **testing and clarifying**, not committing to a single path forever. It's okay to change your mind. What matters is staying curious, taking action, and paying attention to what energizes you. Small steps now will open big doors later.