



# Bryant & Stratton College

Online Education

## Jumpstart Your Career While at Bryant & Stratton College

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Your studies at Bryant & Stratton College are not only an opportunity for you to develop your skills and knowledge; they're also an opportunity for you to build a professional platform that will help launch you into a career that's rewarding both personally and financially. The following tactics will help you get your career started in the right direction:

**Set your personal career agenda early on.** Although your goal in college is to master a specific body of knowledge (*and* get good grades!), you'll also want to focus on personal and professional growth. You need to take control of your learning path, and make sure that as you work your way through your degree courses, you're focusing as much on what will happen after you graduate as you are on acing your assignments.

**Multipurpose your course assignments.** Whenever possible, use your assignments to connect with potential employers, clients, and/or colleagues. Generally, people are amazingly accessible to and supportive of students doing research for a class assignment. Do a dynamite job on that assignment, and then perhaps send a copy of it to the person you interviewed, thereby dazzling him or her with your smarts and initiative *and* building a professional relationship in the process.

When you can, think about turning parts of your assignments into blog posts, articles, and online content contributions. Your goal is to start building visibility as an intelligent, knowledgeable person in your area of interest, so that when potential employers "look you up" online, they'll find evidence of your professional value.

**Create your own learning assignments.** As you work your way through your degree's courses, you'll be mastering a substantial amount of knowledge in your degree field. However, in addition to that knowledge base, you'll also want to build some key professional and/or business skills while you can practice them in a safe environment. For example, you'll want to learn how to write concisely and effectively, how to present to a group, how to make (and defend) decisions, how to collaborate or work effectively as a team member.

These are all critical business and career skills. Also, you'll want to learn how you most effectively learn – is it by listening to a lecture, watching a demonstration, writing up and outlining class notes, drawing "maps" of related concepts? These are but some of the ways people learn and master new information. Your classes at Bryant & Stratton College provide you with a great opportunity to figure out what works best for you, and your ability to learn quickly will be a career asset for you.

**Explore how many different ways your degree skills can be used.** Pepper your guest speakers with questions about their careers, do as many information interviews as you can (possibly as a course assignment?), join LinkedIn special-interest groups in your area of interest and ask questions, and consider joining professional associations in your area of interest (at the student rate!) to learn more about who does what, and how/where they do it.

Professional associations also often have "career" sections that describe the various career opportunities available, and some may have mentor programs that you can join as a student. Some questions to ask: what types of organizations employ people with your skills? For-profit (i.e., businesses) or non-profit? Can this work be done as an independent, and if so, who does that and how? Are there other alternative or nontraditional ways of using your skill set?

**Figure out what type of work you enjoy.** Your classes and assignments will give you a great opportunity to explore not only what options might be available to you, but also which ones you might most enjoy. Use your class assignments whenever possible to learn about various types of work and work environments, and then think about what appeals (or doesn't) to you about that career path.

For example, some people thrive in high-intensity, high-adrenaline workplaces (think IT start-ups, emergency rooms, etc.) while others find they can contribute most effectively (and happily) in a more predictable work situation. Also, do you gravitate to team activities, or prefer working independently? These are some of the questions you can be asking yourself as you progress through your program.

**Start a career journal to record your career ideas, questions, plans, and action items.** A career journal, which can be as simple as an inexpensive binder, will let you capture your career questions and ideas (what type of work you enjoy?) as they come to you. When you read an article about a career or job that interests you, make a note of it so you don't forget to track it down... or you can figure out how to find out more about it as part of a class assignment.

As you start planning your post-graduation career strategy, here's the place to note your action items and checklists. Even if you don't act on them immediately, you will have captured the information for when you *are* ready to take action.

**Hit the Bryant & Stratton College campus libraries!** And don't just hit the library – become best friends with the librarian. The Bryant & Stratton College librarians have some very nifty (and expensive) databases and resources at their fingertips not available to non-students, so take advantage of them while you can.

These resources can tell you about potential career paths, salary expectations, trends, whether the field is expanding or contracting, what issues the profession is facing, where major employers are, their hiring plans, and just about anything you'd need to know to have a competitive edge in the job-hunting and/or career-advancement arena. Librarians know really cool stuff and they like to share what they know!

**Check in with Career Services early and often.** Don't wait until you're ready to graduate – start building a relationship with your career services person and stay in touch throughout your program. Career Services may know about valuable internships, may be able to help you make connections for part-time work, and will be able to offer resources and guidance about possible career paths you're considering.

**Practice doing scary stuff.** College is a great place to practice new or scary activities – like standing up in front of a classroom and giving a presentation, or leading a virtual team – because the costs of being less-than-perfect may be just some slight embarrassment, not job loss.

Think of your time at Bryant & Stratton College as a dress rehearsal for the skills you'll need on the job (including working as a team member or leader, making group presentations, writing a compelling business memo, etc.), and push yourself to do those things that seem most intimidating to you. The more you practice, the better you get; the better you get, the more you'll impress an employer.

**Take a leadership role in your career – and your future.** By choosing to enroll in a degree or certificate program that will open up greater career and life opportunities for you, you've already demonstrated your willingness to do what it takes to change your life. You've already proven to yourself (and those around you) that you're willing to act, you're willing to work hard, you're willing to give up time today for a better life tomorrow. Those are all characteristics of becoming the leader – the hero – of your own life. They are also characteristics very much in demand by employers today.

To keep on this path, you'll want to always take responsibility for your choices and for your outcomes, and decide you'll *always* get up one more time. Personal and career resiliency come down to just this: that when life knocks you down, you make a personal decision to get back up. You're the hero of your own life – what can you do today in your class, or in an assignment, or for a classmate, that will help you get up and keep moving toward your dream career?