

Discernment Assignment Suite

Resource Authors: Ashley Dehart, Rachel Johnson, Jarret Richardson

Rationale: We believe that career exploration and discernment should be meaningfully integrated into students' coursework throughout their time at Centenary. We believe assignments that ask students to consider their career and professional life can also be used to achieve other course learning goals. We hope this menu of sample, customizable assignments and activities offers teachers opportunities to encourage sophomores and juniors to engage in an ongoing, reflective process toward professional discernment.

Interview a Professional

- **Description:** Ask students in your course to identify a professional or professionals in the field and interview them. Mentor students in the creation of their interview protocol (e.g., categories/types/number of questions). This assignment allows students to explore career options and practice professional communication (e.g., emails, requesting/setting up a meeting).
- **Opportunities for extension:** tailor the assignment to your course goals (i.e., use this to inspire research questions/projects); have students write a themed reflection or report on the experience (i.e., things I didn't know about X; steps I think I should take; questions I still have)
- **Notes:** consider letting students use the interview as a primary source for a research project/paper

Degree Plan Analysis/Audit

- **Description:** Ask your students to analyze their degree progress so far. Help students create an outline of all remaining courses for their major. Have students print a copy of their major curriculum from the catalog.
- **Opportunities for extension:** repeat this process in a later course; ask students to identify programs or opportunities in addition to their coursework that might be relevant to discernment (shadowing, internships, campus organizations, leadership)
- **Notes:** encourage students to share this beyond the class with a mentor, parent, or advisor

Professional Organization Exploration

- **Description:** Ask students to choose a professional organization associated with their intended career and carefully read the mission, vision, values, and/or code of ethics of that organization (e.g., National Association of Social Workers). Give them questions to consider as they read and analyze (e.g., Do the stated values of this organization align with or challenge your values?). Ask students to share their analysis.
- **Opportunities for extension:** have students attend a conference or webinar; have students read a recent conference program; give students a creative assignment in which they imagine a professional organization created around their own values; ask

students to challenge/critique stated values of an organization; research the origins of an organization/association

- Notes: possible group project

Guest Speaker Panel

- Description: Assemble a panel of professionals from your own network who have taken different career paths. Choose people who can represent diverse backgrounds and groups. If that is difficult, ask the panel members to help you identify others. Have the panel visit your class (in person or virtually) to share their career journey.
- Opportunities for extension: make students write the questions (give them feedback; ask them to workshop with each other); write a profile of a professional/reflection – what was the most interesting or surprising thing you learned?
- Notes: consider letting students help you create the panel

Values Writing Assignment/Reflection

- Description: Ask students to intentionally examine two questions: Who do you want to be for yourself? Who do you want to be for others? This assignment could involve academic/field research or be more personal/reflective. You could customize these questions to align more closely with your course/discipline.
- Opportunities for extension: recommend students share this at a consultation with Debbie Bury or other advisors/mentors; encourage students to share this with an accountability partner; ask students to do a radical revision – transform the reflection into something new (e.g., motivational poster; service project).
- Notes: consider pairing this assignment with the “professional organization exploration”

What if? (Alternate Title for *Friends Fans: Pivot!*)

- Description: Give students a writing prompt that states that the career they thought they would choose has been somehow eliminated. Get creative with your prompt! Perhaps a medical breakthrough has eliminated the need for X profession. What would they choose instead and why? How would they pivot and prepare for that new career direction? You can set this prompt at different points in their life (e.g., right now in college; ten years from now).
- Opportunities for extension: directed class discussions; class presentation
- Notes: consider pairing this with “interview a professional” but require that it be someone in the new/alternate field

Research a Career and Present

- Description: Ask students to choose a specific career of interest to research and present information. Consider giving students more guidance/parameters than simply to research and share (e.g., What advice do professionals have for novices? What are some nontraditional pathways to this career? What are the introductory positions that lead to this career?)

- Opportunities for extension: find a professional to join you in your presentation; create a handout for classmates who might want to explore further; ask students to present as if they were a recruiter for that profession (persuasive)
- Notes: consider pairing this assignment with “interview a professional”

Field Trips/Site Visits

- Description: Take students to a location (or locations) that helps them see a profession in action. Arrange for an activity relevant to your coursework to occur at the same time. Ask professionals to curate or present during your visit.
- Opportunities for extension: ask students to prepare questions for facilitators ahead of time; have students prepare a research instrument (i.e., observation criteria, interview protocol); give students a pre/post-survey about their impressions or expectations then ask them to write a reflection about the significance between what they thought and what they observed
- Notes: this activity could be repeated several times throughout a course/program