IF YOU THINK LOOKING for a first job is something that just college seniors do, you need to think again. At Gettysburg College students are encouraged to explore possible career paths already in their first semester on campus and to participate in a variety of hands-on experiences that include actual work and workplace discussions. It’s all meant to help students become the early birds when looking for their first job.
THANKS TO A VARIETY of new and existing programs offered by the Center for Career Development (CCD), students at Gettysburg College are encouraged to explore and prepare for possible career paths as soon as they first set foot on campus. And their preparation includes far more than just abstract research about what jobs might be available. Opportunities abound for hands-on experiences that include actual work and workplace discussions.

In the last few years the CCD has introduced several innovative career programs like externships and job shadowing and mock interviews. There’s also Bright Lights! Bright City! — a career seminar program that focuses on specific career areas and connects students with alumni and parents working in the field. Another offering is the New York Hub — the first part of a program called Great American Cities that is being developed in major metropolitan areas, where alumni offer shadowing experiences, dinners, and other activities.

Making Your Future Work

This past year the CCD has been working hard to put in place a new program called Making Your Future Work. The program aims to enroll first-year students at the beginning of their first semester, but is open for any student at any time. “Our goal,” said Dr. Kathy Williams, director of the CCD, “is to help students maximize their career development activities and planning while at Gettysburg.” Williams also pointed out that it is in students’ best interest to start exploring career possibilities as early as possible. “By doing so,” she said, “students have a chance to follow up on a variety of hands-on experiences that can tell them if they are really interested in certain kinds of work.”

Making Your Future Work is a melding of old and new CCD projects. “In a sense, this is our umbrella program, which includes both on- and off-campus elements,” Williams said. “For example, students learn here on campus how to set career goals, how to prepare a resume, how to organize a job search — the more traditional elements of career counseling.” Added to these basic building blocks are several off-campus activities that range from internships and externships to job shadowing and networking sessions. “What we have put in place with Making Your Future Work is a three-phase career development program,” Williams explained. “Students can first explore on campus what careers might be of interest to them. We can then provide career counseling and coaching to help them refine their research and guide them in setting goals.” The CCD will also help students build sample resumes and give suggestions on how to succeed in interviews.

Phase two includes the many off-campus components, Williams said. Here, the opportunities are almost endless and include practice interviews with alumni, parents, and employers; insiders’ advice about graduate school; need-based help with internship experiences; externships; online and on-campus interviews; job fairs and much more: Bright Lights! Bright City! and the new Hub programs are a part of these off-campus “experiential” elements.

The third part of Making Your Future Work is networking. “This is where alumni and parents play a particularly valuable role,” Williams said. “Among other things, they can host a networking dinner with other alumni and parents, introducing students to people already working in specific professions. Or they can bring a leader in their field to speak on campus or at a Hub-sponsored event.”

The numbers of students participating in Making Your Future Work programs is impressive. This past year, for example, staff members at the CCD had more than 1,000 scheduled and unscheduled appointments with students. More than 300 students participated in a computerized assessment program. The office also held 124 network- ing, externship, and shadowing events and sponsored 30 mock interview days. All told, the CCD had more than 2,500 contacts with students in one year.

A program of many partners

Alumni and parents are not the only groups important to the program, which is actually structured around four different groups that include faculty and employers in addition to alumni and friends.

Currently, Williams said, the CCD works with faculty “to identify and develop various experiential opportuni- ties for students.” These include provid- ing speakers and alerting professors about internships. In turn, some faculty have developed career-related units to complement classroom instruction or have created case studies to help students connect classroom knowledge to actual careers.

Cindy Wright, a lecturer in Health Sciences, for example, created a six-part career component for her class Foundations to Health Sciences. Wright included outside speakers to talk about health care in the United States today and invited CCD staff members to work with students on such topics as resumes, goal setting, and business and professional etiquette. Charlie Emmons, professor of sociology, regularly invites a CCD staff member to come into his senior seminar class to talk about “all things career.” And Brendan Cushing Daniels, assistant professor of econom- ics, helped develop the case study that was used in the Bright Lights! Big City! Program in New York City, which focused on careers on Wall Street.

In the end, of course, landing a job in a desired field is the ultimate goal for any career development program, and the CCD works directly with employers and graduate schools, offer- ing them access to on-campus recruit- ment options including interviewing, information sessions, and information tables. “Employers can personalize the schedule, pre-select resumes, and visit the campus for the day,” Williams said. “Online interviews are also available. So far, our placement rate has been very good. And we’re looking to improve that success.”

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Alumni and parents are key to the success of the College’s Making Your Future Work program. By volunteering your time and expertise, you can change a young person’s life — and enhance your own. Your participation gives you the opportunity to meet and help students who are excellent job candidates, while you network with fellow alumni and parents and renew your connection to the College.

Among the many ways to participate are through:

• Internships and externships. You can offer students hands-on workplace experience through an internship. Or turn an internship into an externship by hosting the student in your home — as Dr. Scott Palmer ’72 did with Kim Bose ’08 (see Bose’s journal entry) — to help students see how they might balance their personal and professional lives.

• Job shadowing. Invite a student to come to your office to “shadow” you or one of your colleagues. Or host several students together at your workplace to give them a tour and introduce them to your line of work.

• Mock interviews. Invite a student to your place of work for an hour prac- tice interview. You can give feedback on the student’s resume presentation, professionalism, clarity of career goals, and anything else that might help with the first real interview.

For more information on how you can participate in the Making Your Future Work program, contact the Center for Career Development at career@gettysburg.edu or 717-337-6616.
Making Your Future Work

EXPLORING VETERINARY MEDICINE

This past November Scott Palmer ’72 returned to campus to meet with about 15 students and answer their questions about getting into veterinary school and the profession. He came to campus at the urging of Kim Bowe ’08, who in the summer had completed an externship with him.

“This is exactly the kind of interaction between students and alumni that we are working to develop,” said Kathy Williams, director of the Center for Career Development. “We have so many alumni and parents working in interesting fields, and the kind of mentoring and networking that they can provide to our students is invaluable.”

Palmer, who owns and operates the New Jersey Equine Clinic (www.njequine.com), is the immediate past president of the American Association of Equine Practitioners. He was also the first doctor to work on Barbaro, the racehorse that fractured its right hind leg at the 2006 Preakness. He also worked on Smarty Jones before the Philadelphia horse became prominent by winning two legs of the Triple Crown in 2004.

Bowe herself became interested in veterinary medicine after Palmer spoke on campus to a group of students during her first year. Last summer she was able to participate in an externship with Palmer, living with him and his wife, Janet, and experiencing the daily routine of an equine veterinarian. “It was a time I’ll never forget,” Bowe said.

Palmer was equally enthusiastic about the externship — a “mini” internship that lasts five to ten days. “We had high expectations because Gettysburg College students are bright people,” Palmer said. “But Kim exceeded our expectations. She did a great job.”

Bowe’s journal notes, excerpted here, convey some of the excitement she felt while working with Palmer. She now plans to apply to veterinary school.

Monday July 17, 2006

Around 8:00 in the morning Dr. Scott Palmer and I went to his clinic, where he first introduced me to his receptionists and Dr. Hogan who basically runs the facility.

I felt a little awkward because I wasn’t helping much. I’m not used to not helping. But watching the arthroscopic surgery, I became captivated by what I saw on the television screen. I felt like I was living with a legend! After sailing, we went to a pizza place for dinner and then mini golf. Dr. Palmer and I tied at the end! I guess we’ll just have to battle it out another time. I’m so sad tomorrow is my last day!

Friday July 21, 2006

I’m really going to miss Dr. Palmer and his wife, and all the people at the clinic. I had a blast, and I have pictures that will last a lifetime.

Many people can say they had a chance to meet Barbaro and practice suturing before entering veterinary school? I can. I plan to keep in touch with the Palmers when I apply to veterinary school. Mrs. Palmer said she wants an invitation to my graduation from vet school! I’ll definitely remember to send them one.

Wednesday July 19, 2006

Today was probably the best day of my life. Honestly! It didn’t go so smoothly for others at the clinic, however. Dr. Palmer had an appointment to go to the New Bolton Center (at the University of Pennsylvania, School of Veterinary Medicine) to have pictures taken with a woman he had supported for the Opportunity Scholarship program. He planned to take me along, and I was ecstatic. I’ve always wanted to go there.

Before we left, Dr. Palmer and Dr. Hogan were scheduled for morning surgeries. After Dr. Palmer finished a laryngoplasty surgery, we left though Dr. Hogan wasn’t done with her arthrodesis. She appeared to be having difficulty, but everyone had every bit of confidence in her. So, we were on our way to New Bolton.

When we arrived, we were greeted by Dr. Raker, the founder of equine surgery at New Bolton Center, and Dr. Palmer’s “opportunity scholar,” Tanya. We also met Dr. Sweeney, the woman who basically runs the facility. Dr. Palmer and Tanya got several pictures taken together with the rare horse Barbaro and other horses, and I got one with Barbaro. Dr. Palmer, Dr. Raker, and Barbaro’s trainer (Michael Matz) I was jumping up and down inside!

When we left New Bolton, Dr. Palmer called the office and learned that after Dr. Hogan’s surgery (the arthrodesis), the horse stood and fractured his leg in another place. The new fracture couldn’t be fixed, and Dr. Hogan had to euthanize him. I was extremely shocked and I felt bad for her. Dr. Palmer tried to call Dr. Hogan, but she wasn’t able to talk at the moment. This was a good lesson for me. I realized things do go wrong in this kind of practice, and you just have to deal with it and keep trucking along.

Thursday July 20, 2006

I really enjoyed the clinic today. I felt comfortable, working and making jokes with the interns like I was one of them. Dr. and Mrs. Palmer took me out to a pizza place for dinner and then mini golf. Dr. Palmer and I tied at the end! I guess we’ll just have to battle it out another time. I’m so sad tomorrow is my last day!

Friday July 21, 2006

I’m really going to miss Dr. Palmer and his wife, and all the people at the clinic. I had a blast. I’ve always wanted to go there.

Dr. Palmer took me and Dr. Smith out to a pizza place after the arthroscopic surgery. We talked about life in general and my concerns about veterinary school. She’s really good at making one feel better about one’s self. The moment. This was a good lesson for me. I realized things do go wrong in this kind of practice, and you just have to deal with it and keep trucking along.

Photographs:

1. Observing surgery on my first day. My interest in surgery was discovered today.
2. Dissecting a specimen. This truly was a hands-on learning experience.
3. The entrance to the New Jersey Equine Clinic.
4. Me with Dr. Dr. Palmer and Hogan.
5. Transporting Barbaro with a crane in preparation for an arthroscopic surgery.
6. With Dr. and Mrs. Palmer at the mini-golf course. I’ll never forget my time with them.