What’s Your Career Compass?
Defining Your Professional Identity and Critical Career Factors
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What is your “north star?” What guides your career path? What are your current professional critical factors for your work? Below are questions to help guide you in your reflection. Through taking a few moments to reflect on these questions, you will be able to more clearly focus and articulate your professional identity and goals. Those insights give you tools to better adjust your work and professional development goals to meet what is truly most critical to you in your career.

In any career, you have to work with: People, Data, Things, and Ideas. Prioritize from 1 to 4 (1=top priority) what you would most like to be the focus of your time and energy at work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>_____Data</th>
<th>_____ Ideas</th>
<th>_____ People</th>
<th>_____ Things</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What broad functional areas for your work would you find most interesting or meaningful?
Circle your top 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessibility</th>
<th>Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation</td>
<td>Health (physical &amp; mental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions or Retention</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>International Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>Legal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Related</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Advising</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community (Town/Gown) Linkages</td>
<td>Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Residence Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Student Life/Co-Curricular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity &amp; Inclusion</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/teaching</td>
<td>Trustees/Governing Boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance/Budgeting</td>
<td>Other: __________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What were your original reasons for going into your current career?
What values were you putting into action with your career choice?

What are your current goals or expectations for yourself in your career?
What values are you putting into action in your work today?

What are your longer-term (say 5-10 years from now) career and personal goals?
What values are you hoping to put into action in your future?
Circle your top 5 key values:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>Fairness</th>
<th>Integrity</th>
<th>Respect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Altruism</td>
<td>Fame</td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Self-reliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambition</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Simplicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Frugality</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegiality</td>
<td>Harmony</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Nonviolence</td>
<td>Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Higher Power</td>
<td>Orderliness</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>Wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>Well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resourcefulness</td>
<td>Other: __________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you could only choose three of your top five key values, which three would you choose? Why?

1.  
2.  
3.  

When you review your answers to all of the above questions, what are you noticing serves as your “guiding star” value(s) and themes?

What does your “Career Compass” look like? Feel free to draw it in this space:
Critical Factors: Top 5 Ranking
In your professional career, what are your Critical Factors?

Rank your top 5 below (1=highest ranking):

___ Working with students over time, knowing their story over time.
___ Interacting at one point in time with students.
___ Having a job/career that challenges me.
___ Working with colleagues and supervisor(s) who support me.
___ Having a sense of routine to each day.
___ Experiencing a variety in my work each day.
___ Developing an expertise or specialty focus.
___ Being a generalist, have my work touch on many areas.
___ Earning a high salary.

___ Having a job with good benefits (be specific):
___ Having time to spend with family/friends and for leisure activities.
___ Interacting with diverse individuals.
___ Interacting with other professionals in a collegial atmosphere.
___ Utilizing innovative thinking in my work.
___ Utilizing the latest research and evidence-based outcomes in my work.
___ Making personal, meaningful connections with others at work.
___ Having autonomy in my work.
___ Having access to the latest technology.
___ Having the opportunity to learn, including professional development support.
___ Working in a low-pressure environment.
___ Working in an adrenaline-fueled environment.
___ Working where there is a sense of job security.
___ Working in an organization with financial stability.
___ Fixing or stabilizing an organization that is struggling.
___ Creating something new.
___ Being perceived as higher status among my colleagues.
___ Working with colleagues who share my values.
___ Reporting to a boss who I respect.
___ Working for myself.
___ Having a job that is meaningful (be specific):
___ Having a sense of accomplishment in my work (be specific):
___ Focusing on a Functional Area or Specialty (be specific):
___ Geographic location (be specific):
___ Schedule (be specific):
___ Making a difference (in what way(s)? be specific):
___ Other (what else is most important to you?):

Looking at your top 5 critical factors above, draw a circle around the top 1-3 critical factors that are non-negotiable for you (they absolutely have to be there).

Reviewing all of your answers above, what insights are you noticing? What meaning do you find in your answers? How do your “critical factors” connect to your “guiding star” values?
In one sentence, how would you describe your “why” for your work and career?

Next Steps or “So What?”
As you plan your professional development, seek to adjust your current job, or apply for new job/career opportunities, you now have a compass to guide you. As with all navigation tools, you have to have an idea of where you are, where you want to be, and most of all, where you want to be heading.

- How might you find ways to seek out and include more of your critical factors and values into your current work?
- What is one thing you will do within the next week to more intentionally act on your critical factors and values?
- What questions might you ask to uncover a new job’s “fit” for your top critical factors and values?

Be aware of your goals, and seek and ask for experiences and opportunities that can help you grow professionally. At the same time, be open to how your critical factors may change over time.

Resources for Your Exploration


