**Personal Interests and Career Interests Discussion and Activity- Faculty Instructions**

**Module 2: How to Make a Career Decision**

***Background:*** While on the surface interests may seem like the easiest to assess of the three major factors affecting career choice, in reality it can be the most difficult. Why? Because we often have a hard time determining which of our interests are career interests, which are personal interests that could become career interests, and which are strictly personal interests. For a student inexperienced in making career decisions, this can be especially difficult. When we’re trying to help a student assess their interests, it’s natural to go first for the low-hanging fruit – “What do you enjoy doing in your free time?” We may be looking only for clues about their career interests, but students often imply that their answer to that question IS their career interests… and it may not be.

There IS no right answer to “Should you make your hobby your career?” The decision about whether to incorporate a personal interest into a career depends not only on the individual’s preferences, work values, and abilities, but also on the interest or hobby itself. When making a career decision, it’s important to think about how you feel about making a personal interest or hobby into a career in general, as well as how you feel about making a specific hobby or interest into a career, which this discussion and activity will help your students do.

*Why might you want to make a career out of a personal interest?* Reasons students cite include:

* You already know you enjoy it
* Your work will be something you love and care about
* You’ll be more motivated to work and to be successful
* You won’t have to make time for your hobby on top of a career and other obligations – you’d get to do it at work
* Your career should be something you would do even if you didn’t have to (therefore, a hobby)
* Getting paid to do what you would do for free (or maybe even pay to do)

*Why might you NOT want to make a career out of a personal interest?* Reasons students cite include:

* It’s a hobby because you don’t HAVE TO do it – it’s less fun when someone is making you
* Hobbies are for fun/relaxation after school/work/etc. – if your hobby became your career you’d just have to find a new hobby
* Having someone else dictate how your hobby has to be done (boss) would take the fun out of it
* It might not be fun anymore if you have to do it all day every day
* If it’s something you do “just for you,” you may not want to have to do it for someone else

In addition to the above reasons, the reason many students ultimately rule out pursuing a career directly based on a hobby has to do with a conflict between the interest and the student’s values or abilities. A classic example of an interests-abilities conflict is the athlete who isn’t good enough to go pro. A classic example of an interests-values conflict is the fine artist who doesn’t want to be self-employed, or the one who only wants to create art for self-expression, not for a commercial purpose.

The mistake many students make is to be very literal in their interpretation of how their personal interests translate into career interests (or don’t.) They often think making a career out of a hobby means someone starts paying you to do what you do now. For the student athlete, that means playing professionally, or maybe, if they want to really go outside the box, coaching. For a musician, it means getting a record deal. If those options are undesirable or unrealistic, that entire interest is scratched from the list, perhaps eventually leading the student to a career that is TOO far removed from that personal interest. Personal interests are ALWAYS important because they provide *clues* about what you will enjoy in a career. Consider the example of the fine artist again. Maybe that student doesn’t want to create commercial art, but maybe her artistic hobbies show that being creative is very enjoyable and important to her. She might decide to pursue a career that requires innovation where she gets to create new ideas and concepts, rather than pursuing a more literal application of her hobby like graphic design.

It is crucial for students to not only identify things they enjoy, but (especially in the case of personal interests or hobbies) to also think about what characteristics of that interest they like or value, which will allow them to brainstorm additional career possibilities.

***Activity Instructions:*** You will first facilitate a short whole-class discussion on the topics you just read about, using the discussion outline below. You will then have students complete the “Your Hobbies and Your Career” worksheet (provided). Optionally, you can have students complete the worksheet as a homework assignment, or you can further expand the activity by having students get into small groups afterwards to discuss their answers and help each other brainstorm ways in which specific hobbies could provide clues about career interests.

***Discussion Outline:***

**Part 1: Definitions**

* What is a career interest?
* What is a personal interest? Is it different from a career interest, and if so, how?
* How would you define the word “hobby”?

**Part 2: Should You Make a Career out of Your Hobby?**

* (Poll question) Who would like to make a career out of one of your hobbies?
	+ Why? (Have students share possible reasons as well as specific examples if they have them. You will likely hear many of the reasons listed on the previous page. If they don’t hit all of them, offer up some other possibilities.)
* (Poll question) Who would NOT want to make a career out of one of your hobbies?
	+ Why?

**Part 3: Using Personal Interests to Identify Career Interests**

* (Introduce the idea of there sometimes being a conflict between a personal interest someone has and their abilities or work values. Give examples if you feel comfortable doing so. You may be able to use some of the stories students shared about why they would not want their hobby to be their career as examples.)
* Do you think a hobby someone has may say a lot about what kind of career they’ll like, even if they don’t want to make their hobby into a career? Why or why not?
	+ What kinds of things could your hobbies and personal interests tell you about your ideal career?
* (Introduce the idea of identifying specific things about [characteristics of] an interest or hobby they enjoy as a way of finding other occupations that might align with their interests. Emphasize using personal interests and hobbies to gather “clues” about their career interests.)
* What are some of the characteristics of these hobbies that could translate into a different type of career? (Pick some and do them one at a time and have students brainstorm as many transferable characteristics as possible for each [things like teamwork and competition from the athlete example].)
	+ Playing on a baseball team
	+ Photography
	+ Playing in a band
	+ Buying things at garage sales and selling them on eBay for a profit
	+ Writing short stories
	+ Participating in charity runs
	+ Mountain biking
	+ Being involved in student government
	+ Shopping
	+ Working on cars
	+ Playing puzzles and mind games on your phone
	+ Traveling
	+ Researching things on the internet

**Your Hobbies and Your Career**

***Instructions:*** Pick your top three favorite hobbies, personal interests, and/or things you like to do in your free time. List them below, then under each, jot down 3-5 reasons you enjoy it or specific things you enjoy about it. Next, think about whether you’d want to make that hobby into a career or not, and write down reasons why or why not. Finally, identify characteristics of your hobbies that might translate to other careers, as discussed in the module. For example, if your hobby is basketball, characteristics you might enjoy in other careers could include things like teamwork or competition.

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| **Hobby 1:**  |  |  |
| *What do you enjoy about this hobby?* |
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| *Would you want to make this hobby into a career?*  | *Yes No* |
| *Why or why not?* |
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| *What characteristics of this hobby that you enjoy could you look for in a different type of career?* |
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| **Hobby 2:**  |  |  |
| *What do you enjoy about this hobby?* |
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| *Would you want to make this hobby into a career?*  | *Yes No* |
| *Why or why not?* |
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| *What characteristics of this hobby that you enjoy could you look for in a different type of career?* |
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| **Hobby 3:**  |  |  |
| *What do you enjoy about this hobby?* |
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| *Would you want to make this hobby into a career?*  | *Yes No* |
| *Why or why not?* |
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| *What characteristics of this hobby that you enjoy could you look for in a different type of career?* |
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