PROFESSIONAL CAREER TIME LINE
The Career Time Line supplies a checklist of helpful actions for assuring greater success during the six phases of your career, beginning in college and continuing through your retirement.

Please reflect on each phase, set your goals, and frequently re-evaluate yourself to keep your career plan current.

THROUGOUT YOUR CAREER

- Assess yourself to define specific goals. Periodically check, reassess, extend, or modify goals.
- Actively participate in your career direction and assessment. Schedule meetings with supervisors and mentors to discuss your current performance, expectations, and future possibilities.
- Keep your resume current by adding new projects, responsibilities, and accomplishments every six months.
- Remain active in a professional society that represents your discipline, such as AIAA.
- Establish and maintain professional contacts. Actively develop and sustain new connections, both internal and external to your employer.
- Develop and maintain a professional web presence. Create and maintain a profile on professional networking sites such as LinkedIn. Monitor and correct any negative information appearing in Internet searches for your name.
- Write, publish, and present your own work at technical meetings.
- Stay abreast of new developments in your field by subscribing to appropriate periodicals, attending workshops and seminars, and traveling to international and national conferences when feasible.
- Pursue additional formal education and on-the-job training to remain competitive in an increasingly complex global business environment.
- Enhance organizational and interpersonal skills, including communication, interviewing, and networking.
- Maintain an appropriate balance among family, career, community, and recreation.
- Manage money wisely and periodically seek professional advice about financial planning matters.
- Sustain good physical and mental fitness.
- Remain adaptable to all changes (technological, social, etc.) implemented in the workplace.

This Time Line is a product of the AIAA Career & Workforce Development Committee. It is the compilation of information and experiences of individual members. The information is intended as general guidelines for technical professionals, and should be tailored to individual situations.
Take advantage of co-op opportunities and internships. Work in a career-related field during semesters or while on break.

Participate in an AIAA Student Paper Competition to learn how to prepare and present technical papers.

Seek additional opportunities to develop leadership, communication, and management skills in addition to technical skills through coursework, competitions, and student organizations and activities.

Develop relationships with your advisor, professors, and career services counselor.

Prepare your resume. Post it on relevant professional society sites, such as the AIAA Career Center.

Research potential employers in your chosen field.

Network with prospective employers.

Interview with on-campus recruiters.

Professionalize your online presence.

Develop goals and make career-path decisions (e.g., industry vs. government vs. R&D vs. design vs. manufacturing vs. teaching, etc.)

Decide if you will take the FE (EIT) Exam. Take it during your senior year.

Make a realistic and valid first-job choice based upon your career interests, not just on salary or initial location.
PROFESSIONAL CAREER TIME LINE
Six Phases of Professional Development

- Upgrade from AIAA Student Member to Professional Member.
- Learn the company ropes and adjust to routines of the workplace.
- Become an effective contributor to the team.
- Develop a mentor or sponsor relationship to help you navigate the organizational culture.
- Enhance your technical competency. Subscribe to periodicals and technical journals, and/or take continuing education courses.
- Present papers on your work (participate in local minisymposia, national young professional paper sessions, etc.).
- Consider obtaining an advanced degree (technical discipline or MBA).
- Start preparing for the state professional engineering license, if available, in your field or discipline.
- Meet with a financial advisor to set long-term savings and investment goals.

FIRST JOB
Years in Work Force: 0 – 3
Career Phase: New Engineer or Scientist in Training
Typical Age: 22 – 25
Early Career

Years in Work Force: 3 – 10
Career Phase: Young Professional
Typical Age: 25 – 32

- Continue developing technical skills and credentials.
- Gain exposure to management and other disciplines.
- Consult mentors regarding career goals and steps. Consider changing your job, employer, career, etc. to readjust your path.
- Seek and accept higher levels of responsibility. Learn to make effective decisions. Keep up to date on advancements in your discipline.
- Obtain state engineering license.
- Assume a leadership role at the local, regional, or national level of AIAA.
- Apply for associate membership on an AIAA technical committee.
- Be proactive in your career decisions.
- Consider after-hours graduate programs in your specialty, or an MBA program.
- Meet with financial advisor to adjust long-term plans vs. short term needs.
Make a career path decision to remain in a technical area or move into management.

If moving into management, hone your management and human resources skills; developing these skills takes as much effort as enhancing technical skills.

Stay up to date in your chosen specialty.

Become a mentor or sponsor for young engineers and scientists.

Apply for full membership on an AIAA technical committee.

Continue to take on additional assignments or areas of responsibility.

Apply for a higher grade of membership in AIAA.

Assume professional leadership roles.

Continue upgrading your leadership role in AIAA at the local, regional, and international levels.

Begin retirement planning.
Continue professional leadership progression by obtaining assignments with increasing responsibility and authority.

Stay technically up to date.

Continue mentoring and providing guidance to younger professionals.

Represent your organization outside the workplace.

Diversify your skills or develop hobbies that could lead to a second career or added income upon retirement.

Teach at a college or university, or start your own consulting practice.

Continue retirement planning.
Implement your retirement plans.

Replace compulsory activity with desired leisure wants.

Find new sources of professional and personal satisfaction.

Consider opportunities for part-time work, consulting, teaching, or a second career.

Use accumulated experience and wisdom on behalf of others in various senior roles.

Tutor pre-college students in STEM disciplines.

Work with a local college or university to develop pre-college outreach programs in math and science.

Remain active in AIAA; maintain professional contacts.