Are you unsure of the career path you would like to pursue after graduation? Or did you start with a very defined career goal, but your interests and values have changed as you progressed through your training? If your answer to either of these questions is “yes”, then it’s time to start strategically exploring career options in your field.

Similar to developing a pro-active career plan, self-reflection is a vital part of career exploration and it will help identify qualities that are important to you in a future position. Below are some questions to get you started. Also, reflect on your past experiences (full-time jobs, internships, volunteer work) to determine what you liked most and least about each position and why. This should pinpoint responsibilities you enjoyed most and would likely want in a future job, as well as identify ones to avoid.

Skills:
Review your past accomplishments to uncover your strengths, skills, and talents.
• What are your greatest strengths and unique abilities?
• What technical skills have you developed?
• Do you prefer to communicate verbally or in writing? How about editing documents?
• Do you enjoy analyzing complex issues, problems or data?
• Are you good at multi-tasking? Making decisions quickly and effectively?
• Do you enjoy coordinating projects, supervising others, and/or working on teams?

Interests:
Job satisfaction and success is closely linked to being interested in what you do.
• What have you received praise or recognition for in the past?
• What do you enjoy most: activities related to people, things, or data?
• What do you do in your spare time?
• What courses or assignments have you found the most interesting and were excited to work on?
• What would you do if you knew you could not fail?
• What problems in the world would you like to solve?

Values:
Work that aligns with your values also drives satisfaction. For some people, satisfaction is gained from prestige, money, or power, while others value working or serving others. Furthermore, some people prefer ample time outside work for family or other interests, while others enjoy their jobs being the primary activity in their lives.
• What is more important: direct service to others or service to benefit the “greater good”?
• How important is work-life balance? Do you want flexible work hours?
• Where do you want to live?
• How long of a distance are you willing to commute?
• How do you feel about competition? Job pressure?
• How important is job security? Career advancement?

Personality:
Assessing your personality can offer insight into the type of work responsibilities or environment you will enjoy most.
• Do you prefer to lead or follow?
• Do you prefer to work as part of a team or alone?
• Do you prefer a regular routine or an ever-changing schedule?
• Free online assessments:
Career Values Test: Read and sort cards into groups based on how important the statement on each card is to you about your ideal job.
16 Personalities: Assess your "personality" (or preference) and obtain a 4-letter code similar to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

After doing some self-reflection, it's time to start your RESEARCH! An easy place to start is by reading about careers in your field online. Many professional societies have educational resources that include career profiles, trends within the field, and other information to help you identify specific career paths of interest. Here are a few examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Public Health Association</th>
<th>Association of Schools and Programs in Public Health</th>
<th>Explore Health Careers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists</td>
<td>American Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology</td>
<td>American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Association of Immunologist</td>
<td>American Society of Microbiology</td>
<td>National Institutes of Health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once you have narrowed done a few career paths of interest, you can conduct informational interviews to learn more about specific job responsibilities, work environments, and necessarily skills. Your advisor may be able to identify individuals to connect with. Also, GoHopOnline and LinkedIn are great ways to identify alumni. Finally, one of the best ways to determine if a career path is a good fit for you is to get some hands-on experience. This could be attained through internships, fellowships, volunteer positions, and practicum courses.