

# CAREER DEVELOPMENTS

## *Exploring Emotional Intelligence in Career Development*

**Three Career Lenses:  
Applying Emotional Intelligence  
Throughout Career Planning**

KAREN LITZINGER

**CELEBRATE NATIONAL CAREER  
DEVELOPMENT MONTH 2024**

**Creating My Career Path:  
Embracing Change in My Journey**

MEREDITH BROWN, KYMMIE CARTLEDGE  
AND LOGANN TODD



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FROM THE EDITOR

## EXPLORING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The term *emotional intelligence* (EI), sometimes also called *emotional quotient* (EQ), is used to describe a variety of abilities related to understanding and managing emotions. These abilities include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. In this issue we delve into the often underestimated, but profoundly impactful, realm of EI/EQ in the context of career development.

As the world and workplace rapidly evolve – becoming increasingly diverse, dynamic, and technologically advanced – individuals who possess high EI/EQ often find themselves better equipped to navigate the complexities of modern work and life. And employers are increasingly recognizing the critical role related “soft skills” or “power skills” play in fostering meaningful work and professional growth. From enhancing interpersonal relationships and leading diverse teams to managing stress and adapting to constant change, these skills lead to not only increased productivity and more cohesive teams, but also effective use of empathy and enhanced mental wellness.

EI/EQ can be harnessed for personal and professional growth and play a significant role in a job search and career decision making. Our aim with this issue is to recognize the importance of EI/EQ in the career development field and identify ways the concept can be integrated into career development practice as a pivotal tool for unlocking students’ and clients’ potential for career success.

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# HIGHER EDUCATION *Highlights*



## Criminal Justice Careers: Beyond the Big Three

BY ANDY ALTIZER AND STAN CROWDER

Students enter a university with grand and inspirational plans and hopes, but they often find themselves with more career questions than answers while on the academic pathway. Criminal justice students, for example, frequently seek advice from both practitioners and educators to help them achieve their career and life goals. These goals may come toward the end of their university experience, but they can still explore career opportunities based on transferable skills, and perhaps even some creative exploring and critical thinking related to emotional intelligence.

Undergraduate students often face the proverbial need for a minimal level of experience without having what is needed to make it to the next level (usually an interview) in the job search. Although this article primarily focuses on a criminal justice major, the concepts can apply to all majors.

College students majoring in criminal justice typically seek a career in law enforcement by policing. Students are attracted to the discipline degree and career path, but often they are unsure where they may fit in. And while many people think getting a degree is the academic path to a certain type of career, graduating with a discipline degree opens far more doors than students realize. Often criminal justice majors focus on law enforcement, corrections, and the courts; what we call here the Big Three (also known as the Three C's... cops, courts, and corrections). Within each of these three disciplines a wide variety of career paths are offered. But there are many other professions that criminal justice graduates may want to

explore. It's not uncommon to graduate with a degree and then want to do something different than originally planned, but through mentorship and professors it must be ensured the learner is educated on the many paths a degree provides.

College students benefit by understanding how emotional intelligence (EI) plays into the career search. According to Mental Health America (<https://tinyurl.com/MHA-EI>), there are five key elements to EI: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Developing and enhancing these interpersonal and conflict management skills alone will make all students, and arguably criminal justice students, better suited for just about any future career path. By examining possibilities in government, business, and non-profit organizations, windows of opportunity exist; here we focus again on the criminal justice graduate.

### CIVIC EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS

Government jobs beyond the Big Three are often unexplored by the criminal justice learner. When examining department-level agencies in the federal or state government, one will find "investigator" positions. Whether it is the United States Department of Education or the Department of Public Health, positions seeking those with criminal justice backgrounds and education can be found. Often the "investigator" positions are camouflaged under different titles such as, inspector general or auditor.

### FEDERAL

The investigator career discussion is often couched in terms such as detective, special agent, or inspector. Yet, open positions found at USAJOBS.GOV positions such as "digital investigative specialist", "investigative analyst", "diversion investigator", "industrial operations investigator", and "polygraph examiner" are available. While some positions may require additional technical training, such as a polygraph examiner, many of these positions may be available for application through actions such as internships, co-ops, and volunteer time at agencies. And while "security" may create visions of the private security guard, the possible positions for consideration, include: "physical security specialist" and "witness security specialist."

### STATE

At the state level, many opportunities are couched under the umbrella of investigator, but position are variegated. For example, the office of the Commissioner of Insurance and Safety Fire employs criminal investigators in insurance fraud and fire/arson cases. A "criminal records technician" position within the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) would be a state agency that focuses solely on policies, programs, and services for people with mental health challenges, substance use disorders, intellectual and developmental disabilities, or any combination of these. The Administrative Offices

of the Court offers a “research analyst” position, within the Office of Research, Planning, and Data Analysis, which provides the Judicial Council, Administrative Office of the Courts, and stakeholders’ evidence-based research and subject-matter expertise that drive policy and enhance court administration. The Department of Law seeks investigators to conduct health care fraud investigations. Even the Department of Agriculture Office of Weights and Measures offers positions as a “weights and measures large capacity inspector.” State agencies offer positions that can use the learning gained from a criminal justice degree.

### LOCAL

Police officers’ positions are almost always available, but the local public safety departments also offer positions such as: deputy court clerk, police services representative, public safety ambassador, communications officer, detention officer, and prisoner transport officer.



## Pathways Beyond Civic Employment

Looking beyond government jobs, a criminal justice major can always explore private sector positions. Corporations hire security staff, including experienced middle and upper management that quite regularly pay more than similar public sector positions.

Looking at jobs outside of the criminal justice field may take some interpolation, but especially right after college, or even early in someone’s career, it is an option worth exploring. First, we must remember a traditional undergraduate curriculum consists of 30-35 major-specific classes, and then another 80-100 hours of core education, general education, or liberal education credit hours. Graduates should be able to sell their general education experience if pursuing a position outside of their major. Also, many degrees require an academic minor that can be leveraged for an entry-level career position.

Think about it, the curriculum within an academic major is a great starting point for a career path, but the curriculum is just a starting point that will heavily rely on mentorship, training, continuing education, and on the job training. This could be

said for any student who deviates from the academic discipline’s or profession’s direction. Academia seems quick to sell the importance of liberal arts education. The Coalition for College (<https://tinyurl.com/ycxxwnp6>) reports that The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) did an online survey of employers and found that 93% of them agree that candidates’ demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly and solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major. Four out of five employers also agreed that all students should acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences. There are a lot of jobs that do not require a specified college degree and allow for a broad range of degrees or simply require any college degree.

## Integrating Career-Readiness Skill Development

Over the past several years, many higher education institutions have been aiming to upskill Liberal Arts and other major students, at undergraduate and graduate levels, by infusing career readiness into curriculum and other outreach initiatives. These efforts aim to assist college students with the development of competencies that further develop learned EI traits and demonstrated expertise. Furthermore, the Liberal Arts curriculum promises to make future graduates well-rounded, critical thinkers with an abundance of soft skills to attract future employers. A graduating student should have the confidence to pursue jobs outside their academic field. Based on the liberal arts learning, skills, and training students may find many other jobs seem like a natural fit, including these ideas for those studying criminal justice:

- **EMERGENCY MANAGERS** – Project management, writing, and problem-solving skills are especially important for emergency managers.
- **EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS** – Specific training and certifications will be needed.
- **DISPATCHERS** – First responders appreciate and understand the value of good dispatchers who have good communication and critical thinking skills.
- **MILITARY** – Students with a four-year degree will likely be able to attend Officer Candidate School and dive into a variety of military occupations.
- **INFORMATION SECURITY** – Most of today’s graduates have a fundamental background in a wide range of technologies, and with a little experience and training, a criminal justice student can cross over into the cyber world!
- **SALES JOBS** – Combining a degree, people skills, and a passion for the product can also be financially rewarding!
- **MENTORS** – Organizations like Boys and Girls Club want outstanding mentors.
- **TEACHERS** – It may take some additional education, but with teacher shortage—especially, fewer male-identifying professionals—it is a great match for people who enjoy working with children and young adults.

Students hope to gain employment and make an impact in their selected area of study, but they may realize nearing the completion of their degree, or even after graduating, that the typical discipline job is not for them. Graduating students have the education and skills to pivot to other closely associated professions, as well as jobs that are considerably different. Students can pursue their passion, even if it turns out to be different than what they originally planned, and they can become better employees because of their motivation for success.



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A complete list of references is available upon request from the authors.